

**Focal translation Project: Translation of Die *Löwin von Kenia* by Lea Kampe**

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Ger 561: The Task of the Translator

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## Chapter 8

Ngong, Early December 1922

Kamante leaned against the fence of the clinic area and saw a group of boys who were shouting and running after a ball. The game was called football and he had just learned about it while being in the clinic. He twisted the corners of his mouth. On the one hand, the game was nice because one had to run- and now he could run properly after a very long time. On the other hand, he didn't want to run in the direction of the other boys. The loud shouting and unpleasant smell did not sit well with him. That's why he behaved as if his leg could not allow him to play.

A mocking smile appeared on Kamante's face as he saw an older boy stop and tear down his pants and shirt. Loudly yelling, the other boys followed him. They only kept their underpants on.

Kamante looked back at himself. His pants and shirts were clean and for this, he was praised by the sisters at the clinic but on the inside, Kamante laughed at them. He did not keep his clothes clean because he treasured them, but because he lacked a reason to mess them up. Just as he didn't have a reason to take them off. In any case, a lot of things in his life weren't important.

"Kamantii..."

He looked up. A sister stood in front of the gate of the clinic area and winked again the typical mocking smile appeared on his face. The foreigners who almost spoke only English pronounced his name as if at the end was an I instead of an e. Every time he was called that way, he looked at looked at her in a scrutinizing way. Sometimes she had to recognize her own mistake- but she never did that. Kamante started moving.

The doctor observed Kamante's legs inside the consultation room.

"*Vizuri sana*" he said. "Very good."

"My legs look very good", Kamante repeated.

Dr. Arthur smiled. "Your English has improved in such a short time."

Kamante observed him keenly and the doctor didn't seem to take the compliment seriously. But Kamante was proud.

Dr. Arthur leaned back on his chair. "I believe now we can't do much for you, Kamante. You can go home. I will inform Baron Blixen so she can pick you up."

"No, don't tell her anything!" Kamante shouted unusually violently. On his forehead, a steep crease formed, and his eyes sparkled.

"But how so?", Dr. Arthur asked shockingly. "It is over ten miles to the farm. And you can hardly..."

“I am walking on two healthy legs.” Kamante stood upright. He then picked up the bandage from the table and gave it to the doctor. “Please connect. Surprise for M’sabu.”

The doctor shook his head while laughing. “Understood.” He carefully wrapped the now superfluous bandage around Kamante’s legs.

“Just so you know, I am now a Christian,” Kamante said spontaneously. The doctor looked up in surprise. “Really?” He wrinkled his forehead. “You know that that wasn’t necessary. Did the sisters in the mission convince you? Or one of the priests?”

Kamante made a derogatory face. “That was not necessary. You don’t need reasons to believe in God”, he only said.

Dr. Arthur shook his head half seriously, half amused. Kamante nodded to him. “Goodbye, doctor.” He went to the door and in the frame, he looked back again. “I have one question. Why do Christians put on pants and shirts although your God Jesus wore a long garment? But you can see that in church. He had a white garment long enough to reach the feet. Why don’t you dress like him?”

The doctor nodded slowly. “You know I don’t have an answer for that.”

Kamante watched him full of doubts for a moment then turned around and left.

Tanne softly pressed the hard small coffee berries between her fingers. Some of them were green, others already yellow, and even some red. The short rains between the end of September and the beginning of January had been sufficient and she hoped to have an abundant harvest. She sighed quietly and looked over the beautiful flat green plantation which was in the middle of the wild unbridled landscape.

It rained less as compared to the deeply located regions and therefore it was cold. She had lost almost half of the harvest. If only it worked out this time. She needed money to reduce the steadily growing mountain of debts and to prove to her family in Denmark that she could do it- just like the coffee roastery. Thomas had worked hard and not much was remaining before it could be fully operational. Tanne threw a last glance at the plantation then she turned and left.

