



The Killing of the Leseserrkab
Ink on paper, 1994, 40 cm x 27 cm

The Last Leseserrkab on Uripiv

Told by Elder Mark of Emil Potun

Once upon a time there was a Leseserrkab (a leseserrkab or lisepep is a mythic creature of human-like form that is very strong and has very long hair. It lives in the bush in caves or trees and is harmless—most of the time). She lived in a cave at a place known as Ji Nawu on the other side of the island of Uripiv. The cave is commonly known as Bereng Dialovlov (Cave of “Soft Shit”).

In the cave lived this female Leseserrkab. She often used to chase after children, catch them and eat them inside her cave. When children went out fishing on the reef in the morning, she would come out of her cave and chase after them. When she caught them she would go back to her cave and eat them.

The old men of the island soon became fed up with the Leseserrkab eating their children. “We must try and do something about this before she eats up all the children of the island,” they said. “Let us kill the Leseserrkab because she is eating up all our children.” So one day they all set out, saying, “Right, we shall take some of our children to the other side of the island and let them go out fishing on the reef by themselves while we hide ourselves behind the bushes on the shore. From the bush we shall keep our eyes on the children out there on the reef to see if the Leseserrkab comes out of the cave to chase them again as always.”

With this plan in mind, they took the children and set out for the other side of the island, equipped with their weapons of bows and arrows, spears, clubs, and stones. When they got there, the men hid themselves behind the bushes while the children went off on their own to the reef to look for fish and shellfish. The children were yelling and shouting cheerfully as they went. Meanwhile, inside the cave, the Leseserrkab heard the sound of the voices of the children talking excitedly and calling out (as is normal for

children when on the reef fishing). She then came out of her cave and, after looking to see that nobody was around, went straight after the children to chase them and to try to catch some of them for her dinner.

As soon as she was out on the reef, far away enough from her cave, the men emerged from their hiding places behind the bushes and went straight after her. One of the men shot an arrow at her. The arrow hit one of the Leseserrkab's eyes. The Leseserrkab jumped up and landed again as she felt pain from the wound. She ran for her life out toward the waves at the edge of the reef and swam out into the deep ocean to avoid being hit again. She continued to swim away from the island of Uripiv. The men watched her swimming until she disappeared in the open ocean.

The Leseserrkab swam on until she came ashore on the island of Tongoa. But she was seen by the people of Tongoa swimming ashore. They got hold of her so that she could not escape. Then they cut off her two long ears. She was later married to one of the men in Tongoa and gave birth to many children. Her descendants are still on the island of Tongoa to this day. The toenails and fingernails of the Leseserrkab's descendants on Tongoa are said to grow faster than those of ordinary Tongoans. They grow back faster than other people's toenails and fingernails after they've been cut short. For example, nails that are cut one day can very quickly be replaced by new ones and these can grow very long if left uncut.



Detail from *The Killing of the Leseserrkab*,
by Ralph Regenvanu. 1994.