

Love and Money

A novel by H.T. Retzlaff

Dedication: This work is dedicated with love and affection to His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II. He is the embodiment of all that is good and noble in the Samoan character. Samoa's time honoured customs and traditions thrive under his patronage and leadership.

LOVE AND MONEY

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*“For I don’t care too much for money
For money can’t buy me love”*

John Lennon and Paul
McCartney
Can’t Buy Me Love (1964)

PART ONE: THE TRUTH ABOUT LOVE

*“When it comes, will it come without warning
Just as I’m picking my nose?
Will it knock on my door in the morning
Or tread in the bus on my toes?
Will it come like a change in the weather?
Will its greeting be courteous or rough?
Will it alter my life altogether?
O tell me the truth about love.”*

W.H. Auden
Twelve Songs

CHAPTER ONE: THE MEETING

Whenever in his long life that he sat down and thought about it, it occurred to James Woods III that he probably fell in love with Sieni Folasau the very first time he set eyes on her, serving in the King's College dining room. He was struck by her dark looks, tall slender and firm body and that cheeky smirk on her face. James was a little shaken by that disdainful look of total superiority, especially coming from a kitchen maid.

James was the third James Woods, in what had become a dynastic family who were now confirmed as New Zealand's wealthiest family. He had inherited the sturdy strength of his grandfather, and from his high society mother his tall athletic body and rugged good looks. His good grades, membership of the 1st XV and family fortune, made him a natural choice for Head Boy of the College.

"Can I have another serving of chicken?"
James heard himself asking Sieni, not really wanting any more chicken, but keen to start a conversation.

"Who do you think you are?"

"James Woods III, that's who I am!"

"Are you a King or something, Junior? Come on, the Third! James Woods the Third!"

"No, but I am Head Boy of the College, and you had better watch yourself Missie, or you'll be out of a job!"

"I'm scared shitless, Junior, I won't be able to shit for a week"

"Do I get my extra helping of chicken?"

"Missie says no."

At that instant, Sieni realised that she may have over-stepped the mark, and it struck James that he was already feeling a strange attraction to this cheeky kitchen maid.

Sieni lived in Mangere, a short walk from King's College. Her parents had emigrated to New Zealand from Samoa fifteen years earlier when Sieni was three years old. She was born in Samoa but had returned only once, five years earlier, for her maternal grandfather's funeral.

Sieni's mother was part German. Her grandfather was a Schultz. Her great-grandfather had worked for the German Government, arriving in Samoa in 1910. Erich Schultz married a Samoan woman from the village of Safotu in Savaii, and stayed on in Samoa after the New Zealand Government assumed control in 1914 under a United Nations Mandate.

From her German grandfather she had inherited her long slender body, her high cheekbones and short temper. She was the youngest daughter in a family of five boys and three girls.

The two eldest in the family were Sieni's sisters, who were now both married. Sieni was the spoilt youngest daughter, with only one brother younger than her. Sieni's father doted on his bright, cheeky youngest daughter. At seventeen she enrolled at Auckland University for a BA in English, and took a part-time job with the King's College caterers to help out with her university expenses and other family commitments.

Sieni was not at all impressed with James the first time they met. "*Imagine saying he was James Woods the third!*" she thought to herself. And calling her 'Missie.' Head Boy or not her instructions were, "no extra servings for anyone," and she certainly was

not going to give extra chicken to this arrogant boy who thought being head prefect made him a big deal.

The next time on the line, it was chips.

"May I have some more chips please?"

Sieni caught James off-guard by giving him another scoop of chips, without saying a word.

He was about to move on.

"What do you say?" Sieni could have been talking to a child.

"Thank you" he said promptly, to Sieni's surprise, and moved quickly along the line.

James told his best friend, Henry Purcell.

Henry laughed. "*Half the seventh-formers in this school would like to get into that Island girl's pants*", he said.

"What did you call her?"

"Isn't she from the Islands somewhere?"

James caught himself in time. He was getting defensive, and he did not even know her name.

“I guess so. She is dark. She looks Spanish, or even a dark Italian. She reminds me of someone in the movies.”

“Come on, Jim, she is an Island girl who serves us our food. If you want, shag her under the oaks and move on.”

The oaks on the King’s boundary, were famous for assignations between boys and girls from the College. They were also famous for other assignations.

Henry’s sister Irene had just started as a sixth form boarder at King’s, and everyone in both families believed that Irene was a suitable partner for the third James Woods. The Purcells were Irish immigrants who had invested wisely in property. The Purcells were old money and had a long history at King’s College. The Woods’ may have been much wealthier, but James was the first person of his family to attend the College.

The mention of the shag under the oaks irritated James, he could hold back no longer – *“What do you mean? Don’t patronise her, Henry, and don’t patronise me. We’ve both shagged a few girls under the oaks, and none of them have been Island girls.”*

“Well, excuse me, falling in love are we?”

“No, but I am no racist. Why don’t you complain when Tana Umaga scores tries for the All Blacks, or Beatrice Faumuina wins a gold medal in the discus? And what about those Fijians, flying Fijian wingers like Rokocoko, Tongan Jonah Lomu in his prime”

“Come on Jimmy” Henry hardly ever called him Jimmy. That was a sign to cool it, and it ended the discussion before it could get any more unpleasant.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MEAL

James enjoyed the fish and chips from a shop two streets away from the College. He walked there after a long run on a wet Saturday morning. He had gotten to know the owner, Tom Brajkovich well, during his years at King's.

James was tall and solidly built. He was No.8 and now captain of the King's Rugby 1st XV. He boarded at the School, but only after being made Head Boy. He had been a day student, catching the train until he got his driver's licence and he was then allowed to drive to school. As an only child, his parents had felt James should remain at home with them. The extra commitments of being Head Boy meant that he had to switch to boarding for his final year.

He gave his order and sat down to wait. She walked in with another girl. She was surprised to see James there and reacted instinctively.

"If it isn't number three" Sieni said out loud, as she made as if to walk back out.

He stood up immediately, preventing them walking out, *"It's James. May I know your name?"*

"The name's Folasau, Sieni Folasau" A big smile on her face. Sieni was clearly enjoying herself. She delighted in articulating her Samoan names for this Head Boy of King's College.

"Sieni Folasau the First" she added.

"This is my friend, Mary Tatupu. Mary, meet James Woods the Third."

Sieni was by now laughing out loud, and even Tom Brajkovich was smiling, in spite of the fact that James was one of his best customers.

James could not help being amused, even though they were poking fun at him.

Impulsively, he heard himself saying: *"Can I shout you girls? There are some tables out back. Tom doesn't mind, do you Tom?"*

Sieni was caught by surprise by James' generous and unexpected gesture.

"We're strictly chips and fritters girls, James Woods III, and we are not fussy about which newspaper they're wrapped in either"

"How about a truce, Sieni Folasau the First?"

James pronounced Sieni's names with a fluency that would have made people believe he had known her all his life.

"Just triple my order, Tom. Are Cokes okay?"

"I'll have a Lemon and Paeroa" Sieni said

"Fanta, thanks" said Mary.

It had stopped raining, so they sat in the back, behind the shop. Tables and deck chairs. The conversation was easy, natural. As if it was an everyday event for a James Woods III to be eating fish and chips with a Sieni Folasau and a Mary Tatupu.

Tom Brajkovich found the situation fascinating. Tom read the papers, he knew who James Woods II was. The father of this Head Boy of Kings who was now "dining" on his fish and chips with two Samoan girls, in the back of his shop.

"Doesn't Tom make the best fish and chips!" James said, *"Better than that classy place in Epsom".*

"We wouldn't know as most times we can't afford the fish," Sieni said, without any malice. She was starting to be taken in by how nice this guy was, but something in her could not help but poke fun at the wide gulf in their personal circumstances.

"I can't help who I am, Sieni, or how wealthy my family is. I do find myself liking you. Can you accept that I don't look down on you, in any way at all?"

Mary Tatupu was so impressed by James, she later told Sieni to give her a chance, if Sieni was not interested in James. *"He's quite good looking, Sieni. And very well built. Rather a nice guy considering he goes to that snobbish school!"*

"And I am just a kitchen maid there, Mary. Fairytales are called fairytales because they are from make-believe land."

"I don't care about all that. I just see the way he looks at you, and I know he likes you. And I mean likes you for who you really are."

A simple fish and chip meal. It was to be the turning point in their relationship. A chance meeting, the beginning of a mutual bond of respect that would quickly blossom into affection and then ultimately, love. The initial verbal sparring was now over. Never

again would James say or think anything condescending or disparaging about Sieni. Not about Sieni, her family and friends, and certainly never about her race or personal circumstances.

There were many challenges that would confront their relationship, all of which merely served to strengthen the bonds that brought them together. There were the tentative first visits to each other's homes and families. Sieni displayed a remarkable maturity and understanding in not only dealing with all these challenges, but in preparing James so that he could cope with all the prejudice that confronted them from the beginning of their friendship.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BALL

The King's Ball was to be the major challenge. There was a lot of commotion in the Folasau household. Sieni's father was expected to talk to the bank Manager. Sieni's mother consulted one of her Schultz cousins, who was a lawyer in Wellington. She contacted the shop and arranged the type of dress. When Sieni was told what she considered was the outrageous cost of the dress, she was determined she would sew it herself. It was a white dress printed with tapa designs, with coconut shells designed to join the bare middle section of the dress. Those at the Ball could not believe that their kitchen maid could look so ravishingly beautiful, and they certainly would not have believed that Sieni's dress was not tailored and quite inexpensive.

The Woods' household was in turmoil for quite a different reason. Up until this point, James' parents had considered this all to be a harmless fling or the sowing of wild oats. This was ironic as James and Sieni had not had sex yet. James had gracefully accepted from the start, that this relationship was quite different from all his previous flings, which were

mostly one night stands. His great respect for Sieni meant this issue was settled quite early in their relationship.

Once James formally invited Sieni to the King's Ball, the relationship was taken much more seriously by everyone, especially his parents.

"You're not really serious about this girl?" James' father asked, trying not to sound disapproving.

"Why?"

"Why? You have nothing in common. She's a kitchen maid for God's sake, and a Samoan!"

James held himself back, but only because Sieni had prepared him for this moment, telling him to be understanding. *"It's your parent's way of showing their love for you,"* she had told him.

"What is your problem? That Sieni's a kitchen maid, or that she's Samoan? I am taking her to the Ball Dad. Get used to it." James was struggling to follow Sieni's advice and keep his cool.

"Will you hire a limousine? Can the car get into her driveway?" His father was getting sarcastic, in spite of his initial resolution not to show any disapproval or prejudice.

"I will hire a limo, Dad. It can park on the road. The Folasaus may be poor compared to our family, but they own their own home in Mangere. And by the way, Dad, Sieni is only a part-time kitchen maid. She is very bright and is enrolled in a BA in English at Auckland University." Coming to Sieni's defence seemed to come naturally to James and he did so impulsively.

James' mother locked herself in her room with a bottle of Scotch. She could not face her Remuera socialite friends, telling them that her son was taking a Samoan kitchen maid to the King's College Ball.

Mary Woods' only explanation was 'sex'. Her naïve son obviously had a sexual infatuation for this wild Island girl who must have ensnared him with her sexual prowess.

"We have not had sex yet, Mom. But if you carry on like that, we may just do it!" James told his mother.

"She'll get pregnant! Believe me son, all she wants is to trap you into marriage by getting herself pregnant. For such a bright scholar, you are so naïve and stupid son" Mary Woods was livid, but James knew how so very far from the truth this statement was.

The other girls at Kings College were even worse. New Zealand's most eligible bachelor was taking an Island girl to the King's Ball, and this Island girl worked in the school kitchen. James' best friend Henry Purcell was hardly talking to him, and Irene Purcell had become his mortal enemy. It was as if James had dropped Irene to take up with Sieni, when in fact he had done absolutely nothing to encourage her to believe that a relationship would develop between them. He had certainly never given her any indication to believe she would be his Ball partner.

James found a rude drawing on his desk. The caption read "*Hot Island Pussy – Lick it or Like it – It still smells like hot Island shit.*" James had a good idea who was responsible for this disgraceful drawing. He turned the paper around, and wrote on it: "*Hot island Shit! Better by far than Cold white pussy!*" He took this and put it on Irene Purcell's desk. Fortunately she was not there at the time, but her friends all reported what had happened.

The Headmaster and teachers were also caught up in these intrigues. James' father made it known, though indirectly, that he would not object if a ruling were made that kitchen maids could not be invited to the King's Ball. At the first hint of this, James made it known that prominent broadcaster Paul Heinz would be keen to hear about such a rule, especially as it concerned an Island girl. As Head Boy, James considered he could invite any girl he

wanted to the School Ball. The potential of a scandal, involving race, put an end to such a threat from the College.

There was a stunned silence when James walked Sieni into the Ball. The hush was not related to Sieni the kitchen maid, but to Sieni the ravishing beauty, a beauty that everyone was noticing for the first time. The big collective sigh was followed by the rhetorical question: "*Is this the same Sieni Folasau, that serves our food in the kitchen?*"

Sieni's father Folasau, her mother Malia, and the entire Folasau clan was on hand when James arrived in a limousine to pick up Sieni. James looked resplendent in his tails and stiff collar.

The limo driver turned out to be a Samoan, and he got caught up in all the excitement. After he picked up James at the Woods' Remuera mansion, he was surprised to learn that he was then to pick up James' partner, who was a Samoan girl who lived in Mangere. He considered himself acting out a scene from "Pretty Woman" when Richard Gere picked up Julia Roberts at the end of the movie.

There was not a dry eye amongst the Folasau clan when the beautiful Sieni came out, and James took her hand and proudly walked her to the car. Even the driver was misty eyed. For a moment, it

almost seemed as if everyone believed that this fairytale could come true.

As Head Boy, James would normally have pre- and post- Ball functions to attend. James and his Samoan partner were not invited to the Purcell pre- Ball held in their Remuera neighbourhood. James resented this lack of an invitation, but decided to accept Sieni's advice and not mention anything about this. A life long friendship was swept aside by pressure from Henry's sister Irene, who had threatened to run away from home if that Island girl was allowed in their home. James believed in his heart that his friend did not approve of this snub.

When James had shown Sieni a copy of another Prefect's invitation to the Purcell residence, Sieni had suggested he ignore the slight, simply stating:

“Whatever happens in our lives, we must always live in a home, James, never in a residence.”

These functions had become the norm at King's College. It was customary for the head boy to be invited to all the functions. The only party to which James had been invited was a post-ball for those who had not been invited by the Remuera set. A Gisborne member of the 1st XV organised a hall and a band. It was a great party held at the Otahuhu Leagues Club Hall and it was enjoyed by everyone

there. There was a general feeling of relief that most of the snobbish Remuera set were missing.

There still existed at King's 'levels' of prestige which were based on whether one was 'old' or 'new' money, and on whether one was a first generation King's Collegian or had a history of family members in the College. These distinctions did not usually apply to the head boy, especially if he is also captain of the 1st XV.

James was no longer “new money”, but he was the first generation of his family to attend the school. While James' grandfather was building up the family fortune, he could only afford to send his son James to Auckland Grammar School. The Woods family had only suddenly become “old” money when they contributed generously to the construction of the Great Hall in the College.

James' grandfather had built his fortune from winning contracts to build state houses, under various Labour Governments. He then branched out into banking, internet companies, and even a casino operation in Christchurch. James' grandmother was a Dalmatian lawyer who had risen to become one of New Zealand's first female judges. The Woods empire was now a major conglomerate, and New Zealand's largest publicly-listed company.

James was only too aware that without his parents' consent these snubs would not have occurred. He was also mature enough to realise that he must ensure that his feelings for Sieni were genuine, and not be pushed in her direction by all the malicious and unprovoked attacks on their relationship. He had noticed that Sieni was not at all over-awed or intimidated by the Woods' immense fortune, or their status as New Zealand's wealthiest family.

He was also aware that Sieni appeared to have a school-girl crush on a Samoan boy who had been captain of the Otahuhu College 1st XV. Samasoni Filemoni was Sieni's older brother's best friend, and had always considered his best friend's sister 'out of bounds', although he was very aware of what a beautiful young woman she had developed into. His seeming lack of interest in his best friend's sister was a very Samoan trait. It was perceived as bad form to abuse a friendship by deliberately making a play for a good friend's sister.

James' almost condescending confidence in his former relationships with girls was totally lacking in Sieni's case. He found himself always over-eager to please her, her family and her friends. For the first time in his young life he felt he had to prove himself worthy.

Sieni was flattered by James' attentions but for her, James' family's wealth and position in society meant nothing. Sieni's mother and the rest of the Folasaus though, were only too aware of the fact that James was a good catch.

Sieni's mother was also impressed that James attended King's College. The School was regarded by its neighbours in Mangere as a prestigious Anglican school for the very wealthy. The irony is that the Anglican Church purchased the land in Mangere before South Auckland spread in close proximity to it.

James Woods and Sieni Folasau may have been close neighbours in this unusual setting but they were poles apart in terms of social standing and material wealth.

The area is not far from Mangere Airport and the pub made famous by the bloody fight scenes in the internationally acclaimed movie, "Once Were Warriors." After its release, visitors to New Zealand would sometimes ask taxi drivers to take them to "that pub" from the movie.

There were now quite a few Island boys at King's, mainly on rugby scholarships.

The School's Maori haka at rugby games was:

"Whonga Mai Whonga Mai Whonga Mai Re,

*We are the boys from Mangere,
Kingi karatai, Kingi karatai,
Wai wai wai wai
Go KC!*

There was a wide gulf between this haka and the wealthy city business people and big country farmers whose children dominated the School's roll. It was not surprising that the Folasaus were initially suspicious of James' intentions towards Sieni. He was after all from that "snooty" school and could have been just playing Sieni along.

James considered that Sione Tamasone, their flying Samoan loose forward, would have made a better Captain for the 1st XV. Both on and off the field, he deferred to Sione, accepting that he had exceptional rugby skills and superior rugby sense. It was a situation that did not bother Sione in the slightest, and one he was only too happy to accept. Sione had absolute confidence in his rugby talent, and he did not consider he needed the captaincy of the King's 1st XV to prove that fact. He was also very fond of James who always seemed to defer to his advice during rugby games.

"That was a great in-step Sione, you set up that try," James told him

"It is instinct, James. I never think about what to do, or where to step."

Sione was playing for the Auckland Blues by the time he was 20, and an All Black before his 22nd birthday.

James once told Henry Purcell he believed Islanders were born with the natural rugby instincts that the rest of them had to make an effort to learn.

"Our small Tongan half-back certainly has" said Henry, referring to Tevita Tufou, *"but don't forget, there is also one white man in the back line."*

Tevita could side step anyone, especially big, burly opposition forwards. His flair and unpredictability was one of the keys to the Kings 1st XV winning the Auckland Senior A Competition that year.

There were six Islanders in the team but only two of them had invited Island girls to partner them to the Ball. Pakeha partners were regarded as more of a 'sure' thing, with no big muscular Island brothers around to worry about. There were three Samoans and three Tongans in the King's 1st XV, mainly in the back line and of course Sione Tamasone in the forwards. The King's establishment now accepted without these Islanders on sporting scholarships their 1st XV would never be a top performer.

James had learnt to admire and respect these Islanders in his team. This made it easy for him to admire and respect Sieni Folasau.

The Island players in his team were initially against James dating Sieni until they realised his intentions were serious. All their doubts disappeared when they saw Sieni enter in her Ball gown later that year.

The Ball was the event that made James determined that Sieni was to be his life partner. The air was thick with prejudice, but Sieni's confidence and beauty cut through it like a knife. The kitchen maid's metamorphosis was complete - she could never be seen as anyone other than the "Belle of the Ball" again.

All James' friends, except Henry Purcell, moved closer and secretly wished they could take Sieni for a dance without inviting the wrath of their partners and the 'group' who had decided to leave the popular Head Boy and 1st XV Captain out of the main functions. They listened for Sieni's 'bad' English or an 'Islander' accent. What they heard was an articulate well-spoken first year University English major. Sieni was only one of two University students at the Ball that year. The kitchen maid skin had been well and truly shed, and the beautiful University student had emerged. James wondered on the fickleness of prejudice, and the latent hypocrisy of it

all. Sieni's beauty was the universal panacea that cast aside all the racist prejudices.

Sieni was a graceful dancer; it was James that was awkward in spite of the dancing lessons. His partner carried herself with an easy grace and exuded a confidence that made it seem as though she had been born into this society. Everyone agreed, except her worst enemies such as Irene Purcell, that she was the "Belle of the Ball."

When he first saw her the Headmaster was ashamed of himself for even considering not allowing Sieni to attend the Ball. All the teachers were amazed at Sieni's transformation and were impressed that their Head Boy had seen and appreciated Sieni's inner beauty.

CHAPTER FOUR: UNCLE ANGUS

The day before the Ball, there was an event that proved a turning point in the attitude of the Woods family to their son's relationship with Sieni.

James' grandfather had a good friend and partner, Angus MacDonald, and together they had gone about making his fortune. Angus had never married, and although he was rumoured to be worth more than one hundred million dollars, he lived quite humbly in the one hundred same Newmarket home he had bought years earlier. As a sign of respect, the Woods family always called him Uncle Angus, even though he was not related to them.

At the age of seventy-nine, Uncle Angus was still fit and strong. He usually made a point of visiting the Woods family for Christmas dinner each year and would occasionally drop by on other holidays as well. He had always shown a keen interest in young James.

Uncle Angus arrived unannounced and demanded coffee. James' parents wondered what had brought about his unexpected visit, which seemed to be deliberately timed to take place while James was at school.

"James, how are you all?"

"Well, thanks, Uncle Angus"

"You know, James, I loved your father like a brother"

"Yes, I know, Uncle Angus" said James' father, his apprehension about this visit increasing.

"He loved Island folk, James. We built up Woods Construction partly on hiring good, skilled, loyal Island workers"

"Yes I know Uncle Angus," said James' father, wondering to himself how on earth this reclusive old man could have found out about James' interest in a Samoan girl.

"That Tana Umaga can certainly play rugby - we would surely have beaten Australia in the World Cup semi finals if he had been playing that day," continued Angus, *"he could be captain of the All Blacks some day."*

“Jones, Kronfeld, even Cullen, did you know they are all part Samoan”

“Bernice Mene, April Ieremia, Beatrice Faumuina, do you know they are all Samoan? How about those tenors; Lemalu, Sanerivi? Those musicians. Those great authors, Albert Wendt. I enjoy Albert Wendt’s and Sia Figuel’s books, James.” Uncle Angus was not a man of many words. James’ father was taken by surprise by this conversation with a man who had never spoken to him about anything apart from business, for most of his adult life. It was not until young James was born that he started to take a greater interest in their family. Young James was also very fond of Uncle Angus.

“Your father would have been proud of his grandson courting an Island girl.” It was finally out!

Uncle Angus hated all forms of prejudice. He was determined that it should have no place in any Woods’ household he was associated with. The truth was, Uncle Angus doted on young James and regarded him as the son he never had. He had followed James’ career with great pride and had enjoyed going out to watch some of the College rugby games, especially once James was Captain of the 1st XV. The only reason he did not impose himself more was because of his sensitivity to James’ father’s feelings.

He had another reason for doting on young James, a reason that only Sieni would later discover. He had been an enigma to the Woods, and there was much contemplation about who would inherit his fortune since he had no children, or any other family that anyone knew of.

He had learnt about Sieni from a Master he had befriended at King’s to keep an eye on James and report back to him. He had been concerned about the decision to send James to an “elite” school, and the harm that may cause him, but he had been impressed by how James had thrived at the College.

In the whole time James had schooled at Kings, this was the first time that Uncle Angus had felt the need to intervene. The story, as relayed to him, of the saga of the Samoan kitchen maid, convinced him that his intervention was necessary.

“Good coffee, James. I thank you. Now I really must be going. Nothing more unpleasant than an old man overstaying his welcome! If I’m still alive come Christmas, I shall see you then. My love to young James. I enjoy going out to King’s and watching him play rugby, especially when they beat Grammar.”

Angus MacDonald was gone. He loved the classics, and in true Julius Caesar style; he came, he

dealt with and conquered the prejudice in the Woods family, and left.

“How on earth did he know?” Mary Woods asked her husband afterwards.

