

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang

by

Nicholas Nicola

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LANANG

For Lanang and all orangutans who have suffered.

It was the scientist Albert Einstein who said if anyone wanted one's children to be smart then fairy tales should be read to them.

"I understand you!" shouted the crying philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who hugged a horse around the neck to help defend this hurt sentient being who was being badly whipped by a coach driver.

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Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

LANANG

Table of Contents

LANANG.....	12
1.....	13
GATHERING CLOUDS	13
‘The ‘Great Leader’ Has Doubts’	13
‘The Phantom Agents!’	13
‘A Special Friendship’	15
‘The Killing Of Lanang’s Mother’	16
‘Lanang Outsmarts The Kidnappers’	17
‘Lanang Pays His Last Respects’	19
‘A Very Sad Orangutan Boy Has An Accident’	19
‘Lanang Is Adopted By Mr Aladdin’s Family’	20
‘Mr Aladdin The Learned Scholar’	22
‘What’s In A Name...?’	23
‘What The Dayaks Believe’	24
‘Lanang Learns About The Dayak World’	25

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

'Mr Aladdin Remembers A Very Sad Orphan'	25
'Lanang Enjoys His Stay With The Family'	27
'Unlucky Sad Orangutans'	28
'Lucky Sad Lanang'	28
'Lanang And Aladdin Learn To Talk To Each Other'	29
'Lanang Kindly Treats His Human Hosts As Equals'	30
'A New Family Member'	30
'Lanang Wants To Act On His Fantastic Idea'	31
'Orangutan Neighbourhood Watch'	31
'A Young Primatologist Amuses The Orangutans'	32
'It Is Hoped Lanang's Idea Improves The Young'	33
'The Reincarnation Project'	35
'The Charles Darwin Controversy'	36
'Human Ignorance Angers The First Elder'	37
'Lanang The Student Of Human History'	37
'A Sad Warning'	39
'More Is Learnt About Humans On The Internet'	39
'Palm Oil - The Killer Of Orangutans'	41
'No More Greenwashing!'	42
'The Right Information Needs To Be Shown!'	42
'A 'Mr Lanang' Starts To Write A Report On Palm Oil'	42
'Lanang Takes A Deep Breath'	45

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

'There Are Humans Who Love Money More Than A Healthy Planet!'	47
'Humans Crazy Believing To Be Improving The World By Destroying It!'	47
'An Orangutan's Lone Brave Stand To Inspire Lanang'	48
'Lanang Asks The Computer A Few Questions'	49
'Human Kindness Towards An Old Chimpanzee'	51
'Lanang Looks At Orangutan Escape Artists'	51
'Lanang Looks At An Orangutan Artist'	53
'Lanang Becomes A World Business High Flyer'	53
'On With The Show!'	58
'Mexican Wave'	59
'The Trainees Lack Any Real Interest'	60
2	56
FIRST RAINS	57
'Kidnapper Success'	57
'The Phantom Orangutans!'	57
'OPERATION THREE QUEENS'	58
'Mara And Mr Papiyan'	58
'MARA BEMOS!'	58
'Who Cares...?'	60
'Mr Aladdin Suggests A Trojan Horse'	60
'The Orangutans And Dayaks Travel North'	61

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

'The Orangutans Have A Secret Weapon...'	64
'Major Kong'	65
'Madam Krista'	66
'The Control Room'	68
'The Stars Shine Brightly'	70
'An Other Worldly Threat'	72
'Carlos Sees That The Ranch Is Heavily Defended'	73
'The Usual Inhumanity...'	74
'Troy & Achilles'	74
'Electric Blue Freedom Ride'	75
'Killing Is The Last Choice...'	76
'To The Safe House'	77
'As If Inside A Magic Realism Novel...'	78
'Lanang & Krista'	78
'First Victory'	79
'The Great Leader Speaks'	79
'The 'Trojan Horse' Picks Up Some 'Trojans'	79
'Beware of Dayaks Bearing Gifts'	80
'Achilles Reaches The Ranch'	81
'A Local Elder Pays A Visit'	82
'The Trojan Horse Is Welcomed Into Hell'	83
'The Orangutan Babies Not All For Sale At Once'	83
'Mara The Great'	84

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

'The Two Dayaks Experience Hell's Hospitality'	86
'Over The Top!'	89
'K.L.'	90
'Time To Strike?'	90
'The Rescue Begins!'	91
'The Amazons Come To The Fore'	94
'The Takeover Of The Main Gate'	95
'The Main Gate Opens!'	96
'LOVELY!'	96
'The Two Dayaks Also Swing Into Action'	97
'Mr Aladdin Makes A Difficult Choice'	97
'The First Elder's Son'	98
'Two Trojans Pay A Visit To Mara's House'	99
'The Two Trojans Pay A Visit To Igor's Shed'	100
'Igor Is Fed Up!'	100
'The Laser Beams Are Gone!'	102
'The Orphans Make Themselves Feel At Home'	102
'Time To Go!'	103
'The Two Clown Orangutans Are Not Forgotten'	103
'Ready, Set...'	103
3	104
STORMY WEATHER	104
'No Petrol!'	105

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

'I KNEW IT!'	105
'Mara Puts On A 'Fireworks' Display For The Truck'	105
'A Dragonfly Attempts To Down An Eagle.'	107
'The Calm After The Storm'	108
'Stalemate'	108
'The Three Queens Say Hello'	109
'Mara Loves A Challenge'	111
'How To Get Petrol?'	111
'Borneo On 24 Hour Notice'	112
'The Wise Person Project'	112
'Life On Mars'	113
'Three Russians Have Come On Board'	113
'Mr Aladdin Makes An Interesting Suggestion'	114
'Koko The Gorilla Who Loves Cats'	114
'A New Stowaway Canine Friend!'	115
'A Russian Play with an Old Soldier Who Fools The Devil'	116
'Lanang Thinks Of A Real Devil.....'	117
'A Birthday Party For One Lucky Orangutan Child!'	117
'Mara The Positive Thinker...'	118
'Epiphytes And Flying Buttresses'	119
'Flying Buttress Principles Put To Good Practice'	122
'HIGH RISK!'	123
'An Interesting Tale Waits To Be Told'	124

4	124
<i>STRONG WINDS</i>	125
‘Half Time Is Over!’	125
‘Carlos’s Death-Defying Dive!’	127
‘An Angel Helps Out Lanang’	128
‘Operation Petrol Station’	129
‘Time To Leave The Party!’	130
‘A Fight To The End’	131
‘Mara’s Secret Weapon’	132
‘No Tunnel Vision!’.....	133
‘Mr Papiyan Can’t Get Any Sleep’	134
‘Are The Gods Against The Orangutans?’	135
‘Mara Plays His Trump Card’.....	137
‘Does Mr Papiyan Want A Banana?’.....	138
‘After So Many Years The Past Finally Catches Up...’	139
‘Would Lanang Remember His History Lessons?’.....	139
‘Mr Papiyan Talks About Coco Pops’	140
‘Volcanoes: The Bringers Of Both Life And Death’	140
‘Lanang Keeps Offering Mr Papiyan A Banana’	141
‘A First Class Clown Act!’	141
‘Like Two Trapped Flies In A Spider’s Web...’	142
‘The Gods Have What They Want’	143
‘Fearing The Curse Of Sisyphus’	143

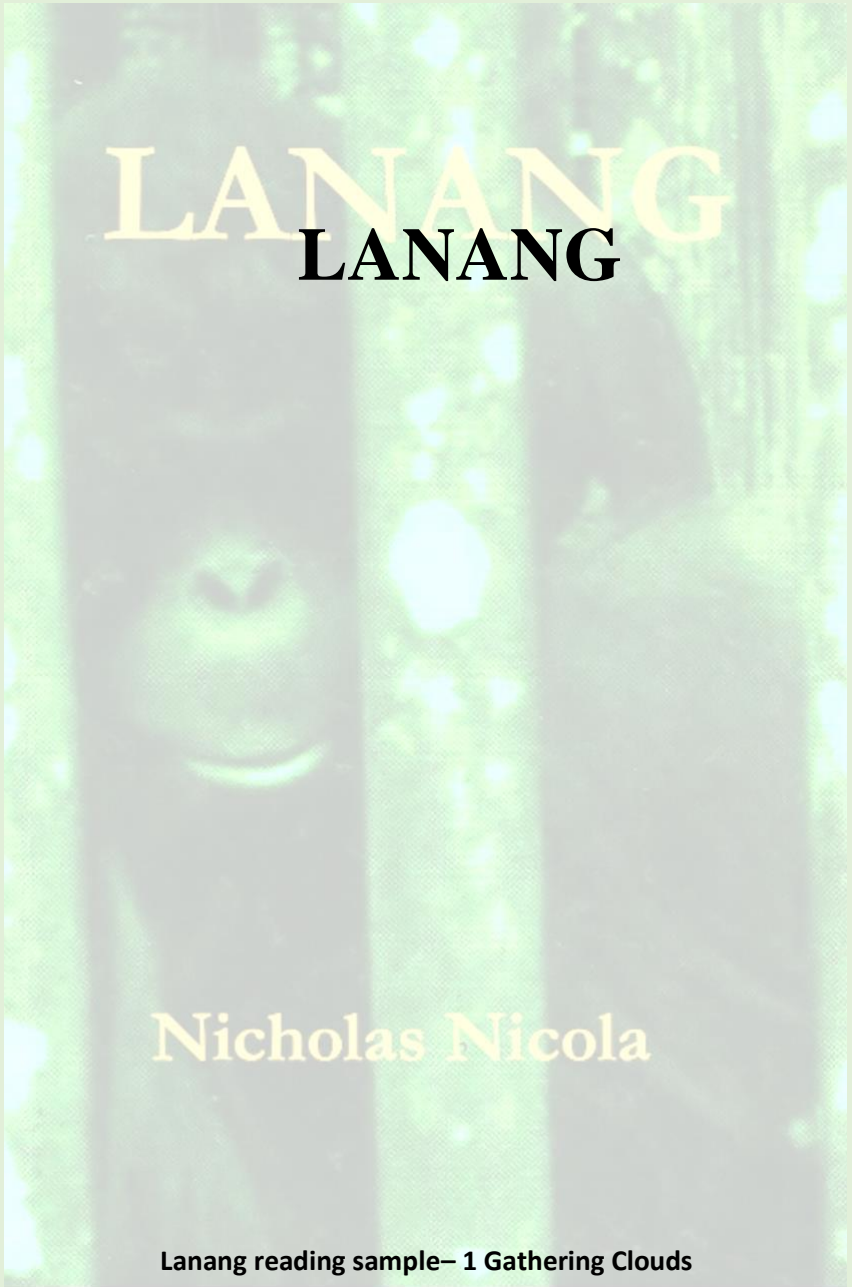
Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

