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The Pleasure Garden

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Attestation of Authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own 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."

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of John Cranna and my mentor Tina Shaw in the production of this work. And also the invaluable information about Frances Hodgkins life and art in the publications *Frances Hodgkins A Private Viewing* by Joanne Drayton and *The Letters of Frances Hodgkins* edited by Linda Gill.

Abstract

This exegesis outlines the areas of consideration that are developed fully in the first draft of the novel *The Pleasure Garden*. Influenced by specific novels and films, postmodern theory, supervision by a mentor and participation and feedback during the year's coursework, this novel evolved over ten months. The work is written within the genres of literary and postmodern fiction and presenting two main protagonists living in differing times and social and artistic contexts. Both of these women are professionals active within tight constraints imposed by their respective eras and ambitions, creating significant bodies of work reflecting the art of their time.

The exegesis provides the intellectual platform for the work and discusses the main terms and theories and the respective roles of the main characters including the reader/spectator. The novel itself was created in a much more organic and creative way using language and image, descriptions and characterisation to evoke differing locations and emotional states. Concerning the lives of a filmmaker and artist the creative processes of both are examined particularly as they undergo conflicts and obstacles hindering their respective paths. The novel aims to explore fully the disciplined but playful approach these women bring to their creative process as well as their intellectual and emotional desires that their work and relationships fulfill. It is up to the reader to lose themselves in the plot and weave of the narrative and to enjoy the landscape provided.

Exegesis

Methods and Theories: Critical Intersections in

The Pleasure Garden

5100 words

Suzanne Laidlaw

2010

EXEGESIS

With the novel we have happened to devise this form, this very elastic, mutable form that can allow us moments of human investigation. Milan Kundera says very wise things in this context. He lays a lot of stress on the novel as a mode of investigation. It's an open-ended way of looking at our own image, in ways that science can't do, religion's not credible, metaphysics is too intellectually repellent on it's surface - this is our best machine, as it were.(1)

The objective of this exegesis is to provide the theoretical background to the novel *The Pleasure Garden*. Crucial to the novel is the use of certain literary methods to integrate a film within a novel, to assimilate historical fact and investigate art and literary forms and to synthesize various postmodern practices. To this end I present five themes. The first is a discussion of postmodern terms covered within the novel and literary examples of these terms to show meaningful influence on my process. Then I discuss the three main participants: the artist, the filmmaker, and the reader/spectator examining specifically the context of the artist, the portrayal of the filmmaker and the relationship with the spectator. In two further sections I discuss travel as a metaphor for self-identity and the unstable occupation of space, and consider the difference between the genres of novel and film.

Within the novel we follow two lives unfolding and mirroring each other. The filmmaker Saskia is making her second feature which is about the esteemed expatriate artist Frances Hodgkins. The reader is invited into a year in the life of Saskia as she negotiates the film world to write and make the film. Collage from the French collar is to glue together a work of art from an assemblage of different forms thus creating a new whole (2). Montage, from the French word putting together, most often refers to photomontage which is a collage of photos, and in film editing it is a filmmaking technique which uses rapid editing, special effects

1 Zadie Smith talks with Ian McEwan, Vida, V. 2005. Edit. *Believer Book of Writers Talking To Writers*. Believer Books, San Francisco, p. 212.

2 Lucie-Smith, E. 1984. *The Thames and Hudson Dictionary of Art Terms*. Thames and Hudson, London, p. 52.

and music to present compressed narrative information (3). Usually art or film terms, they are also applicable to this novel. From a chronologically straight forward novel the work progressively becomes a montage/collage of differing narrative structures and formats: letters, emails, script writing, diary and standard prose. Splicing, cutting, juxtaposing. The novel thereby takes on the format of film - a primarily visual medium which relies on a forward momentum in time to deliver meaning and story.

The novel takes the form of a hero's journey in which the heroine overcomes obstacles and frustrations to achieve the making of a film. This is the film of a female artist who, also on a hero's journey, overcomes the rigid strictures of her era to become a sought after and successful artist, far from her origins in colonial New Zealand, in the competitive and demanding art world of London. The two lives mirror each other like silent partners in a fictional business. The film itself can be seen as within the genres of women's movies, feminist film and the period drama, but it questions the fine stitching of any simplistic success achieved by Hodgkins and instead portrays the hurdles in her path at both personal and social levels.

This novel has been written over ten months from its inception to its present form of a first draft inclusive of thirteen chapters of a sixteen or seventeen chapter novel. Practical considerations and the difficulty of time limits have precluded full completion but have allowed a presentable working draft for consideration in this masters programme.

The French philosopher Jacques Ranciere in *The Future of the Image* examines the perception of art.

"Art is made up of images, regardless of whether it is figurative, of whether we recognize the form of identifiable characters and spectacles in it. The images of art are operations that produce a discrepancy, a dissemblance. Words describe what the eye might see or express what it will never see; they deliberately clarify or obscure an idea. Visible forms yield a meaning to be construed or subtract it. A camera movement anticipates one spectacle and discloses a different one.....This means two things. In the first place, the images of art are, as such, dissemblances. Secondly, the image is not exclusive to the visible. There is visibility that does not amount to an image; there are images which consist wholly in words. But the commonest regime of the image is one that presents

3 Ibid, p.122.

a relationship between the sayable and the visible, a relationship which plays on both analogy *and* the dissemblance between them." (4)

The dissemblance within this novel is the world of make-believe in the film and the weaving together imaginatively of the actual life and the imaginary world of the filmmaker as she (unreal) makes up a life of the artist (real). The images created are verbal yet discuss what is seen and what is painted, what is observed in 'real time' and what is filmed. To write a novel is to create a pretend reality, as is making a film. In reality they stand in for real events and emotion, and when successful they spin a dissemblance that is convincing to the reader or audience (the female and male reader or spectator).

VISITING THE POSTMODERN

This novel falls into three genres, the psychological novel, literary fiction and postmodern fiction. My encounter with postmodernism began as a visual artist experiencing work by European artists and related theory in London in the late 1980s. Where "in this strange new world, artworks are reborn as texts, history is exposed as myth, the author dies, reality is repudiated as an outmoded convention, language rules and ideology masquerades as truth." (5). But not all cultural features of modernism had been discarded. Fragmentation and non-linear narrative are central features in both modern and postmodern fiction where there is a freedom to pastiche (combine or paste together) multiple elements which are carefully woven into a whole. Useful examples were Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* presenting a form of meta fiction combining aliens with time travel and personal experience of the bombing of Dresden in World War Two. Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Travellers Wife* combined intercut passages of different times in a lengthy and complex plot structure concerning a main character afflicted with an uncontrollable ability to step from one time to another.

4 Ranciere, J. 2007. *The Future of the Image*. Verso. London, p. 7.

5 Heartney, E. 2001. *Postmodernism*. Tate, London, p. 7.

In achieving this it became important to have clearly defined characters through extensive characterisation and psychological depth to keep the reader grounded in the narrative. The techniques used here were physical description, character self-reflection, dialogue, indirect observation by others and imagery.

In telling an intercut story of the life of Frances Hodgkins the term historiographic metafiction coined by Linda Hutcheon is relevant as it refers to works that fictionalize actual historic events or figures. An example is *Flaubert's Parrot* by Julian Barnes about the life of Gustave Flaubert(6). This process had to be authentic to historical record while engaging the fictional imagination in a direct and emotionally significant way. Also relevant is the term poioumena coined by Alastair Fowler referring to a type of metafiction in which the story is about the process of creation (7) for example Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy* (and the film *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*) which concerns the narrator's frustrated attempt to tell his own story. The unraveling is like Russian dolls being opened and stories within stories being uncovered. The reader experiences the process of film in action with the director, cinematographer and actress.

'Frances leaned out of her chair and in a warbling voice said, "Dorothy how could you entertain the man?"

Saskia said, "CUT. Retake. Stronger, Frances."

Frances repeated the line in a gruff voice.

"CUT. Got it. Camera Okay?"

Marcus replied, "Want it again from camera B?"

"Yes." She looked at her monitor. "ACTION."

They repeated the scene. The gruff voice firm and resonant.

"CUT. Okay Good. Thanks. Well done. Next setting please. Number 41," said Saskia.

She felt clear headed, was glad they had found the right tone. If they hurried they could finish this scene before lunch yet.'

6 Hutcheon, L. 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*. Routledge. London, p. 122-123.

7 Cudden, J,A, 1998. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Penguin. London, p. 54.

THE ARTIST AS SUBJECT

Frances Hodgkins (1869-1947) lived in New Zealand until 1901 when she emigrated to England where she began to practise as a professional artist painting and teaching in England, France, Italy, The Netherlands and Morocco (8). She achieved acclaim in her adopted country and remains acclaimed in New Zealand to the present day. Hodgkins worked through Impressionism and Post Impressionism but I consider her reputation and prestige amongst New Zealand viewers is dependent upon her association with the English avante garde of her day and their championing of Modernism. Her English contemporaries were Paul Nash, Winifred and Ben Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Graham Sutherland, John Piper and David Jones, mostly of a younger generation. Although some of these artists embraced abstraction they also painted figurative work with recognisable subject matter in simplified modernist styles. Still life and landscape were their favourite subjects and innovative was the combination of the two genres, to produce a still life with a view behind it integrating deep space with domestic objects in the foreground. Winifred Nicholson, Frances Hodgkins and David Jones in particular used this combination (9). They reduced form to its basic shapes, compressed space and used painterly techniques of scrumbling, calligraphic strokes and layering to depict their subject rather than the smooth painting of realism. Colour was chosen as a vehicle for emotion rather than the verisimilitude of local colour. They combined abstraction with figuration. Hodgkins's most common subjects were people she knew, models she paid, and places she visited. It was in an era when artists often assimilated their surroundings making a kind of record of their lives and those around them and painting these in styles that reflected the radical forward progression of art movements in Europe. For instance Hodgkins's response to Surrealism can be seen in *'Pumpkins and Pimenti 1935'* where what appears to be a still life is found to have mountains and hills on its table alongside eggplants and

8 Keith, H. 2007. *The Big Picture*. Godwit, Random House. New Zealand, p.277.

9 Drayton, J. 2005. *Frances Hodgkins. A Private Viewing*. Godwit. Random House. New Zealand. p. 224.

capsicums.

Working at the time but with very different purpose and style were Frida Kahlo and Paula Modersohn Becker. Kahlo used self portraiture to reveal a personal response to questions of female identity where she became her own subject and narrative. She used her face whereas Hodgkins used objects and clothing to 'stand in' for her in her self portraits. Paula Modersohn Becker used her own body as subject matter to explore identity, personality and creativity while using a primitivist style drawing from folk art and avoiding smooth blending of pigment and a high academic finish.⁽¹⁰⁾ Hodgkins dissemblance was to remove her image from her work but portray her life through her sense of place and use of locations to stand in for her physical and emotional life. She was, as an immigrant, on a journey of perpetual reinvention regarding her 'place of identity' as we shall see in the next section.

Her social context avoided some of the traps of society's mores and etiquette of her day as she mixed with bohemian artists including the above members of the avant garde and with others who transgressed convention : lesbian and homosexual couples and cross-dressers. She was left to her own financial devices and so supported herself by teaching both on the mainland in Europe and England maintaining a 'rickety' financial independence.

I had to ask how could I write about an artist - what qualities and characteristics could I give Hodgkins? What could I discuss about art without making it into dry art history or obscure fact gathering? I decided to show rather than tell the activity of art making and to use ekphrasis to obtain vividness of description. In one of Saskia's diary entries:

"...we did some sequences today of her setting up a still life beside an open window. '*Wings Over Water*' 1931-2. Three large shells, one red, one yellow ochre, one green/blue on a cream cloth with three vases of flowers on the sill, a red and green bird (stuffed) on a fence, coastal sea and land in the distance. Shot her hands moving the objects, the pictures of her painting as though Frances is reflecting on earlier works. Comparing. They dissolve into the real scene. Then there will be shots of her walking in the landscape as though she's walking in her own painting. The Tate has the work now."

10 Arnason, H.H. Mansfield, E 2010 *History of Modern Art* Laurance King Publishing, London p. 134.

One day Frances is teaching in a Parisian church which has a huge rose window. "More red there. Try alizarin crimson with a little cerulean blue. Remember the light is coming through the glass. Think transparent, translucent.'

Bringing a favorite artist to life involved a comprehensive study of all the literature I could find on her well documented life, including a compilation of her letters, three major monographs, surveys of New Zealand art history and a number of catalogues. My own occupation as an artist over the last twenty years also informed my vision of Hodgkins as a practicing artist and six years living in London and travelling provided useful insights into the dilemmas and wonderful opportunities available.

TRAVEL

Hodgkins lived a peripatetic life and so Saskia chooses to reflect this by recreating her European context in houses in the suburbs (Grey Lynn, New Lynn etc) of Auckland. The selection of homes and interiors to represent Hodgkins's living spaces is a type of re-colonising the spaces of Europe in a Pacific city. Also filming in Europe she followed routes and train journeys that Hodgkins must have traveled over. In making authentic sets, correctly researched historically for detail, Saskia and her crew created a period drama in the tradition of Merchant and Ivory's *Room With A View* and Jane Campion's *Piano* showing women uprooted by circumstance into new physical and psychological spaces.

Hodgkins's shifting social fabric, never long enough in one place to establish roots (she was often living in six different locations per year), meant she was literally uprooted from New Zealand forever. Travel in the novel is a metaphor for self-expression and finding a fresh new identity by constant travel and setting up 'home'. A peripatetic domesticity. The central stabilising feature in such a life for Hodgkins was art - its pursuit, and secondly teaching - its vital social life and remuneration. This mobility is portrayed in the novel not only by

the heroines but by lesser characters who find themselves far from home, in New Zealand, as English members of the film crew where New Zealand is 'like a present waiting to be opened'.

'We need spatial metaphors that bring together the exterior and the interior world, where communication and exchange can take place" (11) In Hodgkins's journeying did she become a tourist and by analogy a tourist of the self? Imposing her artistic identity on place much as a traveller takes photos to put one's 'self' in a 'place'. Hodgkins used both image and words to locate a sense of identity in her constant journeying - her letters are a vital record of this and her art a legacy of memory. Her psychic space was as important as her physical place so she experienced her interiority through space.

'Being a self has to do with identity and how we ought to be, to find a standpoint, to occupy and be a perspective within a moral space.'(12) Saskia's moral space is that of intrepid investigator into the life of Hodgkins and as a social conduit for the film. The progress of the film relies on her perspective, on her constant renewal and energy to give back to the people she is employing to fulfil her project.

Hodgkins's moral space on the other hand is not so collaborative, and is that of a strong individual finding her place in the world while moving into new physical and psychological spaces. The actual writing style was able to reflect the joy of travel and impart a sense of discovery. On a train coming into Paris: "Now there were buildings, masses and chunks of them. Industrial and domestic. Juxtaposed, arrogant on the soil. In greys and soft beiges with black tiled rooves in the distinctly French vernacular where rooves were ornaments and windows had shutters for eyelids." And also in France: "a lank cake-slice of a building with a frosting of classicism," providing some sensuous details. Hodgkins's desire for a constant reinvention of her artistic self and by association herself, her social position and her questioning of national identity represents a quest for

 11 Birkeland, I. 2005. *Making Place, Making Self, Travel, Subjectivity and Sexual Difference*. Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington, U.S.A, p 108.

12 Ibid, p.107.

authenticity.

THE FEMALE SPECTATOR

Laura Mulvey in her famous essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) developed a theory of the male gaze involving scopophilia, the desire to see, a fundamental drive according to Freud (13). The novel and film are constructed to provide visual pleasure through image and description. Scenes and paintings portray rich visual worlds that the reader is invited to experience through descriptive passage, colour, activation of the senses and in film through camera angle, close up and montage.

'Classical cinema, adds Mulvey, stimulates the desire to look by integrating structures of voyeurism and narcissism into the story and the image. Voyeuristic visual pleasure is produced by looking at another (character, figure, situation) as our object, whereas narcissistic visual pleasure can be derived from identification with the (figure in the) image' (14). In typical classical cinema the male gaze and ego-identification is satisfied by the male movie star, the female as spectacle (other) and the film is aimed at the male spectator. Mulvey didn't consider the female spectator.

'There are three levels of the cinematic gaze (camera, character and spectator) that objectify the female character and make her into a spectacle'.(15) In the novel the camera is operated by a male under the guidance of a female director, the main characters are female (heroines) and the primary spectator is female neatly dovetailing the traditional cinematic dialectic. The female is not displayed as a sexual object in the film or as a subjugated female in the novel's narrative.

In her later essay *Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"* Inspired By King Vidor's *Duel In The Sun* (1946) 1989 Mulvey suggests

13 Smelik, A. 1998. *And The Mirror Cracked. Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* Palgrave, New York. p. 9.

14 Ibid, p 10.

15 Ibid, p 10.

the female spectator undergoes a masculinization 'The masculine identification, in its phallic aspect, reactivates for her a fantasy of 'action' (non passive) that correct femininity demands should be repressed. The fantasy 'action' finds expression through a metaphor of masculinity.'(16) Perhaps this metaphor in the text is in a Mardi Gras scene(masquerade) when the phallic Chrysler Building is created from a pile of school black board dusters which is then symbolically knocked over by a male! Certainly the feminine and masculine metaphor is carried through in objects, clothing and more directly through passages of dialogue when clashes assume separate identification according to gender. For instance an argument between Saskia and her then boyfriend Peter in the first chapter concerning parental responsibility.

The female spectator uses her femininity to masquerade as the spectator(17) and identifies with the focus of the camera in following the genderisation portrayed by the female director - the next main character to be accounted for in this text.

FILMMAKER AS HEROINE

Creating a female filmmaker set me off on a fascinating trail to explore how a filmmaker sees. How time, space, movement, composition, colour, light, emotions and feelings could be organised on film. How a filmmaker arrived at a personal aesthetic and how one could portray this effectively in words.

In classical cinema the filmmaker was the auteur or (male) genius who postulated a unique style imposing his individuality and personality throughout the finished product.(18). There were no female auteurs in the canon unlike literary studies where women have been included(19). With the development of post structuralism the death of the author 'takes place in the more general

16 Thornham, S. edit. 1999. *Feminist Film Theory*. New York University Press. New York. p.129.

17 Ibid, p.139.

18 Smelik, A. 1998. *And The Mirror Cracked. Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* Palgrave, New York. p. 29.

19 Ibid. p. 28.

context of the post structuralist crisis of the subject.'⁽²⁰⁾ Through feminist film theory 'female subjectivity (is understood) as an embodied, multilayered and inclusive entity, which is as much bound to unconscious processes as to political agency.'⁽²¹⁾ The novelistic portrayal of Saskia as an independent woman revealed through character development and action as the main protagonist working under her own agency leads to the film, in turn, being a powerful product of her imagination.

The imagery involved is the visual world's of Saskia, Marcus, Frances and my own. These I came to realise were distinctive and individual to each 'operator' and had to be detailed and comprehensive, while being guided by my own aesthetic sensibility. I also wanted to explore issues of power, financing, group dynamics while filming, interrelationships off set and the sheer complexity of putting together a contemporary film. I took as my examples Jane Campion and Agnes Varda and researched interviews with international contemporary and classic cinema directors. In my personal research I studied film craft and also had to learn how to write a 'film script'. I went to the Auckland Film Festival and saw several films on artists.

Both Campion and Varda had used novels for their films or written their own scripts. Of most impact on this project was Campion's *An Angel at My Table* based on the intimate autobiography by the writer Janet Frame. Originally made in three parts for television it was later edited and became a successful film bringing vividly to life the often tragic tale of Frame from childhood to adulthood (22). Unsentimental and inventive in its cinematography it showed life from her point of view literally moving the camera to accommodate her height, her angle of view, her movements and how she saw the world through an overly sensitive subjectivity. In the film 'Campion not only remained 'faithful' to the traumatic

20 Ibid, p. 31

21 Ibid, p. 3222 McHugh, K 2007. *Jane Campion*. University of Illinois Press, Illinois, U.S.A., p. 65

22 Campion, J 1990 *An Angel at MyTable* Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Channel Four Films.

events of Frame's life, but also set herself the tasks of cinematically representing Frame's psychic development, the internalization of her shame and her creativity, and the imaginative process whereby Frame became the narrator of her own life ."(23) Her methods included framing and intimate close-up, voice over, distancing and voyeurism. Frame's creative development is shown to be vital to her well being and from a wider perspective is of national interest as New Zealand struggled with its own creative identity in the 1950s. Similarly Frances Hodgkins became a national figure contributing, even as an expatriate, to the pride and enjoyment of national identity in New Zealand during that era. Her depiction within the film in the novel uses intimate close-up, letters, costume, stills of her paintings, recreations of her studios to express events from her point of view and make a vivid life 'come alive'.

The second filmmaker Agnes Varda is a French woman who was the only female director in the French New Wave cinema of the 1960s alongside Jean Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut (24). She has made sixteen films. Agnes Varda's latest film *The Beaches of Agnes* (25) is also autobiographical where she takes the unusual step of the filmmaker becoming her own subject. She too uses camera angle and inventive cinematography to reveal both her personal life and her film history. She employs the symbolism of the sea and mirrors to show the viewer an interpretation of female creativity in the making: the ocean, symbol of the unconscious and mirrors, the self. With an ever present camera to record all proceedings. Like Hodgkins *Self- portrait: Still Life* 1935, she edits her filming into a shape presentable to a wider audience but also presents a socially defined self. Her film is the product of many successful professional relationships required to bring a film into life just as Frances's and Saskia's social relationships help towards their own survival and acclaim.

In constructing Saskia's role and persona I was aware the successful portrayal of a female subject would need to address how a woman is seen, how

23 Ibid, p. 77.

24 Smith, A. 1998. *Agnes Varda*. Manchester University Press. Manchester, p. 6.

25 Varda Agnes 2008 *The Beaches of Agnes* Cine Tamaris

a woman sees and how a woman sees herself, and especially herself as a woman(26). It became important then to describe her clothing, dressing rituals and her relationship to her body. Aside from appearance I wanted to explore her subjectivity, moral character, decision making, professionalism and her desires. I wanted to show her as a sexual being and as a mother, a worker/provider and as a woman with a complex vision within her filmmaking, of film, of herself and others.

NOVEL/FILM

In writing this novel I was constantly presented with the difference between a novel and a film. In film meaning is inferred through the visual and the edited cut and emotion is shown through action and facial expression. In the novel these factors are realised through inner dialogue or the narrator's psychological probing of a characters motives and desires. The film is in motion in time and the novel is static on the printed page. Film is collaborative and writing a novel is a singular pursuit. Pivoting between these two different genres produced its own problems. How to show not tell the event of filmmaking, how to create the visual in three dimensional action realistically. When to reveal psychological depth in prose compared to the 'telling' image. I found the devise of using script writing format allowed space to show movement, action and dialogue (representing a rehearsal) was better than the protracted time of actual filming which is laboriously slow and often boring. Another device was to fictionalise Frances's life in a slice of life episode as though it was a film, allowing an intimacy and fresh understanding of the artist's motives and character.

I investigated several examples of films and novels that presented stories within stories. *Sliding Doors* (27) is a film with two congruent narrative threads about the one character depending on whether Helen Quilley (Gwyneth Paltrow) catches or alternatively misses a particular train after she is fired from her public

26 Ibid, p. 93

27 Howitt Peter. 1998 *Sliding Doors* Intermedia Films, Marimax Films

relations job, and the differing romantic entanglements that ensue. In my own work romantic threads are juxtaposed contrasting the love lives of Hodgkins and Saskia.

The Hours is a novel by Micheal Cunningham and a film(28) set in one day in three times with three main characters. Virginia Woolf, Clarissa Vaughan (Mrs Dalloway) holding a party that day for a poet suffering from Aids and Laura Brown, a housewife in 1949 baking a cake for her husband's birthday. Here the shifts of time and sequence make a believable emotional reality based on the impact in their lives of Woolf's book *Mrs Dalloway*.

The novel itself is also set in a day and follows the lives of Mrs Dalloway as she prepares for a party, Septimus Warren Smith, a veteran of WW1 who suffers madness and commits suicide and Mrs Dalloway's old friend Peter Walsh. Her use of stream of consciousness, indirect interior monologue and blurring the distinction between direct and indirect speech enacts deep psychological resonance for the reader. I used diary extracts and the juxtaposition of differing days in the lives of the main characters to build an emotional landscape which flicked between artistic intentions and personal motivations.

Tom Stoppard's play *Arcadia* 1993(29) is a play set in an English country house in 1809-1812 and 1993 following the activities of two modern scholars and residents and the lives of characters including a precocious fourteen year old mathematical 'genius' 180 years earlier. Stoppard commented "There's something about shuttling back and forth, through time in the case of *Arcadia*, which I adore. I just love things which aren't exactly written at all - that in *Arcadia* a twentieth-century apple is cut by a nineteenth-century knife and fed to a tortoise. I find that more theatrical than three-quarters of a page which took a week to write."(30) This lively play which I saw at the Maidment Theatre in

27 Daldry, Stephen 2002 *The Hours* Paramount Pictures

29 Stoppard, Tom 1993 *Arcadia* Maidment Theatre Production

30 Adam Thirlwell talks to Tom Stoppard, Vida, V. 2005. Edit. *Believer Book of Writers Talking To Writers*. Believer Books, San Francisco, p. 369.

Auckland encapsulated within the relatively short narrative time of a two hour play an experience of the changing understanding of mathematics and philosophy over 180 years. He used large themes spliced into pockets of action and relied upon the spectator to layer together disparate time into a continuum.

The challenge in my own work was to weave the threads so tightly together that the reader would feel the time transitions as natural and come to expect them. The novel starts with few of these and then builds up towards the climax with an increasing complex relation to time. It is this combination of time and the visual (which is most typical of film) that I have translated into a novel.

In conclusion I have discussed key philosophies and literary techniques detailing the decisions necessary to bring the complexity of two lives in different times into a cohesive whole. The process of writing in a self-reflexive style of a filmmaker's process and about the accumulation of painting and life experiences in Hodgkins's life was aided by flexible narrative forms in a postmodern structure. The story became one of historical and imaginative consequence through the clear depiction of psychological and physical detail and the subtexts of travel and the creation of art and film.

Woven between the narrative techniques is the story of female heroines which holds appeal to the reader as a historical biographical drama and a glimpse into contemporary life in New Zealand, travel, and the challenge of filmmaking and relationships. It provides a commentary on the twin worlds of film and art making, and a hopeful and uplifting message about creative endeavour.

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Creative Writing Manuscript

The Pleasure Garden

46,205 Words

Suzanne Laidlaw

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15 February 1909 at Quai Conti, Paris

My dearest little Mother

.....I came over to Rosamond for a week or so & am painting a picture for the Salon, the subject is a table laid for dejeuner, Rosamund making a salad - figure of Bonne in background. I have had some good notices about some work exhibited in London. I send you one How do you fancy your daughter painting like Sargent? I might believe it if another paper had not likened me to Arthur Melville - two poles cannot meet. My little show here opens on the 20th & then my Class after that. An artist friend is designing me a gorgeous poster...

Saskia put the book of letters down. The room was pale. Evening shadows of a cabbage tree outside were making faces on the carpet as it was blown sideways by a fierce wind. A shrewd grey face then a scrawly smile made up of a soft patterning of leaves. A large frown, a lifting of eyebrows into a shaky storm. Saskia was excited about Frances Hodgkins's letters. She remembered the first time she had seen Hodgkins's *Self-portrait Still-life*. Must have been fifteen - a quivery acned fifteen, a turbulent fifteen, chaste. This painting in oils was called a self-portrait but no face looked back at her. Instead were arranged a pink shoe, flowers, a bowl, silk scarves and ribbons in lush shades of cadmium yellow, sage green, red and cerulean blue. She'd felt the vibrancy of the paint strokes but especially liked the audacity of camouflaging a realistic presentation of a person with objects that related to and reflected the artist. No earnest face with palette and brushes here. Later she'd learnt there was a second painting titled *Still life Self Portrait* with beret, handbag, scarves and mirror. It had been strange for Saskia because just two days earlier, on her fifteenth birthday, she'd had a charcoal stick in hand and a mirror with a blank piece of cartridge paper and had been putting together her own face in smouldery black marks. Was she to be an artist too? Now at forty two what would she pick to stand in for herself? Perhaps a fan, a hair brush, a stuffed sparrow and a film camera.

She wondered what an artist would make of her own face now. Would her mouth, her lips, show she talked too much, was always testing diplomacy, had learnt to choose her words carefully? Would her eyes show she was a fiery woman, given to quick decisions, seeking out the unusual? Always demanding more hours of the day and looking for the next opportunity? And her expression.

Could it reveal her restlessness, her compassion, her deep love for her children? No. It couldn't. Even Frances Hodgkins couldn't paint all that in. It would need a film, a film she wouldn't be making because she would rather concentrate on someone other than herself.

She went to bed before Peter, her partner, came home and in the morning lay awake and her mind prodded him in the back. She wanted him to be a better person. His misdemeanors were piling up. Not being where he said he'd be at the designated time, forgetting to buy dinner on three occasions, coming home drunk too many times from the local. How much leeway should she give him? Despite this her affection for him was contagious like the first bars of U2's 'Beautiful Day' which promoted a sense of vertigo in her spine. She had these feelings especially at night and in the early morning, ripe with images of him in bed beside her. The shoulder a round lump of cosy flesh, the shadow of head with its brown tufts and those bald patches where the hair had decided to die away like the froth of wake after a boat. Her own hair without any threat of baldness was a wavy sculpture with spiky bits artfully constructed the week before by Linda her hairdresser. As she got out of the bed she hoped he would sleep through after their busy Thursday night so made her movements slow and delicate until she saw herself in the mirror and nearly laughed at the swaying bush structure on her head and its resemblance to a porcupines bottom. A quick brush later and a wrap around of dressing gown saw her emerge from the bedroom onto the landing and then with faster steps she descended to the kitchen, her favourite room.

