THE PIONEERS

Vol. 8

Tomis

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Bɛllɛdha

Thornton Mennea opened his closet and surveyed the clothes he had inside. The closet was packed, which reflected the greater prosperity the family had gradually achieved over the last three years. At one point his Earth clothes had dominated his old, small closet; he had also had two *wɛris,* the Eryan equivalent of an aristocrat's toga, and two *wɛsélis,* long shirts that went to the knees and were worn by working men, usually with nothing more than a *kɛnki* or loincloth underneath, and sometimes not even that. Then he had been able to buy *opodwési,* fine leather pants of the sort Tutanɛ wore when they rode horses; they were perfect for hiking in brush, where they protected one from thorns and snakes, especially if complemented by *pɛdpolkis,* leather boots. His closet now had two pairs of boots, two pairs of *pɛdilis* or sandals, two pairs of fancy new *pɛdwɛris* or leather shoes of the terrestrial sort, three *opodwésis,* and five different *wɛsis*—kilts, worn by men in the summer rather like shorts—and a dozen *tugis,* shirts made of machine-woven cloth, half short sleeve and half long sleeve.

He had a lot of choices to consider for the expedition to Éra's northern shores. He glanced down at his leather suitcase on the closet floor and picked it up to remember its heft.

"You aren't packing yet, I hope?" exclaimed Lébé. She had been in the living room, patiently translating, but had come into the bedroom to see what Thornton was doing.

He heard the irritation in her voice. "No, no, just looking."

“I hope not; you aren’t leaving for three days! You can’t wait to get out of here and leave me with the kids, can you?”

“No, it’s not that! But this trip will be a bit of an adventure, and you know how much I like adventures.”

“Yeah, leaving me here with the kids.”

“Look, they’re with Térmér and Klusé all day playing with their cousins; it’s not like you’re watching them constantly while cooking and washing.”

“No, but it isn’t like I’m free, either. I have to translate all the Ruhi books.”

“You and May volunteered to do that. I’ll be back every two weeks to see you and the kids.”

“Yeah, that’s about as long as you can go without sex.”

That startled him; she was *really* mad. “Look, what’s going on? We’ve known about this trip for months, even before Kalé was born.”

“Well . . . I guess I’m feeling trapped, and I’m jealous you’re escaping!”

He leaned over and put his arm around her. “Trapped? It’s not from drudgery; we have servants. Are you missing not having the time to write your novel? Or missing the adventure?”

“Both, I think! You’re going away to a new place and doing what you love. I don’t mind the translating, but it wasn’t what I planned to do with my summer. It’s a *lot* of work; there are a lot of concepts that are hard to render in Eryan. I wish we had Estodatu doing it. I think he would.”

“I know, but he isn’t a Bahá’í, and he wants to work on translations of Shakespeare and the Greek playwrights this summer. What if you and the kids came to

Pɛnkakwés and Bɛllɛdha this summer for a few days? That'd get you away from the routine here."

"That would help, but I'll still have the Ruhi translating."

"Maybe we can hire a student to help; we've got a lot who are becoming pretty good."

"Maybe. . . but don't worry about that, I think May and I will have them finished by midsummer anyway."

"Fine, but you should at least come to the north shore and get away from here, especially when it gets hot. I don't think it ever gets hot up there!"

"No, it doesn't. Okay; that makes me feel better. I suppose if we brought someone along to help or found someone up there to help, it'd be alright."

"I'm sure we can. Bɛllɛdha isn't that wild and crazy."He leaned over and kissed her.

Just then the house's main door opened and they could hear the rover engine. A moment later they heard Chris say "Thornton! Lua! Change of plans!"

"Now what?" asked Thornton. He and Lébé walked out of the bedroom, across their living room—which was used mostly for writing and playing—out the front door, and down the stairs to the courtyard.

Chris saw them coming. "So, can you be ready to go tomorrow or the next day, rather than three days from now?"

"I suppose; why?"

"I don't know where Lua is; I guess she's at the hospital. The Réjé announced today at the end of the Grand Court that she would go to Bɛllɛdha next week for an extra

week to survey the situation and see what is being done, and that if she is displeased she will fine people."

"What happened?" said Liz, coming into the courtyard from the kitchen.

"Let me backup. Today's the last day of the Grand Court and the day when criminals are sentenced or pardoned. But of course there was almost none of that to do because we now have three judges handling the cases instead. So after the court heard one appeal—which the Réjé turned down—Gawéstu and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr took the floor and spoke at length about Bɛllɛdha. Gawéstu had planned to go to Gordha, but apparently he's been in Bɛllɛdha for a few weeks instead, and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr has been there with him some of the time as well. The two of them basically condemned everything that has been done, even the work by the army; they said it was too little. Some people had been so hungry in the winter they ate all their seeds and no one will lend them money or seed to plant crops this season, and now it's too late. There are people who are literally naked or are wearing clothes woven from straw because there's a growing rag market and they've sold their tattered clothes in order to eat. That criticism was directed at Mɛlwika; since we started using rags to make paper, the price of rags has increased. Anyway, they went on and on for almost an hour and the Réjé got angrier and angrier. If she had been told all this in private, her reaction might not have been so strong, but in public she feels an obligation to speak out against exploitation. So she announced she was going to Bɛllɛdha herself, she was leaving next week—that's a week earlier than her expected visit—that she's staying in the area three weeks, and she wants to see progress or else people would 'regret ignoring the poor.'"

"So, what are we doing?" asked Thornton.

"We're going straight there! We'll go to the Pɛnkakwés afterward. The Queen put the fear of Esto in the Lords, and now they all want to be able to say they've done something, so after the session ended I was suddenly surrounded by a dozen Lords who wanted to organize something. Some of them were absentee Lords for the north shore, some were lords of villages here or near Néfa, one was even from near Ora. Estodhéru plans to organize assistance from Lɛwéspa and Tripola, so no one from those areas approached me. Many just wanted to give money to something, but I suggested we have a meeting tomorrow morning. Lord Aryékwɛs of Dwobrébas—Okpétu's father—volunteered his house, so we're meeting there. Generals Pɛrku and Roktɛkɛstɛr are coming as well so anything we organize is coordinated with the army."

"So, we're talking about money," said Liz.

Chris nodded. "The hospital was already planning to use the portable clinic in the North Shore, and Bidhu had reached an agreement with the army to rent an armored steam wagon to serve as a headquarters for the census and geographical survey. Kandékwɛs is advocating diversion of twenty or thirty thousand dhanay into the telephone and electrical line and some rich Lords like the idea of investing in something that will turn a profit for them while giving them a chance to say they're helping. Roktɛkɛstɛr wants some of those dhanay to go to the army for graveling; I want to make sure that if that happens, the graveling will be for the North Basin Road, not for the Royal Road."

"How much are we talking about?" asked Thornton.

"If Gawéstu or Wɛrétrakɛstɛr come to the meeting, I think well over a hundred thousand dhanay. A *lot;* the Lords are feeling guilty. Wɛrétrakɛstɛr is concerned that the

money go to projects that will make long-term improvements; he suggested to me that we include a bank account to pay for students to get educations. Tonight, we need to brainstorm up here about what we can contribute and what we think will help. John's doing the same with his sons. He's asking Mitru about transportation from here to Bɛllɛdha and various sons about donating building materials. I suggested that Mitru himself, or a few trusted drivers, come with the census group and start free public transportation for the northern basin. I don't know whether he'll do that, though."

"Mitru needs to be subsidized to send plows, sawmills, and other steam-powered equipment," said Thornton. "Bɛllɛdha will be rebuilt better than new in no time if the people have access to cheap building materials."

"It sounds like they need food and clothing first," replied Liz.

"Estodhéru is arranging the donation of clothes and cloth," said Chris. "The power looms have been putting out a surplus, lately, so this will help eliminate the surplus. But we don't want people selling their new clothes for bread, so we need surplus grain as well, and right now there's lots of it."

"Prices have even slipped," agreed Liz. "We've got plenty of food to donate, and I bet the royal granaries are bulging."

"Roktɛkɛstɛr and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr both say we should exchange grain for work. So far, Bɛllɛdhans have not worked on the roads; they've considered the work beneath them. But if we throw in free clothes and extra grain, since it's cheap right now, we might convince them. Anyway, let's save up our ideas; we'll brainstorm more after supper."

The next day Chris and John drove to Lord Aryékwɛs's very large estate for a long and frustrating discussion, but it did result in a rough plan that involved the army to help maintain order and build roads while the génadɛma, the bank, Mɛlwika Hospital, the utility company, and Mitru transportation organized different aspects of the work. As they approached the end of their work a coach arrived with Déolu, the second son of the brother of the late Lord Spondu, a thirty-year old merchant who had been living in Néfa and who had taken business classes from Chris last summer. The Réjé had just deposed Spondanu and put Him in charge of Bɛllɛdha as the new Lord. He listened to the plans with keen interest, pledged ten thousand dhanay from his personal fortune—he was not sure what fortune existed in Bɛllɛdha—and proposed a few additions of his own.

"Déolu looks like a good choice, so far," said Chris over dinner that night. "He's not arrogant or haughty; he listens, and as a merchant he's concerned about spending money wisely."

"Those are the important qualities," said Lua. "I gather he can read, write, and count?"

"Yes. I saw him taking notes in a book he had brought along; he's comfortable with writing. I don't know how well this team will hold together, especially the pledges. Several people backpedaled on the amount they could give. Pɛrku's going to take charge of the army's share. I proposed a meeting of Pɛrku, me, Déolu, and Mitru every week or two to keep things coordinated, and I think that will happen."

"So, Mitru was there?" asked Thornton.

"Yes, John brought him, and he was very professional and engaged. Ménu came as well and promised to send one of his best construction foremen. They'll start with

paying jobs, like repairing the palace and building a new génadɛma, and hire local people to do the work, including cutting wood and hauling materials. That will give local people the cash to buy the building materials for their own houses. The idea is to empower people to do their own construction by fall when it starts to turn cold."

"What about all the houses Lord Spondu owned that haven't been rebuilt?" asked Lua, concerned.

"We're still negotiating with Déolu about them, since they're his property now. He may agree to reduce his ownership to the lot only and let people build their own houses on the land, for which they'll pay a reduced annual rent. A lot of tenants have moved out of the city and won't come back, otherwise."

"What was Aryékwɛs's house like?" asked May, curious.

Chris smiled. "You should drive through Brébɛstéa and Pɛrkas some time! There are fifty or sixty estates, set on anywhere between a dozen and a thousand agris of farmland, and those with less land often have the bigger houses because they have farmland elsewhere. Almost all of them have hereditary titles and most possess villages somewhere; often in the lower Arjakwés or along the Dwobrébakwés. Many are also part of the extended royal family, which means they get a gift every year, usually twenty to forty thousand dhanay."

"So, that's where our tax money goes!" exclaimed Thornton.

"You know it. The land is absolutely beautiful; lush and green, because when the rice paddies are drained the water goes there. They all have lots of horses and at least a dozen servants. Many have a second house in Mɛddoakwés and a third house in their village. In all fairness, I think a lot of the men work in the bureaucracy, at least a little.

The palace has a lot of positions with titles. But I think it's safe to say that about a million dhanay a year could be allocated in other ways."

May laughed at that. "Now I see how Okpétu could afford to build a glider!"

Chris nodded. "Exactly. The army did help, but so did his dad. I know you don't approve, May; neither do I. But this is also an opportunity. We're talking about sixty men with an average of several tens of thousands of dhanay each—maybe two or three million dhanay altogether—that could be deposited in the bank or invested in businesses. Over a hundred sons and a hundred daughters who can come to the génadɛma and pay their own way, and who have the time to study four years. Several hundred wealthy people who can buy glasses and fix their teeth and several thousand servants who should get basic medical services and maybe some education. Families who own thousands of agris of farmland, who have been losing sharecroppers to Mɛlwika, and who should switch to mechanized, scientific agriculture; and who could open small factories to employ their former farm workers. In short, there's a huge, untapped market. We may need a branch hospital and génadɛma in Brébɛstéa or Pɛrkas. Mitru may need more passenger wagon service. We should install telephone and power lines."

"That's been repeatedly suggested," said Amos.

"And they're the most conservative faction of the population," speculated Liz.

"Exactly. I bet most of them had someone who could read using the old system, and can't read the new system. They're largely against us, or indifferent. That's why we know so little about them. We can change that, too."

"Look, we started talking about how to help chronically poor people and ended up talking about making money from the filthy rich!" complained May.

“She’s right,” agreed Mary. “I know you’re thinking about profits to subsidize other services, but it’s another discussion.”

“I understand, but the Bɛllɛdha crisis has become an opportunity to change culture,” said Chris. “If these families support the new knowledge and become invested in it, their annual subsidy from the Réjé can stay the same size as the economy expands and incomes go up, and in a generation the so-called bloodsucker families will be earning honest livings. Let’s keep that in mind.”

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The next morning before noon a remarkable convoy set out from Mɛlwika: a mobile clinic, an eight meter by three meter trailer pulled by a steam wagon, divided into rooms, equipped with electric lights, and stuffed full of supplies, including tents so that the space could be expanded once they reached a destination; a second clinic trailer converted into mobile housing for the Mennea family, with accompanying tents and furniture and spare medical supplies; one rover with a short, covered trailer to transport the survey crew and their supplies; and four steam wagons from Mitru Transportation equipped with bulldozer blades and pulling saw mill and gravel sorting equipment. One even had a steam-powered chain saw able to cut down trees; the winter-time engineering seminar had managed to produce a clumsy but workable model. Another had a portable crane for lifting and moving logs. The wood wagons were heaped with supplies, building materials, and two dozen génadɛma students who were going along to help the survey, the clinic, give classes, or work on the reconstruction.

When they reached Mɛddoakwés, Bidhu’s rented armored steam wagon joined them. The enclosed interior was set up as an office and living quarters for a dozen census

workers, with supplies piled on the roof. The steam whistles tooted to each other as the caravan grew longer.

They proceeded eastward down the Royal Road along the edge of the Arjakwés Valley, with a fine view of the verdant horse pastures and estates of Ekwɛdhuna, Pɛrkas, and Brébɛstéa. After crossing the Dwobrébakwés River, the Arjakwés Valley used to become dry and sparsely populated, but the changing climate had converted the lower valley into a savanna and its human population was noticeably on the rise, with several new hamlets of two to six huts and farmers' fields around them. Chris wondered about the change; this was the area the Réjé had given to three new Lords, but clearly the commons was already filling with squatters. That meant sharecroppers had been leaving their assigned plots closer to the city; some had come east to Mɛlwika, but clearly others were moving west. He turned to Thornton. "Since this caravan can only go thirty-five kilometers per hour, maybe we should hurry ahead of it. I'd like to stop at Nuarjora and talk to Lord Estoséru. I wonder if they're having trouble with squatters all the way down there."

"Okay," he said. "I'm surprised there are so many people on the land down here."

"Not paying taxes, I suspect, and they may face eviction. Let's plan to stop for an hour and talk to the Fish Eryan."

"Okay. And did you see those two hunters we passed a few minutes ago had longbows? Our new technology is spreading down here."

"I didn't notice that. Interesting. But I'm not surprised; a third of Mɛlwika's farmers come from the lower Arjakwés. They've been bringing home dhanay, tools, and bows for several years."

Thornton pushed the accelerator down and speeded up to sixty kilometers per hour, the highest speed that was practical on the graveled road. They reached Nuarjora in a bit more than half an hour. The village was now well established, with fields of grain and vegetables spread out on the floodplain below the village and on the rolling prairie around it. The Arjakwés had flowed all of last year and had permanently flooded the desert basin east of the village, forming a lake that now had fish; the Nuarjorans had several dozen boats on it. On the other side of the lake was a limestone ridge that was a former coral reef; the old Royal Road had once rolled across the basin that was now lake, had squeezed through a gap in the ridge, and continued to Sumilara. Where the old Royal Road had entered the gap was the former location of the oasis of Akanakvéi and their first limestone quarry; the fifty people who had lived there had been forced to move northward a dozen kilometers because their fields and date palms were now being threatened by the rising sea. From Nuarjora one could even see the sea, and it was possible to canoe down the Arjakwés through the gap and all the way to the sea, so some Fish Eryan had resumed their old vocation.

Estoséru gave Chris an ear-full about squatters, some of whom had taken up residence in the thousand-year old ruined buildings of Lilalara. Chris urged Estoséru to send a delegation over to tell them to leave, in order to preserve Lilalara, but the Lord was not particularly impressed by the ruin's historical significance. He was also very unhappy that the power and telephone lines to Bɛllɛdha were being built across the Pɛnkakwés country in order to connect to the turbines to be installed on their dams.

After an hour and a quarter of tea and fish stew, Chris and Thornton resumed their trip on the Royal Road, which now trended more northward than eastward. The land was

rolling savanna and the occasional gullies the road crossed were now small creeks; it was a matter of time before people realized they had enough security and water to settle the area. It was used a lot by hunters, who took advantage of the frequent steam wagons to travel deeply into the area; they stopped to give two hunters and their gutted deer a ride to Akɛldɛdra and enjoyed an energetic chat with the men. They stopped at Akɛldɛdra another hour to talk to the Lord there; the village and its twin settlement of Pékɛnwika had gotten a lot of attention from Mɛlwika and as a result sent two loads of timber a week to Mɛddoakwés. Both villages had small schools as well. A team was using the two villages as their base for completing a line of utility poles and their power and phone lines along the roadway paralleling the Pɛnkakwés.

Then they had to drive fast to catch up with the caravan. Most of the road had been graveled the previous year and they passed two teams spreading more gravel and a third team replacing a bridge over a creek. They caught up to the caravan just as it was approaching Bɛllɛdha. The 180 kilometer drive from Mɛddoakwés had taken five hours, but since they had crossed seven time zones it was now an hour before noon, local time.

When they drove through Bɛllɛdha's south gate, they were both startled by what they saw. "A third of the city site is abandoned!" exclaimed Thornton. "This used to be packed with houses!"

"I guess they were so damaged, they were torn apart for firewood," said Chris. He pointed to a new building. "Some have been rebuilt, though. That one looks pretty good."

"There are a few. So, dad, have they rebuilt the prison?"

“My understanding is no. I think the army and Spondanu couldn’t reach an agreement. They can’t use prisoners to mine copper and silver any more. Déolu has given you permission to see the copper mine, at least.”

“Yes, it should be interesting. Looks like we’ll be stopping in the former central square.”

The caravan slowed, then stopped at the very center of the city. It was laid out in a square 800 doli—400 meters—across, with four gates, one at the center of each side. The city was divided into quarters by a main east-west avenue and a main north-south avenue, their intersection being Central Square. Each quarter in turn was bisected by a north-south and an east-west street, and each smaller block was divided by two north-south and two east-west alleys. The city’s uniform street grid—unique on Éra—reflected its ancient origin as a Sumi army base. The Sumis had even provided the stone streets with sewers, but they had collapsed or filled up long ago.

The unexpected arrival of the caravan caused the entire city’s population to turn out. Roktɛkɛstɛr personally directed the various vehicles to parking spaces on vacant lots while the crowd built up. Then he took Déolu up to the top of the armored steam wagon Bidhu had rented where the crowd could see them.

“People of Bɛllɛdha!” he began. “Your Queen, Duktɛrésto, that gracious and generous monarch, has ordered the reconstruction of Bɛllɛdha and plans to pay a personal visit to the city in a week. She has proclaimed a total tax amnesty for the city for this year!”

He paused while the population cheered wildly. That meant, among other things, that the queen and her huge court would be paying for everything they ate, rather than

extracting it from the city's tax base. The annual royal visit was the big business event of the year.

"To aid in your reconstruction, she has commanded all Lords to vie with each other in their generosity. This caravan is a partial result of their generosity. In the next week, food and clothing will be on the way as well."

That created more cheers, for the people needed relief. Roktɛkɛstɛr raised his hand for silence. "Finally, the greatest announcement of all. Her Majesty, concerned about the city's future, has placed it in new hands. Déolu, son of Puru and nephew of the late Lord Spondu, is this city's new Lord." He rested his right arm on Déolu.

The crowd didn't know what to say about that; they were shocked. They hadn't liked Spondanu, but they didn't know his replacement at all. Roktɛkɛstɛr stepped back to give Déolu the stage. He raised his right hand.

"Fellow citizens of Bɛllɛdha! I am pleased to return home after many years serving as a merchant in various cities, and I am both honored and humbled by the responsibility her Majesty has placed on my shoulders. We are privileged to live in a sacred spot, a choice and verdant land, one that can yield a good life for all of us if we use it well. Restoring normalcy to this city, then moving it forward into a bright and prosperous future, are my twin goals and passions. We can make our home beautiful again and build a city for which we are proud. It will require a partnership; we must supply the muscle while others help with materials and dhanay. But I pledge to you that it will be a partnership and not exploitation. We have had too many struggles and too much mutual distrust for too long. Now I seek for us to work together. Tomorrow I will walk the city and learn who has claims over what plots of land; we will write them down and

finalize the ownership. Much of this city belongs to the Lord, but if the burned buildings are rebuilt by their former renters, they will own the building. Tomorrow my foreman will be hiring workers for a dhanay and a half a day to clean up the city, including restoration of the ancient sewers. Before sunset tomorrow construction will begin on a new génadɛma building, and we will be hiring workers for that job as well. So tonight let us rest and feast, for the army has brought extra food. We will begin in the morning."

That announcement startled people, but food and pay were always good themes to emphasize, so Déolu got a round of hearty applause. Roktekɛstɛr turned to him. "Good speech and a good start. Now let's go to the palace. We'll have the unpleasant duty of giving Spondanu's family notice."

"We can let them stay two weeks," replied Déolu. "The tent her Majesty has supplied me will be quite comfortable for now."

"I'll order some soldiers to set it up," agreed the General.

[Mar 31, 2006; reread and edited 5/22/13, 8/2/17, 11/6/24]

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The Arrow

It was the next morning before the geologists got a tour of the copper mine, a labyrinth of underground passages and caverns that looked in about as good shape as the city itself. Thornton said he'd ask Amos to come up and look; the numerous roof collapses indicated how unsafe the place was, and some sections were partially flooded. Open pit mining would be safer and cheaper with their steam-powered equipment, but there was the issue of the ground collapsing under the steam wagons.

The geologists walked back to town through the north gate, past the workers removing the big, flat stones covering the sewer so that it could be cleaned. As they approached Central Square, Déolu, several trusted advisors of Spondanu in tow—whether Déolu could trust them was another matter—were returning to the temporary "Palace Tent." Chris was with them. He saw Thornton and detoured over.

"So, you're on your way to the North Basin?"

"That's Bidhu's plan: to complete the survey and census there, if possible, before the Réjé leaves, so she can see the results and so that she can see us working near the city."

"Well, have a good trip, and give us a call every day. I talked to the army today and they agreed to install a telephone system in town that connects to their radio. In a few hours, you should be able to call the cb radio here with your cell phone and connect to us."

"I'll call every evening. How was the tour of the ruined area?"

Chris chuckled. “It was a disaster, in a way. This city has never had written records of who owns what piece of land or how big each one was. Where the buildings have been removed there are hot disputes exactly where they were. In some cases alleys were narrowed or even blocked by additions and people want to retain their rights over the public space. Squatters in abandoned buildings are demanding tenancy, and sometimes two or three people are coming forward to claim ownership or tenancy over vacant lots. Sometimes the lies were transparent and the crowd booed the claimants; we needed a dozen troops to keep order.”

“What a mess.”

“I’ve got to get the surveying team at work this afternoon, and they’ll need troops to protect them! The stakes will all get moved afterwards, too. You’re lucky to be leaving!”

Thornton glanced at the génadɛma tent. “Looks like we have a class started.”

“Yeah; a pretty small one, though. No one wants free literacy classes, not yet at least. The clinic’s doing better; people remember Dr. Lua from the winter. And the free school has enrolled thirty kids, but has the usual first day chaos; kids registered under nicknames, with nicknames for the mother or father, no one is sure of the kid’s age, etc.”

“Did they find a site for a génadɛma?”

“Yes, four abandoned house lots, and Ménu already has a team clearing them of debris.”

“Good luck. I’ll be back in a few days.”

“Be careful up there, okay? I’ve got to run now; Déolu asked me to show his staff how to set up city property records, and he plans to write Judge Wérgéndu. We need two

or three judges here for about a month to resolve all the ownership disputes, not to mention the backlog of alleged crimes that have been ignored for the last few months."

Chris waved and headed into the "palace tent." Thornton turned toward the armored steam wagon. He could see Bidhu and a circle of men sitting around a table under an awning outside. As he came over, he saw two local men pointing to a huge map and talking about the villages and landforms. Bidhu saw him and pointed. "Don't you wish we had had a map like this last year?"

"Okpétu came through!" exclaimed Thornton, surprised. The map was about a meter and a half square; a big piece of paper with black lines on it. He could see a circle of mountain peaks; the scale indicated the basin, which was labeled "Lɛpawsa" or "North Land" was seventy-five kilometers in diameter. Rivers and glaciers descended from the peaks toward the center of the basin; the side of the basin opposite Bɛllɛdha was completely blocked by them. The center of the basin was marked "snékha," "snow." Two rivers wrapped around the central snows and joined at six o'clock just north of Bɛllɛdha; the longer one ran clockwise and held the name of the main river, Mɛgdontakwés or "Big Mastodon River," while the smaller one, running counterclockwise from nine o'clock, was named the Yɛjisrumakwés or "Glacier River," so named because it originated where a glacier entered the basin and backed up a big lake behind it.

"It arrived this morning with a letter addressed to both of us. Yesterday Okpétu flew due north from Mɛlwika and flew along the basin crest, taking pictures. He got caught in a downdraft and almost crashed, but managed to get aloft again. He didn't get back to the landing strip until almost sunset, too. The cartographers and Okpétu developed the pictures and worked on the map all night."

“It’s impressive.” Thornton counted. “Eleven or twelve villages.”

“They missed a few little ones, though,” said a black-bearded man who looked to be about thirty. He pointed to a new addition.

“Lujkrénu has agreed to serve as guide; he’s from Dɛntastéa,” explained Bidhu, pointing to a village two thirds up the longer river. “He’s met with General Pɛrku, so he can deliver an announcement about Déolu’s new position. He and Rudhisuru will explain the census and survey.”

“Are we going up the river first to tell people, then go back down and start the survey the next day?”

“That’s the idea; Lujkrénu agrees that’s wise.”

The man glanced at Thornton. “Are you . . . gɛdhému?”

“Indeed, but I’m afraid I have no magic powers.”

The man didn’t seem to expect anything like that. “Well, you should keep out of sight when we’re along the Mɛgdontakwés. The people along the upper Yɛjisrumakwés will be happy to meet with you, though.”

“Why?”

“Because of Pablu, a gɛdhému who lived in Lɛpawsa five centuries ago. One river valley embraced him; the other rejected him.”

Thornton nodded; he had heard of Pablu.

“I think we’re ready to go,” said Bidhu. “Are you sure there’s no other way to get to Lɛpawsa other than the gluba?”

“I am sure,” replied Lujkrénu. “There is a trail over the White Ridge, but your vehicles will never make it. The water isn’t high today, though, so you shouldn’t have any trouble.”

“That’s something for the army to fix,” complained Bidhu. “Okay, let’s pack everything up and go.”

Everyone helped take down the awning and stow the table and chairs. The geologists jumped into the rover and its trailer; the census people entered the armored steam wagon. Then they rolled up Northern Road, out the gate, past the copper mine and refinery, then into the broad, shallow, gravelly Mɛgdontakwés, icy cold and milk colored from all the glacially ground rock flour.

The riverbed provided a soft surface for driving, but as long as they kept moving they were alright. The water was rarely more than half a meter deep, but it meant the rover’s brakes didn’t work; Thornton was careful to stay well behind the steam wagon.

When they entered the gluba, the water got faster and deeper, but it wasn’t too much for the rover. The cliff sides rose a hundred meters or more and were severely eroded; often there was landslide debris they had to drive around, and that meant swift, deeper water. The rover stalled and had to be towed by the steam wagon, so the kilometer-long gluba took an hour to navigate.

At the other side, a broad, green, largely treeless basin opened before them. The Mɛgdontakwés turned right and a hill rose on the other side, with a large village—Yʉjdwoakwés, “Junction of the Two Waters”—built on its lower slopes. The rest of the hill’s southward facing slope was covered with gardens so they could benefit from the additional sunlight. Once they got the rover started again, they drove across the

broad, gravely streambed and stopped at the village. Bidhu, Rudhisuru, and Lujkrénu invited the headman—the Lord was an absentee living in Pɛrkas—into the armored steam wagon to inform them of their mission and developments in Bellɛdha. In forty minutes they were on their way.

The pattern repeated itself in six more villages upstream. Each was built about five or ten kilometers from the previous one at a spot where there was a southward slope, providing better gardens and pastures.

When they left the last village, it was 6 p.m. in Bɛllɛdha but about 10 p.m. locally, though twilight was strong so close to the pole. Thornton was amused to think they were due north of Mɛddoakwés; the capital was just seventy kilometers south of them! They resolved to drive to the last village and sleep for six or seven hours, then drive westward the next day all the way to the end.

They headed east along the river. When they reached the glacier blocking the valley where the river originated, the sky was getting brighter and the sun was approaching the horizon, even though it was only eight p.m. in Bɛllɛdha. Thornton called his father and Lébe, then joined the rest of the geologists, who were bedding down on the roof of the steam wagon out of reach of wild animals, except the ubiquitous mosquitoes.

The next morning Lujkrénu joined the geologists for breakfast and they described to him various things they had found in their hikes elsewhere. The various minerals they described didn't ring a bell until they told him about coal.

"A pitch black rock that even smells of rotted vegetation? There's a lot of that around."

"Really?" said Thornton. "We haven't seen any along the river."

“The river valley is all sand and gravel; not much rock,” replied Lujkrénu. “But the first village we come to has some rock; I know where to look for it.”

“Good,” said Thornton.

A few minutes later they set out along the river. The first village was just a few kilometers away. Lujkrénu pointed to a steeper side of the hill on which the village and its fields were located and Thornton drove across the tundra to the blackish rock, which they could see from the dirt track. Bidhu followed; the geologists poured out of the rover and its trailer to climb on the exposure, rock hammers in hand.

Thornton took a swing at the bedrock and picked up the shattered pieces. “No, not coal,” he said. “It’s an organic shale, though.”

“ ‘Organic shale’?” asked Lujkrénu.

“Yes. ‘Shale’ means the rock is mostly made out of clay, and ‘organic’ means it has black stuff in it that comes from dead plants.” He brought it close to his nose and sniffed. “It has a strong smell, doesn’t it?”

“Indeed,” agreed Lujkrénu. Thornton sniffed again. It smelled oily. He took a piece because it could be oil shale.

He climbed a little higher and broke off more pieces. The entire steep slope was the same black stuff; the air even had a faint whiff of petroleum from it. He broke off more pieces and took several more samples.

Then he heard a scream of pain. He looked up just as an arrow whizzed by his head. He fell over in reaction; it had parted his hair! “Oh God!” he exclaimed in English.

“Get away from our village!” shouted a man.

“Go! Go!”

“Let’s get out of here!” shouted Thornton and he began to slide down the slope toward the rover.

“Gɛdhému! Gɛdhému!” shouted the villagers and another arrow whizzed by him a meter to the right.

He slipped and fell, hurting his knee badly, but the adrenalin was flowing and he hardly noticed. He jumped up and ran to the rover, but considering it had glass windows he didn’t dare get inside.

“In here!” Bidhu was shouting, so Thornton glanced around and dashed to the armored steam wagon. An arrow glanced off the side.

Then a census counter on the roof began to toss cherry bombs at the archers. He couldn’t lob the things far enough, but when they began to explode the villagers were terrified and fled.

How many were there?” asked Thornton, glancing out of some of the tiny holes in the side of the armor, large enough to see out but too small for arrows to come in.

“A dozen,” replied Bidhu.

“Rudhisuru’s still out there!”exclaimed Aréjanu. “He couldn’t run because of the arrow.”

“He was hit?” exclaimed Thornton, who was oblivious to the details of the attack because of his own near-death experience.

“Yes!”

Thornton glanced out and saw the army geologist—and head of their génadɛma!—lying on the ground. “Come on, the villagers are gone!” he exclaimed and

hurried to the door. Then he realized the pain from his knee. But he went out with three others, picked up Rudhisuru, and carried him back.

"It's pretty serious," said Rudhisuru through gritted teeth. "I need a tourniquet."

"Thornton, there's blood on your leg, too," said Arjanu. Thornton looked down and realized his knee was bleeding badly enough so that blood had trickled all the way down to his foot. He pulled up the leather legging.

"It's just a cut," he said. "We better head back to Bɛllɛdha. I can still drive a rover."

Reread and edited 5/22/13, 8/2/17, 11/6/24

158.

Kristanɛs

Three days passed before the census and survey braved the swift waters of the gluba to return to the Lɛpawsa Basin. Roktɛkɛstɛr almost sent an army unit to the village to burn it, then blamed Thornton for exploring near a village without first asking permission. He hadn't realized that the village had been right above the outcrop; Lujkrénu hadn't told him they were close to his own home village, probably because he felt safe there.

Instead, two dozen cavalry were sent up the two valleys with a half dozen locals who had been in the city and who could vouch for what the soldiers said. The next day the village Lord and three of the archers came to Bɛllɛdha to apologize and make amends. Thornton apologized to them as well.

The survey and census found a much warmer reception upon their return to the basin, partly because of the three dozen cavalrymen accompanying them. Roktɛkɛstɛr also loaned horses to the survey, so they set out with the rover and horses while the census fanned out to count in the first two villages, assisted by the soldiers. Thornton led one team up the left bank of the Yɛjisrumakwés while Dwosunu, the Tripola geologist, led the other team up the right bank. They fanned out to cover as much territory as possible, blowing a horn when they saw something they wanted the others to see. Most of the dozen geologists were experienced from last year's survey of the western and southern shores; all of them stopped often to write field notes and draw little diagrams of outcrops. Since each team had a sextant, they took frequent measurements of the sun and

various prominent landmarks; the clock in the rover, which was still running reliably, gave them universal time that allowed a calculation of longitude.

The valley proved to be fascinating in various ways. The land consisted of great, green stretches of grassy prairie separated by rock outcrops and mossy tundra overlying permafrost. To the north, the grassy prairie graded into moss and permanent snow; to the south the land rose into grassy foothills with scattered fir trees that formed the base of what was actually a circular crater rim. Outcrops were relatively rare, but they were all smelly organic shale, sometimes with fish fossils in them. It was hard to believe the area once was seabottom, but Thornton had seen plenty of evidence that Éra had once had much more water than it currently had, with seas that were as much as two hundred meters deeper.

The land was inhabited by scattered mastodons, caribou, Irish elk, and a few wolves; herds of reindeer and sheep were usually accompanied by a child and a dog. They went around the villages, but whenever they saw people they waved and the people generally waved back. After eight hours of walking, riding, and whacking rocks, they were getting pretty tired, but since they had traveled west by five time zones it was still midday.

A wall of ice began to loom several kilometers ahead of them, a barrier of distinctive blue-white rendered obscure by a thick mist. Thornton thought nothing of the mist until he realized it started just a hundred or so meters ahead of them and that it was patchy, with rising columns of it in some places. He hurried forward, curious to see, and suddenly stumbled on a warm spring, the water bubbling vigorously. Ahead of him, the mist resolved into a huge thermal area!

“Wow, come see!” he shouted, and the five accompanying him began to dash over. They stood in a semicircle around the warm spring, which was perhaps ten meters across and equally deep.

“Beautiful color,” said Sarésunu, for the spring’s floor graded from red and orange in its depths to green and blue at the shallow outer edges.

Thornton reached down and touched a blackish deposit rimming the pond. He picked up some, which was sticky. “Huh. Tar. That’s pretty unusual.”

“If the bedrock around here is blackish organic shale, I suppose it’s getting cooked by all this hot water,” added Aréjanu.

“You’re right. Come to think of it, on Earth artificial petroleum is made from oil shale by applying heat and steam. That must be what’s happening here.”

“Look at this spot over here,” added Sarésunu, pointing to a small pond a few meters away. It was choked by a blackish deposit; water bubbled up through to form a thin layer and had an oily sheen. He picked up a thin rock and stuck it in; it was like trying to stir a stew. “This is thick!”

“It’s tar. On Earth sometimes one gets big pools of the stuff, and animals get stuck in it and die. Later on, their skeletons and even their skin are perfectly preserved.”

“You get hot springs like this?” asked Aréjanu.

Thornton shook his head. “No, not like this. On Earth you get tar pools where there’s petroleum, and you get hot springs with no petroleum. I’ve never heard of the two together.”

“I guess there are no hot springs in organic shale on Earth,” concluded Sarésunu.

“Let’s look further,” suggested Thornton. The six of them continued forward, but in smaller groups that could shout to each other. As they stepped around a big grayish mound—Thornton realized it was a sinter deposit—they could see a hamlet just a hundred meters away. The dozen stone houses were built near a large hot spring; a column of steam rose vigorously from the surface. Beyond was a meadow of lush grass filled with sheep and a field of oats. Across the thermal area was another hamlet that was a bit larger.

“They’re building around springs,” observed Thornton. “Very clever; must be useful in the winter.”

“This is pretty big,” said Aréjanu. “We should talk to the people about it, they know the area.”

Thornton nodded. People had come out of the houses at both hamlets and were staring at them. Aréjanu started across the thermal area toward the larger group of houses, so they followed him. As he approached he shouted “Hail!” in his distinctive Bɛllɛdha accent and the people responded “Hail!” and “Welcome.” No one had brought out weapons; they had heard about the visit of the soldiers.

“Are you the census?” asked one man.

“No, we’re the survey,” replied Aréjanu. “The census is downstream near the gluba. We’re exploring the valley, noting the rocks, plants, and animals, and improving the map we have.” He used the English word “map” because the technical Eryan term they had invented would not have been familiar to the villagers anyway.

“We heard you were coming. You are very welcome,” replied a man.

“We are surprised to see that some springs have black stuff around them or even filling them,” said Thornton.

The man looked at him curiously, noting his funny appearance and slight accent. “The *pita* is found in old springs and in very cool ones. The hottest ones and the ones with the fastest flow of water have none. It is very useful.”

Thornton noted the use of *pita*; presumably it came from *piti,* “pine pitch,” but the shift of the last letter to –a indicated it was derived from the earth instead. “Do you have a single village here, or a lot of little ones?”

“There is a central village a dɛkɛnt that way.” The man pointed. “It’s built around one of the largest springs; the hot water feeds a swamp that is green all year round. They can grow three crops of oats a year in a few fields, even when it’s snowy everywhere else. Otherwise we’re scattered across this area and live where the water makes warm meadows.”

“I see,” replied Thornton. “Do you use the water to heat your houses?”

“We don’t need to; we build the houses on warm ground, and that is enough. But every hamlet has a bath house. You can see that all our houses are connected together, even to the barns, so we can stay inside in the winter.” He frowned at Thornton. “Pardon me, Honored, but are you a gɛdhému?”

That startled Thornton. But he remembered Lujkrénu’s comment about the upper river valley being friendly to Earthlings because of Pablu. “Indeed, honored, I am. My family was exiled to this world five years ago. We decided to serve the people here by creating a génadɛma where the new knowledge from Gɛdhéma could be disseminated widely and equally to all.”

“Interesting, honored. And do you teach at all about Jésu Kristu?”

The question surprised him. “A little. We speak about many widus who have appeared on Earth, including Jésu, and the latest one, Bahá’u’lláh.”

“Bahá'u'lláh . . .” The man digested the name. “We heard about Jésu a long time ago from a gɛdhému named Pablu, and we have clung to our belief in Him ever since. But we have no books about him, except part of the *Biblia*. We really know very, very little about him, except that He died for us.”

“Indeed, He did. All the widus have suffered terribly so that we may benefit.”

“My name is Luku.” The man extended both hands.

“And I am Dhoru, son of Kristoféru.” He intentionally added his father’s name.

“Kristoféru.” The man smiled, immediately recognizing the name meant “bearer of Christ.” That made him happy. “You must come to the village.”

“Thank you,” said Thornton. “We left a machine back over there, though—”

“No one will bother it,” replied Luku.

“I’ll go get it,” volunteered Sarésunu, who loved driving the rover when Thornton let him. Thornton nodded and began to accompany Luku with the remaining geologists.

“What is the name of your village?”

“This entire area is Khɛrmdhuna.” Thornton nodded; “warm pastures” or “warm prairies.” It was fitting. “We have families and clans scattered among the various warm pastures here. A lot of our land is too hot and unstable for grass; other areas are ordinary cold pasture. We have our sheep, cows, and reindeer; they give us milk, meat, and hides; we raise oats and some vegetables and trade for other plant foods from warmer places . . .

we have a good life." He smiled a toothless smile and shrugged. Thornton couldn't help but think that a "good life" was relative.

"I'm impressed that you have used the warm pastures so well," said Sarésunu. "We've seen warm springs in other places. Usually people believe they're inhabited by evil spirits and stay away."

"That is true, and it was our salvation," replied Luku. "Because when Pablu led us here, we were left alone, and that was what we needed at the time. So we built our community—" he turned specifically to Thornton. "Our Kristanɛ community."

Kristanɛ. Thornton had never heard the word "Christian" in Eryan before. "How large is your community?"

Luku hesitated. "There are nearly two thousand of us, now, here in the Khɛrmdhuna." He paused, then added. "The census people are coming to count us, right?"

"Yes, and your animals."

"Will they take anything from us?"

"No, they're coming to determine how much tax you should be paying the Réjé."

"I see. Render unto Réjɛ that which is the Réjɛ's, and render unto Esto what is Esto's."

"Exactly," said Thornton, recognizing the biblical quotation.

They walked on a well-defined path across a warm pasture, sometimes treading on round fired clay pipes that let water pass underneath. They passed a series of walls smeared with black charcoal, with vegetables planted on their southern sides. Luku

pointed. “We cover these gardens with skins at night if there might be a frost. The channel of warm water and the heated walls protect the plants.”

“Very clever,” said Sarésunu.

“It was Pablu’s idea.”

They passed the vegetable gardens and entered the village. Someone had seen them coming and had announced their arrival, so people were coming out of their houses. Luku said “They have a gɛdhému!” and a thrill ran through the crowd, much to Thornton’s surprise.

A crowd gathered around them. Luku waved a man forward, then another one. “This is our headman, Pédru. And this is our Bishop, Jonu. This is Dhoru, son of Kristoféru.”

“Kristoféru?” asked Pédru. “You are very, very welcome!”

“Thank you,” replied Thornton. “This group studies the rocks, plants, and animals; we are not from the census. Let me introduce everyone.” He pointed to the others and introduced them one by one; and just then the other six geologists began to approach as well, so he paused and introduced them as well.

“We wish to give all of you hospitality,” exclaimed Pédru. “Please, come this way.” He led them to his house nearby, which was next to a large thatched stone building. Thornton looked at the building and was startled to read a carving in Spanish over the door: Iglesia de San Pablo.

“What is that? English?” asked Sarésunu, recognizing the alphabet.

“No; Spanish. Español.”

Pédru’s eyes opened wide. “Do you know Espanyol?”

“No, I do not, but I recognize the language. Do you know these letters?”

“We do; some of us.”

“Do you use them?”

“A little; we have some parchment to write on.”

Thornton nodded. “I see. Can I see your iglésia?”

“Of course, come inside,” Bishop Jonu replied. He opened the doors and led them into the dark space, for the windows were covered by wooden shutters and no candles were lit. The church smelled of oil; the villagers burned tar for lighting. Jonu led them to the front where there were two statues, one that looked almost exactly like Mitru and the other, Saré.

They all bowed, including Thornton; the Eryan no doubt recognized the statues as familiar expressions of Esto. “Jésu and Marié?” asked Thornton.

“Yes, of course,” replied Jonu.

Thornton nodded and began to recite in Eryan “Our Father, who art in heaven. . .” and both Jonu and Pédru immediately joined in. Their version was different from his, but they all recognized what each other was saying. “*Gawi Potui,* the Lord’s Prayer,” said Thornton.

“Gawi Potui,” agreed Jonu. “You are a Kristanu?”

“No, but I knew many Kristanɛ and I learned their prayer, for it is a prayer from Jésu himself, just like the hymns of Widumaj.”

“It is not like the hymns,” replied Jonu, raising his voice against the insult. Then he glanced at the Eryan geologists and looked down at the floor.

“Esto works in mysterious ways,” replied Thornton. “Thank you for showing me your iglésia.”

They all turned and headed out of the church. “Honored, we are a poor community,” said Pédru. “And we have waited for many, many years to learn more about Jésu. We beg of you, Honored, to teach us what you know.”

“I know very little also, but we have access to books, and the books have much about all of Esto’s messengers. We can get you the sayings of Jésu.”

Jonu turned to the others around. “That would be the most precious gift of life! We have a part of the *Biblia,* Honored—Pablu translated it for us—but he told us there was much, much more.”

“Honored priest, tell us how the Kristanɛs came to be at Khɛrmdhuna.”

“Ah, that is quite a story.” Jonu smiled, revealing a scattering of teeth in his mouth. Thornton guessed he was about forty, but he wasn’t sure.

They entered Pédru’s house and the first room was a very large space with a hearth in the center. The fire was the room’s only light, except for a little daylight entering through the smoke hole right overhead. The smell of oil was even stronger and Thornton noticed the wood pile next to the fire was soaked in it. Pédru threw some sticks on the fire and the flames brightened greatly. They all sat on straw mats covered with furs that dotted the stone floor, which was warm to the touch.

“Wine for the guests,” he exclaimed to a young man, apparently his son. “Honored priest, tell the story.”

“With pleasure.” Jonu paused to look at his listeners. Even the geologists seemed interested. “Pablu was a very learned man in his country of Espanya until one day he saw

a ship of the ansɛs descend from the sky. They saw him and took him away. They brought him here, leaving him outside Bɛllɛdha. He almost died, but some villagers took him in and taught him to speak Eryan, and in turn he gave them the greatest gift of all: knowledge of Jésu. Anyway, his fame reached Rostu, the great King, in Mɛddoakwés, and when the king came through the north shore five or six years later he granted Pablu an audience. There was another gɛdhému in the court named Azizu, the king's physician, who told terrible lies about Esto. Pablu was stirred to reply to him, so they had a debate. King Rostu was impressed and invited Pablu to Mɛddoakwés, where he remained for five years to debate Azizu. When he returned to Bɛllɛdha with fifteen followers he had baptized in the capital—they were not welcome there any more because of Azizu's influence—he found that Lord Yimu of Bɛllɛdha had persecuted the Kristanɛs and driven us north, so Pablu came north as well, to Khɛrmdhuna. Life was very hard; our people didn't know how to live here, and there were only sixty-seven of us. We built the iglésia and Pablu began to write down the parts of the Bible he had memorized. Then the Mammoth Hunters in the Mɛgdontakwés valley raided us. Pablu and two deacons were killed. They are buried under the floor of the church. So Pablu, like San Pablu, the bédhu of Jésu, was martyred.

