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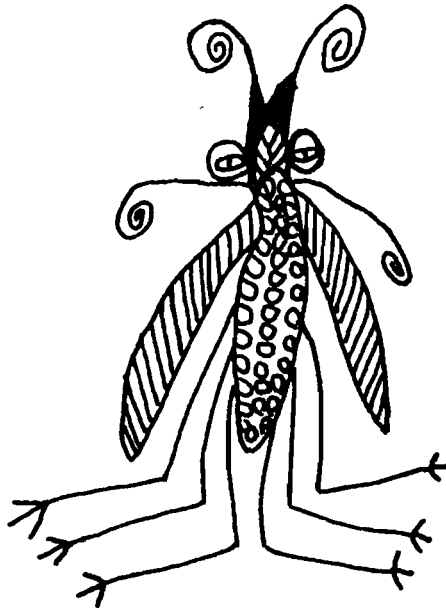
# SIKKIMESE HARVEST

Summer's warmth has coaxed the harvest.  
The yield is good,  
So laughter echoes up the slope  
Where wives prepare meals  
For the reapers below.

Rice bins are full,  
The priest has come,  
Many *thungbas* are sucked  
As the voices drone on  
In the ritual thanksgiving.

Above all are the mountains,  
The Himalayas,  
Fresh layers of snow  
Tell us winter has come.

*Sherab Bhutia*



# KORO'U MURAMURA

by Alan Natachee

*Koro'u Muramura Muraekea!*  
*Koro'u Babine Babineakea!*  
*Koro'u aeai o anua*  
*Aeai o anua!*  
*Koro'u aeai o mia*  
*Aeai o mia!*  
*Koro'u Muramura Muraekea!*  
*Koro'u Babine Babineakea!*  
*Koro'u you sit upon the excrement!*  
*You sit upon the excrement!*  
*Koro'u you live upon the excrement!*  
*You live upon the excrement!*

There was once a man who was a great wild-game hunter. His name was Arure Aitsi. He bred many dogs and he used to kill pigs, wallabies, cassowaries and bandicoots. He never came home without a pig, a wallaby, or a cassowary, and ten or twenty bandicoots.

But one day, when Arure Aitsi went out hunting with his dogs, he was very unlucky. All his dogs deserted him. Therefore he called and called, and whistled and whistled for his dogs to come to him, but there was no answer.

Just as Arure Aitsi made up his mind to return to the village, he heard his dogs barking and fighting each other. He ran in the direction where the sound of barking and yelping of his dogs was coming from. As he hastened along he thought that his dogs might have killed a pig or a wallaby or a cassowary and were barking and fighting over it. But when Arure Aitsi arrived at the spot where his dogs were barking and fighting each other there wasn't any wild game in sight. He got angry and hit the dogs with his hunting spear and let them run away to the village.

When the dogs had gone and the place grew quiet again, Arure Aitsi made a fresh inspection of the place and found that his dogs had been barking and fighting over a big mound of human excrement. He also saw some human excrement

on the trunk of the sago palm which stood close to the excrement mound. So he let his eyes follow the trunk right up to the top. To his surprise he saw a house on the top of the sago palm. He was more surprised when he saw a very beautiful woman sitting on the platform of the house. The beautiful woman was all naked, sitting with her naked bottom over the hole of the platform.

After looking around, he called, 'Who are you sitting up there all naked like that?'

The woman chuckled and replied, 'I am Koro'u Muramura, Koro'u Babine!' Then she asked, 'And you, man, what is your name?'

Arure Aitsi replied, 'My name is Arure Aitsi!'

The woman laughed and said, 'Well, your name is Arure Aitsi and my name is Koro'u Muramura, Koro'u Babine!'

Arure Aitsi then called up to the woman, '*Ai Koro'u Muramura, Koro'u Babine! O namoharai—ki'abaha! Babine namomu tohamu! la wa tavamo birona na itana?*'

('Oh Koro'u Muramura, Koro'u Babine! You are very beautiful! You are a beautiful woman indeed! But what is that red thing that I see there?')

Koro'u Muramura answered, '*Ina na e'u taitai birona no itana! lbabeau taitaina he!*'

('This is my red flower you are looking at! It is the flower of attraction!')

Arure Aitsi whistled and sighed longingly. Then he called, '*Koro'u Muramura, Koro'u Babine! Aeramo pa kara'au pa wahi emu taitai birona pa a'i—apuana?*'

('Koro'u Muramura, Koro'u Babine! May I come up and touch your red flower?')

Koro'u Muramura replied, '*Mo arova-uai ma itanio ba muri ko kara'au ko mai e'u taitai birona ko a'i—apuana!*'

('Let me see you sing first and then you can come up and touch my red flower!')

So Arure Aitsi decorated himself with wild flowers and started singing and swaying and stepping forward and backward.

*Ma pealai ma piteia!*  
*Ma toto ma piteia!*  
*Tomau, taitai!*  
*Emi taitai!*  
*To maiaina!*  
*Taitai to mai!*  
*Emi taitai!*  
*To maiaina!*

*En taitai la yana!*  
*Vavie ena taitai!*  
*En movio la yana!*  
*Vavie ena movio!*

*Aiamu e mai!*  
*En taitai na vararo!*  
*Poumu e mai!*  
*En taitai na vararo!*

*Aiamu e mai!*  
*Aiamu e apipoua!*  
*Poumu e mai!*  
*Poumu e apipoua!*

*Vavie na apa na wahiaina!*  
*Vavie na apa tonitoni!*

*Iviao na apa na wahiaina!*  
*Iviao na apa tonitoni!*  
*Vavie na, korimu a koria!*  
*Na ivaiva na naria!*

*Vavie maamu tainaimo!*  
*Vavie tipomu maamu tainaimo!*

*Vavie namona,*  
*Ituaimo no maitsi,*  
*Kau riva-rivamu!*  
*Kau riva-rivamu!*

*Ituai pai ma vaeno ririaina!*  
*Itu apuronai ma vaeno ririaina!*

*Kanoai pai ma vaeno ririaina!*  
*Kano apuronai ma vaeno ririaina!*

I sing with proceeding steps!  
I sing with receding steps!  
Darling, the flower!  
Your flower!  
Bring it here!  
Bring the flower!  
Your flower!  
Bring it here!

When beholding my flower!  
It is a woman's flower!  
When beholding my shell money!  
It is a woman's shell money!

Your message has come!  
I gather my flower!  
Your news has come!  
I gather my flower!

Your message has come!  
Your message has spread!  
Your news has come!  
Your news has spread!

Let the women stand in line!  
Let the women stand erect!

Let the girls stand in line!  
Let the girls stand erect!  
Woman, I stand for you!  
I call and wait for you!

Woman, according to your eyes!  
Woman, according to your own eyes!

Beautiful woman,  
You sit in your house,  
Staring at a man!  
Staring at a man!

I wish I laid her down within the house!  
I wish I laid her down within the dusty house!

I wish I laid her down upon the ground!  
I wish I laid her down upon the dusty ground!

While Arure Aitsi was busy singing, Koro'u  
Muramura built a fire and heated the stones.

She also filled a big clay pot with water and put it on the fire to boil. Soon the stones in the fire glowed, and the water boiled. Koro'u Muramura let down a large cane basket by a strong rope and called Arure Aitsi, '*E, Arure Aitsi raona'au ki'amu! O mai pohea aonai mo miauta ma veri'aunio he, e'u taitai birona po a'i—apuana!*'

('My dear sweetheart Arure Aitsi! Come and sit inside the basket and I will pull you up to touch my red flower!')

Arure Aitsi felt very happy and he hastened into the basket. Koro'u Muramura then commenced to pull and to swing Arure Aitsi to and fro in the basket. When Koro'u Muramura had pulled Arure Aitsi in the basket right up under the platform, she spilled the boiling water upon him. She also pushed down the glowing hot stones upon him. Poor Arure Aitsi screamed with awful pain and died.

Koro'u Muramura then cut the rope and let the dead body of Arure Aitsi fall to the ground.



# HOHOLA IN THE NIGHT

Bright western skies die.  
You have waited the anxious hours  
of a woman in her first pregnancy,  
the hour like a wounded soldier  
struggling to your dismay.  
Now, moments to display your beauty arrive.

You smile like a titled warrior,  
Pride your mask.  
You transfigure into Hellen  
to capture my admiration.  
You have cast a spell over me.

I admire you.  
Man created heaven,  
symbolic of progress.

Yet  
you  
    a camouflage  
    a deceiver  
    a pregnant woman with a deformed child—  
you whisper the devilish whisper of a harlot,  
of her virginity to an innocent teenage  
male virgin in bed.

Oho! Hypocrite  
I admire you.

Hohola infested with hookworms,  
sick and diseased.  
I smell the dead corpse  
in the still air.  
You breathe out unbearable smell.

Though splendid your beauty  
I hear a siren of a police van far to my left,  
scream of a raped female to my right.  
Before me under dim lights  
a woman selling her body to a queue  
and five juvenile delinquents  
follow me.



Hohola—you send a wave of fear  
like the fear of death descending on my aged father  
or the fear of getting V.D. from my high school girl  
while making love.

Hohola—I wish you were a second  
Gomorrah!

*Kama Kerpi*



# POEM

Captain Mad Blood set out one afternoon  
with a bell on a stick and sought  
the silver-winged eyes of the flowing one  
in the place of laughing dawns.

With his fingers in his ears he  
wept for the purple darkness and dreamt  
of figs and moths on a plain all  
ghosted by fog.

By the howling brook he came upon  
a rainbow in a pebble. It shone beneath the  
red and green boot of Dog Leg the hunchback  
who had come out from the shadows of the  
seven daughters at the raining sky who lived  
in the forest and were fathered by the seven  
cold sorrows of the wind. Dog Leg scribbled on a  
mushroom with a vulture plume from requiems  
and drew pictures of hesitation.

Captain Mad Blood set fire to  
himself within and a green bird flew from the  
boughs above him  
at trees where crept the mumbling cripple  
the wind

was cold  
as wizards' feet  
the rain had  
just  
stopped falling  
he had heard  
the first bird calling  
when out across  
the fog and frost  
like lightning, flashed his lady.

She stood on a rock. A silver  
thing beside the green smudge.

The night water hurried on  
and the stones washed away. Its  
eyes sparkled.

Mad Blood knew of her destiny  
among the stars and hoped to bring a  
bag of some unguilty things that she  
would touch with her hands as if they were  
her own.

She blinked and watched the  
water go, and wondered where it went  
to. Mad Blood walked into the forest. The  
bell tinkled.

*Stewart Nunn*

# THE RAPIST

by Siump Kavani

Kariko was woken up by drops of rain falling from the *kunai* grass. He was surrounded by rain-soaked crosses that reflected the stars. He stood up to measure the dawn. It was still dark and he slipped back into the bed of grass he had made for himself in the middle of the cemetery.

When Kariko was woken up for the second time by some distant call, the sun was already high in the sky and the steamlike clouds had made way for its rays. It was early morning.

'Kariko! Kariko! Where are you?' a continuous voice echoed into the valley from the hills. At first he could not take it in, but gradually the familiar voice injected some concentration into his hearing. 'Am I not the woman who bore you? Please come forward! You have already spent many hungry nights. Kariko! Kariko! Where are you?' The voice continued sailing into the valley.

By now Kariko was fully awake. His mother's voice kept coming. The urgency of the voice bred fear into his heart. He crept cautiously in the direction of the calls. He sprinted from hedge to hedge until he was near enough to hear the voice which became loud and clear. 'Kariko where are you?'

'I am up here,' he replied hoarsely.

'Please come down at once,' the mother urged.

'Are you alone?'

There was a suspiciously long pause . . . and Kariko could hear his mother sobbing. He waited for some time, then asked again whether she had come in the company of others. There was no reply, but her cries now became loud like someone mourning the death of a dear relative. 'All right, Mother, I am coming.'

When he emerged from the shrubs he saw his mother kneeling down, her head hidden in the palms of her hands. 'Mother!' he shouted at the top of his voice and rushed through the sharp, pointed *kunai* hedges. His mother, still weeping, stood and took her son to her heart.

