KOVAVE

A JOURNAL OF NEW GUINEA LITERATURE

KOVAVE: A MAGAZINE OF NEW GUINEA LITERATURE
The editor is grateful to the publishers whose advertisements made this pilot number of *KOVAVE* possible, and to Jacaranda Press who assisted us in producing it.
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CONTENTS

POETRY

PROSE

FOLKLORE

CRITICISM

DRAMA

EDITORIAL

Kovave is the name of the first initiation ceremony in Orokolo, in the Papuan Gulf. It forms part of the long cycle of festivals and masked dances that gradually lead a boy into full manhood. After months of preparation in the seclusion of the *eravo* or man's house, the youth is guided into the forest by his maternal uncles. Suddenly on the lonely path, the mask is pushed over him from behind, and he storms forward in his new disguise towards the clearing in the forest, where he is going to meet his masked companions. Some final instructions are here given by the elders; the youths take a solemn oath, then try out their steps in a vigorous dance. Thus prepared they storm back into the village asserting their new rights. The Kovave festival does not convey full manhood status on the initiates, but they have gained one very important right: they are given their weapons and they are now entitled to go and fight.

Kovave is New Guinea's first literary magazine. Its purpose is to encourage young Papuans and New Guineans to write and to show them what their colleagues in other parts of the country are doing. It wishes to be read as a workshop magazine, a progress report on the state of creative writing in Papua and New Guinea. Kovave will publish creative writing in English and Pidgin, as well as translations of traditional poetry and tales from the numerous languages of Papua and New Guinea.

TWO POEMS

by Pokwari Kale

If we had grown to face
The morning dews together,
We could show our fathers that after all
Their counsels were not wasted.
When our enemies came, with youthful bodies,
We would have borne the children to safety,
Then taken our arms to the front.

If it had been, we would have shared
The scolding, the praise, the worries together.
Together we would have faced the first arrows
To defend our Lukinya Rocks, our indestructible backers,
Whose changing colours we watched
With misty eyes, under the dawning sun,
When our legs were too thorny to carry us there,
And our hands too small to grasp the protective shields.

But tell me, what is in your mind
That causes me to scratch my head?
Yesterday you looked at me sideways,
And since my return you have denied my due.
Brother, the fault is not mine.
It is the path of the whiteman
That our fathers chose for me;
Yet this has deepened my love for you.

I did not cook with good wood
For my land is brown with kunai.
I used a kembo for wood
But there was nothing to eat.
I called upon the elder; she refused.
I called upon the younger; she refused.

Neither sister would dare taste,
For the roaring gully winds of chilling teeth,
And the dark frowning clouds of my mountain lands,
Threaten those dirty women of the plains.
Let them toil in their plains,
Their fat buttocks sweating.

When my Kepaka clouds fetch me,
The deep wet valleys of giggling streams
Beside the lone mossy ridges and stiff rocks,
With the mumble of smoking falls, are mine.
The whispers of my mountain birds will never leave m
Never will their sunburned faces see me.

VILLAGE CHURCH AND SCHOOL*

by Vincent Eri

THE harsh rustle of the sago palms contrasted sharply with the slow gentle swaying of the coconut palms.

In the village below, clouds of dirty brown dust danced in and out among the forest of houseposts. The wind forced itself through the cracks in the floor and the holes in the walls. The dust clouds twisted and turned forming weird and wonderful shapes.

A fence five foot tall encircled the entire village. It was made of long bamboo tubes placed horizontally on top of each other. They were kept in place by saplings pegged into the ground. This fence had been erected on the orders of the government officers who said that pigs must be kept away from the village.

On the windward side of the village, outside the fence, stood a lone building. It stood in a north-south direction. The entrance was on the north side. Each wall had a blackboard nailed to it, the largest being on the south wall. There were pictures of Biblical stories, and an ABC chart, that depicted many objects the children had never seen. A hungry cockroach had eaten clean through the first picture which the teacher called "apple". Three portraits looked down on the children: King George VI, Archbishop De Boismenu of Yule Island and St. Thérèse, the patron Saint of the school.

No partitions separated one class room from another. Everybody squatted crosslegged on the palm wood floor.

The school grounds were always wet. The owners had allowed this land to be used for a school, because it wasn't much good for building a house. Each flood scoured the area of food wrappings, human and animal excreta and pieces of paper. During the day the children deposited more. At night the adults added to the collection.

Huge breadfruit trees towered above, cutting out much of the sunlight. The undergrowth around the classroom was so thick that the building was not visible from any direction, not even from the village. Swarms of mosquitoes infested the dark shadows and bothered the children.

There were no toilets. Why bother to build houses to house our waste? That is what the villagers would say to the medical orderlies who complained. The villagers agreed that it was necessary to build "small houses" for the Government officers, and the white missionaries. Their beautiful white skins looked too delicate to be allowed to use the bush. The teachers and students used the bush. So did all the village people. The teachers themselves did not believe in the story of the worms that made people sick. Nobody had seen these worms of destruction. The bush was kept clean by the pigs, who grew fat on it and trailed their bellies on the ground.

Five days a week the children strained their lungs and vocal chords singing their alphabets and numerals. The teachers did not seem to be bothered by the noise. The parents heard their children's voices when they passed by on their way to the garden. To them it was evidence that their children were learning—though it seemed to have little significance for them *what* their children were learning.

There was a new boy in the preparatory class. He had been in the school for a week. He had recently been transferred from the Protestant school, run by the London Missionary Society, to the Catholic school.

*A chapter from a novel in progress.

In the Daily Attendance register his name was recorded as Hoiri Sevese. His father, Sevese Ovou, was a deacon in the L.M.S. Church. Hoiri was about seven years old.

Hoiri had a bulging stomach, quite out of proportion to the size of his legs. It was surprising that he could see where he placed his feet when he was walking. The other children nicknamed him "tau bada", which literally means "big man." Originally it had been a term of respect for all white people living in the district, but by the late nineteen sixties it had become more of a mockery.

Hoiri didn't look as if he was going to inherit the towering build of his father. He was short and stalky and some people commented that he was growing sideways.

Hoiri was shy in his new surroundings. Though he was familiar enough with the children in his class, who had been his playmates for years in the village, the school work was different and even the prayers were said differently in the new school. But gradually he picked up most of the tricks of his new class. He learned, for example, that by saying "May I leave the room" he could have as many recesses as he liked.

Right now he was anxious to leave the room. He had hidden a stick of sago in a secret place between the bearers under the palm flooring, and was worried whether another child might have discovered it. All the children kept the remains of their breakfast in such secret places to be eaten later, and this made it necessary "to leave the room" as often as possible. Noticing that many of his friends were "leaving the room" Hoiri wanted to follow, but lacked the courage to utter the pass word. Then, without warning a boy nearest to him popped up like a cork out of water.

"Please teacher, may Hoiri leave the room?" he shouted at the top of his voice. What could the teacher do when four or five other such requests had come from various quarters of the class. Without even looking, he gave his consent.

Hoiri felt greatly indebted to his courageous friend. If his sago was still there his friend must have some of it. In a flash he had disappeared under the building.

One or two pigs raised themselves from their siesta and eyed him askance. Others rubbed their mud covered bodies furiously against the posts. The children in the school had got used to the countless mild earthquakes everyday.

Hoiri searched for his sago in vain. Someone had "left the room" earlier, and had discovered the hiding place. He fought to hold back his tears. Lunch was still an hour or so away. Concentration was more difficult on an empty stomach. For the first time he questioned his reason for being in school. He had no clear ideas about this, but felt vaguely, that he wanted to learn the white man's language. Not because he wanted to get a well-paid job—for there weren't any such jobs for Papuans and New Guineans to fill, but because the ability of conversing with the white people would earn him a respected position in the eyes of the community.

Hoiri wondered whether he would find anything to eat at his aunt's house. Two weeks ago things had been very different. Then his mother was alive and even when she went fishing or gardening she had always left some cooked food ready for him. But now Hoiri wasn't too eager to clear the steps of the classroom when the last phrase of the prayer had left his lips.

"Aren't you going to kneel down Hoiri? We are all waiting for you." Faintly the teacher's voice penetrated his brain. Hoiri had been so absorbed in his thoughts that he hadn't been aware of the silence that had fallen upon the building.

Hoiri had not become used to the Catholic way of kneeling for prayers and of making the sign of the cross. In his old school the teacher spoke the prayer alone, everyone else stood with their heads bowed and their eyes closed. Here they all recited the prayer together with the teacher. Hoiri was surprised that in the Catholic school the same Father, Son and Holy Ghost were mentioned in the prayers. Why was there so much antagonism in his village between the followers of the two

missions? Whatever the arguments were about, the London Missionary Society seemed to be in the stronger position. They had been the first to establish themselves in the village. In fact Hoiri's grandfather had been a very small boy when the Reverend James Chalmers first landed on the beach of Moveave.

Hoiri made his way into the village under the cloudless sky. The sun made the shadows of the houses darker than they really were. Among the disorderly rows of houses, the *elavo* men's houses with their huge pointed gables towered impressively. Even though Moveave was one of the largest villages in the Papuan Gulf it looked fairly deserted now. A few women were gossiping and weaving mats under the houses. Others were patching holes in their fishing nets, or picking lice from each other's hair.

Out in the open the glare from the sandy soil was hard on the eyes. The air was heavy with the unpleasant smell of scorched earth. Hoiri wished he was taller than three foot six. He cursed the people who did not teach their children and their dogs to do their business outside the village fence.

Bands of illfed dogs roamed the streets. They howled miserably in the hope that some kindhearted people might give them some titbits to eat. They appeared to have changed the usual order of nature: the bones of their ribs appeared to grow outside their skins.

Hoiri could tell that his aunt had gone out with the other inhabitants of the house. The only step to the house had been pushed aside so that wandering dogs could not enter the house uninvited. Hopefully Hoiri searched the food rack above the fireplace. Over the years the smoke of cooking fires had coloured the entire room a dirty brown. For a minute he couldn't see anything while his eyes adjusted themselves to the dark.

"Have you found anything yet?" The voice belonged to Hoiri's cousin Meraveka, who went to the LMS school. "I've got a long stick of sago that will be more than enough for both of us." Hoiri reappeared from the darkness of the house holding a whole roasted breadfruit and half a dried coconut—still in its shell.

The cousins exchanged food as they walked along together. The oil from the dry coconut made it easier to swallow the rubbery sago. The breadfruit was of the Samoan variety, which had been introduced by early South Sea missionaries.

"How do you like the Catholic School?" Meraveka was anxious to find out what new knowledge his cousin was learning. "I am not as happy as when we were at school together. I can't understand why my parents did not take you to stay with us when your mother died. Is it not customary for the father's close relatives to take care of the children when the mother dies? But look what happened. They let your aunt Anna take you with your brother and sister into their house. And now she made you become a Catholic."

Hoiri was troubled by his cousin's talk. He knew that he himself had nothing to do with the state of affairs. His father hadn't explained anything to him either. In fact he had mysteriously disappeared soon after his mother's burial and Hoiri did not know where he was or what he was doing.

"It was my father who made the decision," Hoiri managed to say with great difficulty. "I had no choice but to go and live with Aunt Anna. She said that if I didn't go to the Catholic school, she wouldn't give me a *rami* to wear. I chose to keep myself covered, rather than exposing myself to all the girls."

A long silence followed. Meraveka felt he shouldn't have asked in the first place.

"What sorts of things are you learning at the new school?"

"Oh, the usual A, B, Cs and 1, 2, 3s. The main difference is that the teachers speak to us in English most of the time."

"I would much like to learn that language too. I envy the village constable, the councillors and medical orderly who can speak to the government officers when they come to our village. The Samoan pastors in our school teach us well, but I don't like the way they speak to us in Toaripi. They don't even speak it properly."

Hoiri felt elevated. He was learning something his cousin wanted to know. What is more, he told his cousin that in the Catholic school the children were not forced to make sago for their teachers, a practice that was common in the L.M.S. school and a task that took up the best part of the day. Hoiri had often heard his father say to the "Ekalesia" that the practice was undesirable but absolutely necessary. "These Samoans," he would say, "have come a long way to bring the word of God to us. They have no land here where they could make their gardens. It is our responsibility to see that they have enough to eat."

"I wish I could come to the same school as you," Meraveka said, almost to himself. Hoiri felt sorry for him. He knew what these sago expeditions were like and he knew the punishment for shirking them: most boys realised that it was wiser to go on the tedious sago expeditions than to face the embarrassment of being caned naked in front of the girls.

Together the cousins forded the creek that was the only outlet in the south of the village to the large waterways. The tide was low and the water was up to their thighs.

The cool smell of mud was a relief to their nostrils. Though the water was full of animal and human excreta, the two boys were not bothered in the least. They had been swimming in that same creek ever since they had been able to float.

Long parallel trenches on the mud marked the mooring places of the canoes. Now only a few unserviceable canoes were left lying around. But on a Sabbath day or on Friday—the "Government day"—the same creek would be jammed with canoes.

