

"Mahana"
AKA
The Patriarch

Screenplay by John Collee

From the novel "Bulibasha"
by Witi Ihimaera

SHOOTING DRAFT

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1

EXT. WAITUHI VALLEY - DAWN

1

Open on panorama of timeless pastoral beauty: a community of small wooden houses on a hardscrabble flinty hillock.

Flax and scotch thistles grow in the fields and pastures by the tree-lined river.

*

Dawn begins to break, colour seeps into the image.

Cows moan. A cock crows. Early-morning mist clings to the hollows.

GLORIA

Simeon. Simeon!

2

INT. WAITUHI - JOSHUA'S HOUSE - SLEEPING ROOM - DAWN

2

Gloria - a plucky 8 year-old Maori girl - is trying to wake her brother Simeon, who is sound asleep in darkness on his wooden bunk.

GLORIA

Wake up, Simeon.

SIMEON

(In Maori)

Go away.

GLORIA

(In Maori)

The cows are waiting.

SIMEON

Please, Gloria..

Trying vainly to recapture some elusive dream of comfort, wealth, luxury....

GLORIA

It's the funeral.

(In Maori)

We can't be late.

Simeon is awake now. He sits up: a long-haired Maori teenager of 14. There's a school history book by his bedside.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Were you dreaming about Poppy?

Simeon takes a playful swipe at her but she dances out of the way.

Everyone is on the move: Simeon's sisters Faith, Hope and Gloria combing each others thick, knotty hair.

Simeon's strong and attractive mother, HURIA, is trying to get the seams of her stockings straight, shouting at everyone to hurry.

HURIA
Kia tere. Kia tere!
(To Simeon)
Wash your hands, brush your hair.
(Sniffing)
Who brought shit in the house?

Simeon checks his bare feet, finds something on his heel.

There's nothing else handy so he washes it in the dog bowl.

The dog barks, unimpressed. Joshua hurries through frame.

JOSHUA
(In Maori)
FIVE MINUTES everybody.

Simeon is hopping around, trying to pull socks over his wet feet.

SIMEON
What about breakfast?

HURIA gives him a cracker to eat - not exactly what he had in mind. Joshua finds his wristwatch.

JOSHUA
Four minutes. He'll kill us. Faith!
Hope! Gloria. Everyone in the car.

Grandfather's house is a substantial weatherboard bungalow with a wide wrap-around verandah.

The Patriarch himself, in his dark worsted suit, watches as a fleet of cars and trucks assemble on the front lawn - all in varying states of disrepair.

Joshua's clanking Austin pulls up last, stalls and wheezes to a halt.

The children pile out and line up for a sort of inspection.

CLOSE on Simeon, long hair all over the place, waiting for the old man to come level.

GRANDFATHER
(To Joshua)
You're late.

Joshua opens his mouth to apologise but Simeon interjects, standing up for his dad.

SIMEON
Only by a minute.

Huria gives him a nudge, it's not done to answer back to Grandfather.

GRANDFATHER
If you were a minute late for heaven, do you think God would still admit you?

To Simeon the obvious answer is "Yes" but Grandfather is addressing his mother now.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
(To Huria)
I told him to get his hair cut.

Simeon tries to smooth down his hair and tuck it behind his ears. Grandfather fixes his eye on Simeon's tie.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
And what is THAT?

SIMEON
My birthday present.

It's a prized possession, if somewhat bizarre. The design shows pictures of hula girls in grass skirts. Grandfather yanks it askew.

GRANDFATHER
We're going to church, not a night club.

Gloria is witnessing all this, wide-eyed and open mouthed, in awe of Grandfather.

He scowls - then gives her a wink which is unexpected and fleeting - did she really see that?. Already he's shouting to the others.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
Me haere tatou!! (We're moving out)

Simeon takes his tie off and puts it in his pocket

HURIA
Give me the tie.

SIMEON
No-one will see it.

GLORIA
God might.

Simeon frowns at his younger sister and hands his mother the offending article.

Grandmother Ramona has emerged from the homestead - still a beauty at the age of 60. White hair plaited, a chiselled moko on her chin.

Grandfather stands aside and holds open the car door for her. There's a touching old-world formality to their relationship.

Car doors slam shut and the convoy falls into line. Grandfather is driving the Rover, eldest son MAATIU driving the car behind, the others wobbling down the dirt track to the gravel road.

In LONG SHOT, at the back of the line, Joshua's car stalls.

JOSHUA
Shit, everyone out. Why does this always happen?

The family all get out and jump-start it down the hill, then chase after it comically and pile back in again.

11

INT/EXT. PATUTAHI ROAD - JOSHUA'S CAR

11

Eight-year-old Gloria is bouncing on the worn leather of the back seat as they leave the shingle and hit a stretch of tarmac - the "white-man's road".

GLORIA
Kei konei! Te rori Pakeha!

The dust clears momentarily as the convoy races through the village of Patutahi with its general store, school and hotel all facing onto the main road.

Then the surfaced road gives out again and the dust envelops Joshua's car once more, as the convoy in front accelerates away from them.

Behind him, in the back seat of Caesar Poata's car, Rupeni's nubile teenage grand-daughter POPPY, presses her nose against the window.

*

POPPY POATA
(In Maori)
Mahanas! Go faster!

*

Caesar Poata accelerates....

*

15 **INT/EXT. PATUTAHU ROAD - JOSHUA'S CAR** 15

His car hits the intersection, forcing Joshua's car half-onto the hard shoulder of the single-lane bridge-approach.

JOSHUA
(swerving)
Give over. Maniacs!

They're sharing the road now, each with one wheel on the tarmac and on in the dirt, gravel smacking off the wheel arches. Each driver shouting at the other.

HURIA
Those idiots!

GLORIA
It's Simeon's girlfriend!

Simeon elbows her, but all the same he looks across at Poppy. She ignores him pointedly as Caesar's car pulls ahead.

*

16 **DELETED** 16

17 **DELETED** 17

18 **EXT. PATUTAHU ROAD. DAY** 18

The two convoys keep travelling hell-for-leather along the long, straight bridge approach.

Rupeni is steadily gaining ground - advancing up the line of Mahana cars.

19 **INT. MAHANA TAMIHANAS ROVER. DAY** 19

Grandfather Tamihana sees Rupeni advancing. He accelerates.

34 **INT/EXT. PATUTAHI ROAD - CHURCH APPROACH. DAY.** 34

Grandfather's car leads the Mahana convoy to the wooden church beyond.

35 **EXT. THE CHURCH. DAY.** 35

Outside the pretty weather-board church, black-suited mourners are arriving - Pakeha and Maori

The Mahana clan get out of their cars, adjusting hair and hems, shaking the dust from their clothes.

The adults are sober and serious, children still fired up from their daredevil chase to the bridge, excitedly swapping accounts of the duel.

Grandfather helps Grandmother Ramona from the car then leaves her and crosses to YOUNG COLLINS - son of the deceased. *

Simeon watches Grandfather formally greeting the dead man's son.

GRANDFATHER

The Mahana family offer their deepest sympathy. Your father was a great man. He respected the traditions. As I know you do...

He clasps the young man's hand as Rupeni's convoy pulls up behind them, raising a cloud of dust which blows over the mourners.

Rupeni stumps over.

RUPENI POATA

(to Young Collins in English) *

Before he says anything I want to speak to you about the shearing contract.

GRANDFATHER

(to Rupeni in Maori)

That side of the river is ours. Always has been. The old man's death changes nothing.

He's still holding Young Collins hand in his powerful grip, bending the young man to his will. *

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

(To young Collins) *

Our contract remains the same, correct? *
The contract I signed with your father. *

YOUNG COLLINS *

Yes. Yes. Everything stays the same.

Keen to be out of this, he moves back to his grieving family.

Rupeni fumes at Grandfather, sotto voce:

RUPENI POATA
(To Grandfather in Maori)
Call yourself civilised? You couldn't even wait til the old fellow was dead and buried.

Grandfather nods sympathetically to the dead man's widow, meanwhile abusing Rupeni, sotto voce, out of the corner of his mouth:

GRANDFATHER
(in Maori)
Ha. I've never seen YOU holding back. He wants the best shearers.

RUPENI
Who won the Golden Shears?

GRANDFATHER
Once!

The Minister approaches. He's aware of the long-standing enmity between Mahanas and Poatas, and is keen to defuse any unpleasantness. *
*

MINISTER *
Gentlemen, welcome.

As he leads the way to the front door he adds sotto:

MINISTER (CONT'D)
You'll remember this is a house of God.

GRANDFATHER
Built with Mahana money!

RUPENI POATA
On Poata land!

36

INT. THE CHURCH. DAY.

36

The service is underway. The congregation sing a song of unity:

ALL
Help us to help each other, Lord,
Each other's cross to bear;
Let all their friendly aid afford,
And feel each other's care.

In singing, as in everything else, the rivalry between Mahanas and Poatas is intense and personal, each side trying to outdo the other.

MINISTER

I call on one of our most respected citizens Tamihana Mahana to say a few words.

Rupeni harrumphs quietly - "respected" !

37

INT. THE CHURCH. LATER

37

Grandfather walks to the lectern to give a eulogy.

Long pause. Grandfather grips the lectern with both hands.

He can't read, so what he says is just invented on the spot, delivered with his trademark domineering scowl, the pauses punctuated by sinus-clearing.

GRANDFATHER

Jesus was a shepherd. His followers were his flock and he looked after them like family.

When we started out here, clearing the land for grazing, it was hard to make a living - tough for Pakeha and Maori alike.

CU on Rupeni who clearly remembers those days. And the origins of their bitter rivalry.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

But if you worked for Collins he always did right by you. Pound of butter a week and jam with our bread. Lights in the shed till nine o'clock. Payment in straight cash when the last sheep was counted out.

*

(Beat)

This country is great because of men like Collins - hard working men of God who's word is their bond.

*

*

Grandfather regards himself as being cut from the same cloth. He catches the eye of Simeon, who has a more jaded view of the old tyrant.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

May he rest in eternal peace. Bless his family. Bless his lands.

Grandfather returns to his pew at the front.

As he sits Grandmother Ramona gives him an encouraging pat.

*

Later, the whole family are gathered at Grandfather's dining table for lunch.

Grandmother Ramona emerges through the linen curtain from the kitchen.

She's followed by Aunts Sephora, Miriam and Esther bearing lamb chops, potatoes, kumara and pumpkin.

All eyes are on the steaming feast. Simeon's stomach rumbles noisily.

Grandfather takes his place at the trestle table, clears his throat for silence and closes his eyes.

SIMEON

(Sotto, to sister Faith)

I'm bloody starving. Please God not another speech!

As the family bow their heads, Simeon steals a potato and pops it into his mouth. It's bloody hot. - Too hot.

Sister Gloria, sitting opposite, regards him in fascinated horror as his eyes bulge and water.

GRANDFATHER

Simeon will say grace.

It's a challenge. He caught Simeon's sceptical glance during the eulogy, and knows his grandson has little time for religion

Simeon blows the potato onto his lap where it gets caught in a fold of his trousers and burns his crotch.

Stifling a yell he brushes it onto the floor and begins:

SIMEON

Well like Grandfather said, it's always been tough being a Maori, so just as well we have God to look after us.....

He's looking for laughs but the disrespectful tone is misjudged. Grandfather remains impassive, head bowed, listening.

Joshua Simeon's father, looks up and tries to catch Simeon's eye. Simeon carries on regardless.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

Bless Mohi for getting out of jail ...again, and bless the judge for releasing him.

(MORE)

SIMEON (CONT'D)

Bless Lloyd for getting better from
appendicitis.

(Pause)

Bless this lamb for agreeing to be
slaughtered. And bless Collins for
renewing the shearing contract - even if
we do have too much work already. Tuck in
everyone. Amen.

Grandfather gets up, walks around the table and clips
Simeon very hard on the ear.

GRANDFATHER

There's no such thing as "too much work".
If you'd grown up like I did you'd know
that.

He returns to his seat, glaring at Joshua, Simeon's
father, who's job it is to discipline the boy.

39

EXT. WAITUHI - JOSHUA'S HOUSE. DUSK

39 *

In twilight, Grandmother Ramona walks up the track past
Simeon's house towards the homestead on the hill.

From Simeon's house she can hear muffled fragments of a
furious family argument

JOSHUA

.... I'm just saying you're smart enough
to know better - why antagonize the old
devil when you know you can't win!

SIMEON

I was just trying to be funny.

JOSHUA

You didn't succeed. Respect his beliefs
even if you don't share them.
It's called working together!

SIMEON

It's called being a doormat!

HURIA

Don't speak to your father like that.

Grandmother Ramona continues on up the Track.

40

INT. WAITUHI - JOSHUA'S HOUSE - SLEEPING ROOM - NIGHT

40 *

Silence reigns - the uneasy calm after the storm. Simeon
lies in bed reading his book and trying to block out the
rest of the family

41 **INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - GRANDFATHER'S BEDROOM. NIGHT** 41

Grandmother Ramona and Grandfather are preparing for bed -
Grandmother Ramona brushing out her long white hair,
Grandfather unwrapping a bandage from his knee.

*
*

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

He'll come good. He's smart enough to
know when he's crossed a line.

GRANDFATHER

His father's too soft on him. It's a hard
world out there.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

It's not the same world you grew up in.

GRANDFATHER

More's the pity. Nothing wrong with the
old ways.

Grandmother Ramona disagrees but says nothing.
Grandfather's gaze lingers on her a while.