Then from behind the bushes Wasi and Moku plunged on Kariko like hungry hawks diving for a meal. They were members of the chief's *amang* band of warriors. Kariko struggled to set himself free, but the power-packed hands that gripped each of his arms gradually killed his strength. He stood defenceless between them. Then he saw his mother break down. With all his energy gone, he could not even hold himself upright.

The warriors tied both his hands behind his back until they were sure that Kariko could not break loose and become a wild pig again. Mockingly they asked his mother whether Kariko was born of two rocks ground together, since he did not have the sense of a human being.

'You think you are a testing agent, don't you?' Wasi asked looking down on Kariko.

'Yeah, he wants to be the first to stick it up in all the virgins of the village. He even used force to climb onto the chief's daughter after she rejected him!' Moku added.

'You big-for-nothing chief's asshole boys!' Kariko cursed, looking up into the eyes of the chief's trackers. 'You think you are great? You think you are men?' He spat. 'You should both go back to your wives this minute, fold your hands, and cry in their presence—'

'Hold your mouth there!'

'Do you know what is happening in your gardens this minute?' Kariko asked both men, ignoring their order. 'Every little hole your wives have is being fucked by the chief, while you are out here looking for some silly breast-sucking kid who had the sky-high courage to bomb the chief's daughter's virginity. Is that—'

But then Wasi fisted him between the eyes stopping the flow of his speech, at least for the moment.

Two months had passed since Kariko had been chased out of the village by chief Obi who

had discovered that his daughter had been raped at one of the village *singsings*. At first the chief had merely wanted to deport Kariko from the village. The news of the rape had not yet spread and the chief did not want to be humiliated in public by making it known that a common villager had thrown dirt into his eyes. Kariko had run away and was living on small catches and gatherings of nuts and fruit.

The chief had still thought he might let him return after his stomach had cooled down, but instead his anger had reached boiling point. For the village folk had started whispering among themselves about the change in appearance of the chief's own daughter. The elders were beginning to wonder who had sown the seed and the older women were commenting on the type of fruit one should eat and the types that one should spit out.

And so the chief had sent two of his best trackers to bring Kariko back from exile. At first Kariko's mother had refused to go along, knowing what would happen to her son if he were brought back to the village. But she was beaten and tortured until she broke down and followed them.

As Kariko was led to his village, with a rope round his neck, he knew he would not live. As they came to the top of the hill, his captors shouted out: 'The prisoner is coming! We have tracked him down! He is here with us!'

The unusually quiet village stirred with movements of people. Messages were shouted across from village to hill; and as the four people slowly descended the hill they saw the thick smoke of a big fire rising from a place near the chief's house. As they burst into the village they were met by angry shouts: 'Burn, burn, the son of a rock!' And Kariko, as the warriors half-dragged and half-carried him to the foot of the stool on which

the chief sat, knew that the council of elders had voted to burn him alive.

Kariko's mother burst into loud wails and looked around to see if there were any sympathizers. But the crowd continued to shout: 'Burn, burn!'

The flame glowed above the tops of the recently planted casuarina trees. The smoke had thinned out, blanketing the valley as if the ancestors wanted to isolate the valley from the rest of the world. The chief called for silence. He called a second time but the people did not hear him. The third time he yelled at the top of his voice: 'All of you people, listen, and listen well!' The noises of the crowd came to a dead stop.

The chief began to speak: 'Everything grows out of something.'

'True, true!' the people affirmed.

'My daughter grew out of my blood. And this young man, pouring the weight of his uninitiated blood into the bowels of my daughter, has brought into my life a heavy weight like the big round stones from the river bed. He has made me look a fool in your eyes. It makes me look like a man who eats his wife's pig meat.' His voice was rising with every sentence.

'Am I not your chief?'

'Burn the young fool!' demanded an old man sitting nearest to the chief.

'True! Burn the young fool! His penis itches like a louse,' another old man added from the back of the audience.

By now enough rage had built up in the old chief. 'All right, all right! Listen all of you! If I don't kill him now, by the beginning of next moon all the young girls in this village will have insects crawling in their birth-bags.' He signalled his men to carry the struggling Kariko towards the huge fire. Everyone remained quiet; only Kariko's mother screamed and wept.

# SONG OF LAMENT

Uchimakona.  
My backbone,  
My beloved.

Uchimakona.  
Cream of love dream,  
Descendant of Ochimakona.

You dwelled in the mouth of elders.  
The insects whisper your name in terror.

Uchimakona.  
My digging stick,  
My beloved,  
The cream of love dream,  
Blood of Ochimakona.

You who uprooted homes and gardens.  
Terror descends like a heavy downpour  
On nearby neighbours.  
Uchimakona.  
My digging stick,  
My red shell.  
Cream of love dream,  
Pride of Ochimakona.

Uchimakona.  
My sun,  
My childhood days.

Uchimakona.  
The roar of distant waterfall,  
Shield of Ochimakona.

You, the legend,  
At feast, at dance, at war.  
Your name the roar of thunder.  
Uchimakona.  
My tattoos that capture the eyes,  
My childhood days left behind.

Uchimakona.  
Roar of distant waterfall,  
Stone axe of Ochimakona.

You the 'big man',  
You whose face blinded the eyes of married women.  
Uchimakona.  
My tattoos that capture the eyes.  
My joy to hear mother's familiar stories.

Uchimakona.  
Roar of distant waterfall,  
Defender of Ochimakona.

Uchimakona.  
Bitter taro soup,  
Grieving moments of mother's death.

Uchimakona.  
White bear whispers the song of departure,  
Bending post of Ochimakona.

You the memories of happy years,  
You midnight stories of all mothers,  
Uchimakona.  
Bitter spear wound,  
Grieving moments of mother's death.

Uchimakona.  
White bear whispers song of departure,  
Decaying tree trunk of Ochimakona.

Memories of our days lie  
Rusting in the most forgotten corner of my house.  
Aia! Uchimakona.  
Aia! Bitter spear wound.

Our ways, our paths are retiring,  
Uchimakona.  
The white bear whispers song of departure,  
Dried blood of Ochimakona.

Uchimakona  
Last warrior.  
Uchimakona  
Last cream of love dream,  
The last true descendant of Ochimakona.

Aia! Aia!  
I have dreamed  
A terrible dream.  
Two horrible white termites have eaten  
Your shield.

*Kama Kerpi*

# KAURAI

by Nora Vagi Brash

## Note:

This legend was told to me by my mother on 10 April 1973. It is a Motuan legend.

A long time ago in the village of Taurama there was a beautiful girl called Kaurai. She was so beautiful that men from all over the Eastern coast of Papua, even up to Hula, would come all the way to Taurama bearing gifts of betel nut and armshells. Although the gifts were plentiful and the men were making greater efforts to improve their looks, Kaurai paid no heed to them.

One day her parents went to the garden and left the young brother Meronai to keep an eye on his sister. But soon Kaurai wanted to go for a swim on the beach. The brother pleaded with her not to go, but she took no notice of him.

Kaurai went down to the beach, took off her grass skirt and her necklace made with a pig's tusk, put this on her grass skirt and went for a swim.

When she came back there was a dog sitting on her skirt. So she said, 'Please get off my skirt and necklace so I can put them on!' But the dog picked up the necklace and away he ran towards Tubusereia. Kaurai followed him until she came upon children playing in the village and she asked, 'Did you see a dog pass by?'

'Yes, he has just walked by. He's probably gone through the mangrove.'

So Kaurai followed until she arrived at Barakau. She enquired about the dog to the children who told her that the dog had just gone by with the necklace. She continued until she came to Gaire and then proceeded on to Kapa Kapa where the children told her that the dog was heading eastward towards Kalo. Before reaching Kalo she had to cross a river. She sat down to rest for a while, when out of the bush a handsome man appeared. Around his neck was her necklace of dog's teeth and pig's tusk.

Kaurai said to the man, 'Why did you not come out like that at the beach? I would not have chased you away. Now it is too far to go back. My father and mother will think I am dead now.'

The man said, 'For you I have travelled a long way and now that I've found you I want you to be my wife.' Kaurai agreed to be his wife.

So they walked towards Babaka. When they neared the village the man said, 'We will have to wait until it's dark before we enter the village.' They waited until all the village noises ceased and only the faint light of the fires could be seen. They felt their way along until they came to the village.

Kaurai's husband said, 'You must hold on to my *sibi*; when I move to my right you must move with me. If I move to the left, you must also do the same.' So, having agreed on this, they climbed up to the house.

The man knocked on the door and his mother called out, 'Who is knocking at the door at this hour?'

The man said, 'I am, Mother. Open the door! I'm very hungry.'

His mother replied, 'You haven't brought Kaurai so I won't open up for you. The door remains shut until you do so.' But the man told his mother to open up because he had something important to tell her. So she told her daughter to get up and let her brother in.

The brother told his sister to light the fire and cook some food. The girl started to make the fire. She went down to blow the fire. As she did, the man moved to his right and Kaurai forgot to move, so there were two shadows on the wall. The mother seeing these sat right up and said, 'Is that Kaurai with you?' The man said it was. The mother got up very quickly, put out the best mats in the house, woke her husband up and asked him to bring out betel nuts and lime gourd

to sit and chew with the couple while she went to cook the food.

Next morning at dawn, the father stood in the middle of the village and called, 'My son has brought Kaurai. I am going to have a feast today.'

All the other young men were so jealous and disappointed that they destroyed their armbands and decorations and refused to take part in the feasting and celebration.

Kaurai and her husband lived in his village until they had a son. The grandparents decided it was time to send Kaurai, her son and husband to Taurama to visit her parents. The people of the village and relatives collected food, betel nuts, mats and pigs, donated them to the young couple and sent them away in a *luḡumi* towards Taurama.

Kaurai's brother was sitting outside when he sighted the *luḡumi*. The parents meanwhile had adorned themselves with ashes and soot as a sign of mourning and were not allowed to leave their house. The relatives would do everything for them. Well, while the boy was sitting outside, he saw Kaurai and he called to his mother, 'Mother! I see Kaurai sitting on that canoe.'

His mother called back to him 'You son of mangy dog, go eat excreta in the grass! My daughter has been dead for almost two years now. You must have seen her ghost.'

But the boy was so insistent that the mother left the fireplace and went to see for herself.

Sure enough, there was Kaurai. The mother jumped from her house into the water and climbed up the *luḡumi* and embraced Kaurai and her infant. There was much rejoicing and feasting for a long time afterwards.

They lived with her parents until one day when Kaurai's parents said, 'We think it's time you went back to your in-laws.' The next few days were spent gathering food and preparing for the journey back. Soon it was time to go. Kaurai's mother said to her, 'Take care of yourselves and our grandson, especially during the journey. If you decide to pull in for the night you may do so at Nunamo; do not pull in over that other side.' She bade them farewell and

Kaurai, her husband and his relatives sailed away.

They sailed on until it was getting late and the husband decided to pull in at the nearest beach for the night. Little did they realize that this was the forbidden place. They had their meal and went to sleep.

While they were asleep a witch climbed up on board, pushed Kaurai overboard and made herself at home near the baby. Every time the baby cried Galaunago the witch would rock him until he fell asleep. Early at dawn they left. As was the custom in those days, the young mother and her first child were not allowed to be seen. So, in order to remain out of sight, a special room was allocated to them and their food was passed in from under a hanging mat which served as a door.

They had not travelled far when Kaurai's husband saw a bamboo floating towards the *luḡumi*. The patterns on the smoking pipe resembled that of Kaurai's. He called out to the crew, 'Bring the *aivara* and pull that beautiful bamboo in for my child to play with.' To which Galaunago replied, 'Eh! Leave it alone; there are prettier ones at home.'

She knew all along it was Kaurai who had changed into bamboo. Soon another object came floating by and again the husband wanted it for the child but Galaunago would not hear of it. This went on until they reached his village.

They soon beached the *luḡumi* and all the relatives climbed on board to welcome them home. The grandparents were so excited about the arrival that they rushed into the room to see their grandson; only to find him sucking the witch's breast.

They soon raised the alarm and the husband snatched the baby from her and ran towards his house. Galaunago followed him and made herself at home under the house. Every time the baby cried, she called out to them to open up and let her feed him. The man would throw abuses and insults at her.

