

# Hot

**Monday 02 Dec 2002**

It is too hot. Here in Central Otago it is nine o'clock at night, still fully light as it will be for an hour yet, and twenty-eight degrees Celsius.

It is too hot to eat, too hot to sleep, and most definitely too hot to work. Furthermore, it is humid; not as humid as it gets in The Great Brown North, but as bad as it gets here, and sufficiently unpleasant for my liking.

I will, I know, not be complaining about this in six months time, when it is minus eighteen and the pale yellow sun has not broken through the shroud of freezing fog in over a month; but right now, at this very point, it is too hot.

It is too hot to be a cat, dog, or any other predominantly black furry animal. I include myself in this; my beard is still predominantly black even if my hair isn't.

It is too hot, and we are lethargic. The high for today was 34, a portent of things to come. In the height of Summer the mercury will crack forty degrees. Overnight it is unlikely to fall much below 24.

We cope in our own idiosyncratic ways. The Boys lie on the lawn, drink lots of water, and pant. (Thinks: they do that anyway). Mother Dog has reclined on the couch in front of the oscillating fan. Personally, I have taken to drinking lots of cold beer and wearing very little. (Thinks: I do that anyway). Smaug has adopted a rebellious, pro-active approach; he has taken to carrying a scimitar and wearing a blue-and-white checkered tea-towel on his head, and has transformed himself from El PussyCat, to al-Qat-Pussi. He no longer simply says "meeow", or even "Meeow, Senior..."; rather, his greeting is "Meeow in the name of Allah, infidel Pig! And bring me a cold milk." (Thinks: he does that anyway...)

Indeed, nature's most adaptable of predators is quite at home amid the dunes and oases of Central Otago's blistering desert. The rest of us are struggling a bit.

The curious, heat-affected behaviour of our fellow sand denizens is not helping. The idiot landlord was out spraying sulphur on his vineyard at ten o'clock last night. Tonight, he's mowing. Go away with your damned noisy tractor! It's Hot!

The idiot neighbour's idiot teenage son is playing loud rap music on his stereo (He has never done this before, I am certain). In response I am searching the secondhand military equipment sites of the Internet for a small domestic mortar...perhaps an antitank missile would do the trick...I key in a Google search, "moron-seeking guided munitions", which frustratingly produces zero matches. Damn useless Internet...it's too hot!!

“Moron-seeking missile” (refined search) returns nine matches!! Feverishly I scroll through them.

Al-Qat-Pussi reads the screen over my shoulder, or more accurately, from his customary vantage point on my shoulder. “We will cut them to pieces, and cast their bones from the battlements, that the ravens may pluck out their blasphemous eyes,” he says with a hiss, sharpening a claw on the blade of his scimitar – or is it the other way round? “We could just go out and hire an air-conditioner,” I tell him with a sigh. “It’s too hot for all this.”

His eyes, which are slit anyway, narrow even more. “Do not sleep tonight, Unbeliever,” he advises me, as the curved blade glints in the lamplight. (Must get that bulb fitting seen to...)

“I won’t, in this heat,” I tell him.

“Even more than that,” is the veiled reply. “And put that milk in the freezer.”

We have had thunderstorms as well. For the last three days the brooding humidity of the afternoon heat has been interrupted by violent tumult in the ferment above, vast black thunderheads rolling in low across the endless blue wilderness of the Central Otago skies. The day before yesterday they were accompanied by a torrential downpour with hail, half an inch of rain falling in forty-five minutes, preceded by a heavenly blitzkrieg which shattered against the firmament every fifteen seconds for half an hour.

“It is Allah’s wrath,” the scimitar carrier informs me, with a half a look in his eye which says that he does not expect the statement to come as a surprise. He has moved from the computer desk to the kitchen, and is draped across the widow sill above the sink bench, where the gentlest of breezes may be found.

“I am contemplating going out to kill something,” he says with hidden menace and a twitch of the tail. “Be thankful I regard you as a friend.”

“I think I liked you better when you were Spanish,” I reply.

A barely perceptible lowering of the eyelids, and a gentle exhalation, alert me to the fact that I Will Keep.

## **Tuesday 03 Dec 2002**

Thirty-six degrees celsius at one o’clock this afternoon. The day will keep getting hotter until about four or five. It is still nearly three weeks till the longest day, after which the hot weather begins.

I came home for lunch, which by rights should have been the start of Siesta time.

