



GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture

Anthology of Recommended SHORT STORIES



**VOLUME TWO
ENGLISH SHORT STORIES
YEARS 9 - 12**

Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture



Malifa, APIA

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Curriculum Design and Materials Division

TATES (The Association of Teachers of English in Samoa)

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Statement by the Chief Executive Officer



This document is specifically developed to support teaching and learning of English for Year 9 – Year 13 students. In 2021, the Ministry implemented a new Four-Year Secondary Level, and introducing two streams of English namely, **English** and **Communication English** to support learning pathways for all secondary students. All recommended texts compiled in this document intends to support the newly developed two streams of English Curriculums for the Four-Year Secondary Level.

All short stories collected in this anthology are works by renowned International and Pacific including local writers whose works have been highly recommended by English teachers in Samoa. The Ministry provides a collection of these writings, as a guide for secondary teachers in teaching the different genres as part of the English curriculum. Much of the themes shared across the writings of these authors are contextually relevant to the environment of our Samoan students who are mostly second language speakers of English.

The role of teachers in extending and expanding upon these texts with higher level order questions and conversations is important.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Afamasaga-Fuata'i', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Afamasaga Dr. Karoline Afamasaga-Fuata'i

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ministry would like to express a special thanks to all the authors whose works have been extracted from the Ministry's English textbooks and other sources acknowledged in the references to be published in this document. Your texts have been highly recommended by secondary teachers and we believe they are of great importance in the study of literature for our young generations.

Once again, we would like to acknowledge the assistance of The Association of Teachers of English in Samoa (TATES) in recommending short stories and providing copies to be included in the document.

Last but not the least, I acknowledge the help and support of the Curriculum Division Literacy team for the continuous work in developing these resources to provide assistance for our secondary teachers in Samoa.

Thank you!

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Introduction

The Anthology of Recommended Texts – Short Stories is a document that contains a range of short stories that have been listed in the Recommended Texts for the 4 Year Secondary Level Curriculum 2021.

The main goal for this document is to ensure all English teachers and learners in Samoa have access to resources to support teaching and learning.

This document is to be published and distributed at no cost to all schools to ensure sustainability and availability of resources in the secondary schools especially for the teaching of literature.

The texts in this document were extracted mainly from the English Textbooks Year 9 to Year 13. Some of the documents were extracted from existing textbooks, online as well as through the assistance of TATES.

The texts have been reshuffled from the previous list of recommended texts to ensure each level has a range of texts to choose from and to ensure that there is no repetition throughout the levels. All short stories in this document have been listed in the recommended texts for the Four-Year Secondary Level English and Communication English Curriculums.

Year 9 – Short stories

Telesa by Cherie Barford¹

Telesa is a presence. She was a mortal who was taken by immortals and made eternal. She's found in Sāmoa, especially along the road to Aleisa. That's where my grandfather saw her. He was inspecting a copra plantation when she appeared at the side of the road, sitting on a rock, combing her hair. She has beautiful hair. It's as black as the lava that shines razor-sharp along Savai'i's coast. Opa noticed that her body was oiled. It glistened in the heat. 'What do you want?' he asked. Telesa smiled. Her mouth split open like a ripe mango, the skin peeling back from the flesh. 'Leave me alone!' he shouted as Telesa walked towards him. Then his horse bolted, running through the plantation, jumping piles of copra drying in the sun.

I have also seen Telesa. It was when my cousin lay dying in my grandmother's house. Siene was weak from fever. Her lips were cracked, her eyes closed. It was Sunday and the family was together for the day. The men were outside preparing the umu. The women sat around Siene. Children ran in and out of the house. 'What shall we do?' I asked my grandmother. 'We've prayed, fasted, chanted, sung hymns, massaged Siene and given her medicine from the hospital.' 'What will be will be,' Oma replied. She sat with Siene's head on her lap, stroking the matted curls covering her knees. 'She has such beautiful hair,' said Oma. Outside, the men laughed as they covered the umu. They'd wrapped the chickens, taro and bananas in tinfoil instead of taro leaves. We could hear them exclaiming at the silver parcels. 'What a palagi umu!' said Tavita. 'A real Kiwi job,' Siene agreed. 'Next thing, we'll be using newspaper instead of leaves to cover it!' The

women laughed. Some of them had seen the family in New Zealand make an umu without any leaves at all!

We were still laughing when Telesa appeared. It was frightening. She looked so angry. Everyone stood still. The children whimpered and clung to their mothers. 'Well,' said Oma, smiling at Telesa. 'I know what you want.' She leaned over Siene, reached into her handbag and drew out a cloth parcel. It unrolled to reveal her barber's scissors. They were shiny and sharp. One of her prized possessions. 'Telesa,' she scolded, snipping Siene's hair. Short, metallic snips around the fevered crown. 'You have your own beauty. Don't envy this poor girl.' She held up an armful of black waves. 'Take this. Leave the girl alone!' Telesa nodded. Took the hair. Disappeared. Then Siene opened her eyes and smiled.

It's Not That Easy by Penehuro Hauma²

'Shoot! Shoot!' he shouted to the Red team's centre-forward, his voice ringing above the shouting of the match's near-to-capacity crowd. The ball was finally snatched away from the attackers with cat-like speed by the White team's defence.

The self-proclaimed soccer star was on the sideline, he had arrived from the city two days before. He was born in the village of Tautau but had lived most of the time in the city, attending school there. However, every holiday he came home to his family; and it was during one of these holidays that this match occurred.

Sau was the name of this youth. His favourite team was the one in red; he used to go round with the boys of

¹ English Year 10 Book 2, p.9, 2004

² English Year 10 Book 2, p.13, 2004

that particular team and he knew the captain and most of the players well.

‘Jesus! What a waste of ball!’ he muttered when a shot from a Red player just missed the White’s goal. Somewhere to his left there were some girls whom he fancied. Even though he was well known for his boasting about his skills, the presence of the girls had made him open up even further.

A player from the Red team, attempting to tackle a White player, over-stretched his ordinary shorts, busted them, and, to the spectators’ delight, revealed that he was wearing nothing underneath. Despite his attempt to cover his precious organs quickly, their momentary but clear exposure was enough to make the spectators roar with laughter.

It was obvious that the player had to get another pair of shorts if he was to continue. A replacement had to be found quickly while he went looking for another pair. The only one available with shorts on was Sau. The Red captain waved for him to take the field. Everyone (spectators and players) clapped as Sau jumped about to warm himself up (one of the routines he had seen soccer players in the city going through).

Sau in fact had never played soccer before, not even at school. He was, however, a keen fan of the game. Every Saturday he went to the park to watch the matches there. From this, Sau thought that he had learned enough techniques.

He had often thought of himself as Bobby Charlton, one of the English stars of the ’60s.

He had lied to his friends in the village that he was a regular secondary schools’ representative. The young spectators were eager to see their self-proclaimed

soccer star in action. The girls in the crowd giggled loudly to attract his attention.

‘Come on Sau, put that red singlet on and choose any position!’ the captain called.

Sau was so excited. ‘I’ll start off with the centre-forward position,’ he told himself.

The ref signalled the kick-off. Sau positioned himself quickly at centreforward between the insides, felt the ball with his left foot, turned around and passed it to the centre-half. The ref’s whistle brought the ball back to the centre, and the ref told Sau to push the ball beyond the line before passing it back to any of his team mates.

‘Come on Sau!’ the girls shouted: they thought the ref did not know what he was doing. (Fancy penalising someone who was a regular player in the city!) Anyway, the ball was given to the White team. Before the ref blew his whistle again, Sau was in the circle charging the ball. He was penalised again.

A spectator said something funny about Sau and the spectators roared with laughter. Sau was breaking some of the simplest rules of the game. Realising what was happening, the Red captain moved Sau to the left wing, bringing the winger to the centre.

In a lightning movement, the Red goalie dived for a superb save. He threw the ball to the captain at fullback, who dribbled the ball at top speed, beating two players before unloading to the centre-half; the centre-half drew four backs and slipped the ball to the right winger who took it over to the far right; the left fullback chased him, leaving only the right fullback to mark the other four forwards; the winger zoomed around the left fullback and then lobbed the ball to the centreforward who chested it down neatly and held it

long enough to attract the right fullback. Sau found himself in front of the goal mouth. He shouted for the ball. It came rolling beautifully from the centreforward.

‘Go! Go! Sau, go!’ the air was filled with girls shouting.

The spectators were on their feet now. The cheering suddenly stopped. Silence. Then followed by Boooooo! To his disappointment, Sau saw the ball going far and wide and he was standing only six yards from the goal mouth.

Time and time again he spoiled the beautiful moves of his team. He was moved from one position to another. At half time he was placed at left-half. The opposing team found it a good place for initiating their moves. Whenever Sau got the ball, he couldn’t pass it away quickly enough before his opposite snatched it away from him. If he did manage to pass, it was either too short or to a member of the White team. Whenever he was charged by a bigger player, he backed down.

To save himself from further humiliation, Sau pretended that he had sprained his ankle. The captain and the team were so relieved when another substitute came on.

On the sideline, Sau found all the people looking at him. He felt so small. When they stopped looking, he sneaked away to his home.

Thereafter, he never talked about soccer to anybody, though he still went to see it played.

Travels With My Pig by Emma Kruse Va’ai³

‘Go have a shower and put on a clean shirt and lavalava. You’re going to town.’ Yippee! I thought. ‘You’re taking a pig for Aunty Mina.’ ‘What for?’ ‘Eseta is getting married on Saturday. Now just hurry up and don’t ask questions.’ ‘Eseta. Isa! She’s a snob!’ I said under my breath. She called us her ‘village cousins’ and looked down on us just because she lived in town. I could just hear her whining when I arrive. ‘Mama! Pito is here from the back.’ I hated that.

The bus rolled up and I stuck out my arm. There was a clanging and a big puff of black smoke. The superkako jumped out. ‘Hey boy, watcha got in the sack?’ The sack moved and the pig’s snout jutted out of the corner. ‘Oi! Big fa’alavelave, eh?’ ‘Yeah. My mother’s sister’s daughter is getting married on Saturday.’ ‘OK son, grab the other end of your sack.’ We staggered to the back of the bus and unbolted the small door which opened out like a drawbridge. ‘Eeeeeeyea — hep!’ We swung the sack up on to the drawbridge, pushed the pig’s bottom halfway under the back seat, then made sure its snout was poking out of the hole in the corner of the sack. ‘Better sit on the back seat, otherwise your friend might go trotting off with someone else,’ said the superkako.

The driver shifted into first gear. The bus rattled, the pig grunted, and away we went. I moved my foot back under the seat just to make sure my pig was there, then I folded my arms and waited for the superkako to turn on the tape recorder. I felt good about catching this bus. It had nice music and they played it very loudly. The windscreen was framed with silver tinsel and on the dashboard was a little hula girl which danced about when the bus thumped into potholes. As more people

³ English Year 10 Book 2, p.16, 2004

got on the bus, pretty soon my pig was well cushioned on all sides with sacks of taro and baskets of bananas. I was cushioned, too, by two large ladies. One was carrying a fierce-looking rooster. Its legs were tied, but its beak was uncomfortably close to my arm. The other lady fell asleep almost as soon as she sat down, and even the loud music couldn't drown out her awful wheezy breathing.

Tooting horns, screeching tyres and noisy people met us at the market. 'The pancakes smell nice,' said an old man sitting in front of me. 'Yes. Let's go have a cup of cocoa and some pancakes before we do our shopping,' said his wife. I wish I could join you, I said to myself. 'Hey boy! Wake up! Your pig!' Yelled the superkako from outside. 'Oi man!' I cried. 'That's a pig, not a sack of taro!' Too late. The pig just came tumbling out like everything else. It squealed furiously in the sack. 'Pito!' Oh please let it be me, I prayed. 'Pito! Over here!' It was my cousin Tala in his taxi on the other side of the road. 'Hurry up, it's busy!' he yelled. I grabbed the sack and hoisted it on to my left shoulder, but it was so heavy, it made me stand lopsided. The squealing was getting louder and louder. I felt so ashamed with everyone looking and laughing at me. I tried to look amused, too, but all I managed was a stupid smile on my face. I struggled across the road as the pig boxed my ears through the sack. Two arms against four legs was not an even match. I dropped him into the boot and slammed the lid down but it sprang up again. 'Easy, Pito! It doesn't close. Besides, that pig needs air, too.'

I slumped into the front seat. 'Oka! I hate bringing pigs to town.' 'I know,' said Tala, 'I used to do it when I was your age, too.' We swerved into Aunty Mina's yard. The dogs started barking. Eseta was sweeping the front verandah. She looked at me, turned around,

and called into the house, 'Mama! Pito is here from out the back. He's got a pig.' Aunty Mina came out. 'Malo, Pito! How is your mother and the rest of your family?' 'Very well, thank you. She said to bring the pig and come back on the afternoon bus.' 'Well, you'd better go back with Tala to the market in case you miss it. Tell your mother thank you, and to try and come on Friday night.' 'OK.' 'And here. Take this for your bus fare and some pancakes to eat on the bus, since you can't stay for lunch.' She unfolded one corner of her lavalava from her side and untied a knot. My heart leapt. A two tala note wrapped around a twenty sene coin! 'Thanks very much! Bye Mina. Bye Eseta.' But Eseta just raised her eyebrows and gave a weak wave. Snob, I thought. I hope your wedding taxi gets a flat tyre in front of the market when you come back from church. I took a last look at my pig as I slammed the car door. It lay there at Aunty Mina's feet. The hole in the corner was bigger now, and its eyes peered sadly at me. I started to feel sad, too.

I turned to Tala and whispered, 'Drop me off at the picture theatre?' Tala grinned. 'No trouble, Mr Millionaire. Want to take your pig to the movies, too?' 'Nah,' I said. 'He came to a wedding, not to the pictures.' We chugged out of Aunty Mina's yard, and when I looked back, I couldn't see my pig because the lid of the boot was bobbing up and down.

A Day Of Weeping by Benjamin Nicholls⁴

Teiva sat astride his horse, his legs slung over bags of vegetables, firewood and coconuts. As he rode down the valley he felt Aorangi's muscles working against him. He had been grazing all day gathering energy from the grass he ate while Teiva was tired after having worked all day in his garden. He squinted as the rays of the setting sun hit his face, as if in a final goodbye before it slid into the horizon beyond.

Teiva had worked by himself all day in his plantation. He had half expected his father to turn up to help him but his father was not like other villagers. He did not like to get his hands dirty working in the garden. Teiva refocused his thoughts away from unpleasant things like his father's drinking habits to something like a nice dish of fried fish, taro and coconut sauce. Aorangi responded to the slight squeeze on his side asking him to go faster. He began to trot a little faster towards their house. As they came near it Teiva saw a number of people standing outside.

'What's going on?' he asked his younger brother who had run up to him.

'It's Papa. He's drunk again. He's beaten Mama.'

'Where is he?'

'Gone out again.'

'Moana, get all this food inside,' said Teiva, as he tied the horse to a tree branch.

He walked towards the cook-house. Plates, cups, pots and pans were strewn on the wooden floor. His mother was crying softly.

'Peea? How are you?' he said, even though he could see how she was. She had blood all over her face. Two women were wiping her face and consoling her.

'Aue e Teiva e,' she answered. 'E vinivini tikai teia tu – oh, Teiva this way of life is frightening. He's a cruel man. You have to do something about him Teiva.'

'No, Mama. You have to do something about it, not me. I've asked you many times to leave him. You won't. Only you can help us Mama. Papa has grown more daring because you just let him get away with it. Please — we must get out of here.'

'Go where, Teiva,' she asked desperately. 'I don't belong here. I'm from another island. Go where?'

'Anywhere Mama. Away, and so far from this place that he won't dare come near us.'

'I don't know Teiva, I've lived with your father for sixteen years. I've come to depend upon him — I depend on his — dominance. Please help me see it through Teiva,' she pleaded. 'You are the man of the house.'

'I'll try Mama,' he said, though unsure how he, a sixteen year old, could do anything to combat his father's cruelty. He remembered the scars his ten year old brother, Moana, still carried from the beatings he had received from his father, but it was his mother who carried the worst scars on her face as if they were inflicted at a time of mourning. He knew that something had to be done. He was not sure what he had to do — yet. He also agreed that his mother, having come from a distant island where all her relatives were, was in no position to do anything about getting away. They did not have the money to do

⁴ English Year 9 Book 1, p.49, 2004

anything about getting away. They did not have the money to pay for a boat ticket. And there were three of them.

Teiva remembered that his horse was still tied to the breadfruit tree outside. Moana had unloaded the taro and coconuts he had brought down from the plantation. Aorangi seemed to sense his presence in the dark and did not shy away. Teiva spoke to him quietly, confidently and patted him. He then fetched Aorangi a bucket of water. The darkness helped him hide his helplessness and remorse over his father's treatment of his mother.

His thoughts were interrupted by renewed disturbance from the cookhouse. He left the horse and ran back to it. There he found the Reverend Tiomi trying to restrain his father, Terekino, who had come back and was trying to hit his mother again. Blood was oozing from the Reverend Tiomi's face.

'Calm down Terekino,' he was saying. 'You have caused enough trouble to a lot of people. You want to kill someone?'

'Shut up Reverend,' shouted Teiva's father. 'You are not welcome in my house.' It was obvious that he was pretending to be brave. Assaulting a man of God is not the thing to do. He knew that just as everyone else in the place knew for sure.

'The policeman is coming,' someone called out. 'Tepaki is here.'

Tepaki, the local constable, was feared by everyone. He was also Terekino's uncle. They did not like each other. Past experiences also told Terekino that he had better move out of the scene. Before anyone could move to meet Constable Tepaki, Terekino got up and

with a flying leap disappeared through the open window of the cookhouse.

'Where's Constable Tepaki?' asked the Reverend Tiomi.

'He was never summoned,' answered old man Paipoi. 'I called the constable's name. I know that Terekino is afraid of him. It worked. How are you Reverend?'

'Just a swollen lip. It'll be fine.' He turned and saw Teiva.

'Why don't you get some blankets and you and your family come and sleep at my place tonight,' he said.

The invitation was a relief for Teiva. He knew that the drama would carry on in the night when his father returned. The matter was not going to be resolved by others. His mother was the key figure in solving the problem. The Reverend Tiomi could only offer them shelter for a short time. Then when they went home the whole thing would start up again.

Teiva did not know what time it was when the silence of the night was disturbed by a far away voice, a plea for help. The repeated plea alerted him. He listened hard and there it was again, coming from his home. He stood up and crept slowly out of the room so he would not disturb his mother and brother.

It was very dark outside. Soon he had acquired his vision and headed for home. He saw some light under the breadfruit tree. Three or four people were standing there. As he came closer he heard a low moan coming from the ground. Tere was holding up a lamp. Lying on the ground, moaning and being attended to by some people, was Terekino, his father.

'What's going on?'

‘It’s Aorangi. He kicked Papa,’ answered Tere.

‘Serves him right,’ said Teiva. ‘I wish him dead.’ And he walked back to the Reverend Tiomi’s house.

His mother was standing in the doorway. She had heard the commotion. She wanted to know where Teiva had been.

‘I thought you were asleep,’ he said.

‘I asked you a question,’ she answered.

‘It’s only Papa. Aorangi has kicked him.’

‘Is he all right?’ asked his mother, with rising concern.

‘Who cares. Looks like he has broken ribs.’

‘Don’t talk like that,’ retorted his mother. ‘He is your father.’

Teiva tried to apologise. He couldn’t. He was lost for words to understand his mother’s concern for his father. The abused wife had suddenly become the compassionate one. He lay down and had no trouble going back to sleep.

‘Papa has broken ribs and a swollen face,’ his brother Moana confirmed the next morning. ‘The doctor is not sure if he also has punctured lungs. He’s keeping Papa in hospital for observation. Aorangi has sure fixed him.’

‘Not good enough,’ said Teiva.

‘You sure hold a grudge against Papa.’

‘He’ll get mended and then come out and do it all over again,’ answered Teiva. ‘I know what it is like to suffer under that man. For as long as I live I’ll hold him responsible for my failures at school.’

The days that followed were quiet in the home. It was pleasingly peaceful so long as their father was not around. But their mother was too quiet. Teiva assumed that she had fallen under his father’s spell yet again.

Terekino was in hospital for two weeks and Teiva dreaded the day when he was to be discharged.

It was boat day. The motor vessel which took passengers and cargo to the outer islands was anchored off the reef.

‘I have three tickets for the boat. We are leaving tonight,’ Teiva’s mother announced.

‘What about Papa?’

‘We won’t tell him. I borrowed some money from Constable Tepaki. I’ll pay him back. You were right when you asked what’s keeping us here with this madman. It is time for us to go.’

‘What about my horse?’

‘I sold him to Constable Tepaki as part-payment for our fare. I reckon Aorangi will be safer with Tepaki than with your father. He’ll only seek revenge against him for kicking him in the dark.’

Teiva’s mother packed the goods they were taking with them to her home island. Soon the passengers were being ferried out to the ship. But in his hospital bed Terekino lay smoking. He was not supposed to smoke but he was a stubborn man. He refused to listen to the nurses who asked him to stop smoking. His thoughts were occupied with revenge against Aorangi, the horse that made him suffer. He vowed that he would make that horse pay for his misdeeds. He planned to kill him. Suddenly he heard a voice calling him. He recognised it. It was Paniora.

‘Terekino, Terekino,’ called Paniora. ‘Your wife and kids. They have gone — on the last boat out to the ship. They are leaving you.’

Terekino was shocked. His brain was in turmoil. Did he hear correctly? He started to get out of bed. He fell to the floor. The impact caused a lot of pain to his body, and even worse than the hurt to his body were the messages he was getting in his brain. The towel that he had wrapped around his waist dropped to the floor. He stood there naked as the other patients giggled at his foolishness. Some even laughed loudly. He felt very stupid. He bent down, picked up the towel and wrapping it around himself he began to hobble out of the hospital. There were no nurses around to stop him.

There were many spectators at the wharf. The Reverend Tiomi and Constable Tepaki were there waving to the passengers on the last boat. And they were congratulating themselves on having solved the problem of the Terekino family. Suddenly a loud piercing cry rent the air. Looking round they saw Terekino running towards the wharf, his left hand holding onto the towel around his waist as he tried to wave to his family to come back.

‘Moe, Moe, come back — Teiva, Moana — come back,’ he pleaded. Spectators turned round to look at him. To Terekino it seemed that the spectators suddenly threw a cordon around him, blocking his view of his departing family. His strength left him. He fell to the ground, gibbering and weeping in the coral dust. His wife Moe, his sons Teiva and Moana were free — at last.

Appointment in Samarra by William Somerset Maugham⁵

There was a merchant in Baghdad who sent his servants to market to buy provisions, and in a little while the servant came back, white and trembling, and said, “Master, just now when I was in the market-place I was jostled by a woman in the crowd and when I turned I saw it was Death that jostled me. She looked at me and made a threatening gesture; now, lend me your horse, and I will ride away from this city and avoid my fate. I will go to Samarra and there Death will not find me.” The merchant lent him his horse, and the servant mounted it, and he dug his spurs in its flanks and as fast as the horse could gallop he went. Then the merchant went down to the market-place and he saw Death standing in the crowd and he came to Death and said, “Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant when you saw him this morning?” “That was not a threatening gesture,” Death said. “It was only a start of surprise. I was astonished to see him in Baghdad, for I had an appointment with him tonight in Samarra.”

Smoke Screen by Michael Easter⁶

He sauntered across the school playground in an effort not to draw attention to himself. When he reached the main gates, he looked left, looked right. No one was watching him. He scurried through the gateway and along the fence line until he reached a small clump of trees where he could safely hide. Crouching down, he reached for his cigarettes and quickly lit one.

⁵mrwhiteman3.weebly.com/uploads

⁶ English Year 12, p.27, 2004

With the first puff he felt more relaxed, though he was still fearful of being seen. The school rules about smoking were so very strict. He had already been caught once and given a warning. If they caught him again he was for the high jump. Out.

He finished his cigarette. Now came the tricky bit, getting back into the school grounds. He sidled towards the gateway, peered carefully through. No one was looking in his direction. He slid through into the playground, nonchalantly strolled towards the school entrance. Just then the bell for the end of morning break sounded. Perfect timing. All he needed to do now was wander along to the schoolroom, sit down behind his desk and start teaching his next class of boys.

The Hat by Judy Parker⁷

The priest looked up from the psalms on the lecturn, cast his eyes over the hats bowed before him. Feathered, frilled, felt hats in rows like faces. One at the end of the row different. A head without hat. A cat without fur. A bird without wings. Won't fly far. Voices dance in song with the colours of the windows. Red light played along the aisle, blue over the white corsage of Mme Dewsbury, green on the pages of the Bible. Reflecting on the face of the priest.

He spoke to the young lady afterwards.

'You must wear a hat and gloves in the House of God. It is not seemly otherwise.'

The lady flushed, raised her chin, strode out.

'That's the last we'll see of her,' said the organist.

The organ rang out, the priest raised his eyes to the rose window. He did not see the woman in hat and gloves advancing down the aisle as though she were a bride. The hat, enormous, such as one might wear to the races. Gloves, black lace, such as one might wear to meet a duchess. Shoes, high-heeled, such as one might wear on a catwalk in Paris. And nothing else.

After Twenty Years by O. Henry⁸

THE COP MOVED ALONG THE STREET, LOOKING strong and important. This was the way he always moved. He was not thinking of how he looked. There were few people on the street to see him. It was only about ten at night, but it was cold. And there was a wind with a little rain in it. He stopped at doors as he walked along, trying each door to be sure that it was closed for the night. Now and then he turned and looked up and down the street. He was a fine-looking cop, watchful, guarding the peace. People in this part of the city went home early. Now and then you might see the lights of a shop or of a small restaurant. But most of the doors belonged to business places that had been closed hours ago.

Then the cop suddenly slowed his walk. Near the door of a darkened shop a man was standing. As the cop walked toward him, the man spoke quickly. "It's all right, officer," he said. "I'm waiting for a friend. Twenty years ago we agreed to meet here tonight. It sounds strange to you, doesn't it? I'll explain if you want to be sure that everything's all right. About twenty years ago there was a restaurant where this

⁷ English Year 11 Book 1, p.25, 2003

⁸americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/after-twenty-years.pdf

shop stands. 'Big Joe' Brady's restaurant." "It was here until five years ago," said the cop. The man near the door had a colorless square face with bright eyes, and a little white mark near his right eye. He had a large jewel in his necktie. "Twenty years ago tonight," said the man, "I had dinner here with Jimmy Wells. He was my best friend and the best fellow in the world. He and I grew up together here in New York, like two brothers. I was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning I was to start for the West. I was going to find a job and make a great success. You couldn't have pulled Jimmy out of New York. He thought it was the only place on earth. "We agreed that night that we would meet here again in twenty years. We thought that in twenty years we would know what kind of men we were, and what future waited for us." "It sounds interesting," said the cop. "A long time between meetings, it seems to me. Have you heard from your friend since you went West?" "Yes, for a time we did write to each other," said the man. "But after a year or two, we stopped. The West is big. I moved around everywhere, and I moved quickly. But I know that Jimmy will meet me here if he can. He was as true as any man in the world. He'll never forget. I came a thousand miles to stand here tonight. But I'll be glad about that, if my old friend comes too." The waiting man took out a fine watch, covered with small jewels. "Three minutes before ten," he said. "It was ten that night when we said goodbye here at the restaurant door."

"You were successful in the West, weren't you?" asked the cop. "I surely was! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a slow mover. I've had to fight for my success. In New York a man doesn't change much. In the West you learn how to fight for what you get." The cop took a step or two. "I'll go on my way," he said. "I hope your friend comes all right. If he isn't

here at ten, are you going to leave?" "I am not!" said the other. "I'll wait half an hour, at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth, he'll be here by that time. Good night, officer." "Good night," said the cop, and walked away, trying doors as he went. There was now a cold rain falling and the wind was stronger. The few people walking along that street were hurrying, trying to keep warm. And at the door of the shop stood the man who had come a thousand miles to meet a friend. Such a meeting could not be certain. But he waited. About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long coat came hurrying across the street. He went directly to the waiting man. "Is that you, Bob?" he asked, doubtfully. "Is that you, Jimmy Wells?" cried the man at the door. The new man took the other man's hands in his. "It's Bob! It surely is. I was certain I would find you here if you were still alive. Twenty years is a long time. The old restaurant is gone, Bob. I wish it were here, so that we could have another dinner in it. Has the West been good to you?" "It gave me everything I asked for. You've changed, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall." "Oh, I grew a little after I was twenty." "Are you doing well in New York, Jimmy?" "Well enough. I work for the city. Come on, Bob, We'll go to a place I know, and have a good long talk about old times." The two men started along the street, arm in arm. The man from the West was beginning to tell the story of his life. The other, with his coat up to his ears, listened with interest. At the corner stood a shop bright with electric lights. When they came near, each turned to look at the other's face. The man from the West stopped suddenly and pulled his arm away. "You're not Jimmy Wells," he said. "Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change the shape of a man's nose." "It sometimes changes a good man into a bad one," said the tall man. "You've been under arrest for ten minutes, Bob. Chicago cops thought you

might be coming to New York. They told us to watch for you. Are you coming with me quietly? That's wise. But first here is something I was asked to give you. You may read it here at the window. It's from a cop named Wells." The man from the West opened the little piece of paper. His hand began to shake a little as he read. "Bob: I was at the place on time. I saw the face of the man wanted by Chicago cops. I didn't want to arrest you myself. So I went and got another cop and sent him to do the job. JIMMY."