It was warm but the air in the highland region was full of clarity- pure energy. She went back to the house full of energy. Already from afar, she noticed that someone was sitting on the veranda. Her heart leaped although she reasoned that Deny could not be back from his business trip. She had never heard from him since the morning they had spent in Ngong hills and now the days and weeks were stretching out. She felt a quiet vibration inside her which increased slowly by slowly.

Tanne remained standing and shielded her eyes with her hand. It was a child. Abdullahi? No, it can’t be possible. Abdullahi was a Muslim and that’s why he had never seen Farah, his brother, without a turban. This boy wore the apron-like trousers of the Kikuyu. But that could be Kamante. Although the doctor from the Scottish mission would have notified her.

Tanne thought about the last time she had visited the boy. Afterward, she had been riding on the horse by the fence of the mission and Kamante immediately was there and ran towards her. He was quite fast for his thin much too long for the rest of the body legs. Tanne wanted to stop the horse, but Kamante had simply run on, always next to her and only separated to her by the fence. His eyes were focused ahead while running. Then they were soon at the end of the farm area, and he stood breathing heavily. Tanne tied her horse then turned to Kamante and waved at him, but Kamante didn't reciprocate. As soon as he wanted to turn around, his arm and shot straight up and stayed there. Tanne smiled at the thought. What a strange little guy this boy was.

She was now a few steps away from the veranda and now it was quite desolate. Tanne took off her hat and caressed her brown hair with her hands. In front of the living room and stripped off the dusty boot.

*"Jambo M'sabu."*

She looked up.

"Kamante? Oh wow, how on earth did you arrive here from the mission? Certainly not by foot. Did they release you?"

There was no movement in Kamante's face, and nothing could be deduced from his face. Instead of an answer, she received a letter. Tanne ripped the letter open and skimmed through the lines.

"They released you. The doctor says that he did his best- whatever that means." She carefully examined the boy, but he stood stiff with an unexpressive face.

"Your legs have healed." She went further to him.

"You were doing better the last time we saw each other you felt much better. Are they again...?" May I see?" With an absence of reaction, she bent down and carefully loosened the bandage. Kamante shrugged.

"Oh, did I hurt you? I am sorry. Kamante twisted his face and Tanne sighed inside. The doctors had not managed to heal the boy completely. Now she had reached the last layer and pulled down the rest of the thin cloth.

"But..." she said in disbelief. There was a wild liberated laugh. Tanne looked up at Kamante whose joy at the healed legs mixed up with the one who had so successfully deceived her. She wanted to shake her head accusatorily, but she couldn't. She only laughed along.

"What will you do now?" she asked once she caught herself. "Are you going home to your family?"

Kamante nodded solemnly. "Ja. I must tell you that I can't take care of the goats anymore."

"But why not?" Tanne asked eyebrows raised.

“Because from now I will be working for you.”

Tanne was lost for words and then laughed shortly.

“Ah, yes? And what exactly were you thinking about?”

“You need a Dog-*Toto*. A boy to watch over your dog. I have seen how that works. Changing water, brushing animals, removing ticks I will be a good dogsitter.”

Tanne could not resist a smile, especially considering that she couldn't remember if he had spent time at her house before going to the clinic.

“You must then know the name of my Dog.” He is the son of your first dog.”

Tanne nodded surprisingly. “Good, then we have an agreement if only your family is okay with it.”

“I will decide myself”, the young boy said. And something else. I am now I am like you. We are now the same since we have the same God.”

Tanne stared at him consternated but before she could say something, Kamante was already on the way towards the veranda.

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Thomas and a couple of workers dragged the last machine into the now-completed coffee roaster and Tanne swept out the hard-stamped floor.

“Done...Pff!” she sat on the rickety bench which she placed near the corrugated iron door. From here, one had a wide view of the riverbank behind which the Maasai reserve began. Thomas sat next to her and pulled out a dirty handkerchief from his pocket with which he wiped his face. A sweaty strand hung on his forehead; his hands were dusty. He leaned against the wall with his back.