"Did you notice that government officers don't usually come to our village at low tide?" Hoiri remarked. "I suppose that with all this excreta floating around they are afraid of letting the water touch their clean white feet."

"I have never seen them brave the water in this creek as yet," Meraveka added support. "Whenever they come their canoes are laden with so many patrol boxes, cartons of goods and furniture—you would think they'd come to stay for months. With that kind of load at low tides the canoe can't get anywhere near the normal landing places. So the men of our village have to carry them like small children!"

When they had crossed to the other side they could hear the laughter and chattering of other boys not far away. It was usual at this time of day for the boys to collect coconuts and for the girls to cut wood and fill the water pots ready for their parents' return.

The boys were joking. They talked freely about sex. Not that they had personal experience of the matter. But they had heard it discussed often by their elders and there was nothing mysterious about what went on between a boy and a girl in a lonely garden. They knew which of the partners gets a dirty back in the event.

Soon boys disappeared in the thick undergrowth, each heading for his family's coconut grove. Hoiri and Meraveka made haste, because they knew that they had to swim across the same creek nearer to its junction with a larger waterway and crocodiles had been known to venture right up to the village with the incoming tide.

By the time the sun was level with the tree tops the boys had their bundles of nuts neatly tied up. They suspended the load on a stick between the two of them and marched off to the bank of the creek to await the arrival of some fishing canoes. They noticed the white bubbles in the water and knew that some canoes must have already gone past. "Can you hear the *tui* calling? It is announcing the turn of the tide," Meraveka said. "Many more canoes should be here any minute."

Soon a large canoe full of women and girls swung into view from the bend in the creek. Their chattering was out of step to the rhythm of the paddles. Already the two boys could recognise one or two faces on the canoe. They all belonged to the boys' fathers' clan, the *Operoro* clan. Therefore they regarded all the girls as their sisters and all the women as their mothers.

That night the full moon was out. It was

still a period of mourning so the children did not boo and cheer. After the evening meal, they sat and told stories to each other in between the rows of houses. It was a special night. Boys and girls had to keep strictly separate. Mothers warned their sons and elder sisters warned their brothers. On no account were they to play with girls. They were told that grown up girls and women menstruated at this time. The pale yellow circle round the moon was the sign. Should a girl's grass skirt touch any part of a boy's head, his growth would be stunted considerably.

Hoiri didn't feel he should play and have fun. It would be unfair to his mother. Instead he sat near his aunt Anna listening to her mumbling to herself. She complained of the extra responsibility thrust on her shoulders by the untimely death of her elder sister. Not that she minded looking after the children—but what stupidity to terminate one's life when one has years of useful life still in one's body? Anna cursed the "mesiri" men, the sorcerers. She couldn't think of one good reason why they had taken her sister's life.

"Who is 'they'?" asked Hoiri who had picked up Aunt Anna's last remark. "O some people are never satisfied with their lot" his aunt answered, not wishing to go into too much detail. "They've got to kill. I do not know what they get out of taking other people's lives. You find that these people are friendly to you, but that is only the surface."

"But who are these people?" Hoiri interrupted, suggesting he was not to be put off easily. "How can one tell they are preparing the deadly mixture?"

Anna realised it was useless to avoid the subject. Hoiri had set his mind on knowing the truth.

"There are some men well-known in this village. It is they who carry out the ground work. They collect the dirt of the person who is to die. Sometimes they cut off a piece from the person's dress. Fresh clean ginger is used. They make sure that their own dirt doesn't get on the ginger or else they are as liable to die. Then they pass these things on to the experts, who are scattered in the villages of the Toaripi coast, or take them to far away villages on the Moiripi coast. These experts do the rest."

"Have these experts any means of knowing who their victims are?" Anna explained that they do. When the mixture has been kept in a bamboo tube over a fire place for some time, the apparition of the victim appears from time to time. The bamboo rolls about the floor when the victim is critically ill and writhes about desperately trying to hang on to his life. The sorcerers have been known to throw the mixture away, when they felt sympathetic towards the victim.

Usually the victim doesn't know for sure. He feels unwell. When he goes fishing, the fish he catches fall back into the water as he is about to land them in his canoe. Some of his properties disappear mysteriously. Sometimes it is his close relatives' things that disappear.

As his aunt talked, Hoiri remembered an incident that took place when he and his parents were gardening up the river shortly before his mother's death. That day the half-inch-thick cane vine that secured their canoe to the nearest coconut tree snapped unexpectedly and the canoe was dragged into the muddy waters of the Taure river and sank mysteriously. More strange, the loose floorboards, which one would have expected to remain floating on top of the water, submerged with the canoe.

Hoiri cursed his father. Why hadn't he noted this phenomenon and acted quickly and wisely? If he had given his mother the correct juice of herbs, barks and roots to drink, they might have counteracted the force of sorcery. But maybe his being a deacon of the L.M.S. Church prevented him from taking such traditional measures.

During the third week of mourning, Sevese Ovou, Hoiri's father, suddenly walked into his sister-in-law's house. He looked a different man. His clothes were black, a scraggy beard covered his face. He looked miserable. Obviously he had not been eating much.

Hoiri had a lot of things on his mind that he

wanted to clear up with his father. But his aunt would not let him bother his father yet. He had to eat first.

In the end Hoiri burst out straight with the question: "Did someone really cause my mother's death?" His father looked surprised and uneasy. His son should not have been told this, at least not at his age. He made Hoiri tell him all he already knew about this matter. When he realised how much Hoiri had already been told and how eager he was to know everything he reluctantly agreed to pursue the subject.

"When your mother died, her body was buried. Her spirit did not leave us. She has been visiting the places where she went fishing and gardening. Every evening, as the sun sets behind the tree tops, she changes to her human form and weeps for us. It is at one of these times that we the living can find out from the dead the cause of their death."

"So that's why you have been away for two weeks?" Hoiri asked. And he now recalled that ever since his mother had died a separate food dish had been set aside in a special room at every meal time. His father now confirmed that this food was for his mother's spirit.

"And did you see her after all?" Hoiri asked again, most anxious for his father to continue.

"You see, son," his father explained, "I was facing the setting sun near our cemetery, alone. I felt the back of my neck become cold, all of a sudden. The cicadas seemed to screech louder than ever. Night was already falling and now here and there were real pockets of darkness where a tall tree obscured the quickly fading sunlight. I found it difficult to focus my eyes on any one subject. Images became blurred. Trees which had been victims of grass fires held out their massive black arms as if to strike. I felt chilly though there wasn't a breath of wind. Then my feet became weak. There was a thumping in my chest. A nearby tree seemed to bend down towards me. My legs gave way and everything became blank for a moment. Then your mother's familiar voice came to my ears."

In a low voice Sevese Ovou told his son the cause of his mother's death. He also mentioned the names of the "mesir" men who were involved. He ended on a note of warning to his son to keep well away from the evil men.

Hoiri also learned from his father, that his mother's spirit would still be with them until the day a feast was made to forget her. It was vitally important that this feast to release her be not delayed any longer than necessary. The earlier she arrived in the place of the dead the better for her. Besides it was not fair to keep the whole village in a state of mourning. They must be freed to beat the drum again. The children too must be freed to cheer and laugh again at nights, the men must be allowed to shave their beard and the women to take off their black grass skirts and black armbands.

The great day came at last. Smoke from numerous cooking fires made the village look as if it was on fire. It was a day of many activities. The whole village was awakened after three Sundays of inactivity.

The squeaking of pigs being slaughtered rang from one end of the village to the other. The long silenced drums boomed. Their thunderous notes were carried high above the tops of the sago palms. The nearby villages of Heatoare and Savaiviri were warned of the feast.

The women and girls had put on their best grass skirts. Only the close relatives of the dead woman were not yet allowed to dress in bright colours.

By late afternoon all the food had been assembled. School children had depleted the meagre supply of chalk in their classrooms so that their mothers could mark their pots.

At a signal from Hoiri's uncle the crowd settled down. The food was already placed into heaps, one for each clan. With a young coconut shoot in hand, the uncle went from heap to heap naming the clans for whom the food was intended.

By night time all the food had been eaten or removed. From now on, any reference to Hoiri's mother would be made in the past tense.

Hoiri was sad to think that his dear mother's spirit was to be leaving forever early next morning. Once she had passed the villages in which people had known her during her life time, her body and spirit would be reunited. Hoiri was comforted by the knowledge that his mother lacked nothing to enable her to make her trip comfortably. His father had provided her with everything at the funeral. Before she was lowered into her grave she had been given a string bag full of roasted balls of sago and coconuts, a lamp and a knife to defend herself with. The more Hoiri thought about the dangers that lay in wait for her in this journey the more he wished he could accompany her.

From his father he had learned about the cunning ferrymen and dishonest guest-house proprietors she was likely to meet on her way, who were only too ready to deceive and rob the unwary. But if she survived the journey, she would shed her dark skin and become a European. She would be in a land of plenty and one day she would send gifts to them.

From then on Hoiri kept trying to visualise this land of plenty his mother had gone to. Did she ever arrive there? And if she did, had she forgotten to send the goods to the loved ones she had left behind? Or were they intercepted before they reached their rightful owners? One day, he was sure, she would send these gifts.

KUMAN (Chimbu)

BOASTING SONG

Black bird of paradise is my bird,
red bird of paradise is theirs.
Red shell is my shell,
white shell is their shell.
Pig is my pig,
dog is their dog.

I clear the forest
a large patch of land
see how strong I am
I am a man
but they are women.

Translated by Herman Ulua

A NEW GUINEA BESTIARY

THE EAGLE

I am king of the earth,
I am king of the air,
I am king of the ocean.
Everything is around my throne
Under my powerful wings.
Sunrise to sunset
I look over the world
As a tiny coconut fruit
Floating on a silvery sea.
I know the spirit of the air,
I know the spirit of the earth,
I know the spirit of the ocean.
Everything is beneath my wings
Under my powerful tail.

George Tuke

SHARK

Your skin is as rough as sand,
Your teeth sharper than razor blades.
Your eyes scan the blue ocean
Like the seagull in the sky.
You are searching, scenting, feeling
With those radar like gills.
When you spot your prey
You pounce swiftly like the dog on the wallaby.
Merciless hunter, contemptuous of man,
You destroy anything to please your appetite.
You show off your strength, when you destroy
Manmade nets and lines.
But when you are caught at last,
How ridiculous you look:
With your bulging eyes and jagged teeth.

Rei Miria

LOST FRIGATE BIRD

He was visible above the ocean
Carried in the grip of the merciless gale
Far from the flock.

He searched for the land of his birth
He searched for his companions
In vain.
The gale swept him far into the unknown.

His beautiful wings, his coloured breast,
Turned grey against the clouded sky.
His powerful claws folded back helplessly.
His cries were mocked by the angry sea.

Then the darkness of night fell upon the sky
With black clouds and forceful wind.
The giant waves broke below.
Still he struggled on hopelessly.

Slowly the urge to live grew weak.
He looked to the east, to the west, with one last cry
And dropped unresisting,
Tossed about like driftwood by the raging ocean.

Wilson Ifunaoa

THE BLACK KITE

There high in the sky above the burning grass
Flying with its wings held still
Just like an opened book—the black kite
Looks down with its marvellous eyes
And sees a rat escaping from the fire.
Down it comes with its wings folded
Just like a bomb, and grabs the rat with open claws.
Up it goes again like an arrow and swallows it
With a gaping mouth like an open shell.

Michael Kuaru

THE BAT

Thief! Featherless bird!
Uncanny bird with human teeth,
You have no job but to steal.
Thief at night, sleeper in the day.
Caves, trees and forests are your homes.
But who cares where you rest?
The farmer only cares for his crops:
His papaws and mangoes.
He plants and tends them hopefully,
But he throws away the fruit in disgust,
When he finds the scars you inflicted.
You have no land and no farm,
You go where the fruit is ripest.
But the farmer is happy
When he remembers you are eternally punished:
For the food you steal, you vomit through the mouth.

Tuain Pongi

BATS

Who inhabits these dark and sinister walls,
Blacker than night itself?
The air is still,
Expectant of nocturnal disturbance.
Suddenly there is a flutter of wings.
Some thing brushes past my face.
Another follows.
In no time there are a swarm of creatures,
And a rising cadence of eerie music.
The pungent aroma of unwashed bodies
Flits through the air.
How do these creatures find their way
Between these walls,
Blacker than night itself?

Rei Mina

THE BOAR

With gleaming tusks
He walks through the grass.
At the first sign of an enemy
He raises the alarm wildly.

With head upthrust
He looks in every direction.
Disappointed by the surrounding silence
He walks away placid and grunting.

With fearless red eyes
He searches for food.
He satisfies his hunger
On the village gardens.

So there is hostility
Between man and the boar.
When men see his traces
They swear vehemently.

Arthur Jawodimbari

THE RAT

They say the rat is a nuisance,
The rat is a dirty creature.
But who looks after the grasslands?
Who looks after the shrubs?
Who looks after the forest?
Who looks after the jungles?
Who looks after the gardens?
Who looks after the kitchen?
Who looks after your health?
Find me someone so popular.
I am the prince of the world.
My fame is known everywhere.