The witch considered herself to be the wife, and the mother of the child. During the day she would go and weed in the gardens of the relatives whom she thought to be her in-laws. Sometimes



she would go collecting shellfish and distribute them among the relatives.

All this time the husband had covered his body with ash and soot as a sign of mourning. He lived in a dark corner of the house, while the baby was cared for by its grandmother.

One day, his youngest sister, who was not yet fully initiated but had a few tattoos on her, went to gather shellfish. She went to take her grass skirt off under the *pandanus* trees when suddenly she saw Kaurai there. She wanted to run home to tell her brother but Kaurai spoke against it. Kaurai told her it was not yet time to tell anybody, but to bring her the tattooing implements and to make sure that no one followed her.

Kaurai told her that when the witch Galaunago pushed her overboard an eel married her and took her over beyond the reef. During the day he would bring Kaurai here and leave her under the trees. Late in the afternoon he would come for her. At that time the sea would turn red.

Early next morning the young girl gathered the things and went to visit Kaurai. All day Kaurai tattooed her own patterns on the girl and when the sea turned red the girl packed up and went home. She continued seeing Kaurai until all the tattooing was complete. So Kaurai said to her, 'You can now tell your brother about me. Tell him to come early and dig a pit and cover it up with the *pandanus* trunks right over where the eel comes to wait for me.'

That afternoon when the girl returned home she took some food over to her brother. Immediately he recognized the tattoos and said, 'Sister, you have strange tattoos on you and they almost resemble those of your dead sister-in-law.'

The girl began to tell the story from beginning to end. When she had finished, the brother washed himself clean, tore off the mourning decorations and began to sharpen his axes and spears.

At dawn he woke up and told his mother to

prepare the house and get betel nuts because Kaurai was coming home that night. The mother thought that her son was out of his mind but she did as she was told.

That day he cut down some trees and lined them up above the small pit. All the while Kaurai was singing to him and hurrying him. Soon everything was ready and Kaurai told him to hide because the sea was beginning to turn red. The man was all prepared for it. When the eel was right over the poles, he dashed out and speared it between the eyes and while it was wriggling cut it to pieces with his axe. The tail fell into the pit and became a short eel.

Kaurai and her husband returned home. Galaunago was not happy at all when she saw Kaurai.

The following day, Kaurai minded the baby while all the other women went to the garden to collect food for celebrating Kaurai's return. Galaunago followed the women for she still considered herself to be the first wife.

While she was away, Kaurai and her husband dug a hole in the ground and heated stones and when it was ready the man cut the old step away and made a new, weak one above the pit. Since the arrival of Galaunago the front step had been reserved for her and the back steps for the other people in the house. The hot pit was covered in coconut leaves.

When the women returned from the garden Galaunago, hearing the baby cry, rushed up the ladder to soothe him, but as the ladder was weak she fell right into the pit and ended her life there and then.

Although that happened a long, long time ago, if you visit Taurama now you can still see a well and the people still refer to it as the *Sisia Ranu Gurina* which means 'Dog's Water Well'. That was where it all started.

Even the seafarers today do not anchor off Dubara for fear of bad luck.

# THE FLYING CLOUD

by Nicholas Kuman

Once upon a time, high on a mountain, an old man lived with his daughter Rom, a girl fairer than the lily in bloom and pretty as the dawn. She was the pride and joy of his life. The love that these two had for each other knew no bounds. They were always cheerful and happy and since no one knows the future, they didn't either.

One day, early in the morning, when the first rays of the sun were kissing the mountain tops, the old man was at his door looking towards the east. And there, on the horizon, a white fleecy cloud was flying westwards. As the old man watched, it flew over Kundiawa, over Kup, over Minj. When it was over Kudjip he woke up Rom who was still in the Land of Nod and, pulling up the post of the house, pushed her into the hole. Then he replaced the post.

Hardly had he replaced the post when the white cloud came flying up over the treetops and disintegrated before his very eyes. And there before him stood the ugliest and most miserable-looking old hag he had ever set eyes on in his many years of existence.

'What may your mission be, old woman?' he demanded harshly.

'That's a long story,' she began in a croaking voice. 'I come from the land of the rising sun and that's a long way away. My people are having a very big feast, but there are not enough young girls to dance. So I come in search of girls. To be frank with you, I am here to ask you to give me your daughter. The feast will last a month, so I will return the girl a month from today. I promise you that she will have the best of times and will be back in good health.'

'I haven't got a daughter, old hag,' he replied scornfully.

'Oh yes you have,' said the old hag with a cunning smile.

Angrily, the old man rushed into the house

and came out with a flaming-red bird of paradise plume and a *kina* shell. Handing them over to the old woman he said: 'Take these and be off! I've got no daughter to give you.'

The old hag left and when she came to a river she turned the bird of paradise plume into *pitpit* and the *kina* shell into stone. She was then back at the old man's house demanding, of all things, his beloved Rom. The old man, realizing that there was nothing he could do, brought out his daughter from her hiding place.

After Rom had washed and dressed in her best, the old man handed her over to the old hag and they left. With a heavy heart and tears streaming down his wrinkled cheeks, the old man watched the white cloud until it disappeared behind the eastern mountains.

After many weary days on the road Rom and the old hag arrived at their destination. The place was different from what Rom had expected. It wasn't a busy dancing ground with rows of houses and colourful people, waiting with happy smiles, to give her a warm reception. Instead, the place looked deserted except for a house which was unusually long, stretching for nearly half a kilometre in the middle of a pine forest. There were occasional groans and cries which sent a chill through Rom's body coming from the long house. It was then and there that Rom felt uneasy. She felt suspicious. Something inside Rom told her to beware.

The old woman opened a door and they entered the house. The small room that they had entered looked neat and tidy. Noticing the girl's uneasiness the old hag told her that they would spend the night in this pig's house and reach the dancing ground behind the hill, the next morning. Meanwhile she would get something for their supper. She was gone the next minute.

Barely had she left the house when there was a rustling in the corner of the room. Turning

around in a flash Rom came face to face with a creature that could hardly be recognized as human. It was an old woman who might have looked pretty once but now was blind and haggard and as thin as a mosquito.

Rom was spellbound and didn't know what to say, but the old lady said cautiously: 'My daughter, is there anyone in the room besides you and me?'

'No,' Rom replied, finding her tongue at last.

'Well, my daughter, I know how you happen to be here for I came here once as you did. I was pretty and dressed like you but that's a long story. For now, take my advice and no harm will come to you. That old woman and her people are cannibals. This long house is full of unlucky women like myself who have fallen into the traps of that cunning old she-wolf. If you want to save your skin then listen carefully. The old cannibal has gone to get worms and poison to give you so that after you have eaten you will be as weak as a baby. Then she will blind you and take out your bones. Take these *pitpit* and vegetables that I have prepared and when the old woman gives you what she has prepared push them under the floor and eat these instead. She is half-blind and won't notice. Finding that you are not weak she will leave you alone tonight.'

Handing Rom two brand new parrot wings, she continued: 'Tomorrow morning I am to be killed and many people will be here to eat me. Take these and keep them. When the club hits me I will yell. As soon as you hear my yell put the wings under your arms and fly home.' And with that the old lady retreated into the dark interior of the house.

It was already dark when the old cannibal returned with her food. In the gloom she handed some to Rom, but Rom threw it away and ate what was given to her by the other old woman.

Seeing that the food had no effect on the girl, the old cannibal didn't do anything to Rom during the night.

The next morning everything came to pass as the old woman had prophesied. People seemed to come out of nowhere and soon there was a big crowd. When the meek old lady was led out there was a cheering and then a young man clubbed her to death. Rom was grief-stricken but there was nothing she could do.

With the old lady's death cry ringing in her ears, Rom was already on the wing. The people were so interested in what they were going to eat that they hadn't paid any attention to Rom. However, one man saw her while she was in flight and, yelling with rage, discharged a couple of arrows after her. But Rom was already out of range. Everyone else watched until she was a speck in the western sky, for there was nothing they could do.

All day Rom flew and by evening she was relieved to see her home on the mountain silhouetted against the western sky. Rom's father was in his house weeping when he heard a thud on the roof. He rushed out and what he saw made his heart leap two beats. He couldn't believe his eyes for he knew that his daughter wasn't due for another month. But, sure enough, there was his daughter sitting on the roof with a smile playing about the corners of her mouth.

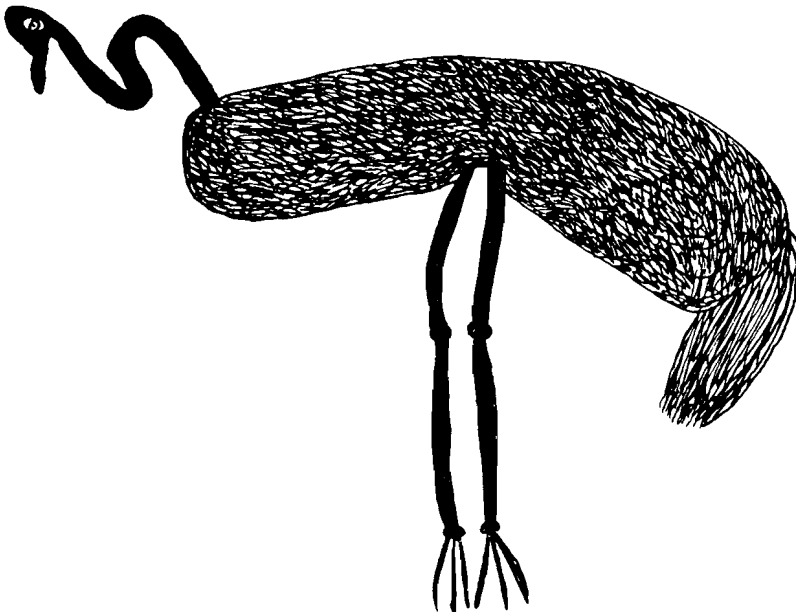
With the last rays of the sun playing on her body, she looked like the queen of beauty. The old man, with tears of joy running down his cheeks, jumped on to the roof with the agility of a twenty-year-old, despite his seventy years, and took his daughter in his arms and held her as if to hold her forever.

After that, well, the story is all told, and beautiful Rom and her old father lived happily together.

# LONELY HEART

Deep deep in the heart of silence  
he sat on his naked bottom  
longing for happiness  
but locked up in himself  
feeling far away, out of reach.  
Low low into the graves of his ancestors  
he sank  
terrified by the darkness  
afraid, blinded.  
He wept for his tiny life.  
When morning came  
he did not see the dawn  
and the sun could not warm his heart.

*Gapi Iamo*



# JOE, THE RASCAL

*by Arthur Jawodimbari*

In the densely populated shantytown the houses were built on the foot of a grassy hill, and were so low that people had to crawl to enter. The houses were constructed with bits of wood, bits of iron, empty cartons and anything one could find lying around on the streets. This is where Joe made his home with his parents and brothers and sisters.

Joe migrated to Port Moresby with his parents when he was only nine years old. As soon as they arrived, Joe's father got a job as a houseboy. Joe started going to a school which was a few kilometres away from the shanty. A few years later, Joe failed his exam and 'dropped out'. Joe intended to pursue further studies but he lacked the talent and his father couldn't afford to support him any longer. Joe's father was happy when he dropped out because Joe was a big boy and could get a better job with his small amount of education and support the family.

However, to his father's disappointment, Joe remained another burden, and an extra mouth to feed despite his salary of twelve dollars a fortnight.

Every night Joe used to go out to picture theatres to see various films. Joe made friends with other boys who were standard VI drop-outs just like himself. The films they enjoyed the most were the westerns and ones about bank robberies. Every time they went to the pictures they used to watch the actions of the actors attentively. Later on, Joe and his friends formed a group called Rascal Brothers. Every night after the films they discussed the characters whom they admired most.

One evening, Joe and his friends decided to put into practice what they learned from the films. They went into a shop and stole a bottle of gin when the shopkeeper was not looking. All the people in the Rascal Brothers group shared that bottle of gin. When they had had as

much as they liked and were drunk, they began to make plans for future activities. Their first plan was to rob the old man and his wife who lived down the road. This old couple owned a shop which consisted of foodstuffs, kerosene and black tobacco. The Rascal Brothers finalized their plan, hugged each other and dispersed.

