

**Post-colonialism, a Matter of Perspective: Native  
Narratives in a Language of Violence and Pain.  
A Recovery Journey.**

**Gayle King-Tamehana  
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**Auckland University of Technology  
Faculty of Applied Humanities  
Dr Paul Mountford**

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in a Language of Violence and Pain.  
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## **PART TWO:**

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# **ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

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# ABSTRACT

The aim of telling the story was to show that the aftermath of colonisation is still manifest in this so called post-colonial era in Aotearoa from the perspective of Maori narrators. The novel is about inequality, powerlessness, oppression, prejudice, and the disproportionate distribution of resources. The stories are about the power relationships between, genders, cultures, ages and those who are mentally afflicted or anyone who is deemed to be different.

The objectives are: to give some insight into what it is like to be different, initiate an awareness of the impact that cultural difference has in this country, to promote better understanding between Maori and Non-Maori, to generate self awareness through reflexive practices, to encourage the use of safe and effective coping methods during times of adversity, to emphasise the need for change, and a story that would instil hope.

*Alison Takes the Train* is about what it means to be Maori in society, not because the characters are trying to live by or to sustain traditional Maori values for none of them are fluent in te reo; but by the mere fact that they are Maori and their Maoriness is inherent in the way they view the world. Through a language of violence and pain the narrators tell their stories. *Keywords: Post-colonial, language, violence, inequality, powerlessness, oppression, prejudice.*

# EXEGESIS

## **Post-colonialism, a Matter of Perspective: Native Narratives in a Language of Violence and Pain.**

### **A Recovery Journey**

#### **Introduction**

This exegesis is a reflexive discourse that describes the creative performance undertaken to create the novel 'Alison Takes the Train' (ATT). The novel is about Maori people surviving violence: past and present. It is about cause, effect and coping. It is also a story of hope for a future without violence: without pain.

To write about violence is an immersion in the most disturbing aspect of existence, pain and suffering; and for the writer requires answering the crucial challenge to confront that violence and struggle with the destructive impulse of human life (Heim, 1998).

The story is told in a particular language that is a peculiarity produced by a transfused and assimilated form of Maori / English. It is a language of violence and pain. The linguistics of that language therefore derives from the vernacular of the characters in the novel.

Throughout this paper, I address elements of my own whakapapa (genealogy). This required delving into the past; and an exploration of the present; in order to gain some comfort in a hopeful future for whanau (family), hapu (extended family) and iwi (Maori). I include reflection of aspects of the work in relation to critical theory, texts of creative fiction that influenced the work as well as; elements of fiction and the creative writing process; such as storytelling and techniques in writing practice, the art of writing and the tools of the craft. I discuss the text in relation to the books I grew up with. These books have influenced the way I think and have contributed to the way I have viewed the world. I also place the text within the context of the canon of literature by Maori about Maori, by writers from Aotearoa.

Finally, I reflect upon the relevance of the work within the wider world and the degree to which it is informed by world events, politically, socially, spiritually and economically. ATT is a story about Maori, about our histories, about Aotearoa and about

the times we live in. In Aotearoa society, the term post colonial according to various indigenous perspectives surmises that colonisation is over and the colonisers have left (Pihama, 1997). ATT is a statement about Maori surviving the residual encumbrances of colonial rule.

The overall aim of this exegesis therefore is to support the creative performance as research; and for the novel to be accepted as a thesis.

## **The Research**

The performance was informed by the principles of qualitative research paradigm and used methods aligned with, case study research and grounded theory methodology, The qualitative research paradigm was the most appropriate design for this study as it is designed to help with understanding social phenomena through the exploration of attitudes, beliefs, meanings values and experiences of participants; and grounded theory methodology focuses on social processes and concentrates on the participants in human action and human action and interaction (Whitehead, 2007). Broadly stated this allows flexibility and freedom to explore the phenomenon in depth to provide clarity to the theory grounded in the data as it emerges inductively from the phenomenon (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999). Case study methodology is suited to conditions when the focus is on experiences of contemporary phenomena within real life contexts (Yin, 1994). Here, significance is in the processes that lead to the results rather than the significance of the results themselves (Gillham, 2000).

ATT gathers the narratives of Maori. They define their experiences of living through their beliefs and how their beliefs influence their lives. The relevance this has to Maori agrees with the appropriateness of Maori researchers to carry out research on Maori to safeguard against the exploitation of Maori knowledge as well as ensuring greater accountability of researchers to those being researched (Bishop & Glynn, 1992; L. Smith, 1999). I have drawn on essentially westernised research design and methodologies to enhance and support Kaupapa Maori frameworks as a research paradigm which enable the use of particular theories that further the emancipation of the indigenous struggles and discard aspects that do not (Eketone, 2008). This is aimed

at generating solutions from a synergic merge of two cultures rather than a dominance of one over the other in order to create new knowledge that will benefit Maori (M. Durie, 2005).

### **Background, aims and objectives.**

The socio-political background was the underpinning determinant for the motivation to write the novel. The Te PuniKokiri 1998 report '*Progress towards closing the social and economic gaps between Maori and Non-Maori*', was intended to measure the degree of progress made towards the development of policy leading towards closing the social and economic disparities between Maori and Non-Maori. Socio-economic disadvantage is considered the most significant explanation for disparities but social disadvantage does not explain the differences. Statistical data available on the position that Maori occupy within New Zealand society show how Maori experience disparities across all social and economic sectors including education, employment, income, housing, criminal justice and health (Te Puni Kokiri, 2000).

Reading the gravestones in the urupa (cemetery) in my papakainga (village) bears testimony to the statistics on health. The ages of my whanau range from new born to mid-fifties. One koro (grand-dad) was seventy three when he died; no one in the whanau is old enough to remember him. My maternal grand-father died in June 1963. I grew up hearing the story that my grand-mother died a month later of a broken heart. A search of family records tells that the cause of death was a heart attack. She was fifty two years old. My paternal grand-mother died from Tuberculosis when she was thirty five, she'd left eleven children behind. We don't have much land left, but each year we move the fence-line at the urupa out so the whanau (family) can all fit when they come home to be buried. They all lay side by side; aunties and uncles, nieces and nephews, a sister, a brother and some cousins: whanau all whanau. The causes of death are not written on the stones, but they are known. Heart disease, renal failure, any one of the cancers, diabetes, liver disease and the list goes on. There are even a few suicides. But those are whispered about.

Whispers also circulate about the ones who are having holidays in gaol, and about the ones who are in some psychiatric facility, or living on the streets, 'Up Auckland or down Wellington.'



Most of the whanau live in the towns in state houses and are on benefits or sell drugs; some have jobs, several left secondary school with a qualification, three have tertiary qualifications. The situation is improving however, Bernadette's a Lawyer in Auckland and David has his own lawn mowing business in Hamilton.

When the basic needs of survival are not being met, self determination (tino rangatiratanga) cannot be met because it is not an immediate need. Partnerships between inter-sectoral government agencies must be committed enough to promote Maori wellness by strengthening the alignment of the principles of good governance, consultation, transparency, and accountability; with the principles implicit in Treaty of Waitangi, partnership, participation and protection in order that individuals can achieve tino rangatiratanga and that it be sustained (Te Puni Kokiri, 2000).

The aim of telling the story was to show the impact of historical events on Maori in this contemporary society of Aotearoa, from the perspective of Maori narrators. The objective was to create a piece of fiction which would be accessible to and be read by ordinary people in Aotearoa. The story needed to give some insight into; what it is like to be different, to initiate an awareness of the impact that cultural difference has in this country, to promote better understanding between Maori and non-Maori, to generate self awareness through reflexive practices, to encourage the use of safe and effective coping methods during times of adversity, to emphasise the need for change, and a story that would instil hope.

## **Sampling strategy, participants and setting.**

All good stories need characters.

As in grounded theory methodology, sample selection involves choosing participants who are experiencing the circumstance, and selecting events and incidents related to the social processes under investigation (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2006). The characters in ATT live within the context of poverty, violence, crime, drugs, alcohol, prostitution, in the prisons, in the hospitals, in the hoods, as families labelled dysfunctional, as gangs, as victims of abuse: and on the benefit.

*We choose to stay here because the only other choice is down. But after this there is no down. This is it.*

*Nadir.*

*And in this street is where we live. We live in the street. We live street. We exist.  
We survive: streetwise.*

*Even the homeless man has to wake up to the morning: bleak as it is.*

Excerpt from, 'Alison Takes the Train' by G. King-Tamehana (writing as K-T Harrison), an unpublished novel.

To investigate social reality requires direct observation of events that occur naturally or through the exploration of attitudes and beliefs, values and meanings and lived experiences of the participants in the study (Whitehead, 2007). Furthermore, grounded theory is context dependent and substantive especially with regard to making sense out of human action and interaction (Whitehead).

*Wetlands where the birds wade becomes swamp out here where the city lights  
fade, then turns into the quagmire of a miasma and stinking wasteland; where  
ethane bogged people with dak clogged brains and P fogged eyes, waste away  
and stay that way. And stay.*

*And stay forever.*

Excerpt from, 'Alison Takes the Train' by G. King-Tamehana (writing as K-T Harrison), an unpublished novel.

In order for the story to be told from the individual perspective, the novel adopted an interpretive and naturalistic approach (Silverman, 2000). The individuals viewed their world and the phenomena contained within it and talked about it (Silverman). I chose this technique to emphasize the dynamic holistic and individual aspects of human experiences and to capture those aspects in their entirety within the context of the individuals who were experiencing them (Silverman). ATT is a compilation of those narratives woven into interactive and interdependent relationships that make the story.

*Over here, right here, the down at heel walk the uneasy streets in tattered rags, to  
broken homes; the dirt poor broken men and the broken up women, the down and  
outs who scrape an existence from the pittance that's doled out to them. Hand-  
outs. Their hands out. For the hand outs and the hand-me downs. In the squalid  
huts of the welfared masses, the always poor of the lower classes, burn chopped  
up floorboards to keep themselves warm. And scream out loud for the hungry*

*storm, rages in their bellies. And the cats and dogs aren't the only things on the prowl, up the darkened alleys.*

Excerpt from, 'Alison Takes the Train' by G. King-Tamehana (writing as K-T Harrison), an unpublished novel.

They need a place to live.

The novel portrays the experiences of the characters within the context of their own culture. The individuals share a culturally orientated understanding of their world and these are the characters in ATT. The whenua (land) and moana (sea) that once sustained the early Maori settlers for over one thousand years has become an entrapment in which the underprivileged try to survive and from which escape seems impossible. These people are strongly affected by violence. I observe the interactional and situational behaviour of the individuals as they are immersed in their daily lives. The people seem to be in perpetual poverty and violence and the most stupefying aspect is that it is self-violence. The main thread of the story takes place in South Auckland from the late seventies through to the early part of this century.

*It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. And it's this part we call Mad-angry. We live here. It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. We stay here. Mad or angry or both. And I stay here where I have been for the past twelve years. 275- on the bus route. 275- in the phone book. This town is Mad-angry.*

*My town: Mangere.*

Excerpt from, 'Alison Takes the Train' by G. King-Tamehana (writing as K-T Harrison), an unpublished novel.

They have a reason to be together.

I explore the attitudes, beliefs meanings and values of the characters as they interact with other members of their group. And I show how the characters try to make sense of and reflect on their experiences and they develop a self awareness and eventually an awareness of others. They are whanau and neighbours. Some live in the same house, some in the same street. They all live in the hood. The jungle. Mad-angry.

They belong to a social setting and they live within it.

The characteristics of the socially constructed group and the impact these have on the individuals as a determinant in their behaviour is portrayed in the novel. They are together because of historical, cultural and therefore economic consequence. And if that in itself seems all too unbearable, I take each character out of their group and observe them as they interact with the rest of the world.

The main characters grow and develop an understanding of where they fit in the greater scheme of things; therefore I emphasise the inextricably linked components of Te Ao Maori (the Maori view of the world).

Language is a means of understanding what it means to be, and seen in terms of socially constructed realities; it is a dynamic process, analysis of which should focus on what language does (Birch, 1989). I discuss language in a further section of this paper.

## **Critical Literary theory.**

The purpose of literary theory is to elucidate and take a broad view of both literary discourse and critical practice (Eagleton, 1990). Furthermore, it is inextricably linked to political beliefs and ideological values, and codes of belief and truths which relate specifically to particular groups (Eagleton, 2001). Literary theory examines factors that shape how a text is written and involves the various approaches to texts (Klages, 2006).

Post-colonial literary theory is concerned with the impact colonisation has had on the development of literature within those regions throughout the world who were historically and politically under the power of England and Britain (Klages). However to suggest this requires interpretation and definition of what post colonial means (Pihama, 1997). One such interpretation proposes a movement beyond imperialist colonial theoretical models and therefore allows the freedom of marginalised peoples to voice their own unique perspectives and insights (Pihama). Post colonial theory has fundamental basis in historical developments and is a product of multiculturalism and decolonisation (Eagleton, 2001). In Aotearoa society, the term post colonial according to various indigenous perspectives surmises that the colonisers have left (Pihama, 1997). This means that colonisation is over (L. Smith, 1998).

ATT is a collection of narratives by Maori people who live in this post colonial contemporary society. The people struggle to survive midst the residual encumbrances of colonial rule. The majority of the people in the story exist in the circumstances of their daily lives without any notion of the theories that attempt to explain their situation or categorise their patterns of behaviour into neat parcels of description for statistical purposes and academic attainment. They are basic in their needs and limited in their aspirations. They live in the realism of today and seek only to wake up in the morning.

*I'm a hopeless vacant lot in a homeless situation, situated in this dispossessed disposition. Now I lie here laid bare in my existence; the truth about my predicament and my annoying gnawing insistence, lying naked on this ground here passively resisting, the thousand, thousand slithering ngangara crawling over my constitution stripped bare.*

Excerpt from, 'Alison Takes the Train' by G. King-Tamehana (writing as K-T Harrison), an unpublished novel.

ATT espouses common and recurring themes in some of the productions of wahine Maori artist Robyn Kahukiwa. These depict Maori women and the social problems they have endured in the past and continue to experience today (Diamond, 1998). Compared to Maori men and non-Maori New Zealanders, many Maori women live in socio-economically disadvantaged situations (Diamond, 1998). Further to this Maori women experience a higher incidence of illness and premature death, higher crime rates, greater involvement in domestic violence and homicide; a lower educational attainment level that corresponds with a higher unemployment rate and a higher dependence on Government welfare benefits (Diamond).

## **Influential Same Genre Fiction.**

Intertextuality is the relationships of text to other texts and associations with other texts and so on (Bennett & Royale, 1999). In other words; the placement of texts within a milieu that embodies an array of texts whatever their origins, will likely lead back to other texts. This is fundamental to the institution of literature (Bennett & Royale). Therefore, placing ATT within the context of other texts gives relevance to the work as it

becomes part of an inextricably linked body of literature and adds to an amassed bulk of knowledge accumulated through engagement and intertextuality.

A significant aspect in developing the novel was the influences of other same genre fiction. I read Harper Lee's 'To kill a Mockingbird' while still in high school and throughout my life I have read the book many times. What interested me were the themes of: prejudice and racism, fear of the unknown, innocence, coming of age, courage and family relationships. In the story, human morality is explored and good and evil coexist. Social inequality in small town Maycomb is a microcosm analogous with that of the wider world (Johnson, 1994). Therefore, I believed the themes could be explored and placed in Aotearoa. ATT is a story about cultural inferiority and marginalisation, discrimination and stigmatisation. ATT is about inequality, powerlessness, oppression, prejudice, and the disproportionate distribution of resources. ATT is about the power relationships between, genders, cultures, ages and those who are mentally afflicted or anyone who is deemed to be different.

When I was younger I was drawn to the character Mrs Ramsy in, 'To the Lighthouse' by Virginia Woolf. The story explores how women are forced by society to allow men to take emotional strength from them (Briggs, 1991). Mrs Ramsy is the icon of motherhood and an intimate link that parallels creation, and there is the implication that women ought to confine their activities to proving support to men, offer reassurance and consolation for self-doubt and failure (Briggs). The character fulfils the needs of all around her as she is the ultimate feminine ideal she is the Madonna of intercession and consolation for suffering and loss (Briggs). Maori solo mother Maia Taurima has similar characteristics to those of Mrs Ramsy, however, Maias struggle is more about preservation of whanau, hapu and iwi as she battles to raise herself and her children out of the pit of victim status that would otherwise have them locked into the low socio-economic grouping and its associated trappings. The construct of whanau, hapu, iwi within traditional Maori society is relevant to Maori development because of the focus on collective rights as opposed to the western civilisations concern with individual rights (Irwin, 1995). Maia knows that she cannot change the behaviours of other people. So she sets about changing her own although she is at constant odds to do so.

‘The Cossacks’ by Leo Tolstoy for me represented the notion that, you may think you can absorb another’s way of life, but you can’t. The story is about a young man who longs to join another society and become another part of life, but his background and temperament are incompatible with those he wishes to join. Several of the characters in ATT are placed in situations that are far removed from the world they know even though the geographical locations are only a few streets away from where they live.

I was also intrigued by the way Tolstoy used several different and apparently incompatible literary forms and conventions such as the romantic, the classical, the epic and the personal to tell the story (Campbell, 1994). ATT uses several literary forms to tell the story and the combination of the forms works because of the multiplicity of narrators of varying ages, genders, educational backgrounds and intellectual ability. The story tells of the self consciousness and self absorption of the young, it is about magic and absurdity.

The Cossacks is a celebration of the life and the flesh. The people are strong, honest and spontaneous (Campbell). So too are the people in ATT.

## **Maori Mythology**

The idea of interrelatedness and complementarities of male and female in Maori cosmology accentuate the relevance of female characters in Maori Mythology (Marsden, 1975; Kawharu 1975).

Alpers (1964) relates the myth of procreation in which Hine-Titama is the mother of all creation, when Hine-Titama discovered that the father of her children was her own father, the degradation she suffered drove her to flee to the underworld. Humiliated and shamed, she chose to hide in the darkness. She dwelt amidst the filth with every verminous creature that existed. She became Hine-Nui-te-Po, goddess of death. She vowed that she would protect her children. From this depraved and filth-infested world, she watched them. They grew fat and flourished. Their numbers grew. Humankind multiplied and soon her children were many (Alpers, 1964).

ATT explored the notion of the legacy inherited through Maori mythology and the creation of the world where we are told of the separation of Ranginui and Papatuanuku (Best, 1952).

Tradition has origins in legacy.

The existence of the unit suffocated the children.

The process of separating was violent.

The separation wrought sadness.

Pro-creation was through incest.

For Maori therefore, the separation of a unit so that the inhabitants within could breathe and walk upright necessitated a violent act and while mythology would have us believe that women are much venerated from a cosmological sense, the incest that was necessary for procreation was therefore a necessary act of abuse.

ATT explores the notion that violence and hostility in the Maori world was inherited from the beginnings of life and creation according to Maori Mythology

ATT suggests that the impact of colonization further compounded the plight of a people who already existed in a world where violence and hostility was rife.

In ATT, Hine-nui-Te-Po is a presence felt by the children and is present in their storytelling to each other. She is also represented in the narratives titled 275.

## **Native Narratives in a Language of Violence and Pain.**

ATT is a Maori story, for Maori: by Maori, for in order for a nation to determine their own destiny, they must tell their own stories. For what richer source of information could there be? Further to this, narrative power that allows telling stories may be the only strategy left for the weak and the dispossessed otherwise they may never be heard (Bennett & Royale, 1999). Language is rich, descriptive and worth attention because it provides insight into the people we study and where they are coming from (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore the ATT is told in the language of the individual story tellers.

Heim (1998) discusses fiction by Maori writers in the twenty years from 1972 which is when Pounamu Pounamu, by Witi Ihimaera was published. He analyses works by; Heretaunga Pat Baker, Alan Duff, Patricia Grace, Keri Hulme, Witi Ihimaera, Bruce Stewart, J.C. Sturm, Apirana Taylor and Ngahuia Te Awekotukutuku. He discusses violence within the concerns of Maori fiction as the expression of a culture of survival, and refers to violence that is private or domestic violence and that which is in the public domain which he calls systemic violence (Heim). From Heims' analyses, I am able to



place ATT somewhere between, Patricia Graces' traditional Maori ethic of the collective, in proposing solutions to Maori adversity; and Alan Duffs proposal of individual effort and achievement towards self-empowerment. I have faith the traditional ethic however the health and well-being of the whole depends on the health and well-being of its components. If the end result of individual self-empowerment can be to add support to the traditional collective of whanau, hapu, iwi then what Duff suggests would be an ideal worth pursuing.

ATT is about violence within the Maori world: past and present, which by all accounts does not predispose the Maori nation to a future with favourable outcomes. However in ATT, there is hope. The violence within ATT does not separate the good people from the bad nor is it differentiated, explained or rationalised. It just happens as if it is one of the facts of every day living: because it is. In ATT violence occurs in the homes, in the street, around the corner, in a park a few miles away and in the Auckland Harbour with the destruction of the Rainbow Warrior, however as frequently as it occurs this does not stop the people from feeling for the victims of violence as it does not necessarily prevent empathetic response to others who suffer. In ATT, not all violence precipitates violent retaliatory behaviour and not all victims of violent acts are predisposed to victim status. The people are united in their empathy.

While Heim suggested that there is no language for pain in my opinion he restricted himself to the written language and English. Though only some of the Maori characters in ATT speak Maori, all sensory awareness is in Maori. The realism of all the facets of living is in the breathing, the walking and the talking. Even the silences have something to say. In ATT, bruises fade, broken bones mend and wounds heal. The residual symptoms of pain remain within the psychological being of the characters, but not all of them dwell on it and they are not embittered by it. For them it is a means by which they sort out what can be learnt from the experience. Some choose to continue along a destructive pathway with negative outcomes and further pain; some choose to walk along the pathway of enlightenment and with positive outcomes. All however are on a continuum of a recovery journey which not only allows for new discoveries and personal growth, but also allows for relapse which is part of that growth.

## **A Recovery Journey**

Recovery is about developing a new meaning and purpose (Anthony, 1993). It is a complex process of discovery (Repper & Perkins, 2003). It is an ongoing struggle of personal growth and learning, taking risks, failing and trying again, being able to live with oneself and others and being part of a living community (Turner, 2002). It is a personally generated process, with a set of positive outcomes set only by the person embarking on the journey.

For Maori there is much to recover from. ATT speaks in a language of those who are in recovery as the narrators/characters are those who have lived through and are living amidst the residual encumbrances of colonial rule. Theirs are stories of recovery; their personal narratives mean that they are experts by experience.

Knowing the story telling craft and was vital to the creative performance in order to reproduce the narratives to create story in a way that was truly representative of the characters journeys. This involved interpreting and applying the tools of the craft, the creative writing process, the art of writing and the elements of fiction: taught by experts in the field. This also included reading the recommended texts on the subjects of: guides to the writing process and techniques in writing practice. Throughout the series of lectures and in all the reading material the notion of tools not rules was emphasised.

There are some professional writers who oppose the idea of analysing the creative process and some prefer to avoid systematic thinking (Vogler, 1998). For them art is intuitive and in some cases the contrast to the pervasiveness of formulas results in work that is fresh and exciting (Vogler). The risk of this practice is; a limited audience since that which is entirely unconventional does not hold with commonly held patterns of association and a certain amount of form is required (Vogler).

To write ATT required an astute application of the tools of the storytelling craft in order to be true to the characters and their stories. However, I felt justified in manipulating some conventions of the craft to suit the needs of the characters and the situations they were in for example the language of violence and pain in a previous section of this paper. I have used a three part helical narrative structure and have relied on psychological and

emotional time rather than chronological time as the growth, development and changes of the characters is most strongly apparent psychologically.

ATT is a recovery story. The journey I took in the creative process was a journey of discovery as well as recovery. For Maori, recovery is about regaining that which was lost so that the healing can continue. Initiatives to restore the language are in place and the current situation is far better than what it was twenty years ago. Raupatu and land claims continue with vast successes. There are gaps and disparities, but they go both ways, however since our achievement is measured against that of Pakeha we still have a long way to go yet.

## **Conclusion**

The story explores the notion that violence and hostility in the Maori world was inherited from the beginnings of life and creation according to Maori Mythology. The story suggests that the impact of colonization further compounded the plight of a people who already existed in a world where violence and hostility was rife. The story implies that the business of colonisation is not over. This is a story about Maori existing in the modern day underworld of: poverty, violence, crime, drugs, alcohol, prostitution, in the prisons, in the hospitals, in the hoods, as families labelled dysfunctional, as gangs, as victims of abuse: and on the benefit. This is a story about cause, effect and coping in order to survive as whanau, hapu and iwi. This is a story about Whakapapa preservation and the survival of the Maori nation.

This story therefore, has to be the saddest I have ever lived.

**Alison Takes the Train**  
**A Novel**

# **Alison Takes the Train**

## **Mum**

### **By Eli Tumanaako**

The air hostess lady gave me a basket full of lollies.

I took the basket she gave me and I said, thank you I've got some brothers and a sister up in Auckland and I'll give these to them when we get there. They're for your ears, she said so I took two and gave her back her basket. She told me to look down there out the window and she pointed to a big Maunga. Mt Egmont she said.

Taranaki.

I said.

And I looked. Gee, God must surely live there on top of that Maunga because even though I haven't never seen God, I heard a whole heap about how white and pure he is, and that Maunga surely was pure white. Just like they said God was. And they said that you only see the pure when you die and go to heaven. And that snowy maunga, the top bit of it at least, was the whitest thing I have ever seen, and I'm still in my living. And I thought gee, that's where he must sit on his throne and look out over the whenua. So I spread my fingers out and I touched the windowed Maunga where God sits.

Gee.

I seen the Maunga and God and I'm not even dead yet. Jesus in bloody hell, as Papa would say twice. That's really something. Then they were gone, God and Taranaki, ten windows behind me already.

But I seen them.

I seen them. And I breathed in and out real loud, because, I'm alive. And I seen them.

When I looked out of the window after we'd left Christchurch, down there looked like the quilt Nanny had made for me out of square rags. It's in my bag in the luggage bit of this plane. My nanny-blanket, my photo of Papa, all my clothes, and some other stuff; all packed away in my back-pack that I bought at the Army surplus shop in New Brighton.

I'm going to live in Auckland with my mother. Her name is Maia. I wish I had a photo of her so I will know her when I get to the airport. I seen her once, but that was nine years ago. And I think she's changed by now. She must be. So in my head, I add nine years to the lady I met when I was five. I put some grey into her hair and a heap of old lady lines around her eyes and mouth. Nah, she looks like nanny with grey hair so I dye her hair red like my friend Michael's mother does and I put it up in a bun. That's better. I give her some big titties and a saggy puku because she's had me and four other kids and that's what having some kids does to ladies; so I'll look for a lady with hupe nose kids hanging on to her dress. Nah, wipe their noses, they're city kids, they should know to keep their noses clean. My mother has to have a big fat arse that wobbles when she walks because she's a nurse. The nurses that looked after Papa when he went to hospital were like that. I can't see her legs because I've put her in this long flowery dress that goes all the way down to her jandals. I make her beautiful and give her a big white smile and red, red lipstick. And she wears dangly earrings.

That's the lady I'll look for.

This morning I went to see Papa in his bedroom to say see you later to him. See you later I said. Papa just said yeah; see you later and then he rolled over on his side to face the wall. When I got to the door he said, here, and he gave me his Best Bets. Pick us a trifecta he said, in race nine. So I picked a trifecta in race nine at Hororata where me and Papa went once. We won lots of money that day and Papa bought me a denim jacket. I'm wearing it now. So I gave him back the Best Bets and he said see you later, and I left him in his bedroom with his radio tuned to the racing station.

See you later Papa.

And when I'm a man I'm gonna go back and see him and maybe we can go to Hororata again and win lots of money. Soon as I get to Auckland, I'm gonna write Papa a letter. He reads real slow, but that's okay because I write real slow.

I wish I didn't have to leave Papa behind. I wish he could have come with me, but he has to stay with Nanny because she's his wife. I've known him all my life even though it's only been a short one so far. Everything I know I've learnt from Papa. I know lots of

things from him, but my school's not interested in the stuff me and Papa know, and I'm not interested in what they want me to know. But right now, I'm on this aeroplane and I'm going to my mother. I don't even know what she looks like except for what I made up so I'll just sit here and think about other stuff.

Auckland I spose.

Heaven's up here somewhere.

We been floating in this big cloudy pillow for ages. I would have gone to sleep but my ears hurt. I tried the lollies out like the lady told me to before, but everyone else around me was eating theirs so I ate mines too. Lucky they were wrapped in paper. We're nearly there a loud speaker says, and the man talking tells us that there are fifty volcanoes in Auckland. I look but I can't see them and I think Auckland must be like my face; full of pimples and just waiting for a squeeze to get all the pus out. We're going to land soon. Gee I miss Papa. I might miss other things soon, like Michael and my other mate Fred, but right now, I just miss Papa.

The town I'm going to live in is huge and it's got water on both sides of it. I'm glad my mother will be waiting for me. I think she'd be too hard to find in a town this big. The town gets bigger and smaller at the same time as we go down, down, down into Mangere.

Jesus in hell, she's worse than what I made her. But she's my mother, the only one I got. In the plane I'd practiced what I would say to her but all those words are gone now and I think I am crying. I must be because my face is wet. I run to my mother.

'Mummy,' I say. 'Mum.' And I grab her and give her a big hug.

'Oiiee..., ' she says to me. 'Oiiee...'

She pushes me away and hits me with her handbag. Jesus in hell, what a mother, she's just like Nanny.

'Mummy it's me Eli.'

Bang, Bang with her hand-bag.

'You leave me alone you bad man. Oiiee...oiiee, I'm not your mother.'

Then this lady comes up and taps my shoulder. I know at once she's my mother but she looks nothing like the person I made up. I gave her too much old, some black like Papa,

lots of fat, and a whole lot of ugly; but she is none of these things and I know she's everything I made her up to be on the inside though because I know what meanness looks like in our whanau, and the lady in front of me doesn't look like Nanny or Aunty Tracy. And even though she's not black like Papa, she still looks like him. And I'm glad she's my mother and even though I'm glad Papa has sent me to live with her, I miss him. I miss him.

**275-**

### **By Narrator**

*Whaea*

*Whaea Hine-Ti-Tama*

*Fled to the dark world.*

Wetlands where the birds wade becomes swamp out here where the city lights fade, then turns into the quagmire of a miasma and stinking wasteland; where ethane bogged people with dak clogged brains and P fogged eyes, waste away and stay that way. And stay.

And stay forever.

There's three parts to this suburb.

There's The Bridge; where people with pockets of wealth live in places of wealth and where wallets are filled with cards that never decline. It's a quaint little village where charming people live in picturesque homes. It's called a dry area, but just a bit down the road there's a winery and just a bit more there's a tavern. The charming people don't frequent the tavern though, that's for the out of town people, the ones who come into here from the dark side of this town.

They go there to that Tavern, those dark ones from the dark side of town.

Around the corner from here; the picturesque quaint, there's a Maori marae. It's named after one of their princesses, as if they had them when they were running around in grass skirts, but it's there just the same. And up the road further there's a Maori church. It's



Anglican, but they've claimed it as theirs just the same, those Maoris. And they've buried their dead there.

There's Central, where the pockets are full for most of the time and so are the cupboards and freezers. Full to brimming. The houses are overcrowded, ugly and state.

Between The Bridge and Central, there's the Airport. It's not part of the town. It's just there. No one lives there because there are no houses for them to live in. People come in to this country via the airport and then they leave.

Same way.

And here in The East is us.

Us with our empty wallets; and the card that declines except for one and a half minutes on a Thursday or Wednesday night after seven; if you bank with the ANZ. This is our one third. This is us. Here, we live in our pockets of poverty. This is our one third of the pie. We choose to stay here because the only other choice is down. But after this there is no down. This is it.

Nadir.

And in this street is where we live. We live in the street. We live street. We exist. We survive: streetwise.

Even the homeless man has to wake up to the morning: bleak as it is.

It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. And it's this part we call Mad-angry. We live here. It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. We stay here. Mad or angry: or both. And I stay here where I have been for the past twelve years. 275- on the bus route. 275- in the phone book. This town is Mad-angry.

My town: Mangere.

It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. And I stay here.

275- on the bus route. 275- in the phone book. And 275 tattooed across Solleys puku.

Written by Maia Taurima. 26 October 1988.

Maia rips the page from the pad and screws it up.

‘Who gives a damn?’

I do. I give a damn. Even if I continue to do as much overtime as I am doing now and even if I continue to save, we won’t be able to buy a home of our own for another four years. That’s a long time. I can do it. I must.

My children deserve better than this.

## **Samson Powhiri**

### **By Narrator**

It’s been raining hard out for two weeks. The rain that was fun to run home in fourteen days ago has no where left to go now. Last Monday it raced down the gutter channel and gurgled at the drain grill, it twirled and swirled with the leaves and other rubbish before it disappeared into the pipes under the town and then ran out to the sea. Yesterday, the gutters were clogged with bits of stuff, and the water had to squeeze past all that rubbish. It trickled by and hovered at the entrance to the sea. And then oozed, leaked drop by drop on its way out. Out of here and away. Away. Today it piles up at the edge of the road and spills over on to the path.

Ten year old Samson Powhiri Taurima kicks the flattened empty beer can along the footpath. It swishes along in the slick wet until it bumps into a bit of plastic trike at the bottom of a stack of inorganic waste. It’s hard rubbish collection time.

A month ago, people put out the waste that the rubbish men don’t take on Thursdays. At the start, the bits of accumulated junk and unwanted articles, the bicycles and beds, the clutter and broken crockery sat in neat piles outside people’s gates. The metal scavengers, the curious and other children on their way home from school have scattered the discards of peoples living; and the disordered debris spreads out. And takes up most of the path. Samson walks down the skinny bit of pathway left to him. His shoes slosh. Quicker now for he is late home. She will be worried. She always looks worried. Mum is such a worrier.

Three o'clock in the afternoon is coffee and cigarette time.

The iron, too hot to put away yet, sits on the ironing board. Traffic noise from the main road three hundred meters away bumper to bumper bunny hops along the road. It toots and honks and changes graunchy gears, it V8s and four cylinders up to the five crossroad intersection. There is a silence. Brief. Traffic is controlled some miles distant perhaps in an office in Auckland Central where it is safe. A roar, horns honk green lighted permission to move along. Go. As fast as you can, you must get out of here. Go. Go. Go.

Monday nights lamb flap and fresh-from-the-garden vegetable stew bubbles in the pot. The potatoes have been mashed to a smoothness and placed in the dish and now awaits the grilling that will melt the cheese into a golden crunchy crust. The instant pudding chills and sets in the fridge. Summer remains trapped in the agee jar that holds the Golden Queen peaches picked in February and the golden warm hue glows from within the jar and lights up this cold and wet winter afternoon kitchen. The thick syrup that's preserved the peaches for all this time will be sweet, and will curdle the pale yellow cream as it's poured into the pudding bowls, and the children will delight in the simple pleasure of eating.

Maia turns the stove off.

Samson is late.

Samson who is never late, is ten minutes late today.

The babies will wake in half an hour, Eli will be home from his after school job in one hour, and Rose Koromiko will come in from playing with Debbie-from-over-the-road soon. Maia rinses her cup. She empties the ashtray and wipes it clean. She turns the fan on. The babies shouldn't have to breathe in the smoke filthed air.

Maia frowns and peers through the window that looks out at the street. But the only things out there that move; are the branches on the Ellen's Umbrella tree and the black cat called Wiremu who circles a baby sparrow on Ellen's front lawn.

Where are you boy?

Maia lights a cigarette. There is nothing marked on the calendar for today. He didn't say he had anything on when he left this morning. Standing outside now, Maia looks up the street for a shape, a figure, an outline, an anything; Wiremu pounces on his victim and rips its head off and the wings flap to go nowhere. Maia searches in her mind for a reason.

Chess club? Science group? Debating team?

No.

Did he say he had something on this afternoon? Did I hear him? Was I listening? What did I miss?

Maia lights another cigarette.

'What do you want to be when you grow up Sammy?'

'I'm going to be a Doctor.'

'What kind of Doctor?'

'Probably a very good one. Probably the best ever. I'll work at Middlemore.'

'Will you work with children?'

'Yeah but not only with kids, I'll work with people too. People like Nanny Jo and Papa Tame and Uncle Barry and Auntie Mere and James. Except the people I work with will get better.'

Come home. Please boy.

Maia stands in the hallway. Cigarette smoke forms a crooked halo over her head. The blue haze hovers and it wavers, then dissolves and becomes part of the air and the food odours from the kitchen. Her foot taps. She sucks the thick smoke in and the cigarette glows at the tip, she draws back the comforting chemical compound; and blows out the lung filtered remains. Suck in, drawback, blow out. Come home. Please boy. Suck in, drawback, blow out.

Her foot taps.

Answer the bloody phone, answer the bloody phone, answer...please answer your phone.

Please.

The back door opens. Then shuts. Maia slams the phone down. And grinds the cigarette out in the ashtray. She smoothes out the lines from the face that stares back at her in the horse shoe shaped mirror on the wall by the front door.

Sammy shuffles in through the back door. His back pack straps strain at his shoulders. He shrugs the pack off. Left side, right side. Drop. It clunks onto the floor. With his right foot he flicks at the back of his left shoe and kicks it into the shoes box. He does the same to his other shoe. Then he stands in his socks and lets out a sigh. His eyes are red-rimmed and the irises are the green colour of his crying, and he looks as if he will cry again. But he doesn't. His nostrils flare as he breathes in. He forces the breath out. Maia sits at the kitchen table.

Sammy looks at her and swallows.

'Sit down dear.'

'Malcolm Brown called me a Piggy Muldoon.'

'Yes?'

'So I called him a Womans Weekly.'

'Yes?'

'Then he called me a Golly Wog and told me to go back to Golly Wog land.'

'Yeah?'

'Yeah and then I said he was a honky from Hong Kong.'

'Then what?'

'Then he called me a Nga Puhi so I hit him.'

'What did you hit him for?'

'Because I don't know what a Nga Puhi is. Mum what's a Nga Puhi?'

'What do you think a Nga Puhi is Sammy?'

'Well first I thought it must be something ugly, because all the kids laughed and they teased me, they kept saying over and over, Samson is a Nga Puhi, Samson is a Nga Puhi and I told them I wasn't and I hit Malcolm again. I punched his face and made his nose bleed. And then Miss Pilkington came and everyone told her on me and she put me on detention for hitting Malcolm. Miss Pilkington said that just because someone called me a nasty name it didn't mean that I could hit them. And I had to say sorry to Malcolm

when he got back from the sick bay. Then Miss Pilkington said that Nga Puhis' are people too and I was wrong to hit Malcolm. I had to stay after school and write lines.' Samson pulls a piece of paper out of his bag.

'See you have to sign this to say that you've read it.'

Maia reads in Sammy's neatest handwriting on line after line that, Nga Puhis are people too and I must not hit others. She corrects the error in the first line. She will answer his question about Nga Puhi later. She turns the page over and the same is repeated.

'Your handwriting is very neat Sammy. How many times did you write this?'

'One hundred.'

'And what did you learn from this?'

'That Nga Puhis are people too and I must not hit others, but Mum I still don't know what a Nga Puhi is.'

His bottom lip trembles. Maia reaches out to her boy. His eyes are squeezed. Shut. He falls into her embrace certain where he will land. He burrows his head as far as he can into the contours of his mothers aroha. Sammy sobs in the late afternoon kitchen. His ten year old body is too heavy to hold up and he slumps into his mother and her gentle soothing firmness.

'No more crying Sammy.'

He is home now and safe. They breathe as one. Talk can wait for later. He is home now and safe.

'Muuuum, muuum. Maryanne fell in the bath and drowned. We have to have a tangi and bury her.'

'I thought she died yesterday Rosie.'

'She did but we dug her up again because Olivia didn't sleep properly last night because she missed Maryanne and Ellen said Debbie can't have another doll until her next birthday because money doesn't grow on fucken trees. Then when we were giving Maryanne a bath because she was dirty from being in the ground, Bobs dog came along and took off with Olivia in his mouth so we chased him around the back yard and when we pulled Olivia out of the dog's mouth and got back to Maryanne, she'd drowned and now Olivias only got one leg.'

Sammy has left the kitchen. Maia can hear him wash in the bathroom.

‘Go and tell Debbie you have to come in, we’re going to have kai soon.’

‘Can she have tea with us because they only have stone soup on Monday?’

‘Okay if Ellen says its okay, and tell Ellen and Bob to come over too.’

A loud thump followed by a croaky bellow that does not stop means that Jordan has climbed over his cot-side and has landed on the floor. Gabriel the baby will have been woken by the noise. Maia heads to the bedroom to pacify the howling Jordan and change the wet Gabriel.

It is five to four.

Jordan spins pot lids in the corner of the lounge where he has stockpiled his toys and screams like the siren on the ambulance. Gabby sits at his high chair and bangs a spoon on the formica tray.

‘Cheers, big ears,’ he says when Ellen comes in.

Ellen dumps a six pack of beer cans on the table. She swears about these bastards of mine needing a fucken money tree and Debbie yuks about ugly stone soup. Maia calls for the children to wash their hands for kai.

‘Can’t a man come home to a quiet house after a hard days work?’

Eli has a part time job at The Mad Butchers after school. He works one hour Monday to Wednesday and three hours Thursdays and Fridays. He works all day Saturday and Sunday.

‘Hi mum what’s for tea?’ He holds up a plastic bag. ‘Look what Peter gave me.’ Debbie and Rosie yuk in unison at the bag of offal.

‘Mmm yummy pigs arseholes,’ says Bob.

‘You bastards don’t know what’s good for you, too well fed that’s your fellas’ problem.’

Says Ellen, she grabs a can and flicks the tab. ‘Tino reka tenei rongoa.’

‘Medicine,’ says Gabby

Maia places the bag of tero-tero into the fridge. She removes the beer from the table. She places it on the floor beside the ugly-chair. Ellen will sit there later.

Now, they are all seated around the table and Maia truly gives thanks for the wealth of whanau.

‘Amen.’ They all say.

‘Arseholes,’ says Gabby.

They eat.

Maia walks towards the blood shot sky. In the distance, an aeroplane begins its upward track as it leaves town and disappears in the cloud that hovers over where the Titirangi ranges must be. She is going home after a call on duty in the emergency department. Today was busy. Another South Auckland Thursday, with Friday and Saturday to come. People here don’t go to the doctors at the first sign of illness. Or the second. People here wait for the symptoms to worsen. They wait for an emergency to develop then they come into the department. They are; sick children, sick old men and ladies, sick Aunties, sick Maoris. And then there’s the sick Islanders, any Island. And the accident victims too; MVA, car versus power pole, car versus truck, assault victims; GBH, common assault and the MAFs, where male assaults female; the regulars on a regular anytime basis.

But it’s the sick babies that always get to Maia, their dull empty eyes; their little chests that rise and fall and rise and fall and sometimes; stop. Their pallid skins that burn with a fever or with the hot water that was poured on them, and their frail limp little limbs that can’t even kick in pain. And they cry, it’s barely audible, but it’s discernable above the hiss and squeak of the equipment that keeps them alive for a little bit longer.

Victims all victims.

Maia went in by Ambulance once. The one time it was necessary. Another bashing from Kahu. She’d met a nurse. The nurse was kind. ‘You don’t have to put up with that you know.’ And she didn’t. She pressed charges. She’d done it before. Heaps of times. But each time she believed that he was sorry and she believed him when he said he wouldn’t do it again. But sooner or later she would burn the spuds and dinner would be late or she wasn’t quick enough with another beer, or she was too tired to root or she looked at his mate Billy longer than she should have or she wasn’t as nice to his other mate Simon as she could have been. Or Sammy was making too much noise.

‘You don’t have to put up with that you know.’

And that time Maia believed that nurse was right. So that time she didn’t withdraw the charges. But then when he bashed her again to drop the charges, Maia blamed that nurse.



And when all those around her told her to drop the charges; that things would get better, that women get the bash all the time, that she was making fools of her family and herself, that it was something she had to ride through; Maia blamed the nurse. She couldn't stand it anymore. Where was that smart mouth nurse where was she and what the hell did she know? The people around her got through; and the bruises healed. Maia marched into the police station in Otahuhu to say that she was sorry, that she'd made a mistake that it was all her fault, 'Sorry for wasting your time.' Kahu bashed her again for something, anything, nothing and the bruises went away and then came back again after another bashing. Then healed. And came back again. And so did the cops. But that didn't stop Kahu.

But then he bashed Sammy,

Maia didn't back down and no one could get her to withdraw the charges then.

Where ever that nurse is, Maia hopes she is well.

Staff nurse Maia Taurima walks home. The footpaths here have a camber that channels the rain-water into the gutters that empty into the drains that will carry the water out to the sea. The foot traffic is heavy. Jandal slapped, steel-capped boot tramped and Nike sole treaded, these asphalt walks that have been patched and re-patched thread their way into a jungle that outsiders call the jungle. And they read their morning newspapers and snigger over their morning coffee, and they watch the six o'clock news each night and tut tut over the dark side. And push the off button on the remote because its dinner time, and the children's dinner mustn't be spoiled.

This is the jungle where a poor soul could lose direction even with a map and where, whichever unlit dog shit dumped alley way you hide up or drag your sad broken arse down would lead you back here to the BP station at the cross-roads; right here where the fast cars of the rich sleek through on their sign posted way to the fun at Rainbows end, or that way to go over the harbour bridge, or that way speeding to the airport to catch a plane to the world.

The cars speed past Maia on their way to that somewhere else and when the red light stops them she dashes between the idled traffic. A siren shrills and lights flash. An ambulance bursts out of the street before hers. She must hurry home to the children. Cars make room and the ambulance weaves in and out of the traffic warp. She is home.

There should be noise.

She pushes the front door open. Gabby rubs a bald patch on the left side of his head as he eats a banana and jabbars out of sync with the mute news reader on the television, Jordon has a black stocking over his face and he looks like a Chinese bank robber, the widened eyes in Rosie's pixie face look guilty as she sits beside a rigid Sammy who has his arms folded tight across his chest and his mouth is the stiff barrier that appears when he feels the need to defend him self. Eli holds an anger that Maia knows will erupt soon. For now he is in control. In through the nose out through the mouth. In through the nose out through the mouth. The breath Maia sucked in at the door now sighs out and her pulse achingly slows.

Every one I love is in this room.

'What's happened?' she says.

'Those two bastards over there,' Eli points to Rosie and Samson. 'Those two bastards Dr fucken Who and Florence Fucken Nightingale both need their fucken arses booted.'

'Not me.' says Rosie.

'Tell me.' Maia says to Samson.

'Tell her you egg.' Eli says.

Maia sits down beside Rosie who shifts closer to Sammy. Gabby rushes to sit on Maia.

The Chinese Jordan remains in his corner where he spins the boil-up pot lid and sucks the TV remote.

'I'm waiting Samson, please tell me. Now.'

'Now,' says Gabby.

Criss cross lines mark Sammys confused forehead and furrowed brow.

'You're not even listening to me Sam do you hear me?'

'If Gabby didn't wriggle around so much it would have been alright.'

'What would have been alright?'

'Holy fuck,' says Eli there's that house around the corner that ugly brick one with the beer bottle garden edging, look, look, where's the remote? Give it here ya doongy.' He grabs the remote off Jordan who then sucks his thumb through a hole in the stocking.

'Look there's the pigs and an ambulance, fuck they found a dead baby, holy fuck. That's

today. Now. I'm going round there for a jack. Save my dinner please. And if you want their arses booted I'll do it for you when I get home. Bye.'

The evening has settled comfortably into the grubby blankets of another South Auckland night. The kids are in bed. Eli is still out. Tomorrow's porridge soaks in a pot on the stove. The lunch boxes are in the fridge and the mince for the Friday night pie thaws in a bowl that rests on the stainless steel bench. Sammy will cook dinner again; his cooking skills improve as the weeks go by.

