

Pencarrow



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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.

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Abstract

This submission is in two parts. The first, an exegesis, sets my creative work in its literary, stylistic and social context. The second and main part of this submission is the first draft of a novel, *Pencarrow*, which I wrote over the course of last year.

The exegesis explores ideas of differing perspectives on grief and loss, shifting cultural and gender perspectives of the late 1960's New Zealand, the idea of banishment and a unification of ancient beliefs of both Māori and Pakeha. It also discusses how these ideas are linked with an overarching emergence of identity and growth for the main characters. Explored in the exegesis is the presence from that 'Other Place,' in *Pencarrow* and how it is used to achieve some unity and depth to all of the ideas listed above. Discussed also is my a voyage of discovery as writer, gradually departing from my original intention to use magic realism as a tool for storytelling and moving toward an allegorical use of metaphor within a broader framework of what in literary fields is termed realism.

The novel is set in New Zealand, predominantly in the year 1969, but with flashbacks to the previous year and earlier era's in New Zealand's history. The novel is written in third person subjective with shifting points of view.

THE DIVINE PRESENCE

“Santa Claus himself in from the Other Place, disguise it as we may by calling it the North Pole; and anyone from the Other Place - whatever we name that other place - Heaven, Hell, Fairyland, the Underworld - will bring back to us, or help us keep free from harm, only if given something back in return - at the very least, our prayers and gratitude.”(Atwood, 2002, p.163)

The fictional device of having a New Zealand girl in the late sixties seeing the world through the optic of an ancient archetypal form, works as a metaphor for distance and closeness. Although many Pakeha New Zealanders are culturally distanced from their Pagan ancestral inheritance through time, dislocation and distance, there still exist remnants of what Margaret Atwood (2002) in her book on writing, *Negotiating with the Dead*, describes as ‘the divine Real Presence’. Such a presence for Atwood resided originally as images and words worshipped for their powers as:

“Representations of gods –icons, sacred in what they pointed to, not sacred as what they were in themselves” (Atwood, p. 161)

Over time, Atwood believes they evolved into allegorical forms, images referred to in relation to a set of ideas. The ‘divine Real Presences’ became no longer themselves but shadows, actors. In the West, along with the decline in religious belief, so too, the ‘divine Real Presence’ slipped away into the realms of the arts. (Atwood, 2004, p. 61)) But for Jude Farley in the world of *Pencarrow*, woven through the daily fabric of life in the music, art and film of the sixties, the Sunday morning request sessions reciting tales from the Brothers Grimm full of witch stories, Peer Gynt and the trolls, Greek

myths of Gods and Goddesses, these 'Real Presences' were not entirely in the shadows. They came out of that 'Other Place.'

The relationship between direct experience and these presences is a broad theme of *Pencarrow*. In creating plot and character in this novel, my objective was to illuminate five key ideas: differing perspectives on grief and loss, shifting cultural and gender perspectives of late sixties New Zealand, the idea of banishment and a unification of ancient beliefs of both Māori and Pakeha. I endeavoured to link all these ideas with an overarching theme of identity and growth for the main protagonists. Woven through is a presence from that 'Other Place', giving unity and depth. In order to achieve this I embarked on a voyage of discovery, gradually departing from my original intention to use magical realism¹ to tell my story and moving toward an allegorical² use of metaphor, within a broader framework of what in literary fields is termed realism.³

Writing in general terms in their introduction about the journey of New Zealand literature in *Floating Words*, Anna Jackson and Jane Stafford (2009) reinforce an earlier assertion by the New Zealand literary critic Mark Williams concerning realism. According to Jackson and Stafford, Williams believed in the early 90's that New Zealand fiction at that time was transforming the realist tradition

¹ Described in the online journal, Margin as, 'writers interweave an ever-shifting pattern, a sharply etched realism in representing ordinary and descriptive details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and fairy tales,' see Ruch&Kaye,(2003, para.2) *Magical Realism*. Retrieved January, 2010 from http://www.themodernword.com/gabo/gabo_mr.html

² My definition for Allegory, taken from online dictionary, trelle.com, is, "Allegory is a form of extended metaphor, in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative, are equated with the meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. The underlying meaning has moral, social, religious, or political significance, and characters are often personifications of abstract ideas as charity, greed, or envy. Thus an allegory is a story with two meanings, a literal meaning and a [symbolic](http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/allegory.html) meaning. Retrieved Jan,2010 from http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/lit_terms/allegory.html

³ Realism- Raymond Williams in, *The long Revolution* (1961) says that the "realistic novel has been replaced by the 'psychological novel'...the direct study of certain states of consciousness." This is my understanding of realism. Williams, (1961.P.303) *The Long Revolution*. Ontario: Chalton & Windus.

and expanding on it. Inhabiting the real world were angels and giants and differing narrative forms spanning centuries but still under that broad realm of realism. Cross cultural concerns involving both Kupe and Cook were graspable, real and tangible. (Jackson, Stafford, 2009, p. 20) Jackson and Stafford believe that this 'transforming' of the realist tradition continues. *Pencarrow* aims to contribute to this emerging genre of NZ realism.

In order to fully explore the connection between real events and their imaginative and emotional consequences, *Pencarrow* draws on past events in New Zealand history, most significant of these was the Taranaki Land Wars of the nineteenth century and the emergence of Parihaka, and the Wahine storm of 1968. In broader terms I sort information about the late sixties and Māori and Celtic mythology. Correspondingly my main points of reference for this exegesis are commentary on New Zealand's history and society by Michael King and Margaret Atwood's theory's on writing. These writers provide the parameters for exploring the relationships between identity and mythology.

At the time of the cataclysmic events in chapter one of *Pencarrow*, the central protagonist Jude Farley, a fourteen year old Wellington girl, is grappling with adolescence and letting go of childhood. I use her fragile belief in a Hare/Goddess ⁴ as an archetype⁵ for exploring the journey of grief, loss and emerging identity. The notion of a Hare/Goddess occurred to me because of a fascination with Easter. Its rich pagan images of rabbits, chickens,

⁴ The Hare/Goddess is my term for the creature Jude thinks she will see on the horizon in chapter one.

⁵ My use of the term archetype follows Carl Jung's theory of layers of consciousness that contain a cultural history that we all share and that are embodied by shared symbolic dreams, images and icons that are called archetypes. For further reference see - C.G.Jung. (1961,p.185)*Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. Glasgow: Random house, Inc

eggs juxtaposed with the Christian beliefs in the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection.

“Easter though in name entirely pagan, now describes only the Christian festival of the resurrection. Many explanations of this word have been put forward, but generally accepted is the earliest, given by Bede more than a thousand years ago. Writing of April he says it was called “Eostrure-Monath”, which is now rendered the Paschal month and formally received its name from the goddess of spring called EOSTRI, worshipped by the ancient nations of the north in whose honour a festival was celebrated at the vernal equinox.”(Budge, P. 2009, p.5)

The animal most associated with this goddess was the hare⁶. It was believed to afford the enlightenment of the soul through death, redemption and resurrection. It was also believed that this spring Goddess changed into a hare on the full moon and that the hare itself carried the souls of the dead. (Budge, P, 2009, p.5)

The setting of the first chapter in a southern landscape also has the power of evoking otherness since it counterposes autumn a period of decline and death in nature with the opposite; spring in the northern hemisphere – a time of re-birth. Autumn is often a time in New Zealand of stillness but also of storms creeping up from the arctic. For a New Zealand girl in the late sixties this elemental landscape stirs up an awareness of this the ancient archetypal form.

Introducing the coming of winter auspiciously just on Easter time, the Wahine storm of April 1968, invoked the arrival of the Hare/Goddess, angry at turning up in the wrong season. The havoc she creates with the storm, the announcement of Jude teenage sister Dianne’s pregnancy, the taking of her father Snow in a probable

⁶ The Hare, an ancient symbol, represents a wide range of beliefs in many different cultures. It seems to be an animal that is both loved for its fertility, speed, resilience and constancy and despised as being lascivious, rampant, a ‘Mad March Hare’ and a pest. Hares and rabbits were sometimes seen as being unlucky and death omens. Some English fishermen believe that the word rabbit should never be said at sea or brought on board and in past times a hare could be a witches ‘familiar’ or a death omen.

drowning - all seem to represent her dual nature. Atwood believes the Goddess could be seen as a monster.

“Among the Shamans, the battle was usually with a spirit, and if you won, the spirit would become your familiar, and if you lost, you’d become possessed by it.”(Atwood, 2002, p. 170))

This monster could fight with the spirits’ of the dead. Atwood names some legendary battles such as Beowulf, Lord of the Rings and Jesus Christ in which there is a quest for a lost one, like,

“Christ who during the three days between Good Friday and Easter Sunday goes down to hell and defies the devil and rescues a group of good people.”(Atwood, 2002, p.170)

Correspondingly my objective was to create a similar quest for Jude in trying against all logic (Snow was never much of a swimmer, the storm was viscous, his body never found) to find her beloved father, Snow

At these points in the novel where Jude was searching, the ‘divine Presence’ the Hare/Goddess, has not metamorphosed into the form of the Hare- the vehicle, the carrier of the souls of the dead that eventually enabled Jude to process the loss and death of her father,

“Carving her way through the high country fields, she wondered if the animal would go toward the mountain, to where the ground was dryer, burnt gold by the mountain tussock, all the while carrying Snow in her little beating heart.” (Harrison 2009, p.217)

In tandem with the loss of this ‘Pagan’ cultural inheritance and rituals surrounding spring and autumn, western society in the sixties had become distanced from the reality of loss and death. Previous generations would have been more familiar with the sight of a dead body and the rituals surrounding death. Although Snow’s

body had not been found, the family exists in a vacuum, nothing is said and no memorial service is held. Pakeha New Zealanders' inherited from their English ancestry a habit of repressing feelings.

In developing the structure, plot, characters and imagery in *Pencarrow*, the Hare/Goddess changed from a more overt magical - realist form. In the first drafts of *Pencarrow* she appeared as a stuffed lifelike toy animal carried by Jude, was seen dashing through landscapes and in flashback as two pets kept by Jude and her sister Dianne. The original title of the novel, *Venus and the Hare*, also illustrated a more direct early concern with the magic realism. But in the process of writing, the hare seemed to change her shape and became something other, finding herself in birds, actions and characters. Just as in *Alice in Wonderland*, I found myself chasing the rabbit down the hole and discovering something magical in the journey of the writer. Margaret Atwood describes this process. In the following passage she discusses who is really in charge in the process of writing,

"The act of writing takes place at the moment when Alice passes through the mirror. At this one instant, the glass barrier between the double dissolves, and Alice is neither here nor there, neither art nor life, neither one thing nor the other, though at the same time she is all of these at once." (Atwood, 2002, p.57)

It seems more realistic to communicate to the reader by alluding, through extended metaphor to universal ideas and metaphysical truths and experiences. A more discreet, archetypal Hare/Goddess seems a tangible 'reality,' but one that also exists in the realms of the subconscious, enabling some form of realization and resolve for the central characters.

The Hare/ Goddesses dual nature informs the female characters in *Pencarrow*. The use of this metaphor was aided and

abetted by changes in the society in the years leading to 1968; the explosion of new ideas in fashion, music, the worldwide landscape of political change, protest, war and assassination. 1968 was at once an exciting but dark time,

“The family seemed well behaved in a year of bad behaviour. A few days earlier Martin Luther King had been assassinated. Months later, Bobby Kennedy fell into the dark of his disappearing blood; looking softly stricken into the last of his light. The whole event was shown in an explosion of yelling in black and white on the television, while outside the world had never been so vivid and the Farley family portrait was full of colour. (Harrison, 2009, p. 25)

Through the characters Jude, Kit (Jude’s mother), Eunice (Jude’s Headmistress) and Jude’s boarding school friend Suzy, the Goddess gradually emerges in her many guises. One of these, the metaphor of clothing and appearance become a chance to adorn, strip and cover the Goddess and her charges, furthering central ideas. In spectacular fashion the sixties witnessed an explosion in tastes and fashion that challenged cultural norms,

“The leading fashion concept of 1968 was that there were no limits or taboos. Conformity was out of fashion and writers were predicting a continuing trend toward liberating diversity in what people could wear.”(Kurlansky, 2004, p.20)

Dianne illustrates this rebellion early on when she refuses to wear something ‘nice.’ The character of Suzy, rebelling at the boarding school Highlands, that Jude is ‘deposited’ in by her mother, also uses appearance to make her point,

“Little tendrils of nylon thread and cloth fanned out in a riot of static like some hula skirt. She held a prayer book close to her chest and cocking her head to one side, Suzy blinked sweetly, like something out an old oil painting. A dressing gown belt pulled in her tiny waist as her teased brown hair, freed from her hat, floated on top of the bohemian vision.” (Harrison,2009, p.122)

Even in a time of rebellion there are still conservative restraints. Like the Goddess, Jude, Dianne, Kit, Eunice and Huia, another boarding school friend, all have some kind of battle to free themselves of these restrictions. There is considerable shame around Dianne's pregnancy and banishment. Kit is aware of Eunice and The Head Librarian, June Watts and their view of her 'fast' ways. Huia experiences isolation for her 'sticky out hair' and worn clothes. Jude has to navigate her way through conservative rural Taranaki.

Jude comes from a family immersed in the rag trade. Jude quickly learns that to have dress designer father may be considered, 'skiting,' According to Jock Philips in online encyclopedia, *Teara*, Rural and urban New Zealand where separate entities in the late sixties.

"Despite the fact that the country was now largely urban, New Zealand's rural mythology remained alive and well...it was still assumed that farming was the backbone of the nation. In politics the long-serving prime ministers in these years, Sid Holland and Keith Holyoake, were both claimed to be farmers. Urban culture was seen as not worth showing off. The long-running television show 'Country calendar' began in 1966."(Philips, 2009,)

But Jude's father, Snow's emersion in the rag trade also provided security and style in the way he 'clothes' the family, both financially and in terms of their social positioning. His loss strips Jude of a secure cloak,

"Then, without explanation, he left the room. His jacket remained, empty beside her, as if he had peeled off part of himself and draped it over the back of the couch."
(Harrison. 2009, p.179)

Conversely, 'dressing' Jude in her school uniform, acts as an allegory for learning, like the academic, Cambridge cape of Headmistress, Miss Shipton - a cape which Eunice, in turn, uses to 'cover' herself. The cruel jibe hurled on the steps of Highlands, at Eunice Shipton, by Kit in chapter three, 'the big fat thing' grows in

meaning and consequence for Eunice. Appearance and clothing for the academically inclined Eunice are just as complex. Her ritualistic destruction of Dorie's fabulous, Mistress on Manners dress, in chapter twenty three, acts as a conduit for what she sees as the destruction of her past dreams and hopes with Bernard. On a wider level, the dress's destruction illuminates the loss of Jude's past life and her father's, Master and Mistress on Manners, business.

Kit uses clothing to both to control her children and form her own identity. Glimpses of some powerful female archetype can be seen in the young Jude as she wore her Grandmother Clara's red gown for dressing up in chapter nine. In her poem, *A Red Shirt*, Margaret Atwood uses the symbolic meaning of the colour red and links it to a young girl's journey.

"Children should not wear red,

a man once told me,

Young girls should not wear red.

In some countries it is the colour

of death; in others passion,

in others war, in others anger

in others sacrifice

of shed blood. A girl should be

a veil, a white shadow, bloodless

as a moon on water: not dangerous: she should

keep silent and avoid red shoes.”(Atwood, 1998, p.144)

In a similar way as Atwood, my objective in *Pencarrow* is to use the gown as an extended metaphor, an allegory for expressing, rebelling and clothing herself. In discovering Shakespeare’s witches and Lady Macbeth, Jude sees some linking thread that binds herself, her Grandmother, mother, with some remote notion of a Goddess creature, equally benign and cruel, in all her many changing forms.

“She is the witch you burned

By daylight and crept from your home

to consult and bribe at night. The love

that tortured you and you blamed on her

She can change her form,

and like your mother she is covered with fur.”(Atwood, 1998, p.98)

‘She’ is present when Jude becomes acquainted, in her high school English class, with the veiled deceit of Lady Macbeth, whom she begins to equate with Kit.

Kit’s love of speed and journeying, is observed by Jude,

“Jude watched Kit drive efficiently and fast, flicking ash from her cigarette towards the odd sheep. A risk taker from way back her mother took each corner easily, accelerating on exactly the right point of the bend, moving in her seat like the rider of a chariot, horses thundering, wheels sparking.”(Harrison, 2009, p.30)

Like some veiled Goddess, Kit traverses landscapes, through flashbacks to her past in the elemental Wellington and her eventual home in the lush Auckland. Kit can be destructive, inadvertently leading Snow to his death over the cliffs of the South Coast, in chapter one and also in her controlling of and exacting punishment on her children and in flashbacks her character has throughout *Pencarrow*.

Memories of days spent in the hills invoking and embodying the female archetypes were also ignited by Jude's introduction to Macbeth's witches. The social historian, Carlo Ginzburg makes reference to this in his book, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches Sabbath*.

"Indubitable....is the deep resemblance that binds the myths that later merged in the witches' Sabbath. All of them work a common theme: going into the beyond, returning from the beyond. This elementary narrative nucleus had accompanied humanity for thousands of years."(cited in Atwood, 2002, p.179))

The outside world might have been modernising and changing but these childhood rituals, the world of sometimes dangerous play was still a reality for many New Zealand children in the sixties. This creative outdoors play was an important vehicle to explore and process complex issues arising from both family and the prevailing social fabric.

After the probable drowning of Snow in chapter one, Jude unconsciously reveals her feelings of loss by shedding her clothing - like a second skin. This is enabled by the eager swallowing up of discarded items by the girls of Highlands, but also this shedding allows Jude to fit in to the conservative rural climate. Just as she stifles her 'posh' vowels, she represses her old tendency to use clothing as a form of expression and rebellion. In Taranaki Jude dresses plainly.

Along with her metamorphosis and in keeping with the sensibilities of the era, Jude is afforded an education and an idea of how clothing might be. In studying Macbeth, the idea of clothes as a disguise or a vehicle for deception are explored,

“Jude looked down at her page and gripping her pen firmly she knew that next time she would make more effort to hide the emblems of her new love. She formed the words, ‘Shakespeare draws upon every day objects such as clothing to get across the idea that new honours’ sit ill upon him,” (Harrison, 2009, p.147)

The hippies on the street, viewed by Jude on her way to church in chapter eleven, invite a sense of otherness from the changing outside world. Dress for the hippies was a vehicle to express an idealistic vision and personal freedom. Jude was also introduced to the ‘straight jacket’ of Eunice Shipton’s church uniform which she enjoys. It gives her respite from choice and control. For a time it ‘clothes’ her. Later she uses the gown like a weapon.

“But fables and charms swarm here

in this January world,

entrenching us like snow, and few

are friendly to you: though

they are strong

potent as viruses

or virginal heads of pins,

potent as viruses

or virginal angels, dancing

on the heads of pins,

potent as the hearts of whores.” (Atwood, 1998 p.147)

In relation to gender issues and like the whore in Atwood's poem, Jude along with her sister Dianne, shares the 'potent' mantle of being called a slut. In the last chapter, chapter twenty four, Jude uses the old ball gown handed down by her bohemian grandmother Clara, as a weapon, turning clothing on its head – no longer, 'bloodless as a moon on water' but instead a vengeful spirit. Adorning herself with leaves, sticks, moss and makeup she attempts to frighten the bullying girls from her dormitory. In using dress allegorically, I endeavour to have Jude confront prevalent shaming attitudes. The world was changing for women in the sixties but there was still a long way to go. If the Goddess had her pagan way, women would have been,

"For the pagan Celt, the essence of the universe and all its creativity was female and they left permanent traces of a culture in which women were the spiritual and moral pivot." (Budge, 2009, p.1)

Jude hopes also, that by embodying the Hare/Goddess, on the anniversary of his death, invoking the Easter magic, she might bring him back from that 'Other Place.'

"That coming weekend it would be Easter and despite having outgrown childhood, she held onto a small belief that somewhere, a creature, half human, half animal would appear." (Harrison, 2009, pg.23)

For many people during the late sixties, rural Taranaki epitomised and presented an image of desirable conformity. In creating the Māori characters, Huia, her brother James and father, Bill Te Whare, I hoped to illuminate undercurrents beneath this facade. Furtherance to the use of the archetypal Hare/Goddess as an allegory, one of my original aims with *Pencarrow* was to connect with similar beliefs in Māori culture and to explore ideas of banishment for both cultures.

Both Māori and Pakeha at the time Pencarrow was set were suffering the effects of displacement. In discussing the journey of his displaced Irish ancestors and their subsequent experience in New Zealand, Michael King in *'The Writing of New Zealand'*, discussed the Māori presence in New Zealand, rejuvenated by the growing Māori renaissance of rituals and values, as giving him an historical resonance. It had put him in touch with symbols relating to a more universal collective unconscious. The concept of 'mauri'⁷ in people, places and objects inherent in Māori cultural heritage opened up a connection with life and death. (King, 1993, p. 228) King expanded on his appreciation of how 'Mauri' connects to ancient Gaelic beliefs where people and places are the sum of more than just a physical presence. Physical presence can be informed by psychic energy and human qualities around friendship, warmth, anger and grief. King believed that these beliefs have been removed from Western industrialised society through education, science and that in turn, Westerners removed these beliefs from the lives of indigenous people. In New Zealand this process followed colonisation along with ideas of racial and cultural superiority. (King, 1993, p. 230)

The presence both physically and metaphorically of Mt Egmont/Taranaki, the sense of place also echoes in the hills of Wellington and the sea for many of the characters, is a vehicle to explore this. Taranaki seems to follow and haunt, Jude and James Te Whare,

"Every so often when the clouds parted, Taranaki peered through like a ghost, not quite in the game." (Harrison 2009, p.149)

It acts as a beloved rock and symbol of dislocation for Eunice,

⁷ A Maori concept of energy which binds elements of the natural world.

“Taranaki still cried after his lost love and home. Streams and rivers flowed from his tears and his sides. He and Eunice were not unlike. She had been banished from her love, the ‘big fat ugly thing.’ Dorie would have liked to banish her from her home.”(Harrison, 2009, pg.190)

And for Bill Te Whare, Mt Taranaki is the symbol of lost tribal identity and land,

“James wondered if Wiremu was sitting somewhere out on the farm, not far away on his own mound. Mooning after his mate. That bloody ever present Taranaki, with all his pointed bitterness, all his exiled dreams of love. Tossed out there alone, having to suffer the insult of being called the prissy, Mt Egmont. Like his father. Once Wiremu, then Bill.”(Harrison, 2009, pg.206)

Dick Scott in *‘Ask that Mountain’* describes the events and consequences of colonization Taranaki by European immigrants. Scott discusses prevailing racist settler and colonial government views of local Māori as well as the history of both violent and then passive protest at Parihaka.

“Parihaka – an open village - in sight of the mountain and the sea, in a clearing ringed by soft round hillocks topped with rata, rimu and riro- a sight was chosen beside a stream- Waitotoroa(water of long blood) named after the ribbons of gore that had run down in times of war.”(Scott, 1975, p.28)

For Taranaki Māori , past wounds concerning colonisation and loss of land still resonated in the late sixties and so in creating Wiremu, Huia and James, a connection with the past informs their characters. The Te Whare family, displaced from their land, have to work as sharemilkers on the Ballcot’s farm, land that previously belonged to their iwi. To highlight this dichotomy both James and Huia suffer from some form of prejudice.

It was this aspect of researching and writing *Pencarrow* that I found most challenging; finding the right voice so as not to commit an offensive misreading of Māori culture. This is an issue Pakeha

writers and artists have faced before, accused of having no inherent knowledge, or no cultural memory in the fashion previously mentioned in terms of archetypal 'Divine Precences.'

When Huia and Jude appear at the end of *Pencarrow*, at an Easter party as a ghost, a fusion is created of shared symbols - Huia's white feathers ⁸(dually acting as the hare's ears) the ambivalent markings on Jude's face and the iconic dress, all underneath the watchful silent eye of Taranaki. I hoped to achieve some shared cultural, emotional experience.

The older female characters in *Pencarrow*, Kit and Eunice also share in an allegorical journey, exploring how the past informs the present. Their roles as women have been shaped by the rapidly changing decades of the 20th Century. Both women use song as an expression. In linking them with an old song, sung by previous generations, Schubert's *Hedge Roses*, I hoped to magnify a shared cultural experience. The lyrics to *Hedge Roses* deal with a youth being pricked by a rose that he has plucked. Both women feel wounded and wounded others. Kit 'pricked' Stuart with the heavy art book. Eunice's roses were destroyed by her sister as a way to control her.

"There before her were the remains of her roses, the stems strewn, left with nothing to defend. Eunice imagined the gloved hands of Deirdre and Dorie clasping the pruning shears, champing at the bit." (Harrison, 2009, p.189)

David Dodd (1995), in his essay entitled, *A Thematic essay for the Annotated Grateful Dead Lyrics*, the rose is a symbol laden with meaning. He quotes J.E. Cirlot's *A Dictionary of Symbols*,

"single rose is, in essence, a symbol of completion, of consummate achievement and perfection. Hence, accruing to it are all those ideas associated

⁸ White feathers were worn as a sign of allegiance to Te Whiti at Parihaka.

with these qualities: the mystic Centre, the heart, the garden of Eros, the paradise of Dante, the Beloved, the emblem of Venus and so on." (cited in Dodd, 1995, pg.1)

And Gabriel Tergits in *Flowers Through the Ages*,

"...Soon the mysterious rose, sacred to Venus in earlier times, became the flower of the Virgin Mary, who herself became the Rosa mystica. The temple of Jupiter Capitolinus became St. Peter's, the temple of Juno Lucina the church of S. Maria Maggiore, and the processions honouring the Mother of God walked on rose petals, just as the processions carrying the images of the pagan gods had done." and

"The scholastics derived the origin of the rose from the drops of Christ's blood falling upon a thornbush." ((cited in Dodd, 1995, pg.1))

In using roses symbolically on a number of levels in *Pencarrow* I endeavour to garner an object from that 'Other Place' and give it some 'Divine Presence' on a number of levels- as expression in song, of love and Pagan and Christian beliefs. On a deeper level it is a vehicle to explore Eunice's perception of Christianity and the Easter celebration. Even then, the 'divine Real Presence', underscores her journey.

Furthermore, also mediating from that 'Other Place' the music of the sixties especially that of the Beatles touches many characters. In contrast to the old songs, the *Hedge Roses*, the Fab Four's journey through the sixties was thoroughly modern. The lyrics change from early sixties innocence to the jaded knowing of the late sixties, serving to highlight emotional resonance and shifting attitudes, for Jude, Kit and Eunice. For Jude,

"From the age of seven, they had filled the corners of her house. Jude had screamed along with Dianne at the picture theatre, following her older sister's queue by jumping up and down, tearing at her hair all the way through 'A Hard Day's Night'.

They had gone to see them land at Wellington airport, sitting on the shingle bank behind the Miramar golf course, a prime spot care of Snow's

membership. Through the binoculars they took turns to watch the boys dressed in suits, and their smart shining innocence. From another world they appeared from the open door of the plane as if they had landed on the moon, the windy tarmac leading straight to the ocean opening up behind them.

The two girls loved each one. Because she was older, Dianne got to have Paul or John and Jude had to make do with Ringo and George. Sometimes Dianne would share. Then their music became more complex. She found herself wide awake at night haunted by the lyrics of Eleanor Rigby, the people old and dying, alone, dark rooms full of Mrs Faversham's and the growing differences in style between the buoyant Paul, the sarcastic John."(Harrison, 2009, pg.39)

For the elderly Eunice, John Lennon was the sticking point in her jaundice view of the modern age,

"John Lennon reclining in bed half naked in a dirty sheet with that trumped up madam, Yoko. With all that crummy drapery and mewing about peace in a shop window, who did he think he was? Jesus?" (Harrison, 2009, p.47)

For the frustrated housebound Kit,

"Paul McCartney's smart young man's voice wailed down its length, 'Wonder how you managed to make ends meet' (Harrison, 2009, p.70)

The challenge of interweaving the divine Real Presence, that 'Other Place', through storms, Hare/Goddesses, clothing, the elements of Wellington and Mt Taranaki, roses and music, was a constant one. With *Pencarrow* that challenge may be realised. The central protagonist Jude and, other central characters, are changed and eventually transformed by journeys of grief, banishment and cultural dislocation. Through dreaming, thinking, researching, writing and re-drafting I may have finally echoed some wider notion of identity voiced so well by the late Michael King.

"As I watch this land and seascape, wrapped around recollections of relationships and remembrance of times past, I find I am Pakeha, I am a New

Zealander, I am Irish, I am Scottish, I am European; and I am, in parts of my spirit Māori.”(King, 1993, pg. 235)

CHAPTER ONE

Jude watched Kit drive efficiently and fast, flicking ash from her cigarette towards the odd sheep. A risk taker from way back her mother took each corner easily, accelerating on the right point of the bend, moving in her seat like the rider of a chariot, horses thundering, wheels sparking. The car sped through a series of small towns and lonely figures on the side of the road, who turned and watched the silver lines of the Jag and its driver. Her mother must have been impressive, red hair tumbling in the wind, bronzed slim hands elegantly moving the wheel. After each curious stare, Kit slowed down, adjusted the mirror and looked at her reflection. Then she lowered her eyelids, glanced sideways at Jude as she shifted around in the sweaty front seat.

To Jude, Kit's profile looked chiseled, the nose perfectly straight, the sucked in cheeks and dark lashes fringing her vision.

'Lovely countryside isn't it dear? I think you'll like boarding school. A fresh start will help you get over the whole damn thing. Lots of new friends to keep you company after that lonely house. I know darling, let's celebrate. Let's sing.'

Jude broke her silence and returned to the musicals of her childhood, pitching in with her mother's mock Cockney accented soprano as they past through winding byways of stunted trees. After every bend a new passage opened up, sending her further into the hill country, ejecting her into a tangled forest.

'I could have danced all night. I could have danced all-night and still have asked for more...'

Jude's weak soprano joined in with the voice of Kits, lilting and strong.

'I could have spread my wings and done a thousand things and...'

The song pierced the lonely landscape. Gypsy's big ears flapped out of the window, the lovely black eyes closed in a bond with the wind. The steep, sharp hill country became less rugged. The falling down farm buildings not ruined, just old. Jude imagined herself with a narrow figure and a big gown sweeping down the hills as faster and faster the car seemed to go. My Fair Lady reached the crescendo as the car climbed to the top of a hill.

Something broke in her mother's voice. It trailed off with '*danced, danced, danced all night*' taking the music with it. Kit turned, looked quickly across at Jude and patted her leg, sweetly smiling as if there was something to forgive and forget.

As they reached flat plains, the paddocks turned bright green. But to Jude the empty fields seemed too light and garish as if something had been ripped from the soil and the lush grass poured over the scar like a potion. Tucked in at the base of a hill was a Marae. A giant Tiki, his tongue knifed, belly protruding, weapon clutched in his hands, made up the central post of the building. Dark red patterns curled around the frame as it pitched toward the sky.

A gust of wind shifted a rotting farm gate off its hinges and it swung away like a sudden goodbye.

'Has something happened round here'? She asked Kit.

'You mean, 'around here'. Not round.'

'Around. Round. Who cares?' Jude crossed her left thigh with the bare calf of her right leg as she'd watched her brothers do.

'I don't understand what on earth you're meaning,' Kit tapped the steering wheel. 'And don't sit like that dear. You look like a lackey.'

Jude continued to sit as a lackey. She let the unanswered gate pass with the faded red barns and falling fences. After every dip and turn, Jude felt she lost a little part of her Wellington self.

The Wellington self she'd been just ten months earlier before everything changed. The self who innocently looked out from her bedroom window that April, not knowing what would come barreling around the corner.

Even at that early stage - the day before, she'd seen something move. A flash of light rose up, leaping in an arc over the worn golden tongue of Baring Head and disappeared over the barren hulk of Pencarrow. Around it everything seemed solid; the light afternoon breeze couldn't break the dark line of *Macrocarpa* lining the end of the long flat plain, before it dropped to cliffs and sea. Jude often wondered if a family lived in a farmhouse inside the ring of tees. Jude peopled it with a strong wise mother, walking for miles along the narrow coast road with her children and a basket of eggs to take to Eastbourne every morning.

That coming weekend it would be Easter and even though she was no longer a child, she held onto a little belief that somewhere, a creature, half human, half animal would appear. In April every year Jude would sit watching the entrance to the harbour and the black rising hulk of the Orongarongas - waiting for some sign. Maybe the animal would sit on a mound of burnt tussock, hand or paw raised in a gesture or to shake a hand. Maybe the palm would be opened in thanksgiving. Then sensing a sudden movement in the moonlit night as a signal this strange being would bound gently along with an offering. The creature was not white and cute with a bow tie, but sinewy, grey, and fast. Jude imagined holding the great ears, the giant radars; beacons cupped in her hands and feeling the perfect, trembling strength of flesh and bone. The creature's gifts, although interesting were not important. What mattered was its quick unseen presence in Jude's room - a warm breathing messenger from some Promised Land; constant and loyal. Finally Jude would fall asleep and in the morning there would be a golden egg.

From somewhere in the house, her mother had called,

'Jude and Dianne come down here at once please. And please, please have on something nice.' The voice carried, strong and melodic, through the corridors, then upstairs and through the wall of the bedroom.

'Nice,' sniggered Dianne. Dianne had been lying on her bed, dressed in a 'nice' blue cotton shift with matching cardigan, popping bubble gum. But as soon as she heard her mother, she leapt out of bed, tore off the clothes, changing into a tatty cream crochet dress. She went to the mirror, ruffled up her hair, wet a finger and smudged her eyeliner. Turning to Jude with eyes black as pandas, she said,

'Let's see how she likes this!'

Dianne curtsied, makeup running like a sad clown. Outside a small white fishing boat bobbed about in the mouth of the harbour.

The Farley family gathered on the sloping front lawn for the photo. They stood on the grass that never really grew - chewed and flattened just like the odd surviving tree, by the wind. Behind them the tall white house, named, 'The Nuffield' after its famous architect, cut into the hill.

Kit had stood in the centre of her children, looking all flash and motherly. With the peach satin, stove pipe pants, matching ruffle necked shirt and hair all ablaze like the gold of her bangles she was a sixties siren. But the light breeze played with her carefully hair sprayed head. Bits of hair fell across her eye

'That bloody wind,' she cried. 'Hurry Snow, my hair will look awful if you don't all get a move on and I have mother, Peter and Honey arriving at 5.!''

Jude's father Snow patiently waited for his children to find the right place to stand; jostling behind their small mother, moving bit by bit away so that Kit almost stood alone. Later, Jude thought that if there had been a firing

squad instead of a camera, Kit would have quickly turned and pushed her children to the front.

Finally Jude's brothers Ned and Steven stood next to Dianne, with Kit in the middle and Jude kneeling down.

'What about Gypsy? We've got to have Gypsy.' Jude called the dog over, but Gypsy wouldn't stay still, wagging her tale, visiting and licking each family member by turns.

Snow lifted the camera, steadied his hand. Everyone said he took a good shot. He took his job seriously, padding about like a cautious sweet bear in his moccasins, changing position, moving to his family, then back by the shadow of the house again. Finally, he said,

'Look this way...now stay still. Just...stay...still. Dianne don't move. Jude hold onto the dog. Now that's it and Kit you look lovely. Smile!'

He took aim, then click. It was done.

By dinner time, the radio station, 2YA, reported that 'a light to moderate breeze' had become 'strong northerlies changing after midnight to southerlies which would gradually increase to gale force'. A far away man's calm, mild voice said that there was a 'hurricane far to the north of New Zealand that is expected to pass over the Chatham Islands.' Further south, bringing with it the start of winter, nothing new, just a deep depression and Jude was to learn the next morning, the ferry Wahine, making her way out of Lyttleton harbor.

That night the table at the Farley house had been a sea of empty plates and bottles with the crumbling, starched white pavlova as the centerpiece. Strawberries toppled into the cream, as Kit's family filled the air with alto talk and soprano laughter. Uncle Peter told the family of his war days. Jude and Dianne poked each other under the table, rolling their eyes - half sad about the young German he'd had to shoot at point blank range -half funny because he spoke with a beautiful polished voice about something ugly. Ned and Steven tried to hide their amazement, looking only just interested.

‘On Saturday the Easter bunny comes! Are you excited?’ Jude’s Aunt Honey lent across and clutched her hand too tightly.

‘I think Jude’s outgrown the Easter bunny, haven’t you darling?’ Kit lightly touched Jude’s other hand before turning to another conversation.

‘You’re never too old for him’, said Snow, ‘I’m sure he’ll turn up this year like he always has.’ He looked at Dianne, cigar firmly wedged between his fingers, hands shaking a little.

‘And for you too girl.’ Dianne turned away, blinking away his words.

Jude’s grandmother, Clara, hadn’t followed any talk, spending her time with grey eyes fuzzily gazing out the window. At other times she seemed absorbed with the food on her plate. But with the mention of Easter, Clara suddenly lit up.

‘Do you know that the ancients believed in a goddess called Eostre? She was their goddess of spring. Apparently she was tall, fine and willowy.

‘Apparently and according to whom Mother? Were there reporters on hand?’ said Uncle Peter.

‘I just know.’

‘Of course only you could be privy to this knowledge, trumpeted down the ages for your ears only.’

‘At least my ears are not shaped like cauliflowers.’ Clara smirked as Uncle Peter withered.

They all waited for more explanation of the goddess but none came. The adults had carried on talking and laughing. Clara shakily rolled herself a cigarette. Ned and Steven sat back in their chairs, arms crossed - bored with it all. Dianne toyed with her food, quiet, and sullen, hair flopping across her face. Jude watched her Grandmother for any sign that she might find her thread but none came. The other adults ignored her. Honey and Kit bobbed about at the

table with their dangly gold earrings and light talk, light touches -skimming the surface. Then out of the blue Clara started up again.

‘This goddess glowed with the promise of a new sun. With her she had a hare, her attendant spirit. The Christians and their celebration of death, resurrection and new life, all that palaver, is Easter! Eostre? Don’t they sound the same? Coincidence? Very suspicious.’

Clara perched like a bird on the edge of her chair and looked at each grandchild with piercing eyes. Cigarette ash fell into her half eaten food as she waved her hand at them in circular motions.

‘But what season is Easter here in this distant country? Tell me that? It beckons the winter. We’ve got it all wrong! We are not supposed to be here, upside down, at the bottom of the world with all our silly beliefs. No wonder the Māori don’t want us.’

‘They wouldn’t want a bar of you Mother,’ said Peter getting his own back, laughing loudly and alone at his own joke.

With that Clara shrunk back, the folds of her long dress and baggy cardigan wrapping up her thoughts. Dianne raised her eyes in disgust with the whole conversation, and like her grandmother, slipped down further into her chair.

‘Dianne! Sit up straight and take that filthy look off your face. The wind might change,’ said Kit, her words slurring.

‘There is no such thing as the Easter Bunny. It s always been Dad you know,’ angrily sitting up, her husky words bitter, Dianne whispered into Jude’s ear.

‘So it’s no use waiting.’

Jude knew there was no point in telling Dianne that she looked for something else. Maybe Clara had been right about the goddess. But what would

she look like in autumn? Coming all the way to New Zealand, then finding the wrong season, her beautiful face a blur of outrage, a bit like Dianne.

But Dianne wouldn't understand.

Her mother was in her element, swapping between sipping her gin, closing her black lidded eyes, deep inhaling on her cigarette.

'Such dreadful things are happening on the 'upside' of the world mother. Better to be down here away from the killing of good people and that ridiculous war.'

Jude had watched the Vietnam War on the television news. Helicopters like giant mud - coloured moths loomed over acres of palm trees like they belonged. The people were nowhere -hidden under the huge leaves or else cut up and burnt.

'Here, here Kit! Here, Here!' Honey raised her glass.

'You don't understand me and you never will', said Clara. She pointed at her children, her hand shaking. Through the open window Jude could just make out the surging waves, rushing, foaming at the bit. The wind had changed.

She looked at her father at the head of the table. In middle- age he had filled out, his skin shiny, round, soft. His face was flushed with warmth. When he smiled his cheeks dimpled up. He winked at his daughters as if to say, '*ignore all that nasty banter*' and raised his glass in toast.

'Well here's to the bottom of the world! Here's to love and art and to Kit on her birthday.'

'Hear, hear! My darling. My wonderful darling,' chimed in Kit, her glass of gin spilling a transparent trail on finely veined hands. She turned to Jude and her siblings at the end of the table.

'I love you all. You darlings!'

Dianne turned away from the watery blonde blue of their mother and said,

‘Everyone’s a darling when you’re drunk.’

Kit’s fingers tightened around her daughter’s arm and pink nails made little holes in Dianne’s flesh. Her face fell. She quietly spat, ‘I’ll kill you for that!’

Dianne lent over, bowing her shoulders right onto the table so her head and chin touched the surface like she was serving herself up, looked up at Kit and smiled.

At two in the morning booming waves woke Jude. She saw her window moving in ripples. Outside the sea rose then fell in huge dirty waves. She wasn’t afraid. She loved to hear and feel the sea and the earth shaking, putting people – their fighting talk, their bobbing bodies, in their place. Jude could make out Kit’s shrill voice over the clattering of pots and pans washed and dried in the kitchen. Cutlery shattered into draws.

‘By God girl how could you. How dare you!’

‘I did mum. It’s too late.’

‘Well it won’t happen here I tell you.’

Dianne laughed sarcastically, slamming a drawer.

‘What! You can’t do that! And if you do, you’re a witch and a bitch.’

Louder than the howl of the wind through the beaten trees, Jude heard a crack and a scream.

She searched for the sound of her father’s voice. But there was no padding of moccasins, no husky words washing over Kit and Dianne like a balm, no,

‘Now come on dear, calm down. Let’s talk about it in the morning.’

When morning came Jude only heard the belting lashes of a storm and something else. Snow calling,

‘Kit stop!’

The family cars started up. First Snow’s MG, then the Jag. And as for what had happened then, the memory had disappeared like her father.

CHAPTER TWO

As Jude and Kit got closer to Taranaki, the cone of Mt Egmont suddenly appeared, as if it had been created by magic from the flat earth, taking her away from that night. A light late-summer dust of snow capped his peak. For a while the mountain towered, a pointy white hooded creature watching over the farms and towns until clouds veiled him. He disappeared as they approached the small city of New Plymouth and the boarding school.

It seemed to Jude on that hot late summer day, that her mother was on auto pilot, that she had been planning this 'depositing' of her daughter for some time. The street, the number quickly found like they'd been programmed in. The car eager, hot, and shining, smoothly past through the huge gates at the entrance of Springwood and swept down the leafy drive. Jude expected it to speak, like something out of James Bond as it smoothly ejected mother and daughter.

'Disembark now!' The voice Swedish and full of smoke.

Kit and Jude stepped out in front of the waiting, dark caped and square figure of the Principal, Miss Shipton. Jude stumbled, out of step with her fast moving mother.

A mid-afternoon haze blazed onto the car, the terracotta bricks and bronze door handle that led into the old building behind the headmistress. The woman raised her hand to her forehead and peered out of a creased brow at Kit and Jude like some deep underwater fish moving from her lair into the daylight. A scar ran down her cheek.

She looked down at Kit's pantsuit and Jude's miniskirt. Her big face twisted in anger. Big loud words boomed out of her mouth,

'How dare you and your daughter appear at my school in those ridiculous skimpy outfits.'

Kit drew herself up the steps ready for a fight. Her mother's sweetness in the car had quickly gone.

Jude stood apart from her mother and Miss Shipton and looked up at the massive square front of the building. The late afternoon sun blinded the windows. It burnt her shoulders and made her feet sweat against the leather of her Roman sandals.

Jude looked back at the Jag. The passenger door was closed. The inside and its dark leather upholstery closed off. After the 'accident' it had been thoroughly cleaned and re-conditioned. Unlike the Wahine, the car had been salvaged. Along with Ned and Steven and others lining the bank beside the ocean, she had watched the car being hauled onto a barge. To Jude the Jag became a silver marsupial, water pouring from her legs, lurching, creaking on the crane toward the bank then back to sea. With each swing the crowd gasped in awe, waiting for the end like an execution. Above them they heard the roar of a plane as it powered into the clouds from the airport behind them, jet fuel spiking the air.

'What a shame. They say he did it on purpose,' said a man. He chewed gum casually, each casual movement of his stubbed chin rhythmically grinding like a stupid sheep.

'What would you know?' said Steven moving quickly towards him. The man stood back and put his hands up.

'Sorry.'

