# *THE PIONEERS*

## *Vol. 16*

### *Entry by Troops*

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## 289.Graduation

Last wk Blorménu/mid June yr 12/630

Jordan clutched his diploma proudly as he walked from the seats where Mɛlwika High School's seniors had sat to his family in the audience. Most of the crowd had risen to its feet and were heading home. He stopped to thank people who offered him congratulations, pulling nervously at his scratchy toga with the red and blue edges that symbolized his school.

The entire family greeted him warmly. "Congratulations," said grandfather Chris, 66, giving him a hug. "We're so proud of you!"

"The first grandchild through high school," added Liz, 65, kissing him on the cheek.

"Yeah; Rostamu's got six years to go," Jordan quipped, looking at his younger brother. He turned to his mother.

"Congratulations, honey," she said, hugging and kissing him. Dr. Lua was now 44. Then he turned to his father.

"Good job, Jordan." Behruz, 48, hugged his son, even though it wasn't an Eryan custom to do so. "You've grown up; today you're a man. And I'm proud of the man you've become."

"Oh, dad!" Jordan was embarrassed, but at the same time excited, because high school graduation was something of a rite of passage.

"I'm impressed that you stuck to it, with half your friends dropping out; that'd be hard," added uncle Thornton, 29.

“Well, they did the traditional thing; got married and started a family. But I’m not ready for that.”

“Good,” said Lébé, 29, hugging her nephew. Éra was still a world without much of a concept of childhood; the average male married as soon as he could support a family—an age that had dropped a lot in the last eleven years as prosperity had expanded—and the average female married at 15 to 17 years old.

Amos and May Keino were there as well and hugged Jordan as they congratulated him, then they all strolled slowly across Mɛlwika to their house, where a big lunch awaited them. “Any more ideas about career?” asked Behruz. They had talked about it a lot, lately.

“No. I’m not thinking about that today, dad.”

“Okay.”

“Let’s not push the matter for a while. I really don’t know what direction I want to go in, but I’m sure I want to serve the Faith.”

“I think a year of service for the Faith is laudable,” said Lua. “And something the Faith could use.”

“As long as we don’t rock the boat too much,” said Behruz. “The Bahá'í Faith is still a ‘gɛdhéma’ religion to many people. It seems foreign.”

“Well, it isn’t, and I’m as Eryan as one can be; I arrived here at age 5, after all. And it is needed; my entire generation needs it. It’s the first generation to grow up in the new knowledge.”

“That’s true, but remember not all Bahá'í communities are ready for a big group of youth,” said Lua. “You need to go to places where there are local spiritual assemblies

able to handle the interest you generate and follow through. You're proposing to jump start intensive growth of the Faith without a support structure."

"Maybe we have more resources for support than we think. There are plenty of Bahá'í communities where people have studied the Ruhi books and taken courses on various Bahá'í scriptures. If someone wants to become a Bahá'í, they can give them classes. But right now they aren't successfully interesting them in taking any classes and becoming active Bahá'ís! And they aren't reaching the youth. Maybe I can reach the village youth. Maybe we can do some follow-up, too."

"Maybe," said Lua, skeptically.

"We'll find out pretty soon," said Jordan.

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The next morning, a group of youth assembled at the Bahá'í Center to prepare for their trip. Mitrukaru and Kordé arrived with the truck pulling the Mennea's house trailer. Budhéstu arrived shortly thereafter carrying his blanket roll and Blorakwé's, for she had gotten permission to stay on the trip for a month. Primanu arrived by bus from Ɛjnopéla fifteen minutes later and helped the others load tents, pans, lanterns, and other camping supplies into the back of the truck. Next was Khwanu, a first-year medical student from Khɛrmdhuna. Tomasu and Gramé Miller, son and granddaughter of John Miller respectively, both 18 and in the same high school graduating class as Jordan, arrived next. Jordan had attracted them to the Faith in the previous year. Finally, Swadé Dwobrébakwési came over with her mother Saréiduktɛr and her jealous little sister, Mɛlité.

“All of you be *very* careful,” said Saréidukter, wiping away a tear. That surprised Jordan; Saréidukter was one of the toughest women he knew, and he could not imagine her crying. She saw his surprise and took it to refer to her admonition. “Look, this world is not as safe as you think. There was an attempted robbery of a bus six months ago and a bank robbery in Mɛddwoglubas last month. And if the villagers get mad at you, don’t hang around, just leave! Bahá'í ideas could be very controversial. They could try to harm you! And young men and women traveling together; that’s very worrisome.”

“We’ll make it very clear that the men and women are sleeping in separate places,” said Jordan. “The men’s tents will be set up a long way from the trailer where the women will stay. We’ll even dig separate latrines. We’ll make sure local people see our sleeping arrangements.”

“Well, make sure the trailer is in a place where people can see who’s coming and going.” She looked at Swadé. “You’re sure you want to do this?”

“I’m sure, mom. This is exciting.”

“We’ll see. Villages are pretty conservative places.” Saréidukter kissed Swadé one more time. “Like I said: *be careful*.”

Swadé nodded and rolled her eyes. Then Saréidukter turned and left.

They turned back to loading. Three foot-pedal sewing machines went into the trailer with a mimeograph machine, several boxes of paper, fifty pounds of sugar for baking and making jams of local fruits, and fifty pounds of popcorn for nighttime snacks. Ten five-kilogram bags of charcoal for the truck’s steam engine went into the back. Jordan ran around for fifteen minutes to find a telephone and ultimately had to go to the telephone company to get one; they’d be able to plug it into the intercity party line just

about anywhere they stopped. When he came back, a week of basic supplies—flour, coffee, vegetables, rice—had been loaded into the trailer. Mitrukaru had checked the water level and had lit the firebox.

They sat in the shade of the trailer and said a round of prayers, then Jordan said, "So, are we ready?" One by one, they all nodded. "Then let's go."

Some climbed into the back of the pickup truck, others into the trailer; Jordan and Mitrukaru got into the cab. Mitrukaru sent steam to the cylinders and they were off.

Wɛranopéla was 220 kilometers and four time zones to the southwest. They drove southward through fields of grains that were being harvested, past olive groves, vineyards, and orchards of apples, peaches, pears, and plums. They watched vegetables, cotton, oil crops, and other things roll by. Mitrukaru went a cautious sixty kilometers per hour, the official speed limit for concreted Route 2 through Mɛlwika. They slowed through Dɛksawsupɛrakwa, then continued across verdant South Ménwika until they reached the rich grasslands of the Médhɛlonɛ, where the road turned to gravel but quiet conditions merited speeding up to 70 kilometers per hour, the maximum that the steam engine could manage while pulling a trailer. The next slow zone was Mɛdhpéla, the town of the Kwolonɛ, which had grown quite a lot in the last few years; most of the tribe's 6,000 lived in the village or along Route 2, where it followed Mɛdhpéla Creek for twenty kilometers. By selling horses to the world's newly prosperous farmers and raising winter vegetables on its equatorial fields, the tribe was doing fairly well.

South of Mɛdhpéla, Route 2 crossed the Swadakwés and turned west, and in forty minutes the fields, then the barracks, houses, factories, and armories of ɛndraidha hove into view. After passing the headquarters of the army—a town of five thousand that

hadn’t even existed a decade earlier—Route 2 turned southward again and gradually bent southwestward to follow the seashore. The Kwétékwonɛ tribal grasslands were followed by Brébɛtroba, the most northerly settlement of the south shore, now a village of 500 people and 600 cottages, many for the residents of more southerly villages. The township had fifteen thousand agris of farmland, a third of the entire province’s, farmed by a thousand itinerant farmers. Its settlement had brought about a huge leap in the province’s prosperity. Twice daily, “agricultural buses” moved farmers and their tools back and forth between their old farms and their new ones, which were on different planting and harvesting cycles.

Route 2 rolled through fifty kilometers of brushland that was reverting to prairie, and of prairie that was reverting to forest. Every few kilometers, a hamlet of two or three or as many as ten houses clustered at a spot where a brook crossed the gravel highway, the former squatters making their living as permanent or itinerant farmers and hunters. Until the land was divided into four new townships it was all considered part of Brébɛtroba, which collected the taxes and educated the children.

Then the road parted from the seashore, rose into slightly hilly terrain, and began to pass through ancient coniferous forest. In fifteen kilometers it reached the Dhébakwés at Wɛranopéla. Until the settling of Brébɛtroba it had been the farthest eastward of the south shore’s villages, a small, poor township of five hundred people. The northeastward expansion of the province had put it in a more central location, and its large Bahá'í community—embracing about a quarter of the population—had been innovative. They had planted potatoes and corn, which did much better in the cooler, damp climate than wheat, and had started a grange that had built a garage to house a leased tractor and truck.

In the last few months, thanks to a Development Corps grant and a Development Bank loan, the village had finally scraped together the cash to complete a sawmill, which was whirring by the river, cutting into boards the trees floated downstream to it. The schoolhouse had added a second room, so now one hundred of the village's hundred-fifty children could attend, though attendance averaged much less. Twelve more rode the bus to Tripola High School. The general store had been enlarged.

Mitrukaru drove onto the muddy lane leading from the school and store to the circle of houses built on Wɛrano's hill. He parked in front of the Bahá'í Center and emitted two long blasts from the truck's steam whistle, then closed off the firebox's air vent. They all began to climb out, stretch their legs after the three-hour ride, and walk into the Bahá'í Center.

The Center was a nine-sided thatched structure, the roof supported by a single central pole, each side having a central door and two large glass windows. The concrete floor was covered by locally woven grass mats and had two dozen folding chairs. A podium on a movable platform with a blackboard completed the furnishings; between the windows, the walls had pictures of the Mɛddwoglubas House of Worship, the design of the Mɛlwika House of Worship that was partially complete, and various Bahá'í temples and shrines on Gɛdhéma. A dozen already awaited them, and more began to arrive immediately.

"Welcome, welcome," said a young man with a ready smile. "I'm Rudékwu, secretary of the Wɛranopéla Spiritual Assembly. You're Jordan Mennea?"

"Jordan Shirazi, actually; my mother, Dr. Lua, was a Mennea until she married my father." He offered his hands and the men shook.

“This is Tumékwu, our headman; Lord Ekwiséru is not here today.”

“I’m pleased to meet you, Honored Tumékwu.”

“Pleased and honored,” he replied, and they shook hands as well. Then the circle of introductions widened to include other assembly members and prominent villagers and the other nine team members. “So, you are here to offer classes on the Bahá'í Faith?” asked the headman.

“Not just Bahá'í subjects; we can offer many different things.” Jordan pointed. “Khwanu has completed a year toward his medical degree and would like to offer classes about hygiene, diet, and health. Mitrukaru is trained as an agricultural agent and is here with his expertise. Kordé can teach adult literacy and sewing; we have three sewing machines with us. Primanu knows general science, biology, and math. I know basic accounting. Gramé knows cooking and canning and can teach Bahá'í children’s classes. Tomasu knows engineering and mechanics. Budhéstu knows psychology and development planning; he participated in the drawing up of the prince’s Seven-Year Development Plan and can talk about it. Swadé can teach children and she knows knitting. Most of us can also teach the Ruhi books and give a series of general talks about Bahá'í teachings. We’d like to offer our services to the entire village for a week, but in particular we’d like to reach out to the fifteen to twenty year olds, male and female.”

“I see,” said Tumékwu, pondering. “Sewing machines; an interesting class. We have five or six girls trained in sewing from Tripola High School, but none have bought a machine. I know, I have one for sale in the store.”

“They learned how to use a sewing machine, but their mothers don’t know how to and their fathers would do the buying on the mother’s advice,” noted Rudhékwu. “Perhaps the chance to use three machines will raise interest.”

“Perhaps. The agricultural agent’s advice and the development planning are both welcome and useful things. I’m not so sure of the rest, unless the engineer can help us plan a water system for the village.”

“I can,” spoke up Tomasu.

“The Bahá'í Center wants to install a flush toilet some time; maybe you can help us with that, too,” added Rudhékwu.

“Of course,” replied Tomasu, who had no idea how to do either project, but he smiled confidently anyway.

“Classes in science, math, sewing, cooking, accounting, and literacy would all be immensely helpful,” said Rudhékwu. “I speak as the lead teacher in our school. I can cover only so much. People hunger for more. School ended for the summer last week and harvest begins in a week, so you are here at exactly the right time.”

“That’s why we came here first. When we leave here we’ll head for a village in Lɛwéspa where the harvest is over. I should explain our lodging arrangements. The women will sleep in the trailer. Mitrukaru and Kordé, who are husband and wife, will have a tent next to the trailer. The men will sleep in tents unless they can use the Bahá'í Center.”

“Yes, of course they can sleep in here,” replied Rudhékwu. “And Mitrukaru and Kordé are welcome to take over a classroom in the school at night. I think you will be more comfortable inside. There is already a latrine by the school and another by the

Bahá'í Center; you can use them instead of digging new ones. And behind the store, adjacent to the Center, there are picnic tables and three outdoor hearths; you can cook and eat there. They are for use by the Center and also for any bus passengers who get stranded here, or visitors stopping to eat and rest here before they move on."

"Excellent, you are very kind," said Jordan.

Tumékwu turned to Budhéstu. "I am very interested to hear about the development plan. I have been following the debate in the House of Lords and House of Commons on the radio and in the newspapers. After a very positive initial reception, things have turned much more hostile."

"Yes, I have followed the discussions closely as well. The initial approach of the sponsors of the legislation was to argue that if you want the development, you have to accept the entire package of laws, but as the legislators are looking more closely, they are more skeptical."

"Of course! I can understand passing a law requiring a minimum wage, but banning labor by children under age 14! That decreases the number of workers, not increases them!"

"But children under age 14 should be in school, so that when they are old enough to work they have more skills," explained Budhéstu. "That increases productivity and fosters development."

"Ah, I see. But what about all these conservation plans? We just got a sawmill. We don't want someone coming along and shutting it down because our supply of trees has been declared a park!"

“I assume you haven’t cut down so many trees that hillsides are washing into the river every time it rains and the river is flooding? Conservation exists to make sure you will always have trees and a peaceful, clean river.”

“Perhaps we can plan a time for this discussion?” suggested Jordan. “Because right now this place is filling up and we need to organize the people.”

“And I need to drive down river to the next two villages, because we want to invite them as well,” added Mitrukaru. “Especially the young people.”

“Alright, do that,” said Rudhékwu. “I’ll call this meeting to order and get it started.”

“I’ll go get the fliers,” said Jordan. He headed for the door; Tomasu came along. Once outside, Jordan said “I didn’t know you could teach plumbing.”

“I’m going to go hook up the phone and call home right now. I can’t, right now, but I plan to be able to do it tomorrow morning!”

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The chamber of the House of Commons was crowded with all of its members and the entire membership of the House of Lords as well, plus a surprisingly large crowd of onlookers. They knew an exciting session was in the offing. Chris looked around the room and noted how tense everyone looked. Two months of debate—more than usual—had produced less agreement and more polarization than ever before.

The royal door to the room opened and Brébkordu, Mɛméjékwu’s chief of staff, announced, “His Highness, Crown Prince Mɛméjékwu!” Everyone rose as the prince strode in, accompanied by Estoiyaju and General Roktɛkɛstɛr. The presence of the two men was an unmistakable statement of solidarity.

“You may be seated,” the Prince said as he sat in the smaller throne up front. That was interesting as well; usually he would sit in the larger throne, unless the queen was expected. “For two months, the Houses of Lords and Commons have conducted a lengthy debate of historic proportions. Nothing less than the future of the realm is at stake. For eleven years now, our kingdom has undergone a growth of five to ten percent per year, in terms of the economy, that is, the flow of goods and services we all produce, pay for, and use. The result over eleven years has been a doubling of our economy.

“But our expansion has been possible because of unusual conditions. Farmers were preparing their fields and harvesting their crops without machines, steam power, or even very much animal power. Mechanizing their work has by itself produced much of our increase. If we are to continue to grow—indeed, if our growth is to become predictable, regular, smooth, and constant—we need to prepare the social ground for it. Just as farmers must prepare their fields, we must prepare our peoples and our world. That means we must provide a legal framework for creating companies, a better tax environment, an educated workforce, a healthy workforce, and a world where water, trees, soil, game, fish, and other resources are used wisely and nondestructively.

“What is at stake is the future, not only that of our children, of our own old age, but of our grandchildren and their old age. Éra has had ages of prosperity and peace before. They have been followed by warfare and collapse. We can build a world that is richer, more peaceful, more just, and more stable than anyone here has ever seen. That is what is at stake.

“I have followed your deliberations with great diligence and interest. But I am disappointed by your unwillingness to be bold and visionary. The chains of the past

weigh more heavily than the call of the future. Some reject laws against child labor and minimum levels of schooling and regulations on the work week; they would make our people into slaves. Others want so much education and so few work hours that our economy would stall. Some fear any change at all. Some want complete freedom to use the trees and game until none are left. I am told there is an island on Gɛdhéma divided between two realms; one has no trees, no wild animals, terrible floods, and terrible erosion of the soil, while the other has trees, animals, managed floods, and good soil. Which do we want? We have animals here that were driven to extinction on Gɛdhéma; let us preserve them on Éra.

"The Seven Year Development Plan is designed to provide the conditions for a ten percent annual growth of the economy, sufficient to double it in seven years. Our people will learn to read and write, acquire new skills, save money and buy new things for making money—sewing machines, factories, trucks, tractors—they will produce and buy new goods, and we will all be better off. That is the world this plan is designed to create. Just think, in seven years we can all be twice as well off as we are now! But it won't happen by snapping our fingers. We have to plan, set up the right conditions, and work. I hope the House of Lords and House of Commons won't disappoint us where this is concerned."

He stopped and looked around at the chamber. A member stood up. "Your Majesty, our custom in this chamber is that the members always have the right to speak. Do I have that right now?"

"You do. Who are you?"

"Ekwésu Dɛdikɛr."

“Oh. Yes. Speak freely.” But the prince shifted uncomfortably in his throne. Ekwésu, now a teacher in Mɛddoakwés and an elected representative from that city, had been head of the Tripola School system almost five years earlier when the city had sunk into chaos, and his brother, Stelésu, had been executed as a rebel ringleader. He had risen to a major leadership position in the Commons.

“Your Majesty, I am immensely impressed by your devotion to this plan and the very far-reaching and progressive reforms on which it is based. But I think we all would agree that the principle of consultation with the people is not fulfilled unless the representatives of the people are fully free to give their considered views. And all progress ultimately rests on consultation with the people.”

Mɛméjékwu’s face tightened. Clearly, he was not pleased by the question. “Honored, I am consulting with the people right now. Consultation does not mean the people are all powerful; neither are the sovereign or the Prime Minister. But in this case, the sovereign has the power and authority to bring about these changes if need be. What I would like to see is the support and encouragement of the people. Ironically, in this case the people may be more ready than the lords of this realm.” He glanced at the House of Lords, which was far more resistant to the legislation than the Commons.

Lord Viduféru of Albagras, the arch conservative in the House of Lords, rose. “Your Majesty, with all due respect, my village has seen no doubling of its income in the last decade. If anything, it has slipped backwards. It has seen better medicine, I will concede, but otherwise its people are distracted from their farming by all sorts of school knowledge of uncertain use, and now the advent of elections has stirred up trouble. Your promises of a better life clash with our reality.”

“Lord Viduféru, your village is located on the crowded Kɛrda plain with no place to expand its fields. Your people cannot increase their farmlands, so tractors will bring less work but not more money. Rather, Albagras will see falling crop prices. The Development Plan recognizes Kɛrda’s special situation and accounts for it. If you reject this plan, seven years from now Albagras will be poorer and smaller. Support this plan and that reality can turn around.”

That raised Chris’s eyebrows; the plan in fact had not made special provisions for Kɛrda. It did create the conditions, however, for locating lots of factories in the valley, and that would bring the area the jobs it needed if it was to keep its population from emigrating.

Others sat and stared at the prince, some angry about the intimidation, some resigned to it. Ekwésu rose again. “Your Majesty, any plan is imperfect and needs modification and improvement. When will that occur?”

“Next year, after the next elections, we will be a year into the plan and we will see what changes are needed.”

Lord Estodhéru of Mɛddwoglubas rose. “I am very grateful for this plan and support it, because I think it generally takes us in the right direction. My concern is that some view it as a plan to make this world perfect. As we all know, a world inhabited by human beings cannot be perfect. This plan ably improves the physical side of this world, but we must work on the spiritual side as well.”

He sat and the Prince thought for a moment. “As you say, we must work on that side as well, but this plan focuses on what the crown can accomplish, not what the priests

and the Bahá'ís and others can do. Perhaps it makes the roads, mail systems, literacy, and private funding possible for all sorts of spiritual initiatives."

Estodhéru nodded and sat. A tutanɛ rose and the Prince nodded in acknowledgement to him. "Your Majesty, I am Markɛstɛr of Kwolona. My people are far more concerned about preserving our land and way of life than doubling our family income. We have lost land to ɛndraidha and Swadlɛndha; more recently, we lost land to Gramakwés and Mɛlita, and we fear we'll lose more. *We want our land.* And we want to decide how it will be used, we don't want regulators telling us! We won't tolerate it!" He sat and several people applauded.

"Honored Kwolonu, your people are a mighty and respected tribe. But you must consider two things. First, if the world becomes rich and the Kwolonɛ do not, they will become weak, and then they will be tempted to sell their land or will have to struggle to keep it. The Kwolonɛ cannot be mighty and respected and be poor. Second, if you overuse your land, you will destroy it. Much of your eastern territory is very arid. We will develop regulations for protecting the land based on neutral science and will train the Kwolonɛ to maintain the regulations themselves."

The Prince looked over the gathering and no one else rose to ask him a question. He nodded. "Very well. Thank you, all of you. I look forward to your deliberations." He rose and the audience stood as well. He turned and walked out.

Wérdéu, the speaker of the House of Commons, rose and stepped onto the platform. "This gathering is adjourned. The House of Commons will reconvene tomorrow at 9 bells to reconsider the legislation connected with the Seven Year Development Plan."

Everyone rose and began to talk to their neighbors. Kandékwɛs, who was seated near Chris, said, “Well, the House of Lords will have to do the same.”

“Honored Lord, we are being pressured!” replied Viduféru.

“I thought the traditional lords were the most obedient to the crown,” Kandékwɛs quipped in reply. He turned to Lord Mitrudatu of Ora, who was the House of Lord’s “whip.” Will you start counting votes?”

“I will; we’re convening at 9 bells also?”

Kandékwɛs shook his head. “No, the Lords will meet at 9:30.”

Mitrudatu turned to Chris, who happened to be closest to him. “What say you, Lord?”

“I will support the development plan’s legislation.”

“Of course,” groused Viduféru.

“Lord, if I can be of assistance to Albagras, I am available any time to offer ideas.”

Viduféru shook his head strongly. Chris glanced at Estodhéru, who shrugged; he, too, had offered suggestions.

Chris headed across the hall to find Estanu and Kérdu, Mɛlwika’s two representatives in the Commons, to offer them a ride home.  Half an hour later, Chris stepped into his house. It was late; 10 bells. The downstairs was empty and quiet, so he went upstairs to his bedroom. Liz was already in bed and was reading.

“So, what was the late session about?”

“Prince Mɛméjékwu met with both Houses and basically told them to pass the legislation for the Seven Year Development Plan or the crown would implement the laws anyway.”

“Really?”

Chris nodded. “That was the implication. I’m sure the two Houses will comply. So we are getting our major social reform effort after years of trying. We’re getting the whole thing. But of course it is being imposed, so it’s doubtful that the reforms will work. Furthermore, some of the laws--like the ban on child labor and a minimum age for compulsory education--will have to be enforced locally, and I doubt most places will enforce them.”

“What about money to implement them?”

“That is included in the plan, fortunately. The budget the Houses can approve is two million dhanay; a *huge* increase. But the Development Plan lays out how much should be spent every year for the next seven years. The numbers were meant to be guidelines, not actual numbers. So the plan is being rigidly implemented as well.” He shrugged. “I suppose next year that will change, though, because the economic growth will be above or below the projection, so the pot of money will not be the expected amount; and the amount needed to achieve next year’s targets will be more or less. Probably more, of course!”

“That’s what usually happens.”

“Any news from Jordan?”

“Not yet, but it’s only 6 p.m. there. He’ll probably call Behruz and Lua later.”

“I hope the first day went well.”

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The meeting in the classroom of Wɛranopéla's schoolhouse went quite long. Two dozen men—including the headman of Wɛrétradɛntɛs, "Dragon's Teeth," three villages away, plus members of the grange councils of three villages, the managers of the Wɛranopéla sawmill and the Mitrudoma dairy, and two local women who were concerned about the future—sat in a circle under three bare lightbulbs in the village school to hear Budhéstu describe the seven year development plan. They repeatedly interrupted him to ask questions or offer various comments.

When the singing stopped at the nearby Bahá'í Center, it clearly was late; the youth were not inclined to stop singing until they were very tired. A few minutes later Jordan, Tomasu, and Mitrukaru joined Budhéstu's group.

"So, by year seven, the report says that taxes will have increased enough for every child to go to school to age fourteen, and for everyone to have access to health care at a very low cost?" said Headman Tumékwu. "That would cost . . . well, it probably would cost about twice as much as we can spend now."

"But surely the palace already gets enough money for that!" objected Brébé, one of the women present, whose name, "lioness," reflected an essential part of her personality. "How much will these things cost?"

Budhéstu sighed. "Well, fifty dhanay per year per pupil times about 150,000 pupils—that includes about half the kids of high school age—is 7.5 million dhanay, and health care for 350,000 will cost about 7 million dhanay, so a total of 14.5 million. The palace currently collects about 15 million; at the end of the Plan it should collect 27, and

the local and regional taxes will equal 18 more. But the palace has to pay for an army and a lot of other things."

"Like big palaces and fat servants!" she replied.

"It'll take time to raise the numbers, not only because tax revenues have to grow, but because it'll take time to train enough teachers, doctors, and nurses," replied Budhéstu, ignoring the criticism.

"But what about us adults?" asked Brébé. "I can read a little, but I'd like to learn more. Adults need to be educated, too."

"The budget seven years from now includes a million dhanay per year for that, but it assumes that adults will use some of their own money for education. If every adult spent ten dhanay per year on their own education, that would equal two million dhanay per year. Over seven years everyone could be literate at that rate."

"Why should we pay, though? We're already paying taxes!"

Budhéstu shrugged. Tumékwu said, "I suppose this is why the Bahá'í teachings are needed. We have to change the rulers of this world from greedy and self-centered, to servants. Trying to do that with force will just produce more violence. We must try to do it with love."

"I think you are right," agreed Budhéstu. "I just took a course on the history of Gɛdhéma; the first of three courses, actually. Revolution to overthrow a ruling class puts another ruling class into power, and since they gain power violently they do not hesitate to use it. Change must be peaceful and spiritual. But until you said this, I did not understand it, Tumékwu."

The headman smiled. “And I am not even a Bahá'í, such as yourself! I heard this in a talk by Lady Liz when she was here three years ago, and it struck me as profoundly true.”

“It is. And I am not a Bahá'í either, I should add.”

“You aren’t?” asked Tumékwu. “All afternoon and evening we have been talking about the future, and I assumed that you were!”

“No, I’m not. I am an optimist about the future, though.”

“I’m not, unless these Bahá'í teachings really can work. Most people in this world, basically, are greedy. Some of it is a question of survival, but for the wealthy it is not; they are greedy for the sake of being greedy. The Bahá'ís sometimes are different. This group of youth you are with; they seem genuinely to want to help the village.”

“They are also out to make converts,” pointed out the headman of Wɛrétradɛntɛs.

Tumékwu nodded. “Sure, that’s true, but they want to make converts to unity, doing good, caring for others, etc. I have no objection to that. The priests aren’t doing that; they’re just asking for richer sacrifices. They promise to teach us the hymns, and how do we learn them? Either from our kids, who learn them in school, or from the Bahá'ís!”

“I do not see this equality of men and women they talk about,” commented Brébé. “The boys had to be reminded to help the girls with supper!”

“This was our first night!” quipped Jordan, from the edge of the circle.

Brébé looked at him, then nodded. “What does this equality really mean, though?” she asked.

“That’s very difficult to say,” replied Jordan. “But first and foremost, it means men and women must have love and mutual respect for each other. It also means that both must be allowed to receive an education and both should have training in a skill. Widows, after all, are often in poverty, and there is nothing honorable about that. But in terms of who does the household chores and raises the children, that is something husbands and wives must decide together in mutual respect. Clearly, men should help women more, for the burden falls heavily on them.”

“Women bear the children and thus raise them,” said Tumékwu.

“Men help bring them into existence, and the children belong to them as well,” replied Jordan.

Tumékwu did not reply to that. Just then the village clock struck 11 bells. “It is very late,” he said. “Perhaps we should resume this tomorrow. So, will we work on the flush toilet for the Bahá'í Center tomorrow? And the water tower after that?”

Tomasu nodded. “I have the information where we go in Tripola to get the toilet and the pipes. First, Mitrukaru will need to drive the steam truck to Wɛrétradɛntɛs and Mitrudoma to pick up people wishing to come here for the day; then Rudhékwu and I will go to Tripola to get the materials; then Mitrukaru needs the truck again to drive around the village’s farmland and make suggestions about the farms.”

“You can drive a truck?” asked Tumékwu.

“Yes, I have a Mɛlwika driver’s license.”

“Tomorrow morning Khwanu will give a class on germs, and in the afternoon he’ll talk about nutrition and foods to eat,” added Jordan. “Kordé has sewing classes morning and afternoon, Swadé has knitting classes, and Gramé will teach how to make

jams. Primanu will be teaching literacy to all adults who are interested and I'll teach mathematics. And I guess Budhéstu will talk about development."

"Correct," said Budhéstu.

"I'll come to the literacy class after I get my chores done," said Brébé.

"I'll call a few more headmen and Lords in the area," said Tumékwu. "I am sure they will want to hear about the Seven Year Development Plan. I think Lord Ekwiséru will want to visit in a few days as well."

Reread and edited, 6/4/13, 8/17/17, 11/19/24

290.

Harvest

Early Kaiménu/mid July, yr 12/630

Chris left for Mɛddoakwés early the next morning for the meeting of the House of Lords. He returned home as the eclipse began. Liz, Lua, Behruz, Thornton, Lébé, and most of their kids were sitting in the gabrula or receiving room listening to Kɛkanu interviewing Lord Kandékwɛs. “It sounds like last night there was quite a lot of serious deliberation about the plan,” said Thornton.

“What?” said Chris.

“Kandékwɛs’s version says nothing about the Prince meeting with the two chambers last night,” said Liz.

“I see,” said Chris. He listened to Kandékwɛs’s story and smiled. “No one will dare contradict this version, either, except the underground newspapers.”

“So, what really happened?” asked Thornton.

“The Prince met with both chambers together last night and basically told them they had to pass the development plan and all attendant legislation, or the crown would establish the plan and the laws by decree. The intimidation was successful. This morning, Lord Kandékwɛs, as speaker of the House of Lords, convened us and said, ‘Today we are passing the development plan,’ and called on Viduféru, the main opponent. Viduféru rose and said, ‘Today I am reluctantly conceding my vote to the plan in the hope that, as promised, it really will benefit my people.’ That opened the floodgates. We spent the

entire morning going around the chamber and everyone had their three minutes to explain why they were voting for the plan. It was unanimous."

"And what would have the vote been yesterday?" asked Thornton.

"Yesterday there were about fifteen suggestions to water down the legislation. There were no votes at all for the plan itself because a majority wanted it weakened. Of course, a majority of the House of Commons wanted many provisions to be strengthened. When we went into the chamber of the House of Commons for the closing ceremony, the rumor was going around that the Prince had bribed a few voters by offering them development grants for their villages."

"That's terrible," said Liz. "Bribing representatives empties the entire process of legitimacy."

"I wonder whether the plan will have any relevancy after this," said Lua. "Some of the laws have to be implemented or enforced locally and I doubt they will be."

"We'll see," replied Chris. "Major reforms have been rammed down the throats of people before. Sometimes they have a long term impact on society anyway; think about the Chinese Cultural Revolution or the changes made in Turkey by Ataturk. But they also do terrible damage because there's no trust in the government or its processes."

"Dirty tricks are part of almost every legislature and they manage to function," added Behruz. "It'll be a while before the tactics can be cleaned up. Meanwhile, just having a legislature is an amazing step forward."

They turned to listen to the rest of the interview. Duke Kandékwɛs summarized all the major legislation and its purposes; it was an impressive list, all the more so when one remembered that Éra now had over a thousand radios and each was listened to by an

average of a dozen adults during the eclipse, so at least five percent of the adult population was absorbing the information. No doubt they'd repeat it to the rest. "How will we expand the schools fast enough?" asked Liz, when the program finally ended. "How many first through eighth graders are there, anyway?"

"A hundred thousand," replied Chris. "Right now thirty thousand are in school, so we have to triple the size of the system in seven years. Seventy thousand kids will require about two thousand additional teachers and classrooms."

"I'm worried about the health system," said Lua. "We have to train three hundred doctors, six hundred nurses, and about a thousand other health care workers, all in seven years! It's impossible. Right now we have forty-two doctors and ninety-one nurses, and not all of them are practicing. The medical school can graduate twenty doctors a year right now. We need to expand to eighty per year in the next four years so that we can graduate three years of classes at that size by the end of the seven year plan."

"Not counting all the doctor's offices, clinics, and hospitals that have to be built," said Chris. "It's impossible. But even if we get close, it'll be a great leap forward for health on this world."

"If we reach the goals in ten years, I'll be pleased," agreed Lua.

"High schools and colleges have to expand a lot, too," said Chris. "This world has about fifty thousand high school age kids and only a quarter of them are in school right now. No doubt that'll double. I'm guessing our génadɛma will have to double its size. But that's something to talk about at the all-génadɛma council, and now that the legislature has finished, it can be held."

"You had a call about it," said Liz. "Aryéstu wanted to start it tomorrow night. Yimu Miller also called, by the way. He wants your help to issue an ultimatum to Lord Mitruiluku."

Chris sighed. "I was afraid of that. We can now make three vehicles per day in Miller Motors; we've finally reached our planned production. The only problem is that we're getting enough headlights for only two vehicles per day! So they've started producing trucks with only one installed headlight! It's ridiculous."

"Take away the contract," pronounced Behruz.

"Maybe we will. How's the western shore gas pipeline, anyway?"

"I'm glad you felt we were ready to invest in it. It's coming along pretty well. I spent three hours before the eclipse calling and getting reports. I'm going to the western shore next week for five days. The pipeline has started growing southward from Ora toward Mɛddwoglubas and from Bruagras toward Pértatranisér; both crews began work yesterday. It'll reach Pértatranisér in about twenty days and then half the summer the crew will be digging up the city's streets and laying pipe. Another crew will start in two weeks to lay pipes northward from Bruagras to Néfa, and most of that city will have gas by late fall. The expansion of the cement and charcoal plant to produce gas won't be ready until late fall anyway. Next year those crews will start laying the thirty kilometers of pipes from Pértatranisér to Ora, and that'll be done by summer, if all goes well."

"And the extension from Mɛddwoglubas to Tripola?"

"Forty kilometers. Ora to Mɛddwoglubas will be finished by the end of the summer. We have a crew near Tripola building tanks to store gas so that we can truck it down from Mɛddwoglubas by the fall. Besides, once the fifteen centimeter pipeline

reaches Tripola next spring or summer, it won't be able to supply enough gas to heat Tripola at peak winter demand times. But when it's done, the cement plant in Bruagras and the steel mill in Ora—both of which produce and consume gas, as well as produce and consume charcoal—will be able to produce gas in large quantities just about as cheaply as it can be made, and the pipelines will deliver it to one sixth the population of this world and almost all the industrial plants outside the Mɛlwika-Mɛddoakwés-ɛjnopéla area, which already has a gas line. It'll quadruple the gas company's service, but, it'll cost us about 450,000 dhanay."

"It'll be worth it in the long run."

"How many houses will actually use gas, though?" asked Liz.

"We don't know. In Mɛlwika, two thirds of the households now have gas stoves, almost half have gas water heaters, and one third use gas heat. As prosperity increases, so will those numbers. The pipe will run through twenty-five villages on the route. We'll leave connection points near every house, even though that will slow us down. Next year if all goes well we'll start adding side lines to other nearby villages, just like the crew in this area is adding side lines."

"Good," said Liz. "Because piped gas and water are probably the two best ways to reduce women's domestic work. Hauling water and firewood are their biggest and most onerous chores."

"Not to mention that firewood is an inefficient use of wood, and we can actually reduce wood use if people switch to gas," added Chris.

Just then the telephone rang. They all turned to look as the cook went to answer it. She brought it over to the table. "Jordan."

“He finally called!” said Behruz. He reached over to the telephone and flipped a switch to make the phone as loud as possible. “Hi Jordan, can you hear us?”

“Sure dad; Alláh-u-Abhá! Are you in the gabrula?”

“Yes, with your mom, grandpa, grandma, Thornton, and Lébé. How’s it going down there?”

“Pretty well. We’ve been very well received; the people of Wɛranopéla have been very warm and kind to us and they’ve flocked to the classes. Mitrukaru is on his way out to the fields with about a dozen men—as many as can ride in the back of the truck—to look at crops and make suggestions, especially the corn and potatoes, because those are pretty recent additions to the crops down here. Tomasu is leading three others in an effort to install the village’s first flush toilet, in the Bahá'í Center. Budhéstu has been by far the most popular speaker because everyone wants to know about the development plan. He’s busy answering questions from sixty people in the Bahá'í Center. We listened to the *World Table* together and everyone wants to know what the votes mean.”

“How has Wɛranopéla received the legislation?” asked Chris, curious.

“Pretty positively. Everyone understands a big budget with a half million for education and half a million for medical care in it, though they have no sense of how much of that might go to them. The new laws are viewed much more ambiguously, though. They worry how they’ll expand the school and whether they can ignore environmental regulations that might shut down the sawmill.”

“They have a sawmill?” asked Chris.

“Yes, it was just finished three months ago. It’s controversial, too, because it can’t cover its expenses without demanding very long work hours or giving a low wage.”

“I’m not surprised. They’re competing against the big charcoal and lumber operations in Pértatranisér and northern Vespa, where tropical forest can be dynamited and dragged by boat to a sawmill. They need to concentrate on specialized products and they need to burn their waste efficiently or sell it as fuel for heating.”

“I’ll explain that to them. The women’s classes—sewing, canning, knitting—are all full. Classes with specific Bahá'í content are smallest. I’m disappointed in that, but I think we need to build more Bahá'í specifics into the evening sing-alongs instead. Last night we had seventy people, mostly young ones, singing at the Bahá'í Center until 10:30 at night to the tune of a three-string and pan-pipe. We taught them several Bahá'í songs as well as sang a few popular songs and a few hymns. It was the big fun time of the day.”

“Don’t get discouraged,” said Lua. “Don’t push the Faith too hard; Wɛranopéla’s twenty-five percent Bahá'í anyway and everyone knows about it. Concentrate on the music and the development classes, make friends for the Faith, and toward the end of the visit ask people whether they want to be Bahá'ís.”

“Okay, I’ll try that.” There was a long pause. “One reason I called, though, has to do with a development grant. Budhéstu and Tumékwu, the headman, had a long talk last night and this morning. Tumékwu wants to install village water. The village is on a hill and they can build a water tower close to the summit. The houses are on two circular lanes, or maybe I should say one spiral lane, about 300 meters long. The sawmill is next to the river and gets its power from a waterwheel; the waterwheel is always turning and could easily pump water to the tower as well. So they need about 350 meters of pipe, a pump, and a water tower. We figure those things will cost about a hundred-fifty, fifteen,

and forty dhanay respectively; a total of two hundred-five. But of course they don't have any money."

Behruz raised his eyebrow at the request. There was a pause as everyone looked at each other. Then Chris said "Jordan, there's no question that we can afford two hundred dhanay, but there is a question whether we should get into the business of making grants spontaneously like this. If every time a Bahá'í youth group pulls into a village, it arranges a grant, people will be expecting money from you rather than ideas, classes, and information about the Faith. You don't want that. Besides, it's a week or two before the harvest. If they wait until after the harvest, each household could chip in one dhanay and they'd have it. If the Lord gave some and the Development Corps gave some, the village would have to shell out even less."

"I suppose that's true, and I see your point, grandpa. But couldn't we offer some kind of incentive?"

"Jordan, did you make some kind of commitment?"

"Well, more or less. . . . I said I'd see whether I could get something, maybe 30 or 40 dhanay. The more the cost is spread out, the better, because the villagers are more likely to act if they have to pay less and just provide labor. You know how water is in the villages, with women and children carrying it for hours every day and people not bathing or washing things as much because water's hard to move."

"He's right about that," said Lua. "It's a sanitation and hygiene issue."

"But we have to be immensely careful because people have to accept Bahá'u'lláh because of the revelation and teachings, not because of development grants," replied Chris.

“How about this,” said Behruz. “The ten-centimeter nickel-steel pipes for village and neighborhood water systems cost 4 or 5 dhanay per ten-meter section when bought in small numbers, but they’re 3 dhanay in a bulk order. I bet we could ask for a favor and get them for three.”

“That would help!” said Jordan. “But it’d cost a lot to get them to Wɛranopéla.”

“You have a truck,” said Behruz. “And we can get a trailer. You can drive up at an odd time to pick them up.”

“Tomasu can help get a pump cheaply, I bet,” said Thornton. “He can make a call and get a quarter knocked off the price of the pump. The water tower is a problem, though; a big steel tank is expensive.”

“I wonder whether they could make a wooden water tower,” said Chris. “Sort of a gigantic wooden barrel, made of staves and two steel hoops. They have a sawmill, after all. Come to think of it, no one on this world makes wooden barrels, do they?”

Behruz shook his head. “I’ve never seen any. Wine is transported in clay amphoras; not very practical, either.”

“Farmers are using big steel milk cans, but I bet there’s a market for wooden barrels,” said Thornton. “Say Jordan, I’ll do some research on my computer and print out anything I can find about wooden water towers and how to make wooden barrels. I can probably get it to you on the dawn bus.”

“Great. Thanks. If we can get them pipes and a pump at a discount and they don’t need to buy a water tower, we’ll save them a lot of money.”

“If nothing else, they can buy cement and build a big pool, then cover it with a wooden roof,” said Chris. “You’ll need more than main pipes, though, you’ll need a tool

to drill holes where smaller three-centimeter pipes can be connected so water can be routed to houses, and a welder to seal the hole. I suspect you'll be back to about two hundred dhanay when you purchase everything."

"I see." Jordan was disappointed. "But we have some ways to make it cheaper, at least. Thanks for that. Thor, anything you can send will be very helpful."

"I'll send anything I can find."

"And we're all saying prayers for you," added Lébé. "It's very exciting that the Faith now has so many capable youth that it can support a project like this."

"Thanks. We're praying a lot, too! I better get off the phone, though, I think I've heard a few clicks. This line serves three villages. I'll call again tomorrow. Bye."

"Bye," they all chorused.

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Early the next morning, Chris and Yimu Miller drove to Kérékwɛs to investigate the slow production of electrical equipment for vehicles. They stopped first in Ornakwés to visit a factory that made glass; in addition to windshields and side and rear windows, the expert glass blowers also made the bulbs for the headlights, tail lights, and brake lights. They confirmed that they had been making and shipping thirty headlights and sixty of the other lights per week, as was necessary to produce the lights for fifteen vehicles per week. So they drove across Mɛlita, its fields greening from the second planting of the year, to Kérékwɛs. They went straight to the factory, bypassing Lord Mitruiluku's house, though as soon as they entered the factory, the foreman saw them and discretely hurried out.

The factory was small; it made ceramic bases for the bulbs, assembled them and evacuated the air from the bulbs, tested them, and built the alternators that powered the

vehicles' electrical systems. Two men made ceramic bases full time, one assembled and evacuated, and two more built the alternators, including the foreman. When Yimu and Chris entered they were startled.

"I'm Yimu Miller, and I wanted to see your operation," said Yimu. He looked around. "Where's your supply of bulbs? It should be building up by now."

"No, honored, we just have these," said the man making ceramic bases, his fingers coated with clay.

"What? You're receiving thirty headlight bulbs and sixty of the small bulbs per week and shipping twenty and forty per week to Mɛlwika."

"I have a very high failure rate. The quality isn't uniform; some are slightly larger and some slightly smaller, so the ceramic bases don't fit right. I have to make about twice as many bases to get ones that fit right, and in the process I break some of the bulbs."

"Then order extras! We didn't have this problem when the headlights were assembled in Mɛlwika. Let me see." Yimu reached down and picked up some bulbs. He grabbed a ruler and began measuring bases. "These are all fine; they're within specifications. Let me see your bases." He picked up several and measured them. "Your bases aren't tapered enough. They're supposed to have a broad bottom and get slightly narrower as they go up, so they can snug up against the bulb if the latter has slight variations in diameter. Let me see how you install them."

"Very well." The man took a base and a bulb and put them in the machine and began to apply heat with a blowtorch to soften the glass so he could mate the two tightly. But within a minute he had cracked the bulb instead.

"You're doing it wrong; weren't you taught how to do this properly?"

“No, honored. The man who was taught in Mɛlwika quit several months ago, so I’ve been teaching myself.”

“No wonder you’re having problems. This operation, frankly, as it gets more experienced should be able to produce two or three times as many headlights per day as it can now. We can send down one of the men who used to do this work in Mɛlwika; the new equipment isn’t that different. He’ll help you.”

Just then, Mitruiluku strode in. “What’s the meaning of this? I may be a partner, but this is *my* factory. You can’t just come in without my permission.”

Yimu looked at him angrily. “And do you know why your factory can’t turn out enough headlights per week? I’ve been here four minutes and I’ve already found a serious problem. Give me an hour and I’ll find a dozen more, and give me the chance and I’ll fix them all.”

Mitruiluku pointed at him. “I’m perfectly able to get these problems fixed myself!”

“Then why have they lasted almost three months? Why are we producing ten trucks a week with one headlight? You want to fix it, go ahead! You have one week, or we’ll give the contract to someone else!”

“You can’t do that!”

“Yes I can, because you’re breaching the contract by failing to fulfill its requirements!”

Mitruiluku’s face was red with anger, but so was Yimu’s, the threat of ending the contract was real. “Okay, okay,” he said. “What have you found?”

“This operator was never trained.”

“The man he replaced left suddenly and could not impart his knowledge.”

“We have people in Mɛlwika who can train him.” Yimu turned to the man. “How much are you being paid?”

“Never mind!” demanded Mitruiluku.

“Two and a half dhanay per day.”

Yimu raised his eyebrow. “As of yesterday, the minimum wage is three dhanay per day for ten hours of work.”

“That applies to operations of twenty or more employees,” replied Mitruiluku.

“You have two other factories in town and they employ that many, so you have to pay the minimum wage, plus medical benefits, plus provide two weeks vacation per year.”

“Give me time!”

Yimu looked at the men as if to say *make sure he gives you what you are owed.* Then he turned to the men making the alternators. “Show me what you do.”

“Hey, they’re keeping up with your production!”

“So far, but I want to see. We’re supposed to have a backlog of alternators, and we don’t. And remember that soon we’re switching to car production for three months, so you have to produce a slightly different alternator. This place is staffed according to plans for producing twenty vehicles per week, not fifteen, so you should be able to handle a faster pace. I don’t see any evidence of that.”

Mitruiluku shook his head. “Okay, Yimu. Look this place over very carefully, make plans to fix it, and come to my house to make a report afterward, alright? I’m in favor of faster production, too. Fine with me. I want a successful contract.”

"I'm sure you do, because it earns you money. That's what we'll do."

Mitruiluku looked at Chris. "Are you needed here? The tea is hot."

"Alright, I'll come with you right now." Chris nodded to Yimu, then stepped out with Mitruiluku.

"Why did you bring him? It betrays lack of trust, Lord. What about my pride?"

"This is about production and contracts, and we have asked for explanations of the problems for months. We had no confidence you'd let Yimu in."

"Fix the factory, then. Twenty vehicles per week; hah! I doubt he'll ever get production up that high, and even if he does, he'll never sell that many! He can't sell fifteen!"

"Don't be so sure. We're tackling bottlenecks very systematically through training. Adequate pay is essential because we want workers to make a long-term commitment and be active in finding better ways to do tasks. When we started almost three months ago, we were producing ten vehicles per week, and there were quality problems. The quality problems are now licked and production is fifteen vehicles per week. The staffing should support twenty, according to all our calculations, but most people aren't there yet. We'd like to get production up to sixteen per week by next month and seventeen per week a month after that. We're going to push up production very gradually. Most people plan to shut down for vacation in early fall, so we have to make up for that. We'd like to have all four of your people know all four jobs, so they can alternate tasks to relieve boredom and train replacements."

"Alright, that sounds fine. But how will we sell that many? Demand isn't there."

"We're beginning to get a production surplus, it is true. But in the last week I think that has started to change. Most granges now have brought in their first harvests and have cash to buy. They like what they see; this new truck design is very versatile, since you can attach plows or a flatbed and use it as a tractor as well. If prices fall and income grows, there will be prosperous farmers and small businessmen buying. And we're working with the banks to design a loan system that will encourage purchases. If they won't help, we'll open our own financing system with low interest."

"Really, and lose money?"

"We won't lose money; we'll use money to make money. We now have an operation that employs over a thousand people around the world. We don't want to lay them off. We hope to manage demand for vehicles so we can keep them employed."

Mitruiluku laughed. "I haven't attended any of your business classes, but I know no one can manage demand very well."

"I concede that," said Chris. "But we're going to try."

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Jordan wiggled the stone gradually into place, watching the mortar squeeze out around it. Finally, he stopped.

"No, not that way," said Bɛlstélu. He had obviously been watching closely. He pulled the stone out, balanced it on one hand, and used the trowel to push the mortar back into place, then rotated the stone with both hands and replaced it. "This way, it fits the width of the wall better, and the bump sticks down into the space between the other stones, which will help lock the wall together better when the mortar sets."

"I see what you mean. That is a better fit."

“Mortaring field stone requires more of an eye than anything else.”

“Thanks.” Jordan carefully selected another stone, slapped down mortar and placed it, and Bɛlstélu nodded approvingly. He was a very helpful and encouraging foreman, and Jordan was learning a skill he never thought he’d learn.

“Lord Ekwiséru’s coming!” exclaimed someone, and a moment later they could see a steam car working its way up the village’s spiral lane, avoiding the ditches being dug along the edge.

“What will he think?” asked one man.

“It’s none of his business,” replied another.

“No; we’re serving the village and we want him to be impressed and donate,” responded Bɛlstélu. “No wise cracks, and don’t look worried or guilty. This is a serious good thing.”

A moment later the steam car reached the nearest open space and stopped. Ekwiséru stepped out of the driver’s seat, and Widubéru, much to Jordan’s surprise, got out of the passenger side. They smiled at each other. “What a project!” exclaimed Widubéru.

“Who is he?” whispered Bɛlstélu.

“Our rescuer; Widubéru, head of the Development Corps.”

“You look just like one of my villagers,” said Ekwiséru, to Jordan.

“Thank you. We have quite a project here.”

“I heard all about it from Tumékwu and had to come see it.” He stopped by Bɛlstélu. “Lord Widubéru, this is Bɛlstélu, one of the sharpest young farmers we have in this village. I’m pleased to see he’s working on this project.”

“Coordinating it,” added Jordan.

Widubéru extended both hands. “Pleased to meet a servant of the village, as I can see you are.”

“Thank you.” They shook hands.

“So, this is the water tower?” asked Widubéru.

“Indeed, Lord, it’ll be three meters in diameter and three meters high,” replied Bɛlstélu. “We understand from the Tripola Fire Department that’s the minimum size for fighting a house fire.”

“That sounds right to me. I’m glad you’ve received sound advice.”

“The Bahá'í youth group has helped us get it. They figure out who to ask, and either we make a telephone call or visit Tripola.”

“Where will you get the pipe?” asked Ekwiséru.

“Mɛlwika,” replied Bɛlstélu.

“That’s a lot of digging, a lot of money for pipes to houses, and a lot of mortaring stone to build the water tower,” said Ekwiséru.

Bɛlstélu shrugged. “We can be done by the end of the summer. We’ll put water pipes along one side of the street and a deep gutter along the other so there’s a place for water to drain. We’d like to gravel the lane, too.”

“That would be good.”

“Where will you get the water?” asked Widubéru.

“From the river near the sawmill. The sawmill’s waterwheel can power a pump to pump water up to the water tower. It has spare capacity and isn’t used at all at night.”

“Clever.” Widubéru considered his next sentence carefully. “It would be better if you dug a well under the sawmill or just outside it, about ten meters from the river’s edge. Animals drink from the river, and when they do they crap in it and drop their germs in the water in various ways. I’m sure you get your water from the river now. People will get diarrhea once or twice a year and children will get sick from the river water. But if you pull water from a well near the river, the sand and silt will filter out the germs. Just close up the well so nothing can fall into it. The water quality will be much better.”

“We can do that,” agreed Bɛlstélu.

“Did you hear about the barrels?” asked Jordan.

“No, what are they?” asked Ekwiséru.

“At the sawmill several men are experimenting, learning how to make wooden barrels. We got the information from Mɛlwika.”

“Show me.” Ekwiséru sounded concerned. Jordan nodded and walked to the steam car with Ekwiséru and Widubéru.

They drove down to the sawmill. Inside, the blade was moving slowly to cut long, thin barrel staves from a trunk of even-grained, seasoned oak. Two men were clamping several staves to a frame that would slowly curve them when they were exposed to steam for several hours. Two other men were taking curved staves from the day before and fitting them inside two hoops of nickel steel.

When they saw Ekwiséru they quickly stopped. “So, this is a barrel?” he asked. It was a new Eryan word, *bolwono,* coined from *bol,* “round,” and *bɛrwono,* “basket.”

“It’ll be watertight once they complete the staves,” said Jordan. “The staves are cut and fitted together dry, then they are immersed in water to make them swell up. The

iron bands keep them in place and the swelling makes them water tight. You can roll them very easily if they are curved properly."

"I see!" said Ekwiséru. "How much will they cost to make?"

"Once this process is developed and becomes routine, a team of four to six men can cut the staves, bend them, and fit them together. They can probably make several barrels a day."

"That means they can be sold at a reasonable price and make a profit." Ekwiséru smiled. "Marvelous. Marvelous. When will you have the first one?"

"By the end of the day we'll have a barrel put together, but it'll have to soak a while to become watertight. It has taken five days of work to figure this out, and it'll be a month to figure out how to do it quickly and efficiently."

"This sawmill has not been able to make money yet. Maybe that's about to change." Ekwiséru was very pleased. "So, what else have you done to the village?"

"The Bahá'í Center has a flush toilet," replied Jordan. "And a dozen women can make some pretty good pastries and jams, though they've had to use imported fruits because local fruit isn't ripe yet. The village has orders for three sewing machines for the Bahá'í Center, where women will use them cooperatively."

"Whose paying for them?"

"The local spiritual assembly has decided to take out a loan for them and will charge women using them a nominal amount," said Jordan.

"And do you have any converts?"

Jordan shook his head. "No, we haven't asked." Of course, this was their last night; they planned to ask that night. But he didn't mention that.

“I’m glad to see you want to do good.” Ekwiséru looked around at the men in the saw mill. “Tell you what. I’ve never seen this village pull together so much before and try so many good ideas. I am very impressed. I’ll pay for the water pipes.”

“And the Development Corps will pay for the pump,” Widubéru hastily added. “The villagers will need all the cash they can get, after the harvest, to buy pipes that will take the water into their houses. In this climate, exposed pipes will freeze in the winter, so every house will want its own underground connection to the water main.” He turned to Jordan. “If you are visiting villages for the summer, you can do few things that bring more good to a village than helping it install a water system. Half the trips to hospitals are caused by bad water. Most childhood deaths are traceable to it as well. Most villages can install a simple but decent system for a hundred dhanay, if the villagers contribute their labor to the laying of the pipe.”

“Okay,” said Jordan. “I’ll keep that in mind, and I’ve learned how to set one up here in Wɛranopéla.”

“Where are you going next?”

“Lɛwéspadéma; we have to be there tomorrow.”

“So far! No more stops in South Shore Province?”

“The harvest starts here tomorrow and is underway everywhere else in the province. We’re heading to Lɛwéspa where it’s over. We’ll be back in late summer, I suspect, to a village on the Glaktakwés. That way we’ll reach one on each of the province’s major rivers.”

“Good. I’ll try to get to Lɛwéspadéma next week while you’re there. If they want a water system and you’re going to get it started, the Development Corps will help. Just call me.”

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As the sun set that night, Wɛranopéla Bahá'í Center filled to an unusual extent. It was the last night in the village for the visiting youth; most of the Bahá'ís, most of the young people, and a large number of visitors from the other villages on the Dhébakwés came. There was plenty to eat together because the women had been experimenting with new kinds of bread filled with dried fruits and olives; the youth had ordered several kilos of supplies for the class and the last night together. After they enjoyed the food there was a round of prayers, then singing for an hour, and a few even started to dance folk dances outside the Bahá'í Center.

Finally about 9:30, Jordan went to the front of the hall. “I want to thank everyone for a truly amazing week,” he began. “We really had no idea what to expect on this trip. We expected some things to be easy and other things impossible. In fact, some easy things proved impossible and some impossible things proved easy. We wanted to go somewhere we could be helpful, but we didn’t know how we could help. Six days later, we have discovered ways we could help that we did not expect, and we found that all of you have helped us as well. We have friends now; friends we never expected. We want to stay in touch with all of you after we leave. Our next stop, Lɛwéspadéma, is on the northern border of Lɛwéspa, about one hundred ten kilometers from here. From there, we’ll head farther north, but we’ll probably come back through here in late summer.

“We hope that all of you have heard more about the Bahá'í Faith because of our visit. Our love of Bahá'u'lláh is the main reason we have dedicated this summer to service. Bahá'u'lláh calls us to be anxiously concerned with the world around us and to become involved to solve its problems. He commands us to build a world in which unity is the highest teaching; a world where people cooperate, build a civilization together, help the weak and the poor, and help themselves. The days when we could worry only about our family have passed. We must now worry about all of humanity, and we must come up with ways to help everyone. We are called on to be active, to take action, but to make sure our actions build unity rather than division and strife. Keeping us going in the right direction is our love of Bahá'u'lláh, or devotion to Esto, prayer, and study of Bahá'u'lláh’s revelation.

“I think that the love of Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings has started to form in the hearts of many people over the last week. So as my closing plea, I would ask you to reflect deeply about Bahá'u'lláh and if you are so moved, declare your faith. We need you. The Faith needs as many followers and lovers of Bahá'u'lláh as it can recruit. This world needs Bahá'u'lláh and His revelation, for it can make a new world; it is the real and true new knowledge, made necessary by the changes that the material new knowledge have brought about. Please join us and help us remake this civilization. Please.” Jordan’s voice broke from the emotion that surprised him. Speechless, he sat.

There was absolute silence in the hall for a moment, then someone began to applaud. It seemed like the best way to release the tension. Everyone rose to applaud, which momentarily shocked and appalled Jordan. Then he nodded in thanks.

Budhéstu, in the front row, was surprised to find himself on his feet applauding. Jordan had touched his heart in a profound and unexpected way. He looked around the hall and tears came to his eyes. The week had been a transformative one for him as well. He had never thought about service so much; both theoretically, dealing with all the concrete problems a village faces—which he knew about from a life of experience—and spiritually, thinking about how to engage people and praying for inspiration. Praying for inspiration: he had come to every prayer session of his fellow youth and had started to say the Bahá'í short obligatory prayer every noon.

He turned to Blorakwé, standing and applauding next to her. He looked at her and she looked back, puzzled. “Ah . . . I’m a Bahá'í,” he said.

“Really?”

He nodded. “I accept Bahá'u'lláh.”

She squealed a bit, then grabbed and hugged him, much to his surprise. He was still surprised that he had declared; it was as if a voice deep inside him had suddenly surfaced.

Jordan saw the commotion and came over. “Did you—”

Budhéstu nodded. “I am a Bahá'í.”

“Congratulations!” Jordan shook Budhéstu’s hands, and that started more commotion, with a dozen people come up to him and shaking hands as well. Then another person declared in the back, quietly, and shouts began there as well.

“Let’s try to keep this fairly calm,” Jordan said to Rudhékwu, who was nearby.

Rudhékwu, secretary of the local spiritual assembly, shook his head. “No, let people see it and celebrate. It’s okay, Jordan.”

“Alright.” Jordan headed to the back of the room to shake hands with the other declarant. After he finished Dhuganu, a nineteen year old Bahá'í youth, came up to him. “Jordan, can I come along to Lɛwéspadéma?”

“Really? Don’t you have harvest work to do?”

“No, not on our farm. I harvested corn on ten agris in Brébɛtroba a month ago and planted corn on ten agris here after that. My corn crop will come along in mid to late summer. I had originally decided to plant late so that I could hire myself out during the harvest, then handle my own harvest later; the money I saved would be for my sister’s dowry or for génadɛma, because I want to go to génadɛma if I can. But I’d rather go with you for a few weeks, then come back here for the harvest. My mom and sister can watch the corn and keep the birds away.”

“Are you sure? Have they given you permission to come?”

“Yes, they have. Please, I want to serve! I’m not sure what skills I can offer, but I can always teach literacy or children’s classes.”

Jordan nodded. “Okay, then you are very welcome.”

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## Prospects

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The All-Génadɛma Council finally got started with a review of the Seven Year Development Plan, which had a thirty-page chapter about development of génadɛmas during that time frame. Before the next morning's meeting, génadɛma presidents reviewed their expansion plans, so that they could present them when Aryéstu, their host, called them to order the next morning.

"I thought we'd just go around the circle and present our plans," began Aryéstu. "Then we can discuss ways to collaborate."

"I'd like to present my plans last, if I may," said Chris. "Because I'd like to scale them back, in some cases, in order to support those of the other schools."

"One problem," exclaimed Stɛrsɛjiu, head of the génadɛma in Isurdhuna. "Our expansion plans depend on the availability of visiting faculty. That's true of many schools."

"I think that will become less of a problem in the next seven years," replied Chris. "The development plan calls for about 21,000 student-years of génadɛma education! That's 3,000 students per year or four times what we have now. A third of that is for training elementary, middle school, and high school teachers, and that has to be done in each province. A lot of the rest is for police, mechanics, accountants, clerics, and administrators, and a lot of that is local, too."

"But that's my point; we don't have anyone to train accountants or police."

“That problem will be solved in two ways: students commuting and faculty commuting. With the better roads and plenty of buses, a special bus run can be made to take Kɛrda policemen or businessmen to Ora or Néfa for evening classes, or a taxi can take faculty to Isurdhuna. By the fall, with a concrete road all the way to Isurdhuna, Néfa will be an hour and a quarter away; Ora, an hour and three quarters. Even Tripola will be an hour and a quarter from Ora and Bɛllɛdha will be an hour and a half from Néfa. The western shore will see a lot of benefits from that.”

“I have another idea that will help,” said Aryéstu. “Right now, it is prestigious to go to Mɛlwika; it's the biggest and the Menneas teach there. I’d like to see us create a class of faculty who can teach anywhere and are recognized as highly capable; ‘all-génadɛma professors.’ That way someone from Néfa can go teach at Isurdhuna, for example, and they will have a prestigious title that will indicate they are capable.”

“That’s a great idea!” said Stɛrsɛjiu. “It would reflect the reality that we have faculty in all our schools who have recognized experience and capability.”

“Let’s create a committee to define standards,” suggested Aryéstu. “But first, let’s go around. I didn’t mean to distract us. Aku, can we start with Gordha?”

Aku laughed. “Why not; we’re the smallest! Our plans really are pretty simple: we need to train teachers, about 75 in the next seven years to the dwoyɛri stage, plus perhaps a dozen to the kwétɛryɛri stage. We also figure we’ll be training about ten or fifteen policemen to the dwoyɛri. We’re really a satellite of Mɛlwika; we have three full time faculty and we receive about fifteen part-time faculty from Mɛlwika every year. We plan to expand to about thirty students and maybe ten courses during any particular term.”

"I guess I should go next," said Aryéstu. "Gésɛlékwɛs Maj plans to focus on law—we have the only law school—economics, administration, literature, philosophy, math and statistics, translation from English, and we will expand our courses on teaching. Our goal is to reach a permanent student body of 300 and a faculty of 25. Her Majesty wants Mɛddoakwés to have a major génadɛma. Randu, you're next."

"Thank you. I have to speak for three Sumi génadɛmas, since my colleagues here can't speak much Eryan." Randu pointed to the heads of the two génadɛmas on Sumilara, who were attending their first council meeting. "The development plan really did not reflect the island's needs or priorities very well. It plans for a full time Sumi student body of 300, but our goal is at least 400 and frankly, we'd like to reach 500; Sumilara has a sixth of the world's population, so we should have at least a sixth of the 3,000 students mentioned in the plan. Our division of labor is as follows: Anarbala Génadɛma is 'gentlemanly' and thus will continue to focus on history, music, philosophy, and Sumi literature, but plans to add business, accounting, and Eryan language. Ninurta Génadɛma will continue focusing on teaching and will add agriculture, mechanics, administration, and police work. Arjdhura will offer teaching and mechanics and will be the bridge where new subjects will be taught by visiting faculty from Mɛlwika and Gésɛlékwɛs Maj; in particular, we want to offer law courses and help Sumi students transition to those génadɛmas."