Raphael F. Oraka

GROWING UP IN MAILU

by John Kadiba

I WAS born on Koitaki rubber plantation near Sogeri. The first image that impressed itself on my mind was miles and miles of rubber trees, planted in monotonous, regular lines. They are tall trees, with straight stems and their branches tend to point towards the sky. The plantation was kept free of any undergrowth, but once a year, when the trees shed their leaves, the ground would be covered with red and orange leaves. As a small boy I used to go and look for the brightest leaves under the bare trees, with their whitish, irregular branches. When the rains came, the trees sprouted new leaves which shone very bright when the sun caught them. Gradually they would turn into a dark green.

My father had come to the rubber plantation as an ordinary tapper, but was later promoted to be an overseer and put in charge of a small plantation. He was a native of Mailu, but had left his native village and gone to look for work almost immediately after his marriage. Three of his children were born on the plantation: Jimmy the eldest was born when the first bomb was dropped on Port Moresby. I came just after the war and Susan arrived three years later.

The plantation was a lonely place. There were no other families living near and we had no other children to play with. Every morning we watched the same routine of rubber tapping. Each labourer had a certain number of trees allocated to him. First he would go along the line of trees, tapping them about three feet above the ground and tying a little cup to it. Slowly the milky liquid would drip into the cup along the V-shaped cuts on the tree. When the labourers had finished with the tapping they would return to the beginning of their lines and collect the rubber in large buckets. By midday they carried their buckets to the factory for processing. Each man carried two buckets which dangled from two ends of a long stick that was placed across his shoulder. It was a dirty job—their *laplaps* were stained with clogged rubber.

On Saturdays everybody came to collect their rations: rice, tobacco, meat, flour, washing soap and kerosene. Father lined them up early in the morning for checking. Sometimes he found one of them missing:

"Kongi he go where?"

"Em i sick."

Father would have to check up on this later. For the time being he told the rest:

"Yu pela wok'im gut na baimbai yu kisim ratim belong yu. Yu harim?" They would shout "Yes", receive their ration and be dismissed to work.

The days on the plantation were much the same. But there was one morning I shall never forget. When we woke up we beheld a strange sight: the dark leaves, the ground, the roof of our house had all been covered by a fine white dust.

"Mother," we shouted, "where did this sand come from?"

My mother was equally puzzled, but she wanted to give us some kind of answer:

"It's your brother Jimmy, who's on holidays in Mailu—he is sending you all this sand."

"Is the sand at our village white?"

"Oh yes," she said. "All along the beach the sand is white. But of course you can't know—you have never been to the sea."

"And—and how did Jimmy send it, Mother?"

"Well," she said, "he put it in the palms of his hands, blew it up, and the wind carried it here."

"He is a good brother, isn't he?"

"Yes," mother said and started to cook rice for our breakfast.

Later as we were squatting on the mat eating our breakfast with spoons or fingers, Father came in from his first plantation round. I was really disappointed when I learned the real explanation of the white sand from him. "Lamington mountain blowed out last night," he said.

"Where is Lamintoni mountain, father?"

Father pointed to the north east and said: "A long way away, behind those mountains there."

During the next few days we heard more and more stories of people being killed and houses being wrecked by the volcanic eruption. One story spoke of a white man who had been hurled up in the air with his jeep and landed on top of a tree jeep and all.

The first heavy rain washed all the white dust away.

My parents had no education, but on the plantation they were removed from village life and learnt some new ways of living from the European plantation manager. Mother learned to make her own dresses and skirts. For us she made little shorts or *piripous*—as we called them—with braces that tied diagonally across chest and back. Both our parents spoke Motu and Pidgin fluently. They also knew Hula and they had picked up a little bit of English. Such words as: go, come, good, bad, naughty boy, silly girl, good morning, good evening, hello . . . were often used by them though they pronounced them with little ease. We children understood these few words and phrases. We could not express abstract ideas in English, but we knew how to name spoon, pot, pan, plate, knife and fork. My parents took some pride in such knowledge and even gave us European names: Jimmy, John and Susan—names that were quite unknown back home in the village.

My parents were most anxious that we boys should go to school, as early as possible. The subject was often discussed at home and finally my father arranged with the pastor at Sogeri that we should go to the L.M.S. Primary School there. It was arranged that we should stay with the pastor and only come home for weekends.

One Sunday morning my mother put all the spare clothing and *piripous* into a small hand bag and Father took us to the pastor. It was painful to hear Mother say good-bye to us:

"*Aioni* John, *Aioni* Jimmy. You must behave well and listen to the one who teaches you. *Aioni*—look after your bodies!" I looked back at Mother over my shoulder, then walked ahead of Father and Jimmy with my eyes fixed on my toes. After two or three hours walk we arrived at the mission station. Father met the pastor and addressed him in Motu:

"*Namo*?—good?" he said offering his hand.

"*Namo herea*—very good" replied the pastor.

"These your children?"

"*Oi he*—yes. This is Jimmy Kadiba the big one, that is John Kadiba the little one. They are at your hands. If they do wrong, you know what to do with them."

"Do not think about that. They'll be alright."

When all arrangements were made, Father said good-bye to us and turned to walk home. We saw him disappear behind a corner of the road. Already my throat was vibrating, the trees around me were becoming blurred. We walked upstairs and the pastor went to the kitchen to fetch us a drink. No sooner was he out of sight, than I slipped out of the house and ran after my father. Jimmy got confused by my sudden flight and followed me somewhat reluctantly. I ran, crying, as fast as my small-boy feet could carry me. I did not want to stay away from home. I had never been away from my mother before. I caught up with my father after about a mile. The old man stood speechless and looked at me solemnly. I did not dare to say anything, I just stood there, rubbing

my eyes with the back of my hand. Father said nothing. He walked straight back to the mission. I understood from his very silence that I had hurt him deeply. When we reached the Mission station he apologised to pastor for my weakness and shameful behaviour. Then he picked up our belongings and walked slowly home. Mother was bewildered: "What happened, why are you all back again?" Father looked at me and said: "It was that silly John. He could not stay away." My mother abused me thoroughly —then she sat down on the mat besides father on the verandah. They were very silent that day. I could not understand, of course, that I had shattered their simple dream. From then on, whenever I did something wrong, my mother would say: "So that's why you did not want to go to school, because you wanted to be naughty at home!"

When I was seven years old my father decided to return to Mailu. He had been away for over twenty years. They had almost forgotten the village way of life. They had no house in Mailu and no garden. Father's older brother gave us half of his own *madava* to plant on, because it takes a long time to clear a virgin piece of land. Father had to fell trees, clear undergrowth burn the *oioi*—that is the as yet uncultivated garden—in order to prepare it for the planting of taro, yam, bananas, sweet potatoes, sugar cane and paw paw seeds. It took many weeks before the *oioi* had been turned into a proper *tako*—a cultivated food garden.

We boys were not expected to work in the garden—it was a girl's job. But we went along sometimes at harvest time, which came when the leaves of the vegetables turned yellow, red and brown. Sometimes all these colours were represented in a single leaf!

While the preparation of the garden was going on, my father also built us a house. *Bedira* trees were cut—the hard red wood was suitable for the houseposts. The *goniga* palm was cut up for floor boards. Its tough, fibrous wood could not be attacked by white ants. The roof was woven from sago leaves and the walls from sago bark. The women were mainly involved in weaving the roof—most of the work was carried out by men. It took about two moons to finish the house.

Meanwhile I got to know the village children. I had never known so many children before. I must have looked like a real stranger among them, because I was the only child wearing clothes. But we soon made friends. I was taught a game called *modiu* that was to prepare me for hunting expeditions. For this game the swollen root of a banana is sliced into the shape of a wheel. There were two teams, ten boys lined up on either side. One side would roll the *modiu* across the field. The other side had to try and shoot it with their spears. This game was meant to teach us how to throw a spear accurately at a running pig.

"Aiesade"—coming! we shouted as we rolled the wheel across. *"Godagoda"* they would exclaim in triumph when they hit it.

One day a boy was hit in the leg and started screaming. Blood flowed from his leg and we all ran to hide in the bush to avoid the anger of his parents and ours. From our hiding places we could hear his mother yelling:

"Oh you children, you would die playing this bad game. Come here and let me see you. You old little children, who would die of playing!"

But as soon as the woman's anger had cooled down we continued with the game.

Soon Karau, my cousin, took me on my first real hunting expedition. We were six boys and six dogs. We held a spear each and followed closely behind the dogs. The dogs keep their noses to the ground, sniffing for scents. They took us several miles through the forest and across a mountain, before they showed signs of real excitement. I was lagging slightly behind and when I heard the wild barking, I wondered what the dogs had cornered: a cassowary? A pig? A wallaby? There was no path here, each of us had to find his own way through the thick jungle, following the noise. When I reached the place, Karau was already there, his spear held high to kill the huge boar that had been rounded up by the dogs. But the dogs were so close he did not dare to shoot. The

boar was furious. It attacked the dogs and ripped open the side of one of them. Karau had to call the dogs away, in order to be able to throw his spear:

"*Ai, ai, ai—Taiga ai—Dimuda ai—ai ai ai!*"

As soon as the dogs were clear Karau thrust the spear deep into the boar's side. We came out from behind the trees where we had taken cover, shouting *godagoda!* The boar howled in dizzy agony, then became silent, jerked, jerked again and lay still, dead. Blood poured from its side.

We tied its feet and suspended it from a pole, about three feet from the ground. Then we covered it in twigs, set fire to them and thus singed off the bristles. Then we cut it up and wrapped the pieces in leaves, ready to carry home. But it was the custom to eat something before reaching home. The dogs were given the intestines. We baked the heart, the kidneys and the tongue for ourselves.

When we got home at dusk, the pig was shared out between several families. It was much too big to be eaten by one family alone.

A favourite game was story telling. We sat around on moonlit nights, listening to older boys telling us stories. The first legend I heard was about the coconut and how it came to our village:

There were two girls. The elder was called Mudi and the younger Arupa. One day they went to fetch water. When they were filling their pots, the younger girl saw a cucumber floating down the river. Both girls left their pots and raced to get the vegetable.

Arupa roro	Arupa swam
Mudi roro	Mudi swam
Arupa roro	Arupa swam
Mudi roro	Mudi swam
ee Mudi	until Mudi
ma kapurika	got the
evasia	cucumber

When they reached the shore Arupa said to Mudi:

"Friend, cut the cucumber and let us eat it."

"No, we must take our water pots to the village first," said Mudi. They returned home and put the pots away into their proper places. Then Arupa said again:

"Sister, now let us cut the cucumber and eat it."

"No, we must sweep the room first," said Mudi.

When they had finished sweeping the younger sister said once more:

"Now we have put the pots away and we have swept the rooms. Let us cut the cucumber then and eat it."

"No, we must sweep under the house first."

When they had done this work Arupa said to Mudi:

"Now we have put away the pots, we swept the rooms, we swept under the house—let's eat the cucumber now."

"No. You must go and play with your friends first. When you come back, we'll eat it."

So Arupa went to play with her small friends. When she returned she said to her sister:

"I have played with my friends. I have come back. Cut your cucumber and let us eat it."

"Oh friend, while you were playing, I cut open the *kapurika* and I found it was not good for eating, so I threw it to a pig and the pig ate it."

Arupa started to cry. She knew that Mudi was telling a lie. She wept and wept. Her parents returned from the garden and tried to stop her crying, but she could not. She cried and cried until her grandmother arrived from the garden:

"Why is Arupa weeping?" she asked.

When she heard the whole story she put Arupa on her back and carried her back to the garden. Then she placed Arupa down in the garden where the cucumbers were many. Arupa ate and ate, and ate. Her stomach grew big and big and big. It was time to return home. Arupa could not walk on her own feet. Grandmother tried to lift her on her back, but she could not. Arupa had become too heavy. So grandmother placed her between some banana trees and covered her with banana leaves. She wanted to come back the next day to get Arupa.

At night, a man-eating spirit came along and smelled his prey. He looked round the garden

and found his meat. He tied her hands and feet and put her on his shoulder and went away. Next morning the man-eater and his wife prepared to boil Arupa alive. They put her in a pot, made fire and then left to get water. Arupa broke the strings that tied her arms and legs. Then she passed waste matter and water in abundance into the pot and quickly climbed up a palm tree. When the couple returned, they found that their meat was overcooked and that not a single bone was left.

"You should have stayed back to look after the meat," the wife said to her husband. However they were hungry and they began to eat the soup. Then they heard a song from a nearby palm tree:

Ina buri isiisi You are eating waste matter
Ina ea isiisi You are eating urine

"I think I hear a bird's song," said the husband.

Ina buri isiisi
Ina ea isiisi

The couple ran out of the house and found Arupa sitting on top of the palm.

"Our food is up there," said the husband. "We have been eating her waste matter and urine."

"How did you get up there?"

"My head downward and my bottom upward," Arupa replied.

The couple tried as she said, but they could not climb the tree. They asked Arupa again:

"How did you get up there?"