'Pretty good munch bro,' Eli said last Friday.

Jordan resisted when Maia tried to take the stocking off his head. He screamed and was heading towards a full-on outburst. So she left it on him. It may have been that he felt safe in that cocoon of synthetic fibre or maybe he just felt okay being the other half of a pair of black Siamese twins. In time Gabby's hair will grow back. Rosie may or may not grow up to be the nurse she wants to be. Sammy may or may not be the Doctor he yearns to be. And Eli may or may not go to school tomorrow. But Maia knows that whatever they do and where ever they choose to do it, she must ensure that all their journeys are safe.

Sammy had made Jordan and Gabby Siamese twins by placing them inside a leg each of a pair of upside down black panty hose. He tied the feet together so they were joined at their heads as well as their hips. The operation involved separating them at their hips first, that was the easy part. The dress making scissors are sharp. But by the time it came to separating their heads; they were fidgety and hoha with the whole procedure. 'They kept moving around when the lollies ran out because I only had a dollars worth and greedy Jordan doesn't suck them to make them last he just crunches twice and they're finished. And they didn't want the banana I gave them, and then Gabby tried to stand up but he couldn't because Jordan wouldn't stand up with him, and Rosie's a dumb nurse, she couldn't hold Gabby down so I had to cut the join fast and Gabby's hair was tied up in the join so I cut that too.'

The back door is pushed open and Alison fills the doorway as she kicks her shoes off.

'Maia, Maia. Fuck Maia did you see the news? Fuck me mate. The fucken bastards killed their baby.'

'Yeah, we saw it on the news. Eli's gone around there. That boy can't mind his own business. Put the jug on Allie, I'll be with you in a minute, gotta check the kids.'

‘Jug? I don’t want no tea,’ Alison waves a bottle of Glennfiddich in front of Maia, ‘I need this. Want one?’

‘No thanks Allie. Tea will do me. I’m doing a call on tomorrow. Emergency department is short staffed.’

‘Fuck they’re always short staffed. You must see a lot.’

‘Yeah.’

‘You all right?’

‘Yeah. Just thinking about that little girl.’

‘You must be used to that kind of thing.’

‘You never get used to it.’

‘You sure you’re okay?’

‘Works, work and this is where I live. That little girl lived just around the corner. It’s too close. This place...sometimes it makes me feel as if...this living is more about. Survival. Help yourself, I won’t be long.’

Gabby sleeps on his bald patch. At age eighteen months, he still needs a pacifier to put him to sleep. The supervisor at creche believes that Gabby is advanced for his age. She wants permission to take him through a series of intelligence quotient tests. ‘No,’ said Maia, ‘He’s only a baby.’ Maia eases the pacifier out of his mouth. He turns over and lies on his back. Maia kisses the hand that reaches out to her, tucks it in and tiptoes to where Jordan lays snoring. None of the nursing text books had prepared her for this. But while she may only know as much as what the next person does about Autism, she knows her boy.

‘The people in this world ain’t ready for you my little man, so we gotta get you ready for them.’

In one months time he will be three. Jordan pulls his sheepskin over his face. And the snore comes out muffled.

Rosie dresses the many times resurrected Maryanne.

‘Good night Rosie.’

‘In a minute mum. Maryannes cold. I need to wrap her up warm. There you are Maryanne. Sleep tight and don’t let the kutus bite. Night mum, is Eli home yet?’

‘No dear. Why?’

‘I want to ask him about the baby’s tangi. He should have taken some flowers aye Mum. Wish he took me with him. Can we take some flowers tomorrow Mum?’

‘We’ll see Rosie. Now goodnight.’

‘Goodnight Mum. Say goodnight to Marya...’

‘Goodnight Rosie.’

A soft glow beneath Sammy’s blankets tells Maia that he fell asleep reading again. Maia removes the torch and the book. He reads, ‘To Kill a Mockingbird.’ See you in the morning Sammy you know I’ll be here when you wake up in the morning. She leaves his door ajar as she did the others.

‘Kids okay?’

‘Yeah they’re fine. I keep thinking about that little girl. Jesus Allie if any one touched my kids I don’t know what I’d do.’

‘I’d kill. Wouldn’t you?’

‘I’d like to say I wouldn’t, but who knows. I did consider it once.’

‘Yeah and?’

‘I pressed charges.’

‘Yeah? Who was it?’

‘My husband.’

‘Your husband? I can’t imagine you with some one ugly.’

‘He wasn’t ugly at the start. He may have been, but I didn’t see it. He was real sad and I wanted to make him happy.’

‘Where’d you meet up with him?’

‘He was just one of the local boys in our town. He didn’t go to our school. When I met him, he’d already left school. He worked. He used to buy me lunch; he waited for me at the shops. Then he started buying me clothes and gave me money too.’

‘Lucky you.’

‘He brought me a bottle of L’air Du Temps.’

‘Ahhh, that’s like that bottle on your dressing table, the one with the wings. It’s empty though.’

‘It’s the very one he gave me. Sometimes I take the top off it and I breathe in that smell.’

‘Is there anything left to smell?’

‘I can still smell it. And then I’m fifteen years old again. I loved him then Allie. You know? I loved him.’

‘You must have.’

‘I did. But when he hurt Sammy, I wanted to pick up a knife and drive it through him, again and again.’

‘What stopped you?’

‘Can’t look after your kids in jail aye. Anyway, he rotted in his own shit.’

‘What happened?’

‘He ended up in Gaol for killing someone. A stranger. Then he pissed the wrong people off in there and they bashed him to death.’

‘Jesus.’

‘What about now? Would you kill if... you know?’

‘I would want to have something, everyone does else there wouldn’t be a need for justice. But no. Same as before. Who would look after my babies while I’m doing time?’

‘True mate. Same with me if anyone harmed Quinten. Sometimes I think I’d die for him you know, I’d risk my life for him, if it came to that.’

‘Yeah but would you want him to live with the guilt?’

‘Spose not. Hey you know what you said about Eli?’

‘Yeah.’

‘He’s not a boy Maia. He’s a young man. Do you think maybe you baby him?’

‘Maybe I do Allie.’

‘You gotta let him grow up.’

‘Up and away?’

‘They’re gonna do it some day.’

‘Yeah. But right now they’re here and hell in this jungle anything can happen.’

‘I’ll drink to that. I spose we can only see what does happen aye?’

‘I’m sick of just being reactive, that little girl didn’t ask to be born and neither did my kids and that little one didn’t ask to die. Her living must have been a hell. I have to make sure mine are okay while we’re here.’

‘True.’

‘I owe my kids better than this. I’m their mother and it’s my job to protect them. I brought them into this world and hell as much as I’d like to make the world a good place well you know that’s impossible, so I gotta prepare them. They gotta know how to cope. You know when I came to the street; I had dreams for me and my kids. This was only gonna be temporary.’

‘What happened?’

‘I got comfortable.’

‘Nothing wrong with comfortable.’

‘Yeah, but... have you sat in that chair over there?’

‘The ugly chair, course I have it’s cosy.’

‘Tried getting out of it after sitting in it for a long time?’

‘Yeah, I got stuck. Eli and Sammy had to haul me out, you know, you were here bloody laughing.’

‘We gotta go.’

‘But the kids are happy here.’

‘I make the decisions for us.’

‘So what are you gonna do?’

‘Just work and save. This jungle man, it’s sinister.’

‘But you’re in it now, were all in it.’

‘Yes.’

‘And you’re part of it.’

‘No.’

‘No?’

‘It’s in me.’

‘That means you belong.’

‘No. I’m becoming it.’

‘And?’

‘I don’t want to be. It.’

‘Who said it’s better any where else?’

‘It’s got to be.’

The two friends sit in the quietness and the warmth of their aroha. One for the other. One sips tea; the other gulps whiskey.

‘You know if you came to work with me, you wouldn’t have to work all those hours. One night a week will get you \$1500:00 easy.’

‘No thanks.’

‘No tax to pay...’

‘No. And besides, I couldn’t, not without, love.’

‘Look where love got you. Know what mate? There’s no such thing as love, the man woman kind anyway, what it all boils down to is what I do. They get laid: I get paid. That’s it.’

‘I’ll stick to my job, thanks.’

The two friends sit in the quietness and the warmth of their aroha. One for the other. One sips tea; the other gulps whiskey.

Soon Alison will go home. Not yet though, the dead little girl from around the corner sits in her mind and she won’t go away. Alison drowns her in whiskey and the little girl chokes and dies and soon she is a thin wisp of a silky scarf that floats in the whiskey sea. Then. Alison goes home.

When Eli came home he said he wasn’t hungry. ‘That house has got crime scene tape around it. A baby died there. Mum they found a dead baby. That man and lady come to buy their meat at the shop. I seen it once, ugly scabby stink looking thing. Needed a good wash too the paru thing. It had a teddy bear like Jordans. And it reached up to grab one of



those lolly pops we keep on the counter. So I gave it one. And now she's dead. Dead mum. Dead. D.E.ed. She smiled at me that time, she was sort of cute I suppose. I'm sorry I said she was ugly and scabby and stink. Three days the man next door said. The man and lady were away for three days and when they came home they found their dead baby. I'm sorry mum, I'm real sorry.'

In through the nose out through the mouth. In through the nose out through the mouth. 'Come here dear.' The fourteen year old Eli allows Maia a brief hug then he pushes her away. Gently.

'I'm not that sorry, hugs are for babies. Fuck I'm hungry.'

The too old for hugs Eli went to his bedroom at the end of the hall. Maia could hear doors as they opened but she did not hear them close. All through the night she was wakened by the sound of Eli's restlessness and when Jordan woke at one and she went to check him, Eli was behind her. And when she checked on the others he followed.

And then somewhere at around three o'clock above the noisy thumping of her heart she thought she could hear him sob.

*Cleave to me my sweet babies while you are still young, for in time, that same action will see me undone.*

My babies deserve better than this. I'll get them out of this ugliness.

## **Home**

### **By Eight**

*All things bright and beautiful...*

Manukau harbour waters shimmer multifaceted diamond flashes and sparks up this whacked out looking Sunday morning. The eggshell blue hut at the waters edge stands to attention like a lone sentry on patrol guarding the approach to the bridge ahead.

'Halt who goes there? Oh, It's only a boy. Mind how you go boy, mind how you go.' The troubled bridge spans the glistening waterway and delivers the traveler to the place beneath the mountain, beside the marae that's named for a princess. The marae gates are closed. Further on and around the corner a bit, a crowd of people are in the pork bone

shop. It sells watercress too. People come out of the shop. Their bags bulge soon their pukus will too. ...*comforter, lord and redeemer...*

*There is a green hill far away...*

To the right is Robertson Road. Anglicans and Methodists, Mormons and Jews; Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholics and Hindhus; all of a Sunday the assemblies of God meet, and the harmonious music spews out into the streets. South Auckland people are dressed in their Sunday best. Their Saturday night worst is over so now they pray for forgiveness and hope they will be blessed. Lotto didn't come last night and I got pissed again please forgive me father God I never mean to sin, my wife she's gone away again to help her family out and Mali she's my friend and she asked me over her house and so I went. A friendly drink. That's all. A friendly drink. My wife she comes back today. I love her so very much. Amen. ...*Oh yes he touched me, and oh the joy that filled my soul....*

*Jesus loves the little children...*

To the left is the hospital. Special kids used to live there. A lot died there. Turn left at the roundabout. A big school and more churches. The organ and the ukulele, and solfar harmony.

Warning! Warning! you are now approaching hostile territory. Wind your windows up and keep them closed at all times. Please remain in your vehicle at all times. This is your final warning. You may go straight ahead to safety, or you may turn right. Turn left at your peril. And may God save your soul.

The park on the right is named for a former Prime Minister. So is this road. Massey. By daylight the park looks friendly. Children play on the swing and wait their turn on the slide. Mothers feed their babies with the KFC bought from the outlet in the shopping centre. Happiness is the sound of childrens laughter that rings out across the morning, happiness looks like children running about and throwing the stick at the dog to fetch and return. Happiness is the here and now of this moment. Grab it and hold it for as long as you can, for you may need to pull it out of your memory in a time not too far from now, for soon you will be a grown up and have children of your own.

You may need something to look back on and say, 'I had a good childhood. I remember one day I played at the park. That one over there.' And you may recall the happy memory and you may need the memory, but wait, it may cause you pain to remember that you were only playing at the park because mummy's new boyfriend didn't want you hanging

around. So you had to take Missy and Boy-boy to the park and, ‘Don’t come back till dark time.’ *What a friend we have in...* ‘Jesus the kid ran out in front of me I didn’t see it.’

At the shopping centre, the large flowery draped women whisper when they talk and shuffle along the Sunday morning footpath, feet hardened and cracked in Jandals that may last another month. Or may break today. It’s called jandal abuse and the shape of South Auckland woman sighs and does the shopping while husband sits in the van loaded with the children born at the hospital up the road where Mele is a cleaner. Sunday is for the housework, and to sweep the yard with the salu or whack the childrens legs with it when they get in the way. Sunday is for cooking the big lunch for when we get back from church. Sunday is for sewing and pick the flowers to take to church and one for behind the ear to make you beautiful.

Sunday is the day to rest. After church, after lunch, after the clean up, after the washing is brought in and ironed and put away; is time for rest. To sleep.

The clock goes off at three AM the van won’t wait. She cleans the offices in Auckland until half past six, then during the day light hours she’s in the factory that assembles plastic toys for all the little girls and boys. She finishes at four. She catches three buses home where she cooks the food for the hungry family. The family is always hungry. Then another cleaning job after that and lucky to be home by eight. The husband might want to go straight to sleep tonight. The clock goes off at three AM. The van won’t wait. Pay the mortgage is important. Pay Kamifosas university fees is very important. Money for the church is everything. This is the promised land...*milk and honey on the other side, Hallelujah.*

*I’ve got a home in glory land that outshines the sun.. do lord oh do remember me...*  
In this town with no money the rubbish bins overflow and the gutter is full. In this town with no money, the TAB is busy, the liquor wholesale is too. People slow down and go past the man on at the tinny house next to the Mormon Church. The man is stoned and getting stoner eyes prospecting for his future. Those who slowed down as they went past before have done a uce and they’ve returned to purchase a foil. On this Sunday morning the dogs bark at something, the dogs bark at nothing. The dogs bark. This is Sunday. South Auckland. And...*there is beauty all around when there’s love at home.*

# **Whakapono**

## **By Gabriel Tumai**

My ancestors arrived here in 900 AD. That's a long time ago. They came here by canoe from a million miles away. And that's a long way to paddle. My grandfather who doesn't talk to me, who has never talked to me in all my years of existence on this planet; said to my grandmother who talks to me still, hey Hei; because her name is Te-Hei-pounamu-o-Te-hikoi-nui and that's a mouthful of a name, 'What do you reckon about this place?' And she said yeah okay, let's stay here and live long and prosper, because she's got trekky in her whanau from way back. She's Vulcanese.

As they approached the shore they thought they saw some people on the shoreline, they feared that they would be attacked and prepared themselves to attack first, my grandfather who had better vision than everyone else because he was a visionary, said to the people, he manukau anake, 'It's only birds.' So the place became Manukau and the people settled here. The harbour was full of kai moana and they gave thanks to Tangaroa in case he got pissed off and wrought his anger on them. There were many birds to eat too. So they gave thanks and sung, Me he manu rere real loud. And then they made a hangi and had a feed of birds and kaimoana.

The ground was fertile, so they planted some kumara that they'd brought with them from the old country. Then my grand parents and the rest of the tribe went about the place and got familiar with the terrain and the birds and the trees and the flowers and the bees and named places for special events that occurred there. They named one place, Te-Moengaroa-o-Te-Iwi, because it was where they had a good long sleep, another place was called Te-Haunui-o-Tawhirimatea because it was windy. They named one place Rangiriri because the red sky looked angry. So my grand mother and my grandfather settled here with the idea of living long and prospering. They speculated a long and prosperous future for them and the people to come from all their plantings and so forth.

# Gabriel Tumai Taurima

## By Narrator

A dealer lives at number seven. I saw her up at the social welfare one time when I was there.

‘Hey,’ I said to her, ‘Remember me?’ But she carried on walking and sat down ten empty chairs away from me. Then some other people came in and filled the empty chairs between us without the music stopping. I leaned forward in my tenth chair away from hers. And I tried to nudge, nudge, wink, wink you-know-what-I-mean at her but only the nine people between us looked back at me.

‘Yahoody hoody,’ I said loud. ‘Yahoody hoody,’ I said louder to go the extra distance to include one more chair. ‘Yahoody hoody,’ I said in my projected teacher’s voice. However, I am not a teacher and the only response I got was from a man with a moko on his face who told me, ‘Fuck up mad cunt.’ And another man said sicko to his mate sitting next to him and made a winding up signal beside his ear and they both smiled at me. I smiled back at their understandingness but they did not really understand a thing. I used to be a sicko when I was on the sickness, but now I am an invalid. I am on the invalids benefit because I might get better. Better than I am now and better than the both of them tied together by their own two shoe laces.

So I stood up and I said to the lady, hey lady, but she wouldn’t look up at me. So I went over to where she sat and I sat down beside her.

‘Hello.’

‘What do you want?’

‘I just want to tell you that Big George is looking for you. He wants his drugs money.’

‘Look would you keep your voice down. I have no idea what you’re talking about. Now please leave me alone.’

‘The drugs money. You know the money you get for selling the tinnies for him.’

‘If you don’t leave me alone, I’ll get the cops. Now get.’

‘What shall I tell Big George?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘He said he was coming back this evening. To get his money.’

‘This evening you say. What time?’

‘He didn’t say.’

‘Fuck.’

‘Fuck what?’

‘Fuck. Hey what are you up to tonight?’

‘Usual.’

‘Usual what?’

‘Well, I just play with my pets.’

‘Want some company?’

‘Who?’

‘Me and my kids.’

‘What shall we do?’

‘I can bring some wine over.’

‘Okay. What else shall we do?’

‘What do you mean what else? We’ll have a drink.’

‘Together you mean?’

‘I don’t want to be home tonight and since you’re just next door, I thought we could spend some time together. Maybe me and my kids can sleep over?’

‘I don’t do that.’

‘Do what?’

‘You know.’

Nudge, nudge. Wink, wink.

‘You’re fucken nuts mate.’

‘No, I’m invalid. But you can still come over if you want.’

‘Thanks.’

‘Eliza Louisiana Conrad-Mansfield,’ said the welfare lady and the dealer from number seven stood up and went with the lady to be welfared socially.

I waved at her, ‘See you later,’ I said in my loudest voice and I blew her a kiss but it landed on her back because she didn’t even turn to wave back to me.

‘Garibaldi Solomon Pohiri, Garibaldi Solomon Pohiri,’

Going once, going twice, ‘Hey, that’s me,’ Sold to the man with the worn out shoes, Mr Bro’jandals. I soft shoe shuffled behind the young man who’d called out my name.

‘Come this way please.’

‘Coming, I’m coming.’

‘Have a seat.’

‘Thank you, thank you.’

‘Not that one, that’s mine, you sit there.’

‘I’ll stand thank you.’

‘Why?’

‘I have...I have an aversion to plastic. It makes me break out.’

‘In a rash?’

‘No.’

‘In a sweat?’

‘No.’

‘Well what then?’

‘Wind.’

‘You pass wind?’

‘Yes. I burp and I can’t stop. I need to talk to you so I can’t be burping because you won’t be able to understand what I’m saying. I need to sit on a chair like that one you offered me first.’

‘Now sir, what can I do for you today?’

‘I need some money.’

‘Why?’

‘I need some food.’

‘Why?’

‘The rats ate it all.’

‘Why?’

‘Because they were hungry. Are you Chinese?’

‘Yes I am. What did you spend your last benefit payment on?’

‘Rent and power and food. I only had fifty dollars left for food after I paid the rent and power. Are you from China?’

‘Yes I am. But I was born here. You must budget for these things.’

‘Yes I know but the rats ate the food I told you last time I was here. Do you ever want to go back home?’

‘This is my home. Have you told the landlord about the rats?’

‘No. But don’t you want to go back you know for a look to see your grandparents and the rest of the whanau?’

‘One day I will go back. But my grandparents were born here too. Why haven’t you told the landlord about the rats?’

‘I wish I knew my grandparents. They’re about one thousand and fifty years old. I lead such a depraved life without them. I used to be such a good boy. They say I was a real cutie. Because I’m not allowed to keep pets, if I tell him he’ll know. Hey see that lady over there, she’s a dealer. She rents her pussy out too. She’s coming over later. ’

‘Sir, please mind your language. How do you know?’

‘Sir? We made an arrangement. She’s gonna bring some wine. She let Ellen borrow her pussy to catch the rats in her shed. And about the drug dealing, George, the patched up gang member told me she owes him money. Hey do you think one thousand and fifty would be a good age for grandparents to be? How old are yours? ’

‘My grandparents died before I was born. You can’t go around accusing people of dealing in drugs. That’s a serious crime. And you cannot afford to keep pets. Last fortnight you said the dog ate all the food. What happened to the dog?’

‘I’ve only told you about the drugs dealing, that’s not a crime. Is it? And about your grand parents, just because they’re dead it doesn’t mean they’ve stopped aging. It just means they’ve stopped living. The dog’s gone. I cried for it. I think the Islanders at number thirteen ate it. Or the gooks at number six. They eat dogs and cats too. That lady better watch out.’

‘Why?’

‘Someone might eat her pussy. Any way young sir. I need money. I am hungry. I need food. Please sir. I didn’t have breakfast this morning. You’ve got a weetbix smudge on your tie. And I’m having guests for dinner. I’ve got to prepare something to go with the wine.’



‘What? Oh yes. In a hurry. Now, I need to talk to my manager Mr Pohiri. This isn’t a charity you know. You can’t come in here week after week to ask for money. We don’t just give it away for free. Perhaps you and your lady friend could go Dutch.’

‘We’re not Dutch?’

‘For the meal tonight I mean it’s an expression, to go Dutch.’

‘We are Maori and we aren’t going anywhere.’

‘And nor are we fast. Now, as I said I will go and talk to my manager.’

‘Hey he might be my whanau.’

‘Who?’

‘Your manager Mr Pohiri. Might be our South Island connection. Ask him. He might give me the money. You know. Tatou, tatou e. Like what Maoris do. Share and share alike.’

‘No. My manager is Mr Bennett; Mr Pohiri, I need to discuss this with him. As I said, we don’t just give it away for free.’

‘Make up your mind young man, I am Mr Pohiri. He must be Mr Bennett. We do have East coast connections. Is he Maori?’

‘No he’s Caucasian.’

‘Where’s Caucasia?’

‘Now look, you sit here and I will go to speak with him.’

‘Okay then. Hey, how much?’

‘How much what?’

‘How much will it cost to buy fifty dollars off you to buy some food?’

‘Well, nothing.’

‘You mean it’s free then?’

‘Well, yes, no, course not.’

‘What does it cost then?’

‘Well that depends.’

‘On what?’

‘On whether or not I decide to give you some.’

‘So, if you decide to give me some and you do, it will cost me nothing.’

‘Yes.’

‘And if you decide not to give me some and you don’t, it will still cost me nothing. But I will be hungry for the next four days until I get paid and have some money to buy some food. That is the cost to me. Hunger. Starvation. I could die. Then the rats would eat me. Then that lady’s pussy will come and eat them. Then the Islanders will kill the pussy and put it in the umu and eat it. I tell you man, she’s a dealer she’s got connections, know what I mean? When you got connections to the gang man, you’re just like royalty. People lick the grass you walk on. So she’s just like a queen.’

‘That is not our concern Mr Pohiri. I will talk to my manager.’

‘Mr Bennett from Caucasia, yes.’

‘Mr Bennett about getting some money for you and I’m sure in your case we can make yet another allowance.’

‘Thank you for making an allowance for an allowance.’

‘Aye? Yes, yes. Okay then. Wait here please. I won’t be long. Now please have some form of identification ready. Preferably with a photograph on it.’

‘A photo of me you mean?’

‘Yes of course of you. Got a drivers licence?’

‘No.’

‘Passport?’

‘No, but I bet you have.’

‘Please wait here.’

The boy with the Weetbix smudge on his tie took his time. It’s hard to soft shoe shuffle when you’re wearing jandals. Harder when you’re standing on a desk down at the welfare and your empty stomach sounds don’t have the beat you need to get into the rhythm for soft shoe. Mr Bro’jandals, Mr Bro’jandals, Mr Bro’jandals dance. Some Islander securities hauled me off the table.

Help me dealer lady, help me. Gentlemen please, that lady over there knows me. She lives at number seven she’s a business woman, she’s a dealer. She’s got royal connections. You can’t take me I’m part of the rugby union. I protested against the Tour in 1982. And at Bastion point in 1964. I’m having people for dinner. Young Chinese

man, Mr Bennett get the goon squad off me. I'm a fully patched up member, take a look at my underpants. I'll close my eyes and think of China if you want me too.  
I only wanted to dance for my dinner.

**275-**

**By narrator**

*Hine*

*Hine Rangimarie*

*Whakarongomai*

Lush fertile plots where the market gardens thrive grow along the road to where the rich people live. The harbour viewed houses huddle against the Maunga there. Ponga fern-trees spring up like bush umbrellas and canopy to protect the exotic growth. The wind can be brutal here, the rain can lash, and the sun can suck every drop of moisture from the foreign plants and shrubs. Over there is where the filthy rich who stink of money; roll in it, wallow in it and are lousy with it. On the fat of the land and with their pots of gold, the nouveau riche has money to burn.

Over here, right here, the down at heel walk the uneasy streets in tattered rags, to broken homes; the dirt poor broken men and the broken up women, the down and outs who scrape an existence from the pittance that's doled out to them. Hand-outs. Their hands out. For the hand outs and the hand-me downs. In the squalid huts of the welfared masses, the always poor of the lower classes, burn chopped up floorboards to keep themselves warm. And scream out loud for the hungry storm that rages in their bellies. And the cats and dogs aren't the only things that prowl, up the darkened alleys.

Still water harbour. Opulent blue, un-busy flat sea no ships in view. Lazy birds float in the Mangere sky and the sun lighted warm breezed clouds idle by. Puketiti Island rests out there. Idyllic. The business is beneath the Island. There, the liquidated effluent of the affluent few converges with the shit of the impoverished who; at least have something to dump. Today. The ponds are where the common waste meets, is purified, un-stratified then piped back to the streets. Thirsts satisfied.

Written by Maia Taurima. 26 October 1988.

## **Mad-Angry**

### **By Narrator**

Let's have a party.

They wait in the car park outside WINZ.

'I got it,' Sharon waves a piece of paper at the two who stand beside a white van.

'I got mines too,' Mere rubs her thumb against the first two fingers of her right hand.

'What about Mana and them?' Sharon says.

'Dunno, did you get yours bro'?' Mere says.

'Sweet Cuz, sweet. One hundy,' Brian nods his head. 'One hundy now and fiddy left in the kitty.'

'Where's Mana?' Sharon says.

'Ah fuck Cuz, he's got Melanie the fucken bitch acts like it's her money Cuz, he won't get anything out of that cow.'

'Fuck that Melanie wouldn't even give me twenty buck bro' she said I used up all the money and I'm not due tel nek week bro', sorry.' Mana says.

'Sweet as Cuz we'll need it then. The Womens will get theirs though they got kids can't let our kids go hungry bro' got to feed the kids first.'

'Not me bro' My dak comes first.'

'Cuz, you got no kids you're just a kid yourself.'

'Here comes the womens and they're smiling.' Mana says.

'Fucken A, washing machine and fridge, five hundred bucks. Mahina got hers too.'

Natasha does a little dance in the car park.

'Right, I have one hundred and fifty dollars. How much do we have altogether?'

'Taihoa, here come the birthday girl.' Natasha says.

'Nah guys sorry.' Addie says.

'Nemmene girl we got heaps. Seven hundred all up that's one mean party let's go.'

Bald tired and rusted. It rattles. It doesn't turn over after the first turn of the fork in the ignition or the second or the third.

'Fuck.' Jay says.

Two jump out and push. People turn to look at the rusted up white van with the casing wheels. One look is all. The people walk on. They don't stop to stare at the vehicle that struggles to breathe. And the two who jump out to push just aren't worth the time of day. Today.

They don't see that Mana is only seventeen. So they wouldn't know that the young man has lived on the street since he was ten and he's still only a boy. Still some mothers baby, crazy as it is, she hasn't seen him since ten. And hasn't even bothered to look or ask has any body seen my baby? And if by chance or luck sometime she sees a boy that looks like him or could be him she won't take time to ask that boy, are you my baby? And if she did and if he said yes, what does she have to give him? And if he said yes, I am your son would he want what she had and then live in; a house that's crammed with bastard kids of bastards on the dole? A mother who at thirty years old looks like the nanny he once knew. But that was long ago from here and too ugly a time away to remember or want to. So now it's these people he's with for today and maybe they'll let him stay for longer than tomorrow.

The people who go by ignore the forty-ish year old man with a patch over his left eye whose clothes are denim, ripped, and dirty, whose feet are bare, whose hair is long and in a plait. So they wouldn't care that his name is Brian and a HATE tattoo on the fingers of his right hand is missing the 't' because the finger isn't there. The man from the Electrical appliance shop walks by and nearly waves to the maori chap with the big stereo on lay-by, surname...Eruti, B. B for... \$1500:00 total, \$400:00 left to pay, he was just in this morning, comes in every Thursday morning B for...is it Bruce? He walks back to the store and bothers no more with a name he can't remember.

Brian wipes the sweat off his face. I see you shop man; the money I hand over to you is the same legal tender for as the other man what's rich. But you take it from me just the same. Only difference is I don't hear no, Sir, when you drop the coin change into the hand I hold out. I know why, cause I gotten used to holding my hand out. Cause that's

what I learned from my mother and father and that's what was taught to them. And if I get me some kids, that's what I'm gonna learn them.

The van kicks into life. It's a short one. Kicks in again. And starts to rumble.

The van stops outside J.D's second hand dealers, Natasha jumps out.

'Won't be long.'

'As long as it takes cuzzy.'

She's back in under ten minutes. She waves four one hundred dollar notes in the air and the lady on one side and the man on the other perform a grotesque tango in a fluttery breeze of Natasha's making. And the man bows down and stoops to the lady and she gives him her hand and he kisses her arse.

'Two hundred for the party and two hundred for me and my kids.'

The van rattles along the Massey Road towards the Mad Butchers. Natasha jumps out and is soon back, she throws Jay a twenty dollar note.

'Go round to the garage and put some gas in this baby, by the time you get back I should be finish...come and help me Addie.'

Mahina sits in the back of the van. She thinks back to two years ago to when she was green as apple shampoo. Then, she pushed the full trolley home with one year old Te Rangimarie in the kid seat bit, three year old Tangiwai in the pushchair and Pounamu still in her Puku. She didn't know that she could have got up to five dollars change from the voucher that could have paid for a taxi home. But nah, dumb and brand new to the Social Welfare Institute of hard ups she didn't know and hell it wasn't as if she needed tutoring but a little advice from some of her third generation Winzian whanau would have been useful. But she had learnt and all her knowledge was self taught from life-on-the-benny experience. She'd moved through the levels from novice to proficient through to expert. She still had a lot more to go to gain the professional status of some others in her whanau but that wasn't the proffession she had in mind for herself.

She didn't name Pounamus father, she'd written down, "father unknown" on the official form and knew that whoever read it would think jeeze what a slut. Because surely you must know who the father is unless you root heaps with a lot of different men. So anyway there was Pounamu with an officially unknown father so that made him by Pakeha standards a bastard. She would harm anyone who called him that though. She didn't

name Patrick because of the complications it would cause him. He was a happily married man he said. He had two children already and a paternity claim would ruin his happy home he said. So Pounamu remained a miraculous little bastard. And Patrick and his wife lived happily ever after. Until he met Addies mother.

Now he goes there for roots.

Addie's mother Eliza had professional status.

She'd told Mahina once, 'Nail the prick and take him to the cleaners.' Eliza was expert by the time she was eighteen.

She'd been rooting around since she was thirteen. She said she liked it. She said sometimes she had to have it. So getting hapu was a recreational hazard. Hazardous though it might have been. It paid. Doug was a cop that she'd rooted one night. The night she was pulled up in her fathers' car pissed as a cunt could be. But pissed as she was it proved useful that night and afterwards when Doug dropped her off at home all he said to Mick her father was, lock your daughter up and don't let her drive again tonight. Her father was more pissed than she was that time, and as for her mother she was always pissed by midday. Every day.

One pissed root with Doug on the bonnet of her fathers car, resulted in her eldest, Addie. Enter Social Welfare. One child. Father unknown.

Enter Grant. Party at her cousin Wallys. The league boys. Eenie meenie miney mo. Which of you will have this ho? They rooted that first night. He rooted. She grunted, faked it, and then spewed.

'Will you marry me?' he said.

'I have a baby.' She said.

'I love you.' He said.

'Okay.' She said.

'I do.' They said.

Exit Social Welfare.

He bored her to fuck. Which drove her to fuck. Someone else. And off with him she fucked. A bikie with red hair. Exciting. Law unabiding non-citizen.

Re-enter Social Welfare. One child. Father unknown.

Then Grants mother died. Pregnant again and not wanting to live in another town, Eliza pleaded with Grant. Take me back. I love you. I won't do it again. I'm sorry. She begged. She pleaded. She sucked his cock. He took her back.

Exit Social Welfare.

The child was born. It looked like a bikie with red hair. And now the family was four. 'You don't make enough money we won't get caught, I'll say I've left you, I'll use my parents address.'

Enter Social Welfare. Two children. One father unknown. The other uncertain.

They bought a house and settled down. He settled down. She played around. Enter Neville the butcher.

So Grant and Eliza lived as happily as being pissed and drugged; and Neville interfered with would allow them to be. And that was a lot of happy. Another pissed root on the bonnet of some-ones car while Neville slept in their bed. They got pregnant. The child was born. It had Grants nose. And now the family was five.

Enter Social Welfare. Three children. One father a cop. Unnamed. One father a bikie. Uncertain. One father. Understood. And became the father of all three.

A drug bust went down. Someone had narked. She pointed the finger, an arrest was made. Grant. By the hair on his chinny chin, chin. He got off. She and her friends pissed off for days and then she came back with Nev. You have to move Grant. Some one narked. Social Welfare knows about you.

I'm your husband. He begged. He pleaded. He offered his cock. You have to leave. Just go.

Exit Grant. From the home they bought with the money that Mum had left him.

Enter Neville. In the home that was bought with the money Grants mum had left him.

A drug induced root in the bed they shared that once she'd shared with Grant. They got pregnant. The child was born. It looked like a butcher.

Enter Social Welfare. Four children. One father a cop. Unnamed. One father a bikie. Uncertain. One father misunderstood and abused. One father a butcher and used. Two years later and another child that required maintenance, he was out of that house. Exit Neville.



Re-enter Grant.

So grateful Grant slept in the shed and Eliza continued the life she led drugging and boozing and rooting whoever and Grant when there was no one else. Grant claimed the child that had his nose, and then he claimed the house bought with the money his mum had left him. And he kicked Eliza out.

‘Get out. And take your children with you.’

Mahina has heard enough. Mahina decides Eliza is not a good person.

‘I don’t want anything to do with this horrible ugly person.’

Eighteen months ago Eliza the professional Winzian gave Mahina the advice about nailing Patrick as she called it, but Mahina wouldn’t use Pounamu for the pecuniary advantage Eliza spoke of.

Last year Mahina had taken a stage one English paper with Massey University because that was the only subject she’d passed in School Certificate that she really liked. She’d passed Maths and Science as well as French and Practical Art. She did have plans of going on to do sixth form and the seventh and then university, but she got hapu with Te Rangimarie and that was the end of that or so her mother told her. That’s your lot Mahina.

She passed that paper with an ‘A’ and this year she was doing another one. And she enjoyed it.

She’d made friends with the lady down the road called Maia who helped her with study and sometimes looked after the kids. Maia is older than this crowd, but she’s cool. Addie’s mother is the same age as Maia but she’s not cool. She’s a bitch. A lying, cheating, stealing slut of a bitch, says Addie. Eliza had worked things out so well with the fathers of her children and WINZ, she didn’t even have to work. The DPB plus what she made dealing dak was what she lived on. And she lived very well compared to some others on the street.

‘Be like me,’ she’d said one day, ‘I’m a WINZ professional. I tried talking Addie into having a baby to get more money, but she won’t. You girls need to wise up.’

That was the day Eliza came over to see if Mahina wanted to drink with her.

‘It’s my anniversary,’ she said. ‘I’ve been twenty years on the DPB. I can still have another kid or two. I’m heading for a golden handshake and at the rate I’m going, I’m gonna get it too.’

‘Congratulations Eliza, but no thanks, I’m studying. I’m on the DPB too, but I want to better myself and I want my children to be proud of me. And I want them to grow up to be honest and good people. People with integrity. And I want out of here as soon as I can.’

‘Won’t do you any good. Once your here, your here for good. There’s no way out of here. Not this hole. Best thing to do is rip off what you can from who you can, when you can. That’s my motto. I been doing it since I was twelve years old.’

Eliza disgusted her. Mahina’s plan was to study extramurally until Pounamu was at school. Then she would study full time at The Auckland University. She would take advantage of the study incentive allowance that WINZ offered. And then after that, a well paying job and then a nice house in a nice neighbourhood.

Eliza is wrong there is a way out of here. There is.

She thinks back to the time when she was new to the street.

‘Phone Mahina, it’s housing corp.’

‘...Stewart Street, number five come in today and sign up...collect the keys...you can come in straight away, there’ll be a fifty dollar bond.’

‘Stewart Street? Do I have a choice?’

‘Yes you do...you can take the house or you can go to the bottom of the list. That will be another three year wait. Or you can move in and put in for a transfer after you’ve been in there for a while.’

‘What’s a while?’

‘About three years.’

Then, she and Hohepa knew the future had good things in store for them. A baby meant slight changes to their plans but standing at the gate of their new home, they knew absolutely knew that they were destined for better things and this house was only a temporary stop. Hohepa had an apprenticeship at the Aluminium plant in Wiri where he was a junior draughtsman. In three years time he would have N.Z.C.S. in civil engineering. In three years time Te Rangimarie would be three. Mahina would put her into day care and she’d get a job somewhere to help out while Hohepa furthered his career options with further study maybe at university.

One day Hohepa came home from work earlier than the usual time and six weeks later he was dead.

But.

Cancer is a bastard, so were all her children.

The WINZ funded party went through from Thursday night to Sunday sometime. On Sunday morning the last of the kai had been eaten, the beer was all gone and twists of aluminium foil lay strewn about on the floor. The broken up relationships had been made up more than once. A few more babies may have been made which in a few months time would add to the burden and drudgery of this life, but whose existence would mean an increase in welfare payments. Tomorrow social welfare will open its doors and the lines of people will shuffle up to the counter.

‘I need a food grant.’

On Saturday night there was trouble. Mana had come home, hurt and bleeding.

‘Fuck, ring an ambulance.’

‘No. Cops will come.’

‘Why?’

‘Never fucken mind why.’

But he kept bleeding.

‘I know who can help.’

‘It’s Mana, he’s been hurt.’

‘You need an ambulance Mahina.’

‘He’ll get in the shit, Maia.’

‘I can’t help him. Get the ambulance. Now.’

‘I know who’ll help,’ said Addie. ‘I’ll go and get mum. She’s probably pissed but she’s better than nothing.’

Around Sunday afternoon, another party started up down the other end of the street at number sixteen.

For this lot though it was time to go to bed.

In the house at number seven, Eliza squeezes the last drop of wine out of the bladder and into a sipper bottle. She spills some. And licks it up off the table.

‘Waste not... life’s a real bastard, I’ve done no one no harm and this is where it’s got me, seven o’clock in the morning and I’m quarter-to-pissed.’

She tidies up the lounge. Neville’s just left. Didn’t even want a root. Must have some other bitch. He’d dropped some gifts off for the kids on his way to work. And now seven year old Anita plays with a dolly.

I became Eliza when I was twelve years old. Hine was a Maori name. I didn’t want it. Nor did I want to be Maori. On my seventh birthday I was given a doll. I hated her straight away. I wanted a train set. One that had a little red caboose at the back and a diesel powered locomotive up the front. One with two carriages with gold lines around the windows. One with it’s own track that I could make into an oval or a figure of eight if I joined it up with the X. One that I could start, go, and stop with a battery operated control box. I could pick passengers up and let them off. I could make it go fast along the straights or slow it down as it climbed hills. And it would go around and around all day long. Every day of the year. Around and around.

That’s what I’d wanted. A train set.

One like the one my brother John got last year for Christmas that was broken on ANZAC day when Uncle Horomia rolled off the sofa and landed on it.

He smashed it to bits because it dug into his back and it shouldn’t have been left in the middle of the sitting room floor he said. And he punched the left side of Johns head and made it lean to the right. Then he punched the right side of Johns head and it leaned to the left. Then he gave it two more slappings on each side so that it sat evenly and dazed, on John’s neck. My brother John was eight. Uncle Horomia lived with us then because he’s my mother’s brother and his wife had kicked him out of their house for hitting their kids she said.

Mum kicked him out of our house for hitting Johnny.

So he went back to his house with his wife and kids. And for the Queens birthday they visited him at Mount Eden because when he moved back to his house he hit his children again and the place at Mount Eden was the only one that would have him because he

molested children as well as hitting them my cousin Emily told me. Emily said that he'd molested her once. And Emily told him that if he didn't give her ten dollars she would tell the teacher at school.

The doll reminded me of all the Pakeha kids at school who called me Heenay. The doll was so ugly I called her Suzanne after the girl who wore a different dress to school each day. The doll's nose had real holes that I could poke a matchstick into but when I pulled it out there was nothing on the end. She didn't have ear holes for me to poke into though. She had thin reddened lips that opened a little to show some hard white plastic teeth. There was a smaller opening where the teeth parted so Suzanne could eat. I shoved some flies into the hole and pushed them in as far as they would go. I used a knitting needle. I made some food out of Daisies that smelt like dogs arse, some cut up bits of a worm, and boogies from my nose and I fed the mixture to Suzanne. One day my mother noticed maggots crawling out of Suzanne's nose so we put her out in the inorganic rubbish collection and some Maoris took her away.

The real Suzanne's mother or whoever it was who made her lunch, cut the crusts of her bread and wrapped the sandwiches in silver paper. She never ate all her lunch. I hung around the bin until all the other kids had left the area and I took the silver paper home. I kept a stack of silver paper under my mattress until my mother found it and threw it all away.

My mother's a Pakeha. I'm black like my father. When I look at my class photos I stand out. Not because I'm tall or pretty or clever looking. It's because in the black and white photos, I'm the black bit. And when colour came along, I'm the one with the shiny face.

By the time I got to High School, I knew that the thing between my legs was colourless. I was popular with the boys. And letting them use that thing made me more popular. By the time I was in the fifth form I'd had the entire second fifteen of Roccatten High School and when we were in the sixth form, those same boys were in the first fifteen. So I had them all again. And again.

It was worth staying at school for.

It's nine o'clock in the morning and Eliza is pissed. And getting pissed.  
That Mahina mate of Addies should follow the advice I gave her. Stuck up little bitch.  
Thinks she can move out of here? Not likely. Not fucken likely. And as for that other  
bitch, that Maia with the handicap kid, the fucken bitch walks around like her shit don't  
stink. Another stuck up bitch. I was the Queen here before she came to the street. I'll get  
the bitch. I'll get her.  
'I'm saving for a house. I don't drink.' She says.  
Every one loves her, Maia this and Maia that. Up you bitch. I fucked your man. I'll get  
you bitch. Up him and up you. Up you all.  
Another cask of wine emptied. Later today Mana will be by to drop off some more  
money. Then George, fuck George the fat pig. He'll want his money. Where the fuck am  
I gonna get five grand from.  
It's gone.  
Gone.

*It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. We call it Mad-angry. We live here.  
275- on the bus route. 275- in the phone book.*

'Where's my money?'  
'That cunt Mana ripped me off.'  
'Who's his people?'  
'He's no one.'

'I'll deal with him, but I still want my money.'

*It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. We call it Mad-angry. We live here.  
275- on the bus route. 275- in the phone book.*

'Hello Grant it's me.'  
'What do you want?'  
'I want to come back. I'm sorry. I miss you. I love you. I promise I won't...'  
'I've missed you too. I love you too. Come home.'

Three weeks later Eliza was debt free and Grant-free again. And back in the house at  
number seven Stewart Street.

*It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. We call it Mad-angry. We live here.*

*275- on the bus route. 275- in the phone book.*

'I'll help him.' Eliza said.

And then she watched as Mana bled. And she placed the pillow over his head. Pushed down, pushed down and held it there.

She watched as Mana died: expired.

## **Whakaponu**

### **By Narrator**

Some others came in 1350 AD. For many days and many nights the old and the new got to know each other through their past which is called history. They had to take turns at telling their stories because they did not know how to write. So while they made family through the talking of history and connected with each other historically, some others made family in the wharemoa; that's the sleeping house, but to make family the way they made family they weren't sleeping; they were awake making family. That's called whakawhanaungatanga. That's a long word. And that's a lot of listening. And it's a lot of not sleeping. So it took a long time. And that's a long time to be without sleep.

There was much feasting and talking because they had four hundred and fifty years to catch up with each other on. And that's a long time so there was a lot more talking and a lot more feasting but because there was plenty of food there was enough for all. There was no boozing though because they hadn't learnt how to make booze and it wasn't a part of their diet. There was no drugging because they hadn't learnt how to make that either. So they just sat around the fire and ate pipis with their fingers; and in a long drawn out process they discussed who begat whom and where and when. And some talked about it and some were begetting some more in the wharemoa and a whole heap more were begot. After four hundred and fifty years that's a lot of begetting.

When the talking was over, it transpired that the others were the long lost whanau of my princess grandmother and queenly grandfather, so they stayed and made the whanau bigger. They all lived together in that place and became more and then became many. They too lived long and prospered.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

I'm mad whichever way you look at it. Look at me, look at me, I'm as crazy as a chicken up a tree. Back to front coming or going, mad. I'm damnmad. Delilah said that even my name sounds as mad as it looks. Adam. Delilahs got this way of saying my name so that it sounds mad. Aaaadaaammmm. But I think she's mad herself.

Deeeliilaaahhhh.

She's a crazy bitch too. I've known her for a long time, probably for as long as I've been mad, she is my madness she is my mad world she built my world around me and her, the mad bitch. And, I've been here in the land of mad for a very long time but not quite as long as I've been Adam.

I used to be normal once. Normal, you ask what is normal? Well by my standards it's you. Normality restricts you to a most restrictive place and you can't take me there because that's where your perfectly normal wife and kids live in your perfectly normal lifestyle that I pay, I pay, I pay, I pay for. Can't be curing me toooooo quickly. You'll run out of work to do and the drug company won't give you a pen to play with.

So you'll have to play with your shelf of toys that you got when you were such a cute little boy. And you used to wear mummies panties on your head and paint circles around your moobs with daddys lipstick the dipstick, look at me daddy. When I grow up I'm gonna be like you. A poofter mummy said while she gave the lady next door head. Maidenhead. And you won't have a chair to stand on when you try to hang yourself in the shower and your perfected wife is having sex with your affected mother. And how then does your father know who the mother of his child is?

Madam I'm Adam and Madam don't panic I'm not manic I'm me. As you can see I'm suitably undressed and for this occasion I'm nakedly blind to your ministrations my auditory hallucinations of the paranoid unkind. Commando type that shout at me don't trust , don't trust to give you the head that you lust. Paranoid schizophrenic me you say, from your DSMIV there is no more. I want the floor I need to speak. But your boot is on my head and I kiss the floor with my lips.



And when I get out of here you're gonna be dead.  
And your boot becomes more pressured.  
Speech.

DAO, DAO.

