

TEN PAGES INTO AWARUA (THE PASSAGE)....

Note: All dialogue spoken in te reo Māori, with subtitles where necessary.

4

EXT. SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN. SUNDOWN: -

4

DRONE: - THE MAKO FOLLOWS A GOLDEN CORRIDOR OF THE SETTING SUN.

ONBOARD: - The kaihoe are sleeping; others are tending to the ropes, or fishing. KEAROA is sitting up next to her sleeping husband (under the shade). TE HUKA is at the tiller.

LA'AKEA is sitting next to him, she is thoughtful, nervous.

LA'AKEA
Are you excited?

TE HUKA
(Thinking about it)
Of course!

LA'AKEA
I will show you everything... do not worry.

TE HUKA is aware of KEAROA's eyes. Then he does a movement with his hand, like a dolphin. It is his little trick.

TE HUKA
(Grinning)
Do you know what that is?

LA'AKEA
Of course, I swim like a dolphin! I made a song about one! I used to sing my songs to the small children on my island...
(Suddenly emotional)
I was, The Lady Who Made Songs...!

TE HUKA
You can make a song for me.

She hides her face in his chest. He can feel her breath; he is both aroused and terrified. He is just a boy with a beautiful woman in his arms.

TE HUKA (CONT'D)
(gaining confidence)
We have an island on Lake Rotorua, Mokokai Island.
(MORE)

TE HUKA (CONT'D)

It has no dolphins, or sharks.
But it is good for swimming,
fishing and farming. And things
grow very well on it.

LA'AKEA sits up, she dries her eyes.

LA'AKEA

Is it very cold?

TE HUKA

You get used to it. The Māori
prefer the weather cooler. Our
lands are not a low islands
La'Akea. They have huge mountains
and rivers... And snow!

LA'AKEA

Snow! That is your name!?

TE HUKA

Yes.

(to KEAROA)

Mother, tell La'Akea about snow.

KEAROA is stitching. Some men are listening. TOTO wakes up. They almost have to yell to be heard above the wind in the sail and the groaning ropes. KEAROA assumes a dramatic air.

KEAROA

It is pure white. And it kills if
Tawhiri sends it when he is angry.

(beat)

It is very cold, and it preserves
the dead, it preserves everything.

TOTO rolls his eyes. LA'AKEA is not enthused.

KEAROA (CONT'D)

But, it is beautiful when it falls
softly. It comes in the winter,
sometimes to the lake. And It
sparkles like Te Ara Maama.

LA'AKEA is enchanted, those listening are thinking of home. Then the wind just dies away. They all choose to ignore the minor disaster - KEAROA is telling a story.

TE HUKA

It comes in summer too, ae?

KEAROA

Rarely. But it came the morning you
were born.

(MORE)

KEAROA (CONT'D)

It covered the ground in a perfect white paraikeke. And it stayed long enough for me to get up, and put you in it. Hence your name, Huka.

(Filled with love)

My precious snow baby.

TE HUKA is bright red. Everyone is listening now.

TOTO

But you screamed murder, and turned the snow a strange colour.

WHIRO snorts with laughter, a few of the Kaihoe are giggling. TOTO gives Whiro a dark look!

TOTO (CONT'D)

Get them going Kaihoeutu!

WHIRO immediately corrals his crew to take up the paddles. TOTO and KEAROA cuddle-up under the shade.

ANGLE ON: - THE YOUNG LOVERS ARE ALONE AT THE BACK OF THE BEAUTIFULLY CARVED OUTRIGGER - THE KAIHOE - THEIR PADDLES PLUNGING IN PERFECT TIME, AND WHIRO KEEPING THE STEADY BEAT.

ONBOARD: - TE HUKA's eyes are on the horizon, his hand on the tiller. LA'AKEA snuggles in close, she takes his free hand.

TE HUKA

Our home is safe, La'Akea. Safe from storms and waves. You will be safe.

THE SUN SINKS INTO THE BLACK SEA.

LA'AKEA

You always follow the setting Sun.

TE HUKA

That's right, to Aotearoa, the setting Sun and the birds. And at night the stars and the moon show us the way.

LA'AKEA considers this. She gazes up at the Milky Way, the brilliant Southern Cross. The chanting is soft, rhythmical.