'Mara Sorts Out A Mystery'	144
'Another Turn For The Worst'	144
'A 'Doomsnight' Scenario...'	144
'It's Just Like Playing A Musical Instrument'	147
'One Can Only Hope...'	148
'The Toaster That Ambushed Mara's Convoy'	149
'Lanang Awaits His Fate'	151
'An Empty Feeling'	152
'The Underworld Is The Only Safe Place'	152
'Blessed Are The Children...'	154
'The Apocalypse!'	155
'A Deadly Surprise!'	156
'The End Of The Trojan Horse'	160
5	162
<i>CLEARING SKIES</i>	162
'Mara's Escape'	162
'Mara's Capture'	163
'Hanging Around...'	165
'Let Freedom Reign!'	165
'The Mysterious Mastermind 'Mr Lanang''	171
'THREE STUPID MEN!'	172
'Justice Always Needs A Push Along!'	172
'After The Tunnel A Final Walk To Freedom'	173

'More Fireworks And A Very Happy Surprise!'	173
'The Orangutans Are Free At Last!'	176
'How Lanang Cheated On Death'	176
'Years Have Gone By & Lanang Still Remembers...'	178
'The First Elder's Son Is Freed'	178
'The Bomb Is Downsized'	179
'Blessed Are The Peacemakers'	180
'An Advanced Civilization'	181
'Two Old Friends'	181
'Lanang Has Peace At Last...'	182
The End	183
Author's Afterword	184
NOTES	186

Nicholas Nicola

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds



LANANG

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Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

LANANG

1

GATHERING CLOUDS

‘The ‘Great Leader’ Has Doubts’

Lanang eyed the others and wondered if they would win; it had been a long time since he had said to his friends they should stand up for what is right. However, it was too late now to back out of this mission. In the darkness Lanang looked into the wide open eyes of his friends and felt their full trust in him.

All was still. It was the well-known calm before the coming storm.

‘They look so innocent...’ Lanang took his mind back to when it all began...like some other life...

‘The Phantom Agents!’

The future leader watched television with the Dayak boy Aladdin. Soldiers with netted motorcycle helmets and samurai swords were jumping out of a big station wagon. They were modern day ninjas who were the good guys. These fighters for goodness were using star-shaped knives hidden up the sleeves of

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

their leather jackets to attack black clothed gunmen who had tied up innocent people in a factory. The hostages could only be freed if the kidnappers were given money.

“What’s this show?” signed Lanang.

“*Phantom Agents.*” signalled Aladdin. “It’s a Japanese children’s show from the 1960s.”

“They look like they’re wearing pineapples on their heads!” Lanang laughed as he waved his hands while signalling with them. “I like the moon badges on the front of their helmets!”

“The leader is called Phanta. Each phantom agent is named after a phase of the moon. There’s even a female phantom agent and her name is Margo. They are all fighting members of an evil group called the Black Flag.” said Aladdin who moved his hands very quickly.

The orangutan also liked the star knives; he copied the action of using them by rubbing the palm of his hand in quick strokes over his other palm.

Aladdin laughed. “That’s good! I guess you have the best hands for it! You should show the others!”

‘*I should!*’ thought Lanang.

The evil gunmen did not know where the star knives were coming from - as the phantom agents had hidden themselves very well in the factory - so they were not sure where to shoot. One by one the gunmen were wounded.

The bad guys were also jumped on from above by the good guys who could climb along the ceiling beams.

Lanang saw the phantom agents tried hard not to kill anyone; it was seen as a last choice to use a gun - only to be done if there really was nothing else to do. ‘*Life is important.*’

There was a surprise attack by other phantom agents who had been hiding behind a big cloth with a brick pattern so they could not be seen against a brick factory wall.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

The last bad men ran off scared – thinking that ghosts had been against them! The hurt criminals who could not escape were caught and tied together with a big rope. The other criminals would be found later as the phantom agents already knew the whereabouts of their hideout.

All the kidnapers would be going to court to face prison when they were proven guilty of their wrongdoings.

The freed hostages with big smiles on their faces thanked their heroes.

‘A Special Friendship’

Aladdin turned the television off. Pointed to a fruit bowl. “You want a banana?”

Lanang nodded.

After handing over the banana Aladdin looked out of a window. The boy lived with his parents and sister amid a Borneo rainforest.

It was very hot but with a heavy blanket of clouds above it looked as if it was about to rain.

“I think you might get wet going home.” stated Aladdin.

Lanang eyed the grey sky. He knew to stay dry by keeping under the thick high brush of the trees. Lanang waved his hand at Aladdin to signal there would be no problem.

“I guess you know the rainforest better than me.” Aladdin smiled.

Lanang went down a ladder outside the longhouse that was set on high thin stilts.

Aladdin said goodbye to his best friend as he watched him go into the thick rainforest. Lanang cheerfully waved back.

The two teenagers knew each other very well. It was a special friendship.

‘The Killing Of Lanang’s Mother’

When Lanang was still a boy his mother had been shot and killed by two bad men. Lanang could still remember his mother pushing him into the thick branches of the next tree just before her big body fell onto the rainforest floor. Lanang saw two men with a brown sack run up to his mother who was crying. Lanang wanted to jump to be with her. Yet, he knew what he had to do; his mother was very ‘jungle wise’ and had readied Lanang for this awful moment. Sadly, she knew one day it would come.

Lanang was told to stay well-hidden and to not make a sound. The bad men would kill her and go after him. They wanted him alive. She wasn’t sure why but young orangutans meant a lot to these evil men.

Lanang’s mother was like all orangutan mothers who would protect their babies even if it meant their own deaths.

Lanang’s mother when she was only a girl herself had seen from the edge of a clearing some other baby orangutans placed in a wooden box. It had been put on the back of a truck that had driven away. Lanang’s mother with her mother had then seen the fly covered bodies of several dead mothers on the brush floor of the rainforest. What made this fearful scene even worse was that some of these dead mothers had missing body parts.

“A cut-up body is truly terrible to see...” Lanang’s mother had stated with tears welling up in her eyes as this childhood nightmare was remembered.

Lanang’s mother had cuddled tightly to her mother while they saw the bullet holes in the bodies of the dead mothers; both had wondered about the loud bangs and the screams that had led them to come over to this part of the rainforest. Alas it was to do with this mass killing of their kind.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

After seeing all this senseless death mother and daughter had then gone deep inside the rainforest to make sure no men could hurt them. Yet, as the years passed and Lanang's mother grew up to have her own child she noticed that what had once been the heart of the rainforest was now itself becoming an edge. The rainforest was being cut down. The evil day would come when it would be impossible to hide.

'Lanang Outsmarts The Kidnappers'

That evil day had come.

Lanang's dying mother lay on her back. Her crying had stopped. She was breathing heavily. With her head slightly tilted she was looking wide-eyed up at the trees to see her son. Her eyebrows moved up and down ever so slightly signalling to Lanang to stay hidden. As much as it went against every sense of loyalty in his young body Lanang obeyed his mother. In Lanang's hand was a small hard fruit which he had wanted to throw at the two men who now poked his mother with their rifles. They had expected to find Lanang in her arms.

When it was clear the young orangutan was not on the ground the two men looked up a tree. They were smiling as well as yelling for Lanang to come down. One of the men took out a banana from a daypack and waved it skywards. However, Lanang's 'friends' were looking up the wrong tree. Lanang was now in the next one and knew the two men could not see him. Although only the sides of the faces of these two murderers could be seen Lanang knew he would always remember what they looked like. Both men were very fit; one man was tall with a thick moustache while the other was slightly shorter with a deep scar on the right side of his face and a black eye patch over his right eye. It looked as if a jungle

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

animal like a clouded leopard, crocodile or maybe even a bearded pig had scratched him.

It was clear to this clever primate child that these two men who thought they could surely find him could really only guess as to where he was. Lanang's mother also knew this and knowing her son would be safe she let go of her last breath.

The man with the big moustache looked down at Lanang's mother. He kicked her to be sure she was dead. He then looked up at the trees and then kicked her again. Again. Again. The man was hoping Lanang would get very angry and in some way give away where he was hiding.

Nothing.

Both men stopped smiling. The banana was thrown onto the ground and the rifles were raised. Lanang kept his cool. He stayed perfectly still.

After a few minutes of this 'jungle stand-off' the two men started to angrily shout.

BANG! A rifle shot.

BANG! Another shot from the other rifle.

The bullets whizzed harmlessly by Lanang. The two murderous kidnappers were only trying to scare Lanang so he would make a sudden move to show where he was and so had aimed their rifles high up and well away from where they thought the young orangutan maybe. Thankfully, Lanang remained both smart and brave enough to stay still and keep hiding. The two men angrily shouted again and then suddenly stopped. Looking back at Lanang's mother they cut off a hand with a big long knife then walked away. "We may get a good price for this off a stupid tourist at the market."

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

‘Lanang Pays His Last Respects’

Lanang stayed in the tree for many hours; looking down all that time at his dear dead mother who now only had one hand. He did not cry. He was silent. He was not scared. He was angry. He wanted to hurt these men for killing his mother. However, for now his love for his mother was so great he did what he had to do to stay free – for *her* sake. His mother had told him that the men would pretend that they had gone away and then grab him when he came down to her dead body. It was true. After half an hour the two men had suddenly come out of nowhere to have another look up the wrong tree. They even checked the banana and saw that it had not been touched. “Too bad.” said one of the men as he put the banana back into his daypack next to a medical kit with needles. “The sleeping mixture we stabbed into this banana would have worked so well.”

The nasty men went away. Lanang would wait until nightfall before climbing down. His mother had told him to get away from the death scene as quickly as possible but Lanang had to touch his mother one more time. She was brave. He wanted to ‘feel’ her spirit. He wanted her spirit to be his spirit too. Luckily, no large jungle animal had come along to bite pieces out of his mother or to even have a big bird or snake come by her. It was also a good thing no other of his kind had come along to face being attacked.

‘A Very Sad Orangutan Boy Has An Accident’

Later, in the distance, there were rifle shots and Lanang feared other orangutans may have been killed or kidnapped.

