



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Kunapipi

Volume 27 | Issue 2

Article 15

2005

Gara

Anne Mathew

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi>

Recommended Citation

Mathew, Anne, Gara, *Kunapipi*, 27(2), 2005.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol27/iss2/15>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:
research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Gara

Abstract

Gara cannot sleep as she lies there in the dark thinking. For the last couple of days, she has been sleeping very late.

ANNE MATHEW

Gara

Gara cannot sleep as she lies there in the dark thinking. For the last couple of days, she has been sleeping very late.

It is a warm moonless night in late November. A Kau, morning bird, singing near the house startles Gara.

'It must be two o'clock. I better sleep,' she tells herself. She turns the wick of the kerosene lamp down. She cannot believe that matters concerning marriage can be so stressing, especially in a situation such as this when one has to choose between two men.

'I can't decide ... maybe talking through this with someone might help. But who can I talk to?' She can think of no one, not even her parents. She usually feels comfortable talking to them about her feelings and worries. Being the only child she has become very independent.

Gara Nurvue, the only child of IaBata and Turliu is not only a hard worker, but very beautiful. At twenty she is the belle in the village. She is tall with a slender figure, and a chocolate-like complexion. Her lovely nature has attracted offers from many young men. But she has her eyes set on two men: Luaina and Muruna.

Gara smiles as she remembers the two men. Luaina and Muruna, unaware of each other, are both courting her. They both want to marry her before Christmas.

Luaina, a bank teller was the first to woo her. The eldest son of a Bikman; he is not only rich, but good-looking as well. She is crazy about him and he knows that. He is wild about her also. But Gara is doubtful of their future. She feels she is incapable of fitting into a family of higher status. She remembers telling him this.

'I am not worthy to be your wife, Luaina. Look for someone who is of your status.'

'But I don't want any other woman. I want you.'

Gara had forgotten her fears then, but now she trembles as she thinks of how she will fit into the family if she becomes his wife.

Muruna on the other hand is more like Gara. Though he is not as handsome as Luaina, he is strong and healthy. He is a hard worker who works on his cocoa plantation to make his living. Gara feels comfortable and more relaxed talking to him than to Luaina. She remembers how she had felt when Muruna asked to marry her.

'You want to marry me?' She had asked him again. She was too surprised to have a second proposal within a single week.

'Yes! Gara please say you will,' pleaded Muruna. She was confused.

'I'll have to think this over. Can you give me some time to think?'

‘Of course, but don’t take too long. I can’t wait to marry you. We will be so happy together, think about it.’

Gara felt an excitement that she did not feel with Luaina.

She has to decide quickly. Christmas is two weeks away. As she drifts off to sleep she knows what she will do. She should have done it earlier. She will simply tell them of each other. Their reactions might help her decide whom she will marry.

After breakfast the next day, IaBata and Gara decide to go to their gardens. They prepare vegetables and greens to sell at the market. By mid afternoon they tie up three big baskets.

‘We have to come back for the last basket,’ says the mother.

‘It’s alright mother, you go on ahead. I will see if I can get one of the boys to carry the other basket. There are a couple of them cutting grass in the next plantation.’

‘But you will have to pay him with a cigarette. Try to look out for Muruna. He is a good young man. He will help free of charge. He helped me the other time,’ advises the mother.

‘Okay, I will look out for him,’ Gara replies as she helps lift the basket on to her mother’s head. She wonders if her mother knows of Muruna’s courting. Then again all the mothers in the village adore him. He helps carry their market baskets and bananas home for them. She remembers him coming home one afternoon, helping her mother with her bananas.

‘Io abara!’ A voice she recognises too well interrupts her thoughts. Walking towards her is Muruna, his mouth full with betel nut.

‘I was just thinking of you. Thank you for coming. Can you help me with the other basket?’

‘Sure, I am going that way,’ he replies. ‘But before we go, I want an answer first. Is it a yes or no?’

‘I can’t answer yet. It is not that easy,’ she says hesitantly, afraid he will not understand.

‘Why not?’ He commands. ‘You know I love you. I want you to agree. My mother is impatient, she wants me married before Christmas.’

‘Does she know about me?’