LA'AKEA

But, there are so many!

TE HUKA

(Eyes shining)

We simply look to

(MORE)

TE HUKA (CONT'D)
 the horizons for the steering
 stars. One by one, they all make an
 appearance.

He points straight ahead with his rod.

A LITTLE RED PLANET SITS JUST ABOVE THE HORIZON (VENUS).

TE HUKA (CONT'D)
 Do you see it?

LA'AKEA nods.

TE HUKA (CONT'D)
 That is the Red Star, the companion
 of the Sun, Mere-mere. We align Hui
 to it, and behind...

They twist around.

JUST ABOVE THE WATER IS A TINY CLUSTER OF STARS (PLEIADES).

TE HUKA (CONT'D)
 There are seven of them, very low.

LA'AKEA
 They are so small.

TE HUKA
 Yes, we call them Little Eyes. They
 point very close to your island,
 and eventually Hawaiki.
 (beat)
 Toto says it is the passage to the
 home of all men.

LA'AKEA kisses him passionately on the lips. TE HUKA is
 electrified. She giggles.

LA'AKEA
 This is called ka-HO-nee. It is
 very popular on my island. We do
 not use the nose.
 (Beat)
 Do you like it?

TE HUKA obviously likes it very much.

5

A BEAUTIFUL CLOUDY MORNING ON THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

5

Exhilarated, TE HUKA rides the lunging figurehead (Hui) as it
 ploughs through the gentle swells. The frigate bird spreads
 its long wings and squawks.

ANGLE ON: - TE MAKO is sailing under a dramatic arch of cloud. Once again - half the kaihoe are resting, the rest are padding. A naked sailor clambers over the back of the boat.

He is reciting a karakai, gripping onto a pole, and having the most glorious shit in cinematic history.

THE SUN IS GETTING LOWER.

THE REFLECTION OF THE FULL MOON IS IN THE TWILIGHT SKY.

ONBOARD: - TOTO is leaning casually on the steering paddle, he gives his son a reassuring nod. Most of the kaihoe are sleeping, one or two are fishing. The craft is stable.

TE HUKA has created a LOVE NEST. He has rigged a screen across the BOW-SPACE, and made room for LA'AKEA and her kit. The air is cool and she is shivering.

KEAROA is multi-tasking; deftly stitching the finishing touches to the waikawa, murmuring a little karakai, and keeping an eye on all aboard.

TE HUKA takes the DEAD CROWN OF WHITE FLOWERS from her head. He throws them into the sea. LA'AKEA watches them float away. He puts a beautiful WHALE-BONE PENDANT around her neck.

KEAROA drapes the splendid cape over her bare shoulders. LA'AKEA is ecstatic. TE HUKA's face is bright red, bashful. One of the men starts snoring, LA'AKEA is suddenly troubled.

KEAROA is sprinkling dried red flowers on their blanket.

BANG!! - ONE OF THE FISHERMEN GETS A MASSIVE BITE ON HIS LINE! IT ACTUALLY JERKS THE BOAT AROUND; EVERYONE WAKES UP.

Moments later four men pull a 200kg (Broad Billed) Swordfish over the gunwales, swamping the boat!!

HATAPTATU clubs it with his PATU. The fish stops thrashing. HATAPTATU nudges it with his foot.

TOTO
Wait, Hataptatu!

The fish jerks violently, and stabs HATAPTATU through the bicep. He leaps back roaring! Finally he gets his foot onto its gills, and clubs it repeatedly, his eyes crazed.

TOTO (CONT'D)
Take it, Rang!

RANGI (25) takes tiller, WHIRO pulls HATAPTATU off of the fish; and extracts the valuable bone FISH-HOOK.

WHIRO

The bitch broke the hook!

TOTO is cutting off its head, and collecting the blood in a baler - drinking the blood with WHIRO, the two are bonding.

The overflow is splashing around the lovers feet, washing away the red flower petals.

KEAROA is checking her plants. WHIRO is cutting the long razor sharp bill off of the swordfish's head. A man is filleting it, another is throwing the guts over the side.

LA'AKEA and TE HUKA are on the bowsprit, their feet out of the bloody bilge-water. TE HUKA drags the bloody blanket out of the love nest, he washes it in the ocean.

