

## The Touchstone

### Chapter Eleven – The Vision

Nightfall wouldn't be too far away, and I'd just realised that I was starving. Making my way into the cool damp bush I lifted my nose in the air and kept on sniffing about until I'd found what I was after.



Following the pungent smell of harore wafting in the air currents I'd soon tracked down the tasty mushroom. I plucked a number of them from the ground and brushed off any dirt before I popped them into my mouth. Still not satisfied, I busted open a rotten log with a few whacks of a heavy rock. Choice! Inside was heaps of wriggling fat huhu bugs that tasted just like gritty peanut butter!

*Photo of a harore fungi / mushroom*

After I'd eaten, I walked for ages until I was on top of hill that was higher than any other around. Settling myself into a dip that had formed in the ridge-line I had a clear 360-degree view all around me.

I could see Pukehoupapa (Mt Taranaki) rising up out of the forests dominating the distant landscape. And away towards the south west the sky above the horizon was in the process of changing from light blue, to indigo to a starry black. Sitting there I started preparing myself by singing an ancient waiata (song).

The air seemed to settle around me as I emptied my mind. Even though I was now in a meditative trance I picked up on a subtle movement amongst the bushes that were closest to me. The patupaiarehe (fairies) had snuck in closer to watch and listen. These fair skinned fairy folk who had a liking for living in hilly and mountainous areas were usually pretty interested to watch what humans were up to in their areas!

I felt Bart's curiosity aroused and knew that he would have liked to have seen one!

Time passed, and the celestial sky moved continually above me. I saw everything that was going to happen and my eyes wept:

***My visions were of the eight whanau of moa that had made Taranaki their home. I saw them all disappearing one by one.***

***I also witnessed the silencing of many other birds and creatures of the land. Then I saw Pukehoupapa burst forth into life and raining scalding ash down upon the land killing the mighty Rimu forests and sending the last few Moa screaming in terror.***

***I saw a young man confront a huge moa. In my trance like state I felt a great sadness wash over me and I knew that the young man would die. I then saw the moa, a red female, scream as she too was slain, and I heard the roars of the toa's triumph mingling in with her death screams.***

My trance ended, and my eyes flicked open. My chest was heaving as if I'd been running. But the night was completely silent and still.

Away in the distant sky a bright star appeared.

I stood up and held my hand up to my eyes to help focus my vision. As it sped closer it grew in size and brightness until the land was lit by its light. Matakite had no knowledge of this wondrous light in the sky,

but Bart was able explain to him what it was. It was a comet. Halley's comet. This was the sign Matakite had been awaiting.

The night had not quite yet given in to dawn. But Turuturu Mokai was ablaze with light and movement.

On the highest level of the pa was the wharenuī (big meeting house) and sitting in front of it was Tohunga Matapo.

Next to him sat the ariki (chief) and all of the kaumatua (whanau leaders). Many of the toa stood in groups talking and gesturing excitedly amongst themselves. The older men stood behind them and all the wahine were gathered right at the back. Skirting around the edges, I worked my way closer to where the tohunga was sitting.

On the way I spied Rua hiding out behind a large whare. As a mokai he was forbidden to attend such gatherings. As I got closer, Tohunga Matapo's head suddenly lifted and he called out loudly;

"Matakite!"

Far man! This old guy was too much! How did he always know where I was!

Tohunga indicated that I was to kneel next to him.

"So Matakite what did you see?"

"I saw the moa leave our land one by one. I saw many other birds and creatures die. Pukehou papa rained down scalding ash and the ancient Rimu forests were burnt. The hunting toa will be victorious but tears will be wept for a young man who will die. The Gods have allowed the hunt to take place and have sent a great star that will light our way. A great red moa will be killed before this star returns to the Gods."

Tohunga Matapo gestured that I sit at his shoulder while he meditated on my vision.

After a while Tohunga Matapo indicated to the ariki that he was ready.

The ariki rose from his sitting position and took hold of his taiaha. He then held it out at arms-length before he skilfully swung both the taiaha and his body around in a graceful curve to end kneeling in front of Tohunga Matapo.

Unlike anyone else was allowed, the ariki's head remained above the tohunga's and his eyes keenly searched the tohunga's face hunting for an indication of what he had to say.

