

Can't stop thinking about Vanessa

Max rolls over in bed and glances at the window. Nice day.

He dozes, thinking about Vanessa.

Funny name, he thinks, you'd think it was a girl. And her surname, 'gonerilla'? Who would call a girl that? It makes Max think of a gorilla, or worse, gonorrhoea.

Dreaming about a non-existent girl isn't the best way to spend the morning, he decides. So Max gets up, but he can't get Vanessa out of his mind. Vanessa bugs him.

Max is keen on bugs, all kinds. He's an amateur naturalist, and today is Sunday. So after lunch he climbs into his work van, the one he uses for carpet cleaning. Upholstery too, and soft furnishings, anywhere around the Hutt Valley or Wellington.

Max is now on a gentle mission, seeking food for Vanessa. I can't expect her to come if there's nothing to eat, he mutters. He crosses the motorway and climbs into the western hills through a maze of streets with perched houses, each seeing more valley and harbour than those below.

At the top of Normandale the houses thin out and the van follows narrow winding tar-seal through countryside with horses. Above are forest and open hills.

This looks promising, thinks Max.

Suddenly a man steps into the road and waves him down. He's stooped, looks elderly. Probably harmless, thinks Max. Two women and another man are there too. Hikers with boots, packs, poles.

The old chap says, We're in a spot of bother. Can you help?

It's about keys for a car up the road where the hikers' walk ended. They think they've inadvertently left them in their other car, in Petone where the walk started.

Any chance of a lift to Petone? the man asks apologetically. Sorry, I've no idea what you were planning, he says. We've stuffed up.

Max says, I'm just cruising, looking for stinging nettle. I can go to Petone. That'd probably be more useful anyway.

The man looks relieved. Thank you so much! He says. I'm John. I'm Max, says Max.

Max turns the van and the other man and a woman get in.

John says, This is Chris and this is Karen. Then he says, Max, you'll go to heaven!

Karen, who is small, takes the middle seat and talks to Max on the way down though the houses. She tells Max about their walk, how they met at the end-point in Stratton Street and left her car there, how they all went in the other car which belongs to Liz and Chris down to Cornish Street, how they walked the trail up Korokoro Stream to the old dam and had lunch there in the shade, how John kept stopping to take photos, how some of them got puffed on the steep uphill bit, how when they got back to Stratton Street she emptied her bag three times looking for her

keys, how she suggested that the others might like to empty it too, and how they turned down the opportunity.

If it was an opportunity.

But none of this matters now, says Karen, because thanks to you, Max, we're on the way back to Liz's and Chris's car, in which I shall find my keys.

I hope, thinks Karen.

Karen is also wondering about her carpets, which need cleaning. She's thinking how she could get Max to do it and pay him twice what he asks. But really I don't need to, she thinks, because John has already told Max he's going to heaven.

Which is better than cleaning carpets, thinks Karen. Especially mine.

Back at Cornish Street, at the extreme left-hand bottom corner of Petone, Chris's and Liz's car is still there. Chris, who's remembered his keys, opens it. On the back seat, where Karen sat this morning with John, there is no sign of Karen's keys.

Karen is a tough woman, and she has met adversity before. She knows that every car seat has a space underneath where lost keys can hide. She looks in that space.

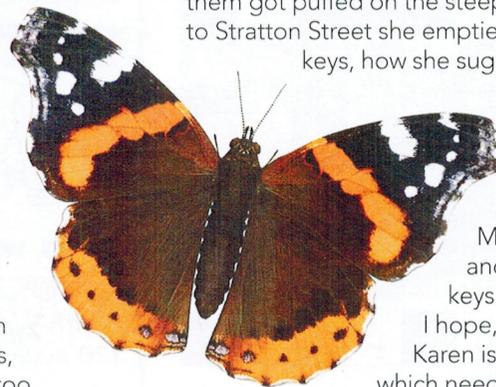
And there are her keys.

Max – and to an extremely minor extent Karen – has saved the day. It is time for Max, laden with a happy burden of gratitude, to go. But first, Chris and Karen want to know why he's looking for stinging nettle.

Chris the naturalist explains, it's to feed the red admiral butterflies – you know, *Vanessa gonerilla*.

Chris Crowe, Liz Crowe, John Rhodes, Karen Serjeantson and Max, 8 February 2026

For more information about South Wairarapa Tramping Club see swtc.org.nz



Greytown's very own **FREE** paper,
The Greytown Grapevine, covering urban and RD1

Did you miss your copy?

For delivery issues,
please contact Greytown Grapevine
greytowngrapevine@gmail.com or (06) 304 9245

Crossword Solution

11.Olympian, 13.Increase, 16.Neatly, 18.Angina, 20.Tool, 22.Dodo
Down: 1.Tabbouli, 2.Anorak, 3.Able, 4.Plancton, 5.Assign, 6.Hihi,
23.Foolhardiness
12.Tannin, 14.Leo, 15.Kidney, 17.Nunance, 19.Atua, 21.Pedigree,
Across: 7.Cannibalistic, 8.Aberdeen, 9.Irfs, 10.Cuckoo,

GREYTOWN COUNTRY MARKET
greytowncountrymarket.org.nz

The Greytown Country Market is pleased to be back for the 2025-2026 summer
starting Sunday 19 October 2025.

Our regular stallholders are ready and we have many new sellers as well.
All profits from running the Markets go to the Greytown Trails Trust for
maintenance and future projects on the Greytown Rail Trail.

**Third Sunday of each month at Stella Bull Park, Greytown
October to March, 10am-2pm – plus Easter Saturday 4 April 2026**

VINTAGE • HOME • GARDEN • COFFEE • FOOD • MUSIC • ART
• COLLECTED • PRODUCED • PICKED • MADE • FOUND

For enquiries contact: Lois Pitt or Ted Ward
027 358 1459 or 027 4437882 | info@greytowncountrymarket.org.nz