

Cassowary Story Nita Keru 3 August 1982 Tape 39 #67
Willie translator

There were two cousins who lived in different villages. One cousin had a human leg and a cassowary leg. One day the cassowary man went hunting. So did his cousin. They came to the same river but didn't meet each other. One came after the other. They each separately killed a pig. The cassowary man came back to the river first and his cousin came after.

Every time the second man saw his cousin's footprint he said, "good footprints." This happened all the time. The cassowary man always came first.

One day he said to his wife, "I will visit my cousin." He got his spear and went fishing. When his cousin saw him coming, he welcomed him. The cassowary's wife placed a mat for him, they sat down and told stories. "Cousin, each time I see your footprints I think how much I like them. What happened to your legs?" "Cousin, I was not born like that. I told your in-law [i.e., his wife] and held on a stick. While I stood up she got a sharp knife and cut one leg off. And so it became like a cassowary's." After a while, the cousin went home.

The next day, his wife wanted to go the garden but he told her to stay back. He got his knife out and sharpened it so that it was very sharp. He called to his wife to cut his legs off. She refused, so he took the stick and threatened to hit her with it. He held onto the stick and she cut his leg off. Blood spurted out on her face and body. That was one side. Then she cut the other side. He fell down and died.

She said, "I won't cry for you. I'll leave you here and go to my own village. Your relatives can bury you." His brothers found the dead man and she told them what had happened.

Notes:

"Anna told me."

For some reason I did not translate this one fully — it is in notes. This is my paraphrase of the notes. Prepared 15 Aug. 1994.

