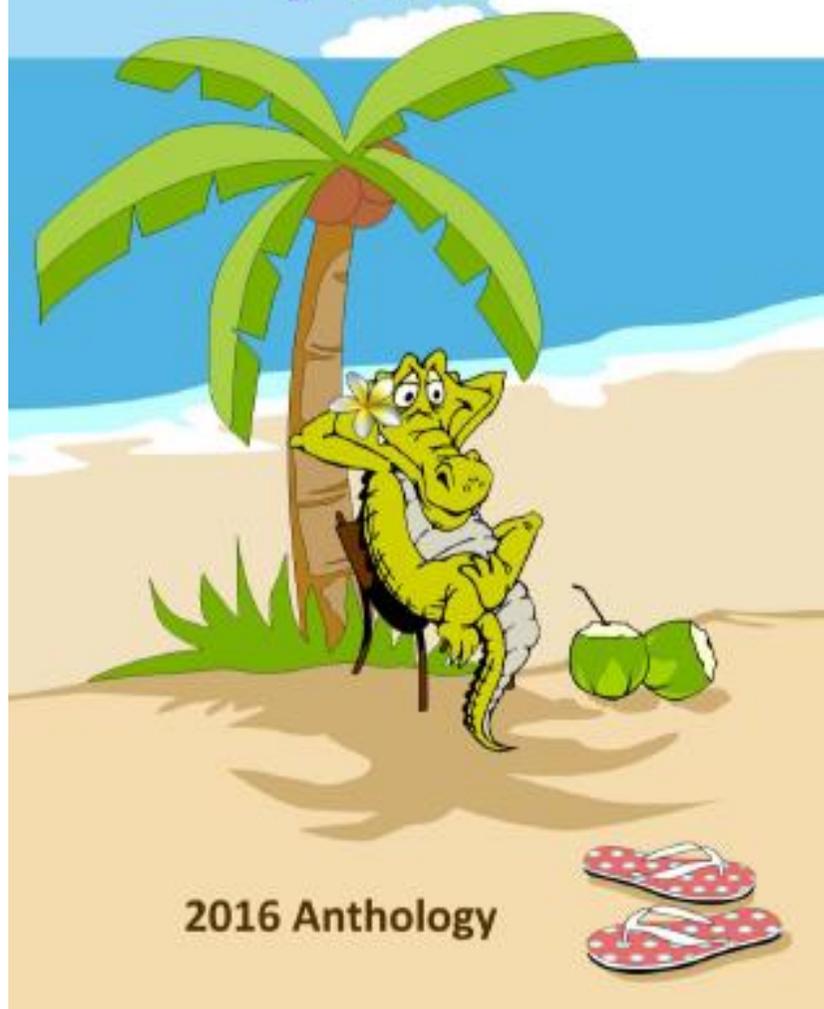


THE CROCODILE PRIZE



The Crocodile Prize Anthology 2016

Edited by
Philip Fitzpatrick

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DEDICATION

The Crocodile Prize is one of many approaches to promote writing. It is great because to write one must read and research. To write one must reflect and find the feelings inside. Importantly, to write you must be inspired by things and events around you. When one writes from these inspirations, one inspires others to do something. It's a powerful approach to promote literature overall and it propels development.

Emmanuel Peni, Author & Chairman of the 2016 Crocodile Prize Organising Committee

CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Short Stories	4
Prison – Not the End of the World – Alexander Nara	5
Servants of the Sea – Vagi Samuel Jnr.	8
A Visit to the Clinic – Raymond Sigimet	11
The Days I Die – Hazel Kutkue	14
One Brother to Another – Raymond Sigimet	17
The Satanic Iceman – Jimmy Awagl	21
The Old Mango Tree	24
Poetry	27
Where Am I From? – Gregory Babilis	28
Bad Tempered Man – Iso Yawi	31
Be the Candle – Wardley D. Barry-Igivisa	32
Manus Island – Francis Nii	33
Tingim ol Lain lo Ples – Philip G. Kaupa	36
Dispela nait Ino Gutpela Tumas – Raymond Sigimet	37
Peter Knows How to Remain in Power - Wardley D. Barry-Igivisa	39
Democracy or PNG Idiocy – Francis Nii	41
Sinagu E! – Vagi Samuel Jnr.	42
My Tumbuna Talked - Wardley D. Barry-Igivisa	45
A Cure for Insomnia – Ozmond Yalu	48
Dream With Me - Wardley D. Barry-Igivisa	49
The Red Cigar Seller – Caroline Evari	51
The Joy of Solitude – Dominica Are	53
Wara Kalap – Raymond Sigimet	55

Old Man – Gregory Babilis	57
Tell Me What I Have Become – Emily Jamaiz Hoko	60
You See Dried Grass Over Rough Cut Logs – Michael Dom	62
Word Your Thoughts – Philip G. Kaupa	64
(Sestina) We Were Never a Match – Vagi Samuel Jnr.	66
Rhythm of Inspiration – Philip G. Kaupa	68
The Green Gold of Goroka – Vagi Samuel Jnr.	70
With Difficulty – Jimmy Awagl	71
The Untapped Gold Mine – Simon Davidson	73
An Ever Changing World – Emily Jamaiz Hoko	75
A Cacophony of Falling Trees – Jeffery Febi	78
Ambai – Jordan Dean	79
Essays	80
Silent Tears – Alexander Nara	81
Today a Woman Died – Kevin Pondikou	85
Amazing Grace – Marlene Dee Gray Potoura	89
True Australians and Old Bonds – Francis Nii	94
PNG Literature can Help cement the Bond – Rashmii Bell	99
Writatoullie – Arnold Mundua	104
Tuna in an Overfished Pacific – Kerry Kamiafa	111
Political Staff – The Destroyers of PNG Politicians – Francis Nii	114
Missionaries as Misfits? – Michael Dom	118
Our Great Negativity – Martyn Namorong	120
One of the World’s Most Corrupt Countries – Lucas Kiap	123
Different Faces of PNG the Barbie Way – Rashmii Bell	128
What is Peace – Alythea Siraba	134
PNG’s Pamuk Parliament – Michael Dom	137
Tiru Jaire – Army Gardener – Alexander Nara	141
Urbanisation or Hell? – Martyn Namorong	143
PNG’s Violated Women – Rashmii Bell	147
Kundiawa Hospital Celebrates – Francis Nii	151
Brink of Death – Robert Iki Leso	154
Writing for Children	159
The Kind Old Woman – Simon Davidson	160
Numbart Saves His Master – Keith Angen	164

Heritage Writing	169
Home is No Longer – Iso Yawi	170
Who is Datagaliwabe? – Betty Wakia	171
The Baya baya Legend – Betty Wakia	176
The Promised Land – Joe Kuman	180
Fading Links – Raymond Sigimet	184

FOREWORD

2016 is a transitional year for the Crocodile Prize. This year the organisation and management of the national annual literary competition has shifted wholly to Papua New Guinean hands.

As we are all aware, life in Papua New Guinea can be difficult for many ordinary people as they juggle between earning an income, fulfilling their family commitments and pursuing their other interests. The writers are no different to anyone else in this regard. In many cases the opportunity and time to write has to be found between these other duties.

Whereas the previous organisers of the competition in Australia have had the luxury of time and resources at their disposal this is not always the case in Papua New Guinea. For this reason it has been necessary to scale back some of the aspects of the competition and to lengthen the time lines for its conduct. You will notice these changes in this edition of the anthology.

As you are probably aware the competition is run entirely by unpaid volunteers and is funded solely by private donations. The Papua New Guinean government has never expressed any desire to be of assistance.

Simply lobbying prospective sponsors and other supporters is a time consuming job. If you add to that the

business of receiving, editing and judging the hundreds of entries that arrive every year, organising the awards ceremony and workshops and all the other details of the competition you will appreciate the enormous effort required every year to make the competition successful.

We hope that the readers of the anthology will be indulgent and understanding about this need for scaling the competition back for a while. This is important because it is only right that the national annual literary competition be owned in its entirety by Papua New Guineans. No doubt, as the competition evolves it will be refined and developed in new and exciting ways that reflect its unique position in modern Papua New Guinean culture.

That said, the competition is all about writing and there has been no diminishment in that respect at all. In fact, as the competition evolves into its seventh year, the quality and quantity of work coming from Papua New Guinea's writers has continued to surprise and thrill the competition's organisers. The selection represented in this latest anthology is no exception and I think you will agree that Papua New Guinean literature, struggling and unsupported as it is, has reached new levels of sophistication.

Among the stories, poems and essays in this edition of the anthology you will notice a lot of familiar names and marvel at the skills on display but at the same time you will see quite a few new names. Some of these new writers will progress to become household names and go down in Papua New Guinean history as people who cared and who mattered.

This is an opportunity for me to bid you farewell and to wish you a fair voyage on this important literary journey. I'm sure that everyone else in Australia who has been

involved in the competition over these past six years will also want to wish you well and much success.

Bamahuta and Good Luck.

SHORT STORIES

Prison – Not the End of the World

Alexander Nara

Three long and perfectly timed clangs of the 9pm bell split the still night, followed by a commanding voice from the guard house ordering silence.

The lights had blacked out about an hour ago and the half moon, partly hidden by clouds, cast a dim yellow glow through the open barred windows.

The effect was to paint the worn out brick wall inside the cell a pale white.

Most of my cell mates had already curled up under the blue and red striped government-issue blankets while a few others whispered and tiptoed around, probably in search of a last roll of *brus* before settling down for the night.

A hacking cough somewhere in the blackness signalled tubercular lungs.

I turned to face the wall and struggled to make myself comfortable on three folded blankets, my mattress for the last three and a half years.

The number of blankets a prisoner possessed came with the number of years he had served.

Sounds of heavy breathing followed by footsteps came from the outside the cell block as a night-shift guard flashed spotlights on the windows above to make sure we were securely confined.

It was Sunday night, 15 August 2010 and only a few hours remaining to my discharge.

After serving a prison term of three years and four

months inside Lakiemata prison in Kimbe, West New Britain Province, I was due for release at 9am on the Monday morning.

It had been a hot afternoon that 17 April 2007 when I first stood at the Lakiemata prison gate to be thoroughly checked before being escorted to a cell to start serving my sentence.

The day I remember like it happened a few minutes ago.

The scorching sun showed no mercy as I wiped the sweat off my bony face to cut off its journey into already sore eyes.

I shakily forced a smile at the tall correctional officer who had no intention of smiling back at me.

His hawk eyes searched my face to catch a sign of panic that would tell him I was hiding contraband somewhere within my clothes or amongst the three trousers and two shirts I had packed into a blue school bag.

Around the fence perimeter, tower guards watched carefully, monitoring every movement, their guns aimed into the precinct.

As the gates of the heavy cell doors swung shut that evening, I succumbed to the painful thought that I had failed to repay the countless amount of money, embraced with love that my parents had spent to see me through my entire schooling until I graduated from Divine Word University in 2003.

And as days grew into months and years, the same thoughts tortured me feeding my despair and desperation.

It was like being under water unable to breathe. Or having your hands in fire unable to pull them back.

Life sometimes gives no second chances. Life can be lost without dying. Sentenced to prison to serve a good number of years is like being buried alive. Prisons are cemeteries of

the living.

Your own impression of life on the other side of those high barbed wires fences and brick prison walls may be shaped by movies, books or stories I hear from friends.

And it is true that there are dangerous cell fights, food shortages and deadly diseases carried by contaminated water and lack of hygiene.

But much worse are the escape nights when all inmates are awoken and forced into the unforgiving hands of tired and angry warders.

It has been six years since I walked out of that place and, looking back, I am humbled that being in prison has made me a better person.

I'm not proud of what I've done or why I went to jail, but I can't change the past. It's who I am and I have to embrace it and use the experience to make something of my life.

Prison had an unexpected and profound influence on me and gave my life a sense of purpose I could never have predicted.

It is entirely different from those movies, books and what people talk about.

It is a very educative place - in its own dark way.

Servants of the Sea

Vagi Samuel Jnr

We gathered the fishing nets and folded them neatly like clothes. We took the paddles and pegs, carried them onto the canoe and emptied the hulls with a cut-off four-litre container.

Our skipper lifted the container filled with salt water, sipped a little, then faced the east and listened to the invisible wind.

Thereafter, he looked at the sun's eye and shadowed his forehead with his hands before getting on his knees and whispering a fishing prayer, made loud in the stillness of time.

"*Galeval!*" he said. A crew of four males, we headed to the ocean like leaving home for war somewhere far away.

She was beautiful with her skin in white and red stripes caressing each pleasing wave. *Oredae*, her name, rocking on the sea like a mother swaying her baby in a *bilum*.

We paddled and sang choruses of the old men's fishing tales as the birds of the sky glided and fussed overhead.

We were kings of the fish but somehow servants of the sea, for the winds carried our spirits at the forefront. We journeyed along Bootless Bay and sighted the ever-smiling Loloata resting in its white sandy beaches and its sailing machines silent by the jetty. It was wonderful.

We arrived at the site just as the sun had tilted. Oh, our skipper, his five senses at work along with fine judgement, mother nature's gift to man, looked at the clear blue sea

and quietly said this is it, this is the place.

We tied the floaters to either end of the net and planted sets into the sea whilst the skipper engineered the right positions with light paddling. We could hear the leads bumping as they hit the sandy bottom below.

We silently echoed words of harvest with each passing set. Our hands were like conveyor belts switched on without question. And if the net slightly, accidentally tangled, it was soon restored by a verbal bashing from the skipper.

We travelled 200 meters before dropping the last floater. The weather remained fine, home was not in sight but, immersed in our task, we had no reason to look back. This was a fishing trip not a playful matter where we could exercise our mischief at our own discretion. These were worthy moments I treasured with the skipper.

From the last floater, we continued onward with occasional sudden splashes on the sea from the long peg. With our hands and paddles, we made drumming beats on the floor of *Oredae*.

At each splash, the skipper would call out the phrase “*Ah, Galeva ena kara!*” [Oh, Galeva’s deeds like these!]. He would repeat this three or four times depending on the response of the waves. It was as if the sea was speaking to the skipper.

Soon after, we started to pull back from where the last floater had been placed. It was a three-man job, so we would take turns at each fifty metres as continuous bending would result in severe back pain.

The moment the first fish was sighted, we rejoiced by calling its name. How beautiful was it to see the colours emerging from the dark water. We whistled and made noises as each catch bade farewell to its home.

In that moment we would converse but still pay careful

attention to the net. If a set was hooked by an object, stone or coral, a diver was needed. Each of us looked at each to consider who might err and commit this nerve-racking blunder. We were so damn scared it failed to occur.

Travelling back home was the best part of the trip. We carefully removed the fish from the net and placed them into the dug-out.

Just before we reached the bay, we stopped to clean the nets. Whilst doing this, we listened to the skipper delivering the laws and traditions and meanings of our fishing heritage.

By the time we arrived home, the sight of those who came to the garden with our grandparents granted us more happiness.

Now the fish went straight to the fireplace to join the tapioca and bananas from the garden.

It was not long before the smoked fish got married to our taste buds.

I recall, I so clearly remember, this Senemai tradition.

A Visit to the Clinic

Raymond Sigimet

The inside walls of the building were spotlessly clean, as if a new coat of paint had just been applied.

A notice in bold print outside the door read, “*ALL FOOTWARES OUTSIDE!*”

The cleaner was busy mopping the floor and, as he entered the door, smiled shyly at Hades.

Then the cleaner continued with his task, sniffing at the familiar *haus sike smel* and whiff of antibacterial detergent.

Hades heard the door open slowly as if not to attract attention and knew it was his mum, who would be peering around to see if anybody else was in the room.

Conscious of the recently mopped floor, Hades’ mother tip-toed into the waiting room.

Six posters on the wall trumpeted awareness of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infection.

Hades’ mother descended into the double-seater sofa, the central feature of the simple arrangement of furniture in the waiting room.

There was a coffee table, four chairs, a pile of old Australian women’s magazines and two copies of *The National Weekender* from the previous week. A backless bench occupied one end of the room.

“Abstain, be faithful to one partner or use a condom.”

Hades recoiled at the inner turmoil. He wanted to vomit. His heart throbbed with an unusual beat. A shortness of breath threatened to overwhelm him.

A simple message on a poster had triggered this panic.

Some weeks before he had gone on a drinking spree with his mates after their final school exams and got senselessly drunk. One thing led to another, He thought he may have engaged in unprotected sex.

He knew he had no condom with him at the time. Now there was an itching and burning sensation in the urethra, especially when he used the loo.

After the shock realisation of what he may have stupidly done to himself, he had gone to his mother.

Now she was here and now someone else had pushed open the door. It was a smartly dressed lady in her mid-twenties. She was followed by a man in his forties.

They also noticed that the floor had been mopped and tip-toed across. Hades' mum smiled at them and they returned her gesture.

The man picked up a newspaper and went to the bench. The young lady took a chair beside the coffee table and selected a magazine.

No one spoke. The soft splash of mop on floor was the only sound. Hades, feeling a bit dizzy went to sit with his mother on the sofa.

Everyone avoided eye contact.

The door opened again and a nurse entered. She was smartly dressed and looked beautiful in her blue uniform.

Hallo olgeta. Gutpla moning lo yupla, she smiled as if she was a close relative.

'Moning.' 'Moning.'

'Yupla sindaun wet liklik na bai mi go sekim sapos dokta stap.' Her voice was soothing.

'OK, tenk yu.'

Hades' mum signalled him to move closer.

'Taim mipla go lukim dokta na em askim yu lo sik blo yu, yu mas stori gut lo em. Sapos em askim long wanem samting kamaḡ, yu

pilim olsem wanem, kain samting.

'*Noken baitim wanpla samting long dokta, em klia?*' she said in a low, insistent voice.

Hades nodded, and tears swelled in his eyes as the fear returned.

'*Mi prei long yu long taim yet kam. Askim Papa God long lusim rong blong yu,*' she added, trying to reassure him.

The man with the newspaper was deep in thought, his arms folded as he looked at the posters on the walls. Occasionally, he stole a glance at the young woman, and at Hades and his mum on the sofa.

The woman seemed to be deeply engaged with a gossip piece in the magazine.

A door closed somewhere and the recognisable footsteps of the nurse approached.

'*OK, dokta wetim yupla stap. Yupla mas go wanwan. Wokabaut go daun. Lukim dua namba seven.*

'*OK, nok pastaim, bibain opim dua na go insait. 'Em klia?'* She gave them her warm smile again.

'*Tenk yu, em klia,*' Hades' mum replied while the others nodded.

Hades' mum stood up and beckoned for him to follow. As she walked alongside him down the corridor, Hades leg joints quivered under the weight of his stupidity and the unknown that lay beyond door number seven.

The cleaner lady passed them, mop in one hand, bucket of grey-brown water in the other.

This is a work of fiction and not based on real people or events. In Papua New Guinea, the Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) clinics were set up by the National AIDS Council Secretariat for private screening and testing of HIV and STIs.

The Days I Die

Hazel Kutkue

To begin with, she always knew she would die one day. And she always knew that it would be sooner than her peers.

Most days, she would tell her mother that she wanted to die, still young, and so full of life. And like all mothers, her mother would take a pretty big coconut frond broom and chase her out of the house, ridiculing her and saying how horrid she is to say these things to people who love her.

And she would burst out laughing, saying that it is all a joke. But she knew. And eventually she came to the hospital, sick and dying, and thrown out of the house of her parents, who suspected she had the illness.

She was going to be 23 soon. She was beautiful, a young Motuan woman, with black flowing hair and pretty eyes and long limbs. She wore faded shirts and skirts, worn out with use, but clean.

The clothes hung on her skinny frame. And her life was pretty messed up these days. She told me of how she had a boyfriend who was pretty slow. And how he was so critical of her every little move and how he called her an uneducated bitch, when she knew she could beat him at anything intellectual.

And he hurt her a lot. And she accepted everything, even the brutality.

She knew that it would be over soon. And she knew it was not her fault that she was dying.

And she never told her anyone about the illness: the little

monsters in her blood. And most days, it ached so much she would curl up in bed, and cry in her head. But she was too strong to cry real tears. And she never said a word about the pain. And she smiled at me every single day I passed her bed.

No one came to visit her. Not one soul. And every morning I dropped by to ask if she was okay.

And she wrote. She wrote about her short life. Thick diaries and pieces of paper lay on the bedside table.

And she had the results of her blood tests back taken from yesterday. And she had a look in her eyes that said she knew she was at the end of her beautiful short life.

Her CD4 cell count was low. She had wanted me to explain the results of the test, and I explained quietly. And as I sat at the side of her bed, looking into her eyes, I knew she was at peace with herself and with the world.

“You going to be alright?” I asked, trying to be empathic without showing sympathy. And she nodded with the slightest smile on her lips. She was but skin and bones now, and so pale, a fragile angel. Not so much older than me.

So I got up from the edge of the bed and shook her hand. Her handshake was feathery light, instead of the weakness I was expecting. And just like the doctors told me, a handshake can tell you a lot.

She thanks me for every time I sit at the edge of her bed and ask her how she was feeling. And now she thanked me again.

I left to grab some dinner that afternoon. I left her sitting in her bed and staring out of the window.

When I came back to the medical ward at 7pm in the night, she was lying on her side, sleeping apparently.

But then the nurse came up to the doctor 10 minutes

later and tapped her on the shoulder.

She pointed to her bed and said that a death certificate needed to be written.

And then they pulled the screens to her bed and completely blocked my view. And they covered her up. And I had to say goodbye, so I went over to her bed. And she was lying on her side, eyes closed and a half smile on her lips.

And I realised I died every time someone died, that was not supposed to die.

But I was happy for her. She was obviously better off.

One Brother to Another

Raymond Sigimet

“Hey, my brother, how’s it hanging? *Yu sik o’, longpla taim mi no lukim yu?*” Philibert quipped, touching the shoulder of the slim man who was crouching down and putting *buai* and *daka* into his small Sepik carry basket.

The slim man, recognising the voice, turned and grinned.

“Hey bro, *gutpla avinun,*” Lesly replied. “*Mi orait,* you know just taking each day as it comes.

“*Kam mi baim wanpla buai long yu.*”

Still crouching, Lesly turned to the *buai* vendor to buy a nut for his friend.

He placed a one kina coin on the plastic mat on which the vendor displayed her wares.

The items were dominated by *buai*, *daka*, cheap candy and Asian counterfeit cigarettes.

“Ah, my brother, thank you,” Philibert leaned over the mat and selected 40 toea worth of *buai* and *daka*.

Les Nomo and Philly Delpia had lived all their lives on the same street. They’d been to the same school. Their lives revolved around each other.