On the next day at dusk, Joe and his friends walked into the old man's shop. Joe stood in the doorway of the shop and looked out for customers. There was no one around so he whistled the tune of the song 'Wild Colonial Boy' which he learned at school. At the same instant other members of the Rascal Brothers jumped over the counter, put the lights out and seized the old man. Some of them searched for money while others tied a piece of cloth over the old man's mouth. Just then the old man's wife came out from the back of the store and yelled out, 'Robert, Robert, what's going on down there?' The Rascal Brothers left the old man and ran out with some cash in their pockets. They dropped the other goods they had collected from the shelf.

The man's wife came over, put the lights on, untied the piece of cloth over her husband's mouth and untied his hands.

'Things like this have never happened to us before,' the old man muttered under his breath.

'Did you recognize those men?' the old man's wife asked while closing the door.

'How could I recognize them? The whole action was too quick,' the old man replied, shrugging his shoulders. He put the light out and followed his wife to the back of the shop.

Meanwhile, Joe and his friends met in their meeting place. Joe, being the leader, demanded to know how much they had gained that night. All the cash they had stolen was put out and Joe searched everyone's pockets. Each member of the Rascal Brothers received an equal amount

of the takings except Joe who received double the amount.

Joe and the Rascal Brothers' next plan was to search all the cars that parked in the shopping area. Their second attempt was quite successful. They stole several hundred dollars from a businessman who had parked his car outside the post office and had gone inside to post his letters. The businessman came out through one of the doors and Joe and the Rascal Brothers entered by the other. The businessman did not check to see if his money was there, in the car. He slammed the door and drove away.

The Rascal Brothers met in their usual meeting place and shared the money. They bought some beer and drank excessively. They sang and danced until their voices were hoarse. Then they decided to sleep in their meeting place. While everyone was asleep Joe sneaked out and went to his parents' house. Joe's father was still awake. Joe's father was startled when Joe produced rolls of notes. 'Where did you get this money?' Joe's father mumbled.

'This is a fortune I made by being a leader of the Rascal Brothers,' Joe snapped.

Joe disappeared in the dark and made his way back to the meeting place.

On Saturday, Joe and his friends went to the bank intending to open an account. They wanted to save enough money to buy modern musical instruments so as to start a string band. While they were at the bank they saw a woman withdrawing some money. Joe took his friends aside and discussed briefly how to snatch the money. One of them was to snatch the money from the woman; the other boy was to open the door and allow the chap with the money to run out; another one was to get the money from the doorway and run away to a certain place. Joe was to stay behind and pretend to fill a deposit form and then chase the man who stole the money. They placed themselves into position. The woman got the money from the counter and put it into her purse. She was about to put this in her handbag when someone snatched the purse from her. She screamed helplessly. Everyone headed for the door but Joe was ahead of them all and he blocked the door awhile. The

Rascal Brothers were nowhere to be seen. Joe ran out and disappeared somewhere behind the shops.

The Rascal Brothers met under a bridge and discussed what their next move would be. 'I think this is enough for today,' Joe decided. 'How much have we got now?' Someone counted the money hurriedly and replied, 'There are twenty-five twenty-dollar notes.'

'I'll keep the money until tonight and then change it into ten, five and two-dollar notes,' Joe continued.

Everyone nodded in agreement and walked away. The place was soon deserted.

Joe walked into the nearest hotel with his hands thrust in his pockets. He was wearing dark glasses, a green shirt similar to the P.I.R. (Pacific Islands Regiment) uniform and thick blue jeans. He was sweating heavily under his thick shirt. His heart was beating faster than ever but he tried to look normal. There weren't many customers around. Only four men were sitting down drinking and two middle-aged men stood sipping their glasses of beer at the counter.

'You are too young to drink,' one of those two men mumbled as Joe leaned against the counter.

'Shut your bloody mouth,' Joe snapped and ordered a glass of Bacardi and coke. Joe handed over a twenty-dollar note as the barman handed him a glass of Bacardi and coke. The two middle-aged men looked at each other. Joe collected the change and went and sat down by himself under the shade of a tree.

The two middle-aged men kept their eyes on Joe. Every time he went to buy drinks he changed either twenty-dollar notes or ten-dollar notes. The two middle-aged men decided to follow him as soon as he left the hotel. Joe continued drinking until he was drunk and had changed all the twenty-dollar notes. All his pockets were full of notes and coins.

Joe staggered out of the hotel into the evening, and stopped a taxi. The men followed him to the taxi.

'Young man, where are you going?' one of the two men asked.

'I'm going to the party at Hohola,' Joe mumbled drunkenly.

'We are going to the same party,' the other man added.

'Come on then, what are you waiting for, get in!' Joe ordered.

Joe sat at the back and went to sleep. On the way the two men asked the driver to stop. They paid him off and asked him to leave. Then they woke Joe up and told him that they were at a party.

'Ah, yes, I can see my girl, no bloody man is going to touch her,' Joe called out. 'I'll tell her I have plenty of money. . . .'

The two men took him into the dark and tied a piece of cloth around his legs. 'Come on tell us where did you get that money?'

'I'm the leader of the Rascal Brothers,' Joe mumbled.

Those two men bound his hands and tied a piece of cloth over his face. They searched his pockets and collected all the money. Joe was left moaning.

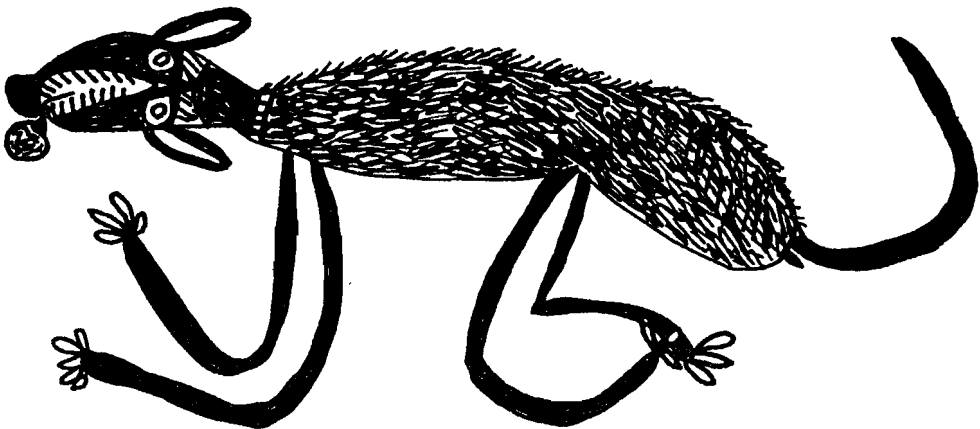
The Rascal Brothers gathered in their meeting place but Joe did not turn up. They waited for awhile and went out looking for Joe.

He was not at his parents' house or at the places he was supposed to be.

In the morning, a police car drove up to Joe's father's house. Joe's parents and his brothers and sisters were all preparing to go to a Sunday service. The Police Inspector asked a few questions and then looked straight at the old man. 'I have bad news for you, old chap—your son is dead in the hospital. Did you know your son was a rascal?' continued the Inspector. 'Well, he'll be judged in heaven.'

'He's in hospital for a post-mortem examination if you want to see him,' added the constable.

The Police Inspector and the constable got into the car. Before they drove away, the Inspector looked out of the car window. 'Those who killed your son have been captured and are now in custody,' the Inspector called out. But the old man wasn't interested. He collapsed in the dust in front of his house. His wife fell on top of him. The whole house was left lamenting, and the noise of the police car faded faintly in their ears like the humming of carpenter bees.



# NUPELA ROT

BOOM! Ai em wanem?  
Samting i pairap,  
Sikin tu i guria ya.

Masin i karai,  
Na maunten bilong Tumbuna i pundaun,  
Gavman i wokim rot ol i tok.

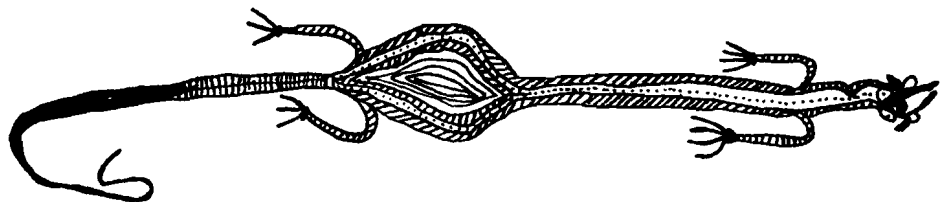
Lukim! Gaden i bagarap,  
Bus bilong kilim Magani i bagarap tu,  
Na bun bilong Tumbuna i wait olsem karanas.

Ples bilong mi i bagarap,  
Ka i ron olsem tripela kapul,  
Ai, mi poret ya!

Het bilong mi i paul,  
Na ai tu i raun,  
Baimbai mi go we?

Maski gavman i wokim rot,  
Larim em, samting bilong em yet.  
MI MAS GO LONG PLES BILONG TUMBUNA.

*Paul Kup-Ogut*





# IN THE NEXT WORLD THEY AVENGE

by *Kama Kerpi*

Dawn was a few hours away. The eastern skies were twilighting with tints of reddish brown filtering through the dark edges of night. From the ridge, and around the blazing fire of the camouflaged hut, youthful voices sailed through the dark, crisp air.

It was one of many courtings which is an integral part of adolescence. Traditional courting is an art. The reward for a professional was a number of females to command. And what greater pride did a bearded Highlander have but to have many—at least five—wives to share him and love him?

Sombre nights bring lovers together and the dates for the tall, graceful, ridge girls that night were the heavily built, valley youths. The hearts of the ridge girls were burning, for who was a better gardener than a valley man, or a better fighter or dancer than a valley man during *Kongar*!

Since it represented selection of husband or wife, the courting went on till the small hours of dawn. Many valley men had ventured into the towns and on returning found their prestige grown overnight, almost challenging that of the elders. Pride enveloped any woman who was addressed as the town man's wife.

A warning of dawn approaching halted the courting ceremony. The long hours of chanting and turning heads encouraged sleep for the exhausted. Despite sore eyes and aching bodies, the young men queued up for the ceremony until the early hours of dawn. It was a night to remember.

The tall ridge girls, some with early signs of motherhood, captured the souls, minds, and strength of the young men. Living memory cannot recall a ridge girl failing to give birth to a male in her first pregnancy. And there was never

a miscarriage. It was whispered throughout the valley that the ridge girls carved in their hearts their mothers' golden rule: 'Make your first pregnancy a success for the second one is easy'. For this reason most of the valley youths sought to impress them. And it was not unusual to see them wear dark spectacles to make them look extraordinary. The ridge girls were shocked by the rejection of the traditional ritual on the part of the educated sons and daughters of the village.

Johno, an Australian-educated Highlander, was one of the courting members. Unlike others, Johno took profound interest in traditional ways. He didn't feel contempt for simplicities nor did he want to see them done away with. Earlier Johno, addressing some of his agemates, affirmed that he was a man of two worlds: the world of the white man and the world of his tribe. Deep inside he had a hideous feeling that he was falling in love with the white man's ways. He vowed to respect the ways of his tribe. But unlike others he was not fastidious about traditional courting. When high school girls taunted him with remarks like 'Yu lus man' he checked his anger and swallowed their remarks with an air of endurance and courage. Anyway, people say, what better tribute can you give to dead kin than to respect their ways?

Just as the path forked someone called out. Immediately a group formed to break away, diminishing in number until Johno found himself surrounded only by his village brothers. The village was four hills away on the foothills of Kaling where the valley of Murdomena stretches far into the land of the snake-eaters. They had two hours' walk before them and, in such an exhausted state, it was quite a walk.

A cool breeze was rolling gently up and over the hills, streaming through the shivering grey-

looking *nop* trees which grew in abundance in the valley. Here and there one could hear the early birds flapping their wings as if to shake off the numbness of the night. When the darkness showed early signs of melting, the hills and the ridges began to take shape. The chirping of cicadas woke up the hills.