I'm a mental health actor of the mental health Act. And the world is my gig staged fright.  
Mid flight of idealisations. Ideologise my neologised isms.  
After pieces of eight stamped a) and b) both documenting bits of me.  
And the CATT has got the CREAM. Cat team, pussy esteemed, a new practitioners  
dream, elitist of the elite. Crème de la crème. The crime of pissed green sobriety.  
Tectonic minded acronym up the careering pathway. Of blueprinted misprint meteoric  
rise. DAO sings the banana boat song. Give me rights when you do wrong.  
And daylight come and I wanna go home.  
Off course steering committee, having one to go to.

**275-**

## **By Narrator**

*Tane*

*Ka tu tana taiaha*

*Patu, patua.*

Dark, still, peace.  
Complete darkness can't exist. There is always a light that shines. Even if it is the only  
street light that still goes. Or the out side light of a house, left on by mistake. Or for the  
one who will come home soon.

There is no stillness. Somewhere here there is always a movement. Between the last bus  
at night and the first of the morning, a car makes its way home or a taxi comes to pick  
some one up or drop somebody off; or the train from Wellington that rattles by at twenty  
past two and screams just before the intersection. Or the cat named Wiremu returning  
home after tom-cating around or a man, doing the same after doing the same.

The hushed peace of some places is a certainty. Like the cemetery. But even there the hush is not peaceful. The worms are all ways busy. Busy. Busy. Busy. The hush of peace can only be where the big black security ensures it, and comes and stays all through the night paid for by those who can pay, disturbed by those who can't; like here and then bugger it bliss called peace when there's peace to disturb can only be that fucken half second before the alarm goes off. And the light is switched on. And another day begins. Your bit in it anyway because it never ended.

Walk, bus, train, walk again to clock-in the card for payroll to process on Tuesday for payday Friday. Clock in before seven or face being docked half an hour. The shrill siren commands that work begin. The shrill siren at ten-thirty tells a man he can go for the first fifteen minute smoko. The shrill siren orders a man to get off his butt, resume work. The fucken siren says that a man can eat lunch. The fucken shrill demands of a man to get off his butt and resume work. The fucken blast, the last of the day if a man hasn't put his name down for overtime, allows him to go home.

Clock out. Walk, train, bus, walk.

Home.

Eat. Shit. Bath. Bash the missus. Swear at the kids. Annoy the missus. Knock her one for being too tired to be annoyed by your annoying and pestering pecker and then give her one anyway.

Sleep. Cuddle the missus in sleep and hope she doesn't stab you. She won't. It's payday tomorrow. Maybe Sunday she'll pull the knife out again.

## **Kahu.**

### **By Maia Taurima**

It didn't happen. That kind of thing doesn't happen in a marriage. You made the vow for better or for worse. And it's not the worst thing to have happened to you so far. You made your bed so then you must lie in it. With him. Most nights without him. You like those nights except you lay awake each time and wonder where he is or worse who he is with and what could they be doing that would take this long. He's your husband. He's allowed to. There was a time when you liked doing it. You did it willingly. Wantonly. The black and white movie you watch shows a real Hollywood root, don't lie, you've

done that with him but it was without the screams and satin sheets, without the make up and the flowing tresses and last night it was without the flash flimsy looking pyjamas that would have ripped anyway. You loved him in the beginning. You did. They won't believe you if you told them anyway. So you're not going to tell anyone. And you know what? Who you going to tell? Two children later is a bit too late. Isn't it? Don't be so fucken ridiculous. For better or for worse. They'll laugh at you if you told them. Anyone would. That'll learn you. So you put a bit more make up on and you smile at those who ask, 'How are you?' And mean it when you reply.

'I'm real good. Thanks.'

Even that stranger at the bus stop.

'Did you bang in to something missy? Are you alright?'

'I'm fine thank you. Really. Thank you.'

'I'm sorry.'

Then the bus came along and you hopped on it and when you turned your head he waved and nodded. You saw him again just yesterday and you ignored his greeting. Him. But he never left your head did he? And he's still there now. You wonder if maybe there's some one who cares. You wonder about the kindness of a stranger. And he won't leave you alone. Even in this bed. You think about that stranger, you think about kindness. Too bad. You made your bed therefore you must lie in it. And suffer?

Did you scream? Course not. You didn't want to wake the baby who slept.

Did he rip your clothes off? Course not. You'd just stepped out of the shower. You were wrapped in a towel. Did he break in? Course not he had a key. It's his house too. Rights of entry. No use complaining. He can come in any time he wants to. He lives here sometimes. Did you struggle. No you didn't. Did you fight back? Did you punch him kick him scratch his eyes out or try to at least. No you didn't. Did you resist? Did he beat you? Then. The other times don't count I asked did he beat you then? No. Did you submit willingly? Did you say no? Well were you beaten into submission? No just submitted. Well then it didn't happen. For richer or for poorer. You made your bed. For better or for worse. Therefore you must lie in it. For better or for worse and for much worse than that. And some times, most times not even the thick make up will hide: your pride.

There was this girl. She walked her dog. It was night time. It was dark. Walking the dog in the dark that's asking for it all right. Asking for it. They dragged her in to their car and drove her to a park. The park where they were camped out at a convention. The park where they have riding for the disabled now. They blindfolded her. They rode her. They disabled her. They beat her. They rode her like they ride the horses there now. Shoved objects into her. Eyes, ears, moth, arse. Save that, we need that bit for a bit of her. They had turns. There were many. They drew straws and who cares which straw broke her fucken back. Smack. Sacrificed the needs of the one for the greed and lust of the many. How many? Too many to count. They took turns and they took photos and all through the night they rode her like a horse. The booze ran out. The drugs ran out. And she remained the only thing to have. And their filth ran out of her. Help me help me she appealed to the women there. But they only stood and stared poor bitch. It was their night off. In the morning, they got more booze and alcohol.

She the constant.

Permanence.

And this fucked up Maori battalion rode to, Victoria was her name. Take the honour of your people with you, to Gloria was her name. Fuck right to the end. For dog, for kicks and for man-tanga.

Aue.

Ake, ake, kia kaha e.

They dragged her off the mattress. There was blood and piss. Some shit. One bashed her for that piss. One bashed her for not moving. And one just bashed her. Dog they called her. Even dogs don't shit in the same place. And they weren't dogs. They were human. Men.

Then they dumped her off somewhere where the lady who found her rang the police. You can't lie there I'm having visitors later oh my God what will people think. Excuse me Miss you are on My property off, off, off you go get off my property. Oh my God what will the neighbours think. Hello Police is that the police yes there's a young Mari woman on my lawn. A girl. She's drunk and looks drugged and she's on my front lawn and she won't move. She won't move. And she's naked. Please come and remove her.

My house is on the Market. She won't move. But she can't move. Almost dead and should be dead. But not dead yet.

Now you say that that is what happened to you and maybe just maybe they'll believe you enough to ask you questions to decide if you do indeed have a case. Did you do anything to entice him? Allure him? Turn him on? Seductress you. Here's a joke for you. A saying essentially. A truism in fact. Lady with dress up run faster than man with pants down around his knees. Why didn't you run? Scream? Scratch? Hiss? Spit? Scream bitch and I hurt your precious bastard baby. How do I know he's mine aye bitch? Keep still. Still I said. Did he beat you then? Come on now, you liked it. That's what women like. Want. Need. Bit of rough and tumble.

They shared that girl amongst themselves. Equally. When that one couldn't wait hell man she got a mouth ain't she use that. More than one way to pelt this pussy. One mouth, two hands help yourself just keep out of my way. Here I come.

Now if you can say that you went through one iota, just one, just a half of one. A dot of what that girl did and if you can prove it and you can go to court and stand up to the scrutiny, then maybe we can do something about it. And we can make a case of it then. Aye? A dot. I did not  
Have you got any money? They don't do it for aroha you know. And if you got no proof and you got no money then shut the fuck up. For better or for worse, you made your bed so now in it you must lie.

You say afterwards he beat you? How long afterwards? No. No. Separate incidents. Did he beat you during the act?

No?

He wasn't acting?

Oh I see. How long after then? Hmmm?

In the morning? Why do you think?

Because there was no food for you to cook for his breakfast and he was hungry. For richer or for poorer. He'd found the food you hid away for the child. He found the money you hid to pay the mortgage. He beat you for the lies. So madam would I.

You cooked him some food. He beat you again and then he left with the money.  
Matrimonial property Act and you the ceremonial mattress. Understress in undress.  
Then you looked in the mirror and you frightened the child with your hideous purpled repulsiveness.  
And you rang in sick.  
Again.  
I'm sorry I can't help you.

They developed the photos they'd taken that night. Caught in Kodachrome colour in their colours. She in repose them in hero pose. Tough and tattooed drugged up and boozed. No excuse. None at all. Evidence, confirmation, verification, substantiation. Where's your proof of your indication? Where is your support? What are the facts of this indignation? Can you get a witness? Television and news paper coverage covering her. Justice.  
People wondered out loud in letters to the editor, what of the dog? In one photo the man held a broken bottle by the neck. In the next photo the neck protruded from between her legs. How rude? Later the public would be told of the horror that girl endured throughout the ordeal and the multiple internal injuries she sustained. No. No head trauma or brain injury. But her heads mighty fucked. The many external injuries. A broken arm, hand, hip bone disconnected from the thigh bone; contusions and abrasions. Wairua disengagement; it floats away to die.  
PTSD?

You behaving in a traumatised stress post cornered-post disorderly manner.  
Yes at the least.  
In that darkest of her nights when everyone was there and no one could care, the women would not dare. And remember, it was their night off.

This working day is over. Maia scans the car park.  
'Do you want a lift to the railway station Maia?'  
'Yes please Laurie.'  
The hot air stifles Maia. She reels and leans back into the seat. The heated leather sears her back through her blouse. She winces. Though she cannot see the skin there, she knows the welts have not healed yet. It's only been three days. Laurie turns the key and

the air conditioner blasts out the blistering plug that's been trapped all day. Little by little the air cools. Maia breathes in slowly out slowly and then they're on their way. At the end of the row, they must wait. Other cars have right of way. It is clear now. Just before they reach the exit a vehicle hurtles through the factory gates on two wheels, gains balance and heads straight for them. It slams to a stop.

'Damned idiot.' Laurie says. He stops. Both he and Maia jerk forward. Maia flinches, as her back slams against the back of the seat. The car fenders almost touch. The Bull-bars threaten the polished chrome. Kahu leaps out of the car and races over to Laurie. Stoned eyes threaten Maia.

'Get in the fucken car you whore.'

He reaches through Laurie's window and grabs him by the shoulders.

'Let go of me this instant, I shall report you.'

'You shall leave my fucken Mrs alone and fuck off. That's what you shall do.'

Maia sits in the back seat of their car now. Twin barrels point from under the drivers seat. She kicks the jagged edged thing and pushes it with her foot until she can't see it anymore. She pulls Sammy closer to her.

Rigid blue fear, jaded-eyes stare; threatening tears. He touches her hand: and grips her heart. The tears that burn leak out, run down her cheeks, and gather wetly at the delta beneath her chin. She wonders how much more she can bear and she wonders how much more she will.

'Where were you off to with lover boy aye cunt?' Kahu talks to her through the rear vision mirror. She replies to the filthy mat on the floor.

'To the railway station.' She turns and runs her hand over the child's face. The other hand rests over her puku.

'Think your smart aye cunt? Just because you work, you think I'm gonna bow down to you cunt? Man should fuck off. You got nothing I need. What I get from you I can get out of any cunt. Wait till we get home cunt. Just you fucken wait. You and that bastard of yours can fuck off. Think you're too good to ride in this car with me aye cunt? Too fucken good.'

'I caught the train this morning. I've been catching it all week.'

‘So now it’s Thursday and I need some fucken money... how the fuck do do expect me to get in to the card game at the pad with no fucken money cunt. One break, just one break is all I need and you can kiss this black arse goodbye’.

The menacing grey and primer patched Ford Falcon force wields it’s own course through; traffic, red lights, pedestrians on crossings, children on bikes: and past a police car.

‘Fuck, fuck, fucken cunt. Look what you made me do cunt.’

It was time for Tammy’s walk.

Gillian McEnroe walks Tammy in the afternoons.

There are too many other dogs about in the morning. Beastly male dogs and their beastlier male owners. They sniff and snort and cock their hind leg in front of Tammy to pee. Gillian McEnroe giggles to herself. She can’t wait to tell that one to Moira when she rings after dinner tonight.

‘And the dogs are just as bad,’ she’ll tell Moira.

‘Come along Tammy there’s a good girl. A few more yards then we’ll be home. Good girl Tammy. Come on girl. Don’t stop now. Tammy, Tammy. Come girl. Don’t growl, don’t growl there’s nothing to be frightened of. The horrid men and their vile dogs aren’t here to scare us. Oh no they aren’t. You want me to pick you up is that it? Aye sweetie? Come here then.’

Broken glass and twisted metal. Petrol fumes and oil. A broken body lies on the grass.

She wonders if she’d turned the potatoes off. Damn. She smells them burn. The fire-engine comes. The police are here. And the ambulance. Wait for the fire-engine.

The petrified eyes remain open.

Cunt. Caught. Court.

Thirteen year old Kahu wears his church suit. It’s not Sunday. Broken glass and twisted metal. Petrol fumes and oil. The newspapers called it an accident. The television called a fatal accident. Every one called it a damned accident. But Kahu knows, it was no accident. She drove into that bus. She. Drove. Into. That. Bus. It was him. He drove her to it. Her husband. Her husband was sleeping with her sister.

The largest mound is his mother.



*'Mummy, I saw daddy and Aunty being rude.'*

There are others. Sister, baby girl Miriam.

*'Love you Miami.'*

*'Love you Kahu.'*

Brother, baby boy Moses.

*'Love you Momo.'*

*'Love you Kahu.'*

Sister Laura and brother Robert.

*'Look after mum you guys.'*

*'Okay Kahu. See you in the holidays.'*

Mounds of dirt.

Next year there will be an unveiling. Next year one will mourn his wife for everyone to see and one will mourn her sister for everyone to see. And everyone will see them leave together and everyone will know. But everyone knew what was happening while it was happening and no one told mum.

*'Mummy, I saw daddy and Aunty being rude.'*

Except Kahu. He'd told her the day. That day they'd come to visit him at boarding school. He'd told her. And in the telling, he'd killed his mother, just as if he drove the car into that bus himself.

Mounds of dirt now, but next year when the dirt has settled, they will have the headstones on them with their names, dates of birth and date of death. It will be written in the stones that they were much loved by whoever much-loved them. RIP will be inscribed at the bottom. There will be plastic flowers and empty sea-shells and pebbles and some one will tend lovingly to the sites. Surely some one will. For now though, they're resting in pieces, in boxes, in the dirt.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

Some others came tried to take over what the people had. They were raiders from the north. They had musket-guns from the Mighty-white ones. They home invaded. If they had of asked politely and used their manners, I'm sure my grand mother would have

made them welcome and offered them something to eat and drink; like a cup of pipi soup, because puha wasn't here yet, and she might have even offered them some smoked mullet or some one's wife. But they didn't ask politely they just home invaded.

They killed many with their guns and went about the place raping my grand mothers sisters, vandalising sacred places and pillaging what they fancied which was a lot. But the many fought for what they had they didn't want the northern raiders to have it. Some of the people who were part of the many but who were living further inland feared the northern raiders and abandoned their villages.

Years later they sold their villagers to others who came afterwards. The northern raiders didn't stay long. Some of them married up with the many and stayed. But some of the others got homesick and went back up north where they had come from. Up there they lived long and prospered and they schemed to come down and do another raid and home invasion.

## **Gabriel Tumai Taurima**

### **By Narrator**

*Lawyers and judiciary*

*Command an exorbitant fee*

*Can I join the law society?*

I am the first person in the first person. Adam I am the to be or not. Etre.

Ko au, je suis jesus, tu es, raua, matou. Tatou, tatou e. Nous sommes.

Io e au. Au e Io. I am: Te huarahi, te whakapono, te oranga me te hinengaro.

Te matua te Tama me te wairua tapu. So conjugate that conjunction to the conjugal right arm bastards strap me for writing left-handed. With my fish on Friday and every other day.

And my Maori tongue.

Pukana.

To harden my arterial routes with hinu and nicotine. Medical I surgical the non-urgent routine Mrs Rangihakonuitemarama I te po nei. By-pass the emergency room it's not Tuesday. Go straight to wait for that coronary coroner.

To release your no body to your whanau. Maori can work you need to mourn and need to send you off.

Asther weekend your southern hemisphere turned Easter. Fertility rites and egg laying rabbits. Fluffy chicken litters the world without end. Babies learn and mothers turn to the foil wrapped chocolate. But teach the kids about Jesus.

Jesus! What a mate. Stat days anyway Tuesday off. Tangihanga leave my right to grieve and get paid leave. Moni aroha, aroha mai. Tangi, tangi, sad, sad, ka tangi tangi. Porangi dark skies, porangi mad eyes. Wairangi watery skies, wairangi sick eyes. Haurangi windy skies, haurangi drunk eyes.

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## **By Narrator**

*Whaea*

*Ko te whaea o te Ao*

*Hine purotu*

Tall evergreen trees that dare not succumb to the wintry deciduous leaf drop surround the sports field of the posh school where the rich kids go to, least the outsiders see in; much worse that the inhabitants see out, for if they did the sights would not be pretty. And nothing is worse than writing home about the view from ones window, than the view itself. For, it is very ugly. Very-very ugly. Especially if one's room faces west. For out there is the jungle. A stratified forest of tall black industrial buildings and large spread out factories whose chimney stacks spew foul air into fouled air and whose waste fluids pour into cesspools of distaste and flow out into the sea. Where tall black men with large spread out noses and flared nostrils breathe in the befouled air of their own making.

Out there is where the Maori boys strut; the Maori boy strut, belted Levis beneath a massive gut. Arms akimbo held out at the sides, marking time with the strutting strides. Kinas under their armpits, the black singlets sweat, tattooed face and forehead; the unbuttoned blue shirt. Afros and shaved heads, dirty and unkempt, the boys bounce along the roadside which each buoyant step. Where they are headed to no one knows or cares; Mt Eden or Paremoremo a certainty. Assumption.

Out there is where the human animals survive perhaps a winter or two and then move on to grimmer pastures, evicted from the poor houses to live in Auntys garage with the wife and kids of another cousin. And their Pitt-bull whose been trained to bite Pakehas. But who will bite any thing that moves. And did. And was put down. But not without protest. Animals do have rights.

And the people drive by but it's not a drive-by they have to go that way it's en route from jungle to the hospital. So the sounds of the chain ganged vehicles go up the road at a sedate fifty-kilometers-per-hour pace and argue for park space with the nine hundred others who've come to visit their mothers, or brothers or fathers or some one else whose sick or dying or dead or has just been born.

Caring for others must be the kindest act one human can do for another. That's aroha, but aroha doesn't put food on the table, nor does it keep the lights on. And aroha doesn't pay posh school fees. The unwellness industry is a growth industry and the people in jungle keep it growing. Their ill-health is anothers wealth and the wheels on the hearses go round and around.

That's the sound of the humans living in the chained gangs.

## **Rose Koromiko**

### **By Maia Taurima**

The cockroach crawls up the wall. Another one joins it. Soon there are six. I press the call bell to alert the nurse. I need her in here. Efficiency dressed in white that smells of disinfectant enters this delivery room. The badge she wears identifies her as, 'Sandy, RN.'

'Do you want to push?'

'No. There's some cockroaches on that wall over there.'

'Where? I can't see any.'

I look at the empty wall.

'No more cockroaches then, Okay? Good.'

Antiseptic remains. The cockroaches return. I press the call bell.

‘They’re back, over there.’

‘Now look love, we’re very busy tonight. We can’t be on the lookout for imaginary bugs. You just settle down and concentrate on having that baby of yours, you’re doing fine. There’s a good girl.’

I am 30 years old and this is my third baby. The belt hooked up to the machine is strapped around my puku. The contractions fucken hurt and the monitor agrees with me. This baby will be born soon. I press the call bell to alert the nurse.

‘Not more cockroaches?’

‘No. I’m ready to have this baby.’

‘You don’t look ready. I’ll just check.’ She lifts the blanket and warns me of a procedure that she needs to perform. ‘Oh my goodness, why didn’t you say?’ She presses the call bell. White-starched-stiff uniform swish-glides, rubber-lino-squeaks and rubber-soled skid-marks into the room. The red slashed epaulettes on her shoulders tell me she is senior. Senior is fat and the buttons strain to keep it in, but rolls of pale pink flesh oozes between the gaping starched cloth.

‘She’s ready to deliver...you’re ready to deliver... you naughty girl, you should have said sooner...don’t push yet...pant...that’s right...don’t want you tearing do we...’

Cockroaches crawl up the wall then down again, Sandy R.N rubs my hand, but its everywhere else that hurts. Two men in white coats march in. One is a doctor and the other an intern, but I can’t read Interns name because it’s smudged with something. Doctor nods at Senior and then at Sandy, R.N. He lifts my gown, he looks at the screen. He nods at Intern. Intern nods at Senior and then at Sandy, R.N. He lifts his eye-brows, he looks at the screen. He nods at Doctor.

‘There you are doctor; you may deliver your first baby,’ says Doctor.

Doctor and Intern do not wash their hands as they are already gloved and gowned. I imagine they have bits of another delivery on their hands.

The intern gives me a nod. I smile, too late; it’s not my face he looks at.

The cockroaches chase each other. Rose Koromiko enters this world. The cockroaches scamper away.

‘She’s beautiful mum.’ Senior says.

‘Would you say if she was ugly?’

‘What a pity that none of your farnow are here to participate in this wondrous event.’

‘They weren’t there when she was made.’ Senior leaves.

Alone with my daughter. I think of him. Her lips pucker and wrinkles appear about her eyes Tiny.Tiny. Perfect. He disappears.

Senior tells me that in a little while we will be transferred to the post-natal ward. There I will learn how to bathe and breast feed my baby. I will participate in the exercise classes that will help to flatten my tummy and I will learn the pelvic floor exercises that will tighten down below so I won’t be an incontinent old lady. ‘And,’ she adds with a chubby chortle, ‘be tight for your husband.’ The fat chuckle chokes her. She coughs and the gross ooze gurgles in her throat.

Families will visit and bring gifts for the mothers and their babies. And family members will claim eye colour and hair colour and shape of nose and mouth. For us there will be no such visitors. No such gifts. No such claims. I want to go home. I tell the nurses I need to go home. They insist I stay. Senior tells me it’s up to the doctor, I tell her it’s up to me. I sign the AMA form and against medical advice I take my baby girl home to meet her brother.

The vegetable stand on Portage Road sold seconds. For a dollar each I bought a one kilogram bag of misshapen carrots, a bag of withered parsnips, deformed onions and munted runner beans. I planned to add these to the meat off the bacon bones bought from New World on Friday for two dollars. They simmered on the stove while me and Sammy walked to buy the veggies. They would make a nutritious soup. *Stone soup*. A handful each of rice and lentils will add bulk and fibre and that should last for the three days until the family benefit payment on Tuesday.

‘Hungry Sammy?’

‘Mmm.’

I scraped off the bitter tasting skin, by rubbing the carrot against the woven canvas bag strap. When I had finished I handed the carrot to Sammy. ‘Here you are Sammy have this

now and when we get back we'll finish making the soup. Then I'll make some bread and we'll have a yummy dinner. Okay?'

He nodded because his mouth was full of chewed up carrot. I slung the strap over my shoulder and I reached for his hand. He changed the carrot to his left hand and slipped the other into mine.

He squeezed four times, *do you love me?* I squeezed back three, *yes I do.* Two more from him, *how much?* We squeeze together. Tight and tighter and never let go. Tight and tighter and never let go. That's how much.

Earlier, I'd spotted some puha growing beneath a hedge. I let go of Sammys hand and picked that puha. It filled the bag. I would boil this and maybe Sammy and I would go to the beach and get some mussels. I would make toroi; puha and mussel salad.

A car was parked in the driveway when we got back home. I could smell the bacon bones as they simmered on the stove. I thought hard not to be hungry, but the baby in my puku controlled the thinking in the hungry part of my brain. Kahu was home and two of his mates were with him. They sat at the table with the pot of bones in the middle and I stood and watched as they sucked at those bones. I watched as they tore at the flesh and ripped it off the bones. I saw the bacon juice and grease as it ran out of their bulging mouths and soaked into their tee-shirts to add more stains to the rest of the bits of filth on them. The pile of bones on the table let me know the pot was empty.

'The fuck you staring at and where the fuck you been? What the fucks this shit. A man wants a fucken feed when he gets home, can't a man bring his mates home to a decent fucken feed. Fucken dog bones. Think I'm a fucken dog aye bitch? I'll show you fucken dog.' He turned to Sammy, 'Fuck off you little cunt, get that little cunt out of my face before I arsehole him into next fucken month. Eat up boys.'

'Go into your room Sammy.' I said.

The boys had stopped eating and one of them stood up with his plate.

'Where do you want me to put this Mrs?'' He said.

‘Leave the fucken thing right where it is mate. You didn’t come here to do fucken bitch work. Leave it there. She’ll make some fucken soup out of these. Always making fucken soup. A man wants a feed not fucken soup shit. Come on boys we got places to go, people to see.’ To me he said, ‘Got any money cunt?’

‘No.’

‘Fucken better not have. I find out you keeping money from me you’ll know all a fucken bout it. Mrs. Come on boys lets go.’

I scrubbed and peeled and chopped the veggies. I put them into the water the bones had boiled in I added the rice and lentils. I made some bread and that evening Sammy and I ate the delicious stone soup. We would have some more for breakfast in the morning. When I woke on Sunday morning, Kahu and a woman slept on the fold down couch. And the pot was empty.

Tuesday morning’s crescent moon looked like the bowl of a silver spoon and it had scooped hunks of boysenberry ripple ice-cream clouds out of the lilac-blue palette of the sky; the clouds slid away and then dissolved. A pale lemon hue lurked beneath the grey cloud mass further to the east as the sun struggled to arrive.

A day off work.

I’d had yesterday off as well because there was no one to mind Sammy, I didn’t know where Kahu was and I couldn’t afford day care. My Aunty had offered to look after Sammy, but Kahu said she would turn him into a poofter and besides, I did not know how to drive. And even if I did, I didn’t have a car and Aunty Jo lived a train station and three bus transfers away. The bosses at work were understanding and kind. I was good at what I did. And I made up time by staying late when I could and working through lunch. But kindness has a way of turning into sympathy and that leads to questioning.

‘Are you alright Maia? Would you like to come to my church?’

‘You’re far too thin Maia, here, have some of my lunch.’

‘Where does you’re husband work again?’

‘You should tell your husband to change the cupboards in your kitchen Maia, you’re forever walking into them.’



Worst of all was the pity and that lead to charity.

‘Oh Maia, silly me. I made too much meat loaf last night. I thought you’d like...’

‘Maia, I’ve brought some old clothes in for you. You might like to take them home...’

And understanding has a way of being misunderstood and lead to misinterpretation, by Kahu.

‘How come those bastards give you so much time off work? Are you rooting the boss?

How do I know that bastard over there is mine and that one in your guts? And the other bastard down South, aye how can I be sure?’

So I do my work and keep my mouth shut and I must believe that things will get better for Kahu. Then my life will improve. It must.

At ten o’clock the sun still hadn’t fully entered the day and it looked like it wasn’t going to so I walked to the Post Office with Sammy to cash the family benefit voucher. As we walked along the street, curtains twitched in windows and further along a woman came to check for the mail that usually comes at twelve. All the oblong houses in this new suburb, squatted on neatly trimmed lawns and sharp edged gardens boasted plump rainbow flowers; straight white footpaths lead to gleaming front steps and those ended at solid wooden doors that were closed.

And where the gargoyled brass knockers did pukana.

At first, the people in the street seemed friendly and the lady in the corner house even brought a cake over.

‘To welcome you and your family to the street. Are you Italian?’

‘Fuck off with your cake.’ Kahu had said.

That was five years ago. They didn’t seem to want to be friendly any more. Which was just as well. Even Aunty Jo and Uncle Barry made sure Kahu was out before they visited. Once I saw them drive away without coming up the drive and later that night Aunty rung. They understood.

‘Just because we live in this poncey-arsed neighbourhood it doesn’t mean we have to be friends with these poncey-arsed poofers. You wanted to live here. You just remember that. And your family can fuck-off too.’

After Sammy was born, I returned to work as soon as I could. We couldn't live on what Kahu made. Then Kahu left the car factory, then, he left the aluminium factory, then the biscuit factory, the plant nursery, the car wreckers. The job at the dump and the rubbish collection round. A single man's dole with an address elsewhere ensured an income to pay for the life he'd begun to enjoy. And the mates he enjoyed it with. But it couldn't sustain the habits that had formed and by the time Sammy was three years old, I was working to pay for Kahu's habit. And the mortgage. And our living. Last year Sammy stayed with Aunty but then one night Kahu went over to get him.

I bought Sammy a bun. It looked like an elongated lump of dark kauri gum and was dusted with white icing sugar. It had a split down the middle and that was filled with a thick frilled piping of fresh whipped cream and had a blob of red jam plopped in the centre. We sat on the bench seat outside the police station because that was the warmest spot in the shopping centre. It was sheltered.

A greedy child will rip a bag open. Tear at the food. Cram it into its mouth and two chews later will gulp it down. Two more chews later the food will be gone. The child will lick the inside of the packet and then lick his fingers. He will ask for more. And it may be given to him to keep the peace. Because it was given to him another time when he played up. A hungry child will eat quickly. The need to feed requires the immediacy of the sugared fix that gratification demands. He will hope for more. But will not ask for more. For he has asked before and was slapped.

A child who is often hungry will open the paper bag carefully. A lump of saliva will slip down his throat. He will slide the bun out of the bag. He will focus his eyes and his mind on this drawn-out task. Slowly, slowly with a steady hand so the icing sugar won't fall off, and the jam won't stick to the inside of the paper packet; slowly, slowly because the bun is bigger than the four year old hand that eases it out. He will place the bun on the packet that he has flattened smooth with the other hand and spread out on his lap. He will run his finger along the cream and scrape it up and take some of the red jam too. He will hesitate then and look at his mother. He will offer her the red and cream morsel at the tip of his finger. She will shake her head.

Sammy placed his creamy jammed finger in his mouth and closed his eyes.

‘Good Sammy?’

‘Mmmm.’

When the cream was all gone. He broke the bun in half along the split. He pointed one half at me and raised his eyebrows.

‘You have it Sammy, you eat it all up.’

At New World, I bought; one bag of soup bones for two dollars, one bag of chicken frames for two dollars, four fish heads for two dollars and a piece of liver for ninety five cents; a packet of weet-bix, a bag of flour a loaf of bread and a tub of margarine. Food to last to Friday. At the Salvation Army store, I bought a singlet and a pair of woollen socks and a mans woollen jersey. I will pull it apart, re-knit the wool, and make two jerseys for Sammy for the winter to come. The left-over wool, I will crochet into squares and sew them to the blanket I make for the baby to come. Money to pay the milk man. And ten dollars left to be hoarded and hidden away. Twenty four dollars is a lot of money and can be stretched to provide all that is needed. And we had all that we needed that day. We held hands, *squeeze four, squeeze three, squeeze two, squeeze one, and never let go.*

And beneath the brooding sky we walked towards home. *Squeeze four, squeeze three, squeeze two, squeeze one, and never let go.*

*Squeeze. And never let go.*

The baby was due in July. I’d decided to work until June. I had seven months of work to go. I would return to work when the baby was six weeks old. By then I would surely need to. In the mean time my focus was my job as a laboratory technician, paying the mortgage and caring for Sammy and the baby in my puku. We walked along the summer road beneath the wintry sky, we walked home, and never let go.

*Squeeze. And never let go.*

Sammy napped. I put the groceries away. That didn’t take long. The fish heads were in a pot on the stove I would cook them later. I always pick all the fleshy bits off for Sammy he’s too little yet to eat a fish head, there are too many bones and scales, but when he gets older he will know the lusciousness of the eyeballs, and the succulence of the brain that

lies deep within the cavity. I make soup out of what's left. I needed to rest. I lay down beside Sammy and closed my eyes.

A closed fist whacked my face, I'd come to know the difference between slap and punch, even in the dark. First, the sound is not the same and second, a slap although it covers a bigger area just stings and after a while the sting goes away. But a punch to the head is instant sore, bone crunching sometimes and bruises up straight away and the hurt stays. It takes a hell of a lot of ice to calm that unbearable hurt and a lot of make-up to cover the bruised bit for appearances and work. Then, a hand grabbed my hair and I was dragged across the bed by it and dumped on the floor. I was lifted to my feet and punched in the face again. I crack landed on the floor. My head hit the corner of Sammy's set of drawers. Crack-land. Nothing.

When I came to I was in the emergency department at the hospital. *My baby? My Sammy?*

The nurse who took care of me told me that my Auntie had come to take Sammy home. The nurse who took care of me told me that my baby was fine. That nurse told me, as she took my temperature,

'You don't have to put up with this you know.'

And again, as she discharged me and handed me a medical certificate.

'You don't have to put up with this you know.'

The doctor had written that I was unfit for work for at least ten days. I only had five sick days left. I had to go to work. The nurse gave me a mirror and said, 'You don't have to put up with that you know.' Looking the way I did I knew I shouldn't go to work and when I got off the bed and tried to stand, I knew I couldn't go to work. I fell. That nurse caught me,

'Please don't say it again. I know.'

I knew I couldn't go to work.

Aunty Jo came to get me. Her and Uncle Barry wanted me and Sammy to stay with them for a while. Aunty Jo had rung work to say I won't be coming in tomorrow and that I would ring in myself then.

'You come home with us.'

'No.'

They dropped me off at home. I let them take Sammy with them for a couple of days. Kahu was at home with the woman from the other day. Her name was Alice. She was named after their grandmother. Her dog ate out of a pot on the floor.

'Got any money?'

'No.'

'Sure?'

'I got nuff for us hun.' Alice said.

They left.

Fish bones and chicken ribs left lying in the open had attracted the flies. Maggots crawled over each other. They nodded their searching heads to and fro and slithered about in slimy stink. They looked like grains of rice as it boils. I cleaned up the mess. I walked to the police station and I went in. Afterwards I sat on the seat in the warmest spot in the town centre. Later, the police came to our house to see Kahu, but he wasn't home. There were two of them, a man and a woman. The man spoke to me. The woman looked around the lounge and commented on the view out of the picture window.

'Are you sure you want to lay charges?' The male officer said. 'These things can go on for a while you know. Are you sure?'

'Yes...I'm sure.' I looked at the woman officer. She looked at me and then she looked back at the view outside the window.

The policeman said they'd come by again another day.

Sammy came home two days later on Friday. Later, Kahu did too.

Alone.

'Got any money?'

'No.'

‘The fuck you mean no, it’s your fucken payday.’

‘The mortgage gets taken out today.’

‘Too fucken bad, I want it. Comon, let’s go I’ll take you down the post office and you can draw the lot out. I need some for me and some for Alice, she’s family, she’s my fucken cousin. She’s going back to Christchurch on Monday, fucks sake Maia how do you expect her to get back home? She’s got kids there she hasn’t seen them for a fucken month, and I won’t see her again. I told her I’d pay for the gas to get down to Wellington and the ferry tickets to Picton, so let’s go and get the fucken money. Now.’

‘No.’

When I came to I was in the lounge. It was dark. *My baby? My Sammy?* Kahu slept on the couch. The police came to our house. They arrested Kahu. They took him away and charged him with common assault. Then they let him come home. So he did.

When I came to I was in the lounge it was dark. *My baby? My Sammy?* And I felt my face being wiped with a damp cloth. *My Sammy.* The police came to our house. Kahu was arrested. He was taken away. He was charged with common assault. He came home.

He hit Sammy.

The police came to our house. He was arrested. He was taken away. He was charged with common assault. He went inside for three months. He came home.

Kahu went to jail again. One day when he’d picked me up after work; crazed, amped, boozed, and speeding, out of control and off his head, he’d hit an old lady who was waiting to cross the road. She died.

Rose Koromiko is a pixie faced little angel. Rose Koromiko has a cute turned up nose and a receding forehead. She had to go back to hospital when she was three days old. She’d stopped breathing. The doctors told me she would probably be in and out of hospital for the first two years of her life and would need further periods in hospital as she grew. They suggested I put her away in a home and forget about her. My cute pixie faced angel. Tiny.Tiny. Perfect. Was a little alcoholic. Because I’d made her one.

Things changed when Kahu went to gaol, suddenly, I had neighbours. Out of curiosity or concern they converged. They brought food, they brought friendship, and they brought invitations to parties, get-togethers and bar-b-ques. I accepted all that they brought. And they became my friends. One of my new friends told me about a domestic purposes benefit that I could claim. I claimed. I became an official, date stamped, solo mother. I stopped working; I started drinking. And I drunk every day with my new friends. I even drunk without them. Kahu was gone and I hadn't been this happy for a long time, but I feared his return. I knew when he got out of prison he would come for us, but in the mean-time. I was having fun. Bloody good fun. Fun when I had booze. Not, when I didn't. Life without alcohol was a hopeless misery that I had to endure. A day without alcohol was a day without breathing and I couldn't not breathe.

So I let the insidious thing creep up on me and sneak its way into my misery and make me laugh and make me cry.

'Give me that boy,' said Aunty Jo.

'Take him, take him.' I said each time.

My new found freedom: free and alive.

Cockroaches crawled up the wall. Others joined in. Soon there were six million.

Cockroaches, crawly things, slimy things and rats. Dark moon and shadows, ngangara and bats. Alcohol made them all disappear.

Each time I went to sleep, I knew that when I woke up, tomorrow would be better, for me for Sammy and for the baby to come. Tomorrow would be better for us. It had to be.

The power was turned off and the next day the water was too. A mortgagee sale meant we had no home. We didn't have much before, but now we had nothing.

'You pack up you and your kids and you come and live with us.'

So we lived with Aunty Jo.

'No drinking. Go and do you some training. I look after the kids.' She said.

So we stayed with Aunty Jo for three and a half years.

You don't have to put up with this you know.

I never did see that nurse again. I looked all over the hospital while I was doing my training. I asked at the emergency department where I'd met her, I asked other nurses if they knew her.

‘What’s her name?’

I hadn’t even asked her that night.

Where ever that nurse is, I wished her well. And when I graduated, a registered nurse, I thought of her.

And then this state house came up for us. A state house in the jungle.

Not for long, not for long.

Rose Koromiko came home yesterday. She’s going to be just fine. Tommorrow we will go to Waiuku. We’ve never been there before. I will show her and Sammy where their nanny and their Auntys and Uncles are buried: their father gets buried beside them in the urupa of his step-fathers whanau.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

Some others came from a far away place.

Many years before that, one of their whanau had come here in a boat. It was a big boat. He drew a map. It was a big map. And he called the map he drew, New Zealand which was named after the old Zealand that he came from. He didn’t do much here, just gave this place another name and went about renaming places here to make his mark. Then he went back to his land and told the people he’d discovered somewhere which wasn’t true at all because it was here all the time. That man got eaten by some people who were related to my grandparents that had hopped off the canoe in another land seven hundred years before.

A few years later about a hundred or so, another man in his boat came along. He was ordered to boldly go and seek out new lands for his people to live on because their land was polluted and absolutely rooted and the people wanted to live long and prosper in another place. He had another job to do as well he had to track the path of the love planet



called Venus because there was no love left where he came from. And at the time in his land the people needed love to survive because they had no bread and stole it from those who had plenty. If they got caught stealing the bread they were put in gaol then the gaols got too full of bread stealers so to punish them, they had to go and live in Australia.

The others who came from that far away place said to the people here, hey you noble savages, hey you natives, we want what you have which is not rightfully yours, God has deigned us to have it, we are the chosen few of the chosen ones, we are going to fight you for all of what you have now so the best thing for you to do is give it to us. But first let's make a pact to bring salvation back because this is out of hand and we need, want your land. So my grandparents in their noble savagery and native naivety signed the pact and agreed to coexistence and offered no resistance because they had faith in the hope implicit in the pact. *He Iwi tahi tatou.*

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

'Hey Aaaaadaaaammm. This land is your land.'

Delilah told me that we could get some of my land back. All I had to do was plough as much land up as I could between sunrise and sunset and I could keep it.

'I don't have a plough.'

'Just hold your hands out in front of you, and pretend you have one. Do I have to tell you everything? How dumb are you?'

She said I had to take all my clothes off when I did it though. That was the law. She said, 'Take your clothes off now in case you forget in the morning.' We went to sleep early in a barn. Delilah took all her clothes off too. She's hairy for a lady. So there we lay on some itchy scratchy hay bales. I in my birthday suit and her in hirsute. Delilah kept saying, 'Lets make a baby, lets make a baby.' So we tried to make a baby and Delilah said if it doesn't work this time, we can try again another time because her time was running out and her bioillogical clock was kicking. When I woke up in the morning Delilah was gone. I was hungry from all the trying Delilah made me do. But Delilah had taken the food with her.

People in the cars that went by, waved and tooted their horns and I waved back. I ploughed and ploughed and waved and smiled at people who tooted at me. The police made me put the plough down, get dressed and get in the car. I told them everything Delilah had told me and that I was making a land reclaiming Act and since I didn't have a dog I was exempt from paying the dog tax.

When I woke up Delilah sat in the corner of the room.

'You are one dumb fuck. You can't get anything right can you? Can you? Can you? Can you?'

I swore at her. I struck out at her and I missed. Then I got her against the wall and I punched her. Over and over and over.

When I came to. My hands were in bandages and I wondered how I was going to wipe my arse.

The Token nui bamboo grove. A party hut the staff all knew of  
Because some went to deal there and got sprung when  
Mickey told Solley at morning group session: I got some money  
to pay my tick. And score again please thank you.

**275-**

**By narrator**

*Pēpē*

*Kotiro ataahua*

*Kaua e tangi*

Between the hedge and the front of the house at number two Stewart Road, the space that should be the front lawn with pretty well kept gardens and a water pond with a little wee gnome fishing in it all day and all through the night; is a dump for old wrecks. It's the storage depot for the backyard mechanic who lives and operates his home business there. Next door at number four, the chained up dogs have shit on, pissed over and paced up and around the packed in hard as concrete dirt patch. Even the weeds that peep out of the old cars at number two won't go there to live. At number six, flowers grow in tyres

scabbed from the man at number two. There's six rubber encircled plots. Today, three of them spill over with Fresias, the daffodils died off last week and their browned off heads rot against the stiff green stalks. Soon, the snap dragons will come and share space with lobelia and pansies and Sweet Williams.

Summer is on its way.

Last year, the council had planted Japanese Cherry blossom trees all along the Stewart Street verge, an hour later a truck parked up outside number eight. Two youths got out, unloaded a portable gas fire and proceeded to boil some water to make tea. Another two took a wheelbarrow and threw some spades onto it. They dug all the trees out and loaded them onto the back of their truck. By then the tea was ready. They had their cuppa. And then left the street. And left big holes behind. The lady at number eight poked geranium stalks into all the holes and now the berm sprouts green foliage that stink of dogs piss. Flower buds tense at the junctions of waxy coated stems. In a time not too far from here, the buds will spring free and open and Mediterranean colour will come to the shady grey street.

There's a water feature at number ten, the down pipe came loose from the guttering in 1987 and when it rains the water is a riotous cascade that splashes and splutters and pools on the dirt patch below and then soaks into the ground, leaving behind a rounded smooth bowl that awaits the next downpour. Today, the feature is switched off. At number twelve, the Jasmine vine twists around the pole with the weather vane that's stuck pointing to the east, the rooster has lost its tail feathers and the once gleaming copper bird is grey with oxidation. Fourteen and sixteen have old bombs parked in the front yard and at eighteen, the trampoline sags in the middle. The bounce has gone, so too have some of the springs.

Twenty, twenty-two and twenty four reflect the pride of those who live there. The lawns are neat. The gardens are tidy. The wee little fishing gnomes have been replaced often. And the cars, parked in the driveways or the carports put up by housing corp in 1985, are old but warranted and rego-ed. The round about in the turning u out side these houses is home for more wrecks that the man at number two can't use for parts. He's already stripped them so they just sit there. The kids don't even pretend in them any more.

They've stopped going to the Zoo. There are no more make-believe trips to the beaches or the Santa parade in Queen Street, or rides over the harbour bridge. And the picnic lunches were the same old school lunch peanut butter sandwiches anyway. Maybe one day when the children are grown-up, they will go to those places, but for now they are far away and stay pretend and the growing up years are spent here. Right here, in this street, in the jungle.

The state of the odd numbered houses mirror the evens across the street. They show the no pride of the people who live in them. The lost cause of beauty, the no need for tidiness, the hardship of mowing a lawn regularly or putting in a flower garden. The indigent thinking of the impoverished indigenous, or the struggling immigrant who's already learnt about WINZ.

The houses are all the same. Same colour. Same plan. Same brick chimney at the left side of the house that the kids bounce tennis balls against or throw water bombs at or go there to cry; or drunk men and dogs piss against and where an angry husband might bang his wife's head against, for getting smart. The bitch.

This is Stewart Road. And this is where I live. But I won't be here for long.  
Written by Maia Taurima 26 October 1988.

Maia rips the pages from the pad and files them away in the lever arch file she brought on special at the stationers on Friday, the same Friday she'd bought the lotto ticket that would free her and her children, but on Saturday lay crumpled on the floor .

## **Ellens Bag**

**By Rose Koromiko**

The three ducks on Ellen's kitchen wall looked like they were flying in a dirty wallpaper sky that was speckled with fly pooh dots. But they didn't fly. The clock beneath the ducks had a pooh spotted freckly face and the hands on the clock-face went around and around while the ducks stayed where they were. The biggest duck's head dangled from its' neck, and the tangley spiders web full of dead flies held it in place where it almost

kissed its chest. Last Saturday the head pointed towards the sun. Now there was a clean duck head shaped space that the flies had already claimed as their toilet. Flies must be marvellous things they can pooh sideways and upside down because the ceiling had fly freckles on it too. The other two ducks, smaller ones, lagged behind as they always did and it seemed they would never catch up. I sat at the table in the dining room with my mother and her friend Ellen.

I drew pictures in my brand new book with my brand new felt pens that Eli gave to me for a seven and a half birthday present yesterday. I liked the coloured bottles on the shelf above the fireplace, so I drew a picture of them. My new felts had lots more colours than my old ones so I made a pretty neat picture. The dark green one was, Marque Vue and the lighter green one was Chardon. There were four dark brown ones in their own little baskets, they were called Mateus. But my favourite one of all was the blue one called Blue nun. Ellen told me that they were Champagne bottles, a drink that only rich people drank. They were empty when Bob had brought them home from the dump, but Ellen filled them up with cold tea, so people would think she was rich.

So while Mum and Ellen drank beer and smoked cigarettes, Dick, my mother's boy friend lay on the floor. He groaned out of his closed mouth.

'Dick you silly hua,' said Ellen, 'get up off the floor and stop being stupid...get up man your beers getting warm. Leave the poor bastard alone you fellas.' She said to Eli and Bob.

'You could help.' Dick said to Mum. But mum just sat at the table across from Ellen and said, 'They seem to be doing okay on their own.' Earlier, Dick had said to Mum, 'If youse Mari's want your land back, give us back our blankets.' Then Mum said, 'Deal, take your itchy blankets then and go home.'

'If it wasn't for us you'd still be running around in grass piu-piu skirts and swinging poi-balls and running around in bare-feet with no shoes on. Like the jungle bunnies youse are.'

Just then Eli came in and said, 'Who you calling Jungle Bunny Caspar?'

‘Just mind your manners when you address your betters, mind yourself.’ And he laughed and said, ‘Just joking.’

