

Uncle Kingi by Tama Werata

You don't really know him do you? Dad's step-brother, Kingi Taylor. Yeah, the lawyer fella in Hamilton. That's him all right. He's the one that Dad's family spent all the money on to go to boarding school and university and so on.

Dad? No he's just got this factory job. Well, he had it I mean. Last year they gave him this promotion. He'd been there about 15 years. Yeah. And then — whoosh. Few weeks later, the push. The whole section of them laid off. Just like that. I tell you the old man he's been doing it real hard. No, not just hacked off. More like the guts've been drained right out of him. You're right there, too much of that sort of thing these days, good men put out to waste.

Me? Well, I've just been down the line a bit to give a hand to some of this Kingi Taylor's family. No, not our side of the family, his wife's youngest

sister eh. Well, they've got this shop now, sort of a superette-dairy. Open all hours that place, every damn day of the week. It's a killer all that.

Anyway, they were needing help because they run it all by themselves and one of them'd got sick really bad, you know. So Dad says to me when Kingi Taylor phoned up: "It's not just a matter of stretching out a hand when someone in the family asks Pere. But we owe him too."

See he's the one helped us out while I had another go at UE last year. Nah, didn't get it. I did think of going back this year but, aw, all my mates've left. Anyway, too much hassle and strife all that stuff, doing it all over again. I didn't want that. Well as I was saying — my sister ...

This Kingi Taylor'd had her to stay with them for a fair time you know last year so's I could have my chance to stay on at school. That's how I

came to be slogging away in that superette place for weeks, day in day out. Man I was had it. But Kingi Taylor and his sister kept on saying, well could be there'd be an opening for me with them permanently, start me on my way to learn the trade.

"Could be a good chance for you boy," Kingi Taylor would say. "Be in." I reckon he must've had a share in that shop, he seemed to be coming in there so often. Well I wasn't going to knock it. A chance like that and at least it was a job.

What? Sure, I lived at the sister-in-law's place. No, she hasn't got a big family at all. Well, for me it made a change from the unemployment. And anyway, I was starting to think: Hey! Maybe I can get into this kind of life, chase the money a while.

Because, man, they sure lived it up there. Not like us at our place. I mean, man, the stuff they had in that house,

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