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# **JOY LANDS**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
**Master of Professional Writing**  
at  
**The University of Waikato**  
by  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

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## *Abstract*

For as long as I can remember, I have been sad. When I moved from India to Aotearoa alone at eighteen, I hoped something would sand down the grief – the Pacific, green air, sidewalk lichen. I created my own displacement and I did not know how to initiate my return. This is what precedes joy.

I had not yet learned that you have to look for joy. You have to recognise it when it arrives. Before I could see that it was joy that ate wonton soup with me and found me by the lake in fur slides – it ended. I was on a one-way plane to India and my body would never be these joys again. This is what follows the end of joy.

When joy ends, it is impossible not to notice the ways in which the world demands suffering from us. We lean on no one, cry in bathrooms and eat alone. The world spins sadder. This is why you must pursue joy.

JOY LANDS is a poetry collection about finding joy across lands and inside bodies through language, girlhood, queerness, and long-haul flights. While these poems are forever in motion across time and space, they are rooted in the presence of other people and in small, indelible moments of tenderness – an almost-wishbone neck, yolk-yellow tulips, taking turns to piss.

The collection is split into three sections, each querying the conditions for joy: something unjoyful, if not terrible, must precede it; some form of hurt must always follow the end of it, and you must continue to pursue joy.

JOY LANDS is a pursuit – I enter joy. I witness joy. I make joy. These poems are lonely and dream-like, funereal and moon-shaped, and bright hot orange. Joy is a build-up and I am just getting started.

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*In Memory of Nani*

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PUSHBACK

## *Elegy For Dog Days In The Southern Hemisphere*

Let us remember grief

and how big it was

and how it lived in a cold house

on a dull street

with jagged green shards of

Waikato Draught out front.

Let us remember

angry, swollen ankles

and how I still bore the

red-hot brunt of this body.

Remember

that I still took it places

cut through the crisp blue bite of winter

in wet socks and rain-soaked suede boots.

But let us also not forget

that before there was glass

there was Rosa Aotearoa from the neighbour's shrub –

a blush pink tapestry flat on wet pavement.

After there was the body

and the rain

and the hurt in the ankles –

there was warm wonton soup

splashing bright orange down my chin

and a tiny round table full of friends.

Let us remember joy

and how even when it was brief

it was always worth holding

my hands out for.

## ***Instruction Manual: How to tackle loneliness and other feelings of displacement***

- i. You should walk to the bus stop at 7 am on Sundays and get on Bus 17 to Hamilton Gardens. You should help the old ladies at the Information Centre and feel a little less lonely.
- ii. You should have veggie dumplings and sticky rice and melon Ramune soda in the sun by the lake. You should pretend that you're waiting for a friend to show up.
- iii. You should let the Aunty at the Indian store tell you off for not buying enough vegetables. You should smile at her when she lists the easiest recipes she can think of – Poha. Upma. Khichdi.
- iv. You should name the grey kittens you found behind the loose wooden plank of the shed Ganymede, Europa, Callisto – after the moons of Jupiter. You should put out milk and bread for them until someone you love tells you not to. You should buy cat food in bulk instead.
- v. You should spend entire nights mapping the stars in the sky. You should pull up your birth chart and really zero in on the fact that your moon is in Sagittarius and according to the internet you can only ever be happy away from home.
- vi. You should be happy for the next three years and then you should come back.

## *Te Puia*

We call it the potluck of my very last days.

Te Hoata and Te Pupu bring the fire,

we bring joy. It bubbles feral,

louder than the underbelly of the Earth.

We bring sustenance. A motley of cheeses

in a sustainable steel lunch box,

gas station pringles, sliced green grapes.

We bring our bodies. Buoyant on frothing,

steaming waters. Sulfur breaths from the

very first wound of dirt.

We bring stillness. Wet backs and buttocks

cradled tender between water-worn rocks.

We bring time. Very little of it. Like a ripe

life condensed – we watch

my silver rings turn green with patina.

We bring love. Washed under dense

Whakarewarewa canopy. Bare feet dripping

over blue root shadows melting into each other.

We bring

your hand in my hand/ in our hand/ in mine.

***Miss you. Would like to walk around the arboretum again.***

AFTER GABRIELLE CALVOCORESSI

Do not care if you show up in my driveway on a weekday.

Do not care if you forget to tell me to wear shoes. Miss you.

Wish you could remind me to put my seatbelt on again.

Would just like to drive around town looking for a parking spot.

Would like to make fun of our wrecked sense of direction again.

You can braid my hair and tuck Japanese Maple in between.

Wish we could lie on the bench and look up at sunlight beaming down through giant Sequoia. Replied to your text this morning that you sent when it was still daytime for you.

Can't find a decent dumpling place here. Miss you and your blue chequered coat with no sleeves.

Miss you snorting. Miss walking around PaknSave with you.

We can stop by the lake. Take photos here, here and here.

Found out pineapple is called ananas in 42 languages.

Wish I could tell you 42 I love yous too.

Know that I was always going to leave.

Know that you wouldn't want me to apologize. Wish you would.

Wish we could eat Mapo Tofu at Chilli House and drink  
dirty martinis at Wonder Horse again. I'll order so many shots,  
we would never have to leave. Know that this is all wishful.  
Know that it will be years before we see each other again.

Miss you. Do not care if I have to see you through the screen.

Do not care if you don't show your face.

I'm still by the lake in my fur slides. Right next to where the cows are.



