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Tarot #3 - Dec 2021

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Introduction to this edition

All around the world presently, there is a collective sigh as 2021 draws to a close. In particular, the last few months—and I will say this as someone living in Tāmaki Makaurau—have been hard. Tensions are high in nearly all of my communities: the teaching world and our unions largely feel unsafe to have returned to what feels like a high-risk classroom environment, my religious setting is becoming even more polarised than it already was, and even my family has more than its fair share of vaccination-resistant members. These tensions and conflicts can be very uncomfortable to live in, and there are no easy answers to how to journey forward together as whole communities.

Perhaps part of these issues is our hesitancy to listen to each other (and the experts) openly or our inefficacy in clearly communicating our feelings, needs, and ideas. In this edition, there are nineteen poets. Each has composed poetry that reflects their ideology and ideation; they each uniquely explore multiple emotions from a range of perspectives. They sit alongside each other in various styles and forms, and they invite you to listen and be moved by the experiences they illustrate.

Too often, I think, we look only for the poetry that we know we are going to like: the style that suits us, the themes that interest us, or even just the look of it on the page. So, I invite you in this edition to try to approach each poem as its own and to embrace its otherness to you. If any poem makes you feel uncomfortable, notice that discomfort and continue to read.

Somehow, I do not think that 2022 will be much different from this year, though I do hope that this season of national lockdowns is over for good. It is time to build bridges with those with whom we disagree while holding firm our boundaries. If there is hope, it lies with all of us together.

Kit Willett, Dec 2021

The cover chosen for this issue is an illustration by Edna Heled to her poem 'Angel No. 1111,' which concludes this collection.

Level 4 again Tony Beyer

no sign of him but my neighbour's shed door swings and clatters in the wind arhythmically

this could go on for some time

the unsettled silence just on the edge of spring still cold though touches of colour outside promise renewal

daily the case count climbs the signers in black spell one another between the politician and the doctor (we watched this show a year ago)

the police have been brought in unthreatening but firm

beyond the press conferences protocols and regulations the dark unknown distances us from what we most need

Lockdown Delights Carrie Briffett

Obviously, lockdown can be No fun And yet on my walks, So many delightful moments: A note posted on a bus shelter, Publicly writing off a friend's loan— Keep the 2,000 dollars, Dennis! Small children run out Into a garden, One chasing another With a huge sweeping brush, Both giggling and yelling. A woman walking her pet, But at the end of the lead— Tada! A bunny-rabbit. Even in subdued times, Against a grey sky, Vibrant pink magnolias bloom.

Christmas is the Season of Love! *Molly Crighton*

So your heart's been properly broken for the first time and now you feel bad for making fun of heartbroken people as they keened and rolled in bed like strange animals

because you are doing exactly that, and feeling not better at all.

You go to a two-dollar shop called Gifts and Things that sells gifts and things and you stand in front of the fabric flowers and cry and cry and cry and cry and cry and cry and drag yourself all over the shop like a big wet heartbroken slug.

You find a pair of four-dollar reindeer antlers because it's Christmas, and it's the season of love and you want to wear them like a dunce hat, like a visual representation that you are a Stupid Idiot With Inappropriate Feelings.

When you get home you do everything you can to distract yourself, and while you're doing a handstand in your wardrobe, you find a slip of paper on which you had written light exists only to illuminate her face. And now

you're crying the wrong way up your own face, and tears are running into your hairline.

She's been a constant in your head for so long that you keep hearing her voice, feeling the dip of a chair next to you. To shut her out

is like shutting out a long-term spouse, like getting a divorce from your own head and leaving your body to blunder around, eyeless and sad. Hurt bobs inside you like a deep aquatic minefield. It pricks at you like sandpaper on a silk conveyor belt, round and round, endlessly.

Christmas is the season of love, and you are still in love, but you also want to take an indulgent bubble bath with a toaster. Which you won't do,

but you do take a bath and slide deep under the skin of the water, letting your hair brush around your neck like a clouded hand.

Second Reading Lincoln Jaques

My first year of university
I remember going into the bookshop with a list, buying up all the textbooks I needed in one go, the cashier neatly stacking them together, putting them through the till, the beeps, the prices flashing up in LED lights.

Then riding home on the bus on the back seat, me and my books heavy in the bag against my leg the day was unusually hot the sun lit up the harbour as the old Bedford rumbled over the bridge.

Carrying my books from the bus-stop down the steep hill to my parents' house sitting down taking them all out one by one, flicking through the pages smelling the covers, reading the blurbs I didn't know then what I was in for all those years of academia ahead.

A lot of time has passed; I sit again with a stack of books, some of them from that day, their pages browned by the sun, the dust ingrained in the covers from all that time on the shelf neglected. I open one up randomly it's a poem I read a long time ago a lecturer tried to explain it to us and when I wrote about it he said I'd missed the point. But it moves me still to this day.

The Wives of Vathek Molly Crighton

Some nights we ran barefoot from our rooms like leopards made of flesh. Past the eunuchs, dreaming their beige dreams,

then we raced through the palace of perfumes until we fell dizzy before burning censers, until we collapsed backwards over rosebushes,

their thorns in our backs as though we lay over the celestial globe, studded stars pricking our skin.

