THE PIONEERS

Vol. 23

Electronic Revolution

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399.

Computers

Dhébɛlménu 6-9/late April, 18/636

He had named these mountains.

Thornton "Dhoru" Mennea gazed through the steam car's windshield at the snowy peaks that rolled in white billows to the east and west. The *Arjmontas,* "Silver Mountains," were the source of the Arjakwés or "Silverwater," the province's main river. Until Thornton's Geological Survey had created topographic maps of the region, the mountain range had a series of local names only. It was mid Dhonménu, the equivalent of early May, and the peaks still had heavy deposits of snow, especially after a very cold and snowy winter.

As he watched, the peaks to the east faded into darkness. He turned toward the westering sun, which was rapidly disappearing behind Skanda, the large planet their worldlet orbited once every twenty-four hours. The daily eclipse was just seconds away. He turned eastward again. The shadow swept across the second peak to the east and it went dark. The peak just east of him was next; the solar dimmer switch turned it off in about five seconds. Then his parked car fell into darkness, followed, one by one, by the domino-line of crests to the west. Overhead the pearly corona around Sula, as the Eryan called their sun, cast an eerie glow over the land and punched a milky hole in the carpet of stars that had instantly unrolled across the sky.

Thornton's cell phone rang. "What is it, Philos?" he asked.

“Can you move another two kilometers farther from the road? There’s something moving about 400 meters north of you and we can’t tell whether it’s a hunter or an antelope. You’re only 300 meters off the road, too, and there are vehicles coming.”

“Okay. This dirt track appears to be passable. Bye.” He closed the phone and put the steam car into gear. He left the headlights off; if he went slowly he could see the track well enough.

He moved forward carefully; the snow had melted in the alpine meadows only two weeks earlier and there was a lot of water and mud. He could barely see rocks to avoid them, let alone the pretty white and pink flowers dotting the tundra.

In ten minutes the corona was beginning to disappear behind Skanda as well. The eclipse always lasted forty minutes; he was moving into its dark heart. The cell phone rang again. “You can stop there and step out,” said Philos.

Thornton stopped the steam car, got out, and turned upward at the black sky. In a moment he saw a dark hole in the stars growing larger; it was the silhouette of the saucer. Its movement gave him a bit of depth perception; it was just fifty meters up. It was the same sort of vehicle he had seen before, thirty meters in diameter and ten meters high. It descended toward a grassy flat nearby, the six landing legs deployed, and it touched down.

He slowly walked over. When he made pickups, three or four times a year, they usually just parachuted the supplies; neither medicines nor machine tools were that delicate. But computers and communicators were.

A ramp descended from the bottom of the ship and Philos and two assistants started down, bearing heavy boxes. Thornton approached the bottom and watched them.

The aliens were about four and a half feet high—120 centimeters—and had two arms, two legs, and a head in the usual places. They departed from the human design in that they had two tentacles growing from their upper chests, a breathing hole at the base of the throat, no nose, and small ear holes. Their eyes were yellow and slitted vertically rather than horizontally; their skin was a scaly gray, except for a mane running down the back of their heads and under their shirts.

Philos emitted a series of whistles and chirps; since their mouths were not connected to their air passageways, they could not use their tongue, teeth, and lips to make sounds. “Greetings Thornton, it’s good to see you again,” came from the translation box attached to his belt.

“Thanks, Philos, it’s very good to see you again.”

Philos extended his left hand. “We’ve never shaken hands before, Thornton.”

“That would be a pleasure.” Thornton extended both hands, Eryan fashion; he had no idea how to shake a left hand independently. Philos hesitated, then extended both hands and they shook. The alien’s flesh was warm and slightly stiff from the scales.

“Don’t forget to wash your hands, my friend. Our biochemistry is right-handed and yours is left-handed, and we rarely find earth germs surviving in our colony, but you never know.”

“I brought water and soap, as you requested. How are you? How is your family?”

Philos moved his mouth in a way that Thornton suspected was a smile, but he wasn’t sure. “They are well. My oldest is 16; just a year younger than Rostamu. He’s tired of living in a little colony way out in the middle of nowhere, but at least there’s a girl his age at our research facility down on Skanda. My wife is busy with her research on

terrestrial plant genetics. She pulls her information off the web from terrestrial researchers and adds comparative analysis."

"Do all members of your species do sentientology research?"

"Of course not; someone has to sell insurance and food, run restaurants, and do all the other things any complex society needs. How's Lébé's work?"

"Good. She has a new book of Tutanɛ folk tales coming out."

"We'll look forward to seeing the manuscript, if you can email it to us. We do have a request from our engineering researcher: next time we provide you supplies, we'd like to acquire a steam car. If you can come here with two, we'll drive one of them on board and fly it back to our research facility. Someone wants to write her dissertation about the application of terrestrial technology and imported machine tools on Éra."

"A steam car? I suppose we can provide one. Sure."

"I know it's a lot of money, but our medicines and other items certainly are worth far more."

"Yes, you are quite right."

Philos pointed to the boxes that were accumulating at the end of the ramp; his two assistants were walking back and forth to bring more. "The tablets and phones will take some getting used to. It's now 2023 on Earth; eighteen years have passed since we brought you here. These items are updated so they can use the latest software. They're all cellular and can use our satellite communications system. We'll also periodically add more web features and data to our services, thanks to three software engineers writing their dissertations about the growth of electronic communications on Earth. I can't say for

sure what will be available when; they'll add icons to the web connection and then email you about them, unless someone figures them out first."

"Do you have the privacy policy finalized?"

"I'm sorry, that request of yours was highly controversial. It almost caused us to pull the plug on the entire effort. In brief, anything that goes into these devices and gets transmitted wirelessly can be used by us in our sentientology research. I think I can convince my colleagues to accept a policy that all users will have to sign in with a username and password and the first time they sign in they'll have to accept a privacy policy."

"That's standard on Earth."

"We have similar privacy policies; all complex societies have to. But we rarely provide internet services to species we are studying; the ethics are not well developed! It's a reasonable request, Thornton."

"Thank you, we thought so. How many are you giving us?"

"Seventy-three tablets, seventy-nine phones, and 160 ink-jet printers. We recommend you keep twenty of each in reserve. In another year we may be able to make another fifty of each, but that's uncertain. If you keep twenty in reserve and use broken ones for spare parts, you should have 53 functioning tablets and 59 functioning phones for at least 7.3 years and an inkjet printer for each. We'll guarantee replacements for them at that point."

"It'll take us a month or two to train users and distribute them, but that will be my personal priority. You've seen the list of proposed users."

"Anyone is fine, since we have military secrets, pornography, and various other sensitive subjects blocked. I'm sure the army will do its best to get around the filters, but they're foolproof; we haven't mirrored any of the sensitive material on our copy of the world wide web." Philos looked up at the sky. The solar corona was beginning to peek out of the eastern side of Skanda. "We're past mid eclipse. We'd better load up your car and go."

"Okay." Thornton picked up two boxes; Philos and his assistants picked up others from the growing pile. Including ink jet cartridges, refill devices, and five-liter plastic bottles of refill ink, they had to move almost four hundred kilograms of stuff. The sun was almost ready to peek out from behind Skanda when they finished. Thornton turned to Philos one last time. "It's good to see you again, Philos. I'm sorry, in the last eighteen Éra years, that we have talked so little."

"I'm sorry, too, but it hasn't been possible for various reasons, Thornton. But I think that may change in a year or two. We'll see." He offered both hands to Thornton and they shook again. Then the aliens headed back to their ship. Thornton watched it take off and rise very rapidly into the dark sky until it was invisible. He pulled out the bottle of water and harsh soap and gave his hands a thorough washing, then got into the car and drove to Mɛlwika.

He had two comparatively free days; Lébé and his parents were still in Mɛddwoglubas at the annual Bahá'í convention and he had no génadɛma courses that term. His kids were in school during the day. So as soon as he got home, he locked the computer equipment in his bedroom, except one tablet and one phone, which he began to use in order to master

the software. They were strange; he had never seen a tablet before. The next day he pulled out a second one of each and took them to Aréjanu, the génadɛma's computer expert who oversaw Thornton's laptop. The two of them experimented all day. They set up accounts for themselves, accessed the alien-provided internet, sent emails back and forth, and emailed changes to a database.

When he returned home that evening, he found that Lébé and his parents were home from a triumphant convention.

"The best one ever," Liz pronounced over supper. "In addition to 171 delegates—and they were all there!—we had fifty youth and 300 other visitors. The excitement and energy were just indescribable."

"We have an abundance of seekers—one might say a surfeit—and we actually have a system for consolidating them that works," added Chris. "The core activities, the institute process, and social action are moving thousands toward active service."

"How many new believers?" asked Thornton.

"Almost four thousand; twenty percent growth in one year," replied Liz. "We didn't need to do door to door teaching either because so many people wanted to study! The ascension of Estoibidhé to the throne piqued the interest of a lot of people, her active involvement in the relief of Sumiupɛrakwa gave her a very positive reputation, and the passing of the new laws reinforced her popularity."

"But people shouldn't be becoming Bahá'ís because the queen's a Bahá'í," said Chris. "There's a sense among some people that the kingdom's religion is changing and they want to be part of the new regime."

“Yes, that’s a bad reason,” agreed Liz. “We are telling insincere declarants that if they don’t have a personal spark of faith, they should study more. That’s why the classes are so full. Some of them are genuinely attracted.”

“The daily Bahá'í radio show has been really helpful, too,” said Thornton. “Has the flap over birth control slowed growth?” Two months earlier, the priests at the Isurdhuna Temple had launched a major attack on the Bahá’í Faith, arguing they were secretly spreading birth control among the women without telling their husbands.

Chris nodded. “It’s hard to tell from the enrollment statistics, but everyone says that, in spite of responses from all the female physicians who aren’t Bahá’ís, the charge has stuck in the minds of many people. The Bahá’í Faith isn’t separated from the new knowledge, for most people.”

“Tampering with the family unit is the worst sin, too,” said Liz. “It’ll be twenty years before birth control is understood and accepted. The charge has hardened the attitudes of those who were against the Faith. People who were neutral are less likely to be affected.”

“My impression, in the last few months, is that the Faith is now a rough equal of the traditional religion,” exclaimed Chris. “Theoretically, there are 300,000 members of the old religion, but most of them are not particularly religious. There are less than 23,000 zealous and active members.”

“But the Bahá’í community doesn’t have 23,000 active and zealous members, either,” replied Liz. “More like 3,000, maybe 5,000. We have a long way to go, perceptions aside.”

"That's true," agreed Chris. "But we now have 123 local spiritual assemblies; that's half the world's localities. In contrast, there are only ten temples for the old religion, so most people live at least a half hour from one, and they rarely see a priest. That's why we're as influential, in spite of our smaller numbers."

"And we're going to raise the number of Assemblies to 200 in the next four years," added Liz.

Chris turned to the coffee; he had finished eating. "So, you got the computers and phones?"

"Yes, and they're very sophisticated. The computers will go ten hours on their batteries and they're very fast. The phones have small screens; that's their main limitation. But you can project a keyboard—an *Eryan* keyboard—onto the bottom half of the screen and it is as powerful as my laptop. The tablets and phones have built in cameras and immense storage capacity. They can make movies as well as take still photos."

"So, they'll work for financial databases?" asked Chris.

"Definitely. Each branch of Prosperity Bank, or the Royal Bank, or each provincial exchequer can maintain and access its own database, even with the phones. There are ways to make the spreadsheet more user-friendly on the small screen. Philos told me they'd be increasing the web services gradually and yesterday afternoon I found something I didn't see last night: live satellite photos of our cloud cover."

"Really? Sounds like the weather bureau needs one as well."

"Definitely; it'll improve weather forecasting a lot. I'm not sure what Philos and his colleagues are up to, dad. Last night Philos sent me a text message to bring water and

soap along; he wanted to shake hands with me and wanted me to wash off afterward to avoid alien germs! He was very friendly and said they probably would institute a standard privacy agreement for all users to accept before receiving service. He also said they'd gradually improve services and hinted that if this worked well, they'd provide more devices."

"That's very friendly and generous of them."

"More friendly and generous than they've been in the past."

'True." Chris shrugged. "I don't know what to make of it, either. I hope they institute a clear privacy statement; it'll make the technology more acceptable."

"Our cell phones will continue to work, right?" asked Liz.

"Yes, in fact they'll work better. The two copies of my old laptop can revert to our personal use. They still have two backup copies of it, so they'll last a while. I figure I'd bring my laptop back from the génadɛma tomorrow, once the replacement is set up, and we can put it in dad's office. Next week, training classes will begin, then we'll distribute the devices."

"It'll be quite a revolution," said Chris. "I wouldn't be surprised if it doesn't increase gross domestic product by a percentage point."

Just then the telephone rang. Chris rose from the table and walked over to get it. "Khélo? . . Jordan, good to hear from you, what's happening . . . . Oh, I'll tell everyone right away! Tiamaté has gone into labor and Lua is on her way . . . . Thanks, we'll say some prayers. Bye." He hung up the telephone. "Well, dear, our first great grandchild is on the way."

Liz smiled. “Marvelous, can’t wait to greet the little one! But I suppose as great grandparents we have to wait this one out and come down after he or she is ready to be presented to the world.”

“Yes, let’s leave the main involvement to the *grand*parents.” Chris walked back to the table. “Ah, life goes on.” He turned to Thornton. “Jalalu may be a father in seven years.”

“Or less; he’ll be 15 next month. Rostamu will be seventeen this summer and he’s very close to his big brother Jordan. He’s next.”

“Let’s say some prayers,” suggested Liz. “Our world is going through a spiritual rebirth, its computers will bring it a complicated material rebirth, and our family is about to grow. We have a lot to pray about.”

400.

New Responsibilities

Early Blorménu/late May 18/636

It was three weeks before the Mennea clan could gather at the Mɛlita house for two days to see Tiamaté and Jordan's baby. A school holiday in Pértatranisér gave Amos and May an extra day to drive in with Bahiyé and Marié, so when the Mɛlwika group arrived at noon on Suksdiu they were beginning to awaken.

"I have to see the baby first," said Liz, as she stepped inside, kissing Tiamaté and her mother, Sarédaté. "Amos and May can wait!"

"We need to verify he's as beautiful as you say!" added Chris, kissing both of the women.

"Come see, then," said Tiamaté. "You're in luck, he's awake." She led them down the hall. Thornton and Lébé and the kids followed, even though almost-thirteen year old Kalé really wanted to see her cousin Marié first, who was only four days younger than she.

They all trooped into the nursery where Jordan was holding his little son. He passed the boy to his grandmother first. "Meet Andru, grandma."

"Thank you, I'm delighted." She kissed the baby and gazed at him. "He really is a beautiful, little boy. Such bright, alert little eyes! What color are they? Brown?"

"Yes, like Tiamaté's. His hair's black, like both of us, and his skin is in between ours."

"No one will know whether he's Sumi or Eryan," said Chris. "Good." He took his great grandson very carefully and gave him a hug.

"Are you sleeping much?" asked Lébé.

Tiamaté shook her head. "Not yet! He's hungry every two hours."

"Why 'Andru'?" asked Thornton.

"It's from the same root word as ɛndru, so it reminds us of Aisɛndru," replied Jordan. "It rings of the great military tradition in Tiamaté's family and all the service to the crown they've performed. And it reminds us of great grandfather Andrew, which is the Greek version of the same name. It's nice to have a name that works in English and Eryan. It works in Sumi, too, though not well; Andaru is an obscure word for a kind of big tree, and thus is used to mean a 'strong man.'"

"That's a well-chosen name, then," said Thornton.

"Let's take him to the living room," suggested Tiamaté.

They all headed for the living room, passing the baby back and forth among them. They got there when Lua and Behruz arrived with Rostamu. They had already seen their grandson, but had to hold him again. All the talking awakened Marié and her big sister Bahiyé, who had turned sixteen the week before; one purpose of the gathering was to celebrate her birthday. Amos and May came out of their bedroom, so the greetings went around the circle again. Finally, Aisɛndru telephoned from Anartu to greet everyone, so they clustered around a cell phone to talk to him.

As the call was finished, Golbésté, the house's cook and maid, announced that dinner was ready, so they trooped into the dining room to eat rice, turkey, and vegetables. For the family from Pertatranisér, it was a grand breakfast, since they were seven time

zones behind Mɛlita. Birthday cake and ice cream provided the dessert, much to Bahiyé's delight. "And I'll be a good cousin and share my birthday with Andru every year, if he doesn't mind!" she added.

"Starting next year or the year after, the birthday parties will be very different," replied Jordan, smiling at his first cousin.

"Well, that's true. Maybe we can celebrate them a day apart," she said.

"Can we be excused, dad?" Kalé asked Thornton.

He looked at her and Marié, who were anxious to dash off and play together. "Sure, the party's finished," he said.

The two girls rose from the table and headed for their bedroom. Abanyaraha, the Bahá'í nanny they had hired from Bilara, took Andru out for his nap. The three oldest teenagers—Rostamu, Bahiyé, and Jalalu—decided to stay with the adults.

"This will be our only time to get together in the next two months," said Chris. "So maybe we should review summer plans."

"We're heading south again for most of the summer," said Thornton. "We'll be spending time with the Kwolonɛ, Wuronɛ, Krésonɛ, and Kwétékwonɛ."

"I'm still collecting hymns and grandmother's stories," said Lébé. "And Thornton's working on forestry."

"I never expected to become a forester. Most of my time will be spent on development planning, I think, and I'll lead two week-long geological expeditions. The tribes are cooperating so that the expeditions can cross several territories."

"I'd like to go on those trips," said Rostamu. "I'll be starting at génadɛma in the fall and maybe I can get geology credit."

"I'm sure you can. Jalalu wants to go, too, and the rest of the summer the two of you could do service with the youth teams we're going to have down there."

Rostamu looked at his cousin Jalalu, then nodded. "Okay."

"That'll be more fun than Mɛddwoglubas," said Lua. "Your dad and I will be there most of the summer."

"If Kalé wants to spend part of the summer with us and Marié, we can keep both of them busy," said May. "There's going to be a big summer camp in Pértatransiér for the first half of the summer that I'm going to help with. The rest of the summer they can do some youth activities together."

"Sounds like a good plan," said Lébé. "They'd have fun together."

"Auntie Lua, is there anything I can do in Mɛddwoglubas with you?" asked Bahiyé. "I'd really love to do some work in the hospital there."

Lua nodded. "Sure, that'd be great. I'm sure we can find something for you to do. You can sit in on some of the classes, if you want. You're too young to get credit, I think."

"But she might be able to get some high school credit," said May. "That would be good for everyone."

"We'll be making our usual round-the-sea trip," said Chris. "I have to meet with all the Tomi Boards. We may take longer than usual this year because of the economic problems. Most of the tomis are losing money this year and are trying various money-saving efforts. The exception is the Jérdomas Tomi; we've received 125,000 dhanay from the palace to retain an inventory of 250 modular houses in case of another disaster, like the tornado."

“How does that work?” asked May. “What will they do if the modulars get really old?”

“They won’t get old,” replied Chris. “We’ll build up the inventory, then sell the oldest modulars and replace them with new ones. Basically, we’re retaining a three-month supply.”

“And how are the tomis reducing costs? Shorter hours and lower salaries?” asked May. “I’m not sure that’s better than unemployment. Unemployed people will try new things; partially employed people won’t.”

“How uncharacteristically capitalist of you, May!” said Chris, surprised.

“Well, my views have evolved,” she replied to her father.

“I rather like the efforts of the Spiritual Assemblies of Mɛlwika and Tripola,” said Liz. “To encourage partially employed workers to attend free vocational classes. They put together some useful classes and provided an excellent service.”

“Those are the kinds of services we need to provide more of,” agreed Chris.

“How’s the harvest looking?” asked Amos.

“Good. The first harvests started two weeks ago along the equator and got very good prices; wheat and corn were fourteen dhanay a bushel, as opposed to five last fall. Mɛlita’s harvests start in another week or two. Because the palace is building a lot of new grain elevators and plans to fill them, grain prices should stay strong all summer and fall; ten dhanay per bushel or more. More people will plant grains and fewer will plant vegetables and hay, so those commodities will stay higher as well. That means demand for chicken, turkey, and red meat will be a bit lower, partly because feed will cost more and partly because there will be less money in the family food budgets to buy them.”

“So the bottom line, in terms of our income?” asked Liz.

“Depends on what you mean, because we’ve spun off many of our assets to trusts. Our ownership in the theaters, for example, has been given to trusts for the theaters and they’re down because theaters have lower revenues. Mɛlita Zoo is getting a chunk of our mortgages from that area and it will get more this year. The génadɛma has a lot of our partnership shares and since businesses are down, it’s down. Overall, the economy should be up.”

“What about industrial output?” asked Amos.

“Industrial output is still down. Aryéstu is guessing that it will recover by mid summer because of the economic stimulus. Right now household food budgets are larger than normal, which reduces people’s budgets for goods and services. The grain storage elevators and the money to fill them, however, are consuming a big chunk of the stimulus, and the rest of the stimulus will barely make up for the rise in food prices.”

“So, the stimulus is eating itself?” asked Liz.

“Yes, exactly,” said Chris. “The worst winter in fifty years eliminated almost the entire usual winter harvest, which pushed up food prices, so the palace decided to increase grain storage so we’d be able to ride out another harvest failure, but that will consume an entire extra harvest, so that keeps food prices up . . . meanwhile, if people pay more for food they have less for clothing, furniture, new houses, vehicles, etc., so the rest of the economy contracts . . . . so the palace prints extra money, releases more silver coinage to stimulate the economy, but has to use a chunk of the extra to build the grain elevators to store the extra grain at the higher price! The stimulus was a good idea, and I’m sure they won’t try it the same way next time.”

“It sounds like they should build the elevators this year and fill them next,” said Liz.

“So, no economic growth this year?” persisted Amos.

“Not ten or twelve percent, which people have gotten used to. Maybe one or two percent. That’s the other thing that will tie me up; all the provinces and their tomis are rethinking their development plans. The computers we just got will help boost it. On the other hand, the insurance industry is about to start and it’ll absorb a lot of money, too.”

“But the premiums will also boost savings, and that’s needed,” said Amos.

“Yes, long-term it’ll strengthen the economy. We need a strong, healthy insurance industry. That’s something else I wanted us to talk about. Prosperity Insurance starts up next week. We’re a major investor; 50,000 dhanay so far and 200,000 dhanay more over the summer. All the génadɛmas we’re involved in should take out insurance against fire and liability; Mɛlwika Génadɛma’s bill will be 20,000, which is a lot, but if any building burns we’d lose more. I plan to insure all the Mennea Tomi buildings, which will cost 5,000. Thornton and Jordan, you need to talk to the Mɛlwika, South Mɛlwika, and Mɛlita City Councils about insuring their schools and other buildings. They’ll need to be educated; they don’t understand its importance. We need to insure all our houses. You younger ones should get life insurance.”

“So, insurance is the next big push,” said Liz.

Chris nodded. “We’ve spent over a hundred thousand dhanay in the last fifteen years covering the costs of fires and property damage, and we’ve been lucky. The génadɛmas should offer the students cheap life insurance policies as part of their tuition so they get used to the idea of insurance, just as we set them all up with bank accounts

now. There are several reasons this is important. First, the alternative to private insurance is for the crown to set up a welfare state, which is potentially very expensive and does not encourage personal responsibility. We need a society where private means cover as much as possible and the government is the last resort for services. A mix—a balance—of private and government services seems to be best, if the lessons of the last century on Earth are correct. Second, private insurance works on a different basis than government protections. The latter are usually pay as you go; the former involve investing accumulated incomes and covering the pay-outs from the profits of the investments. So private insurance is excellent for economic growth."

"And will we make money on it?" asked Liz.

Chris nodded. "Of course. The goal is a ten percent profit the first year. Our various investments are now working out pretty well; most earn ten to fifteen percent in a good year. This is a bad year, so most will earn zero to five percent. We've been transferring assets to génadɛmas, opera houses, hospitals, and other non-profits that need a steady income stream; our total personal income has been dropping. But we're still doing quite well."

"Good, because the Bahá'í fund constantly needs more money."

"We'll be big contributors to the Khɛrmdhuna House of Worship, the Bilara House of Worship, and the Bahá'í Studies Institute," Chris promised.

"My big priority for the summer is to complete the automatic telephone switching system," said Amos. "I think after a seventy thousand dhanay investment over four years, we've finally got the device figured out. And now the palace really wants it, to reduce the access of the aliens to government data."

"They'll pay for the automated switching systems out of the stimulus package," said Chris. "We just have to ask. Even if ten of them cost ten thousand dhanay each, they'll pay for themselves over a decade."

"Good, I'll get them working and you arrange the subsidy," said Amos, with a smile. "It was by far the most complicated engineering project I've ever undertaken."

"How's the efficiency project for Miller Motors?" asked Thornton.

Amos nodded. "They've got plans to reduce steam car expenses to 910 dhanay each, partly by stripping them of some standard features and making them optional. Next month they'll announce the 999-dhanay steam car. That should stimulate demand."

"Good," said Chris. "In the next year we'll move closer to a society on wheels, a society with insurance, a society with an automated phone system, and a society with computers."

"And a society where the Faith is very influential," added Liz. "Let's not forget spiritualization."

The next evening, Thornton, Lua, May, and their families headed home. Chris and Liz stayed an extra night in Mɛlita. The next morning Chris walked around town, visited with merchants in the shopping district—he had invested in many of their businesses—visited the zoo to see how it was doing, stopped into the Mennea Tomi's offices, and walked over to the grange headquarters to ask about agriculture in the area. He returned to the house with a copy of the latest edition of the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs*.

"Look, Liz, it's out," he said, handing her the paper.

She took it and smiled. “Wow! Color pictures and everything! The laptop computer has hit the newspaper industry!”

“The large inkjet printers did a fine job printing thousands of copies, apparently.” Chris pointed to pages two and three, which Liz had turned to. “There are color pictures on every single page, and the ads are in color.”

“This will be a sensation.”

“The newspaper salesman said he received twice the usual number of papers and has almost sold out after three hours. The supply usually lasts two or three days. He called and ordered more.”

“All the papers will switch to this system, obviously. And I bet profits will soar.”

“I wish we still had some money invested in newspapers! The *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* plans to publish twice a week and eventually daily, and you can see why.”

“Everyone will publish daily, which means even more news will be written up. That’s got to be good.”

They sat together and read through the sixteen-page edition. The paper used to be on newsprint and had eight pages; the new pages were much smaller, but the print was a bit smaller as well, so the amount of text was about the same.

They finished the paper in about fifteen minutes, then Chris got into his rover and went for a ride. East of Mɛlita was a strip of prairie twelve kilometers wide that had just been purchased—or wrested—from the Kwolonɛ tribe. It had been carved into townships, but they were still just dotted lines on the map. The only change was a roughed out road that the army had hastily plowed through part of the area. Chris drove south from Mɛlita until he reached an agricultural access road that ran eastward across the township. It had

been hastily widened by army bulldozers; the turf was torn up on the south side and the northern half only was covered by a thin layer of gravel that had been pounded into the black earth. In ten kilometers the strip of gravel ended and the entire road was a new, muddy black track torn through the tall-grass prairie.

The track continued six kilometers until it abruptly reached a similar dirt track that ran northward. There was no southward road, and the eastward track suddenly became a narrow bulldozer path of flattened grass. Chris guessed that he had reached the future center of the village of Gramdhunas and turned left onto the future "Route 14." It was hard to imagine that the two tracks would someday be concreted highways and their intersection would be the center of a thriving community.

He proceeded slowly northward on "Route 14" for twenty kilometers, devoting most of his time to an examination of the land. It was rich; the once semi-arid desert had gradually yielded to short-grass prairie, then tall-grass prairie over the last seventeen years. The cactus and bushes of the semidesert had been overwhelmed by the grass, burned up by prairie fires, and reduced to scattered blackened skeletons smothered by verdure. Small groves of young trees showed that forest was now possible. He got out a few times to handle the soil and was pleased by what he saw.

Route 14 ended at the concrete strip of Route 5. Chris waved at the crew pouring gravel on the new road surface, to prepare it for concreting. A water tower rose next to Route 5 where electricity was pulling water from a well. A large villa was going up at the corner—Lord Wɛranu's—and a bulldozer was clearing a small grid of streets for Orntroba's future village center, which surprised him. He turned left and headed down Route 5 to Route 3, which he took to General Roktɛkɛstɛr's villa in Ornakwés. Awaiting

him with Roktɛkɛstɛr were Wɛranu and Estoiyaju, the new lords of Ornntroba and Gramdhunas.

"I hope I'm not late," said Chris as he entered Roktɛkɛstɛr's meeting room.

"No, we were just early," replied Wɛranu. He extended his hands. "It's nice to see you, neighbor."

"Thank you. I just drove by your villa. It's looking good."

"Thank you; they tell me I'll be able to move into part of it in eight weeks."

"I haven't even started on a villa," said Estoiyaju, offering Chris his hands.

They shook. "But you have a beautiful village site," said Chris. "Rich, black ground. Add a few hundred farmers and you will be amazed at the results."

"And proud," added Roktɛkɛstɛr. "Ornakwés wasn't even rich, black ground when I first came here twelve years ago. It was scrub with grass growing up between the bushes. Now it has two thousand farmers, produces five million dhanay of agricultural produce a year, plus two million dhanay of factory goods."

"So, how much local taxes? Seven hundred thousand?" asked Estoiyaju.

Roktɛkɛstɛr shook his head. "Half the farmers live in North Shore Province, so it gets 120,000 dhanay of their taxes per year. Almost half the land is part of the estate lord system, so the members of the old families who have estates get two percent of the taxes and I get eight percent. Overall, I get 550,000 dhanay in local taxes per year, plus I'm still getting 120,000 dhanay of mortgages a year. The township spends 400,000 a year on school buildings, teachers, maintaining the roads and sewers and parks, the police, the firemen, and administration. I invest about 200,000 per year in factories and agricultural services, which increase the village's jobs by about 50 and its manufacturing output by

350,000 dhanay. Since the increased population mostly shops in Mɛlita, Mɛlita gets about 40 new commercial jobs a year because of the growth of Ornakwés."

"General Roktɛkɛstɛr has very clearly summarized the engine of growth for all of Swadnoma province," added Chris. "An agri of farmland in a good year produces 60 dhanay of food per harvest; it used to be 100, but crop prices have fallen quite a lot. Ornakwés and Orntroba get two harvests per year, but Gramdhunas will get three. Orntroba and Gramdhunas are both 96 square kilometers, which is 27,000 agris. Once the entire township is farmed—let's say 25,000 agris of it, because it's never 100% farmed—Orntroba will produce three million dhanay of food and Gramdhunas 4.5 million. The Kérékwɛs brothers and sister have 430 square kilometers of farmland and are in the three-harvest zone, so their lands produce twenty million dhanay of food per year, which is a third of the kingdom's total food production! Basically, Swadnoma feeds the cities and makes all the chicken, turkey, and pig production possible. The mortgages and surplus taxes are creating 500 new factory and food processing jobs per year and another 500 service and commercial jobs per year, a third of which end up in Mɛlita. The new strip of land bought from the Kwolonɛ will eventually expand the agriculture by 480 square kilometers, but it'll take well over a decade to settle 5,000 more farmers on it because the realm neither has enough spare farmers currently, nor the demand for food and agricultural products."

"That's a rosy picture," said Estoiyaju. "But currently the rich land is unplowed. It'll require roads, village sites, water and sewer systems, schools, and many other things before it gets the farmers, and without the farmers there's no income to set up the services."

“We have a hundred thousand dhanay per year from the crown to set up the townships,” replied Wɛranu. “That’s enough to set up a village site, pave a few initial streets with water and sewer systems, build a small school, and clear some farm roads.”

“Exactly,” said Roktɛkɛstɛr. “And arrange to send the high school age kids to Mɛlita or Ornakwés High School until there are enough for a local high school.”

“What about granges?” asked Estoiyaju. “I have no idea how to set up one!”

“Start by signing a contract with an existing grange—Mɛlita, Ornakwés, North Gramakwés, all the townships now have their own—to provide services in your township for two years,” said Chris. “They’ll organize your farmers. They can rent additional equipment from the one twelfth of the harvest they’ll collect.”

“So, I won’t have to pay them anything?”

“They may need a loan or a loan guarantee to provide the services until the harvest comes in, and if you want them to build buildings or buy equipment for your future grange, they may need additional loans or cash. Equipment has gotten a lot cheaper in the last decade, but grange facilities have gotten bigger and more expensive, especially grain elevators. The harvest has to be stored somewhere.”

“Ask the palace to site some of the new royal grain storage facilities in your townships,” suggested Roktɛkɛstɛr.

“Good idea,” said Wɛranu.

“So, will either of you invest in our townships?” asked Estoiyaju.

“You don’t need our money; you’ve got a hundred thousand dhanay from the palace and 27,000 agris of prime farmland,” replied Roktɛkɛstɛr.

“But we have to attract farmers,” persisted Estoiyaju. “There’s still unsold land in South Ménwika, Swadlɛndha, the northern townships of South Shore province, the eastern townships of Rudhisér, Wɛranowika, and the Long Valley. That’s a *lot* of farmland.”

“Tell you what,” said Chris. “I’ll take an estate in your township. Of course, it’ll be the usual arrangement of mortgage and tax payments. I’ll help set up all the contracts with the grange and the high school, too.”

“Fine,” said Estoiyaju. “I’m willing to spend the money because you have a reputation.”

“He took two thousand agris in my town and the towns nearby when the area was opened to farming and granges,” said Roktɛkɛstɛr. “It was the breakthrough.”

“But that was before there were experienced granges around to set up farms,” noted Chris.

“My township too, lord,” said Wɛranu. “I’m seventy years old and not in the position to take an active role in setting it up.”

Chris considered a moment, then nodded. “Very well. I’d take five thousand agris in both. That seems like a lot; the average estate lord has only three thousand. But I need to find and hire an estate manager, someone who, if you are pleased with their performance, will become your town manager. I suspect the manager will want a three-thousand agri estate as well.”

“That’s fine,” said Estoiyaju. “I have no objection to the estate lord system. It means less money for me, but it has proved a good system for distributing land. And I assume you will be investing in the land as well?”

Chris nodded. “Of course. Now I have a profit motive for doing so. You’ll both have fine townships, I’m sure.”

“I’m sure now, too, with you involved,” said Estoiyaju.

It was early afternoon before Chris returned to the Mɛlita house. “So, did you solve their problems and give them a plan?” asked Liz, as soon as he walked into the parlor.

Chris smiled. “Roktɛkɛstɛr and I spent the last three hours reviewing everything he has invested in; we got so involved in it, we didn’t get to the things he could invest in. So far, besides his automatic share in the Mɛlita-Ornakwés-ɛjnopela Industrial Park, he’s been arranging for the manufacture of army supplies, everything from uniforms to bullets, in Ornakwés.”

“Sounds like a sweet deal.”

“It does, but actually it was ordinary business; Roktɛkɛstɛr put up the money, sometimes the army invested as well but not always, and Roktɛkɛstɛr didn’t get any kickbacks. He has been too devoted to the army; the development of his township was always secondary, so he never asked for any personal remuneration. If anything, the army and Roktɛkɛstɛr have produced a manufacturing capacity that is inefficient. Roktɛkɛstɛr relies on a manager to watch over everything and the army to watch the expenses; he hasn’t lifted a finger to check anything. I recommended that he hire Amos to give the factories a thorough inspection and review, and hire my tomi to review the financial records discretely. I bet the work can be done ten to twenty percent more cheaply.”

“What did he say?”

"Yes. I'll assign my best auditor and review the work personally to make sure it's done right."

"And to see what's going on. Chris, you don't need the information and frankly, you don't need the work. You're getting old, remember?"

"My knees remind me every hour." He smiled. "Speaking of work; Wɛranu and Estoiyaju are terrified to be lords of their own townships. So I gave them a deal: give me estate lord status over 5,000 agris in each township and I'll get them set up for them."

Liz scowled. "Where will you find the time to do that? And what would you do with 10,000 agris?"

"It won't take me that long; I'll look for an experienced manager, of which the existing granges are full. I told both men that whoever becomes my estate manager will need 3,000 agris for his own estate and they agreed! They're buying my reputation; if I'm involved in a township, farmers will give it a chance. So I don't think it'll take that much of my time. And we'll have two large estates to bequeath to great grandchildren."

"Ah. Andru gets an estate, unless he's his father's heir as Lord of Mɛlita."

"Exactly. I need to find Jordan and talk to him about this development."

"He's in the Mennea Consulting offices." She pointed to the first floor of the house's east wing.

"Thanks." Chris headed into the east wing, the second floor of which held the house's seven bedrooms. The first floor had seven rooms, most of which served as offices for Mennea Development Consulting. Jordan was in his office taking a call. Chris listened, intrigued by the half he could hear, which was about a children's museum. When Jordan finally hung up, Chris said, "I wish we had thought of that."

“It doesn’t matter; we’ll have to pay,” replied Jordan. “That was Mayor Wɛrétranu. Someone in the Mɛlita Chamber of Commerce thought of the idea; their wife is completing a Master’s in Education at Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma. The Chamber of Commerce talked to Wɛrétranu. They’d like to put it just south of the zoo.”

“Great idea; it’d complement the zoo quite well. How much will it cost?”

“Two hundred thousand dhanay for phase one. If half were donated and they had a loan guarantee for the rest, they could get it set up.”

“The Chamber of Commerce has some pretty experienced businessmen. I don’t want to donate the whole sum. We could pledge up to half, but other people need to donate as well. The businessmen should want to donate because it’d increase their business. The city could come up with some, also.”

Jordan nodded. “Okay, that’s what I’ll propose. The City Council won’t want to give anything this year; tax revenues are down.”

“But they can borrow, too. They could even issue bonds; the bond market is still pretty small. Mɛlwika financed half its school system with bonds and the pace of construction has slowed in the last two years. We need to shrink our role in things like this and insist others get involved. We never should have financed three quarters of Mɛlita Zoo. This township is getting bigger and richer every year.”

“Okay.”

“Jordan, I just met with Roktɛkɛstɛr, Wɛranu, and Estoiyaju. Roktɛkɛstɛr and I didn’t spend much time reviewing the development plan you proposed; we’ll get together again next week. Overall, he liked it.”

“I proposed diversifying the existing capacities.”

"He liked that approach. He has talked to the palace about grain storage and they have agreed to site eight thousand tonnes of it in Ornakwés, so that has to be added to the plan. He also suggested that Wɛranu and Estoiyaju make a similar request and I suspect they'll get it. Wɛranu and Estoiyaju are not the sort to plunge in and plan an entire town; Wɛranu's too old and Estoiyaju's still in shock. They wanted my reputation and my help and I agreed, but at a price: I wanted my own 5,000 agri estate in each township and said I'd find estate managers who could become village managers, and the managers would have to have 3,000 agri estates of their own. They agreed."

"Really? You consumed a third of each town!"

Chris smiled. "I did, didn't I? But both were planning to make their townships available to estate lords anyway, and I'm not sure there are enough old houses and wealthy people around to fill them. My estates will be for others eventually, like your brother Rostamu, or Jonkrisu, or maybe Bahiyé or Kalé or Marié if they show any interest in such things."

"I'll be glad to do this for you!"

"No, you have a full-time job. I'd love to do these two townships *with* you, however. The big piece of advice I need is who to hire as managers. I can hunt around among the various granges, but I thought I'd ask you first. I think Wɛranu needs help the most; he already has a village site being set up."

"How much does he have to spend?"

"A hundred thousand."

“It’ll take a hundred thousand to set up all the farm roads. He needs to rough out the town site only—enough streets for a few houses—and save some money for some farm roads, then add streets and farm roads as the population increases.”

“Exactly. He’s even got the shell of a villa set up, and I bet it’ll cost 50,000. So Orntroba already has some problems. I didn’t say anything to him, but I can talk to him later about it.”

“Okay. If you need farmers, I think we should prepare a one-page, double-sided color brochure that can be published in the newspapers and as a stand-alone item.”

“Excellent idea! That’ll attract a lot of attention.”

“I’ll work on that. As for a manager, Wértéstu has been planning to leave Mennea Development Services for six months, but he hasn’t been able to find a challenging enough job as a factory manager or tomi executive.”

“He’d be good! And he’s from an Old House; Estoiyaju will like him, I think.”

“And he’d like to have an estate. He’s very experienced in planning, though not in execution.”

“That’s true.” Chris considered a moment. “Someone who came to mind while I was driving here was Wokwéstu. He’s been the head of the Mɛlita Grange since Wɛrétranu became Mayor and was assistant head of the Grange before then. He’s very smart; a self-made man. And I think the grange has become a dead end job for him.”

“And he’s good at executing plans. Maybe if each was manager of one township and assistant manager of the other, they could work together.”

"They're both good at working in teams. I love the idea of Wokwéstu—a toothless fiftyish peasant who taught himself reading and accounting—being an estate lord! Might have to have Wértéstu do most of the talking to Wɛranu, though."

Chris laughed. "Yes, unfortunately. Let's propose this arrangement to Wértéstu right now, then I'll approach Wokwéstu while I'm still here in town. The four of us can strategize together about the estates, since planning them is planning a third of each township. Then we'll schedule a time to meet with Wɛranu and Estoiyaju."

Reread and edited 6/19/13, 9/2/17

401.

New Directions

Early Kaiménu/late June 18/636

Heat rippled off of Route 2 as Thornton accelerated the pickup truck out of Mɛlwika. “It’s hard to believe that everyone was afraid that there’d never be a spring,” Rostamu said.

“Summer can’t be postponed very long.” Thornton pointed to the fields of mown wheat. “The harvest was delayed by only a week. Usually the farmers are plowing for a second crop by now.”

Rostamu pointed to an excavation near the Mɛlwika Grange. “Is that the site of the new grain elevators?”

“Yup. The crown is putting six there, capacity 2,000 tonnes each. Manusunu Miller has a contract to fill them and run the facility. I’m glad they’re increasing the storage capacity—we need the insurance against a bad harvest—but by contracting with lots of separate managers, they’re doing it inefficiently.”

“Or spreading business around, which is good politically.”

“You’re right, but good politics is often bad economics.” Thornton shrugged. “There are no plans to put grain elevators on Sumilara or in Tutanɛ lands. Most are in Arjakwés, Swadnoma, Rudhisér, and South Shore Province.”

“I saw that in the paper. The construction contractors are hiring everyone they can, to finish them before the fall harvest. I saw Gramdhunas will get eight.”

Thornton looked at him. “You’ve become fascinated with Gramdhunas, haven’t you?”

“Well . . . yes. The idea that someone will take 96 square kilometers of virgin prairie and suddenly create a town there; that’s pretty fascinating!”

“And grandpa and Jordan are leading the effort.”

“Yes, Jor’s really lucky.”

“Well, he’s in the right place at the right time. Besides, I thought you were thinking of becoming a doctor.”

“I was, and maybe I will, but I’m also attracted to the idea of being an estate lord and developing the land.”

“Remember those estates are your grandfather’s, not yours, and you don’t know whether he’ll give you one. If you’re interested in an estate, maybe you need to take courses in agriculture, development, accounting, and business.”

“I suppose. Development interests me, but I’m not so sure about the others.”

“You’ve got to set goals for yourself that match your interests and talents. If development interests you, do that; I’m sure Jordan would be glad to have a partner.”

“But I don’t want to be Jordan’s partner!”

“It’d be hard to open a competing development consultancy, so you’d need to do something else. Grandpa certainly could use you in the tomi. Serve as his assistant one summer and part time during the school year. The possibilities in science are endless; I know you’re good in it, I’ve seen it. And you’d be a good doctor because you’re strong in science and good with people.”

“Thanks, Uncle Thor.” Rostamu said it with a tone designed to end the conversation. “Can I drive, some time?”

“Not today; it’s tricky to tow a house trailer. Brakes respond a lot more slowly. Besides, we’ll be in Mɛdhpéla in less than an hour. But when the pickup isn’t towing anything, sure. You’ve had your license for six months.”

“And I’ve gotten a fair amount of driving experience, especially last summer.”

“I remember; in fact, you insisted on learning when you were still a month less than sixteen.”

“But I did fine.”

“You did. But since then, you haven’t had much experience. There’s not a lot of driving to do in Mɛlwika, with everything within walking distance.”

“I know, and I won’t need a car when I’m at génadɛma starting this fall.”

“You can always rent one for a few days if you want to go somewhere with some friends. Not many of them will be able to drive. So, why did you decide to skip twelfth grade and go straight to génadɛma, anyway?”

“A lot of kids are doing it; in Mɛlwika twelfth grade is becoming a place for kids to get a year of vocational training before going to work, or a year of remedial humanities in order to get into génadɛma. Besides, I wanted to get into génadɛma as soon as possible.”

“That’s what I thought.” Thornton thought about it a moment. “It’s okay not to hurry, you know. If I were you, I’d enjoy being a teenager while you can. It’s not easy to be a member of this family; there are a lot of demands on us.”

“I know. It’ll be challenging to lead the youth activities in Kwolona this summer.”

“I’ll be there to help.”

“I know. Do you think any of the Kwolonɛ youth will be wearing feathers?”

“Sure, that’s a very common badge of manhood among the Kwolonɛ. The principal exceptions are those wearing bear claws or pieces of elephant tusk. Those signify that they killed a lion or an elephant respectively.”

“Really?”

Thornton nodded. “I’ve seen fifteen year olds with lion’s claw necklaces. Now they’re facing an interesting reorientation; they have to think of themselves as servants rather than warriors. It’s a big change and not easy. You’ll hear over and over that the warrior ideal is the ideal of service to the tribe, so now the youth will be serving, as well as killing lions. The eagle feather is symbolic of willingness to fight for the tribe, but now the fighting is of a different sort.”

“Do you think the program could include archery or fencing?”

“It could; but watch out, they’ll teach you a thing or two! Those are subjects taught in Kwolona High School. I’d stick to swimming. There’s a nice pond in Mɛdhpéla, some people already know how to swim but not many, and it’s a useful skill.”

“And both of us are certified swimming teachers.”

“I haven’t done it for ten years, though.”

“How many Kwolonɛ Bahá'í youth will take part?”

“Maybe one; the Kwolonɛ Bahá'í community consists of two families. We’ll have a dozen Bahá'í youth from outside the tribe and about twenty Kwolonɛ youth. I think you and Jalalu will have a blast.”

“I hope so.” Rostamu sounded uncertain.

They passed through Dɛksawsupɛrakwa, “Southbridge,” and entered South Ménwika. A new village hall was under construction and Rostamu asked Thornton about it. He decided to say relatively little; Rostamu’s questions reflected a desire to become great and famous, and that worried him. He waved at the fields, now greening with a second crop of corn or soybeans—South Ménwika was noticeably warmer than Mɛlwika, though it was only ten kilometers farther south—and described the process of surveying the prairie, selling it, dividing it with narrow, graveled farm lanes, and installing irrigation, which was necessary in the summer.

They passed into the territory of the Médhɛlonɛ, then crossed the Ornakwés and passed the tribe’s oasis. The former desert around the oasis of palms and citrus was short-grass prairie dotted by grazing cattle.

As they continued south it grew warmer and more humid. The pavement ended just as they reached a big, newly painted sign that said “Welcome to Kwolona Province, Pop. 10,000.”

“Are there really ten thousand Kwolonɛ?” asked Rostamu.

“Not quite. But the sign will be true in a year or two. They’re very proud to be a province now. I’m surprised Route 2 isn’t concreted all the way . . . ah, the construction’s up ahead.” He slowed as they approached the workers laying the new concrete roadway. He waved as they passed them, then with a bump they were back up on a concrete surface again.

“Just two hundred meters left,” noted Rostamu.

“Once this stretch of Route 2 is concreted, the army will concrete a five-meter strip of Route 75 along the Swadakwés to Awstroba. They’ll build a new road from

Mɛdhpéla to Kérékwɛs starting this fall, which will have the same numerical designation, and the whole thing will be called the 'Kwolona Highway.' They drove a hard bargain."

"I guess so!"

After they passed the construction crew, the prairie had grazing cattle on it. A few minutes later they passed ripening wheat fields. "They grow wheat, but don't get grain elevators," said Rostamu.

"Exactly. They still don't have very many farmers; the Kwolonɛ cultural ideal is to be a cattle and horse raiser. But now that they have a slaughterhouse and they send tonnes of beef every day all around the kingdom, they have a lot more cattle and need a lot more cattle feed, and the cattle feed fetches a good price."

"So people raise it."

"Exactly. Of course, with the economic slowdown, demand for beef is down right now, so the Kwolona economy is suffering. They did pretty well this winter; they got very little frost and sold a lot of winter vegetables and grain. But the tanneries, leather work manufactories, shoe manufactories, and textile weaving factories, are running at 2/3 of capacity."

"Is their development plan finished?"

Thornton smiled. "Yes and no. They've paid Jordan, and he, dad, and I have made our trips to Mɛdhpéla and Awstroba to conduct a series of public meetings. The economic part of the plan is in place and it's mostly more of the same; the Kwolonɛ have enough prairie land to support half a million cattle—even with the establishment of game preserves—and they have far less than a quarter of that now. There are plans for more tanneries and leather working facilities, both owned by the Kwolonɛ Tomi and privately,

and plans for more farmland, and plans for improving the grazing land through annual burning and irrigation.

"The spiritual side of the plan, however, is controversial and not approved. A lot of the problems are predictable. The plan called for compulsory education through ninth grade and as many graduations through 12th grade and génadɛma as possible. But most adults don't want their kids to have that much education, especially the girls, so that provision is stalled. The plan calls for compulsory service to the tribe for at least a year unless one joins the army, but that's controversial as well. The plan calls for a special curriculum to teach 'Kwolonɛ values' but it turns out there's less unanimity about that than thought. They sound rather like Eryan or even Sumi values, except it's called the 'values of the warrior' and the 'values of the maid.' The main difference is the inclusion of martial arts for the warriors. The Bahá'í youth can help the process along by talking about and demonstrating the Bahá'í principles. In many ways, the spiritual development plan overlaps with Bahá'í teachings."

