

Like a Calm Sea

by Pradeep Jeganathan

“We should go again,” said Krishna.

But Iqbal didn't reply. He sipped his tea like he hadn't heard, but a tremor passed through his right shoulder. His left arm was bandaged, and the wrist and lower arm were in a cast, making him hold it awkwardly. People had stared at the cast when they went to Kalawawe, making it harder to be unobtrusive. But then, in the dusty back roads of the North Central Province, staring at strangers was common, especially if they arrived in a big, silver Pajero.

“Have more tea.” Iqbal poured from the pot into Krishna's cup, not waiting for a reply. He added milk, drops spilling and spreading on the polished brown table. His hand was unsteady; Krishna wondered if that too was a symptom of something, or just withdrawal from the lack of drink.

After he had been found, wrist crushed, arm and chest lacerated, clinging on to a tree, almost out of his mind, and had been taken to Ampara hospital, where he had managed to remember Krishna's number, and call from a nurse's mobile, whispering hoarsely, “just come and get me *machang*,” Krishna had thought the first thing he would want was a drink. Iqbal was almost one with his single malts, always knowing which ones were new, which ones were private, and most of all which ones to turn his nose up at. He was famous among his buddies for even breaking his fast, during Ramadan, with a carefully iced, slowly sipped scotch, which made all the smart, secular lefties they hung out with crack-up and ask why he bothered to fast in the first place.

But no, now, after every thing, his mind was firm on that one point; all he wanted was tea. Loads of it. And only BOP, and that too only Nikapota Uva. He had a discourse going on it, on the elevation of the Uva mountains, the bouquet it allowed for, and then how many spoons to the pot, how to heat the water, and how many minutes would be just right for a good brew. Krishna was surprised, he didn't know Iqbal even drank tea.

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They were sitting in Krishna's apartment in Colombo. It faced west, high up in a tower, with deep orange views of the setting sun over the Indian Ocean. But drapes were now drawn, making the room dark, even at mid day. Krishna thought it might be better this way, with the drapes drawn, so they couldn't glance out at the sea, even accidentally. Iqbal seemed to think that also, or at least he hadn't said anything about it, either here in the living room, or over in the guest bedroom, where he slept. There too, Krishna kept the drapes drawn. Iqbal hadn't really said much at all about anything, over the last two day, after they had returned from the long, bumpy ride back from Kalawawe, but now, reading the paper he exclaimed suddenly, "these chaps are playing a match!" Iqbal glanced at the date top of paper. "It's the 10th, isn't it? Its today."

"Yes, its today. At the MCG."

"A tsunami bloody match."

"Yep," Krishna pursed his lips. He hadn't yet been able to say the word Iqbal had said.

"Well put it on — you have cable right? — they must have started." Iqbal glanced at his broken wrist, where he usually wore his watch, and then realizing it wasn't there, turned to the clock on the wall. "What's the time in Melbourne?"

"I don't know," Krishna said, as he clicked on the TV. "But I think its started."

The picture came into view, filling the large screen with a soft cackle. The grounds were full, the grass flat, green and smooth, the crowd a dim roar. Murali was bowling to Ponting.

"He can bowl the *doosra*, right?" Iqbal asked.

"Well they aren't going to call him today; it is a tsunami bloody match, isn't it?"

Krishna remembered the first time they had called Murali in Australia. It had been at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, nine years ago, on the first day of the boxing day Test; the biggest cricket match of the year, down under. Fifty five thousand people had been at the ground, when Umpire Hair no balled Murali, not once, not

twice, but seven times. Not for a mistake, which would have been just for over stepping the line, no big deal ever, but for cheating: straightening his arm as he bowled.

They had watched that game together, on TV, Iqbal and Krishna. At the Sheraton bar in Colombo, where Iqbal loved to watch cricket and drink, which had the cable they couldn't afford back then. Both of them back home from Greenwich University in New York, where they were graduate students, for just three weeks, exhausted from writing term papers, dead broke, air tickets bought on that crazy, unpayable extended zone of their credit cards, sleepless on what Iqbal called an 'Allah forsaken' plane, that had shuddered and creaked so much, as it took off after the short lay over in Amman, that they'd both thought it would simply implode on the runway.

And then, on top of it all, Hair had 'called' Sri Lanka's great bowling hope. The whole bar, had been shocked, speechless, almost in terror, as Murali stopped, again and again, pointing to his foot, and then his elbow, eyes wide with pain, asking the umpire silently, 'are you calling me a cheat?'

