

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*

## Starfish Part 2-4

*Would it be quicker to go up over the old pa or run around the big ox-bow path?*

Making a choice I set off and started scrambling up the steep bank. The going was tough, not only because of the long slippery grass and spiky gorse bushes, but also thanks to the deep storage pits that'd been dug into the ground long ago.

All the while the conversations were still going on in my head.

"I don't know whose house I'm going into and I don't want to nick their stuff. What if they're like old or nervous people? It'll just bum them out big-time when they get home to find they've been burgled."

"Come on Starfish, don't wimp out - it's good that you don't know them. It'll make it easier. Just do it man. Get it over and done with. Besides, it's not like you have a choice, because it's either do or die tonight Starfish my man."

By the memorial pou, surrounded by its practical red picket fence, I took a minute to catch my breath. Moonlight shone through the pickets. The differing light bands shivered deliciously like a zebra wearing a hide of moon-silver and night-black stripes.



Startled from my nighttime daydream by a morepork that'd suddenly started hooting over by the northern redoubt entrance my head instinctively swiveled to try and locate the owls' hiding place.

That's when I saw him.

There was a guy crouched down on one knee watching me. Except he wasn't watching me because his face was hidden behind his arm raised up and across his face.

He looked both substantial and translucent. Sort of firm but see-through. I was just trying to work this out in my head, when he started turning towards me. As he moved, a roaring sound like the wind tore right through me.

Before he was able to reveal his face, my legs were already moving like a windmill, driven at breakneck speed propelling me helter-skelter back down the way I'd climbed so cautiously only minutes before.

It was sometime later, up towards Glover Road, when I finally slowed down, stopping only when Kingi's car with its distinctive rumbly purr pulled up alongside me. Standing in front of Kingi with my head bowed and an empty bag meant his answer was swift.

He king-hit me. Down I went like a sack of spuds. Last thing I remember is the sight and feel of the bros kicking the shit out of me. Still, I guess I deserved it, so there's no complaints from me.

The following days and nights passed in a delirium of pain and broken sleep. My face was swollen, and my kidneys had taken a pounding. My only medicine was a bottle of whisky that I'd nicked from home when Mum was out.

During the day, I laid low out back where the guard dogs, maddened by boredom, were tethered. Their kennels, little more than rotting wood and splinters, sat crookedly amongst the piles of shit and broken bones that'd started gathering long before I was born.

Wrapping my arms around the oldest and sanest of the dogs, I buried my face deep into his matted fur. Like those chains that held the dogs to their miserable world, the bitter smell of his fur tethered me firmly to this altered and now very flimsy world.

By the time I was twelve, I'd realized that there were other people who weren't like me and my whanau. At the time this knowledge had totally rocked my world. But this ghost thing was just too big for me to figure out. Not only were there others to contend with, now there were even worse other others.

What the hell else was waiting for me out there? It was all way too confusing and unsettling.

A ghost. I'd seen a real ghost. Nothing was ever going to be the same.

At night, I slept hidden in the back of our garage and when I did fall into a drunken sleep, I was plagued by images of that ghost haunting me. I'd tried to stay awake as much as I could, but the lack of sleep and pain was starting to muck about with my head.

See, I knew that eventually I'd have to go back to Turuturu Mokai and finish what I'd started, otherwise I'd never be able to go home. I needed to get that burglary done and redeem myself.

I was tired of trying to think this through. Taking another big mouthful of whisky my last decipherable thoughts were, "Either way Starfish my man, you're stuffed."

**"Boy, get up."**

Kingi'd found me. It was redemption time.

**Read Part Three to find out what happens next**