Year 10 – Short stories

Ma'a by Sara Vui-Talitu⁹

Did I ever tell you about Ma'a? My pretty young Polynesian neighbour lived in her small South Auckland state house across the street. Ma'a always left in a hurry every weekday morning to catch the bus to university. I learned she was studying for her PhD in psychology. That is, until her father came.

I only saw her father three times. The first time, she brought him home from the airport complete with his eight suitcases and five boxes. Aged in his fifties with white hair that gleamed in the sunshine, he had a well worn look about him. His huge belly made him walk infinitely slowly and the short walk up three stairs left him gasping for air. He staggered slowly indoors as Ma'a unloaded all his luggage into the garage except for one suitcase. 'Ma'a!' I heard him shout in a gruff, stern, commanding voice. She hurried inside and I soon heard the sound of dishes being hastily washed. The next day she left for university as usual and returned late in the evening. This continued and the weeks turned to months.

The second time I saw him he was sitting on the porch one day, coughing and sneezing. He took out a cigarette and started to smoke, a can of beer in his other hand. He noticed me staring at him and, before going back inside, threw the can at me. That was ages ago now.

I wondered if he was still alive and breathing. Perhaps he was on the run from Polynesian gangs, or perhaps he was just tired from old age and needed rest. Maybe he was sick and Ma'a was using traditional methods of healing the sick to treat him. Perhaps he did come out whenever I was away from home.

The other day I saw him again. Ma'a had left for university as usual. I peered out and tried to look through the window. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a police car pull up outside her house. I figured they were making routine checks on houses for any overstayers. Two uniformed police officers emerged, walked up the driveway and knocked on Ma'a's house door. No answer. They walked right round the house and looked through each window to see if there were signs of life inside. Apparently satisfied, they left, but returned later that evening.

Ma'a answered the door. Loud voices filled the air, screaming and shouting. Things were being thrown about, there was the sound of breaking glass coming from inside. The police emerged empty-handed. Ma'a was shouting, seemingly in forked tongues, and making rude gestures. I had never seen her so angry.

The next day her father emerged, looking older and frailer than I remembered. He seemed resigned to letting the men in blue take him away, as if he had been expecting them.

Ma'a moved immediately after the funeral, and never completed her studies. Last I heard, she was living on the city streets. Could easily have been me.

The Tissue Seller by Kapka Kassabova¹⁰

He had green eyes and Bollywood looks. But he was not in Bollywood — he was a tissue-seller at the fifth traffic-lights on a busy Bombay road. He balanced a vertiginous stack of cardboard tissue-boxes in pastel shades with Western written over them in bold, hopeful letters. He wriggled his way across the five

⁹ English Year 11 Book 1, p.27, 2003

¹⁰ English Year 11 Book 1, p.30, 2003

lanes, his stack lurching towards open car windows inside which the indifferent sat. The indifferent, the tight-fisted, the contemptuous, the tissue-immune. Their boredom was his hope. He existed between red lights. He wished he could move at the speed with which the afternoon heat crushed him.

When he saw the white memsahib in the shiny jeep, he hurried towards her, squirming among the steel bodies of the indifferent, the tightfisted, the contemptuous, the tissue-immune. The lights would soon turn green and today's first and last chance would be lost. The jeep was first in the line.

The memsahib sat placidly in the back seat while her driver wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. 'Madam!' he cried, 'Madam, twenty rupees!' The driver shooed him away. The top box fell off. 'Madam!' He freed one hand to knock on her window. She looked at him with eyes in which hesitation glimmered. 'Fifteen rupees,' he cried. He pressed his face to her window. Another box fell off but he couldn't risk bending down to pick it up. She took out some notes and reached towards her driver.

Then suddenly, they were off. The hateful green light mocked his despair. The monster traffic moved forward.

He ran. The jeep was moving so slowly that he could almost keep up the same level as the white face, which looked at him in surprise. 'Madam!' he screamed above the thousand engines. At first he held the boxes with both arms but soon had to give up his left arm in order to move faster. Three more boxes fell off. Horns chased him in an increasing crescendo, but he could scream louder. 'Madam!' He could not afford to lose

the silver jeep from sight, even if it was getting smaller and smaller in the flood of traffic. He ran at the speed with which the heat denied movement. He ran for today's first and last chance. He ran and thought of his boxes crushed by tyres in his wake, lost forever. He had to sell these two, there was no choice.

And then the miracle happened. The jeep changed lanes, moved to the left and pulled over. He zipped across the five lanes, the flash of his body cutting through steel, smoke and glass. Nothing could touch him now.

By the time he reached her window again, he had no breath left but he didn't need his breath any more. The memsahib wound her window down and handed him fifty rupees. Fifty! He tumbled the two boxes into her lap and clutched the note in his wet hand. 'Thank you, Madam,' he whispered with the parched desert that was his mouth. Her thin lips smiled.

In a delirium of heat and happiness, he waved to her. Perhaps she waved back. He didn't see, because a truck thundered behind him, through him, over him, at the exact speed at which the afternoon heat made the memsahib in the jeep weep with nervous exhaustion and reach for a tissue.

A Game of Cards by Witi Ihimaera¹¹

The train pulled into the station. For a moment there was confusion: a voice blaring over the loudspeaker system, people getting off the train, the bustling and shoving of the crowd on the platform. And there was Dad, waiting for me. We hugged each other. We hadn't seen each other for a long time. Then we kissed. But I could tell something was wrong.

¹¹ English Year 11 Book 1, p.33, 2003

‘Your Nanny Miro, he said. She’s very sick’.

Nanny Miro. . . among all my nannies, she was the one I loved most. Everybody used to say I was her favourite mokopuna, and that she loved me more than her own children who’d grown up and had kids of their own. She lived down the road from us, right next to the meeting house in the big old homestead which everybody in the village called ‘The Museum’ because it housed the prized possessions of the whanau, the village family. Because she was rich and had a lot of land, we all used to wonder why Nanny Miro didn’t buy a newer, more modern house. But Nanny didn’t want to move. She liked her own house just as it was.

‘Anyway’, she used to say, ‘what with all my haddit kids and their haddit kids and all this haddit whanau being broke all the time and coming to ask me for some money, how can I afford to buy a new house?’ Nanny didn’t really care about money though. Who needs it? she used to say. What you think I had all these kids for, ay? To look after me, I’m not dumb! Then she would giggle to herself. But it wasn’t true really, because her family would send all their kids to her place when they were broke and she looked after them! She liked her mokopunas, but not for too long. She’d ring up their parents and say:

Hey! When you coming to pick up your hoha kids! They’re wrecking the place! Yet, always, when they left, she would have a little weep, and give them some money . . .

I used to like going to Nanny’s place. For me it was a big treasure house, glistening with sports trophies and photographs, carvings and greenstone, and feather cloaks hanging from the walls. Most times, a lot of women would be there playing cards with Nanny. Nanny loved all card games — five hundred, poker,

canasta, pontoon, whist, euchre — you name it, she could play it. The sitting room would be crowded with the kuias, all puffing clouds of smoke, dressed in their old clothes, laughing and gossiping about who was pregnant — and relishing all the juicy bits too! I liked sitting and watching them. Mrs Heta would always be there, and when it came to cards she was both Nanny’s best friend and worst enemy. And the two of them were the biggest cheats I ever saw. Mrs Heta would cough and reach for a hanky while slyly slipping a card from beneath her dress. And she was always renegeing in five hundred! But her greatest asset was her eyes, which were big and googly. One eye would look straight ahead, while the other swivelled around, having a look at the cards in the hands of the women sitting next to her.

Eeee! You cheat! Nanny would say. You just keep your eyes to yourself, Maka tiko bum! Mrs Heta would look at Nanny as if she were offended. Then she would sniff and say: You the cheat yourself, Miro Mananui. I saw you sneaking that ace from the bottom of the pack. How do you know I got an ace, Maka? Nanny would say, I know you! You dealt this hand, and you stuck that ace down there for yourself, you cheat! Well, ana! I got it now! So take that! And she would slap down her hand. Sweet, ay? she would laugh. Good? Kapai lalelale? And she would sometimes wiggle her hips, making her victory sweeter. Eeee! Miro! Mrs Heta would say. Well, I got a good hand too! And she would slap her hand down and bellow with laughter. Take that! And always, they would squabble. I often wondered how they ever remained friends. The names they called each other!

Sometimes, I would go and see Nanny and she would be all alone, playing patience. If there was nobody to play with her, she’d always play patience. And still she

cheated! I'd see her hands fumbling across the cards, turning up a jack or queen she needed, and then she'd laugh and say: I'm too good for this game! She used to try to teach me some of the games, but I wasn't very interested, and I didn't yell and shout at her like the women did. She liked the bickering. Aue . . . she would sigh. Then she'd look at me and begin dealing out the cards in the only game I ever knew how to play. And we would yell snap! all the afternoon . . .

Now, Nanny was sick. I went to see her that afternoon after I'd dropped my suitcases at home. Nanny Tama, her husband, opened the door. We embraced and he began to weep on my shoulder. Your Nanny Miro, he whispered. She's . . . she's . . . He couldn't say the words. He motioned me to her bedroom. Nanny Miro was lying in bed. And she was so old looking. Her face was very grey, and she looked like a tiny wrinkled doll in that big bed. She was so thin now, and seemed all bones. I walked into the room. She was asleep. I sat down on the bed beside her, and looked at her lovingly. Even when I was a child, she must have been old. But I'd never realised it. She must have been over seventy now. Why do people you love grow old so suddenly? The room had a strange, antiseptic smell. Underneath the bed was a big chamber pot, yellow with urine . . . and the pillow was flecked with small spots of blood where she had been coughing. I shook her gently. Nanny . . . Nanny, wake up. She moaned. A long, hoarse sigh grew on her lips. Her eyelids fluttered, and she looked at me with blank eyes . . . and then tears began to roll down her cheeks. Don't cry, Nanny, I said. Don't cry. I'm here. But she wouldn't stop. So I sat beside her on the bed and she lifted her hands to me. Haere mai, mokopuna. Haere mai. Mmm. Mmmm. And I bent within her arms and we pressed noses.

After a while, she calmed down. She seemed to be her own self. What a haddit mokopuna you are, she wept. It's only when I'm just about in my grave that you come to see me. I couldn't see you last time I was home. I explained. I was too busy. Yes. I know you fullas, she grumbled. It's only when I'm almost dead that you come for some money. I don't want your money, Nanny. What's wrong with my money! she said. Nothing's wrong with it! Don't you want any? Of course I do, I laughed. But I know you! I bet you lost it all on poker! She giggled. Then she was my Nanny again. The Nanny I knew.

We talked for a long time. I told her about what I was doing in Wellington and all the pretty girls who were after me. You teka! She giggled. Who'd want to have you? And she showed me all her injection needles and pills and told me how she'd wanted to come home from the hospital, so they'd let her. You know why I wanted to come home? she asked. I don't like all those strange nurses looking at my bum when they gave me those injections. I was so sick, mokopuna, I couldn't even go to the lav, and I'd rather wet my own bed not their neat bed. That's why I come home.

Afterwards, I played the piano for Nanny. She used to like Me He Manurere so I played it for her, and I could hear her quavering voice singing in her room. Me he manurere aue . . . When I finally left Nanny I told her I would come back in the morning. But that night, Nanny Tama rang up. Your Nanny Miro, she's dying. We all rushed to Nanny's house. It was already crowded. All the old women were there. Nanny was lying very still. Then she looked up and whispered to Mrs Heta: Maka . . . Maka tiko bum . . . I want a game of cards . . .

A pack of cards was found. The old ladies sat around the bed, playing. Everybody else decided to play cards

too, to keep Nanny company. The men played poker in the kitchen and sitting room. The kids played snap in the other bedrooms. The house overflowed with card players, even onto the lawn outside Nanny's window, where she could see . . .

The women laid the cards out on the bed. They dealt the first hand. They laughed and joked with Nanny, trying not to cry. And Mrs Heta kept saying to Nanny: Eee! You cheat, Miro. You cheat! And she made her googly eye reach far over to see Nanny's cards. You think you can see, ay, Maka tiko bum? Nanny coughed. You think you're going to win this hand, ay? Well, take that! She slammed down a full house. The other women goggled at the cards. Mrs Heta looked at her own cards. Then she smiled through her tears and yelled: Eee! You cheat, Miro! I got two aces in my hand already! Only four in the pack. So how come you got three aces in your hand? Everybody laughed. Nanny and Mrs Heta started squabbling as they always did, pointing at each other and saying: You the cheat, not me! And Nanny Miro said: I saw you, Maka tiko bum. I saw you sneaking that card from under the blanket. She began to laugh. Quietly. Her eyes streaming with tears. And while she was laughing, she died.

Everybody was silent. Then Mrs Heta took the cards from Nanny's hands and kissed her. You the cheat, Miro, she whispered. You the cheat yourself . . . We buried Nanny on the hill with the rest of her family. During her tangi, Mrs Heta played patience with Nanny, spreading the cards across the casket. Later in the year, Mrs Heta, she died too. She was buried right next to Nanny, so that they could keep on playing cards . . . And I bet you they're still squabbling up there . . .

Eee! You cheat, Miro . . . You the cheat, Maka tiko bum. You, you the cheat . . .

Guilty Rain by Sara Vui-Talitu¹²

I can, I can't, thought Sina. Wrestling with her indecision, she gazed at the white wall in front of her and sighed. She shared the hospital waiting room with a Palagi woman who appeared strangely more relaxed, although she avoided Sina's curious stares. Sina felt the knots in her stomach tighten with the uncertainty of her decision. Posters on the noticeboard spoke of life rather than death. She picked up a magazine and flicked through it. The pictures showed happy families, but Sina knew her family would be far from happy if they knew the secret embedded in the depths of her soul.

At school she had shown academic promise as an all-rounder before the most popular senior boy had chosen her. He was so nice and caring, with big brown eyes only for her – Sina from Sāmoa. He had been her first, and she had thought it would last forever, like in the movies. She had dreamed of a big traditional church wedding with five bridesmaids and as many guests as could fit into the church hall. Her mother had always warned her about the evils of men, but it was only now that she understood. It was barely a month when the tide turned and he stopped calling. He left school and the rumour was he had joined the Caleb gang down south.

Sina never felt more alone in her silent dilemma. No one knew she was with child. God forgive me, she thought. Disguised with her cap pulled low and in dark sunglasses, she hoped no one would recognise her. Outside, the bright sun was in contrast with her dark

¹² English Year 12, p.28, 2004

inner turmoil. Life in New Zealand was more pressured than in the Islands. Most girls her age had given birth, most outside of marriage. But everyone would know, fingers would point and silent whispers would run like the wind through the land.

The minutes seemed to drag slowly forward, counting down her doom. Sina's voices in her head began to speak. Faster and faster. Louder and louder. "Ms Crae?" called the nurse. Sina breathed a sigh of temporary relief. Watching her go, she knew that she was next. The walls seemed chokingly claustrophobic and her breathing grew short and sharp. She felt sick, remembering her best friend Tila who had wrapped her baby in plastic and thrown it in the trash before committing suicide a week later. Sina's pastor father had a reputation to protect and she was certainly doomed to a fate worse than death if they knew. But this would be Sina's secret for life. Tears filled her eyes.

The sound of footsteps became louder. "Miss Tui?" called the nurse. Sina froze, then slowly stood up. She glanced out the window at the rain.

Twenty minutes later Sina emerged. The rain reminded her that God was crying for her baby as her own tears fell on the lino.

The gift of the Magi by O. Henry¹³

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that

such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing left to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the look-out for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard. To-morrow would be Christmas Day, and

¹³ Other Worlds, p.38, 2000

she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honour of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 Bat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out of the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached

below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she cluttered out of the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One Eight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick" said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and

she hurried home with the 78 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please, God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stepped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice--what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet, even after the hardest mental labour.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with a sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a

year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package, you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped for long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise-shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull

precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

Wasteland by Alan Paton¹⁴

The moment that the bus moved on he knew he was in danger, for by the lights of it he saw the figures of the young men waiting under the tree. That was the thing feared by all, to be waited for by young men. It was a thing he had talked about, now he was to see it for

¹⁴ Other Worlds, p.20, 2000

himself. It was too late to run after the bus; it went down the dark street like an island of safety in a sea of perils. Though he had known of his danger only for a second, his mouth was already dry, his heart was pounding on his breast, something within him was crying out in protest against the coming event. His wages were in his purse; he could feel them weighing heavily against his thigh. That was what they wanted from him. Nothing counted against that. His wife could be made a widow, his children made fatherless, nothing counted against that. Mercy was the unknown word.

While he stood there irresolute he heard the young men walking towards him, not only from the side where he had seen them, but from the other also. They did not speak, their intention was unspeakable. The sound of their feet came on the wind to him. The place was well chosen, for behind him was the high wall of the convent, and the barred door that would not open before a man was dead.

On the other side of the road was the waste land, full of wire and iron and the bodies of old cars. It was his only hope, and he moved towards it; as he did so he knew from the whistle that the young men were there too. His fear was great and instant, and the smell of it went from his body to his nostrils. At that very moment one of them spoke, giving directions. So trapped was he that he was filled suddenly with strength and anger, and he ran towards the waste land swinging his heavy stick. In the darkness a form loomed up at him, and he swung the stick at it, and heard it give a cry of pain. Then he plunged blindly into the wilderness of wire and iron and the bodies of old cars. Something caught him by the leg, and he brought his stick crashing down on it, but it was no man, only some knifeedged piece of iron. He was sobbing and out of breath, but he

pushed on into the waste, while behind him they pushed on also, knocking against the old iron bodies and kicking against tins and buckets. He fell into some grotesque shape of wire; it was barbed and tore at his clothes and flesh. Then it held him, so that it seemed to him that death must be near, and having no other hope, he cried out, "Help me, help me!" in which should have been a great voice but was voiceless and gasping. He tore at the wire, and it tore at him too, ripping his face and his hands. Then suddenly he was free. He saw the bus returning, and he cried out again in the great voiceless voice, "Help me, help me!"

Against the lights of it he could plainly see the form of one of the young men. Death was near him, and for a moment he was filled with the injustice of life, that could end thus for one who had always been hard-working and lawabiding. He lifted the heavy stick and brought it down on the head of his pursuer, so that the man crumpled to the ground, moaning and groaning as though life had been unjust to him also. Then he turned and began to run again, but ran first into the side of an old lorry which sent him reeling. He lay there for a moment expecting the blow that would end him, but even then his wits came back to him, and he turned over twice and was under the lorry. His very entrails seemed to be coming into his mouth, and his lips could taste sweat and blood. His heart was like a wild thing in his breast, and seemed to lift his whole body each time that it beat. He tried to calm it down, thinking it might be heard, and tried to control the noise of his gasping breath, but he could not do either of these things. Then suddenly against the dark sky he saw two of the young men. He thought they must hear him; but they themselves were gasping like drowned men, and their speech came by fits and starts. Then one of them said, "Do you hear?" They were silent except for their gasping, listening. And he listened also, but could hear

nothing but his own exhausted heart. "I heard a man . . . running . . . on the road," said one. "He's got away . . . let's go." Then some more of the young men came up, gasping and cursing the man who had got away. "Freddy," said one, "your father's got away." But there was no reply. "Where's Freddy?" one asked. One said, "Quiet!" Then he called in a loud voice, "Freddy." But still there was no reply. "Let's go," he said. They moved off slowly and carefully, then one of them stopped. "We are saved," he said. "Here is the man." He knelt down on the ground, and then fell to cursing. "There's no money here," he said. One of them lit a match, and in the small light of it the man under the lorry saw him fall back. "It's Freddy," one said. "He's dead." Then the one who had said, "Quiet" spoke again.

The man under the lorry heard them struggling with the body of the dead young man, and he turned once, twice, deeper into his hiding-place. The young men lifted the body and swung it under the lorry so that it touched him. Then he heard them moving away, not speaking, slowly and quietly, making an occasional sound again some obstruction in the waste. He turned on his side, so that he would not need to touch the body of the young man. He buried his face in his arms, and said to himself in the idiom of his own language, "People, arise! The world is dead." Then he arose himself, and went heavily out of the waste land.

Year 11 – Short stories

Ghosting by Litia Alaelua¹⁵

Red roses. Rampant at the bottom of the front stairs and through the borders on either side of the path. Profuse in summer and defiant even to the first frosts of winter. Heady in fragrance and, when spent, headier — a swan song. As a child, I could not wait for the petals to free themselves and fall. I would shake a loosened head to expose a thrusting, perfectly formed crown of spun gold.

On long, hot evenings, Mum cut them in bloody swathes for church while Dad cleaned and swept the paths. They sang Sāmoan hymns in two parts while dark fell, and my mother's voice soared, liquid air, while Dad's would rumble and boom away. Years later, I understood implicitly that music was physics, but at the time I hoped the neighbours did not hear. They took the flowers to church and I stayed home with the others, thought things about the glory of God and wondered why Mum never cut flowers for the house like I had seen in the Woman's Weekly. 'In Sāmoa,' she told me one day, 'these do not grow.' She was final on this point. Surprised that New Zealand could offer her something she didn't already have.

It is my grandfather I think of, though, when I recall those roses. I knew him briefly, but his image is placed firmly, permeated by their scent. After he had bathed and dressed for church — and this was a ritual of meticulous order that kept my aunts busy in a hallway suddenly misty with steam and the smell of Old Spice — he would pace the front path slowly. Austere and tall, he was oddly Victorian in his formal grey lavalava, tweed jacket and white shirt. My mother laboured over these shirts on Saturday night with a swiftly administered iron. I remember the almost scorched smell of steam and heat, and the gentle thud-

thud of water drops she would scatter from long fingertips that flew like birds.

Through a film of nettled lace, I watched my grandfather as my hair or my sister's was being braided for church. Torture! The weight of our hair was lifted off our backs and necks, then patted, smoothed and combed by my mother's hands, made liquid and warm from oil kept in a Jucy bottle and stopped with a frayed wad of fibre. Our hair was then woven tightly onto our scalps, accompanied by my mother's words — warnings, and hidden messages of love and belonging, reinforced frequently by the sudden and strategic tugging of hair. From the temples down, the skin around our eyes and cheekbones was pulled taut as strands of hair were gathered so that we looked at each other when finished and grinned. 'You look chichi.' 'You do.' 'No, you do!' Ever resourceful, and in final insult,

our mother would bind the ends of our hair with white sheeny-shiny bows. These sessions were a kind of mental agony, but when she had finished my sister's head and mine were perfectly sculptured.

Grandpa kept his head shaved, and Mum did this with an electric razor. A Remington. This fact was stamped in tiny silver letters on its grainy black case. It was a Father's Day present to dad, who never used it, preferring the drama of a razor. I watched one day as Mum shaved Grandpa's head while directing a young aunt who sat in another part of the room, crosslegged and neat before the wide-open glory box. From this slid the quick scent of camphor as my aunt layered and sorted linen with smooth, sure movements, the quiet slope of her back intent on private inventories. They spoke evenly in Sāmoan, and Grandpa called to me, capped his hand over my head and smiled so that a

¹⁵ English Year 10 Book 1, p.10, 2004

myriad of wrinkles patterned his eyes and included me.

At ten I was made up of eyes and ears. At some signal each evening, family lotu would begin after the closing off of curtains and doors, and the deferential sound of feet on mats as bodies arranged themselves appropriately to Grandpa's seating place and to each other. Not having learnt to 'look without looking', I gazed carefully at and around Grandpa as he prayed, and having my thigh pinched surreptitiously between the thumb and forefinger by some all-seeing aunt did not stop me. I really felt that he was talking to someone. The bristles that covered his head in a silvery cap would glisten and nod under the yellow light, as his words fell like small polished stones into the still room. He would often call for me to sit near him and turn the pages of his Bible while he read, and I would do this with great care, listening for the papery rustle of something old and rare. I looked for the small pinked snapshots that had been placed carefully as markers. People who covered themselves from neck to wrist to ankle in strange textures looked back at me, unsmiling and sure. And on their backs, the feltish, blue-black smudge of some other person's memories. Firmly rounded copperplate script that I traced with my finger — 'My dearest brother in Christ. . . until it is God's will. . . That we see one another. . . 1953.' Quaint Victorianisms from a colonial missionary upbringing.

To Grandpa's way of thinking, everything that was important was within walking distance, so on Sunday we all walked to church. The Valiant, or what Mum called 'your father's pride and joy', remained inside the garage, in all its glinting, blue-green entirety. Mum and Dad walked behind with my aunts, and Grandpa walked in front with us. In one hand he held his Bible — bound black, with gold-rimmed leaves edged in

small, script-filled half moons. It was rare for Grandpa to look at or speak to us directly, but he sometimes cautioned us against 'spoiling the hard work of our mother', or smiled as we questioned him daringly in our shy child-jabber. Walking to church, the grown-ups were all gods and goddesses, and we, their offspring. I understood their presence of mind. They were all larger than anything around us, because in this land there was nothing that could contain them.

On Fridays, Grandpa fasted until midday. If Dad was on night shift, he stopped at the markets on the way home and bought taro, fish and green bananas. Mum worked the early morning shift, so he made our school lunches, heated the milk for our Weetbix, fixed our hair, then cooked an elaborate meal to break Grandpa's fast. Before this, though, he showered and bathed himself scrupulously. One of us had to run to the washing line for the pulu when he shouted for it above the noise of crashing water. Without the shower, he always said, he never felt himself to be truly clean. Fresh and glistening, in a clean lavalava and work shirt, he began to cook. We ate breakfast and watched a rapidly spreading mound of brown peel on newspaper, as dad flick-knifed the taro deftly to expose the hard whitespeckled flesh beneath. With the point of a knife held like a pen, he slit the emerald-green bananas open and discarded their skins, then sent tiny, opaque mirrors skidding damply over the sink as he cleaned and scraped the milkyeyed fish. Soon the kitchen would be filled with the clatter of steaming pots.

Grandpa always had his own food. My parents served him from different dishes which they arranged around his eating-place in a neat semi-circle of steam and pleasing odours. When lotu had finished, Grandpa would look over at us and call us to bring our plates, on which he would place a portion from each of his

dishes — despite my parents' efforts to scold us away. Grandpa ate fastidiously, savouring each mouthful as though it were his last. His fingers never got messy. This interested me. To my uncles, eating was a serious business too, but they ate hunched over their plates, looking neither left nor right, ending their meals quickly and with fingers shiny from grease.

As the oldest daughter, it was my chore to bring Grandpa a thick white china bowl of warm water and a small embroidered hand-towel when he had finished eating. This moment had to be chosen carefully, because if I got it wrong my parents would be unsparing in their rebuke. But it was hard to know when he would be finished. At some point, he would simply cease to eat, place his hands on either side of his plate with fingers curved carefully and look ahead. I liked to watch the way Grandpa would wash his hands with care, touch at his mouth briefly with wet fingers, then dry them with the towel I gave him. He would look ahead and smile, then thank me gravely in Sāmoan, 'the daughter of Alaelua'. I listened for this same patterning of words when my own father died, many years later.

Grandpa went back to Sāmoa a few months later, and not long after this, he died. I remember feeling no sadness when I knew, only the need to comfort my parents in their grief.

The roses still come every summer. My mother's voice tends them alone now or sometimes mingled with the sound of my own daughter's in childplay. Sometimes I sit on the stairs, close my eyes against a long shimmering dusk, and listen to my mother's voice as it shifts the perfumed silence around us. I can recall my grandfather's image with clarity and sudden love. But the ghost of the ten-year-old girl is lost to me.

My grandfather left an understanding, and this came to me through my mother. People do not die, for this would be too hard. They are merely transposed, etched indelibly on the hearts and minds of those they choose to love.

Dear Mr Cairney by Graeme Lay¹⁶

Tonight I read in the local paper that you have been appointed headmaster of Rimu Park Intermediate School. When I read your name and saw your photograph I was surprised, not at your becoming a headmaster, but at how clearly I still remembered you, even though it's now over twenty-five years since you taught me. Your face hasn't changed much at all, although your hair's receded quite a bit at the temples. I remember that some of the girls in our Form II class thought you were handsome and asked you to sign their autograph books when you left at the end of that term, but I don't suppose you remember that. But that's not surprising because I've been working it out and I realise now that you must have been only about twentyone when you came to our school in Kaimara to relieve for Mrs Hunter when she had her operation. It was the winter term, I think, and I remember that the class wrote to Mrs Hunter in hospital and told her how much they enjoyed having you for a teacher.

