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THE WAVE

KATIE ONEILL

The wave appeared at half past ten on a bright Saturday morning. At least, that's when John noticed it as he went out for a walk amid the streaming sunlight. He made his way slowly down the beach, watching the surf rise up and soak the rough golden sands beneath his feet. To his left, the many polished windows of the resort reflected blinding light, burning his vision. He turned away to look out across the ocean.

No more than ten metres from the shore was an odd curve. It wasn't much higher than the waves swelling around it, but something about its constant form stood out to John. As the rest of the sea rushed forward and fell back in constant breathing motion, it remained fixed.

A bird sounded from somewhere among the deep wet forests that covered the hills behind him. The rising peaks escalated sound and funnelled it all across the island. The first night he had barely slept.

John stared at the wave, but it would not back down. Without understanding exactly why, he felt compelled to turn his back on it and return to a late breakfast in the dining hall.

But by midday, it became clear that the marine oddity was not just a figment of his imagination. Odd, half-whispered conversation broke out between the guests. Why did they hush themselves this way? Nothing indicated that it was necessary. Leaving his book in a corner of the great library, he followed the crowds out to the beach.

The wave had grown, now taller than a man. It towered above the gentle rolling surface below, and it had expanded in length as well. It was not entirely stationary, with water gently surging up its form, but when it reached the crest it seemed to simply roll beneath and fall back away. It never lost its shape or momentum.

"Is that a tidal wave?" asked a woman standing near John. Her face and hair were immaculately made up, her eyes hidden behind her dark glasses. He had seen her around the last few days, and she always seemed to be writing something.

"If it was, it wouldn't just be standing there," he replied.

"Then what is it?"

"I don't know."

The crowds parted slightly as a portly man in a white suit and silk scarf

came into their midst. His stride was determined, challenging. What was this phenomenon that was pulling all his guests away from his resort? He stopped short at the water's edge.

In the short time John had been watching, the wave had grown another foot at least. It seemed to draw strength and body from the pulsing water surrounding it, drinking it up and growing higher and wider. The manager was stunned for several moments, then turned to the suit-clad man on his left who had followed him out. He had dark skin and doleful eyes that were focused on the strange curve.

"Have you ever seen anything like this?" barked the manager.

"No, sir."

"Then what in blazes is it? How can it just be hovering like that?" said the manager, and John could hear the faint notes of fear that echoed in the chests of those that stood uneasily along the sand.

"I don't know sir. It is not high tide right now, or any sort of strange moon. I can't explain it to you."

The crowd, who had been listening to this conversation, turned away. A few of them looked out at the wave, but many wandered back up to the hotel in search of card games and stiff drinks to distract them.

The woman standing near John was one of the few who kept watching. Even the manager had turned away before she did. After a while a light breeze ruffled her silk shirt and she seemed to come to her senses. She looked at John.

"I suppose it doesn't really matter what it is, does it?"

"Not really."

They turned away from the wide blue horizon and strode up the sands.

* * *

The next day, every pair of curtains on the seaboard side of the hotel parted at first light. Every pair of eyes widened in disbelief.

The crest of the wave was now level with the first floor of the hotel, a long barrier that gently swayed and undulated. It rose high above the surrounding waters, which lapped as peacefully and regularly as ever against the smooth sand. As the sun shone across the horizon, it glittered through the wall of clear water.

John and Anna — he had learned the travel writer's name as they both stood on the dining hall balcony, unable to take their eyes off the sea — were one of the few who went down to the beach to walk that morning. They talked about her work, about some of the places she had visited before this.

There was a strange tension in the air, which only took a definite shape when the tones of a heated conversation came echoing from the lobby. John and Anna peered down from the staircase above.

"Look, there's nothing to be afraid of! It's not even moving, it's just some weird tidal anomaly!"

"It gives me the creeps, and if it keeps growing like that it'll crush the hotel. I'm getting my family out of here."

"This is absurd!"

They watched as the squat manager desperately tried to convince his guests to stay, but there was already a pile of luggage accumulating in a corner of the lobby. A taxi came before nine, whisking a group of people away to the lone airport on the island, and another one came at nine-thirty.

