THE PIONEERS

Vol. 17

Tomi Jérdomasi

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Nullification

26 ɛjnaménu/16 March 630/12

Chris Mennea rose an hour before sunrise, the day after the elections, following a restless night's sleep. He threw on some clothes, grabbed a quick breakfast, and headed out of the house right away to say prayers at the House of Worship. It was late ɛjnaménu—the equivalent of mid March on Earth—and promised to be a pleasant spring day in Mɛlwika, which rarely saw frost after the end of that month. A light jacket was sufficient for the ten-minute walk across Mɛlwika to the temple.

He went inside and was surprised to see several dozen people scattered about the chairs in the interior, in the midst of personal prayer. He sat, opened his prayer book, then closed it and began to repeat silently every prayer he had learned by heart. He found himself drawn to say prayers for the Queen and her son, the crown prince, and the governance of this little world that he and his family had involuntarily been taken to almost thirteen years ago. He began to say prayers for dozens of people he knew and focused on Okpétu the flier, then his brother Mɛndhru, then Mɛndhru's friend, the priest's son Mitrudatu. It was strange and unexpected whom he thought about when praying, and at times he wondered whether there was a modicum of divine inspiration behind it.

After fifteen minutes of praying he walked around the interior repeating "Alláh-u-Abhá" ninety-five times, something Bahá'ís were supposed to do as a daily practice but which he still did rarely. Then he strolled out and crossed the génadɛma campus—still quiet, since few students rose with the sun—and contemplated life.

Twelve years. He had arrived at age 55 and was now 67. The pain in his hips and knees and the fatigue every afternoon that often necessitated a nap continually reminded him that he didn't have a lot of time left to make his contribution to this world; perhaps a decade. And the more he did, the more he had to worry about; it was getting harder and harder to keep track of every project and of all the employees he had hired. He had slept poorly that night, probably because of the election the day before. The prayers, though, had helped somewhat.

The news stand on Temple Square was still closed. He was disappointed, but not surprised; the votes were still being counted on most of the western shore. Newspapers probably wouldn't appear with the results until noon. So he headed across the square and north toward home, but turned onto Icehouse Street and walked to the *Mɛlwika Nuɛs* building. Sure enough, there were several people inside working hard, including Sulanu, the general editor, who was busy setting type.

"Lord, what a surprise!" he said when he saw Chris come in the front door.

Chris walked back to the printing press, one of three across the back wall. A long table divided into cubicles stood in front of the presses and two men were sitting in two cubicles writing. The radio was blaring music. "I thought I'd find out what results have come in."

"We've been listening to the radio all night," replied Roktanu, who was sitting in a cubicle. He was the editor of the encyclopedia and of the génadɛma's journal, but assisted the newspaper when there were big news events. "They've been interrupting the music whenever there's news, and the morning show will have a big summary when it

starts in half an hour. The big news was five hours ago. The palace announced they were disqualifying Lasu Turbulu because he had campaigned."

Chris's eyes grew large. "They did? He did put up posters, someone I know saw him do it. But I'm surprised the palace acted on it."

"On that, or on him? They don't like him and he doesn't like them."

"Quite right. What about the results of the Bɛllɛdha and Tripola elections?"

Roktanu picked up a pile of pages. "Here. Everyone was reelected, though the 'loyal' members of parliament got a higher vote than last time and the 'dissenters' got less."

Chris nodded and took the pages. Roktanu had sheets listing names and columns listing the years "628," "630," and even "632"; he was prepared for the next election already. Chris flipped through the pages one by one; he was surprised to see that Roktanu already had data for twenty towns and villages. "How did you get this? Was it announced on the radio?"

"Some of it, and in some cases I made telephone calls. You see?" He pointed to a name and phone number in the upper right corner.

"I'm impressed. So, did the palace's effort to shape the vote work?"

"I'd say they had influence and shifted votes somewhat. Voter turnout has dropped from about 80% to about 75% and their interference might be a factor, but it's hard to say. Mɛlwika was resistant; Mitru and Lasu were the two men the palace dropped from their list of 'most influential' and both were reelected. And of course Bɛlékwu might serve on the City Council if Lasu has to be dropped, and he wasn't on the list at all."

“But he was elected workers’ representative at Mɛlwika Motors last month, and everyone remembers that. That election has catapulted him suddenly into prominence. And the palace had a more difficult task to accomplish here because there are almost no old houses and other aristocrats living here, so they couldn’t be added to the list of prominent people.”

“True. But over time, they will shape the elections this way. And I plan to write an editorial to that effect.”

“They’ll fine us big, but we’ll pay it,” added Sulanu.

“That’s one way to use the endowment,” replied Chris. “I’m impressed, Roktanu.”

“I just wrote a series of articles on political science for the encyclopedia, and I want to offer a course in Political Theory some time,” said Roktanu. “And since Sulanu’s a Bahá'í, he doesn’t dare say anything political. But I’m not a Bahá'í and under no such restraints! I like to think of myself as loyal to the palace, but maybe not loyal the way they expect. I think they will be stronger if they respect elections.”

“Because if they don’t and manipulate them, they’ll undermine their own moral authority,” added Sulanu.

“That’s the way it is with rules, isn’t it?” added Chris. “Manipulating or breaking the rules might work temporarily, but once the effort is exposed, you end up worse.” He turned to Roktanu. “I suggest you talk to Kɛkanu about your conclusions. I suspect he’ll agree and can reinforce them. And if you ever get the chance to talk to Wɛrétrakɛstɛr, you should. That’s the sort of moral point he will strongly agree with, and he’ll repeat it in places and at times when it might have an uncomfortable impact.”

“Unless other people overuse the point in inappropriate places and times and wear it out,” noted Sulanu.

“Alright,” said Roktanu, smiling, pleased that they liked his analysis. “Lord, can you give us any statements about the election we might be able to use, either with or without your name?”

Chris considered, then nodded. “Yes. You can say that I am very pleased with the elections in Mɛlwika and the miracle of electing leaders peacefully and in unity. I don’t think I’ll comment about the Lasu situation at all.”

“Will you talk to the palace about it?”

“When the time is right. But when they make up their minds, they really can’t be swayed, especially after they’ve announced their decision. So let’s not say anything about that.”

“Okay.”

“I’d better head home. Good to talk to you, and I hope you get some sleep!”

“This afternoon!” replied Sulanu.

Chris headed out the door and home. Liz and Lua were in the great room listening to the radio; Lua was drinking coffee, since she wasn’t fasting that day. Shortly after the 7 a.m. news, the phone rang. It was Lasu.

“Lord, this is a terrible injustice! What will you do about it!”

“Honored, when the palace makes a decision like this, it is final. When I get the chance, I will ask them about the decision, but I can’t imagine they’ll reverse it.”

“What about the City Council? Am I banned from service on it, as well as the House of Commons?”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t see how the City Council could defy the palace. I think a ban from one is the same as a ban from both.”

“Lord, you can’t roll over and play dead when something like this happens. Injustice must be met bravely, not with cowardice!”

“Lasu, I have great respect for you as a member of the Council and I think you have made a good contribution. But this is a situation neither you nor I can change. We are both out of our depth. My protest will do no more good than yours. I advise a humble and patient response and no criticism of the palace at all. That will just get you banned next time as well.”

“First you refuse to help, then you counsel silence! No, Lord, what you ask for is neither right nor reasonable!” There was a click and Chris pulled the phone away from his ear, then put it down.

They ate breakfast and chatted about Lasu in and around children appearing, eating quickly, and dashing out the door to go to school, parents admonishing them as they went. Then at 8:15 the phone rang again. It was John Miller. “So, Chris, you heard about Lasu being disqualified?”

“Yes. He called a little while ago, furious, asked me whether I planned to do anything, and hung up on me when I said there was nothing to do.”

“He called me, too, but maybe he had calmed down already. He is easily excited, but he does calm down. It’s a shame.”

“It is. We just heard on the 8 a.m news that Mitrubbaru Kanéstoi was elected to the Néfa City Council and to the House of Commons, but the election has been nullified by the palace on the grounds of campaigning.”

“Yes, I heard that. It’s a shame.”

“Except, John, Mitrubbaru is a Bahá'í and a member of the Central Spiritual Assembly. There’s no way he would ever campaign, not even to the extent of mentioning his name to someone. That charge is an excuse.”

“So, the palace is disqualifying Bahá'ís as well?”

“It looks like it.”

“But they didn’t disqualify Mitru.”

“Mitrubbaru’s a prominent radio personality and singer and everyone knows he’s a Bahá'í. Mitru’s prominent, but as a businessman.”

“They’re eliminating the most honest, then.”

“And loyal members! The Bahá'ís can be counted on to support the crown in a true sense; not to be mere pawns, but to have the crown’s long-term good in mind. I’m not so sure that’s true of the old houses.”

“I agree with you. Now, who will we substitute for Lasu? I suppose you’ll propose Bɛlékwu.”

“He came in next in the voting and he got good support from the voters. He’s honest and has good judgment. And how else will we get a working man on the Council? We have merchants and businessmen.”

John sighed. “Alright. All I would suggest would be another of my sons, but I agree, that would not be received well, especially now. That means a City Council consisting of you, me, Mayor Kérdu, Mitru, Potanu, Dumuzi, Ornéstu, Génésé, and Bɛlékwu.”

“Yes, that’s what I think we should propose for ratification at the first meeting on Kwétɛrdiu.”

“Alright,” said John. “And we have how many representatives in the Arjakwés Provincial Assembly?”

“Thirty four; one per five hundred in the provincial assembly. That’s thirty percent of the total. We’ll probably get three in the House of Commons, depending on the voting of the provincial assembly members, since the Commons has one per five thousand residents.”

“I’ll look at the list again. Thanks Chris. See you soon. Bye.”

“Bye.” Chris hung up the telephone, pleased at least that there was a solid new member of the City Council.

Reread and edited, 6/8/13, 8/20/17, 11/21/24, 9/27/26

310.

Prefabs

29 Plowménu/15 March Yr. 630/12

Three days later—after the first meeting of the Mɛlwika City Council, where Bɛlékwu was officially added and Kérdu was officially reelected mayor—Chris and Jordan got into the old rover for a drive to a day of meetings in various places. Ever since Chris had been asked by the palace, a month earlier, to establish factories for the old houses—a collection of sixty families with royal blood many of whom had no lordly status because the heads of the families were second and third sons or descendants of the same—he had been visiting various old families with whom he had contacts to explore their interests and assess personalities. Most had been polite but insistent that they had to have a factory of their own and that they run it themselves, a formula for disaster considering that there was enough money only for a small factory, and most had no idea how to manage it.

Chris and Jordan's first stop was in Pɛnkakwés, where they had invested in a dairy in the village of Isurmɛnga. The villagers had built the building themselves in the form of a traditional barn. The equipment for pasteurizing milk and making cheese, butter, and yogurt had just arrived; five men were learning how to use it. After a quick inspection and a promise to solve a training problem, they drove to Nuarjora, the Fish Eryanɛ village at the mouth of the Arjakwés, Chris telephoning people to solve the problem while Jordan drove. Lord Estoséru was very happy to see them, offered the fasting men tea—which they politely declined—then took them to the limestone quarry.

“The lime kiln and gas plant will go here,” he said, pointing to a large flat area below the limestone cliffs and close to the shore. “We plan to relocate our entire fishing fleet to the docks we’ll build here. They’ll be able to accommodate ships towing trees as well. Pékɛnwika and Akɛldɛdra are anxious to start supplying us with wood.”

Chris nodded and pointed to the proposed location. “The specifications call for the facility to be at least five meters above sea level, in case it rises in the future. I think this is too low.”

“Then we’ll move it back a bit, dig it into the hillside, and build up the lower areas. Do you really think the sea could rise more?”

“We don’t know. It has dropped about half a meter over the last year and it’ll probably drop, as rainwater raises the water table and the heavier snowfall thickens ice packs at the north and south poles. On the other hand, the water table in the highlands will drop about two thousand meters, and that’s a lot of water; it’s still pouring into the Long Valley in big springs along the bottoms of the cliffs.”

“I see,” though Estoséru seemed a bit puzzled by the reply. “We’re anxious to get this project started. Any idea when everything will be ready?”

“I think the surveyors will be here next week, as soon as ɛjnaménu ends. The gas pipeline crew will start laying the pipes in two or three weeks; they’ll run them from ɛjnopéla to Mɛlita and from Ornakwés to here. They’ll finish the pipelines by mid autumn, if all goes well. The goal is to have the kiln operating by mid summer, so it can start supplying cement for highway construction, and the gas plant by fall. The line to Mɛlita may get extended to ɛndraidha if we can arrange financing.”

“Do you know that the army has a lot of investment money?” asked Estoséru. “Last month a major came through to ask me about ship building. Néfa seems to do a reasonably good job, but he looked at our ships and was impressed. When I asked him, he said the army might invest in a ship building center and money was not a problem.”

“Hum.” Chris considered that. “That may explain why the army asked for the gas line. ɛndraidha is getting several new buildings—you can see them from the highway—and they look like factories. They already manufacture radios and have taken over the manufacture of explosives from Mɛlwika. And I’ve heard they have a million dhanay to spend on research and development, though I suspect that’s exaggerated.”

“Maybe not,” replied Estoséru. “They have five thousand men and no wars to fight, so they might as well employ the men somehow.” Chris nodded in acknowledgement of that, so the lord added, “I don’t like the idea of the army building their own factories.”

“I agree, that isn’t their purpose.” Chris surveyed the broad river mouth. “You know, your gas plant will be the only one on the water. That presents possibilities for expansion. Rather than transporting gas by tanker truck, we could ship it by water.”

“We’d favor that! The kiln and gas plant will create twenty or thirty more jobs. More are welcome. Farmers aren’t earning enough for their families.”

“That’s the picture everywhere on this world. How’s the training going?”

“All winter we’ve had forty or fifty men taking classes, thanks to the two génadɛma students you sent and the efforts of our school teachers. One of the students you sent is a chemist and he has explained all the reactions that occur to convert limestone to lime and charcoal to gas. We wish we had more people *here* who understood

those things, though. Two of our students applied to your génadɛma in the fall and were turned down. They're going to Gésɛlékwɛs Maj instead and are not very satisfied with their classes."

"I'm sorry to hear it. Gésɛlékwɛs Maj offers a pretty good education, though; most courses should be of the same quality as Mɛlwika's. And they just expanded. Our new dormitory can accommodate 240 students and we had over 350 applications, so we couldn't accept everyone. We couldn't provide scholarships for them all, either."

"Maybe they can transfer later, or take some courses at Mɛlwika. Gésɛlékwɛs Maj did not handle its expansion well. Two classes were scheduled for the same room at the same time, and some were oversubscribed while others had no teachers. Our students were disgusted."

"That happened in the fall, but they've resolved those problems since. We'll be building another big dormitory in two years. We have to more than double our number of students in the next few years and increase our floor space by half. It takes time and money."

"There are buildings going up everywhere." Lord Estoséru turned and led them back to the village, where they sat and reviewed a checklist of possible problems. When Chris and Jordan left an hour later, Chris had about fifteen calls to make.

"On our way to ɛjnopéla, let's stop at Tɛrskua," Chris said. "I want to check out the new dairy."

"Alright. Shall we call ahead and let Moléstu know we're coming?"

"Sure. You call; your friend Blorakwé often answers the phone."

Jordan nodded and took the cellular phone. It took the Mɛlwika operator a moment to connect them and he spoke to her briefly while driving. Then he handed the phone to Chris, who began to work his way down his list of calls.

Tɛrskua was only fifteen minutes away. The half-built dairy was located at the lower level of the village near a new bakery and grist mill. Like the one in Isurmɛnga, it was a small, barn-like building, though Moléstu was building this one of cinderblocks. That day a cement truck had arrived and he was supervising the pouring of a large concrete pad for a large gas tank. Since Moléstu was busy, Sarédatu hurried over. He was Chris's partner in the project, a Tɛrskuan who had moved to Mɛlwika, gotten a basic education, had been a grange farmer and a mechanic in the Miller Foundry, and now was moving back to his native village with his wife and children.

He and Chris shook hands. "Greetings, Lord. I'm glad to say that everything is going very well today. As you can see, we have a cement truck."

"Excellent, and they poured the foundation of the diary?"

"That was a few days ago. We'll have the walls up in two weeks and the roof on a week later. Then the plumbing and electrical work—I plan to help Moléstu to save some money—and the equipment arrives."

"And the milk?" That was Chris's big worry; the area didn't have many cows.

Sarédatu pointed to his bicycle. "I've talked to farmers from ɛjnopéla and Nuarjora. They'll all sell me milk. I can rent Moléstu's truck to make a run every night to pick it up. Some farmers have even started to buy milk cows."

"You've emphasized that there's a good market for it?"

“Yes! Even the store here says it’ll sell milk if it can get it regularly. I’ve been checking with all the village stores, which will be my pick-up points. Don’t worry, we’ll do fine. But I think we’ll start with only one employee other than myself.”

“That’s wise, Sarédatu. Businesses have to grow slowly and carefully. As you probably know, a third of the businesses in Mɛlwika fail in the first year.”

“I remember that from your business class! Lord, I’m more worried about competition from the Pɛnkakwés and Kwolonɛ dairies.”

“The Kwolonɛ one is huge, too. But demand for milk in Mɛlwika and Mɛddoakwés is growing fast, now that the public schools want it for their lunches. Contact the local one-room schoolhouses and see whether they’ll buy from you. I’ll write you a letter of introduction to the Mɛlita and ɛjnopéla schools.” Chris nodded to Jordan, who pulled out a pad of paper and added that to the list. “Mɛlita wants to open a dairy, but they don’t have their act together yet; three different people want to start it. This will probably be the only dairy in the lower Arjakwés for some time.”

Just then, Moléstu came over, a bit nervously. He nodded in greeting to Chris. “Welcome, Lord.”

“Thank you.” Chris extended his hands and they shook. “I hear all is going well.”

“Except for getting the gas tank; could you inquire? I was told yesterday it wouldn’t be delivered for at least two months.”

“Two months? I had heard they were behind in production. I’ll see what I can do.” Jordan added that to the list.

“We’ll have the pad ready for a tank in two or three days. And the ice house already has its first load of ice.” He pointed to a small building next to the dairy.

“And we’re selling ice locally. My wife has even ridden the bike to Naskɛrpɛda with two ten-kilogram blocks in the side baskets,” added Sarédatu.

“Just borrow the truck,” commented Moléstu.

Just then, Jordan noticed Blorakwé approaching. He turned to her and they nodded to each other. “Alláh-u-Abhá,” both said at the same time. “How are you?” asked Jordan.

“Quite well. In a few days I’m going back to Soru’s school, so I’ll be back in Mɛddoakwés High School. And I may sit in on one of Soru’s courses, to see what génadɛma is like.”

“Good idea. Then I’ll see you at the Bahá'í Center.”

“Definitely. Budhéstu says there are a lot of youth there, and they meet Suksdiu night.”

“It’s more than doubled in the last year! Very exciting. You’ve probably met a lot of them here on Primdius.”

“I have. Thanks to their dedication, we now have a Women’s Gabruli in Tɛrskua.”

“I heard.”

The two conversations wrapped up quickly; Chris was done with his business. A minute later, Chris and Jordan were back in the rover. “Go this way to ɛjnopéla,” Chris said, pointing to a graveled country lane that ran southwestward. “It goes to the main road connecting Ornakwés and Nuarjora. I want to take a look again. A pipeline will have to come up it, to supply gas to Tɛrskua.”

“There will be a side line?”

“I think there should be. The dairy will use a lot of gas to pasteurize milk and the bakery will benefit as well. The line can connect to the existing storage tank, which will boost the storage capacity of the entire system. Eventually a line needs to run from Tɛrskua up Route 1, so all those villages have gas as well.”

“Expensive.”

“I’m just thinking ahead.”

Jordan nodded and started the rover. He drove while Chris got on the phone and made more calls.

ɛjnopéla was a mere fifteen minutes away through fields already green with spring crops, for they were in the semitropical zone. The town had grown to two thousand people and was the commercial center of the lower Arjakwés, as well as possessing a small industrial park with four facilities that employed 150 people. Lord Aryékwɛs was waiting for them, and his younger son, Okpétu, was there as well.

“It’s been well over a month, lord,” said Aryékwɛs when he entered his gabrula or “receiving room.” He offered both hands to Chris, then Jordan. Okpétu, following behind, did the same.

“I don’t get to ɛjnopéla nearly enough,” replied Chris. “My investments here have all matured. The school and marketplace have both been paid off; the debts are discharged.”

“Together, they have anchored this town. I am very grateful to you for seeing this would be the case. Together, they make the bus hub possible and bring a constant flow of

people here. That made the brick factory, the paper mill, the grist mill, and the brewery possible. And those things, together, attracted the farmers and the gas line. Tea?"

"I'm sorry, but this is the fast. But you are very kind." Chris and Jordan sat on pillows on the floor. "You know that the gas line will be extended. Probably by fall the gas will start to flow in the opposite direction. Nuarjora's getting a big lime kiln; there's no reason to haul limestone sixty kilometers to Mɛlwika to make cement. The lime kiln will use trees cut down in the sea and floated to it, and it will have a gas plant to make and store large quantities of gas; in fact, the kiln will slake lime using gas heat. Gas may even flow as far as Mɛddoakwés, which will allow Mɛlwika's production to be diverted to production of more plastic and to support the factories better."

"I've heard about this, and I guess a line will run to Mɛlita as well. Is that where the factories for the Old Houses will be situated, or will they be scattered about?"

"That's an excellent question, and one I would like to discuss with you. There are problems with scattering them: it would make many of them small, it will complicate supplying them gas and removing hazardous wastes, and will make it harder to support them. It makes more sense to locate them in industrial parks. One obvious park is in the southern extension of Mɛddoakwés; we could run a gas pipe there easily and it will be near a dozen villas. Another is here, very close to the concentration of old villas, where there is already gas and hazardous waste removal. Another is Ornakwés and possibly Mɛlita. But whatever township becomes the site of an industrial park will have to provide infrastructure."

“I see.” Aryékwɛs paused to consider, then nodded. “Naturally, anything that makes Ɛjnopéla grow is welcome, and we will support it. How many jobs are we talking about?”

Chris considered. “All the various factories will probably create over a thousand jobs. Ɛjnopéla could get several hundred of them.”

“Really? Some will be workers coming into town by bus, some will be people living here, but now even the commuters would pay some taxes to the town.” His eyes grew large in considering the possibilities.

“Ɛjnopéla will have to supply roads and two sets of sewers, one for industrial waste, and the industrial waste settling pool will have to be enlarged. We can only guess the cost; maybe 30,000 or 50,000. It depends on the factories. Electrical, telephone, and gas services will have to expand, and those companies may need help to pay for that.”

“Why can’t you supply them with that money?”

“Maybe I will have to, but if that is the case, I will also have an incentive to settle as many of those factories in Mɛlita or even in Mɛlwika as possible, where the tax revenue will help cover the cost.”

“I see.” Aryékwɛs’ eyes narrowed in irritation. “Well, once you know what you want to put here, let me know what the infrastructure costs will be, and I’ll let you know what I can afford.”

“Alright, and I’ll let you know what Mɛlita can afford,” replied Chris, with a twinkle in his eye. He and Aryékwɛs had a slightly combative relationship, but it was always friendly in the end. He turned to Okpétu. “So, what are you doing? Still flying?”

“Yes, almost every day. The army is paying to maintain the planes. I fly them, with another pilot. I get about one job a month from the survey or the army to do aerial photography. Otherwise, we fly lords and rich merchants to Ora or Isurdhuna or Anartu. The new plane can accommodate two passengers, though it’s pretty slow to take off with that much weight.”

“I keep telling him he needs to settle down and marry,” said Aryékwɛs. “Flying may be exciting, but it frightens away the bride’s family. I have tried to arrange three marriages for him, so far, and all three times the father has said no.”

“I suppose I could leave the flying to others.”

“Well, you have taken a lot of business classes from me, you have a dwoyɛri, and you’ve successfully run an operation for several years,” said Chris. “Those are all positive things. What would you like to do?”

“I don’t know. I don’t see myself as a gentleman farmer, like Mɛndhru.”

“Why not?” asked Aryékwɛs. “He is happy, has a lovely house, and two children. It has worked out well.”

Okpétu shrugged. “Father, I like to work with people.”

“Well, I have an idea about that; an idea for you and for Mɛndhru,” replied Chris. “I need full-time lieutenants; assistants who will help establish these industrial parks and coordinate them. Both of you have had business courses, accounting, and you both have run organizations.”

“They would both do an excellent job,” agreed Aryékwɛs immediately.

“Interesting,” said Okpétu. He nodded. “I’d be interested. What would I do?”

“There are several different tasks. Many members of Old Houses will not talk to me, or only minimally. Someone needs to contact everyone, maybe organize meetings. The palace wants this; we need to appeal to their loyalty to the crown. The crown will cut off their pensions early if they refuse to participate. I think we can make this a fairly simple and painless process, if that is what they want. I want to pool the investment money to set up larger factories or groups of factories and have them run by a board elected by all the investors. I am not keen on the idea of establishing fifty or seventy-five small factories of about fifteen or twenty workers each; the management becomes inefficient. I’d rather establish a few larger factories or groups of factories with a single management team. It’d save money and the investors would get more profit. That would be the other task you might be able to take on; the project will need “industrial park managers.’”

“I’d be interested in that,” agreed Okpétu.

“What are all these factories going to make?” asked Aryékwɛs. “Are there really enough products for them all?”

“Yes, there are plenty,” replied Chris. “The seven year development plan, for example, projects that over a thousand people will be needed to make shoes, boots and sandals; right now about 100 are so employed. Dairy operations will employ a thousand, bakeries a thousand, pasta and canned foods, a thousand. Candles and cooking oil will employ 600 people. All of these operations have fairly simple and cheap equipment and it is easy to establish them.”

“Consequently, they are being established everywhere,” noted Aryékwɛs.

“I concede that, but ɛjnopéla is one place that must establish them.” Chris glanced at the clock. “I apologize, Lord, but I need to get to Mɛlita.”

“Next time, come when the fast is over and stay for lunch,” said Aryékwɛs.

Chris and Jordan rose, shook hands with both hosts, and thanked them for their warmth and hospitality. They stepped outside and got back in the rover. “Okpétu and Mɛndhru both could help a lot,” said Jordan.

“I think so; they are capable and trusted by the Old Houses. Let’s get to Mɛlita, I have a lot to read before the City Council meeting.”

Jordan started the car and Chris pulled out his phone and began to resume work on his list of people to call. They headed west and south into warmer and warmer areas and the crops got taller and taller. When they crossed the Ornakwés River the crops suddenly got short again or the fields were bare, for the North Shore visitors usually planted their Mɛlita fields 4 to 8 weeks before they planted their North Shore crops, so the plantings and harvestings were staggered. When they pulled into Mɛlita the town was still stuffed with people; small houses were bulging with two families or the back yards were covered by tents. Mɛlita’s schools had to run two daily sessions, 7-12 and 1-6, to accommodate all the children.

“Looks a little quieter than last week,” Chris observed, as they parked behind the City Hall. “That means we only have six thousand people this week, instead of eight!”

“It’s really amazing how many people go back and forth. And I guess this’ll be another chance to see what the new tax law does to revenues.”

“They’ve dropped, but not as much as one might think, because some of the people who farm the towns south of Mɛlita claim Mɛlita as their residence, so we get

some of the tax on their harvests. The final revenue report for the winter harvest should be on my desk, but Wɛrétranu called late last week and told me that the harvest averaged sixty dhanay per agri and there were about 18,000 agri in crops. That's five dhanay per agri of mortgage payments, or 90,000, and a two percent tax on about half those agris that goes to me or 10,000 dhanay. The Swadlɛndha harvest a bit earlier yielded 45,000 dhanay of mortgages. We're doing alright. Not as much as two years ago when crop prices were strong, but plenty for our projects."

They got out of the rover, locked it, and walked into the City Hall. Chris's office was next to Mayor Wɛrétranu's. Wɛrétranu was also head of the grange, but since there was a City Council meeting that afternoon, he was in. He briefed Chris on numerous items while Jordan read other reports in order to brief Chris later. "One issue we have to consider is hiring more police at times like these," said Wɛrétranu. "We have ten and we need twenty-five to thirty during planting and harvesting. One possibility would be to hire North Shoremen and train them. When their fellow villagers flock here, they can come here to help; when the villagers return home they can return home as well and help with law and order there."

Chris nodded. "I like that idea, especially if they can be hired as policemen there as well. They'll have a good job and we can probably arrange to split the cost of training, using the split stream of tax revenue. Why don't you call lords and headmen up north and talk to them about the idea."

"I'll probably need to attend the provincial assembly when the Réjé visits Bɛllɛdha, but meanwhile I'll see what progress I can make by telephone and letter."

"What sorts of troubles are you having?"

“Drunk men fighting if they’re here without their families, and lots of domestic fights within extended families who are all crowded into small houses.”

“Housing is a real problem,” agreed Chris.

Wɛrétranu turned to other matters, then Jordan briefed Chris about the reports he had read. When Chris went into the monthly City Council meeting, with Jordan at hand to help take notes, he was caught up with the latest developments in Mɛlita.

Throughout the two-hour meeting, Chris paid particular attention to Mɛndhru and his friend Mitrudatu, who had been elected by the various estate-lords as their representatives on the seven-member City Council. Two other members were elected by the permanent residents, Chris appointed one, served himself, and the six of them chose the Mayor, who was the seventh member. Both young men had fairly large and successful estates, were capable, educated, and well respected. They were moderate and articulate as well. When the meeting ended, Chris walked over to both. “Do you have time to join me in my office for ten minutes?”

“Certainly,” agreed Mɛndhru.

“Then I do, too, since he’s driving me home,” added Mitrudatu, with a chuckle.

Chris smiled and they started out of the council chamber. “How are your farms?”

“I’ll get my first grape harvest this year,” said Mɛndhru. “It’ll be small. The red raspberries are spreading out fast; I have five agris of them and they will yield very well in just a few weeks. The problem will be hiring pickers. I think I can get some North Shoremen to do it, as their planting season is a bit later.”

“And they can shift it later, too,” added Mitrudatu. “I have fifty agris of olives and they aren’t yielding yet, but the twenty-five agris of grapes will, and I have almost two

thousand agris sold to farmers who pay me mortgage and a bit of tax, so my farm is doing well."

"Do the North Shoremen have housing when they are here as pickers?" asked Chris.

"Usually they can use a cottage in Mɛlita. I don't provide any housing for pickers; it's too expensive," replied Mɛndhru. "How much would a basic house trailer be, like the ones the clinics and the mobile science lab use?"

"They're usually about two thousand, depending on the custom order," replied Chris, and suddenly his eyes lit up with an idea. Prefabricated houses and house parts!

There was a quickness in his step as he led them into his office. Jordan hurried ahead to collect extra chairs in the hallway, so they could all sit around the desk. They entered and sat. "I need some help from both of you," Chris began. "I am not sure whether you want this task, though, so let me know. As you probably know, last month the palace asked me to set up a project to coordinate investments so as to provide the old houses with a steady income from sources other than the palace. The palace gives them pensions totaling 1.25 million dhanay per year and plans to cut it to 250,000 dhanay per year over the next two years, so that only lords over 65 will receive anything. The palace is providing a quarter million in grants and a quarter million in loans both years, they've asked me to provide a quarter million from my own funds each year, and they are asking the old houses to invest as much as they can, which in practice means matching my money. My role is to set up functioning income-making assets—usually, factories—make sure they are well managed, then bow out and get paid back gradually."

“Frankly, I don’t know how you’ll do it, lord,” said Mɛndhru. “Most of these families will resist any effort to cut off their pensions. If I were the Queen, I would fear for my life. I fear for yours, Lord!”

“I share your concerns. I have been ordered by the palace to do this. I see two basic ways to accomplish their command. The first is to work with all the lordly families who are willing to work on the project on a basis of consultation, letting them choose the type of income-producing asset they want set up, then executing the project and either turning it over to them or over to a manager who is mutually acceptable. The second is to receive the crown grants and loans, invest my money, set up something—I would decide—set up a management system, then when the pensions get cut off, start sending them checks. That would be the loyal thing to do for everyone, whether they like it or not.”

“And that’s what you want our help to do?” asked Mitrudatu, startled.

“Exactly. Both the first and the second options. Half the Old Houses won’t even talk to me, but they will talk to you. You can stress that this is the loyal thing to do to the crown and ask them how much they want to get involved. I suspect we could even organize a meeting of Old Houses to which Estoiyaju or Mɛméjékwu would speak. But if someone else did the inviting and hosting, it would go better. That’s the first thing you could do. The second is bigger and more permanent: serve as managers of the factories. An industrial park with twenty factories can be run more efficiently if management, accounting, payroll, and other tasks are handled centrally.”

“That’s interesting,” said Mɛndhru, pensively. “The investors would get more money in the long run.”

“Exactly,” replied Chris.

“They won’t like it, having someone else run ‘their’ factory.”

“That’ll take some effort, but I don’t want to build the factories scattered all over the area; I want them in a few discrete industrial parks. Some will be larger and owned by several families, because fewer, larger facilities are more cost effective. There will be an industrial park in ɛjnopéla and I think Okpétu will run it.”

“My brother?” asked Mɛndhru.

“And your father will invest in the industrial park. I’ve previously gotten a similar commitment from Gurwɛkɛstɛr and Roktɛkɛstɛr.”

“But what will all these factories make?” asked Mitrudatu.

“Dozens of things. Right now, this world is producing 30,000 pairs of shoes per year via the factories; less than one tenth of the population can buy good quality shoes, so they continue to go barefoot or wear locally made footwear. They’ll all buy shoes, just like the manufactured clothing that is in constant demand. All this is detailed in the prince’s seven year development plan. But there is something missing from the seven year development plan that we can do also: manufactured houses. On Gɛdhéma, factories turn out entire houses and they roll on wheels down the roads to their new owners. These houses must be long and thin; three or four meters wide and ten, even twenty meters long. Sometimes they can be built so that two halves are nailed together at the building site, making a building twice as wide.”

“Wait a minute,” said Mɛndhru. “You’re suggesting that we make a factory to build *houses*? *Wooden* houses? Lord, Mɛlita has no trees!”

“Mɛndhru, the new trucks can move wood, metal, and other materials so cheaply that the factory location doesn’t matter. The route through Mɛlita has been paved, six meters wide, all the way to ɛndraidha. By autumn the paving will connect to the South Shore. At that point heavy trucks will be able to move supplies in and houses out. The big question is what price we can build them for, and I am still not sure about that. I am pretty sure we could build one and sell it for a thousand dhanay, but that may be too much.”

“I think that would be too much,” agreed Mitrudatu. “I can’t picture this idea, lord. Are you talking about a house on wheels?”

“The floor is built on a metal frame that includes axles in the front and back. The building site must be prepared because these houses, being light enough to move on a road, are also light enough that a strong wind can blow them over. Once the house arrives, the wheels are taken off, cinder blocks are put under it to support its weight, and the house is attached to steel cables that are in turn anchored in a concrete pad or to the ground. The house can come with wiring and piping installed, so all you have to do is attach them and it is ready.”

Mitrudatu stared at Chris for a moment, then laughed. “I apologize, Lord,” he said after the good guffaw was over. “I am not laughing at the idea, but at its audacity!”

“It is amazing, isn’t it? The reason it is done is simple: when a crew builds house after house inside a factory, where the lighting is perfect, the temperature perfect, it never rains, and the houses are all uniform, they get fast and they waste less materials, so it is cheaper. Look at Mɛlita; it needs at least several hundred such houses to alleviate the extreme crowding when North Shoremen are here. The génadɛma could use fifty to

supplement the existing dormitories until we build new ones. If they are cheap enough, many villagers would buy them."

"If they are cheap enough," added Mɛndhru.

"I'll explore that question," said Chris. "Meanwhile, we know of scores of factories we can establish. I have a list I've been showing to people; it includes shoes, sandals, pasta, bread, clothing, mattresses, blankets, canned foods, candles, cooking oils, canvas goods, and various tools and household goods."

"If you can give me a list with the sizes of the factories and the costs, I can take that to the old houses," said Mitrudatu. "It would be like a shopping list."

Chris nodded. "The items I'm talking about are in pretty high demand and we already are making most of them according to the new methods, so we can give fairly good price estimates. But the estimates are not perfect."

"Of course," said Mitrudatu.

"Could these manufactured buildings be used for factories?" asked Mɛndhru.

"Sometimes. Not for a bakery, where you need lots of bread ovens. But for sewing centers or shoe manufactories, yes. A double wide, six meters by twenty, could accommodate . . . maybe a dozen workers, so two double-wides could house a factory of twenty, which is the minimum that a gentleman would need."

"You need a team to design and price everything," suggested Mitrudatu. "That would make it simple and concrete."

"You are right. Good idea."

"And you'll pay us, of course?"

Chris nodded. “We’ll start at 3,000 per year and double it after a year if you are doing well, and I suspect you will do well.”

Mɛndhru’s eyes lit up. “That sounds fair, Lord!”

“Good! I can see this arrangement will work well, gentlemen!”

Reread and edited, 6/8/13, 8/20/17, 11/21/24, 9/27/26

311.

Return

1 ɛjnaménu/21 March Yr. 631/13

Moléstu drove his pickup truck to the front door of Réjé Awstɛr School for the Deaf and Mentally Challenged—Soru's school had recently acquired an official name—and parked it there. He and Blorakwé got out, both carrying her bags.

A few meters inside the door and on the right was Soru's office, and inside were Soru and Budhéstu. Both looked up, then rose to greet the arrivals.

"Were you waiting for us?" asked Moléstu. There was a bit of suspicion in his voice and he didn't look at Budhéstu.

"No, we didn't know you were coming," replied Soru. "In fact, we had just sat down to talk. So good to see you, my brother." He embraced Moléstu, who warmly embraced him in turn.