It was Iqbal who had broken the silence, far away from the cricket but at least close to home. "You fucking racist, motherfucking bastard son of a convict...," he had started off, standing, pointing a crooked arm and a raised finger at the screen, and every one at the bar had laughed, some one clapping. Iqbal had gone on, yelled and screamed more, and they'd got their beer on the house. Krishna almost smiled, remembering, and looked at Iqbal, wondering if he remembered. It had been exactly nine years before the tsunami.

Iqbal chuckled, almost like he did remember, like he used to when he drank, and mouth off at the TV. Then he sipped his tea, and looking down at the cup, his eyes widening, as if he needed to take in the flavor of brew again. Iqbal was examining his cup of tea so carefully, Krishna thought he would have to make fresh pot. But

Iqbal said nothing on that, asking instead, "That place we went to, is it far from Anuradhapura town?"

Krishna shook his head, remembering the ride yesterday on the bad, pot holed road, after they turned at Kekirawe, off the Dambulla — Anuradhapura road, and then past the little town of Kalawawe, turning into beautiful, red earth, country lanes.

"Kalawawe? It's a bit far from there, *machang*. Anuradhapura is to the north. You turn before, at Kekirawe, usually. I don't know how the road is from Anuradhapura, can't be good."

"I could get a place in Anuradhapura, right?"

"Oh yes," said Krishna, "Lots of nice hotels there."

Anuradhapura was the only place in the wider vicinity Iqbal really knew, he realized, one place he had actually stayed. He was a city boy. Well, so was Krishna, really. Kalawawe wasn't a place you really stayed over night in, in the usual run of things.

"I can't live right there, right next to them, or on the next road, could I?"

"Well," said Krishna, who had lived for months, doing field work, the previous summer in Eppawella, which was as remote, a little north of there. "No, I mean... you could, but it would be harder on you." He winced at the thought of Iqbal, waiting for his single malt and ice cold beer or a perfectly brewed BOP, at the local *the kede* in Kalawawe. But then again, he considered; things were different now, perhaps he would adjust. But he said, "You're right. You'd be more comfortable in Anuradhapura town, initially. Then we could work something out closer, that's livable. Kekirawe would be a good bet. It's the town at the turn off. Its on the A9, and there are buses to Kalawawe all the time." Krishna looked at his friend, wondering what exactly he had in mind, when he asked if he could live there, unsure if he was even clear himself.

Iqbal's eyes wandered back to the TV. Ponting flicked Murali's flighted ball, almost effortlessly, well over the boundary.

"He is getting hammered. But never mind; six thou' for buggers like me," said Iqbal, pointing at the screen, and laughing. The sponsors were offering money for each run, for the victims.

Krishna smiled.

"I'll need it, if I take up farming in Kalawawe." Iqbal looked serious, and moved his left arm gingerly, as if he was considering a long stint of manual labour.

"Let's do this." Krishna looked up at Iqbal, getting his attention. "I'll expand my field project on suicide. I'll work it out through CASS. You can be a co-researcher." Krishna had a big research grant from Harper University, in Chicago, where he was on the anthropology faculty, that he ran through Center for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, a research institute in Colombo, where he was affiliated as a visiting fellow, while on leave from Harper. His eyes lit up, considering; yes it could work.

"I don't know a damn thing about Anthropology, and anyway I think it's fucked up. You know that." Iqbal was a literary critic. This had always been a great point of debate between them during the New York years at Greenwich. The disciplines, Anthro. and Lit. crit. , their methods, and the kinds of knowledge they produced, and if a real postcolonial turn was possible. But then, on top of that, Iqbal seemed to hate anthropology and anthropologists and was always writing the most venomous footnotes about them. At first this made life difficult for Krishna, because it was a small world, and all the senior anthropologists who Iqbal lambasted knew they were really close. But now that he was settled in his job; Iqbal's critique just made Krishna grin, at times.

"You don't have to know any thing; I know you don't any way." He chuckled. "Its my grant. I just write a note, and you are in."

"Okay," said Iqbal. "And then?"

"Then I don't know *machang*. You'll be near... " He trailed off, not wanting to say her name, in case that would be upsetting. He watched Iqbal's face.

"I suppose I could go to the neighborhood and hang about there, a lot?"

"Yeah, you can. Everyday. Like administer a survey in the GN division or something."

“Me, do surveys?” Iqbal cackled again, as of old, enjoying his protests.