Al-Qat-Pussi has erected a tent in the shade of the big *Photinia robusta* outside the back door. Within, he is at repose, a large glass hookah pipe nearby. He does not stir as I poke my head in to say hello, but a whisker twitches, and I note that his paw rests gently against the hilt of his scimitar. The air in the tent is laden with the aromas of coffee, incense, and something which, I fancy, may be hashish; but it is pleasantly light and cool, and a fan made from palm leaves wafts a delicate zither, pulled (or pushed) by some unseen hand or power. I must ask him where he gets all this stuff from.

At the back of the tent, a curtain hides the entrance to what looks like a separate room. I decide it is probably where the Harem sleeps, and elect (I think wisely) not to investigate further.

Mother Dog has come in to lie on the relative cool of the kitchen floor lino. Zeb has saved a bone from this morning and is grinding at it under the shade of the truck, parked on the lawn. Floyd is under the old trailer, too hot to think about chewing anything.

### **Wednesday 04 Dec 2002**

By eleven o'clock this morning it was already 28 C, too hot to spray, so I will spend the remainder of the day in the winery – more particularly in the barrel room where the cooling system keeps the temperature about eight degrees below ambient.

Yesterday afternoon's thunderstorm didn't amount to much other than a bit of cloud and noise.

I thought that I might have heard it again sometime in the wee small hours, but there were dancing girls in al-Qat-Pussi's tent last night (or "The Tent of al-Qat-Pussi" as he prefers it to be known), so perhaps it was the sound of feasting and merriment which disturbed my fretful sleep.

Mike came round for **one** beer last night, and it was half past one this morning, eighteen stubbies, four and a half litres of home brew, and a packet of chips, before he rolled on out and I fell into bed. Ugh. I'm getting way too old for this lifestyle.

"Remind me that I must ring my sister tomorrow," I say to Smaug. "It's her birthday."

"Then we must send gifts," enthuses my self-styled Arabian feline companion. "Gold, incense, candles, and the finest sheep's eyes in all Purrsia."

"I will send runners," he adds, clapping his paws.

"I don't think she'd appreciate the sheep's eyes," I tell him. "She's a vegetarian, you know."

Smaug wrinkles his nose.

“Plants,” he enunciates, “are not food. They are what food eats.”

“To each their own,” I remind him. “Sheep’s eyes don’t appeal much to me either.”

He washes a paw. “You haven’t laughed at my joke about ‘Purrsia’ yet.”

“Maybe I didn’t think it was very funny,” I tell him.

“Maybe you’d like to wake up tomorrow morning with some interesting but unexplained claw marks,” is the reply.

“Well, maybe I did think it was funny, but I don’t want to let on.”

He allows himself the indulgence of a faint smile. “You may yet save yourself, Infidel.”

8.30pm, 25 degrees and horribly humid. The Dogs and I have been to the supermarket. Eighty-five bucks on nothing at all!! I have no idea how this works; some days you can leave the market with a single plastic bag and the bill for clearing the foreign debt of a medium-sized third-world country; other times the procession of trolleys to the boot of the truck causes traffic jams in the car park, and you can pay for it out of the loose change in the ash tray. And here’s the really suspicious thing; when you go through the bill, it **always adds up**. Hmm.

As I push my gilt-edged purchases from the Mart, I see that I have left the lights on in the truck. How can this be? I didn’t even have them on in the first place.

The mystery is soon exploded. Floyd is down in the driver’s foot well, sitting on the brake pedal.

At home, al-Qat-Pussi inspects the groceries on the bench as I put them away. This is standard practice for him in his more usual Hispanic incarnation; I am curious as to how he will respond in his present form.

“Is this Halal?” he asks accusingly, sniffing at tins of cat food.

“It’s Budget, just the way you like it,” I tell him.

I contemplate for a moment. “Actually, I think all slaughtering in New Zealand is done the halal way now, so you should be quite safe.”

He says nothing, but a flick of his tail conveys that such is just as well for me.

“They didn’t have any halal milk though,” I say, keeping a straight face, and a close watch on his expression. “Do you want I should face Mecca while I pour it for you?”

9.20pm and the place is like a sauna. It's only 24 C but you could mop the air with a sponge. Mother dog, wise old canine, is firmly ensconced in front of the pedestal fan in the lounge. The Boys were eating somebody on the back boundary earlier, but frankly I couldn't be bothered going to see who.

The landlord's mower appears to be experiencing difficulties tonight.

"Maybe there really is a God," I remark.

"Maybe someone stuck a scimitar through the gasoline tank," comes the response.

"You didn't, did you?" I ask, with genuine concern.