## *Glossary of Terms*

AFTER FRANNY CHOI

	<b>LONELINESS</b>	<b>FEAR</b>	<b>GRIEF</b>	<b>JOY</b>	<b>LOVE</b>
<b>Meaning</b>	not death, therefore life	ocean waters beyond the reach of sunlight (1,000-4,000 metres)	the shape of hunger	vitamin D oral solution 6000 IU	the brilliant orange of mandarins
<b>See also</b>	Rootless	decay; forlorn	cadaver; murmur	sunlight; exit mould	soup; swell; song
<b>Antonym</b>	Daughter	birth	marigold	papercut	fist
<b>Origin</b>	mid-flight over the southeast cape	see <i>antonym</i>	dirty refrigerator shelf	hole in the wall chinese restaurant	ends of the evening sky bitten pink
<b>Dreams of being</b>	Held	reasonable	small	endless	dreamt of

***Can you read, write, speak and understand? #1***

new thought/slow/our love/paper fish/travel round and round/cross open ocean/follow small  
wonder/toward mother/who showed/everything.

## *Solstice Poem*

Imagine the sun. Imagine being tipped towards it. Imagine how  
it heats your marrow. Imagine neck sweat salt.

Imagine yourself on the roof with wet  
clothes. Imagine longest day of the  
year. Imagine shortest shadow.

Imagine how long-drawn-  
out this grief  
is.

Imagine the sun.

Imagine being tipped away from it.

Imagine how it warms only the long column

of your neck. Imagine a giant sundial with silver ferns,

violas with their faces wide open. Imagine shortest day of the year.

Imagine longest shadow. Imagine how short-lived this joy shouldn't be.

## Catatonia

			<sup>1</sup> H					
<sup>4</sup> A	F	T	E	R	L	I	F	E
			A					
			D					
			L					
			I			<sup>6</sup> F		
<sup>5</sup> S	A	N	G	R	I	A		
			H			<sup>2</sup> C	A	R
			T			E		
<sup>3</sup> G	O	D	S			S		

### Down

- look at the \_\_\_\_\_ for too long
- time to press our \_\_\_\_\_ to the glass?

### Across

- and you miss the \_\_\_ slamming into your body
- do your \_\_\_ know where to pick you up from?
- is \_\_\_\_\_ far from here?
- will we have time for \_\_\_\_\_?

## *Colour Theory: Origin*

AFTER NINA MINGYA POWLES

buttermilk yellow      rickshaw yellow      alphonso yellow

fresh henna green      henna hand red

middle part carmine red

gulmohar cluster scarlet

rangoli hot pink

tandoor ash grey

wet tarmac black      technicolour oil slick black

blackboard black

salt white      death white

marigold orange

fire flame blue

*I attempt to think of her with kindness*

You cannot  
burn the dead

after sundown.

What is  
a cold night

in the mortuary

after ninety  
hungry sleeps.

She

waits

for dawn to break.

When her body

becomes ash

and breeze

there will be a bald head

for her to kiss again.

Red sari. Red bangles.

Red,

the part

along her heart-shaped hairline.

## *june*

i. all night

the street dogs howl

a certain death.

ii. the powder puff. the menthol.

the rosewater. the bright, bright red

of your nails.

iii. remember summer?

come, chase my bicycle under

orange streetlights again.

iv. i kiss you goodbye through

the telephone.

v. the sun bursts

into marigolds.

***Can you read, write, speak and understand? #2***

follow lightning/keep on sea/paint ship blue/good map/wind warm answer/until time/fall

slow/before mother/nothing after/dead leave/earth stay/note language show care/same often.



## *Prayer Song*

I dream again of the boiling sea.

When you call, I break open at the surface.

Turn into bright blue plankton, turn into albatross.

Grief unclasps itself into my days.

Soft knots of wool become loops, become scarf.

Become loss, become memory of loss.

Pain burrows itself in the body.

Everything matters less, matters more.

Tooth as in ache, as in rot.

I think of what the dead can do.

Make anything beautiful. Spell themselves

into moonlight, into the wingspan of a sparrow.

*All Epiphanies Happen To Me When I'm Standing On Top Of  
Things*

I wake  
up facedown  
in a patch  
of mould. It keeps  
growing &  
growing until it  
becomes the  
shape of me. Foolish

I keep  
pawing at all the  
green &  
in line  
with what  
is true for  
all things  
alive, it  
perseveres.

Finds  
a home under  
my nails.

I too,  
am a thing,  
that is  
alive.

I sit half-  
naked in my  
fanless bedroom,  
body silver  
tinged like fish  
skin.

I climb  
second-  
hand tables &  
wait for God  
to tell me she  
loves me.

*mouldmouldmouldmouldalongthe1950swallpapermouldmouldmouldbehindthecurtainrod  
mouldmouldmouldonthewindowmouldingmouldmouldmouldwherethewallpapercurvesmould  
mouldmouldinmybreathmouldmouldmouldonmytonguemouldmouldmouldwheregot-*

I dip my

fingers in  
bleach. I get  
high on  
the fumes  
& decide

to turn my life around.

It is

good

here. It is

Sunday

&

everyone is home.

I

am doing

good.