The path edged its way along a river and wound up the hill to begin another journey over the next hill. Johnno and his agemates had travelled three-quarters of the distance. They were already exhausted. Their chests were heaving, gasping for breath and their fatigue increased. Their strength waned, forcing them to walk with languid steps. They looked half-famished. There seemed to be nothing left in Johnno. The dryness of his throat burnt, sending the pain quivering to every organ of his body. And then his vagrant thoughts touched on the cause of his tiredness. During the courting, the *luhwei's* daughter sitting at the far corner, eyed him in a prurient manner. This ignited lewd thoughts in his mind and he found himself indulging them. Johnno had walked on, avoiding her eye.

He hadn't settled on the grass for long when a figure walked out from the hut. It was not unusual that someone should walk out to fill his lungs with fresh air. The room lacked ventilation. Johnno coughed to make his presence known but was immediately perturbed when the dark figure came in his direction. Well, it could be one of my agemates, he told himself.

A wave of surprise quivered through him making his heart throb and the tattoo on his chest seemed to vibrate. There was the *luhwei's* daughter standing in mute attention, her hands folded over her chest. Johnno felt an irresistible impulse to possess her weighing him down. With a passionate leap he thrust her flat on the grass. . . .

With all his energy gone he looked up at the last hill to be climbed. He suggested that they take the short cut over the hill rather than around the rocky outcrop. On hearing this a murmur of disapproval went down the line. Why? Because how can one trespass in the homes of dead kin without gifts or prayers to offer? That lateritic

hill has been a symbol of fear and strength. How can the Kumais dream of winning battles against the snake-eaters without proper gifts to offer? Slaughtering a piglet or a cockerel would make all the difference. The Kumais had never known defeat when proper offerings were made; at least living memory cannot recall one.

'It's too early to walk up that hill,' came a feeble voice down the line.

'Come on, going around that hill would take a good hour's walk,' said Johnno, sounding amiable enough, to spread a carpet over his anger that was beginning to boil.

'It would be an offence to trespass,' cut in Kaikondo.

'Offence! To whom?' replied Johnno. His anger was like a caged cassowary poking out its head at intervals. He brushed away sweat from his clammy face and shot his eyes directly into Kaikondo's innocent face.

'We do not recall doing such a thing,' replied Kaikondo with a tinge of fear in his voice.

'If you are afraid then we will all go in a group so that the dead people will not frighten you,' spoke someone down the line to ensure that he did not evoke Johnno's wrath. Others hid their fear of offending Johnno with a few nods of approval. How can anyone correct a person capable of speaking the tongues of white men? No one was going to rebel against someone they looked upon as their leader.

The hill was wreathed in a mask of floating white clouds. Beneath it five silent figures walked through giant trees heavily weighed down with broad green leaves. A few brown mounds could be spotted here and there giving the appearance of a tribal graveyard. Giant rats had bored holes in a mound making it look frightful. For some time they had been kicking through dead leaves and fallen branches, avoiding the graves. One could see the valley youths wearing their fear like a mask. Valley people talk about having 'pointed heads' when they are in the presence of some spiritual beings.

Kaikondo walked, silently contemplating, in fear of causing the wrath of dead kin. A prick of shame coloured his fear. 'Why did I give in?' he kept asking himself. To Kaikondo, Johnno was

like a room whitewashed and rearranged. He could accept a warrior's spear or his mother's shell to decorate it. But would he accept everything? The fear that crept over Kaikondo began to irritate him into anger, and that anger began to settle uncomfortably at the bottom of his heart.

They approached the fringe of the graveyard. From there the *kunai* grass took over, growing in exuberance in all directions. Scattered here and there were clumps of *nop* trees. From down the valley on a cloudless day they resembled sentries. Scarcely had Johno, who was leading, stepped into the grass when someone screamed in a terrifying manner down the line. For a fraction of a second everyone had his heart in his mouth. Kaikondo had fallen into an old grave. Others helped him out, their eyes wide with fear.

A big bird that probably spent the night up in one of the trees flapped its stiff wings. It was as if someone was waking up from a creaky bed. Possessed with fear, the boys bolted down the hill as if a tribe of demons were after them, without even caring to put a few branches over the old grave. The old grave had a big hole. . . .

Johno woke up startled. From the other end of the village a group of mourners wept, evidence

that someone had died during the night.

'What is this I hear? People weeping. Who has died?' asked Johno.

'It was Kaikondo's sister. They said she fell into a hole of a toilet during the early morning twilight,' replied his mother who was one of the early mourners to wake up the village. She smeared mud and clay all over her body.

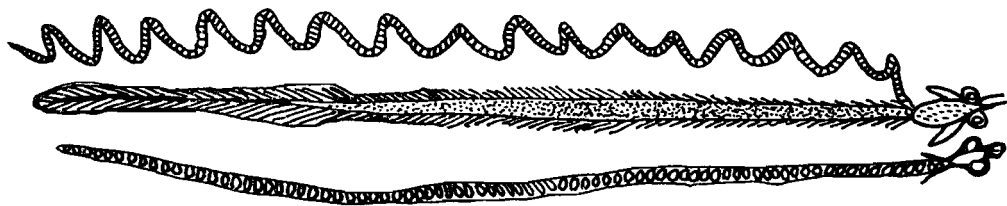
'Haia! They have my dish of pity,' said Johno softly.

'Mine too,' said Jimmy waking up.

'That's not enough. What has got into your head? Actions speak more than mere words. Johno, go and comfort your agemate. You may need his help when it comes to burying me!'

Silently Johno walked out into the grey morning. Massive clouds were drifting up into the mountain heights. A rooster was breakfasting on a child's waste dumped during the course of the night. Couldn't she have done that rather than use the toilet to end her life there? At least she would have been kind to the dogs and the chicken, even if it's unpleasant to smell.

Johno soliloquized as if addressing a crowd of elders wanting to know the cause of her death. Pouting his lips, he never realized that his steps took him right into the doorsteps of his agemate.



# TO A GIRL: PAMUK MERI

Pamuk meri that seduces and wants to fuck  
Pamuk meri that yonder speaks and tells venomous lies  
And at night in the rooms, on the grass, in the chapel,  
Handsome boys seduces and with them lies.

O, pamuk meri that demoralizes boys  
Pamuk meri that carries now no beauty  
Her form now seems drained—empty and lost  
With excessive fucking: her comely face now disfigured and in V.D. lost.  
O, what dehumanization! What a human loss! I cannot pity you enough.

Your mind I cannot read, my playful moods you do not understand.  
Does a man want anything from you, or do you want something from him?  
Let the Creation story our true judge be  
'Tis time to search for truth, and justice will our reward be  
With courage let us face it, you and those you turn to fools:  
Your cowardly adulators that fear of cause and truth investigation befools.

Your name implies strict justice  
But in lying you do great injustice.  
Yet a man knows your story full, and though inexperienced with your female race  
Himself you cannot befool, but as your sexual experiences in excess full  
Then with a dehumanized body your own bed-companion you can befool.

Though weak his nature be, though confused by circumstance his mind may be  
He knows what principles to follow:  
Sex without love he rejects  
Human exploitation he hates  
Unconventionality he does not want  
And immorality he suspects.

The words 'You spoil me' imply his disapproval and rejection of misbehaviour.  
But your translation equals them to an invitation to pamukery.  
O, pamuk meri that forces new meanings into other people's mouths and speeches  
Pamuk meri that well-intentioned words and actions hellishly distorts  
Yet a man knows your story full: your sexual experiences in excess full  
Mis-train you so to do.

Does he ask for something rude, or do you long to see him ask? and when he does not  
You go and spread the lie that now reveals your story full.  
His words 'You spoil me' will tell you his status and story full.

Though weak his nature be, though shy his outward show may be  
He fears not the investigation of moral, spiritual questions.  
For 'tis his faith that on these the livelihood of humanity depends  
And love, the essence of man, flourishes.

O, pamuk meri that herself sells and degrades  
Pamuk meri that demoralization of men aggravates  
Pamuk meri that mental plunder on the youths of men perpetrates  
Pamuk meri that a belated quiet pretends.

Although all is not bad as Hell, I fear thee:  
Pamuk meri that seduces and wants to fuck.  
Pamuk meri that truth cunningly distorts.  
Pamuk meri that dishonesty and promiscuity enthrones.

*Nicholas Peta*



# WHEN THE EAGLE DIES

*A Play by Bernard Mullu Narokobi*

## CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

ISO

DAULO

PORO

MALO

DAULOP

PAULO

KURI KURI

SIRI SIRI

KAB

KAB'S MOTHER

TUM

KAM

MRS TUM

MRS SIGITO

KULAS

1st DANCER

*first chief*

*second chief*

*son of Malo*

*wife of Daulo*

*wife of Malo*

*sister to Kuri Kuri*

*a small girl*

*first chief*

*second chief*

*chief potter*

2nd DANCER

1st SINGER

2nd SINGER

SAK

KOLIM

CHILD

KAM'S WIFE

VILLAGER

1st WOMAN

JELIPU

2nd WOMAN

KUBEL

DAULO'S MOTHER

EAGLE

VILLAGERS and CHILDREN

## SCENE I

NARRATOR:

*Garamuts* roar  
Like thunder in awe;  
Shells' sounds rebound;  
Every woman and child is stirred.  
Evening dusk,  
The sun's beneath the bay.  
People gather,  
Squatting and talking  
About the canoe lost at sea  
Two days, two weeks ago.  
Now, you who have gathered  
Shall see and hear  
The tale's recreation  
As true as yesterday.  
Transform not into logs,  
Nor let your eyes fall asleep!  
Rather, wet your palate,  
Mellow your eyes.  
See and hear!

ISO:                   *(standing)*  
 Truly, I stood  
 On that mound of sand  
 With my hands over my eyes,  
 Gazing endless times  
 Beyond the rolling sea.  
 The canoe had gone afloat  
 Like a hovering seagull  
 Far beyond the islands.  
 Soon I could not see its sails  
 For it was the evening dusk.  
 The sun's face behind its earth's mask,  
 A thick cloud had arisen  
 Between the islands and  
 I lost sight of it.

DAULO:               Yes! Certainly my friend,  
 That was when it rained.  
 The skies had split asunder  
 Like the fisherman's fish in wonder  
 Loosened from its hook,  
 Hanging on its downward fall.  
 The canoe had lost its call  
 Floating upon a lonesome path.  
 Oh, am I not in despair!  
 Oh, am I not . . .

PORO:               No!  
 That cannot be right!  
 The canoe had gone out of sight.  
 Darkness had clouded your eyes  
 Preventing, you Iso  
 And you Daulo  
 From seeing the canoe.  
 The canoe is not lost,  
 Nor its souls.  
 They have reached  
 Then Grandfather's beach  
 In the village of Wab.  
 Don't worry . . .  
 Let us hurry  
 And go to sleep.

MALO:               It was agreed  
 Long, long before  
 That *Tblel* canoe  
 Must go ahead in good speed  
 Bringing the good news;  
 That after the fourth day,  
 And on the fifth day  
 All our men will prepare

To leave on their way  
For the ancient  
Exchange ceremony  
Of *bilums* and shells  
For *banakas* and clay pots. (*Darkness*)

## SCENE II

*Same village in the morning*

MALO: Arise! Arise!  
Wake up! Wake up!  
Cocks are crowing.  
Get up! Get up!  
Hurry up! Hurry up!  
The birds are singing  
Soon the fireball will burn. (*Light*)  
Leave your sweet sleep!  
Rise and be ready  
By dawn. All, men must leave. (*Light increases*)

PORO: (*joining in*)  
Get up! Get up!  
Quick time! Quick time!  
Stand the masts,  
Tighten the sails,  
All baskets on canoes,  
Swing the taro over your noses.  
Calmly shall we set sail  
Pursuing *Tblel* canoe for Wab  
To exchange all our treasures.

MALO: (*waving*)  
The thin threads of darkness  
Suspended between the sails  
Have finally faded.  
It's time to go.  
Hugs, kisses of adieu  
Be quick before its overdue  
Untie the canoes!  
Roll them into the sea!  
Remember the paddles; check to see;  
Jump into your canoes  
For we must sail west, to Wab.  
(*Sounds of confused, crying voices of children*)

DAULO: (*sharply*)  
Papa! Mama!  
Where is Papa going?  
Who shall we stay with?  
When shall Papa return, Mama?



