FLOOR SINCE '05

Poetry and prose from the Whitireia literary journal

Selected by
HINEMOANA BAKER

4th Floor Since ‘05

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Whitireia New Zealand

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Nau mai, haere mai!

Welcome to 4th Floor Since '05, the first ebook published by Whitireia New Zealand. This anthology features selections from the past six years of 4th Floor, the literary journal of the Whitireia creative writing programme.

4th Floor is published online every year in November. It is a collaboration between the creative writing and publishing programmes. Each year, students from the publishing course work with the journal's editor to produce a showcase of poetry and prose by writing students. Since 2007 that editor has been me, and I'm very proud each year when we launch the fantastic work of all our contributors for the world to see.

At the time the journal began, the creative writing programme was situated on the fourth floor of the Whitireia Wellington city campus. Though the programme has since shifted, the name has stuck. 4th Floor is rich with a wide range of talent, style and voices. We use a 'tuakana/teina' approach, so newer writers (teina) and well-known names (tuakana) share the screen. First-timers' poems, fiction and creative non-fiction sit alongside work from our tutors, lecturers, guest speakers and mentors. It's a vibrant and wonderful mix.

Not only is this our first 4th Floor ebook, but it's also the first time we have decided to present a selection from previous years' journals. It was 2005 that the first edition went live (as they say), so we figured

that now was a great time to do a bit of looking back, as well as looking forward – the ebook seemed like an exciting way to do that.

One interesting aspect of making this selection has been that certain pieces emerge which have clearly been written in response to syllabus exercises (as one of the tutors, I have inside knowledge here). Each response is so different but equally compelling. A good deal of this writing, though, has been created outside the course-work – our tuakana, obviously, but also many of the student authors who have published collections of their own. I would very much encourage you to seek these out. 4th Floor contributions are offered without charge by the writers as a platform for keen readers to further explore their work.

I would like to thank all the student publishers who've worked on the journal over the years, along with the group who put together this ebook: Poppy Haynes, Yuliya Nikonova, Valerie Thompson, Jenna Tinkle, Keri Trim and their fantastic boss, leader of the publishing programme at Whitireia, Rachel Lawson. Of course, we all thank the writers, without whom none of this would happen. You have continued to support the project as it grows and evolves, and we really appreciate it. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa, ngā kaituhi toa, e!

So, whichever ereader you choose to experience this extraordinary edition with, we very much hope you enjoy it. And please, do visit the 4th floor website to read this year's journal.

Mauri ora!

Hinemoana Baker

Dear Grandmother

Husbands are a necessary part of the design
God drew on his sketch pad, Sister Joseph tells you

if he hit you for flirting with a man you wouldn't
be seen dead with – it's the drink, the devil drink –

he's a good man really, always money in the plate
and I've told you about that smile before.

So, so – here is handsome Arthur on the butcher's cart –
he's looked at you over the minced beef for months –

You smile that smile and he smiles back.
'A pound of the best fillet,' you say.
'Coming up,' says Arthur,

a man, it turns out, you are happy to be seen dead with.

Nafanua's sister thinks about Nafanua in America

Think of my scenes: thin, meatless, glamorous as gravy.
She is making a life for herself in America.

I work in a library
not even a city library, but a library of World War Two

amphibious vehicles.
A library that only old men visit.

Old men with live geese under their jackets.
Old men with hair parted like their geese would fly if their geese could fly.

She goes to markets where market-men flog pink fluffy numbers
and bunches of plantain and say Gimme ya numba dwarlin

without even moving their lips.
I hate lips.

I hate geese flying through snow
I wish I could stuff airplane lollies into my mouth.

I wish I had a lover.
I wish that she would land in the spotlight like a wombat, no not a wombat

something uglier, less exotic, something like
porridge or

mould or
an old sanitary pad.

Yes, an old sanitary pad
that is what I wish she was.

FAY CAMERON

On Being Sophie's Father

On a cracker day you can see the hills from here. But today clouds block most of the view – it'll rain again, later. The sky and the sea are the same grey, so you can't pick out the horizon. I point to a cargo ship out on the bay but Sophie doesn't look. She's hunkered down into her jacket, packing a sad because I made her come walkabout through the orchard with me. She'd been grumpy all morning and I told her, 'The fresh air'll do you good, might even cheer you up.' So far she's proving me a liar.

A patch of blue catches my eye. The first time I held Sophie, it was a day like this: threatening rain and the sun trying to break through. I was all filled up with relief she'd arrived in one piece and terrified I'd squeeze the life out of her if I breathed too deeply or smiled too widely. Turns out being a father's just like that – always having to keep myself reined in. That day I took her to the window of the maternity unit and showed her the world and told her it was hers and it was waiting.

Now, I turn my back to the view and face the rows of trees rising up the slope towards the road. I sweep my arm at the orchard. 'You know, Sophie, this'll all be yours one day.'

'S'pose.'

She's still not looking. 'It will, I want you to have it.'

She sighs and I shut up. I should've kept my gob shut. The silence between us feels bloody huge, like maybe we'll learn to talk in another decade or two, if I'm lucky. Around us the birds are noisy enough; starlings scrap over a wizened plum and the fantails are busy chattering as they chase after insects. I've been told fourteen-year-old girls are like this: moody, withdrawn, nigh on impossible to live with. I wish that was all there is to it. Desperation drives me on. 'You know I've been thinking . . . soon it'll be time to teach you to drive the tractor. What do ya reckon?'

'Really?' She turns towards me, eyebrows up to her hairline.

'Yep.'

'Random. Now? Today?'

'I dunno. I was thinking in a few weeks, in the spring, maybe.' It's like I've thrown a switch, the way that light in her face vanishes as fast as it appeared, and I give in. 'All right, then – why not.'

'Choice!' Sophie jumps from the stile. 'Come on.' She races ahead through the trees.

By the time I catch up with her she's in the implement shed, sitting on the tractor I bought the year she was born – it broke the bank and cost me months of her mother whingeing on about how she wanted, no needed, a dishwasher and a microwave.

'Remember you used to let me up here when I was little, sometimes with the engine running?'

'Sure do, and your mother rarked me up good and proper when she found out.'

I meant it to come out like a joke or light-hearted banter or something. 'Yeah,' says Sophie, her mouth twisted into a grimace.

I've done it again, gone and said the wrong thing. 'She had a point, it's no place for little kids.' My concession is lame but Sophie seems to accept it. She bounces on the seat like she used to back then – as if it's a dirt bike and not a seventy horsepower machine.

'Come on, Dad.'

'Okay. But you jump down, I'll take it out of the shed.'

I start it up, engage first gear and ease forward, explaining each step. 'Think you can do it?'

'Yep.'

When she turns the key there's a graunching from the starter motor. Keeping my voice steady, I say, 'You've turned it too far. Turn it off.'

She has another go and the engine fires into life. She struggles into first gear, then the tractor coughs, lurches forward. And stalls.

'What did I do wrong?'

'It's the clutch, there's a knack to it.' She tries again, and again she releases it too quickly. 'Relax. It'll go into gear if you've engaged the clutch.'

'I've got my foot on the pedal. I thought this was meant to be easy!'

Maybe it would've been wiser to wait, teach her to drive a car first. Much simpler sitting beside her, hand on the handbrake, steering wheel within easy reach but it'd take more bottle than I've got to renege. 'Okay, put your foot down hard on the clutch, move the gear stick into first . . .

good . . . release the clutch . . . gently does it . . . that's right . . . feel for where it gives slightly?'

She nods – she's starting to get the hang of it.

'Now, give it some juice.'

'What?'

'The accelerator.'

'Oh.'

'It's not like the clutch. You don't want to floor it.' I don't bother her with the hand throttle – not yet.

She's all focused attention as she goes through each step again and the tractor inches forward. 'I'm moving!' She grins.

I allow myself the smallest of smiles. 'Okay, okay, take it easy, stay in first gear for now, nothing fancy.' The tractor moves smoothly down the drive.

Sophie has her head up, watching where she's going and I walk beside her until, after forty metres or so, it's time to stop. 'All right, then brake, engage the clutch, and come to a halt.'

Sophie looks down at her feet.

'Keep your eye on where you're going.'

'I am. I am.' She glances up and then looks back at her feet. 'It's hard to tell which is the right pedal.'

'The clutch is on your left, the accelerator on the right and the middle pedals are for the brakes.'

'You don't have to shout!'

I wasn't but there's no point arguing. 'Sorry.'

The tractor comes to a standstill with the engine running and I sag against the wheel. Before my heart has stopped thudding she asks, 'Can I do it again, Dad?'

'Always a good idea to know when to stop, Soph. Pack it in for now, we'll have another lesson tomorrow.'

'Ohh.'

'Come on, do as I say.'

'Why don't you show me how to turn around and then I'll drive back. You always say practice makes perfect.'

'Where did you learn cheek like that?'

She grins again and I'm done for. She drives back good as gold till we're near the shed. 'Okay, better stop now.' She keeps going. 'Stop the tractor, Sophie.'

'I'm trying.'

'Hit the brake, engage the clutch.'

'Which one's the brake?' She looks down at her feet, again.

'Sophie, brake!' The garage is right next to the implement shed and the closed roller doors loom up at us. 'You're going to hit the garage.' I break into a jog. 'Not the accelerator, the brake!'

'I'm trying, nothing's happening.'

Plenty's happening, including the scream of the engine as she floors the accelerator.

'Sophie, jump off.' She looks up, looks down, and the tractor lurches

into the garage door. A loud bang bounces around the yard followed by a shocked hush. Sophie stays sitting upright, staring straight ahead, like she's blanked out. My chest is tight and my hands shake as I reach over to the key and turn the engine off. 'You okay?'

'How did that happen?'

I sigh. 'You gave it too much throttle when you should have braked.'

I didn't mean to.' She jumps to the ground. 'Do you think the tractor will be okay?'

I check it and the garage door. 'Tractor looks fine but the door's come off second best. Just lucky it's not you.'

'Imagine what Mum'll say.'

'Oh blimmin heck . . .' We look at each other, eyes wide.

Sophie giggles.

I hug her and we both laugh – the kind where you have to hold your sides together, the sort that makes you feel better after a narrow escape.