Jude watched her mother in the days afterwards, always sipping tea or gin with Honey and Peter, deep shadows under her eyes.

'Why must I get rid of it? I love that car. Would you believe there is not a trace of rust from the salt water anywhere? Snow loved the car too. He would want me to keep it.' She placed her hand at the base of her head as if to prop it up.

‘For him.’

‘After what you have been through and you looked exhausted!’ said Aunty Honey seeping sympathy.

Dianne stayed in her room, kicking the wall. She never cried. Ned and Steven took to answering the phone, organizing, taking deep breaths in-between. The dog stayed under the table, shivering, never seeming to get warm. But Jude knew there was nothing to be sad about. Her father hadn’t gone missing. She did the same things, seeing friends, taking the bus into the central city, jiggling about and singing in the back seat,

*‘Just listen to the music of the traffic in the city
Linger on the sidewalk where the neon signs are pretty
How can you lose?
The lights are much brighter there.’*

Nearly a year later, in New Plymouth Miss Shipton waited for her on the top step. The sun hit the Jag’s window screen creating a dazzling white surface. Jude could only see the faint outline of Gypsy. The animal sat alone, eyes fixed to the front. Gypsy knew where her father was but the car shut Jude out along with all her secrets.

A cooler breeze stirred the English trees lining the drive. The fading light had moved to the west, taking with it the playfulness of the leaves, leaving the oaks and willows to brood in darkness. Underneath Kit maneuvered the Jag. That awful headmistress had stood over her as she signed all the forms and by so doing, the care of her daughter. The other matrons flocked around her. One of them, Mrs Latham, placed a red talon on every pertinent word that related to behavior: drinking, smoking and boys. How dreary! What would life be without misbehavior? But just a little. She’d learnt her lesson with Dianne, hence the

boarding school for Jude. Like her sister, Jude was smart. Sometimes too smart. Kit never had the same chances. The girl should be happy.

Earlier that day, on arrival, she had looked directly at the headmistress, Eunice Shipton standing on the steps of Highlands. The woman towered over her. For a moment Kit found it all too much to take in. The distance she and Jude had travelled from Wellington city suddenly felt great. She'd been a little shaky on her feet. Many times during the journey, Kit had wondered at the wisdom of her decision to leave Wellington. As the car trailed around the foreshore and up the Ngauranga gorge, it left behind an unusually still Wellington day.

The city fringed the great circular harbour, buildings nestled like white teeth into the sheer naked bulk of the big hills. Not a breath of wind stirred. Wellington was on its best behaviour just for their leaving and Kit had loved the city of her birth. She had loved the big womb like basin of changing waters; sometimes placid and shining, at others, roaring, spitting and fathomless and Kit could see it all from the house. After all she and Snow had had their suburban Seatoun house architecturally designed by the avante guard architect, Gordon Nuffield, in order to reflect the big bold, primal lines of the harbour. The concrete home stood out on the cliffs of Seatoun like a stark, Grecian citadel. Everyone said it was a wonder. All except a banal little group of locals who called it the 'The Lav'.

The house was big, cold and empty. Kit took one last glimpse before the car turned them away. Slashes of clay rivered down the steep, gorse scattered Orongaronga's to form the white seams for fire breaks. Ahead of her the banks of the gorge closed in on the world she had lived in all her life and the storm that ended it.

'All stitched up and ready to go!' She cried and looked across at her weeping daughter.

Then, on arrival at Highlands, having driven up hill and down dale, through endless farm valleys, Kit had been exhausted but pleased. There before her was a gothic mansion complete with red brick turrets just for her

daughter. What park like grounds for a public school and just there on the steps was this matronly figure of a woman to keep it all, including her difficult girl, in order! But then that huge thing had stepped forward.

‘What a vision! Plain would have to be an understatement.’ Kit had whispered to Jude, guiding her up the steps.

Plain women populated Kit’s neighbourhood. They called into dairies, dropped children at school, were even and heaven forbid, to be confronted at elevenzes for cocktails or coffee afternoons. Worse, it was the plain mothers of her daughter’s friends’ who greeted Kit in all innocence while she gazed past them to the more exotic hills. And there before her, Eunice Shipton had confidently straddled the great wooden door frame without a care for her ruddy skin and blubbery flesh quivering with dislike for the svelte Kit the moment she had stepped out of the Jaguar. Eunice’s squinting eyes fixed in disgust on the all-in-one lilac pant-suit with buttons all the way down Kit’s ample bust to her crotch and the white leather boots. The cheeks and jowls puffed up as Eunice jutted out a whiskered chin in protest.

‘How dare you and your daughter appear at my school in those ridiculous skimpy outfits.’ she boomed.

At that moment, Kit could have made it easy. It was Jude that had to stay.

But of course she didn’t.

‘And how dare you talk to us in that manner. You rude woman. Just look at yourself. Could you wear a mini skirt you big fat thing?’

Pleased with this little outburst, Kit had firmly patted loose strands of her hair back into her headband. The two women stood, facing one another on the wide steps leading into Highland’s - Miss Shipton’s hands now firmly clenched tight to her girth. With her elbows extending the cape she loomed like a giant bat over the much smaller Kit.

'I have never been spoken to like that. I have half a mind to reconsider your daughter's entry into this establishment. She may not be suitable.'

Kit climbed the remaining steps toward Eunice. Neither was taking any prisoners except Jude. Jude was there to stay.

But now heading to her new life in Auckland Kit realized all she had left was the dog. Dogs were her thing. Big bounding silly dogs and she looked back at the animal. Gypsy, who had somehow survived the impact of the water, Gypsy who had struggled out of the car window and swum to shore, Gypsy panting dribbly smiles in the back seat. And Gypsy who even managed to be in the last photo of them all together. The one she gladly gave to Jude.

Before they'd left she had looked closely at it and shivered. Ten months after the storm, the furrowed light of that day formed a grainy texture on the surface. Ned the eldest, towered above them all, caught wide-eyed in the lens like he was paying penance for a day spent fooling around down at the beach with his med-school mates - The Stones rolling in their heads. Stephen was in front of his brother, chest thrust forward as if to take a bullet; behind him his surfboard leant against the garage, sharp nuzzle thrust toward the rinsed out sky. A cheeky fixed grin took up nearly his whole face, around it his long blonde hair fell in waves. Dianne peeped out from his side, just as blonde. Her big hair had been neatly combed, overpowered by Kit at the last minute into a Dusty Springfield bob. The last bits of a tan made Dianne's skin seem sickly yellow. She jiggled about, impatient to meet her boyfriend Simon down by the rocks. At the front and thrust forward as the youngest, Jude crouched down.

It seemed that a small shape, hunched and boned was cupped in Jude's hands. She lent slightly out of the frame, as if to rest on Gypsy, his black tail just visible. Jude looked androgynous. The mousy haired one in a family of fair heads. Kit had had her hair was cut short in an attempt to make it like Mia Farrow, in pixie fashion. But her curls resisted, forming rough little tufts and

anyway, her daughter was no delicate elfin. She inclined her head as if to make some connection with the dog. But the animal seemed beyond her reach.

The family seemed well behaved in a year of bad behaviour. A few days earlier Martin Luther King had been assassinated. Months later, the front page of The Dominion had poor Bobby Kennedy felled - staring into the dark of his disappearing blood; looking softly stricken into the last of his light.

The whole event was shown in an explosion of yelling in black and white on the television, while outside the world had never been so vivid and reflecting that the Farley family portrait was full of colour -the lime green of the surfboard, her own peach top. The stillness masked the stirring of wind in the pine forest behind them and the secret Dianne harboured.

Someone was missing from their family portrait, the photographer - Snow. Why had she not thought to have him there? A neighbor could have taken the photo.

Even then at that early stage of the day, the wind had silently begun its strange planting -the grainy texture like seeds woven through the peach satin top, Dianne's white crochet dress, and Jude's flowered pants. They splashed across the high windows of the house, blanking out the insides, had gone on to embed themselves in the meringue of the pavlova that night of the storm, then carried like spikes on the raised voices of she and Dianne. The next morning they flew on the howling wind of Cyclone Giselle, burrowing into the leather seats of the car. Kit ran her hand over the cool, smooth empty space beside her

The car led her onto the main highway and in no time fled over the bridge leading into the town of Waitara. Half way over Kit saw a glimpse of the big dark river underneath. On the outskirts, the putrid odour of the freezing works caught her unaware - her stomach heaved a sour taste of vomit. The last heat of the five o'clock sun seared onto the bonnet. She pulled the Jag to a stop outside a coffee bar. Passers-by slowed their pace, looking at her as she shakily

emerged from the car and moved gingerly to the café. A large man in tiny shorts and an orange singlet that rode his large belly smiled warmly at Kit.

‘Giddy!’ His gold front tooth flashed.

A tan line stopped abruptly, ringed a white line around his neck and shoulders, his white chest hairs revealed for the world to see.

‘Hello.’ Despite herself she smiled openly, without design.

A teenager who Kit surmised must only be sixteen brought her a coffee and with it a vault of sadness at leaving her forlorn child. The child could not accept what had happened and she loved Judith of course. Of course she did!

CHAPTER THREE

The phrase '*fat thing*,' or was it, '*big fat ugly thing*, resounded in Eunice's head. After the 'fracas' with that woman and alone in her house except for Deirdre in the garden; the harsh words had led her to the lounge window. For solace she looked back toward Springwood, to her school. The place, the '*big fat thing*' had helped become 'A leading light in the education of tomorrow's women', the vision Eunice lived by. But instead of seeing her beloved school, she was confronted by a vision of herself. It was as if the window had played a trick, been in cohorts with that dreadful woman in the Jag and conjured up some pale and ancient face. Something in the play of early evening light made her skin look like old wallpaper. It highlighted the scar that forged deeper every year, the dark liquid stains about her eyes. Her face was a big face, tilting on an axis toward itself. For one such as Eunice, who had over the years studiously avoided such a confrontation, this vision could have been shocking. But she did not flinch. She knew the Highland girls nickname for her – Bulldog.

Soon she'd be due at the boarding school for tea and there they all would be, gabbling and witless while the world outside was unraveling moral fiber. It was turning into a decade of madness. John Lennon reclining in bed half naked in a dirty sheet with that trumped up madam, Yoko. With all that crummy drapery and mewing about peace in a shop window, who did he think he was? Jesus? Then there were legions of young women spilling flesh onto the pavements like wounded soldiers. And here at school, there was that scantily clad Miss Darling and her theatrics in the classroom with Shakespeare, which could go too far. Eunice shared with Darling a love of the Bard, but the younger woman, in her rush to make him relevant, forgot the context. Shakespeare's witches were not feminists. And she had Suzy Morrison to contend with, forever getting into strife; the absolute cheek of the girl.

Eunice watched the heavily pregnant wife of her nephew, Deirdre, in the garden below the window, caress the roses, hastening the inevitable autumn

fall. She had come she said, to, pick some flowers. Lately she had taken an unusual interest in the garden. Ruminating upon the gifts of the natural world was not something Eunice would have associated with the girl. Deidre plucked a perfectly formed specimen from its stem and held it up to the light so that it shimmered like a golden orb in her hand. Objects that were shiny, manmade and at cost were Deirdre's natural habitat. Swinging her voluminous skirt from side to side and muttering to herself, Deirdre then plucked off each petal and threw the empty cup to the ground.

'Who would have thought a girl could be so strong! My son is a lucky man. She's been through hell, that girl! But does she grizzle? Works like a dog all day in that dreadful Road Hog Cafe. And pregnant to boot! Saving for the baby. A pragmatist, that's what I like. A doer! Some are strong, some are weak. As you are born, as you are made,' said Eunice's sister Dorie last week as she knitted a babies jacket.

All about Deirdre lays the vestiges of a summer that has forgotten itself, its sweet aroma growing more fecund by the day. Covering the slopes leading to the river, decayed plums, petals, weeds and leaves lay as if squandered, on the ground; bolting green vegetables and seeds unseen in the air. Some, like Dorie would have said that Eunice had let the garden go to pack and it was true. Her body was tired, less able to move. But it was more than just fatigue. Eunice felt she had let the garden go like some long captive bird.

Increasingly Eunice felt she was beyond cultivation.

The frosted blonde Deirdre rested chubby hands on her voluminous stomach and squinting, surveyed the house. Deirdre, who was always offering to do little jobs for Eunice. Dusting, ironing, gardening, but never allowed inside her room. Eyes darting, coveting the very corners of the rambling villa Eunice had presided in since birth. The villa that Dorie felt, should, 'Have a family in it. To do it justice and fill it with life!'

'It has life in it. Me!

'That Deidre is marvelously capable.' Dorie sucked in some air.

'So were the Nazis,' muttered Eunice.

'Don't tell me you don't like her!'

Dories' mouth began to tremble, her knitting became a frenzy.

The girl's hair showed a fleck of gold under the sun as she lay on a rug, her big belly splayed out like a whale.

'Maybe.'

'That Deirdre's a brick. A giver not a taker. I love her like my own. I love her to bits. She's a beaut. Best girl in the world. She could be Prime Minister.'

Dorie had her little finger arched tense as she sliced the air with her knitting needles. The little white baby's jacket flapping helplessly.

Eunice wanted to grab it. Have a tug of war, just as they'd pulled apart a doll's jacket as children, unraveling their anger.

What did that woman, that supposed 'mother' in the Jag, know of the school Eunice made into one of the best of its kind? Did she hold a degree in English literature from Cambridge? Would the girl she so efficiently deposited have a brain? Deirdre looked up from the garden toward her Aunt by marriage. Eunice put her hand on the window and whispered,

'Mislike me not for my complexion, the shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun.'

The sun seemed to have followed Jude, lighting a path for her along the dark wooden length of what was to be her dormitory, Bruce Dorm. On either side were seven cubicles. Some had their calico curtains drawn. Others had girls coming in and out of the small space, calling out and laughing. A radio blared, *'Back in the USSR boys. You don't know how lucky you are boys.'* A group of girls, hair dyed dirty blonde, mascara clouding eyes, watched Jude from a top bunk and Jude became aware of how they would see her.

An average girl, with a large suitcase full of little things: talc, underwear, clothing that was getting too small. It had already shrunk in the growing silence around her. Curtains were pulled and girls stepped out into the corridor or craned their heads, from their bed. Some whispered and giggled. Some smiled. As they sized up Jude, her miniskirt became even shorter. Just like all her other clothes, Kit had chosen it for her. The flimsy dresses and tops gave no real cover.

Jude raised her head and blushed, holding it high trying to stay floating - in the rising shame. She picked up the suitcase like a life raft. From behind, Mrs Simms called to the girls

'Can I have your attention? This is Judith Farley. She's come all the way from Wellington city. Try to make her feel at home. She'll be sharing with Huia.'

For some reason this last announcement caused stifled laughter as a willowy, dark skinned 14 year old walked out from one of the cubicles at the far end. She made her way in faded jeans to greet Jude, her face broad and open.

'I'm Huia. Come with me.'

Jude's new home was a rectangular space, a bottom bunk bed and two drawers of a shared tallboy, with only room to stand. She soon discovered that girls occupying the top bunks seemed to exist on another level. They sat up on

their beds with a secret code. During the day they signed the arrival of a prowling matron - at night, communicating silently in the darkness.

Jude was to learn that Huia was clever at this. She sat cross-legged at night with the moon shining through on her half smile and by day in late sunlight, waiting patiently for any signal. Later Jude realized that on that first day, like magic, a message would have been sent from Sandy Ballcot. From her own perch at the far end of the dormitory, Sandy, upright and alert, would have signaled to Huia. The opening of the suitcase, the lifting out of clothes and shutting of draws were hand movements, telling Huia to stand beside this city girl and watch her every move.

With her round eyes blinking in silence, black hair feathering her forehead, her goofy smile, Huia helped Jude's unpacking. Bras, underpants and socks were lifted up, tucked into waiting corners. The layers of Jude's belongings gave up what seemed like treasures to Huia. Holding up a smoky velvet jacket, fringed with fur, Huia gasped.

'Where did you get this?

'It was brought for me at a boutique.'

'A what!'

Then she held up an intricately patterned skirt.

'And this?'

'It was made for me. By my father.'

'Your father sews?'

'He can. But he doesn't have to. Others do. Did. He has - had a factory. He designs - designed clothes for women.'

Huia's eyes widened.

'And sometimes men.'

Huia pulled the skirt over her jeans, parading around in the small space. Although made of wool the material was light and the sharp cut swung the hem around her calves. She handed the skirt to Jude.

'I wouldn't say that round here.' Huia's fluid body became still.

'Say what?'

'About the designing.'

'Why not?'

'Where all farmers eh. They'll think you're a skite.'

Jude sensed the silence outside the cubicle.'

'I hate my clothes anyway.'

'Hey Huia, can we have a look at her things?'

'Yeah. Pleeeassse?'

'Go on. Give us a jack.'

Huia took charge.

'Yeah. Come on in.'

Suddenly girls filled every corner of Jude's new room. The smaller ones piling up to the top bunk for a better view hands and faces hanging over the edge. Others stood and stared as muslin tops and silk skirts were held up and examined like some tribe with new objects. They quizzed Jude.

'Why are you here?'

'How come you chose this place?'

Huia whispered the words 'boutique', and 'father sews.' Jude stood back, the threads of her belongings pulling her undone. A few girls, their faces bunched in envy turned away. Some weren't impressed like the pale sharp face of one girl, elbow nudging her mate -laughing as they saw the bulky pads and

sanitary belt at the bottom of the suitcase. Making it worse, Huia continued to hold up Jude's belongings, glowing, as if the clothes shone some capitol city glory over her.

One by one they left. Sandy and her friend, Trudy hung about, picking up an old green cardigan Jude's Grandmother had knitted for her.

'Not very boutique is it?' Sandy said.

Sandy and Trudy experimented with the cardigan, putting it over their heads, peering out of the thick wool like old ladies. Parading around in the small space they whispered and giggled. Jude sat with legs tucked up on her boxed in bed and tugged at her hair. It had grown back from the shearing of the year before in thick mousy layers.

'You've got really pale eyebrows and eyelashes. You can hardly see them,' said Trudy, using the cardy arms like puppets.

'Yeah, but her eyes are tortoiseshell.' Sandy lay back next to Jude, grabbing the cardigan, laying it across her chest.

'Your family's so good looking! You look like you're rich. We saw your mother. And her car.'

'She's so modern,' said Trudy. 'I wish our mothers could be modern.'

'But how can they be, eh. I mean they are so busy on the farm. Cooking, cleaning, and mustering and milking. That's their job. We all do it. Good honest hard work.'

Huia's head leant over the edge of the top bunk, her voice slightly strangled by the wooden bar.

'My father does the milking on your parent's farm. So do me and James in the holidays, I've never seen your mother milk. Or you.'

'Shut up Huia. Yes I do! You don't know anything.' Sandy shoved the underneath of Huia's mattress with her foot.

‘My mother doesn’t muster.’ Trudy added as if it was really important. Sandy whispered loudly in Jude’s ear,

‘Her mother’s too fat to muster. Do you know what mustering is Jude?’

‘No.’ Jude could feel the last rays of the sun through the high window. The light at its most powerful before it died.

There was a quick exchange of looks.

‘Well they wouldn’t muster in the big city would they?’

Sitting up Sandy lent over grabbing the last photo of the family from the suitcase. The one taken on Kit’s birthday.

‘Who’s the nice looking guy in the surfer shirt?’

‘That’s my brother Stephen.’ Jude could see him, freed from his posing, pouncing into life, Hitching his radio to the stars – antennae beaming in the Beach Boys, *‘I get around. I get around round, round.* The phone always ringing just for him and his cynical laughter while Ned tried to study.

‘Is he a hippy?’ said Trudy.

‘Kind of. He’s quite political’

‘What’s that?’

‘Oh you know, the kind of people who smoke marijuana and don’t believe in God and eat muesli silly.’ Sandy sighed and shook her head at Jude.

‘Gosh so the Beatles are really political.’ Trudy looked stunned.

‘The Beatles gave their last concert yesterday,’ said Huia. ‘On a rooftop.’

Since she was seven, they had filled the corners of her house. Jude had screamed along with Dianne at the picture theatre, following her older

sister's cue by jumping up and down, tearing at her hair all the way through 'A Hard Day's Night'.

They had gone to see them land at Wellington airport, sitting on the shingle bank behind the Miramar golf course, a prime spot allowed by Snow's membership. Through the binoculars they took turns to watch the boys dressed in suits, and their smart youth. From another world, they appeared from the open door of the plane as if they had landed on the moon. The windy tarmac leading straight to the ocean opening up behind them.

The two girls loved each one. Because she was older, Dianne got to have Paul or John and Jude had to make do with Ringo and George. Sometimes Dianne would share. Then their music changed. Jude found herself wide awake at night haunted by the lyrics of Eleanor Rigby. The people old and dying, alone, dark rooms full of Mrs Faversham's. The growing differences in style between the excited Paul, the sarcastic John.

'Yeah. The Beatles. That's sad but it had to end one day. Maybe they'll have to get real jobs like our brothers' who work on our farms eh Huia,' said Sandy.

Huia nodded. Her head rested on the wooden bar beside her bunk, hair clouding her eyes.

'But it's not **our** farm,' said Huia

Sandy ignored her.

'Sometimes they surf - where the water is really rough down the coast. You have to be very skilled. But they're strong from all the hard work. Just like your brother James eh Huia?'

'My brothers are strong too,' offered Jude.

But they weren't toward the end.

There was the Steven a month after the photo, staying out all night and lying on the beach, tired and thin. She saw him smoke what looked like a

roll - your -own and pass it on to his friend. His blue eyes went red. Ned was always out.

‘And is this your sister with all the makeup? She looks out of it. Does she have a boyfriend?’

Sandy was holding the picture squarely in front of her. Then she paraded Dianne’s face in front of the others, like something caught.

There was Dianne, sitting at her vanity, piling on layers of makeup while Jude lay on her bed watching- mystified by all that painted stuff on her sister’s face. There was Dianne wearing some bright yellow shift, bright yellow bangle, whispering to her image in the mirror, *‘just give me a little lovin.’* And Simon. How he suddenly stopped calling.

‘She did have one.’ Jude lowered her head.

‘Where is she? At home?’ The words came out thick and fast.

‘I don’t know where she is. She left the home we had.’

‘You had?’

Jude did not know what to say. She must have seemed unfriendly. From a different world where the strong white walls of ‘The Nuffield’ hugged the hills. But for months before they left the walls no longer held the sometimes laughing, fighting family inside; just Jude and Kit who locked herself in her room. Dressed in deepest darkest blue. With pale, but fully made up face (pale lipstick and eye shadow of course) she, ‘Needed to be alone’.

Just alone.

‘And what about your father? Is this him in this other photo?’ Sandy stabbed at Snow.

‘Look at his clothes!’

Again she paraded the photo, holding it high.

‘I’ve never seen a man, well a proper man dressed all posh. Mostly it’s women who fuss about their clothes.’

Hot angry shame flamed out from Jude’s chest like fire.

‘No. No- he’s just dressed well.’

‘Oh – dressed weeeellll!’ mocked Sandy.

Jude took a deep breath.

‘That’s because he was a clothes designer.’

‘Was?’

‘Is.’

‘How cool!’ said Trudy.

‘Shut up Trudy. That’s a strange job for a man.’ Sandy kicked her sandaled foot into the dresser and picked up the cardigan, stroking the wool.

‘Did your father knit too?’

‘Does. No my father does not knit. He does not sew. Although he could if he wanted. He has others to do it for him.’ The heat in the small space formed a band about her head.

‘Well where is your father now?’ Trudy puffed up beside her friend.

‘My father is away. He has been gone a long time.’

‘How long?’

‘Nearly a year.’

‘Oh,’ said Sandy. Full of surprised sympathy, she hugged the cardy in close and crossed her arms. She took a few steps back, sizing up this information and turned to Jude, raising her eyebrows.

The band of heat, now spread throughout Jude's body, to her arms, to her hands and seemed to need release. She stood up and wrestled with the flimsy wooden drawers, pulling out her clothes.

'You can have anything you want of mine' said Jude. 'Want this?' She pulled out muslin top Kit had brought her and thrust it at Sandy.

'And this.' Flowered pants fell onto Trudy's lap.

'Gosh Thanks.' Trudy looked up at Jude, stunned and grateful. Sandy said nothing, looking at the ceiling, tongue in cheek, smirking. She folded the green cardigan carefully laying it on the bed, lifting and crossing the sleeves like they were made of lead. With Trudy towed behind, she left.

Out in the corridor, Sandy loudly said, 'Why did the new girl go red? Like she's embarrassed.'

'I da know.'

'I'm gonna ask my sister. And if she doesn't know I'll ask daddy about her father because he knows half the country through the federated farmers and his good mate Brian Bridges - the MP.'

Directly above Jude's head exposed like ribs were the slats and mattress for Huia's bed. Right beside her was the shared set of drawers and then a wall and then another little room just the same, and another. Every square inch of every floor covered with the same ugly colourless linoleum.

Why didn't they have carpet? In case they somehow stained and marked it with their spilling bodies. Every other mark of her past was gone, sold, given away. Jude had been packed up and transported into this dull corner of the world. Huia came to sit beside her.

'Don't be sad.' She pulled the crying Jude in close and rocked her. With the effort of holding her close, Huia struggled with her breathing. Catching a look at the line of her room-mates nose, Jude noticed there was no bridge, making Huia almost cross-eyed. Jude could see that her room-mates nose, dry

feathered hair, too much excitement shown for new things and her too wide smile were what left Huia open to mocking from others. Her skin soft and cool smelt of musk. The color, the rich dark of a stone Jude might have found after climbing over the rocks to the cave on the beach, filled with shells and rocks.

‘Your father will be back soon.’

‘Yes. Then he will come here and get me.’

‘Yeah. I’m sure he will.’ Huia nodded at her hopefully, but avoided making eye contact.

Jude could see her father walking through the streets of a big city, picking his way through the crowds in clothes that were not wet, hands deep in his pockets. It was clear to see. Snow had amnesia and could not find his way home. He walked lightly and fast and she felt tired with the effort of trying to catch up with him.

There was a photo on the dresser of Huia in a white dress. Beside her was a young guy, not much older. His hair was dark like Huia’s, but fell in thicker plastered down ringlets about a broad face. The mouth was full, his eyes deep, darkest brown. He must be the boy James Huia mentioned when she talked about milking. He was handsome. Behind them stood a man who must be their father, his hair balding and his big head round, the skin firm. The men were dressed formally, in shirt and tie. The family was seated on an old couch, in front of a framed black and white photograph of an old man and woman with tattoos on their chins. The look of the formal clothing and faded tones was old fashioned. There was no mother.

‘Where are you from?’ She asked her new found friend.

‘I am from the south coast of Taranaki. My father is a share- milker on someone else’s farm. Our name is Te Whare.’ Her words trailed off, barely heard.

Beside them the suitcase lay open. Tops, pants, belts and shoes scattered on the floor, formless and empty.

Later Jude finished her unpacking, carelessly stuffing bits and pieces into the dresser. But one item of clothing stayed in the suitcase, one that Kit, in her quick 'clearing of the decks' had not seen. Buried in an inside pocket was a long silk gown, torn, moth eaten and mud stained. It had belonged to her grandmother Clara.

She placed the two photos next to Huia's family.

In the other picture, Snow was outside his clothing factory in 1952. His white-blonde hair swept off his high forehead. A red dotted cravat, red waistcoat and baggy pants showed a young man at ease with himself and the world of colour. His smile was so wide and his eyes shone. Her father looked happy. Jude put her hand on the glass and left it there for a while, shutting her eyes.

CHAPTER FOUR

The dining hall was a large square room with bright lights shining on ten long tables full of talking girls. Jude's table had two girls from each year level and, at the top, a prefect and two seniors who were in charge of dishing out the food. That first night, Huia introduced her to each member of the table. Wanting to fit in, she smiled shyly, muttering, 'Hi!' in return to each greeting. At the top, sat the head prefect Emily and another seventh former, Prudence. Next to them but still 'senior' sat the sixth formers, then Suzy, Jude's fellow fifth, the same girl who had smirked about the sanitary pads and down the end the juniors, Rebecca, Amy and the littlest, Mim and Mo.

Jude tried to smile across the big bright room. Three fans whirled around on the white ceiling. Two Māori women came from the heavy swing doors separating the kitchen, with covered silver dishes. The older one, her face lined, her body small and tense did not make eye contact with the girls as she dumped a tray on their table. The other, not much older than Jude, entered the dining room like a Caribbean dancer. Her strong body moved in rhythm to some unsung song. She smiled at the girls, needling some, making jokes to others. Thick shiny black hair swung on its plait as she moved about the room, the trays light and warm in her hands. Girls turned in their seats, waiting for her to come to their tables. She stopped and warmly greeted Jude, touching her arm.

'You must be the new girl.'

After the trays were delivered she stayed, chatting to another group. The older woman gruffly called her.

'Get back here!'

The kitchen girl left the room, looking back at them from the swing doors and winked.

Suddenly the whole room stood and Jude hurried to her feet, catching sight of the back of Miss Shipton. The thin grey curl of her hair bobbed against the stiff collar of a tweed cape. Following close behind were two white capped matrons. One was Mrs Simms, whose kind face she recognized from the introduction that morning, the other, a Miss Fisher, walked with a stoop, one side of her small face held in a tight paralysis.

‘That’s fish. Notice how she qawps? We call her that cos of her fishy face,’ whispered Mim.

The woman stood at what Jude came to know as Top Table. There was a rippling of sound. Chairs moved, the odd girl whispered, others giggled. Miss Shipton looked about the room, jaw jutting, mouth pouting, eyes flashing toward each sound, like, Jude thought, some giant troll guarding the entrance to her cave. One by one the noises stopped. They waited. Someone shifted. The floor creaked. Mrs Shipton pushed her broad shoulders out, set her grim mouth firm. They waited. Someone else coughed. Again, in the silence they waited, shifting their hunger from foot to foot. The big silver dishes, their contents cooling at the tables, invited the rumbling stomachs but they were not allowed to sit. Jude began to feel faint.

She had come a long way in one day, beginning at dawn when they left Wellington. An eerie light had shone from the entrance to her parent’s room. Beyond it, around it, everywhere she could sense and smell the sea.

‘Come on dear. Cheer up. A new life awaits you.’

‘But do we really have to go mum? Please can we stay just one more night?’

Looking across the mouth of the harbour towards Pencarrow Head, Jude remembered the flash of light she had seen almost a year before, but the headland lay in shadow. In the backyard the hutch where she and Dianne kept small animals: mice, guinea pigs and rabbits, lay empty, the grass beneath

sparse and savaged. Her old swing played by itself in the breeze, calling a weightless goodbye as she picked up her suitcase and left.

After unpacking and getting used to all those new girls all she had wanted to do was eat, but for five more minutes the headmistress found a reason to keep them all from their dinner. Every sigh and sneeze caused a slow turn of her great head. Her eyes moved in their sockets, fleshy bottom lip swallowing the top like a sulky deep water fish.

At last the hall was totally silent. Miss Shipton began to say grace, her voice low, the gruffness only at the edges of,

‘Thank you lord for these gifts we are about to receive,’

The room fell into a deeper silence. The matrons and the girls lowered their heads, but Jude stayed frozen to the spot, unable to bow down. She was familiar with the saying of grace but she couldn’t follow the others. In her home there had been no visits to church. No such thing as prayer.

‘And make us truly grateful...’

Jude could feel eyes upon her, masked under the weight of hair as she stared ahead. She remained alert, her legs shaking. Along with the rising volume of Miss Shipton’s last words;

‘Amen.’ The headmistress slowly raised her hooded red eyes and glared directly at Jude.

With a sigh the room once again filled with chatter and the clanging of plates and cutlery. Jude tried to hold on to the disappearing quiet. She knew no-one except for the, sharp-eyed Suzy, the girl who had laughed mockingly at her things and who now sat directly opposite Jude. But there was no laughter only a pinched face. Suzy’s hair was tightly pulled back around a blank stare. Emily dished out large chunks of gravy soaked meat. Her two senior helpers spooned out the mashed potato and carrot. By the time the two tiny third formers, Mim

and Mo, got to have theirs, the helpings were small. They took their plates, small hands outstretched, eyes wide in thanks, both girls throwing quick, sweet glances toward Emily, who in turn pursed her mouth, sleek pale hair gloving her face.

Jude looked down into her decent sized portion of boiled meat and veg and started eating. There was something comforting and straight forward about the soft plain food, not like the Farley meal times in Seatoun. The freedom that Jude could see in her mother as she lightly moved the steering wheel of the Jag changed once inside the house. Meals were fussily prepared and strictly controlled. Sitting upright at the polished mahogany table with their backs straight, elbows off the table and tucked in, the children's forks nervously stabbed at peas, never scooping. For that sin a swift flick of the knife across the hand from Kit would put them right,

'I do it with love,' she would say.

At eight, Jude toyed with her food, the salt still on her skin from a day diving off the wharf with Linda Somers into the wake of the ferries bound for the South Island.

'Eat! I say eat!' Her mother sat, index finger firmly pressing on the knife.

Jude would continue gazing out at the big open straight of water and remember how she went so deep and saw seaweed and fish and other things, and distracted, would knock over her glass of milk. The carefully prepared meal lay uneaten.

'Oh my God.' Kit would rise from the table and raise her palm to her brow as if to keep the liquid from spilling in her head. Snow would sweep in with a sharp wind, his hat angled, grey coat undone by a few drinks at the club. The wind would whirl around the stony silence of the table. Snow's cheeks would crease up in an attempted smile at his children and they would beam back at him in a big room that seemed to seesaw with their mother's emotions. Every last pea had to be eaten and Jude was always the last to finish. Dianne

would smirk across the table at Kit, slowly popping in one pea, then another, fluttering her eyelashes, taking a stab at the steak with her knife.

There was no stabbing at this Highland's table. Jude tucked into her dinner along with everyone else. Her shoulders relaxed. Scooping up her tucker, she listened to the talk around the table. Emily begun to discuss a girl who had left, Rachel. As she talked, she flicked blonde hair back from her shoulders.

'Why did she leave?' asked Mo.

The senior girls looked at one another and muffled a knowing snigger.

'Didn't you know!' said Prudence, a tall muscular sixth former.

Each girl at the table looked at another in expectation of an answer. Finally it was Emily who decided to reply, laying down her knife and fork gently, breathing in and addressing the table.

'She was really different from us, eh'.

Jude noticed the drawl on the 'eh'. Everyone at Highland's seemed to use it. It was like a tag, an invitation to agree with what the speaker had just said. This seemed reasonable. Everyone was nodding except Suzy, who stared down at her plate, her expression giving nothing away. Jude plucked up the courage to speak.

'Oh? How was she different?'

In the silence she became aware of her rounded city vowels spilling out onto a table of falling faces, slowly turning her way. What had she said? Emily looked around the table at each girl. In turn they showed their displeasure with Jude's well formed words in different ways. Staring at her. Staring at each other. Smirking, rolling eyes in shared agreement. Finally Emily, having taken in the rising disgust, turned toward Jude. Her brows knitted. It seemed like sympathy. As if Emily had the hard but sainted job of having to address this new city girl. Jude froze inside the too-short dress.

‘Actually she spoke just like you. She had flash clothes. Sort of posh. She had a plum in her mouth. She was a bit up herself eh.’

Emily smiled a little smile with her cupid lips. Jude felt her face rinse red in a blush. She looked across and saw Miss Shipton’s jowls wobble as she chewed and watched the room. The table fell into silence. The girls got back to their eating.

But Jude was conscious of someone and she glanced up to see the flashing green eyes of Suzy. Behind her, gliding again between the tables was the kitchen girl. They both looked amused, but not with Jude. Jude held their gaze. Maybe she had some friends. In the sea of bodies, she had been thrown a rope.

And so began Jude’s days at Highlands. Once alone in her tiny corner of that great mass of bricks and mortar, she looked down to the driveway, to see if she could still spot Kit. But she had long gone. The drive lay in semi-darkness. It seemed like a dim narrow passage closing her in. Jude felt tears clouding the corner of her eyes and like a small child hoping to be seen, she raised her hand only to wave at no-one. Gliding down that long drive and out into the sleepy patchwork of farms on her way up the Island, a blaze of silver and lilac, she wondered if Kit’s perfectly proportioned face would look stricken. Or would it be just the smoke from the cigarette pulling in the corners of her mouth.

CHAPTER FIVE

That night the full moon splashed a light onto the ink black sea of a softer Auckland harbour. Kit's new home, a modest brick and tile, furnished one of 'The Bay's' many rolling hills. The vast suburban landscape was subdued by the lushness of the bush. Unlike the Wellington house which boldly fronted up to the wild sea, the new house faced away. In the distance, Rangitoto Island, slung her hook, head down, wings outstretched, behind the dying white sail of yachts and clotheslines.

That night, alone and childless in that changed landscape, Kit dreamt she was swimming out into the deepest part of the sea. Her arms and head pierced into the waves like a bullet. At times, Kit was not sure if she was part of the sea or just herself, as the long hair on her forearms sliced like tiny blonde fins through green swathes of oceans. Others joined in on this ocean journey. Peter and Honey swum along beside her, just like they had as children and together they rolled, flipped and dived. Their mother was a lone, bent figure on the distant shore. They called out to her,

'Watch us mother!'

But their mother Clara, with voluminous layers of mismatching textures and colours flapping in the wind was only interested in pocketing her shells; always trying to find the perfect talisman, something bony, floored and ancient. Like herself, laughed Kit as she floated away from the moving school of her family. For a while she was lost and bided the time gazing from dark liquid eyes at the day and night passing and for a moment it seemed she had died, peeling away like a lonely luminescent leaf swinging and swaying, landing without fanfare on the quiet and empty seabed. There was no-one there at all. Just Kit and her little fishy body and strangely she was contented.

Then she saw Snow, his arms were flailing up at the surface. His thick white hair waved about a pale expressionless face. He was struggling to breathe, weighed down in a heavy suit and tie that acted like armour, bringing him down in ungainly fashion, through the kelp. Suddenly her body changed shape and she was a dolphin, travelling towards him,

wanting desperately to save her husband. But the sea grew restless. The bulk of it began to move like one vast body, so that as soon as she got close the water pulled at her like an outgoing tide and Kit was weeping. Snow's body was gently turned by the liquid that held him, as if he now belonged to it. He faced her. In his arms she could see something else, a creature with dark lashed eyes, deep and fathomless and fur that swirled and fanned out with the wake of the water. The thing was alive and Snow's own eyes held the look of the betrayed, the hunted, as if she, Kit, were the shark. She felt her skin. It was sharp, cold to the touch. Sitting upright in her bed, she looked for something to anchor her swimming head.

Kit moved toward her dresser, with its three way mirror. Perfumes, brushes and jewellery boxes had all been carefully put in place the night before. She had to rid herself of this dream or it would show on her face, all that sadness and all that grief, how aging. Seated now on the little velvet stool, Kit caught sight of herself. Dashing about in the sea had not marked her complexion or strung out her hair but she was devastated, for Snow to have looked at her like that! How dare he! He was never a swimmer anyway. She was on dry land. She must keep her feet firmly on the ground because that next day she had a job interview as a librarian at the local High school. Peter and Honey would have kittens! Kit! A librarian! She was going to shake the library up, ruffle a few stuffy feathers. Rising from the stool, Kit allowed the soft thick wool of the new shag pile to caress her toes.

Far to the west of her mother, stuck out on the limb of another seaside, Jude tried to remember her dream but it bounded in great leaps away from her, chased by a booming voice that came from high above her bed.

'Lifesavers!' The voice belonged to some older, middle-aged woman. But it seemed that whoever she was, her regal, cultured vowels were permitted.

'Please make your way to the pool now!'

She could hear the stick of bare feet on the floor and then hurried movements of undressing. Through the narrow gap of her curtain Jude recognized the two small girls from her table, Mim and Mo come from the cubicle opposite. They both looked so wholesome, bronzed and fit in their bathing suits, skin shining and clear.

‘You’re the new girl!’ They said together.

‘Yes. My Name is Jude’ She replied, aware of the shape of her words.

‘We do life saving.’ Mo whispered. ‘You could join.’ They waited for her reply, upright and alert through parted curtains.

‘No, I used to swim but I don’t now. I’m too big.’ Jude crossed her arms over her breasts, pulling in the blankets around her kneeling body.

‘Like Alice in Wonderland.’ Mo pulled up her shoulders and smiled at Jude. Her whole face collapsed, eyes round with laughter.

‘No she’s not Alice silly!’

Mim, the bigger of the two, waved at Jude as she linked arms with her freckled roommate. They padded out of the dormitory, towels draped over their heads, like veils, just as Jude and Dianne had done on their return from swimming at the beach, ritually curling heavy wet towels into head veils fit for Egyptian queens. Both strong swimmers they were seals in the cold deep water. After they would plunge their frozen feet like spears into black sand and hot pebbles, towels flapping in the wind as they raced home. But veils went beyond the sea for Dianne. As she grew into her teens the veil was a teased mass of hair and a fringe hiding her eyes. She left the house before it was sold, in a big duffle-coat, her face covered in the hood and something else wrapped inside. Kit rushed her along.

‘Hurry. Hurry!’ The plane leaves soon.’

‘Where is she going Mum?’ Jude stood in the doorway to the room they’d once shared. Dianne had moved out a month before. Jude wondered why. Had her sister just outgrown her childish ways?

'She'll only be gone for a while. Then everything will be alright. Now we must go.'

Dianne walked past her sister quickly, eyes red and down cast. Then she slunk into the back seat of the Jag and never returned.

Jude listened. The dormitory was again still, each girl wrapped in her bed. She imagined them lying flat on their backs, arms flung, heads bent or straight, others curled inwards with dreams that took them home, or to some strange exotic place. Only Huia made a sound. Her head must have been flung back as if to gasp at the air, the missing bridge in her nose making the breathing difficult, the only escape through her open mouth so that she snored loudly.

Jude got out of bed and looked out the window, scanning the grass and tree line in the distance. She could just make out a line of white rectangular shapes on the horizon. Mim and Mo disappeared down a bush lined path, followed by girls of all sizes, toward a pool, glinting through bits of light. To their left, under the shadows of a tree, stood Miss Shipton. Her arms were folded. Her head moved from side to side, following each passing girl, counting heads.

Around it Jude could see acres of bush, out-buildings and a river. From somewhere else in the grounds, she heard the sound of a big machine being turned on, ignited like a giant lawn -mower. The smell of the engine richly oiled the air. She saw the caretaker step out of a shed. He stood leaning against the open door, his overall covered in grease, soot and grime gathered in the lines of his face like battle scars. Not far away the young woman from the kitchen made her slow way up the long drive toward the boarding school. She seemed in no hurry and sung to herself. She swung her duffle bag and waved to the caretaker. The generator kicked into life.

The lifesavers would be in the cold morning water. Jude stood and waited for something to appear on the horizon. The grass, trees and stones stayed exactly the same.

Nothing moved. Nothing changed. No father with cheeks and eyes lit with warmth came to wave or walk toward her or say gently,

‘Good morning Dear.’

With her breath slowing, Jude climbed onto the narrow ledge and sat just inside the window, her legs touching the chilly brick walls of Highlands. Birds of all kinds, Thrushes, Pigeons and Sparrows huddled into the small spaces. They didn’t seem interested in her, fussing and cooing in a world of their own. Down below her the water looked so tempting. The distance to the ground below didn’t matter. She should just give way. There was no dizziness, no scared gripping onto the sides. She placed her arms against the window frame and pulled up her limbs. As she tried to move her legs, Jude looked back at the dormitory and became aware of a sudden movement.

From half way down the corridor came a trail of smoke. A spiral of musk scented air took her away from the diving and the pool. She froze. The walls were sheer. A fall would kill her. She’d end up a twisted, mangled mess on the concrete below. Carefully, shaking, legs turning to jelly, Jude climbed back inside and followed where the smoke led.

The calico curtains had been Thai-dyed. The early light blazed through what looked like great flowers of purple, green and orange. A figure could be seen, silhouetted inside. All Jude could make out was a body moving to the muted sounds of Jimi Hendrix. The electric guitar whined in sympathy with his deep angry voice.

‘There must be some way out of here....’

The other girls still lay in their boxed white chambers like patients in a hospital ward, unaware of this exotic corner. Jude felt foolish standing outside, alone in the corridor, listening to the music in her nightie, like some lonely groupie- ignoring the distant clickity clack of stiletto shoes.

‘No reason to get excited....’

The musk smell, the shadow and the psychedelic music cruising down toward the sleeping dormitory seemed like an oasis. Just as Jude moved to pull the curtain aside, the voice she heard when she woke, barked in her ear.

