THE PIONEERS

Vol. 14

The Old Houses

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Harvestfest

Mid Brénménu/early Oct., Yr 10/628

The bus from Arjdhura pulled into Mɛlwika Bus station. Soru, Kanawé, and four year old Blorané waited patiently as a full load of passengers disembarked. Near the end, Randu appeared, dragging two chests, followed by Nina, with one chest, and their four year old son, Alima.

"You made it!" exclaimed Soru, delighted. He helped pull the chests out of the way, then hugged his Sumi friend. "Alláh-u-Abhá."

"Thank you. Alláh-u-Abhá. I don't think we'd try this, if we didn't have some friends here."

"Well, you do have friends." Soru turned to Nina and offered her one hand; Eryanu men shook two hands, but shook only one hand of a woman. She and Kanawé had just hugged. "It's so good to see you again, Nina."

"Thank you. Blorané's growing so tall!"

"So is Alima."

"Alimu, here," added Randu. "He'll have to change his name a bit. Is there a bus across town to your house?"

"Yes, we'll need one. This way." They began to lug the chests the length of the bus station to the Dɛksawsupɛrakwa Stop; it headed across the township every fifteen minutes, and a bus was waiting. Soru pulled out his twenty-ride pass and had the driver punch it for everyone, and they got on. "This stops right by the house," he explained.

“Every fifteen minutes; you have a lot of buses here!” said Randu.

“It’s Harvest Festival, so the buses are very busy. Usually there’s a southbound bus once per hour.”

“That explains why the bus from the lower Arjakwés was so crowded,” said Nina. “At every village a dozen tried to board, and they all came here!”

“This is the first day. I’m glad you’re here in time for it; it’s a lot of fun,” said Kanawé. “How was your trip?”

“Pretty good,” replied Randu. “We left home before dawn and caught the first bus to Anartu, then another bus to the harbor. We almost missed the ferry; it was close. Five hours later we got to Arjdhura, then caught a bus here. Eight hours of travel, five time zones, and here it is sunset!”

“But we’re tired enough to go to bed when it’s time,” added Nina. She tousled Alimu’s hair.

The bus began to back out of the parking space and soon headed along West Street, parallel to and fifty meters outside the western wall of the city. Randu looked over the fallow field to the west. “No houses here.”

“No, Lord Miller is saving the land for later, I think. There’s not supposed to be any construction within 150 meters of the city wall, though that hasn’t happened along the eastern wall up on the ridge, so they plan to move the city wall this winter. No one feels ready to remove the wall yet.”

“It’s not safe,” agreed Randu.

“So many bicycles!” exclaimed Nina, watching dozens of riders on West Street. “We still have very few on Sumilara!”

“This is the best street for bicycles to take, north-south,” explained Randu. “Inside the city there are too many cross streets and pedestrians.”

“I think almost every household has a bike now,” added Kanawé. “My cousin Mɛdhé has one, with a lock and a chain. You can even ride to Mɛddoakwés on the concrete road; it only takes half an hour. You can buy bike baskets so you can carry stuff with you.”

“The concrete roads and all the people around here; a bike is practical,” said Randu, a bit envious.

The bus passed the southern end of the city and suddenly they could see the fairgrounds. Tens of thousands of people milled around, visiting friends, eating, singing, dancing, and riding on amusement rides. Randu and Nina were startled by the size of the crowd. “Does the entire valley come?” he said.

“Pretty much; over thirty thousand come, and the province has almost fifty thousand.”

Alimu pointed to the rotating swings excitedly and spoke to his mother. Kanawé understood and nodded. “Yes, he can ride on it, and it’s a lot of fun! There’s also a gigantic slide and a ‘ferris wheel.’” He pointed. “It goes round and round and takes you very high. It’s a lot of fun.”

“They don’t take them to Sumilara?” asked Kanawé. “They take them everywhere else.”

“No, we don’t get things like that, even at Anartu,” said Randu.

Soru pulled on a cable that rang a bell, indicating they needed to get off at the next stop. The bus slowed and stopped and they disembarked, pulling the chests with

them. The house was just sixty meters away. Kanawé stayed with two chests while Soru and Randu collaborated to move one of them. After three trips, everyone was in the house safely and flopped down on the couch and chairs in the living room while Mɛdhé brought them ice water and started to heat the tea water.

"Oh, it's good to be here," said Randu. "But we don't want to impose on your hospitality for very long. When does the married student dormitory open? Suksdiu?"

"I think so, and I bet you can get in earlier."

"But if we could get our own place in the Sumi quarter, it would be good," said Nina. "I think I'd be happier there."

"It's a question of language and culture," explained Randu. "It's hard to speak Eryani all the time, even for me. We'd be more comfortable there."

"I understand," said Soru, though he was uncomfortable with the idea. "Once you're rested, we can go to the festival. There's a big Sumi pavilion there; you can meet the entire Sumi quarter."

Nina turned to Randu. "We should go there later."

"How long are you staying in Mɛlwika?" asked Kanawé.

"Until next summer," replied Randu. "The village wants me back to teach over the summer. I figure I can get a dwoyɛri by then."

"Really? How many courses do you already have? You need twenty-four for a dwoyɛri."

"I have six at the Ninurta Génadɛma and I think the Mɛlwika Génadɛma will accept all of them. I figure if I take four in the fall term, two each in the four short terms,

four in the long spring term and two in the short spring term, that's eighteen; eighteen and six are twenty-four."

"Wow." Soru shook his head. "My friend, I don't think that's a good idea. That's a year and a half of courses in a year. It would be difficult enough for an experienced teacher from Ora like our friend Skandastáru, but you have the additional problem of learning how to read Eryani quickly and write it fairly well. You speak well enough, but that isn't the same thing as attending a génadɛma."

"I know. It'll be very difficult. But Nina and Alimu are here to help me." He looked at his wife and son gratefully.

"What financial aid do you have?" asked Kanawé.

"That's another problem," he conceded. "We'll need help from the génadɛma."

"They'll give it to you," said Soru. "But financial assistance is not free; you have to work to earn it. A lot of students are professional teachers seeking to acquire better skills; at least a dwoyɛri. The most common assistance is payment to teach evening adult classes. The génadɛma gives a grant to the school and it uses it to pay student teachers to teach one evening course for every one or two courses they take at the génadɛma."

"That must be a lot of courses!" said Randu, surprised.

Soru nodded. "The system has expanded every term. Most villages or granges in the area sponsor free courses in basic reading, math, and the subjects of a high school education like science, health, accounting, the hymns, etc. The Ministry of Education is close to approving a 'high school equivalency certificate' so adults can take these courses and eventually earn the equivalent of high school. They're taking the courses because

they're gaining useful skills, like being able to read the newspaper and the sales coupons."

"But are there enough courses for all the génadɛma students to teach?"

"Sure, though some are pretty small! And it's nice to teach a small course. The génadɛma students offer about 150 per term; they could be one evening a week, three hours or six hours every Primdiu, or two-day intensive courses. Usually they're fifteen classroom hours in length. Our students have offered evening courses as far away as Gordha and Arjdhura, about an hour and a quarter from here by bus. The one- and two-day courses have been held in the north and south shores and various Tutanɛ villages."

"You don't teach a subject unless you've taught it before or you're studying it that term," added Kanawé. "It's actually helpful to take biology on a Dwidiu and teach it on a Kwétɛrdiu; the latter reinforces the former."

"Did you do this, too?" asked Randu.

"Well, the situation four or five years ago was different," said Kanawé. "We were working with deaf and special needs children, so that work 'counted.'"

"And then we had specialized knowledge, so we were teaching courses at the Mɛlwika and Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛmas about special education, even though we only had a dwoyɛri," added Soru.

"Do you think I could teach at the génadɛma?"

Soru shook his head. "The situation has changed drastically in the last five years. Five years ago, most of these adult education courses were offered through the génadɛma. And now there are so many students who already have dwoyɛris and are pursuing triyɛris

and kwétɛryɛris . . . your six courses constitute only half a yɛri, so unless you can offer something unique, like something about the Sumis, I doubt it'll be possible."

"How much will he be paid for a course?" asked Nina.

"A fifteen-hour adult education course pays sixty dhanay. A thirty-hour génadɛma course starts at one hundred fifty but includes free tuition that term for as many génadɛma courses as you want to take. If you teach ten adult-education courses, that's six hundred dhanay, enough to cover a year of tuition, room, and board."

"But we'll need more, with three mouths to feed and an apartment." Randu calculated in his head. "And we have one hundred dhanay from our village and two hundred from Governor Modobéru of Sumilara. If I teach one course a term, that's . . . seven courses, eight if I teach two during the long spring term. That might work."

"Maybe." Nina was skeptical.

"You'll probably get a grant from the génadɛma, too," added Soru. "They want their students to have time to study!"

"I had no idea the génadɛma required so much work!" said Nina. "This province must have a lot of literate people!"

"About ten percent," said Soru. "Pretty good, after ten years. Even the rich kids have to do something of service because the génadɛma requires fifteen hours of service for every year of education. So even if they have enough money to pay for everything, they *still* have to do something to serve others."

Randu laughed. "Ninurta Génadɛma could never do that! Too many rich kids would refuse!"

“They aren’t Bahá'ís,” replied Nina. She finished her glass of water and looked at Alimu, who was wiggling in his seat. “This little boy is going crazy, thinking about the Harvest Fest. We should go see it before exhaustion sets in.”

“Then let’s go,” said Soru, with a smile.

They all rose from their seats and headed to the festival, which was only a hundred paces away. Soru led them along the avenues lined with pavilions to the Sumi pavilion. He and Kanawé felt a bit awkward entering, but Randu and Nina plunged in and started talking with the various people inside right away. A group was singing a folk song to drum and three-string accompaniment and many were dancing as well; they watched while Randu spoke to Ninazu, oldest son of Dumuzi, the city’s most prominent Sumi and a member of the City Council. After fifteen minutes they moved on to the rotating swing chairs and they got in line to ride. Alimu was thrilled beyond words; Blorané, who had already ridden four times earlier in the day, was delighted to ride more. They were leaving the rotating swing chairs when they ran into Thornton, Lébé, and their children, seven year-old Jalalu, five year old Kalé, and two year old Jonkrisu.

“Are you here for the term?” asked Thornton, after shaking hands.

“The year,” replied Randu. “I want to complete a dwoyɛri.”

“How much do you have already?”

“Six courses.”

Thornton didn’t comment about that. “And you have a letter of permission from Governor Modobéru?”

“No, not yet, but I have a letter from his office granting me two hundred dhanay to attend.”

“Peculiar. The génadɛma will need a letter of permission, or the army will investigate you.”

“I can send a message. It’s very hard to call, I understand; the one line is inadequate for all the calls that have to be made in and out.”

“So I’ve heard, but the registrar will keep trying. Don’t worry, we’ll straighten that out. You’ll probably want to talk to the registrar about financial aid. They’ll resolve that problem for you, too. We’re glad you’re here, Randu. We haven’t had many Sumi students, and none have been Bahá'ís; usually they’ve been of noble or royal blood.”

“I’m just a poor villager.”

“You’re a brilliant one, not a poor one! Enjoy your stay.”

“And the Festival!” added Lébé. “Nina, let’s talk about whether you can take some courses at the women’s génadɛma.”

That startled Nina, who had no plans to study, but she reluctantly nodded. The families parted, going in opposite directions. Thornton steered his brood toward the Miller Industries pavilion, the largest and most opulent tent in the entire festival, with two or three hundred people inside singing, dancing, eating, drinking, and talking.

Everyone greeted them as they entered. They headed toward the table where John Miller and his oldest son, Yimu, presided over the activities. Mitru and his family were there, also. Behind them was a big sign bearing a list: **A Year of Many Successes! • 203 vehicles • 558 bicycles • 1,350 electric motors and generators • 4,620 plows • about 5,000 corrugated metal roofs • 40,000 tools • 3,560 gurnis of steel • 5,200 gurnis of flour • 90,000 gurnis of concrete**

They rose to greet Lébé and Thornton. “Glad you made it!” said John. “Great day, great day!”

“Good to see you, father,” said Lébé, and Thornton repeated the same respectful formula, adding, “Looks like you had a very good year.”

John looked at the numbers on the sign and boasted quietly. “The best yet. About two million dhanay of income; maybe 2.5 when you include the sons in law.”

“When will you raise vehicle production?”

“Let demand build first.”

Yimu shook his head. “I think Amos’s advice is good, father. Once the backlog of orders reaches three months, you launch a fifty percent expansion. Then you plan the next fifty percent expansion and wait for demand to rise for it.”

John shrugged in reply. Yimu added, “We’ll probably expand to three hundred per year over the winter, and production costs should drop twenty percent.”

“It’s amazing to think we can produce and sell so many,” said Thornton.

“I’ll need ten new buses, four cars, seven trucks, and five tractors next year,” said Mitru. “Do you know how many buses I’ve had to add to my fleet starting next week? Five!”

“Why?” asked Lébé.

“High School registrations are 300 more than expected! I need to run seven buses along the Glaktakwés every morning to bring 400 students to Tripola High School. Last year it was 280 students and five buses, and they thought I’d need to dispatch six, so that was what I was ready to do. Kɛrda needs five buses to go to the top of the valley and six to the bottom; that’s two more in both directions than last year, and one more than

expected. The lower Arjakwés run will need five instead of four, the Pɛnkakwés region will send two buses of students to Bɛllɛdha . . . almost every province is asking for more."

"Where are you getting them?" asked Lébé.

"We've rushed three into production," said Yimu.

"And I have ten percent spares to cover breakdowns; that's four more," said Mitru. "We're checking every single bus very carefully, so we don't need any backups, we hope, for a month or so."

"That's risky," said Thornton. "That explains why I've heard rumors of a second high school for Kɛrda and the South Shore, and one for Pɛnkakwés."

"And don't forget Véspa North," added Mitru. "Last week I was told to plan for a new high school opening in the northern half of the province starting next year. But that won't require new buses because it'll open an hour after Pértatranisér, so after the kids are dropped off there, the buses can head south and get another load. That means the buses based in Néfa will handle three high schools every day!"

"That's profitable," commented Yimu. "So how many kids will you be driving to school every day?"

"About five thousand. Most buses serve three school districts whose starting and stopping times are staggered an hour apart, so they can make three runs."

"It's incredible how big the high schools are getting," said Thornton. "We've graduated about six hundred teachers, kindergarten through high school, and demand is still going up! But you guys need to open a lot more factories if they're going to get jobs."

“We’re expanding as fast as we can!” said John. “There’s only so much money to build them and so many products to produce! Amos needs to help us develop new machinery, instead of raising tropical fruit in Pértatranisér!”

“He’ll be here the entire fall term to do just that,” replied Thornton. “We should go. See you tomorrow?”

Yimu nodded. “Mitru’s at 7 p.m. We’re starting book 2?”

“That’s right,” said Lébé, who was tutoring as many of her brothers in the Ruhi Bahá'í books as possible. “See you then.”

Randu stood in front of Dumuzi’s house in his best clothes and stared at it for a moment. He was the world’s wealthiest Sumi, thanks to his establishing a new township on Sumilara and expanding his commerce as fast as the world economy was developing. Dumuzi was known to be someone to keep up with the latest developments, and in Mɛlwika he had his ear on all the best grapevines. Randu had to wonder whether he was being invited so that he would be part of one, or whether he would end up contributing information to one instead.

He said a prayer and walked up to the door. A moment after he knocked, the doorman opened it and invited him into the formal sitting room. Dumuzi, a vigorous man in his late forties, arrived seconds later. “So you are Randu of Bilara?” he said. His Sumi was formal and crisp.

“Indeed I am, Lord, Randu son of Adar.”

“I am pleased to meet you. Too few of our people come to Mɛlwika Génadɛma.” He offered his right hand, Sumi style, and they shook. “My son tells me you are here with your wife and son, and you plan to stay through spring.”

“I have six courses from Ninurta Génadɛma and hope to take eighteen more in order to complete a dwoyɛri by the beginning of summer.”

“A two-year degree in one year? Ambitious. How did you decide to come here, rather than completing a degree at Ninurta? It has a remarkable range of courses; just about everything you can get here.”

“Mɛlwika has much more on education; I mean courses on how to educate people, not just the knowledge to give them. Ninurta doesn’t have that, and my Eryani is fairly good; my mother’s father was an Eryanɛ soldier in Anartu. Furthermore, I am a Bahá'í, so I have a slight connection with the Mennea family. Thornton and Lua have both visited Bilara.”

“Bahá'í, huh? So, what do you think of the old gods?”

“Lord Dumuzi, I honor and venerate them and even sacrifice to them as divine principles, perhaps even as spirits. I do not regard them as having supreme power; that is given to the one God alone.”

Dumuzi looked at him for a moment, then nodded. “I suppose that is more than I can say. I have built a magnificent temple to them on this very mountain and sacrifice to them in order to support their priests, but I have my doubts as to their power, or even the power of any supreme god.” He shrugged. “So, do you believe in the advancement of your people, as a Bahá'í?”

"Of course, Lord. You know that as Bahá'ís we are well-wishers of all, but obviously we are well-wishers of our people even more and of our own families even more. This is the way it is with Bahá'ís. I am here to learn, so I can go back to Bilara and organize the village school even better. Bilara has 2,000 people, of whom about 600 are children of school age. Right now we have a three-room schoolhouse that serves about 150 of them. Thirty or forty have started taking the morning bus to Anartu High School, which opened last spring. The three teachers all have studied between four and seven courses in Anartu. With a dwoyɛri I could teach the others, and the village will commit to expanding the school to eight rooms."

"That would put just about all the children in school. Excellent. That is very important; we cannot stay viable as a people unless we remain better educated than the Eryan. The Sumi are a very talented people, but we need education to bring it out."

"Exactly right, Lord. I am dedicated to the cause of educating the Sumi people. Bilara has immense potential. We hope to improve our agriculture, expand our farmland—we have some areas that can still be cultivated—and start a factory in the village."

"Then you know what the development plan should be; excellent. These are the legs on which modern life are built: a good road, telephones, electricity, hospitals, schools, universal literacy—universal—improved agriculture, and manufacturing." He ticked them off with his fingers. "Have you visited Amurueqluma?"

"No, I've been too busy working and studying to travel around the island much."

"The township, in two years, has three thousand people, good modern facilities, and vigorous agriculture—very strong. We should all be proud. And there is still land by

Vermillion Cliffs where another town can be established; Sumilara itself is hardly full. Then there has been quite an exodus as well; we have over five hundred here, three hundred in Mɛddoakwés, six hundred in Arjdhura—I prefer to call it New Lilalara—and two hundred more in Swadlɛndha. We may not be in the position to reconquer land, but we are able to buy it, and we have done so."

"I traveled through Arjdhura yesterday and was surprised it was so large."

"Almost a thousand people already, and growing, thanks to a bountiful supply of farmland. So, you are dedicated to Sumi education: would you be willing to travel to Arjdhura to teach classes? It is an hour and fifteen minutes away by express bus. Not far, really."

"Lord Dumuzi, I need to concentrate on my education here."

"But you'll have to do some teaching in order to afford the classes and support your family, right? I assume you don't have a thousand dhanay in your pocket."

"You are correct, but I need to teach classes that will pay."

"That's what I'm talking about. Arjdhura can pay you the standard fee if the génadɛma can't; and I suspect the génadɛma will. I may even ask Lord Kris about that very point. The génadɛma has paid its students to teach adult classes to Tutanɛ, after all; why not to Sumis in Sumi? Especially if you plan to be a Sumi teacher!"

"Your logic is impeccable, Lord," replied Randu, bowing slightly.

Dumuzi smiled. "Good. You know, I have never been able to get a Sumi student here to go to Arjdhura to teach a class. They were all too proud! But you are different, and I thank you for that."

“Lord, I am not a militant and my patriotism to Sumilara, as a Bahá'í, is a sober one. But I am committed to educating Sumis, and it would be easier for me to teach classes in Sumi than in Eryani.”

“Of course. What about génadɛma-level courses?”

Randu hesitated. “I have no permission to do that, right now, and I would fear that such an effort could be misunderstood.”

“Delicately put. You are correct. But it would also earn you more. With only six courses it is too soon for you to do that, but perhaps I should explore the matter with Lord Kristobéru.”

“Please do ask him, for he would know best.”

“He has the connections to make it happen, too. Excellent. I’ll contact the people in Arjdhura. Let me know which night would be best for you, or perhaps Primdiu would be better. You could bring your entire family for the day and teach two courses.”

“Not in the first term, please. I need the time to settle in here, solidify my language, and learn how courses work.”

Dumuzi nodded. “That is wise. No courses at all, then?”

“I could teach an evening course on mathematics. That is something I’m already good at and have taught to adults in Bilara.”

“Excellent, math it is, then. If you have the chance to take accounting, I am sure there are people in Arjdhura who would be interested. The island is very underdeveloped in business courses. It is badly needed.”

“I’ll keep that in mind, then.”

“Good. Let me call my younger son. Buzurigisu, please come here!” He shouted and a moment later a faint reply could be heard. The young man, about twenty-two, made his appearance half a minute later.

“What is it, father?”

“This is Randu; he just arrived in town to study at Mɛlwika Génadɛma and will be offering adult courses in Arjdhura. Do we have any vacant apartments?”

“Indeed, father, three or four.”

“Please show them to Randu so he can choose one for his family, if he wants. We will offer him an excellent price; a dhanay a week.” Randu was startled, as that was at half the going price of an apartment in the city.

“Very well, father.” Buzurigisu bowed.

“You are very generous, Lord,” said Randu.

“I am glad to help an educator,” he replied.

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The Offer

Three days passed before Dumuzi was able to meet with Chris Mennea. The latter was pleased to see the Sumi merchant and lord. “We really haven’t had a chance to talk all summer,” Chris said, as he poured Dumuzi a cup of tea at the conference table in his office. “I think we both missed at least one City Council meeting, too, so we missed each other there. At least Mɛlwika completed the new elementary school on time.”

“Yes, we’re now getting five hundred first graders per year and will need a new school every year to hold them.” Dumuzi shook his head. “I’m amazed we can do it, but the city has the tax base for it. At Amurueqlima we opened a public bath in early summer and a very nice school for grades 1 through 8 last week. It can hold 500 kids, but the town only has 750 or so in that age range, so we don’t anticipate needing another school for some time.”

“High school?”

“They’re being bused to the new high school for the western end of the island that opened at Silagisu earlier this week. It has 300 students already!”

“Sumilara is moving, where its education is concerned. My trip around the sea with the Réjé’s entourage was reasonably successful. Four of us ran a three-day class for local lords and headmen about how to run a village. The palace’s new expectations for standards of reporting and behavior—i.e., how much tax money could be assigned as income for the lord, versus village services—were made very clear. Often, they did not go over well.”

“I can imagine. In most places the lords have had fairly free reign. I hope the classes will be translated into Sumi and offered on the island.”

“I assume that will be done this winter.”

“What do you think of the release of ɛjnu?”

“They were clever, releasing him before dawn and immediately driving him to his home in Néfa, where no one expected him. There will be some publicity about it, now that the palace is allowing newspapers to write about him, but I suspect it won’t be very much.”

“People are hearing about him even on Sumilara. The buzz on the island is whether the election law will be enforced there as well.”

“I wonder that, too, but I haven’t heard anything to the contrary. It won’t be easy to hold the first election in five and a half months; we have a lot of educating to do. Kɛkanu is already planning a series of programs on *The World Table* about elections. I don’t know how we’ll educate the Sumi population in time.”

“I think we Sumis will have to devote extra time and money to getting the Eryani materials ready in Sumi. Certainly I stand ready to help.” Dumuzi took a sip of his tea. “I wish to ask your advice about something, Lord Kris. Several days ago I met Randu, son of Adar, from Bilara. You may know him; he is a Sumi Bahá'í who has just started at Mɛlwika Génadɛma.”

“Yes, I have met him at our national Bahá'í convention. I heard he had registered. But the first few days of the fall term are the most hectic. I am spending half of every day handling all sorts of minor crises.”

“Randu is bright and quite articulate. I asked him to consider offering adult education courses in Sumi rather than Eryani and he accepted. Arjdhura has been growing and could use such courses, so I asked him to give them there, and I understand he has decided to devote all of Suksdiu every week to the effort. I know your génadɛma sends students to Gordha and Mɛdhpéla to teach adult education courses to the Tutanɛ, so I assume you can do the same for Sumi courses at Arjdhura.”

“I don’t know why not. The army has relaxed many restrictions in the last few years. Sumis can come to Mɛlwika Génadɛma without any difficulty if they have a clearance, which I suppose Randu has. They are still banned from chemistry and engineering courses, of course.”

“I had thought we had access to everything else on Sumilara, but as a result of my conversation with Randu I discovered that was not the case. There is now an education department here, for example, and all teachers take between two and four courses, none of which are taught on the island. We have geology and agriculture, but I looked at your catalog and see a lot more courses than we have, and we have no courses on anthropology or economics, and only one business course.”

“Sumilara’s situation reflects that of most of the génadɛmas. Mɛlwika teaches fifty different courses per term and about two hundred per year. Half are unique to our génadɛma.”

“But Eryani speakers can get here to take the rest; that is not true of Sumi speakers.”

“I agree; but is there a solution, other than Sumis coming here and learning the material, then taking it home?”

“Perhaps. I do have a proposition for you. Arjdhura is a bit over an hour from here by bus and three hours from Anartu by ferry. I understand you are considering a branch génadɛma campus in the lower Arjakwés Valley. If you put it at Arjdhura and offer some courses in Sumi as well as some in Eryan, Sumi students would be in an excellent position to come and take them.”

“Intriguing.” Chris considered the idea a moment. “I plan to open a branch campus in the lower valley, but it will be in Ornakwés. It won’t be very large; probably one building with four classrooms next to the bus station. The campus won’t offer all the courses that are offered here, though, only a selection of basics, the sort needed for a dwoyɛri in education or business or agriculture. We’ll probably expand our adult education courses, too, because that part of the valley is now developing rapidly.”

“What would you say if I built a four-classroom génadɛma building for you in Arjdhura and offered it to you for free?”

“My, Lord Dumuzi, you are anxious to get courses started down there!”

“Very anxious, Lord Kris. Sumilara needs access to more courses. Coming here from Sumilara is psychologically difficult and vice versa, but a génadɛma at Arjdhura would solve that problem. And being on the mainland, it would excite less concern from the army.”

“I’m not so sure about that, but it would be worth exploring. So, you’re thinking about a series of courses there.”

“I’ll even build a dormitory to accommodate the students. Most of your terms are five weeks long; a good length of time for students to come, study intensively, then return home.”

“And they would be in a half-Sumi, half-Eryanɛ environment, which would also be good.” Chris contemplated the idea. “If we can get army approval, Lord Dumuzi, this is something we could partner on. I think it would be best if the génadɛma had a name of its own, like Arjdhura Génadɛma, for example. If it grew as large as you envision, it would need permanent faculty of its own. But I could see our faculty going there and lecturing in Eryani, with live translation. Such courses would be slow and difficult, but would work, and it would be much easier for us than going to Sumilara.”

“And easier for the Sumi students as well, Lord Kris. Quite frankly, Ninurta Génadɛma and Anarbala Génadɛma are not like any of the génadɛmas here. They are both old institutions and have not been able to shake off their past. They are conservative and only partially reformed. If I wanted to start a new génadɛma on the island, they would oppose and try to block the effort. But Arjdhura is controlled by expatriates. And Randu, being a Bahá'í, would not have the same attachment to the past.”

“So, you are thinking of involving him?”

“Probably. He has completed only six génadɛma courses, all at Ninurta. But he plans to take three or four here this term. It’ll take some months to get something started anyway, so by the time we are ready, so will he. Perhaps by then I can get a few more Sumis here to study.”

“They are welcome here if they get an army clearance. Let us draft a proposal for Arjdhura Génadɛma that can be shown to some people in the army and at the palace. Otherwise, we will just invite trouble.”

“I agree. How will we do that?”

"Let me talk to Randu and Skandu; they know what's available on the island. Skandu will be here in a few days to give some lectures and attend an encyclopedia board meeting. Between the two of them, our registrar, and a few other experts here, we can draw up a proposal for the educational side. Then I'll get that to you, we can talk about the finances and add that to the proposal, and then we can get the proposal to the palace."

Dumuzi's eyes lit up. "That's a plan, Lord Kris. Thank you."

They chatted a few more minutes and Dumuzi left, quite pleased. Aryéstu and Luktréstu had been hovering outside the door and entered with a large envelope as soon as Chris was free. "You just got this from the palace," said Aryéstu. "A copy was sent to 'every lord and lordly house in the realm.'"

"Oh? I wonder whether it's announcing the land development plan." He took it and began to pull out a letter and a large printed page.

"It is; we already read it," said Luktréstu. "Every lordly family is urged to reserve between two and three thousand agris of land for themselves and their heirs immediately south of the Arjakwés River, south of ɛndraidha, or in the Long Valley. The terms of purchase are the ones settled on last spring: the estate lord will get five percent of the total harvest for thirty years. Development grants of up to ten thousand dhanay and loans of a similar amount are promised. In return, pensions will end in five years unless the pensioner is fifty or more years old. Palace jobs will be realigned as well."

Chris nodded and read the printed page, which had the details in numbered points in large type. "Wow. It looks like this has been printed to be published in the *Royal Standard.*"

“Which appears tomorrow,” added Aryéstu. “At that point, the whole world will know.”

“This will generate a lot of controversy,” said Chris. “It’ll be interesting to see what happens.”

The two young men headed back to their offices to get work done; Aryéstu was reviewing hundreds of dhanay of purchases at Mɛlita while Luktréstu was preparing a series of letters to lords in the north shore about the estates they had set up in Mɛlita on behalf of their villages. Chris walked over to the génadɛma for an hour to talk to the registrar, Wokwéstu, about the fall term registrations and the financial aid allocations, which had to be reviewed daily during the term’s first week. Then he went to the Women’s College to inspect the final work being done to convert a neighboring house into an expansion of the college. He returned to the tomi building just minutes before Luktréstu took a phone call for him and forwarded it to him.

“Hail Lord Kristobéru, this is Lukbéru Domo-Estobɛjnui. We have met on several occasions, you may recall.”

“Indeed, lord, I recall meeting you.” He was one of the more prominent members of the “Old Houses,” possessing a do-little job in the royal exchequer by virtue of being the first son of the second son of an earlier lord of Mɛddoakwés. He was thus Lord Kandékwɛs’s second cousin, though Chris was fairly sure Lukbéru was related by blood and marriage to a dozen other lords and old houses. “It’s good to hear from you. I hope you are well? How is your family?”

“We are all well, thank you, lord. How are your children and grandchildren?”

“Praised be to Esto, we are all healthy and happy up here. The weather is beginning to turn most noticeably cool.”

“In Mɛddoakwés as well. Fortunately, my foreman completed the harvest of my hundred agris of wheat—the second crop—last week, and soon they’ll sow winter wheat. I inherited a bit of land near Mɛgdhuna. Lord, I suppose you know that Her Majesty has just announced a most surprising plan to make honest estate owners out of as many of my cousins as possible. It will cause quite a tizzy. I have already heard considerable anger expressed, as I am sure you can appreciate. But I am the sort who prefers to obey the monarch. I trust she has in mind what is best for the realm. Besides, I have three sons, aged 20, 18, and 16. The oldest two are in the génadɛma here and both want to get married. Needless to say, a hundred agris of farmland won’t support them very well. But if all three of my sons can get several thousand agris, and I can get several thousand as well, that is quite a different matter. So I thought I should call you before everyone else does and inquire about the availability of land in Mɛlita. I drove through your township two weeks ago on my return from a hunting trip and was impressed by the rich land and the neat farms dotted across it.”

“Thank you, lord, I am flattered and honored by your interest. You are very kind to inquire about Mɛlita. But even though it does not look completely sold, in fact it is. Over the summer I was able to allocate every agri to the lords of seven villages on the north shore. In addition, earlier two estate lords each purchased twenty-five hundred agris from me.”

“Really? It looked to me like only a small fraction of the grassland had been broken by a plow.”

"You are correct; only an eighth of the township's 23,500 agris are being farmed. I know, that's all the tax revenue that was collected. But over the winter a lot of farmers from the north shore will come down and plant; there's plenty of time to take a harvest before their north shore fields can be farmed again. All the land has been assigned and they have three years before I can take any of it back. But there is plenty of land farther south in North Gramakwés, Kérékwɛs, and Gramakwés, and the Mɛlita Grange has the contract to serve the farmlands there. The Mɛlita Grange has huge maps of the entire area; you can go look at them."

"How would I know what land to take?"

"In that area it doesn't matter too much. It's all fairly flat and fertile. Surface water sources are rare, but there's groundwater about ten meters down, so a windmill can pump it up. You may have noticed all the windmills in Mɛlita; eventually the township will have about 2,500. This summer it was pretty dry for a month and a half and the crops without irrigation suffered. The winter farmers won't have that problem; we have plenty of winter rain."

"But where will I get farmers? Will the granges supply them?"

"No. You either must hire your own or re-sell the land to farmers. If you sell the land, Her Majesty has set a formula: farmers pay one third of their harvest as tax, one twelfth as mortgage, and one twelfth as a grange fee. Of the tax, you will get seven percent for twenty years, then five percent reverts to the crown and two percent reverts back to the local lord. If you keep the land, you will pay the same taxes and get the same seven percent back for twenty years, plus you have to pay the mortgage to the local lord

and the grange fee if you use the grange's services, and of course you'll have to pay your workers."

"These numbers make my head swim!"

"I understand. Think of it this way: let us say an agri produces about a hundred dhanay a year of harvest. That's how much it traditionally has produced; now the crops are bigger, but are worth less per bushel. If you sell the land to a farmer, you'll get seven dhanay per agri in tax payments to you. If you have a thousand agri, that's seven thousand dhanay. Two thousand agris, fourteen thousand dhanay. Most years the harvests are worth more than that. After twenty years you lose the tax income, but if you keep some of the land for yourself and use the tax income as an investment to build up your own land, in twenty years you won't need the tax money."

"I see. I see." He paused for a long moment to consider. "So, you aren't interested in partnering with anyone? Because I can imagine that many members of old houses would hesitate to go this way; they wouldn't know how to do it."

"I understand. But the grange can help sell the land because the new farmers will have to join to get access to equipment. The granges are the logical partners. I think the granges might be willing to help farm the land as well. You might want to encourage your sons to learn how to run tractors. It's hard work, but they are young. A man with his own tractor and equipment can actually farm several hundred agris all by himself. The farmers are gradually figuring this out, lord. You do the math; a man with 200 agris, farmed by himself, earning fifty dhanay per agri after paying taxes and fees, will have ten thousand dhanay per year."

"By Esto, the peasants can get rich that way!"

“Indeed they can, lord. Your sons and yourself, operating the equipment yourselves, could make a lot more money.”

“I suppose, but it would not be gentlemanly. It sounds like I will have to perform a pilgrimage to Mɛlita Grange. Thank you for your information, lord.”

“I am pleased to assist. Call me any time if you have other questions.”

“I will, thank you. Good bye.”

“Good bye.” Chris put down the telephone and stared at his desk for a moment. Then he said “Aryéstu!”

“Be right there!” Aryéstu hurried in. “I gather Lukbéru wanted help to start his own estate.”

“Exactly. I suspect about twenty members of old houses will rush in right away, twenty more will delay a few months, and twenty more will finally cave in and want estates in about six months. I don’t know, maybe they’ll all rush in now, or maybe most will delay. Either way, in the next year, sixty or so families will want to start farming two or three thousand agris each. That’s about one hundred fifty thousand agris.”

Aryéstu looked alarmed. “That’s impossible!”

“Not altogether. It would require about two hundred steam tractors. Miller makes two hundred vehicles per year and plans to expand to three hundred. Guano fertilizer isn’t needed right away because the land is fertile. There are two bottlenecks: farmers and crops. Both can be handled. We need to call a meeting of heads of all the granges right away. Right now they are in charge of about ninety thousand agris of cultivated land. Mɛlwika’s five hundred farmers, for example, are idle all winter and could plant a winter crop in some of these southern townships.”

"And make more money, until the price of crops drops even more."

"Which it will, if everyone plants corn, wheat, lentils, beans, and a few other basics. They have to plant cotton, flax, hemp, grapes, tomatoes, peanuts, figs, dates, oranges, red raspberries, soybeans, and all sorts of other crops. And the granges along the Arjakwés need to replace wheat and corn with rice; there's plenty of water for it now, and they can raise fish in the paddies. The granges need to open factories so those who don't want to be farming bigger and bigger farms can get manufacturing work instead."

"So you want a letter?"

"I'll hand draft it. Get a secretary to retype the printed article from the palace so that we can mimeograph copies. Draw up a list of granges and their addresses, then get a secretary to type up each letter. Mail it by the end of today, if possible, then tomorrow you'll need to telephone to follow up. Let's try for a meeting at Ɛjnopéla Grange because it's centrally located."

"When?"

"Let's propose a week from today. Better call Ɛjnopéla and make sure that's alright with them."

"Okay." Aryéstu hurried out. Chris picked up the phone and called Amos; it would be 6 a.m. in Pértatranisér, which was the time he usually rose. It took a few minutes to reach him anyway.

"Good morning, Chris," Amos finally said. "You're calling early!"

"I'm sorry if it's too early. Say, there's big news. Today the palace has written every lord and every old house in the world. I suppose you will get the letter in the mail

later today. They have announced their plan to help old houses to acquire several thousand agris and develop it in return for development grants and loans and seven percent of the harvest as a tax rebate to the estate owner for twenty years. I got the letter only an hour and a half ago and I've already received one call from a lord. There's going to be a land rush, so I plan to mobilize the granges in Arjakwés province to respond."

"That's a lot of land to put into cultivation. Demand for educated farmers with mechanical skills will go through the roof."

"Exactly. So will demand for tractors; I plan to call John next. He has to step up production. He's planning to expand to three hundred vehicles per year, right?"

"Yimu has plans to expand to three hundred, but they haven't been authorized yet. I'm supposed to be there soon and will help implement them if the decision is made."

"Say, can you devote some time to additional automation of farm work? We need to make farm work more efficient."

"I suppose. We could build larger threshers and more efficient combines, for example. We need more electric pumps for irrigation. The entire Mɛlita-Swadakwés region needs irrigation, and a network of ditches drawing from the Ornakwés and Swadakwés and even from Dhɛdhuba should be possible. The Ornakwés could be dammed to store winter flow."

"The army needs to put in some roads, too. I suspect the palace has considered that already. Do you have time?"

"For better farm equipment? I think so. Modolubu's first rotary press has been printing books for a month now with very few breakdowns and the team's almost done with a second rotary press. Pértatranisér's sugar mill should open next month and I'm just

about finished with my contribution to it. I can talk to Yimu about better farm equipment next week."

"Good. Because if this works out, there will be three revolutions. One will be agricultural; a lot of skilled modern farmers will see a big increase in their incomes. The second will be social: the old houses will have to earn a living and the palace will soon have a million dhanay a year to spend on other things. The third is industrial: a lot of farmers will have to switch to other kinds of jobs, and the granges and old houses together will have an interest in investing in factories. And all this will stimulate the need for more schools and more industrial equipment made in Mɛlwika."

"A lot of changes," agreed Amos. "Okay, I'll see what I can do."

The Foundry Square clock began to ring out twelve bells. Chris looked up from the book he had been reading with Jordan. "You can handle the rest of this yourself?"

"I think so, grandpa. Thanks for the help."

"I'm not sure I was able to help much; I haven't studied biology in almost fifty years! But I have to go over to the génadɛma."

"On Primdiu?"

"The Encyclopedia Editorial Board has been meeting all morning and I've been invited to lunch."

"That's right, Thornton and Lébé are there. Thor had promised to help me with this homework, too."

“He’ll be around tonight.” Chris rose from the table and walked to his coat, but before he finished putting it on the phone rang. He paused while the cook answered it. She nodded to him a moment later, so he walked over. “Khélo?”

“Lord Kristobéru, this is Lukbéru Doma-ɛjnobéstu. I called you three days ago about getting estate land near Mɛlita.”

“Indeed, Lord Lukbéru, I remember, and I have heard from the head of our grange, Wɛrétranu, that he showed you around.”

“He did indeed, very generously, and I have reserved three estates of three thousand agris each for myself and my two oldest sons. My youngest son is too young to obtain an estate of his own. But in two years we will give him two thousand agris from the nine thousand we now have in our names. Wɛrétranu did not seem to be able to commit to finding us farmers, though, and this greatly worried my boys and me.”

“We’ll work on that, lord. Give us some time.”

“But we’re talking about *thousands* of farmers; where can you get that many?”

“The granges and the villages in the area. The other issue is farming equipment, and I devoted much of Pɛnkudiu to it. These problems will not be solved in a minute, Lord, but they will be solved in a year, and Her Majesty is not ending pensions in less than a year.”

“Thank Esto for that. Is there any possibility, Lord, that you could come to a gathering of old houses next Primdiu? There will be perhaps a hundred present. They all have questions of this sort and they need answers. I fear revolt against the Queen otherwise.”

“I will be honored to come and assist if I am invited. I would not presume to drop in on a meeting of that sort without being invited.”

“Of course. I’ll work on that matter, then. The host is Yimɛsu; he has a very large house in Ekwɛdhuna.”

“I’ve driven past it; it has the two large statues of the first Yimu in front.”

“I am sure if I suggest it, he will invite you.”

“You should invite Widubéru and members of the Royal Development Bank as well, so they can speak from their points of view.”

“I think you are correct. Thank you, Lord, you are helpful as always.”

“It is an honor.”

“Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.”

Chris hung up the telephone and glanced at the clock. It was now 12:10 and he was even later. He grabbed his coat and started to jog to the Women’s College, where Lébé was hosting the editorial board in their very pleasant and attractive seminar room.

As he approached the room, he could hear a mimeograph machine clunking as it went round and round, generating copies. He entered and found the Board clustered around the machine as Thornton cranked it, making copy after copy. Skandu shook his head. “What a wonder. They have some in ɛndraidha?”

“I understand the army bought the first ones,” replied Thornton. “So far, the company has manufactured twenty of them, and they’ve all sold almost instantly. Every school wants one; it makes it possible for teachers to copy materials. The fluid is rather

expensive and the stencils are still a bit unreliable; the wax smears if too much fluid comes out. But if the machine works right, one can make several hundred copies."

"And the encyclopedia will only produce about fifty copies anyway," added Roktanu, the editor in chief of the project.

"Don't be so sure; demand will rise," replied Chris. Everyone turned to see him.

"I'm glad you made it," said Lébé. "We didn't want to eat till you arrived, so we decided to give the college's mimeograph machine a try."

"I apologize for the delay. I received a telephone call just as I was putting on my coat. You all must be hungry, so let's get our food, and you can fill me in about your conclusions."

"We'll be glad to," replied Roktanu, and he pointed Chris to the food, who in turn indicated the editor should serve himself first. Eventually Roktanu started the food line and was followed by Chris and the others.

"We are now sure of our medium of distribution," said Roktanu to Chris as they sat. "Each encyclopedia article will be on its own pages and will be mimeographed. The encyclopedia will be stored in special notebooks to which articles can be added easily as they become available. That will also allow us to release preliminary articles and revise them later as better information becomes available; the old articles can be removed and revised ones put in their place."

"That will allow us to work faster," added Lébé. "We'll probably label articles 'provisional' and 'approved.'"

"And send out both kinds?" asked Chris.

Lébé nodded. "We want to get things out as fast as possible."

“What about payments, have you figured that out?”

“We think we can aim at producing 1,500 pages a year,” replied Roktanu. “We are guessing that such a production will require my full time effort plus a full-time secretary to answer queries and type articles. That’s 5,000 dhanay. If a thousand of those pages are translations at half a dhanay per page, that’s 500 dhanay more. If another 500 pages are new articles about Éra at a dhanay per page, that’s another 500 dhanay. So we are projecting a cost of 6,000 dhanay. If we had fifty subscriptions at 100 dhanay per year, that would be an income of 5,000 dhanay.”

Chris nodded. “Those sound like good guesses. I bet the first year subscriptions will be lower and expenses will be higher. But I can afford a project like that.” He looked at the big pieces of paper tacked to the wooden walls, covered with lists of articles. “You have plans, I see.”

“Marku and I have the biggest tasks; we have to write history articles about every king, every battle, every ancient city,” said Skandu.

“I don’t know; geology will require a lot of new articles, too,” replied Thornton. “I suspect my geology students and staff can do a lot of the translating of basic geology, though, and they will certainly appreciate the money.”