"That left us with one deacon, Wéréstu, and he could not read the *Biblia* well. We gradually made peace with our neighbors, who were less interested in attacking us once Pablu was dead, and Wéréstu trained more deacons, and by the laying on of hands made some of them priests. Today we have five churches, eight priests, and thirty deacons, and I am the high priest—the *obispu.* Our settlements stretch from here into the foothills, along the warmlands far into the snowland, and down the river halfway to the junction."

“How many people?” asked Thornton.

“Some two thousand, one hundred, and seventeen, according to the list of baptisms and deaths in the church.”

“You keep a list?” said Sarésunu, impressed.

“Yes, Pablu taught it.”

“And how many can read and write?” asked Thornton.

“All the deacons and priests; maybe fifty of us.”

The geologists looked at each other and at Thornton, surprised; they knew the value and rarity of literacy.

“This is a blessed community,” said Thornton.

“But you write with the Englisa—the espanyola—letters,” asked Aréjanu.

“Indeed, because the Eryan letters are very complicated.”

“They were; but now there is a new system, and it is much simpler,” replied Thornton. The bottle of wine reached him. “I apologize to everyone if I seem rude, but I do not drink wine. But if you can bring me a pot of boiling water, I will make everyone tea, for I have some with me.” Thornton had learned the trick from his father, and as usual, it worked.

“We are the hosts, Honored, and would hate to take your tea.”

“It is my honor to give it to everyone. Please; it is my gift to you for your kindness.”

“We will accept your tea and hear your story,” agreed Pablu with a smile.

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159.

Summit

"I wish I could have gotten back here sooner," Thornton said, as he concluded his story. Their dinner table under the tent had Thornton, Lébé, rambunctious two-year-old Jalalu, three-month-old Kalé, Chris, Lua, Liz, and Mary seated around it.

"Well, it would have been impolite to Bidhu to abandon the census, especially since he was using your cell phone a lot," replied Chris. "You got the assignment finished, in spite of delays. Bidhu will make his report about Lɛpawsa to the Réjé and it will be complete."

"Yes; 10,147 people live there," agreed Thornton. "About forty percent of the region's total. They appear to pay about half the tax they should, though. Khɛrmdhuna pays about a third; Bidhu was mad."

"I suggest you borrow some horses and ride back to Khɛrmdhuna," said Chris. "Talk to their headman and get him to come here with you, to the Réjé's court. I bet many of the Lords and headmen of the basin will come; they'll all feel guilty. If he's left out, it won't go well for him."

"I think he's too frightened or too shy."

"Tell him I will do everything I can to help—tell him 'Kristoféru' will help."

Thornton smiled. "That'll do it! Can we host them, if they have no means?"

Chris nodded. "How's their health up there?" asked Lua.

"I'm not a professional, but I'd say it's typical. Lots of toothless adults by middle age and blurry eyeballs from cataracts. I also noted some boils and maybe some growths."

"Growths?" she asked.

"Yes, big bumps or swellings; tumors."

"That's not good. If they're breathing in fumes from burning tar, that might explain it. I bet they have a lot of worms, too."

"I saw a boy with a broken leg and it looked like they had splinted it pretty well. I asked Pédru and he said the deacons and priests all get training as a 'physician.' He used the word *tabibɛ*."

"From the Arabic word *tabib*, physician," said Lua, nodding. "That's part of Azizu's legacy! Near as I can tell, the best Eryan medicine came through him."

"Philosophy too," agreed Lébé. "He was constantly mentioned in philosophy classes. The entire Eryan conception of God was shaped by him; maybe their conception of the mission of Widumaj as well."

"You said you saw their *Biblia*," said Mary. "Do they have the entire Bible?"

Thornton shook his head. "Jonu let me look at a copy. He was surprised when I could read it; he thought it was a miracle or something. I pulled out my notebook and took some notes; I gave him my spare notebook and a couple of pencils, by the way. The *Biblia* consists of two parchments about a meter square with fairly small, neat handwriting; I estimate each has the equivalent of about twenty-five pages of text, so they have about fifty altogether. Most of the text is a series of short extracts, like the Lord's Prayer and various parables. The crucifixion is longer. The end of the first parchment and

the beginning of the second is a brief summary of Acts and the letters of Paul and the Book of Revelation, followed by six sermons by Pablu himself. Pablu did not have the Bible memorized; he wrote down the parts he remembered as well as he could."

"He was Catholic?" asked Chris.

"Definitely. They celebrate a kind of mass, full of nonsense words that are probably mispronounced Latin, and do homage to the goddess Mary as well as the god Jesus. A lot of it seems to be worship of Saré and Mitru displaced onto Mary and Jesus, with Wɛranu as God the Father."

"I should go and attend," said Chris. "It'd bring back memories from childhood."

"This all reminds me of Wɛrétrakɛstɛr's school of philosophy," said Lébé. "Azizu taught philosophy, medicine, alchemy, and astrology; in short, he was a well educated Muslim gentleman. That's what Wɛrétrakɛstɛr and all other schools taught as well. The difference is that Azizu attended schools with libraries of books, whereas when he arrived here there was no easy way to write the classes down, so they were transmitted as an oral tradition instead."

"Until we arrived," added Thornton, nodding. "Sumilara's different, though, because they had philosophers of their own, a library, and books."

"I am struck by the fact that Khɛrmdhuna is the remnant of a sixteenth century Mɛlwika," Liz said. "It was innovative in its day, but got marginalized by the North Pole and became a backwater."

"A remarkable backwater," said Chris. "We'll definitely have to visit after the Réjé leaves town."

“I don’t know how we’ll get through the gluba, though,” said Lua. “That worries me.”

“The army’s looking at ways to improve the route,” said Chris. “Roktɛkɛstɛr told me today that they are sending a crew up the gluba to remove all landslide debris and throw it into the deeper stretches of the river. A week of work will make the gluba a much safer passage. Mitru has said that’s the minimum he’ll accept.”

“Pédru told me that his people don’t come to Bɛllɛdha via the gluba, though,” said Thornton. “They have to pass by too many hostile villages that sometimes try to demand passage money. They have a horse trail instead, and when I asked if wagons could use it, he said it would be possible with some work.”

“We’ll have to tell the army,” said Chris. “The cooperative ones will get the road.”

“The question we need to consider now is, what will we tell them of Jesus, and what will we tell them of Bahá’u’lláh?” asked Mary. “Because we aren’t here to teach Christianity.”

“I said as little as possible about both,” said Thornton. “I figured we’d have plenty of contact with them in the future, so there was no rush. But that can’t be said about Sarésunu, Aréjanu, Dwosunu, and a few others. You never know what people already know about the Faith until you hear them teaching others!”

“What did they say?” asked Chris.

“A lot! They explained progressive revelation, which worked reasonably well until they included Widumaj; this Christian community is very much opposed to Widumaj, I’m afraid. Pablu seems to have viewed him as an influence from Satan. But they were happy to see Eryan talking about Jésu; that impressed them.”

“And there are two young men whom you hope will come to the génadɛma?”

“They accompanied us on the geological expedition, not only in their region, but all the way up the Mɛgdontakwés. They cooked, helped handle supplies and tents, and went on all the hikes, asking intense questions. One night I sat down with both of them and explained the new alphabet to them, and the next day they were using it; they are deacons and can already read and write with the Roman alphabet. The others were astonished. When we drove them back to Khɛrmdhuna we gave them a reading book one geologist happened to have along, all the paper and pencils we could spare, and several boxes of matches; they loved the matches. I bet by the time we get back there, half the deacons will know the new alphabet.”

“This is remarkable,” said Chris, shaking his head.

“But what about Bahá’u’lláh?” repeated Mary. “I’m not saying let’s go convert them; I’m just asking, what is our approach? If we rush, we could make a major mistake and set back an effort to teach them. If we take our time, we could accidentally innoculate them against the Faith. Either option could be wrong.”

“But how can we know which is right, mother?” asked Chris. “We could consult with the Central Spiritual Assembly when it meets in two weeks.”

“I think the answer is, we don’t speak except by their leave,” replied Lua. “It is always a big mistake to answer questions before they are asked.”

There was a silence around the table; Lua seemed to have resolved the matter as best as they could for the time. “So, when should I go back to get Pédru? I hope not tomorrow,” said Thornton.

“No, spend tomorrow with the family,” replied Chris. “But I’d go the next day if you can, and try to get him back here the day after. The local court usually lasts five days. I think this time the Réjé plans to stretch it to ten, and tomorrow and the next day there won’t be much court activity anyway.”

“The Réjé’s coming to the clinic tomorrow morning,” said Lua. “Crown Prince Mɛméjékwu as well, and Estoiyaju said Wɛrétrakɛstɛr and Gawéstu might be along as well.”

“They’re all here?” said Thornton.

“They are,” confirmed Chris. “And the usual three quarters of the bureaucracy with their families, all staying in tents. They’ll be traveling to Isurdhuna and then to Tripola. After they get back to Mɛddoakwés in late summer the Réjé says she’ll make another visit here to get another report. She wants to see progress.”

“And she will,” added Lua. “I’m amazed how much cleaning and construction has happened in just ten days. They have the sewers opened up for the first time in a century and the public water pipes are installed all the way to Central Square, complete with hydrants and faucets. The génadɛma building is already framed.”

“I saw, and there are a lot of houses going up,” noted Thornton.

“Sulubaru’s back with the bank branch, too,” said Chris. “I’m helping him get it set up tomorrow. With the Réjé’s party arriving, the marketplace has exploded with activity.”

“A lot of money to be made.” Thornton turned to Lébé. “And you brought my computer?”

"Yes, and printer, but don't plan on using either of them tomorrow. May and I have a pact sworn in blood that we will each translate three hours every morning and review the other's translation for an hour and a half. So I need four and a half hours. After that, you're spending time with me."

"I see. How are you getting text from her?"

Lébé shrugged. "By email! The wireless cards in both computers are working fine. So we have accounts set up on the network computer the aliens provided for us, to back up the hard disks. I translate straight onto the computer and when I'm done I attach the file to an email to her, and vice versa!"

"How far are you?"

"I'm a third of the way through Ruhi Book Four and she's half way through Book Five."

"And before I head to Néfa, I want twenty-five copies of both books," added Mary. "The intensive there will cover at least through Book Four, and I hope to get to Book Five."

"Wow!" said Thornton. "In how many days?"

"Twelve," she replied. "I'm scheduled to visit Ora for six, so I hope to cover two books. Then twelve days in Mɛddwoglubas and twelve in Tripola, then back to Néfa for twelve more to cover the rest of the books if they're translated by then. After that . . . we'll see. I'd like to teach eight books in at least two regions by the end of summer."

"It's the request of the Central Spiritual Assembly," said Chris. "We want the foundation of community life and teaching laid securely."

Amos skimmed the article about the factory production of prestressed concrete wall units, which were hauled by truck to the construction site and erected by crane. It only took two minutes of reading to determine what to do with the article. He scribbled on the cover sheet “Produce a one to two page summary translation in Eryan, attach it to the article and place it in the library. Also, send a copy of the article and summary translation to Ménu. Be sure to hand-write a translation of the picture captions on the article.” He knew that Ménu had no ability to use the construction technique in the article, which had been printed off the worldwide web. But he thought the Miller family’s construction chief should know about the article and its ideas. He sent two or three such summaries to Ménu a week; it was one of the services the new Engineering School provided.

Done with that article, he turned to another one. Then a slight sound by the door to his office caused him to look up. An Eryan gentleman stood in the doorway, staring at him, and looked a bit embarrassed to be noticed. “Yes, may I help you?”

The man was white haired and his face was lined with wrinkles. He looked seventy, but he was probably fifty; life was hard on this world. And he was startled by the black-skinned man’s response. “I . . . apologize, Honored, I am looking for Honored Amosu.”

“I am Amos, or Amosu if you prefer. Please come in.” Amos was used to the startled looks his gɛdhému appearance generated. While Thornton could pass much of the time, Amos could not. But he generally could overcome the anxiety through kindness. “How can I help you?”

“I am Colonel Dɛku, Honored.”

“Colonel Dɛku! You’ve arrived safely, thanks to Esto. I am pleased to meet you.” Amos walked over to the army veteran and extended both hands. Dɛku hesitated, then shook.

“I am pleased to meet you. General Pɛrku told me you were a great friend of the Eryan and a loyal servant of Her Majesty. We are very grateful you have agreed to devote so much time to this project.”

“And I am honored to meet you, after months of hearing about you and awaiting your arrival! This effort is important to me as well. Please, let us sit here.” Amos motioned to a low table on a rug in the front of his office and several thick, comfortable pillows. They sat cross legged across the table from each other in fairly typical Eryan fashion, which was also typical of the men in the Kenyan village where Amos had been born. Amos pulled out a set of plates and small fruit knives and handed a set to Dɛku. “Please help yourself.” He pointed to the plate full of peaches, bananas, and grapefruit on the table. “I have no tea or coffee to offer, but I have fruit.”

“Very civilized. I had trouble finding you; I wandered around the campus from half past ten bells to eleven bells! I had no idea the génadɛma here had grown so large. And I see you are getting another building.”

Amos nodded. “Number nine, if you include the engineering school. It’s for business classes and will house the administration of the génadɛma. Our existing business school and administration area are now too small. They’ll become dormitory space for married couples.”

“Married students?”

“Yes, we have more and more couples who come here together to study, and we have no place for them to stay.”

“I am amazed this place has grown so large. I was with General Roktɛkɛstɛr’s engineering corps when you built your first dam on the gluba four years ago, and I took the engineering classes then. You had one classroom building in a village that consisted of little more than the manor houses of the two Lords and a citadel. Naturally, I went there this morning and discovered that the classroom building is now a medical school.”

“So, you haven’t visited here in four years?” Amos shook his head. “It must have been a shock!”

“Yes, this city has sprung up overnight like a mushroom on a stump! I could not have imagined it. I was reassigned to Ora, you see. I requested it because my wife’s family is from there. I took engineering and science classes in the Mitrui Génadɛma, except during the Sumi campaign. Then the army built ɛndraidha and offered various incentives to veterans to settle there, so I retired and became a wheat farmer; I figured with the army steam wagon to do the plowing and the harvesting, I’d have reasonably light work. But the army’s agricultural equipment has not always been available when it was needed, and I got bored by farming.”

“What does your wife think of the move?”

“She was furious about leaving Ora and grateful to be leaving ɛndraidha. When she saw the stores when we rolled into town, her eyes lit up. She will like this place.”

“Do you have children?”

“Indeed, Honored. Of our five, three are with Esto now, but I have a son in the army who is married and has given us two grandsons, and a daughter who lives with her husband in ɛndraidha until he gets reassigned here. They have a son and two daughters.”

“You have been blessed. My wife and I have two daughters who are three years old and three months old. They bring us much joy. What is your understanding of the project we are to attempt together?”

“My understanding? An interesting question, Honored. Up to now, the army has kept the peace with the Tutanɛ and the Sumi, and also within our cities, catching and punishing criminals and guarding prisons. But keeping the peace within the cities perhaps should now shift to a new group, the *spɛktɛrus,* ‘watchmen.’ The spɛktɛrus exist to serve the public by enforcing laws, but not to punish criminals; that is the task of the judges and courts, though the spɛktɛrus will run prisons and might carry out the punishments ordered by the court.”

Amos nodded. “A good summary. On Gɛdhéma the word often used is ‘police.’ Their purpose is often summarized as serving and protecting. Serving includes tasks like making sure traffic moves through a busy intersection, or walking the city looking for problems that need to be resolved. But police will also serve subpoenas for the court, informing people they must come. They arrest law breakers. And one very interesting task: sometimes they have to solve crimes, determine who is robbing or murdering, and put together all the evidence for the court to use in the person’s trial. That can be exciting and challenging; it’s a very different task than directing traffic.”

“Indeed, Lord, and I gather you have a crime to solve right now.”

"Yes, there is a gang that is breaking into houses when no one is in them and taking everything valuable they can carry. They hit here for a week, then Mɛddowkaés for several days, then Ora for two days, then Tripola for a day, and we think they may be back here again because two houses were robbed yesterday. We think there are three of them; we have descriptions of two of them."

"You will teach us about solving crime?"

"As best I can. I am an engineer; I once took a law enforcement course, but it was when I was young. I didn't do very well in the course, either. What I have been doing is scouring the books to which we have access for information about law enforcement, and I have found four useful ones. We have some English language students translating the material into Eryan and we are ready to start copying the translations. You can read pretty well?"

"Indeed, Lord. I even knew the old spelling system, though I couldn't use it very much. General Pɛrku asked me to consider this assignment because he knew I wanted something different that used the new knowledge. But I do wonder, Lord, why Aisu wasn't given this opportunity."

"That is very simple: Captain Aisu is a very traditional soldier, as he himself will tell you. He believes in the traditional approach to keeping peace in the city. If someone claims someone else has stolen something and starts to shout 'Stop thief!' Aisu's soldiers catch the alleged thief, beat him, and break his arms and legs. If it later turns out the man wasn't a thief, well, that's unfortunate. It has happened twice now. Furthermore, Captain Aisu is not particularly interested in solving crimes; he prefers to wait until a thief is caught red handed. That is true of the army in general."

“That is true, and it explains why this gang can steal so many things. I have recruited twenty-five veterans from ɛndraidha and Ora. Most will be here this week.”

“Excellent! And five of Aisu’s men want spɛktɛru training as well, so that gives us thirty. Mɛlwika probably needs about fifteen or twenty, so that leaves some to serve elsewhere.”

“Who does this spektɛru unit take orders from?”

“The Réjé, Lord Kandékwɛs as Regional Lord, and here in Mɛlwika, Mayor Wɛranlubu. Lords Millɛr and Mɛnnéa have turned responsibility for the city over to the Mayor. I hope that, like fire fighting, police work will become a regional task, and that this unit eventually will have some responsibility over this whole area, including Mɛddoakwés.”

“Really? What is the army in the capital to do, then?”

“Prepare for military threats. Mɛddoakwés has almost a thousand soldiers; law enforcement probably requires twenty-five. The villages need spɛktɛrus also, and the area needs a unit to solve crimes. That will be true of other regions as well.”

Dɛku was startled. “I thought I was starting the Mɛlwika police force!”

“You are, but if it is effective it will be the model for others, and a new institution will come into being.One that will complement the army; indeed, it will be a good destination for veterans.”

“Interesting; much to think about. Shall we get started with the classes next Dwodiu? I think the men will be here by then.”

Amos nodded. “Excellent, let’s start the classes then. But let’s meet tomorrow and go over the plans in more detail.”

The next day Thornton stayed in Bɛllɛdha with his family, except for some time with the geologists, who were compiling their data together into a big map of the Lɛpawsa Basin. The day after, however, he was anxious to get back to Khɛrmdhuna. He spent the morning and early afternoon working on the map and consulting with Bidhu about the census data, then headed out.

Crews of fresh army recruits were actively working on the gluba. They were systematically building a stone roadbed and were cementing the stones together with Portland cement, which could set underwater, making a permanent kilometer-long road through the gluba. It was quite an undertaking because the river filled the entire ten-meter width of the gluba floor with almost half a meter of water—the summer melt was in full swing—and a three-meter wide one way roadbed had to be a meter high to stay dry. Their work meant he could take the rover; if he stalled it in the water they could always help get him out. It also meant that Rudhisuru could come along even though he was still on crutches; he was anxious to get out. The crews had already improved the worst spots, so Thornton managed to get through the gluba in only fifteen minutes.

He passed Yujdwoakwés and headed up the Glacierwater. Khɛrmdhuna was only thirty kilometers away; an hour-long drive. But at sixty-five degrees north, thirty kilometers was ten time zones; the village's sunrise occurred a few hours before sunset in Bɛllɛdha. He managed to arrive just before sunrise, a good time because Pédru was guaranteed to be in his house. The noise of the rover caused every dog in the hamlet to start barking; everyone knew he had arrived and came out to see. They eyed the army officer, frightened by the uniform and puzzled by the crutches.

Pédru came out of his house. “Hail Dhoru, son of Kristoféru. We are pleased you have come to see us again.”

“Hail Pédru. I am very happy to return so quickly. This is my friend, Colonel Rudhisuru. He has come because he wanted to see more of the Lɛpawsa Basin, and because I never travel alone in my machine.”

“I am pleased to make your acquaintance, Lord,” said Rudhisuru.

Pédru eyed him uneasily. “I am not a Lord. You are most welcome, Honored Rudhisuru.”

“My father was very pleased to hear about Khɛrmdhuna and has sent me here with a message for you.”

“A message? Your father is generous and friendly, Honored Dhoru. Come inside and have hospitality. You, too, Honored Rudhisuru, you are welcome as well.”

Thornton and Rudhisuru nodded. Thornton grabbed a leather backpack from the rover and locked the door. Rudhisuru stood on his crutches and followed them into Lord Pédru’s house. His entire family—two wives and five children—were eating in the large common room when they entered. Water was already on the fire, for Thornton had previously left a gift of tea.

The family rose out of respect, then sat, and Thornton and Rudhisuru sat on mats on the floor as well. “What happened to your leg, honored soldier?” asked Pédru.

“I was shot by an arrow. We were exploring the Mɛgdontakwés and approached a village without first introducing ourselves to the villagers, and they attacked us.”

“Which village?” Pédru did not trust any of the Mammoth Hunters, as the people of the other valley were called.

“Sérdomas.”

Pédru nodded. “They’re hotheads in that village. You counted them, too?” He knew the census and survey had explored that valley, but he needed a reminder.

“Yes, Honored, we are counting everything on this world that doesn’t move fast enough.”

Thornton opened the backpack he had brought along. “Considering your great desire to learn to read and write, my father asked me to bring these notebooks for your use—”

“Oh, bless him! We need paper very badly.”

“And here is the complete set of adult readers to help learn how to use the letters.”

“Excellent, we will forever be in your debt. The book we have is already going round and round; it is not hard to learn how to read it.”

“No, it would not be hard for your people.”

“We don’t even know him, too! Your father’s generosity is unbounded. We are in his debt.”

“Please do not feel that way; it is his pleasure to be of service. The message I bring is very simple. He invites you and two others to accompany me to Bɛllɛdha and be his guests for the court.”

Pédru was speechless for a moment. He stared at Thornton, startled by the offer and unable to respond. “Honored, your father is as brave and daring as he is generous. We are a people who have been safe for five hundred years because of our isolation. This world has never welcomed the message we bring to it; it has rejected us and that

message. We have been saddened by the situation, but we have accepted it and have not attempted to change it. What your father offers is a radical change and a grave risk."

"Honored Pédru, isolation has been your salvation, I agree. But the world is changing very rapidly now and isolation is being destroyed for everyone. As I told you the other day, steam-powered wagons now tie this world together. Bɛllɛdha is no longer a five or six day walk from Mɛddoakwés; it is five or six hours away. My brother in law, Mitru Millɛr, owns many steam wagons. He is planning to start a weekly run that will come from Bɛllɛdha northward into the Lɛpawsa Basin. It will probably go up both rivers, which means it will come here. When that begins, Khɛrmdhuna will be a two hour ride from Bɛllɛdha. The ride will cost half a dhanay. The army has started to improve the road through the gluba. Furthermore, you have been visited by the census and they know you have 2,100 people and 26,300 animals. The Réjé will now expect an annual tax. The customary arrangement would be a sixth of the herd the first time: 4,400 animals. Subsequently, it would be a sixth of the new animals only."

"Such an arrangement will impoverish us! We have done nothing to deserve such a tax and have received no services in return for it!"

"Then go to the Grand Court and make your case to the Réjé. Because otherwise, the army will show up to enforce the payment of the tax."

"It is true, Honored Pédru," added Rudhisuru. "I am not here as an army officer, but as a companion of Dhoru to help ensure his safety. He speaks the truth."

Pédru stared at the fire. The choice was a difficult one. "Your father is too generous," he finally said.

“No, I assure you he is not. He wants to meet you and hear from you about Khɛrmdhuna first hand. You may stay in our tent rather than go to the court; it is up to you.”

“Honored Dhoru, why is your father offering me hospitality?”

“Because he is impressed by what I told him of this place and he thinks you will be safer as a part of this world than isolated from it. Because we want to see everyone in this world learn to read and write, and your village is closer to that goal than just about any place. Because we want to see students from here come to our génadɛma. Because we think this place can become more prosperous, not less. There are many reasons.”

“If your father is such a good and generous host, perhaps he should reciprocate and come here to be our guest.”

“He would be honored to come here. My sister Lua is a physician and she is in Bɛllɛdha with a group of physicians to help people with their worms, their toothaches, and their bad eyesight. We often can fix these problems. She would like to come help your people as well. My wife and children are in Bɛllɛdha and will come here with me. Even my mother and grandmother are in Bɛllɛdha right now and will come here to offer classes to your people. This is what we do.”

Pédru stared at Thornton, uncertain what to say. Finally he said, “Then I will go to Bɛllɛdha with you to meet them myself and invite them here.”

The clock tower at Foundry Square struck out twelve bells as Soru and Kanawé entered Mɛlwika School to visit Ornéstu. Even though it was summer, the school was swarming with children and activity. Except when there was harvesting going on—a month in early

summer and a month in early fall—school was open and the kids were expected to be present. Soru knew that Ornéstu was usually in his office in the morning because he stopped by regularly to make a report about the classes for the deaf children. They looked in the door and saw the head of Mɛlwika's school sitting at his desk and reading, as usual.

He looked up and saw them. "Good day, Soru and Kanawé. Please come in. I don't have too much time; I'm expecting Amos and Dɛku, the new head of the spɛktɛrus. But in the time that I do have, how can I help you?"

"Spɛktɛru; what's that?" asked Soru.

"A new unit to enforce laws here in town. It will replace the army, and because the members will be veterans with army pensions the city will have to pay them only half as much."

"Why are they visiting you; to get to know you?" asked Kanawé, as she entered.

Ornéstu shook his head. "No, because yesterday when I was here and Grané was in class, a gang of robbers broke into our house and took our money, books, clothes, rugs. . . it was terrible, we feel violated and unsafe in our own house. And since she's with child, she's especially concerned. Dɛku and Amos are trying to solve the crime. But as I said, I don't have time to discuss that now. How can I help you?"

Kanawé looked at Soru, surprised by what she saw. He appeared strangely shocked or paralyzed by Ornéstu's news. Since he was tongue-tied, she spoke up. "Both of our classes are getting bigger and bigger. Yesterday a woman brought her thirteen-year-old daughter, Golbé, to me and begged that I take her in as well. Her face is very unusual in its shape and appearance. The child is gentle, but is way behind other children of the same age; I'd say she behaves more like an eight-year-old. I agreed to take

the child that day because one of my other kids has been sick all week and unable to attend class. I worked with Golbé all day and the mother was very pleased with the results; she came back an hour early and sat on the floor outside the classroom and listened. The problem is that I already have six children, and these are not ordinary children; they all have very difficult problems and require a lot of time. They all seem to respond to love and they all can learn, but at their own pace and in their own way."

Ornéstu nodded. "Are Golbé's eyes almond shaped and slant upward, and her ears, nose, or mouth are small?"

Kanawé was surprised. "Yes!"

"She has Down Syndrome, I suspect. It is a genetic condition; incurable, but the children can indeed learn."

"That's good to know. I'll have to look it up."

"Here." Ornéstu scribbled the English on a piece of paper and handed it to her.

"But that's not why we came here, Honored Ornéstu. People who have children with unusual problems know other parents of children with unusual problems. As a result, we are getting more and more parents bringing their children to us, and we simply can't handle them all. What can I do with Golbé? She will be the seventh child in my class. The mother begged me to take her in. The parents are begging us to offer their children school for more than five hours a day, too. Golbé's mother even said she'd pay me five dhanay a week to add her child to my class! They are wealthy and live in Pɛrkas, but there are parents with no money at all who have children with all sorts of serious problems."

"I'd accept Golbé's mother's offer, at least!"

"I did. With it I can afford to hire an assistant. But the class is being held in a house and we can't fit many more children in the room. The class is getting too noisy."

"Of course, that's not a problem for my deaf kids," added Soru, who had recovered his voice. "I now have four, and a fifth child from Béranagrés may start to come. I can handle five. But if I have five and Kanawé has seven, and we have an assistant, that's ten of us in a fairly small room."

"And we're finding we don't have the books and toys we need," added Kanawé.

"Ornéstu, we need some help."

"And I don't have any money to spare. The high school is consuming resources in ways we never anticipated. Every day we hear of more kids who are thinking about attending. Mitru will have to increase the steam wagon runs in the valley from four to *sixteen* to get the kids here in the morning and home at night! That's driving him crazy. The furniture for the classrooms is late and more expensive than expected. Wiring is in short supply because of the extension of wires all the way around the northern route of the Royal Road. I'm going crazy with all the details and I have a staff of three handling most of the work."

"I thought the city's tax income was higher than expected," said Soru.

"It's ten percent higher and the high school is consuming all of it and more. We're borrowing money to get everything ready by the fall. Wɛranolubu's spending half of every day driving to the nearby villages and talking to their Lords about giving more."

"So, I can't go to him, either," noted Soru.

"No." Ornéstu looked up; he saw Amos and Dɛku had arrived and were standing outside. "I'll be going to Bɛllɛdha in a few days for a fast visit to tour its schools and

make suggestions, and I'll see Lord Kandékwɛs. I'll ask him if he can spare some money. There might be classrooms available in Mɛddoakwés, too, because a lot of the older children will be coming to our high school. I think your kids should be in two real classrooms in a real school."

"The problem is their appearance," replied Kanawé.

Ornéstu scowled. "Traditional prejudices. We have to overcome them. We need an article in the newspaper about your classes; that may help. People need to understand that even if education resources are stretched, these children deserve some of them as well." He looked at his door again. Soru noted Amos and Dɛku as well and rose.

"Thank you, Ornéstu," he exclaimed. "Please do what you can."

It was several hours before Thornton left Khɛrmdhuna. Pédru was willing to go, but the priest Jonu was not; Thornton was never sure whether he feared for his life, feared encountering the larger world, or felt that someone who knew the tradition well had to stay home. In the end a younger priest named Matéu from a nearby church accompanied the headman, who it turned out was also a priest. The two young men interested in geology—Yagu and Khawiéru—also went along, making the back of the rover extremely crowded. They drove down the Glacierwater and in a bit over an hour went from mid morning to evening twilight, braving a darkened gluba with the headlights and a half-full Skanda.

They had a very late night entertaining their guests; they were not interested in going to bed at a reasonable hour in Bɛllɛdha, not being fully aware of time zone changes. The next day it proved impossible to get Pédru to go to the court. He was

frightened, unhappy with the idea of encountering the Lords and headmen of their traditional enemies on the Mɛgdontakwés, and afraid of meeting the Réjé after paying miniscule taxes for decades. Chris's positive report about the court that evening did not help. But Estodhéru stopped by to visit and as a Bahá'í asked a thousand questions about Christianity, which surprised and impressed Pédru. The next morning Estodhéru returned with Déolu, whose friendliness helped break the ice. That afternoon Pédru finally agreed to go.

He sat in the back row with Estodhéru and Chris, uncomfortably wearing a toga—he had never worn one before—and listening to a puzzling debate. The official business of the court had been short and had ended yesterday, so today the floor was open to any subject. A Lord was complaining about the new medicine, and that prompted another to add his voice to the subject. The Queen did not seem particularly amused by statements that eyeglasses were not really good to wear; she finally cut off the discussion by putting on her reading glasses and skimming a piece of paper. Other Lords noted that some people died even when they took the new medicine, so it had to be bad. Chris was relieved Lua didn't have to listen to the silliness; since almost all the Lords present and able to speak were local, they knew nothing about the new medicine. Then Déolu rose and thanked the medical team for coming to his city and helping about a hundred people with their toothaches, arthritis, and blindness.

Two lords—including Dontu, an absentee landlord living outside Mɛddoakwés—complained about the electrical and telephone lines, which were making rapid progress toward the city from the east and west, but which would bring evil spirits and disturb the "land's natural lightning." Then someone made a remark about the village

of Sumiupɛrakwa being the westernmost edge of the northern shore and Lord Yimu of that place rose to insist that their village and the four nearby villages were not part of Lɛpawsakɛla—the Northern Shore—never had been, and never would be. Déolu rose to say that he had always understood them to be part of his region. That prompted the Réjé to rise.

Discussion immediately stopped and everyone rose as well.

"You may be seated," she replied, and she sat as well. "Sumiupɛrakwa and the villages near it, including the new Fish Eryan village of Jérkɛnta, are located in the region of the Jɛrnstisér, not in Lɛpawsakɛla. The survey and census will be visiting that region later this summer and I call upon them to invite representatives of the Lords of the villages near the border between the regions and consult with them about defining a permanent border. When I go through that area I will stop for two days to meet with the Lords there specially.

"Today has seen the exchange of ignorance of a sort I have rarely seen. If you don't like the new medicine, then don't ask for its help when you are sick and dying. My uncle is 85 years old and was so weak he rarely got out of bed. Now he has glasses so he can see and he takes four pills a day, which give him much better health. He helped to organize the new Law School we just opened and his grandson Wérgéndu is the judge straightening out all the land claims here in Bɛllɛdha. That would not be possible without the pills and the glasses. But I am assured he will die some day, so don't hold that against the new medicine.

"If none of you decide to use the telephones once they are installed, that is fine. But if I need to get information to you, I plan to have Estoiyaju call here or a village near

you. The same applies to electricity. We have seen no change in lightning in places where the wires have come through. The exorcists report no increase in exorcisms.

"I can see that the Bɛllɛdha region is dominated by more superstition and ignorance than any other part of our world. My Lords, I implore you to visit a few cities on the eastern and western shores and *see.* I am not asking you to walk for a week to get there. Get on one of these new-fangled steam wagons, sit back, and let them take you. Visit a hospital or a génadɛma; you will be welcomed. Talk to a patient who has just had surgery and who would have died without it. Look through a microscope. Perhaps tomorrow the clinic can come and give all of us a show. Lord Kristobéru, please make that so.

"My Lords, I want to see the people of this area to be less hungry, less cold in the winter, and suffer less. It is our lot in this life to suffer, but we are not required to suffer terribly and then die. Widumaj has called on us to be wise and help each other. I am saddened that I cannot see more wisdom and assistance here. I think you all know what we want to see happen here: schools, hospitals, roads, steam power, longer lives, greater prosperity, greater tax revenues. Perhaps tomorrow we can talk about ways we can achieve these things instead of complaining about them.

"Now, we have a new representative of a village here. Could he please stand and introduce himself."

Pédru was startled by that. He rose. "Pédru of Khɛrmdhuna."

"You are welcome, Pédru of Khɛrmdhuna. This is your first time at court, I believe. What sort of name is Pédru?"

"My people have many unusual names, Your Majesty."

“They are Kristanɛs!” shouted a lord of the Mɛgdontakwés Valley.

“Kristanɛs?” The Réjé turned to Pédru. She could see he looked frightened. “It is not important to me, Pédru. We have Bahá’ís, after all, and they are seen as a scourge by some Lords. You Kristanɛs have not been a problem for a century or so. You don’t plan to be a problem now, do you?”

“No Your Majesty!”

She smiled. “Honored sir, you are welcome here. Tell us why your place is called ‘Khɛrmdhuna.’”

“Your Majesty, because we have many hot springs, and some are marvelous for bathing. We live very far north where it is very cold. The hot water coming from the ground creates great green marshes, even in winter, where our animals can graze.”

“It is a land of ghosts!” injected a Mastodon hunter.

Pédru looked at him. “There are no ghosts; that’s just part of the ignorance of which you spoke, Your Majesty. We are a happy people. We have our own physicians; they do not know the new medicine, but they help us stay comfortable. And we have a school where some learn to read and write. It is not the new new knowledge, but it was the new knowledge that Pablu brought five hundred years ago when he debated Azizu.”

The Réjé was startled by that; Chris was startled by Pédru’s boldness. “Then perhaps Lɛpawsakɛla has something to learn from Khɛrmdhuna,” she said. “The court is dismissed for the day. We will resume tomorrow to hear about the new medicine and the schools, and talk about what can be done to establish them here.”

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Visits

Dr. Lua was in the middle of examining a patient when a nurse pushed the door open slightly and stuck her head into the examining room. “The Réjé has just arrived and wishes to visit with patients.”

“Oh?” It was the third time in ten days. “How large of a party?”

“Four; herself, the Crown Prince, Lord Kandékwɛs, and Lady Awstɛr.”

“Show them to the convalescing patients and tell them I’ll be right there.”

The nurse nodded and hurried off. Lua turned to the woman with her. “If you don’t mind, I should speak to Her Majesty, but then I can come back here. From what I can see, though, your leg has a severe infection. I think we will need to lance the infection to drain off the puss, clean it thoroughly, and give you pills to fight off the infection. This is the sort of problem that we can treat fairly well, but if we do nothing it could kill you in a few weeks, or force the amputation of your leg.”

“Oh, I don’t want that, I have three children depending on me!”

“We can take care of this, don’t worry. It won’t take too long, either, and won’t hurt much, so I will be back.”

“Thank you, Dr. Lua.”

Lua nodded and stepped out of the room. The mobile clinic was comfortable but tightly packed with equipment and rooms. The tent attached to it had accommodation for up to eight patients—four male and four female—and was full. At times they had accommodated four more patients overnight in the clinic itself.

The royal party was visiting the large room accommodating female patients when Lua arrived. One was a woman with a severe infection from a difficult childbirth; the second was recovering from an appendectomy; the third was very ill from untreatable cancer; the fourth had pneumonia. Lua entered and helped to introduce the patients and their conditions in general ways, for some regarded their conditions as utterly private. Then they toured the male side, the Réjé asking each how he or she was doing and shook hands or put her hand on the patient's shoulders. It was a touching visit; Lua had never seen the warm and compassionate side of an otherwise gruff and often cold Queen.

They stepped outside to a spot where the clinic trailer gave them shade, for it was one of Bɛllɛdha's rare hot days. "My party moves to Sumiupɛrakwa tomorrow," said the Réjé. "I hope it will be possible for the clinic to arrive there as well in two or at most three days. I want to endorse your work and encourage people to come to you."

"Thank you, your Majesty, we appreciate your support very much. I don't think we can leave tomorrow because most of these patients require an extra day in bed, but we should be able to go the day after. We'll take two or three patients with us. When you head on to Néfa, with your permission we'll come back to this region. I hope you can visit Néfa Hospital."

"I will. Does it have a doctor?"

"No. It has three staff with some training. Seriously ill patients are taken to Mɛddwoglubas."

"With half of the staff of Mɛlwika and Mɛddoakwés Hospitals here, how are they doing in your absence?"

“It is difficult, but Dr. Béndhu is there and we talk on the telephone several times per day. Starting next year we will have more medical students and others will have another year of training, so we should be in better shape. I hope we can dispatch the mobile clinic three or four days a week. If Bɛllɛdha has a hospital, we’ll be able to send a surgeon there one or two days a week. Dr. Staurέstu already does that with Tripola.”

“Bɛllɛdha will have a hospital. If the city doesn’t have the money, let me know and we will find it. I am impressed by your work of saving lives. I would like to see two or three mobile clinics stationed in different places. If you had one at Mɛddoakwés and one at Mɛddowglubas, for example, you could reach many villages.”

“Eventually each major region should have one, and every village should be visited monthly. Once we have telephones in many places we will be able to dispatch ambulances to bring patients to hospitals, also.”

“I can see that in ten years, if resources are available, the sick will be cared for much better than they are now. Will you get to Isurdhuna?”

“We had not planned to.”

“I’ll be there for a month. I hope you come. Kɛrda has no hospital. If you can get there a week or two before I leave, I will twist arms and get the local Lords to come see the clinic, and before I leave there will be a commitment to build a hospital there as well.”

“That would be excellent, Your Majesty! Kɛrda needs a hospital.”

“Lord Gnoskéstu is old and conservative, but I can persuade him. I gather there is still no plan for a power and telephone line to Kɛrda; I’ll get that to happen as well, and the upgrading of the road. We can’t have the cultural and spiritual heart of our civilization

left behind, especially when I am building a new temple there that will cost a million dhanay."

"I agree, of course. I'll talk to the others and we will rearrange our schedule so that we can visit Isurdhuna."

"Excellent, Dr. Lua. Keep up the good work." The Réjé turned and headed back to her pavilion.

Lua was vibrating with excitement. She had to pause a moment before returning to her patient. The Réjé was now promoting development. It was a very encouraging breakthrough.

The day proved to be a long one again and when she finally walked to her family's small group of tents nearby it was an hour after sunset. Chris was in his office tent next to the "dining room" tent and when Lua picked up the plate of food that had been left for her, she saw that he was with Lord Kandékwɛs, Ornéstu, Déolu, Estodhéru, and General Pɛrku.

"Ah, Dr. Lua," exclaimed Kandékwɛs, when he saw her through the open doors. "Please come, we're discussing Her Majesty's schedule."

"Excellent." Lua came into her father's office area. The men were drinking coffee and tea; dirty plates showed that they had eaten supper with the family. They were all comfortable that she had joined them, something that would not have been true just a year earlier.

"Her Majesty wants the clinic in Sumiupɛrakwa by the day after tomorrow, so she can endorse it, and in Isurdhuna in about three weeks so she can talk the Lords of Kɛrda

into funding a hospital," said Kandékwɛs. "I was very impressed by the power of her words."

"I was amazed," agreed Lua. "Would you not call it a breakthrough?"

"I would," agreed Kandékwɛs. "She has been to Mɛddoakwés Hospital once or twice, but for some reason she was not struck by the importance of the work. Perhaps she was concerned by the arguments and complaints of the priests. But here she saw the same thing in tents and on wheels, she saw it working without collecting any money, and she heard the ignorance of the local Lords the other day. . . it all added up to a new perspective."

"I spoke to the staff. We'll be in Sumiupɛrakwa at sunset tomorrow and in Isurdhuna in three weeks. We've served Bɛllɛdha and the six villages closest to it quite well; we've been here almost a month. We've filled dental cavities in a hundred people and fitted two hundred with glasses. We'll spend a week in Sumiupɛrakwa, then two weeks back in this area. We need to visit the region's four corners."

"We have an open invitation from Pédru to visit Khɛrmdhuna any time," said Chris. "Maybe we should go there after Sumiupɛrakwa. A week should be enough there, then a week on the Mɛgdontakwés, then to Isurdhuna. Then on the way back home we can visit the eastern and western ends of Lɛpawsakɛla that are on the Royal Road."

"Are you coming?" Lua asked her father.

"Well, maybe I shouldn't say 'we.' This morning I got a letter from Wɛranonu of the house of Orngéndu, a major merchant family in Néfa. He has three trained accountants working for the family business and he wants to hire one or two more to strengthen accounting in the city. He'd set them up in offices in the bank and sell their

services to other businesses. The bank in Mɛlwika does the same thing and he wants to know more. So I'll probably go there for two weeks."

"His family has a major office in Ora as well," noted Estodhéru. "So they may do the same thing there if the Néfa business works out."

"We need accountants here, too," said Déolu. "For that matter, we need to arrange for medical care. These glasses are amazing." He tapped the pair on his nose.

"The Réjé said that if this region can't afford to pay for a hospital, she would find the money," exclaimed Lua, and Kandékwɛs nodded vigorously.

"Really?" said Déolu. "That's encouraging. But where would we get a doctor? How many doctors are there, other than you?"

"I'm still the only doctor in the sense of having the degree we are creating. But we have three others that are substantially along on their degrees, three more that have started, and we'll have at least six starting this fall. Some have traditional training, too. The situation with nurses is about the same."

"Can you extend the rotation system to Bɛllɛdha?" asked Chris.

Lua nodded. "I suppose. Our students take an intensive term of classes, then another term that involves medical work, reading, and writing papers, with a weekly visit by a doctor-teacher. Some of those students could be stationed here."

"But can they run a hospital?" asked Déolu skeptically.

"They can with help. The doctor comes on market day; which is Dwodiu here, right? He'd conduct elective surgeries, dentistry, and optometry on that day, examine patients, and give a class to the staff. On the other days the staff would telephone Mɛlwika for advice."

“This has only become possible in the last year,” added Chris. “It relies on telephones and fast steam wagons. It’s expensive, but it means we can run several hospitals at once.”

“The bigger question is, how long will the money last to pay for a Bɛllɛdha Hospital?”

“And schools,” added Ornéstu. “There are two hundred kids and a hundred adults taking classes here in town and they’re being taught by a dozen teachers who will need pay.”

“At least the génadɛma building is almost finished,” noted Déolu. “And we can build a school over the summer with the remaining money. But I’ll need about ten thousand dhanay for the teachers and five thousand more to keep the génadɛma open.”

“Perhaps I shouldn’t say this, but I’d rearrange the family allowances,” said Estodhéru, leaning over. “How many members of your extended family live off the area’s taxes? Thirty or forty? I wouldn’t stop their money, but I’d make some of their kids become teachers and include their pay in the family’s share.”

Déolu thought about that for a moment. “That might save me five thousand. Let me be frank with all of you, if I may. Please keep this private. The North Shore is this world’s poorest area. The Northern Basin has ten thousand people, but almost none ever have paid any taxes, and the rest paid little. That area yielded only twenty thousand dhanay last year, mostly in skins and livestock, of which the Lord received 1,600. The rest of the region has five thousand people in town and thirteen thousand in villages, but a third of the town’s population was the army garrison and dependents who pay no taxes. The city collected one hundred thousand dhanay in taxes for Her Majesty and forty-seven

thousand for the Lord. The surrounding villages paid 325,000 dhanay of taxes to the crown and 16,000 to the Lord. The garrison and the prison cost the crown almost all of its tax income. Add up the different sources, and the Lord received only sixty-five thousand. The copper operation earned the ruling family another twenty thousand, so that raised the total to eighty-five. About five thousand of that went to charity, ten thousand to running the city, and the rest to the family." He shrugged.

"That's not much," considered Chris. "Mɛlwika's total tax collection this year will be over a million and a half."

