

HELLO OTHER

Book One – DISCOVERY

By S C Dinsdale

“Fear outs when the Truth is out of alignment and opinions prevail.”

Chapter 8: Coming Home

...Home visits are always time consuming, but particularly so when there are larger distances to travel. When a young woman becomes too unwell to attend the practice, I must undertake home visits. After presenting late with a serious illness, unfortunately her condition is now terminal. Perhaps the prognosis would have been better with earlier treatment. The community nurse is already present when I arrive and she quietly tells me that the patient's condition is deteriorating rapidly. After being given additional pain relief, the young woman relaxes. Barely conscious, her breathing slows and soon becomes irregular. As her family gather at the bedside, I walk through to the living room to give them privacy. The house is located some distance from the medical centre, and the nurse also has a sense that this young woman will soon pass. I decide to wait.

The mournful sounds of a karakia soon drift into the living room. When the ceremonial chant concludes, the nurse offers to check whether the family are ready for me to formally confirm the patient's death. Checking for the absence of vital signs, means ensuring that a person's heart has stopped and that central nervous system activity has ceased. With that task done, I retreat back to the living room. But the hauntingly beautiful karakia has released an unexpected wave of grief within me, and one of the kaumātua notices.

“It's only natural to feel sad. We're all feeling sad,” he reassures me. “I understand that you must leave now, but you are welcome to attend the tangi...”