

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**A VA'INE APPROACH TO CREATIVE WRITING: THE
TĪVAEVAE FRAMEWORK AND THE CALABASH BREAKER**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters
in
Creative Writing

at Massey University, Manawatu,
New Zealand

Stacey Kokaua-Balfour

2019

Abstract

This thesis explores an approach to creative writing embedded with an indigenous cultural framework from the Cook Islands. The tīvaevae framework, based around the process of constructing Cook Islands tīvaevae quilts, shapes both the critical and creative components of the thesis. The critical component explains how the tīvaevae framework is utilised and includes a discussion of an archetype called the calabash breaker, named after the poem of the same name by Selina Tusitala Marsh. The calabash breaker appears in different guises in both traditional and contemporary Moana narratives and can be recognised by her strong links to family, community and place, combined with tendency to rebel against the social conventions of her community. Typically, her insubordinate nature drives the narrative towards her ultimate act of disruption while also providing a method of social critique. Characters who share the traits of the calabash breaker are explored through a close reading of Witi Ihimaera's novel *Whale Rider* (1987) and Sia Figiel's novel *The Girl in the Moon Circle* (1996). In the creative component, a middle grade novel titled *The Mōmoke's Daughter*, a Rarotongan girl named Kimiora from Porirua discovers she is the daughter of a mōmoke, a figure from Rarotongan cultural narratives. Kimiora and her friend return to the world of the mōmoke in the depths of te Moananui a Kiva, the Pacific Ocean. The book has a strong environmental concerns and explores what it means to be Indigenous to the Pacific while also part of a global community that is responsible for so much of the environmental destruction of ocean habitats. The novel uses the calabash breaker, expressed through the character of Kimiora, to explore Cook Islands ideas about identity, family, belonging, place and the role of mana tiaki (kaitiaki) of ocean environments.

Acknowledgements

Kia orāna kōtou kātoatoa i te aro'a ma'ata o te Atua,

Many people have contributed their time, energy and thought to this project. Some of these people I have known since birth, others I met through the process of writing this thesis. My love and gratitude goes out to the following: te Va'inetini, va'ine Kūki 'Āirani from all walks of life, from Dunedin to Auckland to Rarotonga; tōku pūapi'i, Tina Makereti; te au taeake, particularly Amie Curtis, Bridie Scott, Charleen Silcock, Emma Powell, Gail Mitchell, Sophie Lascarides and Vanessa Te Huia; tōku Kōpū Tangata, particularly Rebecca Blair, Sara Kokaua, Hamish Kokaua and Liam Kokaua; ngā Metua, Jesse and Anne Kokaua; tāku tama, Joseph and Owen; and finally tāku tāne, Michael. For every stitch, every moment, every word that was contributed to this work.

Meitaki ma'ata.



Tivaevae designed by Māmā Jane Kokaua. Photograph courtesy of Anne Kokaua.

CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Notes on Language Use	1
Part One – Critical Component	3
Introduction.....	3
1. The Tīvaevae Framework: A Va'ine Approach to Creative Writing	5
'Akapapa.....	6
'Akaruru	8
Pākoti	9
Tuitui.....	10
2. The Calabash Breaker: Exploring an Indigenous archetype.....	12
we all know/ the calabash breakers.....	15
the boundaries / always crossed.....	22
the unsettled / they stroke the lines of our stories.....	28
we now need them / to catch bigger suns	33
Part Two: Creative Component	36
The Mōmoke's Daughter	36
by Stacey Kokaua	36
1. I Mua.....	37
2. Te 'Opega	40

3.	Te Tīvaevae Moana.....	48
4.	Tā'oki	53
5.	Taeake.....	63
6.	Ngā Tara.....	68
7.	Te Anaroa.....	74
8.	Ko Ati e te Mōmoke	84
9.	Ko Tēpaeru e te Tāne.....	90
10.	Nga'i 'Uipā'anga	101
11.	Te Ngutu'are.....	105
12.	Kōpū Tangata.....	113
13.	Te 'Uipā'anga.....	122
14.	Tāmamae'ia	133
15.	Tika'anga.....	139
16.	Vairākau.....	147
17.	Te Kāpua'anga.....	153
	Part Three: O'ora te Tīvaevae	158
	Works Cited	160

Notes on Language Use

In this thesis I use te reo Māori o Kūki 'Āirani, the official language of the Cook Islands (although only one of many diverse dialects and languages) (Nicholas 5). It is important to note that both the Indigenous peoples of New Zealand and the Cook Islands call their language te reo Māori. If I need to discern the two languages I will use the terms te reo Māori o Kūki 'Āirani and te reo Māori o Aotearoa. For consistency across my creative work and to acknowledge the significance of te reo in my own worldview, I have not italicised Cook Islands terms or terms from any other Moana language, nor do I provide a glossary. I draw inspiration from Patricia Grace who argues that minority cultures must be given “the same freedom as other writers to be true to what they know and true to who they are” (71). On occasion, when knowledge of terms is particularly pertinent, I provide an in-text definition or footnote. However these definitions seldom reveal the full contextual implication of terms. As Anahera Gildea writes, sometimes there are simply “no English equivalents that [can] render enough truth”. Fortunately, there are now several accessible online resources that interested readers can draw upon if they wish to seek the definitions of terms.¹

I use the term Moana in place of other terms such as Pacific, Pasifika, or Oceania. Lana Lopesi notes the increased use of the term among scholars stating “Ōkunitino Māhina, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai and Tēvita Ka'ili have picked up on how the term *moana* centres indigenous commonality, providing a way to discuss this part of the world”. The term also defers to my own heritage (Rarotonga and Pāmati) and the mana whenua of Aotearoa who use very similar terms to describe the Pacific Ocean: the former using te Moananui a Kiva,

¹ Cook Islands Maori Dictionary (<http://www.cook-islands-maori-dictionary.org/>) is a primary example.

the latter using te Moananui a Kiwa. Consequently in using this term I include the literature of Māori authors of Aotearoa alongside the literature from authors of Moana island nations. This is not to imply that the Indigenous cultures of Aotearoa and across the Pacific are homogenous. However, there are cultural similarities between the Cook Islands and te Ao Māori o Aotearoa as well as other Pacific nations, and it is in relation to those similarities that the term is used. I wish to acknowledge that although I do not address many Indigenous cultures directly, this does not mean they are not included in this definition of Moana but rather the scope of this work does not permit analysis beyond what is presented. To paraphrase Albert Wendt, we cannot pretend to know te Moananui in all her manifestations (“Towards a New Oceania, 49).

Part One – Critical Component

INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this thesis is to explore an approach to fiction writing in a way that makes sense in a Cook Islands cultural context. My creative work re-imagines a customary cultural narrative of Rarotonga, meaning it draws from a collectively shared oral tradition. As I considered the collective accountability that my writing could have, I encountered more questions; how do I appropriately acknowledge the collective ownership of parts of my work? How do I attempt to tie my version of a story to paper when, as Mary Rokonadravu's protagonist in 'Famished Eels' reflects, "My story is not mine alone. It is the story of multitudes and it will become a thread in the stories of multitudes to come" (68)? The following is my attempt to answer these questions. What I present is a framework that acknowledges the values and communal nature of Cook Islands cultural production.

To ensure Cook Islands culture is embedded through the process of writing this thesis, I adapt the *tivaevae* framework as an analytical tool and creative approach. The *tivaevae* framework was created by Teremoana Maua-Hodges and is based around the process of constructing Cook Islands *tivaevae* quilts (also referred to as *tivaevae* and *tivaivai*) (Maua-Hodges, *The Tivaevae Model*, Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges 4). *Tivaevae* are hand-made patterned quilts made by groups of women that hold significant cultural, social and material value in the Cook Islands. Like most Pacific models, the *tivaevae* framework is adaptable to different disciplines and contexts but it is most often used to shape research methodology in health and education research (Te Ava, Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges, *Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui*). However, I am not the first to apply the framework to literature. Emma Powell's work in "Stitching to the back-bone: A Cook Islands literary *tivaivai*", applies the *tivaevae* framework to "produce a metaphorical *tivaivai* that represents the disparate parts of

this hereto unmapped field” (5); Powell draws together diverse recurring themes of Cook Islands literature into the single piece of work.

In chapter one of the critical component, I explain the conceptual underpinnings of the *tīvaevae* framework, and describe the practical and theoretical ways it has shaped my approach. I adopt the *tīvaevae* framework, an approach based on women’s craft, as a method to centre women’s work and perspectives. This theme recurs throughout this thesis. In the same vein, the ‘calabash breaker’ archetype, which takes its name from Selina Tusitala Marsh’s poem of the same name (*Fast Talking PI* 8), seeks to address the ways women are perceived and represented in literary settings.

In chapter two, I explore the archetype of the calabash breaker and discuss some of its literary elements. I use a close-reading method to provide a more in-depth analysis of the functions of the calabash breaker archetype in Witi Ihimaera’s *The Whale Rider* (1987) and Sia Figiel’s *The Girl in the Moon Circle* (1996).

Part Two consists of a novel, *The Mōmoke’s Daughter*. This is the creative component that results from my use of the *tīvaevae* framework.

Finally, in Part Three I discuss the o’ora’anga of the creative work, the presentation of my metaphorical *tīvaevae* to a public audience.

1. THE TĪVAEVAE FRAMEWORK: A VA'INE APPROACH TO CREATIVE

WRITING

This thesis focuses on archetypes and texts that are not unique to the Cook Islands; it is therefore important to me to use a Cook Islands framework/methodology to conceptualise the wider approach. There is a significant distinction that tīvaevae and the Moana novel share: both originate from colonial contact. Albert Wendt suggests Moana writers “have indigenised much that was colonial or foreign to suit ourselves, creating new blends and forms. We have even indigenised Western art forms, including the novel” (*Nuanua* 3). Like the practice of writing, needlework was introduced to Cook Islands women during the early colonial period by the wives of missionaries in the early 1800s. By the twentieth century had developed into the practice of tīvaevae (Rongokea 9). I was lucky enough to sit down with Teremoana Maua-Hodges, creator of the tīvaevae framework, to discuss my own research. We discussed the origins of the tīvaevae within colonial history and how our women eventually developed their own aesthetic, using designs and motifs emblematic of the local environment and cultural values. She described the tīvaevae as “the transformation of a colonial practice” and challenged me to think of ways I could take the novel, something associated with the English language/culture and transform it into “something ours” (Maua-Hodges, Personal Interview).

I draw upon Maua-Hodge and Futter-Puati’s article “Stitching Tivaevae” that describes four stages which are aligned with the tīvaevae -making process; 'akapapa (preparation), 'akaruru (gathering materials), pākoti (to cut) and o'ora te tīvaevae (presentation) (Futter-Puati & Maua-Hodges 4). I build upon Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges’ article, by adding tuitui, which means ‘to sew’ (Te Ava and Powell). Tuitui was vital for my project and its commitment to the five cultural values used in the tīvaevae framework (listed below). The

final stage, o'ora te tīvaevae, is discussed in Part Three, where I compare te o'ora with submission and publication.

The tīvaevae framework incorporates five values to ensure research is culturally responsive to Kūki 'Āirani worldviews: tā'okota'i (collaboration), tu akangāteitei (respect), uriuri kite (reciprocity), tu 'inangaro (relationships) and 'akaāri kite (a shared vision) (Te Ava, Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges 4). During the production of both the creative and critical sections of this thesis, I incorporate these values to ensure my work reflects its Kūki 'Āirani foundations.

'Akapapa

Te Ava explains that this means to “prepare” (52). In terms of making a tīvaevae, this term equates with collecting materials, deciding on the patterns, fabrics and cottons needed (Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges 4). Within the research process Maua-Hodges and Futter-Puati define this as conceptualising and planning a research project while ensuring you have a knowledge of literature, methods, theories and a clear understanding of your research objectives (4).

At the early stage of making a tīvaevae, one is already aware of its structure, usually comprised of three layers. As Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges explain “the front layer of the tīvaevae is displayed to the world” (5). This layer is where the choices made during 'akapapa are apparent. The colours, textures and composition are most visible and “open to examination and judgement” from the general public (5). In terms of a novel, I equate the front layer with what is eventually published, after the manuscript has been through a thorough editing, evaluation and review process. The front layer requires creativity and artistic finesse in the primary stages, in order to create a composition that is beautiful, dynamic and interesting. As the front layer is stitched onto the “blank canvas” (Rongokea,

2001), it is perfected. The process of tuitui, joining the front layer to the blank canvas constructs a reverse image, visible underneath, that reveals the skill of the artists. Maua-Hodges explains that when a tīvaevae is “assessed or evaluated, it is turned to look at the back first as it tells a lot about consistency or inconsistency” (Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges 5). The average viewer will not see this under-side of the blank canvas as it is usually covered by the final layer, called the “backing”. Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges describe the function of the backing cloth as “the base of the tīvaevae, underpinning it, holding it together and providing strength, all the while offering the possibility of protection for the messiness/diversity of the workings/society” (5). Before the backing cloth is applied, an expert can look at the underside and judge the true ability of the women who sewed the tīvaevae (5).

Hypothetically, I knew it was possible to go ahead and write a novel to the best of my ability, and attempt to pursue publishing. But I also knew that the underside, where skill and base assumptions are laid bare, would reveal my inexperience in creative writing to those who knew what they were looking for. As I intended to have my book published for Cook Islands children, a poorly crafted finished product was simply not an option. This was a significant motivation for gathering the knowledge, theory, understanding and tutelage I needed to complete a novel I could be satisfied with. It also ignited an interest in exploring the experiences and representations of women in Moana literature. The work of completing this thesis over pursuing the novel alone represents my commitment to a strong backing cloth.