He lies back and closes his eyes. "Maybe there really is an Allah, my friend."

### **Thursday 05 Dec 2002**

Home for lunch again. 34 Degrees and a bit of high cloud. Good to let the Dogs out for a breather, and to change their water for something cooler.

Al-Qat-Pussi's tent (sorry, The Tent of al-Qat-Pussi) has been joined by several others. There is quite a bit of dust around, and unless my senses deceive me greatly, what appears (albeit faintly) to be the sounds and smells of many animals.

"Are we starting a commune?" I inquire.

"A camel caravan has arrived, Effendi," replies the turbaned one. "Traders from the East. I am renting them tent sites for a few days."

"I'm not sure we're allowed to sublet," I tell him. "The landlord may have something to say about it."

"One should not refuse Allah's bounty," he says with a wan smile, clinking gold coins into a leather bag.

8.15pm and a pleasant 24 degrees. The relief of a cooler evening is tempered by the view towards the Old Man Range to the south. Big dark clouds are building; not the here-one-minute, gone-the-next, inky-black fashion statement, thunderheads of the flash in the pan lightning storms of recent days, but something more serious. These are real clouds, high, wide, and tall, a sensible, conservative shade of Very Dark Grey. These clouds have bulk, substance, purpose. They have depth, they have commitment. These clouds mean business. I suspect it will not be long before we are made fully aware as to the nature of that business.

Sprayed until just on eleven, when it got too hot. Still plenty to do in the winery. We have moved quite a bit of the Chardonnay (can't believe that Word Spellchecker has never heard of 'Chardonnay'! Or 'Spellchecker' for that matter...) from barrel up to tank, partly for blending, and partly so it can finish its malolactic (knew it wouldn't get that one) fermentation away from the influence of new oak.

This means we have a number of barrels which contain Chardonnay lees, and I have been refilling these with Pinot Noir from some of the older barriques. This serves two purposes; it maximises the Pinot's exposure to new oak – which has had the rough edges knocked off it by six months of Chardonnay fermentation – and adds a creamy, buttery, champagne character to the finished Pinot which gives a mouthfeel beyond compare, and which is unobtainable by any other means. Co-factors present in invisible compounds in the Chardonnay also combine with factors in the Pinot to produce colour pigments which would not otherwise be present in the finished wine. These provide additional depth of colour (optical density) in the 420 and 520 nanometre wavebands, if you have a spectrophotometer operating in the visible spectrum. If you don't, it simply means that the wine has a pleasing deep rich red colour, with a proportion bordering on the purple.

### **Friday 06 Dec 02**

A hellish night last night. Wind, rain, hail, God knows what else. I was woken in the wee hours by al-Qat-Pussi landing on the bed. He has come in through the kitchen window and is soaking wet.

“Hello young man,” I greet him. “What's up?”

He appears agitated. “I have been attending the livestock,” he informs me. “The conditions out there are merciless.”

“Livestock?”

“Camels, goats, chickens, all the animals brought by the caravan,” replies the scimitar carrier. “Even two Barbary Apes in wicker cages. They will require shelter,” he adds, glancing round the bedroom.

“Not in here they bloody won't,” I tell him flatly.

“But Effendi...” he protests, jingling his coin purse.

“Don't you 'But Effendi' me,” I respond. “You are not bringing camels into the house. Mice are bad enough.”

Honestly, what can he be thinking?

Six o'clock and thirty degrees. The wind is getting up again.

Had a meeting with Dave this afternoon regarding developments at work. I've told him (on Tuesday) that I was no longer prepared to work under Lisa. In my view she is not competent to be a manager, plain and simple. Two years of continuous crap lead me to walk out of work on Monday. I haven't done that before, ever – not in eighteen years in the workforce - or in nearly forty different appointments, if you count temporary and part time jobs, contracts and things I did when traveling.

He has thrown the ball back into my court, which says that either he's a chickenshit or he doesn't give a toss.

Soo,... I'm out of there. I have two other offers on the table right now and I will be taking one of them.

Al-Qat-Pussi has managed to shelter most of the animals in the chook house on the end of the implement shed. The few who wouldn't fit he has tethered in the garage. This doesn't bother me; at this time of year I park the truck on the lawn. It's really only in the winter that it needs garaging.

“Are they going to be here much longer?” I inquire, regarding the cluster of tents surrounding his own. “I want to mow the lawns tomorrow.”

