

EDITED BY BERNARD BARSHAY

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# Stories and Poems of New Guinea read by Bernard Barshay



NEW GUINEA SEPIK HOUSEPOST, BOTH SIDES, 8'2", COLLECTION OF RONALD CLYNE

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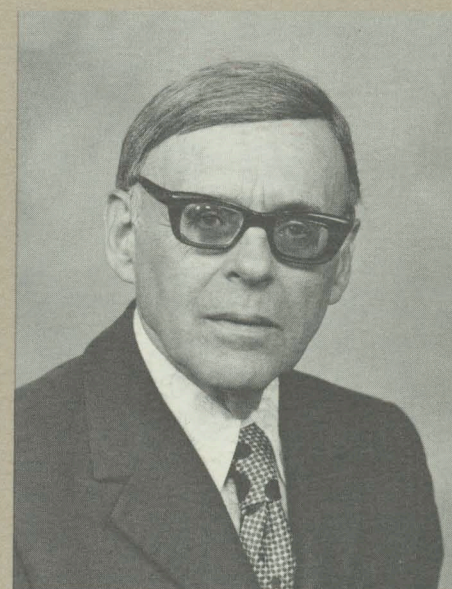
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## NOTES ON "STORIES AND POEMS OF NEW GUINEA"

The connection between black culture in Africa and black artistic expression in the United States has been recognized for some time. Bernard Barshay, however, has also been aware that other continents had their own outstanding black artists, including writers.

A long-time world traveler, both in his role as foreign correspondent (North American Newspaper Alliance and the Long Island Press) and as scholar of comparative literature (Long Island University professor), he was especially impressed by the rich literary tradition of Papua, New Guinea.

Based on the tales and legends of its tribes, this tradition was diversified because of the more than 700 languages and dialects still spoken in that country just off the coast of Australia. In recent years, with the advancement of education in New Guinea, the retelling of the great stories and poems of the past by oral means has been replaced, in part, by publication of the more talented writers in the island. This is mostly done in standard English due to the influence of Australia, which controlled New Guinea until very recently, as well as in Pidgin.

Mr. Barshay collected, and edited, the best of these stories and poems with the result that the flow of language is clear and easily understandable as well as a joy to hear.

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## STORIES AND POEMS OF NEW GUINEA

### Read by Bernard Barshay



SIDE I

LONELY WAR  
by Alois Jerewai

The jungle shielded the small fire in the chilly night as Kaige ate his hasty meal of sago bugs, mushrooms and wild yams. The embers glowed in a circle as if guarding the precious warm flame. The fire was built in a dip against a huge rock face covered with vines and did not cause tell-tale reflection. Kaige sat with his back to the fire, his body helping to conceal it from anyone looking from the valley.

Five and a half feet tall and broad-shouldered, Kaige was a villager who had been taken taken by Australian soldiers and taught the techniques of modern warfare. Then one night the battalion was ambushed. Kaige escaped and was now fighting a lonely war against the invaders.

Kaige's legs and arms were as strong as the bush trees among which he lived. Daily concentration and observation had narrowed and sharpened his eyes and his mind seemed to be awake even when he slept. Born in the jungle, he had native knowledge which gave him an advantage over both enemy and allied armies.

CRACK!

The sound rang clearly, silencing the chattering crickets. Kaige moved with speed, his feet scattering the fire and stamping the embers into the wet ground. Stretched flat, his eyes straining

in the darkness, he could just discern four dark figures moving toward him. Had they seen the fire? he wondered. A night breeze brought the faint scent of the tobacco the enemy used-- it clung to their uniforms. Kaige could tell Australians from Americans the same way.

In the dark, he pressed his elbow to his waist and felt his knife in its sheath.

The enemy scouts, about twenty feet apart, advanced slowly and passed a few feet from him. Kaige lay still until the first three men were out of sight before he moved. Silently his left arm went around the fourth scout's neck and with his right he drove the cold knife into the heart. He twisted the blade and withdrew it. The other three men were still moving away.

Kaige carefully undid the uniform of his victim, donned the clothing, took up the enemy rifle and helmet and was soon following the others.

At the Japanese camp a sentry halted them and whispered the first part of the password. The first scout replied with the second half of the password and they were told to advance.