"Thank you. Ekwɛgéndu?"

"There's not a lot to say about Bɛllɛdha. Our plans focus on teachers and mechanics, with presumably some police courses imported from elsewhere. We'll expand, we hope, to a full-time student body of 70 and a faculty of seven."

“Mitrésu?”

“Néfa Génadɛma wants to expand to 250 full-time students and 21 faculty in the next seven years, with our focus remaining the same: teaching, accounting, business, and administration. We have a reciprocal arrangement with Ora; they provide us with police, engineering, mechanics, and some science via commuting faculty and we share our strengths in business with them in turn. We also have a reciprocal arrangement with Mɛddwoglubas; they provide faculty for our nursing, health, and hygiene courses. Stɛrsɛjiu, we could do the same with you because our teachers will want philosophy, history, and literature, and these are your strengths.”

“Perfect; let’s talk!”

“Tell us your plans, Stɛrsɛjiu,” said Aryéstu.

The philosopher nodded. “Our strength is philosophy and literature, but we also have faculty able to teach science and math, so we have been serving mostly as a teacher’s college for the valley. We plan to add history and expand our philosophy and literature via a grant from the Duke. We figure we’ll have a hundred students and fifteen faculty, and commuting faculty to teach elsewhere on the western shore would help us quite a lot. We have a lot of people who want business and accounting skills, and we have no idea how to offer police courses.”

“We can help you,” replied Sérwéru, head of the Mitrui Génadɛma in Ora. “We plan to become the biggest police training program, bigger even than Mɛlwika, thanks to a commitment Amos has made to assist us, and we’re expanding our mechanical and electrical engineering programs and of course our teacher preparation program. We still have almost no philosophy and history, though, so we could use your strengths there.” He

glanced at Aryéstu, then continued. “Our goal is to become the second largest génadɛma, with about 350 full time students and 25 faculty. We will also start a small program to train people in administrative work, a chemistry major, and continue our English translation program.”

“Good luck; we want to be the second largest, too,” said Aryéstu, with a smile. “We skipped over the Pértatranisér Women’s College.”

“Well, we’re competing with Gordha to be the smallest génadɛma,” replied May. “We have twenty-five women from Néfa, Ora, and Mɛddwoglubas; they arrive every day on the ‘women’s bus,’ which also serves women shoppers. We’re mostly offering basic teacher preparation courses, but we also have cooking and home economics, and our faculty offer those courses at the nearby génadɛmas, with which we also have reciprocal arrangements. We’d love to have a reciprocal arrangement with Isurdhuna as well. We’d like to expand to fifty full-time students in seven years.”

“Thank you. Dhugu?”

“Mɛddwoglubas has three strengths: teacher preparation, nursing, and mechanics. We serve a small province, so we’re very interested in expanding reciprocal arrangements; we’re in negotiation with Tripola over a reciprocal mechanics faculty and with Ora over engineering faculty. We hope to grow to 150 full-time students and 12 faculty over the next seven years.”

“What do you have in Tripola, Wérdéu?”

“We’re a small génadɛma, but we have mechanics, teacher preparation, a small agriculture program, and a small geology program, and we hope all four will grow. We’d like to reach one hundred full-time students, based on the development plan, and maybe

nine faculty. We're particularly interested in developing a branch agricultural campus somewhere closer to the equator; no one is doing tropical agriculture yet."

"We've wanted to start in Pértatranisér," said Amos. "Maybe we could talk."

"Another good connection," said Aryéstu. "That takes us around the sea to ɛndraidha. Skandu?"

"I wish someone could have come here from the academy there, but as I understand it, they plan to expand their civil engineering program in order to train more road and dam and bridge builders. They are also developing military science courses of all sort: strategy, logistics, mechanics, etc. Their goal is to train half incoming recruits over a three-year period with a uniyɛri, all lower level officers with a dwoyɛri, and all higher level officers with triyɛris or even kwétɛryɛris, plus train existing or potential faculty to the Master's level. They want to expand their faculty to twenty-five; quite large, I think all of you would agree. I'm not sure how big their full-time student body would be; I suppose 200 or 300."

"That is large; maybe they'll be the second largest génadɛma," said Aryéstu. "Chris, it's now your turn."

"Thank you. Well, I had thought all of you would give Mɛlwika more competition than you have! Our seven year plan is still taking shape, but our goal is to continue providing most of the world's kwétɛryɛris and Masters. Our Medical School—the only one—will need to quadruple in size, and we're already planning that. Our nursing program, however, will probably only double, since Mɛddwoglubas will expand its program quite a bit. Our police training program will expand, but we will let Ora take the lead. Our teaching training program will expand slightly, but it will be much closer in

size to all the others. The education program will probably become an Education School and will also focus on training génadɛma faculty in education, assuming, of course, we can find someone to run it. Our business school will grow, but Néfa's will grow faster. We will remain the center for advanced science research and education, and our engineering school will expand and will remain larger than Ora's, but I suspect Ora's will catch up in some ways. Our history program will expand into archaeology and museum science. Our Gɛdhéma Studies program will expand a lot and will spin off programs in sociology and anthropology. Commercial art and music will expand as well, though we may start to support an art program near Pértatranisér. The Geological Survey is spinning off programs in land use planning, forestry, and ecology. Our English program will grow and we may start teaching other gɛdhéma languages. Our agriculture program will grow. Our women's géndha plans to double to eighty students. We already offer courses in three satellite campuses in the lower Arjakwés Valley and we may start another campus in Mɛdhpéla, since the Kwolonɛ seem not inclined to allow Gordha to expand to their territory, which is a shame. We're also expanding our publishing program and will start an athletics department staffed by students. So we have a lot of plans, all of which are dependent on money, of course."

"How many students and faculty?" asked Aryéstu.

Chris hesitated. "A lot. We have six different units; a medical school, engineering school, business school, school of public administration, women's college, and the main campus. About one hundred faculty and probably about 1,200 to 1,400 full-time students."

There was silence after that announcement, for it made Mɛlwika four times larger than anyone else. “I want to support the other schools as much as possible,” continued Chris. “We have shared faculty very generously with other schools and with better roads that should be easier than ever. Bɛllɛdha is about two hours away, Tripola about three hours, the western shore four; we can send faculty back and forth. Via Arjdhura, we are now in the position to support the development of Sumilara, and we are thrilled by that. We plan to start endowing research as much as possible, especially the encyclopedia project, which has proved very useful. We think the encyclopedia can improve quality and increase its translations of gɛdhéma knowledge to about five thousand pages a year. That’ll cost a lot of money, but we’ll endow the project and share the money widely. So we will continue supporting the entire system as much as we can.”

“It’s a shame you can’t expand to 75 faculty and help the rest of us grow by 25 faculty,” said Aryéstu, half joking.

“In a way, I can’t blame Chris,” said Randu. “Most of us have done the conservative thing; our provinces need so many teachers, so we’ll train that many. Most of us haven’t even tried to create our own police training programs or business programs! Sumilara is the exception; we need to do everything in a different language.”

“That’s true,” agreed Stɛrsɛjiu. “Isurdhuna can’t afford an accounting or a business program; we don’t have enough students. Either we hire enough people to teach the subject decently, which is financially impossible, or we hire one person and do a poor job. We have to collaborate.”

“All the génadɛmas on the western shore together are competitive with Mɛlwika,” added Sérwéru. “The difference is quality, though; we do more basic training and less advanced training.”

“And that will continue as long as you don’t invest money in education,” added Chris. “Mɛlwika Génadɛma is growing because of local money, mine and the Miller family’s. Your lords and dukes need to take education more seriously and invest money in it. Education is not like a business; it doesn’t make money. It should be viewed as an investment in the future and a source of local pride.”

“We’ve gone around the room,” said Aryéstu. “Shall we turn to this idea of ‘all-génadɛma professors’? Or standards for doctoral degrees? Or fostering women’s education? Or a request for a standard program of education for firemen?”

“Yes,” replied Skandu, and they all laughed. They turned to the first and approved it, had a long and difficult discussion about a doctorate—most schools didn’t want another degree—discussed with some seriousness (though not as much as May and Lébé wanted) the issue of offering more courses for women, and appointed a committee to look into the educational needs of firemen. Then they took a break for a late lunch.

“We need to think seriously about Bahá'í educational needs,” said Chris to Lua, Lébé, May, and Amos over lunch. “It’s time to think about génadɛma courses about Bahá'í teachings, and maybe about the Faith in general.”

“Behruz will kill me for saying this, but it’s time he helps us start courses in Persian and Arabic,” said Lua. “He knows both languages quite well, even after eleven years here. We need to have a group of two or three Bahá'ís who can learn the languages and help us with translation.”

“Make sure they’re solid and reliable, or we’ll have all sorts of problems,” commented May.

“I agree, we’re ready,” said Amos. “Especially if Jordan’s group continues to have success.”

Just then, Wérdéu came over. “So, tropical agriculture . . . could Tripola Génadɛma have a school of agriculture in Pértatranisér?”

“Why not?” said Amos. “Someone needs to open such a school in a tropical area.”

“But as you noted earlier, it is up to the local lord or Duke to fund such an activity.”

“Indeed,” said Chris, and Amos nodded.

“I think Pértatranisér can and should support such an effort,” added Amos. “I have several thousand agris of tropical forest that I am trying to run as a plantation for fruit, wood, latex, nuts, and other products. I’d appreciate scientific research to back my efforts.”

“Pértatranisér will never have a general génadɛma of its own, but Néfa Génadɛma has already started to offer a few courses there, it has a women’s college, and we are thinking of opening a center for art nearby,” noted Chris. “A school of tropical agriculture would complement and strengthen those other efforts. Maybe we need to find a spot where all those intellectual activities can be housed near each other.”

Mitrésu, who was nearby, moved closer. “Néfa Génadɛma will need to expand its current campus to accommodate all the classes it’ll have to offer over the next seven years. I see no reason it couldn’t have branch campuses, just like Mɛlwika Génadɛma’s branch campuses in ɛjnopéla and Mɛlita.”

Chris nodded. “Then maybe we have a potential collaboration. Mɛlwika Génadɛma’s Department of Agriculture has a fifty-agri experimental farm, a classroom, and offices. The Pértatranisér Women’s Géndha is between the market district and the high school and has vacant land behind or east of it.”

“I’d love to see a génadɛma complex there,” added May.

“I think that land could be obtained,” agreed Amos. “Let me look into that. Maybe the five of us can meet again tomorrow morning and draw up some concrete plans to take back to the governors of Rudhisér and South Shore. We need to involve them as well.”

“Good idea,” said Wérdéu. “I’ll list some characteristics of our existing department of agriculture that we’d like to duplicate.” He turned and walked back to his seat. Mitrésu turned back to his conversation with Stɛrsɛjiu about courses they could swap. Randu, who was seated nearby, said, “Amos, are you still ready for your trip to Anartu next month?”

“Yes, and I’m looking forward to it. I’ve been talking to Dingiramarru two or three times a week about the police academy.”

“I was just invited; they want my help with translating,” said Randu. “It’s a way Arjdhura can collaborate with Anartu.”

“How’s the génadɛma, anyway?”

“Very well; we’re getting a second dormitory by the end of the summer because it appears we have a permanent student body of 75 to 100. Arjdhura has been growing as well; it now has 2,000 people.”

“Really? How are they making a living, the town doesn’t have much land!” said Amos, surprised.

“A combination of things; farming, longshoreman work—the island now gets two shiploads of ice every week—and fishing. The army is very leery about Sumi fishermen; they don’t want the island to develop a potential ‘navy.’ So there are now fifty fishing boats based at Arjdhura. Lately, a lot of small manufactories have started opening in Arjdhura as well, to make hats, candles, ceramics . . . you name it. Arjdhura’s electricity is reliable and because of the génadɛma’s courses in mechanics, it has a lot of mechanics. And Sumilara is suffering right now from the drop in farm prices. Farmland has expanded on the island by fifty percent in the last two years and the island doesn’t have much more, so the only way to make a decent living is to do other things, so people are moving to Anartu, Arjdhura, Swadlɛndha, Mɛlwika, and other places.”

“A lot of rural villages are suffering, too,” said Chris. “Farm prices are now a third of what they were a decade ago and two thirds what they were last year. The granges have seen their income drop a lot this year and it’s causing trouble. My income is down for that reason as well.”

Just then, Aryéstu’s personal secretary entered the room where they were eating. “Lord Chris, there’s a fairly urgent telephone call for you.”

“Oh? Thank you.” Chris rose and walked out, following the secretary to the latter’s private office. He gestured to the phone; Chris nodded thanks and picked it up. “Khélo?”

“Lord Chris, this is Duke Kandékwɛs. I hope I did not call you out of an active meeting; I gather it is lunchtime there.”

“Correct, my Duke. How can I help you?”

“Two investors came to me an hour ago with grave concerns about the financial progress of Miller Motors and the lack of any apparent profit. They have heard a rumor of irregularities in the construction payments, also. You are the one to allay their concerns about that. Could you stop by my office this afternoon?”

“Our meeting goes all afternoon, so the only easy time would be right now, during the lunch break.”

“That’s fine. The rumor involves Mayor Estanu. They say he has received payments through his brother’s construction company.”

“I think that is unlikely, since we watched payments going to the construction company very carefully. Of course, a few bills are still coming in; we tried to do so much so fast, costs were much higher than expected. The two-million dhanay project is heading toward 2.7 million, which is a very serious cost overrun. But all the major partners were involved in the project and saw the cost overruns coming. They were aware of them; as you know, we communicated these problems very carefully and frankly.”

“Indeed, the transparency was quite remarkable. I suppose the cost overruns explain the lack of profit.”

“Of course, we basically deferred some bills and paid them with the revenues from sales of vehicles; a bit over one hundred vehicles sold for three thousand dhanay each since the plant opened. We’ve been able to cover salaries and postpone some payments for raw materials, but the construction bills are just about paid off. By the end of summer we will be caught up with bills and be showing a modest profit if demand

holds up. It should, because demand for steam cars appears to be strong. They've taken small down payments on twenty cars already."

"Well, stop by and we'll go over everything in detail."

"I'll be over in ten minutes."

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Jordan and the other youth slept late the next day; they had stayed up much of their last night in Wɛranopéla, singing and receiving declarations. It was noon before they packed up their tents and headed west on Route 2. In a bit over an hour—and four time zones earlier in time—they were at the House of Worship in Mɛddwoglubas, where they prayed. Afterward, Modolubu, secretary of the Central Spiritual Assembly, met with them in his office.

"You have done well," he said. "I spoke to Rudhékwu this morning and he reported that everyone was very pleased by your visit and that you had made very good friends for the Faith. The water system is coming along, too."

"Widubéru and Lord Ekwiséru have both supported it, so it will happen," said Jordan. "I'm disappointed that we had only a dozen declarations! And half of them lived in Wrétradɛntɛs!"

"But Wrétradɛntɛs didn't have any Bahá'ís, and now it does," replied Modolubu. "That's important. Wɛranopéla is a quarter Bahá'í; most of the people willing to join the Faith quickly already have done so. But you've given the others plenty to think about and the local Bahá'ís will be following up for months. They're starting new courses for Ruhi books one and two. And the new inquirers and believers will tell *their* friends and relatives, so you've started a new cycle of teaching."

“The village had never held a reflection meeting before, and now they want to,” said Jordan. “So you are right, we have started a new teaching effort there. That’s exciting.”

“How did you choose Lɛwéspadéma for your next stop?”

“I met Estoidhoru at convention and he invited me.”

“Lɛwéspadéma is very different from Wɛranopéla; the Bahá'í community is much smaller. The village is larger, more developed, and more skeptical. There are also political problems you need to know about; Trisunu is charismatic and was popular, but his popularity has been declining and there’s a stir to elect a council. I suggest you all rest and wash. The Citadel has a very good public bath and you can get in free. Wash, pray a while, take a nap, then leave two hours before sunset.”

“That’s a good idea; we need a day of rest between weeks of intensive effort!” agreed Tomasu.

They left Modolubu’s office a few minutes later, except Budhéstu; Modolubu wanted to hear about the new development plan and wanted to get a sense of who this new Bahá'í was, partly because he had to be added to the membership rolls. They did indeed rest that day—they slept most of it—and headed for Lɛwéspadéma in order to get there an hour before sunset.

Jordan wondered what to expect and was nervous; he prayed while Mitrukaru drove. Lɛwéspadéma was a larger village—with 1,300 people—refugees from Véspa’s flooded lowlands, built just across the Trinénasisér or “Three Elephant River”; the northern banks, in Véspa province, were mostly undeveloped, which reflected the tension over their migration. Even the name of the river was controversial, for in the western

shore dialect, which started on the river's northern banks, the name was "Triyɛbisér," using the western shore word for "elephant." Based on his conversation with Estoidhoru, the Lɛwéspadémans—Lávéspadéma, they would say—still spoke with the accents of their birth.

The village was only seventeen kilometers away and the concrete roadway was eight meters wide; smooth and fast, formerly a half day's walk and now a twelve minute drive. Fields green with their second crops of corn, potatoes, and vegetables, or white with ripe balls of cotton, yielded to a very narrow strip of hilly jungle, then the rolling farmlands of Lɛwéspadéma opened up before them and repeated the earlier patchwork. The town was unkempt, with muddy streets and houses of unpainted wood or crumbling adobe and brick straddling Route 2 and strung out along the river's southern bank. They drove to the impressively large eleven-classroom town school on the eastern end of the settlement.

"We're going to get stuck in the mud here," warned Mitrukaru, as he stopped in front of the school.

"There's no other place to park, though." Jordan opened his door and stepped into oozing mud. As he walked toward the school, Estoidhoru came out of the door with another man, older, with a closely cropped red beard.

"Alláh-u-Abhá, Jordanu," he said. "Welcome to our village! Let me introduce you to the school principal, Estoichandu."

"I'm very pleased to meet you, Estoichandu," said Jordan with a smile, and he extended both hands so they could shake.

“Thank you very much for coming to our poor, little village. We’re very much looking forward to your classes and ideas. The school is on vacation right now, so the facility will be available to your group for classes and lodging.”

“Excellent, thank you. Do you know where we can park the trailer?”

Estoichandu looked around. “I’d leave it right there; it’s already stuck in the mud anyway, and people can drive past it. We have a lot of mud, I’m afraid. There’s no place behind the school because the river is there.”

“We’d also like to give music concerts and lead singing; we can use your school for that as well?”

“Certainly, everyone loves a chance to hear music, especially when the singers are visitors. Kɛkanu’s show isn’t our only source of outside entertainment.” He looked at the other youth who were coming out of the trailer or the back of the truck. “Let’s all go inside where we can sit and talk.”

The ten youth followed the principal and teacher inside and they headed down the hall to a classroom for teenagers where the seats weren’t tiny. They sat in a circle and Jordan introduced everyone and summarized their skills.

“Interesting,” said Estoichandu. “This province being the home of the sewing machine, probably one house in ten owns one; you won’t be able to teach much sewing here, unless you know some stitches and patterns that the local women don’t know. We have some plumbing, too; this school is one of three places with indoor toilets. Since the village’s 300 houses are built on two lanes paralleling the Trinénasisér, everyone can walk quickly to get a bucket of water, so we have never felt much need for pipes. Because we have a large school with eleven teachers, many of your literacy and math

classes probably overlap materials we have offered at night for several years. Cooking classes might be interesting, though we have a bakery that makes pastries, so you may want to skip them. Possibly our grange will appreciate some agricultural advice, but we have an agent who visits three or four times a year."

"This seems like a large, prosperous place," observed Jordan.

"I suppose it depends on what you compare us to. We think of Lɛwéspadéma as fairly small and poor compared to Ora or Mɛddwoglubas. I suppose there are more remote villages that are poorer.

"Perhaps I should give you a quick summary of the history of this place. About nine years ago, the rising sea began to flood the rice paddies of five villages north and east of here. Lord Mitru of Ora gave everyone two choices: move to Ora or move to one of the new hill villages he had decreed under the lordship of his friends and relatives. Ora was booming at the time because of all the construction he was funding, so many moved there, then finding wages low, moved to hill villages. Others went straight to the hill villages and struggled to terrace the hillsides so that they could grow corn, which they had never seen before, or rice. Everyone was very angry because they were poor and because their lords, who had led them well in their old villages, had either retired to Ora and Mɛddoakwés or had accepted large estates in the hills and wanted us to serve as tenants on them.

"A few people were willing to act: they moved here, south of the Trinénasisér, the traditional border of the province. They cleared their own fields and built their own houses, and that attracted more people. Lord Mitru refused to recognize the border and insisted that we pay taxes to him, but we refused and paid them through Mɛddwoglubas

instead. He finally sent the Ora garrison here. They burned a few houses and began to seize animals. But he did not know that the telephone line had been extended to here; we called Mɛddwoglubas, they got the news to Mɛlwika, Mɛlwika got the palace to stop the raid, and Mitru suffered a major defeat. We were recognized as part of Lɛwéspa.

"So we are a very independent place. We supported the literacy efforts in Mɛddwoglubas very early. Ours was the first grange on the western shore and was created with very little information about the Mɛlwika Grange. We have a cloth manufactory here powered by electricity and a sewing cooperative where a quarter of the village's women share machines and earn money. All children aged six through twelve are in school and half the adults in town can read a newspaper. We have quite a bit of business at the village center, too; two big stores and a bakery.

"So we are not like most villages, even on the western shore."

"We also love technology," added Estoidhonu. "The telephone saved us from Lord Mitru; weaving machines bring us wealth; steam engines transport the goods away and bring in the things we buy."

"But you have muddy streets and no water system?" asked Budhéstu. "I mean no offense, but that surprises me. I noticed as we came out of the forest and crossed your beautiful fields that all the farmer's lanes are ungraveled, too. You saved money by not graveling them, but now your trucks have to make twice as many trips to move harvest because the muddy roads don't allow heavy loads."

"Well, we have made certain decisions about allocating resources," replied Estoichandu, with a shrug.

“Who asks this question?” said a man by the door. They turned, startled, and saw a tall, large-shouldered man with orange hair. He strode in and they could tell by his bearing it was Trisunu.

“I am Budhéstu Klɛnvikai, and I meant no offense; Lord Trisunu, I presume?”

“Call me Honored or just Trisunu; I use ‘Lord’ only when I leave the village. I hate the title.” He stepped into the room and shook Budhéstu’s hand, then turned to Jordan. “And you are Jordanu, I am sure; I can tell by your looks.”

“I am, Honored.” He offered his hands and the headman shook vigorously and crushingly.

“Who are the others?”

“I’ll introduce you.” Jordan went around and introduced the other eight in turn, and Trisunu nodded after each name. “Interesting skills that you mention. But you’re here to convert people, right?”

“Not exactly,” replied Jordan. “We’re here to offer all sorts of classes, courses, and expertise, if we have any that matches Lɛwéspadéma’s needs, anyway. This is an advanced village compared to our previous stop. We will also offer Bahá'í classes.”

“Of course. Being nice: it’s the best way to get what you want.” Trisunu turned to Estoichandu. “So, are they staying in the school?”

“Estoidhonu asked and I agreed.”

Trisunu nodded. “How much per night?”

“Nothing, we do not plan to charge.” Estoichandu stared at the headman and Jordan could see that there was a power struggle between them.

“Well, don’t ask me to increase the school’s budget, then, if you aren’t using resources prudently. Jordan must understand this; his family knows how to make money, and they can afford to pay.”

“We aren’t being paid to make this trip by my family,” replied Jordan. “The Central Spiritual Assembly is paying for it from their rather meager budget.”

“I see. Well, I wouldn’t want to hurt Modolubu’s paper business any, then.”

“We hope our courses will be of great use to the village,” exclaimed Budhéstu. “I was one of the thirty people involved in drafting what became the prince’s seven year development plan, and I plan to offer some classes about development over the next seven years. I can even offer you a personal summary, if you’d like.”

“Really?” Trisunu seemed interested in that. “I am curious about the plan. As you know, it passed the Consultative Assembly, and it sounds like our tax money will be used more productively to assist the poor, at least theoretically.”

“Mitrukaru is an agricultural agent for the lower Arjakwés valley and wants to offer his expertise, and Khwanu has a year of medical training that already qualifies him to do basic health work,” added Jordan. “Tomasu knows wiring and plumbing. We really do have some interesting skills, and a week is enough time to be useful.”

“Alright, we’ll see, then,” replied Trisunu. “Please don’t misunderstand me. I don’t like people coming here and telling us what to do. That was the problem in Véspa for the last few hundred years; Lords told us what to do and we were passive sheep, obeying them and being exploited by them. Now we are free and the poor really are helped. Exploitation: I won’t tolerate it at all. People coming here to tell us what to do

and tell us what we should believe: it isn't right. So *be nice*. Serve us like brothers. That's what we want here."

"Of course, and that is what we intend," replied Jordan. "Service is one of the highest virtues in the Bahá'í Faith."

"Good. Maybe they should practice it more." Trisunu stared at Jordan. "You can stay in the school and use it for your classes. The only time we can rent it out is when her Majesty visits Mɛddwoglubas and a huge crowd needs a place to sleep, so some stay here. And I would like to hear about the development plan; what was your name, Budhéstu?"

"Indeed, honored. When; now?"

"No, after sunset. Come to my house."

Reread and edited 6/5/13, 8/17/17, 11/19/24

292.

Resignation

2d week Kaiménu, 630

Thornton left the geological survey building five minutes before noontime and headed home. He would be taking a survey to the Kwétékwonɛ lands in a few days, so he needed to spend as much time with Lébé and the children as he could.

As he crossed Temple Square he saw a pile of mimeographed pages stacked on a park bench next to the Kwolonɛ War Memorial. He detoured over and was surprised to see, in big red letters, *Mɛlwikai Altɛr Nuɛs,* Mɛlwika's Other News, clearly a pun on the name of their weekly newspaper, *Mɛlwika Nuɛs.* Under the title it said "vol. 1, no. 2"; he had never seen number one. The date followed: 14 Kaiménu 630. Then the headline: *Mennea Family Has Too Much Money?*

That surprised him. He picked up the mimeographed "underground" newspaper; four sheets of paper neatly stapled together, all copied on both sides. He read the article as he walked home and was more and more surprised by it. Rather than walking into the house, he stopped at the tomi offices across the street. His father was in his office but packing up his papers.

"Walking home for lunch?" he asked Chris.

"No; I have an important appointment with John."

"Have you seen this?"

"No, what is it?"

“Our own underground newspaper, and it says our family earns two million dhanay per year.”

Chris chuckled at that. He took the newspaper and read. Then he shook his head. “This is quite inaccurate. I wish it were true; we could use that kind of money!”

“They seem to have done a projection from previous year’s incomes, which I think were pretty accurate.”

“Hum. . . well, they’re high, too. In 628 the family took in . . . 524,000, I think, and in 629 it was 1,236,000, but this year it’ll be 800,000 if we’re lucky. Crop prices are down sharply and it’s causing all sorts of problems, farmers are furious and demand for vehicles is depressed just when we need it to go up. Most of the spare income will go to Miller Motors to keep it afloat this year.”

“Should we correct this?”

“I think so, but we’ll have to think carefully about how we do it, since we could make it worse if we do it wrong. ‘Vol. 1, no. 2’ huh? I guess it’s here to stay.”

“For a while, at least. I wonder how many mimeographs there are in town.”

“A lot; every school has one or two, the génadɛma must have four or five, a few businesses have them. I’m not going to worry about it. Unless they attack the Queen, we should allow freedom of speech. Someone has to. They aren’t making any money without advertising. I wonder how many copies they’re making.”

Thornton looked closely. “The copy is rather faint and the letters are thick. You can put up to four masters in a typewriter at once, so this was one of the bottom ones. If you are lucky and get a hundred copies from each, you can make 400 copies.”

“And if you retype four more masters, you can make 800. That can be pretty effective in a city of 16,000 people. What else do we have . . . an article about democracy . . . an attack on religion, whether from Widumaj or Bahá'u'lláh. . . a call for just wages . . .”

“It says you and John should make less profit and pay workers better.”

“And we live in a palace or something? We actually live pretty economically, for four families. But the only way money can be obtained for investment is from a profit; give it to people and they’ll spend it on consumer goods, and then there are no new factories. You need to generate and save a surplus to progress.” Chris sounded a bit defensive so Thornton nodded understandingly, though he felt uncomfortable as well.

“Anyway, I can’t deal with this now; I have a bigger problem on my hands. Take this home and give it to your mom, even though this will result in another request that we support the arts and women’s programs more generously. We’ll talk about it tonight.”

“Okay.”

Father and son hurried down the stairs and out the door. They waited until they could cross the busy street and entered their house together. But from there, Chris crossed the courtyard and entered John Miller’s house, while Thornton headed for the gabrula.

John was in his office with Yimu, waiting for Chris. “What did you find?” asked John anxiously.

“It took the auditors three days to reconstruct the entire paper trail,” replied Chris. He put down his satchel, pulled out a pile of papers, and sat across the table from John and Yimu. “Item 1: a bill from Déanu Construction for 23,250 dhanay for cement products, with attached copy of Déru’s bill for 23,250; but note the first “2” looks like it

was added. Item 2: the bill from Déru for 3,250 dhanay for cement; this is a copy he gave us from his records. It was paid immediately and we were billed two weeks later. And the check for 23,250 dhanay was cashed." Chris held it up. "Countersigned by Estanu and deposited in his bank account."

"That bastard," said John, his anger a slow boil.

"Any other altered bills?" asked Yimu.

"We have found one; a bill for 1,345 dhanay of timber appears to have been changed to 7,345. We're still verifying it because the original bill was from Sullɛndha, and they haven't found their original yet. Their records aren't very good, so they may not find it."

"How much have you checked?" asked John.

"Five guys have been working for three days and they've combed through 560,000 dhanay of bills out of about 1.6 million. Déanu Construction's cost overruns were the worst; the 1.6 million was payment for 1.15 million of work. We know prices were high. If, at this rate, we find 60,000 dhanay in intentional theft, we will have paid about five percent too much."

"It's still outrageous! And Estanu: it isn't even his company any more, it's his brother's! How dare he do this to us!" John was on his feet, pacing back and forth across his office.

"We can't let him get away with this!" added Yimu.

"If it gets out, people will think we looked the other way!" added John.

"I agree. It's safe to say he's lost the confidence of the lords of this city, isn't it?" asked Chris.

“As mayor! That’s for sure. He has to be out of office, out on his ass!” replied John.

“I agree,” said Chris. “And as lords, we can sack him. But I suggest we plan this, because we want the money back, too.”

“Threaten to arrest him for theft and throw him in prison if he doesn’t give the money back,” said Yimu.

“I think that’s the threat,” agreed Chris. “But if he resigns and gets all the money back to us, we could keep the reason quiet.”

“I’d like his head on a pike on the city wall! But yes, let him resign and give the money back,” agreed John. “I’ll be bad cop to your good cop.”

“They’re natural roles,” said Chris. “He should be in his office.”

“Let’s go, then,” said John.

The three of them walked out of John’s house, across Foundry Square, and along East Street, across the Arjakwés to Mɛlwika’s gleaming new City Hall. It was a big, impressive building, but Chris couldn’t help but think of it as a projection of Estanu’s ego. They walked up the stairs, into the lobby, then up the internal stairs to the third floor where the Mayor’s office was. Walu, Estanu’s assistant, saw them coming and went to tell the Mayor without a word, because he could see it was serious. Estanu rose and walked to the door of his office.

“Come in, lords, what can I do for you?” He seemed a trifle nervous.

“We have a big question for you,” said Chris. They entered and the four of them sat around the table. Chris tried to stay calm; John and Yimu were obviously tense. He

handed Estanu the construction company's bill for 23,250 dhanay. "What do you know about this?"

Wɛranu took it and looked, and Chris watched his face. It was tense but expressionless. Then he shook his head. "It's just a bill."

"Look at this." Chris handed him the copy of Déru's original, for 3,250. He looked, compared the two, then his eyes opened wide. "Déanu cheated you."

"Déanu?" Chris handed him the payment check. Estanu looked at the front, then turned it over and saw the signature.

"Oh. Lords, I didn't know. Déanu gave this to me as a gift, so I deposited it."

"Why did he give it to you?"

"I built the company, remember, so it's still mine."

John leaned in close. "Why should I believe that you had nothing to do with this theft?"

Estanu stared at John, then said angrily, "This isn't anything your own kids aren't doing!"

"No!" exclaimed John. "That's not true! If Déru had overcharged Miller Motors, the tomi accountants would have caught it, and it would have gone from one chest to another inside the family anyway. No one has accused anyone in my family of overcharging outsiders!"

"You're all making a fortune!"

"Estanu, that check for 23,000 dhanay is more than my entire extended family spends on its needs in an entire year, in fact it's almost twice as much," replied Chris. "We make money legitimately and invest it in education or industry. You're a public

servant, you can't be taking illegally obtained funds as gifts. If you want a fortune—which is fine, there's nothing wrong with that—don't be mayor and earn it honestly."

Estanu stared at Chris, then John. "The two of you can't fire me without a vote from the rest of the City Council."

"Really?" said Chris. "We've never written that part of the City Charter up very clearly, but I think Her Majesty would say the lord of a place can hire or fire a manager. Or, if you prefer, we can take this to the City Council. By then my auditors will probably find several more of these irregularities. We've already found one more. We can present the evidence to the public and to the courts. I suspect the City Council will agree to fire you and Déanu will face serious charges."

"So, what do you want?"

"I am very saddened this has happened, Estanu. The honorable thing for you to do is resign as Mayor, saying you want to return to your old job, and for Déanu to return all the money he has taken illegally."

"Double!" added John.

"Double?" asked Estanu, shocked.

John nodded firmly.

"You'll have to take that up with Déanu."

"Okay, then we will," said Chris. "I'll take you at your word that you didn't know the 23,000 dhanay was stolen from us. Return it and resign by tomorrow and we'll drop everything about you. You're a good, honest builder and I'll have some contracts for expansion of the génadɛma later this year, if Miller Motors stabilizes financially."

"Sounds like my construction company may help stabilize it."

"It helped destabilize it!" shot back John.

"John, I really had nothing to do with the fraud." He hesitated. "I . . . I'm sorry this happened."

"Well, thank you for that," replied John.

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"It seems to me the school bathrooms reflect this entire village," said Blorakwé to Budhéstu, as they both headed to the river with pairs of buckets to get flush water. "They fancy themselves 'modern' to have flush toilets, then the school has no piped water to flush them with!"

"And flush toilets without flushing water stink up a building much worse than a detached outhouse," agreed Budhéstu. He looked at the almost seventeen year old with new appreciation. "You know, that's pretty insightful. This place is a funny mix of 'look how modern we are' and 'they have that in Mɛddwoglubas, but we don't need it.' "

"It's Trisunu."

"It is, and some people are really resentful, like Estoichandu."

"I'm beginning to despair about us being useful here. Three days, no projects, half our classes are useless, and only a few youth come to our music at night."

"It's that excuse, 'I've got to work tonight in the mill.' I don't think they all work in the mill *that* much. I figure this place has about fifty manufacturing jobs."

"That's all? I'm surprised."

He nodded. They had reached the river. They dipped the nickel-steel buckets into the river, then staggered slowly back to the school under the weight of twenty liters of water each, a ten-liter bucket per arm.

"Well, this place has only two big manufactories; one with power looms, the other with sewing machines. They have male and female workers, respectively. The others are small, like the shoe manufactory."

"Are you going to talk to Trisunu any more?"

"I don't know; he enjoyed the description of the development plan, but had no interest in how it might relate to Lɛwéspadéma. Khwanu wants Jordanu and me to come with him this morning; he wants to talk about illnesses."

"I see a lot of little kids with runny noses."

"Exactly. Probably contaminated water; that's his concern."

"I've been thinking about studying public health. Dr. Lua told me they want to start a major just in that and eventually make it a medical specialty."

"I still think you should skip the last year of high school and go straight to génadɛma. You'll have a uniyɛri the same time you would have had a diploma."

"I'm thinking about it. I just don't know whether I can handle courses that hard."

"You're plenty smart enough, and believe me, you have much better preparation than a lot of students. You've been going to *real* high schools for three years. I went to Mɛlwika Génadɛma from a two-room schoolhouse and was spending most of my 'high school' years teaching first and second graders."

"I know, you explained that. Like I said; maybe." She smiled at his attention and he smiled back.

They stepped back into the school and took the buckets to the two bathrooms, then entered a first grade classroom, which they were using as a lounge. Everyone was there eating fresh bread and fruit and drinking coffee and tea. Estoidhonu and Estoichandu had joined them.

"We can flush the toilets again?" asked Khwanu.

"Yes, one more flush each," replied Budhéstu. "Someone else should get buckets of water before lunch. Say, how much would it cost to install piped water in the school?" He looked at Tomasu, their plumbing expert.

Tomasu considered the question a moment. "Some pipes, a water tank on the roof—I don't think it gets very cold here in the winter—and a way to pump the water up."

"But we don't have any money for that," said Estoichandu.

"I was thinking we'd make it our gift."

"We'd need a well," added Khwanu. "The school should have clean, safe water. If it had a tap on the outside wall, anyone could come by to get drinking water, too."

"If the well was next to the building, we'd need a lot less pipe, too," observed Tomasu. "I bet I can get an electric pump from my father. The new motor works is turning out electric motors really cheaply because they're needed to pump air into the firebox. I bet that's all the school would need. And the pipes would be a few dhanay."

"I bet we can get a big, wooden barrel from Wɛranopéla," suggested Dhuganu. "I could call and ask. They'd give it to us."

“But I still don’t know where we’d get a few dhanay,” said Jordan. “We almost could take it from the budget for the trip. My grandfather reminded me that we have to be very careful on trips like this not to arrive in a place and give things away.”

“He’s right, of course,” replied Mitrukaru. “But I think in this case there’s another principle operating. They’re letting us stay in the school for free. We should give them a gift in return. It’s a Bahá'í principle, isn’t it?”

“I suppose it is,” said Jordan, though he couldn’t think of a quotation right off hand. “We’re talking about five or six dhanay?”

“Yes. I can get that from my father,” said Tomasu.

“Okay,” said Jordan, seeing that everyone was nodding. “Let’s give it a try.”

“It’s fine with me, but we’ll need Trisunu’s permission,” noted Estoichandu.

“This gives us a good reason to talk to Trisunu,” added Khwanu. “Rather than imploring to help the village with something like water to reduce childhood illness, we’ll be giving something.”

“I agree,” said Jordan. “You know, Tomasu, before you call your father, let me call Widubéru. He might give us a development grant to do this.”

They finished breakfast and people began to arrive for the few classes they were offering; they did have three people studying the Bahá'í Faith, which was encouraging. A mother showed up with a sick kid and Khwanu took a look; he knew enough to say the kid had to go to Mɛddwoglubas Hospital. Then he, Budhéstu, Tomasu, and Jordan headed for Trisunu’s house, a large adobe structure bordering the village’s central square, an expanse of lightly graveled, hard-packed dirt with a few struggling pecan trees.

Trisunu ushered them into his gabrula where he talked to all visitors. “Come sit. So, you’re sure last night’s telephone call won’t be charged to me or the village?”

“Yes, we’re sure,” said Jordan, patiently. “When I make a call, the operator always asks what number to charge a call to. I have a special code to give her when I give her my Mɛlwika telephone number that proves it really is my number.”

“And at night when our switchboard is shut down, the Mɛddwoglubas operator asks, also?”

“Definitely. Always. I think she’s more careful because she doesn’t know the various voices in Lɛwéspadéma.”

“Alright. I was quite surprised to pick up the telephone in the middle of the night and hear your voice. But I guess it was early morning in Mɛlwika.”

“It was. That’s the best hour to talk to my mother and father.”

“And you call every few days?”

“Yes, partly to relay messages from everyone else to their parents.”

That seemed to puzzle Trisunu. “Alright. So, what can I do for you?”

“We’d like to offer the town and the school a gift. We’d like to install a water system in the school; that means a well, pipes, pump, and tank. The bathrooms and gymnasium would have running water, and there would be a faucet outside for anyone to get drinking water.”

“Oh? How much will it cost?”

“It won’t cost Lɛwéspadéma anything. I think we can get the tank and pump donated. We’ll dig the well and install the pipes. The pipes will cost five or six dhanay and I think we can get that.”

“Marvelous. I suppose it’ll make your stay in the school easier.”

“I doubt we’ll benefit very much because we’re here only three more days, and it’ll take most of that time to get the system established,” replied Jordan.

“But it will help with the health in this village,” replied Khwanu. “Every day I see sick children, and they almost always have nausea or diarrhea. I sent a mother and kid to Mɛddwoglubas on the bus just fifteen minutes ago.”

“I know, we’ve had a small epidemic lately. People say we need to get a doctor here in Lɛwéspadéma.”

“You could do that and spend three thousand dhanay a year on a doctor’s salary, or you could use some of the money to install safe drinking water. These intestinal and stomach illnesses are preventable. Mɛddwoglubas and Mɛlwika don’t have a lot of sick kids going to the hospital every day. The Trinénasisér has a village upstream, and people here throw stuff into the water at the western end of town, which contaminates the water at the eastern end. The school’s water system could help a lot. Kids could come to school with empty water containers and take clean water home.”

Trisunu nodded. “You’ve thought this through. Very good; I’m impressed. Yes, you can install a water system for the school. Are you sure you know how to do it?”

“We helped install an entire village water system last week,” replied Tomasu. “We installed plumbing for a bathroom as well. We could use some help digging the well.”

“Where will you get the pipes?”

“Tripola; we know the supplier there.”

Trisunu nodded. He was even more impressed. “Okay, see whether you can find some volunteers, and I’ll ask at the grange; I’ll be there all afternoon.” He paused and looked at them. “How many people did you have last night?”

“About a dozen,” said Jordan. “We had fun.”

“Good.” Trisunu looked at them again. “Why don’t you come to the plaza tonight. That’s where people gather to socialize, not the school.”

“Okay; thank you,” said Jordan.

They exchanged goodbyes, then the four of them left Trisunu’s house. “Well, maybe he’s warming up to us,” said Jordan.

They walked back to the school. Jordan and Tomasu stopped at the trailer to make some telephone calls; Khwanu had someone wanting to talk to him about a toothache, something he didn’t know about, but he started to give the man a lengthy explanation about germs anyway. Mitrukaru and Primanu had driven the truck to a nearby farmer’s field to discuss bee keeping; at least they had some tasks. But no one was interested in development, in sharp contrast to Wɛranopéla, so Budhéstu was unoccupied. He walked to the cooking area set up in the shade of the school’s southeastern corner; Blorakwé, Swadé, and Gramé were learning how to make a special vegetable soup from two local women, and would teach jam making in return. “We need more bread for lunch,” Swadé said to him as he approached. “Can you walk to the store and get it?”

“Sure.” He looked at Blorakwé and she rose. “I’ll go along.”

They walked back to the central plaza and Budhéstu told her about the successful meeting with Trisunu. “Sounds like we can finally do something that’s important,” she said.

“I think so. Maybe this will inspire them to install wells and water taps every hundred meters or so! Seven or eight sources of clean public water wouldn’t cost that much.”

“Villages change slowly, even ones that think they’re *modern,*” added Blorakwé.

They entered the store, chatted with the woman running it, and bought three fresh loaves of bread; Lɛwéspadéma, unlike most villages, had a bakery. As they paid, a woman entered with her young son. He was obviously blind and carried a cane in his right hand.

“Morning, Galɛsé,” said the shopkeeper.

“Morning. I need a loaf of bread, a kilo of Gordha beef, and a jug of wine.”

“Alright.” The shopkeeper began to get the items; in her small store, she obtained almost everything for the customer. Budhéstu and Blorkawé turned to head out of the store, but they couldn’t help but notice that the boy, using a few taps of his cane, deftly maneuvered around several large boxes of produce.

“Boy, you’re good at getting around,” said Budhéstu.

“Thank you,” replied the boy, who was about ten. He spoke with a funny accent. “Are you one of the strangers in the village? I don’t recognize your voice or your accent.”

“I am Budhéstu, and my accent is mostly from the northern shore. This is Blorakwé and hers is the accent of the lower Arjakwés Valley.”

“You are both from so far away,” noted Galɛsé. “What brings you here?”

“We are young Bahá'ís from around the world who are living or studying in Mɛlwika and Mɛddoakwés,” replied Budhéstu. “We’re spending the summer traveling

from village to village, giving classes, learning from people, helping with development matters, and talking about the Bahá'í Faith."

"I'd like to learn about your Bahá'í Faith some time. But I'm more worried about my son, of course. Three years ago I took him to Mɛddwoglubas where Dr. Stauréstu and Dr. Lua examined him, and they proclaimed his blindness incurable. They also said there were no services for blind people."

"There are supposed to be in the next seven years," replied Budhéstu. "It's part of the prince's development plan."

"Really?" said Galɛsé. "What are they supposed to provide?"

"A training school where blind people can learn to do things, including how to write and acquire some skills. I suppose it'll be outside Mɛddoakwés."

"My uncle and aunt have agreed to run it," confirmed Blorakwé.

"Really? Do you know when they will start?"

"There are no plans yet," repeated Blorakwé.

"Well, you *must* be sure to tell us. We are not a rich family, but we aren't poor, either. My husband owns the shoe manufactory."

"I want to learn how to do things, maybe help my father," added the boy.

Galɛsé smiled at that. "He's learning to file, believe it or not. I think he can learn to do a lot of office things."

"And I'm learning a lot of knowledge," added the boy. "Mom reads me school books."

"I didn't start until he was eight," Galɛsé replied. "But he's now caught up to fifth grade. I'm learning a lot, too."

“But I’ll never be able to read or write.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” replied Blorakwé. “My uncle Soru has been reading about helping the blind. Your son can learn to type, and on Gɛdhéma they have some sort of writing system involving bumps they can feel with their fingers.”

“Really? Intriguing.”

“What’s your boy’s name?” asked Budhéstu.

“Estoiluku.”

“One of my favorite names,” Budhéstu said, for it meant “God’s light.”

“Tell you what,” said Blorakwé. “I’ll talk to my uncle and see if he has any ideas and suggestions.”

“Please, please,” Galɛsé replied.

“I’ll get back to you. Where do you live?”

“Half way between Route 2 and the school. Everyone knows our house, they’ll point it out to you.”

“The shoe manufactory’s attached to it, right?” asked Budhéstu, and Galɛsé nodded.

“We’re walking back to the school right now,” said Blorakwé. “We can walk with you and talk.”

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Kérdu’s office in the Mɛlwika Grange building was large and full of stacks of papers. When Chris and John arrived, he had to run around to clear chairs of piles of papers. “I’m sorry; I never meet anyone here. I go out to the garage and stand around, or sit on the mat with the farmers.”

“They’re still young enough to be comfortable without a chair,” said John, plunking himself down on a cleared seat. Chris followed him a moment later when Kérdu cleared another one. Then Kérdu pulled his big, wheeled wooden chair out from behind the desk.

“Another reason I don’t have visitors here; they’d talk about my fancy chair, then complain to the others about the waste of money. Well, lords, how can I help you? I apologize we don’t have any coffee or tea here.”

“That’s alright,” replied Chris. “I suspect you can guess part of our mission, at least.”

“That it has to do with Estanu’s announcement at noon yesterday. Frankly, I was utterly shocked. I’m baffled, too; he was doing a reasonably good job and he was popular. You don’t give that up and return to your construction company, especially when business is slowing down.”

“Of course, shrinking demand for your services can cause financial problems.”

“Indeed; this grange is struggling as well. Falling crop prices are a huge problem. But Estanu never said anything about a financial crisis in the company, so that seemed unlikely. I am sure people will press for an explanation at the City Council meeting tomorrow night.”

“I am sure,” agreed Chris. “There is more to the story, and we will tell you a bit of it, because we can trust you to keep it utterly and completely confidential. Estanu took a substantial gift from the construction company, worth almost four years’ of mayoral salary, and the check was one issued to pay for services the company received for work on Miller Motors; but the check was issued based on a bill that had been modified to

increase the amount owed, and thus was theft from Miller Motors. Estanu insists that he didn't know. Perhaps he didn't. But mayors cannot receive very large gifts from companies."

"And we're finding more bills that were based on manipulated figures," added John. "When the extra is paid back double, we may find the cost overrun comes down a fair amount."

"That would be good," agreed Kérdu.

"Anyway, we need a new mayor," said Chris. "The lords choose a candidate and the City Council ratifies the choice; that is the custom. This morning we went over the list of people who received any votes at all at the last election—that seemed a good list to review—and decided that the best choice was the man who got the highest number of votes anyway."

Kérdu smiled. "Well, I got the highest number of votes as head of the grange, and everyone loves the grange. I'm not sure I'd get the most votes now; I've had to slash expenses."

"Your budget is a quarter the size of Mɛlwika's," said Chris. "Which makes it bigger than the budgets of every city in the world except Mɛddoakwés, Ora, and Anartu. Mɛlwika Grange is a big operation."

"Will you serve as mayor?" said John, cutting to the point.

"I suppose that means I can't serve as head of the Grange any more."

"Correct," said Chris. "The Mayor has to have the needs of the city as his highest priority. He can't have any entanglements in anything else."

"I have to think about this, and I have to talk to Pɛlpɛlé and the kids. There were some things about the way Estanu ran the city that I didn't like. All the emphasis on construction . . . he made this place look better and built a lot of schools, but of course it caused Mɛddoakwés to build New Square, so they are still fancier. I think most people thought the City Hall was too expensive. We need to put a lot more money into education. More and more people want to get a basic education; an eighth grade equivalency, then a high school equivalency or even a uniyɛri. It's costing the grange a fortune. Farmers decide they don't want to farm any longer, so they start to use the grange's education benefit to get an equivalency. Then they open a business, farm a minimum amount of farmland to keep their educational and health benefits, and lease out the rest of their land to someone else, who then joins the grange too! The cycle starts all over."

"That's why my prediction that the grange would have fewer and fewer farmers farming more and more agris hasn't come true," noted Chris. "The continued decline in crop prices, also, means we have to switch to a fee system instead of a percentage-of-crop system. Then anyone could join, too. But that's for another time. I share your concern about education."

"So do I, to a point," said John. "I do prefer literate workers, even for the assembly line; it's easier to train them. But what we *really* need is more vocational training. The high school could do a lot more, and we need a technical college in this town. That's something the grange has done a lot of, and something you can help with. Beyond that, Mɛlwika *does* need a lot more construction. We've got over a thousand more children in school every year, so we need to build one or two new school buildings

a year. We're adding one or two hundred houses a year and almost a thousand people a year; some families are now on their third child, and almost every house has a grandparent or other relative living with them. What amazes me is that our tax revenues are growing faster than our population, because more women and older people are getting jobs. But all these people need bigger sewers; when we have any rain at all, the systems overflow onto streets in a few places and into the river in others. The industrial sewers are carrying more hazardous wastes than they were designed for and need expansion. So we have a lot of construction ahead."

"I agree. We can't avoid either more schools or bigger sewers. Fortunately, all these working people want to save for the future and trust city bonds more than banks, so we can raise the money for both. I've overseen the construction of four grange buildings and expansions on all of them, so I know something about that work. The other obvious task is to develop a seven year plan for the city, matching the prince's plan. Do we want Mɛlwika to double as well, or do we want it to shrink relative to the rest of the world? If we want to be a good example of education, prosperity, and justice, we need to get bigger relative to the rest of the world."

"I agree," said John. "So, when can you tell us?"

"Tomorrow morning. Let me sleep on it."

Reread and edited, 6/5/13, 8/18/17, 11/19/24

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## New Commitments

2d/3d week Kaiménu, 630

Budhéstu and Blorakwé stopped in front of the door of the large stone house attached to the shoe manufactory and knocked. They had to wait a moment before a servant ushered them inside. They closed their umbrellas—it was a rainy day—and followed the woman to a room which had an entire side open to the house's central courtyard. Like many houses of the wealthy or partially wealthy, the courtyard was a paradise of flowers, greenery, and water, a sharp contrast to the muddy streets and drab outer walls of the village's public space.

They waited, listening to a radio faintly in the background; the announcer was reading a newspaper aloud. A few minutes later, Galɛsé appeared, with her son Estoiluku and her husband. "Allow me to introduce my husband, Estoivékhu."

"I am pleased you are interested in assisting our son," he said. Budhéstu rose and they shook both hands; Estoivékhu shook Blorakwé's right hand.

"We have been talking to my uncle Soru over the telephone every day, even if it is expensive," replied Blorakwé. "And he talked to Dr. Staurésstu as well, who recalled seeing Estoiluku. My uncle will be coming to Ora for a month in a few weeks to give classes there about special education and training the deaf. He wants to come by to meet you and meet Estoiluku."

"Yes, of course, he will be welcome," replied Estoivékhu. "We can even take him to Ora, if that is easier."

“No, he said visiting you would be easier. I told him that Galɛsé is serving as his teacher and he said that was more important than anything he could do at this time, so he would rather come see what Estoiluku can do and what the local resources are. He was very impressed to hear that Estoiluku is essentially in fifth grade, like a normal child his age. That speaks highly of his intelligence and your dedication.”

“He is a smart boy,” agreed Galɛsé, looking at her son. “It is a terrible curse on him, that he was struck blind by an illness when he was three.”

“Perhaps it is a test from Esto, and a test he is passing,” replied Budhéstu. “I prefer to think of all these life trials as tests for us. Estoiluku could become an example to this entire world of what a blind person can accomplish, and everyone will learn an important lesson. Right now, people are afraid of the deaf and the blind, even more so of the mentally impaired or the mentally ill. These are all very different conditions, but they can all be treated one way or another. That is what Soru is doing.”

“What amazing and difficult work,” said Galɛsé, admiringly.

“Soru also suggested that if you have a typewriter or have access to one, Estoiluku should start to learn how to use it,” continued Blorakwé. “It will give him the ability to write. Soru is looking into the question of how typewriters can be modified to produce not ink letters on paper, but bumps that blind people can read with their fingers. It appears to be pretty complicated, so it may not be practical soon, but possibly Estoiluku will enjoy learning to type.”

“We can try that,” agreed Estoivékhu. “I do not have a typewriter for my business, but I could buy one, or possibly he could use the school’s typewriter.”

“We have been talking to Estoichandu quite a lot over the last week, so we raised the matter with him,” added Budhéstu. “He seemed willing to help. It may be that Estoiluku could actually go to school and attend classes there with his mother. No one has tried that, but considering that this world still has no services at all for blind persons, using the existing services for children seems logical, especially since we felt you were in the position to fight for him.”

“The school, though, discouraged him from coming,” replied Estoivékhu. “They said the students would be disturbed to see him and it would disrupt the class.”

“Perhaps they can adjust to his presence, especially if his mother comes,” replied Budhéstu. “Soru would be willing to speak to the teachers here about ways to accommodate blind and deaf students. He has had some success elsewhere.”

Galɛsé looked at her husband, surprised by the idea. He seemed startled as well, but he nodded.

“Estoiluku is an ordinary boy, after all, who happens to be blind,” said Blorakwé. “He should have friends in the village his own age, and they should get used to the idea of helping him. The various people we’ve met have told us that Estoiluku is called various bad names in town. This is not right and should stop; he isn’t possessed or anything like that. Soru has gotten pretty good talking about matters like that and may be able to help change attitudes.”

“That would be very helpful,” replied Estoivékhu. “What do you think he can learn to do, then?”

“He can learn to do almost anything he wants to learn if someone helps read things to him,” replied Budhéstu. “That seemed to be Soru’s message. He can hear and

speak, after all. Deaf people are limited in what they can do because speech is so hard for them to follow or produce. Estoiluku speaks with a bit of difficulty, but Soru may be able to help with that; he's been developing ideas for helping deaf people speak."

"I think you have given us much hope on this day!" exclaimed Galɛsé joyfully. "We want to see him happy and able to live without us, once we are gone. But that will not be easy because villages are not designed for blind people."

"Neither are cities," agreed Budhéstu. "But love and devotion can overcome many problems."

"You must stay for tea," said Galɛsé. She summoned the servant, who brought in a fresh pot. Then she turned to Blorakwé. "My dear, how old are you, anyway? I am amazed you are able to do all the things you do."

"I'm almost seventeen and have completed three years of high school. I've lived with my aunt Kanawé and uncle Soru for a year and helped them run their school, so I know a lot about it."

"And what are your plans? To get married?"

"Eventually, but first I want to get training to help children with special needs, like my aunt Kanawé. She is raising two children and working as a teacher as well."

"I suppose if you have a big family, someone's always around to help out," said Galɛsé.

"Who's chaperoning all of you, anyway?" asked Estoivékhu.

"Mitrukaru and Kordé; they're married and older," replied Budhéstu. "They are very careful. We don't want any misunderstandings to compromise our reputation. Bahá'í youth are chaste."

“I wasn’t questioning that. What are you planning to do, Budhéstu?”

“Psychology.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s the study of the illnesses of the human mind. On Gɛdhéma, there is a lot of understanding of them, but not here. In fact, I may have to translate many of the texts myself because nothing exists in Eryan. I plan to study English, a gɛdhéma language, this fall.”

“I see,” said Estoivékhu. “Well, I suppose it is a useful thing.”

“It is, or it will be once I learn enough! This spring, I was in the course at Mɛlwika Génadɛma that put together most of the prince’s seven year development plan. That was quite exciting.”

“I can imagine, and very useful! I have been trying to follow the discussion in the newspapers and on the radio. Do they really think we can double the wealth of the realm in seven years?”

“Indeed! It doubled in the previous ten, and most of that happened toward the end. Consider how much better life is in this village, compared to the villages now drowned on the bottom of the sea.”

“Richer, yes, but better, no,” replied Estoivékhu. “And everyone here will say the same. We can now buy nice clothes and bakery-made bread and all sorts of house wares. Many people even own beds with mattresses or have made their own based on the ones their friends have. People have tables and chairs. Some even have electric lights. But the close-knit life of our old villages, the slower pace of life, the close friends and long-time relationships; much of that has been destroyed.”

“Well, perhaps wealth will make a slower pace of life possible again.”

“It could; or it could make us crazy for more things.”

“This gets to the purpose of life, then,” observed Budhéstu. “The Bahá'í Faith says it is to know and worship Esto, and to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. A civilization needs to provide everyone with basic comforts, but it also needs to orient us toward knowing and worshiping Esto, rather than pursuing riches for the sake of riches.”

“How true; Bahá'u'lláh is a wise prophet,” agreed Estoivékhu. “You know what I would like to hear about? How he thinks our village should be organized. I am interested in the prince’s development plan, but I want to know about *spiritual* development.”

“Alright,” said Budhéstu. “Maybe this afternoon I can come back with some ideas.”

“No; this evening. I have to go to the manufactory soon.”

That gave Budhéstu something to think about. They finished their tea and said goodbye to the family. As Budhéstu and Blorakwé stepped back outside and opened their umbrellas, they saw Trisunu walking eastward toward the school.

“Greetings to both of you,” he said, since he was passing the doorway. “Visiting our shoe maker?”

“And his son,” replied Budhéstu. He and Blorakwé joined Trisunu in his stroll along the higher edges of the muddy street. “We’ve talked to people in Mɛddoakwés about services for the blind, and brought some ideas.”

“Oh? Good, we haven’t been able to do anything.”

“Perhaps you can. If Galɛsé accompanied Estoiluku to class, she could help him learn everything the children learn now. He could take tests orally or he could type his answers.”

“Type? I suppose he could, but who can afford to get him a typewriter? I suppose Estoivékhu could. But his presence in the classroom would disrupt it anyway.”

“The children would adjust and accept him, if the teacher was firm.”

“Perhaps, but we can barely educate our children now, let alone any with special problems.”

“Perhaps Galɛsé would have some spare time to help with other kids.”

“I am amazed that you Bahá'ís always seem to have another idea. How is the water system in the school?”

“They were on the roof installing the barrel when we left.”

Trisunu nodded. As they approached the school, they walked around to the back so they could see the roof there. Sure enough, Jordan and Tomasu were on the roof with Estoidhoru while Estoichandu watched from the ground. They were all soaked to the skin in the rain.

“Ah, Lord, good morning,” said Estoichandu as they approached.

“How goes it?” asked Trisunu. Then he looked up and added to Jordan, “Come down.”

Jordan hurried down the ladder. “We’ve been able to secure the barrel to the roof with spikes and heavy wire, so it won’t go anywhere. We’ll have the pipes installed in another hour or so.”

“How will the pump go on and off?”

“There will be a switch in the hall outside the classroom for the second graders. When the barrel on the roof is full, the overflow will start to fall to the ground right outside the classroom’s window. The teacher can ask a child to go flip the switch. The barrel holds two hundred fifty liters of water. It comes from the well over there.” Jordan pointed to a circular cement rim about five meters away and three meters from the building. “The well is only four meters deep because the river is only three meters lower than the ground. River water will percolate through the ten meters of sand and silt and replenish the well, cleaning the water in the process. The toilets flush into a pipe that takes the water to a cesspool there.” He pointed to another circular concrete rim about twenty meters away, and downstream. “The cesspool will capture solids and some of the liquid will sink into the ground, but a long way from the well, and downstream from it. No doubt some sewage will leak into the river. That’s a problem to fix another time.”

“I’m not worried about that. And there will be a faucet outside the school?”

“Right here, beneath the tank, and faucets inside the school.”

“Good.” Trisunu looked very pleased. “If this works out well, we will install a dozen more, and run a sewer line under the streets to capture the sewage. I think you have given this village a very worthy and useful gift.”

“Thank you, honored, we are pleased.”

“For the last three nights, we have enjoyed your music in the town square as well. I think half the village came at one time or another last night! The stores stayed open and sold many items. We don’t get music very often. I’m thinking we need to plan a musical gathering for every Primdiu in the square. It will strengthen the community.”

“In important ways,” added Budhéstu, thinking of Estoivékhu’s comments.

“Indeed,” commented Trisunu. “My cousin from Kadakwas was visiting last night and came to hear the music. He really enjoyed the program and when I told him about the sewing, cooking, literacy, and accounting classes he said ‘they must come to Kadakwas, we need all of these classes!’ They don’t have as many opportunities as we do; they have a struggling sawmill but no factories. It’s a small place, 500 people, a two-room schoolhouse, one telephone line, no store . . . I said I’d ask you whether your group could stay here another week and offer some classes in Kadakwas.”

“You are very kind, honored. We’re supposed to be in Parchimanja next week, though.”

“Tell you what. I’ll call the Lord of Parchimanja personally and ask whether a postponement will work there. We have cousins in all three nearby villages, you know. Triséra is just five kilometers north of here; it has about 800 people. There’s a gravel road to Kadakwas, six kilometers west of it, then a dirt road to Dhudrakaita eight kilometers farther west, up into the hills. It has only 300 people. I bet there are people in all three villages who would like to hear your classes, enjoy your music, and think about your religion.”

“If we could stay, I’d be able to organize a class about spiritual development; creating a loving and spiritual village,” said Budhéstu. “I was just asked for such a thing.”

“Really? That interests me more than the prince’s development plan,” said Trisunu.

“Alright,” said Jordan. “Let me check with the others to make sure they have no objections and make a few calls first. I suspect we can reschedule Parchimanja for two or three weeks from now.”

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Chris and Wɛranolubu drove up and down the new gravel road bisecting the latter's township, then stopped about half way and got out to walk a spot between the Gédhakwés, a lazy brown stream ten meters wide, and a rocky hill to the east. "This is a good spot for your village site," said Chris. "You have about five hundred meters between the river and the hill, and north of the hill is a small spring-fed brook that can be dammed to provide the village with pure water. You could accommodate one or two hundred houses here."

"That's plenty, for now. If the village grew larger it could expand southward along the river."

"If I may make a suggestion, I'd expand northward. You need to put a sewage settling pond somewhere and it has to be downstream of the village and downstream of the little brook. It'll have to be a square two hundred meters on the side, divided into quarters, with earthen walls a meter and a half high. It'll fill up with reeds, birds will nest there, and it'll stink to high heaven, but any water going back into the Gédhakwés will be reasonably clean."

"Who do I hire to lay out the village?"

"The Geological Survey can do it, complete with a map and stakes in the ground and a set of land ownership ledgers, ready to fill out. They helped lay out Mɛlita, Gramakwés, and Kérékwɛs."

"Good. I'm really not sure I want to put that much time and energy into settling a village named for myself! But I suppose I need to protect my future, and the best way to do that is to build this place up."

“Any Old Houses willing to buy land here?”

“I think I have one or two, if I can provide them with farmers willing to purchase land from them.”

“I’ve been thinking about that problem. Wɛranowika’s climate permits only two crops a year and there’s still plenty of land south of Mɛlita where a winter crop is possible, but unless you have windmills it’s too dry there for a summer crop, and it’ll be a few years before there are enough windmills, storage tanks, and irrigation hoses to compensate. So you are competitive. There are still three villages on the north shore without official locations for their farmers to set up second farms. The second possibility is the upper Gédhakwés; the farms up there are crowded and small. Then there’s Dwobrébakwés; close, same climate, and overcrowded, so some farmers there may be willing to commute here if a regular bus route is established. The fourth possibility is Sumilara; the island has been hit hard by falling crop prices and the island has very little unused arable land.”

“I fear Sumilara is the best source of the four. That will be controversial, but if anyone is impervious to the problem, it is I. Are you interested in a thousand or two agris of land? If you have a stake, people will be confident the town will succeed.”

Chris sighed. “I want to do this as a favor to a friend, and not to make money. But I am willing to do that and plow the profits back into the town. You’ll want to set up factories here, too.”

“Are there any items left to manufacture?”

