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Bite

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
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by
Tori Mitchell



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

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Abstract

Bite is a collection of blunt confessional poetry draped in honesty, identity, and 21st century feminism, examined through lived experience with eating disorders, sexuality, trauma, disconnect from family and culture, love and loss, and what it means to be a girl growing up. The collection explores these raw concepts with vulnerability, through the eyes of ‘wolf girl’, in hopes that talking loudly about these topics will force the public to challenge the silence and stigma around them.

This thesis was inspired by Maori Mythology, and all of the Polynesian poets who showed me how important it is for women of colour to share their stories and experiences. It was also influenced by feminist artists Jenny Holzer, Tracey Emin, and Barbara Kruger, whose art embodies the content of these poems in a literal way: freedom of expression, stripped bare and unflinching. The poetry in this collection is confronting, visceral, and filled with bite.

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For all the girls raised by wolves.

This thesis is dedicated to Nana Kirika, mana wāhine, who gives me strength.
Aroha Nui

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Bleeding

Wednesday 2:49 PM

can we watch the princess
bride tonight? i've been writing
poetry all day and i need
something light hearted to
remind myself that i'm actually
alive

jaw

Txting Hine-nui-te-pō

i have made you an altar
of eel skin and rākau
i'm sorry I could not find
a taniwha

you need only bleed
you have my attention

tell me about love
is it
wrapping your fingers
around a heart
squeezing
i do not feel anything

you have mistaken me
for a different kind of
goddess
you should try my ~~mother~~
~~in-law~~
grandmother

i am not scared of your darkness
nothing good has ever come
from light anyway
how do I sharpen my smile
like yours?

the key is salt water
and fish hooks

you came to me last night
dressed in blood and skin
was it a dream?

i was the storm clouds
outside your window
i was the falling
avocados
i was the scream

my body feels heavy
why are my hands dirty?
did i do something wrong?
will you take them?
will you take me?

this place does not feel like home
the bed smells like ash
my breath smells like rot
where is this decay?

i am sorry
i have borrowed your body
for too long
be careful
it is toxic

did you forget
about me?

i have not forgotten
you have my face

i think I shall find a new god
i wish to be pretty

you are an eyesore
maunga
ugly and unshakable
be proud
you were not made
to be *pretty*

did you hear?
they say you are not
that type of god
he ai atu tā te tangata, he huna mai tā Hine-nui-te-pō
(humans create; Hine-nui-te-po destroys)

i was not made for them

i think i want to lay down
under the waves
somewhere i don't have to
wake up again

you will not die tonight

how do you know?

death is not told by the stars
death is not told by cards in
your pocket
i know this
the way i know the tide
will always return
my child
when it is your time
i will open my arms to you
you cannot run to me
you cannot run from me

The Poet Addresses the Mirror

I blame

puberty

I was a small
girl with crooked
teeth and curly
hair that wouldn't stay
put but that
was okay

I looked like everyone

else

then

at eleven

woke with

hips

boobs and stretch

marks

like unleashed tiger

stripes lightning

flowers

while everyone

around

stayed scrawny

there was no

space for this

body in my old

life

I didn't

know what to

do with these

new curves

jeans too tight

c cup

d cup

new bra

every

two

months

the attention

everywhere

I did not

become a woman

still a girl

even

when the

buttons wouldn't

fasten my body

didn't belong

to me

boys

men

watched

slack jawed

tongue

like a dog

at a buffet

except a dog

understands

no.

Thinspiration

tastes like triumph
and looks like
the hidden gallery
on my phone
a reminder
that the
goal
is to look
like them
light skin
contrasts
pink bikini
hollow cheeks
thigh gap
(24kcal in
an apple
quarter)
braless
crop top
hipbone sharp
smile
(hint: chew
on ice
when you think
you're
hungry)

vogue
off-the-rack
sample size
bodycon dress
thigh gap

(pay for clothes
you can't fit
use it as motivation)

s-line body
Calvin Klein
under
wear
thigh gap
(hungry? Go
weigh yourself
are you still?)
Instagram ads
walk your way
into skinny jeans
before and
after
thigh gap

the only way
I know
how to do
that is
to
track
the
calories
in a
broccoli
florete
(6kcal)
but
by the
time

I've eaten
an
entire
Home Brand
cheesecake
(6 servings
203kcal each)
then
thrown
it
back
up

I don't
want to be
pretty

I want to destroy myself

how did I get here?
winning
at this game

I never wanted to play

I can't even

drown

myself
in alcohol
without
crunching
the numbers

*97kcal
in a shot of vodka*

whoever decided
to load
calories in alcohol
is a fucking asshole
getting drunk
is so
much
easier
with
my stomach
choked
to
all I ever
wanted
to be
is
empty

Mā is white 🎵

i can't speak the language/of my ancestors/instead i cough up dirt/the colour of
my skin/i try to speak/the words of my ancestors/but they come up/ghosts spitting/
half cast/plastic māori/doesn't know how to make rēwana bread/can't weave
putiputi/straightens her hair/born in New Zealand's white half/still has Southland
accent/mother's white nose/freckles/i feel like an imposter on my own marae/but i
also have my father's brown eyes/brown skin/brown thoughts/when i was young/i
didn't want them/climbed over my brothers and sisters/claiming the reward/for
painting the most/whiteness/onto my skin/i was born from the land/my ancestors
came from/at my nana's tangi/i didn't sing the waiata/ didn't know the words/
i only know the colours song/Ngā Tae/*mā is white/parauri is brown/*

SCENE ONE

COLD OPEN

EXT. BACKYARD – NIGHT

CLOSE ON GIRL

GIRL lies on wet grass, hopes to become mud. GIRL is a sad indie song. GIRL licks blood from her fingers. GIRL drinks worship from the lips of lovers who leave. GIRL is vodka in a plastic water bottle. GIRL keeps the wolf hidden beneath her skin. GIRL spits guts and rose petals. GIRL is unable to show love. GIRL crumbles maunga in her fists. GIRL makes a home out of empty lighters. GIRL rejects apologies that never come. GIRL leaves scratch marks on everything she touches. GIRL has her father's anger flooding her ribcage. GIRL dreams of never touching the ground.