As usual the day had begun without her, that first light washing the Auckland streets with its calm radiance picking out the volcanoes and harbour. She stood by the kitchen window looking out whimsically at the busy colourful garden feeling uplifted with a strange elation, and wondered if her daughter Isabella and son Joshua were awake. Saskia pushed her hand over a blue bubble of paint, the kitchen required painting but the texture and the glimpses of wood underneath provided an aged canopy of worness that reminded her of the passing of time as fragile as an old calendar. The kitchen's state was raw (like the economy), the floors needed sanding and polyurethaning, the curtains

replacing, the wooden bench scouring and there was always the requirement for more cupboard space. It was something about its need for care that inspired Saskia, that made her enjoy its neglect. There wasn't much money, the divorce had taken with it suitcases of cash and stability. Peter's work as a freelance journalist didn't bring in much. They managed in a random way, pushing money towards bills, sour faces at the sight of brown envelopes, chagrin at the ATM. Money - it wasn't everything.

She thought about her lover's penis, its silky length with translucent dome and the way last night she had made her fingers all feathery and turned the edges of his mouth upwards. They had met at an orchard near Matakana. She'd stopped on impulse at the sight of a pile of early plums. He was standing near them and she'd asked if he was the owner. Not yet he'd said and they'd fallen into an odd conversation about strawberries, she'd given him a verbal recipe for strawberry tart. Then later she'd gone to the village and was having a coffee when he walked in and asked to join her. Straight away his conversation was building a stack of positive attributes in her mind. She liked his nonchalance, his lack of pretence and the way he served his sentences with good humour. Normally she would trim her expectations, not let herself conjecture but that day his words tucked themselves so neatly into her ears she was aware she wanted something more. She'd asked him where he was from. He had a lean tanned face with expressive sky blue eyes, their openness contradicted by an exaggerated lower lip which produced an involuntary smirk at times.

"Waihi originally but I live in Auckland, spent a number of years in Singapore. One night I was invited to a dinner party and managed to source a kiwifruit tart but I was miffed by my Chinese hosts response. A sort of polite refusal, then they took it but it wasn't served."

"Did they say anything?"

"No, I found out later it's an insult to bring food because it implies you think the host can't provide enough food. Another time I took flowers, another bad move, associated with sickness and funerals."

"I hope you stopped taking gifts," she said pursing her lips together. He shifted in his chair looking rueful.

"I did."

"I was in a Dutch household once in Rotterdam, dining with a family and I loved the erwtensoep, thick pea soup, they served and I said I was full. There were a few embarrassed faces. Apparently it's the biggest insult," said Saskia.

There was an awkward moment until he said, "So what do you do?"

"I'm a film maker." She wasn't going to mention the job at Mannequins Solutions. Her eyes sharpened. She brought her hands together on the table top, eight fingertips touching in an arch.

"Films! What are they about?" he asked.

She thought of 'Move'. Over the years the film had morphed into a verbal concoction, few had seen it, many had heard of it. She knew it was going to settle into words again like a menu without a kitchen or food.

"I did one about moving house. There was the real house in the main picture and in the right-hand top corner of the screen was a smaller film of a dolls house. There was a family and everyone wanted to move except the mother and daughter, so as they emptied the rooms they cut off bits of their hair, both brunettes, to leave in the rooms. As each door was shut the rooms slowly filled up with hair." She didn't know how he would take it and was relieved when he said,

"Really. Pretty surreal."

"And, as the house emptied, the dolls house filled up with tiny models of the furniture. By the end the house is full of hair, everything's moved into the dolls house and the mother and daughter have turned into dolls."

"Ha! I like it! When was this?"

"2006."

"What are you doing now?"

"I haven't made up my mind. But there is something brewing."

Saskia wondered if she would ever make another film. Who would finance it? She remembered the response to her last feature *Flotsam*. How the film critic

Malcolm had turned around in his seat and said AMAZING and how everyone had clapped madly at the screening like their hands were cymbals. The screening had been preceded by her sparkling tangy nerves, sitting in the audience with the others, each member a dark presence with radar eyes and sharp emotions tilted to the screen. Taking in the world she had made habitable, as though she had fashioned each speck of light as minutely as a Seurat canvas when in fact so much had just happened, just come together as she had busily learnt, sometimes fumbled, towards the scene. The desire to try again was there, to be amazed by how a whole days work only made a few minutes of film, the nervous energy of each day and the terrible sleeplessness while her head raced with the dailies or the next day's scene.

Joshua came into the kitchen holding a plastic globe of the world. His crop of brown hair was lightly gelled, his thinness not far from an anorexic statement except for two rounded biceps he had conjured from weight lifting. He surveyed the room taking in his mother's expression and looking for hints. He had tanned arms that emerged from a t-shirt telling the world to Stuff Off. Saskia asked him what he was going to do that night. A look of wild delight leaked onto his face.

"I'm going to see 'The Lynx' with Ned."

This love of film they had in common. She wondered if he would make a good actor but it was Isabella who made the most noise in that direction. She poured out Joshua's muesli .

"I can do it." She nodded and pushed the plate towards him. He poured a white waterfall of milk onto the grainy hill and proceeded to eat.

"You know Samuel Blackwood is coming to school on Thursday."

She was surprised. She had forgotten about the scientist's visit, about the email and her reply with permission. He was controversial and it was whispered amongst some of the parents that he might turn their children from God. Saskia had neither turned her children for or against so there were no giant enclosures to barricade. But she was curious what this man against the cloth might propose. Would he lead a procession of thought down a rabbit hole or across a high-minded bridge? Surely it was just science, some talk on Quantum Physics. Only

the senior classes would be present, sitting in the vast hall on wooden seats, hearing about quarks and mesons.

She wanted to be there too.

"How long is the lecture?"

"One hour though Mr Greeble thinks the questions could stretch it another half."

"Will you take notes? I'd like to hear about it."

"Depends."

There was the smell of a blackberry bath scent, Isabella swept into the room. She wore a vibrant red skirt and black top edged with machine lace. Her blonde ringlets made her appear even more pale, her lips were a rosy glossy hue, her nose roughly shapened and her eyes a stand out blue.

"Mum I don't want to go to school," she declared. Joshua's head shot up. Saskia wasn't ruffled, it was the second time this week.

"What's wrong with school today?" she said, briskly cleaning the fridge's exterior.

"I've heard this before," said Peter wandering in sleepily.

"We've got silly lessons today. It's not as though I'm going to learn anything. P.E. and music and social studies."

"Sounds like you're bored with school. What if I take you to the beach?" said Peter. Saskia's eyes flashed.

"Yes.Yes," said Isabella rounding on him and grinning wickedly.

"Don't tempt her," said Saskia. "She's going to school like all the other students."

"Mary's going to California for a month," said Isabella still beaming at Peter.

"So you'd like a month off," proposed Joshua.

"Mary's situation is different. No. You're going to school," declared Saskia and she went out to the laundry to get some towels.

"Don't tell but I'll meet you at the school gates in half an hour," whispered Peter. Isabella giggled, nodded and left the room.

Saskia holding four towels in her hands asked,

"Where is she?"

"Gone to get ready," replied Peter.

Without eating breakfast Peter winked at Joshua and left for work. Isabella came out with her satchel full.

"I'll pick you up after school," said Saskia.

"No need. Margo can give me a lift," said Isabella cunningly as she shut the front door. Joshua disappeared to his room and Saskia started on the fridge's interior, its smooth glacial surfaces welcoming the soapy cloth.

Joshua returned to the kitchen, a tense riff on his face. He put his dishes in the dishwasher where they clattered dully. His movements started to speed up as he thought of getting out of the house. Almost despite himself he said,

"Peter's picking up Izzy at 8.40 outside the gates."

Saskia paused, she shriveled inside as though she had found a dead cat.

"Really!" she made for the car. "Lock up after you," she yelled.

Among the more direct routes to school, cars were in queues and the congestion worked against her. Stuck fast between a school bus and an SUV Saskia turned on the radio "Fifty thousand protesters for relief in Darfur..." Her eyes took in the suburban street - a corner dairy with its blue and white anchor sign as though all it sold was milk. The pitter patter down the street of 1930s bungalows mellowed to the city like worn cushions on a sofa but with a clash of 1960s blocks of flats creating high density living with their concrete blocks shackling lives. The green of trees further softened the spaces between houses, flats, the curb and the divider that was the road, a slender vein in the hand of the city. The tense cars moved forward slowly. Saskia felt a shot of anger and a bloated helplessness. Isabella's grades had dropped from their previous highs and she'd thought it was adolescence, a hormonal cocktail making her drunk with flights of fantasy and negative rambling. But perhaps the reason had been with them in the household all along. The horror of the thought looped itself around and around in her head like the rotations of a wind turbine.

She turned into the street of the school. The traffic had cleared but there was still a turn to take. Coming her way was Peter's Mazda. She blared her horn. Two heads turned and for half a second Saskia thought he wasn't going to stop. Then he pulled into the curb. Looking sheepish and slightly bewildered he just sat in the car and she approached them feeling like a policewoman catching someone speeding, on a cellphone and without a seatbelt on.

"What do you think you are doing?"

"We were just going out to Piha." He looked distracted.

"Piha! Isabella needs to study. She's a school girl Peter. What were you thinking?"

Isabella suddenly got out of Peter's car. Her face was fearful, her defiance crumbling. She murmured,

"Sorry mum."

"I'm not sure what's going on here," said Saskia.

"Nothing. Nothing," said Peter, as though he had been caught in someone else's nightmare where sharks lurked.

"You'd better get in my car," said Saskia to Isabella, and not knowing what to say to Peter she guided her daughter grim faced into the vehicle and drove towards the school.

There was anger in the sky, in the ugly tree beside the park, in the judder bars and in the orange traffic lights. She was relieved to be alone but her own company meant she had too much time to speculate. She had felt throughout the relationship a failure to understand each other, one lighthouse beam not meeting the other. A case where the witty banter fell short of the good humour intended and where witticisms were stuck over small wounds of words that neither of them ever caught up with. This had all accumulated and created a second commentary of feeling beneath the words which leaked out at intervals. She had felt suffocated, he had been confused. On the surface people had thought they were a happy couple. Him with his words, her with images. Him with his fickle mind for a good story, a loose personal style of banter with that added charge of wit. Her with an obsession for film, a determination to work hard and her excellent taste in

things visual. She was a contrast of fear and bravery and in these moments fear leaked septicallly around her heart.

CH2

Saskia had dressed up to meet her best friend at Magda's café and wore a new sea-green dress with black leggings that made her look city-sharp. Her earrings were green-stone kete. She had chosen this café because of its bohemian trimmings. There were two chandeliers made from deer antlers and a paint by numbers mural of a mid-North Island landscape with a Maori female gracing the foreground, a waterfall behind her. Two cables descended from the ceiling to two 1950s pop up toasters on a table for customer use. Saskia coiled herself into a corner to wait. She thought of Isabella and her own times of boredom at secondary school, lingering over why Peter had asked Isabella to Piha and not her. Would there really be any harm in the occasional day off school? Did she expect Peter to be a responsible parent when he had never had kids? The answer was yes she did, although she felt it was imposing something on him.

A hand touched her shoulder.

"Carolyn!"

Her friend smiled, instantly giving away her age with the splendid creases around her mouth. A woman of experience also coded by her clothes, a shaped jacket over a hibiscus red tunic dress with smart black sandals.

"How's it been?"

"Good," said Saskia automatically.

"Wish I could say the same."

"I can't really either." She explained about the morning.

"You'll need to ask him about it," said Carolyn, "I always thought he was the considerate, loyal kind. Actually I was a bit jealous you'd hooked up with him."

Saskia suddenly felt suspended in the conversation. Carolyn continued,

"I've been let down by my builder. He's been so good on previous jobs. I'm loathe to lose him. He's going to Australia."

"But can't he finish the job, you've been working on this house for three months?" she said sympathetically knowing how hard Carolyn worked in her architectural firm.

"Mother dying of cancer in Brisbane."

"What are your clients saying? Saskia said swirling the leaf design on her flat white with a spoon.

"Well they've done a house with architects before so I think they know it has its ups and downs. But whether I can find someone as good is another question. And I need to maintain the same style of cabinet work, doorways, windows. Then there's the finish. Something I'm very particular about."

"I'm quite excited by this house. I'm dying to see it." She was interested by the difference between the two dimensional plan and the built version.

"Oh you'll have to come for a tour. It's a departure in my practice. I've made a ceiling that is like unfolding origami through the open plan lounge/dining. These people are rugby fans so we have a tv niche in a raw plywood wall making it an entertainment room."

"Not exactly the nineteenth century parlour," said Saskia.

"Oh that was for gossip, this is for the serious sporting event."

"Sounds like you've molded the building around their lives."

"Like you mold a film around a potential audience."

"I'm not sure I have an audience in mind. It's more the seeing through of an idea - this idea that takes over. You know how consumed I become." Saskia watched a little boy playing 'trucks' with the toasters. His mum intervened.

"Is there something in the pipeline?" Carolyn was concerned Saskai hadn't made a film for a year. She had felt the creative chord in her friend dissipate.

"A film about an artist."

"Too difficult," said Carolyn hastily.

"Well I disagree. It's biographical. There's lots out there to research. Plus it wouldn't just be about her, it could be any artist."

"The drum and drang of the artist's life.... a bit melodramatic. It's so hard to make them work. There have been some stinkers," said Carolyn thinking of a particularly bad film on Frida Kahlo where the artist had hardly spoken.

"I know, so it would be intriguing to try. I would want to be pleased with it myself. For it to hit all the buttons I might put out there. It's on Frances Hodgkins. She's had this fascinating life. I think her work is fantastic. It's always been there for me, since my teen years when I first discovered her. I felt linked to her paintings. It was partly because of her that I wanted to go overseas on my own. I could see that adventurous spirit, that it was the making of her."

"I still think it's in the too hard basket. It's not as though she's popular now."

"I found a photo of her yesterday. There she was with two others hurrying down a street. Very vibrant. Had a presence. Imagine the life of that on screen. The energy of the life all captured in the texture of the times, in her colours, from her point of view. Her lens on people, on objects, on streets and in the landscape."

"Sounds daunting."

"That resilience', said Saskia annoyed her friend wasn't more encouraging.

"She lived through two world wars, experiencing New Zealand and Europe. She was pushed by the need to paint. Frances was in the era when artists pursued their surroundings, the places they went to, the people they knew, the documents of a life on record."

Carolyn started to see some of the possibilities. She suggested Saskia meet a painter friend of hers for research. They settled into the calm ambience of many things in common - both mothers, both creative, both with difficult fathers, both having lived overseas. Their conversation moved onto their children, volunteer work, Darfur and then back to Peter. Carolyn asked her directly,

"Are you in love with Peter?"

Saskia paused, looked at the maiden on the wall who overlooked the patrons like a quiet goddess. "I was waiting for love."

"And..."

"It hasn't come. Not this time. I don't know whether it will ever revisit me."

"Don't keep him then."

"But I only know that today. Now that you've asked. I have annoyance.

And affection. Yes...Affection. And something like love. Close. I've got near to it."

"But you'd know by now."

"I suspect I'm still waiting."

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In the window the white of the mannequin's face, like something out of a racist pamphlet, was already starkly lit as she opened the door to work. There was a smell of pine and kapok. Up a narrow 60s wooden staircase she walked, escaping the rafters and securing a smile for Geoff. Someone had vacuumed and dusted the showroom with its ghostly crowd of silent faces and molded bodies, women and some men who had long since ceased to talk to each other or who perhaps murmured quietly after the lights were out. A language reserved for the recently dead. Seeing movement through the glass of an interior office window she called,

"Morning Geoff." The glass warped his body into crenulations of differing length but she could tell he was wearing a blue jersey even if it did look like a cuisiniere one.

"Good morning Saskia. I hope you're up to a busy morning."

"Of course."

"Right then. We've got a batch coming through at 10am and then I'll need you to show clients through at 11.15 - an Australian, Brian and his business partner Jennifer."

"Ok. That's fifteen minutes for accounts then," she said sitting down at her desk jarring her elbows against piles of papers. The office looked like an artist's installation of paper and computer junk, not quite real, not quite fake. A work in progress. An Eve Armstrong. Saskia immediately started to clear space while Geoff appeared suddenly nervous about her dismantling of his temporary organization. She knew this look, like his many other expressions that had

peppered the three years she'd been at Mannequin Solutions. She knew to proceed.

At ten they were both downstairs opening the molds and freeing a batch of life size dolls with simulated airways used in the teaching of First Aid and CPR. They were made of glass fibers compressed into fiberglass: filled, heated and set in expensive and perfect molds. In the 1950s Geoff's father had worked on mannequins used in nuclear tests to help illustrate the effects of nuclear weapons on human beings. Now frivolously it was the fashion trade which were their main clients and the female forms had become smaller and skinnier like the impossibly thin fourteen year olds used in fashion shoots.

A buzzer alerted her to check her clothes for marks and stride to the door to greet Brian and Jennifer. Soothing custard words about people's shopping habits secured a small deal for five mannequins at the Dolores shop in Sydney. The afternoon she spent on the accounts. As usual the bills were left to the end of the month, as usual it was last minute and there was only just enough to pay all but one of \$300.00. She was aware again of how tightly the business was run.

Rushing home Saskia wondered if Peter would be there and what she'd say to him. She drove into the driveway avoiding the hedge and the sprinkler and advanced to the door letting herself in. He was sitting in the lounge watching TV which he turned off as he heard her open the door.

"You've had a few."

"Not too many," he said tetchily slumped in the couch.

"So what did you think you were doing this morning?"

"I was giving your daughter a break from her routine," he said dodging her eyes.

"Her routine! Her routine is there for a reason. It is what is expected of fifteen year olds." Saskia heard her voice rise.

"Didn't you wag in your day?"

"Not with the help of my mother's friends. You were taking her to the beach behind my back. You expected my daughter to lie to me."

Peter fumbled with his glass which he then sat on the table. Saskia's face was puckered, her eyes hid little of the resentment she felt, her hands echoed her anger.

"I've every reason to chuck you out now."

"Please Saskia. For heaven's sake, it won't happen again."

"You once said to me 'it's based on telling the truth.'"

"I did? Look Saskia we've got something good happening with us. I don't want to give that up, I'd like to see where it goes. You can trust me with Isabella. I didn't know you'd be so upset."

"Don't underestimate me Peter. If there's anything going on..."

"There isn't. Its innocent," he said. "Now, I'm cooking tonight."

Isabella emerged from her bedroom or had she been listening at the door? Her face was set, eyes intense, perhaps she'd been crying. She picked up the room's tension and went to sit in the far corner, but Sandra motioned for her to sit on the couch. Putting an arm around Isabella she heard her daughter murmur,

"I'm sorry mum."

"Promise you won't do it again."

"Ok," said Peter and Isabella together.

"Now what was that DVD you got out," she said turning to her daughter.

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Saskia lay quietly beside Peter. She had resisted his overture of make-up sex and he now slept with a slight whimpering snore. Niggling in her doubts was the unspeakable idea that Peter had crossed a line. Precious Isabella. Someone she would let trample her soul, but not Peter. He was a scuttler, someone who ran away from conflict, who tried to take sharp corners away by sanding edges into curves. Always he was conciliatory and she was in return. But she also found it irritating because it swept away the unanswered, it left questions floating around her, and now it presented doubts. Doubts that were probably a bit paranoid, a bit wacky. Certainly undesirable. It was beginning to clutter up the good she felt with Peter, the reasonable human being she would make breakfast with the next morning, she would cuddle the next evening, she would tell her day

to. He would be interested and affectionate. They would reconcile in a place where there was no room for doubts. But her thoughts smouldered, until they caught alight and burnt into her like a kitchen fire. She would ask Isabella.

Joshua and Saskia were in the kitchen making toast. He was also stirring scrambled eggs around the pan. He smelt the shrill odour of ground pepper Saskia shook onto the egg dish. It had been an excellent lecture and had been punctuated by his own ideas, strange as they seemed, but compelling. He mulled over the terms tachyons and mesons. Dr Blackwood had said these were amongst the smallest, biggest, fastest and coldest sub-atomic particles. That at this scale within matter, the collisions meant energy and matter became one.

"Have you heard of something called the twin paradox."

"What's that?" asked Saskia.

"If you travel very fast, near the speed of light, you will experience time at a different rate to people who are not travelling. So if a twin of equal age is sent off earth in space close to the speed of light, time for the twin in the spaceship would move more slowly than for the one on earth. If he spent ten years in space, ten years for him might be thirty or forty years on earth so he would come back thirty years younger than his twin."

"Makes a case for time travel," she said, "or one way to avoid aging!"

He felt a warm closeness to Saskia on many issues but didn't feel on the same planet in other ways. She pulled the toaster towards her and popped the bread up before it burned. Inside the toaster, thought Joshua, the sub-atomic particles were jumping towards and away from each other at speed. All that was solid wasn't really. If you took hold of that energy, made it collide and split, controlled it, you had nuclear power. Solidity is a type of illusion because the atoms of an object are constantly moving and are even mostly empty space. Dr Blackwood had said a plane's propeller was a good analogy because it was mostly empty space but try sticking your hand in it.

Joshua was always keenly aware his mum was of an earlier generation, the time when computers weren't the adjunct to the brain and hand that he

understood - the digital extension of the brain's mobility. He liked this and took it factually. It would surprise him if his mum became electronically literate at his level. He saw the future full of electronics which would extend most human beings time and mental effort pressing buttons, moving cursors and reading screens. He didn't realise his mum was catching up quickly, he liked to have it over her. She might still control what time he came home, where he spent the night, but cyberspace was his. He wasn't sure anymore whether his dreams were set in the world or in cyberspace. He packed his school bag and set off on his bike.

Saskia wore tatty slippers in which she scudded over the kitchen floor into the study where the computer sat. After checking her library information and bank account details (two books to renew, \$500.00 in her check account) she googled Isabella's school to see upcoming events (One day science visit to the Observatory) then went to her favourites to pick up a slither of humour in her laugh file. On the edge of her vision she noticed the pink shine of a piece of metal sitting between the couch cushion and its arm. She went over and picked it up. Something rattled inside. It was an oblong metal case with a lid. With curiosity she opened it and tipped the case dislodging its contents. Onto the couch fell what looked like tablets, the capsules dressed in two shades of pink. Saskia jolted away, dropping the case and something crashed inside her. Confusion worried its way into her head, a torrent of questions, the shadow of something wrong becoming darker. Party pills? Peter. And when? Where? How often? And Isabella? Isabella and Joshua? What was going to happen at Piha? Were these the little luxury treats he fed himself behind her back?

When he arrived home she was pacing her bedroom.

"I found your stash of ecstasy tablets," she looked at him icily.

"What ecstasy tablets?"

"The ones in the pink box. They are yours?"

"Well yes," he said, the creases on his face screwing up. "It's just harmless fun."

"I won't have drugs in my home. Especially with teenagers."

"I see."

"This isn't working out. It's not love. You're taking advantage of me, of the situation. I need time out."

Do you want me to leave?"

"Yes."

He nodded. Slammed the bedroom door behind him.

Peter was gone by 8pm that night. Isabella had not come home yet. Saskia sat in darkness in the lounge. Moonlight cast silvery outlines onto the furniture, on the mantle-piece a cup of tea became cold. She couldn't cry yet. She heard the front door open, its unmistakable winge, the firm clack of it shutting. Saskia got up off the couch and turned on the light.

"Mum?"

"In here."

"What's up?"

"Peter has left tonight." A look of fear imprinted on Isabella's features. Saskia watched this transition warily.

"I'll make you a pineapple smoothie," she said.

"No thanks." She settled on the couch.

"What happened?"

"I need to ask you. Did Peter offer you anything while he was here?"

Saskia tried to keep anxiety out of her voice.

"Well, not exactly. What do you mean?"

"I found a stash of drugs today in the study. Have you seen them?"

"No mum." Saskia felt a release of tension - like a tent peg pulling out and the collapse of fabric.

"So he didn't offer you any pills?"

"Well yes he did." The tent peg was back in.

"Why didn't you tell me?" she said abandoning her own mother's interrogation techniques for a directness she knew her daughter could cope with.

"I wasn't sure what to do. I didn't want to cause any trouble."

"Did you take any?"

"No mum. He shouldn't have offered them. So I told him so."

"Good on you. I'm sorry he was here. That he was around." The words hurried over her real feelings.

"Not your fault mum," said Isabella making eye contact but for her there were still three in the room.

"Not yours either." Saskia gave her daughter a big hug.

Ch 3

Within minutes of arriving at Cook's Beach Saskia heard a gannet caw. The low hills were canopied by punga. Sheaths of green, like umbrellas, offered protection. The sky was clear, unblemished and set for a day of unrehearsed beauty. The bush had divorced the city but got on companionably enough because there was in New Zealand plenty of space for both. After deforestation the remaining greenness was kept as beach side reserve. The air was full of sea spray, an accompaniment to the tread and thrash of Saskia and the children's feet as they tramped through the fronds towards the escalating sound of ocean waves.

"For heaven's sake Joshua keep to the path", said Isabella who didn't want any bird's eggs to be broken in their nests, or careless feet unsettling nature as though the mere vibration of a human was enough to cause a calamity. Saskia smiled as the sun stroked her arms and legs covered as she was in lotions and city illusions.

"Blissful," she couldn't help saying aloud as they rounded a dune and she noted how a digital camera with a green lens would capture the splendid light that glanced off the sea surface. It was a luxury to be on holiday with her children and work had been generous enough to give her time away.

Pulling out beach towels she threw her own, an unfurling of a geometric sun like a summer flag, onto the sandy carpet and proceeded to pull off her outer garments. Her skin was a white shock. Isabella's too. They laughed however at the shiny whiteness of Joshua's torso because it was now layered in more black hairs than last year's crop. The hair hovered in circular movements and Isabella laughing called him the chimp. Saskia wasn't sure how she felt about seeing the latest manifestation of testosterone in her son. She wanted him to stay a boy. Settling and finding herself idle and still, she watched the sea, its fizz and flash, its sparkle and slither. Life force, near flat, then pulled into sudden crests and dips in play with a frisky wind and stubborn tide.

Isabella started to rub a second layer of sunscreen onto her mother's back and Saskia was reminded of Peter and his smooth hands. It was a setback which

sent her churning with before and after thoughts, with startlingly clear images of Peter's body and a surge of sexual current in memorium to their closeness. After the breakup her world of solid form had turned into liquid. She remembered having difficulty concentrating, experiencing a see-saw of feelings, stealing time away from people and imagining him sitting in the seat opposite her. She was pleased however not to be the policewoman around his behaviour, she had removed the threat to her teenagers but it had left her feeling raw. While these thoughts in their darkness accumulated as fresh feelings like cactus spikes drawn across skin, Isabella had been telling her about her friend at school.

"She's my best mate. Mandy is stalked by her kittie Lord Eddie who won't let her out of his sight. Possessive cat. He's magnificent - has these great white and ginger paws. I think she likes Eddie better than me. I'd say he's a lot more interesting. My little life doesn't match up to Lord Eddie. If she comes down here for a weekend I don't know what Eddie will do."

"At least you'd have her to yourself," said Saskia thinking of being stalked by Peter.

"I'll take her to one of the cafes."

"But she can do that in Auckland. Take her on some walks and swimming. We could go to Cathedral Cove and Hot Water Beach one day."

"Yes. Mandy is very picky and tight lipped when something doesn't suit her. Then she'll let it out. Ping! It hits you in your face."

This chatty, free Isabella was without school sullenness, attempts to be popular or droll conformity to her school rules of behaviour - the students not the teachers.

"Time for a swim," said Saskia.

Isabella pulled off her sarong and ran playfully down the beach. She stood with water up to her ankles and her reflection on the wet sand shone towards Saskia. She smelt the salt, looked at two jet skis in chase, at the other bathers in various depths with the waves rising and falling in approximation of school graphs, their form nearing perfection. It was hot enough to feel like swimming. Each step took her nearer Isabella, took her body little by little into a dress of water fitted to her

curves. She kept her head above water. When Isabella screamed and disappeared under the water Saskia's head turned to see a crown of bubbles. Instinctively she thrashed her arms to the spot and dived. Opening her eyes to stinging salt she couldn't see her daughter. Turning ninety degrees she spotted her, thrust herself forward and roundly pulled on Isabella's arms pushing her to the surface. Both out of their depth, Saskia dragged her daughter who was spluttering and swearing.

"Fuck Joshua," she exclaimed.

Finding her feet on sand Saskia felt her lungs sucked of air, her eyes stinging, her body trembling and a surge of anger sweeping her.

"What did he do?"

"He tackled me. Took my feet away from me."

"Where is he? He knows you're not a good swimmer."

"I got such a fright mum. I was winded."

Saskia put her arms around her daughter and they helped each other from the water. Their summery joy had evaporated. It was only their first day at the beach.

Back at the bach the books were wrapped in one brown paper package and sat, she imagined, like a medium sized commercial building in a city of books on the table. Their purpose and reason to be, masked by the paper like a building's exterior. On the table was her lap top which Saskia opened, its sleek wall was a silver Richard Serra sculpture or a giant screen waiting for a rugby game. There were no vehicles on the roads, and no sign of city utilities, just a pen and small pad, some unused forks left over from lunch, and an egg timer- a smooth glass and salt tower. Saskia was Gulliver as she picked up the building and unwrapped it. The covers had paintings on them, crisp capital letters formed the name Frances Hodgkins. She opened each of the three books at an illustration, two landscapes and a still life painting. She imagined the table as an English city with the rural scenes nudging its periphery and the still life as evidence of past life - capsicums, pomegranates and old jugs from the 1930s. The city dreamed of sea views.