‘What do you think you are doing? Get back to bed!’

She turned to see a tall woman, her posture perfect, dressed in blue to match the sweep of her hair. Jude quickly did as she was told, jumping into bed, pulling the covers high.

‘What have you done to your curtains, Suzy Morrison?’ The shrill words ricocheted through the dorm.

Suzy’s coloured curtains were violently pulled back.

‘Who gave you permission to do such a disgusting thing?’

‘No-one Mrs Latham. I just did it.’ Suzy sounded so innocent. It seemed perfectly reasonable.

The woman’s spiky heels assaulted the floor as she marched into Suzy’s cubicle and turned off the music. Jimi Hendrix died in a waning...

‘Let us not talk falsely now...’

‘How dare you Suzy. How dare you do this to school property? You have gone too far this time madam!’

There was a pause. The incense hung naughtily in the motionless air. When Suzy replied, the sweet low tones held just a touch of sincerity- underneath the mocking.

‘I won’t do it again.’

‘Right. You had better not. You can take them down right now and quick march to the laundry, where you will soak them in bleach. Meanwhile your filthy room will be exposed for all to see. No wonder no-one wants to share with you. And look at your hair.

What have you done? You look like a voodoo doll. I will have to tell your father and you are grounded for a week. No trips out. Now get to! It's church today.'

With that, the woman swept out of the corridor, heels plunging into the wood, swishing her blue rinse tail behind her like a whip.

Jude joined a group of girls standing outside Suzy's room. Sandy, as if Huia was the chosen one, linked arms, making Huia blush. Deep brown eyes dazed with half sleep, Jude's room-mate stood motionless in a worn cotton nightie. Like the tall boy and the man beside her in the photo on the dresser, Huia seemed grounded, rooted to the spot. Before them in a mess of used tissues and crumpled clothes, Suzy sat cross legged on her bed. The neat pulled back hair, and bland face Jude had seen at dinner, had completely gone. Suzy's skin was like polished chalk, the eyes black and tilted upwards. Her hair was teased into an afro and tiny objects: stars, shells, rolled up cigarette papers and petals were pinned into it. Suzy sleepily blinked at the group, as if what had just happened meant nothing at all.

Jude heard a click. A switch had been turned on by the ceiling. There in the corner was a speaker.

'Now you've seen it.' Suzy addressed Jude, a new tension in her voice.

'Welcome to Highlands.' She yelled toward the silent rectangular box.

'Or, as we like to call it, Spy lands. Where all the old lesbians sit in their office and listen in, perving on our privacy.'

There were gasps. The girls looked at the speaker for some reaction. Suzy moved from the bed and gave the fingers to the brown box.

Sandy stepped forward.

'You're gonna get it Suzy.'

Suzy turned her radio back on as loud as she could. Hendrix's powerful grown-up male sound boomed.

'All along the watchtower...'

'Don't worry Sandy. I don't care if I 'get it'. Latham deserves to 'get it'. She can't wait to ring my old man. He could fly down and they could get it on.' With a little half smile she yanked the flower curtains closed. Sandy smirked. Cold air from the opened window blew the girls nightgowns and hair.

Who opened the window?' demanded Sandy patting her hair down in slow affectionate movements.

No-one spoke.

'Somebody must have.'

'I did.' Jude stepped forward.

'Why?' Sandy swung around and faced her.

'I just did. To let in some air.'

'Let in some 'air'?' Sandy repeated the word as if she was English royalty. The others laughed, all except Huia

Aware of this, Sandy quickly separated her arm from Huia's, letting it fall heavily by Huia's side like an empty sleeve. Sandy walked away; great lanky legs and push out behind sashaying. A little group followed. Then the speaker spoke again.

'Girls! Please dress in your church uniforms, this week it's the Presbyterians, next the Baptists. Lastly, the Catholics, before we start our new cycle with the Anglicans. Please, immediately make your way to the dining room for breakfast.' Mrs Latham said with almost kindness in her voice.

The corridor was empty. Through the window frame Jude could see the big endless grey sky. A shiver ran through her body. She would have to go to church. She picked up the picture of Snow and held it close, the metal frame cold against her fingers.

Each time she was in church she would pray and by the time she got to the Catholics a miracle might happen. Snow might come back from where he'd been.

The box in the corner was quiet. Jude imagined the matron's slim body leaning toward the microphone, her red nail poised to bluntly flick the off switch. Or would she? She tuned into the distant crackle of static that seemed to come from miles away. There was no breathing, sighing, clearing of the throat.

Underneath the hostel kicked into life as liquid trickled slowly into the radiators. Slapping feet echoed on the linoleum along with the tinsel call of voices. Shivering lifesavers ran through the halls and turned on the showers.

Jude heard some shouting from down below in the kitchen.

'Get a move on girl.' Rising above the clamoring of pots, the older woman called from the kitchen.

Down below a plate smashed into tiny pieces on the hard floor, the sound like harsh music. Jude returned to the window. She could see the main street leading into town. She could just make out the other side of it, leading into the country, on the other side of the mountain. Huia came and stood beside her.

'That road goes to where I live. It's not that far away, near the base of the mountain. You can come and stay if you like.'

In contrast to the noisy hostel, the landscape to the west where Huia said she lived seemed like a paradise. That morning Mt Egmont didn't look so lonely. His sides fanned out into the surrounding hills and farms, welcoming. Jude turned to Huia.

'I would love to come thanks.'

Jude returned to her bed. She looked up at the speaker, sat all boxed in, its vowels quiet in the corner, like hers.

CHAPTER SIX

Eunice poured herself a cup of tea and spread the Monday paper on the table, creasing out any crinkled edges with a broad sweep of her capable hands. In the centre there was a picture of the Beatles giving their last concert on a rooftop. John Lennon has on some dreadful fur coat that could have belonged to his grandmother. On the right hand, bottom corner was a picture of the wife of a murdered catholic man, a supposedly innocent victim of Northern Ireland's sectarian violence. The woman's face was twisted with anger and grief in a grey landscape, her small body neatly wrapped in a woolen coat and scarf; fragile armour for the Northern winter. Eunice knew her grief must have been genuine, but there was something in the interplay of the panicked people behind her, an expressionless policeman to her left, the tired hills behind, as if it was all chance, a moment of pain and suffering in some larger divine comedy. She knew what Dorie would say,

'What is so shocking about it? The Catholics love all that anyway - just look at their poor old tortured Jesus, thin, ravaged and writhing on the cross like some sacrifice to the Gods!'

A shaft of morning light warmed Eunice's hand and she looked up to discover its source. It seemed to be confined to her drive, ignited and carried by the white stone, then somehow transported to her kitchen in a flood of yellow.

Rebecca had told her about Suzy and the Thai-dyed curtain. Eunice tried to imagine what the curtain looked like and part of her wished that she had seen the material before the swirling patterns were bleached into nothing. Suzy must have known she'd get into big trouble but the child seemed to walk blithely into the storm; bringing both disorder and colour to the world. The girl was fearless. Like Joan of Arc without the right cause. It had all happened the day before as she had stood on the path below, unaware.

In the shadows of the path, in the same spot every Sunday morning, Eunice had stood for many years. Her job was to, without fuss, somehow encourage the Highlands life

savers, just by means of her presence. Eunice did not talk or smile. That would only have given them cause to be friendly in return. Personal contact of this nature only led to a feeling of entitlement amongst them.

Eunice's had worn her version of the new church dress. It covered her length to just under the knee, her girth wrapped in that marvelous invention of the new age, crimplene. What a material! Fully synthetic, and with no need of ironing. She'd stroked the high neckline and wondered how the girls, as they whipped past, none daring to catch her eye, would react to their own model of the dress new church dress she'd designed. In three weeks it would be ready and waiting, neatly parceled for each girl. Eunice could just see them filing into the pews, a vision of innocence and order, swathed in crimplene, surrounded by the smell of old wood and prayer. They needed it.

Behaviour had been getting out of control. She could pinpoint the day, half-way through last year that Suzy had arrived; spilling out of the taxi with her father and her bags. The child's face was a storm contradicting her tightly pinned back hair. Later before he took his flight back to Auckland, the father talked to Rebecca Latham for a long time in the hostel office. The father was dressed well, tall and elegant. Every so often he pulled a cigarette out a silver case, tapped it, then casually smoked. Later on in the conversation he took a pen out of his lapel and noted something down as Suzy glowered at her father from a chair. That exchange had always unnerved Eunice. But ever since Suzy arrived there had been a 'happening' in Bruce dormitory. There had been smoking and alcohol had been found in the rubbish bin. No-one owned up but Eunice knew.

On Sunday morning, Eunice had bent her head at each passing girl, clutching her hands behind, feeling benevolent in her brown gown. Watching their quick shivery movements, hunched under their towels, their feet stamping on the concrete path, Eunice found herself treading up and down with the vibrations. A never -ending stream of lifesavers' created a beat from the earth, the once scared little new entrants, asserting their new found weight.

She looked up toward Suzy's dormitory and caught sight of the new girl, Jude. By a trick of the morning light, her face had seemed vacant, caught inside a sheet of glass, the features fluid and absent of any expression. For a moment Eunice felt a touch of sadness. The girl was entombed high up in the brick of the building as if she had been banished to a castle by her mother.

'Fast!' That's what Eunice had said to Rebecca Latham at dinner.

'That woman is fast and dangerous with her Jag and her boots and quicksilver tongue.'

Eunice had witnessed the adjusting of the rear vision mirror, the conceited primping of the titian locks as Kitty Farley gazed wondrously at herself in some Dorian Grey exchange with her own reflection before she sped off into the sunset. And where was her husband? She'd heard a rumour, something about a car, a cliff and the Wahine storm.

In the kitchen the shaft of sun had moved away from her. It illuminated the dark hallway as if expecting an entrance, like lights on an empty stage. But no- one would appear. She was alone. She'd been alone in the house for years. Eunice turned the page of the paper and found herself confronted by a small picture of an old Māori woman, leaning forward, elbows at her knees, large work-worn hands casually crossed. Her top was torn. It seemed that either she did not want to be photographed or that she did not care and had made no effort to dress accordingly. The headline read,

REUNION AT PARIHAKA

Local Māori are organizing a meeting to discuss plans to rejuvenate the Pa at Parihaka, a first step, their spokesman, Porikai Sanders says, in, 'reviving the value of the great prophet Te Whiti'. Parihaka was a rebellious stronghold during the late part of the last century. It was at that time, a large, self-sufficient community, spiritually guided by Te Whiti's and fellow chief, Tohu's, interpretation of the bible and Māori traditions. Parihaka became a thriving focus of protest and resisted colonial attempts to seize Māori land. A symbol of this protest was the white feathers worn by the chief's

followers. One of the last surviving Kuia, Hine Kingi is lending her support to this upcoming revival.'

Eunice found herself locked into the tired, sunken eyes of Hine and quickly looked away drawing the warm teacup to her chest.

Down in the left hand corner of the paper was an item that drew her attention. Under 'Wellington Society News.' - there she was! That blousy red - head with that gauche silver Jag.

'WELLINGTON SOCIALITE LEAVES FOR WARMER CLIMBS.

The wife of former industry captain and founder of Master and Mistress on Manners, Snow Farley, Kitty, has left Wellington for Auckland. The gifted Soprano, mother of four and active charity ball organizer, says that although she 'adores Wellington', the more temperate climate and change of scene will help her in moving on with her life. She leaves behind the now, world famous, 'Nuffield House', hailed as a testament to post-modernism.'

Kitty waving a pale blue gloved hand, stood outside a great concrete monstrosity that reminded Eunice of an army fortress or worse, a urinal.

Dorie had bought an Indigo satin dress from Mistress on Manners. She had worn it on the day that she met Eunice and Bernard off the boat. Like a circus creature, some contortionist, she'd charmed Bernard with her height, the bigness of her bust; dangling her sparking orbs. The extravagant folds of the dress fanned around her like some cupie doll. A vision in blue. It all came down to measurements and after all, Bernard was a mathematician, prone to symmetrical illusions and snakes in the grass. Even before the accident and the scar he was drifting.

Eunice held the cup of tea tight in her hands and allowed a smile. Mother had done her own equations and left the house to her. Bernard's obsession with numbers did not

equate to savings and Dorie lived in a brick and tile. It was Eunice, *the big fat ugly thing*, who possessed the elegant staircase, the cream fretwork on the front porch, the sash windows which fell too heavily when they were closed. Like guillotines.

The girl, Jude, must have come from money- new money. Not old, like the money past down through the generations on Eunice's mother's side. Money that came from her Geordie Great Grandfather's knowledge and flair with farm machinery, a skill well put to use in the industrious early settler community of Taranaki. Money that had come from the buying and selling of Māori land.

She emptied the cup without thinking, the tea had gone cold.

That Monday morning, Kit burst through the saloon doors to the little kitchen expecting to see someone. The wooden doors battered against one another, swinging in empty space, heralding some showdown that would never happen. She could have done with these in the Nuffield, making a quick retreat into her kitchen after a fracas with her teenagers, hoping that the door would flap back at Dianne or Steven. They used to pursue her as she went about cooking and cleaning, trying to drive home some point.

'It's all about expressing your true self Mum, throwing off the shackles of the past and it's all about love.'

'Expressing yourself! Yes – off the backs of your parents and their endless slaving and as for love. Love! '

They would retreat in a huff to their spacious, colour co-ordinated rooms, each one framing a part of the hill, white turrets of light and luxury, their new stereos booming the endless rock and pop music of the age, the very loudness a protest. As a child she had placidly shared a small room with Honey in their parent's Johnsonville bungalow. The two

had no need of space, just each other, sharing secrets and dreams, the depression waging war on their stomachs and their father - out of work and sitting sullen all day in his chair.

And forty years later Snow would be off at work, creating some fabulous outfit and securing business deals and Kit was still at home.

When he was at home he wouldn't be in the kitchen. That was Kit's domain, like some lion's den. Her pride was the children. She wanted to **take** pride in them like some rightful inheritance. One of their last conversations was about what the children were to wear for that infamous photo. The photo she could not look at. The photo she'd given to Jude. Before it was taken, Snow sat in the lounge, bathing in early sun as he read the paper. Everything about his demeanor said casual: legs crossed, cigar fixed between his fingers swirling up in a sickly perfume.

The morning sun had not made its way to her kitchen, to her domain, but the room was heating up with steam. She liked the dish water to be near boiling and it raised the colour in her cheeks. A tiny drop of sweat fell into the basin and disappeared into the dirty soapy water. The plates were plunged in, vigorously cleansed - neatly piled. But no one was drying. The newly brought dishwasher sat useless beside the sink. Full of promise, the swishing waters never washed away the real dirt. The dishes needed to be out of the way so that she could cook the evening meal. Her wider family were to come for dinner. The kitchen window misted up and began to rattle with the wind. There was talk of a storm the next day. That was nothing new.

From another corner of the house, the Beatles blared,

'Lady Madonna, children at your feet', for the fifth time that morning.

Snow was half listening to the cricket. The little transistor radio with its wobbly antennae permanently tuned to the voice at Basin Reserve. She felt in the pocket of her apron for her wedding ring. The apron was getting old and tatty, covered with florid beige flowers, an almost deliberately tasteless present from mother. She had a sudden vision of

what the children might all be wearing. Items that did not match, colours that clashed and Dianne in something trashy she would have borrowed from the common Cheryl from Miramar. Kit never knew then, the secret the girl harboured inside the denim skirt. She swiped the bench and called out to Snow,

‘Can you check to see what the children are dressed in?’

There was no reply. Just the radio man watching the field of dull players droning on and on. She gave the bench one more swipe, always wiping with her red gloves like some cleaner and went into the lounge, cloth in hand. Snow had his hands on his knees now. The cigar was in the ashtray, his whole focus on the cricket voice. He looked up to see her with the cloth and ducked his head half-mockingly, then raised his arm high to ward off any possible missile.

He’d dined out on the missile story for years.

‘The glass man came to put in the new window and I said, you’ll need plenty of putty to hold her this time my friend and he said it’s alright Snow the putty hasn’t dried from the last time she threw!’

Great chortling never failed to erupt. The gathering of tieless, red-faced men, business associates from Australia, patted Snow on the back and took gulps from their topped up glasses, looking at Kit sideways; trying to imagine how she, who was all gussied up in some cleavage baring black number could do such a thing.

Peter, often at the Farley house, filling in time between marriages would say on queue,

‘I told Snow when he first met her. I warned him. I said Snow my man you’d better watch Kit. She may be a street angel but she’s also a bloody home devil. We used to call her Spitfire at home.’

More loud laughter. One or two men would wink at Kit and she would smile enigmatically and crush ice between her teeth.

‘Sorry Kit,’ Snow had looked up, turned down the radio, ‘what did you want my sweet?’

Kit took off her gloves.

‘I wanted you to go and make sure the children are dressed properly. Tidily. In suitable clothes.’ The cloth felt greasy in her hands.

‘Not some bloody old thing.’ A strand of hair fell across her lashes and stayed there.

Snow got up swiftly, turning off the voice.

‘Oh for God’s sake Kit. They’re teenagers. They can make up their own mind.’

He stood back from her, out of the light.

‘But I’ll go.’

‘Not with that attitude you won’t.’

She barred his way but he led her aside in one decisive movement. He put hands on her shoulders like he was leading her in a dance, then quickly passing her on to someone else.

‘Don’t worry, I’m going.’ His movements became fastidious and purposeful. He opened the hall way door. Paul McCartney’s smart young man’s voice wailed down its length.

‘Wonder how you managed to make ends meet.’

Snow’s nicely framed, polo-shirted back made its gentle way to the children. Kit returned to the kitchen and throwing the cloth in the water she eyed the now mist- less window, shaking with the force of the Southerly. The sea whipped its way towards her with the force of a plane about to take off.

Kit ran her hand over the cool surface of the glass windows in the new kitchen. They had been thoroughly cleaned and wiped, cool to the touch. Everything in the Auckland kitchen was brown: the Formica, the tiles, the floor of cork. Some homage to earthiness but the earth could get stuffed. She had no money to change it. There was a 'delay' in the life insurance due to some misunderstanding, the body never recovered; some suspicion about the wanton foolishness, the death-wish almost on that day of the storm.

The cupboards were bare. There was shopping to be done. The sooner she could stock the pantry, the fridge and begin to cook and create her legendary meals then people would gather as they'd always done. The Farley home had always been the 'hub'. She always tried to create an atmosphere, to be a good hostess. The Grand piano, a wedding anniversary present from Snow, positioned at the core. It's dark shiny surface in contrast to the creams. It had yet to arrive in the new house, taking its own journey up the island. Kit could see it confined by big straps in the back of a truck like a pure-bred horse; lonely and tuneless.

Their parties were always a hit. The children all dressed up, girls in their little frocks, boys in shirts and ties serving the Hors d'ouvres, Steven allowed to mix the drinks. The cocktail cabinet usually stocked with every kind of spirit imaginable. The air filled with talk and laughter from Honey and Hank, Mother, Barb and Gerald, Peter and always a group of game enough locals. Later, with too many under their belt there would be an argument: always politics or some loaded comment from Peter.

Kit had gone and left them all. She had even left her own mother.

Making a cup of tea, Kit gazed out on the valleys filled with new houses, nestled in beside the cabbage trees, their heads of long thin leaves mushrooming out like some exotic African headdress. Her feet were bare, her nightgown thin, her skin uncovered in this early February warmth. Her siblings would be tucked in their homes high on the hills of Roseneath or Island Bay, shivering no doubt as some Southerly battered the walls. They'd

always said ‘*It’s character building*’, ‘*rigorous*’. Kit had escaped to the heat and calm, lacking ‘*rigour*’ with two cups of tea steaming up the windows and she only had need of one.

Walking to her bedroom, Kit paused, plunging her bare feet into the carpet. It had been the selling point, the deep cream pile. There was new found warmth to be found in the modern age. She sat on her stool in front of the dressing-table mirror and methodically placed her make-up on the surface. The ritual of putting on her face was always the same. Posing in various lights and angles in order to catch any sign of aging.

‘You are mainly free darling of those dreadful signs. Let’s call them...nature’s corrosive effects.’ Honey would say, sucking languorously on her cigarette.

‘Not bad for fifty eh Hon.’

Kit fluttered her lashes against the black wand, forming a tense wide O with her mouth, gawping like some silly fish for the smear of orange lipstick, to match the shift frock, and the patent sling back shoes, purchased before she left from James Smith’s, with no opinions about taste from Snow.

She was determined to have a bit of the sixties before it all vanished.

Her children had had the best of it all: the music, the freedom, the protests. And still, underneath all that sunshine, Martin Luther King, John and Bobby Kennedy had each been felled by a single shot. A war raged in Vietnam. Ned and Steven went out protesting about it, suitably attired in their ‘hippy clothes’. Departing in their fathers MG, crowded into the front seats like two sweet, unblemished warriors. Snow watched them go, head sadly inclined, hands buried deep in his pockets, as if fingering the small change buried deep inside could buy some answers. The stuffed shirts in the National Party, the miserly Muldoon and pompous Holyoake, these men Kit despised. Snow said they were,

‘Good for business.’

‘Yes good for the business of an American war.’

The children had the luxury of protest. Kit had had to make do with a smashed window.

When the piano arrived, she would sift through the neat pile of song sheets and then Schubert and Chopin would cascade off the pages and through the earth walls. Then end with a flourish - the romance of Roger's and Hammerstein.

This year they were going to land on the moon. Maybe she could sing her way there.

'Up, up and away...'

Kit grabbed her purse, clenched it shut with the door. The tightness of the hemline about her thighs made it hard to walk down the stairs to the Jag. But it would be there waiting, her valiant steed. Graceful lines, oak dashboard, leather seats, wheels waiting to roll. The car purred out of the garage, ten thousand pounds worth gliding along the never-ending winding Beach Road toward the shops. Kit put her foot firmly on the accelerator, picking up the pace around the corners, eager to meet these new people, these 'Aucklanders'. She wondered if there would be some envious traffic cop waiting in a dark corner, as they'd waited in her very own Monte Carlo - the thin stony hills and shores of the Wellington South coast. She loved going faster and faster and waiting for the sirens call. Finally when pulled over, she'd wind down the window, peer at the trumped up, jack-booted fool over the rim of her sunglasses and say innocently,

'Yes officer?'

'You're speeding madam.' The big silver buttons on his blue jacket thrust against the car door, pithy little note-pad wavering in his big hands.

'Oh, am I? What a shame.' She'd say meeting him in the eye. Then he'd have to adjust his big blue helmet, trying to veil his expression.

'Well you are breaking the law.'

'Too bad.' she'd say and reach over to her purse, unfasten it, pull out a cigarette, light it in slow exaggerated movements and he'd start rolling up and down on his big boots.

'You need to take this seriously. It's the fifth time this month madam.'

'You're just jealous my dear.' Then Kit would wind up the window and watch him glaze over.

There were no sirens on the North Shore of Auckland, only rampant hibiscus filled gardens spilling down to petite bays, white sand and sparkling water waiting patiently at the bottom of each hill. She saw people swimming and it was only 9.30 and tepid. Soon she would join them in her vibrant new swimsuit; Kit, nut brown in her Northern skin, plunging in and never stopping.

The shops were nice enough. In the Four Square she made short work of getting the basics. Moving quickly through the aisles past docile people - their clothing very informal, shorts and tee-shirts, jandals. Kit felt the flicker of disappointment. Isolated in the car park, the Jag stood out like some silver beacon from a forgotten age. Kit pulled in her behind moving quickly toward it.

Snow's snazzy sports car would have suited this place.

He could have taken it that day when he tried to find her. But she had it. He wasn't used to handling the Jag on the corners. The fierce thumping wind wanted something larger to play with. Having done with its prey of trees, waves and hapless people, it went for the ferry. She could still hear the screams, timed with the pitching of the boat toward the sheer drop to the sea. The screams were carried on the massive waves all the way to the shore, the wind roaring like a thousand jet engines. And she had liked it - it sent a thrill through her body - helped her forget what Dianne had said after that dinner.

How would Snow's little MG fair, hurtling at speed around howling corners? She wanted to test her ability to dodge the wind like a minnow between the waves.

On that morning, she had left her solitary post at the sink and disappeared.

Gypsy looked wanly out of the open window, grey hairs around her jaws. The dog had been in the car with Snow. They found her wet and exhausted wandering the battered coast hours later and with her was Jude.

The weather people just chose the next alphabetical name, on their silly list. They called that hulking great storm Cyclone Giselle. Giselle was the fifteenth century European peasant who went mad over the squire, Giselle who was 'of delicate health.' She and Snow had been to see the ballet. He was bored, while she sat captivated with the female sprits that danced a man to death and wept through the final act. Maybe, Kit thought, mother had been right about the Antipodes; old worn out Northern words for Southern disasters and the 76 dead.

Putting the boxes of food in the boot, speeding back up the hill, not looking once in her rear vision mirror for any clouds that may gather across the far away strait, Kit tried to breathe slowly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Snow stood in the rain on the wet tarmac of Wellington Airport, his gabardine coat flapping in the wind. A plane, a friendship, hovered, only just staying upright like a seagull trying to balance itself, at the Cook Strait end, facing out to sea. A ring of cars surrounded Jude's father: a Dodge, a Morris Oxford and a Cadillac. She saw smiling faces in the grills and headlights and behind them stood tall, wide-shouldered men in pin stripe suits, two-toned shoes and gangster hats. They seemed to parade, forming a circle around Snow. He did not seem to mind. Jude's head tossed on the pillow, her arms flailed around trying to reach out and touch her father. She called to him,

'Dad! Dad. I am here.' But he couldn't hear. He was distracted. He seemed to know the men. He was out of reach and her throat constricted with the pain. The men with their guns hidden in their holsters and Snow somewhere hidden amongst them, silently left the tarmac and headed toward the cars. Once again she tried to call,

'Please don't take him. Please.' But they ignored her. Jude's whole body moved in protest. She sobbed waterless tears. A voice came from somewhere.

'Jude! Jude! You're dreaming. Wake up. Wake up.'

Huia knelt by her bunk and patted her arm.

'Sorry. Did I wake you up?'

'You were calling out, calling for your Dad.'

Huia blinked at Jude, shiny eyelids opening and closing like a sleepy doll. Her roommate crouched down beside the bunk and her long, cool hand lay over Jude's. Huia smiled her crooked smile.

'Maybe he could hear you. Wherever he is.'

'He might be in Christchurch. Or Dunedin.'

'Yeah. Maybe.'

Huia helped her up. Jude's feet touched the cold linoleum and remained there as she listened to someone singing in the showers. Sugary words floated above sheets of falling water. The love song, travelled with the steam filling the corridor, other voices joined in, humming, cascading until they were all drowned by Mrs Latham and the speaker.

'Suzy Morrison, you must come down to the office immediately.'

The slamming drawers, the radios, the talk, the voices in the shower - all stopped, waiting for Suzy to come out from her cubicle and make her way to front office. Huia returned to her top bunk so she could see what Suzy would do and report back to Sandy. Jude had noticed her room-mate do this often, sitting bolt upright, on the look out, watchful and still. Later Jude would hear whispers in Sandy's cubicle as Huia relayed bits of information. She wondered if Huia told them about her.

The night before, after dinner Suzy had lent out the window, smoking. Way down below, Miss Shipton stood with a member of the school board.

'Don't worry,' said Suzy. 'Bulldog can't see me.'

Miss Shipton pointed out various features of the building to the man who followed her raised hand, the black cape falling from her arm like a queenly command. The girls bunched up beside Suzy, watching the ash slowly form at the end of the lighted stick, making a burning paper trail. Down below Miss Shipton talked.

Suzy took long, luxurious drags on the nicotine and the ash began to tilt.

Suzy! It will fall down; you'll be in so much trouble.' Mim stood back, wide-eyed. Mo shook her head and walked away. Sandy stood transfixed.

Suzy took one last puff and then casually tapped the ash onto the waiting, skull-like cap of Miss Shipton's head. The girls scrambled from the window. All except Suzy, and beside her, Jude. The ash must have only been a feathers touch but the headmistress gracefully swept her hair with her hand and looked down at what was in her palm.

'A bird dropping?' said the man.

‘Yes,’ said The Headmistress quietly.

Then she looked up, straight at Suzy. Suzy grinned and blood rushed into Miss Shipton’s eyes.

Jude could hear Suzy yank open her flowerless curtains. Her slippers slowly flapped their way downstairs. She would be in even more trouble for not being in her uniform but Suzy didn’t seem to care. Jude remained sitting on her bed in the winceyette nightie Kit had bought before they left. Everything had to be new.

‘A brand new start darling. This material will launder well. These new fibers are a godsend.’

The winceyette clamped to her chest. Jude automatically drew her arms across her breasts. The air was moist with shower water. Huia sprung down from her bunk bed in one easy movement, no growing bits getting in her way.

‘Miss Darling said she was starting Shakespeare soon.’

‘Cool. I like Miss Darling.’

‘Everyone loves Miss Darling.’

The two girls moved around each other, making the beds, putting away nightwear. Jude opened her top draw. A bra lay inside like white pointed amour. Huia dressed quickly and deftly. Jude put on her stockings and shirt, buttoning up, adjusting the tie and looking at the pictures on the mantelpiece, as she had done for the last few weeks. She liked the photo of the man and teenage boy placed alongside that of her family. Huia’s brother had a wide face like his sister and the same smile. But their father looked so serious and Jude wondered if the brother and sister looked like their mother.

‘When did your mother die?’

‘Two year ago. She died of cancer.’ Huia folded her thin torn nightwear carefully, laying the pajamas neatly in her drawer.

‘I want to show you something.’

Perching on the bottom of Jude’s bunk, Huia pulled up a corner of the top mattress and pulled out a small cardboard box. They sat together looking inside. There was a faded photo of a slim woman standing, holding her hand bag. She was dressed in a knee length dress. Huia’s mother had a small thin face and smiled the same crooked smile.

‘Your Mum looks like a nice lady.’

‘I sat beside the coffin. Her face had changed by then.’

Jude couldn’t imagine an open coffin. The men in the dream came back to her, circling like magpies. The open wet tarmac only leading one way, to the sea and sky.

‘Where was she?’

‘On the Marae. Our Marae.’

Other objects lay in the box: two long white feathers, muscular and shining, a tortoise shell comb and a polished red stone. Jude lightly touched each object then picked up the stone. It felt cool, hard in her palms like a nut.

‘Why do you keep these things?’

‘Me and my brother found the stone. The feathers mean something real important. James knows all about it. One day I’m gonna find out’

‘Hey Huia. Walk with us to breakfast,’ called Trudy.

She quickly hid away the box and joined the others, tagging behind them.

Jude followed her dorm as they ran, dawdled, slunk, often in pair’s, heads together in discussion, arms outstretched, lightly touching the honey wood of the stairwell. Jude seemed to fall in step with the sweeping old structure of Highlands as if the building that

held the teeming girls within her four, two storied wings of red brick, was the old lady in charge. Four Kauri staircases seemed to easily carry the tide from each dormitory, Colquhoun, Cameron, McLaren and Jude's own dorm, Bruce. But Jude remained separate, holding her head held high, hand holding tight to the dense frame. She turned, aware of giggling, and found Sandy and her friends walking with their noses in the air, slinging off at her walk. Half way up each staircase was a long, tall window made of stained glass. The rich colours and patterns framed the symbols for each clan and a motto. For Bruce, a lion and the motto, 'We have been'. As Jude hid inside the routines of meals and school and her tiny room, it felt like she was not even there.

She had taken to reading romance novels, burying herself in the grass, trees and buildings of a distant time. There were silk dresses with secrets buried in the brocade. The plots set in English homes and wild moors- a bit like Highlands were always the same. There was a plain Cinderella whose hidden beauty was her goodness and a hint of something wild in her green eyes. And she had to battle to be understood. And always after all the hard times she got her man; the lord of the manor. At first he was distant, but inside he was just a lonely man.

And the more she read, the white face of the Lord changed into the brown face of Huia's brother James and Jude found herself having to change the backdrop around him. Week by week, the memory of her old city disappeared. The hills changed into what was everywhere at Highlands, framed in windows, doorways, school windows and fields; the mountain. After lights out, she shone a torch under the bed covers, way past mid-night, losing her loneliness in every word until the night matron, Miss Fish, with her qawping, torch face pulled back the covers and took the book away,

Greeting Jude at breakfast was watery porridge and rows of cold burnt toast that the girls disguised in layers of butter, peanut butter and jam. That morning, when the girls walked into the dining hall, the tables were covered with food, but the room was empty as

if the older woman who ran the kitchen had ordered the kitchen girl to put their food out and then leave; the girls taking their places like the three bears.

Suzy came into the hall with Miss Latham behind her. Suzy glanced at the staring girls lining the tables either side of her as she walked, royal and aware of the matron who had to follow her - the leader. She moved boyishly, swaggering like some naughty eight year old.

Once this little side-show was over they helped themselves in a free -for - all. Emily and her team at the head of the table had no hand in dishing out breakfast portions. Instead, they huddled together, glancing over at what the others were eating and doing. Just as Jude was about to pour cream on her porridge, a voice, light with sarcasm, traveled the length of the table.

‘Are you sure you need that?’ Emily let the ‘that’ rise up and cocked her blonde mass to one side in a play at sweetness. The jug froze in Jude’s hand. Her face hot again. Even though she had only been at Highlands a few weeks, the ‘boutique’ city clothes were already tight.

‘Maybe not.’ Jude put the jug down.

‘You don’t want to get really fat. Those tight Levi jeans won’t fit, eh.’

There it was. The tag once again. That relaxed affirmation that came lazily from the back of the throat and paddocks full of sheep -baaaayyye. But far away from the Taranaki farms Jude could hear Kit saying, ‘You don’t want those fine features to be utterly drowned in flesh darling!’

The other seniors tittered then re-grouped, re-visiting no doubt, matters of state, as Jude put the jug down and waited for the other girls at the table to join in the teasing. But they didn’t. Mim and Mo ate their porridge, heads burrowed down in what looked like shame.

Jude played guiltily with her food. She loved it all, even the runny porridge, the oily meat stews, the pulpy texture of the carrots, the soggy spinach - all of it she ate happily. She looked around the room; the other girls were hungry for the food, leaning over one another, grabbing milk and sugar like starving children.

Mim and Mo stopped eating. Suzy, mid-way through her toast, put it down on her plate.

‘Don’t take any notice. They’re such bitches.’

The others at the table nodded in agreement. This friendliness relaxed Jude. She hadn’t dared to speak at the table, not since her first too posh words. Moving closer to them so the seniors could not hear, she took a deep breath in, making sure the vowels that came out were not so clipped.

‘Maybe if I keep on eating and eating, chewing and chewing, I’ll end up being a cow like them.’

Covering their mouths, Mim and Mo attempted to stop giggling. Suzy, in a whisper loud enough for them all to hear, but aimed at Emily, unaware and deep in discussion with the others said;

‘Yeah...moo to you too.’

As if she had picked up this comment by osmosis, Emily turned their way.

Mim spluttered through the tight fist of fingers held to her lips.

‘Or you could be a pig like them. Oink! Oink!’

Mo collapsed under the table in a fit of laughing. The seniors, alerted by this noise, turned together, their faces drawn and taut.

‘What’s going on?’

‘No....no...nothing...’ Mim struggled up. Sitting upright and terrified, cheeks pinched red, she continued eating, concentrating on each mouthful. But Mo could not stop her faint piggy noises. Emily rose up from her chair.

‘I’ll need to come and sort it. Find out what exactly you’ve all been saying, eh Mo’

Poor wee Mo could not stop herself. She continued with these sad little farm noises as if they were leeching from her small body. Months of bottled up noises escaping panicked her. Mim patted her on the back, but tears formed a glass veil over Mo’s wide eyes. Next to Mrs Latham, Miss Fish furiously eating a mouthful of rolled oats, suddenly looked straight at them, her crippled face full of food. Seeing this Suzy and Jude covered their mouths to hide fits of laughter, Emily walked around the table but just as she came level with Mo, Suzy stood, pouring a big helping of more cream on Jude’s cold porridge. Emily stopped in her tracks. The table fell quiet. Emily looked at each girl, her face twisting. Suzy smiled at Emily with stinging warmth - like a slap in the face. She sat down taking a hearty bite of her toast. Emily seemed stuck. She glared at Suzy, then at Jude, and she could hear her mutter to Prudence,

‘A little accident with the chair will see her flayed on the ground like a gutted sheep,’

The swinging doors to the kitchen opened, and the kitchen girl strolled out into the dining room with a large platter full of black toast. The air smelt chemical. Emily moved toward Jude. Just as she had the rim of Jude’s chair in her grip, ready to tip, the girl collided with Emily and the tray of toast tipped over her, then on to the floor.

As if shaken from a trance, Emily’s shoulders relaxed and with her twisted lips forming a little bow, she dusted off the crumbs, looking around the table.

‘I am glad we’ve all calmed down. I’d hate to have got Mrs Latham, or worse, Miss Shipton.’ She moved back to her corner, ponytail swinging as she smoothed out the crease on her gym frock.

One by one, the kitchen girl picked up bits of toast from the floor with her silver tongs. She moved less flamboyantly than the day of Jude's arrival. There was none of her usual smiling, joking or warm questions. Standing right behind Emily, she dropped the remainder of the toast onto her plate like bits of charcoal.

'I think we have got enough and anyway it's dirty!' Emily lips were firmly clenched.

'You need filling up.' said the girl, walking casually away with her empty vessel.

'What is her name?' asked Jude

'No-one knows her name. We don't ask,' said Mo

'Why not?'

Mo wriggled uncomfortably, 'We just don't.'

Later as they sipped their hot drinks, Suzy leant across the table and whispered in her ear.

'Tomorrow night I'm going to the graveyard. Sometimes we meet guys. Wanna come?'

This was possible? To meet a boy or even a life outside the walls of Highland's?

'You go down the bush track, around the pool, over the pipe across the bridge and meet up in the graveyard,' said Mim, serious with pride as the passer of naughty information.

'Didn't you know? About the boys - guys? About the Boy's High School? It's just behind the cemetery.'

Jude liked boys. At seven, the mud splattered only child, Helfred Van Der Holm was her playmate, The Lone Ranger to Jude's Tonto. Imaginary whip in his hand, black mask, white hat and a fiery horse, a cloud of dust, and a hearty 'Hi-ho Silver away!' They

never got far on her small back, falling in a heap on dirt and grass. With his grubby hands smelling of crayons and the neglect of his absent mother, he would help her up. The spurs on Helfred's cowboy boots never defended him from the late night kicks of Mr Van Der Holm and endless teasing from Susan and Billy Soames. Later when he'd suddenly vanished - his whole house packed up in just one night after a call to the authorities from Kit, always quick to the draw with her own children - there were still boys. At Intermediate School hiding in the bushes for a fag with Paul Sutton and Michael Medlyn, Jude's hand shook as she tried to light Michael's away from the biting wind, rough hands and liquid eyes meeting hers.

Dianne had a boyfriend. Her boyfriend took her out of The Nuffield and the fights with Kit. Before Simon stopped picking her up in his Ford, his presence had led Dianne to skip about the house, even after a bitter fight with Kit, only stopping to fall back onto the bed and say,

'Nothing matters because I'm in love.'

Suzy waited for a reply, tapping her empty spoon against the table top.

'Yes' said Jude. 'I might come.'

'You could get into big trouble,' said Mim. 'You could get expelled for that. Latham and Bulldog would murder you girls if you got caught.'

'Emily's on prefect duty that night. She can smell escape.'

They both shot a glance at the seniors; groomed heads like show ponies, huddled in a tighter grouping. The china bone of Emily's profile and the blonde down of her cheek turned toward them. But her jaw moved. Was she grinding her teeth?

There was no sign of the kitchen girl. The doors to the kitchen were closed. Mim had told Jude that the older woman bolted everything: the door, the fridge, the pantry. The kitchen was their place. Jude could hear bursts of laughter from somewhere far away. The

smell of charred toast stayed in the dining hall. Mrs Latham regally rose from top table and wiped her mouth with a hanky; turning her long frame toward Jude's table. For a brief moment, Jude felt the pale eyes rest on her. Then the morning sun shone on the glass frame of the matron's spectacles so that they blazed - blinding any sign of her eyes.

But for Jude a corner had been turned. For a moment she had become one of the Highland girls. She made her way back to the dormitory, keen to pack her bag for school. Half way up the stairs a red panel glowed from the stained glass onto the stairwell. She stopped and peered through it. The glass gave just enough vision to see out onto the fields. Far in the distance, Jude saw the figure of an older man. His well-cut coat flapped in the wind. His round face creased with a half smile shone in the failing light and she ran down the staircase, her step so fast she was flying. Out on the field she ran toward the distant trees, her heart beating. There she found a bank that fell down into thick bush. No- one was there -just the sweep of grass and the solid, stuck Egmont. Soon it would be one year that she'd been looking. She had not forgotten the Catholic Church service and the possibility of a miracle. Maybe Huia was right. He might have heard her calling from her dream. Calling him away from the men and the sea and the sky, her voice full of power like magic. He must return at Easter, the anniversary.

But how would he know where to find her?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Misty rain noiselessly fell on Kit's roof but the evening was warm. The windows were open to a languid breeze, no brutal cold wind hurtled up her dress. No crooked edges. She stroked a hibiscus leaf the colour of coral that took centre stage on the dining room table and wondered how easily her new city had worked its way into her heart like a seduction. The summer seemed to be never ending. The tumble of pohutukawa trees onto the beaches, filtering the hot lemon light. She spent hours bronzing her body like a lioness. The sea lapped not far away. She would take to it, swim out toward Rangitoto, her arms lifting and arched, as if they were defying the pull of the sea.

Kit looked in the wide, gold rimmed mirror in the lounge and admired her tanned body in the Crimplene pantsuit, bought for work. The new, no iron and stain resilient fabric fitted perfectly. The African safari inspired pattern along with the wide belt pulling in her waist was just the thing for the library - modest yet professional. Schoolish! As for school, she loved it. The library manager at North Auckland Boys High was a highly educated and finely principled woman of a similar age. June Watts. It had to be said, that yes, they were from vastly different backgrounds. Kit's, though relatively unschooled was widely read. She had excelled at comprehension and writing; Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Dickens along with Shaw, were regular family fodder.

'These are the true prophets!' Clara would say as father nodded, absent-mindedly staring into space, pipe in one hand pulling down the lines of his face. He would ruminate like this in his chair for hours and occasionally say,

'The papers I have worried over. The papers I have shuffled. And now here I am.'

That was until he lost his job and Mother made Kit leave school because of 'family finances'.

But Kit did not mind shuffling meaningless paper. She always knew she'd enjoy the routine. The fact of the matter was that attending to the small, practical tasks in life

exercised her love of the immaculate. Sequencing for instance required quick thinking and precision and libraries were all about such order - the daily tasks of filing, checking books in and out, sorting shelves. All this may have come as a surprise to some who would ordinarily think Kit Farley as too flamboyant for such mundane and monotonous work. As she shelved the books, she'd chat to the boys. She hadn't bargained on how much she would miss Ned and Steven. An aerogram lay on the table ready for her to open, postmarked Rajasthan, India. Carefully prizing apart the delicate tissue of the letter, Kit could sense her boys formulating what they would and would not say between the folds. The two, as they grew into adulthood, seemed to have formed a united front, like two soldiers planning the line of defense with their mother as the enemy. Ned's hand had been at work, forming each word with tidy flair,

'The people here are deeply spiritual. Steven and I are learning a lot about a whole other way of life, loving the rich spicy aromas, the intense purples, oranges, and blues of the woman's saris. Indian people are not as materialistic like us Westerners - and they are peace loving.'

Loving! Materialistic! By God what would they know, having grown up in the lap of luxury? Wanting for nothing. And was 'peace loving' a dig at her? She'd been right behind their anti-Vietnam war protests. She was no war monger, having seen what it did to Peter. Her brother was clever and sensitive. Even as the younger of the two siblings, she'd managed to clout the quiet shy boy so hard he fainted. Since then there was a different kind of fainting, falling over after too much whisky. Since the war, Peter had steadily attempted to drown the memory of having to blast his way through Europe, the gin never rose far enough to put out the fire but it extinguished two marriages.

It was the second paragraph of the letter that stung,

'How is Jude? Is she enjoying life in Auckland? We really miss her. And Dianne. Did it all go okay? Where is the baby now?'

This reaching out to their siblings created a tight little bond, a grouping, separate from Kit. She hadn't told them about Jude and New Plymouth. How she had maneuvered her youngest daughter out of the house, out of Wellington, away from what happened.

'It's warmer up there darling. Auckland is more our style. No more howling winds and no more wretched memories. You'll love it. I'll have a room for you when you come home for your holidays.'