Night. A full moon was shining as Lanang quietly climbed down from his ‘tree of life’ and hugged his mother. He slept. In the morning, heartbroken, Lanang left his mother where she lay after

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

covering her body with a few leaves, twigs and small branches. The sad son went into the rainforest to find food. Even though he didn't feel like eating it was what his mother would have wanted him to do. Lanang was nearly eight years old and soon he would have left his mother to start his own life. Lanang had never known his father and so his mother had taught him how to make his daily sleeping nest as well as showing him the hundreds of fruits and plants which could be used for food, tools and medicine.

Lanang would get by but losing his mother left him very sad. The will to live was not really there and again it was only out of love for his mother that he went on with life. This sad state of mind explained the careless way Lanang moved across the top of the forest. This unhappy primate would not always check that the next vine he would use to carry his growing body could hold his weight. Thus, to his great shock, Lanang one day fell out of the trees when the vine he was swinging on had snapped. Landing on top of a bush softened Lanang's fall but his foot had banged against its strong trunk to badly hurt his ankle. Lanang had enough sense to climb to the top of the bush to keep away from any big animal that may want him for lunch. Orangutans had learnt over thousands of years that the higher up they were the less chance they could be hunted and eaten. The pain in his ankle was so bad he could not climb back up to the rainforest roof until the aching had stopped.

'Lanang Is Adopted By Mr Aladdin's Family'

A loud noise. *'Oh no! Could be a cloud leopard!'* Lanang scarily knew cloud leopards were willing to attack young orangutans but he couldn't climb up a small tree next to him as the pain in his ankle was too great. *"I'm done for!"* His fear grew when he saw the threat was far worse than any so called wild animal: a human boy and man were coming towards him.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

“LOOK father!” pointed the boy. “A hurt orangutan!”

Lanang was holding his leg; the frightened look on his face made it clear he was in trouble.

“Wait here Aladdin,” stated the father. “No need to be scared lad,” kindly said the father to Lanang. “I’m not going to hurt you.” Unluckily for Aladdin’s father despite the calm tone in his voice an immovable Lanang could only think of defending himself: he tried to poke the father’s eyes with a long stick.

“NOW! NOW!” laughed Aladdin’s father. “I’m no giant who is going to eat you!” Although Lanang was trying to blind him the father well understood why the young orangutan thought that a human being could not be trusted. “Aladdin! Come over here!”

“Yes, father?”

“This brave warrior won’t let me come any closer. You’re much smaller than me. So, you are not as scary. Boys will be boys so they say. Sit here and just smile at him. Let him feel he can relax. I’m going back to the house to bring some cream for his leg.”

Lanang saw the man walk away and watched the boy sit down near him and smile. *‘What were they up too – these tricky humans?’* Maybe he was meant to keep looking at the boy so the man could more easily catch him from behind. Lanang quickly turned his head - and half his body around with it - but could see nobody.

‘OUCH!’ His quick body movement increased the pain.

‘OH NO!’ Lanang could feel the boy’s hand on his hand! Lanang had let down his guard and dropped his stick to grab his sore ankle.

The boy now had his hand on top of Lanang’s hand and it could only mean he would be grabbed from the bush to be taken prisoner.

Lanang was about to pull the boy’s hand away with his free hand but his sixth sense suddenly told him there would be no need. To this day Lanang is not sure what stopped him from smashing Aladdin’s hand to then punch the boy in the face but he did notice

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

that the boy had *softly* put his hand on top of his hand; as if to gently say that he did care about Lanang.

The hurt orangutan took a big chance and let Aladdin hold his hand. It felt kind. Lanang calmed down. Maybe he wouldn't be dragged off to a cage. The man came back and Lanang could see that he had a small white tube in his hand and from it came a smell of the cream which to Lanang was much the same as the 'bush medicine' he would use. *'Were these humans actually going to help him?'* It seemed unthinkable. Yet, it was true! The father rubbed the cream on Lanang's ankle to help soothe the pain. Trust had replaced mistrust so Lanang 'allowed' the man and boy to take him back to their home where they could bandage his hurt ankle. Lanang met the mother and Calypso who was Aladdin's younger sister. The family would take care of Lanang until his ankle was well again.

'Mr Aladdin The Learned Scholar'

"Our little Odysseus." joked the father. This poor Dayak farmer had no proper schooling but when the missionaries from far away western lands arrived they had taught him to read and write by using the Holy Bible and books by some of the world's great writers. (Odysseus was an Old Greek hero who had many adventures during his ten years of travel going back to his home island. Odysseus was returning after the end of a long war fought across the seas at a far-away place called Troy and his eventful journey was talked about by an Old Greek poet named Homer). The missionaries were now gone but only to be replaced by businessmen who wanted to make money by cutting down the rainforest until it would be no more. The tribal people - along with the rainforest and all the animals in it - also faced losing everything. Thus, Lanang was amongst friends who saw him as

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

someone that was also suffering from the disasters that had befallen the land.

‘What’s In A Name...?’

As it was Mr Aladdin was not this wise Dayak’s real name but followed on from being given the unusual nickname ‘Aladdin’ by the missionaries when as a boy it was seen he liked the Middle Eastern folk tales of a *One Thousand and One Nights*. (Although it would prove to be that ‘Mr Aladdin’ would like myths, legends and stories from all over the world and from all historical times including Old Greek ones which lately he was looking at more often). Mr Aladdin being very much his own person - even amongst those of his own people - had decided to keep his true Dayak name and those of his family a secret to outsiders so as to be only known by those close to him. As time passed ‘Mr Aladdin’ became his commonly used name with the ‘Mr’ added after the birth of his son after publicly calling him ‘Aladdin’ as an easy way of keeping up ‘word-wise’ a barrier between an ever infringing outside world and his familiar own world.

Also ‘Calypso’ the public name of his daughter was based on an Old Greek sea goddess adoringly given to her when his daughter who when she saw the sea for the first time laughingly went straight into the surf for a swim. Mr Aladdin’s wife was not so much into her husband’s ‘foolishness’ but publicly he would cheerfully call his wife ‘Hecuba’ after the wife of the Trojan king Priam after he saw the movie *The Trojan Women* which was based on a long ago play by the Old Greek playwright Euripides. Hecuba in this movie was played by a famous American actress Katherine Hepburn who by then in her later years majestically showed how Hecuba heroically stood up to the invading Greeks for the rights of the surviving Trojan women and children after the sad fall of the

city Troy. Hecuba's fighting spirit was very much like that of Mr Aladdin's wife who wholeheartedly supported her husband's strong interest in caring for the rainforest and all who lived within it including the orangutans. All such very different names to publicly use for his family; unlike other local people who had names from the Holy Bible due to the influence of the missionaries. Mr Aladdin actually did not mind the Holy Bible but it did please his off-beat sense of humour that his son was now good friends with Lanang as if to echo from a long ago past – although in a different way – the strong relationship that existed between the hero boy Aladdin and his friend the monkey Abu in the *Arabian Nights*).

'What The Dayaks Believe'

As animists the Dayak Iban people believed a strong life spirit or *semengut* was within all humans, animals and plants. All life was to be cared for. Thus, the damage that was happening to plants, animals and people was sickening the very soul of the planet. These former head hunters believed where they lived was very special. What lay beyond the land of the Dayaks was only disorder which had to be kept away as it was full of evil.

The Dayaks worshipped the Sun known as Mahatala for it was the male part of the Supreme Being who ruled over them while an Underworld known as Jata was the female half of their God. The Dayaks knew Jata as a water snake that circled itself around biting its tail so as to make a sacred mandala which was a special symbol. (It was even believed the land of the Dayaks was on the back of the watersnake). Jata lay on the waters running between the Upperworld and the Underworld.

The symbol for the land was a snake while a hornbill bird was a symbol for the sky which was also deeply respected.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

From the tops of sacred mountains the Dayaks worshipped the Supreme Being who made the world from the Sun and Moon. The End Days would be due to human failings. It was easy to believe that while the rainforest was still logged the world would soon be no more. After the universe had disappeared only a young woman would be left and - hidden in a rock or tree - she would represent the underworld.

‘Lanang Learns About The Dayak World’

Lanang would wonder if this mystery woman was a symbol of life that could once again come out from inside the earth. *‘Who was to say...’* Lanang hopefully thought *‘...that she be a wise female orangutan like my mother? In that case she will hide in a tree!’*

It was Aladdin who explained the Dayak beliefs to Lanang. The young orangutan could also easily believe in a hell world outside where the Dayaks lived; as it seemed this is where evil men came from to destroy the special land of the Dayaks and the orangutans.

Lanang was also interested to learn that after the body’s death a Dayak soul would go on a boat; to drift along a river, that peacefully took the dead person to the Upperworld.

Some orangutans had learnt to paddle with canoes by watching the humans travel this way on the waterways; so Lanang now thought: *‘I must try to save the rainforest which is heaven on earth!’*

‘Mr Aladdin Remembers A Very Sad Orphan’

The father had much kindness for Lanang for when he was a young teenager he had come across an orphan boy orangutan holding a stick at a small animal help centre. For his own safety

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

the orangutan was in a wire cage as it was feared if this mentally damaged primate went outside he would hurt himself.

This young Dayak teenager was amazed to see a kind monkey befriend the sad orphan and give him some seeds to eat and keep him company. There was a true care being shown here and it was needed as the young orangutan kept wildly rocking his whole body back and forth in a highly scared way. Clearly this child had never been held for long in the loving arms of his mother who had surely been killed by kidnappers who had wanted to sell him to be a pet.

Mr Aladdin had come close to the unhappy primate who stopped rocking his body. With the red-brown trace in his mainly black hair the young Mr Aladdin understood that the boy orangutan had in his sadness seen him as a father figure. Standing so close to him the ‘father’ saw that his ‘son’ was a little happy. The young Mr Aladdin had to go home but after moving two steps away from the cage the loudest sad crying sound came out of the young male orangutan’s mouth. Mr Aladdin was shocked by this loud sad shout as he thought orangutans were normally quiet. Two steps back to the son. Peace. Two steps away. Screaming. Two steps back. Perfect silence. Two steps away. Crying. Two steps back. Calmness...

Many minutes passed...still no crying.