Meanwhile, Budhéstu nodded to Blorakwé. "So, you have returned?"

"Yes, it has finally become possible."

Moléstu turned to Budhéstu and extended both hands. He liked the young man, but felt ambivalent about his apparent affection for Blorkawé. "It's good to see you."

"Thank you, Honored." They shook, a strong, firm grip.

Moléstu turned back to Soru. "I'm sorry we didn't get here sooner; we wanted to celebrate New Year's here with you. But Lord Mitruluku got a very serious cut the other day and it was clear this morning when he visited the village that a very serious infection had set in, so I had to drive him to Mɛlwika Hospital. He didn't want to come to

Mɛddokawés Hospital because he wanted the best. We thought it would be a quick thing, but it turned out they had their hands full because six people had gotten injured in a drunken fight the night before. Once they were able to look at him, they saw the infection had left a streak all the way up his arm; the poisons were heading for his heart. So they immediately admitted him, put a needle in his arm, and began to give him antibiotics. So I had to drive back to get his family and bring them because they don't have a telephone at home, then go back and get Blorakwé and her bags."

"I'm sorry you had such a complicated day," said Soru. "We missed all of you; maybe you can come up next Primdiu, or we can go down."

"It's possible," agreed Moléstu. "This is a very busy week; we have yet another factory to start in Mɛlita. The truck is getting a lot of use. But I have another payment for you, and it's extra again." Moléstu opened a bag attached to his belt and pulled out a shiny gold lɛdhay.

"Wow, I don't see these very often," said Soru. "Thank you. I'll record the payment right away. At this rate, the truck will be paid for in less than another year!"

"I know, it's amazing! But with the truck, my guys and I have plenty of work. In fact, I may want to buy another truck, because I need to move too many crews and too much material. But we can talk about that another time."

"Good." Soru nodded and tried not to look too worried about serving as the family's source of loans.

"I should go. Take good care of her, brother."

"I will, brother." Soru and Moléstu shook both hands, then Moléstu nodded in goodbye to Budhéstu and turned to head out the door.

Soru turned to Blorakwé. “Kanawé’s helping put some of the kids to sleep, then has to put ours to sleep. You might want to put your bags in your room quickly and go help her, but stop at the kitchen and tell the staff to heat up some supper for you. They should be there washing dishes, and there should be some excellent stew left from supper. Budhéstu and I are busy talking, and we’ll be along in a few minutes.”

“Alright, uncle. And thank you for letting me return.”

“Letting you? It is a delight, honor, and pleasure.” Soru smiled, and he meant it; and she knew he meant it.

“Thank you.” There was a tear in one of her eyes, which surprised her. She loved her life at the school; the strain of living at home with mom and dad for six months was over; and she would probably never live there again, either, which made her feeling more intense and more ambivalent.

Budhéstu made a move to pick up a bag, but Soru touched his arm and shook his head. Blorakwé smiled in goodbye to Budhéstu, picked up her bags, and headed to her room. Soru and Budhéstu went back into the office.

“You’ll see her later, don’t worry,” said Soru, sitting back in his chair opposite Budhéstu. “I think we need to remember some rules, my dear friend. You and Blorakwé have a different relationship now than last year. I have felt it over the last few months, and so has Moléstu and the rest of the family. I have no objection, and I think Moléstu and Mɛlitané won’t either, if the relationship continues to deepen. But the staff here will undoubtedly feel it as well. So the two of you must be the absolute perfect examples of spotless chastity. If you want to talk together, talk in the lounge or the cafeteria, but not in any room where doors can be closed.”

“I understand,” agreed Budhéstu, nodding but uncomfortable that the subject had been raised.

“I’m sorry to be so bold, but this is a different world. I don’t think either Moléstu or Blorakwé plan on an arranged marriage. They both know it is against Bahá'í principles. But no one here knows how to behave any other way, including the Bahá'ís. This idea of ‘romantic love’--we keep hearing about in courses on gɛdhéma–is a foreign notion. We have always arranged the marriages of our children; it is one of our privileges as parents, our last right over their childhood, and the way we assure the future of our family. That will not change easily. You know what they say: When some other plant grows in the field, people will think it is a weed. That may particularly be true of my non-Bahá'í staff.”

Budhéstu didn’t reply for a moment. Then he said, “I don’t think Blorakwé and I have any idea how to go about getting to know each other. This idea of getting to know each other is strange to us as well. Certainly, we don’t want to appear to be doing anything improper. How did you and Kanawé manage?”

Soru smiled. “Neither of us had parents and we lived far from relatives, so our situation was different. Looking back on it now, it was almost a negotiation; like we were arranging our own marriage. We had to learn to love each other, and that took time. In some ways it was difficult because we entered the marriage with expectations about how it would go, and no one else had expectations for the marriage we had to live up to. This new way of getting to know someone else, feeling affection grow, *then* getting married is more complicated, but ultimately it is better. Many arranged marriages are loveless, and then the woman becomes a slave. I suggest you watch her in public situations, see how

she behaves around others, and ask yourself whether her character and personality is one you can live with. And I hope she does the same with you."

"That is helpful. Thank you."

"Good." Soru picked up the sheet of paper Budhéstu had brought him, which was covered by psychological terminology in English with the Eryani translations, sometimes tentative, and some proposed retranslations. "Regarding this, some of these translations, such as *éga* for 'ego' are rather old. In that case, *égi* probably would have been better; the 'I-ness' is not a body part or a place, after all, which the 'a' suggests. The various translations of the English 'id' suffer similar problems. But this is a matter we should take to Lua, and maybe she should get May on the telephone or invite Lébé into the conversation. We've been teaching basic psychology for five years; just two courses, but that has been enough to standardize certain terms, so it is hard to change them."

"But perhaps the terms lower down on this list could still be revised; we've only taught the additional courses once."

Soru nodded. "I agree, it may be wise. I am impressed that you've thought this through so thoroughly, Budhéstu. I think some of these translations demonstrate a better grasp of the ideas than I have."

"Or perhaps a different grasp."

"Even that would be impressive, but I don't think so; I see insight. You've pushed me to create three new courses in psychology and have attended all three. You helped select the readings and outline the courses. This coming term, I'd like to see you conduct half the classes."

Budhéstu was startled by that. "Really? I don't know if I'm ready."

"You have to be, because I can't keep developing entire new courses and teaching them, term after term. I have a school to run and have responsibilities to the palace to develop the program for deaf, blind, and challenged children for the western shore. That must consume a huge amount of my time. I need your help to take the lead with this course."

"Alright, I'll do my best."

"Good. I am confident you can do an excellent job. I want you to do more grading and advising as well, and develop more study and group exercises. I'll ask the génadɛma to waive all tuition for courses that term as a result of your service. At the end of the two spring terms, you will be one course short of a dwoyɛri at the present rate. I would urge you to do one of two things: take a course over the summer, or better, take four courses over the two terms rather than three and get the dwoyɛri over with."

"This summer I want to go out with a youth team to the villages. Last summer was an incredible experience. I'm still writing to people I met and have managed to revisit several places. Last month I managed to get to Sumiupɛrakwa and Owyapéla for two days each from my parents' house in Klɛnvika."

"Good. I have no objection to you spending the summer that way. It sounds like the Central Spiritual Assembly is making some plans so that the teams can be more effective than last year. I'm thinking toward the fall, Budhéstu. Mɛlwika Génadɛma will hire people as faculty even if all they have is a dwoyɛri, as long as they offer expertise unavailable from more educated people. You will have had seven courses in psychology by then; you will have the critical mass to start teaching the subject. As faculty you can take courses for free and continue to move your education forward and you would be

expected to do so. You will have financial stability and would be in the position to marry, if you decide to do so."

"I see where you're going. Do you really think they'd hire me?"

"I'm sure of it, because Mɛlwika and Gésɛlékwɛs Maj will both be attracted to the idea that you will help them establish a whole new discipline, so there will be competition. That will only carry so far; neither génadɛma will get in a bidding war to retain you, because they already have a faculty exchange agreement. You'll be teaching at both regardless which hires you. I will speak to either one or both, if you wish."

"Yes, please do!"

"You don't want to go back to Klɛnvika."

"No, I haven't wanted to go back since the first week after I arrived here. The génadɛma's too exciting. But I *do* want to go back periodically to offer all sorts of free classes. Please speak to Mɛlwika first; then Gésɛlékwɛs Maj if you wish."

"Alright, I'll do that. I suggest you prepare a good write-up on why some of these terms should be retranslated; Dr. Lua would probably be among those deciding whether to hire you."

"Alright, I'll expand this sheet into a short paper over the next week."

"Good. And I think now's a good time to go to the cafeteria for a cup of tea; Blorakwé will be there, or will arrive there shortly."

Budhéstu smiled. "Alright, thank you, honored!" Budhéstu almost jumped to his feet and headed out the door. His head was swimming from all the possibilities of their conversation, but they all seemed to center on one word: *Blorakwé.* He had missed her a lot over the last six months and her presence in Tɛrskua was a major reason he had led a

youth group there regularly. Now he essentially had permission to court her, and that, he realized, was what he had lacked.

When he reached the cafeteria it was empty, but he made a cup of tea and before it was finished she arrived. He looked at her—almost studied her—when she entered. In the last year she had gained another inch of height and her breasts had filled out more; she had not yet been an adult when he had first met her about a year earlier.

She was startled to see him and she felt his scrutiny of her body. “Oh, I didn’t know you were here.”

“I finished my conversation with Budhéstu and decided to have a cup of tea.”

“I see.” She walked into the kitchen and poured the stew heating on the stove into a bowl. Hesitantly, she joined him. “You were back in Klɛnvika for ɛjnaménu, right?”

“Most of it. When I bought my interprovince ticket, I added a bit to it so I could ride the bus all the way to Pértatranisér, rather than just Klɛnwika. I hitched a ride to Owyapéla and spent two days with the Bahá'ís there; the Assembly secretary put me up in his house. Since the school was closed for the holidays, I was able to give two children’s classes there, and during the two nights I spoke about ‘what I am learning at génadɛma’ and ‘The Book of Certitude and the Journey of the Soul.’ Most of the village came to both, and afterwards we talked for hours. Then I used my return ticket to Mɛlwika to get to Sumiupɛrakwa, where I did basically the same thing for two days. Then I went to Klɛnvika, where I slept for most of the next two days; my parents were baffled by that! I spread out classes there, spent the first week reconnecting with people and resting, then responded to invitations to talk or organize classes for kids.”

“What did your parents think?”

“They’re reconciled to the fact that I’m not coming back permanently and that I am a Bahá'í, though they are not happy with that at all. I think they warmed up a bit; I was practically a hero to a lot of people. Other Klɛnvikans who live elsewhere come back and give gifts, but they don’t offer classes. I’m a poor student, so I can’t afford gifts, and as a Bahá'í I know the importance of education.”

“Of course. I’m glad your parents felt a little better, anyway. It was nice to meet them last summer.”

“Maybe we can get back there to see them again, some time.”

“Perhaps.” She looked down at her soup; that seemed to have scared her a bit. “Let’s not talk about such things, yet.”

“No, I agree,” he replied, but he was disappointed.

Chris looked up from his desk when he heard the knock on his door. “Oh, Tomasu, come in. Is it time?”

“We have to be in Widubéru’s office in five minutes.”

“Then let’s go.” Chris put down the ledger book he had been reviewing and rose. “Are those the plans?” he asked, referring to a satchel in Tomasu’s hands.

“Yes.”

“Good.”

They walked down the stairs, out the main door, across the street into Citadel Square, and then turned into the former house converted into the offices of the Development Corps. Widubéru was waiting. “Good to see you both,” he said, shaking

hands. They exchanged greetings and sat while he brought them tea. “You can drink now, right? Your fast is over?”

“Indeed, thank you for asking. Our fast ended two weeks ago, on the last day of the old year.”

“That’s what I thought. 631: I hope it’ll be a good year. But so far it seems to be. The palace, I think, will give the Development Corps a hundred thousand this year.”

“Excellent. I have to keep my pledge at twenty-five thousand.”

“Understandable, but Mitru may be in the position to give a bit more, and usually the dukes will contribute about ten thousand each. I suspect we’ll have a budget of 200,000. I hope you aren’t asking for most of it!”

“No, not at all.” Chris nodded to Tomasu, who pulled out two sets of pages, each held together with a pin. There were drawings on the cover of each. “These are two engineering projects,” explained Tomasu. “You can have these reports to read the details. To make a long story short, I took regular mechanical engineering courses during fall terms 1 and 2, then convinced my engineering professors to allow me to set up special workshop seminars during winter terms 1 and 2. These are seminars when a group of students—usually recruited by a student or a professor—devote an entire term to developing something and building a functioning model. In the first half of winter term 1, we designed a basic, standardized water tower sized to provide water to 250 people; forty or fifty houses. In the rest of that term and all of winter term 2, we designed a sewage treatment system to handle the household wastes of the same number of houses.”

“Really?” Widubéru took the reports with greater interest. He looked at the diagrams on the cover closely. “And these can be built by the new Mɛlwika Equipment Company?”

“It’s part of our catalog; we had to produce detailed drawings for the manufacturing process, test it, and estimate the price of each unit. The water tower is fairly simple and basic; a cylindrical metal tank three meters in diameter and four high, holding twenty-eight tones of water, elevated five meters off the ground to guarantee a minimum gravity flow. At one hundred liters per person per day, it’ll provide water to 280 people, but we’re rating the system for 250 to be on the safe side. It also stores enough water to put out one house fire. We can manufacture and sell the tower for about 200 dhanay, including the pump. Sewage treatment includes a settling tank and two tanks the size of the water tower set in the ground with powerful air pumps to circulate and aerate the effluent. After two days the effluent emerges with much of the waste broken down and flows into a reed-filled pond fifty meters square with an exit to the river. The sewage treatment system costs 400 dhanay, plus local excavation and assembly costs.”

“What about larger villages?”

“A village of one thousand would have four water towers, four settling tanks, eight secondary treatment tanks, and a larger reed pond.”

“Ah, I see. Clever; that gives the system expandability and flexibility.”

“Exactly. We’d like to manufacture one hundred systems per year, costing 60,000 dhanay; they’d be able to serve the needs of 25,000 people. If demand rose, we’d make more.”

“Do you want me to take this to the Development Bank? I think we could convince them to pay a third, the Development Corps could cover a third, and the village would have to pay a third as well. It’s a pity we can’t make more. With population growth, it’ll take twenty years to serve everyone!”

“Money,” replied Chris.

“We *have* to get more money and make more of them. I almost died from waterborne illness when I was twelve; I remember it well! I’ll work on that. How will we get the news out?”

“That’s the other reason we wanted to see you this afternoon,” replied Chris. “I just returned from a meeting with the Mɛlwika Board of Education. The Central Spiritual Assembly asked me to contact them and arrange to rent public schools for the entire second week of Kaiménu. We’ve decided to invite all Bahá'ís to come either to Mɛlwika the second week of Kaiménu, to Mɛddwoglubas the third week of Dhonménu, Pértatranisér the third week of Abɛlménu, or Anartu the second week of Brénménu for a week-long free school. They can invite their friends and relatives as well. They have to get themselves there, bring bedding and food—grain, vegetables, fruit, live chickens—sufficient for a week, pay one dhanay registration per adult and a half dhanay per child, and do three hours of volunteer work to support the school every other day. We don’t know how many will show up, but Mɛlwika’s schools can accommodate 4,000 people at twenty to a classroom for sleeping and classes. Mɛddwoglubas can accommodate a thousand if one includes the old fort; Pértatranisér a thousand.”

“So . . . they’d be taking classes for a week?”

“That’s the idea; probably three hours long, and many will be repeated. At night musicians will perform in the school auditoriums. We plan to write to every local spiritual assembly that has done something important—set up a water system, established a literacy class, worked on microcredit, set up a class for memorizing Bahá'í texts, whatever—and ask them to give a presentation. We’ll ask many génadɛma students and experts to give presentations as well, about adult education curriculum, setting up children’s drama classes, improving agriculture, protecting the environment, etc. And we’ll have an entire curriculum offering short enrichment classes on specific subjects, like chemistry, biology, astronomy, and Eryani literature. We’ll ask people to choose practical titles and focus on useful results; thus a presentation on deforestation should be titled something like ‘Planting Trees to Increase your Firewood.’”

“And it won’t just be Bahá'ís?”

“Exactly. We’re telling people this is like a big Bahá'í house where the Bahá'ís are the hosts. They should invite guests, many if they want, and we will welcome them.”

“Could I offer a presentation on development projects?”

“Of course! That’s the other reason we wanted to talk to you! We need you to talk about the Development Corps and its programs. I suggest you offer several presentations.”

“How many?”

“As many as you can, Widubéru, at all four gatherings. This is your chance to meet people from every village in the world at the same time, talk to them about what they can do to improve their lives, and start discussions about how much they need.”

His eyes opened wide. “That’s intriguing! You know, the last year has been pretty busy, compared to previous years, because of your youth team. The twenty-four villages they visited were all sensitized to the possibilities. About fifteen of them contacted the Development Corps for grants and loans. In some cases it was the local spiritual assembly or a group of people—like school teachers or women or a grange—that contacted me, *not* the lord. The Development Corps has disbursed fifteen thousand dhanay as a result, and it was matched by the village, the lord, or the group that contacted me. That’s the direction I want development to go. Right now I give most of the development money the palace gives me to lords to make things that glorify them and the village, like improving their houses so they can meet with people, or installing a village square with a clock! These are useful—in fact, about ten of the villages you visited have asked for squares with clocks, and that is useful for them—but I’d rather steer the money into water and sewage systems.”

“Where does the two hundred thousand go right now?” asked Tomasu.

“About half goes to lords to build reception halls and offices—in other words, to a new house—then some to village squares, schoolhouses, or soccer fields. Maybe fifty thousand goes to factories, which are usually owned by lords. But I’ve granted a few thousand for water systems and a few thousand for sewing centers or women’s gabrulis since last summer, and that’s much better!”

“I’m so glad to hear this,” said Tomasu, with a tear in his eye.

“I’m grateful,” replied Widubéru, with a smile. “Have you any idea how many non-Bahá'ís will be there?”

“No idea,” replied Chris. “And they will be in a Bahá'í environment, so many will become Bahá'ís. You need to know this, Widubéru: the gathering has three purposes, deepening the Bahá'í community in its basic beliefs and principles, strengthening its commitment to an ever-advancing civilization—development—and bringing its example to others. When you do that, some people will become Bahá'ís.”

“I understand, and I could be criticized for participating. But that’s fine; I’ll tell the critics that if they can bring together people from most of the world’s villages, I’ll speak there as well.”

“Alright! Here’s a participation form for you to fill out and return to Sulanu.” Chris handed him a sheet, which Widubéru scrutinized carefully.

“Good, I’ll get it to him tomorrow. Say, have you heard anything more about the plan for a microcredit system in Wɛranopéla? The youth mentioned the idea but had no details. Three weeks later Aryéstu returned there to visit with relatives and they asked him how it works. The local spiritual assembly had appointed a committee to get it started.”

“They did, and once the harvest arrives in Brébatroba the village will have an influx of cash and the first group of members will pay their dues and thereby give the microcredit bank its initial capital. So I suppose it will start making loans in about two months.”

“That’s good news. It’s the first microcredit system outside the three granges with it. Please invite someone to your conference to speak about it.”

“We will, and we’ll ask them to bring all their accounting books so people can see how the entries work and how the procedures were set up. Microcredit is essential for

raising people out of poverty; that and education and new jobs." Chris rose and extended his hand. "Good to talk to you as always, Widubéru."

"I feel the same, Lord Kristoféru." They shook, then headed for the door. Chris and Tomasu stepped out and said goodbye to each other. "Keep up the good work!" said Chris.

"Thank you, Lord, and same with you," he replied. "I'm so glad Widubéru will help this project out with grants and loans!"

"I'm so glad you did the work to develop these standard models. You will save a lot of lives, Tomasu." They shook hands as well, then Chris walked back to his house. When he entered, he found everyone busily listening to the radio with very serious looks on their faces.

"What is it?" he said. At first, no one spoke at all; they were absorbed by the radio show. Chris heard the voice of General Gɛlnébɛlu, their chief engineer, and was even more surprised.

"They just announced that the army has perfected firearms," replied Liz, gravely.

"Guns?" asked Chris. "And without us?"

"We wouldn't get involved, so they took their time and did it on their own," said Behruz, bitterly.

"That must be what the army researchers were doing, when they tied up the university computer for much of a month searching the web," said Thornton. "I've been hearing hints for months about a big research project in ɛndraidha."

“I have, too,” agreed Chris. “So, that means the army now has a monopoly on enormous power. I hope the queen really has control over it. And once the guns leak out to the public, the average person will have a lot more killing power.”

“Assassinations,” said Liz, worried.

“And species extinction,” added Thornton.

“Did they say what the guns shoot?” asked Chris.

“He described it,” replied Behruz. “They are making cartridges containing nitro cotton explosive and a bullet. These aren’t flintlocks.”

“And they are making rifles, not pistols,” added Thornton. “Maybe because they’re harder to steal and conceal.”

“Small consolation.” Chris looked at Behruz, who was absolutely horrified. Chris walked over and hugged his son in law. “We delayed this as long as we could.”

“I suppose it was inevitable.” Tears were streaming down Behruz’s cheeks. He put his head on Chris’s shoulder and began to cry. Liz came over to comfort him as well; his father had been shot dead in front of him by a robber when Behruz had been a boy and violence of any sort was traumatic for him.

“We have to build a Bahá'í world where guns are almost completely unnecessary,” she said to him, and he nodded.

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Convention

6-7 Dhébɛlménu/26-27 April, Yr 13/631

The devotional service at the Bahá'í House of Worship in Mɛlwika ended with a final chanted prayer and the audience of nearly a thousand people headed for the doors. About half headed for the Mɛlwika Bahá'í Center a hundred meters away for the morning session of the central Bahá'í convention.

At the main door, a monitor asked to see badges of those authorized to enter and steered others to a registration table. The interior filled up fast, the 171 delegates sitting in the front and other guests in the back. Skandastaru, a Bahá'í elementary school teacher and delegate from Ora, sat next to Soru and Randu, delegates from Morituora and Arjdhura respectively.

Once everyone was seated, Lord Estodhéru rose to call the meeting to order, then turned it over to Modolubu, secretary of the Central Spiritual Assembly, to deliver the Ridván annual report.

“Dear Friends,” he began. “I’m not going to read the report to you; it is too lengthy. But I will summarize its high points. We are now three years into our Five Year Plan and we have had some notable successes, but we face significant challenges in order to complete all of its major goals.

“In the last year the number of Bahá'ís in this world has grown from almost 6,000 to slightly over 7,000. Considering that we had only 2,000 at the beginning of the plan, the growth has been miraculous. Ten new local spiritual assemblies came into existence,

nine because of the traveling youth team last summer, raising our total to fifty-one, but twenty-four short of our goal of seventy-five. The number of Bahá'í Centers has grown to thirteen from eleven, but our goal is eighteen. The House of Worship in Mɛddwoglubas is complete and dedicated and the Mɛlwika structure, now sufficiently complete to be used, will be finished in another three years, as scheduled.

"But a major goal—bringing literacy to ten thousand adults—has not yet made significant progress. The youth team was able to provide some literacy to five hundred last summer, but literacy cannot be achieved in a few weeks. The ten thousand literacy booklets we printed have largely been given out, but we have no idea how many of them have been used partially or completely. This goal appears to be particularly elusive.

"And its importance cannot be underestimated. Bahá'u'lláh praises learned individuals highly. He calls on everyone to learn to read and write, first so that they can study the Word of God, and second so that they can contribute to civilization's advancement. Studies of development on gɛdhéma show that education is one of the most important factors for economic improvement of a country or region. Even here, provinces with higher literacy rates have higher incomes than those with lower levels of literacy. While we do not have statistics, it is reasonable to conclude that children of literate parents are more likely to survive childhood illnesses. The crown prince's seven year development plan, it is estimated, will require 60,000 literate men and women, and our world currently has less than 40,000. Our community can make a major contribution to that goal, and the members of our community will benefit economically from that contribution.

“We must become a community permanently devoted to learning. The study circles are an example of this commitment. It is to foster this broad goal of education and the more specific goal of fostering literacy that the Central Spiritual Assembly has decided to call four week-long educational conferences this summer. Most of you have heard of them; they will be held the second or third weeks of Kaiménu, Dhonménu, Abɛlménu, and Brénménu, in Mɛlwika, Mɛddwoglubas, Pértatranisér, and Anartu respectively. You may attend any or all of them. The first one, in Mɛlwika, will also serve as a youth conference and we want to encourage all Bahá'í youth to come and bring their friends. The theme of all the conferences will be ‘Preparing for Service.’ Non-Bahá'ís will be welcome at all sessions, because much of the service we will talk about will be service to all. There will be an emphasis on literacy, but there will be classes on everything; on village water systems, village sewage systems, adult education in health, science, math, and business skills, agriculture, forestry, setting up a microcredit bank, establishing a women’s gabruli. . . just about anything you can imagine. In fact, if you have an idea, come prepared to present it; we can add you to the program.

“There will be all sorts of classes on Bahá'í subjects as well. We hope to have basic classes about all the major Bahá'í books and the primary figures of the Faith. There will be meetings for assembly members to talk about how assemblies should work and a meeting just for secretaries and one just for treasurers. We will try to cover all the Ruhi books, though no one will manage to study more than one or two in a week!

“Musicians should bring their musical instruments because there will be performances every night. We hope to record some of it or possibly even broadcast some of the concerts live.

“How much will all this cost? We have decided to make the gatherings as cheap as possible. It’ll cost you less than a dhanay to take the bus there and back; less if you combine it with shopping and use a newspaper bus coupon. The conference will cost four dontay per day or one dhanay for all six days; children will be half price. That includes access to all classes and a place to sleep at night, but you will have to bring a sleeping mat, blankets, and pillows. The Central Spiritual Assembly will use the money to rent schools, where people will sleep and go to classes together. There will be places to wash yourselves and wash laundry.

“We will serve three meals a day at seven kɛntay each. If you bring food, we will give you credit for it; if you work for the conference you will receive a ‘conference credit’ worth ten kɛntay per hour. The conference will need people to cook and clean; we are not planning to hire non-Bahá'ís to cook for us! If everyone does three hours of service to the conference every other day, we will have the people we need to run the conference, and everyone will save money on their meals. You have to eat anyway, so bring as much of your six days of food with you as you can and share it with your fellow believers.

“Definitely invite friends and relatives who are not Bahá'ís. We hope to offer an ideal Bahá'í environment where people from all around the world are serving each other while learning how to serve the world. No doubt, some will accept Bahá'u'lláh. We will get publicity for the Faith as well, and we hope it will be positive, because the priests are becoming more opposed and have been stirring resistance to us. But who can complain if several thousand people come together in peace, enjoy each other’s company, and leave ready to serve the Faith and the kingdom? Complainers will simply discredit themselves.

“We hope this session of the convention can be devoted to consultation about the conferences and the remaining two years of the Five Year Plan. I know Auxiliary Liz Mennea has some comments she wants to offer us.”

Modolubu sat and Liz took the stage. “Welcome, everyone, to Mɛlwika once again,” she said. “When the history of this era is written, one of its remarkable features will be the rapid growth of the Faith. It seems so easy, that I think we will forget that at other times it may be slow and difficult. On Gɛdhéma there have been phases of rapid growth followed by phases of slower growth. Clearly, we are in a rapid phase. We’ve gone from 2,000 to 7,100 members in three years; we are now 2.2 percent of this world’s population! But half of this world’s villages still have no Bahá'ís at all. Right now, all of them are receptive. We can triple the number of Bahá'ís on this world quite easily in the next few years.

“But inevitably, growth will get harder. Mɛlwika has three hundred Bahá'ís; it is also two percent Bahá'í, notwithstanding the fact that the Faith started growing here first and is highly visible. The townsfolk are often satisfied with their life and its material comfort and see no need for religion. As life improves in the villages, complacency will spread to them as well. So friends, *teach the Faith!* Bring people in while you can. We have more means for consolidating our victories than ever before.

“In order to strengthen the Faith, the Central Spiritual Assembly has appointed a second Auxiliary, Gɛlé Entɛrdékui of Mɛddwoglubas. The two of us will begin to appoint assistants for every province. We hope that the various clusters, which so far have been functioning weakly at best, will grow in strength. More clusters will be established and they will be divided into zones so that reflection meetings are easier to hold. People still

don’t know how to reflect together and plan the Faith’s progress; we are sure that will improve. The skills we are developing, as a community, are transformative for this entire world. So we must teach and we must develop human resources, for we can make this world a rose garden. Thank you.”

Everyone applauded as she returned to her seat. Delegates lined up at the two microphones up front to speak. Skandastaru turned to his two friends and started a whispered conversation. “I had no idea the Faith stressed education so much! I suppose I’ve heard that it does, but it never sunk in until now!”

“I know what you mean,” replied Randu. “I’ve had to do a lot of thinking about it because I’ve had to think about the development of education on Sumilara. One of the ways I did that was review a compilation of Bahá'í writings on education in English.”

“How’s your English?” asked Soru.

“Very limited, like everyone else. I was able to puzzle through the compilation with the help of an expert. I jotted down his translation as he made it and can share the notes with you, if you’d like.”

“Yes, please.”

“You guys are so lucky, studying subjects like this in detail!” said Skandastaru. “As an elementary school teacher, day after day, I have no time.”

“Maybe you and Puwé can get here for a summer term and take courses,” suggested Soru. “There’s financial aid, and the new dormitory can accommodate families.”

“Maybe we can. I’d love to do it. I suppose we should *try* to do it. Bahá'ís should be in the forefront of education, after all.” Skandastaru shook his head. “You know, one

of the biggest problems I have is with my non-Bahá'í colleagues. Whenever I offer a free adult education course or literacy course at night, they get really angry and say 'look, we have to get paid for this, otherwise they'll cut our salary and demand more of us.'"

"That is a problem," agreed Soru. "I've encountered it, too. But there aren't enough teachers and the need for education is vast. That's why the Bahá'í community has to offer it as a service."

"I agree," said Skandastaru.

"What I wonder about is how the Central Spiritual Assembly will manage such huge gatherings. I can easily imagine that they will lose a lot of money," said Randu.

"Or that they could be organizational disasters," agreed Soru. "But the Bahá'í communities in the upper valley have a lot of expertise, and the Menneas can cover any financial losses. So I suppose they'll be alright."

"I suppose," agreed Randu. He looked at the speaker, who was talking about the classes on the Ruhi books in his village. He didn't seem to grasp the topic of the consultation very well. So he turned back to Soru and whispered, "How are the psychology courses going?"

Soru nodded. "Quite well. Budhéstu has a fascination for the subject and will soon be able to lead the way himself. I wish he weren't going around the world with the youth team this summer; I'd rather he stay here and start practicing with patients. We need to go beyond reading and discussing textbooks."

"Psychology; what's that? How can we study the mind?" asked Skandastaru. He had grasped the basic meaning of the Eryani words for psychology, *mɛntagénto,* "knowledge of the mind."

“It’s quite a complex field of study on gɛdhéma,” replied Soru. “And it turns out that crazy people often have a disease of the mind, which sometimes can be treated, just like diseases of the body. Many are diseases of the brain’s functioning. We’ve translated quite a few textbooks or portions of texts into Eryani and starting this fall we want to work on original texts, and we want to start studying patients.”

“Fascinating,” said Skandastaru. “That’s something I’d like to learn about. I think it’s a topic Puwé would like to learn about as well.”

“Then come here this summer, if you can. We’re planning a summer seminar during the first term.”

Skandastaru nodded. “We’ll try to do that.”

The delegate who had been speaking finished and Dr. Staurést spoke next, so they paused to listen to him. He told several stories about people not going to the hospital out of ignorance of the disease they had contracted to underline the importance of basic education. The delegates speaking after him had useful comments and Randu rose to talk about educational priorities of the Bahá'ís on Sumilara. Overall, the morning session contributed several useful ideas to the Assembly’s plans.

When Lord Estodhéru banged his staff on the floor to end the session for lunchtime, Chris rose and headed for the door. It was difficult to devote three entire days to the convention; there were other tasks he had to accomplish. He walked slowly through the crowd, pausing for a few brief conversations, but his goal was his Tomi office.

Just outside the Bahá'í Center he encountered Moléstu Dénujénésɛ. “You made it to the convention after all! Are you enjoying it?” he asked.

“Thank you, lord, I am. I took your advice and gave my crew three days of vacation; some are busy harvesting vegetables in Mɛlita anyway. I couldn’t get inside the Bahá'í Center, but the loudspeakers are carrying the sound to the tent quite well. It’s amazing to think that we can consult like a small village on so many matters.”

“Yes, they’re doing very well. I like the suggestion that we need to train youth continually at provincial conferences.”

“Any progress on the factory complex?”

“Not much, but I will make sure you get plenty of contracts once it goes through. You do excellent quality work, Moléstu.”

“Thank you. It looks like I’ll need to double the size of my crew soon and buy a second truck!”

“Once the factory contracts are ready, you might even need a third truck. I think truck prices may drop about ten percent soon, too, with the financial package that is. Everyone wants pickup trucks; the demand for cars has actually halved! Plans for the factories are advancing even if the partnerships with the old houses are not.”

“They’re stubborn people, lord. I wish the palace would just cut them off!”

“They’re relatives, and some of them are ruthless enough to turn to assassination. The Queen knows what she is doing. I have to go, honored. I may have more to tell you in a few days.” Chris nodded goodbye and headed across the campus to his office.

As soon as he got there, he turned to phone messages. There was a lengthy one from Lord Mɛnɛgékwɛs of the Kwétékwonɛ tribe asking again about whether he wanted to buy “white rock”; the tribe had a large gypsum deposit, perfect for making plaster and

sheetrock. There was a note from Jordan that he had told the chief no decision would be made for some days or weeks and we would get back to him.

Nothing from Mitrudatu. The priest's second son had proved good at negotiating, just as Mɛndhru had proved able at accounting and managing an operation; the two of them were overseeing the plans for a new industrial park in eastern Mɛlita on the Ornakwés River, carved out of land owned by both of them, Chris, and two other lord's sons. Okpétu, meanwhile, had received from his father, Lord Aryékwɛs of Ɛjnopéla, management responsibility for that town's industrial park. So there was slow progress.

As Chris contemplated all this, the phone rang. "It's Mitrudatu," said his secretary.

"Thanks." Chris picked up the phone. "Khélo, honored Mitrudatu."

"Greetings, Lord. I timed the call just right; you are back in the office from your convention."

"Exactly, and I was hoping to hear from you."

"I'm afraid the news is not good, Lord. I met with two more hereditary lords last night and this morning. They are refusing to invest and insist their pensions won't be cut. Both had long conversations with Her Majesty and are convinced they can bring her around. A big meeting with her is planned for next month."

"Next month? That's a big delay."

"They're dragging their feet and the palace is not being forceful."

"Do you think they'll get the pensions reinstated?"

"They've managed to do it in the past."

“Indeed.” Chris considered the situation. “So, we won’t get any more old houses to commit?”

“No, just the six that have agreed, and one of them may renege.”

“I know. Alright, Mitrudatu.” Chris paused to think. The manufactured housing factory needs some ancillary factories that could operate in support of the existing construction industry, making sheetrock and plywood. But without the reliable and certain demand of the housing factory, it is difficult to know how large to make the other operations. “Are the five or six interested in factories for shoes or processed food?”

“I think two or three would be. But these are the most educated, enlightened, and cooperative of the old houses; we don’t want to lose them from a big project like this.”

“You’re right about that.”

“Could you call Estoiyaju?” asked Mitrudatu.

“Good idea; I’ll tell him about the delay we’re encountering. Meanwhile, we can continue developing blueprints and detailed business plans. We have almost one hundred students in different courses working on them, and by and large they’re doing good work. It’s all rather cookie-cutter; the same building design is being modified again and again, the same formulas are applied to the cost calculations, etc. Experts have spot-checked everything, and systematic errors are being corrected. We’re getting the planning for this huge expansion done for maybe a quarter the cost of the Mɛlwika Motors expansion. The next wave of expansion—mostly in other provinces—will be based on this one and should be even cheaper.”

“So, this is worthwhile.” Mitrudatu sounded relieved.

"Definitely, though it's costing me a lot of money! But I should get it back eventually. I had better check my phone messages and correspondence, Mitrudatu, since I don't have a lot of time before the convention starts again."

"Alright. Nothing else to report down here, but we'll be in touch. Bye."

"Bye."

The next morning, 171 delegates gathered in the Mɛlwika Bahá'í Center and voted for the members of the Central Spiritual Assembly. The afternoon session was devoted to Bahá'í youth, and the entire team from the previous summer was invited onto the stage to speak. The seats behind those for the delegates were reserved for youth, some seventy-five of whom had been invited to attend.

"I don't think any of us can summarize our experience very easily, nor will we all describe it the same," said Jordan. "It was both exhausting and exhilarating, frustrating and satisfying, unpredictable and predictable. All of us soon developed skills we didn't know we had. Music proved very important to our efforts and allowed us to get to know people. About two hundred women learned how to use sewing machines, and we have heard that in almost every village we visited, sewing machines have been purchased. Most villages improved their public water systems and agriculture. We assisted about two hundred people to develop or improve their literacy. It is very hard to say how many people we brought into the Faith, but most of the growth in the last year was either directly or indirectly the result of our travels. Most of us are still in correspondence with people we met; a few of them are here today." He turned to Budhéstu, who had the next part of the program.

“We’re going out again this summer,” Budhestu started. “Not all of us; Mitrukaru and Kordé are expecting a child in five months, but even they plan to spend some time with us. What we really want, though, is to be able to split into three teams of six or eight each, so we need about twenty more youth to join us. Each team will have a pickup truck and tents, though most of the time we expect teams will be able to stay in school classrooms.”