"The army has to do more," said Pɛrku. "We have five hundred soldiers here and they spend most of their time guarding the wall and practicing with their swords. The army should pay the génadɛma to give classes to its soldiers, and that will cover the salaries of the génadɛma faculty. The army kids should be in school and the army should pay for that, too."

"The garrison has maybe a hundred children," said Ornéstu. "That's maybe eight thousand dhanay per year."

"I doubt the army will pay for it all," said Pɛrku, backtracking a bit. "But I'll ask Roktɛkɛstɛr. A lot of soldiers' sons follow in their father's footsteps and we'll have to educate them later. The new army assumes that many soldiers can read."

"You've got to get the copper operation going, too," said Chris. "Close most of the mine; it's too dangerous. I bet the geologists can find other deposits, though. Amos can teach you how to make better copper smelters."

"But you have contracts with the Dwobɛrgonɛ," said Déolu.

“Demand for copper is going up fast. We need two sources, and soon enough both will be producing more copper than either is now. We’ll buy from you.”

“How much?”

Chris considered the question, then shrugged. “I don’t know. A few thousand dhanay at least. The demand for wire isn’t going away, my Lord.”

“When will the wires get here?” asked Lua.

“They’re moving very fast,” said Pɛrku. “Much better planning than on the south shore line, and the soldiers are doing good work. The lines will reach here from the west in a month and from the east by the end of summer. The graveling is proceeding pretty fast, too, since we have five hundred soldiers at work on it. The roadbed through the gluba will take two months; we have a hundred local people working on it. I’d like to assign a few hundred men to gravel the roads along the two rivers in the northern basin, too, in early fall.”

“Pédru says his people have a route over the ridge to Khɛrmdhuna,” said Chris. “I think they may be blazing it or even clearing it.”

“Really?” Pɛrku was interested in that. “The gluba route floods a lot. I’d rather have another route around, even if it is slower.”

“Send a couple horsemen to Khɛrmdhuna and ask for a guide to return along the new route,” suggested Chris. “I’ll write a letter of introduction.”

“That would help.”

Déolu looked at the others gathered around the table. “I don’t know what we would have done without all of you. You’ve launched Bɛllɛdha onto a new life.”

“There’s a long way to go, still, and you’ll have to go most of the distance yourself,” said Chris. “The hardest part will be the fall, because the visiting doctors and teachers will leave and the local people won't be able to replace them fully.”

“True, but by then the reconstruction of the houses will be going strong, so the city will look better. And we’ll have much better gravel roads, the city will have functioning sewers and water fountains, we’ll have telephones, the bank will be better than ever, the génadɛma will be much stronger, we’ll have a lot more people able to read and write . . . it’ll be much better. I am sure of that.” He looked at Chris. “Lord Kristobéru, what do you get out of all this?”

Kandékwɛs smiled. “Yes, Lord, pray tell us.”

Chris glanced at Kandékwɛs. He had long suspect that Kandékwɛs was jealous of him or perhaps felt threatened by him. As the Queen’s son in law, any answer Chris gave was guaranteed to go to the top. Chris looked back at Déolu. “You mean other than serving Esto and His Will, of course. I wouldn’t discount that. Other than that, I have gained. We have found a dozen possible students for the génadɛma and Medical School, and I think there may be government scholarships to cover the cost of their educations. We do not profit from that, but it covers our living costs. Even if we have to cover some of their educational costs ourselves, the reputation of our génadɛmas and gendhas are strengthened. The city will need several dozen telephones at fifty dhanay each, and Amos will make some money off of that. Mitru is making some money off of passenger and cargo traffic and construction. The Miller family will sell concrete, gravel sifting equipment, and dozens of other items, and they are part of our family, too. And we see that the Queen herself is now more supportive of the new knowledge and the new

healing, so we have gained there as well." Chris waved a finger at Déolu. "But you ask the wrong question, my Lord. Don't ask what we will do when our actions benefit the entire world and benefit us at the same time. Ask what we will do when an action that benefits the world hurts us. I hope we would do what is right for the world, but I can't promise you that, Lord."

Déolu smiled slightly. "Well spoken."

Kandékwɛs was not so easily impressed. "How many Bahá'ís have you made here, my Lord Kristobéru?"

"None, my Lord. Many people have asked the medical staff and the teachers about us, and they have told people we are Bahá'ís. People have asked us what a Bahá'í is and we have answered their questions. But we have held no meetings to introduce people to our ideas. It would not be right to teach our Bahá'í customs at the same time we are serving people, especially sick people. It would be an improper motivation and an unfair advantage. But many people now know us, and we will come back to Bɛllɛdha some time when we are not running a hospital or a school, and then we will hold meetings. The city already had two or three Bahá'ís. People will have the chance to hear and to ask questions. I assume that will not be objectionable to the Lord here?"

Déolu shook his head. "Not objectionable. I think this is an example of putting common interests over your own, my Lord."

The next day the Mennea family and clinic moved to Sumiupɛrakwa or "Sumi Bridge," so named because the village of a thousand souls was located where an ancient span crossed the Jɛrnstisér or "Sandy River." It was located in a big, sandy basin rich with pine

trees. Wheat grew poorly there, so the traditional local food had been oats and rye; in the last year, potatoes from Mɛlwika had been introduced and had begun to sweep the area, for they grew well and were nutritious. Sumiupɛrakwa didn't have a school yet, but the local merchant family headed by a man named Déru had sent four people to take classes at various génadɛmas and had even invested in a sawmill. So it wasn't cut off from development.

Many people from the region's other three villages came to see the Réjé; some of the inhabitants of the new Fish Eryan Village of Jɛrkɛnta came as well. Because of the Queen's endorsement, the clinic was overwhelmed with far more patients than it could handle. Dr. Lua raised the delicate question with Lord Kandékwɛs that the clinic had provided eyeglasses and dental fillings for free in Bɛllɛdha because the costs had been covered by the winter fundraiser to help the city, but no such pool of funds existed for the Jɛrnstisér region. He spoke to the Queen and she authorized a royal grant of one thousand dhanay for them. It was spent in six days.

Four of Mɛlwika's advanced undergraduates arrived to give adult literacy classes—the génadɛma would give them credit for it—and with the Réjé's endorsement the classes soon had two hundred teenagers and adults in them. The student teachers planned to stay an entire month to complete the course.

The Réjé departed for Néfa after three days, pleased by what she saw. As the week drew to a close, Chris and the clinic prepared to move on. Their last evening in town, Lord Yimu and the merchant Déru ate supper with the family.

"We are still considering all the costs of these different . . . *things,*" said Yimu to Chris. "We are a poor region and a poor village. We don't have the resources of Ora or Mɛlwika."

"My Lord, again and again I have seen that the small areas have advantages over the large areas. The small areas know they are behind and therefore they will try new things that the cities think they don't need. There is no other village of a thousand people on this world that paid for its own sawmill. The exception is Mɛddwoglubas, but it is the exception that proves what I am saying: it was a small, poor town in a small region wedged between two larger regions with cities. Mɛddwoglubas is the most advanced region on this world after Mɛlwika."

"The most?" asked Yimu, startled.

Chris nodded. "Indeed. Ora has a bigger génadɛma, but only because Lord Mitru pours money into it. Ora has a bigger manufacturing facility, but its steam wagons are still not as good as Mɛlwika's and the facility loses money. Mɛddwoglubas has the best hospital. It has the most people who can read and write, after Mɛlwika. And it is the most innovative; it has produced clocks, power looms, cotton gins, and now sewing machines. It is most advanced in the sense of being the area where the local people are doing new things on their own."

"I see," said Yimu. "And we have started to do things as well."

"But that gets us back to costs," said Déru. "Mitru Transportation provided lots of local transportation while the Réjé was here. Mitru himself came to me and offered to transport logs to the saw mill."

“At least he didn’t bring a portable sawmill here,” said Chris. “Mitru is my son’s brother in law. He’ll probably want to station one steam wagon here. There are five villages in the region, including Jɛrkɛnta. Three are on the Royal Road. I suspect he’ll set up a schedule to connect the villages together everyday or every other day and use the steam wagon to plow, harrow, or move cargo the rest of the time.”

“But I want to do that,” objected Déru. “I told him I didn’t want him to move logs for me; I wanted to move them myself!”

“Well, if you want my advice, it is this,” said Chris. “Make an agreement with Mitru for him to run a steam wagon here for six months using local people. Then take over the operation. Because he knows how to train people to maximize profits with the steam wagon.”

“I’m sure we can figure it out without him,” objected Yimu. “Besides, when we ask for a steam wagon he can’t always provide it, and once it didn’t show up at all.”

Chris nodded. “Demand is growing very fast. I’m sure you can figure out how to be efficient with the steam wagon. But there’s a reason Mitru owns over twenty steam wagons and will soon have over thirty. Most local Lords use their steam wagon for hunting trips, or if they are wealthy they have a really, fancy, expensive coach built for them in Mɛddoakwés so that the steam engine can pull something. Did you see the royal party leave town the other day? There were twenty steam wagons pulling fancy coaches. Two or three were very long; they were rolling houses for wealthy families. Mitru has started renting steam wagons *from* these families because they use them so rarely. He has figured out how to use them efficiently. And he is wealthy as a result.”

“My Lord, I have no interest in coaches,” replied Yimu, a bit insulted. “The taxes I get mostly go back to my people.”

“Then invest them in schools and a clinic, and let Déru buy steam wagons.”

“I would do that, but a clinic costs thousands. So does a school.”

“Start small. Build a school with two classrooms on a lot where you can add classrooms as needed. Same with a clinic; at first all you need is four rooms. I’ll see whether we can find someone to come here in the fall to serve as a teacher. It is possible. You’ll need to pay him at least five hundred dhanay, though, and let him operate a post office and a photography studio. He could do them at the school.”

“Okay,” said Yimu. “But what about a clinic?”

“I’ll see whether we can find a nurse or a medical student to come here two days a week. If you want more than that you’ll have to send someone to Mɛlwika for training. I suggest you send two; one can study to be a teacher and the other, a nurse or doctor.”

“But what if someone has a serious illness?” persisted Yimu.

“You’ll have a telephone soon. Call Mɛddwoglubas Hospital or Mɛlwika Hospital to get advice and put the patient on the first steam wagon. Lua can leave some medications and some simple advice about them before we go.”

“She did train my daughter a bit,” said Déru. “My son went to Néfa Génadɛma over the winter and he’s still too young to go into the business, so he could teach the school.”

“That’s a start,” said Chris. “Didn’t the Réjé and Lord Kandékwɛs talk to you about planning?”

“Is this planning?” asked Yimu. “The Réjé said the four of us Lords should get together and plan, and then Kandékwɛs talked to us about his plan: two génadɛmas, four géndhas, two hospitals, a high school, a fire department, thirty dɛkɛnt of concrete roads, a hundred dɛkɛnt of gravel roads, iron foundries, saw mills . . . it made our heads spin!”

Chris chuckled. “The Arjakwés Valley has ten times the population and twenty times the money of the Jɛrstisér. Make small plans you can accomplish in three to nine months only. Take small steps. If you try to run, you’ll just stumble and fall.”

“That’s the best advice we’ve gotten all week,” complained Yimu.

The next day, the family headed back to Bɛllɛdha, then braved the rushing waters of the gluba to enter the Lɛpawsdhuba or Northern Basin. From Sumiupɛrakwa to Khɛrmdhuna was four hours, but the latter was eight time zones behind the former, so they reached their destination at dawn. As they approached, people poured out of their houses to see the two chuffing steam monsters and their large canvas-covered trailers.

As soon as Chris saw Pédru, he leaned out of the side door of the lead trailer and waved. “Hail, Honored Pédru!” He jumped to the ground, wary of possible archers.

“Hail, Lord Kristobéru! You and your family are welcome!”

“Thank you.” He turned and helped Liz, Mary, and Lua down.

“Where’s Honored Dhoru?”

“He’s out with the survey. He’ll join us in a few days. His wife and children are here with us.”

The priest Jonu arrived, then two deacons, and by then the crowd had grown to over two hundred people; everyone in the village. Pédru led the Mennea family and the

nurses around and introduced them to dozens of people, and everyone enthusiastically greeted each other. The energy was electric; the village rarely had any visitors, but it never had a dozen! The steam wagon drivers came out as well and were greeted like kings. They began to look around for a place to set up the tents, for both trailers had several.

"We can accommodate all of you in houses," began Jonu.

"Thank you, honored priest, but we have tents, if there is a place we can set them up."

"A place to set up tents?" said Pédru, looking around. "All our ground here is either cold and damp, or hot, and sometimes the hot is damp as well!"

"We have all day; we can build some stone platforms," suggested Matéu. "Or you can set them up here in the plaza." He pointed to the paved area in front of the church.

"We have been expecting you," said Pédru. "We have told people about your new medicine and I have shown them my glasses. Many people want to come to you."

"Excellent," said Lua.

"We want to hold a mass of celebration," said Jonu. "But first we must give you hospitality."

"And we have hospitality for you as well," replied Chris. He looked at the plaza. "Shall we bring the things here?"

"This is where we celebrate," said Pédru.

"Then we will bring things here," said Chris. They went back inside the trailer and came out with boxes of oranges and bananas, fruits the villagers had barely heard of. They began boiling water to make gallons of tea. Meanwhile, the villagers brought bread,

cheese, milk, and yogurt, and began to make delicious cheese toast. As everyone ate together, they relaxed. Groups of villagers began to sing. Individuals walked up to the Menneas to ask questions.

After an hour, with more people beginning to arrive from nearby hamlets, Jonu rose and invited everyone inside the church for mass. The Menneas went in as well and Chris was startled to recognize the old Latin mass from before Vatican II, transported to Éra. It was poorly pronounced, but recognizable, and the energy of the congregation moved him greatly. When the congregation recited certain parts Chris struggled along with them, which immensely impressed those close by. He declined to take communion, though seated in the front he could tell from the aroma that the wine had been replaced by locally brewed beer; no doubt the fruit of the vine was largely unavailable and exotic.

When the mass ended and they all walked back outside, they found the plaza filled with twice as many arrivals as the village population, and more were streaming in by the minute. When Chris came out, Jonu was there to shake hands with everyone and he immediately shook both of Chris's hands. "I see you knew the words. Can you explain them to us? We aren't sure of the meaning of some parts."

"And when did Jesus give them? Pablu never explained that part very clearly, and the followers of Widumaj ask whether they were part of the hymns of Jésu."

"I remember the words from when I was a little boy, but I never studied to be a priest, so I am sorry, I do not know the meaning of some of them either. If we sit down and go over the words, though, I can probably explain many of them. You see, my language from childhood was very close to Latin, so I often understand Latin, and I did

study a little of it in school many years ago. As for hymns of Jésu: he did not give hymns the way Widumaj did. He taught using stories instead."

"Can you tell us some of them?" asked Matéu.

"I might remember some of them."

"Do you have the entire Biblia?" asked Jonu, excited. "Because that is what we really need."

"We might be able to get you the Biblia," replied Chris. "Right now, we do not have a copy of it. But we have ways of getting copies."

"But you are not Kristanɛ, right?" asked Jonu. "If not, why do you know so much about Jésu?"

"That's a long story, and perhaps we can tell it to you. In brief, after Pablu came here, we believe Esto—or perhaps I should say Dio, as you say—sent another great teacher like Jésu to Gɛdhéma. Many Kristanɛs have accepted this good news."

"Another son?" asked Jonu, puzzled by the very idea.

"This is Bahu and his Bahá'í customs," said Matéu, hesitating. He had heard about it in Bɛllɛdha.

"Indeed. We are Bahá'ís. But since we have lived much of our lives in Kristanɛ places, we understand the customs of Jésu as well."

"Then you can teach us," said Jonu. "We welcome more on Jésu. Do you have classes about him for us?"

"No, we have no classes on the customs of Jésu, Bahu, or anyone else. We have classes on health and healing, the new letters, the new numbers, and how to use them."

“You can use the church for classes,” said Jonu. “Indeed, you may want to spread out your teachers and use all six churches in the area. Each holds about three hundred people. I think almost everyone wants to come and hear from your people.”

Pédru, who had joined them outside the church door, nodded. “For five hundred years we have been cut off from the outside world, except for a merchant riding to Bɛllɛdha once or twice a month with a dozen horses bearing goods. But my trip to Bɛllɛdha showed me that the world had changed and is changing fast. We need to be part of the world, now. If we don’t, it’ll come to us anyway.”

“The tax man is coming for sure,” agreed Chris. “You already have many people who can read; this is an impressive advantage you have. If you can clear a route across the ridge to Bɛllɛdha so that steam wagons can get here directly, you will have better transportation. I am sure your people have things they can sell; I can see they are industrious. If you can send some to our génadɛma in Mɛlwika, they will return here able to serve as doctors and teachers, and I think they will be able to find the answers to your questions about Jésu as well.”

Reread and edited 5/22/13, 8/3/17, 11/6/24

161.

The Holy City

Thornton drove the rover very slowly through Isurdhuna's dense crowd. The annual sacred festival was underway, and steam wagons made it possible for more pilgrims to come than ever before; it was noticeably more crowded than last time he had attended two years earlier. Fortunately, a steam wagon arriving from Néfa, packed with more people than Thornton had ever seen on a passenger wagon before, had reached a major intersection right before him and Mitru himself was behind the wheel. He saluted his brother in law and proceeded ahead, clearing a space for the smaller rover and trailer. Thornton was amazed by the brand new vehicle, which resembled a bus; it had a radiator in front to cool and recycle the steam engine's water, a painted sheet metal exterior with real glass windows, and rows of seats inside.

A hundred meters down the North Branch Road there was a bridge over the Northern Rudhisér leading into the royal encampment. Thornton took a chance and turned in, and was relieved when the guard waved them in, partly because Colonel Rudhisuru was sitting in the passenger seat, wearing his army uniform. The royal encampment was huge; more Lords had brought their families to the sacred festival this year than ever before. Tents were separated by parking spaces for private steam wagons with fancy coaches attached, their utilitarian roofs piled high with everything that a mobile household needed. Thornton turned left and headed south across the encampment to the field between it and the North and West Branches of the Rudhisér; the rich green grass was being grazed by hundreds of horses, for many people still came the old

fashioned way. He drove around the camp quickly and headed for the back of the Stɛja, where the génadɛma and his family's camp were located.

He quickly spotted the latter: an eight by three meter trailer with wooden and canvas walls attached to a steam wagon, the latter with wooden blocks under its wheels to keep it in place. The trailer had doors in the front, rear, and on the left side. Off the front on the left was the tent for his father and mother; behind it was his father's private meeting tent, and beyond it was the dining tent, lined up with the left side door to the trailer. Beyond it and attached to the trailer's rear door was the kitchen tent and the two tents for servants, for they had brought two steam wagon drivers, a cook, a laundry woman, and a nanny. Off the front door on the right side was a tent for him, Lébé, and the two kids; behind it was a long tent for the survey team. To the right of their tent complex was a nearly identical complex for the clinic, with a tent for Lua next to the one for Thornton's family, one to house the doctors and nurses adjoining the tent for the survey crew, the clinic trailer in the middle, and the tent for ill patients on the other side of it.

As they approached the tent complex, a roar of applause went up from the Stɛja. Thornton glanced over, but the only thing he could see through the crowds was the Stɛja itself, partially enclosed by scaffolding for a major renovation funded by the Queen. "Kɛkanu must have just finished," said Rudhisuru, glancing up at the sun. "This is about the time they finish the entire cycle of hymns."

"It does take all day. I wonder whether we can get him to teach singing for the génadɛma."

"Really? Singing?"

"Mom wants to expand the arts program, now that we have a piano."

“He’s probably staying in the pavilion of Mitru of Ora, who patronizes him.”

“Maybe we’ll go talk to him. Tomorrow’s the pole dance, right?”

“Indeed. I participated in it once ten years ago, when I was just a teenager. I bled a lot and passed out, but I did see Esto.”

“You did?”

Rudhisuru nodded. “And a red deer; that’s where I got my name. You may have noticed the scars on my chest.”

“Were they from the pole dance? I figured you were wounded on the Sumi campaign.”

“No. The right hand scar is big enough to be a sword scar, but it resulted when the stick the rope was attached to tore through the flesh. I must have gone round and round the pole a hundred times, chanting the Hymn of Sacrifice . . . the next two days afterward were a real blur because of loss of blood and infection.”

“Are you going tomorrow?”

Rudhisuru scoffed. “Nah. I doubt it, anyway; I won’t be awake! We’ve been hiking in the mountains for a week! I want to wash, get plastered, and get laid!”

“Ah-hah,” said Thornton, trying not to sound judgmental. He knew that would be true of Rudhisuru and four or five other geologists, but maybe not three or four others. “I guess I’d better offer Yagu an alternative.”

“Yeah, he won’t go with us, but he’ll jump at the chance to have supper with your family.”

“You should be able to wash at the clinic. They should have a water heater and shower set up.”

“We’re counting on it, but you’ll have to replace the water; we won’t be in any shape to do it.”

Thornton scowled at that. He slowed and turned the rover into the long parking space between the two sets of tents, then parked.

They all climbed out of the rover and trailer and unloaded the tents and samples. Then Thornton headed for the trailer, for most likely Lébé was there.

He entered the long canvas-sided trailer. It had a corridor along the right side with a series of four rooms, each about two meters square, on the left. His father’s office was the third one back with wooden walls covered by sheet metal for security, with a safe welded to the steel floor beam under the desk. When he looked in Lébé was at the desk, typing a translation into Thornton’s laptop. She looked up and smiled. “You’re here! I didn’t hear the rover!”

“There’s a lot of noise outside!”

“That’s for sure!” She jumped up and they embraced and kissed, then kissed again.

“It’s soooo good to see you!”

“Good to see you, too. How are the kids?”

“They should be in father’s meeting tent with Korudé; you didn’t see them?”

“I came in from the other side.”

“Of course. They’re fine. Kalé can hold up her head now, and she smiled the other day!”

“I wish I had seen that.”

“Well, you had other priorities. How was the trip?”

“Pretty good. We took the Royal Road all the way to Long Lake and hiked down the remnants of the road to the water. The last one hundred vertical meters the ground was covered with lakebottom slime. Very slippery.”

“So the water’s dropped one hundred meters? Wow.”

“Long Lake has a gigantic gray bathtub ring of dead trees. We also hiked north along the top of the escarpment to sixty-three north, where the valley basically ended. If we had continued north another ten degrees—to seventy-three north—we would have reached Kherɱdhuna. Coming back, something went wrong inside the engine; the rover barely made it home.”

Really? Is it a serious problem?”

“I think so. Maybe the aliens can ship us some replacement engines; they’re really worn out and burned up by all the strain over the last few years.”

“Your dad should be here on the Néfa steam wagon today, by the way; he called to tell us.”

“Great! We were right behind the steam wagon as it came into town, and I saw Mitru driving, so he may show up here as well. How’s the translating?”

“We’re working on book six together and should have it wrapped up in another day or two. Grandma probably won’t need it, though; progress through the books is much slower than she had hoped. There’s no way she’ll get through Book Eight in another month.”

“She must be disappointed.”

"I was skeptical she could push people that fast, anyway. Besides, the point of the books is acquisition of skills, and they don't develop in a few weeks. Oh, by the way, did you see the big, fat envelope from Okpétu on your desk?"

"No. They must be the aerial photos of Long Lake. He promised some. I should look at them later."

She shook her head. "Not tonight, or even tomorrow. You need to spend time with me tonight. And I was thinking tomorrow you and I should go on a picnic or something. I want to get away from this horrendous crush of people."

"Not using the rover. It might strand us."

"Oh, damn! I want to get away." She turned to him and gave him another delicious, sexy kiss; he smiled and kissed her, too. Then she pushed him back. "You have to wash before I'll give you any more. You smell like a mountain goat."

"Okay." He headed out to find the kids. They were right where she said; Jalalu jumped all over daddy in excitement and Thornton picked them both up at once to hug them. He lingered as long as he could so that the geologists had finished washing because he did not relish showering with them around—his circumcision was too weird on Éra—then he heard the sound of voices and his father and Mitru stepped into the tent.

"Ah, here you are!" Chris said. "Mitru said he saw you!"

"I saw him, too. Wow, that's quite a fancy new steam wagon you have!"

"It's a *kwapi buso,*" corrected Mitru, a *steam bus.*

"*Buso?* Oh, a bus. It *did* look like a bus."

He nodded. "That's why I'm here; it's the debut. The eight meter trailer has sheet metal sides and roof, with heavy glass windows and an emergency door in back. It can

seat one hundred people, though I've been hauling one hundred twenty in it to Isurdhuna each time! Demand is through the roof! The cab is really nice, too; very comfortable. It has one of the new Model D engines; smaller and more compact than ever, it uses coke and doesn't need a stoker because the driver can pull a lever to get more coke in it, and it has a radiator to cool and recycle water, so it needs water only once a week or so."

"No stoker? Wow, that'll save money."

Mitru nodded, delighted. "And this festival is making money for me like you wouldn't believe. I hauled 600 people here yesterday, 800 the day before, 1,000 the two days before that, 500 today. . . altogether it'll be about 4,000. I'm making four runs a day between here and Néfa with the steam bus. I've got a driver taking the bus back to Néfa right now to make one more run because there are still a hundred people waiting to get here! I've got three steam wagons per day heading clockwise around the sea and two counterclockwise via Bɛllɛdha. Four more just run up and down the valley to haul people here every day from around Kɛrda. In the two weeks of this festival I'm going to bring in maybe 15,000." He smiled.

"Well, you need to invest in thicker seats," said Chris. "And your dad needs to make these trailers with heavier springs. But otherwise, I'm impressed, Mitru. The bus is pretty nice."

"It'll be a huge difference in the winter, too, because we can route some of the engine heat into it. By then I'm supposed to have four of them. That's where the fifteen thousand's going. I'll be selling a lot of used steam engines and switching to the Model Ds as much as possible. Maybe the grange can buy some."

"Maybe. We need three more, and used steam wagons would be cheaper."

“How’s Néfa?” Thornton asked.

“Thanks for asking, son. Pretty good. I’ve been giving intensive classes on accounting practices for the last week. Every night I go down to ɛjnu’s, where mom and grandma are staying. They’re fine and staying in Néfa for another week, then they’ll head for Ora. At that point I’m headed to Mɛlwika for a while; business is piling up, and you can do only so much by post and telephone. How was your trip?”

“Great; we surveyed the northeastern shore of Long Lake in detail and spotted another copper deposit, though it’s too remote to work, right now. But the rover engine’s in bad shape. I think a piston has failed. I was planning to call Amos about it.”

“He and May and the kids will be here in two days, so maybe he can bring some parts along.”

“Oh, they’re coming?”

Chris nodded. “They wanted to get away, and Isurdhuna and the Sacred Festival is the place to be. Lua’s going home after they get here to see Behruz and the kids.”

“It’s been a long time; eight weeks,” agreed Thornton. “Who’s running the clinic?”

“Dr. Mitrɛtu. He arrives tomorrow with his family. They’ll stay with the clinic for the next six weeks, which should take it back to Mɛlwika when the Queen returns to her palace. She’s been plugging it all the time, now, and demand has gone through the roof! Ornu can’t make eyeglasses fast enough; he’s hired three more people to help. You need to call Philos, we’ve emailed a special request for dental amalgam and medicines and haven’t heard from them.”

“Who’s paying for all this?”

"The Queen! She considers the clinic part of her entourage. It makes sense; it's the most concrete thing a monarch can do, to bring health to her subjects. Never mind it's costing her a hundred dhanay per day. It's helping us a lot because eyeglasses are now being manufactured in larger numbers, so the cost will drop by a third. The acceptance of the new medicine is permanently strengthened."

"It's amazing," said Thornton. He smiled at Mitru. "If you want to see Lébé, she's in the trailer."

"Yes, I was wondering. I hope you all can accommodate me tonight."

"No problem," said Chris. "We've got plenty of room."

"I'd better go wash," said Thornton. "Lébé said I smell like a mountain goat."

"Oh, is that what it is?" said Chris. "Better hurry, supper should be ready pretty soon."

Thornton nodded and headed for his tent to grab clean clothes, a towel, and soap, then walked to the clinic's shower. The locker room atmosphere was diminishing; the geologists were almost done washing. The steam wagon's fire was stoked and blazing to make the boiling water, which was directed from the engine to a shower head and mixed there with a large amount of cold water. He washed fast—there wasn't much water left and the clinic crew was beginning to show up to wash as well—and headed back to the dining tent in time for supper.

They had a grand meal, with Mitru and Yagu as guests. The Christian felt extremely out of place at a huge festival dedicated to Widumaj, but at the same time was fascinated by the crowd, which was larger than anything he could have ever imagined before. Mitru was intrigued by the fellow, who was fascinated to hear Mitru's father was

a Christian; an inactive one, but a Christian nonetheless. They had quite a conversation. As it wound down, Dr. Lua showed up for supper.

"Wow, everyone's here! Sorry I didn't come sooner," she said. She sat and pulled the bowl of stew over to her bowl. "How's grandma?"

"Oh, fine. Her energy has been good, but she's not getting through the books as fast as she wants," responded Chris.

"And ɛjnu?"

Chris glanced at the other guests and lowered his voice. "About usual. Mother's been trying to talk to him, with little success, I think."

Lua shook her head. "And how are you?"

"Pretty good. I still get tired in late afternoons. The ride here was really bumpy and I got very little rest, even though Mitru let me sit up front with him."

"That gave you a little more space, at least."

"How are you?"

Lua shook her head. "Exhausted, and I'm not done yet."

"I see the Queen's talks increased business," said Thornton.

Lua nodded. "More than we could have imagined. Lujruktu is here to help, so we have two physicians. He's gotten really good and fast with the dental drill; I think he does thirty fillings a day! And I've trained a nurse to do optometry. She passes out twenty-five or thirty pairs of glasses per day, thanks to Her Majesty's generosity. But the number of people coming is twice what we can handle. I've been seeing forty patients per day, and we're admitting six or eight of them to the hospital. A lot are coming with problems we can't help with, like deformed limbs. If we rebreak the bones and set them, there's no

guarantee they'll get proper care after we leave in two weeks, so we're not doing anything."

"Are you going to the other cities with the royal party?" asked Thornton.

"The clinic is, yes, but I'm going back to Mɛlwika, thank God, for two weeks. I'm exhausted, burned out, at wits end. I need a rest. When the royal party moves from Néfa to Ora, Behruz and the kids will come along. Since the medical services are free as long as we travel with the royal party, we think a lot of people will come to us, even in towns that have had medical facilities for some time. What are you doing, anyway?"

Thornton looked at Lébé. "We're planning to go back to Mɛlwika after we finish up here. I suppose the census team is done. The geological survey needs two more weeks to survey the mountains south and east of here along the Glugluba."

"And you'll be done?" Lua was impressed.

"Well, there are still a lot of little gaps, and we skipped Pɛnkakwés entirely in order to go straight to Bɛllɛdha. I suppose we'll concentrate on Pɛnkakwés in the fall. We almost hiked to Khɛrmdhuna, but never got quite that far."

"How's Rudhisuru's leg?"

"You need to take a look. I think he needs physical therapy; the leg hurts him so much, he spent half his time hanging out at the rover when the rest of us were out hiking."

"It was a bad injury."

"I'm taking Yagu around the crowd," said Mitru, interrupting. "And showing him a good time."

“Good; enjoy,” said Lua. “By the way, Yagu, Isaféla will be visiting here tomorrow. She’s Catholic.”

“Really? Thornton told me about her!”

“I don’t think she can help you much,” continued Lua. “She was very young and didn’t know very much when she was taken from Gɛdhéma. But both of you will enjoy meeting each other.”

Mitru and Yagu headed out of the tent. Lébé summarized her translating work and her plans to talk to several local storytellers about her book. Finished with their stew, they began to drink tea. Korudé took the children off so that they would go to bed with her, so that Thornton and Lébé would have privacy that night.

They were finishing up when visitors arrived: Bidhu and Widéstu. “Ah, welcome, welcome!” exclaimed Chris. “Please come and have tea with us!”

“Thank you,” replied Widéstu. “Is your trip to Nefa going well?”

“Yes, with more people taking the accountancy training course than expected. We’re taking a break for several days because half the class is coming here. Bidhu, your work must be finished?”

Bidhu nodded. “Indeed, we have visited every village in Kɛrda, which has 25,793 people in 31 towns and villages. All we have left are the Tutanɛ tribes and the Pɛnkakwés. Her Majesty can anticipate an increase in taxes—maybe ten percent—because of systematic underestimation of the amount owed.”

“Like everywhere else,” agreed Chris. “It would be nice if some of that went to development.”

Widéstu scoffed. “We’ll be lucky to continue getting what we’ve been getting. That’s why we’re here, Chris. Her Majesty has been in rather intense discussions over the last few afternoons with the Lords of Ora, Néfa, and of some of the ‘old houses.’ They had been meeting without her and went to her with a long list of demands. Kandéwkɛs attended as well, I think at the Queen’s insistence.”

“Demands?” That surprised Chris.

“The word is not too strong. They didn’t speak at the Grand Court; I think they weren’t sure of their support. And they are unhappy with the Consultative Assembly; they demanded that it be abolished. She rejected that, but she did agree that the Regional Lords could meet in their own chamber and could vote separately. That will make it harder to get development projects approved.”

“That’s too bad. What Regional Lords?”

“Mɛddoakwés, Bɛllɛdha, Néfa, Isurdhuna, Ora, Mɛddwoglubas—that was interesting—and Tripola. She also decreed that the other chamber be expanded. But more important, they demanded a limit on schooling, or at least on the funds for schooling. Her response to that, after negotiations, was quite interesting. The palace will pay for the schooling of all the boys in the Old Houses so that they acquire professions, but then they will receive no yearly allowance. That sounds good, but the army will immediately jump to get as much of that money as possible; army officers are the traditional profession of those boys. She also agreed to a cap on school registrations funded by the palace.”

“Really?” said Chris worredly.

“Ten percent of all children can acquire literacy, from the point of view of the palace. If Mɛlwika wants to fund more literacy than that for its people, no one will stop it,

but the palace won't subsidize it. That ties my hands in terms of supporting high schools; I can allocate some funds to them, but not much."

"On the other hand, a rural village could now have a school for ten percent of its students; that would be quite something."

"True. She also said ten percent of the boys who acquire literacy can go to génadɛma and the palace will support it. That's about a thousand students, but the aristocracy will get a lot of those slots."

"But is she promising to *pay* for a thousand students?"

"No. She's promising the palace won't aim for universal literacy; it is now official policy to oppose universal literacy. This really hits my ministry hard, Lord Chris. I am very discouraged, as you can imagine. Some members of my staff will be devastated."

"Of course. I'm sorry, Wérgéndu."

"I expressed grave concern to Her Majesty when she met with me a few hours ago. She was actually quite compassionate; I was afraid if I objected, she'd fire me. I think her position can still be influenced. Perhaps if you go to Kandékwɛs, the two of you can meet with her about this."

Chris considered that a moment. "Wérgéndu, ten percent literacy; how many students is that?"

He looked at Bidhu, who began to calculate. "Éra has 250,000 people," he began. "The ages of 5 through 20 represent 2.5% of our population for each year of age. So there are 6,250 children aged five, for example."

“So we’re talking about a policy aiming for 625 five year olds in school,” said Chris. “For ten years of schooling, that’s 6,250 people. It’ll be a decade before we get to that level anyway.”

“But how many genadɛma students are we talking about? It sounds like 250 or so. We’re at that level now.”

“But if that money is going to the Old Houses, that’s a lot of royally funded students we don’t have now! Right now the Ministry of Education is not supporting 250 students; more like 50. I’d go to the Queen and seek supplemental funding to support 200 more students!”

Widéstu scoffed again. “Lord, we have to fight this. This is a disaster.”

“Perhaps, but there is no reason to stop at ten percent. If they give ten percent, let’s ask for eleven. Don’t ask for universal literacy now, Widéstu; it scares the Lords terribly. Ten percent apparently doesn’t scare them. That’s a victory, isn’t it? Ten years ago what was the level of literacy here; one per thousand?”

“If that.”

“Widéstu, you’ve seen the coupons in the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs,*” said Lua. “That has done more to push up literacy in Mɛlwika than anything else. People see that reading saves them money. People will pay to learn how to read. The palace’s role is better if it is supportive. If the palace tries to pay for everything, people will wait until they can take a free class, rather than committing some of their own money.”

“I agree, but the policy needs to be universal literacy!”

“I agree,” said Chris. “Universal literacy is a principle. But it starts as a dream before it becomes a policy. It has never been a policy of the palace and now ten percent literacy is.”

“The palace tolerated the principle.”

“They tolerated the dream. Now they have a policy,” persisted Chris.

“My Lord, talk to Kandékwɛs.”

“I will, I will.” Chris glanced at Bidhu, wishing the man would weigh in.

“I think you should talk to Estoiyaju, also,” injected Bidhu suddenly.

“Really? I’ve never felt comfortable approaching him. He . . . does not feel like a friend.”

“Well put. He is an enemy of yours, Lord. But Estoiyaju loves efficiency. When his staff take your courses, they come back with ideas like alphabetizing records and other administrative tricks. And they are more efficient. They also get more uppity, but Estoiyaju is good at yelling at people; he puts them back in their place. If they come to him on their knees, literally, he listens and makes changes. Most of Estoiyaju’s staff—the palace staff—are from the Old Houses or are royal relatives. If they take your courses, eventually you have a huge lever.”

“Interesting.” Chris nodded. “What about your offices, honored sirs? I am not altogether certain how royal offices work, so I’m not sure what to suggest to Estoiyaju. But perhaps we can come up with some courses that would help your offices.”

“My office is quite efficient!” replied Bidhu, taken aback.

“And mine is not typical because all my staff are taking courses,” added Widéstu.

“Then let me suggest this: when we are all back home in a few weeks, come to Mɛlwika for a morning and I will show you how my operations work. There’s the génadɛma, Mennea Associated Businesses—they use a common pool of accountants—and the Mɛlwika branch of the bank. We can review their operations and maybe you can tell me what would help the palace.”

“I’ll do that,” agreed Bidhu.

“Alright,” agreed Widéstu. “This was not what I had in mind when I came here!”

“Don’t worry, honored Widéstu, your efforts to further education here will go down in history,” said Chris. “When education really does reach ten percent of the people, it will not stop there; it will continue. Ten percent is a victory for us right now.” He pointed to some chairs. “I apologize that in the distraction of our conversation, I never invited you to sit and have tea with us.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Widéstu. He said it rather absent mindedly; he was still digesting Chris’s comments. They turned to a discussion of the festival and the crowds. After half an hour, the two guests rose and left.

Lébé rose to leave the table and eyed Thornton as well, but then she added, “This situation worries and disturbs me, so your comments have helped calm me.”

“Good,” replied Chris. “But I am not sure what this means. I suspect the Queen has calmed our critics by giving them something we never expected to achieve quickly. But if she were to insist on the order, it might mean that we already have too many students and would have to start turning them away.”

“I can’t imagine the Queen would want that,” said Lua. She shrugged. “But you never know.”

"Kandékwɛs will have an opinion, I'm sure."

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The day-long cycle of chanting the Hymns of Widumaj represented the culmination of the festival. The next day was the pole dance or the circle dance—it was called both things—by 150 young male volunteers, who had been praying and preparing for the previous four days. Thousands formed great circles around the six poles and watched them dance around, first in one direction, then in the other. Sometimes dancers held the rope in a hand, but more often the rope was attached to a stick thrust through the skin of the chest. The dancers chanted the Hymn of the Sacrifice in unison in a powerful mix of pain and ecstacy, and the audience joined in as well. It was an immensely powerful experience for everyone present; Thornton was very impressed and moved, in spite of the blood. Lua, however, had to bandage the bleeding wounds of sixty dancers and was horrified. It was an exhausting day for the clinic, which took care of no other health matters that day.

That marked the end of the Festival. The next day thousands turned to the steam wagons. Mitru had brought twenty-five of them for the occasion and managed to transport 3,000 people out of the Kɛrda valley and ten thousand people to their homes in the valley in one day. Twelve of the steam wagons were express vehicles to cities as far away as Mɛlwika. The impressive feat of organization earned him ten thousand dhanay in one day.

The next day, Chris headed back to Néfa on the still-crowded passenger wagons in order to resume business classes and to see Liz and Mary. On the fourth afternoon of

his return he was walking from the génadɛma to the marketplace to buy some fruit for Liz when he encountered Lord Albanu on the street.

"Hail, Lord Albanu," he exclaimed.

"Hail, Lord Kristoféru," replied Albanu, who kept walking, but then he stopped. "How is your business class going?"

"Quite well, Lord. I now have fifteen local students and ten more are coming every day from Ora, and all are enthusiastic. Most are from merchant families and have a head for business."

"Good. You're teaching accounting?"

"Double entry accounting, keeping proper business records, contracts, making a budget, setting a profit margin on something, marketing things . . . many, many skills."

"Impressive."

"If you are looking for anyone with these skills, there is a bright young man who may be available . . . Brébalu, or maybe I really should say Fréfalu according to the speech of the western shore. He is the second son of Mitru the tanner of this fair city. He is very quick to learn, but has no place in his father's business."

"I know his father, a good man, hard working . . . I have probably met Fréfalu as well. I have been thinking lately that I could use someone to help manage my money, and now that I have three steam wagons it is hard to plan where each one should go every day."

"I think he would be a good choice. He's eighteen and responsible."

"Thank you, Lord. I'll come by and meet him tomorrow at lunchtime, then."

"I hope you are well. Did you enjoy the Festival?"

“Indeed, indeed. It was the largest ever. Quite a challenge! But it was good for this city as well, because many people came through here on their way to Isurdhuna.”

“Indeed true. The steam wagons will bring more and more people every year.”

“They will. The roads must be improved. That must be the priority for the development money, I think. Everyone benefits from moving around more quickly.”

Kandékwɛs had told Chris that roads had been the other subject of the Lords who had met with the Réjé; they had wanted less money spent on education and more on roads, as the latter benefited everyone. “I think you will be very impressed by the road to Mɛddoakwés, my Lord. I rode on it just three weeks ago and it is noticeably smoother than it had been, and steam wagons can move on it faster. I understand the army plans to turn to the Isurdhuna Road next year and will improve it to a very high degree.”

“I understand that to be the plan, also. Even better for Néfa.”

“I hope, My Lord, that with this new plan to teach ten percent of this world’s young men how to read and write, that Néfa will expand its schools? Have you heard of our high school, in the Arjakwés Valley?”

“I have heard of it; Kandékwɛs told me. I see no reason to aim for ten percent of the young men here to learn the letters, but perhaps five percent, or three percent. It is clear that we need doctors, nurses, lawyers, accountants, record keepers, and that most businessmen need to read and write. So I am not opposed to a Néfa High School, my Lord, or to modest expansion of my génadɛma.”

Chris inwardly smiled; if five percent of the region’s children went through grade eight, that was three hundred children. “Perhaps, then, I should talk to Awskandu about the matter. He may have suggestions on how we can plan for the future.”

Albanu did not seem pleased with that, but he was not angry. “Very well, he should bring me a plan,” he grudgingly agreed.

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Meetings

It was sweltering hot in the old castle perched on the rock above Mɛddwoglubas. The fort's only redeeming feature was that it was high enough to catch a pretty good breeze blowing off the sea, which was still invisible, thirty kilometers beyond the western horizon. When the guards admitted Chris Mennea into the structure, he immediately felt the breeze blow through the gate and secretly envied the Réjé and her court for having occupied the region's génadɛma and school. It was arguably the best accommodation available to her on the western shore after the royal palace in Ora, where she had stayed two weeks, after a week in Néfa, two weeks in Isurdhuna, a week in Sumiupɛrakwa, and two weeks in Bɛllɛdha. In some ways it was better even than Ora because Lord Estodhéru had spared no expense to modernize the reconstructed fort; all the rooms (which were now classrooms) had electric lights, and the bathrooms were equipped with twenty-five flush toilets and ten showers with hot water. Only the main section of the palace in Mɛddoawkés had that. A clocktower even tolled out the hours.

Chris was on his way to meet with Estoiyaju; finally after a month of planning and requesting, he had gotten a meeting time with the Queen's secretary. The guards told him to go to room 105—they all had numbers—and Chris knew from experience it was one of the larger classrooms. But when he got there he saw Estoiyaju was still busy; the Réjé was holding court with all the Lords of the region. Estoiyaju was seated next to the throne, carefully taking notes. When Chris stood in the doorway and looked in Estoiyaju

saw him and beckoned him in, so he entered and joined Lord Kandékwɛs and his wife, Lady Awstɛr, seated in the back.

Just as he sat, the Réjé rose. "My Lords, I am immensely impressed by your ability to work together. I know of no region that has actually drawn up a plan *together*. In three days of meetings, you have done more than I would have expected of any place; more than any of the other regions in my presence this summer, also. Furthermore, with your thriving industry and now the productive silver mine up in your mountains, Lɛwéspa is relatively wealthy. Several times during the various reports you gave me, Lords used the word 'poor.' You are not a poor region. Based on the latest tax figures, relative to your small population, only the Arjakwés pays more in taxes. So I call upon you to take one last step and make Lɛpawsa a true region, like those around Ora, Néfa, Tripola, and Isurdhuna. My Lords, I call on you to erect a temple to Esto here in Mɛddwoglubas. Call priests to live here among you and bring you the benefits of sacrifice. Esto will reign down blessings on Lɛwéspa like you have never seen before.

"I am not calling for the establishment of a royal garrison here. You have peace and safety. But Lɛwéspa needs the blessings of Esto. I pray you will match my generosity in supporting such a temple with generosity of your own."

She sat and there was silence—a slightly stunned silence—in the room. The region had been invited by Gawéstu himself to found a temple five years earlier and he had been unable to persuade them. It was an issue that stretched back a century.

Then Walkordu of Dɛlongagras, a village on the northern side of the Namɛldhuba or Namɛl Basin, raised his staff. He was one of the younger Lords and full of enthusiasm for new things. "Your Majesty, your call fills my heart with love for Esto and gratitude

for the wisdom he has brought us through the hymns sung by Widumaj. I hope we eventually are able to build many temples to Esto. But right now, I think Lɛwéspa can best spend its money on roads, schools, the hospital, and manufacturing. We have a graveled Royal Road and we were most excited to hear from your Majesty that the army will maintain it and improve it every year. But we need a gravel road sixty dɛkɛnt up the Namɛlisér past three villages now served by a crude dirt track, all the way to the new silver mine. Furthermore, the manager of the mine tells us he needs electricity. Graveling the road and installing a power and telephone line to those villages and to the mine will cost 75,000 dhanay; a huge sum for us. We are already sinking twenty thousand into the hospital, to provide free care for those who need it and expand the number of people with medical training. Your Majesty has made ten percent literacy a goal. In Dɛlongagras, which is not exceptional, fifteen percent of the adults can read some. Here in Mɛddwoglubas, five sevenths of the children go to school! Our schools cost us dearly, but are already yielding good results. I do not see how we can yet afford a temple."