“Everyone will appreciate the money,” said Soru. “My prediction is that every class here at the génadɛma will assign the translating or drafting of encyclopedia articles as a final project and we will be flooded with articles.”

“Fine; we’ll edit them and use them,” replied Roktanu. “Of course, for a long time our ‘encyclopedia’ will be a strange mish-mash, with a lot of coverage of some subjects and none of others. The articles will mostly be ‘provisional.’”

“A major reason for the designation,” agreed Lébé. “We need to get things out, so the information is available, and steadily improve quality.”

“That’s true of everything we have done here,” agreed Chris. “The génadɛma has started looking like a real university only in the last three years; we started out doing a lot of adult education literacy courses. The first steam-powered vehicles were lumbering and dangerous; they have started resembling terrestrial vehicles only in the last few years. Quality has to be developed gradually, as we develop the people.”

“There’s one question we have for you, dad,” said Thornton. “Rébu. What do we do if he sends us articles?”

Chris glanced at Skandu. “If he hears about this project, I suspect he will want to write for the encyclopedia. I’d check with the army, but I’d say yes, let’s consider his articles the way we would consider anyone else’s. It’ll be up to the army whether he can be paid.”

“I’ll work on those issues,” said Skandu. “If he writes, draft a letter for me to take to the generals.”

“I suppose we will have to exclude from this encyclopedia sensitive subjects, like what firearms are or how explosives work,” said Chris.

“We’ll run potentially sensitive articles past the army,” agreed Roktanu. “Skandu will know what’s coming and can let us know if he thinks there is a problem.”

“The bigger question is what to do about subjects like ‘democracy,’” said Lébé. “We may need to ask the palace about some topics as well.”

“There is one other matter we wanted to ask you about,” said Thornton to his father. “The question of the name of the encyclopedia.”

"Oh? Did the board have an idea?"

"We want to call it the *Mɛlwika Mɛndhɛnkwékwɛla,* the Mɛlwika Encyclopedia. We considered *Royal Encyclopedia,* but Her Majesty does not know about it and might not even support it, so we thought we should honor our génadɛma instead."

Chris nodded. "Yes, I think that's a good idea. It'll be based here and mostly produced here, so let's name it after the university." Chris took another spoonful of the stew they were eating for lunch. Small talk began around the table; they had finished their report to him. So he turned to Skandu. "I have a question for you, Skandu. Several days ago Dumuzi visited me to discuss adult education classes in Sumi at Arjdhura because we have a new Sumi student here—Randu from Bilara—who is willing to take the bus there to teach them. In the course of our conversation, he asked me whether I was willing to help open a genadɛma there to teach courses in Sumi. He seemed to think that Arjdhura was a good compromise location; on the mainland but close to Sumilara and in a mostly Sumi speaking place. He is very concerned that the génadɛmas on the island have a very limited and old-fashioned curriculum."

"He's partially correct about that; half the courses at Ninurta are about Sumi religion, philosophy, or poetry. It is also true that the génadɛmas don't teach any education, astronomy, anthropology, or sociology courses or any Eryanɛ history or literature. Agriculture, geology, biology, chemistry, physics, business; we have one course each. Choices are limited. And right now the schools have absolutely exploded in size in five years using teachers with a very limited education. We have 1,500 kids in high school and maybe 4,000 in grades 1 through 8. That's about 160 teachers. I doubt more than a dozen have even an uniyɛri."

“Randu was teaching forty kids after taking six courses from Ninurta,” noted Chris.

“Why did the school system expand so fast?” asked Lébé, surprised.

“No mystery there; the only advantage the Sumi have had over the Eryanɛ was education, and they know it. They don’t dare fall behind the mainland.”

“So there’s no question the majority of Sumi would like another génadɛma, especially if it offered new courses,” concluded Chris. “What about the army?”

“The army’s official position now is to support the island’s development, as long as it doesn’t include an arms industry and the knowledge to create one. The Ninurta and Anarbala Génadɛmas would be the most opposed, and that will expose a fault line in Sumi society between traditionalists and modernists. But I’m a modernist; I say, open a génadɛma in Arjdhura.”

“Interesting. The expatriate community on the mainland is modernist, also.”

“Oh yes, very much so. The Sumi Bahá'ís are interesting; they’re a bit of both.”

“So, let’s say we aimed for thirty students per term, with a dormitory and two classrooms,” said Chris. “We’ll need translators. Skandu, who would pay?”

“The governor, the villages, and people like Dumuzi will pay; no question about it. They’d pay double, frankly. I’d schedule classes for only four days a week, so people can go home for two; the ferry boat ride is two dhanay each way. I’d only offer five-week terms, too; keep them short. Someone could come, take four courses very intensively—they’d practically eat, drink, and sleep each class—then return home to teach the material to others and to the children.”

“We’ll need a library there, too,” said Lébé. “And we might even want to inaugurate a Sumi encyclopedia project.”

“Ironically, Rébu could do half the work in Moruagras,” said Skandu. “The other thing you’ll need is a Sumi Director, someone you can trust and who can represent the project capably and reliably.”

“That’s the hardest part of the whole idea, but you are right, that’s an essential piece.” Chris thought. “Can you come to dinner tonight, Skandu? I’d like to get something written down.”

“I’d be glad to. We’d need something to show the army and Governor Modobéru.”

“And Dumuzi. He’s willing to pay for the building.”

[April 4, 2007; reread and edited, 6/1/13, 8/13/17, 9/21/26]

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A Persuasive Tongue

The clock in Temple Square was tolling twelve bells as Chris walked out of the building that housed the university's departments of administration and business. They were still fairly limited operations, with three very part-time professors teaching government—employees of the palace mostly, including Estoiyaju himself—and one full time professor of business, supplemented by Chris himself, who still taught one course on business each term. This term he was revising a course on advanced accounting and was finding it hard to keep up with two very smart students, which was rather embarrassing. In fact, he hoped he could hire one of them to teach the course next time.

His route was predictable; across campus, through the women's college, up an alley or two, then across Temple Square and down Majakwés Street to his house for lunch. After he crossed Temple Square, a young man leaning against the Kwolonɛ War monument stepped forward and waved to him discreetly. "Lord Kristobéru."

Chris looked up. "Okpétu, how are you? I haven't seen you for months."

"Thank you, Lord, I am well. I'm mostly piloting planes; the army is constantly asking me to photograph areas or shuttle someone to Ora or Sumilara on an hour's notice. It's quite fun. How are you?"

"Very well. Is your brother Mɛndhru enjoying his estate in Mɛlita?"

"He loves it, Lord, so much so that he is planting grape vines with his own hands. This surprises and even worries my father."

"He worries too much, Lord Aryékwɛs."

"That's father." Okpétu looked at him. "Did you receive an invitation to Lord Yimɛsu's house this coming Primdiu?"

"Indeed, it arrived yesterday morning and I accepted immediately. I urged them to invite Widubéru as well and was told that he was coming."

"Excellent. Lord . . . I'm here to tell you that I have heard they plan to assassinate you at or before the meeting."

"What? Are you sure of this?"

"I heard it from a reliable source. As you can imagine, the new royal policy about estates and pensions has created extreme anger and desperation to preserve the old order. I think they are desperate . . . so you must be very wary. I would make an excuse and not show up."

"I can't do that, it's a matter of honor."

"I'm just telling you what I have heard, lord." He nodded goodbye and walked away.

Chris watched him go, wondering whether Aryéstu had sent his son, or perhaps had hinted that he should go. He wondered what he should do. He kept walking home, trying to look normal but wondering whether he was in danger in Mɛlwika. The streets were crowded with strangers; an assassin with a dagger could be quick and might escape.

Lunch was torture because he didn't dare say anything to the family. Worse, that afternoon was the grange meeting; he had to concentrate on it, for it might be difficult as well.

At 1 o'clock he, Aryéstu, and Luktréstu jumped into the rover to drive to ɛjnopéla for the meeting with all the granges. Chris paused a moment before starting the car.

“Luktréstu, I know how much you like to drive. Why don’t you take the steam car and follow behind me?”

“Sure; two vehicles, Lord? Why two?”

“Today I was told that there is a plan to assassinate me at or before the meeting of Old Houses this Primdiu. If you stay behind me, I don’t have to worry about anyone trying to ram the rover behind.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Aryéstu.

“I don’t know. What would you do?”

“Call the police!”

“You’re right, I should do that. Why didn’t I think of that! You drive and I’ll call Dɛku.” Chris got out and they switched seats. He pointed. “Drive south out of town to Dɛksawsupɛrakwa, then turn right to Béranagrés, then at Morituora take the old Sumi road to ɛjnopéla.”

“Oh? That’s an interesting route.” Aryéstu turned on the rover and started across the city, Luktréstu following, while Chris pulled out his old, battered cellular telephone. But he changed his mind about who he would talk to. “Please connect me to General Roktɛkɛstɛr at the palace,” he said to the operator.

It took a while to reach the General; the palace routed the call to his house in Ornakwés. Chris told Roktɛkɛstɛr about the threat. “I would certainly take the threat seriously. I’d call Dɛku and the Royal Police and report it. Dɛku is reliable and serious, and a friend of yours.”

“Indeed. Are you planning to come to the meeting next Primdiu?”

"I wasn't invited, but I think I may seek an invitation, and I may try to arrange some other guests as well. Be very careful, Lord Kris. Yimɛsu is probably a center of opposition to this change. He is devoted to the old ways and the old order and he may very well be determined to use violence to oppose these changes."

"I understand. I plan to attend anyway. It is a question of honor."

"Yes, you can't decline now. I will pray for you. It should be an 'interesting' meeting."

"Thank you, Lord General. I'll call Dɛku."

They exchanged small talk and closed the line. Chris pulled out his notes. "I'll call Dɛku on the way home; right now I have to prepare."

"This could be a difficult meeting," agreed Aryéstu. He posed a devil's advocate question and Chris tackled it, then he posed another difficult question. Aryéstu was good at debating.

They reached ɛjnopéla without incident. The grange's garage had been emptied of equipment and chairs set up, and the chairs were full, with more being put out as more representatives arrived. Finally the chair of the ɛjnopéla Grange, Wɛranéstu, a local farmer in his mid forties originally from Tɛrskua, rose and welcomed everyone. They went around the room and everyone introduced themselves. Chris was amazed; every grange in the world was represented, including Lɛpawsɛmdomas on the north side of the Néfa Basin, Brébatroba south of ɛndraidha, two new granges in the south shore, three new and struggling granges on the north shore, the two Lɛwéspa granges, and all the

granges along the Arjakwés and south of the river. Altogether, twenty granges were present.

They all repeated several lines from the Hymn of the Peasant together, which said that "the hardworking peasant, who wrests food from the soil, is beloved of Esto"; it served as a grange pledge of allegiance. Then Wɛranéstu introduced Chris. He was greeted with polite applause. "I am so amazed and impressed that we were able to assemble this meeting so quickly," he began. "The grange movement is almost ten years old, and look how large it has grown! Together we have about seven thousand members and own about two hundred tractors. We are a peaceful, non-political movement dedicated to uplifting farmers. About a third of our members can read and write their names. Members have about twice the income of farmers who aren't in granges, and because they have access to hospitals they are living longer and having more children. We have much to be proud of. And now we are at a critical junction." He paused to look at everyone. "Her Majesty has decreed that the various old families—fifty or sixty of them, depending on how you count them, and their adult children—should acquire estates of two or three thousand agris each. In return they will receive grants and loans to develop their estates, but they will no longer receive pensions from the crown or cushy palace jobs. This is a huge change in the way the kingdom operates. It means that in a few years, the crown will no longer be spending a million dhanay a year or more on the old houses. They will have to generate their own income; they will cease to be 'leeches.'

"But for this to happen, they will have to farm one to two hundred thousand agris of land; a huge increase in the kingdom's farmland. The only way they can do that is sell

land to farmers or employ farmers to work for them. So the queen's plan rests on the farmers of this world, and the granges are the best way for the farmers to respond.

"What will farmers gain from this? Most will buy land from the estate lords, who will not be village lords, just resellers of farmland. The price, by decree of Her Majesty, will be the same as it has been in the lower Arjakwés townships: a twelfth of the harvest for thirty harvests. Most of the world's farmers are not grange members and own ten agris or less; as crop prices decline, they can no longer earn a decent living from such small plots. They will need larger plots and the estate lords will have the land they need. Those who do not want to join granges will be able to buy horses and oxen to farm twenty or thirty agris and will have plenty of pasture for their animals.

"What will the estate lords gain? Her Majesty has granted them five percent of the harvest—from her share, not in addition to it—for twenty years, and they will get two percent of the ten percent that goes to the local lord. That will give them an income for twenty years. After that they will cease to get any tax or any income from the farmland they have sold. How will they live after that, without a tax kickback or a palace pension? That will be up to them; they will have twenty years to invest the wealth of their land and the tax kickback in orchards, vineyards, factories, or whatever.

"What do the granges gain from this? They get the chance to double or triple the land they help farm, and that will establish the granges as the central institution for farmers. Potentially, this change will benefit everyone. But for everyone to benefit, everyone must do their part; the crown must give development grants and loans, the old houses must take the land, the farmers must buy and farm it, and the granges must provide services."

"Lord, what do *you* get out of this?" shouted a skeptical young man from Brébatroba.

"Me? I have no more land to sell, and I doubt Her Majesty will give me any, but I don't need more anyway. I will probably do some business with granges and lords of various houses; I am a farmer and a businessman. I believe that prosperity can extend to everyone, and when it does everyone will benefit. In the next few years, some farmers will get rich. Others will see their income shrink. That will also be true of the lords; some will adjust to the new arrangement and some won't. It's a risk and an opportunity. But for the granges it's mostly an opportunity, because the area of farmland is guaranteed to grow. This world's population will double in the next twenty-five years, so the farmland has to increase."

"Lord, if the farmland increases as much as you say in the next few years, farm prices will collapse," objected Dɛngéstu of the Nénaslua Grange. "In the last few years, fifty or sixty thousand agris have been added to the pool of land being farmed and many farmers are growing two or three crops per year instead of one. Farm prices are now half what they were. If we add one hundred fifty thousand agris to the farmland, we'll get a tenth as much per bushel and we'll all be broke!" Many murmured agreement to that comment.

"Dɛngéstu, we cannot keep expanding the farmland without expanding demand. I agree with you there. But it can still expand quite a lot because there is demand to meet. People are buying more clothes; double the cotton supply, and the prices drop to half what it was, clothes get cheaper and everyone buys twice as many clothes. It is a law of nature that if people can accomplish more for less work, the product will be worth less

than it was. Tractors have cut to a half or a third the amount of work that farming takes, so it is natural that people will farm more land and prices will fall. But farmers have one advantage: the old houses have to sell their land and get people to farm it, because otherwise they will be penniless. So the old houses will compete against each other for farmers and they will have to give you good deals."

"Lord, why should we help them at all? They have exploited us for centuries!" Wokwéstu of Mɛlita almost shouted it in his anger.

"Wokwéstu, it is a fact that farmers will buy land from the estate lords because plenty of farmers are poor and need more land. They will want grange services. If we don't provide them, the lords will buy tractors and lease them to the farmers, and they might not provide health or education."

There was silence after that comment. Everyone knew it was true; the world had plenty of desperate farmers and exploitative lords.

"One solution to falling crop prices is for granges to do other things," said Kérdu of the Mɛlwika Grange. "Our grange has helped thirty farmers open businesses; raising chickens for meat and eggs, building olive and grape presses, purchasing horses and wagons, converting wheat flour into pasta, canning fruits and vegetables, making pottery and ceramics, producing cheese . . . if we can't earn enough from farming, we can supplement with other related things."

"Factories," added Chris. "The granges need to go into manufacturing. On Gɛdhéma, the invention of steam engines caused a huge change in society. Three quarters of the farmers left the land and had to work for rich men in factories under dangerous conditions for low wages. Life was better in some ways; people had much better clothing,

furniture, and other goods. But most people were still poor, the rich got richer, and there was strife between the different classes of people. Finally, as elections spread, laws were passed to protect the majority of the people from excessive exploitation, working conditions improved, and wages went up. Éra does not have to go through that time of troubles. We now have elections. A strong grange movement will protect the rural villagers from exploitation by offering a better path."

"What about the Long Valley?" asked Léféstu, a member of Pértatranisér's grange board.

"Good question. Yesterday I received a telephone call from Brébkordu, Prince Mɛméjékwu's chief of staff, asking whether the prince would be able to hire some farmers with grange experience to coordinate the agriculture in the Long Valley. I said I'd let you know of the request. All of you present in this room have an immense personal opportunity because you are the most experienced farmers in terms of organization and use of equipment. Some of you can be hired to go to the Long Valley and help set up a grange there. The Long Valley has three or four times the farmland of Kɛrda; it's an immense, flat, rich area that once had cities and tens of thousands of people. Prince Mɛméjékwu has been given personal responsibility for the area; he will serve as the 'Duke.' The original plan was to divide the land into townships and assign each one to a lord, but that has changed with the election law. Now, there will be districts instead of townships. The districts will not have lords, but they will have estate lords, farmers, and granges. Each district will have a council of representatives elected by the residents and by the lords, with a mayor nominated by them and approved by the Duke. So the Long Valley will have even more democracy than most of this world. Kɛrda is immensely

crowded and its population is growing, so it will provide many of the settlers for the Long Valley; Véspa is populous and many are dissatisfied with the hilly farmland that replaced the bottomland the sea flooded, so Véspa will be another major source of immigration to the Long Valley. There is an immense future there and the grange movement must grow there."

"The grange movement must grow in Kɛrda and Véspa as well," added Váranu, chair of the Pértatranisér grange. "So far, it has not been able to spread in traditional villages because the farmers don't have enough land to gain a surplus from tractors. We had the same problem in the Néfa Basin. But now farmers are taking additional plots in Lɛpawsɛmdomas and will soon have two more townships opened to farming on the east side of the basin. The result will be more land per farmer; either they'll move and lease old lands to brothers and cousins or they'll commute back and forth between land in two townships. We've already had farmers in Pértatranisér and Lɛpawsɛmdomas ask whether tractors can help farm land in their old villages. The north and south shores are getting granges now because of the land available to farmers south of the Arjakwés. So a great increase in farmland almost guarantees that the grange movement will spread."

"That is true," agreed Stélugéndu, head of the new Brébatroba Grange. "Brébatroba only has a hundred farmers so far, but almost all of them have cousins and brothers back home who want to rent our tractors, and that is why there are two granges on the South Shore."

"We now have five hundred farmers in Mɛlita, and almost all of them are from the North Shore," agreed Wɛrétranu, head of the grange there. "Our equipment will be

heading to the North Shore for planting and harvest, to support the granges forming up there. This effort of Her Majesty has already benefited us immensely."

"Mɛlwika and Nénaslua potentially benefit from the change, too," added Chris. "Because their farmers are idle in the winter and can farm new lands to the south at that time. Mɛlwika farmers don't have enough land; it was the first grange established and no one believed farmers could handle all the land they now can handle. The entire Mɛddoakwés area needs more farmland."

"And all of us need factories," said Wɛrétranu. "Mɛlita is now manufacturing rubber hoses and demand is strong. We've developed a list of a dozen products we could produce there or on the North Shore."

"Could we see your list?" asked Stélugéndu.

"No, make your own; there are hundreds of possibilities. The granges have access to Mɛlwika Génadɛma's experts and can call in Widubéru and the Development Corps. We can get ideas. We have people. We have or can get money from banks or from each other."

"Mɛlwika Grange loans money to other granges," added Kérdu.

"And if we move into manufacturing, our people can buy land from the estate lords and otherwise ignore them," concluded Wokwéstu, with a smile.

There was a lull in the conversation. Then Thuju Luksunu, head of the Lɛpawsɛmdomas Grange, said, "We really could use help from the other granges. Pértatranisér has been a great help, but we haven't asked for all the help we really need. Once the palace authorized the township and appointed Widubéru as lord, we were recognized and 'official,' and Widubéru has channeled some development funds to us, so

we were able to buy a tractor. The problem is that we have been expanding our farms into forest, and clearing has taken a huge amount of time. We left the stumps and planted corn and beans around them, which speeded up planting but meant we couldn't use tractors. We were able to sell some timber, but no one managed to plant more than one crop, and with the low crop prices and small acreages our average household is earning about 600 dhanay before taxes. Now the first frost is weeks away. The grange is broke and we face a winter of poverty."

Chris stepped down and let Wɛranéstu coordinate responses to that question. Different granges offered different ideas. Discussion turned to other matters, much to Chris's surprise, but there seemed to be a consensus that they would support the palace's effort.

After three hours the farmers tired of the discussion and stopped for supper, then began to leave. Chris and his assistants filled both cars with grange members heading east. "A strange meeting," said Aryéstu, after they dropped off the last passengers.

"I expected a vote or something, but Wɛranéstu didn't run things that way," replied Chris. "I guess it worked out alright. I think we convinced people."

"I talked to several people over lunch and they all thought we had to expand the granges to cover the new estates. From what I heard from the south shore grangers, in a matter of months there will be estates in Brébatroba and along the province's coastal strip."

"South Shore now has a lot of land, and North Shore's expanding via Mɛlita," agreed Chris. "Lɛwéspa has enough land and Rudhisér's four new townships give it enough. Arjakwés is growing enormously; it will soon have more people by far than any

other province. So that leaves Kɛrda and Véspa, and their surplus will head west to the Long Valley. And all the expansion will include granges. So I guess we accomplished our mission."

"Now let's see what the Old Houses do," said Aryéstu.

"Yes. Three days."

Chris spent an hour praying at the Bahá'í Center, the morning he had to go to Yimɛsu's house to meet with the lords of the Old Houses. Then he donned his best formal robe and he and Aryéstu drove to ɛjnopéla via the old Sumi road, where they waited for General Roktɛkɛstɛr south of their destination. They followed him to Yimɛsu's large villa at Ekwɛdhuna.

As they approached the villa, the road was lined with parked steam cars. Chris counted forty-six of them, probably half the world's total. Only six horse-drawn carriages were idle along the approach to the house. The General's driver found a spot where he could pull out quickly if necessary. He and Aryéstu waited there.

"So, do you have a weapon?" asked Roktɛkɛstɛr, as they headed for the door.

"No. I considered bringing my pistol, but I can't picture pulling it out if attacked, and I doubt anyone will be allowed in with a sword."

"Other than generals." Roktɛkɛstɛr patted his. "But many gentlemen carry daggers. If needed, I'll throw you mine. Do you have your telephone?"

"Yes, but if there's trouble there won't be any time to make a call."

"Probably not."

Roktɛkɛstɛr and Chris stopped at the front door, which was open, and a moment later the butler welcomed them in. Yimɛsu was there a second later. Sixty-eight, he was one of the oldest of the lords and was related to every major family, though as the second son of the second son of the second son of the Lord of Mɛddoakwés he had never controlled any land. He had also never served in the army; the officer corps was the usual honorable career choice of second sons. Chris couldn't help but notice an enormous mole growing on the lord's left cheek. "So honored that you could make it," he said to the General. "You, too, Honored Kristobéru." He pointedly avoided calling Chris "lord." He seemed slightly surprised Chris made it; perhaps he expected him to not come, or perhaps he had anticipated trouble on the way. "We're just about ready to start; I think there are a few more coming. Let me get both of you something to drink."

"Nothing for me, please," said Chris. "I am under strict orders from my doctor; nothing to drink or eat this afternoon." It was true; Lua had advised that he consume nothing there, lest it be poisonous.

"Really? What a peculiar diet. Please come with me." Yimɛsu led them inside to a spot near the front of the room, rather far from any doors. The others nodded and greeted them; about seventy men were present. Some came over to greet them, among them Okpétu and Mɛndhru.

"You made it, lord," Okpétu said to Chris.

"It's good to see you, lord. I'm very grateful for all your help," added Mɛndhru.

"Thank you," said Chris. "Have we missed anything?"

"Just wine and small talk." Okpétu leaned close. "We are prepared to defend you if necessary, lord."

“Thank you, but please don’t start anything.” Chris leaned close to Roktɛkɛstɛr. “I thought you had reinforcements coming?”

“They aren’t here yet,” he whispered. He sounded a bit worried; Chris wondered what the General had planned. “Where’s Widubéru?”

“I was told he would be invited,” said Chris.

“I wonder.”

They sat on pillows on the floor like the others. Yimɛsu returned with a glass of wine for the general. “Are you comfortable now, Lord General? We have a place of honor for you over there.” He pointed to a chair that had just been brought in.

Roktɛkɛstɛr took the glass and leaned close to his host. “Thank you, lord, but I am very comfortable here.” He lowered his voice. “And if anything happens here that harms anyone, the Royal Police are right down the road.”

“Really? I feel much safer, then. Thank you.” He smiled at Roktɛkɛstɛr.

“Lord?” inquired Chris of Yimɛsu. He had not heard Roktɛkɛstɛr’s admonition. “The mole on your cheek is much larger than it was when I saw you a few months ago. You should have a doctor take a look at it.”

Yimɛsu glared at him. “I’ve had that mole all my adult life. It’s fine.” He turned and headed for the door, for the butler had just admitted another party, a group of four young lords. He settled them not far from Chris, at whom they occasionally stared.

“Let us begin, gentlemen,” exclaimed Yimɛsu. “As we all know, Her Majesty recently has given all of us a new opportunity to acquire large estates in the countryside. The idea is to provide us with land and development grants instead of annual stipends; we will hire peasants or sell land to them and live off the proceeds, at least for a while. Many

of us have yearned for the day when we could possess adequate land for our needs, and now we can have it. But many of us have questions, so this is our chance to obtain the answers and plan our responses."

"I'd like to know why Her Majesty has done this now," spoke up Yɛbu, a middle-aged second son with a job in the palace exchequer. Everyone looked at Chris.

"What a peculiar question," replied Roktɛkɛstɛr. "I can't think of any reason she acted when she did, except maybe that the Long Valley drained and the sea finally filled up."

"We didn't ask you, General," replied Yimɛsu, turning to Chris.

"Why are you asking me this question?" asked Chris. "I think General Roktɛkɛstɛr is right; we know what won't be flooded and what is now dry, so we know what land is available. Furthermore, tractors are more widespread and the Tutanɛ less of a danger."

"It had nothing to do with your summer with Her Majesty's party?" pressed Yɛbu.

"No, she invited me to accompany the royal entourage in order to assist with the government administration training conducted by Estoiyaju and several others. She specified that the training should include discussion of elections."

"Do you deny that you believe in empowering the peasants?" demanded Mitru Majdomai, a middle-aged head of a prominent old house, two of whose sons were married to daughters of lords and were now heirs to villages.

"Why should I deny that?"

"Because land is useless without peasants, and as everyone knows, we will never get peasants on any patches of wilderness."

"Why do you assume that?"

One of the late-arriving young men jumped to his feet. "Answer the lord's question, gɛdhému!" he demanded through wine-slurred speech.

Okpétu sprang to his feet as well, next to Chris. Roktɛkɛstɛr waved his hands. "Be seated, both of you."

"I am the host," exclaimed Yimɛsu. He glared at the young men; they sat. "Proceed, gɛdhému."

"The granges of this world—all twenty of them—are prepared to assist you. They will help farmers who buy land from you. They will rent equipment to your estates. If you sell half your land to farmers and keep half for yourself, you will have some income for twenty years to supplement your pensions as they are phased out, you will have time to learn the ways of agriculture, time to plan your own estate, and access to the equipment to develop it."

"Why should we sell any land to peasants?" spat out Yɛbu.

"Because that will guarantee you an income, and because it will be hard to pay farmers to work for you when they can get their own land."

"Farmers? Peasants."

"Everyone wants to own their own land, and with the draining of the Long Valley, the return of the sea and the rains, and the end of any threats from the tribes, there is a vast amount of land available. Squatters have been popping up all over the realm. You can't keep farmers in their old villages, hungry and farming ten agris with a hand plow."

It was obvious to Chris, but not to most of those present. "Gɛdhému, you are destroying our way of life," said Yɛbu. "Even with all these changes, the peasants could

have been kept in their villages. That's why we have an army. If they can defend us against Tutanɛ, they can send squatters home."

"Gentleman, almost all of you arrived here in steam cars. Those of you with estates also have tractors. The world has changed and you have benefited. You will benefit even more if farmers farm more land using tractors."

"Gɛdhému, you just don't get it!" said the young man, who rose again to confront Chris. "I thought you were smart, but you're a fool!"

Chris looked at him but didn't dare respond. This time the slurring in his speech was more obvious. It was impossible to know what to say that would avoid provoking him.

The young man moved toward Chris. Okpétu rose to step in between them. The other three young lords sprang up; Mɛndhru and Roktɛkɛstɛr rose as well. "No violence!" exclaimed Lord Lukbéru, horrified he had been the one to invite Chris. He and his sons rose as well.

Chris had remained seated on the floor but rose; it was a matter of seconds before daggers would be drawn. He glanced at Yimɛsu, whose false horror seemed to mask pleasure. The four young men began to approach him. Chris reached for his cell phone to press "zero"; Mɛlwika's telephone operator would be an audio witness of the events and probably was smart enough to call the royal police.

The butler suddenly hurried into the room. "Announcing Crown Prince Mɛméjékwu!"

Action froze. Shocked, everyone turned toward the door. A moment later the Crown Prince entered the house, followed by his chief of staff, Brébkordu, and several

servants. Everyone rose from their seats, masking the incipient fight. The four young lords returned to their place.

"Your Majesty, what an honor and surprise!" exclaimed Yimɛsu, walking to the door.

"Thank you, Lord Yimɛsu. Several days ago I heard about this meeting to discuss Her Majesty's plans to assist all of you, and since my cousin the general was invited, I assumed I was as well. I apologize if that is not the case; the invitation never arrived, but the postal service is still unpredictable. At any case, I am probably the best person to answer any questions the honored lords of the Old Houses have. I have devoted much of the summer to plans to settle the Long Valley, and knowing the patriotic service the Old Houses have always rendered the crown, I am confident I can count on you to assist. May I join you?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, of course! Please, come in!"

"There have already been many interesting questions asked," added Roktɛkɛstɛr. "And I am sure if anyone forgets any of them, I can help refresh their memories."

"I'm sure," said Yimɛsu hesitantly, leading Mɛméjékwu across the room to the place of honor.

Reread and edited, 6/1/13, 8/14/17, 9/21/26

266.

Declarations

Lébé led Thornton up the steps to the Sumi Temple. They poked their heads inside to see the statue of Enlil. “Wow; magnificent,” she whispered. “A lot of gold.”

“Based on the statue at Lilalara, I think,” whispered Thornton. He bowed his head and said a Bahá'í prayer, for the place was sacred and therefore a good place to pray. Lébé did the same. They dropped a few dhanay coins in the collection box near the door and hurried out. They paused on the top of the steps.

“This is what I really wanted to see,” she said. “Best view in town!”

“It’s incredible.” Thornton pointed to the north, to the flatlands north and east of the reservoir. “We now have that entire area farmed; two thousand agris of what used to be considered arid foothills.”

“It’s amazing; except the area with coal, of course.” There was a big hole east of the reservoir where a steam shovel was steadily digging coal and loading it into trucks. “And the stripes of trees up in the hills; they look funny.”

“But they allow timber harvesting without soil erosion. I’m more worried about the lower slopes that were clear cut. You can’t see the baby trees growing back. There are cows pastured there and I suspect they’re eating the saplings as well. I’ll have to take a class up there and look for gullying.”

Lébé took his hand and they walked around to the south side of the temple, where the view extended over the Ménwika side of the township. The huge area of farmland,

formerly rolling brushland, was now fallow for the winter. “A lot of orchards and vineyards,” noted Lébé. “The farmers are learning.”

“They’re leasing lands south of the Majakwés for annual crops and planting long-term crops on their original farms,” agreed Thornton. “It doesn’t help dad’s tax and mortgage income much, though!”

“It’s stretching it out, which may be good. Come on, we don’t want to be late.”

He nodded and they walked, hand in hand, back down to North Crest Avenue, which ran close to the top of the ridge on the north side. A few people stared—Eryanɛ and Sumi did not make displays of affection in public—but they ignored them. They passed Dumuzi’s house, exited the second city wall—which was now being replaced by a third wall five hundred meters farther east—and turned down the first street running diagonally downhill to the north. The street sign, in large Eryani and smaller Sumi letters, said “Oak Street.” They stopped at a large, modern, brick apartment building half way down with a “127.” They entered and nodded to the concierge in the lobby, then went down the stairs to apartment 1B.

Nina answered their knock by opening the door. “Alláh-u-Abhá! Welcome to our home!”

“Thank you.” Lébé gave her a kiss; Thornton shook hands politely. Just then Randu appeared and he shook hands with him as well.

“Greetings,” Randu said.

“Thank you.” They walked into the living room, which had high windows overlooking the courtyard in the building’s rear. It was still sparsely furnished. “So, are you mostly settled now?”

“Pretty much. We still need to get a few things, but it’s adequate.” He pointed to the table in the dining area. “As you can see, your table has a good home.”

“Excellent,” said Lébé. “We were glad to help. When you don’t need it any more, just pass it on to some other Bahá'í. We have a constant flow of Bahá'ís through town.”

“We may take it with us,” said Nina. “Bilara doesn’t have many tables; it’s a bit of a luxury there. So strange, luxuries there are necessities here! I had no idea I would live in a place with a gas stove. They are *so* convenient! And no mess of wood to store and ashes to shovel out!”

“This place has gas heat for the winter, too,” added Thornton. “That’s a real convenience; it just comes on. Basement apartments may be hot, though.”

“That’s why we have a window.” Randu pointed. “We miss windows; the other units have a lot, and a lot of sunlight. But that’s why we got this place for only a dhanay a week of rent; the other units are two or three times as much! But ‘garden’ apartments aren’t so pleasant.”

“The concierge lives across the hall,” added Nina. “I think this is really an apartment for another concierge. I think I’ll help her out; that’ll get me out of this place.”

“Your Eryani sounds a bit better,” observed Lébé.

Nina shook her head. “No, not really. I speak Sumi all day, except when we go to Bahá'í things. Come, sit down at the table and let’s have some tea.”

They sat and Nina began to pour them tea. “What about Alimu? He could learn Eryani at a daycare facility.”

“But the nearest day care facilities all operate in Sumi,” said Randu. “And we can’t afford it anyway. If Nina worked at one, we could manage, but that won’t help her Eryani either.”

“I’m not going to try the Women’s College any time soon,” she added. “I don’t have the language skills or the background knowledge. I can barely read Eryani and writing it is very hard.”

“You need to take some free evening courses,” said Lébé. “That would get you out of here, build up your language skills, and give you a foundation for more education.”

“And I can be home on Dwodiu and Kwéterdiu evenings,” added Randu.

“How are your courses?” asked Thornton.

“*Hard!* Soru advised me to start with three this term and I think he was right. I’m going to have to work very, very hard to do reasonably well in all of them. The material is understandable, but an hour of reading takes me two or three hours, and since most of it is in the library, it’s hard to get it for that long! I had wanted to take all my notes in Sumi so I’d have the material in a form I could use later, but that takes too long. All the reading and talking in Eryani gives me a headache!”

“Such a difficult language!” agreed Nina, though Sumi, with its tones and complex grammar, was more difficult in some ways. She placed a loaf of sliced bread and a bowl of butter on the table and sat with them. Alimu sat with the adults as well, though silently since he didn’t understand the conversation.

“I actually wish I had time to learn more Sumi,” said Thornton. “I really have enjoyed my visits to Sumilara, but they have not been long enough to learn grammar, just some vocabulary.”

“You are good at languages, too,” observed Lébé. “You’re the only member of your family to speak Eryani without an accent.”

“Your father can be hard to understand at times,” said Randu.

“His English is that way, too! It isn’t his native tongue.”

“Well, if you want an opportunity to hear Sumi, we plan to start Bahá'í classes here in a few weeks,” exclaimed Randu. “We’re gradually making friends, and it is amazing how many people say ‘Oh, you are Bahá'ís? I’d like to learn more about it.’ The Sumi quarter here is exposed to the Faith, they’ve heard of it, but they don’t feel comfortable learning about it in Eryani or mixing with Eryanɛ. I think there are a lot of people here who could become Bahá'ís.”

“What sort of class?” asked Thornton.

“We’ll use the new introductory curriculum, which mixes parts of Ruhi Book One with prayers and quotations from the writings,” said Nina. “It’s available in Sumi and works well there.”

“I could come to that,” agreed Thornton. “The bits of Sumi I’ve learned would be enough so that I could follow along, since I know the book. But I don’t want to distract the class.”

“It might distract the class, but it will also intrigue people,” said Randu. “Let’s think about that. If we reviewed the Sumi text with you ahead of time, it might work.”

“You know, I’d probably have time for that. This term is a bit less hectic than previous ones because I’m not getting emergency orders for maps from the army or the palace. In the last five months we’ve mapped almost ten percent of Éra into topographic

maps at 1:10,000 scale. Over the next three months we'll be cleaning them up, which is mostly work for my assistants."

"Let's think about this, then," said Randu. "Nina and I would enjoy it."

"I'd have some time on Tridiu afternoons, such as today," added Lébé. "And I'd like to learn some Sumi as well. Several times translation questions have arisen and I haven't been able to help very much. We have a fair number of Sumis who know Eryani, but not many Eryanɛ who know Sumi. Learning a language isn't easy, but even a little will help."

"Even a little will impress the Sumis," added Randu. "They're used to Eryanɛ being ignorant and not caring."

"Then let's do it, starting next week," concluded Nina, delighted.

"Thornton, were all those maps needed for the establishment of the estates?" asked Randu. "I've been looking at them in the introduction to geology course. They are amazingly detailed."

"Each square kilometer becomes a ten by ten centimeter square on paper and takes about a day of work. The hardest part is adding the contour lines, one for every ten meters in flat areas and one per twenty meters in mountains. They're often guesses; the aerial photographs in three-dimensional analysis sometimes contradict the survey data. We've mapped about three thousand square kilometers along the southern edge of the Arjakwés valley and the eastern and southern seacoasts; they're actually mapped better than most of the settled areas! They're the estate areas, yes. But we mapped another five thousand square kilometers from Pértatranisér to the southwestern edges of the North Shore because all those areas were getting their borders fixed. This winter we're doing

the Long Valley and its edges and the rest of the Arjakwés Valley. Next year I think we'll do the south shore around the sea to Pértatranisér and then the North Shore and the Arjakwés from Mɛlwika to Gordha."

"Is the rumor true that Melwika is getting an additional ten kilometers of land south of the Majakwés?"

"The rumors spread fast in geology class. But yes, it is true. The city hall got a letter yesterday. It doubles our farmland. The three thousand agris already under cultivation are leased from the Médhɛlonɛ and they won't get the lease payment any more. I'm sure they'll be furious."

"On the other hand, those farmers' kids are in Mɛlwika schools and the harvest taxes aren't paying for them," said Lébé.

"All the Arjakwés towns have been extended southward ten kilometers, and a township has been created east of Mɛlita," added Thornton. "It'll be in the *Royal Standard* when it comes out today. It isn't out yet, though; we checked on our way over."

"So, what about the rumor that your dad was almost assassinated the other day?" Randu smiled, hoping for a response.

Thornton nodded. "It's no secret, though we aren't saying anything about it officially. It looks like Yimɛsu invited him to a meeting of the Old Houses as a set up; four young men, drunk, were supposed to stop him on the way and stab him to death. They had two cars, probably one was supposed to get ahead of him and one stay behind him. But dad didn't take the usual route to Yimɛsu's villa, from the north; he came from the south, with General Roktɛkɛstɛr following in his car. So the young men came to the meeting and accosted dad, stirred up a lot of angry words, and as they rose to attack

him—he was about to be defended by Okpétu, Mɛndhru, and Roktɛkɛstɛr, and the general had a sword, so it would have been quite a bloody fight—Prince Mɛméjékwu showed up! Roktɛkɛstɛr had told the Prince of the situation and he promised to come to the meeting, but was late. Anyway, once he showed up, no one dared do anything. He gave a speech to the Old Houses about their duties to the crown and answered a few cleaned up versions of their provocative questions. Afterward I guess Roktɛkɛstɛr filled him in, because we heard that several lords who were involved in the plot are now expected to establish their estates in the Long Valley, and they're expected to take up their residences there for at least a year without being able to leave."

"And if dad gets hurt, they have been told that heads will roll," added Lébé. "Her Majesty has set the Old Houses on a new path and she won't have it reversed. Dad's crucial to making it work."

"Good. He's essential to a few other things, too," said Randu.

"Have you started teaching classes at Arjdhura?" asked Thornton.

"I went down on Primdiu and met with several dozen people who want courses. We talked about their needs and what I could offer. I also brought down the Mɛlwika Genadɛma and adult education catalogs so they could see the potential choices and asked everyone to tell me what four courses they wanted to take. I can teach basic science, but I'll need to study some of the other subjects first."

"That'll help dad a lot to decide what courses to offer there," said Lébé.

"I'll give you the lists as soon as I translate them into Eryani. I'm starting with basic science this coming Primdiu. I assume I can use a mimeograph somewhere to make handouts."

“Come to the women’s college; we’ll let you use ours. We’ll keep a count and see whether we can charge someone,” said Lébé.

“Thank you. I need help getting the information into Sumi. Dumuzi said he’d help pay for translating, but he hasn’t provided someone yet.”

“Nina can help with that,” said Lébé. “And she’ll learn vocabulary and information at the same time.”

“That’s what I said!” added Nina.

“But I don’t know whether he’ll pay to have my wife do it, and we’ll need more income pretty soon.”

“We can ask him,” replied Thornton. “Or dad can ask. Or maybe we can find a grant of some sort.”

“I think I should start to work with Nina, then. I need some material next week!”

“Let us know how the class goes,” said Thornton. “Because the new génadɛma hinges on its success.”

“And I’ll do everything I can to make it successful.”

After supper that evening, Chris sat and read the latest issue of the *Royal Standard,* which had finally appeared late that afternoon. The article about the new township boundaries was quite specific and even included a full-page map, a woodcut that impressed Thornton for its accuracy and detail. He passed the pages around so Lua and Behruz could read them as well.

“There’s no question that Mɛlwika has gained territory ten kilometers deep, but how long is it?” asked Lua. “Where will the border with Awsmoritua be?”

“We’ll have to negotiate that with them, since the two townships don’t touch otherwise,” said Chris.

“I’d propose this arrangement,” said Thornton, pointing to the map. “Extend our western boundary with Béranagrés southward by ten kilometers and give the strip between it and Route 3 to Béranagrés. It's about a kilometer wide; it wouldn’t need a new road, just dirt tracks off Route 3. And any irrigation systems we build could be extended easily to that area.”

“And we’d have Béranagrés on our side for the negotiations with Awsmoritua,” said Chris, nodding. “Good idea. It’d give their township a funny jog to it, but that’s alright. Awsmoritua still hasn’t irrigated the land they have, so they might not fight the proposal much.”

The telephone rang. Chris looked at it suspiciously. “Thor, can you answer it? I bet it’s some lord of an old house asking whether he can buy a three-thousand agri estate in the southern extension of Mɛlwika. Tell him we need two or three weeks to plan such sales.”

“Okay. I take it, then, that I’ll be drawing up a map with the township divided into sections.” Thornton hurried to the phone and answered it. A moment later he shook his head, covered the phone’s bottom part, and said “Lord Wénu of Médhɛla.”

“Oh-oh, I’d better talk to him.” Chris rose and hurried to the telephone; he was sure Wénu was mad. “Khélo, Lord Wénu.”

“Lord Kristobéru, I feel betrayed, stabbed in the back, and I do not know whether I was stabbed in the back just by the palace or by them and by you.”

“Lord Wénu, I never asked the palace for more land, I swear it. Indeed, my family has been strained to convert to agriculture all the land we have. We never said anything to the palace about the land our grange members are leasing from you.”

“Then renounce the claim, lord. It is very simple.”

“It is not that simple, lord, because the queen has given the land and its taxes to Mɛlwika, and I do not control Mɛlwika. The city council would have to act, and it has a good reason to keep the taxes; the children of the one hundred farmers who lease land from you and pay taxes to you all go to school here.”

“Lord, I do not hear a condemnation of Her Majesty’s action!”

“Who is inclined to condemn anything Her Majesty does?”

“Don’t play with me, Lord!”

“Alright, alright, Lord. Please don’t misunderstand me, I was as surprised by this change as you. But the taxes you have lost have been replaced by the crown’s payment to you for the land, have they not?”