### **Sunday 07 Dec 2002**

Went into work this morning to finish putting a spray on the home block. Usually just sulphur, but this one had Switch in it as well. It's a preventative fungicide for botrytis and its application is time critical, between 5% and 80% capfall during flowering. Professional to the last, God knows why I bother.

Called in to see Mike on the way home. He opens the door, says “Hi, Richard, can you look after Patrick for two minutes? There's a beer in the fridge.”

So he and Tony disappear for half an hour, and Richard gets to babysit Patrick, who is watching Pokemon videos really loud, and making some slop out of milk and juice, some of which is staying in the container, and most of which is going on the table, on the floor, and on Patrick. Yee-haa, what fun.

Kim is away in Dunedin and has taken Caitlin; so Mike is going to organise a babysitter for tonight, and he and Tony and myself are going to briefly attend James Miller's 21<sup>st</sup> at the Skating Rink Clubrooms. We thirty-somethings need to stick in packs for support, see. I don't think I could do an entire 21<sup>st</sup> anymore. These days I do 40ths, and they're bad enough.

Dropped into the Market after that to get a paper and some wine. A premium Pinot winemaker buying cheap box red...not a good look...someone is in my parking space. How can this be? Whenever I go to the supermarket, regardless of the time or day, or

even how full the car park is, I always get the same park. I haven't asked for it, or performed any ritual magic to ensure it's reservation; but there it always just is nonetheless. Today however someone is in it. Never mind, I can be flexible, I'm not a creature of habit...I park on the other side of the car park, and enjoy the change of scenery as I walk to the other entrance, which I don't usually use.

Sarah What's-her-name is in the market with two offspring. She's looking as gorgeous as she ever did. She's shackled up with that guy, What's-his-name. I stop and have a chat for a while. She makes a passing reference to Pete and kids. That must be his name, but in all honesty it doesn't sound familiar.

What am I doing? Still grapeing and wineing...and yourselves? "We're still farming," she confirms. Hmm. I didn't know they had been. Last I recall they had parked the truck up, and were living in a real house for a bit. He's an electrician I seem to remember, and she's...um...gorgeous. What is Pete's last name? Something foreign, French-sounding, I think. They were doing something arty or crafty, as far as I recollect.

Pete's apparently crutching ewes today, out in the heat with his head up several hundred sheep's twats. We agree that doing the shopping with the kids is the better end of the deal.

"Bye Richard," calls the older of the ankle-biters as I make my departure. How did she know that? She was in a push chair last time I saw her. My God, but her mother is easy on the eye.

Actually the more I think about it the more I'm sure his name was Troy, not Pete. What's going on here? Have I missed several paragraphs?

The market is quite full, but I don't recognise everybody. Must be Outlanders in town. The female on the Lotto counter gives me a hard time (all in good fun). I tried to chat her up one drunken evening, and she's never let me forget it. I didn't get anywhere, and no, I haven't won the Lotto either. Yeah, same again thanks.

There is excitement and activity in the car park on the way out. One of the idiot storepersons has backed a forklift into the car which was in my space. Hmm.

At home, The Tent of al-Qat-Pussi stands unaccompanied again. The camel caravan has moved out and on, driven by wanderlust and that eternal quest for gold, the love of dusty roads and trails and of the open desert; reaching always for the next town, settlement or walled city, the next water hole, the next bazaar...spices and ivory, gems, daggers and fine blades, traded for gold coins, hashish, slave girls (and boys) and Barbary Apes; and traded again for sandalwood and lamp oil, dates, coffee, incense and copper pots. The caravan rolls on, mesmerising its participants in the sway and plod of the ships of the desert, and in the sweet smells of opium and hemp; punctuated and defined by the crack and "hyar" of the drivers, the dust, the sand, the heat, and the sweat and smell of animals and people rolled into one.

At night, under the clear starry heavens, a campfire will pierce the cold of the evening; tents pitched, the men will gather to smoke again, and to talk, and to dice and play backgammon, while slave boys guard the camels and the livestock, and prepare and serve food, and slave girls keep themselves hidden...until later.

The landlord is mowing his vineyard. Again. Why?! Does the man not have a life? How many times in one week must one drive a tractor mower over stunted grass in order to achieve satisfaction?

There is a change in the air. At 4.15pm it is only 24 degrees, and high cloud, accompanied by a cool wind, is spilling over the ranges to the south.

I have been putting it off all day; now I must become domesticated. There is a full load of laundry sitting in the washing machine (actually some of the socks date from last week), and the week's dishes waiting to be done...there are three batches of home brew to be bottled, and the lawns to mow (tent or no tent).

