

A New Home



After the Chaplain and the others left the room, Molly and Eban were alone for the first time in a number of days. There was no time for intimacy - only a brief hug and kiss before Alex knocked on the door to tell them that extra tables were being set up for some of the overflow guests.

Invitations to the wedding and reception had been rather informal, the only written ones were to people who had to come from a distance. Not only did Molly and Eban invite people, but Alex let it be known that there was plenty of space for all those who wished Molly and Eban well. The food was planned to served buffet style, and seating was more or less "picnic" style at long trestle tables.

A separate table was set up for the bridal party near the recently constructed Altar, and a space had been cleared in the center of the hall for dancing. A bar was set up on the verandah as the regular bar had been pressed into service as a food serving platform.

When Molly and Eban re-entered the hall, they circulated amongst the guests who were a varied lot. Deputies and heads of the colonial government were rubbing elbows with members of the Independence Committee, and there were a few visiting officials from the provinces who took the opportunity to meet people they had only had correspondence with in the past.

When the Bridal party was finally assembled, the singing of "God save the King" signaled the start of the official reception. The new flag of New Guinea was proudly displayed beside the flag of Australia and the Union Jack. Alex gave a toast to the new couple, and the audience responded with a rousing "For he's a jolly good fellow" and a loud cheer.

While they were eating, Paul told Eban that he had made arrangements to extend his share of the plantation to Molly and Eban, and had in addition deeded over a tract of land near the Gogol Forest to the couple. The Education Commissioner told Eban that he had been appointed to the committee for planning the new direction for education in the provinces, and Molly was appointed to the committee on the formation of a National archive.

After dinner an orchestra from the base played music for traditional Australian dances, and later on shifted to the recorded music that the Americans had left for the base. Eventually it came to the time for Molly to throw her bouquet, and all the single women waited expectantly to be the chosen one. Pat was lucky (or more skillful) and caught the flowers, to the applause of the crowd.

The couple left the club in a shower of confetti and got into a staff car supplied by Alex and driven by one of the batmen. He took them first to the dorm where Molly picked up her valises, and then to a secluded guest house on Ela beach that was reserved for VIP guests from the mainland.

When Eban carried Molly over the threshold, they found that the rooms had been decorated with flowers, and the pantry stocked with snacks and drinks from the club. After the batman had unloaded their luggage, he informed them he would pick them up in the morning for their flight to Madang, where they would spend their honeymoon.

A note from Alex on the sideboard suggested that they allow Pat and Aileen to pick up the wedding gown and Eban's dress clothes when they tidied up the place after they left. Holding the note down was a chilled bottle of champagne and two glasses.

Molly decided that this would be the perfect time for a moonlight swim and changed into her suit while Eban was hanging up his borrowed finery. They met on the verandah of the house, and raced down to the water's edge and plunged in to the cool surf. Molly watched Eban as he emerged from the water with his black hair glistening in the moonlight. Eban, for his part marveled at the beauty of Molly's body as she stretched out her arms to him.

They embraced a few times and had another splash in the surf and then decided to go back to the house and open the champagne. Eban had turned on the radio to an Australian station, and as they approached the house they could hear a dance tune being played. They went into each other's arms and barely heard the music as they held each other.

Both were still dripping from the surf, when they broke away while Eban popped the cork and poured drinks into the glasses. The drinks were only half finished when they were put down to remove their wet clothes and go into the bedroom where they fell on the bed and were finally alone with each other. "You're beautiful," Molly said as she stroked Eban's hair.

"I never dreamed it would be this good!" Eban replied as he propped up on one elbow and gazed at the length of Molly's body. Their skin was cool as they embraced, and soon passion took over and their love-making was intense and unrestrained. There was no need for more champagne or any other artificial stimulation.

While they were making love, the dance program on the radio had ended and was replaced by the latest Rugby reports. They never even noticed. Later, without dressing,

they went out on the verandah and finished their drinks while bathed in the light of the moon.