GIRL BREATHES.

GIRL WANTS.

FADE TO BLACK

A series of unfinished poems about my eating disorder

My Dentist Asks About Bulimia While His Hands Are In My Mouth

Sorry I Had To Leave Our First Date To Throw Up In The Ladies Room

The Elephant In The Room AKA My Ex-Girlfriend Never Talked About Food

A Photo Collage Of Every Bathroom I've Ever Thrown Up In

Meal For Three, Table For One

Ode To The Pinterest Board Of Recipes I Will Never Make

It's Not A Diet, I'm Sick Bitch

The Only Girl At The Party Writing Each Shot In A Food Journal

The Irony Of Having A Culinary Degree

Holiday Cocktails Are The Bane Of My Existence

Shove Your Before And After Photos Up Your Ass

Fat Is Not A Bad Word – And Other Lies Your Therapist Tells You

Am I Recovering Yet?

Inkwell

pull the poetry from the ridges of her collarbones
the scorch-mark fingerprints littering your body
the cold sheet where she used to lie

peel the poem from the constellations of freckles on his back
the plaid blanket over the backseat of his car
the look you don't see when you leave

dig the verse from the shrapnel lodged in your chest
the buried love letters
the words your father never said

rip words from the straight white man
from Starry Night and Inflammatory Essays
from tangled bed sheets and smoky perfume

write the stained coffee cups and five-fingered bruises
write the ripped pages and foggy morning sleep-ins
write the 2 a.m receipts and rainbow marches

write.

Stay All Day Bold Matte Liquid Lipstick

I wear lipstick
so I do not throw up
I don't wear it
for boys
or girls
brainwashed
to be
easy, breezy, beautiful
I wear it so
in the empty
public bathroom mirror
the dark red
Chanel Noir Moderne
reminds me
that vomit would ruin
what I spent so long
practicing
perfecting
it's something
so small
but it means
that I won't
shove my finger
down
my
throat

#000000 & #FFFFFF

#c0c0c0

eating disorder specialist waiting room/the
sky on my birthday every year/driveway
where i broke my wrist/barbed
wire/cocktail shakers/

#f4d2f5

prayer/her t-shirt the first time we kissed/
butterfly wings or anxiety/my nana's
favourite tea mug/an empty perfume bottle
filled with flowers/cheeks/the person i
pretended to be/candyfloss/

#6d3a21

chocolate cake vomit/the frame of the first
mirror i smashed/my father's eyes/my father's
skin/dried blood/burnt toast/four cups of coffee
for breakfast/wet earth under my nails/rust/

#fcbf1a

her laugh/my sister's favourite colour/listening
to *Badlands* over&over again/honey
sweet lemons/neon signs/lazy sunday mornings/
caution light/HB pencil/brand new Converse/

#0e2b3e

chipped nail polish/my jeans on his bedroom
floor/singing along to every song on the radio
at 2a.m/her X-men dvd collection/the loneliness
of a meal for one/my favourite pen spilling ink/

#d3f0e3

seafoam/ my mother's gym shoes/the car before
the crash/springtime/polyester dresses/sharp scent
of spearmint gum/the cover of your teenage diary/
picnic blankets/eucalyptus aftershave/

#f8f7ed

his hands around my neck/empty notebooks/
calamine lotion/freshly washed bed linen/an
old desktop computer/condensed milk/motel
pool/worn cotton underwear/cheating on a test/
the wrong shade of foundation/teeth/

canine

Can we forget about Romeo?

fingers laced/through chain link fences/bitter metal/contaminates/chaste kisses lit/
by moonlight/bodies laid bare/vacant warehouses/hidden from the world/behind
moss/studded concrete/full moon/drips/glass shards/illuminates the curve/of her hips/
lips/freckled chest/ kisses linger/return to reality/outside their walls/love letters
hidden/beneath floorboards/ cracked open her ribcage/buried her heart/next door/
footsteps thud/cracked pavement/this dance of survival/bind our wrists/with forget-
me-nots/wonder if we'll/bloom/

Astrology is real/Astrology is fake*

Aries

what you see is what you get. bright red chillies. first place trophies. the fire in your soul keeps you warm. the fire in your soul burns others alive. unfinished projects wasting in the garage. slamming doors. purple-brown bruises that never heal. instant gratification. sneakers laced too tight. a hug that lasts too long. honey glazed short ribs. a porch light left on.

Taurus

both feet planted deep in the ground. falling asleep after the movie starts. badly wrapped christmas presents. blunt opinions. evergreen trees. folded paper wedged underneath an unstable table leg. realist. visiting an old childhood home. Wes Anderson films. one recipe that's perfectly mastered. empty savings account

Gemini

baseball bat under your bed. pink lemonade. biting words. unquiet mind. old photographs with old friends. overloaded power sockets. pulling the strings behind the curtain. leather boots. midnight flashlight tag. furniture window shopping. ignoring feelings in hopes they'll disappear. low-cut necklines. never kiss and tell. tangled headphones in the bottom of your bag.

Cancer

paper thin skin. baby teeth in a blue jewellery box.
ten-year grudges. sleeping in your own bed. riptide.
tears bubbling too close to the surface. spilled
secrets. home on a friday night. keeping exes
on speed dial. unopened mail. peacock feathers
in a vase.

Leo

party starter. worn ballet pointe shoes. sore loser.
gold balloons that spell your name. liquid confidence.
fresh mango juice sticking to your chin. scorched earth.
crying from laughter. unearned praise. cracked
iPhone screen. iced Starbucks in the middle of
winter. flashing neon lights.