TAXI

## ***Self-portrait As Inability To Say I Love You***

1. I will bite down so hard on my fake incisors to keep pyar mohabbat ishq love from spilling out the dental cement cracks. I will fold my tongue in half, slit it in two, I will swallow it if I have to. I will say *thank you* and *you make me happy* and *I'd like to do this with you forever* instead.
2. If you ask me for a brick, I will build you a house. In this house, I will call you *honey*, *baby*, *sweetheart* and we will giggle about tofu sticking to the bottom of the pan.
3. I will show up to every dinner sun-drunk and split open in all the best ways possible. In all the ways that don't hurt. I will make my heart the centrepiece on our dining table.
4. I will sleep next to you. And for the first time in a while, I will sleep well. I will look forward to waking up.

## *Love Slime*

#1

Flip the seafoam polythene upside down and let the lady's fingers fall into the heart-shaped colander.

#2

Hold under the kitchen tap. Move your wrists in circular motion to rinse the lady's fingers. Let water drip from the lip of your gold bangles.

#3

This is important: Do not cut the lady's fingers yet.

#4

Tip the cleansed lady's fingers on a newspaper from last week. Let them dry on someone's obituary.

#5

Pat dry until the paper towels turn transparent with moisture.

#6

Take a small, serrated knife to the lady's fingers. Slit vertically. Don't worry about precision.

#7

Get the fire going. Pour thick mustard oil into a wok. Drop a seed of cumin to test the heat. Pull your hand back when the oil splutters.

#8

Add the lady's fingers into the oil. Add raw mango powder, coriander powder, red chilli powder, monsoon, and marigolds.

#9

Watch heat turn the lady's fingers soft and brown. Let love slime the inside of the wok. It's good for you.

#10

Serve hot with basmati rice.



### ***Can you read, write, speak and understand? #3***

travel far when questions/new face/make good speed/follow quick/even no language/it carries  
the song /family voice note/new year again/lead love right under need/live new and show  
from which built many wonder/plane sound/light change/air remember/notice here/try  
best/hold earth.

## *carpark ghosts*

below my thighs, black leather burns red-hot.  
milk skin clouds crack over a sky of powder blue.  
the sun is angrier every new summer. men veil  
their shops with threaded cords of marigold.  
the steering still untouchable. heat grows  
from my fingertips.

satin bargad leaves quiver in what is left  
of the wind. roots dangle till they clutch land  
then crawl over each other. birth new lives  
from the womb of dirt. it is hard to imagine  
this bark was not always vermillion.

is this where the earth first cracked open?  
time is already a memory before the next thing happens.  
ma bites her triple-decker sandwich. tells me  
spirits live under bargad trees. their laughter echoes  
from deep inside the shroud of hanging roots.

i turn the ignition on. all the ghosts watch us leave.  
their laughter passes right through the windshield.

*love on the interweb*

i am gentle with you  
as with the arch of a foot.  
with the splayed meat  
of pink roses i side-step  
every morning.

like sunny rust patches  
of moss gnawing on soft rock,  
i absorb all of you –  
your fragile nails. the  
almost-wishbone of your neck.

i float distorted  
across grease thick gravity  
until my body turns  
to the face of the world  
and all the lights are on.

you are home. the moon  
is not above us. it is  
in between.

*I am listening to a voice note*

about the half-  
dead deer you almost drove  
around, before deciding to pull  
over and call for help. Her  
legs mangled along the  
meridian. Voice keening  
around bone. Air through  
flesh. Everyone knows what  
roadkill looks like – Glass.  
Tyre. Rotting debris. Blood-  
mottled-flattened-fur.  
She was more alive  
than anything you  
had ever seen. Eyes  
big and brown. Shiny  
water drops. Head turned  
towards the Texas Bluebonnets  
that stretched into something

deeper and greener the

further they moved

from denial of

death. You wanted

to hold on to her

tapering warmth. Wanted

to carry her

home. To a

child, to a mother.

Wanted to plant

wildflowers to

mark her soil.

In the end, the gentler

hurt was

a gunshot.

The sharper,

to drive before

it went off.

## *Collecting Dreams*

1.

the hills are padded with yolk-yellow tulips. two rabbits lollop in the distance with their pulpy bellies & cherry eyes. they keep going & going & going and flowers part like the miracle of the sea.

2.

i eat a neon strawberry and my tongue turns to confetti.

3.

the ship is clear, made gossamer-thin and all the fish can see the soles of our shoes. the ship flips, then floats right back up like a dead man. no one is dead. nothing is drenched.

4.

i tongue the hurt in my teeth and they all fall out. my mouth is a bastard country.

5.

the sky is still, made of acid-washed denim. i drive to the beach in a coca-cola red honda civic, tongue chasing salt along the mouth. i say i love you to the sea. it pulls earth from beneath my feet.

## *Calculus measuring 8mm at mid pole*

The spasm under my spine, in waves.

How the body trembles.

Distended. Purple-swollen

Breathtaking pain.

I curl uncurl,

try to hold the shape of it.

Made soft, made malleable

by the sweet of sugarcane juice.

Then angry, neon pink.

Bile burn up to my lungs.

My skin is thick. Make a fist. Tight. Tighter.

No vein green enough to hold pain.

When flesh first splinters and draws out blood,  
all you feel is cold organs, cold toes.

What they don't tell you about Tramadol  
is that you're about to sleep so fuckin' good.

And when you wake up,  
hazed. Painless.

Blossoming without fruit,  
still in the wrong body.