"My head first, my bottom last."

The man began to climb the palm tree and his wife followed.

Arupa had sharpened the spines of the palm leaves with a shell. The man-eater was about to place a hand on the lowest branch, when Arupa threw a sharpened branch into his right eye. The man-eater let go and fell, carrying his wife with him. As they writhed in pain on the ground, Arupa quickly came down and cut off their heads. Then she tied the two heads on both ends of a pole and carried the pole across her shoulders, back to the village. As she entered the village, she sang:

Emegi ioro isana man's head first
emegi ioro deni man's head last
oro mila
oro mila
wui!

Her grandmother heard the song and told the children who were playing:

"Hey little ones! Keep quiet for a while. I want to listen to that voice, I am hearing."

Emegi ioro isana
emegi ioro deni
oro mila
oro mila
wui!

"I heard a voice like Arupa's" said the grandmother and ran to meet her. She hugged her and cried.

Arupa buried the heads under the house. A few days later shoots appeared on the spot and they grew into tall trees that produced coconuts.

That's how the coconut came to Mailu. And even today, when you look closely at a husked coconut you can recognise the eyes and mouth of the man-eater.

* * *

In the third year of our stay in Mailu, in the month of July, my mother became very ill. She was expecting twins, but the month for her to give birth had already passed and every one in the village was worried.

Mother had always been active and lively in her way of doing things. I remember her always bright, when she was talking and walking. But now she was sad and she moved slowly. She was not the same mother. She knew that people in the village were worried, and she too became worried and afraid. Some afternoons when we sat around her she looked at us and said: "Children, what will happen to you all, if I go? How would others treat you? Would Father have time to look after you properly?" But all this time Father went about his work as usual and paid little attention to the village people's talk.

There was no hospital nearby to which we could have taken her, where she could have been looked after by nurses. But in the meantime people began to wonder why mother had not given birth at the right time. Many people

thought that because she was the only woman who had gone to a European place and because she owned many things other women did not have, she had been looked at with evil eyes. Jealous women, so people believed, had bewitched her.

In the end some of her relatives sent for the witch doctor, who lived in a neighbouring village, so that he could exorcise whatever evil thing was stopping Mother from delivering. The witch doctor arrived two days after he received the notice. He was a short man with dark skin and with feathers of wild and domestic birds stuck in his bushy hair. He entered the room in which Mother was resting. A dirty old canvas bag was hanging from his shoulder. He stopped and looked at Mother. Then he went up to her and knelt beside her. He opened his bag and the rich smell of aromatic herbs came out of it. He took out some dry leaves and twigs and chewed them into a brown pulp. Then he put his mouth against Mother's and uttered some words which I did not understand. While Mother sat motionless he performed his magical act. After a while he stood away from Mother. With some effort and looking as if he was about to lose his consciousness, he pulled out a yard long strip of cloth from his mouth. It was said that he had extracted it from Mother's stomach and that it had been placed there by the witches in order to punish her, because she had many good clothes that other women did not possess.

The next day the witch doctor took Mother to a nearby creek where she was to wash off the evil that had been cast upon her. Supported by two women she reached the river. There the witch doctor cut two sticks and placed them across the banks of the narrow creek. He tied some fresh leaves on them which just touched the surface of the water. Mother was then instructed to swim under the sticks, following the current of the river. The current was meant to carry away the evil on Mother's body. Then the doctor was paid and returned to his village.

Three days after the magician had gone Mother gave birth to the twins. At first all was well, but on the second day Mother became very weak. A message was sent to her relatives who arrived from a nearby village on the same day. For the next two days the village was very quiet. The children were not allowed to play. The adults went to the garden very early in the morning and hurried back home as soon as they could—expecting the worst. On the third night Mother had little strength left. Throughout the night all her relatives sat around her. Twice Father prayed that Mother might have rest and peace. He understood clearly now that Mother was to leave us soon.

Two fires were lit in the front and the back of the house. The old men and we children sat around these fires. The men smoked and I was thinking: "Will Mother live or will she go? If she goes—I will not see her face again—never hear her voice." I turned my face away from the fire so that others would not see my tears. The night seemed long. Before the first cock crew Mother gained a little strength to talk. She asked for her children to be brought up into the house. She was leaning against Father and as we came close to her she looked at us and said: "Jimmy, John, Dibai, Naomi, Susan . . . my children . . . my children. . . . " She said nothing more to us. She turned to our father and said: "Take me down stairs." But he would not allow her. Then she turned to my uncle and said again: "Take me to the ground." Uncle did not move. Mother wanted to see the street and look around during the last minutes of her stay. My father and uncle both knew this was a clear sign that she would leave us soon. Father prayed again and the first cock crowed and Mother drew her last breath. Father said to her: "Good-bye, we shall never see you again." The relatives who had been weeping quietly now cried loudly. And the women all called out at Mother:

"Come back friend. . . . come back. . . . "

"Oh, you never said a harsh word to your friends . . . . why have you left us!"

"Wake up and cook breakfast for your children . . . . they are hungry . . . . . can't you hear . . . . . wake up. . . . . "

"You are sleeping too long . . . . the sun is up

already . . . . wake up and carry your basket to the garden. . . . . wake up. . . . . "

"Why have you left your children. . . . . don't you love them?"

While some continued to weep softly, others sang the *damorea*, the traditional mourning song in which my mother's good deeds were recalled.

The morning air was still and dull and the sun was covered by clouds. The village people gathered round the house. My mother's red-haired uncle led off a group of men to dig her grave. My father was too exhausted to help them. The women dressed Mother for burial. They combed her hair and anointed her with coconut oil to make her face shine. They put on her favourite white dress—the one she had made at Koitaki and that she had always worn for service. Her body looked very pale, but she looked fresh like a living woman. Her eyes were closed but she seemed to be smiling. The sun was getting high and her brother came in and announced: "The grave is dug and she must now be buried. She is a Christian woman —*Ekalesia avesa*—and she must not sleep here long." They took her out on the verandah and everybody saw her for the last time. She was wrapped in two blankets and three mats and she was carried to the burial place by four men. As she was lowered gently onto the timber floor of the grave Susan, who was three years old, suddenly burst out weeping. For the first time now, as we dropped the earth into the grave she had become aware the loneliness which we, the older ones, had already felt.

When Mother's grave had been levelled and we walked back to the village we felt even sadder than when her body was still with us. I looked back at the grave. I thought that the dark patches of clouds in the sky were sheltering Mother from the heat of the sun. I could picture her vividly in my mind: her small face and bright eyes, her thick dark hair. Her complexion was light and whenever she wanted to look bright she rubbed herself with coconut oil. She parted her hair in the centre, brushing it to both sides. She moved in quick steps and never gave the impression of being tired.

Reaching the house now I heard the cries of the twins, who were being looked after by the woman next door. It was painful to think of her children being nursed by another woman. In the house everything reminded us of her: her cooking pots, her garden basket. For days I tried to avoid the garden—the taros and yams she had planted, the little hut in which she rested.

Father tried to recall us back to life as soon as we reached the house. "We are late, children! You must help me cook the food. Oh—we have no coconut. Jimmy go to your aunt and ask for a coconut. Then scrape it quickly. Naomi, you come and help me to peel the vegetables and you two boys, John and Dibai—go and fill the bucket with water from the river."

The following week Mother's and Father's relatives began to prepare for the funeral feast. Everyday the women came and brought more yams and taros, bananas and sweet potatoes. A special hut was built to store all the food which was piled up on its floor of narrow wooden sticks. The feast was to be held on the Sunday. My father's kinsmen killed six pigs and gave them to my mother's relatives. This was considered to be the last instalment of the bride price. Mother's relatives singed off the bristles from the pigs and cut them to pieces. In the meantime the women and children divided all the bananas and other vegetables and heaped them up in six large piles in a straight line. Four of these *dubus* were for the four family clans. The other two were intended for visitors and mourners from other villages. The uncooked pig meat was also divided up and placed on top of the six *dubus*. The women hurried to the river to carry water, getting ready to cook their share. The sun was beginning to go down and the villagers who had come from afar got impatient.

"Hey! Hadn't you people better hurry up? We must get back to our villages before dark."

But those who were responsible for allocating the food were still trying to make up their mind on who should get the last of the boar's heads.

"Who should have it?" my uncle asked.

"There are the people from Ori and those from Geagea. The people from Geagea are good people, but those from Ori have a reputation for witchcraft."

I thought he would have preferred to give the head to the Geagea people. But in the end he thought it wiser to give it to the visitors from Ori.

At last the names of the different groups were called out:

"People of Ori—come and collect your *dubu*."

"Geagea people! This is yours" and so on. The people set out for their villages and their friends gave them final parting gifts: hunting dogs, armshells, clothes or money.

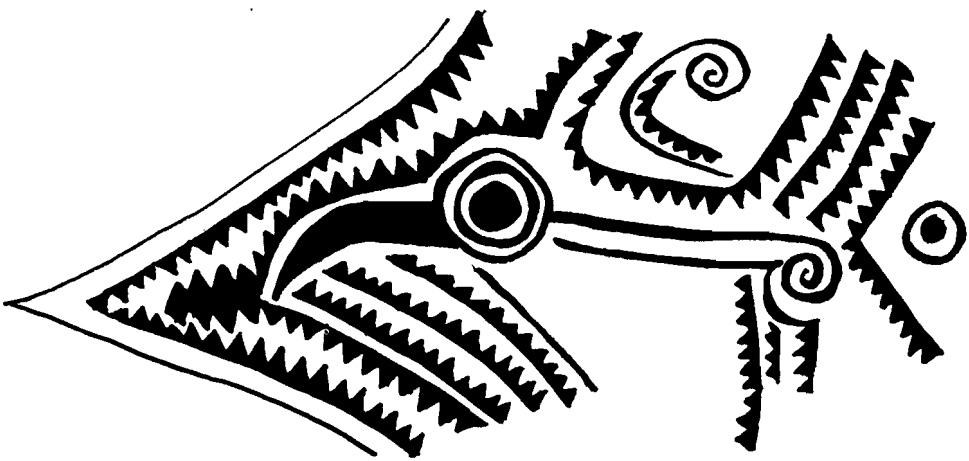
The village was quiet again. Everyone went home to cook his own share of the food. In our house, my father addressed our relatives, thanking them for their help and sympathy.

"I thank you for the feast you have made in memory of these children's mother. I am not asking you to make another feast this time next year, for it will be very hard work for you. All I ask of you is to help me look after these small ones she has left behind."

It was the custom in Mailu to repeat these funeral feasts every year, but my father was a Christian and the Missions had discouraged this custom.

The biggest problem of my father's was to find homes for the twins. In the end they had to be separated: the boy was taken to the mission station and was brought up by Reverend and Mrs. Bache. The girl was taken away by the medical assistant. Now—eleven years later—the boy, Ravu, is living with my father. But the girl grew up without knowing her family. I have not seen her since she was two weeks old.

My father had intended to return to the plantation in Koitaki after three years in Mailu. But when Mother died he could not face the idea of returning to the place where he had lived with her when they were a newly married couple. And so his sorrow has made him stay in the village ever since. On the day of the funeral feast Father promised never to marry again. And he has kept his promise to this day.



FOUR INCANTATIONS

KUMAN (Chimbu)

Apaline, jump, twist,
reflect beauty,
face the East,
from every direction
suitors, suitors searching.
Stretch, stretch arms, legs,
on the mountain.
Lie in the decorated bamboo
with open mouth,
cassowary bones so dry
black feathers, white feathers,
round stones rolling
from South, North, West.

Translated by Theodore Banda

TOREMBI (Sepik)

TO KILL A PIG

My father, my brother,
big teeth, big tusks,
breaking, digging,
  father shut his ear, brother cover his eye.

Mother you listen, you watch out,
hear me not, see me not,
my pig, my pig,
  chewing over there.

Translated by Cyril Kondang

SAPOSA (Solomon Islands)

AEROPLANES

You birds, big and white
you are strange and swift
stiff winged creatures
mocking us from above
Arrows cannot reach you
spears cannot reach you
o ancestors
release your powers
shatter them to pieces.

Translated by Larius Hulo

MUKAWA (Milne Bay)

My hear beats
my heart beats
when I see you, my grandfather.
Your face is red,
your breast is red,
your body is colourful,
you look beautiful.

Lift your wings, let me see them,
show me your head.
Show me your sides
show me your tail
my heart beats
when I see you
my grandfather Yayawe.

Translated by G. Tubuda

WHY WE DO NOT RECEIVE CARGO FROM OUR DEAD RELATIVES

A Binadere story from Tabara village, Northern District, translated by John Douglas Waiko

THERE once lived two brothers, Dandoro and Apa. Dandoro married, but his wife was barren. Apa also married and his wife bore him two attractive daughters, who were named Ababa and Wago. When the girls began to grow up into women, Apa decided to give his elder girl to his brother Dandoro. So Ababa went to live with her uncle.

Ababa remained a virgin. She hated men and refused to sleep with them. All the handsome young men in the village attempted to win her love, but failed. All the magicians made charms to get her, but without any success.

