

Death in the University of South Auckland

Inka in Aotearoa-New Zealand - Volume 1

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Chapter 1 : Arrival

What have I done? Here I am eating breakfast at Auckland airport a little after 7.30 am ready to take up my new role as Professor of Gender Studies at the University of South Auckland. “Don’t make a rash decision,” all my friends had said but rash is what I do. To be fair, I had my reasons.

It is January 20th 2017 and Inka Makkonen’s Air New Zealand Los Angeles to Auckland flight, a killer 13 hours, landed 20 minutes late. In fact it was about 24 hours since she had left Connecticut. The airport was surprisingly busy and customs and immigration were slow. But the officials seemed friendly for that time of the morning. She is now dog tired having only slept intermittently, but she needs to get through the day. She has to report to the main reception at the University. But it is early, so a slow breakfast is called for.

She had never been to New Zealand before except for her interview, and the interview was held in the Air New Zealand Koru lounge at Auckland International Airport. That of course hadn’t been the plan, but she had scheduled the interview on the way to deliver a keynote address at a Women’s Studies Conference in Melbourne and a series of flight delays within the US meant she landed in Auckland only a couple of hours before her onward flight to Melbourne was due. But the committee came to the airport and there was a very unusual interview. The Acting Dean of Arts, Aroha McLean, hugged her, which she found rather strange but reassuring. She was full of adrenalin and sparkled with her talk of building the subject, research funding applications and innovative teaching. She clearly had impressed, but had she done her due diligence about the University? Her sole experience of New Zealand, the Koru Lounge at the airport, was positive. Possibly that was insufficient. She was offered the job three days before the 2016 US election. She was unsure what to do but, after Donald Trump won, that clinched it. No negotiation, she just proceeded to fast track her immigration application.

Time to catch a cab. Inka Makkonen is tall, slim and very blonde, almost translucent. The cab driver, who comes from Rarotonga, is neither tall, nor slim nor blonde.

“Where to Miss?”

“The University of South Auckland.”

“The University of SOUTH Auckland?” the driver queried.

“Yes.”

“Do you have an address?”

“Let me look. Yes, here it is. 286 Puhinui Road.”

“Oh I know, Spanish sort of building, big car park. It’s not far at all.”

This isn’t the first puzzled reaction I received to the name ‘University of South Auckland’. On the long flight to Auckland I had a conversation with a high school principal, who knew of: The University of Auckland, The Auckland University of Technology, and, to the north, The University of Massey, Albany but NOT The University of South Auckland. This is not encouraging. But before too long the cab arrives at the Spanish style building familiar from the landing page of the university’s website. What that image did not reveal was that it is the only permanent building on the site, supported by numerous temporary buildings, and, as the cab driver suggested, plenty of parking, much of it in gravel. It is situated in a largely residential area with some small blocks of downmarket stores and with some light industry in the vicinity.

It is too late to back out now. The cab pulls up in front of the comparatively impressive front entrance and I enter with my suitcase and carry-on bag. A young woman behind the desk is looking at a screen. “I am Professor Makkonen and have just arrived.” “Oh yes, they are expecting you. Vinnie is going to look after you and take you to your motel. Professor McLean will catch up with you later in the day. Please, take a seat and I will see if Vinnie is in yet.”

Ten minutes later, this must be Vinnie. He appears to be a friendly young guy, presumably Māori. “Hello, Professor Makkonen, I am Vinnie, Aroha McLean’s research assistant. You must be tired, eh? Let’s get you to your motel.” After a short drive in Vinnie’s old Toyota we reach the motel, which doesn’t appear particularly smart but they had arranged for me to have early access to my unit which is a good size with a separate bedroom and a surprisingly full kitchen. It already has some food in the refrigerator and a bottle of New Zealand sparkling wine, Le Brun. I am left to sleep. Aroha is going to pick me up for dinner. I am to go through the university formalities the following day.

Dinner at a Thai restaurant, the Thaitanic, is very revealing about the University. Aroha is very frank and seems to treat me as family. It is the only private university in New Zealand. I had realized it was private, but thought nothing of it, coming from the USA. A previous government had opened up the state universities to competition. That door was later closed and the university never grew in the way anticipated, even though it receives subsidies for tuition similar to those received by the state universities. It is financially viable, just, but with little cash for capital expenditure. She tells me about my appointments for the next day. She hopes they have finally sourced a desk for my office, at which point my computer can be installed.

Back in the motel I again ponder what I have done. There were many reasons to leave the US. The most immediate one was the break up with my long time partner, Maria, but as she said, “I asked you to move out of my apartment. I didn’t ask you to move to New Zealand!!” She may have added an intensifier. Of course the split was connected with my difficulties at work, but that was a sore that needed to be avoided in those last days before my departure. On top of my personal and professional upheavals was the sheer madness of the Presidential election.

The motel has Sky TV and I watch CNN's coverage of Trump's inauguration. What an acceptance speech! I am well out of that, at least.

Vinnie offered to pick me up from the motel the next day, but it seemed like only a ten or fifteen minute walk, so that's what I decided to do. My motel is in the suburb of Papatoetoe, which Vinnie told me is named after the native toetoe plant. The main street, in contrast, is Saint George Street, with as English a name as you can get. But you would struggle to find signs of Englishness here. Small shops selling fabric and clothing feature designs that make me think of Hawai'ian shirts. And some of the people on the streets are dressed in a way that suggests Pacific Islands to me unlike the images I had seen of Māori. Various shops have signs indicating they sell kava, which my phone tells me is an intoxicating drink traditional in the Pacific Islands. There is also a clear South Asian presence, with Sikhs wearing turbans and a sign indicating the NZ Punjabi Academy. There is a variety of fast food available including Chinese and Fish and Chips sometimes from the same establishment, Indian, and a Fijian version of Chinese food. There is also a funky looking cafe. There are numerous barbers and hair salons. One in particular catches my eye where I could get hair braiding, straightening, cornrows and spiral perms. None of those services are really for me. The street is down-market but absolutely real. There is no American fast food in this stretch though I had caught sight of some elsewhere.

Eventually, I reach the university. The oversized parking lot seems even dustier than I remembered but entering the imposing front entrance is a little reassuring once again. Vinnie is waiting and takes me to Human Resources who are eager to be welcoming and helpful but the whole procedure of signing on seems to take forever. Finally, Vinnie picks me up and takes me to my future office "to see how they are getting on". It is in one of the temporary buildings, but, as Vinnie puts it, "a posh one." Indeed it appears to be lined with natural wood even on the raked ceilings. Vinnie says it is a 'Lockwood' and the walls are in fact solid wood. The building was designed as a three bedroom house, so we have our own bathroom with a bath and a shower, and our own kitchen with a refrigerator, a coffee machine and various supplies. The living area is for the IT support team, two guys plus a third desk for a woman who is the administrator, but is often away at meetings, I am told. The accommodation isn't what I expected at all but has a pleasant, holiday cabin kind of feel to it. I meet the IT guys and then my two other housemates, who both do some teaching in Gender Studies: Marion who is English and a social psychologist, polite but a little shy, and Carolyn in English Literature, a 'pākehā' as I understand New Zealanders of European origin are known. She is not shy at all and invites me to dinner at some time to be agreed, checking for dietary requirements.

The office still doesn't have a desk but, as we are about to leave, two guys arrive with a large triangular grey desk in two bits. Where do I want it? There were some options, for my office was clearly the 'master bedroom' of the house design and of a good size. When that is all set up, Vinnie wanders down to the IT guys to ask them to install my computer. Then we go to the School of Arts 'tea room', located in a shabbier temporary building. It seems to be tea time, for there are various people in groups. What appears to be a group of secretaries are sitting together. Vinnie introduces me to McDuff, a distinctive looking man with a large head topped

with curly red hair, which joins seamlessly with a curly red beard. He doesn't admit to owning a first name. "McDuff' is my moniker," he says. He is from media studies and seems to be on good terms with everyone. As people come in, he waves them over and introduces them, not that I really take in all the names and personalities. McDuff himself is quite enough to take in for one day. While of Scottish origin he had grown up in Bangor, North Wales and has some fluency in the Welsh language. He is interested in me being from Finland and clearly has some knowledge of linguistics, for he knows that Finnish is part of the Finno-Ugric group of languages. He has been in New Zealand for just over ten years and arrived at the University not long after its first intake of students. I think it is time to return to my office. As a parting piece of advice, McDuff tells me the place to buy lunch is Sammy's pie cart directly behind the main building.

The IT guys had installed my computer and left me a note to give them a shout if I needed help getting started. I take advantage of that, though I don't really see the need for both of them. But, as well as being very competent, they form a kind of comedy duo. The young Indian guy, Vijay, is a fast talker while the older Pākehā guy, Eric, has a kind of quiet dry wit.

Vijay pretends to talk up the merits of the computer they are installing. "Professors get the latest in cutting edge technology you know," he says as he invites me to login to a rather ordinary looking Dell computer with a modest sized screen sitting on top of it. 'Professor' is a very senior rank in the British system, which New Zealand follows, a point emphasised to me in the appointment process.

"Yes," says, Eric, deadpan "and, if it freezes, try turning it off and leave it for 20 seconds."

It is impressively non-hierarchical, but still a little odd. With everything up and running, I head for Sammy's and try the green curry pie with Thai salad. It is really very tasty. Sammy is an unusual character. I can't place him at all. Perhaps he looks white, but maybe a little Polynesian. Slightly Asian perhaps. He greets me by saying, "Tjena", which is Swedish, a language I speak well not only because it is required in school but also because my mother is Swedish. But on learning I am Finnish he immediately says, "Moi," a Finnish greeting. Curious! Back to the office for a while but then a walk back to the motel as I am still very tired.

Lying on my bed I reflect on how the institution is improvised and undeveloped. On the other hand, people are friendly and it is all a novel experience. It is also a fresh start. I need to put my previous work troubles behind me, go about my business, develop research collaborations with scholars at the established New Zealand universities, apply for research funding, as I promised in my interview, and generally avoid controversy. I need to keep a clear professional focus.

Today I have a pōwhiri, an official Māori welcome to the University. It takes place at the Marae in the University, which is based on one of the temporary buildings but with a pair of red painted carved wooden panels joining at a peak making an impressive entrance. There is a paved area in front with two sets of wooden benches facing each other, which is the welcoming area. Aroha and some Māori staff join with me along a path to the marae and then a woman who is part of the host group, including the Vice-Chancellor, assembled on the other side of the marae, calls out in a kind of plaintive wail that soars and dips in an eerie way. Aroha answers that call and we progress to the benches on our side. On our front bench is an old Māori man (a kaumātua, Aroha explains) with a heavily tattooed face, plus Vinnie and a couple of others. There is an exchange of speeches in Māori from the two sides starting with the hosts. The kaumātua speaks first from our side. Then the Vice-Chancellor, who is Australian, speaks in English. While the protocol on the typical marae is that women don't speak, Aroha explained to me previously that I would be expected to speak. She had taught me a Māori greeting: "Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa". I add a sentence of greeting in Finnish and then express in English that I am honoured to be welcomed in this way and hope to learn of the ways of the tangata whenua. I also say that I feel a bond with New Zealand as the myths utilized in The Lord of the Rings originated in my country. As Aroha had told me, a speech is typically followed by a song, I sing a Finnish folk song that I hope has an elvish quality. The song is visibly appreciated by some of the Māori members.

At the end of the ceremony, the manuhiri, the visitors, basically me, but with the others in support, are greeted individually by the tangata whenua, mainly with a hongi, a pressing of noses, though an alternative appeared to be a little kiss on the cheek. After that we go to another building, the whare kai, containing tables full of a wide variety of food. Aroha encourages me to try the kina and the marinated green-lipped mussels. It is early for lunch but it certainly makes a good lunch for me. Back to my office and some emails. That includes a carefully worded one to Maria plus a few cheery lines to some former colleagues. I open the electronic proof of an article of mine that is to be published, "Pathways to re-narrating gender roles in traditional societies". It looks in pretty good shape, but I will have another look tomorrow. I am not really concentrating and I don't want to miss anything.

I decide to walk to the cafe I had seen on Saint George Street, Grounds for Enlightenment. It isn't too busy. A large polynesian woman in front of me orders something from the counter, and I wait and order a white coffee. I sit at a small table near the front of the cafe facing towards the back. I begin to feel out of place. Essentially everyone here is brown and I am not only very white but clearly the most flat-chested person in the room, and that includes the big guy at the espresso machine. I get out my phone, which I had fitted with a local sim card at the airport, and try to look occupied. An attractive young waitress arrives with a coffee. "Are you the flat white?"

"I beg your pardon."

“Did you order a white coffee?”

“Oh yes, thank you.”

She gives me a little amused look, but I am too flustered to say anything. After a while, as more people came in, I begin to feel more comfortable.

I head back to the motel. In the afternoon, Vinnie - what a useful helper - is going to show me a house for rent that Aroha had found for me. Vinnie says there aren't currently apartments for rent nearby and this is within walking distance of the university, not far from the motel. I had never driven on the left before and so did not plan to get a car anytime soon. The place turns out to be an old weatherboard single story house, with a tile roof, while a number in the area have corrugated iron roofs. Vinne tells me it is an ex-state house, one of many built in the post second world war years. Some of these are still owned by the state and rented to families in need, but quite a few had been purchased by tenants and then later sold on to owner occupiers or to landlords. It is rather a plain house, but solid with two bedrooms, a good sized living room, a kitchen with room for a table, a bathroom with a new shower over the bath and a laundry. A galvanized iron rotary washing line is in the backyard. It is a huge contrast to the well equipped modern apartment I shared with Maria in Hartford, Connecticut. It is unfurnished but Vinnie says he knows a good second hand furniture store and there is also good stuff to be had at the 'Sallies', which turns out to mean the Salvation Army thrift store, or as he says, 'op shop'. He says he also could take me into the Manukau Mall, close to the university in a different direction, where I can purchase things I would prefer to be new. So they do have shopping malls! Alright, I will take the house and get settled.

I need to start a new life. The Hartford apartment was situated close to downtown, with easy access to restaurants and cafes and other facilities, and was a mere ten minute walk from my place of work, Ambrosia University. It was very comfortable but it will forever be associated with those rows with Maria. She just did not acknowledge the position she had put me in. Up until that moment our shared political vision had been a cornerstone of our relationship. The fissure in our relationship revealed the fragile nature of that connecting thread.

Two days later Inka has another official meeting, this time with the Chancellor of the University. The Chancellor chairs the University Council, the body that oversees the governance of the university. It is the Council that employs the Vice-Chancellor, who is the administrative head, and chief executive officer. The Chancellor presides over graduation ceremonies and thus has a kind of ceremonial function but also can be influential at certain moments, particularly in the appointment of a Vice-Chancellor. The Chancellor, Sione Latu, is a Tongan gentleman of about 75 who had been educated in Auckland before winning a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. He had worked in some civil service roles in London for several years. As a distinguished, though now elderly, administrator and scholar, his appointment had a symbolic significance in that South

Auckland has the largest concentration of Pacific Island peoples in New Zealand. He is slightly blind, and more than a little deaf. His personal assistant, Beryl, constantly fusses over him. She had brought him some stewed plums, sourced from her garden, and he is trying some when Aroha McLean and the heads of Human Resources and Community Education bring Inka in to meet the Chancellor briefly.

The Chancellor is charming and proceeds to describe, at great length, a visit to Helsinki in the late 60s. He recalls different dishes he had eaten and speaks highly of bilberry pie. He asks me if I had been to Oxford and, fortunately, I am able to say that I had been part of a small Gender Studies conference there in the early 2000s. He doesn't ask me about my American experience and seems little interested in Gender Studies.

After Aroha and Inka leave, Beryl asks the Chancellor how he finds the plums. The Head of Human Resources asks him what he thinks of Inka, but he doesn't seem to hear and is more interested in the plums.

Two weeks have passed and I have started to find my way around. The library, such as it is, is located on the first floor of the main building. Electronic access to journals and e-books is pretty good but the absence of significant numbers of physical volumes, while understandable in a new university, feels like a let down. I am getting on with preparing my two courses for the first semester; the academic year follows the calendar year in the Southern Hemisphere. Aroha has invited me for the weekend to her house in Tuakau, a place in the country, south of Auckland. Aroha often stays with her sister near the university during the week, but the country place is the family home.