Now our husband has lost his mind. Now our husband looks like a far away man brought very close—the same blurred features, the same uncertain shape.

We dream of him at the end of long corridors, running toward us. We dream of losing him in those corridors, doubling back until we are the chaser; we are the husband-king.

He cries into us like handkerchiefs. He comes into us like handkerchiefs. But he does not throw us away. Maybe he loves us.

Now nights are longer and smell of burning hair. Heads down like charging animals we race through the palace of the delight of the eyes,

horrible nightgown-ghouls tearing up the dust, eyes squeezed closed. We contract and reform like a hive mind, as though our husband's black dreams speak to us through the dark, forming us into murmurations.

Hiruharama calling *Tony Beyer*

God has had Baxter on his hands nearly fifty years now

enough for the two of them to sort out their differences

Hemi te Tutua or Jim Nobody same surname as Odysseus

and the Creator of the Universe in whose sight no text is indecipherable

hard to tell from our perspective whether they pummel or forgive each other

one always bushwhacked in his earthly life by religion

one who appears to have lost interest in humans a long time ago

Te Paki sand dunes Madeleine Lifsey

i don't believe you have to scale the Grand Canyon to write poetry, or touch the Berlin Wall or smell the first cup of chai brewed in the pre-sun fog over Mother Ganga

i don't believe you have to have an English degree or know what a past participle is if you are able simply to notice

the way the sand splits in jagged chunks as the rivulet runs through, as if it had been carved that way a thousand years ago but melts like a drive-through soft-serve cone at the slightest touch of your fingertip

if you can still be startled by the way the ground billows under each cautious step into a peculiarly solid mound and relaxes gently back into the stream as soon as your toes move on

Not so small as to be implicit *Colin James*

The nearest available tenured professor is many, many miles away. Our directions therefore are clear, printed on laminated paper no less. Proceed through the Plethoric Forest, crossing very fat spring streams. Oh joy, the forever singing poverty is my duty, supply-carrying sherpa bearer is willing to die for me. Guilt is my grandeur, not the Purple Desert Mountains that point skyward like young tits. A flat-roofed house is just now discernible although smaller than planned. The morning is cool. Smoke rises from a chimney must be burning dilettante hearts.

The Compliment Olivia Warrick

I'm glad we spoke. Yes. So am I. You're an incredible girl. Yes, I'm aware. But a woman, not a girl. A girl lacks the chasms of loss carved into her landscape. A girl doesn't live with a patchwork quilt sewn from the beautiful scraps that loved ones left behind. A girl feels freely: grief, love, passion, loss, longing. A woman folds these neatly, puts them in her lockbox. I'll deal with that later, she says, first, let's find that other shoe. Come, we'll do it together. But she firmly knows where she buried the key. Yes. I'm glad we spoke.

seeing a video of my great-grandma from 180,000km away *Rhys Feeney*

mum sends me a video of my great-grandma framed by concrete & balloons & the carpark-coloured sky a canted view of her waving out the window to my family below it's her 104th birthday & the 13th month of lockdowns evening clapping & beautiful bloo passports

i try to imagine what's it like
i print off analogy maps tht i use to teach year nines simile
i fill them in: what are the aspects of this
what do these feel like?

she was born during the first world war
had a child to an american GI
consumed a bottle of whiskey a week
i hate to admit therapists have been right
but it must be one foot then another foot

i sell my body for 55 hours a week & it feels ordinary

i am just one of 78 billion agricultural animals

the titanic sank for two hours

people had time to distract themselves

watching the video i can't help but feel like tears would be a commodity

no one in close family has died but when they do the content will remain the thumblike selfies w generous ceiling views will acquire reactions in-between sponsored posts all the while a new wave of intergenerational tension is crashing down in the form of the hatred for skinny jeans it took me so long to realise i didn't hate boomers i just hate landlords

tht i was so righteous in poems about politics when i was buried in the landfill of propaganda

how is it different when my grandma believes tht the EU wouldn't allow the sale of bent cucumbers we are all in some big tent we all are hooked by something

be between the crying & the working how was i supposed to know rocketlab were sending US military payloads into space?

how was i supposed to know about shelly bay & the wellington company when i was too busy killing the planet stuck in commuter traffic

i can't possibly drag myself out of the primordial soup of the infodemic to go live in the woods now all i do is watch

paralysed by ddos of petitions flailing my arms like a tube man sad reacting to every post

Secrets Spill and Trust Breaks Joanne Tasker

You're an asshole and I'm an introvert I'm sorry I can't accept your apology.

I shouldn't have come here when you're already a bottle deep and I'm one insensitive comment away from the breaking point.
I wasn't the only one to leave with hurt feelings.
Doesn't that make it my fault?

And this isn't the first time
I've inadvertently ruined things.
I'm swallowing the apology back
because I wasn't the one who said
all of the crap, you were spilling
secrets around like confetti;
it falls to the floor in a great spectacle.
You can't just put it back
once it's used up.