'But I don't want to move. I love Wellington. I love the cold. What about Dad? What if he finds his way home and no-one is here? Please Mum, I just can't.'

Kit could not bring herself to say, 'But he is dead darling.'

Jude began to cry and Kit in a fit of motherliness patted her hand.

'Now now, my dear. You must not take that tone. It has a muscular whining ring to it and we are not people who grizzle or whine. Now that we are on our own we must make our way. I want to start afresh amongst the relaxed people of Auckland. Frankly I deserve it darling. You will just have to make the most of it a good education in New Plymouth. I won't be far away. Take a fist to life my dear.'

Besides, although it was better left unsaid, money was a little tight since the Snow debacle. A public boarding school solved two problems. It was not as expensive as a private one and it was far away from where Jude would be destined if they'd stayed in Wellington. Wellington South Girls High, home of the common. Girls like Mandy Adams - friend of Dianne and the one who'd led her astray. That and the boy, Simon. Just lately she'd seen the same signs in Jude, the makeup, the fluttering of the eyelashes. Not that she was past that herself! But just thinking of the night Dianne's words came spilling out like hot liquid and her own retort - so savage. She found herself patting Jude with increasing force.

'Have I done something wrong Mum?' Jude sat next to her, her hair disheveled, her eyes red and the tears melting her so that she gradually diminished into just a little girl. And with any sign of weakness, Kit felt anger, cruel words fighting their way inside her.

‘Of course not you silly girl.’

With that she had swiftly moved from the couch and dialed up Honey, to tell her ‘our news.’ Kit lit a cigarette, taking long drags as she talked of her decision to move to Auckland and blew the smoke out in little breathless puffs. She had to be on her best behavior and suitably somber with just a touch of melancholy all for Honey.

Kit had not told Ned and Steven about the giving away of the baby, Dianne’s supposed lengthy stay with distant relatives as far south as Kit could find. How it stung having to hand her only grandchild to strangers at Invercargill Hospital, while Dianne turned away and faced the stark white wall. The baby girl would have no memory of Kit’s stricken face peering down at the tiny buds of her eyes. Kit had touched the soft down of pale hair, just like Snow’s, and gently past the baby out of their lives and into the waiting arms of the nurse. Dianne refused to come home. At seventeen she chose to remain in the South. Flirting with locals and working in some dull little shop on the uninspiring main street, selling cosmetics. Kit imagined her daughter caking on even more layers of foundation, plastering up the hole inside her, turning the mask of her beautiful face further and further away toward the droll biting South.

The aerogram paper was so thin. She had read and re-read the letter already three times that evening.

‘At the moment Steven and I are in Bombay. There is terrible poverty and starvation here, but the people bear it with good grace.’

She tried to imagine a healthy, plumper Steven, standing beside Ned as he wrote. Not the thin wastrel that had left.

What had Snow done? He’d left and torn them all asunder! As a young man he had been strong enough. She heard it many times. The back country farms, some in Taranaki. And Snow strong enough to help his parents and his many brothers herding sheep, digging holes, working the heavy machinery. But he would not have enjoyed it. Not Snow. Those hands were not cut out for rough trade.

Maybe he liked walking the five miles to the little school, barefooted in the winter mud, or if he was lucky on the back of the draft horse; squeezed on her wide back with two older brothers. When they got home, he often told Kit, their woolly haired, square faced, fast talking father, Buster, would try and explain to them his latest design with the flax shredder. He was going to make his millions. But the money never came and on and on Buster worked the fields with his fine hands.

Snow had to leave school at twelve and learn a trade to bring in much needed money that his Australian mother, May would have put to good use on food and the odd book. For books were a much loved luxury and the piano they carted from farm to farm.

Kit knew how May must have felt, seeing Snow walk enthusiastically through the farm gate toward the train station. Just as she had to watch Ned and Steven walk across the tarmac, packs in the hold, the boyish thin blades of their backs disappearing into mouth of the plane, a small bumbling friendship headed over the boiling waters of the strait.

Their own father left for a rotting boarding house to be fed on banana sandwiches as he learnt his tailoring craft from the Zimmerman's. May had found, with much difficulty, apprenticeships for her boys, desperate for them not to be like her and forever looking out on endless paddocks of scrub and fern scattered hills and at the top of the rise, that great hefty mountain hemming her in. Snow told her that sometimes she said 'too much green' and went back in a Chopin reverie to the parlour of her Sydney home, medal for Dux on the wall, sibling's playing cricket on a parched lawn as bright birds screeched in the gum tree. Should she have kept him closer, not pushed him away from the life of hard, healthy labour he'd always known? Maybe then, he could have survived the force of the water. Against all logical thought, part of her wondered if maybe he had. That Jude was right. No body was ever found, except for the one at Pencarrow. The body the couple saw while walking their dog a few days after the storm. They returned home and called the police. By the time they got there, the body was gone.

The rain was still falling. She had never known such rain, fine and straight, the noise like a gentle flood. She folded the aerogram but kept it tucked in her hand. Pulling up

a dining chair, Kit sat at the table, empty of plates and food and chatter. At least her day had been filled with a tide of faces at school, united together in one great mass of teeming boys. Odds and sods from all kinds of backgrounds who needed her assistance and for some a little more. One boy, only fifteen, had the look of neglect about him. Uniform unwashed, sallow skin from what she imagined to be a lack of decent food.

‘I really like reading anything by Neville Shute. Have you got anything by him?’

‘Yes dear, of course. I like a bit of adventure myself. Cars are my thing.’

‘True!’ The boy’s hair raven black.

‘Yes. I’ve taken a few risks. I like to break the rules.’

She watched his eyes widen - tilted, lashed and blue. They had walked to the shelves chatting away about adventure and then found just the right book. She stamped the return date and wrote his name down, Richard Soames. Kit asked him if he liked to read at nights before going to sleep.

‘No, I can’t Miss. My mum needs me to look after the younger ones while she works and they cry and play up.’

‘How desperate for you dear. You’re far too young to have such responsibility! Your mother should be ashamed.’ Richard blushed.

‘She can’t really help it. Our dad left.’

Kit lent forward and touched his hand, her ample cleavage spilling a little onto the counter and she was about to ask him more but his English teacher, Mr Porteous, a fat man with a walrus moustache looked sternly across. Great lug, she thought, who was he to look at her like that? She straightened, catching Richards’s eye. She wanted the look to say everything. That he could trust her. Tell her anything. Richard walked jauntily away, Neville Shute firmly in his grip toward the other silently reading, boys.

She had been holding the aerogram too tightly and it had formed a sweaty ball in her hand. Kit opened her palm and let the paper fall onto the table. The rain had made the air moist, the smell damp. She rose and caught sight of herself in the gilded mirror. She'd always hated that feeling of catching herself unaware, like a ghost, preferring to pose, to take control of the view. Under a naked yellow light and as if on queue, the crimplene pantsuit changed colour to become a dull mud like uniform. Inside it she seemed small and diminished, no longer on Safari. Kit stood to attention like a soldier. For a moment it seemed Snow stood behind her, resting hands on her shoulders, winking at the reflected vision, the smoke from his cigar curling toward her. If Snow didn't like the pantsuit, he masked his disdain behind an enigmatic smile.

Just as he might have that day she walked towards him on Courtenay Place after the war on the arm of Peter, his best friend. Dressed in a cream dress, pill hat, gloves and shoes, she shook his warm hand, sucked in her cheeks just a little to show off the high cheek bones and huskily whispered hello through killer red lips. From that moment on was he was caught? And she? Certainly Snow sweetly smiling under the soft line of dimples and hair helped and the immaculate cut of his navy pants. And the busy little factory he established before the war, on Manners Street, Mistress on Manners. Its counterpart, Master on Manners, came later.

Snow made them both very successful. He escaped the damp rooms of the bananas and lonely whisky men at the back of Cuba Street. He learnt quickly to cut, sew, then design both men's and woman's clothes. He watched with keen interest the largesse and good humour of Mr Zimmerman Senior as he charmed his way into large shop order, big arms folded across a crimson suit jacket. It seemed through those years that the buttons never closed on Zimmerman's wide girth and smile.

Snow never once pined after the cows and sheep and dung, only May's quiet voice and recitations of ancient Irish ditty's and his father's strange, clever ideas. May loved the perfectly tailored dresses and coats Snow made her. Back on her piano stool, by then in the

house in central Wellington, thankful to be miles from fields and cows; the taffeta skirt swirled and rustled as May struck a contented G minor.

The rain was heavier now. It came on the breeze and through the open window, light like the scent of rivers. Drops of water had made their way inside. Soon it would be autumn. Soon it would be a year. Kit took to the piano. It arrived safely a week ago, then hauled reluctantly through the new house like a beast and put in a corner. Her fingers easily found their way across the ivory surface. Like a blind woman with her braille, Kit was lost to the language of the keys. But there was no family listening. Not that the older ones ever did any more.

They had their own songs; songs of rebellion, spiriting them out of reach, to India and Invercargill. But Jude loved to listen all tucked up in bed or standing beside her, hand on her shoulder, forming the words sweetly; songs of innocence. What would the child be doing that night? Lying alone, waiting for her mother? Waiting for her father?

Kit's voice rose with the high notes. Her singing career had been cut short by her brood of children but Ave Maria was still within her reach.

Snow's success filtered right throughout their life, lifted them from their first little house in Island Bay to The Nuffield, lifted their cars, furniture and clothing like some spirit with golden hands as around them the sixties flew by in psychedelic confusion. Suddenly cigar smoke filled the room.

'I like the cut of your jib girl.'

She turned and froze. He had gone. From somewhere the phone rang. She knew who it would be. It would be her orthodontist, Jock Withers firming up a time for the restaurant. He was quite a brilliant craftsman having gone to the bother of looking at an old photo of Kit, standing alone in a ball gown at seventeen. The one Clara had made and worn herself in 1917. Not to Kit's taste at all, the thing reminded her of something gothic, fit for a witch. It fell in waves, the dark red sleeves pointed like a spear over her hands. She let the girls use it for dress-ups.

Jock had looked at the photo for a long time. His magnifying glass closed in her mouth.

‘You were stunning even then Kit but your teeth were slightly uneven.’

‘I can’t have that.’

‘The teeth will look good. You’ll see.’

He was to begin fashioning a set of ‘natural’ looking teeth for her. They shared similar interests, music, swimming and the finer things. Her orthodontist would have liked Giselle, the ballet. She would go with confidence. Kit the nurturing librarian waiting for a perfect set of new teeth and something dull thumping in her chest.

CHAPTER NINE

The great Kauri door opened onto the wide steps of Highlands as Jude and the other girls poured out of the door on their way to school. The matrons stood on either side, ready to inspect their uniforms. A sudden breeze lifted their gym frocks and their hair. Some squealed, others laughed, trying to flatten the flapping hems but the only flattening came from the level, watchful eyes of the matrons.

They past Miss Fish, her screwed up face scrutinizing each move they made, past Mrs Simms, hands folded across her chest. Next was Mrs Latham.

As she approached the Head Matron, Jude had second thoughts about whether to escape with Suzy. The two girls could get into big trouble. That morning, even though every stitch of her white blouse and tie were in place, Jude felt a quickening that threatened to undo her seams one by one. She was afraid her skin tingling with the idea of boys, and one particular boy, the good-looking brother of Huia, would be revealed for all to see. But when she past Mrs Latham, the matron showed no sign of knowing anything, giving Jude a forced tight smile, firmly holding down the hem of her own skirt in such a way that it seemed the wind was just some stupid interruption of nature.

Suzy heaved her bag across her shoulders and walked with Jude. She was angry this morning. As a punishment for the cigarette, she had been locked in the 'Box Room.' The room was a tiny narrow place for suitcases, with rows of shelves that seemed to go on and on forever, never reaching a ceiling. Suzy had beaten on the doors,

'Let me out. Let me out.'

But no-one came. While Jude and others sat outside trying to calm her, she sobbed and then suddenly became quiet.

The gardens on each side of the path were losing their flowers and the petals splashed underneath the plants like confetti. Jude tucked her gloved hands into the pockets

of her woolen blazer, the wide band of her hat facing the cool breeze. She was glad to be out of the stuffy air of the dormitory. Each day in this small city seemed the same. There was no huge wind waiting around the corner.

She was used to the all the faces of the wind. The way it came with the sun into the garden like a wild child, flattening every blade of grass, winding up the clothesline, biffing pegs and then aiming for something bigger. Ripping her off her bike, pulling at her clothes, turning Jude around and around, forcing her and her friends to cling tight like crabs to the high cliffs they climbed above the sea.

Sometimes it made a booming sound inside the big bare hills. It whipped waves, tossed boats, smashed wood, threw voices so far that they would get lost.

The girls saw Miss Shipton prowling about the grounds, her cloak trailing, big shoulders hunched, large square hands freely moving at her side; ready for pouncing. Every morning, Miss Shipton, the Bulldog, roared from a distance at some unlucky girl.

'She had me locked in the Box Room the old bag.' Suzy's stockings were pulled up instead of loosely hanging.

'Latham made me darn my stockings. Can you believe it? Darning!' She bent over and stabbed her finger in the darn, forcing apart the stitches, so that a hole appeared again. But Bulldog did not seem to notice. A small terrified girl dropped her bag and froze in the shadows.

'What are you doing with that filthy blazer? Get it cleaned tonight girl!'

Jude was pleased she was not the victim and hurried past, brushing the gym frock over her knees and bowing her head, hoping Miss Shipton had forgotten both her and her cleavage bearing mother.

The lessons were shared with the 'Day Girls'. They arrived in class, in dribs and drabs, uniforms not quite as tidy as the boarders, slinging their bags on the floor, talking non-stop about their day girl world that existed in New Plymouth. New Plymouth was their

little city. This was their school; Springwood. In English, first period, Jude sat between Huia and a day girl Heather Webster.

‘Today we begin Macbeth,’ said Miss Darling.

Miss wore a leather top with tassels and big chick glasses and a matted silver wig over her short hair. Partly dressed as a witch she had lined her eyes with coal and weaved around the room, in-between startled faces. She had two witch sisters who met in thunder, lightning, or in rain.

‘Miiiiissss?’ Suzy put her hand up. With her dark hair tidily platted, her text books, pen and paper all neatly piled on her desk; mouth suitably pursed for playing the part of a scholar, Suzy was far away from the Box Room

‘Yes Suzy.’

‘What sort of witches are they? Are they skinny with daggers for nails like Latham or all black hooded and old with warts and grey skin like Miss Shipton?’

‘Now that will be enough Suzy! That is very rude. You have been in enough trouble this morning!’ Miss Darling flushed a bright angry red and the class murmured and laughed.

‘Sorry. Well are they like us, real sixties chicks, funky, psychedelic, trippy and young. Like Joni Mitchell or Grace Slick?’

‘It was set many centuries ago. The world was very different. Witches in Shakespeare’s time were seen as evil beings full of potent powers. They were often just ordinary woman who were burned at the stake merely for being alone or different. They were very superstitious in the seventeenth century.

‘Or maybe they were just bored housewives or girls escaping at night,’ said Suzy winking at Jude.

Looking nervously toward the back of the room, Jude noticed Sandy, prick up her ears. Jude straightened in her chair, crossed her legs and liked the feel of the silk stockings against her inner thigh.

She and Dianne had played at being witches. They collected things from the beach and the pine forest behind their house. Shells, seaweed, jelly fish, driftwood, old bits of metal, cigarette packets, pinecones, leaves, anything that would bring meaning. The seaweed went into magic mixtures, the driftwood for pounding, stirring, divining and joining hands, dancing about the fire, they'd chant the names of those that they wanted 'to change'.

Mostly it was their mother. At first it was innocent, just play-acting of the mornings events with Jude in the role of Kit. She would pull herself up; prance about on the forest floor on tip-toe as Dianne would make herself small. She appeared by the flame of the fire, like Rose Red, cheeks darkened with mud, big eyes alight, modeling a ragged gown from the dress - up box, the dress that had belonged to Clara and the same dress that was buried in the suitcase in the box room.

'Get out of that dreadful thing.' Jude would say. 'Or you'll get it.'

Around them tall pines would wave in the wind, the wild sea rumbling - spitting salt. Every noise was important to their brew, even the warbling of the surrounding magpies who seemed to find these plays funny; two small girls alone in the hills with their shells and leaves. Dianne stood strong, the folds of the silk dress, far too big for her, pouring onto the dirt. Jude walked toward Dianne, finger pointing, hissing through sucked in cheeks.

'So you are not going to change? Well, I'll just have to kill you for that!'

Jude would smack her hands together and they would both freeze.

Smearing more dirt on their cheeks like rouge, matting it through hair with leaves and flowers, they walked home, like Celtic Goddesses, backs straight, arms crossed over chests.

On the way cigarette packets of gooey mess were put in letter boxes of people deserving of these potent wishes; those deemed bad, mean or spiteful - often just old people. On the packets the sisters would write something significant.

'Beware of your selfish ways

This potion could end your days.'

Later when Dianne got tired of these games and wanted real rouge and hair spray, Jude still believed. Just like she continued to believe every Easter and Christmas. Willing a creature to appear, small or large, male or female, it didn't matter. But maybe all her wishing had created something wicked, something terrible. Something terrible like Cyclone Giselle.

The girls took turns reading the witches parts as Miss Darling moved around the class, encouraging each one to say 'those vowels'.

'There to meet with Macbeth.' Suzy relished every word.

'I come, Graymalkin!' Mim went deep red.

'Paddock calls.' Sandy vowels were flattened of any feeling.

'Anon.' was all that was left for Huia.

'Thank you girls. Well read. These woman appear to be one thing and then another. A theme that weaves through Macbeth. Perhaps it was one way they could get power at a time when they were powerless.'

'They seem pretty powerful to me.' Suzy sat back in her chair, sizing Miss Darling up.

'Power is in the mind of the beholder Suzy.'

Jude could see them on the moor, leaping and sinewy, conjuring out of the earth anything, anyone.

'I bet those witches were really ugly,' said Trudy.

'There is a rumour that the scar on Bulldogs face is because either, she had an accident with a milking machine or combine harvester or she actually had a fiancée and they were in a car. They had an accident. He was killed!' The words spilled out of Sandy in harsh whispers. Like witches bile though Jude.

'Could you imagine it? Bulldog with a fiancée! Trudy said wide eyed.

Jude tried to imagine Miss Shipton's with her thick ankles and fingers, as a young woman. The face thinner, the sallow skin without the scar became a warm olive. The blubbery lips just full, the thin hair black and curly. Suddenly, almost as if Miss Darling had flown, she was opening the window and her husky voice called out,

'Fair is foul and foul is fair:

Hover through the fog and filthy air.'

Later Miss Darling had new props. She wore a jeweled sword in a gold belt, neatly sitting on her narrow hips and the mini skirt with big bold yellow flowers. She drew out the sword and faced the rows of captivated girls; waving the silver blade in pretend battle with Norwegian warriors. Jude could hear Sandy shuffling in her seat, ribbing Trudy and sniggering.

'For brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name,

Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,

Which smok'd with bloody execution,

Like valour's minion carv'd out his passage

Till he faced the slave;'

Miss stopped mid flight and fixed her gaze on the invisible victim. The point of her blade jabbed further and further into his stomach...

'Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,

Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,

And fix'd his head upon our battlements.'

Her sweeping dissection complete she asked her students to write down what they thought it meant.

Sandy sat back, her long legs flexing and straightening as she and Trudy shook their heads.

'We don't understand what you mean Miss.'

To Trudy she said under her breath...

'It's just crap aye, it's just bullshit.'

Trudy nodded. Jude felt Trudy was hiding her interest in Miss Darling's Macbeth as she tucked the fierce warrior and sword back in her belt and walked toward them saying, 'I can help you.'

The afternoon sun beat directly through the windows, warming the room. Huia, Heather and Jude stared into space. Were they seeing the same thing? The dirty, bloodstained locks of the wiry men as they fought on the Scottish moors, dripping with sweat, so busy killing they did not feel the blanket of cold in the air. The sheep and the heather trampled beneath their leather bound feet.

Huia begun to make notes, the ink forming tidy words. She had brown slender hands, the fingers fine and long. Her hair crinkled and frizzed out of her headband as if defying the perfect writing.

'What do you think'? Jude asked.

'I reckon Macbeth was a fearless fighter. His sword was on fire because it got so much action. But brutal because the guy he killed is referred to as a slave.'

Jude looked at the words again. Macbeth seemed to love his fighting. He went about his violent acts as if it were some artist, using his sword lightly like a red paintbrush, painting its way through acres of flesh.

'Yeah - like he means nothing to him.' Jude added and moved her chair closer.

'And there is no time for any greeting. Look.' Huia pointed to the words.

Heather's little round body moved forward as she read out the passage in her book.

'Ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell.'

'And unseam'd? And what do you reckon 'knave' means?' Heather said chewing on the end of her pencil.

'Could have something to do with navel - in your belly,' added Jude, 'And Chops?'

But Heather didn't need to answer. Suddenly the image was made clear in all its gruesome glory. The poor man lay in the icy mud. Almost split open like a bag of wheat, his 'chops' no longer needed for chewing, the witches never far, wrapped in sheaths of rags.

The early autumn heat in the room was stifling. Even with the windows open, the heat reached into Jude's stockings so that her legs seem to boil. But as she took off her blazer and wrapped it about her waist, Jude felt like she was getting down to work. She was beginning to like English, to like this new school. Miss Darling moved to the front of the class.

'All right girls, what have you come up with?'

They each gave their ideas, talking over each other, stumbling their way through Shakespeare's words.

Jude began to imagine Banquo with his lovely name and good character and just as she had done with the Lords in her romance novels, the strong figure and face of James Te Whare worked his way into the battle as Banquo.

‘Well done! You’ll love it when you come across Lady Macbeth.’ said Miss, her eyes sparking behind her big glasses with real appreciation.

For the rest of the lesson, the three girls busily copied more passages from ‘Macbeth’ into their books. Red ink flowed as they underlined the imagery with rulers.

‘As whence the sun’ gins his reflection, shipwracking storms and direful thunders break’.

‘*Shipwracking storms*’ Jude repeated to herself. Suddenly even though she was surrounded by warmth, chairs and desks and uniformed girls the chaos of that morning came back to Jude, the sound of the Wahine storm came into the room like a thousand jet engines. How she walked and walked, dodging waves that crashed onto the road around Breaker Bay, looking for her parents cars. But there were no cars. Just booming in the hills and then out of nowhere, limping, soaked came Gypsy from the other direction. The direction of Moa Pont with its spiked rocks. And she knelt down and held the shaking dog. Looked into the reflection of her brown glazed eyes – so pretty in the dark thunder.

‘We lived near the rocks, near the beach, where the Wahine went down last Easter.’ As soon as she had said it, she regretted it.

‘That was a hurricane,’ said Huia

‘The wind picked me up on my way down a hill and pushed me along. I flew,’ said Jude trying to make it sound light and fun.

Both girls looked at her in disbelief.

'Like a witch,' said Heather, one eyebrow raised as she tucked her pen safely back into her pencil case.

'Why were you outside on a hill in a storm?'

'I was looking for someone.'

'Did you find them?'

'No.'

'And what happened later?' Heather stared at Jude, wide eyed.

Jude could not answer.

'Everyone else in your family? Were they okay?' Heather closed her books, not looking at Jude.

'Pay attention please girls.' Miss Darling was looking their way.

'Yes they were.' Huia glanced at Jude, but did not say anything about Snow. Huia, who so often liked tell others some bit of information like one of Shakespeare's messengers, kept Jude's secret. Watching her work in the classroom it was as if Huia had been set free from a role she had to play in the dormitory with Sandy. By being the messenger, Huia was only just accepted.

Heather had lost interest and zipped up her pencil case saying, 'Ooh Easter is coming! I always get loads of chocolate. Chocolate bunnies, little chicks in wicker baskets. My Mum and Dad really make it special.'

Heather had no idea about '*shipwrecking storms*'. Everything was safe. Jude with her knowledge of something brutal felt untidy, her clothing heavy and dirty on her body. Snatching a quick glance at Heather, plump and confident, whose bag always contained sparkling things that smelt of new wood and plastic like her pencil case, lunch box and hairbrush, Jude wondered if she woke to the smell of bacon and eggs sizzling in a chaotic kitchen full of warm bodies. Round, beaming, mother wrapping her in the folds of dimpled

arms then fondly waving, 'Goodbye'. After school, weaving her way with other 'day girls' through the tree lined streets of New Plymouth, walking up the path to the house with the big blue wooden butterflies on the front and there! There, mum would be, always smiling and laughing. Maybe even a father coming home, bursting through the door with his big work boots and the red knitted scarf Grandma made, hugging the warm children one by one and telling a joke. And homework done together with brothers and sisters while mum made hot chocolate with her tumbling down hair getting in the way. Dad playing the guitar,

'You are my sunshine, my only sunshine...'

Heather, sitting up in her bed, eating chocolate as trickles of brown liquid ran down her fat chin.

Jude looked about the room. It was a mass of moving bodies, chairs scraping, loud talking. The air smelt used. Heather moved to join some other day girls. Jude wanted them all to go home, away to their neat little families.

The bell rung and Huia turned to Jude, taking a breath in and speaking fast as if what she had to say must be expelled quickly in case she was caught out,

'My ancestors were warriors like Macbeth'

'Come on girls! Hurry up. You need to get to PE. It's a long way down to bottom field so get going,' said Miss Darling.

'Do you know their names?' Jude walked with her to the door where a rush of girls made their way out.

Huia's black lashes closed over hooded eyes and she hugged herself in close, *'No. My father doesn't talk about them.'*

Any thought of a reply was interrupted by Sandy, towering over Jude as the way out was blocked, *'I didn't know you were so brainy, eh.'*

'I'm not really.'

'Oh come on. Seems you've got a few secrets tucked away. You're not just a rich city slicker!'

Sandy's friends squeezed up beside Jude in the door frame, sizing her up. Jude looked about for Huia and saw her walking alone, slender hands carrying her big bag full of tidy notes. Her uniform hung off her thin back and Jude had never noticed before how worn and long the skirt of her pinafore was, like a cover. Jude tried to catch up. As she tried to move, Sandy placed her hands on her shoulders. Jude nervously pulled up her tie, fingers remaining under her chin, as if to protect her 'chops.'

'I think you might be planning something. You and Suzy. My sister Emily knows about it. We want to like you and we don't want to have to tell on you. There is an essay coming up. You might need to write one for yourself and one for me.'

With that she left, the sister of Emily, moving with her friends in a tight giggling bundle through the foul and filthy air.

CHAPTER TEN

Half way through her morning rounds Eunice looked up to see Miss Darling recite from Macbeth, in rather florid movements from her classroom window.

'How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?'

A gust of wind stirred from under a great oak she had stopped to admire. The first of the autumn leaves hovered around her ankles like giant orange moths. She understood it was just coincidence that she happened to be outside at that time and that some girls called her a name. Up until that moment Eunice had been enjoying the morning.

Even after the outburst of Suzy at assembly, from the rows of senior girls. Thank God none of the juniors had heard the swearing but Eunice had. She'd always had a good ear and even from the vast distance that separated the two voices, she could hear Suzy's words loud and clear. Beforehand she had, as she did every morning, asked the girls to,

'Look into the middle distance and think about the day ahead.'

A shared energy and commitment to going forth into the land of knowledge - to Dickens, the Bronte's, the great physicists and artists. There was so much to learn and she wanted desperately for every day to be a springboard for that proud future woman to say, 'I was educated at Springwood,' as they worked as doctors and lawyers, accountants and scientists. But their middle distance was mostly just staring blandly ahead or looking glumly at down at their feet and that morning she heard Suzy say,

'And where the fuck's the middle distance Miss Shipton?' Then an out-break of muffled shocked laughter rippled around her.

'Who said that?' She boomed. The assembly fell into absolute silence. Eunice waited.

'I am waiting.' Still no word. And then, bravely, Suzy stood up and said, 'It was me Miss.'

There was another collective intake of breath. Another silence. Eunice moved downstage and peered up at the senior seats. The front rows of girls looked down in terror.

'Get out of this hall at once you disrespectful, rude child. I will deal with you later.'

For once she had not the heart for a dressing down and ended up just putting Suzy on an afterschool detention when really the event warranted much more, even a suspension, especially after the incident with the cigarette only days before. Straight after this the choir master, Larry Brown, with she thought unseemly haste, had the entire hall of one thousand girls singing in one massed voice. He darted about the stage pacing from one corner to another, then down between the rows with his crumpled suit and his hair flopping. The students followed every stroke of his baton.

Larry was a man full of passion for music, some of it dubious in taste. But that morning Eunice hadn't even minded Larry's choice of song - Aquarius. The girls sounded a lot less sappy and gushy than the original which was some hippy thing about harmony, understanding and trust abounding.

Dorie could have learnt a thing or two about that. The previous weekend she had brought Graham around to look at the house for what she called 'maintenance'.

'Graham just wants to check the roof. It's in a state of disrepair. Anyone can see. And as for that garden.'

Graham had stood by his mother grinning at Eunice foolishly, leaning back on his heels just as Bernard used to do. He had always been a sweet boy. But practical he was not. She wondered what on earth he would do up on the roof. Later, on that Saturday, when she could hear his tentative heavy steps on the corrugated iron it seemed as if he was walking slowly to nowhere, somehow lost while Deirdre would be at home, sprawled on the couch patting that giant stomach - waiting. Eunice hoped that up on the roof, Graham had caught sight of her river of roses.

Over the last few years she had planted fiery reds and oranges and let them grow un-pruned down the bank. Thorns helped pierce the magenta petals into rocks and unsuspecting plants. Eunice, who had always been taught like a true Calvinist to harbour a silent disdain for material things, to look down upon those who openly relish possession like Deirdre, found herself gazing at them possessively. As if to match this new desire, she had purchased a stereo system, so that she could listen to music as she relished her flowers. Dorie had decried the purchase

‘What need have you of such a thing? You can just as well play your Wagner on Dad’s old gramophone.’

Eunice no longer had time for Wagner. At twilight she had taken to pouring herself a sherry, putting on some Flamenco music and, from her lounge window, letting her vision flood with colour. The record swept around the turntable as the primal chant filled the room. She first came across it on her travels with Bernard, through Andalucía. Just the two of them wandering through the heat and dust and vibrant colours of the plains and ever since she had come to love the rich tones sung in a language she could not understand, only feel. The passion in that beginning cry, the – *ayee, ayee aye* was a wail of pure grief. The song had a curious mystical quality, encompassing both longing and contained joy and it seemed to her that she held it on her tongue - nestling there like dark syrup, caught like a nightingale.

Then the song began in earnest with the finely plucked guitar, the beat and speed increasing, rolling across the minute notes. The fashionable young guitarists and singers shared some of this finesse, even John Lennon and his ilk.

This Spanish music was a genuine voice, the raised sweet and bitter cry of the people. Not some superficial angst or dopey love song. The music had brought back her time with Bernard and given a whole new focus. She began to really remember the times they had. The memories resurfacing, untrammelled by what was to come but in her private garden of roses, Dorie could not set foot on them.

One spring day, on their trip through Spain, she and Bernard had watched an Easter Parade in a small town. The priests' looked almost bizarre with their white pointed hoods like wizards. A group of men carried a statue of Jesus on the cross. His skin was white and shiny, dark open eyes blazing with some vision. He had the most beautiful well proportioned body. Blood trickled down his forehead from his crown of thorns like some dangerous, dashing martyrdom. The people followed solemnly, some women quietly wept, children in their best Sunday dress looked a little stunned. Eunice felt outrage on behalf of the dead statue – not so much for the torture and sacrifice of Jesus, but for a young man cut down in his prime.

Later, sitting in the empty church, the two of them had looked around. The place was dripping with ornate gold replicas of Jesus and Mary. Their pale skin and European features a far cry from the real Jerusalem; the Jews and the Arabs. On a wall by the altar was a portrait of who they assumed to be Mary. Part of the lower half of her torso was missing. The paint faded or flaking off. But the upper half caught their attention,

'Can you see her hair? See how it's gathered up and parted. See? See the way the hair is separated and extended like the upright ears of an animal?' Bernard stood up, taking her hand, pulling her along the narrow pew with some urgency. Once underneath he pointed up.

'Look Eunice. Look at her face. The half-moon eyes slanted down from the Roman nose. She's slightly out of proportion. Not strictly beautiful, but magnificent.'

Eunice edged closer. The painting was very old. Ruby stones hung from her ear lobes. A matching necklace emphasized her big neck. The 'Mary's' chest was wide, with little breasts, almost manly. The shoulders had a similar line to her own. As if they were not there, but tucked down, folded inside the sloping skin like hidden wings.

'She does not look like Mary at all,' said Eunice.

'I am not sure that she is. Maybe she's just snuck in somehow. The woman could be some kind of ancient Goddess. Do you know...' he turned, taking her by the waist, drawing her in, 'She looks like you. Strong. Classical. Full of mouth. No half measures.'

He kissed her then, softly at first, then passionately. It was a moment. It was her moment.

Years later, when she looked at the almost obscene roses it seemed to her as if a life believing in the existence of an inner God meant nothing. He or she was not housed in some quiet, dull corner with some blind faith slaving to conjure him up against the odds. She was everywhere. She had been inside the statue, inside Bernard, in the snuck in 'Mary.' She was outside in the vivid colours, the dust and the cry of grief. She was there in her roses. Absolute fulfillment was held in those moments and Eunice had been able to spread her arms and say,

'Before me the Hill of Cornucopia' or 'the bank and shoal of time.'

What would poor Graham have heard that weekend up on the roof plodding about. Just the odd Tui? Did he go along with this plan of his mothers to usurp Eunice from the house and the garden? His aunt who'd spent hours with him - reading him stories about trolls and giants and listening to Peer Gynt? Dorie had never been interested in stories.

'Give me reality any day.'

She could hear the music in her ears earlier that morning when she saw Suzy skip down the stairs to speak with her. It seemed as if the girl was welcoming the chastising and punishment she would inevitably get, dampening Eunice's rage with a proud moon face, transcendent; like an offering, like the flowers. The girl represented the spirit of the age, the real rebellion. Not some housewife in a miniskirt. Or some overgrown boy in a fur coat. Hers was the pushing down of barriers. Where was in fact the middle distance? It had given Eunice an idea. The meeting of the choir and parish board to plan for the upcoming Easter service was coming up this Thursday.

Dorie would be there.

There would be no more middle-distance, no more mediocrity. Eunice had in her mind strong colours, an element of sacrifice and a touch dramatic in the mode of the European Passion Plays. Eunice looked up again at Miss Darling's window. The teacher had gone. She had changed her mind a little about Darling, at least the young woman was bringing the wonder of Shakespeare alive for the girls. Eunice wrapped her cape around her and smiled, witches had capes. Eunice put her hand to her face. It felt soft - like her roses.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

For Jude and the other girls, the brown parcels on the bed were at first a source of excitement and mystery. Jude thought it might be a present from home, or some gift from a stranger. But when she ripped open the paper, a strange mud brown dress of a kind of spongy nylon sprung out.

‘What the hell is this?’ Jude walked out into the corridor to find Suzy grimacing, the dress held up in front of her.

‘Let’s go and try them on together in the bathroom.’ Trudi pressed the frock against her stocky little frame. She liked anything new, anything anyone could give her she wore, as long as it wasn’t her own.

Stripping off jeans and tee-shirts they stepped into the pool of chemical cloth, wriggling their bodies in. Jude felt they all had the same hopeful thought, that by just being worn the dress would somehow change and lose its ugly square shape. But they discovered that the dress, even after touching warm bodies, could’ve hung in space without them inside. One by one each girl fell into the wide mirrors of the shared bathroom, gazing in horror. As the sun touched glass and silver surfaces, it caught their hair and skin and nylon thread on the stiff brown mass of each girl. For a moment it seemed to Jude, their bodies became like fluid, like the wood sprites from her childhood fairy stories. The bathroom was a chaos of shrieking, writhing bodies. Mim and Mo quickly summed up the dresses importance in the scheme of things. They combed their hair, looked at their reflections, laughed at the dress and left the bathroom.

It was time for the Catholics and their miracles and as if the dress could act like a medium, Jude pulled some scissors from her toilet bag and bending over, cut the seam open around the hem so that stray material and thread spilled out around her calves in a static haze.

‘You can’t do that! You’re going to get into so much trouble.’ Huia stood behind her, hands covering her mouth in shock.

'I don't care.'

'It's the Catholics this morning,' said Huia

'Yeah. You have to do all this stuff. Crossing yourself and drinking wine. It's far out.' said Suzy. Jude had a moment of panic. She had never been in Catholic Church and did not know what to do.

'This is so disgusting. How can I wear this! James will be at church!' Sandy paraded in front of the mirror.

'Why is she worried about your brother?' Jude whispered to Huia.

'She'd like him to be her boyfriend.'

'The one in the photo?'

'Yes, that's him. He goes to the Boys High School.'

Jude looked across at Sandy. Her long frame seemed to stretch out the smocks bulk, the deep tan of her shapely legs blending in with the brown. Jude looked at her own shrouded figure: the high collar, the tent like drop and the gathered long sleeves - the only touch of prettiness. It was a plain dress and she liked it. Like all her clothing the church dress had been chosen for her by someone else, by her mother, her Headmistress, and underneath it she could hide her building nervousness about church.

Suzy stood captured with herself: the long straight hair, alabaster skin and tilting black eyes. Suzy seized the scissors and set to work, destroying her own hemline. But she went further, tying a dressing gown cord around her waist, pulling and teasing her hair into tight knots.

The other girls followed by fluffing up their own hair, hoping it would go unnoticed by Mrs Latham and Miss Shipton. Jude and the others added a touch of barely seen eyeliner and vaseline on the lips to add moisture to the desert like cover of 'the frock'.

Once paired up with Huia and walking through the suburban streets, her hat crooked, Jude's mood brightened. On the corner of the main street a group of hippies gathered around a Volkswagen van. It was painted bright green, and giant rainbows and flowers covered the surface. On the roof rack were some surfboards. A few men in flared muslin pants and loose cotton shirts and hair were looking inside the steaming bonnet at the back of the van. One, very blonde, his face tanned and smooth smiled at the girls, reminding Jude of Steven. Some young women talked in a circle. One of them was very pregnant and the others touched her full stomach, exclaiming and laughing.

'Ooh. I feel it move,' laughed one. Her hair was cut short in contrast to the others, whose long locks flowed like their floating caftans and velvet bags and cruising gentle voices. Her dungarees were covered in protest badges –Support the IRA. Stop the war in Vietnam.

'That's Mrs Latham's daughter,' said Trudy.

'Mrs Latham has a daughter!' Jude found it hard to imagine the brittle head matron ever being pregnant, breast feeding, changing nappies.

'Carry on girls!' commanded Rebecca Latham from the back row.

The young hippie women stopped talking and watched the Highland's girls pass. Mrs Latham's daughter creased her brow and looked away. Jude noticed there was no sign the mother and daughter knew each other. The other hippie women continued staring. Jude thought it must be in sympathy for the Highland Girls being trapped in hats, gloves and stockings. But the hippies appeared more apart from the surroundings with their flowers and peace signs in contrast with the respectable houses and tidy gardens.

The New Plymouth Church of the Apostle stood at the top of a rise in the centre of the small city. It loomed above them as the girls rounded the corner with its high pitched dark roof and solid ancient mass of grey stone masonry. A row of yew trees circled the sides. Tall stained glass windows, narrow and blind as portholes did not provide any clues into what was inside. As Jude approached she saw the boarders from Springwood Boys'

High School walk pass with blue and red silk ties loose about their necks. White shirts tugged at their shoulders. With their socks bunched on gangly ankles, pushing and shoving they filed through the wooden doors, their messy uniforms worn like a badge of honour. Next to her Trudy put her hat on an angle and pouted her lips. Huia walked and talked naturally, unfazed by the boys. Her face and her clothing did not change at all. For a moment Jude wished she could be like Huia, unaffected by the power of boys and men. But something in her was changing this year. Bit by bit her body seemed to grow, taking on thoughts of its own. Just ahead, Sandy hitched up her skirt and pulled up her sleeves.

‘I can’t see James anywhere,’ Huia called to Sandy and catching up with her so-called friend, she left Jude standing alone. A group of senior boys stood around with their hands deep inside their pockets. Bending toward one another, a gust of broken laughter broke free from their circle. Rocking on their feet, they caught glances of the new brown frocks.

‘They look like fat nuns,’ said one spotty fifth former and the group erupted again in a show of guffawing and rocking. Sandy looked towards them, her expression leveling the group as she folded her arms around her waist, creating just enough pull for the hem of her frock to rise up even further. Looking over, the boys dug their hands deeper and shuffled.

‘James will be here. He knows I’m coming and he’ll really want to see me. I got a letter from him yesterday. It was so sweet. I think he’s in love.’ Sandy looked at them all – a queen with her subjects.

Walking away from the others, Jude read a plaque on the side of the church.

‘In memory of the Taranaki militia and volunteers who fought and fell in the native wars in the years from 1860 to 1866.’

Jude thought back to just a month earlier when she and Kit had travelled through the empty countryside and remembered the rotting farm gate and wandered if they had ‘fought’ there. Images of ‘*brandishing steel*’ and bodies ‘*unseamed from the nave to the chops*’ floated before her, and their dark angry bloodstained faces. The ‘District of Taranaki’

seemed for a moment much bigger than her old city. It didn't have the violent wind but it had wars.

By the church, a flutter of jet black feathers in a giant fig tree took her attention. Two Tui's jumped in chase from one branch to another, their crisp white feathers ruffled with squawking, beaks locked. The stark morning light played with the wild energy of the dark diving bodies making Jude laugh. She didn't notice, leaning against the trees bulk on the shaded side, James Te Whare.

'What are you looking at?' He moved towards her, appearing out of half light. She could just make out his face. All she saw was the tall, broad shouldered frame and coils of hair down his neck. But as he came closer she could see that he was in different to the others boys, his tie in place, the starch white of his collar in contrast to his dark brown skin and wide grin. He had a prefects badge pinned to his blazer. Before her was the young man in Huia's photo on the dresser, the young man who had transposed himself into her books and Macbeth.

'I was looking at the birds,' said Jude feeling like some child answering to a polite adult.

'And what was it about the birds?' But just as James stepped closer, Sandy came out of nowhere. Looking behind to see if the matrons were watching, she took off her hat, shaking her blonde locks free.

'Hi James! I got your letter.'

On seeing her James seemed to forget Jude. Sandy's height blocked her view of him and as they talked, Jude backed away. The others filed into the church and Jude remembered that she had to go into this place and do and say all the right things. Easter was not far away and she had to make something happen. Otherwise it would be too late. The men in the dream on the black oily sheet of tarmac would march her father away forever.

When she got to the bowl of water on top of a stand at the entrance, she saw the girls in front pause and do something with it. This was her first hurdle. She needed to get it right. Jude held her hand tightly in front as if clenching them together would make them hold onto the liquid. Her heart began to pound as she came close to the stand. When it was her turn she only meant to dab her unclenched shaking finger in the liquid and place it on her forehead. She turned and saw that Huia, Sandy and James were lined up behind her.

‘Cross yourself with it.’ Sandy hissed from behind.

In her confusion, Jude scooped up too much water and attempted what she thought must be a crossing of herself, but water splashed onto her chest, creating a dark stain that left the church smock clinging to her left breast. Jude’s hand seemed to shoot all over the place so that the remaining water landed in a spreading wet circle in the area of her crutch. Behind her she could just make out suppressed laughter and heard Sandy whisper,

‘I don’t think she’s been in a church very much. Did you see her mother? Did she look religious?’

Jude tried to cover her clinging wet areas with the blazer, but Kit had brought a size too small. She dived for the nearest pew, perching on the end beside Mim and Mo, who like the rest of the church, kneeled forward on a wood bench, hands clasped, eyes clamped shut in what Jude at least knew to be prayer. Closing her eyes Jude attempted to be spiritual. After the stupidity of her entrance the silence was good. Around her boards creaked and she could smell polish and incense and for a while the church seemed to accept her, clothing her with its old things. Jude folded herself in and holding the pew in front of her with one hand, she began to gently sway. Forgetting her stained parts she remained that way for what felt like a long time. Then Mim jabbed her shoulder and she looked up to find the rest of the congregation seated. A thin man, dressed in black robes, waited on a raised platform.

‘Catholics believe in purgatory.’ The priest had a squeaky voice and Jude sat up, breathing shallow little breaths, not daring to look behind, left or right. He was surrounded

by an ornate marble circular pulpit. The lectern rose up into the shape of a gold and orange eagle, sculptured out of beaten brass.

