

WINE TO WATER

By

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an excerpt from CHRISTMAS WITHOUT TUSKER

Three days after Christmas, a lanky youth in torn jeans and unruly dreadlocks turned up at Padre Pardo's church. He found the padre in the churchyard, right where the car park would be, if he had a car owning congregation. The priest was armed with a grass slasher and was sweating heavily.

"Priests don't do that," said the young man. "They make their followers do all the work. But then, you don't have followers, do you?"

"Not yet," Padre Pardo said. "You must be Juda Pesa."

"Just Juda," said the young man. "Why are you cutting grass?"

"Baba Pesa and the Chief," said the priest.

"You will lose a lot of respect here doing what those two say," Juda informed.

Like the padre, he was sweating buckets.

"Padre Pardo," the priest held out his hand.

"I know who you are," said Juda. "Angelo was everyone's friend. We drank a lot of beer together."

"So I heard."

"It was the way he tried to save souls, but no one went to his church."

"Why?"

"I could not understand it either," Juda admitted. "Except for the Protestant pastors, who generally don't like anyone, people liked Angelo. He would have been a bigger hit, if he had set up a bar here and given free beer."

Padre Pardo understood that too well. He was stranded in a land of freeloaders. He may never recover from the old men's visits.

"Come inside," he said.

"No, Leo," Juda said. "May I call you Leo?"

"I'd prefer Father Pardo."

"I don't call Baba Pesa father," Juda informed him. "Why are you looking for me?"

"Let us talk inside."

Juda hesitated. He had not entered a church for decades, in spite of his mother's effort. To do so now could be traumatic.

"I'd hate for it to become a habit."

Padre Pardo thought fast. Nothing much would be accomplished standing in the tall grass and weeds. Besides, as the saying went, it was easier to catch a fly with wine than with vinegar.

"I have a bottle of wine in the back room," he said.

"Leo, Leo," Juda smiled. "You will not fish me that easy."

Padre Pardo laughed.

"I also have tea."

"I don't drink tea," said Juda.

"It is important that I talk to you in my office."

"Here is fine. What do you want from me?"

It was easy for the priest to see why the old men had been reluctant to approach Juda on his behalf.

"Your father is concerned about you," he said. "About your ways."

"My ways?"

"The drinking. He thinks you are going astray and should stop drinking."

"Is that all?"

"More or less."

"You tell him I'll stop when he does," Juda said. "Anything else?"

Padre Pardo hesitated.

"In that case ...," Juda started to leave.

"I would like your opinion on another matter," Padre Pardo said.

"I know nothing about saving souls."

"Something of a personal nature," said the padre. "But it is so hot out here and my office at the back is much cooler. I promise not to force you to become a Catholic."

Juda hesitated. Padre Pardo saw he was about to lose the opportunity and decided to wager all.

“Let’s talk over a glass of wine,” he said.

Juda considered. It was indeed hot and he was sweating rivers. He was also thirsty and there was nothing to drink in Kambi but water.

“All right,” he nodded. “As long as you understand that you can’t buy me with a bottle of anything. Baba Pesa has been trying it since I was a toddler.”

He followed Padre Pardo through the church to his residence at the back. Padre Pardo showed him a crate to sit on.

“Not even furniture,” he said, thinking out loud. “Juma Pili really did a number on you people.”

Padre Pardo suppressed a laugh. Father Angelo had done such big numbers on the church that Padre Pardo may never find out how big or how many numbers.

Savio was still suffering from helping himself alongside the Gang of Four the night before. He brought them each a glass and an open bottle of wine. Padre Pardo considered sending one bottle back to the kitchen, but he knew what Savio would do to it. While he thought what to do with it himself, Juda claimed the second bottle and poured himself a glass. The padre did the same.

The Bishop would never believe him, anyway, he thought. He watched Juda take a good gulp, incline his head thoughtfully, then nod his approval.

“Definitely not Tusker, but ... speak,” he said. “I have a board meeting this afternoon.”

“Board meeting?”

“With my boys,” he said it with pride. “My water project.”

“I have heard about that,” said Padre Pardo.

He had heard about it in great detail from Juda’s mother and from anyone who did not wish to dig water trenches. Some were full of praise for it and others did not care. Even those who awaited it with anticipation had not stopped to ask themselves how Juda’s water would flow from Kambi to their shambas without trenches. As far as they were concerned, that was Juda’s problem.