Krishna grinned, well knowing Iqbal's well grounded critique of ethnographic surveys. “Yes, you'll do bloody surveys.” Then he shook his head. “No, do whatever. It doesn't matter.”

Iqbal nodded. “And take the bus in, and then cycle around, right? Your fancy Paj didn't really cut it, did it?”

Krishna nodded. “It was a bad idea.” He wanted to find a reason, any reason. It wasn't his Pajero, it was leased for the project; since everyone had said he'd need a good four-wheel drive to navigate the back roads. Which was true, up to a point. “Maybe that's what messed it up,” he said, not really believing that.

“You think?” Iqbal looked skeptical.

“I don't know.”

“She didn't even look at me.”

Krishna said nothing, watching Iqbal's throat move, as he swallowed.

“These things take time, *machang*.”

Iqbal was staring at the cricket on TV.

When the waves came, Iqbal had been with Neema in the cabana. Siddha and his parents, had gone to the beach for a morning walk. They had gone with first wave; but Iqbal hadn't known. He had held Neema tight, trying to lift her above the water, clutching on to the wooden strut that held up the thatched roof with his other hand. When the second wave came, something, a branch perhaps, had smashed into his wrist, shattering it. Iqbal didn't remember any more; he'd blacked out. All he kept saying was, “I let her go. I let her go.”

There had been tiny metal pins from the mechanism of his Tag Haur, embedded deep in his wrist, which the surgeons at the National Hospital, had to get out with micro-tweezers or some such, in four hours of surgery. Now there were two small steel bolts in his wrist, holding it together.

“The tea's gone cold,” announced Iqbal.

“I'll get more going,” said Krishna, getting up to walk into the kitchen.

When Krishna brought the tray back, he said, softly, hesitantly, “We could ask for a DNA test,” His voice was tight and drawn, suddenly, and his lips pursed, as if stopped in thought by the seriousness of his words.

“No.” said Iqbal. “No.”

“No?” asked Krishna, uncertainly.

Krishna, waited, wanting to ask why, but Iqbal was pouring again, with great concentration.

“She is my girl, *machang*. I don't need a test.”

They'd thought Neema was gone also, when Krishna had heard, just by chance, from his Eppawella research assistant, Lalith, that a couple in Kalawawe, a small town some kilometers to the south, had brought a kid back, all the way from Panama, after the tsunami. Panama was by the sea, way far away, at the very end of the road to the deep south-east, even another 20 km south of Arugambe. The child was distantly related, they'd said, orphaned in the tsunami, abandoned in a camp, and they'd just been in Panama, visiting close relatives, when it happened. For Lalith, this was a vignette about familial generosity, part of the whole people-helping-people-thing, after the Tsunami. Krishna had thought nothing of it, until Lalith said, ‘poor girl, she'd been bruised by a falling branch, and had a little steel pin buried in her hip bone.’

He'd told Iqbal even before he'd really recovered from surgery, and they had gone, right then, getting into the Paj at hospital, picking up Lalith, dodging and hurtling through traffic, until they got to the dry, windy plains of the north central province.

Iqbal had been asleep for most of the ride, but suddenly, just when they were passing the Kalawawe, he woke up. It was about two in the afternoon, and the sun was high and the sky clear. The reservoir glistened, shining like a field of diamonds on a bed of coal. Iqbal shielded his eyes, and turned away from the water, looking through the other window, at the lush, green plains below the bund.

“It looked very calm,” he said slowly.

“What does?” asked Krishna, not getting it.

Iqbal lifted his right arm, crookedly, his hand pointing to the water, elbow at the fields below the dam, stretching green and golden for miles. His arm jerked stiffly. “You know in Arugambe...” He said.

Krishna nodded, this was where they'd been, Iqbal, Siddha, Neema and his parents vacationing by the beach, holidays by the sea.

“It was so calm there, that morning.”

Krishna closed his eyes, and then turned, opening them slowly, taking in the shining water on the other side. “Yes,” he said, “I've seen it calm.”

It was another half an hour, before they found the place, Lalith asking for directions, discreetly, not giving away what their interest was, but asking for the Army sergeant Wijedasa's house. Names didn't mean much, in a place like this, but once the people figured out who the person was -- ‘oh the tall army guy, with the thick, long mustache?’ -- Lalith was pointed in the right direction.

It was a small, neat, three roomed house. Drinking the super sweet tea, Krishna tried to act professional, supposedly explaining the research project they'd be doing on families affected by the war. Now he had been really thinking about planning this project out, which is how Lalith had heard about the adoption anyway, because Krishna had asked him to identify a few families who had lost two or more loved ones in the war.