The next morning Molly got up and discovered a few eggs in a cooler, and a small frying pan to use on a double hot plate. She started a billy of tea, and when she heard Eban stirring, cooked the eggs and a biscuit to have it ready when Eban appeared. Molly had never worn much makeup and so was as radiant as ever when she greeted Eban.

After breakfast, they hung up the clothes they were going to leave, and checked their valises for what they were going to take with them. Paul had decided to stay on in Moresby and have a holiday, and arranged to have the house ready for Eban and Molly while he was gone. As it was Christmas Holiday, a fortnight stay was planned for both Paul and the Honeymoon couple. The staff at the plantation had been warned to not bother Eban and Molly, and to care of any problems on their own.

Just before noon Alex pulled up to the house in the staff car, and announced that he was ready to take them to the airport for their flight. He mentioned that Molly and Eban had missed a good party, and that half the attendees were probably sleeping off the effects of too much to eat and drink.

When they arrived at the strip, Alex let them off at a makeshift hanger that had a sign on it " New Guinea Airlines". A syndicate had purchased a surplus Dakota, and was flying freight and passengers to all the former military airfields. The pilot had been at the party last night, and greeted Molly and Eban like old friends. After he stowed their baggage, he showed them to some newly padded seats in the cabin and got ready for takeoff.

After a good flight in cloudless skies, they let down at Madang, and were greeted by one of the plantation workers driving the Jeep. In the short time since they had been there before, Madang had changed, with new signs on hangars and buildings indicating private ownership of what had formerly been Military holdings.

New stores were being built in the town, and a sign proclaimed the opening of a branch of the Bank of New South Wales. The Market was being expanded with new thatched sheds being built, and the docks were filled with merchantmen tied up loading and unloading their cargo. Several fishing boats were tied up to the town wharf and people in uniform were outnumbered by people in civilian clothes.

At the Madang Hotel, where they stopped for a drink, a new dining room was opened up off the Lounge and the dock at the lagoon had a new motor launch tied up. When Eban and Molly arrived they were greeted as old friends and soon were served a refreshing drink garnished with fresh pineapple and orange from a nearby grove.

When their drinks were finished they continued their journey to the plantation and soon were able to marvel at how neat and clean the grounds near the house looked. Flowers had been planted, and a grassed area was established near the house. When they went inside, they immediately noticed new throw rugs and some new furniture in the sitting room. The guest room had been transformed and had all the amenities one could desire.

Another toilet had been constructed in the house, and there were obvious signs that one was being constructed outside. A huge cistern had been placed to collect the rainwater, and was obviously almost full. When Molly peeked into the kitchen, she saw that it had been revamped in a more modern manner with even a new kerosine refrigerator.

After they unpacked and changed into more comfortable clothes they sat on the verandah and had tea. Molly was pleased to see that all of the hausbois were wearing the same colour laplaps. At one corner of the verandah there was a large cage with a beautiful Sulphur-Crested cockatoo. Someone had taught the bird to say "Molly", and as she approached, she was enthusiastically greeted. The houseboy took the bird out of his cage and put him on the arm of Molly's chair. "Hello Molly" the bird said, and Molly responded "Hello Cocky." When Molly was in Australia she never was able to have a pet because of

her job and her family responsibilities. She had always been fascinated with birds, as the Red Cross Club had a tame Cockatoo that was the delight of all the soldiers as well as the staff.

The houseboy told Eban that the bird was for Molly if she wanted it and was quite tame to boot! "Oh Eban, let me keep him, please!" Molly said as Eban gave her the message. Molly asked how old the bird was, and was told that he was less than a year old and had always been with children. She picked up Cocky and cuddled him in her arms as he spoke to her in pidgin.

After a walk in the garden they watched the bats start their flight from town as night began to fall. They sat on the verandah for a while, and then went to their room for their second night together as Mr. and Mrs. Edwards. When the manager of the Madang Hotel had greeted her that way, Molly thought "this will take some getting used to." as she turned around to see who "Mrs. Edwards" was. Both were tired after the long day, and managed a satisfactory night of love making as well as a refreshing night's sleep.

