



4TH FLOOR 2015

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Darryn Joseph

Big Nanna's Porridge

Sea-bacon, burnt butter

wake me from my *Space 1999* slumber,

kahawai swimming at Mohaka's mouth

not but an hour ago until Dad's reti board

dragged the mottled flesh into Mum's pan.

'Big Nanna wants you for breakfast –

don't let her see you do that. Take these *from* Dad.'

Mottled skin, yellow eyes briefly pūkana

as they are stuffed into a flour sack.

'Why? It's a school day? I don't wanna be late!'

'She said you're too skinny. Kin, hurry up!'

Outside the morning frost is still harsh,

I avoid the claustrophobic stench of the long drop,

and piss on the plum tree.

A brisk five-minute drag and Big Nanna's kitchen's

open door lights the path – no phone, she still knows:

'Kia tere e moko, ā, kia ora, kia ora.'

I sit at the table. Nanna Kiri puts the fish

into the cool store, then bends over the stove

I try not to look through the holes

of her upcycled crocheted dress.

'Anei e moko. He tūpuhi rawa koe.'

The porridge is a Big Nanna special.

A bright yellow oil slick lapping

at brown sugar islands,

extra butter-bread canoes

on and under a reef of hot porridge,

a sea of rich fat, farm cream.

'E kai e moko, kei mātaotao tō pāreti.'

My spoon dives into the oats, sugar,

butter-bread, butter-bread

eager at first but after four spoons

the acrid taste overwhelms my buds

and the spoon circles the chipped plate.

One eyebrow lift from Nanna with her floury hands,

and I'm back on task.

Masking the butter I rain down heaped tablespoons

of brown into the mess; chewing, swallowing –

Shit, I'm only halfway.

I'm not going to make it.

A milky sweet hot Bell comes to my rescue,

a new flavour, a new stomach, a new rhythm,

spoon, tea-slurp, swallow, spoon, tea-slurp, swallow.

Nanna pulls hot scones from the oven,

angling my plate I leave some of the yellow oil slick

on the bottom.

'Ka pai, e moko. You're hungry, nē?'

My eyes jump as she goes back to the pot

I only have seconds.

Jumping off the seat I run for the door,

'E moko e! Tō kai!'

'Thanks, Nanna!' I grab the hot brown bag,

dodging her wet hāpuku lips.

‘Gotta get to school. See ya later...’

‘Haere ora atu e moko!’

Darryn Joseph chiefly writes in Māori. He has created and performed a radio script, written children’s books, songs, text books, short stories, a PhD and shopping lists. His fave food is oysters and lemony Corona – a parallel universe snack. This is his entrée into poetry after Apirana Taylor laid the wero during the 2013 Storylines Tour.

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