

Nafanua and the New World

Nafanua's old school mates planned to rob the New World, they sat at the tops of trees and planned: darkness, cigarettes, beer.

She said, You'll never pull it off.

They didn't.

Nafanua from nowhere driving out into the world as far away from Aranui as she can go
Nafanua from Pulothu driving out into the world and all the things that make her
beautiful spin away like hubcaps

When her long dead children ask her, Nafanua, mother, what did you do with our lives?
She will answer, Babies, I tucked you away so you would never be lost or hurt or boiled
down for hubcap manufacture. I wrapped each one of you and put you in the sea and you
learned to be red orange blue.

When the old people say to her, Nafanua, daughter, did we hurt you so bad? She will say
I will not bow as I pass, you are dead, your legs are strong enough. Go catch the bus.

She does not think of her old school friends
she does not think of her family.

Nafanua on the other side of the world climbing into her Triumph
she covers the mirrors, pulls out the choke and roars off into the Va.

Nafanua talks about her body

In my knees I have that disease
someone with careful fingers tries to pry it out
but my joints are secretive.

There is an apocathery somewhere with a cure
a bottle of thick glass with words about poison
about cause and cure.

In my hair I have someone with a rake making boundaries on my scalp
this way that way this way
the result will be great

like Entertainment Tonight
and my body, the one I will have to lose when I become an Amerikan
the one that fits into plane seats with real pain,
that body will have to go.

When I get to Amerika it will be unbuckled like saddlebags at the border
and like Miss Amerika, boiled down and nice and twang, I'll hand over my visa
and they'll say, Welcome, Leeza, we've prepared a place for you.

Nafanua meets Mr Raytheon

Nafanua goes to Kitty O'Malley's, it's half way to St Patrick's day in downtown Honolulu and grown men are walking behind toy ambulances. In the bar the band sings Scotland the Brave and the man from Raytheon explains why he's not part of the war machine

He is not Louise Francesconi, President of Missile Systems – Strike Air to Air Exoatmospheric Kill Directed Energy Weapons – Louise Francesconi has burgundy hair

He tells her he likes the music but he feels he doesn't fit in, Age he says, Forty-five he says and takes off his hat and shows her his head

He is not a magnifying glass over the earth – Bringing Home the Promise of Missile Defense – a golden tower piercing the blue

You know you work for the Devil, she says. He doesn't take offense. Outstanding he says, outstanding

He is not Bill Swanson, Chairman and CEO – white man black woman asian woman black man hispanic man equal opportunity affirmative action wide diversity american citizenship security clearance required

You know ten percent of the population here are military?, he says. Just enough to wipe out the natives, she says, should they rise up and make ma'a slings for hurling things

He is not Dual Mount Stinger: lightweight, fire-and-forget, two colour, short range, air defense missile, superior action at a fraction of the cost

Would you like a... I'm sure you're a nice... I'm sorry our ways of life are not more...
he smiles like Mission Solutions for the War Fighter, he smiles like Twenty-Two Point
Two Billion Dollars

She waves her arms around like something big made of something sharp

This is a sign

This is a warning.

Nafanua relates an incident from her childhood

we all slept on the floor/ all the old men and the young men and the women and the kids and the babies holding blunt objects and other instruments of violence/ we had to wrest them from each other to prevent the cracking of heads/ when we woke everyone was alive but us kids had gone

e, someone go an find dem

leai, aua, dey fink dey smart – let dem look for deir ownself

auoi!, va'ai, dey stole our canoe!

dat canoe, it belong to our ancestor!

there were some of us at the front some of us at the back/ we just lifted it up and ran it down the corridor and out into the street as if it were light as plastic/ they chased us but our legs were faster and their fury took their breath away/ they wanted to bash us really really bad

Aunty Lapo'a calls Nafanua and talks about her holiday

E, suga, I'm love da Gol Coas
it's mus be da rich peoples dey live dere, a?
I'm stay at da hotel for 10 day, so beauty
I'm go for da swim every days an I'm wear da fong for da swim
an da Palagi dey say, E, va'ai se fafige!

I'm have da nice figure when I'm young
ka'i e sexy, suga!
Why you laugh?
I'm da so beauty one
E, look at you suga, you eat too much!
das why you not even find da man.

What's da use travel travel everywhere an no baby?
A?
No husband, no baby, no one look after you
you jus fink you smart
even da Palagi dey get marry.

Nafanua is an aeroplane

Nafanua says: I am an aeroplane and I am happy to be metal
I like my swollen belly, I like the way I feel against myself
I love the way I can take them all inside me like herds of swine
like the pope's celestial gathering of souls that get to their heaven and say
I got it all so wrong

but there will no one to make recrimination cake
and it wont be fun to be righteous.

That's when you know everything is getting better
the world will be ok, someone will marry me, I will not die with dog fur on my clothes

No, I will be big and grey and cold and as light as anything
people wont know me or they'll say

See her, she'd be everything anyway
She'd fly better than people with wings.

Notes:

These poems are from *Bloodclot*, a loosely narrative series about the adventures of Nafanua, named after the ancient warrior / ruler / war goddess of Samoa.

New World: New Zealand supermarket chain

Aranui: New Zealand suburb

Pulotu: Samoan underworld

va: the void / the space between

leai, aua: no, don't

va'ai: look

va'ai se fafige: look at that woman

suga: colloquial form of address to a female