Picking one of the books she turned to its table of contents and flicked to the first chapter. She was going to make a miniature life. For half an hour she read about a little girl's beginnings in Dunedin, birth 1869, into a warm arty household with her father a lawyer and amateur painter, a mother at home, one older sister and four brothers. She checked her other sources. On a walk she sifted the facts and that evening after the children had gone to bed she began.

Ext. FAMILY HOME - VERANDAH - DAY

The screen is filled completely by two sketchpads on the knees of the sisters, the right hand of each girl is sketching on her own pad, drawing a dog sleeping, in pencil.

Girls giggle

WILLIAM (father) (V.O)

Well lets see what you've come up with.

His hand briefly seen touching left hand side pad.

Isabel you've done well!

His hand touches right side pad

Now Fanny, bit heavy with the green aren't we. What is that?

Points

FRANCES indignant

It's a tail

WILLIAM

Isobel. Yours is excellent.

ISABEL

Thank you father

WILLIAM

Now come and see mine

Camera moves backward to show verandah setting and Boxer (dog) sleeping
Shot shows book lined studio of father and the two girls looking up at the easel with a landscape on it. Shows further close up of fathers face very contemplative.

WILLIAM

Needs a bit of sage green in the corner.

Rachel (Mother) enters room

RACHEL

William. William. Come quickly. It's terrible. Do something.

WILLIAM

What is it?

RACHEL

Its Boxer. Keep the girls away.

FRANCES

What's happened to boxer?

See father and mother go onto the verandah and into garden where dead Boxer lies on the path with his head in an animal (possum) trap.

See Frances looking through the window.

EXT GARDEN - NIGHT

See Frances walking through the garden and into the garden shed with pad under arm. She has a lamp and sits beside dead dog and draws him murmuring Poor Boxer, Poor Boxer.

End Scene

Saskia looked out at the night view from the bach where there was stillness, just the gentle sound of the waves, the shadows of flax bushes and toi toi. A glowing two metre high candle made its way with the dark shape of an unidentified man attached. Saskia drew the blind. She knew the bach held many pasts. Its fibrolite walls spoke of a hasty 1950s fabrication when the tiles were tacked together like fish scales, a water tank was erected to lean against an outside wall and the dunny was placed as far away from the bach as possible. Windows were placed for the view becoming frames into the interior or out onto the sea, the lake, the bush and the neighbours with their quota of trees, grass and fellow residents. The past was recorded in the mismatch of furniture and crockery, the earliest piece a convoluted white cane chair of magnificent

proportions from 1860 and the latest a microwave purchased last Christmas. Saskia had gone in with her parents and brothers to buy the property in the early 1980s just before half of New Zealand decided it wanted a holiday home and prices began to soar. The prices hitched up like women's skirts setting new standards of public display. When baches became holiday homes they quadrupled in size becoming stark reminders of the suburbs their residents were trying to escape. The ingredients for happiness had changed but Saskia's family kept true to the charms of their modest bach and had only modified it to accommodate a connected bathroom. Saskia could track over twenty-five years there. The actual holidays had subsided into a holiday blur with only specific incidents recurring, like the making of jam in January and water skiing mishaps. The blender of memory held strong sensations: the stuffy smell of furnishings on opening up the doors and windows after months of absence, the particular grit of sand on carpet square, the familiar sharing of people's surfaces in family patterns of behaviour, the encounters with nature for which she had an insatiable desire. She went to bed sinking happily into the haze of sleep.

Over the weeks Saskia stitched together her screen play. At times she felt she was on an oiled slide and words slipped away when she needed them. Trying to write during the day was mainly unsuccessful. It was at night the real work emerged. Needing silence she would turn off the outside light so the midges and moths didn't suffocate the windows, then lit by a solitary lamp she would sit at the dining table, the outside darkness a guest to her quiet party of words.

Well at least it wasn't Hollywood she thought. Movie making was governed by a fear of failure there. That's why they rewrote so much, spent thousands on new writers just to put a few more gags in or one liners. A script was endlessly malleable but there, it was driven by fear rather than seeking excellence. To make a scene she made notes, drew diagrams and did scene lists. Her work with actors had taught her not to put too many directions of expression as they enjoyed the freedom of bringing themselves to the part. She became adept at seeing the film in her mind's eye. A scene in sharp colour and lighting, the facial expressions establishing emotions swiftly. Another in soft pale shades with the

movement of the people swirling. Frances held a position of integrity and forcefulness. Saskia was frequently surprised by the developments in her life. She was shocked by her poverty, thrilled by the ceaseless painting, her brushes smoothing paint onto the support with calligraphic gestures and broad swathes of colour. Always assimilating her surroundings or the people who accompanied her. Then there was the complexity of Frances's response to the avant garde milieu around her.

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Saskai made delicious meals of pasta and fresh salads, the favourite a combination of chicken, kumera and chick peas with fresh coriander and basil. Her teens entertained themselves with bush walks which took them into deep spaces where plants struggled for life under the bush canopy. Where city feelings were stifled and senses uplifted. They trekked to friends' baches for gossip and jokes and in return gave shiny laughter and stories of their own. Sometimes they got up early and went water skiing when the sea wasn't rough and it's bouyancy felt amazing as the skier sliced through it, setting up walls of impressive spray. Swims were mandatory even though Izzy was more cautious and tentative but then gave in to the lazy sensations of the water. They borrowed the car to visit local cafes. Their favourite, called Friars, had mismatching chairs, seventies posters and a grotesque little statue of a friar in the forecourt. They got together for barbecues, early evening swims and games of scrabble.

Saskia was driving hard to pull the screenplay out of herself into the present. Each morning she faced her desk with a view over the garden - all green with spiky flaxes and a carpet of ferns - and with a pile-up of words waiting, just below consciousness, for the screen. Quickly it had become a battle haunted by the looming character of Frances. The larger Frances became the smaller Saskia became. How must it have been to let go the family, the common place of childhood, the core of herself which she then proceeded to rebuild under English light? In that Europe with its oppression of women but its liberation for those who could slip around its edges and not be stalled by its antagonism. Katherine Mansfield too had escaped the seeming stifled-ness of the New Zealand family

context to scoop rewards from Europe, from recreating self in a foreign world. What had she held onto? What happened when it all became too difficult? How did she find the resources to keep going? The punga tree, like a giant fern, grew upwards and outwards until the weight of its fronds pulled it back towards the ground so it assumed an umbrella shape. Saskia wondered if like the punga these women grew towards the artistic life of Europe and then had to fall in upon themselves simply to keep going. They were in a sense reshaped by the Europe they encountered, Mansfield's aloe uprooted, where punga trees were not native and not needed.

One day she was still wet from her swim and sat in the desk chair idly flicking the printed pages. She wanted to look up French fashions on the internet but lost her connection. Damn she said aloud to the empty bach. There was no local library, no one to consult. It felt like one of the bush walks but all uphill with patches of mud on which she slipped letting out a hiss of exacerbation. She tried the internet again. No response. Began worrying about the limited time, about her historical accuracy and the expansiveness of the busy life she was trying to map out on screen. The afternoon shadows were lengthening indicating her teens would soon be home expecting dinner. She drummed her fingers awkwardly on the table. Then looking into a Frances Hodgkins monograph she found one of her favourite images, *Still Life - Zipp*, with its dark bleak forest-green background on which were arranged ambiguous shapes in red, cadmium orange and ultramarine colours, A black shoe and handbag, zip and belt, perhaps - recalling her much lighter and optimistic self-portrait. As she looked at the spontaneity of the strokes it occurred to her that she just needed to loosen up and relax into this world of images and words. With the painting in front of her she resumed and found her flow again.

Saskia's friend Carolyn and Izzy's Mandy arrived the weekend before they were all due back in Auckland. On her third day Saskia and Carolyn were up early and eager to go.

"Get up Joshua. Have a shower. We're going to Hot Water Beach."

Saskia put on her bathing suit first then pulled on blue shorts and a t-shirt with They're Only Natural printed in green letters. Carolyn was in cover-up-from-the-sun-mode and wore jeans and a long sleeved striped shirt. Having washed the city off her skin in the last days she was relaxed, her shoulders and neck pliant, her legs ready for a walk and the outdoors. Isabella and Mandy were trying to be very grown up and not get excited about going to Hot Water beach. The adults were allowed to display their light thrill of anticipation. Joshua was last into the car.

They rounded the sleeve of the road, the wind brushing the bay, sweeping its saltiness inland. Saskia was grateful for time away from the bach and from the intensity of carrying writing around and around in her head. She wanted images to slow down, felt she would like to be parched of ideas and then ready for the next injection of movement, the next swivel of Frances's head and her shimmering gaze.

At first they could only hear the sound of many voices, then turning the bend of the beach they spotted an enormous moving crowd of humanity in a swarm of activity. Spades were being plunged into sand and shoveled aside to create shallow pools side by side in honey-comb fashion. All in the space of fifty square metres. Steam rose from the pools and figures sprawled in their warmth. Their own group borrowed a spade and Joshua got stuck in digging a pool into which eventually they too were able to lie down for this strange christening in the outdoors. A kind of nature worship, a ready congregation flexed for pleasure then satiated with loosened muscles, repaired backs and newly opened pores.

"Its like a bath in public," said Mandy suddenly feeling embarrassed about her body. Saskai wondered what Frances would have thought. She would have liked it as a scene though semi-naked people were not her usual subject. Reluctantly they left, packing into the car haphazardly. Izzy and Mandy were in high spirits. They joked as they drove round the coast about what Eddie would make of a public dousing in hot water.

When they arrived at the carpark for Cathedral Cove there were no parks. Saskai had never been before and was relieved to finally find a tarseal perch for

the Toyota and to start the descent towards something she didn't know. The teens rushed ahead down the cliff path.

She found herself thinking about 'Wings of Desire' which Carolyn and her had seen together.

"Remember when the angel fell to earth and the black and white movie suddenly became colour. Like an instant epiphany," said Saskia.

"It was just an instant but it was a new way to see the world," replied Carolyn.

"A good film is that too. It should startle the senses."

The raw earth path widened, then narrowed as they walked. Through bush they were startled by glimpses of bright blue sea like shards of mosaic. An orange cargo ship appeared on the horizon.

"When reading your screenplay I felt you were finding that with Frances in her early twenties. The move to England, the opening out of Europe at her feet. She had absorbed Impressionism and was starting to tackle modernism. Painting freely, expressively and richly. She became alive with it."

"She had a tamed wildness. In 'Room with a View' in the fields of Tuscany Helena Bonham Carter has a moment like this when love blossoms. Frances did this with her paintings, it wasn't men who were the trigger of her development, it was her art."

"Independent when women weren't supposed to be." Carolyn saw a fin in the water and pointed it out to Saskia.

"Perhaps an orca." She paused then said, "I found it interesting to see how she grew, kept going with the painting, with the choices around how to do this as a woman without independent means. She had to teach. She had to be a spend-thrift and to use her wits."

Saskia stopped and retied her trainer's laces.

"In 'Sliding Doors' we're confronted with two options or journeys the story could take. With Frances I felt similarly she had two options - to keep going or give up. We know which she chose but I like the energy or question hanging there."

"It hangs over the screen play. For her it almost seemed like life or not life," said Carolyn.

"It was that fundamental." Saskia looked out to the horizon, the cargo ship had disappeared. "At least I've finished the first draft."

"Good one. How do you feel about it now?" asked Carolyn carefully. Saskia sighed.

"Its reasonable but needs work. I want to understand more about painting and the modernists. Paul Nash, Winifred and Ben Nicholson. Her compatriots."

"Did she have much to do with them?"

"It was with them in the Seven and Five Society that she became well known as a cutting edge artist."

Carolyn was silent and they listened to the wind in the flaxes. A heavy brow of clouds had gathered to the north east. Saskia was watching them when suddenly she lost her footing and slid off the path. Falling two metres down the bank.

"Are you alright?" yelled Carolyn.

"Yes. Yes. I think so. Snagged my ankle on a blackberry bush." There was a zig-zag of scratches on her calf. She scrambled up the bank and they resumed their walk. Finally arriving at a flight of wooden steps they descended to a small beach crowded with people and lined with pohutakawas. Coming out onto the beach and to their left Saskia and Carolyn could see for the first time the huge natural hole in the rock, part of a point that thrust into the water allowing a cave that cut from one beach to the next. Walking into the "cathedral" Saskia was intensely aware of the huge height and luminosity of the space, of the smooth cream arch and the view through it to the ocean, its immense space a canopy of pleasure.

"Wow!" exclaimed Carolyn, "Its like a giant chamber. I wonder if Captain Cook found this. You know Cooks Beach is where he landed in 1769, planted the English flag and declared New Zealand for King George III."

Saskia was more impressed by the cathedral. Catching up with the others she saw Isabella, Mandy and Joshua in the water frisking the little waves and falling backwards into the tide, so she joined them.

Saskia imagined Frances. A woman with a strong face softened by brown hair. Holding a parasol - a bright pink and purple one, ruffled. Wearing a dark skirt with a loose white long-sleeved blouse fighting the sun rays. And a set of perilous eyes soaking up the beach, the figures in the shallows in cover up swim gear with the disturbing flash of bare knees, calves and arms. Frances drawn to the laughter of a woman at the water's edge - her sister Isabel - that flighty laugh. She goes up to her and touches her sleeve, takes her arm and they walk along the waves' edge which shifts and changes as they stop. She asks Isabel, "Is he a prospect?" Isabel laughs again.

"He's just an absent minded boy." Frances looks at her with the sceptic's appetite for truth.

"A boy with you in mind," said Frances seriously.

"All of me in mind. From the top of my head to the tip of my toes," she giggled.

"I'll have to draw him so he's all in my mind too. But just for a little time," said Isabel.

"A society portrait. You could sell him back to his mother. She'd have him up on the wall."

"And when I went over there I'd laugh to think I had captured him, and him not me."

"But he might capture you," said Frances. "Have you all to himself."

"I would visit, you'd come over. It would just be the same wouldn't it?" said Isabel tapping her shoe at the water's quivery edge.

CH 4

Saskia could hear the clock ticking, each tick was quicker than the length of a word. Writing the script was her priority. She picked up the clock, took it to the door and out into the hall where it couldn't compete. The sounds of Grey Lynn were noisier than the bach. Thinking about Frances again. About her broad whitish face and the dark hair clinging around it or the flop of her wig. How she aged, the hair grey white but curly like a girls. Those sharp acute eyes waiting knowledgeably for their next visual fix. It wasn't the first time she had felt the artist's presence or was it a trick of the mind. There Frances would be in a bohemian phase, at St Ives say , in a charcoal jacket with art deco patterns, its lace collar and a long skirt in burgundy tones with flat fringed shoes. Dorothy would be there the writing was going well, she was letting Frances become reactionary and difficult as she was sometimes in the letters. Contrary to the amenable Frances she had imagined, this one could get away with rascal-ish things. Saskia hadn't anticipated this, perhaps it was something from her own past, nudging its way in as neatly as a child's elbow against her sister's ribs.

Saskia reluctantly pulled her hands from the keys and looked at her watch, realising she had to pick up Isabella from her piano lesson in just ten minutes. Grabbing her keys she called out to Joshua "back in twenty" and jumping into the car saw she didn't have her wallet, out again, into the lounge, found it on the table, slammed the door, back to the car. Five minutes.

Frances had paled in her mind. Larger and louder was the traffic, the thrump of engines, grumble of trucks, whine of a motorbike and the eerie swish of bicycles. The metal landscape of them all working in unison on the liquorich strap road. Talkback was mumbling about the recession and mortgagee sales. Saskia wondered what Frances's favourite food might be, something French she thought..... perhaps chocolat chouxwhen the Mazda in front slammed on its brakes. Saskia saw two red tail lights flash on as she pushed the brake pedal. Waiting for the smash. It didn't happen. Shaken she peered into the car ahead. A woman was turned towards a child in its car seat. Saskia swore, she clenched and unclenched her hands, muttered to herself. The woman's Mazda was

already moving off, there was no need to get out but for Saskia there was every reason to get out. It had brought it all back and it had taken her years to even get back into a car as a driver. It had been a Mazda. She couldn't bear to think of it, had to cross it out of her mind. The looming yellow metal, the height of the truck, its fierce grilled grimace, four headlights. Her father. No. Enough. I'm not going there she thought. Can't...nothing she could do. Could have done....

It had been her father who had introduced her to film as something beyond entertainment. They'd go together the two of them when her mother was playing golf or out with her friends on a week night. As long as homework had been done. They'd see the film and afterwards there'd be the treat of a hot chocolate at a nearby food outlet. Then the discussion would begin. Her father would ask what she thought of the film and she would answer as best she could. But why did you like that bit her father would ask. And everything it seemed had to have a reason. Saskia would try to be clever and this sometimes went down well but he also wanted to know how she felt about it. Especially the female characters and the young men. It was their way of getting to know each other and a way, Saskia was now convinced, for him to check up on her values and development. But for Saskia it gave a disproportionate importance to films. As she got older she thought she needed to know all about them and would take out books from the library about Fellini, the Dziga-Vertov Group, Anime and Soviet Montage.

She was drawing and painting by then and writing up in large diaries she never managed to completely fill. The drawings were of characters from movies but the paintings were landscapes she painted from picture books of New Zealand scenes - the sort of panoramas or bush details used to lure tourists. They reminded her of the family holidays at camping grounds and the family bach. Then when she was seventeen her father's friend David heard about a movie being made on a farm in Taranaki and he knew the director's brother. After some phone calls and conferring Saskia's and David's families were invited to the set.

Saskia remembered the long car journey. There were stops for her carsick sister. The land was unfamiliar, each turning produced fresh unfolding landscape and as they neared their destination there were fewer farmhouses, less animals, severe hills, more wild bush. It was a remote farm in harsh landscape but the set was a hive of busyness first with a line-up of trucks, then of cars, then a circle of technicians and crew around a shearing shed, then an inner circle of the director and the actors. Saskia's shoes were quickly covered in mud, there were stones to walk around and stark dead tree clumps. That day she was witness to a dream sequence of the boy Tom. They were up close with the camera and crew. The room was ghostly with dark timber floor boards and a low ceiling. Hanging from a slot in the roof was a shearing machine. Still, until it suddenly burst into life spinning around like a mad arm. Then scary Evan has it in his hands and is aiming it at Tom. Is over Tom holding him in a sheep's position ready for shearing. And the blade comes close.....Tom wakes up paralysed with fear. Saskia knew this result because she saw the rushes from the previous day. Then when Vincent Ward's *Vigil* finally came out and she saw it in the cinema she felt inside rather than outside the film. Tom, in his hood with his blue haunted eyes and grubby green cheeks had impressed himself onto her as a vision of lonely bleakness.

At film school Saskia began to put things together. She had started off seeing light as something that lit from the outside, light sent from a source. It had taken some time to also experience light as something in which a scene 'bathed', that could have an all encompassing feeling. That could change a set very quickly into a sensory place she began to envisage herself. Then as she learnt about lens, coloured light began to make sense. How it could affect a face close-up or bring menace or absolute calm. She began to anticipate the gleam of a silver tureen, the cast light of a mirror, the natural light of a window on an overcast day. When she experimented with moving a camera she learnt all the stock in trade moves - tracking, panning, tilting, the crane shot but then began to apply them in unexpected ways. The close-up of a face, zooming in to half the face, then the eye, then the pupil until the screen was an iris in which another

image would appear - a memory of the character's - a child's horse ride. Then the gallop, then a close-up of the shoe in the stirrup banging, banging and on. It was fun to think of different camera angles, to anticipate while filming what might be edited. The drips from a gutter falling faster and faster - sped up. Filming the same scene from one camera to another. The psychological layers that could be revealed just with clever editing.

When she made her first film 'Flotsam' she called it her 'hip operation'. As cumbersome and scary as relying on medics to walk. Baby steps she'd told herself. But hip as in cool too. Choosing who to work with had been fairly straight forward - fellow students, friends (without attitude), family (definitely with attitude), the local dairy owner's son, her mother's hairdresser. The main actors - Margaret was played by Saskia's sister Emily and James by a student Saskia fancied, so who better for the romantic lead. He was Yugoslav and dead handsome in a stolen sort of actor's way as though he could exchange it for something else. Emily had been quite in awe but Saskia had the task of directing him. It was easier with Emily as she could be the bossy sister. Telling James what to do proved to be a highlight. "Move your arm this way James".... "If you could think of strawberries and summer while you say that line." But she couldn't direct the off screen romance that blossomed, just felt a bit disappointed it wasn't her. Thinking back, her best shots were probably in the chandelier shop with all the glittering refractions and the actors in slow motion as a chandelier fell on Emily.....and the sex scene in the school gym behind the box horse with someone on the ropes spying. Now it all seemed like a mirage.

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In her research Saskia found during her late teenage years Isabel Hodgkins was becoming a recognised artist while Frances was the accomplished pianist. In 1887 Isabel, at nineteen years, started to sell her work and made 50 pounds of art sales and in 1888 79 pounds. She could now afford to go to Australia for an 8 month trip and at the Centennial Exhibition in Melbourne won third order of merit as did her father's landscape paintings (he was a founding member of the Otago Art Society and later its president and a dedicated

watercolourist). William was made secretary of the Fine Arts Committee and brought out an impressive exhibition with works from around the world to Dunedin in a much attended show. Amongst the visiting and exhibiting artists was Girolamo Nerli.

EXT STREET COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS NIGHT

William comes out of a door onto the street, carefully looking around to make sure no one sees him.

Frances spots him but doesn't reveal herself. After he has left she goes up to the window of the room he has come from and sees through a gap in the curtains a life drawing class being taken by Nerli, full of students and model (Packing up).

INT FATHERS STUDIO NEXT DAY

FRANCES

Father I saw you last night in town.

WILLIAM

I went to a meeting.

FRANCES

I saw you at a life drawing class. I want to come too.

WILLIAM

Women aren't allowed to do these classes.

FRANCES

Why not?

WILLIAM

Its unseemly. Where would it lead?

FRANCES

Mother wouldn't want you to attend. I won't tell her if you let me go. I want to learn about anatomy.

WILLIAM (Pause)

Mother must never find out.

FRANCES

We could say we were going to an art society meeting.

INT LIFE CLASS

Frances and William draw from the life model with 12 other students all men.

NERLI

Over-dressed, flamboyant, full of energy.

Frances you have a good eye. This passage, the arm to the shoulder, the clavicle is excellent. This is vigorous technique.

FRANCES

I have been thinking. I would like to take lessons with you. I would pay of course. Is this something we could arrange?

NERLI

I may have enough time this term

EXT COASTAL SCENE

Nerli and Frances are seen painting the scenery. It is blustery weather.

INT NERLI'S LODGINGS

Nerli and Frances are painting still lifes and laughing/flirting

INT ART SOCIETY

Frances sells a painting to a wealthy woman

INT NERLI'S LODGINGS

Frances is drawing and Nerli is kissing a woman (possibly Grace Joel another painter with whom it was suggested he had an affair)

INT HODGKINS HOME

Frances looks wistfully at a female life drawing and camera close up on Nerli's signature.

Frances close up of her face as she paints, then of her hands and her painting, Fully concentrating on her work.

8 Feb 2009

So tired of these endless meetings. I just hope each time I pitch I've got enough energy with the idea to sell it. Often we get this really good response, then don't hear anything, then a reluctant no. It's the recession. Have been turned down sixteen times but have four investors. Thank God for the Film

Commission. Need some more small investors about \$10,000 each. Must try Nickolas. Could try investment scheme with the actors where by they get a percentage. Its pivoting on bucks.

16 Feb 2009

Worried about condensing the script into what Jerry (producer) tells me is a 22 day schedule. Or possibly 24 although we cant afford to go over by two days. Plus the Europe segment, not allowed to be more than seven days. Talked to Clare (cinematographer) and she said her last feature was only 15 days and they managed it just fine and it was two hours twenty. But they had five locations. Ours has 48. I saw this woman in the street who looked just like Frances. She is going to be hard to cast. Serious and attractive young, serious and dour later on. Permission to use some images of her work came through yesterday. Still waiting on the Hocken collections. These will be stills. I like the idea of stalled movement, a few moments of screen as a painting then back into action. After a few seconds could overlay it with a black and white image of her actually painting. Ghost. Malcolm (lecturer) would think I was taking a huge leap with this one. I wonder if he would back the movie.

Got to be bold. We have a budget of \$550,000 to spend at my discretion.

I am so worried there won't be enough shooting time. Remember everything will take longer than I initially think. The casting is so crucial.

19 Feb 2009

What are the nuggets from my last films? 'Flotsam' had a slow start and built up, as I layered into it the psychological complexity of Margaret and James - a portrait of a relationship. Set up of a series of emotional 'mirrors', then into the future. Could see they were still together, a kind of redemption given what happened to them. The documentary on the museum MOTAT was much faster, snappier, people to interview, history to haul into the present. Short films 'Circular' and 'Jeapody' were based on short stories. This time I've got monographs. A whole life. 'Move'- my arthouse short with its hairy tangles too

obscure. 'Jeopardy' had the sort of close ups I'm interested in this time - like filming an ear while someone is talking off camera. Or following a droplet of water down a wall to show time, then cut to actor then to drip.

Talked more with Clare and we're starting to arrive at the type of look we want. She calls it the visual field or the visual tone. I call it consistency of eye. This film will be very playful and experimental in the way it is shot. Unexpected close ups, thinking like a painter who continually finds something significant in the everyday, so lots of emphasis on light and colour. Think we should find some objects that correspond with the objects Frances painted and have them in close up, perhaps have to find them in the first place, to chance upon them like she did. Then we see the painting. What happens to a still life object after its been painted? Does she have a different sense of it? A more loving sense. Cezanne used to leave his fruit to rot. Kept painting them. Morandi rearranged the same objects over and over.

So good to be working with Clare again. We get on like sisters, I'm the older one and she doesn't mind being bossed around though I'm actually very careful with this. She wants the 'Self Portrait' to be at the end of the film and I want it at the beginning. Or the 'Pleasure Garden' painting itself. Need to avoid too many night shots, it needs additional lighting and more time.

I think for this film we have to do a lot of talking with actors beforehand so I can be decisive on set and just get on with it.

21 Feb 2009

I'm getting a little nervous about casting.

Joshua has got the flu and now so have I. Poor darling, isn't even playing computer games. Two days off school. I need to finish the script or does it never really get finished until the film is finished? Got feedback from Clare about Scene 17 when Frances is in Europe, taking painting classes as a teacher with a hoard of students, all painting the picturesque in Brittany. We'll have to take the costumes with us, freight them over, hire extras over there to fit the costumes!

Someone will have to go over first, advertise, audition etc - I feel this will be expensive and get out of hand. Fortunately John is great at logistics.

Have four new investors at \$10,000 each and nine turned us down.

Libby (casting director) needs a contract.

Have to have more copies of the script . Need to print them off for the actors and the crew. Plus the prospective investors all want to read it. Funny that the script is not how it'll end up anyway, but the gist is there. Actors always have something to add.

1 March 2009

The bare bones are coming together.

Loved the feedback with latest script from Clare. She's just got this really good eye and is full of helpful suggestions. She thinks best way to go is to film too much so we have plenty for the editing stage. It's seriously difficult to reshoot. We both have to watch for continuity through out. I remember in 'Jeopardy' we had a shot of a table with a cup of tea but the actor drank it between the 2nd and 3rd takes. No one realised until we began editing. You can get hung up on little details, you can end up cutting a whole scene because of continuity issues. Clare needs to have as much space as possible. Headspace so I can have the best of her. I feel so lucky to have her as she can make much more money doing commercials or working on bigger films. I loved her last film 'Enigma' - she did a segment of an owl sitting in a tree at night. Blinking. It was beautiful and offbeat - and the owl represented one of the characters who you saw blinking after he'd had his first night with a new woman.

Spoke to Daniel (production designer) and he was flapping about, in a tide of worry about locations and money. But he is so loyal and such a great designer with his special understanding of what I want to do.

15 March 2009

Libby loved the script. Is fully supportive of seeing one of our art icons on the screen but is still worried about how we are going to do it in time. So am I.

Next thing is a schedule so we can see just how absurd 32 days is for the script. Then I will have to go over things with Jerry (producer) and work out what we can do without. Only so much can be cut from the schedule with impunity. I had this idea for Frances when we have her changing wigs it's like she's trying on new art styles - shall I be this kind of painter or that. It might work when she is exposed to new aspects of modernism in Paris. She sees a Picasso, a Braque, what to make of it? I love it that she was crazy about hats - big bolshy large hats. Janine (wardrobe) is going to love that. Peacock feathers, fake fur, flowers.

Shooting delayed to June 7 at the moment.

25 March 2009

Have decided this film is an engagement with the art of its time but really its about relationships and struggle so there is interconnection and we need to see this visually. Frances is such a trooper! Always had a go! I wouldn't have wanted to get in her way. Stamina and enterprise. Her letters show her as an equivalent to the brave female travelers of the nineteenth century who climbed mountains in Europe and went to the Orient or Africa on their own. How to convey this visually and with enough guts to move the viewer? Imagine I have a 1910 Frances in front of me and she's bursting with energy and responsibility for her students and the desire to do her own work as the dramas of people unfold around her. A series of incidents/vignettes that shape her life. The subtle and not so subtle inferences to the viewer, the sharp image like the owl as she is buffeted by circumstance. I found an image of a travelling woman on a camel in 1892, there was a force in the woman's demeanor that was pure Frances - an agile stubbornness. Sometimes I see a woman in the street or at a café who has this quality and I want a camera.