I meet Aroha at 4 pm on Friday to drive me down to Tuakau. She will bring me back on Sunday evening. There is a fair bit of traffic but eventually we work our way out of the city and into some rolling country with some small scale farming in evidence. Aroha seems to uncoil the further we go. “Let me tell you about my whanau. I have three children all living at home,” she tells me, “Hemi, my eldest son, who is 30, Ngahuia who is 28 and her daughter Roimata, who is 7, and Mikaere, my youngest son, who is 22. My own mother, Kuini, also lives there. It was where I grew up.”

“You must have a big house,” I say.

“Not really, but there is a sleep-out, where Ngahuia and Roimata live; we added a bathroom last year, and Mikaere lives in the garage.”

This is going to be interesting. We pull off the road into a rough driveway and in the overgrown garden is an elegant old weatherboard house in need of paint with an attractive porch whose corrugated iron roof curves over at the front. There is a newer double garage which, in place of garage doors, has a new front panel with a sliding glass door. I catch sight of another building at the back, which must be Ngahuia and Roimata’s sleep out. Several cars of different ages are parked on the gravel.

Chickens are scratching and pecking around the garden. As we get out of the car a large Great Dane bounds up and leaps up at Aroha. She says, “Down,” but then he turns his attention to me. Having had warning, I brace myself and find this huge dog has placed its front paws on my shoulders and, after a moment’s careful reflection, gives my face a big lick. I manage to grab his paws and persuade him to get down.

“That is Tāne Paraone, Mr. Brown.”

“I think I have been welcomed,” I say.

Aroha apologises, “I’m sorry, he is a little too friendly.”

“He must know I am a Finn.”

Aroha shows me into a comfortable bedroom with an old double bed. It contains lots of personal items including academic books and I realise it must be her room. I apologize for taking her room, but she says she has a bed in her office. Aroha and her mother start making dinner and Aroha suggests I could take a bath if I would like to fill in the time. Maybe the bathroom will be busy later, so I follow the suggestion. “And do close the door firmly!” I wonder what that is about. There isn’t a lock on the door but, of course, I do close it. There isn’t a shower but there is an old claw-footed cast iron bath. The hot water is plentiful and I add some bubble bath. I settle in for a relaxing soak when suddenly the door bursts open and Tane Paraone leaps into the room and takes a flying leap and lands on top of me. I let out a huge scream, which I regret. Tāne Paraone is having the time of his life.

A strong looking young man, whom I take to be Hemi, rushes in laughing, but apologizes, and hauls Tāne Paraone off me. The bubbles were scattered by Tāne Paraone and Hemi quickly eyes me up. What is he thinking? “What, no breasts?” But he gives me a cheeky grin and shepherds Tāne Paraone out of the room and closes the door behind them. I don’t linger and get dried and dressed.

When I go into the kitchen Aroha hands me a glass of red wine and says, “I am sorry you had to share your bath.”

“That’s alright, it just took me by surprise.”

Kuini and Hemi are in the kitchen along with Aroha. Hemi is busy laying the table in the kitchen. Aroha introduces me to Kuini, who doesn’t say much.

Aroha then says, “Of course you have met Hemi.”

“Yes, thank you for rescuing me. I am sorry to give such a scream, but I did need help.” Hemi just smiles.

Ngahuia and little Roimata then come in. Ngahuia is cheerful and asks how I am settling into New Zealand. But it is Roimata who is most interested in me. She asks where I come from?

“Finland.”

“Are you an Eskimo?”

“No, but in the northern part of Finland and nearby countries there is a people called the ‘Sami’, a little like Eskimos, (I don’t go into the difficulties with that word) who herd reindeer.”

“Oh are reindeer real? I thought they were just part of silly Father Christmas stories.”

“Oh yes, reindeer are real, but there aren’t as many as there used to be.”

“Is that because of colonization?”

Clever one, this little girl. “That is part of it.”

Roimata insists on sitting next to me, but first Aroha sends her out to fetch Mikaere. When he arrives, we all cram round the kitchen table. Aroha is at one end and Kuini is at the other. I am at Aroha’s right hand and Roimata squeezes in between me and her mother, Ngahuia. Mikaere sits opposite me. He seems shy. And next to him, at Kuini’s right, is Hemi. I am pleased that, for the moment, I am not directly across from Hemi. Hemi is designated to give the karakia kai, which ends with ‘Amene’. It is an interesting meal, with lots of chat about this and that, interspersed with Roimata interrogating me. They give Hemi a hard time for us having to squeeze around the kitchen table. I had noticed that there was a larger dining table in what would be a dining area leading into the living room, but that table is covered with an old sheet and has parts of what must be some kind of engine scattered over it. Hemi tells me he is rebuilding a 1960’s Lambretta scooter. I think this is a highly unusual family. I feel, in a way, out of place but still embraced by this extended family. I have not had such a family experience for a long time.

Even though it is early, everyone gets ready for bed. There is a bit of a wait for the bathroom but I am in bed soon after 10 pm. I look at emails and texts on my phone for a while, but there is nothing of great interest. I recall the events of the day, in particular Tane Paraone's arrival in my bath, and Hemi pulling him off my naked body. I wonder if I can go to sleep if I put out the light. There is a very gentle, almost conspiratorial, knock on my door. "Yes, come in," I say softly. Hemi comes in with a secretive smile. He is wearing ageing but conservative pyjamas, a good match for my old white cotton nightdress. "I can't sleep," he says.

"Oh you poor boy," I say ironically but, softening, add "I can't either."

He sits on the edge of my bed in a confident, casual way and starts talking softly about his life and rather intermittent university study and then moves on to how pleased he is to meet me. Oh, I see where this is going.

Looking back I cannot imagine what came over me. He clearly had one thing on his mind. It turned out he had a condom in his pyjama pocket. Well, strictly, he had two. I think my quip that a girl like me isn't used to a boy arriving with only two condoms could reasonably be taken as a form of consent. But consent I certainly did. When he took off his pyjama shirt, I just couldn't take my hands off his strong arms and exercise hardened pecs. I helped him get the bottom half off. I hadn't been with a man for more than ten years but I suddenly felt, I can see the point of this after all. "You know I think you are my tane paraone," I said.

"Yes and you are my little Eskimo."

It is morning. I am awakened by a knock on the door. It isn't Hemi; he is beside me. Oh dear. Hemi clearly is already awake and answers calmly, "Kuhu mai, whaea."

Aroha comes in with two cups of tea on a small wooden tray. "You weren't in your room, so I thought I would find you here," she says to Hemi.

"I am so sorry," I say.

"Don't be, I know my son." She leaves us with a resigned frown towards Hemi.

I say, "I don't know what to do."

"Just have your tea," he says. reassuringly.

This is absolutely ridiculous. I came over here with every intention of being totally professional, leaving any hint of scandal behind me, and what do I do? I jump into bed with the son of the

Dean of Arts, in her very own house. OK, strictly he jumped into bed with me but where was the mature older woman saying, “No this isn’t a good idea.” I am going to need to have a frank discussion with Aroha. On the surface she appears not to blame me, but what can she really think of me?

Breakfast is a bit disorganised and Aroha disappears quickly into her office and is on the phone. Hemi starts tinkering with his Lambretta engine. So he doesn’t disappear but isn’t seeking attention. Ngahuia and Roimata are last to finish breakfast and offer to show me their sleepout. It is really quite small but cosy. There is a bedroom which has room for a small double bed for Ngahuia and a single bed for Roimata with just a small gap between. The living area has an old two person sofa and an easy chair opposite a new small kitchen. This backs on to the new bathroom.

Roimata makes sure I am sitting next to her and asks me lots of questions about Finland. She wants to know when I learned English and I explain that foreign languages are important in Finnish schools and that Swedish is an official language as well as Finnish but English is very popular and I started learning it when I was 9. She had thought I had come straight from Finland to New Zealand and seems disappointed that I had lived in America for 10 years. “Was it really scary? Did people carry guns the whole time?”

“Not in the part of the country where I was living.”

Ngahuia is very happy to let Roimata take care of me and gets on with sorting out some clothes in the bedroom. But then she makes us a very nice cup of coffee with a new espresso machine that occupies precious bench space in the kitchen area. Roimata has a hot chocolate.

A little later, I wander back to the main house. Hemi isn’t around, it seems, for which I am very grateful. I feel anxious about the discussion I need to have with Aroha. But a distraction occurs. Someone lets themselves in. It is a tall, beautiful, young, Māori woman with a tattoo on her chin. She is carrying an overnight bag.

Aroha must have heard something, for she emerges from her office and says, “Kia ora, Moana. I thought we weren’t going to see you until next week.” They hug.

“My workshop finished a little early and I thought I would rush back to Hemi.” Now this is a development.

Aroha introduces us, describing Moana as Hemi’s girlfriend. She sits next to me on a sofa. “Have you met Hemi? Has he been looking after you?”

Awkward. “Certainly. Second only to Roimata.” As if on cue, Roimata appears and runs over and squeezes between us. For once, she says absolutely nothing but looks blissfully happy. Moana

has a charm and quiet confidence that is striking. She is also absolutely gorgeous. Her skeleton is probably a little like mine, but it is covered with flesh, young, smooth, golden flesh. Her halter top dress shows her beautiful shoulders and elegant arms. She puts one of those arms around Roimata. Moana catches me staring at her, but I cover the situation by asking her about her tattoo.

“We call it a ‘moko’. It shows my connection with my whakapapa, my ancestors.” I am so jealous, jealous of Moana’s wonderful body and jealous of Hemi for having such a girl-friend. She tells me she teaches kapahaka, Māori performance art, and has just come back from Rotorua.

Chapter 6 : The Aftermath

Moana is clearly very much part of the family. She helps get lunch ready, bosses Mikaere about, and Hemi for that matter, and clearly takes a load off Aroha. She is very deferential to Kuini and seems to have a bond with her. She gets me involved in the lunch preparations in a tactful way. The conversation at lunch is light and inconsequential. Roimata is no longer an interrogator, maybe because she has grilled me enough but I think Moana's presence also has changed her. Roimata often looks at Moana in awe.

After lunch, Aroha asks me if I would mind moving rooms for that night, so Hemi and Moana can share that bed. I will sleep in Aroha's office and Aroha will sleep in Hemi's room. "I wouldn't impose that room on any visitor."

I am extremely relieved not to have to sleep in Hemi's bed, even in his absence. She calls me over to have a quick look. It is the messiest room I have ever seen, dominated by the chassis of the Lambretta. I am able to have a quick confidential word with her. "Believe me, my moment of heterosexual madness is well over. He needs to hang on to that woman."

"Too right, if he can. She has a unique inner and outer beauty."

I think I can match Aroha's high regard for Moana. I will need to say a lot more to Aroha. Moana's arrival makes me feel even worse, but in a way it clarifies the situation with Hemi.

In the afternoon Hemi and Moana seem to have a long earnest talk in what is now their room. I wonder what that is about. Ngahuia suggests that if I want to work, I can use the sleep-out. I agree partly because there is an article or two I want to read in preparation for my graduate course but mainly because I would like to be out of the way. Roimata decides to join me but is told very firmly by Ngahuia not to bother me. In fact we settle in very comfortably together. I sit on the sofa in the living area with my laptop and Roimata reads on her bed. After a bit, she gets bored and comes through and asks if I would like a hot chocolate. Clearly she would like a hot chocolate. I don't want to figure out the coffee machine but together we make a hot chocolate for Roimata and a tea for me. As we are drinking, Ngahuia looks in and says she is happy Roimata is looking after me. She makes a cup of tea for herself and, after a few words, goes and has a nap on her bed. Roimata goes back to her bed with her book and I carry on with my reading, without much enthusiasm. As dinner time approaches, we go back to the main house and Moana again plays a leading role in dinner preparation. I am assigned the task of peeling kūmara, which I learn is a sweet potato, small forms of which were brought to New Zealand by the Māori when they migrated from Polynesia. These ones are seriously large, though. While I am not known for my culinary skills, that is a task that I am able to accomplish, though perhaps a little slowly.

The conversation at dinner veers towards Māori issues. Apparently, Kuini is a prominent

member of the local Marae. There is a sharp division of view within the marae over whether to support the Māori Party in the general election later in the year. At the heart of the dispute is the way the party is currently supporting the right wing National Party in government. The Labour Party has often had strong support from Māori voters but there had been a falling out over rights to the seabed and foreshore in 2004, which led to the creation of the Māori Party. I don't have a good grasp of New Zealand politics generally so I lose interest but the notion of an indigenous political party that can have elected members and be influential is very interesting. I think of the surviving remnants of the various Native American tribes in Connecticut and their marginalized status, notwithstanding a rather remunerative casino.

After dinner I am relieved that it is 100% clear that I am sleeping alone. I go to bed early and ponder the events of the day. While I am angry with myself for last night I am also angry with Hemi. What was he thinking? I mustn't keep thinking about this. I will see what emails I have. Anything interesting? Oh, a couple from former colleagues that will be worth a look.

The next morning after breakfast Kuini, Ngahuia and Roimata go to church. I am asked but decline. I don't baldly say, "I am an atheist," but "No, thank you," seems sufficient. Only those three are going. Hemi and Moana take off to see a cousin of hers, for a little while. Mikaere disappears to the garage, which leaves me with Aroha. I explain how awful I feel knowing Hemi had a steady girlfriend, on top of everything. She suggests that probably Hemi didn't tell me that, a point I confirmed. She says that she sometimes despairs of him.

Later, in the car journey back to Auckland, I introduce a professional note to my interaction with Aroha. "How can I help you in the Faculty of Arts?"

Aroha says that in fact there is a role she would like to nominate me for: Chair of the Faculty Curriculum Review Committee. It is a hot potato. To have someone coming in from the outside could be an advantage. "Think about it," she says. I know I should take this on, and it is something I can do, as I do have experience with committee processes. I also know how much work such things can be but I say, "Yes, I'll do it." Aroha appears genuinely grateful and squeezes my arm. I feel better and resolve to throw myself into work.

In a spirit of gratitude, I unburden myself and tell her about the incident that prompted me to apply for this job. I tell her about my partner, Maria, and how I encouraged her to study for a degree as a mature student and how later she became a graduate student in gender studies. She was drawn to radical feminist ideas and was, and is, instinctively an activist. A group of which she was a member, including some of my students, had taken it into their heads to confront the patriarchy with direct action and hold the President of the University to ransom until a series of demands had been met. So, they burst into his office, locked the door, removed most of his clothes and tied him to a chair.

Fortunately the President's PA, whom I knew fairly well, called me immediately. She could have

called the police. I was in my office and was able to be there in just a few minutes. I called through the door and they let me in. I persuaded them to untie him and give him his clothes back.

“So you were the hero of the hour?”

“I don’t think that was quite how the President saw it. Even though I knew very well how serious the situation was, when I saw him with his flabby belly hanging over a rather shabby pair of underpants, for a split second the absurdity of the sight took me over and I smiled and stifled a little laugh.”

That probably helped me take control of the situation and restore it to some kind of order, but that wasn’t how the President saw it. He had to acknowledge that I rescued him and later publicly thanked me in a meeting, a little half-heartedly, but after that laugh I knew that my position was going to be difficult. Also, it was widely known that Maria was my partner and some suggested I had put her up to that bit of direct action, which was not true at all.

Aroha starts to chuckle as I tell my story and, at the end, bursts out laughing in a way that I find quite surprising. “You do have a way of getting yourself into tricky situations, don’t you?” she says with a reassuring smile.

Chapter 7 : A little tart

It is Monday. I had arrived at work early and am in urgent need of a cup of coffee, even though it is barely 10 am. McDuff is there in the tea room, as he usually is, and he asks after my weekend. I tell him I went to Aroha's place in Tuakau. He says I am very privileged. Then he says something quite extraordinary, that he had heard the rumour that the Chancellor, Sione Latu, had called me 'a little tart'. What? That's like calling me 'a hooker' in the States! This immediately resonates with the events of the weekend and, for a moment, I imagine that tales of my night with Hemi are all over the university. I clearly show I am upset, for McDuff, little realising what is in my mind, backtracks, saying, "Don't worry about it, there may be nothing to it."

I compose myself. Of course, it is much too recent for such a rumour to have spread and, anyway, there is little to no chance that Aroha would say anything. Could Sione Latu really have said such a thing?