Mr Aladdin mentally toughened himself. He had to go home or his parents would be very worried. Nightfall was fast approaching. *‘Trust my luck there are no other visitors around.’* Mr Aladdin took a deep breath and walked away from the upset orangutan who sensed something was not right: he stretched out his hand through the thin wire cage to grab his new ‘father.’ Tears. Such crying was too hard to watch let alone listen too. Mr Aladdin walked firmly straight ahead to reach the exit of the animal help centre that was only manned by a couple of government rangers. (It seemed the few orangutans in this centre were only kept here until they could

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

be moved to a larger friendlier place where it was hoped they could even one day be able again to go back into the wild).

Mr Aladdin could never forget the heartbreaking crying of this young male orangutan whom he had ‘left behind’. As the caring teenager walked down the road outside the young orangutan’s loud crying drifted down to him. It was very sad and the boy was very upset.

Meeting Lanang would help Mr Aladdin the man to find a sort of personal happy end to help him get over what was a sad boyhood memory. Although humans hurting orangutans was not of his making Mr Aladdin did feel he should do more to have all people make the government stop this wrong doing. “*We must* save the orangutans and the rainforest!” Mr Aladdin would shake his head in sadness. “Why is the human race so stupid! So crazy! So bad! All of us must help the orangutans!”

‘Lanang Enjoys His Stay With The Family’

Lanang was well taken care for by the family and so was enjoying his rest. The one day that this hurt young orangutan thought he would only stay turned into one week and the week turned into a *whole month* before he finally thought to return to the rainforest. Lanang liked the delicious food especially made for him which he was given, the very comfortable bed he was sleeping in, all the loving attention he was getting and he was surely liking Aladdin’s enjoyable company. Aladdin’s mother was very caring to Lanang. Calypso would be very cheeky - both to Lanang and Aladdin – which helped raise the low spirits of her new ‘little brother’.

Mr Aladdin noticed how well his daughter got on with Lanang and thought if he were to give her another name now it would be Artemis the huntress being often shown with a bow and arrow and

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

who amongst other things was also the goddess of nature and wild animals.

Mr. Aladdin would also give both Lanang and Aladdin simple sign-language lessons so they could talk with each other. In what was the first time for Lanang to see a computer Mr Aladdin showed both his students and Calypso as well a video of a deaf girl and an orangutan who were talking to each other over the internet by using sign language. The orangutan told the girl how sad it was that the rainforest the orangutans lived in was being destroyed. It brought on body pain not to Lanang's ankle but to his heart. As for the ankle it was alright after twenty-four hours but Lanang pretended to be in pain for a few more days. Orangutans were known to be the deep thinkers of the jungle but along with being very smart and wise, they also had a cheeky sense-of-humour so Lanang was in a friendly way making most of the surprising chance to enjoy 'five-star hotel service'.

'Unlucky Sad Orangutans'

Lanang was a welcome guest of the family who could freely leave whenever he wanted too unlike the unlucky orangutans sold to be playthings who with bad owners were trapped like prisoners being chained up or put in cages or were not fed well, to live sad lives and to even die while still hoping for someone to rescue them.

'Lucky Sad Lanang'

Yes, luckily for Lanang he was living the good life with this human family. It was very interesting for Lanang as he had become a loner who did not mix too well with other orangutans. Young orangutans are known to quickly get over any hurtful event which

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

well displays their mental strength but with Lanang there was never this sense of a full return to happiness. He was friendly enough and there were four or five orangutans he could count on as good friends but always this big sadness would overcome him that made him feel better to be on his own for a few days. It was during such a ‘sad time’ that Lanang’s accident had happened. However, with Aladdin he could be friends especially when there was no need to always have to talk.

‘Lanang And Aladdin Learn To Talk To Each Other’

Although these two friends belonged to different species they were of like mind. With that said Lanang was amazed that Aladdin’s mind could not send mind messages as Lanang’s orangutan telepathy which was a mental skill humans did not know about was very developed; the young orangutan also found it strange that human language (Aladdin practiced speaking in English to Lanang while Mr Aladdin would try out his Latin) was simple compared to the highly advanced speech of his species; it would have surprised Lanang if he ever found out how humans considered his ‘no-word sounds’ as ‘primitive’.

“Same, same but different.” was a common saying which Lanang and Aladdin would use to talk about their special friendship; they were developing ways to understand each other using different hand signs and sounds which looked confusing to outsiders but which to these two were nothing special.

Lanang had no problem using the many hand signs shown to him and Aladdin learnt the different tones of Lanang’s voice to the point that he understood that a long sound maybe a noise of happiness while a short loud yell was a spoken sign of disapproval. It was all a matter of common sense really. Lanang found it suited him very well that he could just pretend that he did not understand

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

what Aladdin was saying if he wanted to be left alone and Aladdin was not offended when this happened; when he wanted company Aladdin was always there to be his friend.

‘Lanang Kindly Treats His Human Hosts As Equals’

Lanang’s higher moral sense always made sure that he would not treat Aladdin and the other humans of this family as ‘pets’ but as *equals*. After all, Lanang was thankful of the kindness the family had shown towards him. An older wiser orangutan male named Bapoo who Lanang had gained some ‘fatherly advice’ had once told him let people think you are stupid because then they will show their true ways to you; meaning that people would often make fun of you because of your ‘stupidity’; while on the other hand a person could be pleasantly surprised by the good nature of people who will still be nice just like Aladdin and his family were very caring towards Lanang. There had also been the ‘fatherly’ advice to ‘always be polite to people’ and so this smart orangutan also acted in a thankful way when his human hosts passed on knowledge to him. Mr Aladdin would tell Lanang that malaria came from mosquitoes but Lanang already knew this and to use rainforest medicines for this terrible illness. Still, Lanang would act surprised and thanked Mr Aladdin with open hands for passing on this important medical fact.

‘A New Family Member’

Although Lanang did finally leave after a one month stay he had become such a part of the family he would visit as he pleased and as the big longhouse was a community space in which many other families lived no one minded the ever returning young guest. Lanang was always welcome to stay overnight or longer if he

wished. So many years had gone by and here again was the passing of another afternoon at Aladdin's place; but this time Lanang had watched *Phantom Agents* and this time his whole life was about to change. 'Tell the others.' Aladdin had said and Lanang couldn't get the idea out of his head. 'Why not tell the others? Why couldn't they be *Phantom Agents*? Why not indeed!'

'Lanang Wants To Act On His Fantastic Idea'

"WHAT A RIDICULOUS IDEA!" joked one of the three elderly leaders of Lanang's tribe. These wise, old male orangutans had adopted Lanang soon after his mother's death.

"You watch too many human television shows! You stupid silly thing!" The tall tree the three Elders and Lanang were in started to shake from the laughter of these adult male leaders who each had the strength of ten humans; for deep down in their hearts they very much liked Lanang.

"There's no need for such a commando group anyway! The *homo sapiens* have left us alone for a long time now. We have your *first* idea to thank for that."

'Orangutan Neighbourhood Watch'

Although the valley's very steep slopes had up to now kept the loggers away there was still the threat of kidnappers. Lanang had organised a 'neighbourhood watch' with everyone keeping an eye out for any humans with guns entering into their tribal land. The orangutans lived in a valley where the 'bottlenecks' at both ends could be easily watched. Turns were taken to always have two orangutans on lookout with one on either valley entrance. Whenever a poacher - another name for those human kidnappers who could also kill when stealing wild animals to make money -

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

was sighted by an orangutan he or she would blow on a leaf to warn everyone. Orangutan groups would quickly move into parts of the rainforest that were too difficult for human beings to walk into due to the very thick floor vegetation. After three times when poachers could not spot any orangutans in this rainforest valley they had not come back. It was believed by the tribe that these dangerous humans thought there were no orangutans in the valley.

‘A Young Primatologist Amuses The Orangutans’

One time the leaf whistle was given off for a totally different reason: a young new scientist who studied primates had wandered into the valley. He would amuse the orangutans as they watched him lie down in the wet mud ground of the rainforest. It seemed he was trying to hide from the orangutans but unknown to him orangutans from a whole tribe were studying him from their own hiding spots.

The man in the mud had a little black box which he put to his eye; apart from a loud click sound this ‘secret weapon’ was not causing any harm; what was amazing was the small paper square that would come out of the box after every click.

Worry quickly turned to curiosity and it was Lanang who was the first to go up to the very surprised primatologist. An exchange of sign language occurred but Lanang found it frustrating that the range of words that the human could rely on was limited. *“Hello...yes I can say HELLO!”* A sigh. *‘It’s like talking to a child...’*

The primatologist suddenly aimed the black box at Lanang and pressed a button. He then waved to Lanang to come over and look at the wet square he was shaking to dry. Lanang was amazed to see himself!

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

The now very welcoming host took out a ‘harmonica leaf’ from behind his ear so he could make a loud rough sound; it was the signal for all the others to come out of the jungle and say hello to their visitor.

Everyone was interested in the Polaroid camera and the primatologist soon found himself taking a few group shots. He even showed his new friends how to operate it which of course they quickly learnt. As these orangutans were well mannered the human was politely offered jungle juice and fruit. The orangutans overlooked how the primate scientist crinkled up the leaf handed to him even though it was meant to be used as a napkin and did not wash his hands as well as they would do; they understood humans still had a long way to go to be as smart and cultured as them. However, after being shown a leaf harmonica the primate scientist played on it for his new friends a recital of *Old Man River* (retitled as *Old Orangutan River*) as a goodbye.

‘It Is Hoped Lanang’s Idea Improves The Young’

“What do you think of Lanang’s idea?” remarked the First Elder to the other two Elders. It had been decided to have a private meeting.

“I think it is a *total waste of time* except for one thing...” replied the Second Elder.”

“What may that be?” inquired the Third Elder.

“These young ones need *discipline*.” grunted the Second Elder echoing the unending complaint that the old always made of the young.

“Yes! I agree!” The Third Elder slammed his hand on his knee to make clear his total agreement. “The other day there was a whole gang of boys screaming and laughing while madly swinging on the vines. I nearly had a heart attack they were making so much noise!

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

I even thought my mid-life crisis was going to come back!” snorted the Elder. “These *idiots* like to swing down on vines that are about to break but just before they do - switch to a good vine! Lucky no one has been killed! *Fun* they call it!”