“Oh, yes. Miller is willing to license out the machines and procedures for about fifty items, mostly small tools, and the engineering school is trying to accelerate its

programs to develop new manufacturing techniques. They're almost finished with a nail making machine; the nails will be much more uniform and twenty times cheaper than handmade nails. Everyone making nails by hand will go out of business and a five person factory will be able to supply the entire world's demand. Mɛlwika just can't keep up with the demand for everything; its industrial park can't grow fast enough and its job supply is already growing quite fast."

"We want people to stay in their villages anyway. Do you know of anyone I can hire for four or five thousand a year to serve as village manager? That'd free me to be governor."

"Good people are in very short supply, but there are some grange coordinators looking for bigger tasks. There's a guy on the Ornakwés Grange Council named Yimu Gédhakwési, so I suppose he's a local and would be willing to move back. I don't know him very well, but I can inquire. I have business students who could serve as accountants and provide the support staff."

"What about hiring Estanu to set up the town site; dig the sewers, set up the water systems, pave the streets, etc. Wɛranowika will have good infrastructure. I can afford that." It was an innocent sounding question, but was probably additional probing about Estanu's resignation.

"He'd do a good job, and as we know, his company needs the business right now. You'll need a grange, too, which I'd put on the north side of town so that it can serve the rest of the valley, if the villages north of here are interested. You may eventually want a fire department, since this area is a long way from the others."

"Essential, if the town is to get factories."

"And you'll need at least two bridges over the river here at the townsite."

"True. And a good school, perhaps with some high school classes. And if you don't mind, I'll ask Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma to offer evening classes. They need a branch campus down here and a little competition is good."

"I agree. It sounds like you have a plan. Once you get going, I'd drive here every other morning for half an hour or an hour. With a driver to get you around, you can at least get some reading done, especially in the new steam cars they'll start making next month; they have heavier springs and will produce a smoother ride. The mornings you don't drive down, you call very predictably at 9 a.m. or some other specific time. That's what I did when Mɛlita was going up, or I had Thornton or Aryéstu go down instead. Even today I still drive to the lower Arjakwés Granges, Mɛlita, Swadlɛndha, and Arjdhura one morning a week. I have to, to make sure my investments are in order. Luktréstu calls for me every morning and takes detailed notes."

"That's what you have to do; find reliable people to work for you." Wɛranolubu nodded, looked at the town site one more time, then turned back to the rover, where Luktréstu was busily talking on Chris's cell phone and taking notes. "That's what I need."

"The cell phones do help, but Lukréstu could have connected to your telephone line," said Chris, apologetically. They climbed back into the rear seats while Luktréstu apologized to the man at Mɛlita Grange he had been conversing with and closed the line. They headed back to Mɛddoakwés. "How's everything going?" Chris asked Wɛranolubu.

"Pretty well, I guess. For the last two months, Duke Kandékwɛs and I have spent most of our time together figuring out what I can and can't do, and how. I think we have a pretty good understanding now, so the next step—which I have started—is hiring staff—a

dozen accountants and experts—and implementing the Arjakwés part of the seven year development plan. We'd like to expand the province's economy 125% in seven years, on the assumption that other provinces will fall short of the goal of doubling their economies, so we have to do better to help the kingdom achieve its goal. Agriculture can't expand more—it's at the market's limit—so that means building a lot of factories. Based on the plan and conversations, we're talking about ten percent of the province's total economic output per year plowed into investments of various sorts."

"That's a lot, and there's no guarantee it'll be enough, either. The 2.7 million dhanay invested in Miller Motors will expand output of vehicles, but may not increase their total value because the individual vehicles are cheaper. On the other hand, the additional vehicles will increase productivity. It's very hard to know what will bring about a 125% increase. A good network of concrete roads and extensive bus service will help a lot. Imagine if the whole province functioned like a single city."

"I plan to talk to General Gɛlnébɛlu; I want a lot more concrete roads, and I want them to tie us to ɛndraidha and the Pɛnkakwés so those regions become part of our economy. I want to set up a 'factory startup package' too, to make that task easier. We have to look at the electrical distribution system and the gas pipeline, too, to make sure they're big enough."

"I know Behruz and Amos have been thinking about that. But both of those companies are struggling because of over expansion. The Mɛlwika-Mɛddoakwés-ɛjnopéla pipeline won't pay for itself for at least ten years. We think the Néfa to Tripola pipeline will be even longer, and we're feeling pressure to expand the system farther east

and south from Tripola and to add Isurdhuna! The poor electric company will never make money at the rate it's going because everyone wants to be added to the system and factories don't want to pay for power."

"They need to install electrical meters everywhere, even houses."

"They know that, but that's ten thousand houses, now. A lot of houses have connected to the grid by themselves and since the price of lightbulbs and radios includes the cost of their electricity, they've paid for the power they're using. But people think the power's free. Now they're faced with the issue of creating more electrically powered items for home use and they don't even know who is using their electricity! And the factories think if they buy a machine, the price includes the electricity to run it, but it doesn't. It's complicated."

"They've installed electrical meters for all the factories, right?"

"Yes, but factories wire around the meters and steal power. The power company has to hire more inspectors; that's what they're trying to do now, but it's hard to find qualified workers."

"Back to training, again."

"Exactly. The joint telephone-electrical line maintenance company needs to hire a lot more linemen to maintain the lines, too. That's another problem that develops when you expand too fast and the army installs the utility poles for you. That company seems to be working pretty well, but then the linemen aren't authorized to inspect connections to the grid! So they're going to discuss that problem next week."

"How's Kérdu working out?"

“He just moved into the mayor’s office yesterday and he’s met with the staff of city hall twice. I think he’ll do a fine job. When someone rises to the top via an election by their peers—like in a grange—they have to be able to communicate to people well, and they have to get things done. He has good ideas and is open to input.”

“Mɛlwika is a blessed city; its growth has a lot to do with its organization. Kandékwɛs wants me to handle the province so that he can handle the city, but he doesn’t want to deal with all the details; industrial and commercial expansion, yes, pretty new buildings, yes, but sewers and public water and paving on the back alleys, no. And little details like that matter in the long term. But he doesn’t understand that.”

“If you want the province’s economy to more than double, Mɛlwika’s economy has to more than double; maybe triple. And that will generate more resentment. Our population could increase by 10,000 in seven years, to 26,000. Fifteen hundred children are born there every year, and sometimes the babies are uncles and aunts of other babies! The older generation is moving to Mɛlwika to help their kids, discovering they can get jobs, and are marrying and starting second families. I figured that with higher incomes, the average household size in Mɛlwika would stay smaller than the world average of six, but Mɛlwika’s houses are bigger and some have ten people living in them!”

“And the population’s overflowing into Nénaslua and Béranta; those places have grown fifty percent in the last few decades. Mɛlwika’s the engine for provincial growth, so as long as you’re spreading the wealth, I’ll be happy. Duke Kandékwɛs wants the capital to catch up, but he won’t stop Mɛlwika’s growth.”

“No; the competition will be fair. That’s all we ask. And we will spread out the wealth. If there’s any area I worry about, it’s between Mɛlwika and Mɛddoakwés. You

need to call a meeting of the lords there and set up a regional plan. In my accounting class one of my students from Véspa was complaining that he had heard of a house available for sale in Boléripludha from another student in the course, so he inquired about buying it. The owner said, 'Why do you want to move here? We don't want outsiders, move back to Vespa!' That student is now buying a house in Mɛlwika, even though it's more expensive!"

"That'll happen in Boléripludha especially. They want to keep their township for themselves."

"And they'll be poorer. Boléripludha, Morituora, Béranta, Nénaslua, Awsmoritua and Yimuaidha together have eight thousand people. They should have a regional high school and evening classes in all their schoolhouses. All the concrete roads connecting them to each other and to the cities need wide bicycle lanes, or there needs to be separate bike paths; all of them are less than half an hour by bike to either city. They should all have plans to expand industry unless they want their people to work, shop and pay their taxes in the cities."

"That, or we need to change the tax laws so that villages get some of the taxes collected at workplaces elsewhere. Right now the village schools are starved because the commuters' kids attend them, but they don't pay taxes to support them."

"That is a problem. Mɛlita benefits from it—most farmers there live in the North Shore and keep their kids up there—but it's hard on the North Shore. Mɛlwika shells out charity to the villages sometimes, and that isn't a good relationship either."

"Well, I may try to get that law introduced. The problem is that Prince Mɛméjékwu will oppose anything I propose, and Duke Kandékwɛs, who always has Mɛddoakwés's tax revenues in mind, will oppose a change like that as well."

"I'd be under a lot of pressure to oppose it too, since both of my towns benefit. And any attempt to change the tax laws will bring out a whole host of lobbyists and others seeking their own special exemptions."

"I know." Wɛranolubu watched the landscape roll by for a moment, then added, "You mentioned bicycles. How many are they making per year right now?"

"Maybe two hundred. Demand is brisk and they aren't even marketing them in any way. An advertising campaign and higher production could lower prices and send demand way up; I think a thousand a year could be sold, maybe two thousand."

"Why isn't the Foundry making more, then?"

"Because no Miller son is available to be put in charge. Because selling steam vehicles is more exciting. Because expanding bike production will take up space in a very crowded industrial park. If we could find a really good manager, some accountants, and get the time of some engineers to design a new facility and machines, a lot of money could be made. And it would produce a lot of economic growth because of new opportunities. Half the families on this world—that's 25,000 or so—should have a bicycle, because with it they'd be within an hour of a large city."

"Okay," said Wɛranolubu. "You've given me a lot of ideas today, Chris, but this one is particularly interesting. I'll see what I can do to pursue it."

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Troops

That night in the town square Jordan announced they planned to stay in Lewéspadéma another week and was surprised by the strong applause. They had received a cold reception and had had trouble making contacts with people at first, but after six days they had made some good friends, and questions about the Bahá'í Faith, initially hesitant, had become more relaxed and frequent. They had begun to pay their dues; it was good they were staying.

The next morning, Trisunu awakened him early with a request that they drive to Kadakwas—Chadachvas, in Véspa dialect—to visit his second cousin, who was good friends with the lord there, and active in that village's grange. Jordan roused several others and they set out a half hour later.

The first five kilometers was on Route 2, a smooth gravel road now eight meters wide, which bisected Lɛwéspadéma and ran arrow-straight across the slightly rolling coastal plain toward Ora, forty kilometers to the north. At Triséra—short for *tri iséra,* "Three Rivers"—they turned left onto Route 51, a gravel road that went west for six kilometers, then turned north and paralleled Route 2, connecting together the new hill villages in the narrow, irregular "central valley" that Lord Mitru had established. They crossed the three small streams in rapid succession that gave the place its name, then passed the first foothill. Kadakwas, "Water Falls," was the southernmost of the new villages. It was well named, for a stream that tumbled down the steep edge of the

highlands in a series of falls and cascades west of it, then flowed around the southern side of the foothill and became one of the three streams flowing to Triséra.

Kadakwas was settled in a north-south valley between the line of foothills and the highlands, about two and a half kilometers wide and six kilometers long (although the valley continued farther north, after narrowing briefly). Much of the valley floor had been converted into rice paddies, corn fields, vegetable gardens, pasture, or tropical orchards. The village resembled Wɛranopéla in size and state of development, though the latter was on a paved main road. No doubt the tropical climate, which permitted three crops a year, helped Kadakwas's prosperity.

They went straight to the house of Awshandu, Trisunu's cousin, who welcomed them warmly and quizzed them about their efforts. Then he led them to the house of Lord Jéndu. He was an older man—in his forties, almost toothless—with a kind smile. Jéndu ushered them into his courtyard, a big, green space with several fast-growing fruit trees providing shade. It was actually a small, modest house; the street side consisted of three private rooms and the rest of the rectangular courtyard was enclosed by a wall. That prompted Jordan to do a quick calculation; a village of 500 people had about 90 households, each of which would pay about 100 dhanay in local taxes per year. Less than five thousand dhanay, total; not much for a lord and village services. A resident lord and a small house suggested he cared.

His wife was Estoibloré, "God's flower"—the area was dominated by names starting with "Estoi-". She offered everyone wine and slices of bread, the former of which the Bahá'ís politely declined. "We are very, very thankful for your hospitality, Lord," said

Jordan. “And we mean no offense. But our religion tells us not to drink wine. We do not interfere with anyone else’s desire to drink it, but avoid it ourselves.”

“Why does Bahá'í say you should not drink it?”

“I think, Lord, because we are told not to take anything that will interfere with our ability to maintain self-control and personal responsibility. It is hard enough to keep one’s passions and feelings under control without wine, and think of the many times when loss of self control and prudence does damage to one’s friendships and family relations. If we seek to be servants to others, we must always control our passions.”

“By Esto, you must be very serious young people! Awshandu told me that you have been in Lɛwéspadéma for a week giving all sorts of classes and leading everyone in singing every evening. Well, perhaps the singing suggests you aren’t so serious.”

“After a long day of hard work, everyone likes to relax, including us. And we have two very good three-string players and a drummer among us. We have no idea how we can serve Kadakwas, Lord, but we can offer our services. Among us are men and women who know plumbing, literacy, math, accounting, development, the prince’s seven year development plan, music, making jams, making fancy pastries, knitting, agriculture, using a sewing machine, and medicine.”

“Medicine? Someone who can diagnose illnesses and give medicine?”

“I have one year of medical school training, Lord,” replied Khwanu. “I do not have medicines with me because one needs two years of medical school to disperse them. But I can tell people whether they have something serious, can set bones, clean teeth, examine and test eyes, and other fairly basic things.”

“I am sure people will be glad to see you, since the mobile clinic visits once a month at most. What sort of agricultural knowledge?”

“I have a kwétɛryɛri in agricultural extension work,” replied Mitrukaru. “I am familiar with temperate and semitropical agriculture the best. I am at the service of your village.”

Jéndu nodded, impressed. “And development? I haven’t heard of people studying that systematically.”

“The courses are just a year or two old, Lord,” replied Budhéstu. “I have taken only two, but it was a remarkable pair of courses. The twenty of us helped develop the first draft of the prince’s seven year development plan. I know what is in the plan because I was part of the presentations explaining why something was needed and the debates about what to put in the first draft. This has given me a sense of the complicated balances that development requires.”

“Fascinating. I want to hear more about this. I am in a very strange position. Kadakwas is a small place and it is not wealthy. It has enough land for 1,500 people, supposedly, but never got that many because many went to Lewéspadéma or Mɛlwika. It has no spare tax revenue to support a lord in comfort in Ora, a headman, *and* teachers, *and* develop itself. So I am here, my own headman and a teacher in the school. My own son and successor won’t live here; he and his family support themselves in Ora. Our other teacher is a photographer and weather reporter as well. We have a third teacher who runs classes for adults at night. We have the money to send eight kids to Ora High School. That leaves enough money to take care of the poor and sick and save for farm equipment; we have the only grange in the area, and it now has two tractors and all the necessary

attachments. No one wanted to loan us money, so we saved up for the equipment instead!"

"Very impressive, Lord; may you have a long life," replied Budhéstu. "Has your agriculture seen an increase, now that you have tractors?"

"Indeed, it has nearly kept up with the decline in crop prices! I tell you, it is impossible to get ahead. We are running in a circle; the faster we run, the quicker we return to where we started. The sawmill has been our other village investment and it has made a bit of money for us, but only after a lot of heartache. It is very hard to compete with the big producers who dynamite dead trees in the sea, haul them to the sawmill by water, cut a hundred meters of boards a day, and produce scores of gurnis of charcoal per day! We produced special wood products; door and window frames, high quality mahogany for furniture making and wall paneling, that sort of thing."

"At least the cost of food has declined," added Estoibloré. "That has helped everyone, for we are all buying more and more things from outside the village; ice, beef, apples." She looked at the women. "I'd love to learn how to make jams and pastries. I can bring together some of my friends. Probably the best place to cook is right here." She pointed to her own open-air kitchen on the side of the courtyard. "Plenty of room for a lot of cooks."

"It's a lot of fun," agreed Kordé, who was the cooking coordinator. "We also have three sewing machines with us and can show you how they work."

"I have a sewing machine as well, but I don't know how to use it very well," said Estoibloré. "You can teach me and my friends will come and learn as well. We could set them up here." She pointed to the house's wide portico facing the courtyard.

“That’ll work,” agreed Kordé.

“Can we use the two classrooms for classes of various sorts?” asked Jordan.

Jéndu was surprised. “Both? We have classes going on.”

“One will be enough, I think.”

“That will be fine. Let me show you the school.” Jéndu rose and they all walked out of the house and northward up Route 51 a hundred meters to the school. It was unlocked; they went in. “We have electricity and a telephone here. The first classroom has the photography equipment and the radio for calling in weather reports. People gather there to listen to the radio, too. So I suggest you use the second classroom. How many classes?”

“As many as your village wants,” replied Jordan. “I wonder whether we should move here from Lɛwéspadéma.”

“I suggest the women move here and the men stay at our school,” replied Trisunu. “That will be wiser, and the women’s classes are needed here. And I hope you will continue to give classes at our school.”

“We will, as we promised. Alright.” Jordan looked out the windows at a large gravel pad across the graveled highway. “Can we park our truck and house trailer there? Mitrukaru and Kordé need to be near the women and they can have the trailer to themselves.”

Jéndu shook his head. “Our bus parks there at night.”

“Bus?”

“It’s a Mitru Transportation bus. The driver lives in the house there and drives the bus home at night. That way, he can quickly get the bus going in the morning. It goes

from here to Ora at 6:30 every morning, stopping at every village on Route 2 so it can get to the high school by 7:30. In the summer the high school is closed but it still makes the run because people go to Ora to work or shop. The bus makes five round trips, two in the morning, two in late afternoon, and one in the evening."

"When does it get back here?" asked Jordan.

"About 7:30 or 8:00. If you want to rent it, the driver will do that. Sometimes on Primdius he'll drive to the three villages nearby—us, Dhudrakaita, and Triséra—then to Lɛwéspadéma for shopping and to visit cousins."

"Interesting. I wonder whether we could drive people around for classes and singing at night?"

"Well, it costs us two kɛntay each, and that's a lot of money."

Jordan nodded. "Okay. What's Dhudrakaita like?"

"Go see; you can drive there in your truck. They are poor and isolated and crave visitors."

"The Lord there is a cousin of ours," added Awshandu, and Trisunu nodded.

"Perhaps this afternoon," suggested Jordan. He turned to Jéndu. "We are very grateful, lord, and will see what we can do to be of service. For example, we installed a well and running water in the Lɛwéspadéma school. Someone will have to buy the pipes and faucets, but we can put them together, dig a well, and we can probably get an electrical motor and a large water tank."

"How much will the pipes and such cost?"

"Just pipes and two faucets: three or four dhanay. But if you want a flush toilet, a sink, or any of those things, they are more, of course."

“Of course. We can provide three or four dhanay to buy pipes if you can do the rest. Running water at the school would be very helpful. I can buy pipes to install inside my house, too.”

“If we have the time. Perhaps we should get settled in here, now.”

The lord nodded. “Excellent.” He turned to Budhéstu. “Can you tell me about the development plans some time?”

Budhéstu nodded and Trisunu and Awshandu walked back to the latter’s house to talk. The six of them who had come talked about what to do here and what to continue where they had been, and who would tackle what tasks that day. After half an hour, Trisunu returned, so Jordan, Tomasu, and Kordé drove back to Lɛwéspadéma with Trisunu while Mitrukaru walked around the local farms to see what he could see and Khwanu talked to the other teacher, who stopped by to see what was happening. They walked to a nearby house to visit a sick child.

Jordan, Tomasu, and Kordé returned to Kadakwas two hours later with the trailer and a pile of fresh fruit Kordé was able to buy at the store. There was quite a crowd of villagers at the school, visiting with the strangers; this was not Lɛwéspadéma where everyone was busy working, the lifestyle was much more traditional and slow-paced. Khwanu was busy answering questions about the Faith. Kordé grabbed her bushel of fruit and three kilos of sugar and headed for Estoibloré’s. Jordan turned to Mitrukaru, who was back from his exploration of the area. “What have I missed?”

“Just discussions like this for the last hour and a half. You’ll need to give a big talk tonight, I think. Everyone’s very curious. They’ve heard of the Faith on the radio, but there are no Bahá'ís in this village. None.”

“I have a very good feeling about this place. Maybe we should be going to the little, remote places, rather than the big ones with Bahá'í communities. I want to see Dhudrakaita for that very reason. Shall we drive over?”

“Now?”

“Now. If we wait, we’ll be immersed in tasks here. When we were in Lɛwéspadéma I called Modolubu. The Central Spiritual Assembly is thrilled by what we are doing and the youth in Mɛddwoglubas are inspired. They want to help, too. So four of them are taking the bus to Lɛwéspadéma some time later today or tomorrow. That means we’ll have reinforcements.”

“Dhudrakaita has only three hundred people, and it’s ten minutes from here by truck. And I’m sure you’re thinking about renting the bus; it could get people back and forth pretty easily. So maybe we can handle more.”

“Then let’s see if Awshandu can come with us to introduce us to his cousin.”

Mitrukaru nodded. He and Jordan walked out of the school; Tomasu saw them and tagged along. Within half an hour Awshandu was free and the four of them jumped in the truck and headed for Dhudrakaita.

The dirt road was rutted, but not muddy; it was rarely driven on. They had to go slowly to avoid stumps. For the first two kilometers, the road rose steeply and passed through a thick jungle that Kadakwas had selectively logged for only the best timber. The terrain flattened out for four more kilometers, then rose and abruptly dropped as the truck switched-backed to a big, circular plain below.

“A dhuba,” observed Jordan.

“It’s about four dɛkɛnt—let’s see, that’s two kilometers—in diameter. My cousin is a third cousin of the late Lord Mitru by marriage and he served him quite loyally collecting taxes in southern Véspa. Lord Mitru thought the dhuba was bigger; it can barely support three hundred people. Besides, it’s remote, though the army at least cleared this road.”

“I can’t imagine how a bus gets down this.”

“Very slowly. The round trip takes almost an hour.”

They continued to the bottom of the old meteor crater. The village was set near the northwestern edge where a stream cascaded down; the Trinénasisér crossed the southern side of the crater floor. Most of the flattish floor—about three square kilometers or 800 agris—was cleared and planted with rice paddies, corn, and vegetables. Orchards and pastureland climbed the rim.

“Why is it called Dhudrakaita?” asked Jordan. The name meant “bamboo forest.”

“That’s what it was, but they’ve cleared away the bamboo now. There are still large thickets of bamboo growing in the hills farther west.”

The road reached the floor and turned northwestward, arrow-straight, toward the village. Halfway across the floor they passed a team of men netting fish from a huge rice paddy they had drained. Awshandu exclaimed, “Stop! There’s my cousin!”

They stopped and got out of the truck. The six men stopped their work of throwing small, flopping fish into buckets and turned to the strangers. Then the Lord smiled. “Hail, Awshandu!”

“Hail, Lord Chordu! How do you fare?”

“We are all well today, and well fed tonight! Enough fish for a big feast! What brings you here with these visitors?”

“They are Bahá'í youth visiting Kadakwas and Lɛwéspadéma, and they wanted to visit Dhudrakaita as well. They are offering free classes in a dozen things.”

“Classes? I am not sure we need classes.”

“Lord Chordu, I am Jordanu from Mɛlwika. Ten of us are spending the summer offering services to as many villages as possible, plus we are getting to know the people, praying with them, and sharing a spiritual message. We—”

“Praying and sharing a spiritual message? We do not need priests in Dhudrakaita. One came a few years ago and was willing to open a school as long as we fed him and sent a steady stream of sacrificial animals to the temple in Ora. We said no, we prefer to sing the hymns together and please Esto in that manner, as Widumaj has commanded.”

“We ask for no sacrifices or other pay, Lord. We are Bahá'ís and wish to serve. Sometimes people ask whether we can help them with wiring or plumbing and we cannot pay for pipes because we do not have the money for them, but we can help find others who can pay.”

Chordu shook his head. “We have no need for wiring; as you can see, we have no power and no telephone! And I think we will never get them, either. We have no post office either. We have a single one-room school where the children are taught a little. If you want to help, we need a real road.”

“In a week we cannot do that. But we can offer classes in how to use sewing machines, how to make jams and other fancy things, we have an agricultural agent with

us and a medical student, and we can offer classes in reading, math, accounting, plumbing, and many other things."

"And Bahá'í things?"

"If people so desire."

"I think we would desire. We are always interested in new hymns, and Bahu gave many, did He not?"

"He did." Jordan tipped his head back and began to chant part of a prayer:

*O Lord, my God! Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee, illumine my brow with the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy kingdom of grandeur. Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance to Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me.*

"That is so beautiful; you chant well," said Chordu.

"It's our inspiration for this trip."

"It's an excellent inspiration. You all must come to the village tonight for the fish roast, and to teach us these beautiful words."

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They visited Dhudrakaita for two hours, then headed back to Kadakwas. A large area of Dhudrakaita's farmland had been planted in beans and there was a severe insect infestation; Mitrukaru needed to look at it. A dozen were interested in hearing about development, several families needed medical assistance—a mobile clinic had never visited the village before—and just about every man said their wives would enjoy and

benefit from the cooking and sewing classes. So they brainstormed about how to split their forces three ways and when to drive the truck among the three to move teachers about to repeat classes. Several people in Kadakwas were sure their cousins in Triséra would want courses too, so they had to plan for that.

About the time they had made rough plans the phone rang; Primanu, in Lɛwéspadéma, called to report that four youths from Mɛddwoglubas had arrived. Two had brought their three-strings along. That triggered a hasty reexamination of their plans and some preliminary divisions of labor for that evening. Mitrukaru drove back to pick up all of them. He and Kordé would run a musical evening at Kadakwas while Jordan ran one at Dhudrakaita with the help of Budhéstu and Khwanu. Tomasu would stay at Kadakwas and finish plans for installing a water system in the school. Jordan called Widubéru and secured a small development grant so that the school's system could be built right. Widubéru had always encouraged villages to install complete public water systems and had been very unsuccessful at securing agreement for them, so he was thrilled to help.

When they got back to Dhudrakaita—bearing Awshandu and his family as well—the cooking was almost finished. What followed was the happiest feast Jordan had ever seen; everyone joyfully ate fish, rice, and vegetables while crowding in circles around the strangers, whom they quizzed about absolutely everything. As the sun went down, Skanda shed a brilliant blue-white light on everything and the singing, dancing, and drinking began. The visitors pulled out their musical instruments and sang—Dhudrakaita was a very song-filled place—and every new song was eagerly embraced.

Jordan taught Bahá'í prayer after Bahá'í prayer, for many had been skillfully translated into rhyming Eryan verse and fit traditional hymn tunes well. People learned them, sang them, then asked what they meant and where they came from. The village knew enough about the Bahá'í Faith to know that Bahu was equivalent to Widumaj, and the idea was natural there; Dhudrakaita was not a cynical, skeptical place, but a fairly basic and simple place. So people learned the prayers and sang them as if they had learned new hymns of Widumaj. In spite of their isolation, they knew all the traditional hymns.

Close to midnight, when Jordan was beginning to get pretty tired, Chordu approached him. "So, Bahu teaches that we are all equal, whether male or female, Eryan or Sumi or Tutanɛ, and we must all live together peacefully. But how will that ever happen, really? This world has been dominated by force and struggle from the beginning."

"It has, Lord, but if we try to serve each other in unity, loving, praying, working to be better every day, Esto will guide and strengthen us, and we will gradually make this world a better place."

"It has changed a lot in the last eleven or twelve years and can change much more."

"It will keep changing, both materially and spiritually. The development plan calls for everyone to become twice as rich, on average, over seven years. But it offers no spiritual goals. We Bahá'ís have a five year plan with them."

"To do what?"

“Take our faith to everyone we can. Establish new Bahá'í communities and help the old ones grow larger. Help all Bahá'ís and their communities to transform their lives and live more spiritually. We have many books with guidance; both the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and practical manuals for understanding and implementing the guidance.”

“Really? Dhudrakaita needs all of that. Are these books our school teacher can teach us?”

“We can teach them to the entire village, and the village can then learn more together. We have no priests; the job of priest falls on everyone, young or old, man or woman or child.”

I suppose if everyone can learn to read and memorize, then everyone can be a priest, especially if no one demands sacrifices.”

“I wouldn’t put it that way. We do sacrifice, but not goats and sheep. We sacrifice our time and effort by serving others. Service is the true sacrifice.”

Chordu’s eyes lit up. “Yes, of course. You are quite right, that is what even the hymns of Widumaj call for! You must teach us as much as you can in the next five days, Jordanu. You must. All of Dhudrakaita will accept Bahá'u'lláh; every man, woman, and child. As Lord I accept him on their behalf.”

Jordan looked at him, startled. “What did you say, Lord?”

“I said that all of Dhudrakaita accepts Bahá'u'lláh. We want to learn and sing all his hymns as well, and learn to live by them. They are no more difficult than Widumaj’s, after all.”

“Not all of Bahá'u'lláh’s teachings are hymns. Only a small fraction. The rest are in books. I suppose Widumaj taught everything in hymns so people could remember them, but Bahá'u'lláh knew He could rely on reading and writing.”

“We have people who can read and write, here, and more are learning all the time. We can manage using books as well.”

“And Bahá'u'lláh has laws—like no drinking wine and beer—that eventually must be followed.”

“We can learn to follow that one, though perhaps not right away! How many wives?”

“One only, unless someone already has more; then he can keep all the wives he has, but marry no more.”

“I shouldn’t have asked, really; no one here can afford even two wives. We have seen some material progress here. We have a school and a few books, and the bus does come here at least twice a day. We can get our crop to market on it, we can buy some outside things—some of us wear clothes made in factories, as you can see—and we are not starving. But we want more for our children. We want a better life, but that is not just more food and clothes; it is also a sense of purpose, and we lack that here.”

“We all have many purposes in life. One is to know and worship Esto, and since we can never fully know Esto, knowing him is an eternal process. Another purpose is to marry and bring forth one who will mention Esto. Another is to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. Dhudrakaita has a role to play in the last purpose, both materially and spiritually. As soon as I heard mention of this place this morning, I had a feeling about it.”

“Really? What did you feel?”

“That it was not ordinary, it was extraordinary.”

Chordu shrugged. “I suppose, with Esto’s help, we will see about that.”

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Challenges

The next morning, as soon as he could get away, Jordan drove to Mɛddwoglubas to report to Modolubu. He soon called in Lord Estodhéru and they called Mɛlwika so that Chris and Lua could participate in the discussion of what to do next.

"They really have all become Bahá'ís," concluded Jordan, after describing the previous evening. "I asked Lord Chordu several times and he said yes, I understood him correctly. I think he was puzzled why I didn't understand easily. Then just after the singing ended for the night, he stood up and announced to the entire village that they were now Bahá'ís and everyone responded positively; some applauded, some said "good," some nodded. Then they all left to go to bed, we drove back to Kadakwas and Lɛwéspadéma, and I didn't sleep all night."

"Understandably," said Lord Estodhéru, very seriously. "How big is the village? Three hundred?"

"That's what they say. But I learned that when the voting occurred, they didn't vote at all; no one came to organize them, so they didn't know what to do. Eight kilometers of twisting mud road makes them pretty isolated. They've never participated in a census. No one uses family names under any circumstances; they're all one-name people. I'm not even sure Lord Chordu goes to Ora very much. They don't have a post office; I'm not sure how he would get letters or newspapers."

"There are about a dozen villages like that, not counting the Tutanɛ," said Chris over the phone. "You visited quite a remote place, comparatively speaking, Jordan."

“Well, now we have three hundred new Bahá'ís,” said Modolubu. “And we have to plan accordingly. Jordan, you shouldn’t feel bad about this. Your team has done an incredible job.”

“I’m incredibly proud of you, honey,” added Lua. “I think the Central Spiritual Assembly should be proud of you.”

“Before you leave Mɛddwoglubas, I need to run to the store,” added Modolubu. “I want to buy a gift for every member of the team; something small, but a token of our appreciation. And I need to write a letter to the village of Dhudrakaita welcoming them. And we’ll put together a collection of Bahá'í books as a gift from the Central Spiritual Assembly.”

“But what do we do now?” asked Jordan. “They know nothing about local spiritual assemblies, feast, holy days . . . for that matter, they know little about Bahá'u'lláh.”

“Don’t worry about assemblies now,” said Chris. “The first step is to cement their hearts to Bahá'u'lláh. Once they have faith, everything else will follow. There will be troubles, tests, disputes; that’s normal. Your team will be there a week and will have time to teach them the pre-Ruhi book and the various early Ruhi books, and to teach them to sing some of the Bahá'í prayers. Concentrate on that.”

“Answer other questions, of course,” added Modolubu. “Khwanu knows what we did when Khɛrmdhuna declared *en masse*; he was there. We’ll follow the same procedure here, sending different members of the Central Spiritual Assembly and different teachers through every week or so for a few days. It’s only thirty-six kilometers from here, so we

should be able to send teachers regularly. We can even organize a bus trip for them to come to the House of Worship."

"I'm sure Staurédstu can visit for a day and help them with their medical needs," said Lua. "If I can get there, I'll be glad to volunteer a day or two as well. I guess another question to consider is whether we should press the army to get that road graveled, and whether the poor, overworked electrical and telephone companies should be pressed to install lines."

"Budhéstu is already thinking about the development possibilities," replied Jordan. "He has very good judgment and clever ideas, even if he has had only two courses. They have vast amounts of bamboo; the lord was talking to him about a huge forest of it to the north and west of the dhuba. It's easy to access the bamboo north of the dhuba because there's a gluba wide enough to drive a truck up, with only a little water flowing through it. I suspect they could export bamboo and bamboo products. None of us can remember seeing anything made of bamboo for sale anywhere."

"That's a possibility," agreed Chris. "But right now they don't have a truck, right?"

"Right now they don't have anything at all. They have fifty water buffalo for working the rice paddies; I think the lord decided to pretend the buffalos were tax exempt. That's their big expression of prosperity. They have a one-room schoolhouse that teaches kids how to read and count using the same books over and over. I doubt more than twenty of the village's hundred kids attend."

"It's like the villages around here five years ago," said Modolubu. "I bet their teacher's education is limited, also."

“He’s an inquisitive fellow who figured out how to read and write by himself and taught himself everything he teaches. So, can you send someone down to help us this week, or not?”

Modolubu looked at him. “Your team has gotten this far. We shouldn’t take this away from you now. Besides, we don’t have anyone else.”

“So you want us to consolidate them.”

“And teach more people; I suspect Kadakwas is similar to Dhudrakaita,” said Lua.

“Though I am not sure how many people we can consolidate in one summer,” said Modolubu.

“That’s what the Ruhi books and core activities are for,” replied Chris. “We need to train tutors in the village and they can do a lot of the rest. That’s the beauty of the process. Jordan, you’ll be in our prayers. And I’m sure your team will do a fine job. You have several Ruhi tutors, lots of experience, lots of other skills to impart . . . just keep doing what you’re doing.”

“Okay,” said Jordan. “That’s what we’ll do, then.”

“Best wishes. You’ll be in our prayers,” said Chris.

“Bye,” said Modolubu, closing the line.

“Bye.” Chris put down the phone as well. It was almost 7 p.m. and he was late for an unusual evening meeting, but he turned to Lua. “Incredible, isn’t it?”

“It really is. I can’t believe that Jordan has done this.”

“The little, sickly boy who was scared of the Eryan children because they didn’t wear underpants! And he’s become a ‘lion roaring in the ocean of knowledge, a whale swimming in the ocean of life.’” Chris smiled and there was a tear in one eye.

“I suppose my question is, what if he does this three or four more times? We could literally have a thousand new believers!”

“And we can’t consolidate the 4,500 we already have. But it’s a good problem to have. The Faith is growing very fast here, and right now it should; there are very big social changes. It’s not his fault if we can’t consolidate them.”

“And we have tools that never used to exist, with the Ruhi books and the core activities. In a way, we could use another thousand; a lot of Bahá'ís are upset that a third of the world’s Bahá'ís are in Khɛrmdhuna and they get to elect a third of the delegates.”

“We need three hundred thirty thousand believers on this world. But I have to go. I hope I won’t miss much supper.” Chris rose and headed across the street from his house to the tomi building.

The place was pretty quiet; everyone had left for the day. There was a guard at the main entrance, and Chris nodded to him; he was a new addition to the staff and was a necessity, considering how many confidential financial records they had. The police stopped by three times every night to make sure he was alright.

He went upstairs to the conference room and found everyone else was already there: Luktréstu, John, Yimu, Estanu, and his brother, Déanu. In front of Luktréstu was a pile of twelve bills that had serious irregularities, and they had been going through them.

Everyone nodded to Chris rather tensely. Luktréstu was reviewing the last two, and after each Déanu nodded and tersely offered an “uh-huh,” as an acknowledgement.

“They total 86,357 dhanay extra, charged to Miller Motors,” Luktréstu concluded. “What comment can you offer about the accounting work?”

“You are very thorough,” Déanu replied. “I can have a check ready for you in a week.”

“A week?” replied John, outraged. “I want a check tonight, and for double!”

“Double? You bastard, you won’t get anything like that from us!”

John rose, furious, ready to punch Déanu. Chris put his arm out to restrain him. “So we have two matters to conclude; amount and timing. The amount affects the timing.”

“Look,” said Déanu. “We don’t have accountants as careful and thorough as you, and—”

“Irrelevant. These are not accounting errors, these are deliberate thefts!” replied John.

“You are the richest man in the world, are you aware of that?”

“And I didn’t get there by letting someone steal from me!”

“Your project was not managed well, it had all sorts of cost overruns—”

“Six hundred thousand dhanay in overruns,” replied Chris. “We thought it was seven hundred thousand. We would be ethically remiss if we failed to get that theft back for the investors.”

“Look, we’ll pay you the 86,357,” said Déanu. “But it’s not your job to fine companies when they do something like this. If you want to take us to court, go ahead. We’ll damage your reputation if you do that, so we won’t be the only ones who lose. Six hundred thousand in overruns is embarrassing.”

“The investors already know; it’s public knowledge if anyone looks at our published reports,” replied Chris. “That’s not as damaging as you think.”

“Then there are other ways to damage reputations.”

“I’ll damage yours right now!” replied John, threateningly.

“John, please,” replied Chris. “I think you risk more than the loss of eighty thousand dhanay, Déanu; this could result in prison time. This is theft and it can easily be proved. Ignorance is no excuse. You are head of the company; it was your responsibility. And even if there’s no prison time, there would be a fine and a serious loss of business. Don’t you think that’s a fair assessment?”

“And what if dragging your reputation in the mud is worth all that loss to me, huh? Because allegations never go away, even if they are unproved.”

“I think my reputation can withstand some mudslinging,” replied Chris, calmly.

Estanu tapped Déanu on the shoulder. “No.” He turned to Chris and John. “When we met, I agreed, more or less, to a repayment of double the amount stolen. I gave you my word. Of course, I had no right to do that because I did give the company to my brother when I became mayor. So I put myself in an impossible position, my brother in a difficult one, and I raised the expectations of the two of you. Now that I have reviewed the company’s finances, I can say that it cannot pay you 172,000 dhanay. To do so would require it to sell many assets and go into debt. What I propose is that we split the difference. We can give you 125,000 dhanay. That’s about half more than the original theft. That strikes me as fairer, and it is possible for the company to give you that much in the form of a check and cash.”

“That is not half more,” said John. He pulled out a piece of paper and did a quick calculation. “Half again is 129,536 dhanay. If you want a round number, 130,000.”

“Round numbers. Shit,” replied Deanu.

“Okay, 129,536,” replied Estanu. “And no publicity about the problem.”

“And no hassles about the settlement,” added John. “I don’t want property disappearing or getting damaged at night.”

“There are already rumors going around,” complained Déanu.

“I’ve heard a few, too, and I don’t like how they’ve portrayed John and me,” replied Chris. “We want to keep all this civil. Otherwise John will be tempted to refuse to sell vehicles to you and you’ll be tempted to make trouble in return. I think we’ve all agreed on a solution to a mutual difficulty.”

“When will we get the money?” asked John.

“Right now,” replied Estanu. “We can write you a check. But you can’t cash it until we move money around in various accounts and deposit some cash.” He pulled out a checkbook and wrote a check for Miller Motors for 129,536 dhanay, signed it, and handed it to Déanu, who co-signed it. Then Estanu handed it to John. “That should settle the matter.” He offered both hands.

“I guess it does,” replied John, who stuffed the check in his pocket and looked at Yimu, pretending Estanu had not offered to shake hands. Estanu finally lowered his hands, insulted.

Chris offered his hands and they shook instead, then Chris and Déanu shook hands, then Yimu offered his hands and shook with both men. Then Estanu and Déanu rose, nodded in goodbye, and left.

“Well, that’s over,” said Chris.

“Yeah,” replied John. “Those bastards.”

“It was better to settle the matter this way. The courts are still not equipped to deal with big fights over money and the public’s not prepared to understand. For most people, spending 2 million dhanay or 2.6 million dhanay on something are equally unbelievable.”

“I suppose,” replied John. “I wanted double, Chris. What they did to me was wrong.”

“Well, you accepted 129,536; you’re the one who figured it out.”

“Now we have enough to pay salaries for a few weeks,” said Yimu. “And we have the flexibility to cut prices to roughly the break-even level and see whether demand climbs enough to make extra vehicles and generate a profit. We can also try setting up the assembly line with parts for different vehicles stored on each side, so we can switch between assembly of two vehicles quickly and easily.”

“Yes, I guess that’s good,” agreed John. “Okay, let’s launch the sale.”

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Thornton and Rudhisuru left Mɛlwika at dawn and headed east on Route 1 to Gordha in the Geological Survey’s pickup truck. They passed along the thickly graveled route as quickly as the occasional herds of sheep, goats, and cows, the lumbering wagons, skittish horses, and overloaded trucks would allow; the eighty-five kilometers took an hour and a half, but since they moved eastward by four time zones, they reached Gordha at 11:30 a.m.

Gordha was a bustling town of almost four thousand people with a modicum of prosperity. From there they hunted around to find a southward-bound dirt track and finally located it, a barely discernible trail suitable for high-clearance vehicles such as the one they were driving, with occasional dumps of gravel to fix particularly awful spots.

The land was arid—the driest on the planet, for it was far from the sea's eastern shore and in the rain shadows of three mountain ranges from the western shore—the only true desert left, seemingly untouched by the pluvial bounty now falling on the rest of the world. They headed southward cautiously, an arid mountain ridge rising five hundred meters on the left, rolling desert disappearing over the close horizon to the right.

Halfway across the forty kilometers separating them from Sértroba, the headquarters village of the Krésonɛ, they reached several piles of rocks marking the edge of tribal territory. They drove west a half kilometer to a circular meteor crater and walked around it for an hour, then continued to Sértroba, where they had a meeting with Lord Patékwu.

He was pleased to see them and ushered them into his large gabrula or receiving room. "Honored Dhoru and Colonel Rudhisuru are friends of the Krésonɛ and are always welcome," he said. "I hope you are well? Do you have more sons, Honored Dhoru?"

"I do not, Lord, but my boys and my daughter grow bigger and stronger every year," replied Thornton. "How is your family and your health?"

"Thank you, they are well. The Krésonɛ are doing alright; we sold many winter vegetables this time in Mɛlwika and made good money, but now our wheat is barely worth harvesting."

"Prices have fallen a lot," agreed Thornton. "And they may not recover any time soon. But you are great hunters and your antelope meat is popular in Mɛlwika."

Indeed. We can't compete against Gordha beef, but we do have a lot of antelope. We are selling horses, too, but that market is getting weaker as well because of all the tractors."

“That may get worse, too, because Mɛlwika can now make trucks more cheaply than ever before. How are your schools?”

“Better; we have four one-room schools now, and the teachers have more experience. We have a post office, photo studio, and weather reporting station here, so our teacher has extra income. If we had a regular bus from Gordha, we would probably be in better shape, because we would prefer to shop there than in Mɛlwika.”

“The army would like to develop the dirt track into a gravel road and name it Route 78,” replied Rudhisuru. “That’s one reason we have come to talk to you.”

“Oh? Please explain.”

“It’s a bit difficult to explain, Lord,” replied Thornton. “If you have ever driven the dirt track, you know that just inside of Krésonɛ territory, south of Mɛghéndrɛs territory, there is a small, closed dhuba about five hundred meters around.” Thornton walked over to the large mosaic of aerial photographs of Krésonɛland that Patékwu proudly displayed in his room and put his finger on the faint ghostly ring.

“I know the feature. It is named Saladhuba because the animals go there to lick salt from the rocks on the bottom.”

Thornton nodded, a bit surprised that it had a name. “Saladhuba. A group of us in Mɛlwika would like to purchase Saladhuba and a square of land around it two kilometers across. We need a place to establish a special facility to store metal drums of industrial waste. These are chemicals that we cannot destroy and can be poisonous to people and animals. If they are stored in a place where there is very little rain and where it never freezes, the metal drums will last a long time and require very little maintenance. If they

are in a place far from people, also, they will not be disturbed. If there is a fence around the place, animals will stay away."

Patékwu scowled. "So, you want to buy some of our land so you can poison it rather than poison your own?"

"We don't want to poison the land; we want to store the wastes safely. Close to Mɛlwika, there are so many people that people could break into the storage area, and we will have to build a big building to protect the drums from rain and snow. Here a fence and a local watchman will do. Some of the land will actually be in the land of Mɛghɛndrɛs; it is right on the border of the two tribes, in an area that I understand is no man's land."

"No man's land. I suppose one could call it that, in that we have disputed the area with the Mɛghɛndrɛs for centuries. But we do hunt there. In fact, the Saladhuba is a fairly good hunting spot."

"The area can remain good. We can put out salt blocks for the local animals. We can even set up a windmill and well to provide a local watering hole for people and animals. The size of the area we want is not very large."

"The army has agreed to gravel a road from Gordha all the way to Sértroba if the facility is built," added Rudhisuru. "We have a problem with wastes in ɛndraidha as well, because we have several factories. The crown will support this effort fully."

"Who is building this 'facility' then?" asked Patékwu.

"Mɛlwika businesses, mainly Miller Motors," replied Thornton. "It will start as a private business."

“I see.” Patékwu said nothing more for a moment; he had no idea what to make of such a bold and puzzling request.

“We will pay for the land, of course,” added Thornton. “We do not intend to settle people there; the opposite, we want it to remain a remote and unsettled place. That is why the tribal border lands are perfect. And we are willing to train Krésonɛ to run it, so the regular annual expenses come to the tribe as income.”

Patékwu frowned. “Ten thousand,” he said. That was close to the amount that had been paid for an entire township, which was a lot more land than a small square of desert.

“We are willing to pay ten thousand.” Thornton didn’t add that he was not authorized to go any higher.

“You must want the land very badly, then.”

“I would not say that, Lord. There are other places around this world we could use. But land is sacred and we do not defile it this way lightly.”

“Why defile any of it at all?”

“Some would say that building any village defiles the land, for it cuts the trees and displaces the animals, converting a beautiful spot into something different. But we must use this world. When we do, it is not the same. A factory is like the human body; it consumes things and produces waste, and then the waste must go somewhere. It can take nature a very long time to convert that waste into something useful and beautiful, and we must act responsibly about it.”

“I see.” Patékwu gestured to a servant. “Let us have some tea or coffee, sit together, and discuss this carefully and honestly.”

“Thank you, Lord.” Patékwu waved at some pillows and they sat. He sat next to them a moment later when the refreshments arrived and he served them personally. “I still find it difficult to fathom this request,” he said. “One does not normally have someone come to you and ask to purchase a piece of land to put poisonous things on it. It makes me wonder what else you would use the land for.”

“What else?” asked Thornton.

“Why should the army not use these poisonous things as weapons? Perhaps the army wishes to establish a secret place for making weapons.”

“I see,” said Thornton. “The waste will arrive here in sealed metal drums. Inside the drums will be solids; we will take the wastes and mix them with lime, ash, sawdust, or some other substance so that they will be hard and dry, so they can’t leak and flow. Usually, they will not be strong poisons, like arsenic. If a man smeared the substance on his skin, he might get sick or he might not; and if he has a child afterward the child might die because the man’s seed would be poisoned. Saladhuba will have a tall metal fence all the way around it, and we want to hire Krésonɛ men to help build it. Every day or two a truck will arrive loaded with drums and men wearing gloves and protective clothing will roll the drums off the truck to a place they can stand. Then the truck will drive out and the gate will be locked. That’s all the facility will have; drums standing in rows on the floor of Saladhuba. Nothing more.”

“How many jobs are we talking about?”

“I can only estimate it. One position for a man to stay at the facility all day, every day, to watch it and keep a set of keys. Probably four or five men will be needed to help unload the truck. At first they will work two or three times a week, but it may increase.”

“And what happens if a drum leaks?”

“We will need to inspect the facility once a week. If a drum leaks, we will place it inside another, larger drum. We’ll soak up any leakage with sawdust and use a steam shovel to put the contaminated sawdust in another drum.”

“Lots of drums!”

“Indeed, lots of drums.”

Patékwu thought more, shaking his head. “I can understand the argument that we should do this for money and jobs. This provides both, too. But storing poisons . . . why, Honored Dhoru, should we ever do such a thing?”

“That is an excellent question, Lord. And I think there is one answer, a spiritual answer. Every tribe, every village, every city on this world has a contribution or two or three they can make to the common good. They make those contributions to the common good for several reasons. One is monetary compensation, and that is a good reason, because we all need to live. But ideally, we all should make our contributions to the common good for another reason: our love of humanity and our desire to serve others. The Krésonɛ have a perfect climate and a perfect location to provide this service to everyone. You have antelope and winter vegetables, so you provide people with food; a service and an income. Saladhuba Waste Facility is the same; it is an essential service and an income. We serve each other and we gain a way to support our families.”

Patékwu looked at Thornton closely for a moment, digesting his response. “I have never heard an argument made that way before. And you are quite right; these are the reasons Esto would approve. I did not think anyone could give me a convincing answer, Honored Dhoru, but you have. I was prepared to hear the Colonel tell me we had to do

this because Her Majesty would take the land from us anyway. Coercion is usually what is used against us. But if this facility can be established on the basis of service and support, Honored Dhoru, we will do it. The service, however, must include service to the land as well. We do not want poisons flowing across our land; this facility must contain the poisons."

"We do not want the poisons to get free either."

"Perhaps, then, the facility should come under our direct control, and your people must train us so we can run it. If we are to do this as a service, we must have control."

That startled Thornton. "Very well, Lord, I think that is a logical position to take. I'll take that to Mɛlwika."

"And they will accept?"

"I think so. We need to figure out how to balance costs; if they get too high, the facility will not be used. And a service approach means that the waste facility does not exist to make a huge profit. To make a reasonable living, yes."

"I think we are in agreement, then. Let us write something down and go visit Saladhuba."

Reread and edited, 6/6/13, 8/18/17, 11/20/24

296.

Water

Jordan managed to sleep a little late. Ten days in Lɛwéspadéma had utterly exhausted him, and he was already thinking how he could postpone the next stop after they left in another two days. The entire team was worn out and beginning to argue; they needed at least one day, preferably two, in Mɛddwoglubas, sleeping and praying at the Temple. He awoke thinking how he had to call Modolubu about the matter and see what the Assembly's secretary could arrange.

He stumbled out of the sleeping area to the classroom they were using as a common area. He checked the clock: 9:30 a.m. Not bad, he had finally managed almost eight hours. Everyone else was up and out except for Khwanu, who was washing in the bathroom; his medical skills had been in high demand, especially in Dhudrakaita. Jordan had almost two and a half hours before he had to be in Triséra to give a class on accounting; when he had taken the boring subject in high school, with his grandfather's assistance, he had hated it, but he now found himself an expert in a badly needed subject. He hoped Mitrukaru or Tomasu would remember to come and give him a ride.

He ate leftover bread and fruit and put the water pot on the sterno—really a very big candle—to have tea. Khwanu came out of the bathroom and they talked quickly and they exchanged news about the events of the previous evening; Khwanu had been in Dhudrakaita for the evening while Jordan had been in Triséra. Jordan took notes; there was a lot of news to record and pass on to Modolubu. Jordan had heard from Budhéstu at

1 a.m. about the previous evening in Lɛwéspadéma, but he hadn't yet heard from Tomasu about developments in Kadakwas.

Jordan took his cup of tea to the bathroom with him, brushed his teeth, trimmed his tentative beard, took a sponge bath with cold water—they missed hot water, but at least they had a flush toilet with running water—changed clothes, then came back out. Khwanu was busy examining a man with a severe toothache in the next classroom. Jordan ate the last chunk of bread and began mentally organizing his talking points with Modolubu—who wanted to know quite precisely what they did every day—when the front door of the school banged open and shut. He looked up and a moment later a young man appeared in the doorway, three-string and bedroll slung across his back.

"Jordanu, Alláh-u-Abhá."

"Lɛdhu, Alláh-u-Abhá. What are you doing here?" Jordan tried not to look upset. Lɛdhu was in his late twenties and as such was older than the other youth. He was a Mɛlwika Bahá'í who had completed a triyɛri at the Mɛlwika Genadɛma one year earlier and had been teaching elementary school in the city. He was eccentric in many ways.

"I'm here to join you. The stories at Feast about your youth team were incredibly inspiring; absolutely heroic! I have a free summer and I want to help, so I hopped on a bus earlier today, and here I am."

"Oh. Wow. Lɛdhu, this is a surprise. We already have fourteen members and it's getting pretty big."

"Well, I hope you have room for another. I have a year of elementary school teaching experience and I've taught three adult education classes, so I think I should be able to make a useful contribution. I'm not here to take over or anything."

“Okay. Well, you are here. The men are staying here, the women in Kadakwas. Let me show you a place where you can put your stuff. I don’t have anything for you to do now, but I’m going to Triséra in a little while and I’m sure you can find something there. But it’s too late to start new classes; we’re leaving in two days. Can you teach accounting?”

“No, I don’t know a bit about it. But I can sing and play, and I guess you need that at night.”

“We do.” He wondered how good Lɛdhu’s voice was, but couldn’t worry about that now. “And we need someone to clean the bathroom; we clean it every day, and the new person should do that.”

“Clean the bathroom?” That startled him.

“Yes; I’m sure you know how to do that. Let’s go, I’ll get you the stuff.” He led Lɛdhu to the sleeping classroom, disguising a slight smile on his face. If Lɛdhu wanted to stay, he had to show his dedication. Jordan showed him the classroom, then got him the cleaning supplies. Then he picked up the telephone and rang the Lɛwéspadéma operator. It took a minute for the storekeeper to pick up.

“How may I help you?”

“This is Jordanu of the Bahá'í youth group. Could you connect me to Mɛddwoglubas 575, please?”

“Indeed.” There was a long pause while the operator connected to the Mɛddwoglubas operator and asked for 575, then wrote down the starting time of the call.

“Khélo?” said Modolubu in his office.

“Alláh-u-Abhá Modolubu, this is Jordanu. How are you today?”

"Quite well, and how are all of you doing? What's the news?"

Jordan pulled out his notes. "Quite good. Yesterday we offered sections of Ruhi Book 1 eight times in Dhudrakaita, twice in Kadakwas, once in Triséra, and once in Lɛwéspadéma, and we continued the Book 4 intensives at Dhudrakaita and Lɛwéspadéma. We plan to conduct Book 4 intensives at Triséra and Kadakwas starting today, so that we can finish Book 1 and Book 4 in all four villages before we leave. We have identified several people fairly capable of teaching the books, so after we leave, the classes should continue. The teacher at Dhudrakaita will be able to use the 'Book Zero' materials to teach adult literacy, so can you get them to him?"

"Yes, I'll ship them to you at the Lɛwéspadéma Post Office today; fifty copies."

"That'll be great. I think we can get someone in Triséra to use some of them; I'll let you know how many go to each place. Last night we had six declarations at Kadakwas and three at Triséra, bringing the totals to nine and five, respectively, and a lot of people seem to be on the verge. It's absolutely exhausting; we can't answer the questions fast enough. Budhéstu conducted classes on development at Kadakwas and Dhudrakaita. Khwanu did health interventions in three villages—he didn't get to Dhudrakaita—and gave a health class here in Lɛwéspadéma. Tomasu finished the plumbing at the Kadakwas school and is going to Dhudrakaita to set up something using the brook near the village and their abundant bamboo. Mitrukaru and Primanu spent time in the field for all three Véspa villages and Primanu conducted a class about raising sugar cane, jute, acacia, and indigo."

"What did you say before indigo?" asked Modobéru, who was taking notes as well.

“Acacia; a new cash crop in demand for making gum arabic. We had cooking classes in all three Véspa villages, tried a knitting class in Dhudrakaita but found no interest, and held the last sewing machine classes in Kadakwas; today they start sewing classes in Triséra instead. We can’t get to Dhudrakaita with the sewing machines; no time. But they’re too poor to buy any anyway.”

“I think we can get one donated to Dhudrakaita and Triséra. I asked yesterday. Did you talk to Triséra and Kadakwas about the new, lower prices for village clocks?”

“Yes. It’s too expensive for Triséra right now. Kadakwas’s interested because they think they can get a subsidy from Mitru transportation because the bell would help get the bus started up Route 51 on time. Tomasu’s calling Mitru about that and thinks he can get a hundred dhanay out of his uncle for the purpose.”

Modolubu chuckled. “Clever. I think I’ve written everything down. What else? Any hope of getting Ruhi Book 2 covered in Dhudrakaita?”

“No, but the youth from Mɛddwoglubas who joined us—Gɛlayu in particular—thinks they can get back weekly to run a course.”

“I’m working on transportation for that. We have a Bahá'í in town who is thinking of starting a taxi service; Mɛddwoglubas is rather small for that, but if the Faith pays him to shuttle teachers around, maybe it’ll work out. We may be able to buy a bike, too; one could take the bus from here to Triséra and bike the rest of the way.”

“That would help a lot. Consolidation is essential after we leave.”

“We’ll do our best. What else?”

Jordan looked out the hallway. Lɛdhu was still in the bathroom. “We had a Bahá'í show up by bus this morning from Mɛlwika named Lɛdhu to join the group. Most of us know him; he’s an elementary school teacher. He’s a bit . . . strange. So I’m worried.”

There was a pause. “Let me know whether it works out alright, or whether you need help. Bring him down to the temple for prayers if you need me to talk to him.”

“That’s a good idea. Any news about the bus?”

“I’m pretty sure we’ll have a bus all of Primdiu to bring people from all four places to the temple to pray. We’ll shuttle back and forth all day. It’ll be exciting to see what happens. Many Bahá'ís here in town want to go up to the temple and meet the new Bahá'ís. We’ll have tea, bread, and cheese for them, but they should bring food if they want to eat a real meal.”

“Great, that will help a lot as well. I think that’s everything.”

“Talk to you tomorrow, then. Bye.”

“Bye.” Jordan hung up the telephone, pleased with the conversation.

He reviewed the schedule for the day and wondered when he’d get to Kadakwas and Dhudrakaita; if Mitrukaru really showed up to give him a ride, he’d have to ask for a second ride later, or take the bus if the timing was right. He pulled out his prayer book to pray, but Lɛdhu then showed up and wanted to talk, so he gave Lɛdhu a prayer book as well. That kept them busy and avoided a conversation that Jordan didn’t want to have.

As they finished, Khwanu came in, struck up a conversation, and he invited Lɛdhu to serve as his assistant, recording information and providing equipment. The two of them left as a vehicle drove up outside the school. A moment later Widubéru came in.

“Widubéru! Welcome!”

“Hail, Honored Jordanu. I was driving from Ora to Tripola and thought I’d stop by. So I went to Kadakwas and Blorakwé said, “He’s going to Triséra this morning.’ I stopped there and they said, ‘He’ll be here at noon.’ So I came here next. How goes it?”

“Pretty well. We’re giving all sorts of classes, Mitrukaru and Primanu are walking the farmer’s fields with the farmers and exchanging all sorts of ideas, and Tomasu is installing plumbing.”

“I know, I saw! Blorakwé showed me the work on the Kadakwas school’s well and bathroom. She and Gramé were busy learning how to cook a local soup while they taught how to make ice cream; I’m sorry I won’t be there for lunch. I told them they should prepare a cookbook. Then when I was in Triséra, Swadé was busy with her sewing class. I gather she tried to teach knitting and found it useless and unwanted in a tropical climate.”

“Yes, that never occurred to us!”

Widubéru chuckled. “The thickness of the yarn should have been a clue, Jordanu! But never mind. I am thrilled you are doing so many useful things. It’s a shame you can’t spend a month in each place. A week isn’t enough.”

“I think from now on we’ll do two weeks, and try to visit several villages at once.”

“Good. That’s better. And the plumbing; I am thrilled! I have been visiting villages for several years now, telling them to install water systems. They smiled, nodded politely, and did nothing; I was asking for something very complicated and they had managed without piped water for a thousand years, and the men make the decisions while the women carry the water anyway. I never thought of a series of public taps or installing

public water and toilets in schools. That's brilliant! Everyone sees how they work, how nice they are, and the village has at least one source of safe water where the children are. You have made a beginning. You deserve a medal!"

Jordan laughed. "I don't want a medal."

"Are you getting a lot of converts?"

He hesitated; he knew Widubéru's ambivalence about the Faith and his reluctance to work with local spiritual assemblies. "We have done pretty well here; Dhudrakaita has responded very positively. Really, everywhere we go, people have responded positively to service, music, and prayer."

"Good. You deserve a positive response. Do you think I could get sons of priests to do something like this? Never! This is *development*; a permanent spiritual, cultural, and material change for the better. I will praise this everywhere, even to the queen if I get the chance."

"Thank you. I've tried to call you a few times, but the telephone operators couldn't track you down; you move around a lot! We were hoping to get some small development grants. The plumbing costs our budget a lot, even when the villages have helped."

"I'm sure. Here's what I'll do, Jordanu. The villagers should pay for the pipes; I think they can afford that. They should dig the well and do the other labor aspects. Here's what I'll offer. First, the faucets; three or four per village. Second, water tanks; Mɛlita is manufacturing large ten thousand liter nickel-steel ones for irrigation systems for twenty dhanay each, and I can throw in one per village if the system is providing public water and could expand to serve houses. A ten thousand liter tank, also, will help a lot if the

village has a fire. Third, I will approach Manusunu Miller about donating one sink and toilet per village. I'll make this argument: village people can afford to buy them if they see them working and come to enjoy them. And I think it's true, so I think he can be convinced."

Jordan's eyes positively glowed. "Fantastic! Thank you, Widubéru! This will help immensely! So all we have to worry about is a pump. I think we can get Miller Motors to donate small electric motors; they've donated two already. We were able to buy windmill pumps in Tripola and jury-rig a connection to the motor."

"Really? That's clever. If the village lacks electricity, I can throw in a windmill; Mɛlita's making them for fifteen dhanay, now."

"Great; Dhudrakaita has no power line."

"Where is it, exactly?"

"Eight kilometers up a winding, muddy dirt road east of Kadakwas. I wish you would go see it, even for an hour. They have bamboo; groves and groves of it. Mitrukaru has a theory that they can use it as their natural resource. He called a friend in Mɛddoakwés who's doing research in English about uses of bamboo. We're hoping to have ideas before we leave."

"Bamboo, huh? Good idea. It's strong and light."

"Any possibility you can go there some time?"

Widubéru glanced at the clock; it was now 10:15. "Tell you what. I have almost two hours before I have to leave for Tripola. We could go there now. I could get you to Triséra by 12 noon for your course, then head south."

Jordan smiled and nodded. “Sure, that’ll work! They’re really poor; very isolated. They need people to advocate for them.”

“That’s something I try to do. Sounds like the army has to hire them to help gravel their own road.”

“They need power and a telephone, too.”

“Meanwhile, a windmill turning a pump to fill a water tank and running a truck alternator to charge a battery will help a lot, because the battery could run a two way radio. I bet a combination like that is possible. Let’s go, before we run short of time.”

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Randu pulled the bicycle off the bus with some reluctance. Fortunately, there were no Sumis on board to recognize him and see the bike; he had skipped an early bus that day because several Sumis had been waiting at the Arjdhura bus stop, waiting to get on.

He towed the bike to the Mennea household because he didn’t know how to ride it and rang the doorbell. A moment later Luktréstu ushered him to the gabrula, where Chris and Liz were waiting. Chris took the bike and looked it over. “Not a bad knock-off.”

“Knock-off?” asked Liz, startled.

“This was made in Sumilara,” replied Randu. “I’ve made some comparisons. It’s heavier; the metal parts are generally thicker. If you look at the workmanship you can see the parts were hand made rather than stamped or cut. And the tires are solid rubber, not air-filled, because they can’t make pneumatic tires.”

“Only three gears, too.”

“I was told the shifter doesn’t work so well. I haven’t tried; I don’t know how to ride a bike.”

"How much?"

"They sell for fifty-five dhanay. And even though it's more than the Mɛlwika bikes, and obviously of lower quality, they're selling. I was told the manufactory in Anarbala was turning out three a week; almost two hundred a year."

"That proves what I have been saying to Miller; that there's a lot more demand for bikes than they can fill and they need to crank up bike production. Sumilara may be making more than Mɛlwika! A factory that produces a thousand a year could probably sell them for thirty dhanay. I bet we could sell five thousand a year at twenty-five dhanay."

"But there's no money for investment in the factory."

"Not now." Chris thought for a moment. "I'd estimate a factory to make a thousand a year would cost fifty thousand. Maybe two hundred thousand to make five thousand. We could spend fifty thousand in a year or so, if Miller took bikes more seriously."

"So, what do we do now?" asked Randu.

