

# Martin Auer

## The Strange War

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except: When the Soldiers Came, At Your Own Doorstep, Justice, Money, Story of a Good  
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## The Dreamer

There once was a man who was a dreamer. He believed, for instance, that there must be a way to see things ten thousand miles away. Or he figured there must be a way to eat soup with a fork. He thought there must be a way for people to stand on their own heads, and he was sure there must be a way for people to live without fear.

The people told him, “None of those things can be done; you're a dreamer!” And they said, “You've got to open your eyes and accept reality!” And they said, “There are laws of nature, and you can't just change them!”

But the man said, “I don't know . there must be a way to breathe under water. And there must be a way to give everybody something to eat. There must be a way for everybody to learn what he or she wants to know. There must be a way to look inside your own belly.”

And the people said, “Pull yourself together, mister; those things will never happen. You can't simply say you want something and then just expect it to happen. The world is the way it is, and that's all there is to it!”

When television was invented and x-ray machines, the man was able to see ten thousand miles away and he could see inside his own belly. But no one said to him, “Okay, I guess you weren't so wrong, after all.” And they said nothing after someone invented diving suits that allowed people to breathe easily under water. But the man said to himself: that's what I thought. Maybe one day it will even be possible to get along without wars.

## The Blue Boy

Far, far away behind the stars, everything is very different from here. And even farther out there, everything is even more different from there, where everything is very different from here. But if you flew far away, very far away into the distance, to the place where everything is completely different from everywhere else, maybe there it would be almost exactly like here.

Maybe, in this faraway region, there's a planet as big as our Earth, and maybe people live on this planet, people who look almost exactly like us, except that they're blue and can fold up their ears when they don't want to hear anything.

And perhaps a war broke out on this faraway planet, and ever so many blue people died. A lot of orphans had been left behind, and in the ruins of one of the houses that the bombs had destroyed, sat a little blue boy who was crying because he had lost his father and his mother. For a long time he sat there like that and cried, but then he stopped because he had cried all

the tears that were in him. He pulled up his collar, put his hands in his pockets, and went away. When he saw a rock, he kicked at it, and when he saw a flower, he stepped on it.

A little dog came up to him, looked at him, and started wagging its tail. Then it turned around and began walking alongside the boy, as though it had decided to keep him company.

“Go away!” said the boy to the dog. “You have to go away. If you stay with me, I’ll have to love you, and I never want to love anyone again in my whole life.”

The dog looked at him and wagged its tail cheerfully. Then the boy found a gun that was lying next to a dead soldier. He picked up the gun and showed it to the dog. “This gun can shoot you to death!” he said angrily. So the dog ran away.

“I’m going to take you with me!” the boy said to the gun. “You’ll be my good friend.” And with his gun he fired a shot at a dead tree.

Then he found a flying scooter that had just been left lying around in a field. He got on it and tried to start it. The flying scooter worked.

“Now I have a gun and a flying scooter,” said the boy. “They will be my family. I could have had a dog too, but he might be killed, and then I would have to die from crying.”

He flew around on his flying scooter until he saw a house with smoke coming out of it. “Someone’s still living there,” said the boy. He circled around the house and looked through the windows. Inside, there was only an old woman, who was cooking something.

The boy parked his flying scooter in front of the house, took his gun and went inside. “I have a gun!” he said to the old woman. “You’ve got to give me something to eat!”

“Come on, I would give you something anyway,” said the old woman. “You can go ahead and put your gun away.”

“I don’t want you to be nice to me!” the boy said crossly. “My gun can kill you!”

So the old woman gave him something to eat, and he flew off.

That’s how the boy was living now. He set up a hiding place in an abandoned house. When he got hungry, he flew somewhere where there were people, and with his gun he forced them to give him something to eat.

At other times he flew over the deserted battlefields and collected parts from weapons and tanks and trucks that had been left there. He took all of these things to his hiding place.

“I’ll build a giant armored robot!” he said to himself. “It’ll be a hundred yards tall, and it’ll weigh a hundred thousand tons, and way up in its head I’ll have my controls in a cab. Then I’ll have power and no one can do anything to me.”

One day a girl came by his hiding place. The boy went outside with his gun and said: “You’ve got to go away! My gun can shoot you!”

“I don’t want to bother you,” said the girl. “I’m just looking to see if the mushrooms have started growing again.”

“You’ve got to go away!” said the boy. “I don’t want anyone around me!”

“Are you all by yourself?” asked the girl.

“No,” said the boy. “I have a gun and a flying scooter. They’re my family. And one day I’ll have a giant armored robot!”

“Don’t you have anybody real?”

“I could have had a dog. But if someone had killed it, I would have had to die from crying.”

“I don’t really have anybody either,” said the girl. “We could stay together.”

“I don’t want to have anyone who could be shot by a gun!”

“Then I guess you’ll just have to find someone who can’t be shot by a gun!” said the girl and she went away.

But the boy built a giant armored robot and got inside. He sat down way at the top in the robot’s head, where he had built the cab with the controls.

Then he set out and drove around the country in his giant armored robot.

Everywhere the people screamed when they saw him coming, and they wanted to run away. But they couldn’t escape the giant armored robot.

The boy had a microphone in his cab, and everything he said into the microphone came roaring out of the robot’s mouth. “Is there someone here who can’t be killed by a gun?” yelled the robot. But wherever he came, people just ran away from him, and he never found anyone who couldn’t be killed by a gun.

One day, however, he could see from up above in his cab where he was sitting that someone down there wasn’t running away from him but just stood there and shouted something up to him. But he was so high up that he couldn’t understand what the person was saying.

“Maybe that’s someone who can’t be killed by a gun?” the boy thought and climbed down. But it was the old woman who had cooked a meal for him a while ago. “Did you want to say something to me?” the boy asked.

“Yes,” said the old woman. “I heard about somebody who can’t be killed by a gun. I thought I should tell you about him.”

“And who is that?” asked the boy.

“He’s an old man who lives up there on the moon.”

“Then I’ll have to look for him,” said the boy, “because I don’t want to have anyone around me who can be killed by a gun.” And he pulled a switch and his giant armored robot transformed itself into a giant armored rocket and he flew in it to the moon.

Up there on the moon, the boy had to search for a long time. But finally he found the old man. He was sitting behind a telescope and looking down on the blue planet.

“Are you the man who can’t be killed by a gun?” the boy asked the old man.

“I guess so,” the old man said.

“And what are you looking at in your telescope?”

“I’m studying the people on the planet down there.”

“Do you think I could stay with you?” the boy asked.

“Maybe,” said the old man. “What’s so special about me?”

“Because I don’t want to stay with someone who can be shot to death. When my parents died, I cried all the tears that I had in me. I could have had a dog, but if someone had killed it, I would have had to die from crying. And I could have stayed with an old woman or with a little girl. But they weren’t bulletproof, and if they had been killed, I would have had to die from crying.”

“It’s all right,” said the old man, “you can stay with me. No one can shoot me dead because there aren’t any guns here.”

“Is that the only reason?” the boy asked.

“Yes, that’s it,” said the old man.

“But I brought my gun with me.”

“Too bad,” said the old man, “now you can’t stay with me. Your gun could shoot me dead.”

“Then I’ll just have to go back,” said the boy.

“Yes,” said the old man.

“Too bad,” said the boy.

“Are you sorry?” the old man asked.

“Yes,” said the boy, “I would have liked to stay here.”

“Maybe you could throw your gun away?” said the old man.

“Maybe,” said the boy.

“And then you could stay with me after all,” said the old man.

“Maybe,” said the boy. “And what would I do then?”

“You could look through this telescope. Then maybe you could find out why those people down there are always fighting wars.”

“And why do they fight wars?”

“Well, I don’t know that either. I suppose it has something to do with not knowing enough about each other. There are so many of them, and their lives are so complicated that they don’t know how their actions will affect others. I guess they don’t know where the meat that they eat comes from or where the bread goes that they bake. I suppose they don’t know whether the iron that they dig up from the earth is used to make bulldozers or cannons. Maybe they don’t know if the meat they’re eating isn’t being taken away from other people. If they could see themselves from up above, maybe they would understand many things a lot better.

“Then somebody ought to show it to them?” said the boy.

“Maybe,” said the old man, “but I’m too old and too tired for that.”

It wasn’t until then that the boy let his gun fall, and it fell down through space, down to the planet, and there it broke into pieces.

But the boy stayed a long, long time with the old man on the moon and looked through the telescope and studied the people down there. And perhaps one day he flew down there and explained to them what they were doing wrong.

## Planet of the Carrots

On a tiny planet there once lived some people who were hard working and others who were not so hard working. Then there were a few who were very hard working and a few who were very lazy. In a word - it was just like everywhere else in the universe. Except that the lazy ones and the hard working ones threw everything that they grew - mainly various kinds of carrots - on a pile and then shared everything from the pile. That wasn't the way it was everywhere.

But one day a few of the hard working ones said, “We've had enough. We grunt and sweat all day, and then the others who just lie around on their backs all day and whistle at the sun come waltzing up and want to eat our carrots.” And instead of throwing their carrots on the community pile, they kept them in their homes and stuffed themselves till they were fat.

The really lazy ones just shrugged their shoulders and kept on eating from the big pile, and of course they ate more from the pile than they themselves brought to it.

Then the semi-hard workers and the semi-lazy ones noticed that now everybody was getting less than before because the really hard working ones had always brought especially many carrots, more than they ate themselves.

Then the semi-hardworking ones said, "So we're going to keep our own carrots too." And they stopped throwing them on the big pile, and instead, each one made his or her own little pile at home.

And the semi-lazy ones did the same thing. "We have no other choice," they said to the really lazy ones.

And now they all had their own piles of carrots in front of their cottages, and when they felt like eating a special variety of carrot that they didn't have in their piles, then they had to see if they could trade with someone else.

Pretty soon people were coming and going, and after work they were busy for hours trading carrots until they all had all the carrot varieties in their houses that they needed, or thought they needed.

"That's a fine how-do-you-do!" said the really lazy ones among each other. For them there was no longer a community pile that they could sponge off of. But each one of them learned a different lesson from this situation. Some of them said, "All right, then I guess I'll just have to work more." But that wasn't quite so easy because when such a reformed lazy person found a field to plant his or her carrots, there was usually someone who said, "Hey, I've always planted carrots here. This is my field."

But others just went to the cottages of the richer ones and took from the carrot piles whatever they happened to feel like eating. "We always took from the community pile. And if there are now many piles, instead of one, then they're all just lots of community piles. In any case, we'll take what we want from them," they said.

Of course, the rich people didn't much like that attitude, and some of them started building fences around their carrot piles. And soon almost everybody had to build a fence around his or her pile of carrots because the more fences that were built around the piles, the more the really lazy ones, who wanted to keep to the old ways, went ahead and took what they wanted from the piles that didn't have fences around them.

Before long, everybody who had a pile, also had a fence around it. Now, after work, they not only had to deal with trading varieties, but also with the mending and improvement of their fences and with watching them to make sure nobody climbed over them.

Pretty soon some of them started grumbling, "We all used to meet after work at the big carrot pile and tell jokes and play leapfrog. Now after work, we're just stuck at home, watching our carrots and mending our fences. And the next morning we're dead tired and can't even plant our carrots properly. For some reason, we now have a lot more to do than we used to, but the carrots aren't getting any more plentiful."

And some people suggested that everybody should go back to the old ways, with the big community pile. "It's better to feed a few really lazy moochers than constantly wear ourselves out with trading and guarding and mending fences!"

But the richest ones said, "No, if we go back to the old ways, then that means mooching is allowed. Then everybody will want to mooch, and no one will plant carrots anymore, and we'll all starve!"

“But that's not what'll happen,” said the others. “It's too boring for most people to just lie on their backs and whistle something to the sun. Believe us, there are only a few people, who are really that lazy. Actually, growing carrots is fun!”

“No,” said the richest ones, “growing carrots isn't any fun. Only having carrots is fun. You can go ahead and share your carrots with the lazy bums, if you want to. As for us, we have no intention of tearing down our fences!”

“Heck,” said some of the semi-rich, “if the really rich ones aren't going to go along, then we'd rather keep our fences too. We really don't have so much that we can share it with the lazy bums.”

And the semi-poor ones said, “Well, if we're the only ones who are going to share, then everybody's going to have too little. We can't go along with that. We're afraid we're going to have to keep our fences.”

And so this time, nothing came of it. And even though most of them actually knew that everybody now had more work to do, and no more carrots, they just couldn't manage to go back to the old ways.

But a few other interesting things happened instead. Some of those who didn't have big carrot fields went to some of the richer ones and said, “Listen, if each of you gives me a few carrots every day, in exchange I'll guard your piles.”

And others came up with a different idea and said, “I'll fix the fence of anybody, who gives me carrots!”

And still others went from house to house and said, “Give me a few of your carrots, and I'll go and trade them for you, if I can keep every fifth carrot.”

That's how it went for a while, and then some of them started scratching their heads and said, “Actually I should now have more time, but now I have to plant more carrots so that I can pay the fence mender and the night watchman and the carrot trader.”

And once again, some people proposed that they should all go back to the old ways and tear down the fences. But strangely, it wasn't just the richest ones who were against the idea, but the poorest too, “Do you want to take away our work?” yelled the fence menders.

“How are we going to make a living?” yelled the night watchmen.

“Do you want us to starve?” yelled the carrot traders.

Heck, and so they just went on doing things the new way.

## Fear

Why  
is that guy  
looking at me like that?  
Is he afraid of me?

Why  
is that guy  
afraid of me?  
Does he think that I want to hurt him?

Why  
does he think

that I want to hurt him?  
I never hurt anyone!

I never hurt anyone,  
unless he wants to hurt me!

So if that guy thinks that I want to hurt him,  
then only because he knows:  
I hurt everybody  
who hurts me.

So: he must want to hurt me!

So I guess I'll go right over there and bash him in the mouth,  
so that he can't hurt me.

Ouch!

His fist was quicker than mine!  
Now here I am on the ground.  
But didn't I tell you right away  
that he wanted to hurt me?

## Fear Again

We are  
a peaceful country  
and will never attack anyone.  
Unless,  
someone attacked us.

Whoever doesn't intend  
to attack us,  
needs have no fear of us whatsoever.

Whoever wants to try to  
protect himself from us,  
proves that he's  
afraid of us.

Whoever's afraid of us,  
thereby proves,  
that he intends  
to attack us.

So you see it is clear  
that we have to attack anyone  
who prepares to defend himself.

## The Strange People from Planet Hortus

On the planet Hortus lived the Apple people, the Plum people, the Pear people, and the Raspberry people. The Apple people lived on applesauce, apple pie, apple jelly, and apple cake. The Plum people lived on plum sauce, plum pie, plum jelly, and plum cake. And it was pretty much the same with the Pear people and the Raspberry people.



For a while things went pretty well, but one day the Pear people felt like they were stuffed to the gills with the everlasting pear jelly. And one of the Pear people said, "You know what? We ought to become robbers!"

"Robbers? What's that?"

"Simple: at night, we'll sneak up on the Plum people, and when they're all asleep we'll bushwhack them and beat them up. Then we'll take as many plums as we can carry and run away. And then we can finally eat plum sauce, plum pie, plum jelly, and plum cake."

"Bravo! That'll be fun!"

And they sneaked up on the village of the Plum people, and when they were all sleeping, they swooped down on the village, broke into the houses, and beat up the Plum people. Then they took as many plums as they could carry and ran away.

The Plum people were scared to death and sad. "What was that? That's never happened before."

"Maybe the Pear people have gone crazy? We ought to send Mrs. Prunestem to them!"

You see, old Mrs. Prunestem was able to make an ointment from plum stones that could cure every sickness, except broken legs.

So Mrs. Prunestem set off with her pot full of plum stone ointment.

But in the evening she came back again. "They don't want to be cured," she said. "They threatened to beat me and sent me away again."

"That's bad! What're we going to do now?"

"If they don't want to be cured, then they're not sick, they're just bad. We've got to punish them!"

"Yeah, that's what we'll do! We'll descend on them and take their pears. That's only justice!"

And they all cheered and shouted willy-nilly, and only Mrs. Prunestem looked worried and just shook her head.

So the Plum people went on the warpath, and that night, they launched an attack on the Pear people and thrashed them. Then they took as many pears as they could carry and ran away.

"And what are you going to do, if they come and attack us again tomorrow? And everybody looked worried, but young Mr. Stone said, "We'll just post guards all around the village, with long poles, and if they come, we'll beat them up."

And that's what they did, and when a few nights later the Pear people came again, they got an awful thrashing.

"Well, what did I say! We'll really gave it to them! They won't dare ambush us again so soon."

"Fine, fine. But do you know what: we've been standing guard every night for two weeks, and we've been sleeping all day. In the meantime, we've eaten up all our plum cake and all our plum jelly, and we haven't had time to do any cooking or baking!"

"Then everybody should give you guys something! Because you've been standing guard for everybody!"

So all the Plum people gave something to the guards, and Mr. Stone got the most. "Because I've got to take care of everything! I'm carrying the responsibility!"

But after a while some of the Plum people started grumbling because before there had always been just enough for everybody, but now that all the young men were standing guard, instead of taking care of the plum trees and cooking and baking, now there wasn't enough for everybody.

“Right,” said Mr. Stone, “whose fault is it that our young men can't work but have to stand guard instead? The Pear people's! So the Pear people have to pay for that!”

And with his men he marched to the Pear people's village to rob them again. But the Pear people had posted guards too, and there was a terrible brawl midway between the two villages, and the Plum people couldn't get to the pears.

Then Mr. Stone said, “We've got to weave nets and throw them over the Pear people's guards. Then we can defeat them and loot the village!”

So all the Plum people had to weave nets, and this time the raid succeeded. Proudly Mr. Stone led the troops back, and each of the young men was carrying a sack of pears on his shoulder. Mr. Stone was carrying something too: responsibility.

In the middle of the village, Mr. Stone had everybody pour his pears onto a big pile. Then he divided the pile into three smaller piles. “So,” he said, “one pile will be divvied up among all the villagers, so that everybody has enough to eat. One pile will be divvied up among my soldiers because they fought so bravely. And one pile is for me because I carry the responsibility for everything.”

And everyone shouted with joy and patted Mr. Stone on the shoulder. Only old Mrs. Prunestem looked worried and shook her head, and said, “And what if the Pear people weave nets too?”

“I know! We'll build a wall around the village, so they can never again ambush us.”

And so the Plum people had to build a wall around whole the village.

But the Pear people didn't want to be stuck with the shame of their defeat. And when their scouts reported that the Plum people were building a wall around their village, the Pear people built a wall around their village too. And they weaved nets to catch the guards. And they also built themselves ladders so they could climb over the Plum people's wall. And one night, with their ladders, they invaded the Plum people's village and robbed them of everything they had.

“That's enough! We've got to teach these soft pears a lesson that they'll never recover from.” And Mr. Stone ordered the Plum people to construct a huge tower on wheels. He was going to push it up to the walls of the Pear people's village, and then throw balls of fire down on the Pear people's houses. But, in the meantime, the Pear people were building a huge catapult that they were going to use to demolish the Plum people's village wall.

And one night, the army of the Plum people crept up on the Pear people's village, and the army of the Pear people crept up on the village of the Plum people. And because the night was dark and foggy, the armies crept past each other without noticing it. When the Plum people had erected their tower in front of the wall of the Pear people, Mr. Stone climbed up to the top and yelled, “Open the gates and surrender, or we'll set fire to your whole village.”

And because the Pear people's army was away, the villagers opened the gates and let the Plum people inside.

And when the Pear people had pushed their catapult up to the wall of the Plum village, their leader wrote on a scrap of paper: “Surrender, or your whole village will be pumped full of lead! And he wrapped the note around a rock and had it fired over the wall. And the Plum people too opened their gates and let the Pear people inside.

But when the armies wanted to start plundering, there was hardly anything there. Just a few pots of apple jelly or plum jelly, a few dried up cakes, and some leftover pie, but even that was already moldy.

“There's nothing left,” said the Pear people to the Plum soldiers. “We haven't had time to cook or to tend the trees. The war took up all of our time.”

“We have nothing,” said the Plum people to the Pear soldiers. “We haven't had time to take care of the trees or to bake cakes. The war took up all of our time.”

“Rats!” said the leader of the Pear soldiers and turned back again.

“Damn! Damn!” said Mr. Stone and led his army away again.

At daybreak, both armies met midway between the two villages, and because they were so angry they started slugging each other. But the two field marshals didn't join in. Each one stood on a small hill, gave each other dirty looks, and brooded.

When they felt the two armies had been brawling long enough, they gave the command to retreat, and with their armies they marched back home.

The next day Mr. Stone called the Plum people together and said, “All right, now we've got to get busy right away and quickly bake a few plum cakes. We've got to bake faster than the enemy, so that we'll be ready quicker than they are for the next battle!”

But Mrs. Prunestem said, “We can't do that because there aren't any plums because nobody has been taking care of the trees. They all rotted on the ground. And there's also no flour for the cakes. And anyway we can't go on doing things this way. What sense does it make to rob each other? If we want to have enough to eat, every one of us is going to have to work all day; we'll have to and the Pear people too. Robbery doesn't make plums grow or pears either. We've got to make peace with the Pear people!”

And the Plum people, who finally wanted to start taking care of the plum trees and make pies again agreed with her.

The only one who was teed off was Mr. Stone. Because if there was no war, he couldn't command and carry responsibility, and there wouldn't be any loot from which he could take the lion's share.

He wandered into the village of the Raspberry people and said to them, “Listen. The Pear people don't have anything to eat anymore. They spent everything on the war. So there's a big danger that the Pear people will start robbing you next!”

The Raspberry people scratched their heads and said, “We never did anything to them!”

“That doesn't matter,” said Mr. Stone. “They're robbers and will take their loot where they can get it.”

“That's terrible!” said the Raspberry people. “What should we do? We don't understand anything about waging wars.”

