

medicine. Elka decided that she could wait until they had finished their practices. Finally, Elka gave Achi permission to “stick” the sick man with her injection.

She did so, prayed, and left. Elka started his chants and blowing again.

The man recovered. But who could tell to whom the credit was due?

Both God’s way and the Indian way governed by the great spirit Kworokyam, held fascination to Elka. More and more he liked merging the two ways into his sorcery.

One day an invitation was given for a *shim-shim* (drinking-dancing party), over the high mountains. Elka accepted and led the travelers, first in canoes and then walking on the high mountain trail. A young wife fell sick just after they left the canoes and started on the trail. Elka blew his magic, and after two days she got well. Then a small girl became sick. Elka built a witchdoctor’s house and took the girl in. He prepared to go to the sky. He blew tobacco smoke and rubbed a stone on her hot cheeks. He sang songs over and over again, calling on the spirit of the bush hog. When Elka came back from the sky, the girl’s father told Elka that Kworokyam had revealed to him that he would not heal her.

“Take my daughter to Achi,” said the father. “Take her without waiting for the dawn. Maybe Achi has medicine to heal her.”

But the little girl died before her father could start the trip back to Achi. Elka told everyone that they must all move on to the dance,

but he ached deep in his stomach. He tried to put the dead girl from his mind, but he could not. If Bahm or Kron had been there they would have prayed. Maybe he should have prayed. But it was too late to talk to God now. The girl was dead, and Kworokyam had not stopped her from dying.

The next day a small boy became sick with a fever. His father, holding the boy in his arms, said, “I cannot go to the dance. My son is sick. I will take him now to Achi.”

As the man left to take his boy back over the trail, everyone looked at Elka. Why did Elka not offer to use his charms? Maybe he has lost confidence in Kworokyam.

Once more they started off on their journey. A white bird sat on a rock, and a youth who had been given a gun as a reward from the mission, fired at the bird. The gun blasted noisily. The bird flew off unharmed, but it was the youth who was hurt. He had placed too much gunpowder in the gun and now blood oozed from a nasty wound in his arm. The people did not look to Elka for help. Instead, they called a local witchdoctor who lived near the river landing. The witchdoctor sang a song and the bleeding stopped. The youth seemed to feel better; he decided he could go on.

Elka, felt relieved. Kworokyam was still healing people. But then a terrible thought struck Elka. Perhaps Kworokyam had *chosen* not to work through Elka to heal the young girl.

The group finally reached their destination. They danced and drank. But Elka did not dance on the second night; he was sick. The next day he awoke with a burning fever. His head hurt; he was dizzy and

weak; he was hot and yet he was cold. He blew on himself. He called for his favourite witchdoctor Mafolio, but still Elka suffered.

One dawn after another came, and each time he was no better. He thought he would die. He covered his eyes with his hands.

“Father in the Sky, this is Elka talking. Would You be the one to heal me?”

That day he started to get better. His fever broke. He knew he would get well. By the time he was nearly well, the dance was over. Ahmuri, his wife, was baking the last of the bread to feed them on their homeward trip. But they could not go just now, for others were sick now.

Elka blew on the sick. Most were getting better. But were the spirits choosing to lift him up today, only to let him fall tomorrow?

They carried on the trail, but after two days sickness struck again. This time it was Elka’s two-year old daughter. She burned with fever. Elka feared she would die. This time he talked to God.

“Make my little girl well,” Father. I want to be trusting in You. If you make my little girl well, then I’ll receive You. My bad past I will let go too, because of You.”

He had talked to God before calling the spirits of the forest. Why had he done this? He didn’t know. But he used no charm on his girl, and she got better. He guessed that God had done it.

Elka realized that he could no longer pray and blow. He had to choose between God and Kworokyam.

Chapter 8 Into the pit of my stomach

The conflict between Christ and Kworokyam worried Elka constantly. He was also worried that the teaching of God’s paper was having such little effect on his people. They attended the lessons at which God’s Paper was taught, yet it seemed they were merely there for the entertainment.

Elka’s younger brother Yakuta, was now old enough to take a wife. He had been given one of the same age, but he preferred other men’s wives and stole them. Yakuta sang songs about Jesus and knew the stories. But what did it all mean to them?

Killing was still happening. One woman was threatening to kill her next baby if it was a boy, because she already had too many boys. Some of the men said they would kill to get wives.

Rikaru, a hunter hired by the missionaries, did more than threaten. One day he quarreled with a woman over beads. Because she refused to give them to him, he secretly followed her, her daughter-in-law and her three young children. In the moonlight he crept into their camp and killed them. In the meantime, he returned to Kanashen, where he stole another man’s wife. After a few days, five bodies were found floating in the river, and Rikaru was suspected.

Bahm and Kron were way at the time. Bahm’s wife, Ferochi feared for her own safety and that of Achi. She bravely sat down at the radio, (which had not been working for weeks), pretending to call

the Georgetown police. Maybe if Rikuru thought they were in touch with the outside world he would give less trouble. Ferochi leaned over the set, twisting dials and speaking to it. Unexpectedly, the receiver crackled an answer.

“Come in, Kanashen. Please repeat what you said about five killings”. Ferochi did; whereupon the radio promptly went dead.

The police were more afraid of the Wai Wai than Rikuru was of them. Before the police arrived, there were some anxious nights at Kanashen. Rikuru, imprisoned in an old kitchen, boasted that he would get loose and kill the white women next. Elka nailed chicken wire across their bedroom windows and fastened slats to form a protective ceiling.

Finally, the police flew in from Georgetown, and at the same time, Bahm and Kron returned from the Mapeura River, along with the third brother, Rader Hawkins and his wife Ann, bringing with them a new radio transmitter. With all the goings on, Rikuru was not guarded and he escaped. He was recaptured, but escaped again. Finally taken prisoner once more, he was flown out to Georgetown jail. For a year he awaited a trial which never took place. Noone knew how to handle a case of murder among the Wai Wai, and to prevent further embarrassment he was freed.

Rikuru was the first Wai Wai killer to face the white man’s judgment. Elka was more concerned with God’s judgement of badness, not just murder, but greed, gluttony, malice and hate, including his own. He had tried to be a good witchdoctor. But what had he done for his people? Were they better off for having the

forest spirits blown on them? Or would they be better off under God’s blessing?

‘Christ or Kworokyam?’ He wondered.

No sooner had the horror of the multiple murders slipped a little from memory, then the people were stirred by events that set God in direct opposition to the world of spirits. And in the pit of Elka’s stomach was the place of the battle.

Ekufa, a tiny baby, was brought by his parents to Elka for treatment. He suffered from convulsive fits. Achi had said that God and her medicine could cure them. But Elka’s ability to manipulate the spirits drew the parents to him.

