

Somerville

**time to write
(for Larry)**

Alice Te Punga Somerville

i need ten minutes to write this poem
you need a couple of hours to work on your story
between incoming calls and outgoing flights
the best i can do is steal time from somewhere else:
although you'll read a pristine email version of this poem
there's curry from singh's on the page of this handwritten draft.
 there's no time to write, my friend.

i've had this pen and paper forever
i started writing this poem in 1840
wrote a little more when the land was confiscated 20 years later
did some editing the day my great-uncle bled to death:
italy, 1944, and dressed for the occasion
added a stanza when our language fell away from my family not long after
thought about adding a refrain in august a couple of years ago
when the nz government apologised to my iwi

 grandad always told me i'd never see what i wanted
 that my grandchildren would see the first real change:
 i used to think he was taunting me
 now i see my enthusiasm broke his heart before it broke my own
 his warning was a form of protection

there's no time to write, my friend

there's no time to write

maybe i won't ever finish this poem

maybe it's one stanza of a much longer piece

maybe your story is a chapter

in a novel

on a shelf

in a room

in a house

on an island

in an ocean