“Stop!” Tanne shouted but it was too late. Now Thomas remembered that the white paint she used to paint the roaster was not that dry. Traces of paint stuck at the back of his head and the wet shirt.

“I have never been dirty like today” he grizzly mentioned. “But do you know what? Sometimes I even miss that.” Suddenly his facial expression turned wistful. Tanne immediately understood what he was talking about. Since his brother came from war a few years ago, he could not adjust to normal life. Comparing his experiences at the front, his in the African bush or the farm by her sister's coffee roastery appeared like a childly waste of time. Tanne was worried about him.

“Thomas, do you have something worth fighting for? Something to achieve in the coming years? “

Shockingly, Thomas turned to her. He did not expect such a reaction to his flappy remark. “Don't take me so seriously,” he repelled.

“But I do take you seriously” Tanne insisted. “I see how you strive. You do this and that but it does not seem like you have put your heart in it.”

“But I have put my heart in this coffee roaster” Thomas tried to joke. “What more do you want?”

“I am sure you know. I want you to be happy. You are gifted and I want to see you succeed and achieve your fulfillment. Since you came here, I had hoped that you would find all that here in Africa but now I know that I thought wrong. Your destiny isn’t here.”

“Finding your own thing is such a thing” Thomas insinuated.

“The more someone plans for something, the less he finds it.”

Tanne hummed unwillingly.

“Bror and I ... We had plans at the time. We wanted to go out into the world to lead another life than the middle class we could have had at home and voila I am here. It succeeded.”

“But are you happy here?” Thomas asked who could not resist the small tip.

“Do you mean because of my financial reasons? Please don’t start that now.” She pushed back a brown strand behind her ear. Then she looked at their dirty but slim hands which had become stronger in recent years due to physical work. She was happy that Thomas did not bring up her feelings for Denys Finch Hatton and the kiss. Otherwise, she wouldn’t just have to allude to their financial needs but also put up with questions about her love life.

“Do you remember what we always said, Thomas? If someone wanted to know if they were happy or unhappy, they should ask themselves what it would be like if the said state would last forever. Only then will it be clear if someone is currently in hell or paradise.” She stood up. “Ask yourself that, Thomas. I mean it seriously. And no...”, with a hand movement, she ended his attempt to object to something, “We are speaking now about you, not me... and let us go home. Today we are celebrating the new coffee roaster.”

Abdullahi was waiting at the farmhouse until his elder brother was busy with something else and sneaked into the living room. The chessboard was on the small table with two delicate chairs made out of lacquered wood. For a moment, he listened to the voice of his brother who was talking to someone in the kitchen outside the house. Abdullahi treasured his brother and was thankful that he had taken him. Only that he was strict sometimes and was a perfectionist. Farah didn’t think so much about his free time either and certainly not about playing. Abdullahi took the tower in his hand. It didn’t bother him that his brother had refused to let him play with other children in front of the house. They were Kikuyus anyway and he was a Somali and that meant a whole different thing. He let the tower pull a few fields. Then he put it back and moved the horse. The game was a miracle. How couldn’t Farah understand it?

His brother was still talking in the kitchen about the upcoming dinner. He would then be preoccupied with it for a while. Shortly determined, Abdullahi sat on a chair. His hands were

sweaty and although his brother reprimanded him for that, he still wiped them on the wall. It wasn't the first time he played in secret. He had sneaked in here at night. He played the opening of both sides quickly and thought.

"Abdullahi!" His brother's angry voice made him drive up and a farmer fell from the board. When he turned around, he was relieved to see Memsahib and her brother behind Farah standing at the door area.

"Come here right now!" commanded Farah.

"Come on, let him be", Thomas said and pushed himself past Farah towards Abdullahi. He watched the constellation with interest.

"Where was this one?" he asked and raised the farmer.

Abdullahi hesitantly took the figure and put it back on.

"What color are you?"

"White. I am always white."

Thomas laughed at the celebratory decline of the boy's voice.