Then Eli said, ‘Here, mind this,’ And I heard a crunch and Dick held his nose and some red blotches got on my book and spoilt my picture and Eli said, ‘Go in the kitchen Rosie.’ So I went into the kitchen but I peeped around the corner so I could still see. ‘Let me help.’ said Bob, but Mum said that’s enough. And then she told Dick he better go back to his own house.

‘To your wife and kids,’ she said.

‘I’m not going to be pushed around by a boy.’ And he stood up and I think he was going to punch Eli but Eli knocked him down and Bob kicked his head.

So that’s how come my brother Eli and Bob Ellen’s son came to waste Dick my mother’s boyfriend. And that’s why he was lying there bleeding on the floor swearing that he’s a victim, in pain, and going to die. Eli said to Dick, ‘Go on then prick, get going.’ But he didn’t look as if he could get going anywhere. Mum said, ‘No more please Eli,’ and Ellen said cheers big ears.

I saw Nanny Jo die. My mothers a nurse and she took nanny Jos heartbeat in her wrist and said, ‘She’s dead.’ Her eyes were open so Auntie Miru closed them so nanny could be dead properly. Then everybody cried and mum rang the doctor. When he got there he agreed with mum.

‘Yes,’ he said. ‘She’s dead.’

When a person dies and people say they’ve gone, what they mean is that the thinking part has gone to live with God. I know this because my little brothers Gabby and Jordon’s Nanny called Nanny P, which is where they were now, said, ‘He put us here and when he wants us he takes us back.’ Nanny Ps’ God is the real one because he’s a Roman and a Catholic. Nanny P said she was a convert and she went to the church where all the other converts and Catholics from Italy went to. I know about Italy because I help Mum make the Pizzas for dinner on Tuesdays and sometimes Eli has Watties Spaghetti sandwiches for his school lunch. In Italy people eat Pizza and spaghetti all the time because they’re Italian.

Nanny P goes to church in Rome every day, two times a day and sometimes she goes back after dinner because she's Kaiarihi and she has to go to Kaiarihi practice. Kaiarihi means that you are like a nun but you're not a real nun because you have got some kids. Nuns aren't allowed to have kids. So to be a nun you have to have none. Nanny P said it was not good to tell liars because He knows what's in our heads. He can read our minds. So this is the part He takes back when we die. She said that He can put all the pure thinking back into babies. He doesn't want our arms or legs or faces or any other fleshy part, so those bits go into the ground. That's why dead people can't talk because you have to think something before you say it and if God's got your thinking, well then you can't talk. So, that's what being dead is.

For a nearly dead man, Dick talked heaps. Eli told him to, 'shut the fuck up and die then bitch.'

And Dick yelled out that he was going to get his Mrs's Brothers to come and deal to Eli and Bob so they dragged him outside and punched him some more.

'You bastards have broken my jandal,' he squealed and his voice sounded like Miss Smiths at school when she's cross with us.

When I asked Eli if mum had any brothers he said no. Dick meant his wife's brothers, not mum she wasn't any ones 'Mrs.' She was our mother. And he was a Dick. Then Bob went and got the metal bar that makes the jack go up and down to lift the car up when you get a flat tyre and when Eli asked him what he was gonna do with it he said he was gonna put it through the mother-fuckers head but Eli told him to stop being stupid.

'And don't say that word again Bob. It's not good to call your mother that.'

And Bob put the bar back in the shed.

Dicks face was all bloody like the insides of the pigs-heads Eli brings home from the Mad Butchers. He gets them from his boss for free because that's where he works after school. That's when he goes to school because I heard him say to mum that he hated school and he wasn't going anymore now that he had a job at the butchers. Mum makes the hogs head cheese that he asks her to make because he was brought up by nanny and papa in the South Island and that's what they had to eat there. I'm glad I didn't live in the South Island. I stood at the window and watched Dick as he sat on the kerb and tried to

fix his jandal. He gave up and held his minced looking head with lumps of jellied blood up his nose. He looked like he was trying to stop his face parts from falling off his head. He made noises like when Jordan has a tantrum.

In our street, people didn't peep from behind curtains. If they wanted to know what was happening they came out on to the foot path and jacked. And that is what they did now. Even Ainsley the cripple man had wheeled himself out for a jack. Eli rang up to Dicks Mrs to come and get him but he said she hung up on him. Then Dicks son Sean came over on his ten speed and him and Eli and Bob went out the back of Ellen's shed and had a sesh because they were mates. By the time they came around to the front of the house with their stoner eyes, the cops and an ambulance had arrived and the ambulance nurses were looking after Dick so I went out to stand on the footpath to have a jack with the rest of the street. Everyone was there.

And we stood on that still, hot afternoon footpath and we all had a good jack. Eli and Bob didn't come out but I heard Eli tell Sean to go and help his old man. Sean said, 'Fukim.' So they stayed inside. One of the policemen was my friend at school Vailima Tapuai'i's father. He came to swimming sports in March. He clapped for me when I won the walking in water race because I can't swim.

'Hello Mr Tapuai'i, where's Vailima?'

'Hello Rosie. She's home. Now you go over there and stand aye? There's a good girl stand back over there with the others, mind now you might get in the way.'

So I walked over to the others and they made a space for me and I stood there and jacked. I'm small for my age because I was born an alcoholic. My mother gave it to me when I was in her puku. I'm not an alcoholic anymore I'm just small. On Monday at school I will tell Vailima I saw her dad.

I heard Mr Vailima say to Dick, 'We know you very well sir and you are coming with us to the station to sleep it off. You sir are very drunk.'

'I'm the victim here, I'm dying...I've got rights you know. Those black bastards in there give me one hua of a bashing, bloody near kill me and you want to take me to the station...this is racism in reverse. My Lawyer will have something to say about this...I'm



the victim here. I pay your wages Big Boy...so you get in there and arrest those black huas...or I'll do you for racism...and harassment.'

The ambulance nurses had wiped the blood away so his face didn't look like the inside of a pigs-head anymore. He looked like the whole pig. The Samesis have whole pigs. They kill them at their house and cook them up on special days. They are called sucklings, but Dick looked like a pig before it's a suckling. His face was pink with gingerish hairs sticking out of it and his eyes were slitted up from the bash Eli and Bob gave to them. His fat white puku stuck out of the rips in his tee shirt and his shorts were ripped too. And bloody. He'd taken the good jandal off, so both his feet were dirty from sitting in the gutter and made piggish noises too. He kept saying oink, oink to Vailimas father.

Shane Fords got a father too. A father is some one you call dad. I heard Shane Ford call his father dad once. One day Debbie's dad came to visit Ellen. I said to Debbie, 'Look, your dad's at your house.'

And she said, 'Not.'

'Is.'

'Not.'

'Is.'

And I said, 'Ellen, hey Ellen, Ellen Debbie's father's here.' And I said, 'Are you Debbie's father?'

'No.'

'You look like her.'

And Ellen and Debbie's father looked at each other and said nothing else.

We don't have a father. Just mum. I used to wish we had a father like Shane Ford has, but when I saw Mrs Ford with a punched up face and Shane with a punched up face that he said his dad gave to them, I stopped wishing. I don't want a punched up face. Sammy said that once he got a punched up face from our father, but that was a long time ago and I wasn't here yet. Sammy said he used to give mum a punched up face all the time. And Sammy said that before he was born our father used to give Eli a punched up face and he was still only a baby and that's why he went to live with Nanny and Papa in the South

Island. Sammy said that's what Nanny Jo told Uncle Barry and he heard them talking about our father. I'm glad we don't have our father to live with us.

The Policemen had to help Dick stand up. He couldn't do it on his own because he was still the dying victim of one hua of a bashing and Vailimas' dad said he was very drunk. I thought he just had sore feet because the footpath was burning mine. The policemen put Dick into their car and drove away. Everyone on the footpath clapped, even Ainsley, So I did too.

Dick never did get back up to the table to drink his beer that was getting warm, Ellen drank it. 'Waste not, want not.' she said and she turned the glass around and drank from the other side so she wouldn't get aids. 'Fuck that,' she said, 'He might have aids.' And she drank the whole glass in one go. 'Cheers,' she said. She made a big O with her mouth and poured the beer in. She's real ugly. Her eyes are like the Guinea Pigs ones that we had once. They're dead now. Bobs dog killed them. Her nose looks like the purple jet planes that I like best. It's flat and spreads out over her black face. I hate the green jet planes and I give them to Jordan because he's greedy. When she smiles I can see the rotten apple core tooth that floats in her O mouth.

Eli calls her useless arse because he told me she poohs into a bag that's taped to the side of her puku. So she only uses her bum to sit on. I asked her once if she would show me the bum on the side of her puku but she only laughed.

'Don't be rude please Rosie,' mum said.

I've seen the shape of it though because when she drinks a lot of beer I can see the bulge under her jersey. It's not bum shaped at all. It looks like she hides a football there. I told her, I can see your bum under your jersey. Then she went out and I heard the toilet flush and when she came back I couldn't see her bum any more.

Ellen is a skinny old lady and her skin is the colour of our table. Mum said it's recycled Rimu and we rub Neepol on it to make it shine. Ellen's skin doesn't shine. It's all wrinkly especially under her black Guinea Pig looking eyes. There's bags there. Sometimes the bags look full and puffy and sometimes they're like prune skin after I've sucked the soft inside bit out through the holes at the ends. I don't like the sour skin, so I spit it into my

hand and throw it into the garden. It might grow a prune tree. So far though the tree hasn't come.

Ellen smells like the toilet at Nanny P's house because mum said Nanny P was too lazy to clean it every day. Mum said that Ellen was the kindest person in the world and that although she looked ugly on the outside she was beautiful on the inside. Mum said that Ellen had a heart of gold. Jacinta Singh at school wears gold earrings because she's from South Africa she said. I feel sorry for Ellen because her bums not in the right place and her heart is made out of hard yellow lumps of metal. I know she's kind though because she taped the duck's head back when it fell off, ka aroha e raki raki she said and then she told it to fly away to freedom. When it didn't, she gave it mouth to mouth. And I thought the duck might get drunk. I think it did because now it's stuck crooked on the wall. And between beers she cried about that duck. Eli said that she's a drunken ugly old bag that looks like Hine-nui-te po and he said that she was gonna get me one day and take me to a dark scary place, but I'm not scared of her because she's kind. She gives us Roses chocolates and Eli takes the hard caramels out first because they're his favourites.

Dick hadn't lock the Holden so Sean got into it had pulled out the beer Dick had stashed in the boot. There were four crates of Lion Red. 'Drink the pricks beer,' Sean told mum and Ellen, 'drink it all and enjoy it.' The boys had a good Jack in Dick's car. They found ten tinnies of Marijuana in the glove box so they sold to them to the people in the street. They got \$250.00. They gave mum and Ellen \$100.00 and they split the rest between them. Mum and Ellen invited some of the neighbours over. Solley from next-door to Ellen's hot-wired Dick's car and him and Ellen went down to Mangere East shops. And they came back with some more beer and some shopping.

That night the whole street got together for a huge dinner. There was roast Pork and chicken and stuffing and vegetables, some trifle and ice-cream, lollies and fizzy. Sinua brought over some Islander food, May-Ling brought over some Asian food and Marietta brought over some Pakeha food. And other ladies brought heaps of other food but I didn't know what it was so I just had ice-cream and fizzy. Trish had some trestle tables in her shed and her husband set them out under Ellen's Umbrella tree. Ellen put sheets on for

the table cloth, but mum took them off and said you don't put what arse has been on for the kai table. So we just had table top wiped down with jif.

There were about fifty people all together on Ellen's front lawn. There was food and music and laughter and the grownups drank beer and other booze and smoked dak. It was like a Christmas I remember we had at nanny P's a long time ago. But I can't remember if there was that much laughter that time. And Nanny P's real grand-children got presents then because they were Catholic and Italian. We never got presents at Christmas like the other kids we knew did but Eli gave me and Sammy five bucks each so it was better than Christmas. I put my five bucks away for a rainy day like what mum does. It rains a lot here, so the rainy day money gets used up.

One time when mum was at work and Eli was minding us, Ellen said for us to go over their house and have a Christmas lunch with her and Bob and Debbie. People decorate their houses at Christmas. Ellen had sellotaped strips of coloured paper called crepe from the ceiling, and she taped the other end to the wall. And she hung balloons everywhere. It looked like at the ball that Cinderella went to. She stuck a circle of flowers made out of milk bottle tops on the front door that made a noise like Gabby's baby rattle when the wind blew it. And she put some more milk bottle tops and some glittery sparkly string all over the umbrella tree. Eli said it looked like a tinny house.

'They'll get fucken tinny off me.' Ellen said.

We had a roast and some pudding and then some people came over for beers with Ellen. So Eli said, 'Let's go home,' to me and Sammy because Jordan and Gabby were having a Christmas at Nanny Ps because that's their nanny not ours.

People get presents at Christmas and birthdays, but we don't because we get things on ordinary days. When it's our turn.

We have to save up for shoes. It's my turn next in July. Sammy had his turn in April. I've already chosen what I want, but I know that's not what I'll get. Because that's what happened last year.

'I want those shiny red ones with the ribbon bow.'

‘No Rosie.’

‘But Vailima’s got some.’

‘No Rosie.’

‘I’ll hold my breath.’

‘I’ll leave you here then. And when you start breathing again, you can walk home in the shoes you’re wearing, and Jordan will have your turn.’

Vailimas shoes broke and she had to get some black lace ups like mine. But in their house they don’t have to have turns because they have a father. They have Christmas too. And birthday parties.

Once some fighting soldiers were on their way home. They had been in a war. The war was over. Their side had won. So now they could go home to their families. They were very very hungry because the leaders of the war did not have enough food to feed themselves as well as the soldiers they could only give them gold medals for bravery. By and by, they came across a village. The head soldier who might have been the pres said to the rest of the gang, ‘Let us stop here and see if these people will feed us.’ Then he told the Sgt At Arms to knock on the doors and ask for food so he did.

‘I am sorry,’ said the lady, ‘but we only have enough kai for ourselves, we don’t have any to spare. So he went to the next house and he was told the same thing and at the next house and the next until he got hoha with being told over and over that there wasn’t any kai to spare.

So the pres said to his men. These people are selfish, greedy and ungrateful. We fought a battle for them and now they won’t feed us, but I have an idea. We shall make stone soup. The gangsters had never heard of this before and they began to mutter amongst themselves and then they thought what a good idea this was and what a clever man the pres was to make soup that would get them all stoned. What a clever pres he was. That’s why he was the pres. Stone soup would take care of the munchies too. Some nearby village children over-heard the gang plans and ran home to tell their parents. ‘The buffalo soldiers are going to make stone soup so everyone can have a munch.’ The curious villagers come out of their houses because no one went to work that day and they surrounded the soldiers.

The head of the village said to the pres, 'I hear you fullas are gonna make stone soup.'  
'Yes,' said the pres. 'I have the stones, but alas I don't have a pot large enough to cook them in.'

'I have a pot,' said one lady, 'It's a big boil-up pot from the pa.' So she ran to get the pot. It was a cauldron because really, she was Bad Martha the witch and she used the cauldron to make pokokohuas out of peoples heads so she could eat their brains. She didn't boil all the heads though. She dried some and sold them to the enemies so they could put them in their museums in a faraway land over the mountains and seas where the people talk different to us. By the time Bad Martha got back to the Town Centre a fire was burning and they placed the cauldron on top of Sinua's barby plate.

The people waited and soon the stones rattled in the boiling water. The pres tasted the soup and said mmmm this is delicious but it needed salt and meat and whatever else you people can donate and they went to their homes and brought back what ever kai they could find in their cupboards and freezers and gardens and they put it all in to the pot. When the kai was cooked, all the people had a big feed and the villagers went to sleep because they were stoned. The soldiers, being used to getting stoned tied all the village men together and told the children to go and play down by the river. So they did. Then the soldiers had their wicked ways with all the village women except Bad Martha because they didn't want to lose their heads.

When they had finished their wicked ways, the soldiers went home to their families. That's not how mum told the story though. Eli put his own bits in. And he told me that that's what really happened. Mum said that it's about this; with your food basket and my food basket together we can feed all the baskets. But I think that's what Eli said.

After tea-time all the big kids played spotlight, spotlight because it was dark. The big kids had torches and they played tiggy all around the street. They hid behind hedges, people's garages, and their garden sheds, and the big green box Eli that opened up once and we saw some cables. If you saw some one you shone your torch on them and shouted, spotlight, spotlight. And you both had to race back to base. The winner then became the hunter.

One night the big kids came racing home because a man was chasing them. Eli had spotlight, spotlighted him and the man was angry because he was having a pooh behind the green box and he had to stop when Eli shone the torch on him. They made that place out of bounds for playing in because some one might stand on the mans pooh that he left there when he chased Eli and the others.

One day when me and mum walked past the green box I saw Sinua behind it. She hid from Gregory so he wouldn't punch her head in.

'Please don't tell Gregory I'm here,' she said to mum, 'He will punch my head in.'

'Have you seen Sinua?' Gregory said to mum.

'No.'

'When I find her I'm going to punch her head in.'

That was in the day time, but that night the police went to their house and they took Gregory back to their place, like they took Dick. But no one clapped for Gregory.

I wasn't allowed to play spotlight, spotlight with the big kids, because it was my bath time and after that I had to go to bed. Even though my nose was full of the Johnsons baby powder and Oil of Ulan smell that mum uses and even though I breathed in my Lux-flakes smelling nightie and Palmolive soap I could still smell pigs head so I snuggled up to mum because I didn't want to sleep on Dicks side because I don't like Pork. 'Love you mum.'

'Love you too.' She was soft and warm. And I wanted to stay there by my mother and never have to leave.

I heard a scream. I felt mum move. Then I got cold. And I opened my eyes. Mum had her dressing gown on. 'Stay here.' she said. 'No I want to come where we going?' 'I think I heard Ellen call out.' Eli and Sammy were up too so we all went outside. Ellen stood on her lawn. 'That bastard tried to rape me.' I could see someone under the umbrella tree. 'There he is said Eli and he raced over there so did Bob and Sammy. Me and Mum followed them. Dick stood under that tree. He didn't move. He looked like the scare-crow Eli and Bob made for the garden once and then when it was Guy Fawkes time they burnt it in the fire they'd made with Dicks spare tyre. Dick held his arms out at the sides of his body.

Eli shone the torch in Dicks face. His lips moved but he didn't talk and I thought he was going to cry. Bits of yellow custard looking stuff dripped down his face. Green stuff that looked like toroi stuck to his tee shirt and was like Jordans nappy once when mum said he must have a sore puku.

'Fuck I aint touching you, did you shit yourself man? Bob go ring the pigs they can have him.'

'Got you you bastard.' Ellen said. She held a bottle of beer to her mouth and tipped it in. When she pulled the bottle away it was empty. So she threw it at Dick.

'Ana, take that you pair a barsid huas.'

Dick ducked.

'Threw my bag at him too, that'll teach the bastard to climb through my window.' Then she laughed. 'Rape, rape.' she said, 'shut up and let him get on with it...threw my bag at the bastard na take that ya hua.'

'I was only trying to get my car keys...honest. I'm sorry dear,' he said to mum.

'Dear my arse,' Eli said, 'Get inside.' He said to me and Sammy.

We left Dick under the tree. I heard the cop siren because I know the different ones so I stopped and waited at our gate. Mum waited with Ellen. I could see Ellen doing a hula. She sung, 'Do you love me, do you love me, darling, darling. Rape rape let him get on with it bastard.' The lights on the car flashed and made Ellens front lawn look like the flickery end of the films we watch at school. I tried to see Vailimas father but it wasn't him that time, he must have been out catching crooks in Otahuhu.

'Well, well, well.' I heard one policeman say. They went to help Dick into the car, but they stepped away and Dick had to help himself. The lights stopped flashing and one more time today, the police took Dick to their place. But this time there was no one to clap because it was too late in the night for jacking.

I slept with mum for three more nights after that one. Then I had to sleep in my own bed. Dick was back on his side. I think Mum loves him too. She used to love James and we had lots of fun. Now she loves Dick and we just have lots of beers.

And fighting.



## Home

### By Samson Powhiri Taurima.

My friend Thomas Leiluas sister goes to the university in the city. She will be a Lawyer one day. Thomas's family live at number eighteen. There's seven other kids in his family and his Uncle and Aunty live in their garage with their five kids. Their nanny lives with them too. Her name is Nanny Fela'atio. She smiles all the time and gives Thomas two dollars for lunch every day. We share my lunch and Thomas buys us lollies at the tuck shop. Me and Thomas are in the same class. He is my very best friend. We're both going to be doctors when we grow up. One day after school, Thomas's mum said if I can go for a ride with them to the City to pick his sister Rosina up. I wanted to go and see the school where I would learn to be a Doctor when I grow up, so I said hang on and I ran home.

'Can I go for a ride with the Leilua's into the City to pick Rosina up please Mum?'

'Who's all going?'

'All of them and me.'

'All of them?'

'Yeah, they're waiting for me. There's heaps of room.'

'Okay. Hey Sammy take this.' So I took the box of raisins she held out to me and said nah nemmine to the yoghurt and spoon. I wanted to say I'm not a baby any more and call her mother like the kids on TV but she might have made me stay home. She wanted me to kiss her. But I'm getting a bit too old for that so I just said thanks, bye and she brushed the top of my head with her hand and I ran out the door.

There was heaps of room because the Leilua's have a van; they're Islanders. We only have a car. Me and Thomas sat in the front with his dad Mr Leilua and we shared the raisins. The radio played Islander music and some beads wrapped around the rear vision mirror swayed and danced to the tune that played as we bumped along the motorway to the City. I've been to the City before. It's ages away.

'My mum works there.' said Thomas.

'Where?'

‘There look at the bink patts, in that bink building. That’s Benrose. We got to go pick her up after we get Rosina.’

We waited in the tree lined street that stretched out for miles in front of us and miles behind. We waited and then the street lights went on. Mr Leilua said me and Thomas could hop out. The tall dark ugly buildings loomed over us and became the sky but I couldn’t see the stars. I thought I saw them but when I squinted my eyes and looked properly, they were only the lights that flickered in the gigantic university class rooms up there in the sky. There was a dog lying beside the rubbish bin that was hooked onto the street light pole. The dog looked like Ellen-over-the-roads one. So I went over to pat it. When I touched it, creamy plump maggots crawled out of a hole in its puku, and some of them wriggled towards me. I backed away and Thomas took his jandal off and slapped them and squashed them in to the concrete footpath. They left a mess on the path that looked like Jordans after drinking milk vomit.

‘Look Samuela,’ he said, ‘The dog’s guts is still alive.’ And when I looked the skin over the puku rippled and rolled and looked like the little waves you make when you drop a stone in the water. Sour tasting raisins rushed into my mouth but I swallowed them down because I didn’t want Thomas to think I was a poofter.

‘Hey Sammy, let’s go to the tunnel aye?’

But I said no. I wanted to stay close to the van. I didn’t want to be there anymore I wanted to go home. A bus came towards us. I saw 275 and I wanted to jump on that bus and go home but I had no money. The bus stopped beside us but I didn’t see any one I knew on it. I waved anyway but the people didn’t wave back. I wanted to hop in the pushchair bit at the side of the bus. But I didn’t.

The boys at school hop in that bit. They get in when the driver shuts the door and they roll out when the bus stops so the driver can’t see them and yell at them not to do it again. Maurice Te Pania got hurt and had to go to hospital one time. He’d rolled out while the bus was still moving and he smacked into the kerb and broke his wrist and some of his face. We wrote letters to him while he was in hospital but he didn’t write back. But when he came back to school he brought lollies for all of us at the tuck shop. One time Maurice got in trouble because he told lies about the headmaster.

‘Why did you tell lies about the headmaster?’ I said to him that time and Maurice never said nothing. All the parents had to go to school for a meeting. But I don’t know what happened about that because mum never told me she just said I had to tell her if anyone does anything to me that I don’t want them to. And I said like what? And she said anything like touch me or say bad words to me. Then Maurice stopped coming to our school. I liked our headmaster he was kind to all the boys at school. He patted me on the back and shoulders when I did well, ‘Good boy my dear.’ he used to say to me and he’d give me a Moro or a Pinky bar and say if I keep up the good work there’s more rewards to come my way. So I tried hard to always be good.

Nearly at the end of school last year, he chose some of us form ones to go on a special camp at Wenderholme Park but mum said I couldn’t go. I had to stay home and help her mind Jordan and Gabby. After camp some more boys told lies about the Headmaster but I don’t know what happened to those boys because it was school holidays. And this year, we have Mr Grey for our headmaster.

As we drove down our street, I stretched my neck so I could see our house. Not yet, not yet, not yet. There it is. And there it was.

Home.

I said no thank you to Mr and Mrs Leilua.

‘Don’t have to drop me off I can walk home thanks.’

Walking backwards I said bye to Thomas Leilua see-you-in-the-morning. I waved I turned then I ran up our street. My breath came out as spurts of mist and I tried to make smoke rings as I ran. We only have one street light in our street because Eli boots the power box at the bottom of the poles and the lights don’t go after that. But we all know where we live anyway. It’s only a small street. Not like the long snaky ones in town that begin faraway and end around a corner. And the stars up in the sky where we live are real. The lounge light shone in a half circle on the lawn and made that bit look like the plastic grass in the sports shop window where we bought Eli’s punching bag and boxing gloves from. Around the outside there was shadow and then there was dark. I took my

shoes off at the door and burst inside. The warm wrapped around me and made my nose run.

Home sweet home.

‘Fuck you gave me a fright you hua.’ Said Eli.

Mum sat on the couch. She knitted. Gabby lay beside her. Jordan spun pot-lids in his corner, ‘Roun, roun, roun.’ Rosie drew pictures in her book.

I sat at the part of the table that was left set for me and I ate my dinner. I looked across at my mother and my brothers and sister. Mum looked up and smiled at me. I heard a loud banging in my hot ears that I’m sure was in time with my heart beat. I wanted to stop eating and go and hug them one by one and tell each one I loved them like the Leiluas do to each other and so do the people on TV. But I knew if I did Eli would tell me to fuck off you poofter, Rosie would say yarrrk, and Gabby would wriggle out of the hug. Mum would hug me back and Jordan would pat, pat my back and say, ‘Larlu, larlu.’ That’s his, love you in Autistic talk. Never mind then. So I just carried on eating until I was finished.

## **Whakaponu**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

Desire is a craving that can make a fool of you if you let it. Desire made a fool of me when the northern raiders from up North came here. I saw a woman. She was beautiful and she carried a musket gun that she’d got off one of the Pakeha soldiers. I desired her and I wanted that gun. But alas, she belonged to the paramount chief of the northerners. She was his property and so was that gun.

I no longer desired my many wives who by this time had dwindled down to one in number and had ballooned out to much in size. So I told the beautiful woman with the gun, I desire you and your gun, and I wanted her to touch the desire in my underpants but I wasn’t wearing any because we hadn’t learnt to make them yet. Touch it, touch it I said to her but she just slapped my face in front of everyone. Then she told her husband and he slapped my face in front of everyone. He could have knocked my block off if he really

wanted to or shot me with that gun, but he read to me from a book that was given to him by some missionaries who were in a position to.

He could have taken my land by right of conquest. We two could have come to some form of agreement which I would probably have not intended to stick to, and broken before sundown anyway, but there were too many people watching and as I found out later the woman I'd declared my desire to had heaps of land up north anyway, and that made her more desirable to me. And as my desire grew, the others in the village, my whanau the cheeky things, laughed at me for being a fool, they said. 'Horny fool.' They said.

So the Chief didn't want my land. He just wanted to keep the woman for his own desire. And when they went home about three years later they took their gun with them and all the desirable children they'd made too. When the only wife that I had left found out what I had done from the other women in the village, she slapped my face but not in front of every one because she waited until we were alone. So for her doing that to me I forced my desire on her.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

Up the paddle without my waka. Sectioned in ten commandments in my Awa.  
A five day plan to cover my arse. For you to assess my presenting farce.  
BATOMII, trisomy, misogyny, colour free and flavour. Enhanced in timely minding. My mannerisms. And these my mental health acts to you my narrative contracts. Protect me, partner me and allow me to participate. In my care, least restrictive. My care least intrusive. My recovery, your discovery. Your penal rates: my patient rights.

I will not covet my neighbours wife. Nor will I covet his ox  
Your rising inflection matches my erection. That stands corrected while godsdog barks a little prayer for me. You tick the box.

‘O’ is for odd the originals in the eleven.

The axe is one. To chop the pock marked pork fat thighs of the bitch arsed nurses, Who  
sigh and huff when they can’t bend over to tie their own shoe laces  
So they take mine off me.

Take out Star Bucks, Robert Harris name drops. Decaf limited. Edition in my back  
pocket. Olfactory torment, gustatory advent. I need that fix. FUCK IT. FUCK YOU.  
Tactile act out. Challenging blow out. Recalcitrant belligerence. Durexed duress.  
Up to LSA.

That’s the low stimulus area and I’m in seclusion. Eighteen people later and here I am.  
The big tough bastards are breathing heavy, heavies breathing out of breath conditioned.  
They’re itching to get their hands on me. It would be the only work they’ve done all  
week. For twenty-five bucks an hour. Fat, black, stinking breathed bastards. And tonight  
they’ll tell their wives about the mad little fuck that they had to restrain. Fucked brain.  
Mad in the membrane me. Of course only three people can put their hands on me at  
anyone time. Delilah said that’s the law and Delilah knows the law because she comes  
from Runnymede near Taihape. Fifteen big bastards waiting, waiting. Itching to get their  
hands on me and you know what? I only wanted a coffee that wasn’t decaf. So now the  
paperwork must be done in triplicate and I have been placed on ten minute observations.

Delilah said that they have to get extra staff in for the rest of the duty now, so I may as  
well make it worth their while and play up. Delilah tells me to take all my clothes off and  
say out loud that I’m going to hang myself with my Denim Jacket. So I take all my  
clothes off except my underpants. ‘I’m going to hang myself with my denim jacket.’ I say  
very loudly but I’ve forgotten that they took my denim jacket off me in 1999. But I’m  
placed on five minute observations because I’m wearing underpants and I might wrap  
them around my neck and hang myself from the seclusion room shower rose attachment.  
And they take my clothes away. Delilah thinks it’s funny the bitch and she’s laughing like  
crazy at me the mad bitch. ‘I’ll kill you.’ I say to her out loud. And now I’m in real  
trouble. I feel the needle go in. That’s all.

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**By Narrator**

*Watching*

*For ever to keep them safe*

*My children on earth*

This night's moon looks like the one the cow jumped over. It almost looks as though it smiles as it lies against the blue-black sky, and if it had arms the hands would be clasped behind the head; and if it had legs one would be crossed over the bent knee of the other and the foot would tap in time to the music the world below plays and dances to beneath the starry ceiling. Cosmos.

There must be music and dancing and laughter. There must be some enjoyment to be had in this place. Even here there must be some of that. So it comes in bottles and cans and tinnies and pills and needles and straws and pipes that need cleaning. It comes. It comes. And then it goes. And the tarry residue is scraped from the filthied up pipes bowl, and the knives go on the fire and the residue burns and the heavenly smoke is snorted through the flattened noses. Heaven on earth towards an untimely dearth of a bad season's growth. Marijuana cosmos.

But the cat with the fiddle plays music for the people, and they come out of their crappy cramped houses and dance in the streets, and hug and kiss and dance some more. Such fun, such fun the little dog had and Trish ran off with some ones husband. And some one ran off with her.

Feast today, for tommorrow we may cry, let now be a time of happiness and friendship eat hearty drink merry be friends and be warmed. Come and sit around the circle of fire and sing. Let us enjoy this time we have now. We will have other days but today, let us today enjoy today.

# **Alisons Taxi**

## **By Narrator**

It is a Sunday morning. A taxi crawls along a street, any slower and it may as well stop but it doesn't, it almost limps and it's agonizing to watch as it creeps at a leisurely queens pace; or a sight-seeing pace. But there is no crowd of flag waving waiting-for-the queen people, there are no bouquet holding little girls and boys, there is no long line of front row curtsy practised, 'Marm' perfected ladies in their flash clothes. And the sights are not tourist attractive or friendly.

This is Stewart Road, Mangere East. If there were flags, they would be blue and black with a clenched fist emblazoned on them, if there were boys and girls they would be holding tinnies of dak, there are no ladies who curtsy and wear flash clothes because there are no ladies. And the women wear flashy or trashy. And op-shopping is not a student statement of living on limited means for the next three years it's where you shop. The choice you have is between St Vincent de Paul and the Salvation Army and you remain staunch to whichever meets your need, which is dictated by the price you paid for fish heads today or mutton flaps or chicken frames.

Your wardrobe is a cupboard in the bedroom that takes up the space you could fit a small bed in if that cupboard wasn't there but that doesn't matter because it can sleep two little ones on a sponge mattress but don't shut the door. You wear clothes because that is what people do but the clothes don't have seasons, they are bits of cloth that you put on your body, on a hot day you take bits off and on a cold day you put more bits on.

The unfamiliar but recognised blue and yellow shield logo on the taxi door shouts at all who may look. Co-op, Auckland. The City taxi for City people. It's a late model Ford. It has the Mag wheels that desire makes worth stealing. Worth taking the risk of getting caught and doing P.D. for. What the fuck. Two people who know how, ten minutes max, ready market, three hundy easy. A bit of a good time, say...two hours max for 6 months P.D. max. Better still, teach the young because they can't get done and they'd do it for a spot just get them hooked first give them their first blow a little taste then train them. The street lights are still on. The street light. The other nineteen don't work. The taxi stops at number sixteen. A woman leaps out, looks about her and bellows, 'I'm home.' The house lights go on one by one. Alison, elegant and majestic, the Love Boat Queen is home from the city and she is worthy of featuring in any of this country's tourist



brochures. Her hair is the golden sand colour of some Coromandel beaches or the beach at Kaiteriteri, her eyes are the lacklustre turquoise of the mountain fed Clyde River she stands as regal as any Totara or lofty maunga, and she is stacked like the South Islands West Coast Punakaiki. She has the potency of the Southern Alps she is the mighty Waikato. She is Alison. Ship doll. She is home. And she is loaded. The street will party for the next three days. The taxi speeds out of the street. And the people come out to play.

Home. Bourbon. Ice. Nice. From the kitchen window Alison looks out to the backyard. Solly from next door to Ellens has the hangi wood burning. She'd rung him earlier from town. 'Put the Billy on Solly.' was all she'd said. He was good that way. He listened. And in the night too. He listened. For all the working a girl did. It felt good to be held. And a kiss on the lips is worth far more than what's paid in Yen or U.S. dollars. She waves. He raises his bottle of Waikato at her. That's where he's from. He shows off about it. The only Iwi with a beer named after us. This is her home.

She looks around her kitchen. Her dining room. Her home. Décor: no decorum. Furniture from Farmers booked up and now paid for, this is what she got laid for, a comfy sofa in white whipped leather. And the dining room suite from the recycle centre boutique. There are little treasures from all over the world; dolls from China and Holland, dolls from Norway and Sweden clocks from Italy and Germany and model cars from France and Japan. They clash with each other over every available surface in Alison's lounge. She touches her little treasures now and thinks about all those men.

'What's that?' Maia had said.

'What does it look like?'

'A silver ball.'

'Pick it up.'

'Gee it's heavy, what country did this come from Allie?'

Maia rolled the ball around in her hand, she rolled it against her face and sniffed it. She tossed it from hand to hand. 'Where did it come from?'

'It fell out.'

'Fell out of where? You mean fell off the back of a sailors truck and you stole it? Allie you're not a thief.'

'You know that time when I came back from work and Howard lay on the grass verge out-side Trishes?'

‘Yeah?’

‘ Well I called out for help and none of youse came.’

‘ Yeah?’

‘And yeah I squatted beside him and slapped his face, you know I first aided, ‘What happened?’ him.’

‘Yeah, yeah and?’

‘He groaned and I tried to put him in the recovery position and man he’s heavy.’

‘Yeah and this?’ Maia held up the silverball.

‘Well when I tried to move him over on his side, he rolled back so I stood up and gave a big heave and clunk, this ball fell out and landed on the concrete, you know clunk.’ Clunk again. Maia sprinted to the bathroom and Alison heard her scrub her hands. She used the nail brush. ‘Gross Allie, gross, gross, gross.’

‘Hey Maia,’ Alison called out, ‘Better scrub ya face too Honey.’

A most profitable four days. Quentin doesn’t know about the work Alison does. He’s been told that the money was left by his invented now dead father. School fees are paid up to the end of the year. He has everything he needs. He has the kind of life Alison dreamed about. Could put a little bit more away Allie girl. Plenty time for that. Plenty more left in this Doll for when the boat comes in. Better start putting some more away though. You never know what’s around the corner.

‘Hey. Where you Allie?’

‘In here. Doors open.’

Howard and Tom are from next door.

‘Right we need food we need booze. Drugs I have. Let’s go. Leave the door open. The girls will be over while we’re away.’

Three months before Quentin was born, she’d wandered all over the cemeteries in Auckland. People used to look at her, her stomach and then her left hand. Appearing to be satisfied they seemed to throw whatever bits of sadness they had left over; after visiting Aunty or Uncle, or, Grand-ma or grand-pa, or, mum or his mum, or, whoever else that had departed this world and was in need of flowers and sympathy. One lady gave her a rose, a nod, and a woeful teary eyed countenance. It was a pink rose. A bud. The nod was brief. The countenance embraced. Then the lady gave her a; my hand on your hand

squeeze that was tender enough to pull a tear out of Alison's left eye. The one that always watered first in the presence of roses.

That was the day she found Scottie at the Pah Road Cemetery. Frank Scott (Scottie). Much loved husband of Alison. R.I.P. Sad. Sad. No grandparents. Dead. No photos. Destroyed in the house fire. Alison visited that cemetery every day for a month. The first week. Nothing. The second week. Nothing. The third week on a Sunday afternoon. A white carnation sat in the vase that someone had cleaned. Every third Sunday a fresh flower was placed by someone who cared. After Alison had established the pattern there was no need to go at all. She just knew when to keep away. My God Scottie I hope our baby isn't black or Chinese.

The school's annual fund raising social held in June was always a special event for the street. Maia had told Alison that the social was what everyone spoke about four weeks before it and one day after it. And Alison knew that at the end of the street where the young ones lived, there were at least ten children who had birthdays in March. 'I'm one of the baby sitters for the night Allie, but you go. Meet everyone. You can go and correct all the misinformation Ellen's been giving out about you.' That night every one from the street seemed to be there. Even though Alison had only been staying with Maia for a month, she already knew some of the people.

She'd just stood up and was about to flush the toilet when she heard the outer door crash open. One woman said. 'Hey, I got something to tell you about that woman staying at Maia's.'

Alison sat down again.

'Hang on mate, hang on I got to go.' Alison placed the two voices. She'd seen them out there in the hall. Solos. The women weren't drunk yet but they were pissed enough to piss with the door open and carry on talking to one another. The women weren't drunk yet but they were pissed enough not to care that the next cubicle was occupied. And they carried on talking.

'Stay there my mate, stay there you talk to me we got the same thing mate mine might be prettier than yours though.' One said.

Giggles. The rising inflection of a yanked down zip. The loud whisper of denim on fleshy skin. The indecent gush of splashing urine, a loud burp; then the whistling tinkle of a steady stream. The sighing emptying bladder.

‘That’s not what Dick said Chicky mate.’

‘You been there too my mate, light us a smoke please mate.’

‘Course I have. Who hasn’t? Now what’s this something you got to tell?’

‘She’s got a kid. She hides him away. He’s a retard.’

‘Yeah? You mean that fat thing? God can you imagine it? I wonder who was desperate enough to go there?’

‘Fuck knows. Another retard probably.’

Giggles. Bilabial inhalation of smoke, bilabial plosived air. In. Out.

‘Hey mate, I’ve heard of fuck face, but I haven’t heard of fuck nose. Hurry up mate I’m busting.’

‘Give me a minute. I’ll just wipe your face first.’

Giggles. The rattle of cardboard rolling on plastic. Rip.

‘Smart bitch. Gee you smart alright my mate that’s why we mates. Should a brung our drinks in. My turn now. You know what I was just thinking my mate?’

‘Nah.’

‘I was just thinking about how they did it. She’s a lot of woman and I was just thinking how old fuck nose could find it.’

‘Yeah aye my mate. It’s not as though he just lifted up any old flap, shoved it in and went hell for leathers. Cause she got a kid out of it. Poor little bastard.’

‘Imagine aye. Man on top. Two humps of those elephant hips and then, hau, man overboard.’

‘You know what Ellen told me?’

‘What mate?’

‘Ellen told me she’s a ship mole.’

‘Nah.’

‘True.’

‘You mean they pay her?’

‘Yeah. Ellen reckons she makes heaps.’

‘Well you never can tell aye? There sure must be some desperate men out there. You know what mate that’s where I draw the line. I’d never do that. Not me mate. I could be

down to my last cent but I'd never sell myself. I'd rather go in to Welfare and get a food grant.'

'True mate.'

'Hey speaking of man on top. Freddie's here. He's wearing the leathers I got him when we was a item. And he's in the money now to. Dealing Meth. Drives a red Clubsport. Fuck he still looks good too. My youngest is looking like his father more and more each day.'

'Him and Shadow are hot mate. She's a wild bitch, she'll fucken kill you.'

'Can't be that hot, you know whose bed he was in last night and it wasn't hers. Fuck her. She won't mess with me. I'll waste the bitch.'

'No man can be worth that much and you can't be that desperate Chicky mate.'

'It's not me mate. It's this thing here. Needs a top up every now and again.'

Giggles. The rattle of cardboard rolling on plastic. Rip. A scrunched up wipe. The snap of elastic on fleshed out skin. The thundering flush and sluice of cleansing. The two matey women left after washing their hands. Alison dried her eyes, waited for the silence of alone and left the cubicle. She filled the basin and lathered the soap to calm the hands that squeezed into fists that wanted to smash the bitch faces; she splashed on cold water to cool the hot face and she reapplied her makeup to cover up the angry blotch marks. She collected her tubes and lotions, lipstick and potions; gathered them together and dumped them into her bag. The two bit whore: now ready for war. She slammed the door. Shut.

Alison, elegant and majestic, her hair is a flowing golden waterfall, her eyes are turquoise; they blaze. She is Amazonian. She is Alison.

'Hello, I'm new to the street, I'm Alison would you two ladies like a drink?'

'Hi Allie, you stay with Maia aye? I'm Chicky and my mate here is Mack. Yes please mine is a double Bourbon ice, what you having Mack?'

'Same. I'll have the same. Thanks Allie.'

Alison walked away to the bar.

'Since when do you drink doubles Chicky?'

'When that one pays for it Mack, that's when.'

Alison returned with the drinks for Chicky and Mack and an orange juice for herself.

‘Sit with us if you want.’ Said Mack.

‘Thanks.’ Said Alison

‘Not drinking?’ said Chicky.

‘Not tonight’ said Alison.

‘Is your husband here?’

‘No. Is yours?’

‘I’m, we’re, we ain’t married to no one.’

‘No partners? Boy-friends?’

‘I nearly got married.’ said Mack, ‘But he took off after the second kid.’

‘How many do you have?’

‘Five.’

‘And you Chicky?’

‘Are you a fucken demon or something?’

‘No. Drink up. I’ll buy another round. Same again?’

‘Yeah why not.’ said Chicky. One gulp emptied her glass.

Alison walked away to the bar.

‘You don’t have to be rude my mate. She’s quite nice.’

‘She ain’t nothink but a whore, a cheap two bit whore.’

Alison returned with the drinks for Chicky and Mack and an orange juice for herself.

Another woman was beside her.

‘Chicky, Mack, this is a friend I just met. This is Shadow.’

Maybe it was the rolled double Bourbons or the Tequila Chicky changed to, or the dark she sneaked out to have every now and then. Maybe it was the full moon. Maybe it was the combo of the drugs and the booze. What ever it was that made Chicky shoot her mouth off, Alison can’t be sure. But it could have been Alison’s mention of the red Clubsport she saw parked up Chicky’s driveway last night. Who can say what it was that turned the insubstantial shadow into a rock-solid battering ram? And who cares? What resulted was a smashed up Chicky face and a fucked up Mack head. Alison didn’t even have to lift her manicured pinky. The two bit whore had won this war. Of that, she had no doubts.

When Quentin was three years old, Alison took him to the cemetery. It was a Saturday.  
'This is your daddy sweetie. Say hello to daddy.'  
'Hi daddy.'

While Alison and the boys are at the shops, the girls, Maia and Ellen prepare the food; Ellen has made one of her famous puddings for the hangi, Maia has made some raw fish and stuffing, Sinua will bring over some Samoan food, May-Ling will bring chop suey and Marietta will bring a leg of ham. Her husband Michael drives a meat truck and sometimes he delivers short to the shops because things have a way of falling off the truck. He's a thief. Ellen calls him Rob-in-the-hood because everyone shares in his criminal activity but he insists that it is only criminal if he gets caught and there's no chance of that. He's too clever. They share everything when they have something to share and there are times when they share in nothing too. Today is a time for sharing. Everything.

It is Sunday afternoon. There is laughter and happy, there is music and harmony, and there is food and plenty. This merrymaking will go through to Tuesday so until then the people will rejoice in this excess. There are too many days of scarcity and scratching, too many times of without and making do. There's too much sadness and not enough money; too much of nothing for far too many people. So if they get drunk today, tomorrow they will sober up; and if they get stoned they'll be home again by Tuesday. Nothing lasts forever and the bruising is only painful in the remembering. So what if it rains, they'll get wet. And dance in the rain. And each time Alison takes the train into town to work the ships in the harbour, the people trust she'll be back again and their Sundays worship is through aroha and friendship. And for the next three days they will forget about hardship because it's Sunday today.

Monday comes when Sunday goes, then Tuesday takes its space. One second after midnight, Wednesday comes to Alison's place. The ships come in to harbour and then go out again, the sailors all leave satisfied, when Alison takes the train.

# Home

## By Rose Koromiko Taurima

I like seeing the colours the rainbow makes against the sitting room wall where Jordan has stacked his toys. Rainbows have magic powers. We live at one end of a rainbow. Once, me and Debbie sat beneath the rainbow at her house so we could soak up some of the magic. But we just got very wet when it rained and we had to go inside to change our clothes. I had to stay in bed for a week because I had soaked up too much magic powers.

Once upon a long time ago there lived a Little Red hen. She had so many babies she did not know what to do. But they didn't live in a shoe they lived in a house. Then one day she sold a cow and the man gave her some corn seeds. Her family said for her to make some rotten corn but there weren't enough seeds for that and the lady said to her whanau, if I make rotten corn there'll only be enough for one meal. I am going to plant them so I can have heaps of corn for every one.

At the other end of the rainbow there's a fun park. I went there once with Nanny Jo and her kids. They had popcorn and hotdogs. I had dried fruit to eat. They had a go on all the good rides. I went round and round on the merry go round and vomited on the horses head so I had to sit with Nanny Jo under the big umbrella. I didn't have the fun I thought I would have. I like our end better.

'Who will help me plant this corn?' said the Little Red Hen but none of the whanau would help and they all went to the pub instead. So Eli and Sammie and Rosie and Gabby planted the corn while Jordan sat in the trolley with his sheepskin over his head. When the whanau came back from the pub they had a party at Ellen-over-the-roads and the Little Red hen felt sorry for their kids so she gave them a kai.

One day Eli told me that a rainbow warrior was in town. I wanted to go and see him but mum said she didn't like driving in town so we didn't go. I watched the news on TV and I saw the rainbow warrior's time machine that he travelled in. It didn't look like the Tardis, it looked like a submarine and I think the rainbow warrior must have been out for the day making the world a better place, or saving the world from the poisonous gas, because I didn't see him on TV.



When the garden got all weedy the lady said, 'Who will help me weed this garden?' and nobody said yes. So her children weeded the garden. Sammy and Eli stood by the burning-paper-drum and lit dried grass stalks and smoked them like real smokes. Eli showed Sammy how to do Chinese drawbacks, so they stood by the burning rubbish and sucked smoke back into their mouths after they'd blown it out and then they blew it out of their noses, but they wouldn't give me a turn.