"I don't know. He'll be absolutely furious about this and will want to sue them."

"I guess this has been a hard time for Miller Motors."

"It has, but we've turned a corner; the finances are getting straightened out, we've all learned a few lessons about huge projects, and production bottlenecks are gradually getting fixed. The articles in *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* have exaggerated the situation. Demand for vehicles is strong enough once the economy picks up. This has been a really bad year because of the decline in crop prices and the relative lack of construction because there was no money left for it after building the new vehicle manufacturing facility. But John is

very sensitive about being cheated, right now, because of experiences we had during the construction."

"I brought this to you, not to him, because I was hoping we could arrange some sort of compromise. I am very impressed with this bike as an example of workmanship; it was made by blacksmiths! I'd rather see Anarbala get a license and the machinery to make bikes properly. Two hundred bikes per year may equal the island's demand. Let Sumis finance the plant and buy the products."

"That would be fine with me. Governor Wɛranolubu's working on getting a bike factory built somewhere in the lower valley; probably at Ornakwés. But let there be two factories. There's enough demand."

"Will the army allow a bike factory on Sumilara?" asked Liz.

"I don't think they can stop it, now that the Prince has married a Sumi wife and Governor Modobéru has the palace's confidence," replied Randu.

Chris nodded. "Well, let's go find John and show him the bike."

He and Randu headed across the courtyard and into Miller's house. John was in his office. He examined the bike carefully, heard about its manufacture and price, and shook his head. "This has to be stopped! We can't have people copying everything we produce!"

"I wonder whether the courts will agree," said Chris. "It's not clear to me that there is a law against it. There *should* be, but there isn't."

"Wérgéndu's pretty good."

"I agree, but he won't invent law."

"Chris, what else can I do?"

"Well, I've been telling you that demand for bikes far exceeds supply, as Home Improvement's inventory has repeatedly proved."

"Wɛranolubu's working on opening a big factory in a year or so to solve that."

"Maybe demand's adequate for two factories."

"They won't get the chance if I sue them!"

"Why not give them a license and help them improve the product? They'll pay you a royalty."

"You and your generosity!"

"Hey, people are beginning to think *you're* a generous man, John. And considering how much we have, why shouldn't we be generous? Mɛlwika can't make every manufactured item in the world and we can't own all the factories; there will be a revolt. We have to encourage innovation and spread out the manufacturing."

"But what about encouraging *theft*?"

"This is successful theft only as long as there's a shortage of bikes," said Randu. "Look at the bike; it's made by hand by blacksmiths. It's heavier, it's not as good, and it's more expensive. They can sell it only if there's a shortage. Imagine what these clever workmen could do with access to metal cutting machines. The island can afford them, too; it won't cost you anything."

John looked at Chris. "Now I see why he went to you, first. So, what do you suggest we do about the theft?"

"Build a fine of sorts into the licensing fee."

John paused to think about that. “Tell you what. We’ll ask the army and the Governor. Either they shut the place down or they allow a license and machinery. But I’m going to want a generous fee and sales will have to be limited to Sumilara.”

“We can try that argument,” replied Randu. “I think there’s a good chance it’ll work.”

Reread and edited 6/6/13, 8/18/17, 11/20/24

297.

Amos's Chart

Just a month—five Eryan weeks—and three days after Jordan's graduation, the Réjé left Mɛddoakwés for her summer trip to the western shore, her first stop being Bɛllɛdha. The next day Chris, Liz, Thornton, and Amos followed in her steps and headed for the central city of Lɛpawsakɛla—North Shore—Province. They were met by Lébé, May, and the children, who had been in Pértatranisér for the last four weeks.

"It's so good to see you!" said Thornton, giving Lébé a strong hug, then a passionate kiss. "This was not a very practical arrangement."

"We've missed you. But you finished the various eastern shore field trips you had promised to do, and May and I got the translation of *The Advent of Divine Justice* finished."

Thornton kissed her again, then turned to the kids. Jalalu, 9, just wanted a quick hug from his dad; he was already trying to be a good, stoic Eryan man. Kalé, 7, was glad to hug and kiss her dad, as was Jonkrisu, who was nearly 4. "I've missed you all!" Thornton said several times.

"Dad, are we staying here?" asked Jalalu. He sounded disappointed.

"Yes, dear, and we're lucky to get a classroom here in the génadɛma. The Bɛllɛdha Palace Hotel is totally full with Her Majesty's staff, and so is the palace. The High School is lodging some of the local lords."

"At least we have a toilet," added Lébé.

"But no bath," Jalalu replied.

"We can wash in the bathroom with hot water from the sink, or we can go to the city's bath."

Just then, Chris popped his head in. "Liz and I are on our way to Central Square. If you want to see Her Majesty dedicate the new marketplace, you'll need to leave in a few minutes."

"Okay. I'm sorry we were late; it's hard to get out of the house with kids before dawn, and then we got stuck in traffic here."

"That's okay. We got confused by the new traffic pattern, too." Then Chris smiled and headed back to the room where he and Liz were staying.

"We can finish unpacking later," said Thornton. "Who needs to use the bathroom?"

"Not me!" said Jalalu and Kalé simultaneously.

"I'm taking Jonkrisu to the bathroom," said Thornton. "We'll lock anything valuable in the cars." He picked up the little boy and they headed to the men's room. When they came back out, everyone was ready to walk. "So tell me about *The Advent of Divine Justice,*" he asked, as they headed for the door.

"An amazing book. I never understood it in English; my English was way too limited. But with this new translation into Eryan, we have captured the meaning pretty well. The section on a chaste and holy life is really incredible . . . I think about it over and over and wonder how to live with such purity of motive and such complete devotion to serving others."

"I'll have to read it in translation. My English stopped developing twelve years ago, except for scientific terms. I remember reading the book as a teenager and being

baffled, but I got a lot out of it when I concentrated on specific passages I could understand."

"May says Shoghi Effendi was one the greatest geniuses of the twentieth century, in addition to his divine inspiration."

"I'm sure that's true. How was your class at Pértatranisér Women's Géndha?"

"I think the students are enjoying it; we'll know after final exams next week! How was your second trip to Saladhuba?"

"It went fine. The foreman of the work is getting along well with the ten Krésonɛ we've hired. They're fencing Saladhuba—almost two kilometers of fencing—which will take most of the summer. Meanwhile, another team has started digging up the goopy mess that has accumulated in the industrial waste settling pond. Drums will start to go to Saladhuba next week. We figure with ten men there most of the time, the place is fairly safe already."

"Let's hope so. It was quite an achievement to convince the chief."

"Thank you, the spiritual argument worked. The Tutanɛ are a very spiritual people. Now we need to prove worthy of their trust." He opened the door and they all stepped into the bright sunlight. Jonkrisu was lagging behind so Thornton scooped up his little son and put him on his shoulders.

"Do you have to go to the Polar Basin?" asked Lébé.

He nodded. "I've got to help with the annual mastodon count, then I promised to go to Khɛrmdhuna to map the tar deposits further and give some Bahá'í classes."

"May tells me they're feeling a bit threatened by Jordan's teaching! They may go from one third of all Bahá'ís to only a quarter!"

Thornton chuckled. “No one should be upset by success. I’ll tell them that, if I hear anything else! They have quite a nice high school, but it has required a lot of sacrifice, and the economic situation hasn’t improved much. They’re in a rough place. And the Réjé said she didn’t have time to visit.”

“I heard about that. You’ll enjoy Pértatraisér; it has expanded and improved a lot over the last year. It has almost five thousand people now, the génadɛma is expanding, Amos’s tropical forest plantation is really flourishing, there are now seven factories . . . the southern half of Luktrudéma is now farmed, but the people live in Pértatranisér!”

“Amos has been raving about the place all month. He can’t wait to get home.”

“Well, we can’t wait for you to join us.” Lébé put her arm inside his and against his back. “And I’ve been taking those new birth control pills Lua’s prescribing.”

“Oh? That’s inviting information.”

“I thought you’d say that.” She smiled. “I think I like them. May is very happy; they’ve helped her with women’s troubles. We’ve started talking to Kɛkanu and Dɛrɛsé about how to talk about birth control on *The World Table*.”

“You mean, make it public knowledge?”

Lébé nodded. “It’ll be pretty shocking. Actually, just *talking* about it will be shocking; there are Eryan words that men literally don’t even know, which one would need to use. But we have to say something, because every month the circle of women who know gets bigger. Unofficially, it even includes the Queen, who has women’s troubles. The word will leak eventually, otherwise.”

“Interesting. I think I may want to be in Tutanɛ lands when that comes out!”

“It won’t be *that* shocking!”

Thornton nodded.

They had to slow down to push through the thickening crowd. All of the north shore, it seemed, had come; the place was incredibly crowded. They finally stopped at a spot where they could see the Queen on a platform at the entrance to Central Square. "When I look at Bɛllɛdha today, I see a city totally transformed," she was saying. "It is a clean city, a well-built city, an efficient city, and, increasingly, a wealthy city. The new Central Square will serve as your symbol of the modern era of progress we have entered into. Its businesses are as good as any you will find in the world's other great cities. It complements the industrial park Lord Déolu has just opened south of the city walls, where more and more wealth will be created as this region's contributions to the realm steadily grow. The businesses here, the industrial park there, and the two high schools built or planned—one to the east of the walls, the other to the west—are your principal tools for the advancement of the North Shore. In your efforts, the palace is fully behind you. Today I am announcing plans for a royal palace in Bɛllɛdha, something I have never had here before, and a new royal mint building." She paused for the vigorous applause. "I need a palace here because this is a city I want to visit more often, and because our government now needs to have officials living in every city. The palace will include a new post office for the city and province. Our commitment to Bɛllɛdha is strong and permanent." She paused for another burst of applause. Then she gestured Lord Déolu onto the stage with her. Together, they picked up a giant pair of scissors and sliced through the opening ribbon.

The crowd surged forward into Central Square and the new buildings surrounding it. Most seemed to be heading for the Home Improvement store—an absolute

impossibility because of its small size. As Thornton and family moved forward in the crowd, they approached the platform where the queen had spoken. She was still there, occasionally speaking to members of the crowd and chatting with Lord Déolu, Chris, Glosé, and Sarédatu. The last two were the owners of the Home Improvement stores; Glosé was one of John Miller's daughters.

"Well, we won't run out of stock this time," Sarédatu was saying. "We have ten trucks loaded with inventory waiting, and we have a loading dock in the back where we can constantly bring more items in. We may sell more than we did in Mɛlita last year."

"That much?" Chris said. He spotted Thornton and Amos and their families in the crowd and waved them up to the platform.

"It's quite possible. We've closed the Mɛlita store entirely for the next two days and moved the staff here! Mɛlita is really quiet right now, with all the North Shore farmers here instead."

"You have a remarkable chain of stores, and my people are very appreciative of them," said the Queen. "I was very impressed by the tour you gave me of the Mɛddoakwés store." She turned to Chris. "And I understand, Lord Kristobéru, that Mɛlita tax money helped to finance this new marketplace."

"Indeed, Your Majesty, last year I made a pledge to Lord Déolu when he saw so many North Shore residents shopping in the Mɛlita stores. But it is not charity; I own a share of the marketplace until the others buy me out, and I get some of the profits."

"I understand. What, Lord, do you think of the argument that if people live in one place and farm in another, the tax collection should be split between the two places?"

“Your Majesty, I think it is only fair to make an arrangement of that sort, but I don’t know what fraction would be right. It might be different from place to place. North Shore farmers in Mɛlita bring their children with them in the winter, so the city must educate them. When they return to the North Shore it is summer and the schools are closed anyway. On the other hand, workers living outside Mɛlwika and taking the bus to the city every day to work pay taxes to Mɛlwika but their children are educated elsewhere.”

The Queen was not pleased that Chris had made the issue complicated. “You agree, then, that there is a problem.”

“Indeed, Your Majesty.”

“I understand that a simple solution may not always be fair, and a fair solution may be complicated, but life and ruling often require the simple over the complicated.”

“Indeed, Your Majesty.”

She turned to Déolu. “Lord, today is your day. I congratulate you for a great success. This city has finally turned its back on the terrible events of eight years ago. I look forward to receiving the report of the deliberations of the provincial assembly tonight and meeting with the assembly tomorrow.”

“Thank you, Your Majesty.” They all bowed, then she turned and departed from the platform with her retinue.

Déolu turned to Chris with a smile. “Sounds like I may be getting some Mɛlita tax revenues.”

“We’ll see,” replied Chris, less enthusiastically. “Sounds like the Houses of Commons and Lords may take up the matter this fall.” He looked at the surging crowd,

which had now filled the square and had nowhere else to go. “I guess we better not go in there.”

“Come in the back door,” said Sarédatu, pointing to a door leading into Home Improvement nearby. “It’s a fire exit, but it’s unlocked so Glosé and I can go back in! We have to get into the store and help out, but I’ll be glad to invite all of you in for a tour.”

Liz looked through the store’s big glass windows at the crowd inside. “I think this is not the time for us to get a tour.”

“Come to the palace; we have business anyway,” said Déolu to Chris and Amos, and they both nodded.

“Then the rest of us will walk around the city a bit, then head back to the génadɛma,” suggested Liz. Lébé, Thornton, and May nodded.

“I want ice cream!” said ten year old Skandé, May and Amos’s daughter and the oldest child present.

“Not in there!” replied May, pointing to the square. “But we can walk out the west gate to the festival area, which won’t be so crowded right now, and get ice cream.”

That was clearly popular to the five kids, so the entire party walked west. A crowd was heading to the less crowded festival grounds as well. When they reached the palace, Déolu, Chris, and Amos went inside. Déolu led them to his office. “Quite a different situation from when you were here last year, eh?” said Déolu.

“The North Shore is blossoming. Even without taxes from the Mɛlita area, farm income is up, so people are spending more. The number of buses being used here have doubled in the last year; people are traveling around more. Mɛlita farm equipment is going back and forth, so farms are more mechanized up here and have expanded.

Klɛnvika has aimed to double maple sugar production because demand has grown so much. And people have gone from spending maybe fifty dhanay a year, total, and living on the produce of their farm, to spending two or three hundred dhanay a year, mostly in Bɛllɛdha."

"Electrical demand has gone way up," said Amos. "We've had to add a heavy electrical line from the city southeast to Dhudhuba, and we'll add a line westward next year. We're even thinking about running a line northward over the mountains from Mɛlwika. This place is growing."

"As fast as other regions?" asked Déolu.

"I don't think so," replied Amos. "I've been in Mɛlwika for the last month and spent much of that time with Aryéstu. We've been trying to convert the seven year development plan into concrete details; factories that need to open, items that must be made, electrical lines that need to be laid. Aryéstu has access, confidentially, to all tax data. I remember seeing that the North Shore had grown a lot over the last year, but so has the South Shore and Véspa. Véspa's been recovering from its troubles and expanding its industrial base; the South Shore has expanded industrially and they have a lot more farmland."

"And it's even in their province. We need more taxation." He looked at Chris.

"I think we're in the position to invest more in industry," replied Chris. "That's why Amos and I wanted to talk to you. You get the first peek at the result of Amos's work."

"Really? What is it?"

“I’ll show you,” replied Amos, who had been carrying a leather case with papers in it. He opened the case and pulled out an eighty-page document printed by computer. “You can keep this copy; we will make it available to anyone who wants one, since it was printed by our computer. This is the important part.” Amos turned to a seventy-page chart. The first page had twenty items listed in the first column. “This is the most thorough analysis of what the current economy consists of and where it has to go that anyone has ever made. You see this item, ‘roofing tiles’? Here’s the current demand in square meters, our estimate of the number of places where they are made, a note whether the production is traditional or machine-aided, the cost per square meter, the total annual expenditure on them, and the number of workers employed making them—this is ‘full time equivalents’ because roofing tiles are often made locally, part time. Then over here we have the same categories for seven years from now, with additional columns for investment necessary to build machines to speed up the process. Roofing tiles can be made more cheaply, as you see in the cost per square meter; we think the price could decline thirty percent.”

“Wow, even Esto doesn’t have this much data! How many items?”

“The chart has 4,438 items. There are 1,500 alone for making steam vehicles. You can see the rest are pretty thorough; we don’t just have ‘hunting knives,’ but ‘hunting knife handles’ because they require a different process. Even the wooden handles for axes, hoes, and rakes have their own columns.”

Déolu shook his head. “This is absolutely incredible! So, we can use this to figure out what we can add to our industrial park?”

“And let Aryéstu know; he has a staff who will keep records and let everyone know what’s been ‘assigned’ and what is available. This is not a project of the palace, though they know about it. If there are disputes, they may help resolve them. Some things are best made in one place in the entire kingdom, like light bulbs, but others can or should be made in many places, like milk and cheese. We figure as many as a thousand families will make their living with milk and milk products.”

“That many!”

“Well, it may be almost that many now, but right now it’s spread out; someone has two cows and swaps milk for eggs with a neighbor who has chickens. But as the cities grow, milk and eggs will have to be raised, collected, brought to the cities, and sold. Right now, maybe two thirds of the milk and eggs are not taxable because no money is exchanged, but in seven years that percentage will drop somewhat.”

“That’ll get the attention of the palace!”

“I’m sure.” Amos turned to the last page. “According to tax records, the world’s gross domestic product last year was eighty million dhanay, but we think it was over ninety. An eighth of the economy is still conducted by barter. The real amount is probably a lot more, actually, but we’re not able to estimate it yet. This spreadsheet projects a gross domestic product of 195 million in seven years. It’s a rough guess; some of these numbers may be way too low or way too high. We’re predicting a million dhanay of sales of wine and of beer; together, that’s one percent of the economy!”

“People do love to drink, and it’s easier to buy now than ever before.”

“So that’s another implication of this chart: maybe there should be taxes on beer and wine. We figure that twelve years ago, beer and wine sales together were maybe

100,000 dhanay, and a lot of that was locally made. Now there are two breweries and everyone's planting vines; a large portion of the Néfa basin has gone from wheat to grapes in just four years."

"Amazing." Déolu flipped through the pages and skimmed. "Olive oil sales double to a million dhanay; that won't help us. But charcoal and timber sales are growing a lot . . . even demand for firewood is going up."

"You have a lot of offshore timber to clear and you already have a combined cement and gas plant that uses twenty tonnes of wood per day. You should send someone to offer to supply timber to Nuarjora; I bet you could harvest offshore timber and float it down pretty cheaply. The folks in Pɛnkakwés will start to do the same. Ornakwés will have an industrial park; Roktɛkɛstɛr has started planning it. So there will probably be a gas pipeline laid to connect it to Nuarjora and Ɛjnopéla, and a gas plant will be established at the Nuarjora cement plant. North Shore timber could end up as gas in the Arjakwés Valley. The last ten pages are full of recommendations like that."

"What do you recommend?"

"I have a few informal ones." He flipped through the pages. "Shoes and boots: their manufacture can be much more efficient, we already have the machinery, they're cheap to transport, and we figure eleven hundred men and women could be employed to make them worldwide, but so far only two hundred are. Make shoes here; the Basin can provide plenty of leather. Open a tannery somewhere, too, maybe in Yujdwoakwés. Expand glove making; Bɛllɛdha gloves are very popular already. Hat making has not been automated at all; that's an area in which you can innovate. Demand for leatherwork will triple, some of it can be mechanized using heavier sewing machines, and you can

compete against the Tutanɛ because they have been reluctant to switch to sewing machines. No one is yet making food products from corn or potatoes for wider sale and you could do both of those things. You should open a brewery and raise more malt. There are a lot of pine trees east of here and you should expand pitch production for use in paints. Look at fish, chicken, turkey, and red meat production; they're all going up. Bɛllɛdha should establish a fishing fleet. Those are obvious things. I wouldn't go into pasta manufacturing because even though the jobs may expand from twenty to five hundred, you don't have the local wheat, and we're already investing in plants in the lower Arjakwés and Rudhisér. Khɛrmdhuna is planning a major expansion in exports of ice, woolens, and tar. The rest of the polar basin needs to expand dairy, wool, red meat tanning, and ivory."

"And what about the villages east and west of here?"

"They have agriculture, maple, some timber production, and pitch. Someone should go to Mɛlwika and see how Ekwɛru raises chickens and establish that industry in one of the nearby villages; every province needs it. And all the villages near here can get to Bɛllɛdha factory jobs by bus."

"I see." Déolu was scribbling as fast as he could on the back of the report's last page. "And what about the machinery to mechanize production of all these things?"

"The Engineering School has to expand to at least 100 staff, able to support fifteen product creation teams," said Amos. "Every province will need at least one engineering team at their génadɛma."

"I'll invest in chickens, a tannery, a slaughterhouse, pine pitch, fishing, charcoal, packaged corn and potato products . . . they all interest me," said Chris. "It'll work best if

the village or city, and local merchants or lords are involved, and if we can get development bank funds."

"Of course." Déolu was still scribbling as fast as he could with his right hand while his left hand shook from the excitement.

"I think I can persuade Ekwɛru himself to invest in the chicken and egg facility," continued Chris. "He had to move out of Mɛlwika itself when demand got too large for his building. His chickens now live in a huge chicken house three kilometers south of the city on a farm where he raises corn for them. He has a facility in Mɛlita as well and I bet he sells half this world's eggs. But eggs don't transport well on our bumpy roads and chicken manure has to be disposed of. I bet he'll be willing to partner with someone up here and start a chain, rather like the Home Improvement stores."

"Fine with me."

"There's only one problem, Déolu."

The Duke looked up from his pencil. "What?"

"If you establish an industrial park full of factories here in Bɛllɛdha with workers commuting here by bus every morning, the villages around here will want a share of the tax revenue."

Déolu looked at Chris, then tipped his head back and laughed. "You got me that time, Lord!"

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Soru watched the intercity bus pull out of Lɛwéspadéma's main square with considerable reluctance. He didn't feel altogether comfortable in the unfamiliar village, and the stares

he received indicated that everyone knew he was a stranger. Rather than stand, he turned and headed for a road that paralleled the stream but ran upriver.

It was slow going; the area had received heavy rainfall much of the last month and the street was a sea of mud, with only the barest traces of gravel. His shoes were soon muddy. He walked about two hundred meters until he reached a team that was installing pipes to a big metal tank next to a newly dug well. They stared at him, then one man shouted, "Are you lost? Can we help you, stranger?"

"Yes, I think I may be lost. I am looking for Estoivékhu the shoe maker, his wife Galɛsé, and their blind son, Estoiluku."

"You're definitely lost, then. You walked *west* from the main square; you should have walked *east,* downstream."

"I think the number over their door is 125E," added another man, and he pointed to the nearest house. Over the door was "205W."

"That was another project started by the Bahá'í visitors; they organized the local youth, measured all the houses on the street in meters from Route 2, and painted wooden signs. Most people put them up," said the first man. "Are you a Bahá'í, by any chance?"

"I am. I am also an expert on helping the deaf and blind."

"Alláh-u-Abhá, then, and welcome to Lɛwéspadéma."

Soru was pleased that he had met a Bahá'í. "Alláh-u-Abhá, and thank you for your help."

"You're welcome. This is a Bahá'í-sponsored service project; providing safe water for this neighborhood! The secretary of our Assembly and his wife live at 110 West Second Street. There are no street signs yet, but the first street is the one next to the river,

second is the next one farther away, etc. Odd numbers are on the north side, the side closer to the river; even are on the south side."

"Very simple. Sounds like a stranger can now get around this entire village easily." He waved goodbye and turned around, feeling less like a stranger.

Soru walked back to the main square, noted second street paralleling first issuing to the east and west from the southern side of the square, hoped he still wanted First Street—they had never said—crossed Route 2. and headed east. When he came to 125 he momentarily worried whether he had remembered the number right, but then he saw an open door nearby and could see people working on shoes together inside. The glance was enough for him to see that the factory was at least partially modern; the dozen workers were seated on both sides of a long table. Some worked in front of big machines that quickly and precisely cut leather using pedal power to spin a small cutting blade. Others worked large leather sewing machines for assembling leather pieces. No doubt they were turning out standard sizes; probably fifteen or twenty shoes a day, mostly for local use.

This was the right house, then. He walked to its front door and knocked. A moment later, a servant opened it.

"Hail, Honored. I am Soru Dénujénésɛ, an expert in the care of the deaf and blind, and I would like to call on the parents of Estoiluku to see whether I may be of service."

The servant stood a split second, then said, "Come in, Honored! They have heard of you from your niece and would be very, very pleased to meet you!"

"Thank you, I hope I can be of help."

The servant led him to a sitting room close to the front door and hurried into the private part of the house. In a very short time a woman came to greet him, accompanied

by the blind boy. “Soru Dénujénésɛ, I am Galɛsé, wife of Estoivékhu, and this is Estoiluku. We are honored and very happy that you have come to visit.”

“I apologize I offered you no advance warning, but I was uncertain how to address a letter and did not know whether you had a phone.”

“Yes, I can read a little, and my husband—the son of a lord of one of Véspa’s drowned villages—can read fairly well. We also have a telephone; Lɛwéspadéma 108.” It sounded like a big number, but telephone numbers started at 101, so the village might have only 8 phones.

“Excellent, I’ll remember that next time.” He looked at Estoiluku, then extended a hand toward the boy. The boy didn’t respond by raising his hand—he was too blind even to see fuzzy shapes—so Soru said, “Let me shake your right hand, Estoiluku, and greet you properly.” He touched the boy’s hand and Estoiluku smiled and shook hands.

“I am pleased to meet you. Please help me any way you can.”

“I shall. We have no school for helping the blind, I’m afraid, though it is hoped one will start soon. So, you are going to school?”

“No, not really, but my mother has been tutoring me.”

“He should be in fifth grade, and this last year I was able to catch him up to that level,” Galɛsé noted.

“Have you tried a typewriter?”

“After you suggested it through Blorakwé, we tried it,” replied Galɛsé. “He found it difficult and frustrating. Not only could he not see the result in order to be sure he had typed the right letter, but he could not read what he had just written, so it was difficult to

keep a train of thought. It seems easier for him to dictate and have someone else write or type it."

"You're right about that. Touch typing will probably help; there is a system for learning to type without looking at the keys. You can learn it in Mɛddwoglubas or Ora, I'm sure."

"I'll ask next time I get to Mɛddwoglubas. I go there two or three times a month to shop," replied Galɛsé.

"I think you are a very lucky boy, Estoiluku, because you have such a remarkable mother. We've been thinking about how to tackle this problem of helping the blind. I'm in Ora for the entire month and a group of us are planning a school for the deaf, blind, and physically and mentally challenged, rather like my school outside Mɛddoakwés. There will be a dormitory where students can live on campus, but there will also be students coming by bus; we'll build near the high school so the kids can come on the regular school bus every day. There may even be special buses for bringing kids from as far away as Tripola and Isurdhuna, maybe once or twice a week only. But if you can learn in the local school, you may be better off there."

"I haven't gone to the regular school, though."

"But we're working on that," replied Galɛsé. "I think in the fall he and I will go to sixth grade together, at least part of the day. It's hard to teach him straight from the book; I need to hear the lesson as well."

"Of course."

Just then, there was a knock on the door. The servant hurried to the door and returned a moment later with a man in his late twenties with an orange beard.

“Alláh-u-Abhá, Alláh-u-Abhá,” he said to all of them as he entered the room, and Galɛsé repeated the greeting, to Soru’s surprise. Soru rose and offered both hands to the arrival.

“Alláh-u-Abhá,” Soru replied.

“I am Estoidhoru, secretary of the local Bahá'í community, and a teacher in the school; I teach seventh and eighth grades.”

“Pleased to meet you. Soru Dénujénésɛ.”

“I think I met you once at a Bahá'í school in Mɛddwoglubas.”

“Could be, I attended last year’s. I am so pleased you came. We were just talking about ways to help Estoiluku, and the local school is the obvious way to educate him.”

“Galɛsé and I have talked about that with the principal, Estoichandu. I think we should give it a try when the school year starts again in two months.”

“The next step, I suppose, is to talk to the man who teaches sixth grade and see whether he can accommodate Estoiluku and what his concerns would be.”

Estoidhoru nodded. “We could do that.”

“Do you think he’d let me get a copy of the materials ahead of time?” asked Galɛsé. “Because I could start going over them.”

“He could share the textbooks with you, but if he is revising his notes, he couldn’t share those yet.”

“Of course, I understand.” Galɛsé saw a servant come into the room with a tray. “The refreshment is ready; tea, bread, and jam. We’re so thankful you’ve visited us, Soru. Very grateful.”

“I hope you can help me, because I want to grow up to be able to help my father with his factory,” said Estoiluku.

“Why not?” replied Soru. “You will be amazed at what you can do. We have deaf students in our school who are very good at writing. They can read lips reasonably well and some can speak understandably. All of them know Eryan sign language, and they’re developing new words all the time. Your bigger problem is convincing others you can do so many things. You can speak and your hands can do much of the work of your eyes.”

“You give us so much hope,” said Galɛsé.

There was a pause when everyone sipped their tea. Then Estoidhoru said, “Honored Soru, I came by for two reasons, and the other is that our Bahá'í community here badly needs help from outsiders. Very badly. As I am sure your niece told you, the Bahá'í youth group was here for two weeks. In that time, fifty people became Bahá'ís. Our community had sixteen adults before then; now we have sixty-six. We are one twentieth of the village. But we can’t answer the questions of the new believers very well and the excitement of the visit and the declarations has faded. We’re having trouble maintaining interest. So I was hoping you could stay long enough to give a talk this evening.”

“Me? I’m not sure I could offer very much.”

“Anything would help. Tell people why you became a Bahá'í. Talk about how you try to serve. Anything.”

“But Modolubu is so close; sixteen kilometers. Have you invited him?”

“We have, and he has come once briefly. But he is overwhelmed. All of Dhudrakaita is now Bahá'í, and it had no Bahá'ís. Kadakwas and Triséra had two or three

and they knew almost nothing. Now those places have one hundred-ten and forty-six Bahá'ís each. Modolubu, Staurést̪u, Aréjé, and Estoiwiku Magantéknu have all visited. But none came here, and we need help, too."

"It's a huge task to consolidate all these new believers."

"But we need to know more, too!" added Galɛsé.

"I understand. Look, I should call my wife; she's expecting me for supper. But I can stay and give some sort of talk."

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Relatively few women came to the Center for Women's Industry and Crafts, Bɛllɛdha's thirty-thousand dhanay facility that the Menneas had helped finance the previous year. Liz was disappointed by the turnout; most women had gone to the festival or were making another attempt, on its second day of operation, to get into the overcrowded Home Improvement store. But the core of dedicated women, or the destitute widows who depended on the Center to escape poverty, were there.

She was thrilled to see the progress that had been made. Normally, the thirty sewing machines were constantly in use, and even that day fifteen of them were running at any particular time. The kitchen, with its four six-burner stoves and four gas ovens, was busy; its six large ice boxes were practically bare, though, because the supplies had been used up to prepare for festival sales of cookies, jams, biscuits, pastries, and canned goods. The lace-making room was deserted that day, but she was told that it was by far the most exciting part of the Center; lace making had been introduced to the area by women from the Mɛlwika Widow's Center just four months earlier and had become very popular. Éra had never had lace until a few years ago, and it was in hot demand. Liz spent

half the morning rereading instructions in English about making a particular kind of lace and helping two women write them down in Eryan.

Several times she felt her cell phone vibrate in her pocket, but she had to ignore it. Finally when it was lunch time she walked back to the génadɛma—for the first time she tried crossing Central Square and managed it in a fairly good time—and she pulled the phone out quickly enough to see who had called. It had been Mɛlwika's operator, not a family member.

When she stepped into the classroom she and Chris were using, she saw he was on the phone, smiling and talking very patiently with someone. She assumed her call had been meant for him—no one ever called her—so she waited. When he hung up, she said, "Was that the call that accidentally went to my phone?"

He shook his head. "No, I haven't received any calls all day. I just called Ekwɛru to ask him about partnering with a group of us up here to start a chicken and egg production facility. I really didn't want to do that by phone—I much prefer to talk about matters like that face to face—but I decided to take a chance, and he was persuaded."

"Oh? Congratulations."

"Yes. He has always wanted to provide the entire world chicken and eggs from one place. But eggs don't transport well and chicken on ice hasn't proved acceptable to the market. He hasn't wanted to invest in a special truck to transport live birds. So he's willing to start a chain and collect a smaller fraction of the profits."

"That's good. Do you have local partners?"

"I ran into Ekwiséru, son of the Lord of Udrapéla, this morning at the beginning of the provincial assembly. He has taken a year of business courses and his father shows

no signs of dying any time soon—the father's in his mid 40s—so Ekwiséru's interested in doing development projects for his community. Udrapéla's just south of Bɛllɛdha on the western side of the estuary. It's well located and has strong agriculture, probably some of the strongest in the province. He's interested."

"Good. That spreads out the development, too."

"I have an appointment to talk to Lord Dontu of Yujdwoakwés in an hour, also. We'll discuss a modern tannery and leather working facility."

"That'll get us back to Mɛlwika rather late."

"It'll be before midnight."

Liz nodded, reached into her pocket, and pulled out her cell phone. She stared at a moment, then punched in the number of the old cell phone that was hard-wired into the Mɛlwika operator's switchboard.

"Operator," said Lubésé a moment later.

"Lubésé, this is Liz. Someone tried to call me a little while ago."

"Yes, it was Soru. He's in Ora; at Ora 289. Shall I connect you?"

"Yes, please."

There was a long pause. Lubésé left the audio connected, so Liz could hear the pause while the direct line to Ora connected, the operator there asked for the number, and Lubésé repeated it.

"Khélo?" said someone at the other end.

"Khélo, may I speak to Soru, please."

"Lady Liz, this is Soru. Thank you for calling me back; I tried to reach you three times and gave up."

"I couldn't answer my phone at the time, Soru. I apologize. How can I help you?"

"Well, I apologize for calling you and bothering you, but you are our Auxiliary, so I thought I should talk to you. Yesterday I went to Lɛwéspadéma to meet a blind boy and his family; I had heard some impressive things about his determination to overcome his handicap and learn and his mother's dedication to educate him. We had a good conversation; that part of my visit went well. But then the secretary of the Lɛwéspadéma Spiritual Assembly showed up. Lɛwéspadéma went from sixteen Bahá'ís to sixty-six as a result of the visit of the Bahá'í youth, but now there's no support for the new community. It's confused, the excitement is wearing off, and the new Bahá'ís are beginning to drift away. Modolubu knows about this, but he is overwhelmed. The problem is that the two-week visit produced three new Bahá'í communities, and two of them are larger than Lɛwéspadéma's, so they are the *real* crisis. No one can keep up with the demands. Stauréstu and Aréjé are helping as much as they can, also, but together the three of them can devote maybe a total of two days a week, and that isn't enough. I thought at first that Lɛwéspadéma, in particular, was having trouble, but I stayed last night to speak about the Faith and answer questions, and I heard from several people with Bahá'í cousins that the other villages are struggling as well."

"Have you talked to Modolubu?"

"I called him this morning. This is his day at the paper-making factory, so he didn't have a lot of time for me. He apologized that he could do only so much, that he has taken time from his secretary duties *and* from his business and as a result both are suffering from neglect."

“I’m sure.” Liz reached down and pushed the “speakerphone” button so Chris could hear, too. He came over. “So, what did you talk about last night?”

“It was a dry night—Lɛwéspadéma has been getting a lot of rain lately—so the village gathered in the main square. Several hundred people came. I talked about my life, why I became a Bahá'í, my struggles, what I’m doing now, and why I was visiting Lɛwéspadéma. Estoiluku, the blind boy, stood up and I told people what deaf people could do and that blind people could also accomplish almost anything if we help them. I talked about the Bahá'í principles of the oneness of humanity and the need to help everyone become their best, and now, finally, it was possible to strive for such a society here in this world. I think it impressed some people. I spoke for maybe an hour, but they asked me questions for three. It was after midnight before I could go to bed at Estoidhoru’s house. He was very pleased and begged me to come back, or *someone* to visit.”

“And the situation is equally difficult in the other three villages?”

“I think so.”

Liz thought for a moment. “Okay, Soru, I’ll go there and visit for a few days, and I’ll see who else we can get involved. I’m sure Modolubu has tried just about everyone he knows, but our family is moving into a season of freer time. I think we can help.”

“I think if you and Chris go for a while, May and Amos another time, Dhoru and Lébé another time, that will help immensely. Your family have been Bahá'ís much longer than Modolubu or me, so our ability to answer questions about the Faith is limited by what we can read in Eryan or pick up from you.”

“I think you sell yourself short, Soru. But I’ll see what we can do. Thank you for calling.”

“Thank you for calling me back. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.” Liz closed the cell phone and looked at Chris. “I think I have to go to Lɛwéspadéma and the other villages near it.”

“What was the problem?”

“Too many people to deepen, not enough resources. Soru went to Lɛwéspadéma to see a blind boy and ended up staying the night and giving a deepening to half the village.”

“In some ways, I wish Jordan hadn’t done this. I’m happy about the success, but deeply worried about the follow-up. This is how the Faith grew in the 1960s and 1970s; teams taught masses of people, they’d declare, then there would be limited follow up, spotty consolidation, and the result would be a huge list of inactive Bahá'ís, some of whom no longer even considered themselves Bahá'ís. That’s why we switched to core activities and careful planning for short intensive waves of teaching followed by systematic consolidation. We wanted them to go to the places with organized communities so they could learn how to consolidate.”

“Well, they did, and the declarations occurred not in the villages with the organized communities, but in the nearby villages without them. And that tells you something; people get inoculated against the Faith over time. There’s a window of time when much of a village can convert, then that opportunity is lost.”

“Yes, you may be right about that. Brébéstu was complaining to me the other day over the telephone about all the visits he has to arrange to Wɛranopéla and Wrétradɛntɛs

to consolidate the hundred new Bahá'ís that resulted during their first week. And from the sound of things, they're doing well at Frachvála and nearby villages in Kɛrda. I'm not sure we are ready for too much success!"

"I agree. We now have a problem: you have to head east to Mɛlwika to give your last class and exam while I have to head southwest to Lɛwéspadéma."

"And we can't take buses, the threat to our safety is too great. Amos and May were planning to go back to Pértatranisér later tonight or tomorrow; I suggest you squeeze in with them, then take their car."

"There's no way you can send the exam and have someone else proctor it?"

"No, I have to give it myself. If you want to wait, I can get to Lɛwéspadéma in three days."

Liz considered, then shook her head. "No, I don't feel I can or should wait. I'd prefer to be there tomorrow. May and Lébé have finished up their work on *The Advent of Divine Justice.* I want to take a copy of it along and talk about its concept of a chaste and holy life. That's the kind of meat they seem to want."

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298.

## Opposition

10 Dhonménu/1 Aug. yr 12/630

A few hours later, Amos, May, their children, and Liz left Bɛllɛdha for Pértatranisér in a very crowded steam car, which was much more compact than a rover. Route 1 was now eight meters of concrete in many places, at least six everywhere; traffic was light; they moved along fast and reached their house in a bit less than two hours. Liz immediately walked to the radio station to find Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi, member of the Central Spiritual Assembly.

Mitrubbéru's show started when the *World Table* ended and went for five or six hours; the schedule was flexible and spontaneous. He had been off the air several hours but was going over music for the next day, as he usually did during the afternoons. The music library was a huge room next to the two studios; it had to be huge because the older cylinders only recorded four or five minutes of music and some songs required three or four cylinders. The radio station was now an impressive facility, with a tall broadcast tower on a hill outside town and a staff of six. Kɛkanu and his wife, Dárásé, were in their big office planning the next day's *World Table*; Kɛkanu had become the world's first entertainment star, his voice recognized by everyone. Mitrubbéru was almost as well known.

He was surprised to see Liz when she walked into the music library. "Lady Liz, what a surprise! How can I help you?"

“I wanted to see whether you have some time. Tomorrow I’m driving down to Lɛwéspadéma and southern Véspa. You may have heard that a few weeks ago, about five hundred people became Bahá'ís in four villages down there, including the entire population of one remote village. They are in desperate need of deepening and general assistance in understanding the Faith. Modolubu is overwhelmed. I plan to meet with the local spiritual assembly of Mɛddwoglubas; I think it’s time they arise as a local body and take some responsibility to mobilize resources and assist one village. I hope all the members of the Central Spiritual Assembly can help as well.”

“How? I work here all day, every day, except Suksdius, and I need them to recover. I can’t even make it to an entire Central Spiritual Assembly meeting.”

“I understand, Mitrubbéru. But I was thinking that if the radio station hired you some help, you could get preparation done sooner. Lɛwéspadéma is only an hour away by steam car. Perhaps we can hire you a driver so that you could drive down. Because one evening a week would be a tremendous help. Probably most new Bahá'ís down there have heard you on the radio, so they will be delighted to meet you. Think how much you could accomplish!”

“That’s true, but I have to be careful not to take advantage of my popularity, also, and I have to protect my reputation. Kɛkanu decides who’s hired, not me, and he has been very thrifty. He has to be; advertising barely covers our expenses.”

“I know; the station still doesn’t make a profit. But maybe Chris and I can cover the cost of hiring some part-time help for you. You are a precious resource for the Faith, Mitrubbéru. And it’s time to help more; we have a crisis. We need you. I’ve seen you

speak and sing. The combination is mesmerizing. You can help quite a lot just by driving down for one evening a week."

"One evening per week?!"

"If you manage half that, Mitrubbéru, even that would help."

"I see." He shook his head slowly. "Well, I'm not sure about *every* week, but I can probably travel down three or four times a month. I'll have to consult with the family."

"Bring them along. Especially if you could go down on a Suksdiu, you could make it a family trip. The kids should see what it means to serve the Faith."

"Alright, I'll see what I can do, Lady Liz. It would help if you could talk to Kɛkanu. Maybe I could manage to get to an entire Assembly meeting, some time."

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Jordan glanced at the eastern escarpment, which was barely visible across the Kɛrda valley from Gusdha. That village of a thousand souls was nestled up against the base of the western cliffs, so the afternoon sun had been gone for two hours. The only way to tell whether it was sunset was to look east at the eastern cliffs, which took on a golden hue as the sun dropped.

He could see them shimmering gold. "I think we have time for one more song," he announced, and he nodded to Tomasu, who was particularly good on the three-string. The young man came forward with his guitar-like instrument and played part of a Bahá'í prayer that the Frachvála Bahá'ís, just fifteen kilometers to the north, had set to music. Since it was designed to be sung polyphonically and some of the village's eight adult Bahá'ís knew the piece well, they joined in. Soon much of the crowd of five hundred joined in also, for they had heard it every night for the last eight nights.

“Thank you, everyone, for coming,” said Jordan, when the song ended. “Today we completed the Ruhi Book Zero course. Budhéstu finished his course on development and tomorrow he’ll start a course about education. Mitrukaru will be here in the afternoon; in the morning he’ll be in Frachvála looking at farms. He wants to give a short class about new cash crops and then go out to farms, so if you want ideas, come hear his class at 1 bell. Tomasu seeks assistance with the installation of pipes from the spring to the school; the copper pipes should arrive on the morning bus, so he will spend the night here. Swadé and Gramé will be here with sewing machines tomorrow afternoon to demonstrate how they work, for anyone wishing to learn about them; they will be here all afternoon the next two afternoons, plus the morning the day after tomorrow.

“Finally, if anyone wishes to join the Bahá'í Faith, please come forward. I hope you’ll be able to attend the Ruhi Book One courses that Blorakwé will start tomorrow. She’ll run one all morning and one all afternoon. We hope and pray that anyone interested will be able to find the time to attend. Thank you.”

He began to step off the stage; he wanted to talk to Blorakwé to make sure he understood her plans for the next day, because they were coordinating classes and services in three villages. But then he saw a movement out of the corner of his eye, so he turned. About twenty-five people were coming forward! And they were all looking at him. “Looks like we have twenty-five new Bahá'ís,” he said to her.

“Amazing!” she agreed. “But we’ve been here for a while, we haven’t pushed the Faith at all, and this was a very moving program.”

“It was.” Jordan took a deep breath and grabbed a piece of lined paper so the declarants could write their names. He turned to them, began to greet each one

personally, shook hands warmly, then began to explain what it meant to be a Bahá'í. They were all positive about his description, but he didn't mention any common difficulties like equality of men and women. They all had heard about that already and no one asked. They all wrote their names or helped others to do so; Jordan preferred to let the new believers take care of that themselves as a service to each other and remind each other of the commitment they were making, He asked them when a class could be held to review basic Bahá'í beliefs; they all agreed the time they planned to attend the Ruhi Book One classes was good, and that they would postpone the course to review basic Bahá'í beliefs.

By then, it was almost dark. Kɛrda was on the "far" side of Éra where Skanda never shone, so the stars were coming out. Sara, a very bright planet, shone in the west, and Wɛrana was dazzling overhead. Jordan looked around to see where Swadé and Blorakwé were; he had to drive them back to Frachvála. But then he noticed Lord Sulu was standing, staring at him angrily, and talking to a young man, who also looked upset. He looked away quickly, but then thought about it and decided he had better not leave it alone. He walked toward Sulu as the young man walked away. "Lord, can I be of service to you?"

Sulu stared at him. "The best way you can serve this village is to leave and never return. Kɛrda is sacred land. It is the home of Widumaj's sacred dust. This is no place for Bahá'ís. We appreciate the knowledge and ideas your team brings us. We even have a hotel because of a business deal your grandfather Kristoféru arranged, and we are thankful for that. But Lord Kristoféru never tried to convert us to his religion."

“Lord, we are not pressuring anyone or fooling anyone. Ask us questions and we will answer them as well and frankly as we can. People do not become Bahá'ís because they like our songs.”

Sulu waved a finger at him. “You are persuasive because your ideas are new and you dress them up so they are attractive, but that doesn’t make them right. The customs of Widumaj have served us well for six hundred years and will serve us well for a thousand more. And we can take care of you Bahá'ís; wait and see, and watch out. That’s my advice to you.”

Jordan was startled and uncertain what to say, at first. “Thank you, Lord, for your concerns, and I take it, your warning. Peace be upon you, Lord.” He turned away and walked to Blorakwé and Swadé. “It’s getting dark; we should go. I have to talk to Tomasu quickly.”

“We’ll see you at the truck, then,” said Blorakwé. She and Swadé walked into the darkness toward the truck and that worried him. He hurried over to Tomasu, who was talking to the secretary of the Bahá'í group—they had no Spiritual Assembly—who was also hosting him for the night.

“Lord Sulu just threatened us. He said this valley had the sacred dust of Widumaj and should have no Bahá'ís. He said they’d ‘take care’ of us and we should watch out. He also said the best thing we could do is not return to this village.”

“He said that? Did he ban you from the village?” asked the secretary.

“No. It was a hypothetical comment, not an order. I’m more worried about this ‘take care of’ comment. Tomasu, you have to be careful.”

“He wouldn’t try to hurt you,” said the secretary, shocked. “The Queen will not tolerate disorder, and I doubt the Duke would, either. But Lord Sulu is very conservative about the customs of Widumaj. He has made sure everyone in the village knows the hymns and makes sure we all process together to Isurdhuna every year, gifts in hand, to present them together to the Temple. It’s a long walk, and he still won’t let us use a bus to get there!”

“That’s dedication,” agreed Jordan. “Tomasu, watch out. Here, walk me to the truck.”

“Okay.”

Jordan turned to the secretary. “I’ll see you tomorrow, honored. Thank you for all your help.”

“And thank you; even if the Lord isn’t grateful, most of the village is.”

Jordan nodded in thanks and started for the truck. “Be careful, Tomasu.”

“I will. I should be safe, though. You’ll be back in the morning?”

“Yes, with Blorakwé and Swadé.” They walked most of the way to the truck and stopped. He pulled out his father’s cellular telephone. “Do you know how to use this?”

“I’ve seen you use it before.”

“I’ll show you; it’s simple. Push this button.” He did and a list of numbers and names in the Roman alphabet appeared. “This first number is the Mɛlwika operator.”

“I recognize the word ‘Mɛlwika.’”

“Good. Push this green button, and the phone calls the cell phone attached to the Mɛlwika switchboard and she can connect you to anyone. If you have trouble, I’d ask for

the Isurdhuna police. The red button disconnects you. I don't think there's any reason to call any of my family members; they're too far away to help."

"Alright. I doubt I'll need this. You sure you won't?"

"I'm sure. I'll use a regular phone to make my morning report, like I always do. This is for emergency use."

"Okay. Thanks." Tomasu took it.

They walked the rest of the way to the truck. Jordan, Blorakwé, and Swadé waved goodbye. Tomasu walked back to the main square and Jordan checked the steam pressure. Blorakwé had already gotten the fire going, so steam pressure was building. Jordan turned a dial to set the air fan to high to maximize power production. He turned on the headlights.

Nothing happened.

He played with the headlight switch, then got out to check them. "Someone smashed them!"

"Really?" Blorakwé got out to look as well. In the darkness they could see that someone had been very careful to smash the bulbs dead center; in the darkness they could see that even the filaments had broken. "So what do we do?"

"Drive back to Frachvála in pitch darkness slowly. Let's go; I don't feel safe here any more. Lord Sulu just threatened us."

"Really? How?"

"It was vague; that they could 'take care of' us."

"What about Tomasu?"

"He should be safe in someone's house."

They got back in the truck and Jordan put the vehicle into the forward gear, then pushed on the accelerator to send steam to the cylinders. They started forward down the gravel road.

“Well, you can see the road bed in starlight, but barely.”

“Let’s hope no one is walking down the middle; I’m not sure I’d see them in time!”

“Be careful!” she counseled.

“At least you have a phone to call, if we have trouble,” noted Swadé.

Jordan felt a chill run down his spine. “Well, no, actually I left the phone with Tomasu, in case he had trouble in the village.”

That left all of them silent and worried.

The village of Blorjɛlba was about seven kilometers away, but at their slow speed it took twenty minutes. Budhéstu, Primanu, and Gramé were waiting. Jordan jumped out of the truck and went to fetch them. “We had a good musical program at sunset, we asked people whether they believed in Bahá'u'lláh, and thirty people said yes!” said Budhéstu.

“And we had twenty-five declarations at Gusdha,” said Jordan, not wanting to mention the trouble. “How were classes?”

“We finished Book Zero and tomorrow we’ll start Book One,” said Gramé. “And I’m conducting a cooking class in the afternoon,”

“So I’ll take over book one in the afternoon,” said Primanu. “In the morning, I’m visiting four farms.”

“And I’m doing a class here on development in the morning and one in Gusdha on education in the afternoon,” added Budhéstu. They reached the truck and the three

arrivals began to jump into the pick-up back. “Why are the headlights off?” asked Budhéstu.

“Someone smashed them,” replied Jordan. “*Because* we had twenty-five declarations. Lord Sulu was upset and was talking to a young man; I think he did it.”

“He was that upset? We better talk about it when we get to Frachvála.”

Jordan jumped into the cab and the six of them set off the eight kilometers to Frachvála. He drove a bit faster this time and they arrived in fifteen minutes. There was still singing going on at the Bahá'í Center; it had lights and the crowd was only two hundred. Dhuganu of Wɛranopéla and Lɛdhu were there running the program, with many local musicians helping them; Lɛdhu had proved reasonably capable at organizing musical programs, and his western shore accent was easy for the locals to understand. Khwanu and Mitrukaru were cooking supper for the team at Isaféla’s house, where the team ate their meals; in Frachvála it was easier to break the rules about work men and women don’t do than in earlier villages. They went in and sat to wait for it to end, which would be soon; everyone was hungry for supper.

A tall, black-bearded stranger stood in the back, leaning against the wall, watching and not singing. After the last song, Lɛdhu stepped forward. “That ends the program for tonight. Thank you, everyone, for coming and helping us worship Esto together through songs and prayers. I think we all felt the spirit tonight, didn’t we?” He paused and several people clapped while others nodded or smiled. “We’ll do the same thing tomorrow morning and evening. We have a book four class in the morning and a book five class in the afternoon, a sewing class in the morning, and Mitrukaru will be going to farms in the morning. I’m not sure what else . . . oh yes, Modékvu is conducting

a book one class and Malité a book zero class. We welcome everyone who finds faith in Bahá'u'lláh growing in their hearts to come forward and declare it to us, and to join a class. Good night."

There was a round of applause, then everyone rose and headed out of the Bahá'í Center except two, who lingered and headed toward the stage to declare their faith. Since Jordan was there, he stepped forward as well to greet them, but Lɛdhu touched his shoulder. "I can handle this, but not *him.* You should go talk to him." He waved his eyes at the stranger still standing in the back, watching.

"Who is he?"

"A devotee of Widumaj from Isurdhuna. I spoke to him very briefly; his accent and vocabulary sounded local and well read."

"Okay." Jordan turned away from the stage and walked to the back. "Greetings, honored," he began. "I trust you enjoyed the evening program of prayers and hymns?"

"You're Jordanu, right?"

"I am; and you?" He extended his hands.

The man shook hands, but reluctantly. "Widulubu. How many of you are here?"

"Currently, eleven. Where are you from?"

"Isurdhuna, mother of the world. Who is paying you to do this?"

"Paying? No one is paying us, we are doing this for free as volunteers. We have a budget for food and extras, like paper and pipes; we've been helping install water systems just about everywhere we go. Are you a priest?"

"I am a student at the Géndha ɛjneruis Widumaji, the School for the Priests of Widumaj. How much are you charging the villages for these services?"

“Nothing. If they want a water system, they have to pay for most of it and provide the labor. We have been able to arrange some discounts to get the materials more cheaply.”

“You’re doing this for free?” Widulubu shook his head. “And what about all these new believers, are you getting a lot? Who leads them?”

“We are getting a few new believers, yes, but they have to lead themselves. Bahá'ís elect nine-member spiritual assemblies in every village, and the spiritual assemblies lead them. Are you a hymn teacher?”

“Perhaps I will be; I’m not sure, I’m a student. Why should people accept Bahá'u'lláh and reject Widumaj? Maybe you can persuade me.”

Jordan frowned; the tone was not very enticing. “We do not reject Widumaj at all, Honored. We accept him as, indeed, a great prophet, as his name implies. But Bahá'u'lláh is *also* a great prophet, and a prophet of a world full of the new knowledge; a prophet of steam engines, génadɛmas, new medicine, better agriculture, voting. We love and respect Widumaj and sing his hymns in our worship as well, as you saw tonight.”

“But you live according to the hymns and words of Bahu. You can’t sing the hymns of Widumaj and not live by them, Jordanu.”

“Perhaps we do live by them Honored, but not quite in the way people traditionally have. The new knowledge changes the role of women and our views of the Sumis and Tutanɛs. I think the hymns of Widumaj can allow those changes, don’t you?”

“Perhaps.” Widulubu looked at the young man for a moment. “I am pleased to meet you, Jordanu. Peace be upon you.”

“And you,” agreed Jordan.

They finished up the work in the Bahá'í Center and walked to Isaféla's house, where supper was waiting. They invited one of the new Bahá'ís along; Isaféla was delighted and gave the young man a hug and asked that he get the first bowl of soup. It was another hour before the team could meet to talk about the next day. Jordan invited Modékvu and his mother, Eva, to sit in, since they were both on the Spiritual Assembly of Frachvála.

"I wonder whether this incident with Widulubu is connected to Lord Sulu's threat and the vandalizing of the truck," said Jordan.

Eva shrugged. "Maybe. Widulubu has been in our Bahá'í Center for devotions before, and I bet if we called Isurdhuna we'll hear that he has visited the Isurdhuna Bahá'í Center as well. Lord Sulu has been a critic for a long time and is absolutely devoted to Widumaj and the old customs, especially sacrifice. They might know each other. But Widulubu isn't the type to smash headlights."

"Kɛrda is a very traditional place, and it isn't easy to spread the Faith here," said Modékvu. "We've done well here in Frachvála; in ten years, almost ten percent of the village has accepted Bahá'u'lláh. No one can destroy this community, but communities in small villages are much more fragile and susceptible to peer pressure."

"Frachvála can help the local villages a lot, though. People can take the bus here to attend classes, and you have ten Ruhi tutors who can go to them," said Jordan. "Let's not focus on that problem right now. I think that's solvable. What do we do tomorrow about Lord Sulu and Gusdha? Should we pull Tomasu out of the place and stop our classes there?"

“No,” replied Khwanu. “If we are directly asked to leave, that’s different, but we haven’t been, if I understand your description of the conversation. I think we need to think about how to build unity.”

“Perhaps we should talk to Sulu,” suggested Budhéstu. “I did a lengthy one-day presentation about the development plan to him and his closest five friends. They seemed to respect me.”

“Yes, that’s the way to go,” agreed Modékvu. “Lord Sulu’s mad at Jordan, but not at Budhéstu or Khwanu. The two of you should take him a gift and apologize that there has been a misunderstanding.”

“That might work,” agreed Eva. “Be careful and tactful, though. I wouldn’t start by apologizing for a ‘misunderstanding.’ Just apologize there has been a rift.”

“You could do that in the afternoon,” said Jordan. “In the morning after I drive everyone to their villages, I’ll drive to Isurdhuna and see whether I can replace the headlights. I can get a gift then.”

“I’ll come with you,” said Modékvu. “I have some ideas.”

“So do I,” said Eva. “Will you have room on your truck to take some of our youth with you to Blorjɛlba and Gusdha? The Spiritual Assembly met this afternoon. We want some of our youth to attend the classes in the other villages, so they know the new believers. They can then tutor the courses after you leave.”

“Excellent. You have one of the strongest Bahá'í communities, so we need to talk a lot about follow-up after our three week-visit ends.”

“And we’re grateful for your visit,” said Modékvu. “This is the first time we’ve had a cycle of growth. You initiated it, but we plan to follow up and launch the next one.”

“Tomorrow,” replied Eva. “All of you are exhausted from the day; you need to sleep.”

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Jordan rose with the sun and was soon busy ferrying the other members of the team to the other two villages. He checked in with Tomasu; he was safe and had a group of locals ready to help him with the pipes. Lord Sulu was angry, but he was practical.

The next stop was Isurdhuna. He, Modékvu, and Eva drove in and Jordan spent a futile hour trying to get new headlights, which were still in short supply. He’d have to wait at least three days to get a pair shipped from Mɛlwika. Meanwhile, Modékvu and Eva went shopping and bought a beautiful, leather-bound edition of the hymns of Widumaj in both the old writing system and the new simplified system as a gift for Lord Sulu, courtesy of the Spiritual Assembly of Frachvála. Modékvu accompanied Jordan to Gusdha that afternoon to meet with the Lord, along with Budhéstu and Khwanu. At age 28, Modékvu was a decade older than Budhéstu and seven years older than Khwanu, and he was a local.

“We understand that Tomasu has run the pipes from the spring to the school,” Budhéstu began. “And this afternoon they’ll set up the water tank on the school’s roof, to which the water will flow by gravity. In another day the system will be finished.”

“As I said to Jordanu last night, we welcome efforts like that,” replied Lord Sulu. “Our problem is with your efforts to spread your religion.”

“Lord, we are very disturbed that our efforts have affected a breach with you,” exclaimed Modékvu. “And for that harm, we are truly sorry, for we believe in unity. The Spiritual Assembly of Frachvála, which is the governing body of the Bahá'ís of

Frachvála—sixty-eight of us, as of last night, a community that is over ten years old and has an excellent reputation in the area for serving others—the spiritual assembly wants to give you a gift to show our remorse and perhaps repair some of the damage that has resulted." Modékvu reached into the leather satchel he had been carrying and pulled out the book.

Lord Sulu's eyes opened wide. The version of Widumaj's scripture he took in hand was the most beautiful and expensive made; it had cost twelve dhanay, which equalled the Frachvála Bahá'í community's entire contributions for a month. He opened the book with great reverence and care and silently read several hymns. "I am very touched by this gift. Thank you."

"It is a way for us to demonstrate our love for Widumaj as well. We may live differently and chant the words of Bahu as well, Lord, but we love and respect Widumaj. Our Spiritual Assembly seeks good relations with everyone nearby. When the youth team moves on, we will continue to serve the area. That means we will continue offering any classes we can, both on Bahá'í subjects and on matters related to development."

"I see." Sulu considered Modékvu's words. "Your efforts to spread your Faith, however, can only increase the friction and tension in this valley. You are already aware of the controversy your presence here causes. This team has set forces at work that you cannot control or limit by giving gifts, however splendid. These are not forces I have control over, either. For every person who becomes a Bahá'í here, one additional person becomes anti-Bahá'í. The trouble is growing in Isurdhuna as well."

"Lord, in Frachvála there are people opposed to the Bahá'í Faith as well, but they oppose it peacefully and we spread it peacefully. A world where the ideas of Widumaj

and Bahá'u'lláh can both be preached is a world at peace. We have nothing to fear in such a world; what should the followers of the hymns of Widumaj fear? If they are confident that theirs is the truth, surely the truth can persuade others? That's all we ask; a peaceful place where we can share our ideas. We cannot and will not compel people to accept our Faith."

"Your call for a peaceful place to spread religious ideas is a noble ideal, but it is not the world in which we live now. Even if your people want to live peacefully, not all followers of Widumaj feel the same."

"What do you suggest?"

Sulu considered. "No more Bahá'í classes in Gusdha."

"People will take the bus to Frachvála instead."

"Let them, but I don't want Bahá'í classes in Gusdha. If Lord Manu wants to allow it in Frachvála, that is his business. The team can continue offering other services, but no Bahá'í classes."

Modékvu turned to Khwanu and Budhéstu, who both nodded. "Very well, Lord, you have an agreement."

"And we will have peace," added Sulu.

Reread and edited, 6/6/13, 8/18/17, 11/20/24

299.

## Art Festival

Late Dhonménu/20 Aug. yr 12/630

Liz drove her steam car into Pértatranisér as the sun sank to the western horizon. She was relieved to see their house; she hadn't had a proper bath in three weeks. Her hair felt like cardboard. But she was happy about her trip to southern Véspa.

When she entered the house, everyone rose from their seats in the main room or *gabrula*. "You made it!" said Chris. "I'm relieved."

Liz walked to her husband and they hugged and kissed. "The road's pretty safe, though the pipeline construction has produced quite a bottleneck just north of Triséra; the southbound vehicles leaving the Isurdhuna festival were forced onto the northbound side. The pipeline has spawned all sorts of crazy rumors, too, about spirits using the pipes to enter people's houses. I think someone will have to tackle that problem."

"How was the trip?" asked Thornton.

"That's right, you're just back from various trips, too." She sat next to Chris. "The situation is better now. I gave two classes a day—early morning and late afternoon—and in three weeks I was able to finish Book 4 in Triséra, Kadakwas, and Dhudrakaita. So those villages have between ten and twenty people who have now finished books one and four and are able to teach them to others. Lɛwéspadéma needed book 7 and I got six people through it; they're ready to be formal tutors, though they still lack various books. More importantly, there are now a dozen people in Mɛddwoglubas who have made various commitments to go to the four villages, so Ruhi classes are continuing in all of

them, and a class on the Hidden Words and Seven Valleys is starting in Kadakwas on Primdius to be attended by people from all four."

"So, Mɛddwoglubas is picking up the task?" asked Chris.

Liz nodded. "I met with the assembly twice and the community twice. They held a reflection meeting—only the third one they have tried—and they've agreed to hold them quarterly and use them to create their own cycle of growth."

"That's excellent," said May. "We haven't been able to get them going here in Pértatranisér. People are willing to *be* Bahá'ís, but not to act on it."

"We need Jordan and his team to come through and push us," agreed Amos.

"But I gather that won't happen, now," said Liz.

"Correct," said Chris. "Not this team, anyway. They're finishing two weeks with the Ghésɛlonɛ village of Altagras and the Géndonɛ and from there, they're going to Kostakhéma and the Késtonɛ and Mémɛnɛgonɛ villages, if they are allowed. They'll stay three weeks, and then half the team has to leave to go back to high school. But the rest of the team might continue, at least for another month until the first fall term begins."

"The three-week stays and working with three villages at once has been better than one new village every week," said May. "I hope they can come here in the fall."

"The Central Spiritual Assembly hopes they can visit northern Véspa/Rudhisér and maybe western North Shore/Jérnstisér," said Chris. "After that, we'll see. The Bahá'ís on Sumilara are trying to put together a support team so they can visit the island some time, and I hope once they're back in Mɛlwika they can arrange their studies so they can make day trips."

“There are a lot of places for them to visit,” exclaimed Thornton. “I’m going to have to rethink the way I visit villages; I could give the Bahá'ís a few classes. I’ll be in Kostakhéma at the same time as the team is there and maybe I can spend a few extra days and serve with them.”

“What will you do there?” asked Liz.

“Take an expedition the length of the Spine, north to south. The study of the mastodons in the north Polar Basin showed that the herds there move seasonally along the Spine. Until then, we thought they stayed permanently in the Basin, and apparently some do, but some migrate as well. The Spine provides a strip of alpine meadow—basically, the same tundra environment as the Polar Basin—two hundred fifty kilometers long and one to six kilometers wide. The southern polar area has another few thousand square kilometers of polar meadow as well. We need to study the entire tundra system.”

“And *don’t* open a road along it,” said Chris. “Because there are already big game hunters heading for Kostakhéma, and I gather the village sees it as their economic salvation.”

“It’s a high-paying job, plus Kostakhéma has hot springs and a large-half-empty citadel that can serve as a hotel,” agreed Thornton.

Liz looked at Chris. “So, can you wrap up your business deals and classes in another week, so we can go to Kɛrda?”

“Kɛrda? I thought you wanted me to go to Lɛwéspadéma.”