Virgo

fingernails chewed to jagged edge. emotions expressed
by pen and paper. fists clenched tight. gears turning.
solar eclipse glasses. constructive criticism. rain soaked
moss. second-hand shopping. a joke taken too far.
sticker covered laptop. parents yelling on the side-lines
of a rugby game.

Libra

lemon honey tea. windows always left open. Valentine's
Day chocolates on the highest shelf. magic 8 ball answers.
never awake before noon. taking the hits meant for
someone else. handmade gifts. can't be alone. monochromatic
outfits. prayer. chain necklaces. 5 a.m love confessions.
backyard art galleries.

Scorpio

too hot bath water. manicure filed to a point. empty
pizza boxes. worn edges of a wallet-sized photograph.
white sage incense burning. calendar covered in
scribbles. always looking for a fight. piled up dirty
dishes. monopoly expert. drinking milk straight
from the bottle.

Sagittarius

2 p.m couch naps. stolen supermarket trolleys. smoke
from a bonfire. overfilled tequila shots. vintage red
sunglasses. good news first; bad news never. teeth
bared in defiance. rusted hole in a wire fence. shark
tooth pendant. computer glitches. permanent marker
graffiti.

Capricorn

expansive misty hills with no one else around. long bony fingers. heavy body armour cage. black and white horror movies. Empty elevator stuck on the third floor. mustard yellow flowers. unpaid dentist bills. cardboard easter bunny ears. an old school FM radio. vanilla ice cream.

Aquarius

beach kite flying. overgrown lavender plants. Nissan Cube. blue-tacked band posters. deleting all your social media accounts and starting over. collected seashells in dusty glass jars. stained sheet ghost costume. cold hands. unplanned road trips. reusable shopping bags. chalk drawings on concrete.

Pisces.

pulpy orange juice. sleepwalking. designer tissue boxes. muffled music from another room. breakfast for dinner. child of the moon. over watered decaying plants. long, realistic daydreams. reinforced steel heart. *Dirty Dancing* on repeat. box full of saved receipts. the good kind of tears.

*if you think astrology is stupid, I don't give a shit. go tell someone who cares or read your birth chart and find out exactly why the planets aligned at just the right time when you were born to make you into an asshole who ruins other people's fun.

Tell me what you remember

your best friend smells like violets and smoke
when she hugs you goodbye
with a wink and a sloppy kiss
on your cheek
the pizza disappears and so does she

four Jägerbombs
even though you don't like Redbull
an arm with a steady grip
around your waist
the red flannel clashes
with your green dress
as he takes you upstairs

your jacket is dropped
on the cracked leather couch
under the window
you take off
your heels
dread the blisters
feel the velvety throw under
your fingers

tell me what you remember
someone's playing Drake downstairs
feel the bass in your pulse
as your hands shake
he kisses your shoulder

his hands
in your hair
feather fingertips
on your hips
when you look up
you can see stars on the ceiling

tell me what you remember
the scent of Lynx and beer
settled in the creases of blue sheets
like crumbs from a secret
late night snack

when the party's over
when he texts you
thanks for the great night x
when you don't remember his face
when you can't speak

Worn Black Chuck Taylors

After the echoing thud
of his old front door
the first thing you hear
is the thump in your chest
to the beat
of the same song
you listened to on your second date
where you missed the movie
because you were too busy
showing him how Melodrama
made you cry
every time you listened to it
because *Writer in the Dark*
feels like it was written about you
but now
there's no rumble
of his shitty car engine
no crackle
from the ancient radio
there's no sound
for a weight
off your shoulders
a kiss you won't remember
poetry written for someone else

How to Pray

scorching concrete/discarded towels/wrinkled fingertips/draw
water droplets/her skin tastes of chlorine&SPF30/balmy under
your hands/empty wine glasses/create light prisms/your hair/
sticks/to her thighs/in the drying sunlight/

slow-dripping black coffee\the kitchen bench\digs\into your
hipbones\her body curved\into your back\her words\i want
you\said into your neck\her jacket zip\gets caught\on your
sweater\her fingers\get caught in\your jeans

her hands/grip/damp linen sheets/trace the sweat/down/her
neck/slice/with your tongue/her pulse underneath/so close/
follow her freckles/her vanilla incense/long burned out/her
slow&sexy Spotify playlist/drowned by her greedy words/
&her lips/her lips/her lips/

Hey, this is [REDACTED] leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

i'm at a bar in the city and everyone looks the same/the skeezy whitewashed
bathroom walls are/covered in pen scribbles and thick black vivid/if i write my
number enough times/will you see and call me/

/your voice is so sweet/

baby, i've had a lot a lot a lot to drink and/the taxi just drove past your old house/i
waved/out the window like you were looking at me/behind those god-awful orange
blinds/

/i'm sorry i'm sorry i'm sorry i'msofuckingsorry/

are his hands soft like mine/i bet they're smoother/i bet they don't have/all the
calluses and cuts and bruises/from doing everything/wrong/

/i dropped my phone on the/ground the first time I tried/to make this call/

i'm going to bed now sleeping on your side/even though the pillow doesn't smell
like/ coconut and lime conditioner/and i got rid of the sheets with the cherry cola
stain/but it just –

Message box full.

Your Tinder bio reads: all of my exes were crazy

I would say sorry for the poems,

but I'm not.