Kaige could not guess which one-man tent fly he should crawl into, so he strolled around the camp in a small circle before retiring.

There were four large machine guns each set a few yards from the centre of the camp, but unmanned. Kaige remembered that on entering the camp they had met a sentry and passed a machine gun. This meant there were four sentries, one stationed in the bush beyond each gun. If the camp was attacked, a sentry could raise the alarm and then run back to his machine gun. The other three sentries would do the same, protecting the entire camp while the other troops made ready for battle. It was quite clever strategy, thought Kaige, but it could also be used against the Japanese.

All was quiet but for the tiny sounds of the scouts settling down to sleep. Kaige started towards the row of tents, but some distance from them he noticed an odd pile of brush. Reaching through the grass and branches, he felt the cool metal of ammunition boxes.

Then he moved along the row of tents, and at the first one not showing protruding boots he bent low and ducked inside. Sitting with his Japanese boots sticking out, Kaige waited for the sentries to change watches.

After what seemed an interminable time, Kaige saw a soldier moving silently toward the row of tents. The man made for one of the tents but stopped and looked at the one occupied by Kaige. There was a muttered curse and Kaige was pleased to know he had picked that man's tent.

The soldier marched over and kicked Kaige's boots and swore in a whisper. He lifted the edge of the tent-fly to look in but saw only the flash of a knife blade as its tip flicked through his windpipe. Then his head was suddenly drawn down between Kaige's knees and his gurgling scream smothered in the soft, wet earth.

Kaige took only grenades from the body and added them to the four he had appropriated from his earlier victim. Then he walked resolutely to one of the machine guns and beyond it to the sentry whom he found sleeping. The man died without waking and Kaige strode on to the next sentry. This man was awake and spoke to him. Kaige answered with the password he had heard earlier and the sentry started for his bed. Kaige tripped him and brought his rifle butt down in a murderous blow that broke both the man's neck and the stock of the rifle. Kaige picked up the victim's rifle, checked it and went to the fourth sentry--but the man was not there.

Kaige turned and ran toward the camp, but as he ran he heard the first mutter of alarm among the tents. The fourth guard had become impatient to be relieved and would soon confirm several men missing. Kaige pulled the pins of two grenades and hurled them at the ammunition dump, then ran back to the nearest machine gun. As he turned the gun and dropped face down beside it, the stockpile of ammunition exploded with a thunderous blast that flattened running men and all the tents. Kaige fired three bursts from the machine gun, spraying bullets through the camp. In a state of shock, the enemy made no attempt to return his fire. He dropped an armed grenade under the gun and ran to the next one.

Kaige loosed a hail of bullets from the second gun, dropped a grenade under it and sprinted for the third gun. By the time he reached it, the remaining enemy soldiers were beginning to fire in the general direction of the two guns he had used and destroyed. Now as he unleashed the fury of the third gun he knew he was shooting at their backs; and as he ran for the fourth gun only a few shots rang out, the bullets winging harmlessly through the trees. Kaige could imagine the confusion of the few Japanese who remained alive. As he swung the fourth gun and started pouring bullets into the bewildered enemy, he knew they would never understand that they had been attacked and beaten by just one man.

#### THE MUSICAL KIDNAPPERS

by Albert Toro

We knew every sailing ship calling at our harbor--we traded with them and gave them fresh water--but one day an unusual schooner appeared. On her decks were black-robed figures with big red books. They sang as the schooner neared the shoreline, and while the heavy anchor was lowered

sailors brought glittering trade goods from the hold.

Above the singing we could hear music from something like a ukelele played by scratching a stick across its strings. It was the first time we had heard the enchanting strains of a violin.

We had often been on schooners to trade and men, women and children would go aboard, but this time only men were allowed. Seeing the beautiful goods displayed, our warriors rushed aboard. One of the robed men spoke to us and we heard the word 'Padre' which reassured us, as there was a missionary already stationed near our village. We were told by signs to be seated. The man opened his red book, slowly turned the pages and began to talk in soothing tones. We could not understand him as he was speaking in his own language, but when he indicated we must kneel and close our eyes to pray, we did so and the prayer went on a long time. While we were praying, the crew pulled up the anchor. The sails silently filled and the vessel began to move.