Rostamu nodded. "So, are we teaching the Faith directly?"

"Not directly. Answer people's questions and bring up the Faith when appropriate. The Kwolonɛ probably won't convert *en masse* like other tribes; they're too large and proud and they're advancing materially pretty well. I think the path they follow will involve accepting the Bahá'í principles one by one."

"Okay, that's helpful."

Rostamu and Thornton stopped talking and turned to their own private thoughts as they drove into Mɛdhpéla, "Middle Hill." The flat-topped rock with a large bubbling spring near its base was a short distance into the settlement to the left. The houses

stretched for a dozen kilometers southward along the creek that issued from the spring. Three large artificial ponds occupied a space to the right side of Route 2 to store rain and sewage runoff from the town's streets as irrigation water. Near the third and last pond were the tribe's schools: two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Thornton slowed and turned right into a parking lot between the high school and the town's new marketplace. He drove to the soccer field behind the high school and turned into a courtyard that had classrooms on three sides. "They said we could park here for the summer," he explained to Rostamu. "The buildings will shade us from the tropical sun most of the day and there's a door in the front that will let us in. There's a bathroom not far in."

Rostamu looked at the narrow space. "How will you back out afterward?"

"Very carefully." Thornton turned off the steam car's fire and stepped out. He reached the house trailer behind the truck just as the door opened. Jalalu and Jonkrisu dashed out to take a look. Lébé was right behind. She looked around, then nodded. "Good shade. Water?"

"There's a bathroom right inside that door; they'll give us a key. The Bahá'í youth will sleep in these two classrooms at night and we'll use them for classes during the day. We'll have the use of six classrooms all summer."

"Perfect." She smiled. "May and I just talked for almost an hour. She's sending me a bunch of files to your computer about literary criticism."

"In English or Eryan?"

"Eryan! It's her doctoral dissertation in literature; a translation and commentary on major figures in literary criticism. I'm going to be on her committee, then after she

finishes, I'll write a dissertation offering literary criticism and interpretation of Eryan myths, and she'll be on my committee!"

"Fantastic! Congratulations! Sounds like we'll soon have three Ph.D.s in the family."

"Well, maybe not soon! It'll be an interesting summer: raising kids, chaperoning youth, teaching various classes, and pursuing research and writing."

"Interesting? Exhausting," said Thornton. "But all too typical."

Just then, the High School's back door opened and out stepped the Principal, Brébiku. Rostamu was startled to see that he was wearing a very low-cut leather tunic, as was the style for Kwolonɛ men, and a large lion claw necklace. The tunic extended most of the way to the man's knees; he wore no pants, but presumably had a breechcloth underneath. The man's name meant "courageous" or "lion-like."

Thornton smiled and extended both hands. "Honored Brébiku!"

"Honored Dhoru, thank you for coming. You arrived almost exactly when you said you would!"

"We hastened to come." The men shook hands. "This is my wife, Lébé, my nephew Rostamu, and my sons Jalalu and Jonkisu. My daughter Kalé is staying with my sister this summer."

"I am pleased to meet all of you," said Brébiku, shaking hands one by one. "We're looking forward to an exciting summer. Will you be comfortable here?"

"We have a hose to attach to a water source," said Thornton. "If we can hook it to a faucet, we'll have running water inside. The trailer's small, and can get hot when the sun shines down on it, but it is fairly comfortable."

“It appears to me you have about as much space as in many rural huts, so it should be fine. There’s an outdoor faucet here.” He pointed to a spot a few meters away. “It is attached to the school’s regular water system, so it should be drinkable, especially if you boil it.”

“We can do that. This trailer comes with a gas stove.”

“You can buy refills at the market.” Brébiku pointed toward the marketplace. “They just started selling them a few months ago. Do you need an electric connection? We can run a line through one of the windows of the classrooms.”

“Yes, that would help a lot. I parked toward the right side of the courtyard so that we had a wider space to the left of the trailer. We have a canopy we can erect to create an outdoor living and working space.”

“That’s very nice; you should be very comfortable, then. When do the Bahá'í youth arrive? Our youth group has started to form already.”

“Excellent. They’ll be here next week. This week they’re in Mɛddwoglubas for training. How big is your group?”

“So far, six boys, though I think we’ll get four or five more. A girl’s group is harder to form, but I think we’ll have a half dozen. They need to be kept separate for many activities, though not all.”

“That’s what we understood.”

Brébiku gestured to the door. “Come meet the boys! I assembled them about an hour ago and we’ve been talking about what it means to serve the tribe.”

“We’ll be glad to.” Thornton looked at Rostamu and Jalalu, who nodded. They followed Brébiku into the school.

The classroom was across the hallway from the exterior door. They all looked up when the Eryan entered; Thornton and the boys were just as strange looking as Eryan as they ever would have been as gɛdhémus. The Kwolonɛ youth ranged from 15 to 18 years of age, wore tunics of leather or homespun—only one was wearing factory made clothes out of machine-woven cloth—and leather boots or reed sandals. Rostamu looked from face to face—they all were sprouting beards of various degrees of thickness—and noted that three wore eagle feathers. The tallest and probably the oldest had a lion claw necklace. The oldest stared back at him and momentarily each wondered what sort of person the other was.

"Let me introduce them," said Brébiku. "This is Rudhdamyu, ɛndranu, Ekwusu, Nénaskɛstɛr, Sunéru, and Brébikéstu." He pointed to them one by one; the tall one was Sunéru. Rostamu suspected Brébikéstu was Brébiku's son; they had a family resemblance and it was common for the son's name to be a variant of the father's.

"This is Rostamu, my nephew, who is about to turn 17, and Jalalu, my son, who is 15," replied Thornton. "My younger boy, Jonkrisu, is almost 10 and will sometimes join us as well."

"You are welcome," said Brébiku. "Will your boys offer classes as well?"

"If they are helpful," replied Rostamu. "I'm starting génadɛma this fall and know some science and math. I can also teach swimming."

"Swimming?" asked Sunéru. He snickered.

"Most of us can't swim at all," replied Brébiku. "But in Sunéru's case, he can swim quite well."

"Really?" said Thornton. "Perhaps he can help with the class, then."

"We'd be happy to teach hunting, horsemanship, and archery," said Sunéru.

Brébiku scowled at him. "There won't be time for play this summer, Sunéru."

"Actually, I think we will have some time," replied Thornton. "We'd like some courses about Kwolona as well. We're scheduled to go on two week-long field trips. We'll ride horses on those trips, we can do some hunting, and we can probably do a little archery as well."

"Good," said Brébiku. "The boys don't relish spending half the day in class and half the day doing hard work."

"We'll make it fun," replied Thornton. "We'll do physical work until three hours after dawn every day, rest, eat lunch, then do three hours of classes in the late afternoon. After supper we'll do something fun, too."

"Good," said Sunéru, relieved.

Chris didn't go to the Bahá'í temple anywhere nearly as often as he should. Liz went every morning after breakfast for twenty minutes, but he was usually immersed in work by then and made it once or twice a week at most. That morning he arrived soon after dawn because he had a meeting to attend afterward that was near the temple. The prayer hall had several dozen people praying silently to themselves or walking around the outer corridor between rows of chairs. Several nodded to him as he sat in one of the alcoves and opened his prayer book. After all these years, he still preferred to pray in English or even in Italian. That morning he turned to memorized prayers instead of opening his book, and used ones in all three languages. Afterward he sat silently, facing the podium up front, thinking: *Bahá'u'llah, am I really serving you adequately? Am I focusing too*

much on making money and spending it for the good of others? Should I be worrying about my own spiritual life more? What more can I do to help my exhausted kids deal with their children and their work? What should I say to my grandchildren who are struggling? How can I teach the Faith more effectively to others? How much should I try to reach the wealthy and powerful, and how much should I reach out to the poor? What more do you want me to be doing?

It almost made him depressed to think of all the things he should or could be doing, but wasn't. He was quick to try to make business deals with others; he loved the sport of it, and when the deals produced profits he felt a thrill. Yet he also felt guilty, sometimes. He also worried about the future; Thornton had no interest in maintaining the tomi; Jordan could do it, but was now immersed in other tasks.

He turned back to his prayers, for now he had things to pray for. Then he realized time was running out. He hurried out and headed to the headquarters of the Miller Tomi for a meeting of its Board of Trustees. Theirs was the largest tomi in the world, with twenty-three businesses under its umbrella, most of which were profitable in spite of the economic downturn.

Gradually they all arrived. Of the nine, seven were Miller family members; the exceptions were Chris and Dumuzi, the head of what had been the wealthiest Sumi merchant family before the arrival of the Menneas, and who subsequently moved to Mɛlwika, founded a new town on Sumilara—Amurueqluma—and became wealthy in the new economy as well.

"Let's get started," said John, after everyone had gotten coffee or tea and some pastries. He passed out an agenda and financial report. "As you can see, we're using our

new computer. The agenda is pretty short; we have the latest monthly financial report, discussion of charitable giving, a proposal for a 'green audit' that Chris will explain, and a short announcement."

"How are the tablets and the three phones working out?" asked Rostu.

"I understand they're slowing us down," replied John. "But once we adjust, they should help. The financial office is using them to put all our finances in, and we'll use them to track sales data. In another six months we may start to see some benefits. Anyway, Mitru was in charge of reviewing the financials this month, so he'll present it." John turned to Mitru, who nodded.

"You all should have a copy of the fiscal report for Blorménu," he began. "As you can see, things are looking up, but we aren't out of the woods yet. Income is going up compared to winter and early spring, but that always happens, and it is not going up enough to equal last year's. Revenue of 610,000 dhanay is six percent behind Blorménu last year. Miller Motors shows the biggest improvement compared to the month before, thanks to the release of the 999-dhanay steam car. We sold 126 of them in Blorménu and it appears we'll sell 150 in Kaiménu, which is enough to restart the third shift and give everyone more work. Miller Foundry's up as well because of the increased steel production to make the cars. Its farm tools division, however, was unchanged and barely covered expenses."

"What about all the complaints about quality?" asked John, interrupting. "Have they cost us much?"

Rostu, who was in charge of the motors, shook his head. "Not too much. The biggest complaint was the window cranks; roll the windows up and down a few times,

and the cranks fall off. But we've fixed them and made a change on the assembly line so they're put on securely. There have been no complaints about the thinner steel on the bumpers."

"I think we'll have some problems with peeling paint, though," said Yimu. "Tomasu has reported several problems, even in the showrooms."

"Nip that in the bud," said John.

Mitru nodded and resumed his review of the report. "In contrast, Home Improvement has seen the least improvement in revenue and lost money last month, though only by one percent. This was expected; there's always a slump in sales the month before the harvest. All eight stores had cut hours as much as was feasible and staff are on a ten percent salary reduction. The next two months always make a third of the annual profit and there's no reason to assume that won't be the case this year. Sales have already picked up and the Mɛddoakwés store did very well during the harvest festival.

"The Palace Hotel follows the same pattern as Home Improvement; the nine operations filled an average of 200 of their 315 total beds on a typical day, down from last year's 228, and lost ten percent more than they brought in. But things started picking up in the last week of Blorménu as people traveled to génadɛma graduations and the Mɛddoakwés Harvest Festival, and all summer the hotels will see occupancy rates running 280 or 290 beds per night."

"Her Majesty's altered travel plans should result in a poorer summer than in the past, though," cautioned Awsé, who was in charge of the operation. "She will visit all the same places, but will use day trips to reach many of them, and will spend the night in her

palaces in Bɛllɛdha, Isurdhuna, Ora, Tripola, and ɛndraidha. She'll travel with less staff, too, relying more on communications with Mɛddoakwés so staff can stay there."

"It's going to be a rough year for the Palace Hotel chain," agreed Mitru. "Turning to Ménu Construction, the operation is twenty percent smaller than last year, but is making money. Housing construction in Mɛlwika remains strong and people continue to move here; the city is closing in on a population of 25,000. Our housing construction in Mɛddoakwés is doing well, also. We hear that Ora, Anartu, Néfa, and Tripola are not growing so strongly, and Bɛllɛdha's high unemployment is causing housing sales to collapse. It's a good thing we're not building houses there! Industrial construction is definitely down, but silo contracts have expanded somewhat.

"Our grain storage and milling division is doing quite well because of the high agricultural prices, and profits are up thirty percent over last year. Grain prices appear set to remain high through the fall, too. Déru's Cement and Aggregate Company has sales that match last year's, thanks to the increase in road building. The Heavy Equipment and Machine Tools Division, however, is down twenty percent."

"Why isn't the palace's stimulus maintaining factory construction?" asked John.

There was silence for a moment and everyone turned to Chris, who was the expert on that. "Royal Bank has made available 1.5 million dhanay of credit on low interest terms," he replied. "But all the correspondence I've seen among members of the provincial tomi boards and some private tomi and company boards says 'demand on everything is flat or down, so what do we spend it on?' That's the problem: no one wants to open a new textile weaving operation if no one is buying cloth. In the last seven years, money has been very systematically spent to increase production of every product

imaginable. Part of this economic crisis stems not from the sharp fluctuations in the price of food and the cutback in consumer demand for everything else, but from the fact that we have saturated market after market. There's no growth industry left to invest in. From now on, competition can be expected to push down prices and possibly wages unless we can increase productivity or stimulate demand."

Everyone thought about that for a moment. "That's why we produced the 999-dhanay steam car," agreed Yimu. "The other industries need to do the same thing: improve efficiency."

"So we need to invest in improvements in the quality of the equipment we sell," concluded Rostu. "The Heavy Equipment and Machine Tools Division needs to produce new models that everyone will want to buy, because it will improve their efficiency."

"Yes," said Chris. "And a big investment is called for; fifty to a hundred thousand dhanay, I'd say."

"Right away." John opened the general ledger in front of him, then nodded. "Overall, we can devote fifty thousand, and increase it later if that seems to be helping."

Everyone nodded around the table, so Awsé, who was taking the minutes, entered it as a decision.

"There's not much else to review," concluded Mitru. "Transport—buses and trucks—has seen a small decline, mostly in freight shipments. The warehousing division has ten percent less inventory on hand. The wire division and the electrical products division have seen small declines in demand and revenue, but profitability has been maintained through reductions in staff hours. The Opera House and the Mɛlwika Motorɛs

Soccer team have both seen increases in ticket sales and are making bigger profits than last year."

"Thanks, Mitru," said John. "Comments?"

"Overall, the tomi's weathering the storm well," said Chris. "Some of the provincial tomis are in the red by as much as fifteen percent. The North Shore Tomi is laying off workers and has closed two textile factories, and that's causing civil unrest."

"The workers there are organizing," agreed Yimu. "We don't have that problem; the workers have been very supportive of modest reductions in hours and the corresponding decreases in wages. Natural attrition has slowed because it's hard to find a job now, but our work force has declined by three percent since last fall, and that has helped."

"The job training classes have helped, too," said Mitru. "Though the City Council will hear a complaint from the Board of Education next week that they're providing more vocational classes for our workers and not receiving more money from us."

"That's too bad," replied John. "In good years, we contribute extras to the schools, so this year they can contribute back to us."

"The teachers are doing more and are not getting more pay; that's the problem," said Chris. "But that's one of the ways belts get tightened in a slowdown."

"This brings us to subject number two: charitable giving," said John. "Mitru raised it."

"Thanks, dad. Our standard policy has been to give two percent of our pretax profits to charity, which is pretty generous; I don't know of any other tomis that contribute at all. But considering the difficult times, I am wondering whether we can raise

it to 2.5%. There are a lot of poor people struggling to eat because of the increase in food prices, particularly in Mɛddoakwés. We've got a lot of grain."

Everyone looked at each other while they contemplated the idea. "Chris hasn't hit us with an unusual request for tractors or pickups or a fish hatchery or new tree-planting efforts for at least a year," quipped John.

Several chuckled at that. "How much do we have in our grain elevators?" asked Yimu.

John pushed the general ledger over to Mitru so he could flip through the pages. "We're overflowing; this says we have 12,500 bushels of wheat, but our current capacity is only 12,000."

"The extra must be in temporary storage," said John.

"This strikes me as a strange time to release grain, though," said Yimu. "Right now food is as cheap as it gets, and even though it is higher than this time last year, there's free food all over the place; people have vegetable gardens, tomatoes in pots on their balconies, there's wild food up in the hills, etc."

"That's true," conceded John.

"I think the best way to help people feed themselves is to hire them, and that's our role," said Rostu, who tended to be hard-nosed about charity. "The Motors division is back to full-time employment plus some overtime. The new grain elevators will require several new employees. As the economy bounces back, so will the jobs."

"Let's call the question, then," said John. "All those in favor of increasing our charitable giving raise hands?"

Mitru and Chris raised their hands.

"That's that," said John. "Chris, tell us about the 'green initiative.'"

"There's a student who is finishing up a kwétɛryɛri at the génadɛma named Sulu. He was a teacher at Dɛntastéa who got interested in geology, then helped us count mastodons and mammoths and got interested in ecology and the environment, then he reviewed his village's use of electricity and came up with ways to reduce power and heating. He's very clever; he's now in his mid thirties and keeps reinventing himself as a new kind of expert. He's been at the génadɛma for the last year, very interested in energy conservation, creating his own courses and getting the translation department to translate web documents from English to Eryan for him. He has walked every bit of the génadɛma for the last two months, looking for pipes that need insulation, places where light bulbs should be turned off or put on timer switches—these are spring driven switches that the engineering lab just developed that turn the light off after a certain period of time—looking for places where we need window curtains to improve insulation, etc. He turned in his Masters thesis a few days ago—too late for the graduation—and it estimates the génadɛma can save five percent of its annual energy bill, which is a savings of almost a thousand dhanay per year. We'll have to spend 6,000, but the savings will pay for that in six years. Since he's here for the summer, I suggest we pay him a thousand dhanay to make a similar study of Miller Tomi."

"That sounds like a good deal," said John.

"If he's here for just the summer, why so much?" asked Yimu.

"This is at least three months of work, and this is the sort of job that's worth four thousand a year. He'll have to do the writing back in Dɛntastéa, but we'll have a report in plenty of time to make savings this winter."

“How much could he save us?” asked Rostu.

“I doubt five percent,” said Yimu. “We spend two hundred thousand dhanay a year on coal, coke, gas, and electricity. He may know how to put lights on timers, but he doesn’t know how coke ovens and blast furnaces work.”

“True,” conceded Chris. “But he may have ideas the engineers can work with.”

“We use a lot more electricity than the génadɛma,” noted Mitru. “And our heating systems aren’t that different.”

“He’ll help with them,” agreed Chris.

“Sounds like a good way to reward a man for a lot of hard study,” added John. “I agree. Hands?”

Everyone raised a hand, Rostu reluctantly. John looked around the room. “Last item: an announcement. I plan to retire as chairman of the Board but will remain on the Board. I’m feeling my age more and more and want to participate actively in the succession. The stability of this company—this family operation—is crucial to this city and even to the entire realm. At our next meeting in the fall we will need to elect a new chair. Our bylaws make the procedure clear, but they have never been used before. We’ll be sure to mail a copy of that chapter to everyone a week before.”

There were looks of shock around the table. Manu, the second oldest son, glanced at Yimu, the eldest, nervously. “This is pretty big, dad,” said Mitru.

John shrugged. “I don’t live forever, son! I fathered forty children. So far, thirty-six are married and they’ve produced ninety grandchildren. This tomi is too small for them all, once they all come to age! We have a good plan for allotting shares to family members, making them work their way up in the system, and earning a living based on

their contributions to the tomi. It's the only way this corporation can continue; otherwise it'll be torn apart into little pieces or destroyed by infighting. I think Chris's strategy—my original strategy—of obtaining large tracts of land may have been better in the long run. We may want to reconsider it. But right now we need to think very carefully and seriously about who would make the best chairman of the Board, whether the oldest or youngest, whether a family member or not. Those are my parting thoughts about the matter." He looked around the room. "Thanks for coming, everyone."

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Swimming

Mid Kaiménu/early July 18/636

Their first morning in Mɛdhpéla, Thornton, Rostamu, and Jalalu rose two hours before sunrise. The sky was already glowing in the east and Skanda was brilliantly full in the west when they stepped into the classroom to eat breakfast with the six Kwolonɛ boys, who had just arrived.

"Should we say some prayers?" asked Rostamu, when they finished eating.

Thornton looked at Brébiku, the teacher, and the boys. "The Bahá'í youth will ask that question after they arrive. How would you like to do a program of devotion to Esto?"

They didn't reply, but looked at each other and at Brébiku. He finally said, "As you probably know, we don't say hymns of Widumaj; that's never been the Kwolonɛ way."

"The Wuronɛ have hymns to ɛndro," noted Thornton.

"We have some of them too, and not the same ones as the Wuronɛ. I know; I read the book Lébé published. We say some of those hymns, but we wouldn't use them after breakfast. They're used in certain summer festivals."

"We'd say them around a drum," added Sunéru.

"Then perhaps some evenings we can do that," suggested Thornton. "Do you have a drum?"

Brébiku nodded without speaking.

“Let’s not say any prayers now,” Thornton said, looking at Rostamu. “Are we ready to go out and clean the grounds?”

“When we finish, can we quit?” asked Rudhdamyu, the second oldest, who was beginning to speak up as well.

Brébiku shook his head. “You guys are the clean up crew for the entire town for the summer. You have to do the school grounds, the marketplace, the spring, and the area around the chief’s house.”

They sighed. Mɛdhpéla did not have garbage pickup; some areas of town were pretty bad. “It’s better than digging the new irrigation ditch,” commented Ekwusu.

“That’s what we did last summer at Sértroba,” said Jalalu.

“I’ll be working with you the whole time,” said Thornton. “Let’s get started, there’s plenty of light and it won’t be hot for quite a while. We’ll stop three hours after sunrise.”

They all rose and headed out the door. Brébiku stopped at the door to wave goodbye; he wasn’t going to pick up anything. Thornton pulled out big burlap bags from the trailer, offered the boys gloves—they almost all refused them—handed them pointy sticks that they took with some interest, and they began to comb the soccer grounds, the edges of the ponds, and the grass around the schools.

It was tiring work, and once the sun came up it began to get hot. They returned to the trailer for ice water an hour after sunrise; the Kwolonɛ boys had never had water with ice in it before and greatly enjoyed the experience. They finished the school grounds and the area around the town spring before quitting. One old lady came up to them, impressed, and thanked them for the service.

“That felt good, didn’t it?” said Thornton when they were back at the trailer for more ice water.

“It was nice,” agreed Nénaskɛstɛr. All the boys were talking now; they had gotten comfortable with the three Mɛlwikans.

“If we clean up Mɛdhpéla and keep it clean, people will notice,” said Thornton. “People will thank us. They’ll thank the Duke for the service. They may even ask the Duke to hire people permanently to do this.”

“People will also drop less trash,” said Rostamu. “I suppose there are a few who will drop trash, knowing it’ll get picked up, but most will think ‘it’s so neat, I better not mess it up.’”

“We could even plant some flower beds,” added Jalalu.

“Flowers?” Sunéru laughed.

“You should see Mɛlwika; the streets used to be all muddy and covered with animal droppings, but now they’re washed clean, shaded by trees, and have little flower beds,” said Thornton. “The area around Mɛdhpéla’s spring used to be used to water animals, wash clothes, and draw drinking water. That’s unsanitary and now the spring is off limits, so the water can flow clean into pipes and be distributed to houses and local fountains. That whole area would make a very pretty park.”

The Kwolonɛ boys said nothing; they didn’t know what to think of the idea.

“So, do you want to rest or splash in the pond?” asked Thornton. “We can teach you to swim, if you want.”

“Swimming isn’t an easy thing to learn,” replied Sunéru.

“Don’t worry, you can learn,” replied Rostamu. Some of the boys giggled.

“What will it be?” repeated Thornton.

“The water,” the boys all replied.

“Alright.” Thornton walked over to the trailer, opened the door, and pulled out a bag. He opened it and pulled out something. “This is a swim suit. There’s a rubber band around the waist to keep it on tightly. There are enough for all of you.” He began to pull out suits, look at their sizes, and hand them out.

“Do we give these back?” asked Brébikéstu.

“No, they’re a gift,” replied Thornton. “You should get something for all the work you’re going to do! Go into the classroom and change. I’ll get my swim suit and join you.”

The six Kwolonɛ boys, Rostamu, and Jalalu hurried into the school to put on their swim suits. Thornton went into the trailer to put on his; he didn’t want his circumcision to freak them out, because no one on Éra was ever circumcised. He put on some woven reed sandals, grabbed a pile of towels—he had brought them as well—and went to find the boys. They were ready, so they all trooped over to the nearest pond, the one that the clean creek and the two sewage effluent ponds discharged into. The end closest to them was clean, but cold; the far end was murkier but warmer. Both sides were supposedly safe for swimming.

The boys waded into a spot where there were no reeds and the bottom was a bit less muddy because horses often waded in there. They splashed each other to adjust to the chill, though it felt good in the rapidly heating air. Sunéru laid down in the water and floated as Thornton lined them up. Seeing him, Rostamu did the same.

“Can you swim?” Thornton asked Sunéru.

Sunéru nodded. “My uncle taught me. He’s a policeman.”

“The police get swimming lessons. I gave the first lessons about ten years ago,” said Thornton.

Sunéru nodded, turned over, and began to do a free-style stroke into the deeper water. Rostamu did the same, so Sunéru speeded up and Rostamu did the same. Soon they were racing across the seventy-five meter body of water as fast as they could.

Rostamu got to the far side first, turned around, and headed back. Sunéru turned back as well a bit sooner to close the gap and began to swim like his life depended on it. The boys began cheering Sunéru on. “He’s the fastest swimmer in the tribe,” commented Brébikéstu.

Rostamu reached everyone about two seconds faster. He stood up near Thornton. Sunéru, furious, jumped out of the water as well. “I dare you to a sword fight!”

Rostamu opened his mouth but Thornton put up his hands. “No, there will be no sword fights.”

“Why, do you think I’ll beat him?”

“There will be no sword fights. We aren’t here to have fights and no one has to prove anything! We’re here to serve.” He turned to the other boys even though Rostamu and Sunéru were glaring at each other. “So, how many of you can swim?”

“None of us!” replied Rudhdamyu. “Sunéru and his uncle are the only swimmers I know!”

“We live in grassland, we really don’t need to swim very much,” added Ekwusu.

“It’s a useful skill, especially since Mædhpéla now has this beautiful pond,” replied Thornton. “If you guys get good, I’ll recommend to Brebiku that he hire two or

three of you next summer to teach swim classes to all the high school kids. In ten years everyone will be able to swim."

"But why should they?" asked Nénaskɛstɛr.

"Because it's fun, and the Kwolonɛ now have a bit more time to enjoy themselves," replied Thornton. "Okay, line up again. Sunéru, can you demonstrate to them how to float?"

"Sure," he replied, happy to be included. He floated.

It looked so easy, but the other boys couldn't do it. Thornton demonstrated things, had Sunéru demonstrate—he clearly had a knack for swimming—and even had Rostamu and Jalalu demonstrate. In two hours, the boys began to get a little rudimentary confidence and managed to keep themselves from sinking quite so fast. Thornton let them splash each other and play in the water a while, then marched them back to the school to dry off, change, and have lunch. Lébé and Jonkrisu had prepared sandwiches—lots of them—and Brébiku joined them to see how things were going. "They've relaxed and accepted the three of you. That was fast," he said to Thornton.

"We're off to a good start. The cleaning work was tough; they didn't like it, but I think they began to get used to it. The swimming, however, was a lot of fun. They'll all be pretty good swimmers by the end of the summer."

"Like Sunéru?"

"He is good, isn't he? He'll get better; Rostamu raced him across the pond and beat him because Rostamu has more experience in the water."

"I was watching out the window and saw the race. Sunéru was angry, but you handled it well."

“Thank you. What’s his story? He seems overconfident sometimes and angry other times.”

“Yes, that’s right. He’s bright, but doesn’t do well in school. He’s being raised by his uncle, who took him and his mother in when his father died when Sunéru was three. She was the uncle’s second wife and neither she nor Sunéru were treated with complete justice in the family. I asked that he be in this program because he has to get out of the house. I wish he’d do better in school; he should go to génadɛma.”

“He seems smart, but he’s cocky.”

“Yes. I hope he outgrows it. Ekwusu is our brain; he’s very smart. Brébikéstu is the good boy. He’s my son. ɛndranu is the Duke’s nephew. Rudhdamyu and Nénaskɛstɛr are both sons of prominent cattlemen and are distantly related to the Duke.”

“When will we have girls join the group?”

“Once your girl youth arrive, and I gather they’ll have a supervisor, then Kwolonɛ girls will join. If your wife were more willing to supervise them, I think we could get a group together.”

“Lébé will spend four or five hours with the girls every day giving them classes, but she won’t go out with them on the volunteer service because she has other tasks she is doing. I can supervise both groups if they aren’t too far apart, once the boys know me.”

“What is your wife doing? I thought she didn’t want to make lunch for the boys, but she did.”

“We would like to find someone to cook for all of us. Lébé is writing a book and needs time for it. But she will give the girls a class and will teach an adult class, just like me.”

“That’s what you said before.” Brébiku sighed. “Your wife will seem quite strange to our women, not doing domestic chores and writing a book.”

“We will pay the woman to do the work, and no doubt Lébé and the girls will help as well. If the woman is a bit older, with no family responsibilities, well organized, that would be perfect.”

“I know a woman who is older, a widow who remarried but had no additional children with her second husband, and he died recently as well. She’s an excellent cook.”

“We’ll pay her twelve dhanay a week.”

“Really? That’s a lot of money here! I’ll send her over this afternoon, then. I should warn you about one thing: her first husband was killed before the walls of Mɛlwika fifteen years ago.”

“I’m very sorry to hear that. But that won’t be a problem for us. If it is a problem for her, she should not take the job.”

“I’ll ask her about that.”

Thornton put the last bite of the sandwich in his mouth. “Whether she wanted to make lunch or not, Lébé made some good sandwiches. I need to set up something so we can do one more thing before siesta.” He rose, nodded quickly in goodbye to Brébiku, and walked to the front of the classroom where his satchel sat. He pulled out his laptop—the copy of his original machine, no longer held hostage by all the students at génadɛma but back in his possession—plugged it into the wall socket, and turned it on.

“Attention, everyone!” he said, because the boys were very busy talking and laughing as they finished their second sandwiches. They calmed down and turned toward him and the strange, glowing thing at the front of the classroom. “This summer we will

be able to look at many things, thanks to this object here. It's called a *kontmaganu*, but it does a lot more than count. I thought I'd show you some moving pictures of people swimming and diving, so you can see how some of the fancier things are done. Come closer; the screen isn't very big."

Thornton clicked on a link to a ten-minute video about swimming that he had stored on the machine a few years ago. It had English narration, but he translated simultaneously. Everyone oohed and ahhed immediately and drew closer to watch, transfixed by the very idea of moving pictures. Brébiku was equally fascinated. Sunéru stood and leaned over the others to watch every move. "So, that's how he beat me," he muttered when he watched the freestyle stroke being done. "Wow, you can do that?" he added when watching the butterfly stroke.

The video showed several basic strokes, then turned to diving. "We have to build one of those!" he exclaimed when he watched a few dives.

"Shut up!" replied Ekwusu, transfixed more by the screen than by the content of the video.

That quieted Sunéru. They all stared in silence, listening to Thornton's translation and watching the images. When it ended, Ekwusu said, "What *is* this thing?"

"Why doesn't the tribe have one?" added Brébiku quickly.

"Can you teach us all these swimming strokes?" exclaimed Sunéru.

Thornton raised his hand. "As I said, this is a kontmaganu; a 'counting machine.' We can't make these on Éra yet because they have a very complicated electrical brain—I don't know how else to describe it. The brain is much less complicated than our brains and is very good at manipulating numbers. These things were very common on Gɛdhéma

eighteen years ago, when my family was brought here. I had one in school; all the kids had their own. But when I was born eighteen years earlier, almost no one on Gɛdhéma had them. In the first eighteen years of my life, Gɛdhéma acquired the ability to make these small, powerful machines. The ability to make tiny cameras to create moving pictures also developed, then the ability to put the moving pictures inside the computer, and finally the ability to share the pictures with other computers over telephone lines. When that ability developed and became easy, little 'movies' like this were made and shared widely. All of Gɛdhéma became wired together and billions of people acquired the ability to share words, pictures, and ideas instantly over the entire world, over telephone lines.

"As I said, we can't make these things yet on Éra. But when my laptop broke the *aliénɛs* who brought us here replaced it with two computers because they wanted to study how the gɛdhéma computers worked and how they were used. For years, my family had two of them. We kept one at Mɛlwika Génadɛma and one in Pértranisér. By then, Gɛdhéma had literally billions of pages of things on a computer web. The *aliénɛs* would acquire copies of the pages, study them, then keep a copy of them for us to use. We used these computers to find out how to make tools and medicines, how to train doctors, even how to teach people to swim."

"So, there are only *two* of these?" asked Brébiku.

"No. Two months ago the aliénɛs gave the palace fifty more, plus fifty 'radio telephones' that are similar, but have very small screens. They are in the process of training people in banks, génadɛmas, tomis, and government offices to use them."

"So, now that Kwolona is a province, will we get one also?" asked Brébiku.

Thornton knew they weren't on the distribution list. "I don't know. The Duke will have to ask the palace."

"I'm sure he will!"

"I'm sure, too," replied Thornton.

"Can we watch the movie again?" asked Sunéru.

"One more time," replied Thornton. "Then it's time to sleep. After we rest, we'll have a science class. At the end of it I have another movie for you about science! We'll watch two or three every day. At night we can watch some funny ones, if you want."

"They have funny ones?" asked Ekwusu.

"Yes, of course, there are movies about everything."

"Are there movies about gɛdhéma girls?" asked ɛndranu.

Thornton laughed. "Of course. If you're very good, maybe we'll watch a long movie that's a gɛdhéma love story some time."

"They'll have to be *very* good," added Brébiku, worriedly.

Chris looked over the wide harbor at the mouth of the Arjakwés, the biggest harbor in the world. The calm blue extended eastward to a line of palms just past the horizon, their crown of fronds poking into view beyond the waves. They revealed the presence of a chain of islands on the crest of a coral reef that ran from 15 degrees north to 15 degrees south—about 45 kilometers—along the sea's eastern shore. At the far northern end, a bit farther over the horizon, the barrier reef terminated at the shoreline as a peninsula on which Arjdhura sat; the smoke of that town's domestic hearths dotted the horizon like someone's smoke signals.

Chris turned behind him—eastward—at the town of Nuarjora. It was much more prosperous than when he had first visited the half-starved band of Fish Eryan refugees who had settled the bluff overlooking a basin of scrub desert that was now the harbor. Nuarjora had a limestone quarry, lime plant, large docks for landing rafts of timber, a sawmill, and a blue water gas plant that simultaneously supplied the heat to the lime-making facility and artificial gas to Arjakwés province's gas pipeline. Farther down the shore, the suburb of Dɛksawskhéma—South Village—had docks for fishing vessels and a fish processing plant. Up the shore, the suburb of Lepawskhéma—North Village—had merged with Nuarjora and contained the township's grange. The houses of the Fish Eryan, or Moranɛs as they now preferred to be called, were neatly built of brick, with tile roofs. The streets were concreted and had water, sewer, and gas lines underneath, a tangle of electrical and telephone lines overhead, occasional trees to shade one from the tropical sunshine, and scattered flower beds. Sixteen years had wrought an impressive transformation.

He locked his old, beat up rover and walked from the parking lot along the top of the bluff across the square to Lord Estoséru's house, which contained the village offices. Inside he was ushered into a meeting of all the lords of Morana province: Lord Estoséru, who had the title of Count in order to give him priority over the other two lords within his township, Udworu of Dɛksawskhéma and Nawpotu of Lɛpawskhéma; Count Mitrusaju of Arjdhura, who had been given the title because his was the most central town of the province and the most developed, but the only one lacking Fish Eryan; Bɛlékwu of Akɛldɛdra; and Sugéstu of Pékɛnwika.

"It's so good to see you again, lord," Estoséru said to Chris, after greetings were exchanged and tea provided. "We're delighted you could come join us to discuss education. The six of us meet four times a year to review the province's plans and their implementation, and every half year we alternate which Count serves as provincial executive. I'm the incoming executive and hope to implement some educational plans in the next half year. We want to develop the study of the sea. There are no génadɛma courses about it at all, right?"

"I think Thornton taught a course in Oceanography—*Moragénto*—once," replied Chris. "This is an important subject. The sea covers one sixth of this world's surface."

"All six of our villages are on the coast," said Mitrusaju. "We have five of the world's seven Moranɛ villages, and both the seafaring peoples of this world—the Moranɛ and the Sumi—are found in this province. We handle half the shipping to Sumilara and land two thirds of the world's marine food. Two of our villages ship timber to Nuarjora via the sea. It is central to our lives, so we should become the center of its study."

"How much do you want to spend?" asked Chris.

That surprised them. "How much can you spend?" replied Estoséru, with a smile. "We can devote five thousand a year to a school. Our villages have not been hit as hard by the economic slowdown. Except for Dɛksawskhéma, none of us were far enough south to do winter agriculture. Instead, the frosts raised the prices for our early summer harvests, so we gained income. The severe winter meant that our northern villages had to cut more timber for firewood and gas production, and the crown's increased spending on roads has increased demand for cement."

"Of course, shipping to Sumilara is down five percent," hastened Mitrusaju.

“Overall, tax revenues are up five percent here; the province will collect 69,000 dhanay rather than 66,000,” continued Estoséru.

Chris nodded. “I can probably match five thousand, maybe Mɛlwika Génadɛma can contribute some, and we can probably get a grant from the crown. It won’t cost much to translate English textbooks and articles into Eryan, accumulate locally written summaries, and start a series of Oceanography courses at Arjdhura Génadɛma, first in Eryan, then in Sumi. That will cost maybe three thousand the first year and five thousand afterward. But what we really need is a research program. That means creating an Oceanography laboratory and a research ship, and that will cost a lot more; maybe fifty thousand to build and equip it, then twenty thousand a year to run it.”

Estoséru whistled. “That much?”

“I don’t know; I’m guessing. We need to map the depth of the ocean, determine where the currents go, study the salinity, measure the seasonal rise and fall of sea level—I gather the level does change—study the animal and plant life, and study the sea bottom. Thornton could tell us better what we would need to do.”

“This is something the crown would support,” noted Estoséru. “So I am sure we could get a permanent subsidy from them.”

“I agree,” said Chris. “Presumably Oceanography should be taught at the high school and even to younger classes as well, so that needs to be part of the plan as well.”

“What sort of benefits will we get from this research?” asked Lord Sugéstu of Pékɛnwika skeptically.

“An understanding of how the sea works,” replied Chris. “And that could help shippers use currents going in their direction or avoid ones going against them, or help fishermen find fish.”

“We already know some of that,” replied Lord Bɛlékwu. “But if the classroom were on the ship as well, it could go from village to village.”

“And the cost of running the ship can be kept down if our high school teachers help run it over the summer, and if students are some of its crew,” added Sugéstu. “A ship could be used to spread education about the sea quite effectively.”

“That’s true,” said Estoséru. “So, what are the next steps?”

“I’ll talk to Thornton,” said Chris. “He taught the oceanography course and perhaps he could come here to teach it again. That would get the effort started. I suggest you establish a small task force to coordinate things on your end.”

“I’ll talk to the palace,” volunteered Mitrusaju. “The Queen will be here in two weeks to tour the province. The palace is anxious to announce something new and we’re anxious to show her we are making progress. This is a perfect project, I think.”

“It’s neither small nor huge and it has a lot of implications for local education and the future of our sea,” agreed Chris. “It’s a good project for that.”

“Good, we have a plan, then,” said Estoséru.

“How is the province doing, in terms of its schools?” asked Chris.

“Statistics,” said Mitrusaju. “Ninety percent of first graders are in school. This fall we will start to enforce a mandatory attendance law for first and second grades, and add a grade to it every year until eighth grade. I think twenty-five percent of 17 year olds complete eleventh grade.”

Chris nodded. “That’s not bad. Arjakwés as a whole is highest, at 95% in first grade and 40% in eleventh grade. Let me ask another question, if I may: have you started to use your smart phones?”

“There are three in the province,” replied Mitrusaju. “One for the provincial tax office, one for the Royal Bank, and one for Prosperity Bank. We’re negotiating an arrangement that I think will go through whereby one will be here in Nuarjora, one in Arjdhura, and one in Akɛldɛdra, and all three institutions will share it. We hope to make a phone available for several hours a day to the public schools and génadɛmas as well, and maybe the provincial tomi as well. But it’s a pretty complicated negotiation!”

“That’s an excellent plan,” said Chris. “I hope it works and is publicized. In other places, people are fighting over them. I am very impressed by Morana; you make so many decisions collectively!”

“We have no Count to tell us what to do,” added Estoséru.

“He and I tried that for a year and it didn’t work,” added Mitrusaju.

“So, have you actually *used* the smart phones yet?” repeated Chris.

“No, not yet; it’s all a theoretical thing to us,” replied Mitrusaju, with a smile.

Reread and edited 6/20/13, 9/3/17

403.

Youth

mid Kaiménu, 18/636

Bus after empty bus rolled up the steep hill to Mɛddwoglubas's old castle. They rolled past the Temple to Esto, the Bahá'í House of Worship, the Bahá'í Studies Institute, and the headquarters of the Central Spiritual Assembly, coming to rest outside the castle's old main gate. Behruz Shirazi greeted them, assured them their passengers were almost ready to get on board, then went into the cafeteria—a large tent stretched over the castle's central courtyard—to find Modolubu Papɛrkwéri and Lua.

"The buses are here. I counted; all twelve of them have arrived."

Lua looked over the six hundred Bahá'í youth finishing breakfast. "This place is going to be very quiet in about two hours."

"It'll be strange, but a great relief," said Modolubu.

"You look exhausted."

"I am; I've been doing classes all day, every day, for two weeks! The secretarial work is piling up. And we have a Central Assembly meeting in a week, so I'll be working overtime to catch up!"

"You need more staff," observed Behruz.

Modolubu nodded. "But it just isn't possible. This summer program of 600 volunteer youth will cost the fund 100,000 dhanay, and with all our other expenses, it just isn't possible."

“Not yet,” agreed Lua. “But there’s always a lot of donated food, so the cost may be less than 100,000.”

“True. I hope we don’t try to make this program any bigger next year.” Modolubu sighed. “Well, I think they’re just about finished with breakfast, so we need to get the program started.” He turned and walked toward the front of the tent.

Part way up the hall was a table with older musicians, including Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi, a member of the Central Spiritual Assembly and perhaps the second most renowned singer in the world. “Thank you, all of you, for coming,” Modolubu said to the musicians. “The youth have really enjoyed your music and I think you’ve taught them a lot about it.”

“We’ve got some good musicians among them,” added Mitrubbéru. “I hope we can do an art institute some time, because we need to develop some of their talents.”

“I agree,” said Modolubu. “I hope we can find the money for it! But at least we’re sending these groups out with a lot of songs to sing in the villages where they’ll serve.”

He continued forward to another table where older Bahá’ís gathered for breakfast. Included were many members of the Central Spiritual Assembly and veterans of previous summer youth service efforts: Randu, Nina, Primanu, Budhéstu, Soru, Tomasu, Gramé, Nergalu, Déodatu, Jordanu, Blorakwé, and Mɛlitané. Some had left families behind, others businesses for three to six days to participate in the end of the training, give a few classes, and get to know the youth. “We couldn’t do this without you,” Modolubu said, stopping at the table. “Your sacrifice makes this all worthwhile.”

“Thanks, Modolubu, but you were the workhorse,” said Randu.

“We’re in awe,” added Primanu.

“Don’t worry, we’ll keep an eye on the youth groups,” said Mɛlitané. “I’ll try to visit each one at least every two weeks.”

“They’ll need the classes and encouragement you can bring, and the local spiritual assembly will be glad to brief you,” said Modolubu. “We’ve got good team leaders and good local support, but we need the visits. We’ve found that out the hard way a few times.”

“We’ll call them, too,” pledged Jordan. He looked at Mɛlitané and she nodded; they were splitting oversight of eight youth groups in the lower Arjakwés, Swadnoma, and Lɛpawsona.

“Thanks again,” said Modolubu. He continued on toward the front of the room.

The first table on the left was occupied by Sugérsé, their brilliant linguist, who was now twenty and finished with three intensive years of génadɛma. A dozen youth were gathered around her listening intently as she discussed the Kitáb-i-Íqán. As Modolubu walked by, a young man reached out to stop him. “Honored, is there any way I can stay for the summer institute? I can still take the entrance exam, if you’d like, and I think I can pass it. I really want to study the Writings. It’s amazing the wisdom Sugérsé has gleaned from them!”

“She has learned more than many veteran believers. What is your name?”

“Bidhéstu. I’m from Dhudrakaita and I’m eighteen. I’m scheduled to go to Snékhpéla in the southern end of the South Shore province; not so far that I couldn’t get there by public bus tomorrow if I don’t pass. I know how to ride public buses.”

“And what about your buddy?” All the youth had been paired up.

“Don’t worry; I can form a triplet with two other guys,” replied the youth sitting next to him. “I’d like to stay, too, but I know I can’t pass an entrance exam, and besides, I want to see snow!”

Modolubu smiled at that. “That you will do; I’ve been to Snékhpéla. Alright, Bidhéstu, once everyone has boarded their buses and left, look for me, either here or at the office building, and I’ll give you an entrance exam.”

“I think he can do it,” echoed Sugérsé nearby.

Modolubu nodded and smiled at her. She was a pretty good judge and he trusted her discretion; if she wanted Bidhéstu included, he’d get in, unless his score was abysmal.

Modolubu continued forward and stepped onto the platform in front of the tent. He looked over the busily chatting and eating youth and took a moment to marvel at what they had accomplished. The Bahá'í community only had about 3,000 16 through 20 year olds; they had actually managed to get a fifth of them into one place for two weeks. For most, it had been the first time they had left their province; many had never ventured more than ten kilometers from their village before. Now they were sending them out for two and a half months of service. It was amazing to think that places like Dhudrakaita, totally immersed in poverty and lacking practically anyone who was literate just six years earlier, now produced youth who aspired to be scholars.

“May I have everyone’s attention, please,” he exclaimed. He paused while conversations stopped and everyone turned to him. “Thank you. Wasn’t the celebration last night something? I think the entire town was impressed by your music and talents. I hear we had two declarations. In the last few months, the Mɛddwoglubas community

exceeded six hundred. This is significant because we are now ten percent of the population of this place."

He paused for applause. "Last night you demonstrated in music and poetry that you are ready to be ambassadors for the Bahá'í Faith all over this world. The buses have arrived and in two hours you will disperse to sixty-three villages and cities across the world, one quarter of the inhabited places. We have never attempted to send out six hundred youth volunteers before. Our prayers go with you.

"Remember that you go in service to humanity. Some days you will be teaching children songs; other days you will be digging ditches. Some of the work will be physically exhausting. Other tasks will be mentally and spiritually challenging. Some people will tempt you to see how you react. Some will insult you. Others will excessively praise you because they are amazed by what you are doing.

"Your job is to love everyone. Do not push the Faith; all of you are going to places where people have heard of it already. By your service and example you will teach them, and sometimes they will ask. Sometimes you can be more direct; sometimes you should be discrete. Pray every morning and evening, consult when you are uncertain, and sing when you are relaxing together. You will teach many Bahá'í classes, and you will bring people into the Faith. Some of them may be here next year to do service.

"We hope you have learned a lot in the last two weeks. Not just about the Faith, either, but about yourselves. We are immensely impressed by all of you and hope you will consider going to génadɛma to develop new skills. The Faith needs Bahá'ís who are experts in everything, and we need you to contribute toward that need. This summer will

give you classes and experiences that, we hope, will help you choose such a path. We hope it will also give you knowledge and skills you can take back to your home villages.

"Thank you again, and I hope we will see many of you next year. Alláh-u-Abhá and God speed."

Thornton glanced at a clock on the classroom wall. It was almost 9 p.m.; the bus from Mɛddwoglubas still hadn't shown up. He quickly repeated his mental computation; they had left four hours earlier, 10 a.m. in Mɛddwoglubas, but its clocks were eight hours behind Mɛdhpéla, so it had been 5 p.m. here. Yes, they should have shown up already. The drive was only 235 kilometers, all on concrete roads.

There was a sound in the hallway; he looked up anxiously and saw Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr enter the classroom. He saw the Kwolonɛ youth—their numbers had grown to nine—and Thornton's family. "They aren't here yet?"

"No. I'm getting worried; it's only 235 kilometers, and they left almost four hours ago."

"Maybe the bus broke down. Were they coming straight here?"

"Come to think of it, I bet they had to stop in Gréjpola."

"That would do it." The Duke glanced at Thornton's computer. A cartoon had just ended. "What was that? Mickey Mouse or Pink Panther?" The Duke had stopped by two nights earlier to thank the youth for their cleanup work and had fallen in love with the Pink Panther cartoons. He had been back last night just to watch.

"Donald Duck. But I have a new Pink Panther, so I'll play it." Thornton walked to his computer and pulled up a link to a Pink Panther cartoon, which he played.

The Duke settled into a chair to watch, happy. Thornton cast an amused look at Lébé.

They all watched and laughed; since the cartoon had no dialogue, it was easy to follow the story. Just as it ended Thornton heard a bus outside the window. He glanced out and saw one approaching the school. “Here they are!” he said. He rose and headed for the front door.

The bus stopped and youth began to step off, carrying their bed rolls. A tall youth was in the lead and saw Thornton. He hurried over. “Alláh-u-Abhá, Lord Dhoru.”

“Alláh-u-Abhá, Estosatu, it’s good to see you again.” The twenty year-old was a third-year génadɛma student from Brébɛtroba and had taken two courses from Thornton.