MISSED CONNECTION – w4w

posted three weeks ago

you were the one in the yellow and white dress, cute blonde with the green painted toenails. you stopped me, like a winter wind that makes it hard to breathe. i thought you were an angel until i saw the blood, i was too distracted by the peaches in your hands. i had forgotten what it meant to be holy until i saw your scars. in my head call you venus/aphrodite/hathor/parvarti/freyja/inanna/ziva/there's no māori goddess of love only life and death. i was the one with the red wine bruises and a Countdown shopping bag full of plastic flowers. i could keep your sheets warm, you could keep me in line. we could be the power couple. i got lost in the dream where i get to kiss you, i don't think i can forget the glitter on your eyelids. i've never wanted pain more than i wanted those sharp hands to touch me.

let's make a deal: i'll keep you fed and fucked; you'll teach me how to fall in love

March 26th

this morning i got a facebook/notification to tell me it's your birthday/as if i didn't wake up knowing you were turning/23/i don't know what i would say if we/met again but i hope you're/happy and i mean/it this time/

i can write about the boy with the endless/dvd collection & a tendency to blame other people/i can write about the girl who talked & never listened/but the boy who held/my hand at my first counselling sessions gets 100/unfinished poems instead/

it's probably because i can't think/about you for too long without/crying getting lost in the time we dyed/your hair with blue food colouring/for athletics day/
hint: it doesn't just wash out/but kakepuku house was very proud/getting lost back/
when you let me do your eyeliner every day/in the only bathroom/open before class/
you never/left me/alone aries and gemini are a chaotic pair/you/the reason i know i can love/you/who knew me better than anyone/you/who kept my secrets/you/my other half/even when we were 13/trying to date/we didn't speak for a week after/one kiss/

i can remember the last/time we saw each other/the last time we hugged/we were nearly strangers by that point/you squeezed too tight like you/always did/smelled like orange-blossom/Lush soap drowned/by Lynx Gold like you/always did/i had to lean up on my toes just to/rest my head on your shoulder/i never used to do that/but people get taller/over 8 years/

if i'd known then/i probably wouldn't have said i /love you/but i should have/

An instruction manual on how to fall in love

1. Don't

1. when he shouts to you over the EDM thumping through the speakers, stop staring at his lips long enough to hear what he's saying. when he laughs, it vibrates through his whole body, you've never met someone who makes better puns than you do. when he asks what you're drinking, say water. when he asks what you're really drinking, tell him it's your best friend's flat, and you know where she keeps the good stuff.

2. do not fall for: boys with green eyes. boys who keep birds in cages and don't like the beach. boys that only kiss your neck. boys in bands with dyed hair and a wardrobe full of *Fight Club*, *Inception*, *The Dark Night* -esque dvds they make you watch. do not fall.

3. the boy in the leather jacket with curly hair and a crooked smile wants to get into your pants/wants to call you baby/wants to take you home to mum and dad/wants to bake birthday cakes with you. the boy in the leather jacket with curly hair and a crooked smile wants to hold your hand. let him hold your hand.

4. you are the girl who makes everyone cry. your hands are too rough, and he is too soft. didn't you learn your lesson last time? love is not love when you wrap it in gauze just to breathe. love is not love when it has claws. love is not love when you are both scared.

5. you are not a nice girl; you don't know how to hold things without breaking them (wine glasses/bedroom mirrors/knuckles/church windows/teeth/barbies/mother's hearts/bikes/promises/books/car radios).

6. please don't run away again.

February 14th, or: The Poet vs Valentine's Day

take a shot every time someone you slept with

comes up on your Instagram feed

#loveday #bemine #vday

take a shot for aggressive pda

couples discounts and your favourite café

over-baked red velvet cupcakes

(everyone knows the icing is the best part)

take a shot

turn your brain off

'better to have loved and lost

than to have never loved at all'

bitch please

if i could go back in time

i'd let my friends buy me Burger King

for my sixteenth birthday

i wouldn't spend it

making out in the back

of Cinema 3

watching Pirates of the Caribbean

(your favourite movie series

not mine)

i'd throw away those wilting

supermarket flowers

before i woke up

on Valentine's Day

wanting

a lobotomy

i had a dream
that you apologised
& held my hand
i had a nightmare
that i forgave you

Take the first left, it's the house with the yellow door

The first time i meet her parents
i am fascinated
the silence is filled
with soft conversations
her mum's laughter
at her dad's jokes
even though he
can never remember the
punchline
washing dishes together
the tv doesn't need
to drown out voices

It feels like a dream
a surreal alternate universe
her brother
knocks the jam jar
off the bench
and there is no screaming

Is this what
unconditional
is like?

It took my father
over twenty years
to talk to his favourite cousin
because of mother's
grudges
that had nothing to do with them
there is no forgive in my family
there is no forget

When her parents laugh
hold hands on the couch
dramatically recreate
bad tv show scenes
i think
this is how
she knows
how to love
so i think
i cannot
love her

Why did you kiss him?

- i was alone and he was there
- i was horny
- he tasted like strawberry vodka
- you were gone
- he let me pick the music
- love
- i had to borrow a jacket
- he wasn't afraid
- the speakers were too loud
- impulsivity
- he called me babygirl
- it hurt too much
- the couch was broken
- he touched me first
- i thought it was a dream
- he smelled of chlorine
- everyone was asleep
- i needed to know i was real
- the tv didn't work
- i was alone

SCENE TWO

FLASH BACK

INT. BEDROOM – NIGHT

CLOSE ON GIRL

GIRL is not pretty. GIRL sinks in cold bath water and counts ceiling tiles. GIRL mourns. GIRL has high fructose corn syrup in her veins. GIRL doesn't know how to smile in the mirror. GIRL presses herself into his body like flowers between bible pages. GIRL bites her tongue and chokes. GIRL wears her skin like an ill-fitting dress. GIRL wanders art shows at 3 a.m. GIRL can take a beating. GIRL wants to stop belonging to the wild thing inside of her. GIRL is nicknamed *self-sabotage*, *hazardous*, *sin*. GIRL will not make herself smaller. GIRL wants her innocence back.