“But we do!” said Mr. Stone. “I have a suggestion: give us a few bushels of raspberries - and we'll protect you from the Pear people.”

“All right,” sighed the Raspberry people. “What other choice do we have?”

And then Mr. Stone went back to the Plum people's village and told the Plum people, “It'll be almost one year before the next plum harvest! What do you expect to live on in the meantime? If we make peace, we'll be hungry for a whole year! But if we team up with the Raspberry people to fight against the Pear people, then we'll get raspberries from them right away.”

“Yeah, that's better,” shouted the young men, who had already gotten used to fighting. “We're better at fighting than at raising plums.”

The other Plum people scratched their heads and said: “To be hungry for a whole year! Who can stand that?” And they too went along with Mr. Stone.

Only Mrs. Prunestem looked worried and just shook her head.

But, in the meantime, the Pear people's field marshal had formed an alliance with the Apple people. And so everything started all over again: the Raspberry people and the Apple people had to build walls around their villages too, and weave nets, and build catapults and siege towers, and besides that they had to give their protectors half of their fruit. And when the year was up, on the whole planet there was nothing left to eat and nothing left to steal.

Then Mrs. Prunestem called all of the women on the planet together - that was possible because there were only four villages - and she said to them,

“We can't go on living like this. Robbing and fighting wars don't make plums and raspberries and apples and pears grow. Somebody has to do the work or there wouldn't even be any loot. And since we only have just enough when everybody does his or her work, we just can't afford all this robbery! You can't eat nets and ladders and catapults and walls and siege towers!”

“Right!” said the women.

“So, tell your husbands that they should shake hands with each other and get back to the orchards at once! Or we'll all starve to death!”

“All right!” said the women.

And so a treaty was concluded, and the men all shook each other's hands and mumbled, “Excuse me, it won't happen again.” And then there was peace on the planet Hortus again. And after two, almost three years, everyone once again had enough to eat, and Mrs. Prunestem made gifts of pots of plum jelly to the other villages, and the women from the other villages sent apple cake and pear sauce and raspberry pie.

And because peace reigned for so long, the people also had time to reflect a little and to invent things. One person invented special tongs that you could use to pick apples without climbing up into the trees. And another person developed a variety of raspberry bushes that had no thorns. And one person invented a tool that made it easy to take the stone out of a plum. And another invented a special knife for peeling pears.

“This is fine,” said the women, “now everybody only needs to work half a day, and there's still enough for everyone.”

But one day Mr. Stone stood up and said to the Plum people, “This is no good. People are lying around doing nothing half the day just because our work has become easier with the new plum de-stoner. What if the Pear people decide to ambush us and force us to work for them the other half of the day? The Pear people invented a new pear peeler. That poses a big danger because, if they don't have to work the whole day anymore in order to have enough to eat, then they now have time to build new siege towers and catapults! So we can't waste half the day playing games and telling stories: with our new plum de-stoner we now have enough time to think about our defense. Instead of just working half the day, it would be better if half of us worked the whole day, and the other half built catapults and spent time in training exercises. Now we can afford to support a standing army. That's the only way to protect ourselves from another attack by the Pear people, who will one day enslave us!”

And so the whole thing would have almost started all over again, if . . .

. . . if Mrs. Prunestem hadn't stood up and slapped Mr. Stone in the face with everybody watching. And he sat down nice and quiet and never said a word again.

## When the Soldiers Came

When the soldiers came we were hiding in a cave out in the desert. We had a goatskin full of water with us, some loaves of bread and some figs. That was all. Our two goats we had left behind and I was sad because grandfather said we would never see them again, the soldiers would kill them and eat them. Mother was weeping silently, but she let the baby suck her breasts all the time so he would not start crying and maybe give away our hiding place. I knew I must not cry because I was a big girl already and grandfather said I understood everything like a grown up person. But I could talk with grandfather very low, only from time to time he thought he heard some noise outside and I had to be quiet so he could listen better.

“Why will the soldiers kill our goats?” I said to grandfather. “Don't they like to drink milk?”

“They like to drink milk all right, but they like to eat meat even better. But most of all they don't want the soldiers of king Babak to eat the goats.”

“Is not king Babak our king?”

“That's what they say.”

“Then should we not have taken the goats with us to save them for the soldiers of king Babak?”

“The goats would have given us away. And it does not matter if the soldiers of king Babak or the soldiers of king Ubuk eat them.

“But if king Ubuk wins the war, will his soldiers not kill us all?”

“No. When the war is over, we will have to pay tribute to king Ubuk instead of king Babak. That is all the difference.”

“But is not king Babak our rightful king and the father of the country? Is he not the father of us all?”

“That's what the priests say, yes. But before him, Ereka was our king and the father of the country and we had to pray for his health in the temple. Babak then was the king across the river. Then Babak and Ereka had a fight because Ereka had defiled Babak's honour and Babak's army defeated Ereka's army and Ereka was killed and Babak took his country.”

“Did not also king Ubuk defile king Babak's honour?”

“That's what they say, yes.”

“So was not king Babak right to fight for his honour?”

“This is what kings do.”

“Don't you fight for your honour, grandfather?”

“We peasants do not fight for our honour. When the priest calls me a lazy swine because I do not bring enough corn to the storehouse, I cannot defend my honour. The priests would have me flogged to death. But with kings it is different. All kings must learn to defend their honour.”

“Why kings and not peasants?”

“When a king's honour is defiled by another king he will call together his army and fight with the other king. Sometimes he loses his life in battle. And sometimes the other king is killed

and the survivor will add the loser's kingdom to his own kingdom. The loser does not know that fighting for your honour can kill you, because he is dead. And the winner learns that it pays to defend one's honour. When my grandfather was young there were thirty small kingdoms in this valley. Now there are five bigger ones.”

“Because the kings had fights with each other? Because their honour had been defiled?”

“It was always something like that”, said grandfather.

“But what if a king does not want to defend his honour? What if a king does not want to fight and have his people killed and wounded and suffering?”

“Then the other kings will think he is weak and will take away his country anyway.”

“And has it always been like that? Have there always been wars to make bigger and bigger kingdoms?”

“I don't know”, said grandfather. “My grandfather said that once there were no kings, only farmers. He said they lived together in villages. And that they did not know about war. I can imagine it is true what my grandfather said. Why should they fight with the neighbouring village? Why should they want to take away their land? A farmer can only cultivate so much land. He has no use for more land than he and his family can cultivate. Oh well, maybe they had many children and after some time there would be a few more families that needed land. Would they start a fight to take away someone else's land? I doubt it. I think they would rather divide the land they had than take the risk to start a fight and maybe get killed. And even if they started a fight they would stop when they had won enough land. There would always be a limit to their greed. But to a king's greed there is never a limit.”

“Is a king a different being from a peasant?” I said. “Maybe it is a different kind of animal, like a goat is not the same as a sheep?”

“I don't think so” said grandfather. “I think if you take the son of a peasant and bring him up as a king he will do all the things that kings do.”

“Then why are kings different?”

“Because the way they make a living is different. My grandfather said, that apart from farmers there were also hunters in the old times. They were living in the woods and hunting animals. They too did not fight with each other for land. Each group had their own hunting grounds and they could not use bigger hunting grounds. But one day the weather got drier and the woods got smaller and the animals in the woods got less. And the hunters discovered a new sort of prey. They discovered the farmers with their storehouses full of seeds for next year and their goats and sheep and pigs. They would steal from the farmers, and when the farmers tried to defend themselves they would kill them. The hunters were better at using weapons, my grandfather said, because they had been using them every day. And soon they discovered it was better for them not to kill all the farmers and not to take away everything from them. Because if the farmers survived and had some seeds and some fodder left, they would plant corn again and would raise animals again and the next year they could be robbed again. And some clever chiefs made a treaty with the farmers and told them: If you pay me a tribute every year, I will defend you against other robbers. So the hunters became warriors and their chiefs became kings.

Now for a king owning land is a different thing. Because a king does not work on the land himself. He has the peasants who work and give him corn and butter and meat and wool and other things. The king does not eat or use all this himself. He uses it to feed and clothe his soldiers and his priests and the smiths who make the swords and the bow makers who make the bows and arrows for the soldiers and the builders who make palaces and temples. And all

this he uses to conquer more land to get more tribute to feed more soldiers to conquer more land to get more tribute to feed more soldiers to conquer more land and so on.”

“So if there would be no kings there would be no wars?”

“If there were no people who live on the work of other people, at least the fighting would not be endless as it is now. Maybe there would be no palaces and the temples would be smaller and there would not be so many artists who make beautiful jewellery and grand statues because nobody could afford that sort of thing. The carpets would not be so colourful, but everyone would have simple carpets and not sleep on the naked floor. Maybe there would be a fight now and then, but it would end.”

“So the fighting will not end any more?” I asked grandfather.

“Maybe after many thousand years, when all the world is only one kingdom.”

“But can we not get back to the way it was before there were kings?”

“I don't think so”, said grandfather, “How could that be? The soldiers have swords and bows and arrows. And what do we have?”

“But what if all the peasants in the world would agree not to feed the kings and their soldiers any more?”

“It is not possible”, said grandfather. “Who would send the messengers to all of them?”

When the soldiers had gone, the village was empty. All the animals had been killed or taken away, all the grain had been taken from the storehouses and burned. Even our hoes and sickles were gone. Grandfather showed us how to fish in the river and how to cook some wild plants, and somehow we got through the dry season. And then some corn would grow on the fields from some seeds that had fallen to the ground at the harvest, and we would not bake a single loaf but keep it all to sow it again. Little by little we brought the fields back to life again. Mother died and then grandfather died too, and my little brother married a girl from the neighbouring village and they had a child.

And one day the soldiers came.

## Two Fighters

Two fellows were giving each other a tough fight. One was big, the other was fat, one was heavy, the other tough, one was strong, the other was wild.

The strong one broke the wild one's nose. And he felt: he's got a nose like mine.

The wild one broke the strong one's ribs. And he felt: these ribs crack just like mine.

The strong one gouged out one of the wild one's eyes. And he felt: that eye is soft and delicate just like mine.

The wild one kicked the strong one in the stomach. And he felt: this stomach gives way just like mine.

The strong one choked the wild one's throat. And he felt: he needs air to breathe just like I do.

The wild one jammed his fist into the strong one's heart. And he felt: his heart beats just like mine. When both of them fell down and couldn't get up again, they both thought: “He's just like me, that guy.”

But that didn't do them much good any more.

## Man Against Man

One day when they made Mr. Balaban a recruit, the drill sergeant announced, “All right, today we’re going to practice man to man fighting. That’ll be very important for you when the balloon goes up!”

“Ah,” Mr. Balaban replied, “if it really comes to man to man fighting when the balloon goes up – could you then show me my man? Maybe he and I can patch things up!”

## The Great War on Mars

The Great War on Mars had come to an end.

Weary and sad of heart, the pink Gnuffs trudged home. “No more wars. Never again!” they moaned. They had lost the war.

Weary and sad, the purple Moffers also trudged home. “No more wars. Never again!” they groaned, even though they had won the war.

But on the battlefield lay almost as many dead Moffers as dead Gnuffs, and a terrible amount of green blood had been shed. The Supreme President of the Gnuffs and the High King of the Moffers met at the river that made up the border between their countries and agreed to a treaty.

“Never again shall there be a war between the Gnuffs and the Moffers,” they promised each other. And in both countries the people held huge peace celebrations.

“Let’s send our general into retirement!” the Gnuffs cried at their celebration.

“Let’s give our field marshal the pink slip!” shouted the Moffers at their celebration.

“We’ll have the soldiers plant strawberries!” yelled the Gnuffs.

“We’ll give the soldiers sewing machines!” exclaimed the Moffers.

But the general of the Gnuffs said, “You can’t do that. If we no longer have a general or soldiers, then the Moffers will immediately fall upon us. We must have a strong, alert army so that there will never be another war!”

And the field marshal of the Moffers said, “You can’t do that. When the Gnuffs see that we no longer have an army, surely they’ll immediately take revenge for the lost war. So we need soldiers and a field marshal.”

“Oh well, I guess you’re right,” the Gnuffs grumbled.

“I suppose he must be right,” muttered the Moffers.

And then everybody went home and back to work, the Gnuffs to their towers and the Moffers to their caves.

And the Gnuff general said to himself, “I don’t want another war again, but if I don’t show them that I’m an able general, they’ll send me into retirement.” And he said to the Supreme President, “Our army is in need of more swords, so we won’t be attacked anymore. Please demand higher taxes, so that we can buy more swords from the blacksmiths.” And the Supreme President did just that. And the blacksmiths said to themselves, “We don’t want another war, but if we sell lots of swords, we can afford the expensive schools for our children.” And the blacksmith journeymen said to themselves, “We don’t want another war, but if we say we don’t want to make swords, our bosses will throw us out, and then our children will have nothing to eat.”



And the field marshal of the Moffers said to himself, "I want peace, but if I don't show them that I'm a capable field marshal, they might sack me." And he said to the Head King of the Moffers, "I heard the Gnuffs are buying swords for their army. Please raise the taxes, so that we can attract more soldiers to the army." And the Head King raised the taxes and more soldiers joined the army. And the Moffer farmers said to themselves, "We want peace, but if we don't sell potatoes to the army, we won't be able to pay the new taxes." And the tailors said, "We want peace. But the more soldiers there are in the army, the more uniforms we can sell." And the spear makers said, "We want peace, but the more soldiers there are, the more spears we can sell."

And then it happened that an inventor among the Gnuffs discovered a poison, a terribly strong poison. But to the Gnuffs it was harmless; it was only deadly to Moffers. "I don't want to do anything bad to anybody," said the inventor to himself, "but if I keep my inventions to myself, I won't be able to pay the milk lady." And in a book, he wrote how to produce the poison.

And then it happened that a Moffer professor discovered how to build a bomb that could destroy everything above ground but was harmless to Moffers because they lived in caves. "I wish no one harm," said the professor to himself, "but I have to make my discovery known, or else the people will think that I don't know anything about my science." And he wrote a book explaining how to build the bomb. When the Moffer field marshal heard about it, he said to the Head King, "We really have to build this bomb because I heard that the Gnuffs have a terrible poison that they can use against us."

And the Gnuff general said to the Supreme President, "We really have to produce this poison because I heard that the Moffers have a dangerous bomb that they can use against us."

And so the poison was mixed...

...and the bomb was built.

And the Gnuffs built a huge spray gun that could spray the poison on the Moffers.

And the Gnuffs built a huge balloon that could carry the bomb to the Moffers.

Then the Supreme President of the Gnuffs said in a speech, "Now there can never again be a war because we want peace, and the Moffers will never dare attack us because we have the terrible poison."

And the Head King of the Moffers said in a speech, "Now there will always be peace because we don't want war, and the Gnuffs will never dare attack us because we have the terrible bomb."

One day the Gnuff blacksmiths said, "We don't have enough iron anymore for all the swords and plows and scythes and wagons that we could build. We've got to go to Iron Island and get iron!"

And the Moffer blacksmiths said, "We need more iron for our spears and wagons and plows and scythes. We have to go get iron from Iron Island!"

So the Gnuffs sent a ship to Iron Island...

...and the Moffers sent a ship to Iron Island too.

When the ships came back, the sailors told everybody at home that the others had also taken iron from Iron Island.

"The Moffers are taking our iron!" a Gnuff newspaper announced.

"The Gnuffs want all the iron for themselves!" announced a Moffer newspaper.

This was rather an exaggeration, but everybody knows that papers with exciting news sell better than those which say that everything is not so bad and one should maybe first have a look if maybe there wasn't enough iron for everyone. And newspaper people want to make a living just like everybody else.

And the Moffers once again became frightened of the Gnuffs...

...and the Gnuffs became frightened of the Moffers.

"We have to have Iron Island for ourselves," said some of the Gnuffs, "or there can be no peace."

"Iron Island must belong to us," said some of the Moffers, "or there'll be another war!"

"If we don't have iron for plows, we'll have nothing to eat," said some of the Gnuffs, "and then our terrible poison won't help us either!"

"If we don't have any iron, we'll starve," said some of the Moffers, "and then our huge bomb won't do us any good either."

And the Gnuffs sent a warship to Iron Island...

...and the Moffers sent a warship to Iron Island.

And when the battle came to a draw...

...the Gnuffs sent another warship...

...and the Moffers sent another warship.

"We can't allow them to build any warships!" said the Gnuff general and with his troops he attacked the Moffer's shipyard.

"We have to prevent them from building ships," said the Moffer field marshal, and with his troops he attacked the Gnuff's shipyard.

"They have attacked us!" yelled the Gnuffs.

"They have struck us!" yelled the Moffers.

"We wanted peace," said the Gnuff general, "but now it's too late. We have to spray them with our poison before they drop the bomb on us!"

"We didn't want war!" said the Moffer field marshal, "but now it's too late. We have to drop the bomb on them before they spray us with poison."

And the spray gun was filled...

...and the big balloon was launched.

"Now their number's up!" said the Gnuffs.

"Now their number's up!" said the Moffers.

"And ours is too!" said the Gnuffs when they saw the balloon slowly rising.

"And ours is too!" said the Moffers when they saw the giant spray gun appear on the horizon.

"Maybe I shouldn't have invented the poison after all!" said the inventor.

"Maybe I shouldn't have invented the bomb after all!" said the professor.

"Maybe we shouldn't have made any swords!" said the blacksmiths.

"Maybe we shouldn't have made any spears!" said the spear makers.

"Maybe we shouldn't have sewn any uniforms!" said the tailors.

“Maybe we shouldn’t have delivered any potatoes,” said the farmers.

“Maybe we shouldn’t have exaggerated so much” said the newspaper people.

“Maybe we should have stuck to the truth more” said the people who wrote the magazines.

“Maybe we shouldn’t have become soldiers,” said the soldiers.

“Maybe we should have sent our general into retirement!” said the Gnuffs.

“Maybe we should have given our field marshal the pink slip!” said the Moffers.

...

And then a Gnuff said to his friends, “We can’t save ourselves anymore. But the Moffers – they weren’t any more stupid or mean than we were.” And they climbed up onto the spray gun and knocked it over, just at the moment before it started spraying.

And a few Moffers said to each other, “Now we’re going to die because of our stupidity. But the Gnuffs at least ought to know that there were a few decent Moffers.” And they grabbed hold of the ropes and climbed up to the balloon and exploded the bomb before it got to the Gnuffs.

“Moffers saved us!” the Gnuffs said, astonished when they saw that the bomb had not hurt them.

“Gnuffs gave their lives for us!” the Moffers whispered, completely amazed, when they noticed that the poison hadn’t hit them.

And then they all let their swords and spears drop to the ground, sat down on the ground and moaned, “Whew! That was a close call!” And because they were so relieved, many of them started crying.

Then they sent the general and the marshal into retirement, the Supreme President and the Head King too, and they said, “This time we’ve got to be smarter!”

## The Slave

A man had a slave. And the slave had to do all the chores for him. The slave washed the man, combed his hair, cut up his food, and put it in his mouth. The slave wrote the man’s letters for him, shined his shoes for him, darned his socks for him, chopped the wood for him, and lit the fire in the stove. When the man saw some raspberries while taking a walk, the slave had to pick them and put them in his mouth. To keep the slave from running away, the man always kept him on a chain. Day and night, he had to hold on to him and haul him around, or he would have run away. In the other hand, the man always carried a whip because when the slave pulled on the chain and yanked at it, the man had to whip him. Then when his arms hurt, and he was exhausted from whipping him, the man swore at the slave, and at the chain, and generally at everything.

Sometimes he secretly dreamed of the times when he was still young and didn’t yet have a slave. In those times he could still roam through the woods free as a bird and pick raspberries without this constant tugging and tearing at the chain. Now he couldn’t even go to the can by himself. In the first place, because the slave would have run away, and in the second place: who would have wiped his butt? He himself couldn’t free up either hand for that.

One time when he was bellyaching like that, someone said to him: “Well, if it’s so terrible, why don’t you let the slave go free?”

“Sure,” said the man, “so he can kill me!” But secretly the man dreamed of freedom.

And the slave? Did he dream of freedom too? No, he had long ago given up dreaming of freedom. The only thing he dreamed of was of being the master himself and leading the man around on a chain and whipping him and making him wipe his butt. That's what he dreamed of!

## The Farmers who Were Good at Numbers

Among the places the mullah Nasreddin Hodja visited in his travels, was a village whose citizens were known for being especially good at numbers. Nasreddin found lodging at a farmer's house. The next morning Nasreddin found out that the village had no well. In the morning, someone from every family in the village loaded one or two donkeys with empty water jugs, and then went off to a stream that was an hour's walk away, filled the jugs, and brought them back again, which took another hour.

"Wouldn't it be better if you had water in the village," the hodja asked the farmer he was staying with.

"Oh, much better," said the farmer. "Every day the water costs me two hours of work for a donkey and a boy who drives the donkey. That comes to 1,460 hours per year, if you count the donkey as equal to the boy. If the donkey and the boy were working in the fields during this time, I could, for example, plant a whole field of pumpkins and harvest an additional 457 pumpkins every year."

"I see you've got everything nicely figured out," said the hodja, admiringly. "Then why not dig a canal to bring the water to the village?"

"That's not so simple," said the farmer. "There's a hill in the way, which we'd have to dig up and remove. If I used my boy and donkey to dig a canal instead of sending them for water, it would take them 500 years, if they worked two hours a day. I've got maybe thirty more years to live, so it's cheaper for me to have them fetch the water."

"Yes, but would it be your responsibility alone to dig a canal? There are many families in this village."

"Oh, yes," said the farmer, "there are exactly 100 families. If every family sent a boy and a donkey every day for two hours, then the canal would be finished in five years. And if they worked ten hours every day, it would be finished in one year."

"So why don't you speak to your neighbors and suggest that all of you dig the canal together?"