Wénu laughed. “Twenty thousand a year forever has been replaced by ten thousand a year for twenty-five years, and we have lost about four hundred square kilometers of land as well! What do you think of that deal?”

“I would be unhappy, but I would start to make plans. A quarter million dhanay can bring your village a lot of things; better houses, piped water, sewers, irrigation for your own farmland, expanded plantations of dates and figs . . . The Development Corps can advise you.”

“We have already been getting some of those things, but we anticipated getting a lot *more* of them. Well, I can see you are no help to me, Lord. Thank you for nothing, Lord.” He hung up.

Chris put the phone down. “He’s mad.”

“I don’t blame him,” said Thornton. “I would be, too.”

“But it’s not right for a village of five hundred people to get a big tax subsidy for doing nothing,” noted Behruz. “That’s the problem.”

“In a Bahá'í world, they would be given a big compensation and they would give it away; that would be justice,” said Chris. “I’ll talk to Widubéru. He has to go down to Médhɛla and talk to them. If they don’t expand their date orchards, the falling prices will cause problems. They need to diversify and modernize, anyway. They’ve been giving away most of the tax income to each family rather than investing it.”

The telephone rang again. Chris rolled his eyes; Thornton ran over to answer it. But this was neither an angry lord nor one that wished to purchase. “It’s Pedru from Khɛrmdhuna.”

“Using the telephone?” said Chris. Khɛrmdhuna had a phone line, but almost never used it. He rose from the couch again. “Khélo, Lord Pédru.”

“Alláh-u-Abhá, Lord Kristobéru. I hope it isn’t too late in Mɛlwika; right off hand, I’m not sure what time it is there!”

“We’re nine hours ahead, so it’s eight bells in the evening here and I suppose it’s before noon there.”

“Quite right. Lord, can you and some other Bahá'ís—perhaps members of the Central Spiritual Assembly—come here in the next few days or a week? The entire town

is ready to make an official declaration of belief. We have been discussing and arguing for months. We have avoided bad feelings, mostly. There are still holdouts, but they have consented to the town's conversion. An official change will not cause strife."

"Excellent. We wouldn't want to cause more disunity in Khɛrmdhuna. I think the four month delay has been wise."

"Indeed, I think it was. We are grateful to the many teachers who have come and given us classes; they have helped immensely. We have started to make small changes; husbands and wives sit together in the churches with their children, for example, rather than being separated by sex. When do you think someone can come?"

"I'll call you back in an hour or so; will that work?"

"Yes, that will be fine. Goodbye."

"Goodbye." Chris hung up the telephone. "Khɛrmdhuna's ready to declare as a community, most of it at least. They want us to come for a few days. Thornton?"

"No way. I have too many classes, and it'd be hard on Lébé and the kids."

"Lua?"

She considered a moment and looked at Behruz. "Not the next three days; I have classes to teach, and I have to be in Mɛddoakwés on Suksdiu. Dr. Béndhu managed to call on Lord Yimɛsu today; they're second cousins. He looked at the mole and persuaded the lord to come to Mɛddoakwés Hospital on Suksdiu to have it removed. It looks complicated, so Staurést u's coming to perform the surgery, with Béndhu and me assisting."

"Well, I'm glad the man who plotted to kill me won't die slowly and horribly of a growth on his face. I think. Behruz?"

"No, I can't go. The pipeline to Mɛddoakwés requires too much of my attention, especially now that we're planning an extension to ɛjnopéla."

Lua frowned. "What are you talking about? You spend half an hour a day troubleshooting, and you could do that by telephone."

"Well . . . there are the kids to consider."

"Jordan's sixteen and Rostamu's almost ten. Mom, Lébé, and Thornton can watch them, they're pretty independent. Come on, you haven't been out of Mɛlwika in two years. You haven't even visited Pértatranisér! Come with me to Khɛrmdhuna."

"Alright. I guess I can do it."

"Good. Liz, you can come, can't you? Let's make it a foursome and leave Thornton and Lébé with four kids to hold down the fort here."

"Amos will be here in a few days, too; that'll help," added Thornton.

"If we leave Suksdiu, late afternoon, we'll get to Khɛrmdhuna that same day about noontime," said Chris. "We can stay Primdiu and maybe Dwodiu, then drive home at night. I'll call Pédru back right now."

Three days later, as soon as Lord Yimɛsu awoke from surgery and was recovering properly, Lua called home and the two rovers set out. Behruz drove his old vehicle, Chris his. They stopped at Mɛddoakwés Hospital to pick up Lua, then the four of them headed west on Route 4 to Bɛllɛdha. Two hours and fifteen minutes later they passed that city and got onto Route 20, fifty kilometers of gravel road that climbed northwestward over the basin's forested rim and descended to Khɛrmdhuna. A bit over three hours after they left home, they parked in front of the town's main church.

A huge crowd—four hundred men and a hundred women, almost half of the township's 1,300 adults—awaited them in the church. Lord Pédru welcomed them and escorted them inside, where a devotional program immediately began. It was an interesting mixture of Bahá'í Faith and Khɛrmdhunan Christianity; Bahá'í prayers and the Lord's Prayer, Christian hymns and Bahá'í songs, with a brief homily about truth and honesty by Bishop Jonu, who no longer wore the robes of a priest. Then Pédru rose. "For almost four months we have discussed, debated, read scriptures, compared divine teachers, and prayed to the Father, Esto, for guidance. Most of us have decided; some have not. Lord Kristobéu has come with Lady Liz, Dr. Lua, and her husband, Honored Behruz, to meet with us and ascertain our situation. So I will ask Lord Kris to come forward and address us."

Chris rose and walked to the front. "After the Central Spiritual Assembly heard of your desire to investigate the Bahá'í Faith formally, as a town, the Assembly decided that rather than accepting individual declarations, we had to hear first from the town to ascertain what it wants. Usually individual men and women decide on their own whether they believe Bahá'u'lláh is a Manifestation of God, but if an entire town decides and the individuals accept that, that is also acceptable. So my question to you is: has Khɛrmdhuna met these conditions? What do you say?"

No one spoke up at first. Then Chris said "Priests, what do you say?"

"I am ready to accept Bahá'u'lláh," replied Jonu. "That is why I no longer wear the robes of a priest."

"I accept Bahá'u'lláh," said the next priest, Mariu.

“I am still not sure, but I am willing, and I do not object to the others declaring their faith,” said Khawiéru.

“I declare my faith in Bahá'u’lláh,” said Ignasiu.

“I do not accept Bahá'u’lláh,” exclaimed Luku rather forcefully. “Perhaps I will someday. Jésu still occupies the center of my heart. But I have no objection to others becoming Bahá'ís or to the town accepting Bahá'u’lláh. I will accept the standards of Bahá'u’lláh as the standards of this place, as long as I can worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in my own way.”

“And the Bahá'í Faith says you should be able to do that,” said Chris, and he turned to the next priest. The other seven priests all declared their faith in Bahá'u’lláh. “Very well,” said Chris. “What says everyone else in this house of Esto?”

They went around. Some nodded; some said “I declare”; some said “I still do not know”; a few said “I follow Jésu, but I do not object.” It took quite a while, as a few wished to speak more extensively. The result was a marvelous feeling of unanimity; not all individuals were personally ready to accept Bahá'u’lláh, but the town was ready to give it a try. Chris looked at his wife, daughter, and son in law, who felt the mood as well.

“How remarkable,” he said. “Let us have a few prayers. May my family offer you some Bahá'í prayers? Behruz, could you chant in Persian?”

He nodded, closed his eyes, then chanted a Bahá'í prayer in Persian. Behruz had a beautiful voice; the audience was impressed. Then Chris recited a Bahá'í prayer in Italian, Liz said one in English, and Lua recited one in Zulu, for she and Behruz had lived in South Africa for many years.

“Amazing; I understood much of your prayer!” said Jonu to Chris, who knew as much Spanish as Pablu’s followers had preserved over five hundred years.

“Italian and Spanish are similar languages,” agreed Chris.

“What are we to do, Lord?” asked Jonu. “I know that I can now marry and have a family, something I renounced decades ago. But how do I support a family? I have never learned a trade.”

“You have learned to be a pastor of the people and a teacher. If the people of Khɛrmdhuna wish, they may pay you to teach.”

“But I have no training to teach the useful things of this world!”

“Then we need to give you and the other priests training, if the people of this place want it,” said Chris. “I will personally pay for teachers to come here and teach the priests and others who are ready to study and obtain an uniyɛri. The churches can become schools during the day, so that as many children as Khɛrmdhuna decides can get an education.”

“You are generous,” said Pédru. “But now we wonder how Khɛrmdhuna should be run. Should our local spiritual assembly become the government?”

Chris shook his head. “No, that would be against the law of Her Majesty, which says Lords retain final say even if there is a council. It would also be contrary to justice, for not everyone in Khɛrmdhuna is Bahá'í, and the governing body of this town, if elected, should be elected by everyone.”

“Perhaps we should consider again one idea that we have discussed,” said Pédru. “The local spiritual assembly, elected by the Bahá'ís, will have nine members; the town council will be elected by all adults and will have nine plus the lord.”

“Yes, I think that is good,” said Chris. “The worldwide elections will be in late ɛjnamenu; a good time to elect your town council. You have four months to prepare. Then the Bahá'í election will be a bit over a month later at Ridván. Even if the two bodies share many members, though, they should always remain distinct in terms of meetings. Non-Bahá'ís must always be absolutely respected and must face no pressure to become Bahá'ís. Rather, they must be encouraged and helped, as long as they are not working against the Bahá'í Faith.”

“There is another issue, Lord Kris,” said Pédru. “We need more than faith in Esto and Bahá'u’lláh; we need a way to earn a living on our land. We are grateful to have land in Mɛlita; as the weather gets colder, many of us will go there to farm and earn extra money. But we want to stay here in the ‘warm pastures.’ To do that, we must earn dhanay here, not in Mɛlita.”

“I understand,” said Chris. “And I will personally help Khɛrmdhuna with that problem as well. My resources are not infinite; they have many limitations. The only resource that is unlimited is the people of Khɛrmdhuna.”

“I am very impressed by your leatherwork and the quality of your wool,” added Liz. “You can do much more with them to make clothing and rugs for sale to the world.”

“You can export more ice and more tar-covered wood, also,” noted Behruz.

“If there is any way we priests—former priests—can continue our deep study of the word of God, we would appreciate it,” said Ignasiu. “That is my wish. I can become a teacher of children, but I aspire to do more.”

“If that is the will of the people of this place, we can help,” said Chris. “Behruz, you know the background of Bahá'u’lláh’s writings better than anyone else. Could you come here and teach them what you know?”

Behruz hesitated, then nodded. “Very well. I could come here, for perhaps a week at a time, and offer what I know.”

“We should send others here to study as well,” said Lua. “Behruz’s knowledge has always amazed me, and he has shared it very little, so far.”

“Perhaps we could learn some of the languages of the Bahá'í scriptures,” suggested Pédru. “I am usually said to be good at learning languages. I would like to learn them.”

“Then we will try to teach you,” promised Chris.

[April 7, 2007; reread and edited, 6/1/13, 8/14/17, 11/15/24, 9/21/26]

267.

A New Génadɛma

Mid Génménu/ 1 November, Yr 10/620

Chris had not driven into Arjdhura for over a year and was surprised by the changes. The entire two-kilometer approach road from Route 1—which had been gravel—was concreted and a generous six meters in width. It passed through fields planted in corn and potatoes, for the township was on the northern edge of the tropical zone and usually had a wet but frost-free winter. Once he entered the built-up area itself, he passed one and two-story brick buildings lining the main street. The southern tip of the peninsula, which used to be occupied by a random collection of huts in no particular alignment, was now a cleared plaza with two floating docks and warehouses on its southeast side; the docks extended over Akanakvéi's old limestone quarry into water fifteen meters deep. The huts of relocated Akanakvéi had been razed and replaced by real houses of brick and stone, with red tiled roofs.

Akanakvéi had held a few hundred souls living in fifty huts; Arjdhura had nearly a thousand residents living in two hundred fifty houses, all of which had access to electrical and telephone lines. Lord Mitrusaju, "Mitru's Wisdom" was still technically in charge, but Ziusudra was the Sumi headman, and he had made the difference. A hundred fifty Sumi farmers, organized into a grange-like cooperative, with access to three tractors and a dozen teams of horses and oxen, farmed twenty-five hundred agris and provided the expanded community with a solid tax base. Fifty more Sumis and many of the Eryanɛ of old Akanakvéi worked the fishing boats, docks, warehouses, and stores.

Chris slowed his rover, then parked it outside the town hall, which also served as a school. He, Randu, and Dumuzi got out. Chris breathed in the salt air and relished the shirt-sleeve warmth; it was the 13th of Géménu, equivalent of November 1st, and Mɛlwika had had its first frost the night before. He noted the steam ferry tied to one of the docks. It had arrived an hour earlier and would return to Anartu in three hours. They entered the town hall and were greeted by Mitrusaju and Ziusudra, then turned to shake hands with Modobéru, Governor of Sumilara, General Wéywiku, commander of the Anartu garrison, and Skandu, who had arrived on the ferry. No sooner had they sat than Wéywiku said, "So, why do we need an Arjdhura Génadɛma?"

"No time for drinks, General?" asked Chris, with a smile. "But the answer is simple. This is a perfect 'bridge place' between the two cultures. Both languages are spoken here. Arjdhura is three hours by ferry from Anartu and 75 minutes by bus from Mɛlwika. Sumis can come here to study; our teachers can come here to teach."

"The range of choices at Ninurta Génadɛma cannot be compared to Mɛlwika Génadɛma," said Randu. He had not planned to speak up; he had come to listen only. He was a bit surprised that he had now opened his mouth. "I'm in Mɛlwika until spring to get the courses I need to teach the kids in Bilara better. I was shocked when I saw the range of choices. And these are not strategic topics; I am not studying chemistry or engineering. I'm talking about psychology, economics, advanced accounting, eight courses in business, theories of education, teaching deaf and blind children, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, public health, surgery, anatomy. . . the list goes on. Most of these courses are taught in two places; Mɛlwika and one other génadɛma, usually on the western shore. Sumilara is cut off from all this knowledge."

Wéywiku looked at Randu, startled by the man's boldness and precision. Then he nodded. "I see. But are *you* going to teach all these topics?"

"No. This term I am teaching basic math, which I taught to adults in Bilara last year. Next term I plan to take two business courses and teach one here; it will help me learn the two I am taking. I don't know what I'll take and teach the term after, but I plan to come here for the five terms and I will always teach something that will reinforce the courses I am taking."

"And this is a college?" Wéywiku smirked.

"No, merely the foundation of one," replied Randu. He pulled out a piece of paper. "These are the courses that people in Arjdhura want; I have been coming here six weeks now and I have gradually built up the lists." He showed the neat sheet of paper to the others, which had two columns of neat writing; a list of adult courses and of college courses, in Sumi with Eryani translation beneath.

Skandu leaned close. "This list complements the offerings of Ninurta and Anarbala quite well."

"That's the idea," said Chris. "Faculty from Mɛlwika and Gésɛlékwɛs Maj can get here quickly; on the ferry boat, students from Anartu can get here quickly. Three classrooms, dormitory space for forty students, some office space and a small library, and we will have a small but efficient génadɛma that can offer courses in Eryani to the entire lower valley and in Sumi to locals and students from Sumilara."

"What about medical courses?" asked Modobéru. "Sumilara has one physician with two years of training, two nurses with a dwoyɛri, and a dozen nurses or partially trained physicians from when Dr. Lua was on the island."

"We can offer nursing and some medical courses here," agreed Chris. "But some will require a nearby hospital or the facilities of Mɛlwika Medical School, so some training has to occur there."

"But I would hope that Arjdhura Génadɛma will also encourage doctors and professors from here to go to Sumilara," exclaimed Dumuzi. "That's one of the purposes of a bridge; two way traffic! Right now, people here don't know people there, and vice versa. The more they know each other, the more they will go back and forth."

"I agree, and that is essential," said Chris.

"Alright, I understand the idea," agreed Wéywiku. "This new génadɛma, however, *absolutely must not* teach forbidden information. No chemistry. No engineering."

"At some point, Lord General, those rules will need some clarification," responded Chris. "You have to understand some chemistry to understand the human body and medications, so some is essential for medical training. And if Sumilara is to keep up with the rest of the world, it will have to have factories and machines, just as it now has steam engines."

"If those rules are going to be modified, someone has to write up a case for it."

"The bigger goal needs to be to make the world economically integrated," said Modobéru. "Then independence of any province will be unthinkable, and we will indeed have one kingdom. But to achieve that, Lord General, Sumilara can't be left behind. It needs better access to the new knowledge. This génadɛma is necessary."

"And the governor's budget will accommodate this génadɛma?"

"It will."

"The expatriate Sumi community will play its part, too," added Dumuzi. "I have agreed to donate the building and the other merchant families have agreed to help. We will spend 30,000 dhanay on the building this winter."

"That will reduce costs quite a bit," said Chris. "We should be able to offer two courses per five-week term, lodging, and food for forty dhanay; tuition alone will be twenty-five."

"Arjdhura will provide a piece of land right here on the plaza," said Ziusudra. "And we would like to do something else as well; perhaps we will endow a professorship. We'll also cover some of the costs of our residents to take courses here."

"Who will 'own' Arjdhura Génadɛma?" asked Wéywiku.

"A self-perpetuating board of five people," replied Chris. "I suppose Dumuzi and I will be two, and the chancellor of the Arjdhura Génadɛma will be a third one. We should have someone from Sumilara and someone trusted by the palace as well."

"Who will be the chancellor; this man?" Wéywiku pointed to Randu.

"That remains to be seen," replied Chris. "We have not considered the question."

"I am just a simple teacher from Bilara," added Randu.

Wéywiku looked at Modobéru, who was obviously in favor. Indeed, everyone was in favor. Wéywiku looked around, hesitated, considered, then nodded. "Very well, I'll write a report to the palace and recommend the plan. But if there is any problem, it will be shut down."

"There won't be," replied Dumuzi. "I will be sure of that."

"Let us have some refreshments and talk more informally," suggested Mitrusaju.

The coffee, tea, wine, beer, bread, and fruit came out and they chatted about all sorts of details; courses that might be needed, why the island needed factories, progress in developing the high schools and hospitals, and the state of the island's two volcanoes. They were interrupted a bit before 3 bells by a series of loud blasts from the steam ferry; it was departing in a few minutes. Skandu, Wéywiku, and Modobéru offered their thanks and headed for the dock. Chris, Dumuzi, and Randu got in the rover and headed for Mɛlwika.

"Thank you for your efforts, gentlemen," said Dumuzi. "I think it went well."

"It did," agreed Chris. "I think your comment about a bridge being two-way was very wise. We need an institution like this to bring the peoples together; to help Eryanɛ teachers go to the island as well as helping Sumi to come to the mainland. I wonder what other institutions we can foster to heal the rifts between the Eryanɛ and Sumi."

"Educational, social, and political parity between the peoples is essential," replied Dumuzi. "That is what I am dedicated to. In the next few weeks, Lord Chris, your family will probably receive a letter from Rébu. I cannot be sure of this, but I can say that efforts to contact him and his colleagues in Moruagras are being made. He is an incredible translator; by far the best. Three or four of his fellow exiles are some of the most talented minds we have; and I mean the world has, not just Sumilara. I am hoping they can translate for pay. If the army agrees to it—and I suspect they will, since the exiles have behaved well for almost seven years, now—the Sumi expatriate community will raise funds to employ them right where they are. They can translate textbooks and your encyclopedia. I assume I can buy a set?"

“Yes; the subscription will be 100 dhanay per year, which should produce 1,500 pages of text. But friend Dumuzi, Rébu is a lightning rod; anyone involved with him may get struck. I would not sell you an encyclopedia subscription knowing it is going to Moruagras.”

“I understand; but what if the army gives permission?”

“That’s different. I, personally, won’t pursue such permission, but if it is given, that is different.”

“You don’t need to pursue it. We want to be able to write letters to ‘Rébu, care of Moruagras Army Garrison, Moruagras.’ Perhaps there should be an encyclopedia subscription for the garrison library, or Moruagras’s School; the exiles constitute the teachers. Put the books in a public place. The translations can arrive in Mɛlwika as manuscripts and someone in the génadɛma can transfer them to mimeograph stencils. One or two hundred copies are enough for Sumilara for now.”

“You are optimistic about Rébu, my friend. I like your approach, but I think more is needed to bring about reconciliation between the Eryanɛ and the Sumi. Trouble will recur unless they can be brought together and come to love each other.”

Dumuzi smiled. “No, friend Chris, you are the optimist. These two peoples have three thousand years of warfare between them; a long and unhappy history. I do not want violence, but I am a patriot; I want to see my people to compete and spread. We will never conquer the Eryan, but we can buy land from them and settle anywhere on this world we want, and our population can grow just as quickly as theirs, maybe more quickly. The Eryanɛ will not leave us behind in their dust.”

“That’s fine; I want to see both people prosper and advance. But remember I am a patriot for all people, not just the Eryanɛ or the Sumi.”

Dumuzi shook his head. “I’m not so sure of that, Lord Chris; you live among one people and your family is married into one of them. That affects your attitudes in ways you are not aware. But I will accept that you try to be fair and neutral. And that, in itself, is unusual and much appreciated.”

Chris, Thornton, and Kérdu took a quick drive southward to Dɛkwsawsupɛrakwa or “Southbridge,” the village at Ménwika’s old southern border. There, they continued straight south on Route 2 over the 1.5 kilometer viaduct crossing the Majakwés floodplain—islands of marsh and brushland trampled by fishermen, hunters, and wood cutters interspersed with rice paddies—until they reached the far bank. There, they parked on the eastern side of the highway.

Chris walked the fallow corn field for a few minutes, then paced out a 150 meter by 150 meter plot. “That should be enough, right?” he shouted from the far corner.

“This grange has to serve 16,000 agris; equal to all the land already under cultivation,” Kérdu shouted back.

“But this should do it!” Chris began to jog back to the rover. “We need space for six big grain silos, a twenty-vehicle garage, a big parking lot, and about 1,500 square meters for offices, tool storage, and meeting space.”

“Don’t forget the bus stop and space for stores and such.”

“They go next door.” Chris jogged up to them, pleased he was able to jog so far without panting much, at 65 Earth years of age. “And the farmer’s willing to sell?”

“Delighted! He knows the remaining farmland will go up ten times in value.”

“He’s right; this will be the heart of a new town.”

Thornton pointed west. “Do we know yet whether that side of the road will be Awsmoritua or Béranagrés?”

“Béranagrés; I’m ninety percent positive,” replied Chris. “We have one more meeting in two days.”

“How much land does the farmer own?” asked Thornton. He pointed south.

“You can see the edge of the field,” replied Kérdu. “Looks like 300 meters by 300 meters.”

Thornton nodded. That was likely; such a square had exactly nine hectares and exactly twenty-five agris. “Then I’d move the grange to the far end of the field or even overlap it with the next farmer’s field south. Better to have the grange at the southern edge of the townsite; otherwise the heavy equipment will be rumbling through the town center all the time.”

“He’s right about that,” said Kérdu. “That’s already the problem with the grange across the river. If house lots are twenty meters square and we want room for five hundred houses eventually, we’ll need. . . “He gave up trying to figure it out.

“Two hundred thousand square meters; that’s twenty hectares, 400 meters by 500 meters, not including streets and such,” continued Thornton. “We definitely need to move the grange farther south, to the next field. This farmer will be grateful because the entire field will become part of the townsite and will make him rich.”

“But now I have to talk to someone else,” said Kérdu. “Let’s go back across the river. The grange there will know who I have to talk to.”

Chris nodded and they got back in and turned around. “It’s definitely warmer here,” Chris said. “Just seven kilometers farther south.”

“Twenty kilometers farther south takes you to Médhɛla and there’s never snow there at all,” noted Thornton.

“How’s the sale of the land going?” asked Kérdu.

“The entire township’s spoken for,” replied Chris. “About twenty-five members of the old houses have committed themselves to purchase three-thousand agri estates, and I think fifteen of them contacted me. They know farmers will move to Mɛlwika because of our grange and our proven record of success.”

“But we haven’t been getting that many more farmers,” said Kérdu. “I think we’ve assigned twenty-five agri squares to fifty new farmers in the last two months.”

“That’s not much,” said Chris. “I’m surprised. Mɛlita’s is being plowed up and we can’t keep house construction materials in stock, houses are going up all over town. But that’s because half the north shore is there for the winter.”

“How are the schools handling it?”

“Terribly, the number of kids coming to school can vary by a hundred from week to week. I’m paying for an entirely new school with eight classrooms. And all the farmers whose villages have land in North Gramakwés or Kérékwɛs want to build their houses in Mɛlita, so their kids will have access to a school and there’s a police force to watch their houses when they aren’t there. Besides, in Mɛlita they can buy things to take home; the bakery has had to double in size because every farmer wants to buy a few loaves of bread before getting on the bus to go home! Now everyone’s wondering whether people will

stay in the summer, too. I have to go to Mitrubbaru and Mitruiluku and ask them for tax money to pay for the kids, which won't be easy."

"That's what you get for being generous. The situation in the North Shore is very different from the Arjakwés Valley. I think eventually most farmers here will want more land, but right now most are watching and waiting. Besides, a lot of towns still have spare land, especially in the lower Arjakwés."

"I think you're right. The Old Houses that commit early will get some farmers; the ones that wait will get very, very few. Until the population grows, anyway." Chris slowed the rover as he entered the village. He stopped at the stop sign, turned right, then turned right into the grange to drop off Kérdu. "Should we wait?"

"No, there's a bus every hour and I can take that. I'm glad we took a look at the land."

"So am I." Chris waved as Kérdu closed the rover's back door, then Chris pulled back onto the street. He turned onto Route 2 and headed north back to town. "I'm glad you came along," he said to Thornton.

"Glad you asked. I wanted to get out for a drive."

"Say, how's Randu doing in your geology course?"

"He got an A on the midterm and on both short papers. He's working very hard, so I think he'll do very well in the course."

"Good. Every week he comes back from Arjdhura with a new observation or idea. He's very sharp. He may be the one to organize the génadɛma there."

"He's young, but then just about everyone running new schools and new businesses is young."

"Exactly. He's articulate and honest, and I think he'll be a good leader. But he's taking two business courses next term; we'll see how he does with them. He'll need them to run a génadɛma!"

Thornton nodded. "He and Nina have eight coming to their Ruhi class on Tridiu nights, and I wouldn't be surprised if all eight become Bahá'ís."

"How's your Sumi?"

"Coming along, bit by bit. You can't learn much in two hours a week, but I can understand bits of conversations now."

"Good." Chris pointed to the side of the road, where a crew was laying a gas pipe. "Isn't that Behruz? I guess he's back."

"It is."

Chris slowed, then parked the rover. They got out and walked over; Behruz was talking to the three men as they summarized their progress in the last week. When they finished, the men went back to work and Behruz turned to them. "How are you! I just got back an hour ago!"

"Good to see you! How's Khɛrmdhuna?" asked Chris.

Behruz nodded. "Pretty good. I enjoyed it; I actually enjoyed it. I gave a three-hour English class every morning, a three-hour Persian class every afternoon, and talked about electricity and how electrical things worked every evening; they absolutely exhausted me. I came home with a pile of English and Persian exams to grade. Maybe I can get someone to grade them; I hate that part. They're really bright, inquisitive people up there. The fact that their culture was fairly literate shows. I'm going back next month for a week."

“Do we have someone else there right now?” asked Chris.

Behruz nodded. “A young man, a Bahá'í, from Néfa arrived just before I left. He’s teaching more English and accounting. They decided to set up a Khɛrmdhuna High School and they want all the kids to go, which would mean about 180 kids in three grades. They want génadɛma classes and adult education classes, too. I brought a letter to Mitru asking for evening bus runs the length of Khɛrmdhuna to get people to the high school, starting in the spring.”

“Excellent; they’re moving,” said Chris. “I’m going back next month, too, in spite of the lousy weather.”

“Actually, it wasn’t bad. When we get really cold weather in Mɛlwika, it’s because the northern basin has emptied its cold air south and replaced it with warmer air! It was crisp; maybe a degree above freezing every afternoon. A lot of snow at night and wet snow during the day.”

Chris looked at the ten-centimeter pipeline running along the concrete road. “How did they do in your absence?”

Behruz nodded. “Pretty well. They called me every day during the eclipse to report their progress, so I stayed abreast. All of the teams are laying a hundred meters of pipe a day. We’ll have gas at Dɛksawsupɛrakwa in three weeks, in plenty of time for the cold weather. People constantly stop here to ask the crew ‘I just bought a gas stove and water heater, when will I have gas?’ so we know the villagers are excited. The pipeline should pay for itself in a few years.”

“What about the line to Mɛddoakwés?” asked Thornton.

“It’s finished and being tested; we should have gas flowing through it next week, which is none too soon because the gas plant there was old and too small for rising demand. The cost accounting is finished, too; 3,500 dhanay per kilometer, a bit more than we expected, but we can get it down to 3,000 later on. The big push now is to extend the line to the big villas west of town, toward ɛjnopéla. It’ll be late winter before we service all of them. Then next spring we’ll turn to the lines from the cement plant at Bruagras north and south to Néfa and Pértatranisér. Maybe a line from Ora south to Mɛddwoglubas and Tripola will prove to be practical. We’ll see.”

“And a line from Ora to Pértatranisér?” asked Thornton.

“We’ll see,” repeated Behruz. “Bruagras and Ora both have industrial operations that can be adapted to make gas cheaply, but whether it’s cheaper with a pipeline than local gas plants remains to be seen. Certainly, I’d like to see a pipeline all the way around the sea some day, just like our electrical grid, but that’s decades away!”

“Did you stop in Bɛllɛdha on your way from Khɛrmdhuna?” asked Chris.

“In both directions. The cement plant’s gas making facility is up and running, so a crew is laying gas pipes throughout the city. Isurdhuna and Anartu are the only two cities without plans for gas, now. But I have no idea when profits will start to become reasonable; too much infrastructure to build!”

“It seems like that’s where all our profit goes,” said Chris. “I hope the gas, electric, and telephone companies start making money soon, because we have to have cash to invest in factories.”

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Keyboards

Thornton wrapped the coat more tightly around him in order to keep out the bitter cold wind. It was the 12th of Prusménu, the month of frosts—the equivalent of December 1—but Mɛlwika had had unseasonable cold for several weeks and had already experienced one blizzard. He was not happy about the evening hike across town to the Humanities Building.

There, a circle of students was assembled around his dark and lifeless computer.

Thornton pushed the "on" button and waited. The screen glowed momentarily, then went dark again. He wiggled the electrical connections, then pushed "on" again. The same.

He looked at the twelve-year old dinosaur, certainly the relic of a different computing era if it were still on Earth, but one of their two vital links to the World Wide Web—as censored by the aliens—and to humanity's vast trove of knowledge. Its keyboard was so old and battered that half the letters had been worn off the keys. In spite of repeated cleaning, some keys stuck badly. It was a miracle the computer had worked so long.

"May it live forever with Esto," said Thornton.

"It's dead?" asked the student who was assigned to operate it that night.

"Yes. This is the sort of electrical problem that we can't fix. I'm amazed it has lasted so long."

"So, what will we do? We have to print out eight hundred pages of stuff by tomorrow; pages of a science textbook, squares of topographic maps showing the estates that lords want to buy, and two novels in Eryani translation for a course in Isurdhuna."

"It isn't going to happen. We'll have to get the other computer back from the engineering school."

"But they have a pretty heavy schedule of use as well."

Thornton shrugged. "Everything will have to change; we only have one computer now."

"Can you get another one from the *aliénɛs*?"

"I have no idea." Thornton looked around. "Don't feel bad; no one did this. The machine's just too old. On Gɛdhéma people get new computers every four or five years. They aren't built to last twelve years." He shrugged. "Good night everyone." He turned and sadly walked out the door and back home.

When he stepped inside the house, Chris and Liz looked up from the couch where they were reading. "Could you fix it?" Chris asked.

Thornton shook his head. "No, and I doubt Amos can, either. Something inside has failed."

"I'm amazed it lasted this long."

"We have to rethink our approach to a lot of things. We've been typing up as many things as possible on the computer, storing them in space the aliens have provided—who knows where—and keeping several printouts, including all our topographic maps and tens of thousands of digital photographs. Perhaps the time has

come to switch to non-electronic master copies; negatives for photos and mimeograph stencils for maps and texts."

"How would you do your maps on mimeograph stencils?"

"I'm not sure. But blue, green, red, and yellow stencils will soon be possible, meaning we can produce a master with several colors on it. I gather they want to do children's books that way."

"If we had more computers and color printers, we'd get much better quality," said Liz. "I'd call Philos and ask for a replacement computer, or even several. It's to their advantage; they won't have copies of the mimeograph stencils in their computer's memory storage."

"That's true." Thornton thought about the matter. "For almost two years, I've only emailed Philos when we wanted to contact him. Now I can't, so I'll have to call him."

"We're down to one cell phone, too," said Chris. "We won't be able to telephone him much longer, either!"

Thornton nodded and turned to walk out of the room. He went upstairs to his apartment to help Lébé get the kids in bed; Jonkrisu, now 2 ¼, was becoming quite difficult. Once the kids were asleep he told her the situation, then headed downstairs to his father's office where the one functioning cell phone was stored. He picked it up and dialed 777-7777, the number Philos used.

The phone at the other end rang six times, then Thornton got Philos's voice mail. Strange to think an alien had voice mail, but he did, complete with a message and a beep. Thornton dictated a lengthy message—it did not have a time limit—asking how Philos was doing and telling him about the problem. Then he hung up, disappointed he didn't

get an answer. He put the phone back where it was kept—plugged into a large battery because its built-in battery no longer could run it more than five minutes at a time—and headed out of the room. As he closed the door, he heard the phone ring and dashed back inside.

"Hello?" He answered in English, an awkward accomplishment since he rarely spoke it more than an hour a week.

A long pause and faint background static. "Hello, Thornton, this is Philos. I got your message. How are you doing?"

"Hello Philos, it's been a long time! We are all well here. Jonkrisu's two and very active. Kalé's almost 5 ½ and Jalalu's 7 ½, which is hard to believe."

"I can imagine. My two are 3.2 and 6.7 years old and growing fast. Our base down on Skanda's doing fairly well, though we've had cutbacks lately; I have a staff of only twelve, now, and flights between here and our home world are reduced to four per year. So we are struggling, though I suppose I have nothing to complain about compared to your life."

"We aren't complaining, Philos; we've been here almost ten years and now it feels like home to us. If offered the chance to go back to Earth, I don't think we would. I assume Earth's just as lawless as it was before?"

"The situation on Earth is rather dangerous and chaotic, but that's part of the process; international integration is always messy and difficult. So, your computer died. Can it be fixed?"

"Not by us; something inside has broken, maybe because of the electric supply. But it is so old, something else will break pretty soon. The keyboard is very hard to use

because the keys have been degraded by heavy use. The computer was being used twenty-two hours a day."

"I know, I see what files it has been used to access. By the way, the maps you are making are works of art; they are beautiful and impressive."

"Thank you. Our other computer is almost as old, and of the two cellular telephones that were with us when we arrived here, only this one is still working; and it has to be almost constantly plugged into a large battery to keep it charged up. Our electronics were never meant to last this long."

"And they are essential for access to web pages and materials you have stored on our computers." There was a very long pause. "Thornton, we are trying to phase out our support of your family. There are monetary reasons; the semiannual drops of medicines use up the resources of two or three of my dozen crew. You have not made much progress toward self sufficiency in drugs, and they are complex substances to synthesize exactly right. The occasional support of your engineering school has been burdensome also because our expert in terrestrial engineering doesn't have the skills to make everything. Even the manufacture of ink for your printers consumes several days of one staffer's time every month. Furthermore, providing you with privileged access to certain items endangers your lives; consider the assassination attempts your father has experienced. Jealousy is a powerful emotion; my people feel it as well."

Thornton nodded. "I think I understand. But as you know, the drugs you make have been used to save the lives of thousands of people. It's the same way with the materials for the engineering school; they have supported the mass production of items all over Éra. And it has been the same with the computers. Your scientists have benefited

from the computers as well, because they have access to all the images and texts we have stored in your memory banks. This world has substantial libraries of books in English because of the color ink you have made for our printers. Numerous textbooks in Eryani exist because of our printers as well; until we started to make mimeograph machines a few months ago, there was no practical way to make books for which demand would never exceed one hundred copies. Typesetting and printing was too expensive. We still have no system for copying maps. Cellular telephones, I concede, mostly benefit us as family members, but that technology is now widespread on this world; I think Amos told us last month that Éra now has more than 1,500 telephones."

"Your family has indeed shared everything; I concede that. It is one of the wealthiest families on that world, but that has more to do with your father's development of agriculture than your use of our technology. And you have achieved self sufficiency in many areas, such as production of lenses for eyeglasses."

"Even the assassination attempts are not prompted by jealousy as much as by anger and fear about change. This world has undergone a social revolution in the last decade."

"I concede that, too." There was a long pause on the telephone; so long, Thornton almost asked whether Philos was still there. "Fortunately, we know how to replace your computer; we already made you a duplicate about eight years ago, and we kept one for our own use when we did. We didn't duplicate terrestrial electronics as much as slow down our own so that it could mimic them. We could do that again; indeed, terrestrial machines are now about twenty times faster than they were then and we could slow down

our technology a bit less this time. So I suppose we could do that again. I do not think it would be wise to provide you with too many computers, though."

"Yes, I agree. If you provided, say, five or six, I suspect the Army will want one, and that raises all sorts of issues."

"Correct. As it is, they have obtained considerable weapons technology. We were very busy blocking sites when we saw what they were trying to get. Providing websites is burdensome for my staff, also, because we can't automate the filters completely. We are constantly blocking pornographic sites."

"Really? I suppose I shouldn't be surprised; some of our English-language experts have excessive curiosity that way."

"You really don't need several computers for printing purposes now that you can make mimeograph copies. One computer devoted to printing maps and such is plenty, and one devoted to engineering work—calculations and such—and surfing the web is enough. Tell you what. We'll provide two new ones. We can ship down one right away because we have the extra one we made eight years ago, and we can make another one in a month or so."

"What about cell phones?"

"I can't promise anything because we have never made them. We did keep a complete schematic of the phones you originally had with you. I'll look into that matter. The next drop is scheduled for spring; the last one was two months ago. We'll drop the new computer at our usual location at mid-eclipse two days from now, weather permitting. We'll let you know when the next one can be scheduled after that."

"Alright. Fair enough, Philos. I think this is a good arrangement for everyone; it provides your anthropologists access to a lot of written materials and to photographs they could never get themselves, and provides us access to information essential to this world's development. We want Éra to be ready for contact with the rest of humanity."

"Well, you have a century; Earth is progressing slowly. The political support in our home world for collaborating with you waxes and wanes, since it involves interfering with a world's natural development in unpredictable ways. But I can justify a computer or two as a continuation of existing policy."

"Thank you, Philos."

Lord Estodhéru walked slowly across Mɛlwika from the Bahá'í Center to the Mɛlwika Palace Hotel. It was cold that day in mid December, but the sun was bright and his coat was heavy. His feelings had been unsettled by the two and a half day meeting of the Central Spiritual Assembly. Khɛrmdhuna's very rapid growth as a Bahá'í community had dethroned Mɛddwoglubas as the world's largest "native" Bahá'í community. Not that Lord Estodhéru had become a Bahá'í because of the material advantages it had brought his province—it had, and he knew it would, but even from the beginning he had become a Bahá'í because he believed. Nevertheless, he had gotten used to Mɛddwoglubas having a special status, one that had led to it hosting the world's first Bahá'í House of Worship. Mɛlwika would have the second, but Khɛrmdhuna had been approved to get one as well.

He crossed Temple Square and looked at the impressive Temple to Esto, the God of Light; bigger and much busier than Mɛddwoglubas's, but of course the city would soon get an even bigger Bahá'í House of Worship. It was a puzzling city to him in many

ways; prosperous to the point of being materialistic to most rural people; diverse in a way that even Mɛddwoglubas could not imagine or accommodate, because, except for Mɛddoakwés and Ora, the population elsewhere was wholly parochial and local. Everyone wore machine-woven cloth and sewing machine-assembled clothes, which meant they were buying from Lɛwéspa. Thick smoke poured out of the three smokestacks that climbed the side of the mountain behind the Foundry and streamed into the sky at its peak. Most pollution stayed above the city, but even so, Mɛlwika had more smoke than any other Éran city. He was repulsed by and envied the city at the same time. He wished Mɛddwoglubas was as large and as rich, but he also wanted it to remain Lɛwéspan. When he heard a Lɛwéspan accent in Mɛlwika he immediately wondered why that person was here, not home. Dark Sumis were still strangely human at best, though he had gotten used to having Sumi Bahá'ís around.

Lord Estodhéru was also unsettled by what he had to do—well meaning, principled, but still unnatural—and by the pressure he had felt from Chris to do the right thing. He dreaded returning to his hotel to speak to Lord Wénu. He felt even more unsettled when he approached the hotel and saw a Tutanɛ horse tied up outside. The lord was probably early; but then, Médhɛla probably had no clocks. No time to go to his room, rest a bit, and catch his breath.

Estodhéru entered the hotel and saw Lord Wénu seated on a comfortable easy chair by the fireplace in the lobby. The Médhɛlonɛ chief was dressed in leather pants and a tunic and wore leather boots. Estodhéru put on his happy face and smiled. “Lord Wénu, it’s good to see you. I’m glad we are able to get together.”

“You were kind to write to me.” He extended both hands and they shook. Both men were in their early fifties and had met each other several times in the last few decades. They felt a certain sympathy for each other. “What brings you to Mɛlwika?”

“I’m on the Central Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís and it just met here for three days. We get to Mɛlwika about four times a year, and I usually stay an extra day to take care of business.”

Wénu scowled. “So, I suppose Lord Kristobéru asked you to call me.”

“He happens to know Lɛwéspa’s needs. One of our needs, believe it or not, is to spread our factory machinery around. We are not a large province; we now have 12,000 people, but when you figure that many wish to be farmers or to make various exports, like clocks, pianos, sewing machines, typewriters, and such, we do not have enough people to make all the cloth this world needs, or to sew all its clothing. If we don’t share our textile industry with others, either there will be shortages of modern clothing or there will be immigration to Lɛwéspa. Neither is acceptable to us. Consequently, there are textile factories using power looms in Pértatranisér and Néfa and we plan to open one in the lower Arjakwés. Médhɛla is a logical site, also.”

“How so?”

“I understand you have quite a few people who can read and write because your kids are coming here to high school and you have good adult education classes. You’re a good size for a textile factory and on a reliable power line. If you don’t grow cotton for the factory, the Kwolonɛ could; they have a year-round growing season. Even Mɛlwika could grow cotton; their growing season is long enough, and their grange is constantly looking for new cash crops. Médhɛla is a logical place for a textile factory.”

“You make a persuasive case.” Wénu shook his head. “But surely, Lord, you could bus in workers from Tripola, or put factories close by.”

“We could. But most Eryanɛ won’t commute by bus to work. Perhaps that will change, but it hasn’t in Lɛwéspa yet. Factories in the North Shore don’t have local cotton supplies and will compete with Lɛwéspan factories to buy it. We don’t want to put our factories in Véspa; we don’t trust that province, which has tried to swallow us several times.”

Wénu grunted in agreement. “Who owns the factories?”

“You would buy the equipment from us and you would own it. A power loom costs a thousand dhanay but can weave about a meter of cloth per hour. We can sell used power looms for half as much because we are upgrading our equipment and want to sell the old ones, which still work fine. We can also establish a partnership; if you want to invest in the development of new equipment, you then get to purchase some of it. If you have no money, you can lease the equipment from us.”

“What about sewing machines?”

“Médhɛla can go in that direction as well. A good one costs sixty dhanay, but with it a woman can sew very fast; several items of clothing per day. You can either open a sewing house, where the sewing machines are owned by a single person or a company, and women go there to sew, or you can encourage the women to buy their own machines and do piece work.”

“So; we could raise cotton, weave it to cloth, and sew it into clothing.”

“Indeed you could, or any one or two of those three things.”

“Hum.” Wénu considered the idea. “How much cloth do you weave every year?”

“Two hundred thousand square meters. If the average person needs two square meters per year, demand should rise to six hundred thousand, so there’s room for production to expand. We’ll get there in a few years.”