During 'akapapa, I familiarised myself with my literary papa‘anga. In te reo Māori, the word “papa” can mean several things including “ready” or “layer” or “order of succession” (Savage 228-229). Consequently, the term 'akapapa can mean “to make ready”

(as has been discussed already) or “to lay flat” (like a *tīvaevae*) or “to recite in proper order, such as genealogies” (which would directly translate as “*whakapapa*” in *te reo Māori* o Aotearoa). Emma Powell’s work “Stitching to the backbone” discusses the significance of *papa’anga* in the literature of the Cook Islands and was pivotal during my *'akapapa*. Her work explores the literary legacy of writers like Marjorie Crocombe, Johnny Frisbie, Alistair Campbell, Jean Mason, Makiuti Tongia, Audrey Brown and Kauraka Kauraka and provided a map for me to begin my explorations of existing Cook Islands literature.

At the early stages of my research, I spoke to members of my local community regarding their understandings of the *mōmoke* myth that I wanted to incorporate into the novel. Drawing upon *tu 'inangaro*², I discussed my ideas with members of the Cook Islands community to verify their interest in the book. When I was satisfied that the work would serve young Cook Islands readers, I began to develop my ideas for the novel and critical component.

'*Akapapa* included a significant amount of writing, critical research and many conversations with different members of my community. It was the most time-consuming and intellectually vigorous stage.

'Akaruru

This term draws upon the root word “*ruru*” meaning to “combine” or “unite a form into a body” (Savage 320). Applied to my project, *'akaruru* began when I started drafting this thesis. The process took two paths: creative and critical. '*Akaruru* was particularly important for my critical work as I needed to consider the research I had completed during *'akapapa* and how it

² Loosely defined as “relationships” (Futter-Puati and Maua-Hodges 4)(See page 6)

related to my creative work and how it might be presented in a clear succinct form. As I read more Moana literature, I noticed some patterns in the way women were portrayed and decided to explore this further.

Pākoti

This stage refers to cutting the patterns of the tīvaevae, usually floral motifs, which are sewn on the blank canvas. It is significant because so much preparation has happened to lead to this stage and also if pākoti is done poorly, it is difficult to amend. Regarding research, Futter-Puati aligns pākoti with the analysis and interpretation of data (4).

My analysis and interpretation began with reading several works of contemporary Moana fiction, including Lani Wendt Young's *Telesa*, Isabel Waiti-Mulholland's *Inna Furey*, Albert Wendt's *Ola* and Steph Mataku's *Flight of the Fantail*. I noticed similarities in several texts involving a particular type of protagonist. This protagonist was often young, female, stubborn and, despite even her best efforts, always in trouble. I named her the 'calabash breaker' after the Selina Tusitala Marsh poem. As I explored the ideas expressed in Marsh's poem in more detail, particularly those that draw upon Moana cultural narratives, I realised that there were several recognisable characteristics in the protagonists of contemporary Moana literature. This presented me with an opportunity to investigate the potential of the calabash breaker as an archetype, a method through which to enhance the characterisation in my own novel.

As I completed the first draft of my manuscript, I recruited a va'ine tini³ to provide culturally specific feedback on the project. The feedback from my supervisor was vital during

³ A group of women that work on a tīvaevae together (Rongokea 68), however, in this case, they are reading a manuscript.

pākoti, as significant pākoti/editorial cutting was needed in the redrafting process to make it accessible to my va'ine tini.

Tuitui

My mother sews her love into each stitch

That joins the tivaevae pattern

to the backbone

(Ngatokorima Rasmussen qtd. in Rongokea 112)

Te Ava and Powell include tuitui (sewing) in their application of the tivaevae framework, and suggest that this is where connections in the research are made (57). Te Ava stresses that honesty and strength of relationships will determine the beauty and complexity of the finished tivaevae (57). In regard to my own work, this stage required several re-workings of my draft manuscript, a process that involved my supervisor and the group of ten Cook Islands women from various walks of life who had agreed to join my va'ine tini. These women read through my manuscript, sometimes more than once, and gave feedback according to their strengths. All feedback is important but without the feedback of the va'ine tini, I would be far less confident in my claim that the novel is written by a Cook Islander for Cook Islanders. Although my creative work is attributed to my ability alone, it is made a more beautiful and sophisticated work for the contributions of others.

During tuitui, I was able to draw connections between the learning, research and the feedback I had received. For example, I was also able to incorporate what I had learnt about the calabash breaker to enhance the characterisation of the novel's protagonist.

I wrote the novel with the intention that it could stand alone as a published work beyond the thesis process. It represents the front layer and blank canvas, the part that is

presented to the public for viewing and judgement. However, the underside would reveal the various processes and people that contributed to the tuitui of the front layer to the canvas. It is my hope that the novel emerges with more depth and complexity due to the layering which began with 'akapapa.

2. THE CALABASH BREAKER: EXPLORING AN INDIGENOUS ARCHETYPE

Calabash Breakers

we all know

the calabash breakers

the hinemoas

the mauis

the risk takers

the younger brother

the only sister

the orphan

the bastard child

with rebellious blood

we all know

the hierarchies

the tapu

the boundaries

always crossed

by someone

petulant

we all know

the unsettled

the trouble makers

the calabash breakers

they sail the notes of our songs

stroke the lines of our stories

and reign in the dark hour

we should know them

we now need them

to catch bigger suns

(Selina Tusiatala Marsh *Fast Talking* PI 8)

The primary objective of this chapter is to present an alternative understanding of Indigenous female representation by exploring how women are characterised and represented in contemporary Moana literature. I use the poem 'Calabash Breakers' to frame an archetype, and to structure close readings of Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987) and Sia Figiel's *The Girl in the Moon Circle* (1996).

For some time literary representations of Oceanic people were constructed for a Western (male) readership. Deloughrey explains that "the desire for depopulated islands in which European men could refashion themselves helps to explain why, between 1788 and 1910, over 500 desert-island stories were published in England alone" (12). Deloughrey goes on to explain that many of these publications adhered to a narrative trope she labels the "Robinsonade" (Deloughrey 12-14), named after Defoe's popular *Robinson Crusoe*. In "Towards a New Oceania", Wendt succinctly describes the types of "roles" which tended to represent Oceanic identities in colonial discourse and texts such as "Robinsonades":

The colonisers prescribed for us the roles of domestic animal, amoral phallus, the lackey, the comic and lazy and happy-go-lucky fuzzy-haired boy, and the well-behaved colonized. (13)

In this way "Robinsonades" were a tool of colonialism in that they constructed the Pacific "native" as a passive participant in the colonial process and an accessory to Western fantasy in the Pacific.

While acknowledging that Wendt challenged the Western voice, Marsh suggests there is also a gendered perspective to consider:

When the male is the norm in postcolonial societies (exasperated by the overwhelmingly patriarchal face of nationalism), women's voices are consequently silenced and suppressed; our image is overlooked, superimposed onto a universalist masculinist point of view. ("Theory "Versus" Pacific Islands Writing" 343)

While Marsh agrees about the lasting impacts of colonial stereotypes on the wider Moana identity, she also draws attention to how women's voices are marginalised further. Marsh goes on to describe some of the prescribed roles constructed by Western authors such as "the sexual servant, the dusky maiden, the exotic native, the innocent savage, the "happy-go-lucky fuzzy-haired" girl" (*Theory "Versus" Pacific Islands Writing* 343).

The ideological origins of these female character constructs in literature can be traced to anthropological works (Deloughrey 16) and early colonial accounts that presented Pacific women as "dusky maidens" who "freely offered sexual favours to European male visitors" (Keown 31). However, in the post-colonial era, ideologies have shifted more towards the "exoticist and tourist imaginary" and Teaiwa suggests that the cultural, historical and political complexity of Oceanic women has "been sacrificed at the feet of the 'hula dancer'" (253). That is to say, the commercial militourist demand for the "exotic" experience, has reduced representations of Oceanic women to the Western idea of a "hula dancer", entertainer to white holiday makers, who meets Western desires for the sexually-charged "exotic", offering a performance void in any of its original cultural significance.

My intention is to present the calabash breaker as an alternative Indigenous female archetype, which provides a contrast and critique to the problematic stereotypes used to portray Moana women. Because my creative work is concerned with the representation of young female characters in YA fiction, and because of the different experience of women as

identified by Marsh and Teaiwa, I focus on a female calabash breaker archetype in my critical work.

we all know/ the calabash breakers

I chose Witi Ihimaera's *the Whale Rider* and Sia Figiel's *The Girl in the Moon Circle* because they are intended for a similar audience as my own work and there is a significant body of critical analysis about them. Most importantly Samoana, the protagonist of *The Girl* and Kahu, the protagonist of *Whale Rider* clearly demonstrate the traits of the calabash breaker archetype.

The Girl is a first person narrative from the perspective of Samoana, a ten year old living in the fictitious Samoan village of Malaefou. The "Moon Circle" refers to Samoana's group of friends who share her "coming-of-age" experiences. *The Girl* is most noted for the orality suggested within the text by fragmented sentences and the absence of speech marks (Najita 181, Keown *Postcolonial Pacific Writing* 40). Figiel stated that when writing *The Girl* she "did not want to be confined to the conventionalities of formal language" (125) and Keown observes that the novel is written in a "form of Samoan commonly reserved for informal social contexts" (*Pacific Islands Writing* 171). The orality of Figiel's text and the first person narrative serve to centre Samoana in what appears to be everyday life in a Samoan village.

Whale Rider follows Kahu, a girl who returns to the Aotearoa village of Whangara to live with her father's family, and who later takes on a significant role that her grandfather believed was meant for a male heir. *Whale Rider* has two narrators: the primary narrator is Kahu's uncle while there are several chapters narrated from the point of view of a whale with links to Kahu's people through their ancestor Paikea, the whale rider. The novel was later

made into an internationally acclaimed film of the same name, so there is a large body of academic work exploring the use of Indigenous knowledge in both the film and novel.

I chose the poem “Calabash Breakers”, to frame the archetype as even the first line asks for varied interpretations from Moana readers. “We all know” pays homage to the range of plural personal pronouns that exist in Moana languages (but not in English) and could be interpreted to mean, “we all know the individuals alluded to and their associated stories” but also “we all know a person who shares the traits of these individuals”. The first verse lists a number of figures that appear in cultural narratives across a number of Moana cultures. In relation to Patricia Grace and Albert Wendt, Keown observes that Moana texts blend “Polynesian mythology with non-Polynesian mythopoeic discourses, thus exploring the relevance of Pacific oral traditions to contemporary socio-political realities” (*Pacific Islands Writing* 179). I suggest that Marsh’s poem, as well as Ihimaera and Figiel’s novels, also achieve this and extend upon it. Firstly both novels use oral whakapapa traditions and the recital of family links in passages that draw genealogical links between the protagonist and an origin/ancestor/location of cultural significance. This is a distinctly Moana method of contextualising the character socially and geographically within the narrative.

In *Whale Rider*, Kahu’s genealogical links to Paikea, a revered ancestor, connect her to the social, cultural and physical setting of the story. Kahu’s pito is also buried at the marae at Whangara, strengthening her links to the land. Rehua, Kahu’s mother, dies shortly after Kahu’s birth and the reader learns that it was Rehua’s decision to name Kahu after the ancestor of Kahu’s father, Kahutia Te Rangi (also known as Paikea (34)), despite the objections of Koro Apirana, Kahu’s paternal grandfather. Rehua chose the name so “should she die, at least her first-born child would be linked to her father’s people and land” (25) further demonstrating the significance of whakapapa within the cultural context of the

narrative. The calabash breaker must have strong genealogical links to the social, cultural and geographic context of the narrative. However, these links do not drive the narrative, there needs to be traits or characteristics that challenge the binding strength of the whakapapa links.

Whale Rider achieves this at the early stages of the novel by drawing attention to Koro Apirana's response to Kahu's birth. He laments that her birth "has broken the male descent of our whanau" (18). This is later elaborated:

Koro Apirana could not reconcile his traditional beliefs about Maori leadership and mana with Kahu's birth. By Maori custom, leadership was hereditary and normally the mantle of mana fell from the eldest son to the eldest son. Except that in this case, there was an eldest daughter. (20)

The response of Koro Apirana alludes to the calabash breaker trait whereby, despite the clear genealogical links Kahu has with a revered ancestor, she is not bestowed high social status or favour. By being born a female instead of the anticipated male heir, Kahu is inherently falling short of social expectations in the eyes of her grandfather, who holds significant status within the social context of the story. Kahu's character undermines existing constructs from birth.

Another way *Whale Rider* undermines the status of her genealogical links is by contrasting Kahu's maternal and paternal whakapapa. As the story is set among Kahu's father's family, the paternal whakapapa holds more obvious social clout. Contrasting this is a parallel genealogy for Kahu that alludes to a "rebellious" spirit descending through her female lineage. It is revealed that Rehua, Kahu's mother, was from the same tribe as Kahu's paternal grandmother, Nanny Flowers. The narrator gives an explanation of Nanny Flower's rebellious nature by connecting her to an ancestor, one she shares with both Rehua and Kahu:

I guess the trouble was that Nanny Flowers was always ‘stepping out of line’.

Even though she had married into our tribe she always made constant reference to her ancestor, Muriwai, who had come to New Zealand on the Mataatua canoe. (24)

The reader observes that not only is Kahu’s gender undermining the status of her position within her father’s whakapapa but her maternal whakapapa foreshadows a rebellious nature yet to emerge in the protagonist. Nanny Flowers tells the story of how her ancestor Muriwai broke social conventions to take charge of a perilous situation where the waka she sailing on was about to crash on a rocky shore:

[S]he chanted special prayers, asking the gods to give her the right and open the way for her to take charge. Then she cried, ‘E-i! Tena, kia whakatane ake au i ahau!’ Now I shall make myself a man...