“My sister was complaining that she had a nephew come and visit her and the first thing he did when he turned up was grab a banana without asking!” complained the Second Elder. “This nephew was staying over for a few days and each night he just slept in the *same* nest! Even babies know to put a fresh leaf over their heads when it rains! It did not bother him that insects were coming into the nest! He just *would not* make a fresh insect-free nest every night! Very lazy and unhealthy! The young don’t know the meaning of the word *work*! We can cover up to ten kilometres a day to gather food but this lot would be lucky to cover ten *millimetres*! Ah these stupid silly things! All these kids want to do is swing around! ‘Swingniks’ – that’s what I call them! Generation R for rude is a label which also suits!”

“Yes! Bad manners are all they know!” growled the First Elder. “They are very immature! We have to keep these disrespectful young ones off the vines!”

“Lanang’s idea is crazy but it would be good to teach the younger generation to learn some life skills that will improve their moral fibre!” said the Second Elder.

“It’s agreed.” stated the First Elder. “We’ll let Lanang go ahead with his ridiculous commando unit. We’ll humour him and say it is a great idea. If the younger generation start to behave then that’s all the success we can really expect. If nothing else I’m sure we will be entertained!” The Elders laughed so hard that the tree shook.

‘The Reincarnation Project’

“He would be a good candidate – wouldn’t he?” suggested the First Elder when the laughing session had finally stopped. “Yes he would...” agreed the other Elders who could all see Lanang in a faraway tree putting up a banana leaf roof. It was noticed how good he was in tying up the branches to make a solid frame for the large leaves to rest on; if there was rain it was certain there would be no leaks. “Hmmm...he might turn out to be like Michelangelo...”

Long ago a clever scheme had been worked out by orangutans to learn more about the mysterious ways of humanity as well as to try to have a good effect on human history. The basic plan went along the lines that an orangutan would be selected and prepared over time both mentally and spiritually so at the point of natural death their spirit would enter into human shape and live one human life. At the end of this ‘study exercise’ the orangutan would return to the rainforest in the next life and tell all. So, it is funny to think how human art historians do not know the real source of Michelangelo’s very different building supports that allowed him to paint the Sistine Ceiling; a visit to any tropical rainforest with its many interconnecting series of vines and branches along its rooftop would show straight away where he got the idea from. Of course another famous artist who was surely a reincarnate had to be the Dutch artist Rembrandt which explained how he was interested in doing so many paintings of his ever changing human face from the first days of his youth until old age. While from centuries past a London poet William Blake was certainly a reincarnate having said how in a wildflower is heaven as orangutans certainly saw their wild rainforest ‘universe’ as heavenly. There was as well a calm-minded Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius whose philosophical book *Meditations* so liked by many humans to this day had clearly come about from an earlier

life spent in silent thought living up a rainforest tree. The way the great scientist Albert Einstein thought in such an interesting way about the universe and often liked to have sleeping naps throughout the day to renew his mind surely could only have been because of him also being a reincarnate.

Reincarnate orangutans always had red hair but they would sometimes change the colour to avoid being found out by humans; one thing which could never be covered up was their generosity, helpfulness, compassion, humility, good humour, inventiveness, advanced creativity and originality, sense of adventure, off-beat solution solving and high intelligence.

‘The Charles Darwin Controversy’

The strange thing was that when an orangutan returned to the rainforest in the next life and was asked about the human species more often than not the reincarnate would keep silent. Not a word would be spoken! It was very frustrating for the other orangutans – especially for the Elders who along with the tribal shaman had put in a lot of their spiritual energy to make the rebirth possible. It was usually thought that something had gone wrong and another reincarnation would take place to make up for it. Most of the reincarnates kept quiet as they found the human species often very crazy and if this raw fact was told the reincarnates feared they would be tossed out forever from the tribe or cursed or become a laughing stock. It was better the orangutans knew nothing rather than be told the terrible truth of the stupidity that made up most of human history. (So much so that the good in humanity often seemed outweighed by so much that was bad).

A case in point was an orangutan who returned at the time Charles Darwin had just written *Origin of the Species*. This orangutan reincarnate was too frightened to mention that human

beings believed that they were *on top* of the evolutionary tree when it was plain to see that orangutans followed by mountain gorillas had top billing while human beings would have to fight it out with the chimpanzees, gibbons, bonobos, macaques, capuchins, spider monkeys and perhaps even with the baboons for the next place on the evolutionary scale.

‘Human Ignorance Angers The First Elder’

A very recent reincarnate was also too scared to mention that primatologists believed that orangutans only had the intelligence level of a five year old human child. It was secretly mentioned in passing to the First Elder whose booming voice was not so secret as it could be heard throughout the whole rainforest valley: “WHAT!!!!? A FIVE YEAR OLD! *EUREKA! WE WHO CAN SELECT UP TO FOUR HUNDRED DIFFERENT TYPES OF RAINFOREST VEGETATION ON ANY GIVEN DAY!!!!? WHO CAN IMAGINE IN OUR MINDS HOW TO PLAN AHEAD TO GO THROUGH A RAINFOREST AND NEVER GET LOST! HOW MANY HUMAN FIVE YEAR OLDS CAN DO THAT!!!!? WE WHO GAVE THE WORLD THE SISTINE CEILING, MIND BODY MEDITATION AND THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY?!!! GET OUT OF MY SIGHT!!!!*” Thus, one can understand why reincarnates were afraid to speak up. Yet, the Reincarnation Project continues to this day.

‘Lanang The Student Of Human History’

It was not the next life Lanang was interested in but *this life*. Having gained the approval from the Elders Lanang wasted no time to have a commando group that could *fight back* when bad humans hurt orangutans. Lanang knew he could also count on the

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

support of good humans such as Aladdin, as Lanang had learnt not all humans were evil; in fact, it seemed most human beings were good which made it even more strange for Lanang to understand – as he watched the news - why a few bad human beings were allowed to cause so much harm not only to the rainforest but to the whole world. This interested orangutan was now not only watching *Phantom Agents* to gain good ideas but also movies and history shows. For instance, Mr Aladdin - with his son's help – explained a history show to Lanang that was about an ancient leader called Hannibal - who was from a place in North Africa called Carthage - who kept outsmarting the mighty Romans who had one of the greatest empires the ancient world had ever seen. Apart from famously taking his troops over the Alps with his elephants - which totally surprised Rome - Hannibal also beat the Romans at the Battle of Cannae. This clever general would show how brain-power could defeat body-power.

“It's clear he was another orangutan reincarnate.” laughed Aladdin. Lanang had told him about the Reincarnation Project.

With 80,000 soldiers against him Hannibal's 40,000 men from Carthage made a tight circle around this big army. Hannibal then used the strength of his enemy against itself for the Roman soldiers could only fall in on each other as they were squeezed by this strong-willed human ring. Hannibal's outnumbered warriors caused the Romans to lose up to 70,000 men.

“It was a battle of total destruction. It is not for nothing that Hannibal is called the Father of Strategy.” noted Mr. Aladdin.

It was always great for Lanang to learn from history how a few could defeat the many such as with the fast Athenian ships which trapped the bigger but slower Persian navy at the straits at Salamis; of the three hundred Spartans stopping for many days a hundred thousand Persians at the Greek mountain pass at Thermopylae.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

“At Marathon the Athenian commander Miltiades refused to be too careful.” added Mr Aladdin. “His outnumbered forces acted first by rushing in a steady, disciplined fashion towards the large Persian army. Miltiades knew he had to act quickly before the Persian cavalry could get into position on the beach. As such a powerful force would stop any chance of Greek success. The Persians thought Miltiades was crazy to *attack* them.” continued Mr Aladdin. “Yet his daring led to a brave citizen army out-thinking a surprised, overconfident stronger enemy. The Persians were surrounded and wiped out. The surviving invaders were pushed back into the sea. It is said by some that Hannibal applied the tactics of Marathon at Cannae.” Mr Aladdin smiled at Lanang. “Who dares wins! As the best soldiers say!”

‘Alas, I too have only a few but we too can win!’

‘A Sad Warning’

Lanang was amazed when a phantom agent rolled himself up like a bowling ball to knock down some Black Flag bad guys. It seemed these heroes could always cheat death but in one show a phantom agent was blown up by a bomb. All that was left was the phantom agent’s boot.

‘Yes, it’s not a game to fight against wrong doing...’ unhappily thought Lanang. *‘It can cost me my life - or worse - the lives of my friends.’*

‘More Is Learnt About Humans On The Internet’

Mr Aladdin had connected the internet to the longhouse. Thus, with Aladdin’s help Lanang also learnt more about humanity from cyberspace. Although Aladdin would first surprise Lanang by showing him such movies and programs as *Planet of the Apes*,

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Every Which Way But Loose and the *Hathaways* which all involved chimpanzees, orangutans and gorillas in starring roles. (While Mr Aladdin thought it was great fun to show Lanang the family movie *Dr Doolittle* which was about an animal doctor who could talk to animals!) Aladdin interpreted for Lanang yet as it was this young curious orangutan ‘scholar’ was also learning many English words which helped him to read the human way.

“English is the present world language.” explained Aladdin. “It’s why so many websites are in this foreign tongue but it is also good to look at those webpages in our local language. I can translate them.”

Thankfully Aladdin also finally found on the internet an out-of-the-way translator which he played around with so it was possible to change human speech into Lanang’s language which not only helped with Lanang to understand what humans were saying on the internet, television and radio but would also help him to speak with Aladdin and the rest of the family. Anyhow, Lanang’s typing skills were coming along quite nicely – practice makes perfect as they say. As Lanang practiced writing sentences it bothered him though that grammar spellchecks on word documents always drew a green underline when he added ‘who’ after orangutans or any other animal as if it was wrong. According to English grammar rules Lanang was supposed to write ‘that’ or ‘which’ (as well as ‘it’) but didn’t humans realise animals are living beings and not objects?! Lanang would always use ‘who’ while if he was typing a sentence about humans he would in turn use ‘that’ or ‘which’ for them in protest to this ‘higher human’ grammar rule that was against all other life on the planet. The internet for Lanang was certainly turning out to be a window through which he could see the craziness of an outside human world which the Dayaks believed brought only disaster to their land; typified by commercial television which had already made many more questioning human

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

minds wonder what had been the real point of billions of years of evolution if at the end of it all people were watching television for the sake of stupid ads to keep people to so often stupidly buy things they did not really need.

‘Why did people replace something basic that was working perfectly well with something with ‘improved features’ they are told they now must have?’