“Thank you; good to see you as well. I wasn’t sure who would be greeting us.”

“The Kwolonɛ chief himself is inside. How many do you have?”

“Seven boys and four girls.”

“Introduce me.”

Estosatu nodded and introduced Thornton quickly. He had met only one of the others. They included two Sumis whose Eryan was limited, two from Dhudrakaita, three from Khɛrmdhuna, two from Wɛranopéla, and two from villages near ɛjnopéla.

“Welcome to Mɛdhpéla,” Thornton began. “Usually I’d say you must have had a tiring journey, but I suspect you napped a bit on the bus and now your problem is that you’re hungry for a late lunch and I have to convince you to go to bed instead! But we can feed you something, and since it’s already 9:15 p.m. here, I suggest you try to get to sleep in three hours. Most of us are dead tired because we’re up at 4 a.m. to do work under a full Skanda and in the early morning before it gets hot; Skanda’s full an hour before sunrise

and so bright you can read by it. I hope you can be up at 4 a.m. as well—it'll only be 8 p.m. Mɛddwoglubas time—then take a good, long nap during the midday. Lébé and I will start the next round of classes the day after."

"So, we'll be cleaning the village?" asked one girl.

"We're almost done, actually, though we'll repeat the task every week to keep it clean. We've removed several tonnes of debris; the big tasks have been a collapsed, abandoned house and cleaning several very old stalls in the marketplace. With your arrival, we'll start free literacy classes for adults, free children's classes, some beautification projects, and I think we'll be helping a business build an addition."

"I've got the file with all our skills," said Estosatu.

"Great, we'll go over it together tomorrow. Now, come inside. I'll show you the classrooms where you can sleep, the common area, and I'll introduce you to the Kwolonɛ youth that will join us."

"Is there a place we can wash?" asked one of the girls.

"The city has a brand new bath, but we go swimming every afternoon instead. We'll teach you how; we have bathing suits for everyone."

Thornton led them into the school. They stopped at the two classrooms where the boys and girls, respectively, would sleep so they could deposit their bedrolls, then they headed into the classroom where everyone was watching the end of a Pink Panther cartoon. The Bahá'í youth had never seen a cartoon before and their eyes were riveted to the screen, fascinated. It gave them a chance to look at the "fierce" Kwolonɛ warriors they'd be dealing with, who wore leather clothes, feathers in their hair, and tokens from

the animals they had killed. When it was finished, the two groups stared at each other for a moment.

"Let's go around and repeat our names," said Thornton. He nodded to Estosatu, who got started. The Kwolonɛ flicked glances at the boys and stared at the girls; the Eryan and Sumi youth looked increasingly nervous. "We'll have to repeat the names tomorrow a few times," said Thornton. "Perhaps Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr could offer a few words of welcome."

"I would be delighted and honored," he replied. He rose, and he impressed the kids as well; he wore a helmet with bull horns on it, rather than feathers, and a large bear claw around his neck. "The Kwolonɛ are a proud people and do not need help from anyone." He paused. "That was our attitude when Lord Kristobéru offered us a group of Bahá'í youth for the summer, and a chance for our youth to do something other than watch cows and pick vegetables. We decided to give the strange offer a try. The idea of a program where our youth go to school, do service to the tribe, and do some fun things together—and with youth from other places—was something we could never have imagined. Now the tribe has to think how 800 youth, rather then just nine, can participate.

"The Kwolonɛ would never have thought that, in a million years, they would see a lord—the future heir of Mɛlwika, the lord of South Ménwika, and not a kid, but a man with teenaged children—shoveling horse manure on their main road. If I had not seen it myself, I would not have believed it. I think one tenth of the tribe has stopped and stared at the sight. This man was a central figure in the town that defeated our fiercest cavalry fifteen years ago, and now he picks up after our horses! This is real service. It has made me think about this idea of 'service' in a whole new way.

"So we welcome all of you. We will teach you about us and you will teach us about you. Youth will serve and learn together. The result will be very good for all of us."

He turned back to Thornton. "Now, can we watch another Pink Panther cartoon?"

Thornton laughed. "Yes, there's time for one more before these youth go to bed. They have to get up early." He walked over to his computer and started another cartoon, then walked to the back of the room where Lébé sat. She leaned over and kissed him. "I think this summer just became worthwhile," she said.

Reread and edited 6/20/13, 9/3/17

404.

Unrest.

Late Kaiménu-early Dhonménu /mid-late July, 18/636

“Hey Rudhdamyu, don’t swim over to the girls’ side of the pond!” shouted Thornton, standing up. Rudhdamyu ignored him and continued across the water body; in the last week he had become a confident swimmer. Irritated, Thornton finally jumped in and swam across himself. He caught up with the youth pretty fast.

“Come on, I said not to swim any farther than half way.”

“Alright, alright. I wasn’t going to swim all the way.”

“Just close enough to impress them. Let’s go back, come on.” Thornton turned around and began to swim back, more slowly so that he didn’t get way ahead of Rudhdamyu.

The other boys—there were now twelve Kwolonɛ youth participating, with a new one joining every other day—watched from the shallow water on their side. Sunéru and Rostamu were teaching two new arrivals how to swim while several others swam short distances and returned quickly because of their limited self confidence. Jonkrisu swam around, a show-off even though he was a month short of his tenth birthday; the Kwolonɛ youth watched him to see how he swam so they could learn without admitting their ignorance to Sunéru or Rostamu. Thornton stopped to demonstrate a stroke, then waded out of the water again. He glanced across the pond and saw Lébé on the other side, watching him and making sure Rudhdamyu was staying put. He waved to her and she waved back.

He sat back at the table under the little wooden pavilion they had built just three days earlier; several of the Eryan boys had good carpentry skills. He dried his hands and returned to his computer. The aliens seemed to add something new to the websites every day. The global map of Éra not only showed cloud cover, but surface temperature as well. The latter had appeared suddenly just four days earlier. In the last hour he discovered that the global map was zoomable right down to items a meter across; it would revolutionize updating of maps. There was a new tab labeled "radar—pluri" and it puzzled him for a moment. "Pluri" was Eryan for rain, but what was "radar"? Then he realized it was just the English word; there was an invented Eryan word for radar, but the aliens apparently didn't know it. He clicked and an image of the entire world appeared, with different colors for the different levels of rainfall. "My God, this is incredible," he said, shaking his head in disbelief.

There was an intense band of red to the east of them. He clicked on "animate" and saw the last two hours of data; it was closing in, and a band of rain had appeared to the west of them as well. He looked up and saw thick black clouds to the east and west. It had been a very hot day, so there were strong updrafts of rising hot air being replaced by cooler, moist sea air from fifty kilometers to the west. They were going to get a heavy thunderstorm in about an hour. There was still time to swim, though, before going in, dressing, and eating dinner.

His cell phone rang. He no longer hid it, now that tablets and phones were more common. It was his father. "Hi, dad!" he said, answering the call.

"Hey, Thor, how are you doing?"

"Pretty well; it's an hour before suppertime and the youth are swimming. They're getting pretty good in the water."

"Next summer they can teach swimming to a lot of kids, then."

"Staurɛkɛstɛr's thinking of starting a Kwolonɛ-wide youth service camp for next summer; he likes our formula of three hours of service, three hours of classes, and a few hours of fun. I think we've perfected the formula this time."

"What about letting girls participate?"

"He came around, where that was concerned. The first week after the Bahá'í youth arrived, he watched how the girls were behaving, and I guess he was pleased. Two days ago he came over at suppertime and sat with Lébé for a while, which means he sat with the Bahá'í girls. He asked her a few questions about her work and her family and was pleased that she talked about the latter more than the former. Then he actually turned to the girls and asked each one her name, where she was from, and what she wanted to do with her life. They all said they wanted to go to génadɛma to learn how to serve their world and their family and most explained why; working mothers are aware of the world, educated mothers can watch their children's nutrition, etc. He was impressed by that, too. Then he came to me and said, 'So, you aren't going to teach them about birth control, are you?'"

"Ah, so that argument against the Faith reached Kwolonɛ land."

"Definitely. I told him no, of course not, we were here to do service and spread education and leave issues like birth control to parents, schools, clinics, and other places where it was appropriate. Then he said that there had been a big discussion in the high school back in the spring, which I find ironic, because the anti-Bahá'í people were using

birth control to frighten people and ended up spreading the idea around better than the Royal Medical Society ever could have! He was relieved and said he'd get some Kwolonɛ girls to join us as well. We now have five of them."

"Really! Congratulations! That's a breakthrough!"

"We'll get more, too. Pretty soon we'll need to cap the class, because it's getting pretty big. But it's taking a bit less of my time than I thought because I'm always including video clips or entire movies about the subject I'm covering. The kids love having something to watch."

"Good. Yesterday I passed your comment on to Amos. He said that he and Kɛkanu would look very seriously at taking some cartoons and maybe some movies and dubbing them into Eryan."

"Thousands of dhanay can be made. Our movie nights are now standing room only; the kids bring their parents, siblings, and cousins. We have to turn people away because the room is too full. If you arrange the space well, a hundred people can watch the screen at once. Charge them ten kɛntay each and that's ten dhanay every night; enough to buy the food the youth need."

"Even the phones can be used, though their screens are pretty small. Clearly, our classrooms will have to include movies, starting this fall. Have you gotten to the Kwétékwonɛ lands?"

"Yesterday morning I skipped the service and drove down. The youth seem to be doing fine. Déodatu said there's been some homesickness, but the kids are integrating well with the local kids. I'll get to Wurontroba next week to check things out there, but we know it's going alright."

"Yes, they've had youth groups for several years and know what to do with them. I'm calling because two weeks ago I met with the Council of Lords for Morana province. They want to develop oceanography as a field. They'd start with some courses, then commission a research vessel to explore the sea more systematically. It'd probably have a classroom on it, too. I immediately thought of you, but knowing how busy you are, I asked around the génadɛma first to see who might teach the course."

"And they said me?"

"Exactly. You taught it before."

"I did, and I loved it. Yes, I'll teach it again, and I'll teach it at Arjdhura if that's the plan. I'd love to."

"Good. What's your schedule?"

"Fall Term 1 I'm scheduled to teach one course at génadɛma—Introduction to Ecology—but we could find a substitute for it pretty easily."

"Can you arrange that? You're going back to Mɛlwika for a day or two pretty soon."

"Yes, at the end of the month. I'll do that. You won't be there, right?"

"Right. Mom and I are on our way to Bɛllɛdha right now."

"Oh? He glanced at the laptop's screen and pushed a button. "It's really warm there right now; 25°C, but at least there's no rain. There's a line of heavy thunderstorms sweeping up the Arjakwés Valley, though."

"We got sprinkled on a little as we left Mɛlwika, but the rest of the trip has been dry. Is this new data the aliens are projecting?"

“Yes, they now have hourly satellite photos of the entire world that are zoomable down to a meter of resolution on the ground, surface temperature maps—though the numbers appear to be ground temperature, not air temperature, because they’re too high—and weather radar with an image every five minutes. It’s incredible! And there’s an application called simply “Page” that I found the other day. It’s sort of a Facebook or Myspace, if you’ve heard of either of them. Each person or entity can have their own page with documents and images on it and messages, either private or public. When I go back to Mɛlwika, I’ll set up a few for the génadɛma so they can start using it.”

“Sounds like we’ll soon have a worldwide web!”

“We will, though it’ll be pretty limited with only 100 access devices to use it. They’ll have to give us more. As they watch the traffic grow, they’ll realize that as well.”

“I hope they’ll give us enough bandwidth and storage space for all the traffic! I’ve got to get off the phone because we’re approaching Bɛllɛdha. Let me know when you’ve arranged to teach the oceanography course.”

“Okay. Bye.”

“Bye.”

They both hung up the phone. Thornton began to round up all the kids to get them inside—he didn’t need a computer to know it was going to rain soon—and at the same time, Chris slowed his rover in order to watch the bikes, horses, wagons, pedestrians, trucks, and steam cars that filled the road, now that they had passed through the city gate. “Thanks for getting off the phone,” Liz said. “The city’s really busy today.”

“I wonder whether this is connected to the demonstration about unemployment they had the other day.”

“I wonder, too. Be careful.”

They drove through the gate, down Broad Street, and slowly into Central Square, which indeed was located at the very center of the square city. It was filled with a huge crowd listening to a speaker on a platform, but traffic was pushing through slowly because soldiers lined the street to keep it open. Chris rolled down the windows to listen as they went through. “That’s ɛjnu on stage!” said Liz, surprised.

“Really?” They had to stop for a moment, so Chris listened and heard him say, “The working man has never been treated fairly. It is the history of this world and of Gɛdhéma that the rich exploit the poor and live off the fruits of their labor. But through solidarity, unity, and organization, labor can equal the rich and get their fair share!”

The crowd cheered. Then Chris had to move the rover forward again. The Hotel was right up ahead, fortunately, facing the square. “This must be the third demonstration, and it looks like the biggest.”

“Why Bɛllɛdha?”

“The provincial tomi board decided to lay people off rather than cut hours and keep everyone, and some businesses have followed suit. This province’s economy has contracted more than anyone else’s except Lɛwéspa’s.”

He had to stop again because the bus in front of him stopped. A soldier next to the road was listening attentively. “Say, who are the speakers?” Chris asked him through his open window.

The soldier was startled to see Count Kristobéru. "Ɛjnu's speaking now, and he just mentioned you! Ekwésu's next; he's from Mɛddoakwés. Then Wɛranaisu Tɛntɛr; he's the local expert on work."

"Thank you." But before Chris could ask what Ɛjnu said about him, he had to move forward a bit more.

In a few minutes they exited the square and drove into the alley behind the Bɛllɛdha Palace Hotel. Chris parked the car and a bellman was immediately there to take their luggage inside. Chris was a part owner of the hotel, so he could get a room almost any time; he asked for a room facing the square. They went to the fourth floor—slowly, the building had no elevator—and Chris sat by the open window to listen to the rally. He even pulled out his cell phone and captured video of the event, to experiment with the capability. Ɛjnu was still speaking; he was rambling and radical. The next speech, however, was more organized and theoretical; the crowd grew bored. The last speaker, a local, was practical and listed demands. When he ended a band played a few songs, then the crowd marched from the square toward the industrial park outside the south wall.

"Any other references to you?" asked Liz, who had listened while writing two short letters.

"No, just to wealthy people who profit from the sweat of the workers. They don't understand that you have to have some wealthy people. The wealthy people are the ones who have the capital and the reputation to organize and lead new projects that employ people. The point isn't wealthy people, but how they use their wealth. And any society

has to have the possibility of poverty, otherwise people won't stretch themselves and work."

"My dear, this is a society that hasn't seen much wealth at all, and people don't have the education to understand economics. You know that. What they understand is that they can't feed their kids."

"Or that they can't buy the kids another pair of shoes and pay the mortgage on the house. Of course, 18 years ago their kids didn't have shoes and they lived in a shack. But you're right; the progress hasn't been enough, and when it reverses people are angry."

"Honey, you're condescending. There are people who can't feed their kids at all. This crisis was triggered by a doubling of food prices."

"You're right; I'm sorry. Duke Déolu must be tearing his hair out about this. Her Majesty will be here next week. There could be unrest."

"And the provincial tomi board meets in an hour, so maybe you can do something about it. You heard their demands?"

"Yes: an eight hour day, which is a twenty percent cut, and a twenty percent wage increase, which would be impossible, plus employment guarantees and better educational benefits."

"The tomi would go out of business," she conceded. "But the Board's counteroffer may include tear gas."

"Possibly; the police and army are mobilized. I'd better get to the meeting. I hope I can get through the crowd."

"Call and find out which route to take."

“Good idea.” Chris picked up the phone and asked to be connected to the police. They offered to drive him to the meeting instead, which he accepted. He grabbed his satchel and headed downstairs, where he bought the latest Bɛllɛdha newspaper and quizzed everyone in the lobby. Outside, he tore down a poster to read it and quizzed the policeman all the way to the tomi headquarters. They arrived quite a bit before the crowd, which was moving slowly toward the industrial park and was supposed to stay off the grounds.

The entire Board wasn’t present; three of the nine apparently were frightened away. But they had a quorum. “This situation is rapidly getting out of hand,” exclaimed Spondanu, glaring at his cousin, Duke Déolu. “You never should have permitted these demonstrations in the first place. They’re getting bigger and bigger and now we’ll have to use force to break them up!”

“There’s no evidence they plan to use violence.”

“Even if the organizers don’t, there will be followers who will.”

“We can’t run factories under these conditions,” said Kwɛnéstu, a glover who was one of the businessmen on the board. “And the whole situation may get out of hand.”

“The other tomis don’t have this problem,” said Sulubaru, head of the local branch of Prosperity Bank. “So maybe we should find out what we’re doing differently.”

“The other tomis don’t have demands against them,” Spondanu shot back.

“They haven’t laid off workers; they’ve cut back on hours instead,” replied Sulubaru.

“Some of them have cut back on compensation for the Board members and administration,” added Chris. “The Miller Tomi has cut salaries of executives ten percent.”

“We can’t afford that,” replied Lord Dontu of Yujdwoakwés.

“No?” replied Chris. “And people can afford to not feed their children?”

“I have to feed my kids, too,” replied Dontu.

“Look, let’s turn to the agenda,” pressed Déolu. “The police and army will keep them out of the industrial park, and the organizers know they can’t trespass.”

“How can we possibly turn to matters like cutting costs and raising profits when we have a demonstration going on outside this building and Her Majesty is coming in a week?” replied Spondanu. His voice was condescending; he and Déolu had never gotten along, and their relationship had been further poisoned when the crown had taken the lordship of Bɛllɛdha from Spondanu a decade earlier.

“This is the crisis at hand,” agreed Dontu forcefully. He was no friend of Déolu, either.

“Suggestions?” asked Déolu, looking around.

“Lord Chris, what is the difference between our operations and those of other provinces?” said Kwɛnéstu.

“Sulubaru mentioned an important difference; other tomis have shortened work hours rather than lay off workers. Rather than lay off ten percent, everyone gets ten percent less pay. That spreads the pain around, everyone tightens their belts together, and people don’t have to worry about penury,” replied Chris. “Even the Board members cut

their pay in proportion to the decline in business. In Lɛwéspa, the textile factories are down thirty percent, and that hurts a lot. But there are no demonstrations."

"We're down ten percent," said Sulubaru. "If we cut work hours ten percent, we'd be pretty close to the demand for an eight hour day."

"I think an eight hour workday is flexible," said Chris. "The work day here is the same as it was everywhere else, five years ago: ten hours a day, four days a week, and half that on the fifth day. In Mɛlwika it's now nine hours a day, four days a week. A few businesses have moved to eight hours a day, four days a week, and six hours on the fifth day. We need legislation to standardize the situation, but meanwhile, there's flexibility. If you've laid off ten percent of the workers, cut hours by ten percent and rehire them. That'll restore their incomes."

"But that'll just cause them to demand more," replied Spondanu. "They're demanding a twenty percent increase in salaries, not a ten percent cut!"

"They know they can't demand twenty percent less work *and* twenty percent more money," replied Chris. "That's negotiable."

"That'd bankrupt us in a matter of months," said Sulubaru.

"Have you opened up the retirement fund so the laid off workers can withdraw it or borrow against it?" asked Chris.

"Yes, but the tomi is only five years old and has paid into a retirement fund only for the last three, so there's not much money in it," replied Sulubaru. "Most of the laid off workers have withdrawn all the money they had."

"We laid off workers who were more recently hired anyway, and they didn't have anything in the fund," added Kwɛnéstu.

“How long have these demonstrations been going on?” asked Chris. “I remember seeing something on the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* about a small demonstration the other day.”

“This is the third one, and by far the largest,” replied Déolu. “The first two had a hundred or two people, a bad speaker—Wɛranaisu—and nothing else. But since the Tomi Board was scheduled to meet, they planned a big demonstration for today.”

“There’s one scheduled for tomorrow, too,” added Dontu. “And the Lord of Bɛllɛdha has granted a permit.”

“I have indeed,” replied Déolu. “And the result has been people expressing themselves *nonviolently.*”

“For how much longer?” asked Dontu and Spondanu at the same time.

“Letting people express themselves is not enough,” said Chris. “Because if they express grievances and nothing is done, the situation will indeed deteriorate. We need to go talk to them and we need to negotiate with them. We need to come up with a solution that will work for everyone.”

“Tear gas; an excellent negotiating position,” replied Dontu.

“And their response will be vandalism,” said Sulubaru. “Do you want an escalation?”

“We’ll arrest them.”

“And the entire kingdom will follow the drama in the newspapers and on the radio, and pretty soon there will be questions of illegal actions and lawsuits,” said Chris. “I don’t think you want that mess.”

“The queen won’t back up violence,” added Déolu. “Dontu, you know that. It’s irresponsible to advocate it.”

“Don’t call me irresponsible, you got us into this mess!”

“No, I have followed the laws of the land. The people have the right to express themselves. And Lord Chris is right; their right to express grievance implies our responsibility to negotiate.” He rose. “I’m going to talk to them right now.”

“I’ll come,” said Sulubaru.

“Me, too,” agreed Chris.

“I guess I will, too,” said Kwɛnéstu.

“You’re crazy!” exclaimed Dontu. “Crazy and irresponsible! If they don’t kill you, whatever you agree to will destroy this tomi!”

“Are you a coward, then?” asked Déolu.

“Certainly not, and I’ll challenge you to a duel for that remark!” replied Dontu.

“No duels now,” said Chris. “Will you come? Spondanu, will you come?”

“I will not!” replied Spondanu.

“Nor I, I’m not a fool,” replied Dontu.

“Fine,” said Déolu. “We’re not going to negotiate with a crowd, but we will tell them they have been heard and ask for three to meet with us to present their position.”

“Three from within the province,” added Chris. “You don’t want ɛjnu involved.”

“Or Ekwésu; he’s in the consultative assembly and known for his radicalism,” agreed Déolu. “Let’s go. Lord Chris, favor us with a prayer.”

Chris nodded and chanted the Remover of Difficulties, a common Bahá'í prayer that all the men had heard before.

“Favor me with a glass of wine,” added Kwɛnéstu, and he stopped at the refreshment table to pour himself a glass and guzzle it down before leaving the room.

They headed downstairs. At the bottom, inside the entrance, they saw Ekwɛgéndu, President of the Bɛllɛdha Génadɛma and a member of the Board. He had just arrived. Déolu grabbed him. “We’re going out to talk to them.”

“Really? That might be dangerous.”

“Did you just come through the crowd?”

“Yes, I decided to walk over and got caught up in the excitement. People were saying to me, ‘You’re needed inside and we’ll be outside shouting!’”

“No one wanted to kill you, then,” said Déolu. “Good.” He led them out of the building.

Once outside, they were only thirty meters from the crowd, which was standing on the street and chanting. A line of soldiers stood along the edge of the street, on the grass, spears straight up and wooden clubs hanging from their belts. Déolu headed for the police car—one of two owned by the city—which was parked right in front of the building. “Help me climb on top,” he said to a policeman. “Will your microphone cord reach me up there?”

“Yes, lord, it has a long cord.”

“Good.”

Chris and Sulubaru helped Déolu climb onto the hood of the police car—a steam car with the engine of a truck and special gears for speed and power—and handed him the microphone. The crowd, seeing their lord on the hood of the car, stopped chanting and turned to listen.

“A bit over thirteen years ago I arrived in this city, having been appointed Lord,” he began. “My appointment followed some of the worst troubles Bɛllɛdha had ever seen.

At that time I pledged to you that we would rebuild this city. One third of it was burned down and the rest was old and falling down. We were extremely poor; visitors to Bɛllɛdha often commented about the barefoot people in the winter and the nearly naked people in the summer.

"On that day I pledged to you that we would work together and there would be no exploitation in this city. We have worked together. We have rebuilt the city. But perhaps my pledge that there would never be exploitation in this province has not been kept. I need your help to determine what is fair to everyone, because it is not easy to figure out.

"It is not fair to increase wages a lot while cutting hours. To do that, we would have to increase our prices by a third, no one would buy the things we make, and we would soon have no work at all. It is also not fair to lay people off when there is no alternative source of income for them, but it is also unfair to drain away all of the company's money keeping people employed doing nothing and forcing the company to close.

"So, we will need to cut everyone's salary back—including the people we laid off, who we will hire back—or seek help from the queen. We'll probably have to do both. And that is where I need your help. I need three representatives *from among the tomi workers* to meet with me and representatives of the tomi board. The representatives must be from the province; no outsiders. They must work for the tomi. We need them tomorrow morning. We will not need to discuss an eight-hour day; the Board has already approved it as a temporary measure."

The crowd erupted in applause. "Lord," exclaimed Chris. "I pledge ten thousand dhanay in poor relief."

“Thank you; I’ll pledge some as well.” Déolu raised his hand to quiet the crowd. “The members of the tomi board have personally pledged twenty thousand dhanay in immediate poor relief. We will approach the palace and see what else we can arrange.”

The crowd applauded again. Déolu nodded in response; he could see that their attitude had changed. “We will have more announcements tomorrow after the next meeting of the Board. So, until then.” He waved and stepped down from the car.

“Did we agree to an eight hour day?” asked Ekwɛgéndu, surprised by the swiftness of the Board’s actions.

“Well, what do you think?”

“I think it’s probably a good idea.”

“Good, then you’re the fifth vote,” replied Déolu, with a smile. “We’d better make ourselves available to answer questions, then we’ll have to go inside and look over everything carefully, to see what we can afford to do.”

Reread and edited, 6/20/13, 9/3/17, 12/3/24

405.

Steps Forward

Early Dhonménu/late July 18/636

The two synchronized drums echoed off the high school building and vibrated across Mɛdhpéla, drawing a small crowd to the bonfire where the Kwolonɛ youth chanted traditional hymns to ɛndro. The Bahá'í youth listened respectfully and tried to join in sometimes, but the dialect was ancient and unfamiliar. The Kwolonɛ audience chanted along.

The chants were not short because they involved considerable repetition. A Kwolonɛ widu sat by one drum leading the youth, for they didn't always know the ancient chants. After the first one finished, he repeated the entire chant before they started on the second, so everyone could learn it. Lébé chanted along and clandestinely scribbled down the words, fascinated.

Dusk deepened into night as the high cirrus overhead caught less and less of the sunset three time zones away and Skanda's waxing magnificence illuminated everything. It cooled to a very pleasant temperature. Finally, the last chant was finished and the Bahá'í youth were invited to share a "hymn from Bahá'u'lláh." They chanted a prayer together that had been translated into the rhyming Eryan of Widumaj and the audience joined in a bit. Finally, the widu rose, exclaimed some words, and tossed some powder on the bonfire that caused tall, green flames to leap skyward. The sacred gathering was finished.

Thornton approached the widu, who was about his age, and extended his hands. “Thank you so much for coming and leading the sacred program tonight.”

“It was a pleasure,” replied the widu. He hesitated, then shook hands. “You are...?”

“Dhoru Doma-Mennéai,” he replied, using the last name they had adopted. “And what is your name?”

“Kowéranu.”

It was Thornton’s turn to be startled; he would be the son of the Kwolonɛ widu Kowéru, whose prophecy of the destruction of the Mennea clan had helped to trigger the Kwolonɛ expedition against Mɛlwika. But he was careful not to show his surprise. The darkness helped. “Pleased to meet you, Kowéranu. Was your father a widu as well?”

“Indeed he was.” Kowéranu now looked uneasy.

“I have heard he was a great man. Certainly, the power to chant the divine hymns has been passed to you, and I compliment you for your great ability.”

“Thank you, you are very kind, lord.”

Just then Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr approached them. “Thank you, both of you,” he said. “For if Lord Dhoru had not requested this gathering and the widu had not consented to come, it would not have been the magnificent event that it was. Usually, we only gather around the drum during the great festivals or at funerals. I think spontaneous gatherings are needed. They remind all of us of the greatness of our heritage and teach our youth where they come from.”

“They do indeed,” agreed Kowéranu. “And they learned well this evening.”

“Will both of you come to my home for refreshment, before retiring for the night?” asked the lord. “I’d much appreciate it.”

“Certainly,” they both replied.

Thornton excused himself to tell Lébé, talked to Rostamu to make sure he’d get the Bahá'í youth to bed, and asked Sunéru and Ekwusu to make sure they’d get the Kwolonɛ youth to go home, then he headed across the road to the Duke’s residence on top of the flat-topped rock.

When he was ushered into the chief’s audience hall he found a few others sitting on piles of Kwolonɛ blankets: Brébiku, the head of the schools; Arjstɛru, “Silver Star,” the lord of Awstroba, the easternmost Kwolonɛ village; Ekwɛdamu, “Tame horse,” a prominent Kwolonɛ herder and veteran of the Mɛlwika campaign; and Staurɛgéndu “Seizer of bison,” son of the duke, heir apparent, and the tribal treasurer. He passed wine around to everyone and brought Thornton a brimming cup of tea. Staurɛgéndu had taken two courses at Mɛlwika Génadɛma with Thornton some eight years earlier and was friendly with him.

“So, lord,” Staurɛkɛstɛr said to Thornton, after they all had chatted a bit about the success of the evening. “What is your attitude toward our hymns?”

“Toward your hymns, lord? They are powerful and beautiful works of art, and they have inspired the Kwolonɛ for centuries, if not millennia. Indeed, my wife, who is an expert on hymns of this sort, recognized several of them from the Wuronɛ and Krésonɛ collections of hymns. Hymns have inspired all the Tutanɛ peoples for a very long time. Surely, something so powerful and efficacious can only have a divine origin.”

But it is said that widus heard them chanted by the wind. No great widu like Widumaj was responsible," persisted the chief.

"Not all revelation requires a great widu. 'Chanted by the wind'; what does that mean? Is it literal, or a poetic explanation for inspiration? I accept the hymns for what I think they are; divine words."

"Scripture," said Kowéranu, using the fancy génadɛma word.

"Scripture," agreed Thornton. "Most scripture on Gɛdhéma does not come directly from a great widu, either."

"Really?" said Staurɛkɛstɛr, surprised.

"I have a different question for you," said Kowéranu. "One I do not mean in an insulting or angry way. When we attacked Mɛlwika, why did you respond with such overwhelming force?"

"Overwhelming force?" replied Thornton, surprised. He paused to think about the question, and a tense silence grew thick. "We did not think of it as overwhelming force. When the rumors reached us that we might be attacked, we had no idea how powerful the attack would be or whether we could expect any help from the army. Mɛlwika at the time was a small place; a village aspiring to become a city. All but a handful had arrived in the last two years, penniless, nearly hopeless, searching for a chance to make something of their lives, attracted by our irrigated land, which people could actually purchase for themselves. Most of the men had just married, and half of the wives were pregnant with their first child. Most had brought in at least one harvest and suddenly had some money for the first time. They were building houses, learning to read, and they were very excited and proud of their city. They were ready to die for it and we had a responsibility to

protect our people from the world's bravest and fiercest warriors. Under those circumstances, we could not take a chance; there was the possibility that thousands would be slaughtered, including us, and that all the knowledge and machines we had accumulated would be destroyed. We had no choice but to develop fierce weapons, even though we did not want the army to have them. Since that day, in fact, we have refused to help them develop even more powerful and destructive weapons."

"It was the bomb thrower that was the worst," said Ekwɛdamu. "The bombs would drop from the dark sky unseen."

"The trebuchet," said Thornton. "We weren't sure it would work at all, and twice it shook itself apart and had to be welded back together. The only thing we were sure of were the longbows, which everyone has now. The bravery of the Kwolonɛ was very, very impressive, and it was only when we built armored steam wagons and took the fight outside the walls that we finally freed our city from possible attack. Otherwise, a stalemate had settled in."

"Were you on the walls?" asked Kowéranu.

"Of course; we all were. I had Lébé to protect and my baby son Jalalu." He decided he had better not say he had run the trebuchet.

"Widu, I don't want to pursue this subject further; not now," said Staurɛkɛstɛr. "You can ask him more another time, if he wishes to discuss the matter. I want to talk about a bigger program for Kwolonɛ youth. Do you think it would be possible to create a program like this summer's, but for 600 or 800 youth?"

"Eight hundred?" asked Kowéranu. "That's all of them, isn't it? Including the girls?"

“It is. We won’t get them all; by age 18, half the girls are married and many have babies already. For the boys, half are married by age 20 or 21. Not all of the single ones will want to participate. Some will be out with the herds. But I want to get as many of them involved as possible, even older ones. Right now, most of our kids drop out of school after 8th grade. Some can’t write. But literacy and science classes, combined with swimming, fencing, horsemanship, and service: that will attract them.”

“If you add events like the drum, especially,” said Thornton. “We’ve been offering these youth summer programs for five or six years, refining the content every time. But they’re expensive; we’re sending out 600 youth this summer for 100,000 dhanay.”

“One hundred thousand!” the chief reeled back, shocked.

“But the biggest expense for us is food,” added Thornton quickly. “You won’t have that. We have to lodge the youth, too. Your youth will live and eat at home.”

“We won’t have those expenses,” agreed Brébiku. “We’d hire the teachers, who could use some summer income. If we do any field trips, those will add expense.”

“You want to do a few,” agreed Thornton. “Not just on the prairie. Rent some buses and take them to the Mɛlita Zoo, the War Memorial in Mɛlwika, and the palace in Mɛddoakwés.”

“And the sacred springs,” suggested Kowéranu.

“Where?” asked Thornton, puzzled.

“These are hot springs all Tutanɛ go to for prayer and purification,” replied Kowéranu. “They’re near the mouth of the Kaitakwés river.”

“I’ve been there; I’ve been in the springs,” said Thornton. “They’re in neutral ground between the territories of the Kaitɛrɛ, Mɛghɛndrɛs, Mémɛnɛgonɛ, and Késtonɛ.”

“That’s the place,” agreed Kowéranu. “Perhaps you can go there this year?”

Thornton nodded. “I’m sure we can.”

“And your Bahá'í religion doesn’t prevent you from participating?” asked Staurɛkɛstɛr.

Thornton shook his head. “Not usually. We don’t drink alcohol, so if a ceremony involved that, we wouldn’t drink. If we were asked not to participate in a ceremony, we would stay away out of respect. But singing, sacrificing to the divine . . . these are actions we believe in.”

“So practical,” said the lord.

“But their teachings about women,” said Kowéranu, shaking his head. “That is a major difficulty. There is the practical problem of mixing the boys and girls, which may cause affection to develop between them and make it impossible for their fathers to choose the best mates for them. And educated girls are not obedient; they may talk back to their husbands or do what they want, rather than what is best for the family.”

“We listen to the Eryan priests condemning birth control on the radio, we turn off the radio, and our wives turn to us and say ‘can we have some of that?’” exclaimed Brébiku smiling. “I think the priests have made a situation they condemn worse by talking about it.”

“And birth control has nothing to do with the Bahá'í Faith,” added Thornton. “Bahá'u'llah said ‘marry, O people, that from you may appear one who will remember Me.’ That is understood to mean: have at least one child. But in Bahá'u'llah’s day there

was no ‘birth control.’ Birth control developed much later and is purely a practical, medical matter. If a couple can plan when they will have children, and how many, it makes their lives easier. It also protects the health of some women, who may become weak or die if they bear another child. But plenty of people don’t plan at all, and that’s no one’s business. And even if you plan, things may go differently. Lébé and I decided to have two children separated out by two or three years. And we did that; Kalé is two years and two months younger than Jalalu. That was all we wanted. And then three years later we had Jonkrisu.” Thornton shrugged; the other men chuckled.

“And a good boy he is,” said Brébiku. “You were blessed.”

“Indeed.”

“We live in a different world than the one we grew up in,” said Staurɛkɛstɛr. “It is both marvelous and strange, even repellent. But the Kwolonɛ need to catch up and get ahead of the rest of the world. We can no longer dominate because we are the best horsemen. We learned that the hard way fifteen years ago outside the walls of Mɛlwika. Education is the key, and we must educate the girls as well as the boys if we are to progress.”

Kowéranu sighed. “It is hard for many to understand, but I am encouraged by what I see with this group of Kwolonɛ boys and girls.”

“Then you will help?” asked Staurɛkɛstɛr.

Kowéranu hesitated a bit, then nodded. “Indeed I will, lord.”

“Thank you.” Staurɛkɛstɛr nodded, pleased. He had gained a major victory in the fight over tribal education.

Kowéranu turned back to Thornton. “Why, Lord Dhoru, does your family help everyone, even their enemies?”

Thornton looked at the widu. “First, because Bahá'u'llah says that the day when one should treat others as you would have them treat you has passed. Today you must treat others *better* than yourself. Second, because He says we must be servants of others above all else. Third, because He talks about unity, and when you take unity seriously, you do not treat anyone as an enemy. If they treat you as an enemy you defend yourself, but afterward you heal the relationship as best you can.”

Kowéranu nodded and looked down, pondering.

“It’s a very inspiring standard,” said Brébiku, impressed.

“It is too high for anyone to follow,” commented Staurɛkɛstɛr.

“But we never succeed; we strive,” replied Thornton. “And we can’t strive too hard, or our families would fall apart and we would die. We must be practical, too. Fortunately, my wife believes as I do, and we bring the children along to teach them how to serve.”

“I hope we can raise up more Kwolonɛ families who do the same,” said Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr.

“I want to thank you again,” Deolu said to Wɛranaisu Tɛntɛr, Walu Agrimanu, and Saju Gwiyukwénu, the three representatives the workers had chosen to meet with the North Shore Tomi board. “I think three days of talks have been very productive.”

“Thank you, I think we have moved toward an understanding,” said Wɛranaisu, the most articulate of the three.

“But please, don’t forget that we *must* have a raise,” said Saju, whose name ironically meant “Wise.”

“Saju, I showed you the books,” said Kwɛnéstu gently, tapping the master ledger in front of him. “Hiring back the twenty percent of the workforce we laid off and cutting everyone’s hours twenty percent will not increase our income. Right now, demand for our woolens, milk products, and leather goods is down an average of about twenty-five percent, and that’s after cutting our prices ten percent. So we are getting thirty-five percent less money than before. We have to pay our mortgages, our heat and light, the insurance, and we have to pay for raw materials to convert into finished goods. The prices of the latter are down ten percent, too; that helps. We can’t get money from the air.”

“But you can get it from the palace,” he persisted. He had said that before, as well as offering impractical ideas for cutting costs.

“We’ll ask,” promised Déolu.

“I think the review of finances has helped a lot, and we are looking forward to regular financial reports in the newspaper,” said Wɛranaisu. “Then everyone can consider the facts.” He rose and extended his hands. “Thank you.”

“Thank you.” Déolu shook hands, followed by Chris, Kwɛnéstu, Sulubaru, and Ekwɛgéndu. Far more hesitant to shake hands were Dontu, Lord Ekwiséru of Udrapéla, and Lord Wékdusu of Vestroba. Spondanu, the pretender to the Dukedom, offered one hand only, as was the custom of aristocracy when shaking hands with peasants. Walu glared at him and refused it.

The three representatives stepped out and closed the door behind them. Déolu looked at his colleagues. “It is time to discuss their demands and needs. How shall we do this? Go around the room?”

“Fine with me,” agreed Chris.

“Fine,” said Spondanu. “I know most of you want to do something, but in spite of their sad needs, I am inclined to continue the status quo. No one has a right to work; they have to seek a job. We have no obligation to hire everyone. We’re not making a profit now, and they want us to raise salaries and expenses!”

“What about the eight hour day?” asked Déolu.

“You already promised that in the speech, which was most unfortunate, because now we have nothing new to promise. Giving it to them will just embolden them to ask for a seven-hour work day, then six. No, we have to be firm and hold the line.”

Déolu turned to Kwɛnéstu, who was next around the table. “I wouldn’t take such a hard line,” he replied. “With a careful rejuggling of the books, we do have a profit; only three percent, but we have a profit, and this is an extraordinary time—”

“Three percent’s not a profit, our goal is ten to twenty percent—”

“Don’t interrupt me,” Kwɛnéstu replied to Spondanu. “I’d be in favor of raising our total costs enough to eat up the three percent profit. This downturn can’t continue too much longer; we can borrow for a while and pay it back later.”

“What programs?” asked Déolu.

“Cut hours and salaries back to an eight hour day and rehire all the workers laid off; that will cost us more than it’ll save. Suspend payments to the pension fund and add that back to the weekly salary, which will give everyone five percent more. Allow

workers to borrow against next year's pension payments; that could give them five percent more."

Sulubaru raised his hand. "We have to be careful about that because it could drain all the accumulated cash in the pension fund. We use that cash for construction and as collateral for loans. Twenty-five percent of Prosperity Bank's assets are the pension funds of the various tomis. If everyone did that, the bank would need a bail-out."

"We'll need a bail out," said Déolu. "Dontu?"

"The pension fund is already draining because we have let laid off workers borrow their pension. The pension fund is for the future; theirs and ours. I agree with Spondanu; hold the line."

"Even if we approached the crown for assistance?" asked Déolu.

"I wouldn't approach the crown for this."

"Okay. Ekwiséru."

"I'd institute an eight-hour day, rehire everyone, cut salaries appropriately, and suspend pension payments, but I wouldn't let the workers borrow against next year's pensions. I'd use some of that money to expand our agricultural business because there's profit to be made there. We can get 2-to-1 matching funds via the crown's economic stimulus program."

Dontu shook his head sadly; Ekwiséru was a key vote. "Chris?" said Déolu.

"I agree with the eight hour day, rehiring, proportional reduction in salary, and suspension of the pension payments. I'd let workers borrow against next year's pension payments. I'll work for no pay at all; I think all of us need to sacrifice, and not just for symbolic reasons. I'd use some money from the pension fund for a marketing campaign;

we've talked about that idea as well. Even in a shrinking market you can increase sales with the right advertising."

"Ekwɛgéndu?"

"Yes to an eight hour day, rehiring, proportional salary reduction, suspension of pension payments, marketing, and 2-1 grants for expansion. No to borrowing against next year's pensions. Yes to an expanded worker training program; we can do it through the génadɛma and the génadɛma can give the tomi a fifty percent tuition reduction because we need to fill the classrooms right now."

"We appreciate the reduction as much as you appreciate the business. Sulubaru?"

"Yes to the eight-hour day, rehiring, proportional salary reduction, suspension of pension payments, and 2-to-1 grants for expansion. No to marketing; it generates artificial demand and makes the population materialistic. No to borrowing against next year's pensions: we need to preserve the pension fund, and the bank needs the deposits."

"Okay. Wékdusu?"

"No to everything, except the 2-to-1 grants for expansion and the marketing. If we can expand our operation, we can rehire everyone and retain the status quo. We can't coddle the workers; they'll eat us up and destroy the company. These three bozos couldn't even speak well, and one was downright stupid! Workers are workers, not management or investor-owners. They have their place, we have our place, and they should never mix."

"I see," said Déolu. "Okay, I'm last, and I say yes to everything: the eight hour day, the rehiring of all workers, the proportional salary reduction, the suspension of pension payments, the borrowing against next year, the education program, the

marketing, and 2-to-1 expansion grants. I'd seek a loan guarantee from Royal Bank to give us the cushion we're using up; that shouldn't be too hard to get and they give them pretty routinely to provincial tomis. This is a drastic approach, but I think it's warranted. The province needs the tax payments, the businesses need the sales to workers' families, and the workers need to pay their debts, most of which are to banks."

Spondanu shook his head. "This is the ruin of the company."

"I count six votes to cut back to an eight hour day, rehiring the workers laid off, reduce salaries proportionally, and suspend payments to the pension fund," said Ekwɛgéndu, who was keeping the minutes. "I count only three votes in favor of allowing borrowing against next year's pension payments. Not everyone expressed an opinion about marketing or 2-to-1 expansion grants, but I think both received at least five votes. We only had five comments about expanding the education benefit and only one comment about sacrifice."

"Let's fill those in," said Déolu.

"No!" said Spondanu. "I want more discussion about rehiring everyone and giving them eighty percent of their original salary. I can live with letting them borrow against next year's pension payments, but not with rehiring and cutting everyone back. This is an unacceptable coddling of workers and caving in to their demands! If you want to do that—if a majority wants to do that—I will resign from this board. Provincial tomis must maintain a separation between investors and workers."

Déolu glared at him. "Cousin, this board has nine members, not one, and nine votes. I understand your idea of a tomi, but it isn't our idea."

"A *tomɛ* is a tree with bountiful shade; a refuge," said Sulubaru. "It is meant to be a shelter for many, not just for a few."

"Semantics. It exists to make profits for investors."

"Even the Queen said that," added Dontu. "These tomis were set up to provide jobs to the peasantry and profits to the old houses."

"The workers who built the early factories got shares and therefore profits," replied Chris. "We've discussed extending profit sharing to the workers and the board has rejected it. But several provincial tomis—Arjakwés, South Shore, Kɛrda—extend profit sharing to workers. That is often part of a tomi."

"That's not part of this tomi and never has been," replied Spondanu. "This is not the time to change our philosophy or encourage others by creating a trend. I want a formal vote."

"Alright," said Déolu. "All those in favor of cutting the tomi work hours back to eight per day, four days a week; cutting the pay proportionally; rehiring the workers laid off; and suspending pension payments, raise your hand."

The nine of them looked at each other tensely. Then hands began to go up; six of them.

"Mr. Secretary, please record the vote is 6 to 3," said Déolu.

"Very well," said Spondanu. "You are men of your word, and I am a man of mine. I hereby resign from the Tomi Board. And you can be sure I will state quite clearly to the *Bɛllɛdha Tribune* why I have resigned."

“That’s fine, cousin, we respect your opinion, even if we disagree with it,” said Déolu. “May I hand you your satchel?” He reached down and picked up his cousin’s satchel from the floor.

“Humph!” replied Spondanu, in response to Déolu’s sarcasm. He took the satchel and headed out of the room. Before he had reached the door, Dontu rose as well.

“I appreciate Lord Spondanu’s position and I certainly agree, so I will resign from the Board as well. Tomis can’t make a profit—can’t remain viable—if they make the workers the center of their priorities. They must always have profits and growth in mind. Otherwise they’ll be eaten alive by other tomis. Lord Chris has taught many courses about corporations and we have all learned quite clearly that the modern corporation, with its perpetually renewed Board of Directors, its stockholders, and its basis in the law is the most powerful instrument ever developed for prosperity. The workers do benefit; they get jobs and cheap products. That’s my understanding of a tomi. Good bye.”

Dontu rose and left the room as well. The other seven of them looked at each other in silence for a moment. “Tomis exist for prosperity, profits, and workers,” Chris finally said. “But it isn’t as black and white as Dontu says. There are times tomis must be good citizens in their provinces and make employment a priority.”

“And how do we protect ourselves against tomis with cheaper labor costs?” asked Wékdusu, the remaining conservative lord on the board.

“Legislation. Without laws to protect them, competition will reduce workers to long hours and low wages, unless there’s a labor shortage. The other protection is highly skilled workers who work very efficiently, and that’s arranged through education, mechanization, and efficiency studies.”

“Back to education,” agreed Ekwɛgéndu, head of the local génadɛma.

“We’re not finished with our discussion of several issues, such as marketing, expansion efforts, and personal sacrifice,” said Déolu. “But perhaps this isn’t the time to deal with those issues. We’ll need two new members of the board. They were both appointed by Her Majesty, so she needs to replace them. Perhaps we should adjourn for lunch.”

“It’s 5 p.m. in Mɛddoakwés,” noted Chris. “We could call Wɛpokɛstɛr and let him know. If we wait, it’ll be too late.”

“I agree.” Déolu turned to the telephone on a table against the wall behind him. He grabbed it, then put it down. “Lord Chris, you have one of those little phones, don’t you?”

“Yes, I have it with me, and I can call Wɛpokɛstɛr directly.” Chris pulled out his cell phone. He searched through a directory of cell phone numbers and called the Queen’s secretary.

“Let me talk to him,” said Déolu.

“Of course, but we can all hear. Actually, all of us can speak because I’ve pushed the speaker button.” He put the phone down on the table in front of Déolu.

The phone rang three times, then Wɛpokɛstɛr answered. “Khélo, Lord Kristoféru.”

“Khélo Wɛpokɛstɛr, this is Duke Deolu. Lord Chris is here as well, as are members of the North Shore Tomi’s Board of Directors. We have a report for Her Majesty.”

“A report? Just a moment.” He paused. “Go ahead, lord.”

“Thank you, honored. For the last three days, as you know, we have been meeting with three representatives of the tomi workers, who had been marching for better wages and related matters. We completed our meetings with them an hour ago and have started deliberating about the actions we should take. Six of the nine tomi board members agreed on the following: that we would change the work day from ten hours to eight hours; that we would reduce wages proportionally; that we would rehire the workers laid off, which will bring our hours worked and wages paid per week roughly back to the same level as they were last year; and that we would suspend our payments to the pension fund and add them to the workers’ weekly wages. We are still considering a few other matters, such as increasing access to génadɛma courses, allowing workers to borrow against next year’s pension payments, and personal reductions in compensation. Two members of the Board—Spondanu and Dontu—were vehemently against these reforms. They maintain that the Tomis exist primarily for profit, job creation follows from profit, and workers cannot be coddled without endangering everything. So they have resigned from the Board.”

“Really? Both of them? Because of the Board’s decisions?”

“Yes, they made it very clear that if the Board made those decisions, they would resign.”

“So, how will you fill those vacancies?”

“They were both appointed by the Queen. The palace appoints five of the nine members of the Board, and four are chosen by investors.”

“I see. I apologize; I wasn’t involved when the tomi was set up.”

“The seven of us can continue until such time as Her Majesty wishes to fill the vacancies. I think we’ll adjourn for the day, calm down, review where we stand, and continue our deliberations tomorrow.”

“I see. Can you wait a moment?” Wɛpokɛstɛr paused. Then Queen Estoibidhé’s voice came over the telephone.

“Duke Déolu, thank you for calling,” she said. “I take it you are with the other members of the Board and listening to this conversation on Count Kristoféru’s phone?”