Some miles from shore the lengthy prayer ended and we opened our eyes. But where were the exciting axes and mirrors? Instead we saw pistols pointed at us.

When we saw the vessel had left our island we felt little hope of escape. The captain ordered everyone to be still. One protesting man was shot and hot blood ran on the deck.

At gunpoint we were herded forward where an open hatch waited to swallow us. We descended into the hold with tears in our eyes. There were other prisoners from another tribe. Our hands were fastened to the vessel's ribs with chains. The smell from slowly dying bodies made me sick.

The ship began to sway and toss and I knew we were now far out on the fierce waters. In the darkness we did not know whether it was day or night. I leaned against the hull and my mind wandered back to my mother; I was her only son and I could imagine how she would miss me. Then I cried until I was empty of tears and dozed off to forget everything.

My sleep was disturbed by a sailor opening the hatch. He cracked a whip as he descended and ordered us to climb to the deck. The dead man was no longer there, and I guessed he had been thrown overboard.

We were each given a packet of dry biscuits, and as I chewed the stone-like food I thought of home and the good yams, bananas and taros growing there, the good food of our people. I knew a few more days of this treatment would rob me of the little flesh I had on me.

Land was out of sight and the deep blue sea stretched for miles to the end of the sky. We finished our biscuits in silence and were



locked below again, where the lack of fresh air sickened me.

For two days we received no food and a number of my fellow tribesmen died. Their bodies were left in the hold with us.

One night we were again ordered to the deck for biscuits. This time the sea was calm, the moon shone and stars twinkled. The cool breeze seemed to whisper in my ears, and I imagined Mother telling me to sing her a song from her clan. We were allowed to sleep on deck that night, and I lay with my eyes fixed on the stars until I drifted into dreamland.

"LAND HO!" came a loud cry from the crew's nest. We woke and rubbed our eyes. We saw the land, but the ship sailed along the coast, just keeping it in sight.

The next day we were lined up on the deck and given laplaps to wear, but none of us tried them on as they were too heavy and strange. Our traditional dress was a few leaves at front and back. These had withered and fallen off and we were now naked except for arm-bands.

On the morning of the following day we sighted a harbor. The wind was good and by midday we pulled up at a wharf. We were inspected and stabbed in the upper arm with a spear-like thing, its contents emptying into our flesh. I know now it was an injection against disease.

We disembarked and walked into the country along a bush track. The land was similar to home but the air cooler.

We reached a settlement and a man in khaki shirt and trousers appeared.

The captain greeted him and looking at us they both laughed, I suppose at our nakedness. We stood and talked among ourselves in soft whispers, and then we saw the owner of the plantation hand over some papers. The captain departed quickly.

Again we were issued laplaps, but this time a whip was held ready and we were forced to wear the strange clothing.

We were allocated houses and issued food including a big pot of some strange seeds in large quantities, which we later found were rice. On a routine check the boss noticed the rice was unused. He demonstrated, putting water with the rice and placing the pot on a fire. Soon we learned to like rice.

Early next morning we were assembled for our first day of work in Queensland. It was in a large sugar plantation that stretched far inland, and we were forced to cut the cane with special knives from early morning to late evening.

Within a week two comrades died, no doubt from dreadful homesickness. Their bodies were taken away and buried before we could conduct the proper ceremonies over their deaths.

Days and months passed while we did the same job, and after three years the plantation manager announced we were to go home.

We received money and a bonus of laplaps, shorts, shirts, sticks of tobacco, mirrors and packets of salt. We were taken to the harbor and put on a schooner.

When the ship reached our home harbor, there were canoes positioned to attack. To stop them, I was asked to speak to the warriors in our language. They cautiously neared the vessel until they saw I was one of them. Also they saw the crew were not dressed in robes and there was no music, as was the case when we were kidnapped, and our warriors relaxed.

My family was happy to see me, but when I told them of those who had died they broke into tears.

As I stood there in our family house, I felt a terrible uneasiness coming over me. I looked around, noticed I was the only one wearing European clothing and wondered if I could ever return completely to traditional village life.

WANTOKS  
by Joseph Saruva

(A wantok is a person who speaks the same language as another.)

Frightened by the silence of his room in Konedobu, Laki decided to go for a bus ride. At Koki, he alighted and had started toward the market when he heard someone calling his name.

"Laki! Hey! Wantok!"