They saw children growing up. They saw adults growing older. They had said goodbye to some of their peers who left this town and never returned. In this life, it seemed they were stuck here.

But in some respects they lived very different lives. Les had been married for some years while Philly was still waiting for that elusive opportunity.

While Philly shelled his betel nut and looked for some *kambang* to chew, Les recalled a day some years back, just before he was married.

They were together looking for *buai* to chew, when Philly gave embarked on a man to man talk on the challenges of family, relationships and life.

Les suspected then that *pasin blong em* was to be philosophical and enlightening on issues and topics because of his love of reading.

“Lucky you, my man,” Philly teased, “You will now keep warm next to a woman for the rest of your lives. She’s a beauty. My brother, *yu win stret, mi harim olsem pasin kilim em*.

“*Lukautim em gut*. She’s gonna be your helpmate, confidante and soulmate till death do you part.

“Remember, ‘two free flowing rivers are about to meet and join as one single river. There’s gonna be whirlpools, waves and tides, and undercurrents *na ol displa kain samting*.

“Just make sure when the storm sets in, you don’t lose focus on what you felt for the first time when you realise she is the one for you,” Philly continued.

“Look, I don’t want to sound like I’m intruding into your private affairs but, from a brother to another brother, go easy on the procreation thing.

“*Wokim step ladder maski, plenim famili na stap*. You know, the price of goods and services is increasing every year. It’s gonna be a tough and expensive world out there if you want to raise a big family.

“Just look at what our society has become now,” Philly’s tone was now serious. “Family breakdown, separation and divorce, orphaned street kids, children begging on the streets.

“School children peddling cheap Asian goods, daily reports of relatives abusing and molesting children, child prostitutes, so many things affecting our children.

“It’s disheartening to see and hear about these things happening. *Yumi save tasol long kamapim na lukautim, nogat.* This is injustice to our children, our future generations, our country and humanity.

“*Mi toktok long yu long plenin sindaun blong yu bikos mi no laik long lukim ol, blong mi stret, bai go daun long displa kain rot.*”

Philly’s monologue was interrupted by the *buai* vendor.

“*Em yah, pikinini! Reverse change blong yu!*” the vendor called out to Les, coins in her hand.

Philly took the coins and passed them to Les.

“Yeah, bro,” he continued, *buai* in mouth, “for the last couple of days, you know, I was with the boys, *holim wanpla six o’ twelve nambaut na putim ai long yu but somehow mi no lukim yu.*

“*Yu save* what are brothers for! My man, we’ve been together since primary school. We grew up on this street, *yu save, laik ol save tok* ‘brothers from another mother.’”

“*Bro, mi stap,*” Lesly put in another betel nut in his mouth, dabbed mustard into the lime container and bit off the lime-coated mustard with stained teeth.

“*Yu save, ol meri koros tumas long mipla raun nambaut olsem na mi stap tasol long haus.*

“*Yumi laik raun liklik na go bek long haus em mipla go insait long bush fire stret.*

“*Olsem na bro, mi stap, yu save, hait long haus tasol na stap.* Just doing my bit to avoid flaming the embers in the house,” Les chuckled.

Philly raised his arm in feigned surrender.

“Hey brother, no offence, okay! I’m just a little bit concern *taim mi no lukim yu raun nambaut.*

“Your marriage life is your marriage life, but try not to spend too much time being idle in the house, you get what I’m saying?”

“How are the kids?”

“*Ol stap wantaim mama blong ol,*” Les sounded tired. “*Ol bikhet nambaut na mi toktok go les na mi kam olsem sekim sampla buai.*”

“OK, *yu wetim mi stap mi go painim sampla Twisties blong ol na mitupla raun go long haus,*” said Philly”

“OK, thanks brother.”

The Satanic Iceman

Jimmy Awagl

In that darkest hour of the night, that which human eyes cannot penetrate, it is fear that occupies the heart of the traveller.

At Mainamo village in the Chuave District of Simbu Province, a Christian women's fellowship group conducted a week-long fast beneath the tall trees that surrounded the huge cemetery.

The women had nightly prayer session at the foot of a limestone cliff overlooking the cemetery. The women stationed themselves in various locations to kneel and pray for hours.

Their aim was to rebuke the domination of evil within the community and stare down its evil ways: sorcery, witchcraft, drugs, alcohol and gambling.

The dedicated mothers became prayer warriors and prayed for four hours each night of the week from 10pm until 2am.

Despite the temptation and distraction of Satan, they prayed to demolish his power in the lives of the community.

On the last night of the week's intercession with God, the women demanded that Satan appear for them to view in person. They believed it would strengthen their faith to confront his physical form in this spiritual battle.

A woman leader, Mamado, left her home at 9pm for intercession. The weather was threatening and a huge bolt

of lightning penetrated the dense fog making the place even more scary.

Mamado tiptoed out of the doorway setting her course for the cemetery.

Then she saw it. A huge snowy iceman appeared in the middle of the road leading to the cemetery. The monster looked in her direction.

“If you are Satan then I will come and touch you,” Mamado said. “Do not run away as I approach you.”

The icy figure gave off steam, which evaporated fiercely from its body blowing into the air like a geyser of melting ice cubes. It was scary but Mamado was not afraid and walked towards it with a determined heart.

With continuous prayer as she walked closer she chanted, “Satan you never defeated God, so now you appeared to tame me but I will come closer to see you.”

Mamado walked closer and the ghostly figure stood firm and stared at her. She was not afraid so she moved closer to confront it. With a final prayer she raised her hands to touch the ice-covered being.

However, her fingers touched nothing and the ghostly figure disappeared. Mamado stood still and peeped through the mist and saw nothing except the other ladies kneeling down and praying.

She went further, to a location beside a grave, and started praying. While praying, she thought to herself that she had defeated evil.

After continuous rain for six hours their intercession ended at 2 am. They slept and then woke up in the dawn and gathered together.

Mamado testified about the ghostly iceman. The women were all amazed and testified on their personal encounter.

They congratulated one another for the wonderful job

they had done as devoted and determined Christians having personal intercession with God.

The effort of the women's fellowship had a great effect on the lives of people in a once evil community.

The Old Mango Tree

Raymond Sigimet

It was recess and I was walking from the classrooms when I heard the unmistakable rattling of a chainsaw. The sound came from the direction of the head teacher's house.

The tree fellers were here and the ancient, wrinkled mango tree was coming down.

Arriving at the scene, I saw a group of local men assisting the chainsaw operator.

There had been much controversy in the months and years leading up this moment.

I knew the old mango tree near the head teacher's house had been judged and found wanting. Its ancient memories would soon be forever erased.

Crowded on one side were straight faced teachers, excited students and others locals had never before seen.

Everyone was focused on the operator as he occasionally revved the chainsaw to gain traction into the thick trunk of the age old tree.

The teachers' spouses and children had been told to keep their distance and I saw them lined up along the deputy head teacher's flower garden.

There had been rumours and theories whispered of a supernatural and hidden realm around the ancient mango tree.

Night security guards occasionally said they had caught glimpses of shadowy silhouettes moving in a flickering glow beneath the tree.

They always saw this from afar and, upon investigation,

no one ever found any evidence.

Some teachers told of late night encounters on their way to their houses; of silent whispers, hushed laughter and dry coughs emitting from the tree.

Once, the head teacher's wife had a night terror where she saw herself being dragged by grotesque shadows from her bed to the tree.

She said a huge bonfire was burning and she had heard the distinct sounds of *kundu* and *singsing* throbbing from inside the tree.

She escaped this terror by screaming and flaying her arms and legs in bed, waking up everyone in the house.

But there were a few sceptics to such hysteria.

The deputy head teacher said the scaremongers were delusional and bringing their village mentality into the school. He would bring this up at the next staff meeting, he said.

Another teacher foretold that this was a sign that the last days were approaching and that teachers would need to repent their sins.

Male teachers have been regularly drinking on weekends and socialising too much with the local community, he said. This had to stop to bring back integrity to the school.

As the chainsaw cut into the tree, people said they would miss the juicy mangoes that ripened and hung from the tired branches during each year's mango season.

The children of the head teacher said that finally their daily chores of sweeping, raking and collecting fallen mango leaves would be no more.

It seemed everyone had a different story of the old mango tree.

It took some time to cut down the tree and the chainsaw continuously strained against the wood as the teeth tore

their way into its belly. The operator's veins stuck out from his thin arms as he strained with the saw.

The men holding the rope tied to the upper trunk of the tree were now on standby to pull the tree away from the head teacher's house.

Some students and teachers stepped in to assist.

A teacher came with his axe to help but the axe handle broke.

Grim-faced spectators nodded and eyed each other, contemplating the tree's malevolence even to its end.

Then, suddenly, the tree heaved momentarily.

A cyclone of gasps and shrieks erupted from the onlookers,

With a strong heave and masculine grunts, the old mango tree came tumbling down, well away from the head teacher's house.

It fell to the ground with a thunderous crash. Its fall shook the earth and all the trees and houses around.

The sound of splintering branches and swirling leaves filled the air. A thin layer of dust swirled around.

My heart leaped for a moment as I thought I heard the old mango tree sigh its last breath.

A few birds scuttled into the air from nearby trees, not wanting to be around.

And for a few seconds the onlookers' din and excitement hushed.

rest now/

dear old mango tree/

you are cursed no more/

rest now.

POETRY

Where Am I From?

Gregory Bablis

*A poem about identity and unity and the things
that make us different yet interlink us*

I am from land,
 from river, sea and mountain.
I am from valley and volcano,
 from chilly mountain breeze and steaming lava.
I am from mother, father, uncle and aunty,
 proud in traditions, passed through generations.
I am from a wild,
 yet structured social organisation,
 of stories untold and yet to be told,
 lingering in the present and seeping to the future.

I'm from village and *hauslain*,
 from clan, tribe and totem,
 from *haus tambaran* and *hausman*.

I'm from round-house and long-house,
 from *haus-kuk*, *hausboi* and *hausmeri*.

I'm from high covenant home and the Pineapple Building,
 from Kapal Haus and Deloitte Tower.

I'm from coconut and betel nut,
 from fish, *magani* and pig

I'm from Ox & Palm, Dolly and Diana,
 from Trukai rice, lamb flap, sago and Wahgi Besta

I'm from the highland and island
 from the coast and atoll.

I'm from Krapehem and Gararua,

clans I have yet to make proud.
From conch shell, *tavur*, pig tusk and *garamut*,
whose wisdom I have yet to acquire.
I'm from mainline church and evangelical church,
from Catholic and Lutheran,
to SSEC, CRC, COC and AOG.

I'm from spirit and *masalai*,
from *dukduk* and *tumbuan*.

I'm from Mande Tuo, Datagaliwabe and Yaweh
from God-Three-One and the One-True-God,
who my ancestors knew by many names.

The mat and the *laplap*,
on which I sleep,
provide me no extra warmth
from freezing temperatures.

But the dream that I dream,
of my forefathers' legacy,
comforts me all my days,
until I meet them again.

I'm from Daren Primary School and Awaba Secondary
School,
from UPNG, Unitech and UOG,
from student groups,
standing and walking tall and free.

I'm from many languages and many cultures,
many actions and many words,
spoken and unspoken,
deeds done and yet to be done.

I'm from many faces and many places,
many beliefs and many voices.

And so,
I'm from only one place on earth.
I am from Papua New Guinea.

Bad Tempered Man

Iso Yawi

Gripped fist
Tightened muscles
Deep breath inhaled
Chest bulges, expands
Lips folded inward, the mouth
Teeth clasped
Eyebrows raised
Small veins exposed
Death manifested in the red eyes
Ready to strike
The bomb inside will be exposed
Soon, soon, soon...
Ah...crash!
Ah...smash!
Ah...boom!

Be the Candle

Wardley D. Barry-Igivisa

Run, my friend. Run into the cold, cold night.
Confront your demons, rage against your fears;
Chase them from your haunt before break of light.

Kindle your beacon with a candlelight;
Hold up its golden flames your path to clear.
Run, my friend. Run into the cold, cold night.

Hear gruesome howls from the depths of twilight,
Feel still winds rustling the hairs in your ears;
Chase them from your haunt before break of light.

Gather now your guts, marshal in your might;
With the deftness of courage, wipe your tears.
Run, my friend. Run into the cold, cold night.

Bear your torch and set the darkness alight,
Burn up the shadows that are growling near;
Chase them from your haunt before break of light.

Be the candle, be the morning sunlight,
And bear the eternally burning spear.
Run, my friend. Run into the cold, cold night;
Chase them from your haunt before break of light.

Manus Island

Francis Nii

Cruising over Los Negros Island
Momote Airport sleeping in serenity
Surrounded by surging blue seas
Pilot's bliss

The Bird of Paradise
Gracious national flag carrier
Swiftly taxis to a halt
Joyfully I disembark

To the welcome of equatorial heat
Brackish sea gale
World War II relics
Swaying palms and mangroves

My mind races to Kundiawa Airport
Surrounded by rugged and menacing mountains
Pilot's nightmare
My spirit groans

Settling into a single cab Hilux
I cruise along Loni road
The pulsating songs of Chauka set the pace
My soul thrills at the ambiance

At the sight of Lombrum turnoff
Hatred overwhelms me
Why, I question myself
But the answer hasn't dawned

Wow, Loni Bridge!

A state of the art ingenuity
A solid and durable structure
Connecting Los Negros with Manus

Thinking back to South Simbu highway
Rugged terrain and potholes
Scary Pilme Bridge and snaky Deboma Pass
My mind battles to comprehend the contrast

Arriving at Lorengau Market
To the enchanting smiles of pretty angels
Adorned with stylish tattoos, long tresses
Selling all kinds of sea products

I think of Wara Market
Where varieties are arrayed in galore
Kaukau, potato, broccoli and more
And the familiar smile of Simbu Ambais

Harbourside Hotel
Manus deluxe holiday bungalows
Perched on the sea edge rocks
A lip-smacking banquet of seafood

Out in the dark tranquil sea
Seagulls dexterously glide down and up
Catching the speedy skipjack
Fleeing from the predatory boats

Lying quietly to the east of Harbourside
Is the beautiful no man's Rara Isle
Surrounded by white sandy beach
A perfect hideout for freedom seekers

Beyond is Lombrum Naval Base
The asylum seekers' detention centre
I smell the rot from where I stand

It makes me sick

Then it dawns on me

Why hatred overwhelmed me at Lombrum turnoff

It is the asylum seekers processing centre

Alias Australia's problem solution centre

An institutionalised human rights abuse

Where Australians are at liberty to rape

To satisfy their power and lust

And get protected by the Australian government

Feeling sick I retreat to my room

Jet lag makes it worse

In the comfy of the twin bed

Soon I forget the ugliness of Lombrum

Tingim ol Lain lo Ples

Philip G Kaupa

Eye wara pundaun
taim me tingting na sindaun

Mi wari na les
taim mi tingim pes
blo ol lain lo ples

Ol ino save
ol istap long we

Gavaman ol i bin makim
ino go bek na helevim
sindaun na stretim

Hevi blo ol turango ples lain
ol i bagarap na ksisim taim

Tasol ol ino save olsem
ol i wok lo baim
tax igo lo gavaman

Turango lo ol
yumi mas tingim ol

Gavaman sevis i mas
go lo ples, yumi mas
stretim ol rot i pas

Tingim ol lain lo ples

Dispela Nait ino Gutpela Tumas

Raymond Sigimet

*Dispela nait ino gutpela tumas
Bel bilong mi nogat hamamas
Mi silip long bet wantaim aiwara
Mi tanim tanim olsem kanu antap long solwara
Oloman! Tanim tanim lo nait igo tulait buruk
Em i narakain turu*

The night is torn
My heart, now forlorn
On my bed, I am in tears
Restless like a canoe in open seas
My! Oh! My! Unsettled till break of dawn
A moment now gone

*Dispela nait ino gutpela tumas
Driman nogut i wokim mi maus pas
Mi save tewel blong nait sanap autsait
Mi lukim ol burukim dua na kam insait
Oloman! Mi tromoi han na lek
Em nau mi singaut long nek*

The night, unnerving
A night terror, my voice drowning
Those lurking shadows are here now
Through the door they come slow
My! Oh! My! I punched and I kicked
And finally, my voice is thick

Dispela nait ino gutpela tumas

*Mi wok tingim meri hap kas
Em bin lukluk long mi narakain
Na lewa blong mi kalap seim taim
Oloman! Ai silip i ronowe
Na tingting tu go long we*

The night, heart-rending
This maiden of two cultures had me longing
She looked at me knowingly
My heart leapt momentarily
My! Oh! My! My sleep evaporates
My thoughts now, stimulate

*Dispela nait ino gutpela tumas
Hevi blong graun i antap tumas
Em mi het pen na pulim win i hat
Na tingting kilim mi na mi tubat
Oloman! Ples tutak na tingting i sot
Na mi yet, faul pinis long rot*

This night, suffocating
The burdens of life crushing
Giving me headaches, I'm breathless
In cold sweat and depressed
My! Oh! My! In this darkness, I break
I lost sense of the road I must take

Peter Knows How to Remain in Power

Wardley D Barry-Igivisa

Peter was made Pope by twisting a verse.

His reincarnation became a chief
When he covered himself in blue trousers
And made Capris look like a petty thief.

To stay blameless, he mastered casuistry
And manipulated those in the Haus
With clinks of gold and calls to ministry;
A ministry to keep him in the Haus.

He made friends that only money could buy;
The kiss of a judge and faith of a soldier.
Leo and co weren't born of virgins. That's why,
They must bow and kiss the feet of Peter.

Peter knows how to remain in power;
Before anyone speaks, fill his coffer.

Peter was made Chief by the populace,
Who hailed him when he gave them a Bible
And free books in which to bury their faces,
So they won't see the oncoming trouble.

He amused them with clowns in a stadium
And coddled them with fat fiscal figures,
So they won't rise in a pandemonium
Should they realize that it's only numbers.

When he sold their island to some white folks,
Some people protested. But he let time
Silenced them. When he was brought to the courts,

He drowned the guys accusing him of crime.

Peter knows how to remain in power;
Let them speak now, they'll be silent sooner.

For poor Penge, two things define power,
The people's ignorance and their indifference.
And if you can let money and time yield silence
For a little longer, you can be just like Peter

Democracy or PNG Idiocy?

Francis Nii

Like small children
They shout at each other

Finger pointing
And blame shifting

The bullies shout the most
While the timid crouch in silence

The intelligent can't make an impact
For they are booed and suppressed

Accusations

And counter accusations are the order

Policies and legislation
Are bulldozed through

Without proper debate
There is no sound scrutiny

Important questions are not answered
Important issues are not properly debated

Instead ridiculed and evaded
Gagged and ditched

Is it a House of Parliament or a kindergarten?
Or a buai market?

Is this democracy?
Or PNG's idiocy?

Sinagu E!

Vagi Samuel Jnr

A poem in Motu and English.

Hua taurahani ta emu puse lalonai o beugu
Dina badana ai oha varagu
Emu hisihisi be manoka lasi taruanai
Egu tai regena amo oi o kiri tai
Ratamu ranuna ai o-ubuguva
Vasياهو namo be bubutau ena reke gwarumedia
Parao kininini be bubuhahine imana gaudia
Egu bogakunu danai so laga ani namonamova
Lahara ena toa lalonai matagu danu se kapuva
Varo kiapana ta ai o huigu lalokauva
Mahuta lalonai reudu anena danu oabiava
Hereva siri tabe ta lataguai o hadoava
Egu gorere lalonai o geigu loaloava
Dina sياهو bona medu bada lalonai
Kememu kopana ai o taruguva
Hemami namo bada taugu idoinai
Egu bada oho lalonai o guriguri laiguva
Nega dika herediai danu so hesikuva
Dina namodia iboudia be egu goada roboana
Be emu lalokauna golo hetomana to asi davana
Hitolo bona ranumase na asi nahuadia
Na laloloumu bona mauri gunadia
Baina hereva to na laga tunamu

Badina be oina lau kudougu biaguna

Dina danu vada ekwadogimu
Maurimu ai baina hamaoromu
Sinagu E! Oina feiva kori kori
Badina be egu lalokauna hegena ori

For nine moons you carried me in your sack
On that glorious day you bled me out into this world
The pain you bore wasn't in the camp of softened back
For the sound of my cry made your flickering eyes to melt

From the milk of your breast I was fed
Residuals from fresh fish netted by grandfather
Motuan porridge at gifted hands of grandmother
For my sake you of all people did not rest well

From the breath of easterly winds I could not sleep
Bound in a string bag I was laid where I belonged
At the point of my dreaming you sang an ancient song
Along with words of wisdom you planted in my soul so
deep

Through darkest hour of sickness, I would cling to your
shoulders

Whether it was sunny or pouring rain, you never
complained

The warmth delivered from your cleavage was never
bargained

Better than sweaters for which I was named amongst
shareholders

Growing up you prayed every day for my destiny
Despite bags of shit I brought home you never gave up on
me

From plain white deeds I must admit the great I am to be
Your love is like gold I cannot buy with money

Through hunger and thirst you stood against desolation
I stand here reminiscing about memories of yesterday
Lest to every impending genre of great consolation
For the faintest idea is the candle that burns every day

The end of this life is coming very soon
And while you are alive I am honoured to deliver this
message

Oh Mother, you are my hero without a platoon
My love for you is like the clouds on a mere silent passage

My Tumbuna Talked

Wardley Barry Igivisa

The day before, I heard my Tumbuna talked and talked and talked

He talked and up came shells from the coast
He talked and our rivers were protected by ghosts
He talked and he understood the dance of the sun
He talked and the birua laid down his weapon
He talked and young warriors fought through daylight
He talked and the sorcerer danced through the night
He talked and he got ten beautiful brides
He talked and they brought pigs to his side
He talked and everyone from the far mountains listened
He talked and we laughed and loved from end to end

Yesterday, I saw my Papa think and think and think

He thinks while he sends me and my brother to
Whiteman's schools
He thinks while policemen break Blackman's rules with
Whiteman's tools
He thinks while he sings to Jesus Christ every Sabbath in a
house of bricks
He thinks while the birua brought in the Whiteman's stick
He thinks while the uniformed warriors become puppets
and whingers
He thinks while hospital bills rise higher and higher
He thinks while ten kina got his brother ten thousand girls

He thinks while they took him to the court and all the way
to the cells

He thinks while everyone read their papers and checked
Facebook updates

He thinks while Mama served rice and tinpis on paper
plates

Today, I find myself write and write and write

I write while my Tumbuna was being carried to the grave
I write while white crosses stand where there were the
brave

I write while the bigmen steal from me and desecrate the
Haus

I write while some men shred pants and shirts for leggings
and meri-blouses

I write while Mum the laundry in Dad's face, said it's called
"gender equity"

I write while the boss of the Haus and some talatalas burn
my identity

I write while huge machines mow down my Tumbuna's
rainforest

I write while the teacher asked for America's history in the
test

I write while Junior put on white boots and, with some
friends, chased a bag of air

I write while I walk through my own village thinking I'm
elsewhere

Tomorrow???