“Will you blow on my little baby?” the father asked Elka, bringing his son into Elka’s house.

“Why doesn’t your wife’s father blow on him?” Elka asked, referring to Chirimoso, the child’s grandfather.

“He cannot find a cure,” he said. “He told us to take our boy to one who is more of a witchdoctor than he is.”

“Why don’t you take him to witchdoctor Muyuwa?” asked Elka. He did not want to accept responsibility for the child’s life. He remembered the little girl he had tried to cure, but who had died. In pity for the young couple, he took the baby from the father’s arms.

He laid the baby in his hammock and bent over and blew. He set up a witchdoctor’s house and took the baby there to continue working his charms. He blew and sang. He worked all night, communing

with the spirits. Dawn came. Elka squeezed out through the leafy sides of the hut and handed over the baby, almost dead, to the distraught parents.

He would blow again later in the day, he promised. He did – that day and the next. Deep down in the pit of his stomach he knew that it was no use. The child would not live. He knew because Kworokyam had given a sign through the smoke blown over the child's head. The smoke did not stick to the child's head, as it should have if Kworokyam was working for him.

Why don't my charms work?

He talked to Bahm. "The spirits used to honour my blowing," he said. "Why don't they now?"

"The evil spirits heal sometimes," said Bahm, "but just to fool us. Kworokyam is the devil's servant. It is his way of getting us to worship him instead of God."

Again, it was God against the spirits. 'Why did it have to be that way?' thought Elka. Why couldn't a man both blow and pray? Couldn't he give his service to God and his service to Kworokyam?

"God's Paper tells us we can't be followers of Jesus if we serve the devil," Bahm said.

Elka knew that to serve Jesus Christ instead of the spirits would bring changes to his life. He did not want to face changes now. They could wait.

Elka held a dance and more than a hundred came. They were the people who assembled at Kanashen on Sundays to learn the ways of Jesus. But their thoughts were not on Jesus this evening. Much drink had been prepared. The party got underway noisily. Drunkenness and hilarity gave way to violence. But soon the party was stopped short. A more important issue had arisen.

Malu, the third son of Yakuma was missing. At dusk his mother, Tochi, became aware that the toddler was missing. She called continuously but he did not come. Yakuma, who had been away for the day, sensed something was wrong on his return.

"Where is my son?" he demanded.

"I don't know," said Tochi.

"Why did you not look after him?"

The whole village went looking. Yukuma searched the river and the river banks. Yukuma approached Elka.

"Kworokyam has carried away my boy," he said. "Two of my children are dead. I want this one to live. Could you please go to the sky and look for him?"

In times past he would have been quick to comply. Now he wished he could tell Yukuma that he would talk to God. Elka said nothing. He was unable to talk. The village people gathered around, wondering why.

"Go to the sky!" the people demanded.

Elka had no choice, A witchdoctor's house was quickly built. Elka put on his animal chest bands and feathered headpiece. Clutching his basket of charms, he entered the hut alone. Soon Bahm came by as Kanashen had been alerted of the disappearance.

"Elka, where are you?" Bahm called.

"I'm in here Bahm," Elka answered. "I'm going off to see Kworokyam."

Bahm went away to look for the boy.

Having heard Bahm's voice, Elka started thinking. 'Jesus came to do away with evil spirits', Bahm had said. 'He came to release us from their power. If you receive Jesus, He will set you free from the spirit's binding cord. But you must choose either Jesus or Kworokyam.'

In defense, Elka had explained to Bahm that he was a witchdoctor, and that's what witchdoctors did. Bahm thought that his position as a witchdoctor made no difference. But he said that Elka himself would have to make the choice; he would not urge him to throw over his charms, but he said that when Jesus comes in, Kworokyam must go.

Elka remembered the story from God's Paper, about the man who was tortured by evil spirits. The spirits obeyed Jesus. Where did the spirits go? Into a pack of wild pigs feeding in the mountains.

Elka tried to contact the spirits, but he could not. People were standing outside the witchdoctor's hut calling to Elka,

"Where is the boy," they asked. "Did Kworokyam carry him away?"

Elka tried again and again to contact the spirits, but Bahm's words kept coming back to him – or maybe it was God. Maybe for this reason the spirits refused to come down.

Greatly disturbed by his failure, Elka left the hut. Yukuma was there waiting.

Elka thought it best not say anything about his failure. Turning away from Yukuma's pleading eyes, he said,

"I did not hear them clearly."

The toddler, Malu, was found three days later, his body floating in a backwater of the river.

Elka knew that while thinking thoughts of God, Elka could never exercise Kworokyam's power. God's Paper said that he could not serve both God and Kworokyam. Well, Kworokyam felt that way too. Elka was surely going to have to choose between the two.

In helping Bahm to translate God's Paper, Elka heard, "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he in God", and "There is no fear on love; but perfect love casts out all fear ... we love Him because He first loved us."

Elka began to speak to people in his house about God. "Maybe Jesus is the one we should believe in," he said.

One day while hunting with his brother, he asked, "Why have we caught so much meat? Who is giving us this food? Surely it is God. I think I would like to receive Jesus," Elka said.

“Why do you want to receive Jesus? Asked his brother.

“Just bow your head and close your eyes. I’m going to pray.,” said Elka. And Elka did.

“Father in the Sky, this is Elka. You are good. Father, you have given us this meat. You are a good Father.”

That night he dreamt that he was teaching God’s Paper to people at Yaka Yaka. The next day he told his wife about it.

“Why are you like this?” exclaimed Ahmuri. Why don’t you sing your songs anymore? How do you suppose Kworokyam likes that?”

Elka said nothing. That night Elka dreamed that one like Bahm had appeared before him and said,

“Let go of your sins. Say to Jesus, ‘Come in.’ If you do, He will come in.”

Elka got up early the next morning and told his wife who just said, “Maybe that was God’s spirit.”

He was torn by indecision.

Before others began to stir in their hammocks, he left the big house and strode across the clearing, entering an abandoned field.

“Father in the sky,” he said aloud, “I want to know You. So make yourself known to me forever. I want you to come into the pit of my stomach Father, and make my spirit strong. Here I am Father. I’m a witchdoctor. This is what I am. I’m a bad person too. I get angry with people and I’m sad about those things. Please take out my old

being. You can because your Son died for my badness. Make me a kind person. I want to be like You.”

That afternoon being Sunday, he went to the lesson at Kanashen. “I’m really starting to hear God’s Paper with good ears,” he said to himself, smiling at the happy thought.

Not long after, the people planned a dance with strong drink. Elka told them that if they made strong drink, he would not drink it. Elka told Kron about his decision, and then went to talk about it to his people. Kron went on the radio to report to Bahm in Georgetown that Elka had become a Christian. Elka was now Christ’s witchdoctor!