'Aren't you mad at me?' Sophie asks when she has her breath back.

'Mad? Nuh. Not at you.' I shake my head. 'We know what your mother's like, though. What say we keep it a secret – just between the two of us, eh?'

The sky goes dark and the air smells wet and sharp and then there's a brilliant flash of light, the smell of sulphur and electricity and a crack followed by a roll of thunder that rumbles on and on. 'That was close!' The rain starts, large, slow, heavy drops that'll turn to a deluge. I grab Sophie's arm, 'Come on! Run for it. We're gonna get soaked.'

My heart goes out

At the seaside it is gritty
and on piers underswum by fish.

Gets out books
on the armours of the ancient world;

it would try on helmets
if it had eyes.

Keeps lists
in musical notation

some things be done *Calmly*
some *With the Jinking Energy of a Monkey*.

Double Chocolate

'No? What?' asked Brian.

'They reckon he had a relationship with a patient at his last hospital.' Janine looked down at her plate of macaroni cheese and broccoli while she spoke.

'What happened?' Brian asked.

'Dunno, but I heard he's for the chop. They just found out, the woman he had the relationship with told the hospital. Everyone's talking about it.'

'Brian, today I freaked out when you said you'd been out with him and he bought you stuff. It seemed wrong and reminded me of . . . well, anyway.' Janine paused and her eyes half closed for a moment. 'Then I heard this thing about him.'

Brian felt weird inside. Dr Roberts was a good bloke, wasn't he?

'Janine, I don't know what to think. My judgment is all fucked up. These drugs stop me from seeing and thinking straight.'

Janine put down her fork and looked over at Brian.

'You've lost your danger radar, while mine is overactive!' She leaned over and touched his arm. If he wasn't so chemically flattened he would probably cry. He looked at her and was grateful that she was here with him and his muddled mind and emotions.

The next day the door to Dr Roberts' office was wide open. Brian looked in as he walked past. Janine was right; nothing there except a computer and telephone. His thoughts were so confused. He needed to find Janine but she wasn't in the TV room, kitchen, artroom. Nine o'clock; she'd be lining up for her medication which was what he should be doing.

As he approached the dispensary, he could see her there with the others. Her face lit up when she turned her head and saw him walking towards her. Something good stirred in Brian's stomach, a glimmer of emotion. A feeling he recognised from the past.

'I'm not going to swallow my pills today,' he whispered in her ear.

Wooden

I am a wooden mast
bent from the sun
sailors cling to
me when the
ocean rolls
they cry
out

Mother

Can
I come
home now
will you let
me sit by your
fire and be that boy
you always wanted and
not the one you ended up with.

Freestyle

Anna doesn't want to dive
she never does
but that's the rule.

Me and Fale
we curl our toes
around the edge
of the pool

and watch as our spit
lands on the water

it always goes
like this as we wait
for the signal.

Jimmy says the man
with the stopwatch
likes to look
at our arses

but old people
stare at everything
that's what they do.

When the Principal
steps up on the platform
no one talks any more

he raises his arm up
towards the sky
his finger on the trigger.

Anna hates the sound
it makes her lose
every race

but reminds me
of my Father
and his last straw

with the overtime
and lousy fucken marriage
then my mother

falling backwards into
the sink.

Fale is like a canoe on the water
her brown legs paddle hard
she doesn't make a splash.

I pound the water
with my hook arms

I stay in my own lane
and never cross the
tape marked crime scene.

Jimmy says there's a peephole
in the changing room

that he can see all our
arses real good.

Cuba Street

We're about to go into Olive Cafe –
it's dark and cars are taking
the middle of the road slowly –
when he tips, drunk, out of a black doorway.

Grinning, he takes each step as though
walking on logs across a river,
his arms swing round in front of him
like an ape.

'I can juggle,' he says, 'taught
by my father who was taught
by his mother
who had gypsy blood.'

'This,' he says, pushing up his sleeve
then stumbling sideways as though
he'd given himself a punch in the jaw,
'this is a gypsy symbol'
a kind of cartwheel in black on his forearm.

He looks up at us from his
half-pitched stance
a tent with no frame
someone asleep inside.

A young woman with dreadlocks
and filigree clothes
hands him three juggling balls
calls him Man

reminds me of the English girl
on her way from somewhere to somewhere
who sat by our fire, told stories
of working at music festivals and fairs
how my quiet daughter shone, considering this.

He throws a yellow juggling ball
over his shoulder and steps
heavily towards us to gain some balance.
My daughter smiles at the show

smiles at the fragile girl in the delicate clothes.
I put one arm out
clumsily, from my own dark doorway
and guide us inside the cafe.

Dark Spirits

Midnight. You are standing in a pool of black water that glimmers like onyx under the street lights and the rain is bucketing down. All you've had to eat today is a nasty piece of wedding cake, force-fed to you by your ex-wife to celebrate the wedding of your daughter to a thug you have never liked. You chew on half a toothpick which you snatched off the bar before you staggered out of your own daughter's wedding. That was before you slapped the mother of the groom on the arse. That was before you tried to unfold the allegedly folding bicycle you bought from The Warehouse – made in China, of course. That was before you dumped the wretched piece of crap in the gutter where it belonged. And here you stand, in the black water, on the night from hell, hoping that lightning will strike you dead before tomorrow's hangover kills you. And you vow to never touch bourbon again. And then the rain turns to hail and the hailstones are the size of seed-pearls and they hurt. You welcome the pain and tilt your face towards it.

Suddenly the Lake

(after Rosalie Gascoigne)

You stroll the galleries
of reconfigured road
signs, soft drink crates

which are birds, maps, more
signs of other signs, yellow
and black monuments

to the AA, directions
for driving anywhere
you ever wanted to go.

They are the hills above
a dump in north-western
Australia, views to a long

forgotten lake, and air
so much air. In the next room,
an Ian Scott painting

the dimpled buttocks of a woman
naked in front of a famous
landscape. You know the feeling.

Free Range Men

We talk at a cellular level
swift flashing *twsits* late at night:

I miss u. LOVE.

I am sleeves of *jersey knotted around waist*.
I embrace you.

I am the Welcome Swallow darting up to you
from the Tairua River.

I am da nerves.sensing.da.pressure
between yr thumb and pen
as yr ink flows for da next 7 days.
Union

I bought orange and blue flowers today.
Swoop flit fly riverkiss
***

You are gone for seven days
so dreaming sends me the last two

in an overnight courier package
stickered *International* and *Fragile*.

Inside I find backpacks, skis, bikes,
take me backs in plangent echoes.

The Swede liked his *snus*
brown gloop dripping from glazed gums:

tobacco, arsenic, glass shavings
for fast uptake and keen avian focus;

the Swiss liked to toke up
on a mix of sweet dazing weeds:

a smokescreen of ganja and tobacco
to conceal angst and access to heart.

***

Without the glister one may expect
after a night with two foreign men,

I send them back to the glory hole:
thick filings, diaries and photographs –

a valued record of hearts in flight
now tidier for their revisiting slumber.

***

But you, you have no *Yerba Buena*,
just Dairy Milk, psi-trance and body cherishings.

You are the brightest light emitting diode
in this world of race-through red traffic light cycling.

***

For breakfast I eat a small
soft boiled egg

whose bedraggled yolk
is pale and overcast.

Five more twittering sleeps to go.

twsit – the song of the Welcome Swallow
snus – wet snuff
Yerba Buena – sweet herb/drug of choice

back

Outside your window you see
a world you'd break the glass just to get to

a world where you could climb the pohutukawa all day
a world where small offences are not judged mightily by your grandmother

a world where she did not remove the light bulb
and close the door with that snarl on her back

a world where you won't have to sit here with your head on this desk
and your eyes closed for hours because you sinned and she said

a world, let's call it a world, that will take you to Dress-Smart
and buy you something beautiful – because you didn't ask

yes that would be a world, wouldn't it
a world that brought your mother back

Collectors

Aunty Jane's house was the most recognisable in town. On the roof was a large metal ring. It was two metres in diameter and could be seen for miles, looming larger and larger as you approached. Peeta's consolation was that the ring had been there so long no one asked about it any more.

Going into Aunty Jane's house was like entering the aftermath of the trade fair, lights out, well after all the punters and stall holders had left. Along the walls and on the couch, piled to toppling, were containers of buttons, cotton reels sorted by colour, fragments of cloth and offcuts of old lampshade fringes. High on the arms of the couch were pieces of felt in bright stacks. Legs of yellow and hot pink stockings hung out the side of a large pile of fabric in odd formations. In the centre of the chaos was an ancient Bernina on a clean Formica table.

Aunty Jane was wedged on her couch in the small space between back issues of the local newspaper and Tip Top containers with their Hokey Pokey labels half washed off.

Peeta stood, as instructed, on a clear patch of carpet while Aunty Jane shuffled around. Papery hands measured from Peeta's armpit to her knees, around her bust, her waist, her hips and finally from the floor up to an imaginary hem.

Aunty disappeared behind one of her piles, came out with a bolt of royal blue cloth. She laid out the pattern and cut a jagged edge around the thin paper. The pattern was from the ‘80s, screwed up from the many times it had been used. On the cover it looked like an old cocktail dress with ruffles going around and around in flounces until they reached the knee. It looked unwearable. But Peeta would be back in a week to collect it.

Peeta tried to help Aunty Jane stand, but an unsteady hand flapped at the air between them and waved Peeta to the table. She watched Aunty Jane take every step on a tightrope, each placed foot a relief.

When Aunty Jane spoke she chewed every word with gums and lips before sound ever came out. Her mousy eyes seemed both innocent and stunned. She reminded Peeta of a possum.

‘I had a lover once,’ she said.

Aunty was standing with some difficulty, wobbling like a plane on a windy tarmac.

‘His skin smelled like spices from a foreign kitchen and I remember wanting to lick that skin. To see if it tasted like it smelled.’

Peeta looked away.

‘We weren’t lovers yet but he had been staying in this house. I was young. I got up one night and put on some music. He didn’t wake up.’ She began to whisper. ‘I went into his room – the back one where the cat sleeps now – and I licked his arm, slowly.’

Aunty Jane stopped talking and tilted out of the room.

Peeta could hear her in the kitchen. The water running and the clatter of cups.