Clare thinks the film will differ in light between New Zealand and the Euro section - the Mediterranean sky blue plus Euro pollution and the New Zealand clarity. She thinks we should shoot New Zealand flashbacks to indicate home sickness with V.O of her letters. Nice touch.

2 April 2009

Daniel (production designer) has pulled out . A knock back. We're not offering enough money, he has a commercial for razor blades. Bit late in the piece.

14 April 2009

Have hired Jackie as editor and Patrick as sound design, just out of Sydney Film School they married last year and have done three short films, I loved them, and they know heaps about sound and visuals between them. Pat has a stammer which seems to have made him acutely aware of sound and speech patterns.

15 April 2009

Jerry (producer) found Emert for production designer who talked a lot about budgeting thank goodness.

Had first location scout. We have found Frances's "family home" - it's a Mt Eden villa standing in for a Dunedin home, its owned by friends of Carolyn's. Its perfect, slightly dilapidated and not too renovated (this was the difficulty) - just as long as we keep away from the kitchen. Still got the wooden floors, no carpet. Still separate rooms, separate dining.

Sussed out a setting for the life drawing class in the Grey Lynn shops. Her rooms in Europe have to be Auckland spaces - lining up for inspection are four villas and two mock Italian that our location scout (Sammy) has found so far. Frances moved around so much, hers was a peripatetic life. She seems to have thrived on change. The film needs to mirror this.

Great news Malcolm my old lecturer is backing the film!

29 April 2009

Thank goodness for a good lawyer - she's drawn up a master contract for the actors and another for the crew.

Must try and secure more locations before everyone else comes in so I know number of days each cast and crew member need to dedicate to production so its easier for them to commit.

2 May 2009

Jeremy is coming forward with possible locations. The Naval base is a good idea for old doorways and as an institution. How to transpose London on Auckland? We'll need to get some real London shots to embellish. Nothing where traffic has to be stopped.

4 May 2009

Auditions have begun. Have found an excellent William - that Victorian pose, a fastidious air, sense of propriety. His name is James, his last job was as a Vegemite Man!

France's big friend during her thirties was Dorothy Richmond, very social lovely lady. Rose wants to play her but Emily is in the running too. Final audition for her tomorrow.

Then we've got the ones who need British accents. Thank goodness I've lived in London, but you can pick it up from TV anyway though we'll give elocution lessons.

7 May

Have got Rose on board as Dorothy. Harris wants to play a London art dealer so pleased!

The crew is coming together. We've got Peter just back from Turkey Doco on human trafficking as our stillman. Georgina lucky to get (three months pregnant) as head dresser. Margo has agreed to fit us in between two other projects, great attitude, a magic woman as assistant director.

Found Jack . This is Martin who will play one of our boys at the Front. He has a beautiful shyness, endearing for an eighteen year old, slightly gawky but solid.

Mark in comparison will be social and outgoing even a cad. Can't help my language sometimes slipping back to that time. Gillian said when she worked at Merchant Ivory in London the actors would occasionally stay in character at lunch or tea times - got a bit awkward on the cell phone I believe. Haven't found Frances yet.

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"God Clare what's wrong....you look like you've eaten a frog..." asked Saskia as she stood in the rehearsal room.

"It's Brian."

"Your partner Brian?"

"Yes. He's been in an accident. Mountain biking in Rotorua."

"Oh God no..."

"He's broken his pelvis. Coming up to Auckland this morning in a helicopter."

"Clare you'll have to..."

"Yes. It's a serious injury Saskia. He's going to need daily care. The film... I... I can't do it."

"I see."

They both stared at each other and Saskia pulled at strands of her hair.

"You can't get a nurse in or something?"

"I couldn't...we can't anyway.... the money. I'm so sorry."

"Gosh Clare it's so late. I understand. Yes of course I understand. Don't worry about the film."

"I must go."

"Keep me posted."

It would be so hard to get someone new. For the next days she was running on adrenaline. Sending panic emails to agencies. How could she get someone so late? Clare and her had developed a good vision together. Had discussed it all endlessly. This was disastrous. Just *four weeks* until shooting started.

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12 May

Can't believe Clare has had to pull out. Am gutted. No words describe it. Location scout. Worried about street scenes. There's only so many cars we can have. Vintage Cars Club has agreed to lend us ten for free - should be enough. We have access to a street in Devonport that still has its old trimmings. Can do wonders on computers with this. Jerry has hired Dean computer wizz for our very own 'special effects' - worked on Lord of the Rings.

Took Jerry and Georgina to see three homes - a bedroom in Maud's house is perfect for a St Ives residence with plaster walls. Albert Park shall be a site for Frances sketching as will Cornwall Park. Found a studio for her in Christian Union Building in Queen St. Perfect. Frances hired models everywhere so have to allow plenty of extras of this kind. Can't afford crowd scenes though could get people to work for free as I did in my last feature. That's when the glamour of movies pays off. Libby has three possibles for Frances.

13May 2009

Looked at tape of Cyrus - love the green eyes, a great face. Stern then warm. Will offer Terence to him.

Met with Charlotte - is playing an astute matriarch but in real life is an aerobics teacher - has played soaps and live theatre - versatile as many actors here are.

Costume fittings: Giant hats like wobbly still lifes. Plumage. Need ostrich feathers. Am storing these at my place. In hat boxes. This is not a film where we see the main female character in the nude. If it's like that for the guys they'll have to imagine it. Although am considering a semi-lingerie shot while she puts on one of the hats and examines herself in the mirror so we get her appraising herself positively as an older woman.

14 May

Frances - out spoken, dynamic, strong, emotional, possibilities of vulnerability. In that day an interesting mix of 'male/female' characteristics. I enjoy that ambiguity.

No one up to it yet. Am getting a bit worried.

Production meeting with Jerry. Settled schedule as much as possible for now. Went with Jerry and Bob (lighting man) to boat shed on Ngapipi Rd to find out our one has been damaged by high tides. Fortunately neighbour agreed to use his.

15 May

No one in NZ is available.

Heard about UK cinematographer. It's a guy. Marcus. He's available at short notice because his latest film crumbled last week due to the recession. Is keen to fly out to NZ ASAP. Receive his tapes tomorrow.

Met Sasha (editor) thinks overshooting excellent idea within budget. Is fastidious and so particular, I like that kind of mind for this job. Wants to make clear the emotional life of the characters as central focus and likes a fast revelatory pace. She's into jazz which I think is a good omen for an editor - rhythm.

16 May

Liked Marcus's tapes. Showed Jerry and we think we could work with him. He'll have to stay with one of us as we can't put him up at a hotel because it's an additional expense. Have decided to hire him.

Costume fitting: Jack is in military fatigues, we've been able to hire these. We have a fortune teller in purple velvet and lace in one of France's more vulnerable moments. Frances will wear linen that day in contrast. Worried about blowing the costume budget. Some of the actors are bringing in things. I've got Georgina scouring second hand shops for handbags and furs.

Have every hope that Marcus will be up to the job.

CH 5

If Marcus just lifted his tray he could untangle the headset chords that lay like medusa's head on his knee and set Seb right. He wondered if either of them would get any rest or whether the cusp of sleep would just nudge them, not quite settling their eyelids, pulse, heart to that slumbering state as they sat side by side in 4A,4B. Having the window seat didn't help his boredom as the blind was down to prevent the sunrise over Uzbekistan blasting every sleeper into wakefulness. He felt a scuttle of movement beneath his feet as turbulence bounced the craft like a lilo on waves. Despite himself his spine braced. The plane steadied. Seb pulled out his headset, untangled it and plugged it back in. Marcus gave him a weary smile feeling responsible for his nephew and wondered what both of them would be like after twenty-four hours of this.

His ticket stated New Zealand as his destination and he looked apprehensively at the black letters on a mottled dove grey. There was a vague memory of his father's holiday postcard showing One Tree Hill which he'd also known from a U2 song. Maori artifacts in the British Museum. A mere, surface smooth as a fingernail, and a Maori feather cloak. Snippets on TV that had seemed unremarkable except for the outstanding landscape he had thought would be good to film. Milford Sound or was it Marlborough? The receptionist at Alto Films was on an O.E. from Nelson. Then there was Lord Of The Rings. New Zealand was a present wrapped in tourist paper. He would be undoing the bow in an hour.

"Got some kip?" Marcus asked Seb.

"Sure a little. I've never sat anywhere for so long."

Marcus heard a trolley being pushed towards them. A few blinds were pulled up letting in ovals of bright light. Passengers blinked, shuffled their feet as their body clocks miscounted hours.

"Could do with some food."

"Do you think this lark will pay off?" asked Seb fingering his limp safety belt.

"Who's to say. Some films work, others don't. Some pay their way. But we'll get paid. We've signed the contracts so its law.

"What kind of film is it going to be?"

"Sounds like a cultural weepie. I've no idea really though I can't let them know that. You know their cinematographer pulled out. I'm lucky they contacted our agency, could have been any. But someone knew someone else. Its how the film industry works. You're my concession. I said I'd come if they gave you a job too."

"Thanks for paying my fare."

"Well I knew the film couldn't. Think of it as an investment in your future."

The automatic switch of a hostess's smile shone as she stretched over them with a tray. Breakfast was better than some aircraft meals but it still looked like a futuristic camouflage of real food with science fiction odors and textures. Marcus gulped his down with a plastic fork. He usually ate anything he was given on a flight as it seemed to counter boredom.

The Captain announced, " We are beginning our descent and should arrive in Auckland in twenty minutes."

Marcus wanted to stretch his legs but trolleys picking up breakfast blocked the aisles. Instead he looked out the window and was rewarded with the expected landscape of cloud, waves and hillocks reflecting swells of sunlight like florescent lamb's fleece. He had to look away.

He felt protective towards his nephew - just completed his A Levels, somehow hoping to follow in his Uncle's path, chasing the glamour of movies. Little did he know.

As they descended Marcus offered Seb a mint and slipped one into his mouth. It leaked sugar onto his parched tongue. His body felt achy, his shoulders in a slump, his buttocks and thighs in semi-traction, all his muscles protesting. His sister had asked him to Verona for two weeks. He remembered her apartment with a sixteenth century fountain outside, a view over the Adige river, the Titian in the local museum. Her voice breaking into a contralto at breakfast. His niece's peach skin and how she always wanted to touch his chin since she

had discovered stubble there. How she made him feel old and young in almost the same moment. He thought about home - the two-up he lived in in London, a renovated flat in Finsbury Park that he had been meaning for the past two years to move out of. The light in the morning coming into the lounge had a special quality - an eggshell fragility as it wavered onto the paisley couch, the Camden Town market cushions he'd bought, the coffee table kindly given to him for his first marriage. Finally, it was the weekend before he left, he'd filmed that light - half an hour of film from the beginning of dawn until the quality of light had increased to a fullness. He had it with him now, knew it might keep him grounded in a new environment, a half-hour of home. The clip reminded him of Warhol's twenty four hours shoot of the empire state building from just one camera position. It would bore anyone but a cinematographer he thought, the mere increase and decrease of light. But it meant everything to him, for light and its changes were essential to his craft.

This was what he was noticing in the cabin now. More blinds up, more overhead lights off, less altitude and the space was slowly filling up with alpenglow and conversation. Passengers' faces could be seen clearly now, their clammy eyes, tousled hair, the uncomfortable faces of long distance travel. The plane broke through its cloud sky-scape and Marcus made out the blue cloak of the Pacific Ocean. Then the green body of land, the fingers of beaches, the freckles of farm houses scattered with their rooves painted in brown or blue. He could feel the plane's descent in his ears and throat, his own body tuned to the plane's. He reached for another mint.

"We'll have to remember to find a computer and email your mum," he said. Seb turned in his seat and unplugged his earphones.

"What was that?"

Marcus repeated himself.

"Maybe we could set up skype. I like the idea of mum in slow motion. She's so hyper." said Seb.

Marcus looked out the window and saw a stretch of city sitting like lego on a patch of coast. The little buildings were becoming larger as though they were animate and growing before his eyes.

Suddenly the plane began to ascend again - the two men looked at each other then to the hostesses who were also exchanging glances. The plane continued upwards and circled Auckland. Marcus got a view of the vast city making out a silver bridge, a hub of tall buildings and a tartan blanket of suburbia. He watched the hostesses for any indications of something out of the ordinary but they looked unconcerned until the pilot announced,

"We will be in the air for awhile as we have a fault with our landing gear which we are sorting out. Please be patient."

"I wonder how much fuel we have?" said Seb whose face was flushed, whose eyes darted rather than settled. Marcus felt his stomach contract. A child three rows away started to cry.

The next five minutes passed slowly while passengers adjusted themselves. Bubbles of worry seemed to escape in the air. The pilot's voice crackled from the speakers again.

"We are making an emergency landing. We have no functional landing gear. I will instruct you as we go. We expect to make a successful landing."

"Shit!" said Seb. A collective fear flowed over the passengers. Faces contracted, brows compressed, bodies repositioned.

The plane began to descend again. This time Marcus looked at the buildings with widening apprehension, their concrete solidity suddenly a menace, the ground coming closer was too fixed a reality.

"Crew please go to your seats. Everyone needs to be in the recovery position - head and body over knees please. Remain in your seats please. We will be landing shortly."

The two men bent forward. Intense fear crept into their bodies finding its way newly into muscles and brain pathways. Thoughts of death started to explode, were repressed. Someone began to wail. Children whimpered. The religious prayed. Marcus felt the plane around him as an outer skin. He

desperately wanted to look out of the window to see how far they had to go but his face was on his knees. The plane seemed to be cruising, not flying. Each second felt extended.

The pilot said, "Brace yourselves," and an instant later the plane let out an enormous howl as it hit the runway scrapping its underside on the tarmac. The screech of metal was deafening. Much louder than Seb's scream. Marcus thought of fire, of the plane tilting at the wrong angle and ploughing into the ground. Instead the plane glided, its skin bruised but remaining taut. Finally slowing. Finally petering its run out. Stopping. There was a strange silence, he took deep breaths. Then the whole cabin cheered and clapped, a wave of relief spilled over lives and Marcus turned and hugged his nephew, tears spilling onto his jacket. There was a wail of sirens. The captain's voice came over the air.

"Sorry for the glitch. Welcome to New Zealand."

The taxi took them to the first wooden suburb Marcus had ever seen. Neat weatherboard houses laid like piano keys in rows, he was the drunken piano player still in shock. London was hanging onto him: its bricks, age, habits. He wanted to let go but couldn't. Misty grey London, and here he was, in the wrong season, walking up to a blue house, its sash windows wide open, its front door a candy floss pink. The owner Jerry smiling and helping with the luggage. Guiding them down a wooden hallway to their room with twin beds that had obviously housed teens. Posters on the walls including Lady Gaga semi-clothed, stacks of comics, Denise the Menace on top, with his tongue sticking out. He instantly liked Jerry for his welcome, his cheerfulness. They established immediate links, Jerry had spent an O.E. in Bristol and London. It wasn't long before they were sitting on the back deck with beers in hand meeting Jerry's three kids and his wife Audrey. They were eventually directed to their room to sleep off the flight. The two men had their first afternoon in New Zealand tucked up in bed with the memory of their landing tugging at their sleep.

The six o'clock news had an amateur film of the plane's landing. It was third story in. Marcus watched still bearing the shock and a spikey feeling on his spine. It looked as though it had happened to some other group of people - the

plane had an elegance he'd not been aware of, the sparks generated by the collision were strangely beautiful, it was quicker than it had felt. There had been preparation for them on ground, ambulances and fire engines lined up. He tried to look for himself amongst the passengers emerging from the plane door but the film was too indistinct. The camera shake was apt. Even now he was working out which lens would be needed.

When he met Saskia she'd seen the clip.

"You've had a dramatic welcome to New Zealand," she said. The jetlag still hung on his senses and he could see she was flustered. He noted she was mid-forties, had her brown hair bundled onto her head which made her look slightly regal, that her clothes were well-cut and fashionable. Her hand-shake was warm and friendly with a certain containment of someone used to meeting strangers and having to impart to them some form of decency and pleasure that was not truly felt yet. He wondered whether he met expectations and felt a slight reticence slide over him. A sense of responsibility to make this work. I've come all this way from the other side of the world to do this he thought. It had been agreed they would have dinner, just the two of them and he wondered if it was going to be like the job interview he hadn't had.

"You'll see we're well organised," she started. "It appears to be all on track. You are a lucky find, believe me, it was a shock to lose our cinematographer!" He wanted to know the details but remained silent in case it had been acrimonious.

"I especially liked your tape 'Clementis'." She's going to start straight into it he thought and I've still got jetlag. He must have grimaced slightly for she said,

"I don't think we'll talk too much shop as you'll be needing some sleep."

"Oh I'm feeling fine," he lied but only partially because he was already tuned into his own apprehension. What was he doing here? What was this woman wanting from him? Her vision of a film. What was she trying to do? He was full of questions that would take days to answer. So he held back and listened.

"I've got almost everybody on board," she said, "Except Frances. So tomorrow we have auditions and I would like you to be there.'

She pulled a cloth bag onto the table and drew out three large books.

"These are about Frances," she said with relish, "background reading for you."

He took them into his hands wondering how quickly he could read them. Not by tomorrow. They hadn't even got the main actress yet. Then as though she was a live person Saskia began to tell him about Frances. She gave a brief biography and gave her context in New Zealand art history and internationally. She opened the books at illustrations and he saw gouaches, watercolours and oils in what he perceived as magnificent colours and energetic brush strokes. He knew enough about art to see she had a great talent, dated he thought by the subject matter. Saskia he saw was assuming he knew art and to reassure her he said,

"I particularly like her late gouaches."

"Yes those are my favourite too,' she said smiling. It seemed to be going really well. He could pretend he knew more than he did.

"Of course as an Englishman I've got a particular interest in colonial film."

For some reason she looked concerned. He thought Oh God she's seen through me. Here I am pretending to know something about New Zealand film and I've stuffed it. He searched for something to say. There was an awkward silence.

"I think New Zealanders have done tremendously well," he ventured.

"Tremendously well?" said Saskia.

"You know. The Maoris. Settling here. All that..."

"Really. As compared to who?" she said flatly.

"The Australians and Africans I guess..."

"We've done our own thing."

"Yes but we started it didn't we. The scurrilous Brits taking over everything." He hoped she wouldn't think he'd do that with her film.

"Oh the Brits know their place now."

"We do?" He could see the conversation turning up side down. Suddenly he was becoming the aggressive coloniser and Saskia was on the defence.

"Really I think some of you Brits still think you own the world." She let this out with a low sigh.

"Of course we do," he said to make matters worse. He had hoped it was a joke. She didn't laugh. What an ass I am he thought.

"Power is all in the eyes of the beholder," she said cryptically.

"I think its quite plain New Zealand is a tiny country with minimal influence while England is a major centre with worldwide influence..." he found himself saying.

"For unethical banking perhaps," interrupted Saskia with a dark glow to her eyes, crossing her arms and pinching together her lips. He thought she's a little dictator. I'll show her. Oh no...I'm already in a fight. Then Jerry and Audrey were at his elbow.

"Thought you'd be here. It's Saskia's favourite hangout," said Jerry. Saskia looked relieved and motioned for them to pull up chairs.

Marcus tried to hide his worry, this aborted effort with Saskia. He would have to make amends. Show her what a nice Brit he was. They had a buoyant evening in which he learnt more about Jerry and Audrey but Saskia was on her guard and he received several quizzical glances as they drank and talked.

CH 6

The next morning Saskia took Marcus to the little office in Newton that was being used for rehearsals. She was in brisk organisational mode and didn't look pleased to see Marcus. She was very unsure of him but there was a task to do, a professional stance to maintain or at least obtain. The room was ridiculously too small. They sat, Saskia, Jerry, casting director Libby and Marcus on rickety chairs, a pale light found its way into the room from high windows through which she briefly saw a helicopter, its clip/clack hovering the air. Saskia was saying for Marcus's benefit,

"This is the third audition. We've narrowed it down to four actresses. We need to be aware of the actor/character meld. The potential for the actress to move out of her head and into the head and soul of Frances. When this happens the behaviour and sensibilities of the actress are left behind. This is the meld." She stood in front of the giant desk the selectors were sitting behind and went to the lonely chair in the centre of the room and tapped it.

"The hot seat," she said. Then in a firm tone,

"Remember however that the actor and character are at a great distance from each other still. The actor and character become closer during rehearsals but there is always a degree of separation or a split. We need to see the potential for development with this. If she brings some tension, some conflict to this actor/character split."

Saskia was pulling her team together. It was clearly an important morning.

"As well as the in control Frances we know, I want to see some anger, some desperation. I want to see her clinging to her female friends. Combating aloneness with people and travel. She needs to hit the rocks *and* climb the mountains."

As she spoke an assistant ushered in the first actress. Each head turned to see a blonde woman walk agilely into the room. She was dressed casually in jeans and a lemon cotton shirt. Saskia greeted her, took her audition form and headshot and thanked her for coming. The actress introduced herself as Eleanor,

said a few sentences about her appreciation of France's painting and then Saskia took charge, bringing in the reader to play Dorothy.

"This is a scene when Frances is in Concarneau with Dorothy and she's looking after and teaching her students and having the afternoons to paint her own work. She's thirty-five years old."

Eleanor sat on the green chair. Saskia thought she looked less nervous than the second audition even though there was more at stake.

"You may begin."

FRANCES

I can't bear Mrs Saunders. She has a vile habit of plucking her nasal hairs, like a man. Looks like a poodle. I'm amazed she's married and has been for five years.

DOROTHY

Oh she's not that bad. And he's actually quite nice. I met him at Ascot last year. Tries so hard with her painting you know.

FRANCES

And can't paint to save herself. Too much yellow, squabby shapes and trill little touches instead of broad strokes. I do try to help her. I think perhaps she needs to learn more about layering her colours.

DOROTHY

That special knowledge you have of what colour looks like on top of another and another on top of that. I do like the way you do that Frances.

FRANCES

Thank you. You're such a good friend Dorothy. I do hope you'll stay another few weeks. And I do have three new students arriving next week. Where they're going to stay I haven't a clue.

DOROTHY

Perhaps they can go with the Blanchards.

FRANCES

Oh yes! I forgot about them. Very kind the Blanchards. I painted their daughter Genevieve the other week. I'm pretty sure Monsiuer Blanchard will buy it, maybe we can use the amount for one nights accommodation for a student next week.

Knock on the Door

PROPRIETOR

Mademoiselle Hodgkins there has been an incident with one of your students, Sophie.

FRANCES

Oh what has happened?

PROPRIETOR

Well it is a delicate matter. I'm afraid Sophie is complaining that one of the student's stole one hundred pounds from her.

FRANCES

Oh good heavens. Oh no that is terrible. What shall we do? Poor girl.

DOROTHY

Get the police.

FRANCES

No not the police. What a fuss. I'll find her myself and give her my fists.

DOROTHY

We must really go and see Sophie ourselves.

FRANCES

Yes. Directly.

Eleanor relaxed, her face shifted into a quiet stare. She waited. Saskia said, "Thank you. That's good. Can you play it the other way now."

The script was the same up to,

Knock on the Door

PROPRIETOR

We have a package for you Mademoiselle Hodgkins

FRANCES

Oh Really. What could it be? Dorothy did you order anything?

DOROTHY

Open it my dear

FRANCES

Pulls off brown paper

Oh you darling. This is wonderful. A whole new batch of watercolours! Winsor and Newton no less. Oh I love their cadmiums. Surely these are for you too?

DOROTHY

It's for your birthday Frances

FRANCES

You are too good to me. Hog brushes! I'll try them out this morning. You have made my day!

Saskia thanked the actress and asked,

"Do you have outstanding commitments?"

"Well I've just come back from playing Chekov's The Three Sisters in Melbourne and I'm looking for my first New Zealand gig. I'm available."

"Yes your agency indicated you have a part time job in a café."

"They're very flexible. I can take time off."

"What's your take on Frances?" asked Jerry.

"Pioneer painter. Escaped New Zealand to find her self, the immigrant experience reversed, back to the home country. I think she was gutsy and strong to stay on there, she seems an independent character, I can relate to that when acting takes me overseas."

Saskia thanked her again and the green seat was now empty.

She said to the others,

"Not bad. What did you think?"

"Not good," said Jerry, "She didn't keep me riveted."

"What were the little gestures?" said Libby.

"Good for effort. Seems a nice woman. Not decisive enough."

The second Frances was a brunette and Saskia thought her manner was quiet and contained, too introverted perhaps, and she was obviously very nervous. Her voice quavered over the lines and her performance was unexceptional.

After she had left Saskia said,

"I can see her as an older Frances. When Frances slows down."

"Not enough oomph," said Jerry.

"Tacky accent. But she has lots of experience. Has played lead in the theatre."

The third Frances swept into the room in a commanding fashion and declared her interest in the production. After her performance she was elated and gushed,

"My niece is a painter. I've followed painting for years. Frances is one of my favourites."

Of course thought Saskia. The rush of words projected enthusiasm and a lack of self control. Perhaps by checking that flow she would bring out more in the character mused Saskia. But she was unsure. With the green seat empty again she said,

"Her accent is good. She has presence. She's too tall. I liked the way she treated Dorothy, with a sort of perfunctoriness that comes from long friendship."

"I thought she was rather over the top, too much. We need a more subtle performance for camera" stated Marcus

"She didn't charm me," said Libby.

The fourth Frances had a strong face and wore her clothes with definition. Kay's resume revealed numerous roles as the lead or support actress, she'd been in several major New Zealand films. She gave her performance and the casting crew spontaneously applauded.

"Excellent," said Saskia to the actress.

"That was wonderful," confirmed Jerry, "I like the way you held the character."

"Quite special," enthused Marcus.

"You're our best so far," said Saskia.

"Do you know her work?"

"A little. But I think I understand what kind of woman she is. You see I've had to make ends meet on my own while being passionate about acting. You sacrifice a lot but are always buoyed up by the next possible part like you would be for a new day of painting or a new destination to paint."

"How true. We'll let you know tomorrow."

Afterwards Saskia sat on the green chair.

"Her walk was good. The agility. She has a clear pleasant voice."

"Clarity," said Jerry, "It was a real and convincing performance."

"Her height is good, she has a slightly classical face which with the right hairdo and hat would suit the era. I liked both her and her Frances. So its Kay?" asked Saskia.

"Definitely as far as I'm concerned. She has that joie de vivre," commented Marcus with a ripple of pleasure.

"An avidness," said Jerry.

"Startling performance," agreed Libby.

Saskia sighed with relief.

"We are all agreed. At last a real Frances."

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Joshua put on his jeans and chose a blue t-shirt with Moody written scraggly across his chest. He liked the letters to precede him down the street, their little shout. The lyrics of Dido kept playing back in his head, her video jangled alive in his wiring - he remembered the a kimbo positions and her delivery, how it made him feel buoyant and lively. He pulled on his trainers, checked himself in the mirror, pulled the sheet up to the pillow and escaped his room.

Hepi picked him up at 10 o'clock in his Fiat and they drove to Jerry's to collect Seb. Saskia had insisted they take out the young Englishman, give him a good time. A bit of New Zealand hospitality. Seb had tousled black hair, a newly shaven face with square jaw and dark lusting eyes. Joshua could see the girls'

hearts wobbling. Lucky bastard, he thought. His own attempts with the opposite sex had resulted in some bleak situations. Hepi was asking Seb about bands he'd seen live in London, Hepi always had the words to prize open the history of any unsuspecting bloke or girl. Joshua put it down to his large Maori family, a certain largess that Joshua didn't possess. The list of bands was impressive, then sickening until Joshua felt jealousy filling up his head. They stopped for cigarettes.

"What's the Auckland scene like," asked Seb.

"Its dynamic Bros.... Yeah. Bit behind London maybe but its got its heart in the right place. You should check out some gigs," said Hepi.

"New Zealand music's got some cult status in the UK," said Seb.

"We're the little puff of smoke on the horizon," said Joshua drawing on his cigarette. They pulled up outside a large green shed with Murphy's Paint Ball emblazoned in neon across its scabby façade.

"I've never done this," said Seb getting out of the car.

Joshua and Hepi exchanged glances.

"It's Murphy's law here," muttered Joshua. "This is care of my mum."

They walked into a reception area decked out in cheap mismatching 1990s décor - couches slightly ripped, posters of film stars with cellotape and cleavage showing, grey stained carpet and a new Michael Jackson tribute table. Joshua bought the tickets. In the changing room they dressed in overalls and head masks. Their guns lighter in hand than they looked, the size of machine guns, each with different coloured pellets. As they moved into the main warehouse, a 60m by 40m space, the atmosphere darkened to a soupy murk. Joshua could make out obstacles and barriers constructed from old crates, builder's pallets, wood scraps and petrol drums.

"Position yourselves," instructed Joshua and he walked off to find a suitable hideaway.

"Begin," he yelled. Nothing happened. Music started up, a rap beat turned low. Joshua saw a person in the shadows or was it a drum. He pulled the trigger revealing his place. He decided the best pose was to be a gangster. Hepi was a

cowboy and Seb, well Seb was the target, the underling. As he swung around the pellets missed him, pinging to the concrete or bursting their paint into messy pools. He laughed, decided to run to another obstacle just to see if he would be shot. Was it Seb or Hepi up ahead? Then gone. The flickering memory of a 1916 trench from a movie, the exhilaration of the cop shoot out, of the student psychopath at an American high school - he wobbled on that thought pushed it out of grasp. Holding his gun lightly he dived across again, now seeing one of the others, now not. He was breathing hard, felt the muscles in his calves as he ran again, taking aim when one of the boys chanced to run out at the same time. Towards him now. He sent out useless shots, cursing his aim. It was one hour that felt like half an hour before one was downed. Seb's gun. Hepi put his hands up and Joshua looked at the blue paint dripping over his chest and the hands that held his mask. So it was just the two of them slinking in and out of the light, near or away from protection. Little boys fantasies writ large, then reduced by the silliness of it all, until the pellets hit you. They came fully all at once, off guard and painful, splotting his shoulder and his thighs. Sending him to his knees. He raised his hand, giving in and confronting Seb's joyful face. He was pulled up onto his feet.