“We will do the same things we did last year,” continued Blorakwé. “Though we will be in the position to do better this time. The classes for women will aim to establish local women’s gabrulis, and we’ll start with very simple operations; there will be no need for a separate building. We’ll aim to establish granges, again simple start-up ones. Economics classes will aim to establish micro-credit banks. We hope local Spiritual Assemblies will find the energy and resources to sponsor many of these efforts, which will be open to all, and which will be able to take financial assistance from anyone.”

Swadé stepped forward. “We particularly need young Bahá'í women to volunteer,” she said. “Men in the villages have access to literacy; women much less. Men have access to the new knowledge; women, much less. The principle of equality of men and women means women need access to the new knowledge and need to see role models of young, articulate, capable, feminine and professional women. Development is causing great difficulties for many women. Many have descended into poverty; others have more children than ever, and more surviving children than ever. Ten years ago, houses with seven living children were rare; now they’re becoming common. We can make a difference.” She looked at Tomasu, who was next.

“We also need youth who have mechanical skills,” he said. “We don’t just want college students. We were often asked how to repair steam engines, and none of us had any experience doing it! Good singers and musicians are needed. Youth able to tutor the last three books and able to organize children’s and junior youth classes are particularly needed. We’re hoping to assemble three diverse teams.”

“The Central Spiritual Assembly needs to hear from local Spiritual Assemblies,” continued Khwanu. “We want to go to places where a strong assembly can follow up. Followup is essential, so that the gains are not lost. All the momentum has dissipated in the Géndonɛ villages and the mountain tribal villages near Kostakhéma, but progress has continued elsewhere.”

Khwanu leaned back and Primanu spoke up. “So, do we have volunteers?” he exclaimed loudly. He knew they did; a dozen kids in Mɛlwika had been doing one-day trips since fall and most had planned to join them over the summer. Their hands shot up right away. But so did a half dozen other hands, followed by a sprinkling of others over the next ten seconds.

“Come up on the stage with us!” urged Primanu. “Come on!”

The youth walked up to the stage and the entire audience rose to their feet and erupted in applause. Blorakwé was startled and exhilarated by the noise and looked to Budhéstu, who nodded to her, excited. The youth began to step onto the stage and those already there welcomed them up, shook their hands, and stood among them while the audience continued to applaud. Blorakwé shook hands with a particularly shy looking young woman. “I’m Blorakwé; what’s your name?”

“Lubané. I’m from Mitrudoma. I came to Wɛranopéla with my mother for sewing classes.”

“Oh, yes, I remember you! You and your mother were really good!”

“She now has a sewing machine, and she’s even better!”

“And you’re Bahá'ís?”

“Mom, too. We took Book One in Wɛranopéla after you left. And now I want to travel just like you did.”

“Good, you are welcome!” Blorakwé turned back to the cheering crowd, wondering whether Lubané had permission from her mother to do such a thing.

Someone on stage began to sing the song “Alláh-u-Abhá” and the entire audience joined in, converting the excitement into spiritual joy. When the song ended Khwanu, who had a beautiful voice, chanted a Bahá'í prayer. Tomasu followed with another prayer, then Swadé, then Jordan, then Lubané stepped forward and chanted a short prayer as well, which particularly moved the audience. Then they filed off the stage and Lord Estodhéru, chairman of the convention, stepped up.

“I don’t think we have ever experienced such a moving scene at a Bahá'í convention. My friends, we have just seen the future here, and it has become a present-moment reality. We are changing this world at a remarkable pace, and our youth are leading us. Let us all redouble our efforts to study the writings, study the Ruhi books, and act on the guidance they contain. Let us pray, educate ourselves, help our neighbors educate themselves, and let us earn a better living for our families. Bit by bit, day by day, we will make this world a paradise. Now, let us hear from the delegates. Number 76 had his number up first.”

Estodhéru retreated to his chair on the edge of the stage and the delegates rose to praise the youth, make suggestions, volunteer their villages, and offer support. The excitement continued for the next two hours, though in a more sober and deliberative form.

When the consultation ended, the tellers rose. “We are pleased to say that all 171 delegates voted this year in person!” began the chief teller, and he had to pause because of the applause. “There were twelve invalid votes, however, because some people voted for youth, who are not eligible to be elected to an Assembly. The following were elected to our Central Spiritual Assembly: Dr. Staurέstu Aywɛrgui, Modolubu Papɛrkwéri of Mɛlwika, Lord Estodhéru Doma-Mɛddwoglubasi, Lord Kristobéru Mennea, Aréjé Aywɛrgui, Brébéstu Doma-Slirbrébu, Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi, Jonu Obispu, and Randu Maradar.”

Randu had not been paying close attention to the names and almost didn’t believe his name had been called out. He looked around, startled, and saw that everyone around him was looking at him. Then the shock hit: the bottom seemed to drop out of his stomach and a chill ran along his spine.

“Come on, the members are all going up on stage!” urged Soru. “You’ve turned white, Randu!”

“And that’s how I feel, Soru! What happened to Dr. Mitrɛtu?”

“The delegates voted for you instead! Go on!”

Randu nodded and stumbled to his feet, wondering what Nina would say and what this would do to his work. The path to the aisle opened up as the other delegates, smiling,

moved their feet out of his way so he could pass through. He walked shakily to the stage, where the other eight offered their hands to shake his and hugged him.

"Our first Sumi member!" said Chris, giving him a big hug. Randu nodded in thanks.

The entire audience rose again to applaud their newly renewed national institution. Blorakwé turned to Budhéstu. "Poor Randu, he looks overwhelmed!"

"He really does. He is a humble, hard working man; I've worked with him and like him. He's a good choice."

"Another educator." Blorakwé wasn't sure that was such a good thing.

"That's the focus, right now. And he's Sumi. It's about time we elected a Sumi to the Assembly."

"That's true."

Gɛlé Entɛrdékui, Aréjé's sister, went onto the stage to speak, as an Auxiliary, thanking all the delegates for their votes that day and thanking the Assembly members for their service, then Lord Estodhéru declared an adjournment for supper. Budhéstu and Blorakwé followed the crowd for the door.

"It's going to be impossible to eat in Temple Square," he said.

"Too many people," she agreed.

"There's a nice little restaurant in Sumiwika, and I have the money; let's go there."

"Can you afford it? We can stop and buy a sandwich somewhere."

"No, I have the cash right now, thanks to the course I'm teaching with Soru. Being a teacher makes all the difference, where money is concerned! Let me buy you dinner."

"Alright, but I suppose I should tell Soru."

"Fine." They both looked around and finally spotted Soru across the crowd, talking to a delegate who was also a high school teacher and who was working with several learning-challenged children. They let him know and he gave them permission, so they hurried north to Péskakwés Road and east on it to a major north-south road that headed up the side of the ridge to the top, then down the other side toward Arjakwés Reservoir. They grabbed a ride on a bus and got to the restaurant more quickly; they both had monthly passes. "You've eaten Sumi food?" asked Budhéstu.

"Once or twice. So spicy!"

"I discovered it only in the last few weeks, since I've had some money! I like it. The folks in Klɛnvika wouldn't know what to do with it."

"Or with Sumis!"

He chuckled. "How true. But Mɛlwika's Sumiwika now has over a thousand Sumis; they're at home here, I guess. Let's go in." Budhéstu led her to the front door, where a host stood to greet customers. He greeted the host using two or three Sumi words he had picked up, told the host about Randu's election to the Central Spiritual Assembly, and they unexpectedly got one of the nicest tables in the place, with a good view of the reservoir.

"This is a pretty spot. I had no idea this place existed."

“Look around; almost everyone here’s Sumi, and judging from their clothes, they have some money. So you know the food’s good.”

“Are you sure this place isn’t too expensive?”

“Don’t worry about it.”

The waiter came and handed them menus, which were in Sumi. Budhéstu had learned the old Eryani spelling system and so was able to make out a few words and pointed them out to Blorakwé, and the waiter advised them. Soon they had ordered food and a bottle of ice water was brought to them.

“It’s too bad Mitrukaru and Kordé can’t come with us this summer,” said Budhéstu.

“The baby is too far along; it wouldn’t be wise. The granges are pressing him not to leave, too.”

“He’s pretty important to agriculture in the lower valley. I guess all three groups will need couples?”

“I don’t know. I heard Khwanu ask Jordanu exactly that question, and he said the Assembly might allow teams to go without a couple as chaperones.”

“Really? I think that would be hard.” Budhéstu looked at her. “What do you say about the idea that we get married and be one of the chaperoning couples?”

Her eyes opened wide in surprise. “What? Well, I don’t know . . .”

He leaned over the table toward her. “Blorakwé, I think I love you. I missed you terribly while you were in Tɛrskua—”

“You visited almost every week—”

“Well, you know why! Look, I really don’t know how to do this. I never thought I’d be arranging my own marriage, but our parents can’t arrange this, and they have to give permission anyway. I don’t know how to do this or what to say, Blorakwé, but . . . I love you and want to marry you.”

He blurted it out and was almost shocked he had said it the way he had. She was startled, too. She looked down, then away.

“Is that . . . no?”

She shook her head. “I . . . I don’t know what it is, because I just don’t know what to do in this circumstance. Do you know anyone who proposed marriage to someone else?”

“Soru and Kanawé!”

“Well, yes, but anyone else? I don’t.”

“Do you want to get married?”

“Some day? Yes, I do. And I’ve even thought—dreamed—about marrying you. But there are all sorts of complications: children, money, finishing an education, deciding what sort of education to get, figuring out how to work outside the house while married, which all seems very strange . . .”

“It’s all pretty strange! But I figure, right now both of us are living at the School for the Deaf and helping out there in return for lodging. Why couldn’t we continue doing that? You are living there, working there, and going to school. So am I. If anything, I have a bit more money now, because I have started to teach psychology courses with Soru, and in a few months I’ll have my dwoyɛri and can even be hired as faculty in psychology as long as I continue my education and keep creating new psychology

courses. So we have a foundation for living together and continuing our plans. And Blorakwé, I won't tell you to stop working because we're married. I want a wife who has developed a career, just like Kanawé has."

"I think that's what I want to do, too, but it's so hard to know what I should do . . . I guess you can't take the village out of the village girl very easily."

"That's fine. Like you said, it's all pretty strange. We're all blind and feeling our way. But we have the Faith, we have its principles to guide us, and we'll tackle things day by day."

"You've really thought about this, haven't you?"

"I want to marry you, so I've had to think it through."

"What about . . . children?"

"One or two or three sometime? There seem to be two things to keep in mind. The first are those birth control pills the doctors can prescribe, which means we have children when we want and not earlier. That's the only way for you to plan your career anyway. It seems to me they are essential for the Bahá'í principle of equality to work!"

"In a traditional society where women do all the housework, that's true!"

"Well, I'll do some, of course, but the other thing to keep in mind is that if we both have professional salaries, we can hire help. That's what every professional woman I've ever met does. And professional salaries are high enough so it's possible."

"You're right; in a way, both of us will avoid most of the housework that way! I've thought about how nice that would be. Helping my mother out the last six months was really exhausting sometimes. I'd like to have enough money to hire house help."

"Exactly."

She looked at him. She was tempted to push him about his pledge to do housework, but decided not to; he had no idea what he was talking about. Men rarely did. "I've always imagined having two or three children," she said. "I have no desire for four or six or eight; too much work! But I'd rather have help to take care of them and the house. Cooking, washing, cleaning: they take all day, every day. I still have no idea what I'd like to do instead; maybe be a teacher."

"Teachers are badly needed, as we heard yesterday. But if I were you, I'd look for something to do that will be a really important contribution, just as Kanawé is an expert in special education, Soru is in education of the deaf and blind, and I'm becoming an expert in psychology. There are so many fields on Gɛdhéma that are not studied here at all! We need experts, and there will be demand for experts."

"Good advice, I guess. But I'm still seventeen; not even eighteen. It's hard for me to decide how to become an expert, and in what!"

"It'll come! I'm not twenty-one yet. Soru arrived here when he was twenty, eight years ago, and he was an illiterate escaped convict. Look what he's accomplished."

"He's a very unusual person, and a real blessing to Kanawé."

"Well, I want to be a blessing to you, and I want you to be a blessing to me."

She smiled shyly. "That's beautifully put, Budhéstu."

"Thank you. So, will you marry me?"

She smiled. "Probably, but I want to talk to Kanawé and to mom first. I'm really not ready to jump into this world of arranging my own marriage."

"Okay, that makes sense." He was a bit disappointed. "So . . . a few days?"

She nodded. "A few days."

Just then the food arrived, so their conversation ended and they began to eat. Blorakwé began to sweat profusely from the hot spices and they laughed about that; they both welcomed a lighter tone to their conversation. They finished, Budhéstu paid two dhanay—a lot of money for a meal for two—and he walked her to the bus stop, because she had decided to head back to the school. He went back to the evening session of the Convention—its closing session, for buses departed for the western shore at midnight to take everyone home—and found it hard to pay attention to the music and rousing speeches. He sat next to Soru and said nothing about the conversation.

Blorakwé sought out Kanawé as soon as she got home. Kanawé had just put six year old Blorané and two year old Isuru to bed. "How was convention?" she asked.

"Today's sessions were incredible. The support of the youth teams was so strong; we felt really encouraged, and a lot of youth arose to join us this summer. Then at the end of the session the tellers announced the result of the election and Randu was elected to the Assembly."

"I heard about that! It was mentioned an hour ago on the radio news! It was the second article they did on the convention; it's getting a lot of publicity. What was the audience's reaction?"

"Amazement! We were all thrilled. Randu will do a good job. But I need your advice. Afterward, Budhéstu and I went to a restaurant and he asked me to marry him."

"He did?" Kanawé was surprised, but it immediately turned into pleasure. "Excellent! That is, if you want to. He's bright, reliable, a hard worker, and will be tender and loving to you."

"But I don't know what to do!"

“Of course. I understand. It’s hard to know, isn’t it?”

“It’s impossible!”

“You know what they say about marriage: it’s like a melon, the only way to know whether it’s good is to cut it open. How do you feel about him?”

“I don’t know. I like him very much, I admire him, I can feel his affection and . . . attraction for me.”

“Do you feel an attraction for him?”

She hesitated, then nodded. It was the sort of thing one didn’t speak about.

“Good. I won’t ask you whether you love him; that’s something that takes time. I think Soru and I fell in love about a year after we got married.”

“How did you know?”

“I don’t know. Part of it was practical: I could see he was a good man, a very good man, and I felt I needed a man because I had no confidence in myself living in this world without a man. Now I feel differently; I could manage without a man, though I wouldn’t want to lose the love of my life. Soru was available and I felt I could make a go of it with him. Part of it was an attraction and affection I felt. Part of it was . . . I don’t know, destiny perhaps. It felt right.”

“But didn’t it seem strange to arrange your own marriage?”

“Yes, but remember I had already been married and I was no longer in Tɛrskua; I was in Mɛlwika, I was learning to read, and I didn’t want to go back to the village and have Moléstu arrange another marriage for me. His judgment would be good, but Tɛrskua’s not very big; I could count the possibilities on two hands. I could stay in

Mɛlwika; it was a place where women could be equals to men. But I needed someone as an anchor. I knew Soru would be a good anchor."

"An anchor." Blorakwé thought about that. "Budhéstu would be a good anchor."

"Yes, I think so. But remember, he needs an anchor too; let's not think that only women need an anchor. Are you ready and willing to be his anchor?"

She considered that. "You know, I'd like to try."

"I'm sure the two of you could continue to live and work here, just like you are now."

"Budhéstu said that, too; he's been thinking it through."

"Good. If you want my opinion, he'd make an excellent husband and life partner for you. It'd be hard to find someone better."

"I think you're right about that, too. But I wonder what mom would say?"

Kanawé pointed to the telephone. "Call her and find out. But you need to make a decision yourself; that's the Bahá'í way."

"That's true. It's so hard; a lifetime is a long time for a quick decision!"

"It is, but that's what one does."

"Budhéstu . . . I suppose part of it is getting used to the idea of being his wife."

"That'll take a few months!"

"I suppose. I guess I should call mom, tell her I think I want to say yes, and ask her what she thinks."

"Good, that's the approach I'd take."

Blorakwé walked to the phone, hesitated, and picked it up. Yes, she wanted to marry Budhéstu. Reread and edited, 6/8/13, 8/21/17, 11/22/24, 9/27/26

313.

A New Tomi

First week Kaiménu, Yr 13/631

Chris opened the back door of Amos's steam car and deposited a big armload of rolled up sheets of paper inside. "That's all the blueprints and diagrams."

"And I've got the prospectuses." Amos pointed to two boxes of neatly pinned ten-sheet handouts. Computer generated, they were pretty, photographic, and multicolored.

"I hope they help." Chris looked at a large booklet. "And that's the information about the undersea cables?"

"Yep. One copy for the palace, though maybe we can find investors in it as well."

"I'd leave that to Sumi investors."

"Yeah, we'll have enough trouble selling the industrial complexes." Amos shook his head.

"Thank God that the palace decided to invite them to meet us *at the palace.* That's subtle pressure in itself."

"And presumably we don't have to worry about being assassinated."

"Let's hope not." Chris slid into the passenger side's front seat and Amos glanced at the steam pressure meter, then put the car into gear. They started forward slowly, out the Mɛlwika house's front door, across Citadel Square and down the hill to West Street, where they slowly and carefully merged into the traffic. The steam pressure was low, so the car moved slowly.

They turned left onto Route 2 heading toward Mɛddoakwés, slowly accelerating to 70 kilometers per hour, the maximum allowed. Amos looked at the new houses. "They're still filling in the lots."

"Yes; all the lots are built up now to the township line, and the Nénaslua side is filling up, too."

Amos glanced at the fields behind the houses, now gray after the harvest. A few had already been plowed for their second crop. "How was the harvest?"

"Bountiful, and crop prices were only a little bit lower than last year, but overall the cash flow was a bit better. I was surprised. Demand for harvest seems to have gone up, probably because people are buying more dairy, chicken, and meat, and the animals have to be fed. Corn prices in particular have firmed up."

"Same in Rudhisér with the winter corn and wheat crops. Now it's the rainy season and they're planting rice, so it'll be interesting to see what happens with rice prices. Some of the estate lords decided to plant corn instead, though, so the rice harvest should drop a bit and prices should be okay."

"I'm amazed by the month-to-month tax revenues between harvests. Mɛlwika's always have been pretty steady, but Mɛlita's are rising; instead of spikes of tax collection followed by almost nothing, there's now a steady tax flow between the spikes."

"Pértatranisér has the manufacturing tax base, so collections have always been relatively constant. But two months ago Governor Brébalu and I were talking and he commented that provincial revenues were up ten percent over the winter."

Chris nodded. "That's what I'm talking about. I'll have to ask around. I think what we are seeing is the steady flow of sales of garments made at home by mothers with

their sewing machines, crafts produced by farmers, jams, home-canned vegetables, locally produced eggs and milk, locally raised chickens, etc."

"Household and farm income's going up."

"Definitely. People are buying basic equipment, acquiring new skills, and are marketing the results. They're working during the times the farm doesn't demand their attention and making extra money."

"We should check with some rural villages; maybe the local spiritual assemblies can tell us. I hope we're seeing income rising for the farmers who couldn't get more land."

"But almost everyone is farming more land along the Eastern Shore or locally. Wɛranolubu's town, Weranowika, now has a thousand agris under cultivation, and that's all by farmers from this province who are commuting by bus."

"Impressive." Amos slowed the car to forty kilometers per hour as they passed through the village of Nénaslua. "This place has doubled in size."

"About that, especially in the last two years. Nénaslua had always been a frontier settlement, so they've always been open to new residents. The other villages are a lot more touchy about strangers." Chris pointed. "Go that way; the new road."

"Right." Amos went around a traffic circle and continued straight where Route 2 bent sharply to the left. After passing several houses he was able to speed up to ninety kilometers per hour on a wide, smooth, open road. A separate lane was for horse-drawn wagons; a narrow lane on the shoulder was for bikes and pedestrians. "Wow; nice."

"You can zip to Mɛddoakwés in fourteen minutes, now. So, how are the plans for the telephone cable to Sumilara?"

“We’ve spent fifty-five thousand dhanay designing and building the waterproofing system, and we tested it by stringing a cable across Luktrudɛma harbor all winter. We pulled it out last week and inspected it. Guttapercha is a very effective barrier against sea water, which is why it’s used on undersea cables on Earth. I think we can lay the cables by fall. It’ll carry fifty telephone calls simultaneously. We’re working on an electrical cable, too, but we need permission from the army even to do the basic planning.”

“It’ll tie the island to the mainland pretty well. I’m amazed you can run two engineering schools, a phone company, and an electric company!”

Amos laughed. “It’s simple; I don’t! How could I run the utility companies and the Mɛlwika engineering school from the western shore? You’ve trained some good managers, Chris. They’re pretty creative, too. I’m just on the boards of trustees with the merchants who invested. The big challenge is keeping the utility companies from collapsing under their massive debts.”

“Fortunately, the palace hasn’t demanded repayment, and they don’t seem inclined to do so.”

“They understand that the kingdom needs power and telephones and the private sector can’t do it profitably. The investors are getting a ten percent return, but only because the palace gives us a quarter or half a million per year to expand and repair the system.”

“I wish we could start taking our ten percent, too, but I sense the palace is not friendly to us right now.”

“Me, too. The atmosphere has chilled ever since the youth team visited Kɛrda.”

“Exactly. It was a victory for the Faith, but caused collateral damage.” Chris paused. He watched the edge of Boléripludha pass by. The village had some new houses; now that people who lived there but worked elsewhere were paying some taxes to the village, it was doing better. “I wish you were living in Mɛlwika, Amos. I can’t keep up with all the tasks I am doing right now. I’m beginning to feel my age. My right knee has bad arthritis and nothing helps, so I am always in some pain and I limp a bit when I walk. Don’t ask me to run fifty meters; I can’t do it any more!”

Amos looked concerned. “You’ve told Lua?”

“Oh yes, and Stauréstu. They’ve given me a stronger dose of aspirin and a few other prescriptions. They help some.” He shrugged.

“I’m sorry to hear it.”

“Maybe I’m worrying too much about my mortality. I asked the Central Spiritual Assembly whether I could resign and they said no; they still want me on the body. I’ve been sending Jordan to all Mɛlita City Council meetings for the last few months and that has taken some pressure off, but this industrialization plan is almost killing me.”

“Delegate more, Chris.”

“I have, but you can only delegate so much. The Miller Engineering School has done a magnificent job of creating blueprints, estimating costs, and designing machinery. But I still have to deal with the Old Houses, and they’re poisonous, angry people, blaming me for their situation.”

“I wonder whether this meeting will help.”

“I wonder, too. Jordan is a great help and is very promising; he’s suddenly found he likes business. But it’ll be ten years before he can take over, Thornton’s not interested, and I’m getting old!”

“I understand. Well, let’s talk more about what tasks I might do. I could always help oversee the tomi offices on the western shore.”

“Perhaps,” though Chris didn’t sound enthusiastic about that suggestion.

Amos slowed the car passed as it through the capital’s grand northeast gate. They drove down the wide avenue until it reached the military-palace complex. They parked the car on the side of the street, locked it, and began to lug their piles of prospectuses and diagrams. In a few minutes they were in the conference room, where Estoiyaju was already setting things up.

“Yes, put up the diagrams on the wall,” he said. “But don’t pass out any prospectuses. And let me do the talking.”

“Okay,” said Chris.

Soon the men of the Old Houses began to arrive; almost eighty of them, including a few lords with land who weren’t receiving pensions but who wanted to be involved, and some sons and cousins. They usually glared at Chris; their gazes at Estoiyaju were a mix of fear, resentment, and hope. Estoiyaju’s assistant checked off names on a long list while another assistant served coffee and tea. There was no wine, which provided another reason to complain.

Finally, almost half an hour after the meeting was supposed to start, Estoiyaju rose. “Gentlemen, please be seated. We should begin with a prayer; Lord Kristobéru, can you chant?”

That startled Chris and made him wonder whether he was being set up. But he nodded; he had three general hymns of Widumaj memorized. He chanted one in his scratchy chanting voice. It didn't sound very good, but quite a few lords chanted worse.

Estoiyaju followed with another hymn, startling Chris, because the queen's chief assistant had a remarkably good voice. Then he nodded to Mitru Majdomai, a leading conservative, and he rose to chant as well in a funny, lilting voice. Chris took a moment to glance around the room. It occurred to him that it had several groups of men. Some had successful estates, thanks to the land reform laws of three years ago; they had acquired estates early and thus had sold a lot of land to farmers and were benefiting from the flow of mortgages and taxes. Mɛndhru, Mitrudatu, Okpétu, and an older lord named Lukbéru were examples. The other men had reluctantly acquired estates later when the supply of farmers was less and thus had been less successful.

Then there were the men in the room who had already invested in local factories or in Mɛlwika Motors. Not surprisingly, many of them were also the successful estate lords. The others had often acquired development grants, but rarely had used them productively, though they had larger villas and barns than they would have had otherwise. Some of them had devoted grants to planting orchards and vineyards that, in a few years, would start to yield.

Chris was surprised to see Yimɛsu, the arch-conservative of the old houses, for after he had invited Chris to a gathering in his house three years ago and had planned an assassination attempt on him, the Réjé had exiled Yimɛsu to the Long Valley. There he had established a large and successful estate. His grand nephew Yɛbu, one of the intended assassins, had done alright in the Long Valley and was still exiled there.

Chanting over, Estoiyaju rose. “Thank you, lords, for coming. We are here to resolve some issues today, about these.” He pointed to the blueprints of the factories adorning the walls. “Her Majesty is offering all of you a valuable opportunity to acquire a means to support your families, to prosper, and to help this world prosper through your talents and wisdom. All of you have much to offer the realm. Her Majesty wants to see that happen and will provide the funding to see that it does.”

“Honored, this is a broken promise!” exclaimed Mitru Majdomai, from his seat, trying not to raise his voice. “Three years ago, Her Majesty guaranteed a continued pension until our estates take off and can support us. But only a third of us have acquired enough farmers to have successful estates. The farmers are not cooperating! We have done our part of the bargain. Now the palace wishes to change the rules.”

“Her Majesty wants to help you achieve self sufficiency so you do not need royal pensions. That was the point of the estate law. The estates are gradually achieving that goal. But many of you want pensions anyway; estates *and* pensions. The pensions are ending; that is certain and irreversible.” He paused to let that sink in.

“Honored, you are cutting off your own cousins,” objected Yimɛsu, for Estoiyaju was a member of the old houses as well.

“The hymns speak of work and service, not of pensions. This world is going to grow, and when it does, all of you will become richer. It is very simple and plain. It is not a question of cutting people off.”

“The estate law has not worked out for many of us!” added Mitru Majdomai. “If we could hire peasants and work them the way we are wont, it would have worked fine!”

“Lord, times have changed. The farmers are not slaves.” Estoiyaju said it definitively.

“So, there is no appeal?” asked Yimɛsu.

“Shall we bring in Her Majesty to confirm it? I don’t think you will want to disturb her.”

There was silence. No one dared ask to hear the decision from her own lips. Many shifted uncomfortably in their chairs and Chris could see they felt slighted; not even the Crown Prince had come, after all. “Honored, I for one am not a merchant or a master craftsman, I am a member of the Old Houses, the Old Families,” exclaimed Lord Lukéstu, rising. “My family has had the honor of being a member of our aristocracy from the beginning of time. We are not grubby makers or sellers of things. We are lords. We have no need for new knowledge. But we have two estates that do not yield us an adequate and reasonable living. Under those circumstances, the ties of blood are stronger than anything else.”

“Lord Lukéstu, you are my cousin and Her Majesty’s cousin. As your cousins we are telling you that the world has changed. If agriculture is not enough to support you, what is the difference between a pension and income from investments?”

“As I said, cousin, I am not a maker or a seller of things.”

“That’s fine, cousin. We will protect your dignity, then.” Estoiyaju looked at the others. “And I am sure many of you feel the same way, am I right?”

“Of course!” exclaimed Mitru, and many of the others nodded.

“That’s fine. You don’t have to be active members of these projects; you can be silent partners. You will get your income and you can sit back and live as you see fit.

Lord Kristobéru, the new incorporation laws allow joint stock corporations, do they not? Can you explain the law?"

Chris nodded and rose. "The law specifies that a large number of individuals can invest their money in a common company and elect officers to run it on their behalf. They gain dividends—profits—in proportion to their investment."

Some nodded who knew about the law, mostly the lords who had successful estates and investments. Lukéstu seemed oblivious and it occurred to Chris that the fifty year old probably could not read or write in the new system.

"Then here is the deal," said Estoiyaju. "We will establish a tomi called Jérdomas, Old Houses. The palace will invest in it; so will those who wish to invest their own money. We have instructed Lord Kristobéru to invest in it, and some of you have already shown willingness to invest in its factories. The tomi will own all these factories. The dividends will go to the owners based on their investments. The palace will take its dividend and divide it up among the members of the old houses. You won't get a pension any more, but you will get a dividend check. Of course, it may be small at first, but it will grow. If you invest your own money, you'll get a dividend from the company directly, and you may get a bigger dividend from the palace."

"Cousin, you are bribing us!" exclaimed Mitru angrily.

Lord Aryékwɛs rose from his seat. "Honored cousin, may I speak?" he said to Estoiyaju, and no sooner had Her Majesty's majordomo nodded than he started. "Eight years ago Her Majesty gave me a brush-covered piece of desert with a rocky pinnacle in the middle, surrounded by a Sumi ruin. For almost a year I owned it and had no idea what to do with it, and besides, I didn't want to get my hands dirty buying and selling, making

deals, and dealing with peasants. Then along came Lord Kristobéru. He had a golden touch, he knew how to make the deals, and soon ɛjnopéla had several thousand agris of farms, homes, a high school, a marketplace, and a bus station. Lord Kris invested, he let me invest my money as well, and when I was willing to take over the management of the place he sold his assets to me. Now, eight years after moving to the Esto-forsaken place, it is prosperous and so am I and I have found that making deals, buying and selling, helping a place grow, is fun and very satisfying. Cousins, are my hands dirty?" He held them up and turned them in a circle so that everyone could see them. "I am amazed how often some of my cousins have come to me asking to borrow a bit of the money these dirty hands have made. Cousins, I am ashamed of some of you! The days have passed when you could go hunt deer and boar for three days, get drunk every night, then bring the animals home, make a big banquet, and give away half the meat to your hungry and grateful peasants. Those peasants are now buying chicken in my marketplace; they don't need your meat. What they need is jobs, and you can help them get jobs and enrich yourselves at the same time. So, if you prefer, sit back on your duffs and be leeches; but soon you will be poor leeches."

Yimɛsu rose. "How dare you call us leeches!"

"Cousin, I apologize, but I am angry. I don't want us to be leeches, cousin. If we don't take this opportunity, we will be. And I fear we will be poor."

"You will be poor; I can guarantee that," interrupted Estoiyaju. "Because next month the pensions are cut in half, and a year later they are cut in half again. The Development Bank will make no more grants to people who show no results. These are

Her Majesty's final decisions. The Tomi Jérdomasi is the way of the future. Lord Kris, how quickly can the factories be set up?"

"It'll take a year or so for all of them. It'll be quicker if we are open to investment from anyone."

"Even granges? Perhaps we will have to do that, if the old houses don't do their part."

"The granges can play important roles in the construction effort. Grange teams helped build half the factories in the Mɛlwika Motors expansion."

The audience looked around uncomfortably at the idea that the granges would be investors, for that was how they had participated in the last building push; they had provided worker teams for the construction, paid for like all other teams, and had invested the grange's own surplus in the project.

"So, what are the factories included in this proposal?" asked Lukbéru. As one of the supporters of the effort, he already knew, but he was trying to change the subject.

"Yes, Lord, make a quick presentation," said Estoiyaju.

Chris nodded and passed out the prospectuses, which the audience took with some reluctance. One man even held it upside down. Chris started to review it, but could see they really didn't want the details; they knew they had to get involved. He provided a broad summary of the plans and emphasized the diagrams on the wall, so they didn't have to look at him.

"No factories near our houses?" grumbled one lord when he finished.

"We have some smaller factories that could be sited near a house, or near several if the two or three investors live near each other. But there are many advantages to siting

most of them together in an industrial park. Buses can bring many workers from many places to the same place. One manager and accountant can walk from building to building overseeing matters. Worker services—like child care, bathrooms, showers, and a lunchroom—can be provided in common. Stores can be conveniently nearby."

"Bathrooms and showers," muttered an older lord, disgusted.

"Other questions?" asked Estoiyaju impatiently.

"How do we invest? This form on the back is confusing," asked someone.

"It provides a place for you to identify which factory you want to invest in, but that was before a Tomi Jérdomasi was proposed," replied Chris, who had never heard of the idea before the meeting. "You can still write down a factory, if you want, but we will have to talk to the palace about what to do with such information. Mitrudatu will be in charge of collecting investment information."

Mitrudatu raised his hand so everyone could see him, which was getting difficult because many were rising and heading for the door.

Just then the door opened and Prince Mɛméjékwu strode in. Everyone rose as he walked up the aisle to the front of the room. "You may be seated," he said. "I understand we have had a productive meeting and that our industrialization project is moving forward. Thanks to the success of this meeting, the crown has decided to double its investment, and all of it will be a grant rather than part being a loan; up to a million dhanay this year, and just as much next year if needed. Hence any investment you make will be amplified even more, and the dividend flowing from your investment will be even larger. I think we can all agree that this decision of Her Majesty is good news." He paused for them to cheer and applaud, and after a long, silent moment and the prince's

glare, they offered polite applause. “Excellent,” he continued. “Her Majesty has asked me to convey her love, affection, and gratitude to all of you. What you have done today is not easy. It requires a major reorientation of thinking. But what we have accomplished is historic and will be remembered by future generations as the point when the leadership class of this world shouldered the new responsibilities that the realm’s progress demanded of it. Cousins, you have much talent and leadership experience. Many of you have combined it with knowledge of accounting and business. You are equipped to serve the realm and the people while earning an ample reward for yourselves and your families. It is our hope that you will arise and perform this new service.” He paused again for applause and they politely responded. Chris joined in, wondering how effective it would be to strong-arm such proud people.

The lords rose and began to leave the hall. Chris looked at Amos, whose expressions seemed to indicate the same worry. They began to take down the blueprints and diagrams. Mitrudatu and Mɛndhru helped.

“These are fascinating,” said the Prince, looking at the pages as they were removed from the wall. Chris handed him a pile so he could continue to look at them. “When will you start? What will be first?”

“We’ll start immediately,” replied Chris. “In a sense, we have already started; all winter a team has been drawing up blueprints of factories and budgets for building them. We’ve spent thirty-five thousand dhanay on them. As for what we will start building first, it will be factories for producing two special construction materials.” Chris flipped through the pages until he found a picture of plywood. “This is *doramɛkɛrpéla*. It is made from many thin, flat pieces of wood glued together in a large press. The sheets can be

made from lower quality trees and from scraps that otherwise would be thrown away, they will be two meters by three, and will be lighter in weight and stronger than a sheet of wood of such dimensions, if a tree of that size could be found. It is more expensive than wood, but much cheaper to use. Then there's *lopimɛkɛrpéla*." He flipped through the pages and pulled out a photograph of sheetrock. "It's made out of plaster mixed with fine fibers—like cotton or paper fiber—to give it strength, and it's usually wrapped with a special paper to give it a smooth surface. Rather than hiring plasterers to make plaster walls, one can nail up sheets of sheetrock and plaster the joins. Quick and efficient; sheet rock is more expensive than plain plaster, but installing it is ten times faster, so you save money. We'll start by making the factories to produce these items, and use them to make the other factories, thereby paying for the first factories and training people how to use the materials."

"I see. And how long does it take to make the equipment?"

"We already have machines to make both and we've experimented with them. We'll get those machines running right away, in a tent if necessary, and we'll order more. Once the factories are ready for the machines, the machines will be ready for the factories. Two months; certainly by the end of summer."

"Excellent. What did you think of the meeting, Lord?"

"May I speak frankly, Your Majesty?"

"Indeed."

"I think the lords were mostly unconvinced and will participate because they have no choice. I fear efforts to sabotage the project."

"Understood. We will not allow that to happen."

“We will have to call on the granges to help build these projects. Were you serious that they could invest?”

Mɛméjékwu considered, then nodded. “Yes, they can invest. Is it feasible for Jérdomasi Tomi to own a large number of unrelated factories?”

“If that is the palace’s desire. It may make sense, eventually, to break it into several tomis, each handling a separate group of related products, like construction materials or food products. My tomi will be providing financial oversight and management.”

“That’s fine, for now; we know you will manage the money efficiently. But eventually management of the factories must fall on the Jérdomasi Tomi. You can serve on the Board, Lord Kristobéru, but you should not be the chief manager of operations.”

“I don’t want that responsibility, Your Majesty.”

“Where will all these factories go?”

“We are assembling a plan for that. The plywood factory will go in Wɛranowika; Wɛranolubu has chosen an industrial park site and is ready to set it up any time. Wood products can come from Sullɛndha down Routes 4 and 16 and avoid all the busy roads in the lower Arjakwés. The sheetrock factory will go in Mɛlita; gypsum can come up from the south, and the factory will have access to gas by this fall. Plaster making requires a lot of heat. The manufactured housing factory will go in East Mɛlita and Béranta near the edge of ɛjnopéla in an industrial park called ‘Triwika.’ Food, shoes, and other products will be made in ɛjnopéla, Mɛlita, Ornakwés, Kérékwɛs, and Gramakwés.”

“Altogether, the prospectus describes thirty-six different factories, employing between twenty and one hundred people each,” added Mitrudatu.