'He left after that. Not right away. About a year later. Said he would be back with a ring.'

She returned with the tea, swaying her way back into the room.

Aunty's mouth strangled the words out.

'I got that ring on the roof so he would see it and remember where I was.'

The first thing Peeta saw when she returned was the dress, haunting the front window on its skinny hanger.

It was past dinner time, the porch light was on but the house was in darkness. Aunty was not sitting in her usual place. It took a few minutes of squinting for Peeta to register that the room was empty. There were no boxes, no papers and no colours – only the sewing machine was there, ghostly on the bare table. The moonlight entered through the window, into corners and across the carpet, patches now visible where all the piles had been.

Peeta wandered through the house looking for Aunty Jane. She stopped at the kitchen window, facing the night. The moon was battling with the clouds, mesmerising. She almost didn't see the figure seated on a wooden chair outside the back door.

Aunty Jane was not moving and it was freezing outside. Peeta looked at her aunty's chest to see if it was rising and falling. It was. From this

angle she had a good view of Aunty's face and she could see it smiling and aimed up toward the moon. When the clouds parted, the moonlight shone down and Peeta saw Aunty shiver and open her mouth as if drinking.

The moon disappeared again and Aunty's head dropped back to look at the lawn.

Together they waited. Once more the moon came out, and as the silver tongue licked the grass, unrolling like a magic carpet, the shadow of a perfect circle unfurled at Aunty's feet.

The Queen's Chain

Eventually the view from the road became of lilies curving up around the path and shooting heavenward, like it was them that held up the walls, the stamens yearning forward inviting the touch that got coloured fingermarks pasted across clothes.

'Never a dull moment round here, Te Ao,' my mother would say, with the air of someone who could cultivate an intricate work of art out of seeds and dirt. 'Women born under the auspices of great happenings can handle anything. We can rise and walk about in our lot, wear it like every dress we ever bought that looked great but that we had no occasion for.'

And at the end of every day, as if it was the signal to the world that she was off, she would pick a few stems in payment, using scissors to clip the flowers at just the right length, snip off the stamens and let their mustard dust fall down around her feet. Inside the house, in a long glass cylinder half-filled with murky water, she would display the fresh ones, folding the old bunch in her hands of steel and taking them back down to the pile.

Crises weren't really her forté, my mother. It was the cycle of life she understood – growing things and then letting the dying ones go on the pile, draped in sunlight, with every edge, every lip, every leaf, curling in on itself.

Excerpt from *Resurrection*:

Blood of the Lamb Book Three

It was hot, the thick damp air trapped within the jungle's protective dome of leaves. Already sweat dripped down between her breasts, plastering her grimy white shirt to her skin and running down her brow into her eyes. It blurred her sight, transforming the jungle into a rich mosaic of greens, silvers and yellows as the sunlight filtered down in tiny shafts of light. Brilliantly coloured birds, sporting feathers of the most lurid greens, intense sky-blues, flame-orange and stark berry-reds, fled through the upper canopy, protesting at her with ear-splitting taunts.

Somewhere ahead she could hear the sound of running water, and she worked her way towards it. The ground was rising now, growing ever more rocky as the thick ferns and shrubs that formed the undergrowth gave way to a tangle of creepers so densely woven that, despite the aid of the machete, she could not break through. She was forced to follow a more accessible route downhill, and to clamber over mossy rocks and fungus-laced tree trunks in what she guessed must be a gully leading to the coast. In a moment's inattention she stepped onto an unstable rock that gave way beneath her, sending her skidding on a bumpy ride through loamy leaf-litter and over a sudden drop – right into space. She crashed down onto a shingle bank, followed seconds

later by the machete landing only inches from her hand.

At first she thought she was dreaming as a cloud of butterflies welled up around her, winged creatures of every size and colour that flew in groups of three or four like tiny flocks of birds. The shingle bank on which she'd landed adjoined a deep circular pool fed by a small but ferocious waterfall. Around the water's edge big waxy leaves of wild ginger hosted bright orange butterflies, the swirls on their wings resembling azure eyes; several velvety black moths with vibrant red underbellies hung underneath the leaves like flowers or exotic fruit. Maryam felt as though she'd landed in the Garden of Eden.

As she sat there, stunned, another of the tiny creatures – this one black, with flares of brightest yellow – alighted on her knee. She slowly drew it towards her, until she could examine it at closer range. As she moved, it used its wings to balance, as though adjusting sails, its delicate black legs flexing up and down to hold it firm. Amazed, she watched it unfurl a coiled tongue – or perhaps a feeler – from beneath its head to probe her skin as if searching for food. But when it found nothing to its liking it wafted back into the air and drifted off, gliding on the updraughts from the water's noisy fall.

She stood now and slipped into the water, unable to resist its pull. It was as tepid as a cooling bath and she waded over to the waterfall to stand directly beneath its flow. Spray pummelled down on her head, stinging like tiny spears, and she burst out of it tingling all over, her skin aglow. How good to wash in fresh water again.

Isabella

She is a frenzied atom, bouncing
from wall to door frame.

She is a muppet video on fast forward
a three-hour tape till bedtime.

She is a super slick eel, sliding
her finger up the hot tap.

She is an ice-skater, down the hallway
kissing the floorboards.

I am the ambulance driver
and the stretcher.
(No, she wants to be the driver!)
I am the doctor
(No me!)
and the sick-bed pillow.

VIVIENNE HILL

Perspectives

You won't cook because it's detailed.
You're a big picture man. Admit it.

Happiness to you is ruling a continent.
Why can't you just dice an onion?

Why are you compelled to direct?
Relax a while. Take a country off your shoulders.

She is knitting

twisting the yarn to save her life.
Each stitch hikes across a swollen river.
If she stops her roof will explode.

A dropped stitch is a child dangled.
Purl is a letter sent in anger.
Knit is a DNA strand in a Petri dish.
Cables are lifelines thrown
in dark waters.

Each pattern must be followed, as if
oxygen depended on it.
Match the needles to the weight
or risk amputation.
Cast off like a cruise liner.

Loving our kids

I'd wrap my arms around you
and sing in your ear
a song about a frog
dancing in a pool. I'd play
my guitar to you, my fingers
small frogs dancing on the strings,
the strings become the legs of a cicada
strumming against a brown shell body,
the hollow body of the guitar
become a conch shell, a drum beat,
carrying this song from hill to hill,
telling of cicadas
dancing in hot sun,
a shell and a drum
and my arms around you
holding you as safe
as a frog inside a guitar.

The Look and Feel of 1963

This faded Fuji photograph
green at the bottom, as always,
green for the soft life of towns.
In middle ground, a river,
tiny wee us
and our tartan picnic rug.
Then the mountains,
tall girls at the back.

My mother pours tea from a thermos.
Beside her a book of native plants
is open at the Mount Cook Lily.
I have a book too.

My father looks towards Mount Cook
(that was its name then).
He is smiling because
the mountain has decided
to show itself.

A hawk flies low to the land,
in circles. My sister sees a rabbit
running
across a ridge.

We were simply provided with mountains.

KEVIN JOHNSTON

road walked across, by cat

i catch bill watching me
he's noticed i am studying
samiha; she sees karen listening to
linda-jane, who is giving a Critique
of joseph's work.
        joseph has interrupted
the Critique by talking to hinemoana
who'd just received lucia's Comments
I see pip
        and hamish both writing Notes
and now
here is
simon watching shelley
        i wonder if she
        wonders –
'what is kevin Writing
in his black
notebook?'

SENRYU

woman manager
boys rugby team
esteemed orange girl

Bridie's Scrapbook

'What about this one?' I hold up the recipe. Mum stops flouring the oven tray and peers at the small newspaper type.

'Dunno,' she says. 'Can't imagine the boys being keen on a mushroom flan. You know how they like their meat.' She places the circles of pale scone dough on the tray, three rows of six and two of five.

I put the flan recipe face down on the sheets of newspaper protecting one end of the Formica dining table, and squeeze PVA around the edges. The scrapbook's open in front of me and I carefully glue in the recipe, in between directions for Apricot Cheesecake and Five-Minute Meatballs. I smooth out the kinks in the newsprint with my fingers, wiping them on a tissue afterwards. My hands are all sticky but I don't mind; I like peeling off the PVA once it's dried.

Mum says my recipe collection is impressive. I'll be able to take over the cooking soon, she says, give her a break.

The scones are nearly done. I can smell them, cheese and onion, and the big pots of salty lamb, pumpkin, potatoes and peas simmering on the stove. Mum asks me to set the tables and I jump to it, driven by hunger. Bowls of cutlery on the two long tables, glass salt and pepper shakers, fourteen big white dinner plates and four jugs of water, two on each table.

Mum smiles at me when I've finished. 'You're a good helper,' she says.

Billy's the first one in, like always. He swings through the dining room's double doors in a wave of cool twilight air. The other shearers are outside. I can hear them taking off their boots, laughing while they have a last smoke.

'Hey Bridie,' Billy says to me. 'How's it going?' He makes a beeline for Mum without waiting for a reply. Mum's stirring one of the pots, her cheeks pink and steamy. Billy catches her about the waist, mutters something in her ear that makes her look at me and roll her eyes. She says: 'Billy!' and he laughs, lets her go. He saunters over to where I'm sitting and pulls out a chair, too close, smiling at me as if I'm the best thing he's seen all day.

'Looking good,' he says, gesturing to the recipes in my scrapbook but with his eyes on me. 'The way you're going, you're going to be as good a cook as your mama.' His voice is warm and lazy, like gravy poured from the jug, and it makes me shiver.

A tanned, tattooed hand touches my hair, strokes it, and I sit there, staring at the scrapbook and all the white pages still to be filled. Then Mum turns to us from the stove and Billy's hand falls, rests on the table. Mum's eyes track his hand but she doesn't say anything, she just carries the heavy pot over to the table and places it on a tiled hotplate in the centre.

'I'll wash up,' I say, and push back my chair. Mum nods, not looking at me.

*

Later, I watch her undress. The blue shirt slips off her shoulders and is tossed onto the cane chair. She yawns, a hand feathering over her mouth, then slides into bed. I move close, soaking up her warmth. She smells like vanilla.