She's aware that he's looking at her but she doesn't meet
his eye - a tacit act of rejection.

Grandfather gets into bed and pulls up the covers.

42 **EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - DAWN.** 42

A misty dawn: Outside Grandfather's homestead, the entire
extended family are gathered with their vehicles loaded
to the max.

Blankets, pots, pans and boxes of food are piled on
makeshift roof-racks; petrol cans roped to the runners.

Grandfather, as usual, is ordering everyone around.

GRANDFATHER

Mahana Two will start at the Georgeson
place round the back of the mountain.
Mahana One will start at Collins and work
up the valley farms.

Joshua's unmarried cousin PANI and his beloved MIRIAM,
are standing off to one side, whispering to each other.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

(shouts in Maori)

Pani! Enough spooning! Time to go!

Gloria is trying to stow away in Joshua's car

JOSHUA
 (To the girls in Maori)
 Gloria, you're too young - you stay
 home with the Aunties.

Faith and Hope race to secure the window-seats.
 Grandfather holds out his walking stick blocking Simeon

GRANDFATHER
 You too, Simeon

Simeon looks to his father for support.

SIMEON
 They're a man short. They need me on
 the shearing team.

GRANDFATHER
 I need you at the homestead.

SIMEON
 Dad?

JOSHUA
 It's your grandfather's decision.

Simeon thinks this is bullshit but apparently there's no
 room for discussion.

HURIA
 Remember who you are and do what he says.

Joshua gets in the car with Huria and the older girls.
 Grandfather is already walking back to the house.

Simeon watches as the convoy wobbles off down the lane.

GRANDFATHER
 (shouts)
 Simeon!

Simeon turns.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
 You have an hour until the school bus.
 Chop some firewood, clear out the
 fireplaces, then light the fire in the
 front room.

SIMEON
 Yes, Grandfather.

Simeon is chopping wood, cursing Grandfather under his
 breath with every swing of the axe.

44 **INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - LOUNGE. MORNING**

44

Working fast, Simeon cleans out the grate and lights the fire

The great clock ticks. Mahogany furniture gleams dully in the half-light.

The mantelpiece is a shrine to Mahana prowess - mostly sporting trophies awarded to Grandfather and his sons for rugby, boxing, shearing and wood-chopping.

Low down, there's a photo of Grandmother Ramona, hanging slightly askew. As Simeon straightens it, a sepia photograph falls out from the back.

Simeon looks at the photo in some confusion. Whatever it reveals, we don't see it now.

His sister yells through the open door

GLORIA (O.S.)
Bus is coming!

Simeon pockets the photo, wipes his hands on a rag, grabs his bag from the doorstep and runs outside after Gloria.

45 **INT/EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SCHOOL BUS. MORNING**

45

Gloria sits near the front of the bus with the little kids. Simeon sits in the middle of the bus, studying the stolen photo, concealed in his history book.

CU: A formal picture of his grandmother as a young woman, posing with Rupeni Poata

The bus creaks to a stop and the Poata kids come aboard.

Simeon closes the book.

Poppy Poata brushes past, all ripe flesh, dimples and sex appeal, ankle socks and jiggling bracelets, satchel slung over her shoulder.

Simeon tries a smile. She scowls at him and joins her friends at the back of the bus.

45A **EXT. SCHOOL - DAY**

45A *

School is already in class. We hear a lesson through the windows of the school house.

*
*

Their teacher is Mr. McKenzie - a wiry Scot who applies himself to teaching with the passionate zeal of his missionary forebears.

He's teaching a lesson on tyrants in history.

MCKENZIE

"What is history but a myth agreed upon"
....Anyone?

SIMEON

Napoleon Bonaparte.

MCKENZIE

Very good.

Poppy flicks a paper pellet at him

POPPY POATA

(whispers)

Swot.

McKenzie chooses another quote.

MCKENZIE

"A family is a tyranny ruled over by its
weakest member." What do you think
George Bernard Shaw meant by that?

Silence... then someone offers, grudgingly:

PUPIL

The little ones always get their own
way?

MCKENZIE

Anything else? What other kinds of
weaknesses are there?

Somebody cracks a sexual joke and sniggers.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

Come on now. Settle. Kinds of
weakness. Physical, moral,
...intellectual. He didn't mean just
the youngest. And strength isn't
merely physical is it? Other kinds of
weakness anyone?
Or what kinds of strengths? Simeon?

Simeon knows the answer but doesn't want to give Poppy
more reason to despise him.

He lowers his eyes and says nothing.

47 INT/EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - LAUNDRY. DAY 47 *

Simeon's tirelessly hard-working aunties are doing the laundry. *

Simeon fills two pails with water and - yoked like a beast of burden - lugs them past pretty Miriam - Pani's beloved - who is pegging out Grandfather's long-johns to dry. *

MIRIAM

You think this is hard? Wait til the shearers start sending their dirty clothes in.

Simeon dumps the pails of water to give his aching shoulders a rest.

SIMEON

Why don't you just quit?

MIRIAM

And go where?

SIMEON

I dunno. Marry Pani. You're the only reason he hangs around here.

MIRIAM

Grandfather won't give his permission.

SIMEON

What's it got to do with him?

Miriam just smiles at his naivety - everything has to do with grandfather.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

He's playing with you. He does it with all of us. What I can't figure out is why everyone just sits back and takes it.

Bossy Aunt Sephora sees them conspiring together.

AUNT SEPHORA

Simeon. Leave Miriam alone - she's got work to do. *

48 INT/EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - LAUNDRY. DAY 48 *

Simeon is reading his history book - the chapter on the Russian revolution

GRANDFATHER (O.S.)

Simeon! More firewood.

SIMEON
Yes, Grandfather.

49 **EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - WOODPILE. LATE AFTERNOON** 49

Simeon is chopping great logs of wood again with the two-handed axe.

GRANDFATHER
Simeon, Clean the cow-shed!

SIMEON
Yes Grandfather.

50 **INT. WAITUHI - MILKING SHED. EVENING** 50

Now he's shovelling out clotted hay and horse shit, thick with the choking ammonia smell of animal urine.

GRANDFATHER
Simeon! The generator doesn't have diesel. *

SIMEON
Yes, Grandfather. Yes Grandfather. *

Repeating it under his breath like a mantra of defiance.

51 **INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - KITCHEN. EVENING** 51

Simeon is pouring cups of tea from a large tea pot. *

Elsewhere in the kitchen, the various aunties and female cousins are singing four-part Maori "waiata" as they prepare the dinner.

Simeon hands around cups to his aunties. *

AUNT SEPHORA
Thank you, Simeon

SIMEON
Nice to be appreciated

AUNT SEPHORA
(Sharply)
Hey! Stop feeling sorry for yourself. A bit of discipline is all your Grandfather wants to see.

AUNT RUTH
Maybe if you let one of us cut your hair.

SIMEON
...Cut your own hair.

AUNT SEPHORA

(Sharply)

Don't talk back to your elders!

(beat)

...And while we're on the subject
stop sniffing round that Poata girl.

Simeon casts an accusing glance at his sister, Gloria.

GLORIA

I didn't say anything!

SIMEON

(To the Aunties)

She's on the bus every morning. What am I
supposed to do - wear a blindfold?

AUNT RUTH

Ignore her. We all know what she's like.
Everyone knows those Poatas have no
morals.

*

SIMEON

Well, Rupeni Poata was good enough for
grandmother

AUNT SEPHORA

What are you talking about?

SIMEON

Her and Rupeni, in the old days.

He's merely guessing - fishing for information. Suddenly
he has everyone's attention.

AUNT SEPHORA

Are you mad? She had nothing to do with
old toad face.

SIMEON

Yes she did. They had their photograph
taken!

Simeon slaps his photo on the table - his trump card.

The Aunties crowd around to look. Most of them have never
seen this before

Aunt Sephora snatches it away.

AUNT RUTH

Leave us Gloria. All of you kids.

Aunt Sephora is hustling the young ones out of the
kitchen as Aunt Ruth confronts Simeon

AUNT RUTH (CONT'D)

Where did you get this?

SIMEON

In the lounge room. Wedged behind a picture frame. It fell out when I was cleaning.

AUNT RUTH

Well you've no business with it. It's private to your grandmother.

SIMEON

How's it private - they're posing together!

AUNT RUTH

Yes, but is she smiling?

SIMEON

No-one smiles in old photos.

Aunt Sephora takes charge, stuffing the photo her apron pocket.

AUNT SEPHORA

All right I'll tell you the story if you must know: Your grandmother was promised to Rupeni but she couldn't stand the man. She was in love with Grandfather who'd just arrived in the neighborhood, with nothing but the boots on his feet.

AUNT RUTH

He loved her too, so he stole her away on her wedding day. He rode into church on a horse and grabbed her from right under Rupeni's nose.

*

AUNT SEPHORA

That's what happened. You satisfied now?

The aunts are all nodding. No-one except Simeon seems to regard the tale as bizarre

SIMEON

So why have I never heard this before?

AUNT SEPHORA

It was women's business, and you've heard it now.

SIMEON

So that other story about when Rupeni tried to kill him at the railway station...?

AUNT SEPHORA

No-one tried to kill anyone. Grandmother knew who she loved and the elders agreed to the match. Rupeni just had to lump it.

SIMEON

Let me see the photo again.

AUNT RUTH

It's not yours to look at.

SIMEON

I'm the one who found it!

AUNT SEPHORA

Just stop making a nuisance of yourself,
and go and get washed.

SIMEON

This is our family history...

AUNT SEPHORA

It's dinner time. Wash!!

Simeon shrugs and leaves them, pushing through the screen door onto the porch.

52

EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - PORCH. DUSK

52 *

He's putting on his shoes when he notices Grandmother Ramona, emptying her pockets of quinces and apples from the fruit trees, gently releasing a bee which has become ensnared in the webbing of her hat.

SIMEON

Did you hear all that?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Some of it.

SIMEON

Is it true... About grandfather snatching you from the altar on a horse?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

People exaggerate. It's not important now.

SIMEON

I think it's very important. It explains why they hate us.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

No-one hates anyone. The Poatas saw your grandfather as a business competitor. He had to fight for what he wanted. They all did. That's just the way of the world, Simeon

She goes inside to join the others.

52A

INT. WAITUHI - MILKING SHED. MORNING

52A

The groom - A young Rupeni Poata - watches in horror as
the horseman - Grandfather as a young man - reaches down
and plucks the young bride from the church doorway. *

He spurs the horse around and rides back the way he came. *

The bride clings to her saviour.

The cloak of feathers falls off her shoulders and
flutters to the ground like a dead bird.

There's a fleck of blood on the horse's snowy flank.

56 **INT. WAITUHI - MILKING SHED. MORNING** 56

Simeon, lost in the daydream, realizes he's been
squirting milk onto his bare foot.

He comes to his senses, repositions the pail and
continues to fill it.

57 **INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - KITCHEN. DAY** 57

Simeon enters the kitchen with the pail from the
milking.

SIMEON

Morning Aunties. Morning Grandfather.

Grandfather glowers at him.

GRANDFATHER

You haven't separated the milk.

SIMEON

I'll do it after breakfast.

GRANDFATHER

You'll do it now.

SIMEON

Yes, Grandfather.

GRANDFATHER

And after school. I've marked a sheep for
butchering. See if you can manage a man's
job.

58 **EXT. WAITUHI - PADDOCK. DAY** 58

WIDE SHOT: The rolling hills, the bleating sheep.

Simeon a tiny figure, working the dogs on foot,
separates a marked sheep from the flock and drives it
towards the yard.

59

INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - SHED. DAY

59

Whssshht Whssssshht, the sound of the whetstone, interspersed by the tethered sheep's frightened baa-ing as Simeon sharpens the knife.

This is his least favourite job of all

The dogs watch as Simeon wrestles the sheep on its side, pins it with his knee, stretches the neck and hesitates....

GRANDFATHER (OS)

What are you waiting for - Christmas?

CU on the sheep's terrified eye, its muffled pleas.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

I'll do it.

SIMEON

I can manage

CU on Simeon steeling himself to act. Gathering his courage, closing his eyes....

Then he's knocked aside by Grandfather who grabs the sheep, picks up the skinning knife.

GRANDFATHER

You young people think life is just cowboy films and magazines.

He positions himself, stretches the sheep's neck against his thigh.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

...Think you can live without working, eat without killing...

SIMEON

I said I can manage.

Grandfather, ignoring him, slits the sheep's throat with a single savage movement.

A jet of arterial blood whips across Simeon's shirt front.

The sheep's legs jerk spasmodically, then become still. Its shiny eye dulls.

GRANDFATHER

Joint it. Then load up one of the horses and take it up-country to Mahana One.

SIMEON
You mean tonight?

GRANDFATHER
When do you think I mean? ...and back by
sundown tomorrow.

He turns and heads off. Simeon calls after him.

SIMEON
School's finished in three days. I may
as well stay up there and....

GRANDFATHER
(Turns back)
I said Back Tomorrow!

SIMEON
(Bitterly)
Yes, Grandfather.

60

EXT. HOMESTEAD. LATE EVENING.

60

Simeon is loading a horse with muslin sacks of meat
plus a sack of grain.

The time spent working under his grandfather's thumb
has hardened him. He may deeply resent the old bugger
but he seems tougher, more competent.

He's checking the girth when his sister Gloria appears
with her sleeping roll.

GLORIA
Psst! I'm coming with you.

SIMEON
No you're not. Grandfather wouldn't
allow it

GLORIA
Why does everyone have to do what
Grandfather says?

