

the ground. Then he walked away. He turned to wave to Heta and Toi. They would be angry. It was good money and Heta and Toi believed that one day they would get other work. Piri knew it was hopeless. He was going back home.

A CAR pulled up on the roadway. The occupants got out and came slowly up the hill towards the marae. Piri was aware of their voices but he did not look up. Often Tarua, who had been to the University, would show the pakeha around the pa.

Sharp and clear the vision was before Piri. With each turn of his wrist and fingers he was working out the design. The spirits of his ancestors were working within him. Each day his vision took shape, growing slowly into the carving. Soon it would be finished. Until that day he could not rest. Only at night when it was too dark to work, would he pause. Even then, in his sleep, he could see the finished carved pole in all its beauty, the legend clearly marked upon it.

He knew that the visitors had stopped beside Eru, the other young carver. They were watching him at work on the panel. Eru was talking to them, stopping his work to answer their questions.

Then they were coming to him. He tried to shut out their voices. If he stopped to talk to them the picture would fade, the knowledge of what he had to do would be gone. And he would have to wait, perhaps a long time, before he could continue.

They were silent as they grouped about him. Perhaps they felt his withdrawal. He worked on without raising his eyes.

Then a woman spoke in a high-pitched voice. "Oh, but I think it's marvellous! Just marvellous!"

And a man's voice. "Where do they learn all this?"

Tarua answered. "There is a Maori school of carving. The boys go there some for five years, to study under one of the old Maori carvers. But this boy has never been there. He is one of the lucky ones. He does not need to learn the carving. Eru, over there," he said pointing, "is a skilled craftsman. He is given the design and follows it, though he does not fully understand its meaning. But this boy," he rested his hand on Piri's shoulder, "this boy comes from a long line of carvers and weavers."

"But how does he do it?" The man was speaking again. "How does he know what to do?"

Tarua chuckled. "He just knows. The carvers of long ago come back and work through him. The designs? Some are just the same as those found on the ancient Maori carvings. Carvings this boy has never seen."

"And how long does it take to finish? Say, this one?" the man asked.

"A long time: It is hard work. This boy works day after day, never stops. Not until dark. Only at night he rests."

"What does it all mean? What story is there?"

It was no use. That voice. Piri had to look up. That voice disturbed him. Someone he knew? He turned and looked up at the man. Then he smiled. "Ken!" he said, standing up.

POI DANCERS

*SLENDER, grass-skirted, like ibis or flamingo,
On the concert chamber boards in daggered light
Come the poi dancers, swaying, each by her dazzling circle
Of swung cord haloed, chanting from their gyre
Of time removed to the cramped rows overcoated
Who munch their chocolate, shuffle, murmur and sigh.*

*Among these fallow leaves anachronistic
Their song—accustomed rather this tired hall
To the flower-clock of Mozart, Valhalla of Sibelius.
Yet the blood's crystal trembles to another dawn
Alien, renewed; and the arrow of their chanting
Pierces the eyeball of an age deformed.*

*Rather should they dance where palisades smoke-blackened
Bar out the seawind, while the surf beneath
Worn granite hammers; or where those carved ancestral
Idols look on the marae, by a log fire's heat,
While tiered stars from night wave-tongued, atua-haunted,
Praise earth's necessity and hand-wrought peace.*

*The dancers go—tomorrow will labour in office,
Restaurant, factory, meshed in another net
Than the blood weaves. The stage is darkened; the wilted
Foliage goes in a dustcan. Where now the breath
Imagined, of time's renewal? Outside, in catacombs
Of neon death, easily one smiles and forgets.*

*Yet I have seen, breaking the stony midnight
By gates of horn, in dreams, my love dance—
Eyes burning, body electric, clothed in the earth-black,
Bloodstone-red, white of the toothed shark,
Her fathers gathered—in her limbs night's violence,
In her swung pois the circle of day's calm.*

—James K. Baxter.

"Goo'-day, Piri!" Ken reached forward and grasped Piri's hand, letting it fall immediately. "So this is where you got to! When are you coming back to Auckland?"

Piri said nothing but stood there looking at him.

"Toi has a car now, and Heta is married," Ken said.

"I know," Piri replied.

Tarua had moved away, all but Ken following him.

"You should come back," Ken said. "This is all right." In one swift glance he took in the pa and its surroundings. "This is all right, but a smart boy like you should be in the city."

"I stay here," Piri said.

"Well!" Ken threw out his hands. He looked at the carving and then back at Piri again. "Tell me, then, what's this all mean? These lines at the side. What do they mean?"

"I can't tell you," Piri said.

"You mean you don't know?" Ken said in a surprised voice.

Piri did not answer.

"Tarua said that the spirits of your ancestors worked through you. How do they do that?"

"I don't know," Piri answered.

Piri's eyes moved from the distant hills to the willow-bordered stream that wound around at the base of the hill on which the pa stood, then to the marae in front of the meeting-house. Down on the flat piece of ground at the edge of the stream some of the young people were working among the corn and vegetables. He could hear laughter and singing. He wanted to join them.

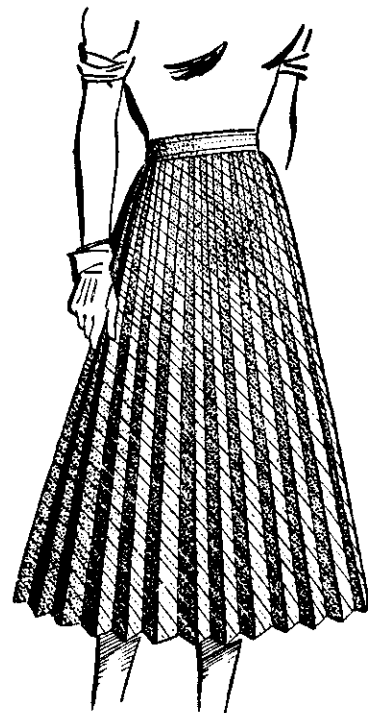
"Well, so long," Ken said. Tarua had taken the group into the meeting-house. Ken hurried after them. "You come to town, boy," he called back.

Piri threw himself down on the grass beside the carving. He was disturbed but he knew that through the earth came comfort and healing. Soon he would be quiet again and go back to his work.

He thought of Toi. Toi at the drill and Toi in his new car. And he thought of Heta and his young pakeha wife, living in one room in the city.

And Ken! Ken had wanted to know the meaning of the carving, the story it told. How could he tell him? Some things he was forbidden to tell. And Ken had wanted to know how his ancestors worked through him. He could not tell him that. He did not know himself. He only knew that this restlessness possessed him when he was not working. That as soon as he took up the knife he was at peace and so quickly did the pattern form in his mind that he must work ceaselessly to follow it.

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