"Then you have made a mistake." Thomas sat down and made a train with a black figure.

"Do you see? Now I am making this, and then you can make it too" he pulled. "And then that, and then that...and you, see? Now you are in a pinch.: He watched Abdullahi with a grin, but his face remained serious.

"You have overlooked a possibility." Abdullahi reversed all trains in the same order. Then he replayed the sequence.

"Chess", he finally said. Thomas looked at him perplexed.

"Now it is enough, Abdullahi. Come I have a task for you." Farah's voice did not allow resistance. Abdullahi lowered his face heated by the game and went to his brother.

"I want revenge!" Thomas shouted back at him.

Abdullahi turned back and a triumphant smile slipped on his face. Then he was pulled away by Farah.

## 10

It was mostly young men and women who showed up for harvest at the coffee plantation. The main harvesting season in Kenya was the month of January and July but the coffee berries had the arduous habit of not ripening at the same time. Many of them till now, the middle of December red, others first yellow, and others still green. Tanne loved the smooth plump hardness of the coffee berries which resembled rose hips more than the berries which they were named. The beans on the inside were made from a fine coat of pulp that tasted wonderful and reminded Tanne of honey melon.

Honey melon with a fresh touch, she thought while she sucked at the coffee berry. She did not do that frequently. Only when she gave her pain-rigid fingers a break, she just couldn't resist. She gazed at the seemingly endless rows of dark green Coffee trees, between which the pickers with their jute bags were distributed. It was a hard but satisfying job.

Tanne buzzed to herself as she stretched her fingers. She hadn't slept well in the last few weeks. A lot of things were running through her head. Bror, the oncoming harvest, the expectations of her family, and Denys. Did he even think of her sometimes? There had been no more than one kiss that morning in the rain because Berkley, Deny's friend, had awakened and the two were interrupted. But still after the kiss, the air between them was literally on fire. Again and again, in the hours after that, she had touched her lips in disbelief, and she felt a particular longing although she didn't know what exactly was going on between her and Denys. They hadn't promised each other anything and she hadn't received a sign of love from him since the day he left.

"M'sabu, are you okay?", the young man who was working next to her with a beautifully shaped face asked her.

"No, no, all good."

Tanne laughed weakly. "I am just a little bit tired."

"Me too", he replied. "My mother keeps me awake. She is not young anymore, but she is expectant and feels like complaining. He laughed but Tanne listened. She decided to go to the Shamba and watch over the family. But now she had to work.

"Family is always a plague...namely they always ask the same question", she sang to herself and smiled. "If the money is still missing, I will be forced to sleep in the tent soon. That's why we are going stalking after the red coffee berry." The nonsensical rhyme began to please her. Immediately, she saw that some of the young men and women around her had stopped working and had drawn closer to her. She spoke in English and the pickers did not understand that. The kikuyus had an unmistakable sense of rhyme and rhythm.

"What are you doing over there?", one of them asked.

"I am rhyming", she answered back in Swahili. Then she explained what one had to do.

"*Ngumbe na-penda chumbe*", she said.

"*Wakamba nakula mamba.*"

The oxen like salt, the Kambas like Snakes...It was the first best thing that occurred to him and had no deeper sense, but the Kikuyu understood that it didn't matter.

"Do more of that, speak like the sound of rain!", a kikuyu woman demanded. Tanne found the comparison beautiful and much more poetic than her own stupid verse. She constructed some examples, and the young people took over.



So, the next hour went by with a lot of laughter. Immediately Tanne saw her house on the way back, she felt tired again. At this time, the sun was starting to set down and the lit windowpanes of the farm had something unsettling. Her house was a ship of light in the now incoming darkness that had engulfed the continent.

Tanne remained standing. What noise was that? Thomas had travelled for a few days to visit his friend Gustav Mohr but perhaps he had changed his mind. She went further and from the unrecognizable sound, came a melody. She involuntarily walked faster, and the melody became clearer. Tanne's heart was beating faster. She did not have a gramophone and Denys had mentioned that she definitely needed such an instrument. Could he be back from his business trip already?

