



"Sāmoa mo Sāmoa" (2013)  
Reina Sutton

## Once Were

The wind carries  
the deep chanting of a drunken haka  
wandering aimless in the darkness of Papatoetoe  
I imagine their twisted limbs  
and stumbled stances  
ready and waiting  
for imaginary battles  
fallen warriors  
throwing mocking faces to the ancestors

Laughter slaps the air  
as bottles smash,  
cutlets,  
scattering to form a map

Slugging insults  
the memory never forgets  
once were warriors gone bad  
causing nightmares  
waking children  
asleep in their beds

Now  
your bros  
are dragged away  
the youngest is left to sweep away  
the glass  
of broken bottles that control you  
the glass  
of pathetic words lost out of you

the glass  
filled with the shame  
if your Mama had heard you.

Brown soldiers fallen  
strong shoulders caving  
liquor disguises  
respect replaced by  
brown brother bravado

Brown for blood  
for liquor—  
for strength?—  
for bruises  
on our sons and daughters.  
these are some of the sons  
that once were Pacific warriors.

The night light dances on her swaying curves  
illuminating their creation  
replacing Aunty's eyes  
The moon spies on her lines  
once used for labours of love  
now used for labours to gain some love  
She tattoos words of strength  
yet she does not breathe them  
Little sisters look up, admire, and follow.

The Gogosina has taken flight  
constantly putting up a subconscious fight  
singing Brown girl in the ring, tra la la la la,  
that entice and excite  
predicaments she invites.  
Stuck between what was

and what is now  
dress it up honey  
only to let it all fall down

Brown suga  
once so sacredly beautiful  
now tourist attraction  
exotic and plentiful.

Easily pushed  
she spells S T R E N G T H  
on her 8 knuckles  
she punches  
she jabs

she ain't no alley cat  
this is how some of our sisters now act.  
Spilling the blood of her own people  
these are some of the daughters  
that once were Pacific beautiful

Have we come so far  
to be 'Once Upon a Time'?