SIMEON
Same reason you have to do what I say.
(In Maori)
Now piss off.

Simeon mounts and heads off. As he heads, off his
little sister shouts after him, crossly.

GLORIA
The kehua will catch you and eat you
... And it serves you right!

SIMEON
 (shouts back)
 Only kids believe in kehua!

He carries on down the hill.

Grandmother Ramona, sitting rocking on the verandah,
 watches him go.

61 **EXT. WAITUHI - RIVER. DUSK** 61 *

A short way out from the homestead, with its lights
 still glittering in the background, Simeon fords the
 river on his horse, nudging it in over its thighs into
 the black swirling water all overhung with trees.

Beyond this, in the dark shadow of the hill, lies a
 ruined house and an overgrown meadow - Grandmother
 Ramona's domain.

62 **EXT. THE BEE MEADOW - NIGHT** 62

Simeon nudges his horse forward.

In the gloom, Grandmother's fruit trees rise out of the
 undergrowth - strange twisted shapes against the dark
 purple sky, with the wooden beehives beneath.

The passing branch of trees catch on Simeon's clothes
 and on the bleeding sacks of meat strapped in front of
 him.

Ahead, a strange silhouette rises out of the night -
 the house:

The track leads close past it and on up the hill behind.

As Simeon approaches, we hear an owl break cover and
 swoops low. Some doomed rodent squeals in panic. *

The ancient, deserted house looms ever closer and
 Simeon's own sense of inner panic rises.

A rasping creaking noise above him, but it's only the
 metal vanes of the broken-down windmill turning in the
 breeze.

A door creaks in the wind Simeon sees what could be the
 shadowy figure of a man and lets out an involuntary
 yell of terror.

The horse panics and bolts, crashing through the scrub
 and off, past the strange deserted house out of the
 dark river valley.

The gates open and sheep start filing through the race, balking at the entrance to the shed, being shoved and coaxed up the wooden ramp.

68 **THE SAME. LATER.**

68

Simeon arrives and ties up his horse. The shearing is in full swing and the teenage "sheepos" are working too hard to notice him.

He walks inside the shearing shed where...

69 **INT. SHEARING SHED. DAWN**

69

The motors are thrumming, the adult male shearers already working on the shearing floor.

Joshua finally sees Simeon and grins

JOSHUA

Simeon! Just in time! You want to have a go.

He grabs a ram, showing Simeon how to flip the animal onto its arse and hold it between his legs

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Good grip, like I showed you. Then pull the start toggle.

Simeon has seen this done many times. He already knows the theory, but now he has the muscular strength to grip and wrestle a sheep.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Short "blows" (ie strokes) round the crutch then the shoulders, long ones up the back. Arm nice and loose. Grip with your knees. Don't tense up.

Simeon is into it, his exhaustion forgotten. The boy is clearly a natural. *

The shearers glance across then return to their work *

In moments the whole shed is a swirl of flying wool, engine noise, bleating and human activity.

Simeon nicks his sheep. The cut bleeds.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Tar tar!

He cauterizes the wound.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

(to Simeon)

It's all right, keep going, get your rhythm back...

The line of shearers work in perfect synchrony, thick fleeces falling around their feet and ankles.

The "fleecos" - Simeon's female cousins - gather up the cut fleeces and fling them in a single arcing spread onto the tables where

The sorters and classers check each fleece for flaws. *

Smaller kids help the "presser" by jumping in the sacks to push the wool down in bales.

Others are continually sweeping the shearing floor, working in and out of the shearers and classers.

A child with the clapper boards is picking up the shitty "dags" and sorting through them for use-able wool.

Simeon finishes his third sheep. It's tough work.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I'll take over. Go outside, say hello to your mother.

Simeon nods, recognizing anew how fit and competent his mild-mannered father really is.

70

INT. CAMP KITCHEN. MORNING

70

Huria, Simeon's mother, looks up from cooking breakfast in and sees Simeon approaching leading his horse by its halter.

HURIA

Simeon! What are you doing here?

SIMEON

Brought you some fresh meat. Butchered twelve hours ago.

HURIA

You didn't need to do that. The farmer gives us meat off the farm.

SIMEON

Ha. And Grandfather didn't know that?

HURIA

Perhaps he forgot.

They both know that's unlikely.

71 **THE SAME, PASSAGE OF TIME. DAY**

71

Joshua pulls the toggle to disengage his handpiece from the overhead drive-shaft.

JOSHUA

Breakfast time. Tally the run! Start dishing the kai!

The other shearers yank the cords to stop their handpieces.

Fut-fut-fut as the engine stalls and cuts.

72 **EXT. BREAKFAST TABLE. MORNING.**

72

The shearers are tucking into a huge breakfast.

Everyone is talking at once, everyone shouting for more bread, butter, bacon and tea.

Pani talks to Simeon between mouthfuls:

PANI

Good to have another pair of hands. The wool up at Horsfield was full of bidibid, then we had three days of rain but we're up to three hundred a day now. So don't imagine you'll be relaxing.

SIMEON

I can't stay. Grandfather wants me back by sundown.

FAITH

Today? Why?

SIMEON

No proper reason.

He looks to his father, but Joshua is not going to contradict the patriarch.

JOSHUA

Eat plenty breakfast. You'll need it for the trip.

73 **EXT. WAITUHI - SHEARING CAMP - KITCHEN. MID-MORNING**

73

Simeon, tightening the girth for the ride back, finds Uncle Pani hovering near.

PANI

How's Miriam?

SIMEON

She's good.

Pani reaches in the pocket next to his heart and hands over an envelope - his pay packet

PANI

Give her this. Tell her "*He koha o taku aroha ki a koe.*"

SIMEON

She knows you love her Pani. It's not her you have to convince.

PANI

Just give her the envelope, OK.

Breakfast is over. Everyone is in a hurry to get underway again.

JOSHUA

(shouts)

David, Benjamin. Bring up the ewes!
Peewee, Mackie!

Hand-rolled cigarettes are stamped out, farewells shouted, as the shearers hurry back inside again.

Huria is fussing over Simeon as mothers do, buttoning the buttons of his oilskin, pulling up the collar.

HURIA

There. All set. Have fun.

SIMEON

(Moodily)

Sure, Mum, I'm having a ball there.

HURIA

(Pulls him up, sharply)

Turituri to waha. It's an honour to stay with the old people and look after them.

Tired of her platitudes, he angrily brushes her away

SIMEON

That's rubbish, and you know it. Truth is we're all slaves to him! Dad and you because he won't give you any land of your own. Miriam and Pani because he won't let them marry...

She slaps him. Hard.

Simeon takes a step back, shocked to be receiving this treatment from the one person on whose unconditional love he thought he could always depend.

HURIA

You have no idea, Simeon. When Grandfather came here, he had nothing. Nothing! He stood up to the Poatas and bought the land on the hill and built a home for us.

SIMEON

Sure, and rode off with grandma on his horse he's a legend.

HURIA

You'd prefer he just drifted like all those others: begging for work in the cities, have me doing Pakeha laundry while your father dug roads?

SIMEON

That wouldn't have happened.

HURIA

Why wouldn't it? Without a leader we're chaff in the wind, we're nothing. He's tough on everyone but he's toughest on the kids he believes in. The ones that might actually amount to something.... Now come here.

She pulls him towards her and embraces him.

HURIA (CONT'D)

We'll be home after the summer, and everything will just be like it always was.

SIMEON

Great. That's what I'm afraid of.

74 **EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD. AUTUMN.**

74 *

Cold rain blows over the fields. Sheep are huddling in the wooden sheds.

Grandfather shuts the gates and labours through mud to the homestead, stooped against the wind.

75 **INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - GRANDFATHER'S ROOM. EVE**

75 *

Grandfather has just had a bath. He sits on the end of the bed watching Grandmother Ramona darning a sweater. *

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

I hear the young ones want to go to the cinema tonight. *

GRANDFATHER
What's the film?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
I don't know. A Western.

GRANDFATHER
Hmph.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
So they can go - yes?

GRANDFATHER
If they want to waste their money.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
They're young, Tamihana, they're entitled
to have some joy in their lives.

GRANDFATHER
How about the old ones, are we entitled?

He's propositioning her. She relents.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
(Re knee)
Here. Let me do that.

*
*

GRANDFATHER
Thank-you.

She puts down her darning and sits beside him.

*

Grateful, he watches her still captivated by her beauty,
even now.

*

He reaches to stroke her hair. She doesn't pull away.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
I'll tell them they can go, then. They'll
be happy.

76

INT. WAITUHI - JOSHUA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN. NIGHT

76

Simeon and his sisters Faith and Hope crowd round a scrap
of mirror, competing to check their appearances.

FAITH
Come on, out of the way, Simeon, you're
never going to be handsome.

As he's elbowed aside his mother, Huria, gives him a
crumpled ten shilling note from the family's meagre
savings.

HURIA

Remember: no drinking, no fighting. Look after your sisters.

SIMEON

Yes, mother.

A car horn sounds and they run outside.

77 **EXT. THE CINEMA. NIGHT.**

77

The cinema is a converted barn.

All the young farming folk of Patutahi are swarming to the new attraction.

Cousin Mohi pulls up in his parents' car and all the Mahana kids pile out - Simeon, Faith and Hope... plus four other teenagers who have somehow crammed themselves into the interior.

78 **INT. THE CINEMA. NIGHT.**

78

The seating is on wooden benches. The screen is a large white tarpaulin stretched over one end of the barn.

The atmosphere is drunken and rowdy. People talk, cheer, laugh and shout almost continually during the performance.

*

An usher tries vainly to preserve order.

*

USHER

Quiet. Quiet. If we can't have quiet we'll stop the film!

*

The usher gives up and chaos reigns.

*

Kids are pelting each other with jelly beans, squirting the rows in front with water pistols.

Someone stands up to protest at this and an egg hits him on the forehead.

79 **THE SAME, LATER.**

79

An hour into the film, the general mayhem continues to escalate:

There's a disturbance at the back of the cinema as the local extrovert, Mihaere Poata, rides a horse through the back entrance and straight down the aisle.

Shouts from the audience. Shrieks from those dancing in the aisle, as the horse pushes between them, blocking the projector.

CAESAR POATA

This isn't funny, Mihaere. Move it!

In response, the horse lifts its tail, and drops a huge turd.

Caesar Poata, outraged and drags his cousin, Mihaere from the saddle.

Mihaere fall on top of a Tamihana lad, MOHI, who gets horse-shit on his clean white jeans.

Mohi starts swinging punches and suddenly...

Fists are flying left and right, stand-up fights breaking out in the flickering glare of the projector lamp.

The brawl has expanded to include most of the teenage male cinema-goers.

Someone knocks over the projector which falls with an almighty bang.

Somehow the reels keep turning, fighting Maori youths silhouetted against the screen, in the wobbly beam of the projector.

Police whistles are heard in the street outside.

In the darkness there's a general rush for the exits.

Pandemonium. People are falling over benches, tumbling into each other and try to climb free.

Simeon is pushed backwards over a bench. A figure falls hard on top of him - the delectable Poppy Poata with the top buttons torn of her shirt and her luxuriant hair hanging loose.

Simeon, grabs her in an embrace and puts his tongue in her mouth.

POPPY POATA

Ugh!...

Outraged she knees him in the balls and fights free of him, wiping her mouth.

POPPY POATA(CONT'D)

(To her friend)

...The swot just kissed me!

(to Simeon)

You're worse than your grandfather!

Then she turns on her heel and disappears into the night.

80 **EXT. CINEMA. NIGHT** 80

Simeon limps out of the cinema as the lights go on.

Two policemen with truncheons are trying fruitlessly to locate the main troublemakers. *

Simeon hobbles over to cousin Mohi's car. *

FAITH

Thank God. There you are.
Grandfather's gonna go crazy, Let's
get out of here.

81 **INT/EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - MOHI'S CAR. NIGHT** 81

They drive up the bumpy farm road at night, with Simeon wedged between his teenage sisters Faith and Hope.

HOPE

Those bloody Poatas they're all animals.

FAITH

Mihaere's out of control, he's going to end up in jail. Someone's going to have to pay for the projector.

CU on Simeon, Closing his eyes he remembers:

POPPY POATA (VO)

"...You're worse than your grandfather"

Simeon imagines...

83 **INT. FLASHBACK CHURCH. DAY** 83 *

Young Ramona waiting outside the church. *

She hears the horse and turns in alarm *

In Slow Mo we see the man on the horse leaning down and lifting her up into the saddle.

Young Ramona looks terrified. She's not clinging to him as a lover might, she's struggling against him.

84 **INT. COUNTRY ROAD - SCHOOL BUS. DAY.** 84

Simeon gets onto the school bus and walks down the aisle past Poppy Poata who turns away and looks out of the window, ignoring him.

The school teacher, McKenzie, gets on behind Simeon and does a quick head-count.

MCKENZIE

All right, is that everyone?

The driver heads off.

*

85

INT/EXT. GISBORNE - SCHOOL BUS. LATER

85

*

As they drive into Gisborne, Simeon is reading a hand-written speech, memorizing the words and repeating them silently to himself. *"Your honour, on behalf of the pupils of Patutahi school I wish to thank you for inviting us to witness...."*

*

Over this, Mr. McKenzie, standing in the central aisle of the bus, briefs them on the plan for the day.

MCKENZIE

We'll start at the chambers and proceed through to the courthouse which should still be in session. The judge, if you meet him should be addressed as "Your Honour". Everyone else is either "Sir" or "Madam"

A Poata boy grabs Simeon's speech.