You're making me glad I guarded the secrets I have that hurt the most. The ones you'd want to know because they have the potential to ruin a reputation.
But I never wanted to know yours and you made me choose a side: a conscientious objector forced to take up arms.

You knew when I showed up that I carried heartache.
And you reached into my chest tore my heart apart with claws you must have grown overnight.
Because I never saw them there before.

It's such a relief when you leave me in the hallway crying.

And you get in the taxi.

I imagine you in the centre of the nightclub: bloodstains on your dress, twirling on the dancefloor as if the whole world revolves around you, taking up space, demanding attention, running bloodied hands up a stranger's arms, whispering into his ear a secret for a secret, because that's how you collect them.

And he's probably stupid enough to open his mouth because there is something about you that's easy to trust.

But secrets spill and trust breaks. Friendship fades. Some mistakes are made twice. I'm not sorry I can't accept your apology.

Cosmopolitan Is Telling Me That I Need To Love Myself Nerida Woods

I first learnt that self could precede a word when I learnt about self-hatred. & like the good student I was I practiced that lesson every day. Desperate to get an A+ in the class.

The years went by & I became a master at putting self before other emotions too. Deprecation & loathing & shame were written neatly on my report card with rows of gold stars next to them.

But the lesson changed.
Self is now followed by love & care
& I'm not getting an A+ or gold stars anymore.
This time I'm flunking out of the class.
In the exam, the first question was
What does self-love look like to you?
I handed the whole thing back in blank.

So I'm going back to kindy, starting with the basics. A is for approval.

B is for belief in myself.

C is for... fuck I've forgotten that one.

How does the song go again?

Nest Lilly Warren

No, nothing makes sense anymore—
Only this. Words on the page, letters
With which (I am unsure of
To whom) I call. To where
This sentence, this line leads—
Sterilised. Fettered youth hums herself
Out of existence. No white
Carriage, no, no white
Dress, nor baby's flesh—No.
Only this white page, alien
Syllable nest, words with which
I burn bleach cradle image to the death.

Chartreuse and Viridian *Molly Crighton*

In the amber, rain-dappled cube of traffic lights you tell me what tattoos you want. You tell me

your favourite colour. You say chartreuse and viridian should be the other way around, and I agree.

I enjoy seeing you in a crowd of people I don't know. It's like going to an alien planet

and amidst the extra-terrestrial architectural preferences of a tripedal species, seeing a mossy parish church.

It's like translating an ancient Aramaic scroll and finding the lyrics to the 'Friends' theme song,

or deep-sea diving for oysters, prying one-off black rock, and opening it to the mood ring you lost when you were ten.

I never know what I'm trying to tell you. Maybe that I wish I had omnipotence, omniscience, omni-benevolence—

so everyone could know you are favoured, God-chosen; I would turn rivers to honey, spell it out with hummingbirds.

You would turn your friend-shaped face to the bird-filled sky and wonder who this was that God so loves.

Thongs for the Ages Colin James

I am phoning to physically thank you as in mutual masturbation. Not so completely sure how this works since I am getting a competitive image. The winner just finishing off his high fives, proceeds to the stairwell past the ponderous fire door. Ignoring a large group of opportunists that mispronounce every vowel as if we were fucking a Norwegian. If this is music, it is independent of our intended rhythmic lust.

Soundings Keith Nunes

She's a student

Of the ticking watch

The singular pulse

that has lost all sense of time that's mass-produced

The kettle as a drum

The coupling click-clack of a train making connections

She hears shadows stretching through the day

The sun flaming, the dawn fanning out

She can hear you whisper to whispers

The creasing of a face

Stars roaring to a conclusion

She can hear a bird latch onto the wind

hears it land

Tears
Brian Graystone

Alone in the night, tears trickle down my face as I reach out to that empty space. Gone is the first true love of my life to a place I cannot yet go. Now alone with much regret, I can no longer say the things I would like to say, nor do the things I would like to do that made her happy. Yet still some nights I lie awake, thinking of how it was. Of how we used to laugh and play, of vacations taken in distant lands. The joy of just being together, the pain when we loudly disagreed. Many years, they will pass; the pain might ease away. So I will try to live what is left of my life and live it as best I may.

The Girl Who is Dying Joanne Tasker

I am the last whispered breath laced with traces of cyanide still clinging to my teeth.
I am a foam at the mouth mess of thrashing limbs heart beating like waves against the shore after an earthquake.

I am the girl who is dying and won't let you hear the end of it.

I am fingernails slicing my own throat scream like the chalkboard in third grade as nails graze the surface and you shiver in your bones.

I am a high-speed collision.
The horrid clash of metal so loud it swallows the cries of pain that even the dying cannot hear because I am the ringing in their ears. They bleed out quietly.
Unseen under the wreck that is me.

I am the girl who will do anything for the world's attention.

Wait for the impact; tragedy has a ripple effect. I am the x-marks-the-spot of the bomb drop. The mushroom cloud overhead stretches out like an umbrella but acid rain isn't the same as water: it'll burn thorough your skin tragedy doesn't build character.