“And as people get wealthier. . .”

“Demand will go even higher. We’re working on looms that can weave thick cotton cloth. We have a loom that can weave canvas. We want to develop a very complex kind of loom that can weave elaborate patterns. There are many possibilities.”

Wénu considered the situation a moment. “Lord, my village really has no idea how to do this, so I don’t think we can take the plunge. It is too difficult.”

“Ah, I understand; you need a *business model*.” He used the English words, which were so popular among business students. Then he translated the term for Wénu, who nodded. “Go to the bank and talk to President Yimanu. Go to Sullɛndha and talk to the lord there about the three or four small factories they have; I think they are owned jointly by the village, by the lord, and by the workers. For a small village, that’s a good model. Come to Mɛddwoglubas and tour our factories; we have some very big ones. They are complicated to build because the light must be enough and the air must stay clean, because the lint from the thread can hurt your lungs. Go talk to Widubéru; the Development Corps can tell you all the different business models around. If you want advice right in Mɛlwika and don’t want to talk to Lord Kristobéru, he has a young assistant, Aryéstu, from a small south shore village, and he is full of bright ideas. Don’t commit to anything until you have a plan and your village supports it.”

“How long before you approach someone else?”

“I can give you a month or a month and a half. My next choice would probably be the Kwolonɛ.”

“I see.” Wénu was startled by that; the Kwolonɛ were traditional rivals and usually had dominated their smaller northern neighbors. “I’ll pursue this idea, then. It could help my people quite a lot.”

“I agree. In the last seven years, the wealth of my province has doubled. We used to be very poor. The impact has been dramatic. And we are using five square meters of cloth per person per year, which shows you how much demand can grow. You should come and see.”

“It’s a long way.”

Estodhéru shook his head. “If you ride a horse, yes. Take the bus, Lord.”

Wénu nodded. “Perhaps it is time, then.” He rose. “Thank you.” They shook hands, then Lord Wénu walked out of the lobby. Estodhéru sat for a moment, pleased he had persuaded the man. It was something Lord Kristobéru probably could not have accomplished, and that thought made him feel even better.

He rose to go to his room, but a young man across the lobby called to him. “Lord Estodhéru! I’m Randu.”

“Oh? Aren’t you early?”

“I am, lord, because I didn’t want to be late. But we can talk later, if you prefer.”

“No, this is fine. Come here and sit with me.”

Randu hurried over and offered his hands. “Alláh-u-Abhá.” Normally, Eryanɛ would not shake hands with Sumi, but he knew if he said Alláh-u-Abhá, a Bahá'í would.

Estodhéru nodded and smiled. “Alláh-u-Abhá.” He extended his hands, a bit hesitantly, and they shook, then sat. “So, you are the young Sumi that has taught two local Sumis the Faith, am I right?”

Randu smiled. “Indeed, Lord Estodhéru. They declared last week, and I think three or four others might as well, unless the Sumi community gets upset.”

“What will Dumuzi think?”

“I don’t know. I may find out next week, though, because I plan to meet with him about the adult education classes in Arjdhura.” Randu lowered his voice a bit. “The expatriate Sumi community is not particularly religious, but for them the temples and the old gods are part of what it means to be Sumi, so I suspect they will not be pleased when expatriates become Bahá'ís.”

“That explains why the only Sumi Bahá'ís live on Sumilara, until now. So, you are involved in the Arjdhura Génadɛma?”

“I’m teaching the adult education classes that are the precursor. Last term, I taught basic math and that went pretty well, and I managed As in all three of my courses here. This term I’m taking two business courses here and teaching a basic business course there. Next term I’m taking two health and nursing courses and will teach one there, and my wife and I together may teach a basic reading course, because many Sumis can’t read at all, or only a little.”

“You have quite a plan, then. How can I help you? Something about typewriters.”

“Indeed, lord. Mɛddwoglubas turns out all of the world’s typewriters. But so far the models only use the revised Eryani alphabet. Have you considered producing typewriters that can reproduce the old Eryani syllabary or the Sumi syllabary?”

“Hum. The short answer is no. We don’t want to encourage the old Eryani writing system; it’s very difficult to learn and very irregular. Have you ever tried to learn it?”

“No, I haven’t.”

“I did, as a boy, and decided I would leave it to the priests and scribes.”

“Lord, it is a question of making a business decision, not a philosophical one. The only place the old system is being used at all is in Isurdhuna; I understand the street signs they just put up use both systems. But I’ve talked to people from there and they tell me the schools mostly use the new system; they teach the old system, of course, and kids can read it pretty well because you can figure out the exceptions when you’re reading, but almost everyone uses the new system on a day-to-day basis. But surely there is demand for some typewriters using the old system?”

“I have no idea and I don’t know how to figure it out. Why do you care about the old Eryani writing system?”

“I don’t, really. But the old system has 123 characters; the Sumi system has 129. So one typewriter design could handle both. And I am sure there is demand for a Sumi typewriter.”

“I see. If we want to talk in terms of business, rather than philosophy, let’s not worry about the old Eryani system, then. The sales are for the Sumi system. I have no idea how one would create a typewriter with 129 keys!”

“Neither the old Eryani system nor the Sumi system uses capital letters, so you could put two characters on each key. That gets you down to 65 keys, and the current typewriters have about 40. That’s not so much of a difference.”

“Intriguing. I was not involved in the design of the typewriter; Amos did most of the work with two of our mechanics. We have some excellent mechanics in Mɛddwoglubas. So, you think there would be demand?”

“Of course! How many Eryani typewriters do you sell every year; a hundred or two? Sumilara has a fifth the world’s population and is richer than average, and is more literate. With the right marketing you should be able to sell a third as many Sumi machines as Eryani machines. And there will be demand for old Eryani typewriters; you can use the basic engine and put on different type.”

Estodhéru smiled. “I can tell you’ve been taking Lord Kris’s business classes!”

Randu chuckled. “I have.”

“Here’s an argument you forgot to make in your sales pitch: the priests will love me for doing it. And we could use a bit more good will from them right now.”

“You could tell them the investment is for the old Eryani typewriter, and the Sumi model is a coincidental addition to the project.”

“Yes, though they may not believe that! They can estimate demand, too, with or without a business course.” He nodded. “I’ll talk to the mechanics and to Amos. This may not be a difficult project, and it will boost sales, which are flat at 150 per year. The springs, keys, and hammers are all the same regardless of the letter, so a one third boost in sales will boost the need for them by half, if we need 65 keys per machine. The frame and base will be different, of course; larger. If I talk to them, what will you do? Talk to Dumuzi?”

“Sure, I’ll do that. And we’ll start thinking about which letters should go on which keys. That has to be settled by people who know the letters.”

“Definitely! We may not be able to get the letters on right-side up without help!”

“We can provide that sort of help. I’ll write to you in a few weeks and let you know.”

“You are a smart man, Randu.” Estodhéru rose and offered both hands. “Pleased to meet you.”

“Pleased to meet you as well. Thank you, Lord.”

“Thank you. These are the kinds of opportunities the Faith provides for service and frankly for personal enrichment; a diverse group of people whom you can trust and work with.”

“Yes, I think so. I would never have dared come to Mɛlwika Génadɛma as a non-Bahá'í Sumi. But as a Bahá'í, this has proved to be a marvelous, very exciting experience.”

They exchanged goodbyes and Estodhéru headed up the stairs to his room. He now had an hour before his last appointment; Lébé wanted to talk to him about some new fabric designs and some improved attachments to sewing machines, because she was about to launch an “Arts for Women” program at the Women’s College and it would emphasize all sorts of practical skills. He needed the time to read through her long, typed letter; he still read very slowly. Hers would be a very practical meeting and a simple one to agree to. He could now relax, knowing that he had some important skills and resources to provide to others.

Reread and edited, 6/1/13, 8/14/17, 11/16/24, 9/21/26

269.

Bilara

Thornton slowed the rover as it neared the top of the low hill. “This is the spot,” he said, pulling over to the edge.

“We’ve got three minutes,” said Amos, glancing at the rover’s clock.

Thornton nodded and picked up the cell phone, which was connected to 777-7777, the aliens’ phone number. “We’re in place, and we’re a bit early.”

“We have a fix on the cell phone signal,” replied an alien voice.

They looked out the windows, but there was nothing to see; it was mid eclipse and overcast as well, so it was pitch dark outside. It was also bitterly cold, so no one would be wandering the grasslands along Route 2 half way between Melwika and Médhɛla.

“We’re releasing now,” said the alien. “We are a hundred meters overhead.”

“Acknowledged.” Thornton put down the phone and opened the driver’s side door. A blast of cold penetrated the rover; he closed the door behind him as quickly as he could and looked up.

Nothing to see. Then he spotted a constellation of faint, blinking red stars descending toward him; the package had small lights on it. He watched it come down, landing ten meters to the east of them. He ran over to it, grabbed the package and its parachute, and pulled them back to the rover. Amos came outside as well to open the back of the rover. They shoved the parachute inside the back and closed it, then carried the package to the front seat.

“It’s not very big,” said Amos, as Thornton thanked the aliens over the phone. He felt the edges of the plastic box until he found an unlocking mechanism. The box opened. “Ah, beautiful; one brand new laptop.”

Thornton started the engine and did a U-turn in the road, but slowed to look. “Very nice. And parts to repair my laptop?”

“Yes, as they promised, and these.” Amos picked up one of the new cell phones. He opened it; it had a very nice keypad. “Eight of them! Isn’t that fantastic! And they all have built-in cameras!”

“Philos said the cameras are better than my old digital camera, too. This will help us a lot. But we’ll have to keep the number secret.”

“I wonder what else they can do.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, the aliens have technology that’s probably hundreds of times better than our own. For all we know, these phones may have built in microphones and who knows what else inside them, constantly sending information to the aliens.”

“I didn’t think of that.”

“So, I get this computer for Pértatranisér?”

“The thought of importing an alien listening device into your house doesn’t deter you? Yes, actually, that’s the plan. Philos said he’d drop more printers with the spring drop. They still have to make them. You can attach two printers to each computer and print to both at once. We’ll be able to pour out printed materials.”

“If we need to. We probably should switch to mimeographs for most materials now.”

“I have for my classes, except for photos and complex diagrams,” agreed Thornton.

Amos looked at the grassland illuminated by the headlights. “Wow, even down here there’s snow.”

“This has been the coldest winter yet. I just wish the cold would break! I wonder whether the extreme cloudiness is a factor.”

“Probably; they reflect a lot of light into space. There was a light frost in Pértatranisér this morning. It damaged the winter crops.”

“Mɛlita’s have been ruined and all the North Shore farmers are furious.”

“Yes, I heard dad say that, too. I guess the tropical areas are really ‘semitropical’ only. Poor Behruz; keeping the gas company from running out of gas is exhausting him.”

“Demand was rising too fast even before the cold snap,” said Thornton. “And with a gas line half way to ɛjnopéla, he has more customers than ever.”

Thornton turned on the radio so they could listen to *The World Table* as they hurried north. In a few minutes they reached “South Ménwika” as the new town across the Majawkés from Dɛksawsupɛrakwa was being called. So far it had a partially built grange hall and two dozen houses in various states of partial completion. Once across the river, the gravel surface was replaced by concrete and Thornton sped up to 90 kilometers per hour. They were back home with the new equipment in ten minutes.

Everyone except Chris was in the great room, sitting under blankets or in coats—the house was chilly because of the low gas pressure—and listening to Kɛkanu’s interview with the chief priest from Isurdhuna, Isursunu. They all turned to Thornton,

Amos, and the box Amos was carrying. “So, do we have a computer for Pértatranisér?” asked May in English.

Amos smiled and nodded eagerly. “Engineering calculations just got easier.”

“And reviewing translations and other manuscripts!” said May.

“And emailing back and forth,” added Lébé, who often collaborated with May on translations.

“Email is easier than you think,” replied Amos. He opened the box and held up one of the new cell phones. “They gave us eight; that’s one for each adult. Each has its own telephone number written on the back. We’ll be able to call each other, and the transmissions will be secure; no one else will be able to listen in. Furthermore, each one has text messaging, so we can message each other! We can even send files back and forth!”

“And they all have cameras,” added Thornton. “Anthropological documentation of places will be that much easier.”

“That will help me; I’ve been very frustrated that I couldn’t photograph things,” said May.

“You should have asked them to give us nine phones,” said Jordan, who was sixteen and felt left out.

“You can borrow mine when you travel,” replied Behruz. “These devices are not to be carried around in public; they have to be used very discreetly. A lot of people know we have cell phones, but they don’t know how many, and they don’t know most of them have died. If all of us are carrying them around where people can see them, someone will

realize we have new ones, and if the army or the palace finds out, they may want one or two of them."

"But they have radios," objected Jordan.

"Would you prefer to carry a big radio around, or a little cell phone, if you were a general or royalty?"

Jordan nodded reluctantly.

"Same with the computers," said Amos. "We've had a computer in Pértatranisér on and off, so having one there all the time may not be noticed."

"There are a few people who will know we have three computers," said Thornton. "But I hope it doesn't get to the palace."

"It would be nice to have more, though," said Lua. "The hospital and medical school could use one, and I'm sure the tomi could use one."

"Maybe someday," said Thornton. "Because if the army hears we have three, they may want one of them and then they'll be googling every English word relating to weapons they know. This is a real problem for the aliens because they have to assign someone to monitor the web pages being accessed; their software filters are not subtle enough. So heavy web demand is hard on them."

"How many web pages have we printed out? Ten thousand? Twenty thousand?" asked May.

Thornton nodded. "Probably two or three times that. The génadɛma library is full of notebooks of web pages, alphabetized by subject, sometimes with Eryani translations scribbled on them or attached."

Just then the front door of the house opened, and a few moments later Chris walked into the great room. He pulled off his heavy winter coat. “Did you get it?” he asked Thornton and Amos.

“Uh-huh, and eight cell phones as well,” said Thor.

“Great!”

“How was your trip?” asked Liz.

Chris shrugged. “Mɛlita has lost about eighty percent of its crops. A few vegetables have survived along the southern edge of the township, and some of the mature corn lost its tops, but the ears survived and may still mature. The stores are on reduced hours because all of sudden, no one is buying anything. The grange meeting had about six hundred farmers present; the biggest grange meeting I’ve ever seen! If they replant now, the crops will all come in at once, a real problem for grange resources, but at least the crop will come in before planting season on the north shore. Of course, another frost could kill everything again. If they wait a month, frost won’t be a problem, but harvest will occur when it’s time to plant on the north shore. If they wait two months, some people will suffer poverty for a while, and they’ll have to rush down here to harvest right after planting up north. Some people asked me for relief, but I’m not sure I want to do that. A hundred dhanay times six hundred farmers is 60,000 dhanay, and that’s more than I can afford!”

“The grange won’t have it, either,” noted Amos.

“Possibly all the granges in the area could come up with the cash as a loan. Not everyone will need that much.”

“What happened in the Gramakwés townships?” asked Thornton. “They’re on the equator.”

“Light frost and a little damage to crops; same in Swadlɛndha. The farmers there will make a killing. Prices will skyrocket.”

“Half of the North Shore villages have farms there, so they’ll be alright,” said Thornton. “And the granges will share equipment, so there will be tractors for replanting.”

Chris nodded. “And seed. We’ll see how many loans from granges we can arrange, plus some money from us, for interest-free loans to farmers who are short. Aryékwɛs wants to set up a cooperative crop insurance program among the granges, so he’s pursuing that idea. We’ll get through this somehow.”

They listened to the rest of Kɛkanu’s interview. It ended as the sun began to reappear above the overcast; the sky began to shed light into the central garden and they saw more coming in through the windows. “Isursunu had nothing new to say,” said May, shaking her head at the priest’s comments when the closing music began. “The world will be saved if everyone just sacrificed!”

“As long as the temples get to sell the meat,” added Behruz. “He didn’t say anything about educating people, even studying the hymns! I was surprised.”

“It’s a dying form of religion,” replied Chris.

Just then the doorbell rang. The cook headed to the door to see who had arrived; visitors often stopped by during the hour after the eclipse, which was two hours before supper. A moment later, Randu came into the Great Room. “Hey, Randu, Alláh-u-Abhá!”

said Chris, pleased to see the Sumi teacher. He rose, as did everyone else, to shake hands with him.

"Thank you, Alláh-u-Abhá to everyone," he replied. "I hope everyone is well today?"

"Very much," said Liz. "Tea, Randu?"

"Thank you, but I have to get home to Nina and Alimu." He turned to Chris. "Lord, I thought I'd let you know that the last week of Bɛlménu—once this term is over—I plan to return to Bilara for a week, but I'll be back on the first of Plowménu for the next term."

"Snékhménu," Thornton jokingly corrected, making the "month of rain" the "month of snow."

Chris nodded. "You haven't been home for a few months, and you'll have a week; sounds like a good idea. Are Nina and Alimu going as well?"

"Yes, we'll get out of the cold and have a chance to rest. The pace of work has been exhausting."

"You have exhausted yourself," replied Chris. "I admire your drive, Randu. How is the course in Arjdhura?"

"Fairly good; I have promised an extra visit to bring answers to their questions from the last class." Since Randu didn't know business practices very well, he often brought the students' questions to Chris and returned with the answers a week later.

"No more drop-outs?"

“No, just two the first week. The remaining thirteen are quite interested, and they represent every business in town. I think some of them will want two or three advanced business and accounting courses. I doubt I can bring them that.”

“Perhaps I can get there to give a business class in the spring. If we lengthened the class hours from 15 to 25, we’d have time to spontaneously translate everything into Sumi.”

“I could do that. If we paid someone to transcribe the whole class, we’d have excellent handouts for the next time you taught the class.”

“I don’t always follow my notes that closely.”

Randu turned to Thornton and Lébé. “While I’m away, there won’t be a class at my apartment; I plan to tell everyone who is coming. We’ll have to stop the Sumi language courses, too.” He paused. “You should consider coming to Sumilara. You’ll learn a lot more of the language there, immersed in it, than you will here.”

Thornton looked at Lébé. “I don’t feel ready to plunge into a Sumi language environment,” he said.

“You already know enough to figure a lot out from listening,” said Randu encouragingly.

“A week in a warm climate with the kids, surrounded by Bahá'ís; I think that’d be lovely,” said Lébé. “If someone could help translate, I’d love to do a class for women about various things; canning, baking, knitting. Useful things we’re adding to the curriculum of the women’s génadɛma.”

“Considering how cold it is here, maybe that’s worth considering. I could teach something, too.”

“That’d be great! Come to Bilara with us! Nina could help translate for Lébé and I could offer the business course; I could teach it in five mornings.”

“Doesn’t sound very relaxing,” observed Thornton.

Randu shook head. “The trip is relaxing because we’d be home seeing friends. A class every morning would be fun and make it that much more useful.”

“Alright,” said Thornton. “The last week of Bɛlménu. Where would Lébé and I stay?”

“I’ll arrange everything,” promised Randu.

They had just nine days to get ready; even though the classes would be things they had taught before, they had to modify the classes because of the need to translate them into Sumi, and in the process they became aware of the different culture and knowledge base and had to modify their plans accordingly. Nina proved immensely helpful; her Eryani had become fairly good and she had time to help them both.

It was 2 p.m. on the last Suksdiu of the month when Randu, Nina, Thornton, and Lébé—accompanied by their kids and by Jordan, who had managed to get permission to go along from his parents—boarded the bus to Arjdhura. They arrived 45 minutes before the ferry departed; just enough time to walk around and inspect the foundation hole for the Arjdhura Génadɛma building and for Thornton to take pictures with his new cellphone, which he immediately sent to his father.

The steam ferry departed on time at 4 p.m. with twenty-five passengers and ten tonnes of cargo on board. Three seasick hours and three time zones later, the bobbing ferry docked just outside Anartu’s south wall, the sea having risen enough to reach the

city in the two years since Thornton had last visited. Three buses waited, one going east and north, one north, and one west and north. Without Randu and Nina, they would have been lost; Thornton still could not read enough Sumi to understand the signs on the buses and he didn't know the logos of the various cities. As they went through Anartu and the bus filled up with passengers, they received more and more stares. They were relieved to get off the bus at Bilara at 5:15.

It seemed that half of Bilara's two thousand people were waiting for them when they stepped off. They walked to the Bahá'í Center where Thornton and family would be staying and where a big meal was being prepared by a dozen Bahá'í women, for most of the village was expected. It was comfortable weather and dry, so everyone turned out, many bringing food to the grassy yard around the Center. As the sun went down, a half-full Skanda shone brilliantly on them. The crowd around Thornton and Lébé was almost as large as that around Randu and Nina, who were coming home for the first time in four months. Everyone was thrilled by even rudimentary attempts to speak Sumi; it almost never happened that off-islanders learned the language.

Just before it was time to start the brief evening program, Lord Bilgadingira came to Thornton. "Welcome to Bilara again," he said in heavily accented Eryani. "It has been two years since we saw you last. We are sorry you stayed away so long."

"I will come again," promised Thornton, speaking in Sumi. He switched to Eryani. "I am trying to learn your language, so I will plan to come again and again."

Bilgadingira's face lit up. "You will be welcome to come here many times, and we will be honored to teach you! Our Sumi is considered very nearly the best. Anartu's is worldly, Sipadananga's is rustic; ours is in between."

“I find it easy to understand.”

“So, you are here for a week. What are you teaching?”

“We will be here six days, an entire Eryan week, and will return home on the following Primdiu. I am offering a course over five afternoons on ‘Succeeding in the New World We Live in.’ It is a course about development. I will explain the importance of post offices, gravel and concrete roads, steam vehicles, electricity, telephones, banks, schools, génadɛmas, hospitals, saving and investing money, police forces, fire companies, elections, factories, machines in general, a regular work day, breaking work down into many small steps, clocks, efficiency, the new agriculture, granges. . . many things. The idea is to cover all the different things that are changing this world, so everyone understands what each does and how they work together to make us more prosperous. The last day we’ll talk about a development plan for Bilara.”

“Excellent! I’ll be sure to attend. And this is free? How will you do it in Sumi?”

“It is free, but I will have to speak Eryani, with Randu translating for me. We have made big pieces of paper with pictures and writing on most of them, and the writing is in Eryani with Sumi translation. We’ll put them on the walls so people can read as we go over each piece of paper.”

“And Randu, I understand, will speak in the morning about business and accounting.”

“That is my understanding also. At night we will speak about the Bahá'í Faith; people will be free to come. In the mornings, Lébé wants to offer a course to women about new ways to prepare food, both for their families and for sale. Bilara has excellent tropical fruits and nuts that can be dried, or converted into jam, or baked into cakes.”

“Lord, I see quite a few older women wearing white robes,” added Lébé, who was nearby. “I am wondering whether they would be interested in these classes.”

“Possibly. The women with white robes are widows; that’s what widows wear when they appear in public. A Sumi widow rarely remarries; she should dedicate herself to the needs of the temple and should be supported by her children. But of course the temple often has nothing for them to do but sing hymns to the gods all day. Some say this is very meritorious. Others think it is a waste of time. And their families often have too little to support them very well, or they have no family. They can’t do any of the traditional things, but perhaps they could do some new things.”

“Perhaps the temple or the Bahá'í Center could accept their work and in turn could help support them,” suggested Lébé. “They appear to be women of dignity.”

“Indeed. That woman over there is my mother.” Lord Bilgadingira indicated a woman nearby. “Come, I will introduce you.” He led Lébé over to the old women, much to Thornton’s surprise. He turned to Randu nearby. “Did you see that?”

“Yes. Lébé asked him at the right time, I think. For about a year Lord Bilgadingira has been upset at the temple because it has not been willing to give the widows more money for chanting and singing hymns to the gods. The widows are suffering as a result. I think he will encourage her class.”

“Good, we were afraid it wouldn’t be acceptable.”

Nina’s been working on the Bahá'í women. I think some of them will go.”

“It looks like there’s a lot of interest for classes on business and development.”

“Oh, definitely! The Bahá'í Center will be packed. I understand the telephone in the village store has been in use constantly for the last two hours. As people have heard

what we plan to cover, they've been calling relatives all over the island and inviting them!"

"Wow! And I suppose some will stay for the Bahá'í class."

"I think so."

Thornton looked at the Skandalit land around them. "This place has completely recovered from the eruption. You'd never know a dozen centimeters of ash fell here two years ago."

"It is better than it was! The ash has fertilized everything. The crops have been amazing. But the people here have no idea what's happening on the mainland. They don't see any of the Eryani papers; almost no one even in Anartu sees them. They have no idea fruit and vegetable prices on the mainland have soared and they should export more. They're cut off."

"They need a subscription to the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs*."

"And there are two or three people in the village who could read it, too. But no one thinks of it. That will change when I return here."

"I'm impressed by Bilara. The school now has three huge classrooms and the village has quite a few new buildings."

"You noticed. Yes, we took in several hundred people permanently, so Bilara's bigger. We teach grades 1 through 8 in those three classrooms; we have about fifty kids in each. Thirty more go to Anartu High School."

"Fifty kids, and one teacher each!"

"Each teacher has between two and four helpers drawn from the pool of older teenagers. Some of them are pretty good, too. Bilara has about 600 children, so we have 1/4 of them in school. We think that's pretty good."

"Oh, I agree," said Thornton. "I see a lot of progress; a better graveled north-south road, a graveled east-west road, electricity, telephones, four or five buses a day, rich farms; it's impressive."

"And we have the Faith, which is the most important improvement," said Randu. "This visit will prove very fruitful in many ways, I think. Well, let's get the evening program started."

It was late before the commotion ended and everyone was able to get to sleep. Lébé was up at dawn to start setting up her class, with the help of Lord Bilgadingira's mother and some of her friends and Nina's rapid translation. Jordan and Thornton got the kids ready; they were up at dawn, too. Then they helped Randu set up the Bahá'í Center for his business course, because it was expected to be large.

They had no idea how large it would be. Bilara's merchants and would-be merchants showed up a bit early and crowded in; since the town was just ten kilometers from Anartu—a two-hour walk, an hour-long wagon ride, and now a fifteen minute trip by bus or truck—the town had long had a strong orientation toward commerce and cash crops. But all of them had cousins and brothers who were merchants, often in Anartu or in Anarbala, the town six kilometers to the north, and those cousins had cousins elsewhere. So when the 9 a.m. bus arrived, it was totally stuffed with merchants and

noblemen anxious to participate. A second bus followed five minutes later with the overflow.

The crowd could not fit into the Bahá'í Center, which held about two hundred tightly; they couldn't even all look in the windows. Randu was in a tizzy. "We'll have to split the class, Thornton."

"I agree. Can you find someone else to translate for me?"

"Sure; there are some good translators around here, especially in the arrivals from Anartu."

"I can pay," added Thornton. "The technical terms are all translated on the handouts; that'll help." He looked out the windows at the crowd. "It's not going to be too hot today, and it shouldn't rain. I could hold a class outside this morning, and we could switch this afternoon."

"Okay, that would work, though we'll both have to give our classes twice. I think we'll be able to use a classroom at the school starting tomorrow; they'll let the kids out or crowd them into the other two rooms. Meanwhile, you can give your class under the tree next to the building west of here. You can tack your displays onto the building's wooden timbers."

"That'd work. The ground there's grassy, too, so people could sit if they want. And we'd be on the other side of the building from Lébé's cooking class, so we wouldn't disturb them."

"Then let's do it." Randu went to the front of the room and made the announcement. He had to make it twice so everyone could hear. An Anartu merchant came up to Thornton and volunteered to translate for free, and it was clear his Eryani was

easy and comfortable; he dealt with the army garrison a lot. So Thornton grabbed the displays and headed out the door with his new translator. Eventually, once everyone understood the new arrangement, about half the students sat on the ground around him for his development course while the other half sat inside the Bahá'í Center for Randu's. After a lunch crowded with student questions and requests for advice, they switched facilities and repeated the three-hour classes again. Thornton emerged hoarse from speaking so much.

"You need tea!" said Lébé.

"First, give me a hug."

"Alright." She hugged him. "But it was good, wasn't it?"

"Well, it was for the students; they have never had classes like this and they're hungry. But the translator isn't as good as I had thought and the concepts are hard to convey; I had to stop several times and tell stories to get the ideas across. And I covered two thirds as much as I had hoped. How was your class?"

"It was interesting. We canned some carrots and some tomatoes. I don't think most women found it very useful; they don't need to preserve foods for their own families because the island never has winter. I told them they could can for sale to Anartu and the mainland, but that was too abstract."

"We need to combine canning with a merchant interested in buying the result, and we have plenty of merchants around. We'll have to talk to Randu about that."

"Tomorrow we'll be making jams. That will be more interesting to the women because that's something their families have never had, and they may see it as something

they can sell. Of course, sugar is *very* expensive and wax is pretty expensive, so they won't want to make much jam either!"

"Unless they can sell it. There will be demand for jam. I think every household in Mɛlwika has a jar."

Just then Randu hurried over. "Thornton, Thornton! You have a telephone call from Governor Modobéru!"

"Oh? Where's the phone?"

"In the town square. You had better not keep him waiting."

"Alright." Thornton jumped up and followed Randu, who jogged a hundred meters to the square. The switchboard—the town only had four phones, but the switchboard could accommodate forty-nine—was located in a large store, and the merchant or his wife served as the telephone operator. His wife was there and pointed to a telephone nearby. Thornton nodded thanks and picked it up. "Khélo?"

"Honored Thornton, is that you? This is Governor Modobéru."

"Yes, Governor, it is I. Lébé and I arrived here last night in response to an invitation to give some classes."

"I can't hear you very well; I think this is a bad connection. Your voice sounds raspy. You say you arrived last night?"

"Indeed, governor, last night. The connection is fine, but my voice is almost gone; so many people have come to my class on development, 'Succeeding in the New World,' that I had to deliver it twice to about 150 people each time. I have been teaching almost six hours today and am exhausted."

“And I am sure your class is excellent. And you are talking about how to establish businesses?”

“No, Randu is teaching that course. He took courses at the Mɛlwika Génadɛma on the subject earlier this month and taught the course at Arjdhura. He brought the course here and invited Lébé and I to come as well. She taught a course to women all morning about canning fruits and vegetables.”

“Really? I heard today when a large number of merchants in Anartu complained to me that the course was being held in Bilara. I hope you can come deliver the course in Anartu as well. We need courses on these subjects very badly.”

“Lord governor, perhaps I can return during the last week of Plowménu to repeat the course in Anartu. This week is impossible; I have no time to leave Bilara, except socially in the evening. My children are here as well; I must help take care of them, and some evenings I am giving a spiritually oriented class as well.”

“Bahá'í, no doubt. But that is fine. So, can you come to the palace at least to have supper with me, perhaps tomorrow or the next night? I would love to hear more about your class.”

“I would be honored, governor; you name the evening. Do buses run at night?”

“One does, but I will send my car to bring you. How about two nights from now? I’d love to hear about the latest news from Mɛlwika and how your father is doing.”

“Thank you, Tridiu will be fine, and thank you for sending a car. I did not bring a car with me.”

“It will be a great pleasure to see you. I have been trying to develop this island, and I am sure your course will be a great impetus. We are fairly cut off, here. The new

Arjdhura Génadɛma has great potential for solving that problem. Indeed, your trip here shows that it has already started serving as a bridge."

"You are correct about that. Lébé and I are learning some Sumi and plan to come here more often. Sumilara is developing fast and has remarkable capacity."

"You are very right about that. Every month we make progress. The army has actually been a great help because it has insisted that the soldiers not just stand guard with the swords and spears, but do some useful work. They have graveled all the roads on the island in two years; three hundred kilometers of roads, opening up every village to buses and trucks. Electrical and telephone lines, over a hundred kilometers of them, reach almost every village; the army has paid for all of that as well. Now we have elementary schools in every village, and middle schools in almost every village, and three regional high schools serving a third of the island's eligible kids. We lack factories and modern business practices; we still lack many of the administrative reforms the palace is making on the mainland because the classes have not been brought here yet. Many positive changes; it's remarkable. But I am sure you are seeing this on your visit."

"I am. I am amazed by all the changes in the last two years. I look forward to sharing my observations with you on Tridiu."

"Thank you, we will have a very fruitful evening, I am sure," replied Modobéru.

Reread and edited, 6/1/13, 8/14/17, 11/16/24, 9/21/26

270.

Election Jitters

Late Plowménu/late Feb., yr 10

The month of Plowménu was ending with the rains for which it had been named. As Chris parked the rover in a real parking space—the concrete surface of the plaza had actual spaces painted on it and planters to mark the ends of the strip of spaces—he reflected that he would have preferred snow most of the month, since he now had a fifty-meter run through the downpour.

He opened the rover's door, jumped out, swiftly locked the door, and made a quick dash to the National Post Office. As soon as he was under the building's copious overhang he stopped to shake the water off, then turned to look over Mɛddoakwés's New Square. Seventy meters across, it was a potentially grand space. The National Post Office building occupied forty meters of the north side; three stories high, it was fronted by ten fluted pillars with Corinthian-like capitals. Next to it, a commercial building was rising, its brick façade reflecting the same architectural themes. The west side, toward the rest of the city, was dominated by a fifty-meter wide National Theatre, which was also a pillared, grand structure; it was mostly finished on the outside. The east side of the square had the National Police headquarters, an equally grand but more controversial structure, as many felt the police did not deserve such an edifice. Finally, the long south side of the square had a new brick market building, grand and modernized, like the commercial spaces in Mɛlwika, Pértatranisér, and Ora.

It was very impressive. Mɛlwika had nothing like it and no doubt Estanu would want to find a place to build such a square to keep up. New Square was outside the capital's walls; it represented a bold statement that the days of fortified cities were over. Mɛlwika had just finished an expensive eastern extension of its city wall and now looked conservative, even old fashioned.

Chris turned and walked inside the post office. The grand lobby was two stories high, the walls and ceiling covered with molded, painted plaster with some gilt; a very impressive space. There were six service windows where workers received and provided mail and processed bank transactions, for the Royal Development Bank used the post offices as its branches. A series of four telephone booths occupied the right side of the lobby and were filled with callers; the city's switchboard was located in the rear of the floor.

He turned left and went up a grand flight of stairs to the offices of the Ministry of Statistics. Prime Minister Wɛranolubu and Minister of Statistics Bidhu were waiting. "Greetings gentlemen!" exclaimed Chris, extending his hands, and they shook.

"Greetings; what do you think of the building?" asked Wɛranolubu.

"It's beautiful! What else is in here?"

"Statistics, education, health, culture, and meteorology, with the Royal Development Bank and the post office on the first floor," replied Bidhu. "We fill the two top floors. The Police Building, once it's finished, will house the National Fire Agency, the National Inspections and Licensing Agency, and the Development Agency."

"That moves almost everyone out except the Prime Minister!" said Chris, looking at Wɛranolubu.

“You’re right,” replied the Prime Minister. “Her Majesty wants me in the palace, so I can see her regularly, but I’ll be spending a lot of time over here and may have an office here as well as in the palace. The traditional palace ministries—the Treasury, pensions, and general services—need more space for record keeping and more comfortable offices. As you know, most workers are crowded into small rooms with old-fashioned furniture, but getting them desks, telephones, and filing cabinets requires about twice as much space per worker. They are indeed laying off kids from the old houses and trimming the bureaucracy, but the remaining workers need more space anyway! But here we have brand new offices and much more space; it’s very nice.”

“They are very comfortable. I am impressed by the commercial buildings that have gone up on the square as well.”

“Aren’t they attractive?” agreed Wɛranolubu. “Very modern. Even Home Improvement has moved in, and no doubt the store here competes with the original one. The two commercial buildings will be air conditioned; very, very nice. A worthy space for the capital.”

“What about the old square?”

“It’ll still have the farmer’s market and the peddlers,” said Bidhu.

“I thought the génadɛma was going to get a building here?” asked Chris.

Wɛranolubu shrugged. “They didn’t act; they would have gotten part of the south side of the square. But Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma has never recovered from Wɛrétrakɛstɛr's departure and then Mitruidatu’s departure. The head’s not particularly effective.”

Chris nodded. “You said it, not me. I don’t want to get involved; I’ll be accused of trying to take it over. Half the courses at the génadɛma here are offered by Mɛlwika professors. It’s starved for money.”

“And it’s starved for money because he isn’t asking for it or planning for it,” said Wɛranolobu. “But never mind, we didn’t invite you here to solve that problem. The election’s in six weeks; that’s our worry.”

“How so?”

“We need to educate people and to supervise or oversee local elections. Mɛlwika, Tripola, and Pértatranisér know how to conduct elections. Generally, the Arjakwés Valley can manage because there are a lot of granges with election experience.”

“But we’ll need help identifying grange members from, say, Tɛrskua who can go back there and help run the election,” said Bidhu. “Grange members are perfect because they are no longer residents, so they can’t be voted for. Every locality needs an election committee to explain elections to everyone, answer questions, choose a location for the voting—usually a school—sit at the ballot box all day on election day to ink the finger of someone who has dropped a ballot into a box, get the ballot box to the regional counting center, and help count the votes.”

“What about determining how many representatives each village should have? I hear some villages are suddenly claiming a larger population.”

Bidhu nodded. “About a quarter of the larger villages are claiming they deserve an additional representative. We’re talking about thirty villages. But I have four statistical teams that can visit and conduct a quick census. And some of the villages have backed off when they’re told that a larger population means more taxes.”

Chris chuckled. “I’m not surprised.”

“But a lot of the claims have been verified; many places *are* bigger.” Bidhu smiled. “Before your family arrived, this world had about six thousand births and six thousand deaths per year. Last year this world had fifteen thousand births and two thousand deaths! Improved nutrition is the biggest factor. The hospitals are saving about two thousand lives per year, but the fact that people can eat well means the women are more fertile, couples are more confident about bringing children into this world, and deaths from illness, malnutrition, and infection are less. It looks like the world population is growing very fast right now. So villages are often getting more representatives than we expected.”

“Impressive. All the land and increased harvests are having an effect. The granges can help you with names of people; I can give you the contact people if you need them. They would do a much better job of suggesting people than I. One possibility would be to ask them for the list of the top fifteen or twenty people who received votes at the last grange election, with the names of their villages. Usually the farmers vote for wise people, so the top vote getters would be pretty good choices most of the time.”

“Brilliant idea!” said Bidhu.

“That helps, but how many grange members are from Véspa, Kɛrda, or Rudhisér?” asked Wɛranolubu.

Chris shook his head. “Not so many for the first two. The Pértatranisér and Lɛpawsɛmdomas Granges would have Rudhisérans. There are a few farmers from northern Véspa in the Pértatranisér Grange. The grange for several north Lɛwéspa

villages, including Lɛwéspadoma, has former residents from many southern Véspa villages. But it'll be hard to reach all the villages with qualified grange members."

"So, we have to turn to the Bahá'ís, then," said Wɛranolubu. "That's the real reason we asked you to come visit. We can contact the granges, but not the Bahá'ís."

"I see." Chris considered the request. "The Central Spiritual Assembly will have to decide whether to provide information on how to reach the Bahá'ís, but in principle I see no reason why they shouldn't. Bahá'ís are being asked, as citizens, to assist their government to accomplish something their religion would support."

"Indeed, something their religion has a stake in," added Wɛranolubu. "Most educated people know that this form of election is based on the Bahá'í system and that it is not widely used on Gɛdhéma. If it fails, it is the failure of a Bahá'í idea."

"True," Chris conceded. "We have thirty-eight local spiritual assemblies now, so that's several hundred people trained in our election system. But there are few Assemblies in places where there are relatively few granges, like Kɛrda. We have three spiritual assemblies in Kɛrda right now."

"That's still a dozen people we wouldn't have otherwise," replied Wɛranolubu.

"There's another pool of people to draw on: school teachers," noted Chris. "Especially the ones who were in Mɛlwika during an election. But again, that's a group of people most numerous in Arjakwés and the northern and southern shores, and least numerous in Kɛrda and Véspa. What about Sumilara?"

Wɛranolubu shook his head. "That's the real nightmare. How many Bahá'ís do you have there?"

"Several hundred, and five local Spiritual Assemblies; we're reasonably strong there. But there are also Sumi farmers in the Swadlɛndha Grange, and there's a grange in Amurueqluma. Finally, there's the expatriate community. I'd approach Dumuzi for assistance."

"I agree." Wɛranolobu made a note. "The bigger problem will be translating the information about elections and disseminating it widely in Sumilara in just six weeks. We have waited too long to plan this election; the responsibility was never given to anyone until the palace finally agreed to give it to me three weeks ago. There are many people who want to see it fail. I am a twice-elected former Mayor, but some people didn't want the responsibility to fall on my shoulders."

"Do you have an election commission?"

Wɛranolubu pointed to himself and Bidhu. "You're looking at it."

"You need provincial commissions, though, and election committees in every village and town."

"We know!" said Bidhu. "And we need them in three weeks at most, preferably two, and we need to train them! It's terrifying!"

"It is. What about election equipment; ballot boxes, ballots, ink?"

"That's the easy part. We've been working on that for months."

"You need to get Her Majesty to appear on *The World Table* and talk about elections."

Wɛranolubu shook his head. "She won't do that. I've asked Kɛkanu to schedule Bidhu and myself at least once a week for the entire month beforehand."

"Excellent. But when you speak, the local village store or school won't have a crowd filling the place and bulging out the doors. If the queen speaks, that's what will happen. There are two hundred thousand voters to educate in some basic fashion in six weeks."

"We're terrified," repeated Bidhu.

"So am I," said Chris. "I'll do anything you need me to do to make this work. I'll drop everything. Fortunately, ɛjnaménu's about to start; that means almost no génadɛma classes, so all our faculty and students are available."

"Give us a list of people we can appoint to local election committees," said Bidhu. "We have started making lists of potential members already. We have a list of every village and town in the world. But we need to finalize the lists and type up about a thousand appointment letters, mail them out with a packet of materials, and follow up to make sure the people will accept."

"And we expect most of them to write or phone us and say 'why didn't you appoint me to serve on the committee for my own village? I don't want to have to go to x.' So we'll appoint a few local people, too, even if that could be seen as electioneering."

"That's a problem," said Chris. "What about the letter the palace sent to the newspapers last week, asking them to develop and print a 'who's who' including at least three times as many people as that town or city will elect? That's electioneering, too."

"That wasn't my idea, Chris," replied Wɛranolubu. "Most people in the palace are skeptical that voters can make a smart choice, so they wanted to assist. If a group of journalists were to draw up a list of the top hundred residents of Ora or Mɛlwika, though, it's safe to say they are the people who would have gotten the bulk of the vote, anyway."

"Perhaps, but the thing that makes this kind of system work is that every voter has a completely free choice. Once you start to steer people, you'll start to get campaigning."

"No, we won't allow anything more than publishing the list. For the next election, we can reprint the list of the people who got the most votes but weren't elected. If you hear of any campaigning at all—even a single hand-drawn poster—report it to me. That person will be disqualified unless it can be proved he or she knew nothing about the effort, and even then the person might be disqualified. We plan to be very strict and that's something I'll say next week when I appear on Kɛkanu's show. Judge Wérgéndu is scheduled next week, too, and I've asked him to repeat the point."

"You should ask him to serve on your election commission."

"He's too busy."

"Don't forget to involve women."

"We'll appoint some to election committees, and we'll talk about it when we appear on *The World Table.*"

"Her Majesty should lean on the priests so that they support it. If every temple had a special round of prayers on election day for its success, for example, that would make an impression, especially if it were mentioned in the newspapers and on the radio news."

"I'll make a note of that. We're already seeking support from the dukes, who will have to be members of provincial election boards. Wɛrétrakɛstɛr will be on *The World Table* to talk about elections in the last week of ɛjnaménu."

Chris nodded. "Good. You don't have much time, but you have a good plan."

Thornton's steam car turned off of Route 1 and into the driveway approaching the Royal School for Deaf and Disabled children about five minutes before Chris's rover drove east on the same route, heading home from Mɛddoaakwés. Thornton had never visited Soru's before and glanced at the long, low brick building before exiting his car and dashing through the rain. Soru had lodging for twenty children in five large dormitory rooms, and four classrooms. Twenty day students attended as well. Another dormitory wing was planned, as were two more classrooms; Soru was shamelessly fundraising and was pretty good at convincing lords and merchants to donate two or three lɛdhay. The school also had a modest headmaster's house nearby and two apartments for live-in chaperones attached to the dormitory wing. It was a small but impressive operation.

Thornton noted that the rain had let up a bit, so he jumped out and dashed to the main entrance. Inside, he was quickly directed to Soru's office, an unkempt space filled with stacks of papers and books.

