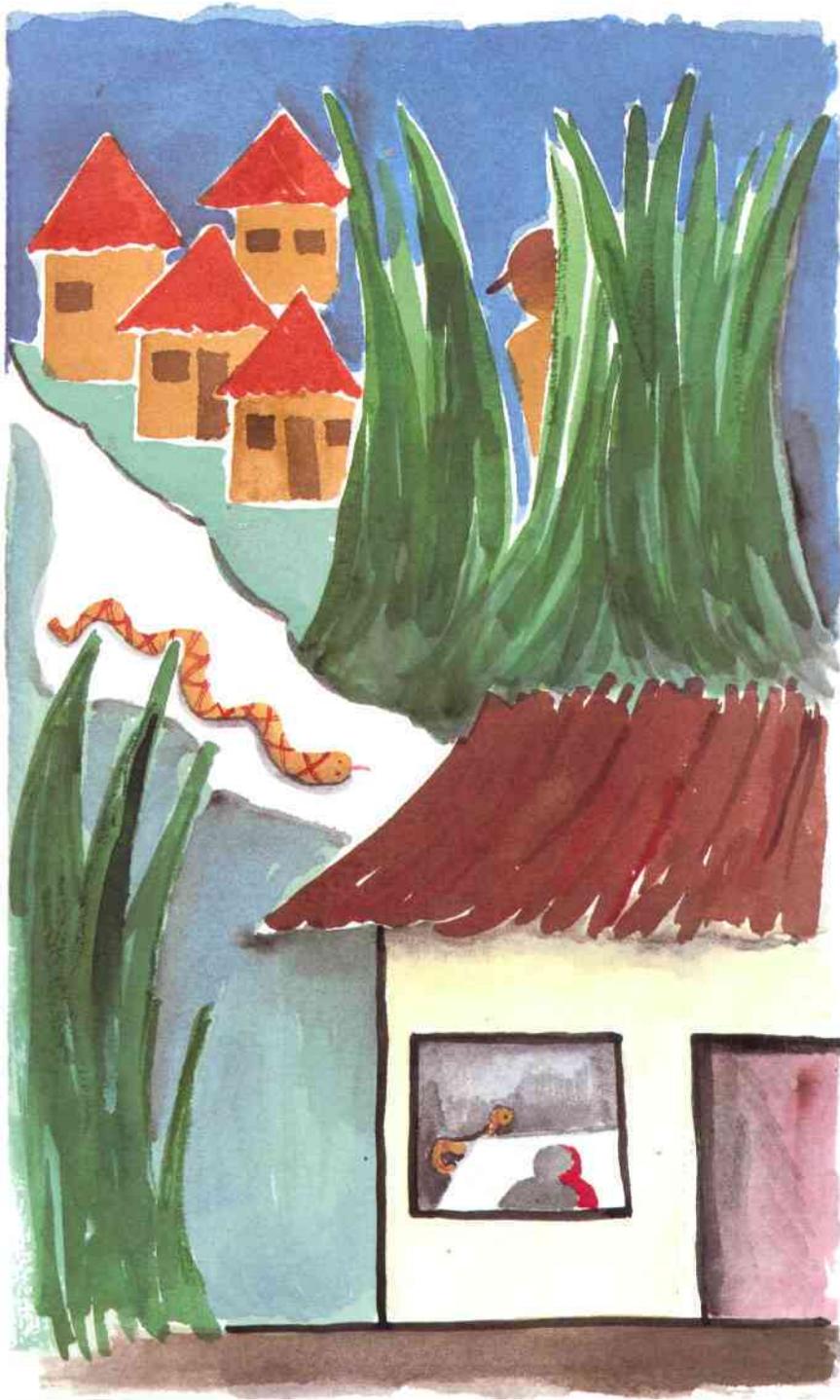




O autor, executivo holandês agora radicado no Brasil, dirigiu grandes empresas em muitos lugares do planeta. Esta pequena história, de sua autoria, fala de relacionamentos, mostra como é importante conhecer e respeitar as diferenças culturais e tem um desfecho absolutamente insólito.

# Snakes Travel in Pairs

The snake was looking for its mate. *It* had lost contact with its companion and was now attempting to locate it. As all natives in the tropics knew, snakes were quite clannish. For a brief period, in the mating season, they would remain together, and establish some kind of companionship. When they found each other's scent, they would follow it, thus eventually guaranteeing contact. This was a well-known natural instinct, known by all but the most uninformed. Natives know these things. They are close to nature.



The snake picked up the scent in a sugar field. From there it led to a house, then across some hard and cold floors, and after some changes in direction it came to a peculiar structure where the trail went straight up. Difficult as it was, it managed to overcome this obstacle, and found itself on a very comfortable surface. The trail led to the end of this surface and then it went underneath. The trail ended there. Having no further to go, the snake waited, and waited, and waited.

It didn't know it, but it was in a bed, under the covers.

Marsahin was a worker on a sugar plantation. He cut cane in the harvesting season. He also did other chores, whatever the foreman decreed. The foreman, an European, assigned and meted out the jobs that had to be done. He wasn't popular with the local people.



Here, we would call him an "ugly Dutchman"; there, the natives would label these people "Totok Kedjoe", or "Cheese Heads", a derogatory term to denote those foreigners that didn't respect the local customs. These were almost always at odds with the local villagers, because they didn't understand them. They always knew everything, arrogantly better.

Marsahin had been careless. One day while cutting cane, a very poisonous snake had bitten him in the finger. Knowing there was no alternative to certain death, he put his hand on a block of wood, and with one fast agonizing swoop of his machete, chopped his finger off. His disability had rendered him less useful to the workgroup, and the foreman had berated him for his stupidity, in front of all the other workers. From this moment there existed a state of enmity between the two. By the time his hand was healed, Marsahin had devised his plan. For this, he needed a poisonous snake. There were plenty of snakes in

the sugar field but he needed a very special one. One, whose bite was fatal. It took some time.

One day, he found just the one. He killed it. He put a string around its neck and dragged it across the field, into the house, into the foreman's room, and up into the bed, under the covers. He pulled the dead snake up from the covers, and the scent ended there.

In the tropics, the muggy heat was oppressive enough to sap the strength of almost anyone. The natives were hardened to this, but the white man needed to rest more frequently to maintain his strength. That night the foreman, after dinner, went to bed as usual. He sat on the edge of the bed, took his shoes and shirt off, and got under the covers.

The next morning, Marsahin noticed a lot of confusion at the big house. He asked what was going on. A man told him that the foreman had died, during the night, from the bite of a very poisonous snake.

The man ventured: "Oh, how could such a terrible thing happen? Every body liked him".

"Yes", acknowledged Marsahin, "It is a very sad thing". "The ways of Allah are indeed mysterious."

"Allah, is great!"

"It is God's will!"

### J. M. Staveren

Foi CEO de grandes indústrias como a Lincoln Electric, a Bendix e a Falk Sundstrand.

Membro do Instituto de Marketing Industrial, voltou a fixar residência no Brasil recentemente.