‘We make no apologies for this. Some may flinch at the notion of some poor soul floating about in a void. But purgatory is merely a place where souls in need of purification can be cleansed before eventually going to the great mansion of heaven, Revelation 21:27, ‘nothing unclean shall enter it.’

Jude remembered how people called the Seatoun house a mansion. Once when some Jehovah Witness came to the door, Snow had invited them in and offered them tea but they paused at the door, unsure whether to come into the wide marble floored entrance. Her father never failed to be good mannered, even with those he disagreed with. He beckoned the three into the large front room. They sat together on the satin lined settee, a clean faced woman hiding her long hair in a blue scarf, and two men, both in chunky brown suits. In contrast her father had his highly polished two toned shoes, casual linen suit jacket, ready for golf. He sent Jude to make the tea as he drew a chair nearer to group. When she came back with the tray, he was sitting on the edge of his seat, leaning forward. His elbows were spread out on his knees, his hands locked together, leaning towards them as if they were the most interesting people on earth. When they left they smiled and waved and knew that they hadn’t persuaded her father of anything but they had met a good man.

From where she was sitting, Jude focused on a stained glass window. Inside it, Jesus beckoned in a garden of orange and a green sky. The colours were all wrong and psychedelic. He looked like a surfer or a hippie with his well built body naked to the waist and long hair. He looked like Steven. Jesus did not look like someone capable of sending you to purgatory. Was God in charge of purgatory? She was confused. The priests’ mouth was moving but she could not hear him, she could only see her father walking alone carrying something in his hands, his body dwarfed by a vast formless grey landscape. Like the witches, a church must have some magic spells. Jude tried to pray again and closed her eyes tightly, whispering to herself;

'Please God and Jesus. Find my father. He could be wandering anywhere suffering from amnesia. His name is Snow and he is slim with fine white hair. Lately he has had a worried face and before he left, he had a fight with my mother. He might be wearing wet clothes. He might be very tired. Please bring him back. Tell him I am in New Plymouth at a boarding school called Highlands and that my mother has abandoned me and that my sister has disappeared.

Please God, bring my daddy back to me. Please. Please.'

Jude opened her eyes but nothing had changed. Jesus was still stuck in the garden and Snow had gone. The congregation seemed to sit like puppets, like morons staring straight ahead. The priest's voice droned on and on.

'The parable of the Unfaithful servant teaches a need for disciples to be faithful to their tasks till the coming of Christ on Judgment Day, concludes with these words: That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself....'

She looked across at the rows of boys who sat in morose lines, their bodies squared off and arms protecting their chests. Jude tried again to cover her wet dress.

'Jude! Jude!' Someone whispered her name.

She dared not look around. Mrs Latham and Miss Shipton sat in the next row. Both of them seem to be listening to what the priest with faces fixed like concrete. The priest's craggy face moved with the shape of the words so that his eyes, cheeks and mouth waged war, his body protected by the pulpit.

'Jude! Jude! I'm sending you a note.' She recognized Suzy's voice.

She waited, trying to concentrate on what the priest was saying.

'The results will be pass or fail, heaven or hell...'

Mim quickly dropped a scrap of paper into her lap as if it were rotten meat. Jude glanced at the flush of embarrassment on the side of Mim's face. Looking again at the matrons and at the minister, Jude opened up the paper.

'We won't have time for purgatory next Friday night. Are you sure you're coming?'

The priest continued.

'And so I quote from John verse five. If you see your brother or sister committing what is not a mortal sin, you will ask, and God will give life to such a one-to those whose sin is not mortal.'

Jude had been waiting weeks to come to the Catholic Church. But she could not make head or tail of the priest's words. They did not give her any comfort or idea of how to bring her father back. The note burned in her hand. In the pew across from her, James's face was unreadable as he stared straight ahead, his leg casually stuck out on the aisle, his wide hands folded in his lap. His body seemed far too big for the pews as if he could take the old timber of the church in his hands and shake it like a dolls house. Jude, careful to make no sound scrunched up the note and in one quick movement she placed it in her pocket. She surprised herself with the coolness with which she had held, read and got rid of the note. The congregation got up to sing. Some of the girls sung loudly, making fun of the words, others just mimed. A chorus of broken boy's voices half-heartedly joined in, rough and low,

'The lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me down to lie

In pastures green He leadeth me

The quiet waters by.'

Jude reluctantly moved to the small steps leading up to the altar. She could not make out what the kneeling bodies were doing. Some seemed to nod when the priest and his helper approached them with something in their cupped hands and then again with a great silver dish. By the time she got to kneel on the step, her whole body shook. Mim seemed to

know exactly what to do but with Miss Shipton giving her darting furious looks on the other side; she was too scared to ask. A white robed man offered a tiny sliver of paper. Mim put hers in her mouth and Jude knew she must do the same.

'This is the body of Christ,'

'Thanks very much.' Jude said.

'Sssshhh,' whispered Mim.

How could it be Jesus' body? Was it some desiccated parched bit of skin? How could there be enough scrapings of old skin to last in this many churches over many centuries. It might be some other dead body. Jude had to eat it. But she would do it for Snow, go to any lengths to reclaim her father. She began to feel strange. The priest was coming toward her and Mim with the big bowl. Mim drunk and so must Jude. The priest muttered something to Mim as she sipped and then wiping the rim he past it along. Jude took it and gulped down a generous amount to wash away the flesh, but just as the welcome sweet red liquid touched the roof of her mouth she heard the squeaking, nasal words.

'Take this, the blood of Christ.' And Jude spluttered so that the wine spilled out of her mouth and down the front of the dress. Nothing happened. Nothing changed. No sudden flash telling her where he was.

Mim quickly got up and moved away from the coughing Jude while Miss Shipton and the priest patted her back.

'Why ever did you drink so much, girl? That's very rude. And as for that dress. I should have guessed you'd get up to something given your mother. Now get up!'

Jude rose off her wobbly knees and turned to the sea of faces. She could see Sandy and the others looking away in laughing shame at her water and wine stained dress.

Back in her pew she bowed her head down, using the disguise of now useless prayer to hide her embarrassment. Mim and Mo stared straight ahead, unsure what to say or do. Sandy sniggered behind her,

'Huia! Look at James. He's staring at that trussed up city slicker. He must think she's a real dick.' Sandy could barely hold in her delight, clasping her hands tight on her lap and almost shouting she said, 'Jude looks all scrappy like her tarty sister in that photo on her dresser. Did you see it? The one of her family?'

But James wasn't laughing. He just smiled across the church at Jude.

Looking up Jude caught James in the eye and he winked.

Later as they left Jude caught sight of Suzy and a rare smile and returned it. She would sneak out with her, running into the night. Her praying, eating of flesh and drinking blood, had failed. She would find another way. Huia had invited her home. Jude had no home. She thought of the vacant, lonely fields on the journey to the school. By befriending a boy and his sister she might get to leave the hostel and out near a main road she could run away, back to Wellington in search of her father.

'Great stunt you pulled there.' Jude turned to her new found friend.

'It wasn't meant to be.'

'Course it was.'

'Jude Farley Come here this instant!'

Mrs Latham marched toward them. Something in the shape of her dark green skirt and cardigan was familiar to Jude. The stylish twist, the perfect cut and Mrs Latham with her handsome figure could wear it. It was a Mistress on Manners.

CHAPTER TWELVE

On Sunday morning, Kit lay in her bed next to Stuart.

To get him there, she had only needed to touch his arm. The skin was soft like baby's', the hair a blonde soft down. It was an act of fortune that the Neville Shute was on a top shelf and she'd had to get the stool and even then she couldn't reach. Climbing down she needed his guiding arm and his touch had lingered.

They had found a common interest in young Richard. The boy had grown in the six weeks Kit had been at Northshore Boys. Every time he came to the library, Richard naturally gravitated toward the issues desk, asking her rather inane question like,

'What books do you like Miss?'

'The greats - Dickens, Tolstoy are my game dear.'

The boy would stand in front of her, taking up all the space along the front of the desk, shorts straining, shirt pulling. His mother must not have had the money for a new school uniform and Kit almost offered. The woman must struggle. Every period of every day, men and boys would come in and out through the flapping doors of the library and Kit moved amongst them, in front, behind, beside. She loved it, like a dance. Like she and Snow at The Palms every Friday night - he taking her hand in his and leading her on to the sparkling dance floor; Kit's white lame dress sashaying till midnight.

Last week a long way from 'The Palms' Mr Porteous had been struck down by a heart attack and the next day, walking behind 4Rd and Richard, walked Stuart like an Adonis. His hair nearly touched his collar- already flouting the school rules.

The first encounter involved Richard. The boy had obviously been side-lined by his peers. He sat alone and morose, in his too tight uniform but it was not Kit's place to go

over to him and ask what was wrong. Instead she made eye contact with his teacher, Stuart. His eyes found their way down to her cleavage and she demurely placed a hand over her neck and walked away.

She watched him talk to Richard, kneeling down on one knee, engaging him in conversation. A connection must have been made because Richard came to the issues desk and asked for more Neville Shute's and she had looked back across to Stuart with a winning smile. And now a week later there he was in her bed.

Kit rose and changed into her togs. Although the chill bite of autumn had crept into her morning swims, she seemed impervious to the cold. There was no equivocating as she waded into the water, no standing stock still and shivering as she'd seen other women do, like they were being herded by a man with a gun, fussing and tittering.

'Oh it's freezing! Oh, I just can't!' inching their silly way slowly in, then paddling about, chins raised above the water like cats caught in a slip stream.

Kit just dived straight in and swam straight out. The little cove down the end of her street was perfect. Surrounded by high cliffs on either side, soft golden sanded bottom, the island Rangitoto fanning out in front of her with its sloping side, little dip in the centre, the shape of a top lip - the mouth of a sleeping volcano. She loved that about this city, the volcanoes; full of bottled up promise. Stuart stirred in the bed, propped his fine torso up on an elbow.

'Hey what you doing?' She loved the soft croak in his voice.

'I'm going for a swim. I do every morning.'

'Wow. That's discipline lady.' He ran his eyes over her body. She found herself blushing under the scrutiny.

'Why don't you come?

'Yeah I'd like to, but it's too early doll and too cold.' He fell back into the bed, splayed on his back and closed his dark blonde lashes, too young and lovely. Kit gently

closed the bedroom door, padded across the carpet, past the piano, darkly framed and watchful in the corner and eased her way into the sandals waiting at the door.

No-one stirred from the houses lining the street down to the beach. These were all relatively new. Like hers. Built in the 60's out of brick and brown creosoted wood, the front gardens dotted with shrubs and flowers. They were all the same, uninspiring, unlike her beloved Nuffield, its walls towering over the sea. When she and Snow had asked Gordon Nuffield to design them a home, they both had in mind the same thing. There was no need to endlessly discuss or compromise. Like her, Snow wanted something roomy, airy but solid. A house fit to hold onto the side of a steep hill. Many of the houses around them were unusual. The tough, uncompromising landscape demanded it, but they all looked out on the great sweep of ocean and Pencarrow Headland.

The strange newborn light broke onto the flat tongue of Baring Head, the wind worn grass of endless dawns, heralding ships and planes past the cliffs of Pencarrow into the harbor. After they had moved in, selected the right furniture, settled the children, there had been a hiatus – a time of routines and contentment. She had been happy to keep order in the house, to attend to practicalities and the meals and the family commitments, running the house like a happy ship.

Kit kept up her singing, joining the choir at the local church. She almost felt virtuous, making her way on a Sunday morning to the Anglican Church at the base of the hill, in a suitable frock, gloves, and hat. Her little handbag held tight in the crook of her arm as she past the nunnery that snaked its way down the hill. Nuns were housed inside the old stone tail, the high red doors at the mouth of the chapel clamped shut against the likes of Kitty Farley. There had once been Catholicism in her family, but Clara had railed against it, banished it long before Kit, Honey and Peter were born.

'It's a load of absolute rubbish.' Clara's hand would flay upwards, like a drowning swimmer waving for help, as she rummaged around in the chaos. Kit hated the mess.

Once inside the Anglican Church along with the rest of the choir, Kit would don the regulation blue smock and go along with the chatter before hand.

‘How are you Kit?’

‘I am fine thanks Pam? And you?’

‘Yes, very well. Lovely day.’

‘Yes, just lovely.’

Then sing with all her heart songs about Angels and God, imagining her mother’s disgusted reaction.

Kit dropped her towel and plunged into the sea, the chill of it taking her breath away, rinsing away any remnants of the night. An off- shore wind, whipped the waves into white curled creatures. She slowly ploughed through, losing herself in the journeying, each arm taking turns, arching up and over, her lungs holding breath, letting it out. When she had gone beyond the cliffs it was time to stop and turn and look back at the empty bay. This was the time she loved the most. It felt like she was a separate creature, way out in the sea, keeping herself afloat with arms circling wide, hands acting like paddles, strong, cupping the clear water, feeling the force of it between her fingers and feet.

Above her a seagull swooped and dived, crying before it flew back towards the cliff with its catch.

She was beginning to get cold. Alone in the ocean, looking back at the land like a creature cast out, she remembered the dream of that first Auckland night. The great bulk of water underneath her could hold anything; a shark, an octopus, a dead body. But not Snow.

What had changed so that it was no longer, ‘just lovely’? The kids traipsing in and out as they grew, hair and clothing progressively loosening along with their tongues and the new found freedom of the age. It was not that she and Snow disagreed with the sensibilities. They had both wept when John Kennedy was shot, united in grief at the tearing apart of a vision. The new Camelot. But their own Camelot began to fray at the seams, her voice after a day with the cleaning, the organizing, battling the cheek of Steven, the cleverness of Ned, the willfulness of Dianne and that boy; their secret, clandestine

meetings. She wanted something better for her girl. And Jude, the child's too vivid imagination leading her up into the pines with that awful old dress. It was all so disappointing and trying to control the chaos Kit became shrill and snapping, like the gull.

Before she swum in Kit treaded water, letting the liquid hold her upright. Sweeping her outstretched arm and palm on the sheer surface in a half circle, Kit turned her head back to the open ocean and Rangitoto.

As she made her way toward the house, Kit's mood shifted. Her young Adonis would be waiting. She liked his cool relaxed manner and the way he saw things. Last night they had gone to see *Easy Rider*. Kit had balked at the casual drug taking, the easy violence.

'Hey chill! Just go with it. You don't have to judge. Just be.'

She opened the front door, she called out to him but here was no reply. In the bedroom, the sheets lay in a rumpled pile, the smell of sweet sweat and a man. A man who'd vanished.

Walking back from church, Eunice's thought about what had just happened with Judith Farley and Suzy.

She used to find the Eucharist most distasteful, the cannibalistic drinking and eating. As a child she had sat in her fathers lap, looking up at the big wooden cross in the plain shell of their Presbyterian church. There had been no distraught statues or ornate candles. Just the cross for one to bring to it what one imagined or thought on a subtle and symbolic journey. For most of her life the solid posts brought guidance and comfort. When she fell off a horse and they thought she'd broken her back, when her father had disappeared for days, then suddenly returned without explanation; tie undone, mud on his suit and the stale smell of spirits on his breath. The uncluttered white space in their modest house of worship helped. The whole family prayed daily and mightily when Eunice had

applied for Cambridge, and was rewarded. But prayer brought her little comfort when she felt Bernard retract from her after he saw Dorie standing at the Wellington pier in 1937 after six romantic weeks on the boat home. Modest worship brought nothing at all when she had driven with Bernard that day in the brand new Humber Mother had brought as an engagement present.

The day had been magnificent. The rolling green hills on South coast road shimmered, reminding Bernard of the Dover coast. Apart from the towering mountain, the unseen hidden scar of conflict as they past Parihaka, the landscape was like something from a scene from Bernard's home, the Cornish Coast. She thought it would please him. Since returning, they had little of their slightly chiding discussions on everything and anything. As the car motored forward they had argued.

'What is the hurry? We do not have to get married too quickly. Let's leave it six months.'

'I don't understand Bernard. You seemed very eager to marry me on the way here. But since you arrived you have changed your mind. I think I know why.'

'What are you insinuating?'

'Nothing.'

Not a confident driver at the best of times Eunice took a bend too quickly and smashed against a tree. Bernard emerged ruffled, a little scratched but unscathed. But Eunice had suffered the full brunt of the crash and a fragment of glass from the windscreen wedged itself like the blade of an axe in her left cheek.

This morning before the Eucharist, the church had begun to feel weighted around her; the air was stuffy, the boards creaking. The girls had begun to line up in front of the pulpit and their dresses covered them well. Eunice felt glad for her design. There was no give. They moved like a row of tents toward what she had once seen as an unseemly ritual, but had begun to enjoy immensely. Seeing a statue of Mother Mary, splendid and festooned with colour against the alabaster of her skin - recognized up there with Jesus.

The walking to the altar like some bride and the humbling of the body before the statue of Jesus, made her feel like a small child. The soft quick murmurings of the priest – the sweet taste of syrupy wine. Half of them weren't Catholics and strictly speaking neither she nor the girls should have been taking part, but they all wanted to be part of the drama. The church in the modern age, after Vatican Two, did not seem to mind. Then Eunice saw Jude shuffling toward the altar, hemmed in by the others and something flayed about her ankles.

After the carry on with bread and wine the girl had frozen on the steps, looking out at the congregation, but not really seeing. With the colour high in her cheeks, her ginger eyes wide in confusion, covered in small dark slashes that clung to her body like marks from a brutal battle, the girl seemed trapped, just as she had that day Eunice had seen her looking out the window. Jude appeared to be all at sea, searching for the shore.

Seated back in their pew Eunice Shipton and Rebecca Latham could now see plainly the tattered Jude. And behind her walked Suzy. Ripples of low, barely audible laughing cascaded through the church, directed at Suzy walking jauntily to her pew, the hem of her dress bouncing. Little tendrils of nylon thread and cloth fanned out in a riot of static like some hula skirt. She held a prayer book close to her chest and cocking her head to one side, Suzy blinked sweetly, like something out an old oil painting. A dressing gown belt pulled in her tiny waist as her teased brown hair, freed from her hat, floated on top of the bohemian vision. As she past Mrs Latham. Suzy smiled like a Cheshire cat.

'How dare she! I'll get that little rat! She's gone to far this time!' Rebecca's hands clutched her knees in an attempt to hold her rage at the rude young face and the carefully polished resistance. The child past her, her eyes glinting like of a little fox.

Seeing Rebecca's fury Eunice tried to feel the same. She should be enraged. After all the work she put into those frocks. But there was something of the hypocrite about Rebecca Latham. Eunice knew about the men she entertained in her cottage, right on the school grounds, right under her nose. The woman kept excellent order in the hostel but she was cold. Eunice had heard about the estranged, rebellious daughter.

‘We’ll catch up with the girls after church. They will be banned from any outings for a month and made to fix those frocks. I too am furious.’ Eunice said, trying to spit out the words from her misshaped lips in the customary manner.

A pageantry surrounded Suzy; something brave. The way she was willing to actually lengthen the dress – none of the leg baring harlotry of the supposed ‘new woman.’ The girl was interested in other things. Eunice’s earlier idea about Easter was growing. She had all those roses in her garden and she needed someone to wear them. She could imagine Suzy with the odd rose, and a robe, walking down Devon Street for Palm Sunday: a living breathing emblem, Suzy as the ‘Mary’ figure, the universal woman. Not some feminist icon but a pupil from her school playing an important role. Suzy had become Eunice’s charge to guide like she would her own child.

‘And the other one, Jude. Just look at the state of her frock! I read something in the newspaper about her family. A tragedy. Something about the father. Do you know what happened?’ Rebecca sat forward in her seat.

‘The father, Snow Farley was a very successful businessman, he owned, Mistress on Manners. I know he was involved with an accident, something to do with the Wahine storm and his car and the sea.’

Rebecca gathered her purse and patted the fabric of her blue skirt in shaky movements. The line and cut of the dress was familiar – elegant. It was similar to the one Dorie had worn when she met Bernard. Although a different style, its trademark was unmistakable. Something luxurious, sheer, in contrast to Dorie’s mealy mouthed Presbyterianism.

‘How unpleasant,’ Rebecca said. The girl will naturally be unstable. And unstable girls are like rotten apples. They spread their bruises.’

Eunice had left Rebecca to challenge the girls. The morning was fresh, the air cool against her skin. She began to hum. Some of the Spanish words she listened to night after night had sunk in. Eunice found she had the voice for it –the rough growling edges suited

more to the essence of Flamenco. The kind of singing she had been taught by her mother, endless sessions with Dorie standing formally and upright were all about purity, roundness of tone. But Flamenco did not hide anything, one searched deep inside like some gravel pit. No need to hide the pain.

Along the way, the houses lining the streets in that part of town, her part of town were grand by any standards. They towered over the small gardens with their bulky dark fronts. Stubborn and seemingly permanent but their wooden veneers would be easily torched. Like paper houses. She wondered what levels of anguish and unhappiness lay behind. Maybe she'd been saved from a life full of that – that supposed domestic bliss. For a moment she had a vision of the people inside having sex. Behind the tidiness an act of chaos, the participants surprised by their own part in that divine comedy. Yet she would give anything to have had some chaos with Bernard. Instead he led a pedestrian life as a math's teacher at Springwood. The girls loved his intelligence and humour, his vague genteel manner. She treated him as headmistress with professional distance and he never curried favour. But over twenty years, when she had her coffee with the staff at interval, catching sight of him chatting, he seemed to slowly fade. The black hair losing luster, the tweed suit worn, shoes unpolished. He began to grow thinner. Then like the torched wooden veneers, he crumbled with stomach cancer. So much left unsaid amongst all that sterile food in Dorie's tidy house.

Down the end of her street Eunice saw a group of young people crowded around a van. They talked and laughed some reclining back against a fence. They seemed to just exist there, uninhibited by the houses with their gentle movements and soft voices. In some ways, the women with their long hair and dresses were more in keeping with era of architecture around them. They waved to Eunice, unafraid of her cape and her scar.

She loved to walk alone - time to think and plan. She was due to give a talk for Darling's English class next week on Lady Macbeth, another one who 'walked abroad.' But there was no blood on Eunice's hands. She had done no scheming, manufactured no death.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

First Jude had Art with Mrs Wilson, who busied about the room, large stomach wrapped in an apron, pudgy face drawing the girls' attention to a copy of a painting called Annunciation. She had cello taped this to the blackboard. On three high stools placed around the art room: a pumpkin, a vase of flowers and an old boot.

'Here, in this painting Mati Klarwein, attempts to depict the inner world of the psyche using surrealist techniques. You may find these same techniques on some of the rock albums you have at home.'

Mrs Wilson's short mass of bleached blonde, not quite hiding the grey hair, stood out in little tufts. She blinked. The girls, some open-mouthed tried to understand the image of a naked, full breasted black woman reclining Madonna like in a garden full flowers, fish heads, watermelons and a blue and red angel straddling a drum. A group of painted African tribesman chanted in the corner.

'Hey.' Said Sandy. 'Look he's got lipstick on and rouge. That's crazy. Are they homosexuals?' Mrs Wilson tried to look tolerant.

'These men are a long way from Taranaki.' She stood reverently in front of the painting with her hands folded at the base of a stomach so large that Jude imagined a baby in it. Over her shoulder she called out instructions.

'Paint girls. Paint the pumpkin. Paint the boot. Place them in the garden or the jungle of your imagination.'

'What the...' Sandy looked around at the others, face disgusted, paint brush gripped in her hand like a feeble weapon.

Suzy began to work quickly, creating an angry scene of blinding colours snaking through a city jungle. Her hair was loose, always a sign that something was up. She'd received a letter from her father saying that she would have to stay in the hostel over Easter and that he had important matters to attend to.

'The 'matters' will be a woman. Probably Latham. Bet she's not around at Easter.' Suzy muttered.

Jude liked Mrs Wilson's effort to connect with the them, her use of colours and images and she thought of Macbeth as the foreign world of the black Madonna invaded in her head. By now the witches were really spinning their magic. They had met again, and Macbeth had come like some addict to find out what more they had in store for him. Over the last week they took turns reading out the foul ingredients of the cauldron, the black eye of the newt and iridescent sheen of a dragon's scale and all those women conjurers vividly slipping before her.

When Dianne had got tired of their own witches games up in the pine trees, preferring Simon Watt and his souped-up bodgy car, Jude had got Linda Somers and other friends to climb up into the steep pine forests, dragging an old tin drum. They placed it on a platform of logs. Rain water slowly collected inside and each Saturday they would add something new to the muddy mix. Linda just threw in flowers, Phillippa Saunders was more game with a dead fish but Jude had taken to throwing items stolen from Kit into the stinking brown water: a treasured necklace, a gold cigarette case and once combings of red hair plucked from a brush on Kit's plush vanity. As they moved about, they sung,

'Imagine yourself in a boat by the river,

And tangerine trees and marmalade skies,'

'Hey you shouldn't take that stuff. Your mother will be furious when she sees it's gone missing.'

Linda bent over the drum, trying to fish out the necklace, which floated briefly before sinking, a dazzle of red and orange baubles, a world away from her Salvation Army

parents down on the flat and the safety of their uniforms. Jude stood very still, like Dianne had done before her on the hill. She wore Clara's maroon ball gown, the 'dreadful old thing' that Kit had put in the dress-up box.

'Why do you wear that dress,' said Linda, 'It's a bit weird.'

'The dress has powers.' Jude bent down and pulling the hem in her hand, she wound the folds around her legs, around her torso.

'When it was sewn it was sewn with magic thread so that whoever wore it could secretly wish something on anyone who looked at it.'

'Good or bad.' Her friends looked at Jude, arms folded, not quite believing but keeping their eyes on her just in case.

'Depends.'

At twelve she'd taken to teasing her hair like Dianne. Kit later deciding to have it cut, to be 'with it' she said. Across Jude's back, slashes of broken skin from a beating by Kit were soothed by the soft material. She looked down at her cauldron. Everything had sunk.

'It's all gone.' Linda sucked in some air.

'I don't care.' Jude kicked the drum, 'She won't even notice.'

A few nights before the house had gone crazy over who was going to do the dishes, whether Dianne had on the right shoes to go to the dairy, why Steven chose to use the – 'sloppy parlance of the times' to address his mother. The many windows that surrounded The Nuffield rattled, rain swirled around the sharp white corners and Dianne walked out into it in a pair of pink fluffy slippers. Kit yelled after her,

'You little vixen,'

Steven said, 'and what are you old lady?'

Jude, nervously drying a large plate, dropped it. The porcelain made a trinket sound as it met the marbled floor and Kit took to her with a coat hanger, beating her back and shoulders so hard the wood broke. Kit was small but also strong. She writhed like a doll whose stitching had become undone to show something savage; lipstick ran from her mouth, black mascara flooded her cheeks, red hair seedy under the bright kitchen lights.

Later Snow came home, his arms filled with new clothes for all of them.

'These are straight off the factory floor.'

The empty chambers, the lonely black piano ignored his words.

He sat at the edge of Jude's bed in a natty suit, the pants a little flared with a red handkerchief in the lapel of his jacket, and the gifts scattered now over the covers as he attempted to wipe away her tears with the hanky. It smelled of old spice and cigars between the folds.

'Don't cry dear. Where is your mother now?'

'She went in the car.' The welts stung on her back. She hiccupped. Mick Jagger wailed about Jumping Jack Flash and Kit did not return till the next morning as they all dressed sullenly for school. Jude heard Ned whisper to Steven. They heaved their school bags onto their shoulders, hair curling underneath their Rongitai Boys red and grey caps,

'Dad reckons the old lady drove all the way to Taihape. Five hundred miles in the dark.'

The tin drum stayed up on the hill but Linda and Phillippa stopped coming up. Once she invited Paul Sutton and they shared the butt of a cigarette and she let him kiss her, just like she had seen Dianne do with Simon. He put his tongue in her mouth and it felt wet and slippery. Later, after the storm, she wondered if she had cast a spell. Maybe the spinning world of the music, the jumping jack flashes and marmalade skies swirled about, tempting fate. Like Macbeth's witches with their fillets of fenny snakes.

After Art, they moved onto to English. Huia walked with Jude.

‘Everyone’s talking about what you did at church. They think that you did it on purpose. They think it was funny.’

Huia past on information like this to Jude, updating her, keeping her in touch with any changes in her new girl status.

‘It wasn’t supposed to be. I didn’t know what to do. Really.’

‘Oh sure. We believe you. They reckon you planned to splash all that water and guzzle all that wine. They reckon you’re quite smart.’ Huia tucked her schoolbag into her waist with her elbow and closed her eyelids, pursed her lips, like she was pulling herself in. Jude wondered who ‘they’ were. She wondered if she should like being thought of as smart. Part of her wanted their approval.

Miss Shipton waited for them in English. Her big body commanded the front the room, Miss Darling sat at her desk, small and powerless.

‘Oh my God. It’s bloody Bulldog.’ Suzy whispered as they pulled out chairs. The girls’ quick free movements of just moments before, the swinging bags, the chewing of gum, became very careful. Each one sat at a desk, placing books, paper and pens carefully, eyes fixed to the front. With everything in neat piles they waited. Miss Shipton drew her hands together and stepped forward.

‘To understand Macbeth and his dear wife, one has to understand Shakespeare’s England.’

‘Whose one?’ Suzy put her foot on her desk and propelled herself backward.

‘Suzy! Do not interrupt Miss Shipton and take your foot off that desk and sit up straight immediately.’ Miss Darling quickly moved from her desk. Jude had never seen her so angry. She had on a plain dress. There was no big flowered belt or coal eyes.

'One is...one is...' Miss Shipton paused, mouth twitching.

'One is yourself and everyone. Now if you don't mind I would like to continue. In Elizabethan England life was hard. One has to imagine a very different world. Daily tasks took time. Conditions were unsanitary. The Black Plaque would come and go, devastating families and towns. One was at the mercy of the weather, the Queen and one's standing in a very structured society. Much of one's position in life - and this included plants and animals - was put down to The Great Chain of Being. The King was at the top, second only to God. To kill a king was like killing something divine.

Now can you girls imagine the lowly peasants crammed onto the dirt floor of the open theatre? In a half circle all around were the various strata's of society in their seats, the aristocrats in the top layers. They had to contemplate the terrible killing of the King. Lady Macbeth was there before them, wiping blood off her skirt. Already she'd stood at the battlements and talked of murdering babies and stopping up the 'passage to remorse.'

Jude could see Lady Macbeth. She could not decide whether she was young with a small black mole just above her lip, auburn hair fanned across her face like a hand drawing blood. Beside her Huia was just as absorbed, but Heather fiddled with her pencil. Jude turned to see rows of stone-faced girls, too scared of 'Bulldog' to ask any questions. Jude wanted to know. She raised her hand.

'Miss Shipton. Was Lady Macbeth a witch?'

Eunice unclenched her hands and let them fall loosely at her sides, the normally fixed, closed expression softening.

'An excellent question. I don't believe she was a witch. But she foolishly ventured into unknown territory by enticing the spirits. Remember Elizabethans believed in ghosts. She was ambitious for her husband.'

She moved to the board and picking up the chalk began to make notes, forming each word in flowing script. Jude noticed the hood on her black cape. It was of white down,

almost like fur and flecked through it were dark marks. The overall effect was like the coat of a bird, a hawk.

Mim and Mo had told her that she had been a scholar at Cambridge. Jude imagined her headmistress much younger, walking toward a man. She was slimmer, in a matching skirt and jacket and carried a pile of books. In his hand a cigarette slowly burned. He was dressed in a tweed jacket. The man seemed so moderate and brown from his eyes, to his jacket, trousers and shoes. He slowed his pace as he came near to Miss Shipton. His hands were shaking. To calm them he patted the reading glasses in his breast pocket. She must have had that effect on people even then. He let the cigarette fall on the freshly cut grass.

Turning to face them, a very different Miss Shipton, brutally changed Jude's romantic vision. Her heavily hooded red eyes with the bags sagging underneath, were exactly like that of a Bulldog.

'We are all capable of foolishness.' Catching Suzy in the eye, Miss Shipton edged closer. Suzy looked blankly back.

'And some of us are capable of treachery. Later lady Macbeth is haunted. Full of remorse. But it is too late. The damage had been done. Have you ever heard the words, 'out out damn spot?'

All the girls nodded except Suzy, all eager to please Miss, even though they knew nothing of what she was talking about. Miss Shipton drew herself up and rubbing her hands together in frenzied action paced up and down in front of the blackboard.

'Out, damn'd spot! out, I say!—One; two: why, then 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky.—Fie, my lord, fie, a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our pow'r to accompt?—Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?'

Just as quickly as she had moved into role, the headmistress snapped out of it and was back to writing notes. Miss Darling watched Miss Shipton with awe, Huia eagerly

copying down every word. The older woman seemed to hold such power in her big head. As if the deep knowledge inside her fueled an engine –unmovable, irreplaceable. The chalk words she formed easily, her hand sweeping across the board, the body behind almost lifting – the chalk like a wand holding the heavy body up – filling all the empty black corners with fluid thoughts. From behind, Miss Shipton was at that moment beautiful, like the goddess she imagined every Easter. Jude shivered; tucking her hand underneath her school shirt she gently touched the healed scars on her back.

Coming home from school she would find her mother scrubbing and wiping, her face clouding with the darkening patches gathering in the hills. As the sky became black so did Kit's mood and Jude would stand there with her little school suitcase smelling of old lunch. Kit's cruel words would spill out onto the floor. As the dark clouds left the hills naked and bright the next day, her mood would change. She'd pile Jude and her friends into the Jag for a 'jaunt'. Speeding through the narrow one way streets of the city and through what Kit said were unused tunnels. Jude was not so sure, expecting a tram to come screaming toward them in the dark passage. They would squeal and shudder and Kit would say,

'Never be sheep children, Never be sheep. Follow your own path.'

Like a modern Lady Macbeth, Kit was stopping the passage to remorse by driving her car into it, like she'd done that morning of the storm, enticing Snow into the mouth of the sea.

Miss Darling handed out the essay topics. Jude looked at the list and knew immediately what question she'd choose for herself and for Sandy. She began to make her notes. She wanted to learn more and more about Macbeth and Shakespeare and whatever else Miss Darling and Shipton had to offer. That would be her path.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

On the other side of the graveyard in the Springwood Boy's High School, recreation room, James Te Whare held the glassy dead gaze of a mounted deer's head above the fireplace. The buck's ornate antlers thrust forward like a beacon to guide him back to some ancient English forest. The deer was the most interesting thing in the recreation room. The guys were in a morose circle, bums on the edge of the small chairs, all elbows, knees and grunts, like Neanderthals playing some meaningless game involving slapping and flicking.

'Hey Te Whare! Come here mate. Livin up the game. Smith here is in need of a stir.'

Martin Mitchell's small pimpled face rose up above the circle of heads in casual inquiry but James didn't want to join in. He continued past the deer toward the rows of photos. The old boys of Niger House stood in all their faded glory. As the years retracted, so to the faces; the sixties boys with their hair a fraction longer, faces casual, a few even smiling, then the white crisp shirts of the buttoned down fifties. Gradually, row upon row of serious young men, proudly wearing their cricket and rugby uniforms were silent testament to a world vanished. James's father's large frame beamed out from 1939's first fifteen. He was the only one smiling and he was the only Māori. The striped jersey barely contained his massive chest, large hands holding the ball with ease, printed underneath 'Wiremu Te Whare - Captain.' James looked into the eyes of the young man. He bore no resemblance to the man who was more comfortable in the craggy mist filled valleys, the grumpy lonely farmer that his father had become. James found himself sinking deeper into the glinting, hopeful wide face of the young Wiremu as if he was seeking out a lost child. Suddenly, a falling chair crashed into this silent bond. Martin and the other lads erupted in rumbled, spluttered guffaws. Smithy had fallen back on the floor and lay there all hairy arms and legs like some broken animal. Stunned for a moment, Smithy slowly got up, rubbing his head - sorer than he would like to admit and gathered his body together, folding it back into the group.

‘Hey James man. We’re gonna meet some Highland’s chicks. Down by the graveyard. Could be interesting. Could get some action’

James returned to searching the faces of the men of old. Did they have such a great need to huddle together, for a fag or a laugh? Or were they more singular? The boys were standing now, shuffling about like little kids, waiting for his reply. He didn’t expect Sandy to be there. Sandy would never break the rules, she was a safe bet. An image of the girl in church flashed before him. She got herself in a bit of a mess.

‘Yeah.’ He said.

‘I’ll come.’

The cold air caught Jude’s breath and she could almost hear the heart of her friend beating like a tiny thing.

They had waited, answering to the roll call as Miss Fisher’s small white shoes, walked the length of the dorm, each step splayed outward, her little voice squeaking out their names. Lying on their bunks they let the others leave for the recreation room.

‘Come and play some records. Sandy has all the hit songs. You and me can dance to Evil Ways.’ Huia peeked back through the curtain, her hair in curlers ready for the Saturday walk to the park.

‘Thanks anyway. But I want to finish this book.’

‘Ok.’ The curtains fell together. Jude hadn’t the heart to tell her that she was going to escape for the night in search of boys. And one boy, James. Huia’s wide face and eyes true as a child, had already disappeared.

Shuffling down the fire escape, running between buildings, keeping a look out for Emily, Jude felt full of new energy – she’d woken up like some sleeping princess. Racing out

onto the open field at the back of Highlands to the rim of trees in the distance, the girls sped, a clean wind at their backs. Beside her Suzy ran without much effort. If anybody had wanted to know their plans, Suzy would hold the key. Gone was the tightly pinched pony tail, the buttoned up lips and school uniform. This night, she looked like a creature formed moments before; hair scraping her back, eyes pulled tight against the cold air. Half way to the trees, Jude out of breath, had to stop and bend over.

‘Don’t stop now. Come on!’

Jude puffed and stumbling, suddenly doubted the whole idea. She caught sight of what looked like small figure, arc of hair glowing under the outside lights.

‘Never look back. It’ll be ok. I’ve have done this a million times and never been caught.’ Suzy spoke coolly, without having trying for breath. Her heart must beat more slowly, like some cold water fish, thought Jude. The body under the lights had unsettled her. What if they were caught?

‘I am not sure if I should be doing this. Maybe I should go back. If my mother found out, I would be in so much trouble.’

Suzy stopped suddenly and rounded on Jude, her tight body, a ball of curled energy.

‘Stuff you’re up herself mother. Don’t be a bloody wimp now for God’s sake. You’re too far in. If you go back, we’ll get caught.’ Her eyes flashed in the dark.

‘Why? I’d be careful.’ Tears welled up with the cold under her back. Jude could see Kit’s fury, frozen at first, then exploding one day in a volley of words.

‘There was a matron or prefect there, you idiot. She may have gone to get someone. All this bloody stalling. Now come on.’

Jude looked back at the building. There was a lump in her throat. The body had gone.

She shimmied over the wide pipe above the river that separated the graveyard and the boys' school from the girls. Early autumn rains had swollen the volume of water so that it poured thick and fast, rushing to the sea. Half way across, she stopped for a moment and wrapped her body over the cold concrete frame like it was some mother ship, the last berth before the wide open. The dense weight held her, the chill of the night against her cheek, the river channeling a powerful path beneath. She realized that if autumn was approaching, then so was Easter. Glancing up, Jude saw gravestones lining the horizon. Later, walking between the rows, she wondered if the tread of their feet caused pain for the dead. Names and dates leapt out as she past, 'Maud Seabrook, born Jan 10th 1880, died April 17th 1950, 'Joshua Taylor born 16th June 1918, died October 30th 1918. And one only recent, covered by a mound of fresh dirt and flowers. A young guy, Davy, only 20. It was as if the rows were miniature streets, paving the way to heaven, bodies housed in ordered beds. Some of the stone edges crumbled, the earth underneath pitching on an angle. Jude thought of Macbeth's battlefield, and all the broken weapons of the dead and the memorial plaque for those that died in the Native Wars, of tomahawks, crying women, children screaming, broken skulls. She could feel her throat constricting. There had never been a funeral for Snow. No body was ever found. No body meant no death. She closed her eyes tight, trying to will away the gun toting men on the airport tarmac.

Up front Suzy ploughed ahead,

'Are we allowed to walk here?'

'Who cares?' Suzy tossed the words lightly over her shoulder. From behind, Suzy could've been a small boy. Jude's borrowed grey velvet jacket hung off her. A long wrap-around Thai-dyed skirt trailed in the dirt, clothes draped over her as if they'd been tossed on the floor then carelessly flung on her body in a child's dress-up game. The lines Jude's body followed were nowhere near as straight. She brought her hands to her waist as she puffed her way up the hill. At least her waist was narrow. But her hips were wide, matching the cup of her breasts brushing against her upper arm. In order to cover this growing womanhood, she'd put on an over sized shirt and hippy muslin pants. That night,

for the first time, Suzy had come into her cubicle, asking her questions, taking an interest in her belongings.

‘Hey! You’re family look cool.’ Suzy leaned against the wall, briefly sizing up the whole of her family, except Snow.

‘I like your brothers. Nice looking guys. Introduce me one day.’

Suzy casually opened a drawer and picked out a top Jude could no longer fit.

‘Do you mind if I wear this tonight?’

‘Yeah, ok.’

Then Suzy quickly followed up by grabbing the velvet jacket.

‘Can I wear this?’ She spoke with unusually high lilting voice, Kit would have called saccharine.

Jude marched behind Suzy’s hard small back, all decked out in her clothes, feeling a thread of anger that helped fuel her pace. Soon she caught up

When they reached the top of the ridge the girls stopped. In front of them a group of boys sat around under a row of trees. There were at least eight of them, some lay on the ground looking up at the stars, others paired and smoking, poking sticks into the ground. Jude wandered why there were so many? What were they expecting?

‘Hi girls. Come over here. It’s Smithy. We’ve been waiting for ages. Where you been?’ Smithy rose up on his haunches, rested one arm across his knee and extended the other out toward Suzy. His forearm was ropy, slender.

‘The new girl slowed me down.’ Suzy seemed to take on a whole new face. She took Smithy’s hand as if this was a regular thing and let him pull her onto his lap, giggling girlishly. Quick as a flash, the almost pretty mouth of Smithy was kissing hers, Suzy’s jet hair falling across her face, pulled like a curtain. The boy disappeared in a clench.

The other boys didn't move. A couple of them , younger at thirteen looked across at the two lovers with mild curiosity. Older boys sat behind.

Suzy pulled away from her embrace.

'Any of you guys got a fag? Martin? I'm desperate?' Jude heard the cultivation in the word 'desperate' and recognized pieces of a past life. Huia told her that Suzy's father was a wealthy surgeon, still living in grand old house on the beach front in Takapuna, Auckland. Her mother had left when she was five. After that, her father couldn't cope with Suzy.

'He just dropped her here one day. Everyone reckoned he was a cold fish, didn't even hug or kiss her goodbye. Just stood there. But when he saw Latham he came over all gentlemanly. They flirted and later when we were looking out the window we saw him go into her house. Suzy really hates Latham,' said Huia.

Martin Mitchell, a small red faced boy, fumbled in his pocket, pulled out a packet of cigarettes and hand shaking, handed it to her.

'Light it for me,' said Suzy, leaning back on her elbows.

No-one had introduced Jude, the new girl who waited in front of them, like one of Lady Macbeth's handmaidens, self consciously digging trembling hands into the pockets of her baggy trousers, pretending to focus on the distant mountain.

'Hey you! You're new eh. Where are ya from?' Smithy rested on his elbow, blowing smoke rings out of his mouth.

Jude felt her face change colour. She hated the way her skin reacted like this, like some sea anemone, sensitive to the slightest touch. But didn't belong at the bottom of the sea. She was beginning to feel she belonged to Highlands.

'I used to be from the city.'

'Used to be.' With the emphasis on 'used', Smithy imitated her voice and made her words sound posh and old-fashioned. The boys laughed together, like thought Jude, some howling tribe of monkeys.

She watched Suzy join in the laughter, just to be in with the crowd. Jude's breathing became shallow. She could turn this image into something else. Suzy disguising her hurt with the tough swaggering girl, Suzy and the tight alabaster mask of her face, Mrs Shipton and her sweeping cape, Kit with the dyed red hair and studied figure. People appeared to be one thing but were really another, like the witches. Like Macbeth. Jude casually crossed her arms and stepped forward, shrieking like an ape, mocking them in turn.

'Aaah, Aaaah, aaaah.'

'Oh yeah? You're a bit of a shit stirrer eh.' said Martin, voice hard and angry.

Jude caught hold of the lingo and stepped even closer.

'Yes. Eh. I'm a shit stirrer.' It came out as a contradiction, the posh voice and the rough phrase. They laughed. Jude chewed some imaginary gum in her mouth and looked once again at Mt Egmont, but this time pretended interest, as if she could take or leave them all so cool was she.