And one of the whanau men got angry because they pulled his weed plants out and then he said, where are they? And the little Red hen said that she gave them to Solley, next-to-Ellens. So they ran to his house where he had built a big bonfire in his back yard. The whanau gave Solley a bashing. He must have had a good go back because the whanau walked funny when they left his house. Howard nearly got hit because the Datsun from number eight had no breaks and the driver wasn't watching where he was going. 'Druggy mungro.' Howard said to the driver. And he showed him his broken finger nail but the driver carried on and swung into number eight.

When Alison came home from town on Sunday I asked her if she saw the rainbow warrior because she works at the Port of Auckland. She told me she had and she squashed me real tight against her big tits and I couldn't breathe, 'The bastards.' She said, 'The bloody bastards.' Afterwards mum told me that some people had blown up the rainbow warrior while he slept in his bed. So I felt very sad and I wondered, now whose going to make the world a better place and I cried. Then I told Debbie and she cried too. We sat underneath their umbrella tree and I used my powers to contact the rainbow warrior. But he didn't come because he was dead. So we made some leis out of lolly wrappers and hung them up in the tree. The next day they were gone so he must have come to get them and that made us very happy.

It took ages for the corn to be ready and the people waiting got hungry so they had to go to Social Welfare for a food grant. And they had a big party at Ellen's house. And they said to the little red hen, 'Come over and feed the kids,' but the Little Red hen said no because she'd already cooked some butterfish for her kids dinner. Mum gets some Hapuka bones and puts them in a dish with butter and puts them in the oven. Then she

makes fried bread and some potatoes. I like butterfish. But I'm not allowed to eat that anymore. So I have a lamb chop instead. One day the corn was ready to be picked.

And the people who killed the rainbow warrior were put in the jail in the Garden of Eden. They were called Adam and Eve just like in the Bible and they came from a land faraway and over the sea. They stayed in the Garden of Eden for a long time and then their King and Queen said they had to go home and have a hero parade down Queen Street like the All blacks did when they won the World Cup for Rugby.

Eli and Sammy picked all the corn and the Little Red hen put heaps in the freezer and saved some for dinner the next night. She told Eli and Sammy to leave some to dry so there would be some seeds for next year. So Eli and Sammy cleaned up the garden patch and smoked grass stalks while they burnt the dry corn leaves. And the whanau said, where's all the corn? And the Little Red hen gave them some.

And the people who killed the rainbow warrior were given lots of gold by their King and Queen for doing good work and making the world a better place.

After that there was corn every year and one year there was so much that the Little Red hen made some rotten corn for the whanau and everybody lived happily ever after. Well some did because some died from smoking too much weeds.

The end.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

For a time, lovehugs, peace and harmony flowed as surely as the waters of the Manukau. A pakeha man said to my grandparents' whanau who lived in the south area named Waikato, hey you guys come up here and protect the new people; the settlers here, because we fear the northern raiders will come down and home invade us. Best that you protect us and die doing so rather than us fight and die doing so, we've come too far and we've acquired too much to lose it all now, and my wife is in delicate health as are all the women and children here. Now if you do that we will put our stamp on the map we have made to affirm ownership of all your lands. So this Paramount chief came up with eighty of his strongest and he settled on some land that the pakeha gave him. As time went by,

all the people lived long and prospered. Both the noble savage and the in-delicate-health ones lived side by side. And all was well in the land of plenty. The natives gifted land to the church people for their missionary positions in the land and to build schools for the natives to achieve chosen one status and cleanliness in the eyes of the One God who rules us all. The natives traded in fair trade with whoever they could; they set up businesses, they were allowed to park their canoes and other boats they'd learnt how to build, in the other harbour of the town. All lived well and prospered. But some of the all wanted more and when they got that, they wanted all.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

This transient lifestyle is tiresome. Delilah wants to settle down. But she's the one who wants to roam from town to town to town.

The King unseated off the bamboo grove. With the stinking mattress where years of madness. Tried to hide. And had Cogentin and Coke parties.

The dumb arsed p.a. in villa eight baked peanut brownies once a week to impress the Charge she rooted. On Tuesdays. And in the time it took. For her to turn her back. To check the oven. I hashed those cookies

And the nurses lost all that afternoon.

Me too.

Delilah said Aaaaadaaaammmmm, they're having a root in the treatment room.' So I climbed the tree outside the treatment room to look through the window. As they kissed I missed my footing and fell and then I kissed the concrete. Emergency, panic, alarm and frantic and Delilah stood there and laughed.

'I'll kill you, you bitch. And I felt the needle go in.

Someone died there a lot who cried there  
eyes out lights out.

*Pharmaceutical company a million dollar concern, can I please have one of your pens  
and some of those strawberries dipped in chocolate?*

Chlorpromazine called Largactil then. Adverse side affected

Irreversible. And Georgie thirty years later. Looks like the handicapped kids from the  
village at the village. That he pulled handicapped faces at. And epicanthic folded his  
eyes. And ugly staid when the winds of change. Blue.

Some kids died there. A lot who tried their. Best care. Rest-home care.

Years later.

Unmarked graves. The tiny bodies killed by maternal anti-bodies. Or a virus that crossed  
mummy's placenta. Thalidomide in the mornings, the sickness victims  
Foetal Etoh Syndromed. FBI bugged. And too heavily drugged. Most failed to thrive.  
Few survived. The normalisation conquest for the best.

They said.

Some babies died there

No parents to pass their

Passing on

Anon.

Me and Delilah wanted children. We couldn't though. Delilahs too mad to have kids.  
Me and Delilah hitch hiked but no one picked us up. Delilah the crazy bitch did stupid  
things to put the drivers off. 'I can get us a ride.' She said and she pulled up her jersey so  
people could see her tits and she made them wobble so I said, 'Cover yourself up and I  
struggled with her to pull her jersey down and while we struggled people tooted out to us  
so I had to wave at them to make them stop and pick us up. Then she took her underpants  
off and lifted her dress up. She bent over and pointed her bum towards the road and I  
think people saw her bum because they tooted at her. I was trying to pull her dress down  
and I shouted at her to, 'Cover yourself up,' and I struggled with her to pull her dress  
down and while we struggled people tooted out to us so I had to wave at them to make  
them stop and pick us up. But no one stopped.

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**By narrator**

*Strange ones*

*have come to this land they harm*

*the ones I care for*

Coconuts and Curries, Nappy heads and Boongas, Ghandus and ching-a-lings, Gooks, Dallies and Hories.

The curry in the dairy, the ching-chong at the takeaways; the Nappy-head at the garage and the Gandu who drives a taxi. The coconut bus driver and the hory on the dole, the gook who owns the bakery and the ching-a-ling green grocer.

The road that leads to the refugee centre has been done up to accomadate the big flash buses that transport people in. It runs parallel to Stewart road. Although the fences are high, the bus windows are way higher, so one of the first things the refugees must see if they look, are the backyards of the even numbered houses. They will see; the car wrecks at number two, the knotted curtains in the windows at number six and the dirty curtains in the smashed windows at number eight, crates of empty beer bottles stacked roof high at number ten. And the almost clean washing that's on everyones lines. If the day is warm, they may see some of Alison as she sunbathes in her back yard on the bath blanket she got from a Swedish sailor. If the day is very warm they will see more of Alison. If it's hot, they'll see all of her. And there's a lot to see. Because she's got a lot to see. On hot days, the bus crawls past.

There used to be a warehouse between the railway tracks and the done up road, now it's a football feild sized hunk of broken up concrete slabs where the blackberry bushes, thistles, and deadly night shade struggle for light, food and space; just enough to exist, breathe: and then die. In the corner closest to the refugee centre the workmen have stacked up some concrete slabs one on top of the other to form a higglety-pigglety concretey mountain of inorganic waste.

The local kids get wasted there. They call it stoned-henge. Off their faces and out of their trees they watch the busloads of people go by and enter the centre, they wave and some of the people wave back at them. Three months later, off their faces and out of their trees they watch the flash cars come out of the centre with one or two people of the very same bus people in them, the kids wave, but none wave back at them.

Hemi lost his wallet there and Damien lost his watch; Selina lost her virginity and Dougy made up his mind, to come out from the closet and declared to all his friends, I'm gay with abandoned prospects. Our association ends, Hemi said. I don't want no gaybo hangin' round my bed. He said.

Coconuts and Curries, Nappy heads and Boongas, Gandus and ching-a-lings, Gooks, Dallies and Hories.

The curry in the dairy the ching-chong at the takeaways; the Nappy-head at the garage and the Gandu who drives a taxi. The coconut bus driver and the hory on the dole, the gook who owns the bakery and the ching-a-ling green grocer.

## **Jordan Te Awanui**

### **By Eli Tumanako**

My brother Jordan is one big doongy unit. He's a lot by himself. He's got this thing about his arse. He plays with it all the time. He walks around with one hand down the back of his shorts shoved into his undies. Sometimes I see him have a real good dig. That's when I tell him you have to go and wash your hand you dirty hua and wash the other one too while you're at it and use the bloody soap. And water. You have to tell him things like that. I tap his forehead twice like what papa used to do to me when he said I needed to use my brains. Tap, tap. Papa told me that his father used to boot his arse and then tell him to use his brains and Papa said that his arse was a long way from his head so he couldn't understand why his arse got booted. Papa said it never worked.

One time while we ate dinner Mum said for me to look at Jordan. He had his left arm on the table and it made a half circle around his plate like he was guarding it. He ate real fast

and while he ate his kai he watched everyone and if someone made a sudden move he looked towards the movement and blinked real fast. Then his circle got smaller and he pulled the plate closer to him. Sometimes when I'm wagging school, I go and have lunch with Jordan. I'm 15. I hate school. One lunchtime, I took him some fruit I'd pinched from the Count-Down. Jordan was late coming out so I went to his classroom. That was easy to find. It had a sign on the door. Special needs unit it said because Jordan is special and needy. He sat on a mat on the floor. His arms were folded. His legs were crossed. He rocked backwards and forwards and made his mmmm sound. The teacher sat at her desk. She said can I help you? And I said no I come to have lunch with Jordan.

Comon matey I said to him and he stood up and stuck his hand down the back of his shorts. The teacher said he wasn't to have anything to eat until he learns to take his hand out of his chuff. Take. Your. Hand. Out. Of. Your. Chuff. Even I didn't know what a chuff was and I'm not doongy. It's arse lady I said to that teacher. You might call yours a chuff but in our house it's called an arse. Then the teacher stood up and Jordan put his hands in front of his face and I could see him blink real fast. At least it got his hand out of his chuff. I'm taking my brother home and my mother will come see you when she can. And he ain't coming back here until she says he can I said. I'll call the headmaster; I'll ring the police she said. You can call the headmaster what you like and you can ring the police. My brother is coming home with me so stick that up your chuff.

When we got outside the room I ripped the special needs sign off the door and stuck it in the bin by the steps. I took him into the boys toilet block and I told him to wash his hands with soap and water. Keep washing, keep washing, keep washing. Stop. Now dry your hands. Dry, dry, dry. Stop. Let's go home matey. 'Hometey.' He echoed.

He held my hand because that's what he does. And we walked home together like that. Jordan is seven. He goes to school on Wednesdays. The other days of the week he goes to the crèche at the hospital. Our other little brother Gabriel goes there too. My mother is a nurse and wears a uniform and a badge with her name on it. The Doctors wear civvies and ID cards with their names and photos on them. So everyone can tell the difference. The staff at the crèche calls my mother Maia and they call the Doctors, Doctor. A couple

of weeks ago we all went to a meeting there to discuss a trip to Disneyland. At the meeting, one of the Drs kids was playing with her doll. It had a dirty face. Oh look said her mother Dollys face is dirty. An Indian Dr said to the little girl that she could pretend it was a Maori Dolly. We left that meeting. The boys never went back to that crèche. No one went to Disneyland in the end.

At home Jordans got his own corner in the lounge where he keeps the things he plays with and the things he has broken. Jordans got a sheepy. He used to carry it everywhere he went. It gets dirty so mum has to wash it. He's not allowed to take it to school. The teachers won't let him so On Wednesdays he has a good hug of his sheepy before he plays with his stuff or takes ours apart. When he hasn't got his hand in his shorts and when he's not taking something apart, he spins pot lids and looks sideways at them while they spin. Roun, roun, roun, he says. He laughs at nothing I can see. He laughs like a cartoon bubble. Tee hee hee and ha ha ha ha ha ha. But sometimes he screams. It's a high pitched sound. That's when I tell him to fuck up ya doongy hua. But that never works and no matter how loud I yell at him, he carries on like a doongy and makes handicap faces. And he covers his head with his sheepy. The psychologist said for us to say, look at me look at me and only when he looks straight at us then she said to tell him what we want him to do. That's new to us so we've just started trying it. Look at me, look at me.

'Don't fucken look at me when I talk to you,' Said nanny. 'Who do you think you are to look at me?'

I was eleven. I told nanny that Aunty Tracey told me to put my hand in her pants. Aunty was seventeen. She was one of the grownups. And she said if I don't she'll punch my head. So I did what she said. She said for me to do the rude stuff that Michael at school told me about once. Then she said for me to lie down on her and put my willy inside her thing. It took me a while to find it because I didn't want to arks in case she punched my head. Then Aunty stopped talking. She closed her eyes and moved us both. It felt good. And I thought, 'I'm gonna tell Michael.' But it made me think that Papa would tap, tap my head. After a while she pushed me off her and when I stood up she slapped my face and called me meat-head son of meat-head.

She was mean. Another time she told me to do something real rude, even worse than usual and I said no and she said if I didn't she'd tell Papa on me for wagging last year and



smoking at the bus stop with Ricky Turner on Monday. So I did what she wanted and when I did I could smell the crayfish legs papa lets me eat when Albert goes diving and brings some over. And I tasted kina. I wanted to vomit because I hate kina. I held my breath and my heart beat in my ears until they burned. Then she told me to fuck off and do the lunch dishes.

Nanny punched my head when I stopped looking at her. That's for telling liars she said and she told me to wait when Papa gets home. Papa said send him back to his mother. That was while he buckled his belt back up. That was after he made sure I couldn't sit down for a week. I'll make sure you don't sit down for a fucken week he said. I've got a scar beside my left eye where the stone in Nannys ring dug into the flesh there. It's shaped like a kite. I think it looks like a diamond. I'm sure I have scars on my arse from Papas belt but I can't see it to look for them. And that's why I live here. We call it Mad-Angry. Aunty Tracy is married now. I wonder if my mother is adopted because she's not like them.

I got in trouble for ripping the special needs sign off the door at Jordan's school. And for doing that, I go to a special needs school too now. It's called Te Kurapuna. This is a chance for me and the other kids here, to redeem ourselves. Next stop. The Mount. With a few steps in between. We learn to side step.

I've got four good mates. I've got four mates. The other people I know are just people I know. There's Muzz-kutu, Bob, Billy and Emma. We're all at Te Kurapuna. We're a gang. We call us the Roughies and we're our own special gang. We've got gang names but we only call each other those ones when we're with each other. Hanging out and stuff. And we don't wear parches like the grown up gangs do. We just wear our normal clothes.

Bob is called Coconut because he looks like one but he's not; Billy is Orange because he's got orange hair; Emma is Tuff because she is. She's my only Pakeha mate and she got me the job at the butchers. Muzz-kutu is Ruff, because one time when were spying on Trish getting changed in the bathroom with the window open, and Muzz-kutu was the look out because we forgot he doesn't talk, I thought the dogs bark I heard was real. It was a dog. I said it was a dog. It was Muzz-kutu. He doesn't answer to Ruff though. He doesn't answer to hardly anything.

Me? I'm Diamond because of my scar. And because in science one day the teacher told us that diamonds were perfect crystals. So that's me a perfect crystal. A rough diamond mum said.

Coconut is Ellen-over-the-roads mokopuna. Ellen calls him a bastard. But you're my bastard aye Bobby she says to him when she's drunk. So she says it to him all the time. Orange is a half caste. But I can't see the halves. He looks whole to me. He said that we have to redeem ourselves. He sings; manipulate yourselves from Maori povertys, no one but yourselves can frees your minds up. So I tap,tap his head and I say to him, you can't sing and you don't know the words but he just keeps on with his waiatarang in his flat boring voice...steals stuffs from the ones who chains us we gots to fill up the fridge. Tap, tap.

My mate Muzz- kutu has got scars around the bit of his neck that I saw once. They look like some one with a real small mouth has given him hickeys. There are seven of them. You can only see them when he's not wearing his bandana. That's why I've only seen them once. He doesn't talk with his mouth. He uses his eyes and his body moves. When he comes over he plays catches with Jordan. They communicate with each other but they don't use words. I know what Jordans body moves mean and I know what Muzz-kutus body moves mean but I don't know what they say to each other that's funny enough to make them laugh. And laugh. Jordan doesn't play with others for that long. He picks up his ball and bounces off somewhere else usually to his corner.

At Te Kurapuna they teach us to speak some Maori because all of us there are. Except Emma. And half of Orange. I'm good at Maori because Papa's already learned me some. The teacher is the best in the world. She's cool. Sometimes I think she's like Mum. She told us this story about how the world was made but I don't know if I can believe that stuff about these kids pushing their parents apart so they could stand up and breathe and see the light and all that.

She told us a story about this girl called Hine-Ti-tama whose father had sex with her and made some kids. Well I can believe that because at my old school Miriama Te Mana had to leave for that reason. Nanny said to Papa that Mr Te Mana should have been shot. But

he ended up in Rolleston prison instead and then Nanny said that Miriama ended up a drunken druggy slut and had to go into Hillmorton mad house, because when she had the baby she hid it in the rubbish bin. She'd killed it first. The girl, not Miriama, the other one, that Hine-Ti-Tama changed her name to Hine-nui-te-po, the goddess of death, and she went to the under world to live because she was so ashamed of herself. And that's where she lives for ever because she can't die. And she waits to get us to take us to the under world. We're her children. All of us.

Well I reckon Ellen's the Goddess of death and she came to Mad-angry. Here, is the underworld; we got drugs and booze and sluts, and Ellen is so ugly she looks like she should be dead. She smells like Papa's mate who died and they couldn't bury him until his daughter came from overseas. Fuck he stunk. Sounds like a pretty out of it story though.

I told Sammy that Ellen was the Goddess of death and she was gonna get him, but he said that he'd read a story like that and if you climbed between her legs and up through her mick and came out of her mouth she would die and us humans would live forever. So I knocked him a good one for talking ugly and then I gave him another two to make sure he hurt. Then I spewed my ring.

I like going to Te Kurapuna we have some mean feeds especially when we get visitors. We have a lot of important people visit us because were the only school like this in Auckland. Once a pakeha lady from the department of education came and she arksed us how we were going. No one said anything ugly because we had nothing ugly to say. She arksed how the Maori lessons were going and we all said okay. She said it was her who pushed for the rayo lessons and then we all said chur thank you and I clapped real hard and loud.

When it was time for munch we moved the desks together and made one big table and the caterers brought this mean as feed in. While they spread it all out on the table we went outside for a smoke cause we were allowed to. Coconut and Orange said what they were gonna eat first. Emma said she's on a diet. I said I was gonna get me some of that Pavlova stuff. I like that, so does Jordan. Once while we were doing shopping at Three

Guys he ate a whole one and mum said she had to pay for it. The manager didn't know what she was talking about because no one had seen him doing it. He gets away with things like that because he's doongy and people ignore him. Hell, I wish I could do that but I don't want to be doongy.

When we came back inside the visitor lady slipped off the table she was sitting on so the caterers could put some more kai out. And then the munch was ready. When our teacher arksed who was gonna do karakia no one offered to do it. I looked at the floor so the teacher couldn't make, 'You do it eyes at me.'

'Come on,' said the visitor lady, we don't eat until someone says a karrakeyar, surely some one can say it. Oh look,' she said. 'There it is on the chart over there. I'll say it then.' And she did. We all said amine when she finished.

'This won't go down well with the board when I tell them I had to say the karrakeyar. You're all going to have to do better than this. I'm not impressed at all. Come on then help yourselves.' But no one ate that munch. None of us gave a reason when she arksed us why we weren't eating, we just sat at the back of the room and watched the lady eat one sandwich. Then she left.

The teacher didn't say anything to us, but after the caterers had taken the kai away she gave us one mean telling off.

'Why didn't one of you, say something?'

'How come you never?' I said.

'Yeah.' said Emma.

'Because it's not about me. You had every right to speak up. I've told you and told you, if you don't say anything you bottle it up and bottle it up and then bang, you blow up and you're in the shit.'

We straightened up the desks and tables and cleaned the room up. And then me and Emma went to buy the fish and chips the teacher shouted us.

We nearly got closed down because that visitor we got wrote a bad report about us and said that we never learned nothing, but we wrote letters to that lady's boss about why we didn't eat that munch. The school stayed open and we even got some more chairs so that visitors wouldn't have to sit on the tables where our kai goes. The lady never came back.

One time mum said for me to tell Muzz-kutu to have dinner with us because he was too skinny. I talk to him normal. So I said to him hey bro you want to stay and have dinner with us? And he shook his head and pointed to his mouth then he pointed down the road to his house where he lived with his Aunty and Uncle. They lived at number fifteen. Mum went down to see the Aunty one day and said if Muzz-kutu can stay for dinner one night and she said he could stay over if he wanted. When she came home she said the Aunty said it was okay. And when she told Muzz-kutu, he grinned at her and showed her his yellow broken teeth. Then he rubbed his head against Mums shoulder because that's where he came up to on her and made a sound like Jordan does when he plays with his sheepy. Mmmmm mmmm.

We had Oxtail stew.

Peter my boss at the butchers gives me free meat sometimes. He gives each of us workers a bag of meat. We have turns and about once a month I take meat home with my pay. The first time mum marched me down the shop to pay for it and said to Peter that we aren't a charity and she could feed her kids and we didn't need hand outs. But Peter told her to get out of his shop and stop being a proud Maori. I seen him on T.V. once. He fund raises so the local kids can have boots to play league in. Every one that comes into the shop laughs and Jokes with him. One day the Prime Minister came in and told him that his meat was over priced. Is the boss in? He said to me because I was on counter. Your meat is way over priced he said to Peter. Just trying to make a living Dave, Peter said. And he gave him a cheerio. Charge that man double Peter said. And they laughed together.

I like Oxtail stew because I can suck the bones and eat the chewy stuff at the ends. I think about Papa. Nanny put him on a diet because she said he was too fat and was going to get diabetes if he didn't be careful. On Saturdays when she went to work me and papa used to go to his mates shop and get these huge bones. On our way home papa would stop at the TAB and put some bets on. Then we'd stop at the wholesales and get some beer. When we got home Papa put the meat on. We listened to the races on the radio, we'd have a feed of boiled bones and cabbage and Papa drank his beers.

Then nanny would come home and papa would eat the salad tea she made for him. One day she came home early because one of the machines at the laundry broke down and couldn't be fixed till Monday. I had just finished putting the bones in the rubbish when she pulled up in the driveway. Papa turned the radio off. And lucky, he had drunk all his beers. But I hadn't wrapped the rubbish properly and Tahi our cat had pulled the rubbish bag over and was eating the bones.

'What the bloody hell are these Dinosaur bones doing in here?' said nanny. And after that she took the wallet to work with her. But Papa had a stash of horse money so we just carried on our Saturdays as usual. After that time, I was careful to double wrap the bones and we fed Tahi extra just in case.

Jordan eats with a knife and fork. He's the only one who does. They taught him how to at school. The teacher said they teach all the special kids table manners so that others won't be put off by the way they eat. Jordan even eats Pizza with a knife and fork now. I use a knife. Sammy uses a fork. Rosie uses a spoon and a fork. And Gabby uses a spoon or mum feeds him. We just plonk the knives and forks and spoons in a heap on the table and everyone chooses their own. When Muzz-kutu came over he sat between me and Jordan. I thought he was waiting for karakia because he didn't eat straight away. 'Just have a feed, bro.' I said to him. He nodded. He held a bone down with one hand. Then he bent his head over the bone and ripped hunks of meat off it with his teeth. When he had finished what was on his plate, mum arksed him if he wanted some more. He nodded. When he finished the food, he bent his head over his bowl and licked it. Clean.

One Wednesday me and Emma wagged. We walked around the shops and Emma bought us some munch and we ate that at the park. At half past twelve Emma said, 'Let's go to my house.'

'What for?' I arksed her.

'My dad has half a day and him and my mother make love on Wednesdays. Have you ever watched people make love?'

'Nah but I've watched my nanny make bread.'

So we went to Emma's up Earlescourt Road. She said we would have to be quiet. We climbed up the tree in their back yard. I could see into her parents bedroom. Emma said

they should be in there soon and she giggled and said, 'You'll get a good laugh.' Then they came into their bedroom.

I tasted kina.

'What the fuck you make me watch that for Emma you ugly bitch?'

'Shhh they'll hear us.'

I pushed Emma out of the tree for being an ugly bitch. She landed in the long grass. She was laughing. I left the stupid bitch laughing in that long grass and I walked home.

We carried on being mates but we never climbed that tree again. And one night Emma said, 'Wanna come over for tea.' And it was okay with Mum when I arksed her so I said, 'Yes.'

Emma's parents had a glass of red wine while they listened to a fulla called Leonard Cohen. Emmas mother arksed me if I wanted a wine too so I said, 'Yes please.' I skulled mines back. Fuck it was ugly. Then it was time for tea and I'm glad Emmas mother didn't arks me if I wanted another wine because I would have had to say yes to be polite. They brought their wines to the table and drank it while they ate their kai. There was no bread on the table. Just butter. And I didn't want to be rude and arks for bread so I ate my kai without it. Emma's father talked about his work and Emma's mother talked about hers and they both talked to me and Emma about school. Emma's dad said that he bet my mother was chuffed with my maths test result. I wanted to hit him for talking about my mother like that. They talked and talked and took little drinks of their wines. I just wanted them to be quiet. They only stopped talking when they chewed their kai.

After kai I said thank you and me and Emma did the dishes. But we didn't do them. We rinsed the dishes and Emma put them in the dishwasher.

'Is that it?' I said.

'Yeah,' said Emma.

'Well, what do we do now?'

'Anything you want to do. Nothing if you like.'

One day Emma came to school and she looked like she'd been crying. She told me her nanna had died. I was aroha for her. So I said, 'Nemmine.'

They caught a plane to Christchurch at six o'clock the next morning. 'Ka aroha.' Mum said when I told her. She took me to the airport because she felt aroha. And we bought a big bunch of tangi flowers for them to take. Emma's father said we needn't have bothered doing that. You needn't have bothered he said. And he said no thank you to the flowers. After we left the airport we took the flowers to the pakeha urupa and shared the flowers out between, Alison-at-number-sixteens dead husband and Jordan and Gabby's father because he's dead too.

Emma rung up at nine o'clock that night to say they were back.

'Aye?'

'Yeah.'

'How come?'

'What do you mean how come?'

'Well, I thought you'd be away for longer'

'What for?'

'Well your nanny died.'

'Yeah and now she's buried.'

'Did you see all your whanau?'

'Yeah. Dad said there were cousins there who he hadn't seen for years. He said they only came to see what they could get their hands on. He has to go back in four weeks time for the reading of the Will.'

'What's that?'

'That's when we find out how much we get.'

'From who?'

'From nanna. We find out what she left and who she left it to. Dad just wants the money. And she left some land. Dad said he wouldn't mind that too. He's not interested in the house.'

'Hell, when someone in our whanau dies we stay at the pa for at least three days.'

'Bloody hell Eli, what do you guys do for three days?'



*The people come. They come. They gather in their sorrow. As they have done since the beginning. Karanga, whaikorero, whanaungatanga. Whenua, whenua. Aroha. Awhi. Manaaki, Taurima. Tautoko.*

*The protocols must be adhered to. Traditions must be upheld.*

*The people must be fed. Kai must be gathered. Kaimoana from the sea, eels from the creeks. Animals must be slaughtered. Vegies from the gardens.*

*Kai must be prepared. Dishes must be done by hands. Many, many hands. The hangi must be organised.*

*Aunties and nannies must be kissed. Uncles must ruffle your hair and say, 'Gee you're a big fulla, I remember when you was a baby, gotta missus yet?'*

*The hole must be dug. The protocols must be adhered to. Traditions must be upheld.*

*Always the learning, the learning. Listen, look, learn and do. So that when I'm gone you will know and carry on.*

*'Anything we want to do. Nothing if we like.'*

Emma told us about a party at Traynor Street three blocks away. Mum arksed questions about the people who lived there and even cruised past the house to check it out. She said I could go. Muzz-kutu, Bob, Billy and Emma were allowed to stay over at our house. Mum dropped us off at the party and said to ring when we were ready to come home. The people there were the kids of Emma's parent's friends. The party was in a garage that was decorated with balloons and silver paper. Music played in the back ground. I thought it was Guns 'n' Roses but it was turned down. Real low. I thought it was a little kids party but it was a girl called Elisa's sixteenth. The kids were all Pakeha. I counted six girls and ten boys. They were about the same age as us. The girls wore make-up and whispered behind their hands and the boys had pimples and loud voices.

Me, Bob, Billy and Emma had all put in for some beers. Muzz didn't have any money so I put in for him. So we took a box of twenty four Waikatos. There was a big bowl of red drink with strawberries, cut up lemons, and white marshmallows floating around in it. And those kids were drinking that stuff out of glass cups. We had been there for about two hours. I saw that some of the girls' eye make-up had run down their faces and left

black smears. And they spoke loud. They shouted. The boys' pimples stood out further against their blushed greasy skin and it was them who whispered behind their hands now.

Bob and Billy were talking to some of the loud made up girls and me, Muzz-kutu and Emma sat back drinking our beers. Muzz-kutu had drunk six beers. He looked drunk. So I tap, tapped his head and told him no more and I gave him a coke. GNR was still spinning but much louder now. One of the boys came over and arksed Emma to dance. Emma said, 'No thank-you.'

Then he said, 'Comon, just one dance.'

Emma said, 'No.' Then he pulled Emmas hand. 'Fuck off.' She said. I heard a dog growl. Low. Menacing. Warning. Muzz-kutu crouched tensed up and muscled. His eyes blazed golden sparks. A trail of spittle was at one corner of his mouth. He looked lethal. The boy dropped Emma's hand. 'Well if that's how you feel.' He passed Muzz-kutu and said, 'Down Boy.' They stood in their corner and we sat in ours. Bob and Billy danced with the girls they'd been talking to earlier. Muzz-kutu pointed his head at his can. I pointed with my head to a table that had been set up with some cans of coke and other fizzies. I was looking but I didn't see. I was watching and I. Did. Not. See. The boy who Emma had refused to dance with passed Muzz-kutu a can. As Muzz-kutu walked away the boy patted his shoulders and gave him a smile. That is what I saw. But I should have looked properly. The music got louder. Muzz-kutu sprang up from his seat and swayed to the music. Eyes closed he crouched and moved around like the abo I saw on television once. He looked like an animal. The others started clapping and cheering and Muzz-kutu moved faster and faster. He tossed his head like a horse and he coiled his body like a snake. He bobbed his head like a bird and he strutted like a rooster. Then he howled like a dog. And his new friend threw a sausage at him and Muzz-kutu bent his head down and snatched the sausage between his teeth and in one gulp it was gone.

The clapping and the cheering had been replaced by laughter but I'm not sure when. I heard it though. Muzz-kutu got up off the floor and smiled at his audience. They'd already turned their backs on him. I touched his shoulder. He turned. I tapped his forehead. Twice. I saw a dog. He sprinted out of the shed. We followed. He moved fast and we lost him. We lost him and we got lost.

We were lost in the unfamiliar well lit up streets of where Emma's parent's friends lived and each time we followed a dog we got more lost. We crossed a road where the houses hid behind big trees but I knew they were there because their lights twinkled and peeped out at me from the hanging branches. We went up a few more streets and then the lights ran out. But the full moon rose over the trees and it showed us where we were. Then I knew we were safe because I could see the only street light that still went at the other end of Hennessy. It was there where it always was. We were back in the jungle. I let out the breath I'd held in through my mouth and I took a deep one back in through my nose; boiled fish and taro, brisket and cabbage, bacon bones and puha; all mixed up in a great big pot, and the rotting stink homely smell of the jungle filled me. We walked home and as we walked we called out to Muzz-Kutu. But we only answered ourselves. 'Muzz-Kutu, Kutu, Kutu, Kutu, Muzz-Kutu, Kutu, Kutu, Kutu, Muzz-Kutu, Kutu, Kutu, Kutu.' One of the cats, Wiremu, from number seven up our street ran out in front of us and I yelled at him to get back home. But he took off the other way.

I thought I saw Muzz-Kutu. But it was only a shadow. Then I kept on seeing shadows. They darted between the power poles and jumped out from the hedges. They disappeared before we got to them. Even though it was still early the streets were empty. No cars. No kids. No people. And I hadn't realised before how long Hennessy was. It seemed like we walked for ages. And in the quiet and the empty of the night we sounded like a lot more people than the four of us because we had our going out shoes on. The ones that go clip, clop, and clip clop when you walk. And the empty night threw our footsteps back at us. I thought I heard a V8 rumble when we got to the end of Hennessey. But when I turned to look there was nothing.

Then we were at my house. I woke Mum up to tell her we were home. She said good and went back to sleep. I dragged mattresses into the sitting room for us. I looked out of the window, where are you, you hua? Come home now. 'Hey you fullas there's a weirdo out there, he's looking in here.' But fuck it was only me so I closed the curtain, and my scary looking other self disappeared. I left the outside light on so Muzz-Kutu wouldn't trip up the steps when he came home. I wanted to wait for him. I tried to keep my eyes open.

The next day the pigs came over. They said Muzz-kutu was dead. There was a pain in my chest just about where my heart beat is. I felt a whole heap of salty spit come into my mouth and I swallowed and swallowed but it kept coming back again so I swallowed some more and I held my breathe to make it stop. And then my eyes stung and watered up and that wouldn't go away either. So I just let that fucken salty tasting water piss out.

One time I stood on something that felt like a thousand pricks from the prickly grass up Reagan Park. I had to sit down. I looked under my foot but all I saw was a thread of red cotton across the soft part of my skin so I wiped the line of blood away. When I stood up on that foot I could feel the thing as it dug into the flesh beneath my skin. I limped home and showed nanny. She burnt the biggest needle she had in her sewing kete. She dug into my skin and squeezed and squeezed. Then she said, 'Gotcha you bastard.' The piece of glass was small and I felt stupid for making a big deal about it. I was glad it was out though. I could walk properly again.

Muzz-kutu dead. I wanted to get rid of the stabbing aching as soon as I could. Mum said it would take time. I wanted it to be squeezed out of me like that piece of glass was. They took him back up North. We couldn't go. Jordan had to go to hospital for tests. He had to stay in for three days. I couldn't go up north. Mum said not without her.

Muzz-kutu's whanau came over to see us when they got back from his tangi.

*Aroha. Awhi. Manaaki, Taurima. Tautoko.*

*The protocols must be adhered to. Traditions must be upheld.*

*The hole must be dug. The protocols must be adhered to. Traditions must be upheld.*

*Always the learning, the learning. Listen, look, learn and do. So that when I'm gone you will know and carry on.*

His whanau told us about him. When he was ten years old, his father chained him up like a dog. At first it was a game. Then Muzz-kutus father said to him that his mother was a slut and you are not my son you are a dog so I will keep you chained up and if you fuck me off I will tie you up in the kennel with Butch. His father was amped when he put the

studded dog collar around Muzz-kutus neck and he put it on back to front. Waste a good leather he said so he left it that way and the studs dug into Muzz-kutus neck.

His hands were tied behind his back. So he learnt how to eat as dogs do. His father threw food at him at mealtimes and just watched as he struggled to eat his food. Sometimes he laughed they said, but most times he hurled abuse and everything else within his reach and once they saw him piss on Muzz-kutu. One day they forgot he was chained to the front door because they were boozed and amped up. And they all went to bed. He pissed and shit where he stood. His father thrashed him. A stick. A leather belt. Then his boot. Then he chained him to the spike under the pear tree. When it rained Muzz-kutu slept under his fathers V8. They kept him chained for a whole year. Both parents are in Gaol. The rest of the children are in welfare.

We all had tea and some beers. And laughed some more which was good because I would've cried. Then the whanau went back to their home and I hoped that it would burn down with all of them in it. Not one of them had helped my mate to live. But they all had a say to remember him by.

Me, Emma, Bob and Billy were sitting around one day talking about the dead baby the pigs found in the house with the beer bottle garden edging. Emma said the poor little thing. Then we talked about Muzz-kutu. I try not to think about him in front of the others, I keep him to myself. But some one, usually Emma will talk about him. His Aunty told us, the night they came over, that his real name was Phillip Mathew. His father called him Muzz-kutu because he got kutus when he was a dog.

Emma said she didn't want any children when she grew up.

'Me too.' I said.

Bob said that people like Muzz-kutus parents and the dead babies parents shouldn't be allowed to keep their children if that's the way they treat them.

'They can just roots them up some more.' Billy said.

I think about that before I tap, tap his head. Man he's dumb.

My brother Jordan is one doongy unit. When I look at him. I think about Muzz-kutu and I think, maybe he'd still be here if they left his name as Phillip Mathew. They didn't have to change his name. All they had to do was get rid of the kutus.

## **Home**

### **By Alison**

I grew up surrounded by Pine trees. The Pine tree industry dominated the whole town. There were even two pubs named for the industry. Uncle Pat worked in one of them so it was hard for me to sneak in with the other painted up thirteen year olds; who looked like painted up thirteen year olds. When I was younger I thought we were the only town in the world where christmas trees grew all year round. I imagined what it would be like if we all got together and decorated those trees. I wanted to go to sleep each night with a million, million sparkling lights shining and shining in my dreams that one day would come true. And that the lights would shine for ever.

Night. The dark. Dark. The night. Six years old I sleep?  
'Is that you mummy? Is that you daddy?'  
Fluffy beard. Santa? Is that you Santa? It's Christmas. 'Did you get my Dear Santa, letter? Did you bring my ballerina dress? I wrote down my size. Is it pink?' Fluffy ears.  
The Easter Bunny. It's Easter. Did you bring me chocolate eggs? 'Grand-dad, grand-dad, is that you?'  
Night-time night. Dark-time night. Bed-time. Night. Heavy. Dark. Heavy. Dark. Can't breathe. Grip the curtain. Pull it tight. Hold. Hold. Breathe.  
The forever lights on the Christmas trees went out. And stayed out.

In the days just before spring a veil of pollen laden mist carried by an Easterly, drifted from the forests and swathed the whole town in a foggy pale green cloud.  
In the summer we lived with the threat of fire; and the smoke from the burn offs in the areas that had been cut the previous summer shrouded our town smokey blue. In the winter we walked to school in the cold; so cold that the puddles iced over. And we would try to crack the ice with our worn out shoes; but only ended up with cold wet toes, where the water got in through the holes in our soles. Kinleith was a giant arsehole that blew the

foul stench into the air we tried hard not to breathe. And during the holidays in our part of town, we had nothing much to do so we ended up doing each other.

I grew up and so did the trees. They were chopped down. I was excited when the train pulled in to town. But more excited when it left. I was on it. Headed for the big smoke. And I didn't want to go back. When I was eighteen I did go back. Same house. Same room. Same curtain. And mother. I ripped the curtain down and let the light into my little sisters room. Each time I look into the mirror I see my mothers face look back at me and I want to smash that mirror into a thousand lifetimes of bad luck.  
Liar! Liar! Liar! With each closed fist whack across my face.  
Liar! Liar! Liar! With each sting of the jug cord across my back.  
Say sorry to grand-dad. Say sorry to grand-dad. Say sorry to grand-dad.

When grand-dad died, I sneaked some fire starters under the satin cloth that covered him in the coffin. I pushed them down one by one around his body. I wanted to give Satan a hand to burn the bastard, I wanted him to burn and burn and blow-up all the way to where ever it was that was worse than hell. I nearly got caught.

'What are you doing?' my mother said.

'I'm saying sorry to grand-dad.' I said. I got another box from the shed and did the same again. I pushed them right down to where his pockets should have been but all I felt was concrete. After two days he started to smell.

'Must be the booze coming out.' Aunty Rita said.

'Yes.' Said Aunty Vera, 'I think he drank Meths for the pain.'

'Huh,' said Aunty Rita, 'For the pain me ass, he was a bloody alcoholic and I heard...'  
I would have rammed another box down but the wood was wet and dad needed the fire starters to start the fire for the hangi.

I pass through Tokoroa on my way to Wellington and again when I go back to Auckland. I stopped once. Some of the trees I grew up with were still standing. The one in the corner of the top field where we used to smoke at lunch times is huge. Kaye carved her name on that one but I couldn't see it. The pashing tree by Tonys fish shop is old it should have been cut down years ago. That's the one Hori Rewita hid behind one day so his mother couldn't find him to give him a hiding and that's where Lance Stephens used

to feel the girls up as they walked past. And the tree up Colsens Hill is still there too. Colsens Hill. Where every one ended up on a Friday night, first of all in the borrowed family car and later in the bombs we brought and learnt to fix.

The lights in my dreams still shine and over the years they've dimmed at various times. But they still shine. And when I, Alison take the train out of the jungle all the way into the big lights to work, it's only for a short time. Up there I can walk down Queen street and pretend to be one of them. I can go into Smith and Caugheys on a Saturday morning and purchase a bottle of L'Air Du Temps for Maia and have it gift wrapped. And I don't charge it. I pay cash money. And when I, Alison come home on a taxi, all my friends are here waiting for me because this this is where I live. And these people are my family now. I, Alison grew up in Tokoroa. Hard. And just like the pine trees I grew up with I give the fingers to the world.

This is my home now.

275-. Hard.

That's us.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

The natives, by this time called Maoris, desired to keep hold of their land; the chosen ones desired to have it. Further down south some of the natives had formed a confederacy to block further land sales. That pakeha man feared war because he was a war fearing man in the name of God. The people of the confederacy by this time had come to realise that all hope implicit in the pact was gone and some said it wasn't there in the first place. The Paramount chief was by this time Te Kinginui of the confederacy. So when the pakeha said we want, need, greed for your land, the Maoris said, 'Kao.' And the Kinginui called for my grandparents to come down to help the whanau because they feared a war was about to be. That pakeha man said to my grandparents, 'I caution you Maoris, if you go down there with your whanau and do battle with us, you will lose your land by default of rebellion against the Queen of this here land. I'm giving you fair warning.



Evil is about to invade the land, an evil that will see many dead, stay here and live and keep your lands or go and join your ungratefully disloyal family members and die. The choice is yours.’ That was just a ploy though. Blood is blood and it’s thicker than water. Even if it is dark. Family is family. My grandfather said to my grandmother, ‘Hey, Hei what do you reckon then?’  
And she said, ‘Yeah okay, let’s go and awhi the whanau.’

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

No bamboo grove in Selwyns street. Hit by a bus there at Henrys feet.  
The nurses blamed the baby one. Your fault, your fault they cried, they lied  
And media ate it up. The bamboo curtain for piracy.  
Imports recruited Maori nurse booted out to the wop-wops where the Maori bland. The men in black. Save us from the alien invasive action armed  
The African nation represent. Osama hideaways omnipotent  
Partnershiped Waitangi why cry? The bastards and their bastardy lies as far as their greed can reach me.

Mulidiscipline teeming mainstreaming. Screaming out for staff. To cow papa the farnow.  
Let us show you how to manage. You. Three pronged p plan wise. I’m on the burns p guys. Rainbows end and Disneyland mother goosed and Drs duped. And God of nations at thy feet. Sits little joe nutty from some nutty iwi to rangis why? Why?  
Getting stoned on a stepping stone. I’m sorry I took your land from you  
But this is how I compensate you. And my reflection reflexively to compete and climb over. Advance onward and upward Christian soldier along that greatest of Southern roads. Made strong by the bones of those who died there. Cried there.  
Cry there still. And the sun never sets. Where the Angry sky. And I RIP your crosses down.

Nurse eat nurse and bitch and moan. To celebrate at Christmas time at the curry place up Victoria Street. Or at someone’s home. To eat pork chop the fatted cunts. Serving up dirt at afternoon handover about some poor jerk

Who used to be a colleague in 1999. And not one cared and not one dared to advocate.  
Client care. I might miss out my snaky tongue. My advocacy too professional to care.  
Too expert to dare the isolation and ostracised there. To have morning tea on my own. To  
be a tall poppy. And shout you a beer on Saturday mate. A pound of flesh to go around. I  
want my share. What about me?

Shut up, shut up you fucked up fucks. Then lock up in seclusion. Legitimise then  
penalise deconstructed role confusion. May as well lobotomise and one flew over the  
kuku nest. And that is my conclusion. Inclusion: My gate kept registration  
is five hundred and six reimbursable dollars therapied occupation at a bastion pointed.  
Orakei

Location, location. Location. Eviction troopers front lined black. To attend the  
multidisciplined clinical for joe mad. I'm not imported but far too important  
To stick within the parameters. Of my job description. Don't fence me in  
And land, lots of land. Under starry flags below Jacks union in the corner.  
Hey doc a new prescription. The order of the day for Joe. Planned daily walks along the  
beery named river. The nurse won't listen, won't listen to me  
She talks to joe instead. Around the lake the roto roa at least once a day  
Twice if you've got time. The nurse said no and so did joe. So I take it to supervision.  
Many die there  
A lot will try their  
Best to cut my throat  
Or stab me in the back.

**275-**

**By narrator**

*Tama*

*To seek vengeance for the harm*

*For you I will die*

When he was seven years old, he laid on the sand while his father fished, and he arksed himself, 'Why am I here?'

'Get off your arse and stop dreaming,' his father said. 'Cut up this bait and when you've done that you can clean up that fish and take it home to your mother.'

When he was fifteen the Marist brother at College said, 'You'll amount to nothing.'

When he was eighteen he'd passed school certificate English after only two attempts. A qualification. At last. Finally. He left school.

Now he could go places.

When he turned twenty, on the night of his twentieth birthday party, he was coerced into having sex with an older woman. She was twenty years and two months old. She'd taken advantage of him. She'd made him do it. He didn't want to. She'd forced him.

By the time he was twenty four he'd perfected the art of blowing his nose. And for a pa boy who grew up to wear out the holes in his shorts that his scabby black arse hung out of and only a sleeve or his hand to wipe his nose on: that was an achievement to be proud of. He made the transition from those holey arsed shorts that let the cold in, to purchasing clothes from Barkers in Newmarket as well as enough undies to change every third day and still have two spare ones in the drawer for emergencies. He was a man on the move. He was going places. He had to find a Maori girl, to keep the bloodlines pure and true, but if that was too hard to find a Pakeha would have to do.

By the time he was thirty he was a bus driver.

By the time he was thirty-four he was dead.

Going places.

## **James**

### **By Narrator**

'How did he die Maia?' Allie said.

'Have you ever let a whole packet of Double Happys off all at once? They jump around all over the place and bang and bang and twist and jerk, then when you think they've all

gone off and you have a look, one goes bang in your face. And that one makes you scream with fright.'

'Yeah but you laugh anyway. But that's not what I meant.'

'Yeah I know what you meant. Cancer and by the time they found it, it was too late to do anything about it. But you have to know this because I have to tell at least some one. Any way about the fire-works, you approach the burnt out banged up mess that smells like Rotorua you approach it carefully because there might be another one just smouldering away there waiting for you to come closer to it and. Bang. In your face. Then there's a long silence and you know there's no more to go off. Nothing left.'

'But you still poke it with a stick aye. Are you okay? I mean he's only been dead for four weeks you might be in shock or something. Shouldn't you be tearful and weepy?'

'I'm alright. I've done my crying. I got too many babies to waste tears on a dead man.'