"Thornton, Alláh-u-Abhá! What a surprise!" Soru rose from his desk and walked over to shake hands. "Please, sit. Would you like any tea?"

"Thank you, you're very kind."

"Two cups, please," Soru said to the woman who had escorted Thornton to the headmaster's office. She nodded and disappeared. "Here, let me clear you a seat." Soru picked up a stack of papers from a chair, motioned for Thornton to sit down, and moved his own chair out from behind the desk. "What crazy weather we're getting. A freezing cold winter punctuated by blizzards and lots of snow, then this! Has Mɛlwika received a flood, yet?"

“Yes, it arrived about noontime and the Arjakwés and Péskakwés reservoirs are filling, even though they’re letting a lot of the water through. Moritua is very low and they say it’ll be full as well in about a week. The mountains got a lot of snow and this rain is melting it fast.”

“I’m sure. Meanwhile, the western shore has a drought. . . I guess if the wind blows the rain here, there’s less to fall over there.” The tea arrived just then and they paused to add sugar and take a first sip.

“It is strange,” agreed Thornton. “It’s the second dry winter in a row for the western shore; it may be a new climatic pattern. At least the hydroelectric dam in the Rudhisér Gluba had a full lake behind it, so the Néfa Basin will have plenty of water for irrigation when rice planting time comes.”

“And the dam across the Glugluba upstream of Ora is just about finished. I was talking to my cousin by telephone two weeks ago. I hear it’s a hundred meters high!”

“Yes, it’s ten kilometers upstream and the top of the dam is level with the top of the canyon, so it has a road across it. Once they have all the turbines installed—maybe a decade from now—it’ll be able to turn out ninety thousand kilowatts of constant power and more during eclipses. It’ll be decades before the entire planet will need that much power, though.”

“Amazing, that we can make such things! How’s the family?”

“Very well. How about you? Kanawé’s expecting, right?”

“Yes, in a few months. Her cousin’s boy, Mitrukaru—they live in our Mɛlwika house—wants to get married, so we’re trying to resolve whether the bride will move in or

the three of them will move out, assuming the dowry negotiations can be finalized! So we have a lot of excitement right now."

"Sounds like it. We'll have a similar situation with Jordan in a few years; he's sixteen and a few of his high school friends are getting married and dropping out of school. He's doing well. Last month he accompanied Lébé and I to Sumilara for a week and he did very well. He helped with the kids, ran around and took care of errands, and made friends. In a few days we're all going back, and this time we're spending a week in Anartu. I'm giving a fifteen-hour course on development—the same course I ran last month in Bilara—and Lébé's teaching useful domestic skills such as canning and making jams. Randu's coming to repeat his course on business and accounting. We'll be doing firesides every evening, too. I'm taking my steam car so that if we save a day I can drive up to the volcano; last time it was impossible to get away. That's the last week of Plowménu; it'll be warm there, and not anywhere nearly as rainy as it is here! I think we're going back for two weeks in ɛjnaménu as well, but I'm not sure what I'll teach. They're immensely hungry for knowledge there, and they're cut off by the sea and the language barrier. Last time I was there, for example, I had supper with the governor, and he mentioned two deaf children in Anartu."

"Really?"

Thornton nodded. "He was interested in seeing what could be done for the island's deaf and blind and was very interested to hear about the sign language you teach. And the island's teachers have no knowledge of the theories of education or child development at all. So I thought I'd stop by to see whether you could consider going to Anartu some time."

“Really?” Soru was startled. “But I don’t know a word of Sumi.”

“You don’t need to. They have translators. I set up my entire presentation on big sheets of paper that can be tacked to the wall; I wrote them ahead of time and left lots of white space so a translator can add the Sumi translation. Then I speak slowly, pointing to the key words and phrases as I go—that helps the translator follow—and pausing for him to catch up every few sentences. It works pretty well. People have a lot of questions.”

“And you’re doing fifteen-hour adult education courses?”

“Fifteen hours, yes, but they could be génadɛma-level courses with an exam as well. You could bring the exams back here and go over them with a translator, or use multiple-choice and true-false; those you can grade yourself or have a Sumi student grade.”

Soru chuckled. “You have a system figured out.”

“You have to. I can now give about a quarter of my lectures in Sumi; I’ve learned quite a bit in the last six months.”

“I don’t have time to do that.” Soru shook his head. “You ask too much, Thornton. I went to Khɛrmdhuna for a week back in Bɛlménu, and that worked out alright; I think the priests grasped the principles of child education pretty well, and I hear they’ve done alright teaching since then. But Sumilara? And now that Kanawé’s pregnant?” He shook his head.

“Soru, this is very important. If Sumilara doesn’t develop along with the mainland, it will drift away and the people will become resentful. The Sumis are a very inquisitive people. They are already fairly educated compared to the Eryanɛ. The Bahá'ís are marvelous; you know Randu and Nina. They will host you and give you the time of

your life. And everyone in your class will ask you why you have come, and you will be able to say ‘because I believe in the oneness of humanity, because I am a Bahá'í.’ It can do the Faith much good as well as the island. It will help break down stereotypes and prejudices.”

“You are right about that.” Soru considered. “When are you going? Because I’d be more comfortable being part of a party.”

“Sure. We’re going for the last week of Plowménu, return here, then go back to Anartu the third and fourth weeks of ɛjnaménu. Come to Anartu for one of those weeks. When we’re there next week, we’ll arrange for the course. I suppose the school here is quiet then?”

“Yes; we’ll have about eight resident children and no day students for the entire month. So I could get away. Let me think about this and talk to Randu, because I need to get a better idea what the island needs. Give me two days.”

“Great! That’ll work just fine.”

They chatted more, then Thornton bid his farewell. He dashed through the rain and got in his car, then headed back to Mɛlwika along a surprisingly full river. Since the eclipse began just before he got to town, he parked the car in their garage under the tomi building and headed home to listen to *The World Table.* No reason to go to the Geological Survey at that point.

It wasn’t until after the eclipse was over when Chris came home; he had been at his office across the street, talking on the telephone. “Lua, we’re having a telephone meeting of the Central Spiritual Assembly tomorrow during the eclipse.”

“Oh? About what?”

“Mobilizing Bahá'í resources to help educate the public about the general election. At the meeting I had with Prime Minister Wɛranolubu today, he asked whether Bahá'ís could serve on village election committees to make sure the election was conducted properly. They have to appoint a committee of three or four for every single village in the world and have no idea who to approach. Bahá'ís already have familiarity with elections.”

Lua was surprised. “It’s getting rather late, isn’t it? Elections are a month away!”

“I know, and if they fail, the Bahá'í model of elections will fail as well. We have to talk about what we should or shouldn’t do. Wɛranolubu and Bidhu are in charge and they are trying to implement it fairly and positively. There has been opposition in the palace to the election, but I gather it is not going to dominate the process. So there is a non-partisan environment; one we can cooperate with and support.”

“I’ll look up relevant texts tonight,” promised Liz. Whenever the Central Spiritual Assembly had serious issues to deal with, she researched them.

“Dad, what about Sumilara?” asked Thornton.

“They’re trying to implement elections there as well. Since you’re going over next week and for the two weeks before the election, you may be in a good position to help educate the public. Disseminating information in Sumi will be one of the big problems. They can’t read Eryani newspapers or listen to Eryani radio broadcasts.”

“What information about elections did you present in your government classes last summer?”

“I’ll get the notes to you tomorrow. But that was a pretty short presentation. Let’s work on expanding it.”

“Since I won’t have to offer my class twice this time—I hope!—I should have time for some extra sessions, especially in the evening. I could easily devote three hours to elections.”

“Great! Let’s work on that tomorrow, then, and phone Wɛranolubu and Bidhu. They may have some ideas about what you should explain.”

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A World Votes

Thornton looked around the largest room in Ninurta Génadɛma—the "auditorium" of the school, as it were—filled with 150 men in elegant vermillion cotton robes. His classes had all been big, but this free lecture about the elections had been packed by twice as many as could attend the development course. In 90 minutes he had covered all the basics: the way the voting worked; the mechanics of putting the ballots into the boxes and then breaking the seals to pull out the ballots and count them; the individual obligation to vote for those whom the voter felt were wisest, most capable, and experienced; the problems that arose when campaigning was allowed. Randu had stood at his side and translated everything, sentence by sentence, and Thornton now knew enough Sumi to appreciate his friend's ease and eloquence in that language.

He briefly glanced at Governor Modobéru, seated quietly in the front row; he seemed pleased. "Is my summary," said Thornton in careful but ungrammatical Sumi. "Questions?" He looked around; hands shot up. He pointed to what appeared to be the first. "Dumugal."

The young aristocrat, editor of the *Sumi Herald* newspaper, in the back rose. "So, how do we know who is wisest, most experienced, most capable?"

Thornton waited for the translation to make sure he understood the question, then answered in Eryani. "That is difficult, I agree. Every voter must spend time over weeks or even months thinking about who to vote for, men or women. One can only vote for people one knows or thinks one knows about; that's why voting districts need to be fairly

small, so one can get to know many of the people in the district. In a way, it does not matter too much; this system depends on good people being elected, most people are fairly good, and the number of people who can serve well is not tiny. The most important achievement of this system is that if people vote for wise and capable persons, no corrupt and evil people will be elected."

"I don't know that the peasants can do that, though," objected Ansharu, son of the lord of Kalagéduru, the island's second largest city, who also claimed to be lord of Idka, the old Sumi city on the site of Ora.

"Whether they can or not, this is what Her Majesty has commanded. The Bahá'ís have found that the system consistently produces capable leaders."

"We'll see," replied Ansharu, skeptically.

"It seems to me that this system spreads out the vote so much, that one man whispering to his friends can accumulate enough votes to be elected," observed Ninzi, son of a wealthy Anartu merchant.

"Except if anyone tells the election committee of the whisper campaign, the person is disqualified, and the larger the whisper campaign, the greater the chance it will be exposed."

"Who is to say that the representatives we elect won't demand independence?" asked Dumuninurta, an imposing man of about thirty with a scar interrupting the beard covering his right cheek.

"Nothing. Voters should vote for people based on wisdom and capability, not based on whether they want or do not want independence. It is a complex matter, for Sumilara needs the mainland for iron, steam engines, and many other things; there is no

such thing as complete independence for any province. Véspa needs Arjakwés and Arjakwés needs Véspa."

"But they are both Eryanɛ places; they are treated fairly," persisted Dumuninurta.

"Perhaps the day when all provinces will be treated fairly is coming. Sumilara will have the same number of representatives in the royal consultative assembly as any other province; one per five thousand people. Its provincial assembly will have one per five hundred, like all other provincial assemblies. Its education is improving, its access to steam vehicles and telephones and electricity are all improving . . . times are changing."

"But is it not true that your family brought the technology that the army used to crush us, seven years ago?" he replied.

"My family has brought new knowledge about healing, génadɛmas, printing presses, and steam engines as well. The army has used it to become more powerful, but the printing press and radio make the people more powerful in return."

Dumuninurta smiled. "A clever answer. Are you now coming here to make up for the Battle of the Palisade?"

That startled Thornton. "No, I am here because my Bahá'í brothers and sisters have shown me the beauty of the people and culture of Sumilara." He said that slowly in Sumi so that he could get the Sumi right.

There was a silence in the hall after that, for how he said it was as impressive as what he said. Very few Eryanɛ ever learn Sumi.

"Do we know how much freedom the provincial assembly will have?" asked Gibila.

Thornton looked at Modobéru, who replied, “The role of the Consultative Assembly started small and grew every year. I am sure provincial assemblies and this new royal assembly will start small as well and gain more power as they become experienced. That is the way with everything.”

“Especially if they remain obedient.”

“And if this goes well, perhaps the army can leave the island.” That was a risky reply but it surprised Dumuninurta and silenced him. Modobéru seemed relieved that the line of questions had ended.

“What about village councils?” asked Ekur.

“The legislation says nothing about them, so the local lord can decide whether to form a village council or not. Even if the people are voting for only one or two representatives, the result will be a list of dozens of people who received votes. The law says the results of the election should be published, so all will know the results. It would be easy for a lord to appoint the top five or seven vote getters as a council.”

“Then why does Mɛlwika still have half its Council appointed?” asked Lé’u.

“The Lords have said that this election will elect all seven. That is up to the lords.”

“If there is to be no campaigning, why has the palace published a description of ‘the top one hundred of Mɛddoakwés’?” asked Sisugal.

“I saw that today and was not pleased. They plan to publish similar lists for all the cities. They arranged the names in alphabetical order, but they included a few on the list whom some will say do not deserve the honor, while not including others. I fear it will look like interference rather than assistance.”

“It already does,” agreed Sisugal.

The questions continued and began to become repetitive of the points he had already made. Finally the afternoon session came to an end and the crowd began to filter out. Dumuninurta came up front to talk to Thornton. He was not one of the regular students, but an addition who had come to the public lecture, and he looked a bit menacing.

Dumuninurta looked at the young gɛdhému for a moment. “Your sister saved my life,” he finally said. He opened his robe slightly to reveal a long, wicked sword scar across his chest.

“That is quite a wound.”

“From the Battle of the Palisade. I was in charge of the middle section when the army broke through. I remember seeing you there.”

Thornton nodded hesitantly. “I was there. The army drafted me.”

“You, your rover, and your radios.”

“Exactly.”

Dumuninurta extended his hands. “And now we are at peace.” They shook once Thornton overcame his surprise. “Thank your sister for me.”

“I will. She’ll be here next month at Anartu Hospital to teach the nurses. You can thank her yourself.”

“Perhaps I will. This wound was so large and deep I literally watched my life flowing away and I prayed a soldier would come along and finish me quickly. But a friend stopped the bleeding with my cotton armor and got me to the army doctors, including your sister soon after. Infection immediately set in and again I thought I would

die, but her skill and medicines conquered them. I have recovered completely now and have two children who never would have lived otherwise."

"The Great One in Heaven has blessed you."

"Very true. I hope the palace will feel that way, also. I am the hereditary lord of Lilalara. Perhaps some day I will claim the city for my own again."

"Have you visited? It is an amazing ruin, still impressive to this day. We have persuaded the local people to preserve it."

"Thank you for that."

Another student was pressing up behind him, so Dumuninurta bowed and left. It was Dumugal. "Honored, can I interview you further about this subject? I want to get an article written for the *Herald* and the deadline for typesetting is tomorrow night." He spoke excellent Eryani.

"Yes, perhaps this evening? But I'd like to see what you quote me as saying."

"Well . . . Governor Modobéru will read it before it is printed."

"Still, I want to be sure I am quoted accurately. It is hard to write things down when someone is speaking."

"Especially because speech does not always sound eloquent in print. I need to do some editing."

"Of course, but I'd like to see it. That won't take long, will it? I could look at it before or after class tomorrow afternoon."

"Very well. This evening will be fine; nine bells?"

Thornton nodded. "Excellent."

Modobéru had been discretely waiting at a distance, but now approached, so Dumugal also bowed and left. Randu, who had been speaking to someone else but had been watching to see whether Thornton needed any translation help, also came over.

"That was excellent," said Modobéru. "We've educated men who reside in at least six towns; not all of them live here in Anartu. And I am very pleased Dumugal plans to write an article for the next issue of the *Herald.* We badly need written materials to train election committees."

"Have you heard about radio broadcasts yet?"

"No. It is ridiculous to not allow Sumi radio broadcasts on the grounds that five years have not yet elapsed since the radio was introduced. But I have hopes the palace will overturn the decision. Villages and stores will buy radios quite quickly."

The island has five weather spotters, so we know there are already radios in five places."

"Any news about election committees?" asked Randu.

"Indeed." Modobéru handed him an envelope.

"What's this?"

"Open it and find out. It appoints you to the provincial election commission."

"Oh?" Randu opened the envelope and pulled out a typed letter. He read it and nodded. "But how can I do this? I'm teaching a two-week course, then I'm scheduled to translate for Soru's course!"

"Duty to your people calls," replied Modobéru.

"We can get another translator," replied Thornton. "But what about village election committees?"

"They've appointed ten out of the eighteen." Modobéru pulled several pages from a pocket in his robe and showed them. "Most of the people I suggested were accepted, and a lot of Bilara Bahá'ís as well. You can see that the committees are complete near Anartu, Bilara, and Amurueqluma, where there are people with grange experience. I suppose the others will be appointed by next week. Meanwhile, this letter says we need to go find the members, find out if they accept, get them together quickly and train them, and get them to pledge to come here a week before the election for a big training. I'll work on the big cities along the coast, but the other three members of the commission will have to divide up the other places."

Randu nodded. "Alright, I can do my fair share. I see there are a lot of Bilarans who have been appointed to the committees along the Anar River. I'll go to Bilara and determine whether they accept, and go to those committees."

"Excellent. I'm sure Ninazu will do the same in the Amurueqluma area. I want to be sure Sumilara is ready and participates in this election fully. An election without any controversy will be a big success."

On the second to last Primdiu of ɛjnaménu—the 19th of the month—Esto smiled on Mɛlwika. For its annual town meeting, the rain stopped, the sun came out, and it was warm. The Arjakwés still roared down its gluba and across the town at flood stage, sandbags helping to keep it in its banks, but the city's adult population surged across the bridges and headed for the natural amphitheater that had been built into the hillside just below the gluba. Chris was there to greet them.

"Good afternoon, fellow citizens," he began, speaking slowly to keep the Italian-English accent of his Eryani to a minimum. "Esto has smiled on our city today and given us warmth and spring so that we can assemble for this town meeting. We have much to be proud of. Two weeks from today, the election system we have pioneered on this world will be tried in every town and village. The representatives will meet a month later to choose the representatives to gather in the royal House of Commons and will constitute provincial consultative assemblies for approving provincial budgets and planning provincial development. Mɛddwoglubas has announced that its seven local representatives will serve as a city council. We had hoped that Prime Minister Wɛranolubu would be able to chair this meeting, but he is so busy planning the voting that he could not, so I have had to substitute.

"Here in Mɛlwika, the top seven vote getters will serve as the Mɛlwika City Council with Lord John and myself. The large size of Mɛlwika has forced us to divide the city, because it now has 14,500 people and will elect twenty-nine provincial representatives. The eastern, northern, and southern districts are all about equally large and will each elect nine provincial representatives, the two highest vote getters also serving on the City Council. The thousand residents of southern Ménwika—mainly the villages of Bolakra and Dɛksawsupɛrakwa—will elect one to the City Council and two provincial representatives. When you go to vote you will fill out ballots with spaces to vote for the number of provincial representatives; nine spaces for most of you. You must vote for people who live in your district, or that vote will be discarded. The polling places will have lists of voters in your district, so you will be able to scan the list if you can read. There will be high school students available to help you otherwise.

“Who can you vote for? The law passed by the Consultative Assembly says that currently sitting lords and priests are ineligible to serve in the House of Commons. The children and wives of lords and priests can serve. Women can vote and be voted for. Our city is one of the more advanced, hence the importance of Mɛlwikans to take very seriously the eligibility of women. If any women at all are to serve in the House of Commons, they will probably be elected by us. Considering that half this world is female, we can be sure that there are many, many women who would make wise and capable members of the provincial assembly and the city council.

“In deciding who to vote for, we should not attempt to influence each other; rather, each should vote for those who combine the necessary qualities of selfless devotion, a well-trained mind, recognized ability, and mature experience. We want wise, honest, fair, and capable leaders for this city. The greatest gift all of you can give Mɛlwika is the collective gift of wise leaders, chosen by all of us after prayer and reflection.

“We are gathered here today to talk about our city’s future and its needs. The Bureau of Statistics has made it official: Mɛlwika has three hundred more people than Mɛddoakwés and five hundred more than Ora. We are the world’s largest city. Our people are the richest and best educated in the world. It is fitting, therefore, that we consult together about our future. There are two microphones, one to the right of the stage and one to the left, and I will alternate. If you wish to speak, come forward.” Many began to hurry forward. “Skandastɛru,” he said, calling on the manager of the eastern shore’s electrical system, who happened to make it to the right hand microphone first.

“Thank you, my Lord.” Skandastɛru held up a newspaper. “I am still scandalized by the Royal Herald of a week and a half ago and its article ‘Mɛlwika’s hundred most prominent citizens.’ It is a blatant attempt at electioneering, and by the palace no less! I will grant that they largely were fair. But they excluded Lasu Turbulu, and I think one can argue that someone who has come close to being elected to the City Council in the past and who runs a large business with fifteen employees deserves to be considered in the top hundred. Furthermore, they only included two women on the list when there are several more that should be included; doctors, heads of génadɛmas, and principals of schools, for example. They also included Soru Dénujénésɛ, who has a house here but doesn’t live here! I also found it strange that the only Sumi included was on the City Council; based on the size of the Sumi community here, the list should have had three or four. So the ‘hundred most prominent’ is really not an accurate portrayal of our city and people should not take it seriously when deciding who to vote for.”

“Thank you, Skandastɛru. I was tempted to say something, but really was not sure what to say. Next, please.”

A young man stepped to the left-hand microphone. “I am Tritusunu Khunu, and I chose my last name because that is what I am: I hunt. I want to thank the lords for forcing the hunters to take several steps, three years ago, that we did not want to take. I refer to their declaring an area along the border with the Dwobɛrgonɛ a no-hunting park. Lord Miller also has started to reforest areas cut for timber and now cuts the forest in stripes to protect the soil from the rain. I wander Mɛlwika’s mountains every week and after three years I think I can say that the number of deer and antelope are slowly on the increase again. The stripes of grass and forbs give them food and the park gives them a refuge.

These very simple things are helping the animals and us. We no longer see mastodon in the high meadows and this is a worry; they are exciting quarries and we should make sure they prosper as well. So perhaps Mɛlwika's future needs to include the big beasts as well." He sat to a few laughs. Chris nodded to the next man at the right-hand microphone.

"I am Mimɛnéstu Dhogunbulu," he said. As indicated by his new family name, he was a brick maker; the city's primary supplier, in fact. "In the last two elections, several people have complained that the city's expertise and resources were going elsewhere to support businesses and factories in other places. The argument has been fierce; should we grow ourselves faster, or spread the wealth? I think we now see that spreading the wealth has not hurt us. We continue to grow. If anything, we now must grow more slowly, as we are the largest city and will probably remain the largest city. So I want to ask whether the city government can establish an office that would help Mɛlwika businesses establish branches elsewhere. The best example of this is the Home Improvement store, with branch stores in three other cities. Because of help from the génadɛma and its engineering school, I can make bricks for about a third less money than traditional methods. I'd like to open branch operations in Ora, Néfa, Pértatranisér, and other cities, or perhaps get contracts that involve shipping Mɛlwika bricks there; believe it or not, I think I can ship bricks all the way to Ora and still make a profit! Bricks in different places are different colors; why not ship them between cities so we can obtain bricks of many colors? But I need help to do this." He walked back to his seat with strong applause, and Chris nodded in appreciation. It was a good idea. He nodded to the next speaker, Okwané.

"I am Okwané, wife of the priest Sarébɛjnu," she began. "If there is one thing we can do to make our city better, it is to make it cleaner and more beautiful. A cleaner city

will smell less and endanger our health less. A more beautiful city will make it more attractive for new people and give us a worldwide reputation. Right now, Ora is said to be the most beautiful city, or perhaps Isurdhuna. Why not Mɛlwika? Our streets are paved and we have many beautiful buildings. If our city employed just five or six men to sweep and wash the streets, they would stay much cleaner. If we paid owners of houses ten dhanay every summer to fill flower pots and hired a few men to fill city owned planters, we could transform Mɛlwika into a paradise. We can afford it; why not do it?"

She nodded and walked back to her seat next to Sarébɛjnu, who nodded to her. "Génésé," Chris said.

The lead widow approached the other microphone. She was in her mid forties—she wasn't sure exactly how old she was—but looked twenty years older because of her hard life. She had three teeth left in her mouth. She was also erect and proud. "I am very pleased to hear people emphasize women today. But there is much we need to do to give women the opportunities they deserve, especially in Mɛlwika. This city has more women in business than men; have you ever thought about that? I refer to the five hundred independent businesses owned by women who take children into their houses during the day. We have two full-time inspectors—both men—to make sure their businesses are keeping our children safe. But these are the poorest businesses in town. In some cases, these women have no other source of income, and they must live very frugally.

"What other businesses do women have? Mine is the largest and it does a very traditional thing for women; it provides cooked food. Several women own small, private businesses for cleaning houses. I think you now see the picture I am showing you:

women have opportunities, but they are opportunities women are expected to pursue. Thank Esto we have two or three women doctors and a few women teachers at the génadɛma. But where are the women owners of stalls in the market? Where are the women who own factories? We have a long way to go, a long, long way.

"How can we get there? First, we all must change our attitudes. Husbands must encourage their wives. Wives must expand their imaginations. The city can provide more free adult education courses for women who do not want to go to courses filled with men. It is often said that most people in Mɛlwika can read and write, but most *men* in Mɛlwika can read and write. Most women cannot. This must be the focus of an effort. Perhaps an office to encourage women's businesses could be set up. There is much we can all do to empower the half of this city that still does not contribute its all to Mɛlwika's progress."

She walked back to her seat amid surprisingly strong applause. Chris smiled and glanced at Lébé, who was vibrating with excitement at Génésé's words. Lébé probably had inspired the speech, for she had met with Génésé several times in the last few months. "Lasu," said Chris, nodding to their curmudgeonly cheesemaker, who was next.

"I want to thank Génésé and suggest another possible way the city can help our businesses. The engineering and business schools here have immense expertise about ways to improve businesses, either through new machines or through new accounting and business techniques. A few of our businesses have benefited; others have not. Since Mɛlwika has embarked on the path of spreading its technology and techniques around the world, let us at least make sure we stay ahead of everyone else. We can be the place the new machines and techniques are tried first, and that will keep us in the lead.

"So I would like to propose that the city establish an office of Business Development to encourage and help pay for any improvements in our businesses. In the last few years we have argued over whether the city should regulate construction and businesses. I think we learned the hard way that we need regulations to protect us from illnesses and poor quality construction. The new buildings in town are worth more because they have been built according to codes. Let us use government to help businesses more, so our city can grow and become more wealthy." Lasu nodded thanks and returned to his seat. Chris was impressed that the cheesemaker had offered such a useful idea.

"Albé." He was surprised that so many of the speakers were women. Ornéstu's former secretary, she was now principal of the largest elementary school.

The thirty year old looked nervous as she stepped up to the microphone. "There is nothing more important to the future of this city than the education of its children. When I arrived here seven years ago, I would never have thought or understood that, but since then I have been working with children every day. I've watched them discover the world around them, the stories they can read, the skills they can learn, and the joy they feel. It has been an amazing experience. Teaching is the most honorable of professions and I hope more people decide to go into it. The pay is alright; the city should increase it.

"One thing that makes me very sad, though, is that not all children go to school. I can tell the difference almost immediately when I talk to a child on the street, and I immediately think 'what's this child going to do when he grows up? How will he support his family? Will he return to his parents' village and become a dirt farmer?' And I am saddened to think about his struggles.

“My proposal is very simple: it is time to make schooling mandatory. All children must be required to attend school. Otherwise they will not be equal to their friends and will be disadvantaged. Mɛlwika needs educated citizens, and we have a responsibility to provide the city with them. I don’t know how high the requirement should go; not all of high school. Perhaps we should start with age twelve and raise it gradually. That’s my suggestion.”

She walked back to her seat amid lots of whispers, comments, and a few surprised expressions. But no one jeered.

Chris turned to the next man, who complained about how his neighbors were too busy to be friendly and socialize with him or anyone else because the city worked people too hard. It was a common complaint; people in Mɛlwika earned more money partly because they worked more hours. The next speaker also had a complaint: that the house he had built had been shoddy and he had had to spend almost a thousand dhanay to fix it up. That was a common complaint about the city’s older houses as well, with their uneven floors, crooked walls, and unreliable electrical wiring. Potanu, the fire chief, reminded everyone about fire safety and Wéroilubu, their new police chief, spoke about crime, the need to be alert, and the need to illuminate more streets electrically, especially during the eclipse. There was time for four more comments and the crowd began to get restless. The clock in Foundry Square struck three; they had been going almost two hours.

“This has been one of the most successful town forums we have ever had,” Chris said. “But we’ve been talking for two hours. We’ll have another one next Primdiu afternoon and I hope all of you can come to that one as well. In between, we have several

walls where posters can be put up. One is near Temple Square, one is in Citadel Square, and the third is in Foundry Square. Materials are available at the high school and the elementary school across the river. We encourage people to write down their ideas for the city and put them up, where everyone can see them. You can also write a letter to the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs;* they want to publish a page of letters about the city in the next issue. And you can always write the Mayor and City Council any time with an idea, suggestion, or complaint. Since you are electing your City Council, they are your servants.

"Thank you, everyone, for coming. Please come back next Primdiu. May the rest of your day be blessed and happy."

Chris stepped down from the podium and walked to his family while ten thousand adults rose and headed home. He walked to Lébé. "You must be pleased. So many speakers were women."

"I know! I encouraged every one of them to get up there quickly and offer their ideas!"

Chris chuckled. "You did? That explains it. I'm glad you did, usually we get one woman to speak at most."

"I know, and we did better this time. This matches my strategy for expanding the Women's Génadɛma."

"May isn't pleased with your approach."

"I know. I want to keep the 'elitist' students that have always been the backbone of the women's génadɛma, but they can serve as teachers of other women. We won't be offering ordinary adult education classes; the classes will have an extra twist because they will be oriented around women and their needs, and they will be intelligent classes."

Chris nodded. “Interesting. Well, you’ve doubled its size; it has worked.” He looked at Thornton. “Are you glad you postponed your trip to Sumilara?”

“I think so. It was good to see the meeting; now I’ll have more to talk about there.”

Lébé rolled her eyes. “Five towns in ten days, twelve hours of classes in each, three hours each on elections. It’s going to be intense. I think the kids and I should stay in Bilara!”

“Suit yourself,” replied Thornton. “Sumilara will be better prepared for the election than a lot of other provinces.”

The classroom in Bilara’s schoolhouse was filled with tables against the windows. Outside, hundreds of faces peered in through the glass panes, watching the tellers place votes in piles, one for each person. Some piles were tall; most were short. Watching the entire process were the election committee members, the village’s lord, and a few outsiders, including Thornton and Lébé. The kids were playing in the classroom across the hall.

Lébé stuck her head in to make sure the kids were fine, then came back to the counting room. “They’re getting tired. We’ll have to take them back to the Bahá'í Center pretty soon to go to bed.”

Thornton nodded. “Everything’s going fine here and there are plenty of people looking in, and the committee’s here, and there are other observers. We can get away.”

“It was kind of them to invite us. How much longer will they be counting?”

Thornton glanced at the huge pile of ballots. “I think in an hour they counted a third or a quarter, so there’s a lot of work ahead.”

“We can’t stay until the end.”

Thornton felt his cell phone vibrating in his pocket. In public places he never let it ring. He pointed to his pocket and started walking out of the room; Lébé followed. “Do you think it’s dad?”

“Probably,” Thornton replied. “It’s midnight in Mɛlwika. They’ve probably finished the count there.”

They stepped outside the school. The sun had set an hour earlier; the legislation specified that polling places were to be open from sunrise to sunset. The western sky was still brightly aglow from the sun, which had not set yet just twenty-five kilometers away. A lone cloud was still brightly yellow-orange and would probably glow for another hour. Overhead, Skanda was half-full and so bright one’s night-adjusted eyes watered when looking at it. Thornton pulled out his phone; he could see the number that had called him was his father’s, but the call had gone to voice mail. He pushed redial.

“Hey, Thornton!” said Chris in English. “Thanks for calling back!”

“Thanks for calling us; are the votes counted?”

“Yes, and I must congratulate you; you are a representative to the provincial assembly.”

“Really? How bizarre!”

“So is Lua. The vote was very interesting. Lébé should hear this—”

“Hold on.” Thornton pushed the speakerphone feature and turned down the volume. “Go ahead.”

"Five women out of twenty-nine representatives," Chris continued. "Génésé, Saréidukter, Albé, and Lua, in that order. Okwané came in thirty-third; pretty close. Génésé came in seventh, so she was elected to the City Council, too."

"Wow!" said Lébé, excited.

"Saréidukter came in tenth in the vote, so she gets to retire from the City Council. Albé was twentieth, Lua twenty-third."

"Who are the other members?" asked Thornton.

"Kérdu, Estanu, Potanu, Lasu, Ornéstu, and Dumuzi. Add Génésé, John, and myself, and we have nine. Lubanu and Mitru came in eighth and ninth. I'd rather have them on the council than Lasu, but what can you do."

"He seemed to be more restrained at the town meeting. Mitru will be disappointed, but I guess he'll have more time for other things."

"So, Estanu came in second?" asked Lébé. "That's not good, for the mayor."

"I agree. The new city wall has been seen as an unnecessary expense, the City Hall has been much more expensive than expected, and last year's epidemic was the result of his push to reduce regulations. He has lost some popularity. But he's still number two, which isn't too bad."

"How many votes were cast?"

"Turnout was seventy percent; down from seventy-three percent last year. That surprised me; I thought the provincial assembly election would increase interest in voting."

"If there's no turnover, I suspect turnout will drop," said Thornton. "The counting started about an hour ago here in Bilara. I think *everyone* voted. *Everyone.* And we talked

to Randu a few hours ago; he's in Anartu. He says the reports indicate that voting is going well in every village on the island."

"The education effort worked. Did the Queen's speech help?"

"I doubt almost anyone heard it. If she had given it two days earlier instead of the day before the voting, they could have translated and disseminated it."

"We talked to Amos a little while ago. He said that everyone in Pértatranisér either listened or heard about it later and they were excited to go vote, even if this was their second chance. And Pɛrku told Amos that in Néfa, everyone was voting. Her speech was very effective. Kɛkanu's been working the telephones, talking to every provincial election commission, and he has been delivering the news every hour. There are a few problems, but basically, everyone is voting."

"Even the Tutanɛ?"

"No, not so much, they are just appointing their clan chiefs as their representatives, which is what the clan chiefs are anyway. Two villages in Kɛrda are not voting because there was too much local opposition and election committees couldn't be appointed. One village in Pɛnkakwés got confused and they're voting tomorrow."

Thornton chuckled. "Never too late."

"So how does it feel, being elected?"

"I don't know! I'm surprised. I'm glad the vote has gone so well. That's the *real* revolution, dad; this world now has elections."

"I know. It's amazing; I've been praying all evening during the count. But now we have to make this system work, because if it doesn't, everything could collapse. It's new and a lot of mistakes will be made. That's what worries me."

“You’re right. We’ll pray, too,” said Thornton, soberly.

Reread and edited, 6/2/13, 8/14/17, 11/16/24, 9/21/26

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Dilemmas

Late Bolérɛnménu/mid April, Yr 11/629

Lébé hurried over to Roktanu's office in the Humanities Building just a few meters from the Women's Génadɛma. When she entered, the editor of the *Mɛlwika Encyclopedia* was looking over the stack of pages in elegant Sumi handwriting. Thornton arrived about the same time; Lébé had called him because Chris was in Mɛlita for the afternoon to resolve details for construction of a new shopping center.

Thornton took a pile of pages and flipped through them "Beautiful handwriting! And I can tell this is really literary, 'high Sumi.' I can barely figure out some of it."

"Rare words," agreed Lébé, who, like her husband, had learned quite a lot of Sumi in the last half year. "Let's see Rébu's letter."

"Alright." Roktanu handed it to them and they read:

Dear Professor Roktanu:

I am immensely excited by the Mɛlwika Encyclopedia project. It has the potential vastly to increase the availability of knowledge around this world and educate the literate public in all sorts of subjects, not only about the 'new knowledge' but about Gɛdhéma and our own world. The articles we have received in this remote outpost are being read with fascination by many.

But I have two concerns. The first is the availability of the encyclopedia in Sumi. To remedy that, I enclose translations of ten of the articles you released three months ago. If they are acceptable to you, I will translate more of them. The second is recording of the

history of the Sumis in this world. I see from two of the articles we have already received in Moruagras that original works are being composed for the encyclopedia. They are excellent. I hope the enclosed article about Sumi poetry will be accepted as a humble contribution to your project. If so, I would welcome a list of topics we exiles could provide.

With much confidence and faith in the future of your endeavors, I remain your servant,

--Rébu son of Kingu, of Sumilara

"So, what do we do?" asked Roktanu.

"I think there are several questions," said Lébé. "Are the articles any good?"

"We should ask Skandu about that," replied Thornton. "I'd hesitate to mail this entire package to him, though. I could have the geological survey staff photograph the pages with our digital camera and print out a copy to mail to him."

"If it's good, you could print as many copies as needed, too," said Roktanu. "That would spare us having to find someone to recopy the text onto mimeograph stencils."

"Knowing Rébu, it'll be good, but in places it'll be problematic," said Lébé, and Thornton nodded at that. "I bet the Eryani version of the 'Sumi Poetry' article doesn't say exactly the same thing as the Sumi version."

"So we need to talk to the army," said Roktanu.

"Definitely," agreed Thornton. "Let's keep the original here, make a copy, and send the whole thing to Skandu so he can talk to Governor Modobéru, General Wéywiku, and anyone else who has to be involved."

“I think we ought to ask Randu, too,” added Lébé. “He’s becoming quite knowledgeable and experienced.”

“Good idea,” said Thornton. “Shall I take the whole thing to the survey right now? I bet they can get this back to you, Roktanu, tomorrow morning.”

“Good; I can’t read a word of it! The best I can do is recognize a few characters from the old Eryani spelling system, which is enough for me to know whether the pages are right side up or not! I wish we could just burn this and forget about it. Publishing articles on Sumi poetry will anger our Eryanɛ subscribers and publishing a Sumi version may endanger the entire project.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll manage this one,” pledged Thornton. “We’ll have to tell dad when he gets home tonight.” He took the packet and headed back to the survey labs, which occupied most of the ground floor of the physical sciences building next door.

He immediately took it to the technician who was responsible for using Thornton’s old digital camera to photograph pages, upload them to the laptop, and print them. The student started photographing the pages immediately; every set of ten he uploaded and started printing, so within a few minutes the inkjet printer was busy as well. Thornton went back to his work “auditing” maps, which involves looking over each twenty by forty centimeter quadrangle, checking the symbols and altitudes against the field notebooks, and occasionally turning to aerial photographs to verify some information. Over the winter they had mapped the entire Arjakwés Valley and most of the eastern shoreline, with preliminary work wrapping its way around the western shore as well.

A change in the rhythm of sounds made him look up. Someone had arrived; he was surprised to see it was General Roktɛkɛstɛr. He walked to the general, so the general wouldn't walk toward him and the technician photographing pages in Sumi. "Lord General, what brings you here! It's marvelous to see you. Have you seen the maps of Ornakwés?"

"You have more? I haven't seen any for three or four weeks."

"We have finals now. Come see." Thornton led Roktɛkɛstɛr over to a huge set of map cabinets and opened a particular drawer. He reached in and pulled out a pile of maps. "Let's spread them out." Thornton began assembling a big map from the squares; he was good at quickly laying pieces in their place.

"Wow; this is incredible." Roktɛkɛstɛr pulled out his reading glasses and leaned close to look. He started at his own villa and nodded as he recognized the squares representing each building. Then he looked southward. "You have the latest farm roads on this map!"

"We updated them from aerial photos Okpétu took last week. We're rephotographing the southern edge of the Arjakwés Valley once a month because the farm lanes and plowed areas are expanding fast."

"Yes, the army started graveling Route 5 last week at the Mɛlita and Morituora ends; oh, I see you already have it marked as a gravel road! It will be finished in two or three months."

"The telephone and electric lines are scheduled to be finished by the end of the summer. Behruz is watching the construction of villas very closely; the gas line to ɛjnopéla paid one third of its construction cost this winter, because it was cold and the

villas wanted so much gas. He may be able to put in a gas line along the lower half of it in a few years."

"Amazing." Roktɛkɛstɛr put the maps down. "But I didn't come here about Ornakwés. I just met with Prince Miméjékwɛs an hour ago. He's on his way to the Long Valley again for a month. He wants you to take a geology team there again with a surveying team. He wants all the township borders marked; he's changed his mind about abolishing them, all of them will have lords after all. He wants a thorough exploration of their features, so the valley can be properly mapped in the next year. Can you go next week?"

Thornton was startled by that. The fact that Roktɛkɛstɛr had come to see him in person indicated that he was not supposed to say no. "Ah; what about Rudhisuru? He's available and can do an excellent job."

"He can, but the Prince has asked for you."

"Well . . . you put me in a difficult position, because I wish to obey both the Crown Prince and Her Majesty."

"What do you mean? She would back up this request, I'm sure."

"But I've been elected to the provincial assembly, remember, and Her Majesty has commanded everyone who was elected to meet in Mɛddoakwés next week, probably for two weeks. I would be disobedient to her if I went to the Long Valley."

"I see what you are saying." Roktɛkɛstɛr considered. "Alright, I'll explain that to the Prince. I'm sure he will understand. When can you make it?"

"Let's not take a chance, shall we. Give me three weeks. The second week of Dhébɛlménu."

“Alright. I’m sure that will be alright. The surveyors have already marked some town boundaries and many, many farmers’ plots.”

“How many farmers do you have?”

“So far, about eleven hundred; seven hundred from Kɛrda and four hundred from Véspa. Twenty-eight thousand agris have been assigned to them. Most are young men with no families or families they can’t support on the land they previously had. Fourteen old houses have been assigned estates, and most of them are very pleased to see most of their land filled already.”

“That’s pretty good. The Arjakwés has thirty new estates and about thirty thousand assigned agris. So the Long Valley has almost as much new farmland and the estates there have a lot more farmers.”

“Well, this area had already expanded its agriculture enormously. Three weeks, huh; you can’t make it sooner?”

“Lord General, three weeks should be fast enough, right? I need time to plan the expedition, arrange the supplies, and draw up a timetable for exploration, in and around my service on the new provincial assembly.”

“Alright, alright. I’ll tell the Prince. He can live with that.”

“Very good, thank you.”

Roktɛkɛstɛr looked at the maps of his township again. “Can you get me a new map, too?”

“We’ll send it to you in a few days. It’s looking really good. I see all of Ornakwés is now assigned.”

"Every agri. It took a long time. The village has almost two thousand people, now, and three factories. I have a very reliable headman. Of course, now I'm being pressured to allow the four men elected as representatives to the provincial assembly to serve as a Council with the headman!" He shook his head. "And they have the example of Mɛlita, where it works quite well. I suppose I'll have to cave in to that, some time."

"It makes governance harder in some ways, but easier in others," said Thornton. "It's good to see you."

"Thank you. You have an incredibly impressive lab here. My congratulations on all your hard work." Roktɛkɛstɛr offered his hands and they shook. Then they exchanged closing words and he left.

The general's visit distracted Thornton so much, he had trouble focusing on the maps. He tried to return to his chores, but after a few minutes he said goodbye to everyone and headed home. The eerie light told him that Skanda had covered about half the sun; he glanced up to look and verified his impression. The sun winked out completely a few seconds before he stepped into the house. He looked at the solar corona and the ring of sunsets around Skanda, which were always awe-inspiring to see. Then he stepped inside.

The World Table had begun, but Lébé was sitting with Chris summarizing the discussion of Rébu's manuscript. Chris was nodding. Then he turned to Thornton and said "So, you've photographed the pages?"

"Pretty much. They'll be done in another hour."

"Good. Roktanu should send the original to Skandu, not a copy. We don't need the original once it has been copied and stored on the aliens' computers. He should write

Skandu, not either of you; Rébu is still a dangerous man and we don't want to have any direct contact with him."

"Do you think they'll refuse permission to use his articles?" asked Lébé.

"Maybe. You never know. The army is in a difficult position. There is literally no remote place in the world, any more. There's daily bus service from Mɛddoakwés to Moruagras, and there's talk of Mitru extending the run to the Long Valley, then up the other side to Isurdhuna, and from there to Néfa and Ora. It's a matter of time before the reverse direction gets service as well. One could pay two dhanay, leave Anartu in the morning, and get to Moruagras by ferryboat and bus in about six or seven hours, getting there about the same time of day one left! I think I heard that a few Sumis have already stopped by and tried to visit with the exiles. I don't know what they will do."

"They can't release them," said Thornton.

"No. Not yet. But they might crack down about everything else. The exiles seem to have settled into Moruagras pretty well; what was the most remote and impoverished Tutanɛ village in the world probably has the highest literacy rate of all the tribes!"