But one night a young man called Ipoda decided to visit her with gifts. "I shall approach her with gifts" said Ipoda, "and I shall marry her for life." He visited Ababa and brought her betel nut, lime, tobacco leaves, tapa cloth, feathers and many other presents. Ababa accepted his gifts but she would not sleep with him.

Ipoda continued to see her often, pleading with her. But Ababa became frightened of him and one day she decided to get rid of him. She split a piece of bamboo and sharpened it, then she hid it under her *topi*, her pandanus leaf mat. She waited until night fell. Ipoda came as usual, bringing more gifts. Ababa invited him to sleep beside her but she insisted that he must not share the same bed. Ababa pretended to be fast asleep. After a little while she heard Ipoda come into her room. He put down his string bag and lay down near her. Soon he fell asleep and he slept like a dead man. Ababa sat up, and making sure that Ipoda was really asleep, she stabbed him with her bamboo knife. Then, leaving the corpse behind, she went into her parents' hut and slept there.

Next morning Dandoro's wife got up to cook the breakfast. She did not notice Ababa, who was lying in a corner of the parents' hut. When she went to wake Ababa she was surprised to see a man lying in Ababa's room. "That is strange," she whispered. "Ababa hates all the fine young men in this village. How did she come to live with this one?" She stopped to shake the young man awake and tell him to leave the house at once. She was frightened when she discovered that the man had been stabbed to death.

Ipoda's parents came to take away the corpse. They placed him on a bier on the verandah of their house and all their relatives came to weep and mourn over him. They brought many things that Ipoda would need in his life after death: a spear, tapa cloth, string bags, food and shell money. His body was wrapped in a big tapa cloth, his head was decorated with bird of paradise feathers, and a head band studded with dog's teeth was tied on his forehead. His bier was decorated with croton leaves.

Meanwhile Ababa prepared her things to

accompany Ipoda to the country of the dead.

"Men were born for women and women for men," she said to her sister Wago. "I have killed a man who is innocent. So I shall go wherever Ipoda is going." Ababa waited until the men came to take Ipoda to his grave. Then she left the house. She went to wait on a certain road, because she knew that the dead people travelled on it. Ababa collected two *uwapa* leaves, they were colourful and beautiful to look at. She climbed on to a *degi* tree that was bent, forming an arch over the road. There she sat and waited for Ipoda.

From a distance Ababa saw Ipoda coming from the east and dancing towards the north. He was dancing towards her. Ababa watched him carefully. She saw him bending over to the left, then to the right, to let the earth drop off his ears. Ipoda danced to the place where Ababa was sitting. Again he bent to the left, to shake the earth from his ear. Then Ababa dropped one of the two *uwapo* leaves. Ipoda picked it up and said: "You are delightful to look at and beautiful. You look like Ababa whom I loved so much. I desired her, but she stabbed me to death."

He put the leaf into his string bag and began dancing towards north. Then Ababa dropped the second leaf. Ipoda picked it up and said again: "Leaf! o *uwapo* leaf! Where did you drop from? I have a lover like you, but I had to leave her behind." Saying so he looked up and to his great surprise he saw Ababa sitting on the *degi* tree. "Where are you going?" he asked her.

"You were born for me, and I was born for you. I have made a great mistake in stabbing you to death. I shall follow you, to wherever you are going."

"No," replied Ipoda without hesitation. "Never before has such a thing happened. The living have never been able to enter the country of the dead. You cannot travel with me on this road. Therefore I beg you to return to your home." But Ababa ignored him. She jumped down from the tree and began to follow him. "I beg you to return home," Ipoda said again. "Maybe you want this string bag. Take it, and go back." Ababa took the string bag, but she continued to walk with him. Then Ipoda said again: "Maybe you came because you wanted this tapa cloth. Take it and return." But again Ababa took the cloth and refused to return. One by one, Ipoda gave her all his funeral gifts, pleading with her. In the end he gave her the croton leaf from his bier.

"I have given you all I have. I can do no more," he said. "But now you must really go." But Ababa said: "No, it was entirely my fault, that is why I cannot leave you now." As they were arguing thus, the couple came to a deep hole in the ground. "That is the road on which I am travelling," said Ipoda. "That is the road on which I am travelling as well," said Ababa. Then at last Ipoda gave up pleading with her and agreed to take his lover with him to the country of the dead. "This hole marks the boundary between the living and the dead. I shall do my best to take you with me into the country of the dead, but you must follow all my instructions carefully. Walk in front and I shall wipe out your footprints."

Then Ababa planted the croton at the side of the hole, and she went ahead as she was told. They journeyed together for a long time until they came near to a village of the dead. There was a garden near the entrance to the village and tall sugar cane was growing there. Then Ipoda opened one of the bundles that had been neatly tied together. He made Ababa stand in the middle of it and then carefully tied it together again.

Ipoda entered the village of the dead. He was received with great joy, and he was directed towards the house of his dead uncle. Ipoda stayed with them until evening, answering questions about the world of the living he had just left. In the end he asked to know who was the owner of the garden near the entrance of the village. "It is ours," said his aunt. "We made that garden. We have already harvested the yams, the bananas and the taro, but we kept the sugar cane especially for you." Then Ipoda asked his uncle to bring him a bundle of sugar cane. "Bring the one that stands near the road, under the *dunga* tree. Cut it close to

the ground and bring it home intact." His uncle brought the bundle and placed it in Ipoda's hut. When everyone else had gone to sleep he opened it and let Ababa out. But the problem was that Ababa still had the features and skin colour of a living person and would easily have been recognised as such.

Next morning therefore Ipoda prepared magic leaves and boiled them in a large pot. Then he told Ababa to bathe in the pot. Then her skin colour and features became like those of the dead. From now on they could live openly together.

Ipoda made love to Ababa and in due time she gave birth to a son, whom she called Wasiri, that means "living". And the boy grew up with his parents in the village of the dead.

Ababa told her son the secret of how they came to be in the village of the dead. "We do not really belong to this village," she told him. "We are strangers here, because we belong to another village. Therefore we must be very careful not to annoy the natives of this village. Be friendly with everyone. Because if we shall cause any trouble here, we shall be killed and eaten." Wasiri grew up with the dead children. He played with them and ate with them. But one morning he forgot about his mother's advice. That day he went to the river with Betari, one of the dead boys. They played a game to see who could stay under the water longest. First Betari took hold of Wasiri and held his head under the water. He held him down so long, that Wasiri nearly drowned. Then Wasiri decided to get his revenge on Betari. Now it was his turn. Angrily he pushed Betari under water and held him there until he was drowned. Then he pulled Betari onto the the river bank and ran home to tell his mother about the accident.

Ababa was greatly alarmed. "I have always told you that we are strangers in this village. Any time now, these people will come and eat us. Therefore, before this news is spread to the east and west, the north and south of this village, we must escape to our original home." So immediately they rushed into their garden and picked the seeds of the *kewa* banana and put them in a string bag and they left the dead people's village and set out on the road for the land of the living. Ababa urged her son to walk faster. "If the accident has become known, someone is sure to pursue us." They had already crossed two mountains, but between them and the boundary there was one more mountain and a creek to cross.

But already the dead body of Betari had been discovered and his mother was pursuing them hotly. Now she was standing on top of the mountain and looking down on Ababa and Wasiri she shouted: *"Egoma mane,* hey, where are you going? You have drowned my son, and now you are fleeing for your lives! You shall never be allowed to return to the country of the living."

Then Wasiri was greatly frightened but his mother told him: "Take a *kewa* seed and plant it by the side of the road." Wasiri planted the seed and it grew immediately and bore ripe fruit that instant. And Ababa urged her son to run faster.

When Betari's mother reached the banana tree she stopped to eat. She ate all the bananas and this gave Ababa and Wasiri an opportunity to gain some ground. But soon Betari's angry mother caught up with them again, and Wasiri had to plant another seed. Thus they kept their enemy at bay by planting many banana seeds and in this manner they managed to cross the third mountain. Now only the creek remained, and they had only one seed left. Just as they reached the bank of the creek they planted the last seed. The hungry woman stopped once more to eat the bananas, while Ababa and her son were wading through the water. When Betari's mother had finished the last banana she rushed after her enemies again, but it was too late. Ababa and Wasiri had crossed the boundary into the land of the living. Betari's mother could not follow them there, because she did not have the skin belonging to living people. So she returned to her village to mourn for her son who was drowned.

Meanwhile Ipoda waited in his house for

his wife and son to return from the garden. He became rather worried when they had not returned after dark, but in the end his aunt came and told him what had happened.

The news made Ipoda very sad. He rose and followed the path Ababa and Wasiri had taken. In the end he reached the village of the living and saw that there the people were very excited over the return of Ababa. Ipoda stayed in the bush, observing everything. But when everybody went to sleep he entered Ababa's hut and woke her up. Ababa wept when she heard the familiar voice of her beloved husband.

"Cry no more," Ipoda said. "You shall not labour and sweat in this world. I shall always provide you with cargo. You will want nothing and have a life of ease. But remember one thing: you must always collect my cargo at early dawn, before everybody else wakes up from sleep."

From then on Ipoda brought loads of cargo every night for his wife and son. Ababa collected everything long before anybody else woke up and she and her son never worked for a living.

However, one morning it happened that Ababa overslept and she could not collect her cargo before the others awoke. People were amazed to see a great heap of cargo near the village. They were all coming out of their houses gathering round the strange sight. Now Ababa was ashamed to pick up her cargo in front of everybody. So she stayed in the house all day.

In the night Ipoda brought fresh cargo, but was dismayed when he discoved that the previous cargo had not been collected. Then he knew that Ababa had not carried out his instructions. He went to his wife's hut. Ababa had been unable to sleep that night. Ipoda said to her: "You have failed to collect your cargo and in this way I have been revealed to your people." Ababa pleaded with him: "Forgive me," she said, "I know that I have done great wrong." But Ipoda said: "I am known to your people and the cargo has been revealed. I cannot come anymore. Had you obeyed my words, my people would have come to supply your entire village with cargo. But now you and your people and their descendants will have to earn their living with hard work and sweat. Never again will a dead person come here to bring you cargo."

Ipoda went away and never returned. And to this day the living have never again received cargo from the dead.

NOTE ON THE VIGNETTES

The designs of the vignettes in this issue were derived from *Marupai* of the Papuan Gulf. A Marupai is a carved dwarf coconut. Its natural shape suggests an animal head with slightly gaping mouth. The Marupai is used as a magical object. It is carved with a pair of eyes and a pattern. The owner then carries it to the bank of a creek and suspends it from an arrow that is stuck in the ground. He then waits patiently at a distance and watches out for the first animal that passes underneath it or flies over it. The Marupai will be named after this animal and is said to derive its power from it. The owner of the Marupai will be protected by the animal as long as he refrains from either killing or eating the species. Marupai are said to be crocodiles, fish, pigs, birds, flying foxes, lizards or even centipedes.

yam." And she had to explain to him how to eat them: "These we have to cook. These we eat raw." Evarapo was proud of his wife. "What a beautiful woman she is."

Hitovea sat on one of the trees and looked down on Lakekavu planting trees. And he spied everything. He noticed the man, he saw how tall he was; he noticed that he carried a spear, but that he had no bow and arrows. Evarapo's spears were made from the dead logs that had been swept ashore.

Then Hitovea made a noise and flew away. Lakekavu saw him flying and she told her husband: "We are in trouble. Someone has discovered us."

But Evarapo was stupid: "O no—there is no other person. You are the only person who has ever come here."

"But it was one of my brothers."

"Show him to me."

"You cannot see him. It is one of my brothers. He flies like a bird."

Hitovea went back to Kivavia. Kivavia was sick, he was lying near the fire place. Hitovea took off his bird's skin and entered Kivavia's house. Hitovea talked about this and that. Kivavia did not ask him about his trip. He had forgotten all about Lakekavu at the moment. He said to Hitovea at last:

"What brought you to my house today?"

"I am just looking for some flying fox bones. I want to mend my little daughter's string bag."

Hitovea took the bones and went. But before he left he put one of his arrows among the arrows of Kivavia. When he had gone some distance into the bush, Hitovea called out at his brother: "I forgot one of my arrows! Come and bring it to me."

"Come back and collect it!"

"No you come and bring it. I am a single minded person: when I set out in one direction, nothing will make me turn back."

Then Kivavia took the arrow to him. He handed it to Hitovea.

"Don't give it to me!"

"It's yours! You have it!"

"No, no, you hold on to it: I have found Lakekavu!"

Hitovea had to lure Kivavia into the bush before discussing such an important matter.

Then he told him what Lakekavu was doing. He told him how big the man was, what his weapons were and that he was stupid.

Kivavia went to his house. Next morning he got up and made more bows and arrows and he got into his canoe and paddled down the river, until he came to Evarapo's beach. When he saw the trees he said: "Lakekavu has stolen our trees and has planted them on foreign land."

Then he hid himself and killed his sister with an arrow and returned home.