'I think I get what you mean about dying. I haven't been with any one but I've seen the war movies. You hear the rat-tat-tat-tat of the machine gun and you see the peoples shirts explode with these little holes all over them then the persons body shudders and the arms and legs flail about and it looks like some fucked up ballet dance. And the screaming, screaming that goes on for ever. And the body jumps about and jerks and you know it's dead before it hits the ground. But when it hits the ground it's still twitching and the camera zooms in on a twitching finger until. Nothing.'

'That's exactly how it was. You know Allie, I've been with old people just before they've died. Sometimes I've sat with them all night. Most of the time they just slip away. In one place I worked at one night, one of the nurses said they've got their ticket for the angel bus and they're just waiting to board it.'

'That's nice aye.'

'Yeah and the kids, the dying ones, they just close their eyes. They don't grieve for themselves or make a fuss. Their parents selfishly try to hold them back and scream and rant and rave and yell out don't go and curse God, they make it difficult for the kids. The young die with dignity, they teach their parents how to die and as for the elderly, they accept death as part of living.'

'There's nothing wrong with making a fuss is there?'

'No. But why bother. We all die in the end. Why create fuss?'

‘Hey, that reminds me of when I had Quentin.’

‘Yeah?’

‘Yeah, there I was all fifteen stone of me. Screaming my arse off threatening to kill the nurses and sue the doctors if they didn’t get this baby out of me fast and then out popped this two pound baby. I roomed in with a young girl, tiny thing she was. Seems that she was in the delivery room next to me, she’d heard all the noise I made. What a laugh.’

‘How come?’

‘Her baby was nine pounds, nearly ten. I didn’t hear a thing. Not one thing. Shame aye?’

‘No Allie we’re all different that’s all. So, you asked how he died and I told you. That’s how he died. Dramatically. Like a drama queen. And the audience were well pleased with the performance. They made me want to throw up all over them.’

‘Audience?’

‘Yeah his mother and sister. The more fire-works and haka-boogy ballet jerks there was, the more they howled. Should a heard those beads going click-clack, click-clack.’

‘Beads?’

‘Worry beads. Decadent beads. The Mary ones.’

‘What were you doing all this time?’

‘What could I do? What could any one do? I’m glad he died you know.’

‘I understand. He’s not suffering any more aye, he’s gone to a better place. He’s gone to be with God.’

‘Get real Allie. Stuff his pain and suffering. I just said I’m glad he died. I’m glad for me and my kids that he’s dead. Otherwise I would have had to watch him suffer for ages it was taking up too much time. My time.’

‘I thought you loved him?’

‘I did. But I couldn’t compete.’

‘Who with?’

‘Him. He loved himself. And his family, they love themselves too. They’re the perfect family and the whole world owes them. They worship the ground they walk on. Did I tell you they said I killed him?’

‘The doctor wants to talk to both of us they don’t know what was causing all the fuss. He said to let the nurse know when you get here and she’ll page him.’

‘She saw me when I came in, she didn’t say anything to me.’ Maia said.

‘I don’t think they know you’re my partner. Probly cause I’m an educated man and all that, and they’ve all met mum and Moana and you know how Pakehified they can get: the staff must think I’m with a Pakeha. After all Maia, you only work part time in emergency, these ones are specialists. You don’t want to put yourself with them you know, they been doing this for a long time.’

‘I’ll go and tell the specialists I’m here then.’

‘Thanks. And I’m glad you didn’t bring Jordan.’

‘Why?’

‘Like I said. I’m a well educated man; they’d never believe he was mine. Yours yes, but not mine.’

The oxygen tubing attached to the nasal prongs was entangled with the walkman headphone wires. The cord that held the family taonga around James’ neck was tangled up with those.

‘Take this off me.’

‘What, the headphones?’

‘No, this greenstone. It’s too heavy. I can’t breathe.’

‘I can’t disentangle it.’

‘Then cut it.’

‘You sure?’

‘Just cut it, I’ll explain to mum and Moana. They said it belonged to my Nanny. They said it would help me to get well. But it’s choking me. Cut it.’

Maia cut the muka and wrapped it around the hei pounamu and placed it in the top drawer of the bed-side cabinet.

‘That’s better. Now, how are the kids? How’s my Gabby?’

‘He’s okay. Jordan has an appointment with the specialist on Monday. I hope you’re out by then. We can all go.’

‘I told you before, anything to do with Jordan you have to manage by yourself. Get some one from your family to go with you, after all it’s from your side we don’t have that disease in our family.’

It was the supervisor at crèche who first noticed something was no quite right about Jordan. ‘Can I see you for a minute please Maia?’ She said.

‘He sits in that corner over there and his favourite object seems to be a spinning top.’

‘He does that at home too, with the pot lids. It’s his normal behaviour.’

‘He doesn’t maintain eye contact when I speak to him.’

‘That’s our culture.’

‘He should be talking.’

‘Maybe he’s got nothing to say.’

‘He screams for no apparent reason.’

‘He does that at home too, usually when one of the others pisses him off.’

‘Maia, do you know what Autism is?’

‘Does any one?’

‘You must have done something wrong when you were hapu.’ Said James’ mother.

‘After all look at that girl of yours, that Rosie she’s not quite right is she? We haven’t got that sort of thing in our family, were Catholics. It must be from your side.’

‘My mother said we have to take Jordan’s name off him,’ said James. ‘Te Awanui belongs to my grandfather and she wants to keep the name in case one of my brothers has children. It looks like we should have given him a name from your side, things being as they are now. It would be more suitable you know since he’s got that sickness.’

The whanau joined hands and sung, ‘Till the White Rose Blooms Again,’ while James’ tinana was lowered into papatuanuku. They’d planted a Rose bush. The man at the nursery assured Mikaere that it would have white Roses. They’d all come home; some from the South Island, some from Australia and some from England. Leilani came all the way from Egypt. They brought their aroha with them, they cried.

After the burial, everyone returned to Maia and the childrens home. They sang that song again. It came through the back door and down the hallway to where Maia sat on the bed. She shut the door and heard no more. The babies, Gabby and Jordan slept. The other children, Sammy and Rose were at their Nanny Jo’s house. Maia would get them in the morning. She’d bring them home and then they’d start being a real family.

‘Hell Maia. From what every one says, he was the perfect man. He was going places you know, upward mobility successful pa kid made good and getting better.’

‘He was all that. He was the opposite to Kahu in every way. But he just proved one thing to me.’

‘Yeah?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Well, what?’

‘The both of them had their own ways of treating me like crap. It seemed like I wasn’t good enough for them. And you know what Allie?’

‘What?’

‘I believed them.’

‘Yeah?’

‘Yeah. But I know different now.’

‘What’s that?’

‘I am a good person.’

‘I’ll drink to that.’

‘Me too.’

## **Home**

### **By Ellen**

*Cheers you fellas.*

When people ask me where I come from I always tell them that I came from me mothers arse. I was born a penny-diver by a mud pool and if you ask me the truth of it, I was probably made beside that same bloody mud pool. This is my home now. Right here in this jungle. This is the jungle-hood. Me and my Rui, we been here since 1970. *Cheers*. These homes were built for the American soldiers in the Second World War and after they packed up and left, Housing Corp took the houses over. Sometimes I see the kehua of those American soldiers and let me tell you this, if I’d a been around when they were here in the flesh they wouldn’t have gone home. *Cheers*. What I could a done with one of those fine young men. I’d a given them R&R alright. Pacific Princess me would a shown them a thing or two. *Cheers*. Rui told me I got a real greedy passage. That’s why me and



him was together for the longest. Longest passage see. Fuck I'm clever. *Cheers*. Those other ones were just play things. I ain't going anywhere else but here and If you ask me where I'm going to be buried when my time comes well I'll tell you this, *Cheers*, you can dig me a hole out there in the back yard cause I ain't going anywhere else. This is my home.

Every time some one died back home my father and uncles killed a pig for the hakari. They rolled it around in the fire to soften the skin so the hairs could come off easy. Oh my God that smell stays with you for the rest of your life. For one part of my life, pigs were being killed two or three times a week. I was twelve years old when my mother died. I was the eldest of the ten of us kids. My father married my Aunty one month after my mother went. And a little while later, we had another brother, then another one, then another one, and then a sister. I left home when I was sixteen. I had no idea how I was going to feed the baby my uncle put in me, so I just took ten pounds from my father's wallet and took off to Wellington. And I said, for no one else but me to know, I'm not never going back. Dead or alive. I'm not never going back.

Fifty five years ago I buried my three hour old baby in a urupa behind a mad house in Porirua. I was sad then but now I'm glad for him that he chose not to remain in this world and become one of them. One of them who strut and slut about the place like they own it: one of them who only know to drink, and fight, and bash women and children. They blame the booze for what they do. They blame the Pakeha for the booze they drink. And when you have them up for it in front of a judge, they blame you. It's always every other barsids fault but their own. And what do we do aye what do we women do? We protect them. As mothers, as grandmothers, as wives and girlfriends and lovers we defend them. We hope they will change their ways and we live in that hope and in doing so we make ourselves hopeless dead losses. Well, far as I'm concerned, there's only one judge. And that's the man upstairs. *Cheers*.

That Maia better watch herself too. No sooner did she get rid of one ugly barsid, then another one came along. That one, that James, he deserved to die if you ask me. Good job. Then along comes another one. Dick. By Jesus I said to her, a bit a dangling gristle isn't worth the money you waste on prettying yourself up for. And she's no dummy

neither. Waste of a good woman for the barsids I seen over there. Bloody greedy passage. That's all. *Cheers*.

My Rui was one of the best. The best. But the barsid had to go and die on me. So there you go. You can't even trust the good ones. *Cheers*.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

There were two gunboats in the harbour. The pakeha captain wanted to destroy the Maoris and blow them off the face of the whenua. They are nothing but scum the hoary dogs. They think they own this land. We are by far superior and that's ordained by God. By God. By Gods book or by crook. There was a man who had a gunboat, bomb them, bomb them the gunboat man said, 'I'll make them howl, I'll make them scream, they'll wish that they were dead.'

But instead, he followed orders from higher up to destroy every canoe he could find. So he hunted high and low and even down below and he found that which he sought. He had ten thousand men he marched them up to the top of the hill and marched them down again. And when he was up he was up and when he was down he was down and when he was only half way up he was neither up nor down. Canoes to the left of him, canoes to the right. His right to destroy a way of life, a means of life to dress his wife in the finery that befitted her station far above the Maori nation. The imbeciles, the native reels backwards once they're shot in the back and no coming back.

They found and destroyed every single canoe but one. Today I don't mean this day, but if you want to see that canoe it's in the Auckland Maori Wars Memorial Museum. Lest we forget for some, best to forget for what was got. The Maori people lost the plot and bit the hand that bled them. The Maori people lost the plot and then they lost the lots. Now you sinners and new beginners pray for the life I've spared you. Speared you before you could spear me in the back and don't come back there is no more. It's mine I won it square and fair.

You scurvy heathen dogs.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

Delilah said that I could get any woman I want with my good looks. But when I look in the mirror all I see is the same old me I've been avoiding looking at for all of my life. My hair is black. It's wavy when it's long and prickly when it's short. My eyes are green when I'm angry or drugged up or sad, so Delilah reckons, but hazel when I'm none of those. I think Delilah wants to say normal, but that will start us off arguing and I know she only wants my eyes to turn green. That turns her on. Like the nurses she said that I turn on. Male or female. 'The Male ones walk mincey when you're around.' I'm six foot four and I usually weigh fourteen stone. But I'm hardly usual. And usually unusable. Especially when I've been drugging hard. Or the needle goes in. I'm Maori because my surname is. I don't have a family. I have Delilah. I saw the light on that night in the window of Delilahs room. I watched her get undressed. Then she turned the light on. And I saw no more.

Carrion by the ton. The bamboo grove. Too close to town they chopped it down, the lunatics: still hung around or hung themselves. Somewhere else instead. The beaten and abused the black and bruised. Made front line news and Pakeha views gave Maori another bad name by which to re-call them. Recognised the dark side need. The cover up gave impetus to. For Maori by Maori. Get thee to your mana tree. Is easier than giving it back.

The oak lee. And the ugly lady. Just as well dad was white skinned. Bash the epileptic and throw him in the pool. Hose him down and douse him and give him copious cocktails of pills. Call it nigger bashing, but I only tried to cure him. Let's go down to the Waikato and there we'll try to shoot him.

King Cobra skinned, the Greying old Lynn. The Looney tunes they used to play. And crazy shuffled to Alberts Mountain.

Now she's crossed that bridge. New York, New York the rotten apple. Portfolio briefed to unite the nations. Third most powerful person there now. Getting rid of poverty, empowering the people. Here is the lurch and where are the people? Under one umbrella. We are on the outside. The down underside wet and getting wetter behind the ears side. Who gives a damn where you're from any way? And where the fuck is that?

Old Kenny Purus bamboo grove. Where I found a rusted old stove  
Filled it up with paper and wood. And tried to get it going  
No good. Someone left a zimmer frame. And a shopping trolley  
Long thick pieces in the middle I battled in and the prickles in my arms had festered up  
by morning. The decoying duck. The Mc Donalds cup. And over the fence an urupa. That  
no one told me about in their own words in other words  
Their language dead and buried instead.  
Ka whawhai tonu matou.  
Ake! Ake! Ake!  
Exclamation marked for posterity in perpetuity. Time without end has ended.  
Raupatu.  
Many dead their names engraved there. Monumental Masonic: *Lest we forget*  
Goths died their demonic. Cosmetic Black hair. Like mine, like mine.  
Mines.

**275-**

**By narrator**

*Badness*

*Hide in darkness for ever*

*Wait for the children*

I want land plots of land. Yours will do. You only grow gorse. And you breed like the rabbits. That we need to cull. Kill? The land is not your mother you mumbo jumboed fools. Cut it up and cut it out. Prosperity at all cost. Get out of your dark aged Maori skins and let progress in. Get the most out of this. This land was your land this land is mine now. From the Kauri forests; fell them now there's a good feller if ever I saw one, to the

crystal clear lakes. This land was made for me and mine. There's gold in them thar hills and I told you once and I'll tell you again it's mine. Mine it and make it mine. Martha. Fools I say you do not know there's gold in the water and the valleys below.

Ecology, shmology I know my niche. Progressive wealth and development I want my peice. Peace is not a given you have to fight for it. Fight for the right to be free. Passively resist my home invasion and I'll walk all over you. Mow you down you half witted brown skinned clowns. Haka shmaka, your all black babys kaka. Come E.T. come E.T. Hi aue hi! The only alien who ever wanted to go home, stay home. Think more globally. Insular you isolated Islanders.

Written by Maia Taurima.

Another peice of bullshit that no one will ever read. Why would they want to? Therefore, why do I do it?

## **Dicks Mower**

### **By Ellen**

*Cheers big ears.* Hau what a dumb prick.

That sign in the back window of Dicks car says, '...want you lawn mow? Ring 09) 27578.' Because Eli and Bob said they'd rubbed some of the writing out. Surely the silly prick must wonder why no-one calls him.

Alison's got a mower. It does the rounds. Eli and Bob use it to do the neighbourhood lawns and they get paid. Nah good job the greedy bastard wanted to take their job away from them. Ana. Bloody hua. I told Maia, boot the hua out. But you think she listens?

*Cheers any way.*

He's a fucken hua. Know what? He's a pair a fucken huas.

'Dick you pair a huas,' I said to him one time. 'Dick get up off my fucken floor you make the place look tidy.'

My mangublack should be here soon. Aroha mai my mangublack. Fuck-I-know who's her father. Oh-my-God it broke my heart when my Miringa told me, 'Mummy, I got a

sore puku.’ Hau and when I had a look at her puku, na there it was, swollen. Are you hapu? I said to her and she just stared at me and shrugged her shoulders and then I knew. Ana I said to her, that’ll learn you. You and your greedy passage hangi-pantsing around the place. Herbie beat the living daylights out of her. ‘Stop it Herbie,’ I said to him, ‘It’s done.’ He damned near killed her. I couldn’t stand by and let him do that to my girl, ‘Hey you bloody barsid,’ I said to him, ‘She’s only thirteen years old, you’ll fucken kill her.’ You think he listened? Nah not him. So you know what I did? Instead of filling my glass, I raised that bottle and I smashed it across his face. Ana, to kai na. You should a seen the blood pissing out of his face. Waste a fucken good beer but that fixed the hua. Then I kicked the barsid out an I hadn’t seen black hide nor hair of him since. *Cheers*. ‘By Jesus that bloody girls gonna get a dong soon. Hey get in here before you get a bloody dong.’ *Cheers*.

Until he turned up out of the black last year.

That bloody girl of Maias. Bit of a little know-it-all that one. *Cheers*. That Tuesday she come yelling up the drive, Ellen, Ellen, hey you got a visitor. It’s a man. It’s Debbie’s father. Hau when I looked out the window, Debbie’s father my arse. It was that fucken Herbie. With a crate. ‘Thought you could do with a beer,’ he said. Course I always got time for a beer. So I said come in and how you been you black barsid? *Cheers*. So I put the brisket on. What with Rui in hospital a girl gets lonely. Know what I mean? And well for old times sake what’s a few rounds of beers between old friends; come to think of it, for old times sake what’s a few rounds between the sheets. Nah. Fuck that. Three days later and he’s still here. Slept on the couch a course. *Cheers*.

‘Hey,’ he said ‘how’s about it?’

No way Jose these bloomers ain’t dropping no more for you, you black hua.

My mangublack wouldn’t stay home. In fact on Wednesday morning she came into my bed early hours a the fucken morning. Make me cold. So I just said shut up and stop your snivelling it was only a dream. And the next night *Cheers*. She stayed over at Maias. That bloody tin arse Herbie scored a trifecta. God knows how much it paid but it was beers on for two more days. That prick Dick came over with Maia. He’s the one for piss alright. A real bloody pisshead. There’s some drunks that’s nice and there’s some drunks that ain’t so. *Cheers*. He ain’t so.

‘By Jesus that bloody girls gonna get a dong soon. Hey mangublack get in here before you get a bloody dong.’ *Cheers.*

Then that Rosie of Maia’s comes over with her mother and say’s, ‘See mum I told you Debbie’s father is here.’ Then the talking stopped and I looked at my mangublack and I looked at Herbie and oh-my-God we just sat there and looked at each other and at the wall then at the table and we stared and stared. *Cheers.* Debbies father my arse. Cheers you fellas, drink up I said. Debbies father me arse. That night Herbie just remembered he had to be somewhere else so he left. He even left some beers. He never came back which is just as well cause I got a ring from the hospital to say Rui was ready to come home so Maia took me up to get him. Debbies father me arse. *Cheers drink up.*

Pity about that girl of Maia’s being so cheeky. Such a tiny little thing. Pretty too. Looks like one of those Patupairehe you hear about in the stories. The fairy people. Spoilt brat. The mother dresses her like she’s a bloody princess.

My girls looked like princesses too. I used to dress them up every day. Iron their dresses. Four year old Miringa wore pink and three year old Terina wore blue. I put ringlets in their hair and tied it in coloured ribbons too. They had little white cardys to match their dresses and patent leather shoes. All from the hokohoko in Dalmaney Street. That was when we lived in Tokoroa. Herbie was on the rubbish trucks then.

‘Come on you girls. Hurry up. Put your fullas shoes on and come in here let me have a look at you before we go out.’

‘Miringa, keep still let me tie your hair. Stop that moving around.’

‘This dress is too tight mummy. I can’t breathe properly.’

‘It’s just a bit short. It’ll do.’

‘Terina, my pretty little baby girl. Oh what a beautiful baby.’

‘How far we walking today mummy? My feet hurt. Whose house are we going to for lunch today mummy?’

Oh my God I just broke down and cried there and then.

‘Fucken horse still running.’ Herbie said when he got home that night. ‘Bloody nag. Nemmine dear brought us home a beer anyway. And here’s some chocolate and chippies for the girls.’

‘I’m still hungry mummy.’ Miringa said.

‘Get to bloody bed.’ Herbie said.

‘I’m still hungry.’

‘I’ll give you bloody hungry.’

And he picked her up and carried her to bed. After that kai or no kai, Miringa stopped complaining about being hungry. I was so proud of my Herbie. Even though she wasn’t his, he treated her like his own. Put her to bed every night. Bloody little bitch started pissing the bed about then too.

*Cheers.*

By Jesus that boy of Maia’s oh-my-god. Some one should tell her he’s a bit doongy. Not me though. If someone told me I had a doongy kid I’d give them bloody doongy. She treats him like he’s bloody normal. He don’t know the difference I’m sure of that. Any one can see he’s not the full crate. And oh-my God what a waste of a good looking kid. Tutu hands too. Can take anything apart with a knife or what have you. Took my radio to bits and there they were all the bits laid out in a neat line that lead all the way from the sitting room to the lav and there the doongy thing was, sitting on the lav like Jackie. I could a screwed his neck but I shut the lav door instead. Ana, that fix him up cause he don’t like to be in the lav with the door shut. I heard him scream and then he shot past me and ran up the hallway to where his mother was changing Rui’s bandages. Poor Rui.

*Cheers*

‘Mangublack, get in here by Jesus if I have to get off my seat, I’ll dong you. Kia tere, I need another beer and you need to put those other bottles in to get cold.’ Why she don’t put him in a doongy hospital, fuck-I-know. By Jesus that Rui got a soft spot for him. Just like the time, ‘Mangublack, hey, get in here and bring a stick with you so I can dong you with it.’ Only words no meaning. *Cheers.* Yeah just like the time the bloody little bugger disappeared down the hall way and before I could say don’t go down there, Rui’s sleeping, he was gone. Pretty quick for one whos not all there.

‘Come here Jordan,’ Maia said. As if he could hear her soft voice. Course he didn’t come so we had to go down the hall to find him. And oh-my-god it damn near broke my heart. There they were; Rui on his bed and Jordan on Rui’s wheelchair. Kei te korero raua.

‘You a good boy?’ said Rui



‘Boy?’ said Jordan.

‘How old are you?’

‘You?’

‘You want a chocolate?’

‘Chocolate?’

Rui almost looked his good looking self when he smiled at the boy. *Cheers*. But later on that night oh-my-god. Rui was blue in the face, he gasped when he breathed and his chest rattled. So I dialled 111 three times before I got through. My hands were shaking like an alky’s. And oh-my-god they couldn’t understand me. The fuck I want a fire engine for? Stewart Road. Stew- wart you silly twat, number leven. And I said, *Cheers*. ‘Rui, Rui you better not die on me you barsid, you fucken better not die on me.’ And he didn’t. Just as well the ambulance came and took him to the hospital cause he died in there.

Maia, hey Maia. Maranga Maia and take me to the hospital. Get a taxi, that fucken pair a huas Dick called out. But me and Maia raced up that motorway and I told her to slow down cause I knew there and then I’d lost my Rui. *Cheers*. And oh-my-god there he was lying on that hospital bed. Cold and dead. I just couldn’t believe it. So I had a smoke. Not allowed to smoke in here said Maia. Ah fuckim I said and lit me up one anyway while there she was standing on the ledge puffing out the fucken window. I just sat there beside Rui and had my smoke.  
Fuckim.

Long grass grows all around the neighbouring houses. Thursday’s a good day to mow lawns. People get paid on Thursday. By Jesus that fucken cunning pair a hua’s. There he was knocking on the door of number seven, his bloody mower on the front lawn. Hey Dick you prick I called out to him, hey leave the boys jobs alone. But the barsid ignored me. When I come back from the wharepaku huh? There’s the mower but no Dick. That mower sat there for nigh on two hours. They say the one in that house is a drug dealer. Got a greedy passage too. Five black white and brindle barsids to three dumb-assed WINZ paying fathers; bit of a alky too, so I heard.  
*Cheers*.

Eli went over and got the mower and left it outside their house while him and Bob did their lawns. God knows who was looking after the doongey one, cause there he was tutuing around that bloody mower. 'Hey,' I said. 'Hey you, leave that bloody thing alone before you cut your fingers off.' But nah. You think he listened? Fuck I know. Dick came home from that house at number seven just before Maia was due back from mahi. He started the mower and the fucken thing blew up. Well it caught on fire and I swear I could smell the singeing hair smell that comes from de-hairing pigs. By Jesus that stinks. My father and uncles were the ones for that. Everytime some one died back home they killed a pig for the hakari. Fuck I know where they came from. We never had pigs. None of us did. We used to give our pig bucket to the pakeha farmer down the road. He had pigs. Oh my God that smell stays with you for the rest of your life.

So there he was, Dick the prick the pair a huas on his ownesome slapping at himself to stop his hair from burning. Fucken good job ya barsid. Ana.

Cheers Jordan.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

On the night of the warning from that Pakeha man, my grandparents called a hui. They sent a panui to the man to come and hui with them but he sent Aides instead. That man had Aides. So in a korero to the Aides my grandfather said, 'We the people of this whenua thank you for your kindness in warning us of the evil to come, may you live long and prosper. We must go now to help our whanau. May your God be with you and our Gods with us and when we meet again may we still be friends?'

My grandparents were stuck up the creek without a canoe to paddle because the man in the gun boat destroyed all but one. So they packed up what they could carry on their backs and walked. They could not take much as by now my grandparents and the others though they were many were old and infirm. And ready for the infirmary.

They were now fugitives in tempest fugit. They were not able to walk down the great southern military road, The Great South road, where the soldiers marched to victory for Victoria and Britannia; that was under construction for the destruction of all the Maoris

where they'd lived for all their lives in isolation least they forget and get TB, so they took an old familiar secreted route known only to secretive them. Why tell them all the secretes?

As soon as my infirm and old grandparents left, the needy greedy ones looted and destroyed what remained; cattle were seized, houses ransacked and horses were sold. Home invasion and robbery weren't criminal offences in that time. Spoils of war and rights of conquest even when they pre-cede that war are all the same in the end. It's not what you know it's who you are.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

*Keep society safe, the voter demands it*

*Can you tell me where do I fit?*

I am: sick, mad, drunk, uneducable, uneducated, unemployable unemployed, poor at any given time now you are none of the above.

C.R.U.E.L. Christian righteousness under English law. Children down the chimney children of the poor. Olivers Twisted, greater expectations than most at the bleakest house for Christmas. Carol. I am mad: yes. But you are bad. Delilah said, 'Hey Aaaaadaaaaammmmm, let's go and look at the doongy kids in the village.' So we did.

Delilah told me that the best ones to see were the Mongols because they were direct descendants of Ghengis Khan. I took some carrots so I could poke them through the fence at the Mongolians if I saw some. Delilah told me to get them to show me their tits, but to watch out for the white dresses, the nurses. So there I was standing at the fence with a carrot in my hand, making show me your tits gestures at a Mongolian man when I was grabbed from behind. I woke up and I called out to Delilah. But she didn't come. I wanted to see the Mongolians my epicanthic folded eye-lidded whanau. With six toes.

**275-**

**By narrator**

*Rainbow*

*Follow the yellow brick road*

*Make your dreams come true*

All the gardens here face to the east. As if the dead can see the rising sun. Arise oh sun and shine upon the dead ones' faces and take me to those other places where dreams come true and promises made are kept. Inept and hopeless the situation here. Too long a time of and dread and fear. Dead in this bloody place. All bloody dead.

Written by Maia Taurima.

Am I losing the plot all together? Am I becoming the embittered and twisted person that I grew up calling mum? She never came. She was never there.

Only to criticise.

**Nanny Jo's Garden**

**By Jordan Te Awanui**

People around me talk about me, around me in normal talk to them-normal-talk-selves, and to my mother and to my sister and to my brothers who say they want to punch those others. If I could talk to you in a language you understand so you can understand me this is what I would say to you. You. And then that would be what you would know. No? I am not visible so it must be that I am not here. They say, 'He's not all there.' That's because I'm all over here. I can see you.

'Hey,' I say. 'Hey.' I wave and I wave. And flap my hands, but third person me they cannot see.

People talk about me in the third person. He's like that, they say. Then I am part of a group, they're all like that, they say. Then they give my group a name. Handicaps. He's a handicap, they say.

My name is Jordan.

Say Jaw-Din, Jordan.

Jaw-Din. Jordan.

Jaw-Din.

Jaw-Din.

Look at me, look at me and say, Jaw

Jaw.

Din

Din.

Look at me, look at me and say it together.

It together.

No, say Jaw-Din. Jaw-Din. Jaw-Din. Jaw-Din.

One, two, bizz, bor.

My,

My.

Name,

name.

Is,

Is.

Jaw-din.

Jaw-Din.

Good Boy.

Boy.

He's a good looking boy.

I'm a good looking boy.

What a waste.

Waste.

Pity.

Pity.

I go to school in a taxi-van-bus. I wait at the gate at my homatey. I put my bag on my back; and my lunch in my bag; and my colour red underpants for accidents in my bag on my back. And my ticket for when I get lost and found:

I am Jordan Taurima. Special needs class.

Satellite Unit. Mangere Normal School.

I am lost.

Please ring 09) 275-999111,

And say you found me.

Thank-you.

I wear a colour red hat and a colour red jersey. And colour red overpants. I like colour red. Glo-heart lollies: but not tomatoes. Strawberries: but not tomatoes. Tomato sauce: but not tomatoes. And I count to four and get a glo-heart, and I write, J-O-R-D-A-N and I get a glo heart, and I have clean underpants all day, and I get a glo-heart.

I'm a good-boy-Jordan.

I go to my classroom, Special needs class. Satellite Unit. Mangere Normal School. I go past the two legs children. Handicap, handicap the two legs children say and to me they point and to them I point too. And they say fuck off you doongy cunt. And I say cunt.

And they show me two fingers and I show them two fingers too. And they hahahahaha.

And I hahahahaha all the way to my class.

Hello Mrs Bo Bell, hello Danika, hello Mathew, hello Jerry, hello Derek, hello Monty, hello Andrew. Hello.

At my Nanny Jo's house, in my Nanny Jo's garden at her house she's got lots of flowers. Red and yellow and pink and green. Violet and purple and blue. We go to her house to visit her. She is not well. Rosie, take Jordan outside in the garden. Go play in the garden Jordan. Go play on the swing. My sister Rosie picks some flowers. Not like that Jordan. Pick them nicely. Lee. We put the water in the bucket and we put the flowers in the bucket and Rosie says smell Jordan and I say smell Jordan and I haaachooo.

Haaachooo, haaachooo, haaachooo. And Rosie says yucky Jordan you put your hupe everywhere. Yucky Jordan. Yucky Jordan. Come have a see-saw Jordan. Up, down. Up, down. Up, down. Then I get off and walk away and Rosie gets a sore nono. Ow Jordan not spose to just get off. I hurt my bum.

At my Nanny Jo's house, the children with two legs and two arms each laugh and laugh. Hahahahaha. So I laugh too. Hahahahaha

What a doongy cunt. Hahahahaha. So I laugh too. Hahahahaha.

Laughing at us you doongy cunt.

Cunt.

I'll bash you.

You.

And I laugh. Hahahahaha.

And we play the games.

I stand in the middle and the children hold hands and dance in a circle around me. We play Simple Simon says and they make me win that game everytime because they make me Simon. And the children say and I do. And I scratch my bum because Simple Simon says to.

Then we play look who is there punchanellow funny fellow and I am in the middle and I pull my pants down because what can you do punchanellow funny fellow? What can you do punchanellow funny man? Then I cover my eyes and I wait for them to, we'll do it too punchanellow funny fellow, we'll do it too punchanellow funny man. And they tee hee hee and ha ha ha and when it stops and I put my hands down the children have all gone away. Then they come back and I stand against the wall and the children throw the ball at me. I stand against the wall. My arms are spread out and my legs are spread out too. The children throw the ball at me and when it hits me they tee hee hee and ha ha ha. Handicap, handicap all the children say and to me they point and I to them point too.

I'm a handicap, but I'm not a wheelchair handicap. I'm a normal one. So, I'm not allowed to line up with the wheelchairs when the taxi-van-bus comes to take us home. The wheelchairs go first. Danika is a wheelchair; she's got no legs, just empty pants legs and no arms just empty sleeves. At lunch-time the teacher aids feed Danika, but I can feed myself. After lunches time the teacher aids take Danika and the other wheel-chairs to change. But when they come back they are still the same. Jerry said. 'Underpants. They change underpants.' And I'm happy I'm not a wheelchair, I don't want to change underpants with Jerry, I don't want to have colour blue underpants. Mathews got one leg that can come off and one leg that can't. He's got one long arm and one half arm, and a big head with a motorbike helmet on it. And when he has a fit, his leg that can't come off goes bang, bang on the floor and when it stops he has to go and change underpants and overpants. Derek has got two legs and his two feet touch at his toes when he takes his big boots off; and Monty wears one big boot on one foot and one big boot with a big, big knitting needle down one side and straps around his leg and boot all the way to his knee. Andrew is a normal handicap like me. Jordan.

We hop in the taxi-van-bus. I'm the first so I sit at the back seat. We go through the town around and around and we all look out the window to look at the funny people laughing and to us they point and we hahahahaha at them and wave out, wave out Jordan. Jerry Timu that Maori Mongol over there rocks back and wards, back and wards and his tongue won't stay in his mouth. And he does the pukana at the people in the town. Hi aue hi. And the taxi-van-bus takes me to my homatey.

At my Nanny Jo's house, Rosie says come here Jordan. So I go there and she says, all of youse, to two legs kids: big ones and small ones, leave my brother alone.

Lone.

And Eli my brother, Rosie's brother too comes out and he says, kai time everyone, go wash your hands. Wash, wash, wash. Dry, dry, dry. We have kai in the garage. We have some soup. We have some fried in hinu bread and golden syrup. Lots and lots and lots of people. Nanny Jo's sick. Rosie says she's sad. Eli says he's sad. I say Jaw Din. I am hungry. Jordan.

'Hey look you fellas, that doongy can nuse a knife and fork.' And all the children look at me. What a doongy cunt. Ha,ha,ha,ha,ha.

Nanny Jo is not here. Then she is. She sleeps in the box bed in the sitting room where the flowers that me and Rosie picked are in jars all over the room and on the tables and on the floor. All the ladies and mothers cry. Boo hoo hoo hoo hoo. Boo hoo hoo hoo hoo. Blow nose. Boo hoo hoo hoo hoo. Boo hoo hoo hoo hoo some more and some more. Falesi at school is from some more. All the men stand by the fire outside. They shake their heads. I go to Nanny Jo and I say to her to listen to me, listen to me. Look at me, look at me and I say, 'Wake up Nanny Jo, wake up.' Because I want to hop in the box- bed. And I try to open her eyes up but she won't stay up and her eyes close down again. And Eli says, 'Fuck off you gross hua.' and Lily-Belle and Tarn and Kaa go, 'Eeeew Jordan.'

Then we go for a ride in the car and we put Nanny Jo-in-the-box in a big, big garden. And Rosie puts all the flowers in the garden and we take the jars home to put some more flowers in for another day.



Violet and purple and blue.

At my school, the sports day is for the children with two legs to run and run and get a ribbon prize. Red ribbon: first best prize, blue ribbon: next best prize, yellow ribbon last best prize. No ribbon, no best prize. Yellow like eggs ribbon, don't like eggs. Blue like Jerrys' underpants ribbon, don't like Jerrys' underpants. Red like strawberries and sauce and my jersey and underpants and glo-heart lollies ribbon. I like red but not tomatoes. Danika has tomatoes for her lunch. And eggs. Don't like eggs. The teacher aid gives Danika lunch. Open wide Danika. Good girl Danika. Eat eggs all up. Close mouth on spoon and egg, and look like egg-in-spoon race going backwards on sports for two legs children day. Open mouth Danika. There's a good girl. Danika, open your mouth. Open your mouth, *you-little-bitch*.

The teacher aid ties one leg each from the two legs children and; on your marks, get set. Loud, loud clap goes bang. Go. And run and win the three legs race. And get a red ribbon. And the other children clap and clap and clap and yayyyyyyy. I want a red ribbon and I get Mathews leg that can come off and I run in the three legs race and run fast past the other three legs children and I am the first. I get the red ribbon and I put it in my pocket and the teacher aid says hey you give that back, but I won the race and I don't give it back and I ahhhhhhh scream. And I keep the ribbon. And I throw Mathews leg at the teacher aid.

The wheelbarrow race is for two, two legs children. One of them walks on their hands and one of them holds legs and push harder and faster and be a wheelbarrow. On your marks, get set. Loud, loud clap goes bang. Go. My mummy and Dick play wheelbarrow racing and go harder and faster my mummy says to Dick and he goes harder and faster and mummy screams when she gets the red ribbon. And I clap and clap and clap and yayyyyyyy loud and Dick says, 'Fuck off.' I push Danika hard and fast past the wheelbarrow children and they all fall down and Danika says weeeeeee and we cross the end line and Mrs Bo Bell says, 'No Jordan, no red ribbon.' And I push Danikas' wheel chair over and she is underneath and I lie down beside the wheel. It spins and spins rounrounroun, rounrounroun.

On a not school morning my mummy was sleeping so I went to wake her up. 'Wake up mummy, wake up.' And her eyes were like a rainbow, violet and purple and blue. So I said, listen to me, listen to me, look at me, look at me. 'Wake up mummy, wake up.' And I touched the rainbow to make her eyes open and she did. Violet and purple and blue. And red drips from her nose and paints the pillow more red. A real rainbow face.

'Get out of this room.' Dick said.

'Leave him alone.' Mummy said.

'He's pissed on the toilet floor.' Dick said.

'Psst.' I said.

'I said get out.'

'Out.' I said.

'Go now.' He said.

'No ow.' I said.

Mummy got out of bed. Violet and purple and blue. 'Get out of my house.' she said. Then Dick he threw all his things in his big school bag and he said, 'I'll be back to waste you all.'

And Eli came in the room, 'Being a clown you Dick egg.' He said.

'Egg.' I said. I hate eggs. And tomatoes. And Eli he said go in the sitting room to me.

And he said to mummy you too. I heard Dick go 'Ooof.' Then Dick he drove away on his truck.

I bounce, bounce, and bounce on the trampoline. Bob and Emma and Muzz-Kutu my best friend, and Billy with the dread knots on his head they fill the empty beer cans up with the sand-pit. I bounce, bounce, and bounce on the trampoline.

'My brother Eli says, right you fellas we'll wait for the prick to come back and we'll bombard him with these. We'll have turns at keeping watch. Who wants to go first?'

And I say pick me Eli and I wave and wave and get off the trampoline. I wave and I wave. And flap my hands and wave and wave some more and Eli says, 'Get out of the way you doongy hua.' To me because he can see me and he can't hear me. And he says, 'You Sammy bags you to go first.'

'I'm not playing Eli.'

'It's not a game bitch you're going first. It's five o'clock now so we don't have to start until dark, say nine-ish.'

'Ish,' I say.

‘Get.’ Eli says.

So I get on the trampoline and I bounce, bounce bounce and Muzz-Kutu hops on and we bounce, bounce, bounce and mmmmm together.

My nanny who is my real nanny, not my other Nanny Jo because she’s in her garden, my mummy said this is your Nanny Martha. Say hello to nanny and I, mmmmm and Nanny Martha says, ‘What does he make that stupid sound for?’ and my mummy says because he’s happy. And Nanny Martha says, ‘What’s he got to be happy about?’ And I put my hand out to shake hands and bump shoulders like Eli and Muzz-Kutu and Bob and Billy and Emma and Nanny Martha says I don’t know where your stink hands have been. And she says he might have been scratching his arse and I say, ‘Arse.’ And mummy says go and play with your toys Jordan. I wave and I wave. And flap my hands.

I spin the knife that cuts the bread because that’s the one that spins the best. Rounrounroun, rounrounroun. And I look sideways over there that way and I don’t move my head and I look sideways over there the other way and I don’t move my head. Nanny Martha says, ‘Take that bloody knife off that kid, he’ll hurt my mokopuna.’ ‘Nanny hey Nanny Martha I’m your mokopuna, I’m Jaw-din.’ She can’t see me and she can’t hear me. And I spin the knife. Rounrounroun, rounrounroun. ‘I said take that fucken knife off that dopey looking monster, he’ll hurt Tai.’ Mummy says to her that I’m not a monster. And I say monster and Nanny Martha wants the knife to cut some bread for Tai so I give her the knife and I mmmmm and she ‘Ahhhhhhh.’ Screams so I, ‘Ahhhhhhh.’ Scream too. My Nanny Martha has to go home because my mummy said go home. I wave and I wave. And flap my hands. Ahhhhhhhh, mmmmm.

Bob and Emma and Muzz-Kutu my best friend, and Billy with the dread knots on his head and Eli go to sleep on the trampoline and I bounce, bounce, bounce and Eli says, ‘Get to fucken bed.’ ‘Bed.’

Sammy waves and waves at me. He’s up on Ellen’s roof because it’s his first turn. And I wave and wave and wave. And Eli says, ‘What’s that clown waving for?’ And I hear a truck noise. ‘Fuck it’s him, get inside Jordan.’ And I don’t want to so I don’t. And Bob and Emma and Muzz-Kutu my best friend, and Billy with the dread knots on his head and

Eli hide behind the hedge and Dick can't see them. I wave and wave at him and he walks down the drive way and Emma and Muzz-Kutu my best friend, and Billy with the dread knots on his head and Eli throw the cans of sand at Dick and he, a haaachooo. A haaachooo, and he all falls down. They throw and they throw then they run out of cans and Sammy is doing the ka mate ka mate, ka ora ka ora on Ellen's roof. Then when he's run out of that two more times he does the Le Manu some more.

Then Ellen comes out of her house and mummy comes out of our house.  
Then Ellen comes over and says, 'You barsids stop wasting beer.'  
'That's enough Eli.' Mummy says. She brings Dicks school bags out and puts them on the drive way beside him sitting up now. He's got the rainbow face. Look who is here punchanellow funny fellow look who is here punchanellow funny man. And I bounce, bounce, and bounce. And Eli, Bob, Emma, Billy and Muzz-Kutu stand in a circle around Dick. They want to play Simple Simon says, I want to play too. So I go over and Eli says, 'Mum, take Jordan inside. Ellen, go home.'  
And Sammy is home now.

Eli looks like the monster on Sesame Street, everything's ay ok.  
'Help me Maia, please?' Dick says. Somebodyhelpmeplease, I say, somebodyhelpmeplease.  
'Help yourself.' And she spits some spit out of her rainbow face and then it's on his shirt. She holds her hand out to me, and says to Ellen come inside Ellen. And Ellen says, 'You got any beer?'  
And I flap my hands and go inside. And mummy and Ellen drink beer not sand and I spin, and spin, spin and spin.  
And Dick's truck noise goes away.

I am Jordan Taurima. Special needs class.

Satellite Unit. Mangere Normal School.

I am lost.

Please ring 09) 275-999111

And say you found me.

Thank-you.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

The war started. Attack the Maoris and kill them destroy them destroy them. I don't think my grandparents wanted to die just yet. Not that way. So they fought back. They fought because they wanted to live long and prosper. Then the war ended.

After the fighting was over, the people returned to their village. When they arrived they found that some others had moved in. The others were the new owners now because the men from the government said that the villagers had rebelled against the queen, not my granddad, that other queen from far away. So they made a law that said anyone who took up arms against the queen, not my grandfather, is punishable by land confiscation. That meant that for wanting to live long and prosper and for being defiant non-noble savages, they lost their land.

All of it.

But it wasn't really lost it never went anywhere. It was right where it was from the start. It wasn't lost. It was stolen. But theft of land wasn't a crime then; theft of bread was though, but at that time all the bread thieves lived in Australia. The men from the government said that the villagers should have remained in the village and helped the queen's people in the battle instead of going to help their whanau. The villagers said okay.

So the next thing the villagers had to do was to go and pay their respects to the dead whanau up the urupa. When they got there the gate was locked and they had to wait for the new owner to come and unlock the gate.

The new owner said, 'You may visit for one hour under my supervision.'

The old owner said, 'How come?'

'Because in one hours time I have to go and milk my cows and I can't leave you lot here to maraud about the place. You lot can't be trusted.'

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

Nurses are always busy they'll tell you. Their watches are upside down rountuit and inaminit they leave at half past three on Tuesday. I rang the call bell for the nurse to come inaminit she said and she walked away, and her fat white bum chewed at her undies. On Wednesday I had another nurse. I wondered out loud about the state of hers. She told me she was dieting. She'd worked out the money she'd spent on food this year. And I said what about your undies. She pressed the button on her duress alarm because I'd enquired about the state of her undies. A private matter and entirely personal and I said thank God for that.

Rountuitinaminit.

And then my room was full of nurse but there was only room for three. And I was on the floor face down and five hovered at the door. I was wet with fat bitches sweat. And one let out a fart. That sounded like ta-ra-ru-a and smelt like the ngawha from Rotorua or the Mangere sewer on a very good day. The one at my head was puffed up and red. And I saw an overweight camels toe and I wondered out loud. Hey nurse, are you a tranny or is that your fat fanny. And are you from Brazil?

John told me that waking up next to Bridgy was like waking up on the side of a hill. And one sweaty dromedary elephant cow I thought out loud that she could chew Her way through a panty liner and an ocean liner. The miner in a sixty niner. Skinny ones take over the misses piggy holds. The fat ones grunt and snort. One can't get up from the polished floor. And then I hear her underpants rip. So I wonder out loud. About a property damage claim and how much it will cost? Evidence required proof of purchase evidence required of damaged goods. Hang them out to dry.

When Cuzzy bro' Tuku did the same I laughed out loud. The state of the nation's wealth was in ruination all for a pair of underpants. And the relationship between partners was much improved after enquiry disapproved the expenditure. Sign here. And the queen said

we are not amused you have abused a trust. Put it down to misadventure in new found ventures. Off shore if you must.

Like punched drunk boxers in a limousine.

A kingdom for a horse

the loss, the waste

alas, alas

Ksss hi aue she.

Lean gripped mean tripped tight-lipped and bold.

They march me to seclusion. When I got out I rung the District Inspector and reported the fat nurse for undie abuse all for the cause of their undies clause, that included a stocking allowance. A branded Mr T said no chance mate. And he twin cheek waddled away from me. Chewing on a minty. For fresh breath.

## **275-**

### **By narrator**

The car space markings are faded so people park any where except in the handicap spaces. And the bit reserved for Doctor. The women push overloaded shopping trolleys; the young girls push their prams and thrust their milk induced cleavage out at any one who wants a look for nuthink. The men push their money over the counter at the TAB or the liquor wholesalers, and the youth in the patched jacket pushes dope.

It's Thursday-busy here in the shopping centre.

The automatic doors at the supermarket spring open then close and touch briefly together only to spring apart again in a succession so quick that some one should prop it open to keep it open with a crate of taro, or a bag of spuds; to save power.

There's the Doctor, the baker, and the material shop for the home maker and the stationers that sells lotto. The ASB bank is empty and the electrical appliance shop is busy. The butcher that lets you book up shoos the flies from the pig heads piled in the window. But he's missed the one that's crawled up a nostril and he's missed the one that sits against the window and spits eggs out of its arse into a pool of jellied blood and pig brains. Inside the shop, the bin of pig's trotters is next to the bin of pork bones that's next to the bin of pigtails that's beside the plastic bags of offal and entrails.

The tarts that try to hook up to make a fast buck, wobble on tinea filled high heeled shoes, the scabs on their legs ooze pus from the infected tattoos they give each other with Indian ink and dirty shared needles that they wrap in cotton. They smell: they're cheap. And their diseases are nasty. But their tricks are tasty if you're hungry for it. And you've got ten dollars and you don't mind going into the toilets to get done.

'I'll follow you, Honey.'

The long line at the taxi stand gets longer. The queue at the bus stop gets shorter as the people and their Thursday shopping go home.

Written by Maia Taurima in a particularly hyper-critical phase of drug induced daze.

## **Eli Tumanako**

### **By Samson Powhiri**

The announcement calls him, 'The New Super Heavy-weight Champion.' And the crowd goes wild. The people next to me are on their feet. They move their bodies as if they're all joined together and they dance as they chant, 'Go Eli, go bro. Go Eli, go bro.' Go Eli, go bro'. Go Eli, go bro.'