“There, too, with your checkbook. But the tension in the western valley worries me. I talked to Modolubu before leaving Kadakwas. He had heard that the Bahá'ís in

Gusdha have been threatened; they were told not to take the bus to Frachvála for classes. One or two have renounced the Faith as a result of the pressure. The Bahá'ís in Blorjɛlba reported that their Lord was visited by someone from Isurdhuna who pressured him to curtail Bahá'í activities in his village in return for a monetary gift. He refused the gift but told them to assume a lower profile, so the opponent got part of what he wanted for free."

"So, you want us to go stay in the Gusdha Hotel for a few days, relax, and visit a few people?"

"Something like that. If we can invest a bit more in the area, that may help nullify the pressure on the friends."

Chris shook his head. "So many investments. In the next week, Amos and I have maybe a dozen appointments with people who want to start factories. The engineering school will develop the equipment they need, we'll help provide some seed money, the tomi will oversee the expenditures, the Development Corps will arrange some grants and loans, and the partner will put up some money himself. My pot of investment money is dwindling fast."

"How much?"

"Well, I'm being conservative; 350,000. We've committed 150,000 already in the Arjakwés Valley and the North Shore and I figure I'll commit 150,000 in Pértatranisér, Néfa, and Ora. I need to commit some to the South Shore and Sumilara, too."

"Well, save some of the Ora money for the southern Véspa villages; even twenty thousand would be a revolution for them! Did you finally reach Gɛlnébɛlu and ask him about graveling the road to Dhudrakaita?"

“This morning, yes. He didn’t go to the Isurdhuna Festival like I thought; he’s been concreting Route 2 between ɛndraidha and Tripola. He was not happy to hear from me and said that the villages that still had no gravel roads were few and small and concreting the main routes had priority.”

“If we rented equipment—trucks, I suppose—could the villagers do the work?”

Chris considered the idea. “Mɛlwika farm roads have light gravel on them and would be adequate in this case. They cost the grange 500 dhanay per kilometer.”

“Eight kilometers; four thousand dhanay.” Liz thought about that. “Maybe a development grant?”

“That might embarrass the army and would be a political problem. I’d offer them a thousand dhanay and see how much they get done. Even some basic graveling would improve transportation.”

She nodded. “I’ve been thinking about this youth team and what they’ve been able to accomplish, and I have an idea. We should establish an academy of sorts; maybe it could move around and not just be located by the temple. It would meet the entire summer. The first half, it would bring youth from around the world together for a month and a half of intensive training in practical and Bahá'í subjects, and the second half of the summer they’d disperse to various villages in teams to apply their skills and get experience.”

“That would be fantastic,” said May. “I think that combination would be more attractive to village youth than this volunteer effort because they would gain skills.”

“And we’d be able to see who has particularly strong capabilities,” added Chris. “And they could receive scholarships and further encouragement. But it would cost the

Faith." He did a calculation in his head. "Maybe ten dhanay per week per youth, so a fifteen week summer would run 150 dhanay per student. If we trained twenty, it'd cost 3,000 dhanay."

"But it would be worth it," said May. "And the money would develop Bahá'í faculty who could summarize economics or science or medicine from a Bahá'í perspective. We badly need to develop Bahá'í faculty able to relate the Bahá'í teachings, and we haven't done anything to encourage that. We need a summer academy of some sort."

"Another way to spend our money," sighed Chris.

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A steady stream of cars and buses flowed through Pértatranisér that night as the crowds at the annual Isurdhuna festival—reportedly thirty thousand people from outside the Kɛrda rift valley, a record—began to head home. A very large campground had been set up outside Luktrudéma where, for half a dhanay, one could get a camping spot with access to water, toilets, and a bathing area at Pɛrku's new horse-racing track. Food and firewood were extra. Busload after busload arrived to spend the night. A new development was the thirty pickup trucks from villages and granges around the world filled with people. Most headed for the campground.

The next morning the campground emptied out, with everyone heading for at least one of three destinations before driving home: Pértatranisér's very large shopping center, the horse racing track, and Luktrudéma's arts festival. The latter had been planned by Lord Pɛrku, Governor Brébalu, the radio station, and May over a six-month period and had been extensively advertised in newspapers and on the radio. More buses and other

vehicles streaming from Isurdhuna added to the crowds. Chris, Liz, May, Amos, Thornton, Lébé, and their children headed for the festival very early in the morning in two vehicles in order to avoid the heat and humidity. They were soon stuck in a traffic jam of buses and steam cars. The big problem was the stop signs in each town at the end of the road. It took an hour to travel twelve kilometers, and then there was the problem of finding a parking spot. Chris steered his car to the rear of the open-air amphitheater where there was a place, but it was already taken. Eventually they found spots on the muddy dirt road to the top of the hilly peninsula behind the theater.

They got out and strolled quickly across Luktrudéma. It seemed like every painter in the world—twenty of them—had come to display paintings. Mɛlwika Génadɛma's five year old art department had rallied its current and former students, some of whom did small sculptures or wood carving. Potters were there to display their wares. A score of craftsmen had booths selling toys and other small objects. Music rose from the space in front of the race track where a small midway had rides, games, and food.

"You managed to line the main street with a hundred booths!" said Lébé, looking. "This is amazing!"

"And so is the crowd," said Liz. "Look at the clothes; there are villagers, but a lot of these customers are professionals and lords. We managed to attract them."

"Pɛrku was on the telephone for days, talking to lords personally, asking them to tell their neighbors, asking for names of the artists and craftsmen they patronize," said Chris. "He thought of the horse racing track and arranged for the financing, but he wanted the artists and craftsmen to attract the wealthy, and he let them know that there were a lot of sites for villas and houses. I bet he's selling a lot of those sites today!"

“So, the plan to make this an artsy, tourist resort is actually happening,” said Thornton. “Amazing.”

“We’ve encouraged a lot of conspicuous consumption,” complained May. “We have villages with mud roads and no services, and fifty rich families are going to spend ten thousand dhanay each to build summer houses here! It’s obscene.”

“Patience, dear,” replied Chris, though his tone conveyed irritation at her criticism. “People are rich for a lot of reasons, and they aren’t purely altruistic at spending their surplus. If you want to encourage commercial art you need a place where the artists can come together with potential patrons. Mɛddoakwés was always too far from the western shore and too much of a military outpost against the Tutanɛ to serve that role. Ora, Néfa, and Isurdhuna all offered different arts and crafts. Sumilara was an artistic world of its own. But here we have them all together in one spot for three days. And if we’re right, wealthy families will build here and come often, so artists will settle here or visit often. We’re planning to build a big studio complex with lots of light and lots of display space, and we’ll continue to offer booths. And we have musicians, too; they’re attracted by the radio station and the free concerts at the Pértatranisér marketplace, and now there will be free concerts here as well. And then the houses will need servants. We’re creating an artistic and entertainment industry, and this world needs that. Yes, there will be some villas and mansions. But there will also be hundreds of jobs and lots of ordinary houses will be needed as well.”

May sighed. “We have to use greed to advance art.”

“Dear, one of the main drivers of art throughout history has been vanity,” said Liz. “As a historian, you know that. When we have a Bahá'í world here, maybe that will change, but we have to foster art somehow in the meantime.”

“Well, enjoy the festival, and watch for pickpockets,” said Chris.

They proceeded through the town slowly, stopping at most of the booths. One had exquisite glassware; another had photographs of painted portraits. A leatherwork craftsman displayed a wide range of wares. “I think I can get these in Home Improvement,” Lébé whispered.

“He probably sells them to the store,” agreed Thornton.

“This festival will take business from Pértatranisér,” said Lébé.

“I think dad figures if people hang around a few days, they’ll spend time and money in both places.”

“He’s always thinking ahead.”

There was a gap in the booths where the street was too close to the shoreline. It was the area where the lumbermen used to drag dynamited trees out of the bay; that effort had been moved three kilometers to the south, away from Luktrudéma village. “They hauled in sand!” said Thornton, surprised. “I guess dad suggested they make a beach!”

“Except no one knows how to swim except fishermen, and they don’t think of it as fun,” said Lébé.

“Dad, can I wade in the water?” asked Kalé.

Thornton looked around. “Why not. Jonkrisu, let’s build a sand castle.”

The family stopped at the beach. Lébé and Kalé lifted their dresses modestly and Jalalu rolled up his pants so they could wade. Thornton and Jonkrisu began to pile sand at

the edge of the waves. Others, walking by, watched and laughed. But then a few others joined them on the edge of the water. “I guess we’ll have to bring bathing suits next time and show people you can swim in the water,” Thornton said when they finally left the beach.

They walked toward the old Sumi amphitheater, which had been repaired and given a canvas roof to keep off the sun and rain. By the time they got there the kids were restless and hungry, so they bought some flavored ice, then went inside to watch an adaptation of part of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream.* When it was over it was noon and the thunder clouds were building; it usually rained every afternoon in the summer. So the two cars headed back to Pértatranisér, again in a traffic jam, because many people had decided that the hot, wet afternoon was best spent in an ice-cooled, dry marketplace.

“Thor, I do want to build a house there, just as we discussed last year,” said Lébé.

“I do, too. More than ever; it’s going to be a fun place to visit. The kid will enjoy the beach and there will be all sorts of entertainment and arts to see.”

“Of course, as they get older, we’ll have to worry about the more seedy forms of entertainment that will probably find a home in Luktrudéma. But I want a place on this shore, and a place that’s not in the family-run town. I don’t see you as Lord.”

“What? Why not? I suppose some day I *will* be lord over Ménwika, and I suppose Mɛlita as well.”

“I know, and I didn’t mean you wouldn’t be, but let’s be more ordinary people somewhere; a place to get away from all those things.”

“I think I know what you mean.” Thornton nodded. “We’ll talk to dad about it this afternoon.”

They slowly worked their way back to Pértatranisér and parked the car at home. Lunch was ready, so they all sat down to eat it. Lua and Behruz had arrived with Rostamu, 11, their younger son and the first member of the Mennea clan born on Éra. Everyone was excited to see each other.

As they finished lunch, while the first afternoon thunderstorm poured down its torrents of rain, Lua's cell phone rang. It was Jordan, calling from Géndonɛtroba. She set the phone on conference and they all clustered around to listen.

"So, what's new in Géndonɛtroba, honey?" asked Lua.

"Not much today; it's just two hours after dawn. I just finished my morning drive to the other Géndonɛ village, Jérpola, thirty kilometers south of here; we switch personnel once a day because it's a mud track and a long, slow trip. We had hoped to teach jam making, but they don't have any sugar here at all and never get any, so the women weren't interested. They were intrigued by sewing machines, but never thought they could buy any, so they weren't interested in learning about them. Maybe in two or three years when the place develops a bit more. But knitting; that was interesting. They have cool nights here, even in summer. The two Géndonɛ settlements are at 2,100 meters. So Swadé, Gramé, Kordé, and Blorakwé are busy teaching how to knit sweaters. Budhéstu's busy talking about development with the Lord and clan leaders; they ask strange questions and have trouble understanding his accent, but otherwise the class is working out fairly well. Primanu and Mitrukaru are busy looking at their farms because they just got corn here two years ago and still don't raise potatoes. We've ordered some seed potatoes; Géndonɛtroba can raise two crops a year in spite of its altitude because it's right on the equator. We'll see what they think of them. They're having lots of trouble

with corn because they don't know what to do with it, especially where milling it is concerned. The wheat mills can't handle the rock-hard corn kernels. Tomasu is frustrated because no one is interested in plumbing and Lɛdhu is frustrated because the Tutanɛ don't like regular Eryan music. So the two of them and I are busy teaching basic literacy, science, and math."

"Still no interest in the Faith?"

"Hum. That's hard to say. Everyone seems generally interested, but non-committal. I think this place is like Dhudrakaita. Either the entire community converts, or no one. This is not a place where 'individual religion' exists."

"What does the lord think? He seemed like a fairly nice man when I took the clinic there a few years ago," said Lua.

"He's been very standoffish, though Budhéstu has had some good conversations."

"They're still really undeveloped there, right?" asked Thornton.

"Yes. You were here almost six years ago. Things haven't changed much since. The road to Géndonɛtroba has been cleared, but it isn't graveled, and it doesn't have an electrical or telephone line. There's also no cleared road to the Long Valley, so we can look down at the valley and see the smoke of the farmers' fires, but it's a two-day ride on horseback to get there and back, so very few people bother. The tribe's township on the valley floor is little used. A passenger and cargo bus arrives twice a week. Géndonɛtroba has three men who can read and write and have some education from Gordha Génadɛma, but it has no school. A mobile clinic visits it once a month and has never gotten to Jérpola, which must be the most isolated village in the world; no one there can read and write."

“Another place the army hasn’t finished the road to,” observed May, shaking her head.

“Everyone here is convinced the road is mud because the army doesn’t want the tribe to gain access to the valley floor,” said Jordan. “They can’t export copper or silver ore, either, because the road’s so bad, and they have no way to process the ore and export the metals. Grandpa, when you talk to Gɛlnebɛlu about Dhudrakaita, you need to talk about the Géndonɛ as well.”

“I talked to him today and he wasn’t sympathetic, so I think I’ll talk to the crown prince next,” replied Chris. “There’s a shortage of silver; people are saving money by hoarding coins. They need it.”

“What’s the general health situation?” asked Lua.

“Khwanu is overwhelmed because there is so much need and he can’t send anyone to a hospital. Everyone has worms; he’s run out of deworming medicine twice and gets another shipment in two days. I’d say a third of the children have runny noses. Life expectancy is about 35 years, he says. They don’t have a baby boom because babies aren’t surviving, like they are in most other places. Not yet, anyway.”

“Dental health must be terrible, too, and I bet no one has eyeglasses.”

“Correct. Of course, with so few people over thirty-five, not many need eyeglasses.”

“Well, honey, keep loving and serving them, and good will result even if no one becomes a Bahá'í,” said Liz. “I just got back from Lɛwéspadéma and the villages north of it. The new believers are doing well, and I think your grandfather and I will get down there in a week or so to see what development possibilities we can foster.”

“Great, they need so many things. In many of these remote places, poverty has increased rather than decreased, because the drop in crop prices hasn’t been offset by bigger crops or other sources of income. But even those places are better off than the Géndonɛ. They’ve lost about a dozen young men to Gordha, so they’re resentful of that and they’re now hesitant to send young men away for an education. It’s a real dilemma. They need a good road, electricity, and telephones; then they can export copper and silver and call for medical advice, and a school will follow from both of those things. I’d better get off the phone, I’m rolling back into Géndonɛtroba right now, and once there I won’t be able to talk any more.”

“Okay, call us tomorrow at this time or earlier,” said Lua. “Bye.”

“Bye.” Jordan closed the connection, so they closed the cell phone to end the connection.

“Sounds like he’s doing well,” said Lua. “I’m relieved; the Géndonɛ can be hospitable, but they’re also isolationist and a bit paranoid about outsiders.”

“Wouldn’t it be marvelous if they all became Bahá'ís, though,” said Chris. “And they need investment of a sort we know how to make, since we’ve already invested in copper mining and refining equipment twice before.”

“They also have hydroelectric power,” added Amos. “The greatest hydroelectric potential in the world is in the four rivers that cross Géndonɛ and Ghéslonɛ territory, then descend 1,800 meters into the Long Valley. It’ll be only a few years before we need to develop those power sources.”

“It sounds like we may want to visit Géndonɛtroba later this year, my dear,” Chris said to Liz.

"I'd love to. It seems like everyone else in this family has gone there!" She rose and got herself another cup of tea. Thornton looked at Lébé, wondering whether it was a good time to change the subject. She nodded slightly.

"Say, dad," said Thornton. "We own a big chunk of land in Luktrudéma, right?"

"Yes, Lord Pɛrku gave us the hilly peninsula behind the theater; 10.4 hectares. That's where we plan to build the artists' colony."

"Because Lébé and I want to build a house there. Not a place to live permanently; a place to get away, and a place where all of us could stay occasionally if we want. That would be quite helpful for all of us, I think, especially if the traffic is this bad all the time! I figure we'll want to spend five to ten thousand dhanay; enough for a house with about six bedrooms, plus a servants' quarters."

Chris looked at his son for a moment. "Well, Thor, I understand your desire for a house, but right now we're trying to avoid conspicuous consumption and focus as much of our income as possible on development projects and on the Faith. This house and the Mɛlwika house cost us ten thousand a year to maintain. And the more houses we get, the more we travel, and the more we need vehicles; we now have four couples with five vehicles among them. I've delayed building a house in Mɛlita as well. Do we really need three houses among us?"

"Dad, Lébé and I both have pretty good incomes. Theoretically, as full professor at Mɛlwika Génadɛma, I should be earning 4,000; as full professor and head of the Women's College, Lébé should be earning at least 5,000. We've been accepting half that so the rest returns to the family pot. But even with a combined income of almost 5,000,

we can afford to build a nice house here. If you could raise our salaries a bit more it would be easy to do it."

"I agree," said May. "We're now in a different position, living most of the time here in Pértatranisér, with Amos as lord. We now have a big, personal income from his position and from the plantation. But before, dad, I was frustrated because I had some charities I personally wanted to support and I wasn't in the position to do so. All such expenditures had to be approved either by you or in a family meeting."

"We were trying—we are still trying—to rationalize expenditures as much as possible," replied Chris, defensively. "We are gɛdhémɛ and Bahá'ís. People scrutinize everything we do. Having a big house in Mɛlwika has been a cause of criticism, even though it wasn't very large for four families plus a clinic plus an engineering and chemistry lab; we started out with all those things under one roof, when there was only one grandchild rather than seven! We now have a combined income of close to a million dhanay per year, which is about one percent of this world's gross domestic product. That million dhanay per year has grown every year because we invest it. We have created thousands of jobs. Our investments have been responsible for much of the doubling of this realm's GDP in our first decade here. We can't afford to sink our surplus into our own consumption. We have to keep our eyes focused on raising the living standards of this world's people."

"Dad, I'm not talking about a huge increase in consumption. Just give Lébé and me five hundred dhanay per year more, each. We have savings of about a thousand, thanks to Prince Mɛméjékwu's generosity after we finished the seven year development plan."

"What about paying someone to watch the house when you aren't there?" asked Chris.

"We'll pay an artist," replied Lébé. "That will help support the art colony."

"I think it's a good idea, Chris," said Liz. "And we *do* need a house in Mɛlita some time. You are criticized as an absentee landlord because you don't have a house there. People expect their lords to have a nice house."

"I suppose." Chris sighed. "Okay, a house in Luktrudéma. I suppose it's a good family investment; it symbolizes a commitment to the place. We should raise everyone's salaries to what they are supposed to earn, when they work for one of the family businesses. May's right; everyone should be able to make their own charitable contributions. Behruz has his business; Amos has his businesses and his lordship; but Thornton, Lébé, Lua, and May have no real outside income. You should be paid what you are worth. You should return to the family chest what you wish, or even invest some of your own fortune in factories and other businesses so that it grows. It's only fair and just."

"Thanks, dad," said Thornton.

There was an awkward silence. Chris sipped tea, unhappy with the results. Thornton and Lébé looked at each other, wondering whether they should have pushed that hard. May looked at the floor, wondering whether this freed her to pursue her own agenda—which tended to be a bit radical—more freely. Liz reflected that an Eryan family would find the entire argument puzzling; the dominance of the head of the family was unquestioned.

They listened to the children playing in the next room. Then the telephone rang. The house servant Fithu answered it, then came into the room a moment later. “Lord, a call for you from Isurdhuna,” he said.

“Thank you.” Chris took the phone. “Lord Kristoféru here.”

“Hello, Lord Kristoféru, this is Widumajbédhu. Alláh-u-Abhá.”

“Alláh-u-Abhá, Widumajbédhu. How are you today?”

“We are all very sad here, Lord. Last night someone smashed the windows of the Isurdhuna Bahá'í Center and tried to set it on fire. Fortunately, the fire burned itself out, but the Center was badly damaged. Modolubu suggested I call you and let you know.”

“I see. That’s terrible, Widumajbédhu.” He turned to the family and told everyone.

“Chris, we should head for Kɛrda,” said Liz.

He nodded in acknowledgement and said, “Widumajbédhu, what did the firemen say about the fire? Did you talk to the police?”

“The firemen said rocks were thrown through the windows; they were still inside. It looks like someone poured pine pitch or something on a bookcase and lit it on fire with a torch; the torch was sitting on the floor, burned out. But the walls are brick and the flames didn’t reach the wooden roofing beams, so the fire burned out. The police came and looked. We went to Lord Yusbéru right away and he said we shouldn’t talk about the situation and he didn’t want to see it in the newspapers, but he’d find out what happened.”

“I see, and maybe he will. Maybe.” Chris didn’t dare say anything more. He had watched Yusbéru go from criticizing the priests to supporting them regularly. “Liz and I

will be there tomorrow or the next day, Widumajbédhu. We want to meet with the friends in all the villages of the valley."

"Good. There's been a lot of trouble, so we welcome your encouragement."

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300.

Spine

The Geological Survey rolled into Kostakhéma in two specially built pickup trucks with big, heavy tires. Dwosunu Wéréstui was driving the lead truck; Thornton was asleep next to him. He shook his friend. “Dhoru, wake up! We’ve reached Kostakhéma!”

Thornton awakened with a start. He looked around; they had stopped just short of the village, where a road crossed the Majakwés, now a small stream, and went to the old citadel nearby.

“Let’s drive quickly through the village. I want to see how it looks.”

“It should be half abandoned.” Dwosunu started the truck forward again. “Feeling better?”

“A bit. Definitely don’t cross fifteen time zones and stop in the middle for a day; it throws off the entire system. I still feel slightly sick to my stomach.”

“Well, I’ll drive, then.”

They entered the western end of Kostakhéma. Once upon a time, the village had a thousand people, including an army garrison of 250; but when 200 of the garrison had departed for Moruagras the village shrank to 500 as well. It supported the remaining garrison of 50, exported two hundred tonnes of ice a day, and benefitted from a growing tourist industry.

“It doesn’t look so bad,” said Dwosunu, surprised, after they drove the length of the main street.

“Turn around and go back,” said Thornton. “Hum . . . I suppose the houses before were much more crowded, and now they aren’t. I bet that’s the main difference.”

“I don’t know.” Dwosunu pointed to a large wooden building that appeared to be abandoned. “Mɛdhkordé and her prostitutes have left.”

“Wonder where they went.”

Dwosunu chuckled at that. “You really don’t know?” he said a minute later to Thornton’s puzzled face. “Mɛlwika! That’s the rumor I heard last year, anyway.”

“Mɛlwika! I think I’d have heard if she moved there!”

“Don’t be so sure!” Dwosunu laughed again. “They can’t move to Moruagras; the Ghéslonɛ would never permit it. They do have a small ‘house’ there and it ‘serves’ Réjéivika as well.”

“I think I won’t ask you how you know.”

“I’ll tell you; some army geology students told me. They keep track of these things.”

“They can’t marry; or they couldn’t until recently.” Thornton looked at the buildings. “Looks like everything got a coat of paint in the last few years. That’s an improvement.”

“Kostakhéma’s important to the region; it has a clinic, a high school of sorts, and a market. The mountain tribes regard it as a neutral place.”

They drove back across the village to its western end and stopped at a stop sign. Thornton pointed and Dwosunu turned left. They drove over the river and toward the army’s fort, which was located on a rock pinnacle near the base of South Mountain. The Bahá'í youths’ pickup truck and house trailer were parked next to Kostakhéma’s

six-classroom school, which was close to the southern bank of the river. The high school science teacher was their contact for the Spine expedition, so they parked in front.

Thornton got out and headed for the front door. A moment later, Jordan came out. Thornton was impressed; his nephew had a more confident walk, looked strong and muscular, and had a fuller beard than two and a half months earlier.

"Alláh-u-Abhá, uncle Dhoru!"

"Alláh-u-Abhá, Jordanu!" He walked over and they hugged, then shook hands with a smile. "How are you doing?"

"Very well; all of us are well. A few had to leave, but there are still ten of us, and we're serving Kostakhéma, the Késtonɛ, the Mémɛnɛgonɛ, and the Ghésɛlonɛ village of Altagras."

"Literacy? Math? Knitting?"

"Yes, those things; not agriculture or jam making. We're trying to figure out how to help with animal husbandry. And we have a Bahá'í course going in every village as well."

"Great. How many declarations?"

"It's too soon here; we arrived here yesterday. We're staying three weeks. None of the Géndonɛ declared, but we made a lot of friends for the Faith. I think a lot of people in Kostakhéma could be interested, and this is a non-tribal place, so individuals will feel free to declare. There are Géndonɛ living here."

"People from all the mountain tribes live here. Even some Kaitɛrɛ and Méghɛndrɛ live here."

“Is there any way you can help us by giving a few talks? It would enhance the program.”

“I’ve thought about that question. We leave tomorrow. We’re heading northward up the Spine to the edge of the polar basin, then back here in about four days; then we head southward to the south polar icefields and back in about eight days. I might have some energy tonight to give a talk, but I should keep it short because I was in Pértatranisér just three days ago, then in Mɛlwika, so I am adjusting through *fifteen* time zones and frankly, my body has no idea what time it is! Basically, I’m sleepy all the time. I doubt when I come back in four days that we’ll have much energy. At the end of the trip, *maybe* I’ll have the energy, but my colleagues will be anxious to get back to Mɛlwika. So tonight’s my best bet.”

“Okay. Could you say something about the Bahá'í Faith and the new knowledge? We need a talk about that in particular. I’ll take notes, so I can use the arguments later! Kostakhéma’s a good place for such a talk. It’s a strange place; intertribal, economically dependent on the changes sweeping the lowlands, with a military garrison that provides education and health care, and the Sumi exiles, while they were here, introduced all sorts of ideas.”

“I know, I’ve been here before. Sure, I can offer something about that. I’m not sure what I’ll say, but I’ll think about it!”

“Any possibility you and Lébé could come with us when we leave here? Mitrukaru and Kordé can’t stay any longer, and they’re our chaperones.”

"I doubt it. But if you all go to Pértatranisér and use it as your base to reach villages in northern Véspa and southern Rudhisér, you all can stay with Amos and May, so they can chaperone."

"But I'm hoping to go to Sumiupɛrakwa after that, for two or three weeks."

"I don't know. I'll ask Lébé. Aren't you going to Mɛlwika Génadɛma in the fall?"

Jordan shook his head. "No, I want to do a bit more of this, first."

"Has it helped you think about majors?"

"Oh, definitely. I'd like to do something that relates to development, but I don't know what, yet. I love the villages! I love working with them."

"There are a lot of possibilities. You should talk to grandpa. Say, have you seen ɛndrulubu? He's the science teacher here. He's going with us on our trip."

"He told me he would be here this morning when you arrive, but he hasn't shown up yet. We're using the back three classrooms and we've left the front two for you guys. The sixth classroom is storing all the school's stuff so we can use the rest of the space."

"Thanks. I guess we'll move into the front two classrooms and wait for ɛndrulubu to show up."

"What are you looking for?"

"It's a geological and ecological survey. We already did a fast survey a few years ago, but it was primarily geological. This time we're studying the mastodons and other large mammals in particular. We're renting horses—two per man—so we can haul tents and plenty of supplies along, so we can make thirty kilometers a day and have plenty of time for study."

"Almost pole to pole? That would be cool. But I have my work."

"And keep it up, it's important, Jordan. Not only are you converting people to the Faith, but your group is taking all sorts of ideas and improvements to villages. Mom was suggesting that the Central Spiritual Assembly establish a summer academy; half the summer, youth would go to classes and acquire skills, while the second half they'd take the skills to villages. I think you've started something of lasting importance."

Jordan smiled. "Fantastic! You've made my day, Dhoru!"

"Well, you're making ours. I'd better help my people unload, though. We can talk more later."

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Duke Yusbéru kept Chris waiting for well over an hour. A minute or two before the Duke entered, Chris looked out the window and saw the two lead priests of Isurdhuna walking out of the palace through a door fifty meters away. Then Yusbéru—a young man of about thirty—entered the audience room.

"Lord Kristobéru, it's marvelous to see you again. I'm sorry I missed you at the festival this year."

"We were unable to make it; I had extensive duties in Pértatanisér at the time, partly in connection with the arts festival now going on."

"Yes, I heard about that, how's it going?"

"Quite well, I understand. The horse racing track is proving popular, so Lord Pɛrku and Governor Brébalu are happy. Pértatranisér is making good sales; less than last year's, but crop prices were low this year. Luktrudéma has been successfully launched as a new place to visit and own a villa."

“We want a Home Improvement Store here! It’ll be closed during the Festival, but it’ll be open the days before and after. No reason for you to get all the retail business. I hope you can help us with retail investments.”

“I think I can. Kɛrda needs to develop various industries as well; you produce some fine fruits, carved wooden goods, and ceramics. The Gusdha Hotel and its hot spring have proved popular and are booked. The valley can do many things to benefit from the Seven Year Development Plan.”

“We’re disappointed the plan has so little industry for Kɛrda.”

“Because you’re in a narrow, deep valley, you have potentially serious air pollution problems. That’s why the plan suggests you focus on agriculture and tourism.”

“So I understand, but surely the ‘air pollution’ argument is just an excuse to keep us backward, probably because we are the center of the observance of the customs of Widumaj.”

“No, Lord, it is not; the Long Valley has the same problem.”

Yusbéru shrugged. “At any rate, we agree about retail. We want a big, modern marketplace, like Mɛlita, Bɛllɛdha, Pértatranisér, New Square in Mɛddoakwés, Mɛlwika, and Tripola. We’ll attach a big hotel to it as well. The old palace was totally full last week. We could have rented out a hundred more rooms at full price.”

“You should talk to Sarédatu and Glosé about the Home Improvement Store. Have you talked to the palace or the Development Bank?”

“Briefly. They’re interested, but they want private investment as well to spread the expenses and involve local people.”

“It makes sense. I am interested, Lord. But as I think you know, I came to ask you about a different matter.”

“Yes, I know. The fire at the Bahá'í Center.”

Exactly. I understand the Bahá'ís were told that there would be no mention of the fire in the newspapers and the fire would be investigated.”

“Correct. I do not want this to become a controversy, which could encourage more attacks. We are investigating. If we determine who damaged the Bahá'í Center, we will arrest them and put them on trial. Meanwhile, the Bahá'ís should offer no programs to the public. They can use their Center for their own worship and education, but they should not use it to teach their ideas to others. Kɛrda is a sacred valley, heartland of the nation, and dedicated to Widumaj. The Bahá'í customs are not welcome here.”

“I see. My friend, you say that mentioning the attack in the newspapers could cause additional attacks, but surely silence about the attack could suggest that one could attempt an additional attack and suffer no consequences.”

“Lord Kristobéru, let us please not argue about this matter. There is to be no mention in the newspapers. The Bahá'ís are to cease efforts to convert the public to their beliefs. That is my decision as Duke over all of Kɛrda. What the Bahá'ís do elsewhere is none of my business.”

“I see. Honored Duke, there are two villages in this world where everyone is a Bahá'í. If a lover of Widumaj were to go to one of those villages, surely you would declare it unjust if the villagers drove him out? If he established a band of lovers of Widumaj, surely you would regard it unjust if they suffered attacks and insults? I do not see this situation to be any different.”

“It is different in one way: those Bahá'í villages are not sacred to Bahu. If a lover of Widumaj were to attempt to promulgate His hymns in a village sacred to the memory of Bahu, that would be an insult to Him. Similarly here: Kɛrda is the heart of the nation, the heart of the Eryan, and it is sacred land, made doubly sacred as the home of the dust of Widumaj. The presence of Bahá'ís is an affront to Widumaj.”

“But we love and respect Widumaj, my lord and friend. I have sacrificed in his temples. I sing his hymns. I support his temple in Mɛlwika, and a beautiful temple it is. The Bahá'ís of Kɛrda do the same.”

Yusbéru shook his head. “Nevertheless, friend Kristobéru, I have told you how it must be from now on. I am sorry if it disturbs the Bahá'ís. I am not one to accuse them of immoralities or to slander their practices, like the priests are wont to do. There is only so much I can do to rein them in, for they are a sacred institution and thus beyond the law in many ways. The Bahá'ís must help me to keep them happy. Because of the sacredness of this valley, my position is a reasonable one.”

“I see. I am sure you will hear more from the local Bahá'ís, Honored Duke; indeed, we will most likely approach Her Majesty about this.”

“I understand and recognize your rights as subjects to the Queen. But I am confident in her support of this position as well.”

“I see. I am most grateful for this conversation, for now I understand the situation here much better.”

“Perhaps you could offer Kɛrda Bahá'ís assistance to settle elsewhere; in the Long Valley or Mɛlwika.”

“As far as we are concerned, my friend, they have a right to live here, and there is no reason for them to move elsewhere. I assume the sacred freedoms of the priests you are anxious to protect do not include the use of force against individuals who love Bahá'u'lláh?”

Yusbéru thought about that. “The priests cannot use force against anyone; that is clear to them. Kɛrda is as peaceful a place as it is sacred. As I said to you, if we determine who attempted to burn down the Bahá'í Center, we will punish him. That action was beyond the acceptable limits.”

“I am relieved to know that.”

Yusbéru rose. “I’m glad we had this conversation, Lord Kristobéru. I look forward to further discussions about the new marketplace.”

Chris rose as well and offered both hands to Duke Yusbéru. They shook. “The architect you should consult is Mitréstu Méndhig; he designed New Square in Mɛddoakwés and West Square in Tripola. He’s brilliant. You can reach him at Mɛlwika Génadɛma in our Architecture Department.”

“Thank you, Lord. When should we talk further about investments?”

“With the fluctuating crop prices, I am being careful about commitments right now, but in the fall I’ll have a clearer idea of what I can commit.”

“I see. It is always a pleasure to see you.”

“Likewise, Duke Yusbéru.” They shook hands once again, then Chris headed out of the palace. Liz was waiting for him in the rover, which was parked in the palace’s courtyard. She started the engine as he got in.

“A lot of priests have been watching me. They’re rather suspicious.”

“I’m glad you were here to watch the rover. Let’s go.” She nodded and put the rover into gear. They headed out of the palace complex and onto the busy main street of Isurdhuna. “Duke Yusbéru has assured me the Bahá'ís are safe as individuals and he says he will seek the identity of the vandal who damaged the Bahá'í Center. But he also suggested that I pay for the Bahá'ís to resettle out of the Kɛrda Valley, sacred to Widumaj, and said the Bahá'ís must cease all efforts to convert the public.”

Liz was startled by that. “He’s banning Bahá'í activities?”

“Only those reaching out to the public at the Bahá'í Center. The Bahá'ís can still have their internal meetings there, and he said nothing about meetings in homes. I said the Bahá'ís would no doubt write him further and that we would appeal to Her Majesty. He said we were free to do these things and that he could only do so much to curb the priests.”

“So, he admitted they were the problem!”

“Essentially. Two left the palace right before the Duke came to see me.”

“The two watching me, no doubt. What are we going to do, Chris?”

He shrugged. “Obey the government. As near as I can tell, he didn’t ban the core activities if they occur in people’s houses, and that’s where they should be held anyway.”

“Should we publicize this?”

“He said he didn’t want anything in the newspapers, and I assume that means the radio as well, so no. I pointed out to him that silence could encourage more violence, but that didn’t change his position. Yusbéru has become a calm and firm negotiator, I’ll give him that. He wants me to invest money in a new Isurdhuna marketplace.”

She laughed. “He partially bans the Faith and asks for money?”

“He was smart; he did it the other way around. I was noncommittal, but the more I think about it, the less inclined I am to invest in Isurdhuna. Maybe Frachvála will be different; I think Lord Manu will ignore any calls to limit Bahá'í activities.”

“And Gusdha?”

“We’ll see. Lord Sulu has been a problem.”

“Jordan has set forces in motion he didn’t anticipate!”

“Though we feared them,” replied Chris.

They drove in silence. Chris looked at the farmland, green with its second crop of the year, and contemplated the situation. Ten minutes later, they passed Frachvála, due west across the valley. Gusdha was less than twenty minutes south, and that was at a leisurely pace on gravel roads. As they passed Gusdha on their way to the hotel, which was nestled against the cliff and next to a large, bubbling hot spring, they saw a dozen men digging the foundation for a fairly large building on the edge of the village near the school. Four men stood in a cluster at the far side of the site and looked up at the rover.

“Say, did I see Wɛrétrakɛstɛr?” asked Liz.

“I wonder. It looked like him, and Lord Sulu,” said Chris, frowning.

They continued on to the hotel, two minutes away. They parked the rover in a space in front—the hotel had a parking lot with thirty painted parking spots and an attached horse stable—and walked to the front entrance. The hotel manager, Doséstu, was sitting at the front desk.

“Lord Kristoféru, you made it safely, excellent. Welcome to Gusdha.”

“Thank you, Honored Doséstu.” They shook hands. “I trust you and your wife and children are well.”

“Indeed we are, and you?”

“We are doing quite well, thank you. How was business during the Festival?”

“We were packed. The more important development is that we are almost full today, and we have a good number of bookings for the next two months. The hot springs are attracting people and there are hunters planning to stay here and hire guides to hunt in the highlands west of here. Business is picking up quite well and it is likely we will break even this year.”

“That is excellent news.”

“Do you want your usual room? It is available.”

“Sure; thank you, Doséstu. We’re staying tonight and tomorrow night for sure, then we have to get back to Pértatranisér.”

“That’s about when Her Majesty will go through, I suspect.”

“Exactly.”

Doséstu handed Chris the key to room 101, which was comfortable and had a nice view. “Enjoy your stay, Lord.”

“Thank you. Say, I have a question for you. When we drove into the village we saw a dozen men digging a big foundation near the school. Lord Sulu was there, and I think Wɛrétrakɛstɛr as well.”

“Correct, it was the prophet. The priest Widulubu is visiting as well. The structure being built is a Mɛndhridɛma, a hymn hall.”

“Mɛndhridɛma? I’ve never heard the word before.” It meant “hymn house.”

Doséstu chuckled. “I think Widulubu invented it himself! I’ll tell you, Lord, what I think is going on.” He leaned close and lowered his voice. “You Bahá'ís have been too

successful converting people to your hymns and customs, so Widulubu has decided to copy you. The mɛndhridɛma is about the same size and shape as the Bahá'í Center in Frachvála."

Chris nodded. "I see. Well, we welcome them to worship in this fashion, it is very good."

Doséstu chuckled again. Liz said, "I'm surprised there won't be a place to sacrifice."

"My Lady, I suspect there will be an altar. I think the idea is that a priest comes once a month in a pickup truck, people bring their animals to sacrifice, they sing the hymns for a while and maybe perform some ceremonies, he sacrifices the animals, then he hauls them away in his truck. Other weeks, someone the priest appoints will lead the hymn singing."

"I see," she said, wondering what to make of such a plan.

They took their leather suitcases upstairs to their room, unpacked, and rested. Chris looked out the window over the valley and noticed Wɛretrakɛstɛr walking toward the hotel, a reluctant Sulu and a trudging Widulubu behind him. He pointed them out to Liz, and the two of them walked down to the lobby to make sure there was hot tea for the arrivals, who were almost certainly walking to the hotel to see them.

When Wɛrétrakɛstɛr and the others entered the lobby, they were surprised to see Chris and Liz waiting, a fresh pot of tea ready with five cups, milk, and sugar. "You have a sixth sense for hospitality, Lord Kris," said Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, impressed. He walked over and extended his hands to his friend, and they shook warmly.

“It’s good to see you,” Chris replied, but he was uncertain whether, in the circumstances, he should add “friend.”

“May I pour all of you tea?” asked Liz, and she began to pour before they could speak.

“Thank you,” replied Wɛrétrakɛstɛr on behalf of the others. “Chris, I think you know Lord Sulu.”

“Indeed, we did a business deal to set up this hotel, and I hear it is going well.”

“It is, and we are grateful.” Sulu offered his hands and they shook, then he turned to Liz and shook one hand with her. “This hotel has created four permanent jobs, twenty part time jobs, and brings other business to Gusdha as well, like hunting guide work.”

“And this is Widulubu, a young priest at the school in Isurdhuna,” added Wɛrétrakɛstɛr.

“Very pleased to meet you. The world needs young, innovative priests who can improve the knowledge of the hymns.”

“Thank you,” replied Widulubu, startled by Chris’s comment. He offered his hands and they shook as well.

“Please sit down,” said Chris. He pointed to the circle of chairs. “This lobby is a very comfortable spot; it has a nice breeze.”

“Indeed, it’s hot today,” agreed Sulu.

“I’ve been talking to a lot of people lately about a budding controversy,” said the prophet. “Your grandson Jordanu and his friends have generated quite a dilemma. This is sacred land that is blessed by the dust of Widumaj, and some say that Widumaj said that

only the singers of his hymns should live here. That tradition is preserved locally; it is not part of the oral tradition of the eastern shore."

"Of course, the valley has had people who pay lip service to the hymns of centuries," noted Liz, handing Wɛrétrakɛstɛr a cup of tea.

"Alas, no doubt," he agreed. "At any rate, the meaning of 'singers' refers not to those who might mouth the words occasionally; it refers to those who have committed themselves to live by the words, and everyone here has made that commitment, whether they follow through or not."

"Except the Bahá'ís," added Sulu.

"I suppose that depends on what you mean by commitment," replied Chris. "For as you know, we take the hymns of Widumaj very seriously."

"Let's not discuss that issue now," replied Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. "For many people, the issue is what to do with this sacred oral tradition, on the one hand, and Bahá'ís, on the other. As you know, someone tried to burn down the Bahá'í Center in Isurdhuna. That's one way to resolve the dilemma. I think I have another way."

"What's that?" asked Chris, curious.

"Let everyone chant hymns. You Bahá'ís have your mendhridɛmas; so will the followers of Widumaj. Widulubu is building the first hymn hall here."

"I just heard a bit about it. I think it is a good experiment," replied Chris.

"And let everyone sacrifice," added Wɛrétrakɛstɛr.

"Bahá'ís are willing to sacrifice at the temple, and do so," said Liz.

"Not very generously," said Widulubu.

“But how much one sacrifices; that’s up to the individual, is it not?” replied Chris. “It’s a measure of their spiritual development. And Bahá'ís sacrifice time and energy as well. We sacrifice in many ways.”

Widulubu was not very pleased with that reply and Sulu scowled, but Wɛrétrakɛstɛr nodded. “I think hymns and sacrifices will please Esto. If the Bahá'ís do those things, and they do not aggressively seek new members, I think their safety here will not be jeopardized, and their property will be safe. Unfortunately, neither I, nor the priests can control everyone. But I think that standard will work reasonably well.”

“That is basically what Duke Yusbéru told me an hour ago; if the Bahá'ís do not conduct campaigns at their Bahá'í Centers to convert people, they will be left alone.”

“Good,” said the prophet. “I think that is a workable arrangement, Chris. I know it is not what you want, but I think it is fair, considering the sacredness of this valley to the memory of Widumaj.”

“I suppose,” replied Chris. “But perhaps a sacred valley should also not be subjected to pollution from factories and shoppers. How far does the idea of sacredness go, Wɛrétrakɛstɛr?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “But I do know that there are very concerned people who will be difficult to control, but who can be persuaded to cooperate peacefully with the Bahá'ís. That is my goal.”

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Interviews

After three days in the Kɛrda valley, Chris and Liz drove back to Pértatranisér. They found the latter city choked with traffic, for Her Majesty's caravan was about to come through on its trip to Ora, so many Véspans were heading home.

"Any success with Duke Yusbéru?" asked May, as they entered the house's great room.

"Not enough," replied Chris, shaking his head. "Wɛrétrakɛstɛr engineered a kind of anti-Bahá'í compromise with the hothead priests and others. The Bahá'í Faith remains legal in the valley and Bahá'ís theoretically will not be attacked. The attacks that happened won't be mentioned in the media. Bahá'ís can't have public events at their Centers aimed at converting others, though quiet person-to-person efforts were not mentioned, so presumably they can continue. And the Bahá'ís must continue to sacrifice at temples."

May looked at Chris, alarmed by the results. "Wɛrétrakɛstɛr pushed for that?!"

"He's not a friend of the Faith; he's devoted to the old religion. They all say the valley is sacred to Widumaj and thus should not have followers of other prophets."

May laughed at that.

"Jordan and his group were a bit too bold," concluded Liz. "They converted nearly one hundred people to the Faith and raised the Valley's total to 450. That stirred opposition."

“And this world still has no constitutional protections, no official legal rights.” May shook her head sadly.

“Well, they won’t get any investment money from me,” said Chris. “Not a dhanay. I will invest in a factory in Frachvála; Lord Manu there respects the Faith and will protect it. But otherwise, I won’t help with the valley’s development. They have their rights and I have mine.”

“I think you should run that past the Central Spiritual Assembly, I really do,” replied Liz.

“I will, of course.”

“We spent most of our three days there meeting with the friends,” said Liz. “Chris talked about obedience to the government and I talked about the early heroes of the Faith in Iran.”

They went upstairs to unpack. When they came down it was noontime and lunch was ready. Just as they sat down, Amos arrived. “Good, you’re home. I’m relieved.”

“The drive was a bit slow,” replied Chris. “How was the close of the provincial assembly?”

“Pretty good. They passed the budget—it was more or less what Brébalu wanted—he signed it and the Queen came to meet with the provincial assembly. She asked questions, the members asked her questions—that was interesting—and then they had the closing ceremony. The provincial assembly formally requested more money from the crown for a second regional high school and a formal, large Néfa Hospital. It’s badly needed, but the request was turned down.”

“The budget can stretch only so much, I guess.”

"I think so. But the big news is this: Prince Mɛméjékwu just met with Pértatranisér City Council all morning. He called last night and arranged it; he arrived at 9 a.m. and it just ended. He and Brébkordu, his chief of staff, asked a dozen questions about how the city is run, who does what, how often the council meets, how the budget is drawn up, how the money is spent . . . It was very interesting. They want to know how cities with councils function. They said they met with the Néfa City Council as well. They also clearly want to know how development functions. Right now, they're eating lunch with the Pertatranisér Grange Council."

"Really? The Prince has never met with a grange before!" said Chris, surprised.

Amos shook his head. "No, not true. Yesterday he went to Lɛpawsɛmdomas and met with its council and Lord Widubéru, then with the entire town."

"Impressive. This is something Wɛranolubu never did."

"I agree. The Crown Prince really is doing some innovative things. And he asked whether you were here. When I said you planned to be back today, he said 'Tell Lord Kristobéru I want to meet with him this afternoon about investments and economic growth.' That's why I was so glad you were here!"

"Any idea why he wants to meet with me?"

"I think he's trying to understand how everything works."

"If he succeeds, he'll be the first person in history to achieve it."

Amos chuckled. "He's asking a lot of questions about the economy, how much Pertatranisér is growing, what makes it grow, what our policies are, etc. When we explained we were being restrained because we didn't want to surpass Néfa and generate

jealousy, he said ‘for the sake of the kingdom, you should just grow and not worry about Néfa.’ That surprised us.”

“He may be right. Mɛlwika’s now bigger than Mɛddoakwés and it hasn’t been the end of the world. Pértatranisér is a regional economic engine that can raise the entire western shore.”

“I suspect he may have questions like that in mind.”

Chris nodded. He barely followed the rest of the lunchtime conversation; his mind was on the impending appointment. About the time they finished their tea and coffee, the phone rang. It was Brébkordu, asking Chris to come to the Pértatranisér Palace Hotel in half an hour to meet the prince. Chris went upstairs to don fresh clothes—he eschewed a traditional robe in favor of the new business attire that was becoming standard, modeled on terrestrial fashions—then walked to the hotel, which was across the street from Pértatranisér Market. The Prince invited him into the hotel’s private dining room. “Thank you, Lord Kristoféru, for coming,” he began. “I am immensely impressed by Pértatranisér. I actually came here last night, after dark, and walked the streets with Brébkordu to get a feel for the place. Four years ago, this was a refugee campground in the woods. Now it’s a city of a thousand households and five thousand people!”

“It is amazing,” agreed Chris. The prince pointed to a chair; they sat next to each other at the dining table. “Several things have made it possible, if that’s what you are asking. First, an elected council and grange: they give the residents a voice in the place, and that makes people feel like they are valued and can participate. Second, six thousand agris of excellent farmland. Third, a lot of investment in the industrial park, which now supplies the city with five hundred jobs. Fourth, retail sales to the entire western shore;

the marketplace employs two hundred people and does 2.5 million dhanay of sales per year. Fifth, investments in timber and tropical forest products and in the cement, charcoal, and gas plant in nearby Bruagras, which gets many of its employees from here."

"How much investment, altogether?"

Chris did a mental calculation. "A lot of the industrial jobs are not expensive. I'd say half a million in our funds and another half a million from other people. The marketplace and this hotel have been 700,000, but only 200,000 came from us. The grange has been largely self-funding. Timber, cement, charcoal, gas, tropical forest products . . . maybe 200,000. So let's say a round two million dhanay over four years. Yes, that sounds about right, Your Majesty, because the rough rule of thumb is that every factory and retail job costs about 2,000 to 3,000 dhanay to create; you have to build a building, buy machines, supply water and electricity, etc. Pértatranisér is still building the infrastructure to support it, too. In the next two years it's spending 200,000 dhanay to treat sewage."

The prince scribbled notes and nodded; Chris's estimate had matched the City Council's. "That's impressive. How quickly will the city grow?"

"That's hard to predict. It expanded a lot two years ago, but very little last year because two million was invested in the new motor works based in Mɛlwika, and that soaked up a lot of spare capital. Néfa's now getting a lot more investment; brewing beer has seen over a hundred thousand dhanay of investment in the last two years. Villages are clamoring for their own factories and I've tried to accommodate that by investing outside the city. Even so, I think Pértatranisér will probably see 250 new manufacturing jobs

every year for the foreseeable future. That may not push up the population because more and more workers come every morning by bus."

"Well, as I said to the City Council, I wouldn't worry about growing past Néfa. Pértatranisér already collects thirty percent more tax than Néfa and has only five hundred fewer people. Néfa is tied up in perpetual fights over who owns which piece of land; the legal title issues won't be resolved for many years. That delays most major construction at least a year. This city doesn't have that problem."

"That is one reason why it has grown so fast. Another is the political situation in Néfa, though the new City Council there may help."

"I'm not so sure. How do you decide what you will invest in?"

"First, I meet the person who wants to open the factory and ask what he wants to produce, how, and why. He needs to have a plan. If he doesn't, I help him refine the plan or refer him to someone who can help. Once there's a reasonable business plan, we sign an agreement. It usually specifies the same things: that I will invest in the business and receive a portion of the profits equal to the percentage of investment; that my tomi will, at minimum, audit the books annually—the agreement often starts out with audits every month or two—or that my tomi will provide all financial services, such as paying bills and paying workers; that the workers will be paid a decent wage and will have free medical services for them and their families and some educational services; and that my shares can be bought by the owner or someone else any time, with my consent. The business plan and the tomi greatly improve the chances the factory will succeed."

"So, your tomi is always involved?"

Chris nodded. “Always; not enough people know how to keep decent books, and I want to be sure taxes are paid properly. Almost all businesses find the tomi’s services worth the expense and keep it even after they buy me out. And some don’t buy me out, preferring to keep me around as a source of expansion capital and advice.”

“And you encourage businesses to seek loans and grants from the Development Bank? I gather you do, because in the last year there has been a great increase in such requests.”

“Correct. The Development Bank is a good source of additional capital. It comes with almost no strings attached; my conditions for investing are much stricter. Rather than providing half or a third, I can now provide a third or a quarter, so my money goes farther, and since your loans don’t ask for profit sharing, usually the amount of profit I get per dhanay invested goes up.”

“I see. The bank has been studying the results of its grants and loans. I think you will not be surprised to hear that the grants and loans to businesses you participate in are more likely to result in success. Grants and loans to members of the old houses produce very little; they have become a way to supplement their pensions. We plan to tighten up our conditions and will want to look at your agreements; we may want to use some of the language.”

“I’ll send you a copy of an agreement, then. Some of the conditions won’t apply because the role of a government is and should be different from the role of an investor. On Gɛdhéma, governments rarely become partial owners of businesses, for example.”

“So I understand. Aryéstu has been tutoring me in economics. Lord, what do you think of our progress toward the seven year goals? We’re half way through the first year. We should have seen most of the first year’s economic expansion by now.”

“You have access to all the tax information; I don’t. But based on the tax revenues in Mɛlita, Pértatranisér, and Mɛlwika, it looks to me that there has been no economic expansion at all, maybe even a shrinkage. Miller Motors is producing more cars, but at a lower price, so their revenues are unchanged. Fewer factories have opened in the last six months because there was no investment capital. And crop prices were down because the weather was good and productivity was up. We still have an economy heavily dependent on agriculture, so crop prices are the single biggest factor in economic output.”

“Aryéstu used almost the same words. If we want to double the economy, it all has to be nonagricultural, and that is much more difficult than expanding agricultural output further.”

“Exactly correct, Your Majesty. I’m sure you’ve seen the report he and Amos finished a month ago. Manufacturing and service jobs must increase from 15,000 to 80,000. That’s almost 10,000 jobs per year. A better way of thinking about it is that manufacturing jobs need to increase by almost thirty percent a year, which means five thousand new jobs this year and about ten to fifteen million dhanay of investment. That includes investment in schools, hospitals, and roads, the Development Bank, and private investment. We’re close to that, but we’re not there. Naturally the economy will expand more slowly than we want.”

“We aren’t putting the money into it. How do we increase the amount?”

"Well, Your Majesty, Aryéstu can tell you the details better than I can. He and I team-taught several economics courses, and since then he has taught a few new ones. We need to increase savings and investment. Laws can do that. They have to regulate banking and guarantee deposits. A law encouraging retirement accounts—money that will be invested for a long time and can be withdrawn only for a few reasons—would help. A law encouraging the creation of an insurance industry would help; that way if something burns down, it can be replaced."

"Aryéstu also mentioned tax rebates."

"Of course. Her Majesty granted reduced taxes for five years for those settling in the new townships. Reduced taxes for a certain number of years for factories would help get them set up. Did he mention microcredit?"

"No."

"Very important, but complicated to set up. We could increase family incomes—and taxes—very quickly if we empowered the average household to make purchases of less than one or two hundred dhanay, like sewing machines, stoves, ice boxes, high quality tools, a cow, a horse, a bunch of turkeys. Women spend much of their time doing things that earn the family no money, like hauling firewood and water. Piped water and gas can eliminate both burdens. Instead, the women could be making jams on their stove or sewing clothes for their family and for sale. Men could be making crafts. Families could be getting their own milk and eggs and getting things to market with their own horse. We need a great increase in farm animals; people will eat better and the animals will increase demand for farm produce, which will strengthen crop prices. The

best way to make small loans is to use the granges, because they can guarantee loans to their members and to relatives of their members."

"But lord, wouldn't these loans be counterproductive? For example, why encourage the purchase of a horse if we want them to switch to trucks? Why encourage the purchase of a sewing machine if they can buy factory-made clothes?"

"I would encourage both the truck and the horse, both the home sewing machine and the factory production of clothes. We need to assist the average householder to work harder and earn more money, to go into business with a horse or a sewing machine to improve their lives and their income. By giving people choices you get the best results."

The prince nodded reluctantly. "I see what you are saying. How much money could that involve?"

"Half a million to a million dhanay of tax money, given to granges on the condition that they match it dhanay for dhanay. They'd have to account for it regularly. When the borrower pays the money paid back to the grange, they'd loan it out again, so it would be a perpetual system of loans. Maybe banks and post offices could make similar small loans."

The development bank doesn't make loans of less than a thousand dhanay. You are right, small loans are badly needed. What else?"

"I'd encourage or require large businesses to offer a day care benefit to make it easier for women to work. Wages would drop slightly, but people with small children would get one or two dhanay per week per child if the child were in a licensed child care facility. Mɛlwika and Pértatranisér both have them and a lot of women work as a result,

and the children do not seem to suffer. That's one reason families in those places are more prosperous."

The prince wrote that down. "You are full of ideas today, Lord. So, do you think we can achieve our goal of doubling the economy in seven years?"

Chris hesitated to answer. "I don't know. I think it will be difficult, but if the economy doubles in eight or ten or twelve years instead, that's still very good. It isn't just a matter of passing laws; we have to learn how to run a new economy. That takes time, and mistakes will be made. But the important thing isn't just raising incomes and taxes or even improving the people's education and health; the important thing is developing the people so they can live in a happier way and can grow toward Esto."

That startled Mɛméjékwu. "I'm afraid that, as Prime Minister, I can't do much about that, Lord."

"I'm not so sure. Encourage the religious communities, Your Majesty; not just the temples, not just the Bahá'ís, but all of them. The priests in Isurdhuna are starting to build hymn halls in villages where people can meet to sing the hymns and sacrifice monthly. Encourage the religious communities to come together and cooperate. We need help to bring the communities together. In Kɛrda, the Bahá'í Faith is now partially banned. It grew and the priests got upset. Someone tried to burn down the Isurdhuna Bahá'í Center, which is used for literacy classes and many other classes of benefit to the local people."

The Prince was momentarily startled, but then he grew very serious. "I know about this already. We need to respect the traditional ways, lord."

"The Bahá'ís do not seek to undermine them, Your Majesty. They have been good citizens, have they not? They seek to improve their communities, do they not? They

sacrifice at the temples sometimes, just like most people. The customs of Widumaj are understood two different ways; some emphasize animal sacrifice while others emphasize the hymns. Bahá'ís naturally favor the hymns, but they do sacrifice sometimes. There is a fight between some of the priests who emphasize sacrifice and other priests and hymn singers, who emphasize the hymns. The palace can play a major role in reducing that conflict and permitting the Bahá'í Faith to develop itself and the kingdom."

"You raise a legitimate issue, lord. I can't promise anything, but I can say I will convey your concern to Her Majesty."

"Thank you."

"And thank you for your many ideas and suggestions. I will convert as many of them as possible into legislation for the fall session of the House of Commons and House of Lords. We'll also be conducting a new census this winter, so the planning for it will begin soon. None of these changes would be possible without your family and their many contributions."

"We do our best to serve, Your Majesty."

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Sunlight filtered into Thornton's leather tent rather slowly. He had kept a tiny crack opened by the door to let light in; some also shone in through a few small sewing holes in the leather along a seam. The light was enough for him to see that it was time to get up.

He rose, awaking Dwosunu, Tripola's geologist, Budhu, their expert on alpine fauna, and Eraru, a Sumi hunter turned geologist, whose broken Eryan amused the Tutanɛ. He pulled on his leather pants, cotton shirt, and wool sweater, and opened the flap.

It was a beautiful morning in the Royal Range of the Spine Mountains. The sun had risen between two peaks of the eastern ridge and was peeking through a large hole in the clouds; it had rained all night, but now the clouds appeared to be breaking. The peak northwest of them was still wrapped in foggy clouds, but a few holes revealed the snow covered upper slopes. Looking closely, Thornton suspected the peak had received fresh snow that night; the snow looked too white to be old.

He headed for the brush-covered latrine and did his business, then walked to the fireplace. The circle of rocks was cold. He walked to a nearby grove of dead fir trees and broke off a large quantity of branches that were off the ground and fairly dry. The firs were only a meter high—they were close to the tree line, 4,000 meters above sea level in the equatorial section of the Spine—and were growing in a meter of permanent snow. They were firm evidence of climate change brought about by the restoration of the sea, which had cooled the world's climate—the atmosphere was now filled with clouds reflecting sunlight into space—and greatly increased snowfall on the Spine, the world's main weather barrier. The valley below them had a glacier in it, and Thornton anticipated that in the next decade the glacier would stop retreating and would start to advance toward Kostakhéma, which was built on an ancient moraine marking the glacier's former maximum extent.

With the branches he built a fire. He put a pot of snow on it to make coffee—more snow would have to be added repeatedly as it melted and shrank—then he pulled out oats for the horses, which were grazing on long ropes in a nearby alpine meadow.

Everyone began to come out of their tents. Wékhéstonu, an army zoologist, Wɛranyunu, the geologist in Ora, and Mɛgdontɛr, a geology teacher from the northern

basin, came out of another tent. Sleeping with them was Gwɛrkhunu, an expert hunter and army veteran, who was their chief guide. The third tent held four Tutanɛ of the Ghéslonɛ, Géndonɛ, Késtonɛ, and Kaitɛrɛ tribes that bordered the Spine; it was impolite at best, dangerous at worst, to enter a tribe's territories without an invitation.

Thornton and Wékhéstonu got started making pancakes; flour, new-fangled powdered eggs, new-fangled powdered milk, butter, and maple sugar made a very good, quick, and nutritious breakfast, and the Tutanɛ had quickly become enthusiastic about them. They made stack after stack for the others using three pans at a time. Finally they all turned to the coffee, a drink the Tutanɛ had quickly acquired a taste for.

"So, boss, what do we do today; head to Kostakhéma?" asked Dwosunu.

"We could; it's most of a day's ride. But we could spend one more day here." Thornton pointed to the peak northwest of them. "According to our map, that's the highest mountain in the world; 4,854 meters, about a thousand meters higher than this spot. I'd like to climb to the top."

There was a pause. "Why?" asked Mɛgdontɛr, baffled at the notion.

"Because we can be the first humans to reach the top of the highest mountain. It'll go down in history as a minor achievement, but it'll be remembered. It doesn't look too difficult."

"This is the south slope," said Gwɛrkhunu. "I'd say it has the easiest access. The northeast slope is cut by a glacier and is very steep, with lots of cliffs. I bet the snow gets pretty deep up there."

"But it should be packed down. During the summer it melts a lot and gets rained on. There may be ice, though."

“We’d have to be careful,” observed Wékhéstonu.

“I think I’d prefer to stay right here,” said Mɛgdontɛr. “If you want to climb a mountain, go ahead. I’ll rest and watch the horses.”

“I agree,” said one of the Tutanɛ, and three others nodded in agreement.

“I’ll go up,” responded Gwɛrkhunu. “If you lowlanders want to climb mountains, as a good guide, I should know the way up!”

“I doubt you’ll have many people wanting to climb to the top,” replied Dwosunu.

“Oh, he might in a few years,” said Thornton. “It’s a popular sport on Gɛdhéma, where people often have little else to do.”

“If we’re going up, we should start soon. It usually rains in the afternoon.”

“Okay, let’s go, then,” said Thornton.

Six geologists and ecologists were going, plus Gwɛrkhunu. They quickly prepared their backpacks with dried meat and extra pancakes. They filled their canteens and replaced their sweaters with leather coats. It was hard to say how long the hike would take; probably three or four hours. With any luck, they’d be back for lunch.

They set out a half an hour later, Gwɛrkhunu and Thornton in the lead. “So, Gwɛrkhunu, how will this trip change your hunting trips?” Thornton asked their guide.

“It definitely will. I had never gone so far north or south before; my expertise was confined largely to the Royal Ranges and the valley between them, and an area about a day’s travel north of Kostɛkhéma. Those areas are pretty heavily hunted, but the southern Spine obviously hasn’t been; it’s too high for the Tutanɛ hunters. So I’ll take parties down there. But don’t worry, we won’t hunt it out!”

“There’d be no way to haul a mastodon out,” said Wékhéstonu.

“Except the ivory,” agreed Gwɛrkhunu. “Actually, I think I could get a rented truck along the western slope of this range to that area, so we could haul out an elephant. We saw sabertooth and panthers, too; they’d be pretty hard to hunt, but they’d make a spectacular trophy.”

“If you can ever capture sabertooth kittens alive, we’ll pay handsomely for them,” said Thornton. “They’re rare animals here and extinct on Gɛdhéma; they were probably wiped out by hunters. If we could raise some in a big cage, I think we’d do it.”

“I’ll remember that.”

They trudged up in silence for a few minutes. At one point they reached a knob sticking out of the side of the mountain and they could see quite far north up the valley, two parallel strips of green grass with a dirty white glacier in between. “I’m sure the glacier is bigger than it used to be,” said Gwɛrkhunu. “Certainly, the river coming out of it is bigger.”

“It should be; this area’s getting two or three times as much precipitation,” said Thornton. “Did these peaks ever get snow in the summer?”

“No, never. And I can remember when the valley didn’t get rain at all for a month or two in the summer and was brown. That never happens now. The eastern slopes of the Spine had scattered pines and grass; now the grass is growing thick and the trees are filling in the meadows.”

“I’m worried about the mastodons and the other large animals,” said Budhu. “Their range is getting squeezed at the higher altitudes by more snow and at lower altitudes by more trees.”

“On the other hand, the alpine vegetation is getting more water and growing faster,” replied Wékhéstonu.

“I suppose we don’t have to worry about selling all the glacier ice,” said Gwɛrkhunu. “They cut the glacier back about thirty meters every summer, since they started selling ice eight years ago, but it advances almost that much every winter. They’re now selling two hundred tonnes a day in the summer; ten truck loads.”

“How many people does it employ?” asked Thornton.

“Fifteen diggers and fifteen drivers, including my brother in law. The trucks are based at Kostɛkhéma, load up in the morning, drive to Mɛlwika or one of the other cities to unload, and get back about sunset, unless they get another job. They haul in all our firewood and coal; that used to be the biggest shortage in Kostɛkhéma. They get pretty good pay. The rest of us provide support to the garrison.”

“You seem to get along fine with the soldiers,” said Wékhéstonu.

“Of course; we’re there because they’re there. Kostakhéma needs factories or something; we’re pretty isolated, there’s no agriculture, not even sheep raising. I can earn a partial living as a hunting guide, but I rely mostly on my veteran’s pension. As the Long Valley is settled more, we’ll probably get more traffic; there’s already one bus a day from Mɛddoakwés and Mɛlwika to the Long Valley and on to Isurdhuna and Néfa. We just started sending a truckload of ice to the Long Valley twice a week.”