The next morning Eban told her that they were going to visit Bilbil, the village where his mother was born. He warned Molly that custom had wives in a very subservient role, and asked Molly to be careful in her relations with the village women. He also asked that she try to limit her talk to the other men, as women in the village customarily did.

The trip to the village was pleasant in the cool of the morning, and when they arrived there, a crowd of men and children gathered around them. The Lului (Eban's uncle) greeted them ceremoniously and then led them to his house near the centre of the village. The women had stopped working on their pot making, and were obviously watching Molly's every move. Finally, Eban started to move away with his uncle, indicating that Molly was to stay with the women as the men talked.

"These are beautiful pots" Molly said in her best pidgin, "The ones in Moresby are very crude compared to these." This opened up a flood of talk as women came closer to show her pots they had made. Molly had dressed, with Ebans advice, in a skirt about as long as a laplap, and was quite comfortable squatting down as the women did. Only a few of the women had been to the market in town and had never had this close a look at a white woman.

Molly's shoes were examined carefully as very few of the women had ever had occasion to wear them. They invited her into the cooking area under the house, and showed her the ingredients in each pot. The pigs that followed the women were treated like pets, except when they got too near the pile of yams near the cookstove.

The children were all fairly well behaved, and kept their distance except when a proud mother called to a child to show him or her to Molly. A few of the boys had attended the Lutheran School at Madang, and one teen-age girl remembered seeing Molly when she visited the school. She proudly showed Molly the sewing machine that the school had loaned to her to use during the Christmas Holiday.

When Molly admired the meri blouse that she had made, both mother and daughter beamed with pleasure. Molly showed them the necklace that Eban had given her, and all the women gathered around to admire it's beauty. Several of the women took the opportunity to unobtrusively touch Molly's hair and run their hands over the fabric of her skirt.

Eban and the Luluai soon returned and the women backed off as he and Molly got back into the jeep to return to town. On the way, Eban stopped at a place overlooking Astrolabe Bay and told Molly of his talk with his uncle. He said that a ceremony would be held two days hence to officially welcome Molly to the village, and make her part of the clan. He said that Molly would be given a tribal name, probably for one of the dead women of the village. Molly would then be a sister or an aunt of all the women and children, and have a spirit of her own to look after her.

Molly wasn't too sure that this would be a good deal. "Does this mean that I will have to walk in back of you and carry the firewood for the house?" she asked. "No," Eban replied, "only when we are in the village!"

"At least I won't have to wear a wedding gown," she joked, "but I won't go barefoot and step on a snake or something!" Eban said that the Luluai's wife and the other women would probably fix her up with appropriate clothes for the ceremony as he planned to wear a fancy Laplap.

When they got back to Bundaberg, Molly opened up the cage and let Cocky sit on her arm. "Cocky", she asked, "What would they think of me back in Rockhampton? Or, for that matter in Moresby?" Cocky answered "Hello Molly", and hopped up on her shoulder.

The next morning she asked to be driven to town so she could visit the Lutheran school. Eban reminded her that it was holiday, and the school would be closed, so she decided instead to go to the market and to the Chinese store. She wanted to buy some prawns if she could, or any kind of seafood that was available.

Eban took the opportunity to visit one of his old friends while Molly was at market and arranged to meet her at the Hotel after she was done. He also asked the driver of the Jeep to go along with Molly and take care of any purchases she made. They dropped Eban off at the wharf and then drove on to the Market.

Several of the women selling food greeted her and she was embarrassed when she didn't know their names. She was polite to all because "after I join the village these might be my relatives, and I can't start off on the wrong foot!". She located the fish stand, and was told that there were a few prawns available, but they had been sold to the Hotel, where they could be purchased from the cook.

