

# **STRANGE TIDES**

**A rose by any other name**

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The young man's name was Sanaet and he was a *moran* (Maasai warriors) by that time. It was in the middle of the night and the whole village was quiet, everybody was asleep except Sanaet, his best friend and a fellow *moran*, Lerionka and Ole Senet, Sanaet's father. From a distance, they could hear hyenas laughing and once in a while a lion roaring. It was a rainy season and during such seasons, Sanaet, being the firstborn son, and his father Ole Senet will spend the whole night guarding their cattle. Lerionka would join them since it was not good for a Maasai *moran* to walk, eat or even sleep alone away from his fellow *moran*.

Once in a while, Sanaet would go around the *boma* (homestead) with a small torch and his short spear to ensure that everything is okay before joining his friend and his father in his small house called *oripie*.

The night was cold and they could cover themselves with *shukas*, they could not light any fire for they believed that warmth would hearten them to sleep.

Ole Senet was an old man. He was among the first men to move out of their big *boma* and together with his four wives: Naisula, Noonkirammat,

Noorparakuo and the youngest of all Yiapoyo, established their home a few miles away from the big *boma* where the rest of the family lived. This is where Sanaet was circumcised and join his age mates and became a *moran*.

Sanaet was his only son from the second wife, Noonkirammat. It was like a blessing to him and for this reason, Ole Senet loved him so much.

Naisula was the first wife. She had six daughters and did not get a son. She was the old man's favorite wife despite the fact that she did not have a son, something which was contrary to the community's beliefs. By that time, all the six daughters were married and she was living with her grandchild in a small house on the right-hand side of the main gate.

Before making any decision, the old man would always consult Naisula. The other wives did not like the idea but they could not do anything about it. Sanaet always wanted to know why, but he feared his father and thought it was not a good idea to ask him such questions. Furthermore, the old man never made a wrong decision, so he decided not to ask.

Noonkiramat was old too, and she was the second wife. She had her house on the left-hand side of the main gate. She first gave birth to a daughter and for a period of around twenty years, she did not get a child. The old man was worried but he put his hopes of still getting at least a son on the third wife.

For a long time, she was not happy. She believed that the only way to please her husband is by bearing him a son, but to her surprise, she only gave birth to a daughter.

She believed that maybe one day her gods will answer her prayer. When Sanaet was born, everybody did not believe that at her age she could still get a child, including her co-wives. This made her nicknamed Sanaet *lenanu*; meaning my own son.

This brought back her happiness and from that day she was included in the small committee that made the decisions in the whole family.

The other two wives, Noorparakuo and Yiapoyo had only daughters; five and two respectively, and this made Sanaet the only son of Ole Senet.

Sanaet was very happy that he could now sit down with his father and share stories since he was a grown-up too. The old man would spend almost the

whole night telling his son about his past, he was very proud of it. So this was what they did every day, and Sanaet loved it.

Ole Senet would narrate the long stories of how they used to hunt lions, how they went for long distances to raid other communities and increase the wealth of their community and how glorious *moranism* was by then.

He would never forget to mention the bravest *moran* of all time; a warrior who died with his whole hand in the mouth of a lion. Although he died, he managed to kill a lion alone, and was found lying beside a lion with his hand holding the lion's tongue, an action that has been praised many generations that followed.

That night was like many other nights in the village, nothing happened. Early in the morning they would walk into the *boma* and look after the cattle, examining each and every cow to ensure that there was none that was sick.

Noonkirammat was the first to wake up that morning. Her work together with the other old man's wives was to milk the cows and prepare breakfast for the rest of the family members.

When Sanaet was sure everything was okay, they would join their fellow morans who slept on the other side of the *boma*. They would collect their share of milk and as a group drink together.

A *moran* was not supposed to drink tea, or eat the modern foods but basically supply their diet with only milk and meat. They would drink milk during rainy seasons since there was enough milk for them and eat meat during dry seasons. Slaughtering any animal was done in the forest, away from other people, here they would drink soup mixed with herbs, drink blood and eat meat.

They were happy because the cattle had enough pasture to eat and there was plenty of water to drink. This then gave them a chance to enjoy their free time. Rainy seasons were a blessing to the whole community, but it also attracted wild animal closers to homes.

At that time, hyenas and lions would break into any *boma* and injure or even killing a number of sheep or cows before eating one. Hyenas were known by their behaviors of leaving many cows without their udder. For this reason, every man including all *morans* will spend their night at their respective *ripieta*; (men's houses).

Endonyo naado is such a cool hill located on the foot of a mountain called Oloorruka. Sitting on the small hill just below the mountain is Ole Senet's *boma*. Crossing the river, you will find another village with around ten *bomas*. This is where the big family; Ole Senet's brothers live together with their father's younger wives since most of them died a long time ago together with the old man, Ole Senet's father.

On the other side of the hill was Ole Senei's family. His *boma* was small compared to many other *bomas* in the area. He had two wives; the first one had two sons and one daughter.

The second wife had one son and two daughters; Lankenua and Lanoi. Ole Senei was so much rooted in culture that every time there was something contradicting in solving problems related to the community, he is always consulted.

The whole region was peaceful. The routine for every individual was normal and the same every day. Each person knew his or her role in the society, the community had better ways of solving their problems in an organized manner.

Sanaet knew that the following days were the days they had been waiting for long. All *morans* knew

the same thing. Each one of them was very busy doing the final preparation.

Sanaet was thinking about the three days he would spend away from home, away from his father and the entire family. This was not the first time to go away from home, but to him, this time he felt like he was not ready to go.

He was needed in the long journey that would take them three days because he was among the best warriors. So he must lead his fellow *morans* to *enjore*; an act of forcefully bringing cattle from other sub-tribes or even tribes. Many things were crossing his mind but the most frequent one was how he would spend so many days away from his new girlfriend, Lankenua.

He had to remain strong and pretend that everything was okay. Everything around him reminded him of the few days he would spend away from home. He hated the idea and at some point, he could forget where he was.

As a leader and someone who was looked upon by the entire group of *morans* to lead them to *enjore* and bring back with them many cows, he was not supposed to show any sign of weakness.



They were to visit *Oloiboni* that evening as part of their last preparation to seek both advice and his blessings. He was living a few miles away from the place where they were preparing, this made them not to be in a hurry to visit him.

Sanaet knew that that was the best time to see Lankenua, so he requested his best friend Lerionka to help him collect more milk from the other side of the *boma*. He knew that that was the only polite way to get Lerionka's attention.

When they walked out of the house, he told his friend about his desire to see and at least have a word with Lankenua. Lerionka knew that there was nothing he could do to stop him, so he agreed to take him to Lankenua's home.

As they walk, just before reaching where they were going, they met Lankenua along the way. She looked troubled and in some way not comfortable meeting them. It was like she also made up her mind to come and meet Sanaet.

They both looked at each other for a while and Lerionka knew that it was his time to give them some private space. No one between the two admitted that they wanted to see each other, and made it look like it was a coincidence.

For a while, they could not talk. They kept staring at each other. The place was silent, it was like both the wind and the shaking trees knew that that moment will be a memory for both of them to carry for years.

After a long time of silence, Sanaet had to say something. So he reminded Lankenua of the day they first met.

“Do you remember the day we met?” Sanaet asked Lankenua. This made Lankenua smile, it was still a fresh memory in her mind. So the story went on for a while....

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