...‘If Muriwai hadn’t done that,’ Nanny used to say, ‘the canoe would have been wrecked.’ Then she would hold up her arms and say, ‘And I am proud that Muriwai’s blood flows in my veins.’(24)

Throughout *Whale Rider*, there is regular reference to Nanny Flowers’ and Kahu’s “Muriwai blood” and their relatives (21, 24, 81, 82, 144, 146). Kahu’s maternal genealogy is presented in constant conflict with her paternal genealogy, implying a power imbalance in the favour of male characters and against Kahu. I suggest that the parallel whakapapa serves the calabash breaker archetype by providing the initial point of conflict but also foreshadowing the climax of the novel where the calabash breaker must ultimately rebel against social conventions.

Like *The Whale Rider*, *The Girl* also incorporates pre-colonial cultural narrative to contextualise Samoana’s character. As *The Girl* is narrated in first person, most often from Samoana’s point of view, her genealogical links are not as clearly presented as in *Whale*

Rider, but they are revealed in fragments throughout the story. Similar to Kahu, there is genealogical, cultural and social significance in her name. The chapter “Pulu Leaves” (66-72) includes several reflections on her own heritage. It describes the origins of her village Malaefou and the relationship between the god Pili and Samoana’s revered ancestor Aolele. The chapter ends:

She [Aolele] is always there...Looking down on Malaefou. Minus the Pili. Because it is no longer the resting place of Pili. But rather the new meeting place. Of all her descendants. In which case you are Samoana. Sea people. Sea clan. And you must remember. What your father has forgotten. What you yourself have forgotten.

Remember Samoana. (72)

Figiel connects pre-colonial oral traditions with a contemporary reality. As the narrative shifts to the voice of Aolele who asks Samoana to remember what has been forgotten, it foreshadows an event that will illuminate exactly what has been forgotten. The passage also further illustrates the centrality of the protagonist by establishing long-standing genealogical links not just with her family but the physical environment of the setting, Malaefou, itself.

The passage above is one of several passages where Samoana reflects on her name (2, 72, 104-5, 114-5). The following passage occurs later in the narrative but repeats the emphasis on Samoana’s name and its meaning:

Samoana

Sea people. Sea clan. Travelling from Samoa to Tonga. To Fiji. To Aotearoa. To Rarotonga. To Tahiti. To Hawai’i. To other parts of the Moana. Guided by stars. Guided by the moon. The sun. Birds. Sharks. Different fish. Red-green-

red. This is my full name. This is what Grandma Faga whispers to me one evening...

These are all the people you carry in your name Ana. Everywhere you go.

Anywhere you go. (104)

As it is narrated in first person, this passage reveals that Samoana is aware that there is a significant heritage and status imbued in her name. Consequently, Samoana later insists that her teachers stop calling her “missy” and use her full name (114). As the character develops, she begins to see that her name connects her not only to the legacy of her village but to her people’s cultural legacy across the Moana. This legacy pre-dates the presence of the church and as Samoana reflects more upon her name, the tension between her and the local church increases.

Similar to *Whale Rider*, where the conflict for Kahu is arranged around parallel whakapapa, divided by gender, the central conflict in *The Girl* is arranged around parallel identities that both demand Samoana’s submission and seem to fight for dominance in her psyche. For ease of explanation I will refer to them as the Darkness and the Light in reference to the popular historical periodising of Samoa into a pre-contact ‘time of darkness’ and post-missionised ‘time of light’ (Connell 264, Sharrad 113). The obvious colonial undertones of the terms Darkness and the Light in the cultural and historical context of Samoa—the tension between the terms and all they encompass—is explored by several contemporary authors. Matthew Hayward argues that the characters in Wendt’s *Pouliuli* demonstrate “the internalization of an imperial account that sought to replace the “infinite possibilities” of the communal oral mode with a single version of history, teleologically justified as the Christian enlightenment of pagan darkness” (104). However, Figiel explores Darkness and Light in much broader terms than a historical reference to colonial contact and its subsequent impacts.

By exploring the tension between Darkness and Light from a young girl's perspective, *The Girl* does not encapsulate the identities attached to the Darkness and Light as finite or mutually exclusive, like the contrasting dualisms described in Hayward's analysis of Pouliuli. Figiel achieves this by illustrating Darkness and Light with a variety of motifs and imagery. The Darkness is expressed with motifs such as night, the moon, animals (particularly the owl), dreams, the land, lava, the Pulu tree (a tree outside the village church), the circle and ideas of "the centre", precolonial mythology and corporeal aspects of womanhood such as hair, blood, sex, sweat and fertility. The Light is expressed with motifs such as Christianity and associated images (Jesus with his "sad blue eyes" (24), white lambs, the church building), dolls, daffodils, school, television and other electrical appliances. The Light is also connected to broader ideas such as western measures of time, western media, money and representations of woman as virginal, good, angelic, humble, clean and fearful.

The dualism of Light and Darkness as existing without clear boundaries is explored artfully within the narrative. In some passages the two concepts are woven within the single narrative such as when Samoana talks about her soul wandering "Past clouds. Real daffodils. Lizards. Pulu leaves..." (119). In the following passage Samoana describes her dreams:

And I leap on waves.
Blackblackblack.
Spearing a shark in the night.
Turtles in the night.
Drenching their blood.
Between my teeth.
Before I swim with an owl.
To the depths of Malaefou and back.
Back to Taiwan Jesus blinking.
To the clock above him that goes tick tick tick. (38-9)

While other parts of *The Girl* portray the tension between the Darkness and the Light in ways that suggest blurred boundaries, the passage above uses imagery and motif to create jarring contrast. As Samoana's connection to the sea and the land becomes apparent through her reflections on her own name, we learn that the black, the shark, turtles are all motifs that align with Samoana's sense of self. This implies that the clock measuring western time and "Taiwan Jesus" are posited in contrast to her own identity. Like *Pouliuli*, the narrative takes the term "Darkness" that was imposed on pre-colonial Samoan society to imply a time of savage paganism and reinterprets it in terms of Indigenous identity. Throughout *The Girl* Samoana feels an obligation to submit to the demands of both the Light, often projected through the church, and the Darkness, most often projected through her family and her reflections on her heritage.

Similar to Kahu's paternal and maternal whakapapa, the exploration of the Light and the Darkness within *the Girl* performs the function of contextualising Samoana as an Indigenous female living with the impacts of Western Imperialism within a Samoan village. It also provides the initial point of conflict for Samoana with a dual set of social expectations that she struggles to meet, foreshadowing her role in the climax of the story.

the boundaries / always crossed

While the use of a rebellious protagonist is by no means distinct to Moana literature, it is important to consider the implications of the calabash breaker's socially disruptive traits in a Moana cultural context. One way to illustrate this is by exploring the definition of the term "vā". The significance of the vā has been explored in academic contexts by Samoan, Tongan and Hawaiian scholars (Anae, 'Ilaiu, Ka'ili, Milo-Schaaf, Tuagalu) and can literally be defined as "space". However, the term alludes to a culturally specific understanding of the relational space between parties. In "Tatauing the Postcolonial Body", Wendt quotes the

Samoan saying '*Ia teu le va*' which he interprets as 'cherish, nurse, care for the *va*, the relationships' (402), the implication being that relationships between people are of such significance that the relationship itself is an entity worthy of sustenance. Melani Anae notes that the *vā* can be nurtured through culturally appropriate protocol/behaviours that enhance relationships (12). Conceptually the *vā* emphasises the importance of collective identity, as elaborated by Karlo Mila-Schaaf:

The concept of *vā* makes sense within a view of society that emphasises relationships. To understand the importance of *vā*, one must view relationships as the most influential dynamic in shaping both individual identity and the nature of the social world. Therefore, it is within the context of relationship that self identity is formed and is continually affected. In addition, it is the nature of all of our interactions with others (on a much larger scale, the culmination of all relationships) that shapes the very nature of our society, either harmonious, indifferent or in conflict. (9-10)

This implies that the *vā* is not something that just exists as a connecting constituent between entities but rather, its strengthening is essential for well-functioning relationships and community dynamics in Samoan and other Moana contexts.

When one lives in a community where tending to relationships within a collective social setting is paramount, "rebellious blood" has an increased potential for conflict for not only the individual but also wider social settings. Like Māui, Samoana is the youngest child in the family, meaning she receives less punishment than her siblings (16) and her family hold her elder sister accountable for Samoana's behaviour (34). The following passage reveals Samoana's awareness of the *vā* and the significance of birth order in her culture as she reflects on why she wasn't to swear at her older sister, Ivoga:

...in our household [swearing] constituted a felony among us kids. Worse than actually hitting her and running away. Because I was the youngest. And she was older. Second to Oko. Which gave her certain privileges. Respect. I had to respect that space between us. I had to respect the va. (75)

The passage reveals Samoana not only understands her obligations to maintaining the vā, at least within her familial relationships, but also that she struggles to maintain the vā she is responsible for.

However the vā is not the only cultural convention that shapes Samoana's life and ideas about appropriate behaviour. Alongside the Indigenous concept of the vā, Samoana explains the significance of "alofa"⁴ as "[t]he virtue that makes you forget about you and you think of others first...All members of your aiga. Of the sacred 'we'" (12). The concept of alofa further demonstrates the importance of relationships in Samoana's cultural context.

Samoana's life is also influenced by the conventions of Christianity and she reflects on how she should desire to be like Jesus (48) or like a lamb (43). There are the additional influences of television media, particularly "TV palagis" (22) that present ideas of material wealth and consumerism not attainable in Malaefou but remain "tattooed in our thoughts" (46). Samoana often reflects upon what it means to be a "good girl". Samoana's cousin Siala is described as having been "the epitome of a good girl" by fearing God, her parents, her older relatives and anyone older than her in Malaefou (10). Siala returns from New Zealand to tell the girls of the moon circle that they are merely "trophies to be beheld...Virginal. Angelical. Clean" (11). Many of the ideas about the "good girl" stem from the influence of

⁴ Similar to the te reo term "aroha", alofa is often translated as meaning "love"

Christianity, including Pela, a character described as a “lamb” who loves Sunday School (43). However, there are also ideas that are underpinned by pre-colonial Indigenous ideas as exemplified by the character Laulelei, Malaefou’s “most graceful dancer” (95). While Samoana never considers who or what dictates the rules for “good girls”, it is an idea that she considers often, implying that it is a constant pressure.

Rather than submitting to the pressure of being a “good girl”, Samoana talks about wanting to be a “bad girl”, an angel for Satan (42), or one of Ivoga’s “circle” who swear, talk about boys and steal cigarettes from their fathers (87). Her descriptions of “bad girl” behaviour are often acts of disrespect against the church, family relationships or both. This is juxtaposed alongside chapters such as “Women Tell Us (in the Silent Unspoken)” which give a list of prohibitive rules for women (113) and “If” which describes things woman should beware of “always” (107). As a calabash breaker, Samoana’s character continues to rebel against and reflect upon these conventions, allowing *The Girl* to question the legitimacy of the demands made on women. By presenting *the Girl* in a fragmented first person narrative, Figiel is able to present the pressure from all these influences converging on Samoana, enabling the reader to empathise with her desire to rebel despite the disruption she causes.

As *Whale Rider* is written from a Māori perspective, it arranges social expectations around the concepts of mana⁵ and tapu⁶ to achieve a similar function within the narrative as the Samoan concept of the vā in *The Girl*. Several passages in *Whale Rider* explore the significance of mana and what can be done to maintain it, all of which involve the character

⁵ Mana: (noun) prestige, authority, control, power, influence, status, spiritual power, charisma - mana is a supernatural force in a person, place or object (Moorfield).

⁶ Tapu: (noun) be sacred, prohibited, restricted, set apart, forbidden, under *atua* protection (Moorfield).

of Koro Apirana to different extents; Koro Apirana introduces the wānanga⁷ to “keep the reo going, and the mana of the iwi” (38); there is a passage where Koro Apirana reminisces on seeing a pod of whales up close, stating, “I have never forgotten, never. They had mana. They were so powerful” (53); and there is also a passage where Rawiri talks about their pet name for Koro Apirana being “Super Maori” because of the fact he was so often called to hui. Rawiri jokes “[i]f you want a man of mana at a Waitangi protest, phone the Maori Man of Steel” (41). Throughout the first half of *Whale Rider*, Kahu spends a lot of time seeking the approval and love of Koro Apirana while the narrators (Rawiri and “an ancient bull whale” (16)) establish the various genealogical entanglements between Kahu, her family, their ancestor Paikea, the village of Whangara and a pod of whales traversing the Pacific. Through exploring these entanglements and the social pursuits of Koro Apirana and his family, the reader learns what has established the mana of the iwi and how it has been maintained in the time preceding the story.

Shortly after Rawiri’s return from a four year hiatus overseas, we see Kahu is well aware of the traits that would build her mana in the eyes of her Koro Apirana, her family and the wider community. She is top of her class and leader of the culture group (79) and at the school prize-giving, the family discovers she has won the regional speech competition using “her own tongue, the Maori language” (86). Kahu reflects that if she wasn’t a girl, her Koro would love her “more than he does” (83). When compared to *The Girl’s* Samoana, Kahu is generally very well-behaved throughout the narrative. Even before Rawiri leaves, Kahu’s

⁷ Wānanga: “seminar, conference, forum, educational seminar” or “tribal knowledge, lore, learning - important traditional cultural, religious, historical, genealogical and philosophical knowledge” (Moorfield)

family empathise with her attempts to win Koro Apirana over and her attempts to join the wānanga:

Ever since the wananga had started, Nanny Flowers had been chucking off at Koro Apirana. While she agreed that the instruction should take place, she couldn't help feeling affronted by the exclusion of women. 'Them's the rules,' Koro Apirana had told her. 'I know, but rules are made to be broken,' she had replied in a huff. So every first Saturday of the month, she would start to play up and pick on Koro Apirana. 'Te mea te mea,' he would say. 'Te mea te mea.'

