

Catch a boy!

Hi _____

Freestyle Area - Let your parent know why you sent this story & what's happening that's new in your life.

Kia ora - For most of my childhood I couldn't read, write or talk. When I was 10 years old a couple of major changes occurred in my life & one of the outcomes was that I found the ability to read. Suddenly I could escape from my world which was full of upheaval and abuse into a world of my choosing by simply opening a book.

I didn't do well at school & so when I was in prison, I started to do re-do my school work. I've only recently finished my NCEA Level 2 English. Before doing NCEA I had no idea how to write properly or where to put all the grammar stuff.

Anyway - I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm a long way off being a good writer & so I'm asking for your patience when I don't tell a story 'quite right.' Also, never think I'm judging in my stories especially like when I talk about gang stuff etc.

Finding ourselves & then being able to live the life we want to, can be a hard & long road. During my years I've seen so many of my whanau stuck in the 'same old same old' & of course I came across so many gifted & talented youth in prison. For this reason, one theme that does run through a lot of my stories is 'finding yourself.'

The other thing I want to add in here is that when I was a kid & then a young adult, I had no idea how many awesome & exciting things there are to do in this world - I mean how could I? I'd been a foster kid from 8 weeks old & all I knew was a whole lot of pain - but trust me on this. Take the time now, while you're in prison to explore your mind & make some plans & goals. This is definitely a journey you can share over the on-coming years with your kids.

Arohanui to you from Darby

Catch a Boy - Part 2-2

The last time I saw Tonga he was standing silhouetted in that mysterious mist waving at me.

Time passed. We all grew up.

Most Sundays I'd like to call in and have lunch with my old folks after they'd been to Church. For some reason they'd both developed an obsession for talking about the past.

"Do you know that the original name of Turuturu Mokai is still unknown?" Mum once started a conversation with. Then she went on to reminisce.

"You know I always wondered what the real name was and if I'd only collected a penny for every time I looked out of the kitchen window past little Tonga Hake pa to wonder at Turuturu Mokai, well! I'd be a wealthy woman" she continued.

"I didn't know that the smaller pa was called Tonga Hake." I butted into the conversation.

"Do you both remember my best mate Tonga who lived over at the pa?"

My dad chuckled, and I noticed that he gave mum a quick wink. "Oh yes! Your special friend Tonga! How could we have forgotten him?"

"What was that game you use to go on about?" Mum asked.

"Catch a boy! Hey, I wonder what Tonga's doing now?"

Mum and Dad just looked back at me and didn't say a word.

Life is good. Or so it was until I got sick. But to be fair I'd have to say that I'd lived a charmed life. I'd done all the things you're supposed to do at the appointed times: I'd done okay at school, been to university, had a good job, married and had two children and to top it all off I can say that I was a genuinely happy and content guy.

But the thought of my actual dying scared me. I'd look at my body and run my hands over my stomach trying to feel the black malignancy inside. I couldn't see it and apart from the occasional appearance of blood in the toilet bowl, I didn't even feel crook yet. But I knew it was there, growing at pace with my burgeoning fear.

Sadly, both my parents had died within weeks of each other last winter and I really miss them. I acknowledge that you might find it a bit strange that a man well into his fifties still wants his mum and dad. But it's true, I'd love to feel my mums touch and my dad's words of comfort. Still I expect that's normal enough.

Catch a boy, catch a boy.

Every-time I doze off lately or fall into a light sleep I can even hear my old mate Tonga calling to me. Again, I expect that this's normal too as my ailing body and brain start to shut down. I suppose all sorts of weird chemical things are happening inside me. It'd be interesting I suppose...if it wasn't happening to me!

Both day and night either my wife or one of my two sons are now always with me. On my good days we talk about the wonderful times we'd shared both as a husband and wife and as a family.

I try to convey to my sons and wife just how precious they are to me and how much I love them. But now in these fleeting days the words feel like an arrangement of letters fallen haphazardly from the alphabet and totally fail to transfer my adoration in a way that's meaningful.

One such day my beautiful wife who was stroking my hand looked at me and said "husband, I'm taking you home to Turuturu Mokai. You may not know it my love, but when you sleep you call for your old friend Tonga and I have a feeling that this need must be fulfilled."

Even though my body was now weak and feeble, I felt a rejoicing inside of me. Home. I'm going home.

I had no words to express my aroha to my wife. She'd always had the knack of knowing just what I needed. She wiped away the tears that fell from my eyes and pressed her nose against mine so that we could breathe in harmony. Arohanui. Arohanui.

The drive across to Taranaki mostly passed in a blur for me. But I do recall the sound of my wife and sons singing and even in my dreams their voices soothed my pain.

My amazing wife had got things organized before we'd made the journey and so there was a man waiting to let us onto the reserve. He'd opened the gates so that my wife could drive up around to the higher land next to the pa, close to where a lone horse was grazing.

Supported on each side by one of my strong sons we walked slowly towards the old pou.

My wife walked in front singing an East Coast waiata about coming home. I felt my spirits lift. The sights hadn't changed.

The line of cabbage trees was bigger of course, but everything else looked the same to me.



In the warmth of the sun, my sons laid me down to rest against the red wooden panels that surrounded the old memorial pou. My wife cradled my head in her lap and gently stroked my forehead.

I was indeed the luckiest man in the world. Even though I knew I was close to death, I had never felt so loved in my whole life. My eyes sought my wife's and then each of my sons before returning once more to gaze at my wife. I smiled and squeezed her hand and felt her respond.

“Catch a boy! Catch a boy!”

My tired eyes opened to see Tonga standing next to the pou just behind my family. The setting sun was behind him almost blinding me, but it was him. It was Tonga my childhood friend and he hadn't aged at all.

He came close enough so that I could make out his cheeky smile.

“Do you want to play?” he asked.

I smiled back at him. “What planet are you on Tonga? Look how old and feeble I am!”

“You could play if you wanted to. Do you want to play?”

“Yes!”

“Come on then!”

I stood up and looked down at my weary and faithful body. I walked around my family three times just looking at them. I didn't feel sad that I was leaving them, but I did feel a certain wistfulness that we weren't going to be sharing this adventure together.

But at least I now had a certainty that when the time was right, that they would rejoin me. My Mansion has many rooms.

Tonga and I played catch a boy and ran laughing as we re-discovered our favorite hiding places and trees to climb. It must've been a lot later in the day because by now we were both lying totally exhausted as only children can do after a full-on day of playing.

Far in the distance I heard my mum call out for me.

I turned to Tonga, “do you want to come home with me for dinner?”

“I thought you'd never ask!” He cheekily called out as he ran off towards the sound of my mum's voice loudly calling us in for dinner.

As Tonga ran, he was shouting, **“catch a boy, catch a boy!”**

“Tonga ya big cheat, wait for me!”

“Mum, Dad!”

“It's me! I'm coming!”