FADE TO BLACK

The Poet Writes About Love/Again and/Again and/Again and/Again and

S. you were the first person i kissed/spin the bottle in a tent/at your mum's wedding/a bunch of kids forced away while the grown-ups got/wasted and danced to Salt-N-Pepa/none of us really knew each other but we/snuck a few cans of Smirnoff/and truth or dare for boring/your lips were chapped and i/though they would be softer/

K. they say you never forget your first love/but honestly i'm not sure i ever actually loved you/do thirteen year olds with parents who scream at each other/know what love is/

S. i wish i could thank you for being the first/boy that made me feel beautiful/we were young with/energy drinks running through/our veins/high on moonlight/stolen weed/sweaty midsummer kisses/short and sweet never made much sense until you/

L. i wish i could stop writing about you/but nobody has ever fucked me/up like you/i didn't know how to love you quietly/you didn't know how to love yourself/you ripped me apart/looking for the parts of me you wanted/and pieced me back together inside out/half of these poems have your face/i had to move cities to get away from you/spent my nights in dirty beds in different rooms/but they all had your hands

J. we were both wrong/you were the best friend i ever/had and i still wear your grey hoodie when it gets cold/sometimes i think about the way you saved/me talked til 3 a.m on the day/i wanted to die/i bought mint chocolate chip ice cream for you/and i don't even like it/i can't believe i ever complained that your hugs were too tight/when i think of love/i think if you/i think of too much eyeliner/tigers at the zoo/post-it notes on the back of my flip phone/MSN Messenger/i miss when we were eleven and love didn't matter/on the Westfield roof carpark/

H. you gave me/everything/but he made me feel/everything betrayal/tastes like/

M. you thought i would be different/but sometimes you only like someone/until you know enough about them/i tried not to disappoint/but you put me on a pedestal/raised me up into something holy/i loved with teeth too sharp/you loved with matchstick fingers/i was not good enough/not a god/just a girl/

B. i'm sorry i was your first girlfriend/i'm sorry it took me five months to realise that i love being loved more than i loved you/you never kissed me in public/i should have been kinder/ or stronger/or less reckless/i'm sorry i don't miss you/

M. i didn't mean for you to fall in love/i only wanted you to make me feel alive/call me babygirl/scratch the itch/make the poems mean/someone to miss me/

C. we were missed/moments i have not/kissed anyone that matters/since

I. you loved me/it was my favourite thing about you/

Tinder pick-up lines

send them a photo of your favourite slippers. assign them a candle scent. only send low quality mirror selfies. ask if they've seen all the Die Hard movies; make them watch each one anyway. offer to show them how to make lasagne. invite them to your cousin's eighth birthday party. send a YouTube link to Boss by NCT U to assert your dominance. teach them the names of all your house plants. send photos of every painting that makes you feel something. learn to like beer and pick a favourite. send seven heart emoji's & tell them they were meant for someone else. bake three batches of cookies and give them only the best ones. send them a gif of Homer Simpson salivating over a donut. tell them their daily horoscope and read their lucky numbers. send all the poetry about your exes. ask if they can sew; ask if they can fix your couch cushion. suggest they get a haircut. learn how to bite your lip in a sexy way. send a link to your Amazon wishlist. quote your therapist; steal the words as your own. ask to see pictures of their cats. tell them you're not a cat person.

molar

Lessons in Survival from Pania of the Reef

Pania
did it sting
you dove
in the ocean
the salt water healed
washed away
the betrayal
you were the sweetest water
he ever tasted
but he wouldn't let you
go

Pania
does it hurt
pūrākau tell
of how you look out
from the waves
yearning to be in his arms again
you don't have a broken heart
you watch with bared teeth

[do you spit blood like me?]

Pania
do you remember how it was
sunlight kissed your shoulders
the river ran clean
before he slipped inside your body
and made a home
without a welcome

*[did you feel your body turning
to pūpūtai?]*

Pania
can you feel your throat
after the scream
raw
bloody
you freed yourself
before he could
devour you whole

Pania
tamāhine kōmārohi
body hardened
by crashing waves
your teeth can slice him
to pieces

[will you teach me how?]

Pania
it was a mistake
for him to think
that he could keep you
searching for his
lost property
men always take
what's never theirs to keep

Pania
you were the most beautiful maiden
before

[you still are]

“Why are you feminists so angry all the time?”

Because fingertip rule
teenage girls
sexualised because grown men
like to stare at tits
and they don't care who owns them
thighs are not a distraction
girls bodies shamed into submission
they are not indecent
simply by being female

I'm angry at the racist girl in line at the Powerstation
who said the n-word
and her friends laughed while nobody else said anything
I'm angry that I didn't say anything
there were five of them and one of me
sometimes I don't want to be that girl
I'm tired of being that girl
she doesn't sleep
she doesn't want to ruin your fun
but maybe try making jokes that are actually funny
she doesn't want to be the only one
she wants to be bulletproof

I'm angry because autonomy means nothing
women are still forced to use their bodies
as incubators
denied access to medical care
underestimated by doctors
if she wanted to fuck
she doesn't have to keep the baby
if she didn't want to fuck
she doesn't have to keep the baby

a woman wants an abortion
like a bear in a trap
wants to gnaw off its own foot

I'm angry because pink tax
because women pay more for luxury items
like fruity floral shampoo
and tampons
sure

I could buy your mountain fresh
steel
alpine wood
peppercorn
3-in-1 body wash
for \$1.20 cheaper
but I shouldn't have to pay more
because I want to smell like honey
and cherry blossoms

I'm angry because you don't listen
no does not mean yes
a shrug does not mean yes
laying absolutely still does not mean yes
snoring does not mean yes
the thought of someone
putting their hands on my sister
without her consent
makes me want to burn the city down

I'm angry because there's a girl at the back of the bus
and a grown man on the opposite seat
talking, smiling
winking
moving closer
while she smiles and wishes she was anywhere else
I'm mad because I was that girl at the back of the bus
Why aren't you angry?