Laki turned and saw his friends, Piara and Tura, coming out of the market.

"Nothing to see there," said Piara. "Tura and I are going to Boroko."

"To watch football?" asked Laki.

"No, make a guess," was Piara's reply as he bent his elbow and lifted his right hand toward his mouth, the sign of drinking beer.

"Why don't you join us?" asked Tura.

"Might as well," said Laki, "I've just about forgotten what beer smells like."

"Oh, how could you forget in just one week?" Tura asked jokingly.

Laughing and talking the trio took a taxi to Boroko and stopped near the public bar. Shouting and singing could be heard from a distance.

The stench of stale beer was strong as they entered the bar. Drinkers stood in small groups around tables loaded with brown and green bottles. A closer look revealed that each group comprised men of the same tribe or language.

The trio stood near the entrance looking at the people and the premises before making their way into the lounge.

The lounge was different from the public bar. It was cleaner and quieter and possessed an atmosphere that appealed to well behaved customers. Except for a few well dressed indigenes the lounge was empty.

"Here you are, fellows," said Piara as he carefully put bottles on the table. Tura lifted his bottle and gulped half of it down.

"Really feels good," he said, rubbing his stomach as if following the descent of the cold beer into his system.

"You know, fellows," said Piara, "because of these green bottles I never feel like going home." They all laughed, then Piara told them about a wantok with no money who had arrived in the city recently.

"Nowadays wantoks are lucky to have a number of us to house and feed them. But when I arrived in Moresby, there weren't any wantoks I could rely on and I had to take the first job available, stone-breaking at 9-Mile Quarry. It was no easy job, I tell you, cracking stones with sledge hammers when your hands are covered with blisters. I reckon that job broke me in. I don't regret it at all."

The other two looked at him in amazement. The quarry still operated, but machines now did most of the work. Tura reached for his beer and drank it up.

Just then their attention was drawn to a group of men near the door. One man was talking loudly and trying to free himself from the grip of the others.

"Mi painim wantok! Em bai baim bia bilong mi." (I'm looking for a friend who will buy me some beer.)

The man had been drinking in the public bar until his money ran out, then had tried to force his way into the lounge but had been stopped as his dress was not acceptable. He was very drunk and could hardly stand. Eventually he was subdued and dragged out by the bartenders.

Tura related the various jobs he had done, mostly hard menial ones. When he joined a big construction company, he became interested in carpentry and over the years had accumulated a complete set of tools. Through observation and practical work he had become a first-class carpenter.

Laki knew Tura as a long-time resident of Port Moresby who had never been home and asked him if he ever thought of going home one day. Tura shook his head.

"I have no one to see there. My parents died while I was small and my dear old grandmother brought me up. She was fond of me. She passed away soon after I left-- through grief, I believe. My fault. I did not even tell her I was leaving." Tura seemed sad about the past, and Laki and Piara regretted their questions.

"Anyway," said Tura, abandoning his look of gloom, "that's all past now. I've got nothing to look back on and nobody to worry about except myself. I don't know why I have few wantoks. They say I'm just 'One-piece.' (a loner) "Me only. I worry for myself.

"Anyway we are in a hidden place where you won't find wantoks loitering around," said Tura. "I mean those who show up expecting others to buy for them. We've seen only that one unfortunate fellow so far."

"You know, Tura," said Laki, "this wantok system is gradually but surely becoming a problem. But what can you do? If a wantok turns up here or at your house, you just can't tell him to go away, can you? Then, sometimes, I am glad to have wantoks around.

"Well, I'm not saying having wantoks is a bad thing, not completely. But this is a city, not a village. Back in the village yes, giving and taking is part of life. But here it's every man for himself.

"It's all right for people with well paid jobs. They can afford to part with some of their earnings. But a person like me, the dollar I earn is for my food, clothes and my occasional green bottle."

Laki agreed. All the same, the wantok system, though desirable and beneficial, was posing numerous problems in the towns and Laki wondered just what could be done to solve it. Could it be solved by law? Piara echoed his thoughts. "Perhaps the Government could do something.

It should be easy to make the necessary laws."

"Yes, but how can you enforce such laws?"

"I guess you can't and those responsible for legislation are so well paid the wantok system doesn't worry them."