She decided to run towards the veranda as she approached it. With reddened cheeks and tangled hair, she entered the living room. Indeed. Denys was sitting in the large wing chair. In front of him on the chair, was a gramophone, and next to it was a bottle of red wine and two glasses.

Immediately, Tanne felt some sense of insecurity building up in her. It had now happened according to her dreams. Denys was here -she didn't know how to go about it. The excursion to Ngong Hills on that rainy morning and the kiss. What did that mean to him? Did it really mean something to him?

The silence between them remained for a long time. Denys stood up. "I thought that the darkness would bring you home and I turned on the fireplace and prepared the glasses. He took a few steps towards her, but his smile also showed a touch of uncertainty, as far as that was possible with a person like him.

"At least this time you didn't build a pyramid from glasses", Tanne joked whose temper had returned despite the treacherous heat in her cheeks.

"For this, I brought you something that you have never appreciated at a glance." Denys grimaced, and Tanne laughed.

"The gramophone has sweetened my way here: she said with a smile." "Thank you, I really don't know what I should say." she stepped closer. "Is your business done?" she added as if by chance.

"Not quite. I will be gone for two weeks. Anyway, I will be leaving tomorrow.

The wink was clear.

Dinner went as you could expect between good friends. Tanne told about the work on the farm and Denys about his grocery stores. His talent for imitating other people always led Tanne to laugh again and again.

Nevertheless, she could feel the question that hung between them in the room.

When silence spread at the end of the meal, Denys went to the gramophone. "Which type of music do you like?", he asked and looked through the records he brought with him.

“The old classics”, Tanne replied. “Beethoven, Mozart...”

“First of all, I brought my favorites. *Petruschka of Strawinsky*, a Russian piece for example. No, stop, I have something we can dance to.” He put on a record, approached her, and stretched out his hand to her. “May I ask?” The smile on his face was nothing more than a hint.

Tanne stood up. Denys was an experienced dancer and she asked herself how many women he had danced with back in England, where he had grown up as the younger son of the thirteenth Earl of Winchelsea. But the thought immediately disappeared. His hand was warm and determined, his earthy smell close to her face. Feeling his body under the shirt was so new that she breathed faster. Denys’s hand, which had rested slightly on her hip, moved up to the center of her back and pulled her closer to her at the same time. Tanne’s grip also became more pressing. When her chest touched his upper body, she involuntarily took her breath. Their faces were so close to each other that their cheeks almost brushed. When Tanne couldn’t bear it anymore, he finally attracted her to himself.

“Denys”, she whispered hoarsely. Then she felt her lips on hers.

“Memsahib? Mr. Finch Hatton?” Farah’s unusually aroused voice penetrated out the corridor. Tanne detached himself from the hug.

“Farah?” He must have been standing by the door.

“Just come on in.”

Farah’s face demonstrated some urgency. “A young Kikuyu is here. He says that she knows him. Her mother is giving birth, and it is not going so well.”

Tanne immediately knew who it was, she looked at Denys. ‘I will come along’, he said. “But my petrol is still enough to drive back to Nairobi.”

“We will take my car.

As she stepped out on the floor, the young man stood at the door. Tanne reached for her Medicine case and still she had a bad feeling that her house medicine would not be enough.

“Farah, get me the lamp.”

An unnecessary command. Farah already had it in his hand.

“Farah is going to sit on the co-driver’s seat!”, Tanne shouted as all the four rushed towards the car. She didn’t notice the questioning look on Denys’ face. As the car started rolling, Farah rolled down the window and held the lamp further outside.

“What is that?” Denys’ voice came from the back seat.

“My headlights are broken” Tanne replied fast.

“Your headlights are what?”

“For a long while. But I always postpone the repair. I always have it in my mind, but as soon as the money comes, other things become more important.” Without looking, Tanne felt the half-astonished, half-amused face in her back.

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