Bidhanu, at sixty the region's oldest Lord, raised his staff next. Estoiyaju nodded. "Your Majesty, the people of Awswika, where I live, have sung the hyms of Widumaj for centuries, and the blessings have poured down on them. With steam wagons, we can get to Ora's grand temple in an hour; less time than it takes us to walk or ride a horse to Mɛddwoglubas. This region does not need its own temple and priests."

"My Lords, the benefits of a temple are incalculable, and by worrying about a few dhanay you are not worthy of the blessings that can follow," admonished the Queen, raising her voice slightly.

That got the attention of Estodhéru. He raised his staff to speak. “Your Majesty! We are not used to being in the position to serve Esto so quickly and easily, and we certainly would not turn down a chance to serve Him when your generosity is included. But I would add one condition, your Majesty: that the people of Mɛddwoglubas be free to build a Bahá’í temple as well.”

That startled everyone present, the local Lords not expecting a break in their united front. The Queen considered, then nodded. “Very well, no objection will come from me, for the main objection or permission must come from Esto, whose will will be made clear by this city’s fortunes. I want to see what temple to Esto you build and what residence for priests you raise up. I pledge thirty thousand dhanay for the temple and residence.”

“And I match your pedge, your Majesty,” replied Estodhéru.

That caused a stir and a lot of murmuring, then Lords in the room began to raise their staffs to pledge as well, typically three to five thousand. Lord Kandékwɛs pledged five thousand, so Chris raised his hand and did the same, knowing that probably meant he’d have to spend ten. In a minute another thirty thousand was pledged.

“This is generosity worthy of a great city,” said the Réjé, startled by the sudden turnabout. “I am grateful and offer five thousand more to your hospital as a gift to the region. When I was told by Lord Estodhéru that he was not the regional Lord, but the representative of the region by the choice of his fellow Lords, I was surprised. But I see it is true. It is typical for the 33% tax on harvests to be allocated 20% to me, 10% to the local Lord, and 3% to the regional Lord. With no regional Lord, that share has gone to me as well. But I hereby designate the three percent to go to whoever is chosen by the local

Lords to represent their interests, in order to benefit the people of this entire region. Let that arrangement reign from this day forward."

That generated even more surprise. Chris did a fast calculation. The region had 9,000 people; at six per household, that was 1500 households. If tax collection averaged 300 dhanay per household per year, that was a total of 450,000 dhanay. A tenth of that, or 45,000, now belonged to the region's Lords jointly. It was enough to give their association a significant budget. And Chris's estimate was probably low, because Mɛddwoglubas's manufacturing brought it significant additional wealth.

Estodhéru rose. "Your Majesty's generosity surprises us. We will try to be worthy of it." His voice broke a bit with emotion, and it was heart-felt; Lɛwespa had always felt isolated and ignored. Now they were a region equal to the others.

"Let us close with a hymn," suggested the Queen. Lord Trisunu of Lɛwéspadéma, whose village was the new one built by refugees from the rising sea in the Ora region, rose. His was the strongest, clearest chanting voice. He chanted the first half of the Hymn of Sacrifice in a most moving fashion.

When he was finished, the meeting began to break up. Chris turned to Lord Kandékwɛs. "I think I arrived for the most exciting part!"

"No question about that. Her Majesty has made this area a full region, and one without a regional Lord; a most unusual arrangement. They'll need the extra income to pay for the priests."

"They'll have to choose the priests carefully," said Chris. "Mɛlwika has two, and they are excellent additions to the city."

"Will you contribute to a Bahá'í temple here as well?"

"I probably will, my Lord."

Kandékwɛs nodded, as if he had to give permission, which he did not. "I am here to speak to Estoiyaju," Chris continued. "I spoke to Bidhu and Widéstu, when we were all in Isurdhuna, about skills their offices needed to become more efficient, and they knew of none. But last week they came to Mɛlwika for a day and I showed them how my offices run and how the bank is run, and then we went to Mayor Wɛranolubu and he explained how his office is set up. It gave them ideas for classes their staff could use. So I have summarized the ideas in a letter to Estoiyaju and he seems interested as well."

"Excellent. Widéstu told me of the ideas. Let's talk about them as well; my staff for the city and the region and the ministries I run for Her Majesty, such as Widéstu's Ministry of Education and Health, could all benefit. I suspect I would want my staff involved."

"Good. When will you be back in Mɛddoakwés?"

"After we visit Tripola; two and a half weeks. I haven't been home all summer." He shook his head about that.

"You've been missed, too. I'm here for just three days, but I'll be going back through Tripola after that. If I can, I'll stop by there to visit."

"Very well." Kandékwɛs nodded. Chris suspected it was better to keep the Lord Mayor fully informed, rather than wait. He shook hands with Kandékwɛs and Lady Awstɛr, then walked up front.

Her Majesty had already left the room, but Estoiyaju was talking to several aides. He saw Chris coming and raised his hand. "Give me a moment, Lord." Estoiyaju spoke rapidly in a low voice, another aide taking rapid notes in Eryan cursive. No instructions

were left unrecorded; that was the way Estoiyaju was. Chris studied the man for a moment; he was a bit short for an Eryan man, maybe five foot two or 155 centimeters, with a surprising amount of gray in his hair for his forty years. He still had about half of his teeth.

Finally Estoiyaju finished and rose. “You can follow me to my office,” he said and walked across the room and through the door to room 106. It was his office and apartment; it had a rug with a low table, a bed, an armoire full of clothes, a set of shelves groaning under books full of information, and another area where two secretaries could work. Another doorway in the rear side wall led to room 107, which was the Queen’s private quarters. Estoiyaju pointed to a rug with a low table. He sat cross legged behind the table and gestured to Chris to sit in front. It was something the gɛdhému was not so good at doing. “I read your letter,” said Estoiyaju. “Very interesting ideas. I am surprised you are still here in Mɛddwoglubas, though.”

“I return here this morning to meet with you and attend to some business, Honored. Otherwise, I’ve been in Mɛlwika and for three weeks. The heat has finally broken and it has become lovely.”

“I miss this time of year; I wish the royal travels hadn’t gotten so long this time. My family has gone home.”

“The schools are about to start up; the second harvest is coming in now, and it is a good one. The summer had pretty good rain and for once little irrigation was needed. I suppose you’ll be back in a little over two weeks?”

“That is the plan. By the way, did you hear that Bɛllɛdha is now connected to the telephone and electric lines?”

"Yes! It is marvelous news. The army is shipping their extra radio to Isurdhuna and I'm getting my other telephone back."

"Did you hear Her Majesty has authorized the army to upgrade the road to Isurdhuna next year so that it is the best road in the world, and to install a power and telephone line?"

"I heard the rumor, and Thornton helped Roktɛkɛstɛr survey improvements to the road where it descends into the Kɛrda Valley."

"It has now been approved. We will be releasing the news to the newspapers when we get to Tripola. Tax revenues this year have been higher than ever before. Every region except Bɛllɛdha has registered an increase. Isurdhuna's and Néfa's were the smallest; about five percent. Lɛwéspa's has grown thirty percent. So Her Majesty has been in a generous mood all summer."

Chris nodded. "It makes sense to reward such increases by giving more of the revenue to the areas producing it."

"Exactly, and to care for the people's health, and bring two judges along instead of one. We want a health clinic with the royal party next summer, also, a bigger one. Many members of the party benefited from it, as well as hundreds of local people. I have never been so free of pain from my teeth; it is surprising. The *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* had an excellent article about the traveling clinic last week; she was very pleased."

"The new woodcut of her was excellent also, I thought," added Chris.

Estoiyaju nodded. "Her Majesty was pleased. I can also tell you that we are looking into ways to get someone who can read in every village; there are advantages to it. We'll see what the fall tax revenues look like. Now, let's consider your letter."

Estoiyaju pulled it out. “Record keeping, filing, scheduling, producing tables and graphs, penmanship, creating forms and ledger books, composing letters and memos; what is a ‘mémo’?”

“It’s like a letter, but simpler. It doesn’t require greetings and chit-chat; it’s more like a form on which one just writes the information one needs to convey.”

“Ah. Not so courteous, but faster.” He nodded; he had the idea. “‘Telephone log and mémo’?”

“A telephone log is a book where you summarize every telephone conversation. The memo is a pad of paper with printing on it; you write down a message for someone else and pass it to them.”

“Good idea. Office furniture; what’s so special about that?”

“The furniture in an office makes it more efficient. It’s worth spending money on a desk and chair, for example, because the worker can do more. Proper lighting and heating is important. Cabinets of different types to store papers make it easier to find them. One can double or triple worker outputs in these ways, and make the work more accurate.”

“Lord, why do you want to offer these things to the palace?”

“As my letter says, it started with a conversation with Bidhu and Widéstu and was expanded by a conversation with Lord Kandékwɛs. If offices are run in many different ways, it is harder on everyone. I have been trying to develop office furniture, for example, for my génadɛma. If everyone wanted the same furniture it would be cheaper for everyone and everyone who works in an office would know how to use it. Merchants will adopt the new office standards as well; they will keep better records and that means

taxation can be more exact, or laws governing business can require them to keep track of more information."

"I am intrigued. And I can come to the génadɛma to see?"

"Of course. If this is approved, we will equip a large classroom with office furniture, so everyone can get used to using it."

"I saw five hundred dhanay for equipping classrooms; and if we don't want the furniture, we don't have to pay for it?"

"Correct, I'll ship it back to Mɛlwika and use it there. If you want to adopt it in all offices, though, you will need to spend about 30 to 50 dhanay on each worker."

Estoiyaju whistled. "That's a lot. But if it doubles what they can do, it is worth it. You said one dhanay per student for six hours of classes per week for two nine-week terms. We have 200 people working in the palace, including the army staff."

Chris nodded. "We're talking about 3,600 dhanay, then."

"But they should have different classes. We have twenty ministers in charge of offices of various sorts; thirty more managers who make various decisions; one hundred copyists who record information or copy it; and fifty messengers who run it around."

"We'll have different classes; literacy classes, basic office classes, accounting, planning—"

"How can you get that many classes ready to start three weeks from now?"

"Much of the material will be modifications of the business classes I have been giving for several years. I have a textbook and over the summer we've been translating some parts of books into Eryan. We'll be ready."

"And you'll teach this yourself?"

"No, I'll have one faculty to help. I'll teach about half of the classes. We'll run each class three times if we have 200 students, so that your workers can accommodate the demands of their work. And I think you should speak two or three times. There needs to be a class about serving Her Majesty, for example, and it has to be given by someone on the palace staff. I don't know the philosophy you have."

"I understand." Estoiyaju jotted a note about that one. "The big problem I can see is that if we double the amount of work our workers can do, we won't have the extra tasks available to them. But I suppose we can solve that one eventually."

"If you are interested, I can add a few classes about what different governments do on gɛdhéma, and how they are set up. I can get that information."

"Yes, that would be interesting." Estoiyaju nodded. "I like this idea, Mennea. It will cost us, but it will bring new ideas to me and to the palace. I'll seek Her Majesty's approval tonight." He rose, so Chris did as well.

"Thank you, Honored Estoiyaju." He extended both hands and, hesitatingly, Estoiyaju shook. Then Chris turned and walked out of the classroom via its door to the castle's central courtyard.

The farther he got from Estoiyaju's office, the faster he walked. It had gone better than he had thought. Estoiyaju actually volunteered information to him; he was almost friendly. That was a surprise.

He exited the castle and headed down the hill to Aréjé and Stauréstu's house. His thoughts about the interview were temporarily crowded out by the new appearance of the people of Mɛddwoglubas. It had a unique look because the power looms and now sewing machines had changed the clothing of the majority of the townsfolk. A year and a quarter

after the construction of the first power loom, and almost a year after an electric line reached the region, Lɛwéspa now had twenty power looms, turning out 20 square doli of cloth per day each; that totaled 130,000 square doli per year, or half a square doli for every person in the world. In another two years the region would be producing six square doli per person per year, which was roughly equal to the need of an average very poor person, except machine woven cloth cost a third as much. Hand weavers were no longer selling their wares in Tripola and Mɛlwika, where machine-woven cloth dominated. But now the sewing machine was initiating another revolution. When cloth was expensive and tailoring it even more expensive, most people preferred simply to wrap a sheet around them and tie it; if it got dirty or ripped it could be wrapped in a different way to hide or cover up the defect. The alternatives were loincloths, which used little cloth and required little tailoring, or a knee-length sleeveless shirt or wɛséla, which was basically a folded sheet with a neck hole in the middle, sewed along both sides. But with cheap cloth that could be cut in patterns that produced some wasted cloth that was thrown away, and a sewing machine to stitch it quickly and cheaply together, shirts and pants were now economical alternatives. As the source of these new clothes, Mɛddwoglubas had been the first to adopt them. When one added modern shoes produced by Dhérwéru's shoe manufactory in Mɛlwika, one had a population that was beginning to resemble early modern Earth, rather than something from Greco-Roman times. It was a surprising change.

Chris greeted several people on his way down the mountain; he knew a surprising number of locals since he visited Mɛddwoglubas about once a month. A line of steam wagons waited outside the store of Owyémé, Aréjé's mother, to take people back to their

villages or to Tripola or Ora; today had been the last day of the Queen's visit and everyone who had come for that was now returning home. Gɛlé, Aréjé's sister, was just closing the store; it was six bells in the evening and the sun was close to the western horizon. Chris greeted her as he entered.

The store's back room was crowded because the Central Spiritual Assembly had been meeting much of the day. They had been deepening on principles of Bahá'í administration; some material had been translated from English and they had been reviewing it. Estodhéru had arrived while Chris had been out—he had attended the afternoon meeting of the Réjé and the Lords of Lɛwéspa—but Lua was gone. Now that the deepening had ended and supper had been brought out, Aréjé had arrived with her six-month old baby, Sliru, named for her martyred brother who had been stabbed along with Chris almost a year earlier. At the time, Stauréstu was holding the baby. Boléré, one of Aréjé's older sisters, was there with her ten year old son, Gɛlayu, and her husband, Dhugu. They were all Bahá'ís as well.

"Lua's at the clinic?" asked Chris.

"Yes," replied Dr. Mitrɛtu. "With all three of the clinic's physicians on the Central Spiritual Assembly, it's hard for them to be at the meeting at the same time!"

"Fortunately, the clinic hasn't been too busy, lately," added Stauréstu. "The local population has been going to the hospital for the last year, so the clinic hasn't added much. If anything, it has complicated things."

"Yes, everyone will show up now and expect free eyeglasses and fillings," growsed Estodhéru. "They won't want to pay for something the Queen paid for over the summer!"

"I've been worrying about that, too," agreed Chris. "But it has one good aspect: poor people who wouldn't have gone to the hospital before might go now. So we'll have to budget for that."

"Around here, we know who's poor, so we can handle that," agreed Estodhéru.

"While you were out, Dr. Lua, Stauréstu, and I resolved one problem," said Aréjé, smiling proudly. "I'll be coming to Mɛlwika Medical School this fall for training to be a doctor while Stauréstu stays here with Sliru."

"Well, we're going to help," Gɛlé hastily added, looking at Bloré, who nodded.

"Oh?" replied Chris. "Two doctors in one family! Congratulations!"

"We think it's a good idea," added Stauréstu. "Aréjé had planned to become a teacher because we thought Mɛddwoglubas would need one of each, but it now has a lot of teachers. What it lacks is a doctor for women; too many women hesitate to go to a male physician."

"And I've been serving as a nurse for the last year, anyway," added Aréjé. "So I already have three or four courses that can count toward physician's training."

"You'll be in the newly arriving class of professionals, then," said Chris. "This fall medical training will become more rigorous than ever before, with the introduction of a new course on human anatomy."

"Yes, with donated bodies," said Aréjé. She shuddered a bit. "I'm not looking forward to cutting them up, but everyone agrees it will make for a much better doctor, so that's what I will do."

"It will help immensely," said Stauréstu. "I'm sorry I'll miss the course. I'll have to take it two years from now when it's offered again. Dr. Lua says the summer has

resulted in recruiting a lot more students, and we will have an entering medical school class of twelve! The medical school will take over the entire original classroom building."

"I stepped into the building a few days ago, before coming here. The workers have been rearranging the space quite nicely," said Chris.

"Lord, sit and have some supper; you must be tired," urged Gɛlé. She pointed to an empty chair and had a plate of food ready for him. Chris nodded gratefully and sat in front of the plate.

"While you were out, we had a very interesting meeting with Grandmother Mary," said Modolubu. "She reported that she has now brought six people through Ruhi Book Six. So even though she did not achieve her goal, we now have plenty of tutors to train everyone else over the winter."

"If we get a lot of people through Book Six, we'll be in good shape," agreed Chris. "And I suppose she'll do an intensive class in Mɛlwika for books seven and eight during the fall, so we'll have some trainers for the entire sequence."

"I don't see a need to hurry everyone through them all," added Brébéstu. "These books require time to digest and implement in one's life. They can't be hurried."

"I don't know," replied ɛjnu. "They will help us grow, and the faster we grow, the better. We need lots of Bahá'ís on this world." It was a theme ɛjnu repeated several times a day at their meetings; he was the major advocate of very rapid expansion of the Faith. Chris ignored the comment, as he was far more cautious and he had tried many arguments on ɛjnu already, with no results.

“I think the idea of encouraging pioneering to the villages is the way to go,” replied Brébéstu. “A lot of Bahá’ís in one place could be very dangerous, but spreading it to a hundred places will root it deeply without spreading opposition. For that reason, when I get back to Tripola I think I’ll investigate the possibility of moving to Akɛlséra. It’s a quiet village just five dɛkɛnt up the river from Tripola and because of the rapids and their waterpower it has interesting possibilities for investment.”

“You could ride a horse to your store in Tripola in fifteen minutes,” agreed Stauréstu. “You could walk it in half an hour if you had to.”

“And there’s a steam wagon, too,” said Brébéstu. “It has five hundred people; no reason it couldn’t have a Bahá’í community.”

“We don’t have people who can move,” replied ɛjnu. “That won’t work for us.”

“We can find people to move to villages in the Néfa area,” replied Chris. “Mɛlwika has Bahá’ís from that area. Remember, ɛjnu, if you push too hard, Lord Albanu will push to ban the Faith in your area. And I think there are Bahá’ís in the town of Néfa who are from the nearby villages and who could move back.”

“Leave Lord Albanu to me,” replied ɛjnu, dismissing Chris’s concern. “I’ve known him for twenty years and can handle him.”

“His attacks on the Faith last fall in the consultative assembly are one of the factors in Sliru’s death,” replied Brébéstu, irritated by such bluster.

“Lord Albanu was not part of that conspiracy at all!” dismissed ɛjnu flatly. “I think we can push up the number of Bahá’ís in Néfa to several hundred very quickly, and I don’t think he’ll stop us.”

"That would be ten percent of the city," noted Modolubu.

"That's right," agreed ɛjnu. "Wait and see. At that point we'll have to increase the number of delegates to the Convention, too." That was another of ɛjnu's themes; he seemed to feel that if the national convention was larger, it would be better, possibly because he feared he wouldn't be reelected next year otherwise. The nine members of the Central Spiritual Assembly had all been delegates, and the convention currently only had nineteen delegates.

"A larger convention?" asked Dhugu. "An interesting idea."

"Well, it's complicated," replied Staurέstu, not wanting to reveal any confidential Assembly business to his brother-in-law. "We have a lot of growing to do before we can elect significantly more delegates."

"Who says?" replied ɛjnu. "We already have five hundred Bahá'ís, and by next year we could have a thousand. It'd make the convention very broadly representative of the entire Bahá'í community."

"Let's not talk about the matter now," responded Mitrɛtu gently, glancing at the non-Assembly members present. ɛjnu nodded reluctantly.

"I think our problem in Ora is not moving to villages, but strengthening the spiritual assembly of the central city," noted Estoiwiku. "It has met only twice in five months. It has too many students on it who are busy studying. We need married couples and families in Ora to stabilize the community."

"I agree," said Staurέstu. "Maybe we can find a couple to pioneer to the city for a while; someone able to buy a house, so you'd have a place to meet."

“We certainly won’t be buying a Bahá’í Center there any time soon,” said Estodhéru. He looked at Chris. “While you were away, I told them of my offer in the court to build a Bahá’í Temple here if Lɛwéspa had to build a temple for the hymns of Widumaj.”

“Why should we build one here?” asked ɛjnu. His dismissal of the place startled his hosts.

“Why not?” replied Modolubu. “I think it’s perfect. It’s in the opposite corner of the world from Mɛlwika; if we build our first temple in Mɛlwika, it’ll reinforce the suspicion that Bahá’í is a ‘gɛdhéma’ thing. This is the region where the Faith has put down the deepest indigenous roots. It’s the place where the first local Lord joined the Faith.”

“Those are good arguments,” agreed Chris.

“But this is also business of the Central Spiritual Assembly when it is in closed session,” emphasized Mitrɛtu.

[April 13, 2006 reread and edited 5/22/13, 8/4/17, 11/6/24]

163.

New Lord

Chris Mennea glanced at the clock in the rear of the store. Nine bells; their third and last day of consultation had gone quite long.

“I think any temple built here should be decorated in silver,” proposed ɛjnu. “You have a big silver mine, after all.”

“That’s an expensive proposal,” said Estodhéru. “Didn’t we just agree the temple here shouldn’t be too flashy?”

“I’ve been amazed how many new, silver dhanay I’ve seen lately,” continued ɛjnu. “You must be mining tonnes of silver!”

“There are a lot of silver dhanay in circulation here because the local bank has priority releasing them,”explained Stauréstu. “They haven’t actually extracted that much silver from the ground yet. There are still shortages of coins on the eastern shore.”

“Besides, a silver temple would require an army of silver polishers,” pointed out Lua, irritated.

“I think someone is proposing a silver temple in order to reserve a gold temple for another city,” quipped Modolubu, glaring at ɛjnu.

“I’m sure there will be one eventually,” ɛjnu replied.

“I suggest we adjourn for the evening,” exclaimed Chris. “We’re just going round and round.”

“Agreed,” said Brébéstu. “An hour ago we agreed we wouldn’t specify details of the temple anyway; we have to let a committee of experts do it. Who has the closing prayer?”

ɛjnu relented; he seemed to enjoy taking up the assembly’s attention. Estoiwiku had the closing prayer marked in the prayer book and opened right to it and began to recite it. They all bowed their heads. Estodhéru fell asleep during the relatively short prayer and woke with a start when they were finished.

“Thank you, Stauréstu, for use of the room,” said Chris.

“I’m afraid we don’t have anything as nice as you have in Mɛlwika, but it works,” he replied. “I gather the castle will have some rooms, next time you come back.”

“After installing the showers and toilets for Her Majesty’s use, it occurred to us that Mɛddwoglubas needed a proper hotel,” said Estodhéru. “So next time the Assembly meets here, we can put everyone up in nice rooms and use one of them for our meeting.” He nodded to the others. “It was good to see everyone again. We had a long meeting, maybe tedious at times, but we got a lot done.”

“We made some historic decisions,” agreed Lua.

Estodhéru went around the circle and shook hands; he had to get home to take care of town business that had been neglected for three days. As he opened the door to step out of the store a rider galloped into the square. “Bidhanu is dead! Bidhanu is dead!”

Estodhéru quickly stepped out. “Lord Bidhanu of Awswika? What happened?”

“Indeed, Lord! He clutched his heart in great pain for the space of half an hour, then expired, Lord!”

“We’ll send the news to villages north and south; you ride upriver!”

“Thank you!” The rider spurred his horse and headed up the gravel road.

Lua and the others had come out as he had announced the news to Estodhéru. The doors of the nearby houses were opening, too, as people came out and shared the news.

“Maybe we should go,” said Lua. “Sometimes people look dead but aren’t.”

“I’ll get us horses,” suggested Stauréstu. “It’s an easy ride under a full Skanda.”

“I’ll come,” said Estodhéru. “I need to find two riders to notify the other villages. Assuming he is dead, which he probably is, we need to notify everyone of the funeral tomorrow morning.”

“Will we need steam wagons?” asked Chris. “Because Mitru can send them.”

“Yes, please call him. We need to call the royal encampment as well, once we are sure, because Her Majesty will send a representative.”

“Was his a hereditary family?” asked Chris.

“Well . . . mostly. Lɛwéspa has no absentee Lords and the only unambiguously hereditary position has been mine. The other villages have had headmen and only recently have they been considered Lords . . . Her Majesty never cared or interfered because we were so small and isolated.”

“Did Bidhanu have children?”

“He has four surviving sons and three daughters from two wives, plus about a dozen grandsons who are adults. He also has a lot of nephews; boys run in the family.”

“He was a prosperous and successful farmer and hunter,” added Gɛlé, who had come out with them. “When he was young his hunting was his strength.”

“And he always worked very hard,” added Estodhéru. “It is a grave loss.”

“How will the successor be chosen?” asked Chris.

"We'll see. The family usually arrives at a choice and the village either accepts it or someone else puts themselves forward and people argue for him instead. His sons are not popular, for various reasons . . . we might have trouble."

"How much trouble?" asked Chris.

Estodhéru hesitated. "There have been duels between potential successors, though usually no one is killed. When the family insists on one person and the village dislikes him, he's ignored for a few years and is almost powerless. Then he earns respect or gives up; or the village drifts until he dies. When my father died there was no dispute that I was his successor, but it took me five years to earn the respect of the majority of Mɛddwoglubas. Once I intervened in favor of a potential successor in a nearby village. I thought he was favored by the majority. Some people in that village still haven't forgiven me."

"How big is Awswika?" asked Lua.

"About 800 people; maybe 150 households. It's the first village near the Royal Road when you enter Namɛldhuba from the south. The power line has been extended to them and they have seven power looms in a new building in town, with more coming as soon as we can make them. They're really into cloth weaving. They don't have a telephone, though; no one has felt the need. Awswika has a school, a local spiritual assembly, and a Bahá'í community of about twenty-five."

"I wonder whether we should propose that the new Lord be elected, then?" said Modolubu. "The Bahá'ís have experience with elections."

The suggestion startled Estodhéru. "Let's not interfere," he counseled.

The family refused to let a gɛdhémé like Lua to examine Bidhanu's body, but they let Staurέstu examine him, and he confirmed that the Lord was dead. The two physicians rode back to Mɛddwoglubas as the family argued over Bidhanu's property and who would succeed him. Lua was there long enough to learn that Bidhanu, sixty, had an eldest son named Bidhu, thirty-nine; who in turn had an eldest son, Bidhusunu, twenty; who in turn had a son named Bidhanu, aged two.

At 6:45 a.m. two passenger steam wagons pulled into Mɛddwoglubas from Mɛlwika via Tripola. They had already delivered a half dozen mourners from other cities to Awswika. One steam wagon continued to Ora; ɛjnu got on it to head home to Néfa, since he saw no reason to attend the funeral of a Lord he didn't know. The other headed up the royal road to pick up mourners from the villages on the north side of Lɛwéspa. A steam wagon from Ora came down the Royal Road an hour later loaded with mourners; a steam wagon in town joined it for the ride to Awswika, then returned to the town for another load. Among the first passengers were Chris, Lua, Estodhéru, Staurέstu, Modolubu, Brébέstu, and Estoiwiku.

Over a thousand people arrived in Awswika by steam wagon, horse, carriage, and on foot, and at 11 bells the funeral began. Chanter after chanter came forward to recite a hymn of Widumaj or to sing the Lord's praises; there were standard formulaic elegies one could quickly modify in order to sing about a decedent. Princess Awstɛr, the Réjé's personal representative, greeted the crowd briefly. Estodhéru spoke briefly about his friend, who was only a decade older than he. The Réjé had sent the great Kɛkanu himself and he chanted several hymns with immense beauty and force. Then a grand procession bore the body to the family's burial mound, where he was interred.

“Did you see Bidhu’s black eye?” Lua said to Chris, as they walked back to the village with the crowd. “He didn’t have that last night.”

“He and Primu clearly were keeping apart,” noted Chris. “Rather strange to name your second son ‘Primu,’ as if he were the first son.”

“He was the favored son,” replied Estodhéru. “But he is not well liked. He drinks a lot. Bidhu is oldest, but he has a reputation for not being very bright. The third son is Ekwɛdamɛr; bright and educated, he went to the génadɛma in Ora for a year, but he’s only twenty-five. Akanu is just fifteen.”

“They’re both too young to be Lord,” said Chris.

Golbéstu approached the three of them. He was Awswika’s chief teacher in their three-room school and chair of the local spiritual assembly. “The talk in town is that a lot of people don’t want any of the four sons,” he said. “It’s a real problem. People are getting angry and arguing, too.”

“Well, we can’t interfere,” said Estodhéru. “Let the family work it out.”

“If they can, they’ll agree on either the drunk or the fool,” said Golbéstu, with a shrug. Estodhéru shrugged back.

They walked from the burial mound back to the village with the crowd. Awswika had one main street that had been graveled the year before, a great improvement on the dung-covered muddy ruts of previous years. Several old women were cooking huge pots of soup in their side yards and they called people over to have some. Many went home to get bowls for themselves or the out of town guests, and soon heaps of bowls and big wooden spoons were available. They all took a bowl of soup and began to sip or spoon

out the contents. Many of the local Bahá'ís came to sit with the seven Central Spiritual Assembly members. Mitrɛtu was also absent, as he was needed at the clinic in Tripola.

As they finished eating, several of the chanters rose and stood in front of Bidhanu's house to sing mournful songs. Everyone sat, sipped tea, listened, and talked; it was a cloudy day and thus not too hot. Princess Awstɛr, the Réjé's representative, came out of the house and walked over to Estodhéru.

"Hail, my Lord," she said. "I have just met with the family. All I saw were people who have let their ambition overcome their grief."

"I am sorry, Lady Awstɛr," he replied. "It is a big and complicated family."

"Indeed. What is the custom in Lɛwéspa? This place is not like Ora, Néfa, or Mɛddoakwés. I gather there is no settled succession in most of your villages."

"If the Lord wishes to indicate a successor, he may, but the family usually has final say over the choice after his passing, and the villagers as well. We are free farmers, my Lady; we are not serfs and we do not have absentee Lords. No one was ever given this land by a Réju. The Sumi city here was conquered long ago by an Eryan clan who settled here, and we are all their descendants. We have gradually become more numerous and have expanded over the rich land; we now have nine villages."

"It must have been a noble clan. The Réjé gave me no instructions or powers, and I am a woman; I do not feel able to assert royal authority by virtue of my blood. If we leave the matter to the family, Lord, I fear the issue will be settled by the sword. My advice would be for you to intervene."

"I see. My Lady, I am not a regional lord, like your honored husband."

“Lord Estodhéru, the other lords are all here,” said Chris, pointing to a few who were nearby. “I suggest the nine of you meet quickly. If the nine of you decide the villagers should assert their will, the family will not be in the position to object.”

“That’s true,” agreed Estodhéru. “But how should the villagers decide?”

“Ask every adult man and woman to write the name of their choice on a piece of paper and count the results,” replied Chris. “It is simple. There should be enough paper in the school, and there are plenty of children who can write down names on behalf of those who can’t write.”

“Is this how Lɛwéspa decides?” asked Awstɛr, startled.

“The village often gets involved in a process of arguing that takes hours,” replied Estodhéru. “Writing down everyone’s choice would be simpler and less argumentative.” He rose and walked to Walkordu, the Lord nearest to him, and then he moved on to Dwosunu while Walkordu walked to Mitralu. The Lords headed for the schoolhouse, where a classroom provided privacy and a convenient place to sit. A half hour later they came out; Estodhéru asked Golbéstu to assemble school children and paper, then went into Bidhanu’s house to get the family. He emerged half an hour later with a bloodied Primu, a Bidhu with another cut on his face, and a grieving widow who looked utterly exhausted. He walked over to the school with them and stood on a wagon that Golbéstu had rolled over. Then Golbéstu began to ring the schoolbell to get everyone’s attention.

“Gather round, citizens of Awswika!” proclaimed Estodhéru, his voice rolling off the nearby buildings. He had a powerful voice; everyone heard him and began to approach. “Citizens of Awswika, today you have buried a great leader. Bidhanu was a man of wisdom and intelligence. He was mature, experienced, and wise about this world;

he knew how to listen and when to speak. He loved his village and knew how to tell you things you didn't want to hear. He was an able leader when the new knowledge arrived. He spent your tax money well; you have a graveled street, electricity, a schoolhouse, and a factory.

"Now the task of chosing a successor falls on your shoulders. The family of Bidhanu cannot settle on a successor, and even if they did, in Lɛwéspa the village can reject the choice if it is not pleased with it. Rather than trying to resolve the matter through disputation, we ask all men and women to come to the school and write their choice for Lord on a piece of paper. We have school children here to write it down for you if you wish; we have many guests from outside the village to assist; and Princess Awstɛr herself is here to oversee the effort. Then we will count up the results and announce who the village wants. Perhaps that will resolve the dispute."

The village was startled by Estodhéru's proposal; clearly, no one had ever resolved succession in this way before. Many people hung back and talked in small groups. Individuals came to Estodhéru to ask questions.

"Kɛkanu," said Chris, approaching the famous singer. "Could you chant for everyone? Something dignified. This should be a noble and dignified process."

Kɛkanu had not seen a role for himself, but suddenly his face brightened. "Of course, Lord! It would be an honor! You are right, we must elevate the choice of Lord with sacred music!" He walked to the wagon near the school, stopping to talk to one or two of the other singers who were present. In a minute they began to chant the Hymn of the Lamp, followed by the Hymn in Praise of Esto, followed by the Hymn of Sacrifice.

Gradually people began to come to the line of tables that Golbéstu set up in the shade of the school to write down a name or have the child or adult at the table write it down for them. Then they folded the ballot in half and dropped it in a basket. Every few minutes Golbéstu shuttled a basket-full of ballots to a classroom, where Estodhéru, Walkordu, and Chris sorted them into separate piles for each person. Other Lords stood to watch or walked back and forth, then answered questions of villagers worried that the count would not be fair. Awstɛr walked back and forth as well, observing, asking questions. "Should we really let the women of the village vote as well?" she asked Chris at one point.

"My Lady, I cannot tell any difference between the votes here. I can't look at a ballot and say 'oh, this one is from a woman.' They're all the same, back here. Why shouldn't the women's voices be heard as well?"

"Not so many are coming forward. Three men are in line for every woman."

"That is their choice, My Lady."

"Maybe I should say something." She went back out and looked at the villagers lining up, and walked among the ones standing about for a while to answer questions and encourage them; but she could not bring herself to speak just to the women. But after she walked among them, a few more women seemed to come forward anyway.

Bidhu approached her as the lines began to get shorter, an hour after the voting began. "My lady, this is not just. I am my father's oldest son. This position is mine by right."

“Bidhu, your own mother does not agree with you, and I do not see villagers rejecting this process to proclaim your praises. This is the way the question will be settled.”

“Get in line!” exclaimed someone to him, angrily. Bidhu glared at the man and walked back to his house, entered it, and closed the door behind. Awstɛr went to find Estodhéru, who went to calm Bidhu and bring him back out.

The chanters took a break and another group stood on the wagon bed to sing. One voting table, then another, had no one in line. Estodhéru went to the wagon bed and asked for any remaining voters to come forward. This prompted a group of women and a few older boys to step up. Golbéstu turned away the boys; everyone in the village knew everyone else and knew whether they were an adult or not, even if they didn’t know the person’s exact age.

The sun was halfway across the western sky when Golbéstu brought the last ballots into the classroom. “That’s it.”

“Thank you.” Chris took the votes and began to create new piles in front of the old piles, which had already been counted. Walkordu helped him while Estodhéru watched, then began to count the numbers in each of the new piles, announced the number aloud, and added the number to the running count.

“The last batch was mostly women, and frankly, their votes broke down about the same way as the men’s,” he commented.

“Sometimes women and men vote differently, but the differences are not drastic,” said Chris. “There, that’s it. No more?”

“No,” said Estodhéru. “I’ll invite Lady Awstɛr in to view the results.”

"We should ask her to announce the vote." He pointed to one pile that was the tallest by far. "We have a clear winner. It is not close."

The princess entered, pawed through the piles to verify that each consisted of ballots with the same name, and received the written list with the totals. Then she came out and climbed onto the wagon herself.

"The people of Awswika have spoken," she exclaimed. "Your new Lord is Aryɛru, nephew of Bidhanu. He received 140 votes. Bidhu received 93, Primu 71, and six others received a total of 126 votes. Anyone who wishes may come to the classroom to see the ballots. After sunset, they will be removed to Mɛddwoglubas for safekeeping in the castle. Will Aryɛru please come forward and be greeted by us."

Aryɛru had been leaning against his house nearby; he now walked to the wagon and climbed up. He was about forty, Chris judged; tall, with a red beard and a friendly smile. The villagers began to applaud; he waved to them. Awswika's new leader had nothing to say; he was too surprised by the announcement. The Lords of Lɛwéspa came forward to shake his hand. Estodhéru shook his hand, then walked over to Chris, beaming. "Aryɛru is an excellent choice. He's in the family, but is older than Ekwɛdamɛr, he can read and write, he's bright, and he doesn't have a problem with drink."

"And the issue was settled peacefully. No yelling or accusations."

"It was good," agreed Estodhéru. "I hope we can do this in the future."

[April 14, 2006; reread and edited 5/23/13, 8/4/17]

164.

First Day of School

Ornéstu watched yet another steam wagon roll up to Mɛlwika's southeastern gate, its passenger wagon stuffed to overflowing with students. The doors opened and teenagers began to jump out, run around, and eventually head through the gate. Two génadɛma students who were supposed to be greeting the steam wagons but had been busy answering questions, dashed out to round up the stray boys and haul them inside, because another steam wagon was now approaching with its load of kids. Ornéstu counted the number that had gotten off; 43. They had expected only 34 from Boléripludha. The next steam wagon said "Brébɛstéa" on the side and it carried extra as well.

Ornéstu entered the high school auditorium. The building had first been designed for 200, then they had raised its capacity to 300 by extending the hallway and adding four more classrooms. As of last week, the official count from the villages had been 319 students. The auditorium was filled with wandering students; the din was tremendous.

"Honored!" exclaimed Manu, a génadɛma student who was helping with registration that day. "I have six fifteen year olds and they all say they can read and write pretty well, but all four classrooms for fifteen year olds have twenty-five students in them."

Ornéstu looked at the boys. They were eager, confused, puzzled by the chaos, and excited by the noise. They had already been to the person with the uniforms and were all carrying a cloth sack with three uniforms in them. They had their notebooks and pencils. "Okay, Manu, divide them equally among the classrooms. Today we'll have to let some

classes grow bigger than twenty, even bigger than twenty-five. Some kids may have to sit on the floor for a few days. But once we know how many we have in every category we'll make adjustments."

"Okay, thanks." Manu turned to his six kids and said "Follow me." They did.

"Honored!" It was Albé, his secretary. "Call from the elementary school! They've got a lot of extra kids coming from Nénaslua and want to know if there's a spare classroom!"

Ornéstu laughed. "Tell them we wouldn't mind getting a classroom from them! No, don't say that. Tell them we're ten to twenty percent over capacity."

"Okay. And Mitru called to say he'd put three more steam wagons on the return trip tonight."

"Good. Thanks. We'll have to look into the number again, though; we have no money in the budget for three more."

Ornéstu walked out of the auditorium and down the high school's main hall. It was a two story building with three pairs of classrooms on each floor, plus a library on the ground floor and science labs above it. He poked his head into the classrooms; they were all filling up fast. Several already had kids sitting on the floor. Teachers were going around and interviewing each student or giving them tests to determine what they knew; there would be chaos for a month because of wildly varying prior schooling. Some kids looked respectful; some interested; some sullen. The two science labs would have to be rearranged and pressed into service as classrooms as well. If necessary, up to four classes could meet in the auditorium if it were partitioned temporarily. A class could meet in the library. They could hire some substitute teachers as permanent ones. They could press

into service more génadɛma students; many were planning to become school teachers and needed experience. They had emergency options.

He walked back to the auditorium to handle numerous minor crises. He told the people handing out the uniforms to hand out two instead of three; the supply was dropping fast. That would slow down the line, though, because the kids missing a uniform had to be given an I.O.U. so they could get it later. Then Albé hurried over again. "Mayor Wɛranolubu's on the phone and asking for a report."

"Give him your own report; I'm too busy in here. Ask him for two or three policemen. We could use them outside to direct the arriving students inside. The volunteers outside can come in and help here, the lines are still pretty long. Oh, tell Génésé she needs to feed one hundred extra students at lunchtime. Tell her to buy extra tropical fruit, especially. I want the kids to enjoy lunch. Today will be hard on them and some won't come back tomorrow."

"Maybe that's just as well!"

"No, I want to hold onto as many of them as possible."

"We're *way* over the ten percent that's now palace policy."

"Don't worry about palace policy, we'll figure that out later."

"And the funding?"

"And the funding. Grané may not see me at home much for the next month. This mess will take a while to straighten out."

When Chris opened his eyes, for a moment he wasn't sure whether it was morning or evening. The twilight of early morning filtered into the bedroom and it was hard to tell

whether it came from the east or west because their windows faced south. Besides, he had arrived the evening before from Mɛddwoglubas, nine time zones behind Mɛlwika, so his morning and evenings were still reversed.

But he and Liz had slept in their old bed the night before. That was nice; it was a relief to be home after most of two and a half months on the road. He rose and pulled on a bathrobe to cover his naked body and headed for the bathroom. Liz had just showered and was drying herself.

"Morning." She spoke to him in English; it was still easier than Eryan, after five years.

"Morning." He kissed her. "How are you?"

"Tired; four hours of sleep are not enough. What time is it in Mɛddwoglubas right now? Nine in the evening? I suppose we're a little adjusted, so it feels like midnight."

"Something like that. The sunlight will help." He kissed her again. "Thank you for last night."

"Thank you!" She had a twinkle in her eye. "I think you are back to normal."

"Well, as normal as one can be at sixty earth years." He sighed. "God, too much to do today."

"I'm in worse shape than you; I have to lead our first Art Seminar in three hours! I have some ideas, but I don't even have a syllabus."

"May has organized ideas for you, though."

"Thank God. Get in the shower and wash, I know you have an appointment at eight bells."

He nodded and pulled off the bathrobe. The water was warm and relaxing; the house now had five shower stalls, one for each couple and one for grandma Mary and the servants. They had spent a thousand dhanay to get them designed and set up two years ago, but the investment had made it possible for a Mennea family company run and half owned by Bédhéstu, "God's herald," to manufacture copper pipes, water heaters, faucets, and showers by the hundreds.

He dried himself off, shaved, brushed his teeth, got dressed, and came downstairs. The winter cover over the central garden of watertight, air-tight alien parachute material had been replaced by a summer cover of gauze-like cloth to diffuse the sun's rays and produce a half-shady area; the early morning cool told Chris to call Ménu and ask him to send some men over to install the winter cover instead. When he entered the dining room—which was wide open to the courtyard—he saw John Miller sitting at the table, drinking coffee and waiting for him.

"Morning," he said. "Since we have to go to the Engineering School at eight, I thought we could walk over together."

"Sure." Chris glanced at the clock on the wall. "Ten minutes to go; I guess I don't have time to eat much."

"Agné left you a nice plate. Eat the yogurt and fruit here and the bread while we walk. You can have a cup of coffee over there."

Chris nodded and sat in front of the plate. He began to eat his yogurt and Agné, appearing from the kitchen, poured him half a cup of coffee. John held up a copy of the *Tripola Bédhɛ*. "Did you see the editorial?"

"About how we should elect three members of the City Council next month? Yes, I read it on the steam wagon yesterday. Actually, I had been thinking of proposing it at the meeting tonight."

"Better not now. It'll look like we caved in to pressure."

"Well, they're calling on us to elect three members of the seven-member City Council. Liz and I were talking about this two or three days ago and what we thought was that we could expand the City Council from seven to nine and elect three rather than one. That's a different proposal. And I think we should do something. If we do nothing and people here in town start to complain, we'll look oppressive when we aren't. If we then act, we'll look like we're on the defensive."

"True. But Chris, what will we do two years from now? If we keep expanding the electoral franchise, we'll start to encounter a lot of trouble."

"And if we don't, we'll encounter trouble. I know. I think we should announce this time that we won't be making any changes for four years. In four years we might want to make the post of Mayor elected, with confirmation by the City Council and the Lords. By then, Wɛranolubu will have been Mayor almost seven years, which is a long time. After that, no changes for four years, then expand the election to five members out of nine. That's eight years away."

Miller considered, then nodded. "That is pretty gradual; eight years and the majority of the City Council will be elected."

"There's something else behind the *Bédhɛ's* editorial, too. All summer, people have been calling on Gugéndu to convene a conference of Lords and experts from Dɛksawsakɛla to set up a regional development plan. Gugéndu has been refusing,

naturally, on the grounds he can figure it out himself. So people are getting frustrated. The call that we have more voting in Mɛlwika is a sublimated complaint about the South Shore."

"Ah. I suppose the Réjé's visit reinforced Gugéndu, too."

"Of course, she always officially supports the Lords. Our decision to increase the number of elected seats will make Gugéndu mad, but I don't care. He supports us in most things and that won't change."

"That reminds me, last week I had a visit from a Tripola businessman named Gostanu. He wants to manufacture parts for us. He said he knows double entry accounting and showed me a very rough outline of a business plan."

"He teaches business at the Tripola Génadɛma and he's pretty good. Yes, he's a potential entrepreneur. What can he make?"

"Yimu and I are still talking about that, but they have electricity in Tripola and we're concerned about putting too many jobs here in the city. There are a lot of parts that can be stamped from heated steel sheets."

"Good." Chris looked at the clock; he took another sip of the coffee and grabbed the bread with butter and jam. The two men headed out the door. Liz was already gone, so Chris waved to Agné.

They headed down Majakwés Rodha dodging bicycles. "Boy, there are a lot of bikes!"

"Half of the ones sold are here, because we have concrete streets. Half of the rest are in Mɛddoakwés or a village in between. Not many have sold elsewhere."