Mrs Samesi from up our street throws the lei she was wearing before, into the ring. 'That's my neighbour's boy,' she says to the man who stands next to her. But I don't think he hears or sees the fat wet tears that run down her face. The referee holds Eli's right hand and pushes his arm up high, then higher into the noisy air. Eli grins. His left eye is puffed up closed and a red blob glistens under it. He looks like he cries bloody tears. He looks at me and Maori waves me and I Maori wave him back. Eli's my big brother. He is 18 years old. He's my big brother.

One time my brother Eli and I went for the shopping at three Guys because Mum was at work and it was school holidays. It was a Thursday. We always did shopping on Thursday.

Even though my brother Eli is two years older than me, I have the shopping list, the money, the coupons and the Christmas club book because I've done it heaps with Mum and Eli hasn't. Before he came to live with us, he lived in Christchurch with our Nanny



and Papa. In the car park, the metal shopping trundlers gleam in the trundler bay that's between the rusted up old Datsun from number eight, and a van full of Islanders. Over at the wholesales where they sell beer and wine, I see Solley from next door to Ellen's. I wave but he doesn't see me because he carries on knocking on the shop door. 'Open up, open up.' I hear him say.

The trundlers are lined up like soldiers and I pull one out. The other ones shuffle out of line and jostle back in to position again. Just like real soldiers.

'You push,' Eli says, 'Only ladies do that.'

I push the trundler through the swing gate. Eli steps over it.

At the fruit and vegetables, Mr Wong sprays the cabbages with a spray bottle and the water-drops from the nozzle sit on top of the leaves. They look like the ones in our garden after the rain.

'Hello Mr Wong,' I say but he can't hear me because I don't talk as loud as Mum. So I stand in front of him so he can see me and I say, 'Hello Mr Wong,' in a louder voice, but it's still not loud enough and he can't see me because he looks at Eli instead. Eli has his pointer fingers at the outside corners of his eyes and he stretches the skin there. His eyes look like slits in his face and he bows and says, 'Haro, haro.' at Mr Wong.

'Out, out,' says Mr Wong to Eli but he's already moved away.

'I'm gonna grab me some of those red grapes,' Eli says. And he does.

'They're not on the list Eli.'

'List schmist, now I'm gonna grab me some black ones.' I might get in trouble with mum because we never buy grapes.

'We have to get bananas and apples, and oranges for Jordan and Gabby.'

'Oranges schmoranges,' Eli says as he fills his bag up. And he eats the sample watermelon pieces as well as some of the black grapes. And he pulls a cabbage from the middle of the pile and all the other cabbages shuffle out of place and scramble for space and some drop to the floor. Mr Wong holds his hands out and Eli throws the cabbage to him.

'Good catch Bruce,' Eli says and holds his fingers to his eyes again and bows.

When me and mum do shopping, Mr Wong lifts the twenty kg of potatoes onto the trundler, but he's too busy sorting out the cabbages today and Eli is somewhere else, so I try to lift it myself.

'Give it here,' Eli says and he lifts the bag up with one hand and plonks it in the trolley. He eats a sample apricot and I think he's eaten them all because I can't see any out for anyone else to try. I cross potatoes off the list and we leave the fruit and veggies. I turn to say bye to Mr Wong but he isn't there and the sprayed cabbages sit neatly in rows beside the pile of cauliflower heads.

At the dairy section, we have to get three packs of the yoghurts that are on special. Rosie likes yoghurt and bananas. Me too, and we have one of each every day for our lunch at school. The rest are for Jordan and Gabby.

'Nemmine that ugly shit,' Eli says and he gets three packs of the dear yoghurt because he says, it's French so it's special anyway. I don't tell him its dairy food. I open up the part of the trundler where ladies put their babies and I put the yoghurts in there.

'Fuck that bullshit,' Eli says, 'that's where the shit arse babies sit,' and he slides the packs onto the edge of the trundler where they fit neatly and he says, 'That's Christchurch styles.'

I get a one kg block of Tasty cheese but Eli swaps it for Colby. 'Tasty schmasty, tastes like shit. Yuk. Yuk.' He sounds like our baby brother Gabby when he doesn't like some of the kai mum gives him. And he spits it out.

I cross the items off the list one by one. The trundler becomes harder to push. I want Eli to help and when Mum comes home this afternoon I'll tell her Eli didn't help. I get; Milo, for me, Rosie, and the babies; coffee and tea bags for visitors, mum and Eli, and the sugar. I put in the margarine for everyone and butter for Rosie. Next is ten kg flour for our bread that mum makes and a two kg packet of rice. Jordan likes rice pudding with tinned peaches. Dishwashing liquid and soap powder go in next, then the special soap for Rosie's skin and normal soap for the rest of us. I get a two litre shampoo that we all use and a different one for Rosie. I have to get some Treasures disposable nappies for Gabby and Jordan.

‘Those lazy little huas should learn to use the toilet instead of filling these Treasures up with treasure.’ Eli says. Gabby is still a baby and Jordan has little accidents.

‘Accidents my arse’. Eli says. At the end of that aisle, we go past the lady things for mum, but they aren’t on our list today, so I carry on.

At the freezer section, I get a three kg packet of peas and a three-litre box of Mooloo ice-cream. Hokey Pokey is our favourite. The last things to go in are a twelve pack of two-ply toilet paper, and some black rubbish bags. And soon, everything on the list has a line crossed through it. I even get the packet of flower seeds that mum said to buy for Rosie.

‘When are you going to dig my garden, Sammy?’

‘Shush Rosie, it’s raining. I can’t do it in the rain.’

‘Well, when then?’

‘As soon as it stops raining. Stop annoying me. Go and play with Debbie.’

Rosie likes flowers. She goes around the neighbourhood and picks the flowers that she can reach through the other people’s fences. Some of the people let her pick them. And she puts them in jars all over the house. But there aren’t many flowers in our street, there’s some on the bit of grass next to the road, but some one’s knocked the flowers off the stalks; and we only grow vegetables in our garden.

‘Why don’t you plant some flowers next to the cabbages,’ I tell her, but she wants a garden of her own.

Rosie and her friend Debbie from over the road at Ellen’s play tangis under the umbrella tree at Ellen’s place. They pretend that their dolls are the dead people and Rosie puts hedge in her hair like the old ladies did at Nannys’ and Papas’ and James’ tangi did and she stands under the umbrella tree and waves bits of hedge up and down. And she chants, ‘Haere mai, haere mai, haere mai.’ Debbie’s the sad mother, or wife or sister of the dead person and she sits beside whichever doll lies in the shoebox and pretends to cry.

‘We have to have flowers for the dead people, Sammy.’

‘Why?’

‘So they know we love them. That’s what people do. You can’t have a tangi without flowers.’

I don't know how many times each of the dolls has died. With all the digging and burying and digging up again, Rosie and Debbie must have dug up enough ground for a garden already.

'We can't plant flowers in the urupa Sammy.'

'Why not?'

'Because you're not allowed to take anything out once it's in there. Please dig a garden for me, I'm not allowed to touch the sharp tools.'

'Alright, I'll do it as soon as the rain stops.'

'Thank you.'

But a few more months go by and I still don't dig the garden. She gets an old dish from the shed and her and Debbie fill it with dirt from the veggie garden. They plant some flowers in it. Bob, Debbie's brother has a dog and it uses their little dish garden for a toilet.

The flowers die in the mimi soaked dirt.

One day Rosie came home from school looking real sad. She'd picked some flowers on the way home from school and got in trouble with the lady at the house. Mum said to Rosie that God grows flowers for everyone to enjoy but Rosie was not to go on other people's property unless she asks and the people say yes.

'Well if I had my own garden, I wouldn't pick other people's flowers.'

'Alright Rosie, I'll dig you a garden. I'm sorry.'

I go down the aisles mum never goes down; I just want to have a look at the Cadburys, and the Nestle's and the bright packets that hold the lollies. I go past the Bluebird and ETA's and the coloured fizzy drinks. I linger in front of the shelves and I stare at all those goodies and my mouth waters. Eli grabs a box of Continental chocolates. 'That's not on our list Eli, I'm gonna get into trouble with mum, we haven't got enough money for those.'

'Stop being an egg, you pussy.' Eli says and he takes the Treasures out of our shopping and puts the packet on the shelf beside the boxed chocolates.

Over at the biscuits and cakes I see Shane Fords mother.

Shane Ford's got a father. He lives with them at their house. The Fords live at number twelve. One time I let Shane borrow my bicycle pump. He didn't give it back when he said he would so about six weeks later I went over to get it because I had a flat tyre. Shane Ford said he didn't borrow it from me and I said, 'Yes you did.' And then his mother came to the door and said, 'What's this?' And I told her that Shane had my bike pump and I needed it back and she said, 'No, that's not yours his dad bought that for him.' And then the dad came to the door. He filled up the whole door and he ducked his head so he could get through and I backed down the steps. 'What's going on here?' so I told him.

'Is that this boys pump?'

'No, you got it for me.' Shane said.

And then he said to Shane's mother, 'Is that right?'

'Of course dear, you must remember when you buy things for your children.' She said. And then Shane's father said to me, 'They must be right and you are wrong. Don't you ever call my wife and son liars again and don't you come to my house. Now off you go, get home. Go on get, and don't come on to my property again.'

'Right,' said Mum when I told her.

She wasn't gone for long and she didn't have the pump when she came back.

Last week when I took my bike down the garage to pump my tyre up, Eli said to me

'Where's your own pump?' So I told him.

When mum came home from work Eli said, 'Let's go get Sammy's pump. You,' he said to me, 'Stay here and watch these fullas.'

They weren't gone for long and they came back with the pump.

Later on that night, I said to Eli, 'How come they gave you the pump? Was the father home?'

'Course he was.'

'Well how did you get him to give it back?'

'He went for mum.'

‘Thanks Eli.’

‘It’s all right bro’.’

And Eli never said any more about that again. And the bruises on his knuckles faded after a while. And then he could hold his fork properly again.

One Friday it was my turn to cook dinner. I’d learnt from Nanny Jo how to make Cottage pie from the left over roast from Sunday. Here at home we use mince because we never have left over roast meat. We only have roast when it’s on special at the butchers or Three Guys. Eli likes roasted pigs head, but that doesn’t count as a real roast.

Eli watched T.V. while I made dinner.

‘Eli, I have to go toilet, can you watch the potatoes please?’

‘You don’t go toilet in the middle of cooking a feed kaka-head. Go on then, but you better scrub and scrub your fucken hands.’

‘They’re burnt. Thought you said you were gonna watch them.’

‘I did.’

‘But they’re burnt.’

‘So? I watched them, you should have shit fast aye?’

‘It’s your fault, now I have to peel some more. These ones have gone to waste.’

‘Waste shmaste, just scrape the burnt bits off and mash them up real good. Put heaps of cheese on top. You’re gonna grill it anyway. Grill means burn. And don’t use that burn arse pot again. That’s why they burnt.’

No one said any thing about the burnt taste. Rosie ate the cheese bit, Jordan ate his all up and Gabby spat his out and said, yuk. Eli had his in sandwiches with heaps of tomato sauce and I had two helpings so it wouldn’t go to waste, but I could still taste burn. Mum stood at the sink and picked at what the others had left on their plates and she didn’t say anything either.

‘That was real good Sammy,’ Eli said.

‘Thanks, Eli.’ I said.

Sometimes I wish we could be a real family like the Leiluas. When I go to pick Thomas my friend up so we can walk to school together, Mr Leilua and Nanny Fela'atio call out, 'Love you, Thomas.' And he calls love you too, back. We don't say that to one another. I wish we did.

One time I had a bad cold and I had to stay home from school. Mum had to go to work and she left all the things I would need on the draw beside my bed. A jug of orange juice, some sandwiches in case I got hungry, a roll of toilet paper for my nose and a plastic bag for rubbish. Eli wagged school that day. Again.

I lay in bed and I read, 'To Kill a Mockingbird.' Mum gave that to me when I was nine and even though I had read it heaps over the three years, I still liked reading it, not from front to back, but I read my favourite bits over and over. I think Jordans gonna grow up to be like Boo Radley. I hope people aren't gonna be ugly to him like Scout and Jem and Dill were to Boo. Jordan can't help being doongy. And Boo Radley couldn't help being the way he was either. He just had an ugly dad.

Eli watched T.V. because I could hear him swear at the ugly bitches on the programmes. Every now and then he came into the room.

'You wanna drink or something?'

'No thank-you. I got some here.'

'You warm?'

'Yes.' But I felt cold.

'You don't look warm.'

'I am.' And I carried on reading my book.

Each time he left he took the rubbish out of the plastic bag with him and after he was gone I could hear the toilet flush and I could hear him scrub his hands.

He came in again.

'You wanna rub down with Vicks or something?'

'Mum already did that.'

'That was this morning kaka-head.'

‘I’m all right.’ But I wasn’t. I felt ugly and cold and blocked up in my nose. And I wanted mum. Eli threw me the vicks jar.

‘Here, rub that on you and if there’s any bits you can’t reach call out to me and I’ll rub it on for you.’

I rubbed vicks on my chest.

‘Want me to do your back?’

‘No.’

‘Here have these, with this.’

‘I’m not allowed those paracetamols; mum has to give them to me.’

‘Please your black self then, but drink this.’

‘What is it?’

‘Lemon drink and it’s got honey in it. Nanny use to make it for me when I got a cold.’

‘Thought you said your nanny was ugly.’

‘Only sometimes. You can’t be ugly all the time. Have a taste.’

‘What does it do?’

‘Makes you better egg.’

So I had a sip. It was nice. Then I had another one. And I drank it all up.

When I woke up. I felt good. I was warm but my skin itched. Instead of the sheet and my fluffy blanket on me I had the itchy blankets on. The grey ones with the red stripe down the middle that we only give to people when they sleep over, the ones mum got from the Savation Army Store and the ones she calls Hobson blankets.

Then, she was home.

‘How you feeling Sammy?’

‘Good.’

‘You look better.’

‘Thanks mum. How come you changed my blankets and pyjamas?’

‘You were sweating, they were all wet.’

‘I didn’t even feel you do it.’

‘I didn’t.’

Mum was home and I felt heaps better. I lay in bed and I read my book. Walter Cunningham had just poured golden syrup all over his kai. I always laugh at that bit.



‘You okay?’ Eli said.

‘Yeah, mums home.’

Eli sat on the end of my bed.

‘I was gonna put my nanny blanket on you but its too heavy.’

‘I’m all right now Eli, Mums here to look after me.’

‘Yeah I know but...You want anything you just call out. Okay bro?’

‘Okay.’

Eli straightened up my blankets. He touched my forehead with the back of his hand. Then he placed his hand on the side of my cheek. My book fell on the floor and he picked it up and put it back on my drawer. I was sick with the ugly cold and it made my eyes water up and sting. Eli must have been getting my cold because his eyes were watery too.

‘Phone Eli,’mum said. ‘It’s Emma.’

‘Okay coming, tell her I won’t be long. Nah tell I’ll ring back. Thanks mum.’

Eli stood up and then he sat down again. He stood up and over me. I saw my fathers face. I felt my mothers hand squeeze mine.

‘Sammy I...Take it easy aye bro’.

‘Okay. Bro’.

I stayed home for a whole week. And Eli stayed home too. He watched T.V. and he looked after me. He went to my school and brought some school work home.’

‘Thanks Eli.’

‘Can’t have you getting behind and being a dumb-arse bro’. I made you a bed on the couch, come in the lounge with me and do your school mahi in there.’

So I did my school work in the lounge and Eli watched T.V. He watched the soaps.

‘Bullshit bitches,’ Eli said. ‘All ways saying that, I love you shit.’

‘What’s wrong with telling some one you love them?’

‘Just saying is bullshit. You gotta mean it.’

‘What’s the difference?’

‘People can tell the difference.’

‘How?’

‘You gotta do stuff. Egg.’

‘What stuff?’

‘Just do your mahi. Shut-up and read your book or something. Get back to bed if you’re gonna be an egg.’

I didn’t do my mahi. I didn’t read my book. I didn’t go back to bed. I lay on the couch in the lounge and I watched the people on T.V. tell other people they loved them. I ate the soup Eli made for our lunch. He’d cut the crusts off my bread, I don’t like crust and he’d made chicken noodle soup. My favourite. I went to sleep and every now and then I could hear Eli swearing about the ugly bitches and huas on T.V.

Eli is my big brother, he loves me. I can tell.

Eli is my big brother and I love him, but I’m not gonna tell him.

I’ll just do stuff.

Like what he does for me.

We still have enough left over for the packet of hot chips mum said we could buy for a treat. And we have the six dollars for the taxi home.

‘Taxi schmaxi,’ Eli saysi and he spends the taxi money on hamburgers and fish and chips.

‘We’ll take some hot chips home for Rosie and we can all have a feed together.’

‘How we gonna get home now Eli? How we gonna get this trundle full of shopping home?’

‘It’s a fucken trolley and were gonna push it home. Everybody in Christchurch does it.’

‘How?’

‘Run.’

‘What about the ice-cream?’

‘Best you run fast then. Aye.’

So I’m running as fast as I can and I see Eli up ahead of me walking normal. I want to throw something at him to make him stop walking so fast. But I don’t know what to throw because we need everything in the trolley. I want to sit down in the gutter and have a tantrum like Jordan. But I’m already in trouble with mum so I call out, ‘Wait, Eli.’

‘Hurry up dick.’ He stops. I hear a sound behind me. Thud, thud, thud, thud. Fast footsteps that run and I think it’s one of the three guys chasing me for the trolley so I run faster.

‘Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, let a man pass, let a man through, make way, make way make haste.’ Someone overtakes me. It’s only Solley.

‘Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you.’ He calls to me without looking. And Solley and his thudding feet and rattling trolley, that sounds like a roomful of people doing the clinking glass cheers thing, whizzes past me. So now there’s two of us running along the main road. We’re running as fast as we can go so our icecream doesn’t melt.

I didn’t get into trouble that day.

Mum was happy with the chocolates Eli bought for her. Jordan ate the red grapes and Gabby didn’t say yuk to the dairy food. Rosie told Eli that Colby is better than Tasty and said to mum we should get it all the time. Rosie was happy with the flower seeds, ‘Thank you Sammy.’ She said.

Mum growled about the trolley though. After we put the shopping away, Eli and me pushed the trolley down the street. Eli said for us to leave it outside number eight because the car wasn’t home yet. Solley from next door to Ellen’s saw us and said, ‘Where youse taking that to?’ So he gave Eli two dollars for it and Eli bought some lollies at the dairy. Mum gave Eli two dollars and told him to go and get the trolley so we can take it back to three Guys.

When we got to Solleys house he’d already broken it down. There was a stack of hangi baskets in his shed and he told us the wheels will come in handy for the go cart he was making for Jordan and Gabby.

Then mum went down the Mad Butchers to buy the meat. And after that we all went for a ride in the car to the Chinese takeaways to buy special tea because it’s Thursday.

We have coke with our take-aways. Eli gets the greedy glass that he fills for himself first. Me and Rosie have the marmite glasses and Jordan and Gabby have their drinking cups. When everyone’s glasses are full, Eli finishes what’s left in the bottle.

My favourite is Won-ton and noodle soup. I use chop-sticks. I'm not very good so I take a long time. Even though I know what's in the middle of the little dough parcels, I like to pretend that I'm unwrapping a surprise. Then I suck the meaty balls that are inside. Rosie likes Chicken Egg Fu Yung, but mum makes hers now. In March, Rosie had Prawn egg Fu Yung, she came out in a rash around her mouth and then she started to wheeze. The ambulance came because Rosies face swelled up and she couldn't breathe. After that time, we added Prawns to the list of things that Rosie couldn't eat.

Jordan likes rice. One time he had some fried rice with peas, egg, and onion in it. He separated the rice from those other things and made piles out of them. He ate the rice first. Then he ate the peas. He left the mounds of onion and egg at the side of his plate. Now he has plain boiled rice and some of the chicken chow mein that mum gets for everyone. Gabby has a bit of everything and he doesn't spit on Thursdays. Eli said he's going to go through the whole menu and so far he's had four different things. Mum stands at the bench and eats what we leave while she scrapes the plates.

I wonder what Mr Wong has for special tea on Thursdays.

Rosie's friend at school invited her to her birthday party and mum let her go. She took her own food to eat at the party and mum said she was allowed some of the birthday cake. We all walked Rosie to the party. Me and Eli had turns at pushing the go cart Solley made for Jordan and Gabby. Jordan sat in the back seat with his sheepskin over his head and Gabby sat up the front. The boys laughed when they crashed into the fences and hedges on the way. Gabby didn't know how to steer. And Eli yelled at him to steer you hua but no matter how much Eli yelled they kept crashing. And laughing. Rosie skipped along the path and I had to keep telling her to keep walking because I saw her look at the flowers in the other people's gardens.

When we got to the house with the beer bottle edged garden, the one that all us kids called the ugly-house, Eli said for us to cross the road because that's where the devil lived. And he told me not to look in the windows because the devil would make a bad thing happen. And he said if I looked by accident I had to criss-cross myself a thousand times.

‘Don’t lie Eli. Stop telling lies.’ I yelled at him and I ran real fast to catch up to the others. I ran so fast that I tripped and fell. I landed on my knee. The skin came off and some little stones dug into the bleeding part. It hurt.

‘Why cry sookarse?’ Eli said laughing.

‘Because my knee hurts.’

Eli laughed some more.

‘Why rub your eyes then?’

‘Not funny Eli.’ And I cried harder.

‘It is funny. Get up and stop being a tangiweto, hurry up we have to look after those fullas. Stop just thinking about yourself all the time. Get up. You can cry about it some more later on. When you’re all by yourself and no one can see you.’

I took his hand that he held out to me and he pulled me up and we carried on to Rosie’s friends’ party.

I limped and I thought about what Eli said about the ugly-house windows. But I know I never looked in. I know I didn’t. I never did that day or any other. I did not look in.

We left Rosie at the party. The father is a policeman and he said he’d give the girls a ride in the car as a treat.

‘Some treat, we’ll all get a ride like that,’ Eli said. ‘Bring us some cake home Rosie.’ But she’d already skipped up the path and had joined the other little girls.

A police car stopped outside our house.

‘Fuck,’ said Eli. ‘Pigs.’ But it was only Rosie’s friends’ father. Rosie wasn’t in the car.

‘Where is your mother?’

‘At work.’

‘Where?’

‘Emergency department.’

‘Oh my goodness, I’d better get back down there.’ He said.

The sound of fist smacking leather tells me that Eli’s in the shed again. His knuckles bleed sometimes because he doesn’t use the gloves that mum bought for him. He just hard out smashes the punching bag. Gabby talks in a language that I don’t know but he’s

not talking to anybody I can see. Sometimes he talks and talks all through the night and he giggles at the wall. Mum said that the tupuna talk to him in Maori and Gabby talks back to them in the same language. I don't know how to talk in Maori; another language is too much for me to learn at the moment especially since I have to do well in English. And I have to do well in maths and science so learning something new will take up too much time. I don't think Maori is that important though, we'd be learning it at school if it was. It's not necessary to know that to be a Doctor. I know some words and Ellen and mum talk it with each other, Eli learns it at school but that's because the kids at his school aren't very clever at English, maths and science. When they grow up they will make things in factories or go on the dole which is for people who don't do well at school.

They talk Maori all the time at Nanny P's house. Nanny P and James' sister Moana, come to pick Gabby up every weekend now. But they don't take Jordan.

The plump black grapes on Mums' bottle hang in clusters, and drops of water cling to them, Mum tilts the bottle and the water drops slide up the label when she refills her glass. After glass. Bottle after bottle. Night after night.

And she calls to Rosie but she knows Rosie's not here. She's up the urupa. One night I found mum asleep on the floor so I got the flannel and wet her face. I squeezed her hand tight and tighter and I never let go. She didn't even squeeze back. So in the end I let go and I got us a blanket and we slept on the floor like we used to when I was small.

I got blisters on my palms from digging and digging and now there's a garden big enough to grow all the flowers in this world in, but no one's planted any yet. I sprinkled the seeds I brought home for Rosie in the garden I made, they grew, but now they're dead too. The blisters on my hands have healed now and only hard bits of skin are left.

The hurt in my knee stayed and stayed and every now and then a hurt comes back like what the blisters in my hands made me feel and when that happens another hurt comes because I think about Rosie. And I miss her and I'm sorry. And I want her to come home to our house again. And that's when I have to do what Eli said, I cry about it later on

when I'm by myself because I don't want anybody to see me being a tangiweto sookarse.  
I'm sorry Rosie. I never looked in the windows.  
I never.

People rush at Eli and shake his hand as he walks towards the changing rooms. One of the people is Shane Ford's father. 'My neighbour,' he says to a man in the crowd. And he puts his arm around Eli.

'You two boys smile, come on now the both of you, get closer together, closer now and say cheese.' Mrs Ford says.

And Eli blinks as the camera flashes and he stumbles and falls forward but Mr Ford holds him up and Mrs Ford screams and drops the camera. It breaks apart when it lands on the floor and it grinds beneath Elis' boot as he staggers forward and it crunches as Eli turns towards me. I can't be sure, but I think Eli winks at me with his good eye and he shrugs Mr Ford off.

Eli goes for a shower and I wait for him. He comes out the back way where he's told me to wait the other times.

'Mum's waiting.' I say.

'Best get home then.' He says.

'She's got a mean feed on for us.'

'Best we run then. Aye?'

## **Home**

### **By Eli Tumanako Taurima**

My name is Eli Tumanako Taurima. I am eighteen years old. I am a fighter. I'm good at what I do.

*It's a mad angry town full of mad angry people. We call it Mad-angry. We live here.*

I read about this lady who was brutally attacked and left to die outside some rich persons house. That was on the other side of town. 275- *on the bus route. 275- in the phone book.*

One night on T.V. I saw that the pigs had found this dead baby in a house around the corner from us. I went to that house. 275- *on the bus route. 275- in the phone book.*

I had a mate once. His name was Philip Mathew. We called him Muzz-Kutu. He's still my mate. We just don't see each other and hang out together any more. He died. He was born at the hospital up the road from here and his house was down from ours. The house is still there. When he died his whanau took him home. Back up North somewhere. He should have gone up there to live. But his living was done here. So was his dying. 275- *on the bus route. 275- in the phone book.*

I had a sister once. Her name was Rose Koromiko. We called her Rosie. She's still my sister. We just don't see each other anymore and she doesn't live at home. She died. She was born at the hospital up the road from here and she died at the hospital up the road from here. In between, she lived with us in this house where we still live. She's buried in the Pakeha urupa up the road. 275- *on the bus route. 275- in the phone book.*

The raped lady, the dead baby, Muzz-Kutu and Rosie: they never hurt anyone.

My Aunty was ugly to me. She told lies about me. She stood by and watched while my Papa thrashed me. She doesn't live in this town.

But she still lives.

Somewhere.

The people in Emma's world sip red wine out of crystal, and raise their little fingers in the air when they have a drink, and listen to Leonard Cohen, and make love on Wednesday afternoons, but here in Mad-angry; we guzzle beer out of the brown glass bottle it comes in, we raise our middle finger in your face as it is done to us, we don't listen to no-one; cause none hears us and we aint hungry for love we got no taste for it anyway, cause here, we just get fucked: off, over, up and around. Any time of the day, every day. This is where I live. This is home.

Smash. One for that lady. Smash. One for that baby. Smash. One for Muzz-Kutu. Smash. One for Rosie. And Smash, smash, smash. For those to come. And then go. I am



a fighter. I am very good at what I do. My name is Eli Tumanako Taurima. I am twenty years old.

I'm very, very, good at what I do.

I am a fighter.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

I get my alieness from my Princess Grandmother.

I saw a movie once called Alien it was about some humans who set up a contraption on another planet to make it a better place for humans to live on because their planet was polluted and absolutely rooted and they wanted to live there, and live long and prosper forever and ever. Ahh men. The planet creatures didn't want the humans there so they set about getting rid of them. The humans did not ask the creatures permission to be there they just home invaded and set about changing the whole atmosphere to suit themselves, but it didn't suit the original inhabitants. The tangata whenua. The indigenous ones.

Towards the end of the movie the Aliens who were really the tangata whenua, and the humans had an action packed movie fight. I was going, go Alien and I meant the creature, the tangata whenua, not the humans and I sat in that movie theatre and threw popcorn at the humans on the screen. Popcorn doesn't go far, jafas would have been better, but I'd eaten them up earlier, so I missed hitting the people in the movie, I just got the people in the movie theatre. A lady who sat in front of me complained to the theatre management about my rudeness and I was evicted for bad behaviour, just when it was getting to the good bit where you see a lady in her underpants. So I didn't get to see. The end. Go Alien. The creature one.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

Cop with a radar radar. Picks me up in my racecaracecar. Godog oh my god crash into the powerpole. Ahahaha head injured brain injury. Too late already brain damaged. Then. Who funds the funny man? Which came first? The damaged brain that is mad or the mad

brain that is damaged. ACC or Mental Health? S.O.E. the nation's wealth. Mind control me, mind controller who holds the purse strings to the mad billion dollars? Mood swing and fluctuate. Emotionally labile. Hallucinations tactile. Feel me heal me touchy feely. Let me off the mad go round. I've been here all my life.

Almost.

Let me off best practice. Not good for the industry. Not in my best interest is malpractice. Know me before you judge me. And me and me and me.

'Hey Adam this is Colin, say hello to Colin Adam.'

'Hello Colin.'

'Is he mad, Delilah.' Says Colin.

'Mad as a crazy bastard can be. Useless too.'

'Is he?'

'Sure is. Been mad for years. Crazy, useless mad bastard. Don't talk too loud, he'll wake the staff up. Then we'll be in for it.'

'Yeah?'

'Yeah he calls out to them. Nurse, nurse, it's Delilah again and she won't go away. I can't handle her. She won't leave me alone. So they try to get rid of me. They can't though not for good or for bad. I keep returning. No matter what chemical they pump into his useless body, they can't kill me off. Change the chemical, change the dosage, change the frequency, give him a cocktail with a pro renata in the middle. They'll kill him first. And do you know why they can't get rid of me? They can't because they don't know what they're dealing with. I'm always one step ahead of them and anyway it's not a good thing to make me go away for good. Too many people will be out of work. So they can't get rid of me. It's a conflict of interests to kill an industry that's taken years to establish. The crazy bastard's stopped listening to me. I know he can hear me, he just doesn't listen. If he keeps this up, I'll go somewhere else. Shall we go Colin?'

## **Home**

### **By Jordon Te Awanui**

Lets go home matey my brother Eli said to me. Homatey I said to him back. Then I put my hand out for him to hold and he said fuck off ehoa you been scratching your arse. So I said ha ha ha ha ha and tee hee hee hee hee and I held my own hand myself and walked down the street beside my big brother and gave the up eyes to every one I saw. But they

didn't up eyes to me back. We had to cross the big road and Eli said to me to hold on to the end of his jersey sleeve so I did and I looked, left, right, left, right, left, right and Eli told me to fucken hurry up so I went leftright, leftright, leftright, leftright with my head. Eli grabbed my hand and I had to run across the road with him.

When we got to the other side he didn't let my scratch arse hand go so I didn't let go of his either.

Eli said don't you tell no one we never used the crossing okay? Kay I said to him back. Homatey.

The Tupuna Maui he used his nannys jawbone for a fishhook and he had no bait. So he punched his own nose. And he hooked up the fish. What a dick like Dick Eli said. And he punched Dick's nose. The Tupuna Maui got a real big fish and the tail is far away up north and the head is far away down the south and here in the middle is homatey. We live in the arse-hole bit of the Ika of Maui Eli said to my friend Muzz-Kutu. The hole in the puku is the arse bit that mummy sticks the knife in and it goes up, up, up, towards the head bit. When mummy sticks the knife in the stinky guts spews out and you can see the pipis the fish had for his dinner. My mummy takes the scaleys off the fishes' outside and then it rains plastic bits of rainbow and they land on the grass. Soap bubbles rain and rain like the soapy bubbles Eli makes for me in my bath that I have when every body has a shower because I don't want the water to rain down, rain down on me. On my head. The raining water comes down, comes down out of the holes in the holey pipe that's stuck to the wall and Eli shuts the door and I can't get out and I ahhhhh scream. Somebodyhelpmeplease. The scaley rainbow soap bubbles go flick-flick-flick. Red and yellow and pink and green and they go pop, pop, pop, and I laugh and laugh, and laugh some more and I mimi in the bath.

Eli said Fat-tits-Alison's got a real flash house.

I went over once because she said to Eli, 'Eli, would you come over and fix my curtain track?'

'Come on Jordan, let's go over to Alison-fat-tits house.'

When we got there Eli knocked on the already opened door and Alison's voice yelled it's open from somewhere in the house, we took our shoes off at the open door and walked

into the house. A hundred dolls in different colour clothes sat everywhere around her sitting room.

‘What you want me to do?’ Eli said loud to her.

‘I’m down here.’

‘Wait here Jordan okay?’ Eli said to me,

‘K.’ I said back. Eli walked to the hallway.

‘Where are you?’ Eli said again.

‘In here.’ She said back.

And Eli went to where the voice came from down the hallway.

And then Eli raced out of that house and left me behind to take all the clothes off the dollies so I did.

‘Jesus, Jordan.’ Eli said when he came back to me.

And I said ‘Jesus, Jordan.’ Back.

And Eli said put those fucken dolls clothes on Jordan.

So I tried to put the clothes on but they can’t fit on me. And Eli said, ‘Jesus, Jordan. On the dolls, on the fucken dolls.’ And I did and he helped me. Then Alison came out and she had no clothes on and she said, ‘How would you like to play with a real doll Eli?’ And I said, ‘Doll.’

And Eli said, ‘Don’t look Jordan.’ But I did. Then Eli put his hand in front of my eyes so I couldn’t see her fat tits and arse.

And Alison said, ‘Don’t be shy.’

Eli grabbed my hand and I pulled me out of that house.

Lets go home matey my brother Eli said to me. Homatey I said to him back.

And I walked with my sheepy over my head and Eli dragged me to make me go fast.

‘Faster than that you hua.’

‘Hua.’ I said to him back.

‘I’m gonna tell mum on that fat fucken bitch.’

‘Bitch.’

We go home and I make paper and glue, paper and glue, paper and glue. Sammy said, ‘Jordans making card board.’ I cut out the shapes. I make biscuits. I draw the washing machine, the drier, the tub, the washing machine, the drier, and the tub. Drier goes

rounrounroun. Washing machine goes rounrounroun. Slow and fast. I'm a good boy  
Jordan. Get a red glo-heart. I draw and I draw.

I draw Alison-fat-tits, don't look Jordan. How would you like to play with a real doll,  
Eli?

Paper and glue, paper and glue. Big balloons. Pink ones and lots and lots of hairys for  
underpants.

Sammy says, 'Mum, Jordans making a naked lady.'

'Alison-fat-tits, good boy Jordan, how would you like to play with a real Doll Eli? Look,  
look Eli.'

And I show Eli so he can say good boy Jordan and give me a red glo-heart.

And mummy see. My picture. Say, 'Good boy Jordan.' But she won't.

'Oh, this looks like Alison, Jordan.'

Yes mummy yes, say good boy Jordan. But she won't. So I show Eli. How would you  
like to play with a real Doll Eli?

'Fuck off with that ugly bitch, you doongy hua.'

'Eli. Don't talk to him like that. Please.'

'He's being an egg.'

Eggs, don't like eggs, smell like farting.

'What's wrong with you Eli?'

'Go and ask her, he seen her too.'

'When?'

When.

'Before.'

Fore.

'When before?'

'When we went over.'

Over.

'Tell me.'

Tell me.

'Fuck-up you.'

You. Hahahahahaha.

And Eli, eyes-together-talks. Loud. And mummy, eyes-together-talks. Loud. And Eli talks, talking, talk-talks. And mummy drinks, drinking, drink-drinks. Drink it all up, mummy. Good mummy, mummy. And Eli crying talks and Aunty Tracy did that to me he says. And mummy crying, drinking, talks. And Eli crying, talking talks. And stops.

‘Right, stay here and watch these kids please.’

Please.

‘What are you gonna do?’

Do.

‘Just stay here.’

Here. Hahahahaha. And mummy goes away. Fast.

Hahahahahaha. Mummy you left your drink on the table.

‘Gimme that you hua.’

‘U Hua.’

And Eli says, Sammy you watch Jordan. I’m going to see what mum’s doing. I stay homatey with Sammy in our house. In the street called Stewart. In the Mad-Angry town. In the Tupuna Mauis’ fish arse-hole.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

I’m a homeless person in a hopeless situation. Vacant lot. I’m a hopeless vacant lot in a homeless situation, situated in this dispossessed disposition.

## **275-**

### **By narrator**

*Your desolate oceans fluctuate.*

*Moon has lost controlling moon.*

*Relentless is still. Periodical*

*Arthriticky muted fingers stutter over arpeggio.*

*Frets.*

*Calypso cadence.*

*Composure.*

*Hungry passion.*

*Beware: satiation.*

*A youthful folly.*

*No.*

*They will never learn*

*Temperence.*

## **Maia Taurima**

### **By Herself**

#### ***After Kahu.***

Last night's rain has washed the footpath clean. Earlier this morning, the sweeper truck sucked up the leaves from the gutter. The rubbish bins are empty. It's a tidy street. An hour ago steam rose from the wet black road. Now the road is dry and grey. The flag outside the courthouse lifts occasionally, but the attempts are pathetic and it droops and hangs down the white pole.

A group. Whanau have spread their KFC over the picnic tables on the grassed area beneath the flag. Their primer-patched vehicles occupy the car park. First in. Otherwise fuck off. Nannys and grand dads, mothers and fathers, youths and children. And babies. It could be a festival. Except that, it lacks gaiety. These people are not gay.

The men boast; toughness, hatred, anger and conceit in their staunch strut and cocky swagger, in hostile korero they spit at their women and children, in the blue-black lines etched deep, deep into their toughened chocolate coloured skins.

They fuck the world. Fuck the world and fuck you too.

Between the mouthfuls of the chicken they've torn with their ferocious teeth, they skull back the ice-cold beer named for their Iwi. They are dressed in black, blue, and leathers. Cruel crude boob made rings glint on their fingers.

Tough.

The women display toughness. They conceal hatred, anger, and conceit. Broken bones heal to be broken again and broken promises are forever. They run for more beers when Neanderthal grunts. They roll up the joints for the simpleton *punks*. At least punk died. Mere has a fat hickey blood sucked on her neck; Mere has a black eye from when she hit the deck, Baby in the push chair chewing on chicken baby in her puku from when he put his dick in.

*Love you forever.* When the carnival is over the merry-go-round stops, and you have to get off. But hey, the roller coaster carries on and the ghost train never stops. The chamber of horrors is never closed and you can always get lost in the amazing maze. And you know what? This is the perpetual circus. Line up, roll up and get your tickets right here. Got no money kare? Haere mai. Tatou, tatou e. Just use your twat. *Love you forever.*

They, laugh, spit, and smoke. And smoke. They feast. They gorge.

A group.

A family huddle on the footpath. They look dressed for a flash wedding. But it's not the day for public celebrant marriages. That's tomorrow. A man shields a woman from the journalists and photographers who loiter. She's a lady worth photographing. The lady dabs at her blue, blue, eyes with a flimsy bit of lace edged cloth. The sunlight strikes a diamond in the silver bracelet on her wrist. The fragmented light rays radiate. Manicured blood red nails press into the pink flesh at her throat. Pearls gather there. They are richly ivory, and classy. A young man stands, hands in pocket. A young woman stands hands clasped. Two men stand at the fringe of the huddle. They talk and shake their heads. They talk and punctuate their speech with abrupt hand gestures. One of the men embraces the group with his arms outstretched.

No touching.

The young mans eyes flit across to where Maia stands. She grips the handle on Rose Koromikos pushchair. The young man whispers to a young woman. The young woman whispers to the manicured lady. The lady tugs at the protecting mans suit jacket sleeve. The peripheral two turn to Maia. They all stare at her. Maias heart thumps loud and fast. Her feet drag. The pushchair wheel that needs oiling squeaks. Rose Koromiko sleeps. Six pairs of iced blue eyes pierce Maias heart.



‘I’m sorry.’ She says.

Maia turns.

She walks away as the blob of designer spittle begins to slide down her right cheek. I am sorry.

Truly.

### ***After James***

The turf has rejoined the surrounding bit of lawn it was cut from. Seamless until you look closely. Like a piece of glass that buries itself on impact, smack and the skin closes over it. Seamless. The council worker who closed the gate at six this evening, knows me by name. It’s on the headstone, as if I’m in that grave too. He stood behind me and coughed as he did the first time ten months ago.

‘Excuse me Maia is it? I must ask you to leave, I must lock the gates.’

‘Must you? It’s not as if these people are going anywhere. Is it?’

Still. Silent.

I know I must go home.

But, if I go home, the aching will come again and I will hate you again.

For leaving me.

The council worker has kicked me out and released me into the silent night. The gate clangs shut and steel grates steel and rings in my ears like a death rattle or a loosely associated word mix of tormented thought disorder that screeches and shrieks and becomes the mad woman on screen.

No.

That is not madness.

That day, when the first dirt clod hit the coffin lid I thought I heard an echoed vacant hollow and I wondered if, hoha with all the fuss and weeping, you’d got up while everyone was sleeping and had walked home. I should go home now but I’ll sit a while in the car, in this parking space where there are more lights than we have in our street.

Do they have night time funerals and burials?

Or maybe the lights are for the other broken arsed women like me, other women who are too sad and too grief filled to go home to their children. Women with hearts, too, too inconsolable, hearts that ache and ache and sicken...sounds like a soapy, stop being a sad arse Maia and get home to the kids. In the ten months that I've been coming here, I haven't seen any other broken arsed night time griever yet. Better go home. Could sleep here. Could.

If I go home tonight I will take my shoes off at the door and unlock it. Quietly. Softly tread, softly. I don't want to wake the children. They will be in bed and so they should be. It's after mid-night and Eli would have made sure they all went to bed at the right time. He would have re-heated the casserole I'd prepared and he would have fed and bathed the little ones. He would have made sure that Samson and Rose tidied the kitchen after dinner. He's a good boy. He looks after his brothers and sister. He doesn't complain. But Eli is only fifteen and too young, too young to carry my burden. And me.

If I go home tonight, I will tiptoe through the house, close the curtains, and shut any windows Eli may have forgotten. I will check my babies one by one and kiss each one's face, forehead, or hand or whatever bit of skin that's exposed to me.

If I go home tonight, I will make my way through the house and breathe in the familiar. I will turn the lights off and shut the darkness in the rooms behind me. I will go into our bedroom and close the door. I will switch the bedside lamp on. After a while, I will put it out.

Then I will go out of my mind.

I must go home. I must go home to my babies.

### ***After Dick***

You wait at the Holy criss-cross of metal track and wooden sleepers. The stoned bed beneath your tired shoes crunches. Look left along the snaky line where Wellington waits nine hours away. Look right to where the lines converge. Auckland at the end in forty-five minutes. Warning! Warning! Do not cross here. Use the over-bridge. That other day, that other nurse crossed here. Locomotive breath. Locomotive death and closed casketed,

smashed up bits of mourned flesh and blood and bone and guts, spread from here to Papakura and beyond. Maybe to the Maunga, Taupiri te Maunga: that sits by the Awa, Waikato te Awa, before the Suicide Bridge bends, before the township of Taupiri. Only memory remains whole. Some remember lest they forget. Take heed the warning. None coming. Careful, careful. Go. Cross now. Go home to the babies who wait for you. The sleeping children. Careful, careful. For them.

Night shift. Emergency department. South Auckland busy. South Auckland hectic. South Auckland hard. Australasia's busiest recorded on some nights. Another night is over. Alison waits on the doorstep. It's Wednesday.

She reads the Herald section one, back of the last page. She needs to know the arrival and departure times of the boats from overseas, and their names. Then she will know what outfits she has to pack, sort out what range of make-up and perfume she needs to take, and if she will need her bag of tricks and whips, and lotions and potions.

The rest she knows. It's her business.

'Captain Pugwash's back in town on Friday afternoon.'

Maia grins at her friend.

'That takes care of Friday night then.'

'Sure does. Did you have a good night? The kids are awake I heard them. I'll make us a coffee aye?'

She continues to read the paper as she walks up the steps and kicks her shoes off before going inside.

'Better take your hand-cuffs then aye. Yeah, It was its usual busy Wednesday night and,'

Maia leans against the bench. Eyes closed, she sighs.

'That ugly aye?'

'Uglier than you can imagine Ali.' She calls down the hallway, 'I'm home you fellas, morning, get up please.'

'Morning mum.'

'Morning muuum.'

'Well, ata marie to you whaea, taku whaea.' Eli learns te reo at school.

The water pipes rumble and the shower runs. Rosie sings, what a friend we have in Jesus, Sammy asks the whole neighbourhood if any one has seen his homework book. The babies sleep on, they will wake soon.

The two friends sit on the step and drink their coffees. The smoke from their cigarettes mingles in the silent space between them. Ash is flicked into the ashtray they share.

‘You know what Maia?’

‘What?’

‘I’ve never had a best friend before.’

‘Yeah?’

‘Forever aye? Me and you. Mates for ever?’

Puff. Inhale. Blow. Exhale. Maia stubs her cigarette out. And the flimsy smoke blows away.

‘Mum, the babies are awake.’

‘Be in soon Rosie. When you coming back Ali?’

‘When I’ve made a million.’

‘Sure. I’ll see you on Sunday morning then.’

‘Well half a million. Hey, got twenty bucks for train fare?’

The house is empty now.

Time to sleep.

Bombay Sapphire burns her throat. The next one slips down. Fire and ice.

The empty bottle rolls off the bed and slides onto the floor.

Time to weep.

**275-**

## **By Narrator**

Death is a punishment for the living. For the dead know nothing. I am left here to live with what I know. My baby girl is dead. I know that. I knew it yesterday just as I’ve known it since the day she died. I know it today. And I will carry on fucken knowing it every day I breathe to live another fucken day. This moment is all I can endure and yet even in the speaking of it, the mere thinking; another moment has passed and another.

And another. Hide me away in the darkness forever so that I won't have to face another day. But even in the dark. I still know it.

If hell is a place of torment and torture, then this is it. If ugliness and pain were all there was to this fucked up existence, I could endure that. If that were the case, I could survive the fucked-upness and not feel as I do, so wretchedly, wretched. The pain is in knowing the difference. I have tasted bitterness and sweetness; I have felt kindness and cruelty, seen ugliness and beauty. I know the fucken difference. I ache to hold my sweet baby girl again; knowing she ain't ever coming back and she ain't ever gonna call out to me again, and she ain't ever gonna bring me flowers from some other bastards garden, so they got fuck all to complain about any more.

Is this you God? Is this your doing?  
Is this your cold, cold revenge served up now to punish me? Why didn't you rip her from my guts then you all knowing prick? Was that the plan all along, to dupe me into complacency and happiness and then to strike your deadly blow? To sting and inject with toxin, to inflict a slow healing wound; to rot and for that rot to spread until all around becomes infected and then reinfected? You gave your son: you take my girl. Who else of mine are you gonna take you vindictive, unforgiving bastard?

And you, Goddess of death, Hine-nui-Te Po, you hideous, mean, nasty old bitch. You were waiting all this time. Lurking, skulking waiting. You fucked your father. Your guilt. Your shame.

Still.

Why pick on an innocent child?

I am here. You could have had me. You chose an innocent child, just because you could. Of all the trees in the forest and all the pebbles on the shore, out of all the drops of water in the ocean and all the stars in the sky; out of all the flowers in the garden, you had to pick my Rose.

## ***After Rosie***

Night duty always seems longer than eight and a half hours.

Maia walks home. Past the grocery store that sells wine. Straight home.

The woman at number seven sits on her front doorstep. She drinks a cup of coffee.