John and Anna had an unusually quiet lunch. The room was far less full, and those it contained were oddly hushed. John couldn't understand why, but he was not afraid. He and Anna chatted normally. She seemed a little skittish, but was more interested in the reactions of everyone around them rather than whatever freak of nature was occurring out on the water.

"I understand the ones who are leaving," she said, sprinkling brown sugar onto her coffee. "It's the ones who stay that are fascinating."

"Like us."

"Like you. I'd be on the next plane out of here if I had my way. But I need the money from this assignment." She sipped. "Are you not afraid at all?"

"I wouldn't say that," said John. "But more than anything... I want to see what happens."

"What if it destroys the hotel?"

"Well, at least I'll know."

They sat in silence for a while, finishing their meal. John asked if she wanted to take a walk along the beach, but Anna declined.

"I have to review some of the walks and gardens," she said. "Then I'm getting out of here."

They parted ways, and John made his way through the now bustling lobby. The doors were flung open, sunshine pouring in. Every day that he had been on this island had been perfect, the temperature peaking somewhere just before too hot, a cooling breeze rolling down from the mountains in the evening. The air was clear, laden with scents from vivid flowers that quietly grew anywhere they could. It was overwhelmingly idyllic.

As he stepped onto the sand, he was bathed in a cool blue light. The wave now stretched across the bay and matched the top floors of the hotel in height, and it had developed so much mass that it was as deep blue as solid glass. It heaved and moved gently, sunlight drifting through it and making glimmering patterns on the beach. It remained as stable as ever.

There were a couple of other souls on the beach, and John tried smiling at them but they did not return it. He guessed that they couldn't understand why they were still there either.

Eventually he broke away and wandered back to the lobby. It was now completely deserted except for the man at the front desk — the one who had been unable give the manager a reason for the wave yesterday on the beach.

"Mr. Lambert? A note was left here for you."

Startled, John approached the desk. He took the folded slip of paper and recognised a brisk, professional hand:

I couldn't take it anymore. Flying out this afternoon. Thanks for the company, look me up if you're ever in New York. Anna.

There was a number written below.

John looked up at the somber-faced man. "Are many people gone?"

"Most, sir. The airport is overwhelmed, they've never had to make this many flights."

"Do you want to leave?"

"I don't know sir. I feel like I should, and yet..."

He trailed off as the manager came stomping into the lobby. His normally oiled hair was dry and his silk necktie askew.

"We're nearly empty!" he shouted to his receptionist, either not noticing or not caring about John's presence. "I might as well shut the whole place down, the way we're haemorrhaging money right now!"

The man at the front desk said nothing, and neither did John. Eventually the manager turned and stormed away.

By nightfall the wave towered over the hotel. It turned pink then purple then indigo in the dying sunlight, then finally glimmered with the bone coloured glow of the moon. John shut his curtains on it, and lay down almost expecting the wall beside him to suddenly explode at any moment and carry them all away amidst torrents of cold dark water.

* * *

The next morning dawned pearly and bright. It took a few moments for John's sleep-blurred eyes to realise the light flooding his hotel room was not tinted blue.

He ran to the window and yanked the curtains apart.

The water in the bay was flat and calm. The sun glimmered across the layers of waves like a hand laying a sheet smooth. The wave was gone. John took his time getting dressed. As he shaved, he tried to rationalise the hollow feeling in his chest. What had he expected to happen? Wasn't it better that it hadn't killed them all?

He came down to the lobby, where a front sitting room had been allocated for breakfast — the manager refused to waste any more money on the full sized dining hall. He sat down, and soon found the man at the front desk had been coerced into acting as waiter.

"Coffee, sir?"

"I suppose so," said John, looking out across the bay. The scene had been so beautiful to him when he first arrived. Now it seemed empty, unfinished.

"Good thing the wave went away," he continued heavily as the man brought him a tray. "If it had gotten any higher..."

The other man nodded. But as he turned away to tend to the other guests, John could see it flash across his face.