"How many units?"

"Two hundred, so far. We're expanding production to one hundred a month by mid winter. We figure a lot will sell in spring." John looked at him. "God, it's good to have you back! I can make executive decisions fine; I get along with Wɛranolubu fine; but I hate all the *talking*. It's constantly needed to get people on board."

"Leave it to me, then. Are the complaints about Ekwɛru's poultry resolved?"

"They seem to be; he's shoveling out the droppings every day, now. A thousand chickens in the city make a powerful stink. The egg and chicken market has expanded a lot, though, and the prices are good. I suppose the Grange is investing in his operation?"

"Of course, big time. He's a member. I'm glad the problems are resolved for now at least."

"We'll have to keep an eye—or a nose—on the barn, though. But now you have a new political problem to solve. Back in Kaiménu, about the time the court headed west for the summer, Dumuzi and his sons and a few of his brothers came to town, one after another, and bought a strip of the northeast addition; the part that hadn't sold yet, closest to the new wall, but scattered pieces elsewhere as well. They immediately hired workers and laid out a new street that runs from the reservoir straight up the slope to the ridge."

"Really? Steep! We decided not to put in such a street!"

"I know! I like the result; it's got a great view. But you can't take a wheeled vehicle up or down it, not even a bike. Anyway, they began to build houses. I ran into Dumuzi in Temple Square and asked him about it and he said the House of Engurra was moving from Mɛddoakwés to Mɛlwika. That surprised me, but I wasn't going to complain; they've got a lot of money. Since then they've started building a lot more housing and some stores on their street, and there are more and more Sumis coming to

town. We now have a Sumi neighborhood developing fast, and that worries me. It's a matter of time before someone complains, and then *you'll* have to deal with it."

"Sumiwika," commented Chris, pondering. "Sort of like 'Chinatown' on Earth. Are families settling here, or young men?"

"Some of both, I'd say. And some of them don't speak Eryan."

"That may explain why Dumuzi wrote to me a month or so ago and offered a thousand dhanay for the columns that are still intact at Pɛnkwayukwa. I said no, they're now historical relics for a future museum."

"Well, he's copying them anyway. Some of the houses they're building are very Sumi, architecturally speaking, and his house has columns like those."

"Interesting. I bet they're trying to make an end run around the army's restriction on what Sumis can study, too."

"The high school?" John suddenly was frightened.

Chris nodded. "I had better inquire about that."

They had just crossed Temple Square. "Well, you run to the high school, then. We're late, but I bet Yimu's even later, and we need him. I'll go to his house to get him."

"Okay." Chris nodded and headed up Péskakwés Rodha while John stopped at the second house up the street. The first house was Sarédatu's; he and Glosé had bought it from Manu and had opened their Home Improvement Store in the front part, the rear being their real house. Chris was amused to notice that the old double tower and bridge reaching over the road, marking the city's former eastern wall, had a big sign on it, "Secure storage available from one dhanay per month." The sargeant whose ten soldiers were stationed there had converted the garrison into a secure storage facility.

He walked under the old gateway and up the road another fifty meters, past the Engineering School, then turned south and headed for the high school. The kids had finished arriving, but when he entered he was startled to find some still registering. A harried Ornéstu saw him and hurried over.

"Do you have any more génadɛma students you can send over? We also badly need folding chairs and spare tables."

"How many students showed up?"

"Including the last. . . twenty-five here in the auditorium, I'd say registration will be 436."

"My God, and you were prepared for three hundred something?"

"That's right! We're in crisis. Wɛranolubu's coming over in another hour to discuss the financial implications."

"The villages didn't register kids for you, did they?"

"No, they just said 'we'll send you fifty' or 'we'll send one hundred' and twenty percent more showed up than expected!"

"And the villages won't want to pay for the extra."

"And neither will Widéstu!"

"And neither will the City Council. Can you raise class size from twenty-five to thirty?"

"The classrooms are designed for twenty-five and thirty pushes the limit. I'm placing two classes in the science labs and one class in the library, since it's still pretty empty, and I'm adding two students to each of the other classrooms. But I'll need three more teachers."

"We have some students who could teach part time, and with so many students we can have special part time classes. They won't cost as much, either."

"We'll have to talk about that, maybe at the City Council meeting tonight. I have to redivide the students based on ability, since we will now have fifteen classes instead of twelve. Can you get us chairs and tables? Maybe from the Bahá'í Center?"

Chris nodded. "Yes, they're not being used there right now. I'll get some students to haul over a hundred fifty chairs and all the tables." He turned and headed for the door, then turned back. "Oh, Ornéstu: are there a lot of Sumi students?"

Ornéstu thought for a moment, then nodded. "I bet every Sumi kid in Mɛddoakwés is here. Some don't seem to speak much Eryan, either!"

"I thought so. We have a problem the City Council must deal with. I'll get the chairs and tables." Chris turned and hurried out of the high school. He jogged around the south end of the Engineering Building, wondering briefly whether John and Yimu had showed up for the meeting yet, and hurried straight to the humanities building. There were always students hanging around there, and Lébé's office held a key to the Center. Chris found Marku in the archaeology lab. "Marku! The high school has a lot of extra students and needs one hundred fifty chairs from the Bahá'í Center and all the tables there. I need someone to organize a dozen students to haul them over." Chris reached into his pocket. "Here; twelve half dhanay coins for twelve students."

"Oh, that'll be an incentive!"

"I hope they don't spend it all on wine and beer. Hey, Marku, here's a question for you: Dumuzi of the House of Engurra and his family have bought up a strip of the northeastern addition and are building a whole Sumi neighborhood. And it would seem

that every Sumi kid in the Arjakwés Valley has shown up to go to our high school. What do you think? You just spent the summer in Sumilara."

"I did." Marku smiled. "They're smart, the Sumis, and they know the new knowledge is important. They're getting around the army every way they can."

"Do you think this is part of it?"

He shrugged. "Maybe. They will deny it, but they are a really close community. The Sumi merchants say they're out to make money, and they are of course, but they'd be happy to help their people get ahead, too."

Chris nodded. "That's what I thought. What would Skandu say?"

"You'll be able to ask him; he'll be here next week to be a guest lecturer in my history course. But he's a member of the House of Engurra, so he may not feel free to speak!"

"I would like to take that course. I will ask him. But now I have to go. Get those chairs and tables to the high school in the next hour." Marku nodded, so Chris turned and headed to the engineering school.

He was now fifteen minutes late; the clock in Temple Square struck out the quarter hour as he approached the main door. Then he saw an army chariot drawn by two horses approach the school of engineering. That surprised him; he stopped to look. Roktɛkɛstɛr was driving, and he had a young engineer with him whom Chris had met once or twice. He stopped to wave. "Hail, Lord General."

"Hail, Lord. What a surprise to see you here. We came to see Amos."

"He's inside; we're about to start a meeting. You're back from Tripola?"

“Indeed, I left it the day after Her Majesty arrived there and spent the next week in ɛndraidha to make some plans. I told Amos we’d be here this morning.”

“He probably thought you’d arrive later. Please come inside. You are. . . Éradɛku?”

“You have an excellent memory, Lord. I took classes here two years ago for the entire autumn and winter.”

“I remember; and you’ve been teaching at ɛndraidha since?”

“Indeed.”

“You read English, too, I remember that. I bet you ordered most of the hundreds of books we’ve copied and sent to ɛndraidha.”

“Correct!” Éradɛku smiled. He was thirtyish, with a trim beard and mustache. Chris led the general and the engineer into the school, down the hall, and to the conference room. Amos, John, Yimu, and Rostu were inside drinking coffee and were surprised by the two additions.

“Welcome!” said Amos. “What a surprise! I thought you were coming in late morning.”

“I said morning. Do you think soldiers sleep late?” Roktɛkɛstɛr laughed, and Amos did as well.

“Sit, gentlemen, and drink coffee and tea with us.” Amos looked at the others. “We’re here to plan engineering tasks for the next few months, and I have a feeling you have plans for my time.”

“Indeed, we hope so,” said Roktɛkɛstɛr. He reached over and took a cup of coffee from Chris, who knew the general liked it black. Éradɛku, on the other hand, wanted tea. “We’ve just had a big meeting in ɛndraidha,” Roktɛkɛstɛr began. “The subjects on the table were the army’s entire future direction and the things it needed to get there. Lord Miller will be pleased to hear we want a lot more armor; not just large vehicles, but small, fast, mobile ones, if you can build them.”

“That actually relates to the topic of our meeting today!” said John, surprised.

“Good, because what we want will take a lot of Amos’s time. It’d be good that the remaining time can serve our needs too!”

“Lord General, I will do what I can, but I have many responsibilities.”

“We know.” Roktɛkɛstɛr looked to Éradɛku. “He’s been reading a lot; he just needs some help.”

“The army wants us to develop a radio,”said Éradɛku. “I’ve spent all summer reading about electronics. It sounds like Mɛlwika has the equipment to build vacuum tubes and other electronics.”

Amos was surprised. “Yes, this school has the equipment. It’ll take time and people.”

“We have the people,” replied Éradɛku. “I can bring six engineers here from ɛndraidha.”

“How much will it cost?” asked Roktɛkɛstɛr.

Amos looked at Éradɛku. “My General, Éradɛku is more of an expert than I; I have never studied electronics. But I will contribute my experience. I have no idea how

much it will cost or how long it will take. More than a thousand and less than a few tens of thousands."

"I hope it will be less than that! You can't come to ɛndraidha to do the work?"

Amos shook his head. "I have many responsibilities here, and the equipment is in this building. But we can make room for an army team; we can give you an entire lab."

Éradɛku nodded. "That's what we need."

"When can you arrive?"

Éradɛku considered the question for a moment. "Later this week. We can get started next Dwodiu."

Amos looked at John, Yimu, and Rostu. "Well, that gives us a week!" He picked up a large piece of paper and unfolded it, revealing a complicated drawing.

"What is it?" asked Roktɛkɛstɛr. "Oh: A steam engine. You can't build that in a week."

Amos and Yimu laughed. "No, we were aiming to have the first Model E functioning by mid winter," replied Amos. "Now I suspect spring is more likely."

"A fifth steam engine design in five years," growled John. "We'll never make much money if the design keeps changing!"

"Father, the Model E will be worth keeping quite a while," replied Yimu. "It's simpler and more compact than anything we've built and weighs less for the power it produces. It relies on the new stainless steel we can make using Kaitɛrɛ nickel-iron, which is stronger and much more corrosion resistant. Model Es are comparable to the internal combustion engines in the rovers, frankly."

"Really?" said Roktɛkɛstɛr. "That's the kind of performance the army wants."

“The Model E won’t have the overall horsepower of the rover engines,” explained Amos. “But steam engines don’t need as much peak power production because their boilers store steam pressure, which gives them an endurance that internal combustion engines lack. Its two cylinders will turn out the power of an eight-cylinder internal combustion engine. The Model E will warm up much faster; it can be driven within a minute of being turned on. We can even add a compressed air cylinder to it so that it can be run immediately on compressed air until the steam pressure builds up. It’ll be designed to run on liquid fuel like the rovers, also, eliminating the need for a stoker.”

“I wish we could design a good internal combustion engine,” complained John. “And eliminate these locomotive engine-like power plants.”

Amos shook his head. “No, John. The internal combustion engine won on Earth for various reasons, but that doesn’t mean it has to win here. Steam engines were powering buses, tractors, and trucks until the end of World War Two in Britain. The longer warm-up time had been almost eliminated by then. Kilogram for kilogram, they’re just as powerful. With a radiator, they don’t need to be resupplied with water more than once a week or two. Their design overall is simpler than internal combustion engines, especially where lubrication is concerned. And they have a very important advantage over internal combustion engines for our purposes: they can burn anything. We can’t afford to spend hundreds of thousands of dhanay building a system to produce alcohol or gasoline fuel. A rural grange or an army unit in the field can use wood or charcoal for fuel; charcoal can even be used with an automated stoker unit. They operate at higher temperatures than internal combustion engines, which means higher efficiency and less pollution. This Model E will be the beginning of mature technology for steam engines.”

“And how long before Ora copies them?” asked John.

Amos shook his head. “Never, unless they get nickel-iron. They won’t be able to tear an engine apart and copy it without investing to make the steel.”

John smiled at that. Roktɛkɛstɛr said, “So, will you be able to build a vehicle like a rover?”

Amos nodded. “Basically.”

“You must have seen the new steam buses we can make; with them, we started making steel bodies with glass windows and windshields,” continued Rostu. “The steam engine goes in front under a metal hood, just like the rovers. So we can now copy the basic design of a rover, except for the pneumatic tires. Those are still a few years away.”

“A five-person passenger vehicle like the rover can be produced with rubber-covered steel wheels in two years for about five thousand dhanay each,” added Amos. “Private cars for the army, government, and the wealthy. The new steam bus can be armored for the army pretty easily as well. The factory starts to turn out steam tractors using Model D engines next month; at that point two distinctive vehicles, buses and tractors, will be produced, rather than one basic vehicle that pulls or powers different things. A steam truck will begin production next summer using the Model E engine, then a smaller passenger vehicle a year after.”

“We had called this meeting to begin detailed planning for the Model E,” said John. “But I can see that won’t be possible until Amos’s schedule becomes clearer, which will be two weeks at least.”

“Let’s reschedule that meeting for two weeks from now,” agreed Amos. “Meanwhile, Yimu, Rostu, and I will do everything we can this week to get started.”

The mother of Kanawé's last child was half an hour late. When she finally came, Soru stopped his studying to listen to her excuses and her refusal to pay the late fee. When she finally left with her crying child, he turned off the lights in his classroom and walked over to Kanawé's.

"Don't let her off the hook," he said. "Otherwise she'll be late every night."

"I agree. She doesn't know what to do with Estoimɛmoré; she's pretty retarded, and I think they've beaten her. I told her I added the late fee to the bill."

"You have her over a barrel anyway; I think she'd pay double to have this little girl off her hands!"

"I know, and it's sad. She's a sweet little girl if she's handled right." Kanawé picked up her satchel and threw her shawl around her shoulders. She stopped to look over the classroom before turning off the lights. "This will be a good space."

"Are you reconciled with the location?"

She shrugged. "I guess. Putting our kids in the hospital building suggests they're sick, and they aren't. But if we can't have a regular classroom, the location is adequate."

"You know how people feel about children with various permanent problems . . . they're seen as possessed or as freaks. It will take a long time for the prejudice to dissipate. Meanwhile, the hospital is a good public place."

"Unless they expand and need the rooms. At least this used to be the génadɛma." Since it was the first day of school for the autumn and the new school year, it was their first day in the new classrooms. She closed the door and they started down the hallway. "How were your two new students?" she asked.

“Pretty good; they both learned a few signs right away. With nine kids, I should be able to do some interesting things.” They reached the hospital receptionist’s desk and glanced at the clock. “We missed the usual steam bus to Mɛlwika.”

“Another reason I have to get Estoimɛmoré’s mother in line. We’ve got forty-five minutes until the next bus; damn, Saréidukter has a city council meeting and she’s counting on me to watch her daughters. Meanwhile, though, shall we eat?”

“Sure. I’ll buy.”

“No, I’ve got some dontay.” She didn’t want Soru to buy for her; she had her own means. In fact, with the second wheat harvest from her farm, she had more money than he.

“Okay; how about the ‘Fat Goose’ Tavern on the square? They’re usually pretty fast.”

“Okay.” They headed outside into the autumn coolness. It was a bit before sunset and the city was still brightly illuminated. They headed up the street. “So, the harvest is in?” asked Soru.

“They cut the wheat yesterday, so I could be there to help. The guys who planted the second crop did a pretty fast job and there was no extra fertilizer, but we got 100 bɛrwonis of grain.”

“Worth how much?”

“The market’s really soft right now; 600 dhanay.”

“Six hundred for a hundred bɛrwonis? They used to be worth twelve hundred!”

“I know. I paid three hundred dhanay of taxes and fees and put three hundred in the bank.”

“What are you going to do with the farm?”

“I don’t know. The grange won’t do any more for me; their obligation is discharged. I could always pay them to plant and harvest wheat for me, but that would cut my income from it even more. I could always go there on nights and Unidius to open irrigation ditches and do minor maintenance.”

“True. Six dhanay per bɛrwoni! No one can raise a family on that!”

“I know; I heard a lot of grumbling. Several farmers told me next year they’ll plant half wheat and half vegetables, because vegetables fetch a better price. Lord Kris told them to do that. But I can’t do that and be a teacher, and I’d rather not farm.”

“How much would you get if you sold it?”

She shook her head. “Not much. I asked Saréidukter. The mortgage is for ten percent of the harvest for twenty harvests. We’ve only paid four harvests, which amounts to about four hundred dhanay. Saréidukter says the land value has increased maybe ten percent and that I should hold onto it.”

“But with the new townships being opened in the lower Arjakwés, the value may not go up very much.”

“Who knows. I don’t like dealing with all these money matters.”

They entered the tavern and found a table in a corner not far from the fireplace, which was the only light, besides fading light entering a few windows. A waitress came by, lit the candle on their table—she had a Mɛlwika-manufactured match—and took their orders, which were for a soup of vegetables, noodles, and fish with bread and butter. The food arrived almost immediately.

“Kanawé, what are your plans for the future?” asked Soru, startling her.

“Plans for the future? I used to think I didn’t have a future, after Tritanu died. But then Saréidukt͡ɾ gave me a roof over my head, the grange harvested my crops and planted a second crop, and you offered me a job. It’s been an amazing six months. . . maybe Esto has some work for me to do with these children.”

“I feel the same way. Seven months ago I fell off my horse, got a terribly dangerous break, was rescued and brought to the hospital, was mended, became a Bahá’í, started classes, began to teach deaf children . . . and here I am with you.”

“We have both been so unexpectedly blessed.”

“Undeservedly. I feel very inadequate; I do not deserve such good treatment. Consider how miserable some lives are . . . it’s incredible this should happen to me.”

Kanawé smiled. “I almost feel the same about my life.”

“How old are you, Kanawé?”

“My, you are full of surprises tonight!” She paused to think. “My mother once told me I was born in the spring two years before Her Majesty ascended the throne. That would be twenty years ago.”

He nodded, pleased with her answer. “My uncle told me once I was born early in Brunménu, so I think I’m now 23. Maybe 22, but I think 23. No parents?”

“No, they’re dead. Yours too?”

He nodded; he had already told her that. “Kanawé, once upon a time I was a thief.”

“Really?” She was surprised. “But your father was deaf and your uncle wasn’t very helpful.”

“I was starving, after my father died.”

“But you’re doing alright now.”

“Oh, I would never steal now.” He looked at his soup, wondering how to say what he was going to say. “Kanawé, we have no one to arrange our marriages for us, so we have to do that ourselves. I was wondering whether you would consider marrying me.”

She smiled, surprised and flattered at once. “My goodness!”

“You know me. I’m a hard worker, I’m taking courses at the génadɛma every term, and I have a pretty good job; good enough to support a family. I’ll be a good husband.”

“Oh, you will be a good husband, Soru. But I have to decide whether I want a husband at all. I love my work too, Soru. And I don’t know whether I can do it and be married.”

“Well, we basically work for ourselves, so there’s no rule. I know the Mɛlwika schools allow women to continue working when they’re married.”

She shook her head. “You don’t know what I mean. If we get married, you’ll expect me to wash your clothes, cook for you, and keep the house clean, on top of teaching. And then if we have a child—which we probably will, within a year—there will be all those responsibilities as well.”

“But Kanawé, surely you want to have children. And Dr. Lua and her sister are married, have children, and work. There’s Lébé Mennea as well.”

“How can I do all that? They have a nanny for the kids, a cook, a house cleaner, and a laundry woman. That’s a lot of money.”

“Not if we have two good salaries. And I *will* help, Kanawé. I have to, the Bahá’í Faith teaches equality of men and women, and that women can work.”

"So I've heard," she conceded. "But Soru, it's just too much."

"Dr. Lua gives women advice about how to plan when they have children. I know, I've heard her. I don't think the advice is much different from any midwife's. But we could plan our children carefully so you could take more classes for a term or two. Because what you are doing is important not just to you or the children; it's important to me as well, and I think it's important to this world." He was genuine about that, and his earnestness touched her.

"Thank you. Someone has to help these poor children, just like with deafness. And I have discovered that I love the task."

"And you need to do it. But special needs children need more than one teacher; they need many. So you need to help others enter the field as well. And if there are other teachers, that means there's time for a family."

That was an interesting argument. She considered it. "You know, the new knowledge requires a new kind of man and a new kind of woman, and I don't know how to be one!"

"It does, I agree, and I don't know how to be a 'new man' either. But we can try to do it together."

She smiled. She did like him a lot, and he was handsome. "Well, Soru, I have to think about it. It's a big decision and I can't make it lightly."

"Okay," he said, disappointed.

[April 16, 2006; reread and edited 5/23/13, 8/4/17]

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Resolutions

Soru and Kanawé's conversation turned to routine things after that, which was a strain, but neither knew what else to say. They left the tavern and caught the next bus, which had the virtue of being much less crowded than the one that left at 6:15 p.m. In Mɛlwika they went their separate ways; Soru had a room in a boarding house for two dhanay per week. He tried to read for the science course he was taking, but he couldn't concentrate. Kanawé found that Saréidukter had assumed correctly she would be on the next bus and had left for city hall and her meeting, so Kanawé buried her thoughts in helping the girls get ready for bed. Then she sat in her own room with a single light bulb on and thought.

Saréidukter came home quite late; after eleven. "You look exhausted," said Kanawé.

"We had to make three very complicated decisions. All of them are worrisome." She shrugged. "But I think they'll work out in the long run. I suppose you couldn't get rid of all your kids in time?"

Kanawé nodded. "One mother didn't pick up her daughter until after the Mɛlwika bus had left. I hope we get that resolved tomorrow. So Soru and I had supper together . . . and he suggested we get married."

Saréidukter's eyes lit up. "Really? What did you say?"

"I said I was really concerned about continuing my work, and he said he would support it, though he never conceded he'd do any housework."

"Men usually won't! How do you feel about him?"

“I like him. He’s a good man.”

“He is. He’s a catch, if you ask me. If anyone will let you keep working, it’s Soru.”

“I think you’re right.”

“I’m glad you didn’t say you love him. I’d worry about that. It’s hard to love someone until you’ve lived with them a while. It’s something that grows.”

“I didn’t think of that! I agree, he’s someone I could love.”

“Exactly. I wouldn’t let him get away. You have some education; some men will not like that. And you’re a widow; that turns off some.”

“I considered that.”

He’s not a farmer, so you know he’s not after your land.”

“And he didn’t have any ideas about what to do with it. We talked about it.”

“I think you can find someone to rent the land and pay you a few hundred dhanay, if that’s what you want to do. You can’t leave it fallow under the terms of the mortgage, you have to pay something every year . . . so, what are you going to do? I don’t think work is enough for a happy life. Work is nice, but it isn’t the purpose of life.”

“I’ve been thinking that a life based only on work would be pretty lonely. Why do work and love have to be so hard to bring together?”

“Because they both take a lot of time and effort. But if you have to choose, choose love. That’s my advice.”

She nodded. “Thank you, that’s good advice, I think. . . Saréidukter, do you plan to get married again some time?”

"Maybe, but I have love without it because I have my daughters. And sometimes we will have others in our house, like you."

Kanawé nodded. "I have to crawl off to bed," added Saréidukter. "We can talk more in the morning."

Chris managed to sleep relatively late the next morning, rising at 9 a.m. It made him feel almost normal, in terms of energy, for the first time in several weeks. Reviewing his schedule over breakfast, he vowed to get in a nap that afternoon, because next week the course for the palace would start and he'd be buried with tasks.

He called Lord Kandékwɛs after breakfast. The Lord was occupied and promised to call back, so Chris turned back to long-term planning for the rest of the week. Finally, the Lord Mayor telephoned.

"Thank you for returning my call," began Chris. "I hope you are well?"

"Well, I just returned last night from Tripola, so I'm pretty tired. They're a bunch of complainers, down there! They want more of this, more of that; more electricity, more manufactories, more elections . . . Gugéndu is good at creating expectations and bad at fulfilling them."

"I think that's a good assessment. The *Bédhɛ* has set a certain tone, too, or reinforced a tone that already was there. Have you any idea how their first day of school went?"

"We were delayed in leaving town an hour and I understand the high school had a lot of students. How did it go in Mɛlwika?"

“It was quite a scene. We had added to the building over the summer to accommodate three hundred students, but 436 showed up. I haven’t checked today; it may be up or down. They worked very hard to feed the kids and keep them happy yesterday, so that they had a good experience.”

“How many came from Mɛddoakwés?”

“We counted 135. Generally, our counts were more accurate as you got closer to Mɛlwika because a higher percentage of possible students was already expected. We got 100 from Ekwɛdhuna, Pɛrkas, and Brébɛstéa, which was 50 more than expected.”

“The Réjé’s admonitions had an effect, I’d say. They can afford to pay for the extra, too. But my final pledge last month was to support only 100 students. And as you know, the sales price of the second harvest was sharply down, so the value of our tax revenue was down as well.”

“Yes, my farmers are grumbling about it, too. We’re preparing another budget based on 400 students; 16 teachers instead of 12; 60 students on each steam wagon instead of 50; and cheaper lunches because of cheaper agricultural products. It’ll be done by the end of the day. That’ll help by maybe five percent. But there’s another twist you should be aware of. Fifty of the students from Mɛddoakwés are Sumi. I figure that must be every Sumi teenager in the city, whereas you agreed to pay for about ten percent of the city’s eligible teenagers.”

“Ah-hah.” He paused to think about that. “I am not opposed to Sumis getting an education, but that is unfair. The city has almost a thousand kids of high school age and the Réjé said we should aim for ten percent of the kids in school. So I think the Sumi families need to come up with the tuition for most of their students.”

“We can provide you with a list of the city’s students—all of them—by the end of the day.”

“Good. You do that and I’ll approach the Sumi community about their kids. Can you give me a breakdown of how many children are coming from every village? I don’t need the names, just the numbers. I can approach the Réjé about a little more money; perhaps five thousand dhanay.”

“That would be good, because Yimuaidha, Mɛgdhuna, and Mitrudoma all sent more students than expected, and they’re pretty poor. So did the Dwobɛrgonɛ and the Mɛdhɛlonɛ.”

“They did?” Kandékwɛs was surprised.

“Yes. The gravel road reaches the two biggest Dwobɛrgonɛ villages and a dirt road has been cleared to the third one. They sent five to the high school, which is about half their eligible boys. The Mɛdhɛlonɛ sent two.”

“Well, I’m not using royal or regional funds to pay for them.”

“You don’t have to. The Dwobɛrgonɛ are paying for their transportation and are providing the school with meat, milk, and cheese daily, plus four hundred dhanay. The Mɛdhɛlonɛ are covering transportation, providing fruit, and are paying three hundred. So they’re covering the costs.”

Kandékwɛs laughed. “Good for them. What else do you have for me?”

“That’s it, my Lord. Rest well; it’ll take three days to adjust to the change in the time. I’m still recovering.”

“Thank you. Best wishes to you as well. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.” Chris hung up the telephone, paused, and picked it up again. “Lubésé, can you connect me with Ornéstu in his office at the high school, please.”

“A moment, Lord.” There were clicks and the operator connected him to the high school.

“Hello?” Ornéstu had answered.

“Hello Ornéstu, this is Lord Kristobéru. How is the high school today?”

“Thank you for asking, Lord. We’re just finishing up the attendance reports from the teachers. It appears we lost twenty students, compared to yesterday, and gained ten. Of course, those twenty may show up tomorrow, and we could get a few more.”

“So, we’re looking at 400.”

“Perhaps 450.”

“I just spoke to Lord Kandékwɛs. He wants a table showing how many students are coming from every village, and a list of the names of students from Mɛddoakwés.”

“You told him about the fifty Sumi students?”

“Yes. He wants to approach that community and ask them to pay more.”

“I’m relieved they’ll be able to attend. Generally, they’re very smart and capable students.”

“Of course; education’s part of Sumi custom. He’ll also approach the Réjé about a few thousand dhanay to help with the higher costs. Can you get those two lists ready by late afternoon?”

“Certainly, Lord. Shall I send a copy to you and a copy to Lord Kandékwɛs?”

“Yes, please do that. Thank you, Ornéstu. Good bye.”

“Good bye, my Lord.” Chris hung up the telephone and looked at his list of tasks. At least he had started on the school attendance crisis. He still had problems for the génadɛma, though; yesterday had been its first day and it had registered 273 students, 30 more than expected. The medical school had twenty-three students, three more than planned. That had caused problems as well, most of which he had handled the day before. He also had a lot of catching up to do with the family businesses; the *Mennea Tomi,* they were calling it, from a word that referred to a tree that produced cooling shade, which connoted comfort and community. And he had to deal with the growing Sumi presence in Mɛlwika. He put on a cloak and headed out the door to find Dumuzi. He didn’t want to talk to him on the telephone.

Chris walked across Foundry Square, briefly admiring the iron and steel manufactory of the Miller family, which was turning out more and more products all the time. A thick plume was pouring out of the smokestack on top of the hill behind the foundry; a mass of bicycles parked in front of the door, most still with training wheels, spoke of the prosperity of the workers. A policeman patrolling the city on horseback, dressed in a very impressive uniform, waved to him; Chris waved back. The police had been very effective, their horses were attractive to the kids and intimidating to trouble makers, their uniforms were impressive, their courtesy was well developed, and the institution was actually popular in town. Amos and Dɛku had spent a lot of the city’s money, but had done well.

He headed up Gluba Rodha past the dam; the reservoir was full and a little water poured over the spillway. It had been a very wet year. The road turned right at North Gate and entered the new northeastern addition. He walked two hundred meters along the base

of the ridge, then turned and started up the steep street Dumuzi had added to the city that ran all the way to the crest.

It was a long way up to the crest almost a hundred meters above the reservoir. Dumuzi's grand house, with a series of columns reminiscent of those still standing at the excavated Sumi villa, stood almost at the very top of the street. Chris was impressed by the architecture of almost every building he passed; the street was only half developed, but clearly it was going to be grand. No vehicles were going up and down; generally they used the streets that ran across the mountain slope. But there were pedestrians, many Sumi, going up and down, and they often nodded a greeting to Lord Chris.

He was huffing and puffing when he reached the top. As he approached the main door, Dumuzi's doorman saw him coming and stepped out to greet him. "Good morning, Lord Kristoféru. Are you here to visit Honored Dumuzi?"

"Indeed I am, if he is available."

"I'm sure he can greet you, Lord. You've been out of the city most of the summer?"

"Indeed. This is my first visit to the new street. I am very impressed by what I see."

"It is looking quite impressive, is it not? Please come in. I'll get you settled in a place where you can wait for the Honored." The doorman opened the front door and ushered Chris in. He took him to a small but comfortable room with rich carpets and a low divan running along the entire wall. It was a prime example of Sumi merchandise: the thick wool carpets, the richly embroidered silk covering the divan, the curtains covering the windows, the wood carvings hanging on the wall; all Sumi.

A woman immediately entered with a pot of tea and served him. Dumuzi entered a few minutes later. He was a trim man in his mid forties, with flashing black eyes, curly black hair, and olive skin.”My Lord, you are so kind to visit me! Thank you so much for this honor!”

“Honored Dumuzi, it’s so good to see you again. It truly is.” Chris rose and they shook hands. He smiled at the Sumi merchant, who was either the second or third richest man in the world, and Dumuzi smiled back.

“I hope you are comfortable? I apologize for the brief delay, I was on the telephone. They are so intrusive, telephones; it is hard to get away from a call when it comes.”

“Intrusive, but so useful.”

“Indeed! It makes it much easier to keep track of orders. I’m glad to see you are back. Do you like Broad Street? That’s what we’re calling it. We still have a lot of building to do.”

“It’s very impressive, Honored Dumuzi. It will be a great addition to our city.”

Dumuzi poured himself tea and sat on the divan running along the adjoining wall. “We are pleased, so far. Wɛranolubu has been very helpful; in sharp contrast to the situation in the capital, where we were not allowed to buy any of the land in the new addition. We have watched this city grow and grow and have wanted to establish a presence here. There is a lot of money here and many opportunities to make money. We don’t want to leave them all to your family and the Millers! We think there are many possibilities for partnership.”

“I’m sure there are. And I understand your sons have houses here as well?”

"Yes. My brother now runs the family operations on Sumilara. He's building a house here as well, however. My three sons all have houses here, though Ninazu—my oldest—also has a house in Néfa, and Buzurigisu—my second oldest—has a house in Ora. They run our operations in those cities. Our business has shifted quite a lot in the last few years, Lord. We used to be merchants that purchased luxury items, moved them between cities by caravan, and sold them. Caravans are now gone, of course; we haven't run any for three years. We tried to replace them with steam wagons, but Mitru had much more experience operating them, and with your advice he was efficient, so now we have him move all our goods. But our goods have shifted; we now sell almost as many Mɛlwika products in Ora and Néfa as Sumi products, and we sell Mɛlwika products on Sumilara."

"You must be feeling the heat from the 'Home Improvement' store."

Dumuzi assumed a poker face. "We're looking at their operation carefully," he said. "It is impressive. We feel rather disadvantaged; we don't have access to your wisdom and ideas. Some of it is new knowledge; some of it is new ideas."

"Well put. Are you closing your operations in Mɛddoakwés?"

Dumuzi shook his head. "Absolutely not. But this is now our headquarters."

"You are welcome in our city, Dumuzi. As you know, we live in a world that is not ruled solely by the law. No place has ever achieved that, even on Gɛdhéma. It will be a long struggle before Sumis and Tutanɛs are treated fairly and justly. Here in Mɛlwika we will be as fair and just as possible to everyone, regardless of their background. But we live in a world that does not understand that idea. It is a world of suspicions, and sometimes they are justified. The army has placed limitations on what Sumis can study at

génadɛmas. Later today the Superintendent of Schools, Ornéstu, will be sending a letter to Widéstu, Her Majesty's Minister of Education, to find out whether that restriction applies to the high school as well. If it does, we will have to obey."

"I understand, of course. We are used to living under restrictions."

"I am sure. Regarding Sumi attendance in our schools, the city of Mɛlwika's policy is clear and unchanged: the city will pay for the education of any child who lives in this city. I understand there are thirty Sumi children in the high school who claim residence in Mɛlwika, and sixty more in the elementary and middle schools. This was a surprise; we did not know about them until yesterday. But we will accept their claim to live in Mɛlwika."

"You are very generous, Lord. Many families are in the process of moving here from Mɛddoakwés, Ora, and other cities of the western and southern shores. They hurried their move so their children would be here for the first day of school. We apologize you were surprised and no doubt you are scrambling to accommodate them all."

"We are. We are also surprised by how many of them speak limited Eryan."

Dumuzi hesitated. "As you know, many children are raised in their houses, with little contact with Eryan."

"Perhaps, but we were wondering how many of them came here from Sumilara."

"I think a few may have; employees of mine, usually. Lord, allow me to compensate the city for this unexpected strain. Perhaps . . . thirty lɛdhay?"

That surprised Chris. Like a wealthy person, Dumuzi counted in terms of lɛdhay, "pounds"; each was equivalent to 6.2 kilograms of silver, and equaled a dozen dozen, or 144 dhanay. It was the equivalent of one or two thousand dollars on Earth, depending on

the market value of silver. Thirty lɛdhay was roughly half the city's extra cost. "You are very generous. But I would be remiss, honored Dumuzi, if I did not tell you that we are sending a list of all the students from each place to the Lord of that place. By the end of today Lord Kandékwɛs will have a list of the 135 students from Mɛddoakwés attending our High School, and that list includes forty Sumis. That must be almost every Sumi youth left in the capital, and the Lord's policy is to pay for the education of only ten percent of the city's youth. So I suspect he will be contacting someone for about thirty lɛdhay to cover ninety percent of the Sumi students from Mɛddoakwés as well."

"I see. Thank you for letting me know; I appreciate that. I am sure the Sumi community can afford to pay sixty lɛdhay to educate its children. As you know, it has always been a priority of ours. My Lord, let us turn back to the question of partnerships."

"Honored, I am open to going into business with anyone, and of all sorts. As you may know, I already have a series of partnerships: to make paper, artwork, glass, books, telephones, gas, cameras and photographic supplies, chemicals, explosives, and other things, and to provide catering services, cleaning services, and laundry. Most of these fit a standard pattern, which we are now standardizing as the *Mennea Tomi*. It's a family of connected businesses that support each other, offer a standard package of salaries and benefits to their workers, and draw on a pool of accountants who handle cash flow, bill paying, and taxes. You might want to take a look at our tomi system. I was able to do a lot of work developing the theory behind it when I taught a class on business organization in Néfa this summer. I think one of your son's assistants was in class, in fact."

"Indeed, and I heard about it. I would like to know more about it, but I was not interested in the House of Engurra becoming a part of the Mennea Tomi."

“I did not intend to suggest such a thing. I meant that perhaps the Mennea Tomi is a useful model for you as you expand your family’s businesses. In addition, I am open to other kinds of partnerships. Why don’t you and your wife come to our house for dinner tomorrow night. Perhaps we can discuss the possibilities further at that time.”

“Tomorrow evening? I think that will work for us. I know Ninlilé will be delighted to get out of the house and meet your wife. She hasn’t met very many women here, yet.”

“We will welcome you with open arms. Please come about six bells, if that will work for you.” Chris rose. Dumuzi extended arms to him again and thanked him for coming, and they had an extended departure ritual, as was the custom. Then Chris left.

He walked on the road that ran along the top of the ridge. When he passed Ekwɛru’s poultry operation, he inhaled deeply; the smell wasn’t too bad, but he was surprised he could actually hear the birds inside. A wagon parked nearby was loaded with a great heap of slightly spoiled grain; Ekwɛru was buying the surplus before it had to be thrown away.

He reached the western edge of the ridge by the smokestack and descended the hillside past the gluba and back to Foundry Square. He followed Majakwés Rodha to Temple Square and from there headed for the génadɛma. But before going to his office in the new Administration Building—just finished two weeks earlier—he detoured past the building with the refectory and bookstore, which had married student housing on the second floor. They had finished the latter just in time; fourteen couples had shown up for classes, two more than they could accommodate. Chris was delighted so many wives were coming to take classes as well and had scrambled to find apartments for them. He

walked upstairs and down the central hallway; there were three pairs of apartments on each side of the corridor. The units were a single room five meters wide and six long; each had a shower stall and a water closet with a toilet and sink, providing each couple with their own facilities. But he didn't see anyone to stop and talk to, so he made a note to come back at lunch, so he could make sure everyone was comfortable.

When he came back downstairs, Lojéstu, the manager of the bookstore, came out to see him. "Hail, Lord Mennea."

"Hail, Honored Lojéstu. How are you doing today?"

"Resting a bit during the quiet. At lunchtime fifty students will arrive to buy books! You should have seen this place yesterday; it was crazy!"

"We had more students than expected, and I think the faculty assigned more books than ever before."

"Oh, they did. Come and see." Lojéstu led Chris into the bookstore. The space opened into the refectory's dining area, which was packed with tables and chairs. The bookstore was full of tall shelves stuffed with books.

"Wow! You must have two or three times as many books as you had at the beginning of the summer! I didn't realize we were assigning that many more!"

"The assigned texts are just this side of the bookstore." He waved at the right half of the store. "We do have almost two thousand books for sale in that area. The other side has books I've ordered, based on requests from other génadɛmas and demand from customers. I have no storage, so I store the books on the shelves."

Chris took a look. The majority of the books had been printed by the génadɛma's computer and inkjet printer on standard paper and bound by Lojéstu or his assistant, who

was busily binding a book as they spoke. Chris was surprised to see how many of the titles were in English or were translations into Eryan. There were even three complete, bound sets of an encyclopedia. A typical book sold for between half a dhanay and three dhanay, depending on its size and demand for it. “You’ve kept the student workers busy printing books!”

“Indeed, Lord, but books won’t sell if you don’t have them. Most of these books can only be printed by computer; the printing press isn’t profitable until sales exceed a few hundred.” He pointed to the telephone. “I even get calls from génadɛmas asking for books. If I don’t have the title, I ask for it to be printed, we bind it, and mail it within two or three days.”

“I was wondering how the Néfa Génadɛma got books so fast, this summer! You were essential for the success of my course.”

“I’m glad to hear it. But as you can see, Lord, I’ve run out of space. This is twice as much as I had in the old classroom building, but it is not enough. So I was wondering, Lord, whether we could install a stairway to the basement. I went downstairs yesterday. As you know, under the refectory is the kitchen and food storage, but the space under the bookstore is empty and unused. If I had that space as well—and maybe even some space under the refectory—I would be able to accumulate even more books.”

“I have no objection. You need the space. You are doing a superb job, Lojéstu. Clearly, you love it.”

He smiled. “I do, Lord. It’s very satisfying.”

“The refectory is pretty busy, isn’t it? Do you have students come in here and just read?”

“Oh, yes, they stand in the aisles and read the books, sometimes for hours. Sometimes they come here to research their papers because the book they need is already being used in the library!”

“Then I have a suggestion. If we can arrange your use of part of the basement, you should install a few tables in here and let the students bring in food and drink from the refectory. If they can drink coffee and read, this place will always be busy.”

Lojéstu smiled. “I think you are right! Some books might get damaged, of course.”

“But you may make more sales because people like visiting a place which is busy.”

“That’s true. The combination may attract more people from town as well.”

“I’ve been trying to convince the widows to keep the refectory open longer hours and offer a wider range of meals. Mɛlwika has relatively few restaurants; we could do a very good business here.”

“That’s another good idea!” He was excited. “If I had more space, we could double the number of books available for purchase. And customers will walk in from outside the génadɛma. We already have some.”

“No doubt.” Then Chris looked at him. “You’ve run the bookstore for three years now, while taking classes. I’ve never had someone so conscientious—”

“Thank you.”

“—And completely reliable. Lojéstu, what do you think of the idea of the bookstore becoming a private business—a company partially owned and operated by you?”

“Really?” He was surprised by the suggestion. “But my Lord, could I continue to operate here on campus?”

“Why not? On Gɛdhéma many bookstores are a private business on campus. It would be part of the Mennea Tomi, which means until you bought us out it would be a partnership; we would partially own it as well. The tomi would be your first source of loans to maintain or expand the business, but if you needed a bank loan we could guarantee it. Your employees would have complete access to the hospital, could take up to four courses per year from the génadɛma for free, and will participate in our retirement pension plan. The tomi’s accountants would oversee all income and expenses, would pay employees, bills, and taxes, and would allocate profits based on our agreed ratio.”

“Just like they do now for the génadɛma. Lord, I am very interested! I love this bookstore!”

“Which is why I am making you this offer. If the bookstore is owned by someone who loves it, it will grow, and I want to see that happen. The bookstore in the Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma in Mɛddoakwés is much smaller. If you took it over, I am sure it would grow as well. There is no reason why you couldn’t operate a chain of bookstores in every major city, eventually. As more people learn to read, there will be an increased need for bookstores.” Chris looked around. “Why don’t you come to my office tomorrow afternoon; maybe around 3 bells? I’ll ask Mɛndhrubéru to pull all our records of the bookstore; how much money has been sunk into it over the last three years, how much it has made, etc. That’ll give us a basis for determining what it is worth and how much of that worth has been created by you. Based on that, we can allocate what percentage of ownership is yours and what percentage is mine.”

His eyes brightened and he bounced up and down a bit with excitement. “I’ll be delighted to do that, Lord! Delighted!”

“Good, then let us plan on three bells,” said Chris. “This is a good arrangement for both of us, because you have proven you can make the bookstore grow as a business.”

The next morning, when Kanawé saw Soru at the bus stop to go to Mɛddoakwés, she told him she would marry him. The joy they both felt at the decision was very confirming; they sat together on the bus looking at each other, excited. It was hard to get anything done that day with their students.

When they came back to Mɛlwika, they stopped at Temple Square for a bite to eat and went to Saréiduktɛr’s together. She took one look at the two of them, as they entered the little house, and laughed. “So, you made the right decision!”

“Well, we think so!” replied Soru.

“I think so, too,” agreed Saréiduktɛr. “But have you started to make any serious decisions? When will you get married?”

“Next month,” replied Kanawé. “At the Bahá’í Center. Soru’s a Bahá’í, so we’ll have a Bahá’í ceremony, which is pretty simple.”

“No sacrifice at the wedding?”

Soru shook his head. “Only of our individualities! The wedding vow is ‘Verily, we will all abide by the will of Esto.’”

“Interesting,” Saréiduktɛr said. “And where will you live? Buying or building a house here in Mɛlwika is complicated. The City Council has a set of construction standards it has been debating for months, so as to prevent house fires and other disasters.

Opposition to passing them is pretty strong from the public and the builders. Most houses here in town don't come remotely close to meeting them. No one knows how much more it'll cost to build houses that do. Meanwhile, the bank doesn't want to give people mortgages for houses that may not pass the new city code, and it is pushing that the code be passed as soon as possible."

"So, housing is in limbo," said Soru. "There are some apartments one can rent, but I don't know that I like them."

"They seem like a strange way to live," agreed Kanawé. "And they're pretty expensive."

"We could always rent from someone for a few months before we decided what to buy or build," added Soru.

Kanawé looked at Saréidukter. "Why not here? Would you mind?"

Saréidukter was taken by surprise by that. "Well, this is a rather small place to add a man to. The bathroom, in particular, is not very convenient."

Soru looked around the little six by ten meter house. It had three rooms. Saréidukter's bedroom occupied the rear third of the house and the bathroom the rear sixth. He had been in the latter before; it was an empty room except for a seat with a bucket underneath, which one had to empty into the nearby city sewer every day. The front half of the house was one large room. A mattress served as a bed for the two girls at night; folded in half, it served as a couch during the day. An iron stove provided heat and its top was a cooking surface. A sink stood next to the stove; it emptied its waste water into the four by ten meter dirt courtyard behind the house. An elevated tank that one filled by bucket daily provided it with water via a faucet. Standing up against the side of

the sink was a metal tub; one sat it down on the floor, stood in it, and poured hot or cold water on one from buckets on the stove or in the sink. A table and four chairs completed the room, except for some shelves built into one wall that stored pots, pans, plates, bowls, cups, spoons, and knives. The floor, at least, had a modest but attractive rug. Two light bulbs provided the room's illumination. A ladder led upstairs to the attic, part storage and part bedroom for Kanawé. She had a bulb, a mattress, and a small table with a chair.

