

## Te Ngeru O Turuturu Mokai

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 Daryl*

## Te Ngeru O Turuturu Mokai – Part 2-2

*In effect we both leapt together. Straight over the fence into the...*

I expected to say we leapt together into the pou. Except that we didn't.

If you've ever had an electric shock, well it was and wasn't like that. It was also akin to jumping into a wind tunnel that swirled you around and then spat you out the other end.

So, one second, I was leaping, then I was tossed and swirled and then I landed flat on my backside winding myself in the process. When my sight steadied, and my breath returned the very first thing that I noticed was the cat.

It was glaring at me while swishing its tail angrily from side to side.

I had found out grey puss's secret.

He was a time-traveler.

If ever a cat could talk, well! I would have been told-off in no uncertain terms. After a yowling admonishment the cat huffily stalked off.

Allowing the cat to wander freely I followed him carefully keeping a fair distance between us.

We were still on Turuturu Mokai that was for sure. But, it was a vastly different Turuturu Mokai from the one we'd just left.

Large palisades now ringed and divided the pa. They were deeply dug in and bound by tightly woven flax chords with pennants of woven flax and feathers waving in the wind from the highest points.

There were also many a lot of people about who all appeared far too engaged in their tasks to bother taking any notice of me.

The cat hurried past the people ignoring them but every now and again he'd divert from his path to rub against a young child. When this happened, the child would cry out in delight and scamper off after the cat.

The cat was soon lost to my sight, but it was easy enough to follow him as all I needed to do was follow the ever-growing line of children who were now trailing after cat.

Having quickly understood that none of the adults or older children could see the cat as he moved amongst them I'd soon found myself entering a smaller palisaded area set apart from the main pa.

In front of me were many food stores sitting on top of intricately carved poles. There were four deep food storage pits that were skillfully lined with wood paneling and I could count three small huts.

On the very far side of this enclosed area was an old man sitting cross-legged. His face and forehead were covered with dark indigo tattoos which'd been deeply carved into his skin. Where his eyes should've been were just deep dark gaping holes. The old man was blind.

The children that'd all been scampering after the grey cat were now sitting quietly around this old man. None of them seemed too keen to sit close to him.

When I overheard one child remind another 'not to get too close to Tohunga Matipo' I understood the reason for the distance.



The grey cat was laying on it's back batting its paws at a feather the tohunga was tickling him with. The children were watching with big smiles on their faces and their eyes wide open in amazement.

One little girl eagerly called out to the elderly tohunga;

"Can you make te ngeru walk like us?"

With a flourish of his hand the tohunga lifted the feather and as he did the cat stood on his hind legs confidently pursuing the feather to shrieks of laughter.

Eventually the cat'd had enough of games and promptly curled up to sleep in the comfort of the tohunga's lap.

Another child, a little boy this time, asked tohunga to tell them stories of te ngeru's adventures.

The blind tohunga hummed to him-self as he stroked the cat and as time passed words formed out of the sounds he made.

*Te ngeru, te ngeru the grey secret holder  
Te ngeru see's all that was and is to be  
Its only te ngeru who'll know our name  
Which he'll only whisper back to the wind...*

The day wove its way towards its end and one by one the children were called away to their dinners or other duties.

Watching from my hiding place amongst the shadows eventually only the old man and cat were left.

The old tohunga was still humming to himself as he stroked the sleeping cat. After a while he sung softly to me.

*Old man time  
Hiding in the shadows  
I see you, I see you  
Old man time, watcher of the ways  
I see you, I see you*

Knowing my game was up I moved out of the shadows and sat companionably beside Tohunga Matipo.

Time was shared. We talked. We ate. We sat in silence. We shared breath.

Eventually the tohunga flicked his chin up in a way that indicated that the evening was growing late for an old man. Without standing he held up the sleeping cat whom I took and held close to my chest.

I whispered a good night to Tohunga Matipo and retraced my steps back up to the top of the pa.

Just before reaching what was the highest point I stopped to appreciate the view one last time. This large pa was well-lit by its many cooking fires that twinkled around me like a forest of stars.

Holding tight to the sleeping cat my breath caught and my admiring eyes welled with un-spent tears.

I was overcome by **deep sadness**.

This taonga will lose its name.

I know knew that to be a truth. But my sadness was fueled by the knowledge that the name wouldn't be lost to **time** myself as commonly thought.

**No.**

The name of this place would be **purposely ended**.

Cleaved rudely off.

Ripped away.

Banished from memory.

Only the mischievous grey cat who wore the eternal sign of eternity above his eye had the power to reveal the mighty name.

Oh! And of course, myself.

Ever capricious

Old Man Time.



**The End**