I am the girl who is dying, but just wait for the impact.

Rain, sunburn, hardship, alive *Ian C Smith*

Footsore, hot, he totes his needs in a pack, t-shirts, tobacco, tourist info, tent, diaries, discount vodka, on his back through towns' censure because he pays no rent, to their limits where he bums the next ride, artwork taped to atlas for a stark sign.

To pitch camp he leaves the road, crowds inside, hears the wheels of freedom's mesmeric whine, eats, reads, by torchlight in arbored places.

Mexico, he tells drivers who ask where?

This idea blazes in their rapt faces, prime years fast eddying soon stripped bare.

To evade regret's hound haunting old age he logs latent miles, rattling duty's cage.

Yearning
Denise O'Hagan

Down cobbled lanes bequeathed with history, alive with the indulgence of thin cut fritz, mayonnaise dipped, Duvall and Hoegaarden, full of grand choices, Belgium waffles with sugar clusters that coddle my soul on brusque wintry Antwerp days, a chocolate booth styles charming assortments of chocolates with parfait fillings. But the warmth from decadence, antique alleys and gothic facades leaves me wanting. For the sun has been hidden for six months, blocked by a low ceiling of dense grey cloud. Only on flying through the bleak barrier, do I finally come out

to meet the sky's blue arc

concealed below

though untouched, pristine

and yearned for waves of zonlicht

feed my dearth

Satan's Hymn Joanne Tasker

I shiver as you dance on the grave of God pages torn from the bible for sheet music then set alight with a flick of Satan's tongue

your words are pretty and sharp like the way a knife glints under artificial light

you whisper sins like sweet nothings
I taste your depravity lingering on my lips
mouth the words
while my body sings a different tune

you call angels whores and claim to have fucked them from heaven

the clattering of broken halos the scream of falling angels this is the heartbeat of hell

I flinch as you throw me in the fire softness of my skin stripped to ribbons of flesh then set alight with a flick of Satan's tongue

you make agony euphoric as you flirt with death and the Devil

sweet lyrics and a soft rhythm but the two lovers turn on one another like the gun you turn against the crowd and fire for impact

you make suffering seductive as the flames of hell fall from your mouth

you claim them the disgraced devout the unworthy worshipers show them the passions of rage

and then set them alight with a flick of Satan's tongue

Earth the Red Planet Lincoln Jaques

for Carl Sagan

Just ignore this poem. It's about climate change. It's not happening, anyway.

Ignore the conspiracists.
Ignore 5G, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, the anti-vaxxers, the pandemic deniers; Area-51, Kennedy, Diana, QAnon.
They're gaining airtime.

We are a fish ingesting a bellyful of microplastics.

Ignore the Amazon rainforest that will have shrunk by fifty football fields in the time you've read this poem.

Ignore the children in Tuvalu who walk to school in water up to their knees.
Soon they will not know what dry land is.

Ignore the landslides in Peru & Guatemala & India & Nepal.
Ignore the buried villagers & farmers.
They will not speak again of this.

As a child I watched in wonder at the replays of the moon landings. Then I watched them dump a bag of rubbish onto the moon's surface. Space is no longer filled with meteorites; there's also bits of space stations & rockets & satellites spinning through our orbit. Our junk has joined Einstein's Relativity.

The ash from Gondwanaland reached us 4000 kilometres away.

The skies turned orange; the sun became a star from another galaxy. We took selfies.

They ignored Kepler & Copernicus; Eratosthenes & Ptolemy. Forget them. The Flat-Earthers are making a comeback.

We are sorry we ignored all this, Carl. You said leave Mars alone.
We're landing rovers remotely there now.
We have plans.
Mars is our Plan B.

Already we've left an imprint.

kākāpō, the Codfish Island king Ila Selwyn

our plump owl-parrot peers from the picture implores me with big round sad eyes short scaly legs, huge feet, massive toes stick out beneath a rotund Tweedledum body, dressed in elegant plumage of yellow and green tweed

side-burns with whiskers to feel its way in the dark surround a disc, house a prominent grey beak of a nose to snuffle out food, become a third foot, assist in climbs to the top of tall trees at night, seeking seeds and fruits short wings on this heavy body not designed for take-off

parachute free-falls, balance a bounding pigeon-toed gate out-paced by predators lured by its musty-sweet odour moved to safe sea islands, still threatened by in-breeding Aspergillus, a fungus, that kills a healthy bird in a few days and crusty bum, bogging up its one-hole orifice

aroused, he builds a bowl, sits in it, booms for up to four months a deep resonant sound, a heartbeat felt in the bones, travelling vast distances, alternates his call with a high-pitched ching ching one male so horny after a five year wait, makes do with a man's hairy head, flaps his wings, draws blood, as he frantically bounces

he's the bad guy in this story, leaves his mate to do the rearing her one or two eggs, sometimes crushed by his plodding feet all day I watch videos of the clownish kākāpō submit to indignities to clear its hole, hold no grudge, and fall in love with the fat fellow wonder if they'd accept an 82-year-old volunteer on Whenua Hou

Survival Denise O'Hagan

Tree snapped encroachment still now but for wind and sea

devastation left entangled amongst the living green succumbing to intrusion like a disease

desolation imperfect natives cling to imposed change like an axe forced abscission of broken pieces

the will to survive, to senesce, resilience innate amongst survivors perseverance a modus operandi

dehisce seminate germinate seedlings peep through decaying humus nature's will endurance

The Persimmon Tree Rebecca Meaney

The persimmon tree in full bloom outside my window reflects off my white walls, making my room a calming shade of pale orange. It's like looking through a lens into my own bedroom.