"You know, if we rented from you, we'd be in the position to help you fix this place up," suggested Soru. "I wouldn't mind putting some extra money into your house. We'd have three full salaries. We could afford to add a cold water pipe from the city water main, a water heater, install a flush toilet and a shower."

"No, you should save your money; you'll need it later once you have kids."

"I agree with Soru. You've been really good to me, Saréiduktɛr, and I need to thank you somehow. If we do most of the installation of pipes, the plumber wouldn't cost more than five or six dhanay."

"A water heater is fifty dhanay. So is a flush toilet," noted Soru. "I have that much in the bank."

"Keep your money!" replied Saréiduktɛr. "I have some, too. If the two of you are going to stay here, spend some of it on a rug for upstairs, a big bed, an armoire for clothes, a lamp, maybe a chest of drawers. . . my daughters need a shower, too, to stay properly clean now that winter is coming. You can help me install those things."

"Oh, I'll be glad to!"

"Not that I need help," Saréiduktɛr continued. "I'm probably better with my hands than you, Soru. But this house could use a lot of fixing up; it doesn't meet future city

standards, and if I ever want to sell it, it'll have to be fixed to meet those standards. If there are three of us in here for half a year, it'll be a good time to fix the walls, paint the place, maybe install a glass window in place of the drafty shutters, add insulation to the underside of the roof, soundproof the attic's floor, and install plumbing."

"I'll be glad to help," said Soru. "We can start tomorrow night!"

[April 19, 2006; reread and edited 5/23/13, 8/4/17]

166.

Town Meeting

Chris left his office in the génadɛma administration building—which also housed the Business School and the new headquarters of the Mennea Tomi—fifteen minutes early to stop in the Natural Sciences Building. Thornton, Okpétu, and the geology class had been putting together a huge photomosaic of as much of the world as they could.

When Chris entered the lab, he couldn't believe what he saw. Its walls were covered by photographs, overlapped and thumb tacked together, sometimes floor to ceiling. At the moment Thornton, Okpétu, Yagu, and Dwosunu were working on a photomosaic of the western shore of the sea three meters square that covered an area of about a hundred kilometers square. Chris stopped and looked, mesmerized.

"Isn't it incredible?" said Thornton. "Look close. The little tiny specks in the water are the tops of trees!"

Chris looked close and nodded, amazed. "They're really tiny, but you can see them! Can you use them to estimate sea depth?"

"Yes, roughly," agreed Thornton. We haven't tried that, yet. We are working on a map, though." He pointed to a big piece of paper on a table. Chris glanced at it briefly, then returned to the photomosaic.

"You can see the Royal Road," he said. "And here's Nuarjora, and Akɛldɛdra."

"Exactly," said Okpétu. "Look close and you can see the pictures don't quite fit together. I wasn't flying horizontally; whenever I fly over the sea I generally lose altitude.

We're measuring each picture carefully to determine their scale and making notes how much to blow up or shrink the next print, so they're all closer to the same scale."

"Clever. And the army gets the final copy?"

"Yes, but we'll keep a copy too!" said Thornton. He looked at Dwosunu. "We're calling ourselves the 'Éra Geological Survey.' Naturally, we need a copy."

"We'll be making three copies of every picture before we get the scales uniform," said Dwosunu. "We might as well make a fourth copy for ourselves!"

"So, how much higher will the sea rise?" asked Chris.

"It looks to us that the current shoreline is about twenty or twenty-five meters lower than Lilalara and other seacoast ruins," said Thornton. "We made a rough estimate the other day. The sea now covers three quarters of its old bed. It has a bit less than half of its final water supply. The central basin is pretty deep; the water is about a hundred meters deep over much of it."

"Wow." Chris turned to Okpétu. "Have you tried flying across it?"

"No! Not yet. It's possible; I'd fly to Nuarjora, cross forty kilometers of sea to the northwest corner of Sumilara, fly in an arc across southern Sumilara—I think I'd better avoid the volcanic ridge across the island's northern side—then fly over fifty kilometers of sea to the Néfa region. It'd take about four hours to go from here to Néfa. But there's no place to land there, and if I flew back here it'd be several hours after dark, and there are no thermals at night. So I'd crash! The only solution would be to leave here in late afternoon and fly all the way around. It'd take about fifteen to eighteen hours and I'd be back here the next morning. But I'm not ready to try that yet!"

"No, especially after last week."

Okpétu nodded. He had made an emergency landing last Pɛnkdiu at Médhɛla; the rover had to drive down and tow him across a harvested wheat field and back into the air. He tossed his head when Chris reminded him. “My mother has forbidden me to fly! I think I’ll give her a month and she’ll come around. For some reason, it had never occurred to her that it was dangerous!”

That made Thornton and Dwosunu laugh. “Esto has preserved you,” said Dwosunu. “It’s a miracle you haven’t been killed.”

“I don’t know. I have been *very* careful. This was my first unplanned landing!”

“I think in a year or so we’ll be able to build a real airplane with an engine,” said Chris. “The new Model E steam engine will be light and powerful enough. How are your parents, Okpétu? Well, I hope.”

“Yes, they’re fine. I think my mother will come up for a few days in the winter, stay with me in the dorm, and get her teeth worked on. She got some glasses over the summer. Dad still says all that is unnecessary, though.”

“Aryékwɛs is a good leader,” said Chris, referring to Okpétu’s father. “I was impressed when I met him briefly at the court.”

“Thank you. He respects you.”

“Okpétu, I’ve written a few Lords in the lower Arjakwés about development matters and none have responded. The army is putting in a gravel road, but no one is putting in a power line or a telephone line. There are now a lot of students coming from the area, too; the area needs a school, maybe a clinic, maybe even a branch of the génadɛma. Farmers keep moving here or down river. Unless the Lords mechanize they’ll have a labor shortage.”

Okpétu nodded. “I know. You know how the Old Houses are; they really would prefer to pretend there is no new knowledge and usually don’t want to admit it might be useful.”

“But they have bought steam wagons to pull coaches and now a lot of their kids are coming to the High School.”

“The Réjé said she’d pay for the High School, so they’re taking advantage of that. And of the sixty Old Houses, maybe twelve have bought steam wagons and coaches; not that many. But most of them can afford them. What can I say? They’re really conservative.”

“I know. I doubt many have bank accounts. But there’s enough money south of Mɛddowakés for an entire branch.”

“Most of the families are still keeping records using the old writing system, though they’re writing it on paper with pencils. You need to talk to Roktɛkɛstɛr; he has a lot of contacts with them because half the men have been army officers. Wɛranolubu is a second son from the House of Rudhstéus, which includes two Lords at least. He can help, too.”

“If you wait a few years, all the sons will have high school educations, too,” added Thornton.

“I’m going home in a few days,” said Okpétu. “I’ll talk to dad. I think he could be convinced to meet with you.”

“That’d be good,” agreed Chris. He turned to leave. But Yagu, who had been silent so far, spoke up. “Lord, can I speak to you?”

"Of course. Could you walk with me, though? I can't be late to meet Mitru. He's driving me to Mɛddoakwés."

"I can walk with you." They both headed out of the building and westward across town to a nearby bus stop on West Road. "Lord, I need your advice. I am very discouraged."

"About what?"

"I came here to acquire knowledge for my people, especially about the *Biblia* and Jésu. I'm taking English and of course I have learned only a tiny bit, so far, but I spent two hours with Estodatu the other day. We paged through an English translation of the Bible and he translated as we looked. He's so quick and eloquent! He found an index, also, and I asked him about certain subjects, like priests, mass, eucharist, confession . . . but he couldn't find any of them!"

Chris took a deep breath. "Yagu, what you call the *Biblia* is not the same as our Biblia. Yours consists of two things: the stories and sayings in the Bible that Pablu remembered, which are not word for word, and Pablu's instructions how to be a Christian community. The real Biblia is much longer and has many things in it you know nothing about. So I suggest you concentrate on learning new things about Jésu, rather than worrying about the old things. Pablu taught you about the Christianity he knew about, and I think he taught you about that well."

"Really? But Pablu's teachings aren't in the Biblia."

"They aren't. They are understandings that the Christians developed over two thousand years."

"What does Bahu say about Jésu?"

“He says many marvelous and important things, so we have great love and respect for Jésu. You should read them some time.”

They had reached the city gate and walked out through it. On the other side was a bus stop and Chris was surprised to see a steam wagon with a trailer full of coal pulled up at it, waiting for him. Mitru waved to Yagu, who waved back; they had become friends in Isurdhuna over the summer. Chris reflected on the two men’s lives; both 22 years old, but one was worth as much as the other’s entire village.

Chris said goodbye to Yagu and climbed on board. “I didn’t know you were bringing a load of coal along!”

Mitru laughed. “I never drive anywhere without pulling something.” He paused to let Chris put on the seat belt, then pushed on the accelerator, which let steam into the two cylinders. They began to roll forward. “It’ll take about a minute to get twenty-five tonnes of coal up to speed, but then it’ll roll along at thirty or forty kilometers per hour. Since I won’t stop for passengers, we’ll get to Mɛddoakwés pretty quick.”

“How many steam wagons do you have now?”

“Even I don’t know; about thirty. My accountants keep track of that. Do you have new graduates? I need a new office manager.”

“None now; it’s the beginning of the term. What happened to Modobéru?”

“He was hired away by Dumuzi. I even offered to raise his salary to 4,000, but he had other plans.”

“He’s part Sumi. They’ve got big plans right now, here in town.”

“Not just here! Remember our friends down at Akanakvéi, who used to dig limestone for us? They’ve moved northward a few kilometers onto the limestone ridge.

The other day, Modobéru approached me about a freight run to their village. I said no, not until a road was cleared to them. Apparently Dumuzi is investing in a port facility there."

"With the rising sea?"

"They plan to build a road along the northern side of the Arjakwés river valley. As the sea rises, they'll beach their boats higher and higher along that bank. They want a direct route for freight between the eastern shore and Sumilara; Néfa's too far and they're inefficient."

"And I bet that means a Sumi-dominated port, too. Interesting." Chris considered that development. "How are you managing, without an office manager?"

"It ties me down! I like to be able to travel. I need to; I've got six regional offices and I have to visit them at least once a month to find out what's going on. Drivers are siphoning off collections in at least three of them, but it's hard for me to fire anyone without being around. I've got to settle problems, too. We ran over a goat last month in the Néfa area, and a dog outside Tripola. That's not bad; we usually average three animals a month and one person a year! I have to handle those cases personally."

"You know, the law school in Mɛddowakwés has some pretty capable students. Maybe you should hire some of them, even part time. They could serve as your agent; visit a region, settle property claims, ride on the passenger wagons and count the passengers, then see how much money was turned in at the end of the day."

"That's a great idea! This is why I love to give you rides; you always help me solve problems!"

"I can recommend a few of them to you, too. Some are from other regions, so they'd be happy to work for you while visiting their old homes. In another year all of our operations will have to start hiring lawyers."

"Write down some names for me, and watch for a potential office manager. Or failing that, a coordinator of offices. I need help with that. I have about sixty employees and they're scattered around in eight regions. I need to be able to fire some of them and I'm constantly having to hire new people. It drives me crazy." He shook his head.

"I gather you're hiring a lot of them here and sending them out?"

"It's easier, I can train them here, make sure they can use the equipment properly, and here they're likely to be literate. Then they go to another region for two weeks, work their tails off, then come back here and have a week off. It's rough on families; most of those employees are single, so there's a high turnover."

"Train them that way, then settle them in another place to work for you there."

"I do that, too, and I promote the good guys to coordinator positions, and some of them I pay pretty well to keep! I'm now spending over a hundred thousand a year on salaries."

"That's the cost of doing good business."

"I guess. Are you going to the génadɛma?"

"No; the palace. I have classes for the staff, noon to six, then dinner with Kandékwɛs, then I'll take the 8:15 passenger bus home. We just started special administrative classes—a modification of my business classes—for most of the palace staff, including the people working under Kandékwɛs. I think it'll improve efficiency quite a lot, and Estoiyaju is already thinking of new things the palace can do."

"I'm skeptical. They've got a lot of royal cousins and aristocrats' second sons on the payroll who aren't more efficient because they're stupid, lazy, or both!"

"I admit, a lot of them are trying to sleep through class. I've been making that difficult. But even stupidity and laziness can be improved by simple things like using a filing cabinet and alphabetizing records! I think in some cases they need a radical change in work habits, and Estoiyaju will push that. Say, speaking of lazy aristocrats, what do you know of the new towns? How are they coming?"

Mitru laughed. "Last month Roktɛkɛstɛr asked me to start a daily run down the southern side of the valley through ɛjnopéla to Béranta and Ornakwés. So we tried it out—we ran it for free the first two weeks to see what results—and I drove it the first day to see the route. They've cleared the old Sumi road along the southern edge of the valley, which is in pretty good shape; most of it is paved. But there's nothing there. ɛjnopéla's interesting; it's a rock rising about thirty meters from the valley floor with an old Sumi temple on top that Aryékwɛs is restoring for the worship of Saré. The old Sumi town around it had paved streets with sewers and I gather the latter still work, so he hired people to clear away the debris and make piles of brick and building stone, and about thirty families have settled there. Several old families have established new estates there, too. He's got irrigation water, so the fields are turning green. But Béranta is a village site with maybe six houses and a few windmills, and Ornakwés has maybe a dozen houses, including two villas. We abandoned the daily run; no business, and the Lords wouldn't subsidize it."

"I can't get them to do anything. I've written them and they don't answer my letters."

"They probably can't read your letters! I'll start a run to Ɛjnopéla in the spring; by then it'll be bigger, and it'll probably have some high school students needing a ride."

"Interesting. How's Diné?"

"Pretty good. Happy with the new baby. We're yelling at each other less, and she's happier now that she has a cook and housekeeper to boss around. She wants to take classes now! She might help Awsé with the hotel, once it opens next month."

"She's smart; you should train her to be your office manager! I bet she could do it."

"She probably could, but then we'd be back to yelling at each other again!"

"That's true. Some relationships are better in small doses!"

Chris picked up his lunch plate and took it to the kitchen. On Primdius, Agné and Stɛrésé had the day off, so Liz cooked for everyone and Chris had to take care of the dishes. But he had no time to wash the lunch dishes yet; the annual town meeting was scheduled to start in twenty minutes.

He picked up several plates and cups that the grandkids had left on the table and took them to the kitchen. He took another look at the table when the telephone rang. That was unusual on Primdius when no one worked; he suspected it was Bahá'í business, though it was too early to get calls from the western, southern, or northern shores. He walked into his little home office and picked it up.

“Hello, Kristobéru here.” Lately he had taken to calling himself by his eastern shore-pronounced name.

There was a pause. “Lord Kristobéru, this is Albékwu, head of the génadɛma in Gordha.” He paused; his voice was a bit faint and there was static on the line. Long distance calls were still difficult to make.

“Honored Albékwu! How are you? Are you enjoying this Primdiu?”

“Oh, is it Primdiu? I suppose it is. I am well, Lord. We had a beautiful, clear, sunny, and warm day here in Gordha.”

“Yes, it is very nice here as well; a bit warmer than average for late Brénménu. We are all well here. How may I help you? I apologize that I may not be able to talk very long. It will be one bell in the afternoon here in about fifteen minutes and the entire town is coming to our annual town meeting to talk about Mɛlwika’s future. I have to be there, as Lord.”

“Of course. I hope you can come to Gordha, Lord, some time soon, so my father and I can greet you properly. He asked me to call you and extend to you all his greetings and appreciative thoughts. We were wondering, Lord, when the hospital’s portable clinic can come to Gordha? We have heard that it traveled all the way around the sea during the summer and stayed for a week or even two in many larger cities, and a few days in smaller places. The people are beginning to arrive in Gordha for the winter, Lord. In another month it will begin to get cold and the men will arrive from their hunting as well. If the clinic could come, we will be sure to get as many people as possible to come. Many have bad eyes and bad teeth, my Lord.”

“Of course, Albékwu. We would be honored to come to Gordha; we will be honored to come to the settlements of all the Tutanɛ, in fact. I can talk—”

“My Lord, there is another matter, also. We are now ready to set up our slaughterhouse. All summer we have been building a building where we can kill animals and scientifically utilize their parts: the hides, the hooves, the horns, the bones, the fat. As you know, when most of your family was away three of us were at your génadɛma reading translations of documents about slaughterhouses and getting advice from Dr. Lua, Honored Behruz, Honored Amos, and even you by letter and sometimes by telephone. But now we want to be sure the slaughterhouse will produce *clean* meat. We want people to be confident our meat won’t make them sick. Then everyone will buy it.”

“They will; I think you are right. Your meat is already good quality. I can talk to Dr. Lua about the matter. But we will also have to talk to Her Majesty and the palace, because they paid for the clinic last summer. The clinic was part of the royal party and traveled with Her Majesty. They served the people for about ninety days and the total cost was almost twenty thousand dhanay. That’s two hundred dhanay per day.”

“So much? How is that possible?”

“The doctors, nurses, and others cost only thirty or forty, but they were filling teeth for ten or fifteen people per day and were prescribing twenty glasses a day. Glasses and the material for filling teeth are expensive; the fillings use some silver, you know.”

“I understand. I’ll talk to Lord Walékwɛs.”

“I suggest he write the Réjé, note that your tribe pays taxes just like the people on the western shore, and they would much appreciate getting some of the taxes back in the form of improved health. I’ll talk to the palace as well. I think we can arrange it. If the

clinic goes to Gordha for two days three times, that's six days in Gordha. That would cost a thousand. I think the palace would agree to that if you ask the right away."

"I see. I agree. I'll talk to him and draft a letter based on his request, to mail to the palace tomorrow. I'll send you a note at the same time."

"Thank you, and I'll talk to Widéstu as soon as I get it. I have to go now, Albékwu."

"Thank you, Lord. Goodbye."

"Goodbye." Chris put down the phone and stepped outside; most of the family was waiting for him. They walked outside while Chris told Lua about the conversation and they considered the implications. Kostɛkhéma had never received a visit from anyone with training in modern medicine, nor had half the Tutanɛ tribes, and some had thousands of members.

The clock towers in Foundry and Temple Squares rang out one bell in the afternoon, as they joined thousands of their neighbors heading for "the Theatre," a natural amphitheatre space in the top of the Arjakwés valley just below the gluba. The elementary school on the south side of the valley was open to provide child care, and a hundred or so older children ran around on the grass of the western end of the park in which the theatre was located.

Chris headed up front where the city council was gathering. "We're getting a very good turnout," he noted to Wɛranolubu, watching the milling crowd pour in. "We should try to keep the meeting to an hour an a half; I doubt we'll keep people's attention much longer than that."

“There are a fairly good number of women in attendance,” noted the Mayor approvingly.

Chris nodded. “That’s a good sign. We should do this more often, I think; maybe twice a year. The City Council’s hearings never get more than thirty or forty!”

“Shall we get started?” said John Miller impatiently. He was sitting next to the two of them. Estanu had just arrived and had seated himself with the other members of the council, completing the membership, which also included Saréiduktɛr and Yimu Miller.

“I think so,” said Chris. He turned to Wɛranolubu, who nodded. The two Lords and the Mayor walked onto the stage. That prompted Kɛkanu, the famous chanter of hymns, to walk up and join them. He had been in town two weeks to give classes on classic Eryan hymn singing at the génadɛma, and he chanted hymns at the temple every Primdiu at noon, which had been packed by admirers. When he appeared on stage, the entire crowd instantly grew silent. He chanted the Hymn of the Lightning Bolt, a complicated and lengthy hymn that was rarely performed. When he finished, the crowd was thrilled.

“Fellow citizens,” exclaimed Wɛranolubu, before the crowded started talking. “We are gathered here today to discuss the future of our town together. This is something we do every two years, two weeks before the election. The election will be held on the first Primdiu of Génménu, and since most of you have arrived in town since our last election two years ago, I will review the details.

“First, who is eligible to vote: everyone who has lived in Mɛlwika at least six months who is at least twenty years old. Does that include women? Yes it does, women

can vote, just the same as men. Does that include Sumis and Tutanɛs? Yes it does. Before the law and according to the customs of our city, everyone twenty years and older can vote.

"What do you do to vote? You must register at least a week in advance. Everyone who wants to v ote must register even if they voted here two years ago. We are setting up tables down there—" He pointed to an area west of the amphitheater, between it and the grassy park, "—so you can go there now or any time until sunset. There will be four places to register: City Hall, the High School, the Temple, and the Grange. You can register any of the four places, but you must say where you will vote because only that place will have your name on a voting list. Those will be the four places to vote in two weeks.

"What do you need to register? You need to give us your name, the names of your mother and father, your age, and the village where you were born. If you don't know any of those things, give the name of a grandparent or uncle or aunt, or give the name of the village where you came from. We cannot verify the information, but we want it because there are many people named Mitru or Yimu, for example. We are asking everyone to give us their personal name and a family name. If you don't have a family name, you will need to give yourself one, because in this town we have so many people named Yimu and Mitru, for example, that we need two names.

"How do you vote? On the first day of Génménu, you go to the place you said you would vote any time between sunrise and nine bells in the evening. They give you a piece of paper with three lines. You write the name of a person you want to vote for on each line. If you don't know the person's family name, describe what he or she does, where he

or she lives, or say something that helps us know which person it is. If you aren't sure how to write something, there will be people at those places who can write it for you. Then they check off your name on the list and you drop the paper into a box. It is as simple as that. We will have twenty people counting votes at the High School all night and should have the results the next morning.

"If you have any questions, go to the tables down there and ask anyone. Lord Kristobéru will talk about how you decide who to vote for." Wɛranolubu turned to Chris, who stepped forward.

"Because voting is a new thing, and because the way we do it here is unique, we want to explain it to you carefully," he began. "On Gɛdhéma, voting started as something a few Lords did to choose their leader. Then they began to let merchants vote, then older or wealthier craftsmen, then all men, and finally all women as well. These changes took hundreds of years and sometimes were made after suffering and bloodshed. Reading and writing, telephones, newspapers, the printing press: these things caused voting to spread, because they made it possible for everyone to become informed and make wise choices.

"But as voting spread, so did ways to fool voters. Sometimes good men made promises to do things in order to get elected. Sometimes bad people lied about what they would do to get power. The worse case was a man named Hitler, who lied about his plans, acquired power, fought war after war against his country's neighbors, and argued that small groups like the Sumis and the Tutanɛ deserved complete destruction. He caused the deaths of vast numbers of people before other countries united their armies to defeat and destroy him.

“Éra cannot afford a Hitler and it cannot afford to go without voting, so we are trying a new way of voting that has been growing on Gɛdhéma. It works this way: First, everyone’s vote is completely private, which means no one should try to influence how you will vote and you should not try to influence anyone else. For that matter, no one should even talk to anyone else about who they might or might not vote for. As soon as you allow discussion of votes, things deteriorate and you get systems to fool voters to vote for someone. So your vote is a private thing and it is your right to be able to vote without anyone trying to influence your vote, including your husband or wife.

“Second: when deciding who you will vote for, vote for someone based on their virtues and experience, not based on what they might do to help the town. If we elect good people, they will do good things; but if we elect people who say they will do good things we will get people who are not as good, and they might not do the good things they promise. When privately deciding whom you will vote for, ask your self: is this person humble? Wise? Experienced? Honest? Can this person determine the right thing to do for the city? Does this person listen to others, or insist on doing things one way? Can this person work with a group to make decisions? Is this person brave? Since you are voting for three people, it is wise to think how those three people might work together and work with the others on the Council: myself, Lord Miller, Mayor Wɛranolubu, Yimu Miller, and Saréiduktɛr.

“So, that is how you decide whom you will vote for. No one will tell you who to vote for; you should decide based on character and experience. If you want to, vote for yourself. Now Lord Miller will explain why you should vote.”

Chris fell silent and stepped back; John came forward. “Mɛlwika is growing and becoming a good place to live because it involves everyone in how it is run. We do that through attending town meetings and voting. The meetings give us a chance to see each other, meet, and talk about what our city needs; they help build community. In voting, we choose together who will implement changes needed to keep our city moving forward, progressing. You do not have to attend town meetings and you do not have to vote. Both are privileges and rights you have. They are difficult rights and privileges, too; there is no one out there telling you who to vote for. You have to struggle, think about all the people you know in this city, and vote for the three you think will be best. And you have to do it privately, without talking to anyone else about it.

“But think about what we will get when we do this. First, we will get the wisdom of the mass of the people, who will choose almost half the persons who will run the city. If it goes well this time and two years from now, the decision of the people will expand even more. Second, we will show Éra that voting can be peaceful, orderly, and produce wise results. No one will need to fear it; it will not produce fanatics wishing to make themselves into a new kind of Lords, or angry leaders wishing to destroy or attack others. It will show that with education and rule by laws for everyone, we can have a peaceful and prosperous world. We will not threaten anyone with a violent overthrow; we will produce peace. Mɛlwika will stand for new knowledge that will build society as well as new knowledge that will harness nature for our benefit.

“Thank you, all of you, for coming. I look forward to hearing what you have to say.”

He and Chris retreated off the stage. Both were surprised by applause that swelled up from the audience and echoed off the hill opposite. Wɛranolubu pointed to two places where an aide held a staff with a red tip. “If you wish to speak to Mɛlwika’s future, come forward to the two places where aides have speaking staffs. I will recognize people from one line, then the other, and you will step up on stage so everyone can see you so you can speak.” Just then the clock in Foundry Square struck 1:15. “We have an hour and fifteen minutes until 2:30, when I suggest we adjourn.” He pointed to the first speaker, Yimanu, who stepped onto the stage.

“The rule of law that dominates our city is one reason for its great success,” he began. “The rule of law is the reason Prosperity Bank is based in Mɛlwika. And over the last year the bank has moved two million dhanay around the world, city to city, paying for goods, making loans, helping businesses. But the bank is limited in some things it can do because the laws are inadequate. For example, the bank rarely will loan money for mortgages on houses. This makes it more difficult to buy or sell a house here in town. Why the trouble? Because some houses are built so poorly they are ready to fall down. And even if one house is built well, its neighbor may be a disaster in the making because of poor electrical wiring, faulty design of the chimney, or even bad plumbing that could flood the neighbor’s well-built house with water.

“My friends, we love the freedom to build our own houses and fear the costs of having to build well. But we suffer consequences from our freedom when we can’t purchase insurance or our buyer can’t get money to buy our house. Mɛlwika needs a building code. This is even more true now that some are building outside the walls, where fire equipment will take longer to reach them. If we pass a code that takes five years to

implement, the extra cost will be spread out, but the result will be a safer city, a more secure city, and a city where we can buy and sell houses more easily. Let us act."

He bowed slightly, then sat. A dozen people rose to join the lines as a result. The Mayor nodded to Ornéstu, who was next.

"Another remarkable feature of our city is education," began the chief educator. "We have a lot to be proud of, here in Mɛlwika. More than half of us can read and write some. Almost all our children are in school. The city helps cover the cost of child care from age three; even most places on Gɛdhéma don't do that! And now we are the center of high school education for the entire region, with almost 450 students in school every day, only 100 of whom are from Mɛlwika. That means we are the center of passenger bus transport, and that has already started bringing more workers to town every day.

"But one thing we need to do is make sure every adult in this city can read and write. The royal standard of ten percent literacy for the entire world cannot apply to this city, which needs universal literacy; we need it to vote, to work, to run the world's banks, to make the world's steam engines, even to raise a third of this region's food! Because we can read and write, we are earning almost twice as much as the average person on this world. That means we can afford to repair our health, help our eyes, fill our teeth, educate our children, and live a long life. We can afford to save for a dignified old age. There are still people in this town who want to learn to read and write and to count, but are not working in a place that will help pay for the classes. So I think it is time the City Council budgeted for free literacy for all in Mɛlwika. It will cost us money; about four thousand dhanay per year. But the people who learn to read and write will earn thousands of dhanay more, over their lifetimes. The investment will return to this city more than a

hundred fold. What better investment, than in our people?" He shrugged and stepped off the stage.

Next was Dɛku, the Police Chief, in his fancy uniform, a handsome figure with his trimmed, silver-edged beard. "I want to thank everyone in the city for their cooperation with the police over the last half year. We've been here barely six months; I'm not even sure we can vote. But we have spent the time to get to know as many of you as possible. We have been able to prevent crimes; people tell us there are fewer with us here, and they feel safer. And we have solved several crimes; we helped solve a murder in Mɛddoakwés a few weeks ago. In the next year we will explore a 'community policing' plan where everyone watches their neighborhood for suspicious activity. We look forward to working with all of you. Thank you." He stepped down and Chris was unclear whether his comments were a suggestion, an announcement, or a commercial for the police force or for its commander.

Kérdu, daily coordinator of the Grange, was next. "Agriculture is the future of this city. We've now sold, irrigated, and planted all of the Ménwika side of the township, but the Mɛlwika side extends up into the hills quite a ways and has enormous agricultural potential. This summer we irrigated several times, but the crops would have survived without it; there was plenty of rain for the first time in memory. With windmills, most hilly land could be irrigated, or it could be used for pasture. Areas that are forested provide us with wood and need to be replanted. The grange would like to see a city plan for developing the Mɛlwika hills. It is also possible that we could purchase a strip of land

south of the Majakwés and expand the township in that direction. There are many things we could do to ensure our city's continued growth." Kérdu walked off the stage and Chris turned to John. "That's interesting. He's been thinking."

Lasu the cheesemaker and the town's constant critic was next. He rose. "I now have many things to say. My first concern is the growth of our town. It would grow much faster if the Lords and the génadɛma supported it more instead of spreading out the new knowledge to the entire world. The Dwobɛrgonɛ are now producing cheese; a direct competition with my operation. In the last few months their leatherwork has been appearing in town, in competition with Mɛméjolubu's; their tanning is competing with Gostu's. And now I understand Gordha is about to be *scientific* in their use of cattle products. How will we survive? Why does this world need several manufacturing centers when we could grow large enough to do it all?

"And now this idea of more regulations has come up again. Every two years it becomes an issue. The buildings in Mɛlwika are fine. They don't need to be regulated and inspected and fined. They don't need to be more expensive. Leave us alone to build things that we can live in, and if the bank doesn't like that, we'll loan money to each other to buy and sell." He jumped down off the stage to scattered applause.

Wɛranolubu raised his speaking staff and stepped forward. He was clearly irritated by the criticism of the Lords. "I think we can all be thankful for the wise

leadership of our Lords. If they held onto the new knowledge just for us, before we grew very large, it would be taken from us. We are better off raising the entire world and staying one step ahead. Potanu is next."

The Chief of the Fire Department stepped onto the stage. He was wearing the magnificent new uniform of the fire department, purchased after the firemen saw the policemen's impressive outfits. When Dɛku had arisen to speak, he had been right behind. "The Fire Department is about to start a program of training volunteer firefighters. We need a lot more help; we don't have enough firemen for the city, let alone the area. It will be quite exciting. Anyone who works within earshot of the fire bells can join and will train two Primdius per month. They'll be paid a little bit, but their main reward will be the excitement of fighting fires.

"But we wouldn't need so many volunteers if we had better building regulations. Mɛlwika has one serious fire every three weeks and a minor fire every three days. Half the fires are caused by faulty wiring, gas lines, or chimneys. We have the same number of buildings as Mɛddoakwés and twice as many fires. Someone goes to the hospital because of a fire every month. Three or four people are killed by fires every year. Is that the way you want to use your freedom? With proper buildings, most of those fires could be eliminated entirely. It will cost everyone some money and will save a few people a lot of money and their lives or the lives of their children. We have to improve the quality of our buildings." He sat and there was more applause; more than Lasu got.

The next speaker was Génésé. The forty-two year old woman had become the "chief widow" of Liz's circle of widows, then had become the chief cook for the génadɛma, then had added the cafeteria of the high school to her business. She had recently remarried but had insisted on keeping her business. The crowd quieted when they saw her; she was respected. "Mɛlwika is a very special place for women. Here we can learn to read and write, can get jobs, and can be mothers. This is possible because of our prosperity; some women can be laundry women, others can take care of children, others can prepare food, and others can be doctors, nurses, or teachers, or they can even be farmers or work in the factory, and they all have their own money as a result. Life is still difficult for us, but we have more hope and more possibilities than ever before. What all of you can do is encourage women, accept them in business and the workplace, and tell the men and women in your home villages that a new era has dawned for women." She sat and was greeted by a surprising amount of applause, but also many comments.

Bédhéstu the plumber rose to speak about the importance of proper installation of pipes and wiring and how they required the work of professionally trained workers, thereby speaking in favor of the new building regulations. Lubanu, the Menneas' former chief accountant but now the chief accountant for Miller tomi and the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, spoke about encouraging business and how Mɛlwika was becoming a major business and financial center. Tritusunu complained about the decline of hunting and the need to eliminate the hunting season and other restrictions so the

hunters could get the food everyone needed. Géndu the glue maker spoke about protecting businesses against outside competition, especially Gordha. Kaspuku, a grange farmer—who didn't look twenty, but insisted he was—rose to praise farming and encourage everyone to keep a small farm, even if they were working full time for the foundry or a business. Ménu Miller rose and argued that the building standards should be postponed another few years because prosperity was not adequate to sustain them. Modanu the postmaster called for the establishment of post offices at Dɛksawsupɛrakwa and Bolakra and generally praised the spread of letter writing and use of bills and checks. Sarébɛjnu, one of the two Temple priests, spoke about homelessness among arrivals and the temple's need for more money.

Two and a half bells sounded from Foundry Square and there were still a dozen speakers. No one rose to leave; it was not a compelling discussion, but few had ever experienced such a collective discussion of needs and ideas and were still fascinated by the process. Wɛranolubu, sensing the sustained interest, let the discussion go until three bells, when he called up Kɛkanu to end the program with another hymn.

After the last notes echoed off the hill and everyone rose to go home, Chris turned to the other City Council members. "Very successful, I think. Some good ideas. And two women spoke."

"It's a start," agreed Saréiduktɛr. She seemed to have expected more women.

"I kept a list of speakers and their ideas," added Estanu. "We should discuss them on Dwodiu."

"Sulanu's writing an article for the *Nu*ɛs," added Chris. "And I think I saw Brébɛkɛstɛr in town, so the *Bédh*ɛ must be planning a long article as well. We'll find a lot of details in them, too."

"I hope your comments about voting for people based on their character rather than what they say they will do are printed in both," said Yimu. "That will help deflect criticism."

"I hope we can continue to spread voting here," agreed Chris. "It will help this world's development in some very crucial ways."

[April 22, 2006; reread and edited 5/23/13, 8/4/17]

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Old Houses

Two weeks later, the Mennea household greeted the first of Génménu with great anticipation. They ate a late breakfast, then walked to City Hall to vote. There was an impressive crowd waiting and they stood in line forty minutes in order to go inside, fill out a ballot, drop it in the box, and return home. Sulanu and Brébɛkɛstɛr were both outside interviewing voters for stories; Karu the photographer was taking pictures; Sajéku the commercial artist was drawing pictures of the line and of voters, so he could prepare a woodcut for the Tridiu edition of the *Nuɛs.* The crowd was in a good mood.

The next morning, Mary rose earliest and walked a few meters to Flower Court, the entrance of City Hall, and wrote down the voting results as they were posted on the city hall's bulletin board. The paper was passed around the breakfast table.

"Good choices, good choices," said Chris. "Kérdu: now we have two members of the Grange Council on the City Council. And Lubanu: the business community trusts him, he's their spokesman, he works for Miller and he has worked for us. Everyone likes him."

"But dad; *D*ɛku?" asked May, shocked. "We don't need a police chief on the Council! He was elected because he strutted around in his fancy uniform."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Amos to his wife. "Almost everyone in town knows Dɛku, and he knows them. He's a good policeman; he's made it his business to get to know everyone. And he's a retired military officer, highly trained and experienced, a leader of men—"

"Of *men,"* agreed May. "I would have preferred Génésé."

"Maybe next time," replied Liz. "I was amazed she came in fourth. This town is more progessive than I thought. She and Dɛku were separated by only four votes."

"And those were the top four vote getters by far," added Chris. "Potanu was fifth but much farther down."

"I feel bad for Estanu," said Amos. "I suspect he got so few votes because a lot of people thought he was already on the Council and not eligible. He should have stood up and said something at the Town Meeting."

"That would have looked funny; none of the Council members spoke up," replied Chris. "I'll call him and commiserate. He has done a good job and should have been elected." He looked around. "So what are everyone's schedules? I'm on my way to Mɛddoakwés for the entire day at 8 bells, then I'll be back for supper and the City Council meeting."

"I'm teaching all morning and at the chemistry facility all afternoon, as usual on Dwodius," said Behruz.

"I've got a Ruhi Book Three class this evening," said Mary.

"Piano and Music this morning," said Liz. "Piano lessons early afternoon, then I'll go shopping for Soru and Kanawé's wedding present."

"Geology and meteorology this morning, physics this afternoon, and geo lab til suppertime; we're working on the photomosaics," said Thornton.

"Eryan History this morning," said May. "Sorry you'll miss it, dad; Skandu's giving a three hour class on the Sumi kings."

"I'm sorry, too."

“I’ll be at the Engineering School all day,” said Amos. “But I can’t predict when I’ll be working on the radio and when I’ll be working on the Model E steam engine.”

“How are both projects going?” asked Chris.

“We’ve got a functioning vacuum tube diode and we’re working on a triode right now. But the Model E steam generator is proving pretty tricky.”

“You know what I think the palace needs more than anything else,” exclaimed Chris. “Typewriters. The number of copyists in the palace is appalling, and the emphasis is on penmanship, not speed, so the copies of all documents are absolutely beautiful. I’ve already talked to Modolubu and Estoiyaju about carbon paper, and the former says he can make it, but the latter says they won’t use it!”

“We could all use typewriters,” replied Amos. He considered the idea a minute. “They’re complicated mechanical devices, but you know, they aren’t *that* complicated; certainly they’re simpler than a clock. I don’t have anyone to spare to design one, Chris. But Mɛddwoglubas could design it.”

“But they’re too busy to produce them,” said Chris. “Maybe Tripola could produce them, though. Okay, I’ll think about that.” He looked at Lua.

“We have anatomy in the morning, then I’ll be doing rounds at Mɛlwika Hospital. Tomorrow I go to Mɛddoakwés; otherwise I’d go down with you, dad.”

“I’m going to the history class,” said Lébé. “Then I’m tutoring Eryan poetry students this afternoon.”

“How’s your novel?” asked Chris.

She smiled and shook her head. “In suspension for the next month! Too much to do!”

Chris nodded. Thornton mentioned the soccer game tomorrow afternoon between the génadɛma and the Dwobɛrgonɛ team and Lua mentioned some progress in planning a two-day trip to Gordha. Then Chris rose and headed outside. Mitru again was meeting him with a coal wagon. They talked all the way to Mɛddoakwés about problems with hiring and training drivers.

Mitru dropped Chris off at the military entrance to the palace compound, which was the fastest way to General Roktɛkɛstɛr's office. Roktɛkɛstɛr's aide greeted Chris and gave him tea while the General finished a phone call, then ushered him in.

"Chris, good morning," said the General. "I apologize for the delay; I was talking to General Gɛlawu down in ɛndraidha. Lots of army business. Tea?"

"Thank you." Roktɛkɛstɛr nodded and poured Chris a cup, then came out from behind his desk and sat with him on the floor in front of a low table. "So; yesterday was the election."

"Yes. The City Council has three new members: Kérdu of the Grange, Lubanu of the business community, and Dɛku."

"Dɛku?" Roktɛkɛstɛr was surprised. He nodded. "I don't know Kérdu, but the other two are solid."

"So is Kérdu; he's basically in charge of the grange. He's about 24 or 25. Four people got the majority of votes, the other being Génésé."

"A woman?" He frowned. "The caterer?"

"A *good* caterer. A good businesswoman; her outfit feeds 250 génadɛma students and 450 high school students per day, and she caters lots of parties using the two school kitchens."

“Even here, I think; no one worries about getting poisoned when she provides the food. I think the Réjé will be pleased, she always worries about these innovations. Now, southern Arjakwés; what can I do for you?”

“I gather from Mitru not much has happened, yet.”

“Oh, I don’t know. A lot of ɛjnopéla has been sold, mostly to Old Houses, and over the winter a lot of families will be building new houses. I don’t know much about Béranta; I’ll have to ask my brother. Ornakwés is sleepy and quiet because I’m busy with other things. I also don’t have the personal fortunes of my brother or Lord Aryékwɛs.”

“The army cleared the old Sumi road.”

“Indeed, and it’s better than the Royal Road. The pavement is mostly intact after six hundred years. I have one hundred army soldiers working on the road, and I have permission for them to clear out the old irrigation ditches in Ornakwés. We’ll install a diversion dam on the Ornakwés over the winter; it flowed all summer, you know? Aryékwɛs and Gurwɛkɛstɛr are paying to clear the irrigation systems for their towns, and the Réjé has asked the army engineering corps to restore the Dhɛdhuba and the canal feeding it. That’ll be a task for early spring.”

“What about power and telephone?”

“No plans. You’d know about that, not me.”

“The Old Houses can afford to pay for power and telephone. Do you think they’d subscribe to those services if they were provided?”

“Probably. If you ask them, they’ll say ‘the army should provide.’ That’s what they always say. If the power and telephone lines go there, they’ll pay for the services. They can afford it, and they will see the advantages.”

“But they won’t invest in it?”

“Invest? For the old families, ‘invest’ means land and nothing else. Their wealth consists of land and rents owed to them.”

“I’ve been trying to determine whether we can serve Ekwɛdhuna, Brébɛstéa, Pɛrkas, and the three new towns in various ways: power, phone, elementary and high school, branch génadɛma, local clinic, bank branch, a local market or store . . . we’re talking about 300 wealthy people and about 3,000 servants and farmers, plus closeby villages of farmers to the north. Collectively they’re as wealthy as Tripola and more wealthy than Bɛllɛdha, but no services.” He shrugged. “I’ve written all the Lords. I can’t even get them to react to issues regarding the High School, they just tell me to contact the palace for payment.”

“True, but that’s their problem, don’t you think?”

“Right now, but it could be a problem for everyone eventually. I don’t want them to be opposed to all the changes that are coming. They have a lot of money, collectively. They are also a huge drain on the palace’s budget. If they were investing their money and making money with it, they wouldn’t need big subsidies.”

“True, but that will never happen.”

“Can we call some sort of meeting?”

“You love to place yourself in harm’s way, don’t you? Make sure the food is by your catering lady. If there’s anyone to approach, it’s Aryékwɛs. Okpétu can help; so can Wɛranolubu, since he’s a second cousin. Get Aryékwɛs on board and I’ll come, and so will my brother.”

“Okay,” said Chris, smiling. “I’ll approach him. That’s the three new towns; what about the three old ones?”

“If you can’t get any of them, go with the three of us. If you get Aryékwɛs, I’ll visit a few people and see what I can do. You’re right; we need to try to get them involved.”

“Thank you.”Chris sipped his tea. “Any news?”

“Bɛllɛdha is doing pretty well; the housing is now mostly rebuilt. The Army Supreme Council has approved money in next year’s budget to educate all sons of army soldiers through grade ten and age sixteen, which is when they can sign up. We’ll be building schools in Anartu, Kostɛkhéma, and ɛndraidha and we’ll support the schools in the other cities. That means a high school in Mɛddoakwés.”

“That’s planned anyway. So, not ten percent of the army sons?”

“No, the Réjé agreed to it, too. No one is worried about a literate army being disobedient; we can instill discipline in literate soldiers. The Réjé’s policy is for the Lords who fear education; they don’t have to pay for more than ten percent of the children in their areas. The royal government won’t subsidize more than ten percent of the education, either; probably less. Lords who want to educate more of their people can do it if they can afford it, and families who want to pay can.”

“Sumilara is already ten percent literate.”

“I know, and that’s why the Sumis have been prosperous and for centuries have sold us a million dhanay of stuff every year. The fear is ridiculous. Bidhu is working on a report over the winter that will show that every dhanay invested in education produces a dozen dhanay of return.”

"I know, we've talked. That's true of hospitals, too. The fear of revolution is legitimate, General, even with an advanced army. But elections like Mɛlwika's yesterday is the reply to that fear."

"If they don't get corrupted."

"Yes, if they don't get corrupted." Chris finished his tea and exchanged goodbyes with the General. Then he headed across the palace grounds to the old palace, which had been replaced over the summer with a brand new building. The old audience room, with its crumbling classic paintings covered with soot, would be the assembly hall for the Consultative Assembly. Her Majesty's old offices had become the offices of the new ministries of education and health, and statistics. On his way to Widéstu's, Chris stopped to see Bidhu.

"Hail, honored Bidhu."

"Hail, Lord Kristobéru. How was the election?"

"It was peaceful and the results were excellent. The entire city seemed excited about it."

"Wɛranolubu was going to get me the count from the voter registration."

"I have it for you." He reached into his satchel and pulled out a sheet of paper. "Very interesting results. Eighty-five percent of the men and seventy percent of the women who took part in the census two years ago registered to vote. We assume almost no one has moved from town. Nine hundred adults registered to vote who were not in the census, so they moved into town since, and they are probably eighty-five percent of the newly arrived men and seventy percent of the women, so Mɛlwika has 1125 more adults than it had then."

Bidhu took the note. “And birth registrations indicate another thousand births since the census as well, so Mɛlwika now has six thousand people. Amazing. You realize Mɛlwika is now larger than Bɛllɛdha, Tripola, and Néfa; it’s the world’s fourth largest city!”

“Really? I was wondering.”

“Yes. It has 4,100 adults . . . assuming no more adults move in, in about a decade they will have an average of three children per couple, or a total of 6,000 children, which will make Mɛlwika slightly larger than Mɛddoakwés, the current largest city. Of course, the capital has been growing as well; it’s up fifteen hundred in the last year and a half. Ora’s larger as well. Even Anartu has grown.”

“Good. I don’t want Mɛlwika to become number one; too dangerous.”

“Quite right. Last month we ran a follow-up study of Akras, my father’s village at the top of the Gɛdhakwés, to see what demographic changes have occurred since the census last year. Very interesting results; still preliminary, but the trends seem clear. The overall population has declined, to 851 from 880, because young men and women are moving to Mɛlwika. But births are up and deaths are down. The village has a school and the teacher has been explaining about germs, washing hands, and how to treat pelui. Furthermore, the forty young men and women who left have been returning with gifts or sending gifts on the twice-weekly passenger steam wagons. Reading glasses have become accepted, people have more blankets, manufactured shoes have spread, and a dozen houses have iron stoves. Mitru has rented to them a steam wagon with a plow, harrow, and wheat thresher, so grain production went up this year. The dam has brought an

electrical line and a telephone. Over the summer when two people were very seriously ill a steam wagon was summoned to haul them to Mɛddoakwés hospital, saving both lives."