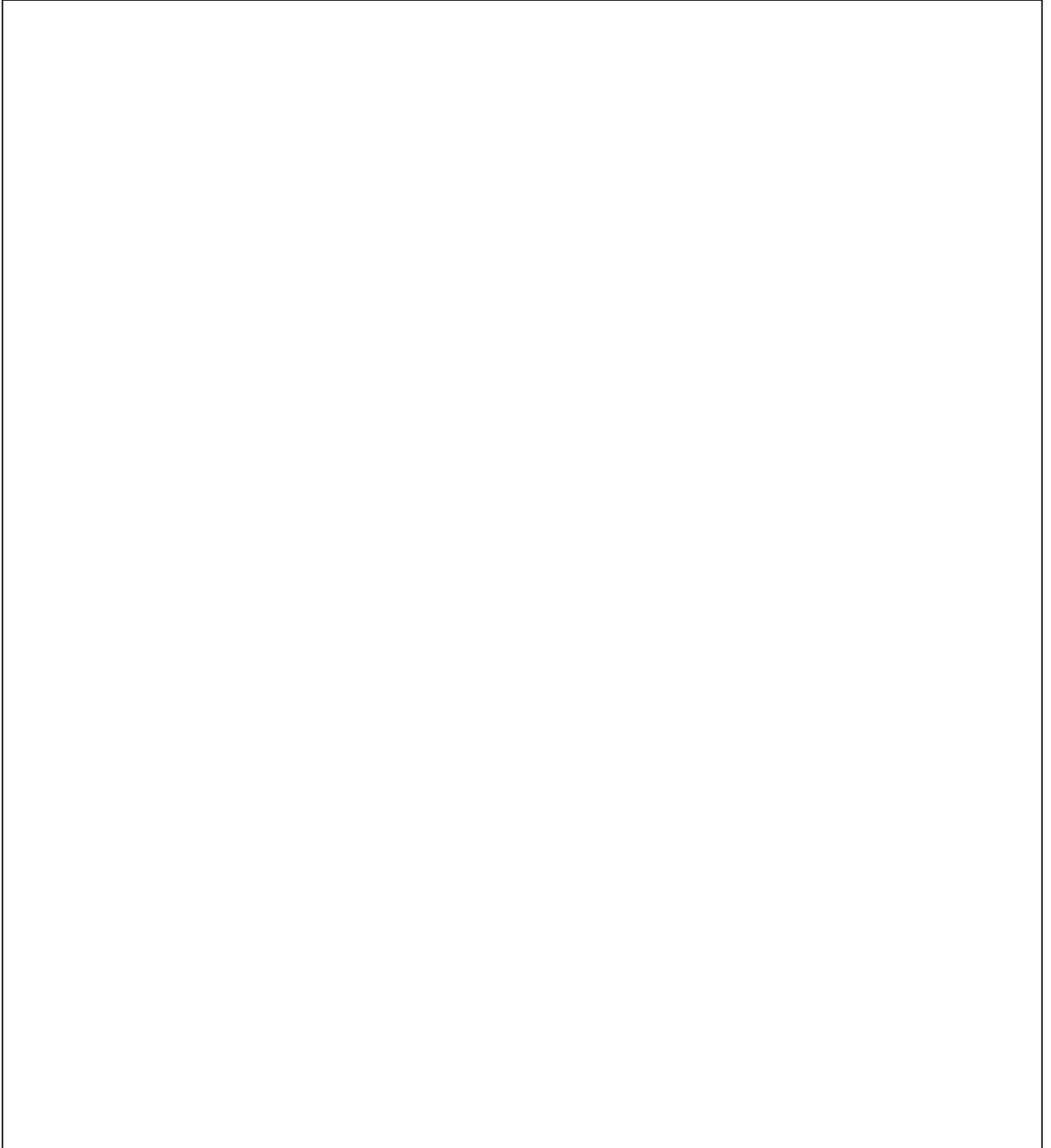
"Tell me what the Gods have instructed! Will the hunt take place? Will we meet with success?"

Matapo then relayed what I'd told him to the ariki. But he'd added in some more detail. Speaking loud enough for everyone to hear, the tohunga said:

"A young toa will lose his life! He will die with honour! He will be taken back into the breast of the Gods on the tail of the star that those very Gods have sent us! And his name will remain long after we are gone!"

A ripple of excitement went through everyone who was gathered. But I'd been watching the face of one of the youngest toa who'd been chosen for the hunt.

He had a fire burning in his eyes and I knew that he wanted to be the one to kill the mighty moa!



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