I'll wake up one morning, any morning now, expecting to be met with the bright and colourful persimmon tree that brings me so much serenity, but it will be gone. The tree will now be naked, nothing but a vertical pile of sticks, and the reminiscence of my serenity will be on the mulch covered ground below it, slowly but surely rotting away. Autumn.

My Attire Rebecca Meaney

The cold air slaps my face as I step out onto the cracking concrete steps—two pairs of socks, boots, leggings, thermal, hoodie, coat, gloves, beanie. The cold air still manages to sneak its way through the microscopic, fine holes in my attire. The many minutes I spent styling my hair now seem as though they ceased to exist, and my toes slowly grow numb inside the wool and leather that hug them. Jittering teeth and lips losing colour. After a day, I walk back up the concrete steps, and I am met with the embrace of warmth and the smell of burnt wood. Winter.

Greed is some nutter's interpretation of modernism *Colin James*

Cash is the drug of choice. I'd hidden mine under a large rock like in the film Treasure Of The Sierre Madre guarded by a growing monster. What's in your symbolism? Thought about such things afterwards. Oh yeah, I see what you mean, kept hanging around like coincidence. No water but plenty of booze. Cigarettes I enthusiastically smoke them despite my spotty lungs. Everyone knows the heart pumps blood in you get out what you get out. Surviving is not the point. I've left a little do ray me for you if you happen to find this note. The likelihood is you won't.

Shards Ella Quarmby

A blush over bleached hills And charcoaled rocks Who smudge their shadows across the water That weeps as it takes What has been left.

Sea to the west
Where it shouldn't be
For now, the water will run
Down the left side of my face
And the salt will sting my cheeks
And poison my eyes red.

The left side is the best side And the right side is wrong.

The sky is sometimes the only thing that feels right, It bawls colour over a world That is always in the grey.

And when time steals your youth away Like the thieving tide That rids the sand of shells, It is the clouds that swathe your Hands and keep them warm.

But when the sky falls, Shatters glass-like Upon the rocks, What do we do then?

We collect the shards
That cut our feet
And tie them with a black-and-white ribbon
That's fraying at the ends.

Because what better gift than the sky?

The best news Tony Beyer

my brother tells me on the phone during lockdown that since it's now clear of effluent spoonbills have returned to the Manukau Harbour

large white goose-like birds he says standing asleep in a bunch under a shoreline tree or shovelling the mud for tucker at low tide off the Weymouth boat ramp

all this is in the context of his recent successful cataract surgery having healed to give him better eyesight than ever in his life coinciding with something worth seeing

The Old Town Hall Café, Urenui Trevor Landers

Past the mermaid's bicycle blue the foyer frothing with intrigue hinting at cornucopias inside the main parlour for very high tea (authentic hand clotted-cream supplied) a Madhatter's rendezvous crocheted blankets on every chair teacups awaiting parchment to slake the travelling palate wetted whistles too A Cornish pastie! A Scotched egg!with encrusted pork crackling! :Delisioso! Jacket potato extravaganza Wunderbar! cries an invisible visitor Tea, sir? 38 to choose from..... Scone, sir? 1 of 130 Guinness World Record in the baking Apricot and cream cheese? Excellent choice, sir. The table near talks of bariatric surgery & Mt Messenger roadworks family histories on a plate & we munch with relish a church of warm eccentrics genuflecting towards the scone board a record nearly clutched by hand this kaleidoscope room eyes not knowing where to look next.

Upper Mohakatino Valley *Trevor Landers*

The serpentine lane sidewinding up the valley fallen logs silvered by time are the slain soldiers of the tops no surrender has ever been signed

the river of tea leeched by native flora & deforestation (farming's relentless fantasies of covet and conquer) scour the hills, muddy truth

these taciturn hills
with sporadic stands of native trees
say nothing; the poet must be kanuka
kauri-father, rimu-mother, speak for these brethren
I am the hills—I shall never erode
find me then, Upper Mohakatino Valley.

