

# Late November

*by* Matt Potter

"I didn't realise she was that far gone." Natalie put the dish, wrapped in alfoil, on the tray table and pulled a chair closer to the bed.

"She's in and out of consciousness," said Zumi, smoothing the sheet under Caro's spidery hands. "Maybe today, maybe tonight. Probably not tomorrow."

They'd all met twenty years ago when their children attended the same kindergarten. Caro had just moved from the States and was finding adjusting hard.

"Where's Grant?" Natalie asked.

"Gone for a walk but he's not far."

Natalie nodded. The two friends watched the sheet rise and fall with each laboured breath.

Zumi smiled. "What did you bring?"

"A pumpkin pie!" Natalie said. "You know how she loves it at Thanksgiving." She poked her tongue out. Like Vegemite and cricket, only those brought up on it like pumpkin pie.

Zumi laughed. "Every November, forcing down a piece to be nice."

"I found a recipe on the net and now my hair smells of pumpkin."

Caro's body twitched and they jumped.

As Zumi soothed Caro's hands, Natalie went to the nurse's station, returning with a table knife and two plates. The alfoil crackled as she removed it from the pie, and making three swift cuts, soon had two slices. Stretching across the bed, she handed Zumi a piece.

Zumi bit into it as Natalie bit into hers. The unsure taste, the disturbing texture: no, you have to be brought up on it to like it.

"Nice," Zumi grinned. "For pumpkin pie."