But I never enjoyed having you, Mr Cairney, because I could tell that you didn't like me almost from the first day that you arrived at our school. You weren't like Mrs Hunter, who let us talk and walk around as we worked. I suppose she let us get into these bad habits, but the first morning you came it was me that you told to stand up, even though there were several of us talking. You asked me what my name was and when I

¹⁶ English Year 11 Book 1, p.40, 2003

told you, you called me by my surname and told me to keep on standing up for a quarter of an hour and I went very red and the others in the class laughed and for the first time since I started school I wished I wasn't there. After that you hardly even asked me to answer a question, so I gave up putting my hand up after a while, even though I would have got the answer right sometimes. And I noticed that you would look at me in a funny way. I suppose that was why I never forgot your face, because quite often I would look up from what I was doing and you would be staring at me. Then one day I knocked a chair over and it made a loud noise and you kept me in after school to write out lines. I must not act the fool when I am supposed to be working, one hundred times. When I finished it was after four o'clock and my wrist was sore and I'd never stayed at school by myself that late before and afterwards my footsteps sounded scary when I walked along the corridor to the vestibule.

It's strange how things like that should come back to me now; until I started writing this letter I had completely forgotten about the lines. But what I never forgot was the wondering about why you were, as we used to put it, picking on me, though I never said anything to anybody else about it. You made me feel sort of ashamed, but I didn't know why.

But what I really wanted to remind you of was the day you set us some sums to do and then went out of the room for a while to see another teacher and came back and found me out of my seat talking to another boy on the other side of the room and shouted 'What are you doing getting up before you've finished?' and then after I said 'I have finished Mr Cairney' you stared at me for a minute, then said, 'Stay behind after school today.' During the rest of the day I was worried about getting kept in again to write out more lines and I remember looking at you and wondering again why it

was that it was always me that was getting into trouble when with Mrs Hunter I had never been kept in. Then at three o'clock when the bell went and the others put their chairs up and went home I went up to your desk and stood there and the way you looked at me made me feel suddenly frightened. Your mouth was just a thin line, and you didn't blink at all. I stood there in front of your desk and I felt very alone, but it wasn't until you said 'I'm going to teach you not to fool in my class,' that I started to realise that I was going to get the strap. We were all frightened of the strap, though I had never actually had it before. Only once I had seen it used, when Mr King the headmaster came in and strapped one of the Maori boys because he had yelled 'Good riddance to bad rubbish' when Mr Rosser the Methodist minister was going out the classroom door one day after giving us Bible study. Mr King's strap had been very black and worn looking, but when you reached into your satchel and pulled yours out I saw that it was light brown, with neat white stitches around the edges. When I saw it and watched you take your dark blue blazer off I felt sick right down in my stomach and I pissed my trousers a bit.

You stood me in the space between the desk and the door and pointed the strap at my right hand. Then you took a deep breath and flicked the strap back over your shoulder. I brought my hand up and held it out but even then I couldn't really believe that you were going to give me the cuts for just being out of my seat and I couldn't take my eyes off your face and when you hit me the first time your head came forward and you made a little gasping noise.

The pain started straight away. It wasn't like falling off my bike or tripping onto concrete: then there was always a little pause between the fall and the pain. But now for one second my hand was a normal, useful part of me, and the next it had disappeared and in its place

was just a huge, numbing pain. There was no burning on the skin, as I had always imagined there would be, just the shock of the ache and the thudding numbness as the muscles of my palm were bruised to the bones. The second cut came so quickly that I hardly had time to straighten out my arm again before a second shock of pain went up my arm. Then you paused before the third and I could see how hard you were working because you were breathing deeply and your tie had slipped sideways. You steadied yourself and nodded again and I brought my hand up and your strap came down again.

Now I was sure that my hand had grown to an enormous size, yet when I glanced down it wasn't any bigger, although the skin was bright pink and my fingers were curled up like the claws of a dead bird. They just went like that, I couldn't stop them. When I looked up at you again you had folded the strap in half and were staring down at me. Your mouth was hanging open a bit and your face had gone shiny and suddenly I knew why you were staring. Because I was so small you thought I ought to be crying. And I was. But only inside. Through the dizziness and the sickness and the pain I knew I must not show that I was. I stood there looking up at you with my huge hand dangling, waiting for you to speak. Now that the thump of the strap had stopped, the room was very still.

But you didn't say anything. Instead you suddenly put the strap on your desk, grabbed me by the shoulder and pulled me over to the door, the one that led out into the playground. You opened the door and pushed me out. By the bottom of the steps there was a downpipe which went from the spouting to a drain. The grate of the drain was blocked by mud and leaves and bits of paper and fruit peel, mixed into a soft wet sludge. You pointed at the drain. 'Clean it out,' you said. 'With

your right hand.' And you stood on the top step and watched me do it.

The muck was very cold — that's why I remember that it was the winter term — but when I scooped out a handful it felt as if I was holding a red-hot coal in my palm. I scratched out the muck, carried it from the drain over to a rubbish bin at the corner of the classroom block and stood at the bottom of the steps looking up at you again. My hand felt as if it had been plunged into a furnace and my arm was throbbing so much that my body felt lop-sided and inside I felt sicker and sicker. But I knew that my eyes were still dry and I could see the lines around the corners of your mouth tighten and I knew that in a way I was winning. As you spoke you turned away. 'Right. Inside,' you said.

I followed you back into the room, then I started to walk over to my desk to put my chair up and get my lunchbox. I had to force myself to walk slowly because more than anything else in the world I wanted to run from that place. Then, from behind me, I heard your voice again. 'No you don't son, I haven't finished with you yet.' And when I turned around you were holding the strap again and making the little pointing movements with it in the direction of my right hand.

Your last three weren't very well directed: only the middle one got me fair and square on the palm. The first cut across the ends of my wet fingers and the third landed high up on my wrist, because later when the bruise came out it reached quite a long way up my arm. But you still didn't see me cry because I didn't start to until after I had wheeled my bike through the school gates and was riding home. One-handed.

Well as I said at the beginning, this happened over twenty-five years ago. Have you changed, Mr Cairney? Somehow I think you probably haven't. Have you been successful? Oh yes, you're a

headmaster now, so I suppose you have been. Will you remember me? I don't think so, in over twenty-five years you must have taught a thousand children. But I'd like you to know that after I left school I went to university and studied music, then I graduated and travelled around Europe a bit and now I'm a music teacher. I'm married with two children, a boy and a girl. We live not very far from your new school, that's why I was especially interested when I read of your appointment in the paper. Our boy's a lively little chap, small for his age, like I was, but he's keen to learn and he loves life. He's the reason why I haven't signed this letter. It was hard for me, as a professional person, to use a pen-name, but you see on the one hand I don't want our son to be victimised, and on the other I do want you to know that he'll be one of your pupils. And that if you as much as touch one hair on his head, Mr Cairney, I will come along to your school and smash every bone in your face.

Yours faithfully,

A past pupil.

Indian Camp by Ernest Hemingway¹⁷

At the lake shore there was another rowboat drawn up. The two Indians stood waiting. Nick and his father got in the stern of the boat and the Indians shoved it off and one of them got in to row. Uncle George sat in the stern of the camp rowboat. The young Indian shoved the camp boat off and got in to row Uncle George.

The two boats started off in the dark. Nick heard the oar-locks of the other boat quite a way ahead of them in the mist. The Indians rowed with quick choppy strokes. Nick lay back with his father's arm around him. It was cold on the water. The Indian who was

rowing them was working very hard, but the other boat moved further ahead in the mist all the time. 'Where are we going, Dad?' Nick asked. 'Over to the Indian camp. There is an Indian lady very sick.' 'Oh,' said Nick. Across the bay they found the other boat beached. Uncle George was smoking a cigar in the dark. The young Indian pulled the boat way up the beach. Uncle George gave both the Indians cigars.

They walked up from the beach through a meadow that was soaking wet with dew, following the young Indian who carried a lantern. Then they went into the woods and followed a trail that led to the logging road that ran back into the hills. It was much lighter on the logging road as the timber was cut away on both sides. The young Indian stopped and blew out his lantern and they all walked on along the road. They came around a bend and a dog came out barking. Ahead were the lights of the shanties where the Indian bark-peelers lived. More dogs rushed out at them. The two Indians sent them back to the shanties. In the shanty nearest the road there was a light in the window. An old woman stood in the doorway holding a lamp.

Inside on a wooden bunk lay a young woman. She had been trying to have her baby for two days. All the old women in the camp had been helping her. The men had moved off up the road to sit in the dark and out of range of the noise she made. She screamed just as Nick and the two Indians followed his father and Uncle George into the shanty. She lay in the lower bunk, very big under a quilt. Her head was turned to one side. In the upper bunk was her husband. He had cut his foot with an axe three days before. He was smoking a pipe. The room smelled very bad.

Nick's father ordered some water to be put on the stove, and while it was heating he spoke to Nick. 'This lady is going to have a baby, Nick,' he said. 'I know,'

¹⁷ English Year 11 Book 2, p.26, 2004

said Nick. 'You don't know,' said his father. 'Listen to me. What she is going through is called being in labour. The baby wants to be born and she wants it to be born. All her muscles are trying to get the baby born. That is what is happening when she screams.' 'I see,' Nick said. Just then the woman cried out. 'Oh, Daddy, can't you give her something to make her stop screaming?' asked Nick. 'No. I haven't any anaesthetic,' his father said. 'But her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important.' The husband in the upper bunk rolled against the wall.

The woman in the kitchen motioned to the doctor that the water was hot. Nick's father went into the kitchen and poured about half the water out of the big kettle into a basin. Into the water left in the kettle he put several things he unwrapped from a handkerchief.

'Those must boil,' he said, and began to scrub his hands in the basin of hot water with a cake of soap he had brought from the camp. Nick watched his father's hands scrubbing each other with the soap. While his father washed his hands carefully and thoroughly, he talked.

'You see, Nick, babies are supposed to be born head first but sometimes they're not. When they're not they make a lot of trouble for everybody. Maybe I'll have to operate on this lady. We'll know in a little while.' When he was satisfied with his hands he went in and went to work. 'Pull back that quilt, will you, George?' he said. 'I'd rather not touch it.'

Later when he started to operate Uncle George and the three Indian men held the woman still. She bit Uncle George on the arm and Uncle George said, 'Damn squaw bitch!' and the young Indian who had rowed Uncle George over laughed at him. Nick held the basin for his father. It all took a long time. His father picked the baby up and slapped it to make it breathe and

handed it to the old woman. 'See, it's a boy, Nick,' he said. 'How do you like being an intern?' Nick said, 'All right.' He was looking away so as not to see what his father was doing. 'There. That gets it,' said his father and put something into the basin. Nick didn't look at it. 'Now,' his father said, 'there's some stitches to put in. You can watch this or not, Nick, just as you like. I'm going to sew up the incision I made.' Nick did not watch. His curiosity had been gone for some time. His father finished and stood up. Uncle George and the three Indian men stood up. Nick put the basin out in the kitchen. Uncle George looked at his arm.

The young Indian smiled reminiscently. 'I'll put some peroxide on that, George,' the doctor said. He bent over the Indian woman. She was quiet now and her eyes were closed. She looked very pale. She did not know what had become of the baby or anything. 'I'll be back in the morning,' the doctor said, standing up. 'The nurse should be here from St. Ignace by noon and she'll bring everything we need.'

He was feeling exalted and talkative as football players are in the dressing-room after a game. 'That's one for the medical journal, George,' he said. 'Doing a Caesarean with a jack-knife and sewing it up with nine-foot, tapered gut leaders.' Uncle George was standing against the wall, looking at his arm. 'Oh, you're a great man, all right,' he said. 'Ought to have a look at the proud father. They're usually the worst sufferers in these little affairs,' the doctor said. 'I must say he took it all pretty quietly.'

He pulled back the blanket from the Indian's head. His hand came away wet. He mounted on the edge of the lower bunk with the lamp in one hand and looked in. The Indian lay with his face toward the wall. His throat had been cut from ear to ear. The blood had flowed down into a pool where his body sagged the bunk. His head rested on his left arm. The open razor lay, edge

up, in the blankets. 'Take Nick out of the shanty, George,' the doctor said. There was no need of that. Nick, standing in the door of the kitchen, had a good view of the upper bunk when his father, the lamp in one hand, tipped the Indian's head back. It was just beginning to be daylight when they walked along the logging road back toward the lake. 'I'm terrible sorry I brought you along, Nickie,' said his father, all his post-operative exhilaration gone. 'It was an awful mess to put you through.' 'Do ladies always have such a hard time having babies?' Nick asked. 'No, that was very, very exceptional.' 'Why did he kill himself, Daddy?' 'I don't know, Nick. He couldn't stand things, I guess.' 'Do many men kill themselves, Daddy?' 'Not very many, Nick.' 'Do many women?' 'Hardly ever.' 'Don't they ever?'

'Oh, yes. They do sometimes.' 'Daddy?' 'Yes?' 'Where did Uncle George go?' 'He'll turn up all right.' 'Is dying hard, Daddy?' 'No, I think it's pretty easy. Nick. It all depends.'

They were seated in the boat. Nick in the stern, his father rowing. The sun was coming up over the hills. A bass jumped, making a circle in the water. Nick trailed his hand in the water. It felt warm in the sharp chill of the morning. In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, he felt sure that he would never die.

The Copier by Graeme Lay¹⁸

Moana received the phone call at the Downtown Post Shop where she worked, not long after she got back from lunch upstairs in the Food Hall. The voice on the phone was a man's, and it sounded hurried, as if he was attending to something or someone else as he spoke.

'Is that . . . Ms Moana Tere?' 'Yes.' 'You are the dancer?' 'I'm in a dance group.' 'I saw you on the ferry the other night. The travel agents' function. The man who organised the function gave me the name of the leader of your group, and he gave me your work number.' 'Oh.' 'The thing is . . . ' There was a pause while he said something to someone else, his voice muffled so that she couldn't hear the details. Then he spoke to her again. 'As I was saying, I work for an advertising agency. Next week we're launching a new photocopier for a client of ours. There's a prize for the salesperson who sells the most photocopiers before the end of July. A free trip to Hawaii, for two. I thought it'd be good to have a bit of Hawaiian dancing at the launching of the new model. To get the flavour of the competition, to kick it off well.'

Moana gave a little laugh. 'But I'm not Hawaiian, I'm Rarotongan.' There was a slight pause, before the man said, 'No worries, these guys won't tell the difference. And I thought your dancing the other night on the boat was terrific. The launching's next week, in Takapuna. Your act would only take about ten minutes. And we'd be prepared to pay you a fee, of course.'

Moana held the phone to her ear for a few moments before she replied. She was pleased that the man had remembered her out of all the girls in the group, but she had never before danced all by herself. Some extra money would be handy, though, especially as she was saving for her fare to Tahiti at Christmas, to stay with Auntie Hine. She only needed the fare, but that was very expensive. But to dance by herself? 'What about drummers? I have to dance to something?' 'I thought about that. Our budget doesn't run to drummers too, but I thought maybe you'd have a tape, a CD maybe . . . ?' His voice trailed away hopefully. 'I've got some CDs.' 'Good, I'm sure they'll do. So, what do you

¹⁸ English Year 11 Book 2, p.31, 2004

think?’ A CD would be okay, Moana thought, if they had decent speakers. And the man sounded all right, not too bossy. It wasn’t as if she wasn’t used to working for papa’a either, in fact she was the only Raro at the Downtown Post Shop, and she liked it.

Working for them wasn’t as hard as some Raros made out. When she first started she had made lots of mistakes with the computer, but the others had been kind about it, they didn’t laugh at her. Not like all those coconuts she’d worked with at the Mangere shop; they gave her a hard time if she made a booboo, which was why she left. Islanders were meant to be kind to one another, but she didn’t believe that any more. They could be mean to other Islanders, especially the ones who had been here for a long time — they thought they had the city all sussed out. Now that she’d got used to working with mostly papa’a, she didn’t mind them at all. But the ones at this shop were mostly women, and this was a man. That might make it harder. ‘Are you there, Moana?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘So, what do you think?’ ‘Is it next Friday?’ ‘Yes, the tenth. But I’ll need to see you first, over at the venue, so we can organise the act properly. We could do that after you finish work on, say, Wednesday? Would that suit?’ ‘Okay,’ said Moana.

The bus swept up the harbour bridge like a plane taking off, and for a few moments Moana felt she was airborne. Far below, to her left, were a couple of yachts and a tiny, steep-sided island that looked as if it had come from an illustration in a child’s adventure story. Staring down at the water far, far below, Moana could see men leaning out over the sides of the yachts as they heeled over, and their backs seemed only a tiny distance from the white-flecked water.

She got off in Takapuna and walked along the busy street towards the address that the advertising man — Patrick — had given her. As she walked past the trendy

shops she felt that she had arrived in another country almost. Hardly a brown face anywhere, nearly all papa’a — European people — walking, shopping, driving. Heaps of Chinese, too. At least in Mount Wellington there was more of a mixture of people. Mrs Barber, the Post Shop staff supervisor, lived in Northcote, and she’d given Moana instructions: ‘Walk up the street and two blocks past Westfield, and it’s on your left. Just after the traffic lights.’

She was outside the building ten minutes earlier than the arranged time. It was a new-looking building, white, with clean lines and a large, freshly sealed carpark alongside. The ground floor was unoccupied, as he had told her, and she went straight up the stairs to the first floor, then along a passage. At the end of the passage it opened out onto a long, wide room with a low ceiling and a pale pink carpet. At one end of the room was a platform, a shiny curtain drawn back on both sides, and electrical equipment — cords, power boards, plugs, lights — were strewn about the floor. Three men were busy with the equipment, stepping over flexes, adjusting lights, inserting and re-inserting plugs, fiddling with volume and tone controls.

Moana stood in the doorway and waited to be noticed, and one of the men came over to her, stepping over the entrails of flex. ‘Hi,’ he said. ‘It’s Moana, isn’t it? I’m Patrick.’ His face was thin and he hadn’t shaved, because his cheeks were covered in a gingery stubble. He wore jeans and a white T-shirt which was tight on his lean torso. There was a silver ring in his right ear, his fair hair was tied back in a ponytail and he made constant grooming movements over it with his left hand as he talked. ‘You’ll be on for eight to ten minutes, but we’ll start the CD a few seconds before the curtains come apart. You’ll have to dance in front of the copier, but try to keep to one side of it, because the machine’s the centrepiece of the event. There’ll be

coloured lights flashing on it, and a spotlight for you.’ Rather worriedly, he added, ‘You brought the CD?’ She produced it from her bag and he took it over to one of the technicians, who placed it in a big cassette player beside the stage. Drum beats filled the room, rapid and insistent. Patrick nodded approvingly.

‘Cool stereo,’ said Moana. ‘Ought to be. Cost a fortune.’ He motioned for it to be turned down, and the drumming subsided. ‘Now, is this a big enough space?’ She studied the area. It wasn’t very big, not when you took the platform into account. And she really needed to be above the audience, on a stage. But still . . . ‘I’ll try it,’ she said. ‘Take the CD back to the start, please?’ Removing the blue pareu from her bag, she wrapped it round her hips, kicked off her sandals. ‘Okay,’ she called to the technician. ‘Play.’ Loud but melodious music poured from the speakers, and with it Moana began to move, her hands tracing graceful patterns in the air, hips swaying, her bare feet dragging a little in the pile of the carpet. She was aware that the men in the room were all looking closely at her, but that didn’t bother her.

That was the way it should be. She had been dancing since . . . since . . . there was no time she could remember when she hadn’t danced. Hands raised high, she glided across, back, forward, across again. Patrick held up his hand. ‘Not too far this way, you’ll obscure their view of the machine.’ Moana stopped, put her hand up to her mouth and started to laugh. It was about the silliest thing she had ever heard of, dancing for a photocopy machine.

As the number ended, the music faded away. ‘Is that it?’ asked Patrick. ‘No, there’s the drum dance. That first track you heard. I should do that last.’ Looking at his watch anxiously, he said, ‘How long does that take?’ ‘About four minutes. Together they’ll take about . . . eight minutes?’ He nodded, although he still

seemed worried about something. ‘That sounds about right. Now let’s take it right through. Greg, play the track again please.’

Moana removed her pareu, put her sandals back on. She had gone right through the action song and the drum dance, and had remembered not to obscure the view of what Patrick called ‘the product’. There was enough room, just, and she could tell by the way the men had watched her that it would be okay, that the show would work. But Patrick still hadn’t mentioned the money. How much would she get paid? She didn’t like to ask, that seemed a bit rude. When the group danced; Roi always handled the money side of it, she had never had to before. Still, because she was performing on her own, it was up to her to sort it out, she decided. Putting the CD back in her bag, she said, ‘I’m going now, I have to catch the bus back into town.’

‘Right. We’ll see you on Friday then. At a quarter to six.’ ‘Yes. Um, we haven’t talked about the money. For the dancing.’ ‘Oh, no.’ He looked away, blinked, stroked his ponytail. ‘The thing is, we’re still working on the budget with our client. And I’m the creative director, not the financial manager.’ Giving her his anxious smile, he added, ‘But don’t worry, it’ll be worth your while. And do keep a list of any expenses you incur.’ Taking a card from his jeans pocket and giving it to her, he said, ‘This’s got the address of our office on it. You’ll be paid from there by our financial manager, after the launching. All right?’ ‘Yes, thank you. I’ll see you on Friday.’

Moana stood behind the shiny drawn curtain. To her left, on the platform, on a crimson velvet cloth, stood the photocopier, and on the big white backdrop, in gold, were the words KAGASASHI SERIES 300 COPIER. Moana made one more adjustment to the fern titi around her hips, checked that the orange

hibiscus behind her ear was secure, that the frangipani ei around her neck was hanging the way it should be. The fragrance from the flowers — flown in on this morning's plane from Rarotonga — wafted around her face, and she swallowed hard and began breathing deeply to control the butterflies that were fluttering in her stomach. It was always like this before a performance, but worse now that she was alone.

There were voices coming from the other side of the curtain. She thought, they are out there, waiting, expecting, wondering what was coming. She glanced at Patrick, sitting across from her, a microphone and a set of audio-visual controls in front of him. He looked at his watch, held up his thumb and mimed 'Right!' at her. Then he bent his voice to the mike. 'Ladies and gentlemen, introducing . . . the Kagasashi Series 300, and our Honolulu Hotshot!' The slow, melodic guitar music flooded the room. Moana raised her arms high and smiled her dazzling smile. The shiny curtains slid apart, soundlessly, and she began to dance, her hip-swaying movements accompanied by a barrage of whistles and catcalls. The coloured lights were so bright that she could not see her audience apart from the men in the very front row. She kept her eyes raised, her smile radiant, her bare arms tracing twin patterns in the air as she moved sinuously across, around and back, careful not to obscure the audience's view of the photocopier behind her.

Spangles of light flashed across the machine, turning it red, gold, yellow and purple as her dance went on, and the calls from the audience grew more urgent. Then the first part of the tape ended, and Moana paused, hands on hips, still smiling at the almost invisible audience, waiting.

The staccato sound of the slit drums burst from the speakers, filling the room with its machine-gun beat. Extending her arms, Moana began her drum dance,

hips moving faster and faster, locked into the rhythm of the drums. Then she slowly turned, until her back was to the audience, and lifted her arms high. Her hips began to move faster still, as if they had a life of their own, and her thick black hair hung like a mane down her back. One of the frangipani flowers worked loose and fell to the floor, but she ignored it, hearing only the pulsating drumbeat, feeling her hips respond, respond, quicker and still quicker, while she held her upper body erect and still. Then, with a last climactic burst, the drumming abruptly ceased. Still smiling broadly, Moana turned and blew a kiss to the photocopier salespeople.

'Moana, you were sensational! They were rapt. You were all their Hawaiian fantasies in person.' She dabbed at the perspiration on her forehead. 'Rarotongan.' 'Whatever. They'll be out selling those photocopiers like their lives depend on it.' Now that it was over, Patrick looked five years younger, she thought. He added, 'I love the frangipani, where did you get them at this time of year?' 'From home. One of my aunties picked them for me in Titikaveka yesterday and put them on the plane.' She lifted the garland from her neck, went up to him and placed it carefully over his head. 'I hope you sell lots of machines,' she said, laughing softly. Flushing a little, he said, 'Thanks. But we don't sell them, we just advertise them.' He brought the flowers up to his face. 'These are divine. Thank you.' 'When you get them home, put them in some water and they will stay fresh. I have to go now, to catch my bus. So, goodbye.' He smiled gratefully. 'Goodbye, and thank you again. And don't forget to come to our office on Tuesday, to get paid.' 'Yes. Thank you, Patrick. Goodbye.'

This time she was on the city side of the harbour bridge, and she could see the setting sun shining on the windows of the cluster of towers in the city's central

business district, behind and in front of the Sky Tower. The towers looked as if they had been cut from blocks of coloured glass. As the bus swept her upwards, Moana stared at the high-rise buildings. In every one there were windows, hundreds of windows, and altogether there were dozens of office buildings. Buildings and offices, and in every one of them a photocopier. Thousands of photocopiers, each one costing thousands of dollars. Lots of them would be the Kagasashi Series 300, she thought, judging by the way all those salespeople had responded to Patrick's competition. Everyone wanted to win the free trip for two to Hawaii, so everyone would be trying hard to sell the photocopiers. Although she kept looking out the window of the bus, now Moana wasn't really seeing the high-rise buildings. She was thinking, I might have helped to make heaps of money for that company. And she began to make some calculations in her head.

The following Monday, during her tea break, Moana went to see Mrs Barber. Looking at her over the top of her glasses, Mrs Barber smiled. 'Yes Moana, what can I do for you?' Moana held out the sheet of paper in her hand. 'I would like you to show me the way to set out an invoice, please.'

The next day, during her lunch hour, Moana walked from Downtown up the hill to Symonds Street, and located the agency. It was in a sixstoreyed building standing a little way back from the street, and it had a smooth, cream exterior and black-framed windows flush with its walls. When she took the lift to the top floor, to James Purdie & Associates, a voice came from the carpet-lined wall and told her in an American accent that that was where she was.

The lift doors slid open, and she was in a reception area with big potted palms and windows which reached right to the grey carpet. There before her was the city,

but a silent city, stretching away like a giant video screen, featuring towers, a park, tiny houses, and in the distance, a long line of low, black hills. She had never seen the city like this before, and for a few moments could only stand and stare at the beautiful, silent scene. Then a voice from the other side of the reception area said, 'Can I help you?' Moana turned to the receptionist, who was looking at her curiously. 'I've come to see Mr Purdie.' 'Is he expecting you?' 'I . . . think so. I had to come and see him about getting paid. For dancing the other night.' At the girl's blank look she added, 'I was working for Patrick.' 'Oh yes. Just wait there please.' She picked up the phone on her desk and spoke into it briefly, then looked up. 'Go straight in.' She nodded toward a door beside the desk. 'That door there.'

The financial manager was sitting behind a large desk. On it was a computer, two telephones and lots of papers. He was a round-faced man of about fifty, with a neatly trimmed black beard and darkrimmed glasses. After first giving Moana a distracted smile, he began flicking through the papers, saying, 'You did the Hawaiian dance for the Kagasashi launch, that's right isn't it?' 'Rarotongan,' Moana said firmly. The man looked up at her and frowned. 'Yes, but it was for the trip to Hawaii, wasn't it?' 'Yes.'

He looked at her directly, but in a slightly vague way, as if he was working out something in his mind. After a few moments he said carefully, 'You danced for about ten minutes, I believe. So . . . ' He reached across the desk for a company chequebook. ' . . . Shall we say, fifty dollars?' Moana shook her head. 'Oh no.'

The man's hand stopped above the chequebook. Blinking behind his glasses, he said carefully, coolly, 'Fifty dollars for ten minutes' work, that sounds reasonable.' Moana did not say anything. Instead she opened her bag, withdrew the invoice she had typed

out the day before, and placed it on the desk in front of him. He unfolded it, adjusted his glasses, read it. When he looked up again his brow was creased, his eyes wide. 'Five hundred and fifty dollars?' 'Yes, that is the bottom line. But if you look closely you can see how I've worked it out. I've listed all my expenses first, then my time.' Swallowing, he looked more closely at the invoice. 'What's this . . . phone calls for tipani?'

'That is what you call frangipani. For me ei, my garland. They came from my aunty in Titikaveka, in Rarotonga. She picked them the day before the event, sewed them, and air-freighted them here. The flowers themselves don't cost anything — they grow on our family land — but I had to ring her and arrange it, and pay the airline charges and the fumigation fee.' She paused. 'It's all listed there.' Coming around to the other side of the desk, Moana looked over the manager's shoulder. 'I've put those costs under "general expenses", here, see?' 'What about "sewing of titi"? What on earth's "titi"? 'Ferns. The ferns that went around my hips. I haven't charged for them because I got them from the park. But it took me two hours to sew them. I've listed that under "costume preparations". There, see?' Moving her finger across the page, she continued. 'The travel includes the bus to the airport and back to collect the tipani, plus the two return fares, to the rehearsal and to the actual launching. That's why that comes to over twenty-five dollars. It's quite expensive, getting from the Shore to Mount Wellington.'