Approaching Gully Farm Trevor Landers

We take the turning just before where the Mohakatino River passes in chicanes into the Tasman baches clumped like limpets around a rock at the top of the valley road

we passed the turquoise embassy with its great trees of moss three flashing kingfishers observe the pilgrim's progress high in the canopy of kahikatea

The river itself, silent and unbowed dark and silted, the shy keeper of secrets wends and winds to the heart of the matter long after we go, it shall remain stoic.

deeper in, the tarsal track might have been specifically laid for us, a tranquil byway, the little lane engenders a smile, at a country oasis, by graduations, we are unwound. Memorial domain *Keith Nunes*

Memorial domain A slab of marble memories rises

Patiently, heavily from a Quaking emerald hill,

Paths like rope curl around Laid evenly for the shoe, the boot, A basket of mysteries

When the clouds dilute and disperse and Our big star has clear sight of us People in pairs, people with their picnics

Linger

Watching the middle distance where Sails skim over the

Shards-of-glass glistening sea,

A young man re-reads his great-grandfather's name, Runs a finger over the engraved print,

Steps back, Throws a frisbee for his dog

The Lighthouse Leaves Carrie Briffett

"Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow..."

And so, the next day, we went.

But the lighthouse had already left.

No wick-burning, incandescent penal station
for hard-luck keepers.

Instead, we found a young, automated replacement.

Left all alone at Akaroa Heads, the old lighthouse—

French lens; Scottish mechanism; Australian hardwood; Kauri timber—
fell to pieces.

But it took the steep and narrow path to Cemetery Point, and pulled itself together.

Restlessness is not a desirable quality, in a lighthouse.

So, it settled closer to the town.

On special occasions, it shines a light on its own history.

First Light Lincoln Jaques

Drunk again and alone listening to Warren Zevon on a tinny transistor gifted by the previous cadaver a slither of a 9-volt battery life keeps me alive.

The moon has turned all the clouds into white whales thrashing through the upturned sea

that pours through cracks fills in spaces shifting parables a piano solo like footsteps on shingle disappears into mountains after fire, after rain, after you left.

Another cigarette
another shot
another song
another line
another hour
passes

Memories run in veins along the grain of the knotted macrocarpa floors how your face is distorted your eyes the colour of wind your mouth a blood orange fallen from a tree in Madrid.

If you placed two lines of poetry in a forest and if I walked forever through kauri and kahikatea trees my feet rotting into earth my hair a knitted garment for an empty body I may, eventually, find the note and read those lines that say how much how very much you loved me. Once.

Bougainvillea Flower Fall Denise O'Hagan

Summer swirl
a cacophony of kaleidoscopes
in the murky blue,
pink and violet,
itinerant, dipping, tumbling
on the tide
enchanted dancers
mystical flight
paths defined by currents
chop and sway
wings of coloured allure
their final journey
a charmed display

the years start coming & they don't stop coming *Rhys Feeney*

some things get funnier the more they happen like getting a lynx africa 3-in-1 set for Christmas it is not the same with years each is long & full of gruelling personal growth like how i thought the year was a palindrome until i realised tht i didn't really know what a palindrome was but still it had a certain symmetry like: one cat dies / then the other i share a vape at a party in the warm country / think about grandparents in the cold country waiting for bake off after the pm announcement still there's something to be said for the good moments how i hiked up the hill with tht tinder date just in time to look through a telescope & see two planets the closest they've been in the sky for 400 years the oval smudge of one planet's rings / the glinting moon of the other how the year started with birds mimicking sirens / & now when i sit in the garden listening they're making bird sounds

Casual Sex on the Night of a Mass Murder Joanne Tasker

fire unable to quench itself burns beneath my skin it's anger passion it's the headline news it's the late-night nudes

it's the dancing of your fingertips against my clit the trigger press my crumpled dress

it's the face of the shooter the corpses he left dead and your hands pulling me close then letting me go

the way my neck tingles beneath your lips the way you move between my hips wet red leaks from their mouths their insides spill out

I see them stumbling along hear the screaming and gunfire as if it's a song but you are here saying nothing moving thrusting

beneath my eyelids bloodied bodies blood shed from bullet holes in the back of the head breath sucked from broken lungs but there you are

finished done

you roll away
head finds pillow
theirs found ground
where they had just rested to pray
and I think about the sound
shocking
loud

I think about how it is silent now

Ah Tony Beyer

at sixteen she was so beautiful blokes fell off their bikes riding past looking at her

a King's boy and one from the local high school got in a fistfight over her and both came off worse

of course she went out first with the captain of the XV who only admired himself but she did better later on

the trick was to pretend you weren't interested which took some effort but worked in the end 17-Hands-High Denise O'Hagan

Sweet scent of sweat rises off Matuchi, that rich raw hide of chestnut stallion allocated to me as if I could ride

bold confidence he leans down, bored, to munch on pampas grass pulled forward, I compensate with patience

iron soles stomp, clomp familiar rocky paths echoing crystal waves of sound through *Polylepis* dotted foothills

sneakered feet nudge past cordon cactus as we are lulled in a line of dappled greys, white and brown, pinto and roan

through Argentinian Andes amateurs' knuckled hands grip reins while local horses stumble and trip, soles slip

sighs spill in tune with silence in the valley's afternoon mist trepidation hides behind walls of smiles, denim and dust

through an amphitheatre of pink sunsets and shadowy hinterland sweat-soaked hides carry intrepid travellers back

to smoke-infused beef and red Malbec, Mendoza's soul salty decadence in the dark amidst mountains of lust

abecedarian in sleet

Madeleine Lifsey

Massachusetts, December 2014

around town, they have hung brilliant, twinkling cells, pulsing lights like jellyfish who don't know they are dead.

