

Etango 2121

By Bruno Venditto



It was the dawn of a new day, etango rose slowly from behind the mahangu field. The sun was particularly rosy, as if his high frequency waves had to travel even longer distance. It has been like that since the member countries of the Reformed United Nations (RUN) signed the Global Pact on climate change.

Meme Hope had just woken up and was ready to go weeding the field. It seemed that life was going on as nothing had changed in Onangholo. Gestures that were handed down from generation to generation were repeated tiredly. She had learned how to look after the mahangu field from her mother, who had passed down the family knowledge to her. But now there was no reason to hand over this skill to the family's youths; from tomorrow Onangholo would be part of the Great Outapi Dome 2121, (GOD) and life would not be the same. Besides, she did not have children of her own, and her only grandchild, Ndakalako, soon will go to varsity in Chile.

Meekulu's mother, Kashibimbwa, and grandmother Ndinelao? were part of the Y generation and Meekulu remembered when she explained to grandmother MeeKulu Ndinelao how climate change would have, in the end, transformed Onangholo, as it had already started to impact small islands in the Pacific Ocean. Those big words, however, were alien to her mother's mother, grand Ma had seldom left the homestead and the mahangu field; but she was wise and did acknowledge that raining season was not the same anymore, and droughts were longer and frequent than before.

Then in the year 2002 Onangholo was not even a proper village. Yes, electricity had just arrived, there was a combined school, few shebeens selling basic foods and drinks, and a church, but for all the rest one had to go to town, which was still at least an one-hour journey away, although it was only 15 km away. Meme Hope of course, had never seen all that. She was born in the year 2032, when Onangholo was a posh suburb of the regional capital Outapi, 5 minutes away from the car-airport. Her mother Meme Kashibimbwa was a social media addict and a journalist. She had terabytes of data, plenty of pictures that were passed from mother to daughter as a treasury to maintain. Meme Hope had downloaded all the relevant data on a microchip which could be slot in the wrist media-port and by a blink of the eye could be scrolled. It was like going back to a fantasy world, where cows and oikonbo were freely grazing in the now dry and disappeared oshana.

Today was an important day for Ndakalako as well, she was turning 17, the 5th generation of the Oryx clan. Having completed the second level of technological education, she was supposed to spend 3 weeks in what remained of the Etosha conservancy wild area, because of the *Olufuku*, the rite of passage for the youths. The ancestral purposes of Olufuku, as girls' initiation to womanhood, had long been lost and transformed to an adulthood's test for boys and girls. Three weeks in the veld without the assistance of any Artificial Intelligence (AI), to experience animals augmented virtual reality and help the Rob-Range to trace and track the few wild creatures that remained in the conservancy. That is why she had to go and see Meekulu Hope. Grand Ma was a scientist, a renowned professor, she had taught in many Universities around the world, but was one of the few remained in the Land of the Brave, who remembered how to do things in the old way. She was not against AI, and in fact she did use CP Robots to help her cataloguing, but as a field historian she believed that no AI could ever substitute the human brain.

"Apo Meekulu" Ndakalako greeted her using the now disused Oshimbaanhu greeting. She knew Meekulu loved to hear the ancestors' words, as so few nowadays used them, "How is the mahangu growing?". "Apo ngheaange" answered Meekulu smiling, "Eewa, mahangu do not look promising this year, it is like in the old, old time, when the elders were looking at the sky to understand if the rain would have been enough to understand if they had been blessed or had to go begging for government handout. Water quotas have been further reduced, so I only planted a few lines, and the governor has declared open farming in our zone as recreational activity, so it is now impossible to cultivate crops. Besides, from tomorrow Onangholo will be fully included into the Great Outapi Dome 2121, so nothing will be the same".

Dome 2121 was the latest apparatus developed to protect humans from land aridification which materialized in full force by the end of 20th century. It began slowly, in the late 1990s when the days with temperature above 50 degrees had increased from a few weeks in the year, to more than thirty days alone in 2021. Since then, the number of extremely hot days had increased exponentially. Globally days above 50 degrees now averaged to 130 per year, but in many Southern African countries their number had reached even 200 in a year. Here the Kalahari and the Namib had merged in what the geographers renamed the KalaNam, virtually creating a huge desert that divided the North from the South of the country.