“Try to build them all within a year,” said Mɛméjékwu. “We want to see the pension phased out entirely, so that money can go to other things. If you manage to build 1.5 million dhanay of factories this year, Lord Kris, we will build another 1.5 million next year.”

“You are ambitious for the realm, Your Majesty.”

“I committed us to a Seven Year Plan in which the economy would double. I am very aware of the cost of achieving that goal, and my personal reputation is at stake. We will double the economy, Lord.” The Prince looked at him, as if to warn him.

“We should be able to accomplish it; the goal is within our reach,” replied Chris, nodding.

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314.

Marriage

Blorakwé's and Budhéstu's wedding took place under a big tent erected on the playground of Tɛrskua's school. The entire village turned out, plus a hundred guests from Klɛnvika and scores of friends from Mɛlwika.

The Bahá'í ceremony was quick, then friends began to play musical instruments and many began to dance while food was brought from the women's gabruli, where a dozen women had labored all morning to prepare it. Chris and Liz were among the guests and delighted the others by joining the dance as well; Eryanɛ folk dancing was fun and easy to learn, though for the couple in their late 60s, it was quickly tiring. When Chris and Liz sat down, Moléstu hurried over. "You honor us, lord, by dancing with us!"

Chris chuckled. "What fun! And what a happy day, honored Moléstu. Congratulations. You must be pleased."

"I am." Moléstu pulled a folding chair—rented from Mɛlwika for the occasion—over and sat. "I very much like Budhéstu, and Blorakwé clearly loves him. I'm not sure she has figured that out yet, completely."

"Give them a month together."

"Yes. They have a place to live together at Soru's school, so they will have support, and they have their school plans. He was never able to satisfy me that he would earn a good living."

"I think so. Psychology is an important field and he's the one developing it. He'll be in demand. Starting in the fall he'll be an instructor at Mɛlwika Génadɛma, earning

our lowest salary because he'll have only a dwoyɛri, but as he gets more education his salary will go up. If all goes well, in three or four years he'll be earning at least 3,000, and his salary will go up to 5,000 eventually."

"That's good money. But Lord, he may have education, but no *wisdom*. Who wants advice about their personal problems from a twenty year old?"

Chris smiled. "I agree, honored. But he and Soru have already been working with several children and their mothers; they have been able to help. Give him five years, and the wisdom will develop."

"I suppose. I am torn, lord; I want my daughter to be a good, traditional, village wife here in Tɛrskua, and I want her to be modern, comfortable, and prosperous."

"Half of Éra is torn in the same way, honored."

Moléstu sighed. "You are right. They are happy together; *already* happy together. When I married Mɛlitané, she cried; she didn't know me. Our first month or two of marriage I ordered her about and she meekly did as I said until I finally asked her to do something trivial after a long, hard day and she said exhaustedly, 'do it yourself.' I was tempted to strike her, but I realized that wasn't right and did it myself. She said 'thank you' and I said 'I'm sorry' and after that . . . well, we started to work together as partners, and we fell in love."

Chris was touched. "That's a beautiful story."

"Eventually it became a beautiful story!"

"Indeed. I guess Blorakwé and Budhéstu will avoid that stage."

“Mostly. Being a Bahá'í may help. But his father seems to treat his mother like a servant, so there may be habits . . .” Moléstu shrugged. “They’ll work it out.” He looked at Chris. “Lord, how do you manage to do so many things?”

“I don’t know. All my life I acquired skills, but I was like a plant in a crowded garden; there were many other people with skills around, or I was restricted in what I could do because I didn’t live in the land of my ancestors. But when I came here I soon discovered I was a tall tree in a forest of short trees. I could capture more of the sunshine. Right now with this world changing, I see many trees growing quickly and getting taller; others are staying in the shadow, but are growing as well. I think you are one of the faster growing trees, Moléstu.”

“Thank you, lord.” He obviously was pleased by the compliment.

“In this new world we are living in, trees will grow quickly if they have three things. This is in my opinion, anyway. The first thing is a desire to grow. The second is virtue; one must be trustworthy and respectful of others. Then they will trust and respect you, disagreements can be resolved easily, and people can work together as partners, like in a marriage. The third essential is skills. Some of those skills are traditional, like using an ax or hammer, but some require the new knowledge, like accounting and business management. You have the desire, I judge that you have the virtue, you have the traditional skills, and you have started acquiring the new knowledge.”

“It’s so difficult, lord. I still struggle to read! If Soru hadn’t written all of my first bid to work for you—which took both of us about three days of lengthy discussion—I never could have done it.”

“I was immensely impressed, Moléstu, and you know why? Because you weren’t 22 years old and had written up a bid based on your book learning. The bid reflected your experience. I suspected you hadn’t written it yourself, but that didn’t matter; you had taken the step to do things in a new way. How old are you right now? Thirty-six? Most men your age are illiterate.”

“I think I am thirty-seven, but I’m really not sure. But you are right. A third of my friends from when I got married are dead, and of the rest, maybe two can read a newspaper. But some of them can drive tractors or install electrical wiring; they are learning.”

“I’m sure, but you can do some accounting!”

“Mɛlitané learned from Blorakwé and Estowékhu, who runs the furniture manufactory, and she taught me. But I still let her do most of it; even with an abacus, I can’t add and subtract very well!”

“You should hire a part time accountant, because I need you to expand your operations. My tomi can send someone down once a week, if you want, and the fee is reasonable. In the next year, the lower valley will see a million dhanay of construction. The more of it you can do, the more money you can make. Ten percent of a million is a hundred thousand. That’s a lot of profit.”

“I can hire the men, but I can’t get the bank loans to buy the trucks. Soru loaned me the money to buy the first truck and I’ve got a lot of it paid off, but he doesn’t want to make another loan to me until fall.”

“I see. I’m going to Mɛlita on Tridiu morning to meet with Mitrudatu, who is in charge of the work there. Come over to his villa; call me first and I’ll tell you the time.

We can solve that problem. If you think you can hire two more crews, we can advance the money to buy two more trucks. We could probably even advance money for three trucks if you can hire three crews."

"Really?" Moléstu's eyes grew wide at the thought. "Thank you, lord!"

"You're the only contractor in the lower valley, Moléstu. I can ask the granges to build things, but I can never be sure who they'll ask to be foreman or who will be the construction crew. The result is better than nothing, and it will probably be a bit cheaper than your work, but your work is much higher quality. I would rather that you find reliable foremen and hire reliable workers who will become experienced. In the long run they may even be cheaper, because they will be faster."

"But is this something I should do all the time, for a living?"

"Keep your land, but lease it out. We need to spend two million dhanay a year, throughout the realm, on factories, office buildings, and roads if the prince's development plan succeeds. That's a lot of sunshine for a tall tree. And the money won't stop after seven years."

Moléstu nodded, thinking deeply about the implications. "I see what you mean. I may be leasing my farm for a *long* time."

"If Esto wills."

Just then Budhéstu's father, Budhu, came by. Chris rose and they shook hands. "My son has spoken of you often, Lord. I am Budhu Budhéstusunu of Klɛnvika."

"It is an honor to meet you, honored Budhu!" They shook hands. Budhu, whose own father apparently had been named Budhéstu—it was common for families to alternate between two similar names for the eldest son, generation after generation—was

older than Moléstu, perhaps mid forties, and had a blackish-red beard untinged by gray. He was a bit hard to understand because he had only a few teeth left in his mouth. Chris could see, under the beard, a strong family resemblance between father and son.

"It is my honor, lord. I am still amazed by how much my son has changed in two years, all for the good."

"I think you should thank Soru for much of that. Your son has great promise as a professor in the génadɛma; one who can teach many students, shape their lives, and write many books. You should be proud."

"I am, though I don't see him coming home any time soon to help take care of the cows and goats."

"You have animals, honored?"

"That's the main way I make a living; twenty cows and thirty goats, and the milk goes to the dairy in Bɛllɛdha."

"That's very impressive. Not many have followed that new path to support their family."

"Well, on the north shore we've always had more cows than this area. The Arjakwés Valley was hot and dry, and besides, the Tutanɛ would steal animals. I think this was one of the poorest provinces before you arrived."

"Perhaps," said Chris, skeptically. "I can see where Budhéstu gets his creativity, honored."

Budhu smiled. "Thank you, Lord." He turned and saw a teenager of sixteen walking by and stopped her. "Lord, please meet my niece, Sugérsé."

Chris extended a hand. "Very pleased to meet you."

Sugérsé shook his hand and replied, in English, “Thank you, how do you do?”

Chris didn’t realize she had spoken in English at first, then he said, startled, “How did you learn English?”

She smiled. “I’m sorry, I don’t know English,” she replied in Eryani. “Jordan taught a few phrases to me when he was in Klɛnvika with some of the youth team, last summer.”

“Your accent is perfect!” he replied in Eryani.

“She listens to Sumi and can repeat it word for word,” said Budhu. “Even if she doesn’t understand it.”

“Really? That’s quite a talent,” said Chris.

“It’s something I’ve always been able to do. I can speak like the people in Ora, with their western shore accent, or like the people in Mɛddoakwés, with their old-fashioned accent, or like the south shore people with their partially Tutanɛ way of speech.” As she spoke, she shifted among the accents.

Chris chuckled. “And you are in school?”

“Bɛllɛdha High School.”

“She’s one of only four girls from our village taking the bus every day,” added Budhu matter-of-factly.

“You should come to Mɛlwika and study English and other languages. We need people who can pick up languages like a sponge. For most people it is a terrible struggle.”

“Perhaps. What I really want to do is serve the Faith, Lord.”

“She has studied all seven of the Ruhi books and is teaching them in Klɛnvika, Lord,” added Budhu.

“Oh, so you are a Bahá'í. Marvelous!”

“Thank you,” relied Sugerse. “We’re a weak community, so far. We have no local Spiritual Assembly, but we do come together and pray.”

“A priest from Isurdhuna came through Klɛnvika last month and said one could not accept both Widumaj and Bahu as great widus,” said Budhu. “That caused some people to stop coming to the devotional meetings, but most people seemed to feel that the priest was prejudiced.”

“Was his name Widulubu?” asked Chris.

Budhu nodded. “He wanted us to build a hall where we could sing the hymns together and where a priest could come perform sacrifices for us once or twice a month. Some people were very interested and they want to do it, but there are only a few of them, so I doubt it’ll happen.”

“Interesting. He’s been traveling around the world, I understand. Are you a Bahá'í, Budhu?”

“I don’t know, Lord. I think Bahu was a great widu, just like Widumaj, but I am not ready to try to follow him.”

“After all these years, I am not sure I am ready to follow him completely. It is a struggle, honored.”

“Perhaps, lord, but you are following him more than I!”

Chris smiled. “I’m very pleased and honored to meet you. And if I may, I would like to introduce Sugérsé to my daughter in law, Lébé. If you are interested in serving the Faith, Sugérsé, you should hear about all the work Lébé is doing to translate the Bahá'í scriptures into Eryani. I think that is a path of service that may fascinate you.”

“You mean, study languages and serve the Faith?” Sugérsé nodded. “Yes, I am curious about that.”

“Come.” Chris nodded in farewell to Budhu and walked across the tent with Sugérsé, whose name meant “hope.” Thornton and Lébé were talking to Soru and Kanawé at the time. He introduced her and walked back to Liz, who was ready for another dance.

“What you do sounds *so* interesting,” said Sugérsé, after Lébé explained how they had just translated a major work, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh,* into Eryani.

“It’s exciting, demanding, and exhausting all at the same time, because English and Eryani are very different languages and they developed independently. This makes translation very difficult.”

“I wish they taught English in Bɛllɛdha.”

“The génadɛma does occasionally,” replied Thornton. “Estodatu was our very best student and has mastered English; like you, he is a sponge where language is concerned. After several years in Mɛddoakwés, his father finally called him back to Sullɛndha, and he now works from there. But Sullɛndha is only an hour by bus from Bɛllɛdha. I think he’ll be teaching English there this fall.”

“But I’m in high school; I just finished tenth grade.”

Lébé shrugged. “The génadɛma and high school are within walking distance of each other. You could probably get permission to take a course there. Maybe we can help arrange it.”

“That would be marvelous!” She was obviously very excited.

“Are you coming to the Mɛlwika Bahá'í Summer School, next week?” asked Lébé. “We can talk more, then.”

“I have permission from my father. There are three youth who want to go, and two couples. That’s most of our Klɛnvika Bahá'í community!”

“Well, if you get there, let me know. I’ll bring you to my office and show you the translating work. It’s very interesting. We now have most of an English-Eryani Dictionary.”

“Really? I’d love to see that!”

“Let me know,” repeated Lébé. She saw a movement of green, which was the color of brides among the Eryan. “Oh, look at Blorakwé! I think she and Budhéstu are going to dance!”

“Let’s watch,” agreed Sugérsé.

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315.

Summer School

Second week Kaiménu, 13/631

Sugérsé scanned the eastern horizon in front of the bus, hoping to catch a glimpse of Mɛlwika. Their bus had passed Mɛddoawkés just minutes earlier and she still had the great city's skyline etched in her mind's eye. The citadel with its high walls surrounding a steep hill was particularly impressive.

"I think there are too many trees along the river for us to see it well," said Rudhkaputu, a twenty year old farmer from Klɛnvika who had managed to sit next to her all the way from Klɛnvika and kept flirting with her.

"Maybe." Sugérsé leaned her head out the window more and looked straight ahead. "Oh, I see it now! A big hill covered by red-tiled roofs, shimmering in the sun! We're almost there!"

"Excellent. It's been a long ride."

"Not that bad."

She watched out the window as more and more details appeared. They passed through the edge of a village—she saw "Nénaslua" on a sign—and was amazed by all the houses and the thicket of wires passing over the bus. The route subsequently was lined with houses, and the city walls were now a bright streak along the horizon. Excitement passed through the bus and someone started signing "Alláh-u-Abhá." Rudhkaputu sang loudly and smiled at her as he did.

In a few minutes the bus approached the city walls, then turned right and took West Street along the western wall of the city. How big could this city be? The wall was twice as long as Bɛllɛdha's! At the far end the bus went through a traffic circle—an innovation for a busload of villagers—and drove along the south wall. Half way along the wall the bus went through a large gate and stopped.

A young man got on the bus and Sugérsé immediately recognized Primanu, who had been on the youth team the previous summer. She waved, but he was looking at the bus driver. "Go straight ahead to that little alley between the high school and elementary school number 3, turn right, and proceed to the middle school; that's our destination." The driver nodded and Primanu turned toward the passengers. The bus was full and all of the storage over their heads was stuffed with their food and personal possessions. "Alláh-u-Abhá and welcome to Mɛlwika!" he exclaimed. They all responded enthusiastically with a loud "Alláh-u-Abhá" in return. "Where are you from? Oh, I see Sugérsé and a few other familiar faces; Klɛnvika?"

"North shore," replied a woman sitting up front. "Mostly east of Bɛllɛdha."

"Welcome to all of you. We're going to the middle school. When we get there, there will be several large tables for registration outside. Leave your things on the bus and go to the tables to register, which costs one dhanay. They will give you a conference card with your name and village on it; don't lose it, you need to show it to get into everything."

"What if we do lose it?" asked the woman.

"They'll give you another. Once you have the card, come back here and get your things. I'll be here to direct you to your rooms. We assign three rooms to a typical bus

with fifty or so passengers; one for men and older boys and two for women, girls, and smaller children. You don't have so many children on this bus, so the women will be very comfortable! Everyone needs to be awake and out of the room by nine bells in the morning, when two of your three rooms will be used for classes. The third can be used to store possessions. All of you should decide how you will secure that third room. Most buses set up a schedule of room watchers. If you want some peace and quiet, that's the job for you."

There was some laughter. Primanu pointed to a large tent they were passing. "That tent has twenty-five shower stalls. Each school has two large bathrooms for men and two for women, and the sinks have running hot and cold water, so many people can wash there. It has flush toilets; if you don't know how they work, please ask someone. The school will have two persons sitting at tables inside the door during the day; at night there will be one. They will need volunteers to help keep the school clean. The school we're going to has a kitchen and they will seek fifteen volunteers to cook every meal and clean up afterward. Your school has sixteen classrooms, will house about 250 people, and will feed the same. It will be a Bahá'í village for a week. But to keep our village from being in chaos, the people at the front desk are in charge of coordinating everything."

"How do we know where to go for everything?" asked someone.

"Ask the people at the table. Today is the day of celebration and organization. There will be five days of classes on all sorts of things; classes on Bahá'í subjects in the morning; classes on development of civilization in the afternoon; and the evening will have various short, special classes, followed by music and hymns in all the auditoriums.

Every night, one of the concerts will be broadcast on radio channel 6, since the schools aren't using it over the summer."

"Incredibly organized," said someone.

"Well, we hope so." The bus driver slowed the bus as it pulled up to the school's main entrance. Another bus was just departing. "Everyone enjoy the conference. We hope it will be fun, educational, and inspirational."

"Thanks Primanu," replied several people who knew him.

The bus stopped and its door opened. They all stepped out and Rudhkaputu of course volunteered to help Sugérsé with her things, so she made a beeline for Primanu. "Allah-u-Abhá!" he said when he saw her. "You had a good trip?"

"Yes, this bus went from Klɛnvika to the villages east of Bɛllɛdha, filled up, then headed here. It took two and a half hours. Strange that the sun's past noon here! We left Klɛnvika at dawn!"

"Yes, that's the way it works. I'm so glad you made it. Can you come to the youth gatherings? We have the auditorium of Elementary School 3." He pointed to the school. "That's the youth hangout. All youth classes are there, too."

"Good. I'll go there. But I can't join a summer youth team; my father forbade it. I have to come home after this week is over. My cousin's chaperoning me. I also have a farmer bothering me."

"What can we do about him?"

"He'll be alright, I'll just avoid him. Do you know where Lébé is?"

"I can show you her office."

"I need to register and move my things into a room."

“Do that and wait here for me. I have to walk back to the gate and guide another bus here, so I’ll be here every ten minutes or so.”

“Okay, I’ll do that.” She smiled, happy he could help her. She waved, then got in a registration line; a different one from Rudhkaputu. Equipped with her conference identification card, she walked back to the bus and grabbed her sleeping pad—a cotton pad about three centimeters thick, into which she had rolled her blanket and three changes of clothes—and a large flexible basket full of three days worth of bread, cheese, and fruit. After that, she had money to buy meals.

She followed the instructions and found room 12, to which she and sixteen other women had been assigned. She found a spot where she could put the roll and looked around, then headed back to the front door, where she read the lengthy mimeographed program while waiting for Primanu to return. Soon enough he did, with a busload of Bahá'ís and friends from Sumilara.

“This way; I’ve got to hurry, the buses are arriving really fast. They’re coming from the western shore, now.”

“How many people are coming?”

“Who knows? We can rent every school in the city. They’ll accommodate about three thousand. After that we’ll put people in tents or houses, if we have to.”

“Wow! This must have taken months to organize!”

“It did, but it’ll be worth it. Think what this will do, not only to the Bahá'í community, but for the world. There will be classes on business, health, everything . . . I was just talking to Khwanu and he was talking about the classes in public health he’s organizing. He’s very excited about being able to explain basic health issues to dozens

and dozens of people! The real trick will be organization; feeding all these people and keeping their toilets clean!"

"I bet. I've volunteered to do some cleaning; they didn't think I could cook."

He led her westward along the alley and they crossed the street, then continued between the high school and elementary school number 2. "How many schools does Mɛlwika have?" she asked.

"I don't know; a lot of elementary schools! The city has to build two new ones every year because it has 1,500 new first graders every year!" He stopped after they passed the high school. "Okay, now you can see the Bahá'í temple."

"Oh, that's the temple! It's so beautiful!"

"It is. Go say some prayers there as soon as you can." He turned and led her southward until the House of Worship was hidden behind the Engineering Building. He pointed through the gap between it and the School of Agriculture. "Right there; that's the Humanities Building. Lébé has an office on the top floor. She also has an office in the Women's Géndha, but she's usually in the Humanities building, if she's on campus."

"How big is the génadɛma?"

"Six hundred fifty students, and they want to have eight hundred in the fall. They say the génadɛma has to grow to 1,300 in the next six years to meet the prince's development plan."

"Wow; that must cost a lot."

"They build a new dormitory every year, and all the buildings' basements are being converted into usable space. I've got to run back to the gate to guide another bus; see you around." He smiled, nodded, and headed for the gate.

She looked at the génadɛma ahead of her, then turned to the temple, as Primanu suggested. Crowds of visiting Bahá'ís were coming and going. She went inside and was disappointed it was so bare, but then she noticed the interior was still under construction. She sat and said some prayers, then meditated about the future, wondering what it would be like to go to the génadɛma. She really, really wanted to find out; she didn't want to be a village housewife with a man like Rudhkaputu telling her what to do.

She headed back out and across the gardens around the temple to the Humanities Building. The temple grounds were a square with génadɛma buildings on the east and west sides, the Bahá'í Center and history museum on the north side, and the old city wall on the south side. The Humanities building occupied the northwest corner. She entered the building with a mix of trepidation and excitement and slowly strolled the length of the ground floor. She immediately recognized that most of the offices and classrooms were dedicated to the teaching of English. A huge map that said "Gɛdhéma" in Eryani and "Earth" in English on top intrigued her; she could pronounce the latter's "ea" since Eryan's new writing system used the same vowels, but the "rth" were unknown letters.

She nodded hello to two students clustered around a device with a glowing surface that was covered with Eryani writing and had a typewriter-like keyboard. They barely noticed her, so she kept walking. At the far end she went up the stairs to the top story. The floor there clearly was dedicated to Éra; it had a large map of the world almost directly above the gɛdhéma map. Books about Eryani literature and folk tales filled book cases, and the names on the office doors were the same as the authors of some of her high school literature texts, which was a very intimidating thought. But the floor was deserted; no one was around.

She saw a pencil in an open office, so she used it and a scrap of paper on a desk to write Lébé a note, which she slipped under her door. Then she headed down the back stairs again to exit the building from the rear and see more of the campus. As she exited, she saw Lébé walking across the campus toward the Humanities Building. The two women's eyes met and Lébé waved.

"So, you made it to summer school! Alláh-u-Abhá! Welcome!"

"Thank you! I got off my bus half an hour ago. Primanu showed me where the Humanities Building was."

"Excellent. Are you coming to my English class?"

"What class?"

"I plan to offer a very simple and basic English class Dwodiu and Tridiu afternoons. It'll be in one of the classrooms at the high school."

"Oh, I'll definitely come to it! What can you do in a few hours?"

"Teach maybe the short obligatory prayer or a Hidden Word; enough to give people a chance to learn how to pronounce words, and learn a few basic words and a little grammar. The committee really didn't think it was very useful, so I'm also giving a class about the writings of Bahá'u'lláh Kwétɛrdiu and Pɛnkudiu mornings."

"Then I'll come to them as well!"

"Don't devote your entire time in the school to my classes!"

"I won't, I'll go to other things as well." She looked around the campus. "So, this is the génadɛma."

"It is. I have an idea. I'll give you a quick tour, how's that?"

"Thank you, I'd love that!"

Lébé nodded. She sensed Sugérsé's interest, so she took her into the Humanities Building and did a slow tour, then quickly walked through the other buildings and ended at the Women's Géndha. A few of the students were around and Sugérsé noted that some were fairly young. "What's the minimum age to go to the Women's Géndha?"

"We prefer eighteen, but we have a few seventeen year olds and we've even had a sixteen year old."

"You don't need a high school diploma?"

"It helps, but high school diplomas are still pretty new, and the quality's not consistent. If you're interested, you should apply. I bet you could get in."

"But my family could never afford this place."

"There are a lot of scholarships because very few parents can afford it. The Géndha, like the Génadɛma, costs 600 dhanay per year, including room and board."

"That's almost my father's entire income!"

"I'm sure." Lébé grabbed an application from a stack on a nearby table. "Here."

Sugérsé looked it over. "Thank you. I don't know whether dad would allow it, though."

"We can't do anything about that. But here you will be safe and chaperoned, so they have nothing to worry about."

"I'll tell them."

"You'd like to come?"

"Oh, I really, really would!" She said it so vehemently the emotion even surprised her.

“Then perhaps Esto will provide.” Lébé smiled. “I was on my way to the Bahá'í Center when I saw you. It’s the nerve center for everything and I’m supposed to help out this afternoon; I’m one of the members of the five-person committee planning the summer school. So I should get there. If you have time tonight, come to the Bahá'í Center just before sunset. I’ll be leaving there for home and you are free to come along and have supper with us.”

“Really? Thank you, I’d love to!”

Jordan watched the red soccer team battle its way down the field one more time, driving for the goal posts. The tall man in the center skillfully kicked the ball past two green team members, then suddenly unleashed a powerful shot at the far side of the goal. The goalie leaped, but fell just short of the ball, which flashed past him and into the net. The crowd erupted with a roar. The score was 2-1.

Jordan turned back to the timer clock; just seconds left. He counted it down, then picked up a bell and rang it powerfully. The game was over.

The crowd erupted in cheers again. Half the Bahá'ís had made their way to the soccer field just outside the city wall and had been joined rather spontaneously by a few thousand city residents, who always loved a good soccer game. Now, as the sun approached the horizon, the game had ended. Jordan, who was the game coordinator, grabbed the microphone. “Congratulations, red team! You have won, 2-1. Tomorrow evening between the end of the eclipse and sunset we will gather for another game. All members of the Bahá'í conference who want to play soccer should go to the Bahá'í Center to register. We have already formed three teams, red, green, and blue, and we are looking

for men who wish to join the yellow, silver, and orange teams. We will provide the tee-shirt; you come to play! Tomorrow the contest will be between blue and yellow. Everyone is welcome to watch, the game will be free. Starting in about an hour there will be a free concert at the high school gymnasium and everyone is welcome to attend it for free as well. The music will be broadcast outside the building to anyone unable to get inside, and will be available over radio channel 6 as well. Thank you, everyone, for coming, and have a pleasant evening."

There was scattered applause as he finished the announcement and the crowd began to break up. Jordan thanked the two scorekeepers sitting with him and confirmed that both would be available tomorrow evening as well. He turned to a table nearby where Estosodu had been sitting behind a large microphone, describing the entire game for "Bahá'í Radio," as they called their week-long broadcasts over Channel 6. He was wrapping up his description of the game and of the plans for future games, frantically beckoning to the tall center of the red team to come over and be interviewed. Seeing the man's gestures, Jordan ran over to the player, who was named Mɛgusu, "Big Ear," and brought him to the broadcaster's table.

Estosodu interviewed Jordan and Mɛgusu on the spot about the latter's strategy and the former's thoughts about the most exciting plays. For ten minutes they talked about the game and the plans for the week-long series, for Mɛgusu was not just the red team captain; he was also the main organizer. Finally, Estosodu thanked them and wrapped up the entire broadcast, then shut down.

"Wow, Estosodu, you're really good!" said Jordan. "I was listening to your play by play. The descriptions were really exciting!"

“Thanks. Several times I’ve broadcast génadɛma games over Channel 1. I love to do it, I get really excited and the audience at home feels it!”

“Oh, they do; I heard one of the games,” agreed Jordan. He turned to Mɛgusu. “This series is off to a good start. I’m glad you suggested it.”

“I was pretty sure we’d have no problem filling six teams,” replied Mɛgusu. “Wait and see; now that just about everyone has arrived, the other three teams will fill up, too. There are a lot of Bahá'ís who have gone to génadɛma, and a lot of them played soccer. The High Schools are all starting teams, too. This world is filled with soccer! Everyone wants to learn it.”

“It really has taken off,” agreed Estosodu. “I think it’s time to organize professional teams. You just said you’d rather play soccer than teach. Well, I’d rather broadcast soccer games than teach!”

“But do you think we could make enough money?”

“I don’t know about that, but we could start over the summer when a lot of teachers are free. They’re a big proportion of those who know how to play. We’d have to charge people to watch it, and the radio would get sponsors to advertise during the breaks between the plays. I think we could make some money.”

“You’d need team patrons to put up some initial capital,” added Jordan. “I bet grandfather would be interested.”

“I think Brébéstu would be,” added Mɛgusu, who lived in Tripola. “We’ve got a lot of good soccer players here at this conference; we can recruit people to start teams in other cities.”

“Mɛddoakwés is building a proper stadium, and it’ll be finished in a few months,” said Jordan. “That’s the sort of facility that’s needed for professional teams, because people can’t get in without paying. There’s talk of a stadium here.”

“And in Tripola,” agreed Mɛgusu. “You know, this is an intriguing idea!”

“Come to supper now at my family’s house,” urged Jordan. “Let’s talk about it.”

“I can’t; I have to get all this equipment to the High School,” said Estosodu. “We need it for the concert. Then we’ll use it tomorrow morning and afternoon to broadcast classes on the Bahá'í Faith, then I’ll move it back here for tomorrow evening’s game.”

“And I need to take a shower before I go anywhere,” added Mɛgusu.

“Bring your clothes along and shower at my house,” replied Jordan. “The cooks have been told to cook for twenty-five. I can take you upstairs to my place to wash, then when you’re done you can come down and join us.”

“Alright,” said Mɛgusu. “But I still have to get my clothes.”

“Meet me at the Bahá'í Center, then.”

Jordan helped Estosodu pack up his broadcast equipment into a big box and the two of them lugged it to the high school auditorium, then Jordan headed for the Bahá'í Center. It was the chaotic headquarters of the summer school, thronged by thirty volunteers and about fifty people who had problems to report. Sulanu, secretary of the Mɛlwika Spiritual Assembly and chief editor of *Mɛlwika Nuɛs,* was patiently listening to a lady complaining about conditions in Elementary School Number 3; the cooking staff was inadequate and the bathrooms were overflowing. “Well, Madame, let’s go over there right now,” replied Sulanu. “You organize the cooks and I’ll get the bathrooms cleaned.”

That startled the lady, but she accompanied him out of the place. Jordan watched them go, then turned to Thornton, who was compiling information. “How goes it?”

“Don’t interrupt me now, I’m counting!” he replied. He was flipping through registration sheets, each of which had a column of names and accompanying information on it. A minute later he whistled. “I think we’ve hit three thousand!”

“Then where are all the dhanay?” asked a man nearby, who was counting coins.

“The registration tables still have a lot of cash.”

“I hope so, because costs keep going up, too!”

Thornton turned to Jordan. “How was the game?”

“It went great, and we had a huge crowd. A lot of city people were there.”

“Good. I think a lot of people are curious and will come to introductory things. This afternoon during the eclipse every classroom at the high school where we offered an introductory talk on the Faith was packed. The guys at the front entrance asked people to show conference cards but let people in if they didn’t have them, since the talks were introductory, and they said half the people they admitted didn’t have cards. I bet a lot of Mɛlwikans will register for the conference, too.”

“This is a really big growth event for the Faith.”

“No one has ever tried a week of free classes on everything before! It’s quite something. In fact, it’s so big, Widulubu has come.”

“The priest starting hymn halls? He’s participating?”

“He’s staying at the temple, I think, but he’s been spotted on campus. Mom saw him.”

Lébé entered the Center just then with a Tutanɛ man. Jordan looked, then smiled and hurried over. “Andamékwu! You made it!”

“Jordanu, Alláh-u-Abha!” replied Andamékwu, with a smile. He approached Jordan and gave him a bear hug rather than shaking his hands.

“Alláh-u-Abhá! So, you have become a Bahá'í!”

“Ever since you visited Géndonatroba last summer, I have been thinking about what you said about Bahá'u'lláh, how he suffered all His life so that humanity may advance spiritually, and I haven’t been able to get that out of my head. I was in Kostakhéma last month to visit the school there because I had accumulated about three hours of science questions to ask the science teacher there—my students are constantly asking me questions I can’t answer, either because they are very smart or because I am not very educated—and while there I heard about this conference. So I decided to come.”

“Excellent, you are very welcome! There will be many classes where you can ask all sorts of questions about the Faith.”

“Yes, I went to a class about Bahá'u'lláh this afternoon. It was fascinating. Afterward I went to the teacher and declared my faith and he called over here.”

“So I went to talk to him,” added Lébé. “He’s coming to supper tonight.”

“Good, we’ll have a chance to talk more, then,” said Jordan.

“I think I had better stay here,” said Thornton. “Sulanu needs a lot of help, especially when he’s wandering around trying to solve problems. Jordan, Lord Chordu of Dhudrakaita is here, too.”

“Really? He came?”

“Yes, with two bus loads of Bahá'ís from Dhudrakaita. They’re at Elementary School number 2; you should go visit them. Apparently the road to their village is scheduled to be widened and graveled this summer, and the crew will prepare trees for the telephone and electric lines, so those will follow.”

“Finally! Great!”

“We need power and telephone service, too,” said Andamékwu. “I think the Géndonɛ are the last group of people on this world without them! And our southern village, Jérpola, is still inaccessible by wheeled vehicle; it takes a day and a half to get there by horseback.”

“That’ll change soon,” replied Thornton. “The Army Engineering Corps is looking at the hydroelectric power that can be generated by the rivers falling from the Géndonɛ and Ghéslonɛ lands into the Long Valley. We’ll probably have power shortages in the next few months because demand is going up so fast. The river that flows past Géndonatroba and falls 1,800 meters into the Long Valley can generate vast amounts of power.”

“But will we get any of the power for our own use?”

“I’m sure the electrical company will install lines for Géndonatroba. But I suspect they’ll start installing hydroelectric plants on the river flowing past Moruagras, since there are already power lines and a good road there. Don’t worry, you’ll get power, but they can only go to so many places at once.”

“Our big problem is the elders of the tribe,” admitted Andamékwu. “They opposed the gravel road to Géndonatroba and managed to keep it one lane in width, which makes it hard to use. They have only recently started to complain about the lack of

a power and telephone line; they didn't want it, then they didn't care, then they were interested. I am afraid the army will say 'you had your chance, and you didn't take it.'"

"That's another matter," said Thornton. "That can be fixed."

Just then, Sugérsé entered the Bahá'í Center. Lébé saw her, beckoned her over, and introduced her. "Let's go to supper," she said.

They headed for the door and Jordan followed. He saw Mɛgusu approaching the Center, so he beckoned his friend to join them. In the gathering dusk they all walked to the Mennea residence, which was already filled with people drinking a punch of fruit juice and naturally carbonated water from Kɛrda chilled with ice. They were eating sandwiches, which kept appearing platter upon platter. Jordan showed Mɛgusu to his own one-room apartment so he could wash, then came downstairs and talked to Lord Chordu, who clearly was considering the Bahá'í Faith very seriously but cautiously.

Chris arrived a short time later, tired from a long meeting with Prince Mɛméjékwu. He hurried upstairs to change his shirt, freshen up quickly, and catch his breath. Liz saw him come in and hurried up when he didn't come down right away. "You're coming downstairs, right?"

"Yes, I just need to change shirt and rest a bit."

"I brought you some punch."

"Thank you." He kissed her and they hugged for a long moment. "Oh, I needed that."

"How was the meeting?"

"Mɛméjékwu seems to think he has to micromanage the new tomi. He's going to be difficult. He wants me to appoint Mitrudatu to be my representative and meet with him

instead, probably because he thinks he can order Mitrudatu around and he can't do the same with me."

"What's he demanding?"

"He doesn't understand how projects like this work. He asked, for example, whether the plywood factory is supplying its product to the rest of the project at cost or whether it was making a profit, and was quite upset to hear it was making a profit. So we had to explain that if the plywood factory doesn't make a profit, it has no incentive to expand; that no one else will enter the market in the future; etc. His reply was, as expected, 'well, if it needs to expand, we'll give it more money.' Then you have to explain that if we do that, no factory will ever claim they are making a profit and none will ever save for expansion, they'll wait for a royal handout. That took an hour and I think he understood in the end. I was tempted to say 'look, just trust us, we know how to do this,' but I didn't dare."

"He should be thankful he has a plywood factory after only two and a half weeks!"

"It's not much of a factory; one plywood making machine and one sheetrock making machine operating in a small cinder block square with sheet metal for a roof. He repeated all the complaints that it is too small, the quality of the product is inadequate, etc. We reminded him that a real plywood factory wouldn't be operating for two months, that the machine is still experimental and we're learning how to use it, we're still adjusting the glue formula, the other machines are still being built, etc. Of course, he had received all that in writing! We have to explain and justify every detail. Mitrudatu was exhausted and depressed when it was all over. I had Luktréstu drive my car to his villa

while I rode with Mitrudatu in his car and encouraged him, told him to stay the course, not be intimidated, not cut corners where quality was concerned, etc."

"I'm sorry. At least the prince will be leaving for the western shore in a few weeks, so you won't have to give reports for a while."

Chris shook his head. "He expects us to go to him and give a report during his three-week trip. Otherwise, he'll be here. He has decided against appointing a Minister for Development and Industrialization and has decided to keep that portfolio for himself."

"Are we going to be able to make any profit from this tomi?"

"Last week, he said all profits would go to the Old Houses for at least two years. After that, I could get a dividend based on the amount I invested. They are exploiting me, my time, and experience. But I'll give them my best, partly because I am not sure what will happen if he gets angry, and partly because this is an important solution to several social problems."

"I'll pray for you." She hugged him again, to transfer some strength to him. "You can do it. Now, come down stairs. Moléstu is here for supper because you invited him. Jordan wants you to talk to a young man about supporting a professional soccer team. Lord Chordu of Dhudrakaita is here and is continuing his investigation of the Faith. There's a teacher from the Géndonɛ tribe. Randu has brought two professors from Anartu who are studying the Faith and Thornton's not here to talk to them in Sumi. And there are about fifteen other guests, all interesting."

"Call Thornton and ask him to drop in for a while. How's the conference?"

"Incredibly exciting, full of energy, bursting with potential, and almost every bathroom in the schools is overflowing with human waste because people don't

understand about flushing until there's too much to flush. The food delivery system is broken, too, but I suppose by breakfast it'll be functioning better."