"Choice. That was good," said Seb.

Joshua relaxed, scuffed him over the head.

"Wouldn't have played if I knew you were such a good shot."

"Learnt it back home," said Seb. Hepi joined them.

"Awesome mate," he said giving Seb a friendly cuff.

"Calls for a beer. Our welts need a bottle," said Joshua grinning.

"My shout," said Seb.

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Marcus stretched his legs and picked a postcard out of the rack showing a kiwi dressed in a kangaroo suit for his mother. She was still his strongest link to the UK as far as relatives went. His sister a wine grower was resident in Verona with her Italian husband, his brother an IT consultant lived in Houston. The only advantage was having somewhere to sleep elsewhere, an excuse for a holiday.

Funerals, now, rather than birthdays tended to bring them together. None of his family were film mad, it had been a lone obsession in his teens. Taking off to the next grubby cinema, dodging school for the two o'clocks. Scrambling the next pound for a ticket. Sitting, waiting for the lights to dim, with the smell of cleaning products from the end of the earlier session. Waiting for the celluloid giants, the oversize landscapes and interiors to form their impressions, press themselves into his mind for two hours of escape. Of course he had his favourite actresses and briefly they were his, displayed for him alone it seemed, going through the emotions he'd suspended in order to be a part of theirs. The mirrors or not of his experience, the shifting of his senses to see it from other people's point of view that then became, briefly, his own until he would be released back to himself. After a few years he'd wanted to hold the camera through which all this happened but he'd started with stills, a canon camera his father had bought him and he'd straight away liked being able to 'steal a frame from life' as he'd put it. A brief theft of reality that he'd excitedly get developed, then store under the bed. But it was in his last year at school when he'd been allowed to use a movie camera, when movement was added to the frame, and when he could feel his way into an expanse of time that he'd become hooked.

Marcus had a few days before filming started and he'd been busily finding out all he could about Frances. This had involved a special visit to the Auckland City Art Gallery to see their originals and reading and rereading Saskia's books and script. He'd been in discussion with Jerry but Saskia had remained strangely unavailable because of the scheduling, rehearsals and a panic about extras.

Being scared of heights didn't stop him from booking a bungy jump from the Harbour Bridge and it was towards this destination that he found himself walking on the Tuesday morning before shooting started on Thursday. The bridge spanned the space between two of the narrowest points from the quiet suburb of Herne Bay to the even quieter suburb of Birkenhead. It was a graceful steel hill but from where he was walking it seemed more like a mountain. One that attracted extreme weather - a relentless wind threatening his body, making him close in his head to his chest. He felt knocked about. Couldn't see very far

ahead, walking in single file up a narrow track beneath the bridge. As he walked upwards the fact that the distance between him and the sea was increasing became a larger idea, started to blow up, heightening his already shaky legs. He started to imagine that he didn't own his feet anymore, that they moved mechanically beneath him. They were following a billowing blue parker owned by the woman in front. If he just stayed close to her he knew he'd be ok. So when she started to get ahead and the gap between them increased he had more room for his mounting fear. It was a fear that he'd forgotten about since the aircraft landing in the same way you forget pain but when it returned it gripped him, ate every inch of him up, blocked his feet. Marcus had come to a stop.

"Are you ok?" came a voice behind him.

"Yes....No" he stuttered. Then a ringing sound erupted. He scrambled for his cell phone deep in his jacket pocket. Pulling it out with shaking hands he was surprised to hear Saskia's voice.

"Hello Marcus. How are you?"

"Saskia I'm on the bridge," He felt completely stupid and took a few steps forward. He could see a yacht below and wished he was on it.

"I didn't know you had a car."

"I don't. I'm walking." Seagulls circled and cried.

"I didn't think that was legal."

"I'm about to take a bungee jump," he said suddenly authoritative and in control again. There was a cheer behind him.

"What's the weather like?" Please keep talking he was thinking.

"It's bloody windy," he said nearing the others.

"Well I'll talk to you later. Don't want to interrupt."

"Thank you Saskia," he said his face relaxing, his feet his own again.

The jump itself was stupendous. When he left the platform he'd given himself up to physical illogicality - a suicide act - with enough security to see pleasure in a very unnatural experience. Of course there was the view over Auckland, the surging blue of the sea but it was his body not his eyes that responded fully. Every bit of him was electrified like he had become a sports field

light at a big arena on full voltage and was lighting up one of the big games of life. When he was raised back up to the platform he was suddenly humbled and oddly grateful to be existing at all.

CH 7

It was full on rehearsals for two weeks each morning. At the first the complete cast was present plus all the crew and other personnel for the reading of the whole script. In this way each person could see where they fitted in, how they might contribute, what their duties were. With the actors' voices taking place side by side Saskia felt the text lift into life like a hive of bees disturbed by a human hand. Now she could feel the energy of the text and it set off minor alarms where she needed to rewrite or to reposition an actor or leave a passage out.

Margo approached Saskia after the first rehearsal worried about her character.

"Could you make her nicer, she's such an old hag."

"Think of her as a foil," said Saskia. "You played her well. On the mark already."

"But she's such an unsympathetic character. Cranky and mean."

Saskia wondered whether the actress was portraying something intense that had a relationship to the actress's own past.

"Has there been a time when you encountered something, someone like this?"

Margo paused, she screwed up her eyes,

"No...well...Yes...I guess. There was a play. It was about a woman seeking an abortion who was turned down at the clinic by a horrible woman - that was me."

"And this made you feel...."

"It was an anti-woman stance that I felt politically against."

"And what was its context in the bigger picture?" asked Saskia.

"Oh she got the abortion in the end. You see she'd been raped."

The actress had obviously identified closely with the role, perhaps that had been missed by the director. Saskia wondered if the actress herself had had an abortion and if so was puzzled by the connection to this production. She knew it was enough if there was a similar arc to the character.

"How is this character similar?"

"It makes me feel the same way."

"But your character in this one is politically positive in the sense she prevents Frances from exhibiting with that gallery but Frances isn't deterred." Margo relaxed." She goes on to better things, finds a gallery, doesn't she."

"Indeed," said Saskia.

Saskia became closer to the actors during the rehearsal process. Could recognise Kay's footfall on the boards, see how her choice of earrings reflected her mood. Saskia was aware of the moment of transition when Kay disappeared and Frances stepped in, was impressed by the courage and guile Kay loaded into the character. Then the pause when Saskia interjected with a different acting strategy, how Kay's head would pull back slightly and her eyes widen, lashes blinking quickly as she thought it through. With her auburn hair, face like an eighteenth century mother of pearl portrait, her mouth was a revenge against this politeness with its full fleshy lips - natural too. Then Frances would appear in her features again for the repeat. A self-possession and confidence, a stronger step, a firmer turn of the head, a lower voice. Saskia watched this with pleasure, looking for accuracy, to see if her idea could settle into the scene, would change the other actors in response. Could pivot the scene into a vital one.

The rehearsal room was once a biscuit factory. Large windows like a set of noughts and crosses offered a view over New Lynn rooftops. One wall was lined with mirrors. Former times as a ballet studio. Now good for Saskia to see the actors from different angles.

Each rehearsal looked at a different aspect of the production. She felt the curve of it under her wing, felt it grow, deflect, brought it back into traction, continued. There was a looseness to the production that built to a tension by the end of two weeks. Her position was that of the modeler. Frances was the clay around which pivoted the cast. Slowly they felt the accumulated nuances of Frances. Saskia was amazed, it felt such a good fit. At times this would sag inexplicably and she would talk with the actress. It might be a stumble about power or the wider trajectory of the character. One time it was simply that there

hadn't been enough conversation around Frances' intentions. Or Saskia needed to explain an acting process or the motivation of another character. Once it was simply the beginning of a sentence "I can't..." There was always a nebulous place between Kay and Frances that needed to be bridged. Saskia became used to the slightest grimace that Kay would produce when it didn't feel right. This tuning brought the two of them closer and closer over the rehearsals yet maintaining a professional distance. There was relish in this exchange. Saskia sometimes felt flummoxed by this, that she wanted to hide or to think but always her response was expected. At any instance she was in demand. The decisions flowed. She would catch herself in the mirror and wonder where they were all coming from. But just as in the last production, she'd been able to conjure them up. It wasn't seamless but it became natural.

Saskia was watching far enough back from the staging of the actors so as not to intrude. Kay had piled up her hair and stuck it under one of Frances's wigs with a sparkly purple hat set on top which gave her a weighty head. She was declaring to Mike who was playing her visiting nephew Rupert.

"I can't see the point of all the fuss. Can you?" said Frances.

Mike had a contained look suggesting he was not only fully in character but was reaching the depths. He moved three paces towards her. Saskia noted he had slowed this down according to her suggestion.

He said, "I think it is essential that the general treats everyone the same."

"Well you are a New Zealander, you would think that. But with the English, well it is all about the class system - that general is merely conforming." Kay emphasised 'the conforming' in a strangled tone. As she moved towards him her slippers, which she insisted on wearing, slid on the waxy floorboards and she toppled into Rupert. Who let out a guffaw. The purple hat with the wig fell to the floor like a spinning petal. The crew guffawed too and the scene slumped into laughter with Frances and Rupert out of the room and a bunch of people here and now watching a comedy transaction. Saskia moved into the actor's space, smiling and relieved by the pause. The room that had been full of the shadows of

WW1 had given away. The present had rushed in with its sharpness, its clarity, its spontaneity.

"A good moment to break I think," said Saskia. "Fifteen minutes, everyone."

She opened a door and stepped out onto the fire escape taking her mobile from her jacket pocket. Dialing home she waited for Joshua or Isabella to pick up. The phone rang into a blankness. She pictured the lonely phone in its cradle waiting attention. Next she rang Joshua's mobile. There was a pick up. Sounded disappointed it was just his mum.

"Josh, I thought we'd have a meal with your dad tonight,"

"Oh yeah," he said politely. Then less, "Do we need to, you said only if it's necessary?"

"I'm thinking of asking him to help with your uni fees next year,"

"Right. Well I guess we could this Friday."

"You're my man. Excellent," said Saskia, knowing it was an ordeal for Josh. For her too.

"See you later."

After the rehearsals Saskia and Libby organised the extras for a department store sequence and were negotiating with the French team to have the crew and locations sorted out, but there were delays and problems. The French casting director had almost resigned over her salary. It was proving difficult to find all English speaking crew who could work with the New Zealanders. Work permits were slow in arriving. Saskia had met Marcus infrequently to discuss the cinematography. At first she had given her vision for the film in a monologue, herself an actress performing her thinking. She had felt over dramatic, overly adamant and probably too detailed for the poor man to take in. There had been a quick uptake but not one she had intended. Marcus, it turned out, had quite firm ideas of his own. She advocated an intimate and close up portrayal of both Frances and the time period. Marcus wanted a much more epic and broad sweeping approach involving many long shots, panning of crowds and camera distance. Saskia argued for a penetrating view of the psychological

dynamics offered in the script and how best the camera could achieve this. As she felt the resistance to her ideas she began to feel distended from her objectives. This was not a good place to be as a director.

The next morning Saskia had an appointment with Marcus at her house. He turned up late. Some problem with a taxi. She ushered him down the hallway, noticing he wore a small piece of tissue on his chin where he had nicked himself shaving. His trousers were too long for his legs. She wondered about his vision. He was however her person for the job. It had to work. They sat at the dining table at an awkward distance.

"When Frances left New Zealand for England in 1901 she was 32. The hard thing in my script has been how to show that she made numerous trips to Europe for painting and took her students on painting trips without making this ridiculously expensive or confusing. It makes sense to have a big contrast between the grey/green of Dunedin and the greyer coal smogged London, then the beauty and colour of Europe. The landscape and interiors, the costumes and make-up change in their colour, feeling and light over these geographical shifts," said Saskia.

"I can have sepia tones for the early scenes and change to full brightness in Europe. We'll be there in the height of summer and will hopefully get sunny days," he said quickly. "I have shot in Italy before."

"But not in France?"

"No. Fortunately I speak a little French so it should be fine with the crew. They will not be looking at France like us. We're the outsiders on their turf. There may be conventions."

"I want it to be through her eyes and there is an element of the tourist about her compulsion to go travelling, and her artwork. She did lots of market scenes in watercolors and locals going about work or leisure. She found her 'exotic' in Europe."

She launched into a series of ideas about the beginning of the film as she had done with Clare. It was the memory of that relationship that lay behind this

series of thoughts. He looked puzzled. She said to herself here we go again, he doesn't get it.

"Yes, Saskia," he said. She didn't like the way he pronounced her name. Sarsk-kia. The Russian way.

"I want to see soft lighting for the interiors at the beginning. I think it would be more powerful this way. There was an amber tone to the electric lights then." He found the little piece of tissue and flicked it off his chin.

Saskia nodded, pleased. He continued,

"I've looked at lots of photos from the era. Now we see it in sepia or black and white. This conditions our seeing. We don't expect colour in that era. So colour has this profuse effect, it impinges deeply into our senses, makes it alive."

"Yes, it will also show which part of the century the film was made in because of the technology. In fifty years time it will all be different. But I don't really look that far ahead."

"Don't you? Some master filmmakers do," he said, pulling his chair closer.

"How could they imagine it. It's beyond our scope." A flicker of exasperation escaped Saskia and she adjusted a vase of lilies.

"Jean Renoir wouldn't agree."

"It's a lofty thought. I'll be happy if it feels right, if it's consistent. That's our difficulty, the continuity of style across different lighting conditions. The French/New Zealand component. All this will be in the back of my mind. A film has a look. But this look in my mind. Well, I think we can only partially fulfil it."

"Is that disappointing?"

She didn't trust the sympathy in his voice. That tone. "Not really. It's my experience that it does shift considerably by the collaborative nature of filmmaking. Even painters say the mind's eye view is rarely reproduced exactly in a painting."

"It's an approximation then," he said, withdrawing, standing up and pacing to the window.

"Yes. Having the goal is important because scenes will be near it. And I'll be emphatic about certain things. I want you to share this with me."

"I'll do my best to understand," he said.

"We'll be ready for shooting tomorrow then," she said yet she felt unsure of the synthesis.

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Kay felt a wave of nausea, she itched her left elbow self consciously. Her costume was prickling her skin, someone must have got a measurement wrong as it sagged at her breasts and her whole body wanted to burst out of the corset. She had been squeezed into a barrel. Nothing could hide her panic. Someone was soon going to yell 'Action'. It was the first day of shooting. Would she remember the rehearsal, her lines, where to put her feet. Just last night she'd gone over her lines. Standing beside the fridge, the background of a softly murmuring TV, Raffles the Persian cat as her audience. It had felt so easy. Of course she could do Frances.

The crew had taken over Carolyn's house the evening before. It was perfect for a colonial scene. Around the 'set' were cables running from all the wall sockets to their equipment like intersections of seaweed. The lounge had been dressed that morning. There was a nineteenth century cabinet covered in Victorian paraphernalia - a jug with set of matching glasses for lemonade, a bell jar with a stuffed tui, a Japanese fan, an early gramophone and a silver cruet. The walls had floral wallpaper on which were a profusion of framed photos and colonial artworks including many supposedly painted by William, one by Isabel. Two richly padded chairs were drawn up to a small table that had a glass lamp in the palest of beiges with its soft light glowing which would light up the actresses' faces. But above and at the sides, out of camera view, were the crew's lights and reflectors set up to disperse the lights evenly over the scene. They had achieved a warm domestic atmosphere in 1892 Dunedin. Marcus was fidgeting with the camera, it was fastened onto a dolly ready to do close-ups, the crew were in position, the sound recordist hovering. Kay was now sitting beside Rachel. "ACTION." Kay took a deep breath.

FRANCES

Mother, I do wish you'd be less flippant. Do you have any idea how long it took to paint this portrait. Wahina posed for three hours and I worked on it all yesterday and last night.

RACHEL

Well I think Isobel would have made much more of it. Its such a pity she's not doing so much art these days. She sold so well too.

FRANCES

I'm sure I'll find an audience. These Maori studies might be just the ticket. Lindauer did very well with his. Don't worry about me mother.

"CUT," said Saskia, "It's looking good. Put a little more energy in it. This is a sensitive altercation. They are both quite disappointed for different reasons." Kay repeated the dialogue, this time a bit louder and with more force. She turned to look at Saskia wondering if she would ever feel like she fitted this Frances character and pulled at her corset uncomfortably.

Her last gig had been the theatre. Projection. Loudness. No close ups. No improvising. The experience repeated each night, the security of ongoing work but also the daily nerves. They almost did her in. Sometimes she questioned why she was an actress. But adrenalin kicked in, had never failed her except in the early days. An excruciating silence in *Twelfth Night*. An understudy called in to take over the lead for a production of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*. She was chosen for the big parts, she out-auditioned others, perhaps they were her best performances. But she'd been told otherwise, couldn't take the compliments still, feeling like the bubble in the centre, always thinking she would pop. There was something to be said for losing yourself in acting. The mask was often more comfortable and she found she yearned for it when out of work. Like some yearn to be spectators for their next cinema fix. It was the reverse for her. She was drawn to the mask, to a new name like someone else's signature that covered over her own at the bottom of the page. When she perused a new script if she felt herself awake fully and soar she knew instinctively it was on again. This

romance with the character, the slender line of division between herself and this other. The new her who wore different clothes and colours, who spoke and moved differently, who paid closer attention to herself than she did in real life. Fully in command. The performance counted more than she.

When Saskia sidled up an hour and a half later with a cup of tea, Kay was calmer, more in control. Something had happened. On the retakes, under the heat of the lights, in the compressed space surrounded by the crew she had taken on board enough of Frances to have experienced a transformation. It was a small but significant start so when Saskia asked her how it was going she was able to say, "I've decided to like Frances. I don't want to be afraid of her."

CH 8

2nd Day Shooting

Overcast and windy

Still nervous.

In depth conversation with Marcus about 'the look'. I keep wondering what he's doing. Whether the lighting is going to work, if its got the right feel and I also have to work with the actors. Kay/Frances is in good spirits, she's got such a good face for this, one with the required intensity but a lovely flip-side. There's something extravagant about her which means even when times are tough for Frances I think we will see her love of life come through.

One of our gaffers failed to turn up today without notice so I had to fire him. Fortunately Seb stood in. Am amazed we are all here and that it's actually happening! The trucks on the street and all the people, it's still a bit daunting, we're so much in the landscape, so "here" to do something and here I am trying to wave a magic wand! Thank goodness for all the work with Kay and Dorothy. They make such a tight pair.

Completed two scenes by lunchtime. The big one - the suffragettes. Women tying themselves to an iron fence, then literally having their chains cut. Wardrobe did a good job on their faces and the posters. Frances walked by and yelled encouragingly. We got some magnificent news photos and headlines from the era which look a bit grainy - need photo-shopping in edit. Double edged sword - on one hand the actors need to feel as relaxed as possible and free to give of their best but on the other there is constant pressure to move on in order to stay on schedule.

4th day

Sunny bright skies.

Big scene shift today. At Carolyn's house. Perfect for a 1905 interior. Rushes in the morning are pretty good indicators of what we're not getting as well as the real stuff. The talent is there! Everyone looking very convincing. Shelley/Dorothy has wicked humour and various elements of the crew fall about when she's in good form between takes.

Hitch with Marcus over camera angles for one scene. He can be a bit stormy. Both under pressure. Must not let the crew and actors see this. They need the sense of harmony between cinematographer and director.

Got some spontaneous shots of Frances painting - actually an art student (her hand) doing skillful things with watercolours - I hope this passes in the artworld. Will run it by painter friends.

Bob did this beautiful lighting -used tungsten and then natural lighting - gave the room a distinctive glow and really warmed up the colours.

Shot argument between two of Frances's pupils who hate each other and are stuck inside one rainy day in Concarneau. Rain simulator outside window. Loved the fight. They threw cupcakes at each other. Frances intervened in hysterics. Had to re shoot her sequence.

In final scene used just one shot with external simultaneous coverage from B camera. There was no reason to cut till the very end.

Caterers provided delicious carrot cake for afternoon perk. Crew appreciative after watching cupcake destruction.

We are on schedule just!

Day 6

Raining

Day from hell

All extras arrived at 830am and the camera truck was late. So didn't get to film until 11am. This scene in Grey Lynn taking up just about all available parking. Some disgruntled residents. The extras had to wait in the garage of a local home. This was Frances catching father at life class. Our nude model had tummy bug - off to loo on consistent basis but lasted the shoot just. Must make sure William (father) comes in for his make-up earlier next time. Had two art students do basic life drawings for the easels - have been told a nude drawing will always be able to be dated to the decade in which its produced so ours will be 100 years too up to date!

Couldn't get 2nd scene right. It felt too sentimental - I kept helping but not helping, came up against my own limits I think. I felt angry, which was totally

inappropriate. I think we finally got enough done to edit from. And the bloody weather, had to shoot the nighttime street scene raining which is not scripted and Marcus had difficulty sheltering the camera. Went over schedule by three hours. Tired crew. Frances/Kay holding up well though.

x

The souflee in the oven smelt musky as Saskia chopped up the chives to go on top. She didn't like making her ex husband Noel his favourite meal and usually steered clear of it but tonight she knew he'd appreciate it. She wanted him to be mellow and acquiescent.

"Mum do I have to stay?" said Joshua itching his tattoo.

"Well he'd think it odd if you didn't as it is about you."

Joshua shrugged while Saskia took off her apron. The knock at the backdoor signaled Noel's arrival.

"For god's sake this house has been taken over!" Noel had a slightly bent figure, like a preying mantis, and his face, now friendly, looked as though it had seen too much. This, Saskia remembered, was one of the things she had liked about him.

"Noel, how's the business?" she asked. He proceeded to tell them about his battle with local government to get a billboard dismantled outside his café.

"The bastard..." he was saying.

She remembered then, with that word, the breakup. How he had confessed to his affair, how she'd suspected for months and the drain of it had felt like she bore a casket on her shoulders. She just couldn't quite see who was in it. The months after had been lived in an emotional soup, as she had seen so often amongst her friends and at the movies but its descent had still been brutal as though it had only happened to her. Joshua had been eleven and despite her efforts it had seared his life. She looked across at this man who had done all this to them. His hands wandered about in front of his chest as he spoke, the familiar voice intoning about some breach of conduct and she felt nothing. Precisely nothing, As though she had never even met him. He was conducting something of which she felt no part.

A sudden image of a lemon came to her and her mother's hands wringing it for its last juice, then throwing it high across the lawn. Its yellow body hitting the ground and bouncing, then disappearing. She heard "What do you think?" and came back into the conversation saying "It's ok" to what ever the words were. Words like lemon pulp squeezed dry of meaning. The next topic was the film, and then he said,

"I'm going out with a woman called Sarah."

Joshua looked up with interest and Saskia's heart sank. It was somehow difficult to hear that someone had moved on again on the merry-go-round of relationships. She'd thought he'd been quite secure with the last one. She didn't want to know the details, so let them dribble away. Something strong and focused took their place. She asked if he'd pay for Joshua's uni fees next year. Yes, he said. He didn't stay long. Saskia felt pleased the evening had finished. The shock of the new partner wore off and now there was one less financial worry for next year.

.....

In the middle of deciding whether Frances was sufficiently angry Saskia heard the ducks quacking. They were in cases ready for the next scene. The sound recordist yelled CUT. The tension of filming dispersed. Saskia moved off the set as the cases were whisked further away. It gave her a moment to scan the crew and actors. They had been filming for eight days now and were half a day behind schedule. Frances/Kay had settled in her chair and was gently gibing Dorothy 2, Shelley as she was known. Marcus had stepped around the camera and off the tracks to the food table and selected a sausage roll. She went over to him and asked him how it was going.

"I think I've got the right lens but I'd like to try it with a red one. Make Frances face a bit more haunted and angry."

"She's supposed to be volcanic for this scene. Still not quite there yet," she twirled a paper cup in her hand. "How are you holding out?"

"Probably better than you. I'm not the director."

"I'm not doing too badly. Got seven hours last night! Luxury."

Kay had played Frances with a slow burning anger. They congregated for the same scene again. Marcus behind camera A, the sound recordist alert on the side, the gaffer and grip in place around Marcus. The lights turned down as evening fell on the set and there was the mayhem of chords to be avoided. Saskia went onto the set for a word with Kay. She was pleased with the intimate atmosphere: the soft yellow curtains, the pitcher and basin, the ornate oval mirror, the floral tablecloth.

"We need to break up the cosiness here. Bold emotion, Frances. Dorothy has just offended you with her obvious interest in that awful man." Saskia moved away quickly and called ACTION.

Frances leaned out of her chair and in a warbling voice said, "Dorothy how could you entertain the man?"

Saskia said, "CUT. Retake. Stronger, Francis."

Frances repeated the line in a gruff voice.

"CUT. Got it. Camera Okay?"

Marcus replied, "Want it again from camera B?"

"Yes." She looked at her monitor. "ACTION."

They repeated the scene. The gruff voice firm and resonant.

"CUT. Okay Good. Thanks. Well done. Next setting please. Number 41," said Saskia. She felt clear headed, was glad they had found the right tone. If they hurried they could finish this scene before lunch yet.

Dorothy's close up went swiftly, also in two takes, for the two cameras. As she said the words "Is it your business?" Frances made a wonderful grimace which Saskia asked her to repeat "Just like that one," in her close-up.

"How about the eyebrow?" said Saskia, "The raising of the left one is perfect." Marcus zoomed in without comment and Saskia looked at the monitor to check the make-up. She could edit the scene out later if she felt it was gratuitous. Always better to get more than she needed. She went to sit down on her director's chair when a fizzing sound erupted. It seemed very near and loud.

"Bloody hell look out," yelled the gaffer. He was looking down at the carpet. The production assistant rushed in. "There's a burst mains," he shouted.

"A what?...The equipment...quickly....everyone...get the equipment off the floor." As Saskia yelled a gush of brown water slid through the doorway into the cramped room. The water had an urgency of its own. The network of chords and plugs on the floor was instantly covered. Saskia felt the water squelch through her shoes. The gaffer and grip had lifted the black boxes.

Marcus swore as his power points were covered. Saskia held onto the monitor.

"Everyone outside." She felt oddly in charge of the catastrophe. Responsible. She picked up her mobile and dialed 111 for the fire department. They still had to finish the scene and do another at this location. Not today they wouldn't. They'd be a whole day over schedule and how long would the carpet take to dry?

"Do we dismantle the scene?" came the call.

"Not until the fire department declare it safe," replied Saskia.

It was still raining outside, so they assembled on the second floor. Saskia propped herself up on a bed-side and stared morosely at the wallpaper.

x

It had been a long twenty-four hours. Marcus read the newspaper without relish, the papers were laughable compared to his *Guardian* and *The Independent*, although he could get them on the net. But, as he said to himself, whenever New Zealand disappointed "It's saved by the beaches." He had found himself a good routine. A jog first thing around Herne Bay, then breakfast at a Ponsonby café, then arrival at the set. He liked the atmosphere Saskia usually managed to create and thank goodness they were getting on alright. He'd had to come around full circle to her ideas and at first that had proved difficult and stressful. Now he went along with the flow, listened to her carefully, he liked her gentle authority. She had a way about her, he thought, that made her a natural leader, someone you deferred to without annoyance. And that interesting mind.

Directing was something he'd aspired to as a young man but he'd never really had the people skills or the desire to see through a whole project. Not so driven. He thought back to the day before. He hadn't liked Carolyn's house, it had a gloomy aspect, was out of character with its neighbours, a small hutch in a

bland suburbia but the rooms had been good enough. As he'd set up Seb and Joshua had come up to him.

"Its Saskia's birthday on the 18th," said Joshua quietly. "Should we all organise a party?"

"I'll organise it," replied Marcus. Why not if it would give him something else to think about. "Could we have it at her place?"

"Too full of stuff. Jerry's would be better."

"I'll talk to him. Let's keep it a surprise."

It had seemed a good idea. Not so sure now. So much to do anyway and little extra energy. Still, she deserved it. If there was anyone who worked hard it was Saskia. The morning shoot had gone well. Kay/Frances was very amenable to the camera. There had been the natural light and the side lights and the gleam of the china, the soft shadows of the furniture making an aura of comfort which the argument and anger had clashed with in a powerful way. Then the flood. Saskia had handled it well, kept her cool. They'd quipped later about Noah and which animals they should take with them. Saskia would be in charge of the two kiwis and he'd have the foxes which would have to be segregated from the kiwis of course. After the fire service stopped the flow he'd helped with the mop up. It would be expensive to replace the carpet if needed but there was insurance. When he finally got away he had a few hours to spare and had bused to Karangahape Rd which everyone said he must visit. He was interested by the shimmers of nineteenth century visible: cornices, architraves and fascia. Pediments and ornate entablature. Several transvestites lounged on street benches. Island fruit odours emanated from Polynesian food shops. A rich assortment of second hand shops sold clothes, books and the odd piece of rickety furniture. The crowds were a colourful snapshot of saris competing with designer gowns or Gothic garb with lava lava, practical sandals or five inch heels. Marcus headed for the bars. Deep holes under the street with hardly anyone there at three in the afternoon. As he'd knocked back his beers he started to think about Emily. He missed the intimacy of being with a woman. She'd been his last partner and the hardest to give up. It took the mildest glimmer of memory to see

her on Hampstead Heath, the two of them having a picnic - zebra tablecloth and silly pink plastic cups, slices of chicken and french bread with avocado and alfalfa bean sprouts. A bottle of champagne. Not enough to separate them until he'd brought himself to the other side of the world and she'd gone to Berlin to train in animation at a cutting edge film school. But Emily was twenty-one years younger than him. And it was the twenty-seven year old in him that had charmed her twenty-six year old self.

