

GOODBYE: Steve Fuger

She didn't ask permission to repack his suitcase, she just did it. The way he'd crammed in what he considered essential, it would be creased to ... by the time he got there. She packed economically, so that his clothes would survive the flight wearable, and in the extra space that resulted, she added things she knew he actually would need, like towels, and so forth. There were things she did not pack, the gold cufflinks for example; she'd had them made for him, set with two gold coins her father had given her. She'd keep those here, and if he remembered them at the last minute she could say she'd bring them when she joined him. Yes, in the panic of leaving he'd accept that.

She didn't tell him she'd repacked. Best not to set him off. He'd flown into a rage when she altered his application letter and CV. He'd applied for so many jobs that she quietly reworded his CV and rewrote the letter. She knew he'd sign it without reading it. She posted it off. But when he saw the copy she'd kept, he went ballistic, accusing her of supposing an intelligence she didn't have. He got the job and now he was going to Africa. She was to pack up the house (how many times before had she done that?) arrange inoculations and transport for the cat, and be ready to join him when he sent tickets for her and their daughter in two months' time.

In spite of his belligerence and arrogance he was a nervous and flustered traveller.

They saw him through check-in, then through the departures gate, waving until he turned the last corner and was out of sight. They turned, linked arms and lowered their gaze, assuming an attitude of sadness. She chewed the inside of her cheeks hard,

attempting to stop the smile that was threatening to erupt. She glanced at her daughter, their eyes met. They both grinned. They giggled. And then their laughter bubbled out uncontrolled as arm in arm they skipped through the concourse and out to the carpark. Her daughter would go to art college and she would accept the university offer she'd received and kept secret. All they had to do now was cross fingers and wait for him to "forget" to send their airline tickets to join him.