

NAAKAHI

or

*The Who-Wants-Their-Snakeussy-Ate-ification
of an Already Finished Work & All the Sincerity
Inside This Joke Threatens to Leak*

essa may ranapiri

for all my takataapui friends forever

VIII

AFTERWARDS
THEY STAND

*they're still around
kicking it with the coolest
queers
they
know*

Naakahi, Naakahi, Naakahi

Naakahi short for Hinenaakahirua

yeah they're a they/them bitch now
a Raukawa bitch now
and they're fucking loved!
(the hate can slide right off their scales)

at the cinema sitting down with popcorn to watch
their best friends fuck in all their animated glory!

EATING LIVER AND EATING OUT AMIRIGHT

the rock of Mt Elbrus pulling a face
like 'oh shit' knowing what liquids are
coming next. Maaui and Prometheus or
Narcissus and Sisyphus.

Naakahi watching Narcissus reflect and Sisyphus get on a roll
lifting each other out of whatever trouble that has found them
lifting them all out of the trouble, falling in love as revolutionary

Naakahi feeling golden, feeling explosive when the credits roll
and it's all their loved ones scrolling white on that deep satisfying black

with the film over, the room gets so so quiet they can hear their own
blood and the love that swims in the pump how alive

HOW FUCKING ALIVE IT ALL IS

WHY WOULD YOU EVER STOP IT

after the film Eve comes round and they hang out like old times
talking shit about everything that has happened
men who can't put their ego down take it out on others
quiet conversations about how coming out as Maaori is perhaps
harder than coming out as gay
they collage the two identities together
and something shines through
Naakahi renames her Hineahuone so remade as she is in that moment

O THE VIBE IS STRONG ON THAT

Naakahi delivers voice messages into their phone
too long and stuttering to be for anyone but someone they love
thinking of it as sending wairua down the wire
feeling absolutely spent sometimes they just need to shove food
in their gob and get some sleep Naakahi has learnt a lot in the last
two months about taking care of themself

stares into the mirror
MONSTROUS AND PROUD
how did it take this long to figure out!!!
a top 20 vegetarian poet in NZ doing the rounds

thinks to the chimerae (the delectably alien!)
who they have been made by
or who have been made by them slithering along
cos walking is boring as fuck
and sliding through this world is the only thing that makes sense
sometimes

from tail to crown they are full to the brim with warm
for once nothing to do with Tama-nui-te-raa

oh it's belonging and the beautiful green sweater
their Commiescientist lover has knitted them

THE CROP IS PRISTINE

Naakahi watches her get ready from the doorway; a teacher
they're always learning something new from, discovering
something new in the molecular structure of their relationship
stretching outwards like genetic code like an unravelling ball of wool

OH TO KNOW SUCH LOVE OH TO KNOW

TO KNOW IT MAKES DEATH LIGHTER

THIS FORTIFICATION WE SPIN

does Naakahi work as well as Echidna repeated three times
and what is summoned when they do? Or who? Naakahi, Naakahi,

Naakahi relaxes for the first time in a long time
getting off a 6-hour call with the Spider (yes that spider the one
they won't ever shut up about) that eight limbed genius they have
missed with their whole body

sits there in their study and swims through the koorero;
jokes about putting the waa in waa
time spiralling gender out into the milky way

Naakahi loves to watch when people transform
and the Spider (who goes by Puungaawerewere Puuaho now)
keeps on evolving over and over and over and

if there was a reason they had to give for why
they're still here it would be to watch their loved ones
grow into what makes them happy and whole

with that saccharine notion going down
Naakah (that Raukawa bish, that they/them bish)
lays a blanket over a tale that comes from
(not the gods this time) but their friends

Hineraukatauri Teaches Naakahi How To Make A Sound

for Ruby Solly

the first instruction is to hold the string
on either side

Naakahi fumbles with the tension
it all just slack and loose
not making any sound except for the smallest
of creatures with the most sensitive of ears to hear
a giving up

Hineraukatauri moves her fingers over the fibre
draws it in and out

Naakahi tries to follow along tries to pick up
where Hineraukatauri leaves off
a sizable overlap to get the rhythm ingrained
but just as it starts to create that wailing sigh
that sings through space
the breath leaving
a mouth so open
it evaporates
into hands touching
and hands letting go

Naakahi & Marakihau

for Jessica Hinerangi

it's snake-woman and the mermaid down by the beach
they can't see no whales in sight
today the tohoraa have chosen to keep clear of the bay
probably for the best
Naakahi tries not to laugh
tries not to cry
the mermaid rests her head on their shoulder
Marakihau was the kind of name she could repeat
for hours without getting sick of it
Marakihau, *Marakihau where are you from?*
a place where the taatahi ain't so cold
that sounds nice
someday I'm going to go back there
the pounamu dark water
laps their lower halves
they pass blunts ember hot back and forth
in the sea breeze to keep some semblance of warmth

Naakahi says they like the way Marakihau has done
their make-up today
the blue eyeshadow really works
considering where they are
gestures all around

Marakihau turns to them and smiles a
small quivering smile
the tide does the rest

Naakahi & Hineahuone

for Aimee-Jane Anderson-O'Connor

was supposed to follow the fucker to hell and back but he left her
in the garden to be bored to tears by a shamed couple *o how we have
sinned o how great is our knowledge of light and debt*