“Correct, Your Majesty, and I gather you heard our report to Wɛpokɛstɛr.”

“That is correct. In the last three days, in preparation for my trip to the North Shore and around the kingdom, and in anticipation that the difficulties there would need some involvement, I’ve been meeting with Aryéstu and some of his economics students, and a few other advisors like Migéstu and Modobéru. All the tomis are facing similar problems, though your tomi’s experience is worse than most for historical reasons. We’ve been putting together some points to address them. It appears your tomi will be the first to implement them.

“The first point is profit-sharing with the workers. All the tomis were established through a combination of royal grants and private investment, usually 2-to-1 or 3-to-1. I think 75% of your tomi’s financing came from us. We set up the tomis so they had to pay no taxes at all for two years and all the profits went to the private investors for four years; that greatly leveraged their investments and encouraged people to pour money into the tomis, and they did so. But starting last year, the tomis had to pay a percentage of their profits to the crown; twenty-five percent this year and fifty percent next year, where it will remain until the principal we invested is paid off. We’re proposing instead that

twenty-five percent of the profits will go to the workers in perpetuity, in return for no profits coming to the crown. The initial investment will be written off.

"We aren't specifying how the profits are split. But the formula we suggest is that someone has to work at least two years to earn one worker's share; they earn a second share after ten years and a third share after twenty. The workers' profits are divided equally based on the number of worker's shares. After twenty-five years of service, the profits continue to come to the worker until death, even after he or she leaves the tomi. These shares are of a different type than owner's shares and can't be sold or traded.

"The second point is worker representation on the Board. We suggest they elect two members to the nine-member board, subject to reelection every two years. Since you have two vacancies on the Board, I'd implement that provision immediately. The crown will continue to appoint three of the nine members.

"The third point is government assistance. We will fund provinces to hire unemployed workers to do public service work, repairing roads, cleaning streets, building parks, clearing trails, etc. We figure that altogether there are about six thousand workers who will be employed that way. The wage will be minimal; two dhanay per day. We're still drawing up the details.

"The fourth point is assistance to firms to keep workers. This will amount to five percent of salary; not much, but it will help. This is roughly equivalent to the amount put into retirement savings every year.

"Your proposed steps are different, but they follow the same basic principles."

"Yes, it's remarkable," said Déolu. "When can you appoint new members to the board?"

"Send me a written report overnight to this phone, so we can review it carefully, Include information about the three workers you negotiated with and any other workers you'd recommend. You'll have two new members by the day after."

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New Technology

mid Dhonménu/early Aug. 18/636

A large truck rumbled by the house of Lord Pédru of Khɛrmdhuna. Liz and Chris looked up from their tea. “I see you’ve installed beautiful glass windows,” Liz said to Marié.

“Yes, just in time,” she replied. “We got them in place early last month. Then two weeks ago they opened the Khɛrmdhuna to Kɛrda stretch of Route 21. Ever since, the traffic has increased twenty fold!”

“Literally,” agreed Pédru. “It used to be that we’d see four buses and at the most two trucks a day. But the road has increased our own traffic; now that all seven parishes are connected with a paved road, the village bus runs back and forth fifteen times per day. And now all the trucks and buses between Kɛrda and the eastern shore go through here; six buses and maybe thirty trucks! And the trucks mostly run at night and wake us up!”

“They’re going too fast,” said Chris. “You need to set a lower speed limit when they’re passing through villages and enforce it. That’ll reduce the noise quite a lot.”

“But how would we enforce it? It’s hard to prove that someone is going too fast.”

“True. Maybe you can add some humps to the pavement. That will force them to slow down.”

“But do you think the Duke will object?”

Chris shook his head. “No. I think you’ll get his backing a lot more, now. The crisis in Bɛllɛdha has strengthened his hand.”

“Really? How so?”

"The Old Houses are very strong in this province; half the villages are run by absentee lords. They also dominated the North Shore Tomi, not because of numbers but because they intimidated the other members. I can't tell you how many times several of them issued ultimatums; they'd resign if the Board didn't agree with them. Several members were more concerned with peace than with calling their bluff. But the labor unrest brought matters to a head. Several lords threatened to resign if we took certain measures to resolve the labor dispute. The Board rejected their demands 6 to 3 and two resigned as a result. We didn't invite them back, either."

"I've heard that two workers are on the Board instead. A remarkable change."

"It is. The Tomi has switched to an eight-hour day, four days per week, rehired the people they laid off, and cut wages twenty percent, which is proportional to the hourly cut. They have also suspended payments to the pension fund—equal to five percent of salary—so that can be added to everyone's salaries, and they've agreed to let workers borrow against next year's pension payments. The tomi is also expanding the educational benefit to workers, so they can improve their skills. The Queen was very pleased and pledged to provide the pension payment instead. The workers are not completely pleased—they're grumbling about the cuts—but the unrest has ceased."

"So I heard. I was following the whole thing in the newspapers and on the radio; Kɛkanu has had some pretty interesting interviews. We've cut work hours here to seven per day in order to keep everyone employed and we've suspended all payments into the pension system. We should approach the palace for help with the pension."

"Definitely. They'll extend the same to you. But here's the other good news for you: I'm sure the Tomi will now consider investing in Khɛrmdhuna. I've argued in favor

of it in the past and it was the representatives who resigned who resisted. They're now gone."

Pédru's eyes brightened. "Excellent! I've extended invitations to Duke Déolu to visit several times and he has always declined. Maybe this time he'll agree."

"The fact that Her Majesty is a Bahá'í is not lost on Déolu and the others. You may want to invite her to visit if he refuses."

"Yes, we could try that. There's another maneuver I've wanted to try, but I really would need your help, Chris, because I can't propose this. The eastern side of the North Polar Basin consists of six villages—six lords—and 5,500 people. The western side of the basin consists of seven parishes—which are considered one long village, with one lord—and 2,500 people. But if Khɛrmdhuna had a Count and a series of lords, and was awarded the Duke's tax tithe, possibly it'd get fairer treatment."

"Possibly." He considered a moment. "It would generate a lot of jealousy, though, and worsen relations with the other villages. Lord Dontu of Yujdwoakwés would demand the same honor, so this province would have two counts."

"True. It's just an idea. I have another idea, which I could try to implement: you are the 'Count of the New Cities,' an honorary title over Mɛlwika, South Ménwika, Mɛlita, and Pértatranisér. I've been thinking of petitioning the Queen to add Khɛrmdhuna to the list."

Chris's eyes grow large with alarm. "No, don't do that!"

"I don't want to jeopardize your relations with Déolu or anyone else, but if Khɛrmdhuna is part of North Shore province, it needs to be treated as such. If they're not going to treat us as part of their province, we need to be part of another province. If they

don’t want Khɛrmdhuna, I’ll petition to be part of Kɛrda; we’re now connected to them by a good road!”

Chris laughed. “You could try that!”

“We need to do something. Déolu extracts his tax from us and gives us nothing in return. This was a terrible winter. We had to buy far more hay than planned, yet demand for our dairy products has dropped. The woolen and leather goods factories have seen orders drop forty percent. Fortunately, the cold winter pushed up demand for tar, but that did not equal the drop in other revenues.”

“On the other hand, farm incomes in Swadnoma are up sharply, and a lot of your farmers have plots there.”

“True, but we only get half the tax. We’ve had to cut one teacher’s position and reduce our budget for health care, which has been hard for Dr. Migélu. We’ve postponed purchasing a fire engine and dipped into the fund for other purposes; and when we had a fire last year it took forty minutes for the engine to arrive from Bɛllɛdha! Now we really need to hire a second policeman, too, because of all the traffic!”

“It’s hard everywhere,” agreed Chris. “But don’t give up on Déolu. I think he’ll start to support Khɛrmdhuna, as will the provincial tomi. The far end of the northeastern valley complains it doesn’t get much, too. And they’re worried about fire protection. The paved road will help immensely; if you had a fire tomorrow the engines could get here from Bɛllɛdha in less than thirty minutes. Yujdwoakwés needs a fire station for the entire polar basin; you shouldn’t have to get an engine yourselves.”

“Maybe we can talk to Deolu by telephone?”

Chris nodded. “Sure. Liz and I will be here for three days; I’m sure we can set up a time to talk to him. We could even drive down and see him face to face.”

“I’d appreciate that.”

“Chris will have plenty of good news to share,” said Liz. “I agree with him that Khɛrmdhuna’s economic isolation will end soon. I’ve been urging him to say something about regular development reflection meetings. There’s a letter from the Universal House of Justice that we just got translated into Eryan that has inspired the idea that a community could meet regularly to reflect about material development and social action. Khɛrmdhuna should try it; as you learn how to reflect about development, we can share your learnings with the other Bahá'í villages and they can start it as well.”

“You mean, a regular reflection about our development plan?” asked Pédru. “It’s a long-term plan.”

“Even so, you could set up a time when everyone could assemble to talk about development, or a series of representatives could do it,” said Chris. “They won’t want to review the entire long-term plan for education or industrialization at each meeting, but no doubt they’ll think of things to add or revise. The idea is to get everyone in the habit of educating themselves and applying their learning to making life better.”

“Can you send Jordan or Dhoru to coordinate it?” asked Pédru.

“Perhaps,” replied Chris. “But I think you have the skills to do it yourselves. If you have technical questions, you can call Jordan.”

“Definitely, it’s something Khɛrmdhuna can do itself,” added Liz.

“Then you should talk about it, Lady Liz.”

"No, I think Chris will propose it, because I want to focus on the spiritual challenges we all face, because we need to reflect about both. We need to concentrate on our prayer, our study of the Writings, and on self-education and improvement. Khɛrmdhuna has undergone a revolution where those things are concerned! Almost everyone is now literate; none of the other Bahá'í villages has achieved that yet, and no one else is seriously trying."

"We need to start thinking of ways to earn income that involve education and training," added Chris. "With the new Mɛlwika to Isurdhuna telephone and power lines being installed, this place has more capacity than ever. You could easily go into telemarketing; that is, answering people's questions by telephone and selling things by telephone."

"Really?" Pédru thought about that idea.

"Liz, you need to talk about miracles as well as prayer and study," said Marié. "Luku's Christian congregation has been swelling in size since early winter. People are dissatisfied and anxious about the future. Only one person has formally withdrawn from the Faith and joined his congregation, but a lot of people who have been sitting on the fence for years and are nominally Bahá'í have been attending his weekly masses. Luku claims to have worked two miracles. A baby who stopped breathing in church started again when he prayed over her; it was quite a dramatic scene. And when we got a warm snap back in ɛjnaménu, he said it happened because of the intense prayers of his congregation for relief."

"Sounds like we need some miracles of our own," said Chris.

“Well, I suppose we have them,” replied Liz, thinking. “There have been claims. Three months ago an old man in Dhudrakaita had a heart attack and stopped breathing, then started again after the friends started to pray. And in Wɛranopéla last year the Bahá'ís prayed for rain and it rained. Maybe I should mention all four miracles, then; Luku’s and these two attributed to Bahá'ís, and talk about God’s bounties and miracles showering down on us.”

“That’s a good idea; I don’t think we should deny his claims.”

“I don’t want to do that, but I probably should say that apparent miracles don’t prove anything. You can never be sure what happened, after all. We know that God works in this world and assists us, but it’s hard to prove what was assistance and what was something else.”

“Everything is an assistance, if we understand it right,” said Marié.

“Exactly.”

“It sounds like we’ll have some interesting talks for the next few nights, then,” said Pédru. “A talk about how the economic times should start to improve, and a talk about the spiritual bounties we always receive.”

Thornton parked the steam car next to their house trailer. A sliver of waxing Skanda and dying evening twilight illuminated the scene as he locked the vehicle and headed inside Mɛdhpéla High School. He was late for the evening’s informal youth gathering, and he had taken his laptop with him, so there were no cartoons or short movies to show.

As he approached the door, he heard Jalalu’s electric guitar instead. He had reluctantly picked it up on his last trip to Mɛlwika. He opened the door and saw his son at

the front of the room playing “She Loves You” by the Beatles. Rostamu, using a borrowed Kwolonɛ drum, was accompanying him.

And all the youth were singing along! It wasn’t hard to learn “she loves you, yeh, yeh, yeh” and they clearly liked the tune. Lébé was sitting in the back with Jonkrisu, looking proud. Staurɛkɛstɛr was present as well, seated near her, and was enjoying himself.

Thornton hurried over to Lébé and smiled. She nodded back. “He’s gotten good!” she whispered. Actually, she spoke it; the music was so loud, it was effectively a whisper.

“He really does sound pretty good! I had no idea!”

“The kids really like it, too. It’s very new and different for them.”

Thornton looked around; they were having a lot of fun with the Beatles music. The girls sat on one side—15 of them—and the boys, numbering 23, sat on the other, but there was a lot of intermingling in the middle, where Lébé, Staurɛkɛstɛr, Brébiku, and their cook sat. “How long has he been playing?”

“About half an hour. I didn’t realize he had learned so many songs.”

“He’s been playing for a year now.”

The song ended and everyone applauded. Jalalu glanced at his dad and Thornton gestured that he should keep going, so he started another Beatles song.

“How was the trip?” asked Lébé.

“Alright. I think I resolved the problem in Gréjpéla. One of the Bahá'í youth will go home on the bus tomorrow. He was too disruptive, especially for the girls. It’s sad, but it’s the best solution. He accepted it pretty well.”

“That’s good. Are relations with the tribe alright?”

“Yes, they don’t blame us. They understand there will always be these kinds of problems. Déodatu is doing a good job of overseeing the youth there. He briefed me with Chief Mɛnɛgékwɛs.”

“Good. You didn’t miss much today. They cleaned the central area of town and continued work on the park around the pond. After swimming, we did a class on Eryan literature. I covered Wuronɛ hymns to ɛndro and three similar hymns of Widumaj. They were actually fascinated.”

“Thanks. Déodatu is covering forestry and development in his classes, and the tribal nurse has been giving some excellent classes about hygiene, but the kids were happy to hear from me. I talked to the man running the tribe’s timber company, too, and he reported that it was going well. The youth will be spending next week in the southern end of Kwétékwonɛ territory, planting trees.”

“Good.”

They stopped talking to listen to the rest of the song. Jonkrisu moved over to lean against his father. When Jalalu finished, the youth applauded enthusiastically and he thanked them. His show was over. Thornton stepped up front to remind everyone of their service early the next morning and the topics they’d review in class the next afternoon, then dismissed everyone for the evening.

The kids headed out of the room, the Bahá’í youth to their sleeping rooms, the Kwolonɛ youth to their homes, but Staurɛkɛstɛr walked over to Thornton. “How are our Kwétékwonɛ cousins?” he asked.

“They’re doing well; they’re having a good second harvest, their forestry company is progressing, and their cattle and horse raising continues to expand.”

“They’re strong competitors in cattle raising, just like the Mɛghɛndrɛs. Is their forestry company making money yet?”

“I think it will because they have forest at the southern edge of their territory that can be harvested, and the timber they sell will cover the cost of planting and thinning. The Kwolonɛ can make money from timber, too, if you start planting some of your western prairie.”

“In twenty years! We’re better off letting the grass grow very tall and selling it for straw, or growing the best cattle in the world on it. If we burn the prairie every spring, we can get rich grass. The Kwolonɛ are not lumbermen.” He leaned close. “But we are computer people. The palace approved my request for a phone. My son will go get one tomorrow or the next day. Since Staurɛgéndu handles all tax collection and tribal expenditures, he’s the logical one to keep it. Can you train him?”

“Sure, I’ll be glad to. I’d train at least one other person, maybe two, because a phone can be used as a computer twenty-four hours a day.”

“Can it show movies, like your laptop?”

“Yes, but the screen is small, so it isn’t as interesting. I don’t know how long it’ll take to enter the tax receipts and tribal expenditures; probably four to six hours a day. There’s a branch of the Royal Bank here and they might want to use it several hours a day as well. The usual rental rate is half a dhanay per hour.”

“I had no idea we could make so much money from it! If we use it to show movies, we could make money that way as well.”

“And each of these functions requires a different person. I’d have Brébiku or someone here in the school trained to use it as well because it can open pages of information.”

“I suppose we can look up the weather.”

“Yes, but now channel 1 broadcasts it every hour, and I think channel 6 may broadcast weather almost constantly; it’s that useful to the kingdom. There are libraries and libraries of pages of information in English; your school will need someone who can read it. And there’s a system on it called ‘Bola,’ ‘Page’ but with the -a “place” ending, where everyone and every institution can create an informational page and can receive messages. The Kwolonɛ tribe could set up a page with information about the tribe so people wanting to learn about you can do so easily, and they could send messages. You can have a personal page where people can send messages to you and you can send messages back.”

Staurɛkɛstɛr shook his head. “That’s too much for me, and besides, the phone will be too busy for things like that.”

“Maybe not. If you want suggestions, lord, I’d train Sunéru to use the computer. He’s bright, he can write pretty well, and I think he’d be good with it. You don’t have anyone here who has studied English, do you?”

“I don’t think so. I’ve heard of the language. Is that something you can teach?”

“I know English; it’s my native language, in fact. But no one can learn a language in a few weeks or months. It takes years. Ekwusu has the skills, I think.”

“He wants to go to Mɛlwika Génadɛma, too, as you probably know. Can he get a scholarship?”

"I think so, but the tribe will need to provide 100 or 200 dhanay."

"We can do that, if he can get the scholarship."

"I'll ask him, and help him fill out the form if he's interested."

"Thank you. Lord Dhoru, I had a most unexpected and interesting visitor today. Lord Walékwɛs drove all the way here from Gordha to talk. We've never had such a talk before. They have a phone as well; they were on the original list to get one, and they've had it over a month. But Walékwɛs didn't seem to know how they were using it, other than accounting and in their génadɛma. It sounds like we have the possibility of advancing farther with ours, for they are not using theirs efficiently. He was trying to get me to support a meeting of Tutanɛ tribes in Gordha to discuss development."

"Such a meeting is a good idea, is it not? The Tutanɛ can do more together than separately."

"True, but the meeting needs to be here, under the auspices of the only Tutanɛ duke! That's what I told him, and he didn't like it. I am under the impression that Mɛlwika has a much closer relationship with Gordha than with us. I suppose that's why they have a génadɛma and a hospital."

"I think that's true, lord," replied Thornton, speaking very carefully. "But it's never too late to change the situation. Our relationship with Gordha was easier in the earlier years because there was an old Royal Road going through there, an established relationship with the army, the city had a major dam that produced much of our electricity, and we helped them feed their livestock during a particularly bitter winter over a decade ago. Your development plan includes a génadɛma and a hospital, and we're committed to help create them."

“That’s true. But talking to Walékwɛs makes me want to accelerate plans for both. I’d like to open Kwolona Génadɛma and Mɛdhpéla Hospital before the end of this year.”

“That’s easy if you start small. There are already génadɛma courses offered at the high school; if you can dedicate a classroom or two and a few offices nearby to the génadɛma, you can launch it this fall using the existing courses. Faculty can drive down from Mɛlwika. But a real Kwolona Génadɛma would have professors who live here. You can hire Eryan for now and gradually add Kwolonɛ faculty as they get trained. But to do that, you’ll need to send more students to Mɛlwika Génadɛma. You already have a doctor here; if you call his office a hospital, you have a hospital until you can build a proper one.”

Staurɛkɛstɛr nodded. “I don’t think we can get more money from the palace. Do you think your father can help in any way?”

“He’s on the western shore right now; we can’t ask him easily until he’s back this fall. I am sure he’ll commit some scholarships.”

“If we use the phone to show movies to a hundred people every night for two dontay each, we can collect ten dhanay per night with it, and use that for the génadɛma and hospital. That would help. Is there any way at all you can come here to give some courses? People like you, and your presence will lend prestige to our génadɛma.”

“I’m already committed to give courses in Oceanography at Nuarjora and Arjdhura in the fall, lord, and those courses will take a lot of my time. But I might be able to get here one afternoon a week to teach something I know well, like geology or ecology.”

"Please do! I hope that's a commitment, lord, because we could use it. We want to arise as a people and need assistance of exactly that sort. Bring Lébé and the children along as well. We'll treat the children royally while both of you teach classes."

Thornton looked at Staurɛkɛstɛr. "I'll ask Lébé about it, lord, and I promise we'll consider the offer very carefully."

The motorcade of four luxurious steam cars rolled into Pértatranisér and headed for the Engineering Building. It turned into the quadrangle of génadɛma buildings and parked. The entourage stepped out of the cars, including Queen Estoibidhé.

Chris, Liz, Amos, and May were there to greet them. They all descended onto bended knee as Her Majesty approached them, then rose on her bidding to shake hands with her. "What a beautiful, comfortable day to visit Pértatranisér," said Her Majesty. "Esto is smiling on us."

"We've had two months of heat and humidity, and now this extraordinary day," agreed May. "We are delighted you could make it, Your Majesty."

"I am looking forward with great anticipation seeing a demonstration of your automatic dialing machine, and afterward I'd like a tour of the campus, especially of the women's géndha."

"Of course," replied Amos. "This way." He began to lead the party forward; he was lord of the city, not Chris, and the first stop was his invention. The Queen began to ask Amos about the city's growth and the effect of the recession as they walked, so Chris retreated a bit to walk next to Aryéstu, the royal economic advisor.

"How's the tour?" he asked.

"I just joined yesterday, the last day in Sumiupɛrakwa. They've rebuilt the town quite well. I'm impressed by the healing that's started in Bɛllɛdha. Everyone's back to work and the publicity actually increased orders for Bɛllɛdha-made goods slightly, so the work situation is better than anticipated."

"Lord Déolu told me; I talked to him three days ago. The *Royal Standard* just published an article suggesting the slowdown is ending."

Aryéstu nodded. "I was the anonymous source for the article. It's rather ironic; we haven't been able to build the grain storage facilities as fast as planned, so there's a shortage of new storage and that has produced a grain surplus and a drop in the sales price. That's spurring confidence and freeing cash for purchase of other goods."

"Interesting," said Chris. "In the last week I've seen tax collection data from Mɛlwika, South Ménwika, Mɛlita, and Pértatranisér. Manufacturing is still down, but it has picked up five percent. Tax receipts from agriculture are up twenty-five to thirty-five percent, because crop prices are high and everyone has planted every square meter of their land. Mɛlita has had the highest agricultural tax revenues ever seen. Both Gramdhunas and Ornтroba are filling because farm prices are high. People are breaking the sod as fast as they can. That's absorbing unemployment and tightening the labor market."

"That's what we're seeing, too. The slowdown will be over in another two or three months. But the year overall will see no growth; gross domestic product will be flat."

"It'll grow next year," said Chris.

Aryéstu nodded. The party had entered the engineering building and headed to the large lab in the rear, where the dialing machine was located. It was cubical and about a meter and a half long, wide, and high. The top was punctuated by a grid of plugs; wires entered on one side. “Here it is, Your Majesty,” said Amos.

“I see. How does it work?”

“Telephones will now have dials. If you put your finger in the hole for ‘8’ and move it back to the beginning, when the dial returns to its old position it will emit eight clicks. Not only will you hear them; the clicks will be transmitted as electrical pulses over the telephone line. When they come into this machine, the eight pulses will tell the machine to move a connector eight positions. Every telephone number will be four digits and four connector wires will all have to be moved the right number of pulses to connect your telephone to a particular other phone. I will demonstrate.” Amos picked up a wire with a plug on its end that connected to a telephone on a table nearby and plugged it into the side of the dialing machine. Then he picked up a second plug and pointed to the grid of holes on top. “We have a grid with numbers on the right and across the bottom. You will note that the right hand numbers run from 10 to 30. The numbers along the bottom are the same, so we have a grid of 20 by 20 holes, 400 altogether. Would you like to suggest a four digit number, such as ‘1111’?”

“Certainly. How about. . . 1526.”

“Very well.” Amos plugged the other telephone into the 1526 grid hole. He turned to the first telephone and picked it up. “You’ll note the tone; the machine makes it, so you know it’s ready to receive a number.” He slowly dialed 1526. Inside the machine they could hear a series of clicks. Then the second telephone rang.

The queen smiled, pleased. Amos handed her the first phone and picked up the second and spoke into it. “You can hear my voice over the circuit; we’ve made a connection.”

“Brilliant! But how about the computers and cellphones? How will they use this system?”

“They are already equipped with the ability to make dial clicks; you press the right combination of numbers on their keypads. So they will be able to communicate over this system. It will be very slow, however, because our telephone system is not quiet; there’s a lot of static in it. We’ll need to upgrade the system over the next few years in order to speed up the connections.”

“Excellent. I am very nervous about sending sensitive information over the aliénɛ’s system. I want it to travel over our own system instead.”

“But how will this work if the two computers are in different cities?” asked Kandékwɛs, puzzled. “Then they won’t be on the same switchboard.”

“Correct. The switchboards will have no numbers starting with zero on them. If you want to call intercity, you’ll pick up the phone and dial zero first. If you then want to dial the operator, you’ll dial zero again, and he or she will receive a ring. To dial another city, you’ll need the city code, which will be based on our existing system of numbering roads and license plates. Thus Mɛddoakwés will be 10, Bɛllɛdha 20, Anartu 30, Néfa 40, Ora 50, etc. Dialing that number will connect you to an existing line to that city; if they’re all occupied, you’ll hear a special tone indicating they’re all busy, and you’ll have to try again later. If you want the operator in that city, you dial 0; if you know the

four-digit number, you dial it. Thus if you want to call the number 1111 in Ora from Mɛddoakwés you'd dial 0-50-1111."

"What about the villages?" asked Wɛpokɛstɛr.

"Take Jérnstisér province as an example," said Amos. "Sumiupɛrakwa and three villages near it will be assigned 28. But Sumiupɛrakwa might have 28-1000 through 28-4999, whereas one of those villages will have 28-5000 through 28-5999."

"I see," said Wɛpokɛstɛr. He chuckled. "Of course, that whole province has only fifty phones."

"True. Right now the whole world has 7,000 telephones, but demand is growing at ten percent per year. We'll have to plan the numbers carefully. This system will give us 900,000 numbers. If we need more, we'll make the city codes three digits."

"And when we install this system, will everyone be able to pick up their phone, dial a number, and talk to anyone else with a phone without talking to an operator?" asked the Queen.

Amos nodded. "It will take quite a while because it'll be expensive. We'll start with the cities with the most telephones: Mɛddoakwés, Mɛlwika, Ora, ɛndraidha, Pértatranisér, Tripola. Many of them already serve neighboring villages because a typical village has access to three or four telephone lines with up to eight phones on each. The switching machine can send out three short rings, or three long rings, or a short and two longs, or whatever combination each phone on the party line needs. We'll have to string a lot of new inter-village lines to use them, though."

"How much will this cost?"

“It won’t be cheap. It cost us 146,000 dhanay over six years to develop this prototype. Two people worked on it constantly for the last two and a half years. And we need to improve it, because it still drops calls or makes a bad connection two percent of the time. Mɛlwika and Mɛddwoglubas had to develop new abilities to make small, precise equipment, so that we could build this. Each mechanical switchboard will cost about five thousand dhanay. We’ll need thirty-five, to start. Eventually, we’ll need one per village, but they should get cheaper. We’ll also need to string a lot more wires, but it’s cheaper to install a mechanical switchboard in a village than it is to string several new wires between it and the rest of the world.”

They all nodded, impressed. “What’s this stack of paper cards down here?” asked Duke Kandékwɛs.

Amos smiled. “I’m glad you asked. When you make a long distance connection, this card will be punched with a series of holes that represent your number, the number you called, and the time. When you hang up, another card will be punched with your number and the time. A person can read the punches and bill you for the call. Eventually, we’ll build a machine to do it.”

“Clever,” said the queen. “Has the telephone company already paid for the development of the machine? Has it figured out how it will pay to deploy them?”

“The Mennea family funded the development,” replied Chris. “It is a gift to the kingdom.”

“But a grant from the crown will help with the manufacture of the switching machines,” added Amos.

The queen nodded and pondered. “I’ll need to discuss the matter with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I think we could provide a grant of fifty thousand for the rest of this year to build switching equipment. Next year we could offer the same amount of cash and an interest-free loan of the same size.”

“That would be an immense help,” said Amos, with a slight bow. “There was a slowdown in new telephones this year, but once the economy recovers we could have orders for as many as a thousand new ones next year.”

“How will the old phones work with this switchboard, if they lack dials?” asked Estoibidhé.

“All telephones will have to be replaced with new phones equipped with dials; it’ll cost almost 50,000 dhanay to convert them all over. Meanwhile, someone with an old telephone can pick up their phone and wait; the switching machine will connect them to an operator after ten seconds, who will dial the number for them.”

“When can the palace and ɛndraidha get their switching machines and new phones?”

Amos thought. “Three months.”

The queen smiled. “Excellent.”

Reread and edited 6/20/13, 9/3/17, 12/3/24

407.

The Power of Water

Early Abɛlmánu/late Aug. 18/636

So many Kwolonɛ youth wanted to visit the sacred springs, Thornton had to charter a bus; not an easy thing, until the Isurdhuna pilgrimage was over. Lord Staurɛkɛstɛr and several elders came along as well. They left a hot, humid Mɛdhpéla early in the morning and reached the cool, forested mountains around the sacred spring, located at the junction of the Majakwés and Kaitakwés, about noon.

"It's so beautiful, so special," said Lord Staurɛkɛstɛr as they stepped off the bus in a glade near the side of the road. "We haven't been here for years. Thank you for arranging this."

"Why, Lord, haven't you visited?" asked Thornton.

"I'm not sure. We used to ride our horses due east, over the mountains to the land of the Kaitɛrɛ, then north to here; we had to avoid the territory of the Mɛghɛndrɛ, of course. After the battle of Mɛlwika we lost a lot of horses, our Kaitɛrɛ cousins were leery to let us cross their land, and I think we lost confidence in ɛndro. Maybe we have it back now."

"I pray so, Lord."

Staurɛkɛstɛr nodded and began to lead everyone uphill along a steaming brook toward a cluster of hot springs two hundred meters away. He looked with great anticipation at two pillars marking the entrance into the sacred precincts, but once he saw them, his smile faded a bit. "What is it?" asked Thornton.

“Lord, I love this spot and was always so impressed by its magnificence, but now after nineteen years, and having seen so many new buildings, I realize it is old and ruined.”

Thornton smiled. “I understand. Maybe it’s time to rebuild it, then. Is this place sacred to all the Tutanɛ?”

“All the tribes I know; the nine tribes of the western slopes of the Spine.”

“Perhaps the tribes could apply to the palace for a grant to rebuild the springs.”

Staurɛkɛstɛr shook his head. “They might not agree, but we shouldn’t take their money, anyway. We should do it ourselves, if we can find the will to do it together.”

That will be the hard part,” said Thornton.

They passed through the monumental entrance, which was one of several openings in a massive wall around the springs. All but one spring in turn had an enclosure around it, and a few of the smaller ones had traces of collapsed roofs. The exception was the largest spring of all. It was surrounded by an ancient plaza, now broken by dozens of fir trees and enclosed by a ring of twenty-four Stonehenge-like megaliths. Outside the megalith ring, in areas between the enclosed springs, were a dozen or so ancient mounds that Thornton realized were probably ancient burial tombs.

They walked past entrances to two springs on the right and headed straight toward the largest spring. When they neared a megalith, Thornton saw carvings and stopped to look. He smiled to Staurɛkɛstɛr. “This is an ancient Eryan inscription!”

“Really? Can you read it?”

Thornton shook his head. “Only a little bit; I think this word is ‘being.’ Yes, this must be ‘great’; ‘great being.’” He pulled out his cellphone and took a picture. “I’ll send this to our archaeologist later.”

“So; we could read, once upon a time?”

“Indeed!”

Staurɛkɛstɛr led them forward to the great central spring, which was set in a large stone-lined pool, though the stone work was old and ruined and the pool full of mud, leaves, and rotting branches. The southern side had a cleared area where they could set up a drum; he pointed where to put it. Kowéranu looked at Thornton and the Bahá'í youth nervously. “We can return to the bus or sit quietly,” Thornton suggested.

Staurɛkɛstɛr shook his head. “No, you are welcome to participate in the ceremony. The waters have powers and you will benefit from the sacred bath. You know our hymns as well as our own youth. You can add a few Bahá'í hymns, if you wish.”

“Thank you,” said Thornton.

They gathered around the drum, which soon began a beat, reinforced by a flute player. Kowéranu led them in two hymns to ɛndro they all knew and let the Bahá'ís offer their own prayer, then he led them, verse by verse, through a special healing hymn to the god Mitro, god of promises, contracts, and affection toward others. “This place is sacred to all four gods, Wɛrano, Saré, Mitro, and ɛndro,” he explained. “It is sacred to the spirits, their children, as well, and to that *Maj Estanto,* the Great Being, above them all.” They all nodded and Thornton wondered whether *Esto* was simply a form of *Maj Estanto.*

Then Kowérano began to chant a hymn by himself, one which began by repeating what he had just said, but using words and metrical schemes that were strange and archaic. He sang about healing us from our sins, our weaknesses, our disloyalty to the gods and to the tribe, and begged the gods for strength to obey and do our duties. Everyone periodically repeated a refrain, “Heal us, O Mitro” or “Heal us, O ɛndro”; the Kwolonɛ seemed to know which one was the right one to use, though Thornton had trouble guessing, and the Bahá'í youth waited to see which name the others would use. The drum and flute continued and punctuated the rhythm of the words.

Then Kowéranu stopped. He reached down to a jug and poured a thick red liquid into a large bowl, which he raised high over his head. “This is the essence of the cow, our sacred source of life, our chief food and support. It will bless and cleanse us. And this spring represents the water of life; it relieves us of thirst, renews our own essence, and washes away our sins. Let us heal ourselves with them. Step forward, I will anoint you, and then immerse yourselves in the spring.”

The men and youth formed a line and stripped off their clothes. Some kept on their loincloths or underpants; others removed everything. Lord Staurɛkɛstɛr, in his loincloth, stepped up to Kowéranu, similarly clothed and standing in the shallow water. Kowéranu anointed the chief on his forehead with a generous smear of pasty cow’s blood, then the lord stepped out into the depths until he was up to his neck in water.

The line slowly moved forward. Thornton, in his underpants, stepped into the water, which was almost too hot to stand in; his skin felt like it was burning. He waded slowly down the line until he reached the widu, who without hesitation repeated the

sacred words and smeared Thornton's forehead with the substance. Thornton waded away, trying not to go in so fast that he felt like he was on fire.

The Kwolonɛ youth took the ceremony less seriously than he did; a few went swimming in the pool, which was fifty meters across and several meters deep in the middle. The lord was careful not to get the blood washed off, but the youth didn't care as much. When Kowéranu had anointed the last one, he waded in and enjoyed a bit of a swim as well. "You need to be in the water of life to benefit from it," he explained to Thornton.

"The spring water will indeed have healing properties," Thornton agreed.

After about ten minutes, they all came out; the water was too hot to stay in much longer, anyway. They dried off and put on their clothes, then Kowéranu repeated another hymn and they headed back to the bus. There, they had baskets of sandwiches and steaks on ice. They took the food over to the bank of the Kaitakwés River where the hot water of the springs flowed in, started a fire, and roasted the meat. Jugs of wine and beer came out; some boys swam in the warmed waters of the river while the food cooked. Then they all sat on the rocks and ate together. Kowéranu sat by Thornton to ask him a few questions about Mɛlwika. When he stepped away to get another cut of steak, Sunéru came over and sat. "The lord just told me that you had recommended that I be one of the men trained to use the tribe's cell phone."

Thornton nodded. "I think you can learn how to use it quickly and teach others. You're smart and good at explaining things."

"Thank you, lord." Sunéru bowed his head slightly. "But . . . I am a bit surprised. Why have you honored me this way?"

Thornton frowned. “As I said, you are smart and good at explaining things. Those are very good reasons, are they not?”

“I am surprised that you recommended a Kwolonɛ at all.”

“Of course I will recommend a Kwolonɛ; it would make no sense to have someone come down from Mɛlwika to Kwolona. Your tribe has many talented and capable people and you are one of them. Besides, young people usually learn new things like these cell phones faster than older ones. You’ll do a fine job.”

“Thank you, I am honored.” He sat eating his steak and seemed nervous, like there was something else he needed to say. Thornton sat patiently, waiting. “Did you know, Lord, that my father died outside the walls of Mɛlwika?”

Thornton was startled by that. “No, I didn’t know, Sunéru. I am very saddened to hear that and I am sorry for it.”

“Thank you. Ever since, I have burned with the desire to avenge his death, and when I first heard you were coming, I hoped to have the opportunity to carry out my vow. But in the last few weeks, I have changed my mind.”

Thornton looked at Sunéru closely, alert that this wasn’t a warning that he intended to carry out his vow after all. Then Thornton said, “Sixteen years ago, all of us—those on the walls and those outside the walls—were carrying out our duties. It was a most unfortunate situation, that our respective duties involved the imperative to kill each other. But now, our duties are the duties to friends, and we can rejoice in that. We can also pay respect to the dead of both the city and the tribe, for they were courageous men who did their duty and sacrificed everything for their duty. This is something everyone understands and holds in the highest esteem.”

“Very true.” Sunéru ate another bite. “The lord also said that you recommended me for génadɛma.”

“That is correct. You will need to improve your grades, but once you have finished high school, I think you will do very well in génadɛma.”

“Improve my grades.” Sunéru considered that, then nodded. “I can do that.”

Fifty thousand people saw it on this year’s pilgrimage.

Shining and metallic, the Kɛrda chimney snaked up a ravine eroded in the side of the escarpment, one thousand meters from the base to the very top, then extended another fifty meters into the air over the forest of firs dominating the stony plateau above. Queen Estoibidhé visited its base, but said nothing about the chimney itself, asking about the gas plant and its ability to heat the entire valley instead. From the industrial park outside Isurdhuna, however, with a pair of binoculars, she scrutinized it carefully.

“You can see it so much better here; a few kilometers of distance helps.” She gazed at it again through binoculars. “It almost looks like something alive and crawling up the slope.”

“Doesn’t it?” agreed Chris Mennea. “We have searched the record books and cannot find anything like it on Gɛdhéma. This is a unique engineering achievement.”

“Really? And I see the smoke stays up there and blows away from the valley floor entirely, even if it blows across the valley.”

“Exactly,” said Wɛranokaru, director of the province’s tomi. “The smoke stays a thousand meters above the floor, so the valley’s air is not polluted. The effect is amazing.

Half the valley is already cooking with gas instead of wood and dung, and the air is noticeably cleaner than it used to be."

"So, Lord Chris, will we need something like this for Réjéiwika and the Long Valley as well?" asked the queen.

"In a few years, yes. The Long Valley is four times as large as Kɛrda and has a sixth the population, so it is not very polluted. Réjéiwika gets a gas plant later this year. It will be built against the valley's eastern edge so that a chimney can be added, but right now its air pollution will blow past Réjéwika and dissipate in the lower valley, which is much wider and draftier than Kɛrda."

"What will it burn? Coal?"

"No, wood from the highlands. We haven't yet found any coal deposits in the Long Valley. The city has biogas digesters that can provide most of its daily supply of cooking gas; many farmers are raising herds of cattle on the open, grassy valley floor. It appears to be the most economical form of agriculture. The water gas plant will supply heating gas for the winter and for industrial purposes."

"I see." She looked at the valley around them. "How much coal does Kɛrda have?"

"About half a century or a century, depending on consumption," replied Wɛranokaru. "But we also have a huge potential source of hydroelectric power. The Rudhisér flows through a gluba thirty-six kilometers to the Néfa Basin and drops four hundred meters in that distance. If we build two dams on it, each about a hundred meters high—which is as high as the dam at Gordha—it is capable of generating over fifty thousand kilowatts of power, equal to the needs of Kɛrda and Rudhisér."

“We already have a dam across the bottom,” noted Estoibidhé.

“Yes, forty meters high. We’ll need two more, twice as high,” replied Wɛranokaru.

“How old are the sides of the gluba? Are they unstable? Could a reservoir cause a collapse and a blockage of the gluba, flooding Kɛrda?”

“A wise question, Your Majesty,” replied Chris. He glanced at Wɛranokaru; he disliked contradicting him. “The Geological Survey would need to investigate. The coal beds in the valley tell you that this valley has been filled by a lake before. I think Thornton estimated it has been flooded at least three times, based on the catastrophic flood remains downstream.”

“Correct,” said Wɛrankaru. “I have personally explored the top ten kilometers of the gluba by canoe. It is narrow, the walls are high, and they have been undercut by the river in some places. Landslide debris blocks the bottom every few kilometers, converting it into a chain of small lakes separated by rapids and thick jungle. We might be able to float construction equipment down the river to an upper dam construction site. The lower dam would be built at the top end of the current reservoir, and would be reached by boat across its reservoir.”

“Expensive,” commented Wɛpokɛstɛr.

“Kɛrda also has hydroelectric potential from rivers flowing into the valley, though,” observed the queen. “They are smaller than the rivers flowing into the Long Valley. Maybe we could get experience here that we could use there.”

“They are rather small,” replied Chris. “The biggest, the western branch, flows over several sacred waterfalls and right past the traditional gathering place of widus, so it

shouldn't be defaced by a hydroelectric project. Possibly the North or South Branches of the Rudhisér could be used for hydroelectric power, though.

"As for the Rudhisérgluba, it is fundamentally very difficult to build a series of dams in a gorge that is so narrow and steep that the only access is from both ends. One cannot build a road down the side of the gluba to a dam site. And such dams are susceptible to catastrophic failure if a large landslide drops into the reservoir and forces a wave over the top. I suspect an engineering committee will tell us that dams in the Rudhisérgluba are prohibitively expensive."

"What about a larger dam in the Glugluba? The walls have been swept clean of potential landslides," asked the Queen.

"The Geological Survey and the Army engineers should study that project. The easiest project would be to enlarge the dam upstream of Ora. But the floor of the gluba doesn't have enough material to build a dam, so it'd have to be hauled in, which would be expensive. We may wish to leave the glubas alone. We don't have to tame every place on this world. They are beautiful wilderness areas to explore by canoe."

"I don't usually associate you with leaving nature unchanged, Lord," said Wɛpokɛstɛr.

Chris nodded. "Development of resources has some limits. In the last few years I have focused on the creation of timber companies, so that this world's forests are not destroyed. But I have also been advocating the creation of preserves for nature, because we now have the power to destroy this entire world, agri by agri. We need to leave some areas alone for the animals, or there will be no beasts left to hunt or admire. These two

big glubas, though, are special. We can flood parts of them, but I hope we leave some of them alone."

"We will have to consider that carefully," agreed Estoibidhé.

Rostamu was happy that Jordan let him drive. "So, you trust my driving, now?"

Jordan smiled. "Well, Thornton let you borrow his steam car for the day to drive to Mɛlita, and there's a lot less traffic where we're going, than on Routes 2 and 3." He pointed right at the end of the driveway. "Go back to Route 3 and south five kilometers. I'll show you where to turn."

"Okay. Wow, Andru's grown so much!"

"Three months; a lot of changes. He's just about beginning to smile. It's just so amazing. A miracle, really."

"I envy you."

"Don't worry, your time will come. It sounds like the Kwolonɛ youth have been quite a challenge!"

"It was difficult; the more I look back at it, the more I realize it was hard. But they trust us now; we've become friends. Even Sunéru. Did you hear that he told Thornton he had originally wanted to kill him?"

"What? No!"

"That's what he said when we visited the sacred springs! But he has no intention of doing it now. In fact, he's agreed to apply to Mɛlwika Génadɛma. He's smart. If he gets in, he and I may even be in some classes together!"

"Two incoming Freshmen."

Rostamu stopped at the stop sign, waited, and turned left onto Route 3, which was pretty busy. “So, how many farmers in Orntroba and Gramdhunas?”

“One hundred fifty in Orntroba, one hundred in Gramdhunas; not bad, for a few months. They’ve taken an average of forty agris each, but so far the average planting has been about fifteen agris. Half are settled on our estates and half elsewhere in the townships.”

“And estate lords?”

“Wɛranu has given out almost his entire township to his three sons in law and two of their adult sons. He has kept only a thousand agris for his own use. So he has assured the future of his own family. Estoiyaju has two estate lords, in addition to us and to Wértéstu, and the rest is his for now. His daughter says she and her husband don’t want an estate.”

“He’s doing well in the employ of Duke Aryékwɛs anyway.”

“Exactly, and they want an estate closer to the capital. There’s still room south of the city.”

In another minute, they reached a sign pointing left and saying “Gramdhunas, 9 km.” So Rostamu turned onto the dirt road. In ten minutes they came to a concreted stretch that ran 100 meters to the roundabout with Route 14, which was also concreted for a hundred meters to the north and south. The tallest object nearby was a spinning windmill with a squat metal water tank beneath it. Utility poles ran along Route 14, but they still lacked wires. A dozen houses of wood or cinder block and forty prefabs were strung out along the two roads, spaced fifty meters apart.

They reached the roundabout. On the southwest side was a large building under construction with a double-wide prefab in front of it; Jordan pointed to a spot near it where Rostamu could park. “This is the present store and post office, with the future one behind,” said Jordan. “The elementary school will go behind them. Estoiyaju’s mansion will be on the northwest corner of the roundabout. He plans to start it in the fall, once electrical and telephone lines reach here.”

“So, he’s still an absentee lord.”

“He doesn’t want to be stuck here without a phone or electricity for a radio! He drives down three times a week; he’s probably in Orntroba right now, in fact.”

“No sewers or piped water, yet?”

“No. Primanu’s not available, so Estanu’s putting them in this fall. Right now people fetch their water from the tank in buckets. Gramdhunas won’t have a compact village center; Estoiyaju has decided to put all the water lines along Route 14 and the road from Mɛlita. They’ll be able to provide irrigation water as well, that way. The pipes won’t be buried, except right here at the center. No sewers; the houses are far enough apart to have their own cesspools.”

“That saves money for the irrigation system.”

“Exactly. So does putting all the houses on the paved main roads; no side streets to survey and pave. The sewage situation is already working pretty well. The wooden and cinder block huts have outhouses behind. The prefabs have interior toilets with pipes to cesspools. Usually the farmer brings his two water buckets to the grange in the morning and carries them home at night, and that lets him boil some water and flush the toilet.”

“Women?”

"Not many; most men are renting out part of their prefab to another farmer and looking forward to a big enough harvest to let them go home and propose marriage to a sweetheart."

"Are they cooking for themselves, then?"

Jordan shook his head. "Not many! The prefabs have gas stoves and the store sells gas tanks, so they can; there's no firewood nearby. But the store sells sandwiches and the grange provides a hot eclipse meal for a nominal price." He pointed to a big tent on the northeast corner of the roundabout. "That's the grange. It's on our estate, which runs north and east from the roundabout about three and a half kilometers. The big tent is the mess tent."

"Where will we put our house?"

"North of the grange on Route 14. We'll need to build something on our lot to help fill the town center. I'd favor a two story structure; upstairs, a few bedrooms where some of us might stay sometimes; downstairs, a big hall that could be used for some formal occasions and otherwise for génadɛma classes. Maybe there should be some rooms downstairs, too, that could be used by a visiting clinic. Wértéstu, the town manager, will have a house on the southeast corner of the roundabout and his estate has two thousand agris running in those directions. For now, he has that double-wide prefab."

Rostamu nodded. He started up the steam car and drove round the roundabout to the exit for northbound Route 14. As they passed the grange he looked at a group of men unloading a trailer of corn. Most were close to his age or younger; he had just turned seventeen. It felt strange to think that he was an adult and felt envious of their independence. Jordan glanced at the men as well, but his eye, attuned to development

issues, saw something very different. The men were all wearing manufactured cotton overalls and tee shirts, often with designs or writing on them. Not a thread of homespun could be seen. After eighteen years, the sons of peasants had become young farmers, with gas stoves, flush toilets, and store-bought clothes.

Orntroba was nearly eighteen kilometers away, but on the well graveled roadbed, they moved along quickly. Both sides of the road had fields of ripening corn and wheat; it was the most heavily farmed part of the township. “We’ve had good farming weather, with regular rain,” observed Jordan. “We have two tractors working 20 hours a day breaking sod. We’re constantly planting.”

About half way to Orntroba, they reached the crew extending the electrical and telephone wires down the route. The last quarter of the route was concreted and smooth. Rostamu slowed as they entered the village site. “I like real villages with a grid of streets, but Estoiyaju’s plan to extend the houses along the main routes is cheaper.”

“Yes, Wɛranu has spent twenty thousand concreting side streets and installing water and sewer on them. He has more farmers, more businesses, and two of his daughters’ families have already started on villas, so Orntroba is developing more quickly.”

“Well, it’s on Route 5, also. Is that the grange?” Rostamu pointed to a building at the edge of the village.

“Yes. Let’s stop. We’re getting close to the eclipse time and there are a lot of farmers there. Wokwéstu may be in. I need to talk to him.”

Rostamu nodded and drove into the muddy plaza in front of the grange building, which was finished. They got out and immediately saw that something was going on; the

farmers were clustered in groups, talking, and they looked concerned. Jordan approached the first circle.

"Hail, Estodatu," he said to a young man he knew. "Is Wokwéstu in his office?"

"Lord Jordanu, haven't you heard? Lord Wɛranu is dead! Apparently he had a terrible pain in his chest, collapsed, and died an hour ago. His grandson Wɛranumégu, came over to tell Wokwéstu, he went to the house, and we haven't seen him since!"

"What will happen, lord?" asked another man. "Wɛranu had no sons, so who will be lord? How will the property be divided among his daughters?"

"And grandsons!" added Estodatu. "He has five!"

"The Queen will settle the question of lordship," said Jordan. "And we'll have to wait and see about the rest."

"There is terrible jealousy between the number one and number two daughters."

Jordan nodded; he had heard that as well, since they had come from different wives. Wɛranu had had two wives at once and had outlived both. "This happens in families, as you know. Wokwéstu is the town manager and that should continue."

