

The Touchstone

Chapter Nineteen – Saturday at the Reserve

I slunk off down to my room as soon as I could get away after I'd helped put the dishes in the dishwasher after dinner. I felt like my brain was stuffed full of crap that I needed to process. I shucked off my clothes, crawled into bed and curled up under my duvet and just lay there for ages.

My mind was like totally blank until I started recalling all the shit that'd been happening. I just couldn't get over my sisters, dad and aunty telling me that I was basically a sad arse. I knew that it was mostly sort of true I just didn't know how to fix it. I was obviously just born pessimistic or something! Stuff knows! Because I didn't!

Later that night I texted Maddy just on the off-chance that she'd want to come and give me a hand at the Turuturu Mokai reserve on Saturday. I didn't hear back from her and so was really surprised when she came around home on Saturday morning.

"Oh hey Maddy! I didn't think you were coming!"

"Hey there back at you Bart. Well I didn't have anything happening this morning and so thought I'd come and give you a hand, and I guess I have missed your sad looking face a bit."

"**Lame**" I said. I felt her punch me on the upper arm.

"**Whatever Bart!**"

My mum must've thought we were going camping or something just as random because she'd packed enough food to last me a week!

"See ya you two! Have a great day! Enjoy yourselves!"

I could hear my Mum calling out stuff like this long after we'd left. I knew she was just over doing the whole 'lets-be-happy' routine because she just wanted me 'n' Maddy to be mates again. Normally her yelling out like that would have annoyed the heck out of me, but I was just pleased to be hanging out with Maddy again, so I let it go.

"Kia ora Bart!" Milt greeted us. "I see you've bought an extra worker, too much! Can you start clearing away anything leaning on the fence wire for me. Stuff like branches or any blackberry growth that is winding around the fence. The cost of replacing any length of rural fencing is huge and so we have to maintain what we have. Just start at the bridge and work your way along as far as you can before lunchtime."

Maddy and I worked together. I pretty much worked on my knees the whole way using my hands to clear any crap away from the bottom part of the fence. Maddy worked above me and cleared any branches from trees that were hanging over the fence line. It was hard mahi but working together made it okay. We talked about all sorts of stuff, but I was dying to find out if she was going out with some other guy.

As usual it was Maddy who was just came straight out and said what was on her mind.

“Bart we’re good mates aye?”

“Well yeah I thought we were.” I replied. My heart had sunk a bit at her just calling us ‘good mates’. I didn’t think that sounded too promising.

“Well you know sometimes, she said, your attitude really sucks.”

What the heck? I thought to myself. What is it with everybody hating on me lately?

“Most of the time, Maddy continued, you’re awesome and really fun to hang out with and I really like you...but when you start going on about being blind you totally suck to be around. It’s like lately I’m never sure what type of a mood you’re gonna be in and I find it too much to handle sometimes. I just wish you’d deal with whatever is eating at you.”

We worked together quietly for a bit more while I absorbed what she’d said. Then I thought I’d take the bull by its horns too.

“My sisters said you were going out with some guy. Like, is this true?”

“We’ll I’m friends with lots of guys Bart! But yeah there is someone I’ve been hanging out with lately. He’s fun and we always have a laugh.”

At that point my breath kind of turned in on itself, like I couldn’t quite catch it or something. I never knew words could hurt so bad. Maddy continued blithely on totally unaware of how her words were killing me.

“But I don’t know, she said...its early days yet.”

“Haeri Mai you two! It’s lunch time, let’s have our kai!” Milt had come around the corner on his 4WD and had our backpacks with him. “Jump on guys and we’ll head up to the top of the pa so that we can eat together and enjoy the view. Oh! Sorry Bart, no offence e’hoa!”

I’d felt a glimmer of hope spark up when Maddy had made the comment of it being ‘early days’ with that other dude and so I tried to act chilled out and easy to be around. I’d heard someone say once that when you want to learn a new type of behaviour the best way to do it is to fake it till you make it! And that’s what I’d decided to do!

We had a real laugh over lunch, we’d all worked hard and were pleased with our progress and Milt was a pretty laxed guy for an adult.

We’d decided to sit by the pou to eat our lunch and were all leaning against the picket fence. I still was getting those weird electric sensations which I was learning to ignore. We were laughing about something when totally out of the blue I heard Rua call out loudly right behind me;

‘Matakite!’

As soon as I heard Rua yell out to me, it was as if a blind had been lifted from my eyes and I realised that I could see!

I turned to look behind me and could see Rua standing inside the picket fenced area surrounding the pou. He was smiling and waving out to me and then I realised that Maddy and Milt could also see him!

They were staring at him with their mouths wide open!

And then Maddy turned towards me and I realised that she was more than just gorgeous! She was like totally beautiful!

But Rua kept calling out impatiently and then I started to feel that familiar sensation of slipping away...

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



The Pou – Turuturu Mokai - Hawera

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