Chapter 9 Go ahead and die

Elka became an earnest follower of Jesus. His witchcraft tools – the smooth stones, the charms, the tobacco lead, the head dress – now all lay untouched.

If someone came to him for healing, he would say, “I’ll ask our Father in the sky to make you well.”

If they insisted, he would say, “Go and ask Muyuwa to blow on you.”

Inactive, but still a witchdoctor. He would remain one as long as he held on to his basket of charms. He wished to get rid of it but was afraid to take the step. Witchdoctors parted from their witchcraft die. This was a fact, just as it was fact that people died from spirit-

eating. He was a companion of Jesus now, but he knew these things happen. He knew the spirits of evil were real.

“Jesus Christ is greater than any spirit,” Bahm had said. “God is the only good spirit.”

And God’s Paper said too, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

But just as he was gaining confidence, old Machere met his awful death and Elka’s fear returned. Machere was a witchdoctor from upriver who blew over the sick. One day his wife fell ill. He blew on her and tried to save her, but she died. Machere’s charms were useless. After she died, he carried his basket of charms into the forest and threw them away.

“I’ve thrown the old things away. I’ve scattered them so they can never be found,” he said aloud. “If charms could not save my wife from dying, they cannot harm me now.”

But Machere became fearful of what he had done. He became ill and died. As Elka talked over the events with Kron, Kron suggested that it couldn’t be because Machere had thrown away his witchcraft that caused his death, so Elka took courage. Continuing to learn more about God, Elka prayed for guidance and strengthening in his new life.

Elka and Kron planned a games event for the people. They agreed that when all the people were present, it would be a good time for him to publicly hand over his charms to Kron.

Soon the word was out and spread through the tribe – “Elka is going to give up his charms. Who will blow on our sick?”

The people asked witchdoctor Muyuwa to exert his influence.

“Why are you going to do that?” Muyuwa asked. “A witchdoctor never stops being a witchdoctor, unless he wants to be dying.”

“But I have received Jesus,” Elka said. “For this reason I want to throw away my charms. I won’t die. God will protect me.”

“Why don’t you just save one charm?” asked Muyuwa.

“If I even hold back one charm it will be bad to God. So I want to give them all up, and all my sin.”

When Muyuwa failed to dissuade Elka, the people turned to Yakuta as their last hope in changing their leader’s mind.

“He will listen to his brother,” some of them told Yakuta.

But Yakuta could not dissuade Elka. Elka was not entirely sure what would happen to him, but his faith was stronger than his fears. He had put himself in God’s hands. What was to happen to him was up to God.

The games day arrived. The men participated in wrestling, tug of war and target shooting with arrows. The women provided food. There was no sour alcoholic drink. The missionaries had taught them to make unfermented sweet drink using sugar cane. For Elka, the games were a time of new insight. He saw that his people could be happy without drunkenness and gluttony and without paying homage to evil spirits.

The games went on for four days, and finally came the time for Elka to give up his charms. Kron and the people waited under the mango tree while Elka went to fetch his basket of charms. He would give them to Kron and Kron would dispose of them in a place unknown to Elka.

“Father ins the sky,” Elka prayed, “Because of you I am doing this. Make my brothers and sisters and my mothers and fathers and uncles all to see that You are strong and because I am obeying You, You will fix me fine. That is all Father.”

Elka’s wife Ahmuri knew she could not hold Elka back. She was convinced he would die.

Elka moved towards the waiting crowd. All eyes were on him.

“You’re going to die now,” came the voice of Muyuwa.

Elka, now standing beneath the tree, took the basket from under his arm and held it firmly in both hands. He looked first at it and then at the people. As long as he kept them he held a power over the people, and over the spirits. Now he was relinquishing it to the One to whom it belonged.

Elka turned to the people. “I’m trusting God,” he said. “I don’t want to be taken up with Kworokyam anymore.”

Elka passed the basket to Kron. It was all over in one motion.

Kron spoke to the group. “Elka is no longer a witchdoctor,” he said. “Don’t ask him to come and blow on you. Ask him to come and pray to God for you.”

Kron said that he would take the basket to America, “but not so that I can become a witchdoctor,” he added. He would take Elka’s charms to his country as a testimony to the Christians there, that one former witchdoctor in the jungle had become a faithful companion of Jesus.

Chapter 10 Blowing without stones

The scene under the mango tree stayed fresh in the minds of all the people. They saw that Elka did not drown in the river the next day, nor was he torn to shreds by a jaguar in the jungle. But the people still believed that eventually Elka would meet his death at the hand of the spirits.

Elka on the other hand was not afraid. He knew that he was a child of God and filled with faith. But his wife was not happy that Elka had given up his charms and his four children were afraid that their father would die.

“If our children die,” said Ahmuri, I will not be your wife.”

Elka knew that he was losing his wife, but giving up his charms was not the only reason. Yakuta, his younger brother, had thrown enticing smiles at Ahmuri, and soon she was responding.

Elka had said that God’s Paper tells us that it is not right for a woman to be like this with a man who is not her husband. But Ahmuri did not want anything to do with God’s Paper.

The people noticed that the bush hogs, their favourite source of meat, no longer came into their area, and they blamed Elka for giving up his charms that controlled them. But Elka was resolute on

his stance and would not return to witchcraft. He saw sorcery as evil and something to be left alone, for witchcraft had stood between him and God. Now God was the one to stand between him and the power of evil spirits. Elka stood firm, but he stood alone among his people in faith in Christ. His stand for God – and the very fact that so far, he was still alive and able to take such a stand – was an endless source of wonder for his people.

The people attended Sunday lessons at Kanashen. They had a willingness to be taught. They would listen to the teaching and take it into their minds, without applying it to their lives. They found no problem in thinking of God as a spirit. The evil spirits lived within them and ruled; so could God's spirit. In fact, Jesus became to them another spirit, added to the unlimited number around them.

Bahm's teaching emphasized the contract in the spiritual world. It must be Jesus or the spirits. If He comes in, the evil one must go. Little by little some effects could be seen. There were no child killings. A few persons were beginning to feel uneasy in their old ways – a least, at times. The people readily accepted the love and kindness of the missionaries and Elka, their new Christian leader, but the message of sin and salvation disturbed them. It was disrupting their ways of vengeance, gossip, sensuality – ways which they preferred to live. For this reason, opposition to the message mounted, though little of this was in the open.

Muyuwa, the witchdoctor, saw medicine as the divider. His cures were a part of his belief in spirits; the missionaries had made it plain that their medicine was an instrument in the hand of God. The

two medicines were rivals. Muyuwa urged people to avoid Achi's pills and to hide when she came with her shing needle.