She turns in the double bed and looks at me. Her eyes are the darkest I've ever seen, as black as the river at night. She sees what I'm asking.

'It'll be all right,' she says.

Bees browsing in the bushes, the sound of summer, and blue hydrangeas spilling onto the broad verandah. I make my way along the side of the big house, the faded white boards creaking underfoot. The verandah's sloping roof offers shade from the Masterton sun.

Michael's in his usual spot. He's supposed to be reading, he told me that last time, but he's just pretending. I don't blame him; the book looks boring. A kid wearing long brown trousers and a buttoned-up shirt is on the cover, doing nothing in particular.

Michael stands, letting the book slide down the side of the green couch.

'I wondered when you were going to turn up,' he says, scooping up a black bag. 'I've been waiting ages. I was just about to give up.'

'I had to do some stuff.' I swivel to show him my pink backpack. 'I raided the fridge, got some food.'

Michael grins. 'Let's go,' he says. We climb and climb and climb until a thin layer of air is the only thing between us and space. At last we flop, exhausted, onto a flat outcrop of grass near the top of the hill. We moan about our sore legs then we eat the leftover chicken, the cheese, the thin white sandwiches lumpy with butter because I made them in a hurry, and we swig from the plastic bottles of warm water. We lie back in the yellow grass, stare at the sky until it feels like we're falling off the face of the world.

I sleep for a while, maybe. When I open my eyes Michael is sitting next to me and he's naked. He's staring down the hill, at the Lego farm.

'Why'd you take your clothes off?' I ask. He's never done this before.

He looks at me, says he wants to show me something, then he stands, picks up his bag and flings it down the hill as far as he can. It gets almost to the bottom.

'We're going to roll down,' he says. 'You'll have to take your clothes off.'

I don't want to, he sees that, but he just stands there until I drop my eyes, start taking off my T-shirt, my shorts, my undies, my sandals. I fold each item neatly and put it in my backpack.

We examine each other's bodies. He's tall and skinny, and every part of him is brown except for his thing. He's looking at me, blue eyes wide and curious, and I shiver, like I do when Billy looks at me, but it's different. A breeze tickles my legs, lifts my hair, strokes my arms.

'Come on,' he says. I hesitate, then hurl my pink backpack far down

the hillside. It bounces a couple of times, flashes of pink against the summer grass, and comes to rest not far from Michael's black bag. A million miles away my mother hangs out the washing on the line behind our cabin. Her shirts, my shirts.

Michael's already started rolling. He's rolling without me and I have to catch up. I lie down and push off, fast, hard, and then I'm rolling too. There's a moment of sky, a moment of grass, more sky and the whistling air. My knees scrape over stones and I feel the bump of dried sheep droppings under my ribs. I don't know if I'm falling down or falling up. Hair flies across my eyes. My skin's tingling, electric, and I can hear someone screaming. Me. Michael too. He's a whooping blur ahead of me, legs held straight and arms clasped above his head, rolling down the hill that's almost vertical, like a cliff of grass.

Then we're slowing, Michael first and now me, slowing as we reach the bottom of the hill. The sky stops spinning and the grass is where it should be, underneath everything. I sit up, smile giddily at Michael. He glances up the hill and I can tell he wants to roll down again.

Instead, we dress, pulling shorts and T-shirts out of our backpacks. We drink the last of the warm water and collect our breath.

'That was great,' Michael says.

'Yeah.'

We clamber over the fence separating the hill from the rest of the farm. Michael hands me my backpack but for a moment both of us are holding onto it, a strap each, and he's looking at me intently.

'Don't you be late tomorrow,' he says, but I know it's a request, a question, so I nod and head for the shearers' quarters.

That night, as darkness smothers the farm, I'm once again watching Mum carry food to the table: rice and beef and curry. I'm sitting on a narrow bench against the wall between Col, who laughs at everything, and Billy, who squeezes in even though there's not enough room. The men are talking loudly, every second word a curse. They're generous with their praise for Mum, though, saying: 'This is bloody good,' which makes her go red. She perches on a stool at the top of the table, ready to spring up if needed.

In the noise and flurry of movement, the flash of arms and hands and forks being raised to mouths, I feel a hand on my thigh. I know whose it is, and my throat begins to close. Billy leans across, as if he's reaching past to get the salt or the sauce, and he whispers: 'Do you like that?'

His hand creeps higher, caresses my leg, touches the soft inner thigh. Forks continue to scrape across the big dinner plates and, beside me, Col suddenly laughs.

'You like that, don't you?' Billy says in my ear.

I stare at the table. His fingers slide up, under my shorts, under my undies and then he's in, he's inside inside inside...

I look at my mother, stricken, and she's looking at me, and suddenly she knows. She leaps from her stool, her eyes as dark as the river in

flood, and she comes to me, pushing past the outstretched arms, the men who've fallen silent. She wraps herself around me, pulls me away from Billy. 'Get out of my fucking sight!' she hisses at him, a raging torrent that would sweep him away and dash him against the rocks if she could. When I look at her I see his brains spilling out and his blood pouring and his heart sliced open.

'Stupid cow,' says Billy, and keeps eating.

The car's loaded. The ancient Toyota station wagon has carried us from farm to farm for years and fingers crossed it won't give up now. There's just enough room in the front for the two of us. In the back are Mum's blue shirt, her guitar, lamp and books, my scrapbook, the PVA, the scissors, my winter pyjamas. The world.

Mum's loading the last box of clothes into the boot, swearing as she tries to fit it all in. I lean against the passenger door, waiting till the last minute to get in so the vinyl seats won't burn.

'Hey,' someone says, and it's Michael. He's standing there in long brown trousers and a buttoned-up shirt, looking serious. He's holding something. 'I heard you were going. Dad said there'd been some trouble.'

I don't say anything. What's there to say?

He holds out a newspaper clipping. The headline says Easy Chocolate Cake.

'It's for your scrapbook,' he says.

For a moment I feel the air whipping past as I roll down the hill, wheeling through the sharp grass and the sheep droppings, barely anchored to the earth.

'Thanks,' I say.

The Smokescreen

I don't know how the subject comes up. I'm sittin' in a bar with Frankie and Petersen, drinkin' tequila and chewin' on cigars, and we're talkin' about Jilly and the .32. It's late afternoon. The sun shunts a path through the smoky air, and the jukebox chokes out a tired melody. Perhaps it's the song that reminds me of Jilly. She always was partial to Elvis.

'Course, Petersen always thought he had a chance with her, but he never. Smells of stale sweat and don't shave properly, always leaves a few tatty whiskers under his chin. Jilly was a classy woman, could have had any man she wanted, she wasn't goin' to waste her time on a loser like Petersen.

Frankie, now, he might have been a possibility. A fine specimen of a man, muscular and tall and tanned, knows how to treat a lady, too. College educated. Always lets her through the door first, pulls the chair out for her and talks sweet, none of those four letter words. Yessir, he might have been just what Jilly was lookin' for.

'Cept she met me first.

'I don't know,' I say. 'You give a woman everything – money, clothes, jewellery. You build her a house fit for a queen. You let her go out with

her girlfriends every Thursday night. Hell, you even pay for the friggin' breast enlargement, but she STILL leaves you!'

The boys look embarrassed. Petersen shrugs and sips his tequila, and Frankie looks down at the ground.

'Somethin' fascinatin' about that floorboard, Frankie?' I ask. He shoots me a look but doesn't answer. I wait for a bit, then I start talkin' again. Guess I've been quiet for too long.

'She's been gone twelve, no, thirteen, months now, but there's somethin' I still don't understand.' I clear my throat. 'Why the hell did she take my rifle? She didn't even know how to shoot the damned thing. She was always tellin' me she didn't like guns in the house, said they was dangerous, gave her the creeps. One day, when I was cleanin' it, she got so spooked she just took off out somewhere, and didn't return till sunset. Brought that moron brother of hers back with her. I'd locked the gun away by then, but still we had a scene, with her smashin' plates and yellin' somethin' about bein' a prisoner in her own home. The moron told me I'd better be careful, he was watchin' me. Hell! Like *that* was gonna worry me!'

'So, why d'you think she brought her brother back with her,' the college boy asks.

'Like I told the police, I've no idea. She was a crazy bitch, worried I was gonna kill her or kill *some*one. Sure, we'd have our arguments, some yellin', some cussin'. But I loved that woman, sure as I got a heart that beats. I never did lift a finger towards her, nor would I.'

Elvis wraps it up, and for a moment it's so quiet you can hear the sound of lips sucking on cigars. Petersen scratches his chin and the sound rasps like a chalk on blackboard. Frankie eyes the floor like a man with somethin' to hide.

I got my theories.

'So, where d'you boys think she is?' I say, all easy and without a care.

No answer.

'Seriously, I'm open to suggestion.'

Still no answer.

'The sheriff says most likely she's alive but doesn't want to be found. No evidence of foul play, she left without a fight, withdrew all that cash the day before. The "unhappy housewife", run off with a younger man or someone richer than me, or both. She might have moved away, changed her name, or maybe she's livin' round these parts, hidin' some place till she thinks it's safe to come out.'

At this, Frankie looks up and shakes his head, just a little too quickly for my likin'. 'Why would she want to stay here,' he says. He sounds like someone's pinchin' his throat.

'Well, I thought maybe *you* could tell *me*.'

Someone throws a coin in the juke box and Streisand's voice pokes into the space between us, all teeth and nose and sentiment.

'Mem'ries, light the corner of my mind ...'

'Whatever it is you're thinkin', you're wrong,' says Frankie. 'I haven't seen her since before she disappeared. You're lookin' at me like I'm

guilty of somethin', I've seen you do it before and I'm sick of it. Maybe you need to turn your attention in other directions.'

He's a good liar, I'll give him that. He shoots a quick look at Petersen, hopin' for back-up, but of course he doesn't get it. He recovers quickly and looks me in the eye without blinkin'. Yessir, he's good.

But now, Petersen looks over my shoulders, out into the carpark and beyond. What's that I see, reflected in his eyes? Is she . . .

I swivel on my bar stool, squint into the sunlight. What can he see that I can't?