"Well, if I have an important matter to discuss with a neighbor, I invite him to my house, serve him tea and halvah, talk to him about the weather and the prospects for the next harvest, then about his family, about his sons, daughters, and grandchildren. Then I have a meal served to him and after dinner we have tea again. Then he asks me about my farm and about my family, and then we get to the matter at hand nice and slowly. That takes a whole day. Since there are 100 families in our village, I would have to speak to 99 heads of household. You have to admit that I can't afford to spend ninety-nine days in a row having these discussions. My farm would go to rack and ruin. The best I could do is to invite a neighbor once a week to my house. Since a year only has fifty-two weeks, that means it would take almost two years to talk to all my neighbors. If I know my neighbors, every one would finally agree that it would be better to have water in the village because they are all good with numbers. And if I know them, every one of them would promise to join in if the others joined in too. So, after two years I would have to start all over again. I'd have to invite them to my house and tell them that the others have also agreed to join in."

“Fine,” said the hodja, “but after four years you would be ready to start the work. And after one more year, the canal would be completed!”

“There’s one more complication,” said the farmer. “You’ll admit that once the canal has been dug, everybody will be able to fetch water from it, whether he did his share of the work or not.”

“That’s right,” said the hodja. “Even if you wanted to, you couldn’t guard the whole length of the canal.”

“Exactly,” said the farmer. “So someone who was a slacker would have the same benefit from the canal as the others, but without the cost.”

“I have to admit that,” said the hodja.

“So everyone who is good at numbers will try to shirk his duty. One day it’ll be a lame donkey. Another day someone’s boy will have a cough. And then someone’s wife will be ill, and the boy and the donkey will be needed to fetch the doctor. But in our village, everyone is good at numbers, so everyone will try to get out of doing his share. And since every one of us knows that the others won’t pitch in, no one will send his donkey and his boy to work. So the canal won’t even be started.”

“I have to admit that your arguments sound very convincing,” said the hodja. He brooded for a while, then he suddenly called out, “But I know a village on the other side of the mountains that had exactly the same problem as you have. But they’ve had a canal for twenty years.”

“Right,” said the farmer, “but they aren’t good at numbers.”

## The Strange War

On a foreign planet or in another time, there were once two countries called Over Here and Over There. There were also other countries, like Next Door and Far Away, but this story is about Over Here and Over There.

One day the High and Mighty of Over Here gave a speech to his citizens. He said that the nation of Over Here was being pressured by the nation of Over There and that the Over Herians could no longer sit idly by and watch the nation of Over There use its borders to push and confine the nation of Over Here.

“They are situated so close to us that we don’t even have a place to catch our breaths!” he shouted. “We’re so cramped we can hardly move. They’re not prepared to move even an inch to give us some space, to grant us a little freedom of movement. But if they don’t feel like doing even that little bit for us, then we’ll just have to force them to.”

We don’t want war. If it were up to us, there would be everlasting peace. But I’m afraid it’s not up to us. If they aren’t prepared to move over a little with their country, then they’re going to force us into war. But we won’t allow a war to be forced upon us. Not us! We won’t permit them to force us to sacrifice our sons senselessly, so that our women will become widows, our children orphans! That’s why we have to break the power of Over There before they force us to start a war. And that’s why, fellow citizens, in order to defend ourselves, in order to protect the peace, in order to save our children, I hereby formally declare war on the nation of Over There!”

The confused Over Herians first looked at one another. Then they looked at their High and Mighty. And then they looked at the special police troops with their armored helmets and exterminator-laser blasters. They were standing around the town square and were applauding

enthusiastically and shouting, “Long live the High and Mighty! Down with the Over Therians!”

And the war began.

On that very day, the army of the Over Herians crossed the border. It was a powerful sight. The armored vehicles looked like giant iron dragon fish. They crushed everything that got in their way. They could fire grenades out of their canon tubes that tore everything apart, and they could spew poison gases that annihilated everyone. Each one left behind it a 100-yard wide death zone.

In front of them lay a beautiful green forest, and behind them lay nothing.

The sky became dark where the planes were flying, and people standing beneath, fell on their faces, the noise alone filling them with terror. And where the shadow fell, there also fell the bombs.

Between the giant planes in the sky and the armored vehicles on the ground, swarms of helicopters buzzed, like tiny, wicked mosquitoes. The soldiers, however, looked like fighting steel robots in their armored suits that made them invulnerable to bullets, gas, poison, and bacteria.

In their hands they carried heavy individual combat weapons that could spray deadly shells or laser rays that melted everything in their paths.

This is how the unstoppable army of Over Here advanced, ruthlessly intending to crush every enemy. But strangely they found no enemy.

On the first day the army advanced ten kilometers into enemy territory, on the second, twenty. On the third day they crossed the big river. Everywhere they found only abandoned villages, harvested fields, deserted factories, empty warehouses. “They’re hiding, and when we’re past them, they’ll attack us from behind!” shouted the High and Mighty. “Search all the haylofts and all the manure piles!”

The soldiers poked through the manure piles, but the only thing they found in the process were piles of identification papers: driver’s licenses, birth certificates, and passports, shot records, school records; receipts for payment of dog licenses and cable TV, and hundreds of other documents. And the photographs had been torn out of the documents that required photo identification. Nobody could tell what all that meant.

A big problem was that the road signs showing directions had been pulled up or turned in the wrong direction or painted over. But some of them were correct, so that you couldn’t even depend on them being wrong. Soldiers kept getting lost, whole companies were unable to find their way, divisions went astray, and many a deserted general cursed and sent motorcycle drivers in every direction to look for his soldiers. The High and Mighty had to call up surveyors and geography teachers so that the conquered country could be properly mapped.

On the fourth day of the campaign, the soldiers of Over Here took their first prisoner. He wasn’t a soldier, but a civilian who had been found in a wood with a mushroom basket over his shoulder. The High and Mighty ordered the man to be brought to him personally for an interrogation. The prisoner said his name was John Smith and that his profession was mushroom gatherer. He said he had lost his ID and that he didn’t know where the Over Therian army was.

In the next few days, the army of Over Here arrested several thousand civilians. All of them were called John or Jane Smith, and none of them had any identification papers. The High and Mighty seethed.

Finally the army of Over Here occupied their first large city. Everywhere soldiers could be seen painting street names on walls. They had had to have the city maps sent by the secret service. Of course, because of the rush, there were many mistakes, and some streets were named one thing on the right side of the street and something else on the left side and one thing on the upper end of the street and something else on the lower end.

Companies of soldiers were constantly wandering around the city aimlessly, in front of them a cursing sergeant with a city map in his hand. In general nothing worked in the city. The power plant wasn't operating and neither was the gas company or the telephone company. Nothing worked.

The High and Mighty immediately announced that going on strike was prohibited and that everybody had to go to work without delay.

And the people went to the factories and offices, but still nothing was working. When the soldiers went there and asked, "Why isn't anybody working here?" the people said, "the engineer is not here" or "the chief technician is not here" or "Mrs. so and so, the director is not here."

But how was Mrs. so and so the director to be found when every woman was called Jane Smith? The High and Mighty announced that those who didn't use their correct names and titles would be shot. So the Over Therians no longer called themselves Smith but used any old name, but what good was that?

The farther the army advanced into the country the more difficult everything became. Pretty soon they weren't able to round up any fresh food for the soldiers; everything had to be brought in from Over Here. The railroad didn't work; the railroaders were either standing around or mindlessly driving the engines back and forth. The conductors couldn't decide who should be in charge of which coach, and naturally all the bosses who knew how things were supposed to work had disappeared. No one could find them.

Nobody did anything to harm the soldiers. So soon they became careless, walking around with open visors on their armored helmets and chatting with the people. And the people from Over There, who were hiding everything edible from the army's confiscation commandos, shared what little food they had with individual soldiers or traded fresh lettuce or homemade cake for canned food. The soldiers had plenty of canned food and they were frankly sick and tired of it.

When the High and Mighty found out about it, he flew into a rage, almost foaming at the mouth, and he issued an order forbidding all soldiers to leave their quarters except when out on patrol with their units. The soldiers didn't like that at all.

Finally the army occupied the capital of Over There. But here, too, everything was like everywhere in this country. There were no street signs, no house numbers, and no family names on the doors. There were no directors, engineers, chief technicians, no policemen and no public officials. The government agencies were empty, and all the files had disappeared. No one knew where the national administration was.

The High and Mighty decided that he would finally have to get ruthless. He announced that all adults would be required to go to their factories and offices. Whoever stayed home would be shot.

Then he himself went to the power plant and ordered all soldiers and officers who, at home, had had something to do with power plants to go there too. He gave a speech to the workers, and then he said that there would be electricity in two hours. The officers gave commands, and the soldiers supervised, and the power plant workers ran back and forth and did exactly what the officers told them to do. Of course the result was terrible chaos and no electricity.

Then the High and Mighty called the officers back and said to the power plant workers, "If there is no electricity in half an hour, you'll all be shot!" And behold, in half an hour there was light. And the High and Mighty said, "You see, you bums, I just have to put the heat on you!" and with his soldiers he then went over to the gas works to do exactly the same thing.

But the next day there was again no electricity. The High and Mighty was infuriated, and when he and his specially trained liquidation troops, marched up to the power plant to wipe out all of the workers, the power plant was empty, and the workers and staff had blended in with the people who were in the factories and offices.

The High and Mighty then ordered his soldiers simply to gather up a thousand people from the street and shoot them.

But because the people of Over There had been treacherous and cunning by always being friendly with the soldiers, the morale of the troops was so low that no one was prepared to just pick out a thousand people who hadn't done anything and shoot them. So the High and Mighty gave the order to the special liquidation troops. But his officers let him know that the ordinary soldiers were already very unhappy and that it could even come to a mutiny, if a thousand people were shot.

And the High and Mighty received letters from the people in powerful positions at home, who wrote: "Highest of the Mighty! You have proven your gift as a field marshal and shown your military genius, and we congratulate you on your innumerable, magnificent victories. But now we ask you to come back and leave those crazy Over There people to their own devices. They're costing us too much. If we have to place a soldier with a sub-machine gun behind every worker and threaten to shoot them, and an engineer who tells them what to do, then the whole conquering business is somehow not worth it all. Please come back home because our beloved country has already been deprived of your shining presence for too long."

So the High and Mighty packed up his army, ordered them to confiscate whatever valuable machines and other expensive objects they could transport, and returned home cursing.

"But we gave it to them!" he growled. "Those cowards. What will the fools do now? How are they going to figure out who's an engineer, who's a doctor, and who's a cabinetmaker? Without certificates and diplomas! How are they going to determine who's going to live in a villa and who in an apartment, if they can't prove what belongs to them? How are they going to manage without deeds to property, without police records or driver's licenses, without titles or uniforms? What confusion they'll have! And all of that just so they don't have to go to war with us, those cowards."

## Arobanai

Arobanai lifted her head out of the water in the river. In front of her lay Apa Lelo in the afternoon sun. Thunder could be heard in the distance, but the rain wouldn't come until later. That left enough time to set up the huts. In the grassy clearing, the children were already playing; here and there lay bundles in the grass. The men, who had been there earlier, had left the bundles lying at the spots where they wanted to have their huts and had then gone straight to the hunt. The women who had children had allowed themselves more time during their journey because they wanted to gather mushrooms and roots on the way. Arobanai rubbed down her body in the water. It was lovely to walk into a new camp and to wash off all the dust and sweat of the trek and of all the earlier camps. A new camp was always a new beginning, full of new possibilities and prospects. She shook the water out of her short, curly hair and waded back to the riverbank. Then she lifted her bundle high over her head and carried it through the river to the other side. She knew, when she lifted her arms that way, that her hard



breasts protruded even more forcefully, and the water from the river made her body shine, and all its shapes appeared even more beautiful. On the other side, the first boys stepped out of the forest with their kill.

Apa Lelo was the nicest camp that Arobanai knew. The Lelo made a loop at this spot, so that the camp was almost an island. In the middle of the island the trees stood far apart and formed a natural clearing, but way up in the top, their crowns almost touched one another, so there was plenty of light but it was still never in the full glare of the sun. Just about in the middle of the island, a group of trees divided the clearing into two almost equal halves. The children had already claimed their playground under trees on the riverbank, a little removed from the clearing where the huts would be standing, but still near enough to be safe.

Arobanai looked for the bundle that belonged to her father, Ekianga. Her mother hadn't arrived yet, and the first thing she did was untie the bundle of leaves in which she had wrapped a glowing ember. She placed a few dry twigs on it, blew at the red-hot coal, and the flames reached for the kindling.

Gradually, more and more people started showing up. Some of the men brought meat and then went off again to cut sticks and leaves. The women lit fires and began to cook. Almost all of them had gathered mushrooms and roots – the children brought them in by the armful – and a sauce was cooked in the pumpkin bowls, and pieces of meat were tossed in.

When the men came back with poles and big bundles of broad mongongo leaves, the women began to build the huts. They pushed the poles into the ground forming a circle; then they lashed the tips into a dome with liana vines. Thinner twigs were woven into the frame, and the broad, heart-shaped leaves were fastened to this wreathwork. People who had set out later or who had interrupted their journey to look for whatever delicacies they could find were still arriving. And the women who were already working on their huts laughed and called to them, telling them how wet they would get, because the rain clouds were getting closer and closer.

But the men who had supplied their women with building materials, ran back into the forest and cut down poles, sticks, and leaves for the latecomers. Relatives and friends built their huts close to each other. Families that didn't get along very well with each other, settled down on opposite ends of the camp from each other, and if that wasn't possible, they set up their huts so that the entrances were pointing away from each other.

The storm clouds caused the evening to come early, the fires were brought into the huts, and time and again the position of a leaf had to be corrected where a little bit of water was leaking through into the hut. But the rain didn't last long. The fires were soon burning again in front of the huts. The women made some improvements to the roofs, and the men sauntered once more into the forest with their bows and arrows, maybe to bag one more bird or monkey before it got too dark. Smoke was coming out of the huts, and a blue haze lay over the camp, which suddenly turned orange and gold and red when the clouds separated and the sun shot its last ray across the sky.

Arobanai lay on her back in her parents' hut, and held her little brother by one arm, while she lifted the little giggler by his legs. From the huts all around the families could be heard chatting with each other, and now and then an uninvited listener chimed in with a comment that caused an outburst of laughter.

Kenge, a still unmarried young hunter, had built one of the neighboring huts. A majority of the young boys were crowded in with him. Arobanai heard them telling each other about the animals they would hunt from this camp and the girls they wanted to flirt with. When she heard Kelemoke say her name, she called over to him, "Your legs are too crooked for me. You need to become a hunter first, you little pup!" They replied with roaring laughter. The

boys beat their chests and thighs and shook helplessly with laughter. Kelemoke was one of the most skillful runners and, after all, had already killed one buffalo by himself.

Ekianga, without shouting, simply said in a loud voice, but in such a way that it could be heard five huts away, "A man'll get a headache from all this shouting. Let's have some peace and quiet, so we can get some sleep!"

That at least caused the boys to tone it down to a whisper, and only now and then could they be heard snickering and chuckling. Arobanai smiled. This would be a good camp, she felt. She would have a lot of fun here.

But in the morning, sorrow filled the camp. Arobanai was awakened by a long, drawn-out, horrible scream, the dreadful lament of a person who has fallen into total gloom. They all rushed out of their huts. Balekimito, one of Arobanai's father's aunts and the mother of Amabosu and Manyalibo, was dead, very dead. The old woman, who was greatly respected by all and a grandmother many times over, had already been sick before the move to the new camp. Her sons, Amabosu and Manyalibo, didn't want to leave her behind. They would have stayed with her until she got better, but the hunting had been bad in the old camp, and Balekimito had insisted on going with them when everybody moved. But the trek had weakened her, and now she was very dead, and would soon be dead forever. Her relatives crowded into her hut. Her sons were pacing back and forth, with tear-streaked faces. Her daughter Asofalinda tried to comfort her brothers but kept breaking down in tears next to the old woman's bed. Only Balekimito herself was quiet amidst the wailing, weeping crowd. She reached for her sons' hands, pulled her daughter to her and whispered, "I am with my children. I'm not dying alone. It is good."

With her still alert eyes, she looked around the hut and caught sight of her great niece Arobanai. She waved to her with her hand, which was transparent like a dry leaf, to come over. "You've become pretty," she whispered. "Have you already picked out a boyfriend?" She grinned and grasped Arobanai's wrist tightly. Arobanai, numb with shock, was crouching next to the old one's bed. Balekimito fell asleep, but her grasp didn't loosen. The girl remained crouching. The men and women kept their wailing down, so as not to disturb the old woman's sleep. When the sun stood high above the camp, Balekimito stopped breathing.

Now there was no longer any reason to hold back. Asofalinda suddenly had a hemp rope in her hands and placed a noose around her neck. Three men had to stop her from harming herself. Children crowded into the hut and then ran back out. They threw themselves on the ground and started beating the earth in helpless anger. The ancient Tungana and his wife Bonyo crouched in front of their hut, tears running down their wrinkled cheeks. Arobanai, still numb with grief, was huddling in the middle of the wailing and crying people. And the wailing and crying would never end because Balekimito would never again wake up. She was dead, not only just dead, she was dead forever, and would always lie there that way and hold on to her wrist.

Not until Arobanai's mother Kamaikan stepped up and softly bent the dead person's fingers back, was Arobanai able to burst into tears too, to writhe on the ground, and cry her grief and terror away.

Not until the evening did the camp slowly calm down. Weary from the sorrow, they all just lay in front of or in their huts. Then old Moke stepped into the middle of the camp and started speaking very quietly. People moved up closer to be able to hear him, and he said with his calm, melodic voice, "It's not good for everybody to just sit around and be sad. The fires are going out and no one is cooking dinner. Tomorrow everybody will be hungry and too weak and too tired for the hunt. She, who was a good mother to us all, died well. Everybody should

be happy that she lived so long and that she had such a good death.” He was answered by general nodding.

Manyalibo said, “Yes, that’s right. Everybody should be happy. All this mourning won’t help anyone. It’s got to stop. We should have a party. We should call the Molimo and have a feast for the Molimo.”

And Njobo, the great hunter who had killed an elephant alone said, “Yes, her death is a big thing, and we should have a big feast. We should celebrate until the moon has been full once and twice, or even three times!”

The next day, two young men went from hut to hut with a lasso made of liana. They threw the noose into the hut and waited. The residents of the hut placed a few bananas in the noose, or maybe roots or a piece of dried meat. The young men acted as though they had to catch the offering and fight over it. Then they went on to the next hut. In the middle of the camp there was soon a well-filled basket on a pole next to the Molimo fire.

The whole day, the young men made a big mystery out of the Molimo. Women were not allowed to see the Molimo. The young men indicated that the Molimo was dangerous, the great animal of the forest, and only men could deal with it. Arobanai, who, with her girl friends, was scraping out the inner bark of branches to get material for ropes, wanted to object angrily, but an aunt just calmly gripped her arm, smiled a little and shook her head. In the evening, after dinner, the women hastily withdrew with their children to their huts. The old men, the hunters, and the young men gathered around the fire and began to sing.

Arobanai was playing with her young brother. Outside the men were singing. Just when Arobanai was just about to fall asleep, Kamaikam gave her a little push. In the glow of the burning embers, Arobanai could see that her mother was smiling and pointing towards outside. She listened. The men sang, and quietly so that they could not hear her, Kamaikam hummed along:

“Around us is darkness, great darkness.  
Darkness is around us, great, black darkness.  
But if there is darkness,  
then the darkness is good.  
Darkness is around us, great black darkness,  
but if there is darkness,  
and the darkness belongs to the forest,  
then the darkness is good.”

Every night the men sang the songs of the Molimo. And the women withdrew to their huts and acted as though all of this was none of their business. When the men sang, the great animal of the forest answered them. He called with the voice of the buffalo, with the voice of the antelope, with the voice of the elephant. He called with bird voices and leopard and monkey voices. And then the men sang again and hummed their songs around the fire. The songs came from close by, from far away, from the north, and from the south.

Sometimes the men sang until the early morning. Every man had to take part. Every man had to spend the night singing and eating, eating and singing. If one of them fell asleep, it was said, the great animal of the forest would eat him.

“They don’t need to act like that!” said Akidinimba sullenly, when she was picking berries with Arobanai and other girls. “I know what it is. It’s a big pipe, a pipe made of bamboo. They blow into it and shout and sing. Yesterday it was Ausu who was running around in the forest with the pipe.”

“He’s got a beautiful voice!” said Arobanai.

“We’re not supposed to talk about those things!” said Kidaya. “Women don’t talk about those things!”

But at night, when the men were singing, Kamaikan smiled and hummed along, and Aunt Asofalinda told a story, “Once, a long time ago, the Molimo belonged to the women. The women sang the songs and ran through the forest with the Molimo. The forest is good to us and watches out for its children. That’s why we sing songs for him, to make the forest happy. But sometimes the forest sleeps, and then bad things can happen. Then we wake up the forest; then we fetch the Molimo so that the forest wakes up and doesn’t forget its children in its dream.”

“And why are the men now running with the Molimo?”

“Oh, the men. They always think they know everything. They say they are the big hunters. They know how to deal with the animals of the forest.”

And Kamaikan smiled mysteriously and told Arobanai to be patient.

In the fifth night of the the Molimo, Kelemoke came to her in her hut. Arobanai was totally amazed. “If you don’t sing with the men, the great animal of the forest will eat you!” she said and poked him in the side with her finger. Kelemoke laughed quietly. “Why should it eat me? Your mother and aunt are sleeping. Your father is singing. What better time is there for love? Why should the animal of the forest eat me if we’re doing what everybody does?”