He was disappointed too.

BIRTH

JENNA HELLER

BIRTH

1. we first spotted the moon
bleeding from the Atlantic
years and years before
a cresting of molten ocean
earth's potter's wheel spinning a satellite
ripping away from the ring of fire
just like Rachel said —
the Sea Around Us —
a mere theory
now happening again
amidst thunderous quakes
and the waxing and waning,
the universe folding in,
a tectonic time-envelope
carrying life to a gravity centre
inward to the core;
a wrinkled moon of existence
stunned and mesmerized
waiting for the whispered breath

2. and now we are two
ballooning out
from a maybe
a what if
a tidal wave crying aloud
breaking silence
a mirrored echo
two distinct entities
a pendulum swinging
giving in to distance
bridging the gap between

theory and small real steps,
a pooling of spun energy —
like Neptune on her back
with Triton circling elliptic —
a slingshot of love
streams of light and dark
dancing hearts
beating in steady
syncopation

THE BYCATCH CHILD

TIM JONES

The sea withdraws its protection from the bycatch child. The white mouth of the sky gapes open. He catches a last glimpse of his mother's upturned face before he is dragged out of the water and cast down on a hard deck. He lies there, gasping, among dying squid and scuttling crabs. All around him thrash thousands of fish, their gills gaping open. His skin burns with light and air.

The crew would throw him overboard, throw him overboard and deny they ever saw him, but a fisheries observer from the Ministry is aboard. What she sees cannot be unseen. She points, shouts. On the point of suffocation, the bycatch child is scooped up and carried to water.

The water is pale, it tastes strange, it is held in by something that hurts when he thrashes against it, but it is life to him. Exhausted, he ceases his struggles and sleeps, despite the vibration and the noise and the slopping from side to side.

Through that day and the next day they come to look at him:

— What is it?

— What does it eat?

They put dead fish in the water with him. The taste turns his stomach, and he pushes them away. At last, at last, when he is knotted up with hunger, a lively little mackerel is dropped into his tank. He seizes it and strips the tender flesh from its bones with relish: one bite, two, three, four. He looks up at round, astonished mouths. Another mackerel, another. He ignores the fourth, which swims round him morosely, as out of place as he is.

Later, when he needs to defecate, there is nowhere to swim to. They change the fouled water before it kills him.

Suddenly there are hands again, voices, the choking blanket of air. They transfer him to a bigger tank, inside which they have rigged a little compartment where—as they show by hand signals—he can meet his bodily needs without fouling his home.

Already, the faces of his clan are beginning to fade, though they still swim unbidden to him in his dreams. His mother, her tenderness—and then he wakes to light, to noise, to faces peering in.

They have differing faces, these strange air-swimmers with their wide nostrils and their blunt, useless teeth. There are three he sees most often: the

old man with the array of sharp tools, who makes him nervous with his endless cutting and chopping but seldom pays him any attention; the young man who dumps mackerel in his tank; and the woman. Even with the coverings they wear, he can tell woman from man. The woman spends a lot of time watching him. He thinks that she is unhappy, or perplexed. She watches him, and taps on a flat rectangular box she holds in her left hand.

They talk among themselves, that is clear, although the sounds they make mean no more to him than the roaring of surf heard from far below. Sometimes the woman talks directly to him. He tries to reproduce the sounds she makes, a e i o u.

For two days there is a storm. He has never heard of seasickness, does not understand the wretchedness he feels, the spasms that void his stomach. They change the water in his tank as often as they can. The storm passes, and the water in the tank goes back to its usual sloshing: unpleasant, but bearable.

One morning he wakes to the unfamiliar sensation of stillness. The boat he is on, b o a t, is no longer rocking—or rather, it is, but so faintly he can scarcely feel it. The noise of the engines has gone. Overhead, things shriek and clank.

Boots clang on a metal deck. Two shapes approach him. They have puffy white arms, and where their faces should be is only a reflective surface made from some shiny material. The arms reach down for him. He struggles and swims to the deepest portion of the tank, voiding himself in his fear. They seize him all the same and lift him towards their blank faces. When they drop him into yet another tank, it takes him a moment to realise that he has not already been devoured. He cowers.