'Hey Suzy you're very rude! You haven't introduced your friend.'

Once again the young man from the Huia's photo stepped out of the shadows.

'Her name is Judith. We call her Jude.' Suzy dragged deeply on what Jude thought was a cigarette and blew a smoke ring, but a sour smell of burning leaves hung in the air.

'We'll come and sit over here with me Jude.' Like some gentleman from one of her books, James extended his hand out, pulled her to him - a fish out of water.

'My name's James.' He held her hand.

'I know.'

'How do you know?'

'Your picture is the room I share with your sister.'

'You share with Huia?' He moved back into the tree behind him, out of the moonlight.

'Don't tell her we met eh.'

'Okay.'

'And you know Sandy?'

'Yes.'

Suzy's strange cigarette was past around. James swallowed the smoke before he handed it to Jude.

'Take a deep drag.'

She didn't ask what it was, guessed it must be dope, remembered Steven on the beach with the red eyes. Jude breathed the smoke in. It burnt her throat, her lungs. She coughed and spluttered. They sneered.

'First time eh?'

'There's always a first time for everything.'

'You want to come over here?' He led her away from the graves to a line of trees. He sat her down and grasped her knee. Words escaped her. He stood up and laid his jacket on the ground. It was old, woolen, torn. She did not mind that he did not want to get to get know her some more. That he began to touch her face her arms, between her legs, so quickly. She did not mind that he seemed in a hurry and that her skin felt nothing, that his touch was rough. From far away she heard what seemed like a cry. James pulled away and sat up.

The night was clear. The mountain seemed close, far away, the circling sea.

'What was that noise?' she said, her hand in his.

'It's the Ruru.'

'The Ruru?'

'Yeah. An owl. For my people he's an Atua. A god. He warned them about...'

'What?'

'It doesn't matter. You wouldn't know.'

And she didn't know.

Later a chill wind came from the west, crossing the grass beneath Jude's feet as she ran back to the hostel. She didn't care where she was going. She had lost sight of Suzy. In the distance, a small grey and white form streaked across a field, leaping like some bird creature and distracted, Jude stripped, falling elbows first onto the hard, sharp ground.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

Dorie had almost reached the neck. The needles moved seamlessly, one hand sliding over the other and yes! thought Eunice. There was almost music in it.

‘She can’t control her garden. Graham was up there on the roof the other day and said it was a mess. You can’t see the entirety of the garden from the house. Half of it runs down a bank. He said it was like a ‘forest of thorns.’

‘A forest of thorns mum.’

Listening behind doors was always frowned upon by their parents and once Eunice had been caught. One side of her body was pushed right up against a sliding door, her ear pulsating with the muffled angry voices of her parents in the bedroom.

‘Get out. I said just get out. Just disappear for good. I can’t bear all this coming and going that you do. Like some hobo.’

‘Shut-up woman!’ Then there was a thump and a silence.

The door suddenly slid open. Eunice staggered; heavily barrelling at fifteen years old into the rising figure of her mother from the floor- a trembling hand covering one eye.

‘How dare you! You silly girl.’ Her mother’s voice trailed off.

‘But mother. I couldn’t help it. I was worried.’

Her father strode past muttering with a whisky fouled breath. The front door slammed.

‘Well you have nothing to worry about now.’

Hot shame with this indiscretion, this violent revelation burnt both women’s cheeks.

There was no fear of being caught tonight. Dorie and Deidre thought she'd walked to the dairy to get milk for yet another cup of tea, not even stopping to question in their endless chatter, whether it would be open at this time of night. Through a small crack in the door Eunice could see the little white arms of the baby's jacket swinging helplessly from side to side as Dorie sliced her way through to the end of the row. She sat forward with her legs, sheathed in shiny opaque stockings, daintily crossed. Her little finger arched along with one dark eye brow.

'My mother left her this house you know.'

'Yeah- you've told me that. Lots of times.' Eunice could only see the back of Deirdre's head. Her words seemed to be too loud to emit from such a pinhead of a vessel.

'Well, it's worth repeating. This house is one of only a few very fine old homes in New Plymouth. Beautifully constructed. Handed on a plate to her by her own mother.'

'Any inheritance with that,' said Deirdre as if referring to a side dish.

'Eunice does not even have a family. Why mother thought she would need it, I don't know.'

'Didn't she go out with your husband?'

Dorie stopped knitting. Both hands poised in mid-air, the needles facing inwards, the jacket suspended. She pulled in her lips, puffed out her pink cashmere swathed chest.

'Yes Bernard, God rest his sweet soul, had what I would call a brief liaison with her at Cambridge. Bernard was English. He followed her here to New Zealand. And then met me.'

'I can't imagine anyone having it on with Eunice.'

Dorie tittered at the 'having it on' and resumed working on the jacket.

‘Eunice was quite something then. Always big -but commanding. Her features have since coarsened. And very bright to boot. Mind you- so was I. But mother couldn’t see it. Sent me off to be a nurse.’

Deirdre rose out of the armchair and wandered aimlessly about the lounge. Eunice backed away from the door and into a wall. She remained there listening, her head resting against the gold appliqué of the old wall paper, eyes averted to a crystal chandelier.

‘You’ve been through so much Dorie,’ said Deirdre.

‘I love her dearly but I believe she has always harboured resentment towards me. After all I married Bernard and I have my children – you, and I am not one to boast, but a good voice. We have always sung Eunice and I. We have always been in the choir. But she is moody when she comes now. I blame mother. Mother always made her sing soprano,

‘There is a nightingale inside you somewhere Eunice’, she would say. But Eunice is, and I hate to say it, an alto.’

Eunice imagined Dorie gesturing grandly, implicating the house, the garden and the dead in some deep throated conspiracy.

‘And she listens to that strange music - flamingos’.

‘What if she went into a unit? Much easier eh.’ Eunice imagined Deirdre, excited by the thought of tearing out the chandelier and the Victorian wallpaper, replacing them with some bland brown and orange facade she’d have spotted in *‘The Women’s Weekly.’*

‘Yes. Perhaps. It would take some persuasion.’

Eunice walked down the hallway and out the front door. Outside, she looked up the rise. The houses were all closed to the night, doors and windows shut, only the odd room lit to signal some warmth, some life within. Across the valley, in the graveyard, what seemed to be a human figure, or was it an animal, flashed between the stones. Eunice shivered and drew her cardigan in tighter. Her mother was buried there. Bernard too. Her father must surely be dead. Who had marked his grave? He never came back, disappearing into the

huge forests planted during the depression on the central plateau. Men used to die, lost inside the endless tracts of pine, lost in the cold and loneliness of the harsh winters. She thought of Shakespeare's ghosts, the King of Denmark and Banquo. Did her father walk about trying to find her, trying to explain?

Eunice had heard from Rebecca Latham that Suzy's father often left her in the hostel over the shorter holidays like Easter, too busy apparently with doctoring. The girl could be difficult. She was impertinent with the 'who is one?' questioning. But the child would be at a loose end, lonely, the hostel emptied out but for a few. She would make it her mission to understand Suzy, to bring out the best in exchange for Suzy playing the part of Mary on Palm Sunday. That would ruffle Dorie up. A girl with hair like wool, unraveling her tightly knitted church plans. She would approach Suzy soon and see if she would oblige. What an honour. Eunice held onto the wooden gate and looked back at her house. It's magnificent, dignified porch and eaves and tiled red roof and big brick chimney – solid and timeless. She felt worn, chiselled at; the two women were attempting to take away parts of her. She began to hum,

'Rosebud rosebud pluck me if you're daring. I've a thorn for my hour of need. It will pierce you till you bleed.'

Her body swayed. I may not have much she mused, but I have a good ear.

That night at prep and with shaking hands and trying to hide the dark black bruise of the bite that James had made on her neck - a mark of pain Jude strangely liked - she handed the first page of the essay to Sandy. They were only part way through Macbeth but Sandy wanted it to look like she'd been working when Mrs Latham came in to check. Ever since they'd been to the Catholic Church, Sandy left Jude alone. She no longer mocked her walk or her talk, as if by being such a fool, Jude was no longer a threat. She eagerly grabbed hold of the page.

'Thanks. I see you've got a love bite. Who gave it to you?'

'A guy.'

Jude tried to extinguish the feeling of the warm salt of James's skin and the broad cheek bones, the tangle of soft black hair through her fingers. The way he had just accepted her that first night, a girl from somewhere else – him touching places she never knew existed. Keeping her hand clamped to her neck as if to hold the bruise there, she felt the stain on her skin. It made her bold.

'What guy?'

Sandy stood before her, suspicious. Just as Jude was about to answer, Suzy came in behind her, slamming her books down on the desk she interrupted,

'Just some weasel little fifth former. She couldn't see him in the dark. She just liked the sound of his crackly voice so she let him do it. Eeeh Jude.'

The whining eeh was an invitation for Jude to join in with the mockery. Jude joined in.

'Yeah....eeehhhh.'

Jude removed her hand and leaving her neck exposed walked past the towering Sandy, to her own desk, feeling a new sense of power. She had some weapons: her newly discovered love and understanding of English, her friendship with Suzy, Huia and James. Sandy called after her.

'Gosh you're easy. Is that what girls do in the city?'

The others girls, who'd already unpacked their books and were taking their places, paused, looking sideways at Jude.

She thought of what she and James 'do' and had done three times in the past few weeks. Once sheltered inside an overhang of bush, another inside the now empty swimming pool, and last time in the cricket shed of the boys' school – the smell of old sweat mingled with his hot breath. He never wanted to be to near the graveyard.

'Tapu.' He said.

'What's Tapu?

'You don't know?'

'There was only one Māori family in Seatoun and they kept to themselves.'

"Tapu means sacred. Sort of. It means you can't go into that place or touch that thing because if you do it'll be real bad.'

'Like being haunted.'

'A bit like that, eh.'

When James said 'eh' it was different, softer, letting you in. Their meetings had given her a new found confidence. They didn't talk much, and when she did say something, he found her way of talking 'funny.' But he wanted her. That was enough.

Placing her pad, pen and books on the desk, she looked around the room. Some of the girls now seemed so old-fashioned. Mim and Mo with their tidy hair, books and beige clothes, Trudy and her too quick laugh and not knowing about anything that mattered, Sandy and the pictures she had of horses on the cover of her school books and Huia; Huia with her old clothes and the little box with a comb and feathers.

'Plain,' she could hear Kit say.

'Plain as ditch water.'

Jude thought of the 'farm girls' surrounded in the night by the grunting noises of copulating sheep and cows. City girls did not have that. They were allowed other things and so she smiled easily at Sandy who then had no choice but to smile back and read the essay.

The rows of white lights formed a fierce glow above them. Suzy, her hair lank and face pulled in, the black and blue bruise of Smithy's love bite paraded on the alabaster skin like a battle scar, suddenly called out.

'Hey, I'm easy! I'm easy like Easy Rider. Easy living, easy sleeping, easy all round.'

Suzy pushed her foot against the desk and lent back in the chair, surveying the room, waiting for some reaction. But none came. The girls ignored her. Suzy just raised her eyebrows and twirled her pen.

Dianne often took on the same attitude. She would lean against the plastered walls of the Nuffield, chewing gum, teased up hair massed around the pout of her dew-drop lips and listen in on Kit's phone calls to Honey.

'Yesterday Dianne walked to the dairy in the most dreadful pair of fluffy slippers. I nearly fainted!'

Dianne would imitate Kit's flaying hands, the long inhaling of the cigarette as Jude hid around the corner and sniggered.

'And as for that boy, God knows what they get up to. I have to say Honey it absolutely disgusts me.'

Jude knew that her mother's face would be churned up, full of dislike for her own child as she sat in the lounge with the sweeping views. As if she knew Dianne would stop her mocking - face glowering in a small storm of black lashes, and walk out.

'Hey, thanks Jude. This essay is really good.' Sandy read aloud from the firmly held up paper.

'Macbeth has a lot of sound in it. It has sound even at the beginning when the witches first meet up with Macbeth.' She looked really thankful and Jude felt some guilt at having thought about Sandy and the cows and sheep. Sandy read the rest in silence, occasionally looking at Jude and smiling. Jude put her head down and began to write her own,

'The imagery in Macbeth is rich and varied.'

Later Sandy whispered to Trudy, unaware of Mrs Latham, head craned to check for talkers through the small square window of the door. She didn't seem to have eyes for the two whisperers. Instead Latham stared directly at Jude. The light purple rinse in her hair, whipped in stiff waves around her face, the lead-like white make-up, swipes of dark lipstick - all of it was framed by the window like the disembodied head of some seventeenth century noble that Miss Darling had shown them pictures of. Jude couldn't hide her smile. The door flung open and Latham, her stiff body with head now firmly attached walked directly to Jude.

'And what do we find so amusing? Not your homework it seems. What's that mark on your neck?'

The girls didn't look up. Sandy pretended to write and Suzy pulled at the collar of her shirt. Jude didn't have time. The matron had already seen. Even though the marks had faded, they could not hide the truth.

'It's a bruise. I needed to get something out of my suitcase in the Box Room and as I reached up to it, it fell against my neck. It really hurt.'

Jude held her throat as if to remember the pain of the sharp edged suitcase, and looked wanly up at Latham like some motherless child, the naked light throwing up shadows under her eyes, but Rebecca only blinked, unconvinced and leaned forward, jabbing at Jude's neck with a pointed hard red nail.

'You are on notice young lady. I better not see that disgusting thing again.'

She left the room quickly. Sandy shifted around in her seat and looked at Jude, mouth open, impressed.

'You were so lucky to get away with that!'

'That was a really good lie though.' Suzy chewed her pencil, nodding at Jude with admiration.

She looked out the window. Back towards Highlands the tops of the oaks fanned out like big dark heads. There was nothing else to be seen. The blazing lights inside the classroom seemed to blind what was outside. In the last few weeks she had felt freed up, as if her eyes had opened, that she was loved for something, even though she was unsure what 'thing' it was. Mrs Latham had frightened her, the way she remained unmoved by her innocent story. Because Mrs Latham knew it was a lie and lies were beginning to roll easily off Jude's tongue like little sour birds. Jude had been caught out and outside the world had vanished, taking with it Ned, Steven, Dianne and her father. They were out there somewhere. Would they recognize the girl she has quickly become in just eight weeks? A 15 year old who 'gets up to no good' with a boy? Her body filled with an aching so all consuming like the earth had been siphoned out of her body, leaving a yawning hole.

Later she touched her neck, her throat, the warmth between her legs. James was not far away, probably doing his own prep. She could see him, responding with easy intelligence to some scientific puzzle, long legs, hands and fingers wrapped around the small desk, possessing the pen, the paper, the book and the knowledge, like some young squire.

Jude looked down at her page and, gripping her pen firmly, knew that next time she'd make more effort to hide the emblems of her new love. The pen was like Miss Shipton's chalk – her wand. But Miss Shipton also had an emblem - the deep purple scar that ripped across her cheek. She wondered how the Headmistress got it. Not from a milking machine, or failed love but from some battle with a mere mortal.

Jude formed the words, 'Shakespeare draws upon every day objects such as clothing to get across the idea that new honours' sit ill upon him,'

Kit made one of her weekly phone calls later that night, her voice sounding full of laughter.

'I am looking forward to you coming home at Easter darling. You'll love it. We'll go shopping and you can still swim here it's so warm.'

In the background, the clink of ice on gin and tonic and the deep nasal tones of a man talking. Who was it? That sound of a man with a drink that should have been Snows, while somewhere lost, Snow would be sitting alone. Jude could see him in a moonlit lounge, looking out to sea, unable to sleep. At fifty two, the trademark sweep of white hair across his forehead now adding years to his face. Whisky on ice clinking in hand. Dead TV set in the corner. The push and pull of the waves in which he never swum or fished and the tide going out on his drink. He was slipping away and she began to see her mother as a conjurer, enticing one man away and leading in another.

Like the ice in the drink, a chill swept through Jude's veins.

'What's the matter?' asked Huia when Jude returned from the office. Huia brushed her hair, pushing down forcefully with each stroke. Every night she tried to flatten it.

'Nothing. It doesn't matter.'

'You've been sneaking out a lot lately. Who do you see?'

What would Huia think if she knew? Would Jude be a suitable girl friend for the noble boy in the photo?

'Just some boys. It's boring really.'

Huia nodded. Everything Jude said she took at face value. Huia's hair was brushed into a liquid shape like two black tongues on either side of her head, resisting the flattening, licking the air.

'You can come home to our place for Easter if you want. You can help with the milking and ride horses. I'll show you where I got the stone. You'll like my brother.'

Jude's heart skipped a beat.

'That's really kind. I'll ask my mum.'

The dormitory sung itself to sleep. Rising into the darkness, trailing through the thin curtains of their tiny sleeping quarters, tired voices joined together soft and low, tinged with humour and sadness.

'Way up here in Highland's the food is mighty fine, a spud rolled off the table and killed a friend of mine -oh, oh, I don't want to go to boarding school. Hey ma, I want to go, back to my Romeo, hey ma I want to go home.'

A voice called,

'Jude Farley has a boyfriend and sneaks out at night.'

Jude listened acutely. Huia did not respond.

'Yeah and so has Latham. A whole string of them,' Suzy's sarcastic tone was unmistakable.

'I thought she was a lesbian,' said someone.

'Yeah. She's both. With Bulldog. The two gals.' Suzy laughed out loud.

The speaker in the corner was abruptly switched off. When all was silent someone whimpered. Jude lay all boxed, arms at her sides like some mummy and blinked. She missed her mother and the way she said goodnight. Even at 14, Kit would come into her room, sit on her bed all full of warmth and love and sorrow as she wished her sweet

dreams and flicked her long eyelashes across Jude's cheeks like a butterfly. Afterwards, Jude could hear her mother singing into the night, her voice only once faltering on,

'Speak to me of love'.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

James managed to kick the ball high. It flew up in circles always destined to fall, nose pointing down. The mud under his feet smelt sweet; the grass shining from last night's downpour. The field was half alight, sun vaulting down between dark clouds threatening to burst again. Every so often when the clouds parted, Taranaki peered through like a ghost, not quite in the game - the first of the season and James was ready. Training after school with Coach Summerville, doing exactly what he demanded, running up and down the field, the endless push-ups.

The training had paid off; he'd kicked the ball right near the try line. Smithy reared up behind him.

'Good one mate.'

Smithy's hot words blew onto James's neck. He wiped them off with a clean brush of his hands. Spencer, all legs and jaw headed for the ball falling heavily towards him.

He had it. Cradling his catch, he made for the try line, face stricken with intent. Fathers, mothers, little sisters lined the field. They stood, their bodies not moving, limbs tucked away in red swandris', jeans- orange and pink cardys. Their voices travelled in staccato toward Spencer.

'Go for it!'

'Come on mate. You're nearly there.'

'Bloody grab it Smith!'

Just as he was about to leap over the line, a pile of bodies heaved and juttled over Spencer. He was lost, like a diver not managing to surface. The bodies seemed stuck in a writhing mass.

‘Break it uuupppppp. Break it uuuppppp.’ Coach Sommerville snarled from his corner at the far end of the field.

James kicked at the ground. The game was stopping and starting too much. He wanted to get the ball, hold it in his hands like skin, like Jude’s skin. He was gonna meet up with her at the Park the next day. The girls and boys allowed out to play, in broad daylight. Matrons and Masters everywhere, spying. He had met up with Jude three times now. Always in the dark, her skin soft and warm on the leathery ground. She didn’t talk much. When he first saw her standing there in clothes that seemed too big and dirt on her face, he thought she was his kind of girl, one that could rough it. Then he remembered her as the same girl who watched the tuis and froze on the steps of the altar after Eucharist, her face like some novice saint. But then Jude’s voice rolled out that first night in the graveyard like something from the BBC.

He had the ball again, running alongside Smithy, passing, looping in and out, no-one in their way.

Get on over,’ the guttural voice could be any one of them. The pink cardied lady, the swandri, a child.

‘That’s it. Nice passing. Nice.’

He could feel a Glenwood boy behind him, the feet closing in and breathing strained. Just as James felt the boy cut in, he threw to Smithy and Smithy missed the catch.

‘Pick up ya bloody game.’ The row of people snarled.

The Glenwood boy kicked the ball and bent over to catch his breath.

‘Good on ya Brian.’

Brian straightened and with a wide grin and turned to a man that must have been his father. The two stared at one another for a moment. The father, smaller in stature than his son had his hands folded across a beer belly. He lent into another man standing beside him. James imagined him saying, ‘That’s my boy.’

Because that’s what fathers are supposed to do. James met with Smithy mid-field. The rain had come again, strangely falling on an angle from a cloud, half ignited by the sun. It cut into their necks.

‘Sorry mate.’ Smithy patted his back. James could hear his erratic asthmatic breathing.

‘It’s okay.’ But James kicked at the ground with his boot, turning up a clot of earth. He couldn’t look at Smithy,

Yesterday evening, when all the guys where lying on their backs in their bunks, sending comments and jokes to each other in volleys; Smithy had gone too far. James had just been thinking about her. How she stood there in the graveyard, thin pants clamped against generous thighs, amber eyes coolly averted toward some act of nature.

How they seemed to skim over the surface as they sat or lay together in their meeting places, wary of one another with a light flirting talk. Jude had told him only that she grew up in Wellington that her mother had moved to Auckland and that her father was away. On business. She came from money that much he could tell. She pretended not to wear it on her sleeve, but it floated carelessly in her voice. He had become aware of his own worn clothes and those of his sister and his father in his holey shirt and filthy pants, plugging siphons onto cows, the smell of their fetid dung clamming to everything: the milking shed, the small crumbling weatherboard house, his clothes. Over the hill, on the same farm in her sprawling house Sandy had always seemed golden, but in touch somehow, knowing about cows and sheep and dung. Not Emily. She never ‘made friends’

when they were kids, preferring to play inside with dolls, once calling him a 'dirty Māori Boy.' He heard her mother Freda from the kitchen window say, 'They rest on their laurels that lot and look where it's getting them. This land was all Māori land once and then Jock's great Grandfather brought it. For a fair price mind you. The Government under some hair brained scheme gave it back to them. But they couldn't manage it, After all that work it went to rack and ruin. Then Jock's father got it back. We've had it ever since.'

He imagined her peeling back more than the skin on the potatoes with her firm grip – looking out the window across the paddocks at the Te Whare's and their cousins as they ran half naked in the grass. The girls' father, Jock Ballcot, was the big man about town, finger in every bloody pie. He would sometimes come over and have a beer with Wiremu. James's father would sit on the steps with Jock, stocky legs sprawled apart, digging the earth with a stick and Jock would say, 'You're doing a great job with those cows Bill. Great job. Their coats are shining, the milk rich tasting. You really know how to chat up those moo cows eh boy!' Jock would pat Wiremu on the back as his father toothlessly smiled and returned to his stick. The once great Rugby player reduced to his beer and stick.

Then last night in the dormitory, before the game, the boys in the dorm started up.

'You gotta new chick, Te Whare?'

'Yeah! What's happened to the gorgeous Sandy?'

'Bit of a player eh boy.'

'Dirty fella.'

James was used to the 'boy and 'fella'. Everything he, everything he achieved was like some brown child reaching for something high up on the top shelf that he shouldn't have like Jude. But then Smithy said,

'He's gotta leg over that snooty chick from down the line. Bit a rutting going on there.'

Then Smithy actually said it.

‘Top shelf eh boy?’

James sat up so fast his head banged against the top bunk and Smithy was lying there blinking and smug.

‘Hey steady on mate’.

They had the ball again. This time Smithy was running for the try line. The hole in the cloud had opened for the sun, and the whole field was awash with light. James jogged lightly on the spot. He was losing his touch; James, the Captain of the 1st 15 only had the ball once. He needed to do well at sports, to get the top passes at school. He only had till the end of the year and he would have got himself bursary. One of the masters, Mr Barringer, taught history. He knew a lot about the history of New Zealand, the Taranaki wars, he knew about Te Whiti, Tohu and Parihaka. Parihaka, where his mother’s tribe built a small kingdom. Mr Barringer knew about the land that was taken.

James wanted to go to university to study Anthropology, to learn and learn more and more, each item of knowledge like the black and red stones he’d gathered as a child, found in small caves, spewed out by the great mountain in some far gone eruption. Like the red rock he once carefully carried home, cupped in his hands, he and Huia wading through streams, climbing the wet grass of the hill to give to his father. Wiremu had just looked and nodded, angling his body away to the block of wood he was whittling down. James would be no block of wood. The dream to go to university was his secret. He didn’t let on to Smithy, the other boys, or his father. The old man wouldn’t like it, his betrayal. James must not get distracted. He wouldn’t let that talk in the dorm happen again. He wouldn’t get himself in ‘hot-water. He should stick to what he knew. Running now, weaving easily between the other players, willowy frame bending as needed, he moved in closer to Smithy.

‘Pass it. Pass it.’

Smithy hesitated, the glory of a try nearly at hand. The opposing team coming up the rear was not an immediate threat. But although fast for a while, the thin, gangly Smithy

lacked stamina, he was puffing again. Maybe he was weakened by all those meetings with that weird girl, Suzy. It was true she had a beautiful face, but a boyish body. The enemy was closing in; the voices from the sidelines sharpening like knives.

‘Get on with it.’

‘Come on Smithy.’ James had open arms. Into them came the ball. Over he dived just in time as an arm grabbed his leg. James’s face hit the grass and mud. The spectators at last moved their tucked in bodies, hands drawn from pockets in a state of high excitement to dully clap. He had scored the winning try. He smiled at last, but only to himself. His eyes peeled the crowd. No- one he knew there to share the moment, only a slim Māori girl he had not seen earlier. With dark eyes retreating and thick hair, she reminded him of his mother. James found himself moving backward, unnerved. He didn’t like it when an image of his mother flashed inside his head like that- too quickly, because it changed into how her face was when she was dying; the yellow eyes and skin burning with pain.

‘Don’t worry boy. You look after your sister and your father.’

The girl waved to someone. Who could she be at the game for?

‘Well you got it boy. Coulda got it myself though.’ Smithy lined up beside him to shake the hands of Glenwood boys.

There were a few Māori on their side. Like his own father, James was the only one in his team. Maybe the girl - well woman actually, he noticed the long flat line of her waist, her easy moves, plait swinging like a rope to climb up on - maybe she was Glenwood Whanau. Then one of the Glenwood boys’ called to her.

‘Hey Makareta! You beauty! Coming for kai after the game?’

Makareta nodded, her smile not giving anything away, her eyes fixed on James.

The field was clearing. James looked toward the mountain, but the glare blinded any view. His father would be doing enough adoring for the two of them, striding over the fields in his gumboots, occasionally stopping and looking toward old Taranaki, his great love. He

would be waiting for James and Huia at Easter in his old beat up pick-up truck. It was always the same. Huia would leap off the bus, dive into the old Ford and plant a kiss on the old man's cheek and he'd just grunt. That Saturday night would be the dress-up ball in Jock and Freda's barn. Some ball - just a big piss-up.

Coach Summerville ambled towards him. His old man coulda made the one hour journey from the farm. Coulda made it for the first game of the season. The Glenwood boys walked morosely toward their coach like lambs to the slaughter.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Huia walked beside Jude, her arm linked to hers. Lately she'd walked to and from school and prep like this with Huia.

'Sandy really likes James. They exchange letters while they are at school. We live on the same farm and she's asked him to be her partner at Sandy's parents ball on the farm at Easter weekend.'

'And he said yes?'

'Yeah. He did. She might let me come and you. Sometimes she's my friend and sometimes she isn't. Maybe she's embarrassed about my springy hair. She says my uniform's too long.'

That afternoon, Jude looked around for Suzy but could not see her. She seemed to want to be alone lately. She could hear the roar of the distant Tasman as they walked to the park. This new sea seemed without an end. No South Island at the other side of a strait. No place to put your feet once you'd swum all that way. She was glad Snow did not have to swim his way out of a car in Taranaki water. There was no other side. It dawned on her that she had not thought of her father for few weeks. She tried to capture his face as she walked; it had always come so easily. But the dimpled smile, gentle turn of his head had vanished. The only reflection she had seen lately was her own, spending time in front of the mirror gazing at herself like some newly discovered puppy, mooning over every detail of her appearance, trying to look soft and perfect. Just like the others.

James had not said anything about Easter weekend. Jude slowed her pace and let Huia walk in front of her while she gathered her thoughts. Perhaps he really liked Sandy. She could see the Jagged form of Paritutu Rock as she rounded the corner. The rock rose up out of the sea like some sharp toothed prehistoric animal. On the other side of the path Jude past the neat houses lining the streets. She imagined the lonely housewives inside, hidden by the thin material of their net curtains, dressed in chiffon, full of secrets, stirring their instant coffees, turning away from the rising sea and the rock just around the corner. She

caught up to Huia. She would never be like them, or like Sandy and Emily, some dull country imitations of the 'Californian Girls' the Beach Boys sung about. Jude turned to Huia.

'You're more beautiful than any of us other girls.'

Huia blanched. Her eyes crossed. She gave Jude a crooked smile.

'Thanks.'

In front of them, Sandy lollopped along, her hair springing up and down on broad shoulders, her lithe powerful netballer's body swinging from its centre like a whirling dervish. Sandy was strong, she had lots of friends. What if Sandy found out, or worse, Emily? A flicker of fear rose inside Jude.

Coming up the rear in her gabardine coat and brown scarf, Miss Fish scowled. Her thin reedy little voice snaked toward them,

'Get a move on girl. Don't think you can lag behind and meet some boy or have a cigarette. I've been told to watch you.'

Huia pulled her in close, Sandy forgotten for a moment. Huia had taken on a possessive role, finding every opportunity to spend time with Jude.

'Everyone likes you now. You're really fitting in.'

Jude craned her neck toward the far side of the lake to see if James was there. He said he would meet her up the high path above the lake. She could see him stretched on a log, like the young Keats she'd read about. James was a new found drug. She needed to get to him.

'Well, I like everyone too.' Jude turned, looking behind. Emily and Prudence walked close together. Emily's arms were straight and firm by her side, treading ground like a cat. In contrast, Prudence swung along.

'Hi Jude.' Prudence smiled widely at Jude. Emily nudged her sharply in the side and hissed something in her ear.

'Hello.' Jude returned the greeting. She was aware of the light nasal tone of her own voice, the unthreatening look on her face. Fitting in. Soon she would be saying 'eh' without even thinking. She increased her pace.

All around the sides of the lake, Jude was aware of the paired Highland girls parading, hoping to be seen by the boys, who loped along in large groups not interested in nice even numbers. When they had to cross over the arched red bridge that spanned the centre, the groups squeezed past each other, shoulders up, stomachs sucked in along with mumbled greetings. The dirty brown water snaked through the park. Jude imagined what lay beneath: mud, lake weed, tiny goldfish. Their geography teacher had told the girls that the small lakes of Pukekura Park sat in a valley of rich volcanic soil deposited by the volcanic explosion of the mountain that although miles away, framed the far entrance. Mt Egmont did not look like he was going to do anything wild that day. Disguised, sitting tidily, not making any rumbles, like pictures Jude had seen of Mt Fuji. The steep bare flanks led up to the growing cap of snow on the peak, a sign, Jude thought, of the coming of winter. She imagined winter, loitering down in the Antarctic ready to spring. It sent a shiver of excitement through her like a cool promise. Lime green Cabbage trees, punga's and ferns lining the banks, seemed to pour into the still water. She separated from her friend and took off her cardigan, tightened it around an old grey shirt she found under a tree in the school grounds.

'Hey slow down Jude! I can't believe that you've taken off that cardy. It's all you ever wear.' Huia pulled up the hanging sleeve and then discarded it.

'Why did you give all your clothes away?

'I don't need them anymore.'

While she spent ages in front of the mirror prettying up her face, she had taken to covering her body. The ever expanding breasts and hips she did not like.

‘Need them. But they are so expensive looking. You can’t just do that. Be careless like that. What would your mother say?’

‘But my mother is not here. I can wear whatever I want.’ And do what I want, she almost added. Her shoes scuffed the path.

Jude looked down to see the tartan skirt Huia had tried on the day Jude arrived, circling her friend’s legs. Ahead Mim and Mo both had on something of Jude’s. Mim wore the short dress Jude travelled from Wellington in. Although too big, Mim wore it with real pride, running her hands down the front, flattening it against her small frame. Mo had on Jude’s bright green cotton coat with lapels and brass buttons.

Kit had come up with the idea. The Beatles Sergeant Pepper album had just come out. The Fab Four grouped at the front in their mock military costumes. Snow made a small fortune with the complete outfit for girls, buckled shoes that looked like they came out of a past century, helmets with chains. Jude and Dianne, in a riot of colours had paraded down to the beach in their new clothes, strolling along; arms linked in just the same way as she did with Huia. But back then there was no lush, gentle bush, just the barren beach, empty except for Mrs Haycock from Dundas Street who was taking the fresh air with her fox terrier. She stopped dead in her tracks when she saw Jude and Dianne, putting her hand to her open mouth in mock shock. The dog growled. The gold chain on their helmets caught the sun, covered their heavily made up lashes.

‘Well I never. You two look like something out of the fashion pages. Very bright, very chic.’

‘Or just plain groovy,’ said Dianne. She moved her shoulders from side to side, wiggled her behind.

The shift and light sleeveless dress coat did nothing to keep off the cold wind that crept past Pencarrow Head and lifted their hems, revealing their underpants.

‘Wherever do you get these words and ideas? I’d watch that wind.’ Then Mrs Haycock pulled the snarling animal in closer along with her garbedine coat and with a

funny smile continued on her way. The sisters looked at one another and, laughing, threw off the caps. Their shoes somersaulted, whooshing heavily through the air to land with a thud on broken shells. Still in their shift frocks the girls ran and dived into the caps of the freezing sea.

The park was very warm. Huia and Jude got closer to a path leading up into the valley. Jude had to somehow get rid of Huia so she could meet her brother.

'I 'm going to go up there to have a fag,' Jude said, careful to use her new found Taranaki word, fag. Her vocabulary was building up like everything else, like a bag of weapons. Like a disguise. She had taken to smoking. At first it made her sick and dizzy along with the smell of petrol and oil from the caretakers shed that she and Suzy hid in. After a while she began to like the slow inhaling, sucking in the heady smell of burning tobacco and petrol. After three or four goes she could not do without it. Huia didn't smoke.

'The matrons won't be able to see,' said Jude.

The matrons and masters from Firth house were inside the Tea House. Emily and Prudence were no longer behind them.

'You could go and walk with Sandy.'

Jude heard herself suggest directions, taking charge. Some of the girls had started to follow her lead. She had a new found power. They asked her advice for English homework, borrowing her clothes, admiring her sneaking out. A few had started to do the same thing every few nights; down the fire escape, across the field, to the river, meeting boys. Jude took quick little glances up the path, thinking about the waiting James.

'Okay. I'll see you later,' Huia believed her story as she always did and walked away with her duck-like jandalled feet sticking out from the borrowed skirt. James's little sister. Jude was reminded of the way her brothers sometimes found her an embarrassment,

cramping their style. She surprised herself with the way she was throwing off her friend, like the clothing.

Down at the Tea House, Rebecca bit into her cake. Opposite her, Tom Barringer stretched his leg out under the table and gave a casual glance toward the latticed window.

'Well that's no good for seeing the troops. Can't see a bloody thing. Lord knows what they're up to.'

'I'll go out and check soon. There's a few I don't trust.'

'Give me some names.' His foot was right next to Rebecca's. She gave it a little kick and drew her heels in. His face was long. The acrid smell of his cigarette breath hung over the table.

'I have heard a rumour. You have a boy. James Te Whare?'

'Yes. James. Great rugby player. Bright boy. Does well in school. I teach him history. He takes a leadership role. Could've been head boy if he'd wanted. But he's too busy with his rugby.'

'He's Māori ?'

Yes. He's Māori . Comes from a farm down by Parihaka. His old man was at Firth House. Brilliant player. Could have been an All Black they say. But he had to take on his family farm. All that was left of it and then he sold it to the Ballcot family and now works for them as a share-milker.

'How do you mean?'

'The land was taken in The New Zealand Wars.

'You mean The Māori Wars.'

Tom sighed and stood up.

Anyway what's the problem?

'We have new girl. Jude Morrison. Comes from Wellington from a business family. Rather a mysterious child. She's quickly got in cahoots with Suzy Morrison.

'Say no more.'

'I think she has been sneaking out. With your boy. The Māori boy.

'How do you know?'

'I have my sources.' She followed Tom outside and was caught by the mid-afternoon glare.

'I better come with you then.' Tom said

Rebecca fetched her sunglasses from her purse. Tom stood waiting, glancing down at her legs. The mountain perched at the end, the valleys falling from the sides like the casings of a Victorian skirt on some Grande European dame and stepping forth, Tom fell into line beside her. Rebecca looked around, searching for any sightings of the girls as if they were rare animals. Tom dug his hands into his pockets half heartedly and followed his counterpart along the pretty path by the side of the lake.

Jude saw him sitting alone beside a rock at the top of the path, unaware of her approach, and felt her heart banging inside her chest. James's thin cream T-shirt clinging to his shoulders and collar bone. He led Jude into the park's dense wooded hill. Bits of light filtered through the canopy of leaves onto the forest floor. Above her a fat blue-black wood pigeon, his coat thick and shining like a sergeant major, flew heavily from one tree to

another. James pressed her against a tree and began to kiss her, without as much as a hello. Her old words seemed to be leaving her; she did not know what to say - caught between two languages. Jude pulled her mouth away from his.

‘Did you see that bird? He flew like he was drunk.’

‘He probably was. Too many berries, last of his summer Kai.’ His body pushed against hers, the warmth of his breath hot on her cheek.

‘There aren’t many birds where I come from. Only seagulls and magpies. Tough birds.’ The bark from the tree dug into her back.

‘Like you.’ He reached up and picked a broad leaf. She did not disagree. In no time, her cardigan and shirt lay in a pile at her feet. Down below she could hear the splash of oars. The girls must be in the dinghies’ they could hire for 50 cents. Highland girls and Firth boys banging against one another in an innocent game. Only a month ago she would have joined in, giggling like them. That would have been enough. Latham would soon be doing a head count. James made a split in the centre of the leaf, cupped it in his hands and blew out a thin, reedy sound.

‘What are you doing?’

‘You city chicks obviously don’t know how to call the birds.’ As he spoke a fantail darted about their heads. Other birds: thrushes, sparrows, birds she couldn’t name, swooped down. Heads darting, beady eyes opening and closing sizing her up. Jude wondered what vision confronted them. Two teenagers, one clothed, one almost naked. James dropped the leaf and ran his hands over her breasts, put his mouth against hers, his hand forging hard into her crotch. Again she pulled away.

‘How did you learn to do that thing with the leaf?’

He let his hand fall to his sides, irritated.

‘Every time we nearly get somewhere you pull away. Don’t you want to?’

‘Yes.’ Jude wanted to but a cautionary memory of Dianne pounded in her head. The way Simon stopped calling, the way she just left. She wrapped her hands about his waste,

‘Okay. My grandfather, my Koro took me into the foothills of Mount Taranaki to learn to hunt and trap birds. Later as I grew it was pigs.’

‘And where is he now?’ They stood together, Jude so much shorter, wrapped in a clumsy embrace.

‘He died.’

‘And you just live with your father.’ She knew the answer but she just wanted to hear his voice, soft, reedy and rough all at once.

‘Just me and my old man and Huia.’

Jude tried to picture his father. Was he kind like Snow? Or a warrior, tattooed and angry? It occurred to her that she knew nothing about Māori people. Only images from the pictures she had seen in her primary school books of people sitting on the ground, women in flax cloaks, men with feathers in their hair smoking pipes, flat and lifeless on the page.

‘And what about your olds. You’ve hardly said much about them?’

Jude had never heard such an expression. Her brothers used words like: groovy, shit-hot, stoked, cool. But she couldn’t say those words and not sound stupid, they belonged with the cool length of their blonde hair, the perfectly faded jeans. Her parents stuck to an old style of talking, clipped and powerful. Yet the house was full of the gadgets, furniture, clothes, even the music of the sixties. The world of old music her mother loved: Schubert, Brahms, existed alongside the sugar painted world of Rogers and Hammerstein, Sound of Music and My Fair Lady and far away from the communes and the ‘free love’ that Dianne talked about

‘Cool it Mum’, she’d say to Kit. ‘Love is free. Anyone can have it. Share it. Live it.’

‘Free Love! You mean with Simon?’ She gave a little laugh. ‘How meaningless. How banal!’

Kit would turn away, hand touching the base of her hairline half way down her long neck.

‘And are you after ‘free love’ too?’ Kit had said to an angry Steven as he threatened to leave in a flowered painted van with a troop of hippies he’d entertained one day. How could Jude explain this all to James?

‘My mother has gone to Auckland. Like I said.’

‘And your old man. He’s a long time away on business. You reckon he’ll come back or has he done a runner? The words jolted through her.

‘He will come back.’ She took a breath in and changed the subject.

‘Why do you call Mt Egmont, Mt Taranaki?’

‘That’s his real name. His Māori name. The new settlers renamed it. That Ruru you heard in graveyard. He warned my people about the colonial forces. What they would do. You ever heard of Parihaka?

Jude shook her head, ‘No.’

‘No of course. The ploughman? Passive resistance? Whites feathers?

‘Yes!’ There was something she knew. ‘I have seen Huia’s white feathers.’

‘Huia has the white feathers?’

He pulled away from her. Jude felt cold air hit her exposed flesh. She looked at her arms that suddenly seemed so white, her cold body standing before him like some silly pale creature - a new settler. In the distance she heard the deep thud of boats banging and female laughter. They must really be in full swing on the lake.

‘You’re getting cold.’ He picked up her shirt and draped it over her shoulder.

Down below on the path, Rebecca had left Tom talking to some boys. She'd accounted for all her charges, bar Jude. Mim and Mo were nearby in a boat, standing up with their backs to her with their oars, swinging them through the water. Mim made too big a splash.

'Stop that at once girls!' They both turned around, almost losing their balance with fright and sheepishly sat. Further down the path Rebecca saw Emily, Prudence, Huia and Sandy with their heads together. Occasionally they looked up the path, then back toward Rebecca as if they were trying to indicate something.

James and Jude could hear them coming. Fumbling with her bra, zipping up her pants, her skin felt strange, like it did not belong to her. Not far away she could hear Latham's voice,

'Where is Jude, Huia?'

'Huia told us that Jude had gone for a fag, sorry a cigarette and we thought you should know Mrs Latham.' Jude could just make out whose voice that was. It was Emily's.'

'Where?' Mrs Latham's voice, sharp in anger, was closing in.

'We have to separate,' whispered James.

Jude waited for him to kiss her goodbye and he did as an afterthought. Then he was in the bush, making his way down the bank, using branches to swing himself easily, further and further, until he vanished. Jude went in another direction, but the leaves crackled beneath her feet.

'I can hear that! Whose there?' snapped Latham

'There's someone down there miss. Do you want me to go and see? I'm small. I can get through.'

The high goody-goody voice was unmistakable. Jude has a vision of Emily, falsely bright and helpful, like some leprechaun. Sandy was louder for Jude's benefit.

'We only want to make sure she's okay, eh Emily? Eh Huia? She's only new. Not used to our country. Our ways.'

Jude's heart was thumping so hard it battered the walls of her chest. Tearing her way through the bush she was met with a vine barring her way, a branch digging into her sides, the terrain so different from the wider spaces between the pines covering the hills of her old city. She could hear Emily behind her, making her way quickly and Jude turned to see her perfect little form obscured by a tree. Through the gaps, Jude could see the lake below.

'Jude is that you?' The tone was almost kind.

'You won't get into trouble. We only told Mrs Latham to help you, so you won't go down the wrong path,'

Emily's voice whined on the words 'help you', as if Jude was lost, had lost something and was lost to herself. Gathering her strength, Jude plunged down, ignoring the cuts and the ripping of her shirt. The momentum send her hurtling, making her body heavy so that once she reached the path she couldn't stop, catapulting into the black lake water. Once under, she swallowed a mouthful. It tasted of dirt and something sweet. Sinking further down, Jude began to like the cool soft water on her cuts. She was not trapped. She could easily make her way to the surface and see the light. Is this how it was for Snow? Cool? Soft? Soft enough to stay? But he didn't stay. Her father would not leave her. He could have pushed open the door and swum. Jude propelled herself through the deep, delaying her return to the surface, knowing what would be there.

The Firth boys lined up on the other side. Water poured off Jude like some salvaged body. A duck cackled.

Mrs Latham stepped forward.