“Tourism,” said Thornton. “It’ll come. You have a beautiful turquoise lake, hot springs, a big old fort, incredible scenery, and hunting.”

“Well, we need it sooner rather than later. We’re pretty poor.”

Thornton nodded and they trudged on up the mountain in silence, admiring the scenery.

It took two hours to reach the peak. The mountain was fairly rounded, except for places the glaciers had bitten into it. The route they followed had no cliffs of any significant size to scale. Most of the way up, the ground was covered with packed snow, sometimes criss-crossed by cracks that belied its slow down-slope flow. They were experienced hikers and in excellent physical shape, so they kept going until they reached the actual peak.

It was very exciting when the ground ahead of them began to level off and their vista suddenly began to expand. The peak was fairly flat; they stopped at its highest point. It was midmorning and the sky was clear, so they could see to the distant horizon two or three dozen kilometers away. It was nothing compared to the flatter, more distant horizon of Earth, but it was breathtaking nonetheless.

No one said anything for a moment, then Dwosunu began to chant a hymn of Widumaj that mentioned natural beauty. The others joined in; it seemed like a fitting response. “This is why I love to climb mountains,” said Thornton. “They are a challenge, a lot of work, but the view is the reward.”

“It is very beautiful,” agreed Dwosunu. “I don’t know what Mɛgdontɛr’s problem was.”

“They are so different from the volcanoes on Sumilara,” added Eraru.

“And they have no names,” noted Thornton. “This one, the tallest one, should be named Mégékwɛs.”

The others nodded. Mégékwɛs Éradékumaj "the World Taker" was the great Eryan king in the days of Widumaj who ended the Dark Ages and united the world. He was the greatest of the great.

Dwosunu pointed to the next peak to the north, connected to their peak by a high saddle. "So, is that Géssɛlékwɛs Maj, then?" He was the Queen's grandfather, the reuniter of the world and builder of the Royal Road and Kostakhéma.

Thornton shook his head. "That's the next peak to the north, the world's third highest. That one there should be Duktɛrésto Maj. The Réjé deserves the name of the second highest peak. In the last twelve years, she has led us through some huge changes. She built more roads than her grandfather and tied the kingdom together more permanently. I think she'll be remembered as the greatest monarch after Mégékwɛs."

"But she isn't 'Maj,'" objected Dwosunu.

"I added that because you can't put 'Duktɛrésto' on a peak between the tallest and third tallest peaks with 'Maj' without giving it 'Maj' as well. No, I'm naming that peak Duktɛrésto Maj on the Survey's maps."

That ended that conversation. Dwosunu nodded. They began to walk around the summit, which was mostly snow free. Dwosunu began to pile rocks on the highest point, so they all helped. They speculated about what to name the other peaks, especially the ones across the valley, which were three hundred meters lower. Thornton said the tallest one deserved the name of Naralon, the great Sumi conqueror, and that generated a discussion that became a bit heated.

They sat to eat a snack and enjoy the view a bit longer, before starting back to camp. Then Thornton's cell phone rang. That startled him; the peak was quiet and no one

ever called him. He had charged up the phone the week earlier and it had run the whole time unused, except for a few calls he had made to Lébé.

The others had seen him use the phone, so he pulled it out and opened it. "Khélo?"

"Uncle Thornton, this is Jordan. How are you?"

"Jordan! We're fine. In fact, right now we're sitting on top of the world's tallest mountain, Mount Mégékwɛs, enjoying the view and resting before we start back down."

"You climbed the highest mountain? Wow! It must be beautiful!"

"Oh, the scenery is breathtaking. Really incredible. We're surrounded by snow-covered peaks on three sides and on the west the land drops down into woods and grasslands. To the east is a big glacier."

"I wish I could go with you and see. Maybe someday. Will you be here tonight?"

"Tonight? No. If we had left camp this morning we would have been, but we decided to climb the mountain instead."

"I see. I had said you would probably speak tonight, but I guess that won't happen."

"No, but I probably can speak tomorrow night. We'll go back down to camp and head north, and get maybe fifteen kilometers before sunset. Tomorrow we'll get to Kostakhéma by noon, I suspect. I can call you if our plans change."

"Please do. I'll tell people tomorrow night, though."

"Okay. Don't give me too difficult of a subject!"

"How about 'Bahá'u'lláh's Plan for Humanity?'"

"Sure, I can talk about that. How's everything going?"

“Very well. Enthusiasm is building. We’ve had three Késtonɛ and two Mémɛnɛgonɛ declarations. I think we’ll have some in Altagras, the Ghéslonɛ village seventy kilometers east of us. And Kostakhéma’s cooking! We’ve now had twenty-four declarations here!”

“Fantastic! Follow-up, though, will be tricky, Jordanu. Keep that in mind.”

“I know, I know. But we’ll finish Ruhi Book One in all four places and all four places have literate people who have declared. They can study the books on their own if they have to, and I think we can send them tutors. Don’t worry. I’m going to stay involved in this effort; I’ll do some followup personally.”

“That’s good, and I’ll help, too. But Lébé told me that mom and dad are being kept pretty busy, May and Lua and Amos are helping . . . you probably heard about the trouble in Kɛrda, too.”

“I did. If we don’t grow, we won’t be persecuted, Dhoru.”

“That’s true. Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow, then, and I’ll talk about ‘Bahá'u'lláh’s Plan for Humanity’.”

“Great. I’ve got to go; I’m giving two Ruhi classes today. Bye.”

“Bye.” Thornton closed the phone.

Gwɛrkhunu looked at Thornton. “Such a useful device. I hope they can make radios smaller, we could use something like that on long trips, especially if we have an emergency.”

“The radios are pretty small, but the batteries are very heavy,” replied Thornton. “But a horse could carry it.”

“That’s true.” Gwɛrkhunu nodded and considered the idea. “So, Jordanu is finding people interested in Bahu?”

“Indeed he is, and he is pleased. They’ve also been giving all sorts of useful free classes, too; literacy, accounting, plumbing, knitting, sewing.”

“We need those things at Kostakhéma. And you will speak tomorrow night?”

“If we get to Kostakhéma on time.”

“We should be there by noon, like you said. Have you any objection if I attend the talk?”

“No, not at all. You are welcome.”

“Thank you. I am very curious to hear about Bahu.” He looked at the route on the way down. “Perhaps that can be the subject of conversation as we hike back down.”

Reread and edited 6/7/13, 8/18/17, 11/20/24

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Dénujénésɛ Construction

10 Abɛlménu/30 Aug. yr. 12/630

The bus slowed, then stopped in front of Rudhstélu Wɛransunu's General Store in Tɛrskua. Soru got out, followed by Kanawé, daughter Blorané, almost six years old, and Isuru, 14 months old and very certain of his ability to run. Kanawé immediately grabbed and restrained the boy until the bus pulled away.

They walked past Rudhstélu's store without going in; they were carrying two large canvas bags of goodies from Mɛddoakwés. The school and expanded furniture manufactory were nearby. They quickly switchbacked down the village's main street to the lower level, where Moléstu and Mɛlité lived near the grange building, grain silos, bakery, and grist mill. The house had a fresh coat of light blue stucco and a new corrugated nickel-iron roof. They knocked on the door, and Moléstu was waiting to let them in. "Enter! Welcome! So glad you could make it!"

"We're glad to be back, brother," said Kanawé. She hugged and kissed her older brother.

"The kids are so big! Isuru must be running around by now!"

"Too much, and he's just starting to talk," replied Soru, shaking hands with his brother-in-law. Then he hugged his sister in law, who was pregnant. "How are you doing?" he asked.

"Pretty well. The next two months are the hardest ones. How's Mɛdhé?"

“Managing,” replied Kanawé. “She should be able to travel in a few weeks. The miscarriage has hit her very hard.”

“Well, she’s forty-one. It’s late to have a child,” replied Mɛlitané. “I’m glad I’m not that old with this one.”

“Birth control,” said Moléstu. “I hear there’s a medicine now?”

“Correct,” replied Kanawé. “And it makes life much simpler. I don’t think we want another child.” She looked at Soru, who did; but that was a different matter.

“Is it expensive? Because this one should be our last as well,” he continued.

“No, but she’ll have to visit a doctor.”

“That’s easy.” The adults sat on pillows in the house’s main room. Mɛlitané passed around tea. “So, how’s everything?” asked Moléstu.

Soru shrugged and smiled. “This has been a busy summer. The province of Véspa found the money to offer a month-long conference to its teachers about many educational subjects and most of them wanted to come, so we were in Ora giving classes about special needs, deaf, and blind students. Earlier, there was a similar conference in Mɛlwika. We’re going to Tripola for a week-long teacher’s conference there at the end of the summer. With the new seven year development plan, everyone’s talking about expanding the educational system and upgrading quality.”

“Who was taking care of your students?” asked Mɛlitané. “Especially with Blorakwé traveling all around the world!”

“We have two very good, reliable staff. They did a good job. But now there’s talk of a similar school for the western shore. I stopped in Pértatranisér and talked to Lord Amos, who talked to Lord Kristobéru. I think they’ll support a day school there, and I’m

hoping we can get funding for busses to collect the kids over a huge area, from Isurdhuna to Tripola. But it'll be a year or two before we can get it started."

"And kids who need a boarding school will come to Mɛddoakwés?" asked Moléstu.

Soru nodded. "Assuming we can expand. We'll have to buy land and raise funds to build buildings. And now there's talk about establishing an asylum—a place for people with mental illnesses—and an orphanage, and we're wondering where they should go."

"All this money for people with difficulties; what about money for normal people?" said Moléstu.

"Everyone needs some support," replied Soru.

"I think Tɛrskua's doing pretty well," replied Kanawé. "I see the bakery has opened, and the furniture manufactory has doubled in size."

"Yes," agreed Moléstu. "But the bakery's business is slow because crop prices have been so low this year. Everyone's complaining they have less money than last year. And the furniture manufactory is hiring new people at a pretty low wage because of competition. Some people are taking the bus to Ornakwés or even Mɛddoakwés every day to work in factories in those places."

"Our fields are yielding only a thousand dhanay after taxes," said Mɛlitané. "And I've got a baby coming. I wish Blorakwé were back; I could use her help!"

"But she's in Mɛddoakwés with you now, and she has friends, so we'll manage," said Moléstu. "Besides, if she moved back here, she'd have to work."

"Have your expenses gone up that much?" asked Soru.

"Vegetables and other basic food items are cheaper, but we're buying pasta and other things from the store, so the cost of food is about the same. We have electricity, and coal for heat and cooking; I don't want to go back to hauling firewood every day without Blorakwé being here," replied Mɛlitané. "And we want to buy clothes and things . . . so indeed, expenses are up."

"I understand," said Soru. "What about your construction work, Moléstu?"

"I think I can get the contract to expand the pasta factory in Tritɛjna. The problem is getting there and getting materials, which is the problem of getting to just about any construction job I might get. It's hard to rent a truck right now. I'm not sure why; there are more of them around, but I think there are a *lot* more people wanting to rent them. The daily rental price has gone up. The grange is less able to provide."

"That's too bad. Maybe you could get a bank loan to buy one?"

"I've thought about that, but a friend of mine said even the grange can't get bank loans to buy vehicles because there's no insurance available and the bank doesn't want to take the chance that it'll lose everything."

"Really?" said Soru, surprised. "Banks give mortgages to houses, and if the house meets construction standards and is in an area served by a fire station, the bank will provide insurance at a fee."

"But not for vehicles, apparently. And I've seen smashed or even badly damaged vehicles. They are easier to destroy than a house!"

Kanawé looked at Soru expectantly. He saw the look and knew what it meant. As the head of a school and a veteran teacher, the two of them had a combined family income of 5,500 dhanay per year, an income almost ten times as great as a typical peasant

farmer's ten years ago. Consequently, they had paid off the mortgage on their house in Mɛlwika already and were sinking much of it into their school, even if it wasn't their own personal property.

"What if we buy a pickup truck as partners?" suggested Soru. "I'll put up the money, you use it to build up your business, then pay me back over five years. How much does one cost?"

"The new price is only 2,500 dhanay," said Moléstu quickly. "They were 3,000 back in the spring, when they first came off the new assembly line. They say the price may fall more if demand rises enough."

"Imagine that," said Mɛlitané.

"I don't want to take advantage of your generosity in any way, Soru, and I don't want you to feel pressured or put out. And I want to support my family by myself."

"Of course, but we're all family. Your construction company can grow and bring honor to all of us if we help it. And I can help it. I don't have 2,500 dhanay on hand, but I can get it in a few weeks."

"Really?" said Mɛlitané, surprised.

"I think we have about that much saved toward retirement," said Kanawé. "And we are allowed to borrow against it. We pay ourselves back plus a very modest 2% interest fee for the paperwork."

"What's this?" said Moléstu, puzzled.

"The retirement savings," replied Soru. He realized that Moléstu didn't know the Eryan term for "retirement." "Old age savings. It's standard for all teachers, Miller industries, and the Mennea Tomi companies. For every sixteen dhanay you receive as

salary, one additional dhanay is put into an old age bank account. The rules on the account are strict. You can not withdraw it until you are at least 70 years old or you are unable to work because of health. When you die, the account goes to your heirs. It earns five percent interest per year. If you want to buy a house or need an emergency loan, you can borrow the money, but you must pay it back at seven percent interest; five percent you are paying to yourself and two percent to the bank for managing the loan."

"What if you fail to pay it back?" asked Moléstu.

"It's taken right out of your salary, so you never even see the money you are paying back. But if you lose the job and can't pay it back, the money is declared income, which means you have to pay taxes on it. As long as it sits in the account and earns interest, you don't have to pay tax on it. The law right now does not tax interest. So when I am seventy years old and I stop working, I'll have about ten years salary and I can start taking the money out to live on, and will have to pay only a small amount of tax on the total."

"That's a good benefit, if the bank doesn't collapse and the money disappears," said Moléstu. "Look, I'll pay the two percent, Soru. That's only fair."

"Alright. That's not a lot. If I make it a five year loan I have to pay back 500 dhanay per year, and two percent interest on 2500 dhanay would be 50 dhanay. The next year, the loan will be smaller and the interest even less."

"But Moléstu, do you think with a truck you can get a construction business going?" asked Mɛlitané seriously.

He nodded vigorously. "Yes, I think so. I've already done a job here and one in Tritɛjna and I worked in construction in Mɛlita and Mɛddoakwés. With a truck I can get

myself and my guys to a work site every day. I can also pick up supplies myself, which eliminates delivery fees; if I charge them toward the truck, it'd help pay for it!"

"As long as the truck works, too, you can always sell it," added Soru. "Right now, demand for vehicles is so high, a used vehicle is worth almost as much as a new one!"

"That's true," agreed Moléstu. "If I don't have a construction job, I can hire my truck and myself out to others anyway. They're even being used as taxis."

"They're a lot faster, more powerful, and more convenient than horses," said Soru. He offered his right hand, the one that one shakes to make a binding agreement. "It's a deal, then. I'll get the 2,500 dhanay and you pay me back over five years at two percent interest."

"Deal." They shook hands. "The Dénujénésɛ Construction Company is born."

They all laughed. Almost two years ago Moléstu and Mɛlitané, needing a family name, had adopted the same family name that Soru and Kanawé had chosen. Majéstu, Moléstu and Kanawé's younger brother, adopted it as well.

"It's a good name for a construction company," said Soru, smiling.

He and Moléstu began to talk about the next steps: hiring help and getting contracts. Soru had been essential for him to get the pasta factory job because Chris Mennea wanted a written bid and Moléstu's literacy had been almost nonexistent at the time. Soru, however, had done the writing and Moléstu had learned how to produce a written estimate. Soru was happy to help further and even said he could find a used typewriter for Mɛlitané to use, if she wanted to become office staff. "Why not, she wants to learn to read," agreed Moléstu. Mɛlitané, by then in the kitchen area with Kanawé, heartily agreed.

The four of them chatted about just about everything for the rest of the morning while Isuru and Blorané played with their eleven year old cousin, Skandéstu, and the women prepared lunch. They had a grand lunch together, then sat, drank tea, and listened to the radio that Moléstu had bought a few months ago. Then Soru looked at the little clock on the wall.

"It's 1 p.m. here. Would you like to call Blorakwé?"

"Call Blorakwé?" Moléstu was shocked by the suggestion.

"Yes. She wrote us a letter and sent us a telephone number; Mɛlwika 7008."

"She sent that to us as well, but I didn't understand it at all. She's not in Mɛlwika."

"She said it was Jordanu's phone," explained Kanawé. "Apparently he has a telephone that is a radio and the Mɛlwika telephone operator can connect to it."

"We can call Mɛlwika for a dontay from the store, right?" asked Soru.

"Sure," said Moléstu. "But . . . are you sure that'll work?"

"Hey, it's my dontay! In her letter she said to call an hour before the eclipse; they're in Pértatranisér and that's when they eat breakfast. And I know Jordanu, I can talk to him easily."

"Let's do it," Mɛlitané said, looking at Moléstu.

"Alright." He rose, turned off the radio, and they all walked out the door to head for the store. "Twelve weeks she's been traveling all around this world." He shook his head.

"They've had quite an adventure," replied Kanawé. "I'm envious. Imagine living in villages in the South Shore, Lɛwéspa, Véspa, and Kɛrda, Tutanɛ villages, crossing the

Long Valley and the Spine! They've never had any serious trouble, they've taught hundreds of people sewing and knitting and reading . . . my brother, you should be proud of your daughter, she has been bold and courageous."

"I suppose. And she's helped make a lot of converts, I hear."

"Seven hundred," replied Soru, calmly. "In my opinion, this has been a historic event. It's the first time a group of youth have traveled literally around the world to serve people."

"I hope she hasn't fallen in love with anyone."

"Mitrukaru and Kordé are chaperoning them," replied Kanawé, though she was a bit worried; Blorakwé had mentioned Budhéstu a lot in her letters.

"All these new things that young people can do," said Moléstu. "I don't know what to think of them. They're so . . . *different.* It's one thing to worry about all this traveling. A decade ago, Ora was a ten-day walk. Now it's a five-hour drive. That's strange enough. But young people traveling together without their parents . . . that's really strange! I guess they've been accepted, though."

"They have," agreed Kanawé. "They've made friends everywhere, they've brought people together around the world—they brought two Tutanɛ youth with them to Pértatranisér—and they knit together all sorts of ties between villages. And they've really helped some places. Several villages now have safe drinking water."

"That's very good," replied Mɛlitané.

They all walked into Rudhstélu Wɛranosunu's store. He was sitting by his work space; a group of children were sitting on the floor drinking mugs of milk, their mothers having given them a kɛntay and a mug to buy the cold, fresh beverage.

Rudhstélu waved. “Greetings!”

“Greetings, honored,” replied Moléstu. “How are you today?”

“Well, well. I see Kanawé has come with her family again. Good to see all of you again.”

“Thank you,” said Soru. “Your family’s well?”

“Oh, yes. My son and his wife have a baby boy and they’re farming lots of land now, and the store is doing pretty well. How’s Mitrukaru? He didn’t come with you this time?”

“No, he’s visiting Pértatranisér right now.”

“Way over there! Wow! What took him there?”

“A group of Bahá'í youth are traveling to villages offering all sorts of classes; he and his wife, Kordé, are chaperoning them. In fact, Blorakwé is with them and we want to call Mɛlwika in order to be connected to them.”

“Call Mɛlwika to call Pértatranisér? I don’t allow calls outside the valley on this phone, unless it’s an extreme emergency. I’ve been stuck with expensive calls more than once.”

“This is just a call to Mɛlwika 7008.”

“There is no 7008, Mɛlwika numbers start with 2000 and now with 3000.”

“Try it,” replied Soru. He reached into his pocket. “Here’s a dontay for the call.”

Rudhstélu nodded. “Alright.” He reached to the switchboard and connected his phone to the village’s single long distance line, then he cranked. A moment later the ɛjnopéla operator answered. “I want Mɛlwika 7008, please . . . yes, I know, but that’s the number I want, could you connect me to the Mɛlwika operator please? This is the

Tɛrskua operator." There was a long pause. "Yes, this is the Tɛrskua operator. I'd like to be connected to Mɛlwika 7008. Am I to understand that this is a local call, just like a call to Mɛlwika 2008 or 3008? . . . Jordanu Shirazi's number?" Soru nodded vigorously. "That's correct, operator." Then he handed the phone to Soru. "It's a local call, like you said."

"Thank you." Soru took the phone. He could hear an unusual sound over the line as Jordan's phone rang. It rang seven times, then he heard a "Khélo." "Jordanu, this is Soru Denujénésɛ. Blorakwé said that if we wanted to talk to her, we could call you at this phone. Is that possible?"

"Soru, Alláh-u-Abhá! Yes, Blorakwé's right here; we're all eating breakfast. Just a second, I'll hand the phone to her. I hope you are well?"

"Yes, we're all fine. Kanawé and I are visiting her parents right now and we were hoping to say hello to her."

"Of course. Hold on."

A pause. "Uncle Soru, Alláh-u-Abhá! Thank you for calling!"

"Khélo, dear. Kanawé and I are in Tɛrskua General Store right now with your mother, father, and brother and we thought we'd give you a call." He beckoned the others to come close and he held the phone out so everyone could listen. "How are you doing?"

"I'm fine! It's early morning here and we're eating breakfast before we go to Boléripura and Owyapéla. I'll be in Boléripura today teaching women how to use a sewing machine. This is the original home village of Primanu; you may have met him, his foster father is Snékwu who is on the Ornakwés Grange Council. His mother couldn't feed him and put him on a bus to Mɛlwika when he was ten to get rid of him, and Snékwu

took him in. Boléripura's a pretty poor village; not much development, though they now have a road and a school, and they're getting electricity and a telephone connection next month. It's really interesting to see all these places. So many poor people in this world!"

"Hello dear," exclaimed Mɛlitané.

"Hi, mom! How are you!"

"We're fine and missing you very much! The pregnancy is getting difficult now, but I saw a doctor a few weeks ago and she said the baby seemed to be fine. I think it's a boy; he's kicking a lot."

"Oh, mom, I'm sure that's an old wive's tale. Khwanu never tries to diagnose the sex of a baby!"

"Well, maybe he doesn't know how to!"

"Is dad there, too?"

"I'm right here, dear. Are you enjoying your adventure?"

She wasn't sure what to make of that, but at least he said 'adventure' in a neutral way. "We're doing fine. I'll tell you, dad, we could use you right now. Boléripura's next to the sea and its main well is getting salty, which is giving the people health problems. Tomasu's trying to plan a well in a sandy are near the river and the rice paddies on the land side of the village—it's built on a kind of peninsula with the sea on one side and rice paddies on the other—and they have to install about a hundred meters of pipe! The villagers are fascinated and have gotten involved, but no one has quite the right skills to do it."

"A hundred meters of pipe; that's a lot. I wish I was there, I might be able to help. The nickel-steel pipes don't rust practically at all, but I hear salt water is bad for pipes."

“We’re getting a visit from the Pértatranisér city engineer tomorrow; Jordanu was able to arrange it. He’ll show the men how to do it. I’ll tell you, we’re working *very* hard, but it’s really fun, too. At night we sing Bahá'í songs together and people come listen and ask questions, and some join Bahá'í classes. So we’re providing both material and spiritual services. We’re doing a lot of praying!”

“That’s good,” said Moléstu, though he was skeptical of its value. “Well, be careful, dear, and stay safe.”

“We’re safe, dad.”

“Do you understand them when they speak?” asked Mɛlitané.

“Well, sometimes Primanu has to translate! They understand us better than we understand them because they’ve learned the hymns of Widumaj with an accent similar to ours.”

“Are people becoming Bahá'ís?” asked Soru.

“We’ve been here only a week, so it’s early. No one has declared in Boléripura or Owyapéla yet. But in Jathisérvika and Nuvika—two villages south of Pértatranisér, in northern Véspa—the people have heard of the Faith a little and there were already small Bahá'í groups. We’ve had about twenty declarations there already. And now we have two Bahá'ís in Pértatranisér who are helping, so there will be follow up when we leave.”

“Congratulations,” said Soru. “That’s good news.”

“When will you be home?” asked Moléstu.

“Not long now, father. We’re staying here two more weeks, then we’re going to Sumiupɛrakwa and neighboring villages for two or maybe three weeks, then we’ll be home. So a month or less. That’s when school starts. And mom, I think I should move

home for six months and go to ɛjnopéla High School for a while to help you with the baby, or maybe skip school completely for six months so I can help you. I've been thinking and praying about it, so I'm glad you called. I want to do it."

Mɛlitané felt a tear well up in one eye. "Dear, that's incredibly sweet and caring of you," she said, her voice breaking a bit with emotion.

There was a pause. "Then that's definitely what I'll do, mom. I want to help."

Mɛlitané turned to Moléstu, beaming with pride in her daughter, and he was surprised and proud as well.

"We can spare you," added Soru. "Isuru and Blorané will miss you, but we'll try to come down to Tɛrskua often so we can all see each other."

"Thank you, uncle. But I do want to get back to Mɛddoakwés and finish high school, and I do want to go to génadɛma and become a teacher. But now I'm thinking I want to be a teacher of women, not of children. There is so much that needs to be done to help adults in this world; so many skills that can be shared. It's really amazing how much can be done."

"So, this trip has changed you," said Kanawé.

"Yes, I think I've grown up a lot."

"I think you have, too," added Moléstu. "And we'll support your efforts to become a teacher, Blorakwé. We can see that it's important to you, and you can do a lot. We'll help."

"Thanks, dad," she replied, and her voice cracked with emotion as well. "Well, I had better go now, we're almost ready to drive to Boléripura. We're staying in the many

spare rooms that the Mennea house has, so we're very comfortable. But we're spending 12 to 16 hours a day in the villages."

"Bye, dear," they all said in near unison.

"Bye bye," she replied, and then Soru put down the phone.

They said goodbye to Rudhstélu and began to walk out. "There was a confidence in her voice," said Moléstu. "Did you hear it? It was unmistakable."

"I heard it," agreed Mɛlitané. "Our baby's a woman, Moléstu."

"She is. This has been quite a trip for her, dear. Perhaps it has been a blessing after all."

"So, you think she should finish high school?" asked Soru.

"And go to génadɛma, if that is her wish. I am very touched to hear what she has been doing for people. It is a drive that needs a reward. I guess Dénujénésɛ Construction is more important than ever."

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The Salon

12 Abɛlménu 630/ early Sept. 12

Chris, Liz, and Brébéstu drove around Tripola on the ring road surrounding the city. Even it was extremely slow, however, for it was choked with wagons, horses, pedestrians, and vehicles. “I can’t believe this,” said Brébéstu. “It looks like the entire South Shore has shown up for the dedication.”

“South Shore and more,” said Chris, pointing. “That car’s license plate starts with 5; it’s from Véspa. I think half the old houses have followed her entourage this year.”

“Lobbying.” Brébéstu sighed. “They want the new development grants *and* the old pensions.”

“I’m sure. How many new townships have been opened in this province?”

“Three, but Brébatroba is a hugely long township and eventually will be split. We’ve got eight ‘estates’ of three thousand agris each, and on average half the land has been sold to farmers. So we have eight lordly families that are richer than ever and want to get even richer.”

“It’s a shame they aren’t willing to invest in factories and other businesses,” said Chris. They had just visited three estates and two village lords to discuss investments.

“I’m sorry it was such a disappointing trip for you,” said Brébéstu. “But I am sure you’ll have more success with the factory owners in Akɛlséra. They know how to think about investing money.”

"I agree, but it's a shame all of the South Shore's industry will continue to be concentrated in one place. I had hoped to spread out the development more. That's better for the people."

"At least we were able to help Wɛranopéla," said Liz. "They have some capable people, thanks to the early development of their school and Aryéstu's visits home."

"They're able to handle a potato and corn processing facility," agreed Chris. "Last year's plan to manufacture sandals there collapsed, but now I see why, and we can avoid that fate this time. The province needs a corn and potato processing facility, and with the province's expansion northeastward, Wɛranopéla's ideally located for agricultural support businesses."

Brébéstu pointed to a gate in the city wall. "Go in there. I'll show you a back route to the new palace."

Chris nodded and turned right, then immediately left as directed by Brébéstu. The alley was crowded with pedestrians, but they made better progress toward West Square than they would have otherwise. Brébéstu pointed to a small space in front of a door in a new stone structure. "That's the palace; park there."

Chris nodded and carefully pulled the rover into the tiny space. They got out and Brébéstu pulled out a key that opened the back door. They entered the palace. "It's a long structure, north-south, with eastern and western wings connected in the front and back. The west wing is reserved for her Majesty and royal government functions; the city's post office and switchboard are there, and they've hired fifteen staffers to audit tax records and disburse grants. This is the east wing; it has the governor's residence and the

provincial offices. The front has the grand entrances to both wings and the city hall between them."

"So, have you moved in yet?"

"No, because Gugéndu has been lobbying to move in instead. I hope her Majesty resolves the issue while she's here."

They walked down a long hallway that connected room after room together. The walls were magnificent carved wood or molded and painted plaster interrupted by frequent, large glass windows that allowed light to pour in through rich draperies. "This is beautiful workmanship."

"It better be. The crown spent a million dhanay over two years on this palace and the new marketplace. It employed three hundred workers full time and was responsible for this city's population growing by a thousand people. Now we're hoping the marketplace will produce enough business to keep them here."

"How much was spent on visiting Sumi craftsmen?"

"A lot! They're on their way to Bɛllɛdha now, to work on the palace there. Believe it or not, this palace has over one hundred telephones! They really concentrated on making it modern."

They entered the formal entrance hall for the provincial wing from the back. They stopped to admire the magnificent space, with its arched stone ceiling and stained glass windows. Brébéstu led them upstairs to the second floor of the City Hall part of the building, where there was a balcony and a series of windows overlooking West Square. They stopped in front of one window that overlooked the seventy-five by one hundred meter square. It was packed with people waiting to enter the stores and public parts of the

palace, once Her Majesty had addressed the crowd and dedicated the space. That was scheduled to happen in a few minutes.

"Ah, governor, there you are," said Estoiyaju, walking down the hall. "I was just coming to look for you. I sent some aides to find you and they said you weren't in your office."

"I just arrived."

"I see." Estoiyaju glanced at Chris and Liz nervously, then nodded in greeting to them. "Her Majesty wishes to meet with you immediately."

"Right before her address?"

"Indeed, right away."

"Alright." Brébéstu turned to Chris. "The two of you can stay here and watch the ceremony, if you'd like. It'll be easier than wading into the crowd."

"Thank you, you are very kind," replied Liz, nodding.

Brébéstu turned and walked down the hallway toward the West Wing with Estoiyaju. The Menneas watched the preparations for the ceremony and walked up and down the hallway to see the new building, which was beautiful. "The new knowledge is producing some pretty remarkable new prosperity," Chris noted.

"It is. The problem is focusing prosperity on human development, not on pretty buildings and luxuries."

"Some of that is to be expected. The Bahá'í Faith has some rather beautiful buildings, and it makes sense that city halls would as well; they are symbols of their community."

“That’s true,” she conceded. “But we have to do more about human development, Chris, especially the development of women.”

“I know, and I’m glad you have a meeting with several prominent women. I like the idea of Women’s Centers in all major cities where they can learn skills and work.”

“It’s working in Bɛllɛdha. It’s the best way to accomplish much of the next doubling of the economy, because it doubles the size of the money-earning workforce.”

“I know, though it’ll cost us without bringing us much return! I wish we could find more people able to plan and run complex operations. Half the people I’ve talked to were unwilling or unable to do what was needed, and now I have to go back to every city and village I’ve visited this summer and solve problems: hold coalitions together, recalculate costs, tweak plans . . .I was never able to find someone down here to open a chicken growing and processing operation.”

“Even though Ekwɛru’s from this province and has a lot of cousins. I was surprised. Can you send Luktréstu?”

“I think I’ll try that first; he can straighten out problems and telephone me to confirm them. Oh, I see the queen stepping out onto the balcony. Her husband and the crown prince are with her, and Gugéndu, and Brébéstu. And . . . is that Wɛrétrakɛstɛr?”

“I think so. Let’s watch.” They opened the window slightly to stick their heads out a bit and get a better view. The royal party waved and the crowd roared a greeting in reply. Finally, her Majesty raised her hand.

“Thank you, my loyal subjects,” she began. “Tripola is one of my favorite cities to visit. The greeting is always warm, the reception joyful, and the news of the South Shore is almost always good.

"Today this remarkable region of the realm achieves a historic milestone: a new center for its market and its government. Tripola is an ancient city and a purely Eryan one; for over a thousand years it has steadily grown as three villages merged and worked together to develop the southern shore. It has long had excellent relations with its Tutanɛ neighbors. In the last ten years it has experienced remarkable development and has been an example to the entire world.

"It can thank two men of vision for its decade of accomplishments. Duke Gugéndu launched it on a path of growth and Governor Brébéstu has shepherded it through a remarkable acceleration of development over the last five years. Brébéstu conceived of West Square and pulled together the mix of merchants and tax funds that made it possible. He oversaw the expansion of the province northeastward, the definitive addition of two thousand square kilometers of land in dispute with the Kwétékwonɛ, and the establishment of three new townships. Finally, he has strengthened the provinces' schools, the hospital, clinics, its agriculture, and its factories, with the result that in five years the province has grown richer by half. In gratitude, I made him Lord of Brébatroba, and today I add to that the honorary title of 'Count of the Southeastern Towns.' Let us thank him for his years of selfless service to this province and the realm."

She pointed to Brébéstu and everyone applauded and cheered. He was a popular governor. But Chris saw in his friend's body language a stiffness that seemed out of place.

"On this day, South Shore sees yet another transition in leadership and the start of a new era. Duke Gugéndu now resumes his role as chief executive of the province and the city, and as my chief assistant and advisor for this region. Count Brébéstu returns to

his businesses and his village with my deepest thanks and heart-felt gratitude. I am confident that his contributions to this region will continue and remain significant in his new role. Duke Gugéndu now will speak about his plans."

The Queen retreated a bit to make way for Gugéndu. Chris turned to Liz, startled by the development; she returned his looks with a surprised glance of her own. Gugéndu had been standing on the balcony with a sort of grin on his face; now he was smiling to the crowd.

"My fellow royal subjects and residents of this great province," he began. "We all owe Count Brébéstu a great debt for leading us forward so decisively yet persuasively for the last five years. I thank him for his wisdom and prudence, his foresight and patience. I count him among my closest friends. Let us thank him again." He began to applaud and the crowded erupted in loud cheers.

Chris shook his head. "Buddy-buddy, huh? Gugéndu has constantly undermined him for five years, has blocked some development efforts, and has functioned more like an enemy."

"It's easy to be nice when you've defeated someone."

The applause finally began to subside, so Gugéndu raised a hand. "The next seven years will see even more remarkable transformations of the South Shore. All summer, a group of us have been converting the Crown Prince's Seven Year Development Plan into a specific plan that can work here. The plan calls for a thirty percent expansion of our industry every year, a five fold increase over seven years. Every village will have a factory. School attendance will double. High school attendance will triple. The Génadɛma will at least double in size. Our incomes will double. Every village will have a water

system. Tripola will grow to over ten thousand people and will host two high schools. Its telephone switchboard will be able to handle a thousand phones.

"To accomplish this leap forward, we will devote a hundred thousand dhanay to economic development and a similar amount to education. We will tap the deep wells of talent of our people, their desire to work hard for the goal of a better life for their children, and we will move forward together. I pledge to you every ounce of my energy and every minute of my time to the development of the people of the South Shore. Thank you." He stopped for applause and received a warm reception, though it was not as enthusiastic as Brébéstu's.

"Alright, what will you do that's new," commented Chris quietly in English. "All of that comes from the prince's development plan."

The Queen stepped forward again. "South Shore province remains in good hands, well governed and progressing. I declare the stores and market stalls of West Square open. Let us enjoyed this new heart of Tripola and celebrate this day." She turned and led her party off the balcony.

The crowd cheered and applauded one more time, then people turned toward the doors in order to enter and see the interiors. It was utterly impossible for everyone to go in, so many headed out of the square and home. They stood and watched the crowd, uncertain what to say about what they had just seen, especially since Brébéstu or anyone else could come by.

"I suppose the new Home Improvement Store will sell out today," Chris said, idly. "They've been the big driver of the economy's growth this year. Each new store seems to

bring half a million dhanay out of mattresses and holes in the ground and into the economy."

"Maybe we should leave," said Liz. "Brébéstu may not be coming back here soon."

"Perhaps you're right." Chris looked up and down the hallway.

Just then they heard footsteps. It was Brébéstu. "I would be remiss to leave you here, so allow me to escort you back to your car."

"Thank you," said Chris. Brébéstu looked stiff, awkward, maybe even angry, but they couldn't speak. The three of them walked down the hall, descended the stairs, then traveled along the corridor running the length of the east wing. Only when they stepped outside to the car did any of them dare to speak.

"Are you alright?" asked Liz.

Brébéstu nodded. "Gugéndu pulled the same trick on me that the crown prince pulled on Wɛranolubu, though I don't see much new to his so-called 'plan.'"

"I wonder whether Wɛrétrakɛstɛr had anything to do it," said Chris, worriedly.

"I think so! He said to me 'you Bahá'ís are so good at making money and developing people, but the lovers of Widumaj should be in charge of the kingdom.' That startled me."

"Hum." Chris considered that. "Her Majesty did give you a title, though."

"Yes. She said I was an honorary Count. Just like Wɛranolubu is 'Count of the Gédhakwés.' And she gave me a hundred thousand dhanay, just like him. It's the way she eases people out of positions of authority."

"Yes, but one does wonder whether it is a warning to Gugéndu, too, not to screw up again. If the duke fails, the count can be brought back."

"I suppose. I'm in so much shock right now, I don't know."

"This is no time to talk about the future," said Chris. "But call us; we'll be at Tripola Palace Hotel for three days. Every cloud has a silver lining. Your businesses have suffered from neglect. We badly need people we can partner with to open factories. Not only are you a good partner; you're a good mentor for upcoming businessmen. You may be able to do more for the province as its leading entrepreneur than as its governor. You'll certainly be able to do more for yourself and for the Faith."

"I suppose you're right. Certainly, I'll be able to make it to more meetings of the Central Spiritual Assembly! I've got to get back to the Queen, then I've got to go home. Pray for me."

"We will." Chris and Liz gave him a hug, then he hurried inside and they got into the rover.

"So, is this persecution?" asked Liz.

Chris started the car. "I don't know."

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Brébéstu called them that evening and invited them to his house for tea with him and his wife after the kids were asleep. They commiserated and planned how he would return to his businesses and invest the hundred thousand dhanay that Her Majesty had already given him.

The next morning, Chris and Liz left the hotel—a new construction attached to the West Square Marketplace—for a shop in the old marketplace two hundred meters

east. It occupied half of the first floor of an old building on the old market square, the other half of which was vacant. It was an old-style shop where large glass-less windows were open to the air unless they were covered by heavy wooden and iron shutters. Inside were hundreds of barrels and pots filled with herbs and traditional medicines of all sorts, though the teas and coffee beans—which had been sold as herbs and medicines all along in Éra's shops—were now moved into a separate section.

"Ooh, she really has a good variety," said Liz. "Mɛlwika's herbalists would have trouble competing with this place." She stopped to admire barrels of dried flowers and inhale their aroma.

Then a woman came out from the back with beautifully tended hair, a simple but elegant robe, and a perfumed smell. She was 35, though her missing teeth and wrinkled skin made her look years older. "Are you Lady Lizé and Lord Kristoféru?"

Chris noted that she had been able to pronounce the "f" in his name; the south shore's accent, like the eastern shore, normally had no "f". "Yes, that is us," replied Liz. "Estoréjé, I presume?"

"Indeed. I am honored to meet both of you and to welcome you to my shop." She extended one hand to Liz and they shook, then both to Chris; an unusual gesture, since men and women usually shook only one hand as well. A two-hand shake was something men did amongst each other. Chris offered both hands back, and he could see that he liked her. Her name was intriguing as well; no doubt "God is sovereign" was the official meaning, but "God is Queen" was technically the accurate rendering.

"You have a marvelous herbal shop," said Liz. "I could smell it twenty meters down the street. And such variety! I see things from Tutanɛ lands and from Sumilara."

"My husband worked hard for fifteen years to build up the business, which he inherited from his father. When he died it proved fairly easy for me to continue it, though I didn't believe it would be. Herbs are an unusual commodity and there is only one other shop in town; there was no powerful guild to exclude me, which there would have been if I had inherited a shoe shop."

"And now the shoe makers guild is collapsing anyway; just as well this wasn't a shoe shop," added Chris.

"Yes, they can't compete with shoe manufactories on price and variety. Old Market Square is almost dead, but I don't think I need to move to West Square because everyone still walks through here on their way there, and because this square is becoming the principal food market anyway. Besides, my rent can only go down!"

"Are most of the old shops and stalls vacant?" asked Chris.

She nodded. "Two thirds. I suppose you invested in West Square, lord?"

"Not directly, but I am invested in Home Improvement, and they have the biggest single store in West Square."

"I'm afraid by comparison my small shop is rather plain and boring."

"Not at all," replied Liz. "And we understand you are interested in supporting a women's center because of the cooking aspect."

"Exactly. I sell herbs and spices, so cooking is important to my business. It is also important to me; I love to cook and consider myself reasonably good. But cooking is also important to women, and I like the idea of a center to help advance women. We need it here very badly."

"What about the other aspects of the Women's Center, like sewing and knitting?"

“I am not such an expert in either. I can sew, of course. But I don’t know how to use a sewing machine.”

“That’s alright. What we need is a manager of a women’s center, and someone who is in business is often the perfect person to do it. Let me give an example. In Bɛllɛdha, the women’s center is associated with a tailor shop. The tailor was able to acquire additional space and purchased several extra sewing machines. He teaches women how to use them and allows women to come in any time to use them as long as he receives a modest rental fee or a share of the profits of anything they sell. We were able to add another large room to the tailor shop, install four gas stoves, and hire a woman to run it. Women come to cook together and sell the results; the profit helps support the Women’s Center and the staff. But we need a business person—an honest one—to keep the books and watch the place for theft and neglect.”

“I see. So, my business would continue as before and I would run it, but I would also watch over this other operation? I could do that if it were located in this same building. Right now, the other store is vacant, and so are some rooms on the second and third floors.”

“This is a boarding house?”

“Exactly.”

Liz turned to Chris to see what he was thinking. His face told her he was pleased with what he had heard, so far.

Just then the front door jingled as a woman entered. Estorájé saw her and smiled. “Greetings, Sarané.”

“Greetings, Estoréjé. I see you have prominent guests. Lord Kristobéru, you may remember meeting me last year when her Majesty was in Tripola. We talked with Brébéstu in the old palace. My husband is Wérdéu’s brother.”

“Oh, yes, I remember meeting you now! Your husband owns a textile factory here in town and sells clothing.”

“Exactly. It is an honor to see you again.” She turned to Estoréjé. “I’ll come back this afternoon. I was hoping you could cut and make up my hair.”

“Certainly; any time this afternoon. I have someone else coming for a haircut at 1:30.”

“Alright.”

“So, you cut hair as well?” asked Liz, surprised.

“She’s the best in the kingdom,” replied Sarané. “And I’m not exaggerating; I’ve had my hair done in Mɛddoakwés.”

Liz looked at Estoréjé’s beautifully arranged hair. “I see you are quite good.”

“It’s something I do to earn a little extra money. Sometimes my hair customers have to wait while I sell herbs and spices, or vice versa. It’s something I could stop doing.”

“No, not at all,” replied Liz, as a lightbulb went off in her head. “Women want to look beautiful. It’s a natural business to associate with a women’s center.”

“Women’s Center?” asked Sarané, interested. “What’s that?”

“The idea is to establish a place where women from all across the town—rich or poor—could come together to teach or learn new skills and make things together, both for

their families and for sale. The Bɛllɛdha Women's Center has sewing, cooking, and knitting."

"I see, but how does the Center survive?"

"It has to be subsidized somewhat, but having a business able to monitor and administer the Center helps a lot."

"And we'll help support the Center," added Chris. "That's my principal reason for coming here today. If Liz had come by herself, we were afraid you might not believe her."

"We work in a man's world," agreed Estoréjé. "So, what happens to my business?"

"That's up to you," said Liz. "It can continue in a part of the Center or can be merged with the Center."

"What sort of costs per year will this Center have?" asked Sarané, who had become fascinated by the idea.

"There are set-up costs and operating costs. Set-up involves the place, getting the stoves, ice boxes, sewing machines, tables, chairs, electrical lights, a telephone, etc. Operating costs involve heat, light, taxes, and the salaries of the women who teach classes and supervise the place. We're prepared to provide ten thousand of each."

"Ten thousand?" Estoréjé was surprised it was so much. She pointed to the building around them. "This building is for sale; the owner has moved his clothing business to West Square. I think the cost is fifty-five hundred."

"That's a bit much," said Chris, looking at the old beams.

“Are you’re looking for partners?” asked Sarané. “I know I wasn’t invited to be part of this discussion, but I think my husband would be willing to help.”

“We’re open to that,” replied Chris.

“I’m curious about the hair business,” said Liz. “In Mɛlwika we have several barber shops that cut men’s hair, but no place cuts women’s hair. There’s a place I’ve heard about in Mɛddoakwés, though.”

“It’s all informal business,” said Sarané. “Estoréjé has a chair in the back room that she uses. In any town there are two or three places like that.”

“Is there any reason it has to be in the back? Because women, obviously, need to have their hair cut and most women like to have their hair done up occasionally. On Gɛdhéma it’s a big business, and a major source of employment for women.”

Estoréjé looked at Sarané. “I didn’t put it in front because I knew I could sell herbs.”

“Agreed; it’s part time work, after all.”

“I see. It doesn’t have to be any more. The average family income in Tripola five years ago was maybe 650 dhanay after taxes. Now it’s maybe 950. That’s a big increase and there’s no reason the average woman in town couldn’t spend a few dhanay a year on her hair, skin, fingernails, etc. Multiply three dhanay a year times 2,000 women and you have six thousand dhanay. I think beauty could be an important aspect of the Women’s Centers around the realm.”

“That’s fine with me,” said Estoréjé. “Of course, all I have is a chair, scissors, and a mirror.”

"We can improve on that," replied Liz. "Are you willing to learn some new techniques? Because I once had some training and could provide it to you. And I think we can get more information as well."

Estorájé nodded. "I'm willing to learn. I can read and write, though not well. I follow my husband's system for tracking income and expenses and I am sure it can be improved on. Yes, that will be part of my commitment to this place. I'd rather merge my business with the Center than keep it separate; it would be easier."

"It would," agreed Chris. "It might be better if you were on salary as head of the Center and that the spice and herb business continue as part of the Center. Then any woman who is part of the Center could help sell the herbs and its profits would support the Center."

"How will women join it?" asked Sarané.

"The Mɛlwika Center charges a small annual membership fee; three dhanay," replied Liz. "It encourages women to use the Center. Anyone who uses a sewing machine has to pay a small fee to rent it, but it is pretty cheap; four dontay to make a dress, three to make a shirt. The same with using a stove. The stoves use gas and the oven has a thermostat that allows you to set the temperature and leave something a predictable amount of time, so cooking is made easier. The Center buys cloth, yarn, and cooking supplies in bulk and sells them back cheaply. It also has a store where products the women make can be sold and a day care facility where children can be left. Women can work at the Center for modest pay or volunteer to cover their dues and equipment rental. The Bɛllɛdha Center is smaller and has some of these services. The Tripola Center will be our third one."

"How many women use them?"

"In Mɛlwika, 500; in Bɛlledha, 200. The Center has free classes also. The Mɛlwika Center covers its expenses, but Bɛllɛdha loses about 5,000 dhanay per year. We're hoping it'll grow larger."

"There is no reason why women shouldn't be able to earn some money to support their families," added Chris. "They are happier if they are expressing their talents and their family benefits because they have more knowledge, skills, and money. The seven year development plan calls for doubling the realm's economy. If women could work part of each day yet still have the time to serve their families, part of the Crown Prince's goals would be accomplished easily."

"Still, you are playing with fire," noted Sarané. "For not all husbands will approve."

"That's why 500 Mɛlwika women are members out of about 3,000," replied Liz. "We hope the customs will change so more women are able to gain some education and vocational skills. It is for their sake as well as the benefit of everyone else."

"Thank Esto when my husband died, I had this herb shop," said Estoréje. "I don't know what I would have done without it; probably search quickly for any man willing to marry me. Even though I had run this shop with my husband and worked in it every day, I did not feel able to take over and almost didn't even try. But I had a dream where Saré herself came to me and said it was my husband's wish, from the next world, that I continue the shop, so I did try. I would like other women to feel less helpless than I did when I was suddenly alone."

"Bravo," said Liz, and Sarane nodded vigorously.

“So, what is the next step?” asked Estoréjé.

“Let’s sit down and figure it out,” replied Liz.

“Sarané, if you want to stay I could use someone to help,” said Estorejé. “I’ll cut your hair for free.”

“Alright, that’s a deal!”

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The four of them sat in the back room, drank tea, and talked for several hours. Then Liz and Chris returned to their hotel for lunch, where Liz pulled out her cell phone and called Thornton. She set it on speaker so Chris could listen in. “Say, Thor, what are you doing today?” she asked.

“Lébé and I are back in the house in Pértatranisér. We just spent the morning talking to the builder at our house site in Luktrudéma. He broke ground yesterday; it’s amazing how fast a team of a dozen men can dig a basement. They’re already half done! They plan to have the hole dug in two more days and the hollow, dry stone walls ready for pouring concrete in four more. While the concrete sets, they’ll assemble the wooden walls in sections, then raise them into place a week later. The shell of the house will be done in four weeks, the interior in four more weeks.”

“That’s pretty fast. Any possibility you could jump in your car with your computer and drive down? We’re talking to a woman here about opening a Women’s Center. It’s basically a cooperative. There’s a large building in Old Market Square available and we plan to find the owner today and ask about it. The woman needs to see some pictures and I know you have a lot of them on your computer. Also, is there any way you could go on YouTube and other web sites and find pictures of beauty salons and

hair dressers? She already cuts hair and is very good. We'd make that part of the Women's Center."

"Hum. I'll have to talk to Lébé; it'll take almost three hours to drive down and the same to drive back. I'd probably have to spend the night. But I think it'll work. Hold on." He paused and Liz could hear muffled conversation. "Sure, mom, she says I have to bring Jalalu, though."

"That's fine. We can accommodate both of you on the floor of our hotel room tonight, so bring blankets and pillows. With Her Majesty in town, there are no places to stay."

"Alright. I'll have him look things up on the computer while we drive down, he's old enough for that. What are we looking for, exactly?"

"Anything about beauty salons. This is an entire business that could be established here and an ideal corollary to a women's center. I wonder how we would translate 'hair salon,' though."

"Hum." Thornton was one of the family's two experts on Eryan; the other was May. "I'd use *grɛjrula,* 'gathering room, meeting hall'; something like that. Or maybe *gabrula*, though that's more like a fancy living room."

"'Gabrula'; I like that. 'Gabrula Krisɛlab,' 'salon for hair'; or maybe even better 'Gabrula Gunéb,' 'Salon for Women,'" said Liz.

"Not *Noba Gunéb*, 'Women's Center'?" asked Chris.

"I've never liked that term, and we only use it for Bahá'í Centers; *noba* isn't used that way in Eryan otherwise," pointed out Thornton.

"With the trouble the Faith is getting right now, it might be better to avoid *noba*," he agreed.

"If you are going to make this an institution, like the grange, I'd use *gabruli,*" suggested Thornton. "The -i indicates it  is an institution, not just a bunch of rooms."

"That's true," agreed Liz.

"Okay, mom, we'll leave here in another hour or so and see you in maybe four hours," said Thornton. "I'm tempted to drive straight to Mɛlwika afterward; I have to go to Awstroba in a few days to check on the hazardous waste storage facility."

"How's that going?" asked Chris.

"I understand the fence is built halfway around the crater, and meanwhile, they're digging up twenty-five barrels of hazardous gunk a day from the settling pond, adding lime to neutralize the pH, sealing them, and trucking them to the facility." There was a distant exchange of comments. "Oh, so much for that. I'll be heading back to Pértatranisér, not to Mɛlwika!"

"The wife has spoken," said Chris. "Okay, we'll see you this afternoon."

They closed the connection. Liz sat and thought. "Chris, is there any way the Women's Gabruli can offer the sorts of benefits that the granges offer?"

"Only if the women are earning enough money to make the cash flow possible. Granges cost farmers about one hundred dhanay per year, which is enough, pooled among hundreds of farmers, to buy equipment and provide such benefits as health care, literacy, and life insurance. If women can earn a thousand dhanay a year, they can afford to pay the Womens' Salon a hundred dhanay, and that will buy such services."

"What if we offered it as a special service for a fee?"

“We could do that. Health care would cost about twenty-five dhanay per year, life insurance maybe three or four more. We’ll have to look into it when we get back to Mɛlwika.”

“It might cost us something, but consider all the poor women who need access to a doctor.”

“I know, I agree. Well, let’s go out and find the owner of Estorejé’s building.”

She nodded. They used the bathroom, grabbed a few items in the room, then headed downstairs.

They walked out of the hotel’s main entrance on West Square and looked at the crowds. There was a long line to get into Home Improvement and a stream of people leaving with packages of all sorts. The store had been an immense success, as expected; the entire new marketplace was very popular, and it was a beautiful space as well.

They headed across the square and out its eastern gate toward the old marketplace. Almost immediately they encountered Wɛrétrakɛstɛr walking toward the square. Chris and Wɛrétrakɛstɛr glanced at each other, looked away, then decided they really couldn’t avoid each other, so they waved, then stopped.

“How are you, honored prophet?” asked Chris.

“Well, Lord Kris. What brings you to Tripola?”

“Investments; looking for people able to open factories, and we’re working on a center to empower women.”

“Oh? Excellent. And serving the Bahá'ís?”

“We aren’t doing anything on this trip. What brings you here?”

“A dream showed that I had to come. It was after two days of praying and fasting. I’m attending the provincial assembly, as a visitor of course, but they have invited me to speak on two occasions and to lead them in prayer. And I’ve been able to strengthen the Duke. You should call on him.”

“I was wondering about that. I haven’t spoken to Duke Gugéndu in several years.”

“You were talking to Governor Brébéstu instead, of course; he was in power and he was a Bahá'í. But now things have changed.”

“How do you think that happened, anyway?”

“The Governor did an excellent job for five years, but Her Majesty was interested in supporting the Duke, who had a new development plan.”

“Was it really that new, or was it simply the Crown Prince’s plan?”

“I’ll put it this way; no other Duke or governor has put forward a local version of the prince’s plan. Of course, any provincial plan has to be based on the royal plan.”

“True, that’s a good point. I’m curious, friend-prophet: to what extent is the question of the ruler’s religion an issue?” He used wɛ*gi,* a new Eryan word meaning “religion,” derived from wɛgo, “path.”

Wɛrétrakɛstɛr nodded. “I think we have come to a point where sɛsɛ*go* is no longer irrelevant. I don’t think Bahá'ís will be excluded, but I think they will have to prove themselves to be truly exemplary. And the more you grow—if you grow, I think the customs of Widumaj will change in order to compete—the more exemplary the Bahá'ís will have to be. I don’t think you can tie your religion to the ‘new knowledge’ any more, Chris. On Gɛdhéma it isn’t tied to the new knowledge; there are very few Bahá'ís

compared to the other religions. I don't think you'll be able to make that claim any longer here either."

"I agree with you that many Bahá'ís have been using a kind of slogan in their teaching. I'm not worried about that; the Bahá'í *sɛgos* will shine on their own. For that matter, calling on Bahá'ís to be exemplary doesn't worry me either, because we want them to be exemplary as well."

"I think the followers of Widumaj are also capable of being exemplary," replied Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. "I am opposed to violence or repression, as I am sure you know. I will always oppose them. But in this world, the teachings of Widumaj should always receive preference."

"I'm relieved to hear that you will condemn violence and repression, my friend. We Bahá'ís seek fairness, and I think you and I have different ideas of what that means. But I think there are other things we can work on, in order to advance this world, and I hope that will continue."

Wɛrétrakɛstɛr smiled. "So do I, Kris. We still share many common concerns."

Reread and edited, 6/7/13, 8/19/17, 11/21/24

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Fall Term

1 Brénménu 630/21 Sept. 12

The wrangling of the House of Lords and House of Commons may have ended for lunch, but the bad feelings had not. As the chair banged his staff against the floor to signal adjournment, everyone looked at each other, then rose to exit and hang out with the like-minded. They were seated alphabetically by first name, so a lot of people walked past each other and pretended the other didn't exist.

Chris rose from his seat with a sigh and headed for the door. He saw he was about to cross paths with Duke Gugéndu, so he nodded a greeting. "Your Grace, how are you? I haven't seen you in several years and it is good to see you again."

"Thank you, Lord Kris. It's good to see you again."

"I had wanted to visit with you in Tripola after your return to a position of authority, but I knew you were busy and I ended up leaving early. Perhaps we can get together here in the next few days? I'd love to talk about development."

"I would welcome that. I'm beginning to set some plans in motion and would much appreciate your ideas. Doubling the province's economy in seven years will not be easy."

"It won't be easy anywhere. How about lunch tomorrow?"

"Sure, let's do that."

"Very good, let's do it, then."

Gugéndu pulled out a little book and wrote it down, then they parted ways. Chris already had an immediate lunchtime meeting with Aryéstu, so he hurried out of the building and across the street to the newest campus of Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma. The first building had become the city's hospital, the second the university's law school. The third campus, built on part of the city's old fair grounds, could expand northeastward, since it was on the edge of the city. Due east of it on a former wheat field, the city's new soccer stadium was slowly rising. The génadɛma had a quadrangle defined by two dormitories, two classroom and office buildings, the library, the economics building, and the administration building.

When Chris arrived, he was surprised to see the Crown Prince sitting with Aryéstu reading a report. They both looked up.

"Come in, Lord," said Mɛméjékwu. "I'm nearly finished with the economist. Perhaps you can confirm or deny his claims. I am angry that the economy, in *current dhanay,* as the economist says, appears to have grown only four percent in the last year. But he says that in *real dhanay* it has grown nine percent."

"Because of deflation," added Aryéstu. "Food prices dropped twenty percent this year. Other items have dropped or risen, depending on the item. The overall effect is nine percent greater purchasing power this year."

"But tax revenues have risen only four percent, and you never told us the workers were able to buy more and we should cut back on their wages!"

"I have a small staff here in the Center for Economics and we only developed the price basket over the summer. We just finished creating a price index last week. We're now in the position to update the price index every two or three months, so we can tell

you what the inflation or deflation rate is pretty regularly. But I wouldn't cut back on their wages; the workers will feel exploited and that will cause other problems. I'd print and coin more money."

"We can't coin more money, the silver supply is limited. Besides, didn't you tell me that the demand for gold and silver is exceeding supply, their value is going up, and people are melting down coins to make jewelry? How do we fix that?"

"That is happening; 1 dhanay now has about 1.2 dhanay of silver. There are several solutions to that. Melt down old coins, add base metal, and issue new coins. And right now there are big coin hoards under people's floors, in holes in their walls, in mattresses, etc. Those hoards are getting bigger. We need to increase the trust in banks so people turn the coins in and open bank accounts, thereby putting the money in circulation and increasing money available for investment. A banking law where the crown guarantees deposits up to, say, a thousand dhanay, would do that."

"There are some silver deposits in Géndonɛ and Ghéslonɛ lands that can still be worked," added Chris. "And such a banking law would charge banks an annual insurance fee, so it would produce a small income to the crown to cover the potential expense."

"Okay. I'd still prefer to cut wages. Highway workers have gotten five percent more earning power than we intended!"

"Your Majesty, the typical farmer who works on the highway crew is not a member of a grange. He has ten or fewer agris of farmland and works it without machines and often without animals. He has seen his farm income cut sixty-six percent over the last decade as crop prices have dropped because of the expansion of farm acreage worldwide. He and his family raise almost all their food on their farm; they don't

buy pasta or jam. Their neighbors are replacing homespun with factory-made clothes and are buying new tools and shoes while their kids are barefoot. The typical road builder needs that five percent. If you want to make up for it, increase the money supply and spend it."

"By how much?"

Aryéstu did a calculation in his head. "About one point five million dhanay. That will cause more money to chase the same goods and services. It will stimulate some increase in production, but it will also stimulate some inflation; it'll raise prices. It won't raise the prices of food and other basic commodities, but will probably raise the prices of construction materials and manufactured goods. But the price index will stay flat or even turn upward slightly. That's good; deflation isn't good for an economy."

Mɛméjékwu looked at Chris, who nodded. "How much have prices declined in the last decade?" Chris asked.

"It varies." Aryéstu picked up a table and handed it to him. "Bread and beer are down by half; the raw materials are two or three times cheaper and the facilities producing them are larger and more efficient. Charcoal, construction timber, building stone, and brick are down twenty to thirty percent; trucks can haul them much more cheaply. But all these things are now dependent on manufactured goods, especially trucks, so their costs have to be figured into the overall price. Food prices are down only by a third because the price basket now includes sugar, tea, coffee, and more meat; they were unavailable or rare or horribly expensive ten years ago."

"And manufactured goods are down too?"

Aryéstu nodded. “Generally. Miller Foundry’s manufacturing of machetes is a good example. No one had ever seen them before and almost everyone wanted one. The price started out at twenty-seven dhanay each; few could afford them, but the profit was plowed into expanding production and when it hit 12,000 per year demand began to drop, so the price did as well. Machetes are now ten dhanay each and 10,000 per year are manufactured. Clothing has dropped about as low as it can—one or two dhanay for a skirt, pants, shirt, or dress—but demand is still rising, so production’s rising as well.”

Prince Mɛméjékwu looked at Chris crossly for interrupting his conversation. “Alright, honored, I understand your latest economic report now. Verify that figure of 1.5 million dhanay in writing, so I can take it to her Majesty. Lord, what happened at the assembly this morning?”

“A lot of unpleasant accusations and some shouting. The bill was introduced to modify the local tax disbursement so that it would be split equally between the village where the workplace was located and the village of residence of the worker. Of course, some lords rose to demand two thirds or three quarters for the place of residence, then other lords rose to demand two thirds for the place with the work. Then a priest rose to ask that a fifth of the total tax be given to the nearest temple so they could expand their services, and a Duke rose to say that the provinces needed more than a tenth of the total tax collection, more like a third. Then members of the house of commons rose to say that the share of the crown could not be decreased . . . it became rather hot.”

“Whenever money is discussed, it will. It’s early, too. Was the bill to eliminate taxes on bank interest introduced?”

“No. I guess the tax distribution bill will be discussed for a while first.”

“I see. This may be a long fall session of the consultative assembly. Thank you, lord.” The prince turned to Aryéstu. “Publish your price report in the newspapers, so people won’t think my plan is a complete failure. It’s a shame the tax increases plus the deflation together produce a nine percent growth in GDP, rather than the goal of ten percent.”

“Next year will be better,” replied Aryestu. “We’ll release the report right away.”

“And it will be better,” added Chris. “Many people are investing in factories, so manufacturing is about to grow substantially.”

“I wish more of you investors would take the advice of the central government.”

“Your Majesty, we are grateful the crown is supporting us by supplementing our investments with loans and grants. You’ll get the best results by creating a stable and predictable environment for business; private money will fill in the gaps and make sure all the necessary products are available. The government is doing an excellent job of that, actually. Additional legislation to encourage savings, like exempting interest income from taxation, and the modifications to the incorporation laws, will help quite a lot.”

“Well, so far the crown has trusted the investors and the results have been good. I hope that continues. Good day, gentlemen.” The Prince nodded in goodbye and left the office.

They watched him go. “He was furious when the economic report for the first third of the year showed such little growth, and he didn’t understand the idea that real GDP growth was more,” said Aryéstu. “In actual fact, the crown has benefited from the decline in prices as well; that’s why they have a modest budget surplus. They’ve paid less

for construction materials, charcoal, gas, and ice than expected. But he didn't notice that."

"It's a subtle thing," agreed Chris. "Well, are you ready to review the fall term courses? I think we can find quite a few shared resources."

"Yes, I know Gwɛlékwɛs Maj needs business courses and some education courses, so let's finalize that," he agreed.

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It was shiny and dark blue. Moléstu ran his hand along the driver's side door and marveled that such an amazing machine could be made. Even more amazing: he could own it.

He looked at the salesman. "Can I get in?"

"Of course. We can take it out for a drive, if you'd like, if you have a driver's license."

"I don't."

"But I do," said Soru.

Moléstu opened the door and sat in the driver's seat, which was smooth, new leather. He wiggled the steering wheel, opened the firebox and looked in, flipped on the firebox fan and listened to the whir, turned on the headlights and turned them off, then turned on the windshield wipers, which were a new addition to the vehicles. He turned around and looked at the 1.8 by 4 meter open back of the pickup truck. "You can get a canvas covering for the back; it's fifty dhanay," said the salesman.

"Yes, we should get that. And it comes with a spare tire?"

"Of course."

“How fast can it go?”

“Depends on the road and the load in back. I’ve heard someone driving on Route 2 on the western shore—concrete and eight meters wide—hit 130 kilometers per hour. But I wouldn’t advise it.”

“I see.” Moléstu glanced at the speedometer; that was another instrument that had been added to the vehicles that year. He looked at the seat belt and wondered whether it really helped if one crashed.

