



Ahumai Te Paerata

AHUMAI TE PAERATA

The tōtara trees
Of my marae
Stand tall
Like always

I too
Stand tall
Waiting for my brother
Hitiri
To return

The scars
On my body
From the battle of Ōrākau
Have not yet healed

Ōrākau
The beginning moment
Of the anger
I still harbour

My iwi and I
Are determined
We will be avenged

HERBERT MEADE

I am weary
As is my guide
The vast bush
Fights back

No more travelling
Can be done
Now that night
Has fallen

The scars
From the vast bush behind us
Will heal
Within a day

The last thing
I remember
Before succumbing to sleep
Is wondering
Who might be in charge
Of this village

HERBERT

I awaken
To hands
On my body

I awaken
To voices
Shouting

Hoariri!
They yell

When I wake
They begin dragging me
To their building

Now I know
Who's in charge

AHUMAI

The coming home
Of Hitiri
Not only brought us food
But our craved revenge

A Pākehā man
Who dared
To sleep on our land

A Pākehā man
Wearing
An officer's jacket

A Pākehā man
Who looks
Like those at Ōrākau
My iwi begin to shout
We will have revenge

HERBERT

There is a crowd
Waiting for me
In the building

They begin to shout
As I am dragged
In front of the rangatira

His cruel eyes
Look down on me
With vengeance

He too
Shouts something
In their language

The crowd cheers
And I don't need
A translation

I know
That this
Is my death sentence

AHUMAI

The Pākehā man
Dared to rest on our land
But there is real dread in his eyes

The Pākehā man
Is wearing an officer's jacket
But his shoulders are slumped within it

The Pākehā man
Looks like those at Ōrākau
But he is not one of them

And though I want revenge
I cannot send an innocent man
To his death





HERBERT

I sit down
And close my eyes
There is nothing
I can do

As I wait
For my end
The cheering stops

I can hear
Footsteps
Coming towards me

They stop
And I squeeze my eyes shut
Even tighter

After a few seconds
I am not dead
So I risk a glance

There is a woman
Standing
Not in front of me
But beside me

She faces the crowd
And slowly
She sits

The crowd looks at me
Solemnly
And I know
They will let me go

AHUMAI

As I start
To walk over
The cheering stops

I look at his face
As I halt
Beside him

He doesn't open his eyes

I turn
Towards the crowd
And slowly
I sit down

I glance at him
He has opened his eyes
And they are full
Of gratitude

Gratitude
The reward
I get for fighting
For peace

Slowly
I let my anger
drain away

The crowd looks at us
Solemnly
And I know
They will let him go