'He didn't growl at Kahu any more than usual,' I answered. 'He just doesn't like her hanging around when we have the wananga, that's all.'

Nanny Flowers compressed her lips. I could tell that rebellion was ready to boil over inside her. (44)

This passage demonstrates how accustomed the family is to Koro Apirana's dismissal of Kahu. Koro Apirana is irritated by Kahu's persistence to attend the wānanga but at this stage in the narrative, it is described as "hanging around" as opposed to deliberate rebellion. However, this passage underlines the idea that Kahu's eventual rebellion is inevitable as her character and the narrative bring into question the reasons why she is barred from a part of the wananga. It is not until the climax of the story that Kahu shows her rebellious "Muriwai blood" and, as I discuss below, this is what drives the narrative to the climax.

Similar to Samoana, Kahu demonstrates that the calabash breaker must understand the significance of the social constructs within their community ("the hierarchies/ the tapu / the boundaries") and for whatever reason, undermine them. However, the calabash breaker's female gender and young age explain why the disruptive actions of the protagonists are

initially interpreted as harmless. Instead, the social disruption is presented as incidental. Their actions are considered “petulant” and/or irritating but lacking any perceived social threat.

the unsettled / they stroke the lines of our stories

The third and fourth stanza of Marsh’s poem reveal the purpose of the calabash breaker in both contemporary Moana fiction and traditional Moana cultural narratives and creation stories. The calabash breaker’s smaller rebellions, considered harmless by others, occur at the beginning of the narrative and begin to increase in terms of impact and tension. In the final act the calabash breaker reveals herself as a character who challenges existing social norms and whose presence critiques the societal expectations of her community.

Throughout *The Girl*, Samoana’s misdemeanours increase in significance from things that seem insignificant until a pivotal moment that involves her father Pili. Samoana is sent home from church with a note from the faifeau’s⁸ wife and Pili is informed about an incident in church where Samoana said she wanted to be “Satan’s girlfriend and the head angel in hell” (98). Taken within the wider context of *the Girl*, Samoana’s actions are shocking and insult her family and the church simultaneously. By insulting the teachings of the church within earshot of the faifeau’s wife, Samoana has damaged the vā between her family and the Church and its key representatives with the village, an act which the novel has already established has significant social impacts. As Samoana prepares for her punishment, she recalls the incident involving her brother, Oko, and the pulenuu’s⁹ son. The first time the

⁸ Pastor

⁹ In an article about custom and legislation in American Samoa, David E. Hall explains that the *Pelenu'u* are “village officials appointed by the Governor, who also prosecute violators of village regulations in the village courts”. I assume that pelenuu of Samoa share a similar custom.

punishment is alluded to in the book, Samoana describes it vaguely, calling it “the worse beating ever” (9). However, as she waits for her own punishment, Samoana describes the beating in more detail:

Pili dealt with the big F. All the felonies that occurred in our household. Like when Oko had a fight with the pulenuu’s son...Causing Oko to break his nose and give him both black eyes. He was still the pelenuu’s son. And it would have been disrespectful to that va. Between our family and the pelenuu’s family. Had Pili not done the right thing. Which meant beating Oko up until he was nearly paralysed. (99)

We see that the tension of the moment causes Samoana to realise the full implications of her situation and she appears to accept it as inevitable. We also discover that social concepts such as the vā, while integral to positive social relationships, also carry inherent social pressures to ensure appropriate demonstrations of respect at all costs. In this case, this respect is demonstrated through violent physical discipline exerted on a child. By contrasting the behaviour of Pili and the recollection of his father’s behaviour with children and among Matai, the traditional social authority in Samoan culture, it begs the question of the Church’s influence in Samoan society regarding the treatment of children, particularly around issues of discipline and social redress

The event is emphasised by the vā dynamic in the relationship between Samoana and Pili. He is a male, she is female; he is an adult, while she is a child. He is also the son of a chief and shares the name of their revered ancestor. In Samoana’s world, Pili is a much loved father figure but also a drunk who represents the constraints and power dynamics that shape Samoana’s world along the lines of gender and social hierarchy. For this reason, the odds

seem stacked against Samoana as she waits for Pili to administer Samoana's punishment with a belt.

Similar to *Whale Rider*, Samoana's grandmother plays a significant role in this pivotal moment. But in *Whale Rider*, Nanny Flowers seems to personify Kahu's rebellion for a large part of the narrative and is first to recognise Kahu's potential, while Samoana's Grandma Faga is largely presented as a peripheral character. This changes when Grandma Faga intervenes on Samoana's behalf and the focalisation temporarily shifts from Samoana to Grandma Faga as she admonishes her son:

When your father was alive he loved children. All children... Just because your father was that kind of man.

A man not afraid to be a child when required. Who played marbles with them...[T]alked with them. With the same integrity he would with the matai at the fono. Your father who ruled Malaefou with the strength and grace of a dancer. Cowardice was not to be found in his vocabulary. No no. Because I'm afraid to say it. But I will anyway. Because that's exactly what you are Pili.

You are a coward. For beating up on this little clot of blood. This tiny alualutoto. Just so you'd appear good in front of people. (100)

By describing Pili's father as a man who "ruled" and sat with the matai, Grandma Faga quickly establishes his social status and lineage. This is juxtaposed with explanation of how Pili's father treated children and how that contrasts with Pili's actions, demonstrating the hypocrisy of beating a child to uphold the *vā*. Grandma Faga uses Pili's ancestry and alofa for grandchildren to critique the behaviour of the most significant male in Samoana's life.

Through her rebellion and her interactions with family, Samoana embodies the calabash

breaker and is able to question the necessity of brutal physical punishment to amend breaches of the vā while demonstrating the failings of the social conventions that shape her life.

Both Grandma Faga and Nanny Flowers in *Whale Rider* demonstrate that the calabash breaker, while rebellious, is never socially isolated. In fact, despite being posited against social conventions that put them at a disadvantage, at pivotal points they are able to draw on the living and ancestral links of their whakapapa/'aiga/papa'anga to demonstrate the injustice of their situation.

While *Whale Rider*'s Kahu does not have a series of transgressions that build to a pivotal point, the narrative does foreshadow her eventual rebellion at the climax of the story where she swims out against her family's will to save the stranded bull whale. As mentioned, her shared Muriwai whakapapa with Nanny Flowers implies that her rebellion is inevitable but the reader also learns that Kahu has an empathy with sea animals. This is revealed in her emotive response to Koro's description of butchering a whale (53) and, when a stranded pod of two hundred whales dies near Whangara, Rawiri returns to Whangara to find Kahu "making that mewling sound and then cocking her head to listen for a reply" (106). Kahu's affinity with sea mammals is revealed significantly when she appears to communicate with dolphins so she can retrieve Koro Apirana's carved stone. Koro had thrown the stone into the ocean expecting one of the boys from the wānanga to retrieve it and prove themselves as the one worthy of taking over his leadership (91). Although Kahu dives for the stone to make Koro happy, the incident represents the point where she begins embody the calabash breaker through actions that challenge the expectations of her Koro and community.

The following night a whale, the same ancient bull whale that Kahu's ancestor Paikea rode, strands himself on the beach at Whangara and is recognised by the iwi by "the sacred sign" on his head, "[a] swirling moko, flashing its mana across the darkening sky" (111).

When Koro Apirana issues instructions for attending to the whale, he tells Nana Flowers that the women will not be included in this “tapu work”. Nanny Flowers responds, “If I think you need help, well, *kia whakatane ake au i ahau*...I’ll be like Muriwai if I have to. Kahu, also, if she has to be” (112). As the men attempt to save the whale/ancestor and fail, Koro Apirana asks Rawiri to “go tell your Nanny Flowers it is time for the women to act the men” (120). Nanny Flowers takes the women to assist and despite her earlier claim of Kahu becoming like Muriwai if needed, she instructs Kahu to stay behind (120). However, even with the involvement of the women, the *iwi* fails in attempts to save the whale and they return to the beach.

In the following chapter, Kahu disobeys the instructions of her family and secretly wades out to the whale. The point of view now shifts between Kahu and Rawiri as Kahu attempts to save the whale. Rawiri is focused on getting Kahu back to land and makes constant reference to how vulnerable Kahu appears compared to the whale, for example, describing her as “dangling on the side of the whale, like a small white ribbon” (125). “Without really thinking about it”, Kahu finds herself talking to the whale and riding it to safety (126). As she does this, she contemplates her family, what she needs to do with the whale, and her impending death (127), thus providing contrast with Rawiri’s narrative. The chapter ends:

She was going with the whales into the sea and the rain. She was a small figure in a white dress, kicking at the whale as if it was a horse, her braids swinging in the rain. Then she was gone and we were left behind.

Ko Paikea, ko Paikea. (128)

This powerful imagery Kahu has re-enacting the legend of Paikea highlights how Kahu embodies the calabash breaker archetype Paikea. She is out on the whale against the wishes

of her family, enacting an Indigenous prophecy steeped with mana that her family did not think she was capable of. She is still the same young girl, as emphasized by the description of her dress and hair, but she has disobeyed the family out of necessity. However, by saving the whale and in an act of disobedience, she has also demonstrated her gifts and her family's inability to see them.

In this sense, the calabash breaker archetype is more than rebellious –their actions call into question the origin and validity of everything that is known of their world. This characteristic is essential to the calabash breaker's narrative arc which relies on increasing conflict that arises from actions contrary to the social systems they have been raised within. In this way, the calabash breaker archetype raises questions about the legitimacy of shared social understandings among communities where relationships and shared social understandings are integral to communities'success. For both stories the tension builds towards the climax and relies on the rebellious acts of the protagonist. If Samoana was set on being a "good girl" and did not rebel in Sunday school, a branch of the Church with significant social power in Samoa, there would be no test of the vā and consequently no story. Similarly if Kahu did not rebel against her family's wishes, she would not have recognised Paikea in herself.

we now need them / to catch bigger suns

In cultures that prioritise social cohesion and relationships like those of te Moana Nui a Kiva, social structures that enforce whakapapa/mana/tapu or aiga/vā are strong out of necessity. This also means that social dynamics of power are very difficult to challenge and/or change. The calabash breaker archetype explores a way of acting outside of accepted social expectations and offers a way for the storyteller to challenge social constraints, through

narrative and fictional characters. In this way, fiction can act as a means of social critique and even protest.

The calabash breaker archetype demonstrates that Moana writers can draw upon a long tradition of narratives that address wider social (and potentially environmental) problems. This is done by establishing a character who has demonstrative genealogical links to the cultural, social and familial settings of the narrative. In *Whale Rider*, Kahu's links are challenged by gender and a strong maternal heritage in a patriarchal setting. In the *The Girl*, Samoana's links are challenged by the constant conflict between the Darkness and the Light, representing pre-colonial and post-colonial realities that have impacted Indigenous identities and undermined familial relationships.

By demonstrating an understanding of social and cultural contexts throughout the narrative, both Kahu and Samoana are able to question the conventions of Indigenous communities. Through the use of young female protagonists, the author can draw attention to potentially problematic social structures in a way that defamiliarises the reader and creates space for reflection. As this is all done within works of fiction, no actual social structures are damaged, no *vā* is ruptured, and no person's *mana* is questioned directly. Fiction is therefore a mechanism for testing social and cultural conventions, and opening discussion about how contemporary Indigenous cultures operate in the postcolonial era. The lines "the calabash breakers / they sail the notes of our songs / stroke the lines of our stories / and reign in the dark hour" suggests that this particular archetype was utilised by Moana storytellers long before contemporary Moana writers took to the page, possibly for this exact function.

One of the most distinct traits of the calabash breaker is that they live among adults and care-givers who are not necessarily neglectful but are so stifled by social convention, they are blind to the inherent self-destructive nature of the conventions they follow. In both *The Girl*

and *Whale Rider*, the calabash breaker explores how young women are treated within their respective communities, but I suggest that if the calabash breaker was taken out of the “village” setting and into the global environment where children live now, she would still have the capacity to be a catalyst for social critique.

In my understanding, almost all Moana nations have a version of Māui, the ultimate “trouble maker” who had the audacity to slow the sun among his many other feats. The final stanza of the poem “Calabash Breakers” alludes to the Māui myth and states “we now need them / to catch bigger suns”. By seeking out the calabash breaker archetype in contemporary Moana literature, I demonstrate my firm agreement with Marsh’s final line. During a time when we grapple as a species with environmental issues, we’ve caused ourselves, I would suggest that we need the calabash breaker more than ever.

Part Two: Creative Component

THE MŌMOKE'S DAUGHTER

BY STACEY KOKAUA

Manuscript for Middle Grade Children's Novel

1. I MUA

Both of them knew that time was running out. In Rarotonga, there is no dusk, day turns to night quickly. One moment there is light, the next comes darkness.

The mōmoke Tapaeru could feel that Mama Tuira 's spirit would not dwell much longer, yes, she was about to die. The old woman sat in her favourite recliner but was bent over, focused on the work on her lap. The mōmoke cooled herself on the tiles at the old woman's feet but she kept watch as Mama Tuira tied the last knot, put the pins that had been held in her mouth into the pincushion and dropped her hands. The old woman sighed as she relaxed back into the chair. The mōmoke placed one of her hands over Mama Tuira's hands and smiled.