Hineahuone shows up one day with a procession of manu and ika
to populate the desolate paradise Naakahi asks if she comes from
the bones of some douchebag like their step-mum Hineahuone scoffs
and says she comes from
the ground *uh huh that makes more sense*

they hang out collecting fruits to make cake
& after waiting around for things to change
God stuck in His own ways
old ways

they leave through the gate of their own accord no angel
to stop them

Naakahi & the Sea or Hinemoana II

for Moana Murray

Naakahi has a thing for the ocean
hangs out in the middle of the night
listening to the sea's fav record
thinking about what a breakfast with ol
Hades would actually be like
was he generous or full of jealousy?
eggs sunny side up or down
poached or scrambled?
Naakahi feels like slithering out of their skin
to let the ocean wrap them
falling for someone is always a choice
at some point
but Naakahi can't recall when they first said yes to this
but they have
said yes so many times since
sitting in the bar the red lights, rock music and stupid jokes
on the couch with Black Belt Eagle Scout
watching the sea take lavender and crush it into scent
listening to them labelling the crowns as pootae
in every all little waananga via voice message
in the feather attached to the chest of their jacket
they have said yes
and will keep saying yes
as the waves crash over them

Naakahi & Puuaho Find Themselves At the End

for Michelle Rahurahu

it's the launch of Poetry NZ 2020
and Naakahi keeps looking over
at Puuaho to make sure they're
on the same page *this shit is so white*
so fucking cringe they both laugh when
some old fuck comes up to Naakahi and tells
her *the poem that made me feel nothing*
about my privilege and was simply beautiful
is what you should keep doing and not
the other stuff he doesn't say political but he doesn't
need to

////////

Naakahi and Puuaho are sitting under a tree
in the rain *I dreamt of something like this*
Naakahi says trying her best to not look
anywhere in particular
oh yeah yeah
what happened? *we were kissing in the rain*
oh yeah yeah it was very 'The Notebook' or something
oh my god you're way too embarrassing sometimes *I know*
but cute they keep sitting there for a long while
eyes taking turns to register each other's forms and then
away like their love was in two shifts
that never overlapped

when they finally share a bed
Naakahi is worried about night terrors
while Puuaho hopes she doesn't kick her friend
off the mattress in her sleep
Puuaho signs things into the dark
that Naakahi cannot see
and the Mother of Monsters mouths something that only
the ceiling hears

/////////

Naakahi doesn't remember feeling closer
to someone than now
Puuaho holding up Naakahi's monstrous genealogy
her whakapapa
after an embarrassing hour of being unable to locate the book
in a library
they're going through a history that is the colour of
many different lands
and feels like multiple flights of stairs they
didn't need to traverse in the first place
all because they thought the Maaori section
would have been bigger

when Naakahi & Puuaho die
they meet up in the darkest part of Rarohenga
where lights are turned on real low
and Hinenaakahirua asks her friend
so what colour was it?
was what Hine?
you know the Twitter post with the different coloured circles
oooooooo right
yeah that thing

you know what I can't remember, like at all

they both laugh into each other's eyes
neither breaking the gaze as they walk backwards away from
one another
one goes to Whiro to be consumed and the other to
that Old Lady of the Night to sleep
neither is sure who goes to which
laughing

until everything goes back to nothing
and after that too



Maaui & A Surprise Visit

s/he waits at the door it's pouring hard
s/he isn't sure if s/he remembers
if s/he's supposed to like the rain or just likes the wet

gone all water spirit with it lately
s/he hardly pauses before knocking on the wood

Prometheus opens the door
does he recognise he/r now?
changed by the blood and moon as s/he is

the fuck? Maaui? is that you?

*Hey, e te tau in a voice s/he didn't mean to be a whisper I guess
I'm back*

they both stand there held in place by the other's stare
silence pooling between them neither sure how long it lasts
neither of them knowing what to do with this

time folds out from the centre like the gods have pushed play
on a paused cassette tape and it's playing their favourite song
(one neither of them thought they would hear again)
Maaui and Prometheus move into an embrace
and kiss each other on the lips
and in this moment (before all the difficult and
necessary conversations that Maaui
knows they'll have to have)
it's easy as shit

Acknowledgements

I thought about doing something like this not long after finishing *ECHIDNA* the book that this is an epilogue too, because I had written so much work that didn't fit in that book. And the year after *ransack* came out I released a zine in conjunction with that work and thought it would be cool to continue that going forward. Some of these poems are old (from 2018 to 2022) some of them are new (this year).

The first poem was written in response to all of the community support I received in response to some transphobic twit. I love you all.

I would like to thank Ruby, Aimee and Michelle again for all their work on *ECHIDNA*.

& my love Emily you are the gaycommiescientist of my memes/dreams lol

essa may ranapiri (Ngaati Raukawa, Te Arawa, Ngaati Puukeko, Clan Gunn, Horwood) is a takataapui poet who lives on Ngaati Wairere whenua. Author of *ransack* (VUP, 2019) and *ECHIDNA* (THWUP, 2022). They have a great love for language, LAND BACK and hot chips. They will write until they're dead.