“I have no idea. Dad made him co-trustee with me of James’ estate, and James gets all of it on his 25th birthday.”

“Why did your father do that Darling? He didn’t trust you to provide for our son?” Mary asked, not for the first time.

“I didn’t used to know, until now.”

It had finally dawned on James Woods II that his father was protecting his grandson’s fortune against just this type of prejudice. *“It is as though Dad is talking to us from his grave telling us to leave James alone. I truly believe Mary that we may have driven James even more into this girl’s arms by our bigoted and racist attitude. I am well and truly ashamed of myself.”*

This was the day before the Ball. Next day, James was amazed at his parents’ change of attitude and sharing his excitement. In fact, they secretly followed James in the limousine, parking a short distance from Sieni’s home. They were amazed at how stunningly beautiful Sieni was when she walked

out of her home with her hand around James’. Mary Woods was so emotional she could not stop herself from crying. When they both realized that they could no longer hide, Mary got out of the car, rushed over and took a surprised Sieni in her arms. The whole Folasau clan were stunned, especially after James’ father had also kissed Sieni. As the limousine drove off, the Woods and the Folasaus met for the first time. It was a brief meeting, everyone was a bit stiff, but the ice had finally been broken.

It was Uncle Angus who had single-handedly brought the two families together. From that day, he also began to play a more dominant role in young James’ life.

Angus had focused on property investments as he always felt that stocks and bonds were not ‘real’ enough. The only stock options he took were those gifted him by James’ grandfather when Woods’ Enterprises became a public company. Over the years he had continued to add to his substantial property empire and now owned property all over New Zealand.

He had foreseen the potential in Queenstown, buying up large parts of it, before it was fully recognized as one of the great tourism destinations in the country. He invested in Ponsonby in Auckland when it was still regarded as a “slum” area. He was now selectively buying up properties in One Tree Hill,

and the Onehunga boundary to that area. He enjoyed his property deals and was very successful in picking locations before they became fashionable and expensive.

Uncle Angus was to develop a close and more personal relationship with Sieni than with any of the Woods family except James himself. He was to play an important role in their relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE COURTSHIP

James started Law Intermediate at Auckland University the following year. This was a year that had to be successfully completed before admission into Law School proper. Sieni was now a second year Arts student, advancing to 200 level English and Anthropology Papers. Sieni had deliberately chosen Anthropology as her second major. They did manage to make sure they both took a Political Studies paper together.

Sieni had settled well into her studies and for her, James was not a distraction. James was not used to his new found freedom after the disciplined atmosphere of King's College. He became possessive, wanting Sieni to be with him every free moment they had together at Varsity.

Samasoni Filemoni, her brother's friend, now started to take a strong interest in Sieni. Sieni had agreed on her first year to a few movie dates and this served to encourage Samasoni. He was now doing first year Law after completing his Intermediate year.

James was jealous that Sieni had any interest in anyone at all apart from him. He was particularly resentful that Samasoni was his senior in the Law Faculty.

Sieni confronted James on the whole situation. *"We both need our space, James. You can't expect to be with me every single minute we are on campus."*

"Of course not, Sieni. But you seeing Samasoni is something else again. The guy gives me the 'evils' every time I see him."

"I only went to a few movies with him last year James. Don't make a big thing of it."

"I thought we agreed to go steady, and not see anyone else. I am prepared to commit myself fully to you Sieni."

"We're not going to enjoy our Varsity years if we're going to act like a couple already. Just give me some space. It has nothing to do with commitment."

James sulked and left it at that. He was conscious of how he felt about Samasoni, especially every time he saw him around Law School.

Samasoni was amused and challenged by James' obvious concern that he should never go on a date with Sieni again. He deliberately stared at James every time they saw each other, daring him to say something. James always ended up bowing his head and walking past him.

James was frustrated with the situation. He really felt jealous but did not consider he had any right to be jealous. He wanted to tell Samasoni to shove off and leave Sieni alone. He did not feel that he had sufficiently committed himself to Sieni to enable him to do that.

His insecurity was made worse because Samasoni was a tall, handsome and well-built Samoan who always seemed to be surrounded by many different attractive ladies. He played Club Rugby for Ponsonby and was already being considered for the Auckland team as a loose forward. As well as all this sporting talent, he was bright enough to be enrolled in the Honours program at the Law School. James was concerned that his potential rival was not only athletic, but intelligent. He was particularly worried that being Samoan gave Samasoni an unfair advantage over him.

Samasoni was attracted to Sieni but his determination to pursue his courtship of her was a direct result of discovering New Zealand's most eligible bachelor and ex King's College Head Boy,

James Woods III, was his rival. James was about his height and build, but as with all Samoans, he felt an inner confidence that he could whip this “palagi” in a fair fight any time.

Samasoni was beginning to realise that Sieni seemed to like James, in spite of her pretending to be uninterested. He had also heard they had dated extensively, and had gone to the King’s College Ball together the previous year.

“Why is this palagi so jealous, Sieni? Are you two engaged or something?” he asked.

“No, he’s just a good friend. We’ve known each other for about a year.” Sieni found herself almost coming to James’ defence. Samasoni was clearly testing her, checking on how she felt about James.

“Do you like this palagi?” Samasoni was making this a race issue. *“Ai leaga e tele tupe a le tamaloa?”* (It must be because he has a lot of money”).

Now Sieni was quite angry. Samasoni spoke better Samoan than she did, but she knew where he was coming from.

“Leai, e le ona e tele ana tupe. Ou te fiafia iai ona e lelei lana amio.”

(No, it’s not the money. I like him because he is a nice guy).

Sieni stopped herself from using the Samoan word alofa (love), but she had clearly been provoked to reveal that her feelings for James ran deeper than she had pretended.

Sieni now realised that James meant more to her than she had previously cared to admit.

James said to Sieni the next time they met. *“Sieni, can we become engaged? Will you agree to marry me? As soon as we finish Varsity?”*

“James, I am confused. Do you want to marry me, become engaged to me, or finish school with me?”

Don’t patronise me Sieni, you know what I mean. I love you, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. You decide which one, or all three. Let’s agree to become engaged so we have at least made a commitment to each other.”

“Let me think about it, James. I don’t like the idea that Samasoni seems to be the reason why all of a sudden we are having this conversation.” Sieni had finally mentioned his name.

“I don’t like his attitude, Sieni. I know I am just jealous, but he is one cocky bastard!”

Sieni was shocked at James’ language. *“Come on James, he just thinks he’s God’s gift to women!”* Sieni laughed.

“Well he can be God’s gift to any other woman Sieni, just not to you!”

“I have only dated him a few times James”

“Okay Sieni, I’ll never mention his name again if you don’t. But no, my asking you to commit to me has nothing to do with Samasoni.”

James would never again mention Samasoni’s name. Samasoni himself never tried to ask Sieni out again, after that last conversation with her.

Samasoni was always pleased and proud to have known Sieni and followed her career with interest. He was Samoan enough to have felt some pride when Sieni married New Zealand’s most eligible bachelor, even though he found himself to be more jealous than he thought he would be. He was also irritated that he was not invited to their wedding.

James and Sieni now entered into a steady relationship and after this episode involving Samasoni, never dated any other people.

Both families were now actively supporting their courtship. This made it easier for James to propose marriage. Sieni accepted but he was still required to formally ask her father’s permission as dictated by Samoan custom. James was surprised as he only asked one question: *“Do you love my daughter.”* James said *“I love Sieni very much,”* and the response was abrupt and final: *“That is all that matters. I know you are rich but money does not make anyone happy. Love one another and be happy. Sieni loves you and will make you a good wife. You are now my son, welcome to the family.”*

Both families then excitedly started planning for the wedding. Everyone was excited, but no – one was happier than Uncle Angus.

CHAPTER SIX: THE WEDDING

Uncle Angus knew instinctively the first time he met Sieni Folasau that this was the young lady for James. Samoans are born with an inherent respect for old people that is not confined to their own parents and grandparents. In Auckland buses, it is usually the Islanders who give up their seats for older people.

Uncle Angus immediately sensed the respect and high regard Sieni impulsively showed him as an elderly friend of the Woods' family.

During their courtship, Uncle Angus became a frequent visitor, especially on days when Sieni was visiting the Woods' home. It was to be a courtship that required James and Sieni to become more intimately aware and informed about their respective families' cultures and values. As their own love for each other grew, so did their understanding and compassion for what it meant, respectively, to be a Remuera socialite family, and a Samoan family living in Mangere. They were poles apart culturally and in their values, but both families were accepting that

love can overcome all obstacles, and James and Sieni became determined that eventually they would be married. This was the perception of the two families, but it took a while for this to finally become the reality.

When James eventually asked Sieni's father for his daughter's hand in marriage, his own parents had actually prompted him. The Woods planned that the wedding was to be the social event of the year. Sieni's father kept firmly insisting that his family would pay their full half share of the costs of the wedding.

James was twenty-three years old and newly graduated from Auckland University with a Bachelor of Laws (with Honours) degree. He had decided to join the old law firm of Maxson and East. The firm had acted for his grandfather and still represented his companies and the old man Angus MacDonald. James did not know that his immediate boss, John Maxson, was the only person who knew that James was Uncle Angus' only heir to a fortune estimated at over one hundred and twenty million dollars. This was to be but a small part of James' total worth, which would exceed two billion dollars on his twenty-fifth birthday.

Sieni had graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, and had completed a teaching diploma. She enjoyed writing, and was working as a

journalist for the New Zealand Herald, keeping her maiden name professionally. She wrote a column on Fridays, mostly hard-hitting and controversial articles on the situation confronting Maori and Pacific Islanders in New Zealand society.

Sieni and Angus MacDonald had common interests which had developed into an unusually close relationship. Both of them enjoyed art-house movies so at least once a month they would catch a movie at the Rialto in Newmarket.

Although James pretended to be jealous, movies of this type did not interest him and he was grateful for the time alone. As he liked to work out at the gym and enjoyed an occasional massage, it worked out well for the three of them.

James enjoyed working for Maxson and East, and he decided to wait until he was twenty-five years old, when he would legally inherit his half of his grandfather's fortune, before going into the family business.

As a wedding gift for James and Sieni, Angus bought them a beautiful town house close to Newmarket, opposite the Domain and close to his own home. James' parents were only a short distance away, and he was able to jog there in the mornings, enjoy a coffee and chat with his father and then run back home.

James had chosen not to play rugby after leaving school, but he kept very fit and played a lot of tennis and squash. He enjoyed his runs as well as the aerobic classes at the gym.

The Folasaus had family funerals, family weddings, some new family event almost every other month. This was the norm in most Samoan families. These family 'faalavelave' as they were known in Samoan could occur in both New Zealand and Samoa.

James was amazed at how Sieni could cope financially with these family 'faalavelave'. Although these used up a big part of her reporter's salary and the money from her articles, Sieni refused to accept any money from James for them.

"E lua selau lau tupe." she'd tell her Mom
(I have two hundred dollars.)

"Faimai foi e tele tupe a lou toalua" her mom would say.
(I thought your husband had a lot of money.)

"O tupe a le tamaloa, e le o ni tupe a au, Mama"
(It is his money, not mine Mom)

They made light of it, but Sieni's father was always particularly proud of this aspect of his daughter's character.

It had been a long courtship while they both attended Auckland University. After the wedding, Metro magazine had run a front-page article – a baby picture of Sieni, with the caption "*Who is Sieni Folasau Woods?*" Sieni had contributed the occasional article to Metro, so the article was obviously intended to also promote the magazine. The article focussed on how this bright Samoan reporter had managed to snare New Zealand's most eligible bachelor. Sieni had a keen sense of social and economic justice, and this was strongly reflected in all her writings. Metro contemplated the obvious irony of having Sieni now married to New Zealand's wealthiest man. It was to be a conceptual problem only, because Sieni continued to write with her usual and inherent sense of what was needed to improve the lot of the oppressed in New Zealand society.

Their wedding had been large, even by New Zealand standards. Eight hundred people were invited, at least half of whom were Samoans. James was grateful that Sieni had convinced her father to abandon the usual Samoan customary exchange in deference to the European ('palagi') husband. That custom is that the bride's family brings fine mats, and the groom's family money. There are always spies to check how many mats are to be given, to ensure that

there is a sufficient amount of money to compensate. It is a ritual relished by all Samoan families because the extended family is supposed to provide these contributions. How well you do out of this exchange depended on whether you value fine mats more than money.

Sieni was twenty-four, so Samoan custom dictated that the bride's cake had to have twenty-four tiers. The tradition was, as Sieni explained to James, that each of the important guests, and especially the Church Ministers', had to be offered a whole tier of the cake to take home. James had struggled to find eight groomsmen in addition to his best man, whereas Sieni's family had to accommodate all the cousins, the nieces, and all the other eligible young female members of the extended Folasau clan, who all had to be bridesmaids. This was yet another aspect of Samoan culture that could not be avoided. Every branch of the extended Folasau clan had to be represented in Sieni's bridal party.

Sieni decided that the wedding would be held in an Anglican church, as her husband was Anglican. The Anglican Cathedral in Parnell was chosen and the Bishop of New Zealand officiated. Sieni's Congregational Pastor was not easy to appease on this issue, although his anguish was eased by a cash envelope on the wedding day. The Anglican Bishop also kindly invited him to join the officiating party at

the marriage ceremony, which was followed by a reception at the Aotea Centre.

Even up to the day he passed away, Sieni's father believed that the reception cost thirty-five thousand dollars. He proudly handed James his family's share, a cheque for seventeen thousand five hundred dollars. He had to increase his mortgage, but there was plenty of collateral as they had bought their home fifteen years previously. The Folasaus also paid for the wedding cake. Sieni's father would not hear of the Woods' totally funding the cost of this wedding. For the Folasaus it was a matter of family pride and had nothing to do with how wealthy the Woods family were.

Sieni had insisted on a beautiful, privately tailored, wedding dress, which she paid for herself. Her father's extended family contributed a substantial amount of money, and each bridesmaid paid for her own dress and contributed to the transport costs.

The Folasaus were only too aware that this had been reported by the media as the wedding of the year. Even New Zealand Prime Minister Mary Shaw and three of her Cabinet Ministers attended. The Captain of the All Blacks and famous broadcasters, mingled with captains of industry and four hundred proud Samoans. There were fifteen Samoan clergymen of various denominations. Tom Brajkovich and his wife were among the guests. He

was proud when James acknowledged him and referred to his meeting with Sieni at his fish and chip shop in Otahuhu.

Sir Anthony Morris, a popular Maori entertainer, and a popular Samoan lady singer, Sarah-Jane Auvaa sang "*Hawaiian Wedding Song*" as the bridal party arrived for the reception. It was a good mix of cultures, the highlight being Sieni's Samoan 'siva' and Uncle Angus joining in wearing a Samoan 'lavalava'. He had shocked everyone when he turned up to the reception in a formal Samoan 'lavalava.' James struggled to try and keep up with Uncle Angus, who seemed to have had some previous practice in the Samoan 'siva'. He suspected Sieni had given Uncle Angus secret lessons and had bought him his 'lavalava'.

James had engaged Auckland's best wedding planner, and only Sieni knew that the real cost of this wedding was way beyond what her father had been told. Now that it was widely known in the community that the Woods family totally approved of this marriage, the cream of New Zealand high society turned up in all their finery. Opposition Parliamentary parties were there, including the Leader of the Opposition, and a well-known part Maori lawyer who had plenty of charisma and led a group of different interests in Parliament. Only the Governor-General, who was on a tour of the Tokelau Islands, was absent. The Samoans, especially Sieni's brothers,

enjoyed their drinks, but nobody dared get drunk with all those Church Ministers' present. Sieni's father had also issued his extended family a stern warning about anyone drinking too much and not behaving appropriately.

Sieni wore white, not only because it was traditional, but also because she was still a virgin. Sieni was the sort of person who would not have worn white otherwise. Virgin brides were rare in New Zealand, and only Uncle Angus and James' parents knew for sure that Sieni was a virgin on her wedding night.

James' father admired Sieni even more and secretly envied his son. He enjoyed Sieni's articles, and found her tremendous respect and regard for all old people, one of her most endearing traits. He also noticed how much she loved James and how fiercely loyal she was to him. Mary Woods' family was an old established family in New Zealand, but his wife had lost her virginity well before he met her. Their marriage brought respectability to the "nouveau riche" Woods'. Although it began as a marriage of convenience, in time James' father grew to not only appreciate but to love his high society wife.

The birth of young James had nearly killed Mary, and it was on good medical advice that they decided not to have any more children. Mary Woods' only brother had died tragically in a car

accident while holidaying in Europe, and it was well known that most of the Whiteside fortune would be James' on his twenty-fifth birthday.

The only heir to the Woods, Whiteside, and MacDonald fortunes, was totally unaware of how wealthy and powerful this would make him. James' net worth was to be almost double his closest rival for New Zealand's richest person.

And here he was marrying for love. He was marrying a twenty-four year old Samoan virgin. He was marrying Sieni Folasau, and for that reason, and that reason only, he considered himself the happiest man in the world. He had grown to appreciate and love Sieni much more during their courtship. They never progressed beyond petting, which only got to be heavy petting one New Year's eve night, when they were both tipsy from champagne.

The Auckland Philharmonic provided the music, and "Adeaze" sang a couple of their most popular songs. The Samoan Prime Minister was not present, but had instructed the High Commissioner in Wellington to attend. The Folasaus had acquired a new status of prominence in Samoan society through this marriage. Sieni's father began to realise the full extent of this fact when the Samoan Prime Minister's telegram of congratulations was read out during the reception. He had been invited as a distant relative of the Schultz's, and as was the custom, his daughter

had arrived at Sieni's Mangere home with the traditional fine mats. She refused to accept them back in spite of the Folasau's protest that the customary exchange of fine mats and money was not taking place.

Sieni's father was quietly proud of his daughter, and was full of genuine, if rather obvious, pious dignity, especially when he walked his daughter up the aisle. It was her mother who could not control her obvious pride and excitement. She had always embarrassed James by treating him like royalty every time he called for Sieni at their home. The house had to be cleaned and spotless for his arrival. It was a wonder Sieni's brothers and sisters did not resent him, but James was such a likable unassuming person, that they all developed a strong affection for this very wealthy palagi. They all grimaced at the many times Sieni gave him cheek. If only they realised how much James appreciated this aspect of their sister's character.

Sieni's frequent visits to the Woods had become joy-filled occasions and she was often taken out to the family's favourite Thai restaurant. Sieni was not ashamed to confess to the Woods that the Folasaus' rare outings were usually to MacDonalds, and this was only on special occasions.

"I'll get fat James, eating all this rich Thai food," she would tell him.

"You'll never get fat, my love. Wait until you have lots of babies. There are not enough Woods in this world"

From the moment Sieni first entered their lives, the Woods family changed in a very significant way. James' parents were drawn closer together than they had ever been in their married lives. The importance of family values brought relationship issues to a new prominence and drove material issues into relative obscurity. As Sieni kept reminding James, with so much wealth at their disposal, matters of business should remain where they belong - in the workplace.

"Keep business at work, don't bring work home or allow it to invade the sanctuary of the dining table." Sieni would say.

Another obvious impact Sieni had was that Uncle Angus was now a frequent visitor to the Woods' household. The special bond between Uncle Angus and Sieni grew, a fact that was not lost on the senior Woods.

"Old Angus has become very close to Sieni"

"Yes, I wonder if he had a Samoan girlfriend himself in the old days," joked back James to his wife.

"It is a lucky thing you didn't meet a pretty Samoan girl, James, or I'd be married to that awful Mathew Bodine!"

They both laughed at this. Mathew Bodine was an old boyfriend who was probably still in love with Mary Woods.

"This girl is good for James," he told his wife, serious now.

"I hate to admit it, but she does bring out the best in our son. Did you glow like that when we dated?"

"What is important is that I glow like that now when I look at you. Come here!"

Even the elder Woods' sex life had improved remarkably since Sieni had entered their lives.

"I can't wait for my grandchildren. James Woods IV, Captain of the All Blacks!"

"Don't you mean Manu Samoa? They're the ones who gave England a scare at the World Cup."

"Now that is where I draw the line, Mary. No grandson of mine is playing for any rugby team except the All Blacks!"

They went on to discuss Irene Purcell, and James' sadness at losing Henry as a friend.

"Irene would not have been a good wife for James as she has been badly spoilt."

"It's a pity though, about a possible share of the Purcell fortune."

"Our son has quite enough fortunes as it is. And I do believe old Uncle Angus may leave him his as well."

"Yes, old Uncle Angus. I still haven't figured out how in the hell he found out about Sieni in the first place."

"Makes you wonder if he didn't set it up for her to start working in the King's kitchen. You know the two of them go to Rialto movies almost every week."

They were both enjoying this conversation.

James did initially mourn the loss of his life long friend, Henry Purcell. He knew Henry would not be comfortable accepting an invitation to be one of his groomsmen, so he did not ask him.

Henry did attend the wedding but was the only Purcell who accepted their invitation. James would

never forgive Irene for that disgraceful cartoon, and Henry knew this. In spite of Irene's weaknesses, Henry loved his sister dearly.

James only realised too late, that it had been an understanding in his friendship with Henry, that Irene and James would probably end up together. It was only James who seemed naively unaware of this expectation and it was only when James showed an interest in Sieni, that the whole matter of this so-called understanding surfaced, becoming nasty and souring their friendship.

As was the case in many such occasions in James' life, Uncle Angus offered the best advice and that was to lay the whole matter to rest.

"Your grandfather and I were what you would call true friends, James. Not a thing could come between us. Certainly not such a silly thing as a sister's spite."

"But I feel so foolish, Uncle Angus, I never knew I was expected to start dating Irene. I never once said anything to her or did anything to encourage such an idea."

"Your parents deserve most of the blame, James. You may even have begun to like Irene, if you had not been pushed into a relationship with her. She isn't such a bad girl. She's certainly pretty

enough, but she's no Sieni Folasau. By the way, what was Sieni's advice to you about this?"

"She said that I should seriously reconsider our relationship, in the light of Irene's obvious love for me. But that's typical Sieni."

"Irene Purcell doesn't love you, James. Don't flatter yourself about that. She was in love with the idea of being Mrs James Woods III. Her family and friends have been conditioned to believe that she would one day be Mrs. James Woods III. She will never get over the disappointment your marrying someone else has caused. That is bad enough, but for you to marry a Samoan. That was the ultimate insult."

"I only wish Henry would not take the whole thing so personally."

"Henry loves his sister, that is to his credit and it speaks well about his character. But if he were a true friend of yours, he would accept Sieni as your choice of a partner with the same joy and happiness we all do. Don't let this bother you a moment longer, James. Irene Purcell would have been a disaster as your wife. She also has a destructive relationship with a boy from Mt Albert Grammar School and that's a ghost that will haunt her for the rest of her life."

“How do you know about all these things, Uncle Angus?” James was truly amazed at how much this old man knew. He himself had only heard rumours of this relationship, although he did notice the heavy make up Irene occasionally had to apply, to cover her ‘black eyes’.

“By the way, what is all this business of taking Sieni to Rialto movies? You’d better keep your beady old eyes off of my girl!”

They both laughed at this mock rebuke.

“That’s one of your problems, James. Not enough culture. You wouldn’t know a good movie if it hit you in the face.”

“I know what I like. Plenty of action and not too much talk. Besides, I go to the movies to hear people speak English, not read the screen while they speak in French, or Russian, or something.”

“You enjoyed “Whale Rider” didn’t you?”

“That I did. I am glad you and Sieni talked me into seeing that one.”

“Well, that’s a Rialto movie, and don’t think Sieni doesn’t know why you go to the gym all the time.”

Now James’ interest was aroused.

“Why, Uncle Angus?”

“Sieni says you stand in the back during aerobic classes and ogle the girls in their tight fitting briefs.”

“What? I stand in the front!”

Now Angus was laughing.

That evening at dinner, James brought this up with Sieni.

“Sieni, I don’t stand in the back of aerobic classes and ogle the girls’ buttocks!”

“I know you don’t Darling – whatever makes you say that?”

“Uncle Angus. He says that’s what you said.”

“The old fox. He keeps telling me that’s probably why you don’t come to Rialto movies with us. You know, I arranged to have Sky Digital connected for Uncle Angus last week and they have a Rialto channel on it too.”

“Really! And when are we going to get Sky Digital?”