Back at my office, I worry over the 'little tart' phrase. I consult my office neighbours. Marion had not heard of it and doesn't believe for one moment that Sione Latu would say such a thing. Carolyn says she had heard it from McDuff and is cross that he would repeat such nonsense. I try to get on with some work, but then set off for Sammy's for some lunch. Oddly the cart is all shut up and there is no sign to say why. Disappointed, I instead go to the cafeteria, where I choose a perfectly acceptable slice of quiche with salad.

I have not been back in my office very long when there is a knock on the door and a pākehā woman of about 40, dressed conservatively in a grey skirt and jacket, asks if I am Professor Makkonen and can she speak with me. She closes the door behind herself and, sitting, presents her credentials, Detective Sergeant Hope Wilson. "I understand you know Samuel Becker-Lau."

"I don't believe so."

"You would know him from Sammy's food cart."

"Oh Sammy. Of course. I went there for lunch today, but he isn't open."

"Yes." Hope paused. "Mr. Becker-Lau was found dead on Saturday morning."

"What? Really? What did he die of?" I ask.

"We are treating it as a suspicious death."

"You mean you think he was murdered? How?"

"We are not releasing any further details at present. When did you last see him?"

“Oh it would have been on Friday, I suppose. No, I didn’t go on Friday, it would have been Thursday.”

“Did he say anything in particular to you then?”

“We sometimes chat, but I don’t remember anything in particular.”

“Would you mind telling me where you were on Friday night?”

“I was staying with the Dean of Arts, Aroha McLean, in Tuakau.” I decline to elaborate that I have the perfect alibi for all of Friday night.

“Do you really suspect me?”

“We are speaking to all Mr. Becker-Lau’s regular customers and you are one of them, is that correct?”

“Yes I suppose I am or I was, but I have only been in the country for a few weeks.”

“Thank you, Professor Makkonen. That is all for now, but we may need to speak to you again.”

This is just extraordinary. What is going on? Sammy was always a bit of a mystery, but murdered? They are certainly doing their interviews very promptly.

It is Tuesday. I am managing to do some work, but it is a very confusing time. It is lunch-time and I wander over to the cafeteria. Strangely, I run into Sione Latu, though I don’t think that is where he is heading. He recognizes me, but he seems to be searching for my name. I remind him who I am. He seems friendly and asks me how I am getting on. I know I shouldn’t say anything, but I can’t resist raising the topic, tactfully. “You won’t believe this funny story I heard, that you described me as a little tart.” I end with a chuckle. He is obviously taken aback, and says that is a term he would only apply to a food item. I say that when we met we were discussing Finnish food and in fact he was eating something at the time, but stewed fruit, not a tart.

“Oh that would have been Beryl’s Black Doris plums. I found them a bit sour.” There is a flash of recognition and he bursts out laughing. “I think I found them a little tart. Oh but I do apologize, it must have been most upsetting.” At that, seeing I was heading for the cafeteria he insists he take me out to lunch. “Do you have a car? No? I will get Beryl to drive us.” It turns out that Beryl, his PA, often drives him around in his old Jaguar, a big sedan from about the 1970s. He makes a call, and soon Sione and I are sitting in the deeply padded leather seats of the large vehicle with Beryl acting as driver.

Beryl drives us to Mount Eden, another part of Auckland to the north, and we arrive at an English style restaurant, The Beekeeper's Arms. She leaves us and arranges to pick us up later. The restaurant is styled in the manner of an English pub with wooden panelling on the walls and English beer on tap but it is clear from the well spoken staff that it is no ordinary pub, and that Sione is a regular. Sione orders steak, kidney and mushroom pudding, not a dish known to me, while I order some pan fried fish, pan fried potatoes and salad. After we settle into our drinks Sione brings up Sammy's death. I don't imagine Sione frequenting Sammy's pie cart but he seems to know about Mr. Becker-Lau, as he prefers to call him.

"What do you make of him?" he asks.

"I don't know. He seems a bit out of place."

"Do you think he had another job?" he asks.

"What do you mean?"

"Pie cart proprietors aren't usually murder victims," he remarks, plausibly.

"I suppose not. What is your theory?"

"Oh, I am just speculating."

Sione then drops the topic and we talk in general about the University. Thinking back, it was a pleasant, unexpected and slightly strange lunch.

Over the next little while I need to concentrate on fine tuning the two courses I am teaching. This is a challenge with which I am familiar and takes my mind off Sammy's death, and indeed off my intense embarrassment over Hemi. I am teaching a second year course (they don't use the terms 'freshman' and 'sophomore' here) entitled International Perspectives on Women's Empowerment. I had taught a similar course at Ambrosia but the international coverage needed to be readjusted to suit a New Zealand context. In particular, North America needed to be a focus and a section on the Pacific Islands needed to be introduced, which took a lot of work as it was largely a new region for me. I started off with a section on the Indian subcontinent, which was able to be retained 'as is' and worked very well. Prior to the first class meeting I was provided with a class list of thirty-seven members. I was pleasantly surprised when exactly thirty-seven students showed up on the first day, but then discovered that only thirty of those thirty-seven were present and, by chance, seven others were having a look to see if they wanted to transfer into the class. Some of the missing students showed up over the next week or so and some of the extras did in the end enrol. I ended up with thirty-eight on the roll, though two of them were barely present. Practices are looser here than at Ambrosia.

I also have a graduate class of seven called Postmodernist Feminist Literature: a Re-evaluation. I was surprised to learn that this is the largest graduate course ever in gender studies at the university. The gender balance is six female to one male. The male, Jason, is an earnest pākehā in his early thirties, balding with a scruffy beard. In a way, he is one of the better students. He has come through sociology and gender studies as a mature student, having previously been a business entrepreneur in packaging after leaving school at 16. He sold up and must be quite wealthy but he certainly doesn't show it. He makes good contributions, or at least always has something to say, but tends to be domineering and thus upsets the spirit of the class. Some of the women react against that and try to take him on but end up doing it ineffectively which just adds to the general frustration. Two or three of them, in particular, have a strong emotional commitment to women's issues but seem a bit naive from an academic point of view. Graduate students at Ambrosia are usually more polished, though not necessarily smarter. The best student in the class by far, Matilda, is quiet. Not that she is shy, more aloof. She smiles, or the less charitable might say 'smirks', behind her long dark hair. Her command of the reading is remarkable. If I am looking for a passage she seems to know the page number immediately. She seems to regard Jason with amusement but won't respond to the points he raises. She could run rings around him if she chose to. She might well become an academic but I hope she acquires some empathy if she does teach.

I think back to the beginnings of my university career. It had a slightly delayed start. In my last year of high school, five of us formed an all girl heavy metal band with the English language name, "Satan's whores". Oh dear. The name seemed very cool at the time. I was the second guitarist and back-up singer. One of the band was an exchange student from Boston and she managed to arrange a tour of sorts for us in several minor venues around New England for the

summer after we completed high school. The plan was that we would make it big and go professional. Well the tour was eventful, it was how I initially met Maria, but the band fell apart at the end of the summer.

I had omitted applying for university as I was destined for rock and roll fame and fortune. A few weeks before the university year began, I managed to land an appointment to see a gender studies professor at the University of Helsinki. I hoped to impress her with my enthusiasm so that she would bend some rules for me and allow me to enrol for the upcoming year. My grades were good but not outstanding and I really should have applied at the proper time. She was, in retrospect, very kind to me but at the time she was rather intimidating. It became clear early on that there would be no rule bending but she was happy to spend a little time with me to talk about my plans. She asked me what I had read in the area. All I could come up with was *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer, which my mother had read and left around the house. That didn't sound so much the wrong answer as not enough of an answer. She proceeded to recommend some books to me, starting with Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. I hadn't expected a male author. "Can you read French?"

"Not well."

"Volume 1 has been translated into English and I think volume 2 as well. I take it you are fluent in English."

Well I was good at English, not just from school but through American movies and English language rock and roll. She also mentioned work by Susan Brownmiller, Susan Orbach and Andrea Dworkin and others besides. I got the impression that university was pretty serious business and, though I would not be attending that year, I could spend that year stepping up and getting on top of the knowledge and skills required. While I had a series of waitressing jobs in the intervening year I did indeed follow those reading recommendations and became fairly proficient in reading academic English. On being admitted to university in the following year I found that I was indeed well prepared and was able to shine. That delayed entry probably gave me the head start and confidence I needed to start on the road to an academic career.

It is a Monday, just two weeks after Sammy's death, well let's say 'murder', and a memorial service is to be held in the university chapel. There had been some muttering amongst staff and students about the absence of a funeral, so the university administration arranged the service. The chapel, needless to say, is another of the temporary buildings but with a cross on top and some effort had been made to produce an entrance porch. The inside has something of a church-like feel, assisted by old wooden pews that had obviously been rescued from a church that had faded into oblivion. The place is packed, in part because Sammy had always been a friendly face on campus but also no doubt in part out of curiosity, as no one really knew anything about him. This curiosity was to be largely unsatisfied.

At the front are the chaplain and the deputy vice-chancellor, who starts the proceedings with due solemnity, beginning with the same Māori greeting I had used at my pōwhiri. In fact, he always speaks with the same solemn tone, but it strikes the right note in the current circumstances. He explains that the authorities have been unable to discover any family members in New Zealand, or indeed elsewhere, that Sammy has a Brazilian passport (Brazilian! That came out of nowhere) and has been a permanent resident of New Zealand for seven years, for most of which time he ran the food cart with which we're all so familiar. We should regard ourselves, members of the university, as his family.

At this point, the chaplain takes over and explains that he is unaware of the specifics of Sammy's spiritual commitments but, curiously, he had been entrusted with a message on a sound file which was to be played only in the event of his death at a memorial service such as this. On the basis of that connection the chaplain presumes some form of religious faith and proceeds to offer a brief prayer. Good. Let's get to the message. What are we going to learn? I think I catch sight of the police officer, Hope Wilson, towards the back of the room. She'll be all ears.

"Hi there, this is Sammy. If you're listening to this, you'll know that I have gone to ... well I was going to say 'a better place' but I'm keeping an open mind at the moment. It isn't quite as I expected. I didn't realize that ambrosia is a pizza topping."

The chaplain had clearly not reviewed this message and seems to be trying to disappear into his chair.

"I am not too sure about all of these open fires. Haven't they heard about global warming up here? I might have a word about it with the joker with the pitchfork who seems to basically run things. The trick would be to catch him in the right mood."

The message carries on for a while in a similar vein. After an initial silence the audience starts to titter and then there is more open laughter. What is going on? A man anticipates his own death

and leaves a message as if he is a stand-up comic. But here is how it finishes:

“Well I expect I’ll see you all up here before too long. No rush. Stay safe. And if you find my death a bit surprising, ask Zoltan.”

Hearing that name takes my breath away. I had dealings with a certain Zoltan, but that was a long time ago. Let’s not even think about it. The name ‘Zoltan’ is the sole clue. Why was it hidden in that comedy skit? Well it was a way of getting it into someone else’s hands, I suppose, and the clue was hidden at the end. At least Hope Wilson has a new lead. The chaplain rallies and covers his confusion with another prayer, which serves to wrap things up. We are invited to refreshments in the whare kai of the marae, which is only about twenty metres away. Many of the staff walk over for the refreshments, basically club sandwiches and small savouries, no Brazilian dishes that I could determine. There is some chat along the lines of: “Didn’t that capture his unique personality?” Other comment follows the line of: “What the f... was that all about?” That we know so little about him is also a strong theme. “Who is Zoltan?” I don’t volunteer the information that I once knew a Zoltan.

Sammy gradually becomes less of a talking point over the following week. Predictably, the concern moves from Sammy’s death to future catering arrangements. I don’t enter into the discussions at all. Then a week later, Hope Wilson turns up at my office with an older male detective, Dave Smithers. Hope takes the lead and asks me if I know Zoltan, the man mentioned in Sammy’s message.

“Well, a long time ago I knew someone called ‘Zoltan’, but there is no reason to think it’s the same man. It is, after all, a common Hungarian name.”

At this point Dave intervenes to ask, “What kind of man was he?”

While I’m not always totally frank and candid, I often am, and somehow this is one of the moments.

“Just the sound of that name sent shivers down my spine.”

That is as accurate an account of my feelings at the time as it would be possible to give.

Hope takes over again. “Could you describe the circumstances under which you met him?”

I feel most uncomfortable and am inclined to be defensive but I want to cut to the chase. “I met him when he was trying to recruit me as an agent for the KGB, when I was a second year student at the University of Helsinki.”

“Trying?” asked Dave.

“Well he might have thought he succeeded, and he wasn’t someone you wanted to cross, but I never completed any functions for that organisation. I’m fully prepared to tell you anything you want to know about all of that but shouldn’t we first of all focus on the question whether Sammy was indeed referring to that man?”

Hope pulls an identikit drawing of a man from her bag and shows it to me. “Is that Zoltan?”

The man is bald, or at least has a shaved head, and he seems in a way familiar, but I cannot really say.

“The man I knew had hair.”

“What sort of hair?” Dave asks, producing a lap-top that clearly has the image on it.

“Straight, shortish, greying a bit, balding at the temples.”

Dave spends some time working on the image. When he shows me the result I am sufficiently confident to be able to say, “Yes that could be the Zoltan I knew.”

Hope says, “We appreciate your cooperation and we’d like to speak to you further. We’d like to interview you at the police station?”

I ask where that is and how far away it is.

“We can pick you up, either from here or your home, whichever is more convenient.”

“I’m working from home on Friday. Any time would work well. I’ll give you my address.”

“Don’t worry, we know your address.”

“Well, email me with a time on Friday if that works. I expect you know my email address, too.”

I think they probably know the contents of my email messages as well.

“Yes, we’ll email you.”

Dave has now finished his work on the image and shows me the modified image. “Is this the man you knew?”

“It does look a bit like him. I can’t be sure, but it could well be him. Maybe he knows where I live too.”

“Don’t worry. We will look after you.” That is both disquieting and comforting but, on the whole, comforting.

The next day Aroha arrives at my office and says she has something to ask me. Oh dear, what does she know, or think she knows? What she in fact asks me takes me completely by surprise. Mikaere is starting a ten week course on IT next week and would I be happy to have him board with me. “Think it over for a day or two. I’m sure I can find somewhere else for him, if necessary.”

I am keen to oblige. Aroha has treated me like family and I have acted more like family than I should have. In fact she is demonstrating considerable trust in me by proposing to put her other son in my care. So I say, “Of course, I’d be delighted to have him.”

She proposes a weekly rent, and insists I take it when I say that no payment is necessary. “Mikaere wouldn’t be comfortable simply being your guest.” That could be so. Hemi and Mikaere clearly have different sensibilities, although I didn’t really get to know Mikaere over that weekend.

Afterwards I begin to realize how Mikaere’s presence will upset my day to day living, lolling around the house in an old robe when I do not have to be on campus early. Oh well, it’s too late to back out now. I’m sure Mikaere will be a charming housemate. Mikaere will arrive on Sunday. I must make sure that the second bedroom, which I had already furnished with an old bed and an old chest of drawers, is in good order. Thoughts of his arrival are pushed to the back of my mind as I contemplate my interview with the police on Friday.

The appointed hour on Friday duly arrives and an unmarked car arrives outside. I leave the house and approach the car. The driver, whom I do not recognize, gets out of the car and, speaking across the car asks, “Professor Makkonen? I have come to take you to your meeting.”

I get in the passenger door and just wonder whether I should have asked for identification. “Where is the police station?” I ask.

“We’re going to a private interview room.”

“Why?”

“It’s more discreet and, anyway, office space is in short supply.”

This doesn’t seem right. Is this the wrong car? Is the real police car about to show up? I look back through the wing mirror to see if there is another car about to draw up in front of the house. There is nothing, except a man on an old motorbike is following on behind us. Stay calm. Act as if nothing is wrong. I look at the passing streets, ignoring the driver, who is happy to ignore me. We enter a small housing development of eight small single story houses with single garages and pull into one of the drives. The driver clicks open the automatic door and we get

out into the bare garage. The internal door leads past a couple of bedrooms and we enter the living area where, seated in an easy chair, is Zoltan, looking very much like the identikit picture, the one without the hair.

“Hello Zoltan. I thought it would be you. I fear the police are going to miss me when I’m not at home for my appointment.”

“Don’t worry little Inka,” Zoltan replies, “You sent an email changing your availability to 2 pm and saying that you don’t need a ride.”

“How thoughtful of you to do that for me! Even so, I think I had better keep that appointment.”