Then everything begins to move. The light grows dim, then brightens immensely. Sunlight burns through the water.

For a moment, he catches sight of the woman, talking to two men he does not recognise, waving her little rectangle about. Then his tank comes to a halt, and faces press in on every side. Bright lights pin him in place.

The woman advances, and a cover is placed over his tank. In the blessed darkness, he no longer has to look at a world he does not comprehend. His little world begins to rock again. When they open up the travel tank at the lab, he is fast asleep.

* * *

In the mornings Henry eats and swims and looks at his tablet. In the afternoons Ms Morris comes. 'Hello, Henry,' says Ms Morris. 'How are you today?'

Ms Morris is careful not to get too close to the edge of the tank. She has seen how quickly Henry can strike at those who frighten or upset him. Still, the boy seems to be settling down now. He had been a holy terror when she had first met him, eighteen months ago, after she had signed the non-disclosure agreement to end all non-disclosure agreements.

'Today, Henry,' says Ms Morris, 'we're going to talk about the sky. Can you see the sky?'

Henry shifts restlessly in the water. It has taken him a long time to get over his fear of the sky. The windows of the lab are high and small, yet at certain times of the day, when the sun is shining, they become rectangles of heat that probe the recesses of his tank, driving him to the darkest corners for shelter.

But Henry is a big boy now, and however painstakingly, he has taught his tongue and vocal chords to say their words. 'Sky,' says Henry.

'Good boy, Henry,' said Ms Morris. 'Good boy. Now, can you find a picture of the sky?'

Henry picks up his waterproof tablet. Orangutans can master hundreds of symbols on the tablets researchers have created for them. Henry has mastered over 1000, and shows no sign of stopping. Fishing across a wide area of the Southern Ocean has been prohibited until more about Henry and his kind can be discovered.

So yes, Henry can call up a picture of the sky: a bright sky, and a cloudy sky, and a night sky. (Henry prefers the cloudy sky.) 'Clouds,' says Henry, and Ms Morris tells Henry about the types of clouds, about how sometimes they cover the whole sky as far as you can see, and other times they are puffy and broken. She tells him about lightning, which he has seen, and thunder, which he has heard. He still finds the concept of rain remarkable: one world falling into another.

Ms Morris says goodbye and closes the lab door behind her. Henry does not know that she goes into another office, where she files her daily report on Henry before going home. She works quickly. She has a dinner date tonight, and unlike the last two losers, she doesn't plan to let Eric slip through her fingers.

'Henry continues to make good progress,' types Ms Morris. 'He is curious about the world beyond the lab, and I am introducing material that relates to his origins as laid out in the research programme. So far, Henry has not volunteered any further information about his home environment, but I remain confident that he will do so when the appropriate stimuli are presented.'

She pauses for a moment, considering. Then she says 'Screw it' under her breath and adds another paragraph.

'As I have previously indicated in my verbal reports to the Director, I remain concerned that Henry's complete lack of social contact, either with his own kind or with humans in his age cohort, will prove a crucial barrier to his further development, especially as he matures towards adolescence. I consider that this poses a risk to Henry's wellbeing and mental health.'

She knows she's going out on a limb by putting this in writing. At her last evaluation meeting, when she expressed her concerns to the Director, he wasn't having any of it. 'You just do your bloody job and get me some results,' he had said. 'Those bastards at Lamont Seafoods have got deep pockets, but limited patience. If they can't get the ban lifted, they at least need it narrowed. All their research vessels have managed to find is a few new fish species and a squid that looks like Lady Gaga. Show him a picture of that and ask him if he recognises it.'

She did. He didn't. She felt disappointed, in Henry, for him. She cares about her water baby.

So she adds a final paragraph. 'Henry's environment offers limited stimulation. I recommend that Henry be periodically exposed to new and enriching experiences.'

Save, send. Take that, you smug pricks, she thinks. With new energy she tugs on her coat and heads for the outer exit. Eric is in for a long night.