Now he sat at his laptop on the bar table and began to tap.

Hi Emily

Up side down in the world is better than you'd think. No pastiche of England here - it's a Pacific place, a Maori place and an immigrant place. No mistake the kiwi doesn't fly. You don't want to leave once you've got to know the country. The beaches are paradise, the Auckland harbour is not to be matched. How is Berlin? We're more than halfway through our first New Zealand segment and I'll be in France in about ten days for just one week shooting. It's going well. European avant garde art milieu in little houses around Auckland. They are re-colonising Europe. Lots of set dressing. I enjoy the preciousness of period drama, its great for the imagination.

I'm sorry our break up was a messy one - I think for both of us. It's for the best for all the reasons we've said. I'll always remember that great picnic on Hampstead Heath. We've shared some good stories. I enjoyed our time together so much. Hope Berlin rocks.

No regrets.

Love

Marcus

CH 9

Frances Hodgkins had learnt it was better to live from one day to the next. Since the war had broken out she had a new relationship with newspapers. The lists of dead, the articles noisy with gunfire and the wicked cartoons flaunted their gore in the moments before sleep, in her dreams. She woke in the middle of the night imagining she was in the trenches. At first, like everyone else, she had thought it would only last a year and she'd felt bursts of pride for the good Englishmen who clamoured to join up. Her Jack, her God son, a New Zealander, amongst them.

As the doorbell chimed Frances got up from her plump red damask chair. She had never got used to that fragile eerie chime but followed it to the door which she opened expecting Jack. He stood there, all eighteen years of him, with a blotchy acned face and wide challenging eyes with a beautiful crop of brown hair, its abundance almost feminine. They greeted each other warmly and Frances felt again the familiar likeability of the man. Boy or man, she wasn't sure.

"Frances," he said, "you've found yourself nice digs here."

She looked around at the white plaster walls of the living room, the low buckling eaves six times her own years.

"St Ives has proved very hospitable. I much prefer this than listening to the Zeppelins in London."

"Quite," said Jack, who had seen action and found civilians possessed 'quaint' ideas about what went on.

"You can sleep safe and sound. In style too," he said as she watched him notice the garden view.

"Come see the studio," she said excitedly and led the way into another white washed room with an even lower ceiling. Easels and paintings were placed randomly in the space. She proceeded to another door which opened straight onto white sand.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. Stepping immediately onto the sand.

"Only problem is the tide," said Frances, "it sometimes comes into the studio."

Jack laughed. How she liked that sound. Pulling out a watercolour, Jack looked suddenly nervous as though something he didn't know was expected of him. Frances held up a sketch of a cove in non-naturalistic colour. A vibrant red pulsed through it. He rewarded her with a smile. Frances pulled out several more.

"Do you paint them on the spot?" he asked.

"Yes. Often. Sometimes they take a little bit of working up afterwards. It's very exciting you know, I have to get down as much as possible. Sitting there like a traffic conductor of colour."

They talked of New Zealand, Frances needed the gossip of Dunedin. Then of London where Jack was staying until called to the front. They walked into town together and window-shopped. Off one street there was a sign outside some dark windows that read "Fortune Teller" and curiously they walked into a shabby room with a woman sitting at a table. She wore purple from head to foot with fur on her collar and peacock feathers on her lapel. Shoes with green studs. Frances took Jack's hand and pushed it towards the woman.

"Tell us our fortunes," she said.

"It will be five pence," replied the woman and Jack looked at her with trepidation.

"I can see you're taking on adventures at present," she said. "You will be changed by them for the good. And when you return home... yes...there is a young woman, a blonde woman. And she is with child. Yes. A wife. There are two, perhaps three children." He looked pleased.

"And Frances?"

"I see your life line is strong. You are a busy person. Your only talent is in arranging flowers and driving horses." They both laughed, Frances to conceal her disappointment.

Outside, Jack said, "Let's go shopping."

He bought her an almond icing Yule log, a pink cake and chocolates, then took her to an expensive hotel where they ate a lavish roast pork meal with crackling and roasted fresh vegetables. The next day she was sad to say

goodbye. It was such a relief to see Jack after the dour faces of her neighbours, and to have the wartime treats after she'd settled on cheap offal and bread for her meals.

She corresponded with him and received letters of cheerfulness in appalling conditions. It was with a gut wrench that she received news of his death on 17 May 1915. This shook her belief in the war effort and, writing to Rachel, she said these are 'killing times'. When she went to bed now she felt the claw of war on her own flesh, its hands around her throat. At times it stopped her painting or it set her rocking in her kitchen chair, rocking and wondering when it would end, when male youth would yet again be allowed to live.

X

At home Saskia slumped into the couch. A block of light the shape of a ship's hull fell onto the wooden floor as the sun was slowly slipping below horizon level. They each held wine glasses, his white, hers red. She held hers close to her chest, nursing it. Marcus held his up to the sun's flimsy light and watched the liquid shine. She would be glad when her house stopped being a busy intersection, she was glad for these moments.

"It's rare to pause," she said.

"I know. I've been meaning to ask you...."

"What?"

"Well... so much really." She looked at him expectantly as you would at a child with a birthday present list.

"I guess I'm puzzled. You seem so in control...have you always been like that."

"No. I haven't. I suppose I came to filmmaking in a round about way." She thought he was being presumptuous. She'd got quite used to his English accent and even thought it one of his assets. There were many things to sort out about Marcus, perhaps this would be an opportunity, but he was already across the room picking up a Maori ornament, a musical instrument called the pukaea. "I'd put this away if I was you. Someone might pick it up to keep." She imagined him putting it in his case to take back to England, another piece of Maoridom

dragged away. But here it was in her own home she mused where someone like Hepi might take offence. It was common enough to collect New Zealand 'items' these days along with 60s furniture and kitsch reproductions of paintings. Her own retro version, a pointy legged lounge suite in turquoise and plum hues .

She settled into the couch deeper.

"Marcus you seem like a somewhat conservative man."

"Do conservative men go bungy jumping?"

"Well yes they do. It's a bit of bravado, isn't it? I don't mean to knock it but every twenty-one year old male does it as a bit of a rite of passage."

"That's the idea of the kiwi bloke."

"Yes. It's not just an idea. My family didn't produce any in my generation. Three girls and a gay man."

"Was your father disappointed?"

"I guess so, but it was never said. Unless that's what my mother meant about Dad being lonely with no one to go possum shooting with."

She moved to a chair over which was draped a large piece of plum coloured fabric.

"Can you help me put up this curtain?"

"Of course."

She noticed his muscular arms as he lifted the fabric up and, stepping onto the chair, began to fasten the plastic hooks to the curtain rail's loops. She helped by holding the weight of the fabric and felt a flicker of pleasure as he brushed against her. She moved away to retrieve the second curtain. He looked non-plussed.

"So you have an ex-husband," said Marcus.

"You haven't met him? He hangs around sometimes. We get on alright, he manages still to annoy me but last time I saw him I had no feelings whatsoever. And you?"

"Emily, he said, "my mistake."

"Your mistake."

"My middle aged lapse." He smoothed an eyebrow.

"That young?"

"Twenty-six."

"I see." Saskia wondered how often he had lapses with younger women.

"We didn't marry. She was lovely but completely inappropriate. It wasn't the usual. She wanted to get to know me first. I was hands off. People always think it's the other way around. You get these looks from people of your own age if there's anything physical in public. Otherwise I suppose they thought she was my daughter."

"How did it end?"

"Sadly. I removed myself. So she could get on with her life really. Meet someone to have kids with. She went off to film school in Berlin."

"Someone said you have a daughter."

"Maggie. She's autistic. She's beautiful. Lives with her grandparents. Is the favourite with her grandfather. And your Dad?"

"There was an accident."

"What happened?"

Saskia's body quivered. She turned away, then facing him said,

"We were driving....he was driving. He was a good driver, no blemishes on his record. Just me and him in the car. We were coming back to Auckland from the Coromandel. Open roads. Anyway it was a logging truck, this huge thing. Fast and furious. It came over the line, it kept coming. Dad swerved, blarred the horn but it keep coming. The braking. We both knew. He knew. Must have known. It was his side.... The impact.... Everything was blank. There was a loud crunching noise. I still don't see it or feel it like it was real. I wasn't quite there. Yet I felt the full whoosh of impact as though it was a blast of air or pressure. I lost time. I was unconscious."

Marcus got up out of his chair and sat beside her on the couch. His face was calm, but breath short.

"When I came to there were people. Someone had their arms around me. I thought it was Dad. It was a woman, her pearls against my neck. She was asking me questions and I was mute until I said I'm OK because I was, so I

thought. Then she pulled me from the wreck. I'm glad I never looked properly at him. I was in a complete daze. I could smell petrol. I said I had to get my dad. She kept saying it's ok, it's ok. Someone is looking after him. And I believed her and then I was asleep or unconscious again. She was there in the ambulance and at the hospital. I needed her face there.... someone. When no one said anything about my dad, when I asked and the nurses said they'd find out, I knew he was dead. But I couldn't quite realise it. Then I saw mum and she was a different person. I understood, I think, at the funeral parlour and by the time they had the funeral - I guess it was sinking in."

"Were you hurt?"

"Yes. I had concussion, three broken ribs, a broken arm and leg. All on his side. He was killed instantly. The truck driver had fallen asleep." She pulled up her trouser leg to show her scars on her calf. Four the size of matchsticks. He bent towards her and touched them.

"How is it now?"

"You don't get over it. I mean of course you do. To the outside world it seems ok. I had counselling. I was twenty two and I was really confused. I still don't know why I didn't look for him in the car. The wreck had twisted so I was in the opposite direction. I was thankful for that woman. She protected me I suppose." Saskia liked his sympathy, was drawn to him.

"Did you ever see her again?"

"She came to the funeral. First car on the scene. I guess she had to process it."

He took her gently into his arms. It was comfortable there and nothing needed to be said. Both lulled by the wine and the exhaustion of filming.

"I should go," he said eventually. She wondered whether to ask him to stay. He got up and walked to the window. The rain had been and gone leaving everything glistening in the moonlight. Intermittent puddles, little riverlets. She saw him to the door and caught sight of the moon's pearl slice. He gave her a small kiss on the cheek and was gone.

In three days time they'd be off to Europe. Saskia had received daily emails updating the situation with her French production assistant. The final work permits were due tomorrow. Accommodation had been set up, car and truck hire, the equipment and the costumes had been sent over from New Zealand. Two of the French crew had been busy over the last month getting permission for the locations. She had photographs of the locations and had story-boarded the scenes. She needed to allow space for the peculiarities and potential of each place. She knew being there would change her ideas. Light, colour and circumstance would work on both her and Marcus.

The next day was eventful but she was extremely tired. Saskia was satisfied with the filming except for one performance that she'd wrestled with and thought that even now it had missed, fired sideways, escaped her intentions. She was sitting in traffic and the traffic of her thoughts was moving around more adventurously than the cars. The crew had set up the wind machine and Saskia had loved it when the wind picked up Mavis's canvas and tossed it onto mud. How the students had fallen about laughing, saying it had probably improved the painting. But when Mavis had stormed away in protest at the conditions and laughter it had flattened the scene. Something was needed to pick up the hollow feeling. Marcus had asked for guidance and she'd tried what she could but felt sure the dailies would just reveal a disappointment.

She stopped at a red light, first in the queue, longest to wait. Had several uncouth thoughts about Marcus which she buried in her cemetery of unfulfilled lust. This meeting with Jerry she hoped to get out of the way quickly. She wanted an early night. The lights changed. The sky still had a bluish tinge but was being overtaken by a swathe of violet black which usually signaled thunderstorms. She couldn't shake the film out of her head and was starting to feel like a complete obsessive. Even when she was making beds or doing the dishes she was thinking about 'The Pleasure Garden'. At least she'd settled on a title.

She knew the details of the story now. In 1951 in Christchurch a scandal erupted around the painting 'The Pleasure Garden'. It was chosen by the British Council to be purchased by the Robert McDougall Art Gallery which then refused

to do so. They turned it down saying it was unworthy of the artist and the gallery. Immediately *The Press* set up a fund to buy the work and thirty-nine people contributed from their private pockets well over the 94.10 pounds required. Sixty-nine staff members from Canterbury University signed a petition supporting the work. Still the museum refused. Auckland supporters offered to purchase it but it was offered again to the Christchurch museum who finally accepted it. The painting of course became famous and Saskia wanted to put it in as the first scanned picture in the film.

She was pleased to get out of the car and knocked on the candy floss coloured door, a new wave of tiredness descended. Then Jerry with a silly grin was ushering her into a darkened lounge and she was amongst people, the lights blared and a round of applause swept over her, startling her into a sharp wakefulness. Dozens of people, wine glasses poised, yelling Happy Birthday. There was her inward cringe, then elation and she declared,

"It's about time for a party. To celebrate the film so far."

Then found herself thanking people to her left and right - the crew, the actors, family and friends too. This crowd of faces that meant so much to her. Gifts were piled on a table, food on another. Someone slipped a champagne glass into her hands which were slightly shaking.

The party washed over her. She was holding it in her head, then it escaped, then it returned. Smiles shone white, eyeshadows glittered, lipsticks looked moist, jewellery richoted points of light. Women's dresses swayed, cleavage jiggled, arms started to swim to the music. Eyes were dreamy. Saskia found herself on the dance floor opposite Jerry. Lifting and misplacing her tired limbs in some confusion that matched the music. She went to sit down. Couldn't see Marcus anywhere. Wanted to be alone. She was alone in the crowd, nodding off, then heard her mother's voice. Beside her.

"I hear the film's going very well...."

Magenta lanterns swung. Candles huddled on mantelpieces and small tables. Under a cellophane chandelier Saskia saw Kay was showing off her youthful good looks which were more declarative tonight than any clothing label.

Tanned arms, beautiful shapely legs, locust eyes and loud words licking her companion. It was Seb.

"I love mushrooms," she was declaring.

He was saying, "The hallucinogenic ones or the cooking ones?"

"Cooking of course. I don't need drugs. Been there. Didn't like it much,"

"Are you sure. I've got some party pills if you'd like."

"Show me," said Kay.

Seb put his hand out with two little yellow tabs gleaming.

"What do they do?"

"They're happy pills."

"I'm already happy," she said.

"I'm not," he said and put them both in his mouth. Then he smiled at her.

"So where is the smile from?"

"From Atlantis." He looked about for Marcus.

"You're cryptic. Very English."

"Do you like that?"

"I think I could," she smiled, and he was suddenly transporting her onto the dance floor.

Saskia's mother was detailing the contents of her newly renovated kitchen that Saskia hadn't had time to inspect yet. Red or was it green cupboards. Saskia already could not remember.

Then her mother said, "There's someone I'd like you to meet." Her face was so flushed Saskia thought she was drunk. *Someone* said so perfunctorily could only mean a man. Her heart sank. She had tried to get used to these men but they never stayed around, never got to know her, were never her father.

"Who is he?" she asked.

"He's called Harold but he hasn't arrived yet. I think you'll like him." She always said this. Little words to wedge between them because it was an expectation that was rarely fulfilled. Saskia didn't like them simply because they weren't her father. She tried, she even told herself off.

"Bring him to me later," she said.

The swirl of the party had got to her again. It's colours fading , then sharpening. The choreography of the bodies surrounding her and her feelings oddly. Lifting her, making her succumb to its tribal rhythms. A third glass of champagne swilled in her throat, in the air around. Dazed by the music. Becoming louder. Then Marcus was at her elbow.

"Feeling alright?"

"Not too bad." Trying enthusiasm, "It's a lovely party."

"I hope its not too much for you, I didn't intend that."

"You organised it?"

"Yes."

She looked at him with a flash of gratitude and felt as special as the angel on top of the tree. She was the star tonight, not Frances. They talked about St Ives, Bordeaux, then her family. She pointed out her cousins, a sister. Her mother. Who was standing next to a short man in a denim jacket which hardly covered a pronounced paunch. They came over towards them.

Saskia's mother looked proud and said in a gush, "I'd like you to meet Harold. We're getting married in August."

Saskia's mouth opened and shut. The word "hello" did emerge. Her hand was grasped firmly. There was even a peck on the cheek. Some admiring comments about filmmakers. Some joke about porn films. Her mother pulled the conversation into safer waters while Saskia struggled to keep her sentences straight. She stared at this man, his busy sideburns, the bushy eyebrows, the way his elbows moved as he spoke. There was something suspect about this false intimacy he was trying to project. Saska already didn't like him, but caught herself in time to give him a good chance. Mustn't spoil it for my mother, she thought. But the party, for her, had evaporated. It went on around her but she wasn't there at all. She was in a small space on a dinghy. Just her father and her. He was telling her the names of the birds and the plants on the lake's edge. They were a kilometre at least away from the baches, from civilization. Just her and him, his voice animated by the beauty surrounding them.

CH10

Saskia shifted her head and another dream escaped. The pillow was unfamiliar, full to choking with feathers and she felt the block of it holding her head too high. Cricked neck. First night. New pillow. New bed. Stretching, the mattress felt hopelessly soft. She got up to look out the window, not believing it was London until she saw it. The view looked onto a Camden mews. Everywhere bricks. An architecture held up by the past. By thousands of people who had moved in and out of these buildings, who left silent bricks behind. Above were plane trails like a snow skier had left tracks in the sky. The one she'd been on yesterday must have left its own sky graffiti.

They'd agreed to meet for breakfast. There was Jerry, Marcus and the English crew - Romanian, Polish, Thai, Pakistani, two New Zealanders and one English woman. There were introductions, affirming of the schedule, orientation to the film, the mechanics discussed of where the film could go in the next days. Then meeting with the actors, introductions again, name tags placed on shirts. All were filled with curiosity and lots of questions. Saskia tried her best to answer them all.

As they left the hotel Saskia succumbed to the thrill of London. She felt it as it might have been in Frances's veins, that sudden calm and shock in the whirlwind of city. Feeling the outsider and the beginner with a London of the mind. A borrowed London from other sources including pictures and anecdotes, and the real London that doesn't care - is a giant stage to fling one self on. When Frances arrived in 1901 London was in mourning for Victoria. To recreate this the film crew had hired a horse and trap, and extras dressed in black stood in front of Buckingham Palace's carefully painted fences with their bright bouquets laid near the gates. And to which Frances added her own bouquet of peonies. Of course this couldn't be set up in front of the real palace, it would have taken a whole morning and traffic to be stopped. Instead they had permission to film the façade from outside the gates, and one pan shot with Frances's head seen against the building. The rest had been recreated back home. However this relatively simple scene took two hours to execute as they tried to find the best

angles, and kept eager tourists out of camera. Saskia was relieved the first UK shoot was a success.

In the afternoon the crew rumbled through London in their slow moving trucks to a street in South London just off Tower Bridge road. An empty store with early twentieth century multi-paned glass windows and green trim had been dressed to be the Levefre Gallery. Kay had been two and half hours in make-up.

At half past two she was ready, bohemian in a purple velvet skirt with lace blouse, a man's smoking jacket and two scarves draped on her shoulders. The dealer was an impeccable figure with monocle and a pipe, Mr McNeil Reid, played by Samuel. While Kay had been made up the cameras were set up. Marcus was being very particular about the light so as to show the paintings well. The walls were deep with works - progressive English landscapes, a few modernist works including reproduced paintings by Ben Nicholson and Paul Nash, some traditional Spanish still lifes and three paintings by the Victorian John William Waterhouse.

Firstly they shot Frances's approach to the gallery, walking past a street beggar, looking into the shop from the outside spying the paintings and opening the door which sent a chime through the gallery. Despite the speed of the crew it took an hour to film this with the dolly blocking the footpath. Saskia noted a P 30 parking sign that needed eliminating. It then took one and a half hours to set up in the shop. Cast sat about getting bored, unable to walk off, as in costume, although they were generously plied with coffee, shrewsberrys and bright Andalusian oranges. At last the two actors convened on the set.

"Frances it is excellent to see you."

"I am pleased to be in London today, to see you and to catch up with two friends down from Manchester. Hannah Ritchie and Jane Saunders. I believe you met them at my last opening."

"Yes, I remember them. Very congenial they were too."

"They have been a great support over the years. Especially when money has been tight." Frances's voice wavered.

"We have a recent sale to celebrate. The 'Man with Macaw' went to an Irish couple - he gave it to her as a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary present."

"How marvellous. Now that was an occasion."

"Frances I have something to offer you. I am really very impressed with your work and dedication. After much consideration I have decided to offer you a contract."

"A contract. Indeed I have been hoping for such a thing. It would relieve me of this burden of constant survival tactics, free me to paint. This is most fortuitous. I feel as though I have been working towards it."

"My conditions are these. A renewable contract for the period of a year. 30 paintings. 200 pounds a year. I hope this is suitable."

"More than suitable." Frances was flushed and excited. "And that's a good Paul Nash," she said waving her arm towards a grey/beige and pink landscape with a lemon wedge moon and gyrating hills. "He really is a most hospitable man. I was just having dinner with him and his partner last week. He is having trouble with his studio, a lease review. The landlord is increasing the rent, possibly to drive him out."

"No. I have been to that studio a number of times. Frances I would like to visit yours again soon. I mustn't keep you. You have a busy day while in London. I will put the contract in writing and send it to you this week."

"Good day Mr McNeill Reid."

Frances came out of the shop where the beggar was hunched on the ground.

"Here boy," she said and placed her handkerchief in his hand. Inside was a large coin.

"Thank you mam," he said with a wide smile.

This rehearsal went well. The actual shoot was broken down into parts with Frances going up to paintings to examine their surface, close-ups while speaking, alternating with the dealer walking, Frances turning in response and their handshake over the deal.

As the filming stopped and the day began to darken the streets filled with those going home. Saskia wanted to revisit one of her London haunts and invited the cast and crew to The Georges Inn further down Borough High St. A few centuries earlier a passerby would have recognised it from a distance by the neighing of horses and the number of carriages being ridden into its driveway as it was a busy coach inn. It wore its history with a sagging double deck of verandahs strung across its three stories, rails a sharp white against the building's black brick and wood facade. Their heads ducked the rafters as they walked in, the floor was a wavering undulation of floor boards already simulating the drunken steps of patrons. They settled at several tables and benches, simple chunks of furniture roughly hewn. Saskia imagined Frances at a near table talking quietly to an artist friend. Dickens and even Shakespeare were reported to have drunk here. If Frances was a ghost Saskia would have asked her if she had got what she wanted or had it all eluded her? What about men? A man? A woman? How much would she have had in common with Frances? Saskia felt a similarity in the sense of striving against the odds for recognition and making a living in their professional lives. But Saskia suspected Frances would also have been challenging company. A sort of brute force, a trust in people lost early, a survivalist mentality, an independence that would have been even more striking in her day. A woman who flouted marriage to live her career in an era when marriage was status. At 63 Frances could live the life she'd chosen without a guilty social conscience, she had survived and been herself. She would have seen in the mirror a woman of her own making. Who didn't shudder at her reflection, who ticked herself off for her personal flaws but knew (recognised in that image of her self portrait) a woman who had been moved by life sufficiently to want to frame glimpses of it. To make memorable and allow to glow in colour the reflections of her engagement with life. Saskia sipped on her wine and turned to Kay.

Marcus sidled up to Saskia. He had a look of raw exuberance as though he could pick whatever he wanted from life. Tonight it was a large Guinness and Saskia's company, but she was talking to Kay and Samuel about the day's shoot.

He watched Saskia, her fine hands moving. She seemed to be describing a space, holding her hands together to make a frame with her two thumbs and index fingers. A silver band with blue stone flashed. The image in her frame was lost to him. There was a sudden grin in response to a comment or joke from Samuel. He wanted to be on the receiving end of that smile. Saskia seemed comfortable in her body, she was at ease tonight, she was filled with the energy of London, of the film. He butted in,

"Two great shoots today!"

"Got there. A relief," said Saskia taking a long sip of red merlot.

"There's word around that we are here."

"Our little New Zealand production! Who?" asked Jerry.

"Just the Charlie Chaplin mimic....no...really a few stars with Chameleon Agency and my agency. Then there's Samuel's agency too."

"Making a movie is like taking a flutter," suggested Samuel.

"My most expensive bet," said Saskia.

"Imagine the financial pundits in the Westend. There's a new Andrew Lloyd Webber coming out," announced Samuel.

"When isn't there a new one coming out," said Marcus.

"I'd be more excited by a Tom Stoppard," said Saskia decisively.

"Remember that scene in 'Sliding Doors' -Gweneth Paltrow either got onto the train or she didn't. Two life stories for one character. The film followed both."

"Like two versions of Frances. She stayed in the UK in 1925 or she left for New Zealand. If she'd left all this later glory would never have happened."

"When are we shooting the 1925 scene?" asked Kay.

"Back in New Zealand," replied Saskia.

"Sometimes I feel like there's a hint of Anthony Minghella in our film," said Marcus.

"Truly, Madly, Deeply," said Jerry.

"Yes. Sometimes its like Frances is a ghost. Who lives on in all these paintings, the books, this film, " intoned Marcus.

"I'm a ghost! I'll haunt you all till the end of your lives," said Kay.

"No. You'll take the next pay check to be someone else. Like me," said Samuel.

"Oh I haven't tried drag yet," said Kay. "Let's make Frances into a man for a day. A brother brush," she added.

"We'll cut all your hair off."

"I'll wear another wig. I think she'd look great in a suit."

"Why isn't Francis in a sex scene?" said Samuel.

"Well I thought about it," said Saskia. "But it's really not that established how sexual she was or which way she went."

"That's part of the mystery. It doesn't need to be declared," said Marcus.

"And what do you personally think?" Kay asked Saskia.

"I really don't know so I had to leave it open."

You don't think she was like a suppressed lesbian in 'Notes on a Scandal'? That Judi Dench character?"

"Trying to lure young women into her bed. Definitely not. But I think she greatly liked and respected women."

"And you Kay do you greatly like and respect..." started Samuel facetiously.

"Oh for heavens sake," cut in Kay. "Women can be pigs too. Pass me some more crisps."

"And which way do you go," asked Samuel.

"Men I'm afraid. I'm boringly normal."

"Normal's the wrong word," muttered Jerry.

Marcus turned to Saskia. "Why is it that these conversations descend into sex?"

"I don't know Marcus. But I think 'Notes on a Scandal' had a wonderfully tight screenplay."

"Cate almost stole it from Judi,"

"Cate was excellent in 'Elizabeth' too. For a young woman she made a great matriarch."

"Is Frances a matriarch for you?"

"Not really. Perhaps she was a little in the Seven and Five Society. But I think painting for her, as she got older, was isolating."

"Her battle was with herself then?"

"No it was as a modernist in a society that didn't readily accept modernism. It was as a New Zealander in a foreign country and as a single woman. But lets stop talking about Frances. I need to clear my head. How about we walk back part of the way to the hotel and then catch a cab."

When they emerged in the darkness there were shimmers of car lights, traffic lights and the glow of shop and business windows with fluorescent sheen and seeping shadows over obscure products. Shiny pinks and ghostly blues. Saskia saw a computer screen blinking catatonically, heard a fire alarm whimpering. As they walked towards the Thames she watched piles of red tail lights where there was a queue as Tower Bridge was lowered after a large boat had been let through. Then the water and its pageant of coloured reflections.

"It's a relief I don't have to know everything, said Saskia. "You hire people who know what they are doing. It's their job to figure out what's needed and what I want."

"How do you deal with all the questions? It amazes me how quickly you make up your mind."

"I always give them an answer. You can change your mind later but you've got to give an answer. I learnt that on my first films."

'Saskia I like this."

"This?" She pretended she didn't understand.

"Us talking."

"So do I," she admitted. "But we must concentrate on the film." She moved away from him, crossing her arms. Undeterred he went up to her and gently touched her arm. This time she didn't move and he leant in and kissed her. She felt as though he was trying to open a door in her head.

"Really Marcus I'm not sure."

"I am. You just need to catch up with me." However he looked fragile and uncertain himself.

"Lets get a cab."

They talked together quietly so the cabbie couldn't hear them or see how Marcus had his arm carefully around her shoulders for part of the journey. They were in a conspiracy. Just the two of them. Making it up as they went. At the hotel they parted politely neither sure what the other thought.

x

Frances sat in the lounge of Paul Nash's home. Paul was pulling out a painting from a stack piled against a William Morris cabinet. 'Harbour and Room'. The work was a room with the back wall cut open to reveal the sea and a steamer making its way across the water. The room in the painting was strangely lit and surrealist with a mismatching floor, fireplace with askew mirror and on the right what looked like a miniature house nestled on the floor. It was unfinished.

"I want the Tate to take this one," he announced.

"Bravo," said Ben Nicholson. Frances sparkled with the pleasure of it.

"The modernists will get there yet," she said, "I'm sure of it. The British will open their eyes to modernism."

"They've been shut for a long time," said Ben Nicholson.

"You'll be in Ben," said Nash. "All of us. The Seven and Five Society is a key to that door."

"That's the spirit," said Frances who was enjoying being seen at the cutting edge, being surrounded by like-minded artists who expected excellence. Winifred Nicholson moved closer to her, out of the other's earshot.

"I've been working so hard for this upcoming show. It's like all of my ideas have to be blended into these works," she said.

"Yes. Me too. I keep finding new paths but I must keep to the one track. I keep having to throw work out. Nothing seems to satisfy me. Then I hit a good one and I'm on my feet again. I'm hoping to have more oils than watercolours this time."