‘Another filthy mark on your neck! What have you been doing? What boy have you been with? You will be punished for this my girl. Now you’ll find out how the Box Room can hurt. You will be reported to Miss Shipton. Let’s see what she makes of this disgusting display, you slut!’

For the third time in a matter of weeks, Jude brought her hand up to cover her neck, but it was knocked away by a viscous slap to her cheek. The sharp sound catapulted her back to a year earlier - Kit slapping Dianne in the kitchen in the early hours of Wednesday. The words, ‘You slut!’

The screams and then the cries of Dianne. The dawn breaking with a bang, the wind hurtling at the house like a thousand jet engines, Kit starting up the car and Snow’s voice carrying up from the lawn at the front, wavering with the bending trees as he ran up the drive, his strained words coming near, then blowing away, lost,

‘Kit! What are you doing? Stop the car. She’s only pregnant, not damned.’

The MG sped off. Snow must have run inside for the Jags keys and Gypsy hopped into the car before he could do anything. Jude ran down the road calling, ‘Dad...Dad! Please come back.’

But no matter how fast she ran, the car slipped away like a silver fish slipping from her grasp.

It all came rushing past her like the water she’d just plunged into. Dianne had been pregnant. She must have been sent away. Where was she? Where was the baby?

Mrs Latham stepped back. Suzy seemed to have suddenly appeared standing quietly as if she'd never been missed behind the others, Emily, Sandy, Huia; all huddled together as if the vision of Jude was shocking and it probably was. Her wet dripping clothes, water once again clinging to her breasts. Back over on the boy's side, James stood with his head down.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN.

Tucked down at the top end of Devon Street, the plain white Presbyterian Church had no great spire to pierce into the still night. Inside Dorie sung with the sopranos. Her voice easily reached the high notes and held them with straightforward rigour.

*A brighter dawn is breaking,
and earth with praise is waking;
for thou, O King most highest,
the power of death defiest;*

Eunice did not need to look back from the line of altos; she knew exactly where her sister was. The combined voices soared, resonating in the vast barn-like ceiling of St Barnabas Church. The organist, Trish Harwood, played with gusto, her long fingers glided left and right, up and down and her head rolled around as if in entranced by the deep tones. Around her the organ pipes resounded from their embossed gold metal cases, climbing up in size and tempo like the high enclosed walls of a fluted miniature city. Ten plain lights inside the church hung down, five on each side with three white orbs on each long hanging fixture, throwing circular shadows over the walls, over their solemn, attentive faces.

Jesus was everywhere. He was in the stained glass windows as the good shepherd, his flame hair parted in the middle, just as some young men did, thought Eunice, in New Plymouth. She wondered whether this fashion was some homage to simplicity, some natural harking back to an innocent time, then she thought of John Lennon and the way he stroked his contrived locks like some school girl. How the poet James Baxter wore his filthy mane as an emblem; Baxter the wild man. In the window Jesus seemed caught, faint and surprised, holding a lamb. In another panel, the lord was a victorious soldier with a helmet, red cape, tunic and shoes. She liked him like that. Ready for battle.

But in another window, poor Jesus was trussed up and expressionless in an oversized loin cloth like some overgrown baby. And where was Mother Mary? She appeared in the odd panel, pushed to the back, holding the baby, her graceful head inclined towards the swaddled fat child. She had agreed to carry God's child. A virgin betrothed to

be married. What was it like Eunice wondered? That moment when the 'power of the highest' had overshadowed her. Exactly how did he do it? Mary was no enticer of men. Physically robust, strong-minded, practical, respectful of tradition and loyal to her family. These were her qualities. Then after years of loving and caring, Mary had to sacrifice her son back to him. Her womb rented out like some oven - all for the 'common good'. What 'common good'? Eunice wanted the tables turned. The 'common good' was Mary. This was the original message. Easter, the time for fertility, new growth. Rebirth. But not here, not in this country. Not for Eunice.

Would Suzy be suitable for such a role? She had her doubts after the talk to Darling's class. The girl had been rude and petulant. Perhaps the role would be just the thing. Eunice wanted to reach out. To make a difference, to save the child from herself. There was no saving to be done with Jude Farley however. She had saved herself with her schoolwork. Eunice had been fully informed of the events at the park. Carrying on with a boy right under their noses! There had been a meeting of the board, Rebecca wanted the girl expelled.

'She's far too sophisticated and devious for us!'

But Eunice held firm.

"I taught one of Miss Darling's classes for English the other day, Judith Farley was in it. The girl was most engaged, asking pertinent questions. I think, with encouragement she could become a scholar.'

Rebecca's face pinched tight with alarm, her authority undermined.

The voices around Eunice rose in volume. She realized she was no longer singing with the same gusto. The woman next to her looked over at Eunice's song sheet as if to remind her to stay on task.

A crown and robe would suffice. She looked again at Jesus, trapped in the stained glass. She and Suzy would set him free by taking away the focus to what really mattered. The act of mothering. The act of life.

Dorie did not sit with Eunice at the meeting in the hall afterwards. She had her 'choir chums', Betty, Pamela and tired old Jim Sothers. Eunice found this part of church life difficult, the meaningless chatter about children, the 'sharing of ones life'. How could she share her own life, the keeping afloat of an entire school, the curriculum demands and disciplinary matters?

Reverend Symes called the meeting to order.

'It is time to plan our activities for Holy week. Are we going to stick with the status quo and just have daily services leading to Good Friday?'

The Reverend looked intently around the circle, massaging his brown beard, thin tweed trousered legs crossed somewhat affectedly, thought Eunice. Jim put his cup and saucer down on the floor, the crockery clanking loudly, amplified in the big space of the hall. He blustered,

'If it's worked well in the past, why not stick to it! After all it is about the readings, the imparting of the teachings of Isaiah and the Corinthians. A time to learn about the true sacrifice of Jesus from the horse's mouth as it were; The Bible!'

'Hear! Hear!' said Dorie, 'The ladies guild could provide refreshments afterwards.'

Betty and Pamela shook their heads like loose dolls bobbing about in some fairground agreement.

'I would like to see something new.' Eunice was aware of her deep voice, the 'alto' nowhere to be found. Everyone turned. The cups were silent in their saucers. It was not usual for Eunice to speak at these meetings.

'Yes Eunice? And what had you in mind?' The Reverend was most attentive. He uncrossed his legs and sat up straight.

'Well, if we really want to get our message across, get Jesus off the church walls and windows and the pages of the bible, why not go all the way?'

'What do you mean, all the way'?' Dorie was dead still, a vision in blue: blue rinsed hair, navy skirt and shoes, there was even a cold blue tinge to her foundation plastered complexion. She looked fixedly at her sister.

'A big, life like statue of Jesus sacrificed on the cross, held up and marched in a procession on Good Friday, down Devon Street in the manner of the Spanish. My fiancée and I came across these wonderful pageants when we were in Andalucía.'

Dorie cast her eyes downwards. Her white cheeks reddened. The mention of Andalucía always had the same effect.

'They have a song of sorrow, their saeta. The word means arrows. The song is sung toward the sky to pierce the side of God himself. It carries with it the true message of Christ. Its passionate cry is full of the desperation of poverty, jealousies.'

Eunice paused looking directly at her sister.

'Of betrayal, saints, mothers, murders, bitterness and happiness. This we could sing from the balconies. There is one on the old hotel.'

'Sing in Spanish! The hotel!' Betty spluttered out brown liquid and laughed. The room erupted into alarmed exclamations. In all the fuss, it seemed to become smaller to Eunice. The Reverend got up from his chair and raised his hands in an effort to calm. Dorie remained still, frozen in disbelief.

'A teenage girl could follow Jesus, dressed in robes, with flowers in her hair. She could be Mother Mary, giving the whole thing a dramatic human quality. We do not have to sing in Spanish. We can use my new sound system.'

'Human! Dramatic! Sound system!' They shook their heads then, incredulous, save for Trish the organist who stood up and clapped her hands with delight. Lately she had taken to wearing Thai-dyed, mutli- coloured tops and flowing skirts and large silver looped earrings that stuck out like alien antennae from the thin strands of her long grey hair.

'Just like the Beatles song, *'Let it be.'*

Trish began to sing,

'Speaking words of wisdom Mother Mary came to me! I think it is a delightful idea Eunice.'

'I do not.' Dorie's cup was perfectly poised in her saucer, which she held aloft.

'Mary is not really mentioned in that part of Jesus' journey. Like the music she may become a focus, distract from Jesus and his mission. We do not, as the Catholics are want to do, idolize Mary.'

'But Dorie, without Mary where would we be. Without the **real** mother.' Eunice leant put her hands on her knees and lent towards her sister.

'What do you mean, **real** mother. What would you know about mothering.'

Eunice abruptly stood, floorboards quaking in her wake.

'More than you know.'

Dorie drew her legs tightly together. 'Do not the commandments say 'you shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth?'

'Oh really?' Eunice inclined her head, the sarcasm spilled out more fervently than she wished.

Dorie gently put down her cup and left the room leaving the door open to the cold night.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

June Watts peered coldly over her rimmed glasses as she sorted through a pile of books. Irrespective of June's frosty gaze, once Kit had started in on the subject of politics she couldn't stop.

'I can't bare the little man. Make no mistake, he'll be the next leader of that party and old Holyoake well get it in the back.'

June did not answer, as if by not answering, she was allowing Kit to dig a hole for herself. Something about June stirred up the rebel in her. Although left unsaid, Kit was sure June was a National voter.

'Although I feel national won't get in next time. Kirk will have his chance. Fine man that Kirk - principled.'

As she spoke, Kit flicked through a pile of cards, enjoying the hard, sharp edges on her fingers. The library was empty. When the boys and their teachers were not there, the books filled the void, tiny tombs lining the shelves – full of dark promise. June put her sorted books on the trolley, appearing to be engrossed in her mundane task. Did she think her tidy little actions meant something momentous? Kit felt a surge of anger. The woman was patently ignoring her and she had her suspicions as to why. Kit held the cards in both hands. Their compact weight gave her a sense of authority but later she realized that sense was misplaced and she had foolishly pursued the subject.

'What do you think of Muldoon?' Kit knew by inviting June to voice a political opinion she was crossing an unspoken boundary. June felt herself 'beyond' politics. She looked sharply up at Kit from the trolley.

'I'm not sure. I haven't made up my mind. Gordon admires the man, says he has a clever brain.'

Yes, of course, Gordon. Gordon thinks this; Gordon thinks that with his dry banker's mouth and scaly red nose.

‘Clever like a fox. When Snow and I would go to one of those manufacturers dinner’s in Wellington, he would be there with his poor dull wife in some awful outfit and you’d see these glamorous young things pouring themselves all over that devil.’

Kit pointed her index finger at June and raised one brow, ‘All because the revolting little man has power.’

June’s movements slowed as she put the last book onto the trolley then she firmly took hold of it.

‘Yes. We should all take care not to pour ourselves over anything.’ June smirked and walked away with her charges, taking command of the books like a nurse expertly trundling medication on her rounds. Turning a corner, she showed her tweed suited back to Kit and disappeared into an aisle. Kit let go of the cards. They now felt sticky in her hands, the brittle white paper smelling of sick.

For the first month they had got along well - June inviting Kit home for meals, discussing children, weather, books but never voicing opinions. The odd time Kit had, in some angry little outburst, Gordon would view her with suspicion, peering at her just as June had this day like she was a woman full of dirty secrets. And now Kit knew, as June retreated from her, safe in the authority of the shut books that Kit’s dirty secret had slipped from the pages. How had June found out? Kit and Stuart had made some attempt to keep their affair quiet, keeping their distance in the car park, not looking at each other in the staffroom. But just last week Stuart had slid his hand down the back of her slacks, the sudden coolness of his skin almost making her squeal. Looking around the room, the staff seemed not to notice, absorbed in their conversations. June wasn’t even there.

Stuart lived in the inner-city. He had told her about his suburb of Ponsonby with its ‘mixed’ population. Samoan immigrants, students, musicians and artists filling the rooms of the old wooden houses. Stuart shared his flat with he said, ‘A feminist.’

‘A what!’ Kit had nuzzled into the soft warm space between his shoulder and ear; the feel of his hair brushing her face. Of course she knew exactly what a feminist was. A

woman who wanted equality with men. She agreed with them. Liked the sentiment but hated the dumpy denim clothes and silly badges they chose to wear, the sexless layers. Clara had been a feminist of sorts. Leaving their father to the cooking, cleaning and childcare as she walked miles to listen to Opera and reading aloud from books, at her 'friends' house. By asking questions however, Kit caught the sound of his young man's voice coursing through her body in deep waves. The few times they had been together, always at her house never at his, he had not told her much about his life, his family and friends. His focus seemed to be on Kit. Lounging back on what he called her 'funky fifties couch,' hands behind his head, legs extended out in front, watching her move around the house. The last time they were together they had shared more than a few sentences in her bed.

'Feminists believe in sharing power with men,' he had turned his head away from her, 'she volunteers for a place called 'Woman's Space.'

'Women's', Kit corrected him.

'Yeah ok, **women's**.' His voice mocked hers, higher, rarified. He sat up, the sheets covering just the little bit over his navel so that she could see the golden curled line of his pubic hairs.

'And what do they do at Women's Space?'

'They share their problems.'

'Goodness, all this 'sharing!' The thought of 'sharing' problems, passing on snivelly little sufferings like soiled hankies annoyed Kit. She moved her leg from the heat of his legs under the covers.

'I painted murals for them.' He leant forward, elbows resting on his knees. She knew even though he was an English teacher, his passion was Art.

'Yes? What did you put in them?' Kit smoothed out the sheet. The cotton was thinning. The sheets had survived 23 years of marriage, endless tumbles in the washing machine – wiped clean every time; a new slate.

‘Two dark skinned women with vibrant headscarves and Picasso noses, facing each other with the city skyline behind them. Their hands are joined to form a bridge. Under the bridge are the bullshit trappings, the good, bad and ugly of their lives. The crap.’

‘Bullshit trappings?’

‘Yeah- Hey do you have to repeat everything I say? ‘Sharing’, ‘Bullshit trappings’. Are they alien concepts to you? What is this? The inquisition? Get with it.’

Kit did not answer; instead she turned over and faced the blank wall- a bland wall free of ‘bullshit trappings’. What did that word mean to her? He had implied some middle-age bourgeois inability to understand the hippy rejection of material things. She understood all of it, their needs, their sentiments, had argued the toss with Steven and Ned.

Every item of her own ‘bullshit trappings’ was meaningful to her. Her clothing, jewelry, furniture, food - Stuart had only been too happy to help himself to that, to all the “bullshit trappings” in her house. And her piano, gifted to her by Snow, polished and played to perfection. The ‘bullshit’ of the institutions, the capital that had made it possible for Stuart’s generation to get an education and attend university. These ‘things’ that were denied Kit and Snow. The sacrifices of depression, the poorly paid factory work during the war, and the rush to have babies to fill the void left by the dead. They had all set about building for the future. That was her youth. Dianne had thrown it all away on that boy. The endless grafting, shaping of lives and things, thrown into the wind that came beckoning around the house, pleading to be let into through the windows and doors. Finding an open seam in the ocean, ripping Snow from her like a punishment.

She stayed in the bed, covered in the thin sheet, eyes still fixed to the wall when Stuart silently went for a shower. Then in her dressing gown, making no customary attempt to ‘glam up’ she lifted the heavy lid of the piano, like opening a sleepy eye and began to play her favourite Schubert song,

‘Rose red rose my hand is torn

Cried the youth despairing

As he felt the cruel thorn

At his feet a rose forlorn.'

Her voice was high and trilling, made to annoy an ear tuned to the endless new song full of their little folksy or electric rebellions. Kit's wide dishwashing hands spanned the keys but not the generations. Then she heard the front door slam and she had not seen him since.

June had emerged from the aisles with her empty trolley. Kit set about finding the cards for a small pile of returned books. One of them was Shakespeare. Jude had written to her, describing her thrill at discovering Macbeth, *'I love the witches Mum. And the words. I get pictures in my head every time I read it. I am writing an essay on it and I would like to get an A. Also I have been invited to a girl's farm for Easter weekend. She is Māori. Can I please go?'*

For a moment Kit had felt panic at the thought of Jude going to the home of Māori people. Visions of unknown rituals, food, something wild flashed before her then left. What harm could it do? That's why she'd sent her there, to experience new things. She decided not to worry. The girl would be safe, safer than her sister had been right under her nose. Jude's confident tone in the letter came as a surprise. She seemed to be making another life for herself, fulfilling Kit's wish for an educated daughter. People might make see Kit as a bad mother for letting her child stay with Māori s'. But maybe she was a good mother – a very good mother.

The library doors opened and 4Rd poured into the library, like one mass of steaming, heaving, joking boyhood. Behind them, his eyes averted, came Stuart. June hurried to the front desk. Just as he always did, Richard made straight for the issues desk.

'Hi !Mrs Farley. My mum had another baby –a girl.' A sudden image of a baby flashed before Kit. The wee hands kneading the air wrapped and warm in her freshly laundered bedding, little white - blonde head nesting into the pillow. Unreachable.

'I didn't even know she was pregnant dear.'

'She met a man on her nightshift last year. He's moved in. His name is Allan.'

'And is he nice?'

'He is ok. He can be a bit mean. Got any new adventure books?'

'Not today Dear. Maybe next week.' Richard shuffled off, hands deep in his too tight pants. Kit moved out from behind the desk and walked towards Stuart, He stood talking to some boys by the encyclopedias. On the way she stopped at the reference book section to get exactly what she wanted. In amongst, *The History of the Twentieth Century*, and *Mythologies of the World*, there it was, just what she needed. '*The Story of Art*', a massive book, full no doubt of Rembrandts, Monet's and big nosed Picassos. Resuming her journey she felt the book's pages give her small frame authority and depth – purpose. He turned and saw her. His eyes clouded with a kind of doubt, an alarm.

'Hello.' Kit smiled as if nothing was wrong, as if no thorn had pricked her skin.

'Hi.' Stuart looked very uncomfortable. She enjoyed seeing the deep crimson rise and flood his face. Back at the issues desk, June Watts again peered over the rim of her glasses.

'You haven't called. Why?'

He grabbed her arm, maneuvered her away from the boys, who sat in absolute stunned silence, into an empty aisle.

'What the hell are you doing? You can't talk to me at school.' His shoulders drew up inside his natty, corduroy jacket.

'You just used me didn't you? Someone to fill in some time? But now I'm an embarrassment. Some old thing. A 'bullshit trapping?'

'It wasn't like that.'

June stood at the end of the aisle, a group of gawking boys crowded behind her.

'Kit, I need to see you. Can you come at once?' June had drawn herself up to her full height, pencil clutched in her hand like a weapon.

'I'd just thought I'd show you what a feminist I am.' It took real effort and nearly toppled her but Kit raised the book high, its weight nearly pivoting her off her axis, the stiletto heels wobbling as she swiped Stuarts head. He went to duck, but not in time. The force of it knocked him sideways. He stumbled, breaking his fall with an outstretched hand. Looking up at her, holding the side of his face with his trembling free hand, he looked shocked, wounded, like a young soldier confused by the first sign of battle.

Walking out past a furious June and the stunned boys, out through the doors that swung heavily behind her, out to her car, tears flooded her vision, streaming down her face; for all that she had lost.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Jude tried not to cry as she sat in the suffocating space. She'd tried to shift her weight on the cold hard floor of the Box Room, but there was no space. She'd tried every position over the five hours she had been in there: curled up, sitting up with her legs pulled in, standing like some dumb soldier. She could only just make out the shapes in the half dark. Rising straight on the walls surrounding her, shelves seemed to climb up and up. On each one -some neatly piled, others half open, their contents spewing out - were suitcases and boxes. The room smelt of musty old leather.

When she walked into prep the night before, the word 'slut' had been chiseled into the wood. She fingered the rough grooves and looked around at the others. They smirked back. Sandy giggled. Huia turned away, that apparently innocent passer of information. Jude thought of Macbeth's witches: their toads, harlot's wings, eyes of newts. At least they were honest in their aggression. They dished it out to only the chosen. But the Highlands' girls served everyone: Miss Shipton and her 'Bulldog' face, Miss Fisher and her fish face. And Jude had tasted this brew in order to fit in. Did all girls do the same? Betray each other? Did all women? Like her own mother with her '*plain women*' and '*big fat things*'.

Jude touched the cool solid surfaces of the Box Room. Before the park, she had begun to even like the grey linoleum floors, the tiny cubicles, as if she was being held tight. But the tightness of the Box Room was too much. The room was getting cold. Her stomach rumbled. She had missed out on dinner. At least they did not know who the boy that she had been with was. Jude could almost feel his touch on her skin, but it was too light. That day in the park he had withdrawn from her. She couldn't understand why. Like the darkening room, she seemed to be blinded by other people, couldn't read them anymore. It was as if she'd been blindfolded and stuffed in a cellar -banished.

Her body stiffened against the hard surfaces. She slapped the floor so hard her palm stung. Something hard like Huia's stone formed inside her. There was none of the usual noise in the hallway outside.

No, 'Get off you idiot!' or 'Can I borrow your jacket?' or 'Hey! Mim, turn up that song.' The others had gone down to the recreation room and left her all boxed up. She was disappearing just like Snow.

It had never been hard for Jude to disappear, whether it was slipping behind an old tree, holding her body still and straight and feeling the tough bark against her skin or underwater, keeping close to the seabed like a flounder. She vanished for the first time at three but of that event she had no memory. It was Snow who told her the story. Friends of Kit and Snow and all of their large extended family had gathered in the house. The guests, having bravely negotiated the driveway that dipped down in a kama kazi horizontal line straight off the winding hill road, talked and mingled and drank, sometimes pausing to gaze out the large window facing the sea. It was common for people to say of the Nuffield,

'It feels as if the sea is about come inside!'

According to Snow, it was true that the architect who built it, created a triumph of line and form. The house tucked into the hill and faced out, so that all the rooms were interconnecting rectangles - turrets of concrete and glass. It apparently, 'echoed' the Second World War bunkers still hiding inside the cliff edges of the stretch of headland beyond, the stark slate line of the naked hills across the harbour and the flat surface of the sea. Although it was simple on the outside, the inside was warm and richly furnished.

That night long ago Snow told Jude as he sat her on his knee, children, aunts, uncles, Grandparents and guests had retired after a big meal of roast and trifle to the lounge. Seated on the couch, the carpet and in chairs they listened to Kit sing Shubert. Grandmother May's capable hands swept the keys of the black piano as her daughter-in-law stood in fitting gold lame, hair swept into a chignon- her voice diving and trilling gloriously about the notes.

'Your mother sung beautifully that night dear and whether it was her sparkling appearance and all the excitement of the clapping, laughing guests or the way her arms

arched wide as if giving her song to all, like a Madonna, it must have got to much for you. Maybe you were frightened by your Uncle Peter. Just as your mother was at the crescendo of Ave Maria, he staggered up and started singing too. He also has a fine voice and the two complimented each other. But then Peter stumbled and fell. Kitty just kept on singing, benignly half smiling at us all as Peter lay on the floor, floundering about! Kitty completely ignored him in all his foolish, drunken splendour. But the next thing I knew, in all the commotion, was that you'd disappeared. Everyone searched the house and the garden and there we found you. Nestled up to the dog, in your nightie, all alone in the freezing autumn night. And because you looked so serious and maternal as you cuddled the dog, we all laughed. And you cried. But the more we laughed, not at you but at the whole situation, the more you cried!

Snow absentmindedly ruffled Jude's hair, lost in the memory.

'Did Kit come and look for me too?'

Snow got up from the couch and moved to the window.

'I think she wanted to, but you know how he is. She was so caught up in her song that she just kept trilling away to those who were too old to move. Perhaps she felt a need to keep them entertained.'

Then, without explanation, he left the room. His jacket remained, empty beside her, as if he had peeled off part of himself and draped it over the back of the couch.

For a moment she felt the incline of his sweet head toward her, the smell of cigar and old spice on the big hanky ready to mop up her tears.

Jude began, softly at first, to tap her head against the bottom shelf, tapping her way into a half sleep.

Jude woke. No-one was there. No mother, no father, no sister, brothers. She started knocking her head again. It became more forceful, a rhythmical beating of her forehead against a brittle shelf. A bruise appeared on the skin near her left eye. It hurt. To relieve

the pain she cast her eyes upward like some dulled sheep and saw the gleaming metal edges of her suitcase, shut tight on a shelf four rows up. Like the turning on of a light she remembered what was in it.

Carefully standing up in the narrow space, she tried to reach and grab the handle. But it was too high. Jude stood still in the dark, her mind racing. She spotted the step ladder. Climbing up, her legs shaking from the unaccustomed movement she pulled at the suitcase, the bulk of it nearly pushing her back and hauled out the ball gown.

‘My dear did I dance! It started even before we got to the ballroom. Walking down the hill, the city spread out before my young man and I like a diamond. In the harbour the lights from the moored ferry shone on the black water. He grabbed my hand and we walked faster. Every so often he’d stop and take my hand, swirl me around so that the dress swung about my feet, like wings. We ran, past the tall, thin stuffy old houses of Mt Victoria and then I seemed to leave the ground. I believe I actually flew.

I made it myself. The dress paid only some homage to the fashions of the day. Tight bodice, skirts pretending to fold in. But I have given it lots of room to expand or contract. All night we barely stood still.’

Her Grandmother told Jude the story as she moved about her small lounge, picking up objects; crinkled fading photos, ivory figurines, a book about the Greek gods. Ten year old Jude sat on the couch, excited by the gown placed on her lap moments before. The tough shiny dark red material would not lie still. It slid off her legs and onto the floor.

‘The dress is like a living thing and you can have it my dear!’ Clara sat down in her chair and fixed her eyes on her granddaughter. Once wide and green, they had dimmed.

Jude bundled the dress into a ball. Clara was right. The dress was versatile, willing to do its owners bidding. She nestled her face into the folds. It smelt of moth balls, pine needles and dust. A dress Lady Macbeth could’ve worn or Miss Shipton. Silk acting like armour, spilling like blood from the battlements.

When Mrs Latham finally flung open the door the gown was nowhere to be seen and Jude stepped out, smiling as if she had been ushered into a waiting chariot, the silk wrapped around under her cardy,

Moments later as Jude entered the recreation room teenage noise rambled through the dimly lit night space and whirled up to the fan in the ceiling. Talking, giggling girls fell about on the floor as an old stereo, banged out endless pop songs. An ignored television blared in the corner. Suzy sat on the ledge of an open window. In the centre of the large space Sandy held court, but whatever was being said was lost, like all the other bits of words and songs in the bouncing noise of the room. Record after record played, the stereo turntable transporting each and everyone to some other more romantic or psychedelic place. They had dressed the part: Trudy wearing a purple flowered headband, Huia an orange poncho. They seemed uninterested in Jude and so she in turn, kept to herself, settling down into a chair in the corner.

Coming through the door, Emily followed by the barely seen Prudence, made her way directly to her sister.

'I need to talk to you.' Emily spoke loudly enough to be heard over the noise. The room fell into silence except for the belt of the fan and the song on the turntable.

Sandy didn't get up, but instead picked at the hole in her jeans put there on purpose last week with a compass in an attempt to look worn, rougher at the edges – cool.

'Now!' Emily spat.

Sandy slowly rose to her full height, towering over her older sister, while her circle gaze wondrously up at her golden hair feathering from the down draft of the fan. Emily drew Sandy to the side of the room. As they talked, the two looked over at Jude.

The older girls then walked to the stereo, taking off the record with an abrupt scraping of the needle. Jude sat up aware of the deeper silence. The girls around the stereo stood back as Emily withdrew the black vinyl of her offering from its cover and placed it on the turntable. She and Prudence took up residence on the floor, heads on cushions,

especially made up eyes for The Bee Gees, gazing at the ceiling and their real or imagined boyfriends. The Bee Gees cried out,

'I gotta get a message to you.'

Suzy stopped playing her guitar, 'Who would want to get a message to Emily!'

But Emily looked picture perfect. She'd fanned her corn hair out around her head like a golden halo. She mouthed the lyrics to the heavens like a cupid doll...

'One more night and my life will be through...hu.hu...'

Prudence mimicked everything Emily did but her brown, shorter hair wouldn't fan out. It stuck out as if she'd been electrocuted.

Later when Suzy put on Bob Dylan they thought it was hilarious.

'You listen to that idiot and his whining, weird songs?' Emily said, still gazing at the ceiling.

'Yeah...what's it to you?' Suzy kicked her heels out from the window ledge, warming up for a spat.

'Nothing. It means exactly nothing. As head prefect I like to keep up with the moral direction of you girls and report to Mrs Latham, who then reports to Miss Shipton.'

The mention of Mrs Latham seemed to trigger a cold fury in Suzy.

'She wouldn't even know what music is and if she did it would be piped in, euthanizing lift pap like *'Up, up and away in my beautiful balloon.'*

Suzy's face seemed stricken with talk of Latham. She caught hold of herself and started dancing around the room to Dylan, occasionally writhing around Emily, arching over her, hands and arms making voodoo moves. Emily continued to stare upward.

'Nobody feels any pain...'

Emily rose up, walking toward Jude, smiling strangely.

'It's nice to see you have got yourself a new friend Suzy. You two girls seem to have been real busy lately. I suppose you know that we're friends with some of the boys you like to visit. In fact we grew up with James Te Whare, eh Sandy?'

Sandy again encircled by her friends nodded with a superior tilt to her head, looking over at Jude. There was hurt about her eyes. It started to dawn on Jude. They knew something. The sisters had found out about James. Huia sitting in the outer circle seemed confused, brown eyes clouding over.

'They are farm boys. Wholesome boys. Not like those city boys with their heavy hippy Dylan shit, eh Prudence?'

Prudence nodded and scoffed revealing a row of dull little teeth. Something in her ignorant guffawing brought back the hard stone inside Jude. She could see Ned and Steven standing in the driveway as they prepared to leave. Ned wore a brown suede jacket making his shoulders seem bigger, the bones tucked away under his armour. He was hugging Jude, saying it will all be great, that they would be back soon with gifts and stories, back to the empty concrete Nuffield. Steven made himself busy, kneeling down and tightening the straps of his suitcase. His corduroy pants and white muslin shirt hung on his thinning body, his hair falling in lank tendrils and now she was older Jude knew that it must have been the previous night's psychedelic experience that made him look numb in the naked light of a Seatoun day. He picked up his guitar and walked toward Kit, who seemed as if she was shrinking along with their imminent departure from her life, giving her a quick efficient peck on the cheek. They waved. They were gone.

'Oh and keep away from the window Suzy. Bad things can happen out there...some girls get tempted and I reckon you would hate to get into trouble. You're so virginal'

Suzy looked out into the night pretending she had lost interest, but Jude could see the flinching of her profile. Jude jumped up into the window frame, curling up opposite her friend and turned her face away.

'There is nothing out there Jude. There's nothing for you. Not like the night six few weeks ago when I saw you sneak out.' sneered Emily.

Jude remembered the small figure in the doorway and the halo of light.

'He doesn't want you anymore because you're easy. You city girls will have to learn our ways. We're not like that,'

Jude jumped from the window, her gut filled with cold fury . Lining her body up in front of Emily she tossed her head back.

'You know nothing you ignorant girl.' Jude made a whine from the roof of her mouth.

'Eeeeeehhhhh Suzy.'

Expecting Suzy to be standing behind her in support, Jude turned to see her still looking out the window. Emily just laughed.

'What the hell are you playing at? We all know what you are – a little...or maybe not so little - slut.'

Jude froze. That word, that word Kit had called Dianne, came thick and fast like an unstoppable spitting wind. Against it her body felt heavy. Filling up with the weight of the word. Filling up like Dianne, heavier and heavier. But for her sister it was also the weight of the baby. And when it was born, he or she? The little baby, her niece or nephew would have been light, white feather down of hair on its little pillow.

'We know that Huia invited you to the farm. We Ballcots' always have a ball. But you can't...' Emily paused as if some new idea had occurred to her. Her manner changed, the angry face broke into a sickly smile.

Huia took Jude's hand.

'You are very mean Emily. Come on Jude. Let's go up to the dorm.' There was a sense of disappointment in her friend's words; she had come to Jude's side even though she must have known about James.

'I think you should come to the ball with Huia Jude. It will be an education. Learn what farming people do and we're really dressing up this year.'

Jude was confused. Emily had completely changed, becoming all motherly, touching her arm. She could feel the tight wrap of the red gown under her jumper like a warm arm holding her up. She could wear it to win back James. And it could it would glow like a beacon on the coast, willing her father home from the South Island. The dress was her miracle.

Huia spun around, eyes flashing.

'I don't think we want to come anymore.'

'It's up to you.' Emily shrugged, 'It's called the Easter Bunny Ball which is funny because we shoot rabbits on our farm, eh Sandy.'

Sandy was stuck to the spot, staring at Jude. Back on the turntable, The Bee Gee's sung a second time through their mining disaster,

*'One more night and my life will be through ooh ooh,
hold on, hold on.'*

The girls stood in their various positions, Jude still close to Emily, Huia holding onto her arm, trying to pull her away, Prudence looking on, her arms folded, like figures on a game board. Occasionally one would look down or shuffle. Only the wide figure of Miss Shipton taking up the whole of the doorway seemed to break the deadlock. Her voice boomed. The girls jumped apart.

'I would like to speak to Suzy. Where is she?'

They looked for Suzy in the window. The pane was shut, its deeply blank face only reflecting a young woman disappearing into the evening.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Eunice had decided not to put on her Flamenco record. Looking out, towards the school, she could see the Celia Ashton block. It was always stark at night. In contrast to the spired stone elegance of the boarding school, the recently constructed two storied building was square and featureless. But from a distance, the lights transformed its regular, utilitarian features into a blazing hive. From her vantage point of the upstairs lounge Eunice hoped the hive might reflect itself in the minds of the Highlands girls decamped there for prep. Part of her doubted it. Suzy who would have been using her homework to write some smart dissertation on what the point of it all was, her sarcasm filling every sentence making spikes of words, was confined to the dormitory, waiting for her father to come and pick her up. They had no choice but to expel the child. She had brazenly returned in the early hours of the next morning, marching past the night staff in the office, unaware there had been a full scale search; even the police were involved. Eunice had been called to the hostel, to confront her.

‘Where have you been girl?’

‘With my boyfriend.’

‘That is against the rules. You have flagrantly flouted them. We have had the police looking for you! What do you have to say for yourself?’

‘I have nothing to say. You and your stupid rules can get stuffed.’

Suzy’s beautiful face was full of sneering. She had misread the girl. There was not a jot of innocence or deep thought behind that angelic face. Eunice had marched her into the Box Room and locked it while she got Rebecca. The girl was silent and Eunice felt useless and without her Mary. She had failed.

Eunice could just see the turrets of her school. She knew the grounds were empty. The big blocks that held Math’s, Science and English, housed the blackboards, chalk,

dusters, desks and texts, tidily waited for the mad rush tomorrow morning. Without the staff and the girls they were devoid of meaning, gathering a fine layer of dust to be blown away by the breath and movement of learning. That was everything to Eunice, the daily act of the school day, like some elaborate dance. A tide of girls sweeping in and out, words and ideas floating in their heads, hopefully one day settling, creating grids and pathways. Like the hive.

The window rattled. Fierce wind and rain was blowing straight from the Tasman. The lights of Celia Ashton become a haze. The day before had been dead calm. The weather was unusual for autumn and the petals would be blown from her roses -too early. Just as in Macbeth, the world seemed full of unnatural acts.

At Cambridge she had completed her dissertation on the relationship between the Elizabethan view of the world and Shakespearian imagery. The violence, the 'screams of death and prophesying with accents terrible' seemed far removed from the safety of 1948 and the quaint English room with its own Victorian fireplace that she wrote in. Then just last year, twenty years later, the world seemed to erupt. One moment the tired voice of Walter Conkrite announcing the shooting with a hunting rifle of Martin Luther King,

'A shot was fired from across the street, the bullet exploded in his face.'

Then by June, it was Bobby Kennedy. His press aide, after stating the facts -the gun and face coming out of nowhere, blinking back his shock, said simply,

'He was 42 years old.'

He said it with slight resentment, the way you would the untimely death of a child. Eunice had thought back even then to her Jesus in Andalucía. The world needed sacrificial lambs.

Just weeks later the flower children pranced about with their tassels and drugs on the fields of Woodstock; singing about love and freedom as the ground turned to a muddy sewer. Flowers and incense did not hide the fact that the King was dead.

She could barely see Celia Ashton. The squall closed in, hiding the building completely. Perhaps the light was on for some. She'd heard from Miss Darling that Jude Farley had been working hard and gaining excellent marks in English. Her faith in her had paid off. Maybe she would take her under her wing, keep her on the safe and narrow, her own flower, her own rose. The child had certainly settled down after the park incident, behaving herself with impeccable manners. She seemed to have made good friends with Huia, another hard worker. Eunice wondered if Judith's mother busily made her own hive in that brash city. Maybe she was busy stinging any threats to the honey pot with that viscous little tongue.

The woman sung opera! Eunice struggled to imagine Kit with the contrived flamboyance of her mauve pantsuit singing Verdi. It was almost as if she had tried to climb aboard the garish, rainbow colours of the age – but too late. She tried to picture Kit standing on a stage in a suburban hall, singing in some amateur production, her small body arched, stiltedly reaching the pure, controlled notes, like Dorie. But did she have Dorie's power?

Eunice and her sister had no trouble singing together as children, marching along the river, following the bank as it made its way to the sea, through the winter in their boots, woolens and whitebait nets. Into the summer in light cotton frocks. Their voices seemed to blend together then. They would go through the whole repertoire of songs they heard on the radio, mimicking the big 78 records their father returned with after one of his jaunts up North. One gift at least to make up for the long absence. They would listen to the songs again and again then walk, still singing – *'Bye Bye Blackbird'* and *'Poor little Rich Girl.'* Their little voices wavered with the effort of scrambling and climbing, the river rushing beside them, the mountain standing quietly behind, letting the water flow from her flanks.

When they were teenagers they learnt to sing Schubert. It required concentration, especially on the high notes. Standing close together behind their mother who played for them - their back straight, heads tilted back.

'Drop your jaws girls. Drop your jaws.'

They would diligently open and close their mouths, breathing in the right places. Still it was a difficult song, with a sudden little lilt on '*clover*' and '*over*'. Eunice found herself unwittingly singing with a much lower voice. The dreaded alto had become even deeper. Almost a base. She was better with '*red*' and '*rare*' and '*I will pluck you.*'

Their once united voices changed as they grew apart in style and interests. When Eunice had won the scholarship, Dorie cried as she left on the train for Wellington to get the boat, Eunice was surprised by the depth of her sister's grief. They wrote to each other, Eunice trying to describe her life in Cambridge, playing down the intricate, fairy like buildings that surrounded her; the ancient charm of every path and her first sight of Bernard, black quaff of hair falling over dark eyes. Eunice took heart in the knowledge that Dorie was fulfilling her dream to become a nurse. She never expected to return home to find the good nurse had changed.

Eunice had waited weeks for a phone call. The last few times she had kept her distance at church. As she went to shake the Reverend's hand after the service, he had asked to speak with her. He questioned her delicately about her faith. Asked her,

'How do you feel about Catholicism?' As he said it he moved back, wiry frame suddenly made timid and malleable by the bulk of her presence and possible conversion.

'I am certainly not a papist!' Eunice boomed so that the twittering circle of parishioners gathered on the lawn, looked up. Then they nodded to each other with some relief, like senseless followers, too easily led. Eunice raised her shoulders and stepped closer to the Reverend.

'But I admire them.'

Her words would have been quickly relayed to Dorie. She was willing to abandon the idea of the Easter parade, not cause any more division if Dorie would stop harping on about the house. Eunice would not mention again the hot, vibrant, true colours of Andalucían countryside and how Bernard had stood in the middle of a wheat field and

raised his hands to the sky and cried out. How at that moment she knew something was stirring inside her- a tiny kernel of new life. Not even once.

It had cleared a little. Eunice could just see the outline of the garden below, but she was blind to the deepening fire of the remaining roses, their last hurrah. Maybe their forms had been dampened by the night. But the bank seemed bare, stark like the denuded landscape in the enlarged photo that hung on the wall. The black and white picture showed her Grandfather's Taranaki farm. He stood in the foreground with his settlers beard, open-necked shirt and braces. Axe held proudly in his arms. Surrounding him were the charred stumps of black wood and in the far distance Egmont, cloaked in snow. Lonely like some banished child.

As she hurried down the stairs, panic set in. She had been so consumed with matters at school, with the Suzy episode and the conflict at church that she had not checked the garden for a week. The back door was jammed. Eunice shook it open, almost breaking the old timber. The air outside smelt of rotten leaves and she almost slipped. She neared the top of her garden. There before her were the remains of her roses, the stems strewn, left with nothing to defend. Eunice imagined the gloved hands of Deirdre and Dorie clasping the pruning shears, champing at the bit.

'This will make good compost!' Dorie would have said.

Eunice wept. Above the sky held grey water and she wondered how it could hold on for so long. After all the sky was just air. Water only a drop heavier. Eunice had tried after the accident with Bernard, to hold onto the growing life in her womb but the balance had tipped. Her would-be child had spilled away like a tiny drowned fish.

Later when she stood in her dressing gown looking out, the only colour to be seen was the white light of the houses and buildings, nestled in the valleys of New Plymouth. To her right, the first autumn snow on the mountain, but she could see nothing of what lay beneath in the forests. The raven necked tuis', the moss on the petrified trees of the Goblin forest and what was left of the kiwi plodding in the undergrowth. Once the bush had crept everywhere. The only light in the night that of the white stars and the fires of the Māori .

White was not even a colour but it caught the outline of her scar. The salt from her dry tears stung the tender flesh.

The Māori had a myth about the mountain. He once lived alongside Mt Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngarahoe on the central plateau. He fell in love with a little hill. Eunice had forgotten her name, but she was the wife of the mighty Tongariro and a fight broke out. The battle of the titans. Taranaki, the striking tall lad had to leave his beloved home. On the way, toward the coast, he heavily ploughed through the earth, his tears shedding into the deep gorge of the trail, creating the Wanganui River. Once on the west coast he stayed put. But Taranaki still cried after his lost love and home. Streams and rivers flowed from his weeping sides. Rivers she and Dorie had played in. He and Eunice were not unlike. She, the *'big fat ugly thing'* had been banished from her love. Dorie would like to banish her from her home.

She felt a presence standing beside her, as if some figure - her constant expansive flesh warm, eyes focused upward, mouth held firm, wings at her back was readied in support for what Eunice had to do. Eunice placed her hand on her cheek and muttered,

'If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not take revenge?'

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

The roads of Auckland annoyed Kit. Like the endless motorway she was travelling on, they were mostly straight, the bland housing showing off the worst of her country's mediocrity. There was a bit of sport to be had on the Eastern Bays where the road snaked for miles. It was wide enough to skirt past plodding drivers using the verge, wide enough not to be seen in just your bra, grabbing the last of the sun after work. But mostly it was through endless dull suburbs,

'This is a no-mans land,' she had said aloud in the car and as if listening the Jag picked up speed.

She had tried some of her old Wellington antics with the traffic patrol. They would not have a bar of her baiting. One had even threatened to arrest her,

'Lady, if you continue with that line I will have to ask you to accompany me to the station.' Accompany! She wanted to say, accompany you, you big jack ass. The bossy blue jacket could not hide his fat stomach. She imagined him going home to his Lockwood, his pedestrian wife, his bland stodgy dinner.

Out on the Southern motorway she drove at a decent speed. There was a fair amount of traffic -holiday travelers , trucks and roof racks piled high like gypsies, children bouncing inside with excitement at the prospect of an Easter holiday. It would be a long day. She had a long way to go. Around her the colours were muted, fading with autumn. The summer had died. Ahead the Bombay hill, so pithy and contoured, in contrast to the big hills and mountains she was headed for.

As she reached the end, to the borders of the city, near Rama Rama, Kit looked to her left and saw the back end of the farm. It was just the same. How could it change? It was just grass, cows, a stream, milking shed. It had been the beginning of her love for Auckland. The green low lying hills and paddocks, filled by seasonal rains rushing now toward her with all their memories. She knew the rhythms well. For five years Kit worked with them.

Stuart had reminded her of him. Something in the jaunty nonchalance, the fair Irish skin. She had taken a voyage into the unknown when she first met that man, just like Peter before her, by boarding the train, fare welling her parents and Honey and joining the land army. But there were no bullets or bombs where she was going, apart from Jim. Mother stood on the platform in what Honey called her 'funny' clothes. For 1941 when hems were rising, Mother still chose to wrap herself in rungs of dark cloth. Clara waved to Kit, the wind billowing out her long skirt, but her amber eyes were dry. Father was more transparent, waving frantically, trying to control his quivering lips while Honey just simply wept. Kit sat back and faced the opposite red leather seat, smart, shining and empty. She had never travelled beyond Wellington apart from a few day trips. She was nineteen. Her naivety was soon to catch up with her.