## *Season of retreating monsoon*

it goes unelectric ////////////////

the machine whir of life ////////////////

collapsing ////////////////

//////////everywhere is cloudburst grey//////////

////////////////////

everywhere is god angry //////////////// sky split nuclear silver //////

shaking guava tree //////////////// tipping terracotta over

////////////////////////////////////

torrent on tin roofing

water slick city ////////////////

sunk in lake water yellow headlights ////////////////

and then sudden still / / / / / clear blue sky bright air

mouth full

of wet earth

slant sunlight

everything mango orange holy

*drip. drip. drip. drip. drip.*

/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

## *All girls' girls*

**one.** we held piss in for 48 hours. **two.** with my head on your shoulder, rocked asleep by the t-chjk t-chjk t-chjk of the indian railway system. **three.** window shutters pulled open. mouthfuls of green air watching farmlands whoosh. small towns, sometimes people on motorbikes. **four.** chai le lo chai le lo chai le lo chai garam garam chai. **five.** girls at an abandoned station with too big suitcases full bladders minimal upper body strength and a dream. **six.** all-girls' girls. all the dreams – stashed phones and clean toilets and running away with– **seven.** roll drag kick break climb forty-five flights of stairs to arrive into light. **eight.** crammed into so many vans spiralling upward to dalhousie. **nine.** stars and stars and stars like you cannot see at home. **ten.** only pine and pine and pine and the full moon behind the hills. **ten.** only pine and moon and hill and girlhood in the backseat. **ten.** only hill and girlhood and girls and girls and taking turns to piss.

***Can you read, write, speak and understand? #4***

full weight for our talk/dog country/now pause/beauty behind field/light yet possible/friend  
new warm/life night map/show little/run good/face/foot/city/simple again/paint heart  
thousand/love find/talk well/eat/drive/river show/fish notice/travel but quick/round in dark  
makes sun.

## *Lemon Lime & Bitter*

**Monday.** Woke up with a distaste for life. Received a postcard from an old friend with the most gorgeous cerulean ocean ever known to mankind. Felt a little less like killing myself.

**Tuesday.** Changed the sheets. Cold sandwich and lemonade for breakfast. Sat by the lake and could not stop hiccupping. Thought of you thinking of me.

**Wednesday.** You phoned and there was little to say. We listened to each other breathe down the line. Bought fresh eggs, fat limes and bread. Petunia seeds to sow when springtime comes in stronger.

**Thursday.** Spent hours in front of the mirror trying to get my hair to look decent. Wonder who I put in so much effort for. I would map the length of the Pacific to be closer to you but I never learnt how to swim. Today, I hiked up a hill alone. The sky was blue, the air clean. Everywhere smelled like pine.

**Friday.** Spent so much of today loathing. Spoke to a friend at length. Received a spot of good news in the evening but my head was too sick with bitterness to revel in it. Most of the time I think the human condition is unfit for meaningful relationships. But then I think of what I have created with you.

**Saturday.** There are gentle and soft ways to be, and I cry easily thinking about things like that. I wish you lived down the street so I could bring you the blueberry cheesecake I baked earlier today before falling into a heavy nap. Now it is 3am and sleep disregards the suicide in my bones.

**Sunday.** Sundays are for hair-washing and hearty meals and I had the pleasure of both. Now I sit in anticipation of your waking up. I wish you a Sunday full of wonder, good food, and pleasant springtime winds.

## *Indian Oil petrol pump, NH 46*

*Friday, 2:38am*

No shame between women  
who tie cotton threads  
around loose teeth  
and pull them out.

No shame between women  
who watch mouths and bellies  
pool with blood and catch  
the red ache in their hands.

No shame between women  
who see bone  
through skinned knees and  
walk each other home.

No shame between women  
who squeeze themselves into  
finger-streaked hotel room mirrors  
to pass the same lipstick around.

No shame between women  
who watch the latchless door  
and wait for piss-trickle  
to taper into silence.

No shame between women  
who sleep on floral mattresses  
on the floor. Elbow to elbow.  
Impossible to tell where one  
begins and the other ends.

***Please specify TRUE or FALSE next to each of the following statements:***

[TRUE/FALSE] I don't want to learn to swim because I think my body will refuse to come up for air.

[TRUE/FALSE] Oranges should always be eaten in the shower.

[TRUE/FALSE] I host tiny funerals in my head.

[TRUE/FALSE] It takes growing older to know everything.

[TRUE/FALSE] I am less afraid of most things than I was yesterday.

[TRUE/FALSE] If hurting didn't exist, I would walk on the sun.

[TRUE/FALSE] I ordered my audacity on UberEats last night.

[TRUE/FALSE] They should make dreams where everything stops spinning.

[TRUE/FALSE] I listed clouds for rent on TradeMe once.

[TRUE/FALSE] We will all die with something unfinished.

[TRUE/FALSE] It is my duty to love whoever I can.

[TRUE/FALSE] You must share your oranges with emerald flies.

[TRUE/FALSE] I try so hard.

[TRUE/FALSE] My mother knows how to chase death away.

[TRUE/FALSE] I went into the ocean and came back a starfish.



*My favourite conspiracy theory is that everything is going to be okay*

AFTER ADA LIMON

Say tomorrow is certain.

Say the moon is silver growing gibbous.

Say the tangerine tree is heavy with sweetness.

Say the sun – like tangerine – is a low-hanging God  
and several million years away from the end, still.

Say the peacocks are still handsome, still the most glorious shade of green.

Say there are rabbits everywhere, their coats fluffed butterscotch.

Say the kitchen is banana bread.