PAULO: (*calming her son*)  
 Darling, don't cry,  
 Your father will hear.  
 Father's going away,  
 We shall stay  
 With other mothers,  
 Sisters and brothers.  
 Your father will return  
 With *banakas* for you to learn;  
 And clay pots for your sister  
 To spear fish with,  
 And I'll cook fish in pots for us.  
 (*Sounds of good-bye, laughing, crying, sea waves splashing and birds singing. The sun rises above an island. Sound of the conch on the other side of the stage.*)

PORO: (*holding conch*)  
 Tune your ears here,  
 My tender ones far and near;  
 Do not be over-anxious!  
 Many a sea league  
 Shall we traverse,  
 Many a lonely day  
 Shall we be away,  
 But we shall be back.

KURI KURI: (*jovially*)  
 Oh, you, our exalted men  
 Alone you shall go!  
 Your strength is our blessing  
 Upon our gardens and our crops.  
 The yam you harvested for us  
 Shall last us as we eat and grow fat  
 Awaiting your return.  
 Let this be a warning—  
 This place is not longing  
 For clay pots that walk,  
 So, come not with women  
 Since all of us here talk.

SIRI SIRI: Oh, you pretty Kuri Kuri!  
 Our men are planning to leave.  
 Now you come with your jokes,  
 Go away!  
 The sun has arisen.  
 They must go!

PORO: (*Standing on the last canoe, he calls over the breakers.*)  
 Farewell! Farewell!  
 Stay well, sleep well.  
 Tend to our gardens  
 Feed the pigs and the dogs,  
 Fatten our children!

We are going to the sunset  
Seeking our long forgotten friends;  
No more than two moons  
Shall we be beyond the seas,  
But soon we shall be back.  
Farewell! Farewell!  
If by chance we are unwell,  
You shall still be well.  
*(As the canoes sail away, the women and children stand on the seashore singing songs of farewell.)*

NARRATOR: Gracious greetings, partakers.  
Now we leave Wah village  
And speedily travel west  
To Wab village  
Where the first canoe went,  
There to bind in depth  
The trading bonds of the past  
Through the use  
Of a language learned  
Over years of continuous communion.  
Speedily must we meet  
The Wah people of the first canoe  
And greet the Wah's distant cousins.  
As their skins are the same  
And the language as well,  
Tell the Wab people  
From the Wah visitors  
By their differing tails,  
The Wab's *tapa* cloth is short  
Whereas Wah's boasts of long tails.

### SCENE III

*Wab village. 4 P.M. All gather in expectation of the visitors. Men and women are on the beach. Children swim in the sea.*

KAB: *(running out of the sea)*  
Oh Mother! Mother!  
See that—  
Sails! I see canoes.  
Over there, in the sunrise.

EVERYONE: *(excitedly)*  
Where? What?  
*Giaman!*

KAB: Those are seagulls!  
*(insisting)*  
No! Not seagulls.  
Canoes! I see them

Coming around the point,  
I see them! I . . .

MOTHER OF KAB: Now, you Kab!  
Stop being a crab!  
Don't deceive your elders,  
You'll be shamed!

EVERYONE: Yes! Indeed!  
Sails,  
Canoes,  
The Wah,  
And how gracious they sail  
Like tender doves swerving  
Across this soft silvery sea!

TUM: Yes, indeed, the Wah!  
I do agree;  
See their sails  
Fluttering in the wind!  
Now, here Kam,  
Sound aloud our conch shell!  
Now, Tan,  
Beat out our *garamut*!  
Now, good women,  
Prepare the mats,  
See that food is cooked.  
Be ready to feast  
As the canoes come on shore.  
*(Shortly the canoes arrive. As the welcome dance continues, chiefs exchange gifts. Kab's mother picks a roller and places it on the beach. Tum sees her.)*  
Here you good children  
See what Kab's mother did?  
Gather the rollers!  
Place them in rows  
In straight lines. *(Children obey)*  
Good! Now stand away! *(Five canoes come ashore.)*

KAM: Beat the drums!  
Bring to the square items of peace—  
Prepare to exchange.  
Start the *singsing*!  
Soften the sunshine  
With your welcome songs.  
Melt your mighty voices  
Into the soft lapping seas  
As you sway and swing,  
Your plumage and tails  
Like sails flapping in the wind.  
*(Singsing for 10 minutes)*

TUM: Tum is my name.  
I possess the village fame

Being the head chief.  
 I am of the *palpal* clan  
 Which is for peace and friendship.  
 Receive this olive bough.  
 It seals our hearts to yours in peace  
 And binds us to a loving feast.

PORO: (*Steps forward and receives the olive branch. He carries a long spear, with bird of paradise plumage.*)  
 I am Poro  
 The primary chief of Wah.  
 With pride I receive  
 Your cherished olive bough.  
 I am of the Paradise clan;  
 The principle strength is sharing  
 Between our village and yours;  
 Treasuring the bough as we do,  
 We give to you our plumage pride.  
 These shall be the symbols!

ALL: Of our unity!  
 PORO: These are the symbols!  
 ALL: Of our oneness!

KAM: Beloved friends of the Wah  
 You chose to come to Wab.  
 We welcome you with love.  
 Stay with us two full moons.  
 Women shall dig clay  
 And mould pots  
 While men gather black palm  
 To sharpen your spears and *banakas*.  
 We will drain the seas  
 And empty the lagoons;  
 We will sweep the forests  
 For fish, meat and food  
 To share and we will dance.

TUM: (*confidently*)  
 Yes, it's true.  
 Look around you! (*He sweeps the air with his hands.*)

ALL: Houses everywhere!  
 TUM: Look around you!  
 ALL: Coconuts all the way!  
 TUM: Look around you!  
 ALL: Sago everywhere!  
 TUM: Look around you!  
 ALL: Fish in all our seas!  
 TUM: And wood all the way.  
 Now, you people of Wab,  
 Spread your mats on the sand,  
 Place on each a share

Of plates of food and smokes  
According to the number of clans.  
Call each clan to take  
And share among themselves.  
(Welcome feast begins. Curtain.)

#### SCENE IV

*Wab village, a month later. By the pottery kiln. Women dig clay, carry it and shape it while men are busy shaping bows and arrows. Some pots, bows and arrows are in the sun drying. When all the moisture has been absorbed, women burn pots and men heat their bows and arrows and strings over the same fire.*

TUM: (admiringly)  
Oh, you my artistic spiders!  
You work such splendours.  
See your bodies glisten  
As they sweat.  
Your crafts will bloom  
Far beyond your furnace fume  
In the land to the east  
Of Wah and beyond.

MRS TUM: Oh, my mighty man!  
With such an inspiring tongue  
You are so big and strong  
And still as soft an gentle as an eel.  
All the women work,  
You men chop us wood,  
The children bring us water  
The sun shines,  
And now, the fire shall bake.  
Oh, how beautiful!  
See the fire glowing!  
Notice patterns taking shape,  
So real and still mysterious!

MRS SIGITO: Yes, indeed!  
See the patterns of Tuedo's hand  
So firmly printed on the clay  
Now as red as fire  
The clay once so soft  
Now quite strong and firm.  
Oh, recall the water  
Once so unsettled  
Now shaping sure solids,  
Remember the moist and soft clay,  
Now so well shaped and strong.

KULAS: (admiringly)  
Most splendid!  
Your fire fingerwork

As pots for water storage,  
As pots for cooking food,  
And as pots for feasts  
That shall last in posterity.

*(Men's handiwork in bows and arrows is admired. Lights dim, characters regroup in the darkness and stage lightens.)*

## SCENE V

*Some weeks later in the evening in Wab village square a colourful exchange ceremony takes place. The Wah men place all their gifts of bilums and taro on one side; while the banakas and pots of the Wab people are presented on the other side.*

MALO: *(Stands up, paces up and down, admiring the gifts.)*

Such good people you are  
Giving precious gifts  
Of priceless pots  
And powerful bows and arrows.  
We bow in thanks  
Proclaiming our continuing unity.  
Though distance divides us  
The very breath of the sea  
Unites us as one,  
For the same sun  
Rises over us and sinks beneath you;  
The same doldrums that  
Bring you rain,  
Return, bringing us endless sunshine.  
Now our core of unity  
Is strengthened in eternity.

KAM:

*(rising)*  
Such stately things  
Resound from you, Malo!  
The sun rises from Wah  
And transmits warmth to Wab.  
It's therefore proper  
That the swallow that leaves us  
In our rainy season of *Talio*  
Still visits you  
In your sunshine season of *Rai*.  
Thus we are one people  
Bound by the soft spirit of the swallow.  
We share our selves with you  
By giving our precious pots;  
We share our selves with you  
By offering our spears and arrows.  
Here, Take them!  
These bind us in unity. *(Malo ceremoniously walks around the gifts.)*

Now tonight we shall feast—  
 Tomorrow you shall go.  
 MALO: (low)  
 No, not long to share  
 For tomorrow we set sail.  
 KAM: (invitingly)  
 Oh, good cousins  
 Why, don't hurry then;  
 There's fish in the sea  
 And pork in the forest  
 For all to eat.  
 MALO:  
 Such treasured invitations  
 We'd take for extensions  
 With grace and thanks,  
 But we left behind  
 Longing mothers and children  
 Caring for our pigs and dogs.  
 We must set sail soon,  
 Tomorrow towards sunrise.  
 (The chiefs of Wah village walk around all the gifts first, followed by the chiefs of Wab.)

## SCENE VI

*Night at Wab Village. Two different gatherings. In the main village square the elders and some young people are busy dancing Mauan. On the beach, children light coconut leaves as torches and dance and play under the orange moonlight.*

1st DANCER: (A Wab dancer instructing Wah dancers)

Hold your *kundus* upright,  
 Stretch your arms outright,  
 Beat spontaneously  
 Low-tuned drums together  
 High-pitched ones remember:  
 One two, one, two, one  
 One two, one, two, one.  
 Now, the singular base  
 Break in and keep pace:  
 One long, half long, one long,  
 Half long, one long, half long.  
 Open your mouths wide!  
 Sing with joy and pride!

2nd WAB DANCER: Bend your knees,  
 Bow your heads and backs,  
 Turn around.  
 Left foot first,  
 Right foot follows,  
 Keep your steps

In tune with the singing,  
Adjust to the drumming.  
That's the show  
You now know  
Keep it up,  
Sing another song!

1st SINGER:

(starts to sing)  
*Oh, oh, eipo iasim momie*  
*Oh, oh, you beloved ones*  
*Oh, oh, eipo panam molime?*  
*Oh, oh, why d'you come?*  
*Eipo iasim momie*  
*You beloved ones*  
*Oh, oh, oh, eipo panam molime?*  
*Oh, oh, oh, why d'you come?*  
*Oh, oh, eipo panam molime?*  
*Oh, oh, why d'you come?*  
*K-u-k-um - nianiep e.*  
*Mist obliterates you.*  
*Oh, eipo panam molime?*  
*Oh, why d'you come?*  
*Iamug-e gijokolipe-e*  
*Fog obliterates you*  
*Eipo panam molime?*  
*You came—what for?*  
*Ku-ku-mi-mi-a-u-i-e-pe*  
*Mist obliterates you.*

2nd WAH DANCER:

Fine dancing!  
Really something!  
Whose dancing is it?  
It's yours! Smash it!  
Mighty moonlight above and  
Seas full of fish.  
Fabulous! Fantastic!  
Start another song  
The first song is stale.

2nd SINGER:

(before the first song could finish)  
*Oh, oh, Kakui alma-a-a tokum e,*  
*Oh, oh, that beloved lady,*  
*Kape-e Kole Katike-e*  
*Stopping, oh, crying, watching oh,*  
*Kakui alma-a- tokum? e*  
*That beloved lady*  
*Kape-e Kole Katike-e*  
*Stopping oh, crying, watching oh*  
*Kape-e Kole Katike-e*  
*Stopping oh, crying, watching oh*  
*Ku aun sabh-e*



Nearly sun should sink oh  
*Kape-e Kole Katike-e*  
Stopping, crying, watching  
*Ku aun nakih -e*

Nearly sun should rise oh!

