

Ruka Trilogy – Story One – I was Mere. I am Ruka

Hi _____

Freestyle Area - Let your loved one know why you sent this story.

Kia ora young one, I hope you like the story I've written for you. I was brought up in the NZ foster system & just like your mum or dad I've been in prison to. I like writing stories for you because writing is a good way to share your feelings & thoughts. I also have a 'vibrant' imagination & so being able to write lets me use this fun part of my brain.

I want to share some of my thoughts with you because I've a feeling that you'll understand what I mean. When I was a kid & then a teenager, I didn't really hold a lot of hope. I couldn't read or write for most of my childhood & I didn't speak much either. I also didn't trust people & never felt safe around them.

& then, I was surprised in later life to learn that: there are more good people than bad people & that there are so many cool things to do in this world. Please let my message of hope help you during this hard time & please:

Learn to be 'your champion.' When you do something well, congratulate yourself, when you feel sad, acknowledge your feelings - but don't let them take over you. Also learn to read books as that will teach you all sorts of useful things & allow you some escapism when life gets hard. The thing to hold onto is that **one day you will be an adult** & the ruler of your own destiny.

Arohanui to you from Darby

She couldn't see out of the bus window because of the condensation. So the girl used her sleeve to try and wipe a patch clear, but her woollen school jersey couldn't absorb the moisture and so she only succeeded in making a bigger mess. The condensation was the final straw. Sitting there, she quietly gave up on life, and her tears fell, unhindered, trekking down her sad face. Her eyes were blank and didn't show the enormity of the decision she'd just made.

Shame! Stupid bitch! Crying like an emo! A pimply faced boy about her age sneered at her as he swaggered down the aisle of the swaying bus. She didn't even notice him.

Stepping off the bus, the cold wind knifed through her clothing. She stood there in silent misery looking at the familiar sights that made up her life; state houses, car wrecks jacked up on piles of bricks, graffiti and gutters over-flowing with trash.

A young boy with wild un-kept hair circled aimlessly around and around in the middle of the street on a bike way too big for him. And a coke can rattled eerily as it was blown down the street. To the girl with the sad face, the empty can was the final omen. A confirmation from 'the beyond' that her life was empty and pointless.

The grating sound of her key in the lock echoed around the hallway. She smelt the familiar smell of home that'd always made her feel nauseous; old cooking and the faint smell of alcohol. She slowly walked up the stairs to her bedroom, each step draining her of energy in a way that only the terminally ill can really understand. She sought the refuge of her bed and burrowed deep into her blankets.

Her eyes were wide open, but already dulled by the opaqueness of death. She was just 15 years old and all done in. She sucked, her life sucked, everything sucked. She was tired and had had enough. She craved the serenity of sleep and only wanted to fade away. After a while, she stood and walked back out into the hallway. At her little brother's door, she paused and looked into his room. Her eyes momentarily came to life, before the spark flickered and died.

"See ya little bro, luv ya" she whispered.

At the bridge the girl stood for a long time listening to the roar of the water. In the roaring she could hear voices, snatches of old conversations and the sound of laughter. These sounds drew her in and made her want to become one with the twisting and healing waters below.

The girl saw and heard all of these things, but it was as if she saw and heard them all from a distance. It was like she was already gone and no longer had anything to do with this empty shell of a girl. Climbing over the rail her cold numb hands held tight to the wet cold steel. Her eyes were shut tight and her sad mouth was set in a silent wail as she stood poised.

A voice whispered in her ear, telling her that as soon as she took the step and let go, that things would be better and that there'd be no more pain. She listened to the words and crooned them to herself like a lullaby...no more pain, no more pain, but just as she let go, her startled eyes flew wide open, made brilliant by fear and panic and she shouted out in a voice that held every atom of her being in it; **'No!'**

The girl, in that split second, that yawn between life and death, had made her final choice and her choice was to ***live***.

**But it was too late,
she had taken that step,
that final irrevocable step and
... the die was cast.**

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My name is Ruka Mataika and when I was 7 years old my sister killed herself and me and my mum's lives were changed forever.

I will always remember the day my sister died. Her name was Mereana, but we called her Mere. Mum had to work late that night and so I waited for her at the Library. I liked looking at all the pictures in the books, and always felt happy walking around smelling the dry fusty smell of the Library. When my mum came to pick me up, I played my game; I'd stand still and watch her eyes hungrily search for me and then, when she saw me, as always, she'd whisper to herself "my boy". I knew this as I could lip read those words and her happiness in seeing me, would always make me feel special.

The night Mere died, mum and I'd held hands as we ran laughing and leaping over the bigger puddles as we raced towards the bus stop. Mum had some money and so we'd bought a \$15.00 fish and chip special to take home for our tea. Riding home on the bus that night, we chatted happily together about our day. Mum had bought Mere a new top as a surprise and was looking forward to showing her. But we both fell silent when we noticed the other people on the bus, all craning forward to see what was going on as we neared our bus stop.

Where our house was, it was all lit up by strobing red and blue lights. The rain and condensation on the bus windows made the colours even more magnified and eerie. I can remember hearing mum begin a low pitched moaning that just got louder and louder as she pulled me off the bus, running and stumbling towards our house. Standing at our gate were two cops and seeing them I remember how mum just dropped to her knees and screamed. I'd always wondered how she knew that Mere was dead cause no one had said anything. But she knew, and mum was never the same.

I still can't figure out why Mere left. She was so awesome and good at everything, even school stuff.

I miss her.

She used to call me 'Short Shanks' and she'd read me stories in bed like Harry Potter and Alex Cross.

When Mere died, mum forgot me and then she had a break-down and I went into foster care.

I hate it.

When Mere left, she took my mum too.

A question to think on: Has anything ever happened to you, or perhaps to someone you know that has changed or altered your/their path in life? I ask this because in this story trilogy I wrote for you, we look at how Mere's decision impacts those she loved. Heaps of things can alter that way 'your life should be' - death, violence, abuse, mum/dad going away etc..

Think on this: Every now & again stop & take a clear & critical look at your life & assess what is good for you & what's doing you no fav's: Example: my mums in prison & I'm in care. 1) Acknowledge: yup that sucks. 2) Then: Make a plan to move forward (make some goals), 3) Don't: React like a dumb-ass - what I mean here is this: don't throw in the towel & give up on things. Now more than ever you need to step up & take control of **yourself**. Be aware that booze & drugs, are available, but keep your smarts & look after yourself first & foremost. **Mana motuhake young one & never forget that: Life is for Living.**