"They sell for so much more too."

Frances spoke quietly,

"I feel so caught up between the two of you."

"He's leaving me and going with Barbara Hepworth. Thank God she's not here tonight. I almost didn't come."

"I'm so sorry Win," said Frances.

"You've seen it brewing. I can't stop him. He's 'in love' he says. But his children are still in love with him."

"And you?"

"Gutted. More like hate. I shouldn't say it. Love in that solid steadfast way left us last year. In the last few years really...marriage...so hard to sustain."

"You've stayed because of the children?"

"That yes. And the past. It would have been enough except for Barbara Hepworth. She's quite a different personality. Bolder, more forceful, all of that. It's in her sculpture. I feel minor beside her."

"You're not."

"Thanks Francis."

"I must really move back to London again. Fowey is lovely - that vast countryside. And its great to be near you but I think I need to be nearer to my gallery. To the life here."

"I think there's a studio space available near Ben in Hampstead. Just a moment." Winifred asked her ex and he came over eagerly.

"Frances it would be wonderful if you took the studio. It's a good one. Large and light. Ground floor."

"I would enjoy that. Yes." Francis smiled broadly. "Could I see it tomorrow morning?"

"Of course," said Ben wandering back to his previous conversation.

"You know being over sixty, one can get clear of emotional relationships and the difficulties of making them work. Then you can really get on with painting."

x

The Seven and Five Society scene was filmed the next day in the lounge and garden of a Hampstead home. Saskia was so nervous about the feel of the scene. These were famous artist's being portrayed, she wanted it to be authentic

and for the details to be historically accurate. The dressers had searched extensively for the correct furniture including pieces by Alvar Aalto and Morris. Glassware by Lalique and a bakelite radio. The clothing had been designed using fashion catalogues of the day. But it was the feelings between the actors that absorbed Saskia. How would Winifred feel about her ex husband? Frances was fond of both of them. Generosity and social deftness was required. It was a lot to ask of Kay but she seemed to be thriving in this new milieu.

Saskia made sure that she sat beside Kay on the train trip to Corfe.

"How are you finding it all?" she asked.

"It's positively overwhelming but I am enjoying it when I'm not nervous," she replied.

Saskia had become so used to Kay's voice and her every nuance of expression that she felt sisterly towards her and quite protective.

"I remember my first time in England. The pomp and ceremony. How seriously England took itself and its dwindling role in the world. It seemed any expert in any area of life could be found in London. It was an open encyclopedia," said Saskia.

"I think of it as the home of acting. I've fallen in love with London."

"Not with Seb?"

"With him too. No....I'm exaggerating. I don't want to be in love while I'm playing Frances. It seems like sacrilege. This woman of serious intent."

"She had a sense of humour too."

"Yes. It's in her letters. I keep going back to them. Brother brush was her name for her fellow painters. Nash was a brother brush."

"She was great with friendships," said Saskia.

"It seemed she suffered from depression at times. But her story, your story isn't."

"In places but no not overall. You must remember a painter at this level outlives her life."

"She's on the wall. In the books. Like I am in film. My 32 year old self is being preserved. I love that about films. Some people can't stand to see themselves on film but I'm the opposite."

"You end up knowing, when you watch yourself, when you are and aren't acting," said Saskia.

"Yes."

"When you suddenly alight on something that is either yours or hers. A chrystal clarity."

"Yes. I just need to keep Frances alive. In my veins."

They looked out the window together and every where seemed fresh and green and never ending.

Corfe was a small village made largely of grey stone with matching grey tiled rooves grouped on small curving roads, unmemorable except for its castle and multi layered history. They shot a view of Corfe Castle, its ruins like old decayed teeth. Then filmed some eighteenth century cottages after the council had cleared the cars. The location scouts had found Frances's original studio. At first they filmed the artist pottering in her studio. The well known photos from 1945 by Felix Mann provided the look for the scene dressing. A reproduction of 'The Spanish Well, Purbeck' stood on the easel. Frances wore a beret with silver clasp on it, round spectacles, a polka dotted scarf at her neck and a double breasted jacket over broadly pleated skirt, white ankle socks and black sandals.

x

Reading a letter she stood up slowly and took it to the window. There was a cracking sound, a kind of rumble. It was very close, Frances looked up.

"What?" she exclaimed. Then nothing. She picked up her letter pad and pen. Then a long creak, another rumble, a loud cracking sound and it seemed a huge force swooped on the studio as part of the roof collapsed only just missing Frances and the paintings. Nevertheless she stood stunned looking through the hole in the roof to the sky. Shaken, the letter forgotten, she pulled her paintings together to the other end of the room in case the rest collapsed. Looking fearfully at the hole there was a knock on the door and a voice - the neighbour.

"Are you there Frances? Are you ok?"

"Yes, I'm here. I'm alright. Come in."

She opened the door.

"Christ! That's a big hole. You won't be able to stay here. The rest could come down."

"But I've got paintings to finish."

"You'll have to find a new studio."

"Bugger a new studio," she said exasperated.

"I was just bringing over your mail. Are you feeling ok?"

"Better get a repairman although where he'll get the materials from I don't know. There's not much left with the war. I'll look at the letters later."

The camera went back to the letters and a voice over of their contents.

From Mr McNeill Reid: 'Frances I am pleased to inform you your show has been a sell out! We are absolutely delighted for you. All this work has paid off.' Frances slumped to the floor and cried into her handkerchief, then looked up at the hole in the ceiling.

CH11

Saskia scanned the railway station shop and picked out *The Independent* with its 'Recession Bites' headline and the magazine *Timeout* to read about all the cultural events she was missing out on during her wildfire trip. The latest Damien Hirst show, the Pinter at the Royal Court, a hot Lithuanian dance troupe. For the train passengers the journey through the English countryside was uneventful except for the new graffiti in each of the towns. Once in the tunnel they were surrounded by the reflected version of themselves in the dank blackness. The windows offered up a new self-consciousness. When the train burst into light a child yelled France! Some of the passengers were able to remember what it was like to be near his age again. Saskia wanted to celebrate - it had been six years ago that she'd traveled by train through the Loire Valley to Bordeaux, when she had practiced her smattering of school girl French, when the romanticism of France had claimed her as another seduced tourist. She could feel herself inhaling it all again. Red poppies were flowering in huge fields of ripening corn, others of sunflowers were readying to be harvested and made into light cooking oil. The train ran past dovecotes the size of small huts raised up it seemed to some holy grace. Now there were buildings, masses and chunks of them. Industrial and domestic. Juxtaposed, arrogant on the soil. In greys and soft beiges with black tiled rooves in the distinctly French vernacular where rooves were ornaments and windows had shutters for eyelids.

The hotel was off Boulevard de Sebastopol, a lank cake-slice of a building with a frosting of classicism . Saskia had brought a few of the British crew but had three new French people whom they met at the hotel for 'orientation'. Saskia was keen to get to know Bernadette, Gerarde and Antoine so hosted coffee in the hotel lobby. Two had been at film school together and Antoine had experience in French/German productions while Gerarde's mother was English and he had worked with Anglo-French crews, and for Bernadette this was only her second film.

As Saskia finalised the schedule her mobile rang.

"Mum where are you?" asked Izzy.

"In Paris. At the Hotel Dupois."

"I can't find Josh."

Saskia tummy sank. She watched Vanessa walk up to Marcus.

"What do you mean?"

"Well he didn't come home last night. He hasn't been answering his cell."

Vanessa pulled at Marcus's arm, she took his hand and led him down the hall.

"That's not like Josh. What's the time there?" She rubbed old skin off her elbows in a nervous gesture.

"It's 8am? I'm off to school."

"I'm sure he'll turn up darling. He'll be at a friends."

Vanessa was dragging Marcus out onto the street. They were both laughing.

"I'll ring his mates Jamie and Peter later if he's not back tonight."

"Ring Auntie Emma. I'll ring her too, lovey. Will you be alright?" She felt about in the shadows of the conversation, her neck tensing.

"I guess so."

Saskia could see the two of them through the window. Vanessa had led Marcus to a fountain and was proceeding to splash water onto his jacket. Marcus had a hang dog look.

"And how's school?" she asked trying to brighten her tone, to keep her daughters spirits up.

"Just the usual. Except my teacher is pregnant. Helen broke her arm. Oh... and I passed my biology test."

"Good one. Call me tonight if he's not back."

"Ok mum."

The next morning Saskia wasn't prepared for the phone call she got from Izzy. Who was now camped at Auntie Emmas with no sign of Josh. Izzy's voice was high pitched as she ranted to her mum. Izzy the disappointed, Izzy the distraught, Izzy the abandoned. Emma on the phone wondering about calling the police.

As she wandered around that day's set - the Gothic church of Saint Germain-l'Auxerrois - she went over what might have happened to Josh. Right to the very worst. Where the hell was he? Should she fly home? For awhile she was too distracted to watch the crew set up and she left Marcus to deal with it. The light in the church came through many stained glass windows including a magnificent circular rose window that glinted its ecclesiastical treasure from centuries earlier. She walked through the vestibule, transept and aisle chapels, the building working on her, softening her edges with its shadows, making her feel small. Her eyes began brimming, she was filled with some hazy notion of power and helplessness as though the two feelings were of equal weight.

The crew were placing easels in the nave and four main aisles. Wooden palettes and brushes were handed out to Frances's students, all eight gathered under a pointed arch waiting to take their positions. A few extras sat in the pews with rosary beads and as the cameras were readied candles were lit. Saskia realised she was needed. She had to make a huge effort to concentrate and began to instruct the actors while they rehearsed.

FRANCES

You could make those pillars a lot stronger and wider. I think the purple shadows are good but you could wash over them with an ultramarine blue to soften them and put the same blue in the upper right corner to balance it.

STUDENT

What about the figure in the pew?

FRANCES

Draw her first in pencil on another sheet of paper or if you think you can manage it, block her in boldly in cadmium yellow and yellow ochre. Think about the detail later.

Frances wandered down the nave and looked up at the rose window. A student was struggling to get its colours correctly.

FRANCES

More red there. Try alizarin crimson with a little cerulean blue. Remember light is coming through the glass. Think transparent. Translucent.

Saskia could feel her film running away from her. It was a lover, a cold wet haunting lover who was leading her. Ducking under a torrent, drowning, feeling the swirl, finding herself on her back on a thin foam board and her head just bobbing there. Looking to the sides of the river to find something, anything to grab. To fight against the torrent. The lapping of the actors' voices called her back.

An hour later on a street near the hotel a doorway had been scouted for the Ecole des Arts Frances Hodgkins which she set up in two rooms in 1911. The sign was painted simple black serif on wood and fixed to the exterior wall. It was a straight forward shoot - Frances walking into her school. She had taught life classes and still life there or taken her students to local sites including churches, parks and markets. Her classes had been in demand.

Saskia walked away from the scene letting the others clear up. Grabbing her cell she rang New Zealand. Emma answered. No sign of Josh. Hadn't been seen by his friends last night. What would he be using for money? Should she call the police? How could he be so irresponsible? Or careless? Or was he in serious trouble? Yes she said they must call the police. Please call back as soon as there is any news. She closed her phone and held it tightly in her hand. She needed to be on the other side of the world. Her hands clenched and unclenched. Her feet paced. There was no one to talk to. Marcus seemed miles away. Jerry was busy with the actors. There was nothing she could do. Just walk back to the others she told herself.

Saskia had asked the hotel earlier for a recommended café so after 8pm the crew and actors met at Café Medusa in Arrondissement Deux. It was opulent in a nineteenth century tea room manner. Large mirrors around the room and tables with red table cloths covered with a rectangle of white paper, laden with bread basket, oil and vinaigrette accessories, salt and pepper shakers in the shape of swans. There were red serviettes, red carpets and painted woman draped in red cloth in between the mirrors. Marcus sat next to Vanessa. Damien, who was to play Norman Garstin, the next day, sat beside Saskia. Jerry and

Bernadette were speaking intensely, the words truffles and fois gras could be heard. She turned to Damien.

"I went to Jacques Tati's 'Trafic' in 1972 with my mum. It was shown at a film festival and I was blown away by it."

"I saw a couple of his earlier comedies much later... Les Vacances....?"

"...de Monsieur Hulot. The inventiveness, the imagination, the humour. There was nothing like this made in New Zealand."

"Tati was a magician of laughter. The visual gag was his speciality." They spoke about scenes they remembered. When Damien smiled his face took on the look of a glazed bun and when he laughed he shook. Saskia felt light as though someone was blowing bubbles in the room. Marcus interrupted,

"Godard is my man."

"My favourite is one of his earliest. 'A Bout de Souffle'" said Saskia.

"Wasn't that the petty car thief who murdered a policeman. Then there was this hunt for him. No morality. Just an eye," said Antoine.

"He used jump cuts. We're so used to them now in music videos but for Godard they were new," said Marcus.

"And disturbing. Romantic anarchy. He brought in new language. Lots of street language, slang in Spanish, Italian and English and he quoted lots of other French films of the time," commented Gerarde.

"We had an overdose of his films at film school," said Saskia. "I saw seven in a week. It was like reading all the books by one author."

"Immersion."

"Indeed. I don't know if he rubbed off but Truffaut did. He wrote the screen play for 'A Bout De Souffle' or 'Breathless' as I know it. For me his best film was 'Le Dernier Metro' with Catherine Deneuve and Gerard Depardieu. It was set in the occupation and was highly researched to show what life was like then. Women coloured their legs and drew lines down the back of their calves to look like they were wearing nylons. People grew tobacco in their gardens," said Saskia.

"Wasn't it about a theatre director?" asked Marcus.

"Yes. An actress took over her husband's job as theatre director because he was a Jew and had disappeared but in fact he lived under the theatre and could direct as he heard the plays through the pipes," remembered Saskia.

"My favourite recent French film was 'Amelie'," broke in Jerry.

"Oh yes. Infectious. Now that had imagination. I particularly liked Audrey Tautou's benevolent effect on all those apartment dwellers. And the guy who copied Renoirs like he could breathe the same air," said Antoine.

"I saw a great French short film recently - it was a little bit like 'The Red Balloon'. It followed the life of a gravy ladle. From its manufacture in seventeenth century Lyon to its first home in a chateau, to its theft and new home in Dijon, then left to the son, a bachelor. Lost into a river, fished up and taken home, sold at a market and so on. It was a philosophy of chance. Of chance encounters and no one really cared about the ladle. Certainly not the six year old boy who threw it into a well at the end," said Saskia.

"But you wouldn't have thrown it into a well would you Saskia?" said Marcus.

"No. I would have found it a new family."

"At home for the Sunday roast."

"Exactly."

Saskia looked around the room. Everything glittered like Christmas, the mirror frames, the candles, the wine glasses, the gold engravings on the plates. Even the swans' eyes were painted with dabs of gold. Her son was missing. Here she was talking about films. Her own film glittered. Frances wasn't real like she had been a few days before. They were all pretending. There was no underlying structure. Coherence was just a maze. She would walk out tomorrow and fly home to attend her son's funeral. She got up quickly and went to the ladies. Vomited in the pan. Flushed. It swirled down the bowl, her head spun from it all. Going back out she went up to Marcus who was deep in conversation with Vanessa.

"I'm just going to get a taxi."

"Early night?" he said.

"Yes."

.....

The next day they travelled to Concarneau, a fishing village in Brittany. Setting up in a small pensionne called Maigret's, Saskia was shaking as though in prolonged shock. The others were all relieved to be out of Paris and in the jewel-like village. It was here in 1914 that Frances was teaching while war was brewing. The De Breve Hotel buzzed with rumours about soldiers and the French government, the positions of Austria and Britain. When Austria declared war on Serbia all the Austrians and Germans left the hotel. Frances saw the maids crying and the proprietress wringing her hands unsure what would happen next. Stoically Frances continued to teach those pupils who stayed on. The weather remained excellent and there was plenty to paint in the attractive little town with its old docks and sea defences, its market and shop keepers. But food prices escalated and concerned about money, she sent for 50 pounds from her English bank. There was no reply.

War was declared on August 1st. Frances was only partially prepared for the news. It was difficult to imagine the meaning of it all. She had no experience of war and was alarmed at how quickly people took sides. It was far removed from her own priorities and risked swamping them. She wanted things to stay 'normal' as long as possible and was in no hurry to leave. That evening the hotel proprietress seemed to be in shock.

"My menfolk are all gone. My husband, his brother. My two sons, 20 and 22. Every male under 47 is called up. Mobilised. I could lose them all."

"How awful," said Frances, her shoulders shuddering. "There is the running of the hotel. Will you be alright?"

"We must keep going. Perhaps it will become a hospital or we will put up soldiers. I don't know."

"I will have to leave soon," said Frances.

Others packed up and departed from the port of St Malo. A friend Norman Gurstin got in contact from a nearby village and invited her to join him at La Faouet. It was difficult to say goodbye to her students who left for St Malo and

she found herself commanding the last car available from Concarneau. It was with great relief that she arrived after being stopped frequently at check points on the way. But shortly after her arrival Gerstin with his wife and a dozen or so pupils left and so there was just her and her ex-pupil Mr Griffins who declared he would stay rather than leave her stranded. Money arrived. They stayed a week, tossed about by the tension of waiting. At last on the Monday they could travel to St Malo. As they drove beside the railway a train came towards them. Frances looked through the window and away in shock, then back again. The carriage was full of maimed soldiers, men with white and bloody dressings around their limbs, their heads. With slings and crutches, cigarette smoke billowing. Later a train from the opposite direction passed by. This time the soldiers were all in smart uniforms, crisp regulation jackets and trousers, cigarette smoke and energy emanating, as they rode towards the front. Frances and Mr Griffins traveled across the English channel together, at one point being stopped by a French torpedo boat but arriving safely.

x

The filming was intense. Saskia wanted the atmosphere of the war to be paramount. She had envisaged greys and khakis but Concarneau was sunny and touristy with lots of travellers. Gerarde had been there two weeks earlier and had selected sites which avoided the commercialism of the present day. The hotel scene went well but the departure from St Malo was a grueling effort because the extras got the time wrong, turning up one hour late, Marcus had camera trouble and Saskia was on tenterhooks.

For the old trains they had to travel to a train graveyard 10 kilometres away near Pommerit-le-Vicomte and hire two carriages. While there they shot another scene with Frances herself on a train. Wooden seats with iron legs in black convolutions, wooden floor and a glossy dark green paint finish.

x

Frances sat gazing out of the window seeing and not seeing the view. She had two burgundy suitcases, her handbag and her painting kit with its burden of newly finished paintings, favourite brushes and wooden palette. Frances got up

to find the toilet and asked a nearby passenger - a whisky faced man of large proportions to look after her cases. She set off down the carriage past smartly dressed and hatted women, shabbier men and curious children. She struck up a conversation with a little girl in the jiggling space between the carriages. When she got back to her seat there was no sign of the large man or her kit. Two suitcases but no kit.

"Mes peintures!" exclaimed Frances who then started a frantic search. Months of work, a beautiful portrait of a Monsieur Ravelais, several scenes of markets, one of a hotel, another of a garden, one of haystacks in a corn field, another of a town fountain. She remembered each and every one. No sign of them and no amount of conversation with the ticket man could solve anything. It appeared the thief had got off at the last stop.

x

2am. Emma on the phone. "We've found him!"

"You have?" A warm feeling spread through her insides like sunlight on black cloth. Tears formed and she felt faint, then a burst of relief.

"Yes. He's fine. Turned up half an hour ago. It was a girl."

"You mean he was with a girl?"

"That's right. Two nights in Waihi with a young woman at her parent's bach. He lost his cell. He was all rather awkward about it. Couldn't believe we called the police."

"Can I talk to him?"

"He says no. To get on with the film. He says sorry. He'll talk when you get back."

She got off the phone bemused, in a small daze. With no one to speak to. Cars passed on the road below, a couple laughed through the wall. Someone's car alarm beeped as a door was opened. The gentle light of the moon beckoned through the curtains.

In the morning Saskia confronted Marcus.

"You seem very set up with Vanessa," she exclaimed tearing at her croissant.

"She's a bit of a laugh. Always pulling pranks."

"Well I hope you are happy together," said Saskia clearly vexed.

"What do you mean?"

"You and Vanessa...."

"I think you've got the wrong idea." He pulled his chair back spilling his coffee a little over the cup's rim.

"So you're not together?"

"No Saskia. She's just been helping me out," he said getting to his feet.

"Well it didn't look like that," she said huffily.

"There's been nothing between us."

"What is it about you men," and she got out of her chair and stalked off not believing him.

When they returned to Concarneau Saskia saw the town afresh. One returned son. Much of the filming completed. A surge of energy, the prospect eventually of a good meal and a Mardi Gras segment to film. This was the last evening of filming and it was up to chance how it went. A mix of extras and locals were available but rehearsal had been scant. These days the Mardi Gras celebrations were low key unlike in the Belle Epoque before the wars when Concarneau transformed into a pleasure-fest. It was timed to end the day before Ash Wednesday in February and of course they were in May. It was a battle to recreate the festivities on a limited budget and Bernadette had over spent. So Saskia was happy to have villagers working for free and they had been primed with expectations about the Nouvelle Zelande directeur de film and an evening of mayhem. As night fell the masks and costumes came out. It was mandatory to wear them. Bernadette had specified the style was pre-war so nothing plastic was allowed. The main street was cordoned off for the film, tourist signs were covered up or removed and Marcus was to use a hand-held camera. Saskia was worried about the lack of rehearsal and choreography. What they got tonight was it. The cast and extras gathered and with the help of her translator she spoke,

"Thanks so much for all being here. Tonight we want energy and fun. You are going to be divided into groups of four, six and ten with everyone coming together at the end. You will be assigned a series of actions and there will be

several takes of each so that we have plenty of material and can show you at your best. Jerry and Antoine will take you through the scenes. I will direct each scene and we will repeat each. You need to be careful with the lit torches. The music will be your guide for your rhythm. Good luck everyone and have a fun night."

One scene was outside the hotel, a man juggled four marrows until an over eager child grabbed one of the green monsters much to the spectator's delight. In another part of the street two mime artists were Punch and Judy with Judy wielding the club and poor Punch succumbing to the blows until he fell to the ground juddering on his imaginary marital strings. A mimic played Charlie Chaplin who was building a tower of black board dusters putting the sign Chrystlar Building at its foot. Until a weighty man danced into the pile by mistake. A crowd gathered around a large bonfire warming their hands and toasting marshmallows. One elderly man passed dressed as the devil but with blue horns and a blue arrowed tail. Two woman draped in cloaks danced together gathering their energy from the spectators and pitching their bodies forward in a parody of bucking horses. A courting couple danced their version of a tango lit by torches that blazed in the purple/blue night. Marcus caught their expressions - and the way their bodies fitted together fleetingly. Frances was filmed sketching and joining in with her students. The final scene allowed all the extras and actors to stand around a central bonfire feasting from food and drink laden tables. Pork cooked on the spit, vegetable tarts, rich pates and baguettes with local chardonnay. Finally Saskia called cut and suddenly it was party time. Now they could all really eat and drink. Someone turned up the music and dancing began.

Marcus called out to Vanessa but she was chatting with Bernadette. He then sought out Saskia who was seated at a table tasting a mushroom and onion flan. He sat down beside her and broke off some bread then spread it with a rough textured terrine. He said nothing. Ate in silence. She didn't want to move. Just took in the crowd and its performative magic.

"Quick Marcus," she said. "They are making a marshmellow chateau."

"Ok, Ok," he said and pulled out the camera again.

Saskia watched as he filmed it go up in flames. And the children scrambling for the pink and white melting mess, scooping up the goo.

He sat beside her again and took her hand gently tracing the lines of her palm. She let him, feeling heady and light from the wine.

"Let's dance," he said.

The music was slow, the crowd was peeling away. Saskia lent her head against his shoulder, felt bone through the fabric. She could feel the energy rise between them. He took her hand again and said,

"I'm taking you back to the hotel."

They passed silently through the remains of the crowd and in this quietness between them was the agitation of their last conversation and a bristling expectation. At the hotel the receptionist was listlessly drumming her fingers to a Bach fugue. Saskia retrieved the key, its clunky shape old fashioned, like the hotel, and she clasped it in her hand, deciding. Then she took his hand and led him to her room. The corridor was empty and white with small lanterns between doors fringed and hiding the light's strength. She struck the key in the hole once and turned it while watching Marcus's face and the smear of his smile. Once the door was shut she wanted to see all of him. Alive. Vivid. She undid the buttons of his shirt exposing dark tendrils of chest hair. One nipple. Two. Like pink marshmallows. She pulled his shirt off him in one gesture. He was kissing her, tugging at her clothes. Finding buttons and hooks and then bare flesh. She unbuckled his belt. Pulled his jeans off his hips, his thighs. And the rest until he was just skin and energy and he found his way into her.

CH 12

She luxuriated in the scent of the fresh sheets and sex. Marcus slept. Not wavering in his sleep as he didn't in his love making. She felt they had shop lifted their moments straight from an expensive store. That she would have to give him back when he woke up. But just for now she was content. She could hear the town beginning its day. It trembled outside with a fresh start. The slivers of light that feathered the carpet were blushing red Morris Louis streaks. A clock ticked accusingly and she had no idea where it was, who was its owner.

It reminded her of a lover who had once timed them on a stop watch. Admittedly he had been an athlete but what did it matter. The longer time the better she had thought. Raymond....that's right. It had only amounted to three nights before he'd gone back to his sports administration work. The watch had turned up on the third night, he'd tried to laugh it off as a quirk. But she could see he was obsessed. It showed in the nervous flicker of his ticking eyes. Ten minutes and twenty-two seconds.

Marcus was slow but nimble.

Their last day in France was spent on a train returning to Paris. It felt like a part of her film - the view framed by the windows flashing by, each new scene separate and different yet tied together by movement. Mainly flashes of green interspersed with sunflower and rape fields, and mottled stone villages tucked into the earthen folds of the landscape. Chimneys and gates playing peek-a-boo. People and animals as segments of animation. The whole a marathon landscape epic uncensored, suitable for adults and children alike. No credits rolled. Instead at the end they disembarked and headed for Orly airport. Saskia already feeling a desperate loss, not knowing when she could return to this side of the world. If she would.

32nd Day

Auckland

Sunny and cold

Early start. Crew meeting. Getting the family together again. Lost one boom operator in the meantime who has been replaced by Dave. Have worked with him before - good sort.

News has got out to the media about our filming in France. One article quoted me as saying, 'Frances is a modern day heroine who lived frugally until she trumped the London artworld.' Have I said it and when? It implies wrongly that she was rich. Quotes are odd things, they follow you around.

Shot a scene with Frances's gay friends Cedric Morris and Lett Haines shopping for a hat with Frances. Cedric and Lett very camp of course and offering advise, expert opinions. "The shape's too oblong." "That one looks like a clump of seaweed." "Why not a crushed violin on your head instead?" Frances chose a big purple one with small green feathers and a costume silver brooch of a dying cupid, shot in its heart. The brooch was mum's. Took my lead from Degas's painting 'At the Milliner's' 1882. Wanted the orange and green combination. We almost had to reshoot because continuity thought we had a gaffer's head in a shop mirror but I think we can edit him out.

I've felt the film change. Marcus and I are more in tandem. We seem to be digging up images, getting beneath the surface. I find I'm more experimental. Thinking about Soviet Montage and Godard's jump cuts. I want to edit in stills of Frances's paintings. So we did some sequences today of her setting up a still life beside an open window. 'Wings Over Water' 1931-2. Three large shells, one red, one yellow ochre, one green/blue on a cream cloth with three vases of flowers on the sill, a red and green bird (stuffed) on a fence, coastal sea and land in the distance. Shot her hands moving around the objects, and pictures of her paintings as though Frances is reflecting on earlier works. Comparing. They dissolve into the real scene. Then there will be shots of her walking in the landscape as though she's walking in her own painting. The Tate has the work now.

Another we set up when she was going through a surrealist phase. 'Cut Melons' 1931. Two pink jugs, a pumpkin, three parts of melons. This will be montaged with Giorgio de Chirico's painting 'Piazza D'Italia'. She has a leafless

tree in the background and a mysterious window which one moment you can look out of and the next into. With its pane the colour of deep aqua-blue sea.

Day 33

Raining.

Marcus has flu. Filming anyway. Not sure whether we'll include this morning's scene. Frances, in 1920, has the well known (later in New Zealand) artist Edith Collier as a student. Lacked punch. Edith was beautifully dressed in a red silk dress 'waisted' at the hip with long beads to her tummy button. But it was a bit lovey, lovey complimentary and just one scene with Edith wasn't enough to 'capture her'.

Afternoon. Set at house in New Lynn passed as her Burford studio and accommodation. 1922. Frances set up a sign on the street to let tourists know (as they passed by on their way to see the church) that they could visit her studio. No one comes in. Long summer shadows on the studio floor and Frances's foot tapping. Next we watch an American man somewhat taken aback to see a nude drawing on the front door. Knocks, enters, and chats to Frances who shows him her watercolours. He buys one of a cockerel on a ledge overlooking a barn with freshly made hay stacked for winter storage. As soon as he leaves Frances goes out to buy bread and meat. We see her take her purse and shut the front door. She opens it again and we see her sit at the table and eat hungrily.

Day 34

Cloudy

Two and a half hours for Frances's make-up (late 60's).

Close up of her eyes, of her glasses, of her painting she's working on 'Ruins' 1937. Next a blurred shot of it. The eyes again. She rubs them with her hands. She is clearly upset. Her post arrives. Large package from the gallery with letter attached. Dear Frances, We are obliged to return these paintings to you as we feel they are not sufficiently resolved for your upcoming show. Frances contrite.