SIMEON

Hey. Hey.

He goes after it and grabs it back

86

INT. COURTROOM CORRIDOR. DAY.

86

Outside Courtroom number one there's a big sign saying "Silence, Court in Session."

Clerk SIMPSON draws their attention to the judge's schedule, five typewritten pages pinned to the notice-board.

CLERK SIMPSON

This is his honour's schedule. You'll see he's already seen about twenty cases this morning. You'll only be able to witness three or four but it will give you an idea....

Simeon scans down the list, reading:

"Drunk and disorderly, intent to obstruct justice, theft, petty larceny, casting offensive matter in public....."

CLERK SIMPSON (CONT'D)
 Just remember if you will that no Maori
 is to be spoken in the court rooms or
 chambers.

Faith whispers to Simeon

FAITH
 (sotto)
 This guy's such a pillock.

SIMEON
 (sotto)
 A pillock, Sir, Your Honour.

CLERK SIMPSON
 If you'll come through now....

The Maori kids file obediently inside.

87

INT. COURTROOM NUMBER ONE. DAY.

87

The SCHOOL KIDS occupy two rows, reserved for them.

THE ACCUSED are being brought before JUDGE HUGHES in a
 constant procession, from the holding room to the dock.

In the front of the spectators' gallery, Rupeni Poata
 sits grim-faced amidst his extended family.

To the right of the judge, the wigged and gowned
 PROSECUTION LAWYER is on his feet.

PROSECUTION LAWYER
The salient facts are before your
 honour. The defendant swore at his
 employer and has been charged with
 verbal assault.

The judge gestures that he's heard enough.

HUGHES
 How do you plead?

The DEFENDANT doesn't speak English and clearly hasn't
 the vaguest understanding of what is going on.

His defence lawyer half-stands.

DEFENCE LAWYER
 The defendant pleads guilty, Your
 Honour.

HUGHES
 Fined twenty pounds.

A gasp from the watchers - horrified by the size of this penalty. The baffled defendant is led off as the next one comes in.

CLERK SIMPSON

Jonah Watu, your honour, charged with attempt to defraud.

JONAH WATU takes the stand

PROSECUTION LAWYER

The accused offered to sell a stretch of tribal land to which he did not own the title.....

Judge Hughes turns to the defendant.

HUGHES

How do you plead?

Again the defence lawyer half-stands, barely leaving the comfort of his seat.

DEFENCE LAWYER

The defendant pleads guilty your honour.

HUGHES

Terms of imprisonment, one year.

He bangs his gavel and the accused is led away.

CLERK SIMPSON

Call Mihaere Poata

A dread silence descends on the school kids. Mihaere is the guy who rode a horse into the cinema. They know him and the judge seems in no mood for forgiveness.

Mihaere takes the stand and smiles at the familiar faces, pleased to have an audience.

PROSECUTION LAWYER

The accused is charged with damage to property and endangering life in a public place. The circumstances were as follows....

HUGHES

Yes, I'm familiar with the circumstances.

(To Mihaere)

How do you plead?

Mihaere is about to make a smart-ass comment but his lawyer gets in first.

DEFENCE LAWYER

The defendant pleads guilty your honour.

HUGHES

As this is your second serious offence in six months I am disinclined to leniency, and am therefore handing down the maximum penalty available to me. Two years imprisonment.

Mihaere's smile drops. There's a cry of anguish in the public gallery.

Simeon turns in his seat and looks upwards to see Mihaere's wife crying uncontrollably, consoled by the stony-faced Rupeni Poata. *

CLERK SIMPSON

Order in the court.

Mihaere's wife continues to weep and wail. *

CLERK SIMPSON (CONT'D)

Order, order. Sergeant-at-arms please escort that lady from the gallery.

HUGHES

As it is now one p.m., that brings to an end this morning's session. We will resume at 2 p.m. prompt.

McKenzie, the school teacher, rises to his feet.

MCKENZIE

Your honour, before the court adjourns,... The class of Patutahi Senior School wish to thank you for the opportunity to briefly witness the justice system. Simeon Mahana will give a vote of thanks.

He gestures to Simeon to stand up.

Judge Hughes sits back in his leather chair on his high dais, waiting.

In the public gallery, the convicted man's mother is escorted, weeping, through the side-door.

Simeon stands, unfolding his crumpled speech. All eyes are upon him.

Rupeni Poata watches.

Poppy is watching... and all the Poata youths.

Simeon puts the speech back in his pocket.

SIMEON
 (to the judge)
 Your Honour. I did prepare a speech of
 thanks but instead...

Ignoring the gestures from McKenzie. "Just read the
 bloody speech!"

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 ...I'd like to ask a question. If
 Maori aren't allowed to speak their
 language here, how can we defend
 ourselves?

A pause. Most of the whites in the audience look
 acutely uncomfortable but Simeon ploughs on.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 For sure we can be a violent people
 but the Scots and English were surely
 no different.
 Mihaere Poata got drunk and rode a
 horse into the cinema. By all means
 make him clean up the mess, or pay for
 the damage, but to lock someone away
 for two years? - that may be the rule
 of law but it cannot be called
 "justice"

Directly to Judge Hughes.

SIMEON (CONT'D)
 And, with respect, it does this court
 no honour, Your Honour.

He sits. From the gallery, Poppy Poata looks at Simeon
 through fresh eyes, as does her great-uncle Rupeni.

Judge Hughes sets his jaw and bangs his gavel, with an
 accusatory scowl at the school teacher McKenzie.

HUGHES
 Interesting. Thank you. Court
 adjourned.

Everyone stands as the judge heads for the door

88

INT. SIDE CORRIDOR - COURTROOM. DAY.

88

Simeon emerges from the court-room and almost walks
 into McKenzie.

SIMEON
 (mumbles)
 Sorry, Mr. McKenzie, but...

McKenzie cuts him off gruffly.

MCKENZIE

"Never apologize it's a sign of weakness" Who said that?

SIMEON

(A wild guess)

...George Bernard Shaw?

MCKENZIE

John Wayne in "Red River".
Everyone has a right to speak their mind.
That's the Westminster system.

*

89 **DELETED**

89 *

90 **EXT. COURTHOUSE - SCHOOL BUS. DAY**

90

The kids are about to board the bus when Rupeni Poata interposes himself.

RUPENI POATA

Simeon Mahana!

Simeon turns, startled.

RUPENI POATA (CONT'D)

You spoke well, and you spoke for all
of us. *Ka pai tena korero. Ka pai. Kia
kaha e tama.*

He places his hand on the back of Simeon's head and pulls him towards him.

Simeon resists momentarily then accedes to the gesture.

In front of the whole class, including his cousin Mohi, Simeon touches his nose and forehead, inhaling the same breath as his grandfather's arch enemy - Rupeni Poata.

91 **INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - DINING ROOM. NIGHT.**

91

The extended Mahana family sit down to Sunday dinner.

There's a tension in the air.

Rumour of what happened outside the courtroom has clearly reached Grandfather, but, typically, he makes no mention of it.

Once more the steaming plates of meat and kumara sits tantalizingly in front of the family, as Grandfather intones another interminable grace.

GRANDFATHER

...So, Lord bless this meal.

(Pause)

Don't let us forget who our friends
are.... Never should we forget that.

(Pause)

Nor who are our enemies.

Simeon raises his head a fraction, but Grandfather's
eyes are closed.

Huria catches Simeon's eye across the table "Say
nothing"

The silence drags on.

Simeon is convinced that his courtroom rhetoric needs
explanation

SIMEON

What I said in court, Grandfather, was

....

Sister Faith, sitting opposite, kicks him hard.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

....Aah!

Grandfather opens his eyes.

GRANDFATHER

Before we eat. I want to say the young
people from this family will no longer
be attending Patutahi Cinema.

The teenage kids are all dismayed by this, but no-one
speaks, except....

Simeon

Why?

Grandfather turns the full force of his gaze in
Simeon's direction.

GRANDFATHER

Because it's unwholesome

SIMEON

What about religious films?

Simeon's father barks at him.

JOSHUA

Whakahihi Simeon!

GRANDFATHER

There are no religious films.

SIMEON
 "Solomon and Sheba" "The Ten
 Commandments"...

JOSHUA
 Simeon!

GRANDFATHER
 These films are not religious. They're
 just an excuse to show naked flesh.

SIMEON
 Well if you've never seen them how can
 you possibly.....

Grandfather pushes his chair back, wood scraping on
 wood.

GRANDFATHER
 Enough!

He's out of his chair striding towards Simeon

HURIA
 No. Please. No

Ignoring her, Grandfather grabs Simeon by his long
 black hair and drags him back in his chair.

GRANDFATHER
 Get me the shears!

Simeon cries out. Everyone is shouting. The chair falls
 over and Simeon sprawls on the floor, Grandfather still
 gripping tight to his hair.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
 The shears! He's finally gone too far!
 Enough of this nonsense. I make the
 rules here!

Grandmother Ramona tries to intervene.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
 Tamihana....

Grandfather cuts her off, sweeping her aside.

GRANDFATHER
 In the barn are they? Fine - we'll go
 to the barn.

He drags Simeon across the floor, scattering chairs,
 dogs and children.

92 **EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - PORCH. NIGHT.**

92

Grandfather throws open the screen door and throws Simeon down the steps into the yard.

Simeon falls awkwardly.

Grandfather follows and boots him in the ribs, roaring furiously.

GRANDFATHER

(In Maori)

Get up!

The family surge after him. Some are shouting to Grandfather to lay off, others arguing that Simeon had this coming.

93 **EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - PORCH. NIGHT.**

93

Grandmother Ramona is caught in the press of people trying to get through the door. She can't reach Grandfather to stop him.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Tamihana!

Little Gloria worms her way outside between everyone's legs.

94 **EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - PORCH. NIGHT.**

94

Simeon gets to his feet.

SIMEON

I was just trying to say that...

Grandfather knocks him down again

GRANDFATHER

No-one asked for your opinion! Get up!

Huria pleads with Joshua

HURIA

Do something, Joshua. He's gone mad.
He'll kill him!

Joshua seems unable to decide what to do. Grandfather still roaring at Simeon

GRANDFATHER

You have no respect for tradition, nor authority, nor your parents. You think Pakeha book-learning is more important than what I can teach you.

Gloria is tugging at her father's shirt, crying, pleading.

GLORIA
Papa, you have to stop him.!

GRANDFATHER
(to Simeon)
...Well I'll teach you what "respect"
means - the same way my uncles taught me!

He's swinging back his boot for another kick when little Gloria launches herself at him, clinging to his leg.

GLORIA
(In Maori)
Stop Grandfather! Leave my brother
alone!

GRANDFATHER
Joshua, get this leech off me!

Gloria clings on grimly.

GLORIA
(In Maori)
Run, Simeon Run!

With a berserk roar, Grandfather picks her up and throws her aside. *

Huria yells out. Joshua finally steps forward interposing himself between Grandfather and his kids

JOSHUA
(In Maori)
Enough now!

GRANDFATHER
The boy believes in nothing. If you
can't teach him I will!

He shoves Joshua out of the way and Joshua, almost as a reflex, pushes back.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)
Out of my way. Joshua. Move

Joshua stands his ground. Grandfather smacks him in the face and Joshua - a peaceable man, wound up like a spring by all the tension - delivers a perfect right hook to Grandfather's chin.

The old man drops, poleaxed.

Simeon is wide-eyed, he never thought his father was capable of that. Joshua barely knew it himself.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
He's groggy. Pay no attention.

GRANDFATHER
I know what I'm doing.

JOSHUA
Father. There's nowhere we could go if we wanted to. You know we have no land of our own.

GRANDFATHER
(In Maori)
Exactly.
(In English)
And when I die you'll get nothing from me. That's final. Nothing!

Simeon stands in the doorway, nursing his bruised ribs, horrified at the chaos he has unleashed.

Huria is weeping. Grandmother Ramona keeps trying to hustle Joshua out of the room.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
I'll speak with him. Just go home to your own house and wait there until...

Grandfather bellows at her receding back:

GRANDFATHER
He has no house! That house he was living in is mine! I built it on my own parcel of land and now I'm taking it back. I have nothing to give them.

Framed in the doorway Grandmother Ramona finally rounds on her husband, fire in her eyes

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
Well I do. The land by the river is mine to give.

GRANDFATHER
Flood-meadow. It's worthless.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
Not to me.

Turning to the rest of the room.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
(CONT'D)
All of you are my witness. The land and the house by the river I give to Joshua, Huria and their children.

GRANDFATHER
 (In Maori)
 I forbid this.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
 You can't, Tamihana. Under the law of
 property, even your great power has
 its limits!

Then she sweeps out of the room.

97 **EXT. WAITUHI - JOSHUA'S HOUSE. DAWN** 97

A drizzle of rain.

Amidst a sea of mud, Joshua fills the family car with
 possessions from their quarters - bedding, kitchenware
 ...and precious little else.

98 **EXT. WAITUHI - TRACK - DAWN** 98 *

Joshua drives the packed car slowly with the others
 walking - mother leading the packhorse, Gloria riding
 the horse, a bruised and battered Simeon herding their
 cow, Red, in front of him. *

It's a scene from the Bible - the expulsion of the
 Israelites: a small, pathetic band of figures moving
 further and further from the painted houses.

They move in single file, stooped against the wind, as
 they crest the rise and descend into the shadows of the
 river-valley with the run-off from the muddy road washing
 around their ankles. *

99 **INT/EXT. GRANDMOTHER RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. DAY** 99 *

The floor of Grandmother Ramona's ruined house is made
 of packed earth, some of it churned to mud by animal
 hooves and by water dripping from the roof.