“Kua oti koe te tīvaevae. E manea rai. Meitaki ma'ata,” Tapaeru said in that trickling voice that made Mama Tuira smile.

Mama Tuira was well known for her ability to craft tīvaevae, hand-stitched quilts unique to the Ipukarea. And this particular tīvaevae was her final, most ambitious work. The following day it would be found by a younger relative who would gasp in wonder as she ran her fingers over the details. But right now Mama Tuira was blinking her eyes quickly, mustering the energy to finish it all.

With great care Mama Tuira used a small pair of scissors to cut the last remaining thread away from the quilt. She dropped the hand that held the scissors heavily on the arm of the chair, where it stayed. The large tīvaevae quilt draped over the woman's knees, its blue backcloth appearing black in the dim light. It spilled across the floor like a flood. Across this seascape were thousands, maybe millions, of precise stitches. A variety of different fabrics had been appliqued to compliment the complex rotational symmetry of the design. The

ultimate effect was almost overwhelming in its detail, yet balanced in composition and colour.

There was something odd about this tīvaevae. Peculiar bead work was blended into the stitching. There was also the odd shimmer in the weave of the fabric that only appeared as the tīvaevae shifted. Had the tīvaevae taken on a life-force? Like a fire conjured from dry sticks, had these lifeless materials taken on the warmth of their creator? Or was this tīvaevae unique because it was created in solitude? No laughter was heard during its inception, no gossip exchanged, no advice nor direction given to draw love into the quilt. No group gathered, no va'ine tini joined to share skills and company. As if aware of this, Mama Tuira rubbed the fabric between her thumb and fingers, willing her love into its folds.

“E mānea tikāi tēia tīvaevae, Tuira, *this tīvaevae is truly beautiful,*” the mōmoke said.

Mama Tuira slowly shifted her head and sighed. A small smile rose about her face like a gentle tide. Tepaeru seemed so young though she had lived several lifetimes more than the old woman. Her skin gleamed like oyster shell as it had done since Tuira was a child.

“Auē tau e, *I'm tired,*” Mama Tuira sighed.

“*I know. There is only one more thing. Here.*”

Tepaeru placed a notepad and pencil on the old woman's lap. Mama Tuira clasped the pencil and slowly wrote a short note in her clear cursive. Then she attached it to the corner of the tīvaevae with a pin.

“*This work is marvellous. You have great talent.*”

Mama Tuira looked back at the mōmoke. This strange woman who Mama Tuira had known and loved all of her life. Her streamlined face with its sloped forehead—not ugly, beautiful in fact—but peculiar. Mama Tuira's hands were aching from the work but there was

also a greater fatigue. She reached out and clasped the pale hand of the mōmoke. It was smooth and cool to the touch, like holding the inside of a shell. Tēpaeru smiled.

“Moe marū, e mā'ine, ” soothed the mōmoke, peace and resignation in her expression.

And Mama Tuira smiled and leaned back to rest. Mama Tuira closed her green eyes for the last time and there was a pause – in time, in sound, in breath, in life.

The mōmoke turned on the lamp beside the armchair and gazed at Mama Tuira's face a while. She lifted her hand to say goodbye. But Tuira's cheek fell away as if it were made of dry sand. She stood as she brought her hand back to observe the granules that clung to her fingers. Outside the breeze built in strength before entering the room. The mōmoke remained still as the vessel of her daughter crumbled like a sand wall against the tide. Even the specks on her fingertips were carried out the open door into the darkness, leaving the pāreu that Tuira had worn in knotted pile on the floor. Tēpaeru gazed out the door where her daughter's remains had drifted away. The air returned to stillness. It was time for the search to begin.

2. TE 'OPENGA

It was only when Kimi tripped on a crack in the footpath that she realised she had been lost in the hazy line that separated the clear morning sky and the ocean. It was like being slapped on the back of the head – wake up!

“HA-hahahaha!”

Kimi looked across the road leading down to Tītahi Bay beach, where her cousin had appeared with her young son.

“You gotta watch where you’re going, cuz!” Puna shouted from across the street, almost at the café.

Kimi laughed, trying to conceal her embarrassment. She should’ve known someone would see that. “You going to the beach?”

“Nah, heading up to Aunty Ngā’s. What you up to?” Puna replied.

“Meeting Bella,” Kimi gestured down to the beach, where seagulls were already screaming over car stereos.

“Aw yeah. Have a good one then. Kā kite,” Puna turned to her son who had stopped to look at something in the gutter. At first Kimi had thought Tangi was just rolling a beer bottle but it was some sort of ball, a deep blue colour. “Tangi! Put that down! C’mon.”

“See ya,” Kimi said.

Kimi knew Puna would see her cousins and they would all have a laugh over her clumsiness. *There was nothing there, that girl just tripped on nothing!* But that’s what happened when you lived in Porirua with most of the kōpū tangata. Not to mention everyone

she knew from school and sports and surf club. There was always someone around. Ready to catch Kimi tripping up.

Bella had sent her a message early to meet her at their usual spot. She had snuck out before Dad could ask her to help with the cooking or the dishes or folding the clothes or anything else around the house. Mum was coming back from Rarotonga and he was trying to tidy up, trying to make it look like everything had been fine. When Kimi had left, he was hiding all the pizza and takeaway boxes at the bottom of the wheelie bin.

Kimi walked down past the toilets perched above the shore. In front of the sheds, boats were lined up, sitting like dogs ready to fetch. Away from the sheds, along the beach, there were all types of cars parked right down to the flags. Doors were open, towels were laid, seagulls edged towards them, trying to steal picnics. It was early but already warm. Beyond the bunting that marked where the cars couldn't park, Kimi spotted her friend Bella sitting cross-legged, leaning against an old log. She was all knees and elbows as she peered down at her phone.

Kimi darted down the beach, disturbing groups of seagulls on the way. She kicked off her scuffs and dropped down beside Bella. "Hey."

There was a pause as Bella finished up what she was doing, "Hey," she said absently. Then she looked up, "What took you so long?"

Kimi laughed and kicked sand at her friend. "I'm not even that late. Anyway, Dad's started cooking lunch coz Mum gets home from Raro today."

"Hey!" said Bella, sliding her phone into her back pocket. "I forgot about that. I can't believe you just ran off to the beach instead of helping."

"You asked me to come!"

“Coz I forgot! I already said that!” Bella’s eyes widened before squinting as something else distracted her. “Hey, your hair is getting really light in the sun. You got that light island hair eh?”

Kimi held a clump of her thick ponytail. “I guess. Where’d you get that? I saw my cousin playing with one in the gutter.”

“I found it,” Bella picked up the globe from where it sat between her ankles. She shook it, before passing it to Kimi. “There’s something inside it.”

It was heavy and about the size of a large grapefruit but a beautiful deep blue turquoise colour – like looking into the centre of the ocean. Kimi could see her hand, blue through the globe. It was strange to hold— it looked like glass but when she actually touched it she realised it wasn’t. Inside something wispy and white was floating within the liquid. For some reason, Kimi felt a strange sensation in her chest as she stared longer, uncomfortable. “Weird,” she said before she dropped it back beside Bella.

“Hey! Don’t break it!”

“Sorry. You ready to go for a swim?”

“Ok. Race you!”

“What? That’s not fair!” But she ran after Bella anyway.

When they hit the foam that frothed from the water’s edge, they lifted their feet higher. Eventually they both slowed as the water deepened and dragged at their legs. There was no-one on boards because the swell was flat. Instead young children jumped over the whitewash and everyone else passed easily to the calm water beyond.

“Oh no!” Bella was twisting around.

“What’s wrong?” asked Kimi.

“My phone! It’s in my shorts. Mum said she won’t get me a new one if I wreck this one,” Bella reached into the back pocket of her denim shorts.

“Why do you keep wearing them in the water? Just take it back to our stuff.”

“It’ll get stolen. I’ll just sit on the beach. I saw Liam back there anyway.”

Kimi wondered if Liam was the real reason Bella was going back. “You could just hold it up?”

“That is the worst idea ever. Don’t worry, you can stay,” Bella called over her shoulder. She was already heading to shore. “I’ll wait for you.”

Kimi turned to face the ocean. The sun warmed her back in a way that told Kimi it would be another long warm day in Tītahi Bay. It was nice to be out here by herself. Past the breakers, people gave each other space. Kimi continued to walk out, skimming her fingertips over the water as it pushed by. The smell, the feeling of weightlessness, the sounds of waves lapping the shore like breath.

She pulled her hair out from her ponytail and dived under, reaching her arms out to push through the water. Bubbles passed by her ears and the ocean pulled through her hair. She plunged down for the sand beneath her and kicked off.

At the surface, she took a big breath and dropped onto her back, her head facing out to sea. She gazed upwards, listening to the water in her ears. Even the sky looked a relaxed type of blue, deep and languid. She almost closed her eyes as the ocean carried her along gently. Then someone bumped into the back of her head. Her first thought was Bella had been swimming beneath her, trying to scare her.

“Bella?”

Kimi splashed to her feet, feeling like a turtle struggling to upright from being flipped on its shell.

But there was no one there.

She turned back towards the shore, looking left and right. No-one. But she was sure...

When she turned around again to face Mana Island, Bella discovered a pair of large green eyes peering up at her. A woman. Her skin was very pale. It almost appeared grey.

“Sorry,” Kimi said. The woman rose gently from the water. A pearl of water slid down her nose and dropped soundlessly in the water.

“Kia orāna e mā’ine. Pē‘ea koe?” the woman said. Her voice was deep, rasping as if her throat was dry. “Auraka e mataku.”

Kimi squinted back in bewilderment. She vaguely understood but she was too confused by the appearance of this strange woman to respond. Where had she just come from? There was no-one a second ago. Why was she speaking Māori?

The woman remained in the water up to her chin. Her hair floated around her like copper seaweed just below surface.

“Ē - kā kite koe i te tuatua i te reo?” the woman asked, using the familiar staccato of Kimi’s childhood language. Her eyes flicked over every part of Kimi’s face.

“Ah yes. ‘Āe,” She tried to shake understanding into her head. Only Bella’s parents spoke to her in Māori but not as much as Mama Grace had.

The woman observed Kimi a moment before asking in English “Do you speak this language?” She observed Kimi a moment. “Yes. I see on your face. You have been here a long time.”

“What?” asked Kimi. “Ah...kō'ai koe?”

“I come from far away.” The woman turned her head back to Mana Island for a moment. “It takes some time to find you. Longer than I thought it would. You are here. What is your name, child?”

“Um... Kimi. It's short for Kimiora. Kimiora Ngametua Williams.” Kimi was stunned that she was giving information over to this strange woman, but she couldn't stop herself.

“Yes. A good name for you. Kimiora. You are far from the land of your people,” the woman gestured around her. “I left Te Moananui for the first time to come here.”

As she stood at full height, the water beaded on her shoulders as if they were made of shell. She was small, shorter than Kimi, and wearing a turquoise and purple pāreu around her chest. It was tied elaborately in a way Kimi had never seen before.

“Where did you come from?” Kimi asked.

“Kimiora. I come from far away to find you. Auraka e matakū, e tamā'ine,” the woman said. She reached out for Kimi's arm. Her hand only brushed Kimi's arm but it was enough for Kimi to feel how unnaturally cold she was.

“Eh? What do you want?”

“Do you understand? Look at me. You know me. Kimiora.”

Something was dancing inside the woman's eyes and Kimi could suddenly hear a booming echo of waves against rock. Waves being dumped on the reef. Boom! The woman glanced beyond Kimi then grabbed her by the wrist. The grasp was hard and cold.

"Kimiora, listen to me." Kimi heard. The woman's voice was inside her own head now. Kimi struggled to escape but the woman's grip was resolute.

"Let go!"

"Kimiora! If you see a vaimara globe, don't touch it!"

The hand released its hold and Kimi stumbled back, swallowing water. She quickly regained her footing and heard splashing behind her.

"Hey," Bella appeared beside her. "You ok?"

Kimi choked a sob, spitting out water.

"Bella! Help me! That woman..." Kimi's eyes shifted over the water, searching.

"What? Who?" Bella looked around.

Kimi looked around again. The water was calm where the woman had been.

"Who was here?" Bella said quietly.

"She stayed low in the water. She... she spoke Māori."

"Could've been Whaea Tania. She's a bit of a weirdo," laughed Bella but stopped when she saw Kimi's expression.

"No, not that Māori. My Māori. Like they speak in Raro," Kimi finally turned to look back at Bella. "It was... she looked strange. Her hands were cold."

"Okay," Bella glanced about them. "We should go home."

“Yeah,” Kimi whispered as she searched around herself again.

“C’mon.” Bella nudged her friend back to the shore, turning back to make sure no-one was following them.

3. TE TĪVAEVAE MOANA

The sun was close to its highest point when Kimi got home. The front door was already open. Warm savoury smells and laughter bounced down the hall. After dropping her gear at the door and kicking her shoes off, Kimi walked down the hall to the kitchen.

“Where have you been, my girl?!” Mum cried. She got up from the table and threw her arms around Kimi. Mum had long muscled arms that gave the best hugs. They smelt like tipani flowers and coconut oil. It made Kimi want to cry.

“Hey, you alright, Kimi?” Mum cradled Kimi’s face with her slender hands and stooped down to look into her eyes. “I guess it has been three weeks,” She pulled Kimi into her chest. “I missed my girl. Auē, you’re getting me all wet.”

Kimi wiped her nose on her wrist. “Sorry.”

“Well, it’s nice to see you,” Mum looked up at Dad who had been watching, smiling.