At some point I have to make a trip to the Transfer Station as well. Rubbish is beginning to pile up around the back door, and I can no longer blame the flies on the goats and camels...maybe I should just buy more rubbish bins.

### **Monday 09 Dec 2002**

Preliminary job interview tonight, result of doing some door knocking last week. Have solved the riddle of Sarah's partner! Though I'm not quite sure whether to be pleased or embarrassed; turns out I was thinking of entirely another Sarah, also of my occasional acquaintance; constructed along remarkably similar lines, and also quite gorgeous. So there you go.

I might have cause for concern at this lack of recognition if it wasn't for the fact that I know Dad does the same thing from time to time; so I don't have to worry that it's my excessive lifestyle which has affected me in some funny way. Not yet, anyhow.

### **Wednesday 11 Dec 2002**

Smaug has been fighting again. Didn't see him yesterday, but he was on the chair in the office this morning. Covered in dried mud and dust, with some horrendous scratches over both eyes. His ears are matted with dried blood as well.

"You've ripped your turban," I remark sympathetically.

"One must protect one's Harem," is his reply, through gritted teeth.

He jumps down from the chair, and limps into the kitchen. His left front paw has a nasty wound on the underside, just up from the pad.

“Let me see that,” I say, picking him up.

“It could be worse, Effendi,” he says, though the bravado is a little false, because I can see that it’s hurting him. “At least it’s not my scimitar hand.”

#### **Thursday 12 Dec 2002**

Al-Qat-Pussi’s eyes (presume I am still calling him that) were gummed up this afternoon. I’ve washed them with warm salty water, taking care to avoid his ears which are rather badly mauled and quite sensitive.

Went over to Cromwell last night for a more formal interview at Bannockburn Heights, home of the Akarua label.

They want someone to run their brewery (didn’t know they had one) as well as work in the winery, look after the fertigation, do some field engineering and generally maintain plant and equipment. It all sounds good, but I have a funny feeling about it.

#### **Friday 13 Dec 2002**

Akarua phoned back to offer me a job; but they want me to take a pay cut for the first six months. Hmm. There are pros and cons naturally....less money doesn’t count as a pro. Smaug’s eyes are improving but he’s still limping a bit.

#### **Saturday 14 Dec 2002**

Fresh white stuff on the hills!! How ridiculous is this?

Bacon and eggs for breakfast, and lots of it. I’m going to Oamaru this afternoon to see Lynda, so I’ll need plenty of protein on board.

Dropped into Pykes Auto Court this morning and took a Nissan Safari for a run. 91, 155km, 4.2 auto, he wants \$13,000. Sunroof, air con, power windows, etc.etc. He has a 94 Terrano coming in at the same price next week, so I’ll look at it too; but I want to change before Christmas.

#### **Sunday 15 Dec 2002**

Back from Oamaru at about half past seven. By Christ it’s a long way. Stopped in to see the folks at Herbert on the way home, and then to Michele’s to pick up Mother Dog. The Boys have been tied up since dinner time last night, poor buggers.

#### **New Year’s Day 2003**

#### **New Year’s Day 2004**

Diary keeping is obviously not one of my strong points. I must resolve to do better this year.

Got horribly drunk last night (as one does). Missed the New Year. Lost my bloody wallet, somewhere between being in the pub and here. What a pain in the bum. My life was in that wallet. Driver's licence, Firearms licence, ATM cards, credit cards, fuel card, fifty bucks cash (I think) and two Lotto tickets. Had to do the ring around of banks, fuel company and Police, all whilst dying of a hangover. Ugh. Didn't get up until after three this afternoon, and that was only because I had to take Lyndie in to work. Went back to bed for a few more hours this afternoon. Rickard is still working nights, I think it was him leaving which woke me.

It is still Hot. Smaug must have enjoyed his incarnation as al-Qat-Pussi, because he has resurrected it, complete with tent. This year, in our new house (Lyndie and I have purchased, on the Earnsclough Road), the *Photinia Robusta* is outside the front door rather than the back, but that doesn't appear to bother him. He hasn't eased up on the fighting, though moving has probably given him a whole new batch of fresh infidels to deal with. He appears to have met with reasonable success on the *amour* front since we moved here – nine weeks ago, or thereabouts. He's currently draped across the sofa in the lounge, and I don't blame him. It's too damned hot to do anything else; ten o'clock at night, only just dusk, and still twenty-two degrees.