"But he serves at the pleasure of the lord!" said Estodatu.

"It does no good standing around and speculating," persisted Jordan. 'There's nothing we can do."

"We should be praying for Wɛranu instead," suggested Rostamu. "Who can chant the Hymn of the Lamp beautifully? That is what we should do."

"And some Bahá'í prayers," suggested Estodatu. "Some of the farmers here are Bahá'ís. I like your prayers."

"Alright, let's chant," said Jordan. "Then Rostamu and I will go to the house to pay our respects. We were supposed to come meet Wɛranu and Estoiyaju during the eclipse."

Reread and edited 6/20/13, 9/3/17, 12/3/24

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Economic Summit

Late Abɛlménu/mid Brénménu 18/636

Queen Estoibidhé was impressed by Gordha. She hadn't visited it for some time and was always surprised by the progress made by the Mɛghɛndrɛ tribe. Their slaughterhouse was bigger and smellier than ever and had stock yards stretching over several agris southwest of town. The ice house had hundreds of tonnes of ice and two trucks were delivering more as she arrived. The biogas facility was amazingly big; trucks distributed small gas tanks all over the mountains and eastern shore, where gas stoves were spreading fast. Tomasu Miller was adding twenty more digesters that day and she spoke to him briefly to encourage his work. The leather tanning facility was expanding and a new shoe manufactory was under construction.

From the industrial park, the Queen and her party walked uphill to the town's ancient main square where a government building—the headquarters of the tribe—faced the Kwétrua on the south. She entered the building and was led to a conference room, where everyone sat. Wɛpokɛstɛr's team had brought her smaller, lower throne from Mɛddoakwés and she sat in it at the head of a circle of chairs.

"My esteem for the northern tribes and their capacities grows every day," she began. "Gordha is as large and modern as any city on the eastern or western shores. Your beef and leather are world renowned and now you are even converting the manure of your cattle to a powerful source of energy."

"And we have done much of this on our own," added Walékwɛs. "We are certainly grateful to the crown for the development grants you gave us; don't mistake my meaning, please. But it was the labor of the tribe itself that built the slaughterhouse; our men and women hauled the stones and mortared them into place. The concrete, iron, steel, and machinery we needed were mostly obtained through bank loans and loans from wealthy partners. Then the profits of the slaughterhouse were used to pay for everything else, even many of the biogas units. We were a tomi before there were tomis!"

"But you were blessed," replied Lord Ekwanu of the Méménɛgonɛ tribe, for the lords of all five of the "northern tribes"—the Mɛghɛndrɛ, Kréstonɛ, Késtonɛ, Méménɛghonɛ, and Kaitɛrɛ—and the headman of Kostɛkhéma were present that day. "The Mɛghɛndrɛ had huge herds of cattle and you already drove them to Mɛddoakwés annually, so you had a meat market. Then the army wanted to dam your gluba and they paid you generously for the privilege, plus gave you free electricity. Your workers who built the slaughterhouse had financial backing that my tribe lacks. And the Kaitɛrɛ had nickel-iron that Mɛlwika wanted, so they got a road and investment to provide that. My people are isolated and lack resources. They will work their fingers to the bone if they have a plan, a reason; but they have nothing to offer."

"Nothing?" asked the Queen. "You have a lead mine, and I understand it will expand this year. You have people and land, lord, so you have the means to develop. Ten days ago I visited Wurontroba. They are far more isolated than you. They are selling timber, dairy products, wild animal meat, potatoes, rye, and the women of their gabruli are doing beautiful embroidery."

The Krésonɛ were isolated, too, and we are moving forward now," added Patéwu.

“And the Késtonɛ, with our development plan, are moving as well,” added Lord Duku. “Our tomi is cutting timber and developing dairy. The Geological Survey found small deposits of tin, chromium, and tungsten on our land and we think we can dig and refine them. The Méménɛgonɛ have a cinnabar deposit to excavate.”

“And both of your tribes now have a better gravel road and are getting water and sewers,” added Estoibidhé. “You are progressing.”

“Your Majesty, we are proud of our traditions and heritage,” exclaimed Ekwanu. “The Wuronɛ, Kréstonɛ, and Késtonɛ have become Bahá'ís and have gotten money from the Menneas as a result. We do not want to sell out our beliefs and customs for money.”

“How dare you say we sold out for money!” shot back Duku. “We would never do that! The Menneas have made it clear that investment comes with a plan to use it. We developed a plan, and they invested in it!”

“That plan includes women learning to read and write and disobey their husbands!”

“Our women are just as obedient as they were!”

“But are your men as manly?”

Duku’s face turned red and he instinctively reached for his sword, which fortunately he did not have. The queen raised her hand. “Silence! I did not come here for this! Lord Ekwanu, your plan does not need to include the literacy of women, but your tribe does need to discuss the matter and the women need to contribute to that discussion.”

“Your Majesty, we have lived well the way we do for a thousand years and—”

“If you have lived well for a thousand years, why do you say you are poor now?”

Ekwanu sputtered. “Your Majesty, my people wish to live better, now that the world is living better, but we do not want our customs to change.”

“I’m not sure you can have one but not the other, lord. I do not impose my religion on others, lord; I am the Queen of the entire world, whether people follow the customs of Widumaj, the customs of the Sumi gods, the Kristanɛ customs, or the Bahá'í customs. So I do not impose the Bahá'í principle of equality of men and women. But I do insist that women be asked what they want, lord. Men cannot decide what is best for women. If women want to follow the old customs, that is their right. But if they want to learn to read and write, the men need to hear that and the schools need to consider how they can accommodate that request. Similarly, if men want to read, the tribe needs to provide the opportunity; and if they do not want to learn to read, that is their right. ”

“But do they need to ask their wives if they want to read?”

The Queen scowled. “If a man is poor and there is a way he can make more money if he can read, perhaps his wife has something to say about that, lord!”

Ekwanu bowed to the Queen in response; he wasn’t going to pursue the argument further.

“Your Majesty, I have a question,” said Lord Magékɛru of the Kaitɛrɛ. “Kwolona is now a province of its own. Does this meeting with the ‘northern tribes,’ as you have called them, indicate any kind of reorganization of our area, such as to create a new province?”

She looked at the five lords and the headman of Kostɛkhéma, most of whose faces betrayed worry; even Lord Walékwɛs, the logical duke of such a province, looked uncertain. The exception was Patékwu, who had talked to his Wuronɛ cousin and knew

what arrangement had been made there. “The Kwolonɛ are a single tribe with a single territory, so they logically make a single province. But the northern tribes, like the southern tribes—the Kwétékwonɛ and Wuronɛ—constitute a ‘district’ instead. Districts have many development foci; in your case, each village or town is a development focus. But some are larger than others because some places are larger than others. A committee of lords and wise men in the district will allocate the Duke’s share—one tenth of the taxes.”

“A committee? Does that mean a consultative assembly? It will be dominated by the Mɛghɛndɛrɛ,” said Ekwanu.

“The Mɛghɛndɛrɛ have about half the population of northern tribes, but less than a third of the land. Even the tribes that are small in population are large in land. The purpose of the Duke’s share will be to encourage district-wide planning. Together, your people have a lot of resources.”

“But they are not the resources of a district; they are resources *of tribes,*” pointed out Ekwanu.

“And what about Kostɛkhéma?” asked Mitrubbéru. “There are members of all the tribes there, and it has no land of its own.”

“Exactly,” said Estoibidhé. “Mémɛnɛgonɛ and Késtonɛ in particular.” She raised a hand. “For years, the tribes here have complained that they are poor. Then they complain that the crown invests money and doesn’t ask them what is best. Then they complain some tribes get richer and others don’t. Then the crown offers them a small amount every year to plan together, and they complain about that!”

“We will plan the duke’s share together, for our mutual benefit, Your Majesty,” pledged Patékwu.

“That’s what I ask.” She looked at the others. They were not enthusiastic. “We’ll rotate the chairing of the council, with Patékwu chairing it this year. All of you will serve. In addition, the Mɛghɛndɛrɛ will have four representatives, the Kaitɛrɛ three, and the others one each, selected by the lords this time and by election in the future. I will appoint two representatives as well, for a total of nineteen, who will devise a plan to spend the duke’s share in the land of the northern tribes.”

The mobile home was packed up and ready to move. The steam car was hitched to it and warmed up. The pickup truck was packed with bedrolls, clothes, and cooking equipment.

A hundred Kwolonɛ had come to say goodbye to Thornton, his family, and the Bahá'í youth. When Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr arrived, everyone formed a semicircle in front of the mobile home to hear him speak.

“For three months, the Kwolonɛ have benefitted from your visit,” began the chief. “Our city is cleaner, our youth have been inspired to serve their tribe, they have learned many things—including swimming—and we have been given a new vision of what our tribe can accomplish. We have even gotten a smart phone and have learned how to use it. To say we are grateful would be an understatement. Therefore, we wish to give a gift to all of the youth and adults who came here this summer. Will Thornton and the boys step forward.”

Thornton, surprised, led the boys forward. Rostamu and Jalalu came along, but Jonkrisu stayed with his mother, until Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr beckoned him forward as well.

Staurɛkɛstɛr held up the gift. “An eagle feather for your hair, for you are all honorary Kwolonɛ now.” Thornton nodded, a bit reluctantly, then stepped forward and bowed slightly. Staurɛkɛstɛr tied a feather into his hair over his right ear. “This feather represents the strength and bravery of the eagle. May ɛndro give you courage and determination to follow the path he guides you to.”

One by one, slightly embarrassed yet impressed, the boys stepped forward and received their feathers. “We will wear these feathers with great care, for this is a very great honor,” said Thornton. “We will strive to demonstrate the courage and determination of a true Kwolonɛ warrior.”

“Thank you, well spoken,” replied Staurɛkɛstɛr. “Will the girls and women now come forward, for my wife will give them the sweetgrass necklaces.”

Lébé led the girls forward and the duchess held up a necklace. “Sweetgrass is beloved of Saré. It represents fertility, growth, and persistence. The medallion of eagle feathers at the bottom convey the power of the winged ones, their perception, strength, and determination. This is something we all wear at sacred ceremonies and special occasions.”

“We have seen them,” agreed Lébé.

“May this give you the qualities of sweetgrass and of the eagle.” The duchess placed a necklace around Lébé’s bowed neck, followed by the necks of the girls.

“It was a great privilege to serve here this summer,” said Thornton. “I think all of us will be back. I know I will be in the second fall term to teach at your new génadɛma.”

“I trust Sunéru, Ekwusu, and Rudhdamyu will be back soon as well, to teach us,” said Staurɛkɛstɛr. He turned to them. “Learn well, so you can return and serve your people.”

“We will, lord,” replied Ekwusu.

Rudhdamyu began to chant a Kwolonɛ hymn to ɛndro and they all joined in, then a Bahá'í youth chanted a Bahá'í prayer as well. Then the youth climbed onto the pickup’s flatbed, including Ekwusu, Sunéru, and Rudhdamyu, who were going to Mɛlwika Génadɛma with them. Thornton got into the steam car with Lébe and the kids and started forward, the pickup following. The Kwolonɛ applauded them as they drove around to the front of the school and turned left onto Route 2. Mɛlwika was less than an hour away.

Mɛlwika was thronging with huge crowds when Chris reluctantly left the city in his battered rover for the palace. Aryéstu had been quite vague about the invitation to discuss “economic matters.” Chris wondered whether the Queen, who had completed her tour of the kingdom at Gordha three weeks earlier, would be present as well.

The road was packed with steam vehicles, wagons, and bicycles heading east, toward Mɛlwika; he was glad to be going in the other direction. Mɛddoakwés was only twenty minutes away on the good road, and parking behind the palace was much improved. He was in the conference room thirty minutes after stepping out of his house. Mitru was there; Dumuzi; Aryéstu; Modobéru, the new chancellor of the exchequer; Duke Kandékwɛs; Lord Mitruiluku of Kérékwɛs; Wɛpokɛstɛr; and finally, the Queen.

“With the Consultative Assembly scheduled to start in a few days, I asked Her Majesty whether we could call this meeting to discuss some economic matters,” began

Aryéstu. “As I am sure all of you have noticed, last year’s recession is over. Harvests this year have been extraordinary, partly because of new townships and a lot of new land under cultivation. Prices were strong in the spring because we were purchasing grain for the new storage silos, and the prices held up into the fall because we continued to fill them. We spent much more than expected on grain, yet we ended up with a surplus in tax collections anyway. Four million more.”

Chris and some of the others were surprised by that. Mitruiluku said, “Whew! No wonder sales have taken off.”

“Miller Motors is back to two shifts and may start a third,” added Mitru.

“And Mɛlwika’s Harvest Festival is huge,” noted Chris.

“Agricultural prices are driving business cycles,” agreed Aryéstu. “A bad winter means a food panic, people stop buying other things, and the industrial sector of the economy shrinks. But everything recovers the following fall when harvest prices are strong. If harvests are too large and crop prices plunge, farmers stop buying things and that also causes a panic. So we have called this meeting to see what we can do to dampen out the cycles.”

There was silence around the table as everyone considered the challenge. Finally, Dumuzi said, “What do you suggest?”

“We need to dampen out the farming cycles and the business cycles,” replied Aryéstu. “We will never flatten them out completely, and our efforts periodically will fail and there will be a business fluctuation anyway. We now have a substantial grain surplus; sufficient to prevent panics from a severe winter. We will continue to build up our surplus over the next few years, especially if the harvests are extremely large; that will help set a

floor under grain prices. After that, I am hoping that better forecasting will help farmers to create fewer surpluses."

"That is difficult, but the spread of granges will help, because they coordinate the farmers' planting decisions," said Chris. "Nevertheless, surpluses are to some extent unavoidable, and we can expect a gradual decline in crop prices as mechanization spreads and improves."

"Do you agree, however, that we can smooth out agricultural cycles?" asked the queen.

Chris nodded. "Yes, government policy can go a long way towards it. Government policy can smooth out manufacturing cycles and credit cycles as well."

"Exactly," continued Aryéstu. "But it will require us to do something we have never wanted to do before: store monetary surpluses when we have a strong economy for expenditure when we have a weak economy. More than that: not loan out surplus as bank deposits or credit guarantees either, but literally let bills and coins sit in bank vaults."

"Why would you do that?" asked Mitru, puzzled.

"Because a big surplus will create lots of credit, which will cause lower interest rates, which in a booming economy will just stimulate it more and cause more boom," replied Aryéstu. "And that will eventually crash, as has happened several times already. The surplus needs to be released as credits and loans when the economy is contracting instead."

"Tell them about your proposed changes to the tomis," added the Queen.

Aryéstu nodded. "The large tomis can help a lot to flatten out the cycles by putting more of their expenditures into profit sharing and pensions and less into salaries.

Right now, in a downturn, people are laid off. If more revenue goes into profit sharing, the workers automatically get less in a downturn, salaries and hours can be preserved and workers can dip temporarily into their pension to compensate. If hours and salaries have to be cut, unemployment is still minimized. This way, tomis preserve their work force in downturns, and the workers are available at those times for other tasks, such as worker training and construction of new tomi facilities. If pensions shrink somewhat at that time, it contracts bank reserves and therefore available credit; but if the government has cash reserves that can be released during a downturn, that problem is avoided as well."

"Of course, workers need the pension for old age," said Chris.

"Agreed. Laws or regulations would be needed limiting how much of the pension can be withdrawn at other times, and we may want to supplement the pension savings in economic upturns."

"How much government reserves are we talking about?" asked Modobéru, no doubt concerned about the impact that the policy would have on the Exchequer.

"We probably need reserves equal to about five percent of gross domestic product," replied Aryéstu. "This year, that's ten million dhanay."

Modobéru shook his head. "That's quite a lot! Right now, we keep two million on hand."

"We'd need to engineer budget surpluses over several good years to build it up. We can do with less if we are willing to print money or create credit during a downturn, but in either case, that's easier to do when you have a solid reserve."

"What do governments on Gɛdhéma do?" asked the queen.

“They spend more money than they take in and borrow the difference, even in good times,” replied Aryéstu. “In bad times they borrow even more, at an immense expense, or they print money and create credits, sometimes producing serious inflation.”

“We have an opportunity here to avoid that because of our election system,” added Chris. “On Gɛdhéma, politicians must make promises in order to get elected, and they compete against each other in making more and more extraordinary promises. Naturally, this creates governments that spend too much. But since we have no campaigning for office, our legislators don’t have to make extravagant promises. Our government can be run on a sounder and more rational basis.”

“How many years would you use to build up the government surplus?” asked Queen Estoibidhé. “Because it is very easy to spend every dhanay we receive. The realm’s needs are very great.”

“I agree, and every dhanay we don’t spend will slow growth a bit, because it won’t be available to build better roads, schools, hospitals, or factories. We will need to plan it carefully and pull money out of the economy when it is expanding the fastest. I think we should aim for an economic growth rate of no more than nine or ten percent per year and build the surplus when the growth rate is in that range or higher. We currently get about a fifth of the total economic output. This year the GDP passed two hundred million and palace revenues reached forty million. Next year, revenues will probably be forty-three to forty-five million. But if we budget for this year’s revenue—forty million—we’ll have room for some natural cost overruns and still have several million we can put aside. Over several years, we can reach an accumulated surplus of ten million.”

“The wisdom here is that when there is rapid economic expansion, pulling money out and slowing growth is not preventing growth altogether; rather, it is postponing growth to a time when the economy stalls,” said Chris. “And there is great wisdom in that. When there is an economic downturn, construction is hit hard. That’s the time to build new hospitals and schools, when salaries and the cost of construction materials are depressed.”

“Part of the strategy, also, is to minimize government responsibility for pensions and health care,” added Aryéstu. “On Gɛdhéma, both of them have a tendency to rise rapidly and strain government finances. Strong tomis and granges can provide pensions and part of health care costs.”

“This is the advantage of a full pension at age 70,” agreed Estoibidhé. “Workers know if they live that long, the government will provide, so they need to provide themselves with a pension until that date only.”

“It helps everyone plan,” agreed Aryéstu. “Tomis and granges are now thinking in terms of pensions for ten years, so that people can retire at age sixty-five and have some left over to supplement the government pension. I don’t think we should lower the eligibility age; not soon, anyway. What are the other problems with this plan?”

“It requires fiscal discipline!” replied Modobéru. “That is harder than it sounds!”

“I agree,” said Aryéstu. “But a surplus does not mean we shouldn’t issue government bonds. Because they are a certain investment, we can pay a lower interest rate to bond owners. That way we can tap into some of the kingdom’s savings as well.”

“We need the fiscal disciple,” added Modobéru. “The army is very careless. In the past, they often had overruns. So did palace construction.”

“But now that the army must enter all financial data into a tablet computer and transmit it to the palace daily—which required us to fire the old accountants and hirie new, younger ones—so we have better control,” noted Aryéstu.

“I see one issue of sorts,” said Chris. “An economic downturn is like a strong windstorm that shakes a tree and blows off the dead and weak branches, thereby leaving the rest of the tree to grow more vigorously. Bankruptcies of companies and the laying off of workers are not altogether bad things; they also create new possibilities. We need those new possibilities in order to maintain rapid economic growth.”

“How long can we continue to grow as quickly as we are growing now?” asked Estoibidhé.

Chris looked at Aryéstu. “He has studied this more than I. I don’t know. On Gɛdhéma, poor countries have maintained economic growth rates close to ten percent per year for several decades, and at the end of that time they emerged as fairly wealthy countries. By Gɛdhéma standards, we have moved from one of the poorest countries to one near the top of the lower third, or perhaps into the bottom of the middle third. That’s impressive, considering we did it by ourselves. There was no outside investment of money and no importation of huge amounts of modern technology, except some basic equipment from the aliénɛs.”

“I am guessing—and that’s all it is—that our economy can at least double one more time,” said Aryéstu. “At that point, household income will average five thousand dhanay. We can only do that if the percentage of the population that works in agriculture goes from almost sixty percent to about twenty-five or thirty percent. That means we need to create 100,000 jobs in manufacturing and services. That will cost about three to

five hundred million dhanay. Our current rate of investment is about ten percent of GDP and will get us there in ten or fifteen years. But the easiest growth has already been achieved. We're already seeing oversupply in shoes, clothing, and other basic goods. Those industries will need to create new, better products and become more efficient. In short, growth is getting more complicated and harder to predict."

"That also means that shoe manufactories, competing against each other, will have to become more efficient, even without economic downturns," noted Dumuzi. "Perhaps we don't need system-wide windstorms."

"We don't if we use other mechanisms," agreed Chris. "For example, Miller Motors now does efficiency audits almost every year, and there is a group of consultants, mostly in my tomi, who have gotten very good at it. Economic downturns, however, help to establish efficiency parameters. It is easy to say that a certain practice is as efficient as it can be; it takes imagination and sometimes a bit of desperation to come up with a better way."

"This is an interesting subject, but it isn't the reason the meeting was called," said the Queen. "We used to have a policy of drawing up a budget based on last year's income and then drawing up a supplemental budget to spend the surplus. Then when Aryéstu could give us careful revenue estimates, we drew up budgets based on them. I suggest we go back to the earlier practice. When we have a surplus, we can decide how much to spend and how much to save. I like the idea of saving an amount eventually equal to a quarter of our annual budget, if we have the discipline to do it."

"That will be the challenge," agreed Modobéru.

"But we can do it, especially if we explain to the public why it's important," said Estoibidhé. "I want a set of recommendations prepared for the tomis and granges as well. If they can gradually increase quarterly profit sharing with workers and lower regular salaries, that may be a better model for weathering downturns, as long as the wealthy investors are not getting a larger share of the revenues."

"Most of the tomis now have profit sharing with the workers," said Chris. "It builds company loyalty and gives them representation on the Board. If the tomi doesn't have enough work during downturns, it can even let the workers contribute their labor to other projects to better their community. People want to be busy and to help others."

"I want all of you to craft a plan, then," said Estoibidhé. "Let's have legislation ready for the Consultative Assembly when it meets in a few weeks."

"So, this is the sea," said Sunéru, staring westward from the edge of the hill on which Nuarjora was built. He stood as if rooted in place, trying to imagine the seemingly infinite water stretching beyond the horizon.

"Too far to swim," quipped Rostamu.

"You can look as long as you want, but I'll be in the high school building." Thornton pointed. "Inside the door, take the stairs to the second floor. The génadɛma classroom is the first one on the left, facing the sea." He locked the steam car and walked to the school.

Inside the front door was a foyer. The stairs to the second floor were straight ahead, but to the right was the office of the principal, who was also in charge of Nuarjora's schools. Platanu had been a very early student at Mɛlwika Génadɛma and had

finally finished a Masters in education a few years earlier, one of their first. He rose from behind his desk when Thornton appeared in the doorway.

"You're early, Lord Dhoru! It's good to see you again!"

"It's good to see you, Honored. It's been a few years."

"I don't get to Mɛlwika anymore; the school here takes too much of my time, and my wife doesn't want me to travel. She wants me home for supper every night."

"I know how that is. It looks like the school has an addition."

"Yes, last year it went from six classrooms to ten. If we can buy the houses on the other side, we'll build an auditorium, too; the town needs one. We used to teach génadɛma classes in one of the 12th grade classrooms at night, and the library was in the corridor. Now they have their own space and one classroom has been converted to offices, of which this is one. The fourth new classroom is the science lab, and it's nicer than anything they have in Arjdhura! If you need it for the oceanography class, we can arrange it. I'm so glad you agreed to offer oceanography here, rather than there."

"You offered a ship and an experienced crew; that's just what this program needs." He decided not to mention that the army was investing as well because they wanted the oceanography ship's crew to be speaking Eryan, not Sumi.

"We make our living from the sea; we want oceanography here. I suppose you're getting fish all the way up in Mɛlwika now?"

"The market now has a lot of your fish; we ate some for dinner the other day. Nuarjora's the main supplier for the eastern shore. Any news, here in town?"

"Did you see our new marketplace? It has forty stalls and they're all rented. The Gabruli has moved into three of them—women are selling cooperatively in the

space—and they're working on a daycare facility in a building next door. The rest sell a huge variety of items; it is really a very nice space for shopping. And we're finally getting our own switchboard next month! Including Dɛksawskhéma and Lépawskhéma, we now have twelve phones, which is the maximum that can use the three party lines. As it is, when I pick up my phone, half the time someone's talking on the line. We're twice the size of Arjdhura, so I don't know why the switchboard ended up there."

"They have more phones; the Sumis love them. How many students are registered?"

"Fifteen, including the entire six-man crew of the ship."

"Good. I've brought two from Mɛlwika and I hear six are coming from Arjdhura. That's a good size."

"How are you going to teach this subject? It's vast."

"It is. We'll cover all four subdivisions: physical, chemical, biological, and geological oceanography. For physical, we'll toss several dozen bottles into the sea. Each will be corked tightly and have a post-paid postcard, so whoever finds the bottle can send the card back with the location and date marked. We hope to get some idea about the currents, that way."

"The currents here flow northward along the shore."

"We know that; the ocean circulates counterclockwise around Sumilara. For chemical oceanography, we'll do some salinity measurements. Biological and geological oceanography will involve visits to the coral reefs offshore. We'll make two day-long field trips. I hope we can find some crew members who can teach school-age kids."

“That’s the plan. The ship will visit all the Fish Eryan villages along the sea—not just the ones in Morana province—teaching oceanography. We have some money from the other villages, too. It’s a big, cooperative effort and we’re thrilled by that.”

“I’m glad to be helping it along, too. I hope we can find someone here who can become an Oceanographer and learn the field far better than I can.”

“You’re already busy with geology, geography, forestry, and land use planning!”

“Exactly, and there’s the need to develop Paleontology so we can date strata better. I enjoy Oceanography, but I can’t move to the sea! Someone else needs to become the expert.”

“I’ll keep my eye out for such a person. Let’s go to the classroom. A few students may already be there; I can introduce you. The ship is tied up to the main wharf, so I hope the class can go take a look.”

“I’ll plan on it. Thanks for your help, Platanu.”

reread and edited, 6/21/13, 9/3/17, 12/4/24

409.

New Lord

Late Génménu 18/636

John Miller rarely got to the palace, let alone the Queen's inner apartments. He was very uncomfortable with aristocracy and distrustful of their motives. He walked slowly through the rooms toward the Queen's private meeting room, partly to marvel at their beauty and partly because his crutches slowed him down.

Wɛpokɛstɛr gave him a comfortable chair and a glass of wine; high quality wine from Sumilara, John noted. Looking around the room, his eye fell on a phone with a rotary dial. The palace now had the first automatic telephone switching machine.

He didn't have long to wait. He struggled to rise as Queen Estoibidhé entered. "No, please remain seated," she said. "I appreciate the gesture of respect, but allow me to respect one older than myself by letting you sit."

"Thank you, Your Majesty." John was touched by her words. "You have such a beautiful palace! I had no idea!"

"Thank you, you are kind." Estoibidhé sat. "The rooms you passed through are the official meeting rooms, where balls, receptions, and other formal events are held. Naturally, they are the most beautiful rooms in the kingdom, for they represent the realm. This room, as you can see, is simpler, as are my personal quarters. I'm saddened to see you with crutches. And here it is, almost mid Génménu and frosts are upon us!"

"It is hard to use them when the ground has ice; I dread the thought. I'm afraid if I have to walk more than a few meters, they are the easiest, unless I start to use a

wheelchair. The doctors say that both hip joints and both knee joints are badly worn out. As a result, walking has become very painful. On Gɛdhéma, I understand, the doctors now can replace my old joints with new ones of metal or ceramic, but they can't do that here, so I am now a cripple."

"And how old are you, Lord, if I may ask?"

"Seventy, Your Majesty, and feeling my age. A lifetime of hard physical work—especially in the fields—has taken a toll on my body." John sighed. "But I still have some life left in me!"

"I'm sure that's true. The Kingdom owes you a great debt. Even before the Menneas arrived, you had built a water powered flour mill. That was a great development."

"And I was working my way toward making steel; Amos just speeded that up. I am proud of everything my family has been able to accomplish. But, Your Majesty, I have come to ask you to grant a request, if you are so inclined." He paused for a moment, as if wondering where to start. "I have many sons, as you know; twenty-one sons and nineteen daughters who survived childhood, to be exact. Akanu, my youngest, is thirteen. I have seventy-nine grandchildren as well, and now some great grandchildren. The biggest fear I have is a huge fight among my children when I die."

"I can understand that, Lord; you had just such a fight seventeen years ago."

"Those issues have mostly been resolved, and I now have a very thorough and complete will that gives my children shares in a joint stock company. I am also purchasing estates for the four or five who will be best served that way. Most of my sons already have positions in the family Tomi or companies of their own, which the will

ratifies. My main concern is the issue of lordship of Mɛlwika, Your Majesty. If you could appoint one of my sons as joint Lord of the city with me, which will make him heir to the title when I die, and if I then make him the executor of the will, that will cement everything, I think."

"Who?"

"Mitru. He is my ninth son; not usually the one to inherit such a title. But Yimu is chairman of the Board of Miller Motors; he has enough responsibility from that task. Manu and Tritu have responsible positions as well, in charge of the foundry and the electrical division, respectively. Mitru is the one the people have elected to serve on the City Council and in the Consultative Assembly. Under him, the transportation division is very strong and effective. And as a Bahá'í, he doesn't drink, so I know he won't do something rash! He's the logical choice."

Estoibidhé nodded. "I agree. Very well, Lord, I happily grant your wish. Co-lordship is unusual, but it has been done before. Mɛlwika has flourished under two lords already and I think three won't change that."

"No, he has a good character. Thank you, Your Majesty. I can't begin to tell you how happy and relieved I am."

Estoibidhé smiled. "It is seldom when I can make someone happy so easily. But plan to live many more years, Lord. The kingdom needs you."

"Thank you, Your Majesty, if I can manage the pain in my legs, I will do exactly that." He rose and she came forward to shake his hands. Then Miller turned and hobbled out. His driver was waiting nearby and soon they were on their way back to Mɛlwika, where he went straight to Mitru's office and told him.

Mitru was shocked. “Father, it’s not right. Yimu is the oldest; he should inherit your title.”

John shook his head. “No. Yimu is an excellent manager of the Miller Tomi, but one man can’t run a tomi and a city. It’s too much. Besides, there are times when there are conflicts between the two responsibilities, as we saw when the issue of a taller smokestack was raised. Of all my sons, you are the other one who can manage well, and your responsibilities are mostly outside Mɛlwika. It makes sense to put the city in your hands.”

“Of course, no Lord of Mɛlwika will really run the city. There are two lords, and that’s what the Mayor is for!”

“True, but the issue of conflicting responsibilities remains. It is already done; Her Majesty agreed to it.”

“I’m in a state of shock. I don’t know what to say.”

“How about thank you!”

“Thank you.” Mitru embraced his father, but it felt funny; he was still uncertain about the arrangement.

“As soon as we have it in writing, I’ll invite everyone to the house for dinner and announce it, and then we’ll put it in the newspaper so everyone knows. I suppose you still have a few days of obscurity, Lord Mitru.”

“I’ll enjoy them. And . . . dad, I’ll do my best with this to represent the family name and support our city.”

“I’m sure you will.” John smiled and tears filled his eyes. Then he waved goodbye and headed out of Mitru’s office before he felt embarrassed by his feelings.

Mitru watched his father go, still in a state of shock. Lord of Mɛlwika, largest city in the world. Or co-lord with his father and Chris Mennea, and when both of them were gone, with his brother in law, Thornton. He looked at the pile of paperwork on his desk; there were hires to approve and checks to sign. They could wait. He headed out to walk around the city.

Mɛlwika looked different, somehow. It was a crisp autumn day in the equivalent of late October. An unusual early frost had glistened everything the night before, but had not killed flowers, so the planters along the streets were still pretty. The flow of pedestrians through Temple Square was heavy, as usual; Majakwés Rodha, the city's main commercial strip, was thronged with shoppers that late afternoon. The bank and stock market had just closed and people were leaving those buildings.

He walked to the House of Worship and said a few prayers. Walking across the génadɛma, he saw Thornton come out of the geology building. He saw Mitru and waved.

"Hey, what brings you here!"

"I was saying prayers in the temple. You look chipper."

"Yes, the Geological Survey just made a plan to walk the length of the Glugluba in Bɛlménu, surveying it thoroughly. It's the last big hydropower potential left." He frowned as he looked at Mitru. "What happened?"

"I. . ." He paused for a moment. "Father just visited me to tell me about his trip to the palace. He asked the queen to name me co-lord of Mɛlwika with him and his heir as lord of the city and she agreed."

"Really? Congratulations! That's fantastic! Everyone loves and respects you. They've elected you to the Consultative Assembly, after all!"

“That’s true. I suppose they can’t do that anymore, though; I have to serve in the House of Lords, if I serve anywhere.”

“I suppose. Don’t look so glum, this is great!”

“Thank you, but I’m still in shock. I really think Yimu should have the honor, not me. I expected that and I think so did he! And how can I serve as Lord and run Mitru Transportation?”

“You’ve already served on the City Council occasionally and ran Mitru Transportation. Your father rarely comes to the Council meetings, so what change do you anticipate? I doubt you’ll have to do much more than you’re doing now.”

“Diné is already complaining that it takes me away too much, and you are serving on a city committee. I suppose I should do that now, too.”

“Not necessarily. It’s up to you.”

“I think I should. But you’re on the Streets and Parks Board, which is the logical one for me to be on!”

“I’ve been thinking of switching to education. It’s facing the biggest challenges. The days are gone when education meant teaching how to read and write; now quality is the emphasis.”

“And we’re worrying about vocational versus génadɛma tracks.”

“All sorts of things, and whatever we do in Mɛlwika is copied by most of the other school systems around the world. It’s a very important department and I have ideas; or maybe they’re biases.”

“I know what you mean.” Mitru looked at Thornton, who, like himself, was 35. “Can you believe it, we’ve known each other for half our lives? And our entire adult lives. Look at the situation we’re in, now!”

“I know, it’s really unbelievable. From kids living in a big stone house surrounded by patchy farmer’s fields in a semidesert, to future co-Lords of a big city surrounded by vast farms. But I’ll tell you this: I think the challenges are going to get more complicated and in some ways bigger than they were for our fathers.”

Mitru scowled. “Really? How’s that possible?”

“We won’t have to fight the Kwolonɛ or anything like that. But growth is a challenge; we’re the biggest and that will only cause trouble. Our workers used to earn far more than anyone else and that gap has closed. It had to, but now we risk losing talent and seeing unrest. And the kingdom’s issues are increasingly spiritual issues; people now have clothes and food. These are subtle problems.”

“I see what you mean. I wish you hadn’t told me; I think you’ve spoiled my excitement!”

“I hope not! I need your help with these issues.”

“We’ll be able to tackle some of them together, then. And we do bring very different sets of experience.”

“Exactly.”

The new building on the west side of Majakwés Rodha was a big, open shell, more or less finished on the outside but an expanse of debris-covered concrete floors, heaps of construction materials, and occasional dangling wires. More worrisome were the puddles

of water that had leaked in from last night's rain. Liz Mennea wished she had worn more practical shoes. Génésé, the town's leading caterer, and Mɛlitané Dénujénésɛ, coordinator of the Women's Gabrulis, had smartly worn boots. Déanu Tritɛjnai, the construction contractor, had solid shoes as well.

"If it's a new roof, why does it leak?" asked Génésé pointedly.

"The roof is fine; the gutter in back was installed improperly, it backed up, and the water seeped in through the wall." He pointed to a big stain. "We'll replace the plaster and check the brickwork."

Mɛlitané pointed to a large, tightly closed steel door. "And once this space opens for business, that door will open?"

Déanu nodded. "That connects to the 'Rainbow Stores' building, which in turn opens onto the main farmer's market. It's the best retail space in the city. And on the other side is the 'Clothing Building' where many of the clothing outlets are located. We'll open onto them as well, and all four of the buildings plan to coordinate their opening and closing times. My plan is to open lots of small food stalls and provide an eating area on the second floor. The first floor will be prime retail; Home Improvement will expand from the Rainbow Building into it. That leaves the third floor." He pointed to the space around them.

"How many stalls here are spoken for?" asked Liz.

"Four so far, which leaves twelve, each five meters long and four deep. I can lease all of them; I'm not desperate for clients. The building won't open for two months, yet. But if the Women's Gabruli wants to make some sort of deal, I'm open to it."

“We need real retail space of our own,” said Mɛlitané. “Some of it will be the Gabruli’s, to sell our products, especially perfumes and beauty products; they’re popular and profitable. But we want to lease some of it to women merchants. Not enough women are going into business.”

“That’s for sure,” agreed Génésé.

Déanu raised an eyebrow. “There are several along the street, but nine tenths of the merchants are men, I agree. That’s not an issue to me. You can sublease to anyone. How many stalls are you thinking about?”

“All twelve,” said Liz. “But we’d like to propose a deal to you. Twelve for the price of ten; a discount for taking the whole thing. We’d like to convert two or three of them into a child care facility. The idea is to provide the women working here a place for their small children, so they aren’t far away. We may also provide an area for women to sit and talk, and possibly a place for their children to play as well.”

“You may need the whole space, then!”

“Is it available?” asked Liz, pointedly.

“No; I do have four renters. But depending on how the space works out on the second floor, I may be able to move some of them there. It sounds like you may need food service up here as well.”

“Can we cook up here?” asked Génésé.

Déanu nodded. “We can run a gas line up from the kitchens underneath pretty easily, and there are chimneys to tap into. There are water and sewer connections at that end.” He pointed to the far end. “Do you plan to open a beauty shop, too?”

“Maybe,” said Liz. “We’re still planning the space. We do have some women interested in opening a beauty shop.”

“So, a beauty shop, perfumes, scented soaps, candles, embroidery work, maybe exotic jams and jellies, a small restaurant, and a child care area.” Déanu looked around the space, trying to envision it. “I can give you the whole area—sixteen stalls—for the price of fourteen. Because what I’ll do is shrink the eating area on the second floor a little bit, figuring that some people will be eating up here instead. Most shoppers are women, with or without children.”

“This space has the potential to serve all four buildings,” agreed Liz. “That’s four thousand square meters of retail space; a third of the city’s total. Women are the main customers, but there’s no area dedicated to them and their needs.”

“So I really think you should charge us for twelve, not fourteen stalls,” said Génésé. “We’ll attract a crowd for you! Everyone will come through the Silver Stores Building on their way between the others.”

“I was already counting on that.” He considered, then shook his head.

“Thirteen, then,” counteroffered Liz.

Déanu scowled at the pressure. “I’ll accept thirteen if you can pay six months in advance.”

“How about this, then,” said Liz. “These stalls are 100 dhanay per month, right? That’s 1,200 per year. What if we pay 14,400 dhanay up front; rental for twelve for an entire year. I’m sure you could use the cash flow, so that helps you. In subsequent years, we’ll pay you 1,300 per month for the entire floor.”

Déanu considered. He didn't like bargaining with women; it was an unfamiliar relationship and felt slightly improper. Having the leading businesswoman, the head of the gabrulis, and the wife of the Lord—from whom he leased the land for the building—made it even more complicated. "Alright," he finally said. "You drive a hard bargain. But it'll be worth it if you attract the business and attention you seek. It'll cost extra to run gas up here, and any additional water and sewer pipes."

"And any additional electric lines, I'm sure." Liz extended her hand. "You have a deal, Déanu."

"Thank you." He looked at her hand, then shook. "The lease starts on the first of Bɛlménu, with all stores to be open the first of ɛjnaménu."

"We can do that," said Mɛlitané. "When do we come back to sign the contract?"

"Give me two days. Can you have the check then?"

Mɛlitané and Génesé looked at Liz, who nodded. "That'll work. What time and where?"

He nodded. "This hour, and on the second floor; that's where I have a temporary office." He turned toward the nearest stair to lead them out of the building. "So, Lady Liz, what do you know about this new profit sharing plan of Miller Motors?"

"Not much, I'm afraid. That's a matter handled by the Tomi Board, and Chris hasn't talked much about it."

"No salary increase this year, but purchase of 100 dhanay of Miller Motors shares for the average worker; that's not going to be very popular."

"Perhaps. But the average worker gets the 100 dhanay back when he sells the share—I think they have to hold it for a minimum of ten years unless they retire—plus

eight or ten dhanay of profit every year, plus any increased value if the stock goes up. It's a long-term investment in the company, and most of the workers plan to stay for life. The tomi is putting more into the workers' pension funds as well."

"Sounds like Miller Motors needs more capital and it wants to take it from the workers. That just makes the workers mad. And the new law, if it passes, will require worker representation on the Tomi Board proportional to their shares. That makes *me* mad, because if I do the same thing—which the law essentially pressures me to do—then I have to set up a Board and add workers to it."

"The law doesn't require Tritɛjna Construction to become a tomi, right? As you said, some workers won't like it. If they want to be paid more up front, they can go work for you instead."

"True."

"Wouldn't a bigger retirement fund and profit sharing give your construction company a bigger cushion? Construction is a notoriously volatile industry."

"True. But it would also tempt us to spend them and we'd go bankrupt."

"Then maybe you need better accounting," said Génésé.

That angered Déanu; it was one thing to do business with women, another to be given business advice by them. Just then they reached the front door of the building, so he bit his tongue and opened the door for them. "Thank you for coming. I'll have the lease ready on Kwétɛrdiu at 10."

"We'll see you then. Goodbye." Liz nodded to Déanu and led the women outside. They pulled their coats more closely around them against the cold north wind sweeping down the street and headed for Temple Square.

“So, where will we get 14,400 dhanay?” asked Mɛlitané.

“Chris will advance it,” said Liz. “I’m sure of it. But he’ll remind me that this is a business arrangement, not charity. And he’s right; we have to make this work commercially.”

“The cold weather over the last week has made everyone think that we’re in for another severe winter,” said Génésé. “And that could cause another economic slowdown. So the commercial success of this is not guaranteed.”

“It’s a gamble,” agreed Liz. “Business always is. I’m still not sure we got a good deal; I’ll ask Chris about that, too. If Déanu had rented those sixteen spaces to sixteen different small merchants, I bet five of them would have had trouble paying him. Businesses close all the time; half of them fail eventually. When that happens, it’s the landlord who loses out. We just guaranteed him a good income.”

“And in advance, when he’s paying carpenters and electricians,” said Génésé.

“Do we have anyone who wants to open a restaurant?” asked Mɛlitané.

“I can find someone,” said Génésé. “Or maybe I’ll do it myself; I have a lot of catering business, but no restaurant business! We have someone who wants to open a beauty salon; that’ll take three or four stalls. If the gabruli uses three or four more and the restaurant two, that’s eight to ten stalls.”

“So we need to find business for two to four more,” said Liz. “That should be possible.”

They reached Temple Square. “I’m going this way,” said Génésé. “I’ve got to make sure the lunches of several hundred school children will be ready on time.”

“Thanks for your help, Génésé,” said Liz. “Without you, we couldn’t have bargained him down.”

“I know how to deal with these men,” replied Génése, with a smile. They waved to her as she headed toward her central kitchen in the southwest quarter of the city.

Liz walked Mɛlitané to the gabruli, which occupied a building on Temple Street. Mɛlitané already had scheduled a taxi to take her home to Tɛrskua in an hour and had some work to do, so Liz said goodbye to her and headed to Chris’s office. The receptionist waved her in and she went to the top floor.

Chris was in his office wearing his toga, for he would be heading to the Consultative Assembly in a few minutes. Luktréstu was with him. “Oh, how did it go?” asked Chris as Liz entered.

“We leased the entire top floor; sixteen stalls. We agreed on paying for thirteen and getting three for free, and this year we’ll pay for just twelve.”

“He must be concerned about renting the space. Competition is getting rather tight here.”

“No, we talked him down to twelve on the grounds that we’d pay the whole annual rent up front. That’s why he went for it.”

“How much?”

“Fourteen thousand, four hundred.”

“Okay, we can find that. That’s not a bad piece of bargaining. Did Génése bargain with him?”

“She and I alternated and we wore him down.”

“I’ll probably hear from him about that later. Be sure to make it clear to the gabruli that this is a loan, not charity.”

“I already did.”

“Good.” Chris turned to Luktréstu. “Can you prepare a check from my personal account, for me to sign please?”

“Sure.” Luktréstu walked to Chris’s desk and pulled out a check book.

“Déanu was worried about Miller Tomi’s new plan for profit sharing and pensions, though. He said workers and businessmen would both be upset.”

“He’s right about that.” Chris pointed to the *Tripola Bédhɛ* on his desk. “There’s an anonymous article about it in today’s issue, and it makes a lot of good points: it’s pushing up the savings rate faster than people are prepared for, it feels like extortion to the workers, it feels like an imposition of democracy on many businessmen . . . it’s revolutionary and its implications are not clear to anyone, so everyone fears the worst.”

“So, it won’t pass?”

“No, it’ll probably pass. The Queen’s riding high right now; people don’t dare vote against her. But I’m no longer so sure it’s a good idea.”

“`Abdu'l-Bahá advocated profit sharing, though.”

“I know, and I’ll vote for it. But workers feel that a vote on the company Boards won’t amount to anything, so they don’t necessarily want it, and businessmen fear the workers will vote for their own short-term interests only. The workers still don’t understand or trust the idea of a pension, either; they don’t mind five percent going to their pension and most have borrowed against it, but if they see it heading toward ten percent, they’ll complain.”

"So, workers think businessmen are pushing the law through because they want to keep more profits for investment, and businessmen think workers are in favor so they can take over the businesses?"

"Something like that. And a certain number of people think it's a plot by me to get richer. I've had one member of the House of Lords and one of Commons approach me and say 'so, why did you propose this to Her Majesty? What have you to gain from it?' Then they don't believe it wasn't my idea. But most likely, the long-term results will be good. Workers who stay a long time will have a good income, the companies will have more investment capital and thus can expand, they will have a better cushion to ride out recessions, and company governance will be more balanced. At least, I trust on faith that will be the result!" He laughed.

"So, this isn't like the old-age pension or universal health coverage."

"No, they're both popular. The old-age pension has been handled well, too."

Luktréstu handed him a check for 14,400 dhanay made out to the Mɛlwika Gabruli, which he signed. He pointed to the *Bédhɛ* again. "There's also a nasty letter to the editor in there that says the Queen appointed Mitru the future lord of Mɛlwika because they're both Bahá'ís."

"That's too bad. Just what he needs."

"He's old enough. He can handle it."

Reread and edited, 6/21/13, 3/23/16, 9/3/17, 12/4/24

410.

Protests

Early Prusménu 18/636

"That was a quick ride back," said Thornton, as the houses and smokestacks Mɛlwika Hill appeared on the northern horizon, four kilometers ahead of them. The city was still bathed in an eerie penumbral light that occurred right after the eclipse, a light made golden by the sun's approach to the western horizon.

"Quick and easy," agreed Sunéru. "I'm saddened that Lord Staurɛkɛstɛr is still upset that I'm not staying in Mɛdhpéla this term, since it's just a month long."

"He'll be upset all month. But you did a good job today, introducing the subject of Oceanography in the Earth Science class. I definitely want you as a guest lecturer every week."

"It'll make your preparation easier, and I get half a credit for teaching part of the course, so it's a good deal all around."

"The Lord is definitely afraid you'll become an Oceanographer."

"I can't help it that my people have no access to the sea! The army took it away! It is really an interesting subject; I do want to study it more, teach it, and maybe do some research on it. But I'll study good Kwolonɛ subjects, too. He worries too much."

"That's his job; the tribe is paying for your education. But we can probably contribute a scholarship to cover some of that."

"He'll like that."

Mɛdhpéla's only 90 minutes from ɛndraidha, and they'll want Oceanography taught there as well. I think it'll be compatible with your plans. During Winter Term 1, I suggest you take two courses; it'll be intense, but you'll get some of your general requirements done. Then in Plowménu I'll be doing Oceanography again, though at Arjdhura, and you can help me. You can even learn a bit of Sumi. If you take two more courses during Bolérɛnménu, you'll finish the year with nine courses and a uniyɛri. That'll be enough to teach a few subjects at Kwolona Génadɛma: introduction to geology, oceanography, and ecology, which will allow you to teach general science as well. At that point, you can alternate between teaching and learning and you'll progress toward a kwétɛryɛri pretty quickly."

"Thanks for the encouragement," said Sunéru, nodding.

Thornton slowed to go around the first roundabout south of the city wall. He took West Street, around the city wall, and entered the Citadel. He had to slow as he approached Temple Street; a crowd was marching up the street toward Foundry Square. "They look agitated," said Sunéru.

"They do," agreed Thornton. He had to wait several minutes before he could turn right, go down Temple Street twenty meters, then turn left onto Icehouse Street, in order to park the steam car in the basement of the Tomi Building. They pulled their coats on as they got out of the car; it was Prusménu 3, the equivalent of November 23, usually a time of almost-warm days and chilly nights, but for two weeks they had had chilly days and cold nights instead. "It's much warmer in Mɛdhpéla, that's for sure!" said Thornton.

"Much nicer; it was hot there today! I want to go see what the crowd is upset about."

"Me, too; let's go."

They closed the garage door and hurried up the stairs into the tomi building, then out the front door, across the street from the entrance to the Mennea house. Foundry Square was just a few steps to the right and the crowd there numbered about three hundred. Standing on a small platform on the side of the square was Estoréju, a long-time worker in Miller Motors who often came in third or fourth in the voting for workers' representative.

"We lost the fight today, but we won't lose it tomorrow!" he was saying. "They won today. They plan to take money away from us when we work harder and better every year and make more money for this company. But we can demand it back, and we *will* get it back!" He paused for cheers. "Mɛlwika used to be the richest city in the world for workers. We earned two, three, four times as much as our country cousins! That's why so many people came here, settled, and lived a happy life! But we aren't rich any more. Only the main families in this town are rich, and it isn't right! We deserve our fair share!" There were more cheers. "How much do we need for our pension? Do we want to be rich in old age—assuming we ever see the money they say they're saving for us—while we're poor now? That's crazy! If they want to put that much more money away, we at least need stock and another seat on the Tomi board. That's fair and just!"