‘No, she wants me to marry someone else. My old mother is dying and she wants me married before she dies,’ explains Muruna.

‘Is this woman Catholic?’ asks Gara. She knows that Muruna’s mother is a strong Catholic. She will never consent to her marrying her son. Her father will also disagree. He is a strong Methodist.

‘Yes, she is Catholic. Why are you asking?’

‘Can’t you see Muruna, your mother wants you married to a Catholic.’

‘I know that, but I can’t marry anyone else. I love you. Catholic or not I will marry you.’

Gara looks away. She has to tell him about Luaina.

‘I don’t know. My parents and your mother will never consent to our marriage,’ she says softly.

Muruna knows that religion cannot be a barrier to his happiness. There is something else.

‘What are you not telling me?’ he asks.

‘There is another man.’

‘Do I know him?’

‘Yes, he is Luaina.’

Muruna feels his heart breaking. He knows he does not stand a chance with Gara. Luaina has everything; competing with him is useless.

‘But I have not agree....’ He puts up a hand to silence her.

‘I don’t want to know. Forget I ever asked you. I hope you have a happy marriage.’ He picks up the basket and walks away.

Gara feels tears in her eyes. Her own heart is breaking. She knows that deep down in her heart she loves Muruna more than Luaina.

Two days later, Gara meets Luaina after the Sunday service. He takes her for a walk in one of his father’s cocoa plantations, next to the road. He must get an answer now.

‘My parents are impatient. They asked me when I will bring you home,’ says Luaina.

‘What did you say?’

‘I told them I would bring you home just before Christmas.’

‘You are crazy.’

‘Of course I am crazy; I want to marry you. Why are you taking so long to answer?’ he asks.

Gara stop walking. Now is the time to tell him. ‘There is another man wooing me.’ Luaina pretends to be surprised. Who would compete against a man like him?

‘Who is he?’

‘Muruna.’

‘But he is Catholic. Your father will never let you marry him.’ He chuckles. So that is why Gara is taking so long in answering. She must be falling for him. I must bring her home now, today.

‘This is no joke. Why are you grinning?’ She looks at him puzzled.

‘Gara, I am so happy. I have decided to take you home today. I don’t want another man to woo you. I love you and must marry you.’

‘But ... I ... ’

‘No buts,’ he says and calls his kid sister. ‘Lavinia, go and fetch mother. Tell her Gara is with me,’ he advises her. Gara has no time to think as the mother arrives.

‘We have been waiting for you.’ She smiles as she hugs Gara. ‘Come on lets go home.’ Everyone seems happy of the new member. She is the family’s first in-law. A mini party is thrown for her.

Meanwhile back at her parent’s home, her parents sit waiting for her. It is nearly six o’clock.

'This is not like Gara. She is always home at this time,' says the father.

'Yeah! She must be still at her grandmother's house. She might spend the night with her,' replies the mother.

As they sit talking, a car comes up to their house.

'That's the Bikman's car. What does he want?' whispers Turliu to his wife.

With the Bikman are his wife, the Councillor of the village ToPida, and the Pastor.

'Marum!' they call.

'Marum avat parika!' the two call back.

ToPida steps forward. He puts a string of tabu (shell money) on a cordyline in front of Turliu. 'This is to tell you that Gara is with the Bikman's son, Luaina,' he says.

Turliu receives the dowry. This shows that he approves of the marriage. IaBata looks on with tears flowing down her cheeks. The Bikman's wife also had tears of joy in her eyes. The Bikman speaks up first.

'We are so happy to have Gara. We want to know your price for her. We can discuss the dates for the wedding and payment later.'

'We too, have decided that our only girl is worth 500 fathoms,' says Turliu. The price is the highest so far in the village.

'Thankyou, your daughter is worth more than that,' says the Bikman's wife. She sympathises with IaBata who will be missing her daughter's assistance.

The next morning the whole village talks of Luaina and Gara. Those who were matchmaking them were not surprised. Only two people were downhearted. Muruna and Gara. He will marry someone he does not love. She, though happy, will always treasure him in her heart. She wipes away a tear as she whispers a prayer for Muruna. She believes God will give him peace, love, and above all happiness.