“You buy your own Sky Digital, Iakopo.”

James tried to remember when Sieni first called him Iakopo. There was a Samoan name “Simi” for James, but the Book of James in the New Testament had been translated into Samoan as “*Iakopo*”, from its Hebrew name “*Epistole Iakobus*”. So, affectionately, Sieni would call James ‘Iakopo’, although it was also ‘Jacob’ in English.

Television was something James wanted to see as little of as possible. James knew that Sieni, as a news person, enjoyed her television and accepted that this was her way of introducing Sky to their home.

James never ceased to marvel at Sieni. She had become the joy of his life. He enjoyed every moment he spent with her. He appreciated her wit and her Samoan humour. Although Sieni had openly teased James during their courtship, now that they were married she would never consciously put him down in front of others.

“You’re my husband now, Iakopo. When you hurt, I hurt. You heard the Bishop, we are one now.”

It took James a while to realise how serious Sieni was about this.

Their wedding night was spent at the Honeymoon Suite of the Auckland Hilton. They travelled to Hawaii the next day and stayed at the Hilton Hawaiian Village for the rest of their honeymoon.

James would never forget the ecstasy and the passion when he first made love to Sieni on their honeymoon. His previous experience was mostly with girls at King’s College, but these occasions had been sexual adventures more than emotional experiences. The girls showed off their experience, and he pretended to be experienced. There had been a lot of BJs, as they called oral sex at Kings. James had become expert at holding the base of his penis so he would not ejaculate early while he enjoyed a long BJ. Occasionally he enjoyed letting it go and pretending to be upset at the result.

The sex was purely physical and perfunctory. He found the act of putting on condoms tiresome and frustrating but was glad he had done it, not only for protection, but also in case of pregnancy. Without the condoms, the girls preferred to give him oral sex and only occasionally expecting that favour in return.

One Easter he had booked a room at an Epsom motel with the intention of ‘shagging’ all night. He was so drunk, as was the girl, that he remembered very little in the morning about what happened. This particular girl liked giving BJs as

much as she enjoyed receiving them. She was only too willing to show James how to give a girl a good BJ. James emerged from this experience a real expert at giving good BJs.

After that, James always carried a small bottle of Listerine around so he could gargle up good at the end of the deed. He never really enjoyed giving BJs until Sieni, but he was now so good at it he could always make any girl come quickly with his tongue.

Sieni was still a virgin on their wedding night. Her parents knew that she was, even though at twenty-four years old she was older than James. They had been courting for many years and there were many sceptics who believed there was no such creature as a twenty-four year old virgin.

It was a subject that was discussed by James' parents.

"I wish I was a virgin on my wedding night" Mary Woods confessed to her husband.

"You were a virgin for me, my love" James Woods II told his wife.

They cuddled each other in one of the more intimate moments of their married lives. They then made love with renewed passion; a passion they

thought had passed them by. Exhausted, afterwards.

"James! On the chair!"

"You loved being on top and straddling me on top of the chair."

Mary Woods laughed.

"We will need to buy a sturdier one than that, if we are going to do this more often."

"Oh, we are! I can't wait for the furniture shops to open tomorrow morning."

"You rude thing!" teased Mary Woods, and then out of the blue: *"You know James, I felt like a virgin again tonight."*

"Oh, but you were, my love – "loved for the very first time" said James Woods II, breaking into the Madonna song.

"That's who I feel like, James. Nicole Kidman in that great musical: 'Like a Virgin'."

Now James' father was laughing, correcting his wife.

"Like a Virgin!" That wasn't the name of the movie. It was called "Moulin Rouge!"

They were both laughing out loud now.

“Our son is marrying his virgin bride. He is one very lucky young man.”

“James is so completely head over heels in love with Sieni that it scares me. I honestly don’t think he could ever live without her!”

“Can’t we call her Jane?”

“No, her name is Sieni. Don’t insult her, Mary.”

On their wedding night, James kept his promise to Sieni and drank only two glasses of Dom Perignon.

Uncle Angus was rarely extravagant, but he had supplied 50 cases of Dom Perignon for the wedding.

“Your father was so proud, Sieni, walking you up the aisle.”

“It is a good thing I am a virgin tonight, lakopo. My brothers would have had you in a wheelchair by now.” Sieni was proud of James’ patience throughout their long courtship. She was also quietly confident he had not slept with anyone else since they started

dating, especially after the episode with Samasoni Filemoni at Varsity.

“Your mother was amazing.”

“Except she was trying to teach your father how to waltz.”

“They don’t teach dancing at Harvard Business School. That’s where Grandpa sent my poor dad.”

“And when are you going off to Harvard, lakopo. Got room for me and a little Folasau?”

“You mean, you and a baby Woods.”

“Whatever.”

James had pre-ordered some fresh strawberries and a bottle of chilled Dom Perignon to be delivered to their suite. They were not due to fly off on their honeymoon until the following evening, but they were all packed ready to go.

“I tried to give Reception my credit card but Uncle Angus had prepaid the suite, Sieni. He danced with you more than I did, tonight. And as for that ‘lavalava’, he thought he was the cat’s meow in that outfit, what a show off!”

“Pretty good dancer for an eighty-five year old. I wonder who broke his heart.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Uncle Angus is too passionate a man not to have had a great love. And he’s the sort that would only love once, and wouldn’t bother to try and love again. He would rather live in the memories of his great love.”

James shook his head in mock awe.

“You, a psychologist my love? I could almost be jealous of your rapport with Uncle Angus. Great love indeed.”

“You are too young, or I would tell you who I think that great love was.”

James was shocked and had to sit down.

“What did you find in Uncle Angus’ apartment? Photos of Grandma?”

Now Sieni was surprised.

“Yes, and your grandfather as well, but a special one of her that told me a lot. That’s why he is so fond of you lakopo. You are the grandson of the great love of his life!”

“Sieni, I am glad I look like my grandfather. You are starting to worry me. My grandmother was a well-known judge. Grandpa built his empire; she pursued her career in the Law. They only had one child you know, my Dad.”

“You, men. You know so little about love. I said she was the great love of his life not the great lover of his life. Uncle Angus has two passions in life, real estate and sex. Don’t you know about the ladies who visit him every week?”

“I always thought his passion was going to Rialto movies with you Sieni. For goodness sake, he’s eighty- five!”

“Wait until you’re eighty-five,” Sieni joked back.

They both had a chilled glass of Dom Perignon in their hands.

“To us”

“To us”

They drank, and then put their glasses down and kissed each other passionately.

“That is a sexy nightie, Sieni.”

"Mama bought it for me. Would you believe it?" Sieni continued, "Poor Papa, the cost of the champagne was more than his half share of the wedding!"

"I'm so proud of your father, Sieni."

"There will still be some fine mats delivered to your parents tomorrow afternoon, lakopo. I warned your mother. Some of my aunties insisted. Oh, and some bed mats."

"Some bed mats?"

"It is Samoan custom to make sure I produce a lot of Woods, or you lakopo, might deliver me back to my family."

"Oh really, can I do that right now?"

Their kiss was much more passionate this time.

James was determined that he would show Sieni he knew how to treat a virgin.

As much as Sieni tried to modestly push him away, he went down on her first, using every technique he had been taught.

Sieni convulsed, coming with so much pent up passion that she screamed out loud, holding on to James' head.

"lakopo" she whispered, "If you are going to keep on doing that, we'll never produce any baby Woodses."

"I am not even going to ask where you learnt how to do that," she laughed. Sieni knew that her husband would be experienced sexually, but what had just happened had taken her by surprise.

"Now let's take care of you."

It had been so long, that at the mere touch of Sieni's hand, James convulsed and started ejaculating. Sieni could not believe that so much "stuff" was coming out of him.

"Now I am really worried. We'll never make babies at this rate. Let's try again. I am so wet lakopo, I shouldn't feel much pain anymore."

She did feel some pain, and there was blood. James was so gentle that Sieni was soon having another orgasm. She shouted out much louder this time. James now lasted much longer and he came much more intensely than before, shouting out Sieni's name. This brought on a third orgasm for Sieni as they came together. Sieni was to discover

during their Hawaiian honeymoon that James' orgasms would always trigger intense orgasms of her own. Their coming together was always Sieni's favourite part of their love making ritual.

"Never make me come by myself with your mouth again. I only enjoy this when we come together," Sieni told James next day.

Sieni learnt to enjoy giving James oral sex as part of their foreplay, and would always tease him when she was peeling and eating a banana.

"Eat your heart out, lakopo." Always the English major, Sieni enjoyed any play on words. James did notice that Sieni would also be just as happy if oral sex was left out altogether. Sieni considered their coming together was the highest achievement in any act of lovemaking.

CHAPTER SEVEN: HAWAIIAN HONEYMOON

James fell in love with Sieni almost from the moment he first saw her and when they had that symbolic clash of words in the King's College dining hall. That love deepened with each new aspect of Sieni's character that was revealed to him. He realised that this woman epitomised everything he ever would, or could, expect from a woman in his lifetime. This love sustained him throughout their long courtship. For James their honeymoon in Hawaii was the realisation of all that he had dreamt life married to Sieni would be like. It was the ultimate pinnacle of happiness.

Sieni's love for James had developed more slowly. It developed along with her acute appreciation of James as a sensitive and loving human being, separating the reality from the illusion. The illusion was the arrogant playboy millionaire who had the world at his feet, and who could not care less about who he trampled on. The reality was a sensitive caring man, who extended her every courtesy and kindness.

Sieni felt she had been prudish, almost hypocritical, by holding back physically, but something reinforced her view that James would appreciate her more if he was made to wait. Sieni also found that her own sense of self-worth grew in direct proportion to James' increasing appreciation of her. Once Sieni learnt of James' casual physical relationships with other girls, she increased her resolve to hold herself back physically until their wedding day.

Sieni had been brought up in a typically strict Samoan Christian household. Her mother had lectured her frequently about the importance of keeping herself 'pure' until her wedding day. The main reason Sieni held herself back physically was so she would not be like the other girls in James' life who had given themselves so easily to him.

Their first night in their Auckland suite had made Sieni finally feel like a complete woman. It also made her appreciate her gentle and loving husband even more.

It was in the early hours of next morning in their suite in the exclusive Hilton Hotel in Auckland's waterfront, that Sieni lovingly gazed at the quietly snoring figure of her husband and realised that she did truly love this man. This man on their shared bridal bed, not the man described in Metro as New

Zealand's only billionaire. Not the great sportsman and scholar that had graduated top of his honours class at Law School. Just this human being, looking so vulnerable, snoring exhaustedly at the end of a night in which she had become a woman. She woke up next morning knowing in her heart that James was the love of her life.

The next afternoon they flew Air New Zealand business class out of Auckland for Honolulu. Uncle Angus had made all the arrangements and bookings, paying in advance for the airline tickets and the hotel accommodation.

They arrived into Honolulu in the early evening, and checked into their luxury suite at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Resort. Their hotel was half way between Waikiki and the famous Ala Moana Shopping Centre. They were on the thirtieth floor of the Rainbow Towers, looking down on Waikiki and its famous Diamond Head.

They tried to check in and found Uncle Angus had ensured that was all done in advance. They were taken straight to their hotel suite. James surprised the porter with a large tip. Even before their door was fully closed, they were tearing off each others' clothes. They made love with James standing and Sieni lying back on the dining table of their suite. Their screams as they both came together were so loud that Sieni whispered: "You'd

better be careful lakopo or the other guests might think you're beating me up."

"You're heavier than I thought Sieni. We nearly broke the dining table." James told her.

"This is the Honeymoon Suite, everything in it is supposed to be sturdy and tough."

They were both sated and satisfied, and Sieni said, *"Let's go for a moonlight swim lakopo, they say the ocean is safe here in Waikiki."*

The sea was chilly but refreshing. They swam for about forty-five minutes, then sat on their towels on the beach and talked a while. The cool trade winds blew in from the sea and it was getting quite cold.

James told Sieni to wait a few moments on the beach. He went to their room and returned with an ice cold bottle of Dom Perignon and two glasses.

"This will warm us up." They drank their champagne and kissed each other passionately in the moonlight.

"We better go back to the room before they arrest us for indecent exposure." Sieni told him

"And do something about that thing pushing hard up against your togs! You'll scare some old lady to death in the hotel elevator."

"Don't you mean bring her back to life!" James responded and they both laughed.

"Do you wonder what's happening in the rest of the world tonight?"

"Who cares. I'm with the woman I love, and I just want to keep on making love to you until you beg me to stop."

"All talk and no action," Sieni told him, *"Let's go up to our room before I have to beg you to start."*

When they got back to their room, it was only a little slower this time. They started out naked in the shower. James lifted Sieni slightly up against the shower wall and entered her while they were both standing with the water dripping on them. Sieni felt a strange sensation as if she was being pegged to the wall.

"Not here, not like this," Sieni told James.

On the bed, James was so aroused he forced Sieni to lie back while she enjoyed his mouth on her. Sieni started to come again all the while complaining about coming alone.

They made love and Sieni started to come in spasms. Every time James moved, she came. Sieni was capable of multiple orgasms but it was to be in Huka Lodge, many years later, that James was to truly appreciate what was really happening to her in these moments of sheer ecstasy. It was as though Sieni was in a different world, given over totally and enslaved by her own pleasure.

Sieni was still sleeping exhaustedly early next morning when James got aroused and woke her. With just a murmur of encouragement, they made passionate love again.

"I have to keep my voice down lakopo, you left the lanai door open."

"The cool Hawaiian breeze, and that beautiful view of Diamond Head" James was fascinated by the diamond façade of Diamond Head Mountain, with all the skyscrapers of Waikiki in the forefront.

After their lovemaking, Sieni fell off to sleep again almost immediately.

"I'll let you sleep in, and I'll go for a run along the beach. I need the exercise." James whispered in Sieni's ear, kissing her on the mouth.

"You're going for a run, how about another round." Sieni murmured, teasing him.

James jogged along the sand, past Fort DeRussy, and the Sheraton Waikiki. It was much harder jogging on the sand. James got on the road by the Honolulu Zoo, along the end of Kalakaua Avenue. There are public tennis courts there by Kapiolani Park.

He noticed someone whom he thought looked like a local so he stopped running to talk to him.

"Can anyone play tennis here?" James asked

"Sure, you visiting, where from?" There was an American accent, and the Hawaiian trait of cutting some vowels and shortening the sentences.

"New Zealand, I just got married, we're on our honeymoon."

"You mad haole, you on your honeymoon and you running this early. What's wrong with you? My name is Eti, you play with my group. We here every morning sixish. You have racquets? We can lend you."

Eti looked to be in his mid sixties, but appeared to be fighting fit.

“You wouldn’t be Samoan by any chance? My wife’s Samoan - Sieni Folasau.”

“You that billionaire kid? Married my cousin Sieni? She too good to call her cousin Eti? I used to change your wife’s nappies.”

“Imagine meeting you here, Sieni has your phone number. We were going to call you,” James lied, embarrassed at the reference to him as “billionaire kid”.

Sieni was not an early riser and they only played tennis once with Eti in the two weeks. They invited Eti, and about ten other relatives, to the award winning Chinese Restaurant in their hotel – ‘The Golden Dragon’.

“Cousin Papaliitele Tihati Thompson, he runs the biggest Polynesian show in Waikiki. We go tonight, they expecting us. Show’s at Sheraton PK.” There were four Sheratons in Waikiki, including the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani, which the locals referred to as the ‘PK.’

The Tihati Revue is world-famous and is the most spectacular Polynesian show in the Hawaiian Islands. Their Waikiki Show features dances from throughout Polynesia; Maori, Tahitian, Tongan, Cook Island, Samoan and Hawaiian. Tihati’s wife, Cha, danced a beautiful hula in their honour. They also

arranged for James and Sieni to see the ‘Society of Seven’ show at the Waikiki Outrigger. They all dined together at the popular Hy’s Steak House. Tihati and Cha Thompson were to become their lifelong friends.

“These “Society of Seven” guys are spectacular. They should have come to sing at our wedding. If only Uncle Angus could see them,” James said to Sieni after watching their show.

James was beginning to understand how important the extended family was in the ‘fa’aSamoa,’ or the Samoan custom. On Sieni’s mother’s side, she was related to Tihati through the famous Jennings family from Swains Island. James was also beginning to grasp the importance of culture and kinship ties to all Samoan families. They invited the Thompsons to visit them in New Zealand. James told them he would take time off so they could all visit Rotorua and Queenstown together.

Uncle Angus’ nose for real estate was beginning to rub off on James. By the time they left Honolulu, he had wired funds from New Zealand and placed a deposit on a Waikiki apartment as an investment. The apartment was rented out so that the income serviced the balance of the loan. It turned out to be good investment as the value of the apartment doubled in the next five years.

James enjoyed swimming, running, and the great restaurants. Sieni enjoyed the swimming, the museums, and the cultural shows. What impressed them most about Honolulu was that there was this great beach right in the middle of a city. The Hawaiian culture and Island hospitality of this Polynesian city, blended in well with the haute cuisine and the European boutiques.

Sieni discovered in Hawaii a goldmine of material for her weekly Herald columns. Stories like that of Father Damien, the martyr who helped the lepers on Molokai Island. The Hawaiians had foolishly allowed the Belgians to take his remains back to Belgium for permanent burial. When they realized their mistake, they protested and requested that his body be returned to Hawaii. The Belgians responded by sending back only the bones of one hand – a rather empty and pathetic gesture that caused even more outrage among the Hawaiians. Reading this made Sieni more determined that Samoa should never allow Robert Louis Stevenson's remains to be taken back to his native Scotland. Tusitala, "Teller of Tales," as the Samoans affectionately referred to Stevenson, was buried on the side of Mt Vaea, which overlooks Apia. The Samoans had lovingly cut a path through the hillside and carried Tusitala up the mountainside to his final resting place there.

As the words of his famous "Requiem" record on his tombstone:

*Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie
Glad did I live and gladly die
And I laid me down with a will*

*This be the verse you grave for me
Here he lies where he longs to be
Home is the sailor home from sea
And the hunter home from the hill*

Sieni thought it ironic that although Stevenson had lived in Hawaii with its cooler weather and beautiful beaches, he had eventually chosen Samoa as his permanent home away from Scotland. Tusitala had fled the severe Scottish winters because of his lifelong battle with consumption. The Samoan climate and lifestyle suited his medical condition and he was loved by, and loved in return, the Samoan people.

The Hawaiians were fiercely trying to protect their culture and their language from the onslaught of American influence and the mighty Yankee dollar. There was a powerful cabal of Japanese in Hawaii who dominated everything from politics to business. The Japanese may have bombed Pearl Harbour and lost the war, but their descendants dominated politics through the Senate and Congressional seats of the

State of Hawaii, and the Japanese dominated many other significant facets of Hawaiian life.

Tihati and Cha Thompson told James and Sieni that there was a very bright and articulate Samoan politician Mufi Hannemann, and they were quietly helping to prepare a long term strategy for him to become the first Samoan mayor of Honolulu some day.

James and Sieni would never forget their Hawaiian honeymoon. They made love at least three times a day, and this kept them euphoric. They came to completely understand each others' physical needs.

James had never believed himself capable of such happiness in his lifetime. Every morning he would mourn the fact their honeymoon was one day nearer to ending. Not finding or at least refusing to find any flaws in Sieni's character, he considered himself the luckiest man on earth to be married to her.

He would usually wake earlier in the morning than Sieni, and would just gaze lovingly at her. James was now finally coming to fully understand the real dimensions of his tremendous love for this woman who was his wife.

Sieni was now certain she loved James and would never love another. She discovered a lot about James' real character in the considerate and unselfish way he made love to her, always making sure her pleasure was complete.

She discovered, and was quite shocked at her own sexuality, when she was aroused. Her first multiple orgasms had been like a complete surrender to her basic sexual nature. She felt a combination of shock and shame that she could experience such pleasure. Each succeeding orgasm was like a tidal wave of sheer ecstasy. She started to relax, assured it was James. Her husband, her lover, the love of her life who was doing this to her. James had stayed hard and did not orgasm for long enough to enable Sieni to come so often she lost count. It was amazing, James just needed to move and she would climax again.

Sieni was now also more relaxed being married to real wealth. She was no longer guilty when sipping Dom Perignon and dining on Maine Lobster taken live from the tank. During their courtship Sieni had always felt guilty on such occasions, especially when she thought about her own family eating stew at home. But then again James was always reminding her of how much he enjoyed her mother's delicious stews.

All too soon their Hawaiian honeymoon was over. They said their sad farewells to all their new friends and flew back to Auckland. The memories would live on and sustain them during their marriage. They had achieved a height of sexuality that would be the basis of their sex life throughout their married lives.

They returned to Auckland with all their beautiful memories including their new found taste for Hawaiian music; their Don Ho, Brothers Cazimero and many other Hawaiian CDs. Playing their special Hawaiian music was always a sure way to return them to this memorable time and place in their lives.

Their Hawaiian honeymoon was also to be the setting for what Sieni considered her greatest achievement in life. A special Christmas gift that would bring special joy to James but even greater joy to Sieni herself.

The whole Woods family would rejoice at this gift but Uncle Angus was to rejoice most of all.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ANGUS

Sieni was already pregnant by the time they arrived back in Auckland after their honeymoon. James Angus Woods was born on Christmas Day that same year. They were tempted to name their son James Christmas Woods but in deference to his being sensitive to such a name, they honoured Uncle Angus instead.

“You know James, you yourself are still young and James Woods IV is a little snooty don’t you think?”

“Yes, Uncle Angus, and although Sieni’s father has a Samoan name for him, we have decided to call him by his second name, Angus!” Uncle Angus could not hide his obvious delight at this news.

“The Samoans can call him what they like, but when this young man runs on to the field to play for the All Blacks, he’ll be called Angus Woods.”

It came on quite suddenly, but at eighty-seven Uncle Angus was starting to look his age.

As for James' parents, they absolutely adored their grandson and it made James a little jealous.

"These two never doted on me like that!"

Sieni laughed, *"Of course not, lakopo, you were an ugly baby. This child is drop-dead handsome!"*

Baby Angus had a long body. He had Sieni's tan complexion and high cheekbones, but apart from that, he was a real Woods.

"My grandson is going to break a few hearts when he grows up" James' father proudly told his wife.

"Yes, you know Sieni's father wants him to become a Church Minister. He tells everyone that the Woods family needs to give its first fruits to God, to ensure its survival as a family."

He's only saying that because he expects Sieni to have eight more children."

"Isn't it amazing. Samoans believe the only legitimate constraint to having large families is

money, and they consider James can afford to sire a dozen children!"

"Yes, it is funny. But Sieni is talking four children, two of each."

"She'll get them too! That girl is blessed. Imagine having Angus at five minutes past midnight on Christmas morning."

Sieni loved her son with a passion that shook even James. It may have been a different kind of love, but he started to draw comparisons, wondering if Sieni loved him as much. Sieni always maintained a sense of mystery for James. It was a challenge which never allowed his interest in her to diminish. This was part of what kept him forever fascinated and marvelling at this woman, and every new day she seemed to display some new quality that would only serve to increase his love for her. It was Sieni's dedication to their son that intrigued him most. It was as if there had been no driving force to her life before young Angus was born.

James found this to be a convenient arrangement. He was so driven by his all-consuming passion for his wife that Sieni's devoted dedication to their son seemed to release him from his usual fatherly duties towards his son. In James' mind, Angus was Sieni's child. His role, however hard he

might try, would always be secondary. So he stopped trying.

Uncle Angus observed: *"It hurts doesn't it?"*

"What do you mean, Uncle Angus?"

"You love Sieni so much it hurts. Although you already have her, you want more - more than she could ever give you."

"It is the nightmare of the thought of life without Sieni, that hurts."

"No, you could live with that. Eventually you would learn to live with that. Your real fear is even more pathetic than that."

James looked at this wise old man, wondering at his great insight into the human character.

"You fear that Sieni may find some other passion, some other love. Your greatest fear is you might lose Sieni's primary focus. What you must not do is begin to resent your own son. You must love him, knowing that his mother will always love him more. But don't worry James; Sieni intends to have a daughter for you next. That girl seems to get whatever she wants. She delivered you the greatest Christmas gift, and even before your first wedding anniversary! Never forget that Angus is another way

of Sieni expressing her love for you – Angus represents the two of you. She loves you, and celebrates her love for you, through her devotion to baby Angus."