Still staring at the invoice, the financial manager exhaled slowly. 'So you've charged, for the performance itself . . . ' His manicured finger moved across the page, ' . . . two hundred and fifty dollars.' 'That's right.' 'That's a lot of money.' 'Not when you know that you got the best. No plastic flowers, proper ones all the way from Rarotonga. Fresh titi, sewed the

right way, and the best pareu I had. And of course the best dancing I could do. For your guests.'

She waited for the man to say something, but there was just a long silence while he scratched his head, frowned, studied the invoice again. Moana went back to the front of the desk, and watched as the manager picked up a pen and made little tap-tapping movements with it on his desk. Then he reached for the chequebook again, wrote in it carefully, ripped the cheque from it, handed it across to her. She took it, looked at it. Payable to Ms M. Tere, five hundred and fifty dollars. When she looked back at him, there was the faintest of smiles, and a respectful expression on his face. 'I heard you danced beautifully,' he said. Moana smiled. 'Thank you. Would you like a receipt?' Outside on the footpath, Moana paused to look across Symonds Street, at the building opposite the one she had left. It was octagonal, but several storeys higher than the one she had been in. On the side of the other building was an external lift which was moving slowly upwards inside a transparent casing, so that it looked like the bubble in a spirit-level. She watched the lift glide to the top, pause there, then begin to move down again.

What an excellent place that would be to work, Moana thought. Better than Downtown, and much better than Mangere. She waited for a break in the traffic, then crossed the street. She would start to look for a secretarial job in an office around here, she decided. After she got back from Tahiti.

Vailima by Graeme Lay¹⁹

I came upon the film crew on my way back from the Apia market, early on my first Saturday in Sāmoa. I had breakfasted at the market on a banana and a slab of fried tuna before walking back around the town waterfront. It was only eight o'clock, but already very hot, with the sky above the town a brilliant blue, and a warm wind blowing from the east. I sat on one of the concrete benches by the waterfront path and watched the film crew going about their business. Two men up ladders were attaching a sign to an old, two storeyed building, stating that for the movie's purposes it was now WEINSTOCK'S HOTEL. The building itself was genuinely colonial: verandahed, with fretwork decorations and an iron roof. Watching the scene, I could see that when the vans, scaffolding and sound booms were removed from the camera's line of vision, the shot would look very realistic.

The actors – women mostly – were standing about in Edwardian costume; long, white, tightly-waisted dresses, gloves, wide-brimmed hats. The one male actor, wearing a white, high-necked suit and dark tie, was standing under a mango tree, smoking. I had sat next to him on the Polynesian Airlines flight from Tonga a couple of nights before, and had been startled to recognise the face I had seen several times on the screen. We had a brief conversation. He told me that the film was about an English aristocrat – himself – who falls in love with a Samoan-German girl, just before the outbreak of World War I. He had been to a London tanning clinic in order to look the part. The female lead, who was also English, had been to the same clinic, for even heavier doses, to make her look as Samoan as possible.

As I watched the director talking to the actors and the cameraman, I tried to imagine the finished scene. It wasn't difficult. The old wooden building, the dusty forecourt, the actors in their white, formal clothing. With the camera lens's trickery, it could all quite easily become Apia in 1913, just before the outbreak of World War I.

Picking up my bag, I walked on, away from the odd mixture of old and new, of reality and unreality, in the direction of Aggie Grey's. To my left was the harbour, where a dozen overseas yachts were moored. It wasn't difficult to imagine some of the Kaiser's battleships out there, either, as they would have been less than a century before. I looked up at Mt Vaea, caught in the glare of the morning sun, the forest flecked with brown from the pods of the flame trees, giving it a strangely deciduous look. Mt Vaea was the place, more than any other, which had drawn me to Apia.

The whiteboards in the lobby of Aggie Grey's described a variety of excursions: cultural tours, fiafia nights, day trips to beaches and waterfalls. But it was the briefest item on the board that most interested me. The climb to the top of Mt Vaea is only for the hardy. It begins near Vailima, Robert Louis Stevenson's restored home, and takes the climber up to the writer's tomb. The climb takes about fortyfive minutes. There is no charge, but the taxi to Vailima costs five tala. It was now only eight-thirty, still early enough to avoid the intense heat, and other climbers. I went back outside to the taxi stand.

The driver had a mop of frizzy hair and a patchy beard. As we turned off Beach Road and onto the Cross Island Road, we passed the film crew again. Shooting was evidently just going to start, as the young Englishman was standing arm in arm with one of the women, who held a sun umbrella. Again I was struck

¹⁹ English Year 12, p.30, 2004

by the reality of the movie's scene, and the strangeness of seeing Europeans posing in formal clothes in the tropical heat. Apia must at one time have been dominated by such people, I realised, playing out their colonial roles, keeping up their act. I decided that I must see the film when it was released. It was to be called *Empire of Love*.

The taxi began to climb, the town fell behind us.

The rising road was lined with hedges of bougainvillea, hibiscus, banana palms and frangipani trees, their pink and white blooms glowing like coral. A little way on, the taxi turned off to the right, along a tree-lined drive which ended a couple of hundred metres later. I got out, followed by the driver. We were on the edge of a forest, right beside the mountain, and it was intensely hot and still.

"Which way is the track?"

"Up there." Then he pointed back the other way.

"Vailima and Road of Loving Hearts is over there."

"Right, thank you."

"You want me to wait, and take you back?"

"No thanks, I'll walk, seeing it's all downhill."

I paid the driver, hoisted my bag onto my back and entered the forest behind the big house that Robert Louis Stevenson had had built back in 1889.

The track began by crossing the bed of a stream, strewn with volcanic boulders, now dry after what had evidently been weeks without rain. It then zig-zagged steeply up through the forest, the pathway and steps clearly marked by a foundation of volcanic boulders. The trees were mostly tall, straight and moss-covered, interspersed with saplings and the occasional rainforest giant. The track and the forest floor were littered with dry leaves, through which grew sprigs of small ferns. I walked for about fifteen minutes without a pause, then a sleek black skink scuttled across the dry leaves in front of me. It froze on a log beside the track,

then as I bent to catch it, vanished almost faster than my eyes could see.

My pace began to slow. In spite of the size of the trees, and the extent of their canopy, it was very hot, and my whole body was running with sweat. From somewhere within the forest came a strange, whoop-whooping call, whether from a bird or animal I couldn't tell. It was answered after a short pause by an identical call from elsewhere on the mountain. The eerie calls, and the rustling of the leaves by the skinks which now darted away frequently before my tread, were the only sounds I could hear as I climbed.

But in spite of the heat, and the steepness, I felt a growing sense of expectation. This was the same path which hundreds of grieving Samoans had cut as they bore Tusitala's body to the summit, more than a century ago. I could not stop now, even to rest.

The track opened onto a clearing, and there was Robert Louis Stevenson's tomb, white, alone, higher than I had imagined, and surrounded by a wide ledge. And as I stood before it, still panting, but cooled at last by a slight breeze, I saw to my annoyance that someone else had beaten me to the mountain top. A young man.

He sat at the end of a strip of cleared ground which sloped away in front of the tomb, his back against the trunk of a big kapok tree. He was writing in a notebook. Ignoring him, I walked slowly around the tomb, savouring Tusitala's words on the bronze plaque, noting the inscription to Fanny, his wife, refreshed by the breeze and the beautiful views, of mountain, forest and distant sea. I felt elated. It had taken me years, but at last I was here.

I walked to the edge of the clearing. Far below, part of the town and its harbour, and the thumb of Mulinufi were visible. Arcs of foam marked the reef, and beyond it the sea was pale and shimmering, mist blurring the horizon. Immediately below me, on the

flanks of the mountain, swifts tacked and swooped, and from somewhere below, a church bell was tolling. Again I heard the haunting, whoop-whooping of the unseen bird, and its echo seconds later.

Turning to walk to the other side of the clearing, I saw the young man again. He raised one hand in greeting. I hesitated, then walked down to where he sat. Smiling, he put aside his notebook. On the grass beside him was a small rucksack.

“Good morning,” he said.

“Hello.” I removed my pack and sat down on the grass.

“You must have been up early.”

“Yes, I was awake before dawn.” He smiled ruefully.

“Island roosters, you know.”

His English public school accent took me by surprise. I hadn’t encountered any upper-class English people in Sāmoa until now. I undid my pack, took out the large bottle of beer I had bought in the town, uncapped it.

“That was quite a climb in this heat,” I said. “Would you like a drink?”

“Oh I say, thank you. Thank you very much.”

He took the bottle, put it to his lips. His long, shapely face was deeply tanned, slightly ruddy, his fair hair thick and wavy, fashionably short at the back and sides. The sleeves of his cream-coloured shirt were rolled up, and half its front buttons were undone. Beside him on the grass was a pair of heavy, dusty, brown brogue shoes, but no socks. I put his age at about twenty-five. Wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he examined the label of the beer bottle curiously.

“Vailima . . . I haven’t seen this brand before.” He passed it back.

“You’ve just arrived in Sāmoa?”

“I’ve been here two weeks, but I’ve only drunk German beer. That’s very good though. A good name

for a beer, Vailima. It means ‘five rivers’, they told me at the house.” He cocked his head. “What is your accent? Australian? South African?”

“New Zealand.”

“Aaah . . . North Island or South Island?”

“North. Auckland.”

Nodding approvingly, he said, “I’m going there next month, from Fiji.” He stared upwards. “I shall take a train from Auckland to . . . Hamilton, then to Tai . . . Tai . . .” Looking back at me, he raised his eyebrows quizzically. “Near the centre of the North Island . . .?”

“Tai . . . happy. Tai . . . happy. Yes.” He savoured the word, rolling it around in his mouth as if it was a fine red wine. “Tai. . .happy. I have friends there, on a sheep station. I’m very much looking forward to seeing it.”

“And do you like Sāmoa?”

“Oh yes! Don’t you?”

“I’ve only been here two days, but yes, I like what I’ve seen so far.”

“So you haven’t been to a village yet?”

“No.”

Putting his head back against the tree trunk, he closed his eyes, appearing to lose himself in reverie for some moments. He had a very full, expressive mouth, and this, and the combination of fair hair, brown skin and blue eyes was strikingly attractive. I thought vaguely that he reminded me of someone I had seen before, but I could not think who. Opening his eyes again, he spoke dreamily.

“Last week I stayed in a village on the south coast of Upolu, with a Samoan family. It was blissful. Very hot by day, so I just swam and walked in the morning, and slept in the afternoon. Then at night I lay awake for hours, lying on a mat, looking out at the white sand under the palms, the black line of the reef a mile out,

moonlight over everything.” He fixed me with his blue eyes. “And the people are so lovely, and kind, and utterly content, living amid so much sheer beauty, and in houses with no walls. It was all divine, like another, much happier childhood to me . . .”

I nodded, appreciating his enthusiasm. Then, remembering his manners, he turned the conversation away from himself. “And yourself? Are you holidaying?”

“Business and pleasure. I’m planning a book about Robert Louis Stevenson, and his life in the Pacific.”

He sat up.

“Oh I say, how interesting. So this is something of a pilgrimage for you.”

“In a way, yes.”

He looked at me with utmost seriousness. “And for me. I am a poet.”

I smiled. “You must find plenty here to inspire you.”

He picked up his leather-bound notebook.

“Yes, wherever I look in these islands, there is poetry.

I have written hundreds of lines.”

“Has any of it been published?”

“Not yet. The post is very slow. But it will be. What about your work? Have you got far with Tusitala?”

“No, I’ve only just begun. Most of the material is in Scotland and England. Some in Hawaii. I’m going to those places later this year. But I had to start here, with the pilgrimage.”

He nodded, then frowned.

“I read *The Beach at Falesa* on the ship from Pago. It’s a strange story. I didn’t much care for it, I’m bound to say.”

“I think his best writing was done before he came here. In Sāmoa he was too involved with other things. Politics, journalism, horticulture.”

Leaning forward, the Englishman said, “But who could blame him? He had been an invalid for so long.

Being here gave him his first real taste of the physical word, in the fullest sense. I understand that.” After a pause, he added, “And the Samoans, did they really love him as much as it’s said they did?”

“Oh yes, I’m sure that’s true. The only people who didn’t like him were the colonial authorities. Which is another point in his favour, I think.”

“Hah, yes.”

“What part of England are you from?” I asked him.

“I grew up in Warwickshire, then after leaving Rugby school I went up to Cambridge university.”

“That’s a beautiful town.”

“Oh yes. I wasn’t a good student though, I wasted a good deal of time.” He stared into the distance, lost in memory and evidently not happy with what he was finding there. He said quietly, “Perhaps I still am. Wasting my time.” Maintaining his thoughtful expression, he went on, “They say that every white man who comes to the South Seas is running away from something.”

“Including Tusitala?”

“Yes. From his illness, from death.”

Taking a crumpled handkerchief from his pocket, he wiped the sweat from his face. I noticed that his clothes were made from coarse material, too heavy for the climate. Even in my shorts I was hot. But he went on speaking, sadly now.

“I’m running away. From people I love. Two years ago I had a breakdown.”

“Oh.”

“But I’m better now,” he added firmly.

“And you’re going to stay in this part of the world?”

“For a few months. He gave a little laugh. “I need to fall in love again, I think.” He was silent for a few moments, then added in a wistful, distant voice, “But I can’t stay forever, I must go back to England. I left too many friends behind.” As he turned his gaze on me, I

thought I saw a flicker of fear in his blue eyes. “And there’s a war coming in Europe.”

“Things are very stable there now, surely.”

I couldn’t keep the irritation from my voice. His pessimism was getting on my nerves. But politics was obviously a topic of intense interest to him. Sitting up, leaning forward, he fixed me with an earnest stare.

“The politicians would like us all to think things are improving, but it’s not true. Europe’s full of weapons, the navies are expanding month by month. The Russian leadership will collapse before much longer, and the Germans are so aggressive. I’ve been to Berlin, I’ve seen what they’re like. The ones here are just the same, arrogant, full of bluster.”

I didn’t bother to reply. He was, I decided, underneath his charm, slightly mad. Like most poets. His anti-German feelings I found very strange. It was true that there were many Germans in Sāmoa, there were several at my guesthouse in Apia, backpackers mainly, about his age. They were decent, thoughtful, civilised young people, in my experience. I hadn’t met one I hadn’t liked. It had occurred to me that their very presence in the South Pacific constituted a rejection of Europe’s nuclear weapons.

But I hadn’t climbed Mt Vaea for a political argument. Instead I put the empty beer bottle into my pack and stood up.

“Forget about Europe,” I said, “Let’s have another look at the tomb.”

Leaping to his feet, he said keenly, “Oh yes, good idea.”

We walked up the slope together. He was tall, loose-limbed, athletic. As we approached the tomb he wandered over to a hibiscus bush, broke off a small branch containing one scarlet bloom, brought it over and placed it gently on the ledge at the front of the vault.

“For you, Tusitala,” he said. We stared at the bronze words of ‘Requiem’ for a few moments in silence, then he read aloud the last lines. “Home is the sailor, home from sea.”

We stood side by side in silence for a little time, then he took a large silver watch from the fob pocket of his trousers, glanced at it, put it back. “I have to go now. I have to be at Weinstock’s at eleven. There’s a coach coming to pick me up from Vailima at a quarter to. Would you like a ride back down to Apia?”

“No thanks, I’ll stay a bit longer.”

Nodding understandingly, he said, “It is a lovely place. I would like to be buried somewhere like this.”

“You’re a bit young to be thinking along those lines,” I replied.

Still with his eyes on the tomb, he ran his hand slowly over his fair hair.

“Perhaps. But if there is a war, I won’t be able to escape it. No one will.” Then his mood changed again. Smiling warmly at me, he held out his hand. “Goodbye. And good luck with your research.” I gripped his hand.

“Thank you. And good luck to you, too. I hope you enjoy Taihape, and everywhere else. My name’s Anthony, by the way.”

“Rupert,” he replied, giving me a brisk nod. “I’ve enjoyed our talk very much.”

“Yes. Goodbye, and the best of luck.”

Our eyes met for an instant longer, then he turned and strode back down the slope to the trees. I watched him bend to put his shoes on, tie the laces. He picked up his rucksack, slung it over his shoulder. Glancing back at me, he held up a hand, momentarily, in salute, then walked to the head of the track and vanished downwards.

As I photographed the tomb, and the views from the mountain, an image of the young man lingered in my

mind. I doubted if I would see him again. The Pacific Islands were filled with such brief encounters. People met, talked, flew on, without bothering with formalities like surnames. That was part of the South Pacific's charm. Still, there had been something very distinctive about him, something vital and appealing, despite his strange preoccupation with death and his swinging moods. Perhaps it was his striking good looks, his unblemished youth, his passion for life. I hoped that he would find the peace he needed, however temporary it might be. England, it seemed, had done nothing but wound him emotionally. But here in the Pacific he could live as he wished. He had mentioned that he wanted to fall in love. I thought that some girl would surely fall in love with him. With Rupert. A good name for a poet, too, Rupert. I froze. Rupert Brooke . . .

I ran to the track, plunged downwards, my bag, the books and empty bottle inside it thumping against my spine. Although the descent was much easier, it was also hotter, and the sweat was soon streaming from every pore. As I hurtled down through the forest, the skinks darted away to left and right in flashes of black. Of course it was ludicrous, the very thought that it could have been him. Yet I knew enough of Rupert Brooke's life story. Rugby school, Cambridge university, travels in the Pacific. And death in 1915, in Greece or somewhere round there. And of course I had seen the famous photo of Rupert Brooke, poet, the handsome but doomed youth. It was him, surely, or his double. Or was it? How much Vailima had I drunk up there in the sun? Not that much, he had drunk more. I had shared the beer with Rupert Brooke. So, was he mad, or was I?

I kept running, taking the stone steps down the mountain three at a time. He had mentioned where he was going, but what was the name of the place?

Weinstock's. Where had I seen that name? Of course, the film set in Apia, the sign for the hotel. That was it, he was an actor, one of the casts. He must have slipped away from the filming for a couple of hours, still in his period costume. The whole thing had been a piece of actor's game-playing. No doubt he and his fellow movie actors would laugh about it later, at how cleverly he had led me on.

Yet as I ran on, back and forth down the zig-zagging, rapidly descending track, I knew full well that at this speed I must by now have overtaken him. Skin dripping, lungs burning, I reached the dry river bed. Ahead was a clearing, planted with vividly coloured tropical shrubs. A young Samoan man dressed only in a green and mauve lavalava was sitting weeding the plants. He looked up at me incuriously as I burst into the clearing.

"Talofa," I gasped. "Where is the man, the young Englishman. Palagi man, fair hair."

The gardener looked around, then said, "No man here."

"He was ahead of me on the track. He must have come past here . . ."

The man shrugged. "Only you here this morning. No other man."

Trudging, chest heaving, I reached the end of the level track. A vast expanse of lawn, an avenue of teak trees. The Road of Loving Hearts. My eyes panned the scene. No coach, not another person in sight. Just the lawn, and the trees, and a huge verandahed house. Vailima.

The Sacrificial Egg by Chinua Achebe²⁰

JULIUS Obi sat gazing at his typewriter. The fat chief clerk, his boss, was snoring at his table. Outside, the gatekeeper in his green uniform was sleeping at his post. No customer had passed through the gate for nearly a week. There was an empty basket on the giant weighing machine. A few palm kernels lay in the dust around the machine.

Julius went to the window that overlooked the great market on the bank of the Niger. This market, like all Ibo markets, had been held on one of the four days of the week. But with the coming of the white man and the growth of Umuru into a big palm-oil port, it had become a daily market. In spite of that however, it was still busiest on its original Nkwo day, because the deity that presided over it cast her spell only on that day. It was said that she appeared in the form of an old woman in the center of the market just before cockcrow and waved her magic fan in the four directions of the earth -- in front of her, behind her, to the right, and to the left -- to draw to the market men and women from distant clans. And they came, these men and women, bringing the produce of their lands: palm oil and kernels, kola nuts, cassava, mats, baskets, and earthenware pots. And they took home many-colored cloths, smoked fish, iron pots and plates.

Others came by the great river bringing yams and fish in their canoes. Sometimes it was a big canoe with a dozen or more people in it; sometimes it was just a fisherman and his wife in a small vessel from the swiftflowing Anambara. They moored their canoe on the bank and sold their fish, after much haggling. The woman then walked up the steep banks of the river to the heart of the market to buy salt and oil and, if the sales had been good, a length of cloth. And for her

children at home she bought bean cakes or *akara* and *mai-mai*, which the Igara women cooked. As evening approached, they took up their paddles and paddled away, the water shimmering in the sunset and their canoe becoming smaller and smaller in the distance until it was just a dark crescent on the water's face and two dark bodies swaying forwards and backwards in it.

Julius Obi was not a native of Umuru. He came from a bush village twenty or so miles away. But having passed his Standard Six in a mission school in 1920 he came to Umuru to work as a clerk in the offices of the Niger Company, which dealt in palm oil and kernels. The offices were situated beside the famous Umuru market, so that in his first two or three weeks Julius had to learn to work against the background of its noise. Sometimes when the chief clerk was away or asleep he walked to the window and looked down on the vast anthill activity. Most of these people were not there yesterday, he thought, and yet the market was as full. There must be many, many people in the world. Of course they say that not everyone who came to the great market was a real person. Janet's mother had said so.

"Some of the beautiful young women you see squeezing through the crowds are not real people but *mammy-wota* from the river," she said.

"How does one know them?" asked Julius, whose education placed him above such superstitious stuff. But he took care not to sound unbelieving. He had long learned that it was bad policy to argue with Ma on such points.

"You can always tell," she explained, "because they are beautiful with a beauty that is not of this world. You catch a glimpse of them with the tail of your eye, then they disappear in the crowd."

²⁰ Other Worlds, p.61, 2000

Julius thought about these things as he now stood at the window looking down at the empty market. Who would have believed that the great market could ever be so empty? But such was the power of *Kitikpa*, or smallpox.

When Umuru had been a little village, it had been swept and kept clean by its handful of inhabitants. But now it had grown into a busy, sprawling, crowded, and dirty river port. And *Kitikpa* came. No other disease is feared by the Ibo people as much as they fear *Kitikpa*. It is personified as an evil deity. Its victims are not mourned lest it be offended. It put an end to the coming and going between neighbors and between villages. They said, "*Kitikpa* is in that village, and immediately it was cut off by its neighbors.

Julius was worried because it was almost a week since he had seen Janet, the girl he was going to marry. Ma had explained to him very gently that he should no longer come to see them "until this thing is over by the power of Jehovah." Ma was a very devout Christian, and one reason why she approved of Julius for her only daughter was that he sang in the church choir.

"You must keep to your rooms," she had said. "You never know whom you might meet on the streets. That family has got it." She pointed at the house across the road. "That is what the yellow palm frond at the doorway means. The family were all moved away today in the big government lorry."

Janet walked a short way with him, and they said good night. And they shook hands, which was very odd.

Julius did not go straight home. He went to the bank of the river and just walked up and down it. He must have been there a long time, because he was still there when the *ekwe*, or wooden gong, of the night spirit sounded. He immediately set out for home, half walking and half running. He had about half an hour to get home before the spirit ran its race through the town.

As Julius hurried home he stepped on something that broke with a slight liquid explosion. He stopped and peeped down at the footpath. The moon was not yet up, but there was some faint light which showed that it would not be long delayed. In this light Julius saw that he had stepped on a sacrificial egg. There were young palm fronds around it. Someone oppressed by misfortune had brought the offering to the crossroads in the dusk. And he had stepped on it and taken the sufferer's ill luck to himself. "Nonsense," he said and hurried away. But it was too late; the night spirit was already abroad. Its voice rose high and clear in the still, black air. It was a long way away, but Julius knew that distance did not apply to these beings. So he made straight for the cocoyam farm beside the road and threw himself on his belly. He had hardly done this when he heard the rattling staff of the spirit and a thundering stream of esoteric speech. He shook all over. The sounds came bearing down on him. And then he could hear the footsteps. It was as if twenty men were running together. In no time at all the sounds had passed and disappeared in the distance on the other side of the road.

As Julius stood at the window looking out on the empty market he lived through that night again. It was only a week ago, but already it seemed to be separated from the present by a vast emptiness. This emptiness deepened with the passage of time. On this side stood Julius, and on the other Ma and Janet, who were carried away by the smallpox.

The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant²¹

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as if by an error of fate, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no expectations, no means of becoming known, understood, loved or wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and so she let herself be married to a minor official at the Ministry of Education.

She dressed plainly because she had never been able to afford anything better, but she was as unhappy as if she had once been wealthy. Women don't belong to a caste or class; their beauty, grace, and natural charm take the place of birth and family. Natural delicacy, instinctive elegance and a quick wit determine their place in society, and make the daughters of commoners the equals of the very finest ladies.

She suffered endlessly, feeling she was entitled to all the delicacies and luxuries of life. She suffered because of the poorness of her house as she looked at the dirty walls, the worn-out chairs and the ugly curtains. All these things that another woman of her class would not even have noticed, tormented her and made her resentful. The sight of the little Brenton girl who did her housework filled her with terrible regrets and hopeless fantasies. She dreamed of silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestries, lit from above by torches in bronze holders, while two tall footmen in knee-length breeches napped in huge armchairs, sleepy from the stove's oppressive warmth. She dreamed of vast living rooms furnished in rare old silks, elegant furniture loaded with priceless ornaments, and inviting smaller rooms, perfumed, made for afternoon chats with close friends - famous, sought after men, who all women envy and desire.

When she sat down to dinner at a round table covered with a three-day-old cloth opposite her husband who, lifting the lid off the soup, shouted excitedly, "Ah! Beef stew! What could be better," she dreamed of fine dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestries which peopled the walls with figures from another time and strange birds in fairy forests; she dreamed of delicious dishes served on wonderful plates, of whispered gallantries listened to with an inscrutable smile as one ate the pink flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing; and these were the only things she loved. She felt she was made for them alone. She wanted so much to charm, to be envied, to be desired and sought after.

She had a rich friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, whom she no longer wanted to visit because she suffered so much when she came home. For whole days afterwards she would weep with sorrow, regret, despair and misery.

One evening her husband came home with an air of triumph, holding a large envelope in his hand.

"Look," he said, "here's something for you."

She tore open the paper and drew out a card, on which was printed the words:

"The Minister of Education and Mme. Georges Rampouneau request the pleasure of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the Ministry, on the evening of Monday January 18th."

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation on the table resentfully, and muttered:

"What do you want me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and it will be such a lovely occasion! I

²¹ www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks

had awful trouble getting it. Every one wants to go; it is very exclusive, and they're not giving many invitations to clerks. The whole ministry will be there."

She stared at him angrily, and said, impatiently:

"And what do you expect me to wear if I go?"

He hadn't thought of that. He stammered:

"Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It seems very nice to me ..."

He stopped, stunned, distressed to see his wife crying. Two large tears ran slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth. He stuttered:

"What's the matter? What's the matter?"

With great effort she overcame her grief and replied in a calm voice, as she wiped her wet cheeks:

"Nothing. Only I have no dress and so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to a friend whose wife has better clothes than I do."

He was distraught, but tried again:

"Let's see, Mathilde. How much would a suitable dress cost, one which you could use again on other occasions, something very simple?"

She thought for a moment, computing the cost, and also wondering what amount she could ask for without an immediate refusal and an alarmed exclamation from the thrifty clerk.

At last she answered hesitantly:

"I don't know exactly, but I think I could do it with four hundred *francs*."

He turned a little pale, because he had been saving that exact amount to buy a gun and treat himself to a hunting trip the following summer, in the country near Nanterre, with a few friends who went lark-shooting there on Sundays.

However, he said:

"Very well, I can give you four hundred *francs*. But try and get a really beautiful dress."

The day of the party drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, restless, anxious. Her dress was ready, however. One evening her husband said to her:

"What's the matter? You've been acting strange these last three days."

She replied: "I'm upset that I have no jewels, not a single stone to wear. I will look cheap. I would almost rather not go to the party."

"You could wear flowers," he said, "They are very fashionable at this time of year. For ten *francs* you could get two or three magnificent roses."

She was not convinced.

"No; there is nothing more humiliating than looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

"How stupid you are!" her husband cried. "Go and see your friend Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her well enough for that."

She uttered a cry of joy.

"Of course. I had not thought of that."

The next day she went to her friend's house and told her of her distress.

Madame Forestier went to her mirrored wardrobe, took out a large box, brought it back, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel:

"Choose, my dear."

First she saw some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a gold Venetian cross set with precious stones, of exquisite craftsmanship. She tried on the jewelry in the mirror, hesitated, could not bear to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking:

"You have nothing else?"

"Why, yes. But I don't know what you like."

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a superb diamond necklace, and her heart began to beat with uncontrolled desire. Her hands trembled as she

took it. She fastened it around her neck, over her high-necked dress, and stood lost in ecstasy as she looked at herself.

Then she asked anxiously, hesitating:

"Would you lend me this, just this?"

"Why, yes, of course."

She threw her arms around her friend's neck, embraced her rapturously, then fled with her treasure. The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was prettier than all the other women, elegant, gracious, smiling, and full of joy. All the men stared at her, asked her name, tried to be introduced. All the cabinet officials wanted to waltz with her. The minister noticed her.