“Of course you should and you will need legal representation so I have arranged for Mr. Fawkes of Dillinger, Brent and McKinsey to assist you.” He indicated another person in the room whom I had not previously noticed.

Mr. Fawkes does not resemble at all his close relative, Guy, but is a thin, stooping, grey haired man in his fifties in a grey, well-worn, pin-stripe suit. I learned how Guy Fawkes and the gunpowder plot of 1605 were cultural icons in the UK from the time I stayed in Lewes near the University of Sussex one autumn and was able to witness the extraordinary celebrations on the anniversary day, November 5th. I need to stay cool about having this contemporary Mr. Fawkes foisted on me, so I say, sarcastically, “Well, you think of everything. How kind!”

With matching sarcasm, Zoltan says, “He will help you stick to your story, that you once knew someone called ‘Zoltan’ whom fellow students called some kind of a spy but he was probably nothing of the kind, that you have no reason to think the person our friend Sammy was referring to is the same person and you are unable to help them any further.”

I explain I had already said that an identikit picture could have been of him.

“Could have? Well this afternoon you will be more doubtful.”

The interview proceeds for some little while, with Zoltan at his best in being calmly polite while also being thoroughly menacing. He’s used to others agreeing with whatever course of action he lays down. Afterwards, Mr. Fawkes takes care of me and takes me to a branch of Pita Pit (no expense spared) so that ‘I can give him my instructions’. The instructions in reality flow in the reverse direction. He drives me to the police station in good time for my interview. Hope Wilson and Dave Smithers are the interviewing officers. I really want to be able to tell them everything, but I know all too well that the innocuous Mr. Fawkes has as his main task reporting back to Zoltan ‘how I perform’. And Zoltan does not play nice.

The painful repetition of stone-walling answers grates with my every inclination. I want to say

something in private to Hope Wilson and figure out what to do. After an hour, I say I need the bathroom with just a flicker of a look at Hope. She gets up with me, opens the door, and as she leans her head out the door I am able to whisper in her ear, "Tomorrow, Grounds of Enlightenment, 10 am." On my return the interview persists for a little longer in a fitful kind of way. It wraps up with the routine phrase, "We may have to speak with you again." It's an extraordinary relief to leave that interview room.

The next morning I arrive five minutes early at the 'Grounds' and find a table for two towards the back of the cafe. Ten past and no Hope Wilson. A quarter past and no Hope. Then a waitress comes over, asks if I am Professor Makkonen, and says there is a message from Maria, my new Masters student. Sorry she couldn't make it today but she'll see me at the university on Monday. Well, I don't have a new Masters student, or perhaps I do now. Hope Wilson clearly did not want to be seen with me in public. This level of caution underlines the seriousness of the situation. I do wish they had chosen a name other than Maria.

Mikaere

It is Sunday. Mikaere is due to arrive late morning. Given recent events it seems unfortunate that he is to arrive just now, but as I try to make his room somewhat welcoming I think I appreciate the distraction. Maybe he'll be company for me. But I hardly know him at all. I wish I'd tried to talk to him when I was in Tuakau for that fateful weekend. I don't have much food in the house. I wonder if he cooks. He didn't have much of a chance at the weekend, particularly when Moana took over. The basis of lunch will be roll-mop herrings, from a jar I found in the nearest supermarket, which I can walk to in twenty minutes. I will boil some potatoes and I have some salad, though not very appetising. It'll have to do.

It is 12.30 when Mikaere arrives, on the Lambretta that Hemi had been working on. While he seemed shy in Tuakau, he seems more comfortable than I expected on arriving at the house. I ask him about the Lambretta. It still looks pretty scruffy and Mikaere says that Hemi had been intending to paint the side panels but at the last minute decided to give it to him and there was no time.

"So Aroha will get her dining table back," I surmise.

"Perhaps. He has started on a new bike, a large classic British bike, a Norton Commando. He may use my room while I'm up here, though."

"I expect that big bike is more his style," I suggest.

"Yes, but mainly he likes to be different. He won't touch a Harley."

I show him his room and he seems happy. I suggest he might like to keep the Lambretta in the concrete shed in the back garden, which is currently empty. He has a look at that and is even happier and puts it away immediately. He says he will buy a padlock for it tomorrow. He brought what he could in a backpack and says he will go back to Tuakau next weekend and bring more clothes next time. He doesn't seem to have a laptop, which is strange for someone about to start an IT course. But he did find room for some produce from the Tuakau garden: some interesting looking tomatoes, which he says are Brandywine Pinks, and a couple of apple cucumbers. I start to prepare lunch and he seems, with hardly a word, to know just how to help. One of the large tomatoes and a cucumber help liven up the salad and we sit down in a quiet companionable way for some lunch. I say I hope he'll be comfortable here and he beams and says he thinks he'll be very comfortable. "Won't you miss your family in Tuakau?"

"Not really. It's good to get away. It's a bit crowded down there."

Oddly, I think this might work. Aroha had clearly already worked that out. After lunch, Mikaere automatically clears away and does the washing up very efficiently. I had wondered how we were going to arrange the food but he seems keen to work in with me and we work out a rough menu for the week. He says he can go to the supermarket on the Lambretta, which is helpful as it is rather a long walk back with shopping. He also asks whether I should get a helmet so I can ride pillion on the Lambretta. At first, I wonder whether this is a good idea. Is this a good look for a new Gender Studies Professor? I decide it is the perfect look.

Mikaere looks over the odd pieces of furniture I obtained and we sit down. I ask him about his course. For the first time since his arrival he seems uncomfortable. He hesitates and then says he has a confession to make. "I told mama I was starting a course on IT, and she's giving me money for it. I am starting a course, but it's not for information technicians. It's for beauty technicians."

When will this country stop springing surprises on me? I feel I need to say something. "What do you learn there?"

"Skin care, makeup techniques, eyebrow shaping, eyelashes, fragrances, nails. You can specialise."

"What is your main interest?"

"Just makeup, really." I evidently don't use a lot of makeup but even so he says, "You wouldn't let me practice on you, would you?" I make a vow. Yes, I will be made up, in the privacy of my own home. Yes, I will ride on the back of the Lambretta, but not in makeup.

So, I'm placed on a chair in the kitchen, where Mikaere thinks the lighting is good and he inspects my face rather more closely than I'm really comfortable with, but not in any kind of judgmental way. Then he proceeds to carry out some systematic steps. He clearly knows his craft pretty well already. But I don't get to see the result until he is finished and hands me a small mirror which he had as part of his kit. I burst out laughing. He looks hurt. But I give his arm a small squeeze and say, "Oh you are so professional. It is just so unlike my usual look." He seems genuinely gratified. What a contrast! Hemi just wanted to have sex with me. Mikaere values me as a congenial landlady and blank canvas for his makeup skills.

We make some dinner together out of various odds and ends I have in the house. He's pretty good at improvising meals. He says, very sweetly, that he would like to cook for me but he would also enjoy us cooking together. He starts to suggest ways of rearranging items in the kitchen. It is really very strange. The shy boy I barely spoke to down at Tuakau seems to be instantly comfortable with me, which has the effect of breaking down any reserve I might have. I think he must really have been dying to get away from home and by an odd chance ended up with me, someone still in the process of setting up house and someone who, frankly, could do

with some help in doing so.

Lying in bed that night I contemplate how Mikaere moving in could really be a blessing. Best of all, it has been a momentary distraction from the events around Sammy's death and the whole business with Zoltan. Tomorrow I will meet my 'new Masters student' Maria. I don't know what she'll have to say, but I'll try to be helpful.

It's Monday. Mikaere is up early and getting ready to attend the first day of his course. He is anxious or should I say excited? I also need to get off reasonably early and so have a shower straight after Mikaere. I wish him luck and, after a few attempts, he gets the Lambretta running and is off. I have some muesli and yoghurt and set off on foot to the university. I don't know when I'll see this Maria. I have a lecture for my second year course at 10 and then there's the inaugural meeting of the curriculum review committee at 2. Otherwise I'm free and will stay in my office. It is 10 to 10 and a young woman arrives, says she is Maria and can we meet for lunch at the cafeteria at 12.15? I have no time before my class to say anything except agree. The class goes only moderately well. I'm a little distracted and completely miss the point of a question until another student helpfully restates it and I'm back on track. I have coffee in the tea room, chatting to McDuff. His focus is still on Sammy's death but with the main concern being the loss of his favourite lunch spot. I suggest that a few weeks without a replacement would be a proper recognition for Sammy. He reluctantly agrees and says he'll see me this afternoon. For the moment I'd forgotten he was a member of the committee.

I need to review my thoughts and strategy for the afternoon's meeting. I have experience in this kind of situation. The official goal is a bold new design that will be attractive to new students, will have intellectual coherence across the Faculty and will use human resources efficiently and effectively. The subtext is reducing the salary bill and culling uneconomic subjects. The fight could get dirty. I know not to introduce ideas of my own, not overtly that is, but let the discussion flow and fall back on the procedure and timetable that has already been determined. I need to pretend that the official goal is achievable longer than anyone else can maintain the pretence and allow a messy compromise to emerge that involves the least, or preferably no, blood on the floor. Hopefully the compromise can be dressed up in sufficiently attractive language that it resembles the official goal, if you don't look too closely. The first meeting will involve introductions and a slow start. I know what I need to do. Even so, my thoughts on this are sufficiently distracting that I end up a couple of minutes late for my appointment.

Now where is Maria? I do hope I recognize her. I only saw her briefly and she looks kind of anonymous. Then she comes up to me with two coffees and two brown bags of lunch. She says it would be nice to sit outside. Well it is rather a dull day but not cold and we can sit on one of the barbeque tables placed under some trees with yellow blossoms. I say that we won't be overheard. "No we won't," she agrees.

After a brief pause I initiate the proceedings by saying, "I got your message at the Grounds of Enlightenment."

"Good. I will be working with you alongside Detective Sergeant Hope Wilson."

“Is my office bugged?”

“Not that we are aware of, but we are taking precautions. I am about to put a phone on the table. When we leave, you pick it up. You can be in touch with Hope Wilson with it, mainly in an emergency. Her number is under ‘Willy’ in the contacts list.”

“Is she really called that?”

“Not at work. I’m enrolled for a directed study with you and we’ll meet once a week. You can write me notes, as required and I can give you messages too.”

“I need to tell you that on Friday morning a car picked me up which I thought was a police vehicle. It took me to Zoltan.”

“Yes, we followed you.”

“I didn’t send the email postponing my interview.”

“Yes, we suspected that.”

“Clearly Mr. Fawkes was assigned to me to stop me talking openly to you.”

“Yes we realised, especially after you managed to speak to Hope Wilson briefly.”

“What’s going to happen now? Are you going to secure my email address?”

“No we’ll leave your email as it is for the moment. Just carry on as usual.”

I’m not sure what else to say, but I start to worry about the graduate student cover story.

“Are you going to produce some work?”

“Yes. I have someone who can help me, if necessary.”

“Do you have a topic?”

“Yes, and an outline.” She gets out some papers from her bag and puts them on the table, with one covering the phone.

I have a look at the outline. It is plausible enough. I write down some references. “Just look at Chapter Two, and for this one, include it but look her up on Wikipedia. I wrote most of that.” I suggest some section headings. We talk generally about the topic and she seems to be on to it,

roughly speaking. I say, “I could forget you are a police officer.”

“Well not strictly a police officer. Let’s just say, another branch of government.”

We finish up and I slip the phone into my pocket. We go our separate ways and I still have a little while before the meeting. In the meeting I’m perhaps a little distracted but relaxed. I get to know the members and there is some discussion of procedure and McDuff raises the question whether redundancies are planned. I wish he hadn’t asked that, but I have a prepared answer: that I have been given no target for redundancies, but I cannot completely rule them out. What is likely is that over time the staffing complement will be reduced, hopefully using a sinking lid. That is as much reassurance as I am able to give and it seems to satisfy them for the time being. As a way of framing the curriculum review process we agree to do a SWOT analysis at the next meeting: the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the University. It wasn’t my suggestion, but it may serve to suggest that business as usual is not an option. The secretary to the meeting is also going to present enrollment data in graphic form for the last five years reflecting majors and interdisciplinary programmes as a basis for later discussion. We finish up in reasonably good spirits.

After a little administrative work back at my office I walk home, after rather an eventful day. I make a small detour to pick up a couple of bottles of wine and arrive home at the same time as Mikaere. Rather more practically, he had been to the supermarket on his way home and had bought quite a few basic provisions including a couple of chicken breasts to be the basis of dinner. He has had a busy day too, and is excited by his new course. I pour wine for myself and offer him a glass. He says he isn’t a big drinker but accepts. I ask about the course. “Are all the rest women?” I ask.

“No, there is one other boy.”

“I expect you will stick together.”

Mikaere looks a little embarrassed and says, “Yes, I think we might.”

I drop that line of discussion and raise what had been on my mind earlier. “Are you going to tell Aroha about your change of course plans?”

He looks more embarrassed. “I wish you would tell her.”

“Are you sure that is best? I will if you absolutely want me to,” I respond.

“Please do. I want her to know before I go back next weekend.”

“Alright, if that’s what you really want.” Mikaere looks relieved and then we start to make some

dinner. He takes the lead and I help.

Lying in bed I think about the puzzle that is Mikaere but then think about my supposed graduate student Maria. I wish we had talked things over more, but clearly she was not anxious to interrogate me. I don't think they see me as a suspect. Then my thoughts go to 'my' Maria and how we first met. It was during the 'tour' of the Boston area by Satan's Whores. While really very small scale, it did have something of the rock star experience. We had both young male fans and young female fans. Some of the male fans in particular took the band name rather literally. Our drummer, Hanna, made the most of the situation and had sex with a different boy after every performance. Our keyboard player, Jemma, the exchange student from Boston, was rather more choosy but certainly disappeared with a boy at least a couple of times. Our lead singer and lead guitarist, Erika was an item with the bass player, Lotta. That left me. Well the truth of the matter was that I was a virgin. I was popular and had been out with several boys I quite liked, but it didn't feel quite right. Maria, who was only fifteen at the time followed the band around and eventually seduced me. For a brief while, it was a magical time. But the 'grand tour' soon came to an end and, after my return to Finland, we only barely kept in touch, until much later when I arrived in Connecticut.

Chapter 13 : A couple of meetings

It is Tuesday morning and I need to arrange a meeting with Aroha. For one thing I need to share Mikaere's change of study plans with her. In retrospect, I feel I should have insisted he tell her himself but I had agreed to do so and I need to honour my promise. Anyway, I would like to express my gratitude to her for entrusting me with her younger son. I decide to send her a short email asking if she has time for a brief catch up, perhaps over coffee, some time this week. In the afternoon she replies with a couple of suggested times and we agree to meet on Thursday morning in her office. Soon after that is settled, I receive an email from my new graduate student, Maria Johnson, asking to meet me in my office on Thursday, but in the afternoon, at 2 pm. I hadn't expected to see her so soon. I have a million questions to ask but I wonder how useful such a constrained meeting would be.

It is Thursday morning and I present myself to Aroha's office at the appointed time of 10 o'clock. I'm nervous and the official setting doesn't help. Her PA says she is on the phone, but she calls through the connecting door for me to come through, and waves me to a seat. She soon finishes her call and asks her PA to get coffee for both of us. She asks about the curriculum review committee and I briefly describe how it got underway. We then move on to Mikaere and she asks how it's working out. I say he's a delight and thank her for providing me with such a congenial housemate and that I appreciate her trust. I then move on to the topic of his course change. "His course turns out not to be in information technology. Heisto be a technician, but a beauty technician."

This catches Aroha by surprise. "You mean makeup and nails and such?"

"Yes," I reply, "and he has practiced his craft on me."

"Why didn't he tell me?" she asks, demonstrating some uncharacteristic exasperation.

"I really don't know, and he asked me to tell you, which I agreed to, perhaps wrongly."

"What do you think about it?" she asks.

"I think he's rather good at it, and he probably would have good work prospects."

Aroha smiles and relaxes a little and says she's happy that I am there to support him.

I mention that I have a late enrolled graduate student, Maria Johnson. Aroha was quick to respond, "Yes, I remember. That was an unusual case. The Chancellor asked me to authorize her enrolment as a special favour. I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to consult you."