Say we cannot wait to see it: bright breath in our mouths, endless mothers. So close.

Say we meet everyone there is to meet.

Say we spend every moment singing and dancing and reaching for joy as the sky becomes  
blue becomes pink becomes purple. Say *it matters*. Say *we want more life*. Say you will  
never stop being this: alive, right here. So lucky.

## *What is the beginning of the Earth?*

Often, I have to do things:

laundry, breathing or loosening the soil  
around the lemon tree.

The grey wallpaper in the bedroom is peeling.

The parsley an old tenant left behind  
is growing unbridled.

No geometry to the act of flourishing.

No neat way of doing things.

Here summer is forever and  
my loneliness continues to shrink.

Tiny moons of my tangerine body  
open themselves in prayer.

My belly becomes the altar  
of all things bright and holy.

This is where joy begins to take shape.

TAKEOFF

## *Observation Notes*

1.	late summer. sky gas-stove blue. sun clings to skin.	early winter. sky blue. hurts brain. sharp. sun makes space for ache.
2.	city spread like a vine without trellis.	geometry. road is not the same street. not the same as a lane, or drive or avenue or place.
3.	walking. dodge warm bodies. a crateful of clucking hens. pistachio green scooters. motorbikes. cycles with furniture tied to backseat. mangy dogs. white cows painted pink.	walking. count fading patches of lichen. swerve a lime scooter.
4.	city measurable in raised decibels. sounds blur into your voice.	fewer words, more smiles. whispered good mornings.
5.	gulmohar trees bloom. orange against cloudless skies. later, tapestry on tarmac.	manuka blooms remind of home.

### **summary:**

- a. you can only come back if you leave.
- b. i left my mother behind for poetry.

## *Miracle*

To push through dense, sodden earth &

inch towards sunlight is a miracle.

To erupt from the belly of a bright pink lotus &

emerge under the awning of a kōwhai – a miracle.

This tofu and avocado banh mi we ate  
inside your silver blue car with the broken heater.

A miracle. Sweater in August. A miracle!

Tonight, I believe in the miracle of shuttered bakery fronts,  
fickle weather & bus stop graffiti.

In the miracle of waste management, karaoke bars,  
good fuckin' dumplings & choppy river waters.

Small miracles – walkable towns. Lemons in the backyard.

So many boba shops.

Big miracles – airplanes. The ability to fly  
for 10 hours at once. How the body remembers all its homes.

## *How to move between worlds and other stories I tell myself*

i. carry your flowers in your palm. paper thin pink bougainvillea. neon orange genda. the bottled- scent of a raat ki raani. stay open open open to the bright red bloom of pōhutukawa. citrus crush of tarata between your fingers.

ii. keep birdsong in your heart. the guaraiya nesting in your verandah. mitthu stealing guavas. kabootar on the cable-line. stay open open open to the smart white plume of kererū. the cough-grunt-wheeze of tūī. the song chime of korimako.

iii. coalesce your rivers inside the body. the glacial rush of ganga. the ebb and flow of narmada. light from a thousand prayers floating. stay open open open to the roar of the waikato.

iv. take whatever shape the moon makes. milk-soaked poornima. chaand raat in anticipation. amaavasya lit by fireworks. stay open open open to ōturu and whiro and how they pull the at the tides inside your body.

v. open as the sun makes space for you. stay open open open.

## *Queer Genesis*

First God made love. And then – jasmine milk tea boba.

Then you. Then every one of your perfect, little teeth

that I name after the cities in Europe —

Innsbruck, Verona, San Sebastian, Portofino, Valencia.

Then the knocking of our knees. The sweetness that chimes in between.

Then Going-To-The-Sun Road. Then the radio.

Then your off-beat tapping on the steering wheel.

Then my rendition of every song in butchered tongue.

Then yellow corduroy overalls. Then white T-shirts.

Stonewashed jeans. Then our hands.

Then automatic gear shift.

Then our hands fused together.

Then vegan pizza. Then gas station mint and cola.

Then kisses that taste like other things.

Then our breaths. Then mercy.

Then the thirst to be seen.

## ***PERMISSION***

I WANT I WANT I WANT      I WANT TO GIVE U MY BONES    I WANT I WANT I  
WANT I WANT TO TOUCH UR HANDS WITH MY HANDS UR SKIN WITH MY  
SKIN    I WANT I WANT I WANT      I WANT UR ANKLES UR COLLARBONE THE  
SHORT SHARP HAIR ON THE UNDERSIDE OF UR JAW    I WANT I WANT I  
WANT    I WANT PAPER THIN WRIST SKIN UR TEETH THE LOBES OF UR EARS    I  
WANT I WANT I WANT      I WANT UR FACE LIKE IT IS THE RIPEST FRUIT IN  
TOWN    I WANT I WANT I WANT      I WANT TO LOVE U SILLY ON FRIDAY  
MORNINGS    I WANT I WANT I WANT    I WANT TO LOVE U SO BAD    I WANT I  
WANT I WANT    I WANT TO LOVE U SO GOOD    I WANT I WANT I WANT////////



## *repository of you*

adore you and all your youness

never-ending sleep-rumpled sweatshirts,

delicate wrists, marmalade jars.

i want to love you as easy as spit

i want to hold you in my palms           &           fold and fold and fold.

not to make you small or less

but to make you fit in the back pocket of my jeans

the ones that make my butt look good.

i want you portable

like everything else these days

so when i fly to duluth or calabria

or other such places

i have only ever heard names of

and take a dingy foreign taxi

with a bright yellow roof to the hotel

while trying to understand an accent

that begins in the epiglottis           &           becomes a breeze

i can still hold your hand

pressed under my left ass cheek.