*While the singing progresses at back of stage, children are busy playing farther on, nearer to the sea. Some children are very young. Some are youths of 18, 19 or even 20 and 21. The children of Wah are busy teaching the same young men from Wah village how to play what may now be called 'blanket covering' and guessing game. One team covers a member of its team and leads him or her to the central place of guessing. If the wrong name is called the blanket is opened. There is usually a big friendly 'quarrel' and the team goes back to cover another member. If the right name is called the blanket is handed to the calling team. It hides someone and invites the other team to guess who it is. Frontstage, Kolim, a handsome young man, and Sak, a beautiful girl from Wab village, are in the opposite teams. It is Sak's team's turn to guess. It is Sak who will guess.*

SAK : *(hesitating)*

Kolim! Come out Kolim!

KOLIM : *(comes out of the blanket blushing)*

I knew you'd call me!

Why do you keep calling my name?

*(As everyone laughs. Kolim in a friendly mood chases Sak. They are out of sight of the rest of the children. He grabs her hand.)*

SAK : *(stopping suddenly, away from the rest of the children)*

Why do you hold my hand?

Please let me go.

You are a stranger.

Return quickly

*Before we are missed. (She pulls him back. Kolim pulls her towards a coconut shade. They stand quietly. The moon is shining brightly. The drums and the singing are heard. Children continue to play. The sea is splashing.)*

KOLIM : Oh, Sak, my dear,

I, I . . .

I y—yearn for you,

Oh, Sak!

You shine like the moon

And you sparkle like the sun.

My heart rages

When I see your hair in bloom

Like a bird of paradise.

Your eyes twinkle

Like a thousand stars.

SAK : *(blushing)*

Oh, Kolim!

You embarrass me!

You shall depart tomorrow,

Why then do you utter

Such flattering words?

I am a silly, innocent fish  
 Swimming in my pool.  
 You came like a tide,  
 Now you sweep the pool's floor  
 Making me float like  
 A leaf in the breeze.  
 KOLIM: Oh, my heart, Sak!  
 Hear the waves splash,  
 See the moon's silvery light  
 Flooding upon the pool's depth.  
 No, my dear,  
 I will not leave you behind  
 See the sparkling stars above  
 Flickering like a homely fire,  
 Shining to show us the way.  
 (*moving towards her*)  
 SAK: My love, Kolim,  
 Hear them call us!  
 Let us go now,  
 You'll drink my cup.  
 Let me go,  
 Join your team,  
 And I mine.  
 KOLIM: Listen!  
 Go ahead to the point tomorrow;  
 Swim across the narrow neck.  
 Stand on the lonesome rock!  
 When our canoes come past  
 Stand and hold out a bunch of flowers.  
 I shall row my canoe  
 And take you away  
 And sail to our village.  
 (*Children call louder*)  
 SAK: Oh, hear them call  
 Quick, hurry!  
 No, my dear,  
 I am the chief's daughter.  
 I can't elope like that!  
 What I treasure now  
 Is to live and die with you.  
 But I must still tell  
 My people of it all,  
 For I am not a treasure to steal  
 But a friend to take and share.  
 (*The children approach*)  
 CHILDREN: You Sak! You Kolim!  
 We saw you two  
 Standing under the palm tree.

What did you do there?  
 Why were you so long?  
 SAK: Kolim wanted a betel nut,  
 I gave him one.  
 A shooting star cut across the sky.  
 We stood there,  
 And I told Kolim of its tale.  
 CHILDREN: No, you *giaman*!  
 KOLIM: (*annoyed*)  
 It's true  
 You rats!  
 What's your business?  
 I talked with Sak;  
 She is a shining star.  
 AN ANGRY BOY: You call me a rat!  
 I shall tell Sak's mother about you.  
 (*He runs to the dancing square. All the children follow. Drums go out of tune.*)  
 KAM: What's the matter?  
 1st CHILD: Nothing's the matter.  
 Kolim of Wah village  
 Talked to Sak alone  
 Under the palm tree.  
 (*Singsing stops*)  
 (*silencing the child*)  
 KAM: All right you chicken  
 Shut your mouth!  
 Leave it to us elders.  
 By gentle talk  
 We shall know the truth  
 And peacefully reach a solution. (*Sak approaches.*)  
 Now, Sak!  
 What's this you are doing?  
 Putting your mother and I to shame?  
 Why weren't you dancing  
 The same as all the other girls  
 Of your own line?  
 PORO: (*reprovingly*)  
 Oh, Kolim  
 Now you bring a cloud  
 Over all our smiling faces.  
 We are ashamed of you.  
 Come forward like a man  
 And tell what you did!  
 Kolim! Where are you?  
 Kolim! (*Silence*)  
 KOLIM: (*coming out of a shadow*)  
 No, Sak and I did nothing  
 We were talking . . .

SAK: *(She stands shamelessly in the moonlight, stretching her hands; she orders silence and calmly speaks.)*  
 Such soft and tender time  
 When hearts open wide  
 Like your mighty songs and drums.  
 Oh, my people, my dear people,  
 You know too well  
 That though it be a tree  
 A blazing flame will burn it;  
 That though it be a rock  
 Wind and rain will weather it;  
 And though it be a mighty soul  
 The strength of passion will move it.  
 Thus, it is with Kolim and I.  
 Oh, my mothers, Oh, my fathers,  
 Recall the rich days of your youth.  
 You too stood in shameless truth.  
 I seek your permission  
 That I may wed this man.

KOLIM: *(inspired)*  
 A stranger indeed am I  
 But as light attracts light  
 So too a man and a woman  
 Will generate life and friendship.  
 The sacred laws of our ancestors  
 Do weigh heavily against me,  
 But still, I do request  
 That I be Sak's husband.

KAM: *(Kam converses with his wife quietly then goes to Poro and Malo. After a quiet talk Kam moves forward to speak.)*  
 We have heard your talk.  
 Sak's mother and I  
 Are moved by the oratory of Sak and Kolim.  
 All Sak's relatives give consent.  
 We all know too well  
 That when a log lies rotten  
 Living fungus will grow on it.  
 And when a sago palm grows,  
 Living vines crawl on it.  
 A man will seek a woman  
 And indeed, man evolves man.

KAM'S WIFE: I am Sak's mother.  
 There is little I can say.  
 Let Sak go to Wah  
 As wife of Kolim.  
 They shall create  
 Cousins and relatives  
 That this village

Can be proud of.  
 Sak is my daughter—  
 I give her in love  
 That she may enrich life  
 And strengthen our bonds,  
 Now, and in generations to come.  
*(Hand clapping and sounds of acclamation. Daybreak arrives, the last song is sung.)*

KAM:  
*(half asleep)*  
 What a night!  
 I am sleepy.  
 Wah people cannot go today.  
 I must go to sleep. *(Finds shade and falls asleep)*

PORO:  
*(drowsily)*  
 The night was long;  
 Wab villagers really are  
 Such wonderful people.  
 Oh, I feel sleepy;  
 We can't go today.  
*(Finds a shade and falls asleep)*

TUM:  
 Where are the canoes?  
 Yes, there they are, ready too.  
 But no! I can't keep my  
 Eyes open one minute longer.  
 Oh, let the Wah people  
 Stay till they are awake.  
*(Sleeps beside Poro)*

KOLIM:  
*(talking in his sleep)*  
 See the fig tree yonder!  
 Birds fly in to rest.  
 They pick fruits to eat.  
 They take some too,  
 And fly away into distant lands.  
 Like a bird  
 I have come upon this tree.  
 I feel sleepy. Where is the hut?  
 There it is!  
 There's Sak!  
 No, that's not her.  
*(He drags his tired body into a hut and sleeps.)*

SAK:  
*(Outside her mother's hut)*  
 I can't go to sleep  
 There are Wah people to keep.  
 Kolim is asleep.  
 Should I fetch water for Mama?  
 No! Must see Kolim first. *(She searches for Kolim, crawls into his hut, and kneels beside him.)*  
 Kolim! Kolim!

KOLIM:  
*(hearing his name, awakes, sits up)*

Sak, my love (*Spots an ugly dog beside a fire*)

Sh! (*chasing it*) Get out!

Go away! (*Dog barks angrily, Kolim gets angrier.*)

Get Lost!

(*He drags the dog off. Sound effects of sea are heard. The dog barks. Kolim returns to the hut.*)

KOLIM:

Here Sak!

Sit by my side!

This ugly dog . . . (*His voice breaks as he hears the dog's last howl. A big wave breaks and the dog is no longer heard.*)

Shall you come with me today?

Or shall I stay with you

And go later to Wah?

Your people will bring us . . .

(*Lightning flashes. Thunder roars. Kolim and Sak are frightened.*)

KOLIM:

What's that sound, Sak?

How could it rain now

On a glorious day of sun?

SAK:

Stay inside;

Something has happened.

I'll go out and see.

(*She walks outside and sees a very thick and heavy cloud, thunder and lightning.*)

Oh, beloved Kolim! (*She calls Kolim outside.*)

It's my fault

I should have warned you.

That silly dog

Wasn't a dog at all . . .

It is the *masalai*

Which takes many forms

But chiefly appears as an ugly dog.

It tests people's love

And tolerance before marriage.

KOLIM:

(*quickly*)

Make haste!

Let none be late!

Beat the *garamuts*!

(*People shaken out of sleep, get up, excited. Some think there is a dance and begin to beat their drums.*)

A VILLAGER:

(*sleeping*)

What's the trouble?

Another dance?

Are we to go?

SAK:

See the sky!

My beloved people

There is trouble—

The *masalai* tempted us.

Kolim and I thought it a cur;

Kolim threw it into the sea

To make way for me to sit.  
 Now it's outraged.  
 TUM: *(hurriedly)*  
 Now quickly pacify it  
 Before it takes vengeance.  
 Now, take a pot  
 And a set of arrows!  
 Quickly offer these!  
 Pacify it.  
*(Kolim rushes to his canoe but is stopped by Tum.)*  
 No, Kolim  
 You can't do it.  
 You are a stranger here,  
 A chief of Wab alone  
 May pacify the spirits here.  
 WAB VILLAGER: *(Gets a pot, fills it with leaves and dirt, offers it to the gods.)*  
 Mighty spirits above  
 You who appear in many shapes and forms;  
 We regret not knowing your animal form.  
 You came to try  
 The endurance of those to wed.  
 And to see if their love  
 Can overflow to creatures.  
 Kolim, a stranger, did not know.  
 He is truly a loving man  
 Such as can win Sak's heart.  
 Look mercifully upon  
 The people of Wah.  
*(Lighten stage, but thunder continues.)*  
 MALO: We must set sail at once.  
 If we wait much longer  
 We shall be destroyed!  
 KAM: No, my good people,  
 The spirit will sleep at night.  
 Go in the moonlight.  
 If you go now,  
 He will pursue you  
 And destroy you.  
*(Everyone gasps in fear.)*

## SCENE VII

*Midnight. All the Wah people are gathered in one house, chatting. A knock outside.*

VOICE: *(from inside)*  
 Who goes there?  
 KAM: *(off stage)*  
 Rise!

Set sail,  
The *masalai* is asleep.  
God speed  
And good luck!  
(*Slowly they set sail in canoes.*)  
(*alone on stage*)  
Oh, Sak!  
Should I stay?  
Can't you come?  
No! I must go.  
It was through me  
That this trouble arose.  
I can't be a coward;  
If the *masalai* strikes  
I must take the blame.  
If Sak comes,  
She too will be struck.  
If I am saved and safe  
I shall return for her. (*Exits*)

KOLIM:

*Later, same village scene.*  
(*watching the canoes sail away*)  
Kolim! Kolim!  
My pearl, my treasure!  
Oh, my bosoms tremble!  
My spirit rises  
To a new hope of ecstasy.  
Love! Love!  
With love I shall seek.  
With love I shall follow. (*Drags canoe up and sets sail.*)

SAK:

NARRATOR:

Good evening!  
I bring bad news.  
Before they could reach home  
The Wah people were struck,  
All but one man perished  
But he wasn't Kolim,  
He was Jelipu.