* * *

Henry is surprised when Ms Morris arrives early one day, just after breakfast. 'We have a special treat for you today,' she says.

Henry is not sure he likes the sound of that. He is even less sure when his transport tank is wheeled into the room. He wriggles and squirms and bites, and one of the men curses, fresh blood dripping from a deep cut in the palm of his hand. But then he is in the tank, in the truck, on his way. Once more, he falls asleep in the darkness and does not wake until the truck stops.

When they wheel him out of the truck, he is in a place of trees and fields and bright light, and in the foreground a lake. People in black shiny suits are standing between Henry and the water.

'Now watch out, Henry,' calls Ms Morris. 'These lakes are full of water weed. Don't get caught up, and if you do, put your arm up out of the water and wave your hand. We have divers to help you. And we have some lovely fresh fish waiting for you once you've had a good swim.'

So that is what they are, thinks Henry. Divers. They stand nearby, unsmiling.

And then he is in the water ... the lake. He has grown used to fresh water by now, but never so much at once. When he dives, he can almost make himself believe that he is back in the ocean, that far below his clan are waiting for him. But when he dives deeper, all he finds is mud and more of the choking weed. He kicks himself free and swims to the surface. This is not the sea.

But he can smell it, faint, tantalising, the brine of a breaking shore somewhere beyond low hills, covered in small shrubs and sharp grasses, that rise where the sun will bathe tonight.

An arm of the lake runs under trees, towards those hills. Drifting away from the divers, whose clumsiness is equalled only by the racket they make, Henry dives deep and swims along the centre of the channel, avoiding the clutching weeds. This arm of the lake is fed by a marshy stream. It is shallow, but there are enough pools that he can catch breaths as he moves upstream. The stream narrows to a ditch. He wrinkles his nose at the sharp smell of decay.

Behind him, they are calling: the deep voices of the divers, the higher-pitched voice of Ms Morris: 'Henry!' He can hear the fear in her voice.

‘Henry bad,’ he says to himself, and presses on. Such strange smells from the land—and far behind, the sound of divers, splashing in vain.

The ditch ends in a concrete lip. He looks up and sees a dark mouth, a round ‘O’ from which water dribbles, with a tiny circle of light at its far end. His memory is firing with long-ago warnings of what can lurk in dark undersea caves: he does not want to enter the darkness of the culvert. He hauls himself out of the water, squeezes under a fence that has come loose from one of its strainers where it crosses a damp hollow, and finds himself on the edge of a rectangle of short, evenly clipped green grass. His tablet has shown him pictures of these things: this is a lawn, and beyond it, a house. Near the house, a young human, a girl, is using a hose to fill a low round object he does not recognise with water.

Henry is not made to walk on land. He propels himself across the lawn towards her.

The girl looks up. She puts down the hose. The nozzle snakes from side to side, spraying water into the air. He moves gratefully under the life-giving flow, letting it moisten his gills, then keeps moving towards the rubber-sided pool. He flops into it gratefully. The girl regards him. ‘You’re funny,’ she says.

‘Funny Henry,’ says Henry.

The girl picks something up from the ground. ‘I have two sticks,’ she says, ‘and one of them is a boy stick. Do you want it?’

Henry says ‘Stick please,’ and reaches for it. At that moment, the girl’s mother walks round the corner of the house.

* * *

The Director looks at Henry with a theatrically furrowed brow. ‘What are we going to do with you, Henry?’ he asks.

‘Do nothing,’ says Henry.

‘That little girl’s mother was very unhappy with you, Henry. That cost us a lot of money.’

‘Girl. Boy stick,’ says Henry.

‘That’s probably just what her mother was thinking.’

Henry stares at the Director silently. The Director often says things with his body that he does not say with his mouth.

‘What it comes down to, Henry, is that we need results. We need to know where you come from. We need to know how many of you there are. And we need to figure out what we can do with you. A whole swathe of the Southern Ocean has been closed thanks to you, Henry. That’s costing some serious money.’

‘Boat,’ says Henry.