He has a mighty gash just above his right shoulder which he has been nursing for a month or so. It's healing, and doesn't seem to trouble him, but it certainly looks impressive. He insists that it was a possum, but it looks a lot like a sword wound to me. Maggie is playing Duty Dog, on the couch in my new office. She's a wee sweetie.

It was hot yesterday also; 38 celsius at four in the afternoon. It was already over thirty by ten o'clock in the morning. Lyndie and myself went down to the old mine tailings at the bottom of Boulton Rd to sight in my new cannon. It's a Browning BAR Mk II Lightweight, .270 Winchester, five-shot semi auto with a Nikko Stirling 3 – 9 X 42 scope. Put fourteen rounds through it – two to find out what it was doing, two to correct, two to confirm, and eight for fun. Lyndie fired about two dozen shots with the .22, and I have to say I'm impressed – she's a pretty good shot.

Jade is away staying with Matt, Mieka is in Frankton, and Carmen and Lewi are still over in Oamaru.

## **January 2 2004**

Horrible night, overnight low was 22C. First shag of the year this morning. Finished the 2003 calendar year on 388, not bad considering Lyndie didn't move over until May. Finally going to make a start on the sleepout today. Poured concrete for the sleepers last week, so no further excuses.

Al-Qat-Pussi is in a feisty mood, chasing invisible things round the lawn and terrifying the boys with playful swipes of his scimitar. Mother Dog has begun the serious summer moult. There's cubic miles of dog hair accumulating round the house. I'm thinking of baling it for export.

Enough procrastination – 11.00 am, time for a coffee and then into building and construction mode.

11.22pm

Well, got the floor joists laid out and built the framing for one and a half walls – the easy ones.

Al-Qat-Pussi spent most of the day sleeping under the *Ceanothus* outside the laundry. His tent (The Tent of al-Qat-Pussi) is too hot even with palm frond fans, apparently. Can't say I blame him. I had to have two siestas today. No idea how hot it really was – I stopped caring at 36C.

### **Saturday January 3 2004**

Shag 2.

11.30pm and still 22 degrees. Absolutely ridiculous. 37 during the heat of the day, and humid with it. Got one more wall built, as well as fixing the “unintentional errors” in the second...it's too hot to think straight, let alone do anything else. I don't have enough framing timber to finish all the walls as well as the roof; seems my estimate of materials is closer to reality than the figure spat out by Placemakers' computer. Hate that.

### **Sunday Jan 4 2004**

Shag 3.

Mid level cloud, and a cool-ish change from the south west. Still bloody hot out in the sun.

Placemakers closed today, as if I needed an excuse to have a light day!

Smaug has pre-empted the change in the weather with a change in identity. His tent was gone this morning, and a hammock had suspiciously appeared between the silver birch and the willow on the front lawn.

He was in the kitchen when I went to ask him about it. He looked....very familiar, but strangely different.

“El...PussyCat?” I venture tentatively.

“Gringo,” comes the reply. “It is El Pusso. You are close, but no ceegar, Senor.”

“You're being Mexican, then?”

“Si, you are queek on the uptake, hombre.”

I crane my neck out the kitchen window and notice for the first time the sombrero and poncho lying next to the hammock.

El Pusso is nosing at his last nights' dinner in his dish on the bench.

"You have any tortillas, Senor?" he asks.

### **Monday Jan 5 2004**

First day back at work. Hot again, of course. At least last night was a little cooler. Even felt compelled to draw a sheet over my midriff at about 4.00 am.

Spent the morning lifting tucking wires at the home block so I can get in with the trimmer. The whole front block looks as though it has been invaded by Triffids.

The Police came round last night with my wallet! There really is a God! Furthermore, everything which was, or should have been, in it, is intact, including the two Lotto tickets and \$20. In all reality I have no idea how much money was there to begin with.

A young guy found it outside the pub and handed it in. Turns out I know him; he's Bryan and Vannessa's eldest daughter's ex. How curious is that? I will go and see him with a box of beer or a Lucky Dip ticket, or something.

Rickard has finished night shift for the week and is away to Nelson and Motueka, via the West Coast. He'll love it.

Lyndie proudly showed me the dog hair she swept off the lounge carpet today. There's about half a bucket of it. Funny thing is, the way she pointed it out, I almost got the feeling that she thought it was a **bad** thing. Strange...but then women can be like that sometimes.

### **Tuesday Jan 6 2004**

Late, tired, plenty to tell, tell it tomorrow.

### **Thursday Jan 8 2004**

Or the day after. Still hot. 36 and humid today. Light drizzle falling just now, 8.30 pm.