Huria regards it in dismay. The broken windows, bird-
 shit in the roof-beams. The place is a total wreck.

SIMEON
 I'm sorry, mother. This is all my fault.

Gloria, shivering, whispers to her sisters

GLORIA
 Told you it was haunted.

JOSHUA
 Put up the tent, Simeon. We'll camp
 inside until we get this fixed up.

SIMEON

(To Huria)

I thought it was just me against him. I never thought he could take it out on all of us.

HURIA

Well now you realize.

GLORIA

I don't like it here. Maybe he'll let us go back.

JOSHUA

Grandfather doesn't forgive. Ever. It's not in his nature.

Gloria sighs and looks around for a corner to make her own.

Her eyes catch Simeon's.

GLORIA

(To Simeon)

Happy now?

100 **INT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. NIGHT**

100

The family sleep in tents and tarpaulins under the leaking roof, with bowls and plastic arranged to catch the drips.

Joshua is too anxious to sleep. He stands by the door, smoking, watching the rain.

Simeon lies awake, tortured by guilt.

*

101 **EXT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. MORNING.**

101

*

Next morning, Simeon emerges, bruised and stiff from his beating of the evening before.

At least the rain has stopped.

As he pees he notices Grandmother Ramona walking out into the centre of the overgrown meadow, towards her fruit trees and beehives.

Gloria and Huria have noticed her also

GLORIA

Where's she going?

HURIA
 She's saying goodbye to her bees.
 (Then)
 ...Gloria!

Before Huria can stop her, Gloria goes skipping off after Grandmother Ramona.

102

EXT. THE BEE MEADOW. DAY.

102

Sunlight reaches through the morning clouds like the fingers of God.

Grandmother Ramona walks into the centre of the meadow, among the hives, then spreads out her arms and begins singing a high lament, calling the bees to her.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
 Haramai, haramai, e nga pi aroha
 haramai.

In ones and twos, then in their dozens, then in a great swarm, the bees settle on her shoulders, her hair, her outstretched arms, like a great golden cloak.

Gloria appears by her side, eyes like saucers, barefoot and fearless.

GLORIA
 (whispers)
 What are you telling them?

Grandmother Ramona opens her eyes, waking herself from a kind of a trance, and sees Gloria standing opposite

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
 I am promising them you will never cut
 the meadow flowers.

Gloria's face falls. She'd been looking forward to that.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
 (CONT'D)
 ... and they are telling me that in
 return they will give you the sweetest
 honey in the world.

Gloria brightens and runs off to report this, scampering through the long wet grass.

Grandmother Ramona looks after her grand-daughter. Grateful for the happy resilience of childhood in which each ending is a new beginning.

Then she gently brushes the swarm from her arms, singing her song of farewell.

103

EXT. RAMONA'S HOUSE - RUINED SHED/ YARD. DAY.

103

Simeon is clearing out one of the tumble-down sheds, trying to lose himself in labour.

The backbreaking work is like a penance to him. As he emerges with a mouldy mattress he sees Grandmother Ramona foraging for souvenirs among the rubbish - a rusty saw - an old bottle.

SIMEON

I saw a man here once, outside the house at night.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(Foraging)

Kehua. They're normally harmless.

SIMEON

It wasn't a ghost. It was a person. I think it was Rupeni Poata.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(Straightening)

It's possible. He always liked this part of the river bank.

SIMEON

....Because you were here?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(Crossly)

What are you getting at Simeon? Just drop it. I think you've caused enough mayhem - don't you...?

104

EXT. WOODS/ BEE MEADOW. FLASHBACK.

104

Simeon's fantasy: In black and white: an unidentified man rides with his bride through the bee meadow.

At this distance the bride and bridegroom are impossible to identify. They're laughing. Happy together.

They arrive at Grandmother Ramona's house in the woods. The place looks newly built.

The man lifts his bride off the white horse, and carries her towards the house.

We push in - finally getting close to the two characters, almost close enough to see who the man is...

Then they cross the threshold And the door is slammed in our faces.

PANI

I can't stay long. The old man would have a fit if he knew I was here.

110 **EXT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. LATER**

110

Joshua and Pani are up on the roof, patching holes with the rusted tin sheeting. Pani is clearly a good handyman.

Down in the yard Simeon is prying the rusty nails out of old timbers.

One of the timbers has a name written on it - as timber yards do when delivering a consignment.

The delivery name is "Poata"

JOSHUA

(Calls down)

Keep the nails. We're going to need every scrap.

111 **INT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - DINING ROOM. NIGHT**

111

At Grandfather's dining table, up at the main house, the rest of the family are gathered for their evening meal. Grandfather is saying grace.

The mood is less vibrant than before. The absence of Simeon's family has created a gap that the others are clearly struggling to fill.

GRANDFATHER

For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us thankful.

ALL

Amen.

As everyone reaches for their knives and forks, Grandfather addresses Pani.

GRANDFATHER

So, Pani, you've made your choice, I hear.

Pani looks at Miriam, confused. His choice of bride or...?

PANI

My choice?

GRANDFATHER

Your choice of where to live: You're working for Joshua now.

Pani looks at the aunties, wondering which of them betrayed his secret

PANI

No. Just... dropped by with some tools to help him out.

Grandfather turns to Miriam.

GRANDFATHER

What about you, Miriam. Do you want to live in a shed, with a man who has no work and no home? He certainly won't be staying here any more.

Grandmother Ramona looks at Grandfather with horror.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Stop it Tamihana.

GRANDFATHER

(Ignores her)

Miriam - it's your decision.

Miriam puts down her knife and fork.

MIRIAM

Then we'll live in a shed.

Pani looks at her with pride and gratitude. Grandfather glowers at both of them.

GRANDFATHER

Leave your food on the table and go pack.

112 **EXT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. DAY.**

112

Simeon looks up from his chores to see Pani and Miriam heading down the track with all their possessions on a horse.

*
*

SIMEON

Pani! Miriam. What happened?

Miriam has been crying. Simeon feels a new stab of guilt.

113 **INT. CHURCH. DAY.**

113

The church is empty but for Joshua's family, Pani and Miriam.

Despite the lovers happiness, the bare surrounds seem cold and joyless to Simeon.

MINISTER

Who gives this woman?

JOSHUA

I do.

MINISTER

Do you Miriam take this man to be your
lawful wedded husband to have and to hold
as long as you both shall live?

*
*
*

MIRIAM

I do.

MINISTER

Do you Pani take this woman as your
lawful wedded wife?

PANI

I do.

MINISTER

Whom the Lord has brought together let no
man put asunder.

114

INT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. NIGHT.

114

In the flimsy house, with its fabric partition wall, Pani and Miriam's enthusiastic wedding-night lovemaking is audible to Gloria and her sisters.

...And to Simeon, in his attic bedroom above, resisting the temptation to spy on them through a gap in the floorboards.

...And to Joshua and Huria trying to close their ears to the nearby grunts and gasps.

The noises stop - it seems to be over

JOSHUA

(Whispers)

At least she'll be company for you if I
have to work away.

HURIA

Pani would have to go with you, otherwise
it's two more mouths to feed ...

An orgasmic gasp from Miriam O.S

HURIA (CONT'D)

...Three more at this rate.

Finally the newlyweds are quiet.

HURIA (CONT'D)

Just pray this weather holds till we get
some food in.

JOSHUA

It will hold.

115 **EXT. WAITUHI - VALLEY. DAY** 115

A clap of thunder. The sky darkens, the heavens open.

Rain sweeps over the landscape in great grey curtains, funneling down from the back-country behind Waituhi. *

116 **EXT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. NIGHT** 116

Rain is hammering down on the house and the barns, battering on the tin roofs, flooding out of the clogged the gutters and overflowing the water-butts, flowing in a muddy torrent through the yard.

The windmill vanes blades whirl uselessly, the whole rickety edifice rocking on it's supports.

A loose sheet of metal has come adrift on the roof of the house and is banging every time the wind gets under it.

117 **INT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE UPPER BEDROOM. NIGHT.** 117

Joshua and Huria lie in bed listening to howling storm, the sheet of roof-metal banging above them.

HURIA

Leave it. There's nothing we can do til morning

JOSHUA

I'll just see how bad it is...

He's about to get out from under the warmth of the covers when

118 **EXT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. NIGHT.** 118

A savage gust of wind rips the whole panel off the roof and hurls it off into the forest beyond the yard

119 **INT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE - UPPER BEDROOM. NIGHT.** 119

Wind and rain fill the bedroom from the hole in the roof. The window blows open and a gale is suddenly roaring through the darkened room.

Dirty rust-coloured water from the roof space starts pouring through the ceiling onto the marriage bed.

Huria jumps up. Joshua is pulling on his trousers, calling for assistance:

JOSHUA
Jesus! Shit! Pani!! Simeon!

120 **INT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. NIGHT.**

120

On the ground floor, everyone is on their feet, dressed in the clothes they were sleeping in, lighting lamps in the darkness as Joshua comes clattering downstairs.

Already water is dripping through the floor from the room above, soaking clothes, bedding and groceries

JOSHUA
Faith. Gloria. Move all that stuff.
The roof has a big hole in it. Give me that light, Miriam. Simeon! Pani! We need ropes and a tarpaulin.

121 **EXT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE. NIGHT.**

121

Joshua is out in the howling wind, standing in the flooded yard with Simeon, trying to prop a big wooden ladder against the guttering.

Pani arrives with an armful of ropes and tarpaulin

JOSHUA
(Shouts to Simeon)
When I'm up there tie off the ropes on this side. I'll try and throw the rest of it over the ridge.

SIMEON
Dad, I'm lighter. Better if I go up there

JOSHUA
No. You hold the ladder. Pani can catch the ropes on the other side.

HURIA
Joshua, it's not worth it. Just leave it til morning.

JOSHUA
You've seen how much water's coming in. Everything we've got will be ruined.

He bundles the big heavy tarpaulin in his arms and - precariously - starts to climb.

SIMEON

Taking his boot off before the foot swells. They told us in first aid...

HURIA

Don't touch it. You'll make it worse.

SIMEON

How could it be worse?

PANI

We need to get him to a doctor.

MIRIAM

Have you seen the river? There's no way the truck would get through that

HURIA

(Desperate, to Simeon)

Run to your Grandfather. Get Tamihana.

SIMEON

He won't come.

HURIA

Just ask him! Who else is there? There's no-one else.

SIMEON

There is one person.

127

EXT. POATA HOMESTEAD. NIGHT.

127

Simeon arrives, soaked, outside a dark house on a hillside.

We don't know this place but we may recognise the cars parked outside as belonging to the family of Rupeni Poata.

As Simeon climbs the gate, farm dogs spring out of the darkness, snapping and barking. *

Simeon shouts towards the house.

SIMEON

(Shouts In Maori)

Rupeni Poata! Rupeni!!

Lights go on. The door opens and Caesar Poata comes out on the verandah. We see Poppy behind him. *

CAESAR POATA *

Who's there? What do you want? *

SIMEON

It's Simeon Mahana. I need Rupeni. My father has broken his leg.

Poppy closes the door and goes back inside.

*

128

INT. RAMONA'S HOUSE(RUINED). NIGHT

128

The family are gathered round Joshua who still lies on the table with a blanket over him and a pillow supporting his injured leg.

Rain batters on the tin roof.

Wet clothes are drying by the stove.

Huria hears someone outside and goes to the door.

It's Simeon in his oilskins, soaked and chilled. He seems to be alone

FAITH

Told you it was a waste of time.

Then a figure with a lantern appears in the doorway behind Simeon.

Rupeni emerges from the darkness.

RUPENI POATA

Can I come in?

Huria, regards him, shocked.

RUPENI POATA(CONT'D)

It's a bit wet out here.

Huria stands back and lets him enter. He is carrying a weird contraption, called a Thomas Splint - a ring of steel with two four-foot steel rods welded to it, tapering to the bottom where they're connected by a 4 inch cross-piece.

HURIA

What's that?

RUPENI POATA

Caesar had it when he broke his leg on the rugby pitch. With a bit of luck it should fit.

*

129

INT. RAMONA'S RUINED HOUSE - KITCHEN. NIGHT.

129

Rupeni approaches Joshua and pulls back the blanket and inspects the broken leg.

*

It is horribly bruised and swollen, bleeding slightly where a sharp end of bone has pierced the skin.

RUPENI POATA

(To Simeon)

You should have taken his boot off. Lift his leg.

Rupeni eases Joshua's boot off. It hurts like hell.

Simeon and Pani lift Joshua's broken leg. The bones grind together. Joshua yells aloud.

Rupeni slips the steel ring over Joshua's leg and moves it all the way up to his groin, so the long steel rods run parallel to the break and the crosspiece is several inches below his foot.

Rupeni takes a long leather strap from his pocket and wraps it expertly in a figure-of-eight round Joshua's ankle.

RUPENI POATA (CONT'D)

(In Maori)

Give him something to bite on. This is going to hurt.

JOSHUA

Ha. "Going to" he says.

The men hold Joshua on the table. Rupeni, standing at the end of the table pulls on the leather straps.

Joshua bites down hard on a tea-towel as Rupeni pulls with all his might... and the leg comes straight

Rupeni fixes it in tension by tying the leather straps to the cross piece.

Joshua is breathing hard but he's a lot more comfortable now, the leg held straight by the Thomas splint, the pain ebbing.

RUPENI POATA

When the river falls take him to Dr.. Gillespie.

