

# 'AFAKASI CHAMELEON

'Afakasi means half-caste:  
half-blood, mixed race, two pasts.

But even if one eye is brown,  
the other eye blue,  
no one is ever just two.

You can't cut in half  
blood that streams  
or splice in two a river that teems  
with tiny currents  
running this way and that.  
You can't divide mata i pusi: the eyes of a cat.

An 'afakasi is a chameleon  
blending in,  
coloured by genealogy  
and its different skins –

a great-great-grandfather from Tuvalu  
a great-great-grandmother from Peru

a great-grandfather from Italy  
a great-grandmother from Fiji

a grandfather from England  
a grandmother from Scotland

a father from Aotearoa  
a mother from Sāmoa.

Cultural chromatophores,  
pigmented geographies,  
mixing the bloodlines  
with poly-hued biographies.

Whether from Nauru or Australia  
Israel, Greece, or Mauritania

Papua New Guinea or Ghana  
Mali, Wales, or Grenada

Kiribati, Ireland, or Estonia  
Costa Rica, Canada, or Ethiopia

France, Tonga, or Namibia  
Somalia, Chad, or Nicaragua –

an 'afakasi is a chameleon,  
fast, agile, free

it knows who it is  
as it blends with the soil  
with the stalk  
with the tree.

The chameleon is you, the chameleon is me.

We are all  
'afakasi.

*Selina Tusitala Marsh*





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by Selina Tusitala Marsh

illustration by Rachel Walker

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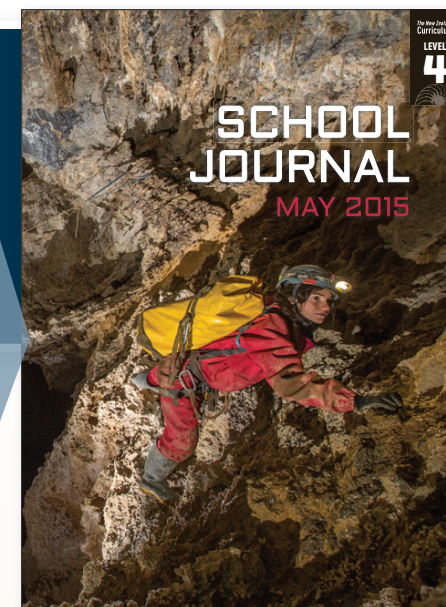
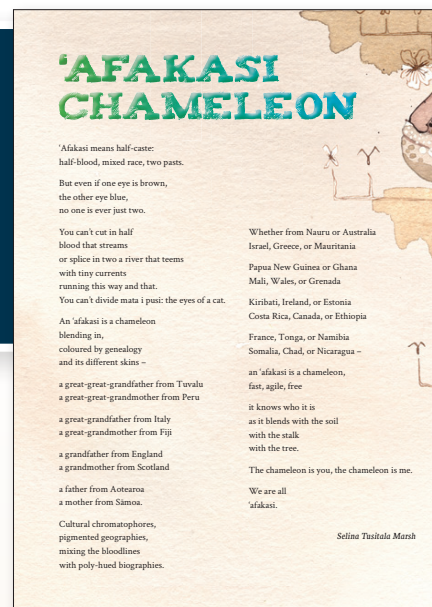
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