"Right," said Laki, "so I guess we'll have to put up with it until the whole national economy makes it unnecessary."

The three sat silently, their faces registering individual mental calculations. They finished their drinks and started for the bus stop.

With a bit of luck, the bus driver would be a wantok of theirs and would give them a free ride.



# SIDE II

## THE BREEZE

by Gwen Toleau

If you are lonely  
ask the breeze to make you glad.  
If you are perspiring  
ask the breeze to cool you.  
If you are without friends  
ask the breeze to be your company.  
If you want to send a message  
ask the breeze to take it.  
The breeze can reach your friend,  
But as it cannot be seen  
It can give him your love  
But cannot talk to him.

## LIBERATION FOR WOMEN

by L. Laepa

A prisoner I was  
as much as a soldier  
Through eternal years, waiting,  
waiting for hope,  
For the love, beauty, the glory,  
of Freedom.  
Then they gave me freedom.  
I got a job, a position.  
I thought more and my ego rose  
I became INDEPENDENT.  
I am alone and Liberated.  
The absence of children and a man to admire  
but me in yet another prison,  
making me search for another freedom.

## TO HER MAJESTY (ELIZABETH II)

by Jack Lahui

When I heard you were coming  
I got busier and busier.  
I fasted and prayed my ancestor  
would give me some luck  
So that I could find a Bird of  
Paradise plume to dress up in  
to ensure my appearance.  
Then I knew you were here  
to look at us,  
Maybe to mingle with us  
Only to find that you were  
a very busy woman  
and could not stay even a week.

# LOVELY BED

by Martin Balthasa

Oh! There you lie motionless,  
So beautifully decorated,  
but people cannot observe  
the mighty help you grant.  
Oh! the giver of great dreams,  
Of dreams lovely and sweet,  
Of dreams of wish and longing,  
Of dreams so frightening and threatening.  
The Goodness of love,  
You comfort us  
When we are sick and weak,  
When we are cold and trembling,  
When we are tired and weary.  
But, how strange you are during the nights,  
When the world is asleep like dead,  
And the fairies begin their duties,  
While the people are sleeping with  
unreflecting minds,  
Some moaning, some grunting, and others,  
Talking away with the Night Ghosts.  
If one lay awake for so long,  
One would begin to dig in the world around,  
at memories of the "Happy Past,"  
Or with thoughts of an unforeseeable future,  
And of things to be done after dawn.

## PAST AND PRESENT

by Aruru Matiaabe

As I sit in despair  
resting my head on this wooden desk  
I feel conquered by worries  
and the anxiety of my future life.  
There is an eternal conflict  
between my past and present life  
when I think of my parents' homeland  
hemmed in by gigantic mountain ranges  
and gay gurgling sounds  
of swift flowing streams through the gullies.  
The things I used to do freely ten years ago  
in that remote part of Huliland  
have not departed from me.  
I wish I were living there.  
On the other hand  
the desire to keep up with the modern world  
which really means that I would be cut off  
from my beautiful homeland  
completely crushes me down.  
The two stir like two flames of burning fire  
within me.  
What shall I do? is the question  
which I have in mind.

# EXPATRIATES

by L. Raepa

If you go away,  
You will find yourself,  
in a strange place,  
In a new world to settle.  
There will be no peace in your heart,  
Nor love in your new neighbor's soul;  
all you have is a chance to start  
your life all over again.  
I'll show you where paradise is  
If you come with me,  
A place to work, someone to talk to.  
We'll even toil side by side.  
If you go away,  
Leaving all memories behind,  
You never find the day  
to relive what once you treasured as home,

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

by Nende Ipagongnaik

Progressing land of peace and freedom  
Appealing with her beauty,  
Proud little nation shining in the Sun,  
Unseen tribesmen welcoming every tourist,  
Attracted to our island.

Noticeable in the Pacific  
Envious of our Paradise Bird and tropical forests,  
Wealthy in economic potentials and Politics finding a place.

Growing rapidly with wisdom  
Under the tall palms, close to the sea.  
Island of lovely mountains and beautiful rivers,  
Nowhere else is there an island so attractive,  
Encouraging the smiling people to grow  
And retain independence.

## THE LAST KUANANDE

by Benjamin Umba

When the Sunday morning service finished, Tora and I went straight  
to the shop where I got a loaf of bread and he bought some black twist  
tobacco and a piece of newspaper.

