



# Purple Heart

*Andrew Fiu*

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## **Purple Heart** Andrew Fiu

**An affecting, insightful and warm memoir of growing up Samoan in New Zealand - and of coping with heart disease.** Andrew Fiu came to Ponsonby, Auckland as a three-year-old, part of the wave of immigration from Samoa that turned Auckland's inner city suburbs into a vibrant cultural melting pot. At 14 he was misdiagnosed as having flu when in fact he had rheumatic fever, a disease endemic in Pacific Island communities. As a result of the damage to his heart he was rushed to hospital. Since that time Andrew has had five open heart surgeries, a record anywhere. He has spent so much time in hospital that he says he grew up there, experiencing tender and expert care from doctors and nurses but also enduring appalling racism. This memoir is the story of his hospital years, his clashes with his parents' traditional attitudes, the wisdom he learnt from his fellow patients and the medical miracles performed on his heart by famous surgeon Alan Kerr. It's the story of growing up a Pacific Islander in Auckland, a reflection on the bad old days when schools made Pacific Island children anglicise their names and hospitals did not have translators, an insight into the inter-generational tensions in Pacific Island migrant families and also a testimony to deep friendship, boundless love and bucketloads of humour. Written in a warm, personable and humorous style, this book is part of the cultural sea-change happening in New Zealand: first the play *Niu Sila*, then *Bro'Town, No. 2* and *Sione's Wedding* and now the first memoir from a 40-something Samoan, written with grace, love and insight. The *Weekend Herald's Canvas* magazine wrote: 'Written with verve and humour, *Purple Heart* is a revelation.' *The New Zealand Listener*, singled it out as one of the year's best memoirs, praising its humour, light touch, and lack of self-pity.



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