The Domes 2100 were introduced just before Meme Hope was born. They were the latest evolution of the first domes conceived in the year 2030 to protect people working mostly in the Central Business Districts (CBDs) and those living in the elite residential areas, from extreme heat stress and for this reason strongly opposed by the World Climate Action Now, (WCAN) of which Meme Hope mother, Meme Kashibibwa was an activist. The idea was simple in principle, to create in the countries mostly

affected by extreme heat stress, a network of self-sufficient artificial bubbles, the domes, empowered with stellarator fusion energy performer, to harness solar power without any nuclear waste. Connection between the different domes was made possible thanks to the car-fly transport system, which had virtually reduced distance of 100s of miles just to a few minutes' drive. However, the domes created an exclusive protection system mostly for the elites; access to them was policed and only allowed for working reasons. For that reason WCAN fought against the bubbles and their global popular mobilisation led to the transformation of the UN into the RUN and ultimately to the new dome 2100.

"Tomorrow I am going to travel to Etosha" said Ndakalako, holding grandma Hope's hand tightly, *"I am scared"*. *"Why ngheeeange?"* answered Meekulu, softly patting her back. *"I have never seen a live wild elephant"* she said *"But thinking of it, I have never seen a live chicken as well"* and both laughed to that last observation.

"There is nothing to be scared of, dear, and do not forget, ... your great, great grandfathers were hunters". She led Ndakalako in the library-cum studio; Ndakalako knew that now she would have an adult, woman to woman conversation with grandma Hope. The studio was where all family vital issues were discussed.

"Do you remember what our family totem is?". *"It is the Oryx"*, retorted Ndakalako, she had been told that so many times, but she failed to figure out what that could have to do with her going in the wild tomorrow. *"There were plenty still, before the last heat wave, now only few remain in the wild, and that is because they could live easily even in the desert scorching heat... this if ...water was available. The Oryx symbolizes our nature, the capacity of facing even the most difficult challenges, beside you will have loads of water at the camp. You can even get a full bath twice a week. That is one of the advantages of turning 17 and going to the Olufuku"*. Ndakalako smiled, she did not remember when was the last time she bathed in water. That was an extravagance only few could indulge, and often a treat child got at their birthday.

Meekulu asked CPR1 to fetch Volume 1 of the Etosha collection edited by van Zely. It was a very rare copy, the first combining text reading with tact-sensorial experience. Of each animal the reader could touch the body and smell the scent, as if it was there in front of the person. Meekulu indicated the animals she would have found in Etosha and those who were now extinct, explaining how to recognize the different spoors. It was a mesmerizing experience, the right induction for what Ndakalako was going to experiencing tomorrow.

"Grandma, what will happen tomorrow to Onangholo?" enquired abruptly Ndakalako. It was long since she wanted to ask, but she had always been hesitant knowing that it was a very sensitive argument. It

was because of the dome that Grandma had stopped speaking with her mother, great grandmother Kashibibwa, who she accused to have been a sell-out. She could, however, not forgive herself of failing to reconcile before her mother passing away.

“Tomorrow Onangholo will be connected to the 2100 domes’ system and be part of the Great Outapi Dome 2121. I do not know if your great grandmother Kashibibwa would have been happy or depressed” replied Meekulu. *“As you know, being part of GOD 2121 means that we will spend even less time in the open sky”* Meekulu, started explaining. *“People will also be less free to move since entry controls will reach level 8 but yes, now even the little villages have been included and will be protected from both extreme heat and excess radiation, but is this really what my mother had campaigned for?”*

When the domes were introduced, Kashibibwa was 28, one of the founders of WCAN Namibia; she had always been an environmentalist. Just when completing her MA in investigative journalism, she was busy probing the rational of the domes’ idea. What puzzled her was that the oil giant corporations were both the initiators and the implementers of the domes. She was disturbed by the fact the domes were ultimately thought to maintain the system of production’s status quo. A modern revisitation of [Tomas di Lampedusa](#)’s quote, *“everything has to change if we want things to stay as they are”*. But ultimately it was the proposed introduction of the Entry Pass (EP) which she fought the most for. The domes were leaving out more than 80 % of population, those in the rural areas and in urban suburbia, practically protecting, and basically isolating, the rich from the other citizens. A reintroduction, only 40 years after independence, of an apartheid system based on wealth and not directly on race. But why a government who had fought for the country’s freedom, had agreed to such a scheme, was what she was investigating.

“Grandma, why did you clash with Meekulu Kashibibwa?” asked Ndakalako out of the blue. *“My mother was very stubborn, me as well. Neither her nor I wanted to admit that we were both wrong”*.