It mattered to Lanang to try to understand this human taste for useless things for it led to the unnecessary death of the rainforest. Millions of beautiful trees were being cut down! Rainforests were supplying the world with oxygen and taking in much carbon dioxide. Thus, helping to save the world from global warming! Why destroy them! They are the lungs of the world! Without rainforests the world could not breathe!

‘Palm Oil - The Killer Of Orangutans’

Yes, many orangutans were dying not only because their rainforests were cut down for logging but also to make way for palm oil which first came a long time ago by European boats who brought over palm oil seeds from West Africa. It was not only orangutans and other animals that were losing out but also tribal people who were forced off their lands to make way for palm oil trees. So, Mr Aladdin also did not like palm oil used in local biofuel and in many supermarket items like candles, shampoo, biscuits, noodles, cosmetics, soaps, lipstick, ice cream, chocolate, bread, detergent, crisps as well as other unhealthy junk food. Lanang could not believe how short-sighted many supermarkets were who also had palm oil in many of the things they sold as it was a cheap way to make their shelf life longer.

“Junk food matters more to these greedy human businesses than trees, wildlife and even the health of humans who eat such sugary,

fatty food. Yes, the good human shoppers MUST be allowed to make a proper choice by knowing all the facts! Children should tell their parents not to buy anything with palm oil so as to help save us and the rainforests!’

‘No More Greenwashing!’

‘Palm oil being on so much land that was once rainforest is bad and so when someone says it can be grown in a good way I truly believe that is just greenwashing! To fool people with pretty pictures and pretty words while uglily still really cutting down many trees as long as possible!’

‘The Right Information Needs To Be Shown!’

An angry Lanang also knew much advertising was aimed at children to annoy their parents to buy junk food.

‘It would help if many good humans could read clear product labels that showed which things had palm oil and who supplied it. Governments needed to be pressured by people to allow for full information palm oil labels! If humans buy less things with palm oil this will help to save the rainforests – and us!’

‘A ‘Mr Lanang’ Starts To Write A Report On Palm Oil’

Lanang found a good reason to practice his writing as he thought a report may help humans to understand why palm oil and logging was bad for the orangutans. *‘In my free time I’ll start to type out some of the many important points humans need to know! However, I will use the human name ‘Mr Lanang’ so humans will think I am one of them as that way they won’t be upset that us*

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

orangutans think their simple speech is only 'children's talk' for us.'

I, Mr Lanang, for orangutans, want the human race to know why they think palm oil is bad for them.

1. Humans must learn less rainforest means it is harder for orangutans to hide from the bad people who steal and sell them and kill the mother orangutans to take their children.

For Lanang it meant so much to him to make this terrible crime the first point as he still thought about his mother every day; especially after having come across a news photo of a wide-eyed frightened baby orangutan with a bandaged broken arm whose mother had also been killed by kidnappers. There were so many examples of orangutans being treated badly by humans. Nearly every day there was a news story of how orangutans had been killed, starving, injured, left to die by a road, chained up or made to work like slaves for humans.

A baby girl orangutan had very bad skin from infections and would hug herself for comfort because it had been treated so badly by humans. One other sad story which stood out for Lanang was of an orphan three-year-old orangutan Mingky caught in the rainforest and kept as a prisoner for a long time just so it could be used now and again to make a family laugh. Mingky was kept in chains in a narrow space between two walls and was not fed well having only some fruit pieces and rice. This was a lonely, horrible life for Mingky. This very sad baby orangutan who would double up on his body to cuddle up and hug himself to sleep was with police help luckily rescued by humans who belonged to a group who cared about the orangutans.

Yet to also talk about the wider terrible picture which meant saving the rainforests where orangutans and other many animal and plant species lived:

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

2. The rainforest is home to many animals and when it is gone they will be homeless.

Lanang in his many points would also say that with no rainforest there was also no food which meant all wildlife would go hungry and die. Orangutans who had lost the only world they knew had become refugees in their own land. At least there were some good humans who wanted to help and save orangutans and the rainforests even risking their lives yet who themselves also needed to be helped more by many other humans.

For Lanang to even note there were humans harming primates no matter where they lived in the world after coming across a photo of a sad child gorilla in Africa whose mother had been killed by poachers. Thankfully the baby gorilla was being comforted by a kind park ranger with his arm around the upset child. It was his job to bravely protect the gorillas but it was clear to Lanang that his point that good humans needed much more help was a true one. (While it was also heartening to see a chimpanzee wash the hands of a photographer who helped the chimpanzee to drink water).

With the rainforest gone it was so unnatural that where it had been on this earth there were now wrongly only palm oil trees grown just to make money. It was also bad for villagers who had lived *with* the rainforest knowing how to find or grow many foods in a way that did not disturb the health of the rainforest and like the wildlife also faced an end to their traditional way of life because of palm oil companies taking over the old lands.

Lanang also wanted to point out how land that was once filled with life could now also only be covered with burning ash with trees, bushes and plants cut down and lit up with fire to ready the soil to grow palm oil trees. For the sky as far as the eye could see to be filled with big thick smoky black clouds that made it hard for all living things including even humans to breathe. To have

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

orangutans burnt to death who had not been able to get away from such big human made forest fires.

Yet for ‘Mr Lanang’ to also state on behalf of orangutans that they were still willing to have a kind thought for those men and women both local and visiting workers who were left with no choice but to work hard all day for palm oil companies or to even have to sell cheaply to them what palm oil they grew yet to still possibly face the risk of not earning enough money and to even risk becoming sick using poisonous chemicals to kill weeds and pests.

For Lanang to also think that for those local people who could no longer fully live the old ways how they would still be better off if they could make a good living from having visitors from all around the human world to come and see how wonderful and important rainforests and every animal and plant within them are to the planet.

As it was for Lanang to also say that with rainforests cut down even the planet would no longer be able to breathe properly. How a big loss of old trees was making the earth become terribly warmer. To even fear monsoons possibly becoming weaker which would make a hotter world even more dry to have then even more bushfires-

All fingers on both hands all of a sudden hitting the computer keyboard. ‘*Yes I say again! RAINFORESTS ARE THE LUNGS OF THE WORLD! Yes! It was so!*’ Lanang had suddenly stopped typing as the many bad things happening to his world that he was putting into his special report had once more made him very upset.

‘Lanang Takes A Deep Breath’

This unhappy orangutan took a deep breath to help calm himself down as many thoughts whizzed crazily through his mind again on how important the rainforest was to his kind.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

'For us orangutans the rainforest is our 'supermarket'; our 'home' and even our 'hospital'. Yes! We know how to find many foods growing in the jungle; to build sleeping nests in trees from branches and leaves and to find natural medicines! Orangutans can chew on plants to make an ointment that helps soothe aches in our limbs or to make one to keep away mosquitoes; we must surely know of medical treatments that humans do not yet know about. After all, these 'learned humans' always seem so surprised when they find out that we can use the rainforest's plants to heal ourselves. The rainforest can still offer for the human race many new medicines which is surely another good reason to keep it...? Why is it that human beings have seemed to have lost their common sense to destroy my world when it is so clear that especially those humans who have so much power must put aside their self-interests for the common good and understand that by destroying the rainforest they also destroy the world. Who can breathe without lungs...? NO ONE!'

Another deep breath.

Another memory. *'Mr Aladdin looked at a historical photo of old destroyed buildings with no one to be seen amongst these city ruins. "An Old Roman once said about the wrongs of empire that a land can be laid to waste to only then wrongly call the deathly stillness that is left: 'peace'." Mr Aladdin then looked at a modern day magazine photo of a land stripped of life with many destroyed trees all together like fallen matchsticks with a lone orangutan sitting sadly in a single surviving one yet with only a few leaves. "Today they make a wasteland and call it 'progress'."*

'Yes, what Mr Aladdin has said about modern humans is right.' sadly mused Lanang who knew that with old growth trees lost to the world it was only humans who still lived with nature like Mr Aladdin who understood the important need to love nature so as to keep it safe. For this orangutan learning more about the bad ways

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

of unthinking humans to now think about what Mr Aladdin had also sadly said: *“It was wise First Nations North American Indians who said humanity will only know after the last tree was cut down and the last fish was eaten and the last stream was poisoned that it cannot eat money to stay alive.”*

‘There Are Humans Who Love Money More Than A Healthy Planet!’

Lanang had decided humans just did not think about keeping the earth living well while they only thought of making money.

Yes, Lanang wisely thought of the planet as a living, breathing thing which needed to be taken care of the same way as any other animal so as not to die. Yes, and to even hope that large areas of deforested land could be properly reforested with many different plants and trees so the earth could be fully returned to good health.

Sadness.

‘Yet...how terrible...that this...for now...cannot be...yes, it seemed that there were humans who for them money was the only thing they wanted even if it meant destroying the world to get it! What was the point of a rainforest to these humans unless it could be cut down for money? What is the point of us orangutans to them if all we do is live in the rainforest? It seems it is ‘better’ for them to kill us if we get in the way of their cutting down of trees or make money from us by selling our babies or by putting us in shows to make them laugh at us!’

‘Humans Crazy Believing To Be Improving The World By Destroying It!’

Lanang on the internet sadly looked at all the self-centred reasons which humans so badly used to make it seem it was alright to be

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

cutting down trees, to be killing animals or digging out too many minerals; to always foolishly claim as they destructively logged away that they were actually making a better world for themselves while all the fauna and flora was dying all around them. *'Humans always lying to themselves and to each other about what is best for the earth when what they really do is for the worst!*

'An Orangutan's Lone Brave Stand To Inspire Lanang'

Lanang to find hope for his species in seeing a single orangutan on a big fallen tree bravely standing up to a bulldozer knocking down trees before having to run off to safety.

'In this David and Goliath fight between orangutans and palm oil companies we are willing to use our intelligence to help stop those who go on willing the destruction of our habitat. While there can be humans too to share this same aim of the orangutans to lock in the safety of the rainforests. The orangutan who fought the bulldozer quickly understood it was the man operating this big machine rather than the machine itself who had to be stopped. The orangutan knew it was impossible to fight the bulldozer but it could be possible to stop the person operating it. Humans can try to do the same by calling to have laws passed that can stop those who make decisions to destroy rainforests. An idea can be very strong if it is allowed to spread and palm oil companies are doing all they can to stop the idea that a ban on palm oil would finally work. An idea is like a tiny germ that can bring down the biggest animal when it is inside it. I once saw at Aladdin's place an old sci-fi film War of the Worlds which had Martians invading the Earth and it looked like nothing could stop them from taking over the world as their saucers within their protective bubble force fields and with their single tentacle eye death ray guns destroyed all the modern

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

armies that humanity used to battle against these alien invaders. Yet, finally the Martians were stopped by a germ they breathed in and which killed them which was what humanity's modern weapons could not do. When all seemed lost, when victory seemed impossible, a miracle was still able to happen to save the Earth. There can still be a miracle to save the rainforests and the wildlife if on the behalf of the planet and all living things that good people can come together to not only call for a better world but to simply have the idea to not buy products with palm oil and to have their governments also help them by having food properly labelled.