So he went on, saying he knew it was difficult to talk about the war, especially the two brothers who had given their lives, but still, he was asking them to consider allowing him to interview them, over an year; half a day long conversations at a time. Krishna had been sketching out the methodology for this project in his mind for awhile, but it was nowhere near fully worked out; certainly it wasn't funded. Still he dove in, acting like this was some thing definite and on-going. He didn't know these people, but they knew of him, since he'd been directing a CASS project on suicide in the surrounding

area for several months now, and had been around the summer before that, living in Eppawella, doing preliminary field work. They knew him, as the really 'good' professor, who was doing, as people put it in Sinhala 'a research,' on why people got very sad, and then killed themselves. And, of course, it was also said, 'while he is Tamil, he was so educated and had studied so much, he even knew such good Sinhala, and when he spoke it, you couldn't tell.' This seemed to add to his 'goodness.' The whole deal was often a thick cloud which enveloped him during field work, and some times it just frustrated him, but now he was glad, so very glad every one said he was so super good, when he wasn't, because the family, the Sergeant and his wife, trusted him. Thinking about those who died in the war was also about sadness, so it made sense to them, that this would be 'a research thing' that he would be interested in, also.

So they agreed. 'Yes, what ever 'the Sir,' wanted to ask, they'd talk about. Yes, they understood, it would also help all the people of our country, to understand how they felt.' Krishna felt momentarily relieved.

"Yes the little one is scared," they said smiling sadly, when he had asked about the recent adoption, trying his best to be casual about it. "A daughter of a elder sister's husband's brother. Lost every one when the sea came on land." The way 'sister' was said, meant she was a cousin, or even more distant. Krishna had only got a glimpse of the child before she ran inside; her hair was cropped, and her face was grimy, and there was a big, carefully done dressing on her hip. He wasn't sure at all, but Iqbal was. But Krishna had seen her large dark eyes take in Iqbal, look deep into him for a long moment, and through him, before she ran in. They waited two hours, hoping for another glimpse, but no, she didn't come out again. And then they'd left, thanking the couple, saying they hoped to return soon.

"Tell me about that place," said Iqbal, suddenly, as if to change the topic, turning away from the TV, muting the sound with a press of his thumb on the remote. Krishna wondered what he wanted to know. He'd talked of nothing but the sociology of the area

for hours in the vehicle, while they were being driven over. But then, Iqbal had been half asleep, and anyway in no condition to listen to much.

Two hundred years before, when the last Naiyakkar Kings still ruled at Kandy, the Kalawawe lay broken and empty, the area ravaged by malaria, with more wild elephants than people perhaps. Small settlements held out, but barely. Fifty years later, the British 'discovered' the great stupas of Anuradhapura, covered with creepers and scrub, towering into the skies, and the beautiful intricate ruins of the ancient city, buried in layers of earth, and hailed the place as a sort of Rome of the East. In another fifty years, just before the end of the nineteenth century, the governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, had the great reservoir, Kalawawe, restored. Now the great twelve meter stone Buddha at Aukana, on its banks, that had stood through it all, from the time of Dhatusena in the fifth century, again looked over the full, spilling expanse of water, as it burned bright in the morning sun.

A Rome, Anuradhapura may have been, once center of a great, and ancient empire, but to call it a Sinhala city, and the province it was in, the Land of Sinhala Kings, was silly as confusing Italians with Romans. But that's how the British understood it, as they always did in the Orient, putting the natives in tight boxes, making sure they were all different, all counted, all quarreling. Of course, they never did imagine Romans as Italians, did they? Oh no, from Shakeapear to the BBC, the Senators and Ceasers were always played as tip top, upper class, English gentlemen. It was like they took Rome for themselves, and gave Anuradhapura to their poor 'Aryan' cousins, the Sinhala.

In another fifty years, places like Kalawawe were thought to be where the purest Sinhala blood lay, where the pulse of a nation was to be taken, like every American Presidential hopeful, did once in four years at Iowa.

Krishna looked at the slivers of sun light, breaking through the edges of the drawn drapes, splashing on Iqbal's face. "You know the great stone statue there?"

"Aukana?"

"Its said the name, Aukana, could come from, *Avvua Kana*; you know in Sinhala: 'Eating the Sun.'"

"Yeah you would know useless stuff like that, since you are a more-Sinhala-than-Sinhala, Tamil." Iqbal grinned. But then he said, "That's beautiful. It's a amazing place, really."