After the approval of the domes’ programme by the regional authority, WCAN mobilized the youth, who represented the majority of the country’s population, against it. The battle lasted two years, the police made a large use of the newly introduced RobCops and often the demonstrations led to violent clashes. Kashibibwa, as many other leaders of the movement, was often arrested. Just before giving birth to Meekulu, Kashibibwa’s opposition campaign against the domes almost stopped. Few WCAN requests were accepted, mainly on the right of free movements in and out of the domes, and the abolition of the EP. Oddly Kashibibwa also agreed not to publish the investigative report on the link between the government and the corporation behind the dome project, and, more relevant for the prosecution of the battle, she resigned as WCAN Executive officer. It was a shock, a blow for the

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movement. Few days after the birth of her daughter, named Hope, on the 6 of August 2032, Kashibibwa left the country, leaving Hope, Ndakalako grandmother, to the in-laws. WCAN ceased its activities.

“Grandma Hope, why did great grandma leave you?” enquired Ndakalako? “She said it was for my own sake. She returned in the country when I was almost your age. Even if in that period we did communicate a bit, she never revealed where she was, and we never spoke of the domes. When I saw her for the first time, I was happy and distressed at the same time, she was a stranger to me”.

By 2032 the construction of the domes had started, aiming to cover the commercial and residential parts of the main regional capital cities. Movement passes were scrapped for accessing the CBDs but were maintained to access the residential areas. The reason was simple: the size of the dome, in order to ensure internal stability, had to be proportional to the number of people living under it. More people meant bigger size and hence higher costs. WCAN's principles of equality was forgotten. Alongside introducing the domes, following the global trend in innovative food production, the government had launched the Food Thermo-stabilised (FooT) programme, spearheaded by one of the major producers of genetically modified seeds (GMS). The idea was to artificially produce nutriment for human consumption, reducing to the bare minimum use of water, which by 2030 had officially declared an extremely scarce resource. Agriculture production had drastically changed, and the impact on rural areas such as Onangholo was devastating. Subsistence agriculture almost disappeared and influx of people to the urban areas skyrocketed. The movement was, however instrumental to the construction of the domes and their maintenance which was a very labor-intensive activity.

Volume 1 of the sense-reading Etosha collection was published in 2032, the same year Meekulu was born. Her mother bought the book and kept it with her until Meekulu turned 17, when she sent it to her with a note: *“In this book you will find all your answers”*. Meekulu never had the chance to ask her mother the meaning of the note, she died in a strange car accident few months after her birthday. The book was one of the few things left to her by her mother and was very precious.

“Can you sense the smoothness of hippo skin? It is funny how the hippo was always underrated in terms of danger, maybe the sleepy face” said Meekulu, *“They were even more deadly to human than the crocs. Now both are only visible in the few protected areas, I am sure you will be able to have a glimpse to them tomorrow”*. After completing her Olufuko, Ndakalako was taking six months leap as a RUN volunteer at the Preventing Arctic Meltdown project, to then enroll at the Ice Regeneration Institute in Santiago, so she didn't know when she would have seen Meekulu after today, and she wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to get to know as much as possible of her great grandmother.

All of sudden Meekulu's wrist chip started flashing, she had completely forgotten that the city governor had invited her for dinner to discuss tomorrow's Dome 2121 inaugural ceremony. Meekulu was asked to give the introductory speech. *"Oh dam!, I am supposed to have dinner with the Honorable governor Tate Levi, he asked me to give an historical presentation on the domes"* Meekulu said apologetically, *"In reality what he really wants from me, is to give a eulogy of the programme and what we have achieved as human race. I do not think he would be happy to listen to what I have to say"*, they both laughed, *"It will be a surprise, I am not a sell-out like my mother...You can take the book with you, consider it as my birthday present, we can continue our conversation after Olufuku"* concluded the overthinking Meekulu, while kissing Ndakalako on the cheek and leaving the studio.

Ndakalako was left alone, she would have loved to continue speaking with grandma Hope, she felt that this time she was going to open up about great grandma Kashibibwa, but no... this would have to wait to the next time they meet again. With the book tight in her hands she asked CPR1 to call a taxi for her. *"It will not take me much to pack up for tomorrow, if I hurry up, I can arrive to Etosha Park before dinner is served"*, thought Ndakalako while waiting for the taxi.

"But your mother agreed with the government's idea about the domes" Tate Levi was saying nervously, *"Actually I do not know what made my mother change position on the domes, but... Tate... I am not my mother. You cannot ask me to say something in which I do not believe and against the way history went. Do not worry, my speech will only put in the right perspective what we have done to make earth a hostile environment for the future generations"* restated with a sarcastic smile Meme Hope. *"And now, if you excuse me it is time for me to leave, I want to be fresh for tomorrow's show"*.