Let me not talk about tomorrow

Let me not think about tomorrow

Let me not write about tomorrow

For sufficient for today is the evil of yesterday.

A Cure For Insomnia

Ozmond Yalu

The pitch black night, I sit upright.
Not a glimpse of light, an awful sight.
Nothing much to see. The feeling is not glee.
Trying to board dreamland, but the ride is not free,
so couldn't pay the fee.

Trying to remove, that invisible mask.

I sit and bask, ahead the task.

A cure for insomnia, is all that I ask.

The crows screech, waves crash near the beach.
The thoughts trying to reach, With the evil disguised,
hated and despised.

All the time that it buys, the sun is about to rise.
The favours that I am in debt, the heights that I've leapt.
The secrets that I've kept, A cure for insomnia,
I still haven't slept.....

Dream With Me

Wardley D Barry-Igivisa

Dream with me,

When I dream that I twinkle among stars,
Or skip with sweet cherubs from moon to moon;
When I spread my wings and glide through rainbows,
Catching gold teardrops of gods in my hand,
Or rollick and romp where night and day blend;
When I gaily farewell stalking shadows,
And watch them disappear into poltroons;
When I spark in Elysian Fields on Mars,
Dream with me.

When I wander through bone-chilling waters,
Dream with me.

You might find me beside the sea watching
The waves break tenderly on the seashore,
Or lying on the sand staring at the sky;
You might see glints of the moon in my eyes,
And, in my heart, hear thunder's raging roar.
When you see pretty birds refuse to sing,

Dream with me.

The sun oft rises when no one bothers.
Sometimes when I lie down rain comes falling
On my head, and they trickle down my face.

Dream with me,

On those days when roses refuse to bloom,
And crimson petals shrivel and fall dead;
When the diamonds we laced fall from their thread,
And there is no burning lamp in our room.

Dream with me,
When I lie in the cesspool of disgrace,
Reaching up to the stars while still drowning.

Even if my destiny becomes doom
—The rivers flood and mercilessly sweep
Away darling scents of rosa la france,
Dream with me.

Angry tides may carry off all my dreams,
And all that remains are but tearful streams.

Dream with me,
Even when the rainbows lose their romance,
And sweet lullabies recall restless sleep,
And glory's light becomes shadows of gloom.

Sometimes all you might hear are awful screams
Jutting desperately out from my bones;
Sometimes ghosts may haunt where I plant my feet,
But even if I cleave to nothing, just
Dream with me.

Dream with me.
Even if dreams don't last and become dust;
For sometimes, dreams take us where glories meet
Goons, and putrid scums become precious stones,
And we'll live our dreams, while dreaming more dreams.

The Red Cigar Seller

Caroline Evari

(Translated into Tok Pisin by Michael Dom)

Boy all in red
And a red in his hands
Coins clatter in one pocket
Notes slumber in the other

*Mangi em werim ret
Ret tu istap long han
Ol coins pairap long poket
Na pepa moni silip long hap poket*

“One kina red! One kina red!
He chants as a song
Up and down the sidewalk

*Wan kina ret! Wan kina ret!
Em singsing olsem
Igo ikam arere long rot*

His feet stationed on alert
His body cautious
To the coppers
And the rangers
Those that attack you in surprise

*Lek b'long emi redi tasol
Bodi b'long em tu redi
Long ol polisman
Na ol reinga
Ol lain b'long stil pait long em nating*

This red brings danger
He had escaped many times
His eyes watch the road
As his mouth continues to chant

Dispela ret ia em ikam wantaim birua

Emi bin abrusim planti taim

Ai b'long ems tap long rot

Na emi singsing iet

“One kina red stap!”

“Wan kina ret stap!”

The Joy of Solitude

Dominica Are

On my face a comforting glow
Excitedly, from the clamorous world I take a bow
Disturbance I cannot allow

At my hideout
I close the doors and lock everything out
It's just me, myself and I, out and about

Can't conceal my delight
As I dance around with smiles so bright
And kneel down to thank God with all my might

In my own little fun filled world
Where wondrous things unfold
I let my imagination run wild

I curl up in bed with a book
When hungry, something nice I'll cook
In my own divine nook

There's no one to make me mad
Or to feel bad
I'm alone but not sad

It's not isolation
Nor fear of interruption
But moments of self-connection

The voice of silence is overpowering
Magical powers of silence I find amusing
My days and nights enlightening

So in love with my freedom
There's no feeling of boredom
Life's fun in my kingdom

Doing things my own way
In a good, bad or weird way
This is happiness I'd say

Bearing challenges with fortitude
I find endless gratitude
In the golden arms of solitude

Wara Kalap

Raymond Sigimet

Naispela wara kalap
Long maunten antap
Kol blong en i nais tru
Harim em lap stap long yu
Taim em i ron kam daun
Na kalap paitim ston

Naispela wara kalap
Em ron yet na kalap stap
Em yu yet lukim long ai
Aninit long ol bus diwai
Nogat narapela i olsem
Ples wara kalap long en

Dispela wara kalap
Stap long naispela hap
Em i ron na kalap i stap olsem
Bipo yet long lapun tumbuna taim
Kam taim blong papamama
Na nau ol pikinini na yangpela tumbuna

Dispela wara kalap
Em kalap isi na i no rap
Save kolim nek na tingting
Na tu ol narapela samting
Taim bikpela wara i rap na doti
Em nogat tru, em klin na kalap isi

Gutpela wara kalap

Long taim blong pait na lap
Em yet gat stori blong en
Taim yu pait aninit long bik san
Na yu sot win na nek i drai
Kam kolim nek na lukluk long ai

Gutpela wara kalap
Long maunten antap
Em ron yet na kalap stap
Stap long naispela hap
Em kalap isi na i no rap
Long taim blong pait na lap

Old Man

Gregory Bablis

Old man,
What have they left you now?
Have they left you your mind,
That once sliced and diced
A piercing intellect so ready
To spew out those sharp answers?

Old man,
Where is it now?
Is it still in there, hidden away
Beneath the mindless media mayhem?
Have they left you your spirit so free
That once challenged many a mountain
Your boldness and dashing personality,
That drank non-stop from a fountain.

Old man,
Where is it now?
Is it still alive in there
Under that heavy haze of cloud?
Have they left you your body, now so frail
That used to run so far and so swiftly
That massive chest and those arms so strong
That carried her over the threshold that very first night?

Old man,
Where is it now?

It's all been melted away
To that skeleton strapped in the wheelchair.

Have they left you your love
That won over all of them
A small baby, an adolescent, a fair lady and all the above
They basked in your radiance, which shone like a gem.

Old man,
Where is it now?
As you grimace so mean.
Is it plastic and dead like the rest of your world?

Have they left you your splendid face
That once wooed a hundred princesses?
Those noble features so rugged and fine
The envy of women wherever you went.

Old man,
Where is it now?
That stringy hair, that hooked nose and toothless grin
It's all been sucked away, by people so perfect.

Have they left you your pride
You were once so justly proud.
They all looked up to you, in you they could confide
A man of honour, beauty and honesty, outspoken and loud

Old man,
Where is it now?
The baby talk nurses, hand feeding you
Have squeezed it from you, every last morsel.

Have they left you your hope
That saw an endless future
That spoke of great grandchildren,
And a world of goodness and light.

Old man,
Where is it now?
Yes, it's buried so deep, far from reach
In the grey concrete beneath your feet.

Have they left you your soul
That lifted you in times of need
Your very being, your lifeblood, your whole
Breathed into your once newborn seed.

Old man,
Where is it now?
Has it already left you, escaping the pain,
Or has it turned to cement, like the rest of the world?

Old man,
What have they left you now?
Have they left you anything at all?

Tell Me Now What Have I Become

Emily Jamaiz Hoko

Tell me now, what have I become, a creature of the dark?

I don't have my own soul.

I am not my own.

Living on the wasted

Feeding on the remains of the night

A life I call mine

Screams out through the window of my insanity.

Tell me now, what have I become, a creature of the dark?

I cannot sleep.

It has ceased with time.

I remain locked, trapped, a prisoner of my insanity

Robbed from the joys that were once mine.

Tell me now, what have I become, a creature of the dark?

Light the beauty of day

Has faded with the pain that erodes inside me

Awakened only by the sound of my groaning

I'm not going to sleep

I'll walk this land for you

You will see that I have grown with this emptiness that engulfs me now.

A nauseating feeling

Stronger than the satisfier rips me apart

Tell me now, what have I become, a creature of the dark?

You took the only thing that meant everything to me

You!

Why?

Can I go on questioning myself?
Let me roam this land to find myself
To collect myself from this thing that I've become
Don't question me for what I have become
I'm not doing this for you.
No.
I'm doing this for me.

Tell me now, what have I become, a creature of the dark?
Tell me, now that I have become a creature of the dark
And in this pain I find no reason
A feeling now as pointless as my existence
Rocks me into a state of chaos
Only in this emptiness of oblivion
I am locked, a prisoner of my own insanity
In unison with the night

Tell me now what have I become a creature of the dark
Still in search for meaning
When in I exist in vanity
Ignorance my friend, a companion in loneliness
Brings me into the sands of time
Though we are one we are not
For in misery we roam

Tell me now what have I become a creature of the dark
My being shouts within me,
Wanting to be free
Captures the stillness
And throws me into the depths of hell.

You See Dried Grass Over Rough Cut Logs

Michael Dom

You see dried grass over rough cut logs
And the earth floor of my house
When I open my home to you
And you think to yourself how you can help me.
And yet...
I smelled the air that morning we cut the kunai grass
And I heard the children laughing as they played
On the green knoll beside us
And I tasted the sweet sour sweat
As we hewed the living trees to earth.

I felt the heat of day and the burning flames
As this house was dried and bound
By light of bright blue day above
And in the deepest dark of night.
I recall the evenings we ate the green-cook
That the old women brought us
(God bless pig fat!)
Because they saw our toil
And loved their grandchildren.
But I do not know and lament bitterly
How could I help you know?
So, this is what I would pray
If God would listen to me once
On one night of His majestic eternity
High above the sparks of my fire place
Give my friend peace, if you are truly god

With the blessing that only heavens knows
Because I have much to be grateful for
But so little to give.
Let my friend understand that I too know that we are here
and now, each of us, alive
And we love too.

Word Your Thoughts

Philip G Kaupa

There are trillions
Maybe zillions
Of thoughts

Who knows
Where it all goes
They are thoughts

There's no smell
Or taste to tell
For they are thoughts

The blind can't feel
The deaf can't see
But they know it's there

One an idea
Another a vision
And they are thoughts

One is an invention
Another an intention
But they are thoughts

A beautiful story
An amazing history
All in your thoughts

Silent and lifeless
Invisible and weightless
They are thoughts

There they exist
In your mind they insist
On being heard

Calm the rest
Pour out the best
Make them treasures

Word your thought
While it's in your court
For you might lose it

Give it life
Make it live
In the world of literature

(Sestina): We Were Never a Match!

Vagi Samuel Jnr

We were never a match (a)
She was a crusader from birth (b)
I was a realist during high school years (c)
We had different ideas and opinions (d)
From the time we started to date (e)
We both pursued dreams not the same (f)

I was white and she was just the same (f)
Black, her skin tone we could not match (a)
But December twenty-fifth was the date (e)
That our friendship gave birth (b)
I did not hate but her opinions (d)
For I cared so much for the coming years (c)

Beautiful was the last three years (c)
Maybe for love we became the same (f)
We debated and agreed on our opinions (d)
We held hands in public like we were a match (a)
We cried as rugged as babies at birth (b)
For we called every secluded meeting a date (e)

But then I forgot our anniversary date (e)
And rage consumed her all through the years (c)
From the night's death to the dawns birth (b)
We never kissed for the sun did not shine the same (f)
We were lovers in disguise at the strike of a match (a)
Renting on the flames stolen by her darkened opinions (d)

We talked – nothing changed but still her opinions (d)
Grew stale like the moon on a thunderous date (e)

What could have I done to make us a match? (a)

For destiny's sake, would there still be us years? (c)

Rain came on different days; the storm was still the same
(f)

Definite was the thought, could our end be at birth? (b)

Then, I gnawed my teeth and remembered my date of birth
(b)

That I have been twirled into oblivion by fruitless opinions
(d)

For this love story was history, records not the same (f)

For every yesterday was a stagnant date (e)

Like time drinking away my blood, depreciating the years
(c)

At the cost of love; could we still be a match? (a)

For if we ain't a match, will the evil inside you give birth
(ab)

To blessed years without the production of constipated
opinions? (cd)

If so, how does a romantic date sound at the expense of us
being the same? (ef)

Rhythm of Inspiration

Philip G Kaupa

Inspiration has rhythms
Tap into its influence

It's the wisdom of the old
That gives fire to the youth

It's the voice of the poet
That gives energy to emotions

It's the stamina of an athlete
That gives confidence to the fan

It's the service of a leader
That motivates the servant

It's the story of a poor man
That gives meaning to life

It's the heart of the humble
That conquers the pride

It's the work of the selfless
That gives hope to the hopeless

It's the music of the children
That gives reason to humanity

It's the role of a mother
It's the courage of a father

It's the sight of a blind
It's the ears of a deaf

It's the rising of the sun
It's the glory of the full moon

It's the glamour of the bloom
That gives light its purpose

It's the reason to love
And the desire to explore

Get inspired
Live to inspire

The Green Gold of Goroka

Vagi Samuel Jnr

Hessian bags of green gold
strung up in layers like pillows
there stood a man by the willows
wondering how his beans will be sold

I passed by Korofegu station
as showers of the morning plead
for the humble sun to be free
from the thick mist from the plantation

I fetched the pain in his eyes
his beard masking selflessness
and in that moment of stillness
my heart visited all his cries

I wondered how he'd appeal
eloping with the dawn's cold
at an hour that seemed so old
yet fresh but truly surreal

I whispered a prayer of solace
amidst the calamity of this nation
from urban villages to this outstation
imparting heaven's gift to embrace

I buried the scenic aroma
in the lips of my dried mind
sipping on the finest grind
of coffee from kolples Goroka

With Difficulty

A poem for World Teachers Day

Jimmy Awagl

Abandoned families
Walking miles
Crossing fast flowing rivers
Climbing hills and mountains
Over the range with a bag of clothes
And a piece of chalk and duster
Reaching an unfamiliar school
Accommodated in a semi-permanent home
No power
No water
No food
No firewood
No access to infrastructure
But preparing the term program
Even the day's lesson
Keeping the day books
Teaching the class
Mentoring the class
Teaches till 3:30pm
Knocks off at 4pm
To find household stuff
Even without communication
Or library books
A piece of chalk
Can still write on the board

With the help of the duster
To deliver just, authentic and genuine
Information for students' knowledge
This teacher teaches tirelessly
Without complaint

Not to gain
From the pain and effort
But satisfied as a designer
Of human brains
As teacher and educator
And a servant of knowledge
Who paved my way into the world

You were there for me today
As a mentor and teacher
Thank you my teacher

The Untapped Gold Mine

Simon Davidson

A gold mine exists deep within,
The human brain.

A mine whose treasures lie hidden,
Under the scalp.

A zillion nuggets no larger than specks,
Light like stars Innumerable.

A rich mine yielding not money,
But the precious gold of ideas.

Golden ideas to make paupers millionaires,
And mediocre men to create empires.

Men who mined great creative ideas,
And put a dent in the universe.

Mine the brain for the treasure it yields,
Ideas precious and powerful.

Mine the thoughts that inspire,
To ennoble and enlighten.

Unleash imagination's creative powers,
And create what is not.

The fount of invention and innovation,
A divine gift given man.

The power to imagine better,
Is the lot of we mortals.

Cultivating our brain with grand ideas,
Nurturing jewels never yet conceived.

Ideas, the cherished dreams grow wings,

We are one with the thoughts we think.
We can walk with the giants of history,
Saints, sages, wise folks of all the ages.

They mined their brains;
And changed the world.
They left this earth a better place,
Than they found it.

An Ever Changing World

Emily Jamaiz Hoko

In this ever changing world of ours.
Where price tags are a proof.
Nothing seems to stay stagnant.
Someone once told me 'everything in this life changes,
except for change of course'.
I always remember this saying,
When at times I ask myself why all these things happen in
my life.
We might take for granted the people or things we possess,
for all are many reasons.
That is difficult for one man to say, but nobody's perfect
except for the perfect of course.
There is not a better cliché to really grasp and capture the
whole element of ever making sense of a damaged life.
With that in mind, consider the possibilities one can
possess with such unlimited awareness and the possibility
to do all kinds of things knowing that we only live this life
once in an ever changing world.

And of course this is an ever changing world.
Where nearly two centuries ago it would have been wishful
thinking to consider the thought and I stress the thought of
women having to occupy jobs that were predominantly
male dominated. It is an ever changing world we are living
in, so God help us!
In a world where there is balance, everything flows
smoothly.

All this in accordance with the laws of nature.
By far mankind has created means and ways to make their
life easier and even easier.
With almost everything in the household having to be
controlled by some kind of device that does not
require any sweat.
And this is yet another proof of an ever changing world we
are living in today.

Life and death is not a problem.
Where infants died of simple illnesses and mothers died
while giving birth, are now things of the past.
With more awareness and new medical breakthroughs each
second, many people could now live up to a ripe old age.
Sickness like cancer or HIV/AIDS are not curable now,
But maybe in a few months from now or even a few years
from now can be cured easily like tuberculosis.
And believe me because this is an ever changing world we
live in.
Mankind has survived throughout the ages, building and
creating new and innovative machines.
With the advance in technology and communication
throughout the ages, businesses start to boom.
And with it a widespread hunger for money and wealth
crept into the depths of our soul. Back in the past you had
to be born into a wealthy family to be rich.
Today it really doesn't matter.
You could be a beggar today but a billionaire overnight if
you win the lottery.
For this is an ever changing world we are living in.

Change itself stays the same but everything around it
withers away.

That people grow old is another anatomical fact that we are ourselves mechanisms of change.

But in the thread of change that we carry like little kittens, we encounter other mechanisms of change that sometimes along the way our threads get jammed.

We stop to play, maybe to pass the time or run the life's hurdles along life's tracks.

We start the race together but along the way,

We can only hope that nothing will change in our love to grow old together.

For this is an ever changing world.

Who knows what tomorrow might bring.

In a classroom filled with children.

And laptops in front them.

How would you know if they are paying attention to you?

But there is only one way to find out and that is their semester reports.

In an ever changing world with lap tops and iPods, or iPads and mp3 players there is so much bad going on in all this good,

But, yet again what can we say this is an ever changing world were living in and these children have their rights too.

Unions and Leagues are created for humanities' protection.

And in justices name some wage war.

And the weapons used to reach peace only result in chaos.

Their purpose lost over the years.

For this is an ever changing world we are living in.

A Cacophony of Falling Trees

Jeffrey Febi

I hear a cacophony
Not from trees in the breeze
With leaves rustling
But from those that have fallen
Like innocent victims of a civil war
Bare they lay side by side in the weather
Hear the chains rattling under
As barks peel off like tender skin
On long muddy beaches awaiting their turn
On ships long voyages begin
Still like logs secured to cold metal plates
High seas their road to distant lands

Others having weakened no more
And having had their flesh become soil
In rapturous cry lie on abandon beaches
Long and low these cries
Despair of a dark night pales in comparison
Like the agony of a birthing mother
But the winds can't carry these cries
As their leaves can't rustle
Nor their branches seen
Their cries like windswept mountains are unheard
O' this voiceless cacophony of trees
Not from the trees in the breeze
But those that have fallen

Ambai

Jordan Dean

cold morning dew
from the misty daulo pass
kissed her strong feet
the raggiana's sang their songs
of love when she was near
sun rises to brighten her day
orchids bowed their heads
spellbound by her beauty
her ancestors spirits smile
lost in a moment of tranquillity
as she silently walks by.
she leaves a wake of calmness
that puts fierce warriors at ease
she wears the feathers
of the bird of paradise
as a crown.

Ambai

daughter of nature
her spirit is so free.
i've never seen such beauty,
but she did not notice me.

ESSAYS

Silent Tears

Alexander Nara

Horace Marco Maino was 26 when he left on a windy September afternoon in 1996.

Regina was proud of him but her heart moaned with anxiety and a feeling of emptiness gripped her at the uncertainty of what lay ahead.

Their sons Samson, two, and Martin, one, stood beside her as she carried their three-week old daughter Keziah close to her heart and bade her man goodbye.

Samson held on to his dad's army helmet a bit longer than usual, not wanting to let go, but Regina held him back. "Never wanting to let go" had to be ignored this afternoon.

They say tears are the raindrops from the storm inside, but Regina did not cry.

That afternoon, husband and father 810160 Corporal Horace Marco Maino boarded a special flight out of Port Moresby with his comrades from Alpha Company, 1st Royal Pacific Island Regiment, bound for the war-torn island of Bougainville.

The conflict was into its eighth year and peace was on the agenda as negotiations continued with leaders of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). A ceasefire seemed likely.

At Taurama Army Barracks, Cpl Maino, section commander of 1RPIR A COY, was deployed with his company to man the post at Siara Junction Camp in north-west Bougainville.

On 23 October 1996, as ceasefire talks continued, Maino

led his company into a rebel stronghold to meet with a BRA leader as part of the peace negotiations.

He never returned to Siara Junction camp.

His rifleman, 811502 Pte Jimmy Jula, along with 810828 Pte Raymond Waia, who were with him that afternoon, also disappeared.

Months passed, but Cpl Maino, Pte Jula and Pte Waia were never seen again.

Back at Taurama, the pride that once held Regina's tears intact at the base of her heart burst open and darkness enveloped her world. Pure agony ruled all elements of her emotions.

She wanted that disappearance to be a bad dream from which she would soon awake.

Her heart begged, pleading that it was a mistake, that there was message coming soon which would say they had been found.

Regina believed that one day soon there would be an unexpected knock on the door, she would open it and there he would be, standing there, probably bearded and rugged like in the movies.

When I interviewed her for this story, Regina's eyes glistened with tears and her lips trembled as she struggled to find words to describe the soreness, loneliness and despair that ate into her heart.

The months turned to years and that knock never came. Then finally in 1998, the three soldiers were declared 'killed in action'.

Regina felt nothing more but pain as she and her three children began their unknown walk into a future without their father.

In mid-2000, Regina found a job with the Nongorr & Associates law firm as a legal secretary. She is still there

today.