"Yeah, it is. But now, some times I think the whole social structure is coming apart."

The thousands of new Sinhala settlers who'd been brought in during the last fifty years, and given a few acres of land, so that they could be homesteaders in the heartland, couldn't with all the subsidies the state could give them, really make ends meet. And there wasn't enough land to be subdivided for their children, who didn't want to farm anyway. So the boys joined the army, going off to fight the great war in the North against the Tamil Tigers, often coming home in coffins. And some of the girls tried the garment factories in the big city until they got married, or worse, brothels for the soldiers in Anuradhapura. Others just stayed home.

But, then again, things weren't that bad. Very few people were really poor. Sure crops failed in particular years, and times got very hard for some, but except for a few exceptions -- and there were a few, of course — this wasn't really the cause of suicides.

"I don't really know why, Iqbal, but people kill themselves."

"I thought you'd cracked that puzzle, didn't you write a paper on that?" Iqbal tilted his head quizzically, half in seminar mode, but his tone was drained of the combativeness that would have flowed easily before.

"No, I don't know. Yeah, I wrote a paper, but I don't know. Its young kids, right, late teens, twenties, they fall in love, have some kind of a tiff, just some tiff, and boom, the boy or girl drinks pesticide, and their insides burn out in three days." He pressed his finger tips to his forehead, face lowering, remembering Nadeeka.

He hadn't known her well then, when it happened, during his first weeks in Eppawella, but he had noticed her of course, walking around giggling with her girl friends, bathing in the canal in her *diya redda*, like some thing out of a James Goonawardena novel, he had read as a teenager; she was more than cute, she was a real beauty, with a tiny snub nose and huge eyes, nineteen at the time.

He had been cycling by, on the little red lane by the canal when he had heard her, then seen her, crying, half hidden by the scrub, in the heat of the afternoon, just when it was too hot for any one else to be out. Bike wobbling, thinking he shouldn't butt in, he froze when he glimpsed the dark bottle with the label in her hand, clutched to her breasts, between her hunched shoulders. He'd thrown the cycle against a tree, and run to her, crouched down, and tried to talk to her.

She listened, too polite even in her grief to tell him to fuck-off, while he talked and talked, she replying with single, lonely words, occasionally between sobs. A big row with her boy, she said, he had said some thing to her, she had said some thing back, and she was going to drink the poison, her life wasn't worth living any more. Krishna just kept talking, saying what ever bubbled up into his mouth, just on and on, telling her she had to live, for her family, for him, please, anything, not to do it. The worst of it was, that the more he blabbered on, the more he felt the deep hurt and anger in her, not the reasons for it, but the pain. Soon he knew he was all out of arguments, since he'd also often felt that 'life' wasn't what it was cracked up to be, and may be it wasn't worth it, after all the hoopla that went with it.

He never persuaded her of any thing that day, made the case for life or the joys of it, but he wore her down, so much so, that she just cried her insides out, and then seemed to go into a trance, eyes shut, going still and cold, as he was going on and on. It had been scary, but he laid her on the bike, her buttocks on the cross bar, his right arm under her knees, hand gripping the handle bar, as he bent over, knuckles so tight, because he thought the cycle would jerk and

he would drop her, his left hand under her head, pushing with his hips on her waist, all the way to her house, well to the stile at the fence of the yard, when her mother came running out, wailing, 'my daughter, my daughter,' holding her and nuzzling her, taking her indoors.

And then she's been fine.

He reached for the sugar, dipping the spoon into the white grains. There were three, no, four black ants, that had some how, got to the rim of the sugar bowl. They were running around, it seemed with great excitement. "You know, there was this girl, right? Is, I mean... I got to know her a bit; she tried to kill herself." He looked at Iqbal.

He nodded. "Yeah, you talked her out of it. You told me."

Krishna stirred in the sugar, unthinkingly, watching the dark liquid swirl.

Yeah, she had been fine.

But her boy friend hadn't been; he'd taken pesticide, almost at the same time, and he died two days later in the Anuradhapura hospital, insides corroded, begging, crying, screaming for water, he couldn't even drink. They hadn't told Nadeeka until much later, of course.

Krishna added another spoon of sugar into his tea, and stirred again.