James was relieved, finding himself only too willing to defer to Uncle Angus' wisdom yet again.

"Whatever would I do without you, Uncle Angus?" However did you find out about Irene Purcell and that Mt Albert boy? I had only heard a rumour." James had to ask Uncle Angus this question again.

"For several years now, I have been observing girls and looking for one who might possibly make a suitable wife for you. Irene had a young man who took her virginity and her heart, but totally despised her. Her fascination for that fellow would last her whole life long. His interest in her would resurface the moment he found out she had married James Woods III. That is the sort of person he is. That is what I meant when I said that it would have been a tragedy for you to marry her."

"Uncle Angus," James said, in spite of himself, *"Wherever does all this wisdom come from, and why ever did you not marry yourself and have a family?"*

"An old man has to have some secrets, James. Didn't anyone ever tell you that Catholic

priests make the best marriage counsellors, and they never marry. At least most of them don't!"

"Uncle Angus, I deliberately didn't offer you that strong coffee you like. Let's walk down to Newmarket - there's a Starbucks there now - great coffee."

"Yuk, Starbucks! Not that milky, frothy rubbish. No milky, frothy rubbish for me."

"Great espresso too, Uncle Angus. Trust me."

This became a Saturday morning ritual for Angus, at least once or twice a month. Coffee with James, then a Rialto movie with Sieni, while James baby-sat young Angus.

There was another weekly ritual they were expected to abide by. After church every Sunday, Samoans had their main meal – 'toanai', a sort of Sunday brunch. Although the Folasaus expected all family members to join them each Sunday, Sieni told James they need only attend once or twice a month. Sieni's mother adored baby Angus and doted on him unashamedly, even with all her other grandchildren watching.

"Mama says to forget Papa's talk about Angus being a Church minister. He is to become a lawyer like his father and become the first Samoan Prime

Minister of New Zealand. We already have a Samoan Cabinet Minister, Mark Gosche. Even though Mark was born here, his father was born in Samoa, and spoke Samoan all his life.

James held not even the slightest bit of interest in politics. He was becoming a bit of a property tycoon in his own right, buying up large in Ponsonby and Royal Oak. This was Uncle Angus' influence. He found all these great deals for them.

"As if you need all this extra wealth, James," Sieni would admonish him.

"It's a hobby. You go with Uncle Angus to Rialto movies. I invest in property and drink coffee with him."

James was already very wealthy and considered his property investments a hobby. This was one reason why he was so successful at it. There was no pressure. He did his sums. If the return on an investment serviced the loan and the loans were beneficial for tax purposes, then he bought the properties.

Sieni's weekly columns were becoming more and more controversial, and consequently more and more popular. She upset her parents with an article on the destructive impact of the Church on certain aspects of Samoan society, especially the welfare of

the people both in New Zealand and in Samoa. She demanded that Church ministers be more caring and take an interest in the pastoral care of their flocks.

When James questioned her, she was uncharacteristically defensive and angry.

“Most of them don’t give a damn about their people, their parishioners. They just care about themselves. It is about time someone forced them to examine their roles as Ministers, as shepherds of their flocks, as the good Book calls them.”

James never raised the topic again. Sieni blamed the few selfish church Ministers she remembered from her youth, for her initial lack of faith. James noticed she always insisted they go to Church on Easter Friday and Christmas Day.

“James, I know I am blaming God for the selfishness of a few Church Ministers. But I feel this void in my spiritual life deeply, and it has made me bitter” Sieni told James.

The reality was that the arrival of baby Angus had created a need not only for his baptism, but also for a spiritually secure environment to raise him in.

“Say that in your article Sieni, it will make your position more credible, and make you more human to your readers. And make sure you emphasise the

point that not all Church Ministers are like that, especially not all Samoan Church Ministers. There are many notable exceptions to your general observation.”

The Herald confirmed that Sieni’s next few articles had the biggest positive feedback of any of her columns. The following Saturday, Uncle Angus brought along Father Paul Ward for coffee and their usual Rialto outing. Father Ward was the Anglican parish priest of All Saints Church in Remuera. He was a tall, good looking family man in his early forties and as fine a person as you could meet. What Sieni responded to, as Uncle Angus knew she would, is that he did not have a hypocritical bone in his body. As usual, Uncle Angus, had read Sieni’s article, and was providing the solution, knowing only too well that baby Angus had to be baptised.

“Let’s start going to Church, James. Young Angus is going to need to be baptised soon, and that Father Paul seems to be a very nice man. We need to have a parish and a parish priest.” Sieni had learnt this much from her own family. Their spiritual lives had demanded full participation in their local Samoan Congregational Church. Church attendance and full participation in Church matters was compulsory in the Folasau household, as in most Samoan families, even in New Zealand.

James knew that this meant that he was now to be a regular Churchgoer. He sensed it had been a sore point with the Folasaus on their occasional Sunday 'toanai'. Sieni's parents were elated when they arrived this particular Sunday with baby Angus, all dressed up in their Church clothes, and announced that Angus would be baptised by Father Paul the following week. Although James had found chapel a chore at Kings because it was compulsory, he was now enjoying attending Father Ward's services. He enjoyed the fellowship and especially his moving sermons. This spiritual strengthening of their family would have a good positive impact on every aspect of their lives. Samoans believe a good spiritual life is not only important, but an integral part of achieving good physical and mental health.

Uncle Angus was to be the godfather, even though he was now eighty-seven. He booked a large private banquet room at his favourite Chinese Restaurant for the lunch. The Folasau clan all attended the service at All Saints Anglican Church, Remuera, and the godfather's extravagant luncheon of Peking Duck, Beggar's Chicken, and many other Chinese specialties. The wines were Dom Perignon Champagne and Wolf Blass Black Label Cabernet Sauvignon 1997. It was a happy occasion for the small group comprised of only the two families and Father Ward and his wife. Uncle Angus was the ultimate host and he seemed happier than he had ever been before in his life. James' parents and the

Folasaus were openly competing for the right to carry the now very spoilt baby Angus.

Angus Woods was booked into Kings Prep and King's College before his first birthday. Sieni wrote often in her columns about the excesses and shortcomings of so-called 'elite' schools, but in the end she felt this was still the best path for educating her own son. She did not feel there was any hypocrisy in such a decision. When it came to her own son, nothing could be too good.

James accepted their decision with good grace. He found that he was deferring most of the decisions affecting young Angus to Sieni. Even the godfather, Uncle Angus had more influence than James. It seemed ironic to James that the decision was eventually based on Kings' superior education standards.

"They didn't completely wreck you at King's, did they James? If you didn't go to Kings, you wouldn't have met Sieni!" Uncle Angus told him. *"It all depends on young Angus' personality and temperament, King's College does not suit all children."* James was quick to point out. Some of his friends, especially the non-sporty types, did not do so well at King's College.

James' father had thought Angus might go to Auckland Grammar School, which he had attended.

He did not let on, but he was a big fan of Sieni's weekly Herald articles, and thought he had achieved his goal when he read her critique of the so-called elite private schools.

Young Angus' christening celebration was subdued only because it was a Sunday and Sieni's father had reminded his sons and family there was to be no heavy drinking on a Sunday. It was usual for the Folasaus to sit at one table, and the Woods at another, but on this occasion Uncle Angus sat both sets of grandparents together at a main table with Father Ward and his wife so that the families were forced to mix and fellowship with each other.

PART TWO: THE TRUTH ABOUT CULTURE

The great law of culture is: let each become all that he was created capable of being.

Jean Paul Friedrich Richter
(1839)

CHAPTER NINE: SAMOAN ANTICS

Malia Folasau made a surprise announcement in the middle of young Angus' Christening lunch:

"My husband is going to be bestowed the high title of Papalii in Samoa next month. Isn't that amazing? It will make it so much easier for young Angus to claim the title when his time comes."

There was a heavy silence in which you could have heard a pin drop.

"Mama, that is a matter for our family and our family only." Sieni admonished her.

"There is no such thing, Sieni. Angus means we are now truly one family. No-one can deny Angus' Samoan side - he is a Samoan!"

"Of course, Angus is a Samoan!" Uncle Angus said, breaking the tension.

"I have never been to Samoa. I shall travel to Samoa with young Angus and Sieni for her father's title bestowal. And remember, young Angus must contribute so he can stake his claim early for this title. He is the descendant of Samoan kings!"

James' parents were shocked. It seemed that Uncle Angus had studied Sieni's family's royal pedigree. They knew that every time Samoa's Head of State, His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II visited New Zealand, Sieni's family always visited him with fine mats, money and food. Now there was to be a title bestowal and Uncle Angus and Sieni were taking their grandchild along.

James was feeling left out. *"I guess I am only the husband, I don't have any royal blood!"*

Sieni laughed: *"If it weren't for me, Dad would have had you take this title on behalf of our family, lakopo. 'Faiava' are some of the most important people in Samoan families."*

'Faiava' are those men who married into a clan, and Sieni was only telling half the truth. Some "faiava" were joked about as being only good enough to make his wife's father's tea and prepare his food. Some did get bestowed high titles by their wives' families. Each case depended on the circumstances of the family and the calibre of the people. There was no such thing as direct or male-only accession

to titles. There was certainly no guarantee a title would be bestowed on a child of the last titleholder. The whole extended family was involved in the intense consultations this process involved.

The Woods were only now beginning to realise what Uncle Angus had long ago researched and understood about Samoan custom. In Samoan custom, the birth of a child, especially a male child, puts the relationship between the two families on another level. The 'gafa' or the connection was now complete. Angus represented the final bond that united these families in a way that the marriage by itself could not.

Although Sieni thought her mother's outburst premature and not in keeping with tradition, as this was being raised during a celebration, it did allow the whole matter of Angus' Samoan heritage with its cultural and customary implications, to be brought out in the open. The point being made was that all titles were usually inherited by a combination of blood connections and ability. What was also of great importance was whether the new titleholder had rendered service or 'tautua' to the family and the last titleholder. There was never such a thing in Samoan custom as primogeniture and the eldest male child never automatically inherits the father's title.

The successful title holder has to be an heir of proven ability and must have rendered service. Sometimes this "tautua" became the main consideration in determining the next titleholder. Other times it was the abilities and qualifications of the candidate. Was it someone who would bring honour and mana to the family? This was also a very important consideration.

Although they were living in New Zealand, the Folasaus had still always contributed to all important family occasions in Samoa. Folasau, Sieni's father, had always rendered service. Now he was to be rewarded with a Papalii title. Sieni believed her recent marriage to New Zealand's wealthiest man also had a lot to do with this sudden rush from the family in Samoa for her father to take a title.

The line of succession missed a generation because Sieni's grandfather had been a Congregational Minister. This generation needed to take the titles, or the next would find the gap between title-holders too long when staking their claim. Whatever their family's real motives were, everyone agreed it was appropriate for Sieni's father to take the title now that there was a consensus that he should be bestowed it. Samoan law dictated that a legally valid title could only be bestowed in the village to which that title belonged. In this case it was the village of Sapapalii, on the big island of Savaii. Savaii was a bigger island than Upolu, but

less populated, because the capital Apia was in Upolu.

What James' parents found intriguing was the great interest Uncle Angus was showing in all things Samoan.

James asked his mother, *"Did Uncle Angus dote on me the way he does on baby Angus?"*

"No, but he and your grandfather were still building the empire in those days, working twelve hour days."

"Did you and Dad dote on me the way you do on baby Angus?"

"Don't be sensitive James, we are only his grandparents. We see him and cuddle him, you and Sieni change the nappies and do all the hard stuff. We appreciate him but we do not have the ultimate responsibility of raising him."

"I wonder sometimes if there will ever be any room for me?"

"No, you are not concerned about us and Uncle Angus. You are jealous of the attention he gets from Sieni. You think you are not the number one man in her life anymore."

"That's crazy, Mum. How can I be jealous of my own son?"

"Not consciously, but unconsciously you are displaying all the symptoms. Think about it and then get it out of your system. Just get used to the fact. These are two different kinds of love. You cannot compare the love of a husband, and the love for a child."

"I love my son, Mum"

"I know that Dear, now just don't resent his mother's love for him. I loved your father and I loved you when you were born. I never felt I had to ensure I loved you both equally. I love you both in the different ways that you both needed to be loved."

It had occurred to James that, while he could hardly imagine life without Sieni, she would probably now not be able to live in a world without Angus.

As though reading her son's mind, Mary Woods said, *"A woman cannot love a child that much, unless she was truly in love with the child's father,"* James' mother tried to console her son.

"I just want a chance to help raise him. Even Uncle Angus seems to be playing a bigger role. Now he is going to Samoa with him for Sieni's father's title ceremony."

“Uncle Angus is eighty-seven years old. He’s even beginning to miss the odd week of those visits from his lady friends we all know about. His namesake is the only thing’s keeping him going. And don’t forget his fortune. It is almost certainly yours and young Angus’ now.”

“That doesn’t concern me Mum. I love Uncle Angus. I just don’t know that his doting is good for my son.” James was genuinely not at all concerned with fortunes - any fortune. It came from being so vastly wealthy himself.

“No child can have too much love, James. Only too little.”

“Who determines what is too much and what is too little?”

“You must be satisfied with the love Sieni has for you. Take her out to dinner and shows more often - she loves theatre. Get a baby-sitter. Assert yourself and emphasise the fact that you still need time alone with each other.”

Mary Woods was only getting started on this subject, *“Put yourself into this trip to Samoa next month. It is about time you visited the country Sieni comes from. Get to understand her culture and her roots more. Sieni is a bit unfair, shielding you from*

all that, but I did sense that she thought you might have suggested you honeymooned in Samoa rather than Hawaii.”

“Thanks, Mum,” said James, cuddling his mother. It was not often they had such a serious conversation, and he was impressed with the depth of the knowledge and understanding his mother possessed.

“Do you remember your wedding, James?” It was a marriage of two cultures, as well as of two people. *The Hawaiian Wedding Song, Sir Anthony Morris and that Samoan lady, such beautiful singing. Did you see the Prime Minister’s face when she got her layer of cake only after all the Church Ministers and the Bishop! But the part I remember the most is when that Samoan band came on after ‘Adeaze’. What happened after that?”*

“Yes,” said James, getting excited all over again, *“Sieni’s Samoan ‘siva’. The whole Folasau clan got on the floor and her brothers lifted her off the ground. She looked so beautiful and danced the siva with such grace and dignity.”*

“I remember telling your father that I would never be able to dance like that! The rhythm came from deep within Sieni. That Samoan ‘siva’ needs a grace we Europeans are just not born with.”

“Yes, yes. I was so embarrassed at my pathetic attempt to dance with her. Wasn’t Sieni’s father so graceful and full of rhythm? I remember thinking I should have practised for that dance.”

“Uncle Angus had learnt how to do the Samoan siva!”

“Tell me about it. I was so shocked when he turned up at the reception in a formal Samoan lavalava! He danced almost as well as Sieni’s father. Sieni must have given him lessons - the old fox!”

“The time has come for you to visit Samoa, son. You’ve read a lot about the Samoan culture, and that’s a credit to you, but now you must experience it. You must live and breathe it.”

“What about you and Dad?”

“We can come on a later trip, when Angus is older. We could go over together with our grandson for a holiday later.”

When James discussed this with his father, he was in full agreement. His father added another topic:

“You will be twenty-five next month James. I don’t believe there are any challenges left for you at Maxson and East. John Maxson tells me he has

taught you all he can about property law, trust law, and commercial law; at least from the practice aspect. You need to move on. They are also expecting it. Come and work with me so that you can begin to understand your grandfather’s empire. You have already built up your first twenty million dollars in your own property deals with Uncle Angus, including your investment properties in Hawaii and Sydney Harbour. Now come into the firm. The Woods Property division has just purchased the St Mark’s Shopping Centre in Auckland, but there is a big Australian property Trust trying to muscle in. This is the Mega Mall of the future - movie theatres, restaurants, even hotels can be attached to them. We have to move Woods Property into the twenty first century, and I believe you are the person to do it.”

James had never really discussed Woods Enterprises with his father. There had been a recent controversial break-up of the conglomerate into four different publicly-listed companies.

“We have got through the growing pains of the split now. All divisions are operating well, making profits. The greatest challenges are in Woods Properties, and I’d like you to understudy the great CEO we have there, Tom Johanssen. Tom’s part Tongan you know, on his father’s side. You met him on your wedding day. He’s getting old though and will retire shortly.”

James knew his father felt his keen interest in property, and that this would be the big attraction to lure him into the Woods business empire.

"It may be a good idea for you to move on, James. Uncle Angus tells me there is a young pretty secretary at the law firm who is almost physically assaulting you on a daily basis!"

"Where in the hell does Uncle Angus get this stuff?" Now James was really quite angry.

"Don't worry, we know you'd never cheat on Sieni. But remember James, the women, especially the pakeha women, resent your so-called perfect marriage to a Samoan woman. You're like a priest to a lady without scruples. Can they seduce the happily-married and faithful husband? You're a challenge to them, James, especially as New Zealand's once most eligible bachelor."

"Were you ever tempted, Dad? This girl's getting quite bad. I had to straighten her out, and she didn't like it. Asked me if I only liked brown trash."

"Has she bothered you lately?"

"No, thank God."

"You know why?"

James had a feeling his father would tell him anyway.

"Sieni visited her at home with two of her aunties. One of the aunties casually mentioned that in Samoan custom, the family of a deceived wife would cut off a piece of the adulteress's ear. The idea is to mark her for life for what she is."

"Dad!" Now James was truly shocked. *"That didn't happen! Sieni said nothing to me"*

"Believe me son, between Angus and Sieni, that young woman will never so much as say your name in public again!"

James wondered whether he really would ever truly understand this woman he loved to distraction, and was his wife.

James could not wait to discuss this with Sieni later.

"Sieni, can I talk to you?"

"Of course, lakopo, Angus is fast asleep. Do you want to do more than talk?" she teased him.

"Jane Silverman from the office. Did you visit her?"

Sieni laughed.

"Imagine that. You like 'Janes', Iakopo, Sieni and now Jane?"

"Don't tease me Sieni, be serious. You know nothing happened?"

"Of course nothing happened, Iakopo. She still has her ear doesn't she?"

"Sieni, don't joke. That's a serious threat. The police could have become involved. The whole thing could have turned ugly. The firm could have been dragged into it, and it could have become a major embarrassment."

"There was no threat. Auntie Ama told her that is what used to happen in Samoa. We didn't actually threaten her. We did it for you, Darling. She needed to leave you alone."

"But, how about me? What about discussing it with me first?"

"This is women's business. Who told you, your Dad?' I told Uncle Angus not to tell your father."

"What makes you so sure Jane Silverman didn't."

"Because Jane Silverman enjoys having two whole ears. She wouldn't tell a soul, let alone you."

"Sieni, please discuss these things with me first in future, and don't kid yourselves - that was a threat. The clear implication was that she could have her own ear chopped off."

"Listen Don Juan" Sieni said grabbing James by his privates, "Remember, these are Sieni's, and only Sieni's. If this thing that's even now growing in my hand ever points in any other direction, other than to this thing here," pointing to herself, "you may lose them! And don't talk to me like a lawyer, all we did was fill her in on Samoan custom, we did not threaten her!"

Sieni was really laughing out loud now. Was this a Samoan thing, this deep raucous laughter, James wondered to himself. He decided though that in the circumstances, he would allow Sieni to win this argument.

They made love with renewed passion that night. After their lovemaking, laying in each others arms:

"We must get these sweet young things to try and seduce you more often Iakopo. We might just

have made a sister for Angus tonight. My son's going to need more female company soon."

James felt a little deflated. After the high of their lovemaking Angus was back in the limelight again. James was now becoming more than a little uneasy about Uncle Angus's influence, both on his wife and his son.

"Did Uncle Angus tell you about Jane Silverman?"

"Uncle Angus didn't need to tell me about her. It's office gossip. The Samoan tea-lady at the firm told my aunties. That woman was throwing herself all over you! I only went along to make sure my aunties behaved themselves. There was absolutely no way I was going to stop them."

"But Sieni, you were born and raised in New Zealand. You don't visit and threaten women who just flirt with your husband."

"She was doing a lot more than innocent flirting, lakopo, and what if my husband flirted back? You are only human and my aunties just wanted the word to get around the office. Hands off James Woods III! It's a territory thing; Samoans believe spouses must stake their boundary lines."

Sieni was still laughing, enjoying this conversation much more than James was.

"We have already made fabulous love and made up, James. Where are we heading with this?"

"Don't for God's sake write a column about it, Sieni. You criticised the Leader of the Opposition last week. You almost called him a racist."

"I don't have to almost call him a racist, he is a bigoted racist, but I stopped short of calling him that. I said his policies would increase racial tension. The fellow's dangerous. He will only increase the cultural and racial divide between 'pakeha', and Maori and Pacific Islanders."

"Just remember our son Angus is a bit of both. And don't forget he does have a 'pakeha' father?" was James' only response.

Sieni looked at James with love and deep affection.

"Of course you are, my love. You are James Woods III. Loved husband of Sieni Folasau Woods and father of Angus Woods. End of story."

"Come on Sieni, don't tease and patronise me. I'd rather you insulted me. That reads like an obituary, I am alive!"

"I can't insult my husband, and I won't patronise you, lakopo. Angus is your son. You are his father. Do as much or as little parenting of Angus as you wish. But don't begrudge Angus the few years' fellowship his godfather can provide him. Uncle Angus will not live forever you know."

It was the first time Uncle Angus' mortality had been raised in their family. Even James was horrified at the thought of losing Uncle Angus. He had asserted a profound and stabilising influence on their whole family.

"Whatever would we do without Uncle Angus?"

"You'd have to take me to Rialto movies, for one thing" Sieni tried to make light of it. Uncle Angus was even closer to Sieni and she was not prepared to discuss his mortality.

"Uncle Angus used to visit us two or three times a year, until you came along Sieni. It does seem though, he always kept a close eye on us. You know about his lady friends? He told me once it was cleaner that way. They visit, he pays well, they leave. No strings, no ties, no emotional attachments."

"I know about them, lakopo. Some of them are Islanders, even the occasional Samoan. All these ladies appreciate Uncle Angus. He is their favourite. He pays double the going rate, and never asks for seconds, at least not anymore!"

"Sieni!" James was astonished at her knowledge of Uncle Angus' antics.

"So what? He's not married! But you lakopo, you are James Woods III. So get used to my aunties' antics. Just remember to keep your royal jewels and pecker zipped up tight, unless I release them! And no matter what the temptation."

"This conversation is unfair on me Sieni. I would no more be unfaithful to you than fly to the moon. It concerns me as to exactly which Sieni I am married to. The modern educated Herald columnist who pokes fun at the establishment, or the old fashioned Samoan wife who slices off pieces of her husband's girlfriend's ears."

"Both" Sieni responded without hesitation, *"You are married to both. And things are changed now that Angus is here and his sister may be on the way. My children need their father and no flirty fly-by-night is going to tempt him away from me."*

James marvelled at his wife. He never considered Sieni as a person who was territorial, who

placed all her valuables, including her husband, in a specific area and then defended her borders with all her energy and resources. Part of him was flattered, another part was concerned at what this might imply later in their marriage.

James resigned from Maxson and East. There was no fanfare, just a quiet farewell dinner with the partners. He was already the firm's biggest client and his presence there had brought them status.

He took six weeks off before taking up his father's offer, so he was able to join the group who travelled to Samoa for Sieni's father's title bestowal.

CHAPTER TEN: THE TITLE

They arrived on a Polynesian Airlines flight late in the evening, and checked into the legendary Aggie Grey's Hotel in the capital, Apia. It was Aggie Grey's grandson Fred Grey who greeted them personally and they were in their suite within minutes of arriving. Suite 209 was the prestige suite with a balcony big enough to entertain over a hundred people. It overlooked beautiful Apia Harbour.

James noted how warm the weather was. The welcome of the Samoan people had been just as warm and cordial. The rest of the Folasaus had taken the ferry to the bigger island of Savaii, to prepare for the big event.

On this occasion, Sieni was not at all reluctant that her husband's wealth be displayed - a fact that intrigued James. Sieni wanted the Samoans to experience their wealth, as well as know about it. They had to stay in Aggies' largest suite. Within the first few days, Sieni had them on the front page of the main local daily "The Observer". They had

featured for a full five minutes on the local Television Samoa News. Baby Angus had his picture everywhere. Sieni was already well known in Samoa through her weekly Herald columns, which the Observer published with her permission each week.