"Life is better," concluded Chris. "Fascinating, those are really concrete examples. I think the situation at Yimuaidha is similar; every month the hospital has a patient from there and the person usually goes home healed a few days later. Births are up because people feel more confident."

"And womens' health is a bit better; they're not eating the leftovers on the family's table, so there are fewer miscarriages. There are a lot of factors involved. We'll be presenting the results to Her Majesty next week and I think they'll be printed in the inaugural issue of the *Réjal Téji.*"

Chris had heard of the official palace publication, *The Royal Standard.* "Oh? When will it appear?"

"Ask Estoiyaju, but I think in two or three weeks. One of his plans for the extra human resources your classes are producing. They'll call in the editors of two existing weekly papers for advice, then get started."

"Good. So, your father is Lord of Akras . . . Kadstɛru, right?"

"Indeed, you have a good memory."

"One of the Old Houses . . . could you talk to your father about a matter? I've been trying to organize the Lords of the lower Arjakwés and members of the Old Houses in a planning meeting to coordinate development of the area. I suppose the Gɛdhakwés could be included."

"Because of the wetter weather and because the dam has regularized the river's flow, there now are farmers homesteading all the way down the valley to its junction with

the Arjakwés. They aren't all moving to Mɛlwika! Sure, I can talk to him. He and mom live in Brébɛstéa; close by. He's rather old fashioned, but he might be willing to listen. He seems to be proud of what I'm doing."

"Does he understand it?"

"No, but the Réjé is pleased! My little brother started at the high school last month, too. So he's getting exposed to the new knowledge. He could read the old system and has puzzled through letters and a newspaper or two in the new system."

"Good. I'll let you know if we arrange something, so you can let him know. If nothing else, a meeting of the Lords of the Gɛdhakwés should be organized." Chris rose. "Well, off to Widéstu's for a tedious hour of reviewing high school attendance figures and who is paying what, to see whether the Réjé will help close the financial gap. Then I'll review notes for an hour and head for class."

"See you there," agreed Bidhu.

The second Primdiu of Génménu saw the Mɛlwika Bahá'í Center packed with guests for the wedding of Soru and Kanawé. Kanawé was dressed in green, as was customary of brides, and Soru wore a formal white toga with a green edge. They recited the marriage vow, "We will all abide by the will of God," amid the recitation and chanting of Bahá'í prayers, passages from scripture, and hymns of Widumaj.

"I am so thrilled for both of you!" said Lua to Kanawé and Soru, as she reached them in the reception line. "Soru, you are a very special person to me, and Kanawé, you are a remarkable person. I'm so happy you found each other." She embraced both of them.

“Thank you. I feel like a new person, Dr. Lua,” said Soru. “I suppose you’ve heard me say this many times, but the last seven or eight months have been a miracle from Esto. I can’t begin to understand why He has given me these blessings and I don’t know what I can do to repay him.” His voice broke with emotion and Lua embraced him again.

“Thank you for everything, Dr. Lua,” echoed Kanawé. “I don’t think I would have tried to do what I tried to do if it hadn’t been for your example.”

“It takes courage to become the first teacher for disabled children; you are an example to me,” replied Lua genuinely, with a tear in one eye. She embraced her again as well.

Chris came down the line a moment later. Soru hesitated to look him in the eye; he still remembered Chris pointing a gun at him so many months earlier. But it was now obvious Chris had no recollection of his connection with the attack on the Lord’s rover. Chris extended both hands. “Congratulations. It was a beautiful ceremony. Very moving.”

“Everyone brought such a spirit to it,” agreed Kanawé. “I’ll remember this day forever!”

“And thank you for your gift,” said Soru, with a smile. Chris had given them three nights at the Mɛlwika Palace Hotel, Awsé’s new business, which had just opened.

“I think the two of you will enjoy it very much. You’ve worked very hard these last few months; you deserve some peace and quiet together.”

“It’ll be much better than our upstairs room at Saréidukter’s,” agreed Soru, with a smile.

"If your classes need anything, let me know," added Chris. "I am impressed by what you are doing."

They nodded thanks to him, then Chris moved out of the way for the next guest. The entire Mɛlwika Bahá'í community had come; some two hundred people. A lot of the grange had come as well and were feeding all the guests. It was their last act of compassion toward the widow of a deceased farmer, who heretofore would be an ordinary member of the grange again. Saréidukter was coordinating the grange's food. Chris nodded to her and asked whether she needed anything, and of course she said no. He greeted Yagu briefly; the Christian had been invited by Thornton and had been impressed. Then Chris walked over to a small gathering of fellow members of the Central Spiritual Assembly, which was meeting in town that day.

"We should invite them both down to Mɛddwoglubas," said Stauréstu to Aréjé, who was also there with their baby. "There are a few children with Down Syndrome in Lɛwéspa."

"And a few with other developmental problems," agreed Aréjé. "Ornéstu is planning a course on developmentally challenged children in the intensive spring term, Stauréstu, and I hope to go to it."

He nodded to his wife. ɛjnu, who was also present, frowned. "I'm not sure why so much energy is put into such children, when we can't educate all the normal ones."

"It's a question of compassion. We have to start somewhere," replied Stauréstu. "You don't solve problems like these one at a time and ignore the others; you have to make a start."

"I suppose." ɛjnu glanced at the clock on the wall.

Chris turned to Brébéstu, who was standing next to his brother. “How has the move gone?”

“Very well! I made the commitment on faith and Bahá’u’lláh blessed me immediately. A huge, old house in Akɛlséra was available for sale, and I bought it cheaply. I’m fixing it up. It can house my entire business, my family, and leave plenty of room for Bahá’í meetings. Lord Mitrubéru visited and wanted ideas about all sorts of things, and he wants to get the villagers to dig a power canal along the rapids; it’s the best way to harness the waterpower. So that will start next month, weather permitting, and I’ll help supervise. They want the work.”

“I have an idea for you, then,” said Chris. “A *typewriter.* It’s a device with a keyboard, like Thornton’s computer, but when you push down on a key—hard—it makes a metal arm rise up and strike a piece of paper in front of you, imprinting the letter on the paper. The paper then moves to the side so the next keystroke places the next letter on the paper next to the first, and so on. It allows one to write very quickly and produce a very attractive page.”

“I can’t picture it, but this is something that can be made?”

“Yes, it is not as complicated as a clock or a power loom or even a sewing machine. Before you leave, Amos can show you pictures.”

“I don’t have anyone to design a prototype.”

“I was wondering whether Mɛddwoglubas could do that.”

Stauréstu had been listening and leaned over. “Maybe Manɛjnu could. This sounds a bit like a piano.”

"No, much smaller," replied Chris. "I bet Lédhu could handle it, and I'd like to encourage Tripola more."

Mary, who was nearby, stepped closer. "I'll help, too. Chris, do you remember my precious old Olivetti typewriter? I *loved* that typewriter. I remember it in great detail, too. I can help design a new typewriter."

"And you'll be in Mɛddwoglubas in two weeks to give us Ruhi Book Seven," said Stauréstu. "Maybe my brother and Lédhu can come from Tripola and we can do a one-day brainstorming about the typewriter."

"Good idea!" said Brébéstu. "That would be excellent intercity collaboration."

"I wish we could collaborate more with Ora, too," quipped Stauréstu. "But they are still mad the Réjé recognized Lɛwéspa as a region."

"They'll get over it." Chris looked up front, where the new couple was standing together, looking at each other. Eryan didn't kiss in public; it was against standards of public morality. "They're cute together."

"They are," agreed Aréjé. "And they found each other. Such a remarkable story."

It was the second Primdiu of Prusménu, the month of frosts—the day was roughly equivalent to December first—when Mitru drove Chris and Lua to Aryékwɛs's new villa at ɛjnopéla. Mitru now had an "automobile"—a steam engine under the hood, an enclosed cab with a windshield in the front, and windows on both sides for the front and back seats—and when he arrived at the villa, everyone's heads turned.

When they entered the villa, it was their turn to be impressed. Aryékwɛs had not been a Lord before, but had owned land all over the area; five hundred agris of rice paddy

in Morituora and Mɛddoakwés itself, several hundred agris of wheat fields along the Dwobrébakwés, and a thousand agris of pasture and brushland on the Bushy Hill north of the capital where he raised cattle. The township was making money for him as well, though slowly. The villa had a pillared front and a grand entrance hall.

Aryékwɛs fussed over his visitors as they entered and led them back to the meeting room. “Where did you get that horseless carriage?” he asked Mitru, immensely impressed.

“It’s an experiment; one of a kind. My brother Yimu made it; it’s his, father’s, and mine. We mounted a steam engine on a carriage chassis and built a superstructure.”

“Can it go fast enough to get a glider into the air? Because I have built a concrete glider runway outside the house, but there is still no way to get a glider up into the air here!”

“I don’t think it can go fast enough, but if we added some gears, it could.”

“How much? I want one for my son.”

“I don’t know exactly; probably about forty.” He referred to lɛdhay; 5,760 dhanay.

“Forty.” Aryékwɛs hesitated; it was probably half his annual income. “I’ll talk to Yimu.”

He led them into a sumptuously decorated meeting room. It already had a dozen men in it, and from the carriages still approaching the village that they had passed, they knew three more were coming. Aryékwɛs led Chris around and introduced him to the others. Rokɛkɛstɛr and his brother, Gurwɛkɛstɛr, “slayer of beasts” were there; Chris thought the general’s younger brother looked almost like a twin. General Sérékwɛs, Lord of Ekwɛdhuna, acknowledged Chris in a cold and perfunctory manner; Major Rudhstɛru

("Red Star"), Lord of Brébɛstéa, was little better; only Major Lukéstu ("God's Light") Lord of Pɛrkas, seemed friendly, and he was the only one who had acknowledged Chris's letter. Wɛranosunu of Yujakwés grunted a greeting; he had attended the conference of Arjakwés Valley lords back in the summer, unlike the others. Three heads of "Old Houses" who did not possess title over a village were there as well; Lukbéru Domo-Tribrébɛs, Yimɛsu Domo-Sajékwus, and Mitru Majdomai. They were formal, but not discourteous.

While Aryékwɛs took Chris around, his wife, ɛjnésé, approached Dr. Lua. "Are you the Lord's wife, Lady Mennea? I am surprised and pleased that you came! Please come join me for tea."

Lua smiled warmly. "Thank you so much. No, I am Dr. Lua; perhaps you have heard of me? Lady Mennea is my mother and Lord Kristobéru is my father."

"Oh; I apologize, I didn't realize! I am honored and pleased to meet you, Dr. Lua. A friend of mine, Kɛrbloré, had severe difficulties with her pregnancy and you saved her life."

"Yes, I remember Kɛrbloré. A woman of great strength and dignity. It was an honor to treat her. I gather the baby is fine, too."

"Indeed, Manu, a strong son! He's crawling now. I saw him the other day. I am ɛjnésé. Okpétu and Mɛndhru are my sons." She pointed to two young men nearby; the older one, Mɛndhru, was wearing an army captain's uniform.

"I've met Okpétu, but not Mɛndhru."

"He's in army headquarters at the palace; one of Roktɛkɛstɛr's assistants."

“This looks like quite a meeting.”

“Yes, a tense one, most likely. Why not come have tea with me, and leave the yelling to the men?”

“I’m here to talk about health; we want to improve the health of the people down here. Why don’t you sit with me, we can whisper if we get bored, and maybe the men will yell a bit less.”

ɛjnésé was startled by the suggestion; it would have never occurred to her to stay. She glanced at her husband, who was still busy introducing Chris. Then she nodded and pointed to the end of the wall-divan closest to the door to the private quarters. Lua walked over with her and they sat there.

By the time the introductions had gone around, the last three had arrived; Kadstɛru of Agras (“High Places”), Bidhu’s father; Wɛranobéru of Dhébkua, another attendee of the earlier conference; and Rudhu of Frakdoma, a very small village quite far east along the Arjakwés, but on its northern bank. Arjékwɛs went around seating everyone and making sure they had food and drink. He stared at his wife, startled by her presence, but did not tell her to leave.

“My friends, we are here to discuss our area,” he said. “Lord Kristobéru of Mɛlwika has generously and bravely offered to come down here and provide us ideas for the development of the lower Arjakwés, all the way down to Ornakwés. General Roktɛkɛstɛr has also come, and he has offered to tell us what the army can do for the area. Honored General.”

“Thank you, my Lord Aryékwɛs, and thank you for hosting this gathering. Thank you, all of you, for coming this afternoon. When Her Majesty announced a plan for

expanding the pattern of villages and towns eastward downstream, I was among those who were surprised. I had no idea I would be the recipient of some of the land. In the months since, the army has sent a troop of men, with equipment, to clear an old road running down the southern side of the valley. Another troop will be clearing irrigation ditches along the Ornakwés over the winter, and the army engineering corps will repair the dam on the Dhɛdhuba.

"That is the extent of the army's involvement. We are looking forward to seeing what else is done. I am impressed by the extent to which ɛjnopéla has developed in the last four months. The rock is an impressive natural feature; the temple on top will attract many residents. This area has a great future and I'm sure once these towns fill up, more will be created."

"General, general!" exclaimed Yimɛsu. "What about irrigation ditches for ɛjnopéla and Béranta?"

Roktɛkɛstɛr looked at him sternly, for the matter had been discussed many times. "As you know, those are not army matters."

"But general, we can't afford to build such ditches! Only the army has the resources."

"I think you will surprise yourself."

"Certainly, the resources are lacking for me," said Aryékwɛs.

"If you sell land at a reasonable price, people will come, and you will have the money."

"No we won't, because of him!" replied Lukbéru, pointing at Chris.

“Peasants won’t come and buy land,” echoed Aryékwɛs.

“They will if you make it cheap,” persisted the general. “I’m offering land with no separate payment at all for the first year; just a ten percent tax to me, and Her Majesty isn’t charging any taxes for five years, so that’s a good deal for peasants. Honored Mitru, who has also joined us today, will provide steam power when we need it.”

“The peasants are ripping you off,” growled Rudhstɛru.

“And that makes it harder for us to get their work; that and Mɛlwika.” Yimɛsu spat out the word.

“Honored Lords, you can view us as doing you a favor,” said Chris, quietly.

“Favor? Having you killed; that would be doing us a favor,” commented Yimɛsu.

That startled and angered Mɛndhru, who put his hand on the hilt of his sword. “No one threatens anyone in my father’s house!”

“Put away the sword, Mɛndhru,” said Aryékwɛs. “I can always ask discourteous guests to leave. But I’m sure that won’t be necessary. Lord Kristobéru, please explain.”

“There are many things that exist in the mind of Esto.” He pointed to Mɛndhru’s belt. “Swords, for example. Once upon a time Esto inspired someone to bring swords to humanity. Steam power exists in the mind of Esto as well, and someday someone on this world would have discovered it. Perhaps it would have been a Sumi. Perhaps it would have been an Eryan who was too greedy to share it with others, and who used the secret to make vast amounts of money. In this case, it was found by someone willing to share it.

“Now, how does this help with the peasants unwilling to work for you? A Miller steam tractor with the proper implements costs forty lɛdhay. It can plow, harrow, fertilize,

seed, then cut and thresh 750 agris of wheat. It can replace 75 peasant families all by itself; that's about 400 people. Half a village. It requires maybe three men to use it."

There was silence as the men stared at him, wondering what to say. Then Sérékwɛs of Ekwɛdhuna said, "Lord, if that is true, why do you have five hundred farmers?"

"My Lord, I have four hundred farmers on ten thousand agris. By this time next year I will have three hundred fifty because about fifty will sell or rent their land to others and go to work in the business and factories of Mɛlwika. In about five years I will probably have less than one hundred. I won't drive anyone off their land; it will be their decision whether to farm or do something new. You don't need hundreds of people on your lands, Lords. Let them do other things to earn a living for their families and make money for others."

"What can they do; they're peasants!" exclaimed Yimɛsu.

"Whatever they can be paid a fair price to do."

"Indeed, *fair*!" exclaimed Rudhu of Frakdoma. A glance at the Lord's shabby clothes showed that he was not one of the Old Houses; his village was small and poor by anyone's estimate. "All this talk of lazy peasants; who wants to work when their children still starve? I wish my village had steam wagons and twenty or thirty agris of farmland per family! We used to be scattered up and down the river on both sides, mostly close to the riverbed to dig shallow wells to irrigate our crops; now the entire southern side of the valley has been taken from us, and those of us who have insisted on staying have been told to pay for their land! Where is the justice!"

"Your people can go to Mɛlwika, too," replied Yimɛsu.

“This is not the time and place for that discussion,” exclaimed Aryékwɛs.

“But we can talk further, Lord,” replied Chris. “There are ways to start small, with the resources you have, and work your way up.”

“Good, because we can’t expect the army to help us!”

“The army isn’t in the business of solving everyone’s problems,” persisted Roktɛkɛstɛr.

“Regardless, I don’t see many of our problems being solved. We are three dɛkɛnt off the Royal Road and have no road to it. We’ll never have electricity or a telephone.”

“You don’t need those things yet anyway; you need windmills and steam tractors,” replied Chris.

“When will we get better passenger connections to Mɛddoakwés?” replied Rudhu.

“You are beyond the area my passenger wagons are currently serving,” replied Mitru, speaking up. “But as this area develops, I will send passenger wagons here.”

“Please!” exclaimed Aryékwɛs. “Lord Kristobéru, what can our people make down here?”

“I don’t know. What resources do you have?”

“The army plans to manufacture various items in the future, and I plan to set up Ornakwés so that it is a good location for the army,” noted Roktɛkɛstɛr. Gurwɛkɛstɛr nodded, suggesting he would do the same.

“We have excellent clay here,” said Aryékwɛs. “The ruins here are all of brick and the bricks are still pretty good. I think the low area east of the village used to be a clay pit.”

“Mɛddoakwés has very little brick, and it could use a lot of it,” said Chris. “So make bricks. Haul coal down from Mɛlwika to fire them and use the fire and extra heat to make gas. Your village will have gas as well.”

“Clever. Our house in Mɛddoakwés has gas for heat and cooking, and it is very convenient.”

There was a lull in the conversation. “I want to ask about health,” exclaimed Lua quietly, knowing that a woman speaking loudly would be offensive. She tugged at the scarf in her hair self consciously. “I see two pairs of spectacles in this room and as a doctor I know that half of you would benefit from them. We’re fifty dɛkɛnt from Mɛddoakwés. Could this area benefit from a local clinic?”

“But who will pay?” replied Lukéstu of Pɛrkas, the nearest village to the east.

“Every village will pay a little and every patient will be asked to pay some,” replied Lua.

Aryékwɛs shrugged. “That’s a good idea, so implement it.” He said nothing about the money, though, which caused Lua to scowl and ɛjnésé to shrug.

“I have a question, Lords,” said Chris. “If there were a school in ɛjnopéla, would it be easier to send your students here than Mɛlwika?”

“Of course, even for Ekwɛdhuna,” replied Sérékwɛs. “It is easier to go east in the morning and west at night than the other way around.”

“Sunrise is half an hour later here than in Mɛddoakwés, and almost an hour and a half later than Mɛlwika,” added Aryékwɛs.

“Lords, if you had access to electric lights and telephones, would you use them?” asked Chris.

They all looked at each other. “Lights; they are interesting, but not always worth the cost,” said Aryékwɛs. “Telephones are very discourteous things, but sometimes they are necessary.” Others nodded. That was Chris’s hunch as well; people were willing to pay for a phone, and would take electricity if it was cheap enough.

“Lords, my people will use anything if it makes life better,” added Rudhu.

“Mine as well,” exclaimed Kadstɛru. “So far, this discussion has been about services and, by implication, investment. The upper Gɛdhakwés has a new dam, but so little else. For us it is a question of what to start with and what small things to get in stages, because we have nothing.”

Chris nodded to Kadstɛru, but said nothing. He could now see that he wasn’t going to get cooperation from most of the Old Houses; not today, anyway. Talking to the poor villages in front of them would only make the situation worse.

“What is the point of this discussion?” asked Yimɛsu, echoing Chris’s private thoughts.

“Perhaps we should take a break and have some refreshments,” suggested Aryékwɛs, sensing the conversation was blocked. ɛjnésé rose to help the servants bring in food, wine, and tea.

The group broke up into small knots of people, eating and chatting, often staring at Chris as they talked quietly about him. Roktɛkɛstɛr came over to him. “You see, you won’t get much cooperation from them. I’m sorry. I’ll tell Her Majesty; she will be disappointed.”

“What can she do?” asked Chris.

“Nothing.”

Aryékwɛs came over as well. “I apologize, Lord Mennea, for the insulting behavior of a few of those present. We are still not used to gɛdhémɛ, as you can imagine. And Mɛlwika, with its machines and voting, is very strange to us.”

“I understand, Lord,” agreed Chris. “I am not offended, I assure you. I wonder whether anyone can or will invest in the things needed to develop this area.”

“Bit by bit. We wish the army would do more; as members of the Old Houses we all have military connections and are used to the army and palace acting.” He said that, looking at Roktɛkɛstɛr. “I am investing everything I can.”

“I am sure,” replied Chris, even though the evidence he saw—a beautiful new house, a glider runway, and interest in an automobile—contradicted the Lord’s assertion.

“Thank you so much for coming to my house, and for helping to make this gathering happen here,” Aryekwɛs said, mostly to Roktɛkɛstɛr. The general and Chris both nodded in thanks, then the host moved on to another group of visitors.

Kadstɛru approached. “You can see why they’re called leeches,” he said, not hesitating to use the common insult in front of Roktɛkɛstɛr. “But my people really do need help, Lord.”

“Let us plan a time I can come to Akras and talk further,” replied Chris, quietly. “Perhaps in another month, if the snows permit. I will try to get to Frakdoma as well.”

“Your problems are similar to Pɛnkakwés,” added Roktɛkstɛr. “And it is the land of my mother’s people. The army is sympathetic; that is why Akras has a power line and this area does not.”

“This area will need a power line, Honored General, if Dhɛdhuba is ever to be used for power generation,” noted Chris.

“True, but private investment will have to do it,” replied Roktɛkɛstɛr. “The Army Command has endured considerable criticism for building the line around the north shore.”

Chris did not know that. Lua came up to them at the moment as well. “Honored doctor, my people need your assistance,” said Kadstɛru.

“I will see what I can do,” Lua replied. She looked at her father. “Disappointed?”

“Perhaps some. But private investment can build up this place. Maybe a clinic here should charge a fee based on income.”

“I think it will have to,” she agreed. “A school, too.”

He nodded. “The Réjé’s promise to pay for the education of the children of the Old Houses is an opportunity. A school down here can serve a lot of kids who can’t get to Mɛlwika, and the palace subsidy is guaranteed if we get the kids of the old houses.” He looked at Mitru. “And moving the kids to a school here will create a new transportation center, where businesses can develop.”

Mitru nodded. “That’s the way to go. Count me in.”

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ɛjnopéla

Chris experienced a rare bout of depression the next day. Hostility and hatred were hard for him to deal with; it made him temporarily question what he was trying to do. The long afternoon of classes at the palace was torturous, and any stray criticisms seemed magnified in significance.

But he felt better the next morning. Over breakfast he talked to Lua, Amos, and Liz about various options. “I think a clinic can cover most of its expenses,” said Lua. “I’ve found that if someone comes in complaining about bad eyesight and you put glasses on their face that corrects their vision, they find the five dhanay it costs to buy the glasses. They recognize a concrete, tangible improvement to their life and want it. I’m more worried about dental work. People with a severe toothache find the two or three dontay to get the tooth pulled in the market, but they’re usually not willing to pay half a dhanay for a filling, especially if we tell them they need ten or fifteen.”

“You’ve got to combine things,” replied Chris. “Like charge six dhanay for glasses but include a free dental examination, cleaning, and repair of one tooth.”

“That will help, but we’ll still have problems with referrals to hospitals. Can you talk to someone about some subsidy?”

“Okay, but I’m not sure we can get any. It’s late in the budget year.”

“Dad, my other concern is that your plan will demand a *lot* of your time and energy,” said Lua. “I’m not sure you have it. For that matter, I’m not sure the two hospitals have the extra staff to support a clinic.”

“You worry about the clinic. The school won’t be that much more work for me, and the classes at the palace are scheduled to run for another two weeks. After that, I can cut back on follow-up courses.”

“We have a good management staff in the tomi now, too,” added Amos.

A few minutes later Chris left for the génadɛma. He diverted through the Natural Sciences building to look for Okpétu. He found him in the geology lab, working on a photomosaic of the Kwolonɛ lands for the army.

“Very impressive,” he said. He moved his finger north of their main grasslands to the arid upper reaches of the Ornakwés, where several small hamlets were visible in the strip of green along the water. “What are these?”

“The villages of the Krésonɛs. They’re a fairly small cattle herding and farming tribe; the census people have looked at the photos and say the population is about a thousand.”

“We’ll have to contact them some time. Say, Okpétu, I want to talk to your father and make a business proposition. When can I drive down to see him?”

“Today should be good. He tours his farms on Kwétɛrdiu through Suksdiu during the spring and summer and hunts those days in Génménu, but it’s almost winter and it’s Tridiu, so he should be home.”

“Thank you. Mitru and I plan to drive down this afternoon, then. If you want a ride, you are free to join us.”

“Thanks, but I now go home Suksdiu afternoon when the high school students go home, and come back Dwodiu morning. One day a week at home is plenty!”

Chris smiled. “Okay. Thank you.” He nodded goodbye and headed for his office, where he called Manu and Estanu to find out how busy both contractors were. Then he walked to the high school to talk to Ornéstu a while. Finally, he returned to his office to formulate details further.

Mitru stopped by at the génadɛma building at 2 bells in his fancy new steam car and they headed for ɛjnopéla. The forty kilometer trip took an hour, but since they had crossed one time zone, they arrived at 2 o’clock. Aryékwɛs was surprised by their arrival; there was no way to warn him.

“Gentlemen, what an honor; two visits in three days! Please come in and have some tea. Honored Mitru, do you have a better idea how much the steam coach will cost?”

“Indeed, my Lord; forty to forty-five, depending on the things one wants included. Yimu thinks he can start producing them in three months. Every time we drive it to Mɛddoakwés, someone wants to buy one, so orders are already coming in. He’ll even buy back old steam wagons at a discounted price; we can recycle them for other tasks.”

“Good, that will help. This way, please.” Aryékwɛs led them back into his formal meeting room. He seemed nervous, no doubt afraid they would ask him something he would have to refuse.

He poured them tea and they chit-chatted for a few minutes. Then he said, “But I am sure you are not here to hear about my boys or my hunt along the Swadakwés. How may I help you?”

“We have been talking about the meeting the other day,” said Chris. “And we have a business proposition for you that will establish ɛjnopéla as the center of this part of the lower Arjakwés, if that is something you desire.”

“That is something I desire. Based on the ruins here, this was a large Sumi town. I think it must have been the largest town between Mɛddoawkés and Lilalara. So it has a lot of potential for growth. Certainly, the hill of sacrifice is auspicious.”

“It will attract people,” agreed Chris. “The key, we think, is a school. Mɛlwika High School is still acquiring more and more students and is impossibly overcrowded. We’ve had to increase the number of students per classroom to 32 and have started holding classes in the auditorium, which we are subdividing into quarters for the winter. The end of agricultural work for the winter means more teenagers are available, and as a result of talking to their friends they have become curious about the school. More girls are going, too. And they like the uniforms. Registrations have now passed 460. Of those, 100 come from Ekwɛdhuna, Pɛrkas, and Brébɛstéa, and eight come from the Dwobrébakwés Valley. Our elementary and middle schools are attracting children from this area as well because the passenger wagons are already running here. If the 125 high school students were diverted to a school in ɛjnopéla, and one or two hundred younger kids, our school would no longer be impossibly overcrowded.”

“I see. But I don’t know how to run a school.”

“That is why we are proposing a business proposition. You provide us the land for free and we’ll organize, build, and run the school. It can be used for génadɛma classes at night. It’ll come with a clinic with a nurse on hand every day and a doctor two or three

days a week. It'll have room for a telephone switchboard because we'll extend telephone and power lines to the area. It'll have space for a post office and a photography studio. The school will also build a business building next door and rent out the space. A food market would be a priority because the school will need access to food for its students."

"And if you provide me with free land, I'll build a passenger bus terminal," added Mitru. "Assuming we get a few more students from the north and east, I'll need to move about 350 students a day. I'm already moving 300 of those students, and I have about fifty other passengers joining them; so I know I'll need five or six bus loads. I'll need to base some buses permanently here, and since Ekwɛdhuna, Pɛrkas, and Brébɛstéa have quite a few steam wagons already, I'll set up a repair facility for them in ɛjnopéla."

"And if you have five or six busses per day moving students in and out, Mitru can afford to add a few extra runs so people can come to ɛjnopéla, shop, and go home, or can switch to a bus to Mɛddoakwés," exclaimed Chris. "Your town will be the transportation hub of the lower valley. The school itself will bring you fifteen or twenty jobs, the business building maybe five or ten more, and the garage and bus terminal about ten. Together, they'll attract even more jobs. Your town will gain fifty households; that's several hundred residents."

"How much money will you make?" asked Aryékwɛs.

"The school will be a not for profit operation," said Chris. "There will be management costs; in addition to sixteen teachers it'll need a principal and a secretary."

"And I'll make my usual profit," added Mitru. "Or I'll lose money; I assume the risk."

Aryékwɛs shook his head. “I am not inclined to give you land for free.”

“Otherwise we can approach Béranta,” replied Chris. “The lower Arjakwés will need a hub somewhere, and it doesn’t have to be ɛjnopéla.”

That took him aback. “Look, I can give land for a school, but why shouldn’t you pay for the land to be used for a market? It’ll make plenty of money.”

“Tell you what; I’ll pay three hundred dhanay for two agris,” offered Mitru.

Aryékwɛs nodded. “Okay, that’ll do. What about my own students?”

“You’ll have to pay,” replied Chris. “One hundred dhanay per year for every local child attending the school. But it’ll be up to you to decide how many that will be, and the Réjé has already said that the palace will pay for the education of children from the old houses.”

“Ah. There’s your money. Now I understand your plan.” He nodded, absorbing the idea. “And I only have to pay for ten percent of the kids who aren’t from old houses. I can afford that. When are you talking about starting?”

“Right away,” replied Chris. “Because the Mɛlwika schools are badly overcrowded. We did not anticipate so many kids would come. We have no room to expand the elementary school. We can expand the high school, but it is expensive. If a school is built here, it will serve most of the excess, which gives us time to plan any expansion, and will attract even more students.”

“You’re creating your own competition!”

“No; Mɛlwika will serve the upper valley, ɛjnopéla the lower valley, and Mɛddoakwés will have schools for itself. Mɛlwika is too far east to serve everyone. If we

run the ɛjnopéla schools, we'll be sure their quality is good. The génadɛma will train the teachers."

"Ah. You make money there."

"The génadɛma is also not for profit, but it does pay the salaries of most of my family."

Aryékwɛs nodded. "But the school can't open tomorrow."

"Of course not. But both Manu and Estanu can start construction in a week or so. We have the blueprints for Mɛlwika high school; they can be modified quickly. We'll need building materials. There are a lot bricks and stones available from the ruins and you have already paid men to make piles of them. And there is the old brick pit; I am sure Manu and Estanu can find someone to start making bricks. Winter is coming fast, but that is not necessarily a problem. We built the Engineering School all winter last year inside a gigantic tent and we can do the same here. A tent over the brick pit will help keep it warm."

"We are warmer than Mɛlwika, too," added Aryékwɛs. "So, when would the school open?"

"We could have four classrooms done in two months and four more every month and a half after that," replied Chris. "Construction and the brick pit would add another fifty jobs. Desks, chairs, and such are already being used by the students in Mɛlwika and would come from there."

"Have you already talked to the Mɛlwika school?"

Chris nodded. "Briefly. We'd buy the desks and chairs when the students are transferred. I've got staff in the Mennea Tomi who can work out the details."

“There is one other thing,” added Mitru. “And it will cost you, Lord. All these buildings will need fire protection, so ɛjnopéla will need a fire station with at least one fire engine. That’s a few thousand dhanay for the building, five thousand for the fire engine, and five thousand per year for the fire fighters.”

“That’s a lot. . . . but the peace of mind will attract people to the town.”

“And the towns already in the regional fire district will support it,” added Chris. “They’ll pay for about half.”

“You’ll arrange that as well?”

“I’ll ask Potanu, Mɛlwika’s fire chief, to do that. He’s in charge of the district. When it was set up, the eastern villages complained they didn’t want to participate because they were too far away to benefit.”

“But with telephone lines here, a fire station will be effective.” Aryékwɛs absorbed the idea. “What else?”

“You may need to have more work done on roads and sewers,” said Chris. “The school will have a well and windmill for water. It would be better to install a public water supply for the town, because all these businesses will attract people.”

“And services attract people,” added Mitru.

“Where will the money to build the school come from?”

“The bank,” replied Chris, though he was uncertain of that; he might loan the money himself. “A basic classroom costs 3,000 dhanay. We’re looking at twelve to sixteen classrooms. Any loans involve seven percent interest per year. But the payment from the Réjé guarantees that we can repay the loans. The business building next door will bring in income to support the school, too.”

“You have an answer for everything.” Aryékwɛs was a bit shocked. “Now, this business building; who gets the profits from it?”

“The school gets the largest share,” replied Chris. “But the Mennea Tomi will get a management fee for assuming the risk and administering it. We’ll get some of the profit there. And it is only fair that we do so.”

“I trust someone better who is making a profit or facing a loss anyway,” said Aryékwɛs.

“Well, I am a businessman and a farmer by nature and experience, and running a not-for-profit génadɛma is a new task for me,” replied Chris. “My family needs to make a living, too. But for us, the school is a service; it is our gift of time and energy to this world. It does cover our basic needs; those members of my family who are faculty get paid a salary, and it is according to the same scale as the Eryan faculty, it is not different. But managing a business to generate profits for a school; that’s different. The Mennea tomi has a standard arrangement for dividing up profits, and the school will benefit the most, but some of the profit will come back to the tomi as an incentive to expand the businesses in ɛjnopéla.”

“Can I get a cut of the profits as well, then?”

“You’ll be getting taxes from the businesses, but if you want some of the profit, that means investing some of your personal fortune in the businesses.”

“That’s fair.” Aryékwɛs considered. “We can talk more about that later. How do you *do* this, Lord?”

“This is the main thing I teach at the génadɛma, Lord; business courses, including accounting. I also teach agriculture. On Gɛdhéma my family lived in one of the poorest

areas of the world and we taught development skills, so that's what we do here as well. The Mennea Tomi includes twelve businesses; the hospital, génadɛma, Woman's Géndha, the Engineering Géndha, and the Grange participate in it as well. The school and business center here will probably be a part as well. The businesses are owned by my sons in law or by Eryan business partners who make things we need but didn't have the money or business skills to produce, such as paper, chemicals, gas, telephones, and matches. The tomi handles most or all accounting for the businesses, tracking income, paying bills and taxes, paying workers, and handling the benefits; all the workers in the tomi and their families have use of the hospital and pay a very low payment, the tomi paying the rest. The tomi also handles the workers' pensions; a payment equal to five percent of each worker's weekly salary is kept and put in a special bank account, which they can receive when they are old or if they have a terrible emergency, like a fire. This gives the workers some security. If the worker dies, his family gets the pension instead. The tomi handles these things for hundreds of people, including the use of the hospital by the grange farmers and the génadɛma students. It has a staff of sixteen. For this project, I'll assign one person full time to manage the cash and oversee all contracts; we prefer written contracts for all major purchases so we agree later what was contracted. So, we have a complex system for managing all these projects. I have a manager running the tomi, Mɛndhrubéru, but I still need to devote one day a week to it."

"The Miller Tomi is very similar because we copy Lord Kristobéru's system," added Mitru. "Almost all our businesses are owned by Miller sons or sons in law, though now some Miller wives and daughters are starting businesses too. We also provide health care and a pension, pay salaries and taxes, and invest profits in each other's businesses.

We handle almost six hundred workers and their families; our tomi employs twenty accountants and clerks."

Aryékwɛs was startled. "This is amazing. But how can you afford it?"

"One can't afford not to do this, Lord," replied Chris. "The tomi system makes the operations more efficient because it watches expenses. Add to it worker training and the workers are two or three times as efficient as traditional workers; in other words, they produce two or three times as much per day. It is not difficult to pay them more and keep some of the increase to pay for benefits. On Gɛdhéma it was found that people never planned for hospital expenses or took care of their health; they always wanted to spend that money on other things until they suddenly had a health crisis. This system saves their money for teeth, glasses, and illnesses. I should also say that where health is concerned, it pools the workers' money and uses that chest of money to pay everyone's health expenses. A worker doesn't pay in fifty dhanay per year and get only fifty dhanay of hospital coverage, they get whatever coverage they need. Some workers pay fifty dhanay and use none of the benefit."

"I see. This is complex." He pointed to the door. "Let's go look at the land." He rose; Chris and Mitru followed. They stepped out the front door. The hill of sacrifice was to the villa's immediate left or north. It was the lava heart of an ancient volcano, the softer layers of ash having eroded away, the foot of the volcano being buried by sediment from the river's floodplain. The hill's sides were steep cliffs of reddish brown. A broad sacred stair wound part way around the pinnacle to the top, which the Sumis had decapitated and flattened for their ancient temple. The temple's roof had fallen in long

ago, but the Parthenon-like pillars of its four sides were still intact, their light sandstone color contrasting sharply with the dark mountain underneath.

The old Sumi townsite east and south of the pinnacle had partly been cleared; the old concrete streets were cracked strips of rusted gray separated by ancient foundations and heaps of debris, the bricks having already been hauled away for new construction. Two lines of villas were being constructed within their outer walls along "Villa Street," a wide street marking the southern edge of the old Sumi town, which had also been the site of many large homes. The gardens of the villas on the southern side of the street were walled off from stubbly wheat fields and pasture stretching several kilometers to the hilly southern border of the valley; the villas along the street's northern side terminated against the vacant lots of the old Ceremonial Way that led to the base of the Sacred Stair. Aryékwɛs's villa was built at the western head of the street and extended northward to the foot of the pinnacle close to the bottom of the ceremonial stair, which reached the mountain at its eastern side. Villa Street had originally continued westward; Aryékwɛs had cleared and repaired it to provide a runway for Okpétu's glider. But it had never landed at the town because it had no way to take off.

They stepped out of the front of the villa facing east, the two lines of new and future villas on their right and left. Aryékwɛs pointed to the parallel street one hundred meters to the north. "Ceremonial Way leads to the base of the sacred stair. It had the market and businesses, so it's a logical place for them now. My street and the Ceremonial Way are crossed by a very broad concrete street six hundred doli west of here; it's the one you drove on from Pɛrkas. That's the place for the school."

Chris nodded and they walked east along Villa Street three hundred meters to "Broad Street." About thirty houses for builders and servants had been built along Broad Street almost to the Sacred Way, giving the nucleus of ɛjnopéla an L shape. They walked along Broad Street to the intersection with the Ceremonial Way. Aryékwɛs pointed to the intersection around them. "This would be good," he said.

Chris nodded and pointed to the west side of Broad Street. "You want the businesses over here, along the foot of the Ceremonial Way. If the business building is on the southwestern corner, Mitru's transportation center can be on the northwestern corner. Then on the east side of Broad Street we can put the schools; one for grades one through eight, one for grades nine through eleven and the génadɛma."

Aryékwɛs looked around. "I'll give you two hundred doli by one hundred doli for the business building, right here, as you said. Mitru, how big a lot do you need?"

"The same, Lord."

Aryékwɛs nodded. "And the schools? One hundred on Broad Street and two hundred deep?"

"That will be enough for the buildings, but we will need a field for the children to play in right behind," replied Chris. "We'll put a fence around it to keep them in."

"What do they need that for, if they are here to learn?"

"They need a break sometimes, and physical education is part of education."

"Fine, I'll give you nine agri." He drew a circle in the air. That would be a piece of land one hundred eighty meters on the side, since an agri was 120 doli, or sixty meters, square.

Chris nodded. "I'll send a surveyor to measure it."

“Let’s pace it off right now,” replied Aryékwɛs, and he started pacing the first lot himself. It was rough, but that was good enough for him. He built a few piles of stones to mark corners as they went.

Finished, they walked back up the Ceremonial Way to the villa for more tea. “My Lord, you need to plan how you will use the Ceremonial Way, even if you can’t implement the plan yet,” suggested Chris. “It is the heart of your future town and needs to be planned right. And if you want to go into business yourself, you should reserve some of it for your own use and start building.”

Aryékwɛs looked at the ground as he walked and pondered a reply. “The Ceremonial Way must await a dream to take its final form,” he finally replied. “As for business; a proper Eryan nobleman lives off the fruit of his land, not from buying and selling.” He said the last three words slowly, with emphasis. Chris raised his eyebrows and said nothing. As they walked back to the house, he contemplated all the noblemen on Earth who had become penniless and powerless because they had locked up their wealth in landed estates.

They drank another round of tea and chatted. After Chris and Mitru got into the steam car and drove away, Chris shook his head. “This will work, I think, but I wish Aryékwɛs would get involved.”

“His passivity worries me. If people make a lot of money, he’ll feel exploited. But you made many offers to him. I hope he’s willing to spend money on necessary improvements.”

“There’s that problem, too.”

“Of course, if he were involved, he might interfere too much.”

“That’s true.” Chris glanced at the sun. Skanda was a razor-thin crescent nearby and moving closer. “About half an hour to the eclipse. That means it’s 5 bells in Mɛlwika and 4 bells here. Do you want to drive to Frakdoma? We can’t stay long, and I don’t have any business in mind; but an hour’s visit would be encouraging to them.”

“Alright,” agreed Mitru. “It’s not too far. And I’d rather be inside drinking more tea than driving during the eclipse; this thing has no headlights.”

“If we leave when the eclipse ends, we’ll get home before the twilight fades.”

[April 25, 2006; reread and edited 5/24/13, 8/4/17]

169.

The Villages

Soru hurried inside the Mɛlwika Bahá'í Center, shook the snow from his light coat, and shuddered from the cold. It was mid Prusménu; the month of frosts, but not usually of snowstorms.

"Alláh-u-Abhá," said Snékwu to him. The young farmer, a member of the Mɛlwika Spiritual Assembly, usually sat by the entrance to greet people.

"Alláh-u-Abhá, Snékwu," replied Soru. "Wow, cold!"

"You need a better coat; a good, warm one. The market is full of Tutanɛ-made ones."

"I know, I've got to buy one. It looks like we're in for a cold winter. How are you?"

"Pretty good. The farm is sleeping, so I'm relaxing a bit and taking two courses at the génadɛma in elementary science and math. Very interesting things. How's Kanawé?"

"Fine. We're both taking two courses, too, and teaching all afternoon, so life is difficult right now."

"That's a lot. How's married life?"

Soru smiled. "Great. Of course, we've only been married a month!"

"Wait until children come along; then it gets complicated." Snékwu rolled his eyes; he had a one year old and was raising Primanu, an adopted boy, now eleven.

Others had arrived at the entrance for Snékwu to greet, so Soru continued inside. In spite of the snow and cold, there was a good turnout; perhaps one hundred of the city's

two hundred Bahá'ís. Feast was held once every Bahá'í month, but with very long work days it had proved impossible to hold them on any day but the first Primdiu of each Bahá'í month, when most rested and did household tasks. By holding feast in mid afternoon, families had time to shop and take care of the laundry, could bring the children to Feast, and still go home in daylight.

A few minutes later the Feast began with a devotional program, a moving series of passages from Bahá'í prayers and scriptures, all chanted, sung, or recited. The Bahá'í community had quite a few able chanters, so the program was quite inspiring. Then everyone sang several songs together to the accompaniment of the génadɛma's piano, which had been hauled over earlier in the day.

"That concludes the devotional program," exclaimed Sulanu, the editor of the Mɛlwika *Nuɛs,* who was the secretary of the Mɛlwika Spiritual Assembly. "We have three announcements from the Central Spiritual Assembly. I'll read the first two, then Modolubu will make the third one." Sulanu picked up a letter. "We just received this letter from the Assembly yesterday. It reads: 'Dear Bahá'í Friends: The Central Spiritual Assembly has deliberated at length about the nature of the Bahá'í administrative structure on Éra. As some of you know, on Gɛdhéma the Bahá'í Faith had two parallel institutions. The local and national Spiritual Assemblies and the Universal House of Justice are elected nine-person bodies; but parallel to them is another branch, which consists of Counselors appointed by the Universal House of Justice, Auxiliary Board members appointed by the Counselors, and Assistants appointed by the Auxiliaries.

"To date, Éra has had local spiritual assemblies and a Central Spiritual Assembly. It is not possible for the Bahá'í Faith to have two Universal Houses of Justice, so Éra will

never have a Supreme Institution of its own, and therefore we can not have Counselors or Auxiliary Board members. However, to continue their function and purpose into the future, the Central Spiritual Assembly has decided to create a parallel institution of individuals called "Auxiliaries." Auxiliaries cannot be elected to a spiritual assembly; that frees them to advise and encourage the Central and local Spiritual Assemblies. Eventually, Auxiliaries will also appoint assistants. For now, we appoint Mary Cartwright as our first Auxiliary and thank her for the informal service she has been doing for the Faith for several years." Sulanu turned to Mary and added, "Congratulations."

All eyes turned to the grandmother of the Mennea clan. She was looking older and frailer than ever, but there was a fire of love and an energy of the spirit in her eyes. She stood up. "Thank you, Sulanu," she replied. "I felt overwhelmed by this appointment and beg all of you to pray for me, that I may serve the Faith in this fashion. You know, the main purpose and responsibility of my position is to love and encourage everyone; Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís, institutions and individuals. If we can learn to love each other more and more, with greater love and fervor, in spite of our imperfections and differences, then we will lay the foundation for building the Kingdom of God. My second responsibility, sometimes, is to speak my mind, frankly and clearly. And this is what I have done in the council chamber and in gatherings such as this one. We know what we are supposed to be doing: building community through private devotional meetings in our houses and community ones here in the Center; providing moral and spiritual classes to children and youth in our homes and here in the Center; visiting Bahá'ís we don't see very often and friends who are attracted to the Faith; praying and bringing ourselves to account each day before God; reciting the word of God every morning and evening;

studying the Faith and our duties through the Ruhi series, then through other study classes, in our homes and here in the Center; attending Feasts and holy day observances; serving others and our city; explaining the teachings to others; and giving to the Fund so that our community is supported materially. The pattern is clear and we are gradually learning how to implement it. I am so pleased to see so many of us here today, in spite of the wretched weather. Please remember that I pray for all of you every day and again I ask you to pray for me." She sat to smiles and nods. Everyone loved Mary.