(To Huria)

He can sleep in that. Keep an eye on his foot, loosen the straps if it starts going numb

He turns to go.

FAITH

Would you like some tea or....

HURIA
(Embarrassed)

We don't have any tea left. I'm sorry.

Rupeni just grunts in acknowledgement then turns and leaves without a word.

130

INT. PATUTAHI - DR.GILLESPIE'S SURGERY. DAY.

130 *

Joshua sits with his leg in a grubby long-leg plaster.

The local GP, Dr. Gillespie, is checking Joshua's X-Rays - comparing the original break with the current, healing fracture.

GILLESPIE
This was two months ago... And this is now.

The bones are well aligned, beginning to knit together.

GILLESPIE (CONT'D)
Not much shortening. You were lucky
....One more month and we'll get the plaster off.

Joshua has a plaster on his leg from thigh to ankle.

JOSHUA
Another month!

GILLESPIE
And several weeks after that before you're fully mobile.

HURIA
But he'll be all right for the shearing?

GILLESPIE
Doubt it.

HURIA
He has to be.

Joshua silences her with a look. Dr. Gillespie hands him his crutches.

GILLESPIE
Limited weight bearing.
(To Joshua)
Oh and tell your father I need to see him.

JOSHUA
 (To the doctor)
 Better if you write to him. We don't
 really see each other.

131 **INT/EXT. PATUTAHI - STORE** 131

Zelda the Shopkeeper's POV through the store window as...

Simeon helps his father into the car then follows his
 mother across the street to the general store. *

132 **EXT. STREET. PATUTAHI. DAY.** 132

Crossing the road with his mother, Huria, Simeon sees
 "Young Collins" (He's 40) entering the local pub.

133 **INT. PATUTAHI - STORE. DAY.** 133

Huria leads through the swing door of the general
 store, followed by Gloria, then Simeon

ZELDA
 Hello Mrs. Mahana. Your husband's on the
 mend, I hope? How can we help you?

HURIA
 Just flour and potatoes. Maybe some
 bacon.

GLORIA
 And shoes.

Huria tells her to SShh. There's definitely no money for
 shoes.

ZELDA
 Will you be paying cash or..?

SIMEON
 We'll put it on account.

HURIA
 ...If that's all right

ZELDA
 (to Huria)
 The thing is, you're already quite a long
 way in the red, and with Mr. Mahana still
 laid up ...

Other customers are turning to look, among them McKenzie,
 the local schoolteacher.

SIMEON

He'll be fine in a month.

Zelda knows this isn't true. She's made her own enquiries

HURIA

It's all right. I'm sorry.

She nods to Simeon that they're leaving. Gloria pipes up from the level of the counter.

GLORIA

But I've got no shoes. We can pay after the shearing.

ZELDA

Yes, well that would be a while yet. Here, take a sweetie.

Gloria is going to accept the sweet but Simeon pulls her hand away. Huria is already heading out.

SIMEON

Come on Gloria.

ZELDA

I'm sorry Mrs. Mahana...

Simeon shoots her a dark look, pulling his sister towards the door as their mother exits, shamed.

GLORIA

But there's no food left ...

ZELDA

Your grandfather will help you.

GLORIA

No he won't. He hates us because of Simeon!

SIMEON

Shut up, Gloria.

134

EXT. PATUTAHI - STREET - PUB. DAY

134

Outside Huria crosses the street with Gloria. Simeon heads off, calling to her.

SIMEON

Put some plastic over dad's plaster, I won't be long.

HURIA

Where are you going? Simeon!

Simeon heads down the road and into the local pub.

"Young Collins" and his landowner friends, are talking and laughing by the bar. They see Simeon and fall silent.

SIMEON

Mr. Collins.

COLLINS

Simeon

His eyes flick to the sign - "Eighteen years or older..."

COLLINS (CONT'D)

Bit young to be in here aren't you?

SIMEON

It's about the shearing this spring.

COLLINS

Yes. Yes. I'll be speaking to your grandfather.

SIMEON

Better if you speak to me, Sir.

COLLINS

(Chuckles)

And why would that be?

SIMEON

We're the ones who always work those sheep. Grandfather's Hapu will have the Wilkinson's to do.

COLLINS

Well now. If you're saying your grandfather's got a manpower shortage I'll be looking to the Poata clan. Might get a better deal than you lot.

A wink to his fellow land-owners. Negotiating with the Maori is a big joke to them. To Simeon its life and death.

SIMEON

My father will be ready for the spring.

COLLINS

Glad to hear it. Tell him to come and see me when the plaster's off.

SIMEON

We need a decision now.

COLLINS

Look here, I'm not going to be steamrollered by a teenage sheepo.

(MORE)

COLLINS (CONT'D)

It's eighteen or older here. Read the blooming sign. Now get off with you.

Simeon leaves, past McKenzie the schoolteacher, who is warming himself by the fire.

136 **EXT. PATUTAHI - STREET - PUB. DAY** 136 *

As Simeon pauses in the front porch of the pub, preparing to dash across the road, something catches his eye - a poster for the upcoming Golden Shears competition: Entries due by end January. First prize 1000 pounds.

MCKENZIE (O.S.)

Simeon.

The schoolteacher has followed him out.

MCKENZIE (CONT'D)

I don't know if this will help but... My father-in-law is needing some scrub cut and it might be something your people could do through winter...

137 **EXT. PATUTAHI - STREET. DAY** 137

Huria, waiting with Joshua on the wagon, sees Simeon leave McKenzie and cross the road towards them

HURIA

What did McKenzie want?

SIMEON

Old man Gilchrist has some scrub-cutting work if we're interested.

JOSHUA

Scrub-cutting. Sweet Jesus. We're shearers! Is this is what we've come to? *

138 **EXT. FARM. HILLSIDE. DAY** 138

Long shot: A line of stooped figures labour up the hillside cutting the scrub with machetes. *

139 **EXT. FARM - TENT. NIGHT** 139

By the light of the campfire, Gloria secretly inspects her red raw and blistered hands.

Simeon is sharpening machetes.

He hears a noise beyond the circle of lamp light and shouts a challenge.

JOSHUA

Who's there?

VOICE

Only me.

Grandmother Ramona emerges from the brush carrying her sleeping gear and a machete. She drops it by the tent and sits down on a stump. Gloria hugs her.

HURIA

Does Grandfather know you're here?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Hmph. What of it? Probably.

Hugging her favourite grand-daughter, Gloria.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(CONT'D)

Show me those hands, little one. You need some of Grandma's aloe.

140 **EXT. THE HILLSIDE. DAY.** 140 *

The line of stooped figures on the hill now comprises Simeon and the three generations of women: His sisters his mother, and Grandmother Ramona.

CU on Simeon This is hard, back-breaking work, grabbing at the stems and slashing.

Grab and slash, grab and slash, edging slowly crab-like up the slope.

141 **EXT. THE HILLSIDE. LATER** 141

Steam rising off their work-clothes as they slowly ascend the hill in a line.

142 **EXT. THE HILLSIDE. LATER STILL - DUSK** 142 *

Finally the hill is cut bare, the cut scrub gathered in a great pile.

Simeon pours kerosene on the pile.

GLORIA

I want to light it!

She strikes a match and...

Whoompf. The whole lot bursts into flames.

Gloria yells in delight, dancing like a savage against the leaping flames.

PULL BACK TO:

143 **EXT. A DISTANT RIDGE. EVENING.** 143

The bonfire with its tiny leaping figures - like some pagan rite of winter.

A dark figure watches from a distance.

It's Grandfather.

144 **EXT. RAMONA'S IMPROVED HOUSE. DAY.** 144 *

Smoke is issuing from the lopsided chimney of the house. *

145 **INT. THE SHED. RAMONA'S IMPROVED HOUSE.** 145 *

Joshua, clad in dirty woolens, is at the work-bench, repairing the rusted gearbox for the windmill.

His leg, still encased in a full length plaster of Paris, is tied up with sisal and plastic sheeting.

A door slams. Joshua looks up from his work and sees Grandfather advancing on him.

JOSHUA

Did you want something?

Grandfather strides over to him and pushes him over.

Joshua falls awkwardly, sprawling on the dirt floor.

GRANDFATHER

I called on Collins about the spring contract. He says your family asked for it.

JOSHUA

I know nothing about that.

GRANDFATHER

Don't lie to me, Joshua!

SIMEON (O.S.)

He's not lying. Leave my dad alone.

Grandfather turns to see Simeon silhouetted in the doorway.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

I spoke to Collins. It's a free country.

GRANDFATHER

You young pup. I'll decide who shears where.

He strides towards Simeon who picks up one of the long machetes they used for the bush-cutting. Its an escalation which shocks even Joshua.

SIMEON

No you won't. We don't belong to you any more. And neither does this land. So get lost, before I report you for trespass.

Grandfather stops short of the blade, trying to read in Simeon's expression just how far the youngster is prepared to go.

GRANDFATHER

That bloody Pakeha school. Breeding toffee-apple lawyers. What have they done to you?

SIMEON

You did it, Grandfather. "You can't eat without killing something". I'll remember that

Grandfather knocks the machete from Simeon's hand, then turns on his heel and exits.

Simeon holds out a hand and helps his father up off the floor.

JOSHUA

You shouldn't have done that. You don't know what he's capable of.

SIMEON

Yes I do. Got two broken ribs to prove it. We're going for the Golden Fleece.

JOSHUA

It's not worth it, you'll only provoke him.

SIMEON

Provoke him to what? What else can he do to us?

Joshua surveys the leaking barn. It's a fair point

146 **EXT. GISBORNE TOWN HALL. DAY.**

146

Simeon walks up the steps of the Town Hall. Behind him comes Joshua.

His leg is now out of plaster but the knee is still stiff and painful.

Coming out of the Town hall is Rupeni Poata.

He looks at them, nods and steps aside.

A banner over the doorway reads: "Golden Fleece Competition, Register Today"

147 **INT. TOWN HALL. DAY.**

147

DOORMAN

Forms on your left. Registration on your right.

As Joshua approaches the registration table he sees Grandfather and Uncle Maatiu signing.

Grandfather turns, scowling at Simeon and Joshua.

SIMEON

Dr. Gillespie's still asking for you.

GRANDFATHER

I've no need for bloody Gillespie

Grandfather pushes past and heads for the door.

Maatiu places himself between Joshua and the registration table, speaking sotto.

MAATIU

Why are you doing this, Joshua? It's just about your pride.

JOSHUA

(Cheerfully)

You're right. Lot to be said for it.

Simeon smiles and Maatiu scowls at the pair of them. The kid's rebellious nature seems to be rubbing off on his father

MAATIU

Family doesn't compete against family. That's the rule.

JOSHUA

Really? It says that on the form?

(To the Registrar)

Put us down as Mahana Two.

Mahana Two has advanced to a place in the final versus the winner of the upcoming semi-final between the Poatas and Mahana One.

*

COMMENTATOR

*

Christie team are out of the Semi.
"Mahana Two" odds now shortening at two to one against. "Poata Gang" and "Mahana One" both on even...

Simeon - in his maroon shearing vest - heads past them, catching glimpses through the crowd of the gorgeous Poppy Poata.

She knows he's looking at her but continues to ignore him

An announcement comes over the PA system.

*

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

*

Last call to the boards, please, Mahana One and Poata Gang.

Simeon goes inside the stadium.

153 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - ARENA/SHEARING STAGE. LATE AFTERNOON** 153

There are two shearing stages, set at an angle so the audience can watch both teams at work and the two teams can keep an eye on each other.

A team has three shearers and 20 sheep to shear between them. (One minute per sheep would be a very fast time.) Three young sheeps wrangle the sheep in each pen - feeding them through to the shearers.

On the stages there are three wool handlers for each shearer

Grandfather's "Mahana One" team is lined up against Rupeni Poata's gang.

*

Simeon sits with his father.

*

Joshua nods grimly. It's going to be awkward - competing the final against his own father.

*

COMMENTATOR

*

Are you ready. On your marks...

The engines fire up, powering the mechanical shears.

*

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

*

...Go!

Massive cheering from the assembled crowd. As the shearers run to their stations and the "Sheepos" start shoving sheep through the gates. With the two Patriarchs, just offstage, yelling instructions like basketball coaches.

SCORE KEEPERS keep an eye on each shearer's tally, and the quality of their work. *

The "sheepos" holler and shout, the sheep file through the slips, the expert shearers - Maatiu, Aperahama and the rest - wrestle the sheep onto their backs....

All the time Grandfather paces backwards and forwards along the shearing floor, marking time with his stick on the boards, yelling instructions, lending his strength where needed.

154 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS COMMENTARY BOX. DAY** 154

The commentator is shouting over the crackling PA

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

...Well we promised you a titanic struggle and look at these teams go! Two great shearing families pushing each other to the limit and will you listen to the big Gisborne crowd just loving it ! *

155 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - SHEARING STAGE. LATE AFTERNOON** 155

It's close. The Poata team are fast, but the Mahana One team are matching them sheep for sheep.

Roughly half the sheep have been shorn from each of the pens.

Wool-handlers, Auntie Sephora and Aunt Ruth, are working like Trojans at the grading tables, their children - Simeon's cousins - are stamping the fleeces into bales. *

On the Poata side, Poppy at the classing table opens her overalls and flaps in some air. A cheer from the men in the crowd - she scowls at them. *

156 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - COMMENTARY BOX. CONTINUOUS.** 156

The red-faced radio COMMENTATOR loosens his tie, shouting into the microphone.