wolf girl

fur covered chaos cherry bomb smile
 body built flip hair
for only one thing over shoulder
 c r o u c h bus seat
in the shadows clings to flesh
 eyes drawn to underneath
 flinch short skirt
signs of weakness rolled up at the waist
hind legs spring fingers skim thighs
 teeth sink hold eye contact
 tear flesh pulls skirt hem slowly
feel life drain h i g h e r
 blood spill breath stills
 lick until
from fangs she strikes
the easiest way to a man's heart
 is through his ribcage

There are two kinds of people

those who heal
and those who don't

for some
coping comes naturally
they breathe in and out
keep their pain
in manageable
bite-sized pieces
go about their lives
cleaned and bandaged
quietly healing to scars
in the background
until one day
the hurt doesn't hurt anymore

others are
trapped in place
eyeing the exit sign
waiting for the dust
that never settles
holding the pain
tight
keeping the fire warm
in their palms

i'm not saying
one is better
than the other
i'm just saying

3:30 a.m Room TC4.4. Light refreshments will be provided

wanted: members of the milk club

let's suffer together.

we'll sit around and talk about how depressed we are while we eat banana bread, and hide alcohol from the AA meeting across the hall. it's a chance to refill ourselves with something more tangible than the sadness: vodka, pirated 2000's rock music, weed, eBay scams, poetry, art, each other. we can play all the songs with painful memories attached, and fill them with new names and faces. maybe learn a new language, a different way to say 'i can't find a way out of this', no one can understand you either way. pack a costume or two, we'll help each other create new, fun personalities to bring out at parties, university lectures, and funerals. don't tell your friends you want to die, tell us instead. it's better than drinking white wine alone in bed, watching serial killer documentaries. we can switch bodies for a night, trick yourself into believing you're not actually alone.

Leave your stage name below, along with your star sign, and preferred mood lighting.

SCENE THREE

FADE IN

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT

CLOSE ON GIRL

GIRL feeds the wolf scraps until it is starving. GIRL scratches her arm until it bleeds. GIRL discovers she is a weapon. GIRL with dirt underneath her nails & skirt rolled at the waist. GIRL is not the victim. GIRL tastes flesh for the first time. GIRL watches without blinking. GIRL is the monster hiding under her bed. GIRL is not a participation trophy. GIRL is undressing to fur and claws. GIRL with jaws that snap. GIRL with mud between her legs. GIRL whose scream can break bones. GIRL will never be a woman. GIRL doesn't care about the body count.

GIRL WOLF

WOLF GIRL

CUT TO BLACK

This goes out to the guy reading this who sighed and said ‘oh she wrote another rape poem’

he gets six months
and an article that reads
young man’s career ruined
he gets name suppression
those who look up to him
get vindication

the police officer asks
what were you wearing?
no matter the answer
during his lunch break
gossips with his partner
about how she was asking for it

she can’t listen to Eastside
anymore
because it reminds her
of his cologne
and his hands
laced around her neck
she can’t drink
red Powerade

everyone wonders
why I can’t bring myself
to tell someone
but you were
supposed to be my friend

all I wanted was a place to stay

but now

I don't know

if I will ever be able

to look at hands

and not flinch

I do not touch anyone

I do not touch myself

PWOC*

PoliSci

On the 9th of August 2017, Metiria Turei resigned as co-leader of the Green Party after she publicly admitted to lying to receive more money while on the benefit in the 90's. My English lecturer wears black to mourn her resignation, and journalists pat each other's backs telling themselves they are only doing their job, trying to expose the conspiracy around single mothers who only want to feed their children. In 2014, my closest friend lied to her case worker because she could not afford to take care of her child. They would have cut her benefit in half.

Pōūkahangatus

I was born in 1995 and so was Tayi Tibble. We were raised in different cities. We are from different tribes. We have never met, and yet when I first saw the Pōūkahangatus cover on my laptop screen, so much brown skin on display, with hair made of snakes like a Māori Medusa, I saw power. When I first read it, I felt as though someone had written my soul into the pages. I follow her on Instagram and I see me. I follow her on Instagram and I see fur coats and red lipstick. I follow her on Instagram and I see a brown girl standing in front of her own poem on the side of a Wellington building.

Pussycat Doll

On Boxing Day 2016, Moana was released, with Nicole Scherzinger voicing Moana's mother. When you Google her name, the top suggestions are *What is Nicole Scherzinger's ethnicity? Is Nicole Scherzinger mixed race? Is Nicole Scherzinger Hawaiian?* When I was growing up, she was the only Pacific Islander in a sea of white in my music library. She taught me that brown girls could be sexy. She taught me how to flirt. She taught me that I don't need a man to make me feel good. Nicole Scherzinger is a forgotten feminist icon. *Do you know that no don't mean yes, it means no.*

Performance Artist

Tusiata Avia was the first Polynesian poet to swallow me whole. Until then, I had never in my life read something that made me feel like my skin was on fire. I first came across her in the recommended readings for my first english paper at university. I had to read *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt* three times because I couldn't believe that a Polynesian woman, hailing from the South Island no less, was in there. I was expecting pages filled with classic poems from old white men and women, with flowery prose I didn't understand. Instead, I found poetry I could build a home out of. I found poetry that showed me people might want to listen to what I have to say.

PolySwagg

Parris Goebel choreographed for the kings of k-pop. Parris Goebel has an islander nose. Parris Goebel owns her own dance studio. Parris Goebel dropped out of high school. Parris Goebel is mixed-race. Parris Goebel is 27 years old. Parris Goebel is a self-taught dancer. Parris Goebel has 984,000 followers on Instagram and counting. Parris Goebel has thick thighs and lips. Parris Goebel is an artist. Parris Goebel is the example I give when people say dancers only have one body type. Parris Goebel has met Rihanna more than once. Parris Goebel is the head of the real Royal Family. Parris Goebel's dance crew is ranked number 1 in the world.