Molly noticed that Yali was entertaining a group under one of the trees, and wandered over to listen in to Yali's harangue. When he spotted her, Yali glowered at her and made a rude remark to the listeners. Her driver, Samuel, said it would be best if she moved away, and commented that Eban would not be pleased if she spoke to Yali.

Over in the clothing section, she saw many colourful Laplap cloths, and was tempted to buy one for Eban, but she knew that he was planning to wear the same colours as the houseboys at Bundaberg wore. She settled on a beautiful cloth that she thought would make a pretty skirt and bought a Meri blouse in matching colours. When she got to the shell sellers, she saw some beautiful Kina shells that had been carved and polished, but as the prices were high, she passed them up.

While strolling along, she heard her name called, and saw that one of the teachers from the Lutheran school was coming towards her. "Mrs. Edwards! I am so glad to see you again" the teacher said as she approached Molly. This was the woman who had introduced Molly to the class when they had questioned her about school in Australia.

Molly was getting quite used to being Mrs. Edwards, but was still tempted to say "Who, Me?" The staff at Bundaberg called her simply "Miskus" and that she was used to. They sat on a bench near the Steamship store and talked. The teacher, Miss Dale, told Molly she was about as curious as her pupils about teaching in Australia, and wondered if Molly thought that there was any chance that such methods would come to New Guinea.

"Not in the near future," Molly replied, "but the whole system is being looked at now, and I know that a school in Madang is going to be organised very soon." Miss Dale said that her parents had originally come from America, but she had been born in New Guinea at a mission in Goroka Province. She, herself had been educated in the mission school in Lae, and when her parents retired, she became a teacher because she liked the mission life.

Molly told her about tomorrow's ceremony at Bilbil Village, and asked for her opinion about the ceremony. "Of course, the mission would not approve as a matter of dogma," Ann Dale said, "But I do know of several Europeans who have been "adopted" by tribes, and have felt it to be a great honour." She went on to reiterate what Molly knew about tribal family customs, and added that it didn't seem to bother those who had been inducted in this way. "Just don't let them interfere with your normal life, or you will soon be overrun by visiting "relatives!" she concluded.

After a little while Molly left after assuring Ann Dale that she would visit her at the school as soon as possible after the ceremony. Molly carried her bilum over to the hotel where she would meet Eban. When she arrived at the hotel, she found the cook and arranged to get a few pounds of large prawns packed in ice for the journey back to the Plantation. After taking care of her business, she sat on the verandah with a gin and squash and soon was in conversation with a planter friend of Eban's, that she had seen when she was listening to Yali.

"After you left Yali was comparing you to Queen Emma." he said, "I don't know whether he meant it as a compliment or not!" Molly had heard references to Queen Emma previously, but only as a colourful figure of the colonial days when Raboul was the centre of commerce of the outer Islands. "She's been dead for a long time, hasn't she?" Molly asked.

"I believe she died around 1913," the planter said, " she was a relatively young woman when she died, and lived a very colourful life." The planter went on to say that his father had dealings with "Queen" Emma back when the Germans had control of Papua, and much of his knowledge was gained from his father's stories.

He told Molly that Emma was born to a Samoan princess, Le'uto and Jonas Coe, an American Trader. Besides Le'uto, Coe had five other wives and many children. Emma was educated in both Australia and America, and married John Forsayth, a trader with

Goddefroys. Her sister, Phoebe Coe, married Richard Parkinson, of Godefroys Samoan Trading Company. Eventually, with the help of several husbands and lovers, she built up a trading empire over much of the South Seas.

Her canny wisdom in dealing with the natives and battling rival traders and slave traders, made her a formidable opponent to the Germans who were trying to establish a colony in New Guinea. Emma treated her workers well, and was able to produce on her plantations almost twice as much as her rivals. Although infuriated by her success, the Germans were powerless to match her acumen in the trading empire she had built up.