‘You’re smarter than you look, aren’t you, Henry? That’s right, you’re going to go on a boat. Soon, Henry, soon.’

* * *

Months pass. ‘Soon’ turns into now.

Henry is excited, because he is going on a boat, and they are going to find his mother, his clan, his people. The Director is pleased. The man from Lamont Seafoods is pleased. Everyone is pleased, except Ms Morris. Ms Morris is sad.

‘I’ll miss you, Henry,’ says Ms Morris.

‘Henry will come back,’ says Henry.

Ms Morris smiles, but her cheeks are wet.

At the dockside, Henry’s tank is unloaded from the truck onto a wharf, protected by a screen of big men in puffer jackets. The gangway is before him, the sea below it. The big men step aside and the Director advances towards Henry, smiling.

Then there is a disturbance, a knot of men and women running, papers being waved in the air. The men in their jackets face outwards. Henry hears raised voices, a furious argument, as if all the people want to bite each other. A police car turns up, and then another one. The sirens hurt Henry’s ears.

‘A ward of the Court?’ says the Director. ‘You have to be shitting me.’

Now the Director’s mouth and his body are saying the same thing.

Then Henry’s tank is moving backwards, back towards the truck. He thinks about slithering over the side and heading for the sea, but the big men are watching him. The tank is receding, receding, and then he is in darkness again.

* * *

Ms Morris still comes to visit him, but only twice a week. Sometimes she does not have the heart to teach him anything.

The news of the world flows into Henry's tank through his tablet, and the news is not good.

Everything is older, and everything is shabbier. The high, barred windows are still there, but they are grimmer now. Less sunlight comes in.

Henry now has to wear swim trunks whenever he has visitors, and he has been told about some private things he is not supposed to do unless he's by himself.

Sometimes, Henry wonders if they will simply stop feeding him. He swims until he is exhausted, round and round, round and round, in the tank that is now much too small for him. Round and round.

Henry never sees the Director, and does not even know if he is the Director any more. Every month—Henry marks the dates in his calendar app—a stern-faced man comes to look at Henry. He looks at Henry as a shark would look at a mackerel. Then he nods his head and turns away.

His most frequent visitor is a woman who talks a lot. She pulls up a chair and sits near his tank, smiling, trying to sound calm. Henry can tell that she wishes she did not have to sit there, that he makes her nervous. But she tries so hard, so very hard, to hide it, and her voice is smooth and soothing. 'How are we today?' she asks Henry, and 'Is there anything you'd like to tell me?'

Henry would like to tell her about the sea, but all he has of the sea are the images that come through his tablet. For a long time, his mother's face would well up in his dreams. It no longer does.

'Nothing,' says Henry, and stares her down until she goes away.

Ms Morris knows how sad Henry is, and she tries to make things better. She says she has written to the Minister, that she has made an appointment to see the judge. 'You'd be better off at sea, Henry,' says Ms Morris.

The desire for the sea, the desire for home, burns all the stronger within Henry now that he can no longer remember either. Sometimes, Henry thinks about finding a way to make a hole in his tank, and letting all the water out, and lying on the floor until he doesn't have to think any more.

He is swimming in his tank, round and round, when the door is flung open and a little knot of people comes in. Henry is surprised and pleased to

see his old Director is among them.

‘We’re in business, Henry,’ says his old Director. ‘We had to take those pricks all the way to the Supreme Court, but we won. Want to go fishing?’

* * *

There is a lot to do before Henry can go on the boat. He is poked, prodded, probed, immunised. They even knock him out for a couple of hours. ‘This won’t hurt, Henry,’ they say, and ‘you won’t suffocate, don’t worry,’ and ‘you’ll open your eyes and you won’t feel a thing.’ It does hurt, though. His skin stings in the water when they put him back in his tank.

But it doesn’t matter, none of it matters, because Henry is going home. The months and years of neglect are over, and now he has visitors every day, important visitors who pay attention to what he tries to tell them, even though he cannot tell them much. He says goodbye to Ms Morris—to Daphne. She cries. He says goodbye to his tank, to the lab, to the high, barred windows. He does not say goodbye to the stern man and the nervous woman, since they have vanished as abruptly as they arrived. He says goodbye to his tablet: though he wishes it could come with him, they say it will not handle the pressure. Henry is going home.