*Polynesian Women of Colour

Are You Beach Body Ready?

Are you staring in the mirror at that string bikini?

Are you poking and prodding at the bits that jiggle?

Are you dragging your ass at the crack of dawn for that runners high?

Are you forcing that bran for breakfast?

feeling faint in class?

skipping lunch?

low on iron?

Are you snapping at everyone in your life?

Are you saying no to pasta?

Are you telling your friends “I just ate”?

Are you staring at your thighs?

Are you seeing failure?

Are you passing up dessert for the toilet bowl?

Are you eating Strepsils like candy?

Are you collapsing in the shower?

Are you beach body ready yet?

[Redacted]

violence touches
you here his
hands take
body devour you
bite
concrete grazed breast
raw embrace
leave you in the dirt
perfume decay
i did not
say yes

Survival of the Prettiest

Honey/thirteen/

smudged discount eyeliner & bedroom piercings/grape
bubblegum kisses/secrets shared in sleeping bags/not a girl;
not a woman/under eye shadows & forgotten lunches/braiding
hair at the back of the classroom/dangerous daydreams of
freedom/*girls can do anything/just not that*

Princess/fourteen/

apathy is the flavour of the month/sports field sunbathing/
watch the boys' rugby training/post-it note love letters/mud
soaked Converse/five for 20c lollies/lucky dip/P.E exclusion
notes/bus stop truth or dare/*this world is made for big boys
with big plans/not little girls with fluorescent dreams*

Baby/fifteen/

bathroom catfights/made-up cocktails with stolen vodka/
four girls in a queen bed/nobody sleeps/late night playground
visits/Home and Away weekend reruns/leftover pizza/skipping
class/canteen brownies/*let's practice kissing/just for fun*

Slut/sixteen/

maths book drawings/kicked out of Burger King/dirty boys
with dirty hands/getting high behind b block/art class therapy/
morning after pill/daily energy drinks/broken mirror selfies/
denim jackets/his mum's chocolate fudge/stumbling in heels/
is it love/is it love/is it love/is it love

Tease/seventeen/

pina colada candles/striped fingerless gloves/the one teacher
that cares/Smokefree Rockquest/strapless bras/short skirts/her
body plastered on everyone's screen/packed away stuffed
animals/whispered lust/tinted lip balm/*a naked woman can
be in a painting/she cannot make the art*

Bitch/eighteen

spitting on catcallers/no plans after leaving school/pink
sweaters/reclaiming words/absent best friend/being the
bitch with a big mouth/leaving him behind/homemade
bath bombs/first taste of feminism/picking up books again/
if god could speak/she would tell you to fight back

What makes a monster?

coming into the world

fists clenched

covered in blood

left on a front doorstep

a boy who hates himself

the most

lips painted

warning light red

a smile too sharp

a stiletto to the throat

wolf pups

stripping their first carcass

what makes a monster?

shouting

fucking fag

hate spilling out

over the asphalt

men who take

and take

a woman who

doesn't need a reminder

a wolf

teeth buried in the throat

of a deer

fur glistening with blood

[sometimes you have to become the bigger monster]

Discarded poems for brown girls that straighten their hair

Little Maori Girl With Big Dreams Watches Whale Rider On Repeat

Imagine Being Proud To Have The Lightest Skin In Your Family

Brown Girls Look Too Scary When They're Not Smiling

2016 Or: The Year Moana Released In Theatres Or: The Year I Cried Over Animated Hair

God Is A Woman And She Has My Sister's Nose

I Never Wanted To Be The Brown Girl Writing About Being A Brown Girl

Your White Boss Asks You To Open A Meeting With A Mihi But You Can't Speak Your Own Language

Papatūānuku Grows Flowers In Plastic Bags

No, I Don't Think It's Funny That Whakatāne Has Fuck In It

White Passing AKA A Compliment That's Not A Compliment

Stop Trying To Make Fry Bread/Boil Up/Rēwana Bread/Hāngi/Puha/Whitebait Gourmet Cuisine

100 Harakeke Plants For Kirika

PAK'nSAVE Parking Lot

intuition
prickling
your skin
the hairs
on the back of your
neck
stand up
lightning
arcs down
your spine
sparks every
nerve
in your body
to attention
the man
in the
camo jacket
pulling cigarettes
from his pocket
stay alert
the woman
loading
a trolley-full
of groceries
with a baby
on her hip
stay alert
the
teenagers
grouped
by the exit
stay alert

the man
leaning on his
station wagon
blue hat
blue shoes
stay alert
thumping heartbeat
in your ears
the throbbing
of your hand
squeezing
your key
between two fingers
when you hear
a noise
in the dark

Came out a monster

you hear rumours
of a creature
in the woods
the wolf leaves a trail of red
it's hard to ignore
blood in the air
some say

she feeds on
the bodies of men

boys swap stories
of footsteps in the dark
as they walk home
no longer hunters

what beautiful eyes you have
he says
hiding an axe behind his thighs
all the better to see you with
she smiles
and takes the throat

years ago
a girl went missing
people still tell
the story where
a man swallowed her whole
the story where
she carved her way out

Guerrilla Girls

I walk through the city art gallery promising

to stop only for women and people of colour so I walk in

and out the door

Acceptable replies to unsolicited dick pics

get a better camera. no i don't want you to be my daddy. ten upside down smiley face emojis. why is your room so dark. how cute. no thank you. does your mother know you talk to women like this. what the fuck. 7 photos of better looking dicks. lmao. dear shopper, your purchase last month has won a \$1000 Repco gift card, visit bitly.com/98K8eH or text STOP to cancel. is that a thumb. a video of you slicing a banana. you should really clean your room. boy bye. what did the doctor say. wow.mp4. is this a proposal. critique on a scale of 1 to 10 to help improve their photography. K. a single gif of Dory from Finding Nemo saying 'hey, little guy'.

