

*Free-style area* - mum/dad can you write or draw something in this space for your child.

## **The Touchstone**

### **Chapter One – The Move**

My whole life's been spent in this room. I can tell the time of day, by the warm touch of sunlight on my bare skin shining in through any one of my windows facing east, north and west. I also know what everyone in my family's up to at any given moment by the vibrations that I feel rising up from the two floors below me.

We're leaving Auckland to go down and live in Hawera which is a nowhere place in a nowhere land called Taranaki.

I don't want to move. I don't want to leave everything I know. It totally sucks being only 14 years old because no one listens to what I have to say. On top of it all I have a painful pimple on my chin and am 100% blind.

To be honest when I was little, being blind wasn't such a big deal because it was normal to me. I didn't give a stuff if I had jam all over my face or if I was wearing miss-matched clothes. I didn't even have to worry about hurting myself or getting myself lost as my whanau were always watching over me. But now that I'm getting older things are different. But I don't want to be different! I just want to be like any other guy my age and muck about with cute girls and my mates at school.

My lunatic parents also landed me with a really lame name. Bartimaeus! Blind Bartimaeus, yeah, I know he's in the Bible and Jesus makes him see again. Well, I just call myself Bart. Because I came to the

If you want to talk to someone about yourself or someone you know - These numbers are all available 24/7

**KIDSLINE** phone: 0800 54 37 54 \* Over 18? Call **LIFELINE** 0800 543 354

realisation that I will never see. I will always be the guy that's different. I don't want to move. I'm in a really stink mood. Life sucks!

**"Barty? Bart? *Bartimaeus!*"**

"Mum! I'm blind - not deaf! Stop shouting! I'm coming all right!"

"Come on love let's go! I'm so excited! You'll love Hawera! You remember your cousins on your dad's side? Jack and Tama? They're nice boys and they'll be at your new college too!"

I remembered them all right. They were nasty sneaky gits. The drive down from Auckland took all day, mainly because my mum and older sisters wanted a toilet stop, every five minutes.

Everyone in my family had gone crazy with excitement all because we were moving into a brand-new house. Like who cares about whether a house is new or not?

When I'd finally found my way from the car into the front door of our new home, all I could make out that was special was the smell of wet paint and new carpet. Oh yeah! My mum and dad basically leave me to my own devices. Now that I'm getting older, they reckon that tough love is the best way for me to live with my blindness. They think that a few bruised shins and stubbed toes will just help boost my memory! I do have one bright spark in my life. Actually I have two. My sisters Huia and Hine are twins and they turned 16 back in June. The year after the next they're planning on going back up to Auckland to study nursing at AUT. I'll really miss them when they go because their bubbly personalities are a really good offset to my way-more grumpy one!

"Hey Bart!" Hine was excitedly calling, "come on! Let's go and explore your room!"

The first time I walked into my new bedroom I felt a drop in the atmosphere. It was like one minute my hearing was normal, but as soon as Hine led me through the door, it was like the sound was sort of squeezed out! I could tell my sisters hadn't noticed anything as they were still talking fast as!

"This's an awesome bedroom, Bart! It's almost as private as your Owlery on top of our old house!" Huia gushed.

"Look you can see Turuturu Mokai from your window!"

"What's that?"

"It's a really old Maori pa site. I think it's about 400 or 500 years old. No one really knows too much. They don't even know its real name!"

"Then why's it called Turuturu Mokai?"

My sisters laughed and started oohing like ghosts..."because heaps of people got killed there and their heads were stuck up on stakes!"

"But hey, don't worry! Hine said as they were leaving my room...the kehua (ghosts) are probably all our ancestors anyway!"

"So they won't spook you too much!" Huia finished for her.

If you want to talk to someone about yourself or someone you know - These numbers are all available 24/7

**KIDSLINE** phone: 0800 54 37 54 \* Over 18? Call **LIFELINE** 0800 543 354

When the sound of my sisters' laughter had faded away the silence in my bedroom thickened. It felt as if my room was holding its breath in anticipation. I carefully made my way over to the window facing the reserve at Turuturu Mokai. My hands reached for the cool glass so that I knew I was facing the right way.

"Who are you? Who are you Turuturu Mokai? What's your name?"

"Bart! Who're you talking to and why are your hands all over that nice clean window? Come on let's get you sorted, I've got a lot left to do before this day ends and I'm getting tired!"

"Mum, just leave me alone okay? This's my space and I'm not a baby." I smiled so that hopefully she wouldn't get all huffy.

"Oh well, if you're sure?"

"Honey! Whakarongo! Listen to the man! He can make his own bed!"

"Hey Dad, thanks!" I said turning towards his voice.

"All good son! Come on honey let's give this guy some space!"

Later that night after everyone was in bed, I lay there analysing all of the creaks and groans that this house made. Every house has its own sounds. I loved my old bedroom back up in Auckland. It was right at the very top of an old wooden house and it captured and magnified every single sound that came from below. This bedroom was totally different. Being brand new it was built onto a concrete foundation that sat right on the ground instead of being built on piles. My bedroom was down a long corridor, away from all the other bedrooms in the house.

I decided that for some reason that this house, or the land that it sat on, freakily sucked sound inwards instead of making it!

Just to explain. We aren't like way rich or anything. Mum and Dad had bought our old house even before Huia and Hine were born. It was a definite doer-upper that would've fallen down if no one'd bought it. Mum had always complained about the drafts and leaks, but I thought it was totally awesome. So when Auckland house prices sky-rocketed, my parents sold it and made heaps of money!

Then they were able to buy this new flash as house here in Hawera - with no leaks!



If you want to talk to someone about yourself or someone you know - These numbers are all available 24/7  
**KIDSLINE** phone: 0800 54 37 54 \* Over 18? Call **LIFELINE** 0800 543 354