“How much charcoal does the firebox hold?”

“A standard ten-kilo box or two standard five-kilo boxes. Ten kilos will take you about one hundred kilometers. When you start to run out of fuel, you’ll know; the steam pressure will start to drop.”

“I know, I’ve driven steam trucks before.” Moléstu glanced at the steam pressure gauge next to the speedometer. “And you check the water supply every hundred kilometers as well?”

“We recommend it, but since the water is condensed and recirculated, it can easily go a thousand kilometers. I’d check it once a week while the engine’s warming up.”

Moléstu nodded. He felt mounting excitement. “So, can I just pay for this truck and take it?”

The salesman smiled; he had an easy job this time. “Correct. The paperwork doesn’t take long, either.”

“Then let’s get started!”

“Alright.” He led them back to his desk. “We have one long form to fill out for the crown. It’s the application for the title; the official piece of paper that says you own the

truck. Two copies for them, one for me, and one for you, which serves as a temporary title until the official one is available. I can even give you a license plate." He reached into a drawer and pulled out a pair that had "1126" on them. "You live in this province, right?"

"Indeed. A four-digit number?"

"Yes. I don't know that we've used up all the possible three-digit combinations yet, but this is what they're making now. If you lived outside Arjakwés and Swadakwés provinces, we might have to give you a temporary plate. We have plates starting with "2" and "6" so we can cover the north and south shores, but we don't have "7" which is the number for the Tutanɛ lands nearby! I suspect it's discrimination."

"The crown won't send them?" asked Soru.

"No." The salesman shook his head. "Of course, we don't get many requests for them, either."

He handed Moléstu the big form to fill out. It was complicated; it asked for the names of his four grandparents as well as his parents and their villages of birth. But he patiently worked his way through it with a pencil, pushing hard to make four copies at once through the carbon papers underneath. Meanwhile Soru haggled a bit about the price, though the salesman didn't budge; it was a seller's market. "We've got plenty of customers right now," he explained. "It was slow in the spring, but demand seems to be picking up every day. I think people are beginning to realize that they can afford twenty-five hundred and they're gradually scraping together the cash. Tell you what, I'll throw in the canvas cover for free. That's a deal. So the price is 2550."

"Not 2,500?"

“The other fifty is the registration fee; that’s paid to the crown. Be thankful there’s no additional tax on it, there used to be.”

Soru nodded and filled out a check, which the salesman scrutinized, then accepted. “I’ll call the bank and verify it.”

“That’s fine.”

The salesman pulled a telephone over from a nearby desk and called the bank to verify the balance and put a hold on the necessary funds while Soru reviewed Moléstu’s progress. He was almost finished. His handwriting was slow, but fairly neat.

The salesman took the form, reviewed it, then nodded. “Good. You have a usable address. The title will be mailed to your post office; you’ll have to pick it up there. You’ll have to renew the license plate every year, which costs twenty-five dhanay; your post office should have the form.”

Moléstu laughed at that. “I hope so! Say, how can I get ‘Dénujénɛsɛ Construction Company’ painted on the sides?”

“Don’t do it yourself; it won’t look good. Take a big piece of heavy paper or cardboard, draw exactly what you want, then cut it out with a razor and bring it here. We can use it to spray paint the words on the truck for five dhanay.”

“Perfect.”

The salesman handed Moléstu the bottom copy, which was faint and hard to read, then rose. “Let’s push her outside and fire her up.”

Moléstu nodded and the three of them trooped back over to the blue pickup. The salesman got in while Soru and Moléstu opened the two big doors, then pushed the vehicle outside by hand. It rolled very easily. The salesman loaded the firebox with two

wax-impregnated paper bags filled with charcoal, lit them, and Soru held down the accelerator to pump air into the firebox while Moléstu mounted the license plates.

Steam pressure built up quickly and in five minutes it was high enough for slow city driving. Moléstu hopped in—Soru wouldn't let him drive in the city—and they drove across town to Soru and Kanawé's Mɛlwika house, vacant while Mitrukaru and Kordé were out of town for the summer, where Kanawé, Blorané, Isuru, Mɛlitané, and Skandéstu were waiting. Soru parked in front of the house and pulled a cord to toot the steam whistle. They all came out.

"Let's go for a ride! Hop in!" said Moléstu through the open passenger-side window. He pointed to the flatbed behind. Then he jumped out and opened the tail gate so everyone could get in more easily, securely latching it afterward. "Move over, brother," he said affectionately to Soru. "I'm driving now, we're at the edge of town."

"Alright, but be careful."

"I don't have that much less experience than you! You just have a driver's license!"

"I've needed to rent steam cars a few times."

"Now you can rent this truck!"

Moléstu got into the driver's seat; Soru slid across the cab to the other side. Moléstu looked out the rear view mirror very carefully; steam vehicles had very slow acceleration and needed a big gap in traffic to get started. They had to wait almost a minute because Soru's house was on Route 2 just south of the traffic circle at the edge of town where there was a lot of traffic. Moléstu kept the acceleration pedal floored the entire time to feed as much air to the firebox as possible and push the steam pressure to

the max. Finally, a horse-drawn wagon came along that backed up cars and trucks behind it. Moléstu took his foot off the accelerator pedal entirely, put the engine into high gear—the truck only had two forward speeds—and pushed the accelerator all the way down to feed as much steam as possible to the two cylinders. The accelerator pedal also sent more electricity to the fan supplying air to the firebox. Because of the high gear ratio, the truck started forward very slowly, but steam vehicles didn't have clutches, so that was what one did for country driving. Unlike internal combustion engines, steam engines couldn't stall.

It was a long and leisurely acceleration down the concrete surface of Route 2, but in less than a minute they were rolling along at 50 kmph, which was the legal limit. Once they passed the grange building the speed limit rose to 70 kmph and Moléstu accelerated. "Whoa, I've never tried to steer at this speed before!"

"You're weaving all over the road, slow down until you get used to it!" said Soru, nearly panicking. Moléstu slowed down and got better control, prompting a soliloquy from Soru about planning ahead for animals jumping in front of the vehicle or trucks pulling out in front of them. It all made Moléstu nervous, but he wasn't going to admit it.

In just a few minutes they slowed for the village of Dɛksawsupɛrakwa. "I'm going straight!" Moléstu announced. He stopped at the stop sign very carefully, then accelerated slowly across the intersection and onto the viaduct and bridge crossing the Majakwés, which had shrunk considerably in the face of the long, dry summer. On the other side he started to accelerate again through Dɛksaws Ménwika, South Ménwika. The concrete was replaced by a wide, smooth gravel road and he was going 70 kmph again.

In a few minutes the farmlands were left behind and they were crossing dry grassland. When they reached Médhɛla, Moléstu said, “I’m going farther!” and no one objected; the freedom to go anywhere one wanted, and fast, was thrilling.

When, twenty minutes later, he came upon other farmlands, he said nervously “What’s this place?”

“Kwolonɛland,” replied Soru.

“The Kwolonɛ?! Is it safe?”

“Of course. If they gave us trouble, the army would descend upon them. I was here last month to meet three learning-challenged children and a teacher who wanted to work with them. They’re very friendly and hospitable people. Another few kilometers we’ll come upon Mɛdhpéla marketplace. Stop there; there’s a store where I can buy everyone some ice cream, and the women can walk around and look at the beautiful Kwolonɛ leather goods.”

Moléstu laughed. “Eating ice cream with the Kwolonɛ! Okay, why not. That sounds like a good culmination of our adventure.”

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Jordan had to walk the length of the village to get to the house of Lord Yimu. Sumiupɛrakwa’s six-classroom schoolhouse was on the north side; the government center and industrial complex were on the south side along the Jɛrnstisér or “Sandy River.” In between was a graveled main street with two hundred sixty houses on it or on the two parallel streets. Route 1—concrete and eight meters wide—passed the village just a hundred meters to the east.

He had been in Sumiupɛrakwa for three days and was impressed by the place. Materially, it was fairly advanced, even though it was a bit remote; it had electrical and telephone lines on every street, electric lights in most houses, twenty telephones, and almost all the kids under age thirteen—of which there were a lot, because the village had acquired a clinic quite early—were in school. Culturally, it was the center of a fairly inquisitive, creative, energetic province, like Lɛwéspa, Pɛnkakwés, and other remote regions that had to be creative in order to pay their taxes in the days before steam power. Spiritually, it had no temple, had clung to the hymns, and was open to the Bahá'í Faith.

He passed several people on the street and they all nodded a greeting; some even said the Bahá'í greeting "Alláh-u-Abhá," which was known across the village. As he passed the sawmill—a massive place along the river with great piles of cut logs and heaps of sawdust—Déru, the owner, came out. He was forty, with slightly graying hair and beard and a very fast step.

"Greetings, Honored Jordanu. On your way to Lord Yimu's?"

"Indeed; you?"

He nodded. "With lots of ideas."

"Did I ever tell you how much I like your village?"

"Really, this poor, little place?"

"It's not poor at all, compared to the places we've visited this summer, and I'd say it's not small, either. The average village has less than a thousand people."

"We have thirteen hundred; not much more. And a lot of places are poorer, I'll concede that."

"They don't have this." Jordan pointed to the sawmill.

Déru chuckled. “I suppose not. Did you know we’re now hauling in ten types of tropical wood by truck, processing it into furniture, door frames, window frames, doors, and lumber, and exporting some of it as far as Mɛlwika and *Sumilara*? The business keeps growing!”

“How many do you employ?”

“One hundred twenty; a third of the households in the village have someone working for me, and many in other villages as well. I employ women as well as men, too, did you know that? It’s a Bahá'í principle.” His eyes twinkled when he said that.

“Good. Well, I can tell you about a few other principles, if you’d like!” He said it half seriously.

“No, no, not me! My god is money, not Esto. Yours, clearly, is Esto.”

“But one can do both, like my grandfather.”

“True. Lord Kristobéru: he has two gods, Esto and money. And maybe people.”

“I think you have that third god, too, honored.”

“Perhaps I do. What else can I do with my surplus, than build up this place? They’re all my cousins, close or distant, after all. In fact, everyone in the province of Jɛrnstisér is descended from the same half dozen warrior families, who were given this land by Mégékwɛs Éradékumaj six hundred years ago. Widumaj even confirmed the allocation.”

That was a common legend around the world, so Jordan didn’t know what to think of it. They were outside Lord Yimu’s, so they opened the door and entered his gabrula. Inside were the rest of the youth group, the spiritual assembly of Sumiupɛrakwa, Lord Yimu, the lord of another nearby village, and two village elders, one the

semi-literate principal of the school system who was Yimu's uncle. Yimu, like Déru, was in his early forties, though unlike most people on Éra he didn't look fifteen years older, because he hadn't engaged in heavy physical labor for most of his life.

"Ah, the two idea men," he said when Jordan and Déru walked in. "So, did the two of you make all the plans for the rest of us?"

"No, we just ran into each other on the way here," replied Jordan. "Would you mind, lord, if we started this meeting with a few prayers and hymns?"

"Not at all." Yimu himself rose to chant while the others sat on the pillows on the floor. The Lord chanted a hymn beautifully, then Kordé rose and chanted Bahá'u'lláh's prayer for unity. It seemed perfect; they were a diverse group by religion, age, sex, and birthplace.

"Excellent," said Yimu. "The Spiritual Assembly wanted this meeting to talk about the village's development. But as I understand it, this youth team is already offering everything they can. They're looking at our farmers' fields to improve agriculture, they're teaching the making of jams and the use of sewing machines, they're tutoring us in accounting and knitting, and Budhéstu has already reviewed the seven year development plan of her Majesty."

"About which we are grateful," added Yimu's uncle.

"We're the smallest province, so we must be clever," added Yimu.

"The assembly had one idea," exclaimed Minroktu, "Little Bear," secretary of the Spiritual Assembly. "We were reading in this month's *Bahá'í News,* our mimeographed newspaper, that Lady Liz has been able to organize a 'Woman's Gabruli' in Tripola and a similar organization earlier in Bɛllɛdha. These were not Bahá'í organizations, but for all

women in the city. The gabruli is a place where women can go to cook together, sew together, knit together, either for their families or to earn money. They can take classes together as well. It has a big kitchen, a big sewing room, a classroom, and a place for children to be watched while the women are working together. The gabruli in Tripola will also have a place where women can have their hair cut and improve their appearance in various ways. We were thinking that maybe Sumiupɛrakwa was ready for something like it, and the Spiritual Assembly wants to offer support for it."

The three women on the spiritual assembly nodded. The non-Bahá'í men in the room, however, were startled by the suggestion.

"This is not something the Bahá'í youth can help on," observed Yimu.

"On the contrary, they can give sewing, cooking, and knitting classes, and get us started with the skills. We still have a few weeks before school starts up for the fall, so we can start a women's gabruli in a classroom, then suspend it when school starts, until a building is available."

"This will disturb many men," commented Yimu's uncle.

"If the honored elders of the village support it, the others will complain, but we think they will soon see the advantages," replied Minroktu. "If women can cook better food, everyone benefits. If they can make clothing for their family, everyone benefits. And if they can sell a few items, the family benefits."

"The article in *Bahá'í News* noted that one fast way to grow the economy over the next seven years is to help women to do more," added Budhéstu. "If they can read, they can help their children learn, can learn how to protect their family's health, and overall they will be happier."

There was silence. “In a way, this relates to one of my ideas,” said Déru. “I think Sumiupɛrakwa needs a génadɛma. If the gabruli has classes and courses, that is similar.”

“The youth can’t help us start a génadɛma,” observed Yimu.

“If Jordan speaks to his grandfather and uncles, maybe we can; maybe it can be a branch of Mɛlwika or even Néfa. It’s an hour to either Néfa or Bɛllɛdha and the bus schedule is not convenient for someone wishing to study génadɛma at either. But never mind; maybe I am changing the subject. How much will this facility cost?”

“The article in *Bahá'í News* said the Tripola Gabruli will cost ten thousand dhanay,” said Jordan. “Half to buy the building and half to furnish it with stoves, sewing machines, classroom furniture, etc.”

“Ten thousand.” Déru pondered. “I bet we could do it for three. We’ll have some donated labor, and we don’t need something as big. How was the Tripola Gabruli financed?”

“The Menneas paid for part of it,” said Minroktu. “Some Tripola businessmen contributed as well. It’s like a business chain, like Home Improvement, though it is a nonprofit organization.”

“A Home Improvement store; that’s something we need here,” said Déru. “But I am distracting us again. If we paid for part of it, would they contribute?”

“We can ask,” said Jordan.

“Good. You ask. I like this idea, Lord Yimu. The women who work for me are good workers and few object that I hire them. This sounds like more wholesome employment anyway, because it involves work that strengthens their families. I am

willing to contribute to it. But I am attaching a string: I want three classrooms, not one, because I want a place where we can have génadɛma classes."

"Honored, we are too small to support a génadɛma. I've asked about it," said Yimu's uncle.

"I'm not talking about an entire génadɛma. Let us say Néfa Génadɛma sent us a teacher in nursing on Dwodiu afternoons and Bɛllɛdha Génadɛma sent us a teacher in accounting Tridiu afternoons. You see? We provide the classroom and the students; they provide the teachers and the grades. And I bet the school could rent two of the gabruli's classrooms sometimes, too, because you're full."

"We are," agreed Yimu's uncle.

"If we're talking about a private business—even a not for profit one—I see no need for me to get involved," said Lord Yimu. "I will support this idea orally and in writing, and I can help us find workers to build it. I assume lumber will be easy to obtain?"

"For free," agreed Déru, instantly. "I bet the stoves should be gas. Perhaps this is a reason to bring gas to Sumiupɛrakwa."

"Honored, you know we inquired, and you know how expensive it would be," said Yimu tiredly.

"Yes, but we know tanks of gas can be shipped here by truck. Maybe it's time to invest in that."

"Private business; feel free," replied Yimu.

Déru nodded. "I thought these youth would propose to help us install a village water system."

“We don’t have that expertise,” replied Tomasu.

“You underestimate yourselves. You said you’ve helped install wells, pumps, pipes, and storage tanks. Those are all the ingredients, whether we are providing water to one building or two hundred sixty. And Widubéru has already stopped by and said the Development Corps would provide financial assistance; he said it two years ago and again last month.”

“And we have a tax surplus,” added Yimu.

“And I have surplus profits,” noted Déru. “For the same reason; people are building factories all around the world, not to mention villas in Luktrudéma and marketplaces in various places and ‘middle class housing’ in every city. The sawmill has expanded twenty percent in the last year and will expand the same next year.”

“We’re talking about three streets, two hundred meters long each,” noted Tomasu. “Ten centimeter nickel-steel pipe is three dhanay per six-meter section, so the pipes will be 300 dhanay.”

“We need a really big water tower, though,” said Déru. “The sawmill needs additional fire protection; more than just pumping water from the river, that is. I’m willing to extend all three pipes along our streets to the sawmill and pay for a really big water tower; as much as several thousand dhanay. It protects a three hundred thousand dhanay sawmill.”

“We can teach everyone how to lay the pipe,” said Tomasu. “We can dig one well and install one pump on a small water tower. We know how to do that. In two weeks we can get the project started.”

“We should do it, then,” said Yimu. “Sumiupɛrakwa has had several severe fires in recent years. Luck confined the damage to two or three buildings each time. The fire department is very limited without village water and hydrants. The city can spend several thousand on that.”

“Then we can get started tomorrow,” promised Tomasu. “The village has a professionally trained surveyor, right?”

“Me,” replied Yimu. “I’ll help plan the paths of the pipes.”

“Jordanu, can you ask your grandparents about the women’s salon *and* the branch génadɛma?” asked Déru.

He nodded. “I’ll call them right away, before they go to bed.”

“There is one other matter, lord,” said Minroktu, pleased by the results of the meeting. “As you know, the youth have been singing at the village school every evening, and we’re now getting a few dozen visitors. Tonight we’d like to move the gathering to the square in front of the store. We’ll attract more people.”

Yimu considered that, then nodded. “Sure. The weather should be nice.”

“We would also like to invite people to a Bahá'í class,” added Jordan.

“That’s fine; you aren’t pushing people, after all. I’ve heard you’ve had trouble in other places, but you won’t have any here. Your religion is welcome in Jɛrnstisér.” The other lord present nodded as well.

“Thank you, lord, we much appreciate that assurance,” replied Jordan.

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Careers

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Jordan slowly pulled the house trailer into the parking space it had occupied over three months ago, when he had graduated from high school and set out on a round-the-world tour. The space, which had been bare dirt, was now covered with grass and weeds. He stopped the truck and closed the engine's air supply. He and Khwanu got out of the cab.

"This is a sad moment," said Jordan. "The summer's over."

"The adventure's over," added Budhéstu, who was riding in the back of the truck with Tomasu, Gramé, and Primanu. They were the only ones left; most of the others had been high school students and had returned from Sumiupɛrakwa a week before.

"But I don't want it to be over!" said Jordanu. "It was great!"

"It was," agreed Budhéstu. "I never thought I'd have so much fun and work so hard. But the génadɛma starts tomorrow, so we're all back. And you guys—other than Khwanu and me—are starting your first term, that's got to be exciting!"

"It is," agreed Tomasu. "I'm now sure I want to be an engineer!"

"I think I want to be an engineer, too!" added Gramé. "I sure don't want to teach any more cooking, sewing, and knitting, and no more basic literacy classes."

"I'll go out with you again, Jordanu," said Budhéstu. "Of course, not on days I'm in class. Soru is offering *two* psychology courses and I'm taking both of them, and I have to learn English."

"I thought you'd make a great planner."

"Maybe I would; but I'm focusing on psychology right now."

"Let's go to the House of Worship and pray together one last time for all the people we taught the Faith to this summer," suggested Jordan.

They headed to the temple, which was just a short distance away. The workmen had finished their work for the day and had gone home for supper—it was just after the eclipse had ended—so they had the space all to themselves. A huge amount of progress had been made in three months, and it was very impressive. The structure itself was finished, though the exterior ornamentation was still being completed and the interior was bare of any ornamentation at all.

One by one, they chanted memorized prayers for the new Bahá'ís. The three weeks they had stayed at Sumiupɛrakwa had been a fitting culmination of the trip. They had taught in that village, two nearby villages in the province, and in Klɛnvika in the neighboring north shore province—Budhéstu's native village. Declarations totaled 153. Klɛnvika and the other two villages had had no Bahá'ís and now averaged twenty-five each; Sumiupɛrakwa's Bahá'í population had quintupled from 21 to 101. Altogether, in sixteen weeks they had reached twenty-four villages and had brought nearly a thousand people into the Faith. Followup by locals had brought in another hundred-fifty. Twelve villages had installed water systems for one or more buildings; Sumiupɛrakwa's plans were by far the most ambitious. Twenty-two villages had benefited from agricultural advice, and all twenty-four had received domestic classes for women of one sort or another. Economic projects of various sorts were underway or were being considered by eleven. Eight new local spiritual assemblies were likely to form next Ridván, when assembly elections were held. Seven local spiritual assemblies, either in a village they

had visited or in a town nearby, had pledged to follow up. Jordan planned to do more follow up personally, to the extent he could, and still wanted to visit Pɛnkakwés, Sumilara, the lower Arjakwés Valley, and various tutanɛ villages.

After twenty minutes of prayers, they all exited the temple and headed home. For Budhéstu and Khwanu, that meant rooms in the dormitories. Jordan, Gramé, and Thomasu walked to the campus with them, then said goodbye.

The sun was setting while Jordan walked across the campus slowly, thinking about the new phase his life was about to enter. He was going to go to college, the best college in the world, the one his family had painstakingly built up for the last twelve years. He had watched the effort from boyhood. Two new buildings—a dorm and a classroom building—had been completed just that summer, raising the school's capacity to six hundred fifty. It was an exciting place. He had felt the excitement all the time while growing up and had yearned to be part of it.

And now he was about to be. Yet, he no longer was sure that was what he wanted. The world was filled with extreme poverty, incredible ignorance, terrible disease, and considerable injustice. The génadɛma was an important path to alleviating all that suffering. But it was not the only path, and now he had another path, one of great reward. The génadɛma no longer felt so essential.

He turned and walked back to the temple to pray some more, but that just reinforced his feelings. He walked home, wondering what to say.

As soon as he stepped in the door, everyone came swarming over to him: Thornton, Lébé, their kids, grandma Liz, his mother and father, and his little brother,

Rostamu. Grandpa Chris was still in Mɛddoakwés; Amos, May, and their kids were in Pértatranisér, where school had started last week.

"He's home!" said Lua, excitedly. "My son, the spiritual adventurer!" She hugged him and gave him a kiss.

"A man returns," added Behruz, giving his son an affectionate hug.

The others hugged and greeted him as well, then Lua added, "We thought you'd be here half an hour ago. Supper's getting cold."

"I'm sorry, I was delayed."

"How was the drive from Sumiupɛrakwa?" asked Thornton.

"Good, but kind of long, and I guess I'll be jetlagged for most of the week." It was a seven-hour time change.

They walked to the dining table, where the food was out and ready to go. "Well, the first week of génadɛma is usually a light load," said Lua. "You'll have time to catch up on sleep. I'm so proud of you, Jordan. I can't begin to express it in words."

"We're all sorry we disrupted so many schedules. A lot of people had to drop their tasks to help consolidate."

"Don't worry about that," said Liz. "I'm making another swing around the sea next week, starting with Wɛranopéla. Their assembly has finally adopted an intensive growth plan. And just yesterday morning we heard from the Gordha Assembly. They plan to send teachers to the mountain villages."

"Good, we couldn't get anyone to follow up. What about the Géndonɛ villages?"

Liz shook her head. "No plans yet, but they had no declarations, either."

"But they will eventually if we support them. The entire tribe will declare *en masse*."

"We're still trying to arrange someone to travel there before the winter snows come. They will require very patient nurturing."

"Exactly." Jordan took the platter of rice with vegetables and meat and scooped out a heaping helping for his plate. Lua looked at his son, who was much more muscular and filled out.

"You look good; healthy and strong."

"We ate well and worked hard," he replied. "The last week in Sumiupɛrakwa, thirty of us dug the entire ditch along Main Street for the water main! That was really hard physical labor."

"So much for scrawny, sickly Jordan," said Thornton.

"No, I'm not that any more, that's for sure." He opened his mouth to talk about how he wanted to continue the work, and maybe delay his génadɛma plans for a term, when the front door opened again. It was Chris. When he came into the dining room, still wearing the toga of a member of the House of Lords, he walked straight to Jordan and gave him a kiss.

"You're home! The epic journey is over! And what an effort! It'll go down in history and inspire generations of youth!"

"Oh, I don't know."

"Of course it will! It already is inspiring the youth. The Central Spiritual Assembly hears from someone almost every week who wants to travel and teach. It's phenomenal. The Eryan used to be scared of travel, but your trip has changed that."

"I had no idea." He considered raising the matter of resuming his travels, but lost courage. "Where were you?"

"At the last day of meetings of the Houses of Lords and Commons. As usual, it was a cliffhanger, but everything moved at the very last minute. There was a supplemental budget to pass; tax revenues recovered slightly over the summer. We put it all into the development bank and a micro-credit project to be managed by granges and village councils. We also authorized another census, which will be conducted this winter. The banking bill was uncontroversial; the crown has agreed to insure all deposits up to 500 dhanay in return for the banks following certain regulations they are already conforming to. We hope that will get coin hoards out of mattresses and holes in the floor and back into circulation. The parliament wanted the insurance to extend to 1,000 dhanay, but the palace said no. Anyone who's smart will open two accounts, one in each bank. The big fight, however, was over the tax reallocation bill. Prince Mɛméjékwu wheeled and dealed to get that one through, and compromised a bit. Rather than a ten percent tax rate supporting local villages and towns, the rate will be twelve percent if the worker works in one place and resides in another. So people working in Mɛlwika but living in Boléripludha, for example, will pay the same tax as before, but six percent will go to Mɛlwika and six percent to Boléripludha, instead of the old arrangement where Boléripludha got nothing. This is a good thing; it will encourage people to stay in their ancestral villages and commute to work, and will allow for more efficient industrial parks. The tax rate for the provinces goes up from three and a third percent to five percent, minus the increase for commuters. And one percent of all tax revenue will now go to the temples or 'hymn halls,' the imitations of Bahá'í Centers that were started in

Kɛrda two months ago. That was very controversial, but there were enough conservative hymn-singers to vote it through. The crown's tax rate drops from twenty percent to seventeen."

"That's a big drop; I'm amazed they agreed to it," said Lua.

"I think the Prince made a mistake and the Queen will be displeased. The palace will give less money to temples, provinces, and townships; those other institutions probably won't see an increase in revenue, but the crown will have less control over them because they'll have independent financing."

"Can we get any of that one percent tax rate for Bahá'í Centers?" asked Jordan.

Chris shook his head. "No, we don't accept government support. This may produce a big increase in hymn halls; now everyone has heard of the idea. Of course, the temples may just hold onto all of the tax for themselves. They don't like the hymn halls, even if the sacrifices at them go to the nearest temple."

"The fundamental problem is that priests don't want to live in villages and most don't want to commute to them, and they don't want sacrifices or money to be used to support anything else," said Liz. "I suppose that'll change, though, when we get bigger, if the hymn halls prove a good defense against the Faith."

"Perhaps." Chris looked at Jordan. "So, you've kicked off a revolution; the number of Bahá'ís is up twenty-two percent in three months."

"And now I have a much better appreciation of the complaints that we youth were short-circuiting all the plans for systematic growth. But I think the local spiritual assemblies—some of them, at least—proved to have more strength than expected, and there is followup."

"And plans to initiate their own intensive plans for growth," added Chris. "All around I think what you did was fine. I was skeptical. But most of the new believers are taking institute courses, we have stronger communities, we will have many new local spiritual assemblies, and we'll have to grow and accommodate both competition and opposition. Even that is good, in the long run."

"That really worried me; Kɛrda's fierce opposition to us. I guess we won't go back there any time soon!"

"Don't write them off," replied Liz, shaking her head. "By the time any youth groups can get back next summer or the summer after, it may be alright."

"That reminds me of something I wanted to discuss," said Jordan, putting down his fork. "I . . . I don't know whether I want to go to génadɛma tomorrow. I don't feel ready and I definitely don't feel motivated."

"What?" said Behruz, surprised. "You can't travel village to village all your life to teach the Faith! You need practical skills."

"I know, dad, but the needs of the villages are so pressing, the poverty so great, the lack of knowledge of the Faith so enormous . . . I want to do what I can."

"Well, good, but no one can do that all the time. They have to acquire skills, too! You'll be of greater use to the villages if you have more skills, son."

"I suppose that's true."

"Of course it is."

"You know, I have had to follow in your tracks half the summer to develop the business opportunities you have created," said Chris. "Your grandmother and I will be in Sumiupɛrakwa in two weeks to get the women's gabruli organized. Wɛranopéla's getting

a potato processing plant. Dhudrakaita's developing a bamboo working center that will make eight items from bamboo initially, and maybe a hundred eventually as they grow and acquire experience. The Géndonɛ are expanding their copper and silver mining and probably will do more logging; they have perfect trees for utility poles. Two villages are adding textile manufactories and four are building sewing centers. Klɛnvika is adding more maple syrup processing. I've shelled out thirty-five thousand dhanay to support these industries, and the villages or other investors or the development bank have shelled out even more. I think the economic implications of your trip—especially Budhéstu's briefings, the classes for women, and the agricultural advice—are just beginning. If you had more training in accounting and setting up factories, frankly, I would have to do less, or if I had gone to the villages I would have been able to do more."

"Really?"

"Yes, of course. The skills that villages need will get more specialized every year. You were very limited in what you could do in Wɛranopéla and Lɛwéspadéma; they had power and industries. In a few years, there will be very few isolated places like Dhudrakaita where almost any effort is appreciated. You'll need business training, or advanced accounting, or planning, or specialized medicine, or electrical or mechanical engineering. But you'll still be able to play the three-string and panpipe at night and sing about the Faith."

Jordan considered that, then nodded. "Yes, that's true."

"So you need to go to school tomorrow," said Behruz.

Jordan rolled his eyes. "Yes, dad."

“Don’t worry, you’ll find some of the classes relevant to helping villages,” said Thornton. “I think it’s fantastic that you want to do exactly that. I went to the Kwétékwonɛ lands a week ago for two days with a geology team to study their meteoritic nickel-iron deposit, and I worked in a talk about nature and religion that included the Faith, so now people there want to know more. I wouldn’t have tried that if you hadn’t encouraged me.”

“But helping villages isn’t a career,” said Behruz. “Engineering, chemistry, geology, business: those are careers.”

“That’s what I was trying to say,” said Chris. “Jordan, I have a proposition for you. Come work for me. You could take one evening class and work for me a few days a week, or two classes that meet on two days a week. Luktréstu can’t keep up; I need another assistant. You’d be good. And the work relates to what you want to do. In the next few months, I have to go to Pɛnkakwés, Gordha, Kérékwɛs, and several other places to discuss development plans. I need someone to come with me and help with follow-up. We need to get a sense of each place, in terms of human resources and local capabilities and what the engineering school can provide, make some suggestions, negotiate the actual choice, put together a business plan, determine financing, then follow up with the details. Every project is complicated.”

“And women’s gabrulis are going to spread,” added Liz. “Every town and large village needs one. The Widow’s Cooperative here in Mɛlwika has faded away and become several women’s businesses, so it needs to be revived as a gabruli. If a group of young Bahá'í women could travel to villages and teach the skills, we could open a chain of gabrulis. And the other day Glosé and Sarédatu came by for an afternoon to talk about

further expansion of the Home Improvement stores. They don't want to open any more stores for a while, after opening their seventh store in Isurdhuna. But they are interested in starting a 'Home Foods' chain of supermarkets. But to do that, there has to be a huge increase in processed foods; boxes of pasta, canned soups, frozen potatoes, etc. So we're considering how to increase the processed food industry. That will take a lot of organizing."

"I'm not interested in opening a business for its sake," replied Jordan. "But to help villages, sure; that's interesting to me. Grandpa, how about this: I'll take two courses on two days, work for you for two days, and I'll reserve two days for Bahá'í work. On average; it may be better to spend three or four days with you one week and on Bahá'í work another."

Chris looked around the table. Lua was uncertain; Behruz seemed resigned to it. "Okay, it's a deal," he replied, offering both hands to his grandson over the dinner table. Jordan smiled and shook hands with his grandfather.

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Jordan went to his bedroom that night excited about the rearrangement of his schedule. He pulled out the Mɛlwika Génadɛma Catalog and scanned through all the courses one more time; that term the college was offering 125 courses via 80 full and part-time faculty. He decided to bite the bullet and take Accounting II, as his high school course and his summer experience would equal Accounting I, and by taking II he'd get credit for I as well. He also decided to take Introduction to Ecology, as he wanted to know a lot more about environmental problems and the course promised two day-long field trips on Primdius.

Classes started on the next day—Dwodiu, the 20th of Brénmenu, the equivalent of October 7—and the campus was bustling with 650 students walking to and from dormitories and classrooms, lining up to buy books in the bookstore, swarming the cafeteria to chat about possible courses, and forming queues to add or drop courses in a big tent outside the administration building. The Medical School had expanded and served eighty future doctors and fifty future nurses in various stages of their education; that term, fifteen courses were being offered by twelve different medical faculty who were all active doctors or nurses themselves.

Khwanu attended the course on public health he had signed up for after lunch, then headed to the instructor—Aréjé—to ask several questions afterwards. "You said we had options for practicums other than going out on the mobile clinic. The mobile clinics, in my experience, are good for encountering common problems; tooth aches, basic illnesses, etc. But they don't deal with some important public health issues, like bad village water. So I was wondering whether we could do something different, like go look at village water systems and report to the villages about the problems."

Aréjé nodded. "That would be an impressive practicum, and an important one. You're right, there are major problems. I am hoping to find more people willing to work on things of that general sort, though the projects I mentioned were sanitary conditions in restaurants and food processing facilities. People are employed to make pasta and they don't understand the importance of washing their hands! Someone goes to the Gordha meat packing plant every month and always finds basic problems. All these factories people want to build will have problems with low light, excessive heat or cold, dust,

badly designed work stations . . . and I can't find anyone interested in pursuing these problems. I ask every year, too."

"Well, I'd like to pursue public water systems. Even Tripola doesn't have a good one, and none of the villages I visited this summer had anything decent. In a lot of places, people are dipping their drinking water out of the same river someone else is washing their clothes in. And it isn't complicated to get clean water; a well fifteen meters from a river will never go dry and will provide clean water."

"When will you do your project, though? And where?"

"The North Shore; my home township, Khɛrmdhuna, has seven villages or hamlets, each would need its own water system, and the ground water for all of them is thermal, so it's contaminated with minerals and hydrocarbons from the underground oil shales. They need a complicated solution, especially because they have cold winters. I could also look at Klɛnvika; Budhéstu is from there. I'd have to do the project during the one-week break between terms and turn it in next term."

"So, I'd have to give you an incomplete. Tell you what: give me a detailed proposal with all the information you can muster. I bet you can get a lot from the Survey; they can tell you how far away are clean springs or rivers. Alternatively, put together a proposal for the Dwobɛrgonɛ villages; there are three of them and they're all less than an hour's drive from here by public bus. I suggest you do them during this term and do a special course on public water systems next term. Then you can use the one-week trip to Khɛrmdhuna to gather data for a separate course."

"You'd do that for me?"

“Sure! We badly need someone to study public water systems. We’ll need to arrange a grant from the génadɛma for translation of English language documents, but there’s time for that. You can get the application form from the English department and I’ll help fill it out. I have to sign it. If you can find some others to take the course, even better.”

“I’ll ask around. I bet we can find others interested in the subject.”

“Great! I’ll only be here one day a week next term, so we’ll have to squeeze it in. That may be tricky, but we’ll work on it.”

“You come here from Mɛddwoglubas?”

She nodded. “Four of us come from the western shore to teach, usually on different days. The car picks me up at home at 10 p.m. and drives me here in five hours, which is when I sleep. I wake up five hours later and it’s noon here. In an hour I wash up a bit, eat, and I’m ready for class. I teach until 9 p.m. here, then I’m driven home, I take a nap, and I get there in time for supper.”

“So, no time zone problems, but it’s expensive.”

“The génadɛma pays. Sometimes two or three of us are in the car and we have to resist the temptation to talk, so we can sleep! But it ties all the génadɛmas together and it means expertise is available everywhere, and not just here. Okay, so we’re clear: you get the paperwork for the translations and write up a proposal for your project and we’ll set up the course.”

“Great! Thank you.” Khwanu was so excited he offered a hand to Aréjé, and they shook. Then he headed out of the Medical School and across town to the génadɛma bookstore to buy the texts for his courses. When he came out, bowed under the weight of

books, he spotted Jordan, Tomasu, and Gramé in the cafeteria nearby, their books on their table, drinking coffee. He hurried over.

"This is a very different place for us to get together!" he said.

"No more village classrooms," agreed Jordan. "Here." He pushed over his cup of coffee.

Khwanu nodded in thanks and took a sip. "Well, I just had my public health class and Aréjé, who's teaching it, agreed to a project about village water systems and public health."

"Great!" said Jordan. "I was just telling Tomasu and Gramé that I'm taking only two courses this term, but I'm working for my grandfather two days a week, helping him plan factories, and I plan to devote two days a week to Bahá'í work."

"Have you been to the Dwobɛrgonɛ villages? I wanted to do a big public health project studying Khɛrmdhuna and its various villages. But it was too big, I guess. She said we could do a special tutorial course next term about that and suggested I do a public water project with the Dwobɛrgonɛ villages this term."

"How many are there?" asked Tomasu.

"Three," replied Gramé. "The big one, the village by the copper mine, and one up in the mountains. I'd like to help with that project. I never got the chance to work on your water projects; I was always tutoring women with 'women's work'! But I'm taking a mechanics course this term and I'm the only woman in it. The males want to laugh at me, but don't dare because they know my last name is 'Miller.'"

"You were smart to take that course. I wish I had. But I am taking civil engineering, and that involves water systems." Tomasu thought for a moment. "So, all

four of us could do a project right up the road, as it were, in between classes. And I bet Gramé and I could both get credit."

"I wonder whether I can work in ecology," said Jordan. "And we certainly should offer some music and some Ruhi classes! I think there are two or three Dwobɛrgonɛ Bahá'ís; people who converted here at the génadɛma or through work at the hospital or in town. Followup will be easy; there are plenty of Bahá'ís here who can help."

"So, we're back in business!" exclaimed Tomasu.

Reread and edited 6/7/13, 8/19/17, 11/21/24

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Trips

Mid Prusménu/late Nov. 630/12

The bus slowed and stopped at a store on the side of the road. “Tɛrskua!” exclaimed the bus driver. Budhéstu, startled by the little he could see, rose, grabbed his bag of gifts, and got off.

A line of houses presented itself to him about a hundred meters away; puzzling, they didn’t look nearly enough to accommodate a thousand people. Much closer were the school, manufactory, store, and watertower. When he glanced at the latter, he immediately thought: that’s too small to supply this village in a fire. It reflected his summer working on water systems. He pulled his coat close to him to keep out the late November chill and headed for the store to get directions to the home of Moléstu and Mɛlitané Dénujénésɛ.

The proprietor, Rudhstélu, was happy to give directions, but they weren’t very helpful; none of the buildings had numbers, none were painted, and none of the streets had names, so the descriptions were baffling complex for a stranger. Finally, a child arrived to buy some items for his mother, and for a kɛntay he walked Budhéstu to the right house, which had a pickup truck in front with “Dénujénésɛ Construction” on the side.

When he knocked, Moléstu opened the front door. “Do you remember me, Moléstu? I am Budhéstu Klɛnvikai. I worked for Soru when Blorakwé was staying with them. I have come to visit with Blorakwé and bring presents for the baby.”

“Yes, I remember you. We talked at Mitrukaru’s wedding. Blorakwé got your letter. Please come in, it’s very kind of you to bring presents for our baby son. Very kind indeed.”

“Most are from Soru and Kanawé. They’re in Ora for another week and can’t get back earlier, so they asked me to bring their presents to you, as they didn’t want them delayed. I have added something quite modest.”

“Please, come in; it’s cold out here. Mɛlitané! Blorakwé! Skandéstu! We have a guest!”

They entered the house’s main room. Mɛlitané and Blorakwé had been in the kitchen area and were looking toward the front door while cleaning their hands, so they could greet him. Skandéstu had been upstairs and came down.

“Budhéstu, welcome,” said Mɛlitané. She walked over and shook hands with him, followed by Blorakwé, who was obviously very happy to see him.

“It’s been over two months! It is so kind of you to visit!” she added. They shook hands, and it was as if a small electrical shock passed between them when their hands touched.

“I had to come.” Budhéstu shook hands with Skandéstu as well. “I hope all of you are well, including the baby.”

“He’s strong and thriving, and I’m mostly recovered, thank you,” replied Mɛlitané. She reached over to a cradle and picked up the baby, who was asleep. “His name is Golbéstu.”

“May Esto be merciful to him, too,” said Budhéstu, for the name meant “Merciful God.”

“Blorakwé has been so helpful, I don’t know what I would have done without her,” added Mɛlitané.

“It has been a special honor to be here,” replied Blorakwé. “Sit down, please, Budhéstu. Let me get you some tea.” And she turned to the charcoal-burning iron stove, which was heating the place as well as providing a cooking space.

Budhéstu handed the bag of presents to Mɛlitané and the family opened them; Soru and Kanawé had concentrated on baby clothes and a new baby blanket. Budhéstu had added a small gourd rattle. They opened the presents and marveled at them.

“So many nice things. They will keep the baby warm this winter,” said Mɛlitané. “Please thank Soru and Kanawé. When will they be home? I’ll write them a thank you letter.”

“A week. This is the free week between génadɛma terms, so they’ve gone to Ora to give a week-long seminar about special education. They’re both teaching next term; I’m taking yet another psychology course with Soru. The first spring term, we’re scheduled to teach introduction to psychology at Arjdhura Génadɛma to Sumis, and Soru has asked me to do most of the teaching.”

“How exciting!” said Blorakwé.

“No, terrifying. I need to grasp the subject well enough by then.”

“How is everyone?” asked Blorakwé.

“I haven’t seen everyone. Mitrukaru and Kordé are down here, right?”

“In Ornakwés,” agreed Moléstu. “They visited here last Primdiu, right after Golbéstu’s birth. They’re doing well. Mitrukaru’s really enjoying agricultural advising. He’s good; I am impressed.”

“I could see he was. This last summer, he was able to handle just about any climate and set of conditions and he seemed to have a personal experience to relate to everything. He learned a lot from the farmers he talked to, also. The big news is that Khwanu, Jordanu, Tomasu, and Gramé have just finished nine weeks of twice-weekly visits to the three Dwobɛgonɛ villages, Roktatroba, Bɛrjpéla, and Bolérilɛdha. They’ve studied the water supplies in all three places—that was Khwanu’s project for a course in public health—and they installed wells, water towers, and limited piping in all three. Those efforts were Tomasu and Gramé’s projects for mechanics and civil engineering courses they were taking. They got the help of a dozen Mɛlwika Bahá'ís, a development grant from the Corps, and discounts for some equipment from the Miller Tomi. I helped a little, but I was taking a full course load, whereas they were not.”

“That’s really remarkable,” said Moléstu, impressed.

“Declarations?” asked Blorakwé.

Budhéstu nodded. “Thirty-seven. Not bad; the tribe only has 500 people.”

“She’s teaching us Ruhi, you know,” said Moléstu, with a smile. “We have a class for us and some neighbors every Primdiu. It’s pretty interesting.”

“We’ll start Book Two in about a month,” added Blorakwé. “I think Tɛrskua will soon have a Bahá'í community.”

“Do you want some help with domestic skills and such? I’m sure Swadé and her friends will come down. Liz Mennea is organizing a group of young women to organize classes in the same things we taught women over the summer, though they’re adding some other skills, like canning. The idea is to organize women’s gabrulis in towns and villages.”

“What’s that?” asked Moléstu.

“A building where women can share sewing machines and big stoves, they’ll have a classroom and a place for small children to be watched, and a place to work on their hair and appearance generally. It’ll help them improve domestic life and earn money to support their families.”

“It’s a business?”

“Partly; the gabruli is a non-profit. The women will have to pay small fees to use the building, so it can be maintained. The Menneas are loaning money to get it started in collaboration with other investors and the development bank. The gabrulis will be like a grange for women and they’ll form a chain that will help each other.”

“Sounds like something Tɛrskua could use,” said Mɛlitané. “But I’m not sure who could organize it. I’m now working for our company.”

“And I need your help,” added Moléstu. He had initially resisted her involvement, but Mɛlitané had insisted. She pointed to a telephone. “A business has to have a telephone, and someone has to answer it. Blorakwé learned basic accounting over the summer and she’s teaching me how to do it.”

“And me,” added Moléstu.

“How’s business?”

“We’re almost done expanding a pasta factory nearby; it’s a basic building, pretty simple. Next week I’ll turn it over to Chris Mennea and I hope he’ll give me a job building a house for him in Mɛlita, which he promised to me over a year ago.”

“He doesn’t have a house in Mɛlita?”

Moléstu shook his head.

“So, what’s your phone number?”

“Tɛrskua 109. A long number, but it just means we’re the village’s ninth telephone!” said Blorakwé, with a laugh.

“Good; if I have spare cash, maybe I’ll call you,” said Budhéstu, with a smile.

Mɛlitané walked back over to the stove to stir the stew. “Blorakwé, since we have a guest, can you walk over to the bakery and buy some fresh bread and pastries?” she asked. She picked up a dhanay coin.

“Sure!” she said, jumping up. She took the coin. “Budhéstu, come on!”

That was a rather bold thing for a village girl to say, but the summer had changed her. He smiled and stood up. “Gladly.”

They pulled on their coats and headed out the front door. The bakery was a small shop just a one-minute walk away, run by the storekeeper’s wife. “So, it sounds like you’re doing alright down here?” he said.

Blorakwé nodded. “Yes, I’m glad I took off the time. I am going to high school three days a week; not much, but it’s plenty because the teacher gives me the homework for the other days. It’s gotten easier for me! I can read and do the homework in and around helping mom. Golbéstu’s a handful and he still doesn’t sleep well. Coming back home, the relationship’s different; they’re treating me like an adult. But mom says I can go back to Soru and Kanawé’s any time after Golbéstu’s three months old. I promised to stay six months, and I’m still not sure what I’ll do.”

“You’re doing some good things in Tɛrskua!”

“Yes; my whole family has just about become Bahá'í. I never thought dad would come around, but he likes Ruhi very much; it’s a whole new way of thinking about Esto

and the world. I think it's just the right time for him; starting his own business has changed him, forced him to discover new abilities. Mom's started to help with the phone and money, so it's a new time in her life, too. And having a baby just as I'm almost ready to leave the house is new for them."

"Interesting. Soru and Kanawé miss you. The school misses you; several of the students asked me to say hello to you. And I miss you, Blorakwé."

"I miss you too," she said with a smile. They looked at each other as they walked. They didn't dare hold hands; that was never done by unmarried people. But their smiles and gazes communicated their affection for each other.

They reached the bakery and entered. Blorakwé selected bread and pastries, introduced Budhéstu to the storekeeper's wife and her two helpers, and they chatted pleasantly together. Then they stepped back outside to walk home.

"When you get back to the school, we need to spend some time together talking," said Budhéstu.

"Alright," she replied, shyly. "But I don't want to rush my mother. It takes over an hour a day just to wash Golbéstu's diapers!"

"Don't rush her; take your time here. We should get Swadé to come down and organize some classes for women, and maybe someone can help with a children's class."

"I want to start one on Primdiu mornings, but it's our only peaceful time. I think a lot of parents would appreciate spiritual education for their children; it would be popular."

“Maybe I can come down and help. I’ve never taught children, but it would be helpful for my psychology classes anyway. And it’d be a chance for us to do something together.”

“And with my parents. I think that’s a good idea, if you want to do it, Budhéstu.”

“I think I can. I haven’t been helping with the Dwobɛrgonɛ project practically at all. But I can’t study all the time; I should do something else to break up the routine. And I’d love to have a reason to get down here every week to see you.”

“And I’d like to see you, I really would.”

“Alright, let’s start a Bahá'í children’s class. Could we get a classroom in the school?”

“I can ask. It’s empty on Primdius. That’d be a good day and time for a class for women as well.”

“I’ll ask Swadé, then. But let’s see what your parents think, first.”

“Definitely.” Blorakwé smiled—almost glowed—looking at Budhéstu, and he glowed right back at her. This was the start of something.

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Pɛnkakwés’s forest of firs, birches, and aspens suddenly yielded to a large expanse of stumps and weeds. Jordan looked out of the passenger side window of the battered old rover. “Clear cut,” he said. “No trees left for reseeding and no strips of trees left to control erosion. And there are already gullies.”

“They didn’t take Thornton’s advice,” replied Chris. “He was here three or four years ago when they started clearing large areas. These trees are the timber in half the

new buildings in Mɛddoakwés and the lower valley." Chris looked over from the driver's seat at his grandson. "I see that ecology course was useful."

"Yes, it was. I already knew about clear cutting and I had already noticed gullying, but now I'm more sensitive than ever about it. Maybe we should suggest that they send timbermen down river, to the dead forests in the shallows of the sea, to help cut that wood. Pretty soon those trees will blow over, sink, and rot, and they'll be useless."

"That's been suggested to the Pɛnkakwés villages—the Lɛpawsonɛs. Neither the Lɛpawsonɛ wanted to go there—remember, they are Tutanɛ, not ordinary Eryan—nor did the Fish Eryan villages at the river mouth want them to come. Never mind that it's a race against time to save that timber."

"It's a shame."

"Rationality and efficiency are not always reasons to do things. There's always politics and perceived self interest. It's amazing we've managed to have as much impact here as we have, in almost twelve years. We've been lucky. The Queen was disposed toward change. I'm not sure most kings would have been, but she wanted her people to have better lives and she was under pressure already to consult with the people, thanks to a campaign by Gawéstu and then by Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. The bureaucracy, largely, is honest. The taxation rate, at a flat thirty-three percent, is predictable, and the queen has been generous with five year tax breaks for expansion."

Jordan looked at a particularly large gully that came down a hill toward Route 4. Some runoff, clearly, had washed over the road recently, creating a rough spot that Chris has to slow down for. "Grandfather, what about reforestation? This land will be ruined."

"Not completely ruined. The weeds and grass are getting established."

“But environmental degradation will steadily whittle away at the land’s carrying capacity, and this world has already had at least one big population collapse, maybe two. We’ve got rapid population growth and we don’t have that much coal, and no petroleum. We could deforest this whole world in half a century.”

Chris chewed on that for a moment. “I’m sure we’ve encouraged reforestation here, and they probably know about the efforts in the hills above Mɛlwika.”

“What if we proposed to give them a start-up grant to start their own reforestation program?”

“Hum. That’d cost us . . . maybe ten thousand a year for something small. I bet a serious reforestation program for the entire region would cost twenty or thirty, though. All seven villages in the upper Pɛnkakwés export timber.”

“Maybe a Development Bank or Development Corps grant could be arranged, and maybe the villages can provide a little tax support.”

“Probably. Let’s add that to the list of ideas to discuss.”

“How far are we from Sullɛndha now?”

Chris looked at the rover’s odometer. It was practically the only original part of the rover that was left; the engine had just been replaced a second time two months earlier, thanks to the aliens, and much of the outer sheet metal had been replaced by Mɛlwika mechanics the previous year. He did a mental calculation. “We’re three kilometers from the village. This is their timber cutting operation.”

A few minutes later they topped a slight rise in the ground and began to descend toward a “dhuba,” a circular bowl that probably represented an eroded meteor crater. The flat floor, about two kilometers across, was covered by fallow fields that provided

Sullɛnda, “Sunland,” with its agriculture. The Gwɛrkaitakwés or “Wild Beast Forest River,” descended mountains on the northeast side, crossed the bowl, and left it on the southwest side. A large tributary entered the bowl from the north and joined the Gwɛrkaitakwés near the middle of the bowl, where Sullɛndha village was situated. Route 4 approached the bowl from the southeast, ran across it to the southern bank of the Gwɛrkaitakwés, then turned southwest and followed the river downstream, where it passed two more Lɛpawsonɛ villages—the latter on the junction of another tributary—then continued downstream to its mouth at the Fish Eryan villages of Akɛldɛdra and Pékɛnwika. Altogether, the region had five mountain streams—hence the name Pɛnkakwés, “Five Waters”—five dams, seven Lɛpawsonɛ villages, two Fish Eryan villages, and eight thousand people. In the last decade Sullɛndha had grown from seven hundred to twelve hundred.

They drove across the bowl to the southern bank of the river. The old village was on the northern bank across a very nice, new stone bridge. The southern bank had the new development: a large sawmill, an ice box factory, a windmill factory, a store with a post office and telephone switchboard, an elementary and middle school with four classrooms, and a regional high school with four classrooms. The buildings were stretched out along the river. Chris, however, drove across the river to the old village and parked in front of Lord Kapanu’s new house, which included a wing with a large hall and space for a half dozen offices.

“Wow; he’s savvy,” commented Jordanu.

“Oh, yes. He’s first cousin of General Roktɛkɛstɛr, he knows what’s going on, and his cousin steers investment here.”

“First cousin? I thought Roktɛkɛstɛr was royalty.”

“He is. His mother was Prince Yusdu’s second wife, the sister of Lord Kapanu’s father. But Kapanu isn’t a rough commoner, either. All the lords of the Pɛnkakwés are descendants of Prince Andékwɛs, a grandson of King Mégékwɛs Éradékumaj, six hundred years ago. He was sent here as governor over the Lepawsonɛs—a small tribe of maybe a thousand people in two or three villages. He married both daughters of the tribal chief, then became heir when the three sons all mysteriously died.”

“I suppose just about all the lords and old houses are descended from Mégékwɛs Éradékumaj by now.”

“I’m sure, but everyone here will remind you of their blood. Roktɛkɛstɛr is just the latest of a string of generals and queens they have produced, too. This is a remote area, but it isn’t poor any more, and it isn’t unsophisticated.” Chris pointed to a steam car. “Roktɛkɛstɛr’s here. Good. He’ll encourage development, and he probably brought his checkbook.”

They got out of the rover and locked the doors. Jordan was nervous. He wanted to stop and pray before going in, but he knew his practical grandfather would object; besides, he would have prayed *before* they left Mɛlwika. Jordan shivered and pulled his jacket closer around him.

“I told you to wear a heavy coat. Pɛnkakwés is much farther north and much colder. The mountains to the north of here are only 300 meters high, so cold air pours over them from the Polar Basin.”

“So I see. I bet they’ve already had some snow.”

"Probably. When warm air comes up from the sea on the southwest wind and then the cold air pours out of the Basin and lifts it, this area gets a *lot* of snow, just like the area around Bɛllɛdha. It's really hard to keep Route 4 open in the winter. Let's go inside."

Chris led the way to the door to the wing with the new hall. When they entered, they were surprised to see the hall pretty full with about twenty men and one woman. General Roktɛkɛstɛr was up front, writing on a large sheet of newsprint stuck to the wall. Three such sheets were attached to the wall and scribbled on. Chris had to smile; it was a business technique he had taught in his classes.

The entire room turned to see them and Chris nodded in greeting to everyone, then pulled off his heavy coat, for the room's pot-belly stove was practically red hot from the fire within it and the room was quite comfortable. "Welcome, Lord Kristobéru," said Lord Kapanu. "We are honored that you were able to make it."

"Thank you, Lord, we are honored to come and make our contribution. I apologize that we are late."

"No, Lord, not at all. We invited you to arrive at 10 a.m., but the General arrived at 9 a.m. so we got started."

"This is my grandson, Jordanu."

"Jordanu Doma-Ménnéai," Jordan added. He had started using "House of Mennea" as his last name some time ago, because no one on the western shore could pronounce "Shirazi"—the best they could say was "Sirasi" or more likely, "Skirasi."

"You are welcome, Jordanu Doma-Ménnéai," replied Kapanu. He began to walk around the room and introduce all twenty people present. Six were the lords of the other upper Pɛnkakwés villages; the two Fish Eryan lords had not been invited. The others

were owners or operators of the factories or schools. The woman, Awsané, Kapanu's sixty-year old aunt, was the principal of the elementary and middle school.

"I'm sorry that I'll never remember all the names," Jordanu apologized.

"So is he gɛdhému, too?" asked Lord Soranu of Rejsunidhérdha, "Prince's Tomb," the area's second largest village. He was a young man barely older than Jordan with bright red clothing and a missing front tooth, which made him look hot-headed.

"Do I sound it?" asked Jordan. "I was not quite six when we arrived here. I have no memories of Gɛdhéma."

"I am impressed by your lists," said Chris, not wanting to continue that conversation.

"Please sit with us." Kapanu waved at the others and they enlarged the circle. The floor was covered by beautiful locally made blankets, of which the Lɛpawsonɛ were justly famous, but on top of them were thick, soft, lavishly embroidered and very expensive silk pillows from Sumilara. They each sat on one.

"Let me show you what we have," said Roktɛkɛstɛr, starting with the first two sheets of once-blank newsprint. "This one lists general goals for the area. An important goal is to establish industry of some sort in every village, because right now it's all concentrated in Sullɛndha."

"And the rest of our villages are pretty poor," added Soranu, irritated.

"Exactly," continued the general. "They all have agriculture, hunting, and lumbering. Five out of seven have a decent gravel road, and the army will gravel the roads to Gwɛrkaita and Pɛdbɛrgas next spring. Five of seven have electricity, telephones, schoolhouses; the other two send some kids here. Three have stores and post offices. We

want all of them to have power, phones, schoolhouses, grain storage, bakeries, stores, post offices, switchboards, and at least one factory by the end of the plan. We also want to expand the high school in Sullɛndha from 200 kids to 400 and add vocational and some génadɛma courses. We want a permanent clinic in Sullɛndha with a physician and nurse. The numbers here to the right are the cost of each; if the number is in parentheses, that means it would come from taxes."

"Very impressive," said Chris.

"Of course, it is now a six and a half year plan; we should have done this in the spring," noted Soranu.

Roktɛkɛstɛr pointed to the other two sheets. "These are specific projects we'd like to tackle. We want to expand the sawmill and start a second one at Réjsunidhérdha. We'd like to start a fish farm in Yɛmɛpɛrkas and a dairy in Isurmɛnga. Abɛldɛdra is expanding its apple orchards and strawberry fields already; those are their main plans. That's as far as we got."

"And we are sure you have brought us other ideas," added Kapanu.

"Indeed," said Chris. "First, there is the matter of the icebox factory. You wrote the engineering school six months ago about the declining sales, and they finally looked into the problems with wooden ice boxes, basically rotting and smelling. They propose to replace the body of the icebox entirely with plastic made in Pértatranisér. They'd be shipped here, where you'd assemble the ice boxes out of metal parts made locally and plastic parts from Pértatranisér. The result will be nicer looking, can come in several colors, will be cheaper, will weigh a lot less, and probably will make you just as much money."

"We can't make the plastic parts here?" asked Kapanu.

Chris shook his head. "No, there's only one place they can be made, so far."

"Alright," said Kapanu. He nodded to Roktɛkɛstɛr, who added it. "What else?"

"You mentioned switchboards in every village. The telephone company, I think, would prefer to string more lines between the villages, because switchboards are expensive to operate. A village of one hundred houses might eventually need fifty phones, but it would be unusual for the village to have more than five or ten for the foreseeable future. If twelve phones are arranged on three party lines of four phones each, a village only needs three pairs of wires to the Sullɛndha switchboard, and the switchboard here will be that much busier and more efficient."

"I told them that, but they feel it is important from the point of view of prestige," said Roktɛkɛstɛr.

"Well, the smallest switchboard has room for fifty phones and costs two hundred dhanay to make and install, and even if a volunteer operates it, it costs several hundred dhanay per year. Save the money for other things during this plan."

Kapanu nodded. "Let's strike that one. What else?"

"Génadɛma classes. We're looking into doing the same thing at Sumiupɛrakwa. We'll send you a list of potential classes and can send faculty to teach in the afternoon or evening. A one-term course, thirty hours in the classroom, costs 400 dhanay. That includes getting the teacher here. It sounds like a lot, but the class could have up to forty students in it, so the cost amounts to ten dhanay each. If the villages pay part of it, many people can afford that."

"How many teachers can you send us?"

“How many do you need? We should sit down later with a Mɛlwika Génadɛma catalog and figure out what the area needs. From that we can figure out what to provide. Courses for your teachers and on basic skills like nursing would be very helpful.”

“There’s no way you can reduce the costs further?” asked one of the lords.

Chris shook his head. “We pay the average professor between 1,500 and 3,000 per year, depending on their education and experience, and they teach six or eight courses per year, plus we pay for their health care and pension.”

“That’s ridiculously expensive,” commented Soranu.

“There’s financial aid available from the Ministry of Education.”

“What about from the génadɛma? You support your students, don’t you?” pressed Kapanu.

“Sometimes. Let us move on to another matter right now. We can discuss financial aid matters when we consider how many courses you might need.”

Kapanu nodded. “Alright. What else?”

“I have a few new ideas. Abɛldɛdra needs more than more apples and strawberries. It should produce cider of various types, hard and soft. No one is producing it in large quantities right now. It could make apple jam, jelly, and sauce in jars that could be sold all over the realm. The same with strawberries. Demand can expand quite a bit, especially if Abɛldɛdra’s products acquire a reputation.”

“How much money will this cost?” asked Lord Dɛku.

“Four or five thousand dhanay for a building with a cider press, some stoves, and an icehouse to store apples and strawberries, then they expand based on profits.”

“Your plans are heavily oriented around just agriculture,” added Jordan, seeing a chance to add something. “But developing the economy involves adding to the value of agricultural products. As people earn more money, they want to spend less time making everything for themselves and prefer to buy finished products instead.”

“But you have other things to develop besides agriculture,” said Chris. “You can increase the production of blankets, of which you are justly famous. That’s an important opportunity. Right now they’re produced by hand, but they can be machine woven and include your distinctive designs.”

“I’ll invest in that,” said Roktɛkɛstɛr. “How hard will it be to adapt the equipment for blankets?”

“I don’t know. It might take a year of experimenting, too,” replied Chris. “I’ll invest in the apple and strawberry products. We are training a group of young people to teach cooking skills; they can come here starting in a few months to help with that aspect.”

“If you plan to set up bakeries, they should make products with locally grown fruit as well; cakes and pastries, for example,” added Jordan. “A full truck won’t add much to the cost.”

“But these are mostly employing women,” objected Soranu. “What about men?”

“These are additional jobs for the area; I’ve mentioned some for men and now some for women. The cooking jobs can be combined with places for women to sew and knit; there are women’s gabrulis spreading around the world, and Pɛnkakwés could have some of the first ones. They will provide women with places to learn things to improve

their families, making things for their families, and earn money to help their families. I'll invest four thousand in each one."

"In seven villages?" asked Soranu, startled.

"All seven, over two or three years," confirmed Chris.

"The idea seems controversial," said Kapanu. "But we would like to earn the money for the area. What else do you have?"

"One other idea; a nursery for trees," said Chris. "You need to replant the areas you've cut. I'll invest in that and will work to get a grant, but it will need some local tax support as well. Gwɛrkaita might be a good place to locate it."

"We'd pay people to plant trees?" asked Soranu, startled by the idea.

"If you prefer, you can run out of trees in ten or fifteen years," replied Chris. "Meanwhile, every time it rains, gullies will wash away the soil and flood your rivers. You must plan ahead. That's what the Seven Year Development Plan is about."

"The land is being damaged; we can see it," agreed Kapanu. "We were told this before and we didn't understand, but I see it. If Gwɛrkaita doesn't want the tree nursery, Sullɛndha does."

"No, we can support it," replied Lord Stélanu. "How much?"

"If you can give two or three thousand, I'll give three and I think we can get a grant for three. That'll be enough to raise and plant quite a few trees."

"Alright, two thousand," said Stélanu. "But not this coming year."

"There's one more thing every region needs, according to the development plan," observed Roktɛkɛstɛr. "A shoe manufactory. If you include the Fish Eryan villages, this province has 8,000 people and therefore needs about 8,000 pairs of shoes per year. With a

complete set of equipment and electricity, a twenty-man manufactory can produce that many."

"That'll cost about thirty thousand," added Chris. "I just arranged for a shoe manufactory twice that big in Wrétradɛntɛs on the south shore. You'll need to export shoes for a while."

"A lot of people will continue to wear home-made moccasins," agreed Lord Andruanu of Pɛdbɛrgas, and he pointed to his own, which were embroidered and had a thick leather sole. "Our village has been making and selling moccasins for centuries; it was easy enough to carry a hundred pairs per horse to Sullɛnda, Bɛllɛdha, or even Mɛddoakwés. This is a task we must have."

"Then you will," agreed Kapanu, though he sounded disappointed. Roktɛkɛstɛr wrote it on the list with "Pɛdbɛrgas" or "Foothills" next to it. It was an appropriately named place to manufacture foot coverings.

"You'll have the new road this spring," said Roktɛkɛstɛr. "Lord Chris, what about power?"

"The army will install the poles where trees are not available and the electric and telephone companies will install their wires. Send both a letter as soon as possible telling them when to schedule the work. You can't get the shoe-making equipment any sooner anyway; there are five shoe manufactories opening in the next year, so the equipment is already being made as fast as possible. You should send someone to Mɛlwika over the winter to work in the shoe manufactory there, to learn how it works. It employs one hundred men and women. The same applies to your plans for a dairy; there are three of them opening in the next year."