"That's why today's theme is 'Celebration and Organization.' Okay, let's go down." He gulped the rest of the punch and they headed to the garden. Before he was able to put a sandwich in his mouth, Moléstu came over. "Lord, thank you for inviting me to this big supper. And I'm surprised and pleased to see Sugérsé is here! She's Budhéstu's cousin."

"Yes, I met her at the wedding. How are Budhéstu and Blorakwé?"

"They are well; back from the three hotels where you gave them accommodation."

"Excellent, I hope they are happy."

"They are *very* happy, Lord! It's quite something to see. And that makes me happy as well, to see my little girl all grown up and the happy wife of a good man."

"It is one of the great happinesses of a father, is it not? And are you ready for your class tomorrow?"

"I wish you hadn't talked me into it! I don't really know what I will do for three hours."

"Just tell your story; it will inspire the audience. If they hear from me they will gain knowledge, but not confidence. If they hear you they will gain confidence."

"I don't know, Lord!"

"You'll see. Tell your story."

Moléstu smiled. “I’ll try. I have the second work crew recruited; I filled the last position today. Running two crews with one pickup truck is driving me crazy, so I’m ready to buy the second pickup.”

“Good. Mitrudatu has given you the paperwork already. Go to Mɛlwika Motors tomorrow, maybe after your class. Jordan might be available to go with you and help with the paperwork.”

“Budhéstu said he’d come along, but I doubt I’ll need his help. He can drive my first pickup home while I drive the new one. I’ll go get it tomorrow night if they have one available.”

“I think they do.”

“You said as many as three teams and three pickup trucks. I figure a pickup truck can support a team of about twenty men. But it looks to me that you need more construction than three teams can deliver.”

“You’re right. If you had one hundred construction workers and five trucks, we could employ them all. Maybe even a hundred fifty workers. The crown prince wants the construction to proceed as quickly as possible. Of course, the danger is that once this project is over, you’ll have to lay off the workers. That’s a reason to move more slowly.”

“If the prince wants the construction finished quickly, let’s do it. I’m hiring farmers who have acquired some construction skills; they can always fall back on farming. A lot of the men are planting corn because it requires less work to harvest, leaving them time to do construction.”

“Then fill your third team, figure out how to manage it, and plan for a fourth team. Ménu Miller and Estanu are busy building the Nuarjora gas plant, the Mɛddoakwés

stadium, and a lot of schools. We're having trouble finding contractors and workers. If you can organize six or seven teams, let's do it."

"Alright. Thank you, Lord."

Chris took the next day off so he could participate fully in the summer school. He spent most of the morning dropping in on classes to see how they were doing—there were 100 going on simultaneously—and was generally impressed by the results. It was clear that most people were so hungry to learn that their excitement fired up the teachers and the classes went well, even if the content was poor or delivered unevenly. Some classrooms overflowed with students.

He spent the rest of the morning solving problems, of which there were many; the Eryanɛ were not used to setting up committees or volunteering, but were used to having someone in charge telling them what to do. Those habits die hard. He spent a lot of time helping Bahá'ís, housed in ten schools scattered around the town, organize themselves to prepare meals and keep the schools clean. Slightly over three thousand Bahá'ís had come to Mɛlwika, and about a thousand locals—three quarters non-Bahá'í—were participating in the classes as well. Three thousand visitors made quite an impact on the city and as he walked around town he could see all sorts of conversations occurring between Mɛlwikans and out of town Bahá'ís.

He was crossing Temple Square on his way between two schools when he saw Widulubu in front of the city's temple talking to Lokolubu, the chief priest. Chris detoured over to say hello; he worked well with Lokolubu, and thought it would be

interesting to meet Widulubu again. “Greetings, honored priests,” he said. “Widulubu, welcome to Mɛlwika.”

“Thank you Lord, and greetings to you,” replied Widulubu, a bit nervously.

“Greetings, Lord,” said Lokolubu. “How goes your summer school?”

“Overall, very well. The logistics are massive; we may have decided to do too much for people. On the other hand, they are learning how to organize themselves, they are attending all sorts of classes and enjoying them, and they are getting many new ideas and perspectives on things.”

“How many are taking part?” asked Widulubu.

“We think attendance is about 4,200, and not just Bahá'ís. That doesn’t include the free soccer games and evening concerts.”

“I was listening to channel 6 much of last night and this morning,” said Lokolubu. “Very impressive.”

“Though I wonder whether a channel dedicated to education of school children should be used in this way,” objected Widulubu.

“It’s not being used at all over the summer,” replied Chris. “Maybe the priests should do the same with channel seven.”

“I think we should,” he agreed. “It’s good to see you again, Lord.”

“It’s good to see you as well, Widulubu.”

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First Forays

Third week Kaiménu 13/631

“Can I borrow fifty thousand dhanay?” John Miller asked Chris, as soon as the latter entered the former’s home office.

“Fifty thousand? Is that why you asked me to stop by?”

“Actually, one hundred thousand would be better. We’re hitting some bottlenecks in vehicle production. Demand for pickup trucks has zoomed upward! It took about a year, but once there were some of them around, a lot of businesses and granges liked what they saw. Our facility was not designed to produce parts for more than five hundred pickup trucks per year. We’re now running 750 and we probably need to get to 1,000 per year.”

Chris smiled. He hadn’t even sat down yet; he paused to sit. “That’s great news. I gather that you’re up to 1,400 vehicles per year and per-unit costs are dropping.”

“In spite of rising prices for materials; they have risen five percent since winter. Yes, we’re at 1,400 per year, and production costs for cars and pickups are down to 1,500 dhanay each, so a sales price of 1,800 generates a twenty percent profit. We want to keep the price there for a while and replenish our capital, but an injection of investment now would speed up expansion.”

“Isn’t that amazing, John? Less than a year ago we were struggling to produce less than a thousand a year for 2,300 each. We couldn’t get the price down or demand up.”

"Well, demand *did* go up, because of the pickups! And we knew all along the system would produce cheaper cars at higher volumes. But back to the loan, Chris."

"This is a bad time for me to provide a loan, John. The Jérdomasi Tomi is consuming not just all my time; it's forcing me to keep my tax and mortgage revenue in reserve to make sure we can cover costs between checks from the palace."

John shook his head. "Chris, they're exploiting you."

"It's true. I admit it. But I'm doing it for several reasons; the kingdom needs the project; the Old Houses need an independent source of income; the workers need jobs; and the expansion of the Bahá'í community is generating strong resistance, even at the palace. Prince Mɛméjékwu has obliquely complained about it and I said I hoped that my service to the palace helped assuage feelings."

"You see, you have to be more careful! Gathering three thousand Bahá'ís in one place at one time; it was so bold and innovative it frightened a lot of people. And I gather people became Bahá'ís! Not to mention the radio coverage; the concerts must have reached tens of thousands."

"We had *three hundred* enrollments. The radio coverage did frighten a lot of priests, and I'm hearing complaints from old houses. But after the first day the concerts made few references to the Faith, and the daytime coverage was of development-oriented workshops rather than classes about the Faith. I think we made an important contribution to grass-roots education, and it'll be interesting to see what skills the Bahá'ís take home and apply to their own lives and teach their neighbors."

"I caught a bit of a workshop on public health, and one on repairing steam engines. They were very useful. So . . . how many Bahá'ís do you have?"

“Maybe sixty-four hundred. But the number who are active, who will vote or serve on local spiritual assemblies . . . that’s much lower. Maybe a thousand.”

“The Widumaj religion is the same way.” John sighed. “So, how much can you loan me?”

Chris considered a moment. “Twenty-five thousand.”

“Okay, I’ll squeeze the system for the rest.”

“Ask Sarédatu and Glosé. I suspect Home Improvement’s sales have been strong over the last six months.”

“I think so, too. What do you think’s going on with the economy? Have you talked to Aryéstu about it lately?”

“We spoke about a month ago, when the harvest was coming in around here and the crop prices were holding up better than expected. He traces the strong economy to a solid banking sector; Prosperity Bank is now functioning very well and the Royal Bank, which is opening branches in every large post office, is doing pretty well also. The law guaranteeing deposits up to five hundred dhanay has produced quite an inflow; 1.5 million to Prosperity Bank, and probably a similar amount to the Royal Bank. Add to that the increase in money supply with the new dhanay coins coming out—another million—and we have injected three million dhanay into the economy. That’s an increase of about twenty percent.”

“Home Improvement’s sales suffered only a small winter dip,” said John.

“Of course! People were borrowing money, opening businesses, making money, and buying consumer goods. The granges have expanded their microcredit. The youth team’s visits to about twenty villages last summer had an effect; women bought more

sewing machines, more kids started school, several villages tried new crops, and several villages started or expanded factories and other businesses like bakeries and dairies. I was talking to Lord Chordu of Dhudrakaita when he was here for the summer school and he said that tax revenues there are up ten percent. There are now ten women's gabrulis and they're generating thousands of dhanay per year of increased income. So the economy is definitely expanding. But production has not yet caught up to demand; that's one thing a big increase in the money supply will do. The result is inflation and an increase in prices and wages by about five percent."

John nodded. "That makes sense. It's interesting to see who is buying pickups and cars. A lot of lords who bought cars to ferry their families around and take hunting buddies on hunting trips bought pickups for the latter, and to help out their villages. Most lords who bought a tractor for their village have now bought a pickup as well. I expected those groups. But then some lords came back for a second pickup; the first one was so useful, they needed another, especially for their village. Then owners of shoe manufactories and bakeries began to show up; they wanted to drive their product to market and buy supplies. A few big dairies want pickups to get milk from farmers."

"And granges."

"Yes, they're buying a lot; some are aiming to buy one per twenty-five farmers."

"No, twenty farmers."

"Is that the new number? Good. Then old men began to show up with lots of cash, and they said they had three sons and two nephews, or three sons and a daughter and a niece, or some such, and their families wanted to share a pickup. So now extended families are getting them!"

“Good, that’s what we want to see happening. This is very exciting, John; give people wheels and you revolutionize their life and earning power. Add telephones so they can call around and find out what the prices are, and they’ll be able to take things where they’re needed, generating competition, lowering prices, and increasing productivity.”

“I bet the Kwolonɛ and other tribes are finding the demand for horses dropping. The price of horses certainly has declined. And demand for charcoal’s going up, especially now that we’re buying charcoal cut from the seabed in order to slow our coal consumption. Anyway, Chris, thanks for the loan. I’ll pay it back in six months.”

“I’ll go get my check book right now,” said Chris.

With the end of the Mɛlwika Summer School, the Bahá'ís scattered to return home and three teams of youth headed out on their summer trips. Budhéstu and Blorakwé led one to the South Shore; Khwanu, Tomasu, and Swadé led another to the North Shore; Jordan, Primanu, and Gramé Miller led the third to Sumilara. Accompanying the last group were three other youth: Migélu, a Khɛrmdhunan who had completed a year and a half of medical school; Sarédaktré, a twenty-year-old who had just completed a dwoyɛri degree in teaching from the Women’s Géndha; and Damkiané, a seventeen-year-old Sumi girl from Mɛlwika who had just completed a year of general education courses at the génadɛma. They took the same ferry boat as Thornton, Lébé, and their children, who arrived with Randu and three other Mɛlwika Génadɛma professors to offer a month of intensive courses at Amurueqluma, the new town Dumuzi had established on the island’s northwest corner.

Thornton was excited to visit Amurueqluma again. A rickety, old public bus with unpadded wooden seats and a wheezy steam engine chugged slowly from Anartu westward on Route 31—the old Royal Road—to Kalageduru, the island's second largest town, now lagging considerably behind Anartu. From there the wide and well-worn gravel track turned northwestward to follow the coastline; the old Royal Road continued westward as a trace and disappeared under the waves. Thornton silently shuddered as they passed Vermillion Cliffs; three quarters of the battleground was now submerged under the sea, leaving a narrow passage between the cliffs and the shore.

But from there northward the mountains and hills receded and a plain opened up. Formerly it had been a scrub oak forest; most had been cut down and replaced by rice paddies, the rest overgrown with tropical rainforest species, for the return of the sea had more than doubled the area's rainfall. The widespread rice was supplemented by citrus orchards and fields of sweet potatoes.

The army's actual landing spot was under water, but it was close to the new town of Amurueqluma, ten kilometers north of Vermillion Cliffs. It was nestled against the western edge of the volcanic uplands. Thornton was amazed to see a neat, freshly built town of four thousand people, equipped with all the amenities of the new knowledge: electricity, telephones, public water brought to each house in iron pipes, and a well-built sewer system connected to a sewage settling and digestion pond that greatly reduced the pollution of the sea.

The bus stopped in front of the marketplace at the center of the town to let most people off and let others on, then it turned right onto Route 37, which ran eastward along the base of the uplands. As soon as it passed the marketplace and a park, the bus stopped

in front of a large building of basalt blocks: the Sumilara Police and Fire Academy. The party got out and began to unload their equipment from the bus's storage area under the passengers. Meanwhile, a large crowd poured out of tents set up behind and next to the academy and came over to watch and help. Dingiramarru—his name meant "love god" and was often translated into Eryani as Deolubu—hurried over from his office in the academy to greet them. "Welcome to Amurueqluma!" he exclaimed in nearly perfect Eryani, for he was a twenty-five year army veteran. "Welcome to the academy!"

"Thank you, honored Dingiramarru!" replied Thornton. They shook hands with much excitement. "We're very happy to be here!"

"I'm glad the bus made it; it's been breaking down a lot lately. I almost suggested you take the bus that goes the other way around the island, it takes much longer but is newer and reliable."

"This one is pretty old!" agreed Thornton. Just then they finished unloading their stuff, so the bus wheezed and slowly accelerated down the road. "It needs maintenance."

"And there is one man in Anartu able to maintain all steam engines on the island. He's overwhelmed."

"In a way, it's a shame you didn't come with someone to teach mechanics," added Lord Ninazu, who was just then walking up. He was the son of Dumuzi, who had established the town three years earlier. Ninazu extended his hands. "Welcome honored Thornton, friend of Sumilara."

"Thank you, Lord. You honor me with such a title." Thornton said that in Sumi; he knew exactly how to say it. "We are all very pleased to be here. Maybe next time we will bring a teacher of mechanics."

“We hope you find our academy adequate,” said Dingiramurru. “It’s small, with only two classrooms, but with rented classrooms from the school across the street, we’ll have plenty of space. The ‘auditorium tent’ will seat nearly a thousand.”

“Excellent. I’m sure the facilities will be fine. We’re grateful you could accommodate us when the two génadɛmas refused.”

“It’s a shame they insisted on charging so much. Maybe next time they’ll come to their senses,” replied Dingiramarru.

“You and your party will be staying with me at the villa,” exclaimed Ninazu. “It’s the least we can do. When Dr. Lua arrives, she’ll stay there as well.”

“That’s very kind and hospitable of you, lord,” said Thornton. “Nina has agreed to watch our kids when she watches hers. They are used to playing together.”

Ninazu nodded. “I’m glad that the matter has been planned. When does your sister arrive?”

“Two days; she couldn’t get away sooner.”

“I understand. You will also appreciate the villa because it is air conditioned.”

“Really?”

Ninazu nodded. “Amurueqluma receives a ferry from Néfa twice a week, and one of its main cargoes is ice. The villa and the marketplace use most of it. Let’s go inside; the others can move everything inside the classrooms, and once my driver is here we can start moving your personal possessions to the villa.” Ninazu led Thornton toward Dingiramarru’s office.

“How many are here for the classes?”

“Eight hundred.”

“Eight hundred!” That surprised Thornton. “How will we accommodate that many?”

“I was hoping everyone could repeat their courses twice,” replied Dingiramarru. “Some of you were scheduled to teach one class in the morning and another one in the afternoon. But if we move the latter to the next day or an evening or to Primdiu, we can squeeze everyone in.”

“The mimeograph machine will be working constantly to make enough copies.”

“We’ll have to find more translators,” added Dingiramarru. “That’s the biggest problem. Did all the faculty come with handouts and display sheets?”

“Almost everyone,” agreed Thornton. “The display sheets were written with a lot of blank space so Sumi translations could be added. I think translation will work out fairly well; Randu has pioneered an excellent system using display sheets.”

“The town’s controller took lessons from your father at Arjdhura,” agreed Lord Ninazu. “He learned quite well.”

“Where are the people staying?”

“Most are coming by bus every morning.”

They entered the police and fire academy building and walked down a hallway that separated two large classrooms, on the left, from a garage with two fire trucks on the right. Dingiramarru’s office was after the latter and they stepped in, then sat. “Is there any way you can get additional teachers?” asked Ninazu. “Because Amurueqluma has needs beyond those met by these courses.”

“What do you have in mind?”

“Engineering and mechanics in particular. Amurueqluma has become the center of industry on the island. The bicycle factory can turn out several thousand bikes per year, thanks to your family interceding with Miller. We have access to much of the island’s good timber and have the largest sawmill. But we have a severe shortage of people trained in the maintenance of machines and even fewer with the skills to design new machines.”

“That sounds controversial.”

“If you can get the faculty, we can arrange the permission,” replied Ninazu. “We also badly need electrical engineers and electricians. The need is even worse with the telephone cable arriving this fall. We wish it was arriving here, instead of Sipadananga.”

“The strait on the eastern side of the island is only twenty-seven kilometers wide; here it’s thirty four.”

“Not that much different! We face the western shore; do you know when a cable will be laid on this side?”

Thornton shook his head. “It’ll cost one hundred fifty thousand dhanay. Raise the money and it’ll be done.”

“The army paid for the other cable,” objected Ninazu.

“Maybe they’ll pay for one on this side. Look, I really know nothing about politics, so let’s not discuss that. I can call Amos and maybe he can come over or send some engineers. The Mitru Génadɛma has been expanding its engineering school, which has two campuses; one in Ora, the other in Pértatranisér. I’m sure he can send one or two instructors. But he’ll want permission from the governor first.”

"We'll get that," said Ninazu, looking at Dingiramarru. The latter nodded; as head of the island's police and fire services, he was a key aide of the governor.

"How's the police force coming?" asked Thornton.

"Quite well," replied Dingiramarru. "They're being trained quite extensively. There are no village and city police forces; they're all hired and trained by the province, though many live in the villages where they serve. We have one hundred policemen now and they all have the equivalent of a dwoyɛri, which is the goal throughout the kingdom. We're way ahead of the other provinces. We still have only six police stations, but we're opening two more every year. The fire departments are developing similarly. The province is divided into five fire districts—the three river valleys and the eastern and western coasts—and we already have three fire stations and ten engines. In the next two years we plan to open two more stations, buy five more engines, and hire thirty more staff. The firemen need some police training and basic medical training, and we're giving the policemen fire training as well."

"I'm impressed. You're ahead of Arjakwés province. It has four fire districts but participation is voluntary and many villages haven't joined, which causes big problems when there are fires. The western end of the valley has resisted creation of a police district and many villages still don't have policemen. Mɛlwika is policing five villages near it basically for free, which isn't fair. The other provinces are trying to create police and fire districts, but they can't force villages to join."

"Well, we can," said Dingiramarru. "Sumis have a natural desire for order."

"Is it true that Mɛlwika Génadɛma will be teaching Sumi this fall?" asked Ninazu, changing subjects.

Thornton nodded. “Yes, it was decided by the Board of Trustees just before I left. I think Gésɛlékwɛs Maj Génadɛma will as well. So two instructors will be hired. They’ll need to speak Eryani as well, of course.”

“How well?”

“Not perfectly, though we’d love to have our génadɛma become a center of translation.”

Ninazu pondered and scratched his beard. “There are some people here I will introduce you to.”

A half hour after the bus going west on Route 31 left Anartu with Thornton and his party, another bus going eastward picked up Jordan, the youth team, and three Eryani-speaking Sumi Bahá'ís. It took them through a series of sonorous places: the large village of Guzizu, the third largest city of Gadauru, the small agricultural village of Kugananga, and finally the remote northeastern village of Sipadananga, the team’s destination for the next three weeks.

Sipadananga was distinctively different from the other places. Route 32 shrank to one poorly graveled lane for the last dozen kilometers, and the scattered utility poles had a single electric line and a single phone line strung between them. The place was old and dilapidated, unlike other nearby villages, which had been rebuilt after the earthquake and volcanic eruption of five years ago. Its nine hundred inhabitants were strung out along a stream, concentrated in a hamlet at the spot where the stream descended off the plateau and a second hamlet where the river reached the sea. Orchards and pockets of fields set among ancient lava flows were punctuated by tropical forest in between.

The bus dropped them off in front of the spot where the utility lines entered Lord Adapa's house, fifty meters from the shore. It turned around and headed back up the road, leaving them with a growing crowd of the curious.

"Who are you?" asked someone.

"These are Bahá'í youth from the mainland," replied Nérgalu, a very active Sumi Bahá'í who spent much of his time organizing Bahá'í activities around the island and who had accompanied them. "They have been invited here by the six Bahá'ís living here to visit and offer classes on all sorts of things."

"Do they speak Sumi?"

"A little," replied Jordan in Sumi, for he had learned that much.

That surprised and pleased them. Just then, Adapa came out of his house.

"Lord Adapa, I present to you Jordanu of the House of Mennea," exclaimed Nérgalu. "He has come with other Bahá'í youth for a month to be of assistance to Sipadananga."

"Excellent; welcome," The Lord extended his hands and shook while Nérgalu translated. He looked pleased and suspicious at the same time. "You are the brother of Honored Dhoru Mennea?"

"He is my uncle, Lord. We are very pleased to come and be of service to your people. We have various classes we can offer, for men or women." Jordan pointed to the other five and introduced them, one by one.

"We welcome your assistance and service to this village," replied Adapa. "Let us sit here and talk; the people can hear well." He sat on the ground, so the others did the same, and many villagers as well. "What classes can you offer?"

“Accounting, business, basic math, basic science, public health, use of sewing machines, and knitting. We can also talk about how business is done around the kingdom and the progress on the seven year development plan, which has six years to go.”

“It does not seem to be progressing much here; we are just as poor as ever,” said Adapa. “I understand there are factories and new businesses in Anartu and Amurueqluma. But we are seeing very little here.”

“Nothing,” corrected a villager.

“You have regular bus service,” said Nergalu. “That brings you things and helps people come and go.”

“No; our young people are getting on the bus and going, and they aren’t coming back,” replied Adapa. “Yes, the sick get on the bus, go to hospital, get cured, and return. But then they go to Anartu, Mɛlwika, Arjdhura, or Swadlɛndha for a new life. They are dead to us.”

“We are not ungrateful, honoreds,” added a villager named Eraru. “A mobile clinic comes here one day a month; to the upper village, that is, because it can’t get down here. We can sell some fish in the Anartu marketplace; we can export fruit and bush meat. We can use the telephone if there is a medical emergency or to find out whether the price of fish is better in Anartu or Gadauru. Certainly, I have much to be grateful for. When honored Dhoru came here five years ago to see the eruption of Evudingiru, I guided him to the peak and afterward was trained as a geologist. I am now the village school teacher, postmaster, and weather reporter, though I am trained in geology, a little science, and little else. But as you can see, none of us wear manufactured clothes; we make our own.

We are still a poor community and now we are a community that is losing its young. We'd rather keep our families intact, honoreds."

"And the undersea cable won't change things," continued Lord Adapa. "They are supposed to come ashore several kilometers north of here. The telephone lines for this island will go right through Sipadananga. I suppose we can get more telephones if we want; but the line we have now can handle a dozen phones, and we still have only one! The cable will do nothing for us." He spat out the last sentence emphatically.

"Our classes may help," said Nergalu, replying rather than waiting for Jordan to formulate a response. "Sewing machines will make sewing much easier, and several women can share one machine. Business training will allow you to open businesses."

"Businesses to serve whom; the villagers?" asked Eraru. "None of us have enough money to support businesses!"

"And we'd love to open factories to export items, but we don't have the money," added Adapa. "We are grateful for what you can offer us, but we think what we need is something else."

"They're putting a cable right through our land and we don't get anything," exclaimed a villager, and many others nodded and murmured agreement.

"I'll tell you what I think we need," said Eraru. "The cable has made me realize that we are the closest point of Sumilara to the mainland. Look at a map; we're less than 30 kilometers from Arjdhura, but Anartu's 75. If we had a harbor and a good road, ferry boats to Sumilara would come here instead of Anartu. On a good road, a bus can get you to Anartu from here in less than an hour, but a ferry takes three hours."

“I’ll tell you what Arjdhura needs that you have,” said Jordan. “Timber. You have a strip of dead forest along the coast, and from what I saw from the bus, some of the trees are enormous. That’s true of the north shore of the island as well. Mɛlwika has started importing wood from the Pɛnkakwés seashore in order to save its coal deposits. The lower Arjakwés valley has almost no timber at all, but it needs more and more of it, especially to slake lime and make gas.”

“There is a shortage of charcoal in Anartu as well,” added Nérgalu.

“Really?” said Adapa. “We have trees everywhere!”

“This is a possibility,” said Eraru. “How can your youth team help us with this idea?”

“We can make telephone calls,” said Jordan. “And ask people who are knowledgeable whether we are right, and what can be done to explore this idea.”

“Good,” said Lord Adapa. “Get me more information, and I’ll call on the governor. We have to take Bahá'í courses, also?”

“No. We have Bahá'í courses, but they are a gift to you. No one must feel an obligation to attend,” said Nergalu. “We are here to serve. We can offer many classes on practical subjects and many on spiritual subjects. People should come to the ones that they think will be interesting to them.”

“Understood,” said Adapa. “Eraru, they can use the school, right?”

“Of course, that is the arrangement we agreed to. Let me bring all of you to the school so you can get comfortable there; you’ve had a long trip. The school has two classrooms. You can use them as you wish.”

“You are kind,” replied Adapa. “And you have music?”

“We would like to organize a concert every evening, using your musicians and ours,” replied Jordan.

“You are welcome to do so,” replied Adapa. “We will have a celebration tonight, then.”

They had a very exciting and warm welcome to Sipadananga that evening, with all 900 villagers—and a hundred visitors from nearby Kahingiru—singing and dancing in traditional style and enjoying the team’s Eryani songs.

The next morning they had to prepare for their first classes; sewing with four machines they had brought along, cooking outside the school at a fireplace they had built the previous afternoon, two classes for adults on science and math in the classrooms, and a class about virtues for children. But Jordan was distracted because one of the Sumi Bahá'í youth who had come along to translate, a young woman named Tiamaté, was, to his eyes, breathtakingly beautiful.

He had barely noticed her on the bus the day before as they rode to Sipadananga, for she sat several rows in front of him. But that evening the light hit her hair a certain way and the beautiful shine had startled him. It seemed familiar; then he realized that like himself and his mother, her hair was a very unusual brownish black shade.

And her eyes: blue, very unusual for a Sumi, and piercing. Her cheeks and chin were distinct and met the Eryanɛ standard of high beauty, which was measured more by a woman’s face than by her figure.

By the next morning he wanted to speak to her. Her Eryani, though accented, was excellent, and that surprised him as well. When she finally stepped outside to help set up the sewing machines, he rose from his seat.

"They're a bit heavy; let me help," he offered.

"Thank you, but they aren't that bad," she replied.

"I'd like to be of service."

"Then you are welcome." She smiled at him and he smiled back. They went outside, each carrying one sewing machine, and began to open the protective boxes to set them up on a table that had already been moved under a tree.

"I'm impressed by your Eryani."

"That's very kind of you. My father is an army officer and my mother is Sumi, so I know both fairly well."

"Ah, that explains it. And you live in Anartu?"

"Yes, in the army base."

"How did you hear of the Faith?"

"I have some friends who know Nérgalu. I went to a study circle and was fascinated; the Faith is a bridge for me, connecting the religion and culture of my mother and my father. So I became a Bahá'í very fast; within a week!"

Really? And I guess your father didn't object, since he let you come on this trip."

"He worships ɛndro, the old god of war; as you probably know, even though Widumaj condemned his worship, he continues to be worshiped in the army. My mother worships Kié, the Sumi goddess of fertility, who is the patron divinity of Anartu. You've probably seen her temple next to the central square. They were surprised I was

worshiping Dingira instead of Kié, and my mom thinks the reason I'm not married is because I won't go to the temple with her, but they've accepted it. As for this trip: Nérgalu said something to my father, but I still don't know what! It worked; he gave permission."

Jordan chuckled. "He's pretty persuasive."

"He's got an army grandfather and uncle, so he has the connection. Most of the Anartu Bahá'ís have some sort of army connection. Bilara's different; they're pure Sumi."

"So I gather. How big is the Anartu community?"

"Maybe three dozen adults; not very large. Bilara's the center of activity. Are you planning to go there as well?"

"Maybe. The plan right now is to go across the island on Route 37, along the base of the uplands where the villages are smallest and poorest. They need economic development the most and may be the most receptive to the Faith. But we'll go southward to other towns and villages as well."

"That makes sense. You already know a little Sumi, but if you used the summer to learn more, your team would be more effective. Eryanɛ who are willing to learn Sumi: that's the most amazing and respected group of all."

"You're right." Jordan nodded. "Will you teach me?"

"Me? Nérgalu would be better!"

"But he'll be busy with all his classes, and with translating. Maybe you'll have more time."

"Alright." She smiled at him; she liked Jordan as well. "I'll give it a try."

“Good.” Jordan smiled as well, showing his attraction to her. Then he remembered the work they were supposed to be doing. “Oh, the sewing machines. Let’s get to them.”

She nodded and they continued to set them up. They were powered by foot pedals, and the length of the rod connecting the foot pedal to the sewing machine’s flywheel had to be adjusted so that it would work conveniently. He showed her how to do it and she picked it up right away.

“You’re good at that.”

“Thank you; I have an eye for this sort of thing.”

“So I see. What are you planning to study in génadɛma?”

“I don’t know. Ninurta has a very limited number of concentrations and Anarbala won’t accept girls. Maybe I can convince my dad to let me go to Arjdhura.”

“Or Mɛlwika.”

“Do you think I could?”

“Why not? There’s a women’s géndha; they can study anything they want, but they are chaperoned at night. I’m sure you could get in.”

“Interesting idea. What are you studying?”

“I’ve completed one general year of courses. I have considered science; too much math for me. And business: too money oriented. But now we’re creating a Development Department and I think I’ll major in development, because it involves many kinds of subjects.”

“Really? How intriguing.”

“I think it will be.”

They had the sewing machines set up, so they went inside to get Gramé and Damkiané, who were going to run the class. Local women were already stopping to gawk at the machines.

Jordan was disappointed; Tiamaté was not available to translate for him. Instead, Eraru, the local teacher, planned to do it, and his Eryani was atrocious. Jordan had to repeat everything several times to Eraru to make sure the man understood him, and the puzzled looks on those gathered to listen to him suggested Eraru still wasn't sure what Jordan meant. Finally he fell back on asking Eraru what the Sumi words for particular ideas were, then while the man translated he wrote them down. Tiamaté was right; he had to learn more Sumi so he could do a lot of the translating himself. The other advantage of that approach was that Lord Adapa knew something about the Development Plan—the topic of Jordan's presentation—and was able to supply some of the necessary terms.

Half way through the morning they took a break and Jordan hurried outside to call Thornton's cell phone. He couldn't call earlier; Amurueqluma was two time zones to the west, so it was still early there. He had to let it ring a long time before his uncle answered.

"Hello?" He answered in English.

"Uncle Thornton, this is Jordan. Have you five minutes?"

"Barely, I'm about to have tea with the famous philosopher Talrando. How's Sipadananga?"

"Pretty good. We had a lot of fun singing and dancing with the people last night, and the first classes started this morning. Translation's the big headache."

"Yes, you've got to learn Sumi to solve the problem, but it's a hard language to learn."

"I'm trying, though. And I've met a beautiful translator here, too. But I called to find out if you plan to come this way with a geology class."

"Maybe; why?"

"Because the village here is upset that they are so cut off from development. That was the theme of discussions yesterday afternoon after we arrived, it was an undercurrent last night, and it's a big issue in the class I'm giving this morning. They have a lot of timber and could export it to the mainland and to Anartu and the other coastal towns if they had a harbor with a dock. The river mouth provides a pretty good harbor, too."

"I remember. There must be a lot of flooded forest there, too."

"Yes, a lot of dead trees, and the shoreline is a tangled mess of trees washed in by the waves. Do you think they could create a harbor here and start exporting timber?"

There was a pause. "It's worth exploring. Demand for wood is skyrocketing in the lower Arjakwés; the cement factory being built at Nuarjora will have a gas plant and needs an incredible amount of wood to reduce calcium carbonate to quicklime and to make gas for the lower valley pipeline. Most of the new factories the Jérdomasi Tomi is building will use gas."

"The quality of the wood is a lot better here and along the northern shore of Sumilara than it is in Pɛnkakwés or the north shore."

"I agree. I plan to call the Geological Survey later today, so I'll ask them to pull aerial photos of Sipadananga and send them to me. If I can get there, I'll bring them. The old ones showing the old shoreline tell you the current depth of the water."

“Can you have someone design a good dock for the villagers?”

“I think we can arrange that.”

“Great, that’d be really helpful! I don’t want to tie you up very long, but who would I call to find out about timber contracts?”

“I’d start with my dad, or even yours; he runs the gas company investing in the gas plant and the cement factory at Nuarjora.”

“That’s true. I’ll call them later today, then. Thanks, Dhoru.”

“I’ll be glad to come and help, just let me know when.”

“I will. The people here remember you fondly, so please come! Bye.”

“Bye.” Thornton closed his cell phone rather quickly; he was late to meet with Talrando. He hurried back inside Ninazu’s villa and to the dining room. The philosopher had already arrived and was talking to the other guests.

“I apologize, honored Talrando,” said Thornton.

The philosopher rose. “Do not apologize. Sometimes I get called away also. Your Sumi sounds excellent, honored.” Talrando extended one hand—the Sumis did not shake with two hands, as did the Eryan—and Thornton grasped it with a smile.

“You are kind, honored. But my accent is better than my vocabulary, so don’t be fooled. I have much to learn.”

“Still, you have started, and that is very impressive. I’ve already met your wife and children, and complimented her on her Sumi as well.”

“We studied it together with Randu and Nina.”

“Ah, that explains the trace of accent I thought I could hear.”

“I’ve invited Talrando to stay here as well,” said Lord Ninazu.

“The bus trip is reasonably convenient, but this kindness will be easier.” Talrando sat at his place on a pillow on the floor, in front of a low table, and Thornton sat opposite him. “I very much enjoyed the program last night with the summary of all the classes. But I gather there are no Bahá'í classes.”

“That is correct. These are classes sponsored by the génadɛma, not by the Bahá'í Faith. If you want Bahá'í classes, there are some in Anartu.”

Talrando shook his head and waved his hand. “No, no. I went to a class in Anartu; a Ruhi Book One. Ghastly. Or perhaps I should say that it was for a very different purpose than what I seek. I want to know about your god and his ethics. I am not interested in prayer and the afterlife, or learning how to hold a devotional program in my house.”

“I understand. The Ruhi series is not what you seek, then.”

“Perhaps you can start a special class?”

“When, honored? I teach all morning and afternoon!”

“The evening, then. There are already optional events, like music and lectures, for those who can stay.”

“I think, honored, if we split the task among three or four of us, we could do it,” suggested Lébé.

“That’s a good idea,” agreed Thornton. “Lébé knows theology and ethics better than I, honored. I am primarily a scientist.”

Talrando eyed Lébé, no doubt wondering what it would be like to have a woman giving a class, as that was not done on Sumilara. “I get the impression that you Bahá'ís live in a moral universe, one where there is meaning and purpose to everything, even the

eruption of Evudingiru. The Eryan, with their Widumaj and Esto, live in such a world as well. We Sumi find such a world very foreign and naïve. Our belief in the gods is not simply a failure to understand the idea of one god; it is a realization that the universe, like human society, is full of many uncoordinated, random, and dangerous forces. I have never heard a monotheist explain this fact."

Thornton nodded and chewed on his bread and jam for a moment. "Perhaps you should take my course in basic science that I will be offering next week. You see, all the apparent chaos you note is only possible because there is inherent order; there are laws controlling the behavior of objects. If there were no laws of nature, we would not exist, there would be no life, there would be no stars, no sun, no Éra at all. For example, there is a law of gravity that causes particles to attract each other; think of it as an expression of love between inanimate, dead particles. That law of gravity causes particles to fall together and cling to each other; without it, Éra could never have come together as a ball of rock. But the attraction also causes pressure, it causes heat, the heat and pressure cause rock to melt a long way down where the pressure of the overlying rock is high, melted rock is buoyant and rises through cracks in the solid rock, and when it reaches the surface it explodes out and creates Evudingiru. So you see, the law of gravity makes this world possible, but it has consequences. And this teaches us a basic lesson: nothing in this world is purely good. But there is definitely a pattern, an inherent order."

Talrando considered Thornton's observation, and he was speechless for a long time. "We believe in the Way of the Universe, so we accept the idea of an order behind the chaos. But I have never heard such an explanation as yours. I must meditate on it."

"I think the moral laws are the same way," added Lébé. "There is no simple formula that determines right and wrong. It is a complex calculation; it requires balancing principles and exercising wisdom. This is not because the moral world is chaotic, but because it is complex. It is like a language. When an Eryanɛ learns Sumi, or a Sumi learns Eryani, inevitably he complains that the language is too complicated; why are there two adjectives with slight shades of different meaning when a single adjective will do? But a simple language is a language with limitations. The complexity makes it rich and forces people to stretch their abilities. It is the same with morality."

"You are right about the need for wisdom," agreed Talrando. "I will meditate on your answer. Definitely, Honored Thornton, you should do an evening class on religion."

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317.