Learning to read was something new that all who took part in enjoyed. Bahm taught the men, and Kron took over when Bahm was away. Achi taught the women. With Elka there was a deep appreciation of his new learning. The day came when he decided he should help teach his people.

In the big communal house at Yaka Yaka he set up a learning centre, complete with blackboard. He taught them to read truths from God's Paper. Before calling them together he was careful to ask God to cause them to get ears, or understanding. He often started his lessons by speaking of the world of nature with which they were all so familiar.

"Look, the ground is what God made," he would say, "and the sun and the moon, the stars, the sky and the rocks."

From the world around them he would go on to talk about Jesus, the life He lived and His death on the cross. Sometimes Elka spoke of the badness in the Wai Wai people and the trouble it caused. "If a snake gets in your house, do you keep looking at it or do you pick it up and play with it? No, you kill it. Sin is like a snake. But Jesus can help you get rid of sin. Let Him life you out of it."

Elka spent much time with the missionaries, and wanted to be more like them. He wanted some of the things they had, like an outboard motor for his canoe, a lamp in his house, and he wanted to exchange his loin cloth for shorts. Bahm and Kron tried to explain that they did not want to make the Wai Wai dependent on the

white man's world. If they should leave, how would the Indians continue to get the goods they had come to depend on?

Elka had a great appetite for the translated sections of God's Paper, which he read and re-read. He also learned to write. He took every opportunity to witness for Christ.

Muyuwa's opposition to the gospel was becoming more apparent. He would not allow the sick people of Deep Eddy to be taken to Kanashen, and this did not put him in good favour with the people, most of whom had seen the value of the shots and the pills. Two old women died the same day, one of them being his wife. Soon afterward his grandson became deathly sick. Muyuwa refused to let the boy go to Achi.

"I can blow on him and make him well," he said. For days he blew and invoked the spirits to come down. The boy was no better. One day the boy appeared to be dying in his mother's arms. Finally, after exhausting all the techniques at his command, Muyuwa said he would go for help. He paddled towards Elka's village. If he could persuade Elka to go back with him and work the witchcraft in which he had once been so skilled, not only would Kworokyam prevail, but also, in the process, he would tear Elka from the God he had chosen.

It was nearly dark when he pulled up at the landing, and told Elka what he wanted.

"I don't want to be blowing on people anymore," said Elka. "It's bad for me. I gave away my charms, and because I did, I don't want to blow."

"You'd better come," said Muyuwa. "If you don't come and my grandchild dies, I'll talk bad about you."

"You'd better go," said Ahmuri, hearing the conversation.

"All right," Elka said, reluctantly. "I'll go and blow on him."

Elka asked Yakuta to come along. They passed Kanashen.

"Why didn't you go to the mission for help?" asked Elk.

"They can't make him well," said Muyuwa.

Muyuwa had chosen to come at a time when Elka was feeling a bit discouraged over his people's attitude towards God. He had given in, and now he was in a world of confusion.

The mother of the boy heard the knocking at the river indicating that Muyuwa was back. She held out hope. Maybe he had brought Kron with a bag of medicine. She was startled and disappointed to see him with Elka and Yakuta.

Muyuwa held up his basket of charms for Elka to use.

"No," said Elka. "I will just use tobacco. I will sing Kworokyam's songs and blow without stones." He had given his word to blow and would not go back on it, but to ease his conscience he refused the use of a stone. It was his method of not going back all the way.

The boy's mother could not believe what she was seeing and hearing. What was Elka doing?

Elka blew, *koosh, koosh*, and sang his old incantations through most of the night. One after another the songs came back that he had once used with such success.

He sang to all the animal spirits he once knew, except for the pig. He did not feel like calling on it. Nor could he face calling on the spirit that could transport him to the sky.

Once a song was sung, he was filled with guilt and shame. He wanted to pray for the child; but he felt he could not both pray and sing songs to Kworokyam, and he had promised to sing and blow.

He blew until morning. Then he stood up. "Come brother," he said to the sleeping Yakuta. "It's time to go."

Muyuwa stirred from his napping. He looked at the boy and then at Elka.

"That's all the blowing," said Elka. "Now maybe he won't die."

The boy was still and hot in his mother's arms.

Muyuwa was grateful. If the boy lived, it would be to Kworokyam's credit. And people would say that old Muyuwa wasn't so bad after all, refusing missionary medicine and not praying to Jesus. And they would know that Elka had *blown* on the boy.

Elka decided not to go back by the river but preferred to walk with Yakuta on the trail through the forest. The trail was long and hard, and Elka had had no sleep. He was nearly exhausted when they reached the edge of the Kanashen clearing.

"Wait," Elka said, putting out his hand to hold Yakuta back. He did not want Kron to know that he had spent the night at Deep Eddy, so circled around and entered the it from the path that came up from Yaka Yaka. But Kron saw them.

Where did you come from? Said Kron.

"We came to see you," Elka said.

"What do you have there?" asked Kron.

"Just some bananas,"

"Where did you get them?" Kron was enjoying practicing the language.

Elka hesitated. To say Yaka Yaka would be a lie. To say Deep Eddy would reveal an act more despicable than lying.

"Yaka Yaka," he said finally.

Back in the big house at Yaka Yaka, Ahmuri asked her husband if he had blown on the sick boy.

Tears welled up in his eyes. "Oh how bad I see it now. I guess others will come and ask me to blow on their children when they get sick."

He turned aside. In a dark edge of the house, he poured out his broken spirit to God. He asked God for forgiveness and asked Him to make him strong, to obey Him and not people, whatever they may ask him to do. He wept bitter tears for hours. He felt cleansed and thanked God for pardoning him.

At deep Eddy, the boy did not get better. The boy was critically ill with malaria. Bahm had heard about Muyuwa's determination not to let the boy have medicine. Usually, the missionaries did not try to persuade the people to take medicine unless they submitted willingly. This time, however Bahm was sure that if left unattended the boy would die.

"If you want your boy to live," he said to the father, "Bring him to Kanashen."

The father did so and with the missionary medicine the fever broke and the boy began to gain strength. Muyuwa's plan had failed, and his place with the people was further eroded. They criticized him more than ever for keeping the child from the medicine for so long. The old sorcerer was broken. The people seemed content that he was.

Elka recovered from his set back. Gradually his pride and lust for material things were supplanted by a growing love for God and for his own people.

The people were surprised that Elka had not been killed by the spirits, but still believed that Kworokyam would eventually take him. One day old Kurum saw a vision of an anaconda which he believed was coming to eat Elka's spirit. The following Sunday, Elka and his people were on the river, paddling to Knashen for the afternoon lesson. Suddenly a snake appeared and thrashed about in the water. The people were frightened – was it the snake spirit coming to get Elka now? Elka prayed that God would quiet the little

fear that he had. Paddling swiftly, they reached the landing unharmed. They never saw the snake again.