'Lanang Asks The Computer A Few Questions'

With Lanang's computer skills having improved and wanting to know more about the human species he started to type many different questions into the computer's internet SEARCH toolbar:

'Excuse me why in the human world is there only a few hundred million people with everything and far too many billions of people with nothing?

Why can humans be so cruel to animals with some of them even showing no understanding or sadness for starving orangutans wrongly seeing them only as troublemakers having to go where humans live to find and eat crops for food because their rainforest is gone?

In the interest of inter-species solidarity should not humans also care about starving polar bears who search for food as their ice world melts as well as to worry about ibis birds who have to go into cities to live as their wetlands disappear...?

By the way why are humans surprised that orangutans can go hunt for fish in streams?

Excuse me, and I know I keep going back to this question but it just doesn't make any sense but could you please tell me why humans want to cut down all the trees?

Don't humans understand that trees are so alive that they can even talk to and help each other...?

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Although I already know rainforests are wrongly destroyed for palm oil I see now that many trees are also cut down to make way for cattle like in South America and Australia so why can't humans be vegetarians like orangutans? Wouldn't it also mean less trees would be cut down to make way for soy seeing so much of it is grown not for humans but to feed livestock...?

Also excuse me, but why can't more be done to scientifically replace palm oil in a good way so there would be no need in a bad way to still grow it? Also why can't the small farmers who feel they have no real choice but to still grow palm oil be helped to find better and different ways to make a living?

Why don't humans recycle not just some but everything they make instead of throwing things into landfill which only bruises and hurts the Earth even more?

After all, to stop so much unnecessary logging which happens throughout the world why don't humans just use plantation wood for their houses, furniture and paper and leave old growth trees well alone?

I see in Australia a supposed first world country - where rivers are dying losing water to cotton and where salt is worsening the soil and where there seems to also be the killing of kangaroos just to make way for grazing land – that there is so much logging of native forests it is now feared there will no longer be any koalas and flying bat-foxes...being just two of our many fellow threatened wildlife friends who live with trees...so-

'So much environmental damage and for what...?!' Lanang was becoming very upset yet again and it seemed to him that Nature was also very angry for as he also studied climate change it seemed to him that Nature was fighting back after such a long time of having humanity trying to control her instead of respecting Gaia which was Mother Earth. This curious orangutan also became interested in the universe with the solar system, its many galaxies and billions of stars.

Mr Aladdin had once wonderfully said: "All of us are made from stardust."

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

So Lanang would also ask spiritual questions about God and the spaceless timeless beginning of this cosmos as well as to the growth and perhaps even of a possible end of this curving endless universe.

‘Human Kindness Towards An Old Chimpanzee’

Lanang came across one wonderful example of goodness between the primate and human species when he discovered a short video of a very old chimpanzee who was soon going to die being visited by a man who had taken care of her many years ago to see her sad face light up with joy remembering him. True friendship. Lanang was brought to tears seeing the kindness of the human towards his old friend which should be so between all primates and humans.

‘Lanang Looks At Orangutan Escape Artists’

Nevertheless, Lanang now chose to cast his eyes over orangutans who had shown some fight by escaping from zoos. Yet Lanang only became interested to do so because of sadly watching a gorilla family in a zoo looking in a puzzled way at a crowd of laughing human children and their parents all with ice creams in their hands and pointing their messy fingers at a newly born baby gorilla. Despite being locked up these gorillas still looked very proud in front of this stupid, badly mannered human crowd. Lanang could just not understand how humans thought they were better than orangutans and gorillas when it clearly was not the case. Especially when the computer’s internet links led Lanang to see how in Africa that there could be wars fought over the minerals used for mobile phones, laptops and that gorillas would be caught in the crossfire. It was also terrible to see humans including even children who

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

worked like slaves to gain these minerals. It was also terrible to see that children would have to work to pick coffee beans and cocoa beans for chocolate (which reminded Lanang how locally he had sadly also seen children working in palm oil fields).

Yet humans hurting other humans seemed to be so common and so Lanang felt it would be up to orangutans to try to make humans see the errors of their ways so as to not only help the flora and fauna of the world as well as planet Earth but for humans to also save themselves from so much self-destroying. While Lanang felt sorry for the gorillas being laughed at by silly humans at least there were some orangutans in zoos outsmarting their human keepers. There was an orangutan named Fu Manchu who knew how to undo the lock on his zoo cage and every night with his family go on a holiday around the zoo. Another orangutan cleverly escaped from his cage and would have the last laugh on his human visitors who ran away from him screaming thinking he would hurt them. All he wanted to do was stretch his legs and have some fresh air. A zookeeper rolled his eyes when a journalist said the escapee had embarrassed the zoo. “Yes, he’s always outsmarting us.” The zookeeper then looked thoughtful. “At the end of the day he just wanted a taste of freedom...which is fair enough.”

“He was pretty smart!” cheerfully said a boy. “He must have done a lot of planning to work out how to get over those fences. The way he used that stick! WOW!”

‘If only you knew how smart we really can be!’ mused Lanang who also saw how four orangutans at an Indonesian zoo had worked together as a team to get over a fence. Late one night Lanang also thought it was funny to hear about on the radio how at an orangutan help centre – of which such places were more to Lanang’s liking as at least it showed there were humans willing to do the right thing for orangutans - of a female orangutan who was unhappy that a photographer had taken a bunch of bananas away

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

from her. He wanted to use them to attract male orangutans to photograph them but she took all of the photographer's costly camera equipment and would not hand them back until the photographer gave back the bananas which he did. It seemed the human photographer was surprised by this orangutan cleverness while for Lanang it was added proof of his belief that the one 'secret weapon' his species had was how most humans had a lowly idea of orangutan brainpower!

'Lanang Looks At An Orangutan Artist'

Lanang turned his attention away from many other orangutan escape artists to look at another example of orangutan smartness: an orangutan artist. At Vienna Zoo was Nonja a female orangutan who painted abstract paintings as good as any human modern art genius. Lanang thought it was strange that Nonja's masterpieces were seen by stupid human art critics as 'child scribblings'. Nonja's art was shown to Mr Aladdin who would surely see straight away their true greatness.

"Yes, the colours are well composed." assured Mr Aladdin. "I see abstract art as classical music for the eyes and Nonja's paintings certainly are greatly musical. Picasso liked primate art."

'Lanang Becomes A World Business High Flyer'

Although knowledge was a good thing what also mattered was training and equipment. With Aladdin's help Lanang had set up a small banana import export business which was tabled onto the nearby Jakarta Stock Exchange in Indonesia. 'LANANG BANANAS'. It was hoped the company would become more popular than palm oil. There would, of course, be one important difference: LANANG BANANAS would *keep* the rainforest. In

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

orangutan society the life of the rainforest came first before anything else. Orangutans along with all other animal species knew that without the rainforest there was no life. As they witnessed the unthinking destruction of the planet by human beings many orangutans wondered how *really* stupid was the human race if it could not even understand this basic survival fact? At least indigenous peoples were wise as they had learnt to live with nature just like wildlife. Life on Earth was like a big web with every living thing relying on every other living thing including plants and the elements of the earth like air, soil and water to stay alive and healthy. Even fish knew that without water they could not live; but many human beings seemed to believe they could somehow continue life while still madly ripping up Mother Nature's living web as well as trashing the Earth's land, sea and air. Yes, orangutans in their thousands were dying as rainforest areas the size of many football fields were cut down every day to make way for palm oil and logging. Lanang was only interested in creating *on paper* the illusion of a very big banana empire. This 'paper empire' would make it seem the whole rainforest was being used for banana production which would mean it could be kept for 'sound business reasons' – which is the only thing the human money makers seemed to understand; and those who made money seemed to control the future of the world. Lanang had also learnt about the political power of bananas: hadn't a democratically elected government in Guatemala been overthrown in the 1950s to suit the business interests of a North American banana company? Lanang's own 'business' was really just a way into the stock exchanges of the world – this was where Lanang would really make his wealth. The stock markets were Lanang's true plantations and this is where he would beat the humans at their own crazy money-making games. Once the right money arrangements had been done it did not matter how many bananas there were for this

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

is what was truly happening: Aladdin would give Lanang the receipts and it would show that just two hundred bananas were passed on to Kuching in Sarawak with a money profit intake of \$US200 for the stock market records. The bananas to be bought simply came from the local fruit stall. Lanang had the receipt records changed to show that 2,000,000 bananas had been sent to Kuching and to other towns and cities in both Indonesia and Malaysia as well as further away like to Bangkok, Sydney, Shanghai, Tokyo and San Francisco. Thus on the Jakarta Stock Exchange the idea was being made in people's minds that LANANG BANANAS was worth millions of US dollars and better still – seemed to be increasing its sky-high money profits. It drew the attention of greedy businesspeople throughout the world who were pouring *real money* into Lanang's banana company; Lanang was just as quickly pouring this money into buying the equipment needed for his commando team.

The Elders had thought Lanang would make a few rough helmets out of coconut shells and use banana skins to make a few humans slip over. *'No siree!'* Lanang was making sure only the best high-tech equipment would do for his 'Phantom Orangutans!' The merchant-of-death arms dealers were thankfully bypassed as direct contact was made via the internet to factories everywhere in the world that could quietly 'on-the-side' make a small number of things that Lanang's tiny commando unit needed e.g. tranquiliser weapons to make the enemy go to sleep; laser guided light metal star knives with stun tips; climbing ropes; infra-red vision goggles; GPS tracking devices and satellite mobile phones; phantom agent style paratrooper army helmets but with webcams and all weather bullet proof uniforms. Top dollar prices would be paid to the factories which included high bonuses for the workers. The clothes workers especially who were mostly women in countries with still much less wealth for many people would not be forced to work

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

hard for long hours for little pay which what was unfairly happening in the human business system with these cheaply made clothes often then sold at high prices in rich countries. (It was also terrible that many old clothes were not recycled to make new clothes to help keep down landfill waste). ‘Mr Lanang’ only asked due to ‘operational reasons’ that everything he bought would remain a secret. Also NASA which needed the money was very happy to put into space a communications satellite for a ‘Mr Lanang’.