More Tomis

First wk Dhonménu/late July 13/631

It was two weeks before Thornton could get to Sipadananga with a geology class. The first week in Amurueqluma he gave a fifteen-hour basic science course, the second week a basic geology course; but the courses only met five days a week and on Primdius everyone supposedly rested, so he was able to bring a team of enthusiastic geologists on that day. Getting out of Amurueqluma was a kind of relaxation, especially since Lébé and the kids came along on the bus with a picnic lunch.

Much of the village turned out when the bus arrived. Lord Adapa came out right away to shake their hands and even kissed the kids. Jordan was right behind.

"Hey, there you are!" said Thornton to Jordan, in Sumi.

"I'm here," he replied in Sumi, and they hugged quickly. Thornton looked at his young nephew, who looked more mature and confident all the time. "You're doing well," he added in Eryani.

"We're doing very well here. Our classes are popular, the evening concerts are very popular, and we have twenty people taking Ruhi Book One. I think the next class will have two or three times that number."

"Excellent. Incredible." Thornton turned to Eraru, who was nearby. "Eraru, it's been a long time."

"It's very good to see you again, honored." They shook hands warmly and Thornton introduced Lébé and the children to him. "I'm sorry you can't stay, honored."

"So am I, but I'm teaching courses morning and afternoon, five days a week, and sometimes a class in the evenings as well. It is very difficult! We have eight hundred people taking courses, so many that we have to offer every course twice to packed classrooms." Thornton pointed to the eight geologists who had accompanied him. "I hope you have some boats or canoes. I remember you had a few when I was here before, though they were a long way away because sea level was much lower. We want to go out in boats and measure the depths of your harbor so we can make a map. We'll also walk the shoreline to see where a dock could be built."

"Do you think we can attract ferries, honored?" asked Lord Adapa.

Thornton nodded. "I do. You have a lot of timber; no question about that. I have aerial photographs of the area. You have a good harbor here and north of here there's a very large area of flooded, dead forest. You can cut down the trees at sea level and tow three or four trees across the strait at once with a steam boat. Even better, the army may be willing to bring dynamite every few days and blow up trees for you, which will be faster and cheaper. That's the arrangement on the western shore."

"But honored, we don't have a steam ship," said Adapa.

"You don't need to own one. Arjdhura has an extra one and they'll send it to haul trees for a fee. You'll make a profit and so will they. I talked to a friend, Randu, who runs the Arjdhura Génadɛma, and he talked to the lord who owns the ferries. He'll send it. But you'll need to build a dock. I have the specifications of the docks at Arjdhura and will leave them. I think you can build the dock you need yourselves."

"Can we get a sawmill, honored?"

“Yes; but the basic unit costs five thousand dhanay. Start by exporting timber and making money, then a bank will loan you the money to buy more equipment. I think you have a good chance of getting a regular ferry run, and since the ferry run will take a bit over an hour instead of three hours, the ferryboat owner can get in three times as many runs and haul that much more cargo.”

“How do we do this,” asked Adapa, looking at the others.

“You’ve taken some basic business classes here,” noted Jordan.

“Send someone to Amurueqluma,” added Thornton. “It’s a one-hour bus ride every day. We have eight hundred people from almost every village and town on the island at our free génadɛma! We have accounting and business courses. And in two weeks when the génadɛma ends we’ll have a course about planning businesses, and the course will include representatives of the two banks and the governor’s office. It’ll end with a gathering to plan development projects.”

“I’ll go myself, then!” said Adapa.

“I’ll organize the boats,” said Eraru. He bowed slightly and headed to the river mouth, where Thornton could see dugout canoes pulled upon the bank. Thornton exchanged a few more words with Adapa, then headed for the harbor with the geologists.

Lébé and the kids were left standing. They turned to Jordan. “Come over to the school,” he said. “Chat with the women; they’ll enjoy meeting you. Do you need a translator?”

“I don’t think so, but someone should watch the kids.”

“I will; I haven’t seen them for a few weeks! Tiamaté will help me.”

“Tiamaté?”

Jordan smiled and blushed slightly. “She’s one of our translators. A marvelous person.” Jordan looked over at the school nearby; she was standing outside, so he waved her to come over. A few seconds later she arrived. “Tiamaté, this is Lébé Ménnéa, the wife of my uncle.”

Tiamaté smiled. “Very pleased to meet you. You’re a translator of Bahá'í scriptures into Eryani, right?”

“Yes, and I’ve been editor of the newsletter in the past as well.”

“I haven’t been a Bahá'í for very long; just a few months.”

“Your Eryani is beautiful.”

“Thank you, my father’s a Major in the army stationed in Anartu, and my mother’s Sumi. My Eryani’s not very educated, I’m afraid; I went to Anartu High School, so my education is in Sumi.”

“Still, the accent is very clear. So, have you finished high school?”

“Yes, and I have taken several courses at Ninurta Génadɛma, though as I said to Jordan, my choices for fields of study are rather limited, and of course my father is pretty conservative; he wants me to get married.”

“Not so conservative, that he prevented your studies!”

“True, but that’s my mother’s influence!”

“They sound like quite a pair,” said Jordan. He moved closer to Tiamaté.

Lébé noticed the closeness. “So, have you grown up in Anartu?”

“No, father was stationed in Kostakhéma for a while when I was little and in Tripola later, then we came back here about six years ago. He thinks he’ll be relocated to

ɛndraidha next year. He's concerned about my brother, who's now fourteen; he wants him to go to ɛndraidha high school so he is ready for officer school."

"That's prudent. What have you been studying so far?"

"Languages, Sumi literature, some science, economics . . . Jordan's been telling me about the field of development and it sounds fascinating. And I wish I could study the Faith in more detail. Are there any génadɛma courses on the Faith?"

"It's funny you ask, because the great philosopher Talrando asked for such a course in Amurueqluma, so we have quickly created one. And we plan to do advanced courses at the summer schools in Pértatranisér and Mɛddwoglubas. But maybe we need to schedule such courses at the génadɛmas as well."

"I'd love that."

"Have you thought of applying to go to Mɛlwika Génadɛma, especially the Women's Géndha?"

"Jordan has suggested it, but I had never thought of it before. I doubt father would permit it, and if he did I know he wouldn't pay for it."

"That's a reason to apply to the women's géndha. It has scholarship money exactly for that situation."

"Really?" Tiamaté looked at Jordan. "Maybe I should."

"I think so," he agreed.

Bɛllɛdha was surging with crowds as Chris, Mitrudatu, and Luktréstu drove around the city and entered the north gate. It was the quietest, easiest way to reach the new palace,

which was half built on the northern approach to Central Square, the city's revitalized commercial center. The guards reluctantly admitted the rover into the palace's central plaza, which had numerous vehicles parked on its grass, and pointed them to the side of the palace where Prince Mɛméjékwu's quarters and offices were located.

They entered and encountered Duke Déolu just inside the door talking to an assistant. "Lord Kristobéru, welcome!" he said.

"Thank you, greetings to you, Your Grace." They shook hands. "As always, the city is packed during the summer festival."

"Indeed, and the crowd seems even larger this year; I hear extra buses brought people from Pɛnkakwés and Jérnstisér. So we are attracting from an even larger area this year."

"How are sales?"

"Very good. We're still counting the tax revenues from yesterday."

"And the regional assembly?"

Déolu smiled slightly. "It is pliant and obedient in the presence of the prince," he said ambiguously.

"If you disqualify people from the body for being outspoken, that happens," noted Mitrudatu.

"Is the prince ready for us?" asked Chris.

"He is meeting with Estoiyaju and Weranu right now, but I can take you there. This way." Déolu started down the hall.

"Thank you." Chris looked around. "A beautiful palace."

“Yes, two hundred local workers and one hundred Sumi artisans have labored on it for a year and a half, and it is still not quite done. But it’ll be done by late winter. I’m asking whether I can move in when the royal family is absent; it is much more comfortable than my residence!”

“It looks it.”

There was a pause as they walked along the corridor. “Jordanu isn’t with you?”

“No, he’s spending the summer on village development projects.”

“A noble effort.”

“Honored Déolu, I have a business proposition for you. We’re starting soccer teams in Mɛlwika, Tripola, and Néfa. They’ll play against each other and any other teams we can organize; we want them to play one or two games a week, maybe three, all year except the winter. People will pay a dontay or two to watch, but several thousand can watch at once, so that amounts to a lot of money.”

“Really? Interesting. How much will it cost?”

“Hard to say. We figure the expenses of the team will be 30,000 a year, but we don’t know the revenues. If they play 150 games and collect 200 dhanay at each, their expenses will be covered. If the games become very popular, the revenue should exceed expenses. Even if they don’t, a good team becomes the pride of the province and a symbol of its achievements.”

“I see what you mean. Where will we get players?”

“I already have identified two or three here in Bɛllɛdha and they want to recruit their friends. They tell me there are several semiregular teams that play on the high school field.”

“That’s true; there’s a game almost every night. How did you meet these players?”

“The Mɛlwika Bahá'í Summer School had a soccer tournament. The plan and the potential teams emerged among the good players there.”

“I see. Good. I’ll find some merchants to support the team, and maybe the city and province can kick in a little. I think Bɛllɛdha needs something like that.” Déolu stopped in front of a door and knocked. A moment later, a voice inside bade them to enter. They stepped directly into the prince’s office, a very large space with a conference table and a desk. Wɛranu and Estoiyaju were still there, pouring over columns of figures, with Aryéstu, the economist.

“Ah, honoreds, come in,” said the prince, who sounded in a good mood. “Lord Kristobéru, you are doing something right. It appears taxes are running fifteen percent ahead of this time last year, which means three million dhanay of extra taxes for everyone; the crown, provinces, and villages.”

“Congratulations, Your Majesty. This world has a lot of talent and people want to work and earn a living for their families. It used to have a lot of underemployment, but that’s changing now.”

“In fact, the construction industry faces a labor shortage, wouldn’t you say?” asked Aryéstu.

Chris nodded. “We’re having trouble hiring workers in the lower Arjakwés to build all the factories needed for the Tomi Jérdomasi. That’s why the work’s running a week behind schedule after only four weeks. We’ve had to raise salaries twenty percent.”

"And that's causing other problems," added Mitrudatu. "I planted a lot of tomatoes on my estate and I'm having trouble hiring pickers; the grange can't send enough, so I've had to raise wages twenty percent as well."

"But total harvest is dropping a little, right?" asked Mɛméjékwu. "I think that's a good thing; the harvest is running too large and crop prices are too low."

"I think that's right, based on the tax receipts in Mɛlita and Mɛlwika over the last month," agreed Chris. "I, too, would prefer to collect more taxes on less crops, but the difficulty is that everyone may have to pay more wages to compete for workers, including manufacturers, who then have to pass the higher costs on as higher prices, so you get inflation."

"I understand," agreed Mɛméjékwu. "We are suffering from inflation, too; at least five percent, maybe ten. It's pushing up interest rates, too. We saw your report about the labor shortage and the higher wages and the need to train more people to do construction to higher standards. This problem must be solved, Lord Kristobéru, because construction has to increase in future years, not decrease. I've been consulting with these gentlemen all of yesterday about the problem. We want to start a tomi in every province; a Rudhisér Tomi, a Véspa Tomi, etc. The crown will no longer be building palaces after this one is finished; we will devote that million dhanay to industrial expansion instead, supplemented by at least a million from the general budget and a million from the old houses pension budget. We want these tomis to be owned via shares and we want merchants and others to feel confident that they can invest in them."

"We figure we need at least a million dhanay a year of private investment as well," added Aryéstu.

“And some of that should come from the people,” added the prince. “What do you think of this idea: rather than raising wages twenty percent, we leave them flat and offer people an additional twenty percent in the form of shares in the tomi?”

Chris considered that. “I think you’ll need to give a partial raise. Perhaps a ten percent raise in salary and a twenty percent raise in the form of shares. Make them salable after ten years and don’t tax them until they are sold.”

“That’s a lot,” replied the prince, shaking his head. “What about the other benefits; day care, health care, access to education? Can we cut back on them?”

“Your Majesty, these are benefits not just to the workers, but to the shareholders as well,” replied Chris. “The longer a worker lives a healthy life, the more experienced he or she becomes as a worker. If a retirement pension accumulates, old age is taken care of, and meanwhile the pension money is available for investment. If child care is provided, women can work as well as men and the labor pool doubles in size, eliminating shortages. Of course, all of this has to be done carefully and professionally; otherwise the factory goes bankrupt and the pension is lost. The purpose of these factories is to benefit people, not just a few.”

“You sound like my mother,” complained the prince. “But remember, we can’t raise labor costs too high; no one will buy the products, and if there is no profit, no one invests.”

“There has to be a balance,” agreed Aryéstu. “I think it makes sense to give the workers some shares of the tomi, though. That’s a future reward. We are basically borrowing labor and are paying later.”

"I agree, and twenty or maybe thirty percent of salary would work," said Chris. "How will we set up all these tomis? What will they do?"

"Each will be based in a province, probably in one industrial park near the capital," replied Mɛméjékwu. "Each will run many different industries. Each will be open to investment by anyone, the wealthy or the farmer. The crown will add investment money every year. The crown will appoint the initial Board; later, large investors will vote for its members annually and the small investors will get a share of the profits. The tomis will not be taxed directly, but the workers and investors will pay income tax, as they do today. The crown will not claim a profit; it will just invest and collect the taxes. Next year's crown budget, if everything continues to expand, will set aside four million dhanay for investment in the tomis."

"We'll need your help to set up the tomis," added Estoiyaju to Chris. "In fact, we need that effort to start right away. As Her Majesty travels around the kingdom, she will announce the establishment of a tomi in every place. She plans to announce the Lɛpawsakɛla Tomi tomorrow."

"Everywhere?" asked Chris, absorbing the idea.

Estoiyaju nodded. "Everywhere. When she makes a three-day stop at Sumiupɛrakwa, she will announce a Jérnstisér Tomi. Of course, it's a very small province; funding will be proportional to population and organization. Even Lɛwéspa can have a provincial tomi, if they can find a place among the textile factories to add more factories!"

“Duke Aryu was here yesterday and he headed back to Ora immediately to reorganize his factories into a Véspa Tomi,” added Estoiyaju. “Lɛwéspa may wish to do something similar, because crown investment will be available for expansion.”

“What about the tutanɛ?” asked Chris.

“Every tribe can have its own tomi,” replied Mɛméjékwu. “Mɛlwika Motors is already a tomi, and it can apply for crown financing too, I suppose. Villages or granges that have their own factories can convert them into tomis—we have a tomi incorporation law now, and it is a good law—and any tomi can apply for crown investment. It’s the only way we can expand the economy consistently at ten percent per year.”

“Ten percent per year *after inflation,”* clarified Aryéstu. “This year’s growth was fifteen percent *with inflation,* and we’re still trying to figure out what it was when inflation is subtracted. It wasn’t ten percent.”

“The economy was growing through expansions in agriculture, but now it must grow industrially,” said Chris. “That costs more and requires more training and education.”

“We want you to give us names of people with business and accounting training in the various provinces,” said Estoiyaju. “We need to know whom we can appoint to the initial boards.”

“I can do that. The Mennea Tomi has offices here, in Pértatranisér, and Tripola. My people in those offices know the local businessmen and their abilities. And I have other contacts where I can get information.”

Mɛméjékwu pointed a finger at him. “Not too many Bahá'ís.”

“Your Majesty, many of the people with training in the new knowledge are Bahá'ís,” objected Aryéstu. “They are often the best choices.”

“Nevertheless, I don’t want too many Bahá'ís. I’ll concede that it was a mistake to kick them off the consultative assemblies; we won’t do that again. They are loyal to the crown and that overrides other concerns. But loyalty to the crown is not relevant in a money-making concern. I want as many traditional believers trained in the new knowledge as possible.”

“Understood, Your Majesty,” said Chris.

Mɛméjékwu picked up a balance sheet. “As for Jérdomasi Tomi, keep the labor and materials costs under control; no more than a ten percent increase. Give workers shares equal to an additional fifteen percent of salary. I don’t know what to say about increases in costs of materials, but keep them to ten percent as well.”

“All this construction is forcing up demand for cement, brick, wood, glass, and stone,” said Chris. “That’s the problem. More production is possible if a night shift is added, but the producers have to pay the workers thirty to fifty percent more to work at night. That’s what happened when Mɛlwika Motors expanded, and construction costs overran the budget by thirty percent.”

“Tell them to take less profit, or cut your costs elsewhere,” replied the prince. “Ten percent only.”

“Your Majesty, you’re asking us to speed the project up *and* control costs. This is not possible. You need to trust us to set the schedule and maintain a reasonable budget. It is the only way.” Chris said the last sentence ominously.

“Kristobéru, speed, price, quality: there are three factors. Work your quality. Leave one end of the factory open so you can get the building ready to operate, then close it later. These factories are in a good climate and it won’t get cold for six months. Make the buildings a bit smaller. Leave the glass out of the windows for now. Spread out the demand for materials, but get the factories operating. I know I can count on you. And I know you don’t want to know the penalties for failure.”

Mitrudatu shifted around uncomfortably. Chris swallowed his anger.

“Very well, Your Majesty. I will do this because I love the people of this world.”

The Sumilara Development conference capping the month-long free génadɛma at Amurueqluma filled the large tent behind the Police and Fire Academy. Thornton and Lébé were eating lunch at a long table near the front with Lord Ninazi, his father, Dumuzi, Talrando, and a few others when one of Ninazi’s servants approached. “Governor Modobéru has arrived.”

“Please invite him here immediately!” said Dumuzi. He looked at Ninazi, seated at his right hand.

“We’ll all shift down,” said Ninazi, for there was no other place for the governor to sit but at Dumuzi’s right, the place of honor. That entire side of the table rose and everyone began to shift their chairs and plates to make room. Dumuzi himself hurried to a nearby buffet table to load up a plate for the governor, returning just seconds before the governor entered the tent.

Everyone at the table rose again; in fact, all thousand people sitting on the floor rose to their feet and stopped talking. Modobéru nodded in thanks to them all and bade them to sit. He extended his hands to Dumuzi.

"Greetings, Honored Dumuzi! It's so good to see you again."

"Welcome, Governor Modobéru. We have a place ready for you."

"Thank you. Have you been here all month?"

"No, I arrived from Mɛlwika yesterday."

Modobéru turned to Ninazi next, greeting him, then Thornton, Randu, and a few others, then he sat at the newly prepared place for him. "How has the month gone?" he asked Thornton.

"Very well, honored governor. We have offered seventy-four different fifteen-hour courses to over three thousand attendees—the eight hundred here took several courses—and the translation issues have been handled fairly well. The students were, as expected, bright and eager."

"This island has the brightest and most eager. And the development conference?"

"This morning we had a talk by Widubéru, head of the Development Corps, about the Seven Year Development Plan, then we broke all thousand people into seventy groups of about fifteen each to discuss the talk and make specific recommendations; we asked people to either gather based on their village, so they could talk about its needs, or by a sector, like agriculture, industry, roads, health, education, fishing, etc. We hope to have written reports from as many of the groups as possible and tomorrow Ninazi will give a summary of them for the keynote address."

"Are you ready for your keynote this afternoon?" asked Ninazi.

Modobéru nodded. “Indeed. I plan to remind everyone that our volcanoes erupt every decade—this is the obligatory concession to the mainland that we need them—and then turn to an outline of the major achievements that are necessary if we are to keep up with the mainland.”

“How’s the cable going?” asked Thornton.

“Quite well, they’re now laying 1.5 kilometers per day. They’ll reach the northeastern corner of the island in a mere two weeks. Of course, no one has yet laid the telephone lines to Sipadananga necessary to connect to the cables!”

“But that’s another month or so,” observed Dumuzi. “Things are about to change greatly for the better. No more long waits to make calls.”

“It will help a lot.” Modobéru turned to Thornton. “Have you heard anything about the palace’s decision to establish tomis in every province?”

“Yes, I heard from my father that Her Majesty announced the plan in Bɛllɛdha last week, when my father was there.”

“Three days later, she announced a Tomi for Jérnstisér,” observed Modobéru. “And last night she announced in Néfa the formation of a Rudhisér Tomi; she even listed the seven members of the Board of Directors. I called Estoiyaju just before leaving Anartu and confirmed the news.”

“Is this a plan for every province?” asked Ninazu.

“So I understand from Estoiyaju, though he did not specifically include Sumilara. Honored Dhoru, did you hear from your father that it is for every province?”

“Indeed. He even said Tutanɛ tribes could have their own.”

“That confirms it, then,” said Modobéru. “Before I speak this afternoon, perhaps Thornton could make an announcement that three provincial tomis have now been set up and that the development conference should include discussion of a Sumilara Tomi.”

“Me? The announcement won’t have much credibility.”

“It will if I confirm it and focus part of my talk on it. We have a million dhanay in this audience; a lot of merchant families and old houses are represented. We have the possibility of getting organized before many other provinces. Sumiupɛrakwa responded right away with a committee and a local commitment. The Rudhisér Assembly is debating the subject today and will allocate funding. We can’t wait.”

“What will we call a Tomi in Sumi?” asked Thornton.

“ ‘Suluppu,’ ” replied Dumuzi. “It’s a certain kind of bountiful date palm. It plays a role in some myths as the tree that feeds the world and orients us to the gods. That’s similar to the ‘shade tree’ image of the tomi.”

“I’ll use *suluppu* in my speech, then,” said Modobéru. “We’ll need three industrial parks; here, Anartu, and somewhere on the eastern side of the island, probably Galulia, so that we have one industrial park on the central plateau as well.”

“We badly need better infrastructure to support them,” warned Ninazu.

“I know. We’re about to get better electrical and telephone lines connecting the plateau villages. Concreting the road from Anartu to Amurrueqluma starts this winter. We’re getting that instead of a new royal palace; a million dhanay over two years to concrete one hundred twenty-five kilometers of roads.” Everyone oohed over that news. “It’s half of what we need, but it’s a good start. Don’t say your governor isn’t working for you!” He turned to Thornton. “So, you’ll make the announcement?”

"Yes."

Jordan was lugging the last items of the youth team into Lord Adapa's house from the school when Adapa came out to see him. "I wish you and the others could stay another month. I don't think Sipadananga will ever be the same. We have so many ideas and possibilities, not to mention the new skills . . . we are very thankful." He extended his hand.

Jordan shook hands warmly and gratefully. "You are kind, lord. We are really happy we were able to spend the time here, for we have learned much from your people. It was a privilege to facilitate some new developments."

"You must come back! Before you leave the island at the end of the summer, we'll have the women's gabruli building and the dock finished. We already have a small timber contract, so we have to get them done!"

"We'll definitely visit. I'll try to be back next year as well. I hope you have no objection to twenty-five people becoming Bahá'ís?"

"As I already told you, people here are free to decide for themselves. The gods have not protected us from Evudingiru or from the Eryanɛ; if anything, the Eryanɛ god seems to be rising into dominance. If everyone here accepted Bahá'u'lláh, it would be alright with me. Shall I write my cousin in Galulia about this matter?"

"No, lord, you already wrote to him and already gave us a letter of introduction. We are very grateful."

"I'll write him again. I'm glad you're going there. You'll be comfortable there and will be treated well."

The phone rang in another room. Adapa looked back and heard his son pick it up. A moment later he called, “It’s for Jordanu.”

“For me?” Adapa nodded, so Jordan headed into the lord’s house. His son handed him the phone. “Khélo?”

“Jordan, is that you. It’s Tiamaté.”

He could hear upset in her voice. “Tiamaté, are you alright? You made it home alright?”

“Yes, there was no problem with the buses. But Jordanu, I told my father I wanted to apply to the Mɛlwika Women’s Géndha and he was absolutely furious. I don’t think I’ve ever seen him so angry in my life. He totally forbade it; he left no room for appeal. I’m afraid I got a bit angry and raised my voice, so he forbade me to accompany the youth team to Mɛddwoglubas summer school. So . . . I’m afraid I won’t be able to meet you at Amurueqluma this afternoon. I have to stay home.”

“Tiamaté, I’m so sorry! Is there anything we can do? What about next week, when we move to Galulia?”

“He forbade me to go there, too. He wants me here the rest of the summer. But Nérgalu should come talk to him. Maybe that’ll work.”

“Did you mention . . . me to him?”

“No, I didn’t dare, Jordanu. I think he would have arranged a marriage for me on the spot. No, I’m sorry, Jordanu, I don’t see any way I’ll get to Mɛlwika. I can’t displease my father.”

“Of course, I understand. I wouldn’t displease my father and mother, either. Let’s say some prayers, Tiamaté, maybe he’ll change his mind.”

“I doubt it, but I’ll pray, Jordanu, and I’ll pray for you.”

“Thank you, and I’ll pray for you every day, Tiamaté. I’ll think of you every day, too.”

“No, don’t think of me, just pray.”

“Alright. Will I . . . see you again?”

“I don’t know, Jordanu. I don’t know.” Her voice broke from the emotion. “I . . . had better go, this call will be expensive. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye.” He hung up the phone, tears in his eyes, and he realized that he loved her and that she loved him. And they might never see each other again.

Reread and edited, 6/8/13, 8/21/17, 11/22/24, 9/28/26

318.

Mɛddwoglubas

19-20 Dhonménu/9-10 August Yr 13/631

Thornton and Amos slowly drove the two steam cars through Mɛddwoglubas, which was choked by people, pickup trucks, and buses. The narrow road to the old castle overlooking town was even worse; they chugged up slowly at the speed of pedestrians because there was no room to pass them. On top they hunted for parking spaces and finally drove around to the side of the castle to park in the tall grass near the postern gate. They knocked on the gate loudly and were pleased when Lua and Chris opened it for them.

"You made it!" said Chris. "We just finished some supper and were about to go to the evening gathering."

"Traffic is terrible!" replied Thornton. "I don't think I've ever seen anything like it before. And the parking!"

"A lot of Bahá'ís have obtained pickups from their granges for a few days to get here conveniently," agreed Chris. "I was surprised to see them all. Come inside. I apologize I can't help unload all of your stuff, but my right knee is very painful today."

"Don't worry, we can do it," replied Amos. He already had a load of stuff in hand. He entered with it and Chris pointed. "We have these six rooms," he said. "Liz and I are sleeping in this room, here. We have three rooms for the couples, a room for male grandchildren, and one for female grandchildren. Take your pick."

“Okay, thanks.” Amos walked down the hall and took the farthest room. They weren’t large rooms and all had doors connecting them together; in fact, only two had doors onto the hallway. They had one bathroom together, also.

Lua helped move suitcases and direct children, and in five minutes they had everything moved in and the cars locked up. They trooped into Chris and Liz’s room to greet Liz, who was in bed. “Don’t worry, I’m on the mend,” she insisted.

“You look pretty pale, mom,” said Thornton, worriedly, as he leaned down to kiss her.

“I feel pale, too. Lua says I’ll be fine, I just need some rest. It’s an intestinal infection, so anyone touching me should wash their hands.” She sighed. “I’m glad I’m here. I endured this infection for three weeks while traveling on the south shore. But I got two more women’s gabrulis started, met with seven Bahá'í communities, and visited Budhéstu and Blorakwé and their youth team for a day. They’ll be here; you’ll see them. They’re doing very well and have brought about a hundred people into the Faith, mostly at Snékhpéla.”

“Everyone there knows Stauréstu,” said Chris. “Let’s sit down and have some tea; it’s hot. We were waiting for you.” He walked—limped—to the samovar they had brought from Mɛlwika and began to pour cups.

“You look tired, too, dad,” observed May as she took a cup.

“You tell him,” added Lua. “He’s working too hard.”

“My right knee’s really bothering me now. It wakes me up at night.”

“If you ever sleep,” replied Lua.

"Well, this is a difficult time," countered Chris, raising his voice a bit. "The crown prince is very demanding; I get a phone call from his chief of staff almost every day. He wants everything done faster. He wants the costs capped. He wants another of this or that kind of factory."

"I hope he won't be calling here," said Thornton.

Chris shook his head. "He knows I'm here—and he did ask me not to come—but he's at Isurdhuna now and the sacred events there will keep him busy all week. But I have tasks to do, even here. They want my suggestions for members of the Boards of Trustees of the provincial tomis, so I have to find a dozen people here and ask for recommendations."

"And every morning he'll be up early to call Mitrudatu, Mɛndhru, and Luktréstu," added Liz.

"You should tell the Prince to back off," said May.

Chris shook his head. "No, this isn't that sort of situation. Mɛméjékwu is in charge of the economy. Full stop. His mother has given him that task. He doesn't care much about education or health, except as they support economic expansion. Aryéstu is his economic advisor and is keeping the prince going in the right direction. I think Mɛméjékwu has picked up basic economics reasonably well. But he is basically a dictator and he appears to be capricious. If I don't accomplish the tasks he wants me to accomplish, he could fine us a few hundred thousand dhanay. He knows exactly how much we are earning because he can look up our tax records, so he can decide exactly how much pain he wants to inflict. And he'd do it, too."

“From what I hear from you, long term I think he wants to strip us of our wealth,” said Amos.

Chris nodded. “I think so. I don’t blame him, in a way. No one knew how to expand farmland quickly and efficiently, but we did it with equipment and granges, and as a result we’re collecting more mortgage and tax income than anyone. Only the Miller family’s richer. Our mortgage income is already shrinking, but we’re investing in finance, retail, and manufacturing. Now a third of our surplus is going into royal tomis and I’m not sure we’ll get any profit back; he says after two years we’ll get dividends, but a few months ago he was saying it’d be after one year!”

“And the rest is tied up building the génadɛma and the utility companies,” said Amos. “The utilities could be confiscated by act of legislation any time.”

“That worries me, too,” agreed Chris. “But right now, they aren’t thinking of confiscating, fortunately.”

“But dad, where’s the justice?” asked Thornton. “This isn’t right.”

“I agree, but this is a kingdom, not a republic. Do you think the courts will stand up to the prince?”

“What about Wɛrétrakɛstɛr?” asked Liz.

“If we see him, we can talk to him. But I’m not sure he’d be on our side. Keep in mind that as a family, we earn about one million dhanay a year. That’s more than one percent of the world’s gross domestic product. Is it right that anyone should control so much of a nation’s wealth? No one on Earth is that wealthy. Under those circumstances, ordinary ethics don’t apply. I think my vocation must be different, from now on; I must turn primarily to service. In the past, I made the money and the rest of you mostly did

service. Now I have to serve the realm as well. I think we will still make money here and there, and I hope the crown will give us dividends on our investments in these tomis, but now we have to help spread the wealth."

"But that money buys us protection, too," noted Amos.

"Yes, it does; when you can give away or invest hundreds of thousands, you establish a lot of relationships and even make some friends, though you also make jealous enemies. And we provide a huge fraction of the National Bahá'í Fund; too much, if anything. We don't want our wealth to grow larger, I think, but we don't want it to shrink, either."

"Let's not just help the old houses to get richer, too!" said May.

"No, not just them. Everyone can invest in the tomis; minimum investment is ten dhanay. We need to encourage everyone to do it so everyone benefits from the economic growth it produces."

"The development conference at Amurreqluma produced a lot of support for a 'Sumilara Suluppu,'" said Thornton. "They want to expand bicycle production, move into other light manufacturing, produce paper and other products from wood, and develop agribusiness. The conference was very focused."

"They're determined to keep up, then get ahead," said Chris. "The Sumis are proud people."

"What amazed me the most about the month in Amurueqluma was the thirst to know about the Faith," added Lébé. "In the middle of the first week we had to start an evening class on the Faith, and every week we had to repeat it to more and more people. I think in the end we gave it to three hundred people. This was a génadɛma course, not a

fireside or Ruhi. I think it's time we start including a Bahá'í course in Mɛlwika Génadɛma. Not only should Bahá'ís have a chance to study their Faith systematically; I suspect a lot of others will take it as well."

Chris pondered the idea, then looked at Liz. She nodded and said, "I agree. We've talked about this a long time. I don't know that it can make our relationship with the palace any worse."

"Probably not," agreed Chris. "It's time to argue that the Bahá'í Faith is like a course on the hymns, or on Eryan philosophy, or on Gɛdhéma. If anything, it's a safe subject; Bahá'ís aren't subversive, after all."

"Subversive in other ways, though," replied May. "We're converting people."

"Let's give it a try in the fall," said Chris. "Speaking of converting people; we have 1,500 people coming to Mɛddwoglubas from outside the province and we think about 2,000 locals will want to attend classes! So a big percentage of Lɛwéspa has decided it's time to learn more about this new religion. All of us have to give classes of one sort or another. Thornton, Amos, Lébé; you had planned to rest a bit, right? I'm afraid this isn't the time for that."

Thornton sighed. "Alright. I'm supposed to go to Bɛllɛdha after this for their génadɛma. But I can do a few more classes."

"I'll try to add a class, too," said Liz. "I'm scheduled to give piano lessons, of all things! And I have a dozen people coming, so I have to do it. But I can add a class on Bahá'í basics. Maybe I can do the part of Ruhi Book One about prayer, then expand on it."

“Good, I’ll tell Estodhéru. I don’t think we ever anticipated that these ‘summer schools’ would be so large and popular. It was a good experiment.”

Just then, there were steps outside in the hall and Jordan appeared in the doorway. He was thin, tanned, and had a neatly trimmed beard. Lua rose to greet her son and everyone else followed. He put down his bedroll. “Alláh-u-Abhá!”

“Alláh-u-Abhá,” they all replied and they lined up to give him hugs. Tears appeared in his eyes. “It’s so good to see everyone.”

“Did the bus get stuck in traffic?” asked Thornton. “When I drove up the narrow road to the fort, I was wondering how the bus would make it.”

“The driver gave up and we all walked up. There were fifty Sumi Bahá'ís on the bus. They’re all settled in tents near the temple. In fact, I think I’d rather stay there, too. I bet I have to sleep with the boys here, otherwise.”

“Unless you want to share my room with me,” said Lua.

“Dad didn’t come?” Jordan was disappointed.

“No, at the last minute he decided to stay home. It’s probably best that someone stays anyway, but he’s also anxious to get the gas pipeline laid from ɛjnopéla to Mɛlita, Nuarjora, and Arjdhura. That will go better if he’s there.”

“I was looking forward to seeing him.”

“How’s it going with Tiamaté?” asked Lébé.

Jordan shook his head. “Her dad was furious that she wanted to go to Mɛlwika Génadɛma and grounded her, so she’s in Anartu right now. When we go back to Sumilara next week, she won’t be at Galulia; he’s ended her participation for the summer.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” said Lébé. “She was a very bright, capable young woman. I was very impressed.”

“She’s part Sumi and part Eryanɛ, and speaks both languages?” asked Chris. “I think Randu mentioned her to me.”

“Yes, he has met her as well,” agreed Thornton. “Well, Jor, don’t worry. If it’s meant to be, God will arrange it.”

“I just wish I knew what I could do to help Him arrange it.”

“Make sure you don’t do something that will make it harder for him,” said Lébé. “How many people declared?”

“Twenty-five in Sipadananga and eight in Kugananga, with fifty-one and fifteen studying book one, respectively. We anticipate more declarations; we’ll go back to both villages at least once a week from Galulia.” He looked at his grandfather. “How is your work going?”

“Quite well,” replied Chris, not wanting to make Jordan feel guilty for leaving him. “We’ll be producing manufactured houses in about a month and a half; we should be ahead of schedule. Pasta making, corn syrup, soybean products, cheese making, plywood and drywall production, and a dozen other things are all starting or expanding.”

“Wow, that’s incredible. I’ll be back to help a few weeks before the fall term starts, grandpa. Once Sumilara is over, I’ll come home.”

That surprised Chris. “Don’t come back for my sake. I’m doing fine. I want you to be going to as many villages as you can, Jordan. Someone has to take development ideas and the Faith to them, and so far you’re the best we have.”

“Thanks, grandpa,” he replied, embarrassed.

That evening, the first night of the Mɛddwoglubas summer school, a huge outdoor concert was organized against the outside wall of the old fort overlooking town. Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi, the Bahá'í whose radio show followed Kɛkanu's and who was a noted singer in his own right, organized it and served as master of ceremonies; just like at the Mɛlwika summer school, it was broadcast live over channel 6 to the entire world. It was fortunate that they had a powerful sound system on the stage, for the entire town turned out and half of Lɛwéspa; nearly ten thousand attended.

The next morning, fifty classes began at the old fort, in every school in Mɛddwoglubas, in tents, and under trees. So many people came that many classrooms had people looking in the doors and through the open windows. Classes for children bulged. Lord Estodhéru and Modolubu were frantically busy finding more teachers, maintaining sanitation, making sure there was enough food, and resolving hundreds of minor problems.

At lunch, Budhéstu headed for the rendezvous spot behind the fort where he would meet Blorakwé. She came along soon enough, looking happy.

"Your course went well?" he asked.

"I think so. I've reviewed this compilation about women so many times, and I've asked Lébé and May and Lua so many questions, I think I know it reasonably well. So I was able to answer most of the questions. But there was one stubborn man in the class—and he was a Bahá'í!—who wanted to contradict everything I said, even though I was quoting Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá most of the time!"

"Really? So, he just couldn't accept the equality of women?"

“He said he could, but he then defined ‘equality’ to mean subservience. And when I gave the example that when a Bahá'í family must choose between educating a son or a daughter, they should educate the daughter, he rejected the idea and the argument! Of course, that made him look silly, because it was `Abdu'l-Bahá’s statement, not mine.”

“It’s not easy for people to accept it. Few Bahá'ís follow that advice.”

“Well, let’s put it positively; a few do accept the advice. And more will in the future. Unfortunately, I was preaching to women, not to men; that man was the only one who showed up. But I gave out all seventy-five copies of the compilation. I have to find the time to rewrite it and mimeograph more. I’m sure the compilation will now get around and be discussed in a lot of places.”

“I’m glad Lébé finished translating it. Let’s go down the stairs to that little hot sandwich stand, before the crowd descends and gets there.”

“You’re right, very few people know about the stairs down the cliff.” They started toward the top of the stairs, which led down the seventy-meter cliff to the town below. Only a few of the three thousand people who had attended classes were using them at the time. “How was your class?” she asked.