I reply carefully. "I may need to talk to you about her another time, but my current thinking is

that she will do OK in this directed study.” I don’t want to be too secretive with Aroha, whom I trust implicitly, but there is no need to lay this particular burden on her right now. So, Sione Latu is part of the picture. I didn’t expect that. I have something else I want to ask. “The police asked me where I was on the Friday night that Sammy was murdered and I told them of our trip to Tuakau. Did they check that with you, by any chance?”

“Oh yes, I confirmed that,” Aroha replies.

In a jokey tone, I respond, “Good. I won’t be their number one suspect then.”

I have lunch at the cafeteria, feeling Sammy’s absence, in preparation for my meeting with Maria. She arrives at my office promptly and, with the door closed, she announces that the room has been swept for bugs and we can speak freely. Even so, she presents me with a small fan, which creates a bit of white noise, to deter more remote listening. Also, she warns me that while it is clear today it might not be tomorrow. Ongoing caution is required. I ask her what she wants to know about my previous contact with Zoltan.

“It could be useful to hear you talk about how you met, how he engaged with you, anything to build a picture about how he operates.”

Very well. I am happy to share, but I need to ask, “Am I a suspect in Sammy’s murder?” I am hoping to hear the answer ‘no’, for they have checked out my alibi.

I find Maria’s answer a little more guarded. “At this stage, we’re still talking to a range of people who may possibly be involved in some way with Sammy’s suspicious death, but we acknowledge your willingness to cooperate with us.” While that is not so reassuring, there is nothing for it but to tell my story.

“In my second year at university I met up with someone I had been in a rock band with.”

“You mean The Devil’s Whores?” Maria interrupted.

“Satan’s Whores, yes. The lead guitarist and lead singer, Erika, took two gap years, while I only took one, so she arrived in my second year. The short story is that we entered into a relationship,”

“You mean a sexual relationship?” Maria asked, a little unnecessarily.

“Yes, and she introduced me to Zoltan.”

“Was Erika a KGB agent?”

“Maybe, but our relationship didn’t last and I didn’t get to know her really well. I do know her mother was Russian.”

“But Zoltan kept in touch with you after that?”

“Yes, even though I didn’t really encourage that.”

“Were you a Marxist?”

“Well I did join a Marxist group in my first year, a group that had been in existence since the sixties, and I was pretty rebellious but, by that time, I was starting to get more focussed on academic study and my relationship with Marxism was more of an academic and critical kind. I had done well in that first year, in spite of playing hard and engaging in some politics. I was thinking I would like to make an academic career in the USA, which was ambitious at that time.”

“Do you think that it was your potential future career in the USA that made you of interest to Zoltan?” Maria asked.

“Maybe. He could have been playing a long game, I suppose.”

“Why did you have anything to do with him?”

“You must know that he can be very charming. He flattered me. And when Erika broke up with me he was very supportive.”

“Did you ever have sex with him?”

“Never voluntarily.”

“You mean he raped you?”

“Yes, once.” I pause, reluctant to elaborate. “That was a bit later. I made the mistake of saying I wasn’t afraid of him. He took offence at that.”

“How long did you have dealings with him?”

“More than a year. Perhaps close to a year and a half.”

“And did you have any contact with him since that period?”

“Occasionally he would try to contact me. After the breakup of the Soviet Union I didn’t hear anything more from him. I didn’t know he was still in business.” I try asking a question? “Who do

you think Sammy was working for?”

“We have some thoughts, but unfortunately we cannot share them with you.”

I understand that Maria would only share information with me on a ‘need to know’ basis. In fact, I am adopting the same policy towards her. I haven’t exactly lied, but I was more involved with Zoltan than I am suggesting. But that would only be a distraction from the investigation. We soon move on to the directed study project. To my surprise, Maria has made some progress with it, even in the short time available. I suspect she likes doing this work. I think we will get a directed study out of her, whether or not she finds the murderer.

It has been a busy week for both Mikaere and me. I ask him on Thursday evening when he thinks he will go down to Tuakau, thinking he might ride down on Friday evening. But no, he'll ride down on Saturday morning and back on Sunday afternoon. He does seem very comfortable living with me. He talks of the trip as mainly being to pick up more of his stuff. He knows I've told Aroha about his change of course plans. He asks again whether I thought she was angry about it.

"No. She thought you should have told her yourself, but didn't seem to mind too much about the course. She's a very wise woman, you know."

"Yes, I know that really."

After dinner on Friday, Mikaere wants to practice making me up again. Really I would rather do something else but to support his new profession I agree and he becomes very conversational, asking me how I'm adapting to a new country and a new job. Such questions are often asked in an empty kind of way but I feel that he is genuinely trying to put himself in my shoes. He has made a big move in his life and I think he sees a parallel with my big move. Of course, he has no idea about some of the things that are on my mind but I try to treat him as a friend and answer his questions seriously. I talk about how I hadn't found out much about the university before I came such as how young it is. I tell him about my only previous experience of New Zealand, the interview in the Koru Lounge at Auckland International Airport. I mention escaping the Trump presidency.

Then, perhaps rashly, I mention that I had broken up with my partner Maria. It turns out this is what interests him most. He asks if I am exclusively gay. Clearly he doesn't know the answer to that already.

"Mostly, I think,"

He then says that he thinks he is gay. I have previously informally counseled young women about their sexuality, but not young men. I try to dole out some standard advice while keeping the tone light and matter of fact. "Don't let others define you. You can find out who you are, in your own time." As we are on the topic of sexual preference I think I can ask if the other boy in his course is gay.

"Oh yea, as soon as you see him, no doubt at all. When the girls talk about their boyfriends he joins in talking about his."

"Do you think you'll be friends," I ask tentatively.

“Yea, we could be mates.” He is happy to let the subject drop and focus on the task of transforming my appearance.

It is Saturday morning. Mikaere seems in no special hurry to get off but fires up the Lambretta soon after 11 am. I was waiting for him to get off, looking forward to having the house to myself, but then I miss him. After a bit, I settle down to some work, though I do distract myself with some emails. Also, I look online to catch up with some US news. The Trump White House has certainly been through some turbulent times. The resignation of Michael Flynn as National Security Advisor is already old news. Jeff Sessions’ decision to recuse himself from investigations into any Russian involvement in the 2016 election stays in the news, as Trump can’t let the matter go. I manage to get back to some work.

Even though it is only 5.30 pm, I think I will walk to an Indian restaurant on Saint George Street and order some take out food. Naturally, the restaurant isn’t busy and the kitchen produces my food quickly. After about three quarters of an hour, I am nearly back at home when I see a middle aged man in a dark hoodie and jeans going round the back of my house. He is carrying a small bag. I reach into my jacket pocket for my phone to call the police but I find the phone that Maria had left for me. I locate ‘Willy’ in the contacts and call the number. She answers reasonably quickly. I tell her what is happening and she says to walk straight past my house as if I don’t belong and not to return until she calls me back.

I walk for a while, conscious of the saag paneer, naan bread and pickle in my take out bag. I find a place to sit in front of a church and try to eat the food, but it becomes a bit messy. My patience has about run out when Hope Wilson phones me back and says my visitor has gone. I can return but they want to quickly check over the premises before I do so. It should take no more than half an hour. I walk around a bit more and then return. On my way back, Hope calls again and says they have located three listening devices: in the living room, the kitchen and my bedroom. They are going to leave them there for the time being.

“Carry on as normal, don’t talk to me on this phone in the house and be aware that they are very good at blackmail.”

No blackmail potential in this bedroom. Wrong brother. I’m not very happy being overheard, but there is nothing I can do. Entering the house I feel a chill. I look around to see if anything has been obviously disturbed. I don’t notice anything, but I don’t have an eye for detail, unless it’s in a piece of writing. I heat up the remains of my meal as I am still a bit hungry, but it doesn’t taste so nice reheated. I wish Mikaere were here, but really it’s best that he isn’t as I don’t fancy explaining to him what is going on.

In fact, what is going on? Sammy might have been a government agent but which government? Presumably Zoltan was in some way involved with his death. I knew him from a long time ago, but apart from that it doesn’t concern me. The New Zealanders must somehow have found out

my connection to Zoltan, so needed to check me out. But he made things worse for himself by having me brought to see him. That gave me something to tell, while otherwise I had little. He must have thought it was no accident that I arrived on the scene when I did. Both sides seem to think I am some kind of secret agent. Mostly, I am just an accident prone academic.

Aroha McLean is in a contemplative mood. She is back in Tuakau for the weekend and has the pleasure of seeing her son Mikaere after his first week in his new course. But she has a lot on her mind.

Inka is so full of surprises. She will never know how hard I had to fight to get approval for her position. It is the only dedicated staffing position in Gender Studies, even though it anchors a lively interdisciplinary programme. She should never find out the short list.

The short list consisted of : Inka, Kataraina Smith, a woman from Victoria University of Wellington with Māori whakapapa, and Kylie Burnham, the Vice-Chancellor's wife, who has good Australian credentials. Naturally the Vice-Chancellor established an extra degree of distance from the appointment process, though it should not be assumed that he favoured the appointment of his wife, whatever he might have said at home. On learning of Inka's appointment, he expressed enthusiasm, or at least what would count as enthusiasm given his dry, utilitarian manner.

Kataraina was the first to be interviewed and naturally, as I knew her, I acted as I normally would and hugged and kissed her as a greeting. I then immediately realised that I needed to do something similar for the other candidates, otherwise I could be seen as favouring Kataraina, who in truth I did favour. I had met Kylie before, so it seemed natural enough to give her a little hug. The last candidate, Inka, for whom we had to arrange the bizarre interview in the airport Koru Lounge, was a slightly different matter. Should I hug this skinny, hospital white, Finnish woman? I did so and she seemed to respond well to it. What a strange feeling to hug that skinny frame!

The appointments committee was largely divided between the Kataraina camp and the Kylie camp. Inka was initially in last place, perhaps in part because of the truncated interview and the feeling we didn't know her or understand her. But she demonstrated considerable energy, had the strongest publication record, had experience winning research funding as well as having a range of administrative experience. In the end, her position as the compromise candidate allowed her merits to shine through. A couple of the committee members suggested she would never accept the offer, which is not the best frame of mind in an appointments committee. I was just concerned she might lack any rapport with tangata whenua and not see the need to establish gender studies with a Māori and Pacific flavour. For all I knew, she was unconsciously, or even consciously, racist. But she did accept the offer without haggling and I knew that she would arrive in New Zealand from the Northern Hemisphere all alone and would need support and some aroha. I was fortunate that I was able to ask Vinnie to help her with some practical matters. But I needed to welcome her to the university family and why not to my own whanau?

Her remarkable weekend down here, while certainly disturbing, laid to rest any thought that she

was uncomfortable with brown bodies! Oh, Hemi. I despair of you. If you could keep Moana, whether or not you deserve her, that would be the best thing that could happen to you. Tētahi wahine ātaahua! Ironically, Inka saw that immediately. And I don't know if the night with Hemi was really what made Inka accept the curriculum review role, but it must have helped. I really didn't have anyone else for the role. Each of the obvious candidates had too much of an axe to grind. And I was really stuck with Mikaere's situation. He had a course to start in Auckland, not the one he told me, I now know, and commuting in from Tuakau was never going to work for him. Moreover, he was never going to find a place for himself in the city at short notice. So, in a practical way, it was an obvious move to suggest to Inka that he become her boarder. And they seem to have bonded, somewhat surprisingly.

Inka was good about the late enrolment of that graduate student for a directed study. I really should have asked her personally. It was odd that Sione insisted that I enrol her, which strictly he had no right to. But I was happy to defer to his mana, partly because I like him. Underneath his Oxford stuffiness and pedantry is a Tongan, a polynesian. Even though I don't know him well, I feel there is a kind of bond between us. He is a man with many connections including New Zealand government connections. He was probably doing a favour for one of his influential friends.

What about Mikaere? I should try and have a kōrero with him. I don't want to scold him for not telling me about his beauty technician course. I wonder what that really is like. Perhaps I can get him to tell me. The idea of him making up Inka's face is amazing and hilarious. Perhaps I should go over to his room. He may be returning to the city pretty early tomorrow. I don't want to miss having some private words with him.

I head across to Mikaere's room. Hemi's new motorcycle project is all over the floor close to the entrance. Hemi is not there, fortunately, but Mikaere must be in the bedroom section at the back. I call out to him.

"Kuhu mai, whaea," he says, unknowingly echoing his brother. They are so different, but then their fathers are different. We sit in his bedroom, which is not as tidy as normal, as he is assembling things to take up to Inka's house on Sunday. We have a very calm chat. He confirms that he is comfortable with Inka and thanks me for arranging for him to stay there. Quite right too, but it is sweet of him to say so. We touch on the matter of the course change and he is a bit sheepish about it, but tells me about the course and talks optimistically of his employment prospects. It is not what I had in mind for him. I suppose we shouldn't interfere with our children's dreams but it can be hard. Oh well, if that is where he wants to earn a living then so be it. It is very likely connected with his sense of his sexuality, but that goes unsaid. That might be a discussion for another day.

I had expected Mikaere to return from Tuakau on Sunday afternoon and he makes it back by about 3.30. I am very pleased to see him, given the events of Saturday, but I can't mention them. The Lambretta was fully laden. He unpacks in his room but emerges with a bluetooth speaker in one hand and a motorcycle helmet in the other. The speaker is a good asset as there is no other way of playing music except earbuds. At first I think the helmet is his but then he asks me to try it on. Apparently it is one that Hemi had and is surplus to requirements. It fits well enough. I knew Mikaere wanted to be able to take me on the back of the Lambretta. I had never ridden a motorcycle or scooter myself but had ridden behind various young men in my youth and had learned how to let my body follow the angle of the bike. I also remembered how intimate an activity it really is. Your body needs to be up against the rider's and the best way to hold on is to hold his waist. Mikaere clearly understands that but thinks nothing of it.

After a cup of tea, he wants to take me out for a ride. Normally I would have put him off but I just want to get out of the house and away from the immediate vicinity. I usually like to walk places, but now I wish I had a vehicle of my own. Perhaps I should think about getting a car, when I am more used to vehicles driving on the left. But for now, riding pillion on the back of a Lambretta it is. Mikaere suggests going for a short trip to the Auckland Botanic Gardens. He says it is really not very far. We get on to a rather busy road, the Great South Road, which takes us through downtown Manukau and past the Mall. Here there are some tall modern buildings with an urban feel more similar to cities I know. I find it a scary ride, but it genuinely isn't very far. The gardens are extensive with some broad vistas and some specialist areas such as one for threatened native plants, with their particular habitats created in miniature. Mostly, I appreciate the broad expanse of green. It brings home to me that, apart from the trip to Tuakau, my life so far in New Zealand has been confined to a very small area. As a first step, I really do need to see more of Auckland, maybe not always from the back of Mikaere's Lambretta.

The schedule for next week appears uneventful and I am even able to get on with some work. On Monday afternoon I receive an email draft of a section of my student Maria's directed study, though she may not be able to meet me this week. She has taken up some of my suggestions and has made some good progress after really a very short time. Maybe she has her weekends free from her job, whatever that is exactly. The document is a credible first piece of work. If it is largely her own, I think she might really be a better student than 'my' Maria, who was good at idea generation and big plans but was weaker at executing them. This student, on the face of it, is able to follow a thread methodically and clearly, or at least clear enough for a first attempt. Successful academic writing, at student level, and perhaps even in general, is 20% ideas and 80% execution.

I am curious about her and, as I have access to the student record system, possibly on the basis of my professorial rank, I look up her details. There is information about previous study at the

Victoria University of Wellington some years back and, interestingly, her address provided is a Wellington one. I wonder if she really does live in Wellington. I don't think the flights are very long from Wellington, so it would be possible for her to come up just for the day when she needs to. Isn't it a slip up not to provide an Auckland address for appearance's sake, though? Undergraduate students might keep their family home address on the record, though, so perhaps it is not so unusual. I copy her cell phone number in the records into my phone. I am disappointed not to be able to talk over the events of Saturday so, after adding comments to her Word document, I reply saying it would be useful to talk over some points if she were able to make an appointment this week. I'm reluctant to try the phone number I have just found.

On Tuesday, I receive a response from Maria saying she has found some useful new sources and is able to see me on Wednesday, at any time after 10 am. We settle on a time. She must now be up with the play about what happened on Saturday. This is all very cloak and dagger. I'm very pleased we can meet on Wednesday. When Wednesday arrives, she tells me that once again the office has been swept for bugs. That was quick work! I unload on Maria my growing anxiety about the situation. I explain that I feel isolated as I am a recent arrival in New Zealand, and that I do not have anyone to share my concerns with.

