

Village princess

Tusiata Avia

My sister was a taupou
so when our parents gave up
caring whether I'd ruined myself
she was still climbing out the windows
at 28.

Our cousin gave up her long golden hair
for my sister's headdress.
She was beautiful dancing
her pale brown arms oiled
and us, a thousand
glinting in her mirrored forehead.

She ran away to Colorado
with a white guy called Randell.
She got herself a scholarship
and a job as a body-piercer.

No one talks about titles now
or going to Amerika.

GLOSSARY

taupou—virgin, titled, unmarried woman who holds a ceremonial position in the village

Pacific Studies, Vol. 30, Nos. 1/2—March/June 2007

Reprinted, with permission, from Tusiata Avia, "Village princess," *Wild Dogs Under My Skirt* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004), 54.