“Go say hi to everyone, Kimi. The kaikai’s ready,” Dad lifted his chin and shouted, “Luke! Tai! Tell your cousins it’s dinner time!”

“What?” Came a muffled voice from the hallway.

“You heard me – 'aere mai kaikai!”

“Yep!”

Dad leaned down to open the oven muttering, “Those kids and their bloody games...”

Mum finally released Kimi. Everyone was outside sitting on the chairs that lined the deck. There was Aunty Ngā, Uncle Teina who lived in the Bay with her cousins, who were with Luke and Tai playing the “bloody games”. Aunty Tī, Uncle Graeme and her cousin Tere had come over from Cannon’s Creek. There was also Uncle Ioane who stayed in Wellington.

Then there were a couple of Mum's cousins whose younger kids were playing on the trampoline that Kimi never used anymore. Māmā Mārua and Pāpā Teina were also there on comfy chairs that had been brought from inside. Kimi went around to each one and welcomed them with a kiss on the cheek.

“Look at how tall this one is getting, Jane!” Māmā Mārua called to Kimi's mum.

“Girl, ka anu'ia koe! Go dry your hair.”

“Yeah, go get changed Kimiora. Tāviviki, 'inē,” Mum called.

“Āe,” Māmā Mārua agreed before she turned to Mum, “Jane, pē'ea i ā Pāpā Kura? Is he better yet?”

“No, Aunt. He left for Auckland,” Mum replied. Kimi left as Mum began talking about her uncle in Rarotonga who had become sick after swimming in a strange algae that had appeared on the reef. It had seemed harmless, like aqua-coloured beads, until that afternoon when Pāpā Kura had fainted. They still didn't know what was wrong.

Kimi walked back through the sliding doors, the kitchen, and down the hall. She stopped in the doorway to her bedroom. Her bed. What was that on her bed? A quilt? Yes, one of those big Cook Island quilts like the māmās had; a blue one. She recognised some of the features: two main colours, symmetrical design, the stitching.

But different.

Kimi couldn't pin down the exact shade of blue used for the backing. There was another layer of dark green sewn on like a plant pattern repeated. No not a plant, more like seaweed. Usually they had flowers like tiare māori and tīpani. She sat down on the bed and smoothed her hands across it. Strangest of all were the things that were sewn amongst the seaweed pattern. The quilts Kimi had seen were mainly fabric and stitching. But this one had

small beads in hundreds of different colours, randomly placed. Some were pink like coral, others green and blue. Different coloured threads had been used to apply the details so they shimmered. The reflection of the quilt in the dresser mirror made the room seem barely big enough to contain it. It made Kimi want to close the curtains.

She leaned back to shout down the hall, “What’s this thing on my bed?”

“Oh yeah,” Mum said from the kitchen before she appeared at the door. “When I was over in Raro, a relative gave this to me. It had a note with your name on it. Apparently Mama Tuirā had made it when I was pregnant with you. Crazy eh? I can’t even remember telling her your name.”

Mum shuffled past Kimi and stood before the bed. All the blue and green bouncing around the room made it look like they were underwater. “Isn’t it beautiful? I’ve seen heaps of these but none like this,” Mum reached down and ran her hand across it. “Must be real special.”

“I was gonna ask where you got that?” Dad was standing behind Mum. His face had no expression.

“Aunty Tia gave it to me in Raro. What do you think?”

“I’ve never seen a tīvaevae like that,” Dad’s eyes were fixed on the quilt, narrowed in suspicion. “Lots of different stuff on it eh?”

“What? You don’t like it?” asked Mum.

“Nah, it’s fine. Just weird for a tīvaevae to just show up for someone. It’s not like she’s turning 21 or anything. Who’s Aunty Tia?” said Dad as he walked back to the kitchen.

“She’s from mum’s side.”

Dad raised his eyebrows. Kimi knew that her mother didn't know her own mother's family well. It was something they didn't talk about.

“She just showed up one day at the house and asked if I knew anyone called Kimiora. The tīvaevae had a little note with Kimi's name on it.”

“Tīvaevae...” Kimi practiced.

She felt soothed as she watched her mum's bronzed hand run over the ocean scene draped across her bed.

There was screaming. It was Tai.

Mum and Dad ran from the room. Kimi followed them into the hall where her cousin Sonny was standing against the wall, staring into Luke and Tai's room.

“What...?” Dad stuttered.

Kimi peered around the corner and found chaos. Tai was kneeling on the floor, curled over his hands, his mouth wide open but silent. Tears streamed from his eyes. He was holding his hand which bleed over his clothing. And there was something else. A dark blue liquid was spilt all over Tai's arm and t-shirt. Mum grabbed Tai and looked over his face.

“Tai!” Mum said in that angry voice she used to hide fear. “Tell me what happened.”

He held his hands out, the right being cradled by the left, catching his blood. It turned black as it mixed with the liquid from the globe.

“He broke the ball...it broke in his hand,” Luke whimpered.

“The what?” asked Dad.

Luke pointed behind Tai and there, on the floor, lay the shattered remains of a turquoise globe. It hadn't shattered like glass but lay in two halves with serrated edges, as if it had been woven with a weak seam. Like it had been designed to break easily.

“What the hell is that, Luke?” said Dad.

“Vaimara...” Kimi whispered.

Tai wailed and Mum turned to Kimi, her face desperate. “What are they Kimi?”

“I dunno. Bella had one at the beach and Tangi found one in the gutter.”

Sobbing, Tai leaned on Mum.

“We found it on the beach...,” Luke said. “We didn't think it would break coz we had kicked it around and then it just broke in his hand.”

“You need to tell us what it is Kimi,” Dad asked Kimi.

“I don't know,” Kimi mumbled, feeling guilty but not knowing why. Tai was suddenly silent and pale. His eyes closed.

4. TĀ'OKI

A black night with no sound. Kimi stepped out from the darkness of the rainforest and stood at the edge of a well. She yearned to escape the clinging feeling of the humid air so she dived into the black waters. The water was black and cool. She dived deeper, gleeful as the water sang past her ears.

Something appeared below her, long and pale. She dived toward it.

It was a woman. No, it was *the* woman, the one from the beach - her body drifting in the darkness. As Kimi drifted towards her, she could see the corners of her lips were upturned – a hint of a smile defining her cheekbones. Her skin shimmered like oyster shell, glowing as if it stored moonlight. With her eyes closed, she was not threatening like she had been at the beach. Her face was peaceful and somehow familiar.

Kimi felt compelled to reach out to touch her cheek.

The woman's eyes snapped open. She grabbed Kimi by the wrist, pulling her close. Kimi's body remembered the cold grip from the beach and went into panic mode. There was a moment where they were face to face, *'Oki mai ki āku, e tamā'ine*. Then the woman dived down, dragging Kimi with her, deeper and deeper. Her lungs burned and there was a pressure pushing her head into itself. And still they dived.

Then the blue light appeared in the dark. Kimi knew. That place. They had to get there. But it was too far, too deep. If she could just hold on a little longer.

Then Kimi's arm was released. She flew towards the surface, her buoyancy pushing her up. The woman vanished into the depths.

Kimi looked up and saw the moon shining down through the water. Slowly it's colour shifting from indigo purples to blue to turquoise, becoming a vaimara globe. Inside something floated, lifeless.

“A daughter of the Dry will never belong in the Deep,” a voice said.

Kimi struggled, trying to escape the woman.

“The Dry bring destruction to everything they touch. Ngā To'u foresee it.”

No! No! NO!”

Kimi's dad turned on the bedroom light, blinding Kimi momentarily. “Kimi! You okay?”

Kimi sat up, looking around dazed, “What...?” she rubbed her eyes and tried to focus. Dad stood at the door of her room in his boxers. Beyond him Kimi could hear the sound of Tai's feverish whimpering. He sounded worse.

“Yeah, I'm okay,” she croaked.

Dad looked back down the hall concerned, then back at Kimi, “You okay to go back to sleep?”

“Yeah. Sorry.”

“You're good mā'ine—moe marū.”

“Moe marū.”

And it was dark again. Before she went back to sleep, she thought about the moment before the light had gone on. The tīvaevae on her bed, beads sparkling red among the seaweed, aglow with the dim blue light of another world. But now she was unsure what she had seen.

Kimi woke later, her head foggy from the poor sleep. She pulled the blankets over her shoulders and noticed the tīvaevae in her hands. It reminded her of the globe that had made Tai sick. She sat up, stretched her arms out to the corners of the bed and yanked the tīvaevae free. Then she shoved it in her bag beside the door. After zipping up the bag, she felt better. She turned to peek out the curtains and saw a clear sky.

Luke crept around the doorway and leaned against the wall.

“Hey,” Luke said.

“Hey, how’s Tai?” Kimi replied from her bed.

“Mum took him to A&E.”

“What? When did that happen...?”

“A few hours ago. They didn’t wanna wake you cos you woke in the night.”

“Is he ok?”

“Dunno. Mum called and said he had some sort of blood poisoning. They took the globe in but they still don’t know what the stuff inside was,” Luke looked up, “Do you think he’ll be ok? Like he’s talking sometimes but he looked really sick when he left...”

Luke was younger so was meant to be shorter than her but he wasn’t. It was sometimes easy to forget he was only eleven “Don’t worry bro. He’s just a bit sick. They’ll find out what’s wrong with him and he’ll be alright.”

It almost convinced them both.

“Dad’s made some food and said you have to get up now.” He left for the kitchen.

Kimi turned to her dresser to get something for her hair. As she reached for a hair-tie she noticed marks on her arms. Bruising. Kimi slowly wrapped her fingers around her wrist and her hand matched the marks. She yanked open the top drawer of the dresser and found a long sleeve top. Then she pulled her hair up into a pony tail before walking out to the kitchen. Dad was already heading out.

“Gotta go to the shop. Come for a koka if you want or you wanna stay and have a kai with Luke?” Dad asked.

“I’ll stay here.”

“Ok, well,” Dad shifted. His mouth stayed open a moment before he simply said, “Ka kite.”

Kimi listened to his heavy footsteps down the hall and the shuffle as he put on his jandals. The front door opened. Outside someone shouted, “Hey Uncle Mat!”

“Bella, you alright? Just heading to the shop. Kimi’s inside.”

“Okay. Hey, can Kimi stay at my house tonight? Just watching movies.”

“Uh, okay,” Dad said, his voice tinged with reluctance. It had taken a long time for Dad to be convinced that Bella’s house was a good place for Kimi to be after Desiree’s twenty-first last year. “Ask her though, she seems a bit sick or something,”

“Thank you!”

Kimi met Bella in the hallway, “What are you doing here so early?”

“Aw y’ know. Mum and Uncle Dan were still up drinking from last night.”

There was a pause. The girls hated Uncle Dan, who wasn’t even an uncle, more a curse. “You wanna go to the beach?”

Kimi leaned back on the wall and avoided looking up. “Nah, I don’t feel like it.”

“Is this about that weird lady you saw yesterday?”

“Nah, my brother’s sick too.”

“Which one?”

“Tai.”

“Eh? What happened?”

“He found one of those blue globes, you know like that one you had, and it smashed in his hand. Hey, do you still have that one?”

“Yeah but it didn’t break...”

“Kimi! Who you talking to?” Luke yelled from the kitchen.

“Bella!”

“Tell her to come have some food.”

“Just in time!” Bella said. “And after we should go to the beach. It’ll make you feel better.”

“I should stay with my family.”

“Yeah, maybe. But you don’t even have to swim. We can just go for a walk around the point or something and then come back. Your dad won’t even notice you went.”

Down at the beach, Kimi immediately felt her mood lifting. It was hard to feel down around Bella. She was telling her about finding her younger sister trying on her new jeans.

“And then I was like, ‘Get them jeans off or I will cut all your hair off in the night while you’re sleeping!’ And she’s taking them off, looking at me like, ‘You probably would, psycho.’ But I can’t afford to have her dirty up the one nice pair of jeans I own. They’d come back covered in dirt and chocolate or whatever. She never looks after anything.”

The girls’ laughter eased off in a loud sigh. “Girl, you’re crazy.”

“Yeah,” Bella said without irony.

They came to the surf club and walked down the gravel drive onto the sand. It was a cool morning but Kimi knew it would be a long summer’s day.

“You wanna see if anyone’s up at the sheds?” Bella asked.

They turned south. Often there were kids from school hanging out by the sheds and they would find themselves a group to hang out with. They walked along without talking, enjoying the sound of the small waves nudging onto the sand. It was still early enough that the sky was light blue and the horizon was blurry. That time of day when the sea and sky were still arranging themselves.

Then Kimi noticed Bella was carrying two bags. “Why did you bring that?” Kimi asked.

“You mean, ‘thanks for bringing my stuff, Bella’?” Bella scowled.

Kimi sighed, “I haven’t got anything in there.”

“Well, for an empty bag, it’s pretty heavy,” Bella yanked at the bag strap.

“No, I mean I took my gear out last night cos it was wet and then I shoved the tīvaevae in it.”

“The what?”

“Don’t worry,” Kimi sighed and took the bag. Bella was right, it was heavy.

There was no-one at the sheds. It was too early. Kimi noticed one of the doors had new graffiti on it. Bella bumped into Kimi when she stopped to look at it.

“The Dry will destroy us all...,” Kimi read out loud. It was written in thick dark red paint that oozed rather than dripped. The slimy letters took up the whole door of the boatshed.

“What does that even mean?” asked Bella.

“It looks weird. Can you look it up?” asked Kimi.

“I got no data.”

“Neither.”

They continued to the rocks at the far end of Titahi Bay. A narrow path cut between the cliffs and rocky outcrops. This end was where wilderness started, where seals could sometimes be spotted and treasures from the sea were caught in the low tides. Bella wandered about, looking in rock pools.

