

The Touchstone

Chapter Three – Matakite!

I was feeling better about our move. School wasn't as bad as I thought it'd be, and I was beginning to feel more confident moving about our new house. When I'd started back at intermediate, I went through a phase of not using my white cane because I just wanted to be like everyone else. But I'd found it really hard, and so my 'being too cool to use a cane' phase only lasted for a few weeks. My parents shelled out with heaps of money and got me a choice as one from the USA. It can telescope right down so it can fit into most pockets. I think most people have the idea that blind people have superhuman hearing, but we don't! Well I don't anyway!

Both Mum and dad had come home from work early and were in the kitchen preparing dinner together and my sisters were out with their mates. Since there were at least a couple of hours to go before we ate, I thought I'd explore outside. Huia and Hine had taken me for a walk all around our section when we first arrived and had told me what they could see. So I knew things like; the BBQ was on the west side and that the patio faced towards the reserve. Holding my hands out in front of me, I walked carefully over towards where I knew the rusty wire fence was.

This was the divide between our property and the Turuturu Mokai reserve. Someone was singing a waiata (song) and they sounded close by. I couldn't quite catch the words and so climbing over the fence I stepped onto the reserve.

All sound stopped: The waiata, the birds, the cicadas, the wind. Everything fell silent.

Then I heard a call... "**Matakite!**"

"Huh...? Hello? Kia ora?" Silence.

All I could hear was my breathing. The birds and cicadas resumed their chatter and chirrups and the sun came out from behind the cloud. I shrugged my shoulders and decided that I must've just imagined it.

But since I was now on the reserve, I thought I'd may as well explore. Reaching into my back pocket I got out my cane and flicked it open and started walking.

After I'd been wandering around for ages, I started to feel claustrophobic as I always ended up being surrounded by prickly gorse and other crud. Suddenly I could hear an open space in front of me. That sounds weird, I know! But when there is stuff around you like bushes and trees, noise kind of bounces back at you. But when you come to an open space, it just feels different.

I'd been walking on grass but I'd now stepped onto a sealed path or road. To my left I could hear water flowing so I made my way towards the sound of it. I must've stepped onto a bridge or culvert because I could now hear the water flowing under me. I pushed my way through a wooden gate at the end of the small bridge and then sat leaning against the concrete base of the bridge to chill out for a bit. There was a sheep close by to me. Perhaps it'd lost a lamb or something as it kept baa-ing over and over!

But it felt good laxing in the sun, listening to the water and that noisy sheep. Something was digging uncomfortably into my back though and so I twisted around onto my knees to feel what it was. It felt like a rectangular metal plaque. In the middle of it were some words that I traced with my fingertips;

James Winks Bridge

You know when something annoys you? But you can't actually define what the annoying thing is? Well that's how I felt about that plaque! It just felt wrong. I didn't know who James Winks was, but I knew he didn't belong at Turuturu Mokai!

Settling back down in the soft grass I tuned into all of the sounds around me. I didn't realise that I'd fallen asleep until someone close to me had shouted with urgency;

"Matakite!"

And I woke with a jolt and freaked out cause standing in front of me was a boy about my age that I could see!

Free-style area- mum/dad or other whanau: write or draw something for your kids or moko's.