* * *

It is summer. It is very cold. They are a long way south.

The vessel has been anchored in these gelid waters, just outside the summer ice limit, for three days, during which the wind has held light and southerly. But there is a storm coming, the Captain says, and by nightfall they must sail north and out of its path.

And for three days, Henry has been swimming, enjoying the limitless freedom of ocean. He was slow at first, uncertain, but then the muscle memory came flooding back—though those are the memories of a much younger body, and Henry is older now, and powerful. He has broken free of the shackles that captivity had placed on his body and his mind. Darting fish fall to his hands and jaws. He plays in the space between the chop of the waves and the

long roil of the currents, and as his confidence grows, he dives deeper, dives so deep that he can barely see.

They have given him a camera, and when he is tired he floats with neutral buoyancy and runs his fingers over the controls. It is the nearest he will come to having his tablet in his hand. He would like it to be his link to the world he is leaving behind, but all it can do is cycle through its menu of commands and show him the photos he has already taken. He has other tools, clipped to a belt round his waist: a knife, a torch.

Henry floats beneath the swells. Above him, the horizon is rising to meet the sun as the long southern summer day nears its end. Below, the darkness of the deep ocean waits. Henry dives again, one swimmer among billions, from the lowliest diatom to the mightiest whale. He has not been in danger yet, and if a shark or a leopard seal swims close and takes a fancy to him, well, he has the advantage of the knife.

Years above ocean, years of exposure to sunlight, have damaged Henry's eyesight so that he can no longer see to the deepest depths. He has been trying to adapt, but this time, as he continues to descend the long column of water upwelling from the depths, he is forced to fit his headband to his head and turn on the torch. The beam of light knives into the depths.

Blinded by his own light, it takes him several moments to realise that he is surrounded. He turns the light off and floats in the water column. He sees that they are pale, and large, and all around him. They are his people, yet he finds his hand creeping to the tool belt, closing on the knife.

Too late. Abruptly, they are on him, biting. He struggles, but strong hands grasp him, and sharp teeth penetrate his left bicep, the side of his neck, his right thigh. He screams in pain, but as suddenly as the attack began, it is over. Now the hands are gentler, holding him. Something soft is pressed against his wounds. Small objects, metal streaked with blood, are passed from hand to hand, then let fall into the abyssal depths below. The clan soothes Henry, waits until he has recovered his composure. Then they swim south.

On the *Seamaster*, the Director wrenches off his headphones and throws them to the floor. 'Shit!', he says, and then 'shit' some more.

Shit shit shit.

The man from Lamont Seafoods just stands there. That's that, he thinks.

Something must have got him, and now the three transmitters are on their way to the bottom of the sea with whatever remains of Henry's lifeless body. All that investment wiped out by some passing predator.

'Maybe we should have used a different frequency,' says the Director. 'Maybe this one attracted something Henry couldn't handle.'

The man from Lamont shrugs. 'It was always a gamble. All we need is a change of Government and this ban will be gone by lunchtime.'

'You don't give a shit about Henry, do you?' accuses the Director.

The man from Lamont doesn't answer. Voices sound above. The ship's engines come to life and the *Seamaster* begins its long voyage back to Wellington Harbour.

Far below and well to the South, under the protecting ice, the clan welcomes Henry home. His wounds are beginning to heal, and while he must be taught again about everything that keeps the clans alive in these waters, he has much to teach them. About the world above. About Lamont Seafoods, who think themselves lords of the sea. About knives.

IN PLACE /WHERE/ WE(MANY)
STAND

XANDER STRONACH

English is merely functional; it will not do.

(it must)

Remember this.

My grandpa told a story of Earth(=dead) — he spoke his own tongue, and the teacher beat him. They did it for his own good, they said: to civilize him. Nobody would hire a little brown boy who refused to speak English. Nobody would hire a little brown boy who was loud, and refused to do as he was told.