The moment she received the invitation for the inaugural speech from the office of the Governor, Meme Hope knew what she would have said. That was in her eyes the opportunity to rehabilitate her mother work to the world. Great Outapi, had been chosen among the 10,000,000 cities in the world which would have been connected to the dome 2121 system. She was one of the few African female experts on history of climate change, so even if her views were very unorthodoxy they had to invite her. That were Professor Hope Endada's last thoughts before falling asleep.

The beeping on the under skin wrist watch was getting louder, Meme Hope did not want to get up yet, but she had to prepare for the ceremony. She got a special permission on water usage to bathe even if she had already used her monthly quota that could not be missed. She felt bad having ended sharply the conversation with her niece, but on the other hand, she was asking too many questions. She was not yet ready to open the wounds of her past. Time to get ready and most of all to enjoy a bath in warm water.

Ndakalako was woken up of birds' chirping, it was a recorded sound but the setting made it as if it was real. Virtual reality at Etosha camp was one of the most advanced in the world, those few who had experienced the real natural setting, argued that it was even more real than the real McCoy.

She had driven straight home after last night's meeting with grandma. She was a bit disappointed, since she had longed to know something more about great grandmother, and she was sure that if they had kept talking, grandma Hope would have opened up, but it least she had the book.

Grandma was right, it was a precious and valuable book, even more since it belonged to great grandma Kashibibwa. She was her role model, Ndakalako had gone through all the available archives to find information on her life. She could not understand how, after all she had done and all the fights to change the dome programme, on the last mile she had capitulated, and disappeared for so many years. That was not the great grandmother she had learned to know from the records.

Ndakalako was sensorially going through the book's pages once again. Suddenly she stopped at the Oryx, the family clan. On the skin there was an odd little bulge which seemed out of place, interrupting the smoothness of the touch, she scratched it and there it was, ... a little microchip.

How could grandma not have noticed. Ndakalako slots the chip into her internal wrist watch and there she was... great grandma Kashibibwa. She was lying in a hospital bed, she had just given birth because grandma Hope was at her breast. *"My dear daughter, if you are looking at this clip, it is because I am no more and for one reason or another, we did not have the chance to express our feelings. I could not explain to you what really happened and why I had to quit WCAN. It is not as it may appear, or how they may have told you in my absence. I am going to name you Hope, because I am sure you will see the truth and will continue my fight.*

I was force to choose: either continue to struggle for a sustainable planet or not to give birth to you. They knew I would have chosen you".

She is not a sell-out, she is not a sell-out shouted Ndakalako.

"It is with great pleasure I am calling Prof. Hope Endada, to give her remarks on this particular occasion, the inauguration of Dome 2121, another testimony of the genius of mankind capability to overcome in this past 2100 years all difficulties nature has set in front of us", silence felt in the auditorium. Grandma wrist phone vibrated, she looked at it and could see Ndakalako's face, automatically she activated the hear-phone and she heard a loud shout *"Grandma, I know the truth Kashibibwa was not a sell-out, she did it to keep you alive".*

With tears descending from her face grandma Hope started her speech: *"Contrary to what Mr. President has just said, Dome 2121 is not a testimony of mankind genius, rather the proof of our stupidity....."*

Glossary of Oshiwambo names

Etango= Sun

Mahangu = Millet

Shebeen = Liquor shop

Oikombo = Goat

Oshana = Flooded field

Olufuku = Rite of passage to womanhood

Neheaange = Last born

Eewa = Yes

Apo Meekulu = Greeting for elderly women

Tate = Suffix used to indicate an adult man followed by his first name

Meme = Suffix used to indicate an adult woman followed by her name

Etosha = Namibian Wildlife Natural Reserve

Family Tree

Name	Family link	Character Name	Born in	
Ndinelao	Ndakalako great great grand mother	Ndinelao Meekulu	1978	in 2002 gives birth to Kashibibwa
Kashibibiwa	Ndakalako great grand mother	Kashibibiwa/ (Hope/Meekul's mother)	2002	in 2032 gives birth to Hope
Hope/Meekulu	Ndakalako grand mother	Hope/Meekulu, Endada's mother, main character 2	2032	in 2032 gives birth to Endada
Endada	Ndakalako mother	Endada,	2066	in 2066 gives birth to Ndakalako
Ndakalako		main character1	2104	In 2121she is 17