“How is it going?” Padre Pardo asked, with a knowing smile.

“How is yours going?” Juda was quick to take offence.

“Not as popular as yours, I don’t think,” said the padre. “No doubt, you have heard about our problems.”

“Angelo talked about it all the time,” said Juda.

“We could use some help from you,” said the priest. “Persuade your boys to help us dig ditches.”

“My boys?” Juda emptied his glass in one gulp. “It is like this, Leo. My boys don’t understand work the same way that you and I do. They don’t grasp what work is, when it should be done, how it must be done and, least of all, why it has to be done. Their fathers never taught them these things and their mothers did not know how to teach them. But work without pay? That they do understand, and they don’t do it, not even for their own fathers.”

“What about you?” asked Padre Pardo.

Juda took a swig from his bottle.

“Are you sure you have met Baba Pesa?” he asked the priest. “He would blow a gasket, if he suspected I was working without pay. He tells anyone who will listen that he invested more money in my education than he did on my mother’s bride price. And it is not said in anger. Do you know why they call him Baba Pesa?”

“The old men told me,” Padre Pardo said.

“Stop by Tajiri Bar one of these evenings,” Juda suggested. “There he is more popular than your Pope.”

“About the trenches,” Padre Pardo asked, “how will you help?”

“Leo,” Juda said, “how do I tell you I can’t dig trenches. I ... can’t ... dig ... trenches. It would destroy Kambi’s faith in education.”

“If we dug together?” asked Padre Pardo.

“You mean you and I together?”

“I can dig too.”

“Leo,” Juda shook his head, “don’t you understand? You and I can’t dig ditches. It would shatter Kambi’s faith in God and education.”

“What if you were the foreman?” Padre Pardo pressed.

“Foreman?” Juda shook his head again. “Leo, you can’t make me do this. It goes against everything Kambi believes in; everything you have taught us.”

“Taught you?” the padre was taken aback.

“Let’s not play games, Leo,” said Juda. “You know very well what I’m talking about. You have deliberately got us hooked on your charity and development aid. You Feed the Hungry, Clothe the Naked, Save the Africans, Save the Elephants, Feed the Rhinos, and all the slogans you can make up so it sounds good and well-intentioned and, therefore, palatable. Do you know there is an NGO in Nanyuki Town called Save Our Asses?”

The only thing Padre Pardo knew about Nanyuki was what the Bishop had told him. The people were a little crazy and there was no church funded water project to worry about.

“Save Our Asses?” he smiled.

“Save Our Asses,” Juda did not smile. “Their sole *raison d’être*, and yes, Leo, I know what that means, is to make sure that donkeys do not work on Sunday. Can you imagine that? If a donkey can’t be made to work on Sunday, why must a man be made to work any day of the week?”

“Because man is ...”

“That was a rhetoric question, Leo” said Juda. “Why should we till and sow, or save for the drought, when free maize rains down on us like manna from Europe? Why break our backs digging trenches when the church will pay someone to dig them for us? Why wake up at all, when you people invent so many ways to keep us asleep?”

“The church does not encourage dependency,” said Padre Pardo.

“Same effect,” said Juda.

The young man was more disturbed than his father realized, Padre Pardo concluded. Juda had more complex issues than he let on with his cultivated village-thug image.

“So you will help me?” asked Padre Pardo.

“Leeoo,” Juda said, “listen to me, I can’t be any part of that nonsense.”

“What nonsense?”

“The one I just told you about,” said Juda. “The hands out for the international handouts. I don’t line up for alms, to volunteer, to be counted or to vote. I chart my own course for which I and I alone are responsible.”

“What are your degrees in?” Padre Pardo had to ask.

“He told you about that too, did he?” Juda laughed.

“What did you study?”

“I don’t remember,” said Juda. “I was in school for so long I forgot why I was there. But I learned enough to find my own path and keep out of the way of those who think they know what is good for me. Your bosses at the Vatican and in Brussels, and all the development aid pundits in the so-called developed world, who think they know what is best for the rest of us. People like you, who believe they know what I really need and how to give it to me.”

“You don’t need water?” asked Padre Pardo. “I certainly need water here.”

“Then do what everyone, except Baba Pesa, does,” Juda advised. “Send your wife to the river to fetch it. But then you don’t have a wife either, do you? Never mind, send any woman to the river. Don’t forget to pay her, unless you intend to marry.”