Uncle Angus took Suite 309, the slightly smaller suite on the floor above. He took an instant liking to Samoa. He even insisted that he would try to struggle up Mount Vaea to visit Robert Louis Stevenson's grave, but Sieni wisely would not let him. Even Sieni was struggling on the climb up to the gravesite with James.

They visited the Robert Louis Stevenson Museum which exhibited many of the originals of his books. A fortune had been spent to bring back most of the original furniture and Stevenson artifacts from around the world. An American millionaire had poured money into a special Trust to do all this. He had been a Mormon Elder sent on a mission to Samoa, and he went on to make a fortune in aloe vera health products.

It was also arranged for them to visit and pay a courtesy call on the Head of State, His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II. This was perceived as an appropriate gesture, given the honour to Sieni's father and the status and wealth of the Woods. James was impressed by his charm and knowledge.

Malietoa was ninety years old, yet he was still an imposing stunning figure of a man, with a full head of white hair.

Sieni was busy making sure there were lots of pictures of them all with Malietoa. Baby Angus had more pictures than anyone else.

"My son will treasure these pictures with His Highness one day."

Uncle Angus struck an immediate affinity with Malietoa, who was only a few years older than he was. At Malietoa's insistence, they were on a first-name basis, calling each other 'Angus and Tanu' well before they parted company. They shared a passion for golf, which they had both played a lot of in their younger years. *"The Royal Samoan Country Club is a beautiful course, Angus. Hire a cart and play a few holes. I'd love to join you but my back won't let me. They still force me to come along a few times a year to hit off the first ball of the big tournaments,"* Malietoa told him. His Highness was the proud patron of the Royal Samoa Country Club.

Malietoa was the head of the Papalii clan, and he had instructed the family that all the important chiefs were to travel to Savaii for Sieni's father's title ceremony. His son, also a Papalii, was to join the title bestowal ceremonies. This added great honour and prestige to the occasion.

Sieni's father was already in Savaii preparing for the ceremony. They had many relatives there. They had travelled by vehicular ferry, 'Lady Samoa II', together with a hired truck and a fleet of vehicles to use for the occasion. A local farmer had sold them eight cattle for the 'suas' or traditional offerings. The family had provided all the fine mats that cultural tradition required for such an occasion.

James had been totally unaware that a lot of the joking in Samoan at the Head of State's residence concerned Malietoa's suggestion that James should also take a Papalii title. Sieni had thanked the Head of State for the offer but told him that James needed to render service or 'tautua' to her father first, before he was bestowed any title. Malietoa felt it would be valuable for James to have the prestige of a high chiefly title such as Papalii, especially when meeting members of the Samoan community in New Zealand. James was also told of a special ceremony, 'faau le ula', whereby he could transfer this title to Angus when he came of age. Uncle Angus was all for it, and but for James' own reluctance, a preliminary ceremony, 'tapa le ipu,' could have been held right then in His Highness' guest house. Sieni's father was an heir to the title, a member of Sa-Malietoa, the Malietoa family, but nobody questioned Malietoa's right to bestow certain titles for services rendered to the family and sometimes to the nation.

James had heard that many Samoans were poor but never saw any signs of poverty. It intrigued him that Sieni for the first time in her life wanted the Woods' fortune on full display. She asked James to bring a substantial amount in travellers' cheques, as well as all his usual credit cards. James found the money flowed quite freely to purchase cattle, cartons of corned beef and canned fish, and many other foodstuffs for the title ceremony. This was in addition to the large amount raised in New Zealand by the rest of the Folasau clan.

The Minister of Agriculture was part of Sieni's extended family and hosted a lavish dinner for them at 'Sails', a local seafood restaurant. The food, wine and service were excellent. Uncle Angus was a little disappointed there was no Dom Perignon on the menu, but he enjoyed the dinner.

The ferry trip took an hour, and James enjoyed the fresh sea air. He especially enjoyed the beautiful unspoilt scenery and beaches of Savaii. They stayed in a nice comfortable hotel, Siufaga Beach Cottages, not far from Sapapalii, the village where the title bestowal would take place.

Uncle Angus was busy taking photographs, and Sieni filmed everything on her Sony camcorder. Sieni's father was dressed in traditional wear, without a shirt, and with a bright pink velvet 'lavalava' and an

'ulafala' around his neck. The village had not seen a title bestowal such as this for a long time. Not the pomp, the ceremony, or the show of wealth that was on offer. There were more fine mats, more cattle, more cartons of corned beef and canned fish, and more cash than had been seen in Sapapalii for decades. Sieni's family members were determined to stamp their authority and their mana, and not least their wealth, on the village and their family.

James was particularly impressed with the official kava ceremony that came after the blessing speech. The village taupou was elegant and was dressed in Samoan mats and wore an elaborate headdress. She prepared the ceremonial 'kava'. After the speeches, the first cup of kava was offered to Sieni's father, with the other cups in strict order of protocol. In Samoan custom the first and last cups were the most important.

"Why are these ceremonies so lavish and expensive, Sieni?" James calculated that the cost was double their contribution, before taking into account the value of the fine mats.

"They don't have to be. But my grandfather was a Congregational Minister, and our family is back after a generation away. We have to assert ourselves a little more aggressively than usual. The last Folasau to be bestowed a Papalii title was my

great-grandfather, and that was over seventy years ago."

"The entire village have enough food for a month."

This was not an understatement from James.

"Samoans believe a title bestowal is one of the important milestones in a person's life. It ranks up there with birth, marriage, and death."

Sieni's father was thereafter to be called Papalii. To call him by any other name would be disrespectful. James found the ceremony full of pomp but also full of dignity. First there was the religious blessing by the local Congregational Minister. He then left, and the official blessing by the village chiefs proceeded. There was the ceremonial pomp of the "faatau", the mock argument as to which chief would bless the title, when they really already knew this in advance. This chief also traditionally received the best fine mat, and the most foodstuffs and money. It was an honour that was very much coveted when the new titleholder had such lavish wealth on display. There were also beautiful fine mats. The real wealth of a Samoan family lay in its collection of fine mats and it was even more important to them than having money in the bank.

When it was all over James and Sieni had a quiet dinner at their hotel.

“I’m glad I came Sieni. I learnt a lot about Samoan custom and culture today.”

“I used to find it all so gross and extravagant. I even considered writing an article about the excesses of Samoan customs but when it came to my own father, I wanted his title bestowal to be the best. I am sorry Darling, but I have never asked you for money before. Call it young Angus’ contribution to his Grandpa’s title bestowal.”

“It was nothing. I saw a nice property in Vailima Heights near Apia, but I will have to buy it in your name as apparently only citizens can own land in Samoa.”

“Buy it in Angus’ name. I have already started processing his Samoan citizenship. Both countries allow dual citizenship you know.”

“Can’t I buy it for you Sieni? You ask so little of me?”

“I only ask for what I need, lakopo, not what I want. Next year it will be your turn to get a title,” she teased him.

On the trip back to Apia, Sieni seemed sad.

“What’s wrong Sieni?”

“What about Uncle Angus? He didn’t stay with us in the hotel. Does he want to go back to New Zealand? He was spending a lot of time with that one widowed aunt of yours, Sieni.”

“I advised him against her. She’s bad luck. She’s already killed off two husbands and she’s only in her mid-fifties.”

“Father Ward isn’t going to be too happy about all this superstition, Sieni. He’s seriously considering making you a Lay Preacher since you’re already a Deacon.”

The Woods were now regular churchgoers since Angus’ birth. Even Uncle Angus approved, and would shock Father Ward by turning up on the occasional Sunday.

“You’re not even a fully confirmed Anglican, Sieni. At least I am confirmed.” James complained, feeling a little left out, as he had not even been considered for a position as a deacon. Father Ward had accepted Sieni’s confirmation in her Samoan Congregational Church.

“Don’t worry, Darling. It is just that Father Ward knows you don’t have the time to fulfil the duties of a deacon.”

“Father Ward hasn’t even asked me to become a deacon.”

The Samoan trip was an unforgettable experience for James and Uncle Angus. They both fell in love with Samoa. Its tranquillity and lush greenery added to the country’s scenic beauty. The Samoan people were very generous and courteous. They were well known for their traditional Polynesian hospitality.

“I can understand why your father doesn’t want to return to New Zealand, Sieni. But I can tell your mother’s had enough. I feel she misses the anonymity she enjoys in South Auckland.”

On their return from Savaii, James and Sieni moved to a resort, 'Sinalei Reef Resort and Spa', on the southern coast of the island, about twenty-five kilometres from Apia. It featured a beautiful white-sand beach, with a small pitch-and-putt golf course, swimming pool, and award winning cuisine with a top German chef.

James jogged every day or he would have put on a lot of weight. The Resort had so much delicious food on offer and being on holiday James and Uncle

Angus were having their first beers before noon. They both did a lot of swimming and enjoyed snorkelling among the reef fish.

Uncle Angus lamented, *“Imagine getting the travel bug at my age, James. I have yet to visit Venice and the South of France. Maybe I can hire a villa in Venice, and we can all do an Italian holiday next. But I do want to come back to Samoa some day. If only... if only I was younger.”*

CHAPTER ELEVEN: PAPALII IAKOPO

While James and Sieni were at Sinalei Resort, His Highness Malietoa sent for them.

“We must go, James. I am not at all sure why he wants to see us. We can go early tomorrow morning and be back in time for lunch.”

Malietoa was in great spirits. Word of the extravagance of Sieni’s father’s title bestowal had spread throughout the country. This mana reflected well on his legacy to his family, not only as the current titleholder but to the fact that he had given his blessings to this event.

“You know James, we Samoans have no concept of rich and poor. We respond to peoples’ kindness and their behaviour towards us. My people in Sapapalii were impressed with Papalii Folasau’s ‘nofo’, not so much because of the money, cattle, and food, but also the quality of the fine mats. Your ‘sua’ and gift to me was your way of honouring me,

and through me you honoured the entire Malietoa family.”

James was impressed by how articulate Malietoa was in English. He spoke with a slight English accent. He had obviously been fully briefed on James’ wealth and circumstances. He now turned to Sieni, speaking these words, but in their Samoan language.

“Come closer, Sieni. You have your mother’s beauty and the figure of a Schultz. No wonder you have ensnared this man of great substance. Uncle Angus and I have been talking. Your husband must accept the title Papalii from me this very day. I am an old man and I have no idea how much longer God will let me live.”

James was shocked when this was translated to him. He was wearing his only pair of long pants that he had brought, and an 'elei' design casual shirt. It also occurred to him as to how fatalistic Samoans were. Everything depended on the will of God.

“But I have no appropriate attire.” He protested, looking to Sieni for help, *“I have not come prepared.”*

Sieni was smiling. Her ear-slicing aunts were also smiling their menacing grins.

In a matter of minutes, a lavalava was wrapped around him, his trousers removed from under it and his body oiled. Malietoa put one of his beautifully painted “ulafala” around his neck. James was made to sit cross-legged, leaning against one of the main posts of the “maota”.

The orator was feigning concern, but spoke what follows in Samoan:

“Who is this ‘palagi’ who is to be bestowed the great honour of a Papalii title?”

Another orator fiercely snarled at him, again in Samoan:

“It is not your place to question Malietoa’s commands, you dog (‘maile’). It is your job to lick the faeces from under his table.” Sieni later explained all this to James. It was all part of an extravagant charade, in honour of the importance of the event.

“This is a ‘paolo’, Malietoa said simply. *“He is married to Tooa. Let the ceremony begin.”* Sieni had not been formally bestowed a Tooa title but Malietoa had just honoured Sieni by calling her Tooa in front of his family.

“I love your articles,” Malietoa had told Sieni earlier. He had read all Sieni’s articles in the local “Observer” newspaper, which reprinted her Herald

columns. Malietoa was an avid reader of all newspapers and kept a close eye on all developments in his country, both social and political. He was remarkably fit and mentally alert for his age.

James was panicking. Images of Papalii Folasau’s ceremony flashed in his mind. No mats, no money, nothing had been prepared.

“Don’t worry Darling,” Sieni whispered. *“They don’t expect anything.”*

“But surely,”

“No” Sieni cut him off

“Yours will initially be an honorary title, since you are not a citizen. However since the Malietoa is bestowing it, it will be recognised by all Samoans everywhere. It is only honorary at law until you are eligible for citizenship. Then we can give Sapapalii a gift and register your title like Papa’s. For now, this ceremony means the Malietoa family and all Samoans will give you full recognition and status as a Papalii.”

“Are you sure? Is this the right thing to do?”

The oratory had already begun. This was a condensed version of the elaborate ceremony in Sapapalii for Sieni’s father. It was more subdued but

full of that special dignity that only His Highness Malietoa's actual presence can bestow.

After the bestowal speech and a brief kava ceremony, James knelt before Malietoa, who placed his hand on his head and gave his blessings to the new Papalii. Sieni hired professionals to film and photograph the event. James' parents were impressed when they saw the video and wished they had been present.

Sieni could not help herself: *"Arise Sir Papalii lakopo!"* she called out to him.

James was quite emotional, but so was everyone else, especially Uncle Angus. Uncle Angus stood hugging James for a long time after the ceremony. The new Papalii lakopo was now certain that with the exception of Sieni, the whole family had really been taken by surprise.

The next thing he knew, Sieni produced money to distribute to all the chiefs and dignitaries who had witnessed the ceremony. There was a special envelope for Malietoa himself.

After tearful farewells with His Highness Malietoa and his family, during the ride back to Sinalei, James asked his wife: *"Where did that money come from? You knew didn't you? You knew*

this was going to happen. It is the same title as your father's for God's sake."

"Yes, but you married into the clan, you have to serve not only the Malietoa, but also Papa and me," she laughed.

"I joke" she added quickly, "That was my own money. My treat. I knew Malietoa would want to honour you with a title. You know, Papalii lakopo, only Malietoa can bestow a Papalii title, and nobody would dare question it. Those orators went through that charade to impress you. I wanted this to be my treat. Angus and I have been saving our housekeeping money. Angus can take over the title when he's old enough."

"So that's it", thought James. *"This whole exercise was for Angus."* James pretended jealousy, but he was secretly very proud to be bestowed this high honour.

"By the way Sieni, I have read that since I now hold a 'tamalii' title, you are now a 'faletua' – the house in the back. So you'd better start doing as you're told, or the chief is going to get angry and put you in your place at the house in the back."

"The chief better never forget he's a 'faiava' and his title comes from his 'ava' – so don't give me this 'faletua' bullshit!"

They both laughed at this reference to James' 'faiava' status.

James was soon to experience the full impact of his new status as a Samoan matai. Everybody's attitude towards him changed. All the staff at Sinalei Resort started to call him Papalii and they did this with due reverence. James was impressed. The title was really important to the Samoan people.

It became clear to James that money only played a minor part in the values system underlying Samoan society. No amount of money could buy him the status he acquired with the title "Papalii."

The owner and manager of Sinalei Resort was a courteous man, who was also a King's College old boy. Although his English name was Edward Nelson Annandale, he had been bestowed the high title of Tuatagaloa. He explained to James that 'Papalii' was one of the most prestigious titles in Samoa, referred to as the 'alo o Malietoa', or a prince, the son of Malietoa. Although Sieni had already told James this, he did not quite believe it, but now he did notice that people called him 'Papalii, le alo o Malietoa.' It was an honour he did not deserve, or even receive, when he was just 'that wealthy palagi' from New Zealand.

James asked Tuatagaloa if there were many King's old boys in Samoa.

"Yes there are quite a few. Our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is a King's old boy. The Headmaster was here last year and awarded him an Honours' Tie. We were all very proud of that."

"That's really something. I don't remember reading anything about that in any of the College magazines."

Sieni teased James, "You'll get an Honours Tie soon, when you build the next building" An Honours Tie was a rare privilege and the highest award Kings made to its old boys.

"My grandfather may have contributed to the Great Hall as a Friend of King's but it's my mother's family who have had a long history at the school. You've booked in young Angus so stop taking the mickey out of my old school."

James could not help but be impressed that the Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa was an old boy of King's College, and had been awarded a prestigious Honours Tie.

"Did you know that Uncle Angus is staying on an extra week? He loves it out here at Sinalei. He is

a regular at the spa, where he gets pampered and massaged for a couple of hours every day. He also goes snorkelling, plays a bit of golf and eats that great food the German chef cooks. He's even got him cooking eisbein, and Bavarian sausages and sauerkraut."

They all returned to New Zealand except Uncle Angus, but they found it hard to settle down back in Auckland. They had all really enjoyed their visit to Samoa, and their exposure to the Samoan culture and the country's natural beauty would be etched indelibly in their memories.

James was convinced that both Sieni's father and Uncle Angus might never come back but they both eventually returned to New Zealand.

James was very pleased that he had taken the time off to make the trip and he was quietly full of pride at being bestowed the prestigious Papalii title. As a Samoan chief, he felt he could now better appreciate this extraordinary lady he was proud to call his wife. His understanding of Samoan culture had been greatly enhanced, especially his appreciation of Samoan values. Money and material things were insignificant in the context of the 'fa'aSamoa'. He also appreciated how easily his son Angus had fitted into the way of life of his Samoan people. It was as though he had been born and raised in Samoa. It then occurred to James that it

was Sieni who had done most of Angus' child rearing.

PART THREE: THE TRUTH ABOUT MONEY

“If we can command our wealth, we shall be rich and free: if our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed”

Edmund Burke (1729 – 1797)

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE FORTUNE

On the day of his twenty-fifth birthday, James was summoned to meet three of the senior partners at Maxson and East. They told him that he was now the controlling proprietor in the Woods Trust, which in turn made him the controlling shareholder in all the various companies of the Woods conglomerate of listed public companies.

The Whiteside fortune was now also vested in James, although Mary Woods would enjoy half of the income from it during her lifetime. Although all this had been expected, what did come as a surprise to James was that most of Uncle Angus' fortune was now also vested in him, with one-half to be held in trust for young Angus until he reached twenty-five years of age.

As the senior partner explained, *"You are now the wealthiest man in New Zealand. Your net worth is at least twice that of your closest rival."*

"No wonder you're all here" James said simply. *"And remember, I have no rivals in my life. Where is Uncle Angus?"*

The senior partner answered him. *"He just left, after executing the deed vesting his major assets in you. He only kept a few assets to keep him independently wealthy and to give to his favourite charity, the Salvation Army, when he dies. He told me I could tell you that."*

"Are you sure he's not leaving it to Sieni?"

"No, Angus transferred some assets to your wife which we are not authorised to disclose to you, but Sieni may tell you."

"Like hell she will," said James, not with any real animosity. He was now so wealthy; he did not need to work again for the rest of his life.

"Well thank you, gentlemen, I believe my grandfather always quoted Goethe: 'What you inherit from your forefathers, work to earn it'. Now, I must try to work and earn this enormous wealth. There is an Australian property magnate trying to muscle in on the hold Woods Properties' has in the major shopping malls in this country."

The partners took James to lunch and because he ordered a soda, it was a dry lunch.

James was now consuming very little alcohol. The main lunch topics were James' Samoan title experience and the daughter he was expecting as a sister to young Angus.

“Sieni is heavy with child, and young Angus already resents a younger sister who is not even born yet,” he told them. James had worked in the firm long enough to know all these men personally. The firm was still a male bastion without any female partners. For this reason Sieni had her own lawyer, a part- Samoan lady with impressive qualifications and an excellent reputation.

James' net worth had just increased to over two billion dollars. He left the offices of Maxson and East with mixed feelings. New Zealand's richest man needed to thank both the living and the dead for his fortune.

Uncle Angus had arranged a big birthday party for him at the Hilton Hotel, but before James did anything else, he bought a bouquet of flowers and visited his grandparents' graves in Mangere Cemetery. He paid his respects to the hardworking man whose great fortune he had just inherited.

James sat by their graves for a long time. His memories came flooding back. A big tall man whose presence was felt by everyone around him,

especially his small grandson. The small but elegant judge, who always displayed a quiet dignity.

He had learnt from Father Ward that he must thank God for his ancestors, but he would follow this ritual of taking flowers to their graves at least once a month, for the rest of his life.

He had to thank the living as well, and later that evening he proposed an emotional toast to Uncle Angus. After he had sat down he remembered his parents and proposed another toast, thanking them. It was a moving tribute to the people who had contributed to his undisputed status as the wealthiest man in the country.

Sieni was busy preparing to give birth to their daughter and this whole event had very little impact on her. James' substantial increase in wealth was insignificant to Sieni because it meant no real change in their lifestyle.

After Uncle Angus' dinner later that evening, Sieni said to James: *“Two million, or two billion dollars, lakopo, does it really matter? Will it make us any happier? I just pray that God will give us a healthy beautiful daughter to share our lives with.”*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: SALAMASINA WOODS

The birth of Mary Salamasina Woods changed James' life. The moment he saw his daughter emerge from her mother's womb, she became a new extension of his inner self. Lots of black hair. Long body. Blue eyes. Dark skin. He noticed almost all of these things at once.

James had always considered Sieni beautiful rather than pretty but his daughter was to him, the most beautiful girl in the world. He ignored her large, wide, flat Samoan feet. Even her slightly flat nose which she inherited from Sieni's father.

She had James' eyes and forehead. She was never ever going to be as beautiful as her mother but her doting dad would never acknowledge this. Sieni's father, the elder Papalii as he was now referred to, insisted she should have a Samoan middle name, Salamasina. Queen Salamasina had been one of Samoa's most powerful and formidable rulers.

The new Woods' daughter came to be known as Sala, to avoid any confusion with her grandmother that she was named after. Mary Woods was delighted at her namesake, the daughter she never had. She acceded to her being called Sala at home, but was certain that her granddaughter would be called Mary Woods when she entered school.

Mary Salamasina Woods was to be referred to as Sala Woods all her life. She would insist that she was always referred to as Sala. She was known as Sala at school and throughout her career as a prominent sports woman.

"Did you see the way our son looked at her, when he carried her out of the delivery room? She's going to be a real Daddy's girl," Mary Woods told her husband.

"Because young Angus will always be Mommy's boy. The whole business is not healthy, Mary."

"James loves Angus, Darling. He just knows that Sieni will always love him more, so he doesn't try to compete. He's stepping into the void now with young Mary. He knows his wife will always have more affection for Angus."

"It is all very strange to us, but then we only had James. Young Mary has more Samoan features

than Sieni. The poor girl's inherited Sieni's father's flat nose and she has wide, flat feet."

"You've noticed all that! You women never cease to amaze me. Young Angus cuts a dashing figure. A sort of Samoan Woods, if there could be such a person. He's dark with a strong, long body and rather strikingly rugged features."

"Young Angus is not only drop-dead handsome, he is as cocky and sure of himself as I have ever seen in a two year old. At the Supermarket the other day I caught him following two pretty little Indian girls around."

"Give me a break, Mary. I have just gotten used to having a Samoan daughter-in-law and part-Samoan grandchildren. Now an Indian - are you saying my grandson has acquired an early taste for Indian women," he laughed.

"Calm down Darling. And remember, Sieni's part German. Her mother was a Schultz."

Angus was the quiet and laid-back child, while Sala was more aggressive and assertive. Sala always felt that as the younger child, she needed to fight for attention. She had an otherwise happy disposition, with an infectious laugh and a mischievous grin that her father adored. Sala quickly

learnt how to twist her father around her little finger, which she proceeded to do for most of their lives.

The outward bondings were Sieni and Angus, James and Sala. Secretly, each child craved the affection and greater attention from the other parent. Angus admired and appreciated his father while Sala yearned for greater recognition from her intellectual mother.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: THE LIGHT DIES

Two weeks after they all celebrated his ninetieth birthday, Angus MacDonald died suddenly of a heart attack. Uncle Angus had bypass surgery when he was eighty years old and although it came as a shock to the Woods it had been expected by his doctors.

He willed his Newmarket home to young Angus and left close to ten million dollars worth of property to the Salvation Army. He had always admired the work of the Salvation Army, and had been one of its main benefactors for many years.