(*On the beach of Wah village a figure is seen crawling on his belly up the sand.*)  
(*sobbing and howling bitterly*)

JELIPU:

Oh, Mother!  
Oh, Father!  
Where are you all?  
(*Suddenly hearing women's laughter, he raises his head. The women hear his howling and come forward.*)

A WOMAN:

There! A man!  
Who are you?

JELIPU:

Lonely me,  
Jelipu!



WOMEN: *(surprised)*  
 You are naked.  
 Ha! Ha! Ha! *(They laugh.)*  
 Who are you trying to seduce?  
 Why are you here?  
 Why did you not go to Wab  
 With our husbands?

JELIPU:  
 You laugh at me now  
 But soon you shall  
 Fight over me.

KUBEL: *(The fishnet falls out of her hand. Looking into the sea.)*  
 Oh blood!  
 See sharks feast  
 On the bones of our  
 Dear, dear husbands.  
*(All the women crowd around Jelipu crying. They pick him up and carry him home.)*

JELIPU:  
 Yes, it's a sad, sad tale.  
 Just as we veered the corner  
 To beach our canoes  
 The sun rose.  
 The *masalai* struck  
 And we all sank.  
 For reasons unknown  
 I am the sole survivor.

A WOMAN:  
 How was my husband  
 When he died?  
 Was he fat?

JELIPU:  
 Yes indeed!  
 He had two  
 Very special pots for you.

ANOTHER WOMAN:  
 And mine?

JELIPU:  
 The same.  
 He talked of finishing  
 The garden he started  
 With you.

KOLIM'S MOTHER:  
 And my son?  
 The strongest  
 And the handsomest of all?

JELIPU:  
 He was handsome too  
 When he died.  
 A woman, Sak was to  
 follow him.

DAULO:  
 Mama?  
 My father?

DAULO'S MOTHER:  
 Your father was the chief;  
 He died courageously.  
 His strength lives on in you.  
 You shall take up his

Bow and arrows  
 And lead our village.  
 JELIPU: Now, my good women and children,  
 Gather from the beach  
 What is left of our men.  
 Dig a big grave  
 And bury them.  
 Towards the sunset  
 Plant a moon coconut!  
 Some day the Wah people  
 Shall meet the Wab people  
 And remember the tragic loss.  
 NARRATOR: Tragic, indeed!  
 Now, let's return to Wab  
 And see what becomes of Sak  
 Who was so infused with love  
 For Kolim whose tragic end  
 She does not know.

### SCENE VIII

*The curtain rises on Sak asleep in a canoe which drifts at sea.*

SAK: (waking)  
 Oh, dear!  
 Where am I?  
 Why did I come?  
 Where is Mama?  
 And where is Papa?  
 Why did I leave them?  
 There is no Kolim  
 To hold firm my hand.  
 NARRATOR: Poor, poor, sad Sak!  
 Her canoe has been smashed  
 And she is lonely and alone  
 On a soulless isle.  
 SAK: (Spotlight on Sak crawling up the beach.)  
 Oh my bones!  
 They ache!  
 Oh, my blood  
 It's oozing like a flood. (She crawls further, digs a hole and catches a crab to eat. But the crab bites her. She screams and throws it away. She finds some dead fish and eats.)  
 Oh my blood,  
 My precious blood,  
 It oozes.  
 I must collect it!  
 It's my only treasure. (She finds an empty shell and lets some blood into it. She

*covers it with another shell and crawls up to a tree shelter. Lights dim and then brighten. Next day Sak goes to see her blood. An eagle is standing on the shell, dancing. She tries to kill it to eat. But as she approaches, she hears a voice.)*

EAGLE:  
Oh, my blood, my precious blood,  
I am your blood, your precious blood.

SAK:  
(*surprised*)  
Do I hear a human voice?  
Now, fly onto my head.  
You and I shall be friends.  
(*Sak and the eagle are alone on the island. Sak, speaking to the eagle*)  
You and I have lived on  
What we find for a long time.  
We eat everything raw.

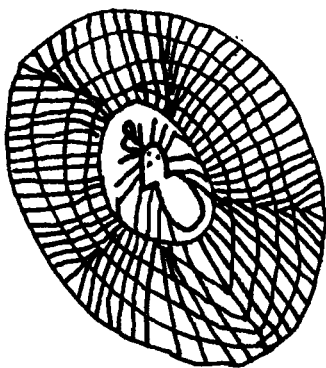
I want fire,  
A pot,  
And a small human baby boy.  
When you are big  
You must fly to the distant lands  
And bring these things. .  
(*The eagle nods its beak in agreement. Sometime later on the island, the eagle's feathers have fully grown and the wings developed. One day the eagle flaps its wings to tell Sak that it is ready for the errand.*)

SAK:  
All right, my son.  
Go now!  
Be careful to fly away  
If human beings try to catch you.  
(*The eagle returns with fire and a pot.*)  
Fine!  
We shall cook fish and eat it.  
Now fly off  
And return in the evening  
With a little boy  
In a *bilum*.

NARRATOR:  
The eagle flies off. It sees a child  
Hanging on a tree stump in a *bilum*. The  
Eagle dives, clasps the handle and flies.  
But a voice calls out, 'Oh the eagle!  
Our baby!' A man grabs an arrow and bow  
And shoots it. The eagle flies home,  
A gale blows, it loses balance and  
Falls into the sea to be bashed up by a wave.

SAK:  
(*impatiently*)  
Oh, my baby! My eagle.  
It too, is gone.  
(*On the shore, she sees the eagle's feathers. She gasps, collects the feathers and goes to her shade.*)  
Poor, poor, lonely me!  
My village

My people,  
Then Kolim. Now my blood.  
Oh, dear, dear, dear.  
In search of love's strength  
I am drowned by its grief.  
It's dark.  
I must go to sleep.  
*(She lies beside her fire and sleeps. The feathers are carefully bound in a bundle and put near her heart. Wakes up—hears singing and drumming.)*  
Did I hear drums?  
Was it a *singsing*?  
Oh, how sweet it sounded!  
Oh how near it was!  
Oh, my feathers!  
My feathers!  
Where are they? *(She looks for them.)*  
No, I must be dreaming.  
*(She sleeps again. Again she hears drums and singing.)*  
Yes! It's true!  
People! Feather people!  
  
*(Curtain)*



# REVIEW

## YIRAWALA ARTIST AND MAN

by *Sandra le Brun Holmes*. *Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1972. \$5.95*

Only very gradually is the anonymity of the so-called primitive artist being lifted. For decades, scholars looking at the art of Africa or the Pacific were so startled by the totally different artistic conventions of other cultures, that they were content to examine the characteristics of different style groups, and to relate them to general social and religious backgrounds.

This is an important book, not only because the art of Australian Aborigines has received far less attention than say African art, but particularly because it is able to present to us the life work of one individual artist.

It is easy to criticize this book because it is not a competent and fluent piece of writing and because the mixture of artist's biography, of personal reminiscences and folklore is sometimes irritating.

However, Sandra le Brun Holmes has done far more than write a book. She had the sensitivity to distinguish the outstanding personality and talent of Yirawala among many of his contemporaries, and she has, at considerable personal sacrifice, enabled Yirawala to become an artist independent of the missions and their artefact trade in Arnhem Land.

Any modern artist knows how destructive a contract situation can be if it does not allow the artist sufficient personal freedom. When Yirawala was at the height of his artistic expression, missions or welfare stations had considerable control over the Aborigines in their care, who were treated almost like wards of court. They could control their movements and could effectively prevent personal contact between the artist and the outside world. It was easy for them to dictate the prices they paid Aboriginal bark painters.

But the problem of the Aboriginal painter was not just economic exploitation. The changeover from religious to commercial art was particularly traumatic in this context. The artists of the cave paintings—including Yirawala's own father—illustrated the 'dreamtime' stories that ordered the entire life of the Aborigines. Yirawala felt uncomfortable because he did not know who the paintings were sold to and how they were being treated. He was extremely upset when a series of paintings, depicting the sacred Maraian ceremony was broken up and scattered among different clients, thus destroying their real meaning. Like many of his colleagues, Yirawala abandoned the ritual painting and concentrated on more or less decorative work.

By taking Yirawala out of the mission and offering him a different contract of her own, Sandra le Brun Holmes did more than play the Kahnweiler to Yirawala's Picasso. She gave an undertaking to the artist that his major ritualistic sequences would not be split up and that the bulk of his work would be kept together.

Her book is the result of an arrangement that has lasted successfully for a decade. It allows us to get an impression of the most important collection of bark paintings by one individual artist.

Considering the limited means at his disposal, Yirawala has created an immensely rich and varied world. His paintings use only four colours: black, white, indian red and yellow ochre. Within this narrow range he achieves a wide variety of texture and tone that helps to create the mood of each painting.

With other Aboriginal artists Yirawala shares a set of conventions: there are several distinct stances or postures in which he depicts kangaroos

or crocodiles; and there is the standard simplification of the human body, that in the vocabulary of Aboriginal art is used to denote a *mimi* figure, or spirit man.

But Yirawala plays on these conventions with great inventiveness, and with artistic passion he transforms the decorative design of Aboriginal painting into a wild and thoroughly convincing world of the dreaming.

The illustrations in this book reveal a repetition of themes, but never a repetition of forms. Kangaroos, crocodiles, *brolgas*, lizards, fish, anteaters, turtles, *mimis*, giants and cultural heroes are the common repertoire Yirawala shares with his colleagues. But Yirawala never repeats himself: there are ten kangaroos in this book, and ten different stances, angles, expressions; and in each one the body area is broken up into differing geometric or X-ray designs.

Yirawala uses the *mimi* figures which convention requires to be more simplistic and repetitive than other stock figures, ingeniously as

lively elements of composition. See for example the superb painting on page 43.

But among all Yirawala's images his most personal ones are the giants and cultural heroes. Here his mind ranges more freely. The giant Lumah Lumah and Namorren the lightning man, become tragic heroes, whose powerful shapes have a strangely modern impact. Much of Yirawala's work can be enjoyed as the work of a contemporary artist, rather than the illustrations of an ancient and remote mythology. Nevertheless, Mrs Holmes's retelling of the myths that motivated the artist are a valuable addition to the book.

In the foreword to the book, Professor Elkin grants curiously reserved approval to Mrs Holmes's book. This is in strange contrast to the enthusiastic praise she receives from full-blooded Aborigines like Philip Roberts and the Rev. Lami Lami in the introduction.

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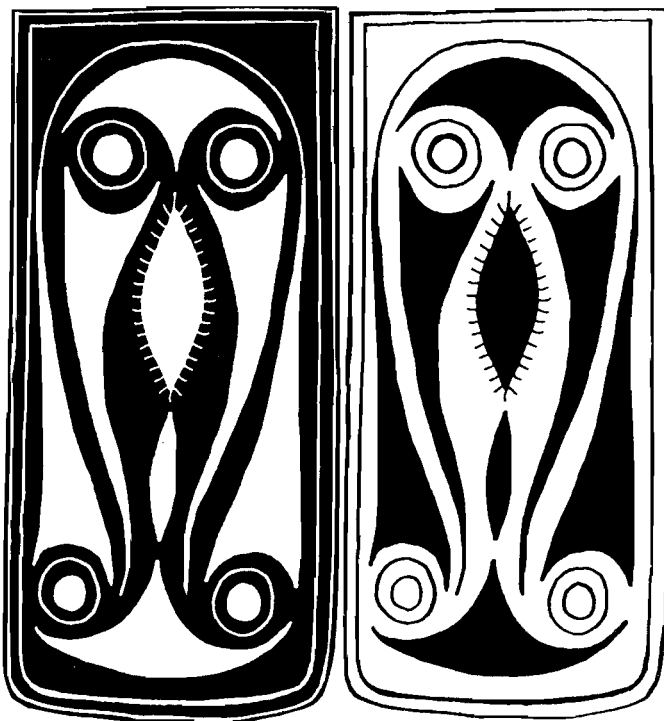
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