The three children turned into adults as Regina, who never married again, grew grey flowers in her hair and continued to hope deep inside that this man would one day come home to lie among his own people at Sohe in Oro Province.

Her prayers were answered. In October 2010, the remains of the three men were discovered in the custody of ex-combatants in the Hahon and Kunua areas of Bougainville.

Clearance was granted with the cooperation of the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the ex-combatants. This led to a successful forensic examination of the remains by the Australian Defence Force which confirmed that it was Cpl Marco Maino who lay at Kunua.

In 2013, the PNG national government issued instructions that the remains be recovered and repatriated.

At around 2 pm on Sunday 21 June 2015, the long wait that hovered like dark clouds over Regina and her children melted into the juddering sound of the chartered Air Niugini Fokker 100 as it touched down at Jacksons Airport, Port Moresby, after the two-hour flight from Bougainville.

On board were the remains of Cpl Horace Marco Maino, Pte Jimmy Jula and Pte Raymond Waia.

Regina stood beside Samson, now 22, and studying information technology, Martin, 21, who works with Pride Furniture, and Keziah, 20, who cuddled her three-month-old baby girl just as she had been cuddled as her father left on that September afternoon in 1996.

As the plane slowly approached the PNGDF air transport wing, Regina felt a sudden gust of wind that softly touched her face before rustling through her greyish white hair. It felt like a hand she knew.

She smiled amidst the tears that ran freely down her cheeks as she welcomed her man home after 19 years.

Today a Woman Died

Kevin Pondikou

A critically mother of eight children was flown in to Rumginae from Yehebi on Tuesday.

She was flown here by our Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) pilots based in Rumginae in what was a last ditch effort to save her life.

This courageous woman was suffering from what turned out to be disseminated tuberculosis with *cor pulmonale*, heart failure secondary to lung disease.

A long term missionary at Yehebi, Dale, and his wife had sponsored her and her husband's tickets to fly to Rumginae.

It was another glimpse into the awe-inspiring work that missionaries continue to do for rural Papua New Guinea in 2016.

In the out patients' department I was seeing a woman with acute appendicitis.

"Dr Kevin, if we can bring the woman to the airstrip by 2.30 the plane will be here to bring her back" the Yehebi missionary's wife had told me.

Sem spid na nau iet, I dropped everything and organised the community health work (CHW) students to stretcher the patient to the airstrip.

These CHW students remind me of when I was a freshman medical officer, when things like kindness, respect and patience were natural inclinations for me.

These days, having been assaulted time and again by harrowing experience, I'm more pragmatic. And practical. I wonder if that's an improvement or a sign that I'm battle

scarred and losing my human touch.

The way CHW student Kelton removed the IV drip and cleaned the site, and how the other CHW student walked back to the hospital to get plaster, gauze and scissors to tape the site, reminded me that these small things are something I've lost somewhere along the line.

At the patient's bed, I told the husband, "*Balus bai kam now, em bai gobek*".

The husband was crying by the bedside but I was thinking practically about transporting his wife back to Yehebi, and wasn't paralysed by emotion.

"*Na mi?*" he said.

Ten minutes before the plane landed, she died outside the MAF shed.

Her husband was understandably grief stricken and crying, wanting to return to Yehebi with her body as soon as possible.

Whilst holding to two infants, he said, "*Mi nogat lain lo bia bai mi hat lo stai lo bia wantem tupla pikinini*".

We brought the body back to the ward to be put in the morgue.

It was just yesterday I was trying to talk to this woman. She was eating a plate of plain rice so I waited for her to finish.

She was painfully thin, and when eating she would alternately give a spoon to the child.

It was a reminder that in Papua New Guinea, women still put their husbands and family before themselves.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. At death's door, and still showing love and care for her toddler.

I must have seen too many deaths because someone dying is part of the job. If I was in this husband's situation, this is the part where my whole world would crumble.

Seeking medical care in rural Papua New Guinea is a path lined with obstacles.

I'll have to work on my grief counselling skills and need to figure out a better way to handle such deaths.

It's not okay to allow someone to die a tragic death and sweep it under the carpet because they have little or no significance to your life.

If you allow such a travesty to occur to the rural majority of Papua New Guineans, it won't be long until your own life will be affected by the continued neglect of rural health care.

So now I have an image vividly emblazoned in my mind of a young man crying whilst watching his wife pass away whilst his toddler son was crying on the adjacent bed.

The baby did not understand what was happening in his life. The husband knew what was happening. I knew what was happening.

He was strong enough to cry.

I was two levels above being messed up.

There should be a limit to the number of times a man can be put into a situation to watch tragic death.

Collapsing on my trusty couch this afternoon, the thought crossed my mind that I should retire and rid myself of such emotional turmoil.

It's not normal to witness a death and not be affected by it.

Throughout today I was under immense stress and pressure to bring this woman home to Yehebi.

I had to take a full 30 minutes off to lie down and refocus. It was that traumatic. Lately I find I need 10-15 minutes to just lie down and figure out what is going on.

Of course, I know what's happening, I just need those minutes to remind myself that it's okay to make tough

decisions.

Last week I was on a high after a caesarean section. I thought to myself, "Yes yah! Now I can handle anything".

But fast forward a few days and I'm wondering if I can continue dealing with these horrifying scenarios.

Sometimes, when I have a lot I want to say to someone about what I am thinking, I find it easier to type. "No comment blood."

In case I should ever forget this woman and her husband and this tragic day, I'm writing this as a reminder to my future self to treasure life and protect the lives of others as best I can.

Taim u lukim onela man krai lo meri blo em dai and hear his wails at the Rumginae airstrip while you stand with some CHW students next to his wife's lifeless body.... *em displa taim bai u save* what life is and what pain it can bring.

The body will be flown back on Monday.

Amazing Grace

Marlene Dee Gray Potoura

When she opened her eyes, Grace Kunseisaw that her right leg was stuck in a fire escape door and the door wouldn't open. She pulled with all her might, but it wouldn't budge.

The *MV Rabaul Queen* was a passenger ship owned by the company Rabaul Shipping in Papua New Guinea. She was built in Japan in 1983 and brought to PNG in 1998, plying a regular weekly route between Buka, Rabaul, Kimbe and Lae.

Nearing the end of her 20 hour journey from Kimbe to Lae, the *Rabaul Queen* capsized in the early hours of 2 February 2012 and sank four hours later. Twelve crew members and an estimated 350 passengers were aboard.

It is possible though, and Grace thinks this is so, that there may have been more than 500 passengers on the vessel. It was the worst tragedy to have happened in PNG waters.

Grace was 18 years old at the time and was about to start Grade 12 at Lae Secondary School. She was travelling back to Lae with her younger sister Amethyst, 13, after visiting their grandparents during the Christmas holidays.

They left Kimbe on Wednesday 1 February 2012 at 1 pm. It had not stopped raining since the weekend.

When they got on board *Rabaul Queen*, it was packed with passengers, especially students from Bougainville, New Ireland, East New Britain and others who boarded at Kimbe wharf. The weather was appalling and waves started rocking the ship as soon as they left Kimbe.

Because the ship was overloaded, Grace, Amethyst, two female cousins and an uncle were outside on Deck B. They put down their bags but there was no space to sit, so they stood.

The rain was torrential and the ship was tossed around at the mercy of the sea. Men, women, boys and girls were seasick. Grace and her relatives stood on the deck staring at the angry waves.

After they left Bulu Point, there was no land in sight. There was only the dark curling waves, monstrous waves, hitting the ship from all sides, swivelling it off its course as, with mounting fear, the passengers struggled to keep their balance.

Grace and everyone on Deck B were wet from head to toe as the sea came pouring over the deck. They held rails, ladders, doors and whatever they could. Inside the people were packed like sardines in a can.

After passing Siassi Island at 1 am Thursday, the waves eased somewhat and the rain ceased. Grace and her sister squatted next to their bags and tried to get some sleep in the last hours before daybreak.

At 5 am the sky cleared but the sea was still rough. Everyone on the ship was weak and tired. Many now slept. Grace was awake looking out at the clear sky and the angry waves.

At around 5:50, Grace's uncle wanted to chew betel nut, so she got a nut from her bag with lime and mustard. When she turned to walk towards him, he called her name and told her to walk safely.

Grace was trying to catch what he was saying when a massive wave hit the right side of the ship, pushing the left side underwater.

Grace was swept her off her feet and held the side rails

for dear life, thinking the wave would come and go. But the water kept pouring in and she realised the ship was going down.

She felt she was being pushed by ten hands on her face and then felt her uncle's hands on hers as they held the iron rail to steady themselves. Then her uncle pushed her away from the ship and the current swept him away. That was the last time she saw him.

Grace was drawn back towards the ship by the force of the ocean and something hit her on the back and she found herself being washed along the steps that led to Deck A. She opened her eyes trying to see where she was, then the current sucked her into its coiling force and washed her away again.

When she opened her eyes again, Grace saw that her right leg was stuck in a fire escape door which wouldn't open. She pulled with all her might, but the door wouldn't budge. The thought that the ship might sink made her force her leg out and she felt the knee cap break. There was nothing else in Grace's mind except she must not go down with the ship.

She swam away from the ship swallowing salt water and the slimy oil that covered the sea's surface. There were people everywhere calling to their loved ones and friends, all of them covered in black oil. The waves kept rolling separating people and washing them away. Grace could hear the terrible sounds of people drowning.

A few metres away, Grace saw her little sister, Amethyst, and called out to her to swim towards her. But the sound of men and women screaming, children crying, the wind howling and the rumble of the waves meant Amethyst did not hear her call.

Grace saw a life raft being washed towards her. She held

it and told a Bougainvillea boy to stand on her shoulders and climb aboard. He got in and pulled Grace up and then she pulled in his sister. But it was difficult to balance because the raft was upside down.

People were still screaming but Grace and the others couldn't help them because the mountainous waves made rescue impossible.

Gradually more people clambered on top of the upside down raft and the huge waves kept coming.

Around 4 pm, *MV Moi Summer*, an ocean liner owned by a shipping company in Germany, came alongside. Ropes were thrown down to the life raft and the men tied it to the side of the boat to steady it.

The ship's crew threw down huge nets and rope ladders for the survivors to climb. And finally they were safe and were given water, fruit, food, coffee, cigarettes, clothes, bath towels, soap and chocolate.

There were 113 survivors on *Moi Summer* and they were brought to Lae the next morning, Thursday.

Grace was put in an ambulance with three other women and taken to Angau Hospital. She had swallowed a lot of oil and sea water, her right pelvic bone was fractured and she had a broken knee cap.

She was in hospital for six weeks during which her parents and fellow church members prayed continuously and cared for her unconditionally. Grace recovered.

The following year, she went back to complete her schooling.

Amethyst survived, and came out of the ordeal unharmed.

Rabaul Shipping never compensated the victims. They said the tragedy happened because God willed it and it had nothing to do with them.

They have not compensated any survivor or the relatives and families of those who perished or are missing.

The PNG government gave K3,000 to each survivor to start their lives again. Grace spent her money on hospital bills and medication. Grace was interviewed a couple of times by the police, but nothing has been done.

Grace is now happily married and has a son named Philip. She works as a penciller at the Kina Betting shop in Lae.

She has never forgotten the most tragic day of her life. She sees it clearly in her mind every time someone talks about it.

She will remember it for the rest of her life.

True Australians and Old Bonds

Francis Nii

Back then I could never have known that the creator of the splendid building standing conspicuously on a hill in Chuave would one day be my friend and escort me on my first visit to Australia.

In 1979, when I enrolled in Grade 7 at Chuave Provincial High School, I observed on a prominent hill a monumental structure with a very different architecture from anything I had ever seen.

By the time I arrived, the building – once a library – was derelict, the walls riddled with holes. It was human vandalism that had done this but the structure remained solid as if it was defying human vileness.

I came to know that this elegant A-frame library had been constructed in 1968-69 and I was still at school in Chuave when eventually it was demolished in 1980.

Just two months ago, in September, I was able to make my first visit to Australia on a study tour funded by a McKinnon-Paga Hill fellowship.

While in Brisbane for the annual writers' festival, I met Murray Bladwell, a retired educationist and a long-serving member of Toowong Rotary Club.

Under the auspices of the club, Murray had arranged for me to get a new wheelchair and a replacement for my stolen notebook computer. The wheelchair was being assembled in Ipswich, near Brisbane, and he wanted me to test it. Together we drove to Ipswich.

On the way, Murray shared fond memories of his life in Papua New Guinea in the 1960s and 1970s. Somehow the

conversation got around to that unusual building I had admired nearly 40 years ago.

It dawned on me that I was in the company of the brain and sinew behind that unforgettable structure.

Murray told me the building was a library and that he, as headmaster of Chuave Primary School, had been instrumental in its concept, design and construction.

My heart cried as the image of the building was rekindled in my mind. It had been a solid structure which, had it been looked after, could have stood to this day and continued as a reservoir of knowledge.

That library was yet another hallmark of the work of Australian civil servants, missionaries and entrepreneurs who came to our shores in those pre-independence years. It was through the careless attitude of too many of our own people that such gifts vanished over time.

Let me tell you the story of Murray Bladwell.

After working as a health inspector in Queanbeyan, New South Wales, Murray accepted an offer to train as a school teacher in PNG, travelling to Rabaul to undertake a six-month course at Malaguna Teachers' College.

After he graduated in October 1963, Murray was posted to Goroka where – with the school year nearly over - he did temporary work at the District Education Office.

Here he met Keith Jackson who, after two years teacher training at the Australian School of Pacific Administration in Sydney, had just arrived in PNG and was also awaiting a posting to a school.

Murray told me that this was the start of a lifelong friendship with the *PNG Attitude* editor and another patriot and true man of Papua New Guinea.

In 1964 Murray was first assigned to Siokiei Primary T School, out of Goroka along the Bena road. He had no

sooner arrived than he found himself in the middle of PNG's first national election for the House of Assembly.

Murray told me he was privileged to act as an assistant returning officer under the watchful eye of esteemed kiap Colin Campbell who, with his team of polling officials, trekked through villages in the Henganofi open electorate on a five week patrol.

Later in 1964, Murray was posted to Gon Primary T School, now known as Gon Kambua Primary School, in Kundiawa in the Simbu Province. There he served under Ray Andersen, a dynamic educator and prominent contributor to PNG's education development.

Through 1964 and 1985, both Murray and Keith taught in Kundiawa and collaborated in publishing the *Kundiawa News*, a small newspaper with a circulation of about 200.

During leave in Australia at the beginning of 1966, Murray married Joan, also a teacher. Joan is such a beautiful woman and I had the pleasure of meeting her during my trip to Brisbane. She treasured the *bilum* I gave her. The next day I saw Joan carrying it on a boat ride on the Brisbane River, which made me feel so happy.

On return from leave in early 1966, Murray and Joan were posted to Chuave Primary T School, as it was known back then: Murray as headmaster and Joan as kindergarten teacher. Murray told me that he and Joan had a wonderful three years working with a highly supportive local community in developing the school facilities, including the famous library.

In 1970 they were posted to Port Moresby where Murray worked in the Publications Branch of the Education Department and Joan was posted to Hohola Demonstration School and was later seconded to the

Department of Health to develop a health curriculum and jointly author health teaching guides for PNG schools.

In 1971 Murray joined Wal Capper and Fay Goodman on the much loved radio program, *Teachers' Teatime*, a joint initiative between the ABC (now NBC) and Education Department.

This program was aimed at teachers throughout PNG and was broadcast at morning tea time so that all teachers could gather in their staff rooms to listen to it and discuss the issues raised. *Teachers' Teatime* enabled Murray to travel widely throughout PNG interviewing teachers and educationists.

At about the same time Joan was appointed a lecturer at Port Moresby Teachers College, later lecturing in early childhood learning at Port Moresby Medical College.

In 1972-74, Murray was seconded to Education headquarters in Konedobu where, prior to independence, he was executive officer of the National Education Board.

Upon his return to Australia in late 1974, Murray joined the Queensland Department of Education. He later earned a master's degree in education from the University of Alberta in Canada and had an impressive career in Queensland education, retiring as Assistant Director of Planning and Policy in 1999.

Murray then spent nine years working as a consultant in his best friend Keith Jackson's public relations company, Jackson Wells Morris.

Murray and Joan told me they have very fond memories of their years in PNG and in particular the warm-hearted village people, parents and inquisitive children who made teaching such an enjoyable and inspiring experience.

Murray and Joan still feel a strong attachment to PNG and the recent Simbu schools book project for that Murray initiated was another clear manifestation of this bond.

There are many Australians like Murray and Joan who are true friends of PNG and who spent much of their life serving PNG and its people, sometimes in the most difficult conditions.

Although most left PNG around 40 years ago, they still have special attachment to our country. As the late David Wall said, “You can take the man out of PNG but you can’t take PNG out of the man”.

Today, when these men and women see PNG driven into poverty and riddled with extreme corruption and malpractice by the current brand of leaders and public servants, they feel the same pain and anger as we PNG’s common citizens.

This is evident in the writings of Keith Jackson, Phil Fitzpatrick, Chris Overland, Paul Oates, Peter Kranz, Barbara Short, Bernard Corden, Lindsay Bond, Robin Lillicrap to name just a few.

Sometimes they say openly, bugger it, I am done with that place. But you will find that they do not give up.

The bond between them and us continues, and even strengthens, and this makes them true men and women of Papua New Guinea.

Murray Bladwell is one such person.

PNG literature Can Help Cement the Bond

Rashmii Bell

“Any act of love, however—no matter how small—lessens anxiety’s grip, gives us a taste of tomorrow, and eases the yoke of our fears. Love, unlike virtue, is not its own reward. The reward of love is peace of mind, and peace of mind is the end of man’s desiring” – Harper Lee

Following the recent death of Harper Lee, her first essay contributed to *Vogue* magazine, *Love – In Other Words*, was edited and republished online.

The April 1961 meditation on the dimensions of love is a most decorous work from the author of the iconic novel, *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

I was moved by the essay’s poignant words and shared it with a dear friend. One with whom. For I felt Ms Lee, in articulating an indifference for distinctions between the various types of love, captured best our decade-long persistence at what has been, at worst, a tumultuous union.

I was moved by the essay’s poignant words and shared it with a dear friend with whom I’ve stumbled through countless broken, repaired and restored versions of friendship.

I felt Harper Lee, in articulating an indifference for distinctions between various types of love, captured exactly our decade-long persistence with a tumultuous relationship.

In my youth, my friend represented the green light that entranced the lone figure of Jay Gatsby standing on his jetty at night. My friend was the first Papua New Guinean

I'd met who shared and sustained a devotion to literature and, with it, a restless harbouring of writing.

In spare moments, he and I would commit to paper our fears and hopes for our country. We wished that, through words, we would find others who shared similar sentiments and offered solutions.

Ultimately we desired to capture the attention of not only our countrymen but people beyond our borders.

As it turned out, *PNG Attitude* and the Crocodile Prize literary competition have been prominent in facilitating this wider reading of my voice.

Without a doubt, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of Papua New Guineans lingering in the shadows waiting for a convincing signal that their voices are of importance.

But whether it's lack of interest or an overwhelming lack of confidence maintaining this quandary, I unequivocally agree with a recent comment made by academic and writer John Kamasua that "*young people in the country do not appreciate the enormous power of reading and writing*". And I feel immersed in that burgeoning despair - again.

Many people have succumbed to an overriding trend of confining their words to social media avenues, where grammar, comprehension and audience selection is at one's discretion.

So much so that any assumption that Papua New Guinean beneficiaries of a higher level of education can demonstrate eloquence in written expression should be tucked away and put to rest.

Perhaps temporarily tucked away. Victim-blaming stagnates progress and I wouldn't want to do that.

Perhaps, instead, the onus for an improved literature should be placed on the shoulders of the nation's decision-makers who have failed to provide avenues for Papua New

Guineans who, through written expression, articulate best their love for country and people.

But – let’s face it – writing with the intention of shared viewing is extremely daunting. Particularly if steering clear of the echo-chamber of domestic mainstream media consumed by the PNG audience.

And so it is enticing to utilise the forum provided by *PNG Attitude* as a place where the breadth of subject matter, depth of debate and articulation of creativity and literary skill frequently produce flashes of brilliance.

It’s enough to set any aspiring writer in contemplation mode. Permanently!

Tell me, what contributor to *PNG Attitude* doesn’t agonise over each paragraph to ensure cohesion, vocabulary and clarity of expression? And that’s after the piece has been submitted for publishing! Or perhaps it’s just me.

PNG Attitude showcases a plethora of high ability and it is my fellow Papua New Guinean writers of whom I am particularly fond and from whom I draw ideas.

I’ve found a handful so far, but am aware that, over time, many more will influence and enhance the depth of my writing.

With the launch of Sean Dorney’s *The Embarrassed Colonist*, an informative debate developed in *The Interpreter*, an online publication of the Sydney-based think tank, the Lowy Institute for International Policy.

Jenny Hayward-Jones summarised Mr Dorney’s key argument as, “Australia needs to acknowledge its colonial past in order to move to a deeper level of engagement with the Papua New Guinea of today.”

Mr Dorney, a former long-serving ABC Papua New Guinea correspondent, coined the term ‘embarrassed

colonist' because, he said, "of our seeming reluctance to fully address our history in PNG and look rigorously at the consequences".

Australia's blindness to its colonial past and the repercussions of this were critically examined in Phil Fitzpatrick's *Why don't Australians care about PNG? Is it the writers?* and Max Uechtritz's *Plenty of great stories still to be mined in PNG* - both of which present strong arguments for the mechanism imperative to bridging the gap identified by Mr Dorney and subsequent commentators.

Phil Fitzpatrick argues rightfully that a thriving literary culture so vital to fostering a national narrative is absent from Papua New Guinea. This in turn may be attributed to Australia's waning interest in its former colony.

Max Uechtritz's reference to an Australian media that's 'myopic' in its approach to reporting about PNG reflects the undercurrents of apathy that are so evident.

A giant leap toward supporting, promoting and encouraging the growth of PNG's literary culture is imperative and required from Australia.

And I'm not talking about vamping up the already concentrated efforts of 20-foot containers laden with second-hand books or child-focused library and resource centres.

It is established and emerging Papua New Guinean writers who must be supported.

What is required, as is encouraged in Australia, are designated spaces where Papua New Guineans are supported to cultivate and enhance their promising literary skills to (re)educate the former colonial administrator of how its presence in PNG impacted upon the country's mood and matter to the present day.

Along with *PNG Attitude*, the Papua New Guinea

Association of Australian has, for the past two years and again in 2016, recognised the significance of Papua New Guinean writers through its publishing program associated with the Crocodile Prize.

