



i f   w e   g r e w   u p

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a collection of poems dealing with mental illness, childhood and death  
in support of *Lifeline Aotearoa*

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cover art by emily duke

# my stuffed friend

i am holding the leg of my great big bunny rabbit

i talk to it at night time and know that it isn't really alive

because it is a stuffed teddy kind of bunny rabbit

but it's so big and great

look at the yellow it is

that couldn't be real on a real bunny rabbit

so i enjoy its silence and

imagine words it says like the bunnies on tv say

*i never quite liked carrots as much as everyone thought*

i say *i know that you don't like carrots and it makes me sad*

*because everyone thinks you do*

and when i am scared by how dark it gets after seven

i can feel the bunny grow in power

like a light

but a light to feel in its food scuffed fluff

and i make it say comforting things in my mind

but pretend they are out loud because that is a power i have

# i'm hiding behind the couch with questions you can't answer

i found a question none of you know the answer to

my belly pressed against the carpet

worn down

what is the point

none of my classmates know

and it has everyone thinking

what is the point of being alive

i expected an answer

a caste on the leg of a wounded pup

a cold ice block pressed into a sweating hot forehead

now sticky but soothed

a paper mache face with a smile that curves down

you tell me it's not right

to ask these questions

that i am wrong for thinking about death

but i never even mentioned death

unless life means something else to you

cars go past this house faster than i could run

and you take three hours to find me here

# it's inside me like a worm

inspecting my veins kissing the blue liquid  
mouthing o's over oxygenated pulse  
it's smothering its wet body over  
thoughts  
it is a thought  
one i keep having  
fingernails in the brain  
protrusions  
without feeling  
there is no bird in this metaphor to peck out the  
slugs in this landscape  
of not wanting anything to do with it  
bridge jumping in the summer  
what a rush

# in a normal week

two kids get out of it

decide to leave our system

with all sorts of performative

actions

all sorts of physical crossing-outs

crumple cans made from the institution

of family

the house polished right down to a tree stump

gums shining nakedly in the mouth

two kids every seven days isn't a clean mathematical problem

all the rooms spotless

it's not even a mathematical problem and

the vacuum isn't clean

# what she did say

she told me that it would be bad if i was made to talk about it to someone for money every week like my cousin in wellington who had something wrong with her more so than the wrong i had with me

she only wanted what was best for me which involved me answering her questions with a lie right involved me saying i only wanted to kill myself a little bit but not really

she would find me behind closet doors laughing with ties around my neck which wasn't a cry for help because i wasn't crying *help*

# my dad never learnt how to talk about his feelings

because that is not what men are supposed to do

he presses his right hand into the base of the steering wheel

they are supposed to be strong and that strength  
is all in how much they don't say because you see  
words are points of weakness are points that can

be turned into weapons if you're not careful  
like the heat of a deadline the heat of hiding money in  
the mattress

and adults never want to hear it because they have enough  
problems as it is  
he couldn't list them in time

they have enough weaknesses with the action of  
trying to make two fraying ends meet  
my dad never learnt how to talk about his feelings  
until the words came out of his arms one night  
with the help

of sharp objects

# black wing

i can't get out of bed today  
my brain is in charge today  
and it wants me to not be doing anything  
today  
i become a shape that my bed wants my body to be  
put headphones on and try to forget  
that my brain is in charge today  
and doesn't want me to be happy today  
no light in my room today  
no lightness in my body today

if something is a real issue like this is  
a real issue like how people sliding off  
the roads is a real issue

how could talking about it have a real kind of impact on it

it is a real issue and so is the vulnerable lapse of words sliding out of  
our mouths

when the brakes are cut it is very hard to stop something from  
moving forward dangerously

when there are no ways of saying a thing

it becomes very hard to say anything or continue to want to say  
anything

when expression becomes impossible by regular means

the body becomes a performance of the available options that society  
provides

the motor vehicle can do nothing but let momentum carry it  
over the gap

# my friend

push the trampoline on its side and lie down while still standing  
like insects clinging to the wall  
we hold onto the springs and climb  
feet and legs in similar places we clamber to the top of the metal structure  
it suspends precarious on its side as we sit at the apex  
and survey the backyard my friend and i  
the first boy i'll fall for  
talk about Star Wars and what could possibly happen in the third one  
fantasize about the different piercings we'd get  
you say you'd even get your belly button done  
i flinch at that  
and suggest snakebites  
because i've seen people in band posters who have them  
and i want to be as cool as them someday

essa may ranapiri /// ~~aka joshua morris~~ /// trans po-et /// they-them-theirs

“whale & harpoon” as metaphor for /// the ?self?

no certainty like un /// certainty they will ~~fight~~ write until they are dead

[has words in *Mayhem, Brief, Geometry, Poetry NZ, Starling, Them*]