Her many husbands and lovers were due to her regal bearing and her natural beauty. She also had a good mind that led to the appreciation of the finer things of life. One of the stories told about her was when she decided to have a formal concert at some gala event. She hired a symphony orchestra and had a grand piano shipped from New Zealand just for the event. At the formal dinner preceeding the event, she wore clothes designed by a French courtierre, and displayed jewels that were worth a fortune. In later years she made her headquarters in Rabaul where she had a beautiful stone mansion built on top of Kokopo Road in view of Simpson Harbour.

"Well, I don't see how Yali can accuse me of being like her," Molly said, "I'm not a raving beauty, I have no money, and one husband will be enough for me!". The trader laughed, but in a more serious vein he pointed out to Molly that in Yali's eyes, she too was a princess and was taking away from a New Guinea woman the opportunity to marry Eban, who was a big man in Yali's eyes.

At this point Eban came back and joined the pair with a drink. "Is what Samuel told me about Yali true?" he asked. Molly saw that Eban was angry, and tried to make light of the incident, claiming that she was not at all offended by being compared to Queen Emma. The trader, however, confirmed that Yali's tone was not at all friendly, and that the remark was not intended to be complimentary.

"Yali was trying to tell the crowd that Molly was another example of how Cargo is being diverted from the common man and given to those that don't deserve it," the planter said, "he wants to give the impression that you have abandoned the tribe and forgotten your ancestors by marrying an outsider".

"Well," replied Eban, "we'll set that right tomorrow when the Village adopts Molly and makes her part of the family!" To Molly, the idea of being "adopted" seemed an honour when first proposed, but now seemed to put her in the middle of a political and philosophical debate. She was now looking at the next day with more trepidation than anticipation, and wishing that the honour had never been proposed.

After they finished their drinks, they packed Molly's things into the Jeep, and Samuel drove them back to the Plantation where Molly gave the shrimp to the cook to be cleaned and then stored in the kerosene-operated fridge for later use. In the evening as they sat on the verandah to watch the bats on their nightly flight from town, she and Eban discussed the day's events, and plans for tomorrow.

Eban advised Molly to wear a simple dress, and a minimum of jewelery consisting only of her wedding ring and her pearl necklace. Eban was going to wear a khaki shirt over his plantation laplap and army boots and socks. Before they retired for the night Molly washed her hair and put it up in a bun held by a shell comb.

The next day, in the late afternoon when the trade winds cooled the air a bit, Samuel, dressed in the same colour laplap as Eban, brought the Jeep around. All the house staff gathered around to watch the couple as they prepared to leave for Bilbil Village. After they got into the Jeep, Samuel's wife came along and presented each of them with a Frangipani blossom of the same colour to wear in their hair.

Yesterday, while Molly was shopping, Eban had purchased four pigs, and had them delivered to the village as a gift for the Luluai, and as they drew near to the village, the smell of roast pig was clearly noticed in the air. Also noticeable was the amount of people walking towards the village centre as they drew near. Molly saw that the entire village had been spruced up for the occasion, and that the usual array of pigs and dogs were not apparent underfoot.

They stopped in front of the Luluai's house, and were ceremoniously greeted by Eban's uncle Titus, the Luluai, and the Big Man who was waiting for them. Molly was taken over by the Luluai's wife, who brought her into the house. Outside, some drums started to pound, and inside other women were putting the finishing touches on their dresses for the evening. Flowers were in evidence everywhere, and shell jewellery, more beautiful than Molly had ever seen, adorned the necks and ears of most of the women.

The schoolgirl who Molly had talked with on her last visit came in and presented Molly with a meri blouse and a laplap both in a beautiful floral pattern. The women helped Molly dress, and also supplied her with a pair of sandals that were bought at the Steamship store. When she was all dressed, she let out her bun, and combed her hair out so that it almost reached her shoulders.

Molly wisely decided that any resistance or protest would not be appropriate and just left herself in the women's hands. Outside the drums stopped and as if that were a signal, the women took Molly outside the house. The centre of the village had been transformed. At the far side opposite the Luluai's house the Luluai, the Big Man, and Eban, sat on a log in front of the large Garamut which was manned by two older men. "Woman, why are you coming here?" the Luluai shouted to his wife in a sing-song voice.