"That's what I'm for, in part" Maria replies. "It is really good that you understand the need for secrecy."

"I take it Hope Wilson is the one I contact about urgent matters."

"Yes, you did exactly right on Saturday."

"I have a lodger, Mikaere, and I am concerned about him getting involved in this."

"Yes, we know about Mikaere. I am sure you haven't talked to him about the bugs or Sammy Becker-Lau's death?"

"That is correct, and nor did I discuss any of this with his mother, even when she told me how the Chancellor had arranged your enrolment."

"That's very good. You have been acting in a very responsible way."

"The Chancellor did speak to me briefly about the death."

"Really? What did he tell you?"

"Nothing!"

Maria gives a little laugh. "Don't be concerned about speaking to him but I am your main point

of contact.”

“Do you live in Wellington?” I ask.

“Sometimes, but I move around the country as required.”

“Can I use the cell phone number on your enrolment?”

She stops to think. “Yes, if really necessary, preferably by text. I will monitor that phone but make it sound like an academic matter.”

“How long are things going to be like this?” I ask.

“It is impossible to know, but matters might be resolved in a few weeks.”

I know Maria told me she was my first point of contact but, frankly, I am anxious and really want a good chat with someone else. She says that Sione is someone I am allowed to talk to about what is going on, so perhaps I should contact him. What is the best way of doing that so as not to attract attention? Presumably, my emails and phone calls are being monitored. I will leave it until tomorrow. I receive an email asking me to a meeting on Thursday from 2 to 3 pm with Human Resources to discuss my orientation experiences. That sounds tedious. I don't recall much in the way of orientation processes as such though I have been introduced to the university in various ways, such as through the pōwhiri. Oh well, confirm the time and see what they want to ask me.

I have a curriculum review committee meeting on Wednesday. We are getting into the tricky stuff. The analysis of enrolments in different subject areas is bound to be contentious. My own position is a little unusual as mine is the only full time position in Gender Studies. The other teaching comes from those primarily based in other areas. Two of the main ones are my office neighbours: Marion and Carolyn, whose primary affiliations are Psychology and English respectively. I've been told how a group of staff in a variety of subject areas gave birth to Gender Studies by tilting existing courses they taught in that direction. You could take the view that there is a staff complement of one in the area. But the mathematics of student:staff ratios required that a proportion of time of such staff be deemed to lie in Gender Studies. But there is disagreement about how you calculate that. Where there are students who are taking a course sitting in both Psychology and Gender Studies purely as an elective, there is no way of registering whether it was the psychology branding or the Gender Studies branding that drew them to it. Oh dear! Is this the kind of problem I joined a university to consider? Relax! All jobs have their equivalent of cleaning the toilets, and cleaning toilets is such important work.

I open the meeting, and we approve the minutes of the previous meeting. As we proceed to assess student:staff ratios, tension rises. Many of the subjects taught within the Faculty do not meet university targets. The languages face particular difficulties. Each language, to be viable, needs to teach from absolute beginners level, while there is another group of students with significant existing competence who need to start at a higher level. In Finland you could count on existing foreign language capacity. Māori language enrolls well, particularly at beginners level. Samoan is the only Pasifika language being taught, not wholly surprising since Samoan is the third most widely used language in New Zealand after English and Māori, perhaps tied with Chinese. The only other languages taught are Chinese and French.

One line of argument that comes up is that New Zealand has three official languages: English, Māori and New Zealand Sign Language, so shouldn't we be teaching all three? This does not help our current situation at all. The discussion then seems to merge into one of supporting students with disabilities of various kinds. I must exert my authority as chair of the meeting. McDuff, whose subject could suffer if too much resource is put into the languages, argues

against the teaching of New Zealand Sign Language. I support his opposition but try and put it mildly. Of course, in an ideal world the teaching of sign languages would have a place in university curricula (and indeed they would) but it does not seem possible in current circumstances. The only thing we can agree on is that a subcommittee should be established to develop some specific proposals for regularising the teaching of languages. I undertake to produce some flexible targets for subject areas in general. An additional agenda item for the next meeting is the introduction of common compulsory courses. That should be fun!

Thursday rolls around and I dutifully turn up to my meeting with Human Resources. It is held in a room decorated with Pacific Island mats. One of the men I met when I first signed on initiates a kind of light discussion about my early experiences with the university and whether he can help me in any way. I talk a little about my first reactions to aspects of the institution, making comparisons with other institutions honestly enough, without developing too complaining a tone, I hope. He seems to take any implied criticisms well, but after ten minutes or so he says that the Chancellor would like to have a chat with me and makes a call. Within a minute, Sione Latu enters.

"I was hoping to have a chat with you," I say, feeling much more engaged than I was with curriculum review matters.

"Yes, I thought you might."

"I didn't know how best to contact you. Can we speak freely here?"

"Yes it has been swept this morning," Sione reassures me. "I realize you know that I asked Aroha McLean to enrol Maria as a graduate student so you could easily talk face to face with an agent involved in the case. You might like to know how I am involved in these matters." Sione pauses. "When in the UK, I worked in intelligence."

"For which government?" I ask.

"For the New Zealand government, though initially for another government. While I have retired from that work, I am brought in as a consultant on some matters from time to time, and it was convenient for me to assist in this matter as I have an official role in the university."

I decide to cut to the chase. "Do you think I am a spy?"

"No." He pauses. "Would you like to be?"

"Whatever do you mean? Are you trying to recruit me?"

"Not exactly, but we are impressed with how you have acted under pressure. Also you have

been appropriately discreet.”

“I don’t think of myself as a discreet person,” I confess.

“In this matter you have been very careful, though. You handled the police interview perfectly and found a way to deliver your short message. You acted well when those agents were bugging your house. You did not tell Aroha McLean what role Maria is playing. You refrained from contacting me when you might have wanted to, a wise move when we have concerns about the security of communications.”

I am flattered but not tempted. “No. I know I contemplated this kind of thing, for the other side, when I was young but that was enough for me. I want to fully cooperate with the New Zealand authorities but I do not want to be an agent.”

“That is a shame. But it is not my job to recruit you. I mainly want to offer you my support.”

This gives me an opportunity to bring up what I have in mind. “While I am trying my best to carry on as normal and up to a point am succeeding, I am really very anxious about the situation. I have been told that my home is bugged but I can’t tell my lodger, Mikaere, which is uncomfortable. My email is compromised. I can never be sure whether my office is bugged. Worst of all, I am expecting Zoltan to contact me again. He must know, or at least strongly suspect, that I have been in contact with you somehow. He is dangerous and I don’t want to be his next victim, assuming he did kill Sammy.”

Sione considers me for a moment and then says quietly, “All your thoughts and concerns about this are perfectly reasonable. All I can say is that we are keeping an eye on you and expect matters to come to a head in a week or two. Please carry on acting in the excellent way you have been.”

Sione Latu and Maria Johnson are having a meeting in an unmarked office in an anonymous looking building on Lambton Quay in Central Wellington.

“I am impressed that we already knew about Inka Makkonen’s prior connection with Zoltan at the time of Becker-Lau’s death,” Maria comments.

“Yes it was a major stroke of luck that, shortly after I met our dear Inka, I was talking to my old friend Jaakko, who still works a little for Finnish intelligence in Helsinki, and mentioned that we have an attractive new Finnish professor of Gender Studies at the university, Inka Makkonen. He said the name rang a bell and later got back to me with the information. In the late 90s a KGB agent named ‘Zoltan’ was operating in and around the University of Helsinki and Inka Makkonen was suspected of being one of his recruits, though there was little hard evidence. As Bekker-Lau was killed not long after her arrival, it was a reasonable precaution to pass the information on to the police.”

“You are now confident she is not involved in any way?” asked Maria.

Sione responds, “Yes, I think so. Of course, she had a good alibi for the time period. The way Zoltan arranged to see her and her response in the police interview with Fawkes present encouraged me to accept her sincerity. Similarly I think her response to her house being bugged was convincing. Your reports also support her sincerity. We can never rule out the possibility that we are being played but I don’t think so. In a way, her arrival at the university, which we now assume was a coincidence, was another stroke of luck. Paying attention to Inka made us keep a look out for Zoltan and, of course, when that name appeared in Becker-Lau’s posthumous message it was a very reasonable assumption that it was the same person. More importantly, her presence seems to have spooked Zoltan. Whisking her off to meet with him was an extraordinarily foolish move. How are your supervision sessions going?”

“I think Inka is a little surprised and perhaps even irritated that I persist with the cover story of the directed study project to the extent I do. She would rather I tell her more about the state of our enquiries, which of course I cannot do as we are still not sure she isn’t working with Zoltan. But she is a good supervisor. And it does provide a low stress situation for her to share any thoughts about the case, if she has any.”

“You are probably enjoying it. Someone like yourself with a doctorate in criminology should have the skills, even if the material is rather different.”

“Yes, I am enjoying it and the change of subject is welcome. I am determined to complete the course. What is the latest state of the police investigation?” Maria asks.

“It looks more and more that Zoltan carried out the murder personally, not that we could prove it in a court of law. As you know, the sightings of a well built man in the vicinity of Sammy’s home at the time of his death line up with the photographs we received from Finland as well as with Inka’s tentative identification of the identikit image. We don’t have any other suspect.”

“She says you have met with her again recently. Is there anything I need to know about that?”

“She now knows that I have a history of work in intelligence and what I said is that I now do some contract work for New Zealand intelligence. I thought it best not to say that I am in charge of the intelligence service activities in this matter. I think she accepts that I am semi-retired. My age supports that assumption. It would have been preferable if Inka had no knowledge of my involvement with intelligence. But once I acted to install you as Inka’s student there was always the possibility, even likelihood, that Inka would learn about my involvement from Aroha McLean. The team did well to provide you with a false academic record on the university student records system so quickly. I was a little surprised that Inka went straight to that false phone number, which we had to make real.”

“I have said that I am her main point of contact in these matters. Is that still true?” Maria questions.

“Yes. But it is still useful for her to feel she has someone else to turn to. I don’t think I told you about an amusing little misunderstanding that arose from my first meeting with her. I was eating some rather sour plums and described them as a little tart. The rumour then spread that I had used that phrase to describe Inka. She politely put that to me when she ran into me by chance. I had pretended not to remember her name. Well, I was able to clear up that misunderstanding and it gave me an opportunity to take her to lunch, which, as well as being a pleasure, gave me an opportunity to size her up in an informal setting.”

“Are you concerned for her safety?” Maria asks.

“Yes, I am but, as you know, we have added our listening devices to theirs and so can keep an eye on her discreetly. She naturally has some concern for herself as well as for Mikaere. He is an additional risk in the situation, but it can’t be helped. I am very much aware that Inka, by her very presence, is providing a kind of trap for Zoltan, but we did nothing to arrange it. As we all agree, she has been handling the situation with impressive calm.”

“Do you want to recruit her?”

“Maybe,” Slone replies. “In fact, when she asked me if I thought she was a spy, I said ‘no’ and asked her if she would like to be, though I hadn’t planned to suggest that. She didn’t follow up the suggestion, which is consistent with her not working for the other side. A foreign agent would very likely express some positive interest.”

“Do you want me to work on that, if we become confident of her loyalties?”

“I may become interested in that. You like her, don’t you?”

I am worried about my graduate class. Jason carries on in much the way he has been all along, contributing frequently and generally well but, more and more, this irritates fellow students. I had hoped they wouldn't want to be outdone and would occupy more of the discussion, thus reducing his air time. But they retreat and merely make snippy little comments. I decide that Mathilda could be the key, but how do I secure her engagement in the process?

I develop a plan. I will invite both of them to lunch so we can talk over how to make the class run better. I will imply that Jason is part of the problem, which he is, while acknowledging his strengths and portraying him as part of the solution. Mathilda will also be billed as part of the solution. This is all a bit risky. I will be sharing problems with the class dynamics that are at bottom my problems. It would be more upfront to engage the whole class with the issue but that would never work. So I separately find a moment to invite each of them to lunch on Sunday and they both accept. A weak aspect of my plan is that I don't really cook. But I am good at buying in cold supplies: smoked salmon, cream cheese, fancy crackers, and a variety of salad ingredients. Also Jason says he makes bread and will bring some. No similar offer from Mathilda. The plan has been set in motion.

My 'special' graduate student, Maria Johnson, made an appointment for this week in the normal way and indeed emailed in a draft of a new section. Anyone who was reading my emails, and I am assuming that Zoltan or his people were doing that meticulously, would have been completely convinced that she is a genuine student. In fact, sitting in the meeting, I myself am almost convinced that she is the real thing. She seems to mostly talk about her project and the topic of the murder comes across more as small talk. I think she just doesn't have a lot to say but is keeping in touch and maintaining the graduate student front. I say that Sione Latu has told me how he came to be involved in arranging her enrolment. She asks me what he said, so I tell her he said that while he has retired he still does a bit of work on contract. She gives me a deadpan look. I add, "He seemed to be wanting to recruit me into the New Zealand secret service."

Maria gives a little laugh and says, "I haven't been instructed to do any recruiting but it is a thought and certainly we think you have handled yourself very well in the situation." They certainly have their story straight on that point. "Maybe we could swap jobs," she jokes. It is all a bit unsatisfactory, but maybe there just is very little they can tell me.

Sunday rolls around. Mikaere left for Tuakau on Saturday. He would have been useful in preparing food but could have been in the way for the discussion about the class. Jason arrives first with an interesting loaf, a light kind of wholemeal with added seeds of various kinds, a British style of bread I suspect. Mathilda shows up slightly late with a bottle of wine. That is nice of her and resolves my dilemma as to whether I should serve alcohol. As she brought it, it would be churlish not to serve it, wouldn't it? And I could do with a glass myself, to tell the truth. As we

get into lunch I prepare the ground by saying I wanted to hear how they have been finding the course and to talk about how we could make it run more smoothly. Jason looks a little suspicious but as we drink the wine and eat the food the atmosphere mellows a little. The bread is very nice and goes well with what I am offering. I try to put the problem to them, that the discussion does not flow well and can become a little hostile. Jason asks me, “Do you think I talk too much in class?”

I must be careful answering this. “It does often end up that way but, if others joined in more readily, then we would have a better balance. You often make some good points that others could feed off.”

It is Mathilda’s turn to ask a direct question. “Do you think I should say more?”

There is no way, or need, to avoid a straight answer to this. “Yes, I think that would be good. I don’t like to impose an extra level of contribution on a particular student, but you are a top performing member of the class and I think you have a lot to offer.”

Mathilda looks a little embarrassed, but I am not sure if it is for being praised in that way or for being implicitly criticised for not pulling her weight? “I will try and contribute more,” she says.

This is all very well but I don’t feel I have made a breakthrough with them. I get them to talk a bit about the topics in the course and I feel that Jason puts forward his views in a restrained manner and Mathilda does join in more than she does in class. This is good, though I am not convinced it can be maintained in a classroom setting. I then hear Mikaere’s Lambretta draw up and tell them this must be my lodger. They seem surprised to hear about a lodger. Mikaere enters through the back door and I introduce him to my students. I ask him if he has had lunch and he says that he hasn’t as lunch was going to be late at Tuakau and he wanted to get off. There are enough leftovers to make an adequate lunch for him so he sits down with us and this makes the atmosphere more casual.

Mathilda asks Mikaere if he is a student and he answers confidently that he is studying to be a beauty technician. Issues around makeup have at times been controversial in Gender Studies but both students take the topic in their stride. Mathilda asks him about makeup techniques, which surprises me a little as I haven’t noticed her wearing much makeup. Perhaps she does in other situations. Then Mikaere asks her if she would agree to him trying out some makeup techniques on her. She hesitates, maybe because it is a distraction from what we were here to discuss or perhaps because she feels it is not the image she wants to present to me. I don’t want her to feel she has to but do want her to feel she can, so I say Mikaere is very good and has practiced his makeup skills on me. With that much encouragement she agrees.

So Mikaere seats Mathilda in a good position, gets out his kit and sets to work. This gives me an opportunity to have a private chat with Jason and tell him how important his contributions are

to the class and I am sure we can get things running smoothly. Then we go and watch what Mikaere is up to. He is in his element. He has tied Mathilda's hair right back, which gives a rare full view of her face, which is really very beautiful, and is working with speed and precision. Jason seems fascinated.