Padre Pardo smiled, a resigned smile. He could understand Baba Pesa’s frustration with his son. Juda was smart enough to know what was expected of him and obstinate enough to not admit it. He should have had this talk with Juda the first day he arrived in Kambi and found him sitting on the windmill hammering like a madman.

“I would have saved you a lot of leg work,” Juda confirmed.

Savio stuck his head through the door. Padre Pardo waved him away.

“Leo ...,” Juda started.

“Padre Pardo.”

“Padre Pardo is too much work for my Laikipia tongue,” Juda admitted. “Do you know what they call you in Kambi?”

He was Batiri Botoro to those who had any reason to talk about him. Most of them were old Catholics, considering a return to the fold, and those Protestants tempted to defect in search of a more predictable Sunday worship.

Kambi was weary of the Protestant tyranny. It yearned for a Sunday service that started and ended on time, every time. A Sunday service at which one knew what to expect. A worship during which the preacher did not startle the congregation with sudden altar calls for more of their time and their money. Only the Catholic Church could deliver on those expectations. The Protestant pastors were furious about it.

“How do you know all this?” Padre Pardo had to ask.

“Leo,” Juda said, “it is not by chance that your church is where it is.”

Padre Pardo was aware the Chief had allocated a plot downwind from the slaughterhouse, and its pile of decomposing bones, to discourage the construction of a Catholic church. The old men had told him how Father Angelo had put up a fight to get any plot of land in Kambi.

“Whatever you do,” advised Juda, “don’t do what he afterwards did.”

What Father Angelo had done afterwards was go around Kambi accusing the Protestant pastors of poaching his Catholic flock and holding it captive against its will. He demanded that the pastors let his people go. He gave them one week to set the Catholics free or else he would have the Vatican scrap Kambi’s water project, withdraw all development aid and close down clinics and schools.

His one-week ultimatum turned to two weeks, then to three weeks. While the pastors plotted how to deal with such blatant provocation, three weeks turned to three months.

In the meantime, Father Angelo descended on Kambi bars and got busy buying beer and saving souls. Then he met his soul mate, a cousin of Jeni the Castrator, and went off to get married.

“Here in Kambi,” Juda Pesa said, in his uniquely forthright manner, “the sheep is craftier than the fox.”

The sheep is craftier than the fox, thought Padre Pardo. I must remember to write that down.

To the Protestants, Father Angelo’s fall from grace was an undeniable indication that theirs was the true church. To the rest of Kambi, and encouraged by the Gang of Four, it was merely a Protestant plot to get rid of the priest and go on collecting tithe and harvesting where they had not planted.

Kambi liked Father Angelo, in spite of his marrying a barmaid and betraying their trust. At least none of Kambi’s time or money was lost in the transaction. Only the Vatican billion was missing, money they had neither seen nor touched. Their money, not ours, Kambians said. Had it been a Protestant project, the Gang of Four gleefully said, things might have been a lot different. The whole of Kambi would have been in rags.

Juda Pesa had no such sentiments. He was making headway with his own project. He had all but convinced his boys to join him in rehabilitating his windmill when word spread that the Vatican had given Father Angelo a billion dollars to lay a five mile pipeline from the lower Aberdares forest to Mutara, halfway across arid Laikipia plains. All enthusiasm for Juda's water project suddenly dried up. The material his boys had commandeered was abandoned in a rusting heap under the windmill. To make matters worse, Father Angelo snatched a barmaid from Masikini Bar and eloped with everything including Kambi's trust in priests.

Juda Pesa had no sympathy anymore for the church, or for any of its projects. Angelo had soured it all for him. Juma Pili was someone Juda had thought he understood, someone he could like. By the end of his first week in Kambi, Juma Pili had visited all the bars and drunk everything, except kumi-kumi. He had made fujo with the patrons in Fanya Fujo Bar, butted heads with some of the hardest heads in Kambi, including Juda's, and proved to everyone that he was a man. In the process, he had penetrated minds that Juda could not reach and convinced them they could not win against Jesus Christ and were better off siding with him. He had bought Tusker, when he had to, and held drinkers captive until they had heard what he had to say. Then he had patted them on the shoulder, in a priestly manner, and informed them they had a date with salvation.

"Tuonane kanisani Juma Pili," he said. "See you on Sunday."

Sunday mornings, some woke up with such hangovers they could not remember where, when or why he had said they should meet. The few who dragged themselves to the church, fell asleep halfway through Mass and never went back.