incisor

Mana Wāhine

you first meet in the bathroom mirror
cleaning dirt
from your cheek
spitting blood
into the sink

when you look up
seaweed hanging
paunamu eyes
a mouthful of teeth
more shark than woman

hine nui-te-po

you can feel her
hungry
as she wipes
her fingertips
sting like salt water
on an open wound

she moves her lips
your own voice comes out

tell me girl

do you want to punish

those

who have

hurt

you

“I love you too”

torn denim jacket

melted chocolate on the tips of your fingers

mosaics from a broken mirror

first taste of cool winter air

chicken burning your tongue

spitting out Bombay Sapphire

the whine of a dog left outside

boots on wooden floorboards

silence when a movie is paused

rotting peaches

cat litter left too long

pepperoni pizza when you haven't eaten in 2 days

dislocated shoulder

blood-stained pillowcases

thick water in the bottom of a vase

What they don't tell you about recovery

this is not an instruction manual
a how-to for bulimia
when you have food poisoning
and the vomiting doesn't disgust you
that *sick* feeling of satisfaction
when your lunch break comes too late
and the empty stomach makes you *too* happy
after a night out
when your best friend is curled over the toilet
and you tell her not to brush her teeth
because you know all too well
what to do afterwards
(no teeth brushing
chew on an antacid but don't swallow)
a week of meticulous meal planning
rice bowls and chickpeas
at evenly spaced intervals
then not eating all weekend
you keep a Powerade sachet in your bag
tell people it's for unexpected hangovers
it's really for
when you've thrown up every meal
& need electrolytes
when your hands keep shaking
and you can't tell
if it's anxiety
low blood sugar
or just the cold

i am supposed to be
one year into my
recovery
except every day
every meal
is a relapse waiting to happen
what counts as being recovered?
where do you count from?

The Poet's Google Search History

why is my voice so loud
when a boy touches you what does it mean
how to make people stop leaving me
is it rude to leave a party before 9
is this my body
can you kill an aloe vera plant
how to hide red eyes
should i trust my memories
borderline personality disorder symptoms
how to look someone in the eye
best concealer to cover dark circles
how to get childhood innocence back
replacement combat boots
how to handle criticism without crying
calories in a large Domino's pizza
when should i apologise
am i pretty
how to stop being jealous
how to stop disappointing my mother
where do i put the pain when i want to sleep
how to get bloodstains out of polyester
am i a bad person
how to take a joke
where to find a best friend
can love make you sick
how to find my way home

did you mean *how to start over again?*

How to talk to your daughter about her body

When she reaches for a second cookie
don't tell her she'll get fat
there are no *good* and *bad* foods
teach her to listen to her body
feed it what it's asking for
don't create guilt
where there should be none
don't teach her what she eats
equates to her worth as a person

When she has her first period
don't tell your she has finally become
a woman
she is still a girl
she has not miraculously aged
ten years
when she has to go bra shopping
more often than her friends
make sure she understands
there's nothing to be embarrassed about
her friends will be feeling the same way
about the opposite issue

When she finds your old Weightwatchers point book
don't teach her what all the little symbols mean
tear the book in half
and cook together
teach her the joys of melted cheese
of buttery sauces
pikelets spread with jam
piled with whipped cream

Don't diet in front of her
don't talk about hating your body
before you go out to dinner
standing in the mirror
poking your stomach
or pinching your thighs
don't ask
do i look fat in this?
bodies don't look fat
they have fat
and there's nothing bad about it
teach her to love herself so
fat
has no power over her
it's just something that exists
like muscle
and bone

How to talk to your daughter about her body?
it's pretty simple

Levi's 710

this morning i tried on an old pair of jeans that didn't fit me last year & this time they slid on smooth no struggle no lying on the ground trying to button them up no changing outfits at the last minute because I can't sit down. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing because when clothes aren't too small it normally means i've been starving myself. once a doctor told me off for eating when i thought i was supposed to. i don't trust hunger & sometimes hunger feels like a full stomach & sometimes it feels like post-vomit elation. i was going to stop buying clothes that didn't fit but now i think maybe in a year they will & maybe in a year i'll look in a mirror with a smile & maybe in a year i won't be wondering if i'm recovered yet & maybe in a year i'll try the scales again & maybe in a year a toothbrush will be just a toothbrush & maybe in a year i'll like my legs & maybe in a year the poetry will be about something different.

Things that won't leave you like they did:

the moon on a clear night/your favourite 90s video game/cheap Moscato wine/the window seat at the public library/your hands/24 hour lo-fi hip-hop streaming channels on YouTube/homemade chocolate chunk cookies/weekend sleep-ins/pressed flowers/sunglasses and leather jackets/christmas tree lights/strawberry cheesecake/the mole under your eye/online shopping/plastic shot glasses/the unkillable succulent on your bathroom window sill/Burger King rodeo meals/chlorinated pools/sour peach lollies/Scooby Doo on repeat/cherry red nail polish/freshly laundered flannelette sheets/Cards Against Humanity/pen and paper/your sister's spontaneous road trips/bubble baths/dirty dishes after a good meal/your reflection in the mirror/

Skinned

you were a girl once
dirt under your
painted nails
pins and needles
in your legs

you were a girl once
wanted out
of your
body

remember how your jaw clenched
and fangs pierced
how your skin stretched
over bone

taste the tang of metal
in the back of your throat
the growl of hunger
makes you feel alive

you cannot recall
the before
always running
bruised with
soil and decay

they created you
wolf/monster/demon/girl
but girls raised by wolves
aren't here
for men to chain up

you will gut them
if you have to
you will bury them
before they have a chance
to touch you

are you afraid?

no
you haven't seen my teeth yet