Budhéstu nodded. “Pretty good, I think. I got ninety people; I ran out of handouts and have to make more for the next four classes. They’re mostly men; maybe we should switch classes for a few minutes! A lot of teachers, a few storekeepers, and two sons of lords. Not all of them are Bahá'ís. But they’re all fascinated by the idea of development, and the compilation of Bahá'í writings and statements created a lot of good discussion.”

“It’s a good compilation. Are people pushing to get to a discussion of practical matters, like you feared?”

“Not many. I told them first we’d explore the writings, then the application, and that seemed to satisfy them. But now I wish I had given more examples of applications all along, so I think I’ll try to do better tomorrow.”

“I feel sort of the same way. I think tomorrow I’ll have to talk about Women’s Gabrulis. Oh, do you remember the young woman in Dhudrakaita last summer who kept asking so many good questions?”

“Yes—Avsé?”

“Yes, her. She’s in my course; she was so happy to see me. She was going to South Véspa High School last year and will resume this fall. Her father has given her permission to postpone marriage a year or two to go to high school! That’s the power of the Faith!”

“That’s a good story. I’ve got two men in my class from Snékhpéla and Wurpéla, school teachers who were skeptical of the Faith, but got curious and came to the summer school. They’re very impressed by what they see.”

“In spite of overflowing latrines?”

“Oh, that doesn’t bother them. They’re overwhelmed by the idea that you can attend a huge event like this and meet a thousand strangers and be comfortable with them! All the Eryani accents, and the Sumis and Tutanɛ . . . it is blowing them away.”

“It’s very different from the Isurdhuna Festival, where you don’t mix with strangers much.”

“Exactly.”

They reached the bottom of the stairs and made a beeline for the sandwich seller, who was beginning to get a line. He was accepting summer school meal tickets, so they

didn't have to pay him. They got sandwiches—hot bread pockets stuffed with vegetables and beans—and walked over to the river to sit on the grass and eat. Budhéstu sat so close to Blorakwé that he was touching her with his side and they leaned on each other a bit. Their month of marriage had been full of challenges as a result of leading a youth team together, but it had also been very fun and had deepened their devotion for each other.

They sat eating and not talking for a long time, just enjoying each other's presence, when a stranger approached. "May I join you?"

"Yes, of course," replied Budhéstu, moving a bit away from Blorakwé. "You are welcome. What is your name?"

He hesitated ever so slightly. "Widulubu."

"Where are you from?"

"Kɛrda. And what's your name?"

"Budhéstu Klɛnvikai, and this is my wife, Blorakwé."

"It's good to meet you both." They shook hands. "You're members of the youth team, right?"

"Yes, last year and this year," said Budhéstu. "Are you enjoying the summer school?"

"In a way, yes; I am intrigued."

"Quite a contrast to the Isurdhuna Festival. They could never organize it to include classes; it'd be impossible."

"Well, it is a sacred gathering, and has a very different purpose," replied Widulubu quickly and defensively. That surprised Budhéstu, as he had assumed Widulubu was a Bahá'í. "But I will say this: Widumaj could use devoted young people

like you to spread his news and his hymns. He said that people should gather to chant his hymns together. So it is logical to organize hymn halls in every place where people can do exactly that, as well as perform sacrifices to Esto. If Bahá'ís love Widumaj so much, why don't they follow his advice and establish hymn halls?"

Budhéstu looked at him strangely. "Well, in a way, they do exactly that, because wherever there are enough Bahá'ís they build Bahá'í Centers. A Center is just a hymn hall, but to the hymns of Bahá'u'lláh as well."

"But Widumaj doesn't say to build hymn halls where Bahu's words can be chanted as well; He says to gather and chant *his* hymns. Whenever Bahá'ís gather they may chant one hymn of Widumaj for every two by Bahu and `Abdu'l-Bahá that they chant. This isn't right."

"Say, you're the priest who's building the hymn halls, aren't you?" asked Budhéstu. "I recognize you from Klɛnvika. You were there back in ɛjnaménu when I visited my parents."

"I was there then, indeed. It is a good, pious village; a place one can be proud of. But answer my question: why chant the hymns of Widumaj so little?"

"I think it is simple," replied Blorakwé. "We love Widumaj and his hymns, but we love Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá as well, and theirs is the latest guidance. It is like your father versus your grandfather; you may venerate your grandfather greatly, but most of the time you obey your father."

"But your father also obeys his father. Does Bahá'u'lláh obey Widumaj?"

"Bahá'u'lláh obeyed all of Esto's great widus, for they all taught the same great truths," replied Budhéstu. "And Widumaj promised He would return. This is what he has

done. The best proof of that is the fruit of Bahá'u'lláh's life. Look at this community of people, is it not truly remarkable?" He gestured toward the old fort.

"They would be truly remarkable if they obeyed their grandfather; Widumaj. I see people pursuing material progress, seeking wealth rather than preparing for the next life. There are classes here on development, but are there any on the next life?"

"There are many on prayer," replied Blorakwé.

"And do you know what I see in hymn halls?" added Budhéstu, raising his voice in irritation. "I see priests willing to let village lords spend their money to build a place for the people to chant hymns, as long as they also sacrifice through a visiting priest. There is no willingness to let the people build a hymn hall on their own, to create their own committee to do it, to plan it themselves, or even to contribute the money to build the building. It is a place where the lord can continue to tell them what to do and the priests can continue to demand animal sacrifices, when Widumaj never even explicitly demanded animal sacrifice. I see no interest in hymn halls being places where the people can consult and be consulted, as Widumaj calls for; no interest in helping the people get ahead. They are a new way to continue the old ways."

Widulubu looked at him. "That's because we are creating hymn halls, not Bahá'í Centers, and when we create them we don't need a Bahá'í interpretation of the hymns to guide our work." He rose. "I was hoping you were still open about the faith of your fathers, but I see it is too late. May Esto bless you on this day." He nodded slightly and walked away.

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319.

Modular Homes

Second week Abɛlménu/late Aug-early Sept Yr. 13/631

The Triwika Industrial Park was an expanse of tallgrass prairie interrupted by ugly metal buildings strung out along the northern bank of the Ornakwés River. Chris stopped the rover on a hillock overlooking the development and stepped out with Mitrudatu, Lord Aryékwɛs of Ɛjnopéla, and Lord Gurwɛkɛstɛr of Béranta. “It’s not very pretty,” he said, pointing. “But it’ll be one of the most sophisticated industrial parks we’ve built.”

“And one of the few that’s not adjacent to a village,” said Aryékwɛs. “I hope workers are willing to take the bus to work.”

“They seem to be; bus service is well established now,” replied Chris. “But a settlement will grow up here; ‘Triwika’ as we’re calling it, for the three towns that meet in this area. The park’s partly in Mɛlita and partly in Béranta and only three kilometers from the southwestern corner of Ɛjnopéla township, so all three of our townships will benefit when workers settle here, especially once the gas line opens in two months.” He turned to Mitrudatu. “Can you point out things?”

“Sure. It’s fairly simple. The long building under construction closest to the river is the facility for assembling manufactured homes. If you look uphill from there, you see, from closest to us to farthest, the sawmill, the plywood manufacturing facility, the sheetrock manufacturing facility, and the factory for making small wooden items; door frames, doors, window frames, cabinets, basic furniture.”

And the little building, way far from here?” asked Gurwɛkɛstɛr.

“The pollution control building. The treatment plant goes there, but it hasn’t been built yet.”

“And what about glass, pipes, wiring, and such?” asked Aryékwɛs.

“They’re made elsewhere, mostly in Mɛlwika. You see the road between the river bank and the long assembly building? That side of the building consists of a series of doors. Trucks can drive up and unload pipes or wiring right where they’re needed, as the manufactured house rolls by to receive them.”

“Fascinating,” said Aryékwɛs. “And the factory buildings are metal?”

“Indeed,” said Chris. “It’s a whole new construction technique here, though it’s used a lot on Gɛdhéma. The frame is welded steel beams and the outside is a skin of sheet steel. The two cranes are new; they pick up and move the pieces, then the workers rivet them into place. The cost is comparable to a cinder block or brick building but is faster to assemble, at least once you know how to assemble it. It took over a month for the workers to get used to the technique, but now they’re moving fast. Eventually, an interior wall of sheetrock will be added to the factory for insulation and sound dampening, but we’ve postponed that so that we can get manufacturing started as soon as possible.”

“And we will make the sheet rock for the interior walls, so that will save money,” added Mitrudatu. “In half a year or so we plan to add a factory to make ceramic tile so that we can tile floors cheaply.”

“Let’s go down,” said Chris.

They got back into the rover and drove the remaining half kilometer to a metal arch marking the entrance to the industrial park. Moléstu had been waiting for them and hurried over to the rover when Chris stopped.

“Welcome, lords,” he said nervously.

“Thank you,” said Gurwɛkɛstɛr, extending both hands, something Aryéstu did as well after a moment of hesitation. “So, you are the man who is running this entire construction operation.”

“I am, Lord. It’s quite different from anything I’ve ever done before, but we’ve learned a lot in the last two months. All new equipment, new ways to build walls and roofs; it’s quite amazing. And we have three more months of building ahead of us.”

“Three?” said Aryéstu. “I thought the plant was about to open!”

“It is, sort of,” replied Chris. He pointed to the building in front of them. “The assembly facility is only a sixth finished, and that part is just an empty shell, but we’re already using it. The entire concrete floor has been poured, but most of it is open to the sky. Some has an open lattice of girders over it.” Chris nodded and Moléstu opened the door so they could enter.

Inside was an area thirty meters long and wide with a pillar in the middle to support the roof. The opposite end was partially enclosed by a big sheet of alien parachute cloth to reduce the construction noise. They could see past it on one side to the far end of the future building one hundred fifty meters away. The enclosed area already had two modular homes in it, one almost finished, the other just a frame of beams.

“Wow!” said Aryéstu, impressed.

“You can see how the framing works,” said Mitrudatu, pointing to the partially complete home. “The bottom of the modular home consists of two steel beams ten and a half meters long, joined by a steel beam at each end and one in the middle, forming a floor ten and a half meters long by three and a half wide. Onto the four corners of the

floor go vertical steel beams two and a half meters high. Attached to that frame is a wooden frame for the ceiling and roof, reinforced by steel cable. The roof peak along one side of the modular home is five meters high, and the attic between the ceiling of the first floor and the roof is usable for storage and bedrooms. The attic even has two windows, one at each end." He pointed to the finished unit. "As you can see, the entire outside of the module building—walls, roof, even the doors—is sheet steel, which we can paint a variety of colors. The home has six glass windows, which admit a lot of light. Let's go inside." He led them to the finished unit and paused so everyone could admire the workmanship. Then he opened the door and they entered.

"This is the kitchen alcove, two meters long and 3.5 deep. It will come with a stove that can handle either charcoal or gas and has a built-in oven. It also has a large kitchen sink, a built in ice box, a nice wooden counter, and lots of storage cabinets. The stove can heat the entire house in the winter, though the bedrooms will be rather chilly. It also has the ladderway to the attic. The living room area to the right is three meters by 3.5 and opens onto the kitchen alcove, producing a single large space that can be arranged a variety of ways. Together, they're half the home."

He pointed down the corridor to the left. "There are two bedrooms in the back half of the house. The first one is two meters by 2.75 meters; pretty small. It's followed by a bathroom one meter by 2.75 meters; small and efficient. Finally, the master bedroom is 2.5 meters by 3.5 meters, filling the entire rear of the house."

"So, peasants will be able to buy houses with *bathrooms*?" asked Aryéstu, incredulously.

"Yes. By manufacturing everything to the same standard we can install bathrooms pretty cheaply. The last thing these houses get are their exterior walls; we install the pipes first, then the floor, then the appliances that need water and gas. The shower is made as a single unit and slid right in. Then the wiring is installed below the ceiling, the sheetrock interior walls and ceiling go on, the plywood attic floor, the sheetrock surface of the attic ceiling, and finally the exterior sheet metal walls and roof."

"And *wallpaper*?" asked Aryéstu, further surprised by the interior.

Mitrudatu nodded. "The sheetrock walls are very fast and easy to install; the standard 1.75 by 2.5 meter sheets do not require any cutting. A team of two men can wallpaper the entire place in a day, so it only adds ten dhanay to the cost. We're building a factory in Gramakwés to make oilcloth floor coverings; they're ten dhanay more and make the floors very attractive, with a variety of patterns, and are easy to wash or sweep." He pointed to a linoleum-like material on the floor.

"So, how much will this be?" asked Aryéstu.

"We're still guessing," replied Chris. "This house took ten men a month to build, but they had to work in place; they couldn't roll the house from one supply of things to the next. Also, they were doing the job for the first time and did not gain any benefit from the labor saving techniques we have devised. Their labor was about fifteen hundred dhanay, plus parts and materials, so this sample cost maybe 2,000. But once we get the assembly line rolling in three months and we start buying materials in bulk, this unit should cost 400 dhanay to make; eventually 300. We should be able to sell it for 700, eventually for 600."

“Six hundred dhanay,” said Gurwɛkɛstɛr, shaking his head in amazement. “Yes, I think you’ll be able to sell them at that price.”

“I don’t know how I can expect to build houses for two or three thousand dhanay any more,” added Moléstu.

“What about water, though?” asked Aryékwɛs. “Sinks, toilets, showers; they need running water.”

“There’s a cistern just below the roof that catches rain water for washing,” replied Mitrudatu. “Depending on water consumption and climate, the cistern will catch and store about half the water the house needs. The rest can be supplied three ways; a village water system, a well with a wind or hand-powered pump, or by truck. The fire companies are well equipped to earn a little extra money providing water by truck. All they have to do is spray it on the roof or pump it into the cistern.”

“And where will the waste go?” asked Gurwɛkɛstɛr.

“If the village has no sewer, the home owner will have to dig a cesspool in his backyard.”

“No water heater?” asked Aryéstu, sarcastically.

“It can be added for fifty dhanay.” Mitrudatu smiled. “This is the basic model; another hundred dhanay can make the interior much nicer. Another version will lack one long wall, so that a double wide building can be made by joining two units together. We suspect the new urban middle class will want them. They’ll sell for 1,500 to 2,000.”

“This is amazing,” said Aryéstu. “And you can move them on the roads without cracking the sheetrock?”

“We’ll see,” replied Chris. “That’s another reason for the wallpaper; to cover up cracks that form from transport. We’ll probably want to wallpaper the interior after arrival and do some touching up. Vehicles 3.5 meters wide will not be easy to move on six-meter roads; an encounter with a truck will be very interesting. They’ll have to move at night and very slowly.”

“Of course, we still don’t know how much demand will exist for them,” said Mitrudatu. “But most of the houses in Mɛlita are smaller than this, and they house up to two families. I suspect in Mɛlita alone there will be demand for several hundred.”

“Oh, these will sell!” replied Aryéstu. “Wallpaper, a sink, a toilet, electric lights, glass windows; these are all prestige things that people want to show off to their neighbors! And to get them all at once for less than a year’s salary!”

“That’s what we’re guessing, too,” replied Chris. “Because we have to make two thousand a year to get the production price down to 350.”

“What’s the capacity of the factory?” asked Gurwɛkɛstɛr.

“The assembly plant has room to make as many as twenty-four a day, operating three eight-hour shifts. That’s almost 8,000 per year. But we don’t expect to get up to that level. The entire kingdom only has fifty thousand households.”

“But we can use these units for things other than housing,” added Mitrudatu. “One double wide would make an excellent classroom; it’d cost about a thousand dhanay without furniture. In fact, we already have several orders for classrooms, if we can fulfill them. A stripped down version for 400 dhanay could be used as a barn. We’re working on designs for offices, clinics, and four- to ten-man factories.”

"Ah!" said Aryestu. "I can see all those uses! Now that I can actually *look* at one of these things, I can see how revolutionary they are!"

"The only disadvantage I see is that a village consisting only of these things would be ugly," commented Moléstu, even though he had not been asked to participate in the discussion. "They lack character."

"That's very true," agreed Mitrudatu. "But once we gain experience, we will start producing a wider variety of designs and more things that can be added to the outsides of them to make them more attractive. And I don't think people will stop building in traditional ways. These will supplement the traditional ways, not replace them."

"They suffer from one basic limitation: they can't be wider, longer, or taller than the roads permit," said Chris. "Anyone who wants a larger structure will need to build it in other ways, at least until we can make modules that can be stacked on top of each other by crane and placed side by side to make large structures."

"I'd like to learn how to do that, Lord," exclaimed Moléstu quickly.

Chris nodded. "Then you will learn." He looked at the others. "Other questions?"

Gurwɛkɛstɛr shook his head. He was impressed. Aryéstu, looking enthusiastic, said "So, when will production *really* start? The Prince is expecting it next month!"

"It has started already. The ten men who put these two together are learning how to do the work faster and we're expanding the team so they can complete each unit faster. At the same time, we're expanding the plywood and sheetrock factories, and our suppliers are expanding their production."

"Still the prince expected a fully functional complex to open next month."

"And it won't. It'll be three more months before this complex is close to ready. We told him all along that four months was the minimum, and we told him that if we did it faster, it'd cost more money. He responded that we had to cap expenses at no more than ten percent above budget and we should build enough of the facility to get started. That's what we have done. We're making plywood and sheetrock in one big tent while their separate facilities are built, and we're adding to those facilities a machine at a time, as the machines are finished. If you try to do everything at once, expenses shoot through the roof. This way, workers start to gain experience a month earlier than expected and production starts a month earlier than expected, but production will be very small; maybe two houses a month at first."

"That won't please the prince," warned Gurwɛkɛstɛr.

"I agree. But the bottom line is profit; this facility is projected to make 200,000 dhanay per year for the Jérdomasi Tomi. Another 200,000 comes from the food processing and other factories that are under construction in various places, but that isn't scheduled to make money until spring anyway. I think the Prince planned to make me pay for cost overruns. I'd rather shell out 20,000 dhanay a month and replace the missing profit, because it'll cost me less. You can't build something like this in three months at a reasonable cost; it's impossible."

"I agree, and I'll tell him when I get the chance," said Gurwɛkɛstɛr. "This is a big complex; it has to be done right. Cut the schedule in half and you drive prices up at least three times, and you'll still get something that looks hasty."

"I'm impressed that Miller Foundry can turn out enough sheet steel," said Aryéstu. "Is that the reason we just got a dividend from Mɛlwika Motors?"

Chris shook his head. “No, Miller Foundry and Mɛlwika Motors are two separate companies. Mɛlwika Motors is now making a profit, though the dividend was only five percent of investment; the profit is still small. Demand for pickup trucks is very, very strong and is carrying the entire company. But the Foundry is making extra profit because of the sheet steel we’re buying, and John is plowing that money into improvements that will make some car parts cheaper, so eventually Mɛlwika Motors will benefit as well.”

“I’m glad for you; you can handle only one birthing at once!” said Aryéstu.

Chris chuckled. “You can say that again. The génadɛma, the foundry, the first grange, the bank, the electric and phone companies, ɛjnopéla, the gas company, Home Improvement, Pértatranisér, Mɛlita, Mɛlwika Motors, Jérdomasi Tomi: I’ve had a hand in a lot of exciting things. But it’s only possible if there’s a team of people working with you and a good management team that keeps the work going.”

“Well, we trust you, Chris,” said Aryéstu. “That’s important, too. I’d make a careful report to the Prince so he understands what it means to say production has started. You don’t want to undermine his trust in you.”

“That’s a good point, since he wants me to help in the establishment of the provincial tomis. That’s the next project, and it’s very big. I had better schedule a visit right away.”

“I’d start by soliciting orders for classrooms and completing them; with no interior walls and appliances, they’d be easier.”

Chris smiled. “You’re right. That’s an excellent idea. I think we could build them quickly and we may be able to get quite a few orders. We’ll do that.”

"And I'll come along to meet with the Prince, if that helps," volunteered Gurwɛkɛstɛr, who was the queen's first cousin, just like his brother, General Roktɛkɛstɛr.

"Thank you, it will help," agreed Chris.

Tiamaté got off the bus at the center of Galulia with considerable excitement and anticipation. She carried her bedroll with several changes of clothes inside and immediately began to look around. She had never been in the village of 2,400 before. She saw a man walking toward her on the street.

"Excuse me, honored, but I am looking for the Bahá'í youth team."

"They're staying at the school." He pointed up a side street.

"Thank you, honored." She turned and hurried up the side street, figuring the school had to be close by; Galulia only had four hundred houses. She couldn't wait to see her friends again, after three weeks of being away. She was especially looking forward to seeing a tall, handsome dark-haired man with a neatly trimmed beard.

She reached the twelve-room school building a hundred meters away. It was built on the edge of the village next to a soccer field—Galulia had that—and a large field beyond that had several surveyors walking around it. She entered the school and followed the sounds to the classroom the youth team was using as its headquarters. When she appeared in the doorway, they all stopped talking and turned to her.

"Tiamaté!" exclaimed Jordan. "I can't believe it, you're back!"

"I thought my visit was useless!" added Nérgalu, who had gone to Anartu a week earlier for a day and had spent an hour trying gently to persuade her father.

“No, it wasn’t useless; it just took father a week of thinking about what you said. I was a good, obedient daughter, doing my chores around the house and studying, but he could see my heart was here. Last night at supper he said he’d give me bus fare to Galulia.”

“We’re glad you’re back,” replied Gramé. “And even if we’re all learning Sumi, we still need translation!”

“Well, I can stay the rest of the summer, and translation’s something I love.”

“You can help me with the Sumi lessons, too,” added Nérgalu. “We’re giving a half hour after breakfast and a half hour after dinner every night, no exceptions! And they’re coming along, too.”

“I figure I’m learning about twelve new words a day,”added Jordan. “Not bad; I’ve been here almost forty days now, so I’m beginning to make complete sentences that are actually useful!”

They all laughed. “So, what have I missed?” she asked.

“Galulia’s a nice place; we’ve been well received here and in Kahingiru and Baleduru, where we’ve also been giving classes,” said Jordan. “We have Ruhi Book One running in all three places, sewing classes in all three, agriculture classes in two, and a smattering of other classes going on. Galulia’s interested in infrastructure, so we’ve been scrambling to offer classes about electricity, telephones, paved roads, gas, and other things an industrial park needs.”

“Industrial park?”

“This will be one of the three sites of an industrial park on Sumilara,” replied Jordan. “The decision was made on the last day of the génadɛma at Amurueqluma. There are surveyors laying it out right now.”

“I saw them. How’s interest in the Faith?”

“Excellent,” replied Primanu. “There are three people here from the Amurueqluma génadɛma who took the evening Bahá'í Faith course. One declared and the other two are friendly and knowledgeable, and all three are taking the Ruhi books. They’re telling friends and neighbors, also, so we have a lot of interested people.”

“We’re still supporting a Book Four class at Sipadananga, too,” added Jordan. “I’m going tonight and you can come to translate, if you’d like. We’ve had twenty-two more declarations there. The telephone cable arrived across the water yesterday; the place was quite excited. The dock is coming along impressively, too.”

“And the women’s gabruli?”

He nodded. “They’ve started building it.”

She looked at him. “I’d love to go with you tonight.”

They caught the 4 p.m. bus running north to Kahingiru. The bus was relatively empty, so they could sit together in the back and talk quietly and privately. “It’s good to see you again,” said Jordan. “I was wondering how you were doing and was very saddened you weren’t able to return to the team.”

“I missed everyone so much. I’ve never been involved in something like this before; it’s so exciting! And so helpful.”

“Well, we try. The trick is to be servants of the people without telling them what you think they need or doing things for them they can do themselves.”

“That’s the hard part. But you’ve gotten good at suggesting things without pushing them.”

“And all of us have to be flexible and try things we don’t know how to do.”

“I’ve never been a translator before; that’s been quite a stretch!”

“And you’re good at it, too.” Jordan smiled. “I like it when you’re my translator. I know you’ll do a good job, so I can relax and listen to the translation and improve my Sumi, or think about the next thing to say. And it’s nice to work with you as a team; as an equal.”

She smiled shyly. “Thank you, it’s very special to me as well. You’re a remarkable man, Jordanu.”

“Well, you’re a remarkable woman.” They looked into each other’s eyes and their glances communicated something that words couldn’t. Jordan lifted his hand—almost involuntarily—and moved it over to touch hers. No one could see that they were holding hands. Jordan nervously glanced up at the driver, who was busy driving.

They sat silently, holding hands, for several minutes. Then Jordan said, “Let’s try to get to know each other better in the next month or so. Every day we should walk around Galulia together. We can talk about anything because no one knows Eryani, and as long as we’re walking no one will complain.”

“That’s a good idea,” she replied. “That won’t violate any rules.”

The bus slowed; Kahingiru was only a few kilometers distant and they were entering the village. It was completely rebuilt after the eruption of Evudingiru had destroyed it, though it was still only half as large as it had been.

The bus stopped and they got off to wait for the eastbound bus with several others. When the other bus arrived, it was crowded; they had to stand all the way to Sipadananga, so they did not speak. The latter was swarming with people, as the cable ship was still in the harbor and a utility crew had arrived to receive the cable and begin to extend it across the island. Sipadananga was going from an isolated outpost to a central location overnight; an exciting time. And Jordan and Tiamaté got to function as a team, interacting with the local conditions and responding together. It was an exciting time for them, too.

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320.

New Fuels

Mid Abɛlménu/early Sept. yr 13/631

As the royal party left the mobile home, Queen and prince smiling and waving at the crowd, hundreds of people surged toward the door to form a line to follow them inside. The Tripola police closed in to maintain order. Chris looked back. “I fear, Your Majesties, that I should stay and coordinate the viewing of the house.”

“No, Lord, find someone else to do it,” replied the Queen. “You are needed in the palace. We can wait a moment.”

“Thank you.” Chris turned and walked back to the house where a young worker, Lédhanu, stood by the door. “Lédhanu, I have to go to the palace and the crowd wants to see the mobile house,” said Chris. “So I have to leave you in charge. Have one policeman stand outside this door and one just inside the other door, by the bathroom. You stand inside this door by the kitchen area and direct the crowd in this door, back to the bathroom, and out. Answer questions and make sure no one steals anything.”

“I understand, Lord,” he replied nervously.

“You’ll do fine.” Chris smiled confidently to buck up the seventeen year old, who had come from the factory to touch up the interior, not to protect it. Then he hurried back to the royal party.

“Do you really think these things can be made for about one year’s salary?” asked the Réjé, as they walked across Tripola’s new West Square to the palace.

“Indeed, Your Majesty, if the sales are strong enough, we can hire more people and work more efficiently and turn them out rapidly. Each man will have one or two tasks only, so he’ll get very fast.”

“That would get boring quickly as well,” noted Mɛméjékwu.

“We can solve that problem two ways,” replied Chris. “And we’ll use both. We’ll train the men to do a new job every month or two and let them alternate. That will also give us a more flexible workforce; if one man is sick, we’ll have plenty of others who can do his job. And the more jobs they learn and do well, the more we’ll pay them, because they will be more highly skilled and more effective. They’ll want to stay and earn more, and we’ll get a better product.”

“Very clever,” she replied. They entered the palace and started up the grand stair to the royal apartments above. “I want my people to have these things, Lord Kristobéru: clean water, a place to wash themselves easily, a clean place to cook, pleasant surroundings. Have you thought about how we will get more of these things to people who won’t buy a modular home?”

“Indeed, Your Majesty. Stoves are not expensive to buy, and many people are buying them. The factory that makes the bathroom will be able to make extra units and all the separate parts will be available through the Home Improvement Stores.”

“Excellent.”

“I never thought these houses would fit on our roads,” observed the Prince.

“The ride to Tripola was difficult,” replied Chris. “The house had to go slowly because the bumps might damage the sheet rock. It took twelve hours to drive it here

from Mɛlita; it moved only fifteen kilometers per hour. Trucks had to pass it often and they barely fit. But we got it here."

"Can you get them to the Long Valley?"

Chris nodded. "Certainly; the road from Ora is gradual and lacks sharp curves. Kɛrda will be difficult, though."

The royal party entered the room Prince Mɛméjékwu was using as his office. "Thank you again, Lord," said the Réjé. "I look forward to a full report from my son later."

Chris bowed before Her Majesty, then she turned and departed. That left Mɛméjékwu, Chris, Gurwɛkɛstɛr, and Aryéstu. The prince pointed to chairs around the table and they sat. "So, Lord Chris, you said it was not possible to get production started, yet you did it. Congratulations."

"Thank you, Your Majesty. Right now we can only build about six houses a week, but in three and a half months we will be producing thirty per week."

"Six per week? That's all? You won't make much profit that way!" The Prince's voice rose with anger.

"We started as soon as we could. If you are able to visit the factory, you will see that so far only a fourth of the facility is built. But we are expanding very fast now."

The Prince waved his finger. "What sort of trick is this, Lord Chris! I want a functioning factory with full profits!"

"The tomi will get its profits," replied Chris, calmly.

"I am immensely impressed by how much has been accomplished, Your Majesty," said Gurwɛkɛstɛr. "Out in the middle of nowhere a factory has popped up in the prairie

like a spring flower. If you had watched every day as I did, you would be very impressed."

"Perhaps that's true, cousin," replied Mɛméjékwu, calming. "And I am glad to hear the tomi will make the profit it needs to make. Lord Chris, is thirty per week its maximum production?"

"No, Your Majesty, but it is our estimate of what we can sell right now. If the market can accommodate one hundred twenty per week, we can produce that many. We already have orders for twenty-six units, configured as double-wide classrooms, and we hope to produce all of them immediately, because school is starting."

"Excellent. Do you have the names of men to nominate to the provincial tomi boards?"

"Indeed, Your Majesty." Chris handed the prince several sheets of paper, each with a separate list of suggestions for the North Shore, Véspa, and the South Shore.

Mɛméjékwu read and nodded. "The ones I know are good, reliable men. I suppose the others are accountants and business experts?"

"We've tried to bring a mix of people to the boards; capable minds who have risen because of their experience, some with training and experience, and some who have weight and prestige."

"Bahá'ís?"

"There are a few on the list for the South Shore, but none in Véspa or the North Shore."

The prince nodded. "We'll certainly add Lord Ekwiséru of Wɛranopéla and Lord Kasiséru of Kɛntudha to the South Shore Tomi Board, and Lords Dontu and Wékdusu to

the North Shore Tomi Board. Véspa is a delicate matter; we'll look into that in great detail. I will need several reliable managers and accountants for the Dɛlongisér Tomi; the Board I have in mind lacks those skills."

"You'll need to hire them and have them move to the Long Valley."

"Obviously." The prince looked at the attached sheets of industries that each tomi would establish its first, second, and third years. Each factory had a description that said how many workers it would employ and its estimated annual cash flow. "These are excellent, detailed plans. Thank you. Can you make a plan for Dɛlongisér as well?"

"Indeed, if you can tell me how much investment to plan for."

"Half a million dhanay of government investment per year, and perhaps half as much from private investment."

Chris raised his eyebrows in surprise. The prince was planning to devote about a quarter of the crown's industrial development to the Long Valley. "Very well, Lord. That should expand the valley quite quickly."

"Indeed, it's still underpopulated."

"The expansion plans for the tomis were based on their receiving a percentage of the crown's investment equal to their population."

"I see." Mɛméjékwu pondered. "We'll resolve that matter later."

"One difficulty for the Long Valley is that it will have to import many raw materials and export products. The various tomis are all set up to manufacture shoes or cheese in proportion to their population."

"Then set up the Long Valley tomi to export manufactures."

“Can we devote some of that investment money to hydroelectricity? The Valley has the potential of producing all the power the entire kingdom needs.”

“But that won’t bring jobs to the valley, so it won’t gain population.”

“True, but Your Majesty, consider that the factories will need power. The valley lacks trees, and importing the wood to make the power will generate smoke that will linger in the valley. Hydroelectricity is the best source. Furthermore, development all around the world is threatened by a shortage of electricity. We will need a lot more power.”

Mɛméjékwu waved his hand. “Very well, lord. How much are we talking about; one hundred thousand dhanay? We can find that. Make it so.”

“Thank you, Your Majesty,” replied Chris, trying not to sound or look increasingly irritated by the Prince’s attitudes.

“I can help coordinate the distribution of development monies,” volunteered Aryéstu, sensing Chris’s predicament.

“I would welcome that,” said Chris.

“Either way,” replied the prince. “I want jobs for the Long Valley so that people continue moving in, good profits for the tomi owners, and strong tax collections for the crown. We know how to do these things, so we will make it so. Right Lord Chris?”

Chris nodded. “I will do my best, Your Majesty.”

Chris and Amos walked into the Pértatranisér house just as the city’s clock rang out eleven bells. It had been a long and tiring day, but well worth it. Fithu, without a word, pointed to the parlor, so they turned to that room.

“John!” said Chris, surprised. “What brings you to Pértatranisér?”

John Miller rose from Chris’s couch. “I wanted to visit again,” he replied. They shook hands warmly. “Awsé’s been here four times, but this is only my second trip to the western shore. There’s a lot to see!”

“We’re going to drive all the way around the world,” added Awsé, extending her hand to Chris as well, so they shook also. “I’ve been to the hotel here three times before, not four. I’ve never seen Pértatranisér this busy, though.”

“It’s our third Bahá'í summer school out of four,” replied Chris. “Anartu will host the fourth one next month. We’ve got almost three thousand Bahá'ís and their friends here. The park is covered with tents and the schools are thronging with classes during the day. The concert tonight was the best one yet.”

“We were listening; it really was good,” agreed John, pointing to the radio. “A lot of Bahá'í information was woven into it, too, but not offensively.”

“We’re getting better; Mitrubbéru Kanéstoi has gotten very experienced at planning these things,” agreed Amos. “We’ve just made an agreement with the Ministry of Education; we’re going to start Bahá'í broadcasts permanently next month, after the Anartu school. It’ll be two hours of programming, three days a week.”

“I’m amazed you can get away with that,” said John. “I gather the opposition to Bahá'í activities is growing.”

“It is,” agreed Chris. “But we got permission to do this on the grounds—which we proposed—that the traditional religion get two hours a day the other three days a week. They have a priest who wants to give it a try, too. He won’t do anywhere nearly as good a job as Mitrubbéru, but I am sure he’ll get better.”

“Equal time,” said Awsé, with a smile. “A clever argument.”

“I think the palace is opposed to us officially, but when they see the Bahá'ís are good, hard working people and the priests are doing little to raise up the general population, their opposition to us is blunted,” said Chris.

“We now have four Millers who are Bahá'ís, and they seem to be better people as a result,” agreed John. “Don’t expect me to join; I want to be able to speak my mind when I’m mad!”

“We love you anyway, John,” replied Chris, with a smile.

“What other opportunities are you finding here, Chris?” asked John, curious about what new plans Chris was cooking up.

“There are a few. These schools are great opportunities to recruit professional soccer teams; so far we’ve formed six of them. Ideas are flying back and forth, with women’s gabrulis learning from each other and new ones being planned, day care facilities being set up all over the place by individuals or by spiritual assemblies, people with factory experience teaching others what they need to do . . . it’s really incredible to see.”

Just then Chalésté entered with a large tray with tea, lemonade, and cakes. John and Awsé took another glass of lemonade and another cake; Chris and Amos eagerly took some as well. “You have a beautiful home here,” said Awsé. “So much bigger than the Mɛlwika house!”

“It has offices and meeting spaces as well,” replied Chris. “So, where else have you been?”

"We stopped in Bɛllɛdha overnight, then visited Néfa this morning and Luktrudéma this afternoon," replied John. "We'll see Ora tomorrow, then spend two or three days in Isurdhuna. From there, we'll go to the Long Valley, then across the Spine and back to Mɛlwika. With the Queen in Tripola, we would rather not go home by way of the south shore."

"She's on her way to ɛndraidha tomorrow, I think," replied Chris. "I was down there two days ago meeting with several potential members of the provincial tomi."

"Oh, do you have them set up, too?" asked John, surprised.

"I met with the prince and submitted proposals with names of members for tomis for North Shore, Véspa, and the South Shore, along with preliminary plans for facilities they could build in the next three years. He was pleased with the plans for facilities and approved them, but he has packed the tomi boards with his friends."

"That's worrisome."

"I briefed the tomi members for the South Shore and some are just interested in amassing personal wealth. I suspect the tomis won't do very well, unless the prince insists on professionalism."

John frowned. "What's going on? I thought he was opposing the old houses and supporting democracy."

"He was, but the purpose was to break the power of the old houses. That's largely accomplished. Now he's developing a network of loyal friends and he has to reward their loyalty with wealth and power. Some are kids of old houses, some are army soldiers, and a few are former peasants with education. They're going to make up about half the membership of the tomi boards."

“If they lose money, will the losses come out of your pocket?”

“I hope not.”

“That’s not reassuring.”

“The Crown Prince also asked me to inaugurate tomis for the Long Valley, Kɛrda, and Pɛnkakwés in the next three months. Lɛwéspa has decided it doesn’t need a tomi because it already has over a dozen factories; its industrialization is well established and underway.”

“What does the prince think of that?”

“He’s furious. When the Réjé visited Lɛwéspa, Mɛméjékwu stayed in Ora.”

“I’m not surprised.” John sighed. “I wish I could get more of that development for Mɛlwika.”

Chris shook his head. “Part of the strategy, John, is to grow the rest of the world so that Mɛlwika, relatively speaking, is smaller. We’ve grown so much, so fast, that we have generated a strong opposition to us. And I have been ordered, basically, to put half of my personal resources and much of my time into growing these other places. So I am doing it, partly because it will raise the standard of living everywhere.”

“That’s badly needed,” agreed Awsé. “The alternative is to have half the world try to move to Mɛlwika to make money. We can’t handle that, either.”

“Exactly,” said Chris.