"Rébu has a wife and two kids," said Thornton. "He might not want to leave even if he could. I bet Sumi radio broadcasts on channel 5 can be picked up there, and they can get Sumi newspapers and letters by mail."

"He's a born troublemaker, and having two kids won't change that. We have to be careful. Let Roktanu write and send the original manuscript, and we'll see what Skandu can manage." Chris turned toward the radio, where Kɛkanu had started interviewing Génésé, who was by far the most successful older woman in the world who had no aristocratic blood or relationship to the gɛdhémɛs.

“Dad, General Roktɛkɛstɛr visited me a little while ago. Prince Mɛméjékwu wants me to take a geological survey team to the Long Valley.”

“I know; Roktɛkɛstɛr came here with me, his driver following along in a second car. The Long Valley’s settling pretty well, though twenty-eight thousand agris is only five percent of the valley floor. It’ll take decades, which is probably just as well.”

“What will this do to crop prices?”

Chris shrugged. “Eventually drive them down, of course. We’re alright this year, I think, because the exceptionally cold winter destroyed a lot of winter crops. The replanting is just coming to harvest south of Mɛlita and will be harvested in Mɛlita in two or three weeks. I was there all day today hearing various reports of the local granges; they’re willing to exchange information with each other if I’m present! Winter wheat will fetch an excellent price. Demand for cooking oil has tripled in the last two years and prices were very strong last year, so a lot of oil seed crops have been planted. I announced that Mɛlita will get a corn processing plant this summer; Amos is coming for a month and a half in late spring to set it up. It’ll make corn oil, syrup, starch, and meal, plus ground corn cobs, which makes an excellent absorbant. It sounds like we can push up demand for corn and alleviate oversupply a bit.”

“We’re lucky Amos can do these things,” said Thornton. “When does he go to Khɛrmdhuna?”

“He should be there now; he left Pértatranisér this morning. I’m rather worried. We can’t afford to send him somewhere every time a village largely becomes Bahá'í.”

“Why is his trip costing us money?” asked Lébé.

“Because it is our fortune that’s paying for the two factories. The shoe and boot factory started producing two months ago and so far, demand for their product has been weak. We paid for the heavy leather sewing and cutting machines that automated the plant. Khɛrmdhuna’s got the high quality leather for shoes, so I hope they’ll do alright eventually. The new plant will spin wool into thread and weave wool cloth, which requires extensive modification of the cotton weaving equipment. They’ve got access to the requisite wool, some very high in quality, so it seems like a sound investment.” Chris shrugged. “We’ll see. Bilara wants a factory—Sumilara’s first—and their Bahá'í community has doubled, thanks to your visits during the fast. I think we can afford to help them set up a factory of some sort, especially if Amos helps plan it.”

“We get the money back, don’t we?” asked Lébé.

“We should. We’re a partner in all of them, which means we put up the money to buy the equipment, the village puts up the labor, and we split the profits for at least five years. But the two factories in Khɛrmdhuna will cost us fifty thousand altogether and the corn processing plant in Mɛlita may cost thirty thousand. How many facilities like that can we afford, especially if they don’t earn money right away?”

“Especially when we’re funding the génadɛma and the utility companies,” conceded Lébé.

The next week, Mitru Miller and Thornton Mennea drove together to Mɛddoakwés early in the morning for the opening day of the provincial assembly.

“I can’t imagine how this will work,” said Mitru, as they rolled down Route 2 to the capital. The morning “rush” of buses had passed, but there were a lot of wagons, bikes, and pedestrians on the road, so they had to watch their speed.

“What do you mean; that you think it’ll be a mess?”

“No, I don’t think that either, I just don’t know how you get one hundred eighteen representatives from all over the valley together and make them work together.”

“I scanned the list in the newspaper yesterday. Ten are Bahá'ís and about thirty are grange members, mostly grange council members. They have a lot of experience. I’d worry more about the provincial assemblies in Ora and Kɛrda; they have no democratic experience at all.”

“Yeah, I gather one village in Kɛrda still hasn’t voted. I guess they just won’t get services.”

Thornton smiled devilishly. “Dad told me that Her Majesty personally called Lord Viduféru of Albagras and told him that if his village didn’t vote in the next two weeks, he’d be demoted.”

“Really?”

“That’s what happened. He was the most conservative of the conservatives in the House of Lords. He prevented the vote. And that means whoever gets elected by the people will probably be angry, so that village will have trouble for a long time.”

“Why do you think Her Majesty is supportive of elections? I think it’s strange. The Prince seems lukewarm and most lords are angry.”

“Dad and Lua had a conversation about that right before the election, partly with Pɛrku. First, she’s a woman who came to power very young, so she has always relied on

her popularity to offset the domination of the lords. Second, Gawéstu and now Wɛrétrakɛstɛr constantly stressed the hymn about consulting with the people, and that became her shield against the lords, though she didn't really 'consult' with the people as much as maintain her popularity with them. Third, she's smart and sees where the new knowledge is going. How many women in their late forties wear eyeglasses and have learned to read and write in the new system? She's a smart, savvy lady. She wants to use the election system to move the kingdom forward—which means more tax money especially—and improve the lot of the poor. She really does seem to be concerned about the poor."

Mitru nodded. "She does. I suppose I shouldn't say this, but on three or four occasions I've gotten calls from Estoiyaju saying 'why isn't there a bus from x to y?' I say, 'because I don't know whether there are enough riders.' And he replied 'Her Majesty will give you a thousand dhanay grant to try it.' And I always made a profit on the run within a few months, so after the first three calls I said, 'I'll start a run right away,' and if Estoiyaju offered money I said 'no, I have some left over from the last grant.' They were pretty smart suggestions, actually."

Thornton laughed. "That's amazing."

They slowed as they approached Nénaslua. The "elephant wash" on the left side of the road now had a permanent connection to the Arjakwés and was a pretty pond, though it was polluted and people fished in it anyway. The village on the right side had doubled in size over the last five years and now held a thousand people; many of the houses were larger than traditional ones and had wires carrying electricity or even telephones to them. Over half the village rode the bus to Mɛlwika to work every day.

They sped up a minute later and talked about their respective children as they flew through greening fields, corn and vegetables on the right, rice paddies on the left. They had to slow for Béranagrés in a few minutes and Thornton pointed to a building going up. "What's that?"

"Upholstery factory, to make seats for steam cars, tractors, buses, and trucks. I think they plan to make chairs and sofas, too."

"Sofas; no one had heard of them, and now people want them. What happened to the contract with Mɛgdɛntéstu?"

"He couldn't fulfill orders fast enough. So now he'll have competition for other furniture as well."

"And who owns the new factory; one of your brothers in law?"

"Of course. It's part of the Miller Tomi, which means Amos and Yimu will review it for efficiency periodically, and it'll pay the usual salary and benefits."

They continued past Béranagrés through rice paddies to Moritua, with its three factories and hundred new houses, then past it to Mɛddoakwés. They entered the built up area at New Square and parked on the plaza itself—it had parking spaces marked on it—and walked into the Royal Theatre, which would be the meeting place of the provincial assembly. It was already thronging with representatives, and as they entered another busload arrived from the west. They registered, put on name tags—another innovation for the Eryan, rarely used, except at national Bahá'í conventions—and began to mix with the other representatives.

"I don't understand this agenda at all," confided one representative to another. Thornton turned to see a short forty-ish man with a bright red goatee and an older,

reddish-black haired man nearby. Thornton pulled out the agenda and skimmed it; something neither of the other men were able to do, for they were laboriously sounding out every word. He listened to their progress as he and Mitru read. “Damn, we’ve been elected to do what? Endorse Duke Kandékwɛs’ ideas?”

Thornton turned to them. “I agree, it’s pretty thin, but maybe this is just a start. Sometimes, bodies like this start with small responsibilities and grow.”

The men looked at him. “You’re Lord Kristobéru’s son, right?” asked the red-haired man. He smiled. “I’m Khunu, son of Krénanu, from Dhébkua. Your father was immensely helpful to our village three years ago.”

“Oh, yes, during the long, cold spring. I heard about the trouble there.”

“I’m Estolubumu,” said the older, blackish-red haired man.

“The instigator of the trouble,” added Khunu. “He tore things down and I built them back up afterward!”

“A fighter for justice,” corrected Estolubumu.

“Pleased to meet you both; I’m Dhoru Ménnéa,” said Thornton, offering both hands, and they shook. “This is Mitru Millɛr.”

“The bus man?” said Khunu, with a smile. He offered his hands and Mitru shook hands with both men.

“Yes, the bus man,” said Mitru, with a smile.

“So, in Mɛlwika they elected future noblemen to the assembly!” Estolubumu’s tone suggested surprise and some disapproval.

“Crazy, isn’t it?” agreed Mitru. “Actually, I’m not nobility; I’m my father’s ninth son.”

“Ninth?” said Khunu, shocked.

“That’s right, your father had three wives and more sons than Gésɛlékwɛs Maj,” said Estolubumu. “But I guess Mɛlwika can afford them.”

“We all work very hard,” agreed Mitru.

“How are things in Dhébkua?” asked Thornton. “You have a road and power now, right?”

“Yes, of course, and regular bus service,” replied Khunu. “Our population had been shrinking, but this year it went up slightly, to 505 people, thanks to a bunch of children born in the village over the winter, and that meant we elected two representatives instead of one.”

“Fortunate for you,” added Estolubumu, who apparently had gotten the most votes. “Things have improved in some ways. Over the winter, about half of the farmers agreed to buy land south of the Arjakwés on a new estate bought by our lord. He arranged regular bus service to get us back and forth, so now we’re staying in the village and farming more fields. He has also settled some land disputes he had with some of us in favor of the farmers; he was very anxious to get our labor on the new estate! Of course, with the cold weather we never planted anything, until late ɛjnaménu, just two weeks before planting our old fields.”

“And we’re part of a grange as a result,” added Khunu. “We need tractors to farm the new land, so a ‘Dwobrébakwés Grange’ has been organized to serve both the villages near us and the villages directly south of us across the Arjakwés, and that means our old fields can be plowed by tractors as well. But of course everyone’s worrying about farm

prices, so half the farmers—the ones who haven't bought extra land—are bussing to work in Mɛddoakwés or Mɛlwika every day."

"So we now have a clock," added Estolubumu. "We need something to warn us when the buses are coming!"

"And you have a school?" asked Thornton.

"Yes, three classrooms. Just about all the younger ones go. The women want to be free of them. Our village women own almost thirty sewing machines!" said Khunu.

"Sounds like a lot of changes in three years."

"The late spring three years ago proved to be a blessing," replied Khunu. "Your father's grants, the Development Corps, money from Her Majesty . . . we are doing much better now."

"But Lord Wɛranobéru still exploits us," said Estolubumu. "Frankly, we'd do better without him entirely. The highest five vote getters were all good, experienced men, and we could run the place better that he and his headman can! Now that we have a list of high vote getters, we have a way to choose a village council. The five of us have already met together three times. After this useless assembly is over, we'll present some demands to him."

"Perhaps not 'demands,'" said Khunu.

"Speak for yourself. Is it true that on Gɛdhéma, lords have been abolished?"

"In some countries the titles and privileges have been completely ended. In others the titles remain, but not the privileges," replied Thornton.

"Then why has your father pushed this plan for the Old Houses to get all this new farmland?" exclaimed Estolubumu, raising his voice.

"Well, it's a plan to benefit farmers, too, because it has greatly increased the available farmland, and the land is being sold to farmers, not rented to them. The main idea is that with the land, the Old Houses won't get pensions for life or high paying jobs in the palace that require no work. The palace has cut its staffing by a quarter since fall, did you know that? The pensions are being replaced by development grants; if the lords want income, they have to make plans to help their people. Some are opening factories."

"Some of our people work at the big grain mill in Domamitrui," agreed Khunu. "One man even works in Akras at the wood-working factory there, making toothpicks, matches, wooden spoons, and such. Both of those places were built with development grants. And there's talk of a lace making factory in Bɛjakwa."

"Honoreds, if the five of us in Dhébkua wanted to organize a factory for the village, how would we do it?" asked Estolubumu.

"You're not an official village council, so it might be difficult," said Thornton.

Mitru shook his head. "Not at all, then they do it as a partnership of five men! The five of you can draw up a contract to work together and own something together. You probably want to give some ownership to the workers based on their positions and how long they have worked, also. Then you draw up a business plan and seek investment money."

"Money; from whom?"

"The Royal Development Bank, from the Development Corps, from the Prosperity Bank, from private investors such as myself, or a combination of them all. You'd need someone with a business course; that would help your proposal a lot. Lord Chris and his business students give them in Mɛddoakwés, Mɛlwika, and ɛjnopéla."

“Let us convene!” shouted Duke Kandékwɛs just then.

“We should talk more,” volunteered Mitru.

“Thank you, honored,” said Estolubumu. They all headed inside the theater; they had been standing in the grandly ornate lobby. Walking in, Thornton was amazed by the space; the very high ceiling was covered by bas-reliefs in plaster telling the story of the creation of the world, with paintings about other parts of the creation story adorning the upper walls. Half the ceiling was still covered by scaffolding. Three enormous chandeliers, decked with fifty light bulbs each and hundreds of reflective glass “jewels” illuminated the hall. The seats were plush and comfortable, upholstered in leather, and they folded. The upper gallery and a series of private boxes were even more luxurious. Over a year of work and half a million dhanay had been put into the building.

They all searched for their names and sat in alphabetical order, though Mitru defied it and sat next to Thornton, because he was at the end of a row and a spare seat had been left there. Thornton barely had time to look around. Many representatives obviously were rural and wore farmer’s clothes or old robes, though it was surprising how many were wearing modern pants and shirts from Lɛwéspa. There was one woman present other than the four from Mɛlwika; she was the wife of a lord.

One of the representatives from Mɛddoakwés went to the stage on Duke Kandékwɛs’s beckoning and beautifully chanted a hymn; the acoustics of the theater were magnificent and amplified his sonorant voice. Then Lord Kandékwɛs walked onto the stage. “Good morning to all of you and welcome to the first meeting of the Consultative Assembly of Arjakwés province. The people of the province have elected you to meet together for two purposes; one, to deliberate about the future of the province and draw up

a budget for fifty thousand dhanay to move us toward that future; and two, to elect the province's ten representatives to the House of Commons. Seven of you have served in the House of Commons before, and I ask those seven to come up on the stage with me. Since they have experience organizing bodies such as this, I have asked that they serve as a temporary committee to set up this assembly and draw up the rules of discussion."

Estolubumu's hand immediately shot up into the air, and when Kandékwɛs ignored him, he rose. "Lord, I object to this procedure. You have just selected *for us* people to organize us, and these are people you previously chose for the House of Commons as well! That is electioneering and a form of undue pressure! I would like to suggest a different approach. Let the man or woman from each town or village who received the highest votes from that place serve on the organizing committee you propose. That would produce a committee of thirty-one; rather large, but not as large as the 118 of us. And I suspect some of the seven are among those thirty-three as well."

Kandékwɛs glared at Estolubumu and obviously was ready to put the man in his place. "I am the temporary chair of this body. Please allow me to decide how we will get it organized," he finally said.

The seven came forward, but the rest of the representatives all turned to each other and murmured. "He's off to a bad start," said Thornton.

"Estolubumu's right," replied Mitru.

Once all seven came to the stage, they looked at the unhappy gathering in front of them. Mayor Estanu of Mɛlwika said quietly, "Duke Kandékwɛs, I think the seven of us do not wish to pressure or disappoint our fellow representatives in any way."

Kandékwɛs glared at him as well. “You won’t be included if we follow the upstart’s suggestion!” he whispered.

“I know, but that suggestion is better.”

“Very well.” Kandékwɛs turned to the seated representatives. “Let the men and women with the highest votes also come forward. We will form the organizing committee from both groups.”

Reread and edited 6/2/13, 8/14/17, 11/17/24, 9/22/26

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Hoi Poloi

Chris shook his head sadly at Jonu's explanation. The former Christian bishop—now a member of Khɛrmdhuna's Spiritual Assembly and one of the town's five representatives to the Lɛpawsakɛla Consultative Assembly—had called him collect.

"Friend Jonu, Bahá'ís should always be kind when attacked verbally. The fight between Khɛrmdhuna and the people of the Mɛgdontakwés is centuries old. The only way to end it is to turn the other cheek. Respond by being generous. Your woolen factory will need their wool, too. Your shoe factory needs their leather."

"I understand the idea, Lord, but we have been viciously tarred by all sorts of accusations! They said we ate children at our Christian mass and now we eat them at Bahá'í Feast! They have said we wish to take over the Polar Basin! We refuted these charges as best we could and still they continued! And Luku is not a Bahá'í, remember. He replied that the people in the eastern half of the Basin are eaters of raw meat!"

"Calling them names won't help. Can't you talk to Luku?"

"It's not that simple. He was probably going to be my successor as bishop. He has always had a certain amount of ambition. He doesn't listen to me; in the last few months, as most of us became Bahá'ís, he has become alienated."

"Well, remind him that Jesus said to 'turn the other cheek' and be kind to enemies. I was using Jesus's words, not Bahá'u'lláh's. And if that doesn't work, there are ways of letting everyone else know that he doesn't speak for Khɛrmdhuna. If you are kind and generous, there will be a contrast."

"You are right about that, but in politics the kindly one does not always win, as you know."

"Yes, I know, friend Jonu. But the provincial assembly can't stop your two factories, and people will sell raw materials to you. And Amos and I can see what we can do that will show kindness to the others."

"Yes, please help that way."

Chris nodded. That commitment was going to cost him ten or twenty thousand. "We'll have to talk to them. Amos is up there, so I'll call him. Best wishes, my friend."

"Thank you, friend Kristobéru. Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

Chris hung up the telephone and sighed.

"What happened?" asked Liz.

"The entire morning of the Lɛpawsakɛla Assembly's time was devoted to attacks against Khɛrmdhuna, and I guess the discussion continues this afternoon."

"Why did he call you instead of Modolubu? He's secretary of the Central Spiritual Assembly."

"He called Modolubu and he said to call me! I think I'll call Modolubu now and suggest that he and Lord Estodhéru could have handled this one. What have I missed?"

Kɛkanu interviewed the speaker of the Assembly in Rudhisér. There's a resolution being debated that they petition the Queen that ɛjnu be seated. He came in third in the voting and there was no electioneering for him, but he's under a ban."

“Sounds like they have a good controversy going.” He paused to listen to the interview with the Véspa’s assembly’s speaker. “And Véspa’s got a good fight going as well over Ora versus the villages. Sounds like every province does.”

“Except Lɛwéspa.”

“They had their fights two years ago and they’ve moved past them. I’m calling Modolubu now.” Chris turned back to the telephone and called the operator. It took two minutes just to reach Modolubu; fortunately, the Menneas had a flat monthly long distance rate. He reviewed the situation with the secretary and they both agreed on the principles.

He hung up and turned back to the *World Table.* Kɛkanu was telephoning around the entire world. The Dɛksawsakɛla or South Shore Assembly’s speaker reported a fierce debate about village boundaries and demands of the more southerly villages that they be given a chunk of land along the seashore as well, for future expansion. Governor Brebéstu was being accused of enriching himself and favoring the larger villages along the rivers over their poorer southern cousins.

“Poor man,” said Chris. “At some point the Central Spiritual Assembly is going to have to consider the issues of partisan politics. Things are deteriorating too much.”

“How would the Bahá'ís pull out of politics now?” asked Liz. “I told you all along it wasn’t a good idea.”

“The elections are being held Bahá'í style, though,” said Chris.

“Not if there’s lots of partisanship!”

“But `Abdu'l-Bahá gave the Iranian Bahá'ís permission to get their community represented in the first Iranian parliament in 1906—”

"Then took the permission away when partisanship became extreme."

"At least partisanship isn't extreme here. People are angry, but not partisan."

Liz sighed. "I wish there was a way we could get the advice of the Universal House of Justice. The old world order won't get this world to its destiny; we know that. And we have to put our energy into building the new world order."

"That's certainly the prospect for Earth. But Ruhiyyih Khanum once commented that she hoped the tribal peoples of the Earth could go straight from their tribal culture to the new world order, without being dragged downward into the materialism and immorality of the old world order."

"But this world has a world order; it isn't tribal." Liz shrugged again. It was a debate they had had several times, with various twists.

"And we have to build this world up materially, too," added Chris. "I wish we could talk to the Universal House of Justice also, but we can't."

They turned back to the radio. Kɛkanu was interviewing a village representative about how Ora had been growing at the expense of the villages. It was the usual litany of complaints that had led to the meltdown when Lord Mitru had died two years earlier. The subsequent efforts to set matters right had not been adequate.

There was music, then Kɛkanu reached the speaker of the North Shore's assembly. Ironically, he painted the assembly as a great success and totally peaceful. "I guess they don't have any controversies because they're busy insulting each other," quipped Chris.

"Kɛkanu's doing an incredible job," said Liz. "He's gone from being the world's best musician and entertainer to being its best journalist."

“He’s very talented,” agreed Chris. “And he’s gradually introducing Sumi music into the show, too.”

“He has absorbed some Bahá'í values.”

The door opened and Thornton entered. “You’re back early,” said Chris.

“Thank God,” replied Thornton. He plopped down on the sofa. “The Assembly is *so* tedious. So difficult. We spent the entire morning debating rules of debate.”

“I thought that was settled last week.”

“So did I. But Estolubumu raised a question about it and triggered a three hour discussion.”

“Maybe I never should have showed up a Dhébkua that day!”

Thornton shook his head. “No, it’s a good thing. He’s angry, he’s difficult, but I think he’s working through things. Yesterday he went up to Duke Kandékwɛs and thanked him for supporting the ‘democratic process.’ Estolubumu even used the English words!”

Chris chuckled. “Good. Now you know how I feel about the meetings of the House of Lords. Consultative processes can be messy when love and unity are not the highest values. At least we have some controls on partisanship.”

“For now. People are already whispering about who they plan to vote for. They’re being clever; no one asks for votes for themselves. You’ll have Mr. A say ‘I plan to vote for Mr. B, you should, too,” and Mr. B. saying the same about Mr. A. At least some of the time.”

“Don’t tolerate it; tell people it isn’t right because it undermines the entire process.”

“It’s . . . hard, dad.”

“I know, you think the House of Lords will be any different? Trust yourself, Thor. You’re wise and articulate; you can do it.”

“Well, thanks, dad. I’ll try. If Mitru’s with me, sometimes the two of us are braver together than separately.”

“Good. Get the Bahá'ís together at lunchtime and talk to them about this. The grange people, too; they understand the process.”

“I don’t want to do something that looks like electioneering, though.”

Chris shook his head. “No, acting bravely and courageously and creatively is service, not campaigning for yourself. This world needs leadership, so provide it. If you don’t want to get elected, pray that you won’t!”

“Okay, I’ll try that.”

It was two days before Amos was able to get to the North Shore’s provincial assembly to talk to the lords from the eastern side of the Polar Basin. It was Kwétɛrdiu, with two more days of meetings left for all the provincial assemblies before they would recess for the year. The lords were gathering that day to begin their discussions to choose their representatives to the royal consultative assembly, so Amos had to be in Néfa, but he could stop in Bɛllɛdha on the way.

He left Khɛrmdhuna at 5:00 a.m., which seemed excessively early but really was not very difficult; the sun never dipped very far below the horizon and thus the sky glowed all night, so much so that the locals rejected the word night and divided the diurnal cycle into “day” and “twilight.” Many people in Khɛrmdhuna were used to rising

early, especially if they wanted to get to Bɛllɛdha four time zones to the east. He loaded his steam car with the four Bahá'í representatives to the North Shore provincial assembly and drove them to the government palace in about forty-five minutes, arriving there, with the time zone changes, at 9:45 a.m. The narrow gravel road took them from a land of blazing white snow interrupted by scattered, small fir trees, barely touched by spring, up over the North Polar Basins's crater rim and down into a circum-marine land of green and warmth, where fields had been plowed for rye, cabbage, and increasingly for potatoes and corn.

Amo had not seen Bɛllɛdha for many months and was pleased to see a growing city. The high school, outside the city's eastern walls and using the greenspace around the city for its athletic fields, was overcrowded; ground had been broken for another high school outside the city's western walls, its starting time to be staggered ninety minutes later so that the same buses could be used to deliver kids to both schools. Thanks to graveled roads along both the eastern and westward stretches of the polar basin and two graveled routes over the rim, the basin was now fully integrated into the world market; buses and trucks gave Khɛrmdhuna reliable transportation to Bɛllɛdha four or five times a day. The copper mine was rebuilt and providing more income than ever; the mint was turning out coins and providing jobs; the large military outpost was encouraging its soldiers to work, lifting the city's economy further; and most of the province's villages had land in or near Mɛlita, so the farmers had more income than even last year. This winter, for the first time the city had benefited from a gas plant that also produced charcoal. The new palace was modern, with big, comfortable meeting spaces and lots of glass windows.

Amos entered a few minutes after the Khɛrmdhunans and looked around for Lord Dontu of Yujdwoakwés or Lord Rudhawsu of Dɛntastéa, two of the six lords of the eastern basin villages. Both of them spotted him before he saw them.

"Lord Amos!" exclaimed Dontu, who began to walk over to him, followed by several others. "What brings you here? Surely you have your own meeting of the lords in Néfa today."

"Greetings, Lord Dontu. Yes indeed, I am on my way to Néfa. How are you? How is your family?" Amos extended his hands. Dontu hesitated only briefly to shake hands with the black-skinned gɛdhému.

"My family is well. We are now splitting our time among three homes, in Yujdwoakwés, Brébɛstéa, and Mɛlita. Lord Amos, why are you helping Khɛrmdhuna acquire a factory? You know me as well. My dhanay are made of the same silver. I hope it isn't merely because they have accepted your religion. You and Lord Chris are intelligent businessmen and rise above that sort of thing, especially when it puts you in the middle of an ancient conflict."

"You are correct, Lord, we do not determine business matters primarily because of religion. In this case, Khɛrmdhuna repeatedly invited us back in spite of religion, for they had no interest in the Bahá'í Faith. But they did have a large number of literate people and thus they quickly saw the advantage of working with us and acquiring as much of the new knowledge as possible. Our first effort to help was the greenhouse; you may have heard of it. It was not successful. They raised the matter of a shoe factory and a woolen textile factory after several planning meetings. You are familiar with the planning meetings the Development Corps offers, right?"

Yes, I've heard of them," growled Dontu. "Look, Lord, my people need work and factories more than Khɛrmdhuna does. We can make it worth your while to move those factories to Yujdwoakwés. Please do not strengthen our enemies!"

"Enemies? I was not aware they had ever hurt your people. We want to strengthen everyone Lord—"

"Don't play with me, Lord Amos, they consort with evil spirits in that land of demons! Ever since they arrived in our basin, my people have suffered vicious winters, strange plagues, the mysterious loss of cattle and sheep, and intrusions by mastodon herds! They are witches who have black magic, and if they deny it either they are lying to you about their powers or you are lying to us about the magical powers of Bahá'ís!"

That surprised Amos. It shouldn't have; he had heard the accusation of witchcraft before. The fact that he had forgotten about it betrayed his own modern assumptions. "Lord Dontu, Bahá'ís do not play with magical powers. To the extent they are real, they are dangerous and interfere with personal spiritual development. I will pursue this accusation with my friends in Khɛrmdhuna. But I also wish to pursue your offer to help me to establish factories for Yujdwoakwés. We can come, do a planning meeting, and find out what your village could best support—"

"We could use a woolen textiles factory, like them!"

"The modification to the cotton weaving equipment belongs to the Miller School of Engineering and has been licensed to Khɛrmdhuna for at least five years. We can't offer you that, but we can offer something else. The western basin has many, many cattle and sheep. You need a dairy where the milk can be pasteurized so it is safe for sale all over the world and where it can be converted to cheese and yogurt. You need a tannery

where the hides can be tanned cheaply and in large numbers. And your womenfolk need to learn some new ways of knitting; they will have new products to sell."

"Can you offer those things to Dɛntastéa as well?" asked Rudhawsu, who was standing nearby.

"Look, my family, Lord Chris's family that is, can offer your people many ideas. You'll need to mobilize your people to utilize them. We do not favor any one place; we want to see everyone advance. We—"

"Then definitely bring us factories!" interrupted Rudhawsu.

"It's not that simple. A shoe factory that employs twenty people to make fifteen thousand shoes per year and pays each worker two thousand dhanay per year requires a building, a furnace, fans to keep air moving, electric lights to provide proper lighting, ten thousand dhanay of equipment, a trained supervisor, and an accountant. It costs about twenty thousand dhanay to set up a factory to employ twenty workers; every factory job costs about a thousand dhanay to create. The eastern basin has over five thousand people. If it needs eight hundred jobs, they will cost eight hundred thousand dhanay to create. Where will that come from?"

"So, how did Khɛrmdhuna afford their two factories?" replied Dontu, accusatorily.

"Those factories will employ maybe fifty people and the investment of fifty thousand dhanay came from private investors. Dontu, you know many members of old houses. The Royal Development Bank and the Development Corps have grants and loans. A lot of your people are members of the Greater Mɛlita Grange, and in a year it'll have surplus to invest in other projects. There are sources of money. The western basin can't

get eight hundred thousand dhanay in one year, but if it started with thirty thousand or fifty thousand per year, as the income of the people rose, more and more investment money will become available from savings and the development can accelerate. That's the way to do it."

Dontu scowled. "Who will trust us with grants and loans, though? We don't know how to use them!"

"That's what the Development Corps is for."

"Lord Amos, we need help from someone with a proven record of success, such as yourself and Lord Chris."

"We can participate; I didn't say we wouldn't. We'll invest. We'd like to open a branch of the Mennea Tomi in Bɛllɛdha. It provides accounting and tax payment services to businesses, manages their expenses like paying for workers' hospital bills and overseeing their pension savings. I suspect Lord Chris can come through to teach a business course here this summer. I'm willing to come teach a course on basic engineering and mechanics. We can help. But no one in the western basin even approached us or asked in any way."

"You are being asked now!" replied Rudhawsu.

"Fine. But it is difficult to work with people who keep accusing other business partners of witchcraft. I'll make sure there's no witchcraft being used if you stop accusing them of it. It poisons the waters and makes everything more difficult."

Dontu was not pleased by that. "Look, Lord, we have suffered—"

"I understand that, Lord Dontu. Just leave them alone. I'll make sure they leave you alone as well."

He shrugged. “Alright, if you help us develop and get the witchcraft stopped, we’ll ignore them.”

“Excellent. That will be good progress. I’ll be back in the province next week and will visit Yujdwoakwés to see what we can start.”

Chris was immensely nervous about the nighttime summons to the palace. Her Majesty didn’t often summon people at 8 p.m. to meet with her in less than an hour; he barely had time to change into something formal. His hands were shaking a bit as he was ushered into the conference room where she had gathered with Estoiyaju, Kandékwɛs, Wɛranolubu, and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr.

At the moment they were listening to Kɛkanu, who was broadcasting live over the radio a conversation with the speaker of the Rudhisér provincial assembly, Wɛranonu, who was also one of Néfa’s most prominent merchants. Wɛranonu was reading aloud the names of Rudhisér’s six representatives to the House of Commons, and as he announced each name Estoiyaju was writing it down.

“Saru; another merchant,” growled Estoiyaju, as he wrote. “Estoipuru; who’s he?”

“Head of the Pértatranisér City Council,” replied the Queen, rather matter-of-factly. “So is he.” She said the latter comment just after Wɛranonu announced another member, Brébɛsu, who was also head of Pértatranisér’s police force and prominent in the province’s law enforcement.

“No ɛjnu,” added Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, when the list finished.

“They wouldn’t dare,” replied the Queen. She turned to Chris. “Lord, thank you for joining us. Come, sit down.” She gestured to a seat at the oval table next to the widu.

“Thank you, Your Majesty.” Chris sat, nodding to the others and smiling at his friend Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, who offered both hands in a quick hand-touch; it was too quick and informal to call a handshake.

She gestured to the radio. “We have to learn the results the same way as everyone else: Kɛkanu. He seems to have contacts everywhere. The speaker of the Lɛpawsakɛla assembly called him with the results before he called the palace! What is your reaction to the votes, Lord?”

He looked at her and the others, trying to judge what their reaction was. They were relaxed, but if they were pleased he doubted they would have summoned him. “I’ve been listening to Kɛkanu all afternoon, like everyone else. I’m surprised he’s still on the air. I gather the only province we haven’t heard from is Kɛrda.”

“They’re counting the votes right now,” replied Estoiyaju. “He announced that just before he interviewed Wɛranonu.”

“I see. This morning when I heard the results of the vote of the lords here in Arjakwés, I was surprised; not because I wasn’t included, which didn’t surprise me, but because they had chosen Mitru Majdomai, a member of the Old Houses and an opponent of all the recent reforms. And when I heard the results of the Arjakwés provincial assembly’s vote, I was surprised because they had included Estolubumu, who is something of a trouble maker. All day, whenever a different province voted, I was surprised by some of the names.”

“Exactly,” said Estoiyaju, waving a finger at Chris. “So many merchants! They can be real trouble makers. And the radical school teachers!”

“They often chose the noisiest members, not the wisest,” concluded Kandékwɛs, gravely.

“What about the results from Lɛwéspa?” asked Chris to Estoiyaju, as he didn’t dare question the Queen.

“What about them?” Estoiyaju turned to the list he had been making. “Ah . . . Dontanu, ɛjnanu, Trisunu.”

“The chief mechanic of Mɛddwoglubas, one of the city’s leading merchants, and the head of Lɛwéspadoma’s village council and grange. Good, solid representatives, experienced, articulate, and reliable. Lɛwéspa has been holding elections for a few years and they’ve moved beyond extremes. Mɛlwika’s City Council was elected on New Year’s and all seven were good choices.”

“Including Lasu?” asked Estoiyaju, surprised.

“Lasu can be brash. He can be difficult. He wants attention and gets it by arguing for unusual ideas or points of view. But one person like that out of nine—including Lord Miller and myself—is useful, not disruptive, because he can help all of us think about matters in new ways. I’m sure Trisunu, in Lɛwéspa, has that tendency. He emerged as the leader of Véspan squatters and became the head of their town once it was recognized. Estolubumu has done that in the Arjakwés Assembly.”

“The Sumi Assembly voted to negotiate with us ‘about the future of the island’!” exclaimed Estoiyaju, raising his voice.

“That ‘negotiation’ has been ongoing for years already,” replied Chris. “But informally, not formally. The government’s position was stated quite clearly after Evudingiru erupted: Sumilara will have no access to the mainland’s economy and

technology if it is not part of the same political structure. That position gives you the upper hand."

"And an army garrison does not?" asked Kandékwɛs.

"An army garrison makes things more complicated," injected Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. "It gives the people an object to hate and something to negotiate against."

"Widu, we can't remove the garrison," said the Queen gently, almost interrogatively.

"Make the troops do more for the island, and make the Governor more visible, and the results will be better," he replied.

"So, you are saying that these trouble makers make the House of Commons and House of Lords stronger," said Estoiyaju to Chris.

"They *can* make those bodies stronger. I am not saying they have no ability to disrupt those bodies. In Lɛwéspa and to a lesser extent in Tripola, elected bodies have improved over time. This realm has centuries of resentments of all sorts; they won't go away because of an election. But letting people talk about their resentments and empowering them to act positively can help the hurt and anger to diminish, if the consultative bodies are led wisely and skillfully."

"This is the wisdom behind Widumaj's hymn," agreed Wɛrétrakɛstɛr.

"But what does all this do to our power, gɛdhému?" insisted Estoiyaju. "That is always the bottom line, is it not?"

"It always has been," agreed Chris. "But Her Majesty's power has always flowed from two sources: her possession of the throne and her possession of the love of the people. As we know, possession of the throne alone is a precarious source, even if

Widumaj said that it was all that was necessary to be the legitimate ruler. Her Majesty was selected according to the rules of succession laid down by Widumaj, so she *is* the sovereign. She can count on Bahá'ís understanding and accepting it. But in the real world, to be effective, one needs credibility and support from the people, and that is something one earns. Her Majesty, throughout her decades of rule, has been masterful at that. And now she has new mechanisms for persuading and influencing the people. I refer to the radio, the newspapers, and the Houses of Commons and Lords. She travels the realm and the people pour out to see her. If you were to ask the average person who they love and trust, what would they say? 'The Réjé.' I am speaking the truth, not mere flattery here. These consultative bodies are opportunities, not problems."

"He's right," added Wɛranolubu. "We could have done more."

"So could have the Bahá'ís," said Chris. "The Arjakwés provincial assembly had ten Bahá'ís and thirty grange council members. But neither group organized in any way to provide leadership to the assembly. As a result, the noisiest often emerged as the leaders, and naturally they were subsequently elected to the House of Commons! It did not have to be that way. Any body must have leadership and it will find its leaders where it can."

"We should have written to each provincial assembly and offered encouragement and advice," said the Queen. "Lord Chris, what do you think about the matter of my appearing on the radio?"

Chris considered that. "The Queen should not appear as an ordinary guest on a show and she should not be interviewed like any other guest. But there are ways she can appear on the radio that will make her visible. If her voice is not heard on the radio, the

voices of others will be instead. The radio is an important way for the Queen to reach her people."

"How could she be a guest but not an ordinary guest?" asked Estoiyaju, skeptically.

"I don't know." Chris considered the matter a moment. "Her Majesty grants audiences, for example, and at audiences people can make requests of her. Perhaps the *World Table* is too informal, but an occasional special program with her might work. Kɛkanu has excellent instincts about what will work over the radio. You should talk to him. A radio program is rather like a play; it can do many different things."

Wɛrétrakɛstɛr nodded. "Your Majesty, there is much wisdom in this approach. If you push against the provincial assemblies and the Houses of Lords and Commons, you will be undermining the very institutions you called on the people, in your radio address, to establish. If you declare certain people ineligible to serve after they have been legitimately elected, you undermine the very processes you have promulgated."

"Once elections have been established, it is impossible to eliminate them, and compromising them simply makes them a medium for opposing you," agreed Wɛranolubu.

"We never should have permitted them or supported them so strongly," said Estoiyaju.

"No, Estoiyaju," replied the Queen. "The people have always been a source of strength for me. If we are to take the truths of Widumaj seriously, we must serve them and we must consult with them. And 'consult' does not just mean the assemblies. They

are important for specific changes that this world needs to have made, but I have to go to the people themselves, directly. We will discuss a special program with Kɛkanu.

"Estoiyaju, I want a royal proclamation ready by tomorrow morning. It will congratulate the provincial assemblies for their hard work and good results. Mention some specifics, like the decision to locate a provincial fire department in the lower Arjakwés valley and build a high school for southern Véspa. Say that I have heard the people of Sumilara and wish to speak to them directly by visiting Anartu. I haven't been there in eight years; it is time to return and spend some time. I want you, Estoiyaju, to read the proclamation over the radio tomorrow; you will be my official voice in this matter. And start to schedule times when each province's members of the House of Commons can have an audience with me as a group. I want to spend an hour with each delegation."

That startled Estoiyaju. "Your Majesty, that will take you all of two or three days!"

"I know. So be it. I want to speak to every single one of them and I want them to speak to me. Let us see how radical they will be after that."

Reread and edited, 6/2/13, 8/14/17, 9/22/26

274.

A New Temple

Ridván/early Dhébɛlménu, yr 11/629

Enthusiastic applause arose from the crowd of Bahá'ís as Duke Kandékwɛs stepped down from the podium. Lébé elbowed Thornton. “Wow! You know the Faith has arrived in this world when the queen’s personal representative says ‘our kingdom has been blessed, enriched, and strengthened by the Bahá'í Faith and knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh.’ I never would have thought we’d hear something like that!”

“I know; it’s amazing,” he agreed. “But the Faith has come a long, long way here in a decade. And one reason is because it’s built into much of the education and business ethics.”

“And it keeps growing.” They turned back to the podium, because Liz had approached the microphone.

“We are now ready to lay the cornerstone,” she announced. “Would the various representatives come forward.”

Several people—mostly women—rose and walked forward to the front of the tent. Modolubu, as secretary of the Central Spiritual Assembly, joined them. Chris stepped forward with a bucket of prepared mortar, placed it next to the gap in the low concrete wall, then retreated. Led by Liz, the representatives applied mortar to the gap where the cornerstone was to be laid; first Liz; then Dr. Aréjé Aywɛrgui; then Nina Bilarai, Randu’s wife; then Jonu Obispu, the former bishop of Khɛrmdhuna, whose last name reflected the Spanish word for his prior occupation; then Kɛrbloré Mɛgɛndru, a Bahá'í studying

medicine from the Tutanɛ city of Gordha. Finally, Modolubu nodded to Liz and the two of them, with the help of Mitru Miller and Randu Bilarai, lifted a yellow sandstone block and placed it in the gap in the wall. The nonagonal wall enclosing Mɛlwika's future House of Worship was now complete.

The audience erupted in cheers and applause while they finished cleaning up the mortar; Modolubu clearly had masonry experience and sculpted the mortar around the block to make it look fancy. He walked to the microphone and gestured to the diminutive wall around them and the tent soaring over their heads. "The temple has been built!" he proclaimed, and everyone cheered again. Then Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi, member of the Central Spiritual Assembly from Néfa and a distinguished musician and radio show host, rose to lead them all in the song "Alláh-u-Abhá." A thousand voices rose in unison to sing God's Greatest Name, a moving experience for all, including Lord Kandékwɛs.

Chanters came forward to chant two Bahá'í prayers and two hymns of Widumaj about worshiping Esto in song. Then the cornerstone laying ceremony was over. The crowd began to head out of the enclosure for lunch.

Thornton paused to look at the space around them. The future House of Worship would be fifty meters across and rise seventy-five meters into the sky, the tallest structure in the world. In the last two and a half months the ground had been cleared and the concrete floor of the basement had been poured, complete with a low, half-meter high wall. A huge tent had been erected over the site and the national Bahá'í convention was being held under the tent on the floor of the future basement. The ground around the building would be raised four meters using fill in order to bury the basement, and the gardens would be laid out on top. The structure of concrete, steel, stone, and glass would

take six years to complete and cost about 350,000 dhanay; a very ambitious undertaking. “This is going to be incredible,” he said.

“I don’t know how we’re going to do it,” said Lébé. “We’ve already filled the space, though! This will be the largest interior gathering place in the world.”

“The priests already want to tear down the new temple to Widumaj in Mɛddoakwés and build a new new temple!” Thornton chuckled, then added, “But we do have to be careful about engendering jealousy and opposition.”

“They seem pretty toothless,” Lébé replied. She saw Randu and Nina nearby and waved. “Good job!”

“Thank you!” replied Randu. The couples walked closer toward each other. “We’re going to Temple Street to grab something to eat; join us?”

“Sure,” said Thornton. “So, how much longer before we’ll need temple number three on Sumilara?”

“I wonder,” replied Randu. “At least six years; the community can’t afford to start a new one sooner!”

“True, at the moment. But Bilara gained a hundred new Bahá'ís this year, mostly during the fast, and Anartu fifty more, with another fifty scattered across the island. We’re lucky; at the moment the Faith is growing fast everywhere in the world, and we are generally keeping up with the growth and consolidating people. Who knows, we may be able to afford starting temple number three in three years!”

“That would be amazing. I suppose if I worry about anything, it is the very sudden addition of so many Bahá'ís in Khɛrmdhuna.”

“Everyone’s whispering about that. Last year we had 2,000 Bahá'ís; this year we have 4,500, and about a third of them are in Khɛrmdhuna. That means next year one third of the delegates to convention will be from there. But that percentage will drop every year. Sumilara has more than ten percent of the Bahá'ís, which is pretty amazing.”

“We’re almost one percent of the island,” agreed Randu. “And Bahá'ís are 1.5% of the population of the world.”

“The problem is mobilizing all these people,” replied Thornton. “It was the same way on Earth. There were a dozen countries where the Bahá'í Faith was more than one percent of the population, but most Bahá'ís knew relatively little and just keeping in touch with them all was exhausting. We have the same problems here.”

“We are lucky about one thing, though; we have a lot of school teachers in the Faith,” said Lébé. “They are some of the most capable people locally.”

“I hope to join that group pretty soon,” added Randu.

“How are classes?” asked Thornton.

“Pretty good. I can now take two and teach two pretty well; not too much stress.”

“No? Speak for yourself!” replied Nina.

“Well, it has gotten easier. I understand the expectations, my skills have grown so I can accomplish them more easily, and my Eryani is better.”