‘Morning, you’re Maia aren’t you?’

‘Yes, good morning.’

‘I’m Eliza. Home from work are you?’

‘Yes.’

‘Hey, come over some time, come and have a drink with me.’

‘No thanks, I’m pretty tired after night duty. And I’ve got the kids. I...I don’t drink.’

‘Well the offers there if you need company mate. Come over. Anytime ’

Maia walks home. Past the grocery store that sells wine. Straight home.

Eliza at number seven sits on her front doorstep. She drinks a cup of coffee.

‘Good morning again. Did you have a good night mate?’

‘Yes thanks.’

‘Come over later.’

‘No thanks.’

Maia walks home. Past the grocery store that sells wine. Straight home.

Eliza sits on her front doorstep. She drinks a cup of coffee.

‘Hey Maia.’

‘Morning Eliza.’

‘Come over later.’

‘Thanks.’

Maia walks home. Goes into the grocery store that sells wine.

‘Come over later.’

‘Sure.’

Eliza sits on her front doorstep. She drinks wine out of a coffee cup.

It’s as easy as that. Drinking Buddies. Stories to share.

Through ruthless cunning, careful planning and expert knowledge Eliza now lived a good life.

‘You know, you don’t have to work, go on the benefit like me I’ve never worked a day in my life and look at me. Look at what my kids have got. They want for nothing. They live the life of Kings.’

Everything in the house was brand new and modern, but the yellow shag-pile carpet that the orange three piece lounge suite sat on was stained and the kitchen sink was piled with unwashed dishes and pots. The children had boxes and boxes of toys and some were still in their plastic wrapping. One shelf in the book case was stacked with videos. Maia felt grit beneath her feet and then she stood on something soft and squishy. It was a rusty apple core. She picked it up.

‘Just throw it on the bench. Come and see my bedroom.’

The wardrobe that Eliza threw open was crammed with dresses, they were just like the ones James’ mother wore to church. Shoe boxes were piled up on the floor. Eliza grabbed hangers of clothing and spread the colourful things out all over the water bed. Eliza held the frocks up to herself, one by one.

‘This is my favourite, what do you think?’

The green chiffon halter neck frock had a beaded waist-line from which the skirt hung in light green and dark green panels with blue piping in between them.

‘What do you think?’

‘I don’t know what to...’

‘You’re just like me. It’s just too beautiful for words.’

Eliza had two fake fur coats. And three feather boas. One lime green, one pink and one red.

A huge television sat in one corner of the room. The dressing table was cluttered with boxed perfume and cosmetics from the Avon range.

‘What do you think of all this?’

‘You have a lot of... I think you have... some very pretty...things.’ Maia said.

‘Thank you. I go to Aussie twice a year. And that car out there in the driveway is paid for, compliments of WINZ.’

‘It’s very...nice. A valiant charger isn’t it?’

The morning drinks with Eliza after the kids were off to school was what she'd needed for a long time. She couldn't get used to the boxed wine Eliza drank though.

'It's far cheaper, when you drink the amount I do, you learn to make sacrifices somewhere along the line.'

'No thank-you.'

'You'll see mate, we all end up doing cheap and nasty in the end.'

On Wednesday morning Maia bought three bottles of wine. Fifty-four dollars was only three hours work. She still did overtime. The savings plan had slowed down, just a bit. And the kids weren't starving, fish and chips is a nutritious feed and cheap too. And it's not every night. Sammy cooks. And Eli does too. They're good little cooks and they look after the little ones. She was only down the road. And on her nights off when she went back to Eliza's, they knew where she was.

An ambulance was parked outside number seven. Four police cars were parked there too. Crime scene tape was draped around the house. Eliza sat in the back seat of one of the police cars and she hung her head. The Paramedic, who'd said good morning to Maia, didn't look as if he believed his own greeting. He climbed into the back and Wally, the driver, slammed the doors. He shook his head. 'You'll be glad you're off duty Maia. Bloody glad.' Wally hopped in the front and shut the door. He looked into the side mirror, waved out to Maia, and drove away at a respectful pace. Maia waved back at his reflection and then the indicator blinked off. At the end of the street the left blinker flashed twice and then the ambulance was gone.

This was not an emergency.

On Tuesday afternoon, Little Whatu had knocked on the door at number seven.

'Mummy, I'm home. Let me in.'

But mummy wasn't home. She was on the piss with her best friends Tiana and Nadine. So little Whatu used his key and let himself in the house. Anita would be home soon. But Anita didn't come home soon. Anita didn't come home at all. She was at daddy's house.



And you little Whatu were meant to be there too. But when daddy rung mummy at Tiana's house to say you weren't waiting after school, mummy said this was the night you were staying at your friend Tyronnes house.

Little Whatu was hungry. There was no food in the fridge that he could eat. And he was too little to cook his own feed. He tried to make a jam and peanut butter sandwich. Bread, butter, peanut butter and jam. The tin of jam was empty but there was another one in the cupboard. He couldn't find the opener. So he tried to use the sharp knife the way daddy does. But daddy is a grown up and knows what he is doing because he's a butcher. And daddy wouldn't have slipped in the wine that mummy spilt on the floor this morning and didn't wipe up. So daddy wouldn't have fallen on the knife blade and bled to death. And when mummy came home with Dick, they went straight to bed and didn't get up until the morning. And when mummy got up she found little Whatu and screamed and screamed, and screamed at Dick to get rid of the foils of Marijuana. And then mummy cried and called the cops.

Dick narked to save his white arse. The cops found Eliza's diary.  
Diaries.

So that Wednesday morning Maia hid the bottles in her wardrobe. There was a piece of paper on the pillow.

Dear mum please ring AA. Love from Sammy.

'That won't bring her back mum.' Eli said.

'I'm not trying to.'

'What then?'

'Just remembering.'

'And you need that shit to?'

'No, but it helps me forget.'

'What do you want to do, remember or forget?'

'Both. Neither. Cope. I miss her.'

'Well, getting pissed up about it every night ain't gonna bring her back.'

'Every night?'

‘Yeah, every night at that ugly slut-moles house, mum. I miss Rosie too, but you don’t see me getting pissed up every night.’

‘I’m not stopping you.’

‘One of us has to look after the kids.’

‘You don’t know what I’m going through, I’m her mother.’

‘Isn’t what you’re doing now what made her sick in the first place Mum?’

### ***After Haydyn***

Haydyn spreads the table cloth.

It’s Maias turn to cook.

Haydyn lays the table.

Maia strains the pasta.

Haydyn twists the corkscrew. He yanks the cork out.

‘Wine?’

‘Please.’

‘Bryan Adams or Rod Stewart?’

‘You choose.’

Maia presses the garlic. Twist and twist and force the pungent smelling worms out of the press.

Haydyn makes the salad. He rips the lettuce into bits and he splits the cherry tomatoes.

‘Your hair looks beautiful.’

‘It needs a wash.’

‘I love that dress you’re wearing.’

‘It’s old.’

He lights the candles. He dances around and around to the music by himself, ‘...tell her that she’s really wanted...’ Haydyn lipsyncs to Bryan Adams and holds an imaginary other. He stops prancing.

‘Maia...’

She turns to him. His hug is long. Kiss. Brief. He glances at the clock they bought this time ten years ago to celebrate their moving in together.

He sits at the table in his chair that faces the TV. He eats.

‘This pasta is absolutely divine.’

‘It’s the same as last Tuesdays.’

‘Look Maia, I...’

‘You’re leaving.’

And I am loving me a man who is loving me back.

God, God. I deserve this after all that I have been through.

I’m here at last where I always wanted to be. The children have no fear of walking down the street and confronting ugliness and all that it is. There is no ugly here. There are no threats. These are respectable people. The children go to good schools. Good people live here in this neighbourhood. Haydyn is a good man. One of the pillars of this society to which we, me and my children now belong. We have made it. I have made it. Finally out of the clutches of the jungle that bound us. I waited for deliverance God. I waited.

‘You’re new in this neighbourhood.’

‘Yes.’

‘I’m Hadyn.’

‘Hi. I’m Maia.’

‘Spanish?’

‘Maori.’

‘Really?’

‘Really.’

Maia stands and scrapes her food into the sink master.

He’s no different from the others.

Is it him or you? You were no different in your thinking about the others. Kahu, James, Dick and those ones you picked up in between. What do you want Maia? What did you ever want? Thought you would have learnt a lesson. Rosie, Maia, Rosie. Your fucked up

head cost you Rosie, Maia. You're so fucked in the head you don't even deserve the children you have left.

She flicks the switch.

On.

The tears that burn leak out, run down her cheeks, and gather wetly at the delta beneath her chin. She wonders how much more she can bear and she wonders how much more she will.

I deserve my children. I deserve my children.

The clocks second hand races, the minute hand paces and the hour hand stands still.

Stands still. Then goes back.

'What did you do to Eli Alison?'

'Ah Maia, I was only having a bit of fun. It was nothing, only a bit of fun. That's all. I meant no harm Maia.'

'The boy is only eighteen Alison, how could you do that to him? To my son? To me? Did you think he was one of those fucken sailors of yours? You're a fucken ship mole Alison, a fuckeng tart, and you wave your fucken filthy disease ridden twat at my boy? At my two boys?'

'Eli's not a boy Maia, take a good look at him he's a man. You think you can keep him a boy? Your babies are growing up Maia, soon they'll be gone. I told you that before. You can't hold on to them forever Maia, just because you can't keep a man. And as for Jordan huh, he should be so luck...'

The crack was loud when Maia's fist connected with Alisons' nose and even though Alison was twice Maia's size, she crumpled and dropped. Maia seized her by her shirt front and pulled her upright and then threw her down the steps where she landed on the concrete path. Face first. Blood seeped from a deep laceration to Alison's forehead.

Alison sat up and spat out the blood that had tracked into her mouth.

It seemed that the whole street had gathered on the footpath outside Alison's gate to watch as The Days of our Lives, played to their empty lounges.

‘You think you’re different from the rest of us don’t you Maia, you think you’re better. Tell you what mate your worse. We don’t hide what we do. Sammy asked me how to get in touch with AA Maia. You can’t hide it any more. I can smell the booze from here.’

A kick to Alison’s head knocked her back. She struggled to get up.  
‘Don’t even dirty my sons names with your filthy mouth you fucken mole.’  
Maia bent down and grabbed a handful of hair. She yanked Alison’s head up, she pulled her fist back. She’d make this slut fuck up forever.

‘Mum. What the fuck are you doing?’ Eli said.  
‘I’m gonna waste this slut.’  
‘Don’t mum, please don’t.’

Eli took Maias hand and untangled the hair from her fingers. He grabbed Maia in a bear hug and held her, ‘Nemmine mum. Lets go home.’ Maia slipped out of Eli’s arms and went for Alison again.

‘Don’t Mum.’ Eli made a grab at Maia. She dodged him and lifted her boot and aimed a kick at Alison. Eli grabbed her and lifted her.

‘Put me down. You fucken put me down now.’  
‘And what? You wanna be like the rest of the bastards here?’  
‘Yes if I have to?’  
‘And when will you stop?’

Eli dumped his mother on the ground.

‘Go on then. I’ll look after the kids while you’re in gaol.’ In through the nose out through the mouth in through the nose, out through the mouth.

The crying Eli walked away. Maia got up and followed.

‘Well why the fuck did you tell me then? What the fuck did you want me to do?’

Eli stopped and turned towards Maia. They glared at one another. They breathed as one. In through the nose out through the mouth, in through the nose out through the mouth.  
‘I wanted you to show me how to deal with it your way,’ he tapped Maias head.

Tap, tap.

‘With that. Your way mum the way you tried to learn me, the way you tried to learn all of us. I could have done what you did all by myself, I could a used my fists too, because my hands is all I got. It’s all everyone here’s got. I don’t want to go to the Mount or Parry.

And I don’t want you to neither. I wanted you to fix it your way.’ *Tap, Tap.*

‘Your way Mum.’

A siren screamed in the distance and Ellen came through the gate. She turned to the crowd, ‘You barsids got fuck all better to do? One of you barsids help me stand this pissed bitch up. Hey Alison you alky barsid, fucken stand up and don’t you fucken fall over again.’

‘Comon mum lets go home.’

‘Muuum, you better get home real quick. There’s a whole bunch of Maori’s at our house. They said they’ve come to take Gabby.’ Sammy said.

‘Fuck,’ said Eli, ‘We better run.’

Sammy took Maias other hand, ‘hurry, please Mum, Nanny P and Aunty Moana are with them. I made them all a cup of tea and gave them some biscuits. And I put your bottle in the linen cupboard before they could see it. It was on the table.’

The three rushed home. A van and three cars were parked up the driveway.

‘I’m gonna call the cops as soon as we get inside Mum. Don’t you do anything please. I’ll look after us.’ Eli said.

‘Maia, we know you’re not coping. We want our mokopuna. He belongs to us.’

‘He belongs here with me and his brothers.’

‘Half brothers, two half brothers and a...retard.’

‘Get out of my house.’

‘Maia, we know about the drinking. We can take him off you, or we can come to an arrangement. He’s a clever boy. A very clever boy. He gets that from our side. If he stays with you, he won’t reach his full potential. His father was going places until...until he, well our mokopuna deserves better than this.’

The plan was to bring him up the right way. Their way. He would come back for holidays. They would send him to a private school. They would pay for his schooling. He would study Law when he got older. It was all worked out.

They came back for him two weeks later.

Three months after that, Maia and her family were out of the jungle. They moved into a nice neighbourhood. Nice house. Nice schools. Nice people. Nice. Nice. That was twelve years ago.

And two years later, she'd met nice Haydyn.

Nice, nice Haydyn.

He opened doors for her.

He bought flowers and perfume, chocolates and jewellery. He made birthdays and Christmases special days. Every day was a celebration to be celebrated. Every night was bliss. This was what Maia had been waiting for all her life.

And now it's gone.

Madness lurks.

Again.

The waste disposal motor hums. The discarded scraps slosh in the water as the greedy machine scrunches and grinds them, and the swill gurgles down the pipes. The clocks second hand races, the minute hand paces and the hour hand stands still.

Stands still.

Then moves on.

Maia flicks the switch. Off

# **Maia Taurima**

## **By Myself**

**Driven.**

**By Maia Taurima.**

Fade In.

EXT. NIGHT. A CITY.

Sound of air breaks releasing. An inter-city coach pulls out onto a city street, the indicator flashes right and the vehicle disappears into the dark night.

MAIA TAURIMA (47) stands alone on the footpath. She stretches her arms and rotates her head. She is slim. She wears C.K. prescription glasses, Ralph Lauren cargoes, Jimmy Choo boots, leather jacket and gloves. Her jet black hair is spiked. She wears heavy black eye-liner.

A Louis Vuitton back-pack with passenger label destination, 'Porirua', is on the foot-path beside her. MAIA watches as the people from off the bus are greeted.

Two teenage girls are met by a woman. They chatter happily.

A man greets a woman. They walk hand in hand in silence to the car. The man places the woman's luggage into the boot and slams the lid down. Hard. The man looks up and regards MAIA. He nods a silent greeting, she sneers and looks away. The cars leave.

MAIA

So this is Wellington.

Well almost.

EXT. NIGHT. A CITY. A FOOTPATH

MAIA checks her cell phone for the time. It is 2030hrs. She looks up the street, one way is dark. The other is well lit up and she can see more lights in the distance. She tries to



light a cigarette but it's difficult with gloves on so she removes the right hand one. Four cigarettes remain in the packet.

She slings her backpack over her shoulder and walks towards the lighted area. She passes a rubbish bin it overflows with empty Steinlager, Tui and RTD bottles. Her eyes move slowly over fast food containers and boxes marked, 'hot, sizzling, tasty, juicy.'

She sidesteps the two dogs fucking by the bin. She stamps the cigarette out. A public toilet sign points the way. It is 2040hrs, she has \$0.11 airtime, and battery is low.

EXT. NIGHT. CITY. SHOPS.

In a lighted area, a door to a bar opens and music comes out. (Jolene, Jolene, Jolene, Jolene...). A lady walks down the steps she is followed by a man. He helps her with her coat and fusses over her. The lady glances at MAIA and smiles drunkenly. The man places his arm about the woman's shoulders. They walk off. Ruth sees his hand move down to waist, to hip, to arse where after a squeeze, it remains.

MAIA uses the ATM. The balance in her check account is \$1.60 and a message refers her to the bank when she tries her savings account. She looks up the road. A well lit WINZ logo glimmers in the distance she walks towards that light.

EXT. NIGHT. LOCAL BUS SHELTER.

The bus shelter adjoins public toilets. The sign says open 24hrs.  
She tries the door. It's locked.

MAIA.

Fuck.

She checks out the shelter. It's well lit shelter with peripheral shadows. Graffiti swears at her. SHADZ, KRONA and EPDMC was here. Male and female genitalia perform a crude twisted sex act. The male part is donkey like. She closes her eyes for a minute. A blue jandal, a wad of chewed gum, and a glo in the dark condom lie on a three-slat wooden bench seat bolt fixed to the concrete block back wall.

The condom has leaked a stain on the seat. She sits down on the cleanest part of the grubby seat. A leaflet reads, 'Come to meet Jesus at 10am, this Wednesday, this month, this year at the Fisher Road Community Hall. A picture of J.C. on the cross has a bubble coming out of his mouth, 'Forgive them father.'

A car speeds by. It screeches to a halt. The front passenger winds the window down.

PASSENGER.

Wanna lift?

MAIA.

No thank-you.

PASSENGER.

Wanna come to a party

MAIA.

No. Thanks.

PASSENGER.

Please yourself.

The car speeds off.

Left Wall graffiti. Mere gives good head. Mere is a slut. Mere's not the prettiest but she's the busiest. Roimata has aids. I wouldn't touch her with yours m8. Patsy's got a big one. Crystals got a hairy one. Mere's got a stink one.

MAIA

Aroha mai e Mere. Ka aroha

Hine purotu.

Ring: 0800RUTME. Black flowers bend over for Mongrel knobs. Parry is for a long time not a good time. Why pay at Mt Hutt and freeze your balls off? Mt Crawford is forever and free, contact, [www.con](http://www.con)

MAIA

Fuckwits.

MAIA rubs her hands together and blows on them to warm them. She bounces her legs up and down.

On the right wall a display cabinet holds the official notices. This project has been funded by, Lions and Rotary. Free counselling and budget advice is available from Community Care. The food bank is open, 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week; please provide documentation from WINZ that states you are not eligible for a food grant.

The emergency accommodation service is closed due to the demand on current availability. The New Zealand Prostitutes Collective has moved to Mere's place. Revelucion is a photography exhibition at the local arts gallery. MAIA reads, that for a koha, she can see the stark naked poverty of Cuba in sensual, vibrant colour; she can see sultry Cuba at her sluttish most impoverished.

MAIA.

Aroha mai.

MAIA squirms in her seat. She crosses and uncrosses her legs. She stands and rushes into the bushes behind the shelter.

EXT. NIGHT. BUS SHELTER.

The light bulb at the centre of the ceiling flickers. Insects hover about it. A spider's web is full of insects. A message is written next to the bulb, There is no justice: just us. A gust of wind stirs the debris scattered on the ground. Cans rattle and roll along the concrete. Wrappers dance. A pizza hut box does a cartwheel and psychedelic vomit attracts small insects. Fluid leaks through the back wall at ground level and a dark patch gets bigger and mixes with the vomit.

EXT. BUS SHELTER-NIGHT.

MAIA comes back from the bushes. She pulls a face at the urine and steps over it. Gets a container of Steri-gel out of her bag and scrubs her hands. Pulls out a hoodie and a beanie. Set of keys with BMW tag falls out. Throws them back in bag. The wind howls. Puts beanie and hoodie on. Lifts her feet on to the seat and pulls them close to her body. She hugs her legs. Rests her head on her knees. Wind howls. Rubbish shifts.

EXT. BUS SHELTER-NIGHT.

A cop car cruises by. It slows. It continues. Male voices speak. Loud slurred speech.

MAIA pulls her gloves tighter and holds her fists clenched.

VOICE ONE.

Nah, nah, nah, my bro' I go  
(singing). You know it's  
true...and then you go  
(singing) everything I do...  
and then we both go (singing)  
ooh, ooh, ooh, I do it for you.

VOICE TWO.

Chur bro'chur.

MAIA unclenches her fists. She leans back.

VOICES ONE AND TWO.

Kia ora Aunty.

MAIA.

Kia ora korua.

VOICE ONE.

Kia ora Aunty. Have a good one.

Footsteps fade. Singing heard.

VOICES ONE AND TWO.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, I do it for you

VOICE ONE

Chur, sweet bro'sweet.

EXT. BUS SHELTER-NIGHT.

Car marked with security logo pulls up. Good looking Black man hops out. Keys dangle from a chain on his belt. The car door is open. Eagles 'Hotel California' ends. Tina Turner privately dances.

SECURITY GUY (SG).

You okay?

MAIA.

Yeah, I'm okay.

She moves her hand to smooth her hair. She pretends to straighten her hoodie.

SG.

Is any one coming to get you?

MAIA.

They won't be long  
must have gone to sleep  
or something. They'll be  
here soon.

The SG checks his watch. He signs the check in chart he got from a hook above the toilet door. As he returns it MAIA stands up and looks up and then down the road. SG notices the Inter-City luggage label on the bag

SG.

Look I can't take you

in the car, regulations  
you know but would  
you like to use my phone  
to ring someone?

MAIA.

No thanks, I'm sure  
They're on their way.

SG.

Just be careful, there's  
all kinds of nutters and  
wierdos about, although  
this cold wind should  
keep them indoors, but  
you never can tell. The  
Police cruise past here  
regularly. Hey I'm due  
back in another three  
hours, just in case you're  
still here, how do you like  
your coffee? I could pick  
some up.

MAIA.

Black will do. Thanks.

He leaves as Tina Turner sings that American express will do nicely thank-you. MAIA sits and rummages in her back-pack. She pulls out a bottle of Chanel 5 and smiles to herself as she sprays some on. She lights a cigarette. She blows the smoke out and the wind swirls it away. It's 2330hrs.

EXT. STORE-NIGHT.

Night fill staff at the Countdown store across the road drink coffee and smoke. Bits of their faces show, snatches of their korero float across to MAIA.

FEMALE VOICE.

Kia ora whaea.

MAIA does not reply to the greeting. She replies under her breath.

MAIA.

Fuck up tart. All shop

Bitches are the same.

MAIA checks the time on her cell-phone. It is 2400hrs. Battery level is at 4. She scrolls to the photo section. She lights a cigarette. The packet has two left in it.

Photo 1.

MAIA and another woman, SELINA (30). Arms around each other. Both look at the camera they smile. A birthday cake with 36 on it in foreground.

MAIA.

Slut. Shop tart.

Deletes photo.

Photo 2.

HAYDYN (33) lips in mock kiss, blowing hand.

Photo 3.

MAIA and HAYDYN. He is placing a greenstone taonga around her neck. They both smile.

Photo 4.

MAIA and SELINA. Cheek to cheek. MAIA wears 40 hat, she holds Steiny bottle up to camera. SELINA holds Tui bottle up to her mouth, her tongue licks the rim of the bottle.

MAIA deletes this.

Photo 5.

HAYDYN and SELINA cheek to cheek but HAYDYN'S mouth brushes SELINA'S cheek.  
MAIA deletes this and flicks cigarette away.

Photo 6.

MAIA and HAYDYN. MAIA wears 40 hat. HAYDYN holds bottle out to camera.  
Licking his top lip. MAIA spreads fingers of her left hand fanned out. She sparkles. So  
does a solitaire.

Deletes

Photo 7.

MAIA surrounded by grown up, Eli, Sammy, Gabby and their partners. And Jordan.

MAIA.

Should have listened to  
You guys aye?

She kisses the photo and holds it to heart. The wind has stopped. MAIA sits in the  
silence.

EXT. BUS SHELTER-NIGHT.

Cans and bottles rattle. Someone mutters. A MAN (60) is rummaging in the bin.

MAIA.

Hello.

Man jumps.

MAN.

Who lock the door?  
Suppose to be a 24 hour.

MAIA.

Fucked if I know  
or care.



He is an ugly monkey faced creature. He is shorter than MAIA. His left arm droops. Tufts of stiff grey hair poke out from beneath a holey red beanie that covers most of his head. He wears layers of shabby clothing beneath an unbuttoned brown overcoat. Black track pants are tucked into rugby socks. His shoes are dirty.

He shuffles to the far end of the seat, brushes the condom and jandal off and sits in the shadows. He stretches towards MAIA and offers his hand.

MAN.

I Samoa, Gordon, please  
to meet you.

MAIA glares at him and he puts his hand in his pocket.

MAIA.

What the hell kind of  
name is Gordon for a  
coco...Samoan?

GORDON.

What chu doing here?  
Are you waiting for somebodys?

MAIA.

What's it to you?

GORDON.

You come to my house.  
Too cold here. I a very good  
man. I found God. I go to  
the church. Come to my  
house, I make you a cuppa.

MAIA hands him the invitation.

MAIA.

Here take this to God. His  
son's got something to ask  
Him.

GORDON.

Thank you. I know God.  
He talks to me.

MAIA.

I don't give a fuck. Piss off and  
leave me alone.

GORDON.

You look like my wife  
do you want to see her?

He pulls a plastic wallet out of his coat pocket.

MAIA.

Fucks sake, Give the fucken  
thing here then. But piss off  
after that.

He kisses it and hands it to MAIA. She takes it but doesn't look at it. Gordon pulls a  
pump bottle of orange drink and a ripe banana out of his pocket.

GORDON.

Firsty? Hunkry?

MAIA.

No but have you got a  
cigarette in that monkey  
suit?

Gordon offers Maia a crumpled cigarette packet.

GORDON.

My lars one.

MAIA.

Good. I only want one.

He flicks his lighter and holds the cupped flame out to Maia. She removes her left glove.  
A diamond sparkles in the light. She lights the cigarette and inhales.

MAIA.

God this feels good.

GORDON.

Pardon?

MAIA.

I was just telling ya mate  
how good this feels.

She looks at the photo. The woman is beautiful.

GORDON.

She left me for another one.

MAIA.

I don't blame her.

GORDON.

Ten years ago. I miss her  
very much. I love her.

MAIA.

What would you know about  
love?

GORDON.

I love God. He loves me.  
He loves you too.

MAIA.

Fuck off.

She gives the photo back and he kisses it again before he returns it to his pocket. He holds  
the picture of Jesus.

GORDON.

See in this picture here...

MAIA.

Weren't you supposed to  
fuck off?

GORDON.

Well, that's how much God  
loves us. He let people do  
this cruel thing to his boy  
because he loves us.

MAIA.

You've got a fucken screw loose.  
your Mrs fucked around because  
you're ugly. Haydyn fucked around  
because he's ugly. And we all live  
ugly ever after. End of fucken story.

GORDON.

When my Mrs come back...

MAIA.

Jesus...

GORDON.

...I'm gonna love her and be  
good for her and she won't ever  
leave me again, because I know  
God.

MAIA.

What the fuck are you on?  
She's not coming back for  
fucks sake.

GORDON.

I think you should go home.

MAIA.

I think you should get fucked.

GORDON.

I think you are not happy.

MAIA.

What the fuck is happy?

GORDON.

I think you have misery because  
you aren't home. I think you  
love him very much.

MAIA.

Who the fuck do you think  
you are? You don't know me.

GORDON.

I think you want to go home to  
him.

MAIA.

Fuck you. You haven't heard a  
fucken word I've said have you?  
There is no happy, there is no love.  
(points to NZPC poster) They know  
it's not for keeps. They get paid to  
love. You're all shit. In the end,  
(points to genitalia drawing) that's  
all love is. That's all it ever was.  
Fuck you.

GORDON.

Well.

MAIA.

Fuck you just can't shut-up can you?

GORDON.

Well. If I was cold and hungry and  
I had a ring like that and it didn't  
Mean anything to me, I would sell  
it. Can I have the lars puff please?

Gordon is now in full light and he faces Maia. She passes him the cigarette.

GORDON.

No, no you have some more.

MAIA.

(Beat) No you have it  
I'm sorry. That's all  
that's left. Here.

GORDON.

Thank you. You a kind  
lady. Thank you.

He has one puff and throws the butt away.

I go home now.

He stands. Maia does too and offers him her hand. He takes it and holds it.

God bless you. Take care  
of yourself. Good lady.  
I pray for you.

MAIA.

You take care too Gordon

thank you.

Gordon walks away, he mutters. It is 0300hrs. Maia checks the sign in chart above the toilet. The space for 0230hrs and 0530hrs have been signed already.

Prick.

Maia sits. The wind howls. The crazy pave on the ground changes. She nods and nearly falls off the seat. The cop car cruises by. It does not slow down. The spider's web is full. That's all Maia sees.

EXT. BUS SHELTER. DAY.

A warning alarm. Street sweeper vehicle. Maia reaches out and touches empty space beside her. Her eyes open. Sweeper sound fades. Train whistle in distance. Sky is grey. 0530hrs

Maia looks at photo of Haydyn. Low battery sound. Looks at photo of her and Haydyn. Double battery sound. Phone goes dead. Maia removes the ring.

Fade out.

## **Whakapono**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

I'm a homeless person in a hopeless situation. Vacant lot. I'm a hopeless vacant lot in a homeless situation, situated in this dispossessed disposition. A no life a low life but once I had a wife. And she had me. And then we were three. My wife, my son, and me. Once before that I had a life. I was Chief of all Chiefs a paramounted one. My grandmother was a princess. My grandfather was a queen. He dressed up in battledress for him it was nothing but the best he adorned himself in the pretty bird feathers and he put some lipstick on and it stayed. My princess nanny still talks to me because she's my guardian angel.



I'm Gabriel archangel an archeological dig, illogical truth of the matter that won't hold up court. When I was Chiefly in my grandfathers queenly refinements I had many lands, many wives, many children. Mana. Much land had I in my custody for my many wives and my many people. We had much wealth. Then there was much ado about what to do and today I'm a hopeless vacant lot in a homeless situation, situated in this dispossessed disposition. Now I lie here laid bare in my existence; the truth about my predicament and my annoying gnawing insistence, lying naked on this ground here passively resisting, the thousand, thousand ngangara crawling over my constitution stripped bare.

## **Home**

### **By Gabriel Tumai**

It is morning. I am still here. Each night before I go to sleep I look up at where the star that always shines the brightest should be. 'Please come and get me.' I say. 'I want to come home.' The football field I noticed when I got here looks like a suitable landing pad. They could come at any time. And even though I wait for them to come as I know they will, I jump at every sound. But usually it's only my heart in my ears I hear.

This is not my planet of origin. I come from Leahcim. We came here for a picnic one time. While the others set about getting the food ready, I wandered off in search of moments to hold and when I returned to the picnic area, they'd gone. All of them. I'd been abandoned by my own family in this strange, strange place. Later, some Maoris found me so I grew up with them. I grew up with Maoris. Some of my best friends are Maoris.

My very best friend in this world is Daniella. But she isn't Maori, she's a Jewish transgenderite. She's in here now. There are two men in here as well. They stand beside the door. I grew up with Maori's I say to the men. One of them says to me, so did I bro. I'm a recidivistic epiphiniac Daniella told me, 'You're a recidivistic epiphiniac.' she said. 'Yes of course I am.' I said, 'I'm Leachimese were a nation of recidivistic epiphiniacs. We go about the universe capturing moments of pleasure, moments of bliss, moments of

pure happiness and we hold on to them forever and never let them go. I think that's why I was abandoned.'

'Why?'

'Because I let too many go.'

'What were you supposed to do with them?'

'Keep them.'

'What for?'

'For future generations. Then they wouldn't be moments, they would be forever.'

'You Leachim goys are weird.'

'You bet your sweet pork chop we are. We have our ways.'

Do you want to hear a story?'

This story, I say to Daniella, starts way, way back, before B.C. even.

'Well that could be any time now.' She says.

'Don't interrupt please, now as I said this story starts way, way back.' And I heard my story for the very first time.

So I told Daniella about our ways. The story I told to Daniella has been stuck in my head all this time and when I told her I had to pull it out of there. When I finished my story I thought about all I had said because for the first time ever, I heard all I said. I'd listened to me.

'So anyway Daniella, if you people on this planet lived according to our ways you would always have good forever.'

'Feasible. Unlikely though.'

'Well I know one thing's absolutely certain.'

'What's that?' she says.

'There'd be a lot more of you guys left. Six million more at the least. And you would have grown up with your grand parents.'

The walls in this room are painted green. The light shines in from vents above the door that's always locked except when it opens to let someone in and opened again to let some one out. I sleep on a leather covered mattress and my pillow is leathers too. They bring food to me on paper plates and I drink out of a paper cup. I piss in a papier mâché bottle

and I sit on a papier mâché bedpan to shit. There's only one chair in here and it's bolted to the floor. That's where Daniella sits now.

Still.

Very still.

'And something else too.'

'What's that?'

This time I look at the men at the door, 'And you guys would be living long and prospering.'

'What ever cuzz.' One says.

I tell Daniella. I was abandoned here because I let the precious moments go.

'You said that before.' She says.

'Yeah but, when they were gone I wanted more. And more. I even fought with others to have them. I killed. I deserved to be abandoned. Especially here. Living here has been painful. Now I want to go home.'

'Do you think they'll come and get you?'

'Yes. I think it all the time.'

'Should they come and get you?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

Because in all this time I've been here, I've never let go of our ways. I passed the test. I never let go. And you know I was punished for that you know, you've read the notes. Locked up, drugged up, beaten up; belittled because I was deemed different, laughed at and ridiculed because they say I don't know how to talk properly, spat on by those who said I was unusual and bashed by others just because they could.

'I've been punished enough. They'll come and get me. You'll see.'

Daniella presses a hand held alarm and nods at the men. The door opens. There are two more men in the corridor.

'I'll see you tomorrow,' She says, 'we'll talk some more.'

'No.' I say, 'you won't see me and anyway, I've got nothing more to say.'

Daniella leaves.

The two men in the corridor come in and the door slides shut. And clicks, double clicks locked.

‘Do you want this injection the hard way or the easy way?’

‘Well actually,’ I say, ‘I don’t want it at all, but since you offered.’

I lie face down on the mattress I feel the needle go in.

The brightest star up in the sky is bright and getting brighter.

I’m tired and I want to go home. This has got to be the saddest story I have ever lived.

They are coming to get me.

This sojourn has been too long.

## **Home**

### **By Maia Taurima**

Tui song wakes me. Later on today I will check the troughs I left out for those birds. I suspect the diluted honey will be gone. So I claim the bird music. Mine. My reward. A narrow slice of daylight cuts a skinny gap where the bottom of the curtain and the windowsill don’t meet. The shadow space this single room defines has been my home for the past six months. The warm and light will come in as soon as I tie the curtain back.

Once I claimed the songs you all sung to me.  
You Kahu, with your gifts of perfume and flowers and boy promises that the girl wanted to hear: but the man couldn’t keep. You James, with your desire to go places and you thought I was good enough to go with you. But for the children: I would have. And you Dick, when I was at the bottom of my downward spiral I clung to you, but you struggled to hold yourself up. And you Haydyn. I thought you were a way to a better life.

I wasn’t good enough for any of you.

My thirsting greed and parched need I lusted to satiate my desire and I swallowed every note each one of you sung.

*Please don’t come in here.*

Fuck. I wanted it to rain again today. I wanted the steely grey sky to unleash the cold and wet, to slap my face and sting my eyes and burn my skin. Anything, anything to stop me from feeling you.

Any one of you.

All of you.

She stands on the beach.

Black sand burns her winter softened feet. The cooling water rushes in and soothes them. Then it runs away. She gazes out to the palette blues of sea and sky, and the faraway islands. The dulled and distant headland squats, a grey hump on the horizon. She sits on the wet sand. The cry baby gulls beckon her. She loves the sea. It's him. Fishing again. Bait wasting, beer tasting fest of activity that used to last for hours. The pounamu he placed around her neck lies cold between her breasts.

I trace a face with my finger on any surface I choose. A table cloth. A blank page. A single bed sheet. Eyes closed now I follow the line of your nose. It ends in a bump to the left. The suggestive lift of your right brow obscures the demure of your Pacific eyes made bluer by alcoholic shot red. The practiced self-assured grin and directing chin to a private place where we made love and called it love because fucking is done with others in states of oblivious drunkenness. Fuck it.

Wretched from too much crying and crying from too much sadness. Should this be the end? Fragmented and sharp edged the cold steel grain and dripping rain. You're not going to do that to me. To have lived through as much violence as I have; and survived, and then to consider turning that same act upon myself is, must be, a sheer conceit: stupidity. To even allow the thought into my head is stupid. Empty. I'm not stupid and I'm not vain. Crush the seed of thought lest it grows. And silence the whispering demons. Now, you fool.

Throw the first one back. She tells him. She rejoices in the pleasure that she derives from watching his muscles ripple beneath his skin as he bends to remove that first one from the hook to return Tangaroa's baby. He turns and grins at her thumbs up. It's

undersized. She closes her eyes and enjoys the sweet warm beery kiss. She slips easily into his sensual touch. She smooths the sun lotion on the bits that she can reach.  
'Let me do that.' And she doesn't mind the fishy smell.

Your fingers control the cadence on skin in light and air and in dark silk place where the tune submits to the primitive score that others have sung before. This song the sweetest of all. Heartbeat. Pulse. Pounding. Pulse. Moving shards too cruel to bear. Dull blunt thudding ache and I thought you the only fix. I won't let you do that to me again. Not any of you. Not any of you.

Miles apart now in this faraway from home place, to that home in the long ago place and a long ago time. Then, you stood before me in your too clean skin. I didn't believe you, couldn't believe you. Wouldn't believe you. Poisoned by the toxins that crept around in my insecure mind that hid in the dark grooves of the central sulcus; the toxic residue of left-over lovers, their leftovers and scraps was all that remained and it was that which I held on to. To look for signs I knew I would find so I found them. A scrap of a letter. A cut off conversation when I entered the room on Tuesday. A whispered late night phone call.

A woman and a little girl make sand castles. The woman hums a tune. The child chatters. Happy, happy.

A dog runs towards the inverted-bucket-moulded house. The woman swears and waves useless go away gestures at the dog.

'Shoo, shoo.'

It cocks its leg. Weakened, the wall crumbles. Implosion follows. The house of cards falls down. Black fury in her eyes. The woman hurls a bucket at the dog. She misses, but the dog still yelps and races away and leaps into the car with the door that's ajar.

'In you get Poochie.' And then the car is gone.

The woman strikes vicious kicks to the princess castle. The child wails and gritty tears streak tracks to her mouth.

'Shut-up.'

The woman and child leave.

I yearn to hear your sweet songs again. The remembered now more beautiful in memory that echoes and echoes of love, and arouses. Pain. The physical distance is a gnawing insistence that I hear your songs once more. No more.

Now, Tui song wakes me. I spoon the pillow.

She watches with jade eyes as the relentless water ebb reclaims the sandcastle form inch by inch. The tears that burn leak out, run down her cheeks, and gather wetly at the delta beneath her chin. She wonders how much more she can bear and she wonders how much more she will.

No more.

They've all gone.

I'm still here.

She feels the oppressive grip at her heart unleash.

I will go home tomorrow she tells the gulls. But for the children my life would have ended, now, they and my mokopuna wait for me.

She removes the pounamu from around her neck and she gifts it to Tangaroa. The gulls swoop down, touch sand; swift upward and then angle away. Mana wahine ahau, ko ahau he wahine toa. Toa, toa, toa the seagulls say as they fly towards the North.

## **Gabriel Tumai**

### **By Narrator**

Tomorrow is my birthday. I will be seventy years old. Twenty years ago I found out who I belonged to. I went to the village of my mother. I found my whanau in the urupa. No one in the village could tell me, would tell me if I had any whanau that was living. You know I thought that people in the village could help me, would help me. But they couldn't, wouldn't.

'All gone.' Said the green eyed kuia who smelt like an old toilet. 'They're all gone.' Delilahs gone too. So has Colin. Neville stayed for a while, so did Oscar, Brian and Meredith. Gone. They're all gone now. I miss them.

I'm a homeless person in a hopeless situation. Vacant lot. I'm a hopeless vacant lot in a homeless situation, situated in this dispossessed disposition.

## **Te Whakaponu me Nga Tito Iti Ma**

**26 October 2006**

Maia walks along the wide curving street on the straight and narrow foot-path that leads to her house. She passes the respectable cobble-stone driveways that stop at the remote controlled wrought iron gates and continue after the shut-tight entrances; towards the orderly white houses. Tall gappy fences let her look in at the neat clipped lawns, the topiaried shrubs and the marbled statuettes that stand stately by; or lie rudely about, the water-featured sculptures.

Suspicious curtains jerk at the pristined picture windows that behind; hide the manicured, the coiffured, the haute coutoured ladies who in one hours time will create fine cuisine in their cold designer kitchens for their hot designer men. And children if they're there. The recycle bins around the back hold Chivas Regal and Lindauer Brut, Moët & Chandon; and Bollinger and Fouilly Pousse. And in the tidy three bin system that stands behind the garage; the decomposers process the scraps and leaves, the waste decays and becomes more refined, and the rich dark compost awaits the October plantings.

The house next door is just the same and so is the one next to that. The one across the road and the one next to it, the one on the corner, and the one on the hill and the one where the white collars meet. Every Friday to have drinkies and Japanese nibbles and dismiss the minor employee quibbles. 'They're lucky to have jobs.'

Maia has reached home. No mail in the box. Same as yesterday. The gate clinks shut behind her. No messages on the phone. Today.

She pulls the cord that draws the drapes. Faraway over the western hills, out there over the harbour, a 747 jet airplane descends against the dimming sky: and Maia pulls the cord that draws th drapes and the curtains close on the world out there.



It had looked like rain this morning and the bamboo mobile at the back door jangled a sonorous tubular: click-dong. But instead of driving to work she walked. Again. Five kilometres isn't far. And walking only requires placing one foot in front of the other. No hassles with other cars on the road. No hassles. None at all. Especially when you know where you're going to.

At lunchtime, Maia walked to the shops. A notice outside the town hall announced a forthcoming performance. After international successes in Cannes, Europe and the U.S.A, the movie, 'Te Whakapono me Nga Tito Iti Ma,' will soon be showing in this country. It will be here in two months time. The posters were everywhere all around the town; pasted around power-poles, plastered on walls and displayed in shop windows and at the corner of Kolmar and George Streets, a young woman handed her a leaflet about the movie.

'Thank you.'

'You're welcome,' the young woman said

Maia stood on the busy corner. Horns honked loudly. Motors revved. Exhausts spewed stink smoke. The cars stopped.

Revved.

Foul fumes filled nostrils. And choked throats to make them itchy and cough. The cars waited. Accelerated and sped around and around the roundabout. The wheels spun on the compacted road. They spun. Around and around. And when Maia looked closely, they seemed to be going backwards.

'Hey Mum.'

'Hey Gabby.'

'I've had it with Law school.'

'Bit hard aye?'

'No. It's crap. Especially legal history, actually, every thing that follows from that is crap. I had to sit in that damned class and hear how we were done over.'

'So?'

'I'm pulling out.'

'Do they know? The Whanau.'

‘Yes.’

‘And?’

‘They don’t like it.’

‘And?’

‘Mum. They want me to be something I can’t be. It’s like they want me to be my father, fuck mum I can’t even remember him. And it’s like they want me to make up for the missing bit in Jordan, what ever the fuck that is. That’s the hard bit.’

‘What? Making up for Jordan?’

‘No, being someone else. What the fuck do I do with me?’

‘What did they say about you pulling out?’

‘Well, that’s why I’m here. They’ve disowned me.’

‘What are you going to do now?’

‘Hang around and annoy you for a while and next year I’m off to Wellington.’

‘What’s down there?’

‘I’ve been accepted at the acting school. You are now looking at, Gabriel Tumai Taurima. About to be famous actor, Oscar material actually.’

‘You changed your name.’

‘Well, since Jordan isn’t good enough for their name, I don’t want it either. Actually I think we’re far too good for it.’

‘Well then you better work hard and deserve my name.’

‘Our name Mum. And as for me inheriting everything of theirs, they can shove it. I never promised them anything. I remember Ellen swearing about this exact thing?’

‘Ellen swore about everything and every one.’

‘No but this one fits here, ‘What’s fucken meant, is what will fucken be and then, there the barsid is.’

And the wheels on the cars spun around and around.

Maia crossed the busy road.

Te Whakapono me Nga Tito Iti Ma, (The Truth and the Little White Lies).

Gabby wrote it, directed it and acted in it. He took it to the world. He brings it home.

Soon.

A young woman and a child sat on a bench seat outside the library. It seemed to be the warmest spot in the town centre. The child broke a Mac Donalds burger in two and offered one half to the woman. She shook her head.

‘You eat it, she said. ‘You eat it all up.’

The sign in the New World supermarket said, ‘Ten items or fewer.’ Maia steered her trolley into that aisle. A man arrived at the same time.

‘I’m in a hurry,’ he said.

‘Slow down,’ she said.

And she pushed his trolley out of her way.

The three lonely items huddled on the steely wire-wove bottom. A basket would have done but Maia still liked the feel of pushing a pram or a push-chair.

They will come home again on Sunday with their families as they do now once every three months. Jordan will come with his care-giver. Gabby will be back then too. He wants a hangi.

‘No stone soup please, mum.’ Eli had said that first time.

‘Be grateful for the food you are given, Eli.’

‘Amen to you brother Sammy, you just stick to doctoring those sick fullas in where-ever the hell it is you doctor in.’

‘Doctor in. Hahahahaha.’

The other shoppers; the elderly couple, the suited young man, the teen aged girl who should have been in class, and the harried looking mums, lined up and waited their turn. No-one talked. And the shop girls scanned and packed, scanned and packed.

‘Mummy?’

All heads turned toward the searching baby-voice. Maia didn’t turn though.

‘Mummy?’

Maia placed the items on the conveyor. The cheese; the bag of baby lettuce. The tomato.

‘Hello, how-are-you-today?’ said the girl called Melanie-in-training.

‘Good thanks.’

‘Poor little thing.’ Scan, pack. ‘She’s lost.’ Scan, pack. ‘Wonder who she belongs to?’  
Scan, pack.

‘Thank-you.’

Maia walked out of the shop.

It didn’t rain after all today.

But now as Maia sits in front of the turned down T.V. and munches on a sandwich, it pisses down. On the T.V weather report, it rains heavily all over the map. On Sunday, the rain clouds with the turned down mouths are gone and have been replaced by smiley-faced suns.

Between today and Sunday is a long time.

I used to know their voices anywhere; I’d identify each one of them as they called out to me, up and down the street, in the school yard whenever I went to get them; I could even single them out in a crowd. Sometimes in a bewildered dreamlike time just before I sleep, or in an aching moment of yearning, I’ve thought I’ve heard their little voices calling me. ‘Mummy, mummy.’

Gabby or Sammy. And the little Eli before he went away.

And even Jordan. Especially Jordan for I knew the sounds he used to make voice and I knew what he said without sound. I used to.

And then in states of clear minded alertness I’ve known immediately that it wasn’t any of them.

Why would they call to me from where they are now? Eli in his grown-up mans body, Sammy, living his adult life where his father’s people come from in the Hokianga. And Gabby, where ever he is in the world now. Why would they want to call out to me? Why would they still call to me when they must surely remember that sometimes I did not listen? Why would they need me to come to them? They share their grown-up lives with others who must come when they call. I don’t know that adult part of them. The piece of time I had in them is done.

Is over.

I've even heard Rose Koromiko call to me from her grave, but I don't turn. She's not there. If she does call at all, she is only haunting me, she can't be here. She cannot be.

Nor can any of them.

The evocative illusion that I summon must be gone least I suffer the delusion and allow it be my out of touch reality. Christ am I mad?

I think I can reach out and touch them. Still. Or is the imagining illusory? I'm not entirely sure.

God I miss then.

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