John looked at Amos. “How is your operation here? Your plantation; it must be doing well.”

“It is,” agreed Amos. “The city gave me five thousand agris of the hilliest, most heavily forested land in the eastern end of the township, an area that could not easily be

cleared and farmed. We're selectively logging it, leaving trees that produce fruit, nuts, and latex, and we're gradually planting the tree species we want, so every year the income from the plantation has grown. In addition to the plantation, though, the engineering lab here is now quite large and capable, and I'm invested in four factories and other facilities in town or in Néfa. So I'm pretty deeply rooted in Pértatranisér."

"I hope you will continue getting back to Mɛlwika, though!" said John. "I need your input, Amos! Miller Motors is doing better and better; pickup trucks have been incredibly popular. We just got an order for one hundred special pickup trucks for the provincial police forces over the next two years; they're to have extra large engines, enclosed backs, and special sirens! But we have an infinite number of improvements to make, and each one saves money."

"You've got great engineers now, John. My contribution is less and less all the time! But don't worry, I'll visit Mɛlwika at least two months per year."

"Good. Our engineers really want to start using liquid fuels; ethanol, that is. Steam engines will start up much faster with liquid fuel and operate much more reliably. They want to design an engine that can use both ethanol and charcoal."

"That should be easy," said Chris.

"In principle, yes, but it's a bit complicated in practice," replied John. "Once the design is finalized, kits to retrofit older vehicles can be made."

"That's a *very* good idea," said Amos, nodding. "Solid fuels are rather inconvenient because they can't be fed to the engine automatically, so the engine needs to hold a large supply of fuel. Liquid fueled engines are smaller and more compact, and therefore cheaper. If ethanol is widely available, too, you could start making internal

combustion engines. A small internal combustion engine has immense potential. It could power motorbikes, motorcycles, chain saws, and all sorts of relatively small, light equipment."

John shook his head. "No internal combustion engines; not yet. I don't want to make a huge investment in an entire new type of engine. But steam engines can be made small and compact, too."

"That's true. Some time, I suppose, we should switch."

"I don't know. I was opposed to steam engines ten years ago, but you convinced me, and we've developed them quite well. I see no reason a steam engine can't be as compact as an internal combustion engine. You engineers just want to develop new things."

"I suppose you're right; we *are* interested in new things, and steam engines can be made pretty small."

"Small motor vehicles had occurred to me, but not chainsaws. That would be revolutionary."

"Exactly. Liquid fuel's the key to make them, too."

"But how cheaply can ethanol be made?" asked John.

"I don't know, but it can be an acceptable price," replied Amos. "Pértatranisér has the world's first and only sugar cane processing factory; we squeeze out the juice and boil it to produce the sugar. The sugar can be converted into alcohol pretty easily. I suspect we could make it for a dontay per liter."

"Rather expensive, but that would work," said John.

“There’s plenty of land that could be planted in sugar cane, too,” said Chris. “It grows quite well here and in Véspa province just south of here, and it’ll grow south of Mɛlita quite well. It’d be a really good crop to bring to market in a big way. It would greatly increase farm incomes.”

“And we could build a lot more processing plants,” added Amos. “Adding them one at a time would be easy to do.”

“The provincial tomis could do it,” said Chris. He looked at Amos. “We have to grow the sugar cane at the equator, but we could process it in Tripola or Bɛllɛdha. The plants produce a lot of extra heat, right?”

Amos considered that, then nodded. “They could. In Brazil, they burn the bagasse, the cane left after the sugar has been squeezed out of it. You need the heat to evaporate the water and concentrate the sugar. You also have to reduce the water content of the ethanol that is produced, and heat is used. So yes, these are plants that could provide heating to houses.”

“That’s the way to go, then,” said Chris. “And motorbikes; that could revolutionize transport.”

“Revolutionize it *again,”* replied John. “That’s the sort of project I’m looking for, especially one that produces some collaboration with these new tomis. That’ll guarantee political support.”

“I’ll get to Mɛlwika in another month, and maybe we can start designing a small, compact liquid fuel engine,” said Amos. “We’re already making ethanol for the rovers, so we have fuel to test them.”

Jordan got off the bus at Galulia center with the dozen other Bahá'ís who had gone to Pértatranisér and they all headed toward the school where the youth team—or part of it—was staying. It was close to sunset and they figured most of the team would be there. They were, though several classes were going on, so most were busy. Jordan stood in the door of one classroom where a Ruhi Book Two class was underway until Tiamaté, who was facilitating, saw him. She smiled and came out once everyone was engaged in small group discussions.

"You're back."

"I am." Jordan looked around, then reached out and touched her hand; a daring gesture, but in that context almost as moving as a kiss.

"It's good to see you. I'll be done in another half hour; the class is almost finished."

"Good, I'll be in the main room." He smiled at her, she smiled at him, then he turned and headed for their main room. He felt a lump in his throat; seeing her did that to him.

He came into the main room again and got a cup of coffee. Nérgalu hurried over. "So, how was Pértatranisér?"

"Oh . . . it was good." Jordan forced himself to stop thinking about Tiamaté and reply. "Three thousand people were there; it was big. I think there were 124 declarations. Lots of classes. Really good nighttime concerts. Some very exciting soccer games. The prayer gatherings were incredible."

"We heard the concerts. I gather a lot of Khérmdhuna came?"

“Yes, they made a concerted effort and chartered lots of buses. Two thirds of the town came. It really helped integrate them into the Bahá'í community.”

“It’s a shame we only got a few dozen Sumis there, but the Anartu gathering is taking shape. I was in Anartu all day; I got here just half an hour before you did. They’ve signed a contract to rent every school in town. We’re mustering every translator we have. If you give any classes, you’re on your own! We won’t have anyone to spare.”

“Alright, I think I can manage. But how can you get that many people on the island?”

“After the school at Amurueqluma, and now with increased ferry traffic, we might fill the schools.” Nérgalu looked at him, puzzled. “You look . . . tired or something. I suppose it’s the travel.”

Jordan shook his head. “No, the trip was pretty routine. It’s only early afternoon for me. It’s . . .” He hesitated to say anything. “Nérgalu, I’m lovesick.”

Nérgalu smiled. “Tiamaté. Yes, I’ve noticed. I think everyone has.”

“What am I going to do? She can’t even mention me to her father!”

“I understand. He’s tough, demanding, protective . . . and if he met you I think he’d like you.”

“Really?”

Nérgalu nodded. “She’s afraid he’ll say no. I don’t blame her; he might.” He thought. “But he might say yes, too. He wants her to marry an army officer.”

“Really? Why?”

“Discipline. A predictable life. A familiar culture, and one that has accommodated Sumis better than other settings.”

“To protect her?”

“Partly, and because he thinks that’s best for her. The military is a proud tradition.”

“Of course.”

“No, don’t just say ‘of course.’ You can think that, but you can’t *feel* that. That’s part of the problem.”

“Well, what can I do?”

“Hum.” Nérgalu considered the matter a moment. Then he turned to his trunk of possessions against a nearby wall. He opened it and pulled out a short, curved sword in a scabbard.

“What is it?” asked Jordan.

“The traditional weapon of an army officer; light, flexible, and very sharp. I have one because my uncle’s an army officer. That’s how I know my Eryani.”

“So I had heard.”

“Take it.” Nérgalu handed it to Jordan, who took it carefully. “No, not like that.” Nérgalu rearranged his fingers. “This is the proper grip. I wonder whether I can borrow a sword here in Galulia. I bet the lord has one we can use.”

“Why?”

“To teach you fencing!”

“What?”

“Of course. If you want to impress him that you are a gentleman, you need to know how!”

“I can’t learn that!”

"Why not?"

Jordan considered the question. Nérgalu stared at him, waiting.

"Well . . . alright, I guess I can learn fencing. My uncle Thornton did."

"There you go! Just don't remind anyone he learned it to defend himself against Sumis! We'll go outside right now and start."

Reread and edited 6/9/13, 8/22/17, 11/22/24, 9/29/26

321.

Anartu

2d week Brénménu/late Sept. yr 13/631

Behruz headed into his father in law's room at Anartu High School with trepidation. He was not one to enjoy talking, especially of the endless, consultative sort Chris was good at. Behruz preferred to consider matters carefully and speak briefly about them.

Sure enough, the tea was out and the room was filled with people. Chris nodded to his son in law as he entered; Behruz nodded back and settled onto the long sitting platform along the wall next to Lua, who moved so that her husband could have half the pillow. "Glad you made it," she said.

"Last ferry of the day," he replied. "An engineer on board recognized me and wanted to point out the entire cable operation, so he drove me here from Sipadananga, and we stopped to see the line a half dozen times. It was interesting."

"He thought you were connected to the utility company?" asked Chris.

Behruz shook his head. "He was angling for a job with the gas company; he stressed how laying the cable was like laying a pipeline! He seemed bright and capable."

"But you don't plan to lay any more pipe," said Liz.

"Well, who knows? The south line reached Mɛlita last week and the north line will reach Arjdhura in another six or seven weeks. But ɛndraidha's pressuring me to lay an extension and I'm bargaining for them to subsidize it. I think they will, too."

"That'd put the western shore line only 95 kilometers from the southern shore line," said Chris.

“Arjdhura’s only 105 kilometers from Bɛllɛdha, and since a line to the north would go through colder weather, it’s more likely to be used. I bet in five years we’ll have connected the two systems together one way or the other.” Behruz shrugged.

“Imagine that; first a power line and a phone line all the way around the sea, then a concrete highway, then a gas pipeline,” said Chris.

Just then there came a knock at the door. Lord Estodhéru of Mɛddwoglubas and former Bishop Jonu of Khɛrmdhuna stood there awaiting an invitation to enter. Chris rose and walked to the door. “Come in, my friends. Alláh-u-Abhá.”

“Alláh-u-Abhá,” they both replied, entering. Everyone rose to greet them.

“Are you comfortable?” asked Chris.

“As well as can be expected,” replied Jonu. “Camping on the floor of a classroom is not particularly comfortable. But we are here to contribute.”

“How many came from Khɛrmdhuna?” asked Liz.

“One hundred,” replied Jonu, proudly. “They enjoyed the Pértatranisér conference so much, they wanted to try another one! And Sumilara seemed so exotic a destination.”

“We even have one hundred or so from Mɛddwoglubas,” added Estodhéru. “It’ll be interesting to feel like a minority. I think it’ll be good for us.”

“And this conference will feel comfortable for us because no one will single us out because of our accent,” added Jonu. “Here, we’re just Eryanɛ.”

“You should be sure to say that in your class,” said Chris. “I think many Sumis will be fascinated by your account of Khɛrmdhuna.”

“How many people are coming to the conference?” asked Estodhéru.

Chris smiled. “It appears that we’ll have a lot more than we can accommodate; perhaps 4,000 or even 5,000. The organizers have set up several very large open-air gathering places, each with a microphone and loudspeaker, so that hundreds of people can attend lectures. Randu, Nina, and Nérgalu are all speaking. I think Thornton will try a few, too.”

Thornton nodded. “Without translation, too.”

“Are we sure we can get away with such a large gathering?” asked Jonu, worried. “This is the sort of thing that could call down intervention by the governor.”

Chris shook his head. “Not a problem. Governor Modobéru is a friend of the Faith. We have more freedom on Sumilara than on the mainland because the army favors peaceful movements and knows we are one, and because the traditional priesthood has not yet been stirred up to oppose us.”

“They probably will be after this!”

“Maybe not,” replied Estodhéru. “They aren’t organized the way the priests of Widumaj are because every city has a different patron god and therefore an independent priesthood. They also have no relationship to the army or the governor.”

“And the school at Amurueqluma built very positive feelings among the aristocracy,” added Chris. “In fact, many of them are coming. The island is ready for something new; every time I come here, I feel it.”

“I agree,” said Lua. “We could see a big influx of believers as a result of this conference.”

“In a way, something we don’t need,” sighed Estodhéru. “These conferences have done something unexpected for the Faith: they’ve made everyone aware that it is a very

different kind of religion than the traditional religion of Widumaj. We really can't handle the attention or the influx of believers."

"We have to pray harder," replied Liz. "This is a very different situation than anything I've ever seen or heard about on Gɛdhéma."

"Really?" asked Estodhéru.

Liz nodded. "Oh yes. We had villages convert en masse, but never large fractions of entire provinces."

"It reminds me of when Hawaii converted to Christianity," said May. "It took about three decades, and Hawaii was about the same size."

Just then Jordan entered the room. Behruz smiled when he saw his son, looking so arrow straight and grown up. Jordan hurried over. "Dad, you made it!"

"Yes. Sorry I skipped the other two conferences, but the pipeline work and the gas conversion plant in Arjdhura were demanding projects."

"I know, but I haven't seen you in almost three months." He came over and hugged his dad.

"I'm sorry. At least we could talk by phone."

"And with the new telephone lines, that's now much easier," added Jordan. "How are you doing?"

"Me? I'm fine, as usual. What about you, you're the adventurer!"

"It's been a fun adventure, too." Jordan turned to the others to greet them, then sat next to his dad. "We've wrapped up the work in Galulia," he continued. "Over the summer we reached most of the villages on the plateau. We wanted to start in the remoter parts of the island to build a base for expansion in places no one would object to. Now we

find the Faith on the tongues of everyone on Sumilara and ironically the cities now need Bahá'ís instead of the remote places!"

"It's a small island; tutors can move around," replied Chris. "Don't worry, no one would have expected the success we've seen this year. It's not just your team, either, Jordan. The other youth teams have been incredibly successful."

"How many new Bahá'ís?" asked Jordan.

Estodhéru shook his head. "Don't even ask because we're overwhelmed. We can't keep up with the news. But we're over ten thousand; that much I'm sure about."

"Wow; we've almost doubled!"

"Well, we had over six thousand. Only about a thousand are really active or reliable, though. And that hasn't changed much."

"That's going to be slow," replied Chris. "But the incoming class at Mɛlwika Génadɛma—270 students—includes about one hundred Bahá'ís. We went out of our way to accept them and give them scholarships. And they're good students; they're qualified. Give them five years and they'll be very qualified leaders of the community."

"The génadɛmas have given us many of our leaders," said Estodhéru. "And the youth teams."

"I'm surprised we don't have more active believers," said Jordan. "The youth teams have been bringing in lots of people *and* training them."

"Yes, you are right," agreed Estodhéru. "But I hear Modolubu's daily complaints about local Spiritual Assemblies that have no idea how to conduct business or follow Bahá'í principles. When I say we only have a thousand Bahá'ís who are active and deepened, I'm referring to people able to serve on Assemblies."

“The community doesn’t divide just into a thousand active and nine thousand inactive,” agreed Liz. “There’s a range of activity. I suspect about three or four thousand have contributed money at least once, and maybe six or eight thousand have gone to a few Feasts. But we have a long way to go to create a strong, active, community. It’ll take a long time.”

“But we’re moving in the right direction,” said Jordan, though he almost made it into a question.

“It’s the only direction we can move in,” said Chris. “We have to grow the active community. In some places like Mɛlwika and Mɛddowglubas where there are big Bahá'í communities, the Faith is growing slowly because people see the inactive Bahá'ís and feel the Faith doesn’t transform people.”

“The big communities always have a few Bahá'ís with bad moral reputations,” agreed Estodhéru. “I can’t tell you, Jordanu, how grateful and appreciative we are of the youth teams. Your contributions have been incredible. We need to multiply the youth teams.”

“The assembly hopes to deploy six or eight next summer,” added Chris. “What you have started, Jordan, is historic.”

“Thanks,” he replied, looking down at the floor.

They turned back to a discussion of the plans for the Anartu conference. Behruz emptied his cup of its remaining tea and rose; he had socialized enough for the day. Seeing his dad head out of the room, Jordan rose and followed. Behruz waited for him and they exited together.

“It’s good to see you again.”

“Thanks, dad. I’ve missed you.”

“Really? I’ve missed you, too. Now that you’re all grown up, we don’t see each other as much.”

“I’ll be back in Mɛlwika for school starting next week, though I suppose grandpa needs me, too.”

“He does; he’s looking forward to having you back, too. He doesn’t want you to feel pressure, but he badly needs you; he’s being worked almost to death by the palace. You have quite a knack for business, too; you can help him a lot.” They entered the classroom across the hall, which was the place Lua, Behruz, Jordan, and Rostamu, Jordan’s 12 year old brother, would sleep that night. “So, will I get a chance to meet this young lady you’re fond of?”

“I hope so, but Tiamaté’s busy almost every moment of the day translating or giving a class herself; she’s doing two Book One classes. She was worried about getting hoarse from talking so much.”

“Maybe at lunchtime, then.”

“Breakfast is more likely. Lunchtime, she’s translating, and supper she’s at home with her parents.”

“How’s it going?”

Jordan looked at his father. “Dad, I’m absolutely crazy about her. It’s gotten so that I feel like Majnun, the crazy lover, pining away for his beloved. I’ve never felt anything like this in my entire life. Being with her is both torture and heaven; not being with her is torture without the heaven.”

Behruz smiled. “Good. Congratulations, you’re in love.”

“I guess I am, but dad, I doubt I have any chance of marrying her. That’s part of the problem. Her father’s a very old fashioned army officer who wants the best for his daughter, which means marrying an army officer! She told me she hasn’t done much more than hint about me to him. Her mom’s sympathetic, but her father’s opposed.”

“You can’t blame him; you’re gɛdhému and Bahá'í. At least you’re rich, though I suppose you don’t look rich.”

“He’s never even seen me, so he doesn’t know what I look like.”

“Then he just has stereotypes and biases to work with. If you want to get his permission, you’ll have to meet him.”

“I know, but Tiamaté’s scared to arrange a meeting. Meanwhile, he has refused to give her permission to come to the Women’s Géndha, even though Lébé admitted her with a full scholarship.”

“That’s too bad; she’d get a lot out of the school. Once again, you can’t do anything until you meet him. That’s step one.”

“I know. I’ll have to press that on her. But she’s afraid he’ll forbid her from ever seeing me again, and that will be the end of our relationship.”

“Does she love you as well?”

He nodded. “I think so.” His voice broke a bit with emotion at the thought of it. Behruz put his hand on his son’s shoulder. “This is a hard situation, and I’m sorry it hasn’t worked out, or not yet anyway. But don’t rule it out. You’re bright, courteous, and conscientious; I think you’ll impress him if you can meet him. You have a lot going for you, Jordan, and don’t forget that. And if it’s not meant to be, well . . . we all must be patient in God. There’s a lesson in that too.”

“I know. I know.”

“At least arrange for us to meet her. I’ve got to meet the girl who has captured my son’s heart.”

Jordan smiled. “Alright, I’ll see what I can do.”

That night, the three-day program began with a huge public concert, as was the custom, and it involved most of the well known Sumi performers as well as several famous Eryanɛ singers as well. Much of Anartu turned out; no one had ever even seen a huge public concert before, let alone attended one. The loudspeaker system made the new type of gathering possible and impressed everyone that the Bahá'í Faith appreciated art and culture as well as was willing to use the latest technology. The excitement in the air was palpable. It started the conference with a bang.

The next day, all the classes were overflowing with attendees. Jordan was scheduled to give a class on “Spiritual Foundations for Advancement of Society” 10:30 to 12 noon and five hundred people showed up. His large poster-sized quotations were too small for everyone to see, the crowd was so enormous; he had to have three different people read every quotation, so people could concentrate on it and absorb it. The 125 copies of his handout were taken immediately. A surprisingly large number of older Sumis and aristocracy attended, sat in front, and asked a lot of questions. When the class was over he was surrounded by fifty people who asked questions for most of the lunch hour; he had to move because the spot where his class had been held was scheduled to be used by another class immediately afterward. It was also crowded.

Finally free of students, he went back to the high school where he had slept the night before to get handouts for his next class. The crowds in the hallway were so dense, at first he couldn't get to the stairs. The situation was getting ridiculous; turnout was so large that no one could enjoy the conference. He finally managed to push through the crowd and go upstairs, only to find very few people there because everyone in his family was busy teaching something, including his father. He got the handouts and pushed through the thinning crowd to go to the Ninurta Genadɛma to make more copies of the compilation of Bahá'í writings he would use for his late afternoon class. He had just enough time to hand-copy the readings one more time onto a ditto stencil and make 125 more copies.

Anartu was crowded as well because several thousand people had come from the countryside to attend the conference. He grabbed a hot sandwich and ate it quickly on his way to the génadɛma. Just as he reached the entrance to the courtyard of the génadɛma, a man coming toward him on the street waved. "Honored!" he said in Sumi.

Jordan stood and waited for the man to approach him. He looked vaguely familiar; Jordan thought he had been standing in the front row of students during the morning class. He was dressed like a Sumi merchant or aristocrat, with a silk tunic, though he was wearing long army dress pants in standard army blue; Mɛddwoglubas had been mass producing them for several years. The man looked to be about forty-five and had a very neatly trimmed, short beard of dark brown hair—a very unusual color for a Sumi. "Thank you, honored," the man said, as he came close. "I was in your class this morning. I have a question for you, if I may."

"Certainly, honored," replied Jordan. "I am at your service."

"You spoke about developing a spiritual society, and the picture you painted was a beautiful one; very attractive. But I am curious. What will be the role of an army in such a society?"

"An army?" replied Jordan, looking at the man closely to try and determine what his own view was. It was a tricky question, because if he was an aristocrat or merchant he would be opposed to the presence of the army on Sumilara, but if the man were an army officer he would probably be in favor. But the man's face gave no hint of his own position. He spoke Sumi with a trace of accent, but it didn't sound like an Eryanɛ accent, so Jordan suspected it was a rural accent of some sort. "The Bahá'í Faith says that in the foreseeable future, societies will need armies to keep order. Perhaps some day, in the future, societies will become so peaceful and stable that armies will become unnecessary. But until then, societies need both the principle of reward and the principle of punishment to maintain stability and order. The principle of punishment implies the need for the government to have access to force, which means it must have a police force, and if something the police can't handle comes along, it needs an army."

The man nodded. "That makes sense; a practical answer. But will human beings ever become so mature and spiritual that force will become unnecessary?"

"I am inclined to say no because the human ego is something that is difficult to regulate. Human beings cannot grow and develop without wanting things. Humans should want sufficient wealth, for example, to support their families and acquire the means to develop their own talents. Talents require musical instruments, or tools, or factories; families require food, houses, and clothing. So people naturally need and want such things. The problem is that people cannot perfectly regulate their needs and wants. It

is natural for people to want a bit too much of something; or perhaps even much too much of something. Sometimes people come under the control of their wants. When that happens, someone else has to regulate their wants and needs for them. So society will always need some level of coercion."

The man thought about that, then nodded. "I see you now wear a sword. In your class you did not, but after all the extra questions, you put it on when you left."

"Indeed, I wear a sword, honored. I do not like wearing one. Recently, a friend of mine taught me how to use a Sumi sword and afterwards he insisted that, for my own safety, I should wear it whenever I moved around Anartu."

"That may be wise, considering your family's arrival produced the rebellion and the Battle of the Palisade. Many Sumis resent your family greatly for the defeat that resulted. On the other hand, there may be a thousand Sumis alive right now because of your medicine, the food your steamships helped deliver after Evudingiru erupted, and the fodder the animals got from Mɛlita."

"We are obedient to the government and we strive to serve. They are both principles we try to live by."

"Principles of our army, also." The man looked at Jordan's scabbard. "So, how well can you use your sword?"

Jordan smiled nervously. "I am still learning, honored."

"Let's see." He pointed to the courtyard of the génadɛma. "There's plenty of room in there."

"Oh, thank you, honored, but I don't want—"

“Come on.” The man was firm but calm and matter-of-fact. It was strange that a stranger would want to fence with him, and Jordan wondered whether the man was teasing him or might really want to kill him. He didn’t know what to do. Then the man drew his sword, but kept it pointed down and walked past Jordan, expecting the young man to follow. After a moment’s hesitation, Jordan did follow.

A few students sat on a bench in the shade, reading; they looked up and saw the strange scene unfolding. Jordan put down his handouts on the clean, dry stones next to a wall where no breeze would disturb them, then walked to the middle of the courtyard where the man stood, waiting. Jordan drew his sword.

“No, no, keep it up more. Your grip is good, but keep your arm loose.” The man nodded when Jordan moved the sword into a new position. “Much better. On guard!”

They tapped swords once as was the practice, then started to parry. The man obviously was quite experienced; he watched Jordan carefully, but watched his stance and use of his sword as much as where he was directing his blows. Indeed, he seemed more interested in the young man’s confidence, the way he held himself, the way he dealt with the stress of the sword fight, than with the actual clash of blades. They continued for about a minute, then the man got his sword past Jordan’s and tapped the young man on the side with the side of his sword. “Hold!” he said, and they stopped. Jordan looked at his side to make sure his shirt wasn’t torn. The man sheathed his sword. “Not bad, but you’ll need a lot more practice, if you want that sword to protect you from anything more than a petty thief or two with a dagger!”

“I know. I’ve only been learning for a month.”

“Not bad, for a month, then. But haven’t you been busy serving up in Galulia? Where would you get time to learn fencing?”

“My friend was there and gave me a lesson every evening for about fifteen minutes. It was good exercise as well.”

“Why would he teach you? Was he a Bahá'í as well?”

“He was, and it was his advice, so I followed it.”

“Interesting.”

“Why, honored, did you ask to fence with me? I assume you don’t do that to most strangers you meet.”

“No, I don’t; you are correct. I am a trainer for the army, and the sword is my specialty. I learn much about men from how they fence. You are gɛdhému and Bahá'í, and I don’t understand either. But now I feel that I understand you a bit, honored.”

“I see. Well, I need to go inside now to make more copies of a handout I need for my class this afternoon. If you have other questions, you can ask me there, or at my class tomorrow morning.”

“Thank you, honored.” The man offered his two hands to Jordan and they shook, a firm but respectful grip. Jordan looked at the man and was puzzled again by how he looked familiar. Then the man turned and headed out of the courtyard. Jordan reached down to pick up his pile of handouts and realized that his hands were shaking a bit from all the adrenaline that had been pumped into his system. The man had been a very good fencer and Jordan realized he had been lucky to go as long as he had.

After his late afternoon class, Jordan went to Anartu high school to look for Tiamaté, who had had a class there. She was hurrying home, but said she could come for breakfast the next morning. She arrived at 7:15 a.m. the next day; Lua and Behruz had a simple spread of bread, jam, fruit, coffee, and tea ready and Tiamaté joined just Jordan's parents and him for breakfast, though Chris and Liz popped in quickly toward the end. Jordan walked her to her class afterward. "I think that went very well."

"Your mother is charming and your father is a gentleman. And to think, she has trained so many doctors! How does she do it?"

"She's very good with people, and remember we have Thornton's computer to get information. Our family does not know everything. But we have access to an incredible library on the computer, and we have gradually translated it and put it into practice."

"A blessing. Listen. Last night at dinner, father turned to me and said 'So, you've been telling your mother about this young man; what's his name?' I said 'Jordanu' and he nodded and asked about you, what you do, where you are from, then he said, 'will we ever meet him?' I almost fell off my chair! I was shocked. He saw that and said, 'don't be so surprised; I want to meet some of your Bahá'í friends. I don't understand your interest in it. Can he come to lunch tomorrow?' So I said 'I think so.'"

"Lunch today?"

"Yes. Can you make it?"

"Wow, that's bad timing. All my classes are so huge, I've had to make a second set of dittos and run the machine until the copies were almost invisible. Even then I can only make 300 copies. My morning class yesterday had 500, the afternoon class had 400. I need lunchtime today to make a second set of copies."

“I wouldn’t turn father down, if I were you. He really seemed interested in meeting you.”

“Alright, I’ll plan on passing out 125 copies of my handout this afternoon. It’ll be alright. I can always make more for the next class, since most people are coming to the entire series. How do I get there?”

“I’ll meet you outside the high school front door and take you there. You’ll need me to get into the army base, anyway.”

“Does he know we’re . . . interested in each other?”

“I think so, because I told mother, and she must have said something to him.”

“Alright.” He wondered what the meeting would be like. “Great. See you then.” He turned and headed back upstairs. If he hurried, he could make a second set of the afternoon handout as well and copy it before his morning class started at 10:30.

He hurried to copy handouts, then went to class. He was distracted and nervous, and fewer questions were asked than after the other classes; it did not go as well. He walked back to the high school, where Tiamaté was waiting. “So, what do I say to him?” he asked, as they walked across town to the army base in the fortress.

“I don’t know.”

“Should I . . . ask for your hand in marriage?”

“I don’t know, Jordu. I don’t think he’s ready for anything like that. He seems to want to meet you.”

“Do you want me to ask him for permission to marry you, some day?”

She stopped walking and turned to him. “That would be my deepest desire and profoundest wish.”

“It is mine as well, Tiamaté.”

She nodded and started walking again. They walked side by side in silence, ever aware of the other’s presence.

The guard let them into the fortress without even stopping them; Tiamaté just nodded to him and he nodded back. Once inside, they turned right and walked along the east wall to a modest door close to the northeast corner of the fort. She opened it and they were in the family’s main room. Her brother, a fourteen year old with a sprouting mustache and scraggly beard, stood nearby. “This is Aisugu; Aisugu, meet Jordanu.”

“Honored to meet you.” The boy offered one hand to Jordan, Sumi fashion, and they shook.

“I’m pleased to meet you.” He could recognize Tiamaté in her brother’s face; there was a strong family resemblance.

Just then Tiamaté’s mother entered the room with a tray of cold drinks. “So, you are Jordanu; it’s good to meet you.” She spoke in Eryani with a distinctive Sumi accent.

“Thank you, I am honored to meet you as well.”

“This is my mother Sarédaté.”

“I didn’t realize you had an Eryani name.”

She laughed. “It’s a translation! I’m really Kigisum.”

“Oh, of course.”

“I understand you speak Sumi very well. Your Eryani sounds beautiful.”

“Thank you. I was six when my family arrived here, so I grew up speaking Eryani. My Sumi is still quite limited.”

Just then, steps could be heard on the stairs, and Tiamaté's father began to descend. Jordan looked at the man, who looked at him in return, and Jordan was shocked to realize that her father had been the fencer he had met the day before. "You didn't bring your sword!" he said in Eryani as he entered the room.

"No, sir, after you said I couldn't defend myself against a man with a sword yet, I decided to stop wearing it."

"Why? A gentleman must know how to defend himself, especially one who might be in danger."

"What are you talking about?" asked Tiamaté.

"We've met already," replied her father. He extended his hands. "Aisɛndru."

"I'm pleased and honored to meet you, sir."

"Likewise." They shook hands. Aisɛndru turned to Tiamaté. "He's pretty good with a sword. Almost as good as with his tongue, in fact. Here, sit down at the table, Jordanu, and make yourself comfortable." He pointed at the low table and the seats of pillows piled around it. He sat at the head of the table, with Jordan at his right and Tiamaté next to him. Jordan looked at him with a surprised expression on his face; he was still adjusting to the idea that he had been fencing with his possible father in law. "How was your class this morning? I wasn't able to attend it."

"Thank you, it went reasonably well, I think. I had about four hundred people, and they asked questions for about twenty minutes afterward."

"A bit smaller than yesterday, then. How long do you think it will take to build this spiritual world you desire?"

"A few centuries. It took Christianity three centuries to convert an entire empire, and the culture was still not Christian; that took centuries more, and in a way, that struggle never ended on Gɛdhéma. I'm not sure any society ever arrives at a destination; rather, it is always on the way."

"Then why struggle?"

"Because society is always on some sort of path. It is either on a path leading toward peace, stability, prosperity, and love, or on a path leading to domination, force, and injustice."

"And which path is the society of Widumaj on?"

"The path of the good, I think! But the teachings of Widumaj can carry Eryanɛ society only so far, and perhaps with all the changes in the last thirteen years we are seeing some of the limitations."

"Perhaps. I am not a believer in Widumaj, as I think you are aware, though Sarédaté is. I trust in ɛndro, 'the Man,' embodiment of strength, loyalty, and service to the crown."

"I know very little about ɛndro."

"Of course; the rituals are secret. There are no priests, but one rises in grades through the ranks, and those of higher rank can initiate those of lower rank in the Mysteries."

Just then Sarédaté entered with a huge platter of rice and a bowl of stew to pour on top of it. They went around the table and everyone took a portion. Sarédaté sat with them and asked Jordan about what he was studying, which triggered a long discussion

about development and what constituted progress, versus mere change. Aisɛndru asked difficult, critical questions; he was unwilling to give Jordan an easy time.

Finally they all had a third plate and Aisɛndru called for a bottle of wine, so Sarédaté fetched one. When he offered some to Jordan, Jordan shook his head. “No, thank you. Bahá'ís don’t drink wine.”

“At all?”

“No, not at all, unless a doctor recommends it.”

“A shame.”

“I think that’s wise,” replied Sarédaté.

Aisɛndru downed his glass. “This is good quality, too. So, Jordanu: I understand from my wife that Tiamaté has deep affection for you. How do you feel about her?”

Jordan was surprised a bit by the directness of the question. He glanced at Tiamaté, who was shocked and apprehensive. For a second he debated his options.

“You ask me directly, honored Aisɛndru, so I will answer you directly. I have deep love and affection for Tiamaté as well and would like very much to marry her.”

The father looked at the young man for a moment. “And why should I consent to such a marriage?”

“Because it is, I feel, the best thing for her. We love each other and want to live our lives together, have children together, serve the kingdom and its people together. I am hopeful that we will be a great partnership, one that is happy for us and effective together in service to others. In the last two months we have had many opportunities to work together, and we have done so with much joy and great effectiveness.”

“Can you give an example?”

“We taught classes together. She did more than translate for me; she amplified the content of the lessons and helped convey them clearly. We learned from each other while we served others.”

“An interesting example. Service: why is it important to you?”

“Service and obedience are two values you mentioned to me yesterday as values of the army. I believe that life consists of more than acquiring wealth, power, and fame, which are the things most men pursue. We strive to serve humanity and Esto, confident that some reward will come in this world as well as the next.”

“And what do you do when the desire to serve with someone else in a marriage clashes with the desires of parents?”

“Then we follow the difficult path of obedience. Parental permission is a right we must respect.”

“Even if it is difficult?”

“Yes, even if it is difficult.” Jordan swallowed a bit when he replied, and his voice wavered; it was indeed difficult.

“I see.” Aisɛndru looked at Jordan, then at Tiamaté. It was a difficult choice for him as well, for he had hopes and dreams for his daughter. He looked at Sarédaté, who looked at him hopefully; she was willing to consent.

“Very well. I consent,” he said. “This is not the path of service I would have chosen for her, but by becoming a Bahá'í she chose a new and different path, and even if I were to forbid this marriage, I would not be able to make her love and desire the path I envisioned for her. The world has changed in ways I did not imagine.”

“Oh, thank you, father!” said Tiamaté, tears streaming down both cheeks.

He nodded to her. “And what will be the dowry?” It was Eryanɛ custom that the groom’s family paid the bride’s family, who in turn paid for the wedding; the groom’s family also housed the new couple.

“I haven’t consulted with my father or mother about this question yet. I apologize, honored Aisɛndru.”

“We can resolve that later. The question of when and where the marriage ceremony will be held is complicated by one fact: the transfer to ɛndraidha that I requested a year ago has finally been approved. We will be moving over the next two months.”

“Perhaps that is better, because the fall term starts at Mɛlwika Génadɛma in a week and continues through the first week of Prusménu.”

“The second week of Prusménu in ɛndraidha or vicinity, then,” said Aisɛndru. “It is settled. Meanwhile, Tiamate lives with us. After she is married, it is up to you, as her husband, to decide whether she will go to génadɛma or not.”

“Very well,” said Jordan. “Thank you, honored Aisɛndru. I will strive to be a worthy son in law.”

“Then we’ll work on your fencing.”

Reread and edited 6/9/13, 8/22/17, 11/22/24, 9/29/26

Six professional soccer teams emerge.

Bahá'í radio station starts

Mobile home business started in Mɛlita with accompanying sawmill and ironworking facility and purchased windows, pipes, wiring.

Hymn halls make very slow progress.

“Webinars” established by gɛnadɛmas.

Undersea cable laid to Sumilara over summer; Thornton gets on cable laying ship to Sumilara; starts oceanography based at Luktrudéma and Arjdhura.

Randu is doing what? Bishop Jonu? How’s the Mɛlwika House of Worship going; it’s 1+ years into construction.

More on traffic safety.

Global meetings of: Encyclopedia Board; Librarians; High School Principals; Teachers; Police; Firemen; Granges; Chambers of Commerce;

Old Houses still scramble for trained farmers. Véspans and Kɛrdans head for the Long Valley. Sumilarans want to, but they are banned from it.

Former Bishop Jonu is a problem on the Central Spiritual Assembly.

Year 14; vehicle production rises to 1,500 per year by end; profits begin to pour in.

Dhudrakaita gets a road.

Thornton and Lébé and family head to Sumilara for the summer to supervise Bahá'í youth workers and a mobile génadɛma with a dozen courses run by Randu. Visit Amurueqluma and bike factory there. Jordan meets a Sumi woman and romance begins; she comes to Mɛlwika Génadɛma in the fall.

Goal established of universal literacy among Bahá'ís.
Summer géndha established at Mɛlwika to spread Bahá'í education; 3,000 show up. High school, elementary schools all rented for accommodation and classes. Kɛkanu covers the event. It continues one week. Then three youth teams go out for the summer.

Huge amount of work on factories for old houses in Arjakwés. Chris hires Okpétu and his older brother Mɛndhru as liaisons with Old Houses and bundles their investments into larger factories. Old houses stall and do nothing until pensions actually get cut.

Palace nullifiers election of Lasu and maybe 1 Bahá'í. Chris not appointed to House of Lords. Army announces development of firearms.

Budhéstu moves back to Soru's school about the time Blorakwé returns. He and she court. He and Soru plan a psychology program with Lua's help.

x

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