every endless night an itch, and my father calls me up first time this decade to know if I've been a good girl.

haiku hangover mourning after midterms:

brain fog happening sentences not happening synapses in mud

invisibility: my latest superpower when you enter to say

just kidding again

looking at everyone but me. we were a cryptic myth when we began, but such a good one, the kind you'd want to swallow whole, and hot.

no longer a story, only floating characters, we shiver on pieces of once quilted promises, cloaked in ripped sheets, we taste stained, nearly rotten.

sweaty pits, streaks of grey sun,
the kind of beauty that stings.
under the only lights, fluorescent (those
violet cells still beating), gutters still fill with grimy
white diamonds. still unsure if it's me or you or your new
Xanax pills building the clear quicksand wall between, except then
you tell me you think maybe
zoos aren't so bad, not really like prisons, except for the metal, and when
their heads hit the concrete—

Sweet, Unsafe Houses Lincoln Jaques

Without us knowing—without anyone knowing they disappeared. One by one the houses came down. The ring-fences went up like metallic centipedes circling the empty lots.

The blind machine was brought in to chisel a hole through the earth. The houses tumbled down; the ground shook. We passed each morning as the world became smaller.

Emily's 'Sweet, safe, houses' are no more. We created shorter routes to the malls. We dug up the bodies. Relocated ourselves. Our kids self-harm in the abandoned laundromats in tune to the ghostly revolutions of spin cycles.

As if to reinvent a home, rough sleepers lay still in the rubble. Their corpses pulled each morning from the sewage pipes. A pilgrimage they never saw to the end they cannot separate themselves from the land.

If Emily saw this she would weep.

Should have, could have Brian Graystone

When your home is empty, and the ones you loved have gone. All you have left are memories of the family you were never near. Will you blame yourself for all the hurt you caused? Of all the "could have's, should have's" that you missed:

You should have been a nicer person.
You could have shown her more love.
You should have listened to her more.
You could have heard what she had to say.
You should have paid more attention to her needs.
You could have helped around the house more.
You should have told her how nice she looks.
You could have said how pretty she is.
You should have spent more time with your son.
You could have taught him right from wrong.
You should have stayed at home more weekends.
You could have missed a few games.
You should have said no more drinks for me.
You could have gone home sober.

Or, will you blame her for not letting you have your fun, When you really know it's all your own fault.

Egyptians in the Red Sea *Molly Crighton*

Ahead, leaving you behind, the Israelites glow like birthstone scales, rippling on black flesh-wings. Blind creatures twist in your periphery, inverted like a nervous system.

Your chariots tangle seaweed. Your torch-bearers blaze azure fire through anemone fields. You are gold wasps or black-sea scarabs; jewels crystal-trawling the deepest deep.

You and your glittering brothers, here until the end of days—beyond that—until you become black-red shrines to strange, watery gods.
Extinct pilgrims will find you and bless you.

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withered scarlet
          of the bag
        of the woman
       standing in line
          in front of
              me
           browned
         as the blood
           drained
       by your bellows
          gagged
just before
             your
          brainstem
        snapped, skin
           stripped,
     stretched,
              and
                 away to
      sent
           be sold:
       limo seats, sticky
    couches, chequebook
            covers,
    (toes, hair, bones, eyes
neatly, conveniently detached)
      red is the rouge
on the cheekbones
            of this
            woman
            before
              me
              in
              the
             long
             dress
           clutching
       what she is sure
             is her
             right.
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Edna's illustration to accompany her poem 'Angel No. 1111' is the front cover of this issue.

Angel No. 1111 Edna Heled

It is summary time
we are summoned to show
what we gained, what we learned
what we chose to embrace
what we want to divorce

It is summary time last grain in the hourglass elapsed our moment to observe, to reflect to decipher our core

It is summary time no adjournment is granted we are called to the dock to prove we have bettered to prove we've improved

It is summary time we can storm out of gates to dance and rejoice or drool with canine teeth Damnatio ad bestias*

It is summary time and the birds and the bees and the grass and the trees and the lands and the seas are listening

Angel Number 1111 is a powerful symbol of the truth and purity. Seeing this number is a clear message from the Universe that it is time to find your own truth and align it with your life, your thoughts and your actions.

^{*} Latin: "condemnation to beasts" as was practised in Rome's Colosseum

Poet Biographies

Tony Beyer

Tony Beyer writes in Taranaki, New Zealand. Among his print titles, Anchor Stone (Cold Hub Press) was a finalist in the poetry category of the 2018 NZ Book Awards. More recent work has appeared internationally in *Atlanta Review*, *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Landfall*, *London Grip*, *Mayhem*, *Molly Bloom*, *Mudlark*, *Otoliths*, *Tarot*, and elsewhere.