Although he had not asked for any shares, Uncle Angus had voting control of the fifteen million Woods Enterprises stock given to him by James' grandfather. He had already transferred this stock to Sieni as he considered James had more than enough. Uncle Angus had been quite specific in his instructions to Sieni: *"Do a will - will the shares to young Angus. And vote those stocks, Sieni! Keep a*

close eye on what your husband is doing. Take an interest in the Woods conglomerate."

Sieni did as Uncle Angus instructed and was much more aware of what was happening than James realised. They rarely talked about the Woods business empire, but Sieni had been quite firm on what they must do.

"Let us will everything to our children and make each of them co-trustee, with us, of the other's estate until our youngest child is twenty-five years old. This is just in case something happens to one of us. Should we both die together in an accident or something, I want your lawyer friend Paul Cox to be trustee with your father, if he is still alive, and Father Paul Ward. I do believe though, lakopo, that my sister Sina will be the best guardian of the children." Sina was eight years older than Sieni and married to a policeman. Sieni loved and respected her the most of all her siblings.

Sieni missed Uncle Angus more than she would admit. She had found Uncle Angus' dead body, after he failed to turn up for their usual Rialto movie date. This was a traumatic experience for Sieni who loved Uncle Angus like a father.

Sieni insisted Uncle Angus be buried next to James' grandmother in their large Mangere plot. She also arranged a lavish wake, after a funeral service

conducted by the Bishop of Auckland. She had the food catered and served Dom Perignon, Uncle Angus' favourite champagne. The daughter Uncle Angus never had, made sure he was buried with all the pomp and ceremony that he deserved. The cream of New Zealand's business community attended Uncle Angus' funeral.

It was the first time Sieni had asked for anything substantial. *"Iakopo, how about letting my parents stay in Uncle Angus' Newmarket home that now belongs to young Angus? All their children have left home now, except for my one brother with his wife and family - the one who cannot afford a flat. It does make for a big crowd in our Mangere home and I feel sorry for Mama and Papa."*

"Of course, Angus doesn't need the income and you're his trustee anyway."

Sieni took her parents to see the house and was shocked at how firmly her father rejected the offer.

"Sieni, I appreciate your offer. Your mother's excited but your old father is not a Newmarket kind of guy. I enjoy being in Mangere with my Mangere friends and my Mangere pub. We can walk to our Samoan church and I enjoy living among our own people."

"But, Dad." Sieni pleaded. "It belongs to your grandson, he got it free in Uncle Angus' will."

"Rent it out, pay for his schooling."

It was just like Papalii Folasau to consider his grandson's education and schooling as more important than his own comfort.

"Papa, then move for Mama's sake. Let Mareko, and his wife and four kids live in Mangere. It is all too much for her, with a house full of children."

"I love having Mareko and his family at home. I miss you kids. And I get along well with Mareko's wife, she spoils me."

Mareko's wife Tina was Samoan, and really did spoil her father-in-law. Her only problem was that her Samoan relatives were forever asking her for money "mai le milionea lena e nofo ai Sieni" – "from that millionaire that Sieni's married to." She had finally been able to convince them that there was no way Papalii Folasau would allow that. Sieni's father was constantly reminding his family that the Woods' fortune belonged to the Woods' family.

"But Sieni and her children are Woods," would come the response, *"surely she could help us out financially. They have so much."*

“And their money is theirs, not ours!” he would emphatically tell them.

The only exception was when His Highness Malietoa visited New Zealand, or the Papalii clan needed funds. On those occasions Papalii Iakopo’s contribution was not only requested, but expected.

Sieni’s father was emphatic about his refusal to move:

“The house is beautiful, but I like it where I am, Sieni, truly. When you paid off the remaining mortgage a few years ago, I started to really appreciate my house, and it is now all mine. You know the old saying “Be it ever so humble, there’s no place like home.”

Sieni had taken them to the Newmarket house for a surprise visit. Her mother was so upset at how the conversation was turning out, she fled outside. Sieni had expected her father to be grateful and to accept the offer to live in a beautiful comfortable home in Newmarket.

Sieni was even more shocked that James was not surprised.

“It is a matter of values, Sieni. Remember when I test-drove that Mercedes convertible? It just wasn’t me. I felt so uncomfortable in all that luxury. Happiness is relative. Don’t force your father, even

for your mother’s sake. He still wants to go back home to Samoa - you know that. He knows that accepting your offer will make that dream even more remote. Besides, all his friends and his Church are in Mangere. He is comfortable there.”

Sieni had given up writing her weekly Herald columns when Sala was born, devoting herself fully to raising her children. At that particular moment she was bursting to write about the noble core values of the Samoan. She was particularly proud that in this case, it was her own father who had so firmly asserted them. She had also learnt another important life lesson that day: *“A happy family makes a happy home, a fancy expensive home does not necessarily make a happy family.”*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: MANGERE GIRL

James' parents were surprised to learn of Sieni's father's decision but his father could relate to Papalii Folasau's reasons.

"Remember when our friend Logan tried to get us to buy that fabulous mansion in Paritai Drive? We talked and agreed we should stay here. This is the home Dad bought, I grew up in it and our memories are here."

"Come on, Darling. This is Remuera. We are talking the wild side of Mangere here."

"But deep down, even Sieni is still a Mangere girl."

Then James' father said something very profound.

"I have noticed this about Sieni. You can take the girl out of Mangere, but you can't take Mangere out of the girl."

"You truly amaze me" Mary Woods was impressed, "and if you didn't love Sieni so much, that remark would be offensive."

"It's true though. What about when Sieni and her aunts visited that girl and threatened to slice off a part of her ear? See, for us a move to Newmarket is a move up in this world. The cafes, the restaurants, Rialto movies, the Baths. What do these things mean to Sieni's Dad? Absolutely nothing. Because they are just that. They are material things!"

"It may not be original, but your poetic streak is surfacing James. What was it? You can take Mangere out of the girl?"

"No, you can take the girl out of Mangere, but you can't take Mangere out of the girl. Sieni's Dad is a Mangere man. He loves it there and he wants to live there. It is not our, or Sieni's, job to tell him he should want something else. Besides, his dream since his title bestowal is to return to Samoa to live out the rest of his days."

"Good on him, I say" Mary Woods said "And to think of all those rabble rousers who predicted Sieni's family would pillage the Woods fortune with their Samoan "faalavelave" – what rubbish!"

"You remembered the word 'faalavelave'. Now I'm impressed. I am truly impressed, Mary. That's their word for funerals, weddings, and all the things that they have to contribute money to. And don't forget our son is himself now a Samoan chief – Papalii lakopo!"

"So what about me, you can take the girl out of Remuera, but you can't take Remuera out of the girl. Is it true Sieni attends shareholders' meetings, and votes her stock from Uncle Angus? Speaks up at meetings? I feel so useless, James."

"Come on, Darling, relax. Sieni only does it because that was Uncle Angus' condition in gifting her the stock. She must attend and participate at all stakeholders' meetings."

"Like hell, James. Don't patronise me. Why don't you admit it, I am just your typical Remuera socialite wife. Isn't that what that judge called us in that family law case, the one between that Samoan National Member of Parliament and his wife?"

"Darling, the Judge didn't know what he was talking about! He said the wife in that case was not your typical Remuera housewife and awarded her three million dollar's worth of property."

"Still, Sieni attends stockholders' meetings and I don't. I don't even go to vote the Whiteside stock. You did and now our son does."

"Why would you want to attend? All the businesses are doing well. You get good dividends. You cannot spend all that money. Don't you have over a million dollars in your bank account?"

"We'll all miss Uncle Angus. Why did he leave so much to the Salvation Army?" Mary Woods changed the subject.

"Uncle Angus admired their work. He said New Zealand's a better place because of them. He left his beautiful Newmarket home to young Angus though."

"You know James told me the only reason Uncle Angus never married was because he was in love with your mother."

"What? Uncle Angus loved Mom? He was very fond of Mom, but he loved my father like a brother."

"Apparently, there's a tell-all photo in Uncle Angus' home. Sieni first made the observation. But, listen to this. Sieni believes Uncle Angus was in love with your mother, but never made love to her."

“The great love of his life - Mum? I always believed he must have had a great love, but I didn’t think it was my mother”

“Sieni was as close to Uncle Angus as anyone. It must be true. That explains why he dotes on young Angus. He is the great grandson of the great love of his life. Young Angus even has a birthmark on his neck in the same place as your mother.”

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: GOING GLOBAL

The Woods’ business empire had already gone global. James had acquired a special talent from Uncle Angus for spotting good real estate deals. Woods Properties expanded across the Tasman, firstly to Brisbane where it now owned the four largest shopping malls, then on to Sydney and Melbourne. They were currently about to sign up for the construction of their first megamall in Adelaide.

James now needed to travel extensively. He missed his wife and family when he travelled, but Sieni would not entrust their children to minders, not even her own parents. In the property business it was necessary to view the sites, feel the vibes and assess the movement of people and traffic. All these factors combined to determine whether a megamall would become a thriving success or a dismal failure. James and his father described this important process as “feeling the deal.” The deal had to feel right or they would not go ahead with it.

These megamalls were like one-stop cities. Movie theatres, pubs, restaurants, entertainment centres, other amusements. There were also a wide variety of different shops and boutiques. The art of successful megamalls was making sure your tenants were able to succeed and make a bundle of money. How else could they pay the rent? The megamall owner had to market the mall almost as aggressively as the individual tenants.

Sieni was now focussing her energies on raising her children and reading vociferously about the Woods' empire. She read every report her husband gave her. She attended every stockholders' meeting, asking the difficult questions. This caused James' fellow directors to tease him about whether he and Sieni could not settle these issues between themselves before the meeting. James would just smile and remind them that Sieni had inherited her own stock from Angus Macdonald.

James also noticed that Sieni no longer asked why they needed so much more wealth! Sieni had pushed him to expand to Brisbane after a family holiday they took in the Gold Coast. She was now a major driving force behind making the Woods name instantly recognisable globally.

There was now no more talk of those other two children they had planned to have. Sieni now

considered that they had one of each and that was quite enough for the moment.

Their son Angus was punching a computer when he was three years old. By the time he started at King's Prep he was a computer whiz kid. Although they had rooms next to one another he and his mother were already sending one another emails.

Angus was a natural athlete, growing up strong and tall. He was always very competitive and just had to beat both his parents at table tennis. Instead of just paddling and playing in the pool like most other kids, he was swimming laps before he was five years old. According to his kindergarten teachers he was very bright for his age. Not that Sieni would have it any other way.

Sala was still a little on the chubby side. "Puppy fat" James called it. She hated computers but loved to read. When she was four James took her along to his weekly tennis game with his friends. He noticed Sala hitting the ball at the practice wall with a lot of confidence for a little girl.

"We need to buy a bigger home," he told Sieni next day. Sieni detested the word "residence". She thought it was snooty. *"I live in a home"* she reminded people. *"Uncle Angus' home is even bigger than this."* They were renting it out to the

Japanese Embassy for a huge amount. Young Angus now had to pay taxes! At least, his Trust did.

“Where?” Sieni asked

“There’s a beautiful villa in Parnell. On a cliff top overlooking the sea. A whole acre of land. And a tennis court and large swimming pool.”

“You and Sala go to tennis, now we move to a villa with a tennis court. Don’t tell me your girl is going to play tennis?” Sieni was secretly pleased. Sala had a sweet tooth and a Samoan inclination to put on weight easily. She needed to get involved in a sport. She had the height and strength to make a good tennis player.

“My girl? You mean our daughter. I want you and me back on the court Sieni. You used to almost beat me, remember?”

“Almost beat you? I thrashed you when we played in the Gold Coast during our holidays”

“Will you go and have a look at the house Sieni?”

“No, you make the time. Ring the agent and we’ll both go right now.”

The Agent of course made time for the Woods. The property was due to go to auction three weeks later and the owners were hoping for eight million dollars. James offered seven million seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, *“take it or leave it”*. He signed the agreement next day and they moved in the following month. Their Newmarket home was put up for rent.

James noted, *“Everybody wins. Sala gets her tennis court and we get the biggest ensuite balcony with the greatest view of the harbour. Let’s make more babies!”*

“Don’t get your hopes up, lakopo. I need to get back to my writing. Have you read the poems I gave you to read?”

“Why should I, they’re all about the two Anguses! Even more about Uncle Angus since he passed away.”

“You’re too young and healthy for me to write poetry about, lakopo”

Sieni started joining James on his monthly visits to the Woods’ graves. James laid flowers on his grandparents’ graves and Sieni laid flowers for Uncle Angus.

“Isn’t it ironic?” observed Sieni. *“Uncle Angus and your grandfather, the two greatest friends, together with the one woman they both loved.”*

Sieni and James missed Uncle Angus even more than his parents did. They missed his loving concern and caring presence in all matters that affected them and their family. They missed his dry sense of humour but most of all they missed his wise counsel.

PART FOUR: THE TRUTH ABOUT LIFE

*"Do not go gentle into that good night
Old age should burn and rave at close of day.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light"*

Dylan Thomas Do Not go Gentle
Into that Good Night
(1952)

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: PAPALII FOLASAU

The Woods family still attended church every Sunday and James had now also been made a Deacon. They went every second Sunday after church to Mangere to join in the family 'toanai'.

Sieni added a fortnightly Friday night dinner with James' parents to this routine. Sieni always cooked herself and James' father enjoyed these meals. He would bring a bottle of red wine for the men and a white for the ladies. In the winter the men watched the Friday night Super 12 Rugby Game after dinner. Sieni and Mary Woods usually visited one of the Woods' megamalls with the children.

“Do you know Sieni takes notes and makes suggestions all the time about how to make the malls more marketable?” Mary told her husband.

“Remarkable woman. James has tripled the capitalised value of Woods Properties in just eight years. He is only thirty three years old.”

“Our son had an Honours degree in Law when he was only 22 years old, James.”

“Yes, Darling. You should record that so you don't have to say it to me again. I have decided not to push for Harvard. He's learning more on the job than Harvard could ever teach him, especially about property. The best thing I ever did was to convince him to join Woods Properties”

“You went to Harvard darling and there's a broken- hearted black girl from Atlanta to prove it” Mary Woods was teasing her husband about an African American girlfriend he had while doing his MBA at Harvard.

“Don't tease me Mary. I only went to Harvard because my father thought I needed a Harvard MBA to make the Woods Empire go global.”

“What they didn't teach me at Harvard was how to deal with corrupt Asian and Latin American officials,” he was referring to Woods' loss making forays into Latin America and some parts of Asia.

“James believes property is property. That it will never lose value, and that even corrupt governments don't nationalise anything any more. At least if they don't want overseas investment to dry up completely.”

"I'm glad we never invested in Zimbabwe. Remember how you fell in love with the place after our safari and visit to Victoria Falls?"

These animated conversations between the elder Woods always resulted from their Friday night soirees with James and Sieni. Sieni's main objective was to ensure Angus and Sala spent quality time with their grandparents. The two of them always seemed to be happier at the Folasau 'toanais' though. Sieni's brothers and sisters had twenty-two children amongst them, so there were plenty of cousins to play with. They also found the Folasaus much more relaxed and laid back.

After brunch one Sunday, Sala said: *"What does 'kefe' mean Mummy?"*

Sieni was shocked: *"Sala! That's a very bad word in Samoan! Who said it to you?"*

Sala froze. This was the difference between them. Angus would have happily given a name. Sala absolutely refused and James loved her even more for it. At King's College a squealer was worse than the lowest form of human being.

"You really don't expect Sala to tell on her cousin do you?"

"Yes I do. Someone deserves a damned good hiding. 'Kefe' is a very bad word in Samoan!"

"And next thing you know, our children will no longer want to go to your family brunches."

"Sala is just so stubborn," Sieni was exasperated.

"You mean Sala is just so Samoan!" James replied, coming to the defence of his daughter once again. He changed the subject to something that was concerning him.

"Your father's losing weight fast Sieni. I hope he isn't sick?"

"I've arranged for him to go into Ascot Hospital to see Dr Stiller for a checkup."

Sieni's father was diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. He had quit smoking five years earlier but had been a very heavy smoker before that.

Although he was given only three months to live. he survived another five months. In those five months James hardly saw his wife. Sieni took her turn in the around-the-clock care the family gave their father.

His mother noticed:

“Samoan families really rally around when their parents are sick.”

“Yes, and it is humbling. I thought I was the number one man in Sieni’s life.”

“You’re number three son. There are her Dad and Angus ahead of you. Don’t worry, young Sala will leave her husband and look after you some day!”

They both had a laugh about that.

“I hope so, Mum. It is hard on Sieni though. It makes me appreciate having you and Dad in good health.”

“Angus starts King’s College next year. Where have you booked Sala?”

“Sieni insists Sala goes to Epsom Girls”. Epsom Girls Grammar was regarded as one of the best public schools in New Zealand. “She says Sala is not the St. Cuthberts or Diocesan type.”

“What a load of rubbish! I’ll book her into Dio. The new Headmistress of the School and I were at Dio together. How can you send Angus to Kings and Sala to Epsom Girls?”

Sala was booked and confirmed into Diocesan, the top Anglican boarding school for girls. Sieni was not aware of this until the year before she was due to attend.

By the time Sala was thirteen she was the Auckland Under-15 girls tennis champion. The move to Parnell and the tennis coaching James had arranged for her, had all paid off. Sala was still the aggressive and confident daddy’s girl, both on and off the tennis court. At almost five feet eight inches, she was tall for her age.

Although Sala had slimmed down James would often remind Sieni that their daughter had the strong “Tina Turner” legs suitable for a star tennis player.

“We know you are a big fan of Tina Turner’s legs, lakopo. Sala’s just cursed with sturdy Samoan legs.”

“I am a big fan of Tina Turner, not just her legs! Sala’s coach says Sala could be one of the best in the world. She’s mentally very strong for her age. She can already thrash the two of us!”

“I just wish Sala would apply herself half as well to her school work. You spoil her, you know. Talk about Daddy’s girl.”

“Sala just feels she is too young to become a computer nerd, like Angus. She reads everything she can lay her hands on. She’s driving Dad broke with her book purchases.”

James’ father had continued a tradition begun by his grandfather. The Access Book Store had an open account for Angus and Sala. They could take any books they wanted on his account.

“You know that account has ballooned since Access Books starting selling CDs and Videos. I wouldn’t mind betting Sala talked poor Tom Nietzsche at Access Books into ordering them. Sala has a way with all men. She doesn’t just twist you around her little finger! And don’t call Angus a computer nerd. He just enjoys going online to get information for school projects.”

“Come on Sieni, there’s a lot of unsavoury porn on the internet as well. It would be good to occasionally find Angus reading a book.”

James went on to discuss Angus’ rugby talents. *“He is becoming a bit too tall for a wing, but I can’t seem to convince him to move to the forwards.”*

“Angus is just fast. He’ll play wing for the All Blacks some day. Jonah Lomu is much bigger than Angus and he was the greatest All Black wing before

his kidney problems.” Sieni would always rally to her son’s defence.

“Alright, I am not going to debate that with you, but I have never ever seen you watch a rugby game, apart from Angus’ team’s games, and then we have to stop you running on the field to beat up anyone who even looks like they mean to harm your son.” James was making fun of how excited Sieni became when her son was playing rugby.

“Why didn’t you play again after King’s lakopo?” This was a sensitive area.

“I was good enough for King’s, but I knew I’d never make it as a loose forward in the big time. I play tennis and squash instead, to keep fit.”

“And as Uncle Angus used to tell me, you exercise in the back of Les Mills aerobic classes in order to ogle the girls!”

This broke the tension, and they both laughed.

That evening their lovemaking was especially passionate. It was a cool spring evening and James liked to keep their sliding door open so they could enjoy their magnificent view over the balcony.

“I love you, Sieni.”

"I love you, Iakopo"

"Do you mind if Sala goes to Diocesan next year?"

"Okay, Diocesan, but as long as she doesn't board. The school's only a short drive for me in the morning. Angus is not boarding either, I am quite happy to drive him to catch the Otahuhu train every morning."

James could not believe how easily Sieni was giving in on this issue.

"Thanks Sieni. My performance must have really been exceptional tonight. Feel like seconds?"

"Don't flatter yourself, Iakopo. You're just lucky I have no basis of comparison. Maybe I should take a lover and find out."

"Did I tell you I was Captain of Shooting at King's?"

"James Woods III could have been Captain of anything at King's, especially after the Woods family virtually single-handedly built the Great Hall."

"That's not fair Sieni. I caught your eye. Now come here and do your duty this time, you're getting very lazy letting me do all the work."

"You're supposed to do all the work."

Their lovemaking was now even more intense than before.

"I stopped taking the pill two months ago. We may have made a baby tonight."

James was surprised.

"Thanks for telling me. When was I supposed to be let in on the secret?"

"Why do you think I agreed to Diocesan so easily? I knew your mother had booked her. Sala is not the career type, except maybe in her tennis, and she could probably make a good living playing tennis. Let her go to Diocesan, smooth her around the edges. Meet the brothers of Dio girls, to support her in her old age."

"Come on Sieni, Sala will be wealthier by far than any girls at Dio."

It always surprised James that a modern woman like Sieni was so old-fashioned about inheritance. Sieni believed that only boys who carried the founder's surname should inherit.

“Sala tells me if she gets married, she won’t change her name!”

“Really, wait until she falls in love. I changed my name.”

“Not for your columns!”

“That was to protect you, lakopo. You know some of my views are radical and anti-Government. Not good for business.”

“Are you up for a third round?”

Now they really did both laugh.

“Let’s go to sleep. This is the first time we’ve even gone a second round in months. And your performance has been going down-hill ever since our Hawaiian honeymoon, lakopo.”

“That’s a lot of rubbish, and you know it Sieni.”

But they were sated and slept in each other’s arms. James was at peace and slept soundly. His beloved Sala could go to Diocesan Girls School. He wondered if Father Ward had any influence. Since Uncle Angus’ death Sieni was now confiding in him more.

James was also grateful that his wife could be at home with him tonight. Since her father’s illness she had been away at least three to four nights a week. The sisters and brothers always made sure at least two or three of them were ‘on duty’ every night.

The old man refused to go to St Joseph’s hospice even though there was now a new tumour in his neck. The family were getting despondent, and Sieni just wanted her father’s suffering to end.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE FUNERAL

Sieni's father died the following week, late on a Sunday afternoon after 'toanai', with all his children and grandchildren by his side. James admired his display of remarkable courage. He put on a smiling face for every grandchild, in spite of the obvious pain he was enduring. He refused any more morphine shots, after only one dose. He preferred to be lucid and able to understand and appreciate his family.

They had been eating their dessert that Sunday and Angus left the table as he was not a big fan of ice cream. He returned to the sitting room shortly afterwards and announced *"Pa has grown quiet and won't talk to me."*

Papalii Folasau had made his wishes very clear. He was to be buried with his parents in the family plot in Sapapalii, Savaii. There was to be a memorial service in Auckland at their Congregational Church. They would then all fly to Samoa for his final funeral service at the Congregational Church in Sapapalii, Savaii.

The whole family decided they must all travel to Samoa and they also paid the fares of their Samoan minister in Auckland and his wife so they could travel to Samoa together.

"It must all cost a fortune." James remarked to Sieni.

"They have all been saving. The in-laws will stay behind to care for the children. You are a Papalii. You should come to Samoa with the children and me. And they want you to do the only English eulogy in the service in Auckland."

"Does the cost not matter?"

This talk about cost was frustrating Sieni:
"We are Samoans, lakopo. This is the last thing we do on earth for our parents and loved ones. We will all go into mortgage and probably spend years paying off our debts. We show our love and respect for our parents by how we put them to eternal rest. Will you deliver the eulogy and come with us to Samoa? The children have already been given time off school."

"Of course I will Darling. I didn't mean to be insensitive. I was supposed to fly to Sydney next week, but I'll postpone it until after we get back from Samoa."

“Thank you, lakopo. I’ll help you with the eulogy. We have to make offerings to Sapapalii after we lay Papa to rest. The family suggest we should follow Papa’s ‘lagi’ with your formal presentations as Papalii to our village.”

James felt trapped. *“I thought we’d done that.”*

“That was what we call ‘tapa le ipu’, but now you must make your presentations to the village. They know we have two children now. Thank you lakopo. I am very grateful that you are able to spare the time for my father. He always admired you, and Angus was one of his favourite grandchildren.”

The Auckland memorial service was held at the Folasau’s Congregational Church in Mangere. Most of the service was in Samoan.