Kimi continued down the usual path. Then she noticed large boulders had slipped from the cliff making the narrow pass difficult. She looked up at the cliffs, not finding where the boulders could have come from, and then back to the obstacle. No, she’d have to get through there, she thought. She scrambled up and over the large rocks. At the top, she tossed her bag and slides to the ground and jumped down after them.

As she landed on the soft sea gravel, Kimi turned to look back at where she had jumped from. It would be difficult to return, especially if the tide came up. She had a quick look for any footholds she could use if she wanted to get back over. What was she doing here?

“Bella!” she shouted. But no-one responded.

“Kimiora, tēnā koe.”

Kimi froze, now looking at the rock-face directly in front of her.

“Look at me.”

But Kimi couldn't make herself turn. Then she felt a cool touch on her shoulder and something dragged in her skull with the pull of a ship sinking – “Look at me.”

Kimi swung around. She stumbled against the boulder behind her, her breath fast. She desperately wanted a way out, but she couldn't take her eyes from the woman's face.

No hallucination. She was real.

Long, thick, coppery hair and large green eyes. Skin like oyster shell. And her face. There was something familiar about her face, something unsettling.

“Kimiora, we must return.” The woman's mouth did not move as she spoke but her eyes stressed the meaning.

Kimi was about to scream but something stopped her. She looked into the woman's face: it was like hearing a song she'd heard before.

“What...?” Kimi uttered in confusion.

“Kimiora! Tāku tamā'ine, please, you must remember...” the woman let go of Kimi's shoulder and brought her hands to hold Kimi's face, searching for something. Kimi didn't push her away.

Please, she pleaded. Then she pointed to a huge rock that Kimi had never seen before. It was the size of a small car and appeared a lighter brown colour than the surrounding rock

covering most of the beach that Kimi knew from countless walks and adventures. The woman drew nearer to the strange rock and beckoned Kimi.

Kimi saw the grey rock held a small pool, like a circular bath. But it was not filled with water. Instead, there was something like pearl coloured paint. Impulsively, Kimi dropped her hand into the liquid and ran it around. She laughed as the liquid drew up her arm.

I remember you, Kimi thought. But then she caught herself. She looked up at the woman.

The woman placed her hand gently on her shoulder and spoke to her mind, “You remember this?”

Kimi nodded. She was still terrified but at the same time...there was something familiar in this situation.

“Do you remember me?”

“Yes,” Kimi said aloud. “You’re Tapaeru, a mōmoke of Rarotonga. You are ancient. You -”

Kimi felt dizzy all of a sudden.

Tapaeru spoke, but gently this time – “I will not force you. But I have to tell you that if you want your brother to get better, you need to come with me. Kua mārama koe? 'Akamāro'iro'i e mā'ine.”

Kimi nodded, as if in a spell. Tapaeru took her by the hand. She let herself be guided into the pool. It was up to her knees and the liquid lapped glossily at her legs. Kimi let go of the hand and slowly sat down and looked back at the woman, who gave a gentle nod.

Tepaeru placed her hands on Kimi's head, looking down at the girl with sympathy.

Kimi did not resist. She let herself be pushed under the pearl waters.

5. TAEAKE

E mā'ine. This woman had said this to her before – in another time. In her mind she found many memories of Tapaeru smiling, laughing, her mouth opening to speak. Her heart slowed and she let the pearl liquid envelope her. She saw her own hand as a smaller child reach for the Tapaeru's face. She heard a lullaby being sung in Māori while the wind blew through the tipani tree leaves. She felt her mother's embrace and smelled the salt of her skin. The bath felt like lying on your own bed after a long trip away, comforting and familiar.

Kimi opened her eyes and saw the white shimmer of the sun shining through the grey of the bath. Tapaeru's silhouette perched over the rim of the pool, her hands no longer on Kimi's head. She felt calm and safe. So she opened her mouth and breathed the liquid in, letting it enter her stomach and lungs. She didn't question the fact that she was not drowning. Instead it felt as if pearl essence was washing all through her body, into her blood and brain. It left Kimi feeling like she was made of steel.

Then a shadow flickered across the sun and the Tapaeru disappeared. This did not worry Kimi as she felt at peace, comfortable in the warm pearl bath. Again another shadow flickered around the rim of the bath. For a moment Kimi wondered what Tapaeru was doing but her mind released the thought as quickly as it came. This is what I need to do to go home, Kimi thought before she could question where the thought had come from.

After some time, Kimi began to feel like it was time to rise from the water. Yes, the process was almost done. She gathered herself and reached her hands up to the rims of the bath. As she did, it felt as if someone had smacked her left hand. Kimi sat up to see why the mōmoke had done it. As Kimi rose from the water, she heard shouting.

Tapaeru was restraining Bella who jolted and screamed. The contents of Bella's bag were strewn across the rocky shore. "KIMI! Are you ok?! Kimi!"

“Kō'ai ia?” Tapaeru asked coldly.

Kimi attempted to stand but still felt a bit woozy. Her clothes didn't hold the liquid and it fell quickly back into the bath. “Bella, I'm ok. Please, it's ok.”

As Kimi stood, Bella looked her up and down. “What has she done to you?! What have you done?”

“Bella, it's ok. We're gonna help Tai.” Kimi realised that the skin on her arms was now the colour of the inside of an oyster shell, pale white, with blue undertones, identical to Tapaeru's. She lifted herself out of the bath, flicking her limbs out, testing the sensation of her new skin. Bella was distracted by Kimi's transformation when Tapaeru lifted her up and dropped her into the pool, holding her down roughly by the shoulders. Bella thrust her arms and legs up through the liquid, which splashed in all directions.

Kimi grabbed at the Tapaeru's arms. “Stop! Leave her alone! She doesn't understand.”

Tapaeru held Kimi back with seemingly little effort. Then the pearl waters became still and Tapaeru slowly stepped away from the pool. It was quiet for a moment. Then Bella's hands rose out of the bath and she slowly lifted herself up from the rock tub. For a moment she watched as the liquid fell from her clothes, running her hands along her arms, mesmerised.

“That was crazy! That was the best bath of my life! I feel so good,” Bella squealed. She turned to Tapaeru, “What is this stuff?”

“We call it pakā. It helps... I'm sorry. I am not good at this language.”

“Pakā,” said Kimi. “That means like hard shell on the outside of your body, like a turtle shell, or a crust or something.”

The mōmoke looked to Kimi, “I am happy you remember your reo, Kimiora. You have the right words. And you have a good friend. What is her name?”

Bella didn’t wait for Kimi to answer, “Ah, *my* name is Bella. And you are?”

“I am Tēpaeru”.

Yes, thought Kimi, Tēpaeru. Peerless one, fairest of the fair. Something began unfurling in Kimi’s mind.

“You must bathe so you can go to the 'Uipā'anga. Or you will die.”

“Eh? What is this?” Bella asked.

“We need to go with Tēpaeru and get a cure for my brother. The globes come from Tēpaeru’s world.”

“Her world? How do you know?” asked Bella. Kimi had no answer.

“Kimiora’s brother need help. He will die,” Tēpaeru explained. “In five days. You need to come. Your healers don’t understand the poison.”

“Why would you poison Luke?” Bella asked.

“Tāku tamā’ine, the poison is not mine. There is a group. It is hard to make you understand. The Dry Objectors are from the Deep. Now I see they are here. We can help heal him. You must come. First, your clothing. It is not good in the water,” said Tēpaeru.

Kimi looked down at her t-shirt and shorts. “I don’t understand.”

“Vakatere comes. He will help us get to the Tunnel.”

“Okay,” said Bella. “What are you talking about? I don’t even know— Aaah! My eyes!”

Tepaeru had removed her pāreu and held a grey cylinder to her naked chest. Threads had sprung from the cylinder and covered her in a clinging grey suit. All in a matter of seconds.

“What the-? You were like naked? Is that stuff magic?” Bella asked, eyes wide. Kimi could see she was beginning to come around to the travel idea.

“No, it is not magic. Kimiora, please put on the suit. Bella needs it too. Put the things somewhere dry.”

After Bella’s outburst, Kimi decided to walk around the outcrop for privacy, where she quickly stripped down. Although it was still early, she checked for people. Being naked on the beach seemed unnatural. For a moment Kimi paused as she held the cylinder at her chest. Something about the moment felt like a turning point. Then she jabbed herself.

Immediately threads of silk shot in all directions from where she held the cylinder, wrapping themselves like tentacles around her whole body. They quickly widened to join and seal. Then it was done. Kimi turned to check her backside as it felt as if she was still wearing nothing, but she was in fact covered from head to toe. The only real difference was that she was now warmer. She returned to Bella and Tepaeru.

“Oooh sexy suit Kimi!” Bella laughed.

Tepaeru frowned, “Bella, do you know what to do?”

“Yep!” she replied with enthusiasm before heading off to the outcrop. Meanwhile Kimi found a place for their bags.

Tepaeru looked back out to sea, “They are here.”

“Where?” asked Kimi, squinting in the direction Tapaeru was looking. She could see some ripple in the water but it was too far for Kimi to make out what it was.

“Do they have some sort of boat?”

“No. There,” Tapaeru smiled and lifted her chin. “I see Vakatere. Twelve will take us to the Tunnel quickly.”

“Is twelve a big group?”

“Yes. The mako sharks do not like to swim in a group.”

6. NGĀ TARA

Bella had her hands on her hips, resolute, “I did the spa and I put on the weird suit and I was like, ‘Yeah, let’s go on some sea adventure with a water mutant. But there’s a reason they tell people not to swim with sharks! It’s probably alright for her,” Bella pointed at Tapaeru who was scanning the water. “Like, do sharks eat aliens?”

Tapaeru turned to address them, “Kimiora’s people call us ‘mōmoke’. I believe the people of this place call us ‘patupaiarehe’.”

“Patu...I know that word,” Bella squinted. “Wait! You’re one of those fairies! Or spirits or whatever.” She turned to Kimi. “I remember my cousin said there were some at the creek on the farm. Gave me the creeps!”

Tapaeru returned her gaze to the sea, “I do not know. Is ‘fairy’ a good word..?”

Kimi felt something drop into clarity. “Ati. Ati married a mōmoke. She was pale-skinned and they had a child. Mama Grace said the child was our ancestor. That’s why I have blondish hair. And you. You are my mother.”

Bella’s mouth fell open, “What? No, she isn’t. You got a mum already. What do you need a ghost mum for?”

“I know Mum is my mother but so is Tapaeru – another type of mother. One from long ago,” Kimi said. “But it doesn’t even matter. The point is we gotta get help for Tai. And you saw the globes. If they’re from Tapaeru’s world, we need to get there to get whatever will help my brother.”

Bella shrugged, admitting defeat.

“It is time to go.” Tapaeru turned back from her sea-gazing. “You need to know it is difficult to return after we leave. But it’s your best chance of healing your brother and I would like you to attend the ‘Uipā’anga.”

Kimi looked out to sea but her thoughts were facing landwards to her brother and her family. If this was the only chance to help Tai, she would have to take it. She looked over at Bella.

“But why the sharks is all I’m saying?! Why can’t she be friends with dolphins?” Bella exclaimed, holding her arms out.

Kimi smirked and they stepped forward.

The sun was higher now and the wind had died down. Once in the water, Kimi felt the sensation of her legs slice through the currents with the pakā suit on. It was as if the water had become light like air. The line of the horizon beyond Mana Island was now clear. They waded further out. Kimi drifted her fingertips over the water and considered the woman walking in front of her: the mōmoke, Tapaeru. She considered how it was impossible for this woman to be her mother even though she had never met her. But she felt the shifting of a memory, rolling deep inside her gut.

“We will wait here. Our friends are not far,” Tapaeru said.

“Coz ‘our friends’ can sense an easy meal,” Bella muttered.

They had travelled to where the water was deeper, at Kimi’s chin. Kimi was amazed at the sharks’ speed. Under the water, she ran her hands along each arm, feeling the strange texture of her suit. It reminded Kimi of her uncle making drums. The shark skin was used for the pa’u mango and her uncle had shown Kimi its properties before it was prepared for the

drum. Like her suit, in one direction, it felt smooth but when she dragged her hand along the other direction, it felt rough. “Even a shark’s skin has teeth,” her uncle had said.

Concentrating on how the suit felt made Kimi feel better about watching the sharks swim for her. She was eye level with a dozen fins as they sliced towards her. Everything in her wanted to flee. Images of pointed teeth and gaping wounds swam through her mind. Her heart felt like it was being squeezed by a fist in her chest. But she didn’t want Tapaeru to see her fear. She clenched her jaw together as she watched them approach, cutting cleanly through the surface. It was terrifying and mesmerising. Then they veered off to the left and began to loop around.

“Let go!”

Kimi turned to see Tapaeru was holding Bella’s shoulder as she strained to make her way back to the shore.

“We’re gonna DIE!” Bella screamed.

Even though Kimi *knew* this was not true, her body agreed with Bella.

The sharks were now circling them just beyond their reach. Bella’s eyes shifted wildly as she attempted to take in the movement of the sharks.

Tapaeru placed her hand over Bella’s mouth and hissed into her face, “Hush!”

She waited until Bella was calm before releasing her.

Kimi was beginning to wish her friend could be spared this. Maybe she should’ve tried to make Bella stay back? What if she had just ignored the feeling that Tapaeru was her mother? What if she had been right the first time when she was scared? But then she saw Tai’s face, pale against Mum, the fear in Luke’s face, heard her Dad’s worried voice.

Kimi joined her friend, and dropped her eyes to the water to show Bella her remorse. “This is a big thing you are doing for me.”