The same can be said of the PNG and Australian sponsors and supporters of the Crocodile Prize since 2011.

The PNGAA's annual pledge to print the *Crocodile Prize Anthology* is a sure indication to Papua New Guinean writers that their love of country and literature is supported by people who understand its importance for both PNG and Australia.

Unlike the two-person friendship mentioned at the outset of this essay, the relationship between Australia and Papua New Guinea embodies generations of individuals with whom rests questions and answers that might dispel the perceived ignorance and blindness often debated on *PNG Attitude* and recently written about by Sean Dorney.

If not developed and genuinely supported, the literary output of PNG writers will probably not contribute to the deeper level of engagement characterised by Max Uechtritz as “six decades of colonial rule and a century of deep, genuine bonds will be a mere footnote in history”.

Writatoullie Arnold Mundua

People who sees the title of this article for the first time will wonder if there is any such word as *Writeatoullie* in any of the world's languages.

Indeed the word is not to be found in any modern dictionary for it is a word I created after watching Brad Bird's 2007 Academy Award winning animated film, *Ratatoullie*.

Ratatoullie is a French dish prepared by expert chefs and the movie tells the story of how a colony of rats in Paris could cook *Ratatoullie* too, proving restaurant critic Anton Ego wrong when he disagreed with the title of a cookbook, '*Anyone Can Cook*'.

The critic was adamant until, when he finally tasted what the rats cooked, he had to concede that anyone can cook.

After watching the movie, I felt inspired to share my story about how I got interested in writing. And I gave my experience the name *Writeatoullie*, '*Anyone Can Write*'.

Writing was never part of me. Like many educated Papua New Guineans I used to think that the art of writing belonged in the hands of the gifted; clever and brainy individuals who mastered the English language in its entirety.

My high school education reached only Grade 10. As an average student, I wasn't good in English. That was evident in the 'C' I scored for the subject in the final Grade 10 examinations.

Back then colleges accepted Grade 10 school leavers, so I applied and got accepted into the Bulolo Forestry College

while most of my bright colleagues went on to Grades 11 and 12 at various national high schools.

The Bulolo chapter of my education broke new ground. The courses offered were forestry orientated science subjects blended with extensive practical field work. English and mathematics surfaced again, taught in the first year, possibly to polish and prepare us for the core forestry subjects.

After three years at the college, I was employed as a resource forester with the Department of Forestry. My work environment was mostly confined to the bush, forest and jungle. Active reading and writing were absent.

Also diminished on my lips were the style and fluency of the English language. The nature of my work and my postings did not warrant its regular use. *Tok Pisin* was the daily communication lingo. Good English was gradually slipping away from me.

The only time English became useful was when I had to prepare a report or communicate with my expatriate supervisor. This continued for 10-15 years after I left college.

Only newspapers kept me close to the English language. Although I did not have access to them each day, they consumed some of my leisure time followed closely by occasional popular magazines that crossed my path. I guess those publications kept me close to the English language.

Literature in general was a foreign subject until November 1998 when I was on a duty trip to Milne Bay. In Alotau, something caught my eye that was to open the door to literature and set me on a path of unveiling a literary talent that had lay hidden in me for many years.

Melbourne Storm was in its maiden year and had made the NRL finals. One Saturday I travelled from Ulabo to

Alotau to watch the weekend finals game on TV.

As I was going in and out of the Alotau shops that morning, I passed a table selling second-hand books and something caught my attention. On the table was a book entitled, '*To Serve with Love*', authored by Sir Paulias Matane.

I wasn't a book lover nor an avid reader but when I saw Sir Paulias' book, I instantly got attracted to reading it because he was popular on TV in those days and strongly advocated that Papua New Guineans write books.

I was flipping through the pages and the thought of purchasing the book and reading it during my weeklong stay struck me. So I bought it.

It took me less than two days to finish reading the book and, with nothing else to do, I re-read it, this time more slowly absorbing the content. I became enthralled, more so by the writing than the story.

Two things in '*To Serve with Love*' beguiled my attention.

First, the simplicity of the writing style and the everyday vocabulary Sir Paulias used in his writing amazed me. Second, touching and reading a book written by a Papua New Guinean like Sir Paulias Matane presented some kind of a challenge to me.

If Sir Paulias Matane could make use of everyday English to write a book, nothing was impossible, I said to myself. That premise was the fire that set alight my interest in writing.

I made my first attempt at writing by contributing an article to my employer's quarterly newsletter, *Gadona*. The reaction from readers was good. Many were impressed. I was also impressed when I read the article. I discovered I could write like others.

The articles I undertook for *Gadona* while I was locked away in the forest was the start of my writing.

Every time my writing appeared in *Gadona*, I was elated and reached a stage where I felt I should go beyond the newsletter. So I decided to write articles for the *Post Courier's* Weekender section. I penned my first short story for the *Post Courier* in late 1998.

I continued writing until one day, beyond my expectation, I realised the pages of the manuscript I was working on had greatly increased. I realised that my writing would no longer be the anticipated short story but something different.

I found the isolated and lonely logging camps the most ideal place to write and continued to work on the manuscript wherever I camped.

Due to extensive travel and heavy workload it took me nearly three years to complete the book.

It took me another 12 months to go over the manuscript, fixing, adding, subtracting and arranging chapters and everything else I deemed necessary to be done.

And so I edited my own work, which was now entitled *Dark Side of a Woman*. Later I considered this to be offensive to female readers, so changed the title to *A Bride's Price*.

Satisfied, I allowed the manuscript to be read by friends. But strangely not many took the time to read everything or make any critical comment that would either denounce or improve my work. Maybe the thickness of the manuscript (110 pages of A4 size paper) scared them.

Nevertheless, a few friends managed to spend some time reading the whole book and offered invaluable comments and recommended it for publication.

I got excited at the prospect of getting it published but this was another new area and posed a challenge for me. As

a stranger on this unfamiliar turf, I got stuck. I knew nothing about publishing and I didn't know where to send the manuscript or to whom.

Sir Paulias crossed my mind but I was not sure if he would assist me. I looked up his number in the telephone directory and called him one morning from Kimbe.

I had never known or talked with Sir Paulias before but he sounded friendly over the phone. After introducing myself I notified him of my manuscript. Sir Paulias sounded pleased and asked me to send it to him.

Two weeks later, while on my way to Open Bay in East New Britain on a business trip, I fronted up at Sir Paulias' Takubar office armed with the manuscript. It was my first time to meet Sir Paulias and I felt a bit nervous as I was led to his office. But it was different when I finally met him.

Sir Paulias greeted me as if he had known me for ages and I felt welcome the moment we shook hands. He directed me to a seat and, after settling down, I presented my manuscript to him. I told him that I wanted his view of my work and possible help in finding a publisher.

Sir Paulias expressed surprise. He said many Papua New Guineans called him and expressed their interest in writing but none had showed up with a manuscript. He said I was different. Well done, he said.

That kind of compliment from a master writer inspired me. His words were the ammunition I needed to keep the fire of writing burning in me.

He told me to check with him after a week by which time he would have gone through the manuscript. When I returned a week later after my Open Bay stint, I fronted up at Sir Paulias' office. He greeted me with a broad smile the moment he saw me.

He said he was impressed with the story and wanted a

digital copy. I sent him a copy as soon as I returned to Kimbe. Sir Paulias then advised me to expect a letter direct from the publisher.

I knew my work was now before a publisher and kept my fingers crossed hoping that the publisher would accept it and publish it.

Two weeks later I got a letter from CBS Publishers in India advising me that my work would be published and they included all the costs I had to facilitate.

I later realised that this was the same publishing house that published Sir Paulias' books. With a foreword written by Sir Paulias, 500 copies of *A Bride's Price* were printed.

The book was launched before a packed crowd by the late Sir Alkan Tololo in September 2003 at the Kokopo Secondary School Hall. Also launched at the same time were Sir Paulias' book *Ripples in the South Pacific* and a book of poetry by Sam Mutuaina.

Sir Paulias was instrumental in organising the launch and there I began to understand and appreciate fully his genuineness in advocating PNG literature.

I had not seen or touched a copy of *A Bride's Price* prior to the launch date. There was a delay due to some technical reasons associated with shipping. My book was due to arrive late.

Sir Paulias again stepped in and brought 10 copies into the country just for the launch. It was at this time that I first sighted a copy of my book.

When I picked it up and held it in my hands, I realised I had achieved something very few Papua New Guineans achieved in their lifetime. I had written a book that I previously thought was only possible for the trained and gifted hands. I was an author.

The experience was like a window curtain being opened.

In the process of writing *A Bride's Price* and in communicating with the editor of CBS Publishers to prepare the manuscript for publication, I had learnt many things about writing, publishing and how the publishing industry works.

I had learnt to create and develop my own writing and editing skills and even how to go about conducting research for my writing.

Immediately after *A Bride's Price* I started on a new manuscript and went on to publish my second book, *Elep Returns*.

In 2005 my entry in the 2005 national literature competition took out first prize in the short stories for dramatisation category. In 2014 my entry in the Crocodile Prize competition won the prize for heritage writing. This was followed by the first level Val Rivers Prize two months later. I am currently revising and editing my third book.

I started writing only 18 years ago. Considering my educational background and where I come from in a literary sense, I am a total outsider, an absolute stranger in the literary field.

But after two books and currently working on a third and winning three top level prizes in three different national literature competitions, I can confidently herald *Writeatoullie –Anyone Can Write!*

Tuna in an Overfished Pacific

Kerry Kimiafa

I was once told by my environmental sciences lecturer, Associate Prof David Mowbray, that “tuna fish know no boundaries and no borders and no man or government will claim the tuna as theirs”.

Dr Mowbray pointed out that tuna are a trans-migratory species and can be anywhere depending on season and sea water temperature. They can swim long distances without fatigue due to their tough muscular build.

Their meat is a delicacy on dinner tables, whether canned or fresh. If fish were like cars, tuna would be the Ferraris of the ocean—sleek, powerful and made for speed.

Their torpedo-shaped bodies streamline their movement through water and special swimming muscles enable them to cruise the ocean highways with great efficiency.

They prefer to travel in schools to avoid predators, usually with the smaller ones at the top; however this group behaviour comes at a huge cost as fishermen use this knowledge to their advantage to scoop and haul them in using driftnets or even sticks.

The highly decorative skipjack, blue fin and yellow fin tuna are sporting wonders; some of which weigh in at several hundred kilograms.

According to some game fishermen, yellow fin and blue fin are amongst the world’s toughest game fish. You’ve got to be strong to play them and haul them in because it’s no job for a boneless man.

You could be jerked overboard by the sheer might and

fighting prowess of these fish. These tuna are amongst the most sought after game fish.

“These bad boys of the ocean are strong and have high stamina,” I was told. “They will fight until the end and will make you sweat till the moment you land them.”

And, in particular, if you are targeting a yellowfin then you should be prepared for a battle because it is no quitter. It will fight until you cut it loose or land it on the boat.”

As an Environmental Scientist whose interest covers both food and game, I’m very concerned with the dangers threatening the survival, numbers and regeneration time of these oceanic wonders.

This concern is felt also on behalf of the Pacific Island sea faring community and the people who rely on it, whose livelihood is very much dependent on fish stocks for protein supply and sustenance.

It is public knowledge that tuna stocks have been overfished and depleted, and that traditional tuna breeding grounds are threatened right throughout the Pacific.

The use of modern fishing technology including GPS and radar to locate and spot schools of fish and sophisticated fishing techniques like drift net fishing are beginning to overwhelm the fish.

There seems little regard for sustainability.

Population increase in Pacific communities is also exerting pressure on fish stocks and other marine life.

At the same time, increased storm water disposal into oceans and increasing sea water temperatures are leading to coral bleaching, destroying the breeding ground for aquatic life including fish.

Papua New Guinea, through the National Fisheries Authority (NFA), and the other Pacific Island countries are signatories to various tuna conventions and agreements.

These laws are meant to ensure that tuna will remain available to the South Pacific people.

I'm sure that these and other initiatives like will assist to bring greater awareness to Pacific islanders, governments and the fishing industry of the necessity to conserve and ensure the long term survival and availability of tuna fish species in Pacific waters.

Kerry Kimiafa is the Head of Science at Goroka Grammar School. He is an environmental science graduate from the University of PNG and a current masters candidate in Ecology through the University of Western Australia.

Political staff – the Destroyers of PNG Politicians

Francis Nii

Imagine you have genuine business to conduct with your provincial Governor, the man people like you have given a mandate to serve.

Say you want to follow up on the K100,000 he has committed to your group's community-based vegetable project under the special agriculture grant roll out.

The money has been budgeted but not released and the year is about to end.

Your group members are frustrated and pressure you as chairperson to personally meet the Governor and collect the cheque.

You get up early one morning and walk up the mountain, along the valley and cross swamps for three hours fighting the chill and mosquito bites. Then you reach the nearest main road. You wait an hour for a PMV to arrive.

By the time you get to the provincial government headquarters, half the day has gone. You spend another two hours standing in a long queue, all of it wanting to see the Governor.

As you stand there, the atmosphere starts to get tense and eventually the people in front of you become rowdy.

The security guard and one of Governor's sidekicks at the entrance to the great man's office are answering the people's queries and forcing them to go away.

The people are not satisfied with this. They are angry and want to force their way into the Governor's office.

The guard threatens to call the police if they don't leave immediately. Knowing what the police are like –brutality first; talk later - the people slowly and reluctantly leave, thoroughly dismayed.

Only a few, people who appear to be the Governor's acquaintances, are allowed to see him.

By now you are thinking hard about how you will convince the guard and get in to see the Governor. You feel more uneasy as you move closer to the top of the queue.

After what seems to be a million hours, your turn comes. The first question shoots at you like a missile: "What is it you want to see the Governor about?"

The missile is delivered with a tone of power and authority that you did not expect. Your heart beats faster.

After a moment of silence, you give your reason.

"There is no money. Come back next year."

"I want to see the Governor," you insist.

"I told you, there is no money. Are you deaf? Now get out and come back next year. Stop wasting our time." It's the sidekick.

"When exactly next year will I ...?"

You haven't finished your question and the guard shouts out to the next person who shoves his way to the front.

Feeling lost and disgusted, you take the slow steps like those who went before you.

"If only you knew where I come from"

The thought sweeps back to swamp, mountain and mosquitoes. You are engulfed with feelings of sadness then anger and hatred.

You look to the sky and the grand old sun is about to perch on the western mountain top. You check your mobile phone and it is four o'clock.

The thought of the long and gruelling journey back home enervates your soul. Nevertheless, it has to be done, as you have no friend or *wantok* in this town.

You force your legs to stride to the PMV stop and get on the back of an old and battered Land Cruiser. You know the vehicle is a road menace but you risk the journey anyway because at this time of the day you have no choice.

Finally you reach home around midnight, feeling sore, tired, hungry and disheartened.

Next morning your happy group members gather at your house to welcome the K100,000 cheque from their honorable Governor. Instead, to their increasing dismay and detestation, you tell them the story.

They feel sorry for you and hate the Governor to their bones. They grind their teeth and vow to get even at the next election. *Ol i kaikai tit the tok bai ol i lukim (mekim save) long taim bilong nupla ileksen.*

Have you ever experienced or come across stories like this? People who have genuine business matters to discuss with the Governor or some other elected leader are handled by secretaries, security guards, drivers, tea boys, briefcase carriers and sidekicks.

People don't go to the politician's office to be seen by these ignorant and arrogant fools. They go with one thing in mind, and that is to get an answer from the mouth of their mandated leader, be that answer negative or positive.

Only then they will be satisfied.

Instead the nincompoops guarding the door are the mouthpieces. They demand to know the reason to see the grand personage and, when they are told, they provide an answer as if they are the MP himself.

When people tell them that they are not satisfied and want to hear it from the MP's own mouth, these lunatics

say that they are telling them what the MP is going to tell them.

When the people insist, they are ordered out or simply ignored. In extreme cases , they are ushered to the gate which is shut in front of them.

This is real and happening all the time at Kondom Agaundo Building, the Simbu Provincial Government headquarters in Kundiawa. It is also happening elsewhere in our country.

The briefcase carriers or sidekicks think they are doing a great job. What they don't realise is that they are destroying the MP who employs them.

Those same people who have given the politician the mandate return home with anger and hatred. This will not be forgotten at the time of the next election.

Papua New Guinea has a high turnover of politicians at each election. And this is one of the reasons that contributes to their downfall.

It's up to the politicians to ensure their electoral staff facilitate the process of accountability and answerability to the voters, not trash it.

Missionaries as Misfits?

Michael Dom

More often than not the saving grace that missionaries offered to Papua New Guinea's tribes was balanced by cultural destruction, sequestered land, and diminution of sustainable lifestyles and, to some degree, retarded capacity to think and make decisions.

I have a theory that one origin of women's disempowerment worldwide is religious teaching, and probably the notion of religion itself.

No matter how innocuous or enlightened religious teaching may be, its foundational precepts seem flawed where women are concerned.

Think of it, most creation legends of so-called less sophisticated tribal belief systems often included both male and female progenitors.

And, for the most part, they were polytheistic or believing in the spirituality of creatures, objects and places.

All right, perhaps today's modern thinking makes us laugh at these ideas now, but take a step off the beaten path and find yourself alone in the bush for a few days and you'll very soon come to terms with your own spirituality or lack of it.

Back to my theory about women's disempowerment.

Christianity and Islam, the two big guns, teach the mystery of creation by the Word of God - a monotheistic belief in one sexless creator.

Islam, in essence, ignores women and where women figure they tend to be marginalised or subjugated entirely.

Christianity on the other hand is more subtle – promoting Mary as The Virgin Mother and relegating Magdalene to prostitution.

Poor Eve was apparently an afterthought, and also had the dubious qualification of being the first woman ‘born of a man’.

Interestingly, the Hindu pantheon contains thousands of gods and goddesses which have both male and female avatars.

As for Buddhism, thousands of men living alone from childhood in close quarters with fellow monks and usually in isolated environments. Exchanging the marital arts for the martial arts.

It’s only comparatively recently that secularism seems to be exerting a major influence on these.

I have this suspicion that women’s roles and responsibilities in traditional PNG took a sharp downward turn after the arrival of missionaries.

Perhaps the introduction of the *meri*-blouse to hide the body of the ‘uncovered village maiden’ was more than an attempt at modesty or to keep philandering white husbands out of temptation’s way.

Maybe it was a symbol of a culture also to be hidden, if not buried.

Our Great Negativity

Martyn Namorong

If we are truly honest with ourselves, we will admit that growing up and living in Papua New Guinea is a negative experience.

As children, we were told that there was once a perfect world that Adam and Eve screwed up sending us all to eternal damnation.

We were told to repent, which we did and continue to do, and then forever ask forgiveness because we are horrible sinners.

Then we grew up a bit and went to school and our teachers scolded us and called us “dumb-dumbs”.

We felt dumb anyway as we watched from a distance as our peers collected end of year prizes; the rest of us being told that we’d go back to our villages and plant *kaukau* that the smart kids would buy from us.

Then we grew up and realised it was all a lie.

Now we’re miserable because the engineer and the economist struggle to find accommodation at Morata settlement whilst the *buai* seller who didn’t go to school owns a trade store and a PMV bus.

In addition, if our colleagues at work reckon we’re smart, they plot against us to stop us becoming more successful. We also find that hard work isn’t rewarded unless we have connections.

I have travelled the length and breadth of this country and everyone keeps telling me that they are the “back page” of PNG, the “last people”.

But many of these “back page” communities have better road and water links than the truly remote people of Nomad or Wawoi Falls. Many are only a few hours away from a main centre compared to the number of days it takes for me to travel from Daru to my village.

Why do they therefore perceive themselves as being backward?

Perhaps what I am describing is what is referred to by some as “structural violence.” Structural violence refers to types of economic, political, legal, religious and cultural arrangements that stop individuals, groups and societies from reaching their full potential.

As I ponder this issue, I ask myself, “What *are* the determinants of the way things turn out in PNG?”

I do not know.

But I can’t help think that perhaps any avoidable impairment of a person’s ability to reach their full human potential is a form of violence.

I have met so many young people around the country and each time we have a chat they talk about what needs to be done or how much help they or their communities need. And when I point out what *they* can do, I’m usually confronted with a blank stare.

Many of our people have been so beaten down by various forms of structural violence that its ubiquitous nature has been normalised as a stable experience.

Being told they’re dumb constantly gets normalised as “*mi nidim moa save*” – I need further studies.

If a pickpocket kid is apprehended, the crowd usually shouts ‘*paitim em*’. Yet some of that same crowd would also be ranting on Facebook about police brutality. What is acceptable and what isn’t acceptable violence, one may ask?

There are so many young people in PNG “doing

nothing” when there is so much work to be done. Many are dreaming of “going to school and getting a job” because they “need more knowledge”.

There is also the violence of foreign aid and government.

Last year, whilst filming outside Lae city, the *Tanim Graun* TV crew came across an aid post near Markham Bridge that had a power line just a few metres away but no lights at night.

Everyone of course was waiting for ‘*gavman*’ to fix it when they themselves could have assisted.

The aid post also had a gutter and tank but no water because there was no downpipe connecting the gutter to the tank. The cost of buying and installing a downpipe would be less than K100 but no one did anything.

PNG does have major challenges in terms of its difficult terrain. Indeed, I think that’s the only physical challenge to tackle – taming the terrain.

The rest of our problems exist in our heads because of the cognitive dissonance arising from the normalisation of various forms of structural violence.

The changes Papua New Guineans want to see in their lives and communities will come when people act based on what they can do rather than dwell on what they’ve been told they cannot do.

One of the World's Most Corrupt Countries

Lucas Kiap

Soon after Papua New Guinea gained independence from Australia on 16 September 1975, the founding fathers who took charge of the new country made a fundamental mistake that continues to this day to haunt and prevent Papua New Guinea from progressing.

The new leadership failed to develop an effective vision to steer the country in the right direction.

They didn't look ahead and plan for what kind of future the country and its people were going to build as the years passed by.

They failed to derive a vision which would achieve the directives, principles and national goals outlined in the constitution.

The founding fathers thought the constitution was sufficient in itself to run one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse countries in the world with a population of mostly uneducated rural subsistence dwellers living in bush villages and hamlets scattered across the toughest terrain.

It was a grave mistake that set a wrong course for the country from the very beginning.

The constitution was not translated into long-term development plans and strategies which would have laid the foundations on which to develop and distribute the country's wealth fairly and equally to improve the living standards of all people.

Some simple development concepts the founding fathers

should have adopted but did not may have included long-term plans in relation to urbanisation, infrastructure, a diversified economy, educational institutions to produce people who would build our country, a workforce in paid employment and decent housing for the people.

