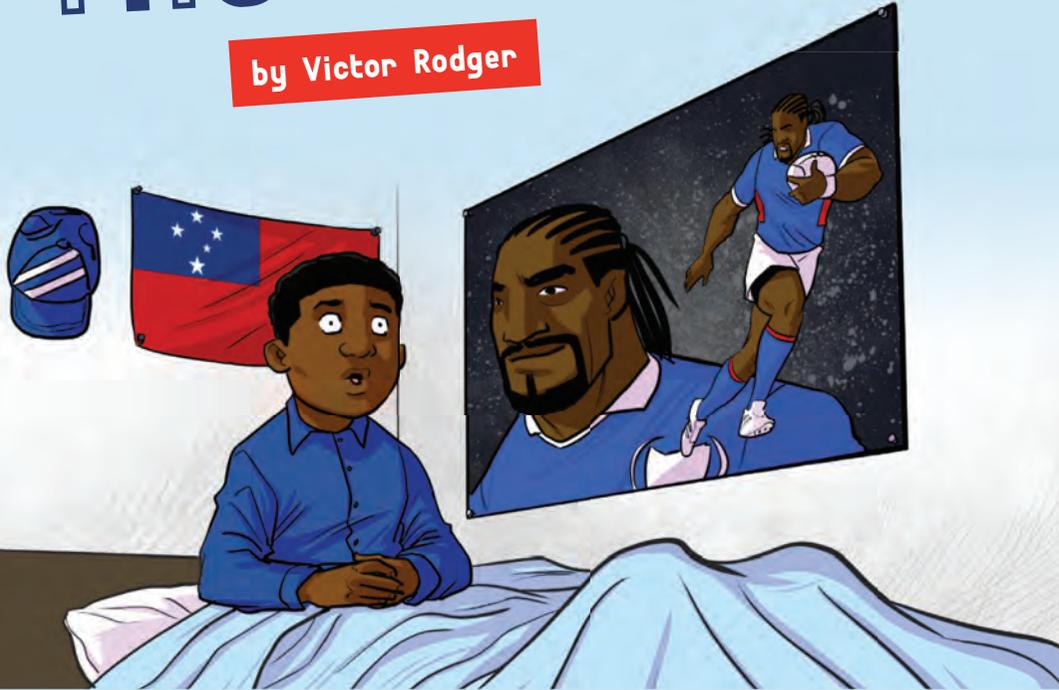


The Choice

by Victor Rodger



As soon as Lamb woke up, he knew immediately that there were two things he didn't want to do: (1) he didn't want to get out of bed, and (2) he didn't want to go to church.

Today was the final of the church talent quest. Lamb was singing in it with his sister, Lala, and their brother, Lio. After three rounds, it was down to the last two contestants. The winners would get a fancy meal for their whole family at a fancy restaurant in the city.

But Lamb didn't care. There was only one final that he cared about – the final match of the season for Manu Sāmoa.

They were playing France, and the game was going to be live on television at 9 a.m. He was dying to watch it.

Lamb looked up at the huge poster on his bedroom wall. It was a poster of Mose Malolo, the captain of Manu Sāmoa. Mose Malolo was *the man*.

Lamb heard his mother's footsteps approaching his room. He squeezed his eyes shut and pretended to be asleep. He heard his mother fling open the bedroom door.

“Come on, Lamb! Se vave!”



She was telling him to hurry up. But Lamb didn't want to. It was too warm and cosy underneath his blanket. More importantly, if he got up, he would have to go to church, and if he went to church, he would miss the game.

"Sole – get up, you'll be late for the competition."

Lamb opened his eyes. "I feel sick."

His mother put her hand on his forehead. "You don't have a temperature," she said.

"My tummy. It's sore."

Lala and Lio appeared in the doorway.

Lala frowned. "He's acting, Mum. I bet he just wants to stay home and watch the game."

Lamb's mother looked at him. "You wouldn't let your brother and sister down because of a game of rugby would you, Lamb? Because that would be makua – selfish."

Lamb hesitated, then shook his head. His mother sighed.

"Lamb, is your tummy really sore?"

Lamb hesitated again, then heard himself softly say, "Yes."

"Then you'd better stay home."