Every other night or so, Kelemoke found the chance to sneak away from the Kumamolimo. Arobanai crept out of the hut, and they usually met at the bopi, the children’s playground. There they giggled and whispered and played the game of love. It was all the more exciting because it was forbidden. A boy and a girl from the same hunting group could not marry. And Arobanai knew whom she wanted to marry. It was Tumba, a boy who hunted with Abira’s and Motu’s group. But, in the meantime, why shouldn’t she amuse herself with Kelemoke, the strongest hunter among the young men, who could have had a wife a long time ago, if he hadn’t had to wait. He had to wait until a close female relative from his group was of marriageable age and at the same time a girl from another group came to him. They could then have an exchange: the female relative could marry a man from the girl’s group, and he could marry the girl. If the hunters didn’t exchange their “sisters,” it was possible that one day a group would be without women. No girl would have said no to Kelemoke, but she, Arobanai, was the most beautiful. That’s why he had chosen her. No girl had such beautiful breasts as she had, and such slender legs and such a round bottom. When the moon would bless her with the blood, then there would always be time to marry.

The next day brought heated debates and bickering. Sefu had arrived, the old trouble maker. It wasn’t that they didn’t like him, that sly joker, but why did he have to set up his own camp, just fifty steps away from the big camp? He considered himself the leader of five families. How could five families organize a hunt? “It’ll be the same as last time,” said Asofalinda, Ekianga’s sister. “If he needs something, he says he belongs to our camp, but if he has something we’d like, then he says he’s just passing through.” She imitated Sefu’s whining voice. When the laughter had died down, Masisi, who was related to Sefu, said, “It’s good to have many hunters and many nets.” “Yes, and many eaters!” said Asofalinda.

It turned out that Asofalinda was right. Sefu didn’t often give anything for the Kumamolimo, the food basket that had to be filled every day. “It’s not my Molimo,” he said during the day. But when he had given something, or rather, when someone from his camp had given something, then Sefu came and devoured large portions. When he had eaten his fill, he sang a little and took the first opportunity to disappear back into his hut. “If he doesn’t behave himself,” the young men threatened, “we’ll go find him in his hut, and if we find him sleeping, we’ll nail him to the floor with our spears, and when he’s dead forever, we’ll bury

him beneath the Molimo fire. We'll tell his wife the animal of the forest ate him, and then nobody'll ever talk about him anymore."

But, of course, things didn't go beyond threats, and Sefu said, "Why shouldn't I go to sleep when I'm tired? No one would be such an animal as to prevent a tired man from sleeping. Besides, this Molimo is not my Molimo. I just come to be friendly, to pay my respects to the Molimo, and I'm being threatened with spears!"

True, in the mornings the Molimo often scolded him. For the morning was the time when the Molimo came into camp. He came closely surrounded by the young men, so that he couldn't be seen. The young men romped and ran around with him among the huts, and they beat on the roof of the huts of those who had misbehaved in some way the day before. The boys beat on the roofs and shook the walls. Sefu's hut was often shaken up, but so too were the huts of couples who had had a loud argument, of hunters who had stayed away from the hunt too often, of girls who had too openly flirted with boys who were related to them. The Molimo respected no one. Whoever he scolded had to just take it.

The days in Apa Lelo were happy days. Arobanai often went along on the hunt. In the evenings the men usually discussed where they would hunt the next day. The men and the boys told about tracks they had seen and compared the chances of finding game at this or that location. The women voiced their opinions too, especially regarding the forest fruits that they wanted to gather before and after the hunt. The first of the young men started out soon after sunrise with their nets and spears and a piece of burning ember to start the hunting fire. Fire was the forest's greatest present, and one had to give the fire back to the forest. Then the forest was in a good mood and blessed its children with a good hunt. When the hunting fire was burning, the other hunters showed up too. And the women and children also went into the forest, to collect mushrooms and berries, and they followed certain lianas until they came to their roots, which were sweet and tasty.

One morning, when the hunters had gathered, Sefu was missing. They figured he had left his camp, but he hadn't passed by the hunting fire. They shook their heads, and someone said that maybe Sefu had started his own hunting fire. No, they all shouted, not even Sefu would do something like that. When they arrived at the place where they first wanted to spread out the nets, Sefu was already there, had lit a fire, and was eating roasted bananas. Ekianga and a few other men went off for a quick scout of the area and then instructed the others in which direction to spread out the nets. The women took their bundles and went ahead with their children. Everybody stopped chattering and jabbering, and almost without a sound they slid through the forest. The men also scattered; everybody knew exactly where he had to spread out his net, which was more than a hundred big steps long, so that together they would form a large semi-circle. When Ekianga gave the signal with the call of the kudu bird, the women and children, forming a long file, rushed through the forest, yelling and howling. Arobanai startled a sondu. The frightened antelope jumped out of the bushes. "She'll run into Kelemoke's net," she called happily to Kidaya, who was running next to her.

When they had reached the hunters, Kelemoke had already killed the antelope. His mother was putting the best pieces in her basket. The other women were crowding around the two of them, "My husband let you borrow his spear!" – "We gave your sisters liver when they were hungry and your father wasn't home!" – "My father and yours always hunted together!" they yelled. Kelemoke was enjoying his role, and with a grand gesture he distributed the meat to the women without concerning himself with their reasons. He already knew who deserved what.

Sefu walked up and whined that he hadn't had any luck. But nobody offered him a share. He turned to the women, "You're driving the game away from my net on purpose. Why don't you drive it in my direction too?"

“Hey, you have your own womenfolk. Go complain to them!”

“Oh them. They’re just lazy bone heads.”

The women laughed at him and shrugged their shoulders.

Kelemoke had given Arobanai’s mother an especially nice piece from the thigh. Arobanai had already started walking back to the camp with her basket, which was filled with meat and nuts. She wanted to come back when the hunters spread out their nets for the third time. She was walking with Kidaya, who was asking her all about Kelemoke, but Arobanai just laughed and hinted at some things. On their way they met old Moke, who had seen leopard tracks. In the camp they told the other girls and women about the leopard tracks. “The men will get a scare when they see those tracks!” they shouted, snickering. Arobanai crouched down and imitated the prowl of a leopard. The other women formed a line, as though they were the hunters who were moving through the forest in single file. The leopard leaped at them, and the hunters fled into the trees, screeching.

After they had almost died laughing, Arobanai decided she’d like to go back to the hunters in the forest. But the men came back from the hunt earlier than expected, grumpy and defeated. No one wanted to say what had happened. Only Kelemoke grumbled, “That Sefu. He just makes too much noise!” And Kenge said, “Up to now we’ve always treated him like a man, but he’s an animal, and we should treat him like an animal.” And he yelled over to Sefu’s camp, “Animal, animal!” even though Sefu wasn’t even there yet.

He arrived later with a group of older hunters. Without saying a word to anyone, he went straight over to his camp.

Ekianga and Manyalibo, who had arrived last, crouched at the the Molimo fire. “That Sefu brought dishonor on all of us!” said Ekianga to no one in particular. And Manyalibo said, “Sefu brought dishonor on the Kumamolimo. We’ll break off the Kumamolimo. The Molimo feast will come to an end. The best thing for us is to go to a new camp.”

“Everybody come here,” said Ekianga. “Everybody come to the Kumamolimo. This is a serious matter. This has to be settled right away!”

Everybody gathered; they sat on stools made of four short branches bound together or on logs, and Kenge yelled over to the other camp again, “Hey, you animal, come over here, animal!” The boys laughed, but the men ignored him.

Sefu sauntered over, trying to look completely innocent. He looked around, but nobody offered him a place to sit. He went over to Amabosu, one of the youngest lads, and yanked at his stool. “Animals lie on the ground!” said Amabosu.

Sefu was close to tears, “I’m an old hunter and a good hunter. It’s not right that everybody’s treating me like an animal.”

Finally Masisi said to Amabosu that he should get up and give Sefu his stool.

Then Manyalibo stood up and began a long speech: “Everyone wants this camp to be a good camp. And everybody wants this Molimo feast to be a good Molimo feast. But Sefu is spoiling everything. The camp isn’t a good camp anymore, and the feast isn’t a good feast. When his daughter died, he was happy to accept our offer to fetch our Molimo for him. But now when his mother has died, he doesn’t want to provide anything for the Kumamolimo.”

“It wasn’t my mother,” Sefu said defiantly.

“Not your mother?” Ekianga shouted. “She was the mother of all of us here in the camp. I hope you’ll fall on your spear and die like an animal! A human doesn’t steal meat from his brothers. Only an animal does something like that!” Ekianga shook his fist furiously.

Sefu began to cry. Now for the first time Arobanai found out what had happened. On the second hunt, Sefu had set up his net in front of the other nets and in this way had caught the first game that the drivers had scared up. But he had been caught. Now he was making the excuse that it was all just a misunderstanding. He had lost sight of the other hunters and hadn't been able to find them. That's the only reason he had set his net up where he just happened to be.

"Sure, sure," said old Moke. "We believe you. You shouldn't make so much noise. Our mother, who died, isn't your mother. So you don't belong to us. You can set up your net wherever you want to and hunt wherever you want and set up your camp wherever you want. We'll go far away and set up our camp somewhere else, so that we won't bother you."

Sefu had to admit to himself that he had made a mistake. With a group of four families he could never organize a drive. He apologized and said it had really been only a misunderstanding, but he would give back all the meat.

"Then it's all okay," said Kenge and stood up immediately, and the others got up too and walked back with Sefu to his camp. There he told his wife harshly to give up the meat. And the young men rummaged through all the huts and looked for meat that was hidden under the roofs. Even the cooking pots were emptied. Sefu tried to cry, but everybody just laughed at him. He held his belly and cringed, "I'll die of hunger and my family too. All my relatives will die because my brothers are taking away all my food. I'll die because no one gives me the respect I deserve."

They let him blubber and returned to the Kumamolimo. The feast was again a feast, and everybody sang and danced and ate. In the distance they could hear Sefu moaning. The women called him names and imitated his wailing. But when everybody had eaten, Masisi filled a pot with meat and mushroom sauce that his wife had cooked and disappeared. A short time later the moaning stopped.

At night when Arobanai crept out of her hut to meet Kelemoke, she saw Sefu sitting and singing with the men at the the Molimo fire. A child of the forest like all the others.

Arobanai had experienced such things many times. They argued, they complained, they threatened each other. But the children of the forest needed each other. Alone, without the others, no one could survive. That's why there was always a solution, a way out. Whoever had a complaint stepped up to the middle of the camp and started protesting, cursing, or forcefully stating his or her case. But often enough, the camp members who were asked for support didn't turn against those who were in the wrong but against those who made the most noise. A good camp was a peaceful camp. A loud quarreling camp was also a hungry camp. Often just loud, general laughter decided a dispute. But a person who had been shamed was quickly forgiven. Arobanai remembered when Aunt Kondabate had fought with her husband. In her anger, she had started to tear off leaves from the roof of her hut. That was her right. After all, she had built the hut. Her husband had just looked on silently. Then she tore off more leaves from the hut. At this point her husband should have stepped in and made up with her, because when a wife tore down a hut, that was the end of the marriage. But Kondabate's husband said nothing, and so she continued to tear down the hut leaf by leaf. Tears had already started pouring down her cheeks, but the man had remained firm. After a while he only said, "Kondabate will get pretty cold tonight." Then she had to keep on tearing down the hut. What else could she do? She couldn't allow herself to be put to shame. Finally there weren't any more leaves, and, weeping, she started to pull on the poles. Now everybody was watching, spellbound, because when she had pulled the last poles out of the ground, she would have to tie up her bundle and go back to her parents' camp. Kondabate's husband was also close to tears because he loved her dearly and certainly didn't want a divorce. But if he had now given in he would have had to endure the laughter of his teasing friends for days.

Everybody could see the gears turning around in his mind. Finally he calmly said, “You don’t have to tear down the poles, it’s only the leaves that are dirty!”

“Huh?” Kondabate shouted in amazement. But then she understood, and relieved she said, “Yes, these leaves are full of bugs.” And together the two of them went to the river to wash the leaves. Then they hung them back on the hut. Never before had anyone washed leaves. But Kamaikan, Arobanai’s mother, took a few leaves from the roof of her hut and mumbled, “These bugs are really a nuisance!” And she too went to the river to wash leaves, as though that were the usual thing to do. And for a few more days, women went to the river and washed a few bug-ridden leaves, hiding their grins.

The days, like the river Lelo, flowed by easily. The forest made gifts to its children: nuts and roots, berries and fruit, mushrooms and meat. The young men showed off the animals they had killed and flirted with the girls. The old people wandered around close to the camp, but usually they sat in the shade and talked about their long-forgotten deeds. The children played near the river, climbed up the young trees in little groups until the trees began to sway and bend down to the water. Then they all jumped off, and whoever wasn’t quick enough got thoroughly shaken up by the rebounding tree. The men made little bows with blunt arrows for the little boys, and then the little girls and boys played hunting with a tired, placid frog. The women showed the girls how to build a little hut, and then, with great seriousness, the little girl cooked a meal of mud and nuts for her young friend. Then they went into the hut and played children making, the way they had seen their parents do it. In their games, they tried everything they would have to be able to do when they grew up, and without realizing it, the games would become the serious stuff of life. The children called all adults, “mother” or “father”, every old person, “grandfather” or “grandmother”, and someone could always be found, who would allow himself to be the hunted buffalo or a leopard that would jump out and ambush them and then eat them up while everybody laughed and giggled.

But the pole with the food basket that was always full next to the fire in the middle of the camp reminded them every day that a big feast was taking place, that the forest itself was being asked to remember its children and to be happy with them.

In these days, Kidaya was blessed with the blood. She proudly shared that information with her girl friends. And only a few days later it was Arobanai’s turn. Now, in addition to the the Molimo, there would be also be an Elima celebration. Aunt Kondabate built an addition to her hut, and the girls and their girl friends moved into it. From Kondabate they learned new songs here, songs that only women sing.

Some guests arrived. They were an old couple who normally lived with a hunting group in the north, people said. First they stayed in Sefu’s camp where the man had a relative. Then they came into the main camp. Old Moke greeted them respectfully. The old woman went straight to Kondabate’s hut. Kondabate also greeted her with great reverence. The girls watched her shyly. The old woman crouched down and sang and practiced with the girls. But she didn’t sing the songs of the women, the songs of Elima, she sang the songs of the Molimo that were reserved for men only. That scared the girls, but Kondabate nodded solemnly and started singing along. The girls joined in shyly.

On this evening there were not one, but four baskets filled with food hanging on the pole at the Kumamolimo. Manyalibo fetched a burning ember from every hut to light the the Molimo fire. The men and boys were excited and nervous when they started to sing. Then the girls came from the Elima hut, led by the old woman. She took embers from the the Molimo fire and lit a second fire next to the first. The women gathered around this fire. The girls, who had painted themselves with the stain from the black gardenia, danced in a long line, and the women sang the songs of the Molimo louder and louder and more and more forcefully. On this evening the women led the singing and the men sang along. The old woman from the



north sat at the fire that she had lit and fixed her eyes on the flames. Across from her sat Kondabate, the beautiful Kondabate. As though spellbound by the old woman's gaze, she too stared, motionless, into the flames. But then the old woman began using her hands to imitate a dance. She spread and bent her thin, dry fingers; her bony arms jerked and punched the air in every direction, as though they didn't belong to her. But then she stood up and started dancing. She danced around the men's fire, while the men sang without looking at her. Her singing and dancing became more and more intense. She jumped into the burning coals and danced in them. Then she started to kick the fire apart with her feet. With wild kicks she flung the embers in all directions, and the men had to dodge them as well as they could. Old Moke rose and gathered the fire together again, but the old one tore it apart again. In this way she reminded the men three times that it was the women who had tamed fire and tended it, that it depended on women whether the fire went out or kept burning, whether life ended or went on. Then the old woman grabbed a liana rope and looped it around the necks of one man after the other. Whoever had the noose around his neck hushed, and after the last man had been tied up, the singing stopped. For a while there was silence, broken only by the voice of the forest. Then old Moke said, "It's true, we are bound. We are bound and can't do anything. We have to give something to be free again." Ekianga said, "We'll give the meat of the antelope to be free again." Manyalibo said, "Let's also give the skin of the civet cat." The men agreed. Then the old woman undid the nooses, and those who had been freed started singing. The next morning the old woman and her husband had vanished.

Other visitors came: young men from groups whose hunting grounds were far away, many days of walking. The news of the Elima festival had spread quickly. Whenever hunters met hunters from other groups in the forest, they chatted and gossiped, and they found out the latest news about their relatives. They talked about each other's luck at hunting, and the fine feats of great hunters they knew became even more amazing.

The young men joined the hunters of Apa Lelo. Most of them had aunts and uncles or distant relatives in the group, and they stayed with them or they hung out in the huts of the bachelors. Their aim was to get into the Elima hut in the evening. But the girls' mothers guarded the hut and threw rocks and embers at the besiegers.

Sometimes the girls emerged, painted with white clay and armed with long, woven whips. They raced through the camp, and if they liked someone they lashed out at him with their whips. Sometimes they hit adults too and old men, but that was only for fun, a friendly tribute to their manliness. But when they hit an eligible bachelor, it meant that there was an obligation. The one who was hit had to visit the girl in the Elima hut.

Tumba, the one Arobanai had silently chosen, made himself scarce. So Arobanai and her friends decided to go look for him. They departed one early morning, their breasts and behinds decorated with white designs, and they ran to the west, following antelope and elephant trails. They ran with long, silent steps until late in the afternoon they reached the camp where Tumba's group was staying. With yells, they descended upon the sleepy camp and chased the men around the huts. The men and boys defended themselves as well as they could, raced to the garbage piles behind the huts and threw whatever they could get in their hands at the fiery girls. Finally Arobanai caught sight of her chosen one. He was using his bow to shoot dry banana peels at the girls. But he had to throw in the towel to the nine wild combatants. Arobanai didn't spare him.

On the fifth day he finally came to the Elima hut. He put up a manly fight against the mothers in order to get in, but after he had succeeded, he had done his duty. He could now either devote himself to Arobanai or leave, or he could choose another girl. And that's what the guy did too. He flirted with Kidaya, and when night came, Arobanai could hear only too well what the two of them were up to. So she decided to grant a hearing to Aberi, who had fought his

way into the hut on the first day and since then had tried to get her to like him by any means available. She would do with him what Tumba and Kidaya were doing, and if she liked it, she would ask him to hunt an antelope for her parents and to find a sister in his group who wanted to marry one of her brothers. And if she didn't like it – there were more pretty boys out there, great hunters, who boasted that they would bring their bride's parents not one, but two antelopes. Antelopes? No, an elephant or maybe even two! Life was beautiful. The forest took care of its sons and daughters. It gave them not only meat and fruit to eat and clear water to drink, but it also gave them fire, and it gave them the joys of love.

“It's dark around us,” whispered Arobanai,  
“but if there is darkness,  
then the darkness is good.”

Then she lay down with Aberi on his mat and started to tickle him. He giggled and reached out for her.

## Star Snake

Here I am. I am dancing. We dance in a long line, painted and adorned in honor of the God. Soon we will be with Huitzilopochtli; soon we will escort the sun in the sky. We were warriors, now we are prisoners. In a long line we dance, and up front the High Priests are standing. We dance in a long line, and one after the other of us passes away, as a sacrifice to the Gods. Soon they will push the knife made of black rock into my breast too. My blood will flow over the altar, and they will cut out my heart. My blood is nourishment for the gods. My blood is nourishment for Huitzilopochtli, the sun. I dance. They gave me pulque to drink. Now I feel light and I dance. At first I was sad that it wasn't I who had made a prisoner of an enemy. But now I am light: through me the Earth will be saved, my sacrifice will appease the Gods so that they will not destroy the Earth. I will rise to Huitzilopochtli; I will travel with him in the sky. And then I will become a hummingbird, as will all brave warriors who fall in battle, who are sacrificed in battle, and will fly from flower to flower and always be happy as long as the Earth exists. That's the way it has always been, and that's the way it must be.

I dance and I'm getting closer and closer to the altar. I dance, and while I'm dancing, I remember:

I was born on day 1 of the month of Ocelotl, and so fate predetermined me to die as a prisoner of war. When I came into this world, the midwife said to me: “Dearest son, know that your house is not the house of your birth, for you are a warrior, you are a Quecholli-bird, and the house where you came into this world is only a nest. You are destined to refresh the sun with the blood of your enemies and to feed the Earth with their bodies.” In this manner, all boys are greeted.

If I had been a girl, she would have said, “You have to be in the house just as the heart is in the body. You mustn't leave the house, you have to be like the ash in the stove.”

Many speeches were held at my birth. Relatives and friends came, and the astrologer priest was asked to read the sacred calendar, which foretells one's destiny. He set the day of my immersion, and on this day I was sprinkled with water many times. And the midwife said the words: “Take and receive because you will live on water on this Earth, you grow and become verdant from water; water gives us what we need to live.” Then they chose the name Citlalcoatl for me, Star Snake.

For eight years I lived in my father's house. As soon as I could walk and speak, I had to fetch water and wood and go with my father to market. Later I learned to fish and sail; my sisters, however, learned spinning and weaving, swept the house, and ground corn on the grinding

stone. When I was eight years old, my father sent me to the calmecac, the temple school, not to the ordinary warrior school. "Listen, my son," he said to me. "You will reap neither honor nor respect. You will be ignored, despised, and degraded. Every day you'll cut agave thorns to do penance. You'll have to prick yourself with the thorns and give your blood as a sacrifice, and at night they will wake you up in order for you to bathe in cold water. Steel your body in the cold, and when the fasting time comes, be sure not to break it, and don't let anyone notice any weakness during the fasting and the penance exercises."

I learned to be a man in the temple school. They demanded sacrifice and self-denial. At night, in the mountains, we had to offer incense and our blood to the gods. During the day we had to work very hard in the temple fields. There was severe punishment for even the smallest infraction. Sometimes I cried and thought how hard it is to be a warrior and a man. But in time I became stronger. And I looked down on the boys who visited the ordinary warrior school. They had to chop wood and clean the water ditches and canals and farm in the community fields. But at sunset they all went to the cuicacalco, the house of song and danced and sang there until midnight and slept with girls they weren't married to. They associated only with warriors whose actions they admired and wanted to imitate. They knew nothing of the higher things, of science, the arts, or the worship of the Gods.