Evarapo was very sad. He buried his wife. Then he cut the Hia tree and carved an Hohao board, in which he kept Lakekavu's spirit.

Hitovea went to visit Kivavia to find out about his trip. Again they talked about everyday things. Again Hitovea left, leaving one of his arrows behind. Then he called back to Kivavia to bring it to him. At last, when they were alone in the bush, Kivavia said: "I killed our sister!"

Hitovea went to his house. Next morning he flew down once more to Evarapo's beach. There he saw Evarapo with the Hohao of Lakekavu.

Hitovea returned to Kivavia. He said: "You have killed Lakekavu. But you have not killed her completely. Her spirit went into the Hia tree. She is still living with Evarapo."

Kivavia went back to his house and made new weapons. The next day he got into his canoe and paddled down Purari river. When he got to the beach, he turned east until he met Evarapo. They fought for a long time. Evarapo was very strong, but he was stupid. So in the end Kivavia killed him. Then he took the Hohao and he carried his sister's spirit back to her own clan.

Note: Kivavia and Lakekavu are the *aualari* (or mythical ancestors) of the *Ive Kaive* clan in Orokolo, in the Papuan gulf. Evarapo is the *aualari* of the Namau people who live to the west of Orokolo.
Hohao are oval shaped boards, mostly carved from the sides of broken canoes. They are said to house the spirit of an *aualari* and are decorated with a highly stylized face and abstract patterns representing the clan symbols.

HOW THE MOON CAME INTO BEING

Translated by Peter Manup

LONG ago in the Upper Sepik a man had a large garden of "apika". He weeded the garden constantly and looked forward to a plentiful harvest.

One morning when he visited the garden he saw something which surprised him greatly. Half his crop had been stolen and carried away. Only a village of people could have accomplished this. He traced many footprints to the base of a huge tree standing in the centre of his garden. The man was mystified and returned to his village, keeping this event to himself.

The following morning he took up watch near the garden. To his amazement he saw beautiful girls coming out of the tree. The girls emerged in order of age, led by the youngest. The man kept still and counted them carefully. They gathered up the remaining "apika", and re-entered the tree, the oldest girl last of all. The man waited a few moments, then he ran to his village.

He went straight to the men's house, and related all that had happened. A public meeting was called, and once again the man recounted his story in detail. The villagers decided to chop down the tree and to kill and eat the girls. Bananas, yams, taro, sago and other foods were collected for the great feast.

The appointed day came and all the villagers flocked into the garden. Strong young men tore at the dead flesh of the tree with their axes. When it fell every man stepped onto it and began stripping and cutting it into small pieces. They found and killed the girls, piling them onto the ground near the tree. The villagers watched happily, while the owner of the garden checked and counted each girl. The youngest was found on the tip of a branch, and the others in order of age below her. The oldest girl was found last of all in the tap root.

Old wise leaders were called upon to distribute the girls, and the villagers returned home with their share of the kill. In the village there was much noise as preparations for the feast were made. An old woman who was making pottery under a house had no appetite for feasting. She had been given the oldest girl. She turned a pot upside-down and placed the girl beneath it. When she had completed her work she lifted the pot, and jumped away with fear. The body of the girl was illuminated. It grew larger and brighter until the whole of the surrounding area was brightly lit. The old woman tried to seize it but it moved away up into the sky. The feasting villagers fled into their houses. Some men ran to question the old woman. They stood watching while the body rose higher and higher, growing ever brighter. Finally it became fixed and stopped moving. One by one the villagers crept out and stared at the monster shining down on them.

The old woman wanted some young men to climb up and bring the body back to her. She told them to bring many long bamboos and connect them together. She sat down cross-legged and the bamboos were erected on both sides of her neck between the collar-bone and the shoulders. Three men started the long climb. Then a mosquito stung the old woman and she moved her head. The bamboos broke and the three men fell and were killed. More bamboos were connected and another three men began climbing. They too were killed when the old woman moved her head. Then two men started up, one on each side. They

reached the moon. They discovered that the moon was as huge as the earth itself, and there was no hope of getting down.

After a few days the men's supply of food ran out. They began to eat their tapa cloth. Then they saw a flock of flying foxes passing by with a bundle of sago leaves for the roof of a house. They begged to be carried down to earth. The flying foxes said they would return, but the men waited in vain.

One man decided to jump down. If he reached earth safely, and after he had feasted on sago and pig meat, he would beat the "garamut" with a special rhythm. Then his friend would know he had arrived safely. By evening the friend had heard no sound of the garamut. The night passed, and the man on the moon was wakened by the flapping of wings. It was the flying foxes. Again he begged to be carried to earth. Each promised to return, but did not. At last the smallest flying fox agreed to help him. The animal flew home and told his wife to prepare a meal of sago and pig meat. He got a bunch of betel nuts and ginger, some coconuts and a new tapa cloth, and put these with his wife's meal into a billum. Then he flew back to the man.

When the man had dressed himself and satisfied his hunger, the flying fox told him to hang on his back, without holding his wings. Then they set out. The man told the flying fox to set him down on the fruit tree at the back of his house. They landed on the tree, and the man instructed his helper to wait there. He would make a feast in his honour, and decorate him with gifts of shell money to take back to his wife on the moon.

The man's wife and sons ran to meet him. He said that he had jumped down. Then he took his wife into the forest to make sago. When about to eat he saw blood and black paint in the bowl of spongy sago. He knew his sons had killed the flying fox. He pretended to be sick and pushed the sago away.

The three sons had found the flying fox hanging in the tree. They took their father's bow and arrows from the house. The oldest brother shot first and missed. The second brother also missed. When it was the turn of the youngest, the oldest brother pulled the bow away from him, saying he was too full of sores and not fit to shoot. The youngest boy went to the toilet. Instead of waste a spear-lever and instead of urine a spear came out. He took aim with the spear-lever and spear. His first shot pierced the chest. The two older brothers were amazed. They cooked the flying fox and left it in the pot for their parents. When the man and his wife returned, the sons boasted of their deed. The father ignored them and went straight into his sleeping basket.

At midnight the man got up. He tramped heavily on the floor to make sure his wife, his sons, and their dogs were fast asleep in the other sleeping basket. Then he collected food, cooking pots and knives, and placed them in his canoe. He lifted the heavy basket containing his wife and children, and put it in the centre of the canoe. He secured the opening of the basket with ropes. Finally he put a big fire stick into the canoe.

He pushed the canoe out and dragged it back with a white weeping. He pushed the canoe out again and dragged it back with a red weeping. He did the same a third time, with a black and final weeping. The fourth time he gave a hard push, and took his hands off. He turned away and went home, weeping bitterly.

The canoe drifted down river. Just before dawn a land breeze ruffled the water, and wet the sleeping basket. The mother stirred, and felt with her hand to see if a child or dog had urinated. She felt no wetness and was puzzled. Then she noticed the movement of the canoe, and the sound of splashing water. She woke her sons and dogs, and cut the ropes with a shell knife. The opening fell away. She saw they were many miles down river in a strange country. She told her sons their father was angry and had sent them away because they had killed the flying fox. They became frightened and shivered in the morning cold.

The woman saw smoke rising from a fire under a men's house nearby. There were several men warming their bodies. She told her

biggest dog, Auroapa, to take a fire stick in his nostril. If the men asked him for the fire he should shake his tail. The dog swam over and did as he was told. The men were pleased with the dog's ability, and gave him a fire stick, but the fire was put out by the small waves. The second time the men tied the fire stick onto the dog's tail. He reached the canoe with the fire still burning, and the woman cooked food.

The woman told her sons she had a brother living underwater somewhere down the river. She threw the fruit of a wild tree into the waters of various smaller rivers flowing into the Sepik River. If the fruit did not float, it would signify that her brother lived underneath. After five throws the canoe entered a small river. The woman paddled one hundred feet up this river and threw the fruit again. The fruit disappeared.

The woman tied a long piece of rope onto her arm and gave the other end to her sons. If she met her brother she would tie a bunch of betel nut and ginger onto the rope. When the rope slackened they should pull it up. If nothing was attached they should paddle away and seek their own safety. If something was attached they should capsize the canoe and follow her.

The woman dived into the water and landed on the roof of her brother's house. He told his wife to investigate the noise, and they erected a ladder for the woman to descend. She related all that had happened. She chewed betel nut and ginger, and attached the remains to the rope. The sons pulled it up. They capsized the canoe, and, together with the dogs and their possessions, landed on the roof of their uncle's house. They lived there for some time.

After a long period the father became lonely. He followed the journey made by his family. He threw a carved spear into the waters to detect where his family was. When he came to the spot, the spear did not refloat. It buried itself in his wife's leg. She knew this was her husband, and cried to her brother to kill the owner of the spear. The brother told her to take her husband into the house and comfort him.

The woman packed up her possessions and moved with her children into another house in the village. When her husband moved into that house, she moved into another. This continued until finally the woman's brother recited a charm which changed the woman's attitude. Then she and her children were re-united with her husband, and they lived happily together.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE:

Nearly all contributors to this issue of KOVAVE are students of the University of Papua and New Guinea. Albert Maori Kiki is secretary of the PANGU PATI and author of an autobiography: *Ten Thousand Years in a Life Time* (Pall Mall, London '68; Cheshire, Canberra, '68) John Hakena is a magistrate. Reuben Yowana is a student at Goroka Teachers' College. Michael Kuaru was a student at Brandi High School. His poem was first published in *Kanimbie*, the school magazine. Vincent Eri is an education officer, at present taking a degree at the University.

The incantations and the Songs of Death were translated by preliminary year students of the University of Papua and New Guinea as an assignment in Literature.

TAPURA SPRING

Today is dry
Tomorrow cloudy
Yesterday a thunderstorm:
All come and go.
Tapura is timeless.

Fruit ripen and rot,
Pitpit flowers and dries,
Man arrives today
He is gone tomorrow:
Tapura is timeless.

Sun and earth confer,
Day and night confer,
Sun hurries the day,
Day hurries the night.
Tapura is timeless.

Sun, earth, day, night,
All twist man's arm,
All hurry him along.
Man arrives today
He is gone tomorrow:
Tapura is timeless.

Translated by Karipe Pitzz from Huli

CHANT FOR THE DEAD

Hold on to the rope
for the eagle leads the way
and my canoe goes faster.
I weep with joy over the sea.

Translated by Julie Watson from Kiriwina

MOURNING SONG OF THE OVALA IRU CLAN

Thunder! Thunder! It says to us:
You Ovala Iru birds,
anger is bad
jealousy is a curse
We brothers,
we sons,
let us be happy.
When death separates us
you'll never call us brothers or sons again.

Translated by Daniel Galama from Maopa

LAMENT

Twilight sits by twilight
Hum my song, softly sweetly,
Song of a royal child.

Terrace, bird of terrace,
when silent evening falls,
I cry sadly in loneliness.

Translated by Reuben Yowana from Kiriwina

My child, my child,
flown from my womb,
I cared for you,
my child born for death.

Translated by Saimon Kunai from Kuanua

TREE WALLABY'S SONG

When I went with mother
Our eyes ever fell on bananas.
When I went with mother
Our pouches were always full.
Where is mother gone?
I will sit here to know—
River Laneme, help! Lament not.

Translated by Pokwari Kale from Euga

THE BOY

Father, you don't love me, eh?
Then let's go and search the evening shark
the shark that ate my poor mother
the shark that haunts the sea at night.
But you won't kill it
I will kill it
because I love my mother
but you don't.

Translated by Morea Veri from Motu

Sandpiper, your wife was killed by the sea.
She was washed to the South by the flood
She was buried on the floor of the ocean.
She sat on a stone in the river
But the stone was washed away.

The river rushed down from the mountain
Your wife was washed down to the South
She was buried among red coral.
She sat on the reed in the river
But the reed was swept away.

Translated by John Bito from Buin

"CAUTIOUSLY ADVANCE ATOMIC AGE" : A PAPUAN PILOT POET

by Ulli Beier

THE term "pilot poets" was invented by J. P. Clark to describe the first generation of West African poets whose work was characterised by good intentions and no imagination. They were all earnest citizens, deeply concerned with the welfare of their country. Some were politicians, and they had a message. Their poetry was to be rousing and inspiring. They spoke in the language of rhetoric and sometimes of the harangue. Characteristically, many of them were published in the columns of the "West African Pilot", the first nationalist newspaper in Nigeria. Today we look at them as interesting figures in the social and political history of West Africa, rather than as forerunners of modern African literature. Many of the pilot poets were eminently successful as politicians or civil servants. The themes of their versifications were to occupy the minds of African writers for some time to come: the conflict of cultures, an examination of the African past, the fight against colonialism etc. But the pilot poets were writers without poetic imagination. If they had any inspiration at all, it was derived from the Anglican hymn book. They were all good citizens and patriots, but they were also living proof of Robert Graves' saying that "in poetry good intentions count for nothing."

All emerging nations seem to throw up a few "pilot poets" before genuine writers emerge. Papua is no exception: it has Allan Natachee, the first Papuan "poet" ever to get into print.