FIONA MITFORD

Distance

Mum's tongue goes right around her lips when she paints, just like a paintbrush. She likes to paint more than anything. My dad said she could have been a famous artist, but she married him instead. But then, he was crying drunk when he said it, so he could have been having a laugh.

Our hallway is covered in Mum's paintings, and if you turn them over you can see their prices. She hangs her paintings at shopping malls and community centres and a couple of days later back we go, praying to see a red sticker. Mostly, we bring them all home again and put them back up in the hallway. But, as my dad says, 'At least they've had a bit of an outing.'

She mainly paints what she calls 'seascapes'. Our hallway is all foaming surf, jagged rocks and little boats tipping sideways, but there are no windows in the hallway so you need to turn the light on to see them.

A while back, she started painting words onto tiles; shiny white tiles about the size of your hand. She's been painting the same words for days now. Every morning when my little brother Tom and I come out to the kitchen, she's in the same place. Bent over the kitchen table; one

hand pulling her hair back from her face into a ponytail. Her tongue moves in time with the tip of the brush. ‘I must go down to the sea again,’ I say, reading the words over her shoulder. ‘It’s just a poem,’ Mum tells us. She straightens, rubs her back, rolls her head from side to side. Her hair falls like a collar around her neck. ‘That’s when words rhyme and their nearness to each other makes them sound beautiful,’ she says. She places one hand on her neck and her fingers stroke her throat. ‘It’s when you find words like sky and goodbye and cry and … who knows why?’ Her voice just sounds like a sad song to me when she says those words. She reads from the tile. ‘I must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and the sky, and all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by.’ ‘See?’ she says smiling, but she’s saying it to the tile, not to us. ‘Now that’s a beautiful piece of rhyme.’

I say her words over and over in my head, but not out loud because sometimes if I talk too loud when she’s painting, she mucks things up. Then she has to start over and our tea’s late, and my dad comes in from a hard day’s work and there’s just broken rhyme all over the kitchen table and nothing else.

One time he came in and put his big hands on the table, and his fingers spread out wide over the tiles, as wide as two of them. And he said to Mum in a kind of quiet but slow voice, like my teacher does sometimes when I don’t understand, ‘Is this all we’ve got for dinner then? Bloody words again?’ But none of us laughed. And another time when I made her very late, his big hands swept right across the table to

make some room and he knocked her tiles to the floor and my mother looked at him, and it felt like it was her who lay in sharp, little pieces on the kitchen floor.

Mum's holding her paintbrush in front of her like the conductor of an orchestra. She's staring through the glass sliding doors to outside where it's all grey mist again and I wonder how she can look at nothing for so long. And when she turns at last, and looks at all the breakfast plates, the crumbs and spilt milk on the table, her eyes look surprised to find them still there, and she says to me in a voice that's not much more than a whisper, 'Would you throw those crusts out to the poor sparrows, Sean?'

I clear the table quietly, and wonder if Mum's forgotten it's nearly lunchtime. But it doesn't matter. I'm just happy to see her put those brushes in the jam jars on the window sill beside her geranium slips. We kneel on the floor in her bedroom and I hand her the tiles, one at a time. She wraps each one in creased, pale yellow tissue paper and lays them gently in a cardboard box. She clears her throat all the time, like she's not sure if her voice will come when she needs to speak.

'I think we should go see your grandma today Sean,' she says, and I try to see her eyes, but her eyes are watching her hands closing the lid of the cardboard box. We don't see my grandma much any more. She doesn't live far away but Mum says we're just a bit too busy for visiting these days. Dad says he'd rather watch grass grow than sit over at her place. Sometimes though, I know he thinks about grandma.

We'd gone to the apple orchards one day. Tom and I had played in all the orange and red leaves while Dad loaded up the boot with golden delicious and grannies. On the drive back Dad had one hand on the wheel and the other holding a huge golden delicious. He ate it in about five great bites, right down till you could see the black seeds in the core and then, just as we got to Grandma's turn-off, he wound his window down and threw the core out, sort of angry. It was like he'd saved throwing it till then.

And one cold, wet Sunday when we'd driven out to Piha, and Tom and I chased each other along the wet black sand until our jeans rubbed our ankles raw. Driving home, I watched Dad from the back seat. He had the wipers on full and the car was all steamed up with our breathing. As we got near Grandma's turn-off, I could see his knuckles turn white on the steering wheel and he squeezed that wheel like it was something he hated. Tom was asleep and he thought I was too, but I heard him say it. 'It's up to you.' My mum looked down at her hands and out at the road and she seemed to lean a little nearer towards her window, but he never slowed the car down. And then the turn-off was way, way behind us, and I heard him say in his quiet, gentle voice, 'Maybe next time then.'

So while Mum puts her red lipstick on, I get Tom's duffel coat and button him into it before she changes her mind. I make sure to strap his seatbelt tight across his body so that if we have an accident we won't shoot like bullets through the windscreen, and smash on the tar-seal.

As we drive to Grandma's, I'm thinking about the YMCA camp day trips we did last week, and me, singing 'Jesus Wants Me For a Sunbeam' with the other kids in the bus on the way out to Meremere. I counted 342 empty coal buckets going round and round on the conveyor belts. And there was that great day we had at Mangere. Hanging around for hours at the viewing platform, and me, rubbing my arms, wishing that mist would clear. And then, just when I'd about given up, seeing those huge planes lift like giant seagulls, up and out through the mist, taking people to places I'd never even heard of. It was worth the wait though, that's for sure. So, I'm miles away, dreaming, when I hear Mum say in her sing-song voice, 'Here we are then.'

Grandma's lawn is special. It's got lovely, soft grass called kikuyu and when I was here once in the summer, a long time ago, I took my sandals off and the grass was springy under my feet. A lady was laughing in the house next door and there was a man over the back fence mowing his lawn while his kids played on their swings. It felt so nice to be there, that I lay down on my back, shut my eyes against the sun and let the soft needles tickle my head. But that was a sunny day. It's grey today, a real 'pea-souper', as Mum would say, and all I can see is Grandma's front steps, the daphne bush by the letterbox and the two dead hydrangeas that Mum planted here last Christmas.

Mum presses the little ringer beside the box on the door that says *Sorry we missed you . . . please leave a note*. Tom and I each grab one of Mum's hands. 'Just like two little counterweights,' she says. I'm not

sure what she means, but it sounds happy, so I smile. I'm still smiling up at her when Grandma opens the door and says, 'Hello strangers!' with a laughing voice. And I want to laugh too, but Mum squeezes my hand. Not a soft squeeze – it's hard and it hurts – but I don't say anything. She drops my hand and I pick at a scab on my leg, which is just asking for trouble. She gives me a slap, but it's just a soft one on the top of my head. 'You look a bit peaky you do,' Grandma says, squinting at Mum. She turns before Mum can answer her. 'A bit green around the gills are you then?' she says, walking ahead up the hall.

Mum says, 'Hello Mum.'

All the walls and ceilings in Grandma's house are browny-yellow. Mum would call it rich ochre or burnt sienna. I watch Mum running her finger around the inside of a cup. She picks up one of Grandma's tea towels, sniffs it, puts it back on the sink and then dries her cup on her skirt. There's a big white square on the brown wall near the sink that wasn't there last Christmas. 'Moved the fridge then, Mum?' she says, and her laugh is just like Grandma's. But Grandma's in a big hurry today. She needs to get to the radio to check who's running in the next race and her slippers make little scuff-scuff sounds on the lino. She takes a pen from her pocket and makes a mark in her bible. I know it's not a real bible but my dad calls it her bible because it never leaves her side.

Grandma's got two cats on her kitchen table. There's one for each end. They're called Ginger and Stripey, and Grandma says, 'That's just

what they are.' I love cats, but we mustn't touch them. They're very old, like Grandma, and they don't like kids much. She turns the volume down and her tiny black velvet slippers scuff-scuff-scuff back to the kitchen.

'I'll just open us a tin of salmon for lunch,' she calls, and the old cats leap down from the table and run in and out of her legs, like ribbons. Mum brushes her hand along the table top. Fur floats to the floor. 'Nothing for me thanks, Mum,' she says.

I lean against Mum's chair and drape one arm around her shoulder, but she's looking out the window at the mist. 'Mum?' I say, and she looks at me. But it's the look she gives you when she's painting or reading her poems. When her eyes meet yours you can be standing so close to her that you can see yourself in the black bits in her eyes, but you know she's not really seeing you at all. 'If only this mist would lift,' she says after a long time. There's no one else in the room but me and Mum, but I know she's not saying it to me. I watch her run her finger through the puddles on the window sill, making them into one big pool. 'Five minutes!' Grandma says, mashing the pink and silvery mound with the back of a fork. Her cough sounds like water trickling over broken glass. She takes a cigarette from her cardigan pocket, taps the end twice on the table and places it in her mouth. She cups one hand around the flame of the match, so it doesn't die. She used to let me blow the flame out, but I'm ten now and big for my age. She strokes the cover of her bible. 'He's running in five minutes,' she says again. Smoke

leaves her mouth in wiggly white puffs as she speaks. She nods her head up and down to thank the man in the wireless for letting us know. I try to lean my head on Mum's shoulder but she pulls away from me towards the window.

'Into the lounge Sean, *please*, and keep Tom happy,' she says, and her words come out with a big woosh of air behind them. I pretend not to hear her and hook my leg over her crossed ones, but she pushes me. 'Off!' she says, and jerks her head towards the lounge.

Tom's only just five and he's always whining. He wants to make houses out of the lounge cushions but they keep caving in and everything smells in here. It smells like there was a fire a long time ago, but that's stupid. I know there wasn't. The walls are all browny and all the Toby jugs around the mantelpiece are laughing at me, and the blinds are closed and now my guts hurt. So I just watch my mum sitting at the table through the doors with the wavy glass that makes everyone look shimmery.

Grandma leans forward in her chair getting as close as she can to the man in the wireless and he's shouting '*and they're coming in for the last turn!*' and that's when I hear above his voice my mother say 'Mum'. Her voice sounds a bit like mine does when I wake up from a nightmare and there's only dark. But that man's shouting louder now and Grandma holds up her hand to stop whatever my mum wants to say, and ash falls from her smoke onto the lino and she stubs it out with her slipper like she's doing the twist. 'Just hold on,' she coughs. 'Just

hold on a minute now. I've got a fiver each way on Mista Majestik.' And my mum just holds on. And pretty soon Grandma opens the glass doors and throws her bible into my lap.