We students of the calmecac were marked for higher duties. We could become priests or public officials. I learned self-discipline and tenacity in the temple school, but I also learned to speak and address people with decency, using the customs that prevail at the court of the king. I learned the correct way to treat public officials and judges. I also learned astronomy and the interpretation of dreams, the calculation of years and the astrological calendar. I learned to draw the signs and pictures for numbers and names and to decipher the writings of our ancestors. And I learned the sacred hymns of our people, the songs with which the Gods are honored and the songs that tell the history of the Aztecs. For we are a great and mighty people and are feared by all the peoples of the earth.

Long ago we moved away from Aztlán, our first homeland, from which we Aztecs get our name. The legends tell us that Aztlán was surrounded by water and that we lived there as fishermen. In the beginning we were poor. We clothed ourselves in animal skins and had nothing but arrows and bows and targets for our spears. We were no better than the forest people who live to the north of our empire. Our leaders were four priests, who carried a shrine made of reeds. In the shrine was our God, Huitzilopochtli, who spoke to them and told them what we should do. After we had left Aztlán, our God commanded us to call ourselves the "moon people," the Mexicas.

If we found a good location, we stayed there a few years maybe. We sowed corn, but we didn't always stay long enough to harvest it. Usually we lived from hunting deer, rabbits, birds, and snakes and on what grew in the earth.

But God promised us: "We shall settle down and establish ourselves, and we shall conquer all the peoples of the world; and indeed, I say to you, I shall make you lords and kings over everything in this world; and you shall rule and have countless vassals who will pay tribute to you, and they will give you innumerable and very precious stones, and gold, the feathers of the Quetzal-bird, emeralds, coral, amethysts. And you will wear them as jewelry. And you shall also have many kinds of feathers and cocoa and cotton in many colors. You shall experience all of this!"

Some say that Huitzilopochtli wasn't our God from the beginning. Our tribe consisted of seven clans, and every clan held its own counsel and chose its own leader. And so, they say, each clan had its own god. But Huitzilopochtli was the greatest of them, the God of the sun and war. We wandered through many lands. Some were desolate and unpopulated, others were settled and we had to fight with the inhabitants. At some places we stayed longer and

built a temple for our God. But we always felt driven to push on. We often had to leave our old people behind when we moved on. Sometimes a group from our tribe would separate and journey in a different direction. But others joined us: hunters, who had never lived in villages. Finally we came to the beautiful land between the mountains that today bears our name, the name Mexica. It is situated high above the two seas, protected and surrounded by mountains. Eternal spring prevails here. Only very seldom do we have a freeze, and when it is hot in the summer, the nights stay cool. Mountain springs supply the land with water, and in the valley lowlands there are five cool lakes, surrounded by villages and cities.

Once there was a mighty empire here, the Tula Empire, the city of the God Quetzalcoatl. But Quetzalcoatl, the God of the arts and the calendar, had abandoned his city, and the empire had fallen. The villages and cities of the lagoons were small, and the people had no single ruler. Every tribe lived for itself, with its own customs and its own gods.

We found a home at a place that was called Grasshopperhill, Chapultepec. There we chose for the first time a single leader for the whole tribe because we had had to fight too many wars with our neighbors and needed a chief who was experienced at war. Our neighbors were worried when we settled there and had children, and they attacked us. We defended ourselves well, but when they became too strong, they drove us away. Our chief was taken prisoner and sacrificed, and we had to surrender to our neighbors.

The rulers of Culhuacán gave us some land that was two hours away from their city and where it was crawling with snakes. We were supposed to live there because they were afraid of us and didn't want us near them. But we caught the snakes and fried them because after our long wandering we were used to dealing with hardship. And that's why they called us snake eaters. But they respected us because we had survived where no one else could have survived. So soon we were able to trade with them. They married our daughters and we married theirs, and we became related to each other. When they had wars with their neighbors, they called on us for help, and we made weapons and saved them. But when they saw how good we were as warriors, they became afraid of us and did not thank us. And then we waged war against them.

We had to flee and came to Acatzintlán. There we made rafts out of our shields and spears and floated over the water to a small island in the lake.

And then one of Huitzilopochtli's priests had a vision and the god appeared to him and told him we should look for a nopal cactus upon which an eagle would be sitting. This place would be called the "place of the cactus fruit," Tenochtitlán, and there we should found a city. We searched and found the eagle sitting on the cactus, and he was eating a red cactus fruit, just as the sun eats the hearts of warriors. There we cut grass sod pieces from the earth and piled them into a hill upon which we erected a chapel made of reeds for Huitzilopochtli. "Here," said Huitzilopochtli to us, "here we shall make ourselves lords over all tribes, over their property, over their sons and daughters. Here they shall serve us and make tribute payments to us. At this place shall be founded the famous city that is destined to become the queen and mistress over all others – where we one day shall receive all kings and princes who must come here in order to pay homage to the mightiest city."

Thus we were once again in a place that was surrounded by water, like our old homeland, Aztlán.

As we had been accustomed from ancient times, we divided the city into the sacred number four. The city had four fourths, and every fourth was divided into boroughs that were called calpulli. Every calpulli belonged to a clan and had its own temple for the clan God. The land belonged to the whole clan, and it was only loaned to the individual families.

There was an abundance of birds and fish here. But because we had only a limited amount of land, we established gardens in the water. We wove walls out of reeds and between these walls we built layers of mud and water plants until they stuck out of the water. Then we could plant beans and corn on them.

After several years we quarreled, and part of our tribe moved away and founded Tlatelolco on a nearby island.

So we lived among reed and rush on our island and had neither wood nor stone. Two hundred years had passed since our departure from Aztlán.

We gave in to no one because our city lay on the borders of three regions, the regions of the Tepanecs, the Acolhuas, and the people of Culhuacán, all of whom had settled around the lake. We went to their markets and traded with them. We brought them fish, frogs, and other water animals, and they gave us wood and stones for our houses and temples.

When our chief and high priest, Tenoch, died, we asked the ruler of Culhuacán to give us a lord because the Mexicas were despised and unimportant, and we thought it would increase our stature to have the son of a great prince as our leader. We asked him to give us Acamapichtli as our lord, who was the son of a Mexican and of a Culhua princess. He was also related to the Acolhuas. Tlatelolco, on the other hand, chose a son of the chief of the Tepanecs to be their lord. In this way, there was kinship with all the tribes around the lake. Acamapichtli governed peacefully. He had us build houses, water gardens, and canals.

Of all the peoples around the lake, the Tepanecs were the most powerful. They waged wars against other cities, and when they had conquered them, they demanded tribute from them. When they became ever more powerful, we also had to pay tribute to them and march into war with them when they told us to.

When our chief, Acamapichtli, died, our leaders chose his son, Huitzilihuitl, Hummingbird Feathers, as his successor, and he married a granddaughter of the Tepanec chief. In this way our situation improved, and the Tepanecs had to respect us. Huitzilihuitl waged war with the southern lands, where there was an abundance of cotton. This is how the Mexicas got their first clothes made of cotton; before that they knew only rough fabrics made from the fibers of the agave. Then he conquered Cuauhtinchan, Chalco, Otumba, Tulancingo, and still more cities. He started the war with Texcoco.

His son was Chimalpopoca, who was chosen as the chief after him. He ended the war with Texcoco and conquered the city. The ruler of the Tepanecs handed the city over to the Mexicas, and they had to pay tribute to us. But still we had to pay tribute to the Tepanecs.

But when the ruler of the Tepanecs died, we no longer wanted to be their subjects. Our city had become bigger, and we no longer lived in huts, but built our houses of stone. We no longer wanted to serve the Tepanecs. To be sure, the little people, the farmers, were afraid of war because they had experienced the power of the Tepanecs. So the superiors – those were the relatives of the chief, the priests, and the leaders of the warriors – said: “If we have no success with this war, we’ll place ourselves in your hands. You can then take your revenge on us and let us rot in dirty cages.” Thereupon the people answered: “And we promise to serve you and to work for you, to build your houses, and to recognize you as our true lords, if you should win this war.”

So we joined forces with the Texcoco, against whom we had earlier fought wars, and now fought against the Tepanecs. We lay siege to their city for a hundred and fourteen days. Then we conquered them. Their ruler, Maxtla was sacrificed and his heart was cut out. Then he was buried, as is fitting for a ruler.

Now the Mexicas had captured a great deal of land. This land was now distributed, and in accordance with the agreement between the superiors and the people, the leaders and the superiors received the biggest share. The clans, however, received only very little land, only enough to be able to keep their temples. Some say, though, that there never was an agreement between the people and the superiors, and that the superiors had only invented it. The people said that was unjust, and the entire land used to belong to the whole tribe, and everybody had the same rights. But could they defend themselves? The warriors had won the war and expanded the empire. And who was supposed to be powerful in this land? The farmers, who pull a little corn out of the ground? Or the warriors, who expand the empire and make other tribes pay tribute. And who makes sure there are always prisoners who can be sacrificed at festivals, so that the Gods aren't angry with us and don't destroy the Earth?

When we were still wandering around as nomads and were poor and despised, then we all had the same rights, that's true. Everyone was a warrior and a farmer at the same time. But how are we supposed to fight wars and conquer cities if everybody is saying his piece and everybody wants to be a counselor? And do you want the priests, the judges, and the public servants to dig up the soil too? How would they then be able to carry out their duties?

No, the arrangement is just: every young man does his war service. When the boy is ten years old, we cut his hair from his head, and only on the back of his neck remains a mane of hair. Whoever takes a prisoner for the first time, even if it is with the help of some of his comrades, he may cut the mane off. He is an iyac. But not until a warrior has single-handedly captured four prisoners, will he become a tequia. And aren't all the offices and honors available to the tequia? A tequia receives a portion of the taxes that the ruler collects. He may wear feathers and leather bracelets. He can become a Jaguar Knight or an Eagle Knight. The emperor can choose a tequia for high office. But whoever does not succeed, after one or two campaigns, in becoming a tequia, he must go to the fields. He must pay taxes and is called upon to work on the public projects. He must clean the streets or repair the dams, and he must work in the fields of the higher public officials. He may not wear cotton clothing or jewelry. Isn't that just? But whoever distinguishes himself as a warrior or as a public official is bestowed with gifts of clothing, jewelry, and land. The others must work for him and fill his stores with corn.

We have become a great and rich people. There is corn in the market and vegetables, poultry. On little fires women cook many kinds of meals that we can buy from them. Traders offer textiles, shoes, drinks, furs, pottery, ropes, pipes, and all kinds of tools. The fishermen bring fish, snails, and crabs from the lake to the city. From the remotest regions, our merchants bring jade and emeralds, tortoise shells, and jaguar furs, amber, and parrot feathers. The cities that we conquered give us as tribute every year 52,000 tons of food. The convoys of carriers are endless. The tribute-payers have to deliver 123,000 cotton garments and 33,000 bundles of feathers. The province of Yoaltepec sends us forty finger-thick gold bracelets every year. Tlachquiauco has to deliver twenty squash bottles of gold dust. From Xilotepec come 16,000 women's dresses every year, 16,000 men's robes, two warrior costumes with shields and headdress and four living eagles. From Tochpan comes pepper; from Tochtepec comes rubber and cocoa. The provinces deliver to us corn, grain, cocoa, honey, salt, pepper, tobacco, furniture, and pottery. They have to carry gold from the south coast, turquoise and jade from the east coast. Huaxtepec delivers paper, Cihuatlán mussels.

Haven't we joined many cities into a great empire? Our stone cutters, who make jewelry from precious stones, don't they come from Xochimilco? And the feather weavers, who create wonderful headdresses, aren't they from Amantlán? Didn't we conquer them and burn their houses? And the goldsmiths come from far away to the south.

Our emperor Moctezuma is ministered to by 3,000 servants - not to mention all of his eagles, snakes, and jaguars that eat 500 turkeys every day. In the month Uey tecuihuitl, when the poor

have used up all their supplies, the emperor opens his storehouse and has food and drink distributed among the people. 700,000 people live in the city Mexico-Tenochtitlán. We have fortified the islands, and we have built dams in the water, bridges over the canals, temples and palaces, an aqueduct that brings water from Chapultepec to the capital. When the emperor builds a temple, the cities deliver stones and lime. Thousands of workers have to be fed by the emperor when they build a temple for the Gods. Our emperors have constructed gardens and baths, and animals and plants from the whole empire have been collected here. When the emperor celebrates a festival, he invites the rulers of the enemy cities and lavishes jewelry and rich clothing upon them. Who is as rich, as powerful as we are, the Mexicas? When our emperor Ahuitzotl crushed the rebellion of the Huasteks, the celebrations lasted many weeks. The sacrifice of the prisoners alone lasted four days! No people is greater, no people is stronger than ours is!

But:

*As they say, we don't live here,  
nor have we come here to linger.  
Oh, I must leave the beautiful flowers,  
I must go down there to search for the hereafter.  
Oh, for one moment my heart became tired:  
the beautiful songs  
are only loaned to us.*

The Gods need sacrifices. We must nourish the Gods with sacrifices, so that they will not destroy the world. I dance. The drums beat, the flutes cry, I dance. Faster and faster I dance, wilder and wilder. Soon I will be with Huitzilopochtli. No, I am myself Huitzilopochtli. Do I not wear his robes, am I not dressed like him? Here stands the priest with the knife of black stone. Now it's my turn.

## Traffic Jam

Wherever a lot of people get together, things are always happening that nobody predicted or planned. Yes, even things that nobody wants to happen. Does that sound unbelievable?

Think, for example, of the traffic jams on our freeways. Does somebody want the traffic jam to happen? Does anyone really want to sit around on a hot and dusty freeway and sweat? No, of course not. Everybody just wants to get somewhere as fast as possible. And that's exactly why they are stuck in a traffic jam – and as a matter of fact, routinely and again and again.

## At Your Own Doorstep

There was a town that suffered badly from traffic jams. For some reason there were not many traffic lights, and one reason for the constant jams was this: When drivers drove up to an intersection and saw that the column of cars across the intersection came to a stop, they would nonetheless try to press their car onto the intersection, so they would not be blocked by the traffic coming from the side when the column in front would move on. In this way of course they blocked the traffic coming from the left and from the right. What would happen further is hard to explain in words, a computer animation could make this clear in a minute. Let's try it anyway: All the roads from north to south were called streets, and all the roads going from east to west were called avenues. Now let's say Mrs. Kumar is driving along 5th Street going north and approaching the intersection of 5th Street and Avenue D. She sees that traffic behind the intersection is slowing down, but still she drives onto the intersection and has to stop right there. In this way she blocks the traffic going east to west and west to east on

Avenue D. So it happens that Mrs. Miller, going west on Avenue D drives onto the intersection with 4th Street, blocking the traffic there, and Mrs. Szymanski, going east on Avenue D drives onto the intersection with 6th Street, blocking the traffic there. Next the intersections of 6th Street and Avenue C and 6th Street and Avenue E will be blocked, as well as 4th Street and Avenue C and 4th Street and Avenue E and so on ... And the jam spreads across the whole town.

“This is war on our roads!” Mrs. Kumar used to sigh every evening when she was driving home from work. One day Mrs. Kumar remembered the saying: Peace begins at your own doorstep. She decided not to press onto intersections any more. But when she stopped before an intersection because the traffic behind it was stopping to let the cars coming from the side pass, the drivers behind her would honk their horns and even shake their fists at her. Because, of course, if she would not press onto the intersection when it was possible for her to do so, it might be quite a long time until the traffic coming from the side would give her a chance to cross. But what was worse than other drivers being mad at her was this: When she did not make use of every possible advantage she arrived home about half an hour later than usual. This made her sad because her family were waiting for her to cook dinner and the children needed her to help them with their homework and really the chores in the house were so many that Mrs. Kumar felt she could not afford to lose this half hour. She felt it was her duty to her family to drive home as fast as she could. So after some days she just gave up and returned to driving like everybody else did.

What Mrs. Kumar did not know was this: Two weeks earlier Mrs. Miller had had just the same thought. She also started to stop before intersections to make way for the cars coming from the right and the left. She also got fists shaken at her and she also lost half an hour that she felt she should devote to her own family. And so Mrs. Miller had given up again just as Mrs. Kumar. And four weeks earlier Mrs. Szymanski had had just the same experience. And she had also given up.

One Saturday afternoon Mrs. Kumar took her children to the playground in the park. She sat on one of the benches and watched them playing on the seesaw and the monkeybars. By chance Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Szymanski came to sit on the same bench and the three ladies started talking about the weather, the children, the cost of living and the impossible traffic situation of the city.

“It is war on our roads!” sighed Mrs. Kumar.

“This city is a madhouse!” said Mrs. Miller.

“People are so selfish!” exclaimed Mrs. Szymanski.

At this point Mrs. Fukuda, who was sitting on the next bench, bent over and said: “Excuse me for interfering, but I think that peace begins at your own doorstep. I have decided that from now on I will not drive onto intersections anymore. I think someone just has to start doing the sensible thing.”

So the three other ladies all at the same time excitedly began to tell Mrs. Fukuda about their experiences.

“It is hopeless!” sighed Mrs. Kumar.

“It is a tragedy!” cried Mrs. Miller.

“There is nothing that can be done!” exclaimed Mrs. Szymanski.

“But we have a duty towards our fellow humans!” said Mrs. Fukuda. “We cannot be so selfish!”



“Yes. But we also have a duty towards our families”, said Mrs. Kumar. “It is not selfishness that makes me drive as fast as I can. It is the wish to be with my family! I know I should drive a little slower so others can get home earlier. But what about my own family? It would be unfair to them.”

“It is tragic”, said Mrs. Miller. “By driving sensibly we lose half an hour every day. But if everybody would drive sensibly, everybody would be home half an hour earlier every day!”

“Yes, it's a tragedy!” said Mrs. Szymanski. “Being unselfish and sensible doesn't help. It even makes your family sad and the drivers behind you mad. Something is wrong with: Peace begins at your own doorstep!”

“I think”, said Mrs. Fukuda, “that we should start a campaign! You see, you all had the same idea, but not at the same time. That is why you had no success. But if the four of us start driving sensibly tomorrow ...”

“Then there will be only four of us in a city of millions!” said Mrs. Kumar.

“Well, so we will talk to our husbands. If they agree with us, we will already be eight. And if we talk to our neighbours ... “

“We must write letters to the newspapers!” said Mrs. Miller.

“And make folders to hand out!” said Mrs. Szymanski.

“And make bumper stickers: I stop before an intersection so YOU can be home earlier!”

“No, it should say: So we all can be home earlier!”

“And we should get on talk shows on TV!”

So the four ladies exchanged phone numbers and started their campaign. Their children and even their husbands helped them to draft folders and make drawings and write letters to the newspapers and Mrs. Kumar's eldest son even created a computer animation showing how the jam spreads over the whole city and they sent emails to all their friends and acquaintances and soon they found that many people had had similar thoughts about the war on the roads, but all at different times and different places and all had given up again. And people started recognizing each other on the road by their bumper stickers and when they saw many cars carrying the stickers they were not afraid they would get shouted at at the intersection when they stopped to let others pass, and then in one part of the city people found that – whoops, they really got home faster now although everybody was driving slower, and when the news spread, soon the general mood in the city changed and now people would honk their horns and shake their fists at people who blocked the intersection. But the more sensible ones would go and hand them a folder.

“Well”, said Mrs. Kumar, “Peace begins at your own doorstep, but it also needs some coordination!”

Meanwhile in the neighbouring town elections for the city council were being held. One of the candidates promised to solve the traffic problem and he got elected. The new mayor doubled the taxes, employed a lot of policemen and had cameras installed at every intersection. And everybody who blocked an intersection had to pay a fine amounting to one month's salary and if they could not pay they had to go to prison. This too solved the traffic problem. And fast too!

## The Two Prisoners

Once several of Mr. Balaban's friends were sitting around together and one of them said, "We're all sorry losers. We ought to start a club so that we can help each other."

"Leave me alone with your clubs," said one of them. "If everybody looks after himself then everybody will be looked after."

For a while the friends argued about whether that was true. Then they asked Mr. Balaban for his opinion.

"Sometimes it's true, I think. If two equally strong men go to a grove of nut trees and gather nuts, then it's probably better for each man to gather them by himself. Because if each one gathered nuts for the other one, then they might be thinking, 'Ah, why should I work so hard. If I knock myself out, I'll only be getting the nuts that my partner gathers.' And so maybe each one will put less effort into it than if he were gathering them for himself, and then both will have fewer nuts. But often the destinies of people are so interconnected that if they are only concerned with their own self-interest they make things tougher on themselves and everyone else."

"How is that possible?" his friends asked.

And Mr. Balaban gave them this riddle:

"In Samarkand, the authorities once caught two thieves who had stolen a goose. Timur Lenk locked them up in two different jail cells, so that they could not make contact with each other. Then he went to the first one and said, 'Listen, you two stole a goose. For that you'll get twenty blows with a cane. It is not pleasant, but you will survive it. But I know for sure that you didn't just steal this goose but also two golden goblets from my palace. For that I could have you executed. That would have only one drawback for me: I wouldn't get my golden goblets back that way. I could torture you to get the confession, but I've thought of something else. Pay close attention: if you confess to the theft of the goblets and tell me where you hid them, then I'll only have your accomplice executed, but I'll let you go. It's true that I'll give him the same possibility. If he confesses and you don't, then I'll let him go, and you'll be executed. Of course, it's possible you'll both confess. In that case, I couldn't let either one of you go free, of course. But I would show mercy and only have your right hands cut off.'

'And if neither one of us confesses?' asked the prisoner, who, by the way, really had stolen the goblets with his companion.

'Well,' said Timur, 'then you would just get the twenty blows with a cane for the stolen goose.'

"What," Mr. Balaban asked his friends, "should the prisoner do, in your opinion?"