Scarcely had the memory of the anaconda been brushed aside, one morning someone on the river shouted, "Wild pigs!"

The bush hogs, gone for so long, had come back. Not since Elka gave their spirit worship, had they been sighted. Now a large pack of sharp-tooth swine were swimming across the river.

"Wild pigs! They're coming to kill Elka, their old master! ... They're coming to eat you Elka!" the people cried. At last, they were sure his time had come.

Chapter 11 Shoot first, then eat

Elka dashed from the workhouse to the main building and grabbed his gun. He bounded to the doorway, picked up a canoe paddle, and sprinted towards the river. At the smell of the pigs the dogs went nearly wild. Elka heard neither the dogs nor the people. His ears were only for the grunting of the hogs. To kill one and eat it, that was all that mattered. Elka jumped into his canoe and paddled towards the pigs. His dog followed him into the water. But in the middle of the river, the pigs turned back, fleeing towards the bank. Elka pushed on towards them. Whether Kworokyam's or not, they had no power to harm him. Jesus Christ had broken that. By killing and eating he would prove to his people, once and for all, that the spirits could not harm one protected by God.

Old Kurum, excited by the idea of a pig hunt, decided to join in. following Elka in another canoe, with his bow and arrow. The pigs

now had reached the opposite bank, assisted by the tangled vines which gave them a foothold for climbing up the slippery bank. Moments later, Elka grasped the same vines to pull himself up to the floor of the forest. His dog reached the bank with him and struggled up the slope.

“Don’t go into the forest alone!” those on the landing called out.

Elka disappeared with the dog behind the bush curtain that lined the river.

“Why are you coming to kill us?” the pigs had asked him once in a dream. He had no answer, for then his spirit was bound to theirs. But today he did. He was free, and it was in order to prove to his people that he was free. He pushed on harder and faster. Sharp, jagged-edged leaves scratched his legs and body, sometimes even drawing blood, but he did not notice. He was concerned only with killing and eating wild pigs.

Elka knew from the agitated tone of the pigs, that the pack was surrounding the dog. The pigs would leap and catch the dog by the throat if Elka did not get there in time to shoot. One of the pigs turned away from the dog to Elka. Sniffing the air, he eyed his new opponent. Elka, in turn, kept his eye steadily on the pig. Quickly and quietly, he placed a shell into the chamber of his gun. He raised the gun to sight at his straining enemy. The big fellow sprang. Elka squeezed the trigger. The explosion reverberated through the forest. The pigs turned and ran – all but Elka’s big fellow, that lay dead in front of him.

Two of the fleeing pigs had turned back, seemingly to settle their score with the dog. Elka quickly reloaded, took careful aim and fired. A second pig was dead. The remaining pig, separated from its fellows, was confused, first running in circles and then cowering among the roots of a tree. Panting and wheezing, old Kurum summoned up the last of his strength and drew his arrow. His arrow went into the cheek of the animal. It was an easy and fatal shot.

Kurum shouldered his own pig, (something that a witchdoctor had not been allowed to do). Elka carried one, and Ahmuri carried the other. She was rather proud of her husband. She had been afraid, like the others, that the pig would kill him. But how brave he had been to taunt Kworokyam and to run after the bush hogs alone.

Elka then butchered the hogs, another chore no witchdoctor ever performed. He divided up the meat among the villagers, who accepted it fearfully, but astonished at the turn of fate that had allowed him to kill the pigs and live.

In cooking the meat, Ahmuri was somewhat afraid, but nevertheless, filled with admiration too. Maybe God had protected Elka from the hogs. And maybe, just maybe, God would continue to protect Elka.

Chapter 12 Greater is He that is in you

The women prepared the feast and Elka called all to eat.

“Let’s sing ‘Everything is good at my Father’s place’” said Elka, and all sang.

He's stronger than any evil spirit," said Elka. "He's stronger in me than Kworokyam is in you. Jesus is in me now. That's why I am living." He told them to close their eyes while he prayed, and not one eye remained open.

"It's true that you have received Jesus," said a young man. "He does protect you. If it weren't so you would have surely died."

They ate the meal until it was gone. One man paused on the way back to his hammock.

"Elka is telling the truth," he said. "I guess Kworokyam was thrown today." The others nodded. By killing and eating the forbidden pig meat, Elka dealt Kworokyam a blow from which he was never to recover. Until that moment the people had listened to the teaching of God's Paper, but fear and indifference kept them from believing. Now they saw that God was greater than the evil spirits, that Christ had conquered Kworokyam. Elka's brave exercise of faith provided the truth.

The patient teaching of the missionaries through the years, and the example of their way of life, had begun to take hold. And now the love and life of Elka and his growing leadership were having their effect.

Elka now showed more tenderness towards Ahmuri. He no longer looked upon her as a servant; through the eyes of his new faith, he saw her as a loved one. He cut across custom by assisting her in chopping and carrying wood and by minding the children when she was busy.

It was God's Paper that most helped Elka to grow as a companion of Jesus. The words it spoke were now penetrating to his tribesmen too. Ahmuri was one of the first to confess Christ. Fearfully and resentfully, she had long watched the change in her husband. Slowly and almost against her will she saw him as strong and kind. Often she sat with him as he read from his Wai Wai Scriptures, and she took new interest in learning to read.

Elka's younger brother Yakuta began to bring his carved stool more often to Elka's desk. So did other friends from Big Falls. For half a day or more they would sit at his side and listen to him read and study portions of God's Paper. But when Yakuta heard about David's adultery he seemed to close his ears. He was proud that he had taken the wives of other men. He also lived in fear. Only Elka, of all the Wai Wai seemed to have no fear. Kron and Bahm also talked with Yakuta, pointing out that the sin he seemed so proud of was displeasing to God.

On the trail from Kanashen to Yaka Yaka one day, Yakuta decided to pray.

"Father in the Sky," he began, "I am Yakuta. Why am I the way I am? I am very afraid. I would like you to take away my fear, and maybe my badness, if I have any. That is all, Father."

But his prayer of repentance was not sincere.

"Saying words is not enough," Elka explained. Elka helped his brother see that it was mostly his sin which kept him away from God. "Let God take away your sin and He will take away your fear too."

Shedding tears as he bowed his head, Yakuta prayed, this time in contrition.

“Come into the pit of my stomach, Jesus. Take away the badness that is there.”

The rest of that week the people of Yaka Yaka encountered a Yakuta they had never seen before. On Sunday morning at a gathering in the village workhouse they were astounded to hear his testimony.

“You know me as one who takes the wives of others,” he said. “That’s the way I was until I received Jesus a few days ago.”