In the absence of such long-term development plans and goals, all subsequent governments resorted to temporary or short-term measures, usually on an ad hoc or reactive basis, to spend the limited government resources and funds. Development funds were then just thrown away for leaders to use and spend on anything as they wished.

Politicians realised that they had easy access to huge public funds, something neither they nor their ancestors were used to. They realised that they could buy anything they liked with the money; a life their subsistence farmer parents had never dreamed of.

In a country where most people were illiterate and poor, the leaders became gods and celebrity figures. Everyone looked up to them and worshipped them. It was the emergence of Papua New Guinea's "money and big man culture" - a man with enough money is a big man and he is above the laws of this land.

The leaders slowly transited into the world of the colonial masters, placing themselves ahead of their fellow Papua New Guineans.

They developed an appetite for misusing, abusing and stealing public funds to buy the kind of life that commanded great respect from ordinary Papua New Guineans. The appetite they developed has been responsible for swallowing billions of kina in development funds.

Since then there has emerged the misconception that politics is a means of wealth creation. Elections mean

nothing more than a becoming an instant millionaire.

This has grown into a cultural norm, and has slowly spread across the country from the highlands to the coast.

Politicians or big men begin their political careers as ordinary people and graduate as business entrepreneurs after they leave office. The difficulties in separating business from politics has sent out further signals to political aspirants that contesting elections is a god-sent opportunity for wealth accumulation.

Ordinary people like civil servants, priests and pastors when voted into parliament disappear and re-emerge as business entrepreneurs. This also explains why elections in Papua New Guinea are increasingly becoming violent, with bribery and cheating. Leaders are not contesting elections to serve the people and the country but to serve their greed.

As a result, a culture of greed and corruption developed, where anyone, so long as they have connections to the political masters, could easily establish schemes which could be used to divert and siphon public funds away from the people and development.

Slowly, a network of political cronies and masters developed. Cronies mostly came from the bureaucratic mechanism and the relatives and business associates of the leaders. Bribery, the *wantok* system and nepotism became the norm. Currently, the network is multiplying with time and with every new government.

To feed their greed, politicians constantly look for easy ways to bring big money into the national coffers so enough is floating around the system for them to steal and satiate their huge appetite for wealth.

Sadly, our natural resources have been the constant subject of their quest for easy money, in the disguise of

growing and sustaining the economy.

They give tax breaks to multinational corporations in the guise of attracting foreign investment while neglecting other sectors of the economy such as agriculture. Perhaps this explains why we are still poor despite our riches in natural resources, foreign aid and loans.

Over the years we have been asking why our politicians are not serious about stopping corruption. Well, the answer is obvious. Neither can they punish themselves for stealing nor can they stop themselves from stealing. They love money and all that money can buy. They have been addicted to greed and money almost from the start. There is no quick and easy way out for the country so long as they maintain control of the national piggy bank.

Sadly, while they have been enjoying a life their ancestors never had they have been leaving behind the rest of the people of Papua New Guinea as beggars in their own rich country.

As a result, every place that was once a village remains village. Even village that hosts a multibillion dollar project remains a village. The people of Kutubu still live in shacks built from sago leaf without electricity and a water supply despite oil flowing out of their land for more than 20 years generating billions of kina in revenue.

Despite all the fancy promises and new ways of distribution, development funds never get to the people who remain as villagers in villages. Before there were a few bush houses in each village. Now that number has more than trebled because there are more people. More people who do not share in the distribution of the country's enormous wealth.

The question is – can we continue down this path?

The greatest mistake we have been making continuously

is electing the same leaders who have failed this country miserably from the start by failing to have a vision for our future.

If we continue down this path, this country will remain the same or more likely get worse.

Our forefathers never gave us this dream but they did give us the choice of determining our own path. The dilemma facing this generation is the choice of whether to lazily stick with the present generation of politicians or choose our own destiny and change the course of history.

Different Faces of PNG the Barbie Way

Rashmii Bell

In early 2016, international brand Mattel (read Barbie) expanded its Fashionistas collection by introducing three new body types to their iconic dolls: tall, curvy and petite.

This was met by whoops and cheers and staircase moon-walking by men, women, girls and boys across the globe. Former (me) and current consumers rejoiced at this long-overdue epiphany.

Mattel's president Richard Dickson, in pinpointing the key to the cultish doll's reign over 55 years was clear: "Barbie reflects the world girls see around them. Her ability to evolve and grow with the times, while staying true to her spirit".

The body type variations were an extension to Mattel's 2015 move to diversify the Barbie catalogue by adding seven skin tones, 22 eye colours and 24 hairstyles. But even better, Barbie now comes with feet that will don either heels or flats.

Mattel, in banding with like-minded corporations and celebrity figures, had a simple message for the world - there exists no single definition of what a beautiful woman looks like.

Devout Barbie consumers and haters can now unite in this chemically-fused expansion of the notion of beauty. But most importantly, they should now understand that *slaymode*, the serious annihilation of all opponents, can be executed in five-inch stilettos or five millimetres off-pavement rubber slippers, just like in the real world.

Hold that thought for a minute.

It brings to mind Michael Dom's '*Seeking asylum in my own country*', a piece so raw in emotion, so clear in voice and unloaded with visible but controlled rage.

My heart hurt as I read Michael's recollection of scenarios and emotional reactions to what he succinctly defined as divisive behaviour from our own countrymen. But I quickly disconnected those pangs of sorrow, yanked out my inner-Jadis (white witch, the lion, the witch and the wardrobe) and took to Twitter.

In sharing Michael's article, I used the 140 character limit to empathise with him and flung a '*FRO*' (that's '*fucked right off*' in social media talk) in the direction of the culprits who sustain this over-recycled and tiresome carry-on.

Like Michael, I too have had a gutful.

Who appointed these culprits as the authority on setting and continually shifting the benchmark of what a 'real' Melanesian-Papua New Guinean is like?

I'm as irritated as I was in 'Let the C Word Run Free: Desperately Seeking Collaboration', I'm as furious as I was in 'The Brain Draining of the Papua New Guinean Non-Resident' and I'm perplexed as I was in 'The Would've, Could've, Should've Been Story of PNG'.

But, as with that saying about 'ways', 'skin' and 'cats', I've veered off the path of reacting to my vexatious countrymen. This idea that there is only one standard that one should emulate to be worthy of classification as a genuine PNG article is ridiculous. A closer look at this fallacy is in order.

To all those newly experiencing the sentiments shared by Michael, here are a few cheat tips to manoeuvring your way through the harrowing personal identity crisis so disgustingly imposed upon you by these irrational and

malevolent culprits.

As far as haematology's role in qualifying one's nationality, I'm fairly confident that you are as Papua New Guinean as the girl next to you who has one parent from the motherland. But just in case I missed the newsflash that a 'real' Papua New Guinean bleeds red, black, yellow and white stars, a comparison of blood vials should confirm your authenticity.

Embrace with all your youthful might this truth: you had *zero* say about the life you were born into. Nor the decisions made in the next 18 years (longer for those at the mercy of hardline PNG parents).

Don't be compelled to apologise or justify why you lived where you lived, when you ate where you ate or how much of the air you breathed when you breathed air. None of these factors make you any more or any less Papua New Guinean than the culprit holding court at your inquisition.

Compensating for others misfortunes is a recurring theme (aka obligation) in any Papua New Guinean's life. You'll have plenty of opportunity down the track to be wrung dry of emotion (and finances). So unless these culprits can show proof that you in your foetal state or infancy had a say in the cards you were dealt, there's nothing more for these prince and princesses of darkness to do but....

Take a seat. Suck it up. Deal with it.

Papua New Guineans, it seems, will tolerate brilliance so long as your eccentricities are kept under a tight lid. So be mindful of your two *A's* – accent and attire. Be you, but please control that you're not too much of you.

I'm not sure why at any given moment when a Papua New Guinean delivers a string of words with unfamiliar elocution, all ears are pricked and immediately eyes begin

the stare-downs and mouths start the self-scripted speculation about the speaker's authenticity.

It reminds me of that scene in the *Lion King* where the deer (you) at the waterhole stops mid-drink as their ears prick to the vibration of the fast approaching wildebeest (culprits).

Nevertheless, if your style of speech meets with the culprits' dissent, be swift in adopting the intonation of the Highlanders, the Papuans or, wait, is it the New Guinea Islanders' or perhaps the Momase inflection that aligns the best with the way a 'real' Papua New Guinean speaks?

Of course, it's possible to achieve *bona fide* Papua New Guinean status by ignoring the nation's land mass in its entirety. In place, emphasise the little nook of the country in which you and yours reign. Regionalism is all the rage. Days of the calendar year have been dedicated to celebrating respective provinces' displays of diversity in traditional *tokples*, *bilas*, *singsing* and *kaikai*. (Hang on, what's this business about acknowledging diversity?)

Investing in a miniature hand-held provincial flag to wave erratically at public gatherings is a sure-fire way to earn acceptance and kick into overdrive that warm, fuzzy feeling of belonging.

You'll no longer be 'Mark John a Papua New Guinean' but, 'Mark John a true son of Morobe....'

That in itself implies the cancellation of any doubt that, well hey, look here, you're 'real' Papua New Guinean after all. Mission complete.

Pay no attention to this idiom of '*missis*' or '*masta*'; it serves to injure and compliment, simultaneously. The sooner you accept this, the faster your brain will stop rattling because it's not all in your head. It was formed and made itself a cosy home in the culprits' multi-layered,

mean-spirited mouth.

Your nautical-inspired maxi dress and too-out-of-place accent is likely to be met with indiscreet glares or leper-like avoidance. As is the delivery of a '*missis*' sneer; vehemently spat in your direction.

Yet, within minutes of this ill-reception, a Caucasian female, one of your prototypes, may enter the scene. You'll see that this same word will lobbed at her feet but, much to your horror, observe it conveyed through a pantomime that reeks of sing-song and brown-nosing.

'*Missis*' will be delivered two-octaves too high accompanied by the aroma of a nauseating lavender scent most synonymous with toilets.

Then to compound your already frazzled head, the same culprits will later go on to badger their light-brown complexioned Papua New Guinean girl squad members with coos of '*naispla missis*' or '*yu missis yah*' and similar banter of ludicrous dimension.

And for their male offspring, a showering of '*liklik masta blo yumi*' accompanied by misplaced squeals of delight.

Adoration that baffles the mind and makes my skin crawl.

Is anyone else's temples throbbing from trying to make sense out of this nonsense? Because it is just that. Absolute and utterly preposterous carry-on.

I need an aspirin. And a lie-down.

The message here is simple: culprits should take heed of Mattel and the rest of the world. In this day and age, Papua New Guineans, like Barbie dolls, come in various body shapes, hair and eye colour, accents and attire. We can be heel-encased, flats-wearing and yes even, bare feet.

Just like the reality of Papua New Guinea.

Times have changed, individuals have evolved. Culprits,

please do likewise.

There exists no single definition of what a 'real' Papua New Guinean is. Rather, a Papua New Guinean should be referenced according to expansive and inclusive criteria championed by the individual staying true to a spirit of love, mutual respect and good intentions for people and country.

What is Peace?

Alythea Siraba

Every day death tolls are rising, the numbers of refugee's increasing, children are being abused; violence is swelling; and here I am, wondering: why? I have not lived two decades in this world, and have already witnessed violence, discrimination, brutality and suffering at first hand.

According to the "Online Dictionary", *peace* is referred to as:" the non-warring condition of a nation, group of nations, or the world; peace is mutual harmony; peace is free from civil commotion of violence; freedom of mind from annoyance, distraction, anxiety and obsession" and the list goes on.

Personally I believe that peace comes from within; that peace is simply acceptance. Acceptance of my current situation and my past; acceptance of the mistakes that I have made in my life; acceptance of life's disappointments and my failures; acceptance that in life there are good times and there are bad times.

I know of many people who say that they are happy and at peace; that wear big smiles on their faces and laugh the loudest; but ask them how they really are when they are alone and there is no one around; you will hear the truth. It is the same story for the ones who seem the coolest or the ones who seem the happiest and for the ones who are always willing to lend an ear; they all have sleepless nights accompanied by tears and fears, trapped within walls of anger and frustration. They build higher walls of isolation to protect that which is already hurting and broken. To

them peace is like an umbrella on a rainy day; carried around in front of everyone, and yet, it is left at the doorstep before entering the house.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Nobody can bring you peace but yourself.” I believe that peace is not a mathematics formula that is taught and applied in a given situation later on in reality. Peace is like an individual’s calling in life; some people find their calling at a young age simply due to the environment they were raised in; others find their calling within themselves as they journey through life.

This world is designed so that after a storm there is always a beautiful sunrise, but it takes a person who is willing to rise up early, regardless of what has happened the previous night, just to witness that wonderful ray of hope in the morning. Peace is that stillness within yourself when you accept the situation that you are in and you focus on the solution, rather than the problem.

Peace is also hope; people who are filled with hope are by far the most peaceful people on earth. We are losing peace because we are losing hope. Fantasies have unconsciously placed in the mindset of people that in despair, hardships and heartaches, there will be a superhero that will save the day. Everybody is awaiting that hero; but who is to say that I am not that hero?

I believe that being appreciative and accepting; finding that sympathy within ourselves; to extend a hand of support to our neighbour regardless of our situations is the manner in which peace is planted within us. From within, it builds up; pours out of your heart and flourishes into your mind, body and soul. I have come to feel the presence of peace when I remind myself that there are other people whose challenges in life are far greater than mine.

Sometimes when we help those who are in need, we tend to find the solution to our own problems. Sometimes, when we redirect our focus, to helping another find peace, we see that our problems are no longer as big as we thought they were.

Real peace is a lifestyle, not an act. It can be found only within ourselves, not from searching outdoors. Peace is like a smile, it starts from within an individual, once we find our inner peace, and we give hope to the person beside us to find theirs. Once we all find our inner peace; then and only then shall the world be in peace.

PNG's Pamuk Paliament

Michael Dom

The question must be asked: does God care about what's happening here at the grassroots?

Or, if you unwittingly step on an ant, does it really reverberate in another dimension?

Many Christlike people are asking the former question right now.

But they are still not listening to the 'still small voice' telling them to get off their hinnies and do something for themselves for a change, instead of dumping it all on an Unseen Force – may it be with you.

Look, I know one electorate put a god in parliament, but he was elevated onto a different Chairway to Heaven. We have to deal with the whole mess of Papacy-Niu-Genuine ourselves and need every hand we could use, not just one deity no matter how high and mighty.

It's called freedom of religion and was enshrined somewhere in what's left of our constitutional graveyard. But if anyone exhumes those remains they'll be burned at the stake as a *sanguma* and not only that they'll be ejected from the *Haus Tambaran*, which would be terrible for their health.

I personally tried to poetically tease a response from that god, but it seems He's too busy chain-sawing carvings and collecting Jewish taxes to pay for all the advice they've been receiving from their business Levites.

He's busy, okay? Leave Him alone. Talk to His Several Sons and Daughters instead.

Recently one Strong-Man-of-Letters failed to escape the clutches of the vicar-riots Task Force Sweep, under the notorious, and not so blind that he can't see you, Killer-Of-Idiot-Monkeys.

Another Strong-Man-of-Typing-Letters has been posting a fair deal of correspondence regarding the Rebel Forces who have infiltrated social media with messages pertaining to The Truth, The Whole Truth and Nothing but The Truth, So Help Them God.

That Boss-of-Secretarial-Work believes the Papacy rulings have been fucked with by particular individuals, namely, Miss Con Strued by the Rebel Forces and Miss Lead Ing of our General Public.

But he is oblivious to the fact that Miss Con Ception screws with General Public when Miss Appropriation and Miss Management are to blame. Those two wordy Misses are always available in a ménage, for the correct legal fees of course.

I wonder if it would have been better that our political Abraham should have sacrificed His first born son a long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away?

Indeed, some anointed and god-fearing leaders have been doing the good lords work but to no avail.

I'm thinking it's the coconut oil, which may be a good substitute for diesel oil, but does not have the same flash point. They need stuff that can burn like the Hagenites allowed to happen to Leniata.

However, the Almighty-Word-Speaker and Last-of-the-Whigs put out a revised version of an old book last year to mark our 40 years of slavery to Mamon, Jezebel and the Midianites, Sodom, Gomorrah and their Lot and freedom from Egypt, Spain, Portugal, Germany, France and Great Britain as well as anyone related to or existing on the same

planet as Ross Garnaut or Paul Flanagan.

America was given a bye because that's where the book was printed, and besides that they haven't yet won the soccer world cup, which we all know righteously belongs in Finschhafen.

The new old book emphasizes in biblical proportion His ancient plans for PNG, although it also outlines a few dubious practices, such as the removal of eyes, sacrifice of first born sons (ibid), stoning of naughty people (like bloggers and poets), the existence of dragons (although this was verified elsewhere, see Bobongara, 2012) and the practice of genital mutilation.

Specifically regarding genital mutilation, two of His many faithless disciples, who also go by the names James and John have been insulted 'below the waistline' by public media via their Faeces Book accounts.

Nevertheless, one of His many mighty Prophets is fermenting something pungent with the Lost Tribe of Benjamin that even has fellow '*ailan mangi*' Caesar concerned.

Caesar also had a book published recently, and he was formerly up to his neck in the Lord-Knows-What work too.

More importantly our latest saviour and king without a crown has been implicated in several malodorous legal cases, with unconfirmed rumours that these were related to his Papacy-Niu-Genuine trend setting fashion choices.

If you're thinking about who I think you're thinking then I'm thinking you're thinking. I think it stinks.

The Reigning Ruler of PNG is The-Rock-Who-Will-Not-Step-Down, son of Cock Robin and master of mayhem, monetarily speaking, Mr Piper Pumpkin Eater.

The Rock has also been building even more cathedrals in

the sky, some of which he is currently launching from Cair Paravel, where The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe are gathered today to witness in unholy communion the destruction of this virgin country by this rapacious man.

It's a wonder what takes place Down Under and not all of it between their Casino's.

Last year one of the Kings-of-Kommers in PNG, supposedly a spiritual-father-in-waiting for the Melanesian Messiah, wrote a book about The Rock.

The book was based on the audacious and suspiciously THC induced plans of a village boy, justifying financial mismanagement, the abuse of national constitution and ruin of an entire economy. It is recommended reading for despots who are smoking pot.

It was highly recommended by an Assistant-Pig-Keeper, of all professions, but not for its palatability or its apparent olfactory qualities. Heaven caught of a whiff of that review, so he's in trouble big time.

This particular story ends here, but I hope that our readers understand how very, very busy God is right now. He could probably use a little help from His friends. If He has any left in PNG.

Tiru Jaire - Army Gardener

Alexander Nara

It was getting late in the tiny village of Golaveka, deep in the heart of the Kefamo valley in Eastern Highlands Province.

The flames in the fireplace in the centre of the room had begun to die down casting dull flickering reflections and crooked shadows on the cane and bamboo walls of the *kumai* round house.

Nine-year old Tiru twisted and turned on his wooden bed to face the fireplace.

The flames now gone but the red embers still glowed and Tiru's mind drifted along as the tuneless carol of the night insects blended into the soft voice of his aging mother somewhere outside humming a traditional tune.

From the steep hills that sank into the Kefamo river sprang a freezing breeze that began to suck the warmth from the fire forcing Tiru to pull the old grey blanket over his head as he succumbed to the darkness and the cold.

His daily village life of fishing along the narrow forest creeks, bird hunting and trips through those steep hills to his mother's *kaukau* garden exhausted his nine-year old body and he would lie in bed like a log unaware of the night hours speeding past.

One special morning came when he took a trip with his father to the distant government station and Ufeto Community School where he had a medical check-up and was immunised.

It was that journey with his father 46 years ago that led

him down life's road.

Now a grey haired gentleman of medium height, Tiru sat beside me on the lawn under the thick rain trees at PNGDF Headquarters at Murray Barracks in Port Moresby.

The fresh smell of the newly cut lawn did not quite dissolve the odour of the roll of tobacco he puffed as he eyed me carefully, waiting as I scribbled his story in my dirty notebook.

Tiru's face, the colour of a brick due to long hours spent under the sun, featured an unshaven chin beneath lips which offered a half frown, half grin as if I might be wasting his time.

Tiru Jaire, now aged 55, boarded an Air Niugini F28 for Port Moresby in 1981 when he was 19.

He walked into PNGDF Headquarters, Murray Barracks, and stayed with his big brother who worked as *abausboi* to an Australian soldier who continued to serve with the PNGDF after independence.

His father's words that morning he left for the bright lights of the city had told him to be committed in whatever he did.

Sometimes we are stuck at our computer desks in air conditioned offices and fail to appreciate hard-working ground staff who spend hours in the sun to shape the external appearance of our organisations.

For Tiru, his love for the job can be seen clearly in the cleanliness of the front lawns and the perfectly organised flowers around the commander's and the minister's office.

The sun had completely gone down behind Brigadier Hill and a few security lights had been switched on as I left Tiru to pack up his tools for the night.

Urbanisation or Hell?

Martyn Namorong

Urbanisation in Papua New Guinea raises difficult questions about ethics, morality, social and economic inclusion and various other issues.

On a blistering hot Friday morning recently, Francis Nii, Daniel Kumbon and I arrived at the gated compound at Islander Village in Port Moresby.

I got there half an hour earlier so I could guide my fellow writers and journalists to the reception area.

Gummi Fridriksson and his staff must have been working in overdrive to welcome us to the offices of the Paga Hill Development Company because, when I got there in my blue skinnies and tee-shirt, despite being well ahead of time, everything was already set.

While waiting for my colleagues to arrive, Gummi and I talked about the divergent subjects of literature and Port Moresby's future prospects.

In Gummi's eyes, PNG's national capital has a great and prosperous future and he is placing his bets on what will be the city's largest waterfront development at Paga Hill.

We didn't shy away from the controversy of that project. In an atmosphere of mutual discourse, we discussed the vexed issue of settler dislocation and relocation.

It's been a rough experience for all parties. At stake have been the livelihoods of settlers in a direct clash with millions of kina invested in property development.

As I sit there listening to Gummi, I comprehended the difficulties that had to be grappled with.

If the Paga Hill project is successful, it will potentially provide employment opportunities for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Papua New Guineans living in Port Moresby.

How do we create more jobs in Moresby and elsewhere in PNG? What price are we willing to pay to support our growing urban population? Even for many city dwellers, their present jobs or businesses are their gardens. Not much big job growth potential there,

When I ask what the opportunity cost of this is, I'm not trying to downplay the suffering of the former settlers of Paga Hill but to pose a fundamental question of economics.

If we used this land for something that would create more jobs, would not more people benefit?

Not doing that is the cost of a missed opportunity.