“It is really quite good,” complemented Lébé.

“Thank you. Your Sumi is coming along as well, both of you,” said Randu.

“I think I may be able to teach geology in Sumi, now,” said Thornton. “Anyway, next term I’ll give it a try.”

They stopped at a vendor they knew and bought tortillas filled with vegetables, cheese, and chicken, then carried them to the Mennea house and ate them in the courtyard. Shortly thereafter Chris and Liz entered with Duke Kandékwɛs and Lady Awstɛr. The men sat separately from the women and held separate conversations in the great room, which was closed off from the courtyard. “We are immensely appreciative that Her Majesty sent you to represent her at the cornerstone ceremony,” Chris said as they sat at the dining table.

“The Bahá'í community has grown very strong and numerous in the last decade,” said Kandékwɛs. “The priests of the old religion are furious, but they can’t seem to offer an alternative besides killing Bahá'ís. The hymns remain a powerful force in our society, but the Bahá'ís respect and sing them as well, and seem to make them work with the new knowledge.” Kandékwɛs shook his head. “Frankly, I find the priests greedy and self-serving. All they want are bigger temples and more sacrifices! They’re more ‘leeches’ than the old houses.”

Chris was surprised to hear such frankness from the Duke. “They said they want to support village education, but other than two or three rural priests who teach reading, they haven’t done anything.”

“They don’t get it,” said the Duke. “Wɛrétrakɛstɛr’s approach to the hymns and Widumaj is much better, but he has a handful of fellow widus and active supporters.”

“He’s not trying to organize a movement. There are hundreds of hymn-memorizers; I’m surprised more of them aren’t getting active, but I guess if no one organizes and trains them, they won’t.”

“I wonder whether we should try that. I bet some of the hymn memorizers have become Bahá'ís, though.”

Chris nodded. “Some have, because the hymn memorizers were the group concerned about education in the countryside. Once they saw we Bahá'ís were willing to chant the hymns, they saw us as allies, and when they saw the other things villagers could learn, many of them wanted to come to the génadɛmas. So many are now school teachers.”

“Interesting.” Kandékwɛs considered for a moment. “Lord, how do you work with your City Council? How do you decide what the council should do and what you should do?”

“It isn’t a question of how much they do versus I do; it’s a question of who decides what the mayor will do. I don’t have time to run a city; neither does John Miller; and as gɛdhémus, our accent and attitudes are not right for the task anyway. The key is finding a good mayor and giving him the authority to accomplish things for Mɛlwika. The mayor must have his own sphere of authority or his hands are tied. If I guide him alone, he will remain an expression of my authority unless he is very clever and capable. When there is a body guiding the mayor, he *has* to have a sphere, because a group of people cannot meet often enough to manage and execute all the tasks necessary to run a city.”

“But what do you do when the people who might be elected to the Council might be ambitious, aggressive, or uncooperative?”

“Well, it’s like a big family when there always seems to be an uncle or grandfather somewhere who is difficult or unpleasant. You have to work with the person,

and sometimes it won't work out. But then, sometimes the ideas and plans of a single lord will prove to be shortsighted or harmful in the long run. There is no easy answer to the question. I am not particularly pleased with Estanu's approach to running the city; he is ambitious, self-promoting in some ways, and he tends to want to plan big construction projects because he was a builder. But he is honest and fair. Lasu is on the council now, but so far he isn't any more difficult than Dɛku was last year. When people are capable and successful, they are used to be listened to."

"What you say is fair. But I look at the high vote-getters in Mɛddoakwés and I hesitate. I know them; they will want to take over. They are already calling for a city council, too."

"I've seen the posters. Some of the posters about Mɛddoakwés are on the walls here as well. If you are asking for my suggestions, I'd start by finding someone who could be a capable mayor, then appoint a City Council and include some of the people who got the highest votes. But also appoint some fair, capable people whom you trust but who got fairly few votes; next time there is an election they will probably get more votes. And think about how you want to spend your time. You have personal wealth. If you had more time, you could use that wealth to benefit the city and yourself. That's how I spend most of my time."

"Indeed. I am struck by the fact that you have more influence by virtue of your property than your title. I am not sure I would want to dedicate myself to the pursuit of wealth to the extent you have. I was raised to be Lord Mayor and Duke, after all. Agriculture is different; that is expected of us as well. I happily spent the entire winter

getting three thousand agris of farmland set up in the city's new southern extension. But commerce is not in my blood."

"Very true. So, keep your hand in both administrative responsibilities, but hire more reliable and capable people who can carry out major tasks with relatively little supervision. This is especially easy at the provincial level; an 'assistant governor' could do much for you."

"An assistant mayor would help me as well."

"If you want to pursue more personal wealth, I would convert some of your personal land into an 'industrial park,' a place with water, gas, telephone, and especially sewer services where factories can be set up. You sell or lease the land to the factory owners or build your own factories there."

"Could I establish partnerships with you or Lord John?"

"Of course. Mɛlwika's first industrial park is full and the second one will be full very soon. They're expensive to set up, so we'd rather spread them around."

"And Mɛddoakwés has a lot of labor, and salaries are less than in Mɛlwika. Are there still factories to establish?"

"Definitely. This entire world has maybe three thousand factory jobs out of almost a hundred thousand workers. On Gɛdhéma, over half of all workers have factory jobs in some countries. And Miller's contemplating a major expansion."

Kandékwɛs was surprised by that statistic. "Alright. If there is the prospect of making money, and expanding my city, I'm willing to invest. Maybe Tridiu afternoon I could come back to talk to you and John?"

Chris nodded. “That will work for me. So far, not a single factory on this world has lost money. Of course, some take longer to make money than others.”

A week later, Thornton and a team from the geological survey finally left Mɛlwika for the Long Valley. They were a few days later than Prince Mɛméjékwu wished. They drove to Ora and took the newly finished gravel road westward along the northern rim of the glugluba; it was a longer route than traveling via Isurdhuna, but the latter route required three steep vertical stretches of road, since one had to descend into and rise out of the Kɛrda Valley. They left Mɛlwika at 1 p.m. and reached the top of the rim of the Long Valley seven hours later at dawn the same day, local time. They parked the vehicles inside a massive, collapsed gate; the road ran through an ancient fortress guarding the valley.

“This is incredible,” said Thornton, looking at thick, partially collapsed defensive walls fading into the coniferous forest north and south of the road.

“See the tower?” noted Rudhisuru, pointing to a pile of stones sticking above the treetops two hundred meters to the north.

“Amazing. I’m surprised we never heard about this site before. It reminds me of Moruagras. I suppose Skandu knows about it.”

“I’m sure.”

Thornton scanned the massive fortifications one more time, then turned to look at the valley in front of them. “Wow, it’s turned green! The grass down there must be over a meter high!”

“We’re looking into the part of the valley that’s equatorial and humid,” said Rudhisuru. “If they don’t farm it soon, in a decade it’ll be jungle.”

“I wonder what has happened to all the ruins; I suppose they’re disintegrating fast. Huh, look at the haze in the valley.” He pointed at what could only be called a layer of thin cirrus-like clouds just below the rim.

“I’ve never seen anything like that; they look like a thin layer of cloth on top of a bowl.”

“I’m surprised. Let’s go down.”

The six of them got back into their two steam cars and descended the long, wide ramp to the valley floor. The army engineers had used an ancient ramp that had been very well built; unlike other highways crossing escarpments, it had no switchbacks, just a few gentle curves, so to their surprise they were on the bottom in ten minutes. The eighteen hundred meter drop was accompanied by a noticeable drop in temperature when they passed through the thin, foggy cloud layer, then a gradual jump in temperature.

They were close to Mɛdha, the old center city of the valley, and fifty kilometers south of Réjéivika, the prince’s seat of power. They were not expected for several hours, so Thornton turned off the very wide, smooth, new north-south gravel road—Route 92, it had been designated—and followed an ancient, bumpy, weeded-covered cobblestone viaduct over a swamp to Mɛdha, where Marku was doing an archaeological dig. He was surprised that the marshy ground was flooded with more water this year than last, then he saw the reason; the Delongisér was swollen and muddy. The old rickety Sumi bridge over the river looked particularly precarious and its approaches were flooded with a thin sheet

of water, but Marku had assured them it had been inspected and was used regularly by trucks, so they drove over.

Marku's camp was on the northwestern edge of the ruined city beyond the reach of the flooded marshes. Marku and his men were eating breakfast. "Honored Dhoru, what a surprise!" he exclaimed.

"I told the Prince we would be there by lunchtime, so we have some time."

"How long was the trip from Mɛlwika?"

"Seven hours. We could have made it in six or six and a half. The new highway from Ora is incredible. It must have cost a lot."

"Duke Aryu spared no expense, and Mɛméjékwu has spared little expense to give the valley a good road system. They plan to lay a four-meter strip of concrete all the way from Ora to Réjéivika in the next year. A waste of money, if you ask me; this place is practically deserted. The road has maybe two vehicles a day. I could use the money to build a museum!"

"You've seen the ruins on top of the rim?"

"Yes, I spent a week excavating them. Based on inscriptions at the site, they're Eryanɛ defenses; based on the remnants of bones and arrowheads in the forest in front, it was assaulted at least once."

"What have you found here?" Thornton looked at Mɛdha. "I am amazed how much this place has fallen down in the last year."

"The buildings were underwater for a thousand years in an environment without oxygen and barely above freezing. Tropical rain and wind reduced them to heaps of stone

and brick in a few months. But we have found almost a thousand inscriptions and countless statues and mosaics."

"Can you read them?"

"Definitely! A third of the characters are Sumi and a third old Eryan. With them, we've deciphered the rest. Their Eryani was archaic; it reminds me of the Ghéslonɛs's. A lot are victory inscriptions. The Eryanɛ were not uncivilized Tutanɛ; they defeated Sumis quite regularly. The entire valley was a sort of fortress; there were only three or four ways in and all were well defended. I think careful field work will find some big battlefields between here and Ora. The ruins on top of the western escarpment at Moruagras were back-up defenses in case the valley fell to Sumi armies, which it may have a few times."

"But they couldn't protect themselves from a flood."

No. Do you have time to look at the city's old temple? Or more specifically, at the hill under it. I can't find bedrock. I'm wondering how they built the foundations of the temple."

"Sure, I'd love to see it."

Marku rounded up his excavation crew and they headed down the main street to the center of the city. As soon as they entered the built-up area, the ground rose above the flat, swampy plain about ten meters. The soft, sucking mud that had blanketed everything a year earlier was now hard, dry, and full of grass and weeds. The streets were partially blocked by heaps of rubble, forcing them to walk around them and sometimes to climb over them.

Marku kept up a running commentary, describing ruined temples, grand houses, market buildings, and a public bath as they went. The hillock at the center of the city had

two levels; it rose twenty meters to a big terrace for the royal palace, then twenty meters more to the temple. They wandered the ruined palace and the edges of the temple hillock for almost an hour.

"All this building stone; it's granitic rock from the highlands," said Thornton. He looked at Rudhisuru. "No local sedimentary rock or basalt."

Rudhisuru nodded, seeing where Thornton was going. "Mɛddoakwés and ɛjnopéla are built around rocky pinnacles of basalt; volcanic remnants."

"And this valley is a rift; it doesn't have any hills on its floor." Thornton turned to Marku. "You're the archaeologist; you'll have to dig it. But I think it's a mound."

"A mound? It's hundred-fifty meters long, ninety wide, and up to forty high! Who would pile up that much dirt?"

"Our Eryanɛ ancestors," replied Thornton. "Maybe they used Sumi slave labor, or maybe it was tens of thousands of residents from the valley."

"Come to think of it, I bet Isurdhuna's temple is built on a mound as well!" said Rudhisuru.

"It's an ancient city," agreed Marku. He looked at the mound with a new appreciation.

They climbed the monumental stairs to the temple on top. The style of construction and interior design were familiar; Eryanɛ and Sumi temples hadn't changed much in a millennium. The shocking detail, for Rudhisuru at least, was the statue of ɛndru; the ancient Eryanɛ warrior god had been the city's patron! "I'm still not used to ɛndru," said Marku, as they started down the stairs. "But it gives me more appreciation of

Widumaj's denunciation of the ancient god as an incarnation of violence and war. This was a violent place."

"Prophets denounce bad things because they happen. So you're right, this represents some of the excesses He was denouncing." Thornton stopped and looked southward over the expanse of ruined walls. "This entire city needs to be preserved. It needs a fence around it, a permanent set of caretakers, and a museum. People should come here and get guided tours of one of their ancestors' greatest accomplishments."

"I've mentioned that to the prince, but he has been uninterested so far. I think he wants to rebuild the city as the valley's capital."

"That's decades away, at the rate the valley's being settled."

They walked back to camp via a different route that took them through an ancient affluent neighborhood, with very impressive ruins of pillared villas. Clearly, the valley had been very wealthy. They didn't stay long at the camp; the survey had to get to Réjéivika. The two steam cars soon headed back over the viaduct to Route 92 and drove north.

The eight-meter wide, thickly graveled highway was a dream to drive on, and in the half hour to Réjéivika they saw only one other vehicle. The road cut across richly green prairies with patches of saplings that might eventually swallow the grass, if left undisturbed. As they approached the new town they entered an area of new farms. Most of the fields had just been harvested; some were being replanted for the second crop of the year. Most of the valley, with irrigation, could support three bountiful crops per year.

Réjéivika was a beehive of tents and houses humming with activity. The palace was a stone and cement shell; the prince was still living in his mother's travel tent,

erected next to the construction site. Ground had been broken on a grand temple to Wɛranu, father of all, and on a large brick marketplace; the three public buildings faced each other across a muddy expanse that would eventually be a huge plaza, 150 meters square, fronting on the North Branch of the Dɛlongisér. Behind the hole for the marketplace, which was on the south side of the plaza, two hundred cottages of stone and thatch stood in various states of completion in a neat checkerboard. Réjéivika had been carefully planned. Lédhvika, ɛjnu's original settlement, had been swallowed and erased.

They parked their steam cars on the edge of the plaza away from trucks and bulldozers and walked over to the new palace to see the construction before heading for the prince's tent. Much to Thornton's surprise, he saw Mɛméjékwu himself inside the partially built structure, consulting with the architect and construction director, pointing out tasks to be finished. The prince had never struck him as a hands-on manager of tasks. At one point the prince saw him at a distance and nodded in acknowledgement. When he was finished, he walked over.

"Honored Dhoru, you made it; excellent."

"It is always good to see you, Your Majesty."

"Thank you. Mɛméjékwu looked at the building. "Quite a palace, eh? It'll have space for apartments for Her Majesty and my family, a large throne room, housing for a staff of thirty, and offices for fifty clerks and ministers, with room for expansion. On the other side of the temple, closer to the river, is space for housing for six priestly families, followed by a public school complex and a génadɛma. I hope your family can help to found the latter."

“We would be honored to work with you on that, Your Majesty. It sounds like you’re planning ahead.”

“Indeed; this place will grow larger than Mɛddoakwés is now. I hope you can help me make the plan. We have a good map of the valley already and a quick survey, but we need an depth-survey and plans for expanding. And I am very concerned about the river.” He pointed westward at the muddy torrent across the plaza. “It was a quiet, placid stream until yesterday, when there was a rainstorm north of here, and now look at it. Last night it overflowed onto the plaza.”

“The escarpment has very little vegetation on it, so heavy rain will cause mud slides and floods. This will be a problem for quite a few years.”

“Is there nothing we can do? Couldn’t we build a wall of dirt?”

“Yes, a levee along the river will keep it away from the city. But a low dam upstream to catch the flood and hold it might be better.”

“Well, that’s what I need from you; recommendations like that.”

“I understand. You want more than a survey, then; you want a land use plan for the entire valley?”

“You could make such a plan?”

“Indeed. You could review it and propose changes, and we could make the changes.”

“That would be very good. How much?”

“A good plan, Your Majesty, cannot be done quickly. We have good aerial photographs of the valley and topographic maps. We’ll need to do a two-week survey,

then go home and spend four to six weeks putting together the plan, then show it to you and revise it."

"I can give you two months. How much?"

"Two months of work, six people full time, a few others part time plus advice, travel, equipment, lab time. . ."

"How about four thousand?"

Thornton nodded. "Yes, that'll do it."

"Can you do it in the next two months?"

"If you can explain to the army why we won't be able to deliver the maps they ordered, yes, no problem."

The Prince waved his hand. "No problem. It's done."

"Then you will have your plan about the time of the Grand Court."

Reread and edited, 6/2/13, 8/14/17, 9/22/26

275.

Industrial Park

Mid Dhébɛlménu/early May, yr 11/629

John looked at Chris and Amos, then out the window of the Mennea Tomi's conference room to calm himself down, then back at them. "Why in hell should we go into business with Kandékwɛs?" He paused. "He tried to annex me when I built the grist mill. Earlier than that, I think he and his father wanted to kill me."

"John, he's a friend of Mɛlwika now," replied Chris. "Twenty-five years ago you were a strange gɛdhému, and we know what that means. Fifteen years ago you were an unexpected source of wealth. Now, you're an independent lord."

"Granted. But we don't *need* him. Let him run Mɛddoakwés. We'll run Mɛlwika."

"John, I think we're on the edge of another major expansion," said Amos, patiently. "Demand for steam-powered trucks and tractors is still going up, and if they were cheaper, even more would be wanted. Steam cars and buses are needed, too. You've pushed up production to 250 vehicles per year and the backorders are growing, not shrinking. Usually we'd push production up to 300 or 400, lower prices twenty percent, and wait. But in the last few months I've been studying assembly-line production methods."

"Amos, we can't switch to a production line! You need to produce *a vehicle every hour* for that to work. We're talking about three or four *thousand* vehicles a year!"

"I know, but I think there are ways of starting an assembly line—a short one—with several steps being performed by each worker. I think we could halve the cost

of producing vehicles initially and raise production to a thousand a year. That would reduce a basic steam car to two thousand dhanay, which is feasible for about a thousand families. Furthermore, we could use two basic designs; a car and a tractor. The latter would have a bigger, stronger engine and a wider range of gears and would cost about three thousand. If it were to serve as a truck or bus, it would pull an attached flatbed or passenger cabin."

"Yimu's been talking about a design like that. I'm willing to consider a big increase in production like that if the economics work out. But that has nothing to do with Lord Kandékwɛs."

"On the contrary. Such a vehicle plant would fill the entire industrial park and would require relocation of some manufacturing facilities elsewhere. It'll add seven hundred more manufacturing jobs, and their purchases and taxes will add about a thousand retail, service, and government jobs. That's 1,700 jobs; multiply by five and that's almost nine thousand more people in the city. It also means twice as much air pollution, which is already getting rather serious at times, and twice as much industrial effluent."

John considered that, so Chris spoke up. "If Mɛddoakwés doesn't grow, in a few years Mɛlwika will be twice as large as the capital. That worries me."

"Look, we're going to grow," said John. "What can anyone do? Amos, you've been expanding the School of Engineering; you've hired eight more staffers in the last six months. Mɛddoakwés will get factories eventually. They're trickling out. Béranagrés has a new one."

"Opened by one of your sons in law," said Chris. "Factories don't grow like mushrooms; they have to be planted, fertilized, and protected."

"I've expanded the School of Engineering's staff because we need to develop literally hundreds of new machines," said Amos. "And we're either investing in the factories the school makes possible, or we're partnering with others. Mɛlita's getting a corn processing plant; Pértatranisér has a sugar cane mill; Gramakwés is getting a peanut processing plant. We need as much investment as we can find, and Kandékwɛs has a lot of wealth. If he gets involved, a lot of old houses will follow."

"You guys are rushing this world into the industrial age." John stared out the window.

"John, ten years ago this was an impoverished world of illiterate people who had a life expectancy of thirty-five years, excluding infant mortality; if you include infant mortality, life expectancy for the average human was about five years," said Chris. "Modern economies do not stand still; they either expand or contract. Farm acreage is growing about thirty percent this year. *Thirty percent.* We're lucky the winter was cold and it killed half the winter crop; otherwise food overproduction would have caused a collapse of farm prices and probably depressed demand for manufactured goods, and we'd be entering a recession right now. We have to expand factories as fast as possible to soak up spare labor and increase demand for agricultural non-food items like cotton and industrial oils. Otherwise, Mɛlwika could face social unrest and this world's entire democratic experiment could be jeopardized."

"Just because I don't partner with Kandékwɛs? Come on, Chris."

"No, not because of that. But every bit helps, John. And we need to build good relations with everyone. That means being generous."

John sighed. "Alright, alright! Generosity and kindness; I understand those ideas. And forgiveness. I can let go of a grudge. As long as Mɛlwika stays number one."

"We're about five hundred people bigger than Mɛddoakwés, and I have no objection to that sort of advantage."

"Two more things. If Kandékwɛs is involved, I don't want him to be a two-bit player; he's got to make a big commitment."

"I think he'll do that." Chris paused, wondering what "big" meant. "I'm sure he can commit thirty or forty thousand a year, and—"

John threw his head back and laughed deeply. "That's all? Amos, how much will an expansion to a thousand vehicles per year cost? One million? Two? I've already invested two million in the place over ten years!"

"Yes, something like that."

"But Kandékwɛs can bring two other things; government investments in infrastructure like roads and gas pipelines, and investment from other lords," pointed out Chris. "Amos and I will invest, too, and Mɛlita gives us almost twice the resources we used to have. But two million isn't something that can be raised quickly."

"I could raise it from my own profits in about five years," groused John. "But in ten years I might be dead. I suppose faster is better, if I retain majority control over the operation. That's my other condition."

"I agree," said Chris. "I'll invite Kandékwɛs to a meeting on Tridiu."

Randu struggled with the heavy case of leather and wood. Fortunately, from the bus stop by the ferry dock to the Arjdhura Génadɛma was only fifty meters; a slow plod across a dusty plaza. The main door was open so it was a short trek to the secretary's office and the faculty offices next to it.

"What do you have?" asked Enir, the secretary and caretaker, puzzled by the leather case.

"You *must* see. You'll need to learn to use it, in fact." Randu put the case down on Enir's desk and opened it, revealing a very large, multi-keyed typewriter.

"It types *Sumi*?" Enir stared, amazed. Then he reached over and grabbed a piece of paper.

"I'll show you." Randu rolled the sheet into place and lined it up, then slowly typed a sentence, hunting and pecking across the page.

Enir laughed. "Amazing! When did they start making them?"

"This is the very first one. We get to test it out."

"Are you sure the army won't object?"

"These are not banned. We can't have a mimeograph machine—not yet, anyway—but a typewriter?" He shrugged.

"Is there a system for typing on it? In Eryani, certain fingers are for certain keys."

"You've used an Eryani typewriter?"

"Of course! I typed for Modobéru and for Dumuzi."

"Then it sounds like you're the man to invent the touch-typing system for Sumi."

Enir smiled with glee. "Well, it has about twice as many keys, so I guess that won't be that hard to develop. Is it staying here?"

“Yes, it’s the génadɛma’s. Lord Estodhéru was just in Mɛlwika for a meeting of the Central Spiritual Assembly and brought it. I asked him about developing a Sumi typewriter five months ago, and he had the workmen in Mɛddwoglubas do it. They’re expensive; 150 dhanay. But if demand is strong, he said the cost would eventually drop by about half.”

“Well, leave it here, and everyone who gets off the ferry from Sumilara will come see it! They’ll be clamoring for one, I’m sure.”

“I agree. They’ll sell. So will ‘old Eryani’ typewriters in Isurdhuna; they need the same number of keys. If you want to practice, I have some things to type up.”

“Sure, anything! I’ll probably make some mistakes, though.”

“That’s alright.” Randu pulled off his backpack and opened it. “Here’s a sheet of Bahá'í quotations. Use some carbon paper.”

“I’ll make five copies at once; that seems to be the maximum you can make in Eryani typewriters.” Enir took the hand-written page and opened his desk for paper and carbons.

Randu nodded, pleased Enir would be exposed a bit more to Bahá'í writings. He could use five copies at the Tridiu evening class he and Nina were still holding in their apartment. He walked to his office, unlocked the door, and spread out stuff on his desk. He had to give a three-hour class on basic math starting in an hour and a half, but he had been reviewing his notes on the bus ride down and he had taught the subject several times before, so after five minutes he decided to walk around the building and see how it was coming.

The two large classrooms on the first floor were finished; he had been teaching in one of them for several months, and the other was used for a class in Eryani once a week. He walked up the stairs to check out the four smaller classrooms. Three were finished; the fourth still had exposed electrical wires, but the workmen had made some progress and he could see that they would be plastering the walls soon.

He walked to the dormitory wing, thirty-five meters long and ten wide, with a total of forty rooms and four bathrooms. In addition to Enir, four other students had already moved in. Most of the rooms were partially finished, but a lot of progress had been made in the last week. The last part of the building—a kitchen and cafeteria, with a library and study area above it—were still empty shells. It was hard to believe everything was scheduled for completion in two months.

He walked back to the classrooms and checked out a smaller one. He would move his two classes there today; it was silly teaching ten people in a classroom for sixty. He was about to go downstairs when he saw the mobile clinic drive into the plaza in front of the génadɛma and park. It visited the town every three weeks. He went down to help extend an electrical line from the génadɛma to the vehicle.

He was surprised to see Dr. Lua on board. "Alláh-u-Abhá. I didn't know you still went out with the clinic."

"Alláh-u-Abhá, Randu! Yes, I still get out every few weeks; today I'm substituting for Dr. Kɛrbloré, who had to hurry back to Gordha for a medical emergency. How's the school coming?"

"The building's almost finished. It has five students living in it and they're also the staff. I guess once it's finished, they'll hire professors and staff for it. I was talking to

Amos the other day about a vocational lab, so Sumis could come here to learn electrical wiring, plumbing, use of lathes, etc. He said he'd check with the army."

"That's a great idea, if they approve it. How are your classes?"

"The ones here, or in Mɛlwika? I'm taking three there and teaching three here."

"How?" Lua's eyes opened wide.

"Oh, it isn't that bad. Two of the courses I'm taking are seminars in education and psychology, and two of the ones I'm teaching here are adult education courses I've taught before on basic math and basic science. So I'm busy, but I'm not overwhelmed! If I complete three this term and three the next, I'll get a dwoyɛri at graduation, which is my goal."

"That's ambitious. We should talk about how to create nursing courses in Sumi. I've run a few very basic classes—I wouldn't even call them courses—in nursing while I was on the island a few years ago, and we have one Sumi-speaking physician who is running Anartu hospital and gradually teaching basic medical classes. But he is not a particularly good teacher, and teaching isn't his priority. The army sends over one or two doctors, but they usually don't know the language. It's a bad situation. We've graduated twenty-five physicians now, almost one per ten thousand people, so Sumilara should have four."

"I gather there are a lot of people trying to read Eryani medical textbooks on their own. Yes, I hope this school teaches nursing. It has to. I think Nina would be interested in the subject. Maybe I can convince her to take a course next term."

"Good! She lacks confidence, but I think she could be good."

“By the way, any news from Thornton? Lébé’s still coming over Tridius to our Ruhi classes.”

“We talked to him last night and they were exploring the Long Valley in great detail. It’s much easier this time; there’s no mud! He’ll be home next week. But now I have to get ready; we have several patients with appointments and we always have drop-ins. Good to see you.”

“Thank you.” Randu headed back to the génadɛma to focus on final preparations for class, now forty-five minutes away. Dr. Lua headed back to the cramped office to pull out medical records. They were expecting a pregnant woman, a man with a serious cough, and a man with arthritis.

Her cell phone began to vibrate, disturbing her concentration. She pulled it out and looked at the display. “Sophos, 777-0004” it said. She had never gotten a call from an alien before.

She stared at the display for a moment, wondering what to do. She almost didn’t want to answer. But then she pushed the button. “Hello?” she said in English.

“Hello, Dr. Lua? My name is Sophos, and I am new at the research station on Skanda. Can you understand me alright?”

“Ah . . . yes, Sophos, the English translation is good. Are you trying to speak to my brother, Thornton?”

“No, I wanted to speak to you. I hope you don’t mind. I’m a medical researcher completing a doctorate in human medicine. There’s only so much one can learn from the World Wide Web and medical docudramas! So I’m spending half of one of our years at the research station, and I was hoping to be of assistance to you and complete some

research at the same time. That's the sort of arrangement that was made in the past, I understand."

"Yes, and it has worked out well for us. What did you have in mind?"

"I'd like to do a series of in-depth interviews with you about the development of the health care system on Éra and where you think it should go in the future. There are medical data you can upload to our computers, too, that would help; death rates, total numbers treated, cost per patient, systems for providing care at a reasonable cost, etc. I understand you've tackled the last one particularly well."

"Perhaps we have. We are still very limited in what we can do. We have greatly reduced deaths from infectious disease, though, and the population here is pretty young; that alone causes the death rate to plunge. What can you provide us in return?"

"More medications. I can run our drug synthesizing units; I have the training and the person who does it will happily give the task to me. The big limitation is that if you want more medications—greater quantity and more types of drugs—we'll have to provide them in concentrated form, and you'll have to convert them to pills. The reason is because we have to synthesize the inert ingredients as well, and even though they are simple for you to make, they take just as much machine time for us as the drugs themselves! If we give you concentrated medications, we could easily increase our output ten or twentyfold."

"Now, *that* interests me, Sophos. I've been asking for several dozen other drugs for years and they haven't been able to get them to me. There have even been times when we received a shipment and it was missing something."

"I know. Everyone here is very busy. But I have a particular interest in the chemistry of medications. I'll spend the time."

"Good. Then I think you have a deal, Sophos."

Two weeks had been enough to finish the Crown Prince's throne room. When Thornton and the geologists entered, they looked around briefly as they approached Mɛméjékwu up front. The plaster moldings, in which the Eryanɛ and Sumi excelled, had barely been started; no doubt the prince used the throne room only a few hours a day, so the decoration could advance.

"Please approach," said Mɛméjékwu, encouragingly. Thornton felt relieved that the prince didn't seem to want to remain aloof; he had much preferred their previous encounter in the construction area.

Thornton bowed. "Your Majesty."

"Please introduce me to your men, Honored Thornton."

"Gladly." Thornton pointed to each and gave their name and Mɛméjékwu exchanged a sentence or two with each.

"Please, make yourselves comfortable in the chairs or on the pillows," said the prince, pointing, and Thornton led the other five to the pillows so they could sit cross legged, Eryanɛ fashion. Chairs struck him as too "gɛdhémɛ" in that context. "So, how did the two weeks of exploring go?"

"Quite well, Your Majesty," replied Thornton. "The network of roads and bridges made our exploration much easier this time than last, there was almost no mud to deal with, and we had excellent maps to work with. Consequently, we had twice as much time

but did perhaps ten times as much work as last year. We started at the southern end and worked our way north, spending most of our time in the wide central areas where the climate is nicest and the potential for settlement is greatest. We have not had any significant amount of time even to think about what we have seen, but we have some ideas already."

"And what are they?"

"Any land use plan for the valley needs to plan for flood control and soil erosion. Otherwise the rivers will become choked with sediment rage out of control, as you have seen. More seriously, any reservoirs downstream will fill with mud. So we would recommend several major principles in planning: First, all steep slopes should be covered with trees or tall grass, with no agriculture and no heavy grazing from animals. Second, the valley needs three major water reservoirs which will provide irrigation water and serve to control floods. One must be upstream of Réjéivika to protect it and provide it with a reliable, clean water supply. Another needs to be in the lower valley. The third needs to be where the Dɛlongisér leaves the valley."

"Will these also provide electricity? We need that, too."

The dam on the Dɛlongisér by the valley's exit could, but the dams in the valley itself would be fairly low. Their water levels should be kept low so they can catch floods. But waterpower is not a problem in this area. Four rivers fall 1,800 meters into the valley on the western side, and all four carry at least 20 cubic meters of water per second. Each one is capable of generating an average of 360,000 kilowatts, which is almost ten times as much power as we are making right now. So we don't need to harness power from a few low dams on the valley floor."

Mɛmɛjékwu smiled, pleased with that news. “So, we can become a great industrial center. Excellent.”

“Well, yes and no. The valley has enough waterpower to run this entire world. But if you burn wood or coal in the valley, the smoke will not escape from it quickly because the valley is so narrow and deep. This is the big problem. We think that the valley has breezes blowing from the cold northern and southern ends toward the equatorial middle, where the sun heats the air and makes it rise. The problem is that once the air rises 1,800 meters to the level of the rim, it is cooler than the air on both sides of the valley, because the air there is in contact with ground warmed by the sun. The result is that the valley has a permanent condition called a thermal inversion, which means the air in the valley does not mix with the wind blowing overhead. We suspect if this valley once had a hundred thousand people, the smoke from cooking fires, iron smelting, and other activities would have made the air unhealthy. That, combined with overgrazing of the slopes, floods, and mud and rock slides would have made this place less pleasant to live in than the shores of the sea. We have seen many terraces on the valley edges. They indicate the inhabitants were dealing with erosion problems.”

“I see. Go on.” The prince was not pleased by that information.

“We also want to recommend that initially, large parts of the valley be set aside as parkland. Some of it can be settled later. We would make all slopes parkland to reduce erosion and flooding, but we would also cross the valley itself with strips of parkland, perhaps ten of them, and ultimately they should be at least a kilometer wide, though they could start out wider than that. The strips will cross the rivers, and we should maximize

the marshland along the rivers in those areas because marshes store floods, purify the water, and are homes of fish and birds."

"Hum." Mɛméjékwu thought about that, then nodded. "What else?"

"One other major recommendation: that Mɛdha be preserved as a historic site and no construction be allowed there. It needs to be the center of major excavation because it can tell us the ancient history of the Eryanɛ—or the west Eryanɛ, at least—better than any other place. Mɛdha was the center of the ancient West Eryanɛ civilization. If it is leveled, if it is even mined for building stone, precious information will be destroyed. All the major ancient town and village sites need to be mapped—we have identified most of them—and many of them merit some preservation, but none are more important than Mɛdha."

"We'll see about that. What else?"

"Those are the main elements. We'll produce a map of the valley with other details, like areas suitable for rice, for three crops per year, and so on. We'll propose a network of roads, large and small, and the order in which to build and populate them."

"Good, that's something we need. When can you have it ready?"

"Please give us a bit more time; ten weeks, until the Grand Court. Mɛlwika Génadɛma's second spring term starts in a week and I plan to organize and teach a course on land-use planning. Amos once took a course on that subject and taught it about seven years ago. It's time for me to teach it again with a dozen of my best students, and we can use the Long Valley as our case study throughout the term. That will give you a far more detailed and complete plan than otherwise we could have produced, and I will train a dozen students how to make similar plans for other provinces."

Mɛmɛ́jékwu considered the request, then nodded. “I will grant that request, because the new budget will be ready at the time of the Grand Court anyway, and we know more or less how much we need for things. We can decide which roads to lay out later.”

Reread and edited 6/2/13, 8/14/17, 9/22/26

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Generosity

Mid Blorménu/early June, year 11/year 629

The bus slowed as it approached Tɛrskua, then stopped near the village store next to Route 1. Out stepped Soru, Kanawé, Blorané, Mɛdhé, and Mitrukaru. Kanawé was carrying little Isuru, just a month old, who was asleep in her arms.

"We have to take a glance at Rudhstélu's store," said Kanawé. She pointed. "Look, there's even a big sign!"

"'Tɛrskua General Store, Rudhstélu Wɛranosunu, proprietor,'" Soru read, smiling. "So grand."

"I like the 'Wɛranosunu,'" added Kanawé. "He never used to use a family name."

"Probably since the election," said Soru. That was true in many places; voter registration had required a family name, and most used the father's father's name.

They stepped onto the ten meter wide porch in front of the building. It had a corrugated nickel steel roof, a concrete floor, and was surrounded by a low railing. Rudhstélu sat at a table near the door leading inside, listening to the radio, which was emitting music. There was a large clear area near him with two tables and eight chairs where people could sit and eat. The rest of the porch was filled with wheeled shelves full of wares.

Rudhstélu saw them and smiled. "It's so nice to see all of you again, especially my fellow villagers, Kanawé, Mɛdhé, and Mitrukaru." He rose and approached them, both hands extended. "Soru, right?"

“Yes, Soru. Good to see you again, Rudhstélu.”

He shook hands with everyone. “Can I hold the baby? What’s his name?”

“Isuru, named for Soru’s father; he’s a month old.”

“How cute!” Rudhstélu took the baby and kissed him. “I’m so happy for you. Stɛrstélu’s wife is expecting in five months, so I’ll be a grandfather in the fall!”

“Say hello for me!” said Mitrukaru.

“How are you doing? Married yet?”

Mitrukaru shook his head. “Not yet, but Esto willing, next spring. I should finish my kwétɛryɛri in late fall or early winter.”

“And she’s a good girl, from a nice family,” added Mɛdhé. “She’s from Morituora.”

“So, you’re engaged?”

“Well, no; not yet. We see each other at génadɛma and at the Bahá'í meetings.”

“Oh, are you a Bahá'í? A lot of that is going around.”

“No, I’m not, but the Bahá'í meetings are good places to meet girls!”

Rudhstélu laughed at that. Then he turned toward the road, because there was a loud noise approaching. They all stopped talking and turned to watch two residential trailers and three buses drive by. He was startled by that. “What was that?”

“The Queen, I think,” said Mitrukaru. “I read in the *Royal Standard* yesterday that she was heading to Sumilara today.”

“Oh? We got a copy of the paper, but there’s a school teacher here who reads it aloud to everyone, and he’ll do that tonight.”

“When did you add the porch?” asked Kanawé.

“Last fall. I had too much stuff in the store! I can wheel it inside and lock it at night and wheel it back outside in the day, and I now have a place for people to come have a snack and listen to the radio. Iced tea and fruit or bread or pickles for a dontay. They usually do a little shopping, too!” He smiled.

“Anything new in the village?” asked Mɛdhé.

Rudhstélu nodded and a look of satisfaction crossed his face. “Yes, some good changes. After the election, Wɛranu and I were elected the village’s two representatives to the provincial assembly, so Lord Mitruluku got *very* nice to us, especially when Wɛranu and I asked to have a joint meeting with him! We invited Wɛranéstu and your brother Moléstu along, since they came in third and fourth in the voting. Lord Mitruluku agreed to sue the lord of an Old House who claimed ten thousand agris north of Route 1, which is just about the entire township, but that lord dropped his claim before it had to go to court! And next month a survey comes to mark the borders, which the lord is claiming. Some of us have claimed a strip along Route 1 and He said he’d recognize our claims and give us titles, so our ownership will be official! A judge is coming for three days to settle other land disputes, too. So we have some progress!”

“I heard about the lawsuit getting settled,” said Kanawé. “I’m so happy. And I see the land is already being plowed.”

“Yes, we got some grange guys to come over and do a quick survey; the borders may be off a bit, but the plots will be more regular than the slivers we own down in the floodplain.”

“It’s good to hear,” said Kanawé. “We’ll head home on the 17:00.”

"You mean the 17:30? The schedule has changed. The new coat of gravel has made Route 1 faster, so the bus company is running two more buses a day on the highway."

"Thanks," said Soru. They said goodbye and headed into the village. He paused briefly to point to Kanawé the new manufactory Estowékhu Tɛrskuai had finished; it employed five men to make desks; swiveling wheeled office chairs; metal filing cabinets; and other office products that he sold in his store in Mɛlwika. She nodded, then they walked past the school and onto Tɛrskua's single, winding main street. Soru looked at the place closely, because he knew of some improvements and was looking for others. Last summer he and Kanawé had organized a group consisting of Estowékhu Tɛrskuai; Wɛranosunu, a member of the ɛjnopéla Grange's Board; and five Tɛrskuans who held manufacturing or farming jobs in Mɛlwika. The group of them, and the Mɛlwika and ɛjnopéla Granges, had donated to the village a thousand dhanay to install electrical and telephone lines along the village's main street and install water and sewer pipes underneath it. There were indeed wires jumping from house to house, and side lines crossing the street to houses on the other side. The open sewers running along both sides of the street were still there, but the water trickling through them seemed to carry only animal dung; no human sewage.

"Look at all the corrugated steel roofs," said Kanawé, pointing. In the past, most houses had virtually flat adobe roofs with a thatched canopy over them; the space in between was used as a porch, living room, and sleeping area when the weather was

pleasant, which it usually was in Tɛrskua. The thatch was rapidly being replaced by sheets of corrugated nickel-steel.

"That's a big change, and all in six months," said Mɛdhé, referring to the last time they had visited.

They turned the corner and switchbacked down to the street's next level. As they passed the large home of Wɛranu they were surprised to hear a telephone ring inside. Glancing inside the house of a friend, Mɛdhé saw a lightbulb glowing within.

They reached the lowermost level of the street, where Moléstu and Mɛlitané lived with Blorakwé, their fifteen year old daughter. Kanawé's younger brother, Majéstu, had arrived with Lukaré and their three children—one a four-month old baby named Saru for their deceased father—a few hours earlier. Not far away was the village's new grange building, with three grain silos and an electrically powered grist mill.

They knocked on the house's door and walked in—it was Kanawé's childhood home and they were expected. Inside, everyone rose and greeted them with hugs and kisses.

"So good to see you!"

"It's been a long time; you have to come home more often!"

"I'm glad we got to Majéstu's new house," said Kanawé, referring to an earlier visit to Mɛlita.

"And thank you for coming to see us, finally!" added Mɛdhé. The Moléstu family had come to Mɛlwika a month earlier; it had been their first bus ride.

"Let me hold Isuru!" said Lukaré, who handed her son Saru to Blorakwé so she could hold the new little one.

“No, no, give Saru to me,” said Soru, and he took Lukaré and Majéstu’s little boy. “These cousins will play together in a few years.”

“You’ve got to come back to Mɛlita,” said Majéstu to his sister. “Mɛlita’s got some nice stores, and the kids can have ice cream!”

“I wish Rudhstélu would get some, but he’s afraid it’ll melt before he sells it!” quipped Moléstu.

They all began to sit on pillows on the floor. “What a beautiful rug,” said Kanawé, fingering it. “Tutanɛ, right?”

“Yes, a Kaitɛrɛ pattern; I really like it,” said Mɛlitané, pleased that Kanawé had noticed. Kanawé looked around the house’s main room. The walls had been replastered and painted; the ceiling had two light bulbs, both on even though the windows were unshuttered, probably to show them off to the visitors; an iron wood stove sat in the corner to provide heat and a cooking surface; next to it was a nice new set of shelves and a large dining table with chairs. The family had spent almost a thousand dhanay over the last year on quite a few new things. Moléstu was not lazy; he had earned two hundred dhanay reconditioning Mɛdhé’s old house for resale or rent, then over the winter had spent several months staying with Majéstu and doing construction work in Mɛlita.

“When we passed Wɛranu’s house, I think we heard a phone ring,” observed Soru.

“He has one,” agreed Moléstu. “Rudhstélu has a little switchboard in his store. I think Tɛrskua has six phones: the store, the school, the furniture manufactory, the grange, and two in houses.”

“Status and prestige,” added Mɛlitané from the kitchen corner, where she was getting tea and bread. “I doubt even Wɛranu uses his more than two or three times a week!”

“So many changes,” said Kanawé. “I can’t believe it! I guess the grange has helped a lot!”

“It has,” agreed Moléstu, though not enthusiastically. “It’s still a pretty weak grange; it doesn’t have a local board yet. We’re really part of the Ornakwés Grange. They built the building to garage three tractors, and once they did everyone wanted to join; suddenly there were tractors right in the village! At the same time, the lawsuit was settled, so in the last month a thousand new agris of fields have been plowed across Route 1 north of here. Crop prices seem to be holding up alright, so we’re hoping to make a bit more money this year than last.”

“I’m surprised the grange built a grist mill here,” said Soru.

“They didn’t; they were pretty unhappy when Lord Mitruluku got a loan and grant from the development bank for it, because they wanted all our grain to go to their grinding facility in Ornakwés. That was a big construction job.”

“You worked on that, too?” asked Soru.

“I was the construction foreman.”

Soru nodded, suitably impressed. Kanawé asked, “And now everyone has medical care, because of the grange?”

Moléstu nodded. “Yes, the grange has guaranteed that. Of course, people went to the hospital before, but only if they were very, very sick. The clinic has been visiting

monthly for several years. But now the grange pays, so there's less paperwork and more people are using the clinic."

"I hear they're talking about buying another mobile clinic because the lower valley needs it," said Kanawé.

"Finally, this place is catching up to Mɛlita," commented Majéstu.