## *The Third Thing*

AFTER DONALD HALL

Consider the breaking of  
glass. Consider time & space.  
Consider the single occurrence  
of our bodies colliding. How  
we can go back to the gay bar  
the bass, the beat, neon blue lights  
& stand in line to piss again. But  
never go back to not knowing the  
tenderness of each other's mouths.  
This is the first thing.

You –the second thing – to me.  
Me, to you. The year with the  
kidney stones & unanswered job applications  
& not speaking & no space for joy.  
The years we hardly remember because  
all we did was cook & clean & love.

The third thing – no, not more love.  
Neither hand-holding nor looking  
into your eyes. But simply looking

at something outside of us &  
the first & the second thing.

Trainspotting. Mushroom foraging.

The lake is a third thing.

In spring, we lug our blankets & books &  
sandwiches & iced coffees down  
to where there is a small patch of grass  
on a mound of dirt with the least amount of  
ants. This is why love lasts.

## *space lichen*

the most difficult part of living

is surviving.

an act of radical stubbornness.

like how the sidewalk meets lichen.

how lichen meets foot. continues

living anyway. it was here

before you. it will be here

after.

sometimes what saves life

more than god is our ability

to mould hands to hold.

to blow pink bubblegum out,

until it goes splat, sweet against lips.

*love, love, love –*

because it is the better thing

to do.

*love, love, love –*

but with fists ready to sucker-punch.

in case survival is the only rule.

frozen, dethawed, vacuum-sealed

and flung into space –

earth's toughest life survives.

you and me, baby?

we are lime-green lichen

blooming across the surface of mars.

***Can you read, write, speak and understand? #5***

hold tree/even just foot/until give/follow plan/travel many/till problem give/build mother so  
well/find morning bird over little object/then try together air/simple music/never as busy  
here/little life/deep rest/warm ship/final walk/love big/night usual/green air/several  
sun/mother/star brought life/long call/half world/everything start.

## *The Planets Make All The Decisions For Me*

Moon: Sagittarius

*Feelings, intuitions, memories.*

honey hair. airplane face. all of it jupiter  
big. only what you do is memory. run is  
memory. everything else [blank].  
there is space for you if you just stay. you  
could build a home everywhere if you  
wanted to. listen listen listen how the  
cicadas molt. someone loves you, the rest  
is confetti.

☾ \* ◦ □ ° ☆

Sun: Aries

*Ego and motivations.*

solid punch. sturdy feet. red is the colour  
of everything. you can do worse things to  
be palatable. you are real even if no one  
touches you. say a little grace half-  
swallowed in the mouth of grief. someone  
listens if you let yourself talk.

☾ \* ◦ □ ° ☆

Rising: Virgo

*Energy put into the world.*

teeth bared harmless. well-greased body.  
there is so little living. a lot of alone. the  
years you wasted being sad mean nothing.  
tongue your wounds till they stop tasting  
metal. all the world is curdled milk.  
someone will always need you for  
something.

☾ \* ◻ ° ☆



*The way all rooms are filled with air but only until someone opens a window and the door slams shut*

Supermarkets do not have windows &  
are filled with air that only moves  
when people make the glass doors move.

It is hard to breathe at the supermarket.

Tiled floors mopped fresh.

Seventy-eight types of coffee. Sterile fluorescent lights.

Water-sprinkled-veggie whiff

In and out. Fuck the trolleys.

I brisk walk down the aisles like a tiny dog  
afraid of everything.

I look and reach out for bright things.

I hold them in my hands

& the crook of my elbow

& under my armpit.

4 for \$5 bell peppers: Left hand

Under armpit: *Value standard milk 2l*

*Freya's* Tuscan mixed grain bread: left hand

*McoBeauty* facial razor: crook of elbow

*Nurofen*: right hand

Crook of elbow: *Cheds*

Right hand: chocolate-covered coffee beans

*San Remo Fusilli*: crook of elbow

Some things I only think about

but do not buy –

the biggest jar of *Nutella*,

cans of chili beans, chickpeas in spring water,

every *Living & Co.* candle.

All the lists are in my head.

I walk

and walk

and walk

to look at everything

twice.

At the supermarket,

I become my mother.

I open all the windows.

## *Colour Theory: Not Origin*

AFTER NINA MINGYA POWLES

sun's out yellow      kōwhai yellow      pineapple lumps yellow

unforeseen hamilton grey

toetoe off-white      long cloud white

traffic cone orange

grapefruit orange

hot spring orangebluegreen

moss green

koru green

sun-bleached lichen green

kauri green

pounamu green

grass lace green

cut grass green

green green green.

## ***What Every Woman Should Carry***

AFTER MAURA DOOLEY

My mother gave me the creased-up pocket calendar  
with a prayer on the back.

I added bus stubs, a bright red tube of pawpaw,

*Eclipse* mints, *Rexona* roll on,

Dollar and Rupee notes.

Always distrustful of my tucked-in tops –

a baby blue microfibre cloth for my glasses.

I have three lipsticks –

*Wakeup Makeup*, *Lead the Way*, *On the Edge*.

There is space for friends. They only have to

fold their arms and legs, their laughter

usually spills over. Passport. A copy of my visa. Keys.

