

C H A P T E R 1

Gavin leaned across the table and grabbed the morning paper. He was not computer literate and preferred to find what he wanted in the classified section of the paper. He flicked through the pages until he found 'Properties for Rent.' Peering through his cheap reading glasses he started going down the list. Nothing. As usual there was nothing that appealed to him. He noticed his coffee had gone cold and headed off towards the coffee pot for a refill.

He heard his sister in the next room getting ready for work. Gavin knew he had overstayed his welcome and very soon she would ask him to leave. He dreaded moving out. He had nowhere to go and no one to go to. His future had disappeared into his past. Divorce, retirement and homelessness had unfortunately coincided leaving Gavin at the mercy of his sister's benevolence.

"Gavin," he heard his sister calling, "Gavin, where are you?" He could hear the irritation in her voice. She appeared in the kitchen all pumped up and pompous. Her long, straight blonde hair flowed over her wide shoulders and down her broad back. His sister had eaten her way into a lonely existence. Her once slim physique had drawn men like bees to honey. Gavin thought she was probably a lesbian in denial. She had no children, no pets and in her later years had started hoarding. At first it was little things like newspapers and magazines kept in piles in the spare bedroom. He could tell she wanted him to leave so she didn't have to hide her frustration at having him in her precious space - spaces that needed to be filled.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I have been checking online and found the perfect place for you," she said with sheer glee. "It is quiet, fully furnished and overlooks the ocean. It sounds just what you have been looking for."

Gavin thought she had no idea what he was looking for. If he didn't know, how could she possibly know?

His sister produced a sheet of paper with the property details along with a photo of a little cabin surrounded by lawns and trees.

“I have already emailed them and arranged time for you to view it,” she said.
Gavin took the paper and began to read.

A Cabin by the Sea
Private, secluded and fully furnished.
*14 acres of native bush * overlooking the ocean*
Suitable for one adult
\$200.00 per week
No pets, No smoking, No children
Owner lives on property in separate cottage

Gavin put the paper in his pocket and filled his empty cup with hot brewed coffee. He may as well check it out. The price was right and the seclusion was what he was looking for. And, better yet, he could get out of here where he wasn't welcome.

The driveway was lined in the tallest pine trees Audrey had ever seen. They were planted so close together that a few dead ones simply rested on stronger healthier trees. They leaned preciously inward towards the driveway creating a sinister threat to anyone daring to drive the long distance to the cottages.

It had taken her six months and every penny she had managed to recoup from the sale of her chalets to renovate the dilapidated cabins and release the view from the old gnarly pine trees which had grown like weeds on the hillside and now lay spread eagled on the bush floor.

A second hand mower took care of the lawns around the two buildings and four sheep took care of the newly exposed acres of freshly sown grass and clover. Audrey still had to take care of the fencing situation as the pro kiwi Nazis had threatened to shoot them on a number of occasions when they had been spotted wandering aimlessly up the steep gravel road in the search of fresher grass and tastier morsels.

As she pulled up in front of the little white cottage with a bright red awning she took a moment to soak in the beautiful ocean view. Perched high on the hill she could see for miles. Karikari peninsular was in the distance and the red sandy beaches of Cable Bay contrasted with the deep blue shades of a quiet ocean. A lone fisherman was fishing off his kayak not far from the shore. Pleasure boats buzzed in the twinkling water. She reached over for her handbag forcing herself away from the quiet moment knowing she had to face a new reality.

For weeks now she had made the trip from the Three Suites to her new home. Each time bringing boxes filled with unwanted and long forgotten keepsakes. Everything of value she had owned was now the property of the new owners. All her furniture, books, music, DVDs, pots, pans, rugs and linens were now just memories.

She forced open the weathered glass door and walked inside. The second hand furniture was a sorry replacement for her previous life of luxury and wealth.

She opened up several boxes on the kitchen floor and began to unpack worn linens rescued from the Three Suites so she could make her bed. Tomorrow would be a better day. Audrey had arranged to meet a man who was interested in renting the cabin. A man she was hoping would be just the perfect tenant. And, if so, he might just be her next project.