Sitting on a boulder I munched my bread, while Tora rolled his  
tobacco in newspaper and lit up his foot-long cigarette and we surveyed  
the scene.

Adjusting my red and white Isuzu cap so I could see better, I  
noticed our elders sitting ceremoniously in the churchyard, their  
faces inclined as they meditated on the wisdom crammed into their  
heads during the service.

Other villagers sat smoking, talking or eating sweet potatoes  
they had brought along. Beyond were the young boys and girls  
sitting in small groups exchanging jokes and smokes.

My wandering eyes suddenly fixed on an outstanding girl.  
She was incredibly beautiful, so much lovelier than the other girls

I imagined she had dropped at that moment from the blue sky.

She must have been watching me before I saw her, because she smiled right away. In surprise, I smiled too and then looked away in embarrassment.

I tried to look around at other things, but my eyes were drawn again to the girl. I found her smiling radiantly and I had to smile at her, this time unable to look away. In those few moments I had become enchanted.

At last I broke my gaze and at a loss for anything else to do I looked down, examined my toes, my ragged pair of shorts and finally my fingernails. My head was spinning and I breathed with difficulty.

I turned to Tora to ask about the girl, but he had left me. Then I saw him heading for the young and lovely lady. I leaped up to follow, but when I saw them talking together I was shy again and stopped to watch.

Like the other girls she was dressed in traditional costume, but something about her made the ornaments more attractive. She sat on a boulder, her sleek legs dangling to the ground. The long heavy purpur (a kind of skirt), intricately woven with yellow, black and gray fur of the possum, ran smoothly over her thighs and disappeared between her knees.

Her hands rested on her lap, the wrists decorated with bands of possum fur. A wide, black, polished belt hung loosely around her waist and above it her breasts, large and firm, stood out proudly. There were three strings of colorful beads around her neck and below them hung a shiny pearl shell. A longer string of beads with a beautiful sun shell hung down to the purpur.

The natural beauty of her face was enhanced by designs in red paint on her forehead, cheeks and nose. Bush flowers were planted in her short, curly hair and a transparent, silky cloth was tied around her head with a knot at the back.

As I stood there entranced, frantically trying to recall her name, Tora turned and motioned me to join them. My desire to meet the girl overcame my shyness and I strolled over.

"Good evening, Greg," she cordially greeted me, her hand extended and her face radiant with that seraphic smile.

"It's a wonderful morning," I replied, and had another pleasant surprise as I shook her hand; it was cool and firm, quite unlike the dead-fish limpness of most girls' hands. My admiration increased.

"When did you come back, Greg? I haven't seen you for two years."

"I arrived yesterday. Last Christmas I went to Mingende."

"Oh, yes, you must have been tied down by those Mingende girls. We heard all about it!"

"No, no, I was staying with my uncle . . ." But she laughed at my protests and I realized she had been joking. I was not used to being with girls because my parents had told me to stay away from them until I was grown up, and I had taken their warning seriously.

Now, faced with this lovely lady, I was at a loss for conversation and her brightness and ease of manner made me feel even worse. I looked to Tora for assistance, but again he had wandered off.

"Greg, have you ever been to a Kuanande?" she asked.

"No, never, but I've heard about it."

"Would you like to go? There will be one tonight at Dinipene, arranged by Wandike boys and Denglaku girls."

"Well, I don't know," I hesitated, "it's a long way to go in the night."

"Oh, Greg! Don't be such a child! It is not far at all, and some of your brothers will be going. You can go with them."

"Yes, I suppose I could . . ." Why on earth was I hesitating?

"Greg, please come to the Kuanande tonight!"

"All right, if Tora and Kindua are going I'll go along with them."

"I will have some food for you in case you get hungry. I live in the girls' house near the Kuanande place."

"That's very kind of you," I said, really impressed, "I didn't expect you to take such trouble."

"Normally I wouldn't," she said with that dazzling smile, "but I feel this will be a special occasion."

At that moment my Isuzu cap was suddenly lifted from my head, and I turned to see the culprit was my eight-year-old sister. She was my favorite sister, so I grinned and did not scold her. But then the lovely girl spoke to her.

