

## ONEKIRITEA RAT LINE 71–80

A certain satisfaction is found in wire embedded in grey neck fur,  
the flattened, soft body, tiny, splayed feet, baby teeth comically bared,  
the wide dead eyes surprised.

Certain too, is sorrow.

Are tūi chortling, geckos grinning, sleeking through grasses,  
kōtare deliberately blue streaking, pīwakawaka defiantly dancing  
a merry fan-span flutter?

Or are they simply cravat chucklers, sassy skirt-swingers out on the  
sunshine rantan, berry-smearred, pollen-dusted jazz devotees, oblivious  
as dotterel chicks in a cat's shadow?

If it is a knowing yahoo, a hopeful hullabaloo, a treetops tipsy tango,  
then, at this particular crime scene there is a certain satisfaction.

## ISLAND

I might be  
hard-headed

but that  
is what it takes.

It takes  
butting heads  
to stop rutting goats,

it takes guns and steel  
and a keen eye.

What it takes is to  
stare down the tides,  
to be like seaward cliffs  
and jut my flint chin  
into the onslaught.

It takes standing guard  
while she drapes herself  
in capes of dull emeralds  
and downy browns  
singing nothing  
in particular.

Sometimes  
I sneak a peek  
(I am only human)  
but I am patient.

Soon I may ask her  
if she is ready for me  
and hope she answers:

‘I might be’.

## ALICE EAVES' BEQUEST

A good woman. That Alice. Guest house proprietor. People would come by sea, ferried into the golden beach. They could punt on her clear stream, scoff hearty country food, and dance gaily on her wooden floors to 1920s tunes. A sheltering hill rose behind the house, dense with ancient kauri, the forest floor asway with palms and ferns. Alice loved it, wanted it preserved – all the shimmering leaves, mossy limbs and hollering birds. The deep, woody scent of it. Now the kererū, tūī and pīwakawaka flap, swoop and flutter on the hill she gave away. That Alice. A good woman.

## JUST GETTING THERE

Just getting there  
it's a two hour and a twenty minute drive  
from Whanganui to New Plymouth  
two and a three quarters if you take the coastal road  
either way you're driving through the land of milk and oil.  
It's green - lush, prosperous looking  
the proverbial back bone of the nation's economy  
it's also a country side stripped of its bush  
either way you go you pass by Taranaki Maunga  
sitting there with a skirt of green bush  
all that's left of those forests.  
The fauna, those that could,  
retreated up his slopes  
took all they had just getting there.

‘GOING. GOING. GONE.’

Location, location, location.  
Often sought. Rarely found.  
Step this way, prepare to plunge  
your shovel in the ground.

Picture this  
through mud and silt,  
the indoor-outdoor flow.  
Ignore that space between the rocks  
where willows used to grow.

Believe your ears,  
no tweets nor calls.  
No irritating song.  
We’re confident  
this environment  
will all too soon  
be gone.

Rapids here,  
torrents there.  
Rich tones of brown and yellow.  
Safe for paddling, wading, rafting;  
no creatures swim below.

Landbank or clear;  
it’s in your hands.  
For if you’ve got the vision  
this is the place  
that offers you  
location.  
location.  
location.

## LOST

Now we know,  
a 'Great Swamp' once ran  
the length of this Kāpiti Coast,  
down to its windswept dunes,  
soaking up storms' surge and mountains' flow,  
before beach houses, tarmac, fences and farms.  
Fluid edges, ebbing with the seasons,  
absorbing, filtering, cooling,  
spiky tī kōuka and harakeke  
perfectly mirrored in its glimmer.  
Ancient alchemy buried deep,  
secretly, silently locking away  
in its peaty storehouse,  
the carbon we're leaching,  
protecting us, from the future  
we're creating, holding  
in its tiny jewelled remnants  
more than all the world's forests  
ever could,  
even  
with  
so  
little  
left.  
There's no excuse,  
now we know.

## TE HENGA WHISPERS

On the edge, where city meets sea,  
find the nearly lost symphony in-between  
Find below Bethells Road Te Henga wetland,  
where behind the ridge beats the Tasman Sea.

But here lies a primordial hush,  
where rustling leaves of tī kōuka and harakeke  
those ancient and elemental sentinels,  
offer shelter and food.

Listen...

There in the wintry waters:  
the booming lament of the matuku  
and the pāteke speaking softly once more.

Te Henga  
asks us to pay attention  
and breathe together, not alone.  
She invites us into her quiet restoration,  
where land meets river  
past meets future  
just on the edge.

PAUL WHITE

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## MOTUIHE (A STORY OF NEW ZEALAND)

Rare footprints here  
were once the human ones.  
Bare Māori feet  
came first then Brits in boots  
buying land with blankets  
hoes and iron pots  
where money made no sense.  
But even then the thieving rats  
had trampled through  
the forest and found feasts  
of gecko, skink, and  
tuatara eggs, tīeke's too.  
The hooves arrived,  
cow, sheep, pig, horse,  
but no one knew outcasts  
were on their way,  
the sick and war-torn  
stumbled on.  
Time came  
to make a stand.  
Kahikatea now take root,  
korimako roost again,  
while step by step  
wētāpunga and the Duvaucel  
make delicate  
rare footprints here.