Yakuta had truly changed. Yakuta continued to sit on one side of Elka to learn, and Mawasha from Big Falls sat on the other.

More and more people wanted to learn about God’s Paper. Kron and Elka started men’s classes at Yaka Yaka and later there were women leaders who ran a women’s group. By 1956 new comers were arriving almost every week to the men’s and women’s classes, making public confessions of their faith in Jesus. The front row of benches, near the teacher, was reserved for those who wanted to declare they had become companions of Jesus.

Believers were still few compared with those who held to the old way. In the Yaka Yaka house, filthy talk, stealing and wife-trading continued. Because of this, Elka was feeling the need to give his family something better. His mind was made up. He would build a house just for his own family. Elka would then try to explain that he did not want their bad talk to reach the ears of his children, and he

wanted a place where he could be alone with his family when they wanted to talk to God.

The new house, round like the communal house, stood half-a dozen paces from the main house. The door Elka had made from sawed planks was ajar. Traffic in and out was heavy. People wanted to sit by Elka’s blackboard to learn letters.

One day, one of Elka’s daughters was carrying a firebrand stick from the main house to their own house to light their fire, and was careless. The walls of the main house caught fire, and was soon ablaze. The people and pets managed to escape, but the house was destroyed. The fire spread to the work house which was also destroyed. But Elka’s own house remained intact.

“Why didn’t my house burn?” Elka later asked Bahm. “Did God send an angel to guard it?”

“Maybe He did,” replied Bahm. There seemed no other explanation for the miraculous escape.

The big house was rebuilt, but some of those who had seen Elka’s house spared were impressed that God had preserved it. They had a new respect for privacy. Slowly, others followed Elka in putting up their own houses. It was the beginning of a new closeness within families. As they moved to their own homes, the Christians among them were better able to apply the teachings of God’s Paper to their lives. Once more God had vindicated Elka’s daring to stand alone.

Chapter 13 Trial of faith for Elka

Further trials were in store for Elka in the days following the great fire. A wave of sickness enveloped his family. First, Elka suffered many large, painful boils. Then one of his wife's teeth became infected and bled dangerously for a day and a night. Then a daughter fell ill. Elka went to Achi for medication during a torrential downpour.

"Achi, my girl is hot!" You must do something."

In her medicine room, Achi took the child. She prayed. Then she reached into her medicine box and drew out some pills. At home, Ahmari's faith was stretched so thin that it nearly broke.

"I told you we should have never given up our taboos," she was ready to said.

But now, as before, she had no opportunity to say it. The girl got well.

Then came the sickness of their only son, Kulanow. The little seven-year-old struggled to breathe. He wheezed and panted. He cried and complained of pain in his chest. His heart pounded fast and hard.

Since Achi was away, he asked Bahm to stick him. Bahm gave him a shot of medicine and suggested that they stay in an unoccupied leaf shelter at the edge of the mission so as to be near medical care, should more be needed. A second shot was given next day, but Kulanow was no better. He seemed likely to die. Bahm got on the radio to Kron, who was then in Georgetown. He asked for a doctor

to be sent by charter plane, but there was no plane available. The best Kron could do was to describe the boy's condition to a doctor. The symptoms spelled out severe asthma. The medical advice was relayed over the air. While Elka prayed, Bahm tried to give capsules the doctor had prescribed. But the boy could not swallow the capsules.

When Ahmuri saw this, she took Elka aside.

"Maybe we should blow on a bowl of water so that it could be turned into medicine, and give it to him," she said.

"I don't know, Elka replied doubtfully.

"But it's the only way to make medicine," said Ahmuri.

"No," said Elka. "I don't blow anymore."

"Then you'd let our son die? Don't you love him?"

Elka went to Bahm's side to try and help get the pills down the boy's throat. It was no use.

Then, rather hesitantly, Elka said, "Does God's Paper say anything about blowing on a bowl of water to turn it into medicine?" he asked.

Bahm's face clouded. Elka knew the answer and wished he hadn't have spoken.

Bahm's answer to his question came quietly and firmly.

"Blowing is sorcery. God's paper speaks against witchcraft."

Elka's faith should be in the will of God, not the life of his boy. It was a hard doctrine to explain to the father of a boy near death.

"God doesn't always give us our desires," Bahm told Elka. God is not able to be manipulated like the spirits. God is to be trusted to give His best to His people. This is not so of Kworokyam."

As Bahm spoke, Elka recalled how he used to work and work to persuade Kworokyam to reverse his evil just a little. Not so with God, Bahm was saying. "God longs to do good for us. He gave His own Son for our good. He always wants to give us His best. We must trust that He will – whether it is life or death for our children.

During the night, the rainiest and stormiest of the year, Elka sent Ahmuri to call Bahm out of his sleep. Bahm and his wife Ferochi dashed to the hut through the driving rain. The boy was worse. Elka looked at Bahm and saw despair on his face. But Ferochi was not ready to give up.

"Let's try the capsules again," she insisted. This time, with much time and struggle, she managed to get five capsules into the boy.

"Father," Bahm began to pray. "If the medication works, thank You. If it doesn't, we can do no more."

The missionaries left. The rain passed. Slowly, ever so slowly, the dawn came. Before the sun rose, Bahm came hurrying towards the hut.

"Elka! God showed me a verse this morning that I feel is just for you. It's in Psalm 21: "He asked you for life, and You gave it to him..." How is Kulanow?"

"A little better," Elka replied.

The boy had relaxed. His breathing was easier and he was able to take a new dose of medicine with little effort.

"I prayed during the night," Elka said to Bahm. "I said, 'Father, if You want to take my child, how sad, but You go ahead and take him. If You take him, I'll still love You. I won't give You up. I'm giving my son to You'"

Chapter 14 Trial of faith for the Wai Wai

Elka was concerned about the Wai Wai who still lived across the high mountains on the Mapuera River. He sent his brother Yakuta to invite those on the other side to come and stay at Kanashen to learn about God's way.

Among the first group to arrive back with Yakuta was Mafolio, the happy old witchdoctor who had inspired Elka to serve Kworokyam. Elka was glad to see him. Mafolio was as ugly as ever, but his face wore the same bright smile. Elka told him how Christ had triumphed over Kworokyam.

"Working good charms is not enough, Grandfather," he said.

Mafolio looked at him quizzically. How could Elka make the old sorcerer understand that God was the source of goodness?

The people on the other side of the mountains had been struck by calamity. The most recent was an attack by a jaguar which had decapitated a young boy of the village. Someone shot the jaguar

with an arrow, but only injured its shoulder. “He will come back to avenge the injury,” they said.

They believed that witchdoctor Muyuwa had sent the spirit of the cat to kill the boy.