There was more cheering. Estoréju began to sing a song about working together—an old peasants' harvest song—and immediately everyone joined in, for it fit their situation well. Sunéru turned to Thornton. "What are they complaining about?"

"I guess the new law passed the Consultative Assembly. It allows tomis, granges, gabrulis, and other businesses to put aside as much as ten percent of the workers' salary

per year toward pension, tax free, and as much as fifteen percent toward stock options. Before the law passed, they could have put one hundred percent, though no one would do that, obviously."

"I know about the law and I agree, it must have passed. But what is this complaint about being poor? Have they forgotten the villages? Where else can the average worker have electricity, gas, a phone if they want, a basic education, day care for their little children, clean parks with flowers, and the possibility of renting a steam car whenever they want to show off to their country cousins? Ridiculous!"

"You're right. But ten years ago, this place was two or three times as wealthy as a village; now it's only thirty percent or fifty percent richer. That's the complaint."

"But that's because the wealth has spread out; it's a good thing, not a bad thing!"

"I agree."

"I thought the idea of this new law was to boost savings, so there's more money available for bad times."

"Exactly, but it's not being explained that way."

Just then, a chorus of boos rose from the crowd. They looked and saw Yimu Miller striding forward. He pushed through the crowd and stood on the platform next to Estoréju.

"Look, this is not some sort of plot," he said. "This is a measure that will benefit you and the company—"

"Give us our money!" someone shouted, which was followed by cheers.

"You'll get every kɛntay of your money!" replied Yimu, not to be intimidated by the crowd's anger. "But not as quickly. First of all, we're not going to reduce your

salaries by a single dhanay. For now, they are frozen. We made a good profit this quarter—the details were in the paper the other day—but the owners aren't taking any more than usual. The difference is going into your pensions and stock options. A bigger pension means you can borrow more to buy a house or a steam car, or if you have a family emergency. A bigger stock option means you own more of the company and get more of the profit directly. Anyone who has been working here for ten years now owns, on average, stock equal to almost half their annual income, and it earns them almost a week of extra pay every quarter! And they've only paid in an amount equal to a quarter of their salary, because the value of the stock has doubled in that time! This is a good deal for you because you get more, long term; and it's good for the company because we can afford to dip into reserves and pay you when business slows down!"

"How can we be so sure?"

"We want our money now!"

The shouting rose and almost drowned Yimu out. "Look, I'm not going to debate this. It's pretty simple, so please trust us on it! It's only the people who want to grab power and influence who are confusing the issues!"

"Liar! Liar!" replied some members of the crowd.

"That was the wrong thing to say," Thornton said to Sunéru.

"We can discuss this more later, but it's cold out here right now. I've tried to explain it." Yimu stepped down and walked away, angry.

That did not please the crowd; they booed him all the way out of the square. Estoréju began to sing again, and everyone joined in. But after that, there was nothing left

to do; they had had their confrontation with the management. “Let’s do this again tomorrow,” he promised. “Until then—solidarity!”

“Solidarity!” the crowd replied, then it began to break up.

“So: What’ll they do tomorrow?” asked Sunéru, clearly worried.

“I don’t know. I had better get home; I suspect there will be an interesting discussion about it tonight.”

“Then please tell me tomorrow!”

“I will. Have a good evening, Sunéru.”

“Thanks. Bye.” The Kwolonɛ youth turned and headed back to his dorm at the génadɛma. Thornton headed home. When he stepped inside, he saw his mother listening to the World Table, which was wrapping up its program; it now ran an hour after the end of the eclipse. She looked worried.

“Wɛrétrakɛstɛr has found a young ‘hymn chanter’ to start a hymn hall in Boléripludha,” she explained. “Kɛkanu just interviewed him. Sounds like he’ll stress the hymns and service rather than animal sacrifice. The Mɛddoakwés priests are furious and want the hymn hall closed. So many people want to participate on Primdius that extra bus service from Mɛddoakwés has been started.”

“A sort of modernized, semi-Bahá'í worship?”

“I think so. I suppose it was inevitable.”

“And it’ll be controversial forever. I wouldn’t worry too much. Any reference to the rally on the World Table?”

“What rally?”

“Mom, you didn’t hear 500 people walk by outside? It was a huge crowd! Yimu tried to reason with them and they booed him! Unfortunately, he didn’t do a very good job.”

“No, I didn’t hear, but I am getting hard of hearing. What’s the issue?”

“Giving the workers more pension and more stock instead of a salary raise.”

“Yes, I know people are worried about that.” She was about to ask what Yimu said when the door into the garden from the Miller residence opened. John, Yimu, and Tritu came in. John was walking without his crutches; apparently he was so angry, the pain didn’t bother him.

“Is Chris here?” asked John, agitated.

“Not yet. He called about ten minutes ago and said he had just left Mɛddoakwés, so he should be here any minute.”

“Good. Can we wait?”

“Of course,” she replied, irritated that they wouldn’t discuss the rally with her or Thornton, even though he had seen it. They sat, without speaking, on chairs nearby; Liz asked the kitchen staff to serve them tea and coffee and went back to listening to the radio.

The front door opened and Chris hurried in, dressed in his formal toga for the meeting of the House of Lords, which had just adjourned for the season. He saw the three Millers. “I take it you heard the bill passed both houses?”

“We’re not the only ones,” replied Yimu. “There was just a rally; hundreds of protesters marched from Temple Square to Foundry Square to protest. I tried to speak to them, but they booed me!”

“We’ll have to fire Estoréju,” said John. “He’s the ringleader.”

“Firing can make things worse,” cautioned Chris. “What are their demands?”

“Hard to say,” replied Yimu. “But I think they boil down to one thing: pay rather than investment.”

“Do they understand there are no plans to cut wages? That has to be emphasized.”

“I said that!” exclaimed Yimu.

“I don’t think that’s the issue,” said Thornton, speaking up. “I heard part of the rally in Foundry Square, too. They were complaining about how they used to be rich, but now they’re poor, just like their village cousins. They didn’t want any more taken from them—”

“Poor? They haven’t become poor!” scoffed John.

“It’s a relative thing,” said Thornton. “They’re twice as well off now as they were ten years ago, but the villages are four times better off and have almost caught up with Mɛlwika. There’s a sense that our edge is eroding. If salaries stay flat here, we won’t be any more prosperous than anyone else.”

“Rising expectations can be the most dangerous thing,” agreed Chris.

“So what do we do?” asked Yimu.

“Keep communicating,” replied Chris. “Explain to them why this measure is necessary. And it will make them wealthier, because they’ll get more profits, and because the investment money will build up this place.”

“That’s a tall order,” said Yimu. “Because they don’t trust us.”

“Trust,” interrupted Liz. “That’s the real issue, isn’t it? It’s a spiritual issue, and talking won’t solve it. It has to be demonstrated.”

“She’s right about that,” agreed Thornton. “They don’t believe they need more retirement pension and they aren’t sure they’ll actually get it. That was said, too.”

“Of course they’ll get it!” growled John. “Some people already are getting it! We have three million dhanay invested in pensions!”

“But workers *aren’t* sure,” said Thornton. “We’ve heard that before. That’s why they borrow against their pension and are unhappy when their salary goes down to pay it off. Some people quit, demand their pension, spend it, then ask to be rehired.”

“It was never possible to plan far ahead; this world was too unstable,” added Liz. “Frankly, it still may be too unstable to plan that far ahead; we don’t know where the future leads.”

“But that’s also the point of this law,” replied Chris. “More savings means more investment and bigger cushions to ride out the ups and downs.”

“Look, we’re spinning our wheels,” complained John. “What do we do?”

“Compromise in order to build trust,” said Liz.

“Compromise, and they demand more,” replied John.

“No, our workers haven’t given up on us,” said Yimu. “They are angry, but they can be calmed. Amos can do it, I think.”

“Yes, we should call in Amos,” agreed Chris. “He’s rather busy, but this is important. If he could come meet with the workers, maybe he could shape a position the Tomi Board could work with.”

“Amos; that’s a good idea,” said John.

“I bet every tomi will be watching,” said Thornton. “Because they will all face the same controversy.”

"And most have a smaller reservoir of trust," added Liz.

"The palace will be watching, too," noted Chris. "This was their bill. They'll need to help. You can't push big changes to the structure of society too fast; you get a backlash. This is a tough change to make."

Mɛlwika calmed down the next day as Amos dropped everything in Pértatranisér and came to start a dialogue with workers. But trouble spread everywhere else and there were rallies in almost every city in the realm. On Suksdiu, Chris went down to Triwika to meet with workers at the mobile home factory and the other Jérdomais Tomi factories. Liz came down with him and drove over to Tɛrskua for two hours. When she returned to Triwika, the first thing she asked was, "how did it go?"

Chris shrugged. "It went fine because the Tomi Board hasn't met and made an implementation plan like Miller Motors did, so there's nothing for them to oppose. I mostly answered questions, like whether we were considering increases in retirement pensions or stock. People want to be sure they'll get a wage increase this year."

"Can the tomi do that?"

"Hard to say; it depends on the economy, and no one knows where it's going. This cold weather is causing a lot of worry about crop prices."

"But the palace has said they'll keep crop prices from rising too high."

"That's right; six dhanay per bushel for wheat. They have plenty to release, too. But people won't believe it until they see it, so they worry. All I could do is assure them that the tomi is financially sound and the economy is structurally strong, and that we really don't know what the weather will do. Right now most factories are running nine

hours a day, four days a week; 36 hours altogether. If demand rises we'll add a Suksdiu shift or extend the day shifts by an hour, in either case with 25% more pay for the additional time. But you know what the irony is? The easiest way for the tomi to be sure to hit its goal of a ten percent profit is to aim higher—fifteen or twenty percent—then give some of it back to the workers as a bonus or as a profit dividend on a gift of stock. But now, if we gave them stock and a larger dividend, they'd feel cheated out of a wage increase! This law has actually made profit sharing *harder.*" He shook his head in disgust.

"Unintended consequences," Liz commented.

"Definitely. How was your trip to Tɛrskua?"

"Pretty good. The gabruli was busy because they had just gotten a load of jasmine flowers from Swadlɛndha, so I helped prepare the flowers for extracting the aroma."

"That's why you smell like jasmine!"

"Exactly. I didn't do any talking; just helped with the flowers. They turn out two thirds of the world's flower essences down there; they've displaced Sumilara! So, we're on our way to Gramdhunas? Which way?"

"Go out of the industrial park, turn left onto Route 5, then right onto Route 17. While I was waiting for you, Rostamu called. He's already there."

Liz started the steam car forward. "He has gotten absolutely fascinated with the place."

"Yes, he's in that funny place between adolescence and adulthood. He wants a lifetime purpose and he looks at our estate in Gramdhunas as potentially his, someday. Maybe it is."

"Yes, but he needs to aim higher than an estate."

“He knows that. I think part of the fascination is that the farmers are his age, and they’re off on their own for the first time, making their own way in the world. Let’s go meet them, encourage them, and head home.”

Liz nodded. She stopped and turned north onto Route 5. A few minutes later, at Orntroba, they turned south onto Route 14. “This place has stopped growing, right?”

“Yes, the fight among Wɛranu’s descendants has paralyzed the place. It’s too bad. If it continues a few more months, I hope the Queen intervenes. Meanwhile, Gramdhunas has expanded.”

“It helps that it’s now connected with wires and by a good road.”

They whizzed down a one-lane concrete road to Gramdhunas. It was tricky when they came to another vehicle; they were supposed to yield, which required Liz to slow and turn onto the gravel strip along the right side of the pavement. “Is Estoiyaju living here, yet?”

Chris shook his head. “His house is finished and it has power, gas, and a phone, but I doubt he stays here more than one day a week. He’s gotten used to living in Mɛddoakwés. The grange manager does a good job, too.”

They reached the modular homes along the road. “Lots of houses.”

“Two new ones every week; almost everyone wants one. These two towns will fill up completely within the next two years. They’re the leading edge of the baby boom.”

“But they were born the year we arrived.”

“Half that generation would be dead by now without our medicine, and three quarters of it is still alive. That’s what I mean. There are 5,000 18-year-olds, this year, and a third of them have moved to new towns. South Ménwika’s filling up, too.”

Liz rolled around the traffic circle at the center of the township and drove into the grange's facility. The garage was almost finished and already had tractors and pickup trucks in it. Two parking spaces were empty and a couple dozen farmers were sitting in a circle, waiting with Rostamu. They rose as Chris and Liz stepped out of the steam car and walked over.

"Welcome, welcome," said Rostamu, very pleased his grandparents had made it. "This is Lord Kristobéru and Lady Lizé, and this is my study circle. Let me introduce everyone." Rostamu pointed to the fifteen men around the circle and gave the name of each one.

"I apologize that we'll never remember everyone's names," said Chris, with a smile. "What are you studying?"

"Today, bits of Ruhi Book 4," replied Erwɛrganu, whose long black beard suggested he was a bit older than the others. "Many of us aren't Bahá'ís, and we wanted to know who this Bahu was because we were reading so many of His words."

"Otherwise, we have been studying about family life and prosperity," replied a dark skinned man who had introduced himself as Estoilubu, "lover of God."

"And I can hear from your accent that you are Sumi," said Liz. "I'm delighted to see that this town has a mix of people."

"He's 'the Sumi guy'," commented someone else. "But that's okay."

"We make sure he's treated okay," added Erwɛrganu.

"And they have been good to me," said Estoilubu. "Some of the guys in the grange have been uncomfortable with me; they're afraid of a Sumi invasion of the

township. But I've assured them I'd only invite 100 cousins to settle here." He said that with a twinkle in his eye. Some of the men chuckled; others did not.

"We all have a long way to go to understand the idea of the oneness of humanity," exclaimed Rostamu. "But that's one of the subjects that comes up in our study circle."

"And where are the women?" asked Liz. "Are any of you married?"

"Some of us." Five hands went up.

"Maybe we can get a class going for them, too," suggested Liz. "Where could the women meet in town, if they wanted to have some spiritual discussions?" She looked around the grange building, which was open and had men hanging out in various places, talking or sharpening tools.

"Not here," replied Erwɛrganu. "But the store has a back room where small groups sometimes meet to play cards, for example. Maybe there."

"If I could get someone here, would you let them know?" asked Liz.

The men looked at each other hesitantly. "Sure," they said. Liz could see they weren't sure they wanted their wives to get together that way.

"Excellent," said Liz, making the most of their agreement.

"How's farming?" asked Chris.

"If we don't get a frost, we'll do well," replied Estoilubu. "Crop prices are strong."

"We have loans on our modular houses to pay off!" quipped someone, and they laughed.

"Usually, crop prices are good in the winter, and Gramdhunas is pretty far south," said Chris. "Do you have enough equipment?"

"We never have enough of that, but we're managing pretty well," replied Erwɛrganu. "We'd like some literacy classes, though, and maybe a small library of books, like the Mɛlita Grange has."

"I'm learning to read," said Estoilubu.

"Of course, you're still learning Eryan," said someone else, and they laughed again.

"True, but I get your jokes now!"

"Ask the Mɛlita Grange to send down some books," suggested Chris. "And I bet some of you can read and write pretty well, so why not organize a literacy class through the grange? It' s easy to do; it counts toward grange service. Do a good job and we'll have to send down génadɛma teachers in a year or two! Seriously, we do that; the grange will set up a course and register people for it, and we send the teacher. Your farming will get better, and anyone who wants to open a business can get the skills to get one started. I'm curious; have you all thought about what your long-term career goal is? There's nothing wrong with being a farmer, of course, but I bet some of you have other ideas." Chris looked at Erwɛrganu, who was closest to him, and that started them around the circle. Most wanted to farm; some even said why; a few weren't sure and had other ideas.

"Good," said Chris when they finished. "For those of you committed to farming, I think it's safe to say that the next ten years won't be as good as the previous ten. The palace can protect us against shortages, but not against oversupply, and that will be an increasing problem. If the supply increases, as you know, the price falls. That pushes farmers to plant more, which in turn pushes down the price. You see the problem? So you have to farm smart. There are new crops coming along all the time; switch to them early,

and there's less pressure. An obvious example is sugar cane, which can be processed into alcohol for steam cars and tractors, or palm oil, which also can be used as a fuel. The number of vehicles is now increasing by over a thousand a year and soon it'll be 2,000 per year. In ten years, this world will have maybe thirty thousand vehicles, and they'll want liquid fuel. So that's a growing market. So is hemp, for cordage and paper, or cotton and flax, for clothing. Fruits are expanding fast, too. Seed production has to increase. Even flowers can now be raised for a profit. To learn about these possibilities, it helps to read and train yourself to ask sharp questions."

"Thank you, Lord," said Erwɛrganu. "What are you putting your money in, if we may ask?"

"Me? I'm putting money in almost everything. I love agriculture and support it strongly, but I have also invested in fifteen tomis and five timber companies. I've invested in Prosperity Bank and Wiki Bank, and now I'm investing in the new insurance business. I've even invested in two theaters and three soccer teams. For this world to provide prosperity to everyone, it needs balance; some agriculture, some manufacturing, and some services. The number of people farming, however, will decline over time. That's inevitable because of tractors and other equipment; one farmer can already do the work of five, and soon it will be the work of ten."

"So, the grange should open factories?" asked Estoilubu.

"Factories, and provide services. The percentage of workers working in factories will grow for twenty or thirty years, but then it will begin to decline as well, as the service sector expands. That's probably what will happen." He looked at them again. "It

was good to meet all of you. Best wishes with your class. I'm looking forward to hearing good things from Rostamu about all of you."

"Thank you, come again, Lord," said Estoilubu, and the others nodded and added their thanks. Chris and Liz shook hands with each one, then headed for the steam car.

"I'm glad we came," said Chris. "They seem like good, intelligent young men."

"I wonder how many of them are Bahá'ís. I'll have to ask Rostamu. I wonder whether they were so friendly and happy to see us because they never see their own lord?" Liz started the steam car forward and back onto Route 14.

Chris sighed. "I'll talk to Estoiyaju. He needs to walk around, shake hands, ask how people are doing, and bestow some small gifts. He's spending all his time at his daughter's house."

"The capital's a lot more exciting."

"He doesn't have to be here 6 days a week. One solid day is plenty, parts of two would be even better. He's collecting taxes from them, after all!"

"Your little talk wasn't very encouraging, where agriculture is concerned."

"I know. But I'm not sure the manufacturing sector will be any better. The population is now 400,000 and growing by 12,000 per year. That means in two decades, we'll have to be creating at least six thousand jobs per year for the men, and more if the women are working, too. We have to produce three thousand jobs per year right now. Too many workers chasing too few jobs will depress wages. The world is a lot more complex than it was eighteen years ago."

"We need the Faith."

"This world needs Bahá'í principles and virtues, definitely."

They drove north to Route 5, where Chris pointed straight ahead and they continued to ɛjnopéla. It was a new stretch of Route 14 and they enjoyed the view. ɛjnopéla was a busy town of three thousand; seven buses were going through the town at that moment. The bus station and attached marketplace were crowded and a soccer game was going on behind the high school across the street. Chris pointed north again, so they continued up Route 14 along the Dwobrébakwés, through Yujakwés, Sugédha, Réjédona, Plɛndhona, Wɛranuagras, and Domamitri; small villages that had gone from utter poverty to modest prosperity. Electric wires seemed to snake to every house and a dozen pickups, scattered about, showed that some large families had purchased vehicles. Small stores clustered in the center of each village.

They turned east on Route 4, which ran around the north side of the capital and straight to Mɛlwika; it was a low-traffic route to get home. But in two minutes they came to a side road. Chris pointed. “Let’s drive down to Dhébkua and see what’s happening.”

“Okay,” she replied. “When were you there last?”

“It’s been a year or two. Once that big crisis was over, when they burned the lord’s barn and smashed his steam car, I had no reason to come regularly. But I have dropped by sometimes.”

They turned onto the Dhébkua road. It had one lane of concrete with a concrete bicycle path along the right side; a very wide gravel lane on the left was for vehicles coming from the other direction. Electric and phone lines paralleled the road on a line of poles. It was good to see that the poorest village in the area had seen progress.

Dhébkua's concrete grain elevator and water tower were the first things they saw. As they drove into the hamlet, they saw several dozen people working on an extension of the two-room schoolhouse; it was the first new building in the village for several years, which was obvious by the looks of the dilapidated structures that dominated the place. Liz parked the car and they got out. Khunu, a 50-year old hunter with a red goatee was leading the work and recognized the visitors.

"Lord Chris! What a surprise! What brings you to Dhébkua?"

"We were driving by and thought we would stop to see how you're doing," replied Chris. "The grain elevator and water tower are very impressive."

"Thank you; we have biogas as well, and a big gas tank that's hauled in from Mɛddoakwés so we have enough in the winter. We aren't near any firewood, so gas is particularly helpful."

"Yes, I can imagine. How are things here?"

Khunu shrugged. "Pretty good. As you can see, we're adding a third classroom. We have a lot of five and six year olds starting school in the next two years, and two rooms are getting overcrowded."

"Is Lord Wɛranobéru helping at all?"

Khunu looked at Chris, then laughed. "We haven't seen him in two years, lord!"

"What? How's that possible?"

"I'll tell you, we have you to thank, Lord. Lord Wɛranobéru has two sons; well, he had three, but the oldest one went into the army and died at the Battle of the Palisade. The other two married into Old Houses that had no particular wealth or land, and the

Lord had no particular plan to turn over Dhébkua to his heir, so he arranged for both sons to get estates in Swadnoma."

"Gramakwés," injected Chris.

"I think that's right. In a few years they were both doing very, very well, so he decided to get an estate himself down there; I think Swadlɛndha. He got a big estate down there, too. The arrangement, as I know you know, is a seven percent tax on output for the lord of a landed estate; five percent from the royal share and two percent from the Lord's share, which otherwise is ten percent. As a result of this arrangement, Lord Wɛranobéru did very well. He also saw what an eight percent tax on output allowed a lord to do for his village. Gramakwés, Mɛlita, and the other townships down there all have power, telephones, paved roads, and now gas, water, and sewers. Consequently, three years ago he decided to devote four fifths of his ten percent tax from Dhébkua to the improvement of the village here, and keep only a two percent share. But he wasn't paying close attention to how it was being spent; he really didn't care that much, frankly. So the three of us who got the highest number of votes in the biennial election for the provincial assembly went to see him and try to offer him some suggestions. We talked to some of our friends in other villages, talked to Saréiduktɛr in Mɛlwika, and went to him with a development list and some cost estimates. He looked at our list, listened to our presentation, asked a few questions, then said 'okay, I'll open a bank account for the village and put fifteen thousand dhanay in it, and you three will be in charge of spending it.'"

Chris was surprised by that. "He did that? He basically gave you independence?"

Khunu smiled. “We think of it this way: the village of Dhébkua is paying our lord a legal bribe of three thousand dhanay to leave us alone! The three of us meet monthly to plan expenditures, we hold a quick meeting of the town to report our decision to them, sometimes we change our decisions, our treasurer writes the checks, and once a year we go to Lord Wɛranobéru to give him an annual report. He then releases another deposit to us.”

“That’s amazing. So, the estate lord system plus elections basically created the conditions for independence.”

“That’s right. The estate in Swadlɛndha is smaller than Dhébkua, but he gets a seven percent tax plus mortgage payments on three crops per year, so he spends a lot of time there. Many of us have land on his estate or on the estate of one of his sons, and we see him down there a lot more than up here! Last year we reminded him of the tax-sharing law and we got a share of the taxes paid to him there for Dhébkua as well! Two thousand; it almost covers the ‘bribe’ we have to pay him every year! That’s how we contributed to the new granary—built by the palace—how we could pay for the biogas and the entire gas system, and how we can now pay for a third teacher for the school.”

“But doesn’t he have to sign contracts and such?” asked Liz.

Khunu nodded. “He does that. I think he’s happy to leave us alone. He’s got a gentleman’s income without us, and no hassles.”

“Do the other villages around here know about your arrangement?” asked Chris.

“Some do, but no other lord has been willing to go this far. Some still feel a sense of responsibility, or they don’t have an estate in the new lands. Some are actively investing in factories in or near their villages to boost their tax revenues.”

“Generally, we have managed to prevent the worst abuses by lords in their realm,” said Chris. “And I thank you and the villagers of Dhébkua for pulling back, after beating up Wɛranobéru, and trusting the justice system. In the long run, I think that produced a victory for everyone.”

“I agree, Lord, and thank you for helping us during that dark time. In the past, the army would have come in, burned half the village, many people would have died or starved later, and the Lord would have ended up with nothing. This valley has a half dozen abandoned villages that suffered that fate, and their lords ended up landless.”

“Will you stay and have coffee with us, Lord?” asked an older woman nearby who was providing the builders with food and drink.

“Thank you, we’ll have a cup,” agreed Chris. He looked at Liz, who nodded. No doubt she wanted to ask how the women of the village were doing, and whether they had considered a gabruli.

The workers took a break and they all sat inside one of the classrooms for fifteen minutes to continue their conversation. Then Chris and Liz headed home. “I’m so glad they’re doing fairly well,” said Chris. “Their houses still look pretty bad on the outside, though.”

“But I bet the insides look very different,” replied Liz. “A lot more furniture, rugs, plus electric lights and gas stoves. And I was struck that the widow who was cooking for everyone mentioned she had a phone. She must have gotten a Wiki Bank microcredit loan in order to provide pay phone service.”

“And probably to get a stove, since she cooks hot lunches for the kids in school and for workers around town every day. She has basically opened a restaurant!”

"Women are definitely feeling more empowered. And note, no one complained about the new profit sharing law."

"No, they're happy with their increased prosperity," agreed Chris.

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411.

Sacrifice

Early Prusménu 18/636

“I’m so glad you could come with me, dear,” Liz said to Jordan, as she climbed into her grandson’s pickup truck.

I’m glad you could come with me,” replied Jordan. “I’ve been wanting to get back to the Késtonε village for months. They have three development grants I have to audit. That’ll take a lot less time than your deepening.”

“Did you bring any forms? I’m sure we can initiate another application or two for development funds. They have a lot of needs.”

“Yes, and I can take photos with my smartphone to document the needs; that makes the application even stronger. The palace loves to see photos.”

“Good.”

Jordan started forward from the front of the Mennea house, turned immediately left onto Temple Street, one of the city’s main thoroughfares, and headed toward Temple Square. It was still two hours before sunrise, but in the dawn light the street was already getting busy. “No protests yet, at least.”

“No, but when we get home we may have to go around one. They’re smaller and peaceful.”

“I figured Amos’s visit would settle the matter.”

"It did, partly. People are still waiting for the decision of the Board of Directors. I wish they'd hurry up and compromise, but I guess they're combing records to get a better idea of what they can propose, and that takes a little time."

"It does, but it looks like an excuse."

"How's Andru?"

Jordan smiled. "He's getting cuter and cuter! Smiling, cooing, rolling over, and pretty soon he'll start to struggle to crawl."

"But he's just six months old; don't rush him!"

"I know. Tiamaté is so happy to have a baby. She's already talking about having another!"

"Give Andru at least a year. Two very little ones are really hard."

They crossed Temple Square and drove straight down Majakwés Rodha, the city's main commercial district. Liz pointed out the space for the new women's gabruli. Then they drove out the South Gate, across the green belt, around the roundabout, and headed south on Route 2. Soon they were on Route 1 heading east to Gordha. The sun rose a half hour later and was well above the horizon when they drove around Gordha on its new beltway. They surmounted Gordhamonta, drove down the other side and past Gordha Reservoir—which was about as low as it got—then steadily climbed up the shoulders of the Spine Mountains. They reached Késtonatroba in less than two hours, but with four time zones to cross, the sun was mounting toward the zenith.

"Thank you for coming to see us again, Lady Liz and Lord Jordanu!" exclaimed Lord Duku, coming out of his house when he heard the pickup. "I'm glad we have no snow and hope you had a quick and easy trip!"

“Yes, it was very easy, thank you,” said Liz. “Jordan is such a good driver. But this may be our last visit until spring.”

“We’ll see how much snow Esto brings us,” said Duku. “The women are gathering in my uncle’s house and are excited to be learning about knitting. But can you teach them very much in four hours?”

“Oh, yes, enough to get them started with a simple stitch. Two can read enough to follow directions if I go over them carefully. And I can telephone them next week to find out how they’re doing. That may help.”

“I suppose it would,” said Duku, pondering the idea of making an expensive phone call about knitting. He turned to Jordan. “And you want to see our three development projects?”

“Yes, it’s a condition of the grant that I check them. But that should be easy and quick.”

“No, not too quick; the pickup is up valley with the portable sawmill, so that’s two of the grants. But I can find someone who can get you up there in your pickup.”

“Good. I’ll go up, see how they’re doing, and visit with people. They may have other ideas for grants or loans.”

“I’m sure they will. I’ll take you up there myself. I have a lot of questions.”

“Excellent.” The three of them walked to the house of the lord’s uncle, ɛndrusunu, where a half dozen women awaited Liz. After a few words of welcome, Duku and Jordan headed back to the latter’s pickup and headed up the bumpy, winding, rocky trace that paralleled the river.

A magnificent stand of firs—over fifty meters high—occupied a small dhuba ten kilometers upstream. By the time they got there, Jordan already had two development grant ideas; more equipment to export long, high quality timbers, and a much improved and widened road so it could be moved to market.

The lumbermen were eating lunch, so they sat and talked an hour about the timber and other resources in the area. When they finished, Jordan suggested they say a prayer to Esto for giving them such trees and mountains and everyone agreed; it seemed a fitting way to emphasize respect for the land and would help develop an interest in environmental management. Then he and the lord got back into the pickup for the ride back to Késtonatroba.

"So, how do we balance spiritual and material development?" asked Duku out loud, knowing Jordan had no simple answer.

"I think we always must remember that we are on this world to prepare for the next. That means we should be comfortable, but not so comfortable that we take the means for comfort from others. It's a balance. Somehow, the more we focus on Esto and on others and less on our own needs, the better, but that doesn't mean we live with no means for comfort and with no resources to contribute to the world."

"Yes, you are right; we need to put our needs in a much bigger context. And as chief—as lord—I have to put everyone ahead of myself."

"But even then, you have to put your family first most of the time. It's only right."

"That's true." Duku thought for a moment. "I very much appreciated your request that we pray for the trees and the land. It is sacred to us; it sustains us; we mustn't destroy it."

“Exactly, and we now have the ability to destroy this world. It worries my grandfather greatly, especially deforestation.”

“So he told us when he was here. You know, lord, I appreciate the Bahá'í prayers very much, and we are very happy we can continue our old prayers to ɛndro, but what we miss is sacrifice. I suppose it is a silly thing, but we are used to sacrificing animals. We understand that Esto really gains no benefit from a dead animal; He is the All-Powerful and the dead body of an animal cannot give Him strength. But surely He can appreciate the sacrifice of material means to the priests, or to a temple?”

“Oh, absolutely. I agree fully with you. The sacrifice strengthens us spiritually, and that is the point. The animal is material property that has been given up for a spiritual cause. It really is our sacrifice.”

“Yes, exactly. So, Lord Jordanu, why is it that the Bahá'í Faith does not allow us to sacrifice animals for the Bahá'í community and its projects?”

Jordan thought about it. “I suppose it does allow it, lord. You can give anything to the Central Spiritual Assembly; anything. And they can then sell it. That is a sacrifice of material means.”

“So, we can give the Central Spiritual Assembly animals?”

“I don’t know why not. You could give them to the Késtonɛ Bahá'í Fund as well.”

“But how would we convert the gift into cash?”

“Sell the meat.”

Duku nodded. He continued to think. “Are there any Bahá'í prayers to say for sacrificing things?”

“There are many Bahá'í prayers for the fund and for service to others. Perhaps they could be used. And you could use your prayers as well.”

“Could you take some animals back to Mɛlwika to sell for the funds, then? We could bind three or four goats and put them in the back of this pickup.”

“Ah . . . we know someone who slaughters animals in town and we could take them to him. He’d probably give us a pretty good price.”

Duku smiled. “We would be very appreciative of the assistance, Lord. We’d give half the money to the Central Spiritual Assembly and keep half for the Késtonɛ Spiritual Assembly, because it has no money at all.”

“Yes, we can do that for you, Lord.”

“Thank you.”

They drove back to Késtonatroba in silence, Jordan wondering what his grandmother would say about four goats tied up in the back of his truck and how he’d handle the sale. Once back to the village, they parked the truck at Uncle ɛndrusunu’s and went inside. The knitting lesson was well advanced, but Lord Duku decided to interrupt. “We’ve solved the problem of supporting the local and central Bahá'í funds,” he announced. “Jordan said he’d bring some goats back to Mɛlwika to sell them for the fund.”

“Ah, yes, we can do that,” said Liz. “We’ll be glad to.”

“So, Bahá'ís are accepting animal sacrifices now?” exclaimed ɛndrusunu. “The priests of Widumaj will be furious!”

“People can donate anything to the Bahá'í funds,” replied Liz. “We can accept animals.”

“But we aren’t just donating animals; this is an act of sacrifice,” pointed out Duku. “And we need to mark that act of sacrifice with prayers.”

“Alright,” agreed Liz, realizing that the situation was getting complicated. “We’ll be finished here in another hour or so.”

“We’ll get the goats,” said Duku, happy. ɛndrusunu scowled. Jordan went outside to help the lord while Liz continued the knitting lessons and pondered what trouble this could cause.

When she came out of the house, half the village had assembled, including ɛndrusunu and his group of skeptics. The Bahá'ís—the majority of the village—was delighted that they could follow the customs of their fathers and donate animals. They sat in a circle around the bound animals and prayed Bahá'í prayers and a few to ɛndro and even a few hymns of Widumaj. Then the goats were placed in the back of the pickup truck, Jordan and Liz got in, and they headed back to Mɛlwika.

“So, will ɛndrusunu tell the priests of Widumaj about this?” asked Jordan.

“I bet he will,” said Liz. “I think people have donated animals to the fund before, and I suspect people have even prayed over the animals first. There’s nothing wrong with that; it’s all permissible. It’s not our standard procedure, but it isn’t forbidden, and we can accommodate local customs.”

“We should have told them that we don’t have rituals in the Faith.”

“Yes, this skated near the edge, where a ritual was concerned, but doing it once isn’t a ritual, and if they did different prayers and hymns each time it’s still not a ritual, exactly.”

“It’s also a traditional custom, and we allow that.”

Liz thought about that, then nodded. “Yes, that’s a good way to put it. We don’t have Bahá'í rituals, but we allow traditional ones. How much do the priests get from sacrifices, anyway?”

“It used to be a lot of their income, but with the Kwolonɛ slaughterhouse producing a huge amount of cheap meat, I’m sure they don’t get so much. But it’s symbolically important.”

She nodded. “Yes, that’s what it is.”

Only two days passed before the priests announced that the Bahá'ís had accepted a sacrifice of animals. It did not matter that the animals were not ritually killed and were sold to a slaughterhouse instead; the usual custom in an Eryan temple was to bring the animals forward and give it to a priest, who sang a hymn and led the animal away for ritual slaughter anyway. Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi used his radio program to set the record straight. The newspapers covered the story and the letters to the editor columns debated it as well.

“So, what do people really think about this?” asked Chris after supper, several nights later. “I’m not sure.”

“I’ve heard a few students talking about it,” said Thornton. “My impression is that most génadɛma students regard animal sacrifice as old fashioned and of little importance, so the whole flap by the priests is a bit silly to them.”

“I talked to a few investors at the bank today,” said Chris. “Two were from Old Houses and were very upset, as one can expect. The merchants seemed to think that this would cause controversy, and that worried them.”

“I talked to Mitrubéru by telephone this afternoon,” said Liz. “He said Kɛkanu’s not very stirred by this, and he’s a lover of all the old things, including animal sacrifice. He didn’t think this would amount to much.”

“I suspect the priests will succeed to stir up their conservative base against the Faith,” said Chris. “For people who are becoming modern and secular, the whole controversy will look old-fashioned, even our accepting donations of animals. And some traditional people who are sympathetic to us will like the fact that we accept animals!”

“So, the result is polarization,” concluded Thornton.

“For a while,” said Chris. “We’ll have to see whether this issue gets traction, but I don’t see it.”

“I think the birth control controversy was worse,” agreed Liz.

Chris and Thornton nodded; that seemed like a good assessment. “So, did the Miller Motors Board make a decision?” asked Liz, changing the subject.

“Yes, we did,” replied Chris. “New hires will get five percent less salary, but will get some of it back through profit sharing. Existing workers will not see any salary cut, but future raises from productivity improvements and seniority will be smaller. Fifteen per cent of total profits will go to the workers as a quarterly dividend starting this quarter

at the end of this month and we will gradually increase the percentage to twenty percent over the next five years. At that rate, existing investors shouldn't see any decrease."

"How big will the dividend checks be in two weeks?" asked Thornton.

"They'll average fifteen dhanay; more for long-term workers, less for short term workers. Not much, about a day and a half of salary every quarter. But it will go up. We want it to get up to a month's worth, in five to ten years. Then we'll have real flexibility when there's a downturn."

"What profit margin will that require?" asked Thornton.

"That's the tricky part. We're averaging a ten percent profit on a cash flow of about seven million dhanay for Miller Motors and the Miller Foundry, so there's a profit of about 700,000 that is already committed to the investors. The Miller family owns a 51% share, so they get 51% of that; we own 10% of the company, which we've given to the génadɛma so we don't have to pay taxes on the income. When we were starting the manufacture of steam cars, the palace extended a series of 'grants' that would give them a 10% stake, but they had always said they didn't want a vote on the Board, just gradual repayment, which we were doing steadily, interest free. Now they've forgiven the grants so we can give the larger profit to the workers; they really have saved us, because this is their new policy for tomis. We're cutting the profits of everyone else by five percent, which is painful. But it allows us to give the workers fifteen percent. That's about 100,000 dhanay altogether, divided among 1,500 workers, or 60 dhanay per year. But we need to raise it to about 200 dhanay per year, or 300,000 altogether, for it to be a large enough cushion. If we can grow the company until the cash flow reaches ten million and

profit hits one million, and split the additional 300,000 between workers and investors, we'll be there."

"Then the workers would get 30 percent of the profits?" asked Liz.

"Exactly, and the remaining investors would see their profits grow, but very slowly; painfully so. But the workers wouldn't get any additional seats on the Board, their shares would be non-voting shares of the sort the palace has outlined. We may be able to get more royal grants to grow the company, too."

"Not easy," said Liz. "I suppose they want to support smaller, more struggling outfits!"

"Yes, definitely. It would have been easier to cut workers' salaries ten percent and put it into a special profit sharing pot for them, but that has proved politically impossible. But these mechanisms should get us to our goal in five to ten years." Chris glanced at the clock. "I need to make a few calls to the western shore; the tomis there want to know what the Miller Tomi has decided, because they'll probably do something similar. Certainly Jérdomas Tomi will. Bɛlékwu Kwénu will make the announcement at the noon press conference tomorrow. Since he's a worker, we thought he'd have the most credibility. Chandu Chartagrasi, head of the Grange Council, will speak as well."

"I hope that will calm the controversy," said Liz. "Because this will probably work out better for everyone in the long run."

Chris nodded. He rose from the table and went to his office to make his calls. Liz went upstairs to read and Thornton headed to his apartment to help Lébé with the kids.

Gradually the household quieted down for the night. At midnight Lua came in from the hospital, but that was the last sound. Chris and Liz turned off their bedroom lights a little while later, and the Mennea household fell silent.

Three hours later they were awakened by a loud crash.

"What the—" said Chris, bolting awake in bed. He fumbled for the light, then climbed out of bed. The bedroom wall less than a meter from him had an enormous crack in it.

"What is it?" asked Liz.

"Someone ran into the house!" said Chris. He walked to the crack and looked out. The street outside was brightly illuminated by several lights. Directly below their bedroom was the house's main door. A pickup truck had smashed partly into the door and partly into the stone wall, some of which had tumbled down on the truck.

"Hurry up and break it down!" exclaimed a voice. "The soldiers will be here in a minute!"

"They're trying to break into the house!" exclaimed Chris. Just then there was a loud thud.

"What? What was that?"

"They're taking an ax to the front door! Grab your phone, awaken Thornton and family, and get them to the roof immediately!"

"What about Lua and Behruz?"

"I'm running downstairs to warn them right now!" Chris headed for the bedroom door as the thuds continued. Liz glanced through the crack and saw four men with swords, though one was wounded because a building stone had smashed the windshield

of the pickup truck. The door must have been badly damaged; there was little time. She dashed out and headed for Thornton and Lébé's apartment next door. She couldn't believe the situation; it seemed unreal.

As she pounded on the door of Thornton's apartment she heard the clash of swords outside and a scream. The Mennea Tomi had a security man and he was just inside the door, across the street. He must have interfered.

"Thornton, Lébé, the house is being attacked!" she shouted almost desperately. Meanwhile, Chris was pounding on Lua and Behruz's door across the way. The cook had come out of her room on the first floor—not far from the spot where the truck had struck—and she was dashing upstairs as well, frightened.

Thornton suddenly opened his door. "Attacked?" He had grabbed his sword; it was possibly the only weapon in the household.

"They're breaking down the front door!" said Chris.

"Then go!" shouted Thornton. He dashed out with the sword, wearing just pajamas, and dashed down the stairs, even though both parents shouted at him to stop.

As he came down, Thornton could see the house's wood stove sitting in the Great Room faintly glowing from a fire within; they usually loaded in a big, heavy log or two at midnight to make a steady supply of heat most of the night. They also kept a kettle on the top so they could make tea or coffee any time, so he grabbed the pot, which still had a lot of water in it; boiling water. He dashed to the door, which was beginning to splinter before the assault of the ax; it had a crack in it half as wide as a man. He stepped close and looked out; two bearded men stood there behind a third who was swinging the ax. He

pulled off the top of the kettle, aimed carefully, and threw the whole pot of boiling water at them.

The three men screamed and fell back, temporarily blinded and in pain. With nothing left to defend them, Thornton threw the pot at one man. He dashed back into the great room as Behruz came down the stairs.

"Let's push something against the door!" he shouted to Thornton.

"Yes!" He looked around and spotted a chest of drawers. They pushed everything off the top, smashing some items, and picked it up, surprising both of them at their own strength. In a few seconds they hauled it to the door and turned it over against the door, then leaned against the other side to hold it in place.

"That should stop them," said Thornton.

"Where are the soldiers or the police?" said Behruz, exasperated.

"I don't know; dad must have called by now." He looked upstairs, which was quiet; everyone had fled onto the roof, and from there they would be heading down into the Miller house.

"They're not trying to cut open the door any more," said Thornton.

"What did you do?" asked Behruz.

"Threw the kettle half full of boiling water in their faces." Thornton suddenly realized that his hands were burned as well, from handling the iron kettle.

"Ouch. We have to keep salt bombs in the house, from now on."

"Or dad's revolver."

Behruz cringed at that.

"You can open up!" shouted a voice from outside.

“Aisu, is that you?” asked Thornton.

“Yes, and several soldiers. They’ve fled.”

“Alright.” Thornton and Berhuz pulled the heavy chest of drawers away from the door and looked outside; Aisu was there with three soldiers. They struggled to unbar the heavy metal-reinforced door, because the metal restraints were all bent and twisted. Finally they opened the door and stepped out. By then, Chris had come back into the house and down the stairs.

“You’re lucky the street here is so narrow,” said Aisu. “They needed speed to ram your door, but they couldn’t come up Temple Street fast enough and take the corner to hit the door squarely.”

“So they hit the wall of the house instead,” said Chris. “That probably saved our lives.”

“I think so.” Aisu pointed to the pickup truck. “It has an Isurdhuna license plate. They came a long way to get you.”

“I wonder who they are?” said Chris.

“We’ll probably find out,” said Thornton. “Because I got the guy with the ax squarely in the face with a kettle of boiling water, and at least one of the two guys behind him got some, too.”

“And one—the driver, I think—had an injured shoulder,” said Chris. “I looked out the hole in my second story bedroom wall. I think some of the falling stones came through the windshield and struck him.”

“Alright, we’ll look for injured men,” said Aisu. “It’s a cold night and they have no getaway vehicle. We’ll probably catch them. I’ll send out every soldier and policeman to comb the city.”

Just then, John Miller came hobbling up behind them with his rifle. “Are they gone?” he shouted.

“Yes, they fled when Thornton hit two of them in the face with a kettle full of boiling water,” said Chris. “And one probably has an injured shoulder from the falling rocks.”

John hobbled up to the door and looked at the pickup truck. “The bastards! Give Yimu the vehicle identification number and we’ll see who bought it!”

“I’ll call the Isurdhuna provincial police,” said Aisu. “They’re open, since it’s the afternoon there. They can check the license plate number.”

“Good.” John looked at the door and shook his head. “What a mess. Awsé’s making room for everyone in our house or at the hotel; you’ll actually be safer and more comfortable at the hotel.”

“Good idea,” agreed Chris.

“We can close the door, bolt it, and push the chest of drawers against it to close it up,” said Thornton. “We can close the door between your bedroom and the rest of the house to keep the cold out of the house, at least.”

“And we can get a policeman posted inside all night, I’m sure.”

“That reminds me: the night watchman across the street!” said Chris.

“He’s in the hospital with a minor sword wound. He saw he couldn’t take them on, so he ran to the tower and woke us up,” said Aisu. “We’ll post some soldiers inside here, outside the door, and inside the Tomi building.”

“Thanks,” said Chris.

“I better get to the hospital, too,” said Thornton. He held up his right hand. The palm was badly burned.

“Wow, that must hurt a lot!” said John.

“It’s beginning to, but it didn’t hurt at all because of adrenaline,” replied Thornton.

“Alright, let’s get everyone calmed down,” said Chris. “Maybe some might actually get a little more sleep.”

Few slept that night; the kids were too hysterical and the parents too stressed. But by 8 a.m., Ménu Miller dropped everything to replace the smashed door with a temporary one and sent some masons to repair the stonework, and everyone at least felt able to come home and have some breakfast.

“So, will we ever feel safe again?” asked Liz, sipping her coffee.

“Should we have felt so safe all along?” replied Chris. “I’ve survived 4 or 5 assassination attempts, if you include the attempted burning of our house in Mɛlita.”

“But no one has attacked the household itself,” said Liz.

“Well, there was the Kwolonɛ attack,” noted Thornton.

“Oh, I didn’t count that one,” added Chris. “Five or six assassination attempts, then. Look, we need to take some practical measures. We need to make sure the outer

walls of the house are stronger, so a crash won't penetrate. The southern wall of the house runs along a very narrow street that lacks a sidewalk. If we create a sidewalk a meter wide and a meter high, people will have a safe place to walk by the house and the sidewalk will be a barrier to keep vehicles back from the walls."

"But what about the front door?" asked Lua.

"We'll move it to the west side and put large flower boxes separating the Flower Court from Citadel Square, so vehicles can't enter Flower Court. That'll also make the space in front of the Medical School more pleasant and will give us a nicer entrance. The current entrance can be the exit of a tunnel under the street to the Tomi Building, which will make access to the Tomi Building and the basement garage there easier. We'll be sure to hire a second guard for the Tomi Building, too."

"I'm really surprised the pickup truck knocked down part of our outer wall!" exclaimed Behruz. "It's supposed to be able to stand up to earthquakes!"

"Maybe it isn't as strong as we thought," replied Chris. "Let's get some pictures and email them to Amos. I suspect we'll need to reinforce the first story walls with iron bars."

"If we're going to excavate an underground entrance to the Tomi Building, we probably should excavate some basement storage as well," suggested Thornton. "This house has so much stuff, now, we don't have enough storage for everything."

"That's a good idea," said Liz.

Just then the phone rang. Agné the cook answered it. "Lord Kris, it's Wɛrétrakɛstɛr."

"Oh, thank you. I'd be surprised if the news has reached him already!" Chris got up and walked to the phone. "Hello, honored widu!" he began.

"Hail, honored Lord. I just heard that someone tried to ram your front door with a pickup truck and break into your house in the middle of the night! I am terribly shocked and upset by this assault on your household! I want to assure you of my prayers for your safety. No true follower of Widumaj would ever do such a thing."

"Thank you, my friend, and be assured we hold no grudge against any true follower of the Great Prophet. We are shocked and upset as well, but no one in our house was hurt, other than Thornton, and he just had minor burns from throwing a kettle of boiling water at the attackers. How did you hear so quickly?"

"The police in Isurdhuna called me to ask whether I might have heard anything. The truck belonged to an estate here owned by a priestly family, who say the truck was stolen, though they had never reported it as stolen. There's a new group here, the *Sirus Sɛgois Jérois,* 'Guardians of the Old Customs' and they have sworn to fight new knowledge and 'new customs,' that is, the Bahá'í Faith. They're a secret group, but I have heard whisperings about them. They may be behind this."

"I've never heard of them."

"No, the police here hadn't either. So, what will you do? Strengthen your house?"

"Yes, we're working on ways to make it safer, and we'll need to consider ways to make our movement safer as well."

"Definitely, because I think whoever tried this won't just go after the men in your family. I think they may try to kill anyone, male or female, young or old."

"That's what we were afraid of. This will make our lives very difficult."

“I fear it will. I plan to call Kɛkanu in a few hours and offer to go on his show to talk about this attack and why your family does not deserve such treatment. But I strongly feel that you need to go on his show as well. Kɛkanu has never interviewed you, right?”

“Correct. With my accent, honored widu, I do not feel comfortable doing an interview.”

“My friend, people will understand you just fine; you speak Eryan as fast as anyone else, and more clearly than a lot of Tutanɛ or rural peasants! No, it is very important. Thousands have met you, and they usually like you when they do. But hundreds of thousands do not know you and many fear you. An interview may help. I think it is essential.”

“I will keep your advice in mind then, Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, and I respect you very highly, so I will take it very seriously.”

“Good. Please do. And protect yourself and your family, Chris. I have had dreams recently of a storm swirling around you. I fear more trouble.”