Maria Folasau gave a eulogy and then it was James’ turn. He heard himself being introduced as Susuga Papalii lakopo. Sieni’s name for him was catching on. James had learnt some Samoan introductory and concluding words:

“Ou te faatulou atu i le afaigaluega paia a Le Atua, lau Susuga le Taitai o le Sauniga.”

These few words alone deeply impressed the congregation, and James was pleased to notice how proud Sieni was of him. He then switched to English and spoke of how he admired and respected his father-in-law, Susuga Papalii Folasau. His pride as a man and a father. His insistence he pay for half of the cost of their wedding. His refusal to move into young Angus’ inherited home. His edict that no family members should ever attempt to “borrow” from the Woods. His pride at being Samoan, especially the holder of the Papalii title.

James concluded by talking about their family’s mourning of this great loss. He told of what a great Grandpa he had been to Angus and Sala. What a great job he and his wife had done raising Sieni, the light of his life. Sieni was clearly blushing now.

James concluded by reiterating his sadness at his own loss of a revered and respected father-in-law. He ended with a biblical quote in Samoan, which really impressed the congregation.

*“Aue, ua maliliu toa,
Ua maumau ai aupega o le taua.”
Finally, “Ia manuia lau faigamalaga Papa.”*

There was involuntary clapping, even though applause is quite unusual in such a conservative church.

Sieni was proud of James, as were her whole family. No people were prouder than James' parents, who were also present. They were determined to be there since they could not travel to Samoa.

“That was a great eulogy son. You could have made a great court lawyer. How about politics?” his father asked.

“Thanks, Dad. Let young Angus go into politics some day. He has the gift of the gab. I was supposed to go to Sydney to close a shopping mall deal. You still have the gift. How about you going to Sydney in my place? We are leaving for Samoa later tonight.”

And so James and his family travelled to Samoa with Papalii Folasau's coffin and a plane full of relatives. His father flew to Sydney to seal the deal that was to become one of Woods Properties most successful Megamalls.

CHAPTER NINETEEN: SAMOAN REQUIEM

It was hot and sultry, even in the early morning at 3.30am, when their Air New Zealand flight arrived at Faleolo Airport. Sieni collected all the passports of their group. A senior government official, who was also a relative, was meeting them and would take care of their arrival formalities and baggage. The family proceeded directly to the special Chapel which had been recently built at the airport, right next to the Terminal building. It seemed that most of the three hundred seats were already filled with people, including at least five ministers from the various denominations in Sapaalii.

After a forty-minute service and the guests had departed, the family were told they could remain in the chapel until it was closer to the time they had to catch the Savaii ferry at the nearby wharf. They had booked out the eight o'clock ferry to carry their large family group, the funeral car and a fleet of ten vehicles, including eight large vans, for all the family to use in Savaii. Apia Rentals had, with quiet efficiency, arranged for all the vehicles to be waiting

for them at the airport. The Sapapalii Congregational Minister was already taking charge, and had brought over his choir, even for this brief airport ceremony.

The vehicular ferry, "Lady Samoa II," took only an hour to cross and they were all disembarked at Salelologa, Savaii by nine o'clock. They arrived in Sapapalii, in a slow funeral convoy, by half past nine.

James noticed that for the last mile all the streets were lined on both sides with men without shirts and wearing black 'lavalava'. There were also coconut fronds staked on both sides of the road. The village were honouring the death of a Papalii, a high chief, '*o le alo o Malietoa*'.

When it had become apparent that her father's health was deteriorating and his condition was diagnosed as terminal, Sieni and her family had sent over sufficient funds to build a new 'maota' or large family meeting house, so that their father's coffin would lie in dignified surroundings. One of Sieni's brothers had travelled over to supervise the construction and it was one of the finest 'maota' in the village. It was now all adorned with fine mats and had an elevated dais in the centre to place the coffin on.

As the children were very tired, James and Sieni checked into the Siufaga Beach Cottages and settled them down to sleep. They had been too

excited to sleep during the flight over, and during the boat trip.

James was astonished at the continuous stream of people arriving with fine mats and money. Some came with whole cattle beasts, others with cartons of corned beef and canned fish. Sieni's family kept some of the offerings and presented some back. Those who presented offerings expected the family to keep some for Papalii Folasau's 'lagi'.

The orators were in their element and relishing this process, receiving their share of fine mats and "lafo" - money in the process. Orators always came out best on these occasions in the "faa-Samoa."

James was a Papalii, an alii chief. He was not an orator or talking Chief, and he was grateful for that. This whole process of presentations started as soon as they had arrived, and continued on until nightfall. The family was kept busy preparing plates of food to offer all the people who arrived with presentations.

Throughout the night, various church choirs took turns singing hymns around the coffin. Each choir was invited to have coffee and cakes after they sang their hymns. They were also given cartons of biscuits and bread to take home with them.

“Where do all these choirs come from?” James asked. These church choirs came from far and wide. It was their way of honouring the passing of a high chief.

It was three in the morning when the last choir left. Sieni and her family were quite literally exhausted.

They sat there drinking coffee as it was too late to sleep. As predicted, it was not quite six next morning when the first ‘sii’ arrived. They knew the funeral was at ten o’clock, and they came early, but it was half past nine before all these presentations had been dealt with. It was quite normal for family orators to be so busy that they missed the church service altogether.

The ‘taulele’a’ wanted to carry the coffin the eight hundred metres to the Church. They did this in shifts, each group carrying the coffin for about fifty metres.

Some chiefs started firing gunshots into the air. This was the usual mark of respect when a great chief died. James was impressed, sweating ‘taulele’a’ were carrying the coffin as gunshots filled the air.

The funeral service lasted three hours. Two hours were taken up by eulogies, all in Samoan.

Sieni’s mother, her eldest brother, Sieni, the eldest grandson and even their church Minister from New Zealand; all of them gave eulogies. Another Papalii, on behalf of the village, gave a eulogy thanking Sieni’s father for all he had contributed to the village and the Church during his tenure as a Papalii. He also acknowledged Papalii Iakopo. James was proud that he was referred to, even though he did not really understand what was being said.

After the service, the coffin was again carried back in relays to the newly prepared burial plot of the Folasaus. It was a wide site, enough for two coffins. Sieni explained to James later that the reason for this was to allow space for her mother to be buried there also when she passed away. There were still more traditional speeches after the usual final prayers were offered at the gravesite.

There was no time for the family to mourn Sieni’s father after he was finally laid to rest. The village folk returned to their homes and the Folasau clan prepared for their father’s ‘lagi’ which was to begin at eight o’clock the following morning. This involved the whole village receiving fine mats, money and food from the family.

James had never seen so many fine mats, food and money exchange hands in one day. All done with pomp and ceremony and a great deal of oratory.

There had been an unexpected last minute change of plans. The family had decided that Sieni's eldest brother Mataio would assume his father's title. It was then agreed that it would be appropriate to have Mataio's title bestowed together with James' in one ceremony. This decision allowed James and Sieni to fund the substantial costs of the "lagi" and the "saofai".

James was relieved that he would not be alone. James and Mataio were both dressed in bright blue velvet 'lavalava' and 'ulafala' and took off their shirts. James proudly wore the 'ulafala' he had received from His Highness Malietoa. Malietoa had conveyed his blessings through his own son, Papalii Moli who was also in attendance.

James and Mataio were led by the senior ranking Papalii into the new 'maota'. 'Ava', or kava root branches, were presented and announced. Speeches were made and both the Christian and the traditional blessings were given.

After she had oiled his body for the ceremony, Sieni teased James that he still had a sexy body, *"but you need a tan, lakopo."*

They took many photos and filmed the "saofai". When James' parents saw the video they regretted very much not being in Samoa for this

occasion. They were also fascinated and excited to see their grandchildren in traditional wear, taking an active part in these ceremonies. Sala looked stunning in her traditional puletasi.

After the title ceremony, the mats, money and food started its flow to the village all over again.

"Sapapalii Village will not need to buy food for a couple of months and the Church ministers will be able to purchase new vehicles," the new Papalii Folasau II told Sieni later, although there was some exaggeration in this statement.

Sieni's brother was mortgaged to the limit and could not have afforded his title ceremony had it not been held jointly with James. The photo of the two of them taken at their title bestowal was to be the biggest photo on display in his home in Sapapalii.

"You see, lakopo, we have a dynasty going as well now. My brother is Papalii Folasau II, as my father was the first," Sieni teased James. Mataio had told the village he wished to be known as Papalii Folasau II.

"Angus is now always going to be Angus, he'll never be James Woods IV," James teased back.

"Thank God for that" Sieni said.

The family was pleased at how well both the funeral and the dual title bestowals had gone. James had asked Sieni if holding these on the same day was not perceived as insensitive to Sieni's father's memory.

“Death is a time of celebration for the Christians, Samoans believe. We should not mourn as our father's soul is in heaven with his God.”

“We had the mats, the food and the money left over from the funeral. Now we have also ensured a quick succession and no power vacuum in the family. Sort of like “The King is dead. Long live the King”. This is quite normal and happens all the time.”

“Even if you are Christians, that all sounds so cold, Sieni?”

Sieni's eyes moistened up. *“Of course we grieve for our father, lakopo. Why do you think we have all made ourselves paupers to lay him to rest in style. Now we must save to buy him an appropriate tombstone, and some of us will return in twelve months' time for the 'unveiling' ceremony.”*

Usually held exactly twelve months after the burial, these “unveilings” of tombstones had become significant and expensive ceremonies in Samoan custom. The mana and status of the family would

dictate how elaborate a tombstone there should be. It was interesting that back in Auckland, when Sieni and her family went to pick out an appropriate tombstone, the proprietor told them that only the “Island people bothered with large tombstones anymore.”

“Don't worry, lakopo. We don't need to come back. There's now Papalii Folasau II to oversee those ceremonies. Besides, we need to plan our Samoan visits around the school holidays, so that Angus and Sala can join us.”

They returned to Apia the next day with the children, to spend a night at Aggies. They then spent a couple of days at a resort called Coconuts Beach Club, owned by Americans Tautai Barry Rose and his wife Jennifer. “Coconuts” was a beautiful boutique hotel located right next to Sinalei Reef Resort where they had stayed previously.

The children enjoyed the relative luxury of the suites at Aggie Grey's and Coconuts after being in Savaii. They were very fond of their late grandfather and were pleased to have been able to take time off school to attend his funeral.

The rest of Sieni's family stayed on in Sapapalii, except for those who had to rush back to New Zealand because of work commitments.

Sieni would never have allowed their children to miss their grandfather's funeral. She was more conscious than ever that if her children could not speak Samoan, at least they must understand that they were Samoan and what that meant. She told James that she should have engaged an elderly Samoan housekeeper, who could speak only Samoan, to stay with them while the children were growing up. This would have ensured they grew up speaking both languages.

**PART FIVE: THE TRUTH ABOVE LOVE AND
LIFE**

*“Omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori
Love conquers all: let us all yield to love.”*

Virgil (70 - 19 BC)
Eclogues

*“Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit Impediments. Love is not love
Which alters it when alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.”*

William Shakespeare
Sonnet 116

CHAPTER TWENTY: SECOND HONEYMOON

Sieni was not feeling well and she believed she was probably pregnant again. It had been a while since their last child. Sala was now thirteen and a third-former at Diocesan Girls' School and Angus was fifteen and a fifth-former at King's College.

The doctor did a quick pregnancy test and it came up negative. As Sieni was complaining of abdominal pains he ordered a scan and blood tests. Sieni was still convinced that the pregnancy test was faulty and asked for a proper analysis and the blood test.

James was uncertain of how the children would react if they had another child now but he was secretly excited at the prospect of a third child.

“Are you sure you're pregnant, Sieni? You went off the pill a few years ago. I was starting to think you were past it.”

“Past what, lakopo? I am only thirty-eight years old.”

“But you've started writing your columns again. I thought you were enjoying the break. The children are both at secondary school and doing well.”

Sala was already in the Senior A tennis team, the only third-former to achieve that distinction. She was even beginning to take an interest in her schoolwork except that anything to do with the sciences completely turned her off.

Angus was a leg spinner for the King's 1st XI cricket team and was also a competent batsman. He would get a trial for the 1st XV but at wing and there was a lot of competition from seventh-form boys. Angus was exceptionally brilliant scholastically. James readily admitted his son was a brighter student than even he had been at school and he was developing into a champion debater.

He was only a fifth-former but he was already popular with the sixth form girls at King's College. Sala was already getting older Diocesan girls befriending her as a way to get to know Angus. This disgusted her and she would deliberately lead them on without ever saying anything to Angus.

Sala knew she could beat the school's top tennis player, who also happened to be the Head Girl. She deliberately lost the compulsory challenge between them and played at number two. Her gesture was appreciated and led to a strong friendship with the Head Girl who doted on this young tennis prodigy.

Sala missed her father during his frequent absences abroad but she found she was beginning to enjoy her mother's company. Sieni was more like a sister to her than a mother.

Sieni's test was confirmed negative, so the doctor ordered even more tests. Sieni now noticed that the pains were becoming more acute. At the onset of one attack she almost doubled over with pain. She always put on a brave face and kept this to herself.

James flew in from Sydney on a Thursday afternoon determined to take a long weekend off. They had booked Huka Lodge in Taupo for just the two of them. Their excuse for going alone was the children both had sports fixtures on the Saturday and their grandparents were more than happy to drive them to their sports.

James and Sieni flew out to Taupo on Friday and arrived at Huka Lodge in the afternoon. The

porter had barely closed the door, leaving them alone in their cottage, when they were making passionate love. There was a new intensity that James had not really experienced since their Hawaiian honeymoon. There was even a sense of urgency in the way Sieni was making love to him with wild abandon.

After they made love, they took a long hot spa bath and were dressed for cocktails by six.

Huka was one of the most famous Lodges in New Zealand. The Queen of England and many other international celebrities enjoyed staying there. The Lodge was expensive but all the drinks and meals were included in the tariff. The menu was 'table d'hote' and it was amongst the best gourmet food served in New Zealand. James and Sieni always needed to go on a diet after their visits to Huka Lodge.

It was to be a particularly memorable weekend. Sieni was not just romantic, she was clinging. James noticed she wanted to stay up late. They took long walks by the river or sat for hours talking outside their cottage.

On the Saturday, Sieni suddenly said to James, "*Let's go bungy jumping.*" This was an impulsive act that was out of character. The Taupo bungy was even more terrifying than the

Queenstown one. It was a longer fall and the river underneath was more rapid. James indulged Sieni, believing she would change her mind when they got there. But it was not to be. Sieni asked for them to be strapped, so they could jump together. She held on to James as though her life depended on it. They both screamed from the moment they jumped off and continued screaming for the four big bounces before they were lowered on to a boat on the river below. Sieni had ordered a video of their jump. James had never been so scared in his life. Sieni treasured that video of their bungy jump.

“You have to try everything once, lakopo.”

James noticed their lovemaking was now becoming more than just intense. Sieni made love and experimented in a way James had never experienced before. She was pushing their passion to new heights of ecstasy.

“Wow, Sieni. I need to bring you to Huka more often.” Sieni smiled, as though his remark saddened her.

On the Sunday morning, she insisted they went to the Anglican Church in Taupo. This surprised James, as never on any of their previous visits to Huka had Sieni shown any interest in attending the Sunday service. They enjoyed the sermon and shared a morning tea with the

congregation after the service. The parish priest said he knew Father Paul Ward as they had attended St Johns Seminary at the same time.

By Sunday evening's cocktails James was curious, *“What's up Sieni?”*

“Nothing's up, lakopo. I just love you and want to make our every moment together mean something.”

“This is the first time we've been away together that you haven't said you missed the children or even wanted to call them.”

She hugged him and kissed him modestly on the cheek because there were other guests around.

“The children are fine lakopo. They need quality time with your parents. I need quality time with you. Do you love me lakopo?” James could not remember when Sieni last asked him this question.

“Come on Sieni, of course I do. I love you so much my only nightmare is a life without you.”

“lakopo! Life will always go on, with or without me. And never forget your number one girl in life, Sala. Sala will always look after you. She adores you. She worships the ground you walk on.”

“Just as Angus adores you Sieni. Why are we having this conversation?”

“I just wanted to hear you say; ‘I love you’.”

“I love you, Sieni. Without being corny, you’re my everything.”

“And everything is you!” Sieni was laughing, as she completed the words of the Stylistics song.

“I love you, lakopo. I never told you this before in case you got swollen-headed. I thought you were so cute when you asked for more food when we first met. By the time you bought Mele and me fish and chips I was already beginning to fall in love with you, James Woods the third!”

“Sieni, I was smitten by you the first time I saw you. You and your cheeky, cocky smile. Such arrogance and in a kitchen maid!” James was deliberately mocking her.

“Give me a break James. I may have been a kitchen maid, but I knew who I was and what I wanted out of life. If you hadn’t come along, I would probably have married my brother’s friend. He became an All Black you know.”

“Poor Sieni, missed out on an All Black.”
James put a hand up to wipe a mock tear from his eye.

“No lakopo, I got all the All Black I need. You are all I need. Uncle Angus used to tease me about how much I tried to hide from you how much I truly loved you. I am truly, madly and deeply in love with you, lakopo. You know, we women don’t say this too often. It makes us too vulnerable.”

James had noticed that Sieni was drinking more wine than she usually did and she was mixing her whites and reds. It was also quite out of character for Sieni to insist that they dine alone. Huka Lodge allow their guests to choose if they wished to dine alone or to join other guests and Sieni usually preferred to dine with the others.

This particular evening, they were alone in the underground wine cellar, which is just across from the entrance to the Lodge. A table for two was set in the cosy surroundings. The waiters were very discrete and well trained. They appeared only when they were needed to pour the wine or bring in the next course.

Dinners at Huka Lodge always comprised five courses, each with its own recommended wine. The servings were small but the cuisine was of exceptionally high quality.

Sieni insisted they follow the menu suggestions for the wines. They had as appetizer a succulent whitebait fritter with a tart lemon sauce. This was followed by a most delicious lobster bisque. It was not thick, but rather light with an aromatic white wine sauce.

After a palate-cleansing sorbet, they tucked into grilled tiger prawns. Next they were served the 'piece de resistance', John Dory fillets mornay style. The dessert was 'crepes flambees' cooked at their table. James insisted this was served with Dom Perignon instead of the Chef's suggested Riesling.

It was an evening that would provide unforgettable memories. Its real significance would only strike James after they returned home. Sieni was even more clinging than usual, always touching his hand and smiling at him often. She was continuously leaning over and kissing him.

"I love you Papalii lakopo, my Samoan chief. It doesn't matter if you don't buy me diamond rings," Sieni was speaking the words from the song.

"That's unfair Sieni. Every time I buy you an expensive diamond ring or a necklace, you put it in the safe and say, 'Save it for Sala!' That necklace you are wearing tonight. I bought it five years ago for

your birthday, this is the first time I've seen you wear it!"

"I am not usually comfortable wearing expensive jewellery, lakopo. Our daughter is not the type who will ever marry a wealthy man, the reason is that she was born into so much wealth that she despises it. She'll need those diamond rings and necklaces some day."

"Darling Sieni, you are so old-fashioned. I am going to leave Sala her fair share of my fortune. She will be wealthy enough to buy all the diamond rings and necklaces she wants. She'll also earn her own millions playing tennis."

"Don't put her in your will yet lakopo. Wait until she has children and leave the assets directly to them. Sala will have many boyfriends, maybe even many husbands! You need to protect her from herself. I agree that she will be a world-class tennis champion and will earn quite enough money of her own. She's precocious sexually though, lakopo. She had her first period at ten years old and I have already found some rude magazines under her bed."

James noticed that Sieni was more talkative than usual, and blamed the wine.

“Sala and I share one thing in common. We both adore you, but you’ll be surprised to hear that young Angus probably loves you most of all!”

“Come on, Sieni. Angus is a real mama’s boy.”

“Do you know he has a scrap book with every single newspaper clipping with you in it. Everything to do with the Woods empire is in another scrapbook. It was only when I mentioned it, that he started one with my Herald articles.”

“How does he get them all?”

“He scours the internet, worldwide. Your first Megamall in Los Angeles. That’s the real reason he wanted to go to see Disneyland again a few years ago. Do you remember? He spent more time in the Mall? It’s a good thing they have movies and restaurants there.”

“And a great gym, no wonder he kept telling me to go and workout with him there. We would work out, take a shower, have lunch and then see a movie. All in one Mall.”

“Yes, and he kept buying me massages and other Spa Treatments at the Day Spa. Remember the first time we went there Angus spent a full fifteen minutes admiring the Woods sign in the front.” There

was a special golden logo of a globe with the word “WOODS” written in the centre.

Sieni was explaining a side to Angus that James was totally unaware of. Angus had hidden his growing interest in the Woods empire so well. Sieni now changed the subject.

“Do you know he writes poetry?”

“No, and why have you and Angus been hiding this secret life from me? Is it good poetry?”

“It’s great poetry, lakopo.” Sieni was quite happy to exaggerate when it came to her son. “The pastoral eloquence of Wordsworth and the wit of Pope. He’s been afraid to let you read his poetry in case you didn’t like it. He swore me to secrecy so you’d better not let on you heard this from me. Even though he loves the sciences, he also gets ‘A+s’ in English. His English teacher tells me his poetry has been published every year in the school magazine.”

“And I don’t even read that nerdy stuff in the back of the annual King’s magazines they send me. I know he’s a great cricketer. Not many leg spin bowlers make the 1st XI at Kings in their fifth form.”

Sieni squeezed his hand tightly. *“You must promise to spend more time with Angus, lakopo. Beneath the cocky exterior, he’s very sensitive and*

vulnerable. Sala's the tough one, but Angus needs you more. If you want to understand our son, read his poetry. His English teacher is so impressed he believes Angus is ready to publish his first collection."

That night after dinner Sieni made love to James with a passion such as he did not believe she was capable of. She deliberately totally lost control. She wanted everything done to her and did everything for James in return.

"I keep having more and more orgasms, lakopo. You just need to move and I come" she whispered in his ear. It was at that moment that James fully understood what was actually happening to Sieni. She was in a completely different world, given over absolutely to her wild pleasure. James remembered when he first saw Sieni this way on their Hawaiian honeymoon.

They were tired but sated next morning. The room was still full of the smells and resonant with the sounds of their lovemaking the night before. Sieni whispered in James' ear, *"It is a good thing our cottage is far away from the others, lakopo, we would have woken the dead with our screaming last night! I should be feeling ashamed of myself but I don't. We are getting quite disgusting in our old age."*

They had hardly slept all night and before dawn James brewed their espressos. They then went for a long walk in the woods by the river. They talked as though they were meeting each other for the first time.

They caught an early flight to Auckland on that Monday morning. James' Board of Directors had urged him to buy a corporate jet but James would have none of that extravagance.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE: WHAT NOW MY LOVE?

They were back in their home in Auckland by early afternoon. James told Sieni that he needed two days off to get over their break.

“Iakopo, how strong are you?”

“With you by my side, how can I be weak?” said James, echoing one of their favourite psalms.

“Dr Black wants to see us at three o’clock this afternoon”.

James’ whole life seemed to stop at just that moment. It struck him like lightning what their whole weekend was about. He also now realised it was Sieni who suggested this weekend break even before he had left for Australia in the beginning of the week.

His reaction was to take Sieni in his arms and squeeze her to him as though he had never held her before.

“I can hardly breathe Iakopo. Give me a break. I only said Dr Black wants to see the two of us”.

Finally, James let Sieni go:

“What have you been hiding from me Sieni?”

“I thought I was pregnant but I am sick, Iakopo. Apparently, I am very sick.”

James sat down and was now openly crying. The tears were streaming down his cheeks. When he started to sob Sieni knelt by his chair and took him in her arms.

“We believe. We believe”, was all she said.

“We believe there is a God. He will have a place for me, and we can always reunite in heaven, Iakopo. You need to remarry, maybe even fall in love again.”

“Don’t!” James shouted, *“For God’s sake, stop it!”*

James was shaking convulsively. *“Nothing is going to happen to you. I won’t allow it. Oh Sieni,*

how could you even talk of my ever loving or marrying anyone else? I would rather live with your memories than with someone else. Who could ever take your place?"

James' despair arose at the mention of Dr Harvey Black's name, for though he was a family friend but he was also one of New Zealand's top cancer specialists.