She danced wildly, with passion, drunk on pleasure, forgetting everything in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness, made up of all this respect, all this admiration, all these awakened desires, of that sense of triumph that is so sweet to a woman's heart.

She left at about four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been dozing since midnight in a little deserted anteroom with three other gentlemen whose wives were having a good time.

He threw over her shoulders the clothes he had brought for her to go outside in, the modest clothes of an ordinary life, whose poverty contrasted sharply with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this and wanted to run away, so she wouldn't be noticed by the other women who were wrapping themselves in expensive furs.

Loisel held her back.

"Wait a moment, you'll catch a cold outside. I'll go and find a cab."

But she would not listen to him, and ran down the stairs. When they were finally in the street, they could

not find a cab, and began to look for one, shouting at the cabmen they saw passing in the distance.

They walked down toward the Seine in despair, shivering with cold. At last they found on the quay one of those old night cabs that one sees in Paris only after dark, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day.

They were dropped off at their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly walked up the steps to their apartment. It was all over, for her. And he was remembering that he had to be back at his office at ten o'clock.

In front of the mirror, she took off the clothes around her shoulders, taking a final look at herself in all her glory. But suddenly she uttered a cry. She no longer had the necklace round her neck!

"What is the matter?" asked her husband, already half undressed.

She turned towards him, panic-stricken.

"I have ... I have ... I no longer have Madame Forestier's necklace."

He stood up, distraught.

"What! ... how! ... That's impossible!"

They looked in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her cloak, in her pockets, everywhere. But they could not find it.

"Are you sure you still had it on when you left the ball?" he asked.

"Yes. I touched it in the hall at the Ministry."

"But if you had lost it in the street we would have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. That's probably it. Did you take his number?"

"No. And you, didn't you notice it?"

"No."

They stared at each other, stunned. At last Loisel put his clothes on again.

"I'm going back," he said, "over the whole route we walked, see if I can find it."

He left. She remained in her ball dress all evening, without the strength to go to bed, sitting on a chair, with no fire, her mind blank.

Her husband returned at about seven o'clock. He had found nothing.

He went to the police, to the newspapers to offer a reward, to the cab companies, everywhere the tiniest glimmer of hope led him.

She waited all day, in the same state of blank despair from before this frightful disaster.

Loisel returned in the evening, a hollow, pale figure; he had found nothing.

"You must write to your friend," he said, "tell her you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it mended. It will give us time to look some more."

She wrote as he dictated.

At the end of one week they had lost all hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

"We must consider how to replace the jewel."

The next day they took the box which had held it, and went to the jeweler whose name they found inside. He consulted his books.

"It was not I, madame, who sold the necklace; I must simply have supplied the case."

And so they went from jeweler to jeweler, looking for an necklace like the other one, consulting their memories, both sick with grief and anguish.

In a shop at the Palais Royal, they found a string of diamonds which seemed to be exactly what they were looking for. It was worth forty thousand *francs*. They could have it for thirty-six thousand.

So they begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made an arrangement that he would

take it back for thirty-four thousand *francs* if the other necklace was found before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand *francs* which his father had left him. He would borrow the rest.

And he did borrow, asking for a thousand *francs* from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes, made ruinous agreements, dealt with usurers, with every type of money-lender. He compromised the rest of his life, risked signing notes without knowing if he could ever honor them, and, terrified by the anguish still to come, by the black misery about to fall on him, by the prospect of every physical privation and every moral torture he was about to suffer, he went to get the new necklace, and laid down on the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand *francs*.

When Madame Loisel took the necklace back, Madame Forestier said coldly:

"You should have returned it sooner, I might have needed it."

To the relief of her friend, she did not open the case. If she had detected the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she have taken her friend for a thief?

From then on, Madame Loisel knew the horrible life of the very poor. But she played her part heroically. The dreadful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They dismissed their maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented a garret under the roof.

She came to know the drudgery of housework, the odious labors of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, staining her rosy nails on greasy pots and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and the dishcloths, which she hung to dry on a line; she carried the garbage down to the street every morning, and carried up the water, stopping at each landing to catch her breath. And, dressed like a commoner, she went to

the fruiterer's, the grocer's, the butcher's, her basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, fighting over every miserable *sou*.

Each month they had to pay some notes, renew others, get more time.

Her husband worked every evening, doing accounts for a tradesman, and often, late into the night, he sat copying a manuscript at five *sous* a page.

And this life lasted ten years.

At the end of ten years they had paid off everything, everything, at usurer's rates and with the accumulations of compound interest.

Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become strong, hard and rough like all women of impoverished households. With hair half combed, with skirts awry, and reddened hands, she talked loudly as she washed the floor with great swishes of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down near the window and thought of that evening at the ball so long ago, when she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows, who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed for one to be ruined or saved!

One Sunday, as she was walking in the Champs Élysées to refresh herself after the week's work, suddenly she saw a woman walking with a child. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

Madame Loisel felt emotional. Should she speak to her? Yes, of course. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She went up to her.

"Good morning, Jeanne."

The other, astonished to be addressed so familiarly by this common woman, did not recognize her. She stammered:

"But - madame - I don't know. You must have made a mistake."

"No, I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry.

"Oh! ... my poor Mathilde, how you've changed! ..."

"Yes, I have had some hard times since I last saw you, and many miseries ... and all because of you! ..."

"Me? How can that be?"

"You remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to wear to the Ministry party?"

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"What do you mean? You brought it back."

"I brought you back another exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. It wasn't easy for us, we had very little. But at last it is over, and I am very glad."

Madame Forestier was stunned.

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes; you didn't notice then? They were very similar."

And she smiled with proud and innocent pleasure.

Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took both her hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! Mine was an imitation! It was worth five hundred *francs* at most! ..."

Year 12 – Short stories

An Affair of the Heart by Frank Sargeson²²

At Christmastime our family always went to the beach. In those days there weren't the roads along the Gulf that there are now, so father would get a carrier to take our luggage down to the launch steps. And as my brother and I would always ride on the cart, that was the real beginning of our holidays.

It was a little bay a good distance out of the harbour that we'd go to, and of course the launch trip would be even more exciting than the ride on the carrier's cart. We'd always scare mother beforehand by telling her it was sure to be rough. Each year we rented the same bach and we'd stay right until our school holidays were up. All except father who used to have only a few days' holiday at Christmas. He'd give my brother and me a lecture about behaving ourselves and not giving mother any trouble, then he'd go back home. Of course we'd spend nearly all our time on the beach, and mother'd have no more trouble with us than most mothers are quite used to having.

Well, it's all a long time ago. It's hard now to understand why the things that we occupied our time over should have given us so much happiness. But they did. As I'll tell you, I was back in that bay not long ago, and for all that I'm well on in years I was innocent enough to think that to be there again would be to experience something of that same happiness. Of course I didn't experience anything of the kind. And because I didn't I had some reflections instead that gave me the very reverse of happiness. But this is by the way. I haven't set out to philosophise. I've set out to tell you about a woman who lived in a bach not far beyond that bay of ours, and who, an old woman now, lives there to this day.

As you can understand, we children didn't spend all our time on our own little beach. When the tide was out we'd go for walks round the rocks, and sometimes we'd get mother to go with us. My brother and I would be one on each side of her, holding her hands, dragging her this way and that. We'd show her the wonders we'd found, some place where there were sea-eggs underneath a ledge, or a pool where the sea-anemones grew thick.

It was one of these times when we had mother with us that we walked further round the rocks than we had ever been before. We came to a place where there was a fair-sized beach, and there, down near lowwater mark, was the woman I've spoken about. She was digging for pipis, and her children were all round her scratching the sand up too. Every now and then they'd pick up handfuls of pipis and run over near their mother, and drop the pipis into a flax kit.

Well, we went over to look. We liked pipis ourselves, but there weren't many on our own beach. The woman hardly took any notice of us, and we could have laughed at the way she was dressed. She had on a man's old hat and coat, and the children were sketches too. There were four of them, three girls and a boy; and the boy, besides being the smallest and skinniest, looked the worst of all because he was so badly in need of a haircut.

The woman asked mother if she'd like some pipis to take home. She said she sold pipis and mussels. They made good soup, she said. Mother didn't buy any but she said she would some other day, so the woman slung the kit on her shoulder, and off she went towards a tumbledown bach that stood a little way back from the beach. The children ran about all round her, and

²² English Year 11 Book 2, p.41, 2004

the sight made you think of a hen that was out with her chickens.

Of course going back round the rocks we talked about the woman and her children. I remember we poked a bit of fun at the way they were dressed, and we wondered why the woman wanted to sell us pipis and mussels when we could have easily got some for ourselves. Perhaps they're poor, mother said.

That made us leave off poking fun. We didn't know what it was to be poor. Father had only his wages, and sometimes when we complained about not getting enough money to spend, he asked what we thought would happen to us if he got the sack. We took it as a joke. But this time there was something in what mother said that made us feel a little frightened.

Well, later on my brother and I made lots of excursions as far as that beach, and gradually we got to know the woman and her children, and saw inside their bach. We'd go home in great excitement to tell mother the things we'd found out. The woman was Mrs Crawley. She lived there all the year round, and the children had miles to walk to school. They didn't have any father, and Mrs Crawley collected pipis and mussels and sold them, and as there were lots of pine trees along the cliffs she gathered pine cones into sugar bags and sold them too. Another way she had of getting money was to pick up the kauri gum that you found among the seaweed at high-tide mark, and sell that. But it was little enough she got all told. There was a road not very far back from the beach, and about once a week she'd collect there the things she had to sell, and a man who ran a cream lorry would give her a lift into town. And the money she got she'd spend on things like flour and sugar, and clothes that she bought in second-hand shops. Mostly, though, all there was to eat was the soup from the pipis and mussels, and vegetables out of the garden. There was a sandy bit of garden close by

the bach. It was ringed round with tea-tree brush to keep out the wind, and Mrs Crawley grew kumaras and tomatoes, drum-head cabbages and runner beans. But most of the runner beans she'd let go to seed, and sell for the winter.

It was all very interesting and romantic to me and my brother. We were always down in the dumps when our holidays were over. We'd have liked to camp at our bach all the year round, so we thought the young Crawleys were luckier than we were. Certainly they were poor, and lived in a tumbledown bach with sacking nailed on to the walls to keep the wind out, and slept on heaps of fern sewn into sacking. But we couldn't see anything wrong with that. We'd have done it ourselves any day. But we could see that mother was upset over the things we used to tell her.

Such things shouldn't be, she'd say. She'd never come to visit the Crawleys, but she was always giving us something or other that we didn't need in our bach to take round to them. But Mrs Crawley never liked taking the things that mother sent. She'd rather be independent, she said. And she told us there were busybodies in the world who'd do people harm if they could.

One thing we noticed right from the start. It was that Mrs Crawley's boy Joe was her favourite. One time mother gave us a big piece of Christmas cake to take round, and the children didn't happen to be about when we got there, so Mrs Crawley put the cake away in a tin. Later on my brother let the cat out of the bag. He asked one of the girls how she liked the cake. Well, she didn't know anything about it, but you could tell by the way Joe looked that he did. Mrs Crawley spoilt him, sure enough. She'd bring him back little things from town when she never brought anything back for the girls. He didn't have to do as much work as any of the girls either, and his mother was always saying,

‘Come here Joe, and let me nurse you’. It made us feel a bit uncomfortable. In our family we never showed our feelings much.

Well, year after year we took the launch to our bay, and we always looked forward to seeing the Crawleys. The children shot up the same as we did. The food they had kept them growing at any rate. And when Joe was a lanky boy of fifteen his mother was spoiling him worse than ever. She’d let him off work more and more, even though she never left off working herself for a second. And she was looking old and worn out by that time. Her back was getting bent with so much digging and picking up pine cones, and her face looked old and tired too. Her teeth were gone and her mouth was sucked in. It made her chin stick out until you thought of the toe of a boot. But it was queer the way she never looked old when Joe was there. Her face seemed to go young again, and she never took her eyes off him. He was nothing much to look at we thought, but although my brother and I never spoke about it we both somehow understood how she felt about him. Every day she spent digging in her garden or digging up pipis, pulling up mussels from the reefs or picking up pine cones; and compared to our mother she didn’t seem to have much of a life. But it was all for Joe, and so long as she had Joe what did it matter? She never told us that, but we knew all the same. I don’t know how much my brother understood about it, because as I’ve said we never said anything to each other. But I felt a little bit frightened. It was perhaps the first time I understood what deep things there could be in life. It was easy to see how mad over Joe Mrs Crawley was, and evidently when you went mad over a person like that you didn’t take much account of their being nothing much to look at. And perhaps I felt frightened because there was a feeling in me that going mad over

a person in that way could turn out to be quite a terrible thing.

Anyhow, the next thing was our family left off going to the bay. My brother and I were old enough to go away camping somewhere with our cobbles, and father and mother were sick of the bother of going down to the bay. It certainly made us a bit sorry to think that we wouldn’t be seeing the Crawleys that summer, but I don’t think we lost much sleep over it. I remember that we talked about sending them a letter. But it never got beyond talk.

What I’m going to tell you about happened last Christmas. It was twenty-odd years since I’d been in the bay and I happened to be passing near.

I may as well tell you that I’ve not been what people call a success in life. Unlike my brother who’s a successful businessman, with a wife and a car and a few other ties that successful men have, I’ve never been able to settle down. Perhaps the way I’d seen the Crawleys live had an upsetting influence on me. It’s always seemed a bit comic to me to see people stay in one place all their lives and work at one job. I like meeting different people and tackling all sorts of jobs, and if I’ve saved up a few pounds it’s always come natural to me to throw up my job and travel about a bit. It gets you nowhere, as people say, and it’s a sore point with my mother and father who’ve just about ceased to own me. But there are lots of compensations.

Well, last Christmas Day I was heading up north after a job I’d heard was going on a fruit farm, and as I was short of money at the time I was hoofing it. I got the idea that I’d turn off the road and have a look at the bay. I did, and had a good look. But it was a mistake. As I’ve said the kick that I got was the opposite to what I was expecting, and I came away in a hurry. It’s my belief that only the very toughest sort of people should ever go back to places where they’ve been happy.

Then I thought of the Crawleys. I couldn't believe it possible they'd be living on their beach still, but I felt like having a look. (You can see why I've never been a success in life. I never learn from my mistakes, even when I've just made them.)

I found that the place on the road where Mrs Crawley used to wait for a lift into town had been made into a bus terminus, and there was a little shelter shed and a store. All the way down to the beach baches had been built, and lots of young people were about in shorts. And I really got the shock of my life when I saw the Crawleys' bach still standing there; but there it was, and except for a fresh coat of Stockholm tar it didn't look any different.

Mrs Crawley was in the garden. I hardly recognised her. She'd shrivelled up to nothing, and she was fixed in such a bend that above the waist she walked parallel to the ground. Her mouth had been sucked right inside her head, so her chin stuck out like the toe of a boot more than ever. Naturally she didn't know me, I had to shout to make her hear, and her eyes were bad too. When I'd told her I was Freddy Coleman, and she'd remembered who Freddy Coleman was, she ran her hands over my face as though to help her know whether or not I was telling the truth.

Fancy you coming, she said, and after I'd admired the garden and asked her how many times she'd put up a fresh ring of tea-tree brush, she asked me inside.

The bach was much the same. The sacking was still nailed up over the places where the wind came in, but only two of the fern beds were left. One was Mrs Crawley's and the other was Joe's, and both were made up. The table was set too, but covered over with teatowels. I didn't know what to say. It was all too much for me. Mrs Crawley sat and watched me, her head stuck forward, and I didn't know where to look.

It's a good job you came early, she said. If you'd come late you'd have given me a turn. Oh, I said. Yes, she said. He always comes late. Not till the last bus. Oh, I said, I suppose you mean Joe. Yes, Joe, she said. He never comes until the last bus. I asked her what had become of the girls, but she took no notice. She went on talking about Joe and I couldn't follow her, so I got up to leave. She offered me a cup of tea, but I said no thank you. I wanted to get away. You've got Joe's Christmas dinner ready for him, I said, and I touched the table.

Yes, she said, I've got him everything that he likes. And she took away the tea-towels. It was some spread. Ham, fruit, cake, nuts, everything that you can think of for Christmas. It was a shock after the old days. Joe was evidently making good money, and I felt a bit envious of him. He'll enjoy that, I said. What line's he in, by the way? He'll come, she said. I've got him everything that he likes. He'll come. It was hopeless, so I went.

Then, walking back to the road I didn't feel quite so bad. It all came back to me about how fond of Joe Mrs Crawley had been. She hadn't lost him at any rate. I thought of the bach all tidied up, and the Christmas spread, and it put me in quite a glow. I hadn't made a success of my life, and the world was in a mess, but here was something you could admire and feel thankful for. Mrs Crawley still had her Joe. And I couldn't help wondering what sort of a fellow Joe Crawley had turned out.

Well, when I was back on the road again a bus hadn't long come in, and the driver was eating a sandwich. So I went up to him. Good-day, I said. Can you tell me what sort of a fellow Joe Crawley is? Joe Crawley, he said, I've never seen him. Oh, I said. Been driving out here long ?

He told me about five years, so I jerked my thumb over towards the beach. Do you know Mrs Crawley? I asked him. Do I what! he said. She's sat in that shed waiting for the last bus every night that I can remember. He told me all he knew. Long ago, people said, Joe would come several times a year, then he'd come just at Christmas. When he did come it would be always on the last bus, and he'd be off again first thing in the morning. But for years now he hadn't come at all. No one knew for sure what he used to do. There were yarns about him being a bookmaker, some said he'd gone to gaol, others that he'd cleared off to America. As for the girls they'd married and got scattered, though one was supposed to write now and then. Anyhow, wet or fine, summer or winter, Mrs Crawley never missed a night sitting in that shelter shed waiting to see if Joe'd turn up on the last bus. She still collected pine cones to sell, and would drag the bags for miles; and several times, pulling up mussels out on the reefs she'd been knocked over by the sea, and nearly drowned. Of course she got the pension, but people said she saved every penny of it and lived on the smell of an oil-rag. And whenever she did buy anything she always explained that she was buying it for Joe.

Well, I heard him out. Then I took to the road. I felt small. All the affairs of the heart that I had had in my life, and all that I had seen in other people, seemed petty and mean compared to this one of Mrs Crawley's. I looked at the smart young people about in their shorts with a sort of contempt. I thought of Mrs Crawley waiting down there in the bach with her wonderful Christmas spread, the bach swept out and tidied, and Joe's bed with clean sheets on, all made up ready and waiting. And I thought of her all those years digging in the garden, digging for pipis, pulling up

mussels and picking up cones, bending her body until it couldn't be straightened out again, until she looked like a new sort of human being. All for Joe. For Joe who'd never been anything much to look at, and who, if he was alive now, stayed away while his mother sat night after night waiting for him in a bus shelter shed. Though, mind you, I didn't feel like blaming Joe. I knew how he'd been spoilt, and I remembered how as a boy I'd sort of understood the way Mrs Crawley felt towards him might turn out to be quite a terrible thing. And sure enough, it had. But I never understood until last Christmas Day, when I was walking northwards to a job on a fruit farm, how anything in the world that was such a terrible thing, could at the same time be so beautiful.

The Doll's House by Katherine Mansfield²³

When dear old Mrs Hay went back to town after staying with the Burnells she sent the children a doll's house. It was so big that the carter and Pat carried it into the courtyard, and there it stayed, propped up on two wooden boxes beside the feed-room door. No harm could come to it; it was summer. And perhaps the smell of paint would have gone off by the time it had to be taken in. For, really, the smell of paint coming from that doll's house ('Sweet of old Mrs Hay, of course; most sweet and generous!') — but the smell of paint was quite enough to make anyone seriously ill, in Aunt Beryl's opinion. Even before the sacking was taken off. And when it was . . .

There stood the doll's house, a dark, oily, spinach green, picked out with bright yellow. Its two solid little chimneys, glued on to the roof, were painted red and white, and the door, gleaming with yellow varnish,

²³ English Year 13, p.96, 2004

was like a little slab of toffee. Four windows, real windows, were divided into panes by a broad streak of green. There was actually a tiny porch, too, painted yellow, with big lumps of congealed paint hanging along the edge.

But perfect, perfect little house! Who could possibly mind the smell. It was part of the joy, part of the newness. 'Open it quickly, someone!' The hook at the side was stuck fast. Pat prised it open with his penknife, and the whole house-front swung back, and — there you were, gazing at one and the same moment into the drawing-room and diningroom, the kitchen and two bedrooms. That is the way for a house to open! Why don't all houses open like that? How much more exciting than peering through the slit of a door into a mean little hall with a hat-stand and two umbrellas! That is — isn't it? — what you long to know about a house when you put your hand on the knocker. Perhaps it is the way God opens houses at the dead of night when He is taking a quiet turn with an angel . . .

'Oh-oh!' The Burnell children sounded as though they were in despair. It was too marvellous; it was too much for them. They had never seen anything like it in their lives. All the rooms were papered. There were pictures on the walls; painted on the paper, with gold frames complete. Red carpet covered all the floors except the kitchen; red plush chairs in the drawing-room, green in the dining-room; tables, beds with real bedclothes, a cradle, a stove, a dresser with tiny plates and one big jug. But what Kezia liked more than anything, what she liked frightfully, was the lamp. It stood in the middle of the dining-room table, an exquisite little amber lamp with a white globe. It was even filled all ready for lighting, though, of course, you couldn't light it. But there was something inside that looked like oil and moved when you shook it.

The father and mother dolls, who sprawled very stiff as though they had fainted in the drawing-room, and their two little children asleep upstairs, were really too big for the doll's house. They didn't look as though they belonged. But the lamp was perfect. It seemed to smile at Kezia, to say, 'I live here.' The lamp was real. The Burnell children could hardly walk to school fast enough the next morning. They burned to tell everybody, to describe, to — well — to boast about their doll's house before the school bell rang. 'I'm to tell,' said Isabel, 'because I'm the eldest. And you two can join in after. But I'm to tell first.' There was nothing to answer. Isabel was bossy, but she was always right, and Lottie and Kezia knew too well the powers that went with being eldest. They brushed through the thick buttercups at the road edge and said nothing. 'And I'm to choose who's to come and see it first. Mother said I might.'

For it had been arranged that while the doll's house stood in the courtyard they might ask the girls at school, two at a time, to come and look. Not to stay to tea, of course, or to come traipsing through the house. But just to stand quietly in the courtyard while Isabel pointed out the beauties, and Lottie and Kezia looked pleased . . .

But hurry as they might, by the time they had reached the tarred palings of the boys' playground the bell had begun to jangle. They only just had time to whip off their hats and fall into line before the roll was called. Never mind. Isabel tried to make up for it by looking very important and mysterious and by whispering behind her hand to the girls near her, 'Got something to tell you at playtime.'

Playtime came and Isabel was surrounded. The girls of her class nearly fought to put their arms round her, to walk away with her, to beam flatteringly, to be her special friend. She held quite a court under the huge

pine trees at the side of the playground. Nudging, giggling together, the little girls pressed up close. And the only two who stayed outside the ring were the two who were always outside, the little Kelveys. They knew better than to come anywhere near the Burnells. For the fact was, the school the Burnell children went to was not at all the kind of place their parents would have chosen if there had been any choice. But there was none. It was the only school for miles. And the consequence was all the children of the neighbourhood, the judge's little girls, the doctor's daughters, the store-keeper's children, the milkman's, were forced to mix together. Not to speak of there being an equal number of rude, rough little boys as well. But the line had to be drawn somewhere. It was drawn at the Kelveys. Many of the children, including the Burnells, were not allowed even to speak to them. They walked past the Kelveys with their heads in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behaviour, the Kelveys were shunned by everybody. Even the teacher had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey came up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers.

They were the daughters of a spry, hard-working little washerwoman, who went about from house to house by the day. This was awful enough. But where was Mr Kelvey? Nobody knew for certain. But everybody said he was in prison. So they were the daughters of a washerwoman and a gaolbird. Very nice company for other people's children! And they looked it. Why Mrs Kelvey made them so conspicuous was hard to understand.

The truth was they were dressed in 'bits' given to her by the people for whom she worked. Lil, for instance, who was a stout, plain child, with big freckles, came to school in a dress made from a green artserge

tablecloth of the Burnells', with red plush sleeves from the Logans' curtains. Her hat, perched on top of her high forehead, was a grownup woman's hat, once the property of Miss Lecky, the postmistress. It was turned up at the back and trimmed with a large scarlet quill. What a little guy she looked! It was impossible not to laugh. And her little sister, our Else, wore a long white dress, rather like a nightgown, and a pair of little boy's boots. But whatever our Else wore she would have looked strange. She was a tiny wishbone of a child, with cropped hair and enormous solemn eyes — a little white owl. Nobody had ever seen her smile; she scarcely ever spoke. She went through life holding on to Lil, with a piece of Lil's skirt screwed up in her hand.

Where Lil went, our Else followed. In the playground, on the road going to and from school, there was Lil marching in front and our Else holding on behind. Only when she wanted anything, or when she was out of breath, our Else gave Lil a tug, a twitch, and Lil stopped and turned round. The Kelveys never failed to understand each other.

Now they hovered at the edge; you couldn't stop them listening. When the little girls turned round and sneered, Lil, as usual, gave her silly, shamefaced smile, but our Else only looked. And Isabel's voice, so very proud, went on telling. The carpet made a great sensation, but so did the beds with real bedclothes, and the stove with an oven door.

When she finished Kezia broke in. 'You've forgotten the lamp, Isabel.' 'Oh yes,' said Isabel, 'and there's a teeny little lamp, all made of yellow glass, with a white globe that stands on the dining-room table. You couldn't tell it from a real one.' 'The lamp's best of all,' cried Kezia. She thought Isabel wasn't making half enough of the little lamp. But nobody paid any attention. Isabel was choosing the two who were to

come back with them that afternoon and see it. She chose Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But when the others knew they were all to have a chance, they couldn't be nice enough to Isabel. One by one they put their arms round Isabel's waist and walked her off. They had something to whisper to her, a secret. 'Isabel's my friend.'

Only the little Kelveys moved away forgotten; there was nothing more for them to hear. Days passed, and as more children saw the doll's house, the fame of it spread. The one question was, 'have you seen Burnells' doll's house? Oh, ain't it lovely!' 'Haven't you seen it? Oh, I say!' Even the dinner hour was given up to talking about it. The little girls sat under the pines eating their thick mutton sandwiches and big slabs of johnny cake spread with butter. While always, as near as they could get, sat the Kelveys, our Else holding on to Lil, listening too, while they chewed their jam sandwiches out of a newspaper soaked with large red blobs. 'Mother,' said Kezia, 'can't I ask the Kelveys just once?' 'Certainly not, Kezia.' 'But why not?' 'Run away, Kezia; you know quite well why not.'

At last everybody had seen it except them. On that day the subject rather flagged. It was the dinner hour. The children stood together under the pine trees, and suddenly, as they looked at the Kelveys eating out of their paper, always by themselves, always listening, they wanted to be horrid to them. Emmie Cole started the whisper. 'Lil Kelvey's going to be a servant when she grows up.' 'O-oh, how awful!' said Isabel Burnell, and she made eyes at Emmie. Emmie swallowed in a very meaningful way and nodded to Isabel as she'd seen her mother do on those occasions. 'It's true — it's true — it's true,' she said. Then Lena Logan's little eyes snapped. 'Shall I ask her?' she whispered. 'Bet you don't,' said Jessie May. 'Pooh, I'm not frightened,' said Lena. Suddenly she gave a little

squeal and danced in front of the other girls. 'Watch! Watch me! Watch me now!' said Lena. And sliding, gliding, dragging one foot, giggling behind her hand, Lena went over to the Kelveys. Lil looked up from her dinner. She wrapped the rest quickly away. Our Else stopped chewing. What was coming now? 'Is it true you're going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?' shrilled Lena. Dead silence. But instead of answering, Lil only gave her silly, shamefaced smile. She didn't seem to mind the question at all. What a sell for Lena! The girls began to titter. Lena couldn't stand that. She put her hands on her hips; she shot forward. 'Yah, yer father's in prison!' she hissed spitefully.

This was such a marvellous thing to have said that the little girls rushed away in a body, deeply, deeply excited, wild with joy. Someone found a long rope, and they began skipping. And never did they skip so high, run in and out so fast, or do such daring things as on that morning.

In the afternoon Pat called for the Burnell children with the buggy and they drove home. There were visitors. Isabel and Lottie, who liked visitors, went upstairs to change their pinafores. But Kezia thieved out at the back. Nobody was about; she began to swing on the big white gates of the courtyard. Presently, looking along the road, she saw two little dots. They grew bigger, they were coming towards her. Now she could see that one was in front and one close behind. Now she could see that they were the Kelveys. Kezia stopped swinging. She slipped off the gate as if she was going to run away. Then she hesitated. The Kelveys came nearer, and beside them walked their shadows, very long, stretching right across the road with their heads in the buttercups. Kezia clambered back on the gate; she made up her mind; she swung out.