“We will do that, friend Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. Thank you.”

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Reactions

Late Prusménu 18/636

“In conclusion, Count Kristobéru, what do you want the people of this world to understand about your family?” asked Kɛkanu.

Chris considered the question very carefully for a moment. “I hope, Honored, that people would understand that our goal is to be servants of the people. We created the génadɛma and the hospital to provide education and health to people. We have helped to set up tomis so that partnership between the people and those with money can spread wealth across the world. We helped to set up Prosperity Bank and Wiki Bank so that money could be available to help people get ahead; in the case of Wiki Bank, we gave the bank money to establish it. We have certainly made a lot of money, but—”

“How much, Lord, may I ask, have you made?”

“A few years ago our income was about a million and a third dhanay, but since then we have assigned much of the income, which comes from mortgages or profits on investments, to the génadɛmas or other charities, so our income is now under half a million a year. But—and this is a continuation of what I planned to say before you asked the question—we spend very little of it on ourselves. My family consists of five married couples and their children and the three houses we live in. Those five couples and three houses spend about thirty thousand dhanay per year on themselves. The rest of the money goes to development projects, temples, granges, tomis, investment in new businesses, soccer teams, theaters, research to make new drugs or new machines, and such. The

tomis, granges, génadɛmas, and hospitals we have directly set up employ several thousand people, and the ones we have helped set up employ tens of thousands more. We have tried to do a lot of good in this world; that is what I mean by being servants of the people. I hope this service is acceptable to Esto."

"Personally, Lord, I feel the service will be very acceptable," replied Kɛkanu. "People are listening to this program right now because of the radio stations your family started, on radio receivers your family helped to design. You have enabled us to bring news and music to the entire world. Certainly, I must admit that I have benefitted; it is very nice to have my name on the tongues of literally everyone. But you have also taught me that service is more important than fame, and if one has a choice between the two, one must choose service. That is a very difficult choice to make, and I hope I will prove worthy, if Esto ever gives me that choice. Thank you again, Count Kristobéru, for coming on this show today. If there is one suggestion I would offer you, it is that you should get out among the people more, not less. Don't let this terrible assault on your house force you into isolation. Let them meet you, let them ask you difficult questions, let them tell you their complaints about how the world is changing. I'm sure you've heard them all, but it's important to hear them over and over again. And apologize to them when harm has been done."

"Thank you for that advice, and I do indeed apologize to the many people who have been harmed. The world has changed in huge ways in the last twenty years. Most people have benefitted, but not everyone, and even those who have benefitted have also experienced some harm. This fact haunts me every day, believe me, and I am sorry about it."

“Let us close the World Table with the Hymn of the Lamp.” Kɛkanu paused, then began to chant the hymn live.

May and Amos listened briefly to the chant in the great room in their house in Pértatranisér. Then May said, “Dad did pretty well.”

Amos nodded. “Yes, Kɛkanu threw some tough questions at him, but did so in a very calm and friendly fashion, so I think the entire interview will make a very positive impression.”

“But will it make us safer?”

“I don’t know. I guess the answer to that question is, how many fanatics are there, and can they be dissuaded to act violently against us. I for one have no plans to start walking around with a bodyguard. If they reduce our freedom that much, they’ve won.”

“I understand what you’re saying,” said May, though she didn’t necessarily agree with her husband.

Amos sighed. “I’m going outside to see how the work’s going.” He rose and walked out of the great room, across the eastern side of the house where there were guest rooms and offices for the tomi, and out the front door.

It was hard to exit the house because of the work on the sidewalk running along its eastern side. A rope blocked the sidewalk entirely; pedestrians had to cross over to the other side of the street. A crew was busily setting up the woodwork to pour a new sidewalk a meter high the length of the house, to make it impossible for anyone to crash a vehicle into it. Amos stopped to inspect the work and talk to the foreman, who thought the entire project—whose purpose had never been explained to him—was a waste of time

and money. Another contractor would soon be adding metal beams and sheet metal to reinforce the house's first floor walls.

About the time he finished talking to the crew, a taxi arrived from the radio station with Chris. Amos hurried over. "The interview went very well!"

"Yes, I think so," agreed Chris. He pointed to the front door and they stepped inside, to a place where a private conversation was possible. "Kɛkanu said he wanted to ask a series of challenging questions and told me ahead of time what they were. I wasn't very pleased because some were pretty personal, like how much money we earn. But I think he's right to ask them."

"Yes, I think it's better to answer that question directly."

"I'm intrigued by Kɛkanu's suggestion that we get out among the people more, not less, and we allow them to talk to us directly about their concerns. It's a risky strategy; it could backfire or cause violence. But it may be the wisest strategy, too. We haven't been intentionally accessible, even in Mɛlwika."

"Or here. May and I were impressed by that idea as well."

They reached the great room and May rose to kiss her father. "That was good."

"I think so," agreed Chris. "I'm glad Wɛrétrakɛstɛr suggested it. He did an excellent job the other day, also. He even avoided talking about the Bahá'í Faith!" He sat in a chair, looking tired. Chalésté handed him a cup of coffee with milk; she had it ready for him. "Thank you, Chalésté. So, what's the weather forecast for the drive back?"

"Clear skies," replied Amos.

“I’d prefer to stay to visit both of you more and do some business, but the drivers and the guard are waiting, and they’re expensive! It’s a ridiculous situation. I need to be back to oversee the work on the house, anyway.”

“It’ll be hard to get used to a new front door from the Flower Court side.”

“They’re still working on it, but it has potential; it provides a nice greeting area and a larger coat area. The street between the house and tomi will be closed overnight in three days and that should be enough to install the metal cover over the tunneling work. The tunnel to the tomi won’t take that long—a few weeks to dig and concrete—but then we’re going to use the tunnel to excavate a basement area under the central garden. It’ll be two months before the garden is reestablished. The dirt will be hauled out through the tunnel.”

“That’ll be a great addition to the house,” said May. “So much more storage space.”

“There will be a pantry and root cellar down there, too; it’ll help the cooks immensely. We’re going to expand the garage area under the tomi to accommodate four steam cars, too. That’ll work until Rostamu and Jalalu get steam cars as well!”

“The next generation will need a lot more space,” said Amos. “Within ten years, we’ll need additional houses.”

“No doubt.” Chris looked at the clock on the wall. “I suppose I have time to eat a Pértatranisér lunch, which will be a Mɛlwika supper, then head home. And maybe I should stop in the shopping center for half an hour after lunch, mingle, and ask people what they thought.”

“That’s a great idea!” said May. “Kɛkanu’s suggestion was an excellent one.”

Just then the telephone rang. Chalésté answered it, then beckoned to Chris. “It’s Wɛpokɛstɛr, Her Majesty’s secretary.”

“Thank you.” Chris hurried over and took the phone. “Khélo?”

“Count Kristobéru, this is Wɛpokɛstɛr. How are you on this day?”

“Quite well, Honored. Did you hear the interview?”

“Indeed, and so did Her Majesty. She asked me to call you and say she was very pleased by how it went. Even the frank questions about money were good ones to discuss, and the questions about the role of the Bahá'í Faith in your family’s efforts were excellent ones. She wanted me to tell you that she plans to issue a statement about the value of your family to the practical aspects of developing the kingdom and how your family has the confidence and trust of the palace. She also plans to state that she feels it is important for other prominent figures—lords, counts, dukes—to issue statements of appreciation as well.”

“Really? That’s extraordinary, Honored Wɛpokɛstɛr. Please thank Her Majesty profusely for us and tell her how much we appreciate this support. Possibly it will help prevent acts of violence against us.”

“That is very much her hope. Her Majesty will also state that the palace will not tolerate any violence encouraged by priests and will react against it with vigor; it is totally contrary to their role. We are privately asking all the priestly families in Mɛddoakwés and Isurdhuna to write letters to the prisoners urging them to confess fully their motives for attacking your house and name anyone who urged them to carry out the plot. Those who fail to do so will possibly be betraying their own role in the plot, or at

very least their tacit support for it. If any priests are involved, and if the Guardians of the Old Customs are involved, they will be dealt with swiftly and forcefully."

"I fear there is a nefarious history of their involvement in plots," agreed Chris. "It is a black blot on the fair name of the religion of Widumaj, and totally inconsistent with His teachings."

"Exactly so. I'll let you know if there are any other developments, Lord."

"Thank you, Wɛpokɛstɛr."

"Good bye, Lord."

"Good bye." Chris put the phone down. "Well, that's very good news."

"Let's hope it has an impact," said May.

The ship was twelve meters long and four meters wide. It had a cabin in front, two masts for sails, and two steam engines in the back. Thornton walked around it and frowned.

"It looks familiar to me," he said. "Where did you get it?"

"From northern Véspa, I think," replied Lord Estoséru of Nuarjora. "It was used for timber harvesting, but now all the drowned trees have fallen into the water and are gone."

"Oh, of course!" replied Thornton. "It was based in northern Véspa, but was operating out of Luktrudɛma. I once went out on it and watched them blow up trees!"

"Really?" said Estoséru, amused. "That would be interesting. But now it is our *oceanography* ship." He said that with special emphasis. "It would make quite a remarkable fishing vessel, though."

“Until it’s fully set up for oceanography, take it out for some fishing,” suggested Jordan, who was also on board.

“As long as we don’t lose it for oceanography!” exclaimed Wɛranobɛjnu, their oceanographer, who was worried the ship would be used for anything else.

“Well, when the ship goes out for oceanography, perhaps it can do a little fishing,” suggested Estoséru. “If you want to collect fish species, you’ll need to fish for them!”

“So, what are the next steps?” asked Jordan, who was there because a development grant was involved. He cast a glance at his personal assistant, a burly young man with a pad of paper and a pencil in hand and a sword hanging from his belt.

“We need to buy sails and install them,” replied Wɛranobɛjnu. “We need to buy a lifeboat, too. The crew will be three, and we already have myself and one other student from Lord Dhoru’s oceanography course, so we only need one more, then we need to do training. We already have an oceanography lab here in Nuarjora, for biological oceanography, and a chemical oceanography lab is getting set up at Arjdhura. We need to set up the ship so that it can accommodate equipment from both, depending on the mission.”

“How long will you go out?” asked Jordan.

“Up to a week,” replied Wɛranobɛjnu. “We’ll make trips around the sea, stopping at various cities for educational programs. We’ll also be taking water samples, studying currents, and studying coral reefs and other species.”

“The additional crew member they’re looking for is Sumi, also,” added Thornton. “The chemistry teacher at Arjdhura High School is interested in being involved.”

"It'd be good to have a Sumi crew member, so the ship can stop at Sumi cities as well," said Jordan. "Why are the chemistry and biology labs in two different places?"

"Politics, you might say," replied Lord Estoséru. "Morana province is part Sumi as well as part Moranɛ and we need both major towns and both peoples involved."

Jordan nodded; that made sense. "So, when do you plan to make the first voyage?"

"The weather is now turning bad," replied Estoséru. "We might be ready by ɛjnoménu, however, and by then weather's improving. We hope to have the ship operational by springtime."

"I'll come down and participate in at least one voyage," pledged Thornton. "I want to offer a geological oceanography seminar some time in the spring. I'll drive down with students from Mɛlwika. We'll need a geological oceanography lab eventually, probably here in Nuarjora, but meanwhile we can accumulate the samples and materials both here and in Mɛlwika."

Jordan nodded. "This is great. There's no problem approving the use of the development grant, and all the other grants are tied to it, so that takes care of the paperwork, unless you're way over budget."

"We are over budget, but Nuarjora and Arjdhura are absorbing the overrun, which is about fifteen hundred dhanay for each town," said Estoséru. "The total budget was sixty thousand. But we will need an ongoing royal grant of about five thousand a year to help with operations. The army is very supportive; they want this ship to succeed for strategic reasons."

“Of course,” replied Jordan. “That’s not a development grant, though, so I’m not involved in that.”

“Correct,” said Estoséru.

Jordan looked at Nuarjora’s harbor. It was busy at the moment, with a timber ship arriving with a dozen logs for the cement and gas plant nearby, and a dozen wooden fishing boats coming and going under sail. He pointed. “These are your standard fishing boats, right? One or two man vessels, five meters long and two wide, single mast?”

Estoséru nodded. “Some are longer and some are shorter; we make them here from the best wood that arrives at the cement plant. We have a sawmill to cut it, which also makes wooden beams for local construction. Akɛldɛdra makes boats, too.”

Jordan looked at Thornton. “We need to get Lord Kristobéru to invest in fiberglass. Fiberglass hulls would be stronger, lighter, and can be made larger.”

“What is it?” asked Estoséru.

“I don’t know how to describe it; it’s a hard, flexible, thin material.”

Thornton nodded. “That’s a good idea. It’d be useful for a lot of other applications, too, especially vehicle manufacturing and modular home construction.”

“And we could use the jobs here!” said Estoséru, always looking for opportunities.

“This is the place for fiberglass boat construction,” said Thornton. “The army would be concerned if it were placed at Arjdhura, and you already have experience.”

“I’ll talk to the Lord,” said Jordan, referring to his grandfather. “Lord Estoséru, do you have any objection if I walk around the square and talk to people? As you know, our house in Mɛlwika was attacked two weeks ago. I’m trying to get out and mingle with

people, talk to them, get a better idea of their concerns, and let them express their concerns to me."

"Certainly, and it should be safe here; your family has been our salvation!" replied Estoséru. "We were starving fishermen with no fish to catch when Lord Kristobéru and Dhoru found this spot and helped us get established here. I think there would be no Morana Province if it weren't for your family! I was so shocked to hear about the attack! And Lord Dhoru, I understand you stopped the house invaders single-handedly!"

"Well, with the help of a pot of boiling water!" replied Thornton. "One man just got out of the hospital from the burns on his face. The four attackers are beginning to confess, also."

"The Guardians of the Old Customs," said Estoséru, nodding. "Those vicious priests! The religion of Widumaj has never really needed them; the hymns were in the hearts of so many people, and we had the widus to keep us on the right track. All the priests have ever wanted was animal sacrifices!"

"Well, they helped keep the hymns in the hearts, too," said Thornton. "We have three excellent priests in Mɛlwika. My hope is that the priesthood will be reformed along the lines of their actions."

They turned and stepped off the ship. The town square was fifteen meters above them, so they walked up the wide stairs leading to the square, chatting about the latest news. On top, Estoséru and Wɛranobɛjnu said goodbye, shook hands, and walked to their respective offices.

"Let me introduce you to my assistant," said Jordan. "This is Sajéstu. He's completed a kwéteryɛri in business and development."

“Very good to meet you,” said Thornton. “I think Jordan has been praising your abilities.”

“Thank you, Lord. I’ve only been on the job a few weeks, but I have greatly enjoyed the work.”

“I’m glad Jordan’s not going out on his visits alone, too; not after the trouble,” said Thornton.

“I hired him for braun as well as brains!” said Jordan. “But I badly needed an assistant. Grandpa gets three times as much done because of Luktréstu, and Sajéstu is at least doubling what I can get done.”

“And both of us are armed,” added Sajéstu quietly. “I’m a trained swordfighter, and between me and Aisɛndru, Jordanu’s getting a lot better.”

“Granddad wanted to give me his pistol,” added Jordan. “But I know how my father feels about that, so I said no. We have salt bombs in the car, too. You need to be careful, Thornton. You shouldn’t travel alone.”

“I know, I’m worried about that, too. But I don’t go to all the places you go to. After this I’m swinging through Sullɛndha to visit the forestry plantation and answer any questions they have. They’re friends and doing very well; I’m not in any danger there.”

“No, but if someone knows you’re going there, you could be in danger on the road,” said Jordan. “I’d be very careful. I don’t think grandma is safe, either.”

“I agree. We probably haven’t been safe for a long time, too, considering how many attempts have been made on dad’s life. Alright, I’ll see what I can arrange.” He looked around the square. “Let me see what you do, talking to people. Dad had long

conversations with people in the Pértatranisér shopping area after his radio interview, and they went very well. He was very pleased with the experience."

"All of us need to mingle more, but spontaneously so no one knows it's planned," agreed Jordan. "And we need always to be accompanied. Things have changed."

Wɛranodatu, high priest of Mɛddoakwés, and ɛjnoberu, high priest of Isurdhuna, looked distinctly uncomfortable when they were ushered into Queen Estoibidhé's presence. ɛjnobéru glanced at Wɛrétrakɛstɛr briefly to try to read his face; he had accompanied the high priest from Isurdhuna and had had an earlier audience with Her Majesty. The prophet looked very solemn, as did his son, Her Majesty's chief of staff, Wɛpokɛstɛr.

They kneeled before her presence. "Rise and be seated, honored priests," said the Queen. "Thank you so much for coming all this way, and leaving Isurdhuna at such a very early hour."

"We appreciate you meeting with us at such a late hour," replied ɛjnobéru. He and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr had left Isurdhuna at 5 a.m. local time for a five hour drive and a meeting with the queen at 10 p.m. palace time.

"It's the least I can do. As I suppose you both have heard, the four men who attacked the Mennea household have been held separately and have been promised relatively lenient sentences for clear and complete confessions. They have all now signed confessions. I should add that none of them were tortured, but all knew that their stories, which were independent and separate, had to agree to be accepted."

She paused to look at them. ɛjnobéru was nervous. “All four have said they were members of the Guardians of the Old Customs and that the organization had three priests at its head: Mitrudatu, Bidhéstu, and Kandéstu, head of the three most prominent priestly families in Isurdhuna, and relatives to both of you.”

“Your Majesty, I am sure this is false!” exclaimed Wɛranodatu. “They are men of exceptional integrity!”

“There is no doubt about the confessions; we will publish them in the *Royal Standard.* As I noted, they were kept isolated from each other as soon as they were arrested, so the corroboration is quite strong and very damning.”

“What will you do?” asked ɛjnobéru.

“We are still considering a trial and other options. This fits a pattern, though, wouldn’t you say? Jésunu paid the Kwolonɛ to attack Mɛlwika, the priests paid someone to poison Wɛrétrakɛtɛr, they accused Dhoru of witchcraft, they asked a man to stab Lord Kristobéru and nearly killed him, they were aware of the plot to assassinate Lord Kristobéru at the gathering of Lords of the Old Houses, they stirred up men to kill the Bahá'ís asleep in the school in southern Kɛrda, they have encouraged the burning of Bahá'í Centers, they opposed all sorts of laws including the establishment of public schools . . . over the last eighteen years their actions have been violent, angry, and oppositional.”

“Your Majesty, in our defense, our concern has always been to defend Widumaj and His hymns and the way of life of this Kingdom, including the station and sovereignty of the monarch,” replied ɛjnobéru.

“Considering that neither my mother nor I were in favor of any of these actions, even in the least, that is not a very strong defense. How many temples have the Bahá'ís burned? How many priests have they killed or tried to kill? How many of them even attack priests verbally? The Bahá'ís I know will even defend the priesthood as an institution after individual priests commit acts grossly opposed by the teachings of Widumaj.”

“Your Majesty, Widumaj never ruled out all use of violence,” reminded Wɛranodatu.

“And now that’s your defense?” asked the Queen, raising her voice. “We are moving into a world where justice comes from laws and judges, not the sword. And you want to roll that back? How much of the population of Éra do you think is in favor of assassinations and arson?” She stared at both chief priests.

“The day of violence has passed,” agreed Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, which caused both priests to scowl.

“Keep in mind that my great grandfather, Gésɛlékwɛs Maj, reformed the priesthood some fifty years ago. He defrocked about half the priests, cut their subsidies, confiscated some of their land, and reformed the sacrifice. It seems to me it was at least the third time the monarch had intervened. It appears to me that it is time for the monarch to reform the priesthood again. It is my prerogative.”

“Your Majesty, your right to reform us is compromised by your becoming a Bahá'í,” replied ɛjnobéru, flatly.

“Is it? You think so? I am the follower of two great widus, not one, and it is not hard to reform the priesthood when the teachings of both agree. And both do agree where condemnation of violence and arson are concerned.”

Wɛranodatu raised his hand. “I accept your authority to reform the priesthood, Your Majesty, but I assure you we are able to reform ourselves. Please give us some time to do so.”

“Time? Very well. I want a plan in a month, honored priest.”

“A month?” Wɛranodatu said, shocked. “I am sure we need at least six.”

The queen shook her head. “One month; that’s all you get. I want an ambitious plan and it needs to include punishments, defrockings, and penance.”

“Penance?” said ɛjnobéru.

“Yes, you should know that word well, ɛjnobéru. I will have my plan in a month and it will be implemented unless you can convince me your plan is better.” She looked at them. “You are dismissed, good priests. Prophet, please stay a moment.”

Wɛranodatu and ɛjnobéru rose, bowed, and exited, clearly upset and angry. Once they were gone, the queen said, “I need your full support, Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, for this to happen.”

“I understand, Your Majesty, and you have it. If the priesthood is not reformed drastically, the revelation of Widumaj will be all but forgotten. A vigorous priesthood that represents the teachings with love and wisdom is essential. I am fully behind you.”

“Thank you. Have you had any dreams about this?”

“No, but I don’t need to have a dream to know the truth.”

“Are you riding all the way back to Isurdhuna with ɛjnobéru? Talk to him. I don’t think he understands the gravity of the situation. He should; he was put in the place of Isérsunu just three years ago, after the deaths of the young Bahá'ís. And Wɛranodatu replaced Jesunu after the attempted assassination of Lord Chris. This is not the first time, it is the third time!”

“I will talk to him, definitely. But have a plan ready. I am not confident they will respond effectively.”

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Tradition and Modernity

Mid Bɛlménu/early January, 18/636

“Welcome to Sumilara, your Majesty,” said Duke Lamuno, as he entered the new royal quarters in Anartu. “I trust you had a good rest?”

“Indeed I did, Lord,” replied Queen Estoibidhé. “And as unpleasant as your incessant downpours are, they are better than Mɛddoakwés’s blizzards.”

“I understand the month of Bɛlménu, the White Month, has lived up to its name.”

“Indeed it has, though the snows stopped two days ago, about the time the sea’s moisture began to be dumped on Sumilara. Is the development team ready to meet with me?”

“Indeed they are. Everyone has arrived and is waiting in the conference room.”

“Thank you, then we will be there shortly.” She nodded to Lamuno, who stepped out, then turned to Lord Kandékwɛs and Wɛpokɛstɛr. “Are we ready?”

“Here’s your crown, Your Majesty,” replied Wɛpokɛstɛr, who handed it to Kandékwɛs, who usually exercised the privilege of placing it on his wife’s head.

“Thank you, Wɛpokɛstɛr. Has your wife settled into your quarters well?” He had recently married and his wife was pregnant.

“Indeed, Your Majesty, and my father joined us this morning.”

“Please invite him to this meeting as well, then.”

“He will be honored I’m sure.” Wɛpokɛstɛr headed out another door of the audience chamber; Estoibidhé and Kandékwɛs took the direct route to the conference

room nearby. General Pɛrku had arrived last night with the royal party and would be present, as would Modobéru, the Chancellor of the Exchequer; Duke Lamuno of the island; his governor, Dingiramarru, a Sumi army veteran who had arisen to become Mayor of Amurueqlima and then chief of the island's police force, and then Governor; and General Aisɛndru, who was in charge of the army garrison. An advance party had arrived a week earlier and consisted of Aryéstu, Jordan, and Chris, who would also be present, plus support staff for them.

When Her Majesty entered the room, all rose out of respect. "You may be seated," she replied immediately, though everyone waited until she and Lord Kandékwɛs had taken their places at the head of the table. Wɛpokɛstɛr and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr arrived a moment later. The former sat at a table reserved especially for him and the latter added himself at the very bottom of the table. "Well, what do you have for me?" she asked, getting right down to business.

"We thought we'd start with a report from the army," replied Pɛrku. "General Aisɛndru will give it."

"Your Majesty, the army has made great progress to establish a positive reputation for itself on Sumilara," he began. "The policy that after 2 years, recruits can choose their place of assignment if there are any openings, caused the majority of Sumi soldiers to request transfer to the island. The garrison here is now 35% Sumi. We have also started teaching basic Sumi to Eryan soldiers stationed here, and whenever soldiers go out on work details or patrols we are careful to send a mix of soldiers together. As a result, the army is being viewed much more appreciatively. The best measure of that is a ten percent increase in Sumi recruits. If one talks to people, they express some appreciation for the

army's contributions to the island. Soldiers tell us they are having positive conversations on the street and they hear fewer insults, partly because they now understand the words!"

Her Majesty smiled at that. "And the soldiers are digging ditches for gas, water, and sewer lines?"

"They are indeed, Your Majesty, though not always happily. In most places the ditches are being dug by local people as well."

Jordan raised his hand, so she nodded. "I was just in three villages and one town examining the progress, Your Majesty, and saw the soldiers working with civilians, often mixed together in the same ditches. It was very impressive. The soldiers and civilians felt safe together."

"That is impressive," said Estoibidhé. "Thank you, generals, for this encouraging report. How would you describe the attitude of the population here to the Kingdom?"

Pɛrku and Aisɛndru looked at each other a moment, considering. "The majority, I'd say, are happy to be part of the Kingdom, to the extent they think about it," said Aisɛndru. "A minority—perhaps ten or twenty percent—want outright independence, and a similar number want greater autonomy. By and large, we have given the population more than they expected they'd ever get."

"We need to continue to emphasize that Sumilara is a province like all others," said the queen. "And it will be allowed to develop and prosper and excel, like all others. General Pɛrku, you said to me the other day that there were lessons from this experience."

"Yes, Your Majesty," he replied. "Involving soldiers in work in their own villages or the villages of their friends has worked well. We have done the same in Jernstisér

province and in southern Véspa; those were our two test areas on the mainland. The army needs to become a major development force. It needs to be the emergency response force in case a tornado or flood hits. It needs to expand its road building budget. It could even become a construction force. Soldiers need to train in military matters two or three months a year at the most. The rest of the time the soldiers need to be in classes or out doing useful work. But to make the army attractive, we need to raise the basic pay of recruits or add more veterans benefits. This is how armies work in most countries on Gɛdhéma, I understand."

"That is correct," agreed Chris, speaking without raising his hand. "I would suggest that the army stay out of construction; we have a vigorous private sector that handles that task. But otherwise, this is exactly my hope for the army."

"And it is my wish," added Estoibidhé. "I want a plan, General. Are you teaching Eryan soldiers Sumi after they reach Sumilara, or before?"

"In Anartu, where there are many translators available."

"Is there a need to teach soldiers stationed at Kostakhéma or Moruagras how to understand the dialects spoken there? I think it would make them much more acceptable to those populations."

"Yes to Moruagras," replied Pɛrku. "Kostakhéma is not in the territory of a single Tutanɛ tribe and its population comes from everywhere; all the tribes, all over Eryana, even from Sumilara. So it is a place where you can hear everything, and the people there can understand almost any dialect."

"What about the time the soldiers can marry?" asked Estoibidhé. "It used to be ten years of service, then five."

“I think we should lower it to three,” replied Pɛrku.

She nodded. “What else?”

“We decided I should give you a report next about gas, water, and sewer,” replied Jordan. “Then my grandfather can cover industrialization. Every village and city on the island has gas, but many city streets do not, so that’s the challenge. Not everyone wants gas; poorer neighborhoods usually have very few customers. So the gas company is growing slowly. We’re working on a plan to lay gas pipes the same time water and sewer pipes are laid, with the gas company paying for the placement of the pipes only. The villages are all served by biogas. A pipeline is now complete along Route 31, connecting the Anartu water gas plant to Kalageduru to the west and Guzizu to the east, and another pipeline goes north to Anarbala. A pipeline from Guzizu south to Hegalatira will be finished in a week; they are very close to each other so the pipeline is short. A pipeline to the industrial park at Galulia will be finished by the end of spring. A pipeline to Amurueqluma is contemplated, but at the moment it is too expensive.

“As for piped water and sewer lines, Anartu is the focus right now, though Kalageduru will start getting a new system next month. I say ‘new’ because all these cities have ancient stone and concrete lined sewers under major streets. We will use them whenever possible. Piped water, however, is new and requires us to dig up all the streets, then reestablish the cobblestones or re-concrete them. Either way, the result will be much better streets.The cities will take several years to complete.

“Work has been completed or is underway in six villages and two more will begin this month, at which point more than half the settled places on Sumilara will be dug up.

The smaller villages—usually the ones closest to the volcanoes—will be finished first because they don't take much time. Larger villages, like Bilara, will take a year or more."

"What about sewage treatment?" asked the queen.

"All the systems will have sewage treatment and the larger places require much larger treatment facilities. They are being excavated by teams at the same time the pipes are being laid. The Galulia industrial park will require special treatment facilities."

"Excellent. What are the bottlenecks and challenges?"

"There are many small ones, Your Majesty. Pipes are not a problem; they are being produced efficiently and arrive on time. The problems usually have to do with where to put the pipes, where to put the sewage treatment plant, where to get the water supply, and how to handle land disputes."

"Where is the water coming from?"

"Springs when they are available. That causes problems because people who have springs on their property don't always want to give them up, or want to charge exorbitant prices for access. Otherwise, the water company is drilling wells and pumping up clean water. One or two villages don't have access to electricity and access to springs is blocked or impossible, so those places are having the biggest problems. Modobéru has a financial report about the effort."

"No one is completing under budget," said Modobéru. "A few places are thirty percent over budget. I have called in all the Lords of those places and will ask detailed questions."

"Good; we don't want waste. Lord Chris, how does the industrialization go?"

“The Sumilara Tomi Board met two days ago,” replied Chris. “Galulia needs gas and industrial waste treatment and that is slowing it down. It has biogas, so a few facilities that need gas are using that, but Galulia can’t make enough for high demand facilities, such as ones that heat and shape metal. The bicycle manufacturing plant here in the city has completed an expansion and is turning out an excellent new product with rubber tires and gears, and demand is very strong. Most of the plants here make parts for vehicles or consumer goods for export to Mɛlwika, Ora, or Kérékwɛs and they have been expanding steadily as manufacturing has expanded. The Tomi is behind in expansion goals because of lack of gas and sewage treatment, but because it hasn’t had to plow profits into expansion, it made a 15% profit this quarter.”

“How has profit sharing worked out?”

“It hasn’t been controversial here, like on the mainland. But even on the mainland, it has now largely been accepted.”

“What about other industries?” asked the Queen.

Chris looked to Dingiramarru, who said, “The manufacturing sector is growing at twelve percent this year, based on tax revenues, Your Majesty, so they are doing reasonably well. The looming shortage overall is electricity. We are opening two more hydroelectric facilities this year, but they are fairly small. Sumilara has no sites for large water power facilities. We are already cutting trees down faster than they can grow back. What we really need is an undersea power cable, and we understand the same technique that made the telephone line possible will also make a power line possible.”

“How much?” asked the queen.

“A quarter million dhanay for a connection via Arjdhura along the route of the telephone cable. A telephone and electrical cable to the western shore would be 350,000 more, but would provide a second source of power and communications to the island and would allow power to be routed between the two shores via an additional route.”

“The telephone and electric companies would love to have such cables,” added Chris.

“So would the army,” added Pɛrku.

“Fairly high priority, then,” concluded the Queen. “The next few years. You mentioned deforestation, Governor Dingiramarru. We have many forestry companies now. Has the province considered starting one?”

The governor looked at Chris and nodded. “My son Thornton has been in touch with people here for more than a year about forest management,” said Chris. “As I understand it, the problem is that most of Sumilara belongs to small landowners. The exception is the volcanic ridge on the northern edge of the island, which has remarkable forests, but they are expensive to cut and utilize because of the steep slopes. Legislation is needed to mandate management of the small lots. But if I may add, Your Majesty, Sumilara is a good place to develop wind power as well, because the shorelines and the high peaks all have strong winds.”

“Wind power?” she asked.

“Indeed. Falling water can turn the blades of a wheel, but so can wind. On Gɛdhéma there are wind turbines on towers that are over 100 meters high and the huge blades generate several thousand kilowatts. Of course, winds are not steady, but here they are fairly reliable. I want to invest in wind turbines soon.”

“Excellent, Lord,” replied the Queen.

“But Lord, I thought you wanted the hydropower of the Long Valley developed?” asked Pɛrku.

“Oh, I very much do, and the hydropower of the Long Valley potentially can supply the entire world all it needs. But there is always the need for more power, and it is better to have diverse sources.”

“We have one more matter, Your Majesty,” said Dingiramarru. “Our historian Mélammu—Skandu in Eryan—has proposed that we establish a historical museum in the old palace, now that this new facility has been completed. Our model is the historical museum in Mɛlwika and the proposed art museum in Mɛddoakwés. The museum would focus on the history and art of Sumilara and would include statues of old kings, inscriptions about battles, sculptures of gods and goddesses, etc. There are a lot of archaeological sites on the island to excavate and work on them has barely begun. A museum can be the center of archaeological work, can store the artifacts, and can display the best specimens.”

“Intriguing idea,” said the queen. “But what are the political implications? Is it good to make people proud of their heritage if it causes division and leads to strife?”

“This is precisely the army’s objection,” said Pɛrku.

“The historical presentation needs to be balanced,” replied Dingiramarru. “We can bring to people pride about their past without fostering rebellion.”

“Can you?” asked Pɛrku, skeptically.

“We need to devote a lot more resources to the study of the past,” said Chris. “The history museum in Mɛlwika gets a budget of barely 10,000 dhanay per year and is

cramped in its small building. At Mɛdha in the Long Valley, there's a huge crumbling Eryan city and it is being watched over by a single person with a dwoyɛri in archaeology who has a small building to store artifacts. The massive defenses at the entrances to the Long Valley are barely explored, let alone mapped and excavated. There has been an excavation next to the Kwétrua in Gordha that found vast quantities of artifacts and they're in storage in a basement room of the génadɛma building. Lilalara is a fascinating, huge ruin that is unguarded and subject to vandalism and theft. The Western Shore has several impressive ruins. ɛjnopéla has the remains of a temple; Morituora has a temple, a palace, and defensive ruins. Even Pértatranisér and Mɛlita have the remains of ancient villages. We need to devote a lot more resources to archaeology and history."

"Perhaps a balance of research spread out among all those places is needed," suggested Aisɛndru.

"How will that help counter the pride in any one place, though?' asked Pɛrku.

"One land—two peoples," exclaimed Wɛpokɛstɛr. "Make it the theme everywhere! And exchange artifacts, so the Anartu museum, for example, has displays from Gordha and Mɛdha as well!"

"One land—many peoples," corrected Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. "There were two originally, the Sumi and Eryan, but now there are the Tutanɛ, the Moranɛ, and the Kristanɛ as well."

"There are no Moranɛ or Kristanɛ artifacts, though," replied Pɛrku.

"I suspect we can find some," replied Chris. "A photograph of the church in Khɛrmdhuna and an old cross would be a sufficient display to remind people of the Kristanɛ people. I think the Sumi would be intrigued by the Moranɛ, too. Jordan tells me that almost all their terms for fish, seaweed, the foam floating on the sea, etc., are really

Sumi words pronounced in an Eryan fashion. They are indeed Sumi people originally who have become Eryan. That's true of some of the villages in the North Shore as well."

"So, archaeology with the theme of 'unity in diversity,'" concluded Queen Estoibidhé. "That is certainly something the crown can support. And certainly, part of the old palace can be devoted to it; it's a perfect facility for the purpose, considering its age and history. But the palace cannot be the only source of funding for such an effort; there needs to be provincial and private support as well."

"The province certainly can find ten thousand dhanay this year to support a historical museum," pledged Dingiramarru.

"I'll pledge several thousand from my personal wealth and will seek private donations," added Duke Lamuno.

"I'll pledge two thousand, plus two thousand for the excavations at Mɛdha and a thousand more for Lilalara and Gordha," said Chris. That surprised people.

"Very well," said the Queen. "What say you, Modobéru? Can we pledge ten thousand to Anartu and five thousand each to Mɛdha, Gordha, and Lilalara?"

"Twenty-five thousand?" the Chancellor to the Exchequer contemplated a moment, then nodded.

"I'm sure Sumis involved in Arjdhura will pledge some to Lilalara as well," said Lamuno. "The hereditary Lord of Lilalara is here and will certainly pledge something."

"And I'll pledge two thousand more to the museum in Mɛlwika," added Chris. "Altogether, this is an excellent start. But all these places will need buildings and several staff, eventually, so the eventual cost must exceed a hundred thousand dhanay per year."

“In good time,” agreed the Queen, with a pleased smile on her face. “This could be a very important initiative to unite the realm, if we do it right.”

“The archaeological and historical staffs in these places can also help develop a common history curriculum for all the schools and in all the languages,” noted Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. “A common sense of history will also help bind us together as one big people.”

“Indeed,” said the queen. “Is that everything? We will need to express all these priorities in terms of legislation for the provincial assembly when it meets next week.”

“We can modify the proposed budget to include the museum,” said Dingiramarru. “The total proposed expenditure is a million dhanay. We have already increased the portion devoted to sewers, water, and other infrastructure because of the unexpected cost overruns. We have had to cut support to education somewhat.”

“These are the balances we always must make,” agreed the Queen. “Let us hope the upcoming year is a prosperous one. I will address the provincial assembly the morning it begins. It will be a brief address and it will be completely in Sumi.” She paused to look at the startled reactions. “I am told that a bad accent and awkward phrasing still looks and sounds more respectful than an address in Eryan. Nina Maradar is here with me and she has been giving me Sumi lessons; five hours a week for the last two months. My accent, alas, is terrible, but I am understandable. I plan to devote several mornings to memorizing my speech in Sumi, with the hope that the respect it signals will be understood and received by those present.”

“I am sure they will respond warmly, even enthusiastically,” replied Lamuno. “The two occasions when you addressed the island in Sumi were absolutely electric. People were fascinated; they loved it! No Eryan monarch has ever done that before.”

“It is indeed a new era. God willing, my heir, or his heir, will find a Sumi bride, and the monarchy itself will unite the two peoples together as one. It is my fervent wish. Have we any other business?” She looked around; no one spoke up. “Excellent. Thank you, all of you, for your hard work. I already have plans to see all of you at different times for smaller meetings over meals, and I look forward to those meetings.”

Chris and Liz were the first ones to visit with the queen, over supper that evening. “I am freer here,” she said to them, as they sat down to dinner. “The palace and government staff are all back in Mɛddoakwés, so there are fewer prying eyes around.”

“Just me,” said Kandékwɛs, with a smile.

“You keep me honest, dear,” she replied. “Lady Liz, how have you been spending your time here?”

“Visiting the Bahá'í communities,” replied Liz. “We arrived a week ago. So far, I’ve been to eight places. The Bahá'ís are coming along; they’re asking a whole new set of very interesting questions, as are their friends. They’re offering a lot of spiritual education classes for children and youth, too; Sumilara is the most successful cluster, in that regard.”

“What sort of classes?”

“Classes about virtues and about service. The virtues are mostly the same in all the religions, and all of them stress serving others. There are several hundred children aged 6 to 11 in virtues classes, and 150 aged 12-17 doing service.”

“That’s quite impressive. The Bahá'í spiritualization plan talked a lot about service and teaching virtues in the schools. Since then, a committee of school teachers completed a virtues text. Has that been printed yet?”

“Yes, and it will be introduced to many schools next fall,” said Liz. “The non-Bahá'í members of the committee felt it should include quotations from the Bahá'í writings, just as much as it includes hymns of Widumaj, so it uses both sources. It also quotes from the Bible and Qur’an. It’ll be used in every grade level, but in different ways, so over 12 years the children will receive quite a comprehensive exposure to virtues.”

“Excellent. I am very frustrated that the spiritualization plans of the priests of Widumaj and of the Sumi customs were so heavily focused on money for buildings. And now I have given the priests an ultimatum to give me a reform plan in a month, or the ax will fall. We are preparing to exile some priestly families, fine others, and expel many of them entirely from the priesthood. We can no longer tolerate the violence they have been condoning. But it is not so clear what alternative function for the priesthood that the reform should create.”

“Have you asked Wɛrétrakɛstɛr?” asked Chris.

“I did, and he is awaiting a vision. I hope he will have had one when we talk in two days.”

“The priests in Mɛlwika are excellent,” said Chris. “Wɛrétrakɛstɛr helped us get the first two, then he helped us get the third one. They accept and pray over sacrifices,

and they get quite a few of them, but they spend most of their time teaching hymns, explaining them, and organizing charities and service."

"That is the sort of focus the priesthood should have," agreed Kandékwɛs.

"There are others who stress those things, too," said Liz. "The new priest in Sumiupɛrakwa is excellent, and the priest in Mɛddwoglubas is fairly good as well. I think there are a fair number of young priests with that approach."

"Good. I hope Wɛrétrakɛstɛr knows them; we need a list. I'm thinking of making a speech that will talk about the 'two peoples' of this world: the Eryan and the Sumi. This is not to deny the Tutanɛ, Kristanɛ, and Moranɛ, but the first two are Eryan groups and the latter is a mix of the two peoples. All three speak Eryan dialects, too. And I'm thinking about talking about a world devoted to two prophets: Widumaj and Bahá'u'lláh. Many people are ready to move to that point, I think."

"I think you're right about that," agreed Liz. "Many people seem to be willing to give Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings a try, even if they don't declare themselves Bahá'ís. They may not be willing to give up drinking or gossiping, but they are ready to consider consultation, and they're already trying our approach to voting."

"Exactly. I think in that world, priests who teach the hymns and educate people in virtues have an important place. They can debate with the Bahá'ís about the details of the virtues, too; let that discussion flourish. But there would be no violence."

"Exactly," agreed Liz. "In a world of that sort, I think they could become strong competitors with the Faith, too! But that would be better for everyone."

"The Faith can handle that challenge," agreed Chris. "But you will also be stirring up strong forces of opposition to you."

"Certainly, some forces. But the two main sources are the old houses and the priesthood. The power of the old houses had to be broken after they killed my brother and attempted to assassinate my mother. Now the power of the priesthood has to be removed as well, because of the evil they are causing with it. Both institutions will continue to exist and both will oppose, but if they do so in legitimate ways, they will be acceptable."

"You are also gaining strong support, too," noted Kandékwɛs. "The poor love you, the Sumis are moving in that direction, and the Tutanɛ will probably like and support you as well."

"The danger is a smear campaign," said Chris. "Anyone's reputation can be attacked, no matter how saintly, and we are moving into a time when one's reputation with the public is crucial. It is the obligation of the press to be fair."

"We have had some trouble with that, but posters and underground newspapers don't have the reputation of regular newspapers and the radio," observed Estoibidhé. "I am still concerned about including the Sumis. I plan to announce that all royal announcements will be issued in both languages. Right now, the translations are done locally and are not always correct."

"Mɛlwika High School has been offering Sumi language classes several years, and some Eryan have started to take them," said Liz. "If all big city high schools offered Sumi and all Sumi high schools offered Eryan, a lot more people could talk back and forth. Right now, Sumis can't easily go to the mainland as tourists, nor can Eryan visit Sumilara easily. We still don't even have a good Sumi-Eryan dictionary."

The queen's face lit up. "Excellent ideas! We'll need to fund a dictionary and support more language programs. Rébu is working on a dictionary, right?"

“He has been for years,” said Chris.

“Let’s see whether he can finish it up, then,” said the Queen. “You have given me a lot to think about tonight.”

Lord Duku’s pickup truck, with a heavy snow plow blade on the front, looked out of place in the equatorial sun of Mɛdhpéla. He stepped out of the truck and looked at the blade, amused. “It’ll never be used here.”

“No,” agreed Lord Patékwu of the Krέstonɛ tribe. He was relieved to be alive; Duku had very little idea how to drive.

“Let’s go inside and visit,” said Lord ɛndranu of the Wuronɛ tribe, who also got out of the pickup. The front seat had been pretty crowded with the three of them. Duku nodded and the three Lords headed for the front door of Lord Staurɛkɛstɛr’s palace. They didn’t quite know what to do with his title of Duke; they were inclined to continue calling him Lord, even if he was in charge of the largest and most powerful Tutanɛ tribe.

Staurɛkɛstɛr was delighted to see the three lords. “Thank you so much for coming!” he said. “I was very touched by your letter, Lord Patékwu. I am fascinated by the subject. I hope your trip was quick and comfortable. Did you have any trouble with mountain snows, Lord Duku?”

“No, not at all; our tribe now has a pickup truck with a snow plow, and I drove it here. It looks rather out of place here, in fact.”

“Mɛdhpéla has had frost, but never snow. As you can see, we raise a lot of winter vegetables for sale to the towns and cities buried under snow. How has your winter been?”

“Average,” replied Duku. “Thanks to Esto and to ɛndro, we have not had huge amounts of snow yet, nor have we had none.”

“That’s true of our winter, too,” exclaimed ɛndranu, whose tribe was quite far south. “After a year of extremes, perhaps we will finally have normal weather.”

“Of course, even normal weather has its disadvantages,” said Staurɛkɛstɛr. “Crop harvests could be bountiful and crop prices could plunge. Come to my sitting room. Let me get you refreshments. Beer? Wine?”

“Coffee for me,” said Patékwu, reminding Lords ɛndranu and Duku that they were now Bahá'ís.

“I’ll have wine,” said Duku, and ɛndranu nodded. They hadn’t been Bahá'ís very long.

“My son will get them for us. He’ll join us. He’s our provincial governor; he oversees tax collection and the budget.” Staurɛkɛstɛr nodded to Staurɛgéndu, who hurried out.

They walked through two rooms to the lord’s gabrula or “salon,” a room to entertain guests. There, they sat on piles of Kwolonɛ blankets on the floor. Bread and cheese was already served on plates, waiting for them. Staurɛgéndu came in with the drinks and passed them around, then sat as well, while they continued the small talk.

“So, I am curious about your argument,” said Staurɛkɛstɛr, finally, to Patékwu. “Last summer we had Lord Dhoru here for several months with a youth team. It worked out quite well. Our youth learned a lot, we learned about these new smart phones and tablets, and we even managed to get one from the palace. We got commitments to send

our youth to their génadɛma and to start our own génadɛma, which starts in the spring. We're starting a clinic as well. In many ways we never could have extracted the concessions we got from the palace for selling them a strip of townships if Dhoru hadn't visited. We have a development plan now, more or less. We're even a province. So I am not sure what we would gain from acceptance of the Bahá'í teachings, as you have advocated."

"I think you have answered your own question, in a way," replied Patékwu. "Because you have the things you have partly by accepting Bahá'í teachings. You understand the importance of education, health, and planning. We live in a new world, my Lord, and the teachings of Widumaj really do not tell us how to live in this world. As Tutanɛ, we haven't even fully accepted Widumaj, either. We are still following ɛndro and the old gods, and the hymns about them tell us little about how to deal with banks, government grant paperwork, and the management of factories. But Bahá'u'lláh tells us about consultation, spiritual voting, respect for all, and empowerment of all, and from these principles follow education of all, including women."

"A difficult principle to accept and understand," added ɛndranu. "We are still struggling with it, as I am sure you are."

"We are," agreed Staurɛkɛstɛr. "The youth team included boys and girls, and eventually we added Kwolonɛ girls to our team as well. This summer we plan to organize all our youth—boys and girls—or as many of them as we can, anyway. We are struggling, but we have a consensus that the girls should be involved as well. We hope Lord Dhoru will come back and help."

“We Krésonɛ have struggled with that one,” said Patékwu. “Your situation, Lord, is as I suspected. The Kwolonɛ have not become Bahá'ís, but nevertheless have accepted many, many Bahá'í teachings. This is very impressive.”

“But we are not ready to become Bahá'ís, lords. I understand your tribes have accepted Bahá'u'lláh. Among the Késtonɛ it has been very controversial, and I am sure that would be true of us as well.”

“No, I am not suggesting that,” said Patékwu. “Your tribe is large; the Kwolonɛ must decide as individuals and families, not even as clans. What I am suggesting is a halfway measure, you might say. The tribe needs a beacon to guide it; it needs a direction. Neither Widumaj nor ɛndro can give that to you. You can try to find it yourselves, but I would argue that when in doubt, you should try the Bahá'í principles. You are already following many of them, so why not come out and say so? Say: we are not sure what to do as a tribe, so we will start with the Bahá'í principles and see how they work for us. We will make them our ethos, the assumptions we will start with. And tell the people that it is up to them whether to accept Bahá'u'lláh or not; encourage them to consider it, but stay neutral. Right now, people hesitate because it may be against traditions.”

“And the prophets,” added Staurɛgéndu.

“And the prophets,” conceded Patékwu. “The Kwolonɛ have a long history of prophets; you are blessed that way. None of our tribes have had prophets, but we have often turned to the Kwolonɛ prophets.”

“The last time our prophet spoke out forcefully, it ended in disaster before the walls of Mɛlwika,” replied Staurɛkɛstɛr. “And we have the blessings of the current lead prophet to include girls in our youth efforts.”

“Really? Amazing,” said Duku.

“Indeed, we are pleased,” said Staurɛkɛstɛr. “The prophetic tradition does not have the strength or the prestige it used to have, but we must respect the tradition nevertheless.”

“But Bahá'ís can respect traditions of that sort,” said Patékwu. “As you know, we have continued to chant the hymns to ɛndro, and the Bahá'ís have had no objection.”

“Lady Lébé even wants to publish them so the whole world knows them,” agreed Staurɛgéndu. “And this is very impressive.”

“We have gone from fierce warriors to fierce defenders of our traditions,” said Staurɛkɛstɛr.

Patékwu leaned forward. “Exactly! This is what the Bahá'í Faith does for us, too. We now have a way—a blueprint—for preserving and developing our traditions, yet also accommodating factories, banks, génadɛmas, and the new healing. This is what the Bahá'í Faith brings the Tutanɛ! And that is the summary of my argument, Lord. I fear the alternative. Gordha is wealthy, but the people are not so interested in their traditions. They are becoming Eryan and Gordha is becoming an Eryan city. When their students go to Mɛlwika Génadɛma, they no longer wear bear claws or eagle feathers. Why? It is becoming a big Kostakhéma, a generic place, complete with prostitutes. Their wealth is very nice, but they are losing their souls in the process.”

