

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 3-4

**“Boy, get up.”**

*Kingi'd found me. It was redemption time.*

Just like deja vu there went the red taillights disappearing up the road. Retracing my steps, I'd soon found myself approaching the memorial pou set at the highest point of Turuturu Mokai.

He was waiting for me.

Like before he was crouching with his face turned away and hidden by his raised arm.

Either out aloud or inside my head I stood my ground and growled defiantly, “I'm not scared of you,” as he started to move towards me.

Surprisingly, it was true that I wasn't scared. After all these pain filled days, I'd had enough of being the victim.

The ghost was facing me. His arm had dropped, but his hand was still covering his face.

His fingers parted, and I could see his eyes looking at me through his spread fingers.

“Tito.”

I heard my name. The ghost had said my real name.

“Tito Waru.”

Having said my name, the hand that'd been held up in front of his face turned into a fluid wiri, fluttering like a leaf shaken by the wind. While making this motion, he moved towards me, taking intricate steps and kicking his heels up behind him just like the captain of the All Blacks leading the haka.

He chanted my name as he shape-shifted above the darkening silver shadows fluttering just above the long grasses beaded with dew.

With each call of my name, he'd dramatically pukana, with a thrusting tongue and bulging of his eyes. He'd come to a stop just in front of me and we stood looking at each other.

My chest was heaving like I'd just run a marathon, but I can't say that I felt scared. More than anything, I was just totally curious about this guy.

We would've been about the same age. Our height and build were pretty much the same, but his hair, unlike mine, had been tied up into an intricate top-knot. What looked like hand-woven linen had been wound around his waist and tied up between his legs. A bone patu finely fractured with age had been stuck into his wais-band. He looked cool.

He raised his hand back up to his face to look at me through his spread fingers. Closing his fingers with a snap, he altered the movement so that he was performing the wiri again as he moved his hand down and away from his face. He spoke.

“You’re not Starfish. You’re Tito Waru.”

He reached forward and touched me lightly in the center of my chest. Then tapping his own chest in the same spot, he spoke again.

“Ancestor.”

A feeling that I can best describe as completion washed over me, and then, with a grin, he just vanished.

Standing completely alone on top of Turuturu Mokai I laid my hand over the spot where his hand had been, and for the first time in days, I smiled. It felt as if a great weight had just been taken from me.

Racing and sliding down the old embankments, I sprinted back up towards the entrance gate where Kingi’s car was already rumbling hungry and eager to leave.

Clearing the entrance gate in one easy bound, I stood boldly illuminated in the full beam of Kingi’s car lights. After performing my own pukana, I bellowed out to the occupants:

“I’m Tito Waru and I’m my own man so fuck you!”

The front door was flung violently open and Kingi stepped out.

Moving towards me using that stiff gang shuffle with his arms braced above his head while yelling obscenities and gang slogans, I thought I was about to get the major bash. Instead, for the first time in my life, Kingi stopped and looked at me directly in the face.

**“So, you’ve made your choice son?”**



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