‘Hullo,’ she said to the passing Kelveys. They were so astounded that they stopped. Lil gave her silly smile. Our Else stared. ‘You can come and see our doll’s house if you want to,’ said Kezia, and she dragged one toe on the ground. But at that Lil turned red and shook her head quickly. ‘Why not?’ asked Kezia. Lil gasped, then she said, ‘Your ma told our ma you wasn’t to speak to us.’ ‘Oh well,’ said Kezia. She didn’t know what to reply. ‘It doesn’t matter. You can come and see our doll’s house all the same. Come on. Nobody’s looking.’ But Lil shook her head still harder. ‘Don’t you want to?’ asked Kezia.

Suddenly there was a twitch, a tug at Lil’s skirt. She turned round. Our Else was looking at her with big, imploring eyes; she was frowning; she wanted to go. For a moment Lil looked at our Else very doubtfully. But then our Else twitched her skirt again. She started forward. Kezia led the way. Like two little stray cats they followed across the courtyard to where the doll’s house stood. ‘There it is,’ said Kezia. There was a pause. Lil breathed loudly, almost snorted; our Else was still as stone.

‘I’ll open it for you,’ said Kezia kindly. She undid the hook and they looked inside. ‘There’s the drawing-room and the dining-room, and that’s the —’ ‘Kezia!’ Oh, what a start they gave! ‘Kezia!’ It was Aunt Beryl’s voice. They turned round. At the back door stood Aunt Beryl, staring as if she couldn’t believe what she saw. ‘How dare you ask the little Kelveys into the courtyard!’ said her cold, furious voice. ‘You know as well as I do, you’re not allowed to talk to them. Run away, children, run away at once. And don’t come back again,’ said Aunt Beryl. And she stepped into the yard and shooed them out as if they were chickens. ‘Off you go immediately!’ she called, cold and proud. They did not need telling twice. Burning with shame, shrinking together, Lil huddling

along like her mother, our Else dazed, somehow they crossed the big courtyard and squeezed through the white gate. ‘Wicked, disobedient little girl!’ said Aunt Beryl bitterly to Kezia, and she slammed the doll’s house to.

The afternoon had been awful. A letter had come from Willie Brent, a terrifying, threatening letter, saying if she did not meet him that evening in Pulman’s Bush, he’d come to the front door and ask the reason why! But now that she had frightened those little rats of Kelveys and given Kezia a good scolding, her heart felt lighter. That ghastly pressure was gone. She went back to the house humming.

When the Kelveys were well out of sight of Burnells’, they sat down to rest on a big red drainpipe by the side of the road. Lil’s cheeks still burning; she took off the hat with the quill and held it on her knee. Dreamily they looked over the hay paddocks, past the creek, to the group of wattles where Logan’s cows stood waiting to be milked. What were their thoughts?

Presently our Else nudged up close to her sister. But now she had forgotten the cross lady. She put out a finger and stroked her sister’s quill; she smiled her rare smile.

‘I seen the little lamp,’ she said softly. Then both were silent once more.

The Legacy by Graeme Lay²⁴

Sam Rutherford's bicycle shop must have been even older than its owner. It stood at one end of Kaimara's main street, between two empty sections: a narrow, yellow, weatherboard building with a corrugated iron-roofed verandah. Stepping from the footpath and into the shop was like going from day straight into night. Inside the door was a long windowless room with a sagging pinex ceiling and varnished wooden walls. All along the walls were framed photographs from the South African war. This was Mr Rutherford's showroom. Standing diagonally in two long wooden racks were the new bikes which he had for sale: ladies' ones on the right, men's on the left. But the showroom occupied only the front half of the building; through at the back was the small workshop where Mr Rutherford carried out bicycle repairs, the part of the business which took up most of his time.

Mr Rutherford seemed like a giant to me. He was an enormously tall man, with deep-set grey eyes, short white hair, bushy white eyebrows and a thin moustache. He had the habit of pushing out his mouth and frowning deeply, so that his eyebrows puckered and joined together, and he always seemed to wear the same clothes: heavy black trousers, boots and a grey cotton shirt open at the neck. And although Mr Rutherford was a bachelor, he looked after himself well. His boots were always shiny, his clothes were always neat, and he had lived in a room in the Criterion Hotel, across the street from his shop, for more than fifty years.

For my ninth birthday my parents bought me my first bike. It was a plain, black, second-hand model. My parents didn't let on that it was second-hand, but I could tell by the paint that it wasn't really new. Soon I

was saving up my pocket-money for extras to improve its appearance — pennants, a light, a saddlebag — and soon too its chain needed tightening, or spokes needed replacing. Every extra or repair meant wheeling my bike through Mr Rutherford's showroom and into his workshop.

There was something mysterious and exciting about that building. Perhaps it was the fact that it was very old, that it smelt strongly of leather and paint, or that when you came in the door of the shop you blinked once or twice and the two rows of gleaming new bikes appeared out of the darkness as if by magic. Or perhaps it was the photographs. You had to peer up and squint to see them properly, but it was worth it because there, in every one of them, was Mr Rutherford. But another Mr Rutherford: a tall, slim, handsome young man with a dark moustache and a uniform and a horse and riding boots and a hat with its brim turned up on one side. The captions under the photographs added to their enchantment.

S. J. Rutherford, 1st Mounted Rifles Contingent, Diamond Hill, 6 January 1900.

Corporal S. J. Rutherford, 1st Mounted Rifles Contingent, Reimester Kop, 18 February 1900.

I never once entered his shop without pausing and looking up at the photos. Then, after staring for a few moments and noting some new detail, I'd push my bike on through into the room where the old man worked.

'How old's Mr Rutherford?' I asked my father one day. He looked up from his newspaper. 'Sam Rutherford? I'm not sure. He's the only Boer War veteran left in Kaimara now though, so that'd make him . . . nearly eighty I suppose.' 'His heart's not good, poor man,' added my mother, who somehow seemed

²⁴ English Year 11 Book 2, p.75, 2004

to know the condition of every elderly heart in the town. 'I think it's time he retired.'

But if Mr Rutherford had any thoughts of retiring, he never acted upon them. He spent every weekday from eight o'clock till five in the little workroom at the rear of his shop, keeping the bicycles of Kaimara in good working order. Mr Rutherford's workshop was the only untidy thing about him. It was filled with the bodies of dozens of bicycles, piled on the floor, hanging on nails on the walls, even suspended from the ceiling. There was a wide window in the back wall and a long narrow bench beneath it. The bench was littered with spanners, screwdrivers, nuts, bolts, screws, tyre tubes, oily rags and tins of paint. And in the middle of the muddle, sitting astride a stool with an upsidedown bike in front of him, would be Mr Rutherford, working very slowly and carefully, tightening, loosening, assembling, dismantling — one huge hand reaching out from time to time to hover above the bench, then dropping on to whatever tool or part he sought. Yet he never seemed too busy to stop and fix my bike, no matter how small the job was. And as he did so he'd explain everything he was doing, and when he'd finished he'd always say: 'There you are Stephen, now you'll be able to fix it yourself.'

One day during the Easter holiday, not long after my ninth birthday, I read a story in a magazine. It was about a ten-year-old girl from New York who had befriended a lonely old woman — done her shopping for her, cleaned the bedsitter where she lived alone. Then, one day, the old lady died and it turned out that in fact she'd been very rich and, in her will, had left her entire fortune — over five hundred thousand dollars — to the little girl. Alongside the story was a photograph of the smiling girl standing in the dismal room which had been the old lady's home.

'Would Mr Rutherford make much money from his shop?' I asked my father at dinner that night, suspecting that he, as the manager of Kaimara's only bank, would know most things about its citizens' financial affairs. 'Well,' replied my father, 'there's just the one bike shop in the town, and there are plenty of bikes. I'd say Sam's got a tidy little business.'

This puzzled me a bit: my father obviously hadn't seen Mr Rutherford's workshop, because that was anything but tidy, but I saw what he meant about it being the only one of its kind. After dinner I went to my room and began doing a few sums, a bit like the ones our teachers were always setting us. *If a man sold two bikes a week for fifty years, and charged ten pounds for each bike, and if he mended four punctures a day and charged two shillings and sixpence for each puncture, how much money would he have altogether?*

I put my pencil down. It would be nearly all profit. Mr Rutherford didn't have a wife or children or a house or car or even a bike of his own — all he had to pay for was his hotel room. So that meant that Mr Rutherford was worth at least . . . twenty thousand pounds!

'Hello, Mr Rutherford.'

'Oh hello there, Stephen. What can we do for you today? Those brakes of yours playing up again?'

'No, it's good thanks. I was just wondering if you had . . . any jobs that needed doing?'

'Jobs? What kind of jobs?'

'Oh any jobs.'

'Got a bit of time on your hands, eh?'

'Yes, there isn't much to do.'

'Well, I'll tell you what. Got your bike with you?'

'Yes.'

'Okay. How would you like to go down to the station and collect a parcel for me? Some spare parts have arrived on this morning's train and I need them. Could

you do that? Tell Frank Thompson at the station that I sent you.'

'Okay Mr Rutherford.'

And I had those parts in his workshop in less than ten minutes.

From then on, twice a week, Tuesdays and Fridays, I was Mr Rutherford's right-hand boy. I collected his parcels and burnt his rubbish. I dusted his bikes and washed his windows. He even let me tidy up one end of his workshop, and I half expected to come across his fortune, buried among the old tyres and inner tubes. But I didn't. I didn't accept any payment from him, either. My mother said I mustn't. And anyway, that would come later.

But Mr Rutherford serviced my bike for nothing and gave me extras for it: a pair of mud-flaps, a set of gears, a shiny new dynamo. And, as we worked he talked in his deep, slow voice. He told me about his boyhood, and the hardships he had experienced when he was growing up, and the first car that came to Kaimara; about South Africa and the Boers, and how he'd seen a Zulu kill a lion with a knife. Sometimes I enjoyed listening to his stories so much I almost forgot about the money, and his will, and how I'd inherit his fortune and become world famous. And I noticed something else about him, too. Even though he was big and strong his breathing was very slow and deliberate and so loud that his nostrils made whistling noises as he worked. Sometimes too, when he was tightening a wheel, he'd stop for a while and stare into space until his chest stopped heaving. Then he would go back to the job and seem as good as ever.

It was a Friday night, about six months after I first started working for him, that it happened. I'd gone straight to his shop from school, and left my bike outside as usual. I heard the coughing even as I walked

through the showroom. At the door of the workshop I stopped, and stared.

In the middle of the room, on his knees, was Mr Rutherford. He was coughing and gasping and the top half of his body was leaning forward and heaving with every cough. He turned and looked up at me. His face had gone all grey and his eyes were a funny dull colour. Suddenly I was very frightened because I could see that he had hardly any time between coughs to get any air. He pointed to the cracked handbasin at the end of the workshop. I ran over and got him some water. He took little sips from the cup as I held it, and gradually the gasps between the coughs got longer, but his breath was still making a horrible rasping noise in his throat and frothy dribble was coming from one corner of his mouth. He still couldn't speak. When the cup was empty I ran back through the shop and over the street to the hotel to tell Mrs Harrop. As I gasped the story out the pounding in my own chest was so strong I thought I would have a heart attack too. All I could think of was, 'Please God, don't let Mr Rutherford die because I want him to go on being my friend . . .'

They took him to the hospital but he died in the ambulance on the way. After my mother told me she said, 'Try not to be upset dear, you did the right thing'. I went away to my bedroom and buried my face in my pillow and cried. I tried to shut out the picture of him kneeling there like a stricken animal, coughing his life away — Mr Rutherford, who had been a Mounted Rifleman and fought the Boers and seen a Zulu kill a lion with a knife.

The RSA gave him a funeral, and they cleared out his shop and closed it. It became just another of Kaimara's empty buildings. Mr Watson, who had a sports goods shop in a modern block at the other end of the town, took over the bicycle trade, but I hardly ever went

there. I did my own repairs now. As for his money, well I never knew for certain what happened to it. Someone said he left what he had to a widowed sister in Australia. Anyway, the funny thing was that I didn't care any more about the money. Because I knew that what Mr Rutherford had left me was worth much more than that.

The Plunge by Jonathan Yu²⁵

As I climbed up onto the safety rails of the bridge, I could see the river far, far below me. I was so high up, it seemed more like a long piece of blue ribbon than a river. The wind was so cold up here. Constantly blowing against me, pushing me closer and closer towards the edge.

That's been the story of my life I guess. I'm seventeen years old and I hadn't really lived a day of it. I never realised it until now, but it was a problem that was slowly pushing me over the edge.

I'm not a normal teenager. I'd never really had any friends. Going out to parties, socialising and drinking just wasn't me. My idea of fun was solving maths and logic problems and reading scientific theorems. My parents never had any problems with me either. I was always such a good boy. Never disobedient, always did my homework and never stayed up late like normal little boys.

Recently though, I had been getting thoughts of rebellion, non-conformity and freedom shooting through my mind like fiery arrows, piercing my normal thoughts. I first dismissed them as mere quirks in my mind. But as they became more and more frequent, I began to worry. I told my parents but they

deemed this merely a phase. Something that I'd grow out of soon.

I should have known they would. After all, I was their perfect son, with no interest in sport, girls or other normal teenage-guy things. My life revolved around school and knowledge. They could never accept their son having such irresponsible thoughts about drinking, partying, drugs and, worst of all, sex.

As the days went by since the time of my first rebellious thought, I became more and more miserable. I was consumed by these thoughts. I started realising the need to become a normal teenager – to socialise, to party, to drink and dare I say it . . . to have sex. But all this could never happen, I lived under the strict confinements of my parents' rules. The teenage world of freedom and rebellion was totally off-limits for me.

When I hit my lowest point, my most depressed state, I decided I couldn't take it any more. Something needed to be done. There was no one to talk to. I was alone. Somehow, I had to end all this depression and pain.

This brings me back to the start of the story. On top of the highest bridge I could find, I was going to do it. I was going to jump. It was time to stop being the boring little nerd I was. After looking down again though, it seemed so high, and so scary now as well. Before I had a chance to back out, someone behind me yelled, "Don't be a wuss!" Then gave me a hard shove.

That was it, I thought, that was the start of my new life. My new life as a teenager. It all began with that bungee jump.

²⁵ English Year 12, p.29, 2004

A Descendant of the Mountain By Albert Wendt²⁶

The influenza epidemic squatted over the district of Falefanua that lay spreadeagled beneath the impersonal mountain, hatching her brood of death. The epidemic had crawled over the mountain range from the western side of the island after flying across the Pacific in a sailing ship and lodged in the throats of white sailors who spewed it out on reaching the shore. Now it was free under a sun that hung from the copper sky like a judge, a sun that cast a harsh spell of light over the mountain range, the village, the trees, the beach, and the sea.

In the fale, sitting crosslegged like a statue, Mauga – high chief of the district – drank the wailing and chanting of the mourners as he stared at the body of his wife stretched out in the middle of the pebble floor and covered with fine mats. Flies swirled round the face of the dead woman. Mauga broke from the spell with the shrill sound of the song of a bird. Then the pain was there again, snaking its way from the core of his belly to fill his mouth and brim over from his eyes. He looked out. A troupe of mourners – now a daily sight – trailed past on the road. They bore a long bundle and headed surely for the graveyard. Soon they too would have to follow that road with the body of his wife. Mauga shuddered. First his eldest son – heir to his name – had died; then one of his daughters; now it was his wife. A fuia streaked past the fale, and Mauga caught it in the corner of his eye till the bird disappeared into the shelter of the trees. Mauga blinked, controlled the twitching of his body, and commanded: ‘Enough of this!’ The wailing ceased immediately. ‘She is dead. That is all. She is dead and gone to God!’ he paused, compelled to stop and choke the swelling tongue of pain that had reached his

clenched teeth, threatening to give the lie to all his outward show of strength. ‘It is God’s will,’ he whispered. For a moment, in the stifling heat, he grew cold like a knife blade, and he stood up and hurried out of the fale, stopping the funeral while everyone watched him disappear over the road into the trees.

Hidden by the banana trees, he sat down muttering: ‘It’s God’s will . . . It’s God’s will,’ as if he was attempting to persuade himself that it was so. He had lost count of the days since the epidemic started, and of the number of victims it had claimed. Only the pain and fear of the inexplicable terror was real. He stretched out under the trees and deliberately opened his eyes to absorb the hurt of the blaring light. In his head there were no clear pictures, just an infuriating dark without any trace of the seeds of understanding. Like muscle round the bone, the dark had claimed him as it had claimed the rest of his people. A spider, dangling from a banana leaf above him, edged down toward his eyes. He watched it steadily; then his hand shot up, closed round it, killed it. Some understanding flicked into his mind as he examined the dead spider on the palm of his hand. Yes, God had willed the epidemic to punish him and his people. His eyes shut tightly as he listened to the faraway tolling of the church lali. Another victim. God was angry, and his anger knew no bounds. This was the explanation which Mauga shared with his people. Mauga turned over and staggered to his feet. The funeral wailing seeped through the trees again at that moment and iced him to the ground. The sound came whistling like sea-wind chopping the fingers of the trees. Wailing as terrifying as spears probing the moulded clay of his skull. Caught in the sound of the chant and wooden drum, like the harmony of bone round the marrow, Mauga throbbed with fear as the wailing battled to

²⁶ English Year 13, p.88, 2004

snuff out the flicker of light in his mind. Chained, he watched the leaves dance down to the quivering roots with the heat like wax round his body. As the tolling of the lali and the wailing ebbed away like a setting sun, Mauga shook his body as if to expel the dark from himself into the air and the trees. He gazed up, up at the sun crucified to the centre of the sky. There was no longer anywhere to hide. He turned and stumbled deeper and deeper into the web of trees.

He stopped suddenly. The clearing – a green carpet of creepers and fern – skimmed away from his feet and broke abruptly to his right, where a spring bubbled like coconut milk from the earth to form a round, deep pool. He dragged his body to the pool, pushing forward, and watched his mouth sucking greedily at the water. He sighed and belched as the water stunned his belly. It was good. For a long while he lay, contemplating his reflection in the water. Gradually he forgot the terrifying reality of the epidemic as memories of his youth bubbled up from the mudbank of his mind, memories as captivating and pure as the water under his face. Seeds of memory burst and filled his head and heart, driving out the bitter dark. He sat up. He pulled his lavalava above his knees and dangled his legs into the water. Slowly the coolness of the water tingled up from his legs and revived his whole body. A breeze tinkled through the trees and caressed his greying hair. A picture focused in Mauga's head. He had seen her stepping from the trees: the girl Fanua who was to become his wife. Tall and slender she had emerged out of the womb of trees. He had remained, as he was now, staring into the water, pretending he had not seen her. She filled his eyes like soothing ointment as she stopped, startled by the sight of the young man sitting by the pool, her pool.

As she walked cautiously toward him, he continued to watch her out of the corner of his eye. She shuddered

and folded her arms protectively over her naked breasts. Without looking at him, she circled the pool and sat down on the other side. Casually she scooped up handfuls of water and drank them as though saying: 'This pool is mine!' His head came up, and he caught her staring almost angrily at him. 'I only came to have a drink,' he heard himself apologise. She said nothing. And, as if he wasn't there, she drew her lavalava high above her knees, exposing her soft thighs to the sunlight and to his eyes as she stuck her legs into the water. He looked away politely. She didn't seem to care. She placed her arms behind her to support her weight and, as she yawned and stretched her body, her breasts tautly challenged him. From narrowed eyes he drank the whole of her beauty, suddenly becoming conscious of his heart thudding against his ribs. He looked away, ashamed, feeling annoyed, for somehow he believed that her actions were deliberate attempts to drive him away from the pool. He wasn't going to leave!

'Who do you think you are?' he called to her. She stared straight back at him. Immediately he felt a fool. He sprang up and moved to leave. She laughed. He paused.

'Don't go!' she called. 'I'll leave if you want me to.' He turned to face her, sensing that there was some trace of understanding between them: she was willing to share the pool with him. She smiled at him. And he noticed that she had pulled down her lavalava, and that her arms were again crossed over her breasts. He sighed in relief, but he was disappointed that she no longer looked natural, free. The sun was now over the trees, and the sunlight filtered through the leaves and branches to lie calmly on the surface of the water. The heat was lifting. The throbbing chorus of the cicadas pulsed in their ears in unison with the beating of their hearts.

'I'm going to bathe. It'll be dark soon,' she called back. She pulled off her lavalava. He blushed and turned his back even though he wanted so much to look at her. When he heard the splash as her body cut in to the water, he turned round slowly.

'It's good,' she remarked, her body swallowed up to the neck by the water. Her hair, now wet and pinned to her head and neck by the weight of the dive, glistened like black lava. 'Why don't you come in?' she invited him.

He started. He could almost hear her giggling. She twisted and dived for the bottom of the pool. When she was completely out of sight, he whipped off his lavalava and dived in. Once under, in the cool green water, he opened his eyes. She hovered straight in front of him and, while her head was out of the water, the golden nakedness of the rest of her body confronted him full in the face and injected desire into his bones. He stopped, and hurried to the surface to find her laughing as she blinded him with water. Their laughter mated and lost itself in the dense trees and the fading light.

Three weeks later he took her for his wife as naturally as she had shown herself to him at the pool.

A crackling in the trees broke the spell . . . Now she was dead . . . Mauga sat up immediately. The delicate picture was gone, shattered by the footsteps cracking over the brittle undergrowth toward him. He dashed his puffed face with water and awaited the intruder.

It was his son Timu who came into view with his head bowed. His feet marked a thin trail over the creepers till he stood above his father, staring down. The boy, aged about eleven, placed his hand lightly on his father's head. Mauga turned slowly under the boy's hand till his eyes found his son's grinning face, then his arms circled the boy's waist and drew him to him. This was his last son, the remaining heir to his title:

Mauga. Mauga the Mountain, centuries old, as old as the history of the village, an institution now threatened with destruction by the wrath of God who seemed so far away – burning like an indifferent star outside his vision – yet so immediately terrifying. Bitterness and protest festered in Mauga's heart as the picture of his dead wife erupted into his mind.

'God! God! God!'

The boy heard his father's pitiful voice cut into his side. He had never seen his father like this before, helpless and human like most men. To him, his father had always been the Rock, the Mountain, unapproachable and high like the mountain behind the village, the mountain from which his family was descended. The boy gazed down at his father for a long time, as though the next thing he might do was to censure his father for behaving like a child and not in keeping with his high rank. When he became chief he would never act like this. Hadn't his father told him this?

When he moved it was an attempt to leave, but his father's arm held him, as securely as the history and mana of the title chained his father. So the boy stood, slowly melting under the fire of love which he felt for this father, till he was as pure as the water beside him, and he wrapped his arms like comforting shields round his father's head. The man was no longer the mountain, impersonal and far away. The man was truly his father who now needed his love – as much as he had needed the love which his father had never given him.

Mauga straightened suddenly and pushed his son away. Enough of that. He was Mauga. He bowed his head with his face turned away from the boy's eyes, ashamed for having shown so vulnerably that he was like other men.

‘The funeral is over.’ Mauga’s face showed no emotion. This annoyed the boy, gradually turned his love to anger. Stepping forward he picked up a large rock with both hands, and hurled it into the pool. He turned then and ran across the clearing and disappeared into the trees.

Mauga hugged himself as the rock shattered his reflection and pushed waves to the banks, as the mud rose steadily from the bottom of the pool like dark sleep. Soon the pool was quivering mud. Mauga jumped to his feet and fled toward the trees, stumbling for home and the tolling lali. Over his shoulder he glanced back at the mountain range, centering his eyes on the highest peak. Mauga stood crowned by the last rays of the setting sun.

The Bath by Janet Frame²⁷

On Friday afternoon she bought cut flowers – daffodils, anemones, a few twigs of a red-leaved shrub, wrapped in mauve waxed paper, for Saturday was the seventeenth anniversary of her husband’s death and she planned to visit his grave, as she did each year, to weed it and put fresh flowers in the two jam jars standing one on each side of the tombstone. Her visit this year occupied her thoughts more than usual. She had bought the flowers to force herself to make the journey that each year became more hazardous, from the walk to the bus stop, the change of buses at the Octagon, to the bitterness of the winds blowing from the open sea across almost unsheltered rows of tombstones; and the tiredness that overcame her when it was time to return home when she longed to find a place beside the graves, in the soft grass, and fall asleep.

That evening she filled the coal bucket, stoked the fire. Her movements were slow and arduous, her back and shoulder gave her so much pain. She cooked her tea – liver and bacon – set up knife and fork on the teatowel she used as a tablecloth, turned up the volume of the polished red radio to listen to the Weather Report and the News, ate her tea, washed her dishes, then sat drowsing in the rocking chair by the fire, waiting for the water to get hot enough for a bath. Visits to the cemetery, the doctor, and to relatives, to stay, always demanded a bath. When she was sure that the water was hot enough (and her tea had been digested) she ventured from the kitchen through the cold passageway to the colder bathroom. She paused in the doorway to get used to the chill of the air then she walked slowly, feeling with each step the pain in her back, across to the bath, and though she knew that she was gradually losing the power in her hands she managed to wrench on the stiff cold and hot taps and half-fill the bath with warm water. How wasteful, she thought, that with the kitchen fire always burning during the past month of frost, and the water almost always hot, getting in and out of a bath had become such an effort that it was not possible to bath every night or even every week!

She found a big towel, laid it ready over a chair, arranged the chair so that should difficulty arise as it had last time she bathed she would have some way of rescuing herself; then with her nightclothes warming on a page of newspaper inside the coal oven and her dressing-gown across the chair to be put on the instant she stepped from the bath, she undressed and pausing first to get her breath and clinging tightly to the slippery yellow-stained rim that now seemed more like the edge of a cliff with a deep drop below into the sea, slowly and painfully she climbed into the bath.

²⁷ English Year 13, p.106, 2004

I'll put on my nightie the instant I get out, she thought. The instant she got out indeed! She knew it would be more than a matter of instants yet she tried to think of it calmly, without dread, telling herself that when the time came she would be very careful, taking the process step by step, surprising her bad back and shoulder and her powerless wrists into performing feats they might usually rebel against, but the key to controlling them would be the surprise, the slow stealing up on them. With care, with thought . . .

Sitting upright, not daring to lean back or lie down, she soaped herself, washing away the dirt of the past fortnight, seeing with satisfaction how it drifted about on the water as a sign that she was clean again. Then when her washing was completed she found herself looking for excuses not to try and climb out. Those old woman's finger nails, cracked and dry, where germs could lodge, would need to be scrubbed again; the skin of her heels, too, growing so hard that her feet might have been turning to stone; behind her ears where a thread of dirt lay in the rim; after all, she did not often have the luxury of a bath, did she? How warm it was! She drowsed a moment. If only she could fall asleep then wake to find herself in her nightdress in bed for the night! Slowly she rewashed her body, and when she knew she could no longer deceive herself into thinking she was not clean she reluctantly replaced the soap, brush and flannel in the groove at the side of the bath, feeling as she loosened her grip on them that all strength and support were ebbing from her. Quickly she seized the nail-brush again, but its magic had been used and was gone; it would not adopt the role she tried to urge upon it. The flannel too, and the soap, were frail flotsam to cling to in the hope of being borne to safety.

She was alone now. For a few minutes she sat swilling the water against her skin, perhaps as a means of

buoying up her courage. Then resolutely she pulled out the plug, sat feeling the tide swirl and scrape at her skin and flesh, trying to draw her down, down into the earth; then the bathwater was gone in a soapy gurgle and she was naked and shivering and had not yet made the attempt to get out of the bath.

How slippery the surface had become! In future she would not clean it with kerosene, she would use the paste cleaner that, left on overnight, gave the enamel rough patches that could be gripped with the skin.

She leaned forward, feeling the pain in her back and shoulder. She grasped the rim of the bath but her fingers slithered from it almost at once. She would not panic, she told herself; again her grip loosened as if iron hands had deliberately uncurled her stiffened blue fingers from their trembling hold. Her heart began to beat faster, her breath came more quickly, her mouth was dry. She moistened her lips. If I shout for help, she thought, no one will hear me. No one in the world will hear me. No one will know I'm in the bath and can't get out.

She listened. She could hear only the drip-drip of the cold water tap of the wash-basin, and a corresponding whisper and gurgle of her heart, as if it were beating under water. All else was silent. Where were the people, the traffic? Then she had a strange feeling of being under the earth, of a throbbing in her head like wheels going over the earth above her.

Then she told herself sternly that she must have no nonsense, that she had really not tried to get out of the bath. She had forgotten the strong solid chair and the grip she could get on it. If she made the effort quickly she could first take hold on both sides of the bath, pull herself up, then transfer her hold to the chair and thus pull herself out.

She tried to do this; she just failed to make the final effort. Pale now, gasping for breath, she sank back into

the bath. She began to call out but as she had predicted there was no answer. No one had heard her, no one in the houses or the street or Dunedin or the world knew that she was imprisoned. Loneliness welled in her. If John were here, she thought, if we were sharing our old age, helping each other, this would never have happened. She made another effort to get out. Again she failed. Faintness overcoming her she closed her eyes, trying to rest, then recovering and trying again and failing, she panicked and began to cry and strike the sides of the bath; it made a hollow sound like a wild drumbeat.