Natachee comes from the Mekeo tribe who are reputed to be the proudest and most tradition conscious Papuans. Even in Port Moresby, the capital, these aloof people grow their hair into very large balloon shapes in the traditional manner. It is extremely rare to see one of them in European clothes. They prefer to wear the "laplap": a cloth loosely wrapped round the hips that reaches down to the ankles. The Mekeos are reputed to dislike Europeans, to despise some aspects of modern living and they are feared by other Papuans for their alleged aggressiveness. None of this is reflected in Allan Natachee's poetry.

Natachee writes like someone set aside from his people, like a man with prophetic vision, who is trying to enlighten his fellow countrymen who still live in darkness. Life set him aside indeed: for as a small boy he lost his parents, was educated by the nuns, and taught to despise the traditional way of his people. His extraordinary name is that of a red Indian war chief, who figured in the nun's literature class. Allan, whose real name is Avaisa Pinongo, was nicknamed Natachee after the hero of a cowboy-and-Indian story that was the young boy's first introduction to fiction. When he finished primary school, the war broke out and prevented him from getting further education. He was recruited as a carrier for the Army, but the commanding officer of the unit he was attached to considered him too young and sent him straight back home. He spent the war working on a plantation. When the war was over, he tried to lead his people towards a better life and started a "cargo cult movement" in his village. The cargo cult, common in many parts of Papua and New Guinea, basically believes that the white man's superior way of life cannot be attained by Papuans, because the white man is keeping some essential secret to himself. The only way to learn the secret is from the dead, and material welfare can there-

fore be achieved only through ritualistic means and not simply by hard work and economics. Natachee's movement quickly collapsed. He was accused of being a fraud and a court case was threatened. Natachee left his village, came to Port Moresby where he has been working as a labourer and carpenter ever since. In more than one sense, therefore, Natachee feels that he is a man set apart. He takes no pride in being a Mekeo, cuts his hair short and wears only European clothes. But his isolation is compensated for by his sense of mission. He feels the vocation of the poet, almost like a Romantic of the nineteenth century, and there is a kind of inner glow, a transfixed look in his eyes. Once he told me that his wife left him, shortly after she gave birth to a son, but it did not matter. She was unable to understand what it meant to be a poet. She had wanted him to spend his time more lucratively, but Natachee clearly set poetry above domestic bliss. This was just one of many sacrifices he had to bring on the long road towards becoming Papua's leading poet.

The poet-prophet Natachee sings of the new age:

"courageously advance atomic age, step by step
and crush under your foot our stone age . . "
"hark and behold, our stone age is swaying groaning
under your mighty steps of pain . . "

Natachee gives us little indication of the blessings he is expecting for himself or his people from the atomic age; but he is quite unequivocal about his condemnation of the past, when "our ancestors (were) lying fast asleep" and when

"no suns had streamed, no moons had quivered
upon our land . . "

His land to him is "our land of countless dark ages", the past is referred to as "days of yore when the killer was believed the bravest of the brave" and tradition is "none but worthless heathen rubbish."

Contempt for the past goes hand in hand with admiration for the white man: "restless he is indeed and kind and just." For black nationalism Natachee has no time at all:

"O why must Brother White be driven away from Brother Brown whom he has made well?
What sort of wrong has Brother White done unto Brother Brown of savagery?"

His praise of Britain is embarrassing in its naivety:

"Now in joyful tears to my fellow Papuans I shall unfold
That without the great and just Britain we could have been made slaves.
She has prevented other nations from doing us harm."

Future generations of Papuans will undoubtedly despise him for such sentiments. For the time being, however, Natachee enjoys some measure of success. Early in his career he found Australian "patrons" who boosted his writing and had his poems broadcast over the Australian Broadcasting Corporation network.

More recently Natachee has been awarded a gold medal by the "International Association of Poet Laureates", a somewhat weird organisation whose headquarters are in the Philippines.

What is interesting about Natachee is not that he is a bad poet, nor that his bad poetry has brought some success. The question that intrigued me from the start was: what made this charming man, who is sincere, but without the gift of language, want to write? What made him become a poet? How did he get this image of himself as the man who wanders forlorn in a special world of his own to which his fellow men have no access?

I had heard about Allan Natachee from an Australian poet, Jim Burns, sometime before coming to Papua and New Guinea and I wrote to him from Nigeria telling him, that I was coming to teach literature in his country, that I was interested to meet him later on, and in the meantime, could he tell me what made him start to write poetry?

His reply was a charming document, and far more moving than any of his poems. I think it is worthwhile quoting it here in full:

Professor Ulli Beier,

How glad I was when I received your letter yesterday THURS., 23-3-67. Therefore I thank you with great respect because you have been humble enough to write to me an unworthy Papua-New Guinean like me.

Well, your name was made known to me by the poet (James Burns) or Jim Burns. Therefore, you are indeed not a stranger to me. For I could have met you that time—but the letter from Jim Burns reached me too late. But remember that you are a Professor and I am nothing.

Although I am nothing, I shall try hard and do my best to help you when you come here to Papua New Guinea to teach, literature at the University of Papua New Guinea.

A long time ago we used to say Papua & New Guinea and it still exists to this day. Now we are talking about how to give one name to Papua N.-G. that is to replace Papua and New Guinea with a new name.

Well, what I am suggesting might never be but as a matter of fact, I think that the 'AND' should be omitted. Instead of saying Papua and New Guinea, we should say Papua New Guinea. By Papua New Guinea I mean:

An Imported Name to Stay

Our Island lies in the Pacific Ocean,
In times past and unknown there was no motion.
Our fathers gave her no name,
But not on them the blame!

The name of the land of our birth is Papua New Guinea!
An imported name and may it ever be,
Papua New Guinea for Aye!
Change not her name in any way!
But Papua New Guinea to stay!

Though sons of Papua New Guinea may change with time,
of earthly civilisations marching time!
But take a backward glance and see,
True sons of Papua New Guinea,
Savage and fuzzy as can be!

O sons of Papua New Guinea let us be proud,
That we are none but Australian crowd:
We were despised and forsaken,
By many upon their ken,
Yet Australia she has taken!

This might never be,—but a jest for the man of tomorrow. This "Papua New Guinea."

Very well, you might wonder how I came to love poetry and started writing it.

Well, it was through one of England's poet, Lord Tennyson's poem in 1935 while I was in school (a Catholic mission.) It was on a scrap of paper thrown away by the nuns. This is how it went:

"While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave,
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairylands forlorn."

This was all, and no more. It drove me into composing poetry. As soon as I read it,—it clung to my mind day and night. I could not forget it.

After three days I wrote a line like this:

"I am a poor beggar and roam around the world to find a shade to dwell."

I left it at that. I was only ten years of age at that time and year of 1935. I will be fourty two years old by 16th July 1967 this year.

Then in 1939 when I was fourteen years old, I composed a poem which I called: RIVER OF KNOWLEDGE

From out the source where all existence and noble qualities flow,
From there indeed all outstanding men have come forth down here below
Generation after generation these men may come and go!
But known and yet unseen river of knowledge shall flow.

I left it at that for about a month. You might not believe me but it is quite true. For when I was only 5 years old my mother died. So the Roman Catholic Mission Nuns took me, cared for me and taught me how to pray, how to speak, read and write English, for they were English people or Nuns.

Very well, during that month I composed another poetry which I called "STONE AGE MAN":

The time is not so far,
Mortal just as you are,
Somewhere you will all meet,
Somewhere you will all greet,
An ancient stone age man . . . . . etc.

As soon as I finished with the "Stone Age Man", I returned to continue with RIVER OF KNOWLEDGE.

Very well, I am glad that you have been able to contact me and I thank the poet Jim Burns for his good will in helping us to meet by our pens.

I will also write to him and let him know that our pens had met.

Thanking you for your estimable services ever and hoping to hear from you soon.

Respectfully yours,
Allan Natachee

Undoubtedly, there have been many victims of culture contact before Allan Natachee, many others whose spirit was crushed by an insensitive missionary effort. I doubt, whether anybody has ever been such a charming and sincere witness to his own misfortune as Natachee is in this letter. If this pathetic piece of biography can be so moving, what kind of a man could Natachee have been, if he had grown up in his own culture, or if he had—alternatively—been given the opportunity of furthering his education to enable him to fully digest and critically examine the wisdom of the "atomic age?" Here is a man with a big heart, and genuine sincerity, left helplessly hanging between two worlds, and hopelessly admiring the one he cannot understand.

When I met Natachee many months after receiving this letter, I could not help pressing him for more information. Was there no other poetic experience? Something he could remember from the days *before* he was picked up by the mission?

"Well", he said, "when I was 3 or 4 years old I used to hear the older people singing. Then when they stopped singing, I used to sing just what they had done. They were very surprised in hearing me singing. I was very fond of smearing my body with red native paint. The song I first learned to sing was one of the war songs. It bears the name of the god Aia.

Aia on the road he walks!
Aia all naked,
On the road he walks!

Aia my hand is faultless!
Aia all naked,
My hand is faultless.

Aia you shake your spear!
Aia all naked,
You shake your spear.

Aia in war decoration!
Aia all naked,
In war decoration!

Then my poor mother died and I was taken to the nuns. There were no more war songs for me. . . . "

I have since succeeded to persuade Allan Natachee to collect and translate some of the ancient songs of his village. He has produced a small collection of great simplicity and great beauty:

AIA THE CREATOR

Water all over
all all over
darkness all over
all all over.

Aia sitting seated
Aia living alive

Aia sitting seated
sitting forever
Aia living alive
living forever

Aia without beginning
Aia without end

Above the water
Aia has lived
Aia has watched
above the darkness
Aia has lived
Aia has watched

Aia creator of our earth
Aia creator of our home

Creator of earth
creator creating
creator of home
creator creating

By mouth wind of Aia
we were made
by lip wind of Aia
we were made

Eater eating
things all things
things above
things below

Aia lighting alight
lighting our earth
lighting our home

Aia lighting all over
lighting all our earth
Aia lighting all over
lighting all our home

Alas, such beautiful "stone age poetry" has been "crushed under foot" by the "atomic age advancing courageously". Allan Natachee himself celebrates the "mighty steps of pain" and with the "atomic age" he too is "advancing, step by step" from the purity of the Mekeo creation song to the trivialities of "Brother White and Brother Brown."

PIDGIN SONGS

Time me look so very young
Allo people i wandim me
And alogeter wandim talko too much longo me
But time me ready for die
No more man i save come longo me
No more man i save wandim talko lelebiti longo me.

Mummy and my Daddy
Come sit down withim me
Sorry and karai kasim me now
Oh Mummy and my Daddy
Come say good bye longo me
Time bilongo me for die come kolosap now.

Ande alogeta leavim me
No more man i save come longo me
No good all i kasim sikinis i kasim me
Oh my angel up in heaven
Come down and pick up me
No good all i makim foolu too much longo me.

Collected by Leo Morgan

Taim mi skul meri
mi laik mariti
mariti finsi
mi hatu waka tumasi

Hatu waka tumasi
mi go kukim kaikai
manki i karai
mino savi silipi.

Collected by Leo D. Laita

Wiliwil blong mi i gutpela
mikisim nau, na mi sin daun
mi taitim strong, mi run long en
long ologeta ples.

I gat onepela motoka
i buggerup, na mi kin run
wiliwil blong mi i gutpela
i run more huriup.

I gat onepela titsaboi
i skulim mi long ABC
na hed blong mi i pas tumas
bikos i gat kaskas.

Collected by John Hakena

No matter you have many kind colour
no matter you have many kind colour
Kikiriki insaiti longo you
no matter mi look u rabisi
that's the way mi no kasim you

The God men say when die that Jesus came
to save our sins and let us know
the right from wrong and in his name
to die and into heaven go—
might be, might be,—I don't know.

The God men say, when die go sky,
through pearly gates where river flows
the God men say when die we fly
just like eagle hawk and crow
might be, might be—I don't know.

poem by an Australian Aborigine

EM ROD BILONG KAGO

A one act play
by Leo Hannet

SCENE I

This scene takes place in the house of RAMRAM *and his wife* TANDE. TANDE *is sitting on the floor near the fire place sobbing incessantly over the death of her father who has just been buried. The husband is standing further away.*

RAMRAM: Taim bilong yumi i pinis nau,
Yumi wet long dai tasol.

Mi sanap sori, na meri bilong mi i krai.
O sori, sori, meri tru bilong mi
Papa bilong em i dai, em i lus gen
Wanfela long yumi—o yumi pinis nau.

Yufela ol tumbuna bilong mi, ol gods bilong mi
Harim mi, harim, noken harim mifela i pinis olosem.
Ol pasin bilong mifela, ol gudfela pasin bilong
mifela, ol i pinis oli pinis nau.

Ol pikinini, blut tru bilong mifela,
Oli tok pilai, oli tok bilas, ol i spit long mifela
Ol i sem long mifela, ol i bihainim
ol masta tasol.