Carrie Briffett

Carrie Briffett's writing spans several forms and genres. Over the years, Carrie has worked as a journalist, English teacher, copywriter, and communications officer, living in the UK, Japan, Czech Republic, France, and New Zealand. She is currently living happily in Auckland.

Molly Crighton

Molly Crighton is a Dunedin writer. Her work has appeared in *Landfall*, a fine line, *Starling*, *Takahē*, and *The Cormorant*. She placed third in the 2021 Page and Blackmore story competition, was a resident for the 2021 Young Writers' Festival, and, was a featured poet for 2019's National Poetry Day.

Rhys Feeney

Rhys Feeney (they/them) is a high school teacher in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Rhys' debut collection, *soyboy*, was published in AUP New Poets 7 (2020). They write about all the things that scare them.

Brian Graystone

Brian Graystone was born in 1945 as the last of ten children. He was educated at Cornwall Secondary Modern School in East London. He married Christine in 1966 and had two girls. He gained a BSc (hons) from The Open University in 2004. He and Christine moved to New Zealand 2007 to be with their youngest daughter. He was widowed in 2009. Brian has been previously published in *Tarot*.

Edna Heled

Edna Heled is an artist, art therapist, counsellor and travel journalist from New Zealand. She studied Art Therapy (MA) overseas and Psychology (Hons) in the University of Auckland, NZ. Her writing includes short stories, poetry, travel writing and non-fiction. She has published in NZ Herald, Short and Twisted, Flash Frontier, Fresh Ink, Backstory Australia, Landing Press, Poetry NZ Yearbook 2021, and more.

Colin James

Colin James has a couple of chapbooks of poetry published: Dreams Of The Really Annoying (Writing Knights Press) and A Thoroughness Not Deprived of Absurdity (Piski's Porch Press), and a book of poems, Resisting Probability (Sagging Meniscus Press).

Lincoln Jaques

Lincoln Jaques holds a Master of Creative Writing from AUT. His poetry, fiction and travel writing has appeared in journals and collections in Aotearoa, Australia, the US and Ireland. He was a finalist in the 2018 Emerging Poets, and a 2020 Vaughan Park Residential Scholar/Writer.

Trevor Landers

Trevor Landers is a psychotherapist and academic manager based in New Plymouth. He is the editor of *Mātātuhi Taranaki*: A bilingual journal of literature and an volume he edited *Writing Therapy*, a collaboration with his psychotherapy clients is due for release later this month.

Madeleine Lifsey

Madeleine (she/her) is a queer, Jewish animal rights activist and educator based in Tāmaki Makaurau. She is interested in bodily autonomy and relationships. Her writing has appeared in Starling, Violet Rising Zine, Quick Brown Fox, Australian Children's Poetry, Shot Glass Journal, Overcommunicate, and more.

Rebecca Meaney

Rebecca Meaney is an establishing poet from Auckland and is currently in her last year of highschool. She has always had a passion for writing and, more recently, is starting to explore her capabilities. Rebecca views writing as a way to express feelings in a way no other medium can.

Keith Nunes

Keith Nunes (Aotearoa/New Zealand) has had poetry, fiction, haiku and visuals published around the globe. He creates ethereal manifestations because he's inept at anything practical or useful.

Denise O'Hagan

Denise O'Hagan has a Master of Creative Writing. She has poems published in Fresh Ink Anthology, NZ Poetry Society Anthology, Fast Fibres Poetry, a fine line and Takahē. She spent twelve years living in Brazil, Chile, Spain, Belgium and England which has inspired her poetry and several fiction novels.

Ella Quarmby

Ella Quarmby is a year 12 student at Otumoetai College and writes poetry, short stories, and novels. Her poem, 'Symphony' was published in the October 2020 issue of *Mindfood* and she is one of the recipients of the 2021 NZSA youth writing mentorship.

Ila Selwyn

Ila Selwyn has an MCW from Auckland University, and has self-published two poetry collections and several chap books. She is in three writing groups, an art class, a walking group, two dance classes and is attempting Te Reo. She hasn't much time left for her garden, which, like her, is going to seed(!)

Ian C Smith

Ian C Smith's work has been published in Antipodes, BBC Radio 4 Sounds, The Dalhousie Review, Griffith Review, San Pedro River Review, Southword, The Stony Thursday Book, & Two Thirds North. His seventh book is wonder sadness madness joy, Ginninderra (Port Adelaide). He writes in the Gippsland Lakes area of Victoria, and on Flinders Island.

Joanne Tasker

Joanne is a 25 year old Whangārei based poet. She has previously been published in *Mayhem* and *Fast Fibres*.

Lilly Warren

Lilly Warren (she/her) is a Waikato-based poet, creative nonfiction writer, and video editor. Her work has been published by *Roads & Kingdoms, The Toast*, and *Dog-Ear Magazine*.

Olivia Warrick

Dr. Olivia Warrick is a scientist, a mother, a gardener, a feminist and a hermit. She lives near Raglan with her two children, her best friend, and a menagerie of odd animals.

Nerida Woods

Nerida Woods is a New Zealand-based poet and author of *Peppermint Tea* and *lambskin*.