"Little sister, you are my friend. Give me that cap!"

"No! Don't give it to her," I protested, but my sister tossed the cap to her. I jumped to catch it but missed and fell against the boulder. I was instantly angry.

"Give me my cap!" I demanded.

"Your cap? It is mine, a gift from your sister." I felt like grabbing her and forcing her to return the cap, but there were a lot of people around so I begged her to return it to me.

"Greg, what are you worrying about? I won't eat this cap,



I won't burn it. I'll keep it for you. You can reclaim it tonight at the Kuanande."

"I won't go to the Kuanande!"

"All right," she said with mock coolness, "no one will be hurt or die if you don't." Then the sweetness returned to her voice.

"But you can get it some other time. I'll keep it in my house for you." She walked away, leaving me standing there, angry and feeble. I went to Tora and told him what happened.

"Well, don't worry about your dirty old eap. Can't you see it is Begere's way to get you to visit her?" Begere, that was her name, of course.

"She did say I could recover it at her house tonight . . ."

"There you are then," laughed Tora, "she is making sure you attend the Kuanande."

"But, brother, I don't know what to do at a singsing with all those girls."

"Then it is time you learned. Don't worry, they'll show you what to do. You can sit and sing and 'turnim-head' with Begere tonight and maybe you will find you like each other very much.

She certainly is a favorite of the boys here; many have fought for her but none has won her affection. Her father is a hard man and has tutored and disciplined her carefully. To be invited to her house is a great privilege, a chance you must not miss."

"She seems well behaved," I murmured, "except for taking my hat!"

"Man! Everyone here knows she is the ideal girl; she is kind, hard-working, friendly, helpful to her parents and, above all, exceptionally good looking. You must have been using love-charms to attract her so easily."

I nearly told him I had no idea why she was taking an interest in me, but by now I was feeling much less like a young secondary student and more like a man of the world.

"All right!" I said with determination, "we will go tonight."

That evening Tora and I started toward Dinipene with some other boys. As we traveled others joined us until there were a hundred young men marching to meet the girls. We practiced the Kuanande songs as we went along, and I discovered my voice was deeper than the others. The Kuanande songs required a soprano and, attempting them, I sounded like a young cock crowing for the first time.

The boys were traditionally dressed in the Kondai, a large heavy bark garment at the front, and a bunch of fresh leaves at the back, both held by bark belts. Their faces were covered with

red ochre, with spots of white powder here and there. Each had a cap of possum fur on his head, and from each cap sprouted two yellow feathers of the Bird of Paradise which bobbed up and down as we walked. Some had the beautiful traditional blue breast-plates also of Bird of Paradise feathers. I had been excused from dressing traditionally since I had just arrived from the city.

We arrived at Dinipene and saw fires had been lit around the big house where the Kuanande would be held. There were many men, women, girls and young children, but I could not see the beautiful Begere.

"Make one straight line!" came the order from the man next to me in an urgent whisper. We formed a line and the 'Pawaia' started. The young man at the head of the line began the introductory chant, then turned to the next fellow who took it up. When it reached me, I made a feeble attempt at it and turned to the man behind me, and so it went to the end of the line. As soon as it finished it was started again at the head of the line. This stage of the Kuanande was called the 'Tonsingua' and, as we went through the third round of the song, we climbed over the fence into the small compound and moved toward the house.

Now another chant began with a very fast rhythm, but the words were loud and distinct. It was unfamiliar to me and I could not contribute to the singing.

Maina, the man at the head of the line, approached the fires and one by one we were welcomed by the girls' mothers. The girls were then given last minute instructions on good behavior and sent into the house. I hoped to identify Begere by the Isuzu eap, but I did not see it.

Then Maina led the way into the house, and as we entered the mothers wished us a pleasant and enjoyable evening.

Now the Pawaia chant was sung again, with a faster beat, and as we moved into the house the girls took it up. When we were all inside and settled on the floor, a strong voice addressed us. The speaker was Bain, the only Denglaku boy among us. He enjoyed organizing and speaking to crowds and was the equivalent of the 'Master of Ceremonies' of the Western life-style.

"As you know," Bain said, "at the last Kuanande a boy was killed when things got out of hand. Therefore, I will be here to see order is maintained. Whether you stop after a few hours or go on until morning depends upon your stamina. Now you may begin."