"I don't like Mɛlita; it's ugly," replied Mɛlitané. "Tɛrskua has character."

"Character, or decay?" replied Lukaré, chuckling.

"No, not decay! This is a *village*. The houses touch each other to form a mass, and the people help each other to form a mass. But in Mɛlita each house is by itself, each family by itself." Mɛlitané shook her head disapprovingly.

"Hey, we have community," replied Majéstu. "It's not impersonal, like Mɛlwika."

"Mɛlita's a town with hundreds of empty houses, filled with shifting farmers from the north shore who speak funny," retorted Mɛlitané. "Look, I'm not saying you should move back; it's a nice place in its own way. Good stores, too. But it isn't a village."

"That's true," agreed Majéstu. "I'll concede that, sister. It's a funny place to live because we have seven hundred little houses; much smaller than the houses here. It has twenty-five thousand agris of farmland, and now all of it is farmed. You look at it and Mɛlita should be one of the largest towns in the world! But the streets look half deserted, and that's because only a third of the houses have anyone living in them at any time. It's busiest in winter when the north shore people come down to escape the snow and plant crops on their land."

"But we know all our neighbors," added Lukaré. "We're in a real neighborhood; all our neighbors live there full time. And I will say this about the north shore people;

they do most of their shopping in Mɛlita before they head home, so we have great stores! We're getting a Home Improvement store next month."

"That'll be nice," added Majéstu. "The big new shopping area will be *ice cooled;* they say they'll melt twenty gurnis of ice per day! You guys have to come after it opens."

"We will," agreed Moléstu. "After the harvest we'll have money."

"Prices have held up okay," said Majéstu, echoing his brother. It was a constant worry of farmers.

"What do you think of peanuts?" asked Moléstu.

Majéstu shook his head. "The granges have been pushing them, but from what I hear, supply has expanded faster than demand. They're opening a peanut processing plant soon; the oil can be used in cooking, you can grind them to make something called *peanut butter* that you can spread on bread and it tastes nice, and they plan to shell, roast, salt, and bottle peanuts for sale."

"Those sound nice, but expensive," said Mɛlitané, walking over with a big tray of sliced bread. "We'll stick to regular butter. Kanawé, what's in this bread; olives?"

"Yes, I thought you'd like to try it. It's a fancy new kind of bread."

"You all in Mɛlwika have too much money to spend."

Blorakwé took a bite of a piece. "Oh, mom, it tastes great! We need some of this here!"

"And who will ever pay for it?"

"Lord Mitruluku says he wants to open a bakery; they should make a little every few days!"

"A bakery?" asked Kanawé.

Mɛlitané nodded. “That’s what he keeps saying. He’d put it next to the grist mill.”

“He’s figuring this village has enough extra cash now, people will buy bread rather than bake it themselves,” added Moléstu.

“If it’s cheap enough, he’s right,” said Mɛlitané. “I hate baking bread. I’d rather be sewing.”

“And you’re good,” agreed Mɛdhé. “I don’t bake much any more; I run my sewing machine and earn money.”

“Can you earn enough that way?” asked Mɛlitané.

Mɛdhé shrugged. “It depends. I can earn maybe 500 or 600 dhanay per year that way; not enough for a family, but enough when you’re part of a household.”

“You may have to go back to cooking pretty soon, though,” observed Kanawé. Mɛdhé smiled satisfactorily at that, then paused.

“I’m getting married again,” she said a moment later.

“Really? Congratulations!” exclaimed Mɛlitané.

“Marvelous. I’m glad you’ll have a husband again,” said Moléstu, who had been uncomfortable about his cousin’s single status. “Is he a good provider?”

“You’ll meet him if you come to the wedding in two months. His name’s Datéstu and he’s a farmer in the grange. He has a house and three grown kids who are married and living around the valley. He’s a good man. He has said I can keep the sewing machine and my sewing work.”

“Good for him,” said Mɛlitané.

“No kids?” asked Moléstu.

Mɛdhé shrugged. “We’ll see what Esto wills. It may still be possible. I’m not sure I want another crop of kids, but I sort of miss having kids around.”

“You can borrow some of mine!” replied Lukaré, looking at her three, who could be terrors around the house.

“Congratulations, cousin. I am very happy for you,” said Majéstu.

Mɛlitané returned to the stove and poured the tea water, which had been boiling for some time. She carried a tray of tea cups and sugar, with two jars of jam, back to the circle of people sitting on the floor. Everyone got their share and chatted happily about the kids, who sat silently and embarrassedly. When Mɛlitané finished reviewing Blorakwé’s achievements in ninth grade—she took the bus daily to ɛjnopéla High School—Kanawé said, “those are achievements I’m proud of.”

“She’s always seen you as a role model,” said Mɛlitané. She didn’t seem completely pleased by her daughter’s choice.

“I’d like to have the chance to help her more,” said Kanawé. “Between Isuru and Blorané, my hands are full. Isuru is still small and sleeps most of the time, but I really will need help with him in a few months. If Blorakwé can come live with us and help out with Isuru and with the house in general, we can arrange for her to go to high school at either Mɛlwika or Mɛddoakwés.”

Blorakwé nodded enthusiastically. Moléstu, however, decided to reason his way out of the situation, rather than simply refuse. “Kanawé, a girl like Blorakwé can help with the house or can go to school, but she can’t do both.”

“Oh, I don’t know. We *live* at a school, remember. It’s easy to get homework done; there are six people who can help.”

"If you still were living in your house in Mɛlwika, though, Mɛdhé could help."

"Sure, that's why I moved there four years ago," agreed Mɛdhé. "But that was to help with Blorané. Now I'm working almost full time with my sewing machine. And Mitrukaru's useless; he's always running around. He'll have to settle down and help a wife with children soon enough."

"I'd worry about her catching something from those . . . *kids*," objected Mɛlitané.

Soru was offended by that. "Mɛlitané, children who are deaf or are slow readers *do not* have demons in them. There is nothing to catch. They are different for purely medical reasons. If you were around them for two or three days, you'd see."

"You'd fall in love with them," agreed Kanawé. "Some of them are very precious souls. They are different, but they are precious. Their difference is a test from Esto; a test to *us*."

There was a long silence after that. "Look, I want my daughter to have all the skills needed to catch the eye of a good man," said Moléstu, trying to stay calm. "She's learning how to take care of a household. She's sixteen; one or two of her friends are married."

"Brother, give her a bit more time," urged Kanawé. "The new knowledge takes a little while longer to acquire, and it does not offend many men for a woman to know some of it. When we lived on little farm plots and had no doctors or teachers, we had to grow up fast and have a family quickly, because we didn't live long. But now we can live fifty, sixty, seventy years. . . give her a few years."

“Father, please, I really want to be a teacher and come back to the village to teach. There are women who are married, have a child, and teach . . . one of the high school teachers has two!”

“One of the teachers at our school is pregnant,” agreed Soru. “If the father and mother both have a salary, they have enough money to hire help around the house.”

“Then why don’t you do that,” said Moléstu.

“We want to hire someone; Blorakwé!” replied Kanawé. “Why hire some local woman we don’t know when we can hire a cousin and provide her with an opportunity at the same time?”

Moléstu didn’t say anything to that at first. Mɛlitané turned to her husband, uncertain. Majéstu and Lukaré looked at each other, then at the floor. Finally Moléstu looked at his daughter, so filled with hope and worry. “Alright,” he finally said. “We’ll give it a try. You have another month of ninth grade at ɛjnopéla High School. Finish it up, then it’s summertime. You can go there for the summer, and we’ll see after that.”

“Thank you, daddy!” she replied, bursting with excitement.

Jonu Obisbu looked at the knife, fork, and spoon arrayed around his plate and the heap of steaming rice with vegetables and mutton in a tomato sauce piled on top. He glanced to see how Chris, Amos, Thornton, and Behruz were eating.

“Honored Jonu, we can eat rice with a fork or a spoon; it really doesn’t matter,” said Liz. She had put down her fork and picked up a spoon, since the others were eating with forks. He nodded and picked up the fork, the way the men were doing.

“I hope you had a good Central Spiritual Assembly meeting,” Thornton observed. The three-day meeting—the first after the Ridván election, where Jonu had been elected to the body—had ended that afternoon. That caused Chris to shift in his chair uncomfortably.

“I think so,” replied Jonu. “It was my first. I’ve never been part of a group quite like it; it’ll take some getting used to. I had no idea we’d be talking about translations, newsletters, and building temples. I had hoped we’d talk about spreading prosperity and salaries.”

“Salaries?” asked Thornton.

“Yes; for the members. I still find it hard to believe we aren’t paid.”

“It’s a personal sacrifice,” said Amos. “Membership is an expression of servitude; it isn’t a material privilege.”

“I understand that, but still, I have to eat. When I was bishop I got a fine house and clothes. Now I have a wife and no salary.”

“I thought you were teaching in the school,” said Liz.

“I am, but teaching children is not very satisfying.”

“You need new skills, so you can teach new things,” suggested Chris. “Perhaps you can come here for a term or two.”

“How can I do that? I’m forty years old; I’m not a student.”

“Jonu, my friend, one can be a student at any age. You have noted a problem and I have suggested some solutions. These matters generally do not resolve themselves. One has to act somehow.”

He sighed. “I know. You’re right. It’s pride that stops me from becoming a student.” He looked out the big glass windows, for they were eating dinner in the tomi building’s fancy conference room near Chris’s office, and the room had south and west-facing windows that opened on some of the city’s busiest quarters. He pointed. “That’s what we want, in Khɛrmdhuna; the sophistication, the advancement, the prosperity of this city.”

“That’s what everyone wants,” agreed Chris. “But Mɛlwika has some advantages conferred by geography—good waterpower, coal, rich soil, plenty of timber, nearby copper, some local iron—and it has been developing over ten years. Khɛrmdhuna can’t become exactly this; it doesn’t have the geography. But it has different geography; it has thermal springs and tar pits. Over time it can develop those resources and develop the most important resource of all: its people. But we can’t do that for you, Khɛrmdhuna has to do the bulk of the work.”

“I know, I know.”

“How are the factories working?” asked Amos.

“Quite well, but together they aren’t supposed to hire more than about fifty men. So far I think they’re up to twenty-five. Expansion has been slow.”

“Winter boots and woolens won’t sell much over the next few months, but as fall approaches, demand will pick up,” said Chris. “You have a contract from Home Improvement; that will help a lot. Your quality is pretty good and will continue to improve. There is no reason the Tutanɛ, or Mɛlwika, should dominate foot wear.”

“I’m sure Khɛrmdhuna will get more factories, and these two will expand,” added Amos. “It takes time.”

"What about the farm lands in Mɛlita, too?" asked Thornton. "Don't half the township's farmers go there in the winter? I suggest you go there for a while. You could teach in the school there, be among your people, and be close to génadɛma classes."

"Mɛlita's getting a regular génadɛma building," agreed Chris. "It'll have four classrooms plus a science lab and a mechanical workshop to teach mechanical classes. My impression is that the constant flow of people back and forth between the north shore and greater Mɛlita is a constant source of disruption for everyone. Maybe Mɛlita can do something about it."

"Perhaps. In some ways, you are making the problems in Khɛrmdhuna and similar villages worse: people will stop moving back and forth and emigrate from the north shore. Meanwhile, the people going back and forth naturally want to buy things, and Mɛlita provides better stores, so they buy things there. Mɛlita already is better than Bɛllɛdha that way, which makes it hard for Bɛllɛdha to develop."

"I know," said Chris. "This gets back to the matter of opportunities again. I know how to build a shopping center, but it is much harder to do it where I don't own the land or control the political climate. I've given classes in business and administration in Bɛllɛdha several times; there are people there who have access to the knowledge to build a bigger commercial district. I agree that a big Mɛlita shopping district will slow down Bɛllɛdha's expansion, but I am also confident that the latter can expand quite a bit. I've even told Lord Déolu I'd cooperate and support commercial efforts in Bɛllɛdha."

"I said the same about factories," added Amos. "We need local initiative, though. Khɛrmdhuna's ahead of everyone else on the north shore, where that's concerned."

“Consultation and town meetings have already helped,” agreed Jonu. “I suppose we should be thankful for the change we’ve already experienced. But a little change raises expectations and makes us desire more, and that causes problems, too. Ultimately, happiness is not brought by a factory job or electric lights at home.”

“Exactly right,” said Liz. “They can make life easier, or they can become a distraction from the real spiritual goals. Most of the people of Mɛlwika, however good they are, are distracted to one degree or another; they are preparing for their children’s future, but not preparing for the next life. That’s what the Bahá'í Faith gives us and why it must be spread around. It also can help with the mundane things—Bahá'ís are much more literate than the average person, and as a result the average Bahá'í probably earns more money—but that isn’t the point of the Faith.”

Jonu nodded. “Perhaps I understand better the Central Spiritual Assembly’s focus on spiritual matters, then. I suppose there is always time afterward to deal with mundane matters, as we are in this discussion.”

“I think so,” agreed Chris. “I suggest that when the Assembly meets in Mɛlwika, Ora, Mɛddwoglubas—any of the big cities—you see whether you can stay an extra day and talk to people. Very few Khɛrmdhunans travel; they don’t have connections. You now will travel monthly, so you are in an ideal position to help out your town, to find out who wants to buy shoes or woolens, for example, and go talk to them. Walk around Mɛlwika, see what it has, ask us about how it got the things it has, and take the ideas home. Because if you see something that Khɛrmdhuna needs, you can explain it better than we ever can.”

“Good idea,” said Jonu, with a smile.

They turned to more ordinary matters: Thornton's gradually emerging travel plans for the summer, Chris's frustrations over the House of Lords—which had started its spring meeting last week and to which the queen herself had added him, after the local lords had not elected him to it—and Amos's confusing back-and-forth between Mɛlwika, Pértatranisér, and new factories popping up in various places. Hearing about all the places on the world struggling to advance helped ease Jonu's frustration as well. "You should go on *The World Table,* Amos," he finally said.

The dinner went long and when it was over, Chris walked Jonu back to the hotel in bright Skandalight. When he returned to his house, he found that Thornton, Amos, and Lébé were in the great room next to the radio. "What is it?" he asked.

"The Queen is about to address a large public gathering in Anartu," said Thornton. "This is on channel 5, with commentary in Sumi."

Chris looked at the clock. "Eleven p.m.; it's 6 p.m. in Anartu. I wonder whether she intentionally waited until the eastern shore was asleep."

"Could be; the Old Houses won't hear her," said Thornton. "Or it might be that she wanted to wait until the Sumis are done with daily work and can listen. Just about every village has a radio now, so a radio address can reach a lot of people quickly."

"The announcer is describing the scene," added Lébé. "There's a big plaza in front of the citadel. They've set up folding chairs for the 110 members of the provincial assembly, the eighteen lords and their families, and about thirty hereditary lords; if you think the Eryanɛ have a lot of 'old houses,' you should see the Sumis! Almost every Eryanɛ city has a line of Sumi lords from before the great drought."

“Folding chairs, huh?” said Chris, surprised, since that was one of their innovations and he didn’t realize it had spread to the island.

“And this is interesting,” added Thornton. “The queen won’t address them from the citadel’s wall or from a window, but from a platform in front of them. She just entered the gathering and she has detoured over to the lords and old houses to greet her fellow aristocrats. I’m surprised she’s doing that, but I suppose Sumi aristocracy are viewed even by the Eryanɛ as having a certain gravitas that Eryanɛ nobility lack.”

“A dignity,” agreed Lébé. “I think you’re right, they receive a certain respect, and she’s accepting that. I bet our Old Houses won’t like that.”

“Except they can’t understand the announcer!” said Thornton.

“And I’m impressed the two of you do,” said Chris.

Her Majesty finished shaking hands with the lords and walked to the platform, which raised her high enough to be seen by the entire crowd. She gestured to those in front that they could sit. The two or three thousand behind had no chairs to sit in and remained on their feet.

“Five days ago, I arrived here in Anartu for the first time in eight years,” she began in Eryani, pausing for translation between sentences. Her voice boomed from loudspeakers and echoed off the surrounding buildings. “I very much regret that my annual visits were interrupted by the rise of the sea. I have traveled the island, from Sipadananga on the east to Amurueqluma on the west, from Hegalatira on the southern shore to Agalaru on the high plateau. Two things have struck me. The first was the immense destruction wrought by Evudingiru, which has left Kabingiru an abandoned wreck and Agalaru a half-ruined and buried home for almost a thousand people. We

pledge this to you: both places will be rebuilt, the farm roads will be opened, the fields will be cleared of rocks that rained from the air, and these villages will return to life." She paused for the inevitable groundswell of applause, and she was not disappointed by the enthusiastic response. She had to pause quite a while until it quieted down. "The second thing that struck me was the immense change and development this island has seen in the last eight years. I used to visit Sumilara every year. It was always hospitable and polite to me, welcoming to my entourage, and the people were relatively prosperous; the villages and cities were busy and productive and they produced some of the most beautiful and sophisticated objects in this world. I am pleased to see that after seven years of revolutionary change on the mainland, Sumilara is still prosperous, busy, and sophisticated. Unlike the mainland, every village has electricity and a telephone line. Every village has a school. Every village sends older students to a regional high school. I am told that the ferries have been taking a new bus, tractor, or steam car to Sumilara almost every week. The Sumis know what is good for their island: economic development and the knitting of their economy to the economies of all the other provinces of the realm.

"For several thousand years, this world has had two peoples and they have warred against each other. The archaeologists digging in the Long Valley have found an advanced Eryanɛ civilization with immense fortifications at all the valley entrances. Sumis have destroyed and subdued Eryanɛ cities. Eryanɛ have subdued and destroyed Sumi cities. The battles have continued for millennia. When the great drought began a thousand years ago, the cities of both sides were destroyed. Thousands and thousands of

people died. Two populations survived; the hunters and animal herders in the mountains, who were Eryanɛ, and the farmers on Sumilara. And they have fought as well.

"Now the great drought is over, the sea is restored, the Great Valley is being repopulated, and we have the new knowledge. Sumi are coming to the mainland to settle as they desire. The world has a single government: a monarch and popular elections that choose provincial assemblies and the royal Houses of Lords and Commons. The world has a single economy. It has great génadɛmas that turn out new machines to make new things for us. To divide this unity into separate sovereignties will not work; the pieces will not share innovation, so they will not stay equal, and they will not be able to trade with each other, so the pieces will not be prosperous. Unity will bring us strength and allow us to advance together. Disunity threatens our peace, stability, and prosperity.

"To advance together, all the provinces of the realm must develop together. I plan to come here every summer to see what developments have occurred and to give my people here the same right of audience and appeal that my subjects on the mainland enjoy.

"After a day of consultations with the provincial assembly of Sumilara, I am ordering various changes to the province's developmental course. We are reexamining the various restrictions on science courses and will eliminate many of them. We will drop the five-year delay policy on new things, like radios and phonographs. We will lay a telephone cable under the sea to connect the island to the mainland, so communications can flow freely. We will establish village, city, and provincial police forces. I have appointed Dingiramarru, the mayor of Amurueqluma, the chief of police of the province. He will report to the Governor. It is our hope that many Sumi army veterans will return to

the island and join the police force, but we will also recruit local men and train them in an Anartu Police Academy. It will take two years to develop this police force, which eventually will number several hundred. If, at that point, the island is still peaceful and the police force capable, much of the army will withdraw to ɛndraidha, where its men can serve the entire world."

A cheer exploded from the crowd over that announcement. Lébé looked at Thornton. "I don't think the translation was quite right. She said 'much of the army will withdraw' but the translator said 'the army will withdraw,' right?"

He nodded."I think you're right. But even 'much of the army' would generate quite a cheer. Their work clearing roads and rescuing people from the volcano has not salvaged their reputation."

"No, the soldiers can't speak to the people, so they create a lot of misunderstandings."

"You're missing her closing statement!" admonished Chris.

They listened to the queen's closing words about the fellowship of all peoples, which generated another cheer. "That was really very positive," said Chris. "It sounds like the forces of reconciliation are winning again, at least temporarily."

"I agree," said Thornton. "Dingiramarru is very popular; he's the highest elected official on the island, he's an army veteran, he was on the Swadlɛndha Grange's board, he knows the way the Eryanɛ work, and he has a good familiarity with the new knowledge. I bet he'll be a good police chief."

"And inevitably this weakens the army's political position on the island," said Lébé. "That's always good. They aren't as intrusive now as they were, but they're still pretty pushy."

"For now," said Chris. "Because generosity is not enough to end grudges. Her Majesty has proclaimed the unity of this world, but on her terms as the sovereign. That's not an argument designed to convince extremists. The history of tit-for-tat wars won't convince them either; they yearn to get the mainland back. And they know about terrorism. I don't see anything solving that problem except the Faith over many decades."

"When you put it that way, I suppose you're right," said Thornton.

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College Presidents

Chris, Dumuzi, Randu, and Enir slowly inspected the entire extended building of the Arjdhura Génadɛma. They flipped the light switches in the six classrooms and forty dormitory rooms, flushed the toilets in the four bathrooms, opened the bread oven in the kitchen, turned on all the faucets, tapped the book shelves in the library, moved furniture to examine the tile floors, then walked around the outside of the building to look at the exterior.

"Would you like a ladder, so you can climb on the roof?" asked the brother of Estanu, Déanu Tritɛjnai, the contractor. He was half serious.

Chris shook his head. "No, I don't think that's necessary." He looked at the others. "What do you think?"

"I had spotted a dozen little things over the last few weeks, like doors that don't close right. But I reported them to Dianu and he fixed them right away," said Enir.

"I've found the classrooms quite comfortable," said Randu. "And if I found a problem—a dripping faucet, for example—they fixed it right away."

"Good." Chris turned to Dumuzi. "Partner?"

"This is a good, solid construction job."

"I agree. Shall we pay him?"

"I'll write a check right now." They walked back inside the building and stopped at the receptionist's desk. Dumuzi wrote a check for 21,735 dhanay, the remaining half

the cost of the génadɛma. The building had cost more than they had expected, but it was worth it.

They shook hands with Dianu and thanked him for his work. He left as students began to arrive for their afternoon class; Randu was teaching land use planning as fast as he was taking the course from Thornton. Randu and Enir headed for the classroom, the latter to attend as a student.

"Let's sit in here," said Chris, pointing to an empty faculty office. Dumuzi nodded and they closed the door and sat. "So, we have a génadɛma. Now we need a President and two more trustees."

"Well, we agreed that you and I would each appoint one trustee, and we'd agree jointly on the President, who will have the fifth vote on the Board. Let's tackle the President first, because I think it'll be easy."

Chris nodded. "Randu Mar-Adar." Randu had started using Mar-Adar, son of Adar, as his family name in the last few months.

Dumuzi nodded. "I thought that'd be easy. He's bright, organized, energetic, reliable, articulate—"

"And can teach half the courses the génadɛma needs!" added Chris, with a laugh. "But I'd favor hiring two or three more faculty right away and maybe two more later, as we see the direction the génadɛma is going in. We need to cover science, math, business, health, education, and literature."

"Literature? We want the students to learn to write reasonably well, but please, let's not cover ancient Sumi myths about gods and all that! Those superstitions are adequately covered at Ninurta and Anarbala!"

"Dumuzi, students need to include some of that in their education; otherwise they will be out of touch with the people they are educating. But I agree if the génadɛmas on the island cover literature adequately, we can focus on it less. The bigger problem is finding people able to teach these other subjects. I don't know any Sumis who can teach business well."

"Randu has taught all these subjects so far, and he knows who took each one from him. I'd favor raising up faculty from among his students. There may be someone on the island who can teach basic science and math whom we could hire, but frankly, génadɛma education there is still very limited. Modern mechanical skills—fixing steam engines, installing electrical wiring—are very limited as well. But I know we have to be careful about offering them."

"You just returned from the island and have your ear to the ground. Do you think we could offer courses on electrical wiring, at least? The island is covered by wires and they're spreading fast. Someone needs to know how to install them properly."

Dumuzi considered. "Yes, we could do courses on wiring and plumbing, but I think steam engine repair is still too sensitive."

"What about a chemistry and physics lab? A proper génadɛma needs one. Here, all the high schools have them and the Sumi kids in Mɛlwika High take chemistry like everyone else."

"I'll inquire, Chris. I agree, we need to add a chemistry and physics lab if we can. How much do you propose to pay the faculty?"

"I need your advice about that because I know mainland salaries, but not island salaries. I'd pay a faculty member with a dwoyɛri 1,500 dhanay per year as a starting

salary, plus free tuition to take more courses. A kwétɛryɛri is worth 2,500 dhanay; a Master's 3,000. They could double over fifteen or twenty years. We pay about 500 dhanay per year more than that in Mɛlwika, but this génadɛma doesn't start with the prestige of Mɛlwika. The President would earn double that, so I'd start Randu out at 3,000 and encourage him to work toward a kwétɛryɛri and eventually a Masters."

"That sounds good to me," replied Dumuzi. "So, 3,000 for the President and 1,500 each for three faculty; that's 7,500 dhanay of salaries. We'll need another thousand a year per position for two support staff positions; that pushes us up to 10,000, to use a nice, round figure. Adding in electricity and supplies, and we have a budget of about a thousand a month, excluding lodging and meals. That's manageable. I plan to donate the 30,000 dhanay I paid toward the building."

"Alright, I'll donate my building payment as well, and ten thousand to cover salaries the first year. That means most of the income the school gains in the first year can go to endowment. We should ask the Arjdhura government to donate some local scholarships, or maybe even some land, whose sale can support the school. How much can we expect from the provincial government?"

"I'll lean on Modobéru to budget at least two thousand for scholarships. Villages will match that and the students themselves can pay a modest amount or borrow a modest amount from us and pay us back later. Do you think you can approach the palace? Her Majesty seemed quite keen on integrating the island. That costs money."

Chris nodded. "Okay, I'll do that." He pulled out a piece of paper and made notes of things he had to do. Dumuzi did the same. "What about your rich Sumi friends? Can they contribute to a scholarship fund?"

"I've already been approaching them. Can you send down faculty from Mɛlwika to teach courses here in Eryani, with Sumi translation? We can employ faculty or our own students to translate or pay for translation."

"We'll do that. I plan to come teach business personally. Randu said he thought the génadɛma should run a new term each month; the six-week months in the winter would either have a slower pace or the last week of the month would be a break. Mɛlwika may switch to that system, and the other mainland génadɛmas have been experimenting with it. It allows people to find a free month and immerse themselves in learning."

"Month-long terms are practical and easier to advertise. I think we'll find ourselves in need of twice as much dormitory space within a year. What else?"

Chris considered. "I think that's it. I think we can offer the job to Randu any time; he has a week to go before he finishes up his dwoyɛri in Mɛlwika. We'll need a lot more money to make this grow, friend Dumuzi."

Dumuzi shrugged. "You and I are in the business of making money and spending it, friend Chris. Speaking of which, thank you for inviting me to participate in the expansion of Miller Motors. The presence of myself and Adar at the investor's meeting two weeks ago did not cause any resistance or trouble; people even drank tea with us. He and I felt relieved afterwards."

"Good. Kandékwɛs was careful which old houses and merchants he invited to participate. The fact that Miller plans to retain 51% of the shares disturbed the meeting, but I think in the end everyone felt that John had led his family business through very impressive growth and that he deserved to have a controlling share of the project."

“Yes, I agree. Have commitments been coming in? That’s one disadvantage of being on Sumilara for a week and a half; I’ve missed the news.”

“They have. So far, just pledges; no actual cash. But the pledges total half a million, and John has committed 300,000 plus half the accumulated workers’ retirement pension, or a quarter million more. I’m committing 150,000. So we have a million and a quarter; enough to get started. The palace and the city of Mɛddoakwés will probably commit to a hundred thousand to build a Mɛddoakwés industrial park, and we’ll talk to the Mɛlwika City Council next week about expanding Mɛlwika’s industrial park. Basically, it looks like the expansion project can start in late summer or early fall.”

“I want a factory in Amurueqluma, if at all possible. I’m investing fifty thousand in this project; that’s enough to cover a good-sized factory. We don’t need an industrial park there because the effluent can run straight into the sea. I spent quite a bit of time talking to everyone in Anartu who would listen to me and even bent the ear of a few officials accompanying the queen. It seems that if the factory has equipment for making small parts, it will be permitted. No one wants Sumilara to know how to make an entire vehicle, but small parts scattered throughout a vehicle will be okay. I argued that if true economic interdependence was desirable, with every province integrated with every other, we should have our share of manufacturing!”

“Quite right. I’m glad you asked because I want to site a factory in Bilara, if at all possible.”

Dumuzi was surprised by that. “As reward for all the Bahá'í conversions?”

“No, though in a way it is in consequence. Bilara now has 300 Bahá'ís out of a population of 2,500, which means it has more people pursuing literacy than most Sumi

villages, and the efforts to have the village consult about development have gone quite far forward. The village psychologically is ready for a factory."

"I know what you mean; Amurueqluma is ready for a factory because it has a grange and a lot of participation in the community. And it has thirty or forty Bahá'ís!" Dumuzi rose and glanced at his list of tasks. "Good to work with you again, Lord Chris. Are you heading back to Mɛlwika? Can I get a ride with you?"

"Of course. I have to stop at Nuarjora for half an hour; Lord Estoséru asked me to review their plans for expanding the limestone quarry. They provide most of the western shore's limestone for concrete and steel making; fifteen thousand tonnes last year, twenty thousand this year. It's the village's big industry; it employs twenty people."

"And something like that can make a big difference to a village's overall prosperity."

"Yes, though less and less; it used to be those workers would buy shoes and things made from their neighbors, but now they go to ɛjnopéla or Mɛddoakwés to shop, so the money doesn't stay in Nuarjora."

"That's true. Oh, did I tell you, when I was in Anartu I negotiated an excellent location for a Home Improvement store? I have the franchise for the island."

"Really?" Chris smiled. "Excellent! I'll tell you what I would do. Open a little Home Improvement store *on the ferry boat.* People are on board for three hours and a lot of the travelers are wealthy. Let them shop."

Dumuzi's eyes grew big. He laughed. "Great idea! I love capitalism!"

Chris could feel the tension in the chamber of the House of Lords as Kandékwɛs, Brébéstu—who was now a lord himself—and Viduféru of Albagras walked to the front. The last hymn of the morning's brief opening ceremony—chanted by Viduféru himself, for the arch-conservative was an excellent cantor—had just echoed through the room. Kandékwɛs nodded to Viduféru to make the report.

"The three of us got very little sleep last night," he began. "We started our meeting with the three representatives of the House of Commons with supper at 7 bells and finished the negotiations at 2 bells; the wee hours of the morning. Prime Minister Wɛranolubu attended and helped craft some of the compromises; like all negotiations over legislative matters, compromise was necessary to reach an agreement. The six of us hope that the two houses will approve the following package. If so, the last two months of legislative efforts will be reasonably successful. If not, we may find the new legislature unable to accomplish even a basic budget, which will force the Queen to finalize the budget. That will erode the prestige of these Houses and may cause their privileges to be curtailed in the future."

He paused to let that warning sink in. "So, that is the background the six of us labored with. In terms of the budget, in many cases we split the difference between our bill and theirs. Thus for example, of the half million dhanay Her Majesty gave us to allocate, the House of Commons assigned 300,000 to education, 200,000 of which was for elementary through high school construction, materials, and salaries and 100,000 for génadɛmas; the House of Lords assigned 250,000, 100,000 to elementary through high schools and 150,000 for génadɛma. The compromise is 275,000 total and 125,000.

"The bills expanding incorporation law to allow the creation and sale of stock were easy to reconcile, as the differences were minor. Our proposal to tax wine and beer an additional ten percent was wholly rejected by the Commons even though it appears to have the potential to raise half a million dhanay per year. The committee was willing to consider it if we are willing to consider their bill requiring hunters to purchase hunting licenses and report how many animals they kill. I would urge our chamber to consider this compromise very seriously. It does not place quotas on licenses or on kills, but it allows a 'Ministry of the Environment' to make a study and determine how many animals the various regions can support. The large game animals appear to be on the decline in Kwolonɛ territory and the tribe has already said they will limit the privilege of outsiders to hunt in their territory, including the army, if the army agrees. The people in the Northern Basin report finding very few mastodons this year; Kostakhéma reports few of them in the Spinelands. We may actually be endangering these animals, as hard as it is to believe. I think our young men can cut back on their sport a bit for the sake of their sons being able to hunt as well.

"That's one pair of bills that are linked; if either chamber fails to pass their half, the deal for that pair collapses and nothing happens. Much more difficult was the bill we passed allocating fifty thousand dhanay to development in the form of additional grants the Royal Development Bank could offer, versus the seventy-five thousand Commons allocated to public and charitable health care. We also budgeted forty thousand for health care, and there are various minor differences in the funding of police and fire. After over an hour of discussion, Wɛranolubu proposed approaching Her Majesty for an additional thirty-five thousand, and this morning she agreed. The result is a proposal for both houses

to consider, allocating fifty thousand to development and forty to medical care. The difference also helps smooth out the differences in the fire and police budgets.

"The stickiest negotiations had to do with their proposal for a minimum wage of four dontay an hour, which amounts to two and four-tenths dhanay per twelve-hour day and 792 dhanay per year, assuming five days of work out of six. This would force the government to pay almost twice as much for some laborer jobs. While it would not affect labor rates much in the cities, it would have a serious impact on rural lords. We refused to budge on that one."

He paused for cheers to ring out. "We also refused to accept the Commons' bill to establish and gradually phase in a pension system. It would have required every worker to contribute to the system and draw from it if the worker or his wife reached age seventy or was incapacitated by health problems. This is a gigantic proposal to encourage laziness at the expense of the royal coffers and private wealth. However, we did tell the Commons we would pass legislation allowing granges and factories to establish their own pension systems. They have often done this already and their systems are operating without any legal oversight; we would authorize the Ministry of Business Regulation to draw up regulations within which they would operate, and that would protect the workers from exploitation. If a factory or grange wants to give its workers this benefit, it assumes the risks that the pension will be payable in the future, not the crown. Let them do this.

"Finally, since we utterly rejected the minimum wage bill, we propose that this chamber pass the bill from the House of Commons to establish a Ministry of the Environment. Several townships have created parks and regulations for their common use. In many places, commons are being divided up among farmers or taken over as

property of the lord, and tens of thousands of agris have been sold that used to be in legal limbo, officially belonging to the crown but in fact belonging to no one. The Ministry of the Environment would decide what areas should be park and how those parks can or cannot be used for logging, mining, hunting, and fishing. We understand that flooding can result when trees are cleared from steep slopes, for example, so regulations on logging can prevent extreme flooding. The Ministry of the Environment would handle these matters.

"That's our report. We managed to kill a few of their worst ideas, including the Commons bill asking the two Houses to request a detailed budget from the army. We also made it clear that our chamber would never consider such ideas, floating around the House of Commons this year, to eliminate child labor, require schooling from age 6 to age 12, or establish councils of five to nine members for every city and village. But that means we can't get everything we want, either. We think this compromise proposal is a good one and worthy of approval by this body."

Viduféru and Brébéstu returned to their seats amid scattered applause and some boos. The House of Lords, elected by the lords, and House of Commons, elected by the people, were much more radical bodies than in previous years; as a result, the two-month session had produced a lot of bills that were passed in one chamber and killed in the other. Now they had one long day left to reconcile everything. Her Majesty was scheduled to arrive in the House of Commons at the beginning of the eclipse for the closing ceremony for both houses, and they had to have business wrapped up by then.

Two dozen hands shot up. Kandékwɛs looked at them with a bit of dread; the House of Lords only had twenty-six members. It was going to be a long day.

Long it proved to be in both chambers; contentious as well, for both chambers had a diverse spectrum of views best characterized as “traditionalist” or perhaps “medieval,” “socialist-modernist,” and “capitalist-modernist.” The Commons had few of the first and was evenly split between the other two, though the socialist side was a bit stronger; Lords was dominated by the first and had the other two competing to shape the alternative, with capitalism being a bit stronger. At lunchtime, the committees of the two met again to hammer out further compromises. Only fifteen minutes before Her Majesty arrived, 90% of the overnight compromise was approved, and the rest was approved to be resolved in committee later.

The closing ceremony, as always, was grand. Her Majesty thanked everyone for their service, complemented them for a few of their decisions, then they all listened to the chanting of hymns. After they were finished, the session for the year 629 was at an end.

Chris walked up to Kandékwɛs to shake hands. “I think we did fairly well. It was beginning to look like we’d get nothing.”

“Damn stubborn people,” replied Kandékwɛs, shaking his head. “I hope we can work together better next time. I’m going to argue against a fall session.”

“I’m glad Her Majesty agreed to a higher budget.”

“That was easy. We’re still counting harvest taxes, but this expansion of agriculture by seventy-five thousand agris has definitely boosted revenues. We’re talking about 2.25 million dhanay more than last year. Add taxes from factories and artisans and the palace is getting 18 million, more than double the 8.5 million when you first arrived. Why should she worry about 35,000? What these two Houses don’t seem to understand is

that if they prove responsible stewards, their budget could easily expand to a million, then several million."

"Good point. Part of the problem is education. Some is better information. For example, I would have favored the minimum wage, but the Commons proposed a figure that I think was too high. It would create more problems than it would solve."

"Because of unemployment?" Kandékwɛs nodded. "We need your economist, Aryéstu, to evaluate that proposal. He's finishing up, right?"

"Indeed, he gets a *dwoyɛri* in economics in two days. He has had to create the degree himself, mostly, and has learned enough English to rough out translations of economics texts into Eryan."

"He's very smart; I'm impressed by him. I recommended him to Estoiyaju."

"So that's where the job offer came from. He's considering it. I don't think an office in the Ministry of Statistics is the best thing for him, though. He's a doer; he's good at theoretical things, but he likes to take a problem, come up with a solution, and implement it. He handled most of the details for the new Mɛlita Marketplace, and he's just 25 years old; 125,000 dhanay of investments by a dozen different merchants, negotiations with Mitru Miller about new bus routes . . . every time I did a check of facts, I was always impressed."

"Interesting." Kandékwɛs considered the new information. "It sounds like he should be considered for President of Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma. The last two presidents have nearly sunk the place; no one can replace Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. Does he have any noble blood?"

"Well, how shall I put it? Rumor has it that the village lord was his father."

"He's illegitimate? We had better say he's a commoner and leave it at that."

"He'd make an excellent president. He'd take the génadɛma in a very different direction than Wɛrétrakɛstɛr ever would; more modern and scientific. But that's what you need. The génadɛma should focus on the needs of the government and society."

"But his background . . ." Kandékwɛs considered. "I'll see what I can do."

Two days later was Mɛlwika Génadɛma's commencement. Receiving their degrees were 335 *uniyɛris*, 201 *dwoyɛris,* 167 *triyɛris,* 127 *kwéterɣɛris,* 93 *potɛs* or Masters, and 12 M.D. degrees. Some people—like Randu—received two degrees and went on stage twice.

Afterward Aryéstu pushed across the crowd leaving the quadrangle to find Randu. He was surrounded by an enormous crowd of Sumis, which included several Sumi *uniyɛris* as well, so Aryéstu had to be patient. But finally he caught Randu's eye and the Sumi came over to him. "Thank you for coming over and waiting; I apologize for this crowd. Congratulations on your dwoyɛri."

"Thanks." They shook hands very warmly. "Congratulations on yours as well, and congratulations on being named President of Arjdhura Génadɛma. I was called to Mɛddoakwés last night to meet with Duke Kandékwɛs, Estoiyaju, and four lords, and they asked me whether I'd serve as President of Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma. They want an economist."

Randu's eyes grew wide. "Wow! What did you say? Are you going to do it?"

"I think so. I spent an hour with Lord Chris this morning reviewing my options. What I'd like to do is open an economics institute to provide services to the government

and the private sector, but maybe the génadɛma's the way to do it. It'll give me a better platform."

"Congratulations, then!" Randu hugged his Bahá'í friend. "You should do it. I think you're right; if you can organize and strengthen Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma, it'll be a much better institution, and you'll be in a better position to do other things." He leaned close. "Was being a Bahá'í an issue?"

"It came up, but I think I handled it alright. I stressed consultation and fairness to all; Bahá'í virtues, rather than Bahá'í teachings. The bigger issue was my lack of 'aristocratic blood.'" He shook his head in frustration. "But they seemed to think I knew how to walk and wear a proper set of clothes! In the end I must have been their best choice. Because of the two acting presidents, the place is down to ten faculty: four professors of literature who have been teaching from before we had modern degrees, four judges who teach law in the law school—the génadɛma's only strong department—and two people who teach science and math. Otherwise, most of its courses have been taught by Mɛlwika faculty who take the bus to Mɛddoakwés."

"Arjdhura will function that way, too; just like the Mɛlwika branch campuses in ɛjnopéla and now Mɛlita. Are you coming to the All-Génadɛma Council? It starts in two hours!"

"I guess so! I'd better call the Duke and confirm my acceptance, so it's official! At least I'll be able to go, listen, and take lots of notes!"

"That's what I plan to do, too." Randu smiled. "We've never had many chances to sit down, talk, and get to know each other, but maybe we'll want to spend more time together, now!"

"Definitely! Two village boys come to the city and have a whirlwind of opportunities descend on them; I still can't believe it!"

"Me, too! See you at the All-Génadɛma Council, then."

Reread and edited 6/2/13, 8/14/17, 9/22/26

Meet with Mitru, Manu/Yimu; discuss industrial output, schools, busses, the Faith

Mɛlwika's usual election is late October Year 11. It is advanced six months to late ɛjnaménu, when the provincial elections are held

Global meetings of: Encyclopedia Board; Librarians; High School Principals; Teachers; Police; Firemen; Granges; Chambers of Commerce;

New mimeograph machine revolutionizes copying, but an underground newspaper immediately appears

New women's college opens in Pért.

First fall term (5th wk Brénménu/Oct. 15): Randu and family come to Mɛlwika for the year for college. The army is concerned; who are they?

Randu and family settled into a rented apartment in the Sumi Quarter and start firesides. Thornton attends. They discuss plans for the new Arjdhura Génadɛma. He and Lébé begin to learn some Sumi.

Palace meets with Brébéstu re starting towns on the edge of the South Shore, based on Pɛrku's plans. The Swadlɛndha area is unsettled as well. The Plan: give the Old Houses big landed estates and let them hire farmers or sell land to them. Create a series of small townships aggregated together with common grange, public school, etc., and move the Old Houses off the pension system. Use development bank to purchase lots of equipment to mechanize the farms. Hire workers from existing granges who have experience to coordinate and pay them well. The Long Valley will be royal lands with loose oversight, no Lords, and elected governments. Same with the estate-townships, though the Lords will have a role in them.

Randu's father gets extremely sick but hospital cures him. Phone calls back and forth impossible; the radio connection is too limited. A cable is needed.

High schools are expanding very fast, literacy as well. Develop high school equivalency certificate and free adult high school classes at night. Use college students as teachers; pay them through scholarship funds. Aryéstu and Randu in particular.

Old Houses get land and subsidies stop. Scramble for trained farmers. Véspans and Kɛrdans head for the Long Valley

Thornton's computer dies; he needs a new one, upgraded. The aliens agree.

Khɛrmdhunans all enroll. Plans for high school start. Shoe factory and sewing center planned. House of Worship planned.

Estodhéru is unhappy: he has to share technology with Médhɛla and Khɛrmdhuna, and will have to deal with a City Council.

Winter is very cold, winter crops are killed by frost nearly to the equator. Khɛrmdhuna has a very snowy winter, not so cold (because the cold is spread southward). Extensive cloudiness may be a factor in increasing albedo and cooling the world.

Elections held, late ɛjnaménu

Véspa highway to Long Valley opens, early summer

Summer: Her Majesty visits Sumilara, announces undersea cable, commissions royal yacht.

Former Bishop Jonu is a problem on the Central Spiritual Assembly. Randu helps arrange sale of Home Improvement stuff on the ferry boat between Sumilara and Arjdhura. Traveling Home Improvement tent is considered.

More about industrialization; factories to make pasta, candy, dried fruit, paper bags, sandals, rugs. Chicken production starts in Pért. and turkey production in Mɛlita.

Soru gets more involved in psychology, translating articles and organizing a course

Ground broken for Mɛlwika temple

Mɛlita gets a big shopping center, like Pértatranisér, because of all the North Shore farmers and families coming through.

Thornton goes to Kaitɛrɛ area to get permission to draw up a land use plan. Revisits Kwétékwonɛ. Draws up land use plan for Long Valley after heavy rains produce mud slides and floods.

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