'Maybe you'll pick out a couple of winners for your poor old grandma?'

She pulls the doors together behind her. I wait for a minute then nudge the opening with my foot. I hear the hum of the heater. The man in the radio has gone.

'How far along are you, then?' I hear my grandma ask. And my mum just sort of flops her head onto her hands on the table. And then again, she asks her, and she's sort of shaking my mum's arm.

'I said how far, for Christ's sake?'

Grandma's chair scrapes hard against the lino as she stands, and moves towards Mum, and her voice sounds like my father's, and my guts really hurt now, so I push open the glass door and stand behind Mum's chair and I say, 'How far is what, Mum?' My voice sounds funny and my throat feels like there's a something big in the back where you swallow. Mum just lifts her head up from the table and turns to look at me, more fur floats down to the floor, and she says 'Oh Jesus!' So I know it must be a very long way.

Grandma opens a door in the china cabinet where she keeps all her treasures, and gives me a packet of jubes – a whole packet. I look at Mum, her eyes are red, and there's a red rash up her neck. I wrap my arms around her chair.

'Mum?'

'Leave your mother,' Grandma says. 'Outside now, and take your brother.' She pushes Tom and I towards the back steps. 'It'll pour soon,' she says, 'and then you'll be all wishing you'd got out when you had your chance.'

The sky outside is the dark charcoal of one of Mum's pastels. Thunder rolls a long way off. I hear the clack-a-ta, clack-a-ta, clack-a-ta of a train somewhere and listen until it's gone. I leave my brother on the back steps with the jubes, and open the door to Grandma's outhouse. The walls are soft sepia. The water in the bowl is almost black. My grandma has torn up strips of the *New Zealand Truth* for toilet paper and hung them on a wire hanger. I sit there, as fat raindrops splash onto the iron roof, piecing torn pages together, looking for beautiful rhymes.

Describing home

The bay that curves like a moon is a map
of your limbs, your scale and hills.

That white shell, steep at the mark,
is the pool in your hollows.

Those old trees touching the grass
are all the people who take the risk we took.

And the cars so near those knee-high railings
is the fizzing in your irises.

Running the beach at odd angles,
that way of being a person that being

left by a person has taught you.
Leaning on loud music is the yes

I was learning too like kids jumping off
and you walking away on what seemed

so long and white, so made from timber
I could have counted each rung.

You said once the least is the most we can hope for
never mentioning what to want

as half figures under the only lamp
on that quiet night, the Ulster breeze drifting in.

Doggie Bones

A new year means nothing to a dog.
Sometimes these days I get money and time confused,
this is a dollar and this is an hour,
I have to re-educate myself.

A new bone means more to a dog
than a new year, and a new year means more to a human
than a bone, unless you are the Dog Man of Kalimantan
grown up with dogs and barking more than speaking.

When I was a child my father told me that a man
stood with a starting pistol which he let off at midnight;
this was later discovered to be a fabrication, as in truth
we all lie, the average human tells one lie a day

or even more. Lying has played a key role
in our evolution, a sophisticated cognitive ability
that makes us different from dogs, because if you ask them
where they hid their bone, they will show you.

green

my tongue slipped from her lip
for the last time.

wood hollowed into a bowl,

need deepening,
with each knock of the beak

wings folded with silent words.

these slippery apologies
we must continue to forgive:

my palm resting like a seal on
her pillow, her plate.
the pregnant shape of her emptiness.
the definite edges
of cake forks and paper cranes.

who she could have been.

blood blossomed
into the dark lake.

a raft floated towards me –
utterly ablaze.

clinging felt more desperate
than being adrift.

the loaves of her legs,
the fish bones of her feet,
remade in the space between
my floating hands.

I collect the remains:

a stone of thought
ringing across her face,

counting and skimming,

holding close
before bubbling into air.

Love in the Fifties

She wore a second-hand,
button-through frock
covered in rosebuds

a belt at her waist
of the same fabric
and black patent shoes

he wore corduroy trousers
a silver cigarette tin in his
back pocket and carpet slippers

they paid half a crown at the
turnstile and Tex Morton sang
'Old Shep' on the slow ride

she loved candyfloss and
he lost his front tooth
to a toffee apple

they marvelled together at
the half-man half-woman,
the one white thigh

he proposed on the ghost
train and she screamed
as the skeletons rattled

she wore a hat with
matching gloves and
carried a small bump

they stoked the fire together
and the hot water rumbled
over the red roof tiles

when the ditch was filled
with rainwater and he
was so full that he fell

she dried his clothes on
the rack above the stove
where the roast rested

And there's more; more
than the rain and the
lost footbridges; barbiturates

This is only the start
but who
has the time nowadays?

wendy has an artist friend

who lived in golden bay –
in a tipi – he painted inside
on the walls then cut them up
exhibited and sold the lot –
he changed his name to
spontaneous – she pauses
worries away at a plate of rice
– combustion, she resumes – no
that wasn't it, he was quite good,
quite a good artist 'n that, no
that wasn't his last name . . .
ten minutes later her plate empty
she says, spontaneous and his last
name was search party – he was cool,
it was cool that he chose his own
name, it would have been different
you know, if his parents
had named him that –

Are you coming or going?

1
You finally arrive
crowds gather, waiting for the circus.

2
Do not loiter or leave your bag.

3
Put your foot down.

4
An all-natural baby
ten days late
no added colouring or preservative.

5
Silhouettes fall off high-rise buildings
one after another
without faltering

you cannot tell if they land on their feet
in
twilight.

Orangutans

She would not think about another
cup of coffee she would think instead

about anxious orangutans who cannot
swim and live on an island off Borneo.

They are orphans. She pictures
her favourite, big boy, Marmalade,

as he crosses a river
covered in goose bumps.

Amy brings the thesaurus

Mid-winter night. Amy strides across
the zebra crossing, a bulging bag of books
in each hand. Head bowed against the rain.

It's our night for conversation and eating prawns.
The Szechuan chef in the open kitchen
bends over his wok while a line of ducks

is growing redder with each ladle
wielded by the sous chef. Our little table
beside the window seems cast in street light

from the rain-drenched lamp post opposite.
'I've brought . . .' and Amy opens
thesaurus, dictionary, Fowler's *Modern Usage*

pushing the bamboo steamer of pork rolls aside
and taking up her chopsticks like pencils.
It is the gesture that overwhelms, not

the heavy compendiums I will return to
each of her bags and thence her arms
though I will hold an umbrella over her

for her pristine devotion to scholarship
for her seeing in the heat of careless writing
a parallel longing for a jewelled fact

a beauty built on solids. And now comes
the procession of dishes: the Bang Bang chicken
the Mapo Tofu and the luscious pink prawns.

The Bogan and the Brethren Girl

Come out of your house
And preach to us.

Come out of your house
And cruise with us.

Don't tell your father.
Don't tell your pastor.

You always smiled at me
When we were kids . . .

. . . now we can rescue each other
On the black leather seats

Of my red Nissan
Skyline.

Season of new year

To feast the trapped wood pigeon
feathers tear flesh burns drip
sizzled fat into gourds poured

and stuffed with the kill to keep
seven to our eyes carved piercing
fire in dark cover above our heads

toward embers and weary faces
seven fast burning stars announce
predict no crust of ice or flood

will crush bodies game or crop
mark this rest on the first moon
solid it shines and down we sing

dance chant rant on through
dark-time I lost my mother
the last first moon water drops

smooth crevices across my face
wash the dirt to mud for kumara
dug by our sons next Matariki.

HOW TO DANCE YOUR OWN BODY'S LEGEND

(after reading about butoh)

Choose the site carefully. Find one that will hold you
inside nuance. Create your own *mise en scène*,
you before the watching tribe huddled in the dark,
breath the parent rhythm. Enter the Now,
shade the many nows, then dissolve the separations.
Move through the animal (raw flesh, blood on the jaw).
Make room for the bird, the fish, the horned bull
in its draughty cavern, holding sway. Follow the wind-spool.
Then, when you're nearing core, embrace the beautiful danger.
Watch how it grins and glares at you, that blur
at the edge of field, blur on the edge of shape – find the
keel of it, the red that pecks, the claw angling for the back.

Back, safe, from the flight through the intuitive,
resist even now the wanting-to-be-calmed,
the 'clear-lit custody of knowing'. Furrow-up the stone path.
Lick your way through the glittering city (its fabled glass).
Play in the slipstream. *This* is how the story opens.
This is how the necessary heat rolls in.

Shackleton I

We were watching Shackleton's
last trip on TV and we'd
got to the point where the ship
was finally stuck and pushed
up on a thirty degree
tilt. It had started leaking.
The men unloaded supplies
and set up camp on the ice.

Then it began
first the mast snapped
(surprisingly)
then the rest of
the boat collapsed
amidst the loud
cracks of timbers
splitting in half.

Then the shelf

above the TV
began to go.
(It was loaded
with box files full
of papers that
Nick kept just in
case.) We didn't
notice at first
we were too impressed
at the convincing
nature of the
sound effects.

Then there was a
really loud crack
Quick said Nick. *If*
that goes the whole
thing could explode.

So, in the grey and white light
(even with colour there's not
a lot in Antarctica)
forming a human chain of
two, we moved box files from the

shelf onto the floor hoping
the splintering noise would soon stop.

Then . . . *Look!* Nick gasped.

What? Disaster
surely.
Look how
you're throwing them
down all in a
muddle. Keep them
in their order.

They are. They're just
on their sides. Keep
going. (The TV
was worrying me.)

We missed the bit
where the whole ship
disintegrates
like kindling wood
and disappears
under the ice.

And that was the
thing I was most
wanting to see.

Look! said Nick. *The shelf's slipped off.*
It'll just take a couple
of nails to fix it. I felt
doubtful. With Shackleton's men
there'd been a ship's carpenter.

Standing in the
wreckage of the
room, we watched as
they sailed lifeboats
to Elephant
Island then on
to South Georgia,
crossed glaciers to
Stromness Station
in thirty-six
continuous hours,
so as to find
a boat and save
the other men.