"And they couldn't communicate with each other?"

"No," said Mr. Balaban, "Timur made sure that they couldn't communicate with each other in any way."

"He should keep his mouth shut and rely on his partner to say nothing either," said one of them.

"How can he rely on that?" said another one. "He must know that his partner will surely confess."

"How is that?"

"Because it is much better for the partner if he confesses. Listen. Let's call them Ahmed and Bulent. Now, if Ahmed confesses, it's better for Bulent to confess too, because otherwise he'll be executed. If Ahmed doesn't confess, it's also better for Bulent to confess because then he'll be set free. So Ahmed knows that Bulent will confess. So Ahmed will confess too, or

he'll be executed. But if Bulent for some reason decides not to confess, all the better for Ahmed because then he'll be set free."

"Yes, but the result is that they both get their hands cut off when they could have both gotten off with twenty blows with a cane."

So they kept debating this riddle for hours, but they couldn't reach any other conclusion.

"And this is what I wanted to show you," said Mr. Balaban. "By looking after their own self-interests, they made it tougher on both of them."

"But what should they have done, in your opinion?"

"They should have talked to each other and promised each other to be silent," said Mr. Balaban.

"But you said they couldn't talk to each other!"

"They should have bribed a guard to carry letters or messages back and forth. They should have tied a note to a mouse's tail, for all I know, or let a trained parrot fly from cell to cell. They should have tried everything they could think of in order to communicate with each other, because if humans can't manage to communicate, then people will never be able to further their own interests without making life harder for everyone - including themselves

## Justice

Now my friends I must tell you something and I hope you will believe me. And if you don't believe me, well, so much the worse for you. What I want to tell you is this: Once upon a time, on a small continent right on this planet earth (a continent which is now completely covered with water, so you won't be able to find it on any map - and when this continent existed, map making had not been invented yet, so you will not find it on the old maps either), anyway, on this small continent (which would have been the seventh continent if anybody had counted continents then, which nobody did because not a single continent had been discovered at that time, so all the people on all the continents thought that theirs was the only continent and why should they bother to count something of which there is only one anyway) well, what I was going to say was, this small continent, which wasn't the seventh continent nor the first continent, but just *the* continent, was inhabited by a very strange people. These people, I am sorry to say, were crazy. They were crazy in a very special way. They were not stupid, oh no. For instance they had invented the wheel before it had been invented on any of the other continents, and right after the wheel they invented fire and pyramids and mobile telephones and television. No, as I said, they were crazy in a very special way. How can I explain it? Well, for instance, let's say, they had an aunt visiting. This aunt would call on her mobile phone, and would say: "Hey, I will come and visit you over the holidays, just a couple of days, aren't you thrilled to see your old auntie again?" And the family who had planned to go to the seaside for the holidays would unpack their things and take the wheels back to the garage and wait for auntie. Now let's say the holidays were over and it was already six weeks that auntie was staying at the house and no chance of her going back home, and the whole family had to have tea for breakfast, because auntie had convinced them that coffee was bad for their health, and daddy had had to give up smoking because auntie couldn't stand the smell of cigarettes, and the children had to keep quiet from one to four in the afternoon when auntie was taking her nap. Well, these people wouldn't throw her out nor even take a lipstick and paint red dots on their youngest daughters face and pretend that she had scarlet fever to make auntie run away. No, these people would just quietly pack their things again, would take the wheel out of the garage, give auntie the keys of the house and go and live in a tent near the

seaside from now on where they could drink coffee and smoke cigarettes and play noisy games between one and four as much as they liked.

Or let us say at a school a new headmistress was appointed and one of the teachers would keep nagging and saying: "Why didn't they make *me* the headmistress, I am much better than her!" They wouldn't tell her: "Well, she is much more experienced than you are and during the holidays she has always been taking courses, whereas you have only painted your toenails!" No. Instead, they would write a letter to the city council saying: "This woman is giving us a headache with her constant nagging, please make her the headmistress so she won't get on our nerves any more!" and most of the times even the newly appointed headmistress would sign the letter.

Or if a boy wouldn't learn his lessons and get only very bad marks, his teachers wouldn't make him repeat the class. Instead they would say: "Ah, but he has such a pretty smile and his friends would be sad to lose him, so what if his spelling is bad and he doesn't know the names of the continents, which haven't been discovered anyway."

I could go on and on telling you how crazy these people were. When at a crossroads two wheels bumped into each other, people wouldn't stop and take sides and yell at each other: "I *saw* him coming down the lane and I knew he was rolling his wheel *much* too fast! Please, mister, if you go to court you can name me as a witness, here is my name and address!" Instead they would yell at the drivers: "Who cares whose fault it was, just get your damn wheels out of the way so we can roll ours along, the devil knows why we invented them in the first place!"

Everybody can understand that this crazy attitude didn't get those people anywhere. They always got second best, they had the worst seats at the cinema, they never got served at the meat counter in the supermarket, they never became headmistress, but instead they lived in tents near the seaside and ruined their health with coffee and cigarettes and noisy games.

Then one day a great magician came to visit this continent. The magician's name was The Great Belloni, and when he landed with his flying carpet on the marketplace, he said: "Greetings to you, people of this continent, I am The Great Belloni and I will call this continent Bellonia after myself, because I have discovered it."

The people were a bit astonished because they had always thought it had been them who had discovered the continent, but the magician explained to them that you cannot discover something you have known all the time, and they thought: Well it could have been Gulbrannsonia or Herrschkovitzia, so Bellonia isn't so bad after all.

The magician looked around the continent he had discovered and soon found out what was the trouble with its inhabitants. "You are clever people", he said to them, "I can see you have great potential. Actually you are lacking only two things." When the people wanted to know what these two things were, he said: "Well, the first one is carts". And he showed them how they could attach a sort of wooden box to their wheels so they could use them to transport things. The people experimented for a while with one wheel or seven wheels, but before long they found out that the ideal number of wheels was something from two to four. From there it wasn't hard to go on to the motorcar, the steam engine, the railway, and then someone even found out you could hitch a donkey to the cart which wasn't so noisy as the other methods to get the cart moving.

"And what is the second thing?" they asked the magician.

"Well, the second thing that stands in the way of progress in your country is your lack of a sense of justice."

“What's that?” demanded the people, “is it something like the wooden box you showed us how to make?”

“No, said the magician, “it is not a thing. It's a principle.”

The people nodded as if they understood, but in fact they didn't know what a principle was either.

“Justice means to give everybody *just* what they deserve, neither more nor less!”

“But we do that”.

“No, you just give people what they want to stop them nagging, that's not the same. And if they don't nag the don't get anything.”

“Well, maybe they don't want it enough to nag about it. Anyway, who should know better what people deserve than they themselves?”

The magician tried to explain, but after a while he gave up, exasperated.

“Look”, he said, “do you want justice or no? It costs me just a wave of my wand to give it to you, and that will spare me a sore throat.”

“Well”, they said, “if it helps to further progress, we want it.”

So the magician waved his wand and then he got on his magic carpet and flew away to discover more continents so he could count them and name them. He had already thought out some fantastic new names like Bellonia II and Bellonia III, and he was eager to find fitting continents for them.

As soon as the magician had waved his wand the Bellonians - as they now called themselves - immediately saw what the magician had meant and they shook their heads and said: “How could we have been so crazy?”

They immediately packed up their tents and went back to reclaim their houses, but auntie had been staying there for so long she now practically lived there and she said: “What do you think, you have given this house to me when you willfully left me here alone, I absolutely decline to go!” And endless quarrels began about verbal contracts and common law and other things like that.

Next the Bellonians had to set up a court of justice, but they couldn't agree as to whose right it was to be judge. So they decided to meet every morning at ten to discuss all the cases.

The first case was that of two poor brothers whose father had died and had left them only one donkey. Each of them said he needed the donkey to carry his things and to pull the cart. This was an easy case for the Bellonians. They decided that the donkey was to be cut in halves and each half be given to a brother. The brothers protested and said that half a donkey wasn't useful for anything because it couldn't even pull half a cart, but they were told that the division had been very exact so they had nothing to complain about.

The brothers cursed and went away, leaving the useless donkey halves lying there.

Now the next case was harder to resolve. It was about a man who had got drunk and had started a fight with another man and had knocked one of his eyes out. So far there was no problem. They decided that the victim should knock out one of the miscreant's eyes, and then each of them should buy a glass eye for the other one. “Because”, they said, “we must take exactly an eye for an eye, this is justice.” But the next day this man was brought back to court, because he had got drunk again and knocked out another mans eye. “So where is the problem?” some of them said. “We have decided a similar case only yesterday, we can pass the same verdict again. An eye for an eye!”

“But he has only one eye left”, said others. “If we take his eye, he will be blind, but his opponent only needs a glass eye and can lead an almost ordinary life. Taking an only eye isn't the same thing as taking an eye of someone who has two.”

“But we must take *something* from him” said others, “or he will run around knocking out peoples eyes all the time.”

“Let's cut off his hand,” someone suggested, but others protested that a hand wasn't the same as an eye. “We must do justice”, they said, “Not just hurt him any old way. He must suffer exactly the same pain that he has caused the other man.”

“Well then”, said someone, “He has knocked out half of all the eyes the other one had. So let us take from him half of all the eyes he has.”

“But it is impossible to knock out half an eye. And even if it was possible, he would be blind all the same.”

So the discussion went on and on and they could not find a decision.

And then, as was to be expected, the case of one of the aunties was brought to court.

This auntie had been staying at her nephew's house for many, many years now. And as she had felt lonely, she had invited another of her nephews and his wife to stay with her. “All our children were born here!” the second nephew said, “*and* I painted the house new and put new wallpaper in all the rooms!”

“Yes, but who had the plumbing installed?” the first nephew countered.

“Wallpaper, plumbing!” the judges said. “What is important is: Who built the house?”

“W-ell, it is a very old house...” the first nephew said slowly. “But I was born there, so by rights it should be mine.”

“But you gave it up!”

“No, I didn't give it up, I was driven away through constant nagging!”

“You could have turned out your aunt!”

“Whoever heard of turning out an aunt!”

“But you never told her you were planning to come back!”

“We were living in a tent. That clearly shows we planned to come back to the house of our fathers.”

At this point auntie raised her hand: “If I remember right, dear nephew, it was *my* father who used to live in this house once. But then one day your father's auntie came for a visit over the holidays and never left again, so to get some peace and quiet my father had to move out and live in a tent near the seaside. He smoked his head off, poor fool. So by rights, I think, it should be my house anyway.”

And then the old documents and family albums were being consulted, and there was a lot of quarreling about aunties and uncles, and also some first cousins and great grand aunties and godmothers were dragged into it.

The trial went on for weeks on end and by and by people were getting hungry. For because of the trial no one had time to do some useful work and they were already running out of foodstuffs.

And then the donkey halves, which were still lying around the meeting place, had begun to rot. Nobody thought it their duty to remove them because they all agreed that that was the responsibility of the owners. But the two brothers had stolen a boat and had gone out to sea in

the hope of finding the magician so they could give him exactly what he deserved. The rotting donkey halves were stinking terribly and were covered with millions of flies, and eventually all the Bellonians got sick and died.

When the magician came back to see what had become of the continent he had discovered, he found it full of flies and almost nothing else. He shrugged his shoulders and waved his wand, and the continent sank under water, so nobody should know about the magician's failure to bring progress to Bellonia I. The magician had hoped to drown the flies together with everything else, but he had overlooked the fact that flies, well, can fly. The flies were starving, and before the magician could fly away on his magic carpet they all rose in a big cloud and devoured him. The carpet without its pilot circled the globe a few times, then it ran out of magic and dropped down to earth on one of the other continents. There it was found by a peddler who sold it to me at the flea market. And if you don't believe my story, I can show you the carpet.

## Money

“So what is it, anyway, this *money*?” Old Kitunda turned the small piece of paper between his fingers.

“It is something the foreigners value very highly”, said his son. “The agent says, if you have lots and lots of these pieces of paper you are considered to be a rich man.”

“This sounds stupid to me”, said old Kitunda. “If you have a lot of cattle and fields with maize and yams, a nice house and many children – then you are rich. What use is a bunch of pieces of paper? Can you eat paper? Can you wear it or sleep in it?”

“Well, the agent says that you can turn it into everything. You can turn it into a house or into a cow or into a beautiful suit of clothes like the ones the foreigners wear.”

“Then is it some sort of magic?”

“No. You can just exchange these pieces of paper for anything you like. If you see a beautiful house you can just offer the owner some pieces of paper and ask him to give it to you. If he does not want to give you the house you offer him more pieces of paper. Eventually he will give you the house if you offer him enough of the paper. Or at least this is what the agent explained to me.”

“Then it must be very strong magic. Maybe the magic makes the owner of the house loose his power to think clearly?”

“No, it's not like this. The owner of the house can exchange the money for something else. Maybe for one of those cars the foreigners use or for lots of food or for another house. That is why he will let you have his house in exchange for money. With the money he can go somewhere else and buy a house and live there. You cannot carry a house with you.”

“But if he is stupid enough to give away a house for pieces of paper, how does he know he will find another person who is just as stupid and will exchange valuable things for pieces of paper?”

“I really don't know, father. But the agent says that everybody knows that money is valuable and that is why everybody is willing to exchange things for money.”

Old Kitunda shook his head. “And this agent, he gave you this money?”

“Yes. He told me to go back to the village and to tell all the young men to come and work on the cotton plantation. And for this he gave me the money. And he said, for every man who comes to work he will give me some more money.”

“So he wants the men to work for him on his plantation and in exchange he will give them money?”

“Well, the plantation does not belong to him. It belongs to his boss. And his boss will give us the money.”

“So they want you to go and pick cotton for worthless pieces of paper. And who will look after your cows and who will work in your fields and harvest the maize and the yams?”

“The agent says that with the money his boss will give us we can buy more maize and yams than we would harvest in our fields.”

“And what if he is lying? How can you tell how much this piece of paper is really worth?”

“I don’t know, father.”

The old man brooded for a while. “If you trade with someone you must know the value of the thing you give and of the thing you receive. You know the forest people. They do not grow maize or yams, instead they bring us dried meat and wild honey from the forest and we give them maize and yams in exchange. You know what old Ekianga says when he thinks I am offering him too little maize for his meat. He says: ‘Ah, come on, it took me so long to hunt up this antelope. If you give me so little maize, it is not worth while for me to hunt for you. I would be better off if I started my own field.’ But if he asks too much maize then I say to him: ‘Ah, come on, it is so much work to hack the field and to water the maize and to harvest and dry it. If you give me so little meat for the maize I would be better off if I went hunting in the woods myself.’”

Kitunda’s son smiled: “I know how you two are haggling every time. And I know your reasoning”

“And it is true. If we see the forest people are getting too fat we know we are giving them too much maize for their meat, and if they think that we are getting too fat they know that they are giving us too much meat for our maize. So, you see, by and large it evens out and we are exchanging a day’s worth of hunting for a day’s worth of cultivating. But with this money – I don’t know how it is made and I don’t know the man who makes it. How should I know or even guess how many pieces of paper they can make in one day?”

“I asked the agent the same question. He said that the bank notes are made by machines in the big city and they can make many thousands in one hour.”

“If they can make so many of them in such a short time then these pieces of paper are not worth anything. Not even one grain of maize. Listen to me, my son: don’t go to work on the plantation. You go and work your own fields and you and your family will have plenty of food and everybody will see that you are a wealthy man and they will respect you.”

Kitunda’s son said: “I will think of it, father.”

Kitunda’s son went to see his neighbour and showed him the money the agent had given him: “Here, look at this. This is what the foreigners call money. What will you give me for it?”

The neighbour laughed: “For this? Nothing. When I need something like this I pick some leaves from the next bush. You know what for...”

So Kitunda’s son went to his other neighbour: “Listen, my wife has run out of salt. Will you let me have some salt in exchange for this money?”

The other neighbour said: “Listen, friend, for friendship’s sake I will let you have some salt. You can give it back to me when you can, or you can give me some cassava roots in exchange. But what would I do with these pieces of paper?”



“Well, the foreigners would exchange them for something you need, for some sugar maybe or a nice piece of cotton cloth.”

“I have heard that. But I don’t trust in this. Look, when I have a goat, I know I can always exchange it for something else because everybody needs to drink milk and to eat some meat now and then. But who can guarantee that I will find someone who needs pieces of worthless paper?”

Kitunda’s son went all around the village but no one wanted to exchange something for his money and no one wanted to come to work on the plantation with him. So he did not go to work on the cotton plantation either but worked his own fields like his father and grandfather had done before and his family were healthy and well fed and he was respected by the other villagers.

In the city on the coast, where the foreigner’s ships would unload the goods the foreigners wanted to sell to the locals and take home the cotton and copper and diamonds the foreigners needed in their country across the sea, the governor called his advisors for a meeting.

“We have problems”, he declared. “Trade with our home country is not what it could be. This land is ideal for growing cotton and it is full of copper and diamonds. But we cannot find enough workers to dig in the mines or work on the cotton farms.”

“And what is the reason for this?” the president of the chamber of commerce asked. “There are so many people living here? What are they doing all day?”

“It seems they are content with working their own fields, growing some maize and bananas and keeping some cattle and goats for meat and milk”, the head of the department of agriculture said.

“They’re a bunch of lazybones” said the commander of the colonial troops. “We should just force them to work on the plantations.”

“No. They are just not interested in working for wages”, the head of the department of agriculture said.

“And why do you think they are not interested in working for wages?” the president of the chamber of commerce asked.

“Because they do not understand the concept of money. They think it is just worthless pieces of paper.”

“Well, it *is* worthless pieces of paper”, the president of the chamber of commerce laughed. “I sometimes wonder myself why it works. I bet people here still measure their wealth in cows and goats.”

“That’s what they do”, said the head of the department of agriculture.

“In a way I agree with them. With cows you know where you are. You can always find someone who wants to eat meat or to drink milk, and if you cannot exchange the cow for anything you can eat it yourself. With gold it’s the same, you can always wear it as jewelry or get your teeth repaired. But we cannot pay them in cows of course. You know, when I was at the university our professor taught us: ‘Anything can serve as money as long as people believe it is money.’”

“Then how can we make them believe that our money is money?” the governor asked.

The president of the chamber of commerce mused: “The young men won’t come to work for money because the farmers won’t give them food for the money. And the farmers don’t accept the money because their craftsmen won’t give them pots or hoes for money. And so on...”

“Then we should make a law that forces them to accept money if someone wants to buy anything”, said the commander of the colonial troops.

“That’s not so easy”, said the head of the department of agriculture. “They would just hide their goods and say they don’t have anything to sell. We know this has happened in other countries. We would not be able to control everybody all the time. No, we must somehow convince them that they need money, that trade and commerce cannot prosper without money.”

“It should not be so hard to convince them.” The head of the department of financial affairs spoke for the first time.

“And how would that be?” the governor asked.

“If we cannot force them to accept money we can force them to pay us money. We demand that everybody pay tax. It is easy to check if someone has paid their tax or not. And the tax has to be paid in our paper money. So everybody will need to get this money somehow. And they will be willing to work for money and to trade goods for money. We will have the workers we need and we will be able to sell them our goods.”

“Splendid idea!” said the governor and the president of the chamber of commerce and the head of the department of agriculture clapped their hands.

“And if they don’t pay they will go to prison!” the commander of the colonial troops added and this time the others applauded him too.

“Well”, said old Kitunda, “Now they’ve got us where they wanted us.”

The young men were ready to leave for the plantation.

“Don’t worry, father”, said Kitunda’s son. “I am going to earn the money to pay the tax for you and for mother and for my wife. So our family will be safe.”

“Yes. But our fields will lie waste because we will be missing your strong arms. We will never again be able to look after ourselves, we will be depending on the foreigner’s money and the work they let us do.”

Old Kitunda embraced his son: “I hope that when you come back from the plantation I will still be alive to greet you. But then on the other hand, maybe I don’t want to live any longer. You know, when first they came, some of us wanted to fight them. But now they have really defeated us. Nothing will ever be as it was before.”

And the young men left.

## The Story of a Good King

Once there was a good king who ruled his country wisely. The taxes his subjects had to pay he used to have schools and universities built so the young people could learn all the different trades and study all the sciences and thus be able to serve each other better. He also had hospitals built and doctors trained so his subjects should not suffer from sickness more than necessary. He had roads and railways built so the goods that were produced in one part of the country could be quickly delivered to all the other parts of the country where they were needed. He admonished his judges to give just verdicts and he did not allow his officials to accept bribes.

The king also wanted his subjects to live in peace. He especially instructed the school teachers to teach the children to be tolerant and not despise anybody for the colour of their skin or their religion or their culture. Also the children should be taught not to fight when they had a

dispute, but to talk things over and settle their quarrels amiably. Every year a great peace festival was held in the capital with music and folk dancing and young people from all over the world being invited.

The king was a nice young man, quiet and modest and gentle. He really could not hurt a fly. He did not dress extravagantly, he did not eat expensive food or drink costly wines, he did not spend the taxpayer's money on pompous palaces or fine horses or fast automobiles. He loved his young wife and in the evenings he sat with his two children and read them bedtime stories. But what he liked to do most was to sit in his study with his books and the reports from all parts of the country and work out new plans to make the life of his subjects even better.

The king was not conceited at all but he was a clear thinker, and when he looked at the reports he got from all parts of the country he had to conclude that he really was ruling the country well and that he was probably the best king the country could ever wish for. He concluded further that no one had reason to wish for another king unless he had some bad intentions, and that anyone who wished to become king in his place could really only plan to use the king's power for selfish reasons.

He told his chief of police: "If anyone wants to be king in my place, it can only be to abuse the king's power, maybe to buy fine horses or to have pompous palaces built or to spend the taxpayer's money on extravagant clothes and jewels or to buy fine horses or fast automobiles. So please look out for such people and keep them from doing the kingdom harm!"