Then she stopped striking with her fists; she struggled again to get out; and for over half an hour she stayed alternately struggling and resting until at last she did succeed in climbing out and making her escape into the kitchen. She thought, I'll never take another bath in this house or anywhere. I never want to see that bath again. This is the end or the beginning of it. In future a district nurse will have to come and attend me. Submitting to that will be the first humiliation. There will be others, and others.

In bed at last she lay exhausted and lonely thinking that perhaps it might be better for her to die at once. The slow progression of difficulties was a kind of torture. There were her shoes that had to be made specially in a special shape or she could not walk. There were the times she had to call in a neighbour to fetch a pot of jam from the top shelf of her cupboard when it had been only a year ago that she herself had made the jam and put it on the shelf. Sometimes a niece came to fill the coal-bucket or mow the lawn. Every week there was the washing to be hung on the line – this required a special technique for she could not raise her arms without at the same time finding some support in the dizziness that overcame her. She remembered with a sense of the world narrowing and growing darker, like

a tunnel, the incredulous almost despising look on the face of her niece when in answer to the comment 'How beautiful the clouds are in Dunedin! These big billowing white and grey clouds – don't you think, Auntie?' she had said, her disappointment at the misery of things putting a sharpness in her voice, 'I never look at the clouds!'

She wondered how long ago it was since she had been able to look up at the sky without reeling with dizziness. Now she did not dare look up. There was enough to attend to down and around – the cracks and hollows in the footpath, the patches of frost and ice and the potholes in the roads; the approaching cars and motorcycles; and now, after all the outside menaces, the inner menace of her own body. She had to be guardian now over her arms and legs, force them to do as she wanted when how easily and dutifully they had walked, moved and grasped, in the old days! They were the enemy now. It had been her body that showed treachery when she tried to get out of the bath. If she ever wanted to bath again – how strange it seemed! – she would have to ask another human being to help her to guard and control her own body. Was this so fearful? She wondered. Even if it were not, it seemed so.

She thought of the frost slowly hardening outside on the fences, roofs, windows and streets. She thought again of the terror of not being able to escape from the bath. She remembered her dead husband and the flowers she had bought to put on his grave. Then thinking again of the frost, its whiteness, white like a new bath, of the anemones and daffodils and the twigs of the red-leaved shrub, of John dead seventeen years, she fell asleep while outside, within two hours, the frost began to melt with the warmth of a sudden wind blowing from the north, and the night grew warm, like a spring night, and in the morning the light came early,

the sky was pale blue, the same warm wind as gentle as a mere breath was blowing, and a narcissus had burst its bud in the front garden.

In all her years of visiting the cemetery she had never known the wind so mild. On an arm of the peninsula exposed to the winds from two stretches of sea, the cemetery had always been a place to crouch shivering in overcoat and scarf while the flowers were set on the grave and the narrow garden cleared of weeds. Today, everything was different. After all the frosts of the past month there was no trace of chill in the air. The mildness and warmth were scarcely to be believed. The sea lay, violet-coloured, hush-hushing, turning and heaving, not breaking into foamy waves; it was one sinuous ripple from shore to horizon and its sound was the muted sound of distant forests of peace.

Picking up the rusted garden fork that she knew lay always in the grass of the next grave, long neglected, she set to work to clear away the twitch and other weeds, exposing the first bunch of dark blue primroses with yellow centres, a clump of autumn lilies, and the shoots, six inches high, of daffodils. Then removing the green-slimed jam jars from their grooves on each side of the tombstone she walked slowly, stiff from her crouching, to the ever-dripping tap at the end of the lawn path where, filling the jars with pebbles and water she rattled them up and down to try to clean them of slime. Then she ran the sparkling ice-cold water into the jars and balancing them carefully one in each hand she walked back to the grave where she shook the daffodils, anemones, red leaves from their waxed paper and dividing them put half in one jar, half in the other. The dark blue of the anemones swelled with a sea-colour as their heads rested against the red leaves. The daffodils were short-stemmed with big ragged rather than delicate trumpets – the type for blowing; and their scent was strong.

Finally, remembering the winds that raged from the sea she stuffed small pieces of the screwed-up waxed paper into the top of each jar so the flowers would not be carried away by the wind. Then with a feeling of satisfaction – I look after my husband's grave after seventeen years. The tombstone is not cracked or blown over, the garden has not sunk into a pool of clay. I look after my husband's grave – she began to walk away, between the rows of graves, noting which were and were not cared for. Her Father and Mother had been buried here. She stood now before their grave. It was a roomy grave made in the days when there was space for the dead and for the dead with money, like her parents, extra space should they need it. Their tombstone was elaborate though the writing was now faded; in death they kept the elaborate station of their life. There were no flowers on the grave, only the feathery sea-grass soft to the touch, lit with gold in the sun. There was no sound but the sound of the sea and the one row of fir trees on the brow of the hill. She felt the peace inside her; the nightmare of the evening before seemed far away, seemed not to have happened; the senseless terrifying struggle to get out of a bath! She sat on the concrete edge of her parents' grave. She did not want to go home. She felt content to sit here quietly with the warm soft wind flowing around her and the sigh of the sea rising to mingle with the sighing of the firs and the whisper of the thin gold grass. She was grateful for the money, the time and the forethought that had made her parents' grave so much bigger than the others near by. Her husband, cremated, had been allowed only a narrow eighteen inches by two feet, room only for the flecked grey tombstone In Memory of My Husband John Edward Harraway died August 6th 1948, and the narrow garden of spring flowers, whereas her parents' grave was so wide, and its concrete wall was a foot high; it was, in death, the

equivalent of a quarter-acre section before there were too many people in the world. Why when the world was wider and wider was there no space left?

Or was the world narrower?

She did not know; she could not think; she knew only that she did not want to go home, she wanted to sit here on the edge of the grave, never catching any more buses, crossing streets, walking on icy footpaths, turning mattresses, trying to reach jam from the top shelf of the cupboard, filling coal buckets, getting in and out of the bath. Only to get in somewhere and stay in; to get out and stay out; to stay now, always, in one place.

Ten minutes later she was waiting at the bus stop; anxiously studying the destination of each bus as it passed, clutching her money since concession tickets were not allowed in the weekend, thinking of the cup of tea she would make when she got home, of her evening meal – the remainder of the liver and bacon, of her nephew in Christchurch who was coming with his wife and children for the school holidays, of her niece in the home expecting her third baby. Cars and buses surged by, horns tooted, a plane droned, near and far, near and far, children cried out, dogs barked; the sea, in competition, made a harsher sound as if its waves were now breaking in foam.

For a moment, confused after the peace of the cemetery, she shut her eyes, trying to recapture the image of her husband's grave, wide, spacious, with room should the dead desire it to turn and sigh and move in dreams as if the two slept together in a big soft grass double-bed.

She waited, trying to capture the image of peace. She saw only her husband's grave, made narrower, the spring garden whittled to a thin strip; then it vanished and she was left with the image of the bathroom, of the

narrow confining bath grass-yellow as old baths are, not frost-white, waiting, waiting for one moment of inattention, weakness, pain, to claim her forever.

It Used to be Green Once by Patricia Grace²⁸

We were all ashamed of our mother. Our mother always did things to shame us. Like putting red darns in our clothes, and cutting up old swimming togs and making two – girl's togs from the top half for my sister, and boy's togs from the bottom half for my brother. Peti and Raana both cried when Mum made them take the togs to school. Peti sat down on the road by our gate and yelled out she wasn't going to school. She wasn't going swimming. I didn't blame my sister because the togs were thirty-eight chest and Peti was only ten.

But Mum knew how to get her up off the road. She yelled loudly, 'Get up off that road, my girl. There's nothing wrong with those togs. I didn't have any togs when I was a kid and I had to swim in my nothings. Get up off your backside and get to school.' Mum's got a loud voice and she knew how to shame us. We all dragged Peti up off the road before our mates came along and heard Mum. We pushed Peti into the school bus so Mum wouldn't come yelling up the drive.

We never minded our holey fruit at first. Dad used to pick up the cases of over-ripe apples or pears from town that he got cheap. Mum would dig out the rotten bits, and then give them to us to take for playlunch. We didn't notice much at first, not until Reweti from down the road yelled out to us one morning, 'Hey you fellas, who shot your pears?' We didn't have anywhere to hide our lunch because we weren't allowed school bags until we got to high school. Mum said she wasn't buying fourteen school bags. When we went to high

²⁸ English Year 13, p.201, 2004

school we could have shoes too. The whole lot of us gave Reweti a good hiding after school.

However, this story is mainly about the car, and about Mum and how she shamed us all the time. The shame of rainbow darns and cut-up togs and holey fruit was nothing to what we suffered because of the car. Uncle Raz gave us the car because he couldn't fix it up any more, and he'd been fined because he lived in Auckland. He gave the car to Dad so we could drive our cream cans up the road instead of pushing them up by the wheelbarrow.

It didn't matter about the car not having brakes because the drive from our cowshed goes down in a dip then up to the gate. Put the car in its first gear, run it down from the shed, pick up a bit of speed, up the other side, turn it round by the cream stand so that it's pointing down the drive again, foot off the accelerator and slam on the hand-brake. Dad pegged a board there to make sure it stopped. Then when we'd lifted the cans out on to the stand he'd back up a little and slide off down the drive – with all of us throwing ourselves in over the sides as if it were a dinghy that had just been pushed out into the sea.

The car had been red once because you could still see some of the patches of red paint here and there. And it used to have a top too, that you could put down or up. Our uncle told us that when he gave it to Dad. We were all proud about the car having had a top once. Some of the younger kids skited to their mates about our convertible and its top that went up and down. But that was before our mother started shaming us by driving the car to the shop.

We growled at Mum and we cried but it made no difference. 'You kids always howl when I tell you to get our shopping,' she said.

'We'll get it, Mum. We won't cry.'

'We won't cry, Mum. We'll carry the sack of potatoes.'

'And the flour.'

'And the rolled oats.'

'And the tin of treacle.'

'We'll do the shopping, Mum.'

But Mum would say, 'Never mind, I'll do it myself.'

And after that she wouldn't listen any more.

How we hated Wednesdays. We always tried to be sick on Wednesdays, or to miss the bus. But Mum would be up early yelling at us to get out of bed. If we didn't get up when we were told she'd drag us out and pull down our pyjama pants and set our bums on the cold lino.

Mum was cruel to us.

Whoever was helping with the milking had to be back quickly from the shed for breakfast, and we'd all have to rush through our kai and get to school. Wednesday was Mum's day for shopping.

As soon as she had everything tidy she'd change into her good purple dress that she'd made from a Japanese bedspread, pull on her floppy-brimmed blue sunhat and her slippers and galoshes, and go out and start up the car.

We tried everything to stop her shaming us all.

'You've got no licence, Mum.'

'What do I want a licence for? I can drive, can't I? I don't need the proof.'

'You got no warrant.'

'Warrant? What's a warrant?'

'The traffic man'll get you, Mum.'

'That rat. He won't come near me after what he did to my niece. I'll hit him right over his smart head with a bag of riwais and I'll hit him somewhere else as well.' We could never win an argument with Mum.

Off she'd go on a Wednesday morning, and once out on the road she'd start tooting the horn. This didn't

sound like a horn at all but more like a flock of ducks coming in for a feed. The reason for the horn was to let all her mates and relations along the way know she was coming. And as she passed each one's house, if they wanted anything they'd have to run out and call it out loud. Mum couldn't stop because of not having any brakes. 'E Kiri,' each would call. 'Mauria mai he riwai,' if they wanted spuds; 'Mauria mai he paraoa,' if they wanted bread. 'Mauria mai he tarau, penei te kaita,' hand spread to show the size of the pants they wanted Mum to get. She would call out to each one and wave to them to show she'd understood. And when she neared the store she'd switch the motor off, run into the kerbing and pull on the handbrake. I don't know how she remembered all the things she had to buy – I only know that by the time she'd finished, every space in that car was filled and it was a squeeze for her to get into the driver's seat. But she had everything there, all ready to throw out on the way back. As soon as she'd left the store she'd begin hooting again, to let the whole district know she was on her way. Everybody would be out on the road to get their shopping thrown at them, or just to watch our mother go chuffing past. We always hid if we heard her coming.

The first time Mum's car and the school bus met was when they were both approaching a one-way bridge from opposite directions. We had to ask the driver to stop and give way to Mum because she had no brakes. We were all ashamed. But everyone soon got to know Mum and her car and they always stopped whenever they saw her coming. And you know, Mum never ever had an accident in her car, except for once when she threw a side of mutton out to Uncle Peta and it knocked him over and broke his leg.

After a while we started walking home from school on Wednesdays to give Mum a good chance of getting

home before us, and so we wouldn't be in the bus when it had to stop and let her past. The boys didn't like having to walk home but we girls didn't mind because Mr Hadley walked home too. He was a new teacher at our school and he stayed not far from where we lived. We girls thought that he was really neat.

But one day, it had to happen. When I heard the honking and tooting behind me I wished that a hole would appear in the ground and that I would fall in it and disappear forever. As Mum came near she started smiling and waving and yelling her head off. 'Anyone wants a ride,' she yelled, 'they'll have to run and jump in.'

We all turned our heads the other way and hoped Mr Hadley wouldn't notice the car with our mother in it, and her yelling and tooting, and the brim of her hat jumping up and down. But instead, Mr Hadley took off after the car and leapt in over the back seat on top of the shopping. Oh the shame.

But then one day something happened that changed everything. We arrived home to find Dad in his best clothes, walking round and grinning, and not doing anything like getting the cows in, or mending a gate, or digging a drain. We said, 'What are you laughing at, Dad?' 'What are you dressed up for? Hey Mum, what's the matter with Dad?'

'Your dad's a rich man,' she said. 'Your dad he's just won fifty thousand dollars in a lottery,'

At first we couldn't believe it. We couldn't believe it. Then we all began running round and laughing and yelling and hugging Mum and Dad. 'We can have shoes and bags,' we said. 'New clothes and swimming togs, and proper apples and pears.' Then do you know what Dad said? Dad said, 'Mum can have a new car.' This really astounded and amazed us. We went numb

with excitement for five minutes then began hooting and shouting again, and knocking Mum over.

‘A new car!’

‘A new car?’

‘Get us a Packard, Mum’

‘Or a De Soto. Yes, yes.’

Get this, get that. . .

Well Mum bought a big shiny green Chevrolet, and Dad got a new cowshed with everything modernised and water gushing everywhere. We all got our new clothes – shoes, bags, togs – and we even started taking posh lunches to school. Sandwiches cut in triangles, bottles of cordial, crisp apples and pears, and yellow bananas.

And somehow all of us kids changed. We started acting like we were somebody instead of ordinary like before. We used to whine to Dad for money to spend and he’d always give it to us. Every week we’d nag Mum into taking us to the pictures, or if she was tired we’d go ourselves by taxi. We got flash bedspreads and a piano and we really thought that we were neat.

As for the old car – we made Dad take it to the dump. We never wanted to see it again. We all cheered when he took it away, except for Mum. Mum stayed inside where she couldn’t watch, but we all stood outside and cheered.

We all changed, as though we were really somebody, but there was one thing I noticed. Mum didn’t change at all, and neither did Dad. Mum had a new car all right, and a couple of new dresses, and a new pair of galoshes to put over her slippers. And Dad had a new modern milking shed and a tractor and some other gadgets for the farm. But Mum and Dad didn’t change. They were the same as always.

Mum still went shopping every Wednesday. But instead of having to do all the shopping herself she was

able to take all her friends and relations with her. She had to start out earlier so she’d have time to pick everyone up on the way. How angry we used to be when Mum went past with her same old sunhat and her heap of friends and relations, and them all waving and calling out to us.

Mum sometimes forgot that the car had brakes, especially when she was approaching the old bridge and we were coming the opposite way in the school bus. She would start tooting and the bus would have to pull over and let her through. That’s when all our aunties and uncles and friends would start waving and calling out. But some of them couldn’t wave because they were too squashed by people and shopping, they’d just yell. How shaming.

There were always ropes everywhere over Mum’s new car holding bags of things and shovel handles to the roof and sides. The boot was always hanging open because it was too full to close – things used to drop out on to the road all the time. And the new car – it used to be green once, because if you look closely you can still see some patches of green paint here and there.

Appointment With Love by S.I Kishor²⁹

Six minutes to six, said the clock over the information booth in New York’s Grand Central Station. The tall young Army Officer lifted his sun-burned face and narrowed his eyes to note the exact time. His heart was pounding with a beat that shocked him. In six minutes he would see the woman who had filled such a special place in his life for the past thirteen months, the woman he had never seen, yet whose written words had sustained him faithfully. Lt. Blanford remembered one day in particular, with worst of the fighting when

²⁹www.allenisd.org/cms/lib8/TX01001197/Centricity/Domain

his plane had been caught in the midst of a pack of enemy planes. In one of his letters, he had confessed to her that he often felt fear, and only a few days before this battle, he had received her answer: "Of course you fear ... all brave men do. Next time you doubt yourself, I want you to hear my voice reciting to you: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me..." He had remembered, and it had renewed his strength. Now he was going to hear her real voice. Four minutes to six. A girl passed close to him, and Lt. Blanford stared. She was wearing a flower, but it was not the little red rose they had agreed upon. Besides, this girl was only about 18, and Hollis Maynell had told him she was 30. "What of it?" he had answered. "I'm 32." He was 29. His mind went back to that book he had read in the training camp. "Of Human Bondage" and throughout the book there were notes in a woman's writing. He had never believed that a woman could see into a man's heart, so tenderly, so understandingly. Her name was on the book plate: Hollis Maynell. He got hold of a New York City telephone book and found her address. He had written, she had answered. The next day he had been shipped out, but they had gone on writing. For thirteen months she had faithfully replied. When his letters did not arrive, she wrote anyway and now he believed he loved her and she loved him. But she had refused all his pleas to send him her photograph. She had explained. "If your feeling for me had any reality, what I look like won't matter. Suppose I'm beautiful. I'd always be haunted that you had been taking a chance on just that, and that kind of love would disgust me. Suppose I'm plain, (and you must admit that this is more likely), then, I'd always fear that you were only writing because you were lonely and had no one else. No, don't ask for my picture. When you come to New York, you shall see

me and then you shall make your own decision." One minute to six... he flipped the pages of the book he held. Then Lt. Blanford's heart leaped. A young woman was coming toward him. Her figure was long and slim: her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears. Her eyes were blue as flowers, her lips and chin had a gentle firmness. In her pale green suit, she was like springtime come-alive. He started toward her, forgetting to notice that she was wearing no rose, and as he moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. "Going my way soldier?" she murmured. He made one step closer to her, then he saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl, a woman well past 40, her hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump; her thick-ankled feet were thrust into low-heeled shoes. But she wore a red rose on her rumpled coat. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. Blanford felt as though he were being split in two, so keen was his desire to follow the girl, yet so deep was his longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned and upheld him; and there she stood. He could see that her pale plump face was gentle and sensible; her gray eyes had a worn wrinkle. Lt. Blanford did not get hostile. His fingers gripped the worn copy of *Human Bondage* which was to identify him to her. This would not be love, but it would be something precious, a friendship for which he had been and must be ever grateful... He squared his shoulders, saluted and held the book out towards the woman, although even while he spoke he felt the bitterness of his disappointment. "I'm Lt. Blanford and you... Miss Maynell. I'm so glad you could meet me. May...may I take you to dinner?" The woman's face broadened in a tolerant smile. "I don't know what this is all about, son," she answered. That young woman in the green suit who just passed gave me a rose to wear and said that if you asked me to go

out with you, I should tell you she is waiting in the restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of a test.”

Eveline by James Joyce³⁰

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired. Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it—not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field—the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep nix and call out when he saw her father coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home. Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering

where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken harmonium beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. He had been a school friend of her father. Whenever he showed the photograph to a visitor her father used to pass it with a casual word: “He is in Melbourne now.” She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. O course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool, perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening. “Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting?” “Look lively, Miss Hill, please.” She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores. But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married—she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And now she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead

³⁰ <https://www.lonestar.edu/departments/english>

and Harry, who was in the church decorating business, was nearly always down somewhere in the country. Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She always gave her entire wages—seven shillings—and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad on Saturday night. In the end he would give her the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions. She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work—a hard life—but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life. She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, openhearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her. How well she remembered the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. He was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze. Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her outside the Stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see The Bohemian Girl and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew

that they were courting and, when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him. "I know these sailor chaps," he said. One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly. The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father. Ernest had been her favourite but she liked Harry too. Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh. 5 Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side of

the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given sixpence. She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying: "Damned Italians! coming over here!" As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being—that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother's voice saying constantly with foolish insistence: "Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!" She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her. She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, 6 with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, tomorrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer. A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand: "Come!" All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron

railing. "Come!" No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish. "Eveline! Evvy!" He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

The Garden Party by Katherine Mansfield³¹

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

"Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and

³¹ <https://www.katherinemansfieldsociety.org/assets>

she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

"You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one."

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she had not got the bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh - er - have you come - is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it."

His smile was so easy, so friendly that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. "Cheer up, we won't bite," their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

"Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?"

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they

stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

"I don't fancy it," said he. "Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee," and he turned to Laura in his easy way, "you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me."

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

"A corner of the tennis-court," she suggested. "But the band's going to be in one corner."

"H'm, going to have a band, are you?" said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

"Only a very small band," said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

"Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine."

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that - caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have

done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for her friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom ... And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Some one whistled, some one sang out, "Are you right there, matey?" "Matey!" The friendliness of it, the - the - Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

"Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!" a voice cried from the house.

"Coming!" Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

"I say, Laura," said Laurie very fast, "you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing."

"I will," said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. "Oh, I do love parties, don't you?" gasped Laura.

"Ra-ther," said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. "Dash off to the telephone, old girl."

The telephone. "Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal - just the

sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment - hold the line. Mother's calling." And Laura sat back. "What, mother? Can't hear."

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. "Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday."

"Mother says you're to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. "Huh," she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase, in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, "I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs Sheridan."

"What is it, Sadie?" Laura came into the hall.

"It's the florist, Miss Laura."

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies - canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

"O-oh, Sadie!" said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

"It's some mistake," she said faintly. "Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother."

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

"It's quite right," she said calmly. "Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?" She pressed Laura's arm. "I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse."

"But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere," said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

"My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man."

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

"Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Don't you agree, Laura?"

"Oh, I do, mother."

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

"Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and - one moment, Hans - " Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some

drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once.

"Very good, Miss Jose."

She turned to Meg. "I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over 'This life is Weary.'"

Pom! Ta-ta-ta Tee-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

"This Life is Wee-ary, A Tear - a Sigh. A Love that Chan-ges, This Life is Wee-ary, A Tear - a Sigh. A Love that Chan-ges, And then ... Good-bye!"

But at the word "Good-bye," and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

"Aren't I in good voice, mummy?" she beamed.

"This Life is Wee-ary, Hope comes to Die. A Dream - a Wa-kening."

But now Sadie interrupted them. "What is it, Sadie?"

"If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?"

"The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?" echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. "Let me see." And she said to Sadie firmly, "Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes.

Sadie went.

"Now, Laura," said her mother quickly, "come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And - and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into

the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning."

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

"One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly - cream cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?"

"Yes."

"Egg and--" Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her. "It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?"

"Olive, pet," said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

"Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive."

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

"I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches," said Jose's rapturous voice. "How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?"

"Fifteen, Miss Jose."

"Well, cook, I congratulate you."

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife, and smiled broadly.

"Godber's has come," announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.

That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

"Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl," ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

"Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?" said Laura.

"I suppose they do," said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. "They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say."

"Have one each, my dears," said cook in her comfortable voice. "Yer ma won't know."

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

"Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. "I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened.

"Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself; it was his story.

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"There's been a horrible accident," said Cook. "A man killed."

"A man killed! Where? How? When?"

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

"Know those little cottages just below here, miss?" Know them? Of course, she knew them. "Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed."

"Dead!" Laura stared at Godber's man.

"Dead when they picked him up," said Godber's man with relish. "They were taking the body home as I come up here." And he said to the cook, "He's left a wife and five little ones."

"Jose, come here." Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. "Jose!" she said, horrified, "however are we going to stop everything?"

"Stop everything, Laura!" cried Jose in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Stop the garden-party, of course." Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. "Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant."

"But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate."

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up,

Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

"And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman," said Laura.

"Oh, Laura!" Jose began to be seriously annoyed. "If you're going to stop a band playing every time some one has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic." Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. "You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental," she said softly.

"Drunk! Who said he was drunk?" Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said, just as they had used to say on those occasions, "I'm going straight up to tell mother."

"Do, dear," cooed Jose.

"Mother, can I come into your room?" Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

"Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?" And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

"Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura.

"Not in the garden?" interrupted her mother.

"No, no!"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me!" Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

"But listen, mother," said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. "Of course, we can't have our party, can we?" she pleaded. "The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!"

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

"But, my dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If some one had died there normally - and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes - we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?"

Laura had to say "yes" to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

"Mother, isn't it terribly heartless of us?" she asked.

"Darling!" Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. "My child!" said her mother, "the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!" And she held up her hand-mirror.

"But, mother," Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside.

This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

"You are being very absurd, Laura," she said coldly. "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now."

"I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all

seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan ...

Lunch was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

"My dear!" trilled Kitty Maitland, "aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf."

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

"Laurie!"

"Hallo!" He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. "My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie. "What an absolutely topping hat!"

Laura said faintly "Is it?" and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to - where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

"Darling Laura, how well you look!"

"What a becoming hat, child!"

"Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking."

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, "Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special." She ran to her father and begged him. "Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?"

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

"Never a more delightful garden-party ... " "The greatest success ... " "Quite the most ... "

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

"All over, all over, thank heaven," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted. Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!" And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

"Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag."

"Thanks." Mr. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. "I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened to-day?" he said.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, "we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off."

"Oh, mother!" Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

"It was a horrible affair all the same," said Mr. Sheridan. "The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say."

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father ...

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all uneaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

"I know," she said. "Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura!" She jumped up. "Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard."

"But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?" said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

"Of course! What's the matter with you to-day? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now--"

Oh well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

"Take it yourself, darling," said she. "Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies."

"The stems will ruin her lace frock," said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. "Only the basket, then. And, Laura!" - her mother followed her out of the marquee - "don't on any account--"

"What mother?"

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! "Nothing! Run along."

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't

realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, "Yes, it was the most successful party."

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer - if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, "Is this Mrs. Scott's house?" and the woman, smiling queerly, said, "It is, my lass."

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, "Help me, God," as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, "Are you Mrs. Scott?" But to her horror the woman answered, "Walk in please, miss," and she was shut in the passage.

"No," said Laura, "I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent--"

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. "Step this way, please, miss," she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

"Em," said the little creature who had let her in. "Em! It's a young lady." She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, "I'm 'er sister, miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?"

"Oh, but of course!" said Laura. "Please, please don't disturb her. I - I only want to leave--"

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

"All right, my dear," said the other. "I'll think the young lady."

And again she began, "You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure," and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying.

"You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you?" said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. "Don't be afraid, my lass," - and now her voice

sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet--"e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, my dear."

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep - sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy ... happy ... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

"Forgive my hat," she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. "Is that you, Laura?"

"Yes."

"Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?"

"Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!" She took his arm, she pressed up against him.

"I say, you're not crying, are you?" asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. "Don't cry," he said in his warm, loving voice. "Was it awful?"

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvellous. But Laurie--" She stopped, she looked at her brother.

"Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life--" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"Isn't it, darling?" said Laurie.

The Lottery by Shirley Jackson³²

The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day; the flowers were blossoming profusely and the grass was richly green. The people of the village began to gather in the square, between the post office and the bank, around ten o'clock; in some towns there were so many people that the lottery took two days and had to be started on June 26th, but in this village, where there were only about three hundred people, the whole lottery took only about two hours, so it could begin at ten o'clock in the morning and still be through in time to allow the villagers to get home for noon dinner.

The children assembled first, of course. School was recently over for the summer, and the feeling of liberty sat uneasily on most of them; they tended to gather together quietly for a while before they broke into boisterous play, and their talk was still of the classroom and the teacher, of books and reprimands. Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones; Bobby and Harry Jones and Dickie Delacroix—the villagers pronounced this name "Dellacroy"—eventually made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and guarded it against the raids of the other boys. The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys, and the very small children rolled in the dust or clung to the hands of their older brothers or sisters.

³² web1.nbed.nb.ca/sites

Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes. They stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed. The women, wearing faded house dresses and sweaters, came shortly after their menfolk. They greeted one another and exchanged bits of gossip as they went to join their husbands. Soon the women, standing by their husbands, began to call to their children, and the children came reluctantly, having to be called four or five times. Bobby Martin ducked under his mother's grasping hand and ran, laughing, back to the pile of stones. His father spoke up sharply, and Bobby came quickly and took his place between his father and his oldest brother.