My grandpa died in an earthquake. Ten seconds before it hit, he started shouting that the Earth(=dead) was coming to eat him. He said the Earth(=dead) was broken — an endless field of open wounds. We(two) tried to calm him, then the teacups began to rattle. It was only a small one, but his heart couldn't take it. He slumped in his chair, and the room was — in a moment — a little more empty. We(family) didn't talk about it at the funeral. His will demanded he be cremated: *come the day the Holiest calls, I'd rather be lost to the wind.*

Remember this.

Earth (you'll forgive me for speaking plainly) is a funny word; it means dirt; soil; a place in which things grow. Earth(=sacred). We(many) have earth here, though no Earth(=dead). When there is no earth, there is no food; where there is no food, there is no life. Sounds a bit sappy — like you'd see posted online over a grainy picture of a forest — until you look back into ugly memory: back to the days when the Earth(=dead) opened up, and ate mankind bite-by-bite.

Forgive me, I forgot to say —

My river is New-Wairau; my mountain is red, and has no name. My father is Rewi, from Kaikoura(=gone), of the tribe of Kāi Tahu. My mother's name got lost on Earth(=d), though we(family) love her no less.

There's a word in grandpa's language — a word which was almost lost to Earth(=d).

Turangawaewae.

Turangawaewae means the place where I stand; where the ground is firm; where I am tall; where my tribe and I belong.

At sunrise, this new earth spreads out before, painted in broad strokes of pink and gold. The colony ship is gone — taken apart and recycled piece-by-piece into buildings, pipes, generators. The ship burned up the landing site when it came down. We(many) rattled this new earth(=teacup, =unbroken) and scorched the grass away. It did not grow back for some time, but it did in time, grow back.

We(many)(=few). We(many)(=te kaitiaki) of this new earth; the guardian, steward, keeper. If we(many) were many, it would shatter like Earth(=d); if we(many) are many, we must attend(role: steward).

The Earth(=d) ate my grandpa bit-by-bit. It ate his language first; it ate his body last. Everything in between was a matter of degrees. By the end, his feet had nowhere to stand.

English is merely functional; it will not do.

I do not know my grandfather's words, so it must.

SECOND PROBE

GAIL INGRAM

I lie on crisp sheets,
eagle-spread thighs like meat, waiting
for hook teeth, or
a cold speculum
to trawl my insides.

His hands are fish
he wrings to warm, though I know
from previous experience
they won't be. His face
is pock-dimpled like a corn chip,
his mouth opens
to speak: da-da-da-da-

This is what I hear:
Doritos Doritos
– that ad they beamed
to outer space, somewhere near
Ursa Major in 2008,
which makes me think
of another Major... we are floating
in a mm mm, may God's
love be with yoooouuu...

—da-da-da-da, he flashes his teeth,
a smile... oh

oh! The penetration is sweet.
What did those aliens think
of corn crisps dancing around
a salsa-bowl, preparing joyfully
to be eaten? Did they wonder

at the crunch, the squeal
of palm-oil heat? Were they
hungry?

I wissh you'd sshut up
so we of Urssa Major
cann get onn with it.
It'ss only whenn we're inn
we'll be conssumed
by the marvelss of our featss
the thingss we cann explore

—da -da-da those polyps, for instance

thiss beautiful cavern, oh!
and ssank you for clearing
thosse pessky treess and orangutanss and tigerss,
a great sstart for a colonny... what
progresssss!

I'm hearing this sound
eeeeeeee Dor-eeeeeeeeeee-to
it doesn't hurt... eee...
to be brave. And
what should I expect anyway
if the waves I send
are distracting? It's not
our first meeting, I know. I arranged it
for my own sake.
But I wonder

did the Maori warriors giggle
the first time they saw
the blood flower at the back
of their merchant's head? Or perhaps
it was the clean white savage
with the smoking musket who smiled
at the surprise on Hemi's face.

Thesse days the collection
of a mere few cellss da-da-da
is the besst way to tell
if you are ssick. Besides,
we like your sships.