"Thank you, Mary," replied Sulanu. "We always love to hear from you. The other announcement is that the Central Spiritual Assembly has started a newsletter, which will appear every two Bahá'í months." He held up a copy. "I have ten copies of the first issue, which I will pass around. Lébé Mennea is the editor, and as you can see, it is printed using Dhoru's computer, so it is quite fancy, with color and even with photos! I wish I could do that with the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs!*" He waved the copy in his hand. "It came out last week, so some of you have already seen it. It doesn't mention Mary's appointment as Auxiliary, but it does describe her trip to Mɛddwoglubas, where she gave Ruhi books 7 and 8; they now have four tutors on the western shore who have taken the entire primary series, one more than we have here! The other lead article talks about plans for the Bahá'í temple; at its last meeting the Central Spiritual Assembly defined the basic design they want. It's quite a good article, so please read the issue during the social portion of Feast, if you can." He turned to Modolubu. "And now we have an important announcement."

"Yes," said Modolubu, who was the Central Spiritual Assembly's secretary. "Over the last six months, your Central Spiritual Assembly has met eight times and has considered carefully the current status of the Faith and its future growth. We have been

struck, over and over, by one fact: our believers can be found in one very large community of migrants—Mɛlwika—a reasonably large community of locally born people—Mɛddwoglubas—and a very large number of small, struggling communities. Some of those communities have elected local spiritual assemblies that have never met; some have never held a Feast. Even in larger communities like Ora and Néfa, the communities are struggling. And, of course, there are hundreds of villages with no Bahá'ís at all.

"For this reason, we call on Bahá'ís in the larger communities—Mɛlwika and Mɛddwoglubas—to consider making plans to move to places where the Bahá'í community is small or nonexistent in order to develop the Faith there. Many of you are from such villages and have friends and family in them. If you return to those places after a careful plan of preparation, you will be in the position to take with you the new knowledge that can improve the lives of the people there. You will also be able to bring the pattern of Bahá'í life and gradually, patiently, wisely, establish it. You will also call heavenly blessings down on yourselves and win eternal bounties. Mɛlwika will see steady renewal, we are convinced, as new arrivals are attracted to the message of Bahá'u'lláh and some of them in turn return home."

He looked around at his startled fellow believers. They had escaped poverty and ignorance to come to what was, to them, a paradise; they had gotten ahead in some small way; and now they were being called on to leave!

"It's not that bad!" Modolubu said, with a smile. "We don't have priests, remember; this is our religion and we have to take the responsibility to expand and improve it."

“We might even make money going home,” quipped Snékwu. “We’ll have skills that people in our home villages need. Even if they can’t pay us much, in most villages a few dhanay go a long way.”

“So, are you going?” asked Sarébéru, who had a vegetable and fruit stall in the Temple Square Market.

“Me? No, I have a farm to run.”

“Keep in mind that many of us have brothers and cousins who could take over our farms for a year,” noted Modolubu. “The Assembly is not saying to leave forever. A long time may be better, but there may be reasons to go back for the winter, for a few months, for a year or two . . . everyone must decide whether they can move at all, and if so, for how long.”

That brought about another long pause as everyone considered the idea. Then Chris Mennea spoke up. “Liz and I would never have met if Mary hadn’t moved to a new place. I was a little boy when this woman and her daughter visited my parents’ house because they had an apartment to rent. They had come thousands of dɛkɛnt to our country, Italia, where there were almost no Bahá’ís. They settled and my parents became Bahá’ís. Fifteen years later, Liz and I married. We then moved to several other countries, again hundreds or thousands of dɛkɛnt from Italia. Each of our three children was born in a different country. We finally settled in a fairly poor but capable country; I suppose Lɛwéspa is the best comparison. The skills we developed there to serve the people, help them become educated, help them start businesses, were essential for our successes here. What a blessing we have experienced because we dared to move to a strange place where the people didn’t even speak the same language as us.”

"We must all think seriously about this idea," said Modolubu. "We're not asking people to move now, or even before winter is over. Maybe some will move by then. But some of us will start a process of planning that will take a year or two or more. And we will have blessings." He turned to Sulanu; he was finished.

Sulanu called for the Treasurer's report and a quick one was offered; the community had received 120 dhanay in donations over the last Bahá'í month. The business portion over, everyone turned to the refreshments and socializing. Soru remained another hour, as he had many friends to see and catch up with.

When he left the snow had stopped and it had warmed up a bit. He considered walking through the market to look at coats, but wondered whether they had enough money to buy one; the Tutanɛ ones, leather and fancy with bead work by the tribal women, were ten dhanay, which was almost a week's salary. Instead he headed home—Saréiduktɛr's, which they had helped fix up quite a bit—contemplating whether to propose to Kanawé that they move for the Bahá'í Faith. She was beginning to get interested in the Faith, but proposing a move was premature. It was not clear where they could go, either; their work in Mɛddoakwés could not easily be duplicated anywhere else but perhaps Ora, and he had no desire to move back there; the specialized education they needed for working with deaf and special needs children was impossible anywhere but Mɛlwika; and living in between those two places was a complicated proposition because of limited public transportation.

He crossed the Péskawés bridge, head bent downward against the wind. When he looked up, three men walked past him and suddenly he realized they were the three thieves that had escaped Bɛllɛdha Prison with him almost a year earlier. He made eye

contact with one of them, who nodded to him. He kept walking and didn't dare look back. He walked past the entrance to the alley where he was living and turned down the next street instead, glancing back to make sure they weren't following him.

They were back, and no doubt they were going to rob people in Mɛlwika again. The police had turned the heat up on them over the summer and they had disappeared, who knows to where; crimes occurred all around the world and no one was collecting the information to look for patterns. Soru wondered what to do. He didn't want to reveal his secret past, though; not now, when life had gotten so good and so happy. But he didn't want the thieves to reveal his secrets either. With a heavy heart, he stepped inside Saréidukter's house, full of worry.

Only four centimeters of snow fell on Mɛlwika that day. The next day most of it melted under the influence of a warm wind from the east. By Pɛnkudiu, when Lord Chris had a long-distance trip to take, the winter's first snow storm was a memory.

Mitru, again, was coming, driving his steam car; he loved to show it off, and they wanted to test it on long trips anyway. Chris brought along Rudhkrisu, their best electrician, because Agras had a power line but no power yet. They stopped in Mɛddoakwés to pick up Bidhu, then headed northwest.

The gravel road headed north along the Isérakwés, then turned west for nine kilometers until it reached the Dwobrébakwés. It crossed that river on a new bridge and from there to the Gédhakwés was a brand new gravel road carved from scratch across the brushlands and open woods. The army had done a good job; the remaining twenty-five kilometers to Akras took only half an hour. It was a village sited on the Gédhakwés

where it emerged from the northern mountains, forty kilometers from Mɛddoakwés and only twenty-three from Sullɛndha, the largest village in the Pɛnkakwés district, which was the next stop on the new road.

Kadstɛru was outside his house looking for them when the steam car arrived. Mitru parked it next to the Lord's steam wagon and they stepped out. Kadstɛru extended both arms to his guests in a gesture of welcome. "Greetings, greetings. Thank you for coming so far on such a cold day." He shook hands with Chris and Mitru, then hugged his son and shook hands with Rudhkrisu.

"Lord, I am the electrician. Perhaps before you go inside, you can direct me?" asked Rudhkrisu.

"Oh, of course. Come." Kadstɛru turned and led all of them sixty meters to where the road crossed the Gédhakwés on a new bridge. The river was not impressive; a mere brook. A line of utility poles paralleled it from the gluba a hundred meters away, where a turbine and electrical generator spun. A hundred meters west, framing the road, were two basalt pinnacles, two of the village's "akras" or "high places" for which it was named. Both had ancient stone shrines on top.

Immediately across the bridge was a small stone building. "The electrical building is locked," noted Kadstɛru when they reached it. "I hope you have a key."

"I do, Lord. So, you want a power line from here to your house?"

"Indeed."

"That will take a day, and installing lines inside will take another day at least."

"You can stay tonight; we'll put you up. Mitru has a wagon running through here tomorrow."

“I can stay,” he said, though he glanced at Chris. He had not anticipated such a big assignment, which would cost Chris more than expected.

“Thank you.” Kadstɛru pointed to a young man nearby. “Tritu can help you; he wants to learn.” Kadstɛru turned to Chris. “Let’s head back to my house where we can talk, and where the others are gathered. We have tea and coffee waiting, too.” They headed back. He waved his hand. “Agras is a pretty typical place. We have about eight hundred people. But we do have a power and telephone line. The phone was installed over the summer so the electrical company could call my headman and tell him when to turn up the power production, other than ten minutes before the eclipse of course. But no one here wanted to pay for electricity, so it was never installed. Now think, I’ll have power in my rustic house here, but not in the mansion in Brébɛstéa!”

“That will change soon,” replied Chris. “Next month the electric company will start installing utility poles through Ekwɛdhunas to Brébɛstéa and Pɛrkas to ɛjnopéla and the Dhɛdhuba. An extension is planned to Béranta and Ornakwés over the summer. You’ll have electricity and telephone service by late spring.”

“Excellent! If I can call here every day or two, I won’t have to make as many visits.”

“I don’t know, dad. The people count on you to visit,” said Bidhu.

“They’ll manage; Séru is a pretty good headman.” Kadstɛru looked at Chris. “So, I hear a school is going up in ɛjnopéla.”

“Indeed; the ground has been broken for four classrooms and the walls are already rising.”

“It won’t help us much; it’s just as far as Mɛddoakwés, though it is closer than Mɛlwika.”

“Indeed, your students can get to Ɛjnopéla in an hour and the change in sunrise is less, so it may be convenient to send a few boys from here.”

“It’ll just encourage them to leave, I fear. Akras has lost half its young men and women in the last three years. The lower Arjakwés development will make that worse.” He paused as they reached the intersection between the new gravel road and a dirt road paralleling the river. He pointed to a new building north of them at the edge of the village. “That’s our schoolhouse, built a year ago. The teacher has forty kids; all he can handle. I bought them an iron stove last month, so they’ll be warm this winter, at least.” He led them up the road and they stuck their heads in the door for a moment. There was chaos inside as little groups of kids worked on different lessons at the same time, reciting them aloud, the teacher moving from group to group to see how they were doing, assisted by some of the older kids.

He led them back down the road and toward the vehicles parked by his house. “Of course, forty kids are not that many; Akras has three hundred who could be in school. But who can afford to send them all, and what would they do with the education? They’d just move to Mɛlwika or Mɛddoakwés.”

“Forty is pretty good, dad, compared to the average village,” replied Bidhu.

Kadstɛru nodded. “My heir, the numbers expert.”

They entered Kadstɛru’s old, rambling house. It had small windows closed against the wind with shutters; the interior was illuminated by smoky lamps. The great room had a big fireplace with a blazing fire and was reasonably comfortable. Two doors led out of

the great room, one to the quarters of the head man and his family, the other to Kadstɛru's quarters. The floor had several old bison furs covering it. Like most Eryan main rooms, it had a sésdha, a long bench built along the walls covered by furs and cushions; but today the group awaiting them was seated on the floor within reach of the fireplace's warmth. They all rose as Chris, Mitru, and Bidhu entered.

"Allow me to introduce everyone." Kadstɛru pointed. "This is Séru, headman of Akras. Sumikɛstɛr is headman of Wɛranakra, the next village down the river, over which I am also the Lord. Then there's Sugu of Jémipéla; Lujbardha of Bloriplata; and Wɛranu of Nusɛdya. My son tells me these five villages have 800, 700, 600, 500, and 500 inhabitants respectively; as you go down the river they get smaller."

"And then there are another 150 people in two or three hamlets farther south," added Wɛranu. About twenty-five, he was the youngest one present; his village, Nusɛdya, meant "New Settlement" and was the farthest downriver.

"A lot of people and resources," said Bidhu. The head of Her Majesty's statistics was busily reviewing statistics that were in his head; the area had 3,250 people; there were about 550 households; life expectancy, 40 years; annual household income, 850 dhanay, of which 283 dhanay was paid as taxes, of which 189 was paid to the Réjé and 94 to the Lords; 300 children were of high school age, 900 for grades 1 through 8. Theoretically, the local taxes could pay for all the kids to go to school, cover the costs of a good clinic, maintain the area's roads, and leave some for charity. But in fact Kadstɛru consumed ten thousand a year for his family, mansion, and servants in Brébɛstéa; three thousand more went to the other three Lords and their families; a few thousand was used for charity; and almost all of the rest was lost through spoilage of stored crops. Just a few

thousand dhanay was left for schools and emergency medical care.

"A lot of resources?" responded Sumikɛstɛr. His name, "Sumi Slayer," seemed appropriate; he was big and very Eryan looking, with slightly reddish skin, red hair, and a red beard. "Bidhu, you've forgotten how poor we are here!"

"No, Honored Sumikɛstɛr. I am looking toward the future."

"I'm glad someone is!" exclaimed Lord Sugu, "Victor," whose village, Jémipéla, meant "Thornhill." "We haven't been able to hire a teacher, Bidhu. We built a school for fifty children and it's empty."

"So we have not bothered to build a school at all," exclaimed Lujbardha, "Blackbeard," from Bloriplata, "Flower Plain."

"And we're at the end of everything," concluded Wɛranu. "No school, no literacy, nothing to do when someone gets deathly ill."

"Let me get our guests tea!" exclaimed Kadstɛru. The headman's wife was dashing about to fill cups.

"You are very kind," said Chris. "In some ways, the situation here is similar to other small villages across this world. In other ways it is different, because you are an hour by steam wagon from the capital and an hour and a half from Mɛlwika, and you are on a good road with a telephone line and electricity. Your region even has a dammed gluba with an electrical generator. It doesn't make much power; a few hundred horsepower. But it is something."

"But we have no way to *use* those horses!" replied Séru. "It does us no good."

"But there is potential here," replied Bidhu. "So there is hope." He nodded thanks for the cup of tea and paused for Mitru to receive his cup.

“On the drive down, the three of us talked about the Gédhakwés region,” exclaimed Chris. “And we have some ideas. They are a bit unusual, but listen to us. Bidhu will explain.” Chris turned to the heir of the region’s most important Lord. There was no question that the young man had more credibility than a Gɛdhému or a young half-Gɛdhémɛ rich man.

“One thing Mɛlwika has been teaching local villages is how to preserve grain better, so spoilage is a tenth or twentieth instead of a third or a half,” Bidhu began. “This area loses fifteen hundred to two thousand bushels of grain every winter and spring to spoilage. If you paid the Mɛlwika Grange to store it for you, spoilage will be almost nothing and the payment to their grange will be small. The result would be at least five thousand extra dhanay.”

“Mɛlwika alone has thirty thousand bushels in storage, and the capital has even more,” added Chris. “Most of it’s being sold gradually to feed the sixteen thousand people in our region who are not farmers. Some is being kept in reserve in case next year’s weather causes a famine. But now that we have steam wagons, food can easily be moved from region to region. We can grow grain all winter at ɛndraidha and eat the fresh harvest in the early spring.”

“But if we sell our surplus and there’s a famine, how could we afford to buy replacement grain?” asked Séru, irritated by the idea.

“Our grain storage facilities are fullest in Abɛlménu. They already have ten thousand bushels of empty capacity,” replied Chris. “You have about five thousand bushels in your villages. The price of grain is now quite low; six dhanay per bushel. It’ll go up in late winter or early spring, probably to about eight, then it’ll go down in late

spring as people dump their old grain in anticipation of the upcoming harvest. Our storage fee is fifty dhanay per hundred bushels. Let's say you ship five thousand bushels to us. Mitru will charge you ten dhanay per load for the transportation. We're talking about ten loads. Ship the bad grain as well as the good, because we have a chicken farmer in Mɛlwika who will pay one dhanay per bushel for partially rotten grain if his chickens can eat it. You probably have a thousand bushels of that grain already! We won't sell any grain until you authorize it. I suggest you let our grange pool your grain with ours and handle the sales of the whole thing, but that's your decision."

"So how much are we talking about?" asked Kadstɛru, intrigued.

"Let's say you have four thousand bushels of good grain and a thousand bushels of bad," said Bidhu. "The good is worth 24,000 thousand right now and the bad, one thousand. So that's 25,000. Transportation is 100 and storage, 2,000, since I assume you won't store the bad. That leaves you with almost 23,000. If you wait and sell in early spring, you'll get 32,000 instead. With reduced spoilage and careful sales to the market, you can make about ten thousand more than you'd get otherwise, even after storage and transportation."

"But what if we have a cold spring, the winter wheat is ruined, and the spring wheat planting is delayed?" asked Sumikɛstɛr, raising his voice.

"Then don't sell it until late spring," replied Bidhu. "And call the grain back. Mitru will ship it back here for ten dhanay per load. You'll still have a thousand bushels of grain to sell that would have gone bad in your granaries."

"Why doesn't the Réjé do this with her granaries?" asked Sugu, critically.

"She is beginning to," replied Bidhu. "The palace has their own modern grain

silos."

"My grain wagon moved ten thousand bushels in the last month," added Mitru. "The idea came from Mɛgdhuna; they were struggling to pay for all the kids going to Mɛlwika high school. Some other villages are moving their grain to Mɛlwika, too."

"We should ask the Lord of Mɛgdhuna, to verify that," said Sugu.

"That's easy to do," replied Bidhu. "But I can vouch for this."

So, we have about ten thousand extra dhanay," said Kadstɛru, who was already sold on the idea.

"If you want my suggestion, I'd spend some upgrading the dirt track to Nusɛdya," said Bidhu. "The customary arrangement in the last few years has been to pay local men one dhanay per day to work on the road. That's not much, but they benefit because the road will make life easier, and between now and planting season they won't make much money anyway."

"You can rent steam wagons from me to transport gravel for ten dhanay per day," added Mitru. "I can guarantee that the driver has road-building experience. I have quite a few who drove steam wagons when the army worked on this road last year. A few are even locals and they'll be glad to come back. About ten or twelve men can ride on top of a load of gravel, so I suggest you rent one steam wagon with a gravel trailer for every ten men. They dig gravel at a local deposit, ride to the place where the gravel is to be spread, spread it, and ride back for more. They can spread at least three loads a day, which is enough to upgrade a hundred-fifty meters of dirt track; call it a third of a dɛkɛnt."

"And Nesɛdya is forty dɛkɛnt," said Wɛranu. "So that's. . . 120 days with one steam wagon and ten men."

“Is that all this road through here cost?” asked Sumikɛstɛr, skeptically.

“No, it cost fifteen times that,” replied Mitru. “It’s six meters wide instead of three, has three or four times as much gravel, a drainage ditch, and bridges.”

“A lot of our men have experience working on it,” added Kadstɛru. “It sounds like you’re talking about a pretty basic road.”

“One lane,” said Bidhu. “Most of the gravel is where the wheels go. More is put only where there are low spots. But you spend 2,400 this year, 2,400 next year, 2,400 the year after . . . in a few years it’ll be pretty good.”

“If you build a 2,400 dhanay gravel track to Nusɛdya, I can send a steam wagon down it and back in an hour or so,” said Mitru. “I don’t know how much demand there will be, so I don’t know how often I’d do it. I doubt I can make much money. But the Dwobɛrgonɛ have a similar run in their township three times a day and they pay for it themselves using their own steam wagon.”

“If there were a school here in Akras and kids to move back and forth, it’ll be profitable, right, Mitru?” asked Bidhu.

“Mitru nodded. “Sure, because we’re talking about a couple hundred kids going back and forth every day for a dontay per round trip. Of course, you’d have to pay the dontays! Another possibility: I could rent a steam wagon, driver, and passenger trailer to the area for seventy dhanay per week.”

“Seventy! That’s robbery!” exclaimed Sumikɛstɛr.

“No, it’s 4,200 per year, which is how much a passenger wagon costs. My profit is about twenty percent, and that’s reasonable. You could rent other equipment, too: plows, harrows, a saw mill, a cargo trailer. You could even rent a passenger trailer two days a

week, a plow two other days, a cargo trailer another day . . . you get the idea."

"What if a steam wagon were already available to this area?" asked Bidhu. Several people glanced at Kadstɛru, whose face tightened.

"The steam engine is half the cost, the driver another third, and the attachments the last sixth, roughly speaking," said Mitru.

"And my father's steam engine would qualify?"

Mitru nodded. "So would a used steam engine."

"Father, you come here pretty often; could you make your steam engine available?"

Kadstɛru tipped his head slightly. He was angry at his son and didn't want to show it. "I probably could make it available occasionally."

"Lord, there is another option to consider," said Mitru. "You have a fairly old steam wagon. Leave it here. I can train a local to run it if he comes to work for me all winter in Mɛlwika. The steam car I am driving will go into production in two months and we plan to make five per month. We will rent them for ten dhanay per day including a driver, except during times of high demand. Most Lords seem to drive their steam wagons less than fifty days a year; for five hundred a year they'll get just as much transportation, and it'll look much nicer. It'll be more comfortable, a professional will drive them and watch the car when it is parked . . . it'll be better."

Kadstɛru nodded tentatively. "Do you rent steam wagons for personal transportation?" asked Bidhu.

"Of course, we'll rent them for anything."

"What will you do with all the used steam wagons sold back to you?" asked

Bidhu.

"Fix them up and rent them out. We'll probably be able to lower our rates. We'll sell some to businessmen who want them for moving things, cutting wood, grinding grain, etc."

"Look, I'll make my steam wagon available three days a week," said Kadstɛru. "Either I'll drive it up, or I'll have my driver bring it up. How's that?"

"Then buy a cargo trailer with some of the surplus," suggested Mitru. "Five hundred dhanay; or it'll cost you one dhanay per day to rent it. You can put people in the back too; not as comfortable as a passenger wagon, but it's less than an hour between villages."

"So that's five hundred dhanay," said Kadstɛru. "Let's say we rent a steam wagon, trailer, and driver also, to speed up work on the road, so we can finish it by the end of spring. The road should cost about two thousand."

"Tell you what," said Chris. "Mitru and I will cover the cost of the trailer." He looked at Mitru, who usually gave Chris a deal on equipment.

"We can do better than that," said Mitru. "Let's include a plow and harrow as well."

Chris nodded. "Okay."

"Now, how are the two of you making money off this arrangement?" asked Sumikɛstɛr.

"His grange will make two thousand on grain storage," replied Mitru. "And it sounds like you're renting a steam wagon from me to help on the road. With the road you'll move more things, and I'll make some money on them. Don't worry about me."

“Another matter to consider is a clinic on wheels,” said Chris. “We built one last winter to help Bɛllɛdha and the Réjé took it with her on her trip around the sea last summer. It’s a trailer with a sheet metal covering that has four rooms in it and comes with a doctor, dentist, and two nurses, one of whom can examine eyes. It can leave Mɛlwika early in the morning, get here in an hour, stay until sunset, then drive back to Mɛlwika. The next day it goes somewhere else. In a day they can prescribe about a dozen glasses and fill teeth for about eight people, plus examine about twenty people. Perhaps it should visit on a day when any men injured while building the road can get assistance.”

“How much?” asked Kadstɛru, more interested in the bottom line.

“The cost to you would be fifty dhanay per day. The Réjé has agreed to pay the other fifty.”

“It costs one hundred dhanay per day!” exclaimed Sumikɛstɛr, revolted.

“Doctors and nurses are expensive, the clinic on wheels is expensive, the eyeglasses are expensive to make, the material to fill the teeth uses silver and is expensive . . . nothing in this world is free. The clinic, however, does not make a profit. That would not be right. It just covers its expenses.”

“Now how can it always be one hundred dhanay per day?” asked Kadstɛru, skeptically. “Sometimes you give out more glasses, sometimes fewer . . . and what about people who need to go to the hospital?”

“One hundred is the average,” replied Chris. “We ran the clinic all summer, so we know. If someone needs to go to the hospital, the clinic will take them and we’ll handle the cost whatever way we can.”

“The hospital has already saved several lives,” reminded Bidhu. “Because people

know about germs, fewer babies are dying."

"So you say," acknowledged Kadstɛru. "But surely it can't visit all five villages every week!"

"No, maybe three, but emergency patients could arrive by horse from the other two, or a messenger could summon the clinic."

Kadstɛru nodded. "Okay, three thousand dhanay. That leaves us about five thousand. How much would a power and telephone line cost?"

"Forty dɛkɛnt to Nusɛdya?" Chris calculated in his head. "A thousand dhanay. If the local people prepared the poles and set them up every one hundred sixty doli, that would save about a third of the cost. The phone and electrical company will cover some of the cost, too. But I wouldn't spend this year's surplus on that. Spend the year getting the poles in the ground and spend next year's surplus on them. I'd spend the remaining five thousand on schools and teachers."

"But we can't get teachers," reminded Sugu.

"I'll work on that," said Chris. "Mɛlwika is the source. With the grain sales, you can pay dhanay instead of bushels. That'll help. The palace has a program to help pay for teachers, also."

"And any day there will be an important announcement," added Bidhu, lowering his voice a bit. "The Réjé has agreed to use this year's tax surplus to hire a part time representative of the royal government in every village. He will run a village post office and keep a record all births, marriages, and deaths. The logical person to do these things is the village teacher. That will bring your teachers about two hundred dhanay per year."

"That will help a lot!" exclaimed Sumikɛstɛr, surprised.

“You may need the extra, too, because demand for teachers is going up faster than supply, so salaries are heading toward seven hundred a year, plus the teachers are expecting to take a hundred dhanay of new courses per year.”

“Wow!” said Bidhu. “I had no idea.”

“Each schoolhouse will cost one or two hundred to supply, too,” noted Wɛranu. “I’m not sure we’ll have enough.”

“Tell you what,” replied Kadstɛru. “I’ll guarantee four salaries and three new schoolhouses if the shortfall is a thousand dhanay or less. I am honored to be that generous to my people.”

“Then we’ve spent all the money,” said Sugu, with a smile.

“That’s true,” said Kadstɛru, smiling back. “I can smell the roasted boar; I bet it’s ready. Let’s eat together, then call in the school teacher, so he can help us write all of this up.”

[April 27, 2006; reread and edited 5/24/13, 8/4/17, 11/6/24]

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Winter Snows

Everyone jumped up from the table to greet Chris when he returned from Akras.

"We were getting worried," said Liz.

"Everything went fine at first, then there was a lot of haggling over details, like how much tax money each village had to contribute by and what each one got," replied Chris, glancing at his cold supper. He sat at the table. "But everything worked out in the end. They plan to haul five thousand bushels of wheat here for us to store for them and sell when they need the cash. They'll hire four teachers, so we have to find them. And they want the mobile clinic one day a week."

"It's booking up fast," said Lua, worriedly. "We'll have a second one ready to use in another month and a half, but that's all we can staff for the next year, dad. I don't have the medical students and trained people for any more."

"Two will serve the eastern shore pretty well though, don't you think?" asked Chris. "Next week when I go to Mɛddoakwés, I'll talk to Roktɛkɛstɛr about making a joint trip to Pɛnkakwés. They need the clinic there pretty badly, and if the staff were willing to overnight on the road, they could go straight to Pɛnkakwés for a day, then stop in Gédhakwés the next day."

"Two will serve this area adequately if people who can go to the two hospitals use them," agreed Lua. "But the entire world needs about a dozen mobile clinics, and I don't see the Réjé funding that many. It'd cost her about 400,000 dhanay if she paid all of their expenses. And we won't be able to staff that many mobile clinics in less than five years

anyway."

"Well, bit by bit," replied Chris. "You're ready for the trip to Gordha?"

She nodded. "Some of the staff going are intrigued, others terrified."

"Yes, the stereotypes. Let's hope it isn't too cold."

"Well the *forecast* in the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* is sunny and reasonably warm for the next few days; five to ten Celsius." The newspaper had started carrying a weather forecast two weeks earlier, thanks to the maturing research of Gwiwɛru, but so far it had not proved very accurate.

"Speaking of newspapers." May held one up. "The first issue of the *Royal Standard* came out today."

"Oh, really?" Chris took it and put on his reading glasses. "Nice layout and design."

"The articles are skillfully written propaganda," she said. "I guess that's a compliment."

"Some of them, yes," agreed Lua. "But this lead article about appointing a royal recorder in every village is very interesting and important."

"Oh, is it official?" asked Chris. He leaned over to read it. "Bidhu was just talking about this today. So, it's now official."

"I am pleased by some of the aspects of the plan," conceded May. "Our graduates will be there in the villages as teachers, so they'll be able to be appointed as the recorder and postmaster, and the pay will help them a lot. I just hope they aren't asked to serve as spies, though."

"I haven't heard anything about that," said Chris. "Oh, and they are being asked to

record family names for everyone! That will help a lot!"

"Yes; real first and last names," agreed Lua. "It should simplify medical record keeping. Every week or two the hospital can't find someone's medical records because the person used a nickname one time and a first name another time."

"The génadɛma records will be simplified as well," agreed May.

"I just hope they agree to use our identification numbering system," said Lua. "Bidhu and I spent half a day working out a system the hospitals and génadɛmas would use."

"Probably," replied Chris. "This is a good publication. Yes, there's an interview with Lord Kandékwɛs about how great the Réjé is, and I see an article summarizing what she did last week. But that's okay, May. The palace has to put itself forward."

"As long as they don't force us to carry the articles, too," she replied.

"We'll see. Freedom of the press isn't achieved overnight," Chris replied.

Two evenings later, the mobile clinic headed for Gordha, a rover and its bright headlights leading the way. It arrived there in the middle of the night, as planned. Albékwu was there and waiting; he quickly led them into the classrooms of the génadɛma, where they got five hours of sleep before they rose an hour after the sun.

When they awoke, a crowd was rapidly building. Aku and Kɛrbloré were organizing them, classifying them into groups, and moving them into the Kwétrua temple or Lord Walékwɛs's house so they would stay warm while they waited. Both of them had taken medical training the previous spring terms, so they had planned the clinic's visit very carefully. Lua came out to find them when the five personnel were ready.

“Alláh-u-Abhá,” she said to Aku, who was the chairman of the Gordha Spiritual Assembly. “How many patients are waiting to see us?”

“About three hundred.”

“Three hundred!”

“Gordhans are sold on the new medicine. This is not like your first visit, when you had to treat animals to get people’s confidence!”

“We can’t see that many!”

“I know. They all need dental care. About one hundred need glasses; we’ve done our best to figure out what sort they need. Fifty need urgent medical care and another hundred have less urgent medical needs.”

“You did triage?”

“Absolutely. Everyone knew you were coming. We’ve been seeing people for months. We have medical records.” He pointed to a series of shelves stuffed with folders. “We’ll be sure you have the records of anyone you see.”

“We only have forty pairs of spectacles with us. There’s a freight wagon coming later; someone will have to call the hospital and ask for more. Let’s use the forty we have to figure out which pair works for whom. I don’t know how we’ll pay for a hundred spectacles.”

“I warned Lord Walékwɛs and the clan heads, and we’ll keep track of who got them. Give me a month or so and I’ll extract money for some of them, at least.”

“Okay. You can handle the eye checks, right? Do you know what cataracts look like?”

“Oh, yes, and a dozen other things! We can pass on to you any eyes that seem

strange, and we can use the spectacles to figure out the prescription."

"I think we need to get you the complete set of test lenses. It sounds like you can figure out who needs what and mail us the prescriptions, and the time it takes to get the prescription back to you will be time to figure out who will pay. Can Kɛrbloré get the medical records and brief us about each patient?"

"Yes, and we have four students who can help. Albékwu will handle crowd control; he can go from group to group, chat with them, assure them things are moving, and get specific people. We've canceled classes for the next two days so that we can devote all our resources to the clinic."

"You have quite a plan! Excellent. Sounds like we'll be able to handle quite a few over the next two days. Okay, let's start with the worse medical and dental cases." She smiled. "Thanks."

"Thank you!" Aku headed out to get the first patients and Lua went in to brief her staff about the tidal wave that was coming.

Over the next twelve hours they worked more efficiently and exhaustively than they had ever before. The medical records and pre-screenings helped immensely; by the time they closed their doors for supper, they had prescribed a hundred pairs of spectacles, filled fifty teeth, diagnosed five cases of cancer, and treated thirty people for various infections. It was clear that Aku and Kɛrbloré, who had taken five medical courses between them and had accumulated two hundred hours of work experience in Mɛlwika Hospital, were running a very effective clinic.

The next morning Lord Walékwɛs himself came by to give Dr. Lua a tour of the slaughterhouse. The fact that she was a woman did not seem to bother him much. They

walked down the curving road of the Gordha depression to the slaughterhouse, which was built just outside the spot where the river exited the depression. They walked along the small building end to end and he explained in graphic detail what was done to the animal or parts thereof at every stop. It wasn't a huge facility, but it was big enough to kill, slaughter, and ice as many as forty cattle a day, and that was a lot of meat for Éra. A tannery would be added in the spring and a glue making factory afterward.

"Once we are ready, Mitru has promised to get ten tonnes of meat from here to the western shore in twelve hours or less," Walékwɛs said. "Basically, he can move it as fast as the sun moves; if it leaves here at noon, it will be at Ora at noon."

"It is true," said Lua. "My family has taken the runs from Mɛlwika to the western shore. Start small, with some free meat to establish the market."

"No, no! Half price special for the first month, and we'll produce only one gurni of meat per day until the market is established. We'll use the rest of the space here for making leather and glue until we can expand production."

"What about the workers? You'll need good air circulation; the smells will build up, and chemicals for making glue can be dangerous to health."

"We'll have to look into that. We could install some fans. We'll need them in the summer, anyway. As you can see, we have electricity. But my main concern is: is this place clean? If the meat makes people sick, they won't buy it! We're counting on this place earning us a hundred dhanay per day!"

"It looks to me that Aku has done a very good job. The animals are killed quickly and painlessly, and the slaughtering is done carefully to keep the intestines intact so the meat stays clean."

“Can you endorse the process?”

She considered that. “Yes. Let us say it is ‘Mɛlwika Hospital approved.’ I think it is better if the approval comes from the hospital. But we should probably check it two or three times a year. I can also instruct Aku. You know, he is very good!”

The Lord was surprised. “But he’s Tutanɛ.”

“Lord, that is irrelevant. He needs to come to our medical school. Kɛrbloré, too. If they can come every other term, in five years you will have two highly qualified physicians. I am quite serious. Gordha will be the center of medical care for Tutanɛ country.”

“Really? He is bright; that’s why everyone calls him ‘Aku.’ He has a good reputation.”

“Send them both if you can. They are already at the point where they can screen patients to determine who has what basic needs, and they can handle many basics. They need to come to Mɛlwika to learn basic dentistry; I think they could fill cavities pretty well. And when you have cases of urgent care they can stabilize the patients and come with them on the steam wagon to Mɛlwika Hospital. You have a steam wagon here, right?”

“Indeed, for hunting parties, moving hay, and other tasks.”

“If there’s a medical emergency, could the steam wagon bring the person to Mɛlwika? It’d take two hours each way.”

Walékwɛs considered. “Indeed, that is possible, if there is an emergency. You could save the person?”

“There is a good chance.”

He nodded. “So, does that mean you won’t come any more?”

“You have a very good clinic, but we will indeed continue to come. I think we will be able to come less often in the spring and summer; once a month, perhaps. Aku and Kɛrbloré will handle most matters and when we are here we will train them.”

“Alright. I suppose that will save us some money.” He looked at her. “I suppose you have many demands on your clinic.”

“Indeed, and soon we will have a second one. But we also are operating three hospitals; the third one is in Bɛllɛdha. And we are assisting the new hospital at ɛndraidha. We help the western shore, too, but they have an excellent hospital at Mɛddwoglubas, and it is supporting hospitals in Ora, Tripola, and Néfa. Starting in the spring there will be a new hospital in Isurdhuna as well.”

“We should aim to get a hospital, too, then.”

“Lord, in five years if Aku and Kɛrbloré can get the necessary training, Gordha will have a hospital.”

“I think we will have to add that to our ‘development plan,’” he said, quite seriously.

They walked back to the génadɛma and Walékwɛs graciously thanked Dr. Lua. She entered the génadɛma feeling good; the Tutanɛ did not have some of the attitudes of the urban Eryan, where women were supposed to wear veils or scarves over their hair and avoid domestic labor, unless they were poor. Tutanɛ women, like village farming women, *had* to work, and in those environments she was better accepted.

Aku was already lining up patients. “You’re finished with the eyes, right?” she asked him.

“Yes, we handled them all yesterday. Some of the glasses will arrive later today, though, so I thought I’d distribute them.”

“You can do that after we leave. I want you to assist me today. Sit in on all examinations, and I’ll have you do some of them.”

“Really? I’m not sure the patients will like that.”

“They have to learn to trust you. You’re here; we aren’t.”

“Alright. Albékwu was just looking for you with one of our students, Dhrébékwɛs.” He pointed. “There they are.”

“Alright.” Albékwu and Dhrébékwɛs, “driver of horses,” had just entered the room; otherwise Lua would have looked for them later, since patients were waiting. She walked toward them.

“Dr. Lua, this is Dhrébékwɛs,” began Albékwu. “He was a student here all last spring and summer, then returned home to Krésonɛ country.”

“I’m pleased to meet you,” said Lua and she slowly extended both hands. Dhrébékwɛs, seeing them, extended his hands as well, and they shook. He seemed only a little surprised to shake hands with a woman.

“I’m honored to meet you, Dr. Lua. I was helping Kɛrbloré yesterday taking medical information from the patients and doing very simple, basic examinations. We Krésonɛ badly need this help, Dr. Lua. I was hoping that somehow you could bring your clinic to us. We are poor people, we are suffering, and we are dying.”

“I am sorry, Dhrébékwɛs, but I don't even know where the Krésonɛ live.”

“We are not off in the middle of the wilderness, I’m glad to say. We are halfway between here and Médhɛla. Do you know the Ornakwés River? It starts about sixty

dɛkɛnt south of here in the hills and mountains, then flows westward until it reaches the Arjakwés not far from where the latter reaches the sea. The road from Mɛlwika to the south shore crosses the Ornakwés a few dɛkɛnt north of Médhɛla. There is a dirt track that runs along the Ornakwés from Médhɛla all the way to the ridges south of here. The Médhɛlonɛ are our cousins, actually. We live along the river in a dozen hamlets, raising crops and cattle. There are a thousand of us."

"A thousand! And you aren't too far away. I am amazed."

"We are not on a road; that is the problem. But we now have two schools. I run one and a cousin runs another thirty dɛkɛnt farther downstream."

"Really? I had no idea there were people or schools on the upper Ornakwés. I apologize, Dhrébékwɛs."

"We are a hidden and quiet people, Dr. Lua. But we are learning."

"They have two more students here for the entire winter," added Albékwu. "They arrived already knowing how to read and write because Dhrébékwɛs taught them, and pretty well. They want to open two more one-room schoolhouses."

"If we have four, most of the Krésonɛ children will be able to walk to school," said Dhrébékwɛs. "Of course, in the winter it is too cold for them to walk to school, and in the summer they're working. We need a steam wagon to move them. And we need a gravel road. And electricity and telephone lines."

Lua smiled. "So many plans! Too many plans. You have to start small. Your people need to talk among themselves and get advice, maybe from Gordha or Médhɛla."

"Médhɛla is doing very little, though," said Dhrébékwɛs. "They have a tiny school and no clinic."

“They have never asked us to come, either. Dhrébékwɛs, one problem we have is that our clinic on wheels can only visit so many places. And I am sure after we visit Gordha a few times, every Tutanɛ tribe will want us to visit them.”

“Dr. Lua, if you can’t visit all of them, come to the bigger ones that are closer, like us!”

“Yes, you have a point. There is the question of whether we can drive to your villages, too—”

“We’ll fix up the dirt track!”

“I can’t make any commitments right now, Dhrébékwɛs, but let us talk more, or exchange letters. As Aku can tell you, we are expensive, and we are not making a profit, either. This is expensive work to do.”

“I’m sure it is, and we can pay some, but I understand the Queen agreed to cover some of the cost via the taxes Gordha pays, and we pay her taxes as well.”

“Then perhaps her support can be arranged as well. I apologize, but I have to run, Dhrébékwɛs. There are many patients waiting.”

Soru pulled his warm bison-skin coat closer against the cold as he left their house. It was a long trudge to Temple Square and its bakeries. He wrinkled his nose against the smell of woodsmoke and foundry exhaust; on cold, windless days the town had bad air. He jogged against the cold, dodging vehicles, horses, pedestrians, and even bicycles that braved the slippery, snow-covered streets.

The market, at least, was warm, and was already crowded with purchasers. He stopped at the first baker’s stall and bought a fresh loaf. Yagu came in right after him and

he nodded. “Hail, Yagu.”

“Hail, Soru. How are you this day?”

“Cold, and puzzled by my wife’s request that I get a loaf of bread when I’m sure I saw one in the bread box last night.” He was pretty sure he understood, but couldn’t say.

“Strange. Today is a special day for me; it is the birth of Jésu. My people will commemorate it with a special *misa*. Since I can’t do that, I’m getting together with Estodatu so that we can translate the two accounts in the Bible of his birth into Eryan, so I can mail them home.”

“How nice.” Soru had no idea what a *misa* or mass was. “We celebrated the birth of Bahu about a month and a half ago. It was a big event. So, Jésu was born on the fifth day of Bɛlménu?”

“I’m not sure we know his birth date,” replied Yagu, uneasily. “Pablu said we should celebrate it on the fifth of Bɛlménu. We celebrate *Paskwa,* the day of His resurrection, the first day of Dhébɛlménu.”

“Oh? That’s Rɛdwan for us; the holiest day of the Bahá’í year.”

“Nice,” said Yagu, uninterested in a further pursuit of interfaith discussions. He nodded goodbye. “Have a glorious day, Soru. May Esto be with you.”

“Fare thee well.” Yagu headed to the market’s front door and the cold of Temple Square. Soru lingered to stop at a news stand near the door where a boy was selling newly printed copies of *Mɛlwika Nuɛs*. He glanced at the weather forecast in the box in the upper right corner; clear, sunny, and warm. That amused him, considering the eight centimeters of new snow he had just trudged through. The two lead articles were of minor interest to him. The first was about the clinic; it had inaugurated a weekly trip to

Sullɛndha, the largest village in the Pɛnkakwés, on Tridius. That was in addition to the trip to Akras on Dwodius, which was conveniently on the way to Sullɛndha. The clinic was also going to ɛjnopéla on Pɛnkudius, where it set up in the first completed classroom, in addition to the monthly two-day trips to Gordha on Suksdius and Primdius. The second article reported an unusually warm winter for the south shore, while the northern hemisphere was having unusually cold weather, with bitter cold causing severe suffering in the northern basin. The Queen had ordered shipments of hay from ɛndraidha to brave the plowed gravel road to the various settlements to keep their herds alive.

Soru handed the boy a dontay and took a copy of the paper along. Saréiduktɛr and Kanawé would want to read it as well. Over the fall and winter Saréiduktɛr had taken three courses at the génadɛma to improve her knowledge and skills and had set her sights on getting an uniyɛri or one-year degree. It was one unexpected side effect of their moving in with her; not only had their studious example affected her, but their rent had augmented her budget.

He dashed outside, into the cold, and ran back home with the bread and the newspaper. Saréiduktɛr was bundling up her daughters for their walk to school. In the last two months since Soru and Kanawé had gotten married they had fixed up the house quite nicely. Soru had installed a small, steep stairway to replace the ladder accessing the second story, and had insulated the upstairs so it held in the house's heat better. They had added a pipe to the city water main, so the sink had constant water, and had installed a gas water heater in Saréidukter's bedroom, where it also provided some heat. The bathroom now had a shower, flush toilet, and sink, and the waste water, rather than

pouring into the dirt courtyard behind the house, now went into the city's sewer. An extra electric lamp brightened the main room and the new desk Saréidukter had bought for her papers. A new set of dishes—Saréidukter's wedding gift to the couple—was set up on shelves near the kitchen area.

Soru walked to the kitchen corner, opened the bread box, and as expected he found a loaf inside. He put the new loaf on top of the bread box instead and glanced at Saréidukter, who cast a glance back at him. "She's upstairs," she replied. Soru nodded, put the newspaper down on the dining table, and went up.

Kanawé was sitting on their bed. She looked up as he entered the room. He looked at her. "So, are you pregnant?"

"Saréidukter thinks so; she says it's morning sickness."

"But how long . . .?"

"About five weeks, I think. Pretty fast." She sighed. "I guess I had better go to the hospital to make sure."

"Yes." Soru smiled excitedly. "We're going to have a baby!"

"Yes." She said it plainly; she wasn't excited. He was startled at first and didn't say anything in response, waiting for her. "This changes everything," she finally said. "I don't know how I'll finish my education or continue my work." Tears trickled down her cheeks.

He hurried over and sat next to her, and put his arm around her. "What you're doing with these children is important. We'll find a way to continue." He thought for a moment. "We're both taking Psychology. If you can't make it to class this morning, I can take extra-thorough notes and explain it all to you later. I bet I could explain it in less

time, too."

"Or maybe I can skip the first hour; I'll feel better after that. But what'll I do after the baby's born?" She began to cry.

"The baby's going to be born when? Abɛlménu? School's usually closed then, anyway. We can train Golbkordé to run things for two or three months. Maybe we can hire another assistant. That way you can come and help out a little, but spend most of your time with the baby. Then when the baby's six months old, we can start him or her in day care. This town has more of them than any other place, and the city council covers half the price, so there are plenty of choices."

"I know, thank Esto for that."

"Don't worry, this will work out. Esto wants people to have families, but he also wants women to have the chance to work. Bahá'u'lláh says so. With two salaries, we can manage; we can afford to send out the laundry, we can buy food that is partially prepared in the market . . . it'll work out."

"We can't stay here, though, Soru. A baby would be too noisy in this little place."

"We'll talk to Saréidukter, or maybe we can find another place. Esto will provide."

She smiled. "You have more confidence in Esto than I do."

"Don't worry. Don't worry. We'll find a way. We have been blessed so far; that won't stop now."

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