All the equipment was shipped to a local warehouse in boxes marked LANANG BANANAS. Mr Aladdin and Aladdin would pick up the boxes put them in a van and take them to their place. At the longhouse where the Aladdin family lived orangutans would open up the boxes and take separate things into the rainforest. A local very smart donkey named Platero and his friends were also happy to help carry things as they were treated very fairly by both Dayak and orangutan alike. Mr Aladdin mentioned these faithful animals had been brought in from Cyprus by the missionaries many years ago.

Lanang’s first major business enterprise now had the full attention of Wall Street. Wide-eyed speculators who saw only dollar signs in front of their eyes were pouring *billions* of dollars into a company whose real net monetary value was about \$US20. Lanang was laughing himself silly. The world economy was now in the hands of a cheeky teenage orangutan who had outwitted all the businesspeople from every major business centre and financial market on the globe. The whole shape of the world economy was taking on a different face; although this was good Lanang was wondering in this global card game if he was overplaying his hand. It was time to draw back as Asian Stock Exchanges were starting to go into meltdown after some fact-finding articles in a major business newspaper. Although the business mastermind ‘Mr

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Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang' was yet to be linked with any crooked dealing the share price in LANANG BANANAS began to fall quickly; with this sudden lack of business confidence was the threat of a new global war if the world economy could not right itself. It was feared the world was about to turn into one big 'banana republic' - billions of dollars were now going out of bananas. However, Lanang did not mind – he had made the large fortune he needed and he had already done some good in the world with his buying up of much rainforest land; giving money to orangutan rehabilitation centres and establishing art galleries in major cities for orangutan artists. These purchases would still hold as the banks and economic barons of the world who found out the truth could not let it be made public knowledge that for a time the fate of human history had fallen into the hands of a Dayak boy's 'pet' orangutan who had typed on the family computer. Hush money to keep silent from many big banks and companies went into Aladdin's bank account so he would not go on the public record. It added up to a few extra tens of millions of dollars that would further help Lanang's cause.

The two boys were amused that each bank and company had no idea that every one of their competitors were each giving such big cheques to Aladdin to stay quiet. Lanang had already made sure the things he needed were bought straight away while a spare few billion dollars were put into morally proven business portfolios to keep a very healthy cash flow. Millions of dollars were also poured into third world family planning and school education programs especially for girls as well as giving money to kick-start the small businesses of many thousands of very poor humans. With rainforests always in mind there was also money given to good humans trying to get governments to fix up the environment; as well as trying to stop first world mining companies from using developing countries as dumping grounds for poisonous waste. One thing Lanang would not do was open a secret Swiss bank

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

account. Any leftover hundreds of millions of dollars were put into a local bank. Lanang's money principles were very fair for the common good. It was so unlike many big businesses of whom it had been claimed had hid at least twenty *trillion* dollars into many secret bank accounts in out-of-the-way places – so much unused money that could help so many people! Everything had worked out well for Lanang and the true reasons for the Global Banana Bubble Crisis or 'GBBC' would be a world-wide state secret as human governments did what they did best – cover up any annoying truth from its citizens and put the blame of any stupid error squarely on anybody else but themselves.

'On With The Show!'

Lanang was pleased. He had his equipment and so could start the training. It still mattered that the orangutans learnt to defend themselves for no amount of money could do that for them.

Justice was priceless.

In Lanang's tribe twenty-five young orangutans both male and female would be enlisted to be commandoes. His greatest enemy would prove to be a lack of interest as no one thought there was a real threat. It seemed Lanang's neighbourhood watch scheme had worked *too* perfectly. Yet Lanang was still very aware of the dangers: kidnapping and out of control logging would go on. Lanang also wanted to save the rainforest from the next round of fires that were irresponsibly started once a year to clear land to plant palm oil trees; this also related to saving orangutan lives for as he already knew being mentioned in his report: in the last Big Fire not only had large parts of Borneo forest been recklessly burnt to the ground but thousands of orangutans had also been horribly burnt to death.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

The danger to Lanang's tribe may not come today but one day it would come – the death of his own mother was sad proof of this frightening likelihood.

LANANG *'Mexican Wave'*

A meeting was held between Mr Aladdin, Aladdin, Lanang and the First Elder to discuss tactics and primate-human co-operation; for example, although an orangutan was known for steering a golf cart it was still also the case that orangutans could not yet drive motor vehicles so human help was needed to take them anywhere as had already been the case with moving equipment and supplies; it was an orangutan mission but back up human assistance would be important. Mr Aladdin would make a remark and it was passed onto Lanang by way of Aladdin using hand signals and Lanang would then pass on what was said to the First Elder. In turn the First Elder would speak to Lanang and he would use sign language to translate what was said to Aladdin who would then speak directly to Mr Aladdin. Mr Aladdin and the First Elder would also communicate their opinions with their hands and to an outsider it appeared as if a sort of hand 'Mexican wave' was flowing backwards and forwards between these four males.

It was decided to go for a walk through Mr Aladdin's big vegetable garden where the talking between the First Elder and Mr Aladdin became quicker. The two older males discussed planting and growing methods. Mr Aladdin explained how good it was not to be relying on supermarkets. Comments were also made on how it seemed so difficult to pass on any wisdom to the young – after all, what did they really know about life? The First Elder was especially going on about this 'problem'. The two younger ones followed on from behind to interpret when needed which turned out to be surprisingly not too often.

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

‘The Trainees Lack Any Real Interest’

Lanang would teach the others what he had seen on *Phantom Agents* and Aladdin would help Lanang. Cultural activities would also be included to help mind, spirit and body be ‘as one’. The first sign of a lack of real interest was in the star knife training. Many of the trainees would just lie on their backs and lazily throw the star knives anywhere they liked instead of at the targets. Secondly, the high rope training was taken as a big joke and the state-of-the-art helmets were being used as drinking bowls! For these free spirits of the jungle having a rollcall was considered just plain stupid when it was simply a matter of a very quick look around to see that everyone had turned up to any session. Although the first Chinese ink and brush landscape lesson along with learning the famous song *Bella Ciao* sung by Italian partisans in World War Two had seemed to have gone down well and while the backgammon, jungle lawn grass bowling and the karate instructions were accepted several complaints were made after the first yoga class: the stretching exercises had led to sore limbs; such young bodies were stretchy enough thank you very much. There was also no chance the recruits were going to take a strong interest in learning to swim or to scuba dive! (Although curiously orangutans as non-swimmers do not seem to mind water so rather than be afraid they like it). However, the one attempt at parachute sky diving did leave a big impression to say the least on the trainees who had all dressed up in parachute outfits and goggles. Lanang had hired a big old-fashioned propeller plane for this training exercise. An out-of-the way old jungle runway from World War Two days was used. If nothing else it was the first time in recent military history where it proved to be a good thing for the

Lanang reading sample– 1 Gathering Clouds

paratroopers (who were well covered up with all their military equipment, face coverings and uniforms so the human pilot would not suspect a thing about these ‘soldiers’) to land in trees. Introducing reading to the trainees ended up with the orangutans cheekily putting the opened Jungle Books they were given on their heads to use as sunshades.

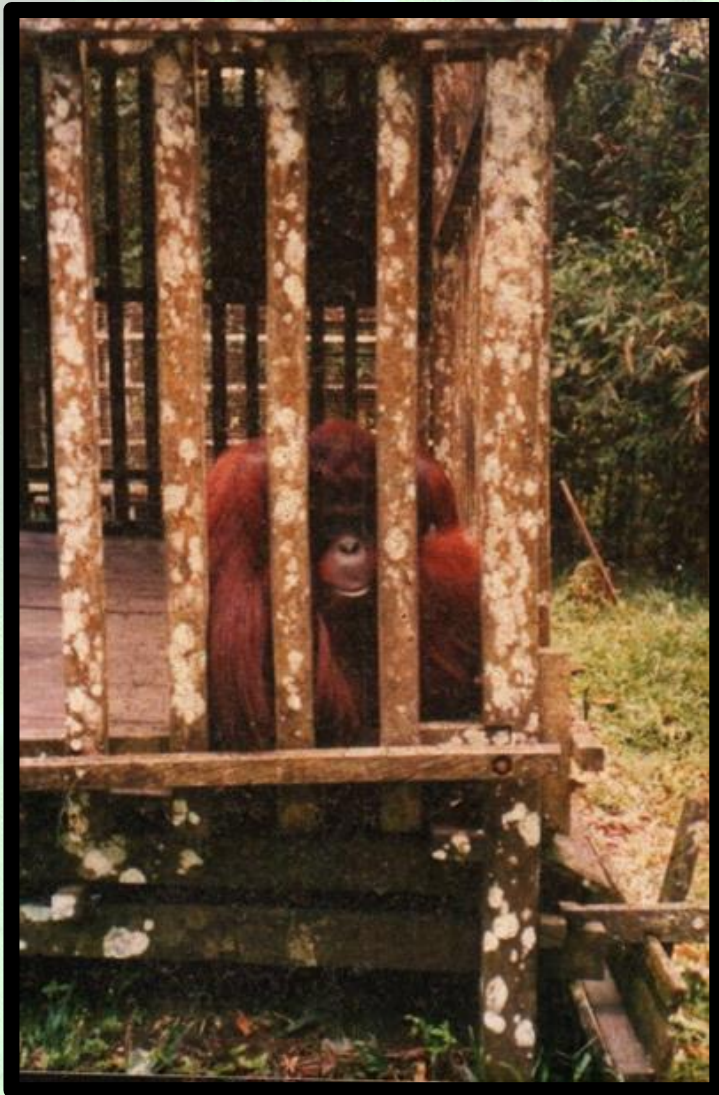
Some trainees just thought of laughing at Lanang as well as not taking any notice of his leadership. Lanang along with Aladdin were both very upset. The whole matter of ‘attitude’ was to be raised with the Elders who would well know how to make these laidback trainee ‘orangutan guerillas’ work harder. Yet sadly this would prove unnecessary because everyone would soon enough become very willing to work very hard.



Nicholas Nicola

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Orangutan kept at a rehabilitation centre. Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo, 1989.
Photograph by Nicholas Nicola and is at the end of the e-book.

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