Kambi did not understand him, but Father Angelo fascinated everyone. He was unlike anything they had seen before in a priest. Except for the Protestant pastors, everyone else wanted to be his friend. Some who did not know where the church was situated were not ashamed to say they belonged to his church. Young men went from bar to bar to speak with him. Where before they had enquired after Baba Pesa on entering Kambi bars, looking to sponge off him, now they asked for Father Angelo for the same reason.

"Have you seen the priest?" they would ask.

"Wapi Juma Pili?" they asked. "Where is Juma Pili?"

In the short time he lived and drank among them, Father Angelo made such an impression on Kambi that Juda thought of bypassing the traditional Protestants, who had been wooing him since birth, and defecting straight from the majority atheists to the Catholics. Then Juma Pili took off with Kambi's favourite barmaid and ended Juda's interest in church.

"He was a good man, though" Juda admitted. "A lousy priest, but a good man."

Padre Pardo smiled. What had the Bishop said? Judge not lest you be judged? It was interesting that a man whose own father considered him a wastrel would consider a bad priest a good man.

"Is it true he stole church money?" Juda asked him.

"That is the way it looks," Padre Pardo said.

Money had left Rome for the water project. The project was incomplete and no one seemed to know where the money went. Padre Pardo's assignment, he informed Juda, was to follow the paper trail. To find out what really happened to the money. And, by the way, it was not a billion dollars, as Kambi wanted to believe. He had been with the project since its inception and knew for a fact that the total cost was estimated at around a hundred thousand dollars.

Juda looked up, the wine bottle halfway to his lips.

"Leo," he said, "that will be a hard sell for Kambi."

The few Kambians who could count to a million knew that a billion dollars could not fit in Juma Pili's battered suitcase. It was more money than he could carry, with the help of a dozen barmaids. The rest of Kambi knew only that it was enough money to make every man, woman, child and goat in Kambi as rich as Baba Pesa.

"Baba Pesa, of course, knows that to be wishful thinking," Juda admitted. "No one in the world can have more money than Baba Pesa. Savio!"

Savio immediately appeared with a fresh bottle. Under Padre Pardo's helpless gaze, Juda refilled a glass, emptied it and refilled it again. Padre Pardo looked from Savio to Juda and back. He would have to find a way to put an end to Kambi's freeloading tradition without losing friends, or firing Savio. At the rate his new friends emptied wine bottles, he would be out of altar wine before New Year's Mass. In any case, he was bound to have to do some creative accounting to explain that portion of the project budget.

Of the total project money he had come to find, he had traced about a measly third of it, or rather he thought he knew where it had gone. Most of it was buried in the half-finished church. Enough of it had gone into the construction of the robust wine cellar to ensure the church would never run out of altar wine. Some of it was buried in the completed three-mile portion of the trench. Padre Pardo had discovered a cache of plastic water pipes behind the church, buried in the grass that everyone wanted him to cut. In the books he had perused at the Vatican, prior to his coming to Kambi, the invoices indicated they were galvanised steel pipes. Father Joachim was in charge of purchases.

“Plastic lasts longer,” Father Joachim had explained.

Padre Pardo loathed to think how much of the difference between steel and plastic might have ended up in his pocket or in the Bishop’s perimeter wall. Only Father Angelo could answer that. Judge not lest you be judged.

“Do you know where he is?” he asked Juda Pesa.

“Depends on who you ask,” said Juda. “The man is a living legend.”

“Somewhere near?”

“You hear so many things about him you can’t trust anyone.”

In spite of, and perhaps because of, his un-orthodox method of finding new converts, Father Angelo was a local celebrity and considered a real man long before he eloped with a barmaid.

“Leo,” Juda said. “People here like you too. You don’t have to be Juma Pili, but they would like you better if you stopped asking them to work for free. They know about the project money. They think you want to keep it for yourself.”

“And you, what do you think?” asked Padre Pardo.

“It doesn’t matter what I think,” Juda said. “You want them to work without pay.”

“I can’t pay them.”

“Then you can forget your project.”

“It is not my project,” Padre Pardo said. “It is their project. Part self-help, part church funded.”

“Perfect,” said Juda. “Use the funded part to pay everyone. They will self-help you and love you too.”

“What sort of self-help is that?” Padre Pardo asked. “That is not *Harambee*.”