Spoolie brush for my brown girl brows.

Anxiety for what I said and when I said it and how I said it.

A green corduroy tote. The last time I walked out of my childhood home.

Loneliness. My palms, rasping

from Morning Fresh Lemon.

A wooden crate of bright yellow alphonsos.

## *Self-portrait of a girl who is so sleepy*

I want to

be as sleepy &

as moon-like as possible.

I want to

move

so

very

slow –

like monsoon-washed

slugs or honey

at the bottom

of

a

jar.

I want to

make a show

of all my moves.

Languid

like cough syrup,

takes-effort-to-swallow

kind. I want to

be a warble of visions,  
closed eyelid technicolour buzz.

I want to  
be my own  
time zone.

Tonight,  
I am  
seventy-five  
different upsets  
stacked under  
a trench coat.  
Still so spiffy.  
Even uncombed  
& drooling.

***“Your passport must be valid for 3 months after you plan to leave  
New Zealand”***

examples of things that end

stomach muscles tender

time in uk

EK018 manc to dubai track flight

matcha near me

wilfred owen gay?

Tax codes for individuals

two-headed calf poem

kundru in english

nzd to inr

how to thinly slice bok choy

KEY CARABINGER

KEY CARABINER

carabiner vs carabinger

close friends forgot birthday reddit

the burying party

ways to show you love someone

fares are changing

melanin gummies and ibuprofen

monday weather

surprised by joy

time in india

bereavement leave nz

what does marigold smell like

raat ki raani in English

the work of friendship is not discussed nearly enough essay

amla in english

what is the beginning of the world called?



*Aubade beginning in GMT +12 and ending in GMT +5:30*

Light makes

a sound. From the landing, I watch  
the avocado bruise sky recede.

With my

girl-legs tender in the morning,  
I open the window above the sink.

Warm toast,

two tea bags sap into clear water  
like last night. Careful at first,

then rippling.

Everywhere in the world is beautiful  
with repeated rituals. Leaving is hard.

I am

mortal. I understand the business of  
fear. Let me do a good job of loving today.

The airport

an aubade upon aubade. All the clocks  
have stopped working. Behind the plane,

the sun is

a golden gong in Auckland in Singapore  
in Kuala Lumpur. Behind the plane,

the moon

a silver slice of tangerine. The sky is jeans,  
the sky is jam, the sky is invisible.

Why should it

matter if anyone loves me? I love the world.  
The promise of an end is fraud. Look East.

The sky

is an atomic orange lace of the day  
just gone. The sun follows you  
everywhere.

*For my mother while I watch from inside the car as she holds a  
mango up to the light*

What is rooted, will ripen.

The beginnings of your hair, the guava tree in our verandah.

The crate of green-orange Totapari mangoes.

Come be a 5-foot God in the passenger seat of my car.

Hold my less-knowing hands to the light.

My adult teeth are still frilled. I am asking for more time.

## Connections

<b>GAS-STOVE BLUE</b>	<b>MARMALADE</b>	<b>BLEEDING TO DEATH</b>	<b>HOT SPRINGS</b>
<b>BUS STOP</b>	<b>PINEAPPLE</b>	<b>RABBITS</b>	<b>ACID WASHED DENIM</b>
<b>PISS</b>	<b>PLANKTON</b>	<b>SUPER MARKET</b>	<b>JAM</b>
<b>TULIPS</b>	<b>LAKE</b>	<b>BITTEN PINK</b>	<b>FOOT ARCH</b>

Mistakes remaining: ••••

Shuffle

Deselect All

Submit

<p><b>PECULIAR DREAMS</b> BLEEDING TO DEATH, RABBITS, PLANKTON, TULIPS</p>
<p><b>PLACES TO WALK TO/AROUND</b> HOT SPRINGS, BUS STOP, SUPERMARKET, LAKE</p>
<p><b>OUR LADY OF WAYS TO LOVE</b> MARMALADE, PINEAPPLE, PISS, FOOT ARCH</p>
<p><b>THE SKY IS _____</b> GAS-STOVE BLUE, ACID WASHED DENIM, JAM, BITTEN PINK</p>

***Can you read, write, speak and understand? #6***

every sad boy/must know possible/even islands begin together/with language/say home/show  
north/old river/where everywhere stood/several years shape/thousand wonders/draw line/say  
fact/every rock/dog/boy/form right above me/our kind god.

## *Better Is Better Than Not Better*

AFTER ELAINE EQUI

Grateful today

for small things:

taking the bus before schoolboys

and only two attempts for

the Pounamu to clasp on,

my new frill-rimmed

coupe glasses from Kmart

in Granny Smith green,

no pre-cooking required lasagne sheets,

gin,

the ability

to write poems.

any poem, this poem.

## *I Had A Dream About You*

AFTER RICHARD SIKEN

We were sitting cross-legged in the house with the blue gate

and blue tiles and eating naphthalene balls.

Everyone's teeth were falling out of their mouth and showing up on the porch. You were

sitting in the waiting room and I was deseeding a fat lemon,

but it didn't matter.

I said *I am dead* and *your arms are made of manuka*.

You said there is no time to die right now

so I didn't.

We saw a UFO beaming cows up into the sky.

We were eating sundaes. You said *Stop making*

*shit up! None of that is real.*

And then you wanted to go home

so we went back to the flat my parents rented in 1998

and I fell down the stairs. Nothing hurt.

Things only happen if you remember them.