He snapped out of his despair as suddenly as he had succumbed to it.

"Sieni, what is it? Nothing is impossible. There are new medicines and technologies every day. We'll search the world. We'll find a cure for you."

"You can talk to Dr Black yourself but I am strong, lakopo. I have lived my life to the full. I have the greatest husband, the greatest children, and the greatest family. I have had everything I ever needed. What more could I want?"

"Sieni, I refuse to allow any more of this type of talk! There are many more specialists we can see and many more countries we can travel to, to find cures. I'll talk to Dr Black."

"I am at peace, lakopo. I have talked to both Father Ward and our Samoan Congregational Minister. If this is God's will for me then I must accept it. I must accept my fate and count all my blessings. I have a loving family and children who are now old enough to have fond memories of me. Our children are blessed with so much talent. Most of all, I thank God for you, for taking me and leaving you behind to love and care for our children."

"Sieni, I will not allow this talk. I just will not allow it! Let's go now and see Dr Black."

"Of course, lakopo. We should go now. I never wanted to tell you until I really needed to."

James tried to hide his animosity when they entered the doctor's office. He was unconsciously slipping into a 'shoot the messenger' mentality.

Sieni had a rare but virulent form of leukaemia. Not common, but even more unusual in Samoans. Dr Black had consulted the best medical minds in the country. The usual plasma transplants and other possible treatments were not recommended and would not be successful.

"Tell James how long." Sieni wanted to get this out of the way. Dr Harvey Black was finding this situation very difficult, in spite of his many years of medical practice.

“It depends, but on the medical evidence, we believe two to three months. I am so very sorry James.”

At the moment it was as though someone had taken a stake and driven it into James’ heart.

He was not accepting defeat yet: *“I appreciate your candour Doctor, but I cannot accept it. Sieni is fine. We have just returned from the most wonderful weekend of our lives. We are determined to beat this thing. I cannot accept you have explored all the possible treatments.”*

In spite of Sieni’s references to God’s grace and mercy, James found himself blaming God. There was also a lot of soul searching. Had he been a loving husband to Sieni? What more could he have done? Could this situation have been avoided? James was fully convinced that he loved Sieni but his grief was causing him to wonder if he had loved her enough.

CHAPTER TWENTY TWO: NOW WILL YOU LEAVE ME?

James did not return to work. His father assumed temporary responsibility for running Woods Properties. The management structure was highly sophisticated and the company could run itself. The main family input was in the area of expansion, where to and by how much? There were plans for the first Woods megamall in Vancouver, Canada, and they were exploring a site in New York City.

Sieni tried her best to send James back to work, but he just refused to even talk about it. He scoured the internet for health and medical news. The more determined James was to find a cure, the more Sieni resolved herself to her fate. James was now even reluctant to sleep at night. He considered sleep a thief, robbing precious time from them. He

was literally driving Sieni mad by his invasive presence in everything she wanted to do.

James would plan every hour of every day, continuously cross-checking with Sieni that it was alright with her. Dinners, lunches, even breakfasts were all planned, either catered for or they would eat out with the children but only if Sieni was strong enough. He even tried to plan another weekend at Huka Lodge.

“I am sick, lakopo. I may need some morphine soon, but for now I just want to spend some precious quality time with you and the children.”

Sieni’s family was reacting to her condition in a typically Samoan way. They prayed, and prayed, and they prayed. They turned to God for a cure the way James was scouring the medical world for one. They were very careful not to intrude on James and the children, but some of her brothers and sisters would visit with Sieni and bring along her favourite foods. These were Samoan foods such as taro, palusami, oka, breadfruit and roast pork. Sieni seemed to be eating more, but continued to lose weight.

The senior Woods knew there would be two deaths should Sieni die. Sieni’s own death and the death of an important part of their son.

“I just can’t imagine what James’ life will be like, without Sieni,” Mary Woods observed.

“He’s like a lost child already darling. James is living in a surreal dream. Part of him is clinging to every precious moment he has left with Sieni. The other part is wondering how he can possibly live without her.”

“It’s interesting how the children are reacting. Angus seems to be coping, happily going to school. It’s Sala who is taking her mother’s condition very badly. She’s been refusing to go to school.”

“Angus is devastated, he’s just putting on a big act. He’s lost interest in almost everything, even his beloved computers. And he refuses to go to Church, despite how upset that makes his mother. It’s as if he’s blaming God for what’s happening to Sieni.” James’ father was closer to Angus and was always alert to his grandson’s mood swings.

“We’ve got to be strong for all of them. Let’s just give them all the love we can and hopefully we can help them to get over this tragedy. Help them to move on when Sieni finally passes away.”

“What an amazing woman she is, Mary. And to think we were horrified when we first heard James had taken an interest in a Samoan kitchen maid.”

“Thank God for Uncle Angus. He sure straightened us out on that score.”

“Uncle Angus loved Sieni in his own way, almost as much as James, if such a thing is possible.”

“I wonder if she’s made a will. All that Woods stock Uncle Angus gave her, what will she do with it?”

“Apparently all for Angus. Sieni is very Samoan that way. She believes Sala will find a husband who will take care of her. In any case, she feels Sala will make enough money playing tennis.”

“Is Sala that good?”

“She beat the New Zealand under-16 Champion the other day, and she’s only just turned fourteen.”

The senior Woods tried to visit at least once a day, even if only briefly, on the excuse of dropping off some of Sieni’s favourite bread pudding dessert. Mary Woods suggested to James that he should hire a full-time nurse, especially if Sieni was going to remain at home as her illness progressed.

“I am staying home, Mum. I’m all the nurse Sieni needs”

“James, I know you are staying home, but this illness requires specialised treatment from a trained professional. Sieni is barely able to walk around any more.”

“Sieni is walking around fine, Mum. I wish you would leave us alone!”

Mary Woods then did something she had not done since her son was a teenager, she took him in her arms. Suddenly he started to cry, sobbing convulsively. At five foot six Mary Woods was not as tall as Sieni and it was a little awkward having her tall, thirty-eight year-old son sobbing uncontrollably on her shoulder. These were wretched, muffled sounds of absolute anguish. The only thing that kept James from crying out really loudly was that his father and Sieni were in the room next door and would have heard him.

Mary Woods wanted her son to cry out loud, let it all out. She took James in her arms and felt like a real mother again. It was the first time since he had gone off to King’s College and had become the self-sufficient sports hero and scholar, brimming over with confidence. Mary now realized that if James had been a failure at something, she would have felt more needed as a mother. James was losing the

love of his life and she was going to be there for him. It occurred to Mary Woods that Sieni, even through her illness, was wielding her incredible influence to rekindle maternal instincts she thought she had lost.

That evening, after they returned home, Mary Woods told her husband how much she felt her son's anguish and pain. How it made her feel like a mother, a real mother, for the first time in her life.

"Am I the love of your life?"

The question took James' father by surprise.

"I love you, Mary."

"Yes, I know that, but am I the love of your life."

"I am not quite sure I understand"

"You are the love of my life," said Mary Woods, disappointed her husband had not answered 'yes' right away. She went on, *"Let me say this again, Sieni is the great love of James' life. James loves Sieni more than life itself. He is in a state of denial. One half is clinging to her and sharing every waking moment left on this earth with her. The other half is already mourning her loss. If we don't rally around and support our son, he will never be the same again for the rest of his life. He may have*

doubled the net worth of the Woods empire in the last five years but all this means nothing to him without Sieni. When she dies, we must get James to go away. Go to some quiet place to find himself again."

"I don't agree, Mary. We need James to throw himself back into his work. We need him to refocus on Angus and Sala. We need him to keep absolutely busy so he can try and get on with life without Sieni. He will never forget her but he must learn to live without her."

"He may live on, but will he be alive?"

"Time heals. Our son will find purpose in guiding and helping his children, Sieni's children, live their lives. James must accept Angus and Sala as living extensions of Sieni, part of Sieni. He must redirect his love for Sieni to their children. He already dotes on Sala, now he must learn to appreciate the finer qualities of Angus. He must be made to realise how much Angus idolises him. The boy's having a hard time coming out of his father's shadow. In a school like Kings, it is not easy to follow in the footsteps of the Head Boy, who also happened to be the rugby captain and one of the senior scholars.

It was Mary Woods who proudly came to Angus' defence.

“Angus is becoming his own man at King’s. He is the only fifth-former with full sporting colours in cricket. He’ll get a 1st XV trial this year, but should be in the team next year. He’s an even more accomplished scholar than his father, even James admits that.”

They both agreed that they must work very hard to ensure their son and grandchildren would cope with life without Sieni.

In moments like this, everyone in their family missed dear old Uncle Angus. His wise counsel and loving concern would have helped them all cope with this situation.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE: FLIES AND WANTON BOYS

Sieni was more than just a mother to Angus. She was a confidante and friend. They joked together, they laughed together, and now they tended to cry a lot together.

“One of my friends, whose family don’t go to Church, said when we die we just get buried and become maggot food Mum.”

“Is that why you won’t come to Church with us anymore, Angus? Do you blame God for my illness?”

“A kind and loving God would not take you away!”

“But we must all die some day, Angus. I could have been hit by a truck or died in a plane crash. People die that way almost every day. We can’t blame God for that. He is a loving God, full of mercy and grace. Look at how he has blessed me with a loving husband and two wonderful children. My loving families of Folasaus and Woods! All these people who love me, and whom I love in return. Now I am ill and soon I will die. God may take me away but he has left you all behind and for that I will always be grateful.”

“Oh Mum, I just can’t even talk about you dying. And look at Dad, he’s not himself. He walks around in a daze. Sala refuses to go to school in case you die while she’s away. She’s even been deliberately losing her tennis matches lately.”

“I hear you haven’t been taking too many wickets in cricket either, Angus. Do you really think you show your love for me when you all start going to pieces? If you all love me Angus, then you must go on with your lives. Live life to the best of your abilities. Live life to the fullest. Appreciate life, Angus. I never valued life so much as when the doctor said I might not have much time left. I wake each new day and thank God. Remember the psalmist said, ‘This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.’ We must learn to live every day to the fullest. That is how we give thanks to God for a new day. Remember that line

from the film “Dead Poets Society?” ‘Carpe Diem,’ ‘Seize the Day’. We must all seize, and make the most out of, every new day God grants us on this earth.”

“I just keep thinking about that line from “King Lear”, Angus said – ‘As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport’. Shakespeare was telling us how cruel life can be.”

“God does not kill anyone Angus, and certainly not for sport. Only the Roman emperors in the Coliseum killed people for sport. You must be strong. Strong for your father. Strong for Sala. You must promise me to look after them. And, some day, you may have to accept that your Dad will marry again. After all, he is only thirty-eight years old.”

“No! Mum, please let’s not talk like this. You are alive right now. So I won’t blame God. I will bowl better. I will promise to look after Dad and Sala. But, you must promise me that you won’t die. Uncle Angus died. Grandpa Folasau died. That’s enough death!”

“Come here and give your mother a hug”

They hugged each other with a renewed intensity. Sieni was relieved at Angus’ resolve to resume living his life to the fullest.

“No more talk of death. Where did Dad order lunch from?”

“You know what Mum, can I sneak out and buy us some burgers? Dad has all this gourmet food coming in. I’m sick to death of all this French and Italian food.” Angus realized too late he had used the word “death.”

They found relief in laughter in spite of this. James was having almost every meal catered and served by the best gourmet chefs in Auckland. Ever since Sieni could no longer go out to eat, there had been a veritable feast of every conceivable gourmet delight, all delivered to their home.

After dinner that night when they were alone, Sieni told James, *“You’re getting a bit of a pot-belly lakopo, I insist you go to the gym tomorrow. Or at least go to your exercise room and work out. Jump in the pool, do some laps.”*

“No, I want to be with you.”

“You’re not giving me a chance to talk to Sala or Angus” Sieni lied. *“And even my poor family from Mangere are scared to come around with you hanging around all the time”.*

It was as though someone had struck James on the face. He said, holding back the tears.

“Sieni, I just want to be with you.”

“You are with me lakopo, you just need to live your life as well.”

“I can live my life any time, Sieni. This is my time with you,”

You could hear the faintest moan as James started to cry.

“If you love me, lakopo, you must promise me to never give up and let go of your life, your dream for the future of our children and the Woods business empire. Angus and Sala are going to need you now more than ever. If you don’t promise to look after them, to love them, then you don’t love me lakopo. Angus and Sala are part of me. They’re part of us. They’re the essence of our life together and the fruits of our love for each other. You must promise me to continue loving me through our children. And, lakopo, you can’t fulfil any of your promises to me if you become a pot-bellied, unhealthy fatso. You know darling, we all appreciate this gourmet food, but can we tuck our teeth into a juicy cheeseburger tomorrow. I’d love some KFC and fries. How about fish and chips? Come on, lakopo, all these rich French sauces are making us fat. If we are going to get fat, let’s get fat on burgers!”

Sieni was proud of herself. There was the trace of a smile in James' face. The irony of this conversation was not lost on James, Sieni was in fact losing weight.

"Fast food it is, but gourmet burgers. And after that I'll go to the gym."

The next evening they feasted on gourmet burgers and fries. James was fresh from a two-hour workout at the gym, including a fifty minutes aerobic class. His body was aching as it had been a while since he had exercised. James had a few bottles left of the 1997 Wolf Blass Black Label. Even though their dinner was burgers, James insisted it was accompanied by a great red wine.

There was a rare normalcy in their dinner conversation that night. It was as though the veil of depression had been lifted. Sala talked about her coach teaching her how to volley much more decisively and aggressively when she was at the net. Angus was in the culture club at King's and needed to have Sieni teach him the 'aiuli', the male accompaniment to the Samoan 'siva'. Sieni was an accomplished Samoan 'siva' exponent, as James had found out when she did the Samoan 'siva' at their wedding reception. Their wedding seemed like yesterday, yet they were a week away from celebrating their sixteenth wedding anniversary.

Their planned frequent holidays to Honolulu had never happened. They had only been back twice since their honeymoon. Once just before Angus started school when they travelled on to Los Angeles to visit Disneyland. Their last visit was a few years previously, on their way back from visiting the Woods Megamall in Los Angeles.

James had continued to buy up property on a personal basis. It was like a hobby for him, as it had been for Uncle Angus. He paid a deposit, and borrowed against the rental payments, minimising his taxes. It was a simple enough formula but people had gotten rich writing books about it.

All of a sudden at dinner one evening, Sieni said: *"Why do we keep buying property, James? Houses and apartments we'll never even live in? Every time we visit Honolulu we stay in hotels and you own three apartments there now."*

"You can talk, Sieni. You and Uncle Angus got me started on this property thing to begin with. Woods Properties is all set to acquire, expand, and operate its first New York Megamall. Dad just got back from New York, he likes the numbers, so we are really going to become the world's largest megamall operator."

Sieni said, *"I am not talking about Woods Properties, I mean us personally. I still remember*

with pride my Papa saying he did not want to move into Angus' Newmarket home, he was happier to live in Mangere."

James said: *"Home is where the heart is. Nothing could be truer than that, but property is like savings Sieni, except it's more secure."*

Young Angus chipped in *"I remember Uncle Angus saying property values may level off, even drop off slightly, but long term they'll always go up."*

Sala was getting bored with all this talk about property, *"Mum, there's a great new movie at the Rialto, "Mystic River", it's directed by Clint Eastwood."* Sala forgot for a moment her mother was having difficulty going out. What amazed them all was how Sala had recently acquired a taste for Rialto movies, probably just to please her mother.

"You guys have made me so happy!" Sieni quickly chipped in.

"A normal conversation for a change! Property, movies, sports. Not about me all the time. This is how you can all make me so very happy!"

Sieni suddenly experienced a sharp pain which despite her best efforts to hide, caused her to double up in agony. All three of them rushed over at the same time. They took her carefully back to the

bed and settled her down. Sieni was brave, but she was sick and she was dying.

Sieni's agony brought them all back to the reality of their situation. These were the precious and few stolen moments that they had left in this world with her.

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR: RAGE AGAINST THE DYING OF THE LIGHT

Sieni died on the twenty-seventh of February, the exact date of her sixteenth wedding anniversary. She was having difficulties getting out of bed and James had hired a professional nurse for her morphine shots and other necessary palliative care. Sieni had reluctantly agreed to the morphine shots because the pain had become so severe.

James and the children had wished her a happy anniversary and showered her with gifts and flowers. She enjoyed their kisses and hugs. She opened all of her presents and thanked each one of them personally for the gift. She then told the children not to be late for school and asked James to let the nurse bathe her.

Before they left, she told them all in her weak voice: *“You and the children spoil me with these beautiful flowers and wonderful gifts. I love you all so*

very much. Come and kiss me. You two off to school, and lakopo, let nurse bathe me.”

She then held and cuddled each of them to her. She whispered to each of them as they were embracing, *“I love you very much.”* They could see she was in pain, but they would only later realise that these were to be Sieni’s last words to them.

A few minutes after her bath, the nurse came crying and told James his wife had just passed away. After she had bathed and dressed her, Sieni had turned on her side and died peacefully.

James was reading the paper. He got up and ran to her bedroom yelling – *“No! No! No! No!”*

He fell to his knees next to the bed and put his arms around Sieni’s still-warm body.

“Sieni, Sieni, Sieni, Sieni....” Willing her to wake up and smile at him, just as she had done a few moments before.

“She’s gone, Mr Woods,” the nurse tried to comfort him.

“Go away! Get out of here!” he screamed back at her.

The nurse ran out of the room. She had called James' parents first as Mary Woods had instructed her to. She had been told to call the senior Woods first before breaking the news to James.

Mary Woods and James' father were there in a matter of minutes. James was still on the floor crying hysterically, holding on to his wife as though his life depended on it.

They both got on their knees next to James, taking their son into their arms. Saying nothing. Just showing their love for him. James was to remain there for nearly an hour until his father carefully lifted him off the floor, after prying his arms apart from Sieni. The car they sent to pick up Angus and Sala from their schools had just arrived and they did not want the children to see their father like this. It was the repeated mention of the children's names, that finally enabled James' father to lift him off the floor.

Angus and Sala ran into the room. Sala rushed over and sat by the bed and rested her head on her mother's chest. She refused to look at her face. Sala was thinking back to her whispered "I love you very much" when they had said goodbye that morning.

Angus just looked at his mother. Willing her to get up and smile, and talk to him. He realised as

soon as his grandfather's driver arrived at school, that his mother had said goodbye to him for the last time that morning. "I love you very much." He thought back to her insisting that he be strong for Sala and their father. "*Where is Dad? How is he?*" he asked, almost to himself.

He sat down on the other side of the bed, placing his head next to Sala's. "*What would he do?*" he thought to himself. Sala was now openly crying loudly. Giving vent to her grief. Angus could only give out a muffled sound, a sort of groan. "*My mother is with God. If she's not, then there can be no heaven, for there was no person more deserving of Heaven than my mother.*" Angus was talking to God and to himself at the same time.

Angus was now so glad he had gone to Church that previous Sunday. Sieni had not been well enough to go so Father Ward came to the house after the service and administered Communion to her. It seemed to make Sieni happy and contented. Her son had gone to Church and she had her Communion.

The Folasaus had then visited and this was always a joyous time for Sieni. They had spoken in Samoan, joking and laughing as though nothing was wrong. This was the amazing way in which Samoans dealt with this type of situation. The

Folasaus were all very good at showing happy faces and hiding their real feelings inside.

Angus was jolted out of his reverie. Where was his father? Had the Folasaus been told? He had to be strong for his father's sake. He had given his mother his word. He stood up and bent over the sobbing Sala. He said nothing. He did not need to say anything, but this mutual grief brought brother and sister closer together than they had ever been in their lives.

James' father took over the funeral arrangements. The Folasaus requested a family service at the Samoan Congregational Church in Mangere the evening before the main service at Father Ward's All Saints Anglican Church. All the Woods went to the Samoan Service and even though it was in Samoan, James gave a brief eulogy in English. It was even briefer than planned because he broke down. They wanted Angus or Sala to say a few words, but James would not allow it. He felt neither child was emotionally capable of delivering a eulogy for their mother at that time.

The Folasaus mentioned it was a Samoan custom to keep the casket at home on the night prior to the burial. James knew from Sieni's father's funeral that this was to allow the various choirs to come along and hold prayer vigils and sing hymns. James could not cope with that now. Sieni still

looked beautiful through the great work of the funeral directors but he was no longer able to touch or look at her. He tried once but she was so cold that he instinctively pulled his hand away and had not touched her since. He preferred his memory of the warm loving woman that was the love of his life.

James insisted that the casket be closed after the Samoan service and taken back to the funeral parlour. The Funeral was scheduled for ten o'clock the following day. The Anglican Church was filled to capacity. Sieni's eldest brother Papalii Folasau II had travelled to New Zealand to attend his sister's funeral and gave the eulogy on behalf of his family.

James gave the only other eulogy. He was by now a little more composed than the day before. James began his eulogy for Sieni with these lines from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (11:ii):

*'My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep: the more I give to thee,
The more I have, for both are infinite.'*

James referred to Sieni as the love of his life, the woman who completed him as a man. She was much more than that, she added substance to every aspect of his life. She fulfilled him physically, intellectually and spiritually.

Sieni was all things to all people. A loving and doting mother to Angus and Sala. A loving and

caring wife to him. A special friend to Uncle Angus. She had brought a new sparkle to his parents' marriage.

She was the devoted daughter who abandoned her husband and children to care for her sick father. She had made sure they all returned home to Samoa for her father's funeral.

James spoke about Sieni, the woman with business acumen. The woman who inherited her Woods stocks from Uncle Angus and then made it her business to learn every aspect of the Woods conglomerate's operations. James talked about Sieni giving him inspiration and sound advice in running the business.

Lest they should forget, James emphasized, Sieni was Samoan. She was Samoan in the way she wanted to run on to the rugby field and hit with her umbrella anyone she thought was roughing up her son. She was Samoan in that at twenty-four years of age, she married him as a virgin bride. Sieni was Samoan in that she wanted him to take a matai title, so that he could hand it down to their son some day.

James then thanked the Folasaus for raising the fine and wonderful person that he was privileged to love and take for his wife.

James spoke of Sieni the columnist, revealing her social conscience. Her concern for the poor and the downtrodden in society, for those who were oppressed both physically and emotionally. Her special concern for Pacific Island and Maori people. The way she secretly continued Uncle Angus' contributions to the Salvation Army, thinking all the time that James did not know.

He talked about Sieni's spiritual strength. Her search and discovery of a special relationship with God, His mercy and His infinite grace. Her strength in adversity, especially her illness. Her strength as a person was reinforced by her great faith in God. He spoke of Sieni's favourite Psalm 23 which Father Ward had read and based his sermon on. He referred to Sieni's search for spiritual strength and how it was firmly anchored on her desire to have a spiritual foundation for all their lives, especially when their children were born.

Finally, James spoke of their love. He told the Congregation that these words from Kahil Gibran's 'The Prophet' best described his love for Sieni.

*"To melt and be like the running brook that
sings its melody in the night.
To know the pain of too much tenderness.
To be wounded by your own understanding of
love;
And to bleed willingly and joyfully.*

*To wake at dawn with a winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving;
To rest at the noon hour and meditate love's ecstasy;
To return home at eventide with gratitude;
And then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in your heart and a song of praise upon your lips..."*

James' final words

"Good bye my dearest Sieni, the love of my life."

There was hardly a dry eye in the congregation when James completed his eulogy and sat down between his children. Angus and Sala instinctively both hugged their father at the same time.

James' father had recently put up an elaborate fence around the family's large plot in Mangere. Sieni was to lie on the opposite side to his parents, allowing space for James. He already knew that his son would not want to be laid to rest anywhere except next to his wife. There was also more space for the next generation of Woods to be buried.

A chapter had now closed in the Woods saga. A Samoan girl had come along and had loved, and been loved in return, by their family. A woman who bore them two children and whom they would never forget.

There were to be many more chapters. The Woods' business empire was to become one of the biggest in the world. The first New Zealand conglomerate to truly achieve an international standing in the global arena.

A family whose future generations would now all be part-Samoan. Samoans entrenched in Samoan values and customs and who would never deny who they were, or where they came from.

People of enormous wealth who would often be seen in Mangere Cemetery, laying flowers on the graves of their dearly departed loved ones.

THE END