Despite it all
he never thrashed
himself about
how he shouldn't have
done it, regretted
the foolhardy
or careless things,
but just made sure
that in the end
everyone was
brought back safely.

Even with just
a couple of
nails he could
make sure we were
brought back
safely.

Dear Little Flannel Flower

This is to confirm that your bank details
were updated for the
Denial of The Child in The Personality
tax type.

If you have any further queries,
struggles, face a grim future
or require assistance
please contact

Dog Rose of the Wild Forces;
for loss of control, hysteria and pain
Turkey Bush; for inspired creativity
and renewal of artistic confidence

8am to 9pm Monday to Friday.
Alternatively, telephone Old Man Banksia
Saturday mornings

if you have difficulty with commitment
or suffer from
a phlegmatic personality.

Yours faithfully

Bryre Mountain Devil Patchell
Jealous Holder of Grudges and Suspiciousness
(Assistant Manager)

A found poem, lifted from an Inland Revenue letter and a poster about Australian Bush Flower Essences, www.ausflowers.com.au.

first catch your trout

pan-fried
in cast iron
over red-gum fire
beside the river
where smoke and mist
        twist together

sautéed in butter
with almonds
and cream
a splash of white wine
liberal parsley

poached in wine
picked off the bone
and chilled,
floating through
colourful, seasoned aspic

rubbed with salt
finely chopped herbs
rosemary, thyme
oregano, sage
crushed garlic
and smoked all day
over quince wood

smoked, then pulled apart
packed in jars
with good olive oil

this requires some
preparation
have a large pot
of acidulated water
on a rolling boil
unhook your trout
and drop it in
death will be
instantaneous
the fish
curls in a circle
head touching tail

and the flesh
when you eat
is pale blue

did I mention
pan-fried
beside the river?

Maybe tomorrow

Ngaire's high-pitched barking almost drowned out the knock on the door. Jay dropped his paperback on the couch and went to answer it.

It was Scott. 'Hey!'

'It's not the sixteenth yet, is it?' Jay let him in, and Ngaire snuffled around their legs and wagged her tail so hard her whole rear end wobbled.

'Changed my flight.' Scott dropped his duffel bag at the foot of the stairs. Ngaire curled up against it and closed her eyes. 'You got plans?'

'Nope.' That wasn't strictly true, but there was nothing that couldn't wait.

Scott looked tired beneath his smile, and bundled up – not just against the cold, Jay guessed, but the flights and Customs and airports. His hair was spiky and his sunglasses sat on his forehead like bug eyes. He dug in his pocket for his cigarettes. 'Got a light?'

Jay's hand went automatically to his own pocket, but instead of offering his lighter, he wrapped his arms around Scott, pulling him close, coat and cigarettes and all. 'Good to see you, man.'

The chill from the early spring air lingered in the folds of Scott's coat, in his hair. Scott wrestled his arms free and returned the hug, turned his head and pressed cold lips to Jay's cheek, his mouth. Scott

smelled of tobacco smoke, as always, but he tasted of gum.

Jay pulled back and clapped him on the shoulder. 'Take a load off. You look like shit.'

Jay leaned on the kitchen bench and folded his arms. Scott's coat hung heavy from his shoulders, shifting and steaming slightly in the weak afternoon sunlight as he buttered toast and tapped cigarette ash into the sink.

'Been writing?' Jay asked.

'Got a couple new songs. Johnny's being a bitch, so we haven't nailed them yet.'

'What's up?'

Scott's shoulders twitched. 'He's got some bug up his ass about cleaning up our sound. Refining it.'

Jay didn't say anything. Band politics were intricate, and sticking his nose in never paid off. Ngaire trundled into the room and lapped at her water dish, and Scott interrupted himself to mock the size of her arse.

'Whereas yours is svelte and firm,' said Jay. 'Leave her alone, she's got issues.'

She looked up at them, her muzzle dripping, and both men snorted in unison.

'Dainty,' said Scott.

'Fuck off.' Jay pushed off the bench. 'Should take her to the dog park, anyway. You want to?'

*

They pulled into the nearly empty car park and Jay whistled Ngaire out of the car. Scott echoed the sound, eked it out into a tune, making Ngaire bark and jump in circles.

'Stop messing with her.' Jay bumped his shoulder against Scott's through all the bundled layers, and felt a buzz start, anticipation.

A girl in a knitted hat and army surplus gear was calling to her golden retriever. 'Hey, Sonny. Come on, it's time to go.' She grinned as they passed. 'You'd think she'd want to get back inside, into the warm, but as soon as I get her out here, she's like Party Time.'

Jay nodded without connecting.

Scott said, 'I know how she feels,' with enough of a leer that the girl laughed and blushed, stepping away into the dark.

Jay elbowed him. 'Nice.'

'Just being polite,' said Scott, like hitting on anything that moved was a matter of etiquette. 'What's the matter? Jealous?'

It galled, as if Jay had no claim on him, which in the greater scheme of things was the truth. Jay was way down the totem pole, below the band, even Debs. He knew it was stupid to want more, but sometimes that didn't stop him.

'Hey.' Scott blocked his path. 'I'm here, aren't I?'

'Yeah.'

They reached the shadow of the trees, and Scott backed Jay against frosty-rough bark and leaned into him, kissed him lazily, a kiss that

said *take me for granted*. Jay relaxed into it.

Ngaire wandered up and barked: it was time to go home.

'She's got more smarts than Sonny,' Scott said, stepping back. 'I can't feel my toes.'

Jay eyed him. 'She's got more smarts than a lot of people.'

They stumbled in the front door in a confusion of dog and scarves and sweet-and-sour scented takeaways. Scott sat on the bottom stair to take his boots off, lined them up next to Jay's sneakers.

Jay fed Ngaire, and then led Scott upstairs to the bedroom, where they came together in a rush, half-dressed and urgent, grasping for each other and groaning. Jay wrapped his hand around Scott's dick in the open V of his jeans and thought *now is enough*, and jerked him off hard and fast, knowing there'd be a slow-motion replay after they'd eaten.

By the time they stirred, the food was barely warm. They swapped plastic trays of chow mein and fried rice back and forth, their legs nudging.

Scott spoke with his mouth full. 'Sounds like the wind's picking up.'

'I wasn't planning on going anywhere.' Jay put the empty takeaway container on the nightstand, rummaged in the drawer for lube and lay back, running his hand down his chest and waiting as coolly as he could for Scott to be done eating.

'Come here.'

*

Afterwards, they kissed until Jay's face felt raw from stubble-burn, until they both kept dropping off. Scott's snore was the line in the sand, and Jay stumbled out of bed to brush his teeth, blinked at himself in the harsh bathroom light.

Scott appeared at his shoulder with a scrunched-up supermarket bag. He shook it open with a rustle and took out his toothbrush.

'You staying long?' Jay squeezed toothpaste onto his own brush, then did the same for Scott.

'Couple of days. That okay?'

'Sure.' Jay spat into the basin. 'Does Debs know?'

Scott squinted at himself in the mirror. 'We have an agreement that doesn't –' He rubbed his fingers over the stubble on his jaw.

Jay rinsed and leaned on the wall, ignoring the sinking feeling in his gut. 'If you made a vow of fidelity, I think you broke it.'

'She doesn't care about this shit.' Scott put his toothbrush in the holder next to Jay's. 'That's sort of the problem.'

Jay raised his eyebrows, willing to listen even though he wasn't sure he wanted to hear it.

Scott looked away. 'Don't you think it ought to bug her? I mean, this – you and me – it's not small potatoes.'

It was the last thing Jay had expected from this conversation, but it was there in his palm like a gift. 'Maybe it just means she knows you,' he said. 'She knows you don't do monogamy. If she's okay with it . . .'

He shoved Scott towards the bedroom. ‘Don’t go looking for trouble, you know?’

‘Yeah, you’re right.’ Scott went to the window and peered into the gloom. Raindrops scattered across the glass. ‘I’ve got it made.’

Ngaire lumbered into the room and jumped up. Jay sent her to her basket in the corner and slid into bed, tugged at the covers. His skin goose-pimpled against the cooled sheets. ‘Come here,’ he said, letting it be a demand, trying that out.

Scott turned away from the window and lay down, pulling him close. ‘Maybe tomorrow,’ he muttered into Jay’s shoulder. ‘I’m all comed out for now.’

‘Idiot.’ Jay stretched to turn off the lamp and smiled into the dark.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Renée is a playwright, novelist, non-fiction writer and teacher. She has taught at Whitireia for six years in the creative writing programme. In 2007 she was a student on the poetry course taught by Lynn Davidson around which time the first draft of this poem was written. She is currently working on a novel and, with Sarah Delahunty (also a student on the 2007 poetry course), on a programme of short plays on the lives of older women.

Tusiata Avia is a poet, performer and writer. Her solo stage show, *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*, premiered in New Zealand in 2002 and has since toured in Austria, Germany, Hawai'i, Australia, Bali and Russia. Her first collection of poetry, also titled *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt*, was published by Victoria University Press in 2004 and shortlisted for the Prize in Modern Letters in 2006. Her latest book of poetry, *Bloodclot*, was published in 2009, again by Victoria University Press. She held the Fulbright-Creative New Zealand Pacific Writer's Residency at the University of Hawai'i and the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies artist residency in Christchurch in 2005. In 2010 she was the Ursula Bethell Writer in Residence at the University of Canterbury.

Fay Cameron lives in Napier. She completed the Graduate Diploma in Creative Writing at Whitireia in 2008. Her short story 'Gizzy Girl – A

Love Story' was first equal in the 2009 New Zealand Society of Authors Central Districts Short Story Competition and 'The Loving Stitch' was runner-up in the 2010 Rodney Writes competition. She is currently working on a second novel which is as yet untitled. 'On Being Sophie's Father' is an excerpt from her first novel, *Say Something*. Fay Cameron is a pen name.

Kate Camp is the author of four collections of poetry, all published by Victoria University Press: *Unfamiliar Legends of the Stars* (1998), *Realia* (2001), *Beauty Sleep* (2005) and *The Mirror of Simple Annihilated Souls* (2010). Her collection of essays on classic literature, *Kate's Klassics* was published by Penguin in 2007 and is based on her monthly discussion of classic books with Radio New Zealand National's Kim Hill.