“*Harambee*?” Juda asked. “Who told you about that? Those who remember *harambee*, will lynch you, if you insist on trying to sell them that line.”

“But it is such a great idea,” said Padre Pardo.

“Was a great idea,” Juda corrected. “*Harambee* was fine when a poor man could build a house, plough his field, send a bright child to school, pay a bride price and bury his dead without money. All with the help of his friends and neighbours. That was the *harambee*, you’ve probably heard of. The *harambee* that built schools and churches, roads and bridges. That one is dead and buried, murdered by greed and self-interest.”

The moment they realized what a gentle giant it was, everyone from the sub-chief to the senator wanted to own *harambee*, to saddle it and ride it to their political fortunes. Then they discovered that it was a mammoth milk cow whose udders had unlimited capacity and, from then on, *harambee* belonged to politicians.

“You could not dig a latrine without a politician,” Juda said to Padre Pardo. “Politicians had to be in on anything that happened in the village. They had to be invited to funerals of people they did not know. They had to be invited to birthday parties and to weddings by people who did not like them. When that did not happen, they invited themselves. They demanded to be guests of honour. They corralled their friends and business partners, who also brought their friends, who brought sacks full of money. That was how they killed *harambee*.”

Padre Pardo continued nodding, a thoughtful frown on his face, long after Juda had stopped talking.

“Leo!” Juda had to raise his voice to snap him out of it. “You don’t understand; that was not a good thing. “

“How,” he asked, “could it be a bad thing, if people brought money to help out?”

“Exactly,” said Juda. “Money was the kiss of death. The nail in the coffin of a movement that had transformed people and built a nation. Self-help stopped helping and started destroying.”

Juda saw the priest was not getting it and was tempted to give up. He took a swig from his wine bottle and tried to enlighten him.

“Leo,” he said, “forget everything they have told you and listen to me. This is how it worked. Suppose Kambi wanted to dig a well. And suppose you, Leo, were our honorable MP and got wind of it. You immediately dropped whatever you were doing in Nairobi, hopped in your Mercedes car and raced down here to find out what the hell was going on without you. You then had a stern word with the Chief and reminded him whose constituency this was. No one had any right to hold any sort of a *harambee* here without your participation. You threatened the Chief with dismissal, and even deportation, and intimidated him to the point where he could no longer function. Then you went off to Nyeri and had a word with the administration.

Suddenly, our *harambee* needs licenses, permits and permissions from the DC , the PC, the KRA and people we never heard of before. While they keep us busy, finding Government offices we never knew existed, you then crawl to State House and propose that the President accept our humble request to be the patron of our proposed village well. You realise that His Excellency is a very busy man, but it would be such a good chance for him to show how he is a great lover of women and a protector of children.”

If the President agreed, the rest was smooth sailing for the Member of Parliament, the party and the Government. The MP invited everyone with whom he had ever made acquaintance. Sycophants dropped everything and raced from every corner of the nation to be seen with, and by, the president. Ordered by the DC to collect a certain number of millions of money by a certain date, chiefs printed multiple receipt books for the donations. Assistant chiefs printed their own books of receipts. Their askaris, and anyone who had any office printed their own. They went about collecting *harambee* donations from anyone they came across. Policemen threw up barricades and demanded presidential *harambee* donations from motorists and their passengers.

“In the end,” Juda said. “We would end up raising enough money to water the whole nation.”

Padre Pardo still did not see how that could be a bad thing.

“It could be a great thing,” Juda explained, “if all the money went into our water well. We would have the deepest well in the universe. We might even end up striking both oil and water.”

Sadly most of the donations ended up with the organizing committees, the Chiefs, their askaris and anyone who had a chance to get their hands on it. Our well ended up shallower than it would have been, if we had dug it ourselves by hand, and life went on.

Padre Pardo digested what he had heard. So far no one had laid it down as Juda had.

“What you are saying is we should dig the trenches ourselves,” he said to Juda.

“Leo,” Juda said, “you are not listening.”

“All I hear is how you don’t want to help with my water project,” Padre Pardo said.

Juda regarded him for a moment.

“You really don’t get it, do you?” he said. “Your water project means death to my water project. There, I have said it.”

“On the contrary,” the padre told him, “my three inch water pipeline will not be enough to supply water for the whole of Kambi.”

Not with Baba Pesa already gearing up to irrigate his entire estate and grow fodder for his livestock.