Ol masta i kam, ol masta i go
na bringim ol kain pasin bilong ol i kam
Pasin bilong mifela, maski, ol raosim i go
Pasin bilong mifela, maski, ol raosim i go
O sori mifela i no man, ol lus man tru

O watfo mi man, mi lus turu nau.
mi tin pipia tru belong ol kain
pasin nogut long ples daun.

O sori sori yumi lus nau.

TANDE: *(still sobbing)* Ee! papa bilong mi—watfo you lusim mi *(She continues crying.)* Kam bek papa, o kam bek.

RAMRAM: *(while still standing)* Ei, Tande, yu no ken krai mo. Yu lusim pinis ol toktok papa belong yu, i tokim yumi taim em i no dai iet?

TANDE: Mi save, tasol . . . *(She cries again.)*

RAMRAM: Ja Tande inapnau. Yu save papa bilong yu i tok olsem: "Pikinini belong mi, sapos yu laikim mi tru yu no ken foret long lukim mi gen. Sapos mi dai, baimbai mi kam bek na sowim yupela wanfela liklik rod bilong sindaon isi, isi. Em rod bilong kago." Yu harim?

TANDE: Yes!

RAMRAM: Orait—yu rediim haus nau. Baimbai yumi wetim em. (TANDE *starts sweeping the house while* RAMRAM *sits down and starts smoking his pipe. Just as* TANDE *is about to sit,* RAMRAM *speaks.)*

RAMRAM: Tande, bringim hap paia i kam mi laitim simok belong mi. (TANDE *brings it and goes back to sit down when* RAMRAM *speaks again.)* Tande, kam sikirapim baksait bilong mi.

TANDE: Oloman! Yu no save sikirapim baksait bilong yu iet. Yu fela ol man i olosem wanem?

RAMRAM: *(quite furious)* Kam sikirapim baksait belong mi—Hariap, yu tink mi baim yu nating a? Yu tink $2,000 i samting, nating? One handred beg rais na suga na ol kain samting—yu nap kandim a?

TANDE: Na husat i tokim yu long maritim mi: Mi bin laik go skul nurs long P.M.C. na yu kam kolim mi.

RAMRAM: Turua? Na husat i seksek long lukim mi taim mi pinis work long Rabaul?

TANDE: Husat i bin seksek long yu? A! mi les long pasin belong yufela ol man i les ol taim, liklik wan siling i kam i go tasol long Spark, Spark na Spark ol taem. Sapos i nogat ai roun yufela i katim kona nabaut.

RAMRAM: Na yufela ol meri i no gat nans long yu. Yufela pauda, pauda ol taim—ologeta mani i go tasol long pauda na ol samting i simel. Tasol maski long ol. Kam tasol na sikirapim baksait bilong mi.

TANDE: Oloman, yufela olosem wanem. *(She gives in, and is about to move to* RAMRAM *when a whistling and knocking on the door is heard. In surprise she asks:)* E! Wanem ia?

RAMRAM: We? (TANDE *points to the direction where noise is coming from, while* RAMRAM *intently listens; he also motions furiously to* TANDE *to come and scratch his back.)*

RAMRAM: *(in a solemn tone)* Yu huset, papa belong Tande?. *(Whistle of positive response heard.)* Sori mi tufela i no redi gud. *(The ghost whistles again.)* Yu laik toktok long dispela samting yu tokim mi bifo. *(Ghost whistles on and on and* RAMRAM *keeps nodding his head in approval.)* Tande yu harim tu?

TANDE: Baimbai mi harim olosem wanem. Mi no savi long harim tok peles bilong ol tambaran. Papa i tok wanem?

RAMRAM: Em, tok olosem—bai liklik taim nau bai ologeta samting i senis—na nupela sindaon kamap long yumi na baimbai yumi sindaon isi isi tru.

TANDE: Askim em sapos ologeta i olrait long pikinini belong mi tufela long Keravat em i olrait tu?

RAMRAM: Em i harim yu. *(The ghosts whistles out a reply . . . and* RAMRAM *then interprets.)* Em i tok olosem, pikinini bilong mi tupela em i olrait na i no gat sik. Liklik taim bai em irait i kam i askim yu long sampela mani.

TANDE: *(affectionately)* Ee pikinini bilong mi. Papa sindaon bilong mipela bai i isi olosem wanem? *(The ghost whistles for a long while saying in effect that there is a new way—cargoes will come out of the ground etc.)*

RAMRAM: *(nodding approvingly)* Tande, bai liklik rod bilong yumi bai op bai yumi no ken wok mo—bai yumi sindaon tasol olosem ol masta na misis. Long kisim dispela kago

yumi mas go long matmat kolim korona na ol kain lotu na wantu graun i op na kago i kam i kapset nating. Em dispela i liklik rod belong yumi i rod bilong kago.

TANDE: Papa, nau olosem wanem long mipela ol meri, baimbai mipela i no ken wok mo long gaden na kukim kaikai. Baimbai mipela i sidaon isi olosem ol man tu?

GHOST: *(Whistles again assuringly, and* RAMRAM'S *face gets grimmer the more he whistles.)*

TANDE: I Tok wanem?

RAMRAM: *(unwillingly)* Tande, baimbai yupela i no ken bruk bun mo long wok. Baimbai yupela sidaun olosem misis tru na komim gras tasol.

TANDE: A, gutpela tru. Baimbai mi brukim ol sospen bilong yumi, na baimbai yu yet sikirapim beksait bilong yu.

RAMRAM: Olosem wanem long mipela ol man, baimbai mipela i gat plenti samting bilong Spark na ai raun nabaut?

GHOST: *(Whistles again approvingly;* RAMRAM *is full of glee.)*

RAMRAM: Olosem wanem long ol wait man na ol Kongkong Ol i save kisim kago bilong huset?

GHOST: *(Whistles and* RAMRAM *listens with great concentration)*

RAMRAM: Mmm . . . ! Nau mi save. Ol dispela baga i save ropim kago bilong mi. I truia, em ol mastaia i kam faulim akis bilong mi kam long brata bilong mi em bin dai bipo, a? Orait!

(In the meantime the ghost makes a parting hoot and whistles. TANDE *begins to cry again.)*

TANDE: O Papa stap wantaim mipela, kam gen, kam gen . . .

BLACK OUT

SCENE II

RAMRAM *and* TANDE *are conversing in low tones, and* MURUK *and* KALIBOBO *enter bringing a letter.*

MURUK: Mi tupela i bringim pas bilong yu i kam long pikinini bilong yu.

RAMRAM: I kam we?

KALIBOBO: I kam long Nika, em i stop long skul long Rabaul.

(RAMRAM *accepts the letter, examines it then hands it back to* MURUK.)

RAMRAM: You ridim em Long mi Muruk.

MURUK: *(Opens it and reads:)* Dear Papa and Mama,

Tupela mun tasol i stop iet baimbai mipela pasim skul na baimbai mi kam bek long ples.

Mi laik yutupela i fainim liklik moni bilong mi long baim skul na baimbai ol bilas bilong mi tu. Olsem wanem long Lapun tumbuna, em i stap gut? Ol man i tok em em i sik liklik. Mi no save supos em stop gut no nogat.

TANDE: O lewa bilong mi Nika, em i no save yet Tumbuna bilong em i dai pinis.

MURUK: Long skul oli givim mi gutpela mark, na mi happi tru, orait em tasol liklik tok bilong mi.

Mi Your Loving Son,
Moses Nika.

RAMRAM: Wonem samting em rabim san?

KALIBOBO: Lapun, em i no rabim san. Dispela em hap tok Inglis, em i tok Mi pikinini bilong yu

tru, o olosem mi lewa bilong yu, Moses Nika. (TANDE *sighs and presses the letter to her heart.* KALIGULA *coughs near the door.* RAMRAM *hears the sound and motions* KALIBOBO *to find out.)*

KALIBOBO: Kaligula i kam.

RAMRAM: O Kaligula kam insait, mipela i ridim pas bilong Nika, em i tok i nogat moni gen na i wok long hangre nabaut long sikul.

KALIGULA: Manki bilong mi tu i bin rait i kan na singaot long moni tu. Tasol bai yumi kisim moni we? Wan siling bilong mi i pinis tasol long simok.

RAMRAM: Kalibobo na Muruk, yu tupela go painim sampela kulau, an taim yu kam bek bringim akis bilong mi em i stop insait long liklik haus long garden. Yu go kwik nau, lukim Kaligula i tuhat tru.

KALIGULA: Nogat ia, mi dai tasol long liklik buai. Yu tupela i gat liklik?

TANDE: *(Looks into her basket.)* Eh sori, mi nogat turu, Mama bilong Pilipo i pinisim liklik bilong mi aste.

RAMRAM: Mi traim lukim basket bilong mi. *(after searching in vain)* Sori mi nogat tu.

KALIGULA: O, maski, bai yumi lukautim sampela bihain.

TANDE: A, mi go traim askim mama bilong Kuren, mi ting em i gat sampela. *(She goes off.)*

KALIGULA: Ramram, mi bin girap nogut tru long lukim ol skul boi bilong dispela ples, ol manki bilong harim tok tru.

RAMRAM: Oloman you tok wanem? Ol manki bilong dispela ples i les mo, na ol i save biket tu long ol lapun bilong ples. Yumi no ken save ol masta i save skulim ol wanem samting long sikul.

KALIGULA: Ha, ol i spoilim ol turu. Ol manki i no mor lanim ol fasin na stori bilong yumi, ol kain danis na ol gutpela lo bilong tumbuna bilong yumi.

RAMRAM: Haset, i tru tumas.

KALIGULA: O sori ol gutpela taim bilong bifor i lus nau, taim yumi ol man i man tru, na ol meri ol i meri tru. Tasol nau man i olsem meri i nogat strong mo, na ol meri tu i laik bosim ol man nabaut.

RAMRAM: Kaligula, Kaligula, Rod bilong yumi i laik klia nau. Samting yumi toktok long em bifor i kamap turu.

KALIGULA: I turu a? Olosem wanem?

RAMRAM: Yu save aste long nait papa bilong Tande i kam bek, na em i tok olosem: "Taim bilong mipela i kam bai ologeta samting i op, mipela sidaon ologeta. Baimbai yumi sidaon gut olosem masta. Taim bilong ol masta i pinis nau. I bin longtaim ol i pasim rod bilong kago long yumi na ol i save ropim ol samting ol tumbuna bilong yumi i save salim i kam. Tasol nau yumi i gat liklik rod bilong yumi, em rod Kago tu. Em matmat.

KALIGULA: Ee Ramram, em liklik rod ia wanpela gutpela masta, masta George i laik skulim mipela long en, tasol kwiktaim turu Gavman i salim em i go bek long Australia. Nau turangu masta George baimbai i tok wanem, Em karai tasol, na em i go pinis.

RAMRAM: A yumi singim gen singsing bilong matmat olosem, bai TANEPUA. A sori mi kolim nem bilong Tambu bilong me gen.

KALIGULA: *(encourages)* Em i orait lapun i dai pinis.

RAMRAM: Baimbai em i kam beg gen na tokim yumi gut. (KALIGULA *beckons* RAMRAM *to start, then they start off together. They sing their barbaric song. Others could compose any unintelligible song they wish. As the two old men are engrossed in their contemplative song, the two young boys enter and watch, amused by the sight, then they interrupt them without due respect.)*

MURUK: *(dropping the dry coconuts onto the floor with a crash)* Em ol kulauia, sori tru mitupela i no fainim akis bilong yu.

RAMRAM: Tasol, wafo? mi laik soim Kaligula long em. Bilong wonem dispela akis bilong mi turu i kam iet long kandre bilong mi i bin dai bifo, tasol ol kongkong na ol masta bin stilim ol nabut.

KALIBOBO: Haha, wok kago gen, longlong fasin tru! Olosem wanem bai kago ken kam long ol man i dai pinis, ol man i dai pinis ol i no wori long ol kago.

KALIGULA: Lukim Ramram, ol masta i spoilim ol pikinini bilong yumi. Ol i sikul nating! Ol i skul nating, ol i no mo save tingting long ol pasin bilong yumi. Ol i laik masta tasol. Ol i hambag man tru.

KALIBOBO: Mipela i hambag long wanem? Yupela i longlong, kranki nabaut long tingting olsem kago i kamap long ol tambaran.

RAMRAM: Yumi i gat gutpela fasin tasol ol i laik tromwe ologeta long kisim pasin bilong ol masta tasol. A pasin nogut tru.

MURUK: Wanem pasin nogut? Yupela tasol i longlong.

KALIGULA: Mipela i longlong ha?. You biket manki. Givim mi akis bilong mi baimbai mi mekim save long ol.

(He jumps up followed up instantly by RAMRAM *who is searching for a stick.* MURUK *and* KALIBOBO *jump at them and push them to the floor, then making some more remarks run off).*

KALIGULA: O sori Ramram, ai ting taim bilong yumi i pinis nau. Tasol yumi no longlong. A, larim ol i bihainim rod, bilong ol iet.

(They walk off sorrowfully hand in hand.)

END

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" . . . . . it is one of the most relaxed, lucidly written, informative and delightful novels to come from Africa in the sixties." (The Spectator)
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