Lala looked horrified. "But what about the talent quest? What will we do without Lamb? We need his harmony."

"I'm sure the two of you will still sound great, Lala." Lamb's mother kissed Lamb on his forehead. "I'll ask Grandma to keep an eye on you. She's not feeling well, either, so she's staying home, too."

Lamb sighed. His grandmother would want to watch her game shows. She'd hog the television. Now he'd have to work out another way to watch the game.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

Lamb's mum looked at him suspiciously for a moment. Then she turned to Lio and Lala. "Come on, you kids, we're going to be late."

Lala's face was one gigantic scowl. "Enjoy your dumb game, Lamb," she whispered. She shot one last look at him as she left the room – a look that said "You're a liar and I know it."

Suddenly Lamb's tummy *did* feel sore – not because he felt sick but because he felt guilty.



At nine o'clock, Lamb sneaked into the lounge, still dressed in his pyjamas. A game show was playing on the television. His grandmother seemed to be watching it, but when Lamb looked more closely, he could see that she was asleep. Yes!

Very quietly, Lamb picked up the remote and changed the channel. There was Mose Malolo leading the team onto the field. Lamb was excited, but at the same time, he couldn't stop wondering how Lala and Lio were getting along without him.

He tried to push those thoughts aside, but they kept coming back.

Suddenly Lamb heard a noise behind him.

"So you're too sick to go to church, but not too sick to get out of bed to watch TV, eh?"

He turned. There, in the doorway, were his mother, Lala, and Lio.

"I told you he was acting, Mum," Lala sneered.



Lamb swallowed. “How come you’re not at church?”

“The minister had a family emergency,” said his mother.

Lala narrowed her eyes. “A real one.”

Even though Lamb knew he was in trouble, he couldn’t resist looking at the television screen. Mose Malolo had the ball and was running towards the French players.

At that moment, Lamb’s grandmother woke up and squinted at the screen. “Oi – what happened to my game show?”

Lamb’s mother grabbed the remote from Lamb and handed it to her mother. “Here, change it back to your programme, Mum.”

But grandmother’s face broke into a smile. “That’s Mose Malolo. What a handsome man. He reminds me of your father ...” Lamb watched as Mose continued his epic run towards the try line.

“Look at me, Lamb,” said his mother.

Reluctantly, Lamb looked at his mother, just as his grandmother let out a yell – obviously Mose had scored a try.

“Tell me the truth, Lamb. Did you lie to me?”

Lamb nodded.

“And did you lie to me just so you could watch the rugby game?”

Lamb nodded again.

“Son, do you think Mose Malolo would have let down his brother and sister like that?”

Lamb knew Mose Malolo would have done anything for his brother and sister. He felt guilty from the top of his head to the bottom of his toes.

“Sorry, Mum. Sorry, Lala. Sorry, Lio.”

His mother sighed. “You’re lucky church got cancelled today, Lamb. You’ll be able to do that competition with your brother and sister next week ... no matter what. Now go to your room. We’re all going to watch the match with Grandma. And when it’s finished, we’ll tell you what happened.”

Lamb nodded.

“Oh, and Lamb,” his mother added.

Lamb was suddenly hopeful his mother was going to let him watch the game after all. “Yes, Mum?”

“Close the door on the way out. It’s freezing.”

Lamb’s shoulders sagged. “Yes, Mum.”



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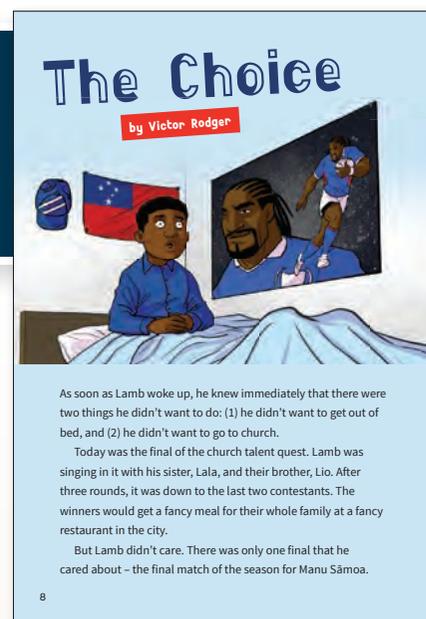
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