The chief of police actually was an old friend of the king, they had gone to the same school and studied at the same universities. He was also a nice young man who had many good qualities. He did not hate anybody, he did not despise anybody because they dressed differently or spoke another language or believed in a different religion. But his foremost quality was being absolutely loyal to his king. He told his policemen: "We have a very clever and well-meaning king who rules us wisely. He looks after our schools and universities, our hospitals and roads and railways, our law courts and our mail delivery system. These are all very important for our country. But the most important thing for our country's welfare and the well-being of its subjects is for our king to remain king. So look out for anybody who wishes for a different king or even aims at being king himself. Such persons are enemies of the people and must immediately be disposed of."

The policemen also were nice people who had many good qualities. They loved their families and did not hate anybody. But their foremost quality was to obey their superiors. So they looked out for people who might be enemies of the king and thus enemies of the people. When they heard of someone who said "Well, the new hospital is a really good thing but it should have a larger maternity ward", they suspected them of criticizing the king and immediately arrested them.

After some time some people started to complain more seriously, saying the police should not arrest people just for uttering a different opinion on hospitals or schools. Of course such persons were dealt with even more harshly. They were thrown into the deepest dungeons and their trials were not held publicly. Ordinary people should not learn that there were so many people criticizing the behaviour of the police. And if someone tried to resist being arrested the policemen could not help using force even though they did not like to do so.

The friends and relatives of the people who had disappeared kept asking questions, so the king made a law that said it was forbidden to criticize the actions of the police. Newspapers were not allowed to write about the arrests or about the people who had disappeared. Among the population the opinions were mixed. Some thought the police were right to watch over the safety of the king because after all he was a really good king and ruled the country wisely. But others thought it was unfair to arrest people and throw them into the deepest dungeons

without even a public trial. They also complained that nowadays the king spent more money on the police than on schools and hospitals and roads. And some people now seriously thought the king should be replaced by someone else. When some of these people were arrested the chief of police thought they were too dangerous to be left alive even in the deepest dungeons. His loyalty to the king demanded that he had these ringleaders killed, although he was very reluctant to shed blood. He did not do it himself but ordered his most loyal policemen to do it. The policemen, who were used to obey orders, did not question this decision. They just did their duty.

Now people started to fear for their lives and many who were opposed to the way the country was run fled to neighbouring states.

You can guess what happened next. The chief of police feared the people who opposed the king would gather in the neighbouring countries and raise an army and come back to conquer the country and overthrow the king. So even more of the taxpayer's money was spent on strengthening the army and buying more weapons and employing more secret service agents to spy on the neighbouring countries.

And of course the neighbouring countries became afraid and prepared to defend themselves.

So one day the nice young king had no other choice but to declare war on his neighbours and the loyal chief of police had no other choice but to lead the army into battle and all the nice young men who had been taught to be tolerant and respectful towards others had no choice but to take their guns and march over the border and shoot at the nice young men on the other side before the others shot at them.

## Report to the United Solar Systems' Council

On the basis of our observations during approximately 10,000 revolutions of the planet Yer, we must urgently advise against admitting this planet and its inhabitants into the United Solar Systems.

There is a species of inhabitants on Yer that considers itself intelligent and during the last million revolutions has multiplied tremendously and spread all over the planet: the so-called Nin, Orang or Humans. This species, which originally descends from tree dwellers, does in fact consider itself intelligent, but the currently six billion Nin are incapable of coordinating their actions with each other in any sensible way. Often some of them destroy what others have created. They also take food and clothing away from each other. They do produce things that are supposed to make life easier and more pleasant for them, but in the process of producing these things, they destroy and poison their planet's atmosphere, water, and soil, and in this way they make their life infinitely more difficult. One of the worst afflictions they suffer from is a custom (or should we call it a disease?) that they call wojna, war, krieg or guerra. When a wojna breaks out, large groups of Nin set upon one another and destroy each other. They destroy the dwellings and food supplies of their "enemies," and they inflict the most terrible torture on one another. Our research team attempted to find out why they do that. In fact the Nin are themselves in complete disagreement on this matter. There are, and that is the strange thing, very many among them who reject this cruel custom and regard it as the worst misfortune that can befall Ninkind. Others to be sure love wojna. They tell stories about it or watch moving pictures about it. The Nin who reject wojna have different views on why it can come to it. Some of them consider it simply an eruption of insanity on the part of a larger group of Nin. Others believe that the Nin bear sort of two different kinds of soul within themselves, one a good one that loves the other Nin, and a bad one that hates the other Nin. Still others believe wojna is not really nice but is unfortunately necessary now and then. It

often happens that two groups of Nin start a wojna with each other and each group says, "Well, we don't want this wojna, but regrettably the others are forcing us into it."

Our research team tends towards the view that the Nin's basic problem is that they are not capable of harmonizing the actions of large groups with each other. They do not yet seem to have understood at all that they are not separate individuals but are connected to each other and with all other inhabitants of the planet. To make what is meant understandable to the Nin, one could take the example of two Yer inhabitants that are called oxen by some Nin. If two of these oxen are hitched up in front of a means of transportation (referred to as wagons by some Nin) and one ox pulls towards the north but the other ox towards the west, both of them will end up in the northwest, even though neither of them actually wanted to go there. The Nin have yet not understood that they are tied to all the other six billion Nin just like the two oxen in front of the wagon. It's just that their actions are much more complicated than the pulling of a wagon, and the results of the actions of six billion Nin are of course more difficult to calculate than the path of the two oxen. It appears that so far the intelligence of the Nin has not been up to the task.

What now follows is a report made by our research team on the origin of wojna on the planet Yer. Many, many thousands of planet revolutions ago, when the Nin were still living from hunting and gathering in the forests, they had not yet come to know what wojna is. At that time, the Nin lived together in small groups and roamed through the forests. Such a group consisted of only sixty to eighty Nin, maybe ten to fifteen so-called families.

Every group had a particular hunting ground that they wandered through during the course of a year, looking for berries and fruit, mushrooms and roots, for snails and frogs, and naturally for game that they could hunt. In one area, let's say in a mountain valley, there lived only very few of these groups, maybe three or four at most. A forest cannot feed a large number of people. These Nin knew nothing of kings or chieftains, of courts of law, police, or prisons, and they also had no laws. Why should they? When someone did something that the others did not approve of, they could sit down together at the fire in the evening and talk about it. When they wanted to hunt gazelles, they followed their best hunter. But when the time came when the honey of the wild bees could be found, they followed the woman who knew the bees best. And when there was a quarrel, they followed the advice of the oldest women and men because they had the most experience. The Nin stuck together and shared everything with each other, since they could not have survived otherwise.

When a group became too large, it had to split up, and one half had to find a new hunting ground somewhere else. In those cases, it was possible for this group to enter another group's area. And then, yes, then there could be a fight. But such a fight was quickly over. Maybe it was just a big brawl. And as soon as one group ran away, the fight was over.

These fights were the exception and only happened when one group had to leave its territory. That did not happen very often because the women nursed their babies for four years or more and that kept them from having children during that time. In this way the women unknowingly prevented the group from becoming too large and maybe having to split up. Otherwise there was no reason for a fight. These Nin groups had no wish to make their hunting grounds larger and larger. They would not even be able to take advantage of a bigger hunting ground. There was also no reason to attack the neighboring group and to loot them because there was nothing to loot. The Nin of those days only kept a small stock of supplies. They lived from hand to mouth and gathered and hunted only as much as they could eat in a short amount of time. They lived in this way for hundreds of thousands of planet revolutions.

About 6,000 planet revolutions ago the climate changed in certain areas where the Nin lived. The differences between the dry and the rainy seasons became greater, and certain plants did not grow any more. And so certain animals that had lived on these plants disappeared. But

certain plants, whose seed consisted of hard kernels, were able to thrive especially well in this climate. And the Nin discovered how to lavish care and attention on these plants and that in this way they could harvest much more food in a small area than if they wandered around and took what they could find. These Nin no longer wanted to wander. They set up the first villages and became farmers. But they maintained many of their hunting customs. So just as they used to hunt together, they now worked in the fields together. The land belonged to no one - or to everyone. When there were communal issues to decide the villagers got together and discussed the problem. They did not elect leaders, but when there was a certain activity that had to be organized, to clear a new section of the forest, for example, or to build a new community center, or to go on a hunt, then they asked a man or a woman who knew something about it to take the leadership. That was also the way it used to be. The men still went on the hunt for the increasingly meager game, and a large part of the work in the fields was done by the women. But since the most important food came from the fields, the women often had more say so than the men had.

Life on a farm had advantages and disadvantages. People had become dependent on grain. When they were still hunters and gatherers, it was no big deal if one kind of plant did not do well one year. There were hundreds of others in the woods. Now when a drought came they had to go hungry. Their food was also more one-sided, not much variety, so that they got bad teeth and their children stayed smaller. And the work was hard and monotonous. Life was not as varied and exciting as before. But there was no going back, if for no other reason than that hunters and gatherers need much more land than farmers do.

The new thing was that they did not live from hand to mouth anymore. They could produce more than they consumed. They could store food. Then they had something for when times were bad, a safety net for when there might be a drought or a flood. And when their stockpile was big enough they could also invest some of it in the future. That is, when they had stored enough grain, they could, for example, afford to cultivate fewer fields. Some of the people could instead dig an irrigation ditch so that in the year after the next the harvest was even more bountiful and the surplus became even larger. Then they could either make their lives more comfortable or again invest the surplus in something else. If not everyone was needed in the fields, one of them could start specializing in blacksmithing and another in pottery, and so forth and further develop these crafts that in turn made everyone's work easier later on.

They could just as well permit some of them to specialize in healing, in praying, or in writing songs. It is true that these things did not increase the surplus, but it made life for everyone more pleasant and richer. In this way, progress slowly and leisurely made its entrance. Jewelry was made; pictures were painted; and statues were carved. Songs and stories were composed; clothes became more beautiful and the dances more complicated. It was a peaceful life.

In other regions the hunters followed the herds of hoofed animals. Gazelles, deer, sheep, and goats grazed on the plains in the winter, in the highlands in the summer. The hunters followed them during their migrations. On the plains they found dates, on the slopes acorns, almonds, and pistachios. In the hills they found apples and pears. Wild grains ripened at different elevations in different seasons. The better the people became at hunting, the more selective they could be about the animals that they chose as their prey. When they mainly killed young bucks and rams and spared the female animals, the herds were better able to reproduce. The hunters killed bears, wolves, and foxes so that they would not harm the herds. They drove the herds to areas where they could better protect them. Sheep and goats were less shy than gazelles and deer, and it was easier for them to get used to the constant presence of humans. So the hunters preferred to follow them. And the hunters became shepherds. The life of the pastoral people was still very similar to the earlier life of the hunters. They still moved through their pastures during the course of a year, and they naturally still hunted animals that

would not allow themselves to be tamed. Since hunting was still a man's business, the men considered the herds as their property, and so among the shepherds the word of a male Nin counted for more than the word of women did.

Shepherds and farmers naturally soon came across one another. Everybody had something that the other could use. The shepherds could get grain and bread from the farmers and pots made of clay and other things. In exchange, the farmers got meat, leather, and wild fruit and nuts. But one day a shepherd chieftain, who was also a great hunter, discovered that it was also possible to take from the farmers what he wanted, without giving them something in return. The farmers, who were no longer used to hunting, were not very good fighters. The shepherds were still much closer to the old hunting life. For them the farmers were just a new kind of game. And so they became accustomed to raid the farmers regularly and rob them.

Do not think that they had suddenly become bad Nin. They were just maintaining their accustomed way of making a living and simply applied it to a new prey: to the farmers with their cattle and stores of grain. Among each other they remained just as friendly and helpful as ever. They shared their kill, settled their affairs collectively, and were good to their children. They were hunters, not warriors, and still they brought wojna into the world.

Why were they able to keep raiding and looting the farmers' villages? Because the farmers were simply able to produce more food than they absolutely needed themselves. If the hunters did not completely loot the barns, if they did not take all of the sheep and pigs with them, if they did not set fire to the fields, then the farmers were somehow able to make it to the next harvest. And then there was again something there that the hunters could steal. In time, the hunters even made contracts with the farmers: if the farmers voluntarily gave them grain and meat - it was called a "tribute" - then they would not raid them anymore but instead would even protect them. Thus the hunters became rulers and warriors, and the farmers became laborers. And now something strange happened. Even though the rulers and warriors did not do a lick of work and besides squandered a pretty big part of what the farmers produced, there was a larger surplus for the community as a whole than the farmers used to have when they were still free. The farmers now kept less of what they produced, and they produced more than before. Before, when they were able to freely decide how to spend their time, they had of course not achieved the utmost that a Nin could achieve, and they had not been satisfied with the most necessary things that a Nin requires. Which free Nin, who was sane, would do that? But that was exactly what their rulers now forced them to do: they had to work as hard as possible and be content with only the most necessary things. And because this warrior-farmer community produced a larger surplus than any other community, more irrigation canals could be built here, more tools could be forged, and more things could be invented than in other places. More weapons and better fortifications could be built, and more temples could also be built, and more priests could be fed than in other places. In a sentence: such a community was superior to all others; it could grow larger more quickly, and it could conquer other communities and force them to adopt the same life style.

The old hunter tribes had never wanted to increase the size of their hunting grounds. They would not have been able to make use of it. The farmers also had no wish to increase the size of their land. They would not have been able to work it. But the new rulers had the wish to subjugate more and more villages. For the more villages they dominated, the more tribute they could collect. And the more tribute they received, the more they could use for improvements that would increase their power even more. For soon there were warrior and farmer communities in other places that they had to be cautious of. And so war became a regular institution, a habit even.

Let us then summarize the sad story. Wherever the Nin lived in freedom, they used the time that remained after their work for things that make life more pleasant: for making music and

dancing, for telling stories, for making jewelry, for making clothing more beautiful, or for painting their bodies. Wherever Nin were dominated by warriors, they were forced to produce as much food as possible so that others on the other hand could obtain metals, produce weapons, build protective walls and castles, all sorts of things that actually brought suffering and pain to the Nin.

But strangely, in the lands of the warriors there were also more beautiful clothes, more precious jewelry, grander statues, and better music too. How is that possible? Because all of these things were of course only for the rulers. They had the best artists come to their palaces, gave them good food, beautiful houses and clothes, so that they could spend the whole day just improving their arts. But for the simple Nin there were no arts.

The free Nin had musicians and jewelers in every village, but they were at the same time also farmers and did not have much time to sharpen their skills. So a warrior people was usually richer than a free Nin people could be, but only because most Nin who belonged to this people lived in poverty and ignorance, and only the ruler and his warriors had access to the wealth. That is why the warriors were stronger than the free Nin and could conquer them.

Thus Yer became a world of fighting, robbery, and repression. The way of living that promised the greatest amount of fun was not the way of living that won out. Instead, it was the way of life that produced the greatest surplus and made the fastest progress possible. What that led to shall be briefly dealt with using the example of an area that was called the Roman Empire:

The warrior princes soon found out that they could become even richer if they made the conquered enemies their slaves. Slaves had absolutely no rights anymore. They had to work like animals and were often treated worse than animals. It is true that a slave only works when he or she is forced to. And it is also true that a slave, who was not even kept as well as an animal, does not live very long. But that does not matter. New wars can be waged and new slaves can be captured. In Rome it soon happened that no free Roman wanted to work anymore. Work was the business of slaves. The Roman Empire was constantly waging wars to get more and more slaves who did all the work and had to feed the Empire. All the free Romans were either soldiers or unemployed layabouts, except for the few who were officials of the emperor or land and slave owners. The Roman Empire was constantly waging wars and expanded more and more. It ruled the world. But one day it collapsed. It had become so large that there were not enough Roman soldiers to defend the far-flung borders and at the same time to watch over the slaves in the whole country. The time came when war no longer made the country stronger but instead made it so weak that it perished.

Other empires replaced it. Other forms of social life came into being. But one thing stayed the same: those forms of social life that were the most pleasant for people were not the forms that succeeded; instead it was those forms of social life that produced the greatest surplus. Those empires or states that achieved the greatest surplus could always subjugate the others and force their way of life on them. This has never changed, and that is why to this day wojna has not disappeared from the lives of the Nin. To this day they use the greatest part of their surpluses to produce new and even better weapons. Today they have weapons with which they can obliterate all life on their planet. That is why they have become a great danger to the whole planet of Yer.

Only when the Nin comprehend that wojna and repression create only apparent wealth, can they then find a new form of social life. But to do this they have to understand that true wealth does not consist of having as many possessions as possible with which they can again produce as many other things as possible, and so forth. For the inhabitants of this planet, true wealth can probably also be found in a world in which it is possible for as many Nin as possible to have as much time as possible for making music, dancing, chatting with each other, playing,



writing poetry, painting, telling stories, doing sports. In a word, to make life more beautiful. Otherwise wojna could destroy their whole planet just as it once destroyed the Roman Empire.

In any case, it is completely out of the question - at least that is the opinion of our research team - to admit the Nin into the community of the United Solar Systems, as long as they have not comprehended the most simple basic rules of living together in large groups.

## Open Words

Now I would like to speak very openly about something. Especially now when so many beat around the bush, when no one says what he really thinks because it's not "polite", because it is not "politically correct", because it stirs up memories that are better left buried. Precisely because of this it is necessary for someone to openly tell it like it is.

Of course foreigners, even those in the South and in the East, are people too. No one disputes that. Of course they have eyes, a mouth, and a nose just like us. They experience love and fear like us; they are gifted or dumb like us and so forth and so on. Of course there are among them, just as there are among us, decent and less decent people. And when they grow up in orderly circumstances, they are no more prone to crime than we are. But that is not what it is all about. What it is about is this: we have to defend our culture, and we have to defend our affluence without which this culture would not exist. The fact is that here we live in one of the richest countries in the world. (And that goes for all of those who can read these words, for Germans just as much as for the Swiss and Austrians.) Here we have prosperity and a secure social structure that the Greeks or the Poles can only dream of. Ethiopians or Colombians cannot even imagine this. Let's face the facts squarely: of the six billion people in this world, only one billion live in the "industrial nations." And we just so happen to belong to them.

We, the rich sixth of humanity, we own four fifths of the wealth of the earth! We consume 70% of the energy, 60% of the food, and 85% of the wood on this earth. What would happen if the others just came along and demanded their share? So far they are just one or one and a half million poor devils that flee to us, from political persecution, from a war or from hunger. Oh well. But out there, there are not millions, but a few billion poor devils full of envy of our prosperity! We, the richest sixth, have sixty times as much as the poorest sixth. You have to let that sink in completely without a false sense of shame. A German consumes as much fuel oil as ten black Africans. A German emits as much CO<sub>2</sub> into the air as 65 blacks. In our part of the world there is one car for every two inhabitants, counting children. In India, there is one car for every 455 people. Let's face it, if they all wanted to live the way we do too, we could close down the planet! There just isn't enough oil in the world for the blacks and Chinese to drive cars too. Those are facts!

Everybody who likes to talk about justice while having a cup of coffee should just think about how much he is paying for that coffee. Ten years ago the blacks down there or the Indians from South America got from us the equivalent of a locomotive for 13,000 sacks of coffee. Today, if they want to buy a locomotive, they have to deliver 45,000 sacks to us. You couldn't say that that is bad for us. None of us wants to do without our cheap coffee. How many of those who love to talk about justice voluntarily buy the expensive coffee from the Third World Shop? Who asks, when he buys a cheap Indian cotton shirt or a pretty silk scarf, whether they're just so cheap because they're produced by child labor? No, charity begins at home. We all think of our own future first of all, of our own family. That's just natural. The Indians or the Chinese wouldn't act any differently if they were the leading nations in the world.

Let's not kid ourselves: our whole world order rests on the supremacy of the whites. Where are the industrial nations located? In North America, in Europe, in Australia, South Africa, Japan. You can't even count Russia anymore. That's practically all white people, not counting the Japanese.

And the industrial nations take it absolutely for granted that they have to do everything to protect their supremacy in the world, mainly with political and economic means these days. We're not only protecting our borders against the refugees from the poor countries. We're also protecting our markets from their products. For example, we don't exact nearly as much duty on raw cotton as we do on manufactured textiles. We have them deliver cocoa to us, but never the prepared chocolate. After all we have to protect our textiles or chocolate factories from the competition. In truth we can't have the slightest interest in having those countries down there establish their own industries, get "developed." After all we want to keep selling our industrial products to them at a high price and buy cheap raw materials from them.

But will economic and political means - like say, European unity - always be enough to secure our supremacy in the world? Won't it one day have to come to military measures? When the Red Empire collapsed some people acted for a while as though eternal peace would soon be breaking out. But to the more foresighted, it was clear that the truth was that the problems were not coming so much from the East as from the South. Since the Gulf War, one thing is very clear: when Saddam Hussein tried to snatch Kuwait, he got rapped on the knuckles by us, the rich fifth, with a vengeance. Luckily we were dealing with a true dictator then and a true violation of international law, so that no one could say we weren't within our rights. But it wasn't only Saddam who got a taste of what technological-military superiority is. The televised war showed the entire South who's the boss in the world. And Mr. Milosevic, who is luckily also indisputably a dictator and war criminal, did us a similar favor, so that no one dares point a finger at us and charge that we are jointly responsible for the war because of unacceptable ultimatums and other diplomatic acts and omissions. For in the last analysis, these wars were necessary for us.

Let's not kid ourselves! Let's not kid ourselves about how the others see us: each one of us can buy a carnation from Colombia in the middle of winter for 75 cents. Yes, and does anybody ask questions about that? Every day airplanes fly around half the world just to bring us fresh flowers from the other side of the globe! Even the emperors of ancient Rome couldn't afford a luxury like that. Aren't we the aristocrats of the world? We would be naive to talk ourselves into thinking that the other five sixths love us.

Of course we don't all profit equally from our pre-eminence in the world. A few always get a raw deal; there's nothing to be done about that. We simply happen to be a meritocracy. And that's like a ski race: if someone is two hundredths of a second slower than the other one, he's not really a poorer skier because of that. But only three people can get a medal; those are the rules, and the others get nothing.