“So, what do we have?” asked Kapanu. He and Roktɛkɛstɛr began to tally up the costs and the jobs created. When they were done, they both shook their heads. “This would spend 327,000 dhanay, which is about nine years of investment money, and would create 140 jobs, which is about a third as many as we want!”

“But it isn’t nine years of investment money,” replied Roktɛkɛstɛr. “Because the economy of the area will grow.”

“And for every job you intentionally create, the economy will create as much as one more,” added Chris. “Because the 140 workers will need to buy things, which the others will produce and sell. So you probably have closer to 280 jobs.”

“And we haven’t included more timber cutting jobs,” added Kapanu. “We’ve doubled the size of our sawmills, so they will need at least twice as much timber.”

“That’s what I mean by doubling the number,” replied Chris. “Women who work in some of these facilities will want day care, so some women will take small children into their houses during the day. The shoe manufactory will need leather, the dairy, milk, and the cider press, apples. Every one of these facilities will need firewood or charcoal for winter heat. You’ve probably created 280 jobs.”

“But we wanted 500,” replied Soranu. “This area has six thousand people and twelve hundred households. Agriculture is yielding less and less money every year. And in seven years, the statistics experts in Mɛddoakwés say the upper Pɛnkakwés will have eight thousand people and sixteen hundred households, unless our children leave, and we don’t want that to happen.”

“You need to invest more,” said Chris. “Everyone wants the economy to grow naturally, but it costs money. You’re investing only thirty dhanay per household per year;

that's less than three percent of income. On Gɛdhéma, countries that double their economies every seven years invest ten percent of their income! That's how much it takes."

"There are other industries we could add," agreed Kapanu. He picked up the fat list of manufactures and services that Amos and Aryéstu had compiled and they began to go down it, singling out items they could begin to make, especially farm tools. They also noted that they needed a bigger fire company to protect the region's structures and that they could export more firewood with the timber.

They took a break for lunch. Roktɛkɛstɛr and Chris got on the phone to find out about certain items and who was planning to make them and what sort of money was available for the area from the palace. Then after lunch they all convened back together to review everything and make a list of next steps. By 3:00, everyone was exhausted but satisfied they had put together a good plan for the upper Pɛnkakwés.

"I'm amazed it was that simple!" said Jordan, as they drove across the village to Route 4.

Chris chuckled. "I assure you, it won't be. Half these plans won't bear fruit, but others unexpectedly will. The important thing is that they have a process for setting up regional goals. None of the larger provinces can do that; too many villages, too many grudges, and too much tension between the central city and surrounding villages. The smaller regions really do have some advantages."

"But they don't know it."

"They don't. But Lɛwéspa, Pɛnkakwés, and Jérnstisér are all doing pretty well, in spite of their small sizes. Consider all the things Sullɛndha already has."

“Sullɛndha has done well, though the rest of the area hasn’t done as well.” Jordan watched Chris turn right onto Route 4, rather than left. “So, I guess we aren’t heading home?”

“First we have to stop in Tritɛjna. I want to see how the expansion of the pasta factory’s going. That’ll make the trip to Mɛlita tomorrow simpler and faster.”

“You’re involved in so many projects, I can’t believe it.”

“About sixty; the average investment is five thousand and we have three hundred thousand invested this year. You can see why I need your help.”

“And that represents about 150 new jobs?”

Chris shook his head. “More like four or five hundred, because the financial leverage is three to one. In other words, my share of the investment is a third; the rest comes from local taxes, the Development Corps, the Development Bank, and other investors, including the workers. It’s pretty expensive to create jobs. Those workers’ salaries in turn create another four or five hundred jobs, so we’re making maybe a thousand a year. Of course, the development plan calls for the creation of 83,000 jobs, and our share might reach ten thousand. The money comes back at about a ten or fifteen percent profit and we reinvest it.”

“And it’s all outside Mɛlwika? I’d think that would be controversial.”

“Yes and no. Remember that the biggest cost of a factory is equipment, and where does it come from? Most comes from Mɛlwika and ultimately from the work of the Engineering School. So my three hundred thousand dhanay of investment in factories produces about three hundred thousand dhanay of purchases of equipment from Mɛlwika.

That's 150 jobs. And those people need another hundred or so to sell them things, educate their kids, etc."

"It goes round and round."

"It does."

They continued southwestward along the Gwɛrkaitakwés, past Isurmɛnga and Réjsunidhérdha, through an almost continuous strip of farmland and pasture, then for twelve kilometers they entered an open belt of former prairie, now filling with seedling trees. Finally they reached Akɛldɛdra, a Fish Eryan town of nearly a thousand people, which had a sawmill, several grain storage silos, and a small factory that made axes, hatchets, knives, forks, and spoons. They turned southward onto Route 1—now concreted for a short ways—and drove sixty kilometers through beautiful prairie growing up into forest, uninhabited except for a squatter farmer or two, until they reached Arjdhura and Nuarjora. Most of the way the headlights were on; the eclipse had started. From there, Route 1 turned northeastward toward Mɛddoakwés, and in eight kilometers they came to Tritɛjna.

Moléstu and his crew were hard at work inside the addition to the pasta factory, plastering the walls and installing electric lights. Moléstu was startled by Chris's arrival. "Lord, welcome! What a surprise! But as you can see, we are making a lot of progress!"

"Indeed, honored. The work is beautiful, as usual. I am not checking up on you; I was on my way home from a day-long meeting in Sullɛndha north of here and decided to swing through, as it is less out of my way than a visit when I go to Mɛlita."

"I understand. As you can see, we'll have the plastering done in this room tomorrow. We put on the big double doors yesterday."

“They have to be that large in order to get some of the equipment into here. The new pasta drier is huge and will take up a lot of this wall.” Chris pointed to a twenty-meter wall inside the twenty by twenty-five meter building.

“We poured the concrete pads for the gas tanks yesterday. So, will this place use gas to dry the pasta?”

“Yes, the quality is unpredictable and uneven with charcoal. We’ll sell more product when the quality is better. The dryer is the first of its kind; it’ll cost ten thousand. But it will make money in the long run.”

“Someone asked me whether Tritɛjna would get gas service once the tanks are installed.”

“Probably, because the bigger the sales of gas, the cheaper it’ll be to haul it here. How are the baths coming?”

“They’ll be done next week.” Moléstu beckoned him and they walked to a corridor leading to the factory’s exit, which had a pair of bathrooms on each side. Chris went into all four of them, inspected the work, then nodded.

“Good. Jordan, make a note; we need to call the supplier and make sure the bathtubs, toilets, sinks, and the water heaters arrive next week. If anyone asks, Moléstu, tell them that the baths will be for free use by employees and their families, and everyone else can use them for a dontay.”

“And the factory manager says you’re hiring another thirty workers?”

“Correct. When the expansion’s over, fifty workers will produce pasta worth two hundred thousand dhanay per year. It’s becoming popular.”

“Sure; cheap, easy to keep, easy to cook. We’ll be finished by the end of next week, Lord. I was hoping you’d have another job for me, like that house in Mɛlita you promised me.”

“I’ll tell you, Moléstu, that when I finally ask you to build that house, you’ll have to worry, because it’ll mean I don’t have anything else for you. I don’t need a house in Mɛlita. I’d rather spend my money creating jobs for people. Can you come to Mɛlita tomorrow afternoon? We’re planning a cannery.”

“What’s that?”

“A place where men and women partially cook food, put it in jars while it’s hot and sterile, and seal them airtight. The food stays good for several years and there’s almost no cooking to do. It’ll be about the size of this addition and will employ twenty or twenty-five people. It’s a similar job in terms of electricity and gas, though there won’t be bathtubs.”

“That’ll take us about two months, then.”

“I think so. After that, we have an expansion of the peanut processing plant, and after that I may have an additional building to build here, and I think we’ll be partially funding a women’s gabruli in Tɛrskua in the spring. I have plenty for you. With factories and other facilities being built all over the place, this is a good time to go into construction.”

“So I’m beginning to realize, Lord.”

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Demonstration

"We're approaching the front door; can you open it for us, so we can drive straight in?" asked Amos over his cell phone. The cook in the Mennea house, who had answered the telephone, said yes, so Amos thanked her and closed the connection.

The traffic on West Street was pretty heavy; Mɛlwika had a dozen buses now, and delivery trucks were making their deliveries. The main street just west of the city walls needed widening. Amos slowed and had to wait for three vehicles to pass before turning left, driving up the steep hill, and through the West Gate into Citadel Square. There he had to wait, because East Street—the major street along the western edge of the city, but inside and east of the wall—was a moving mass of bicycles, pedestrians, and horse-drawn vehicles. A big sign over the gate had said "local residents only." Mɛlwika had separated the faster steam-powered vehicles from everyone else.

Amos crossed Citadel Square slowly, entrained in the heavy traffic of people biking to the marketplace or home with their bike's rear side baskets bulging with purchases. When he reached the Mennea residence, he honked to pass through the reverse flow and turned into the open front door of the house.

"We're home," he said to May.

"A pretty quick, safe trip." She looked at the back seat, where Bahiyé, age 10, and Marié, 7, were sound asleep amid bags of clothes and satchels of papers. A trunk with heavy clothes was strapped to the steam car's roof. "Girls! Girls! Wake up, we've arrived." She reached down or shook their legs.

They stirred. “What time is it?” asked Bahiyé, opening her eyes.

“It’s 9 a.m. here and everyone’s awake and ready for us. It’s midnight at home, so stay in the courtyard here in the sunshine and play with your cousins as long as you can. Oh, here they come.”

“There’s Kalé!” added Marié happily. She was just four days younger and the girls were practically sisters.

They opened the car doors and stepped out as the entire rest of the family came to greet them. Everyone hugged and kissed, round and round, then Thornton and Behruz reached up and pulled the chest of clothes off the roof. They trooped up to the Keino apartment of the house and helped move everything in, then the adults headed to the house’s big main room for tea and pastries while the kids played in the chilly courtyard, which was covered by several sheets of alien parachute cloth for the winter.

“I’m glad we took the chance and headed around the northern shore,” said Amos. “The road was well plowed and wide open, in spite of yesterday’s snow storm. If we had gone around the bottom of the sea, it would have taken an hour more.”

“Now that the crown pays Mitru to keep the main routes open, he does it very systematically,” said Chris. “Here it is mid Bɛlménu and we still haven’t had practically any snow.”

“But it’s been cold,” added Liz. “I guess the winter gyre hasn’t gotten started around the sea.”

“Pértatranisér’s been warm, humid, and rainy,” said May. “So much for the dry season. It’s been tough on the wheat, and I bet Mɛlita’s dry and they’re irrigating like crazy.”

“Exactly,” said Chris. “For a small world, this place has amazingly unpredictable weather.” He turned to Amos. “So, you all are here for a month.”

“Yes. It sounds like the girls won’t have much trouble with their school work, either, which is a big relief.”

“Estowékhé should be a good tutor for the girls,” exclaimed Lébé. “She’s been a teacher in the school system here for six years; she was Jordan’s eighth grade teacher and he really liked her. Her husband won’t let her teach full time now that she has two small kids, but she has converted this career disaster into a victory by developing lesson plans and textbooks, taking education classes in the génadɛma, and tutoring at home during the day.”

“She’s really good,” echoed Jordan. “We loved her.”

“I wish most women dealing with old-fashioned husbands had managed the problem as well as she,” added Lébé.

“We’re glad you all are here with us,” said Chris. “I know the engineering school is looking forward to your help, Amos.”

“They’re doing fine without me. They have some really capable engineers and mechanics now; I am amazed by what they’re doing. The operations in Pértatranisér, Tripola, Mɛddwoglubas, and Ora are still much smaller, and we still rely on the school here to produce many of the final products.”

“Mɛddwoglubas is pretty independent,” replied Chris. “You’re being modest. The engineers don’t have confidence without you around to advise them.”

“They have to get a lot more independent, because the operations are expanding so fast. The latest supply drop from the aliens has provided Pértatranisér with some of the

same machine tools. Orders for industrial machinery have ballooned to almost half a million dhanay! We'll need to double the staff, from master engineers down to secretaries, and we'll need twice as much floor space. We need to fund a major expansion of the labs and work spaces, Chris. I'm talking about a hundred thousand dhanay. And I doubt we can handle this sort of demand without pushing up the top salary to five or even six thousand per year. It's going to be very expensive."

Chris shrugged. "If it's going to be so expensive, it'll just take a little longer. For six months I've been making trips to every province. I've pledged three hundred thousand of investment in what will probably be a million dhanay of factories. That's most of the source for the half million dhanay of machinery orders! The School of Engineering is essentially a for-profit operation, though the 'profit' is surplus to plow into its expansion. If the school asks for a down payment on the machinery it will deliver, I'll pay the down payment out of my investment in the factory, and then we'll use the down payments to build the labs and hire the staff. The money will go round and round."

"The tomi's accountants will have to watch it all carefully, because it'll be a complicated project."

"I've been hiring more accountants. The tomi's bursting out of the building next door; I may buy a few adjoining houses, tear them down, and expand it. I've had to pay the accountants and managers more, too, to retain them, but the best try to come to Mɛlwika Génadɛma, so I get the best pickings."

"This is becoming an incredibly complex operation," said Liz. "I don't know how you'll keep it going into the future, Chris."

"We'll see." He looked at Jordan. "I may have someone who can learn the operation, eh, Jordan?"

The boy shrugged. "Maybe. It's certainly more interesting than I thought it would be."

"He's been going to Mɛlita for me one day a week, and he's doing a good job of supervising projects in that area. Luktréstu's handling the upper valley and Lubanu's handling day to day operations of the tomi itself. I think I'm close to hiring someone to oversee operations in Rudhisér, Kɛrda, and Véspa from Pértatranisér, and I plan to upgrade the tomi offices in Bɛllɛdha and Tripola next year. Most of the factories will be using at least some of our services, and we'll be auditing all of them, but we'll be ready."

"What's the rumor I've heard about discontent in Miller Motors?" asked May.

"That's reached Pértatranisér?" asked Chris.

"There are some posters, and the mimeographed underground newspapers have had two articles," she replied.

"Tension does seem to be building," agreed Chris. "Demand for vehicles has been rising, but very slowly; they're up to 2.3 per day, which translates into 760 vehicles per year. They've had to cut production to avoid a surplus. Efficiency has been rising, but the workers are complaining of boring, repetitive work and increased on-the-job accidents. So they want more pay. But with low production, we can't afford it."

"And there has been an increase in accidents," confirmed Lua. "Mostly gashes and cuts, though several men have lost fingers and a few months ago one lost a hand in the power equipment."

"That's terrible," said May. "At least they have good medical benefits."

“But with tight cash flow, they haven’t been paying very quickly,” replied Lua.

“The decisions are tough to make,” replied Chris. “We wanted to be producing a thousand vehicles per year by now. We’ll get there; creative financing has helped with demand. It’s amazing how many individuals other than lords are buying cars and trucks, including some of those high-pay engineers! But it takes time for people to *imagine* they can buy a vehicle.”

“May, you said underground newspaper**s**,” noted Liz. “Is there a second one?”

She nodded. “Yes, in addition to the one produced in Mɛlwika or Mɛddoakwés, there’s now one coming out in Ora, Pértatranisér, or Néfa; I suspect Pértatranisér, because the high school’s mimeograph machine disappeared. The secretary was fired for that. It’s not bad. I suspect there are four or five contributors, and I think some are high school and génadɛma teachers.”

“They’re the best informed,” agreed Liz. “The paper for this area uses some colorful pseudonyms.”

“I’m glad they’re there, but I wish they wouldn’t criticize us for having such a big income,” said Chris. “This household *for three families* is not living in an opulent way. We’re devoting less than two percent of our income to ourselves, and we’re actually paying ourselves reasonable or low fees for services rendered. The rest is reinvested in growth.”

“And we’re not even getting it all back!” added Behruz. “The gas company just spent 500,000 on expansion of pipelines and production facilities and it won’t pay for itself for a decade or more. The electric and telephone companies are financial black holes that would collapse without our investments.”

“We need to double power production and triple the transmission capacity in the next seven years to avoid rolling blackouts,” added Amos.

“All these factories won’t pay us back fully for five to ten years, either,” added Chris. “The return, eventually, will be very good, and we’ll plow it back into investments anyway.” He picked up the census form on the table near him. “Have you seen this yet?”

“I filled it out before leaving,” replied Amos. “Amazing they’re asking so many questions; whether the house has electricity and a flush toilet!”

“They’re trying to measure public health things, and come up with a way to define ‘middle class’,” said Thornton. “I had a long conversation with Bidhu two weeks ago, when they had five hundred postmasters and other census workers in Mɛddoakwés for training. They think there are about ten thousand households with power, flush toilets, radios, gas stoves, ice boxes, or some combination of them. Three thousand have telephones, but they’re asking about telephones to make a check.”

“That would be a pretty good definition of ‘middle class,’” agreed May. “Electricity, gas, and ice all cost about one dhanay per week.”

“But I was surprised they asked ‘what widu does your household follow?’ and then list Widumaj, Bahu, and Jesu!”

“I explained to Bidhu that some households are only partially Bahá'í, and the heads of households—the men—often are not, the adult children are more likely members, and sometimes the women, so the result would not be accurate. He said that they didn’t want to add that question to the section of the census about each of the individual members; it’d be too complicated! So what can you do.” Thornton shrugged.

“It sounds to me that they’re trying to minimize our numbers,” said May, suspiciously.

“Maybe,” replied Chris. “And maybe that’s just as well.”

“By the way, is there any news from the new Bahá'ís around Pértatranisér?” asked Jordan.

Amos nodded. “Yes. Pertatranisér is sending teachers to Nuvika, Parchimanja, Owyapéla, and Boléripura once a week to teach Ruhi and children’s classes. The adults in three of those places have now taken over the effort to run the children’s classes; Boléripura’s the exception. We’ve also started a Book Zero course in Bruagras; it was a goal the Pértatranisér Assembly set and accomplished. All this has stirred more activity in Pértatranisér itself, too. There’s a feeling of excitement we’ve never seen there before, and there’s a willingness to make systematic plans to start teaching projects, then follow up.”

“It’s very encouraging,” agreed May. She changed subjects, “Father, with all our money, we need to do more to help the poor. Even in Pértatranisér and Mɛlwika there’s poverty, pretty serious poverty.”

Chris looked at her irritatedly. “The vast majority of people here want jobs, not handouts. There are newly arrived who are struggling, but the struggle makes them move up. There are the elderly who have arrived; they need help, but usually they have relatives.”

“And the women who have fled violent husbands? I know Pértatranisér has at least a dozen of them and I bet Mɛlwika does as well.”

“In Mɛlwika they can initiate divorce,” said Chris. “But even if they’re too frightened to do that, we need to encourage them to get basic jobs and take evening classes. Almost all of the five thousand ‘middle class’ households hire maids and cooks.”

“I want to open a women’s shelter.”

That caused a moment of silence in the room. The dominance of men was still barely questioned in Bahá'í households; it was assumed by everyone else, male and female alike.

“I wonder whether you can hire a manager and keep the funding anonymous,” suggested Liz.

May shook her head. “No. I want to do this directly and publicly. And please don’t say I can’t, that it’s too dangerous. I’m tired of sneaking around with changes and doing them ‘gradually.’ This is a serious situation, with women dying every year. Let’s provide them with a haven, please.”

“I’m willing to take the chance,” said Amos. “I’m lord of Pértatranisér. I have a reputation for fairness. I can afford to expend a little of my good will on this. And I don’t live sixteen kilometers from the capital; I live in the world’s sixth or seventh largest city. My remoteness will help. And I have a hunch Kɛkanu will cover it sympathetically on the radio.”

“Look, our caution hasn’t always been enough,” replied Chris, voice rising. “Remember Kamɛru and Rébu. Our course on social change on Earth was the major cause of the Sumi revolt, which killed a thousand people. Rébu’s still in exile and lucky to be alive. One of Mitru’s first steam wagons was hijacked and its crew killed. Allowing Tripola to have a printing press almost got all of us in trouble and is our other big failure.

In retaliation, the palace looked the other way when the Kwolonɛ attacked Mɛlwika. Several dozen died in that conflict. The priests were involved in the attack and in my stabbing, and have never been brought to justice. The printing press and the course are the reasons Kamɛru became radicalized, which led to the Tripola unrest and his execution, and Stélésu's. So, we've been too cautious? Our lack of wisdom has killed over a thousand people! You think I don't meditate and pray about that?"

There was a silence for a moment after his vehement words echoed and died away. Then May said, "Dad, we aren't talking about a revolution. We're talking about a house where women can go for safety, with their children if necessary. We will have to keep the location secret, to the extent we can. We'll have to keep the management secret and who stays there will have to be secret. We may even have to relocate women to another town if they are in danger. But there are several women I know about who need this. There must be a way to provide the service. And our profits from the tropical forest plantation keep going up; we can afford it."

"And I think there are ways to explain it to people; the Eryan are concerned about justice," added Amos.

Chris didn't say anything at first, then he shrugged. "Well, give it a try, then. But I'd be as low key as possible about it."

May nodded, pleased she had persuaded her father. Lua smiled, too; she was happy about it.

They turned back to the growth of the Faith, then when there was a lull in the conversation they switched to Mɛlwika itself, with its new factories and stores. That

prompted May to suggest to Lua that they go for a quick walk, and Amos decided to join them as well. They pulled on their coats again for a brisk winter walk.

“I’m glad dad came around,” May said to Amos, as they headed across the courtyard to the house’s main door.

“So am I. I hadn’t realized he was so concerned about past mistakes.” Amos stopped by the door to open it. The heavy wooden doors took a moment to unlatch, then they passed out through them.

The street immediately outside was narrow, as traffic coming out of Citadel Square and Foundry Square had to pass between their house, the tomi headquarters, and the hospital. Narrowing it further was a small crowd of people walking by. They waited and quickly realized the people were not just pedestrians passing their house, but people with signs.

“We want Fair Treatment!” “Just wages for hard work!” “Just wages or strike!” read three of the signs. They were momentarily shocked. “What is this?” asked May.

“I don’t know, we haven’t seen anything like this before,” said Lua, surprised.

“I apologize,” replied a man walking past. “We’re picketing Miller’s house, not yours, but your house is connected to his and we have to walk through here to pass by both of the Miller house’s entrances.”

“It’s a question of fairness,” added another man. “Miller has usually paid pretty generously, but assembly line work is tough; tougher than anything we’ve had before. We’re now making twice as many cars as we were last year with the same number of workers. We need a raise.”

“Bɛlékwu!” exclaimed Amos, surprised to see a seasoned Miller Motors employee—one of the leading foremen—walking in the demonstration.

“Lord Amos, it’s good to see you again.” Bɛlékwu stopped walking to talk.

“What’s this all about, honored?”

“As the man said, Lord, we want an increase in wages. At least ten or fifteen percent. Assembly line work’s not fit for a man; it’s monotonous, boring, and hard. It’s not being done efficiently. People are losing fingers or getting injuries. We need a better deal or we’ll quit; or perhaps we’ll strike!”

“Have you talked to Yimu?”

“I spoke to him personally yesterday, and he said they couldn’t afford a raise. But we know they’re making good money off the vehicles. Yes, most of the profit goes back to expansion, and they have a lot of debt to pay off. But we deserve more, too. Miller Motors is just a bunch of big buildings without our skilled, trained, experienced work.”

“I understand.”

“Maybe you should talk to them as well then, lord. Of course, it doesn’t help when the cleverest mechanics are sent to your engineering school, take a few courses, and start working there for a lot more money.”

“The Engineering School has to expand a lot, in order to meet the kingdom’s demand for more machines.”

“We understand that. But we also understand that work for either the Miller or Mennea Tomi is decent work that gives a good living for one’s family.”

“It should do that, I agree.”

"Well, raise our average from 2,000 to 2,500 and we might even have enough to buy the cars we make!"

"That's a good point, and I agree with you."

"Will you talk to Miller, then?"

"I will." Amos looked at May and Lua, hesitating. "You go for your walk; I think I'll go back inside."

"Good idea," agreed May. "I'm coming with you, though."

The three of them went back inside and closed the door. They found Chris on the phone with an angry Miller.

"John, if you call out the police, you'll have to deal with a lot of bad publicity. Even if the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* doesn't cover it, the other papers will, and if the crown bans them from covering labor troubles, the work will still spread via the underground newspapers and posters."

"Chris, this is humiliating! The ungrateful slobs, I should fire them and have them all arrested!" Miller was so loud he could easily be heard halfway across the room.

"And get the rest of your workforce mad at you? What about vandalism, trouble on the assembly line, intentional quality problems? You need their cooperation, not their submission."

"So I should ignore this and let it get worse?"

"You're better off shrugging at the demonstration, being nice, and playing on the public's sympathy."

"Tell him we should meet and talk about it," injected Amos.

"Amos suggests we meet and plot a strategy."

“Amos is there? Whose side will he be on?”

“John, he knows the workers very well and they trust him. I think they trust Yimu, too.”

“But not me?”

“John, I didn’t say that.”

There was a pause. “Alright. I’ll call Yimu. Too bad you never built that pedestrian bridge from your second story to the tomi, we’d have an easy way to go in and out.”

“I may build over the entire street, because I need more space. You could build a connection to the hotel at the same time. Where shall we meet?”

“How about your tomi meeting room, in an hour.”

“Fine.”

They exchanged a few closing words, then Chris put down the phone. “I don’t like being in the middle of this dispute. John is a tightwad, but he’s not a sweatshop owner. Workers earn a living wage working for him.”

“Dad, they’re dissatisfied.”

“I know. I see that. But it’s also hard to satisfy them. Even when you are generous, more can be demanded. ‘Fair’ is hard to define impartially.”

“I think I should find out what is going on,” said Amos. “I saw a reliable old worker, Bɛlékwu, outside.”

“Bɛlékwu? Yes, I’ve met him. He’s no radical,” agreed Chris.

“He may be one of the leaders. I’ll go find him, take him to Dhɛrsaju’s Tavern, buy him a drink, and find out what he says.”

"Yes, definitely. But let's not try to intervene, Amos. Let's try to help these two sides resolve this on their own. They have to work together if the breach is to be healed."

"Chris, they may need help to heal the breach," replied Amos.

Chris hesitated, then nodded. "Alright, then let's help, if we have to."

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"Look, I don't want a union," said John, as soon as they sat down in the conference room an hour later. "I don't want to be sitting down and negotiating with anyone about wages and benefits. That's the flaw in just about anything you can propose to me, Amos. My workers are paid between double and triple the base pay of the average peasant. What do they want? We have to be reasonable. I'm not in business so that workers get rich! A decent wage, yes; your family has convinced me of that. We're managing competition and efficiency here so the former isn't cutthroat and the latter doesn't degenerate into laziness. But let's not let this kinder and gentler capitalism degenerate into exploitation by the worker!"

"I agree, John, there has to be a balance," said Chris. "But the growing tensions in the factory suggest we aren't in balance right now. We didn't have these problems before. One reason we have them now is that the new assembly line system is about twice as efficient, so workers are twice as productive, but they aren't paid twice as much."

"We can't pay them twice as much! That would be ridiculous. The purpose of the assembly line was to produce twice as many cars at half the price per car, thereby doubling demand and keeping the cash flow the same."

"Which hasn't been quite achieved, either," added Amos.

“Exactly. The factory cost almost a third more than expected and demand has been low, in spite of everything we’ve tried. Our plans didn’t work out quite as well as we wanted.”

“We also know that a work slow down, a strike, and acts of vandalism or sabotage will make the situation worse,” said Chris. “We have to raise demand, provide more compensation, and obtain more income.”

“If we raised production from 760 to 1,000 per year, how much more would that cost?” asked Amos.

“That’s fifteen vehicles per week,” said Yimu. “It depends on whether we’re talking about cars, pickup trucks, or what. We’re designed to run at that level right now. Wages would go up some, but only a little, because we know how to operate at the fifteen per week level with the existing workers; we did briefly in early summer before we cut back because of lower demand. The cost of materials represents about a quarter of each vehicle, or 600 dhanay. So the additional vehicles would cost maybe 700 dhanay each. That’s the irony! A production of 760 results in a per-unit price of 2,300; a run of 1,000 cuts the per-unit price to 1,800. But when we tried to sell at 1,800, demand was insufficient and we lost money, so we cut back production!”

“Then what if you raised wages ten percent,” said Amos, “but offered workers the chance to buy a car or pickup truck from Miller Motors for 1,000 dhanay. Only one per worker per decade of work. If they worked for less than five years, maybe the discount would be less, and maybe workers would not be eligible at all until they had worked at least three years. My guess is that overnight, you’d have a thousand workers wanting a steam car, and they’d be scrambling to borrow the rest from relatives.”

“And reselling cars to relatives.And on the used vehicle market, undercutting our new-vehicle sales,” objected John. “We’ve thought about that.”

There was silence in the room for a moment. “Then give a much smaller discount and a larger raise to those wanting to buy a vehicle,” suggested Amos. “Maybe they have to pay a down payment of a thousand and the rest comes out of their wages for five years. That way, any worker can buy right away.”

“That’d be two hundred dhanay per year, and if we gave them a ten percent raise, or an average of 250 dhanay per year, we probably would get most of it back.” John considered. “Something like that might work.”

“Stretch the repayment over six years,” suggested Yimu. “That’d be 163 dhanay per year and would leave a real raise of about 1.3 dhanay per week. By charging a down payment of a thousand, we could afford it.”

“It’s not a huge risk,” said Chris. “The extra 240 vehicles per year and the ten percent wage increase raise costs by about . . . 250,000 dhanay, if I’ve estimated correctly. If 240 workers wanted the arrangement and came up with the 1,000 dhanay down payment, plus started to pay 163 dhanay per year from their wages, you’d actually end up making money.”

“The first year. What about later years?” asked John, skeptically.

“Demand from the workers may drop,” agreed Chris. “But by then, the plant will be more efficient and outside demand may be higher. You could extend a similar financing deal to others; workers in the Mennea Tomi, grange members, or even anyone. You could cut the down payment, too. There must be ways we can raise demand.”

"Even at 2300, the vehicles are making no real profit," John reminded them. "The rest of the operation—manufacture of machetes, wheelbarrows, locks, and the like by Miller Foundry—is keeping Miller Motors afloat and paying off its debts. But these other products are gradually being sold off to factories outside Mɛlwika so that we can expand vehicle production. We make a one-time windfall from the sale of the manufacturing equipment. But we can continue only if two things happen: Miller Motors starts to turn a profit, and its employment base expands to absorb the workers who are no longer working for the Foundry. We have a much bigger problem here, Chris, and we haven't begun to solve it. It has been a problem for nine months, since the new facility opened. The Eryan still don't want enough vehicles."

"But they will," replied Chris. "We know where all this is going, John: one car per household, just like on Earth, then two cars per household, then eventually three. This world has over two hundred thousand adults. In half a century it may have a million adults."

"Chris, that may be clear, but we don't know *how fast* we can get there. Right now we're moving too slowly and we're in trouble. We really need an annual demand of a thousand vehicles at two thousand dhanay each. Then we have the cash flow to raise wages, cut prices, and generate profit."

"John, we can't do it in that order. We need to give the workers incentive to work more efficiently; to *want* to build these vehicles."

"Amos, can you review the entire operation again and find new efficiencies?" asked Yimu.

"Yes, I can spend a day a week for the next month doing that. I think the efficiency incentive program needs to be revived and really pushed. Maybe the potential reward needs to be raised to 100 or even 150 dhanay."

"And this is a time to add a worker to the Board of Miller Motors," said Chris. "We've talked about the idea before, John. Let the workers vote, in our standard no-nominating, no-campaigning way, for one representative on the Board."

"But Chris, then it is natural to view the top three or five vote getters as the workers' 'representatives' and that gets awfully close to a union!"

"John, just announce the name of the top vote getter, then. There are advantages to having a worker representative. Right now there's no way to communicate to all the workers easily and find out their grievances. An informal representative may make your life easier. And a Union has dues and therefore resources; this is much simpler than that."

"You Bahá'ís and consultation," he growled.

"It does help, dad," said Yimu.

John nodded slightly. "Sure, sometimes. I'm more worried about the slippery slope from voting for a representative to voting for a Union Committee."

"I think we can handle that," replied Yimu.

"Chris, can the bank help with a new financing program? That was impossible in the summer, with the lower crop prices."

Chris's eyes lit up. "Yes, I'm sure they could! The law that was passed two months ago guaranteeing deposits of up to five hundred dhanay has stimulated a flood of deposits; ten thousand customers have deposited an average of 150 dhanay each. That's 1.5 million dhanay that are no longer sitting in mattresses and in jars under the floor. But

we'd need to offer a lower interest rate on the car loans, which means subsidizing the bank. For example, if the car loan was at five percent instead of seven, we'd have to pay the two percent."

"Two percent on half a million dhanay is ten thousand dhanay," said Yimu. "If that pushed up demand significantly, it'd be worth it."

"One program at a time," said Chris. "Otherwise, you can't tell which program raised the demand, or how much."

"Let's try the worker incentive program with the raise first," said John. "Then try cheap financing for outsiders, which workers might be able to use as well. If we could, I'd love to see us get to the point where the down payment is tiny; let businessmen buy a vehicle and pay for it out of the increased productivity. But we aren't there yet."

"Let me talk to the bank and Aryéstu about a financing program," replied Chris. "We haven't thought that through anywhere nearly enough. If we get paid in full by the bank right away, no down payment from the customer at all would be needed. I think there are a thousand small businesses that would start or expand if they had a vehicle."

"Alright, we have a plan," said John. "I avoid a union but the workers do choose a representative. The workers get a raise, but they get to use a lot of it to buy a vehicle. We improve efficiency again. And we'll work on a much better financing program. How do we negotiate this with the workers without it looking like a cave-in?"

Amos looked at Yimu. "I bet you and I can think of five or size long-time workers who are responsible and respected. Let's invite them to a meeting."

"Yes," said Yimu, nodding.

“We have to make this work,” added Chris. “If I have to, John, I’ll postpone some of my other investments and put more money here.”

“Thanks, but we should do this without subsidies. This is a business, not a charity.”

Reread and edited, 6/7/13, 8/19/17, 11/21/24

Electioneering

Chris left his class in the génadɛma's business school with a quickness in his step. "We don't have much time," he said to Jordan, who was taking the course and often accompanied his grandfather back to the Tomi. "We've got an appointment with Aryéstu in an hour and I want to stop in Temple Square to get a newspaper on our way to the Tomi."

"That won't take much time."

"No, but I'd like to check my office for messages, and there may be small tasks to get done. I promised Lubanu I'd stop by."

"We may hear whether Awsané will accept the task of part time coordinator of the Women's gabruli in Sullɛndha."

"I hope so. It sounds like running the Sullɛndha schools is a part time task, and that vacant lot next to the school is a perfect place for a gabruli. She can easily go back and forth. And she has the ear of Lord Kapanu."

"And ideas who we can hire to run gabrulis in the other Pɛnkakwés villages. By the way, Blorakwé's mother Mɛlitané has agreed to run the Women's gabruli in Tɛrskua. On my way to class, I ran into Budhéstu. He's going to Tɛrskua with a few youth every Primdiu to run children's and Ruhi classes at their house. And to court Blorakwé, I think. He said that Mɛlitané's  baby is now almost six months old. Blorakwé has agreed to stay through the end of ɛjnaménu to help watch Golbéstu, and she has no school during that month, so the two of them will devote the time to getting a Women's gabruli set up in

their house. Another woman has agreed to participate and run a children's day care in her house, so after the month is over, Golbéstu will be there and Blorakwé will be free to return to Mɛddoakwés."

"And get married?"

"I don't know whether she and Budhéstu are in that much of a hurry. She's still seventeen. And she wants to start génadɛma over the summer."

"Good; we need more women pursuing careers. Your youth group will go down in history as transforming the lives of some remarkable young people. Now, do they want a Women's Gabruli building in Tɛrskua?"

"Budhéstu said they'll have one in a matter of weeks. Apparently Blorakwé has an aunt who lives in Mɛlwika; I think in Soru and Kanawé's house. Her house in Tɛrskua is rented by a young couple who have decided to move to Wɛranowika, so it'll be vacant. The idea is that the women's gabruli will rent it. The old cellar, which had been a barn but more recently was converted into two bedrooms, will become the day care and storage. The main room will be the kitchen and serve as a classroom. The attic, which has two bedrooms under the eaves, will become sewing rooms. It's small, but Tɛrskua may not need much, and the rent's five dhanay per month."

"That beats investing in a new building! Does it have power and water?"

"Power, yes, and Tɛrskua has pipes under all the streets, so water can be added."

"Tell Budhéstu we'll donate two gas stoves and a gas setup; a gas tank and a gas pipe to the building. And we'll install a flush toilet. Those will be our grant to the project."

"I'll tell him. The youth going down have been giving some women's classes, and Blorakwé knows everything we taught over the summer, so that gabruli will be established pretty solidly."

"Any Bahá'ís in the village?"

"Mɛlitané and Moléstu! They declared right after Moléstu filled out the census form and decided to mark 'Bahu' as their prophet! We have a dozen attending Ruhi book one; people are very receptive there. I suspect when the fast begins we'll have some people fasting with us, and then they'll declare."

"Interesting." They stepped out of the génadéma campus and onto the sidewalk along the east side of Majakwés Rodha. The wide boulevard had been closed to through traffic a year earlier; it was now a pedestrian thoroughfare, lined with leafy trees and flowers in the summer, though in late Plowménu—late February—it was still lined with huge snow banks. The "month of rain," as the name meant, had been a month of blizzards instead and had made up for the otherwise warm and dry weather of early winter.

They strolled to Temple Square amid the crowd of shoppers, bundled up against the unseasonal cold, and stopped at the news stand. It was Dwodiu, the day the Royal Beacon appeared. The various weekly newspapers had finally spread out their publication deadlines, with Mɛlwika and Néfa/Pértatranisér's appearing on Kwétɛrdiu and occasionally an extra on Primdiu, Mɛddoakwes's on Dwodiu, Bɛllɛdha's and Tripola's on Tridiu, Mɛddwoglubas's and Isurdhuna's publishing on Pɛnkudiu, and Ora's on Suksdiu. As it was about a month before the voting, Chris was curious to see what the *Royal Standard* would do.

It was much thicker than the usual two-sheet, eight-page publication, though it was still 2 kɛntay. He gave the man two cents and picked up the heavy newspaper and flipped through it. “As I thought. They published the top 100 prominent men and women of Mɛlwika, and a similar list for Mɛddoakwés.” He flipped further. “And a top hundred for the rest of Arjakwés province.”

“Wow, no wonder it’s so thick.”

Chris scanned down through the four pages of small print about Mɛlwika. He skimmed the list to see who was in and who was out, and his scowl grew.

“What is it?”

He hastily shook his head; others could be watching. He closed the paper and started walking to the Tomi.

“Did they leave people out?” Jordan repeated, after they were in an area of the sidewalk with no one close by.

“Definitely. Yimu Miller’s listed, but Mitru isn’t.”

“What? Mitru’s on the city council!”

“I didn’t see Lasu, either. He’s on the City Council, but criticizes the palace in public.”

“Mitru doesn’t!”

“No, but he’s a Bahá'í.”

Jordan shook his head. Both of them walked solemnly back to the Tomi, and their steps both had an angry and indignant pace to it.

They walked straight to Chris’s office and pushed aside the neat pile of notes Lubanu had left for him. They opened the paper and read.

“No Ekwésu Dɛdikɛr, member of the House of Commons,” noted Jordan as he scanned the section about Mɛddoakwés.

“No Saréiduktɛr; what do they have against her? Maybe because her daughter’s a Bahá'í,” replied Chris, disgusted.

“But I count six . . . seven . . . eight members of old houses who are related to Her Majesty,” added Jordan.

“Of course.”

“Grandpa, are they electioneering?”

“It sure looks like it to me! Some people read the paper to decide who to vote for. Those who can’t read will go to a tavern one evening and listen to the paper being read while they eat.”

“But they’ve only focused on this province.”

“In this issue. I heard from Sulanu, who heard from Brébɛkɛstɛr, editor of the *Tripola Bédhɛ,* that the crown plans to buy a four-page spread in tomorrow’s issue. I suspect it will be their ‘top hundred residents of the South Shore.’”

“So, they plan to electioneer everywhere?”

“It looks like all the major provinces, at least.”

“Will it work?”

“When no one campaigns at all, a little campaigning can go a long way!”

“I guess that’s true.” Jordan was crestfallen to think about it.

Lubanu stuck his head in the door and reviewed every item on Chris’s desk with him quickly. Chris signed a few checks and letters, approved a contract, and modified the wording of a memo. Then they hurried downstairs to get in the rover. They had to be in

Mɛddoakwés in half an hour, including city traffic at each end, parking, and walking to Aryéstu's office.

All the way, Chris scrutinized the newspaper. Jordan drove and split his time between watching his brooding grandfather and the road. The route to the capital via Boléripludha had been paved to eight meters in the fall and it had become the new main route between the two cities for motor vehicles; the route via Béranagrés and Morituora had been painted to make the vehicle lanes narrower and the shoulders very wide for bikes, horses, and horse-drawn carriages. So he took the new route, whizzed past fields draped in winter white, bypassed the capital city along the eastern ring road, and approached New Square and the Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma from the northeast. They barely made it to Aryéstu's office in time.

"I suppose I should come to your office, instead of you coming to mine," said Aryéstu, rising. "Next time it'll be my turn. Thanks. So, Jordan came as well."

"He drove me and can take notes. Have you seen this?" He held up the paper.

"About an hour ago. The list of 'prominent residents' struck me as funny."

"Funny? Did you notice there isn't a single Bahá'í on the lists? I checked all three lists. Three hundred names! Mitru Miller is on the City Council and the House of Commons, but he isn't mentioned! They've also dropped the troublesome people, like Lasu and Ekwésu."

"I didn't check, though I was surprised I wasn't on the list for Mɛddoakwés. What I saw was a *lot* of kids of lords and members of Old Houses. I figured that was a bone thrown to them, because the newspaper also announces that their pensions are about to be

cut." He pointed to an article on the bottom of the front page, which Chris hadn't even noticed.

"Oh?" Chris looked at it, then nodded. "That is big news, and a big cut. That explains why they got maybe a third or two fifths of the listings. But that doesn't explain why the Bahá'ís were all dropped. I'll have to look at a copy of the list they published two years ago."

"Maybe the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* should publish a comparison. That would produce a balance."

"That's a good idea, if they dare. It might be worth the fine. The problem is that this politicizes the entire process. The troublemakers won't remain quiet; they'll complain! They may even campaign a bit. And that's the slippery slope toward everyone campaigning."

"I understand." Aryéstu sighed. "What can we do? This is a kingdom, not a republic. No one wants a bloody revolution. The Réjé's pretty savvy; she gives up some power, but maintains it in other ways, even strengthens it."

"She's very capable, and thank Esto she's not bloodthirsty."

"The next issue, I think, will release the number of representatives each city and village will elect, along with their populations. I just came back from the Ministry of Statistics, where Bidhu and I talked about the demographics of our population all morning. They have all the raw data from the census now and they've produced totals for every place. They've also done some analysis; they've taken four or five places and done most of the work on them. They'll be producing some remarkable publications over the next few years."

"So, tell us the details!" said Chris, with a smile.

"Alright." Aryéstu pulled out his notes. "First of all, the world population appears to have grown to 330,000; that's about 25% more than it was in 621, nine years ago, when the last census counted 270,000. Our estimate was pretty good, but the population growth rate now is 3.5% per year. That means that our 60,000 households—with about that many women of child bearing age—are giving birth to about 15,000 children every year, so the average household has a child every four years. Mortality up to the age of 17 has dropped from 45% to 10%; in other words, 55% used to survive to child bearing age, but now 90% do. The consequence of this is a population that doubles every 21 years. We can anticipate very expensive programs to build schools and génadɛmas for some time into the future, and very busy housewives raising an average of 4 children.

"The urban population has grown from almost 60,000 in ten cities—defined as 3,500 residents or more—to 122,000 residents in sixteen cities. Sumilara has added one city, the Tutanɛ two—Gordha and Mɛdhpéla—and your family has created two, Mɛlwika and Pértatranisér, with 22,500 people between them, or a third of the total urban increase. Mɛddoakwés has grown by two thirds, from 9,500 to 16,000; Ora and Anartu slightly less. The world has gone from 45,000 households with six members each to 60,000 households with 5.5 members each. We used to have 36,000 households that depended on farming and 9,000 that did not; we now have 40,000 and 20,000. That's the dramatic measure of the spread of manufacturing and services. The preliminary guess is that we now have 6,000 households that are 'middle class,' defined as having incomes of 2,000 to 6,000 dhanay per year, and 1,000 households earning over 6,000. Nine years ago there were about 600 of each. A third of the middle class now lives in Mɛlwika, Pértatranisér,

or Mɛlita. The number of households in poverty—defined as a family income of under 400 dhanay per year—has stayed at 15,000, so the percentage has declined from 33% to 25%.

"Literacy: it has grown from 1,000 to 50,000 people, using a very loose definition. The majority of urban men can now read a little and the average household has someone who can read a little, though in many cases it is a child. Ten thousand households use electric lights, a sixth of the total; pretty impressive. About half of that number has radios and flush toilets."

"And the future?" asked Chris.

"The future: that's the interesting question, and the trickier one to guess at. We can say that at the end of our seven year planning period, our population will be about 410,000; a third more than we have today, almost a year into the plan. There should be a slightly higher mortality rate than today because our population will be older; life expectancy has risen from 18 when you arrived and 40 today to about 50 at the end of the plan. We'll have about 75,000 households. The mortality rate for children presumably will fall further; the hospitals hope to get it down to one percent. We can predict how many kids will need to be in school because almost all of them are already born; we'll have 12,000 first graders, 6,000 twelfth graders, about 114,000 altogether, double what we have today. With more high school graduates, the potential génadɛma population will probably triple. We hope the 'middle class' will triple or quadruple and the households in poverty will drop to ten thousand."

"How many children does the average woman now have?" asked Jordan.

Aryéstu smiled. “You should take Bidhu’s course on the census, which he’ll offer in late spring or the summer. That’s very complicated. When your family arrived, half the population survived eighteen years. The average eighteen year old survived another twenty-two years, though, which means only a quarter of the population was still alive at age 40. An eighth of the population survived to age 55. As of today, the average person appears to be living 40 years and a quarter of the population will live to be 60. That’s an incredible revolution—a cultural revolution—thanks to the new medicine.

“So when you ask how many children the average woman had, you have to decide: do you mean women ever born, or women who survived to age 18? The average female married at age 15 and had eight children, about one every three years. But the population was stable because only half the women ever had children—they didn’t live long enough—and half the babies died. Now almost everyone survives to adulthood.”

Jordan whistled in surprise. Aryéstu shrugged; he had survived such a world and was familiar with it. “Animals have it even worse,” added Chris. “So, the census shows that poverty has declined, sort of. We need to work on that. More education, job training, and local factories.”

“The census asked Mitru Miller to give them a report about commuting by bus and he got one of your génadɛma’s planning courses to study it. More and more workers are willing to ride the bus as much as an hour a day to get to work, which means province-wide and even inter-province labor markets are developing. Rural villagers will go to the provincial capital or to regional industrial parks to work.”

“I saw that report, and the new legislation allows their villages to get some tax money when they work elsewhere. That’ll help a lot. And steam power continues to

spread; Dhudrakaita just got a pickup truck and they use it to power a saw mill, since they have no electrical connection."

"How are vehicle sales going?"

Chris smiled. "We're now almost two months into the employee incentive program and the new financing plan. We've sold a hundred pickups and cars to workers, who are using a combination of the bank financing and their raises to finance the purchases. Another hundred cars and pickups have been ordered by non-workers, a significant increase for just two months, so we have raised production to a thousand a year and we have a temporary shortage of production. So it looks like we have firmed up demand for a few months at least. Early spring usually is really slow, since that's when food and money are usually at their lowest."

"Weather and the first harvest will affect sales after that," agreed Aryéstu. "The main reason I asked for a meeting is because Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma has to double the number of courses in accounting, basic business, marketing, and management for the next four months. The palace, as I mentioned already, is cutting pensions to the Old Houses by half as of the Grand Court in Kaiménu, four months from now. The notice goes out tomorrow. The palace has asked me to provide three to six teachers able to teach a total of nine or ten courses per month in various villas throughout the area. The idea is to train the aristocrats in their houses, rather than asking them to come to the génadɛma, so they will be able to get development bank grants to establish factories and businesses to support themselves."

Chris shook his head. “I think the Development Bank has given ten to twenty thousand dhanay in grants to about fifty or sixty Old Houses every year for several years. What do we have to show for them?”

“I know. I think most of the money has been used to build villas along Route 5 on the southern edge of the valley in the new farmlands and to buy farm equipment, and to buy family cars. They have created a lot of agriculture, but I can think of only one factory.”

“And fifty were promised!”

“That’s why the palace is providing education. They won’t offer any more development grants unless it is spent on the thing promised. You have a big opportunity, Chris; if you partner with any of these people, the development grant will be automatic.”

“I haven’t because they’re mostly privileged people who won’t work for their money. I can’t build a factory and leave it to them to run it; they’ll cut wages and drive the factory into bankruptcy.”

“You may have to explain that to Estoiyaju; I think he’ll call you about this problem. Every family has someone with some business sense; the idea is for me to train them and you to help partner with them to start something.”

Chris shook his head. “With my money? If the palace is willing to let me put in a small amount, or give *me* a development grant, I might. But I’m already trying to establish 50 or 60 factories at once, Aryéstu. The contracts for them are drawn up and signed. Most of the buildings are under construction and they’ll open in the spring and summer. They’re all over the world. I’m spending three days a week overseeing them all, plus Jordan, Luktréstu, and a new employee on the western shore are devoting much of

their time for me on the projects. It's *huge* work. And now you want me to tackle 50 or 60 more with a bunch of men who feel the world owes them a comfortable living?"

"I don't want you to do it, but I'm telling you that the palace wants you to help. I think they want Brébéstu, Roktɛkɛstɛr, Wɛranolubu, and Gurwɛkɛstɛr to partner with some of them. Even Mitrulubu and the other sons of Lord Mitru of Ora will probably be asked to partner."

"They've finally managed to establish a series of factories and businesses in Kérékwɛs and Gramakwés," agreed Chris. "Brébéstu has time, experience, and ability. Gurwɛkɛstɛr has been quite good, too; he's helped the General when he was too busy to run Ornakwés. That's a more feasible plan, then."

"I hope so. It looks like a dozen of the Old Houses are going to sink into oblivion, but most of the others will manage. We are desperately short of managers; our schools can't turn them out fast enough." Aryéstu picked up a piece of paper. "Let's turn to the question of classes, then; who we can use, who you can spare, and what courses we can offer. I need to have a plan by next week."

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"It's been a long time since we've had a little time alone," said Lébé to Thornton. They walked off the street to a little overview where they could look down on the gluba and the dam backing up the reservoir and sat on a bench. Thornton unbuttoned his winter coat.

"At least it's warmer today; finally, we don't need coats."

"And last night's rain melted most of the snow, so we can walk around town easier. I wish Pértatranisér was closer, so we could drive over for a day or two."

"Their winter's much nicer, but the jet lag would wipe us out."

“If you traveled less, we’d have more time together.”

“My schedule isn't the problem, dear. I haven’t gone anywhere for the entire winter. But the women’s college has taken a *lot* of your time, and you’ve been busy traveling to raise funds.”

“That’s true. I was speaking in general; you’re away most of the time every summer.”

“Not most.”

“And you’re headed to Sértroba next week.”

“For two days, to check the hazardous waste dump. Now, *that* would make a nice getaway spot. Sértroba, that is, not the dump. The people know me, it’s very pretty, since it almost never rains, the weather is nice, the kids would be safe, and we could do some useful things.”

“Jordan loves the place, and the youth visiting have been welcomed. Maybe a small cottage would be nice. But what will we do with the house in Luktrudɛma? We used it only a few weeks this year.”

“And that’s all we ever will. Maybe we can rent it out, or mom and May can use it for women’s things. A lot of rich people are building houses there now. Maybe it can be used as a gathering place for wealthier women.”

“That’s a good idea. They need uplifting, too. Not cooking and sewing classes, but literacy, and I dare say a few of them would like to know about birth control pills!”

“Yes, I’m sure.” Thornton looked at the reservoir east of the dam and could see a slight ripple at the far end. “Let’s go up to the top of the ridge. I’d like to see how much I can see of the spring flood coming into the reservoir.”

"Alright. It must be quite a flood, after last night's rain. And look at the huge amount they're letting out through the turbines. Looks like they're trying to slow the reservoir's rise as much as they can."

Thornton glanced at the roaring water below the dam and nodded. They rose and started up the steep hill to the ridgetop. "Jonkrisu wants to learn to read," said Thornton. "I read a story to him after lunch. He pointed out a few short words and identified them, much to my surprise!"

"Pretty good, for four and a half, but he's quick with those sorts of things, and Jalalu's been teaching him. Jalalu told me yesterday afternoon that he wants a soccer ball for his birthday. He *really* wants to play soccer this spring."

"I wish I had time to organize a league for children. That's what we need. Jalalu has plenty of friends to play soccer with if we could get them together regularly. Otherwise, he'll play with the older boys and get kicked."

"I wish Jordan had time to play with him. He got pretty good with soccer, his last year of high school."

"Between college, working for dad, and Bahá'í activities, he's too busy."

They trudged the rest of the way to the top in silence, except to greet people they passed on the street; everyone knew them and they recognized just about everyone, because it was one of the city's older neighborhoods. At the top they walked around the smokestacks to admire the view.

"Yep, it's a big flood," said Thornton, nodding. He could see brown waters all over the floodplain leading to the reservoir, and a big brown plume displacing blue water in the reservoir. Its level had been lowered all winter and it was now less than half full.

“It is a big flood,” agreed Lébé. They walked around to the south side of the tower. “Look at the size of the new engineering building! You can see up here that it's twice as big as the old one!”

“They’re bursting out of the old building and have filled the entire basement of the Performing Arts Building with labs and offices. Amos hired a hundred engineers over the last year; every graduate or almost graduate of the school. He needs to hire a hundred more. It’s the only way they can develop, test, and manufacture all the equipment the new factories will need.”

“And that spot next to the new dorm; that’s for *another* dorm, right?”

Thornton nodded. “We’ll need it in another year.”

“The Humanities Building is bursting, too. We need a special building for English and Gɛdhéma Studies. I guess it goes between the engineering building and the high school, to create a new quadrangle.”

“That’s the plan. We need to build an entire new quadrangle—at least one—in the next seven years. The génadɛma has to double in size.”

“That’s why I’m fundraising; the Women’s College needs more funding of its own!”

“There’s not enough cash to go around. But it’s a beautiful spot, isn’t it? And think, we were able to build it all in twelve years.”

“And the thirteenth year begins in another month; 631. Let’s go down, the eclipse starts soon.”

Thornton nodded. He reached out and took her hand and they walked down Wall Street, which followed the path of the old wall straight southward to the Péskakwés.

Holding her hand in public would have been unthinkable ten years ago and impossibly bold five years ago; now it was something one occasionally saw married couples do in Mɛlwika, though not elsewhere.

Wall Street reached Péskakwés Square where the old city wall reached the river, and there they turned east onto Icehouse Street. It was an anachronistic name; the icehouse had grown impossibly too small years ago and had been torn down, replaced by the Mɛlwika Palace Hotel. They wandered across the first new east addition, built up with houses long ago, then across the second eastward addition, which was occupied by the new steam vehicle plant. They crossed the river and headed westward toward Temple Square on Péskakwés Rodha, which passed through an industrial park, then through a large partially built up area that would hold the future expansion of Mɛlwika Génadɛma. The new engineering building was a huge hole in the ground with cinderblock walls rising amid nickel-steel girders, which would support the second and third stories.

After passing a section of elegant houses, they reached Temple Square and turned north on Temple Street. Halfway home they passed Lasu the Cheesemaker outside his cheese store, affixing a large silk-screened poster to a blank stretch of brick. It said:

Snubbed by the Royal Standard

Lasu Turbulu

Member of the City Council and House of Commons

Vote for Him and Remind the Palace:

They Can’t Influence Your Vote!

“Greetings, Honored,” said Thornton, as they passed Lasu. He looked at then nodded.

“Hail, Honored Dhoru. I hope your father wasn’t behind that list in the Royal Standard. Who does the palace think they are, influencing the vote! Well, I can influence it too!”

“So I see. No, father was upset. Not only were you left off; so were all Bahá'ís. Not a single Bahá'í is on any of the lists they’ve published.”

“Really? Interesting. Maybe they think I’m a Bahá'í. Well, I’m not that, either.”

“They’ve also put a lot of members of old houses and relatives of the royal family on the lists of the hundred most prominent. My father’s at the palace right now, in fact, or he was this afternoon, and I know that was one thing he planned to mention.”

“Good. The *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* wasn’t as cowardly as I thought; the editorial today mentioned all the prominent people from two years ago left off the new list. I wish they had been critical of the palace, but I guess some cowardice is to be expected of them.”

“I don’t know anyone as frank as you, Lasu.”

He smiled. “Thank you, I’ll take that as a compliment. If people aren’t frank and honest, how will this world ever advance and shrug off injustice?”

“Honesty is one of the things we need, yes,” agreed Thornton. “May the eclipse bring you good fortune, Lasu.”

Lasu nodded in thanks and Thornton and Lébé moved on. They reached the house just as the eclipse began and they glanced west briefly to see the beautiful solar corona shining around Skanda. They were about to step into the house when Chris came out of the Tomi offices across the street and hurried over, so the three of them entered at once. “You just got back from the palace?” asked Thornton.

Chris nodded. “It was a long and disappointing meeting. Let’s go to the gabrula and I’ll tell you.” He led Thornton and Lébé across the courtyard to the house’s main room, where most of the family had gathered to drink tea and listen to the *World Table.*

“How’d it go?” asked Liz, walking to Chris to kiss him.

“I suppose it could have been worse.” He sat in his chair while the cook brought him tea with sugar, just as he liked it. “Estoiyaju and Prince Mɛméjékwu were both there and proceeded to berate me about the article in today’s *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* listing the various prominent citizens mentioned two years ago, but not two days ago in the *Royal Standard*. They were furious. The article’s extreme politeness about the matter did not assuage them. They are fining the *Nuɛs* a thousand dhanay for it.”

“A thousand?” said Liz, surprised. “That’ll wipe out most of their annual profit!”

“Sure will,” agreed Chris. “But they denied that the Bahá'ís had been intentionally dropped; they said it was an ‘oversight.’ They wouldn’t even admit that they had dropped Lasu because he was ornery. They said they made their selection based on ‘prominence’ and that they thought a lot of prominent individuals had been ignored last year. When I pointed out that the disparity had everyone talking and that one could be sure there would be some subtle campaigning as a result by some of the disgruntled, they said anyone campaigning would be disqualified.”

“Lasu’s putting up posters,” said Thornton. “We just saw him do it.”

“Well, call on him and warn him,” said Chris.

“Or maybe we should let him be disqualified?” asked Thornton.

Chris shook his head. “I personally don’t like him much and find his style abrasive and unpleasant, but he has proved easier to work with than I had expected and

has not been a disaster for the City Council. I respect him. If you saw him putting up posters, definitely warn him the law will be enforced. If he still puts them up, that's his choice."

"What about partnering with old houses?" asked Liz.

Chris nodded. "That was the main reason they invited me, and it was worse than Aryéstu thought. I suspect in the intervening days, Roktɛkɛstɛr and one or two others have declined pretty forcefully. Mɛméjékwu all but ordered me to invest two hundred fifty thousand dhanay next year in partnerships with members of old houses. He said under such circumstances, the crown would trust the old houses with grants and loans—half and half—to establish businesses, but not otherwise, because their record is so poor. He confirmed that the pensions of everyone under age 50 were being cut in half this year and terminated altogether next, and that in spite of considerable pressure, Her Majesty herself had no intention of reversing the decision. So that's firm."

"So, is the purpose of your involvement to guarantee that they make money, or to slow down how quickly you make money?" asked Thornton.

"I think it's like the challenge to Hercules to clean the Augean stables; impossible, but beneficial if he succeeds. In a way, I asked that question; I said that I would be willing to form partnerships with old houses if they did not interfere with the management of the projects. Estoiyaju said that was fine with them and they wanted to be sure the old houses used the money to make money and that subsequently they wouldn't need pensions. They are phasing out half a million dhanay of pensions this year and the same amount next year—after extending pensions they promised to end three years

ago!—and in turn would award 250,000 in grants and 250,000 in loans each year to make the old houses financially successful."

"Is that enough?" asked Jordan. "How many families are we talking about?"

"Sixty. If I have to invest half a million in two years and we get the same amount in grants and loans, that's 1.5 million. Divided by 60 families, it's 25,000 dhanay per family. That's not enough. With luck, it could build each family a factory for a dozen workers. But these families have other means. If each can invest ten thousand a year for two years, that would raise each factory to about twenty workers, and with luck that's enough to provide each family with about ten thousand dhanay per year of income, which is close to the threshold income for a gentleman.

"A hundred lɛdhay per year; 14,400 dhanay," said Thornton, shaking his head.

With agricultural income as well, they'd be pretty close."

"They have pretty extravagant lifestyles," said Thornton.

"Agreed," said Chris. "They get a million dhanay of pensions per year right now. Divide that by sixty; it's 16,000 each."

"Will we get the money back?" asked Liz.

"I think we'll get a lot of it back because the palace wants me to impose management discipline on the old houses and they'll let me impose standard professional terms on the contracts. Otherwise, they won't risk the grants and loans. I tried to get even more money, by the way, and Mɛméjékwu said if the program looked successful, more money might be possible. The main caveat Estoiyaju imposed is that eventually the ownership of the factories must revert to the old houses. But I said what if they agreed that my tomi would manage their factories. Estoiyaju said the palace had no reason to

interfere in matters like that. He also said that partnerships whereby several families owned one larger factory was alright if the houses agreed to it. So maybe this will prove an opportunity to create a lot of jobs and break even."

"The engineering school could always charge a hefty profit on the machinery," said Jordan. "That would get a lot of your money back, and you could then subsidize the génadɛma less."

"I'd rather not resort to slights of hand like that, but who knows," said Chris. "We'll be sure to get signed contracts. I'll make an appointment to talk to Governor Wɛranolubu in the next few days because I don't want these factories scattered on every villa in the province; I want them clustered in industrial parks, where services can be shared and the lords won't be able to micromanage. Usually they'll need gas, so we can use that as a reason to cluster them along the gas line or any extensions we build. In some cases I own land where we can put them, so we can get some money back that way. In other cases I can use the location of the industrial park as a bargaining chip to get Gurwɛkɛstɛr, Roktɛkɛstɛr, and the Mitru brothers to invest."

"So we have some options," said Liz.

Chris nodded. "I think so. But I'll have to hire more managers and accountants than ever, and I'll need more help from Jordan and other assistants. We're handling fifty projects already; sounds like they'll double over the next year."

"I'll be there, grandpa," replied Jordan.

Reread and edited 6/7/13, 8/19/17, Dec. 21-23, 2023, 11/21/24

Assembly line work is more demanding and workers demand more money. Chris convinces John to give it. Kɛkanu does a series of shows about the Faith, one with Jordan, the other with Wɛrétrakɛstɛr. Moléstu and Mɛlitané have their new baby and Blorakwé is staying home six months to help, but is teaching Ruhi classes in the village. Ten thousand bank accounts opened in two months after the banking bill passes, with an average of 150 dhanay each (1.5 million total).

Moléstu approaches Chris about construction work. Jordan's with Chris when they visit pasta factory after trip to Sullɛndha.

Youth group visits Sumiupɛrakwa and it wants a village water supply, thanks to Widubéru; Soru and Moléstu buy a truck

This fall: Parliament deliberates a tax reform bill. The priests want 5%, Counts want 10%; everyone ready to fight over the matter. Prince is mad tax revenues have not grown 10% until Aryéstu explains deflation. Plans for decennial census started.

Visit Tripola when Queen dedicates its new commercial center, mid Abɛlménu. Visit Ora to deal with its pollution. Royal Development Bank is making grants and loans to merchants, professionals, and granges who wish to open factories, because the Old Houses have done so little. Development Corps is managing as many of them as possible.

More on Luktrudéma. When Réjé comes through, big concert and arts exhibition in Luktrudéma. Thornton and Lébé decide to build a house there with their own money, over Chris's objection, because they want something that is just theirs.

Bicycle production starts up in Sumilara, a knock-off of Mɛlwika's, just as a new bike factory is contemplated. Randu blows the whistle.

Soru goes to Lɛwéspadéma to visit blind boy.

Engineering school develops a list of needed products.

Start excavating the existing hazardous waste pond to enlarge it and remove accumulating wastes. Visit Bɛllɛdha and dedicate the new shopping center, early Dhonménu.
Find a hazardous waste dump for the entire planet

Chris and Wɛranolubu visit Wɛranowika, his new town, and plan it. Sumis can farm there.

Budhéstu meets a blind child of a merchant, arranges contact with Soru

Mɛlwika gets an alternative newspaper (mimeographed).

All-Génadɛma Council

Budhéstu becomes a Bahá'í.

Assembly line starts working, producing 990 vehicles per year (15/week, 3/day). Demand expands enough because bottlenecks keep production down to 10/week at first, but as production expands, demand does not at first. With a second shift and work six days per week, production can expand to 36/week (6/day).

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