A FLY LANDS ON THE BACK OF HIS HAND.

TE HUKA

How do they fly so far from home?

LA'AKEA turns away from him, wrapping herself in her wedding clothes. Her are eyes wet, gazing the way they have come; following the long wake back across the Pacific to her home.

THE SUN IS SETTING.

LATER: - The MAKO is sailing well on her own. Most of the men are facing the back, where TOTO is holding court. AMIDSHIPS - WHIRO is with HATAPTATU, TURI and RANGI, talking - scheming.

KEAROA sprinkles more flowers in the LOVENEST, praying quietly. TE HUKA and LA'AKEA are on different sides of the boat. KEAROA finishes up, and motions them forward.

WHIRO, HATAPTATU and TURI join TOTO at the tiler, who is still regaling the crew. A few of the men are nervous.

LA'AKEA ducks into the LOVENEST. TE HUKA is following her, when the frigate bird abruptly takes flight from the prow!

THE BIRD FLIES UNDER A CRIMSON AND GREY ARCH OF SUNSET CLOUDS - HEADING TO A DISTANT CLOUDBANK ON THE HORIZON.

TE HUKA (CONT'D)

(with reverence)

Aotearoa!

KEAROA

I don't see it.

LA'AKEA's head pops out of the opening; she stands up beside him, and takes his hand. TE HUKA points it out. WHIRO can see it too. He has a triumphant smile on his face.

TE HUKA

There!

CLOSER: - CLOUD HORIZON - THE UNDERSIDE OF THE LONG BANK OF WHITE CLOUD IS TINTED WITH A GREEN HUE.

TE HUKA lets out a blast on his (triton-shell) BUGLE, loud and long. WHIRO's eyes are shining. TOTO rises up, red faced, he is a bit dizzy. He begins a melodic karakai.

TOTO

(Staring at the sky)

O Aotearoa. Our Land Of The long
White Cloud.

We focus on nearly every face aboard, all moved. All except WHIRO, who grins at HATAPTATU like a wolf.

DRONE: PULLING UP HIGH, LOOKING DOWN ON THEIR LITTLE CRAFT.

TOTO is standing, preaching as the boat slices through the swells heading for the long white and green cloudbank.

TOTO (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Ka eke, ka takoto
Te hau no Tu,
Turuturu o hiki,
Whakamau o
Kia tina.
Hui-e!
Taiki-e!

ENTIRE CREW (O.C.)

Hui-e! Taiki-e!

ONBOARD: - TOTO is pointing his TAIAHA toward home. Relieved from their duty joy engulfs the kaihoe. KEAROA gives TE HUKA a strong look. His joy quickly turns into disappointment.

TE HUKA

Toto must sleep now. We will make
land in two or three days.

LA'AKEA slumps down on the thwart, she is gutted!

TE HUKA (CONT'D)

If he feels better, we--

LA'AKEA

--I will wait!

They separate reluctantly, TE HUKA moves down through the jubilant Kaihoe. He takes the tiller from TOTO.

TE HUKA
We made good time, father.

TOTO
(happy, exhausted)
The best yet, son.

Then TOTO almost crawls onto the deck, onto the soft mat. KEAROA puts a blanket over him, he is asleep in an instant.

LATER: - KEAROA is tending her plants. The MAKO is sailing nicely on her own with TE HUKA at the tiller.

TE HUKA beckons to LA'AKEA in the LOVE NEST. She ignores him. AMIDSHIPS, WHIRO has fashioned a short STABBING-SPEAR from the swordfish bill, and is wrapping it with cord.

WHIRO and HATAPTATU share a look, TURI is grinning like a demon. WHIRO rises and starts heading back. TOTO awakens; he instinctively reaches for his PATU.

WHIRO is holding the stabbing-spear, as a gift. TOTO is touched. KEAROA is smiling. TOTO puts down his weapon, and beckons the smiling, deferential, WHIRO forward.

TOTO is about to speak when WHIRO splits his head with his PATU! KEAROA shrieks and charges him with her bare hands. WHIRO chops her down with two strokes! All the men riot.

LA'AKEA's piercing scream comes from the BOW. HATAPTATU is like a giant, moving in on her. TE HUKA grips a paddle defensively, doing the full Māori war face.