“That’s Baba Pesa,” Juda confirmed. “Don’t try to stop him, or you will be back in Rome before you know it.”

“He has reserved a hundred acres to build greenhouses for export flowers,” the priest informed. “Another hundred acres will be for green beans and avocados, also for export, and all fed with water from my pipeline.”

“He is so full of it,” Juda said. “Think of what those things will mean for the environment. Fortunately, he cannot do any of it without me. And I will never take part in such a thing. So, you see, your project is safe.”

“If we can get it done.”

“All you have to do is pay for labour.”

“With money I do not have.”

“Talk to your Pope,” Juda suggested. “The man owns a city full of banks. He can raise another billion.”

“Now you are not listening,” Padre Pardo said patiently. “It was not a billion, and that was all there was for Kambi’s water project.”

“I’m sorry, Leo,” Juda said, shaking his head, “but I can’t help you. How many times do you want to hear it? I can’t, I can’t, and I can’t help you.”

“You can,” Padre Pardo insisted. “All you have to do is convince your boys to dig the trenches.”

“For free,” said Juda.

“Without pay, yes,” Padre Pardo said, “but not for free. You help my project and I help yours.”

Juda stopped to listen. He waited for more.

“I know of several dioceses with derelict windmills in their inventories,” Padre Pardo told him. “It is just a question of relocating church assets from one parish to another. From there to here.”

Juda stared at him. Padre Pardo looked him in the eye, spread his hands as if to say – what could be easier?

“Savio!” Juda yelled.

What was it about altar wine that made his guests so brazen? He would have to seal off his cellar, if he was to have any wine bottles left to audit.

Savio poked his head through the door. He looked from Padre Pardo to Juda and back. Padre Pardo nodded. The head disappeared.

They were silent, thinking hard, for the duration it took Savio to descend to the cellar, find the wine and open it. Juda thought about the priest offer. Padre Pardo thought he might yet open a bar in his church, as Juda suggested, and let Kambi come to him. Father Angelo’s cellar seemed to be the only reason he had any friends in Kambi.

Savio brought two bottles of wine. The padre gestured him to return one. Juda took his and held it thoughtfully in his hands. He peeled off the label as he did with Tusker bottle when deep in thought.

“For no money?” he asked again.

“I don’t have any,” Padre Pardo said.

Juda thought some more. He had never had such a break with any of his projects before. He had never been so close to accomplishing his dream.

“And I get all the spare parts I want?” he asked.

Padre Pardo stopped short of nodding.

“The church has many windmills,” he said.

Juda nodded, took a sip from his bottle.

“And how many of these do you have?”

Padre Pardo hesitated. He knew where Juda was going with that question.

“I can’t pay you with altar wine,” he said.

“Hey, Leo,” Juda said. “What do you take me for?”

“For a man with a windmill problem,” said Padre Pardo. “And I am the man with a trench problem. So, what do you say? You scratch my back and I scratch yours? That is self-help, is it not?”

Juda rose abruptly.

“It was nice talking to you,” he headed for the door.

Padre Pardo followed him and his bottle round the altar, through the church and out of the door into the blinding sunlight. Juda stopped on the steps and took a swig. Then he turned to the priest and wagged a finger at him.

“Leo,” he said. “You are smarter than Angelo, I grant you that.”

“That is some compliment,” said Padre Pardo.

“Baba Pesa must never find out about this,” said Juda.

“Of course not,” Padre Pardo said to him. “This is just between us two.”

“And it is not a bribe.”

“The Bishop would not like that either,” said the priest. “As far as the church is concerned, this is an exchange of services.”

“Good,” said Juda. “I’m not sure the boys would go for it either, so I have to sell them a different story. But it is a deal. You and I have a deal.”

He extended his hand. They shook hands. He started down the steps, stopped and looked up at the priest.

“Leo,” he had a big smile on his face, “you are wondering how I knew your name was Leo. It so happens that Baba Pesa knows everything and everyone, who is anyone, in Nyeri. He probably knew you were coming long before you knew it.”

“The Bishop?” Padre Pardo wondered.

“I would not be surprised to see them knock back a Tusker or two together.”

Padre Pardo smiled, as he watched Juda Pesa reel away to his board meeting with a bottle of altar wine in his hand. It was unlikely that either Rome or the Bishop

would ever believe or understand it, but Padre Pardo was certain he would never have got this far without Father Angelo's wine cellar.

The Lord did work in mysterious ways.