“Muyuwa will kill us all,” someone protested. “He will tell the cat to kill us one by one while we are sleeping in our hammocks.”

Another Christian convert, Kirifaka, arrived and listened to their story.

“Don’t call on the spirits for revenge,” he told them. “Muyuwa is getting ears about God, and you need to know God too. He wants to help you. Go over the mountains with me and Elka will give you ears about God.”

After much muttering, all but a handful went with Kirifaka. On their way back they stopped in another large village and Kirifaka persuaded the people there to go with them to Kanashen.

The sun shone brightly. Yellow butterflies fluttered over the landscape. Some of the canoes stopped at the Yaka Yaka landing. First the men, then the women climbed the footholds in the bank. In two single files they walked from the points of debarkation into the mission yard, coming together under the big mango tree.

Elka was there waiting for them. Looking splendid in paint and feathers, he looked every inch a chief. He wore khaki shorts in place of a loin cloth. Arms folded across his chest, he surveyed the newcomers as they seated themselves before him, picked out a number of acquaintances and smiled at them all.

“It is good that you have come,” said Elka. “You will see us as different ones,” he continued. “We want you to become God’s children. I will teach you. Mawasha will teach you. So will Bahm and Kron, Kirifaka and Yakuta.

He told the people that they could stay here so that they could learn. The new people found their surroundings strange. Nothing was stranger than the mission houses standing on legs.

Elka, Yakuta and Kirifaka taught groups of newcomers about creation and the death and resurrection of Jesus. Before the next full moon came, a leader of the Shedeu tribe – a man who had killed children in his own country – bowed in repentance to God.

Elka urged all the Shedeu people to attend the Sunday lessons at Kanashen. They were astounded to hear him say that a Wai Wai witchdoctor was throwing away his charms. That witchdoctor was Chirimoso, who, years before, had seemed likely to become the first Christian Wai Wai, but turned away after the death of his young wife. Now he was a follower of Jesus.

Muyuwa was the next to become a Christian. Muyuwa came to Elka to acknowledge that Jesus was more powerful than Kworokyam. He moved to Yaka Yaka to be nearer to Elka, this one who seemed so close to God. One Sunday he brought his basket of charms and threw them away into the river, while the Wai Wai stood around the landing in silent awe.

The number of companions of Jesus increased to the point where Kron said that it was time they chose their own spiritual leaders.

Elka, Kirifaka, Mawasha and Yakuta were selected unanimously by the Christian people.

One day, Kron came down with a cold, lost his voice so could not preach at the Sunday meeting. Elka preached his first Sunday sermon, replacing Kron. He told them about Daniel, and how he did not fear even in the face of his enemies. He contrasted Daniel's faithfulness and contrasted this to his own faithlessness when his son was very sick. He confessed that he had blown on his son, and had deceived Kron by entering the mission as if he had come from Yaka Yaka.

As he confessed, Elka looked at Kron, who sat dumbfounded at this revelation, and was amazed at Elka's ability to speak with such a ring of conviction in his voice. From that day on, Elka and the elders became the new Sunday preachers.

Others who had learned to read studied the translated Scriptures and occasionally preached. One day, one of them told in his sermon how bad the Wai Wai had been before they knew God. He said he had been in a group cutting trees with Bahm and that they had cut down a giant tree with the intention of killing him.

Again, Kron was dumbfounded by a confession.

Elka well remembered the attempted murder. How changed the Wai Wai were! Looking around he picked out those who had been involved. Most of them were now companions of Jesus.

The Wai Wai were beginning to know a love based on giving, not getting. Like Elka, the men had begun to help their hard-working

wives. In turn, the wives smiled more often and attended to their work with less grumbling.

They were also learning that faith did not depend on material gain. Yakuta once said in his preaching, "God is the one who gives us our meat. Sometimes He doesn't. I love him just the same."

Teams of men went to villages up and down the river to conduct services between Sundays. Elka brought the people of Yaka Yaka together every daybreak for singing and prayer. Sometimes days of prayer were called. The old fears of the jungle had dissolved, not only for the Christian Wai Wai, but also for those who were not yet believers, but had been influenced by the Christians.

The numbers on Kron's calendar read "1958". That year severe sickness – Achi called in 'Asian flu' – came with the heavy rains. One of the first victims was Mafolio, who died within a few days of contracting it. He had practiced no witchcraft since coming to Kanashen and some believed he had laid aside his witchcraft to become a companion of Jesus. The flu waned sooner than Elka dared to hope, and took the lives of only eight people.

The day came when the Wai Wai erected a new building – God's House. It stood at the edge of the mission settlement, round like a Wai Wai house and large enough to seat more than 100 worshipers. At the completion of the church, the first baptism took place. Kron had taught them what God's Paper said about believers' baptism. Elka agreed with Kron that only those who showed Christ in their lived should be baptized. Many followed in believers' baptism.

Not long after, a new disaster struck the Wai Wai. One Sunday, about a year after the flu epidemic, Achi was called to Kirifaka's house at Kanashen. A man was there who had been sick for a week downriver. Achi looked at his infected eyes and throat, and her heart sank. She knew she was facing her first case of measles among the Indians, and she was alone at the mission station, for the other missionaries were away temporarily. This disease had wiped out the entire tribe of Taruma Indians, neighbours to the Wai Wai.

"You're going back to your camp downriver," Achi insisted to the sick man, "and I'm going with you."

As she left the house the next morning, she met several people coming along the path.

"Don't go to Kirifaka's house," she warned. "Don't go near it. If you do, you'll get itchy and hot."

Achi told Elka to separate the people and tell them not to mix with one another. Elka did not follow Achi's orders. As Achi was about to get into her canoe, she came across groups that were gathering together.

"You go back to your own villages and stay there," she directed. "Unless you get sick... then come to Kanashen right away."

Achi went on with her sick passenger, hoping that he would be her only patient. He was not. In a few days she had to move back to the medicine room under her house at Kanashen. The huts that Elka built filled up with folk complaining of headache, sore throat and

itching ears. Strong men and babies came down with measles. Fevers burned high. A terrible weakness came over the most able, who lay languidly in their hammocks. The ever-present threat of chest complications, so dangerous to Indians of low resistance, caused Achi much fear and strain. She radioed for serum from the United States.

Would the people remain faithful to the Father in the Sky to whom they prayed, asking that He make them well? If people died, would the Wai Wai want to go back to for the old ways of witchcraft? Elka understood that God did not always heal. For him this had been settled when he cradled his son in his arms, thinking the boy would die, and found himself willing to accept that life and death were in God's hands. But did the people understand it? Would their faith surmount the suffering that was coming on them?