She stayed for five years in Rama Rama. The little family of Jim, Millie and two small children welcomed her, grateful for the much needed help. By night she slept in a sleep out, by day milking, calving, fencing and feeding. Kit was surprised at how much she loved it. The air smelling like honey, the feel of the brute force of the horse powering beneath her, coming home to a cooked meal like one of the workers. She did not miss the cluttered Wellington house, the surrounding dark damp hills and Clara's musty old books and odd friends.

Jim was a hard task master. His wily frame, smelling of oilskin seemed to rage about the farm. Swearing at cows, swearing at Kit,

'Get it open!' Kit would run to open the gate just in time, the tractor rearing behind her, just missing her back as it ploughed through.

'Get out you silly Mare,' he'd say as her pushed past her to some reluctant cow. Beating the animal about its hide, the cow's doe eyes wide and petrified. His thin mouth set hard. But he hadn't reckoned on how hard Kit could work. Even in winter when the cows were dried off, the miles she biked to the stinking freezing works at Westfield -facing the smorgasbord of fetid smells to replace the disappearing men.

Over time Jim changed toward Kit. Leaping from the tractor he would open the gate wide for her, whispering sweet nothings to cows, touching Kit lightly as he helped over a high fence. Camaraderie developed between them the night they had to pull a cow out from the bog. Kit had stayed with its moaning, weighted body for hours in the dark and cold, up to her waste in mud. Jim set to work hauling it out with the tractor. It was slowly shifted, eyes fierce with pain. He took no notice. He saved the animal not for love but for its worth.

He kissed her in the barn. She never thought a rough farmer could taste sweet. She was only young; he was in his late thirties. He challenged her to races, running or horse – they were equals then; stampeding through paddocks, laughing as they jiggled and fell.

‘For a slip of a girl, you’ve got guts Kit,’

They had the run of the farm for their affair while Millie, an intelligent, devoted mother seemed unaware as she tended the house. Like her, the young wife was small and active. But unlike her husband, Millie was level, gentle like the soft sloping hills around her. Kit and Millie became friends. Before Jim, Kit had never made love. She never knew what it could be like, but quickly knew only the hard surfaces, the chafed calloused hands.

The American soldiers came to Papakura. They took Kit out dancing, brought her stockings, chocolate. They spoke to her like a lady, arriving at the doorstep with cap in hand, with handsome broad faces and white teeth.

‘Hey Kit! Would you care to accompany me to the village dance this week?’

How could she resist the soldiers? Jim’s mood changed. He returned to even crueller behavior. At first it looked like a practical joke, setting her up for a fall in the stream, or a kick from an angry cow. Then it became more sinister. Pitching her into the gorse, pouring a bucket of dung over her head, grabbing her roughly by the arm,

‘Toughen up Kit.’

But when the war ended she stayed on. She found it hard to leave the freedom of open spaces, her sleep-out and Millie.

So when, a year later and back in Wellington, she saw Snow walking toward her Peter, the gentle face was like a balm.

She was already in Hamilton. The willow trees lining the banks of the Waikato River seemed to almost fall in the water. An old river boat, heavy and matronly, made slow progress. Very proper, head held high, black powder veil streaming like Queen Victoria with her back arched just like Kits long dead Victorian aunts who would visit her family home in Johnsonville from Invercargill once a year.

Johnsonville had the proud distinction of being one of New Zealand's first satellite suburbs. Fanning out at the top of a gorge in a labyrinth of streets, freshly built bungalows climbed stark resistant hills. Inside them grew the ever expanding families of the lower middle classes. After school and in the weekends, the children, including Kit, Honey and Peter would roam gorse scattered hills. Stripped of trees they offered little shelter from bitter southerlies, silent of birds, but filled with whining wind. Up there they were their own masters, claiming forts on the slopes, fighting with sticks. On return they'd bowl through the front door, valiant over the hill kingdom. There before them, sitting at tables, sitting in chairs, drinking tea, stuffily nibbling cakes the aunts would be. Shrouded in brown and black they would bring an arched icy presence from the deep South and the children's bravado would crumble like the cake.

There was so much she longed to tell her own children but she couldn't. Each time something caught in her throat, some holding back, creating regret dense and cold as stone. She wanted to explain how after the farm she felt cooped up in the kitchen, watching the ferries at night, gliding past her, all decked out with lights, glamorous and unreachable. How she longed for escape back to the open. How she had let the brute force of the wind come in that morning.

Mother had always taught them to speak 'well,' but sometimes Kit's words came out like ripe, sugar plums. At other times spilling out tart and cruel like, 'Slut.'

That morning of the storm after she had driven from the house, Kit had past a woman clinging to a lamppost so as not to get blown away. She did not stop to help her. Rocks battered the car but she just kept on driving, trying to escape her self. Snow had followed and Jude heard him leave. The boys said to her later that Jude had run all the way down Beacon Hill, calling after her father.

‘Dad, Dad come back.’ What must she have thought seeing the tail of the Jag wind its way from her, taking the sharp corner, past the monastery, never to be seen again?

Kit drove steadily and quietly through the pitted steep hills of Te Kuiti, through the Awakuni gorge toward New Plymouth, the once drowned car housing her long journey. At Mokoi she stopped. There before her was the mountain and the sea, perfect as a postcard. The coast spread out, calm and sultry like an invitation. It took her breath away.

Such stillness in contrast to the storm of just a year ago. That morning of the storm, on her way back from the jaunt around the Wellington South Coast, she saw a man parked by the side of the road, near the embankment of Moa Point by the airport. The man, braving the pelting wind, had one hand raised above his eyes to shield away the stones and seaweed. The other pointed down to the sea.

‘Someone just went over in a car. I’ll call the police.’

He ran to his house, one of the small weathered batches that lined the coast. Kit knew who it would be, did not stop to think, stripping off her clothes, diving into the boiling ocean. And sure enough there it was, the grey top of the Jag slowly sinking. She tried to dive under the huge waves, tried to get to the door. But her lungs filled with water, her body pulled away each time with the force of the rips and the biting cold. Standing, shivering on the stony beach she had been unaware of all the other drownings. The Wahine passengers who had made it all the way across the huge waves in the channel, to the Eastbourne shore were hurled up and battered. The sharp rocks took the weakened bodies of children, young men, women and old people into their sharp teeth. Had Kit not been so foolish and left the house earlier, perhaps she could have tried to save them.

Later when they pulled the car out, Kit was told by Ned that the door of the Jag was open. He must have tried at least to swim. The sea would have been like a wall – a heaving mass of bleak liquid. The body the couple had seen a few days later on the Pencarrow coast, had white-blond hair. Had it time to dry as his head gently rested on the moving carpet of pebbles? The couple mentioned that his shoes looked expensive- two toned -no longer shiny.

Gypsy lay flat out on the back seat, too tired now to sit and look out for long. Gypsy must have got through the open door. Jude would be delighted to see her dog, the survivor. Jude must know that she too braved the elements, walked the shoreline. She must know her sister was in Invercargill kindly watched over by the adult children of those frosty aunts. They had asked no questions. They understood that Dianne was just a child having a child. And there was the shame. The thought of the staring from all those plain pedestrian woman raking their revenge. How could she bear it!

But her little granddaughter had gone. Like Snow, Kit had spirited her away. Kit would go to Invercargill after New Plymouth. She would try to say the words, 'I am sorry.' To dislodge the stones in her throat and assuage the bitter ones that had come before.

Kit sat in the car and began to sing that smart young McCartney's song,

'The long and long and winding road,

That leads to your door,

Don't ever be afraid...'

The horizon of the flat grey Tasman opened out endlessly. Like some great ribbon of runway, ready for takeoff, coming to meet her. The little town seemed emptied out. No cars, no people, no dogs.

She turned the key in the ignition. She'd have to find a new job in Auckland, One that suited her better. One that involved music. She altered the rear vision mirror and smiled into it. The new teeth dazzled – the irregularity barely visible. The orthodontist was still in the wings. The Jag fired up. As she sped out of Mokoi, Kit caught one last glance of the sea. The girls needed to know what Clara would often say,

'One must walk head first into the brute force of the wind.'

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

On Easter Friday, just as she had done only a few months earlier, Eunice searched for herself in the window, but the '*big fat thing*' was gone. The reflection she had seen, that 'old reptile in repose,' had vanished. Out beyond the naked bank the golden boughs of weeping willows and oaks on the driveway to Highlands shone back at her like an empty reminder of something past. The hostel was all but empty. She wondered if the girls knew anything as they boarded the busses home, of what she had done just a week before on Palm Sunday. What would they make of it? She hoped that some would have liked the spectacle. Judith may have understood, Suzy would have just laughed and anyway she had left that morning.

'Sayonara,' she said, waving as she got in her father's car.

Eunice had been in the Highlands office, getting her weekly report from Rebecca Latham. The woman capably summed up matters of concern: Mim had come down with a terrible flu and was confined to The Sans, the little hospital wing, crying uncontrollably in response to not being allowed to travel home, Sandy seemed to be growing thin and had not been seen eating in the dining hall. New sheets had been ordered for Cameron dorm. As she talked, Rebecca's fingers rattled on the desk. Eunice had not noticed the yellow cigarette stains between index and third finger before. Then a voice issued from the intercom system.

'You must be looking forward to my father coming to get me!'

The voice was Suzy's. Rebecca looked at Eunice, fiercely plucked eyebrows raised in alarm.

'I'll turn it off.'

'Leave it on. Let the girl have her say.'

There was a pause. It seemed as if the whole hostel was listening, one breathing passage of bodies. Eunice imagined Suzy in the hallway of the dormitory, suitcase bulging

at the seams by her side, the other girls too scared of her fury to make a move from their cubicles.

'You're nothing like my mother. She was real different from you. Much prettier. She didn't look like a stick insect.' Eunice could not look at Rebecca. There was no crackling of static, only the barely detectable sound of Suzy inhaling.

'She left because she was an artist. You couldn't be an artist. She left because she...' The girl struggled to control her voice. It started to waver. The next few words came out between an anguished guttural cry.

'She doesn't see me. I know she'd like to. But being an artist is bus...' There it was - a rising in the inflection of what was going to be 'busy'. A break away, a high pitched cry.

Rebecca got up from her seat.

'That is enough Eunice. I am going to turn it off.'

But before she could get to the switch with her shaking stained fingers the girl's last words came out thick and fast. Suzy was shouting with cultured vowels Eunice had not heard before.

'My father won't be with you for long Latham. He moves on quickly. Strange thing is I'm being expelled for exactly what you do. Having sex...rooting like some rabbit...'

Someone sucked in some air. The words were cut off. Rebecca stood by the system, her head down, arms crossed.

'I have been out with him only a few times. We went to the pictures the night he dropped Suzy off last year. I flew to Auckland several months ago and we met for dinner. It was all above board. Goodness knows how she knew.'

Eunice could have taken it a lot further but capable hostel Head Matrons were hard to find. Rebecca had excellent book keeping, ran an efficient laundry and kitchen. Eunice did not reply and left the office. That would be enough reprimand.

The hostel would soon be back to normal. With Suzy gone, behavior would improve. But still, sipping her evening sherry and imagining the girls' hi-jinks at the hostel would never be the same. Not even the flamenco would fill the empty space left by the luminescent Suzy, stamping her feet on the lino. There was Jude. Eunice had even smiled and waved to Jude and Huia as they left on the bus, breaking her own rules of no familiarity. And of course there were no phone calls from Dorie, no popping in with Deidre. After what had happened she may never see her sister again. Eunice looked down at the street. It was empty of people, of gabbling, laughing hippies but full of birds - hiding in the trees.

On that morning, a week earlier, a Tui's dark form had perched high in the trees austere peeling out its call as Eunice opened the door. The morning, she'd decided, was well made like a perfect song, tree leaves turning in the sun, flashing like dark green feathers on a cloak.

'They say that people sang before they could talk.' This, she had tried to say to Dorrie.

'Who are 'they'?' Her sister said in that muscular, no-nonsense tone she reserved only for Eunice.

'Those in the know,' Eunice had replied -nonchalant.

'What about the poor things who couldn't sing in tune?' Dorie stared intently at Eunice, mouth pulled waspish, tight.

'I don't think it was a matter of that. No melodies. Just a lot of different noises. Perhaps they copied the birds.'

Their mother and the aunts used to sing to one another as a calling card. Eunice could see and hear the voices of the women rising and falling. Clambering up the path like great flightless birds. They would first knock quiet, tentative.....then a high soprano

call.....orrr horrrr.....orr horrrrrrrr. The tone would vary according to mood, robust, tight, mostly light...breaching the great divide; greeting one another in domestic isolation. The talk would often turn to food.

‘Apple is very good for the bowel.’

‘Banana is too I believe.’

‘No. Apple is gentler. It flushes.’

That perfect morning she had wondered - could a person kill another in the newborn light of day? The flax kete bought at the church fete last year was light as grass between her fingers; the crown of rose stems no weight at all, as she negotiated the path descending.

She walked slowly through New Plymouth toward her first stop, Deidre’s café. Beyond the city, fanning out from the mountain was the rich flat Taranaki landscape, its wealth culled by generations of farmers. She thought of the fat animals gently nuzzling and munching the liquid grass. She thought of the solid remains of the past buried beneath; giant forests full of birds calling along with the doleful thud of axe against wood and plant, guns and mere viscously breaking the chill air. Voices raised high in wails of grief or deep in anger. To some, like Dorie, the past had never been ancient. If Dorie had had a farm and planted crops, their roots that would have been deep and pale.

On the way there was a huge billboard with a painting of Christ on the cross looking like an emaciated surfie. It read ‘CHRIST DIED FOR YOU’. She wondered if Christ had a passion for the vastness of the gold desert. Did little birds in Judea bath in the hot pink sand or were they few in number and big, scarce and scavenging, like the giant eagles that once flew in New Zealand skies?

The Road Hog Café was nearly empty save for a young man with an alarming moustache and a foolish looking girl who seemed to Eunice to cower behind her very own

tall, witless frame, her dark hair falling about a pasty face. And of course there was Deirdre, maneuvering that baby-filled stomach like a trophy, between tables.

For a moment as she took her seat, Eunice felt nauseas with the thought of all the food she had to order from the hapless Deirdre. The girl looked harried at the sight of Eunice and slowed down, approaching Eunice with suspicion.

‘Hi! What are you doing here?’ The voice came out squeaky and high, full of nerves.

‘I have come for breakfast before I go onto church. Its Palm Sunday today and I will need extra energy for the performance.’

Deirdre edged closer trying to peak at what was underneath her long coat and at what was in the kete.

‘Why do you need so much energy? Dorie said the congregation just walked around the church, saying the right lines from the bible.’

‘Yes, that and a bit of silly knocking on doors. They think it’s terribly risqué. Terrible Symbolic of the great dance of faith, the wonder of Easter. Terribly representative of Jesus on the donkey. What with no costumes, no pageantry? What with the Minister and Jim Sothers strutting about with the bible?’

‘Well I don’t know about that eh.’

‘Ignorance is bliss. Now can I first have the cooked breakfast please?’

Slowly, sullenly Deirdre brought plate after plate. The cooked breakfast, scones, toasted sandwiches. Just about everything on the menu. Eunice managed very slowly and deliberately to eat most of it, even with Deirdre continuing to quiz her about why she needed all that food? What did she intend to do today? Taking quick lizard-eyed glances at her flax kete with the crown just peeping out.

But best of all and the only thing she really enjoyed was the banana cake. She sliced down into it, making shafts, just like the endless river game of pushing the sandbank with

Dorrie. They loved to see the solid mass of sand break away and cave into the water with a heavy splash. And into the deep, exquisite river they would jump, rise to the surface and smile. Eunice stopped eating and toyed with the cake so that the manager, a large, stupid woman with a saccharine manner, called out from the kitchen.

‘Youuuuuuuuuuu.....I say....Madam! Would you like more cream?’

‘No!’ She said abruptly. Eunice had suddenly felt tense thinking about what she had to do next. Could the woman hear the panic? Usually she did not find it difficult to beguile fawning people but that day Eunice had to feign a look of urgency. Had to play the part of a sweet older lady who’d got flustered. Lost her memory, lost her bearings. But her bearings were right beside her in the kete.

‘No more cream thank you. I really must go. I’ve forgotten I have to be at church! My sister’s daughter- in law Deirdre, is kindly paying the bill for me today, dear. Her treat! It’s my birthday! Goodbye and thank you so much.”

But when she went to move her bones had been brittle. At the door she looked back at Deirdre, holding her stomach, bland face still with shock.

The liquor store was most disappointing. There was no challenge, just a round red man who didn’t even bother to look up from the racing page. Eunice wanted to swipe his giant head with the dry sherry, but instead, walked stiffly toward St Barnabas Church. She found an empty alleyway and stopped, pouring the liquid into a hip flask. Eunice took three gulps of the warm gold.

It was still early. Eunice did not want the congregation to see her, only Dorie and the choir. Although she was near retirement, such a public vision would loose her, her job.

‘Mental instability,’ the board would say and next would be the house. Dorie would get her wish after all.

They would be finalizing the details of the service, The Passion of Jesus Christ according to Mathew.....*and Thou, O Crown of Virgins, Grant us peace, And assuage the passions that touch our hearts?* They didn't know what she was on about, didn't know the true beauty of the sacrifice of the Universal Mary. Her daily passion in creating life, that great, creaking, yearning act of living. Like some ancient ship pitched to the winds. The creation taken away from her by Earnest and Dorie, making Eunice distracted, causing the accident that day on the coast. Instead she had the Suzy's, Jude's and Huia's – her girls that walked every minute that flamenco song and dance.

The latter two had written excellent essays on Macbeth, obviously relishing the underlining of imagery peppered through their text. The deep red ink lines almost went through the paper.

The sherry began to calm her nerves. She could have forgiven the taking of Bernard and the baby, but Dorie wanted more. Dorie coveted the house. It was Dorie she had needed to see. She had eventually phoned just the day before Palm Sunday.

'I've had to make excuses for you now for three weeks in a row and I have just about come to the end of my tether!'

Dorie would have gone on without her presence, proudly singing; eyes softly shut. Eunice could imagine her sister whinnying and neighing.

'I'm sorry.' Eunice had offered. 'I have no excuses. The most probable explanation is that I have become bored with the choir.'

The phone had gone dead. The silence was just as resounding as Eunice stood outside the back door to the church. Eunice's increasingly wavering and fragile alto did not penetrate the windowless brick walls of the church, nor any other, for that matter. Singing would not be enough. Eunice took off her coat, carefully folding it and putting it inside the doorway. Out of the kete she took the crown. A few petals had still remained tarnished a dark brown from the bruising. Small curled survivors of the massacre. The thorns pricked a little as she put it on her head. Eunice patted the ripped and torn dress.

It was the frayed church frock of Judith and Suzy that had given her the idea but putting it into action, executing it was the real challenge. Eunice had had to time breaking into Dorie's house, waiting until her sister went to choir practice. Edging her frame through the half opened window proved to be the sticking point. For awhile she was stuck, the sill digging into her the tender flesh of her ample stomach. But she managed with huge will to pull herself through. Once inside she was delighted to see that the blue taffeta Mistress on Manners was still in Dorie's wardrobe - draped under plastic like spoils to the victor. Dorie had kept it all those years. The dress that ended it all, lurking in the back, a shimmering garb of deceit in indigo. Once she had it home, armed with scissors, needle and thread, Eunice set to work. Expanding the waistline with elastic, cutting and shredding at will. The malleable material seemed to let her fashion a robe fit for a poor mother of ancient times.

As Eunice cut and tore and reworked, patching some areas with some sacking, the world of appearances, the daily dance that the women, Kitty Farley seemed to relish seemed like putty in her hands. The thin cloth of Dorie's Mistress on Manners gave way, easily shed. Weakened like skin by decades. The comings and goings of fashion she had always held it in suspicion. Ritually wearing day after day her Cambridge cape had clothed - covered Eunice more than adequately.

Once, years ago she had tried to heal her scar. Eunice decided after Bernard left to go to Rotorua. She had heard the rich volcanic mud could heal skin. And she had always liked the smell. It was as if the searing heat of its underbelly, the geysers and sulphurous boiling mud pools brokered honesty. Bathing in the open sores of the earth's crust, people could finally relax and connect with the real power of the earth. Rotorua had certainly witnessed this power. The still lakes and waters had withstood the raining down of molten ash and lava. The land surrounding the pools she had bathed in comprised of white chalky rock, the bush creeping back, retreating from the angry soil. Out on the lake the swans' glided effortlessly, soft black water supporting them - hiding the deep geologic past. Like Eunice the region had shed its skin and grown another. But when she came back the scar had crept back like a snake.

As she opened the church door that morning they must have been having a break in their practice. The choir stood in a row looking at their song books. Dorie saw Eunice and clutched Bill Sothers arm.

Eunice had let the silence cascade through her. There were no words from mother,

'Remember back straight, chest pushed upward and forward. Be a proud sparrow. Drop your jaw...hold your tongue flat!'

Or from the bloated Deirdre about the house, not a word! No, 'I like this dresser, I like this bowl.'

No word from Kitty Farley. No '*big fat thing*' resided.

That is peace and this is her wisdom, there in the music inside her head, the passionate calling of the flamenco guitar, piercing. There before her was Dorie in the centre of the choir. And behind her Eunice thought she saw, just for one time, as big as her beloved mountain, the beautiful, naked, foolishness of God. The dress cascaded around her ample body – expanded, layered like the coat of the flightless bird. Eunice had begun to sing, low and deep as the cold and shadows, her secret language, the Spanish lyrics she had learnt. Like an old bird, mouth forming a perfect O, to the very silent Dorrie.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

The night was pitch black but for the moon. James walked out of the barn and made his way to the paddock on the hill. Sweaty beer –filled music pulsated in his head. The guys were playing their stupid drinking games.

‘Come on mate! Skull! Skull!’

‘What’s wrong with ya, ya bloody moron!’

They were all sprawled across the room while the girls grouped and made little forays into the booze pit. The beer pit. The Ballcot girls had made some attempt at decorating the shed. A few streamers, a roughly hand painted sign -**The Easter Bunny Ball**. But no-one was dressed up apart from a bit of glitter and a few bunny ears. At the back, sitting on a hay bail was the chick from the rugby game – Makareta. Behind her stood a big guy. James had seen him before. He was part of a shearing gang, Tall, muscly, tattooed with a heart and arrow on his upper arm. His black eyes were bloodshot, brewing like the beer he slugged back. Makareta’s movements were cautious, shy, not the shining string girl he’d seen that day.

Sandy pivoted about the big shed. James didn’t mind watching her, her great lanky legs, flash of blonde, shirt pulled high and knotted on her mid-riff. But he felt bad about Jude. He’d tried to avoid her.

On the bus on the way to the farm, The Highland girls sat at the front, the Firth boys at the back of the old Bedford. Huia and Jude sat together but Huia seemed to turn her body away from her room-mate. He had to pretend to Huia that he did not know Jude. He did not like to lie to his sister. Jude pretended not to care. She sat with one leg arched across the other. Her profile was strong. He’d never noticed the nose; its little fine bump near the bridge, her eyebrow’s arched, alert, as she looked out at the passing country. Jude’s hair had grown thick and heavy and fell about her the shoulders of her winter blazer. Everything about her was raised, heightened -top shelf. Even the lie she’d told about her

old man. Some long business trip. She'd said it with such ease. He knew the truth, Sandy told him. Ballcot had asked some Wellington politician. There had been an accident, her old man went into the sea. Day's later a body had been spotted up the coast from where Jude lived. James shuddered. Jude had been living a lie. Each time he'd touched her, he'd touched something empty, sad. A shell, left open, scoured by an outgoing tide.

The coast past beside them. It reminded James of a movie he had seen of the English coastline. The RAF bomber pilots winged their way across the channel, full of cheer, leaving behind them the soft green downs rolling to meet the sea. The sheer chalk face of the Dover cliffs formed a natural guard from the enemy, no mooring to be found on the rocks beneath. Any natural barrier from marauding invaders on the South Taranaki coast had long been stripped away. As the bus trailed the coast road, James looked out at where the grass covered fields barely held back the vast sea – the great trees of the forest of Tane stripped away. He wondered what his ancestors thought as they peered out at the strange tall boats, gliding toward them on a favourable wind, their sails wavering like white butterflies, masts upright. Those strange fish, at once delicate and cruel, their webbed network of men scrambling all over the ships surprisingly tough timbre frame, calling out in excitement after such a long haul and ready to land.

Even though he knew it would have been one of her ancestors that landed and took his Hapu's land, he had always liked Sandy. Even as children when they played together in the vast open fields, she was always running, climbing, daring. He could tell her parents disapproved. The way Sandy's mother, her starched apron blowing as she hung out the washing had looked sideways at he and Huia. It wasn't Sandy's fault. She would simply just play.

But this night of the party in the barn he caught wind of a different kind of playing. Huia and Jude were nowhere to be seen. The other girls seemed preoccupied with looking outside. As if they were waiting for some sign. Sandy and Emily strutted about chatting to the olds, flicking hair, buffing their clothes as if they were harbouring some secret. Earlier he heard Jude in Huia's room, 'That looks hilarious.'

Huia seemed to have overcome her mood in the bus and was talking, exclaiming, 'You better not!'

Then patches of quiet.

Out in the open field, James found a dry mound to sit on. The grass was wet with the night. Despite his confusion with the lie Jude had told him, the trouble she could get him in, he found himself wondering what she would wear tonight. He tried to shake the image of her wide apart gold flecked eyes. He lit a cigarette and took a swig of beer. A full moon shone across the variegated folded land. The land was luminous, dazzling under the moonlight like some extravagant fertilized show for the hulking stark mountain. He shivered, pulling his swandri close.

He looked back down at the barn. The noise and light were distant; the barn seemed ablaze with activity, people moving in and out as if they were on automatic. He couldn't see his old man. The photo of him back at Firth House kept popping back into his head. The one of him smiling, legs astride, holding the ball like a casual gift for the First Fifteen. Wiremu must have had some ambition to stay at school. It must have been the depression. Koro must have had some dough up his sleeve to keep him there. His father was somewhere that night. Out there on the farm. He'd been invited but didn't show. Wiremu hid away like he was full of some shame. He 'hardly said a word to James, shrugged a *'Hello'*. No word about school, 'And how are your studies going? What would you like to do in the future son?

That big happy man-child of the footy photo, that big happy fella was gone.

He heard a rustling. Something moved. A hedge shook. James wondered if Wiremu was sitting somewhere out on the farm, not far away on his own mound. Mooning after his mate. That bloody ever present Taranaki, with all his pointed bitterness, all his exiled dreams of love. Tossed out there alone, having to suffer the insult of being called the prissy, Mt Egmont. Like his father. Once Wiremu, then Bill.

James's eyes filled with water. Welling up as if they had come from a core, streaming out like an avalanche. He stood up and just as he was about to call out into the night,

‘Fuck you old....’ He saw something strange moving on the horizon. It was a creature, like the Patupuraihe Koro told him about, mounted on a horse. James staggered forward to get a better view. The thing was unbelievable. It had a human body, a dead white face, red lips. He rubbed his eyes. It seemed to be a woman. The body was dressed in an old gown. He could see it shining in the night, the folds falling across the sides of the horse. Around her head were branches and leaves, above white feathers like ears. The creature descended the hill toward the barn. The creature was both ugly and beautiful at once. The horse began to pick up pace, trotting. He got a closer look. He knew that horse – the dappled grey, the black mane. It was Huia’s horse and someone was sitting behind the fairy rider, the tell tale hair bolting out. The white feathers, the feathers of Parihaka. Feathers of pride and resistance. How did they get there? They were sacred, untouchable toanga and wearing them was Huia.

Jude had no trouble riding the horse. Kit had organized riding lessons for her from the age of seven. The horse moved slowly with the double weight, over the ridge toward the barn. The big moon lit their way, circling high above the ice coated mountain. The dress, as Clara had promised seemed to cope with being straddled across her legs. It fitted well. The long sleeves that covered her part of her hand, the cut of the bodice wrapped her chest like swaddling. For a freezing night she was warm, sheathed in silk. But the branches of manuka wrapped around her head, the sticks fanning out from her waste, white paste of flour sticking to her skin were a different matter. The tendrils of moss and wet lichen around her pasty face, the dark lipstick, soothed her skin. Behind her Huia adjusted the white feathers. They sat easily in her tough, wiry hair.

‘Are you scared Huia?’

‘No, I’m not scared. We are not doing anything wrong. They said dress-up and we’re just dressing up.’

'Isn't that sacking weighing you down? Huia had blanketed herself in sacks hastily sewn together, to form a long cape.

'No. It's warm.'

The night was very cold. Jude could not pin-point the moment when they both somehow knew they had been set up. Was it when they were on the ridge earlier in the day?

After the stand off in the rec room, Huia had withdrawn from her. Jude knew she was still invited, but Huia remained distant, ignoring her on the journey down except for falsely polite exchanges. Jude couldn't pull out of the trip. She had nowhere else to go.

Earlier that morning she had milked the cows. Her first cow, its wide body standing beside her, stared straight ahead. Side on all Jude could see were the long pale lashes, wet black nose, mouth held still – aware of a new presence. The cow gave no sign of feeling put out as Huia's father, Bill cleaned her udder with disinfectant and attached the cups.

'This is how you do it eh.' Those were the only words he had spoken to Jude, apart from a mumbled '*hello*' since her arrival the day before.

'Here come on. You try.'

For a man with a big body he got up easily from the stool. The sleeves of his dirty checked shirt pulled up above his elbows revealed the dark skin of his forearms and the tail of a tattoo. As he sat down on the stool, Jude became aware of how close he was.

'Clean them.' He beckoned to the bucket and the udders. The tone of his voice invited her to join in, to make a go of it. She followed instructions robotically, nervously, conscious of Bill's beer belly sticking into her as he patted the cows hide. But he was not interested in Jude, not in that way, only in his cow.

'It's alright girl. New milker eh? Just be patient.' And the cow blinked.

All morning, all very early morning he had spoken tenderly to the animals. As Bill, Huia and Jude walked them into the shed, through the semi-darkness, he quietly moved amongst the cows with his stick. The slow moving herd seemed tuned into their master. When he talked, clearing his throat, the beasts grunted, snorted, swayed.

‘Move along now girl. Time to be milked.’

Only a sliver of light from the cow shed guided their way. Steam rose from the wet earth. Over the hill was Sandy and Emily’s house, much bigger than the small weatherboard house of Huia’s family. James was inside it asleep. She tried not to imagine his body spread-eagled on a bed that was too small, long muscular limbs strewn, feet and hands falling over the edged ready to be picked up in her waiting hands. All the way on the bus and since her arrival he had kept to his room, hardly acknowledging Jude.

‘James has to study.’ said Huia.

Jude couldn’t understand it. He seemed at first to like her, laugh at her posh voice, her manner. What had she done?

That morning when she walked down the path to the shed, the cow hooves clattering, the plodding pace, Jude felt like she was on some march - a lonely mission while the world slept. Her destination would somehow be resolved the next morning. Easter Sunday morning.

Maybe Snow would appear at the end of the long gravel road to the farm. He might have gone to the Highlands office and said,

‘I have come to see my daughter. I’m her father Snow.’

‘Oh!’ Latham would spring up from her chair, humbled like Uriah Heep at the sight of Snow – his white hair swept back, his dimpled smile. Jude’s father.

‘I thought that you had...you had died.’

‘No, No!’ Snow would laugh and shake his head.

'I lost my memory. Ended up in the South island of all places. For a whole year would you believe? Even had a job, tailoring in a factory in Christchurch. But everything has come back to me now. Once I realized who I was I have set about trying to pull together my family. First Jude. Is she here?'

Latham would have had to tell him where she was and Snow would have no trouble finding Jude because he spent his childhood on farms in Taranaki.

The next morning, Jude would spot him as the dawn broke on their way to milk the cows and call to Bill and Huia.

'There's my Dad!'

Jude began to master the art of milking, moving from one cow to another, growing in confidence, touching each rough haired cow hide before she started, saying.

'Hi girl. My name is Jude; I'm here to milk you!' The animals would occasionally flick their tails, open their mouths, filling the shed with the sweet sickly smell of grass and saliva

'That's the way girl. That's the way.' Bill nodded at Jude from across the shed.

Later in the morning, Huia sullenly invited her to walk to a ridge on the range of hills, fencing the mountain. As they walked up a sharp rutted paddock,, Huia talked fast, her words tinged, tasting bitter.

'Me and James used to walk here with our Koro -our Granddad. He took us into the bush. He told us about birds, plants and trees. What they meant. He told James other stuff when he was older about Parihaka. The people that were there. My iwi. I was too young to know, he said. I still don't know. Only a bit. That there was pulling down of houses, fires, dragging away of people'.

At the top Huia stopped, sitting heavily on the grass and pointed to a cave on the other side of a ravine where she and James had found the stone in her box. She talked with her head between her legs, pulling up the grass, words muffled.

'I put the stone in my mother's coffin, but it was taken out by James. When I touched my mum she was frozen. That's how I knew my mother was dead. You Pakeha's don't know when someone's dead. You hide away. You shut the door.'

Jude edged closer.

'The Saturday night after my father went- disappeared, I waited and waited, looking out the window like I always had. The house was dead quiet. Kit was holed up in her room. Ned and Steven had gone somewhere, after turning their stereo up so loud mum had to yell.

'Turn that bloody thing down. My head is spinning.'

I sat again at the widow, looking out -waiting. The Wahine lay in the sea like she'd been shot. Dianne lay on her bed, hands holding her belly, gazing up. Since the storm, there had been no calls from Simon. The night got darker and darker. Nothing appeared over the hills, the Orongaronga's. No creature.'

'What do you mean, 'creature.' 'Huia words were muffled. She still had her head down between her legs.

'I used to think that the Easter bunny was really half human, half animal. I must have fallen asleep. In the night I heard rustling and shuffling. Standing in front of me, weirdly grinning from big, Jagged, rotten yellow front teeth was the Easter Bunny. It had clumps of rough hair on parts of its body, in other parts hair was missing, the skin bald. This giant bunny stayed fixed to the spot, twiddling its thumbs, grinning at me. I tried to scream but couldn't. Suddenly as if answering some call from the far away, the rabbit bound dumbly past - its giant thumping feet pounding through the earth.

I woke up in the morning and there were no eggs.'

'And no father?' At last Huia lifted her head up and sat back.

‘No father.’ Something shifted inside Jude like a lurching. Below the valley became a deep chasm

‘We never get Easter eggs. Your dream sounds a bit like the story my Koro did told me.’

‘Once my Dad, Wiremu was setting out in the night to look after an animal but what he saw on the way stopped him in his tracks. Wiremu never said anything to us but Koru said that Dad heard the call of the ruru bird. He looked around expecting to see its huge round eyes in a tree. Instead he saw a woman; her tattooed face was white, her hair black with the body of a bird. The woman opened her arms out to Wiremu but he turned and ran so fast his heart nearly burst. Koru said the spirit had come to warn him that my mummy would die.’

Huia’s eyes filled with tears. She sat with Jude, looking over the farm. She wanted to put her arm around her room-mate, but Huia’s body was bundled and tense. They stayed quiet, buried into the grass.

‘What will we wear tonight?’ Jude pulled out a thick blade and ran it though her fingers. She thought about the dress waiting in her bag ready to spring out onto her body like some jeweled weapon.

Huia rolled over, looked up at the sky.

‘I’ve been thinking about that. I was listening on my bunk in the dorm. I overheard something.’

‘Like what?’ Good old Huia. She was warming up. Her finally honed listening skills had come in handy. Jude sat up, the blade falling from her fingers.

‘I heard Sandy talking to Trudy in a strange low voice. I heard something like, ‘Not fancy dress, Emily’s just bullshitting.’ But I couldn’t tell what the rest was. It might not mean anything.’

‘Why would they do that?’

Huia stood up and stared down at Jude frankly. She had grown taller. Although her frame still wiry and thin, she stood firm – hands on hips. Like Jude she had been doing well in English. Miss Darling had praised them both on their essays. Huia had puffed up, eyes shining.

‘Because you snuck out at night and went off with my brother James. They called you a slut.’

‘I’m sorry Huia.’

Huia turned away, got up and walked at a fast pace down the hill. The back of her head, the mass of wiry black hair seemed to Jude like some puritan cap. The ones they were learning about. Miss Darling had moved onto *The Crucible*.

‘Why didn’t you say? I thought we were friends.’ Huia’s words were thrown back like arrows.

‘Huia please forgive me. I really like James but most of all, I am your friend.’ Huia stopped, stood still for what seemed like ages and then turned, smiling her crooked smile. Jude caught up, wrapped an arm round her waist and reaching up she ruffled Huia’s flattened hair.

‘It looks better that way. Afro’s are the fashion...wild hair like Janis and Jimi. Sandy and Emily are just jealous tarts anyway. Remember the witches and the apparitions. They didn’t come up with a ghost woman, but we will.’

And after they’d finished, looking in the mirror Jude saw a scary stark white- faced creature: dark green tendrils pulled from a stagnant pool, limpid eyes, black lips and strange patterns on her cheek. She looked macabre- a freak.

As they rode down that same hill toward the barn, Jude was jolted out of her thoughts by Huia’

'We are nearly there.'

'Huia. I am chickening out. What if they just point and laugh?'

'They won't laugh. I reckon they'll be scared.' Huia nudged her side and handed her the heavy torch.

'You just shine this under your face at the entrance to the barn. Then see.'

'But we might be doing something really wrong. It's Easter Sunday tomorrow. I can't tell you what but I've been thinking something will happen.'

'Like what?'

'Just something might.' But her voice trembled. She thought of the Jag – an iron casing. The water like ice filling his lungs.

The horse seemed to be thrusting them forward. Even in the stark cold Jude found herself sweating, itching under the weight of branches, dresses and makeup. Huia felt light behind her, light as a feather. Jude was conscious of how the feathers would seem. That's how they'd planned it. Huia being slightly taller would have her face hidden behind Jude, only the big bony feathers and fan of black hair would show above Jude's head. The horse was picking up speed, moving too fast. Jude could not control the reigns, the animal thundered ahead, jiggling them along.

It barreled them inside the barn. Jude switched on the torch, lifted it to her chin. Music blared,

'Oh sugar, sugar. Oh honey, honey'

It took a while for the gathering to register their presence, for everything to stop, like a cuckoo clock show waiting for the chime to swap sides. Inside the hay glowed with the multi coloured strung up lights. Group's stood around talking; some made shuffling movements at an attempt to dance. Voices were raised, bottles clunking, the room smelling of stale beer and hay. No-one was dressed up. The older people sat on chairs, the women in

dressess and cardy's, the men's shirts tucked neatly into dress trousers. The rest were in jeans and checked shirts like a uniform. Huia and Jude stood stock still and stared straight ahead just as they had rehearsed. Someone screamed.

'It's a ghost.'

'It's a Māori ghost.'

'What the hell'

The music screeched off the turntable.

'Shit!' A circle of guys ran out of the barn. Jude could hear their hefty clunky breathing as they whooshed past. Jude began to enjoy their reaction. Her ugly power. Like her headmistress, she commanded fear and attention, the dress pouring over the side of the horse like a read sea. In the background she caught sight of the kitchen girl. She stood up and laughed, pointed.

'I know you!

Jude stayed dead still, Huia shrunk in behind her,

'It's okay. I won't say.'

A big man roughly grabbed her arm,

'Shut up Makareta. You're full of shit.' His voice was thick with drink.

Makareta folded herself in. The strong, funny young woman that brought laughter to the Dining Hall had gone.

The older people seemed not so scared, more startled.

'Hold on a minute. Look more closely. See that's just makeup. It's dripping off. It's two girls,' said Mr Ballcot.

Sandy and Emily stood hugging each other. Sandy began to cry. There was no sign of James. Jude was conscious that her outfit was falling apart, branches falling from her head.

'Hey look behind her.' One of the young men came back into the barn, Huia wriggled, clasping her hands together tightly under the branches.

'It's a girl holding on. It's Huia Te Whare!'

Emily stepped closer and pulling at the dress so hard it tore, she managed to pull Jude down onto the dusty floor.

'Its you. Jude Farley.'

Jude pulled herself up on one arm. They were all gathering around. Sandy and Emily's parents, the young men, some of the girls from school –Trudy, Prudence. And out of the corner of her eye she could see James in the doorway of the bar, hands on his hips, head bent down trying to catch his breath.

'Huia!' he called.

'What the hell are you doing? The feathers...you can't wear them like that.'

'Like what?' Huia remained on the horse, peering down at James, strangely relaxed.

'They are toanga.'

'Well if they are no-one told me because I am not told anything.'

James held the reigns, 'If you knew it would make you hard. It would make you bitter. Get down now Huia.'

'You look a real fright Huia.' Sandy had recovered and moved toward the horse. Huia didn't budge, looking down at Jude and the others, unmoved.

'I'll take your sister home, James.'

Huia backed up the animal.

'No you won't. Come on Jude, let's get out of here.' But before Jude could move, Emily talked over her prone body, addressing her father. She moved closer to Mr Ballcott, puffing up her small frame, pursing lips as if she needed to impress him. He towered over Emily, dressed sharply -corduroy waistcoat, flared trousers. But like many of the other older men he had a beer belly, his skin yellow and sagging- the signs of a heavy smoker.

'This is the girl I was telling you about Dad. The one who said her father was missing. And you asked Bridges about him.'

'I don't think this is the time Emily' He grinned nervously, looking around to his friends. 'She can be a bit silly sometimes.'

'I'm not silly. She's been lying. Everyone knows her father's dead.'

The whole room took in a breath. Jude rose off the ground.

'Now steady on Emily. There's no need...'

James stepped closer, pushing Emily away, bending down to pull Jude up. She brushed away his hands.

'She had no right to say that Jude. I'm sorry. Come with me, eh?'

Sandy tried to get between them, 'James! James! She's just a.....'

Jude did not hear the rest. She ran, ripping the branches and leaves from her head toward the hills. The moon lit her way. She could hear them calling her, but she couldn't stop. Tears almost blinded her path to the ridges that flanked the mountains. They formed a wall, a barricade to where she would go, losing herself in the bush and the cold; never coming back. Running up a hill, the gown weighing her down, the ripped material catching her bare feet, she paused for breath. The dress didn't free her; her feet didn't leave the ground. They were tangled muddy, caught. In the distance, horses hooves, shouting.

'Come back Jude.' James called, loud and urgent.

A figure loomed at the top of the same ridge she had sat on with Huia. Like a Buddha, it sat hunched and cross legged. As she came near her heart pounded. It was a man. Could it be? She heard a voice.

'What you doing out here girl eh? That's a bloody funny outfit. Come over here. Come on.' Bill Te Whare stood stiffly, beckoning her.

'Come, come. Who are you looking for? Why you crying?'

He grabbed her sobbing body by the shoulders, sat her down next to him, pulled an old rag from his pocket, wiping her face.

Jude managed to say the words, heaving them out in short bursts.

'They said he was dead. They said my father was dead.'

Bill took her hand in his. He patted her back. He pulled her up, pointing toward the mountain.

'Look how mighty, how lovely he is.'

Jude peered out of her stinging eyes, wiping flour from her face with the dress. Taranaki seemed so near, like some Xmas angel. Below them the dark forms of animals lay under trees. She could just make out a shape in the centre of a field. Its white and grey back legs surprisingly long, like the legs of a flying creature. But there were no wings to help it take flight. The moon shone down on the finely tuned oversized ears. They did not twitch, no paw was raised. It remained folded in and still. Waiting.

'My father grew up somewhere near here. On lots of farms. His father was a farm worker,' said Jude.

Bill cleared his throat. 'Working someone else's land. Hard work eh?'

She began to cry again. Great sobs shook her cold body.

‘Don’t worry girl. The mountain will look after your daddy. He has one of his mokopuna home.’

Jude stared dumbly ahead. Some liquid seemed to rush through her – freezing water filled her from top to toe.

‘Come on. Let’s get you home. Let’s get you warm.’

Bill took her arm guiding her down from the high ground. Below the rabbit moved, slowly at first, then quickened her pace. Later when Jude was nearer the house, holding onto James on the back of Huia’s horse, she looked back. The rabbit had gone. Carving her way through the high country fields, she wondered if the animal would go toward the mountain, to where the ground was dryer, burnt gold by the mountain tussock, all the while carrying Snow in her little beating heart.

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