Something came running down the corridors of our old high school.

We were on horses. And we were the horses.

You threw up in the cement grey bathroom,

your horse body half outside the stall.

I trampled on grass to use the pay-per-call phone in the office to call Mumma.

The soil was yellow and our shoes were yellow

and we were on Venus

Bad highland music played on repeat and we kept dancing  
for two hundred and forty-three

Earth days.

Then you wanted a cold drink,

so we stretched our legs until they touched my car.

Your legs were very beautiful.

Twenty sunbirds unfurled from inside,

I looked down and the car was an orchard.

The birds drank from your manuka arms

and you said *We could be beekeepers.*

The suns were purple, split at the neck.

We were on a ship with glass floors and all the fish were flying.

We were swimming on the airplane

and filling our pockets with pool water.

Someone yelled *Quit it!* and we couldn't stop laughing.

You were cutting your hair in the butter-yellow kitchen

I was collecting the shorn pieces in my palms.

Then you were crying and the tarot reader said

*You can't learn less. Something is always beginning. Try seeing southward.*

*How are you,* you asked but I am trying to write a book of good dreams.

No one leaves. Nothing ends.

You were hurting in your childhood bed. I should've asked.

The fish learn to swim. You can tell your mother all about it.



## *The Year of Choosing Joy*

was actually the year of bad teeth and bad kidneys i discovered horrible truths

about myself i couldnt love didnt want to didnt see any of that in the map of my life i lost friends to

space

there was this shelf with safety pins and spare toothbrushes and a bottle of zoloft

in order to not kill myself i needed to make things: a sandwich a trip to

kmart another grief drained saturday playlist on spotify needed to drink neon

orange aperol and go on a very long walk needed to

stand shin-deep in the ocean to look at bird-mangled fish needed to

watch the sky turn princess frosting pink

neededtoneededtoneededtoneededtoneededtoneededtoneededtoneededtoneededtoneeded

to find ways to live

i needed

to live

my jellyfish body bondi acid blue on the ocean floor i made my own joy

joy was always always always there even when

it felt impossible in a life like

mine.

## Notes

Poha	Flattened rice that is steam cooked with onions, spices and herbs. Popular breakfast food in Central India
Upma	Thick porridge dish made from dry-roasted semolina. Popular breakfast food in South India
Khichdi	Dish made of rice and lentils. Popular as either lunch or dinner all across India
Te Puia	The hot spring
Te Hoata and Te Pupu	Goddesses of fire knowns to have emerged from the Earth's core thus forming the geothermal fields in Aotearoa
Whakarewarewa	Home of the Tūhourangi and Ngāti Wāhiao people. Also the name of the Redwood Forests in Rotorua
Gulmohar	A summer flowering tree native to Madagascar that is found in several parts of India
Rangoli	Rangoli is an art form from the Indian subcontinent in which patterns are created on the floor using materials such as powdered limestone, red ochre, dry rice flour, coloured sand, quartz powder, and flower petals
Tandoor	A large wood/charcoal-fired oven made of clay, used to cook flat breads like naan
Lady's Fingers	Indian English name for Okra
Bargad	Banyan/Indian Fig tree
<i>"Chai le lo chai le lo chai le lo chai garma garam chai"</i>	A common phrase that tea-sellers use on trains across India. It translates to "Take tea, take tea, take tea. Piping hot tea."
NH46	National Highway 46 in India

Kōwhai	Small woody legume trees native to Aotearoa that bear bright yellow inverted bell-like flowers
Genda	Marigold. Native to Mexico but hold significant cultural importance in South Asian societies and are used during weddings, religious festivals, funerals etc.
Raat ki Raani	Night-blooming Jasmine. It releases a sweet perfume that intensifies after sunset
Pōhutukawa	Endemic to Aotearoa, it is a coastal evergreen tree that produces beautiful red flowers. Also known as the Aotearoa Christmas Tree
Tarata	Lemonwood, an evergreen tree native to Aotearoa
Guraiya	House Sparrow
Verandah	Roofed, open-air porch which is a common feature in Indian homes
Mitthu	Parrot
Kabootar	Pigeon
Kererū	Aotearoa Pigeon
Tūī	Boisterous, medium-sized bird native to Aotearoa
Korimako	New Zealand Bellbird is endemic to Aotearoa
Poornima	Day of full moon
Chaand raat	Night before Eid-al-Fitr when the spotting of the crescent moon marks the culmination of the month of Ramadan
Amaavasya	Day of new moon

Ōturu	Full moon
Whiro	New moon
Toetoe	Tall grass native to Aotearoa
Koru	The koru is a spiral shape based on the appearance of a new unfurling silver fern frond. It is integral in Māori art, carving and tattooing
Kauri	Largest native species of tree in Aotearoa standing at 50m tall
Pounamu	Greenstone. It is considered taonga (treasure) by the Māori people
Alphonsos	One of the best varieties of mango that originated in India and is beloved worldwide for its sweet taste and brilliant yellow colour
Kundru	Ivy gourd. Widely eaten in South and Southeast Asia
Hāpi	Hop (crop)
Amla	Indian gooseberry
Totapari	A variety of mango grown prominently in Southern India and Sri Lanka that is shaped like a parrot's beak

“...rest is confetti” in ‘The Planets Make All The Decisions For Me’ is taken from a quote from the Netflix Series *The Haunting of Hill House*: “I love you completely. And you loved me the same. That’s all. The rest is confetti.”