

The Touchstone

Chapter Eight– Aunty’s

“Bart?” Hine was calling me. “Do you want to come out to Aunty’s at Ohawe?”

“You’d better say yes” Huia instructed. “Because if you say no Mum will go all sappy again and start looking all morose with worry about you!”

“**Save us!**” They chanted, laughing as they pulled me off the bed.

“Get off me you weirdos, I’m coming” Far out! My family is enough to drive anyone crazy. I loved going to aunty’s by the beach. The house always smelt of dogs, cats, the sea and rotting fish heads.

“Sorry about the smell!” Aunty would always apologise, “it’s for the garden... the fish heads you know!”

“We’re just going for a walk along the beach, do you want to come?” Dad asked.

“Nah. I’m gonna hang with Aunty.”

“All good. We’ll be back in time for lunch.”

I made my way into Aunty’s main room. Her house was all open plan. So the couches and beds were all in the same room. Aunty was pottering around preparing the kai for lunch. Every now and again she’d break into some churchy waiata but I could tell she was thinking of a way to ask about what’d happened to me.

“I didn’t get any sleep last night.”

“Why’s that?”

“Some idiots were mucking around in their cars on the reserve wrecking things.”

“Why don’t you just fence it off Aunty? It’s our land isn’t it?”

“Yes but everyone thinks that they have a right to access it!”

“Does it really matter though, Aunty? I mean what damage can they do? I mean it isn’t as if the land is going anywhere!”

“**Bart Kapo-Matakite!** This land is where our ancestors have lived for hundreds of years! Ohawe is one of the first areas we inhabited. Right on that reserve where the boatshed and carpark is and where people drive like they are porangi is where one of the three pas in this area used to be! Except Mr Smarty-pants, that the headland that it sat on has been excavated right down by about 15 metres! So don’t you tell me that our land is not going anywhere!”

I could hear Aunty huffing and puffing to herself.

“And another thing is that these idiots, who muck about driving like they are crazy, leave broken beer bottles and rubbish around. And they also drive drunk when there are kids about!”

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

“All right, Aunty settle down! I agree with you!”

But Aunty hadn't finished with me yet!

“This is such a special area for our people. It's a real shame that everyone can't just enjoy it and be more respectful. Anyway, don't get me worked up!”

But I could tell that Aunty was smiling now. “I have some chocolates hidden away let's have a few before the whanau gets back!” Aunty had the sweetest tooth I have ever known anyone to have! She always had stashes of chocolate or sweets hidden about.

“Do you want to talk about what happened and why you wouldn't open your waha (mouth)?”

“Aunty, do you believe in kehua?”

“Well yes of course! I'm a Christian and we believe in the Holy Spirit.”

“No I don't mean the Lord, I'm talking about normal ghosts, you know like people who used to be alive just like you and me.” I could hear Aunty sucking on her chocolate in deep thought before she replied.

“Bart, there are a lot of things we can't see or don't understand in this world. I don't go searching or trying to make contact with spirits because the Bible tells us not to. But I have faith that there's nothing in this world that does not come under the Lord. So! In answer to your question! Yes, I believe there are ghosts, but I try to ignore them as they belong to a different place.”

“Is the kai ready?” Dad yelled from the doorway. “We're starving!”

Soon the small kitchen was full of my whanau bustling around getting plates out, buttering bread and preparing cups of tea and coffee.

Sitting surrounded by your family and listening to them all happily talking and eating is a special thing. I had the idea that it'd be neat if I could take a mental snapshot of this moment so that I could replay it whenever life got tough.

Sitting there I realised that I was a lucky guy. And with that realisation the depression *started* to lose a bit of its hold on me.

- I knew I couldn't see.
- I didn't even know if what'd happened at Turuturu Mokai was real.
- ✓ But what I did know was that I had a pretty awesome whanau!

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