"I bring a new member to our family!" the wife replied, in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear. "This woman with me has not a tribal name, and does not know who her relatives are! Do we have a name for her?"

The luluai looked at the Big Man and then at Eban and said, "She shall be named Elena, and the spirits will be happy. Now all the women must dance and make the spirits happy to reside with Elena!" All the women and the young girls formed a circle around Molly and started to sing. They were joined by a few men with Kundus, and the two old men by the large Garamut who took turns striking the drum. The women were singing Deik, the story of children playing on the beach on a moonlight night.

Molly stood in the centre of the circle, and soon, caught up in the spirit of happiness, joined in the hand clapping of the other women. Eban, watching with a huge grin on his face, thought that Molly never looked as beautiful as she did then. After the women finished their dance, the men formed a line and gave a dance and song to welcome Molly, while the women retired to supervise the final stages of the cooking of the meal.

In a break with tradition, the Luluai went over to the women's group, and escorted Molly back to where Eban was sitting, and told her to join her husband. Both and Eban were happy to be together again, and were able to exchange a few words now and then as the dance progressed. When the dance was finished, an old man with a Momo, played a solo song invoking the spirits to make Molly fertile and have many children.

As it was now quite dark, when the old man finished his song, a huge bonfire was built in the middle of the area, and as food was served or taken, the entire village sat around the fire to eat and talk. Molly and Eban, as honoured guests, were invited to sit at a table with the officials of the village. As the men talked, Molly could see that they were constrained by her presence, and as soon as she finished eating, she excused herself and went to sit with Titus' wife and the other women.

The women's talk stopped when she first arrived, but soon started up again when Molly proclaimed how happy she was with her new Meri blouse and the Laplap. Titus' wife, Hana, called over the girl who had made the blouse and her mother, and asked them to

sit with Molly. After she repeated her praise, she remarked that the mother must be proud of such a talented daughter. "Anyone can learn to sew" the mother said, "You should see how she reads English! She can read better than anyone, even the men!" Molly knew that the church school did not teach English, and asked how the girl had learned?

"Miss Dale gave me a book, and showed me how to start, and then she would hear me read, and give me new things to try." the girl replied. Molly had a guilty feeling when she heard that reply. She thought about the many times that she could have helped a student go a bit further than the classroom assignment, but had not taken the time to help. Obviously, this girl was receiving tremendous benefits from a teacher who went beyond the classroom to help a student who wanted to learn.

The church schools had a very rigid course of study, and rarely changed its curriculum to adjust to changing times. That was supposed to be the strength of the state schools; and yet, Molly knew that change never did come easily. She resolved to see that in the future she would try very hard to innovate in the methods used in her school.

She very much enjoyed her stay with the women, and was sorry when Eban came along to tell her that they would soon have to leave. On the way back to Bundaberg, she noticed that Eban was preoccupied, and asked him the reason why. "It's this Cargo bunch," he replied, "I think we will have a lot of trouble ahead unless we act now to counter these people's ideas."

"Now that you are a member of the clan, a lot of people are calling for some retribution for the insult Yali gave you!" Molly knew that in very recent times, retribution meant bloodshed usually ending in some sort of compensation as part of the end of an incident. Eban assured Molly that he would keep an eye on things and be sure that no tribal warfare took place.

The next morning as Molly sat with Eban and discussed the events of the last night, Brian McGregor, the District Officer and Kiap of the Madang area, stopped by to talk with Eban. "It would be better," he said, "if you were to go back to Moresby, and stay until this matter of Yali calms down a bit." It seems that there is a lot of talk in the village about how the insult to Eban and his wife is to be settled." The Kiap went on to explain that there was a call for villagers to extract vengeance on Yali's followers in the traditional way. Some violence would be expected, as the insult to Molly had now become an insult to the tribe as a whole.