The lottery was conducted—as were the square dances, the teen-age club, the Halloween program—by Mr. Summers, who had time and energy to devote to civic activities. He was a round-faced, jovial man and he ran the coal business, and people were sorry for him, because he had no children and his wife was a scold. When he arrived in the square, carrying the black wooden box, there was a murmur of conversation among the villagers, and he waved and called, “Little late today, folks.” The postmaster, Mr. Graves, followed him, carrying a three-legged stool, and the stool was put in the center of the square and Mr. Summers set the black box down on it. The villagers kept their distance, leaving a space between themselves and the stool, and when Mr. Summers said, “Some of you fellows want to give me a hand?,” there was a hesitation before two men, Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, came forward to hold the box steady on the stool while Mr. Summers stirred up the papers inside it.

The original paraphernalia for the lottery had been lost long ago, and the black box now resting on the stool had been put into use even before Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, was born. Mr. Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box. There was a story that the present box had been made with some pieces of the box that had preceded it, the one that had been constructed when the first people settled down to make a village here. Every year, after the lottery, Mr. Summers began talking again about a new box, but every year the subject was allowed to fade off without anything's being done. The black box grew shabbier each year; by now it was no longer completely black but splintered badly along one side to show the original wood color, and in some places faded or stained.

Mr. Martin and his oldest son, Baxter, held the black box securely on the stool until Mr. Summers had stirred the papers thoroughly with his hand. Because so much of the ritual had been forgotten or discarded, Mr. Summers had been successful in having slips of paper substituted for the chips of wood that had been used for generations. Chips of wood, Mr. Summers had argued, had been all very well when the village was tiny, but now that the population was more than three hundred and likely to keep on growing, it was necessary to use something that would fit more easily into the black box. The night before the lottery, Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves made up the slips of paper and put them into the box, and it was then taken to the safe of Mr. Summers' coal company and locked up until Mr. Summers was ready to take it to the square next morning. The rest of the year, the box was put away, sometimes one place, sometimes another; it had spent one year in Mr. Graves' barn and another year

underfoot in the post office, and sometimes it was set on a shelf in the Martin grocery and left there.

There was a great deal of fussing to be done before Mr. Summers declared the lottery open. There were the lists to make up—of heads of families, heads of households in each family, members of each household in each family. There was the proper swearing-in of Mr. Summers by the postmaster, as the official of the lottery; at one time, some people remembered, there had been a recital of some sort, performed by the official of the lottery, a perfunctory, tuneless chant that had been rattled off duly each year; some people believed that the official of the lottery used to stand just so when he said or sang it, others believed that he was supposed to walk among the people, but years and years ago this part of the ritual had been allowed to lapse. There had been, also, a ritual salute, which the official of the lottery had had to use in addressing each person who came up to draw from the box, but this also had changed with time, until now it was felt necessary only for the official to speak to each person approaching. Mr. Summers was very good at all this; in his clean white shirt and blue jeans, with one hand resting carelessly on the black box, he seemed very proper and important as he talked interminably to Mr. Graves and the Martins.

Just as Mr. Summers finally left off talking and turned to the assembled villagers, Mrs. Hutchinson came hurriedly along the path to the square, her sweater thrown over her shoulders, and slid into place in the back of the crowd. “Clean forgot what day it was,” she said to Mrs. Delacroix, who stood next to her, and they both laughed softly. “Thought my old man was out back stacking wood,” Mrs. Hutchinson went on, “and then I looked out the window and the kids was gone, and then I remembered it was the twenty-seventh and came a-running.” She dried her hands on her apron,

and Mrs. Delacroix said, “You’re in time, though. They’re still talking away up there.”

Mrs. Hutchinson craned her neck to see through the crowd and found her husband and children standing near the front. She tapped Mrs. Delacroix on the arm as a farewell and began to make her way through the crowd. The people separated good-humoredly to let her through; two or three people said, in voices just loud enough to be heard across the crowd, “Here comes your Mrs., Hutchinson,” and “Bill, she made it after all.” Mrs. Hutchinson reached her husband, and Mr. Summers, who had been waiting, said cheerfully, “Thought we were going to have to get on without you, Tessie.” Mrs. Hutchinson said, grinning, “Wouldn’t have me leave m’dishes in the sink, now, would you, Joe?,” and soft laughter ran through the crowd as the people stirred back into position after Mrs. Hutchinson’s arrival.

“Well, now,” Mr. Summers said soberly, “guess we better get started, get this over with, so’s we can go back to work. Anybody ain’t here?”

“Dunbar,” several people said. “Dunbar, Dunbar.”

Mr. Summers consulted his list. “Clyde Dunbar,” he said. “That’s right. He’s broke his leg, hasn’t he? Who’s drawing for him?”

“Me, I guess,” a woman said, and Mr. Summers turned to look at her. “Wife draws for her husband,” Mr. Summers said. “Don’t you have a grown boy to do it for you, Janey?” Although Mr. Summers and everyone else in the village knew the answer perfectly well, it was the business of the official of the lottery to ask such questions formally. Mr. Summers waited with an expression of polite interest while Mrs. Dunbar answered.

“Horace’s not but sixteen yet,” Mrs. Dunbar said regretfully. “Guess I gotta fill in for the old man this year.”

“Right,” Mr. Summers said. He made a note on the list he was holding. Then he asked, “Watson boy drawing this year?”

A tall boy in the crowd raised his hand. “Here,” he said. “I’m drawing for m’mother and me.” He blinked his eyes nervously and ducked his head as several voices in the crowd said things like “Good fellow, Jack,” and “Glad to see your mother’s got a man to do it.”

“Well,” Mr. Summers said, “guess that’s everyone. Old Man Warner make it?”

“Here,” a voice said, and Mr. Summers nodded.

A sudden hush fell on the crowd as Mr. Summers cleared his throat and looked at the list. “All ready?” he called. “Now, I’ll read the names—heads of families first—and the men come up and take a paper out of the box. Keep the paper folded in your hand without looking at it until everyone has had a turn. Everything clear?”

The people had done it so many times that they only half listened to the directions; most of them were quiet, wetting their lips, not looking around. Then Mr. Summers raised one hand high and said, “Adams.” A man disengaged himself from the crowd and came forward. “Hi, Steve,” Mr. Summers said, and Mr. Adams said, “Hi, Joe.” They grinned at one another humorlessly and nervously. Then Mr. Adams reached into the black box and took out a folded paper. He held it firmly by one corner as he turned and went hastily back to his place in the crowd, where he stood a little apart from his family, not looking down at his hand.

“Allen,” Mr. Summers said. “Anderson. . . . Bentham.”

“Seems like there’s no time at all between lotteries any more,” Mrs. Delacroix said to Mrs. Graves in the back row. “Seems like we got through with the last one only last week.”

“Time sure goes fast,” Mrs. Graves said.

“Clark. . . . Delacroix.”

“There goes my old man,” Mrs. Delacroix said. She held her breath while her husband went forward.

“Dunbar,” Mr. Summers said, and Mrs. Dunbar went steadily to the box while one of the women said, “Go on, Janey,” and another said, “There she goes.”

“We’re next,” Mrs. Graves said. She watched while Mr. Graves came around from the side of the box, greeted Mr. Summers gravely, and selected a slip of paper from the box. By now, all through the crowd there were men holding the small folded papers in their large hands, turning them over and over nervously. Mrs. Dunbar and her two sons stood together, Mrs. Dunbar holding the slip of paper.

“Harburt. . . . Hutchinson.”

“Get up there, Bill,” Mrs. Hutchinson said, and the people near her laughed.

“Jones.”

“They do say,” Mr. Adams said to Old Man Warner, who stood next to him, “that over in the north village they’re talking of giving up the lottery.”

Old Man Warner snorted. “Pack of crazy fools,” he said. “Listening to the young folks, nothing’s good enough for *them*. Next thing you know, they’ll be wanting to go back to living in caves, nobody work any more, live *that* way for a while. Used to be a saying about ‘Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon.’ First thing you know, we’d all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There’s *always* been a lottery,” he added petulantly. “Bad enough to see young Joe Summers up there joking with everybody.”

“Some places have already quit lotteries,” Mrs. Adams said.

“Nothing but trouble in *that*,” Old Man Warner said stoutly. “Pack of young fools.”

"Martin." And Bobby Martin watched his father go forward. "Overdyke. . . Percy."

"I wish they'd hurry," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son. "I wish they'd hurry."

"They're almost through," her son said.

"You get ready to run tell Dad," Mrs. Dunbar said.

Mr. Summers called his own name and then stepped forward precisely and selected a slip from the box. Then he called, "Warner."

"Seventy-seventh year I been in the lottery," Old Man Warner said as he went through the crowd. "Seventy-seventh time."

"Watson." The tall boy came awkwardly through the crowd. Someone said, "Don't be nervous, Jack," and Mr. Summers said, "Take your time, son."

"Zanini."

After that, there was a long pause, a breathless pause, until Mr. Summers, holding his slip of paper in the air, said, "All right, fellows." For a minute, no one moved, and then all the slips of paper were opened. Suddenly, all the women began to speak at once, saying, "Who is it?," "Who's got it?," "Is it the Dunbars?," "Is it the Watsons?" Then the voices began to say, "It's Hutchinson. It's Bill," "Bill Hutchinson's got it."

"Go tell your father," Mrs. Dunbar said to her older son.

People began to look around to see the Hutchinsons. Bill Hutchinson was standing quiet, staring down at the paper in his hand. Suddenly, Tessie Hutchinson shouted to Mr. Summers, "You didn't give him time enough to take any paper he wanted. I saw you. It wasn't fair!"

"Be a good sport, Tessie," Mrs. Delacroix called, and Mrs. Graves said, "All of us took the same chance."

"Shut up, Tessie," Bill Hutchinson said.

"Well, everyone," Mr. Summers said, "that was done pretty fast, and now we've got to be hurrying a little

more to get done in time." He consulted his next list.

"Bill," he said, "you draw for the Hutchinson family. You got any other households in the Hutchinsons?"

"There's Don and Eva," Mrs. Hutchinson yelled. "Make *them* take their chance!"

"Daughters draw with their husbands' families, Tessie," Mr. Summers said gently. "You know that as well as anyone else."

"It wasn't *fair*," Tessie said.

"I guess not, Joe," Bill Hutchinson said regretfully.

"My daughter draws with her husband's family, that's only fair. And I've got no other family except the kids."

"Then, as far as drawing for families is concerned, it's you," Mr. Summers said in explanation, "and as far as drawing for households is concerned, that's you, too. Right?"

"Right," Bill Hutchinson said.

"How many kids, Bill?" Mr. Summers asked formally.

"Three," Bill Hutchinson said. "There's Bill, Jr., and Nancy, and little Dave. And Tessie and me."

"All right, then," Mr. Summers said. "Harry, you got their tickets back?"

Mr. Graves nodded and held up the slips of paper. "Put them in the box, then," Mr. Summers directed. "Take Bill's and put it in."

"I think we ought to start over," Mrs. Hutchinson said, as quietly as she could. "I tell you it wasn't *fair*. You didn't give him time enough to choose. Everybody saw that."

Mr. Graves had selected the five slips and put them in the box, and he dropped all the papers but those onto the ground, where the breeze caught them and lifted them off.

"Listen, everybody," Mrs. Hutchinson was saying to the people around her.

"Ready, Bill?" Mr. Summers asked, and Bill Hutchinson, with one quick glance around at his wife and children, nodded.

"Remember," Mr. Summers said, "take the slips and keep them folded until each person has taken one. Harry, you help little Dave." Mr. Graves took the hand of the little boy, who came willingly with him up to the box. "Take a paper out of the box, Davy," Mr. Summers said. Davy put his hand into the box and laughed. "Take just *one* paper," Mr. Summers said. "Harry, you hold it for him." Mr. Graves took the child's hand and removed the folded paper from the tight fist and held it while little Dave stood next to him and looked up at him wonderingly.

"Nancy next," Mr. Summers said. Nancy was twelve, and her school friends breathed heavily as she went forward, switching her skirt, and took a slip daintily from the box. "Bill, Jr.," Mr. Summers said, and Billy, his face red and his feet overlarge, nearly knocked the box over as he got a paper out. "Tessie," Mr. Summers said. She hesitated for a minute, looking around defiantly, and then set her lips and went up to the box. She snatched a paper out and held it behind her.

"Bill," Mr. Summers said, and Bill Hutchinson reached into the box and felt around, bringing his hand out at last with the slip of paper in it.

The crowd was quiet. A girl whispered, "I hope it's not Nancy," and the sound of the whisper reached the edges of the crowd.

"It's not the way it used to be," Old Man Warner said clearly. "People ain't the way they used to be."

"All right," Mr. Summers said. "Open the papers. Harry, you open little Dave's."

Mr. Graves opened the slip of paper and there was a general sigh through the crowd as he held it up and everyone could see that it was blank. Nancy and Bill, Jr., opened theirs at the same time, and both beamed

and laughed, turning around to the crowd and holding their slips of paper above their heads.

"Tessie," Mr. Summers said. There was a pause, and then Mr. Summers looked at Bill Hutchinson, and Bill unfolded his paper and showed it. It was blank.

"It's Tessie," Mr. Summers said, and his voice was hushed. "Show us her paper, Bill."

Bill Hutchinson went over to his wife and forced the slip of paper out of her hand. It had a black spot on it, the black spot Mr. Summers had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal-company office. Bill Hutchinson held it up, and there was a stir in the crowd.

"All right, folks," Mr. Summers said. "Let's finish quickly."

Although the villagers had forgotten the ritual and lost the original black box, they still remembered to use stones. The pile of stones the boys had made earlier was ready; there were stones on the ground with the blowing scraps of paper that had come out of the box. Mrs. Delacroix selected a stone so large she had to pick it up with both hands and turned to Mrs. Dunbar. "Come on," she said. "Hurry up."

Mrs. Dunbar had small stones in both hands, and she said, gasping for breath. "I can't run at all. You'll have to go ahead and I'll catch up with you."

The children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles.

Tessie Hutchinson was in the center of a cleared space by now, and she held her hands out desperately as the villagers moved in on her. "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her on the side of the head.

Old Man Warner was saying, "Come on, come on, everyone." Steve Adams was in the front of the crowd of villagers, with Mrs. Graves beside him.

"It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her.

The Storyteller by Saki³³

It was a hot afternoon, and inside the train it was steamy. The next stop was Templecombe, which was almost an hour ahead. In one car of the train there were a little girl, an even younger girl, and a little boy. Their aunt sat in a seat in the corner. In the opposite corner of the car was a bachelor who didn't know them. The girls and the boy were all over the train car. The aunt kept telling the children "Don't," while the children kept asking her questions starting with "Why?" The bachelor said nothing to them. "Don't, Cyril, don't!" exclaimed the aunt, as the boy began hitting the seat cushions, making clouds of dust fly up. "Come over here and look out the window." Reluctantly, the boy went over to the window. "Why are they driving those sheep out of that field?" he asked. "I guess they are being taken to another field that has more grass," said the aunt weakly. "But there's lots of grass in that field," protested the boy. "There's nothing but grass there. Aunt, there's lots of grass in that field." "Maybe the grass in the other field is better," the aunt suggested foolishly. "Why is it better?" came the quick, obvious question. "Oh, look at those cows!" exclaimed the aunt. Almost every field they passed was full of cows and bulls, but she acted like it was an unusual thing. "Why is the grass in the other field better?" Cyril kept at her. The frown on the bachelor's face was deepening into a scowl. The aunt saw him and decided he was a mean, unfriendly man. And she couldn't come up with any good explanation for the little boy about the grass in the field. The younger girl tried to entertain herself 4 SAKI and everyone else by starting to recite a poem. She only knew the first line, but she used that as much as possible. She repeated the line over and over again in a dreamy but loud voice. The bachelor thought it

seemed like someone had bet her she couldn't say that same line two thousand times without stopping. Unfortunately for him, it seemed like she was going to win the bet. "Come over here and listen to a story," said the aunt, when the bachelor had given her two nasty looks and looked like he was going to call the train conductor. The children moved over toward the aunt without any enthusiasm. They obviously did not think the aunt was a very good storyteller. In a quiet voice that was often interrupted by loud questions from the children, the aunt started a not-so-interesting story about a little girl who was good. Because she was so good, she made a lot of friends, and was finally saved from a wild bull by people who admired how good she was. "Would they have saved her if she hadn't been good?" demanded the older of the little girls. That was exactly the question the bachelor wanted to ask. "Well, yes," answered the aunt lamely, "but I don't think they would have run so fast to help her if they hadn't liked her so much." THE STORYTELLER 5 "It's the stupidest story I've ever heard," said the older of the little girls. "I didn't even listen after the first part because it was so stupid," said Cyril. The younger girl didn't comment on the story, but long before she had stopped listening and started repeating the line from the poem again. "You don't seem to be a very good storyteller," said the bachelor suddenly. The aunt immediately got defensive at this unexpected attack. "It's very difficult to tell stories that children will understand and enjoy," she said stiffly. "I don't agree with you," said the bachelor. "Maybe you'd like to tell them a story," the aunt shot back. "Tell us a story!" demanded the older of the little girls. "Once upon a time," began the bachelor, "there was a little girl called Bertha, who was very, very good." The children's temporary interest started

³³ <https://www.townsendpress.com/sites/default/files>

fading immediately. To them, all stories seemed boring and the same, no matter who told them. "She did everything she was told to do. She always told the truth and kept her clothes neat and clean. She ate food that was good for her instead of junk food and sweets, got good grades in school, and was polite to everyone." 6 SAKI "Was she pretty?" asked the older little girl. "Not as pretty as any of you," said the bachelor, "but she was horribly good." The children showed they liked this part of the story; the word horrible in connection with goodness was something new and they liked it. It seemed real and true, unlike the aunt's stories about children. "She was so good," continued the bachelor, "that she won several medals for goodness, which she always wore, pinned to her dress. There was a medal for following rules, one for being on time, and one for general good behavior. They were large metal medals and they clicked against each other when she walked. No other child in her town had three medals, so everyone knew that she must be an extra good child." "Horribly good," repeated Cyril. "Everybody talked about how good she was, and the Prince of the country heard about it. He decided she was so good that he would let her walk once a week in his park just outside the town. It was a beautiful park, and no children had ever been allowed in it before. So it was a great honor for Bertha to be allowed to go there." "Were there any sheep in the park?" demanded Cyril. "No," said the bachelor, "there were no sheep." THE STORYTELLER 7 8 SAKI "Why weren't there any sheep?" came the unavoidable question. The aunt had a big smile on her face. "There were no sheep in the park," said the bachelor, "because the Prince's mother had once had a dream that her son would either be killed by a sheep or by a clock falling on him. So the Prince never kept sheep in his park or a clock in his palace." The aunt

gasped in admiration at how well the bachelor had answered the question. "Was the Prince killed by a sheep or a clock?" asked Cyril. "He is still alive, so we don't know if the dream will come true," said the bachelor. "Anyway, there were no sheep in the park, but there were lots of little pigs running all over the place." "What color were they?" "Black with white faces, white with black spots, black all over, gray with white patches, and some were white all over." The storyteller stopped to let the children imagine all of the great things about the park, and then started again: "Bertha was sad to find that there were no flowers in the park. With tears in her eyes she had promised her aunts that she wouldn't pick any of the flowers. She wanted to keep her promise, and it made her feel silly that there weren't any flowers to pick." "Why weren't there any flowers?" "Because the pigs had eaten all of them," said the bachelor right away. "The gardeners told the Prince he couldn't have both pigs and flowers, so he decided to keep the pigs and forget the flowers." The children were all happy with the Prince's choice; so many people would have picked the flowers over the pigs. "There were lots of other fun things in the park. There were ponds with gold, blue, and green fish in them, and trees with beautiful talking parrots, and hummingbirds that could hum popular music. Bertha walked around and totally enjoyed herself. She thought, 'If I weren't so very good, they wouldn't have let me come to this beautiful park and enjoy everything in it.' Her three medals clinked against each other as she walked and again reminded her how good she was. But then a very big wolf came into the park to hunt for a fat little pig for its supper." "What color was it?" asked the children, who were now very interested in the story. "Mud colored all over, with a black tongue and fierce pale gray eyes. The first thing it saw in the park was Bertha. Her white dress was so spotlessly

white and clean that you could see it from far away. Bertha saw the wolf creeping toward her, and she wished she had never been invited to the park. She ran as fast as she could, THE STORYTELLER 9 but the wolf came after her with huge leaps and bounds. She managed to reach some bushes and she hid in them. The wolf sniffed the bushes and she could see its black tongue hanging out of its mouth and its angry gray eyes. Bertha was very scared, and thought, 'If I had not been so very good, I would be safe back in town right now.' "However, the smell of the bushes was so strong and the branches were so thick that the wolf couldn't smell or see Bertha, so it decided to go catch a pig instead. Bertha was so scared of the wolf that she was shaking and her medals for goodness started clinking together. The wolf was just moving away when it heard the medals clinking and stopped to listen. When they clinked again in a bush near him, it dove into the bush with its gray eyes shining fiercely. It dragged Bertha out and ate her all up. All that was left were her shoes, pieces of clothing, and the three medals for goodness." "Were any of the pigs killed?" "No, they all escaped." "The story started badly," said the younger girl, "but it had a beautiful ending." "It is the most beautiful story I have ever heard," said the older little girl seriously. "It is the only beautiful story I have ever heard," said Cyril. The aunt disagreed. "That is an inappropriate story to tell young children! You will undo 10 SAKI years of careful teaching." "Anyway," said the bachelor, getting his stuff together so he could get off the train. "I kept them quiet for ten minutes, which was more than you could do." "Poor woman!" he thought to himself as he walked down the platform of Templecombe station. "For the next six months

those children will beg her in public for an inappropriate story!"

The Last leaf, by O. Henry³⁴

IN A SMALL PART OF THE CITY WEST OF Washington Square, the streets have gone wild. They turn in different directions. They are broken into small pieces called "places." One street goes across itself one or two times. A painter once discovered something possible and valuable about this street. Suppose a painter had some painting materials for which he had not paid. Suppose he had no money. Suppose a man came to get the money. The man might walk down that street and suddenly meet himself coming back, without having received a cent! This part of the city is called Greenwich Village. And to old Greenwich Village the painters soon came. Here they found rooms they like, with good light and at a low cost.

Sue and Johnsy lived at the top of a building with three floors. One of these young women came from Maine, the other from California. They had met at a restaurant on Eighth Street. There they discovered that they liked the same kind of art, the same kind of food, and the same kind of clothes. So they decided to live and work together. That was in the spring. Toward winter a cold stranger entered Greenwich Village. No one could see him. He walked around touching one person here and another there with his icy fingers. He was a bad sickness. Doctors called him Pneumonia. On the east side of the city he hurried, touching many people; but in the narrow streets of Greenwich Village he did not move so quickly. Mr. Pneumonia was not a nice old gentleman. A nice old gentleman would not hurt a weak little woman from California. But Mr. Pneumonia touched Johnsy with his cold fingers. She

³⁴ americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files

lay on her bed almost without moving, and she looked through the window at the wall of the house next to hers. One morning the busy doctor spoke to Sue alone in the hall, where Johnsy could not hear. "She has a very small chance," he said. "She has a chance, if she wants to live. If people don't want to live, I can't do much for them. Your little lady has decided that she is not going to get well. Is there something that is troubling her?" "She always wanted to go to Italy and paint a picture of the Bay of Naples," said Sue. "Paint! Not paint. Is there anything worth being troubled about? A man?" "A man?" said Sue. "Is a man worth—No, doctor. There is not a man." "It is weakness," said the doctor. "I will do all I know how to do. But when a sick person begins to feel that he's going to die, half my work is useless. Talk to her about new winter clothes. If she were interested in the future, her chances would be better." After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom to cry.

Then she walked into Johnsy's room. She carried some of her painting materials, and she was singing. Johnsy lay there, very thin and very quiet. Her face was turned toward the window. Sue stopped singing, thinking that Johnsy was asleep. Sue began to work. As she worked she heard a low sound, again and again. She went quickly to the bedside. Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting—counting back. "Twelve," she said; and a little later, "Eleven"; and then, "Ten," and, "Nine"; and then, "Eight," and, "Seven," almost together. Sue looked out the window. What was there to count? There was only the side wall of the next house, a short distance away. The wall had no window. An old, old tree grew against the wall. The cold breath of winter had already touched it. Almost all its leaves had fallen from its dark branches. "What is it, dear?" asked Sue. "Six," said Johnsy, in a voice still lower. "They're falling faster

now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It hurt my head to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five now." "Five what, dear? Tell your Sue." "Leaves. On the tree. When the last one falls, I must go, too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?" "Oh, I never heard of such a thing," said Sue. "It doesn't have any sense in it. What does an old tree have to do with you? Or with your getting well? And you used to love that tree so much. Don't be a little fool. The doctor told me your chances for getting well. He told me this morning. He said you had very good chances! Try to eat a little now. And then I'll go back to work. And then I can sell my picture, and then I can buy something more for you to eat to make you strong." "You don't have to buy anything for me," said Johnsy. She still looked out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want anything to eat. Now there are four. I want to see the last one fall before night. Then I'll go, too." "Johnsy, dear," said Sue, "will you promise me to close your eyes and keep them closed? Will you promise not to look out the window until I finish working? I must have this picture ready tomorrow. I need the light; I can't cover the window." "Couldn't you work in the other room?" asked Johnsy coldly. "I'd rather be here by you," said Sue. "And I don't want you to look at those leaves." "Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johnsy. She closed her eyes and lay white and still. "Because I want to see the last leaf fall. I have done enough waiting. I have done enough thinking. I want to go sailing down, down, like one of those leaves." "Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Behrman to come up here. I want to paint a man in this picture, and I'll make him look like Behrman. I won't be gone a minute. Don't try to move till I come back." Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the first floor of their house. He was past sixty. He had had

no success as a painter. For forty years he had painted, without ever painting a good picture. He had always talked of painting a great picture, a masterpiece, but he had never yet started it. He got a little money by letting others paint pictures of him. He drank too much. He still talked of his great masterpiece. And he believed that it was his special duty to do everything possible to help Sue and Johnsy. Sue found him in his dark room, and she knew that he had been drinking. She could smell it. She told him about Johnsy and the leaves on the vine. She said that she was afraid that Johnsy would indeed sail down, down like the leaf. Her hold on the world was growing weaker. Old Behrman shouted his anger over such an idea. "What!" he cried. "Are there such fools? Do people die because leaves drop off a tree? I have not heard of such a thing. No, I will not come up and sit while you make a picture of me. Why do you allow her to think such a thing? That poor little Johnsy!" "She is very sick and weak," said Sue. "The sickness has put these strange ideas into her mind. Mr. Behrman, if you won't come, you won't. But I don't think you're very nice." "This is like a woman!" shouted Behrman. "Who said I will not come? Go. I come with you. For half an hour I have been trying to say that I will come. God! This is not any place for someone so good as Johnsy to lie sick. Some day I shall paint my masterpiece, and we shall all go away from here. God! Yes." Johnsy was sleeping when they went up. Sue covered the window, and took Behrman into the other room. There they looked out the window fearfully at the tree. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A cold rain was falling, with a little snow in it too. Behrman sat down, and Sue began to paint. She worked through most of the night. In the morning, after an hour's sleep, she went to Johnsy's bedside. Johnsy with wide-open eyes was looking toward the

window. "I want to see," she told Sue. Sue took the cover from the window. But after the beating rain and the wild wind that had not stopped through the whole night, there still was one leaf to be seen against the wall. It was the last on the tree. It was still dark green near the branch. But at the edges it was turning yellow with age. There it was hanging from a branch nearly twenty feet above the ground. "It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall today, and I shall die at the same time." "Dear, dear Johnsy!" said Sue. "Think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?" But Johnsy did not answer. The most lonely thing in the world is a soul when it is preparing to go on its far journey. The ties that held her to friendship and to earth were breaking, one by one. The day slowly passed. As it grew dark, they could still see the leaf hanging from its branch against the wall. And then, as the night came, the north wind began again to blow. The rain still beat against the windows.

When it was light enough the next morning, Johnsy again commanded that she be allowed to see. The leaf was still there. Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was cooking something for her to eat. "I've been a bad girl, Sue," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how bad I was. It is wrong to want to die. I'll try to eat now. But first bring me a looking-glass, so that I can see myself. And then I'll sit up and watch you cook." An hour later she said, "Sue, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples." The doctor came in the afternoon. Sue followed him into the hall outside Johnsy's room to talk to him. "The chances are good," said the doctor. He took Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. "Give her good care, and she'll get well. And now I must see another sick person in this house. His name is Behrman. A painter, I believe. Pneumonia,

too. Mike is an old, weak man, and he is very ill. There is no hope for him. But we take him to the hospital today. We'll make it as easy for him as we can." The next day the doctor said to Sue: "She's safe. You have done it. Food and care now—that's all." And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay. She put one arm around her. "I have something to tell you," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia today in the hospital. He was ill only two days. Someone found him on the morning of the first day, in his room. He was helpless with pain." "His shoes and his clothes were wet and as cold as ice. Everyone wondered where he had been. The night had been so cold and wild. "And then they found some things. There was a light that he had taken outside. And there were his materials for painting. There was paint, green paint and yellow paint. And— "Look out the window, dear, at the last leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never moved when the wind was blowing? Oh, my dear, it is Behrman's great masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

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