COMMENTATOR

Eight sheep in each pen ... This is the second last ram for Maatiu Tamihana....second last for Caesar Poata.
(MORE)

He's clearly not fine. Maatiu, on stage, is still focussed on the race to win.

MAATIU

Come on! We can still win this!

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(To Joshua)

He's not right. Call for a stretcher!

GRANDFATHER

(Roars)

Leave me! Finish the contest!!

Joshua pulls back. Grandmother Ramona stays by grandfather's side watching over him as the mayhem of the shearing contest continues, just feet away

Grandfather's POV. A strange low angle on the shearing with the dazzling lights, the shrieking machines, motes of wool hanging in the air.

His vision is swimming in and out of focus. There's an odd echo as the crowd count down the last seconds the contest.

The Poata team are ahead. Two shearers have finished, the last one is finishing the final sheep.

Mahana One are thirty seconds behind.

CROWD

Ten nine eight seven... etc

Grandfather struggles to rise like a concussed boxer. His eyes meet Grandmother Ramona's. She sees fear in them, a look she's never seen before.

CROWD (CONT'D)

Four, three, two, one....Zero!!

...The victorious Poatas finish inside seven minutes and their supporters erupt in celebration.

The Mahana one team finish in seven minutes and ten seconds. Maatiu hangs up his handpiece and crosses to Grandfather

Judges flock up onto the stage to assist. *

The St. Johns Ambulance men have brought a wheelchair and a stretcher. *

AUNT RUTH *

(To Grandfather)

Where's the pain, father? We need to get you to the hospital.

GRANDFATHER

Too late for that.

(Of the Ambulancemen)

Get rid of those people.

AUNT SEPHORA

The contest doesn't matter What do you mean "too late?"

GRANDFATHER

Too late for hospital. Doctor Gillespie has been nagging me all year to see the surgeon.

Grandmother Ramona didn't know this

RAMONA

See him about what?

GRANDFATHER

Bowel cancer, so he reckons.

Grandmother Ramona looks at him in silent shock. The Aunties are reeling from the revelation.

AUNTIES

- he said what? Cancer?

- Who says you've got cancer?

- What does Gillespie know? How can he tell?

GRANDFATHER

I've been shitting blood for weeks now. Don't need a doctor to tell me I'm dying.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Allowing for penalty points. Mahana One have it!

(Cheering)

Mahana One go through to the final round.

Grandfather focusses on the wheelchair, left by the ambulancemen at the front stalls

GRANDFATHER

Get me to that wheelchair.

MAATIU

You don't have to stay here father. We're out of the contest....

GRANDFATHER

(Stubbornly)

I'll see it to the finish.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Let me loosen your shirt here.

She reaches out to loosen his tie but he knocks her hand away, angrily.

GRANDFATHER

For God's sake woman can't you ever just leave me alone!

Grandmother Ramona turns and leaves, angry and humiliated.

Everyone is attending to Grandfather. Simeon leaves his family and goes after Grandmother Ramona.

Joshua calls after him.

JOSHUA

Simeon. We're on next. We need you!

Simeon has already gone.

161

EXT. GOLDEN SHEARS - OUTSIDE THE ARENA. DAY

161 *

Outside the main arena Mahana One are being erased from the blackboards as Simeon hurries past.

*
*

SIMEON

Grandmother. Wait..

She stops and turns.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

He didn't mean it. He's angry and ashamed. I understand that.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

You don't. But thank you, Simeon

They sit together.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(CONT'D)

I'm ashamed too, that I never knew about the bleeding. He could never admit to weakness - even to me.

SIMEON

Was it different when you were young?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(laughs despite herself)

You never give up, do you.

SIMEON

Just curious how it works. Did he really steal you at the altar?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

No. It was just an ordinary church service ... The real crime happened months before that.

A silence. She's reluctant to say much more than that. *

COMMENTATOR (O.S.) *

Last call: Mahana 2 and Poata to the shearing Stage...

Simeon barely hears it, intent on Grandmother. Finally she adds:

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

That house by the bee meadow was built for me by Rupeni Poata. He and I planned to live there together, but your grandfather had other ideas.

162 **EXT. RAMONA'S HOUSE (NEW) (FLASHBACK). DAY** 162

A memory from the past:

We are circling down on the house in the meadow, newly built and painted.

163 **INT. RAMONA'S HOUSE (NEW) (FLASHBACK). DAY** 163

Our POV meanders through the newly built house

Wood-shavings and piles of sawdust litter the new-laid pine boards.

164 **INT. RAMONA'S HOUSE (NEW) (FLASHBACK). DAY** 164

A white linen sheet billows in the sunshine as

Young Ramona, throws it high and lets it settle on the mattress ...of her marriage bed.

She smooths it flat and tucks in the corners.

We hear a horse outside.

YOUNG Ramona hurries to the front door, expecting Rupeni.

165 **INT/EXT. RAMONA'S HOUSE (NEW) (FLASHBACK). DAY** 165

She opens the door and her expression falls.

YOUNG RAMONA

Tamihana Mahana. What are you doing here?

He gives no answer but pushes forward into the house.

YOUNG GRANDFATHER

You're always smiling at me. What's that about?

YOUNG RAMONA

I smile at lots of people. What do you mean "always" ?

He keeps advancing, his broad back blocking our vision. Ramona's voice increasingly scared and urgent:

Grandfather kicks the door shut, excluding us.

YOUNG RAMONA (CONT'D)

No. Tamihana. No!

Our POV lingers on the closed door as Ramona's panicky imprecations fade and finally become inaudible, merging with the buzzing insects and chirruping birds of the surrounding forest.

SLOW TRACKING SHOT along the side of the building, around the corner and then up to a curtained window on the gable end - the main bedroom.

Hold on the window, until a sound becomes audible. Young Grandmother Ramona weeping.

We move through the window.

The newly made marriage-bed is ruffled.

There's a spot of blood on the white sheet.

Young Ramona sits bruised and sobbing in a corner of the room.

CU of her face. We hear thumping boots as Young grandfather makes his way downstairs and out through the front door again.

MIXING TO:

166

EXT. GOLDEN SHEARS - OUTSIDE ARENA. PRESENT DAY. DAY

166 *

Grandmother Ramona as she is now, her cheeks wet with tears.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

That's how I became pregnant with Maatiu.

(A beat)

Afterwards, the elders made us marry. And the story grew that Tamihana had somehow "rescued" me.

(A beat)

(MORE)

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Rupeni went off to the war and I bore
your grandfather 7 children, each one
binding me more tightly to him.

She dabs her eyes one last time, blows her nose, folds
away the lace handkerchief and tucks it in her sleeve

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(CONT'D)

Strangely, you remind me a lot of him
sometimes.

SIMEON

(Shocked)

Me. Of Grandfather?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Your stubborn-ness. Your determination to
plough your own furrow....

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome back
to stage: Poata gang versus Mahana Two.

SIMEON

(Leaps up)

Shit. Shit.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Go. I'll follow.

Simeon runs off, back past the bookie's stall

Already he can hear the contestants being announced as
the two teams take to the stage:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

The mighty Poata One team, led by Caesar
Poata, fastest individual shearer two
years running.....

167 **DELETED** 167

168 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - SHEARING STAGE. DAY.** 168 *

Applause and cheering from the capacity crowd *

COMMENTATOR *

....And Joshua Mahana's "Mahana Two" team
with an impressive best time of seven
minutes ten seconds!

In front of a packed arena, Mahana Two take to the stage.
Joshua and Pani are shearers. The third slot is empty.

The rest of the family take up their positions, shaky with pre-match nerves.

AUDIENCE
 (Shouting at Lib)
 - Kill em Poatas
 - Come on the maroons! *

COMMENTATOR
 Teams. Are you ready?! *

JOSHUA
 Simeon. Simeon! We're a shearer short!
 Where's Simeon?

Simeon's sister, Hope, kicks off her high heels.

In the competing team, Poppy Poata hitches up her skirt and tucks it in her pants to whistles from the crowd.

Simeon fights through the crowd, arriving in the nick of time.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
 What happened to you!?

Simeon climbs the stage and turns to face the audience.

His POV: Grandfather Tamihana, sitting rigid with pain, is a scary, ghostly presence in the front row.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
 (To the family)
 Last time up folks, then *hoki mai tatou*
ki te wa kainga. *

COMMENTATOR
 On your marks...Steady!..... Go! *

Simeon's mechanical shearer comes alive in his hand. The Mahana Two Sheepos jump into the pen and start pushing sheep through the gates.

SHEEPOS
 Hut. Hut! Get in there!

On the other stage, the big Poata men are manhandling the sheep over the fences rather than pushing them through the gates.

Simeon and his family are already a few seconds behind as The Poata shearers start on their first sheep. Rupeni Poata egging them on.

169 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - COMMENTARY BOX. DAY.** 169 *

In the Commentary box, the commentator keeps a running report. *

COMMENTATOR

...Caesar Poata. Just look at this man's form! That first sheep - a big ram - took a little over fifty seconds. Mahana clan already lagging by quarter of a minute ...

170 **INT - GOLDEN SHEARS - FRONT OF AUDIENCE. DAY** 170 *

Grandfather Tamihana watches, his breathing fast and shallow, the pain in his belly drilling into him.

171 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - SHEARING STAGES/ INTERCUTTING. DAY** 171 *

On the Poata board, Caesar Poata the fastest shearer of all, is detaching another fleece, drawing a small bead of blood from the sheep's throat.

CAESAR POATA

Tar!

He fixes the cut and dispatches it, calling for his Next sheep which SLAMS though the hatch, bleating with fear under the arc-lights.

On the Mahana Two board, Pani, shearing his second, looks across anxiously at the competition.

JOSHUA

(Shouts across)

Steady lads.
Long way to go yet!

On the Poata side, Alexander Poata nicks his sheep and calls for tar also.

ALEXANDER POATA

Tar!

On the Mahana side, Joshua finishes his next sheep, closely followed by the other Mahana shearers - Simeon keeping pace with the older men.

HURIA

Dags away!

Gloria runs in for the dags as her mother pulls the fleece clear, bundling it up in her arms before throwing it like a net...

SLO MO: the whole intact fleece seeming to hang in the air before falling perfectly square on the table. *

COMMENTATOR *

Rotate judges!

The judges are changing stations, so each judge can assess each stage of the process.

172 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS ARENA. BACK OF THE AUDIENCE. DAY.** 172 *

Half way into the contest McKenzie the schoolteacher, arriving late, pushes in from the back to get a glimpse of the action.

His POV: Two thirds of the sheep have been shorn

The Mahana Two shearers are bent over their animals, Joshua fighting the ache in his recently-healed leg.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Faultless technique from Mahana Two - their shearers are a joy to watch but as Alexander Poata moves onto his second last sheep the all-powerful Poatas have a clear lead...

173 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - SHEARING STAGES. DAY** 173 *

The young pressers jump into the wool sacks and stamp the fleeces down, filling out the corners.

The Poatas keep up the punishing pace.

Caesar Poata, turning with his sheep, knocks one of his fleecos off the stand. He's so intent on his work he doesn't bother to apologize.

COMMENTATOR

Only seven sheep left in each pen as the judges rotate for the third and last time....

174 **INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - SHEARING STAGE. DAY** 174 *

Sheepos keep pushing the sheep up the ramp.

CAESAR POATA

Tar! Tar!

The Mahana Two shearers keep up a steady rhythm, Simeon struggling to keep up.

180

GOLDEN SHEARS ARENA. FRONT OF THE AUDIENCE - DAY

180 *

Maatiu is on his feet - caught up in the excitement of the contest.

Grandfather tugs on Maatiu's shirt and Maatiu bends close.

GRANDFATHER
You can take me home now.

MAATIU
Now?

GRANDFATHER
It's over. We won.

MAATIU
He's delirious

Beckoning for Grandmother Ramona to follow, they wheel grandfather away without waiting for the final outcome.

AUDIENCE
Ten , nine, eight....

181

INT. GOLDEN SHEARS - SHEARING STAGE. DAY

181 *

The Poata supporters are doing the count-down as...

The last fleeces are flung on the classing table. The Poata classers make a quick inspection then raise their hands in victory.

Now the audience are all on their feet, Cheering the runners up - the Mahana gang - just ten seconds behind

AUDIENCE
Ten, nine, eight....etc

On seven minutes dead, Joshua raises his hand to show the judges they're done.

Simeon looks towards the place where Grandfather was sitting, but the seat is now empty.

COMMENTATOR
Will Mr. Mervyn Williams of the New Zealand Wool Board please come to the stage...

Simeon stands aside, sweating and defeated, as the president comes to the stage.

He goes to the microphone.

WILLIAMS

Ladies and Gentlemen, What a final round! Mahana two in their first year of competition taking the fight to the reigning champions. Could I ask Mr. Caesar Poata to come forward, and accept the award for fastest individual shearer.

*

Caesar Poata jumps up on stage and receives the award.

Tumultuous applause - Caesar is a local hero.

As he's accepting his trophy the judges have been checking the fleeces and swapping notes. One of them passes Hughes a note with his judgement.

Hughes raises a hand to the audience for silence.

*

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

The Poata Gang were the fastest team, by a mere ten seconds ... But we all know that speed is not everything...

*

Joshua, head down, exhausted raises his head a fraction.

*

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

The Mahana family did not manhandle their sheep over the rails, or skimp any stage of the sorting and classing. None of the sheep they sheared was in any way cut or nicked by the blades.

*

Joshua winks at Simeon - good work

*

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

For this reason, after deducting penalty points, the Golden Fleece award for the best shearing team of 1960...

