

## Writing for Penis Gourds

A long time ago, I served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the far off land of Papua New Guinea. Now Papua New Guinea was a land that was not only far away, but one that was also far out in a purple haze kind of way, minus the hallucinogens.

One morning as I shopped for vegetables at the market, two of the tribal elders, Ray and George, approached me. Ray and George believed in melding the ancient traditions of their ancestors with the modern materials of western culture. A perfect example of this eclectic attitude could be found in their attire. On this particular day, Ray sported a grass skirt worn over a pair of gym shorts topped off by a woman's pink tank top. George had chosen a polyester uniform shirt from McDonalds and Wrangler jeans; jeans that were buttoned but not zipped in order to showcase a traditional selkabaum, a cone shaped gourd worn like a jock strap.

"Gut moning, Tetti." They called out simultaneously as they flashed identical grins revealing teeth stained brownish-red by a lifetime of chewing beetle nut.

Keeping my eyes averted from George's lower regions, I responded. "Gut moning, Ray. Gut moning, George."

After a tactful pause, George took half a step forward, cleared his throat, spit, then began to speak. "Tetti, mi laik askim you wanpela samting." (I want to ask you something) "Yu save raitim mani stori, yes?" (You know how to write stories, yes?)

When I nodded, George spoke again. "Ray and mipela laik yupela raitim wanpela

stori belong mi tupela.” (Ray and I would like you to write us a story) George took another step forward then gestured towards his penis gourd. “Yu olsem selkabaum belong mi?” (Do you like my penis gourd?)

Without looking at it, I nodded and replied, “Yes, George. Selkabaum bilong yupela is numba wan gutpela.” (Your penis gourd is very good)

But alas, my verbal acknowledgement did not satisfy George. He wanted visual confirmation. Stepping closer to me, he issued a command. “No, Tetti. Lukim selkabaum bilong mi.” (No, Terri. Look at my penis gourd)

I couldn’t do it. Despite issuing a stern command to my eyeballs to move down to George’s nether regions, they refused to obey. Fortunately, before George could take further action, Ray interceded.

“Tetti. Lukim mani selkabaum bilong mi.” (Look at all my penis gourds) He pulled out his bilum (bag) and opened it, displaying a mass of gourds.

Greatly relieved, I examined the many different shapes and sizes of his penis gourds. When I had finished, I complimented him. “Selkabaum bilong yupela is numba wan gutpela.” (Your penis gourds are very good)

Ray nodded an acknowledgement then said, “Mi tupela laik sellum selkabaum bilong tupela. Yupela raitim stori. Givim stori to mani store in Port Moresby.” (We want to sell our penis gourds. You write a story. Send the story to the stores in Port Moresby, the capital city of Papua New Guinea)

Suddenly George, with barely contained excitement, exclaimed, “Tupela sellim mani, mani, selkabaum. Mi tupela givem yupela selkabaum. Makim olgeta man bilong yupela hamamas tru!” (We will sell many, many penis gourds. We will give you penis

gourds. This will make all your men very happy!)

At the thought of presenting my male friends in the United States with penis gourds, I exploded in laughter. George and Ray, delighted by the cleverness of their plan and my apparent glee, joined in. After the hilarity subsided, I agreed to begin writing the story that very day.

As I hiked the path back to my house, I wondered whether I could convince any of the guys back home to wear a selkabaum with a pair of jeans, zipper down. Maybe if the penis gourd came with a six-pack of beer, someone would try it.