Angry. Pushes them away. Next shot she has them out retouching. Shot of her reply. "I have in hand, oils and watercolour I think they look very well, 100% better than the ones you sent back to me and I don't think there will be any shuddering when you look at them; they seem to me to look fresher and simpler and easy to look at with the paint going on very well."

It was interesting to choose her hand writing - wanted something loose and expressive, dashed off. Caroline's was spot on.

Jerry is several steps ahead - organising two weeks in advance. Both worried about the budget. Europe cost more than we thought. Means trimming back here. Seeing the money men at end of week.

Am amazed at Kay's diligence, one of the most focused actresses I've worked with. She won't let anything come between her and the film. Caught Marcus's flu (both of us have) but not deterred.

Afternoon. Shot scene of Frances suffering from her rheumatism - waking up in bed with stiff joints, unwrapping her hands to make a pot of tea. Struggling to paint and giving up that day. Having difficulty writing a letter. Great make-up job on her hands. Reminiscing on New Zealand - shot juxtaposition for editing. We have some postcards of Ohinemutu village in Rotorua for this. It feels like she was terribly alone in her old age but it's not so, she was often feted and successful, had many friends, so I want it to be difficult but not hopeless. Kay is using memories of her grandmother to get it right. So am I. During rehearsals we went to Glenward Resthome and talked to Patricia McPhee who was once a painter but lost it to rheumatism. Frances didn't quite suffer that fate.

.....

Marcus dialed Saskia's number.

"Come out with me tonight," he said.

"I can't. I'm going over tomorrow's schedule with Kay and Jerry. I'd like to.

Another time."

He looked out the window of the house. He could see a battered 1960s factory to his left and another house, also rundown, to his right. In the middle was an old-fashioned metal clothes line. The view had gradually grown on him. He saw

subtle shades of pink on the factory walls, a pleasant faded green on the house and the clothes line was a metal tree. With the evening off he thought either a movie or the beach. He chose the beach, even though it was wintry in New Zealand terms, it would have been considered mild in Britain. On the bus, he was thinking about Emily and Saskia. His mind did little loops between the two. He was trying to join the dots about their personality differences. It felt beyond him. He had never been able to make his own life into a narrative. His job was to follow other people's. He knew he liked Saskia a lot. Love was not a word he used lightly. But he did look at her, think about her now on a faster timeline as though everything had sped up and the next thing he wanted was to see her again. To jump the queue of hours until tomorrow. She was courageous and weak at the same time. He had watched her battle herself when rehearsing. Saying the right thing didn't come as naturally to her as it did for some directors and she was always concerned about the well being of the actors and crew. So it felt like a team, not a contest, even though the hierarchy of jobs was, as usual in the film industry, very clearly marked out, and felt. Saskia seemed to respect this and didn't provoke the power plays that went on. Her approach was direct and open. Even when she was clearly upset, she didn't take sides or vent the frustration. It seemed to bottle up in her. He imagined that sex was one of her releases, jogging another, and perhaps cooking. He was more fickle and wondered what she would think when she saw him drunk. He hadn't been to that place for months. Was proud of the fact. Wary of himself. He didn't think drink and women mixed very well.

Getting off the bus he found himself at the beach and it was getting dark. He had missed the best time of day, there were no clear outlines. The velvety dusk hung over the water. No sunset just an eerie glow. Seagulls, a few walkers with dogs on leashes, a pitched tent and a couple lying quietly on a rug with chilly bin, plates and glasses for a feast in a makeshift dining room. Walking across the sand he felt free and light. He watched the waves, their relentless curvatures, the fact they were temporary; gone in a flash.

When his cellphone rang he had walked about 100 metres. The call was from Italy, his sister. At first he couldn't catch the words. Something about ...how was he doing? That they hadn't seen each other in over a year. Something about the family. You need to know. There's been something terrible. All very unexpected. He realised she was crying. There was a constriction in his own throat as he got out the words. Who? Mum. Stroke. Mum's had a stroke. Yes. She didn't make it. When? She died half an hour ago. I'm terribly sorry to tell you like this. Where are you? On a beach. Tell me what happened. His sister cried into the phone for awhile. He watched the street lights go on. Joggers went by. He held a little patch of his mother in his hand. The line cleared. She was at home apparently. On her own. It happened and she was found by a neighbor this morning. When? An hour ago. They had to call Houston and Italy. Her friends. They had the address book. Who are 'they'? The ambulance people. You must come back Marcus. We have to organise a funeral. A funeral, he said limply. Yes of course. First flight out. I'll call you in half an hour. I can't believe it. I wish I had been there. Any of us. Yes. Me too.

Marcus felt his body sway: but there was no movement. He stood quietly thinking about the words. They replayed. Several times over. The odd texture and meaning of them. The beach felt like a place of calm. He felt the calmness of a waiting dolphin before being caught in the net and irredeemably changed.

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Saskia said "Cut." She had on her cross face, the one that said Everything is Not Ok. She called over Jerry and said,

"It's not quite right. That light doesn't work. It's too strong. I think it makes the scene too stark."

She went up to Daniel and said the same thing. The new cinematographer shifted his feet uneasily. His bulky body towered over Saskia. He had a brown beard, sideburns and bulbous glasses that had a habit of misting. It was like there were several pairs of eyes. His. His glasses. The lens and hers. All somehow separate.

"Daniel," she said, "Try a pink lens."

The scene was a conversation between the cross-dressing Daphne and Frances. It was afternoon tea at the former's large white house in Bodinnick-by-Fowey in Cornwall. Daphne was wearing a grey man's suit with sharp lapels of the day, a handkerchief in its chest pocket, a leather belt and brogues, also grey. Her hair was cut short, tight to the head like a skull cap and she had untrimmed eyebrows and no make-up. They were talking about Cornish authors.

Saskia drew in her breath. Patience she said to herself. Don't muck it up. Daniel would be fine. She just had to show him somehow the kind of look she was after. He'd seen all the rushes. He'd read the script. What more could she do? It was hard enough to find him and he had worked on historic films before. The clips seemed good. But he was not Marcus. *The sensitivity was missing.* She left the room for a break.

x

Evert Moll and Frances stood on the dyke looking out to an aggressive bleak sea. It was a cloudy day, they were twenty-five kilometres from Dordrecht and both had set up easels - Frances working in watercolours and Evert in oils. He was thin and feminine looking with a fringe that the wind picked up. They seemed comfortable in each others company, standing in the landscape dabbing with their brushes, mixing colours and occasionally talking. Frances liked the way he put paint onto canvas firmly and without fuss. But she wasn't so sure of the result. He was saying in his thick Dutch accent,

"Almost ready to leave Frances."

"It looks like it is going to rain anyway. I just want to get that angry grey sky." She worked on while Evert began packing up. He wiped off and covered his palette. Put the canvas delicately on the ground, pulled the easel's legs together and folded down its spine. He stood watching Frances putting in a grey/ultramarine wash in broad strokes with a hogs hair brush.

"You do it differently to me. I would have put that sky in first."

"Better to build up to the drama," said Frances finally putting down her brush, cleaning it carefully in a jar of water for the purpose. She packed up too. They drove back to Dordrecht in his Renault motor on the way discussing the

circus they'd gone to together the previous night. They were seeing a lot of each other but Frances was weary of their second meeting when he had presented her with roses while explaining he was actually engaged to an English woman.

The next day at the hotel she was delighted to be called down to the foyer by the proprietor and shown a large package, clearly a bicycle, that Evert had sent her. That afternoon he arrived with his own bike and for the first time in four years Frances rode a bicycle. Her enthusiasm was heightened by the good company. She did look forward to their meetings. It was sailing or rowing or snipe shooting, dinners or lunches or afternoon tea. He took her out shopping to the markets and explained the local Dutch customs to her. It was an insider's viewpoint and he was generous with his knowledge. At times she felt he was her closest friend and certainly this was the closest relationship with a male she had experienced for years. Their five year age gap (he was younger) didn't seem to make any difference except she told herself it did.

On a Sunday they went on a sketching trip and picnic. Firstly by boat up a backwater to a small sandy beach. She liked the sound of the oars in their rollicks and the strong arms of Evert and his man rowing the boat. She had a scarf, in blue art deco swirls, over her head to shelter from the sun. They found a good view with a crop of trees, footbridge and boulders to paint and spent a leisurely time in front of their easels. Evert appeared to have thought of everything. His man set up a picnic with slices of edam and gouda cheese, portions of quail, tins of herring, bread rolls and fresh tomatoes with spinach leaves. It was cold so they boiled eggs and made claret punch. She would remember that day as the day when he might have confessed his feelings.

It was around this time that Evert broke off his engagement and his mother, most concerned, visited. Frances found herself at lunch between the old lady and Evert acting as innocent as possible. The meal was at a local inn and stern looks gave way to platitudes as both tried to assure his mother nothing was going on between them. Somehow under this official guidance they both persuaded themselves that nothing was and Frances went back to England. The

one recompense was that Evert managed to get two of her paintings into a prestigious exhibition in Amsterdam.

x

Saskia picked out her current favourite art book - a monograph on the French artist Pierre Bonnard. She turned on the lounge lights better to see the colours. The gentleman colourist. Explosive colours in the most unassuming of settings - rooms of his house, and gardens that glowed in rich harmonies with surprise colours coming up from hiding. Compared to Frances his brush was so tentative yet subtle and delicate. Bonnard's colour palette was a pink and orange feast while Frances was often much cooler - browns, blues and greens. They shared an interest in still life and gardens, in making colour structural, holding a painting together by hue and intensity of light.

She thought back over the day, the difficulties with the new cinematographer, his habit of running his hands creepily over the camera, the way he didn't ask questions, dangerously assuming he knew. It wasn't as though he had filmed a painter before. There were gaps in him she didn't know how to fill, she kept arriving at stalemates and blanks. If only Marcus would hurry back. She missed his calm helpfulness, his sensitivity, the way they worked together with ease. But really she also missed *him*. His voice, snatches of his humour, his presence. They had only slept together once and it wasn't nearly enough, just a beginning. A threshold for what? How she wanted him to be beside her now. That they would start a day together. But the funeral was tomorrow. She remembered back to her own father's. How strange it had seemed that he would be swallowed up by the earth, that he might lie in the ground cold and lonely. Lying in his box, his final piece of furniture. How it had taken so long to realise he had gone. Actually had left. Because everything was there to remind her of him. His study, his clothes, the grey trainers beside the back door that her mother couldn't bare to remove. His crossword puzzles he'd carefully cut out and stacked. A pile of silent words. Like the talks they'd never have again. All the memories sparked by the smallest things. Even now when she smelt lavender

she'd see him cutting the bushes back in the home garden and in the evening smelling like he'd bathed in lavender oil.

Her phone started to sing its little song.

"Hello."

"Hello Marcus. How are you?" She felt a warmth rise and curled her feet underneath her on the couch like a conical shell. He was silent. Then said,

"It's difficult. I didn't know it would be like this. It's all a bit of a mess. Frankly it's fucking shit."

"What's going on?"

"It's my brother. He's not coming to the funeral. Refuses. Won't help. Is already discussing the will. The house. So unnecessary. We just need to get through this bit of it. I don't care about the rest." His voice sounded strangled. "Mum meant so much to me."

"What was she like?"

"Well she was generous - always in the centre of things I suppose. She was a member of an amateur acting society here. There was always the next performance. She loved practicing on us. That was all my first experience with theatre, amateur actors. The excitement. The build up through rehearsals. She often played the hard done by wife. We'd laugh because she wasn't. Had a good solid marriage." He stopped.

"And your father?"

"Won't talk about it. Not yet. Still in shock."

"Did he think he'd go first?"

"I suppose. Even though it's hardest for him, my brother doesn't care. Wants to sell the house. Put him in a rehome. It's not what Dad wants but he might do it for everyone's sake. It would be too soon." His voice sounded far away. "How's the film going?"

"Not so good. Daniel doesn't have your sensibility. I'm worried about the film's quality."

"Surely he's better than that. Was recommended."

"I want you back in charge of the camera. Can you come back by next week?"

"Saskia I'm not sure I am coming back." She quivered in her seat, threw a cushion against the wall.

"But you must," she said.

"I'll let you know in a few days."

"Yes. You must get the funeral done. I hope it goes well."

"Be in touch soon."

x

Frances walked along Fitzroy St, Fitzrovia, London looking shabby in a loose hanging dress with over-large hat, thick white stockings ending in sandals. But it was her face that appeared shabbier. Her usually bright eyes dull, her skin sallow, her mouth leaning downwards, she had on a mask of pain. Clutched her stomach. Stopped. Looked for a seat. Didn't find one. Walked on. She hadn't taken the bus back to her new little one room flat because of the fare. It was days like this that were doing her in. And she had a visitor coming. Once inside the flat she put together cups, saucers, teaspoons with Scottish crests, a teapot and shortbread and just as she boiled the kettle there was a knock.

"Jane. Thanks for coming."

"Pleasure Frances. I was so excited to hear your exhibition was a success!"

Frances looked at her warily. "Well a good review in *The Times* but no money to speak of."

"You must have got a little," said Jane looking at an unfinished painting on the easel. Eggplants and persimmons on a dark ground.

"Barely enough to cover costs." Suddenly Frances was clutching her stomach again. She let out a moan.

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Well not quite nothing. I've been having these pains. Wasn't going to mention it."

"For how long?" said Jane quietly.

"A few weeks. Months."

"It's mainly your stomach?"

"Yes. And digestion. Food doesn't taste the same." Frances had the guilt of a confession.

"I'm going to arrange for you to see a specialist next week. This can't go on."

"Don't bother. I'm too busy," said Frances idly.

"Not at all Frances. I know exactly who to see, a Dr Trevors. He looked after my mother."

The next week Jane took her to the doctor. Frances looked worn. Hoped it wasn't cancer. She'd had a whole week to worry about it. Her face easily puckered with the pain. At least she might get some relief for that. The doctor kept her for only half an hour and didn't charge her. Diagnosed an internal ulceration and recommended changes to her diet and bed rest.

"If you could get out of the city it would be better," he said. Frances was so grateful for Jane Saunders help, and again when she arranged for her to go and stay with friends in the country after she also had her remaining teeth removed. When Frances arrived in Tunbridge Wells she brought with her canvas and paints as she said to her friends, "What else am I to do with myself?"

CH 13

Marcus threw back his fifth pint. His glance at the menu didn't quite make out all the alphabet letters. C__s_r S_l_d. It came out alright when he said it to the waitress, and ordered another pint. Should have got a whole fucking jug he thought. He pulled out, and opened up his wallet, then realised he didn't have to pay yet. Not at the table. Not yet. If he just stayed where he was in this warm brown space with its froth and reflections, if he could just be *in* a beer glass he'd be alright. Silly thought. Like the others he'd had in the last half an hour. Something about Saskia - if they were both in England for instance. She could make 'English' films, he'd be the cinematographer - a team. Or if he caught a plane back to London from New Zealand tonight his mum would still be there. The funeral forgotten. Or if he walked over to Saskia's now - only ten minutes away - she'd be happy to see him..... like this. The salad arrived. He started to pluck out the croutons, then the bacon, then the egg. What was he doing in this bloody country? With this little gem of a movie that took his whole attention. He ought to be thinking about tomorrow's shoot. He watched the bar girl. She had her breasts propped up somehow and had a floating cleavage. Then there was the short red skirt with the terrific legs. The nipped in waist, tied up with a black leather belt. He imagined fishnets and dark pubic hair. How many men had made fools of themselves in front of her?

"Everything alright?" she said.

"Absolutely," he replied. Thought she'd like the accent. They often did in New Zealand. He turned his attention to the view. Three villas, each at different stages of life. The elderly geriatric with missing finials, peeling paint, broken steps, sagging verandahs, old concrete path to the door. The mid-life crisis villa, awkward garage, aluminium windows, tacky tiled roof and ivy covering up it's green paint sheen. Then the child, the recently renovated - sparkly clean, new paint job, flawless skin, extended back of the house, landscaped garden with variegated grasses, designer letterbox. So he was somewhere between the mid-life crisis and the geriatric, needing a bit of polish to his tongue and groove.

The sixth pint went down lightly. The seventh was accompanied by several burps. There was a change of clientele in the bar - a younger set had taken over. Now he was the old man. They spread long shadows on the walls. The music took on a dance beat. People got up and flung themselves about a bit on the dance floor. Women teetered on high heels, men were bird-like in struts and footwork sequences, their partners tried to keep up. The shadows of handbags and hairdos pulsated. Marcus felt it was time to go. He got up from his chair and the world shifted abruptly like a mini earthquake had gripped the floor and he spun backwards into the chair again. Want some help grandad said one of the young men. Marcus didn't hear him and tried once again. This time he managed to stay vertical and was making his way towards the door when he fudged a step and fell onto a young woman who squealed as his weight pressed down upon her. Suddenly three guys were pulling at his arms and legs. He felt a punch smash his face and the kick of a heel into his ribs. He moaned and lay still breathing heavily as an old blocked chimney. A barman intervened and he was suddenly on his feet again and being led to the door. To the darkness of the pavement and the night as it slunk through the early hours shining it's moon on his touselled hair and bloodied face. He was propelled into a taxi and barely got his address out before slumping into the back seat.

.....

The next day Saskia took Jerry aside and asked him to take special care of Kay today as it was going to be tiring. She was agitated in a low key sense when things seem to take a little longer than normal, when her own responses weren't quite what she was expecting of herself. There was much to be achieved today but nothing pivotal to the film. Mostly short cuts, short scenes that would be pasted into the film. Hopefully part of the invisible flow, of building impressions around character like adding tufts of chest hair to an already masculine actor.

Kay had been in make-up for two hours and the set, Frances's bedroom, was ready. A narrow single bed with blue patchworked bedspread, a classic 1940s wooden wardrobe painted pretty pink and a dresser with three mirrors, one flat and two angled. There was another mirror on the wall and yet another

above a second dresser with pitcher of water and bowl underneath for washing. A blue wallpaper with a tiny rose print freshened up the walls.

Kay walked onto the set while Saskia dusted the mirrors and Marcus waited with the cameras set up. It was a difficult shoot given the cameras could not be seen in the mirrors.

"This is a cosy set," said Kay. "We're in Corfe are we?"

"Yes. This scene is a bit like a self portrait. I think we need to show the moment of choice. It's not a good day for her, she'll be sombre." Kay sat down at the dresser.

"Marcus are the mirror angles ok?" asked Saskia.

"Can see myself in the left hand one. Move it six centimetres leftwards."

"Ok. Now we'll have a little Mozart or something going. And the sound of brushing hair."

Kay had on Frances's customary big hat and dark wig.

"Action."

Frances looked at herself for a moment. Then took off her hat placing it on the dresser, and patted her hair, touching it to its length. Next she lifted off her wig and for the first time the audience would see her natural thick white hair. She took up her hairbrush and brushed it in smooth gestures. Turned her head backwards and forwards in front of the three mirrors. Then picked up the wig and dropped it into a waste paper basket.

"Once more," said Saskia. "Hone in on that moment of choice when we see her hair for the first time."

The scene designers came in and over the next hour changed the wall paper and furniture of the room ready for the next scene.

"Now we'll just go over the last scene we filmed earlier. She read from the script notes. "Frances went to see one of her paintings in a gallery in Manchester. As she left the gallery she heard a loud smash, quickly turning she saw her painting had fallen off the wall, the glass broken everywhere on the floor. She said to the secretary who rushed in - "That is a family premonition - death always follows.""

Saskia strode quickly onto the set and moved a desk a little to the right.

"So it's the next morning. She is standing in the room having just received a cable from her brother Willie in Dunedin. We shoot Frances with it in her hands....I think stand this way Kay. How about the light Marcus?"

"Under control."

"Now we film the cable close up."

Dear Frances. I'm so sorry to inform you Rachel has died. Peacefully on Sunday morning. We're holding the funeral on Wednesday. We're all devastated. Love Willie.

"Now we need her reaction. Close up." Marcus skillfully zoomed in.

"Good on the monitor. Yes that's it. No tears yet. Repeat it Kay. It's her mother remember. Yes that's good too. Ok."

Kay looked relieved, breathed deeply.

"Now over to the desk." The camera was carefully moved and positioned while everyone waited. No one felt like chatting.

"Ok everyone. We're just showing her writing to her sister Isabel. Now you've been practicing the handwriting Kay."

"Even this morning before getting here," she said.

"We've got plenty of sheets of aged paper."

It was three takes to get Frances's slightly shaky beginning of a letter asking for details about the death. She started crying on her first draft, tears blotching the ink as in the script. And tried a second time on a new sheet of paper successfully. Saskia appeared pleased with the result.

"Any more takes Marcus?"

"No. it's fine."

"Well thanks everyone. Let's have lunch before our next scene."

The third filming session began just after 3pm because of a prolonged set up recreating the studio in Corfe. The dressers had been working for days. The room had a cluttered feel with piles of loose drawings and watercolours - haphazard and bomb-like. Books, catalogues, postcards of paintings stuck on the walls and oil paintings stacked in rows gave a more ordered impression. Then

the room slumped into disorder again with dirty palettes and wrapped up paintings being made ready for delivery with packaging jumbled in disarray. Some walls had paintings hung (which were prints of course) glowing fiercely. Dorothy Selby and Frances were on the set.

The artist picked up a pile of works on paper.

FRANCES

What do you make of these?

DOROTHY

I haven't seen them before. They're magnificent Frances. Quite fresh and new. But they look different. What are they in?

FRANCES

Gouache, I like the medium for it's opacity. It's easier to correct and makes a more solid paint film than watercolour.

DOROTHY

And it has a different effect. The colours are more solid looking. Perhaps brighter, more decisive somehow. These would make a great show on their own. Has anyone seen them?

FRANCES

No not yet. They're great fun to paint. A new freedom I think.

DOROTHY.

They are some of your best works for years.

FRANCES

Well is that a good thing? I suppose it is.

"And again," said Saskia. "Now a bit more direct, Frances look at Dorothy more. It's a good rehearsal. Now for the first take, close up on Frances placing the gouaches on the table. These became famous as her 'late gouaches' and much in demand so we want the audience to get a good look."

It took two hours to complete the shoot. Saskia was relieved to have had a relatively trouble free day of filming and felt like a nice chardonnay and relaxing. She invited Marcus to her home as they all began packing up.

Josh texted Saskia they wouldn't be home for awhile as they were going to Piha. Josh and girlfriend Katrina, Izzy and Seb. All piled into Josh's new second-hand Triumph barrelling their way through Titirangi Village onto the Scenic Drive. Curvy roads shrouded by billowing fronds, sprays of punga umbrellas and giant flax shooting upwards. Clusters of mature cabbage trees, nikau, karaka and puka. Dense greens, purple afternoon shadows, the illusion of human absence. Josh was in a good mood, Izzy wasn't. He was talking about some game of rugby Izzy was sick of hearing about. Had heard about the previous weekend, and the one before that.

"I wish you'd shut up about rugby."

"Me too," piped up Katrina. The girls looked at each other conspiratorially.

"So what happened between you and Kay?" asked Izzy of Seb.

"Nothing really."

"Not what I heard."

"Well we went out a couple of times," conceded Seb shifting the headrest.

"What was she like," probed Izzy.

"Fun. In a serious kind of way."

"How?"

"Took her jokes seriously. She wasn't like an actress when she was away from the set."

"Have you been out with an actress before," asked Katrina.

"Well no. But there was no mimicry or airs or anything."

"A regular person," said Josh.

"Kind of. She has an obsession. I found that out."

"What?" said Izzy and Katrina together.

"She's into hunting."

"Really. Blood lust. How disgusting," said Izzy.

"Yeah. It was a bit creepy. Seeing I can't even kill spiders. She thinks nothing of shooting possums, rabbits, deer. She gets some of them stuffed. I've seen them at her flat."

"Animals on the wall," said Izzy.

"Standing about. There's this artist who uses stuffed animals and covers them in jewellery and fake flowers. Angela Singer. She's a friend of hers."

The others were silent wondering about stuffed animals and real animals.

"I helped save pilot whales last summer," said Katrina.

"Were they the ones at Farewell Spit?"

"No. At Colville Beach. We kept them watered down. But our one died. I felt shit."

"Horrible," commiserated Izzy who was liking Katrina.

They turned the final curve before the water and then the sea was spread out in front of them like a giant picnic table cloth in shining blues and iridescent greens. The descent to the beach was crowded with baches - old time ones and flashy new. All adapted to the conditions of salt air and bare in-your-face weather.

"I want a bach here one day," said Josh.

"So you could surf every day," said Seb looking at the beach curiously as he had never before seen black sand.

"Sure."

"And chat up beach girls," said Seb.

Josh didn't answer. He parked the car near the bathing sheds, then they walked the short distance to the beach. It was too cold to swim still. There were no life guards or flags. One person was in the water in a wet suit. Some children while being supervised were making a sand clown. They settled down on a rug not far from Lion Rock and waited for it to get dark.

"Tell us about Marcus." Izzy asked Seb.

"He was the cameraman for a reality TV show in the UK."

"Which one?"

"How to Become a Writer in One Week."

"Weird."

"They had twelve contestants and only one would get to do a special writing course. They all had no experience."

"There's a novel in me just waiting to come out," said Izzy.

"Yeah. But they were going to be taken seriously by three judges who didn't know their backgrounds and thought they were legitimate aspiring writers. They had to convince the judges so they swotted up on writing, learnt some quotes and built up back stories about their previous history. They had to write and be critiqued on the show. The judges were sucked in."

"Really. What dumb judges. I bet they were paid," said Katrina.

"No. Marcus said not."

"A friend of ours saw him at the pub on Tuesday night. He was drunk. He got in a fight. Bashed around. They took him out," said Josh.

"He didn't say anything." Seb was distracted.

"Taken his mum's death badly," said Izzy.

"Maybe,"

"Is there something between Marcus and mum?" asked Josh.

"No way!" exclaimed Izzy.

"I don't think so," said Seb. "He'd keep it close though." Seb looked out to the pitching sea.

"Whose going in the water?"

"Not me," said Katrina.

"Come on," said Seb. And in one gesture Seb and Josh picked her up. One by her arms, the other her legs, and carried her to the water's edge. The black sea rolled in, breathing in and out like the earth's lungs. Breathing out to the sand, breathing back in to the sea. Katrina felt the icy swell on her bottom and started to scream.

"O My God," she yelled as she was hoisted further out over the water. The boys grinned wildly. Eyes flashed like demented sharks.

"Bring her back. Bring her back," shouted Izzy.

"Now we're going to drop you on the count of three," said Seb.

"No. No. No."

"One...Two...Three!" And with a huge splash in she went. She disappeared under the water, then came up thrashing. Finding her feet and madly splashing the boys with vicious sweeps of her hands. The boys were

laughing. Only Izzy stood dry on the beach. Not for long. The three chased her up the beach, then dragged her to the water, dunking her backwards. She let out shrills.

"Mean. Mean," she was bellowing. "It's too cold."

But on her feet again she ran after the others up the beach where they all fell about on the rug. Wet but happy. Cold and shivering. A ludicrous shine to their eyes.

.....

Marcus sat beside Saskia on her couch tracing the pattern of a cushion with his finger tips. A red swirl, then a blue. She leant over and touched his arm.

"What is it?" she said.

"I've been drinking. Losing it. On a bender. Three nights."

"But you've been fine tonight?"

"I've had some drinks today already."

"Is it your mother?"

"Yes. I guess. I never felt I understood her or she me. You know.... there were conversations we never had. I've been having them in my head."

"Like.....?"

"Well she had a great passion for amateur theatre. Played Ibsen, Pinter, Shakespeare. I was always envious of this. Her ease at performing. I couldn't. It left me in awe. Have you ever felt in awe of a parent."

"Often. It's their privilege if you like. They are supposed to be the leaders."

"I suppose. Well I never lost it. So I was never at her level. Even though I've been around actors for ever. She was interested that I liked visual things. I guess she thought I might make a photographer at best. Of weddings and family portraits. But she never understood the art side of it."

"Why should she Marcus?"

"Because I understood her theatre. I'd even get involved. Help with the set. That sort of thing."

"I remember when my father died we had this strange conversation weeks before. He actually said he was proud of his filmmaker daughter. Not in so many

words. But it was what he meant. I don't remember him doing that at any other time. There was no real success in it."

"And he got it..... but mine didn't."

"Few people do I suppose."

"You get it."

"Yes. of course. Now come here Marcus."

She pulled him towards her and kissed him, felt the brush of lips, the tongue. The shape of the kiss settling them both. He was already removing her top.

"Not here," she said thinking of her teenagers. She led him upstairs. How could she explain him in the morning to Josh and Izzy? The thought vanished as he came up to her and wrapped his arms round her, pushing them both onto the bed.

x

Frances stretched her 300 gm watercolour paper by wetting it and taping the sides to a board. At her table she propped one end onto books so the board sloped down towards her. Assessing the view she proceeded to dip into her watercolours with a broad hogs hair brush. Dorothy watched her, then read from her book. The wet paper responded to the colour by spreading it and creating soft washes. Dabs. Splashes. Shimmering colour was laid down as background with a mauve streak through the sky. Taking a smaller sable brush Frances drew in the lines of the village. Seven clustered buildings in the distance with pitched rooves. She painted in an umbrella canopy, orange and umber, placing its staff down the right hand edge of the paper. Then a range of flowers at the sides including sunflowers in sharp yellow. The middle ground was a green transition. In the foreground she put chairs and a table on which was a bottle, glasses and a single plate. A strange stone sculpture of a woman sat on the right. Everything looked mobile, fresh, energetic with her display of decorative marks and the hovering air in the scene.

Noticing she was finished Dorothy asked, "Have you a title?"

"I think I'll call it 'The Pleasure Garden'."