“I think that is true,” agreed Staurɛkɛstɛr. “And I fear the same for Mɛdhpéla.”

“Wealth is not our concern, I should add,” exclaimed ɛndranu. “The Wuronɛ wish they had the wealth you have. The problem is what to do with the wealth and what place to put the wealth in, for it can be good or bad. It can make us more unified or can make us greedy and divided.”

“That is why all three of our tribes have created tribal tomis to manage much of our development,” said Patékwu. “Every adult owns part of the tomi and gets some of the profits.”

“We have that as well,” agreed Staurɛgéndu. “We have two factories that are privately owned. But we are pushing them to set up profit sharing with their workers and to protect workers as much as it is reasonable.”

“Good,” said Patékwu. “And you know that profit sharing is also a Bahá'í teachings? You see, you are doing so many of them!”

“We are doing them because they are reasonable and practical,” replied Staurɛkɛstɛr. “Not because they are Bahá'í.”

“Then maybe the argument to make is that you will try more of the principles because so many of them have proved practical and reasonable,” suggested ɛndranu. “That has proved to be our experience. Our poverty has not decreased by much. But we now feel a confidence to go out into the world, and we know the Bahá'ís won’t cheat us, but will help us. As a result, we feel we are progressing. Khɛrmdhuna is now becoming more prosperous, but it has taken them many years. The Krésonɛ are on that same road. We are behind them, then the Késtonɛ.”

At least we have pickup trucks and can keep our road open in the winter, and if we can't, we can make a telephone call and get help," added Duku. "These are simple things, but even they help. More importantly, our people no longer have a fatalistic view of life, that we will always struggle, be hungry in the winter, and die young. We can make our lives better; our children will live better. We can get together, someone can read the latest newspaper aloud to all of us, and we can talk about new ideas. Our women are buying sewing machines. Our men are buying better tools. Our village wants more pickups, a sawmill, maybe a factory of some sort. We can make plans and can even figure out how to make them happen!"

Staurɛkɛstɛr nodded. "More and more, the Kwolonɛ are feeling that way as well. We have two women's gabrulis and we want to form three more, so the women can come together to make the lives of their families better. Every clan has a pickup; most have several. And we have confidence as well. The world will not take advantage of us; it will respect us. And the world is learning to do that."

"Exactly," said Patékwu. "That's the oneness of humanity, another Bahá'í principle."

"And the Mennea family," added ɛndranu. "Let us be frank; they are our shield and advisor. They help everyone, but obviously they can help Bahá'ís more because the common values and understandings establish a relationship."

"Yes, that is a very good point," said Staurɛkɛstɛr. "We have felt their friendship, and they have been very, very helpful to us. If we had not accepted the Bahá'í ideas they advocated, the friendship would have been more limited and their help would have had limitations as well." He nodded thoughtfully.

“They have tried to go to the Mémɛnɛgonɛ,” noted Duku. “The tribe is the same size as us, just as far off the Kostakhéma road, a bit closer to Gordha than we, but much poorer. They have no partnerships. They make unreasonable demands and do not trust. We can trust Bahá'ís, mostly, and if a Bahá'í isn’t fair to us, we have recourse. The Mémɛnɛgonɛ have no one who can help them or collaborate with them.”

“Well put,” agreed Staurɛgéndu.

Staurɛkɛstɛr looked at his three colleagues. “I think you have made your point well, lords. I am not going to make a commitment now. I need to talk not just to Staurɛgéndu, but other leaders. Consultation: a Bahá'í principle again, I guess you could say. We will take your arguments, consider them well, and make a decision, sooner or later; I don’t know when. Either way, I very much appreciate your effort to come here and discuss this subject with us.”

“And we are grateful for your hospitality, lord,” replied Patékwu. “We stand to collaborate with the Kwolonɛ in any small ways we can. Your tribe is three or four times as large as our three combined. A Bahá'í environment benefits us in particular because it levels the playing field. But even the Kwolonɛ need that in a world of 400,000 people and cities three times the size of your tribe.”

“We agree with you about that quite strongly,” agreed Staurɛkɛstɛr.

414.

Reform

Early Plowménu/end of January, 18/636

The walls of the glugluba seemed to reach to the sky.

Thornton drank in one last look at the impossibly straight, high cliffs. Awe was mixed with fear because the floor of the glugluba was dark and, in spite of its length, one felt a bit claustrophobic. During their five days of hiking, they had never seen the sun more than a few minutes a day, and one day because of clouds they never saw it at all.

Still, he couldn't take his eyes off the spectacle. It was a few minutes before he finally looked down; his neck hurt from looking up at the sheer walls. He turned and walked a kilometer up the gluba to their campsite at the edge of the Long Valley.

"Finished?" asked Wɛranyunu Rostuagras, the chief geologist at the Mitrui Génadɛma in Ora. He and the two others had been finishing their morning coffee.

"Yes. I wanted one last look; I doubt I'll get back here soon."

"It's much easier for me to get to the glugluba, though at Ora the walls aren't very high. And the view doesn't thrill me that much, anyway." He downed the rest of his coffee. "Shall we pack up the campsite?"

"Yes," agreed Thornton. The four of them turned to the two tents and had them down and packed up in ten minutes. In less than thirty minutes the entire campsite was packed into the back of the pickup truck that had arrived that morning to drive them back to Ora.

They headed northward along the valley floor on the graveled road. They rolled through an emerging forest; after eight years, some trees were ten meters high. Biologists were fascinated to watch temperate climate trees establishing themselves in a tropical climate, for tropical species were far away and so far the wind had blown in the seeds of only one or two. The Long Valley had rapidly grown over, except the area around Réjéivika where farms and cattle raising were spreading.

They headed up Route 55 to the top of the escarpment, then rolled across the forests of the equatorial Snowy Mountains, now occasionally white with midwinter slush. In three hours they were in Ora, where they unpacked the pickup. Thornton loaded rolls of film, a box of samples, his rock hammer and backpack into his steam car, waved goodbye to his colleagues, and headed north to Pértatranisér. He had to visit Amos before heading home.

The work to make the house more secure had been finished a few days earlier. Driving into the courtyard took longer than before; the new vehicle gate was steel reinforced timbers. The house was surrounded by a curb and sidewalk almost a meter high, to keep vehicles back. High windows had a tough steel mesh built into them. Additional doors gave people ways to escape from one part of the house to another, and interior doors had been replaced by heavier wood and were lockable. The family room, however, was just as cozy and comfortable, and Amos led him there so the two of them and May could sit, drink iced tea, and relax.

"So, what's the glugluba like?" asked Amos, anxious to hear the details.

"Is it beautiful?" asked May, deliberately modifying Amos's question.

"Beautiful. . . I wouldn't call it beautiful exactly. Magnificent: yes. Amazing: definitely. It's rather dark, bare, and wet. Now that we've walked the whole thing—waded the whole thing—I can say definitely that the best way to see it is by boat, floating downstream. There are no waterfalls and almost no rapids. Two thirds of it has cliffs over a kilometer high, so sunlight penetrates to the bottom only a few minutes a day, and the sky is such a small area overhead that relatively little light makes it to the bottom. Only shade plants can grow there. Even the rain doesn't make it to the bottom because slight wind currents tend to blow the drops against the cliffs, so when it rains overhead the water drips down the walls, which are almost constantly dripping anyway. The cliff sides are fresh, bare rock; no trees or even grass grows out of the cracks. Not yet, anyway. Amos, do you remember when we walked up the glugluba from Ora, before the flood? It was filled with tall trees at the bottom where the walls weren't high enough to shade them. The bottom was 35.6 meters wide everywhere except where the sides had slid down, and there were places where the river had undercut the cliffs as much as ten meters. Well, the bottom is now seventy to one hundred fifty meters wide and it averages a bit over one hundred meters. There are no overhanging ledges; in fact, there's none of the original cliffs left anywhere, the sides have slid into the flood and been carried away. The cliffs are completely fresh rock. Wɛranyunu, the geologist at Ora, calculates that fifty meters has been scoured off the cliff on each side, on average. That's ten cubic kilometers of debris—ten billion cubic meters, about thirty billion tonnes of stuff that fell into the flood and was washed into the sea. The so-called 'Ora flats' extending eleven kilometers east of Ora are new land from the delta of debris that was deposited by the flood. That's why Ora is no longer on the coast and why they were never able to maintain a shipping

channel big enough for anything but small boats while the flood was raging. There are remnants of trees that were fifty meters tall and are buried up to their tops! Ora used to be on a slope that extended from the river eighty meters to the top of an old flood deposit. Almost the entire town was washed away; now Ora's on the north side of the old flood deposit. But the south side is only thirty meters above the river because of deposition in the last month as the flood waned. It's really incredible to contemplate the changes that were wrought."

"And it could all happen again," said May.

Thornton shook his head. "Not for a thousand years at least. There's nothing loose to fall into the river. The glugluba had seen big floods before, but nothing like this one. I don't think the Long Valley ever flooded more than a dozen meters, and the sea never dried up before. A five hundred meter high landslide deposit would back up a year of river flow and wash out, making a quick, devastating flood able to build an alluvial deposit like the one the city's built on. But this flood swept away all the loose rock and then some; it involved 2,000 cubic kilometers of water. The aerial photos of the glugluba sides suggest that the aliens were intentionally blasting rock loose as well; there are circular craters in a few places. Ora is safe for a thousand years. I'd worry more about Néfa; we know the Rudhisér Gluba has been blocked before and the Néfa basin appears to have a hundred meters of deposit in it, but there are no floods in recorded history. We have to pray about that problem, because we don't have the ability to do anything about it."

"Is there anything left of the landslide dam?" asked Amos.

Thornton shook his head. “No, not really; a few heaps a few meters high against the cliffs. I think the aliens must have used explosives to blast the top into the water as the water level dropped, always keeping enough dam to be sure it wouldn’t breach. Where the dam was, the cliffs are amazing to look at, because the tunnels they melted through the rock are still there; seventeen of them on each side of the glugluba, about eighty meters apart vertically on each side, but the two sets of tunnels were offset by forty meters. The bottom tunnel is still there and part of the river still flows through it. The top ones were swept away by cliff collapses.”

“So, how much of the bottom is the river and how much can you walk on?” asked May.

“The bottom is a hundred meters wide and the river has an average flow of one hundred cubic meters per second, flowing at about 1.5 meters per second, so the water is seventy centimeters deep on average; about up to the knees. The current shifts from side to side, so we had to wade across the channel every kilometer or so. Fortunately, the flood scoured the bottom all the way to bedrock and not much sediment has accumulated since, so the river isn’t very deep anywhere, but the water’s cold! We all wore waders that went up to our waist and we needed them, believe me.

“The most beautiful spots on the entire hundred-kilometer trip were the two places where there were big waterfalls into the gluba. One must be 1,500 meters high. The water reaches the bottom as a spray of wet, cold air, a sort of fog that extends several kilometers from the falls. When the sun is out, there are rainbows everywhere, but otherwise it’s a wet experience because you can’t get away from the spray.”

“So, I suppose Wɛranyunu wants to build a series of dams across it,” said May.

“Ora does; Wɛranyunu was there to survey possible spots. You can build a dam near the entrance of the gluba and one near the exit because you can build an access road along the gluba floor. You can’t build a road down the sides into the glugluba anywhere else, except maybe one spot ten kilometers from Ora where the cliffs are still low and an ancient landslide produced a gentler slope. Without a road, you can’t move in the heavy equipment to build the structures. Every meter of height gives a thousand kilowatts of potential water power, so a one hundred fifty meter dam—which is probably the tallest we could build—would give 150,000 potential kilowatts, probably 120,000 in practice. The river falls 600 meters, so two dams would flood no more than half of the glugluba. The rest would be pristine and could be reached by boat.”

“That’s a lot of hydropower; hard to ignore,” said Amos.

‘The rivers falling into the Long Valley fall over 2,000 meters; that’s two million kilowatts of power if we could develop it all,” said Thornton. “The potential is absolutely immense. We never need to cut another tree again, if we develop it all. And none of these rivers have fish runs, so there’s nothing to disrupt.”

“Except the magnificence,” said May.

Thornton nodded. “Yes, but a big lake in a canyon is pretty magnificent, too.”

She nodded reluctantly. Amos added, “Of course, the dam across the mouth of the glugluba is already complete and is one hundred meters high, and it can’t be raised. A dam ten or twenty kilometers down the glugluba from the top would be pretty expensive to build, too.”

“And we don’t need more power at the moment,” added May. “What’s the estimate? Another ten years before we have shortages?”

"Something like that," agreed Thornton. "The glugluba is safe for now. So, what else is new?"

Amos looked at him, surprised. "So, you haven't heard about the priests?"

"Priests? No, we didn't have practically any contact while we were in the glugluba. The cellular telephone connection worked only a few minutes a day, which was enough to send emails, but not for telephone calls. We couldn't even email photographs."

"Wow. This morning right after the eclipse the Queen herself went on the radio and announced that because the leadership of the priesthood has consistently encouraged violence and has become corrupt, she was ordering that a large number of priests were being defrocked, some were being exiled, and some families were having their personal estates confiscated. She added this was being done by her rather than exposing them to the indignity of a court trial open to the public. She didn't give any details, but a press release followed, read by Wɛpokɛstɛr. Kɛkanu stayed on the air and provided analysis. The two leading priestly families in Mɛddoakwés and the two leading families in Isurdhuna—twenty-two priests altogether—have been completely defrocked and their personal estates have been confiscated and given to the temples themselves. Those families are now penniless, except for their bank accounts. Seven leading priests have been exiled—are you ready for this?—to Anartu!"

"Anartu!" Thornton began to laugh. "I guess there's no reason to exile them to Kostakhéma, it's still Eryan speaking and nominally follows Widumaj."

"Yes, Sumilara is the equivalent of hell, to these priests. They'll have no local followers at all, no friends, no allies, though they will have long distance telephone service."

“I bet most of them hate telephones and have never made a long distance call!” said Thornton, laughing further.

“Probably,” agreed Amos.

“And who, do you think, they’ve appointed as the new high priests in Mɛddoakwés and Isurdhuna?” asked May.

“Who?” Thornton frowned. “I don’t know, who’s left?”

“No one of importance in either city, but people originally from those cities. Sarébɛjnu is now high priest in Mɛddowakwés and Lukolubu is now high priest in Isurdhuna.”

“Really? Mɛlwika’s down to one priest?”

“Until we can find some good ones to replace them.”

Thornton laughed. “That’s amazing. Sarébɛjnu and Lukolubu have been fantastic; they focus on the hymns, are positive, spend their time giving classes and helping the poor . . . that’s what the temples and priests should do.”

“We agree, and apparently so does the Queen,” said May. “This is a great day for this world. Both religions are now aligned more or less along the same lines, which means the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh can continue to spread and penetrate the culture more deeply.”

“But without adherence to Bahá'u'lláh,” noted Thornton.

“That’ll follow,” replied May. “Ultimately, the teachings will only work if one accepts Bahá'u'lláh as well.”

“We’re so sorry to see you leaving, Lukolubu,” said Chris Mennea to Mɛlwika’s former assistant priest, as he entered the Mennea house through the new front door. “Your decade and a half of service here has been significant and very important. We will have trouble replacing you.”

“You are too kind, Lord,” replied Lukolubu. “It has been three days since my new position was announced, and I am still in shock! The palace gave me no advance warning.”

“I gather there has been trouble in Isurdhuna over the changes, too,” said Liz. “So please be very careful, honored priest. May I serve you some coffee?”

“Yes, please, with milk and sugar,” replied Lukolubu. Chris led him to their sitting area—around the central courtyard, which was still dug up so they could install a basement level under it—and they sat in comfortable chairs. Liz pulled out coffee for all three of them. “You are right about the trouble,” continued Lukolubu. “I’ve been talking to my friend, Widumigu, who is a priest there in Isurdhuna.”

“Yes, I know him; he’s on the Kɛrda Province’s Tomi Board.”

“Indeed. A good man. There have been demonstrations demanding the High Priest be reinstated and that no priests are exiled. The police are guarding the Bahá'í Center all day and night to protect it from arson and vandalism. And there are anonymous posters calling for my assassination.”

“That’s what I heard about,” said Liz. “Be careful, please.”

“But don’t let them intimidate you,” added Chris. “The forces of violence must never be accepted, they must remain isolated and viewed as improper.”

"I fully agree. I have no intention of bending to them. Her Majesty wants a big change; when Sarébɛjnu and I met her this afternoon she affirmed it. We agree with the reforms. There will be no violence, no bribery, no whisper campaigns or slander. But there will be a fair, open debate, Lord. It's important that I make that clear to you."

"Of course, I understand that and respect it," replied Chris.

"We have nothing to fear from a debate, Lukolubu," added Liz. "A debate strengthens everyone. I hope that we can start an inter-religious dialogue as well. This has never been possible before."

"I think it will be now. Her Majesty made it clear to me that the Kingdom is now a Kingdom of Two Great Prophets. The followers of both must respect each other and vie with each other in service to the people. Sarébɛjnu, Estoyustu, and I have stressed service at the temple here from the very beginning. We have taught hundreds to read, fed thousands of poor, housed thousands of homeless, and given countless talks to all sorts of groups about the hymns and what they call us to do. We are immensely grateful to you, Lord, for your unfailing support for the temple, too. Isurdhuna has endless possibilities for service, especially when the housing for the elderly gets built. I am very excited by all the possibilities."

"The plan to build housing for the elderly and infirm is excellent, and could be a very important form of service by the priests," agreed Chris. "Have you, Sarébɛjnu, and Estoyustu started thinking about who we can hire to replace the two of you? I will make a commitment to expand the priestly staff at the temple from three to four. Mɛlwika has 25,000 people and it needs at least four priests."

“You are very generous, Lord. We have started to think about who we would recommend. The problem is that so many priests have been defrocked, there is a shortage everywhere. The young ones who are more in tune with the new approach are particularly hard to find. Her Majesty also told us she wants the temple in Ora expanded and reformed, and as you know, it has only one old priest.”

“I gather she wants temples established in Pértatranisér and Mɛlita as well,” said Chris. “ɛjnopéla only has one priest and needs two. The entire Morana province has no temple; she wants one in Nuarjora.”

“Defrocking priests and increasing the number of temples; a difficult combination,”said Liz. “But if the big concentrations of priests are broken up and they are scattered around to serve the people, that will be better.”

“And the temples are to serve more like hymn halls; they should have big auditoriums,” said Lukolubu. “Very interesting changes.” He downed the last of his coffee. “I apologize that this has to be a short visit, but I wanted to stop by to say goodbye. My family and I are driving to Isurdhuna on Primdiu.”

“You’re plunging right in! Good,” said Chris. They all rose and Chris extended both hands to the priest. “May Esto go with you and be with you, Lukolubu.”

“Thank you, Lord. Thank you for everything. May Esto protect and guide you.”

They shook hands, then he shook hands with Liz and they exchanged parting words. They walked to the door and said goodbye to Lukolubu.

“I’m sorry we’re losing him,” said Chris. “The temple, at least, was neutral about the Faith, but if we get three new priests, who knows what we’ll get.”

“They may be inclined to hold their tongues, considering who pays a third of their budget,” said Liz.

“True, but we really have no choice but to support them, even if they’re nasty,” said Chris. “And they’ll figure that out eventually.” He sighed. “When are Patékwu and Duku coming by? 4?”

That’s what they said.”

Chris glanced at the clock; it was 3. “Okay, I’m going to my office for a while. Can you call me when they arrive?”

“Sure,” said Liz, nodding. Chris headed to their old front door, down a flight of stairs, and through a tunnel to the Tomi building across the street, where he climbed slowly to his office on the second story. It was quite nice to have a tunnel under the street; it was a cold wintery day.

He called in his principal accountants and reviewed the latest income and expense figures for the tomi and the various businesses for which it handled accounting. It was a normal winter—as opposed to an extreme one, either too warm, too cold, too wet, or too dry—and that had kept the agricultural output strong. Crop prices had been soft, but weren’t bad. Industrial production was a bit above normal, as was demand for electricity and gas, adjusted for the weather. The economy had continued to be strong. After the accountants left he calculated his family’s income and determined it was five thousand dhanay higher that month than expected. He walked around the Tomi offices, visiting with people and seeing how they were doing. Several asked him quick questions or reported minor problems such as lack of file storage space or cold air leaking in their window.

The eclipse began; the two chiefs were quite late. He sat and talked to Luktréstu about various business ideas and proposals. Then the call came; the chiefs had arrived. Chris headed back through the tunnel to home. Liz, Thornton, and Lébé were busy chatting with Patékwu and Duku at the dining room table while several kids played on the other side of the room near the radio, which was playing popular music. “Lords, welcome to my home!” said Chris, as he entered.

“Thank you, Lord, you are very kind and hospitable, as usual,” said Patékwu. “It’s cold here in Mɛlwika today!”

“This is about average for late Bɛlménu; barely above freezing during the day and below freezing at night,” replied Chris. He extended his hands and shook with both chiefs. “It is very good to see you both. I take it you are enjoying the freedom that a pickup truck brings?”

“We are indeed,” agreed Duku. “Though I really should get home tonight, even if it will be almost dawn. The truck is needed tomorrow.”

“Stay at my place tonight; it’s halfway there, and warm,” said Patékwu.

“Alright, after we finish our shopping.” Duku looked at the Menneas. “I can’t ever go to a big town without bringing a long list of things to buy!”

They laughed. “I’m sure,” said Chris.

“At least we aren’t here to ask you for anything,” said Patékwu. “We visited with Ekwanu, chief of the Mémɛnɛgonɛ, today. I wish we could bring you a good report, but we can’t.”

“He is insistent the tribe must stay isolated and preserve its traditional way of life,” said Duku. “The road from Route 1 to their village, 7 kilometers long, hasn’t been

plowed in two weeks. I had to lower my snowplow blade and push through; it took over an hour. When we pulled into the village, everyone poured out and many cheered! But Lord Ekwanu complained to us privately instead. The village wanted the road open, but he didn't! It is a shame. No one can get out and go to Gordha to buy things or sell things or to work. The kids can't get to school. At least they go to the schoolhouse every day and listen to classes on the radio, so they are getting some education."

"They are mining lead and selling that," said Chris.

"But it is making some people sick; I heard that from a cousin who married into the tribe," said Duku. "Lead is poisonous stuff. Surely it can be made safer."

"I'm sure," replied Chris.

"I can ask someone to look it up," said Thornton. "The tribe has taken advice from the Geological Survey."

"Yes, everyone respects the Survey," agreed Duku. "Anyway, we sat and drank and ate with Ekwanu, but he was unbending. No development plan, no Bahá'í youth. They do want help to get a new pickup truck, though. They had one briefly but crashed it."

"When he saw you driving it, he got ideas," said Patékwu. "We told him to call Jordan and gave him the number."

"They have a telephone?" asked Thornton.

"Yes; two," replied Duku. "One for the chief and one for the store; the village now has a store. The store owner is agitating against Ekwanu, too, because he knows how things are changing. Ekwanu knows, too, but won't admit it." Duku shrugged.

“It sounds a bit like your late father, may Esto shower blessing on him,” ventured Chris.

Duku nodded. “This is a generational thing. Ekwanu’s nephews—he only had daughters—want change. Two of them have taken courses at Gordha Génadɛma.”

“So, no progress with the Mémɛnɛgonɛ,” said Patékwu, in conclusion. “But I got another phone call from Staurɛkɛstɛr yesterday. He was asking about how our tribal tomi works, in terms of profit sharing. The Kwolonɛ have a tomi, but it really does nothing; the manager has a good job and it operates one factory, and that’s it. We told him how it is owned by everyone, everyone owns a share, people can earn more shares by contributing labor to Tomi projects, that workers get extra shares, that elders automatically get a second share as long as they are alive—then it goes back to the tribe—etc. We spent hours—days—consulting about the structure, based on Bahá'í economic principles. He was fascinated and asked about the Bahá'í principles in particular. But Kwolona province has a different political structure than the Krésonɛ—a Duke, five lords, and a provincial assembly that will convene this spring—and twenty times the population, so he wasn’t sure how to apply the principles.”

“I wouldn’t give shares to every member of the tribe; the amount would be too little to constitute an incentive,” said Chris. “Give shares to the contributors of labor, the workers, and possibly to the local residents. Kwolona has a lot of large ‘townships’ and Mɛdhpéla has a lot of neighborhoods, so one could use them. Or give the residential share to the provincial assembly to allocate.”

“I’ll call him back and suggest those ideas. Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr seems genuinely interested. At first, I thought our visit had done nothing, but clearly we got him thinking.”

“What visit?” asked Thornton.

“This is confidential business,” said Liz, “But you get to Mɛdhpéla, so you need to know. Last week, Pakékwu, Duku, and ɛndranu visited Staurɛkɛstɛr and Staurɛgéndu. They argued that the Kwolona don’t need to become Bahá'ís to base their development on Bahá'í principles.”

“Because there are no other principles of development that are comprehensive,” explained Patékwu. “Widumaj’s hymns offer little; the traditional Tutanɛ hymns offer less. The Bahá'í principles do not provide a complete blueprint by any means, but they give us an ethical framework, and the Central Spiritual Assembly has helped us fill in the gaps.”

“And it is helping us,” added Duku. “The Késtonɛ are still divided over the Faith, but the basic principles of consultation resonate with the way we have always worked, except they provide limits on any extreme behaviors we might have tried in the past, and they have helped us with the difficult matter of allocating money and dividing up profits. We took out a lot of Development Corps grants and loans and we are managing to pay them back quite well, so we have a lot more machines than we had before, and we are gradually living better.”

“So we explained these things to the Duke and his son,” continued Patékwu. “I was surprised that he brought up the issue of the advancement of women quite positively, and said they were planning a huge mobilization of their youth this summer. In the end they didn’t commit themselves, but now I think they might.”

“Good,” said Thornton. “Lébé and I were there all last summer and they have invited us back this summer, though I’m not sure we can do it.” He looked at her; she was hesitant.

“You’re going back down next week, right?” said Chris.

“For the opening of the Kwolona Génadɛma,” said Lébé, nodded. “We’ve been invited down to speak and represent the Mɛlwika Génadɛma.”

“They’re getting a génadɛma?” said Patékwu, surprised. “We could use that!”

“They have twenty times the people, so they really need it,” said Thornton. “They’ve had courses for five years, arranged through Mɛlwika Génadɛma and taught at their high school, but now they’ve built a very nice, little génadɛma building with four classrooms and six offices,” said Thornton.

“Do you want a génadɛma?” asked Chris. “I think every tribe should have a génadɛma, a branch campus, or a géndha. Even small tribes; it can be a single classroom that can also be used for meetings of various sorts. The Krésonɛ should be ready, by now.”

“I’m not so sure about the Késtonɛ,” said Duku.

“Perhaps not; you still have a lot of basic literacy to work on,” replied Chris. “But you’ll get there. I’d call it a géndha, which is a school for specialized advanced education, like our Medical Géndha, the Law Géndha in Mɛddoakwés, or the Forestry Géndha in Sullɛndha. Sullenda’s teaches everything.”

“We have nothing specialized to offer, though,” said Patékwu.

"I'm sure you do," replied Chris. "Think about it. Because then your géndha professor can come teach his or her classes here or at other schools; it creates an exchange, you see?"

"The marshes," said Thornton. "We badly need someone who studies them and understands them. Not just your marshes, but the marshes along the Majakwés and the Swadakwés. The eastern shore has some unique ecologies that the western shore doesn't have."

"There you go," said Chris. "You just need to train someone. And I am in the mood to be generous because I just found out our investments are doing better than expected. I suspect the Krésonɛ Tomi is seeing the same situation, too; the economy is strong right now. If there's anything I will support spontaneously, it is education; Duku, keep that in mind for your tribe as well. Let's plan a Krésonɛ Géndha."

Patékwu smiled with delight. "Thank you, Lord, we will be glad to pursue that idea."

"I'll ask Thornton and Lébé to be my representatives in that effort," said Chris, looking at Thornton and Lébé, who nodded. "Good."

"And I'll talk to Staurɛkɛstɛr when I go to Mɛdhpéla," said Thornton. "I'm sure the Faith will come up, because he has already said he wants to talk about the youth program."

A week later, on Primdiu, Thornton and Lébé drove down to Mɛdhpéla. The Kwolona Génadɛma was located on the east side of Route 2, right after the marketplace at the base of the rock where the palace was located and across the street from the high school.

“I like the pillars,” said Lébé, as they parked their steam car. “They look like palm trees. They must have hauled in Sumi workers to make them.”

“It’s the only elegant building in the city,” said Thornton. “The palace is ancient, the marketplace is purely commercial, and the high school is boring brick. I guess the génadɛma is making a statement.”

“‘We’ve arrived’?”

“I think so: we’ve arrived, we’re civilized, we’re a province . . . So, are we coming here this summer?”

“I doubt we can avoid it. But even Jonkrisu is pretty independent now, at age eleven, so I should have a fair amount of time. I’ll need to get to Mɛlwika once a week or so to make sure the Women’s Géndha is doing alright.”

“I’ll have to go up to attend City Council meetings and oversee the Geological Survey, but it’s only an hour away.” Thornton closed the air intake to the firebox and locked it, then they both stepped out of the car. “Wow, it’s pretty warm here.”

“Mɛlwika’s in winter, and fifty kilometers to the south, it’s the equator. Their winter vegetable fields looked beautiful.”

“And they’re feeding us.”

They walked over to the crowd gathering in front of the building. There were folding chairs for several hundred people and Thornton wondered how the Kwolonɛ managed to borrow, rent, or buy them. A tent by the side of the building had refreshments for a select group of invitees that looked catered and that surprised him as well. Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr and his son, Staurɛgéndu, greeted them and introduced them to lords and other notables, half of whom they remembered from other visits. Lord Kandékwɛs was

there to represent the palace, but Thornton was surprised that there were no chiefs of other Tutanɛ tribes or even their representatives.

When the bell struck 12 noon, it was time to begin, so the VIPs stepped out of the tent and sat in the chairs. A crowd began to gather and stand beyond the rows of chairs. Thornton was struck by their clothes, a mix of traditional leather and factory spun textiles, but with bear claws, eagle feathers, and other distinctively Kwolonɛ additions. Pretty soon the entire town had arrived, filling the parking lot and blocking route 2; the tribal police closed the highway and routed traffic onto a series of alleys that went around the crowd. The speaker's platform at the top of the entrance stairs of the building had a microphone and there were loudspeakers in various places; they had anticipated the audience.

Kowéranu, the Kwolonɛ widu—they didn't have priests—stepped up to the platform and chanted a hymn to ɛndro, a rather bold way to begin a program in front of the royal consort. A hymn to Widumaj and a Bahá'í prayer followed, then another hymn was chanted by a woman. Thornton listened to the almost familiar words and tune—for it resembled Widumaj's Hymn of the Blessing—but when the refrain "Send down your blessings on us, O ɛjno, for we are your children and in need of your bestowal," his eyes grew wide in surprise. Kandékwɛs, several seats to his right, dropped his jaw in shock. Thornton turn to Lébé, on his left, who was listening intensely, mesmerized.

When the woman finished, the audience leaped to their feet and cheered. They did not applaud; they were not reacting to her rendition, but to the subject matter. Kandékwɛs

looked like he was ready to walk out. “They never chanted that one in front of us last summer!” he whispered to Lébé.

“No; that must be very old and very sacred, to sacred fire.”

“ɛjno; the god of fire?”

“Maybe it does mean the god of fire, or the god of sacrifice. What was the old Hindu god that May spoke about? Agni?”

“Yes; same word. So did they stick ɛjno into a hymn of Widumaj, or did Widumaj stick Esto into a hymn to ɛjno?”

“Based on the archaic grammar, I’d say the latter. It’s almost identical to the Hymn of the Blessing.”

The crowded quieted as Staurɛkɛstɛr walked to the platform next. “We warmly welcome all of you to this very special dedication,” he began. “We are proud of this building; we are proud of ourselves and our hymns, are we not?” The crowd cheered again, almost as strongly. “It is our first truly beautiful, truly modern building. The first floor auditorium can seat 250 people and we plan to use it for many different sorts of gatherings, artistic, political, and cultural, and we will chant *all* our hymns there. Upstairs we have four smaller classrooms and six offices. The entrance lobby is large so we can set up special displays; it will house the beginnings of our Kwolonɛ Museum. If we need more space, we can add to the back of the building, and we hope we will indeed need more space within a few years.

“The Kwolonɛ Génadɛma will play a central role in the advancement of our tribe. Here, we will develop our experts, who pass their wisdom on to our young adults. Some

of the expertise will be quite practical; no one on Éra is studying medicine for domestic animals, so we want to develop that specialty. The entire world will come here to learn how to heal their animals. We also want to develop the study of ecology, especially of grasslands, for we have more grasslands than anyone else in the world. Thanks to our cooperative arrangements with Mɛlwika Génadɛma and other génadɛmas, we will be able to teach a wide range of basic courses; our experts will go there sometimes, and their experts will come here.

"But beyond its practical purposes, the Kwolonɛ Génadɛma will also help make long-term plans for the tribe's advancement. Our reputation, in the past, was as fierce warriors, the fiercest and most dangerous in the world. It does no good to be fierce warriors now; the time of the horse, spear, and bow has passed. Instead, we must be spiritual warriors, excelling in our virtues, the most educated, the most talented, the wisest people in the Kingdom. Empowered by our hymns, armed with modern virtue, this génadɛma will make our success and leadership possible. That is the promise of the Kwolonɛ Génadɛma. With the help and sacrifice of everyone in the tribe, we will do it."

Staurɛkɛstɛr stepped down to excited applause. It was Thornton's turn, and no one was introducing him, so he walked to the platform. "I have always been impressed by the Kwolonɛ," he began, "And today that impression grows even stronger. The future of this world lies in education, and the Kwolonɛ have grasped this fact. The future lies with spiritual values rather than physical strength, with sacrifice of self for all"—he used the term *ɛjno* for sacrifice—"and the Kwolonɛ understand this as well. Mɛlwika has developed a strong relationship with the strongest of the Tutanɛ tribes, and now we see that relationship deepening. There are many complementary aspects of the relationship,

where agriculture and industry are concerned, but there is a stronger and stronger sympathetic relationship based on shared values. The Mɛlwika Génadema is delighted to be establishing a partnership with the Kwolonɛ Génadɛma. We have been wanting to expand our focus on ecology and now we will be able to support your effort. Many schools have wanted to start a veterinarian program; you will lead us, and we will come here to learn from you. And this is how it should be; we are one people on Éra, but many groups, and each group has much to contribute to everyone. The Kwolonɛ, by virtue of their size, territory, history, and their orientation toward the future, will be making outsized contributions to the world. I am sure my amazement at the Kwolonɛ will continue."

Thornton stepped down to strong applause. Lord Mayor Kandékwɛs was next and looked quite uncomfortable; he had been to Mɛdhpéla only once or twice and didn't know the audience. He spoke about the Queen's commitment to all her people and the reciprocal relationship with Arjakwés province to the north, and got lukewarm applause. Lébé was last and spoke briefly about the role of women in the world and the contributions that Kwolonɛ women could make. She was sure to speak of *ɛjno,* sacrifice, as well.

Then Duke Staurɛkɛstɛr cut the ribbon across the door and led everyone inside. The entire town followed, into the lobby, up the stairs, across the top floor past its classrooms and empty offices—there was nothing to steal—down the back stairs, across part of the first floor auditorium, and out one of the side doors.

“Come to the palace for the reception,” said Staurɛkɛstɛr after they stepped out the side door. “It was a short ceremony, but we have never liked long ones, like the Mɛghɛndrɛs!”

Thornton laughed. “Yes, they can easily go two or three hours. What a *beautiful* building, Lord. Every detail is perfect.”

“Thank you. We called several architects down to talk to us and selected one who could do something quite nice. And Staurɛgéndu drove around the sea and stopped at every theater and auditorium to ask who did the work and how much it cost. Our auditorium isn’t as large as many, but it is quite nice. We’ll build a bigger, more elegant one later!” He laughed.

“Yes, that’s very practical, but the building makes the point anyway: we have arrived. If I may ask, how can you afford it?”

Staurɛkɛstɛr smiled. “We have the sale of the township land to the palace, but we also asked everyone to contribute, and they did, generously. This génadɛma has strong popular support. Thank you for supporting our plan for an animal medicine program. What did you call it?”

“We have been using kwétɛrpodkailo rather than pɛkɛrkailo; the healing of any quadruped, not just the tame ones. But we will support pɛkɛrkailo. Except at Mɛlita Zoo, there isn’t much need to heal antelopes and zebras.”

Staurɛkɛstɛr laughed at that. “Who knows, we may want to heal the beasts as well. So, Lord, will you be coming this summer? Our plans are well advanced for a summer youth program. Brébiku, the principal of the high school, is in charge of the program, and he thinks he’ll have more youth involved than go to the high school! We

have 1,000 kids aged 15 through 19, 350 of them go to the high school, and we think we'll have 500 involved with the summer institute!"

"Excellent. How many Bahá'í youth do you want? And how many of the Kwolonɛ youth can go to other places?"

"Other places? Ask Brébiku about that. I am sure we can accommodate 50 or 100 Bahá'í youth, if you can bring them. Our summer institute will go only one month, but we may have some stay on for the other two months. You must be sure to include classes on the Bahá'í values during the institute. We want our children to know about them."

"Really? Because some will want to become Bahá'ís."

"Yes, we understand that, but as long as they continue to respect the old ways and the old hymns, that is fine."

"We will indeed respect the old hymns, but which old ways are we talking about? We have already discussed the issue of including the girls."

"Indeed, and the boys and girls should be kept separate most of the time, just as they are in our high school now. I agree, the old ways have been changing and will continue to change. We need to be careful about controversy, but Kowéranu is behind this effort and that helps."

"Excellent. Lébé and I can certainly commit to be here for the month during the summer youth institute. During the rest of the summer we will need to be in other places, especially Mɛlwika, but we will be able to visit as well."

"Excellent. That is what I wanted to hear, Lord."

"I am amazed you can get half your youth involved in this institute."

“It is a shorter commitment than high school and we can make it more ‘traditional’; in addition to service and Bahá'í classes, there will be classes on our hymns and sacred stories, on animal healing, the new agriculture, business, accounting, etc. It will be the place where we create the new Kwolonɛ; the High School and the Génadɛma will be built on the foundations of the summer youth institute. Indeed, I suspect the high school and génadɛma curriculum will change as a result of the summer youth institute. We hope the institute will help youth become more involved in the high school and the génadɛma, too. We no longer feel the need to follow the models in the rest of the world. We think we can excel in this world in *our* way. But to create that way, we need the Bahá'í teachings as well. The Kwolonɛ culture, hymns, and sacred stories are the soil; but for the plant to grow, it needs the sun. We hope the Bahá'í teachings will be the sun.”

“The sun and the soil; powerful things. I fear I am inadequate, Lord, to assist in this process.”

“You, me, Brébiku, Kowéranu: we are all inadequate, are we not?”

Thornton nodded. Just then, Staurɛgéndu approached to ask his father about something, so Thornton dropped back to tell Lébé what the lord had told him. “We’ll have our work cut out for us,” she said. “We’ll need some very mature and experienced youth.”

“We’ll need a *lot* of youth, too. I don’t know whether the Assembly was planning to make the program bigger, but clearly we had better make it bigger.”

“Definitely. And we’ll need to plan the classes very carefully as well.”

The procession of VIPs reached the palace, an old pile of stones that badly needed work, but Thornton was struck by the fact that the génadɛma had been built first; the lord

had his priorities right. The old reception hall was full of food and drink, with a traditional low sitting platform running along the walls and scattered collections of chairs. Thornton and Lébé talked to Brébiku and Markɛstɛr, “slayer of zebras,” the head of the génadema; a bright first son of a clan chief, with a kwétɛryɛri in business, but with a strong background in science as well. Soon Kandékwɛs, who otherwise felt out of place, and Staurɛkɛstɛr joined them; it was a chance for the two of them to engage in a low level conversation without feeling awkward. Markɛstɛr had many ideas for the génadɛma and Lébé, who had experience running a géndha, had suggestions.

There was a lull in the conversation. Staurɛgéndu, who had joined the group, spoke up. “Lord Thornton, they just announced on the radio that the Bahá'í Center in Isurdhuna has been burned down.”

“They did?” he replied, startled. He sighed. “Such a beautiful building; it was mostly glass windows, rather like the Bahá'í Center in Mɛlwika. This is the second fire it has had, and at least the fifth or sixth attempt to burn it. There have been two other incidents just in the last two weeks.”

“Wasn’t there a guard?” asked Staurɛkɛstɛr.

“Indeed, but they must have gotten past him.”

“Those ‘old customs’ fanatics,” said Kandékwɛs, angrily. “They have even been threatening the queen.”

“The queen?” said Staurɛkɛstɛr, surprised.

Kandékwɛs nodded. “In the last few weeks, since the reform of the priesthood was announced, there have been several anonymous threats. The corrupt priests will not

go quietly. Yesterday the Isurdhuna police had to arrest two of the men sentenced to exile and drive them to the Néfa ferry boat. The old palace in Anartu is now filled with them."

"Which they share with a museum devoted to Sumi history and culture."

Kandékwɛs laughed. "A fitting punishment, is it not? Better than Kostakhéma or Moruagras."

Thornton couldn't help but laugh; so did the Duke and his son. "But what of the Bahá'í Center," asked Staurɛkɛstɛr. "What will you do?"

"We'll rebuild it," replied Thornton. "It is a beautiful building, befitting the dignity of the Bahá'í Faith in Kɛrda, but it is just a building. The authorities will investigate and punish the criminals who did this."

"No revenge?" asked Staurɛgéndu.

Thornton shook his head. "That's part of the old ways of doing things, but we respect the law and the authorities. Punishment is their job, not ours. If they fail to do it, then they need to learn how to do their job better and we will want to help them do that. But we do not do revenge; it will just perpetuate violence and disunity. If we want to create a world based on unity, we need to build up just laws and the system to create and enforce them. Then everyone will have justice."

Staurɛkɛstɛr nodded. "Well said. This is indeed what the Kwolonɛ need. I look forward to the Bahá'í classes you can give our youth."

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June 17-20, 2013, then writing resumed again. Reread and edited, March 22-24, 2016 and

Dec. 3-4, 2024

Ideas:

Round-the-sea bicycle race planned. It includes Kɛrda, too.

Liz (70): Gabrulias, growth of the Faith, spiritualization

Chris (72): Focuses on sustainable development. Wants hydroelectric potential of Long Valley developed. Talks to John about sustainable development

May (45) is focusing on; Amos (47) is focusing on engineering, especially a telephone switching system; Lua (50) is busy with a rapidly expanding health system; Behruz (54) is working on the Institute; Thornton (35) is working on Kwolonɛ development all summer and finds a master swimmer whose father was killed on the Mɛlwika attack; Lébé (35) works on a literary-critical book on Eryan myth and folk tales.

The children: Rostamu Shirazi (17, summer) contemplates his future in Mɛdhpéla all summer; Skandé Keino (16, spring); Jalalu Mennea (15, spring) takes his electric guitar to Mɛdhpéla, starts a rock band; Kalé Mennea (13, June); Marié Keino (same); Jonkrisu (10, Aug.)

Tiamaté (23-24) Jordan (23-24): continue with development, raise a baby, visit Sumilara.

Tomasu: finishes biogas installation, goes into maintenance; Sulokwé is raising their baby, born in mid-late Bɛlménu 17/635

Primanu and Gramé Miller: have baby

Sugérsé: Moves to Mɛddwoglubas, starts Institute, translates Universal House of Justice guidance into Eryan

Chandu: Becomes a major force in grange movement

Roktɛkɛstɛr: Developing his town.

Estoiyaju, Wɛranu: developing their towns with estate lords Wértéstu and Wokwéstu, respectively, with Chris and Jordan's inputs. Wɛranu dies.

Wɛpokɛstɛr and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr:

Aisɛndru and Sarédaté: Settling into Anartu and working to make the army a service agency. Aisugu: Attending Mɛlwika Génadɛma.

Budhéstu and Blorakwé (22); Mɛlitané and Moléstu:

Soru, Kanawé, Blorané (11-12), Isuru (7):

Rébu is rehabilitated

Pɛrku and Sharé: kids Mitrubu (24) and Avásé (19)

Queen Awstɛr/Estoibidhé: With computers and cellphones, she stays overnight in only 5 places and travels with a smaller entourage. Prime Minister flies in for consultations once per week.

New Times doesn't get a computer and does an expose about them, causing great worry about the aliens. Eventually the Queen wants them to appear before the public and speak to them.

Wɛrétrakɛster writes a piece lamenting modern life and criticizing the Bahá'í Faith indirectly.

Mɛlwika salaries are not rising 10% per year, like average, so its standing vis-à-vis the villages is being eroded. Decision to pay in profit therefore is very controversial. Tax base is not exapanding as fast, either, so establishment of a Youth Center is controversial

Bilingual government?

Army soldiers sent to Sumilara must know Sumi, are paid 10% more, are allowed to marry earlier Pɛrku reorganizes and repurposes the military.

The palace obtains all land claimed by the Dwobɛrgonɛ south of the Majakwés for townships. In response, all Tutanɛ tribes get representation in the Consultative Assembly.

Palace grants the land along Route 55 to Véspa province for mountain townships.

Thornton visits the coral reefs off the east coast and sees the guano is gone. Time to start manufacturing fertilizer

Mémɛnɛgonɛ have a pro-development "coup"

Patékwu organizes Kwolonɛ summit at the sacred springs; they demand better representation in the House of Commons

Menneas organize a private security force to protect tomis, temples, Centers, génadɛmas, hospitals

Plan for hydropower in Long Valley

National forest and park system

Wind turbines and undersea power cable for Sumilara; gas pipeline from Tripola along Dhébakwés, then to ɛndraidha, connecting the shores together (₫300,000)

Dhébɛlménu: April 21-May 20 (month of planting)

1/21

7/27 Andru born, 9 Dhébɛlménu

13/May 3

19/9 Mɛlwika spring term 1 ends

25/15 Mɛlwika vacation

Blorménu: May 21-June 20 (month of flowers)

1/21 Consultative Assembly (next 4-6 weeks, ending at Grand Court); Mɛlwika spring short term 1 begins

7/27

13/June 3

19/9

25/15 Mɛlwika spring short term 1 ends

Kaiménu: June 21-July 20 (hot month)

1/21 Mɛddoakwés: Harvest; Graduation, All-Génadɛma Council and Conference; Thornton heads for Mɛdhpéla

7/27 Grand Court and Harvest Festival

13/July 3 Mɛddoakwés: second planting; Mɛlwika summer short term 1 begins

19/9

25/15

Dhonménu: July 21-August 20 (month of grain)

1/21 Queen visits Morana, Lɛpawsona (where she urges patience with the economy)

7/27 Queen visits Bɛllɛdha; Chris visits Khɛrmdhuna; trouble in Bɛllɛdha

13/Aug. 3 Queen visits Jérnstisér (from Bɛllɛdha), Rudhisér (from Ora); Mɛlwika summer short term 2 begins

19/9 Queen visits Rudhisér (from Ora), sees telephone switching machine; visits Isurdhuna

22/12 Widumaj cycle culminates, ends at Isurdhuna

25/15 Queen visits Isurdhuna, tours the new chimney

Abɛlménu: August 21-September 20 (month of apples)

1/21 Queen visits Long Valley (from Ora), Ora; Chris talks about hydroelectricity

7/27 Queen visits Ora, Lɛwéspa (from Ora); Chris and Liz visit Dhudrakaita; Bahá'í Studies Institute

13/Sep. 3 Queen visits Tripola, Wurontroba for one day; Mɛlwika summer short term 3 begins

19/9 Queen visits ɛndraidha, Kwolona, Kwétékwona (from ɛndraidha)

25/15 Queen visits "Northern Tribes" at Gordha, then home

Brénménu: September 21-October 20 (month of browning)

1/21 Fall Consultative Assembly (if held)

7/26 Fall Consultative Assembly

13/Oct. 1 Mɛddoakwés: Second harvest; Mɛlwika vacation week

19/6 Mɛlwika Harvest Festival; Mɛlwika fall term 1 starts; Chris and Aryéstu discuss cooling economy when strong. Thornton teaches oceanography at Nuarjora/Arjdhura

25/11

31/16

Génménu: October 21-November 20 (month of hunting)

1/21

7/26

13/Nov. 1

19/6 First phone switching in palace, ɛndraidha

25/11

31/16 Mɛlwika fall term 1 ends

Prusménu: November 21-December 20 (month of frosts)

1/21 Mɛlwika (short) fall term 2 starts; Thornton teaches at Kwolona Génadɛma; 7/26

13/Dec. 1

19/6

25/11

31/16

Bɛlménu: December 21-January 20 (white month)

1/21 Mɛlwika short winter term 1 starts

7/26 Queen visits Sumilara for 6 days; Jordan and Tiamaté in Anartu teaching and doing development

13/Jan. 1

19/6

25/11

31/16

Plowménu: January 21-February 20 (rainy month)

1/21 Mɛlwika short winter term 2 starts

7/26

13/Feb. 1

19/6

25/11

31/16

ɛjnaménu: February 21 -March 20 (30-day month) (month of sacrifice)

1/21 Mɛlwika school vacation (all month)

7/27

13/Mar. 3

19/9

25/15 Primdiu: world and Mɛlwika election

Bolérɛnménu: Mar. 21-April 20 (month of greening)

1/21 Mɛddoakwés: planting; Mɛlwika spring term 1 starts

7/27

13/Apr. 3

19/9

25/15

Geological Survey report about the Glugluba; build a dam half way down from the entrance, 200 meters high, 103 m^3 per sec. Use lower dam to moderate flow, leave middle

section as wilderness, leave Rudhisérgluba alone. Hydropower = 180,000 kw. But cost would be high and the effort long and slow.

Reread and edited Sept. 2-4, 2017, 12/3-4/24