When he went to visit Nadee at home, two weeks later, she'd worshiped him, in the traditional way, and when he touched her head, as was the custom, and said she owed her life to him. And her mother and father couldn't stop saying how good he was, that he was a god born among men, that he'd gained merit for eons to come. But he hated himself, because Nadee had said softly when her parents were safely inside the house, 'I have my life, but it is no use to me.' She looked so sweet, quiet and sad, when she said that, sitting on the cement floor of the verandah, hugging her knees, her long hair coiled on her shoulders, dark eyes moist, he guessed he

should have asked her father, right then and there if he could marry her. Strange though the thought was to him, he figured that would have been, in their way of looking at things, the 'good' or 'right' thing to do. But of course he didn't, he didn't even hug her, because that would have been so inappropriate, for him. But then, after that, she always called him 'our elder brother.' *Ape Ayia*, like he was her own blood.

"Yeah, she survived, Cards, but she doesn't want to live, she says." Krishna looked down at his tea. One black ant, that must have been caught in the second spoon of sugar, was floating on the surface of the liquid, struggling. He dipped the spoon in, scooping it out, dropping the animal with the drops of tea, into the saucer.

Suddenly he realized he had called Iqbal, Cards, like when he did when they were boys, in school at King's. He had been Cards, and Krishna, Yugs, the weird way the last names of Carder and Yoganathan, got crushed up in a school like King's, together with every other boys last name, by the time they had been in upper school. He didn't know if Iqbal had even heard him. It had been years and years, since he'd called him Cards.

"Yeah." Iqbal said.

"I don't think I really got to that, in the article." Krishna's paper hadn't been about Nadee and him, but what the larger issues at stake might be. It was called *Dying to Love*, but it wasn't really finished and published, because he wasn't sure about his argument. Perhaps he didn't even have one. When had tried to read it at a conference, it had been way hard, because he couldn't read it out aloud, without crying.

"I think its about figuring out how love works, really, Iqbal," he said softly. "When I went out there, I thought I was so different from people there. Superior I guess; on life, love, death. On every thing. But now, I don't know. I'm still trying to work it out."

Iqbal looked on, "Yes," he said, "that would be good to work out." But his face was flat and numb, except the corner of his right cheek, which was twitching.

Krishna felt the tea sour in his gullet. What on earth had he been going on about? He must be crazy, why was he talking about this? He was going nuts; this was the last thing he should have brought up. Looking down, feeling hopelessly messed up, he watched the ant on the saucer, running in small, tight, dizzying circles, nipping at one grain of sugar that had dropped down onto the curved porcelain.

Neck tensing, ears warm, Krishna tried to think a way out of this topic. "You know," he said, trying to bring a chuckle into his voice, "us anthropologists get all worked up over this stuff, thinking its so important. Back then, you know, 'then,' as students say, about any thing that isn't 'now,'" he managed a chuckle, and Iqbal smiled. "Back then the Brits, didn't know bollocks about the Nuwarakalavya. That's what the province was called, before 1845. It was the 'interior.' 'Unexplored.' They'd go out, shoot some elephants, shoot some more natives, and then come back to Kandy. Must have had Gin and Limes, stroked their mustaches, and said 'good sport, old chap.'"

"That fellow, what was his name? Sir Samuel Baker, yes, that's it, he 'shot game' there."

"Really?" said Krishna, pleased that he had managed to get them off the topic of suicides.

"He describes this trek of four days, twenty miles a day, eighty miles from Kandy, when they get to a big reservoir... was it Kalawawe? No, it's the Minneriya reservoir, I think... that's close to Kalawawe, right?"

"Yes, about 30 kilometers to the east."

"They get there, six natives hacking the scrub in front, must be another dozen with the pack donkeys, and big rifles bringing up the rear. Just he and his brother, the white dudes with shotguns. Baker stalks a huge Buffalo, and finally it charges. Shoots once, doesn't get the fellow, and Baker is out of balls," Iqbal grinned. "For the gun, that is, so he stuffs the gun with power, and six sixpennies, that have 'her Majesty's features' on them, and fires, just inches from the

animals skull, just as it is charging." Iqbal laughed and laughed. "Not a joke," he finished, "the buffalo had it."

"Wow!" Shot the fellow with coins?" Krishna shook his head, with the craziness of it all.

"Its amazing what these fellows did," said Iqbal. "Oh then, he went exploring in Africa. 'Discovered' its said, the source of the Nile." He shook his head. "Yes the 'interior'." That's the great trope imperial exploration." He chuckled, and then drained the last of his tea, holding the white cup, high, tilted, right elbow extended, hand quite steady. He set it down carefully. His voice was firm, like the matter had been decided. "Yes, we should go again, and work things out."