As some started to mend, others got sick. One day the radio brought word that the serum had come. It was being held in Georgetown, however, because it was the wrong type; somehow an emergency order had been garbled.

Elka knew that disaster threatened. But he knew too, that there was another resource, one he turned to in times of distress, as Achi did now.

"Father," she prayed, laying her burden before God, "If our people, especially our babies, are to live, You will have to be the one to keep them alive."

Miraculously, the disease abated – without the loss of a single life. When word finally came that the right serum had been on hand

after all, the emergency had already passed. The absence of medicine seemed to stress their complete dependence on God. The faith of the Wai Wai had passed its hardest test. They remembered that the Taruma, (who had been wiped out by the measles), had turned away God's messenger a few years before they died. The Wai Wai were grateful they had received a faith strong enough to bring them through any crisis.

Chapter 15 A slow uncertain process

As the faith of the Wai Wai grew wider and deeper, they began to think less about themselves and more about other tribes in the jungle around them. Kron had said to them, that just as the missionaries had come to the Wai Wai with the good news about God, so the Wai Wai should carry it to others. They had made a start on reaching the people groups close by, people very like themselves. But there were strange tribes farther away, people they did not know, or people they had feared, who still lived without hope. These people, as the Wai Wai once were, still lived in a world of fear, suspicion, hatred and killing. They needed to hear the words from God's Paper, and who would tell them if the Wai Wai people did not go to them?

Mistoken, who was preparing the way, sent word that remote regions of northwest Brazil were being opened for missions. This news led Bahm and Kron to make plans for the first trip to the Waica people. Bahm asked for Wai Wai volunteers.

For the Wai Wai it was a hard choice. They would have to leave their familiar land, travel across the savannas they hated, pass

through the strange towns of white man's civilization, and risk entering another forest to meet people they did not know. What might happen to them along the way? Would they ever return?

But Elka and Mawasha had a confident faith, and they had learned what God could do if they followed His way. They volunteered to go with Bahm.

On the day of departure all went out to the new landing strip recently cleared on a jungle hillside near Kanashen. The 'sky canoe' landed and Elka and Mawasha were on their first flight. They exclaimed in amazement to see the forest spread out beneath them, then over the savannas, and finally landing at a place where white men were waiting. They traveled for the first time in a car for a few days until they reached a different forest. Then they journeyed on foot and by canoe far up the tributary of the Rio Branco River in Brazil. The rapids and waterfalls were treacherous, and once they lost their food supply when their canoe overturned. Razor grass cut their legs as they slashed new trails, and their bodies were covered with bites of flies and mosquitoes. They were sometimes threatened by ambush by hostile Indians, and were in frequent danger of being caught in the crossfire of warring tribes.

Finally the party reached the land of the Waica. They feared that they might meet suspicion, or even violence, but the people welcomed them to their small scattered settlements. The tribe helped Bahm, Elka and Mawasha to learn their language, and many came to listen when Sunday lessons began.

Elka and Mawasha worked hard during their stay with the Waica. They laboured to hack out an airstrip out of the jungle growth. They led services and held prayer meetings. In their unfamiliar surroundings, Elka and Mawasha were often homesick and sometimes ill. But they remained steadfast through the long weeks, never complaining or shirking the task for which they had volunteered. Elka sent back letters to his own people, asking them to pray for the Waica.

The Waica language was a difficult one, and the missionaries had not been able to say much that the people understood. But by the time they left, after being absent for four months, they felt that they had made a beginning in sowing the first seeds of the Gospel.

When Elka and Mawasha arrived at Yaka Yaka, they found that their fields had been planted for them by fellow tribesmen. The people had chosen that way to express appreciation for the work they had done. Elka had many stories to tell about the Waica Indians and about his experiences in the white man's settlements.

Although Elka dreamed of ways to reach other Indian tribes, he still had to deal with problems among his own people

Most Wai Wai professed to be companions of Jesus, but many of them continued in their old ways. Others weakened after a strong start in the faith. There were problems among the youth, who often didn't follow the ways of Christian parents. To help bridge the gap, Achi started a Sunday School and morning devotions each day at Kanashen and Yaka Yaka. This was followed by another new venture: a day school.

The Wai Wai tribe grew bigger. The Wai Wai were wanting more things that the white man had – white flour instead of cassava, shorts and dresses. But these things were beyond the reach of the Wai Wai economy.

The day came when all the missionaries were absent from Kanashen for a six-week period. For Elka and his fellow leaders it proved a testing time of their leadership. And it was in this period that Elka performed the first church wedding among the Wai Wai. The practice of having multiple wives was still common. But the wedding ceremony had a great impact.

“Brother, do you want a wife?” asked Elka, to the husband-to-be. “Your answer is to God.”

“Yes,” said the young man.

Elka asked the same of the girl.

“That's the way God wants it to be – a man and a woman to be husband and wife,” Elka said, addressing the congregation. To the couple he said, “Talk to God together. Don't scold one another. Brother, when your wife is sick, don't scold her for being weak. Sister, when your husband does not bring back meat from the forest, don't scold him. Brother, do not be concerned about anyone else. You cannot let her go, even if she is bad. Both of you should learn to make God's Paper talk to you clearly. Later on, God will give you children. When you see them, say 'God is good to us!'”

He sealed their simple vows with prayer. This marriage ceremony performed by Elka lifted it from the haphazard custom it had been into a part of Christian living.

Chapter 16 Let us go far

Carrying their new-found faith to other people had become a challenge to the Wai Wai. This far, there had been many who had volunteered to go. Elka and his fellow elders urged their people not to hold dear their homes and fields or even their families, but to be ready to leave them all if God should call them to go tell another tribe about their Father in the Sky. In sermons and informal talks, they spoke of other tribes living as they used to live – in continual fear of evil spirits, ‘talking bad’ about each other, suspicious, truthful only when convenient, killing by club or sorcery.

“How would we be if it wasn’t for the missionaries?” Elka would say to his people. “How would we be if Jesus had never come from his home to earth to save us? Jesus came so far. So let us go far too. He died for us. We haven’t yet died for Him. We should be willing to die for Jesus.”

By 1962, the Wai Wai had been on many missionary trips in all directions. A few of them were with the white missionaries but most of them were on their own. Some Wai Wai travelers ran out of food. Others got sick on the trail. Mawasha and Yakuta were two of the seven elders chosen to head up the missionary teams. Elka, as chief, stayed in Yaka Yaka and continued to teach. Achi, along with two more white missionaries, Jean and Kitty, stayed at Kanashen to

work with Elka after Bahm and Kron had left. They continued to teach and take care for people.

The demands on Elka were heavy. Although he longed to go in mission trips himself, there were some duties that only a chief could perform. He knew that God was calling him to be at home and look after his people. He did not mind; this was his life – to serve his people.