When Mikaere declares his work is complete Mathilda stands up and looks Jason straight in the eye and says, "Am I beautiful now?"

Jason looks a little flustered and says, "Yes, but you were beforehand too." That is something that could have been said in a light way but clearly he really means it for he goes bright red and is at a loss for words.

Mathilda smiles, and I thought it was going to turn into one of her smirks but, in what seems like an impulsive moment, she goes up to him and gives him a little hug and a kiss on the cheek and says, "Thank you."

Jason's colour deepens but Mathilda, whether out of consideration or just instinctively I cannot tell, goes up to Mikaere and gives him a similar hug and a kiss and thanks him for the makeup. Then for good measure she does the same to me. She has a soft, gentle touch. Mikaere offers to remove Mathilda's makeup if she wishes but she prefers to keep it on. Things seem to be wrapping up and Jason asks Mathilda if she would like a ride home. She says, "Sure." After they go, Mikaere asks whether he disturbed us and I am able to assure him that he provided just the distraction we needed.

On Monday my long foreshadowed dinner with Carolyn is finally settled. I will get a ride with her after work on Thursday and she will drop me home afterwards. She and her family live in Otahuhu, which is a bit further north from Papatoetoe. Afterwards I look it up on Google Maps and see that Otahuhu lies on an exceptionally skinny bit of New Zealand where an inlet coming in from the east ends up only a couple of hundred metres from an inlet coming in from the west. Carolyn tells me that her husband, Derek, is a police detective (let's not talk shop). Her son, Adam, 16, is into computer games and her daughter, Kylie, 8 is into teddy bears. It will be interesting to visit a Kiwi family different from Aroha's.

This week's graduate class runs very well. Both Jason and Mathilda are transformed. Clearly something has developed between them. In fact, to my eye, they are now a couple. This had certainly not been my intention and indeed takes me by surprise. I have seen young women attracted to older men who display success, confidence and worldliness but this is not the dynamic that I can now see. On the contrary, Jason is the one who looks like the love-struck adolescent and Mathilda now appears more confident and mature.

Jason still contributes to the class but in a more restrained manner, often glancing across to Mathilda who, while not overtly contradicting Jason's points, tactfully suggests a qualification or alternative and looks round to draw in the other students, who now appear more comfortable joining in. In fact, the class pretty much runs itself after I lead off with the key themes. Mathilda would make a very fine teacher. Well, my plan was a success, although not in the way I had envisaged. A thought strikes me. My lunch at home was being listened in to by the Russian GRU, if indeed they are Zoltan's current employers. While it was an innocuous meeting, I hope I wasn't drawing students into my mess. I raise that topic when I meet Maria Johnson the next day.

"I'm not too concerned," she says. "If you had asked me before arranging that lunch I'd probably have advised against it but, really, I don't see much danger for them. In fact, it would give the listeners the impression you don't know about the bugs."

Even so, I am anxious about the overall situation and find Maria's 'business as usual' attitude slightly irritating. There is an unresolved murder with a dangerous man still at large, someone who seems to have me in his sights. We discuss her directed study project. She continues to make good progress.

It is Thursday and I am in Carolyn's car with a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc driving north. We were a little late setting off as she was trying to find something in her rather chaotic office, and we hit a fair bit of traffic on the Great South Road, going north this time rather than south as I did with Mikaere on the way to the Botanic Gardens. "Maybe we should have taken State Highway 1 instead but it's probably just as chocka," Carolyn suggests.

Although it really isn't very far, it isn't until about 6.45 pm that we get to her home, which is a standard, single story, three bedroom home, larger and a bit more modern than my place. Carolyn went straight to the kitchen. "I need to get a wriggle on getting tea ready."

"Can I do anything?" I ask.

"No thanks. I have it all planned out. Why don't you go and talk to the kids? Derek should be back soon."

I go into the living room and find just Kylie. True to Carolyn's description she is playing with a Teddy bear. "Hello, I am Inka. You must be Kylie. What's your bear's name?"

"This is Roy. I made him, you know."

"That is very clever. How did you do that? Can I have a look at him?"

"Yes, here he is. Mummy bought a pattern. I cut out the material and me and Mummy did the sewing. I have Mummy's sewing machine in my room now. I put all the stuffing in."

"I think Roy is very smart and he has such a happy face."

Adam comes into the room. We introduce ourselves and I wonder if discussion will be difficult, but then he says, "Mum says you come from Finland. Do you have a Nokia phone?"

"Not now. I have an iPhone. I don't know quite what Nokia phones there are now. But certainly ten years ago, before I went to America, Nokia phones were everywhere, not just in Finland."

"Yes, a friend of mine has an old one that used to be his father's. It is kind of cool they come from Finland."

Derek arrives. He is cheerful, but tired. He says he needs a drink, and gets me one too. "A hard day at the office?" I inquire.

"Yes, very busy, and there is some restructuring going on."

In spite of my resolve, I can't help probing. "Carolyn said you're a detective. I've met a couple of your colleagues, Hope Wilson and Dave Smithers, when they were investigating that death on our campus."

"Yes, I know them. They're based in the Counties-Manukau station, and I'm in Otahuhu, but we do cooperate. Carolyn says there's plenty of interest on campus in Sammy's death." I wonder how much he knows about Sammy's case. Maybe more than he is letting on. Quite right to be

discreet. Or has he been asked to check me out in a different setting? Probably not as Carolyn has been promising this dinner for ages.

It doesn't seem long before Carolyn says 'tea' is nearly ready. Adam and Kylie are asked to lay the table. I am impressed with Carolyn's efficiency and I like Derek. He is interested in my American experience. He had been to some kind of training session in Boston in mid 2016 and heard local reactions to Trump. We discuss whether the presidency will settle down. We aren't optimistic. After dinner Derek leads the clearing up routine. I try to help but Derek matches Carolyn's efficiency so I don't succeed in helping much. Derek makes coffee, while Carolyn goes with Kylie and encourages her to get ready for bed. Adam promptly retires to his room, very likely to engage in intergalactic warfare.

The after dinner chat starts to peter out and I suspect that they don't want to make a late night of it, so I say I'm happy to have a lift back whenever they like. On the ride back, which is much quicker through light traffic, Carolyn talks about the process to appoint a longer term Dean of Arts to replace Aroha. Apparently her acting appointment had been a little controversial, as was the way she established my position in financially shaky times. But Aroha came to be generally liked and there was some anxiety about a new Dean coming in as a new broom. That puts my role on the curriculum review committee in sharper focus.

It is the following week. Aroha had put me in touch with the Gender Studies academics at the University of Waikato, which is in Hamilton, about an hour and a quarter's drive south of Aroha's house. This was very helpful of her as I had been slow to make contact with colleagues in other parts of the country. The University of Auckland academics certainly weren't in a hurry to invite me to present a seminar. Waikato may not be as dismissive of the University of South Auckland. On Monday, the organiser of the Waikato Gender Studies seminar series contacts me to say there has been a cancellation and asks whether I could give a seminar at short notice that Friday. I have a seminar prepared that I think would be suitable so I agree. Aroha has close ties with staff down there in Te Pua Wānanga ki te Ao - The Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies, as she completed a doctorate with them only a couple of years previously. Therefore, Aroha offers to drive me down so she can catch up with her friends and mentors. We will drive back to Tuakau in the evening and Mikaere, who will come down to Tuakau on Friday, will take me home on the back of the Lambretta on Saturday. Well, I never was a big fan of limousines. At least, we can avoid traveling on State Highway 1.

Friday rolls around. I am not expected down in Hamilton until 2 pm but Aroha and I had agreed to set off at 11 o'clock or so, even though the trip is not that long. It is closer to 11.30 by the time we finally take off. Aroha suggests we divert a little and stop off at Ngāruawāhia which is most of the way to Hamilton. A lot of the drive is four lane highway but there are parts that are still under construction, so there are roadworks and some delays. Even so, we make good time and arrive in Ngāruawāhia soon after 12.30. We get some fish and chips, which we eat in a park called 'The Point' which is located where the Waipa River joins the Waikato River. It is peaceful sitting on a bench watching the rivers flow past. We see some outrigger canoes being paddled by high school students, and the calm is only disturbed when a power boat roars down river. We don't linger too long and, on our way out of Ngāruawāhia, Aroha shows me the large complex forming Tūrangawaewae Marae, the home marae of the Māori King. Aroha tells me how the king movement emerged to unite tribes resisting the confiscation of land by the English colonists.

We arrive in good time at the University of Waikato, which is located in the Eastern suburbs of Hamilton. It was established in 1964. Many of the academic blocks are from the 70s and have the look of utilitarian office blocks, but there are various newer buildings that have more architectural flair. It is a campus university with well planted grounds, which we catch sight of as we drive up to J-block, where there is visitor parking. After we find my host, Erica, Aroha leaves us but not before checking where the seminar will take place. It is due to start at 3.10 pm. Erica and I go for a take out coffee at a cafe nearby and have a short walk and a chat in a shady area of ferns before going to the seminar room. It is in fact a small lecture room with tiered seating. The audience is a bit sparse but, at the last moment, we are joined by Aroha and two of her contacts from the Faculty of Māori and Indigenous Studies.

My topic is the traditional place of women in Sami society and the changes that have taken place with modernisation. The powerpoint slides I brought on a USB drive worked without a technical hitch and I start with a map showing the distribution of the Sami population across northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and northwest Russia. The Sami languages, which are closely related to Finnish, are in decline but my topic is the changing role of women. In traditional Sami society, women had prestige based on their vital roles in making clothing and passing on cultural knowledge. According to one analysis, the introduction of Christianity was the primary cause of the increasingly subservient position of women, though I regard the causes as more complex. In question time, it is clear the audience includes representatives from various disciplines including Gender studies, Sociology and Anthropology. Moreover, some were knowledgeable about the Sami, which was a pleasant surprise. They tell me they had a Sami graduate student a few years previously.

After the seminar, there are drinks and snacks, though Aroha went off with her people. One or two graduate students talk to me and I try to make some helpful comments about their projects. Then, there is discussion about the best restaurant for the planned early dinner with a few staff members. The final choice is a Middle Eastern place in Hamilton East, a suburb not far from the University. Aroha is going to pick me up later and I will text her when I am ready. The people are very hospitable and make me feel I have joined a community of New Zealand scholars. Aroha picks me up promptly when I text her and we head back up to Tuakau.

“Thank you so much for arranging this, Aroha, and bringing me down here. It was so good to meet up with new colleagues.”

“You are very welcome. It gave me a good opportunity to link up with the Waikato whanau. I feel comfortable down here.”

We continue mostly in companionable silence on the trip back. The drive is easy as there isn't a lot of traffic. One thing Aroha tells me is that Hemi is setting off to spend the weekend with his father, Rāwiri, who lives in Māngere, another part of South Auckland. Aroha doesn't seem to want to talk too much about Rāwiri, though she does say, “He was a bit too staunch for me,” which I don't really understand. We skirt Ngāruawāhia this time and before long we are back in Tuakau.

Mikaere is in the house when we arrive and makes a point of asking me about the trip. It is strange seeing him back in this environment. He is being really sweet. When he retires to the garage, Aroha gives me a hug and thanks me for looking after him.

“Well he also looks after me,” I respond.

“I am sure he enjoys doing that,”

This time I sleep in Aroha’s office.

It is Sunday. After lunch, Mikaere, inspired by Hemi's example, decides to set off to see his own father, Piri, a carver of pounamu who lives nearby. I settle in to write up a few notes based on the feedback from my seminar at Waikato. There is a firm knock on the front door. I am not expecting anyone. I open the door and Zoltan and a thuggish looking guy push their way in. This time there is no mock politeness. They tie me to a chair but do not proceed immediately to their interrogation.

Zoltan finds a bottle of white wine in the fridge and also locates three wine glasses. They attempt to force wine down my throat, an attempt I respond to by gulping it thirstily. My throat is dry and I'd like to be a bit drunk for what is to happen.

"Why are you in Auckland, Inka?"

"To take up the role of Professor of Gender Studies at the University of South Auckland."

Slap across the face. "Who are you working for?"

"You mean, 'For whom are you working?' As I say, for the University of South Auckland."

Another slap. "Don't get cute with me, little Inka."

"Really, I'm just an academic, plain and simple."

"You are neither plain nor simple, little Inka. I think both of us may have some fun with you. Do you remember the fun you and I used to have?"

"You mean when you raped me."

Yet another slap. "Oh we can do better than that." The thug rips open my jacket and then my shirt and runs a knife gently down my neck.

"You're helping the police, aren't you? What have you told them?"

I need to give them something, but I don't have much to give. "Nothing they didn't already know. They knew we were connected even before you killed Sammy. I was an immediate suspect. But I had a good alibi. I was out of town."

The interrogation proceeds in circles. They get frustrated. The thug tries to loosen my tongue by placing the tip of his knife at the top of my left cheek and, ever so slowly, drawing it down making a long shallow cut. It doesn't hurt quite as much as I would have thought. I feel the blood

dripping from my chin. The purpose is probably disfigurement. “Stoy,” Zoltan says.

“If there is anything else I could tell you, I would. Really.”

Zoltan is angry, but maybe mostly with himself. I think he is beginning to believe me. At this point there is a loud rap on the front door. They ignore it. The hammering continues. Then a voice I don’t recognise says, “Inka, is my son in there?”

“Just a minute,” I shout out.

The thug slaps me so hard that I fall over, chair and all.

“What the hell is going on?” the voice asks.

Zoltan draws a gun and opens the door. A large middle aged Māori guy walks in. Zoltan points the gun at him and says, “Don’t say a word!”

The guy does not look intimidated in the slightest and says, “Put that thing away, you stupid fucker.”

“Your idiot son isn’t here,” is the best that Zoltan can come up with.

Then a voice from behind me says, “Yes, I am.” It sounds like Hemi, which is confirmed as he walks quietly forward into my field of vision. As attention is drawn to Hemi and to the guy who is clearly his father, Rāwiri, I feel someone cutting the ropes binding me. It is Mikaere. Zoltan notices what he is doing and Rāwiri takes that opportunity to try to grab Zoltan’s gun. But it goes off, shooting Rāwiri in the shoulder. The thug tells Zoltan, in Russian, that they should leave and they do.

Hemi phones for an ambulance. Mikaere helps me up and finds a clean tea towel for me to press against my face to stop the bleeding. I ask him to get my Hope Wilson phone from my bedside table. When I ring, she answers immediately and, before I have a chance to say anything, she says they are on their way. That is the literal truth for, in a minute or so, she is there in the living room with three armed officers. She is on her phone immediately, seeing if they can pick up Zoltan and the other thug. She is clearly angry that they have missed them. She also checks on how soon the ambulance will arrive. At this point Derek, Carolyn’s husband, arrives with a female plainclothes officer, Joanne, and Hope asks them to take me to Middlemore hospital. Mikaere asks if he can come with me but Hope says she wants him to stay.

Derek drives and Joanne sits in the back seat with me, checking on me while gently asking what happened. She reassures me that Middlemore hospital is not far and indeed we are soon there. Joanne comes in with me while Derek parks the car. Accident and Emergency is not too busy at

that time. Joanne helps me with registration and I think is able to fast track me through the system, so I am soon seen by a surgeon who turns out to be Sri Lankan. There is some debate as to whether I should be admitted overnight but it turns out that an operating theatre is free and also an anaesthetist and theatre nurse are available. He thinks he can sew me up and discharge me a bit later. Before I am prepped, Derek and Joanne tell me that they are going to leave me but they will arrange for someone to come to look after me later. I am given a sedative and a local anesthetic and, in fact, go to sleep, with nervous exhaustion I suppose.

Later, in the recovery area, Aroha and Mikaere arrive and admire my bandage and comment on the bruises coming up on both sides of my face. Aroha must have driven up from Tuakau. More time has passed than I realize. Mikaere is visibly upset but Aroha is calm and reassuring. I need to wait to be seen by the surgeon before being discharged. Aroha sends Mikaere to the Subway outlet in the Hospital for sandwiches for all of us. I can't eat mine just at the moment but it will be saved for later. The surgeon drops in for a minute, asks how I am feeling and tells me the kind of bandage I have stays on for seven to ten days and I will need to return to outpatients to have it removed and have the wound inspected. He says he has used internal stitches that will dissolve. He is optimistic that, while I will have a scar, it need not be disfiguring and further treatment is available to improve its appearance. Afterwards I get dressed, using a shirt that Aroha brought for me, and then they take me home. At home, Aroha stays for a while to see if I am comfortable. I slowly eat some of my sandwich in a one sided way, after Aroha carefully cut it up for me. A bit later, she goes to her sister's place and leaves me in Mikaere's kind hands.