Of course we're not just a meritocracy but also a welfare state. And the poorest welfare recipients in our part of the world still live better than most people from Mozambique do. But that's not what it's all about. There are just some who know they will never get a medal, who know they will never belong to the successful and famous. And they're just frustrated. You can't do anything about that. Sure, it would be nice if we could place different values at the top: friendliness, congeniality, humor, or the ability to be happy and enjoy life. But then we would never have become as rich as we are today. You have to understand that. We owe our prosperity not least to our system of values, in which success is at the top of the list.

And those who get the short end of it, who consider themselves useless and not needed, these people feel humiliated and are full of anger. Aren't they also white, European, German, members of an industrial nation? Don't they belong to the group that claims to be the salt of

the earth? Why wouldn't they belong? Naturally these mostly young people can't understand why on the one hand we allow ourselves to be guided only to a extremely limited degree by humanitarian considerations in our economic activities in the world, but on the other hand still grant humanitarian aid to one small basically insignificant group of people. Their reasoning (surely oversimplified) goes this way: if we present ourselves as the lords over other peoples on a national and economic level, why can't we also do the same thing with regard to individual members of foreign groups, and especially in our own country?

They overlook the fact that a certain minimum of humanity is necessary for our reputation in the world, which therefore of course also contributes to our economic successes. They also overlook the fact that the cost of this humanity (even though of course we like to remind people of it) actually isn't all that high. The German banks alone earn four or five times the amount spent by their federal government on refugees and asylum seekers just from the interest paid by the developing countries for loans. Anyway, here there are only three refugees for every 1,000 residents, whereas a country like say Malawi, has to cope with 105 refugees for every 1,000 residents. Luckily, 85 % of the world's refugees stay in the Third World anyway.

Still one ought to show some understanding for these perhaps overzealous, radicalized young people and not demonize them as right wing extremists and Neo-nazis lock, stock and barrel. Of course it's not nice to set fire to homes for asylum seekers or go "colored bashing." That's primitive and crude. More than anything, these extreme actions harm our international relations and thus our export interests in a direct way. But behind these stupid excesses that are, and - I repeat - to be absolutely rejected, there is also a feeling, a completely realistic thought: that it is necessary to erect a protective wall against the onslaught from the South.

Sure, excesses must not be permitted. Order must be maintained. On the other hand, we have to recognize that the basic premise that is expressed by these excesses is definitely healthy and is a completely logical outcome of our position in the world as a political and economic power. And possibly, yes probably, we will one day need this basic attitude to a much greater extent than today: who can say that one day we won't have to defend our achievements, our position in the world with military means as well? When one day push comes to shove, when it's necessary one day to defend our culture, our values, and not least also our affluence and our pre-eminence in the world to the bitter end, it will then only be possible if a healthy, strong "Germany first," "Austria first," or "Europe first" attitude is firmly anchored as one of the basic values of our culture in the minds and hearts of the people. We have to understand that clearly; we can't allow ourselves to be deceived about that!

A European

## The Bomb

In the coffee house people were talking about what to do in case of a nuclear war. Mr. Balaban said, "If they drop the bomb, you should take a bath, wrap yourself in a white cloth, and walk slowly to the cemetery!"

"Why slowly?"

"So you don't cause a panic," said Mr. Balaban.

## Afterword

Ever since I started writing books for children, I have considered it important to deal with the difficult subject of war and peace in a way that children can understand. It seems to me that it

is not enough to tell children that war is terrible and that peace is much nicer. Although even that is a step forward, of course, considering there was once a youth literature that glorified the military and combat action. But most children in our latitudes know that war is something terrible and peace is much nicer. But is peace possible? Or is war an unavoidable destiny that keeps befalling humankind? Doesn't our history class, as well as the evening news, teach us that war has always existed everywhere in the world and is still with us? A culture of peace, understanding of others, peaceful resolution of conflicts – all of that is well and good: but what if the others do not want to go along?

I cannot imagine how we can banish war from the life of humankind, if we do not search for the causes of war. Only when the cause of a disease is discovered, can a focused and effective method be found to fight it.

It is true that I just skipped all my history classes at university, but at home I have continued my studies of history for myself to this day because, as a writer, the question of what determines people's actions and thoughts is naturally always on my mind. But of course I cannot claim to have found the philosopher's stone or that in my stories I could absolutely explain the causes of war. And I also cannot present a complete recipe for the avoidance of future wars. But I want the stories to do more than just give people "food for thought." Writers are always trying to give people something to think about, but at some point, someone is going to have to start thinking. The stories I have collected here are intended to suggest a direction in which a person can continue to think; they are intended to convey a feeling for where and how to search for the causes of war.

Maybe the intentions of the book can best be summed up like this: I try to show how our actions can be interconnected in such a way, that the ones who do not try their best to further their own interests must perish. But that on the other hand by each of us trying to further our own interests we may in fact unintentionally increase the loss or make worse the damage for all of us. And that we cannot escape this dilemma unless we communicate with each other and coordinate our actions. This moral is simple enough, but the hard thing is to really see through the complex ways in which the actions of individuals, groups, nations, states on this planet are interconnected.

I am trying to teach children to begin to recognize that sort of social mechanism, and I think that this is a novel approach in children's literature.

*The Dreamer* took shape during a weeklong workshop, arranged by the cultural initiative "Fireworks" in the Oetz valley, Tyrol. The theme was "Free as the Wind and the Clouds." There the children and I wrote a "Wind and Cloud Book."

I wrote *The Blue Boy* for the children's television series "Siebenstein" presented by the German television network, ZDF. I wrote it shortly after the wall came down between East and West Germany in 1989, when the whole world was seized by a short-lived euphoria of peace. When the story appeared in a book, we had already experienced the Gulf War. This story is about the hardening of the soul that can produce fear. The point of the story is not that the boy throws away his gun in the end but rather why he throws it away. "Well, you could just throw away your gun," is not enough. First there has to be hope for change.

*The Planet of Carrots* shows how a specific social system can develop its own dynamic, so that it becomes very difficult to change anything in the system, and even those who are actually placed at a disadvantage by the system can become its defenders.

*Fear* is an example of how we often do not use our reasoning power to find out how things really are, but use it only to justify our desires or urges, our fear or our hatred. The human being's ability to deceive itself is one of its most amazing qualities. In class you may want to find more examples with your students.

The same paranoid logic that is demonstrated in *Fear* is depicted in *Fear Again*, this time on the level of the state.

*The Strange People from the Planet Hortus* is quite simply about the costs of waging war.

*When the Soldiers Came* shows in a condensed form, which can already be understood by quite small children, that conquest and exploitation are the essence of war, not difference of opinion or race or culture or conflicting interests. It argues that an egalitarian society has no need for conquest whereas a hierarchical society cannot exist without conquest. The theme is expanded in *Report to the United Solar System's Council*.

*The Great War on Mars* is an attempt to show how the fact that everybody pursues his or her own – actually harmless and even justifiable - self-interests can lead to results that nobody intended.

When I tell the story I usually make a break after: “*Maybe we should have given our field marshal the pink slip!*” said the Moffers. I say: “Well, here the story must end, mustn't it? What else can happen now but wheeeee - WHAM!” I let it sink in for a few seconds, then I take up the story again and tell the happy ending, making it clear that this is not very likely to happen in real life.

We often have very interesting discussions when I ask the children who was responsible for the whole disaster. Whoever they name, I defend them and show that they had good reasons for acting - or not acting - the way they did. I ask them: What difference would it make if one of the peasants refused to sell his potatoes to the army? Someone else would be able to sell even more potatoes and the peaceloving peasant might starve with his family. So if he can't make a difference, isn't he right to do what is best for his family? So what can be the solution?

The theme is expanded in *At Your Own Doorstep*.

*The Slave* is about how it can happen that people create systems of which they themselves become prisoners. You might want to ask you students why the slave only can think in terms of master and slave.

I wrote *The Farmers Who Were Good at Numbers* after reading *The Logic of Collective Action* by the economist Mancur Olson. In this book, the author reliably demonstrates that it is theoretically impossible for a large group of individuals acting rationally in their own self-interests (this is the favorite model of modern economics) to do something together for a common cause, even if everyone knows that it would be better for all if everyone committed themselves to this cause. He also shows why it is easier for smaller, more manageable groups to do something for a common cause than it is for really large groups.

*The Strange War* shows a possible form of passive resistance. What kind of resistance is possible depends, of course, on the goals of the aggressors. If the aggressors are intent on wiping out the other nation, this form of resistance will not be possible. But most wars are waged to subjugate people, not to exterminate them.

*Arobanai* is an account of the life of BaMbuti (“pygmies”) in the tropical forests of Congo as an example of the life style of hunters and gatherers. It is based on the research conducted by Colin Turnbull. All known hunter gatherer societies are egalitarian, with very weak leaders or none at all. They do not wage war because conquering more land would not make sense for them, as they would not be able to use it. They may fight with a neighboring group for such resources as a tree rich in honey or some such delicacy.

That they do not wage war does not mean that they are not violent. The ethologist Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt pointed out that the Khoi (“Bushman”) people of the Khalahari desert, although they do not wage war, have an extremely high murder rate. But this only supports

the theory that the cause of war is not the violent nature of the individual but the structure of the society.

*Star Snake*, is the story of a young Aztec warrior and the history of the rise of the Aztec Empire.

The two stories *Arobanai* and *Star Snake* contrast one of the most peaceful and loving societies that has ever lived on this planet with one of the cruelest and most warlike. They ought to be read together. The task for the students should be to carefully compare the structure of the two societies and the various aspects of life. What is the economic basis of each society? How are the goods distributed? How is labour divided among the members of society? How are decisions made? What sort of ethics prevail? How are the children and young people educated? What are the ideals they are taught? And finally: How is it possible for beings of the same species to be so different in their feelings, thoughts, and in their actions?

*At your Own Doorstep* was originally inspired by the traffic situation in Beirut. But of course road traffic serves here as an example of a special case of societal entanglements. If you enter the words "Peace begins" in any Internet search engine you will be amazed how many pages you get of the form "Peace begins at your own doorstep", "Peace begins within your soul" and so on. But what is the next step?

At the beginning the drivers all think they are confronted with what game theory calls a "zero sum game": "If you win, I lose" If you win 5, I lose 5, so the sum of our winnings is 0. In our case this means: "You can only get home earlier if I get home later". But in reality the drivers are caught in a sort of prisoner's dilemma, in which they all lose. By communicating and cooperating the women manage to turn this situation into a win-win situation: Everybody gets home earlier.

Conflict resolution is not so much about compromising: Okay, I'll be content with less so you can have more. This is what nice people would do, and of course it is nice to be nice and to deal with nice people. But if you manage to turn a zero sum situation into a win-win situation you can also convince the not so nice people and make them cooperate.

Warmongers often want us to believe that we are in a zero sum situation: "If *they* take X, we can't have X" (for X insert land, water, oil or whatever). They make us believe that if there is not enough water we must fight for the well. But if instead of fighting for the well we get together and dig a second well we can all gain.

The philosopher Sir Karl Popper warned of revolutionary change. He advocated "piecemeal social engineering", small changes which by and by will lead to a better society. He argued that social experiments on a smaller scale could not cause so much damage and could more easily be reversed if they were not successful. There is much to what he said, but in my opinion he overlooked one thing: social systems tend to settle in a relatively stable equilibrium. If you put a little ball on the bottom of a round bowl and you push it a little, it will move a little towards the edge of the bowl and then roll back. If you push it a little harder it will climb up a little higher towards the edge and then roll back again. You need a certain minimum of force to push it over the edge of the bowl. Anything less will just not make a difference.

Take the example of a city council that wants to improve a "bad area" of the town. The streets there are strewn with litter, so the city council decides to put up litter bins. But to no avail. Almost nobody uses them.

Why is that?

In the “nice area” of the town, if you throw away a banana peel on the sidewalk a person who sees you doing it will approach you and ask you to use a litter bin, or they may even pick up the banana peel and put it in a litter bin. In a “nice” area one banana peel on the sidewalk makes a big difference. And everybody living in a “nice” area wants it to remain nice.

In the “bad” area of town one banana peel more on the sidewalk does not make a difference at all. And putting your banana peel in the litter bin does not make a difference either. So why take the trouble? If you want people to use the litter bins at least you must remove all the litter from the streets first, so that putting your banana peel in the litter bin *will* make a difference. Probably you will also have to educate the people because they have been used to throwing away their litter in the streets. They will have to reach some sort of agreement that clean streets are good for their health. Or - because the “bad” area of the town is probably the poor area - they may have more pressing problems on their hands than litter.

So even if you want to adopt the piecemeal approach for social change you must find out what is the minimum effort necessary to overcome the stable equilibrium of a certain situation.

The bad news is that situations where people work together for a common good are usually less stable than situations where everyone fends for themselves. One careless litterer will not upset the equilibrium of the “nice” street. But if, let's say, 10% or 20% of the inhabitants get careless and throw their litter on the street, the rest of the population may soon give up and get careless too. On the other hand, if 10% or 20% of the inhabitants of the dirty street start using the litter bins they still will not make a visible impact and will not be able to change it into a clean street if they do not proactively try to convince their neighbors.

*The Two Prisoners* introduces something known in game theory as the “prisoners dilemma.” It is a classic model for how the quite rational pursuit of an advantage for oneself can nevertheless become harmful to all concerned. As long as one adheres to the conditions of the model that the two prisoners cannot communicate, there is no solution.

*Justice* I wrote for a congress on children's books in Israel in 2001.”Justice” is a very ambiguous concept and it is often abused. What is a just distribution of goods? Give to everybody what he or she deserves? Or give to everybody enough for a decent life? How do you decide what someone deserves? And who decides?

And if someone commits a crime, what is a just punishment? An eye for an eye? Should a murderer be killed? Should a rapist be raped? And what about mass murderers? You can only kill a person once. For the murderers of my grandparents who were killed in the holocaust their could never be a “just” punishment. And for my father, who survived, their could never be a “just” compensation. My father never sought justice or revenge. His goal in life was to understand what happened, how it could have happened and how something similar could be prevented in the future.

*Money* is about economic conquest. Events such as the one described in the story happened many times in the history of colonialism. The story also tries to explain the most puzzling aspect of money: Why can you get something for it? All earlier forms of money are relatively easy to understand: People were willing to exchange useful things for money because the things that were used as money were also useful. Cocoa beans, cowrie shells, camels, copper, silver or gold: you knew you could exchange these things for almost anything else because these things were useful themselves. You could eat them or milk them or ride them or turn them into tools or jewellery. Anything that many people want to have can serve as money, as a means of exchange. Nowadays people accept worthless paper money (no, the bank does not guarantee to give you gold for it. That was a long time ago), because they need the government's money to pay their taxes. That's the simple secret.

*The Story of a Good King* I wrote in Korea in 2010. I attended a meeting of writers and illustrators from all over the world. They all had contributed to a collection of peace stories and had come together to celebrate the publication of the book. There was much talk about the power of love and the importance of tolerance and friendship. “When people sing and dance together they will not fight each other later on”, was a statement that got much applause. I did not like to contradict this statement but I had to because it simply is not true. How often in history has it happened that people who had been good friends and neighbours suddenly found themselves on different sides of the front-lines! Although tolerance, friendship and love are indispensable values they are not enough. We must also teach our children critical thinking and an analytical world view. We must help them to see through political propaganda and peace rhetoric. And most important we must understand and help our children to understand that large groups of people behave differently from single persons. States don't start to fight because they don't like each other. You cannot use psychology to explain the behaviour of states or tribes or companies or religious communities because such organisations are composed of many individuals with different psychologies, different world views, different interests and a very limited knowledge of what the other members of the group are up to. The behaviour of the group is determined by the behaviour of all its members, but the outcome may be completely different from anything any single member of the group has been trying to achieve. As an example I wrote this story.

*Report to the Council of the United Solar Systems* sums up all of the themes, and maybe it is what the blue boy discovered during the years he studied the blue planet, while gazing through the telescope.

*Yer* is Turkish and means *Earth*. *Nin* is Japanese and means *person*. *Wojna* is Polish and means of course *war*.

It was at the same workshop in the Oetz valley that I wrote the first drafts of this story. The children were encouraged to ask me for stories, and one girl, who coincidentally shares my last name and whose first name is Nina, brought me a note that said, “Martin, please tell me why there are wars.” The story is based, among other things, on the research of Lewis Mumford (*The Myth of the Machine*), but naturally also on my own reflections.

I used to think that there had been a time when humankind did not know war. When I read Jane Goodall's account of a war between chimpanzees, I had to revise this opinion. Even in the age of the hunters and gatherers it was possible that one band had to find new hunting grounds and in the process got into a conflict with another band. But after the other band had been driven away, the war was over. Wars could happen, but they were not a critical component of the culture. It was not until the advent of agriculture, with plant cultivation and domesticated livestock, that people were able to store supplies and so even had time for military campaigns. As for the vanquished, these supplies were something that could be stolen without necessarily destroying those who had been robbed. War became a permanent institution because it was a means to gather together the surpluses of smaller groups of people and to invest them in strategies that resulted in an increase in productivity, i.e., in the production of even more surpluses that again could be invested in progress. And this was a far more effective means of subsistence than negotiations or free confederations would have been. The motivations of the individuals in power or of the warriors were less important. In nature, characteristics like horns, for example, arise by means of chance mutations. Whether the horns remain or disappear depends on whether they give their bearer a reproductive advantage or are a hindrance. A tribal chief might start a war out of hatred of his neighbor, for reasons of prestige, for religious reasons, because of pure arrogance, because of built-up aggression, because of sexual frustration, whatever. But war is able to persist as a permanent institution because of several factors: first, it promotes the congregation of people in large empires, and thus it makes gathering surpluses possible. Secondly, because it takes away



more surpluses from a large portion of these people than they would be willing to invest in the common cause or in the future. And finally war persists because it promotes “progress” in the form of increased productivity of human labor. An advantage to society does not, however, have to be an advantage to the individual. A community of 500 free farming families would have been happier than an army of 100,000 farming families under the rule of a warrior chief. But only the empire of a warrior chief could afford a capital city with temples and schools for priests where the movements of the stars are studied.

The aggression that humans are capable of is certainly a precondition for wars being waged in the first place, but it is not the cause. Were the young men in Austria-Hungary more aggressive in 1914 than say in 1880? Or did the Kaiser become more aggressive in his later years? Often people’s aggressiveness and hatred of their neighbors must be stirred up in order for them to be ready to go to war or let their children go. Often though, the aggressiveness of soldiers has to be curbed. Whereas, on the one hand, some humans are trained for special units to be fiends, as for example the Green Berets in Vietnam, a modern army needs foremost people who are disciplined and who function reliably; that is, people who let themselves be governed by emotions as little as possible. The human being’s capacity for coolly objective and dispassionate action is, perhaps, even more dangerous than his capacity for aggression. As important as are all the pedagogical efforts that serve to reduce aggression, promote understanding of foreign cultures, teach the ability to solve personal conflicts peacefully, none of these measures can eliminate the causes of war. The industrial market economy that today controls the social structure on our planet is concerned (as no previous social structure has been) with increasing productivity, with producing ever more goods requiring ever less work, and investing the surpluses immediately in increased production and productivity. This not only leads to the fact that we will soon be reaching the limit of what the planet can stand ecologically. Here also lies the root of new wars. It is said that the wars of the future could be fought over ever decreasing resources, e.g., water. That is conceivable. But it is just as conceivable that future wars will be waged between the giant multi-national economic conglomerations, and that they will be about who may sell what to whom.

The important difference is this: A conflict about resources can be resolved. Let us say, the conflict is about water. Such a conflict can be resolved in different ways: One of the competing parties may conquer the resource for themselves and leave the others to starve or to flee. Or they may destroy the other party more or less completely by direct violence. Or the war reduces the population on both sides until the combined population is small enough for the existing water supply. But the conflict can also be resolved if new sources of water can be found, for instance by digging deeper wells, by desalinating sea water; or by inventing methods to save water and reduce its consumption. Conflicts about resources can be the cause of the most terrible, most cruel wars, even of genocide. But conflicts about resources are finite. And it is always possible to at least think of a peaceful way to resolve a conflict about resources. Whereas the war that is caused by the necessity - not the wish, the necessity - to expand the empire, to acquire new markets, to concentrate more surplus, is inherent in the structure of exploitative societies and is infinite.

To avoid future wars, six billion – and soon it will be seven and eight billion – people will have to agree on new economies and social structures. Only when they know something about one another and act with each other in mind, can people avoid increasing the harm to all by seeking only their own advantage. No longer can the goal be to constantly raise productivity – to produce ever more goods with ever less work; the exchange of things should not be the main content of interpersonal affairs. The fact that things can be produced with less and less labor should not lead to ever more things being produced. Instead it should lead to people being able to use the freed-up time to exchange social services with each other: art, entertainment, care giving, healing, education, research, sports, philosophy ...

*For if every instrument could accomplish its own work, obeying or anticipating the will of others, like the statues of Daedalus, or the tripods of Hephaestus, which, says the poet, “of their own accord entered the assembly of the Gods;” if, in like manner, the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre without a hand to guide them, chief workmen would not want servants, nor masters slaves.*

*Aristotle*

Don't you think we have reached that point?

###

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## About the Author

Martin Auer was born in 1951 in Vienna, Austria. He attended university but never really studied anything there. He was an actor, a musician, a singer-songwriter, a teacher, a journalist, a stage magician, a copy-writer for public relations agencies. His first book was published in 1986, and since then he has been a free lance writer. By now he has published over 40 books, among them childrens books which have won various awards and have been translated into several different languages. “For his services to the republic of Austria” he was made an honorary professor in 2005.

Martin Auer is the father of a grown up daughter, grandfather of two somewhat younger children and the father of a little daughter. He lives in Vienna and has no pets.

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