WHIRO advances on him with his weapon, a fearful sight. TE HUKA smashes him with a paddle, but WHIRO deflects it easily; he gets in close, putting a choke hold on him.

He lifts TE HUKA's small feet off the ground, squeezing until he is subdued. LA'AKEA is dragged by the hair, through the baying kaihoe. HATAPTATU slings her down at WHIRO's feet.

LA'AKEA rips her fingernails down WHIRO's shins. He knees her in the jaw, and she slumps down, dazed.

TURI and RANGI strip the bodies; and heave them overboard! WHIRO is leering at LA'AKEA.

TE HUKA
If you touch her...!

HATAPTATU grabs hold of TE HUKA.

WHIRO
 Oh, I'll touch her! And she will
 like it, just like your mother
 liked it in Mangarewa!

TE HUKA makes a noise like a tortured animal. WHIRO laughs.

WHIRO (CONT'D)
 And when I am satisfied...
 (indicating the plants)
 The Kaihoe will throw this filthy
 mess into the sea. We will sail
 down. Down to Awarua.

His eyes are shining, he grabs TE TORU by his top-knot.

WHIRO (CONT'D)
 There will be no delay!

He gouges TE HUKA between his eyes with his new weapon. TE HUKA almost faints. LA'AKEA starts whimpering.

WHIRO (CONT'D)
 And you will be so very quiet,
 Princess. Do you understand!?

WHIRO collects soot from the fire, and smears it in TE HUKA's gaping wound. He admires his handy-work; then HATAPTATU frog marches him through the jeering Kaihoe.

As he passes, TURI spits in his face! A rope is tied to his neck, and he is shoved and prodded up onto the bowsprit.

CLOSE: - TE HUKA listening, as LA'AKEA is raped - quietly.

He raises his arm in defiance - TURI strikes him brutally in the back, nearly knocking him off of his perch.

KEAROA'S PLANTS ARE BEING THROWN INTO THE SEA.

6

SUNNY MORNING ON THE SOUTH PACIFIC

6

The Sea is choppy; the wind is stiff. The MAKO is following the distant cloudy coastline South.

CLOSE: - TE HUKA's face is a bloody mask, with white crazed eyes. Behind him half the kaihoe are at the paddles.

LA'AKEA is sitting at WHIRO's feet, traumatized. He is slouched like King Shit at the tiller, eating an orange.

7

THE NEW ZEALAND WEST COAST. SOUTH ISLAND. DAY: -

7

The rugged coast looms into view. With its dark rocky shore, wild surf, and towering snow-capped mountains.

The sail is furled, and the two huge anchor stones, either end, are heaved into the sea. The boat is drifting; they are waiting for the coastal mist to clear.

The Kaihoe pull their rain capes up, and hunker down for some sleep. LA'AKEA is sobbing quietly under her cloak. TE HUKA is actually trying to drink in the mist, eyes mad with thirst.

WHIRO
(tenderly)
Do not cry, La'Akea.

TE HUKA is listening, vibrating with anger and shame. The Sun comes out, shining shafts through the billowing clouds.

LATER: - The MAKO is much closer to the rocky coast now.

LA'AKEA climbs out from under her blanket, and onto the STERNPIECE, carefully. WHIRO grabs her ankle. TE HUKA is tethered to the washboard, watching.

WHIRO (CONT'D)
Do not fall. Or I will fish you
out, and give you to the Kaihoe.

She seems to have gotten the message. He lets her ankle go. TE HUKA watches her climb around to the back. He has a small piece of shell hidden in his hand.

LA'AKEA glances at him; she makes the sign of the dolphin. WHIRO reacts too slowly - she dives off the back of the boat! TE HUKA desperately hacks at his rope.

WHIRO (CONT'D)
TIKINI IA!!!!

HATAPTATU sits up. He sees what TE HUKA is up to. TE HUKA snaps the last threads, and throws himself overboard; he sinks, then swims under water for some distance.

Several spears are thrown. They all miss. The dog lets out a squeak, and leaps off too.

8

DRONE: LOOKING DOWN ON THE BOAT.

8

The two strong swimmers strike out for the rocky shore. WHIRO can be heard screaming commands. Momentarily the outrigger is bought about, the kaihoe are digging in - catching up!