

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

## **The Touchstone**

### **Chapter Four - Matapo the Blind Tohunga**

“Hurry up Matakite! The tohunga is calling for you!”

“What? Who are...? Where the heck am I?”

I went to stand up, but not being used to having sight, I became way dizzy and my knees buckled under me. The unfamiliar movement and colours made everything sway and dip crazily around me. I went to lean against the bridge but it wasn't there anymore!

It took me ages to get use to having sight but as my sight settled into focus, I saw a broad and fast flowing stream right in front me. And when I looked back along the route that I must have walked only twenty minutes ago, there were palisades encircling a small pa! On the other side of the stream was the main pa that I knew as Turuturu Mokai! It towered above the landscape with each set of palisades reaching higher and higher into the sky.

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

I knew the boy who was calling out to me! I knew everything about him even though I'd never met him before!

"Come on Matakite! You mustn't keep Tohunga Matapo waiting! You know how impatient he is!" The boy's name was Rua and he was a mokai - a slave!

I ran in front of him as was the custom for I was Tohunga Matapo's acolyte (student). Crossing the stream by using a series of large flat rocks that'd been placed there for that purpose, we ran around the east side of the main pa skirting the lower palisades. Along the way we passed the vast gardens where some women and young children were gathered talking and laughing amongst themselves. They didn't even look at us as we passed. About midway along the length of palisades we entered Turuturu Mokai.

The palisades opened inwards to make a passage-way about a metre and a half wide. This led us up, past the first ditch, to the second terrace! At the top we did a U-turn and then hurried back in the direction we'd come from.

Finally, we entered into a separate area where the kumara pits, store houses and some pataka (raised storehouses) were. Right at the very edge of the palisades, as far away as possible from every other dwelling was the tohunga's whare. I stopped running suddenly and Rua banged into the back of me. Scowling at him, I stopped to adjust my waistband and quickly touched my manaia for good luck.

The old tohunga's name was Matapo and he was blind. But I'd seen how quickly he'd turned his head to watch me as soon as I'd appeared around the corner!

Where the tohunga's eyes should have been were just deep dark hollows.

His white bushy eyebrows emphasized the dark hollows beneath and his long un-cut white hair fell down about his shoulders, framing his ancient face. Every inch of this face was covered in intricate moko (tattoo) telling the story of his lineage.

His deep wrinkles only served to under-score his sacred power and his nose jutted out imperiously over the sunken line of his lips.

**"So, Matakite... you have come to us!"**

Falling before him I crawled the last few meters and then sat with my head bowed before him.

The smell that came from him hit my nostrils with a jolt. He was pure from the cleansing rituals, but he'd never, ever washed his hair in his whole life! The smell was kinda like putrid grease that I couldn't escape from, even when I held my breath! I swear his face flickered momentarily in humour as he noticed my discomfort.

We sat in silence for what seemed like hours. Every now and again Tohunga Matapo would break into a rhythmic chant invoking various deities.

I was impatient to test out my new-found vision but I knew that I had to sit with my head bowed and not to complain even though my legs were cramping. Sneaking looks from the corners of my eyes I tried to look at as much as possible! But each time I saw something that captured my interest tohunga would grunt loudly or start chanting!

Dusk was beginning to fall when the tohunga finally indicated to me with a nod of his head that we were done. Rua who must have been watching suddenly appeared in front of Tohunga Matapo holding a calabash of water.

Matapo opened his mouth and accepted the stream of water from the korere (funnel) that Rua reverently poured into his open mouth.

“Go. Go and explore boy. Go and experience what your heart has longed for.” Tohunga Matapo’s head then drooped as if spent. Taking this as my cue I backed away, still keeping my head respectfully bowed until I was far enough away to stand up in his presence.