*

The audience are on their feet. A deafening storm of applause washes over the stage, drowning the rest of his words.

*

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

...Goes to the "Mahana Two" gang ...of Gisborne East Coast and Poverty Bay district.

*

Poppy Poata looks outraged. Gloria can't restrain herself and gives a great whoop of pleasure.

Simeon, dazed by this latest twist of fate, finds himself in the midst of a hugging, cheering family.

Strangers invade the stage, slapping him on the back, weeping, embracing yelling in his ear.

Joshua grabs Huria and sweeps her bodily off her feet

JOSHUA
 (in Maori)
 - We did it! We Won!
 - A thousand bloody pounds!!

Somewhere in the crowd, the schoolteacher McKenzie is on his feet, applauding and cheering with the rest of them.

Rupeni Poata feeling cheated of victory catches Simeon's eye and nods grudgingly. *

WILLIAMS *

Can I ask the leader of Mahana Two,
 Joshua Mahana, to receive the trophy.

Joshua is an emotional mess. It takes a few moments for him to find his voice but finally, with his eyes on Huria and Simeon:

JOSHUA
 I owe this award to my son, who
 persuaded us to enter.

Then, composing himself.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)
 ... And to my father Tamihana Mahana
 who was taken ill during the contest.
 This will mean a lot to him.

Rupeni grunts - Huh!

182	DELETED	182
183	DELETED	183
184	INT. COUNTRY ROAD - MAATIU'S CAR. DAY.	184 *

Maatiu drives through the night, listening to the final result on the radio. He talks back to Grandfather over his shoulder.

MAATIU
 You hear that, Pop? You were right.
 Joshua's team won.

Grandfather is laid out in the back seat, lips caked and dry, wincing with pain with every bump in the road, his venerable head in Grandmother Ramona's lap.

GRANDFATHER
 How close are we?

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA
Close. It's almost over.

184A **EXT. PATUTAHI STREET. DAY.** 184A *

Joshua's old car pulls into the little town.

185 **INT. JOSHUA'S CAR. PATUTAHI STREET. DAY** 185

Simeon wakes, having fallen asleep in the back seat.

HURIA
Stop here.

Outside, it is morning in the village of Patutahi. Huria gets out and crosses the road to Zelda's shop.

Gloria gets out and goes with her.

JOSHUA
You want to go with them?

SIMEON
I think the girls can handle it.

186 **INT. PATUTAHI - STORE. DAY** 186

As Huria and Gloria comes through the door, Zelda pastes on her "Welcome" face

ZELDA
Scott! Daisy. Mrs. Mahana is here.
(To Huria)
We heard on the radio, congratulations are in order.

Huria is a steady, consistent woman doesn't know how to take this sudden change of attitude.

Gloria knows and treats it with disdain.

GLORIA
My mother wants to pay off our debt.

ZELDA
Of course. Let me just get the register.
(Beat)
Let me see now.

Licking her pencil adding up the figures.

Huria already knows what she owes and has the money ready in crisp new notes

HURIA
It's a hundred and eighty-four pounds.

ZELDA

A hundred and ninety-seven I make it.

GLORIA

Can I see that?

Zelda pulls a face, but she turns the register around so that Huria and Gloria can read it.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

We never bought the shoes.

Zelda looks at the register, embarrassed.

ZELDA

Oh, you're quite right. I don't know how that happened. Would you like to buy a pair now.

GLORIA

No. We'll go to a better shop.

Zelda scowls at Gloria over her spectacles then takes her pencil and puts a line through that item.

187 **EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD. DAY**

187

The family is gathered en masse - little anxious knots of relatives grouped in the kitchen and on the verandah.

Joshua and his family arrive, just as Dr. Gillespie is leaving.

As the exiles rejoin the larger family we hear snatches of hushed conversation from the various Aunties

AUNTIES

- Peritonitis from a ruptured bowel.
- No point operating. The cancer's all through him.
- He gave him some morphine for the pain.
- He said it would be hours, not days.

188 **INT. HOMESTEAD - GRANDFATHER'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.**

188

CU on Grandfather, drifting in and out of consciousness. *

His cheeks are sunken, his lips dry, his breathing damp and hesitant.

He hears O.S. the noise of a page turning, and opens his eyes to see Simeon sitting by his bedside, reading.

GRANDFATHER

What are you hanging around for?

SIMEON

We're taking it in turns. Someone has to sit with you.

GRANDFATHER

No they don't. I'm perfectly able to die on my own here.

He closes his eyes and falls silent. Simeon returns to his book.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

...And if you're hoping for my forgiveness you'll have a long wait.

SIMEON

The place you're headed, it's God's forgiveness I'd worry about.

Rather than being shocked by this pitiless remark, Grandfather kind of admires it. He opens his eyes again, beckons.

GRANDFATHER

Come here. Drop your trouser.

SIMEON

Do what?

GRANDFATHER

Your trousers, take them off. What are you afraid of?

SIMEON

I'm not afraid of you.

GRANDFATHER

Yes you are.

Simeon loosens his belt, drops his trousers and underpants to the floor.

Grandfather reaches out and grips Simeon by the balls, hard.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

You think you've got what it takes to hold a family together.

SIMEON

I'll learn.

GRANDFATHER

In a book, eh?

SIMEON

Probably not from you.

Grandfather releases his grip.

GRANDFATHER

At least you've got the balls.

Simeon buttons his trousers.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

There's a book in your grandmother's box.
Get it.

Simeon unlocks the polished wooden box which once contained his grandmother's trousseau.

There's a heavy King James Bible there, with the names of the various generations of grandmother's noble family inscribed in the front page

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

...Book of Judges.

SIMEON

You want me to read to you?

Grandfather is silent. Simeon turns to Judges. There's an old letter between the pages.

GRANDFATHER

Think you're so smart. You deal with it.

Then, having passed on the burden of responsibility, the old man closes his eyes, as Simeon reads a letter from the past, written in his grandmother's hand.

When he looks back, his grandfather is not breathing.,

189

EXT. WAITUHI - HOMESTEAD - LOUNGE. NIGHT

189

Simeon opens the door from Grandfather's bedroom. Everyone who's still awake looks up.

Simeon addresses his Grandmother Ramona.

SIMEON

You'd better come in I think.

A Maori hymn of lament is carried over from....

190

EXT. RONGOPAI MARAE. DAY

190

We look down on the Waituhi meeting house where a great crowd of people have gathered for Grandfather's "tangihanga" - or wake.

*

*

*

191 **EXT. RONGOPAI MARAE. DAY.**

191 *

Representatives are there from all the tribes and local families, dressed in suit and tie, or traditional garb

Grandmother Ramona is at the front - regal in a black gown and greenstone earrings.

Grandfather lies dead in his casket as representatives from all the tribes and families make funeral orations over his body.

The Paramount chief concludes his speech.

PARAMOUNT CHIEF

(in Maori)

...Great Tamihana, strong are your sons, and wide is your fame. The sorrow of your passing will resonate through these valleys for many seasons to come.

The womenfolk raise their voices in karanga, interrupted by the sound of car engines as a fleet of cars arrive outside.

*

MAATIU

Who's that?

HONE

It's the Poatas.

*

MAATIU

Over my dead body.

Calling to his brothers, he heads for the doorway of the Marae.

192 **EXT. THE MARAE. ENTRANCE. DAY.**

192

Rupeni and his sons leave their cars, only to find the entrance to the Marae blocked by Maatiu and his brothers.

RUPENI POATA

(In Maori)

We acknowledge the great power of the Mahana clan.

(In English)

..But even enemies have the right to pay tribute.

JOSHUA

He speaks true. Let them pass.

Maatiu looks to Aperahama, who nods - that's the rule. Grudgingly the Mahana men part and allow the Poata men to file past them.

*

Rupeni marches straight up to the place where Grandfather Tamihana lies in state.

APERAHAMA

Rupeni Poata wishes to pay tribute

Everyone falls silent. Standing over the body Rupeni declares:

RUPENI POATA

Well, you old bastard: I've prayed for years to see you in your coffin. The whole of the East coast rejoices that you are dead.

Shock and horror spreads through the Marae, but Rupeni Poata continues, unrepentant:

RUPENI POATA (CONT'D)

Now, I can't wait to get you buried. You cast too long a shadow. Take it with you and leave us the sun.

Uproar. All the Mahana men are on their feet spoiling for a fight.

MAATIU

(To Joshua)

Idiot! What did you let him in for?

JOSHUA

It's Custom. How did I know he'd say that!

MAATIU

(In Maori)

Custom to insult us? To hell with that!

He makes a lunge towards Caesar Poata. Aperahama tries to restrain him.

All the elders are on their feet trying to keep the peace.

PARAMOUNT CHIEF

No fighting on the Marae! No fighting on the Marae! If you want to settle your differences, go settle them outside.

In the uproar, Simeon stands on a chair and declares

SIMEON

Everyone listen to me! There are many things we may not like hearing but sometimes they still need to be said.

His uncles are yelling at him to sit down and shut up but Simeon persists. From his pocket he takes the letter which Grandfather gave him on his death bed.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

You want to know why Rupeni hates Grandfather? Well maybe now's the time to discuss it.

AUNTIES

What's he got there?
Who gave it to you.
What's that letter?

SIMEON

Before he died, grandfather showed me this. It's from Grandmother, years ago, and I think everyone should read it.

The aunties are shouting at him in Maori.

AUNTIES

No! No!
Get down!
Someone stop him!

Simeon just raises his voice and talks over them.

SIMEON

She agreed to marry him, because he'd got her pregnant.

Shouting above the din now.

SIMEON (CONT'D)

...even though Tamihana came from nowhere, and she'd been promised to Rupeni!

Uproar.

Anything Simeon was going to add is drowned out by howls of dissent from the Aunties and uncles, who drag him off his perch, snatching at the letter.

AUNTIES

Give me that thing!

Arguing among themselves as they try to prize the letter from Simeon's grasp.

AUNTIES (CONT'D)

Don't tear it - you're tearing it!

Now everyone is fighting everyone, Aunties trying to get to the letter, Uncles trying to get at Simeon, Joshua trying to protect his son, Poatas being elbowed and stamped on.

PARAMOUNT CHIEF
NO fighting on the Marae!

Laying into the combatants with fists and walking sticks.

Rupeni Poata, pushing towards Simeon and Grandmother Ramona, he is blocked by Simeon's Uncle Hone

RUPENI POATA
I need to speak with your mother.

UNCLE HONE
Get lost and take your bloody clan with you.

RUPENI POATA
Watch your words Hone Mahana. I'm not too old to punch your lights out.

UNCLE HONE
Ha! we'll see about that.

ELDERS
NO FIGHTING on the Marae!!

Simeon fights free of his Aunties and thrusts the letter at its rightful owner, Grandmother Ramona.

Huria drags him aside.

HURIA
What have you done. What were you thinking?

SIMEON
Somebody has to take Grandmother's part in this.

AUNT SEPHORA
It's not about Mother! Has everyone forgotten who just died here?!

SIMEON
She loves Rupeni.

AUNT SEPHORA
She's sixty years old, Simeon! How can she be in love with anyone!

Then Grandmother Ramona who has been standing silently amidst this mayhem, climbs on a chair with the torn letter in her hand, speaking in a high clear voice.

RAMONA
Everyone quiet! I think I should speak for myself in this.

SIMEON

Quiet, and let grandmother speak!

A silence falls.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

We are here to honour the dead. But the
dead are honoured by truth not lies.
Simeon's right. Maybe now is the time for
truth.

Some of you were there on the day
when I was given in marriage to
Tamihana Mahana. You know what
sorrow it caused me then.

The elders who decided her fate avert their eyes,
guiltily.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(CONT'D)

(To her children)

But good things came out of it.
...including my children and their
children - all of you.
I promised Mahana Tamihana to stay loyal
until the day that "death us should
part." That day has come, and I am sad to
lose him, but also happy, because now I
am free to live with whom I choose.

She pauses. And her eyes find Rupeni among the throng.

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

(CONT'D)

I choose Rupeni Poata.

Rupeni beams. His eyes fill with tears of joy. It's the
first time we have ever seen him smile like this and his
face is transformed by it.

He holds out his hands as Grandmother Ramona steps down
from the stool.

And to everyone's astonishment they embrace.

RUPENI POATA

(Whispers)

Ko taku aroha ki a koe kaore e mate
(my love for you will never die).

GRANDMOTHER RAMONA

Ae engari.

The cars are leaving the marae.

In stark contrast to the race for the bridge at the start of the movie, Mahanas and Poatas are treating each other with elaborate respect - they are in-laws now.

Gesturing ("After you, now after you!") they leave their parking spots and wend back down the road in an orderly procession.

195

EXT. MARAE. GRANDFATHER'S COFFIN. DAY

195 *

Simeon stands by grandfather's coffin, paying his last respects. *

His mind is full of conflicting emotions towards the old man.

He senses someone watching and looks up. Poppy Poata is standing across the coffin from him, chewing gum. *

POPPY

Nice work. You want a lift back

SIMEON

No, I'll stay for a bit. I can walk.

POPPY

(Re their grandparents)

Kind of amazing don't you think. That you can still be in love with someone at their age.

SIMEON

Not really. I think when you meet the right person you kind of know....

She nods, pops her gum, flashes him a smile and walks off.

Simeon watches her go, feeling the world just changed in that moment.

CRANE UP. Simeon by his Grandfather's grave. Poppy walking out of shot and the procession of cars tailing off into the distance.

THE END