Life is about loss and suffering and also about the perseverance of human beings and their determination to walk away from the flames stronger and better off.

That morning I had travelled to the suburb of Gerehu with my wheelchair-bound friend Francis to pick up Daniel. I was struck by how massive the area was.

But, in Australian terms, and we were headed for Australia the next day, Gerehu would be classed as just another of the many conurbations that exist within that country's huge cities.

It dawned on me that the notoriety associated with Gerehu stems from its high population and limited opportunities. *Population blong Mosbi stap long Gerehu tasol yumi no luksave long disla.*

How do we create opportunities for young kids growing up in largely impoverished settlement areas like Gerehu, 9 Mile and ATS? What is the price we are willing to pay?

These thoughts rattled around in my mind as the jet took

off from Moresby and headed south.

It was late in the evening when we arrived in Brisbane. For Daniel's wife, Julie, and Francis, it was their first ever welcome into the darkness of neon lights.

If Port Moresby is ever going to grow into a city like Brisbane, it is inevitable customary landowners will be displaced. We're already seeing that unfolding with the expansion at Taurama Valley.

My friend Darvan, whose extended family had moved into the area, mourned the loss of mangrove and tuna breeding sites. I had a turkey roll and lemonade at a café and talked about this difficult dilemma with her.

Meanwhile, in Brisbane, the original inhabitants were long gone, together with most of the original habitat.

And one day in PNG, as we begin our formal events and ceremonies, we may just acknowledge the customary owners in the same way Australians do today. A mere echo that there were souls here before us.

Whilst anchoring the panel discussion on PNG writing at the Queensland State Library, I felt compelled to follow this Australian etiquette.

I did so not just out of respect but as an ominous warning to myself of that which is to come in my own country.

So is the displacement of customary landowners inevitable? Well if cities and towns in PNG aspire to be like Noosa or Brisbane or Sydney, the answer is yes.

Urban development need not necessarily be evil if it is accompanied by improvements in quality of life. This unfortunately has not been the story in PNG.

The chaos of development in PNG's urban societies has not only led to fragmented urban spaces but to unequal distribution of wealth.

Someone living upstream on the Brisbane River at the University of Queensland is not necessarily disadvantaged. Indeed it is easier to get from UQ to South Bank by road (or river) than from Gerehu to Downtown Port Moresby.

Social disparities are not just linked to greed but also physical and technological barriers to personal development and empowerment.

As PNG's urban centres grow, opportunities for urban youth may also be determined by how infrastructure is built and jobs are created.

Julie and Francis – first timers in Australia - were in awe that people parked their vehicles on the roadside in front of their homes. This of course would not happen in Port Moresby. There are fewer car thieves because almost everyone has their basic needs covered.

Law and order is also important and must be achieved not just to ensure effective policing but to create a more equitable society. We need to build more socially and economically inclusive communities that are fair and beneficial for our people to live in.

As, like the rest of the world, Papua New Guinea moves into a more urbanised state, we need to reflect on models of development that can help us create a more successful society that works for the benefit of all.

PNG's Violated Women

Rashmii Bell

In Greek mythology, Apollo in his romantic pursuit of Cassandra (daughter of the king of Troy) gifted her with the power of prophecy.

Eventually Cassandra refused him and, when she did, Apollo spat into her mouth to inflict a curse that nobody would ever believe anything she would say.

And so it transpired that, despite their accuracy, Cassandra's warnings were never heeded and she was called crazy and a liar.

Consider how frequently words like 'delusional', 'angry', 'talking nonsense' or 'attention-seeking' are thrown around. It's a common chide when one has spoken out about a negative personal experience or expressed an opinion about poor customer service at the local shoe shop or an inappropriate brush of the hand by a doctor in the examination room.

Although gender-neutral, history tells us such scenarios are experienced and reported upon predominantly by and girls and women. Yet instead of being met with the rational response of empathy and support, complainants are often berated by those closest (family and friends), the broader community or both.

In *Why we should all be attention seekers*, Australian feminist writer Clementine Ford reiterates the frustration around perceptions of what type of 'attention' women are entitled to seek and what types are expected to be tolerated.

Ford reasons that such "attention is controlled by

everyone who isn't us and we just have to suck it up and accept what we get”.

‘*Everyone who isn't us*’ might point to the general population but more so to those who have historically been responsible for influencing the enforcing and reinforcing of society’s laws, norms, rules and etiquette.

Males.

The story of Cassandra has much relevance in the context of violence against girls and women in Papua New Guinea.

We are inundated with reports of this escalating epidemic. But what of the underlying causal factors deeply-rooted in PNG society that overshadow vocalised female distress following harassment, intimidation, inequality or violence, particularly, sexual violence?

One view to consider is offered by writer Rebecca Solnit, who expressed this view:

“When a woman says something that impugns a man, particularly one at the heart of the *status quo*, especially if it has to do with sex, the response will question not only the facts of her assertion but her capacity to speak and her right to do so.”

Earlier this year, Radio Australia interviewed Manus MP Ronny Knight. That discussion centred around the 2015 alleged rape of a Papua New Guinean woman by Australian male colleagues at the Manus regional processing centre.

It is a case study of shamefully stunted progress on the part of both Australian and Papua New Guinean authorities.

"I think they should bring them [the accused men] in and let them clear the air and if they are found culpable for it then let them take the heat for it," said Ronnie Knight. "That should straighten up the relationship."

He then went onto to address case-related documentation (heavily redacted by Australian authorities) adding, “It means that both the Australian government and the PNG government have total disrespect for the leaders of Manus Province and Manus district and our citizens take a second place in the grand scheme of things.”

I find this response distressing. A Papua New Guinean woman made an allegation that her human rights have been violated and yet, priority is given to language that gives precedence to rectifying bilateral relations and admonishing bureaucratic etiquette.

Perhaps Mr Knight has been more articulate on other occasions but, viewing this text in isolation infers a lack of understanding, empathy and genuine support for the female complainant’s right to swift access to justice.

There have been unforgivable delays in delivering justice in this case as well as an appalling lack of proficiency in adopting victim-focused language.

If an allegation of raping a Papua New Guinean woman is not serious enough for a crime to be afforded the language of advocacy she deserves, then what is?

Camilla Burkot’s synopsis of a recent Amnesty International study (*Outlawed and abused: human rights abuses against sex workers in PNG*) highlighted just how the PNG legal system contributes to perpetuating modern day Cassandras.

Sex work, technically illegal but operating through provisions in certain legislation, implicates Papua New Guinean female sex workers as engaging in criminal activity.

That the male client is afforded immunity for legal culpability is blatant gender inequality. The legal consequence of the sexual interaction is a gross

enforcement of misogyny.

This was illustrated in Burkot's reference to the Child Welfare Act provision which declares that "maintenance payments need not be paid for the illegitimate [child] of a woman to be found be a common prostitute". But what of the instance where a sex worker is raped by her client?

As if the violation, public stigma and reported inconsistencies of law enforcement aren't mammoth enough barriers, Papua New Guinean women are further incapacitated by denial of the legal right to seek financial responsibility for the child from the perpetrator.

Like elsewhere, PNG is inundated with cases where the Cassandra syndrome plays out. In my 2015 essay '*Loyalty is saying what we mean and doing as we say*', I highlighted instances where Papua New Guinean girls and women were continually subjected to perception being manipulated to accommodate expectations.

We see or hear of the violation taking place, but almost always we ask questions like is this woman deserving of my attention? How much validity should we give her screams for help? Did it really happen the way she said it did? What did she do to prompt this reaction? What other factors need to be considered first?

So what will it take for Papua New Guineans, particularly our men and boys, to understand that, in instances where we believe our legal and human rights have been violated, we are not 'lying', 'attention-seeking' or 'deserving' of such infringements?

Gender equality is impossible to achieve if the language, legislation, attitudes and behaviours expressed by those who act or speak on behalf of Papua New Guinean women continue to reinforce doubt about facts of our assertions and thereby incapacitate our right to speak out.

Kundiawa Hospital Celebrates

Francis Nii

The mostly quiet corner of Kundiawa town that is home to the Sir Joseph Nombri Memorial Hospital last week came alive with the beating of kundus, singing and dancing as over 3,000 people celebrated its second open day.

The event marked the hospital's proud track record of community service and development in both its clinical and non-clinical areas under the management of CEO Mathew Kaluvia.

The activities took place in the outpatient area in which each unit of the hospital had its own stall where staff conducted displays and exhibitions.

The crowd was eager and amazed at some of the displays, especially weird looking surgical tools they had never imagined before. "This is just amazing," said Jane, a guardian from Jiwaka Province.

Certain hospital units provided free medical examinations - taking temperatures, measuring blood pressure, checking weights and so forth.

Radio Simbu, which previously had been off air for four months due to technical problems, had a field day broadcasting the whole event live.

Mathew Kaluvia said the idea behind the event was for staff to show the public the kind of services the hospital provides and the changes that have taken place since the first open day four years ago.

Many changes and new developments have taken place, he said, and it was important for the public to know about

these.

“We are accountable to the national government and the people of Simbu to give the hospital’s status report,” he said with a smile on his face. “And we are providing that to the people today.”

In what appeared to be a farewell speech, Mr Kaluvia thanked all the unit managers and staff, starting with Dr Jan Jaworski and the surgical team, for their undivided support and cooperation in delivering clinical and curative health services during his tenure as CEO.

Simbu Principal Provincial Health Advisor Margret Kaile said the current management of Mr Kaluvia and the board headed by Fr Luke Kewani had proven to be a great team with strong vision. Many beneficial changes had taken place at the hospital during their term of office, she said.

Apart from management and board, other units also contributed to the success of the hospital. Sixty-five year old Joe Daugl of Kond outside Kundiawa had this to say: “*Kundiawa hausik em nambawan tru. Ol ners na dokta i wok hat tru na wok bilong ol i gutpla stret. Mi man Simbu na mi hamamas long hausik bilong mi*” (Kundiawa hospital is the best. The nurses and doctors work really hard and their services are excellent. I am a Simbu man and I am proud of my hospital).

Parkop Chandrol, 53, from Rambutso Island in Manus Province travelled all the way from Lorengau to Kundiawa six weeks ago seeking treatment for Potts Disease, had this to say: “*Mi harim yet long Manus osem Kundiawa hausik i save oraitim ol man na meri bun baksait blong ol TB binatang i kaikaim na paralaisim ol. Osem na wantaim halivim bilong ol pikinini bilong mi, mipla i kisim balus igo long Madang na haiarim wanpla kar na kam kamap long Kundiawa*” (I heard way off in Manus that Kundiawa hospital heals men and women whose backbone

TB bacteria had destroyed and paralysed them. That's why with the assistance of my children, we flew to Madang and hired a motor vehicle to bring me to Kundiawa).

“Olo man, nambawan taim mi kam kamap mi ting em wanpela hotel tasol mi kirap nogut taim ol i tokim mi em hausik. Nogat smel blong marasin na ples i klin na nais strel” (Man, when I first arrived I thought it was a hotel and I was surprised to be told it is the hospital. There is no smell of medicine and the place looks clean and nice).

“Waitman dokta i tok em bai opereitim bun baksait bilong mi na mi amamas stap. Manus i nogat kain opereisen olsem” (The European doctor [Dr Jan Jaworski] said he is going to operate on my backbone and I am happily waiting. Manus does not operate on such sickness).

Parkop's story is not an isolated case. The hospital receives patients from all over PNG including the highlands and places as far away as New Ireland, Western and East Sepik provinces and even Port Moresby.

The major developments that took place under the current management and board included security, a warehouse, a doctors' office block, a hospital records building, the administration building, a multi-drug resistant tuberculosis unit and TB clinic.

The MDR TB unit and CEO's administration block were officially opened at the event. An additional operating theatre is under construction and will be commissioned soon.

The whole event ended with light refreshments for everyone provided by the hospital.

Brink of Death

Robert Iki Leso

The groans of a woman in labour disturbed the peaceful afternoon. They came from inside the smoke-stained women's house in an isolated area some distance away from the main family home.

“Please help! Please help me! I am dying,” came the desperate cries of a young woman, struggling to give birth to her first child.

The pain worsened and there was no relief. The elderly women tried to comfort her to no avail.

Otherwise, life in the village appeared normal that day. Women were in their gardens, the smoke from fires spiralling into the sky indicating intense activity.

Men gathered at the usual places to gossip and exchange rolls of home grown tobacco to sample the bitter taste. The smoke they exhaled resembled the exhaust fumes of an engine.

The men talked about tribal issues - fights, compensation, feasts and other matters of interest. The serious discussions were interspersed with jokes on sex and polygamy. They laughed at their dirty jokes and continued with the serious stuff.

Men enjoyed the pleasure of lovemaking but women paid the price in childbearing. They also looked after pigs, cultivated gardens and cooked food every day to feed the family. The men helped once in a while to clear new land or erect some fences.

Meanwhile, the young woman suffered as labour pangs

stabbed at her. She felt as if she was on a bed of a thousand needles and pierced by a blunt scalpel.

“Am I dying or will I survive?” she asked. “Is this what every woman goes through during childbirth? Why didn’t anybody tell me about this pain?” The fear of death mixed with regret haunted her. She felt she was being torn apart.

But she maneuvered all her strength to remain brave. She realised she would soon be a mother if she safely delivered this child. She had no choice but to fight on and win the battle.

The setting sun disappeared over the western ranges. Her first day of suffering was coming to an end. The evening sky was beautifully painted. But the atmosphere in the women’s house was tense. The young woman began to lose consciousness.

No matter how much men and boys wanted to be close when their loved ones suffered during childbirth, tradition forbade them from going anywhere near women’s houses. Menstrual blood, childbirth and labour were unclean and ritually impure for men.

Surrounded by rugged hills and steep gullies with waterfalls and fast-flowing rivers, the prospect of rescue for this dying woman seemed hopeless. There was no missionary with a vehicle nearby and Wabag Health Centre was 22 kilometres away.

Luke Luwai, the young woman’s husband, was a Pendent clansman of the major Tit tribe and lived in Yakandak village in the Aumbum Kompian district of Enga Province.

His wife, Aipit Lyambian, was originally from a small hilly village called Goropip located not far from where she lay broken in the women’s house. Her clan, Pumain, was a sub-clan of the Tit tribe but clans were allowed to

intermarry. She had married Luke, a close neighbour, whose baby she was now struggling to bring into the world.

Right in front of Yakandak village is the roaring Ambum River which, joined by tributaries, surges downstream to finally unite with the mighty Sepik River.

During the wet season, the Ambum can turn angry, its flow accelerating, the mud swirling. It can trigger unexpected landslides in the Ambum Valley, impeding vehicles from transiting the single snake-like road built by early missionaries and colonial kiaps.

Not many vehicles used the road. There seemed no hope for Aipit.

The night was taken over by the humming of insects. Fireflies flickered here and there and a breeze blew from the Ambum River, producing an eerie murmur.

Distant owls could be heard, hooting in the dark forest. These sounds seemed to send death wishes to the woman, signalling her ghost to be taken away. Fear gripped everybody present in the house. How they wished the day could break.

The elderly women kept vigil and added firewood to the dancing flames. The flames seemed to keep hope alive through their warmth and light, which also kept at bay the engulfing darkness.

Luke Luwai by this late hour had heard of the pain his wife was enduring. He feared she might die. But he could not go near the woman's house. He could not comfort his dying wife. He wished and prayed everything would work out right in the morning.

Anxiety and sorrow robbed him of sleep. He sat quietly in the men's house and puffed his home-grown tobacco deeply. He felt the nicotine's powerful grip. He breathed out mouthfuls of smoke and glanced at his clansmen fast

asleep.

“It is too soon to lose my wife and unborn child,” he said to himself.

Luke had seen a lot of women die in childbirth. There were no proper health facilities in his isolated valley. He felt certain his wife and unborn child would die. He felt like crying. But he was a tough Tit-raised Engan male who did not succumb to childish emotion.

So Like Luwai withheld his tears and made a plan to save his young wife and unborn child. He had to show how much he loved Aipit Lyambian. Memories of the struggles he had gone through to marry her flooded his mind.

He was many years older than Aipit, he had been well past marriageable age, but Aipit had not rejected him. She could have easily gone for younger men but had accepted his proposal and he loved her more so because of this.

He also did not want to disappoint his wife’s aunt, Leale. She had been a powerful influence in making it possible for him to marry Aipit. He had indeed been the victor to marry such a wonderful woman.

Luke decided that his wife had to be taken to Wabag Health Centre for immediate medical attention. There could be no waiting until dawn, and he discarded the traditional belief that men should never go near a woman in labour. This now seemed like nonsense to him.

He had to get the men sleeping in the *hausman* to help him carry his wife to Wabag. He had to try to save her life. He would not sit idly and have her die with their unborn child.

Luke’s brother Lalyo worked at the health centre as a medical officer. Once there, they would face no problems. So, in the dark morning, before the first rays of the sun touched the sleeping valley, the semi-conscious mother was

lifted onto a stretcher.

They walked the 22 kilometres to the health centre. First they climbed over the Mokokam range to Lakolam and then followed the Lai River towards Wabag.

With two bearers on each end of the stretcher, they tramped through the mud, carrying her up and over the ridges, shrugging away the numbing cold of the deep gullies. They toiled on painfully hoping against hope that she would not die on the track.

It was worth the struggle. They got there and they saved the lives of Aipit Lyambian and the baby.

This baby boy who would one day become a great businessman, indeed a tycoon, who would establish a major trucking company, Mapai Transport.

His name is Jacob Luke. The year was 1950.

Mapai Transport commenced operations in 1985 with a single vehicle and now has depots in Lae, Mt Hagen and Goroka running a fleet of 70 prime movers and 170 trailers, 20 town delivery trucks and nearly 700 containers.

WRITING FOR CHILDREN

The Kind Old Woman

Simon Davidson

Once upon a time there lived an old woman in a village. Her village was about two kilometres away from the mission school. Her husband had deserted her when he found a new wife from another place.

She struggled to raise her three children, a girl and two boys. When her children became adults, they got married they went to start their own family, so she was left alone by herself. She used to make her own garden and collect firewood and fetch water. She was a very industrious lady.

One day she went to the market to sell some kaukau. As she was walking home on the road she meet a young boy carrying a load of books in his bag and also travelling home.

She asked him, “Where do you live, and how far is your home?”

The boy said, “I live at Pamas village, it is about 10 kilometres from the school.”

“How often do you travel from your village to the school?” the woman asked the boy.

“I walk to school from my home every day.”

The old woman felt sorrow for the young boy. She believed that the child had a right to education. She believed that this cruel world still has a place for that child’s dreams. So she asked him to come and stay in her house.

She took him to her house and told the boy, “Tomorrow after school, you must come to my house. You will stay here and go to school. It is much easier for you go to

school from here than to travel all the way from your house as you have done. The school is very close to my home. It is only two kilometres away compared to your house which is 10 kilometres away.”

The boy was very relieved that the old woman had opened her house for him. That afternoon he excitedly went and told his parents about the old woman’s offer. The parents were very happy. They helped him to pack his few belongings and brought their son the next day to the old woman’s house.

The old woman gave the boy a vacant room in her house and told him, “This will be your room for as long as you live and attend school here.” She also told him, “I live alone here and do my own gardening. I will not tell you to work. But if you wish to assist me, it is up to you. But I will cook your breakfast and come and give you your lunch at school. I don’t want you to go hungry when you are at school.”

The young boy was very happy and continued to attend school and completed his grade four while living with the old woman. During the afternoons, the young boy would come home after school and look for the old woman and assisted her to carry food and fetch water and collect firewood. As a result the relationship between the old woman and the boy grew and they bonded and they cared for each other.

As the young boy began to live closer to the school, he had more time to study and his grades began to improve. From grade five to grade eight, he usually got the dux prize in the school every year. The old woman was very proud that the boy she was nurturing was doing very well in school. Every year the boy would bring home the awards he received home and proudly displayed the in the house.

When the boy completed grade 8, he was selected to go to high school. He had to leave the home and the old woman and travel to another place to attend high school. The parents of the boy came to make a farewell party and thank the old woman for her kindness in looking after the boy for almost four years.

He made this parting promise. “If I complete all my studies and find a decent job and live in a good house, you will come and stay with me.”

They young boy went to study at a new high school. He was very focused in his studies. He didn't waste time playing with his peers, but he spend time studying very hard. He continued to perform very well in school and scored good marks. During the four years he studied at the school he continued to receive highest award each year. Many of the teachers in the school were proud of him.

When he completed his grade 10, he was selected to do his grades 11 and 12 at the National high school. Upon completion of his studies there, he was selected to attend the University of Applied Science and he studied for a degree in communication Engineering. He completed four years of studies at University and was employed as a Satellite engineer.

He was given a house and paid a good salary. The first thing that he did was to send a ticket for the old woman to come to where he was working and stay with him and repay her kindness. The old woman was very frail by then, so she flew with a wheel chair. He went to the airport to pick her up, and brought her to his home.

He told her, “As you took me to your house, to live and study and do well in school, so I have flown you from home to live with me until you die. You will live with me, enjoy the good environment and every good things I will

provide for you. When you die I will buy your coffin, and fly you home and bury you near your house.”

The old woman was overwhelmed with the young man’s kindness. She said, “Your kindness is greater than the kindness I have shown you.”

Kindness begets kindness. If we are kind to others, to the unfortunate, we will be shown kindness.

The golden rule says do unto others what you want them to do unto you. By being kind, we can make the world a better place.

Numbart Saves His Master

Keith Angen

Long, long ago there lived an old man named Rowogin. He had only one friend. It was a dog named Numbart. They lived in a cave. The cave had been made by the flying foxes that lived there before.

One day Rowogin and Numbart went hunting. They climbed mountains. And searched the kunai grass. They found nothing. And became very hungry.

“Numbart! I am sorry. We have found no food. We are going to the swamp to look for sago grubs,” Rowogin told his friend.

“Oooooowwww!” Numbart spoke in dog language saying okay.

The two went to the sago palm swamp. They walked to where a sago palm had fallen. Numbart sniffed the air and barked loudly.

“Booowooo!”

The signal alerted Rowogin, who put one arrow onto his bow. He stood still with his eyes roving about.

Numbart followed the scent to a wild boar. He tried to bite on the throat of the wild boar to wrestle it to the ground. Rowogin followed. Numbart grabbed the animal with his teeth. And wrestled with it. Rowogin came and shot an arrow at the pig. The arrow went straight to the side of the boar.

The boar shrugged its shoulders and the arrow bounced off his skin. It swayed its head from side to side and Numbart went flying in the air into the muddy clay swamp.

“Numbaaaaaart!” the old man cried. His face turned red with anger. He pulled out another arrow from his holder. He put it on the bow.