As Derek and Joanne took Inka to the hospital, Hope Wilson found out how Rāwiri, Hemi and Mikaere came to be there. When Mikaere reached his father's place, he found that, uncharacteristically, he was not at home. On returning, Mikaere could see through the kitchen window Inka being tied to a chair. He called Hemi, whom he knew was not far away in Mangere. Immediately, Rāwiri and Hemi jumped on Rāwiri's Harley and, before very long, they pulled up in front of Inka's house. Mikaere was waiting outside for them. They decided that Rāwiri would make a lot of noise at the front, allowing Hemi and Mikaere to slip in quietly through the back door.

"Why didn't you call 111?" Hope Wilson asked Mikaere.

"I don't know. I suppose I just felt I could say to Hemi, 'Get over here!' without much explanation."

Hope also heard from all of them what happened after they arrived. Before long, the sound of the sirens indicated that the ambulance had arrived. Hope took the opportunity to show the identikit picture of Zoltan to Rāwiri. He seemed to confirm that that was the person who shot him but, in spite of his injury, he managed to get his phone out and take a photo of the picture to look at again. Hemi said he would go with Rāwiri in the ambulance. Hope said she would probably need to speak to all of them again another time. Hope and the other officers stayed

for a while with Mikaere, though he was so stressed he went to lie down on his bed. Hope phoned Derek and found out what was happening with Inka. He was able to call back with news a bit later. Hope talked to Mikaere to see who could pick up Inka, so he called Aroha and briefly told her what had been happening. She said she would set off immediately from Tuakau, pick him up and go to Middlemore. Hope arranged for Derek to come over and be with Mikaere until Aroha arrived.

Sunday night is rough. My cut is certainly sore. I can't sleep on my left side as I usually like to and I am restless. The horror of the day keeps playing back through my mind. At about 2 am I take some more pain relief but still I cannot settle. Now it is 6.50 am. I must have had a few hours sleep. I am not really rested but don't think I can get back to sleep. Mikaere is very sweet and makes me a cup of tea. He asks if I would like him to stay with me during the day. I instinctively say, "No, you should get to your course." He seems relieved. He tells me they do have an important piece of assessment today, though he could ask for a special exemption.

I have a meeting and a lecture today. Should I cancel? I am pondering that question when Aroha calls and insists that I cancel all obligations for today at least and stay at home. When she says that, I feel relieved, for I do feel drained even though the cut in itself isn't a major problem. I shouldn't have even thought of going in. I agree not to go in today, though I make no promises about later in the week. I get a call from Hope Wilson to say that they are watching my house. A quick look out the front shows a late model Holden with two guys in it parked across the road a few doors down.

After Mikaere leaves for his course I feel lonely and vulnerable. Then I get a call from my student Maria. She was told at the university that I was at home. Do I mind if she comes over to discuss her work? What is my address? I see, we need to be very discreet. I say I have been attacked, which she obviously knows already, and that I am a bit tired and shaken but I would like to see her and we could chat about her work a bit. All of what I say is true but I am conscious of saying it for an audience listening in.

Maria arrives soon after 11 am, carrying coffee and sushi for the two of us. She gives me a hug and takes that opportunity to whisper in my ear that they have left the bugs in. I respond to her hug and, for a while, she lets her face rest lightly on my neck. She asks how I am feeling and I say how pleased I am to see her. We have the coffee and sushi a little later. Afterwards I feel really tired and say I don't have the energy to discuss her work. She says I should lie down and try to sleep. She will slip out to the pharmacy to fill the prescriptions for the medicines I need and afterwards will work on her laptop. She is very calming and when I lie down on my bed I fall fast asleep immediately.

I wake up slowly and realize that two hours have passed. Maria must have heard me stir, for she comes into my bedroom and sits beside me on the bed, and gives my arm a squeeze. It is comforting having her there. I get up and we have a cup of tea. We do even have a little discussion about her project. It is clear that she is mainly here to support me. Towards the end of the afternoon she asks if it is OK if she leaves. I say it is fine and I even manage to see what I could put together for some dinner.

Mikaere gets home promptly and says I looked better. That is nice of him though that is not my

assessment when I look in the mirror at my black eyes and the way the flesh coloured bandage reveals a line of coagulated blood. He finishes off my half-hearted attempts at preparing some dinner and, while he is doing that, he talks about yesterday. He explains that when he came back he happened to look through the kitchen window into the living room and saw me being tied up. He immediately called Hemi and knew that Rāwiri wouldn't hesitate to come over too. "How is Rāwiri?" I ask.

"I think he is still in Middlemore hospital," Mikaere replied, "but Hemi would know more." He gives me Hemi's phone number and, after dinner, I call him.

I talk to Hemi about how Rāwiri put his body on the line for me. Hemi says the bullet damage was complex but they are going to operate tomorrow morning to remove the bullet from a tricky place in the shoulder and repair some damage.

"I would like to give him a present. What would he like?" I ask.

"Cash," Hemi promptly replies.

Hemi tells me his ward number and I say I will visit him in the afternoon. I can understand that he isn't the kind of guy who suits upmarket consumer items but Hemi's suggestion for a present leaves me with a problem. A particular kind of item suggests a range of prices but with cash you have to think of an amount. I think \$100 would be an insult. Here is someone who literally took a bullet for me. I haven't been spending much money so my account is in good shape. \$2,000 sounds like a decent sort of amount that could cover various kinds of expenses in recuperation. I plan to get the cash before going to see him in Middlemore.

On Tuesday morning, Mikaere covers up my bandage to make it look better and puts concealer makeup over my black eyes. I need another day off and cancel my only lecture and a small meeting. Mid-morning, I walk to my bank and successfully withdraw \$2,000. I choose one hundred dollar bills and twenty of them doesn't make too large a bundle. I buy a little box and some ribbon at a convenience store to make the cash look like a gift. After lunch I book an Uber and make my way to Middlemore Hospital. As I walk inside, memories of the events of Sunday flood my mind but I compose myself and ask at reception how to reach Rāwiri's ward.

I wonder if I will recognize him but, when I see him, there is no doubt. There are three big guys already visiting, all in black leather and with gang patches. I ask him if I should come back but he seems remarkably cheerful and pleased to see me. I am immediately offered the only visitor seat. I just say, "You took a bullet for me and I want to thank you."

"No worries. How's your cut?"

"Not too bad. How did your operation go?"

We talked a bit about the operation, which was long but successful. I hesitate to hand over my present in front of those guys and I wish the box weren't so banknote shaped but it can't be helped. "Here's a present. You can open it later." Soon afterwards, I say goodbye and leave them.

It is Wednesday morning and I just have one meeting scheduled for the day. Hope Wilson contacted me and said they would remove the bugs from my house, so I plan to attend the meeting while they do it. I assume she was just referring to the foreign bugs. They must have some of their own, for how else did they arrive so promptly after I called Hope on Sunday? I would have liked them to have arrived more promptly still but delays do happen, I suppose.

Mikaere has time before leaving for his course to again make my face look more presentable. Even so, I need to get my story straight when I get asked what happened. Hope urged me to be discreet, which I can understand. I have time before my meeting to visit the tea room, so I do that in order to practice my response. The effect of my injuries on the staff in the tea room is overwhelming. Foolishly, I had imagined people quietly asking me individually what had happened but I find myself with a whole group of staff clustered around me, concerned but highly curious. I feel my narrative is sparse. I talk of two men barging into my house and threatening me. I say the police have some leads but we can't talk about that at the moment. The phrase 'home invasion' is suggested to describe my ordeal. Apparently, in New Zealand law, various crimes involving violence can carry a higher penalty if accompanied by home invasion.

My meeting goes well, after expressions of concern and a brief summary of what had happened. I am fluent in my story by now. I return to my office and find Maria waiting for me. I say I had planned to return home soon but she suggests we can walk and talk. We talk over what happened in my ordeal, allowing me to add to what I told Joanne on the way to hospital. She checks that Mikaere had told me what he did after he returned. I confirm I hadn't met Rawiri before. We stop in at the Grounds of Enlightenment for a snack. It is pretty empty and we are able to carry on talking discreetly. She walks with me all the way home and only leaves when she is happy that I feel safe inside. I find I am exhausted and fall asleep on my bed.

On Thursday I do meet with my graduate class. While I hadn't prepared to the extent I normally do, I know what I want to cover and the whole class appears very sympathetic and supportive. Jason and Mathilda jointly play a useful role once more and the class works well enough. I leave the class pleased that I did it but also exhausted and in no mood to work. I amble in the general direction of home and run into McDuff. He expresses concern about me and tells me that what I need is a drink. He knows a bar that is reasonably close and we walk there slowly. His conversational skills provide me with a comforting cocoon. He doesn't interrogate me but somehow gets me to express how I felt at the time of the attack and how I am dealing with it now. He tells me how impressed my colleagues are by the way I have returned to work so soon.

At the bar he offers me a rusty nail, which I accept, though it is not a cocktail I really know. We both sip our rusty nails in relative silence and the warmth of the drink in the almost deserted bar is reassuring. I start to relax. A little later McDuff offers to walk me home but I say I will be fine

and he returns to catch up with someone back at work. As I am walking, I am surprised to get a call from Hemi. After checking to see how I am doing, he tells me Rāwiri had just been in touch to say that a friend had seen someone resembling Zoltan in level 7 of Auckland City Hospital. Rāwiri had previously circulated his photo of Zoltan's identikit image amongst some friends. I cut the call short and phone Hope Wilson. I can't get through to her in person so call Maria. She picks up immediately and says she will have it checked out.

I arrive home and lie down for a while. That evening Mikaere and I have a long talk. It is strange; it is as if I have known him for years. He tells me some of Rāwiri's back story. In his youth he had been a gang member, though had already left by the time he got together with Aroha. Aroha herself had experience with motorcycles, though did not associate with gangs. Mikaere says there are early photos of her in black leathers on the back of a Harley with Rāwiri and also on her own Triumph. For a while, Rāwiri became a campaigner against gangs, or at least against some of their illegal and violent activities. He settled into an uneasy accommodation with his former associates when he provided support for younger gang members who had got into trouble with the law. As his gang contemporaries got older he became more accepted and they kept in touch. The guys I saw by his bedside were some of them.

Mikaere oozes sympathy for what I have been through. "Thank you again for calling for help and being part of the rescue," I say. I don't want to say, "You were very brave," as it might sound as if bravery were more remarkable in his case than for the others. I try to turn the conversation onto him. While I have been caught up with my own troubles, his life of course has carried on. After some resistance, he does talk about himself. He admits he has become a bit disillusioned with his course, not because he can't do it or it isn't providing useful skills but because he finds his fellow students rather shallow, or at least that is my word for what he is saying about them. He has made a bold move to reinvent himself and now wonders whether he likes the new version.

"You have a choice as to whether to quit without completing the course or whether to finish it and then assess your options," I say wisely.

"Mum would growl at me if I quit this course after changing from IT."

"You are probably right, but you have to make the best choice for you. If you know exactly what you want to do now then it could be right to quit but, if not, then it might be best to complete the course, which would lead to work that would help you fund a course in another area." I don't know why I think I am in a position to offer this kind of advice. My career hasn't always been the result of careful planning.

Mikaere seems to like the idea of work in the beauty industry being a stepping stone to something different. Talking about Mikaere's life is the perfect distraction from my own problems.

On Friday, Maria sends me a photo of the man in Auckland City Hospital and follows it up with a phone call. I confirm that it is indeed Zoltan, as did Rāwiri, Hemi and Mikaere, she tells me. In the photo, Zoltan has both legs in plaster. She tells me that he had been badly beaten up.

The police wanted to find who it was who had seen him in hospital, but Rāwiri didn't seem to be able to help them. He said that he had sent his photo of Zoltan's identikit image to a number of his friends and asked them to pass it on to their friends to look out for him around town. "It was just luck that someone was in Middlemore and saw him."

Rāwiri said he didn't know who that was because his partner took a phone call on their landline from a guy who didn't leave his name.

"That's odd," I say to Maria. If those friends broke his legs that could be how they knew he was in hospital. But I keep my mouth shut.

"We think so too. Do you think Rāwiri arranged the beating?" A tough question here from Maria.

"Mikaere told me he was once a gang member, but that was a long time ago."

"Yes we know about that" Maria replied "and we think that his old associates wouldn't do that for him unless he paid them. But he doesn't have that sort of money."

There is a moment when I could explain that he did have some ready cash but I let that moment pass. I don't want to get Rāwiri into trouble after he saved me. Also, it could look as if I had bankrolled a hit. Maria says that they have formally arrested Zoltan on charges of assaulting me and Rāwiri. They aren't pursuing the attack on Zoltan, as nobody is talking. As to Sammy's death, while they have strong suspicions concerning Zoltan, they don't have sufficiently convincing eye-witness evidence or any forensics implicating him. They haven't been able to find his associate and believe he has left the country.

Life returns pretty much to normal and the end of the semester arrives. The curriculum review committee submitted its report but there is no immediate prospect of action. Aroha has been having discussions with the Vice-Chancellor but it is widely suspected that nothing will happen until the arrival of a new dean. Maria submits her research assignment on time, I mark it promptly as does the second marker. She receives an A, not too far off an A+ in my estimation. When the grades are released Maria contacts me, saying she is in town and suggests we meet up for a drink at a certain pub, which I don't know. I am keen, partly because she can fill me in on any further developments with the case. I have been out of touch with what was happening, not that I have asked. Mikaere seems to know the pub and drops me off on the back of the Lambretta, in wet weather. I ask if he would like to come in but he says, "No, it's not for boys."

Indeed, when I enter, I see nearly all the customers are women. It is clearly a gay bar.

Maria is already there sitting up at the bar against the back wall and waving at me. I slide onto the stool next to her and she greets me with a kiss on the lips. This is a date. I am a little surprised by this development but maybe shouldn't be. Maria is looking good, dressed up more than usual: tight fitting designer jeans, dark top and light linen jacket. She is drinking a vodka tonic and orders one for me too. I steer the conversation to familiar territory, expressing surprise and pleasure that she worked so diligently and effectively on her directed study project in the circumstances. She then tells me she has a PhD in criminology.

"That wasn't on your academic record!" I exclaim.

"No. That record was carefully drafted to look right and a PhD would have looked all wrong."

I want to move on to talk about Zoltan and Sammy but feel inhibited by bar staff moving near us from time to time and other customers occasionally moving behind us. Maria directs my attention to the pub and the other customers and asks how I like it. In fact, I do feel comfortable here. We have a second drink and Maria gets a little more flirty. After a while she suggests we can talk better in her hotel room, which is close by. We hurry through some light rain whipped up by wind. I am better prepared for wet weather than she is. Her hotel room is warm and comfortable. I remove my rain jacket and take the only easy chair in the room. Maria takes off her light jacket, which is quite damp. Her sleeveless top reveals her beautiful shoulders, which remind me of Moana's.

For a while, Maria reverts to her professional persona and brings me up to date. Zoltan has been exchanged in a spy swap with the Russian Federation, which was a useful outcome. There is no-one else they are interested in for Sammy's murder. The current theory is that Sammy worked for the Chinese but what specifically prompted the Russians to go to the lengths of murdering him on New Zealand soil remains a mystery. His death is no longer a priority.

After we have talked through these matters, Maria goes into the bathroom and turns on the extractor fan. She beckons me over and puts her finger momentarily to her lips. She draws me to her, her hand gently in the small of her back and whispers in my ear, "The place is bugged. I am supposed to seduce you and recruit you. I'm keen on the first part. Please go along with it."

I go and sit on the bed. Then Maria comes and sits next to me and tells me how much she has enjoyed the directed study aspect of the relationship. "I've enjoyed working with you," I say. I then just lean back on the bed, as if tired. Maria needs no more encouragement. She lays her hand lightly on my belly and lets it drift downwards. "Does that feel good?" she asks.

Dumb question. Oh, of course, it's for the listeners. "Mmm." This may be difficult, playing to the microphones. A few minutes later, I forget about the microphones.