For the sixth time the Pawaia chant began and the boys sat in a circle with their backs to the fire, facing the girls who sat against



the wall. The girls were dressed much as Begere had been in the morning except some had added oil to their skins, making them glisten in the firelight. Others had put red paint on their lips which enhanced their beauty but was not in imitation of European ladies. In their hair were the Kuanande feathers of the Bird of Paradise.

As the Pawaia chant continued, the boys and girls swayed their heads first to the right, then to the left, and then forward until their noses and foreheads pressed together. This was the basic 'turnim-head' ceremony. The Bird of Paradise plumes bobbed to the movement of two hundred heads, and soon it seemed as if the feathers provided the beat of the song.

As each song ended, the circle of girls moved so each was then faced with a new boy--eventually every girl would meet every boy.

I had spent too long in the city and by the time the third song started, I felt out of place. Gradually I withdrew and watched. I pulled out a pack of cigarettes and was about to light one when it was snatched from my hand. I started in anger but looked up and saw Begere standing beside me. Smiling and glistening in the light of the fire, she was devastatingly beautiful.

She dropped down beside me, still smiling, and reached for my box of matches. It was like when she had taken my cap. If I made a fool of myself again I might lose her completely. Fortunately I controlled my feelings, struck a match and held it to her cigarette, then lit another for myself.

We saw Bain coming around and fear showed for a moment in Begere's face--he might order us back into the dance. But he only smiled and moved away.

"When do I get my cap?" I asked.

"You can have it tonight."

"When we have our own Kuanande?"

"Greg! In the village we do not speak of it that way."

"Sorry, but when can we go? I want to talk with you."

"We cannot go until the Kuanande is finished. If we did, Bain would be allowed to kill me under village law."

So we sat another four hours during which I nearly fell asleep. Each time she saw Bain coming around, Begere roused me and we 'turned-heads,' our noses and foreheads pressing happily together. During those moments I believe I first knew love.

Suddenly, for no apparent reason, the Kuanande ended. The singing stopped, and boys and girls began to file out the door into the first light of another day.

"Are you hungry?" Begere asked.

"Yes, very. Have you anything edible in your house?"

"There are potatoes and beans left in the pot . . ."

"My girl, I could eat them and the pot also!"

In her house, she heated the leftovers and handed a plate of food to me. I gobbled it up quickly and she gave me more.

Then we smoked and talked quietly for a time and finally, in utter weariness, I said I would go home. We stood and went to the door, but as I began to move away she spoke once more.

"Greg, you have forgotten what you came for tonight. Don't you want your cap?"

"Oh, yes," I said in a daze. We stepped back inside and she brought the tattered headgear to me. In the faint glow from the fire I saw her traditional paint had disappeared from her beautiful face, but the eyes and lips retained their delicacy and tenderness. I took the cap from her hand and with my other hand touched her chin. She did not resist, and I brought her face forward until our lips met.

"You had better keep the cap," I whispered in her ear. "Then I will have a reason to see you again." When she looked at me, the firelight reflected a trace of tears in her eyes.

"If you think you want to visit me often," she whispered, "I could tell my parents I have had my last Kuanande. If I say that, it means I have found the man I want to be with forever."

"Make it your last Kuanande," I whispered, then stepped quickly out the door and walked fast to catch up to my clan brothers.

The End

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#### BERNARD BARSHAY BIOGRAPHY

Bernard Barshay received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Brooklyn College. He then won a scholarship to the New School for Social Research in New York where he studied under John Gasner, noted literary critic and drama historian.

Following this, Mr. Barshay began a newspaper and free lance writing career, highlight of which was his intensively researched "interview" with Abraham Lincoln on the problems facing America. His aptitude for historical research was also utilized in documenting a series of true murder mysteries. International syndication of these narratives was succeeded by their radio and TV adaptations. (Folkways Record 9781 and Folkways Cassette 79781 feature these stories as FOUR AMERICAN MURDER MYSTERIES.) Later the academic world claimed him and he became a journalism professor at Long Island University.

For the past few years Mr. Barshay has been writing and producing shows for radio, TV and the off-Broadway theatre. Recently he hosted his WORLD TRAVEL television program, with interviews of leading personalities from some of the 86 countries he had visited.