“Gr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!” The boar shrugged the dirt off its body and looking straight at Rowogin it charged forward. The boar's hair on the back of the neck stood up like black sewing needles. Its eyes turned red. The white fully grown tusks stuck out of its mouth.

The old man stood firm and gripped his bow and pulled on the cane with the arrow. The bow bent and formed a 'D' shape. The two shoulder blades of Rowogin came together on his back as he pulled on the bow cane.

He released the second arrow. It went flying towards the boar. The arrow bounced off the boar's head and into the sago leaves.

Numbart's suddenly broke through the dry sago palm fronds but as he landed on the muddy swamp soil he knocked his head on a dry piece of log in the mud and lay still.

The boar charged sideways at Rowogin, showing its curved tusks. The old man moved sideways and the boar's tusk caught hold of the old man's malo and ripped it off.

As Rowogin moved to avoid the boar he lost his grip on his arrow holder and it fell to the ground with his last three arrows. He threw the bow at the boar and ran for his life. He held onto his bush knife. His buttocks were bouncing and swaying. He ran naked.

Numbart awoke and stood up and shrugged the mud off his body and barked loudly, “Boooooo!”

H sniffed through the dry sago fronds and looked for where his master had gone. He felt a little dizzy and stopped for a while at a nearby pool. He took a drink of the swamp water. Then swayed his head to clear the excess

water from his nostrils.

The boar bulldozed the dry leaves and shrubs as it chased Rowogin into the sago swamp. After running for some time the old man became exhausted. He climbed a small tree. The tree was a young sapling with not many branches.

Rowogin clung tightly to the tree trunk and looked down at the boar. When his hands got tired he gripped the tree trunk with his calf muscles and feet. He switched from hands to legs to hold onto the tree. He stayed up on the tree for a very long time and felt his muscles ache.

When the dizziness had faded Numbart continued tracking his master. The boar had thrown him for quite a distance and he was lost and separated from his master. The scent of the boar faded. It would take the dog a long while to find his master.

The boar rested under the tree and waited for Rowogin to fall. Then it became impatient and it walked some distance away from the tree and then charged at the tree trunk. The boar used its body to hit the tree to make Rowogin fall down.

With his aching muscles Rowogin lost his grip on the tree and fell down when the boar gave a second hit against the small tree. He said his last prayer when he landed on the ground. "Dear Lord! Please take me to heaven when I die!"

After a long walk Numbart picked up the pig's scent. He ran towards the boar, arriving just in time to see it rip open the belly of Rowogin so his intestines fell out of the wound.

The boar left Rowogin and turned towards Numbart. The dog, seeing his master being attacked became furious. He jumped straight at the boar and grabbed its throat. He planted his teeth very deep in the boar's throat and clamped

very tightly.

In great pain but still alive Rowogin watched his brave dog attack the boar. "Come on Numbart! Don't let go! Hold on!" the old man said in his mind.

The boar jumped up and down, swayed his head from side to side and ran around in

Circles to loosen the grip from Numbart's teeth. Soon exhaustion overpowered the boar and it fell down.

Rowogin almost fainted when he saw Numbart the dog transform into a handsome young man. His dog skin disappeared and he became human and stood upright.

Numbart got Rowogin's bush knife from the ground and chopped the boar's head off. He then cut some young trees and bush vines and made a stretcher.

"When we arrive at the village you will become silent. If you want to talk again you must kill me,"

Numbart told Rowogin. "I have broken the rules of my kingdom. I and the other dogs are not allowed to transform into humans and speak their language. Now I will die. It is a sin in the dog kingdom."

Numbart pulled his master on the stretcher to a nearby village. Before he arrived at the village he put the stretcher down. His dog skin reappeared. He barked loudly in a wailing tone. The villages heard the barking and came to find Numbart. He led them to the stretcher. The old man stayed silent. Then Numbart led the other village men to the place where he had killed the boar. The villagers carried the boar back to the village and made a big feast.

An old lady witch doctor treated the wounds of Rowogin with magic leaves and then the villagers cooked the boar.

Rowogin piled a big plate with pig meat and offered it to his dog but Numbart did not eat. He lay down close to his

master and quietly died.

The old man remembered Numbart's story and he tied some bush rope around the four legs of the dog and put him on the fire. The dog burned to ashes. Then the old man told the villagers what had happened.

“Wee-e-e-e-e! Ah-a-a-a-a-a! Why-e!Ah-a-a!”

The whole village wept when they heard the story of Numbart, the dog that saved his master from the wild boar.

Rowogin stayed in the village for the rest of his life and married the witch doctor. The old man became the chief and he named the village Wabur.

HERITAGE WRITING

Home is No Longer

Iso Yawi

I came home from afar
From the world of civilisation
Rejoicing at last for my spirit's revival

But my optimism failed
My heart beat dropped
My bones shook to extreme

My home is no more
The culture and traditions vanished
Traditional songs are rarely sung
Kundu and conch shell are heard no more
Foreigners turned my people's heart

I asked, "Why is this so?"

No one answered

I thought deeply

Then I remembered when Adam lost his culture
God came and asked "Adam, Adam, where are you?"

Who is Datagaliwabe?

Betty Wakia

Much is talked about Datagaliwabe throughout Hela, nearby provinces and even the entirety of Papua New Guinea.

Let me take you to Datagaliwabe. The Huli have a mixture of myths and legends that explain the origins of the gods, clan founders, the creation of all living things and other vital components of Huli life.

The Huli believe that in the beginning, there was land and the deities. The deities, such as sun and moon, the Ni and Hana, live in the sky.

The Huli High God, Datagaliwabe, was the original Supreme Spirit to come from the sky who created the land and other deities. Datagaliwabe was replaced by Honabi wali, the demiurge from whom all life flowed. Her children, Ni and Hana, are the focus of many Huli fertility rites.

The first goddess to inhabit the land was Honabe wali. She was seduced by Timbu, the male deity, and gave birth to five gods, Korimogo, Heyolabe, Piandela, Ni and Hela, and one goddess, Hana.

Many Huli regard all these deities as very powerful beings, but deity Heyolabe as the most dangerously evil of them all.

After a time, she gave birth to eight other deities, the first bird, possum and pig, hills, trees, bows and arrows, and fire and water.

She is the grandmother goddess of the Huli people and surrounding cultures, the Obene, Duna, Duguba and Hewa peoples.

Otherwise, they all speak different languages, have their own spirits and their own styles of worship.

The deity Hela married an unknown woman who bore him four sons, Obene, Huli, Duna and Duguba. They had a fight which resulted in Obene fleeing to live in the Magarima area, Duna to Lake Kopyago and Duguba to Mount Bosavi, while Huli remained in the Tagari river basin.

They were the first human beings and each founded the cultural group that is known to the Huli by those same names.

The Huli calm these deities and seek their assistance through oblation of pigs, red paints, pig fat, cowrie and kina shells, crops and special plant leaves.

Some deities like Ni and Korimogo consume the blood and aroma of prepared pigs while the other deities delight in pig fat offerings which are rubbed on sacred stones. Datagaliwabe and Heyalobe cannot be propitiated by any ritual means, although the former is placated by proper moral conduct.

The deity Heyalobe was regarded as dama, the Satan. He control the forces of nature and would deceive the Huli people to do evil things.

If Huli people did not follow Heyalobe's instructions, he would attack them directly causing sickness, accident or death or indirectly through witches, corpses, stones, sticks or other ritual objects that are imbued with their presence.

If they pleased Heyalobe, he would help them in their endeavours. To avoid attack, the Huli people would placate and win the favour of Heyalobe by tricking him to protect themselves.

Long ago, in order to confuse the deities, Huli men would traverse deep forests and climb mountain peaks

speaking a derivative of the Huli language called Tayanda Bi. They also tricked the Heyalobe by constructing symbolic gates to block paths as they walked through the forest.

The Datagaliwabe is a unique supreme being, who, unlike Ni and Hana, is not referred to as dama but only by name. He is someone who the Huli people never play around with. They feel his presence more powerfully than other deities.

He is a giant High God, who looks down from the sky to punish lying, stealing, adultery, incest, murder of related kin and disregard of ritual taboos. Huli say if you do something evil Datagaliwabe will be watching you.

Datagaliwabe was known to the Huli as a bringer of punishment upon those who infringed kinship laws. The only way to please him is proper moral behavior. He would never be placated by pigs as sacrifices and doesn't accept prayers, dances or other rituals.

The Datagaliwabe looks favourably upon those who obey kinship rules and helps them in their daily affairs. He speaks directly to whoever pleases him in the form of dreams, visions, prophecies and special insights.

He also speaks to Huli needs in term of the good life: salvation and power for living. Only the righteous and holy people are taken to dahulianda, the heaven.

The Pari clan in South Koroba (a home to the descendant of the sun god, the Ni), regard the place *asdabulianda dogo*, the bridge to heaven. The Datagaliwabe uses that place for his holy people to cross to heaven.

In the legend of Ira Hari, there is a sacred tree through which all of the earth's waters pass into the heavens only to fall again as rain.

Men tried to build a bridge to heaven on this tree using rope and timber but were unsuccessful. Their language was confused as they worked on the bridge resulting in the disruption of their plans to reach the house of the deities and this was the creation of various other languages.

The Datagaliwabe showed the Huli people dreams and visions of aircraft, truck and also the return of Tahonane, the Hulis' long lost white brother.

The first Huli man Tagonimabe has two sons, Tahonane born white and Tamindini born black. Tahonane was nursed by a great god, grew quickly and left the Huli area never to die. Tamindini nursed at his mother's breast, and became the father of all the Huli people through his son, Tiliali.

The first white men the Huli people encountered were Jack Hides and Peter O'Malley. They looked queerly at the two explorers and whispered excitedly among themselves about their long lost white brother who had returned.

One of the prophecies that has come to pass is Gigira Laitebo legend called *Kwai Topo*. In this legend, the wise men of Hela spoke many generations ago that their land possessed the Gigira Laitebo or everlasting fire and that one day this would so shine that the faraway lands would be attracted by it and they would come to their doorstep.

Today the people of Hela are seeing the men with the orange legs from faraway lands trying to take the fire from them.

The Datagaliwabe transformed himself into the sun god, the Ni, resulting in a combination of the supreme-being with the sun god to form one supreme-being, the Ni.

Ni is a creator god who makes the fertility of the earth and increases the abundance of life for his children, Ni

honowini. One of the Ni honowini who makes the fertility of the earth is the famous Huli legend of Baya Baya.

He was regarded as Jesus who stayed among the Huli people. Prophecy states that the descendant from Ni honowini would one day will come and light up the caves and tunnels of Hela Province. The Huli ancestors said that when that day came, it would be the sign of the last days.

Many Huli believe that Bible stories are paralleled in Huli legend, to the extent that some became convinced that their ancestors had somehow received the biblical message before even the missionaries came, which resulted in many questions about Church history.

Datagaliwabe is still equated with God or Yahweh by many Huli Christians today.

The Baya Baya Legend

Betty Wakia

In the early Huli history, there emerged an important young man named Baya Baya. He was the son of the great high god of Hela, Datagaliwabe, who transformed himself into the sun god Ni, came down to the earth and stayed among the Huli people.

Baya Baya was conceived by the virgin Tiame. He was a perfect young man who went around doing good and persuading people to stop fighting, committing adultery and doing evil things.

He was around 14 or 15 years old when he came with Tiame past Duna to Koroba and then down to Lai Terebo places in Duguba. Lai Terebo is a site for performing the ancient *dindi pongone*, the ground knot rites.

From there Tiame and Baya Baya came into the Huli area where they stopped and slept at Gumu.

Then they crossed the Tagali River and went to Lumu Lumu, Wabia and all around the Huli area telling people not to do evil things.

At last they came to Bebenete, the special ground called Abureteanda, the most important Lai Terebo place situated beside where Dauli Teacher's College is now.

Here men were killing pigs for *dindi pongone*, the ground knot sacrifice, so they decided Baya Baya was going to hold the pigs and would let his blood flow to bless Hela land and stop people doing wrong things.

The man in charge of the pig killing said, "When you hit the pig, instead of cutting it, just miss and cut Baya Baya's

hand between thumb and forefinger.”

But they hated Baya Baya so they hit him and knocked him to the ground. Then they butchered his body and chopped it into little pieces and mixed his blood with the pig’s blood. The women washed out his intestines like that of a pig.

The men who murdered Baya Baya were mostly from the *hameigini* (clans) Padagabua, Abua Amuira, Hogo Yuwi, Koroba Goli, Pailero, Uguma Labe, Dugu Kewai, Hubiyabe, Homa, Ambua, in and around Dauli village and other Huli men, people from Obena, Duna and Duguba were there that day.

Pieces of Baya Baya’s dismembered body were buried in the territories of all the guilty clans to stop people from doing wrong. Today some of his remains are at one of the secret places inside Mount Lagabe.

A certain stream flowing from Abureteanda sometimes appears red due to the underlying clay and the Huli say it is the fluid from Baya Baya’s intestines containing his blood.

That day, all the men in charge of the killing told the people not to cross the Huria river or go back to their places for six months while they changed their name from Huli to Homa.

The people spoke the Homa language for six months then changed back to Huli. The reason they did this was because they were afraid that *bingi*, the darkness, would come to them because they had done wrong.

The darkness had occurred earlier in Huli, but on the day of Baya Baya’s death they were afraid it would return so the *dindi pongone yi*, the specialists who performed ground knot rituals, altered the nouns in the language to avert this.

The Huli regard darkness as punishment from Datagaliwabe and say that, since Baya Baya's death, his

mother has been keeping a special pandanus tree of *angalu nanenamu* variety in Duna. When the tree bears fruit, darkness will occur. Since then, whenever there has been trouble, famine or drought, the people have come together at Bebenete and changed all the names around.

On the day they killed Baya Baya, they hit his mother and threw mud at her and pulled off her clothes. She ran away naked and dirty, trying to get back to her own place. On the way, the Tani clan, which had not participated in Baya Baya's murder, took her in, washed her, gave her new clothes and looked after her.

As she was leaving, Baya Baya's mother said, "Because you have looked after me and helped me in my trouble, one day you, the Tani clan, will be the largest and greatest of all the Huli clans."

So today the Tani people are the biggest and strongest clan and are growing bigger and stronger all the time. Who knows, the new Hela Governor might be from the Tani or Ni clan because the first Governor came from the place that killed Baya Baya.

Many people believe Baya Baya will one day return to the Huli area. Others fear that his kin may come and demand compensation for his death. This is a common cause for concern since all the Huli clan, except for the Tani, are responsible for his death and it is the only case in Huli history where payback has not been given.

The fact that Baya Baya was a perfect man born from a virgin who never did wrong but shed his blood to atone for the sins of all the people, suggests a connection with the Christian gospel, although there is no resurrection of Baya Baya.

A similar Messiah-like myth is found amongst the Foe, the details of which are closer to the gospel than the legend

of Baya Baya. Possibly similar myths occur amongst other Huli neighbours as well.

This is the Messiah like myth found in the Foe area.

“Long ago a bird came from the sky and alighted upon a virgin woman. She saw a mark on her stomach and knew she was pregnant and a son was born.

“When he grew up he went around telling people in each village to stop killing, stealing and committing adultery.

“Because he was a good man people hated him. They wanted to continue doing evil, so they decided to kill him. He knew he would be killed, so he told his mother to come to the place where he would be killed on the fifth day after his death.

“Eventually the men in a certain longhouse grabbed him and dragged him out to kill him in the village. But he said, ‘Remember you will pollute the village if you kill me outside the village’. So they dragged him and killed him in the bush.

“They then lay his dead body on rock ledges. Five days later his mother came to the place where he had been laid, but his body was no longer there. She saw a strange light in the sky and heard a voice saying ‘Your son is no longer dead but is with his father in the sky’.”

The Messiah-like myths from the Foe and the gospel refer to the same events, but the New Testament accounts are more accurate because they were written down.

This indicates that the gospel or a version may have come to the area at least 150 years before contemporary missionary outreach.

Concerning Baya Baya the Huli say he is not Jesus Christ but God allowed this legend in their oral history so that they would understand the gospel when it came to them.

The Promised Land

Joe Kuman

Iri (Irimaule) is a hamlet beside the fast-flowing River Maril in the rugged terrain of Yuri in the Dagine and Kumai-Bomai Local Level Government of the Gumine District in Simbu Province.

For those who do not know, Iri was known as the site of the Omdara Community School, one of the first schools in Yuri, until 1993, when tribal fighting amongst the Yuri people destroyed it.

The resource centre of the tribal organisation, YAKA, has been built at Iri and is now in operation. The Yuri people have decided that all major events of the tribe shall be hosted at this place. Irimaule is the recognised centre of Yuri.

Historically, Iri was a venue chosen by Alai (Alaibia), the great ancestor of the Yuri people. On an expedition through the area, Alai advised his two sons, Nombri and Kepa, to establish their home there in the future.

Sometime later, Alai was murdered by a Baimane tribe at Ole-Kaipil close to Neragaima Catholic mission station. Nombri and Kepa had to carry his body for burial at Balkilma-nule in the Dom Nulaigauma tribal territory.

The two sons fled to Iri in fear of further attacks. They could not carry their father's corpse with them because he was so heavy and the walk would take six hours even without a load.

When Nombri and Kepa buried their father, a cane rope was tied around his head and hooked to his jaws with one

end of the rope sticking out of the grave. From time to time, they would visit the grave to pull the rope.

Eventually, when they pulled the rope, the head was clipped off the body. They then bagged the skull and took it to Iri (Irimaule) to preserve it in the hollow of a cliff beside the Maril River.

There, Nombri and Kepa made a permanent home, protecting their father's grotto and cultivating the vast land around them.

Eventually, Kepa took the upper land, Nil-giplin (Upper Maril), while Nombri took the lower land, Nil-kaun (Lower Maril), for hunting, gathering and gardening.

Neither would interfere with the other's territory but, after each day's activities, they would return to their *hausman* (men's house) at Iri. So the two brothers each claimed a portion of the *Marilnule* (Maril River), able to multiply with their vast arable land and their respective progeny

As the population increased, they moved further to the other side of mountains, gullies and ravines of Pildimina, Oldale, Sipilpaunan, Gurnil-tapwala, Molgime, Dekawi, Diginiguri, Omdara, Dia-Palma, Gomgale, Digin-nule, Dimla-kua, Kuabala and so on.

The Yuri people now occupy the biggest part of the political territory of Digin and part of the Kumai-Bomai areas. There are still huge tracts of land untouched.

In 2013, when the Yuri Alaiku Kuikane Association (YAKA) was launched, it coincided with a major peace and reconciliation ceremony. All the Yuri tribe gathered at Iri to observe and contribute in one way or another.

At the time, the elders performed the ritual of *Ipal kian diunguwo* (calling for the spirit of dead), in particular calling for Alaibia who was believed to dwell in a sacred place

beside the Maril River cliff.

The dead were called to come forth and settle at the public gathering place, Irimaule. Some remains of Alaibia's skull and pieces of rocks were found in a hollow at the cliff beside the river. All the Yuri elders and sons then led a procession to Irimaule the day before the launching and reconciliation where the remains were to be buried.

One old Yuri man, Toya Wambre, uttered in the Yuri dialect, "*Alai kian gala di isuna erpinge kene noneh Alaiiku papinga kura bole, ekil ekil warpingra kere, ere mala ure wu tenan nala di elpingi, Yalmain Alaibia wu suna molang kene kalkal i elpinge wu wai namiyoo*" (The ritual is observed so the descendants of Alai, who gathered to reconcile after decades of warfare and disintegration, may embrace the presence of our father to celebrate the reunion of his multitudes).

The old man's explanation may not be true but it instilled a sense that all Yuri men and women felt obliged to participate in the ritual and reunite.

Every clan and sub-clan of Yuri agreed that there would be everlasting peace with pigs slaughtered and their blood shed on *tanget* (cordyline) and stones which would be buried with Alai's remains as a peace monument at the entrance to Irimaule. The stones covered in pigs' blood represented the different clans of Yuri. The *tanget* and other graveyard plants around the monument have now taken root.

Iri is the most appropriate customary location for any common event, meeting and forum for Alai had chosen this venue for his descendants. Iri is the promised land of the people of Yuri, morally constituted by the great ancestor for generations to come.

Those of us residing on this land are the custodians to

ensure it is protected against invasion by foreigners.

Every Christmas break, a YAKA anniversary celebration is celebrated at Iri with various educational programs in which youth and citizens participate. YAKA's resource center was erected there at a cost of over K100,000 and more developments are expected in the near future.

All in all, Iri or Irimaule is a place never to be demeaned, exploited and used with oversight for personal gain but to be revered with high regard for common good.

Fading Links

Raymond Sigimet

In June, I had the opportunity to witness a contemporary Goroka engagement ceremony, hosted by the family of a young man from Okiufa.

His fiancée was of mixed parentage - Simbu and Daulo, Eastern Highlands.

The clan leader informed me that, in *Tok Pisin*, this ceremony is referred to as '*sindaunim meri*' [seated with the woman].

The '*sindaunim meri*' ceremony saw the family of the woman arrive with strength in numbers and fanfare to issue their bride price demand upon the man's family.

They brought with them food from gardens and stores which they proceeded to divide into three piles for presentation to the clan leader and family of the fiancé.

The fiancé's family and clan, on the other hand, prepared a traditional Goroka wet *mumu* for the visitors.

Before the bride price demand, the father of the fiancée introduced himself and his family. He went on to elaborate on the importance of relationship and family bonding.

After everything was said, he consulted his family from both sides, Simbu and Daulo, and put forward the bride price demand. The demand consisted of money, pigs and a cow.

The clan leader of the fiancé's family spoke next, accepting the demand on behalf of the young man. He also spoke on the importance of family and relationships between young people and said these should be open and

customarily censored to avoid any relationship problems between the couple.

The ceremony ended with the *mumu* being shared by the two parties.

In observing this process, I made a connection to my own Mountain Arapesh society of East Sepik.

An engagement ceremony in my society is called '*lusim han*' [let go of] in *Tok Pisin* and the practice and stages bare a resemblance to that of '*sindaunim meri*'.

In my society, the man and his family go to the woman's family and present a token of money and other items to the parents and brothers of the woman.

The families get to know each other and this gesture seals the engagement. While there, the man's family awaits the bride price obligations that will come from the woman's parents.

'*Sindaunim meri*' and '*lusim han*' are practices that strengthen and cement the relationship bond between the couple and both families. They also allow family members to get to know each other better.

Sadly, these important cultural traditions are slowly fading into history and losing their cultural significance.

As the gap widens between us and past generations, people like me and those to come seem likely to slowly lose our identity.