Tessa Castree is a Wellingtonian who started short story writing last year with help, she says, from the Whitireia creative writing programme.

Kay Corns completed her MA in Creative Writing at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University in 2009. Her poems have previously appeared in *4th Floor*, *Turbine* and *Sport*.

Lynn Davidson is the author of three collections of poetry, *Tender*, *Mary Shelley's Window* and *How to live by the sea*, and a novel, *Ghost Net*. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in *Sport*, *Landfall*, *Turbine* and *The Red Wheelbarrow*. In 2003 she was awarded the Louis Johnson Writer's Bursary. Lynn tutored on the Whitireia creative writing programme until 2008.

Natasha Dennerstein is a Melbourne-born New Zealand writer who has been working as a psychiatric nurse for the past twenty years, which has given her an interesting perspective on the human condition. Her true love is creative writing and, after studying at Whitireia, she is now completing her MA in Creative Writing at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University. Natasha is currently working on a verse novel.

Mary-Jane Duffy's poems have appeared in *Millionaire's Shortbread* (Otago University Press, 2003) *Sport* and *New Zealand Listener*, as well as art publications *Living By the Sea* (Mahara Gallery, 2005) and *Caught In This Sensual Music All: Works of Janet Paul* (Fernbank Studio/City Gallery, Wellington, 2000). She co-directs the Mary Newton Gallery in Wellington.

Nicola Easthope is a mother, poet and Enviroschools facilitator, and is involved in the campaign to save the Kāpiti Coast from being carved

up by a proposed mega-motorway. She studied at Whitireia in 2005, completing a Graduate Diploma in Creative Writing under the fine tutelage of Renée. Her first collection of poetry, *Leaving my arms free to fly around you*, has just been published by Steele Roberts.

Justine Eldred is the wife of Andy and mother to Eden Hope, Julian Dennis and Leon Justice. She has studied short fiction, poetry and novel writing through Whitireia and Victoria University. Presently, she is writing a mythic drama, in bed, in her borrowed nineteenth-century villa in Greytown.

Anahera Gildea (Ngāti Raukawa-ki-te-Tonga) was the winner of the 2007 Pikihuia Award for Best Novel Extract and has had short stories and poetry published in several collections. She is currently working on the completion of her first novel,multiple theatre projects and wrangling her three-year-old son.

Mandy Hager lives on the Kāpiti Coast and tutors novel writing for Whitireia. Her book *The Crossing* (Random House, 2009), the first in her Blood of the Lamb trilogy, won the Young Adult section of the 2010 New Zealand Post Book Awards. The second book, *Into the Wilderness* (Random House, 2010), was named as a Notable Book by the Storylines Trust, and book three, *Resurrection*, which contains this excerpt, was published by Random House in 2011.

Helen Heath blogs at helenheath.com and writes poetry and essays. Her poetry has been published in many journals in New Zealand, Australia and the USA. She completed an MA in Creative Writing at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University in 2009. Helen's chap-book of poems, *Watching for Smoke*, was published by Seraph Press in 2009. Her first full length book, *Graft*, will be published in 2012 by Victoria University Press.

Vivienne Hill is currently a freelance editor and publisher with a BA in Creative Writing and a Diploma in Publishing from Whitireia. She mainly works on other people's projects, but tries to make time for her own writing.

Adrienne Jansen writes poetry, fiction, and non-fiction for adults and children. She is part of the Writing team at Te Papa , and teaches on the Whitireia Creative Writing Programme. She lives in Titahi Bay with her family.

Lynn Jenner began writing after many years of work as an educational psychologist and counsellor. She has studied writing at Whitireia and at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University. *Dear Sweet Harry*, the book which grew out of her MA portfolio, won the Adam Foundation Prize in Creative Writing in 2008 and the Jessie Mackay Best First Book of Poetry Award in

2011. Lynn is currently studying for a PhD in Creative Writing at the International Institute of Modern Letters.

Kevin Johnston is not a mathematician, but has figured out the equation:
eat; sleep; tweet; watch; write
Not always in that order.
He lives in Auckland.

Reina Kahukiwa (Te Arawa, Tūhoe, Ngāti Porou, Rongowhakāta, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki) is a mother of two and has enjoyed writing as an outlet since she was a teenager. Reina has a project management background, comprising writing in the arts and corporate sectors, and she currently manages the Māori arts resource business Mauri Tu. Her study background includes academic and creative writing with a degree in sociology and a Diploma in Māori Studies from Victoria University, a Diploma in Journalism from Whitireia, as well as being a graduate of the He Taonga i Tawhiti film and television training course. She is due to complete the Bachelor of Applied Arts in Creative Writing at Whitireia in 2011.

Cushla Managh lives in Silverstream and juggles a busy job, four children, and the urge to write. She has had a number of short stories and poems published, both electronically and in print.

Catherine Martin grew up in New Plymouth but has lived most of her life inWellington. She studied Piano Performance at Victoria University and in Europe, and freelanced as a musician for many years. Catherine has taught piano for over thirty years and became New Zealand National Consultant for Trinity College London in 2000.

Fiona Mitford was a student of the Whitireia creative writing programme before going on to complete her MA at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University in 2009. She has been published in *4th Floor* and *Sport*.

Bill Nelson's poem, 'Describing Home', was written in 2008 while he was working towards the Diploma in Creative Writing (Advanced) at Whitireia. It also became part of his successful application to the Victoria University MA in Creative Writing programme. The poem is set in Auckland.

Vivienne Plumb writes poetry, drama and fiction and has won awards in all three fields. Her most recent poetry collection, *crumple*, was published in 2010. Her new poetry chapbook, *The Cheese and Onion Sandwich and other New Zealand Icons*, is to be released before Christmas, 2011. Her play, *The Cape* has been recently translated into Polish.

Samiha Radcliffe studied creative writing at Whitireia in 2007. 'Green' came from a 'writing between the lines' exercise and was written in response to the Robert Hass poem 'Meditation at Lagunitas'. In 2008 Samiha was an MA student at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University.

Maggie Rainey-Smith is the author of two novels, *About Turns* (2005) and *Turbulence* (2007), both published by Random House, a published poet and a short story writer who writes occasional book reviews on *Beattie's Book Blog*. She won the Page & Blackmore National Short Story Competition in 2007, judged by Owen Marshall, and was shortlisted in 2004 for the *Landfall* essay and Takahe Cultural Studies competitions. Her short stories and poetry have been published in *Sport*, *Takahe*, *New Zealand Listener* and *New Zealand Books*, and read on Radio New Zealand National.

Long-time Kāpiti Coast resident **Tina Regtien** has spent twenty-four years as an actor, several as a teacher, ten as a parent and many more as a student of writing. She started this journey with Whitireia back in 2001 and has also studied poetry through the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University.

Lorraine Singh completed a Diploma in Creative Writing at Whitireia in 2009 where her tutors were Lynn Davidson and Hinemoana Baker.

Lorraine has had poems published online in *4th Floor* (2007, 2009); *Blackmail Press 25: the Rebel Issue* (2009), and in the *Paekākāriki Xpressed* (2007). She was also highly commended in the Wellington Sonnet Competition (Earl of Seacliff Art Workshop, 2008).

Elizabeth Smither is a poet, novelist and short story writer. Her latest publications are *The Year of Adverbs* (AUP, 2007), *The Girl who Proposed* (Cape Catley, 2008), *Lola* (Penguin, 2010) and *The Commonplace Book: a writer's journey through quotations* (AUP, 2011). She received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry in 2008.

Robert Stratford works part time in the public service and divides his other time between writing, family and the outdoors. Aside from *4th Floor*, Robert has published poetry in anthologies of the New Zealand Poetry Society. His poetry is influenced by his Buddhism, post-structuralism, travelling, science, environmentalism and things he finds funny.

Puawai Swindells-Wallace descends from a line of orators and hard workers, and writes because it feels natural. 'I am Māori and proud', she says. Puawai is studying for the Bachelor of Applied Arts in Creative Writing at Whitireia.

Jo Thorpe lives in Wellington and Cape Palliser and teaches dance history at the New Zealand School of Dance. She graduated from the Whitireia creative writing programme in 1998 and completed her MA in Creative Writing at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University in 2001. Besides being a dance writer and critic, Jo is a member of the Crows Feet Dance Collective. She has published two books of poetry with Steele Roberts – *in/let* (2010) and *Len & other poems* (2003).

Anne Tucker works as a part-time tutor for the publishing programme at Whitireia. She completed the poetry module of the Diploma in Creative Writing in 2004, and at the beginning of 2005 she completed the poetry stream of The Iowa Workshop at the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University. She has previously had poems published in *Poetry New Zealand*, *New Zealand Listener* and *Spin*.

Until she undertook the poetry module at Whitireia in 2007, reading and writing poetry perplexed **Shelley Vernon**, as would a sausage with sideburns. She is grateful to Hinemoana Baker and fellow writers for stretching and challenging her literary limits. Shelley still writes and has integrated poetry into her myriad modes of self-expression and spirited lunacy.

Since completing a Diploma in Creative Writing at Whitireia in 2009, **Mercedes Webb-Pullman** has gone on to graduate with an MA in Creative Writing from the International Institute of Modern Letters at Victoria University in 2011. Her poems have appeared in *Turbine* (2008), *4th Floor* (2009) and *Reconfigurations* (2009) as well as in ezines and print collections, and Mercedes was the winner of the 2010 Eat Your Words poetry competition. She reads at open mic sessions in Wellington, including Lembas Café in Raumati South and the Ballroom Café in Newtown.

Iona Woodward lives in Wellington and loves it. In the 1990s, she edited three anthologies for the New Zealand Poetry Society, and dabbled in film making and scripting comics. Now, in her spare time, she writes short stories and participates in a web-based writers' community.

NOTE ABOUT THE PRODUCTION OF THIS BOOK

This ebook has been produced by students studying for the Diploma in Publishing (Applied) at Whitireia. It is published in three digital formats: EPUB, Kindle and PDF.

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As well as showcasing the skills of our publishing graduates, we hope *4th Floor Since '05* encourages you to seek out more work by the writers it features.

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