While most of Bilbil village was quite civilised, some of the older people still clung to the traditional way, and were demanding blood vengeance. McGregor thought it would be better if Molly and Eban were gone from Madang, giving the District Officer a chance to mediate the quarrel. As Eban and Molly were due to return to Moresby in a day or so, this seemed a reasonable plan to Eban even though the thought of running from a battle was repugnant to him.

The Kiap had already contacted Paul Edwards in Moresby, and apprised him of the situation. Paul agreed that the Kiap was on the right course, and said that he would return immediately to protect his own interests in the Plantation. Molly was shocked at the action that had been precipitated on her behalf, and for the first time recognised the finality of her being accepted into the tribe.

When the war ended, a lot of weapons had fallen into the hands of the villagers, and even though illegal, were still easily available. Knives, arrows, and clubs were still the first choice, but some of the younger men were itching to demonstrate the skills that had been taught them during the war. While some of Yali's followers remained steadfast to him, others were becoming disenchanted with his preaching, and were returning to the church and the plantation to resume their pre-war ways.

After a thorough discussion with McGregor, Eban finally concluded that the Kiap was right, and with Eban and Molly out of the way, the District Officer had a good chance of calming things down before the situation became explosive. So Molly and Eban packed their things that night, and with the help of McGregor, got ready for a plane ride back to Moresby the next morning.

Molly was reluctant to leave Cocky, but was assured that he could be sent to Moresby as soon as they got settled in a house. Samuel and his wife assured Molly that Cocky would be well taken care of, and a proper shipping cage would be constructed before sending him on to Moresby.

The next morning McGregor picked them up and drove them to the airstrip where he handed Eban a sack of official documents for delivery to Administration offices in Moresby. When they arrived, Paul was waiting for them and drove them to what was to be their new home. While the couple was away, Paul had managed to buy a bungalow from an older trader who was returning to Australia to live with his children. The house was bought for the plantation as a sort of 'rest' house while visiting Moresby.

The house had one large, and two small bedrooms, a rather elaborate kitchen and an indoor bath. As soon as they deposited their valises, Molly borrowed Paul's car and went to the dorms to see Pat and Aileen.

When Molly arrived, the girls were both home, and were anxious to hear about the last ten days. Molly had brought a few souvenirs that she had purchased in Madang, and was soon in a three-way conversation to bring everything up to date on local news. For the past fortnight a virtual revolution had swept over the school system, Rumours were flying that an upheaval was in process that would move around all the present staff, and expand the system beyond imagination.

A Political shakeup had occurred in Australia and now the Papua and New Guinea education system was under the scrutiny of the UN for its supposed lack of innovation in bringing education to the provinces and the villages. At the same time, a new committee was formed to develop a constitution for the soon-to-be independent country.

While Molly was hearing all this, Eban was at the Education Department hearing much the same thing. Because of his mixed-race heritage, his presence on the new education committee was deemed to be essential. On the one hand, the expatriate group hoped that he would favour the status quo, and the independence group hoped he would see things from the native viewpoint.

Eban, for his part felt uncomfortable with a political task, and was interested more in the result of a change of policy than the way it came about. He stated his opinion rather forcibly, emphasising that he felt the traditional methods of both the administration and the church schools were not working because of aiming for a "standard six" goal rather than a tertiary education for both boys and girls.

His opinions were not subscribed to by the majority of the expatriate leaders, and were viewed with suspicion by the indigenous group. The Administration had concluded a series of meetings, and the gossip was that new state schools were going to be built at a great rate, and the cadre for staffing them would be drawn from the staff at the Moresby school.

Aileen was asked about her feelings about going into "the bush" for a new school, and rumour had it that Eban was to have a hand in bringing the schools to the Northern Provinces. Les Jones was appointed co-ordinator for the new schooling effort, and dozens of new teachers were being recruited in Australia.

When Molly arrived at their new home that night, Eban was seated at a table with a stack of papers and maps which he was trying to sort out into some semblance of order.