

The Valley of Unlikely Acquaintances

A NOVEL BY Terri Te Tau

A remarkable debut that follows one close-knit Māori community and the Wairarapa forest they are fighting to restore.

Tīria is a revolutionary scientist—or so she likes to think. Her work at the whānau-led Kōpuaranga Research Centre has transformed the valley’s reforestation efforts. But not everyone is convinced that genetically edited cats belong in the ngahere. While Tīria juggles disciplinary hearings and romantic field trips, her best friend Lydia is left trying to hold the hapori together.

When human remains are found in a nearby cave, the valley is drawn into speculation. What begins as an isolated discovery soon reveals unsettling ties to the 1800s, when the region’s ecological devastation first began. As rumours spread and tensions escalate, Lydia and Tīria are pulled into a history that promises to redefine not only the research centre, but the future of the community and the forest they call home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Terri Te Tau (Ngāti Kahungunu, Rangitāne ki Wairarapa) is a writer and artist, and the 2026 Emerging Māori Writer in Residence at the IIML. She is a member of the art collective Mataaho, whose work won the Golden Lion at the 2024 Venice Biennale. She holds a PhD in Creative Arts, and her story “Hīkoi Whetū” won the Emerging Māori Writer category of the 2024 Sunday Star-Times Short Story Award.

PHOTO: REBECCA MCMILLAN

PRAISE

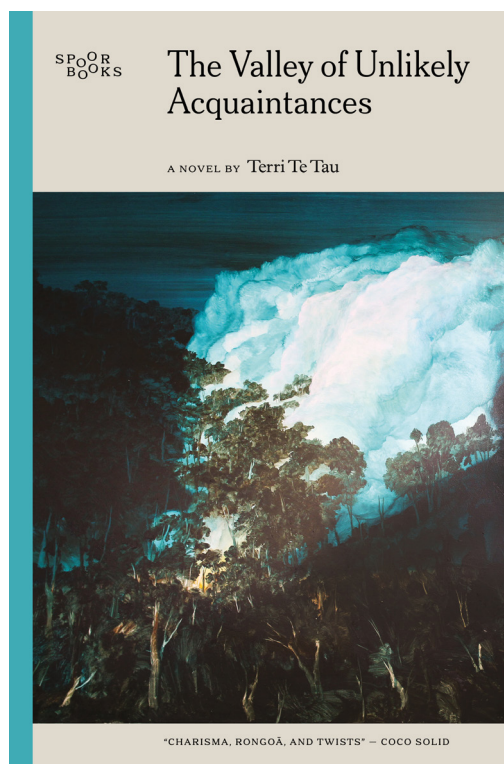
“She’s a writer to watch!”
— Damien Wilkins

“An unputdownable environmental epic ... at once intimate and hilarious, with characters that are now wrapped around my heart.”
— Laura Jean McKay

“Ethereal and intelligent.”
— Lauren Keenan

“Dripping in small-town charisma, rongoā, and twists.” — Coco Solid

“Rich with authentic dialogue and very Māori-specific humour.”
— Emma Wehipeihana on “Hīkoi Whetū”



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