“I guess if this is the only thing we can do for Tai, we have to do it. But you really owe me.” Bella cocked her head around at the mōmoke, eyes narrowed, “Tepaeru, I’m starting to think me and you are never gonna be good friends. Like you’re old so, you know. But also the drowning stuff and the sharks and the hand over my mouth. It’s not a good way to make friends. Just saying.”

Tepaeru frowned at Bella but Kimi felt relief. Now that Bella was feeling a bit better, they could all focus.

“The sharks have ties,” Tepaeru said. “We hold them. Come. I go first. You watch me to learn and then you go.”

Kimi and Bella locked eyes. This was getting real.

“Remember, you can breathe in the water,” Tepaeru said. “Now I go. Come.” And she dropped under the water.

Kimi and Bella followed. What had looked like fins and ripples of disturbance around them, looked very different under the surface. Kimi saw they were surrounded by a large pack of sharks circling them over and over. They were Mako sharks, beautiful in their own way. The tops of their bodies were shades of dark blue and indigo. By contrast their undersides were white, appearing naked and vulnerable. Black eyes sat within their flattened heads. They were almost serpent-like as they swam. They were unaccustomed to travelling in a group, unaccustomed to swimming in circles, and thrashed violently against each other. But Kimi’s fear was gone.

After watching the sharks a while she noticed Tapaeru had been watching her, a small smile on her face.

“This is the right thing to do,” she said in Kimi’s mind.

She doesn’t have to touch me to speak in the water, thought Kimi.

“Get out of my head!” Bella’s eyes were wide with alarm.

Tapaeru attempted to calm Bella for a minute before giving up. She turned to address Kimi while holding Bella by the shoulder. “Riding is not difficult. You only have to grab the top of the reins and as your hands run down, the harness at the end will attach itself to you. I will travel with Vakaterere. Kimi, you will travel with Auika and Bella...Bella, you will travel with Teremoana,” she gestured to two different sharks.

Kimi watched as Auika circled with the rest of the pack. She was smaller than the rest, younger maybe. But her muscled frame revealed strength and agility. Auika was able to hold her own among the bigger sharks with ease. All the while Kimi could hear the disjointed muttering of her friend.

“Please observe carefully,” said Tapaeru.

Vakaterere emerged from the pack. Kimi could now see he was the longest. And he was magnificent. His back was darker, a black indigo, and he seemed to move more gently, with less effort. He began to circle closer. Kimi could’ve reached out and touched him. Tapaeru held her arms out as he moved in front of her and was quickly yanked from view. All Kimi could see was the flume of sand where Tapaeru’s feet dragged along the ocean floor.

“Bella is first. Teremoana is waiting,” Kimi heard.

Another shark pulled forward.

“Your turn,” Kimi said to Bella.

In response, Kimi heard a lot of scattered thoughts coming from Bella before she heard loudly. “I hear you in my mind. I’m so scared.”

“I know. Bella, I know but we’ll be fine. Bella, I’ll be there with you,” Kimi smiled. “Just focus on the reins.”

Bella’s voices became quiet, “Ok. I hate you.”

“You too,” Kimi replied.

Bella stepped forward to Teremoana who was now circling close. Kimi felt her trepidation. Her friend was stepping away from her fear into something unknown.

One moment Bella stood with her hands outstretched, the next she was gone. A cloud of disturbed sand in her place.

Then Auīka emerged from the circle. Kimi let her circle and looked into her black eyes. Her back was grey blue. This was a shark, not a human, not a friend in the way Kimi understood, not even like a dog or a cat or even a wolf—something so different. But for some reason, Auīka was here, agreeing to help them. Again Auīka circled, using the smooth, gentle motions Vakatore had used, gliding effortlessly around Kimi’s shoulders as she crouched in the water. Kimi reached her hands out to grab the reins.

7. TE ANAROA

After leaving the bay, Kimi followed Auīka through hours and hours of blue. All around her, endless, large blue spaces. Kimi thought maybe there was movement beyond them, groups of fish perhaps, but they moved too fast for her to focus. Any creatures that found themselves in their path, scattered long before their approach, the only trace being a tail fin or a tentacle vanishing back into the navy waters beyond. It was unnatural, the thrash of mako sharks travelling at speed across the ocean. It sent an alarm to all creatures within range; something dangerous approaches.

Kimi saw Tēpaeru with Vakātere, their motions very fluid, as if they were a single entity. The other sharks followed at either side. Kimi imagined that without her suit or the pakā, the motion of following a shark would feel different, like being dragged by a speedboat, water flurrying in your face. Instead her body cut through the water. Auīka seemed unencumbered by the extra weight, moving smoothly. Her body seemed to absorb Auīka's fluid movements like the end of a flag or whip.

They didn't stop or talk. There was an urgency to their travel. The repeated motion and the endless blue, thinking of Tai and her family, the unknown; she gave into the exhaustion of it all.

Kimi awoke when Auīka's movements slowed. The water was dark, and it felt like waking in the middle of the night. Tēpaeru and Vakātere appeared at Kimi's side. Bella was on Tēpaeru's other side. The lack of movement meant that they were now hanging from the reigns below the sharks.

“The sharks can go no further. They live in the top layer of our ocean. The depths we are going to are not where they belong,” Kimi heard Tapaeru say, “We need to dismount and sink.”

Kimi looked down into the darkness. “Where is it? I can’t see anything.”

“Sunlight very rarely penetrates this far below the surface. And we will sink significantly further.”

“How?”

“The pakā will ensure your descent is quick and safe. You will both take my hand as I take your harnesses off.”

“What would happen if we dived down further and didn’t have this stuff on?” asked Bella, her voice still had a peculiar echo in Kimi’s head but she seemed calmer.

“I believe even at this depth, you would be having trouble,” said Tapaeru. “The pakā ensures your cell structure is optimally maintained. Otherwise your body would respond poorly.”

“Poorly...like what though?”

“We do not have time to discuss it now.”

“Our brain would explode. Is that it? No? Our guts would burst?”

“Bella, please focus.”

“It’s definitely exploded brains isn’t it...?”

“Bella and Kimiora, when I take your hands, I’ll remove the last links in the reins and we will sink. Going head first will get us there faster. Are you ready?”

“Yes,” said Kimi.

“Maybe...?” said Bella.

Vakatere swam before them and lingered before Tapaeru. Kimi heard her thoughts as murmuring. The other sharks were circling quickly around the group.

“Now.”

They plunged head first into the darkness. Kimi looked back a moment to see the shark pack returning swiftly towards the glowing blue of the surface. Back where she belonged.

Kimi thought she knew darkness. There had been clear nights, hiding under blankets, eyes shut, out in the country, not a sound. But this. This was a darkness that surrounded her, unlike anything she had known. It felt like she should be able to hold it. She pulled her hand to her face and saw nothing. Not even a movement of shadow. The black ruled at these depths. It was enough to make Kimi doubt if she was even alive. Did she exist?

“Do I exist? What a question,” mocked Bella, reminding Kimi that her thoughts could be heard.

“Remember, Bella and I are right by your side.”

Finally, after so much darkness, something emerged below them, expanding like a glowing blue flower.

“We are almost there,” Tapaeru said. “Make yourself ready.”

What had seemed like a flower continued to expand. It was monstrous. A great, glowing hill on the sea floor. Small red and yellow lights shone gently from small caves, like little windows into a ghostly city on a hill. Kimi positioned herself as closely to Tapaeru as

she could. They appeared to be aiming for a small entrance, illuminated green, at the base of the hill.

But it looked far too small. As they came closer, Kimi realised the speed at which they were approaching. She began to panic. *No, no, no, no...*

They hit the edge of the entrance, more like a tunnel. The three of them stumbled inside. Her hand was ripped from Tapaeru's as she rolled forward. Once. Then twice. Then again. She hit a green wall just before Bella smashed into her.

"Ow! Bella!" Kimi yelled, rubbing her head.

"Like I could even stop! Your head is so hard..." Bella moaned rubbing her eye. Their legs were tangled.

Kimi took a moment to gather herself, disentangling herself from Bella. No bleeding. No rips in the suit. Bella seemed to look ok as well.

Kimi pushed herself up off the wall and noticed it was rubbery. Like going down the throat of a great green beast. Tapaeru was waiting for them at the end of the entrance tunnel. She had her default expression – weary impatience. Kimi pulled Bella up and followed Tapaeru out of the cave into the wider space beyond.

"Welcome to te Pā o Paikea where we enter the Anaroa."

"Is this where you keep the cure?" Kimi asked.

"No, but the Anaroa will take us to the Nga'i 'Uipā'anga where we can obtain a remedy for your brother."

Mention of her brother brought back worry about her family, but the majesty of Te Pā o Paikea was too great for Kimi to ignore. They had entered a large hexagonal chamber. The

biggest place Kimi knew in Porirua was at Te Rauparaha Arena, where a crowd could watch a basketball game. But this place, a station for mōmoke passengers to board the Anaroa, was the size of three of those arenas stacked on top of each other. Outside it had looked like a city on a hill but inside she could see that the hill was hollow and the light came from inside the hill itself. There were entrances in the ceilings where other passengers dropped gently to the floor, all mōmoke dressed in bright colours. The walls gave off their own blue light beneath the repeating geometric patterns that reminded Kimi of her cousin's tattoos. A large chandelier was suspended at the buildings apex. It appeared to be moving, pulsating with pink and orange light. As Kimi focused more, she could see that it was actually a large group of jellyfish in different shades swimming in a swirling group. Mōmoke dressed in all colours and textures landed and made their way to boarding. Their gowns floated dramatically around them. Kimi stretched her neck, eyes wide, taking it all in, trying to adjust.

Bella tugged on her hand and they followed Tēpaeru.

“I hope she's not gonna force us to wear these suits the whole time,” said Bella. “I want some glow hair and face-paint like everyone else.”

Kimi was suddenly self-conscious as they walked grey amongst all the colour of the other passengers. She was sure she saw a couple laughing at them. But whenever she looked at their faces, their eyes were averted.

“And how come it sounds like she's speaking Māori and English instead of Cook Island? I thought they were different,” continued Bella.

“She is speaking Cook Island Māori,” said Kimi, puzzled.

Tēpaeru turned back, “Here we do not need our tongues to speak. You interpret my thoughts in whatever way is fitting to you. Āru mai and, please, stay close to me.”

They wove among the many other groups of mōmoke towards a large archway. It was half the height of the station and had four tunnels going under its arch, bringing carriages in and out of what Kimi now knew was a station. The carriages looked like long glass shellfish with a front thickening towards a rounded end where the passengers sat. Tapaeru called them Pā'ua. They looked so much like the glossed shells of mussels that Kimi thought of her father, sitting out on the rocks eating fresh mussels. "C'mon, bub! You're missin' out!" he had teased as he dangled a raw mussel in front of Kimi. She had been disgusted. "Get out, Dad!" She smiled at the memory. *Please, don't be worried Dad.*

"Kimi! He won't be worried yet. I told him you were staying at mine, remember?" said Bella.

Kimi looked at Bella but Bella did not return her gaze. She was distracted by a mōmoke with a bare muscled chest and long green hair. His eyes glowed purple and his lips were painted orange. He snorted dismissively in response to Bella's attention.

Bella turned to Kimi, eyes wide, "I like this place."

Kimi laughed, "You would."

"E pā'ua tēia," said Tapaeru. They all stood close to the glass trench as a mussel-shaped carriage slid up alongside them, like a boat along a quiet stream. Its top half raised and opened like a great glass mouth providing a tongue to sit on.

Kimi had been about to step in when Tapaeru blocked her with her arm.

"Wait," said Tapaeru, looking at the ceiling.

A large group of people descended to the centre of the station, all wearing dark gowns, falling like a great black comet to the ground. After landing, the crowds parted to

make way for the group. There were several women who stood on the outside, heads and shoulders exposed, revealing dark grey skin and long white hair pulled into thick plaits.

“It is an Elder,” said Tēpaeru, the thought a whisper in Kimi’s mind.

The ambient bustle of the stadium dimmed to a murmur as everyone stepped aside to let the group pass. Kimi could see that what seemed like a large group was actually women walking in an oval-shaped formation. The black fabric that attached to their shoulders was bound between the women, creating a type of draping tent. There was no light under the draping.

“That’s badass,” said Bella.

The group stopped. One of the women was less than two steps from them but like the other women she stood still, facing towards the gate. Kimi had never seen someone who looked so beautiful and terrifying at the same time. White hair, grey skin, grey eyes unfocused, white lashes, full dark grey lips. Then Kimi got a strange feeling. Then she saw the eyes.

They peered over the woman’s shoulder, from beneath the black drapery. Large with an eerie green glow, like cats eyes shining in the dark. Kimi tried to step back into the crowd behind her. The eyes narrowed, as if the person was smiling, glaring maybe. Then they vanished.

The group recommenced their walk to the pā’ua. Unlike the other pā’ua, which remained transparent, when their pā’ua closed, it appeared to darken. The lights in the station reflected glossily off the pā’ua’s hard lips and surfaces. The carriage departed under the arch.

Once they had left, the bustle resumed.

Tepaeru grabbed Bella's other hand roughly. "That was Our Mother Tutuariki. Why could you not keep your mind still for one moment?"

"I said her tent was badass! It's a compliment! I didn't know she could hear me, no-one else can!" Bella said.

"Everyone can hear you! Your thoughts are so fragmented and heightened that it is difficult for anyone *not* to hear you," Tepaeru said, her eyes narrowed at Bella. "Get in the pā'ua before you attract more attention."

As the upper and lower shell met, there was a minor shift in the pressure inside the pā'ua. The noise outside immediately lessened. Kimi watched all the beautiful colours and lights of the crowds, the gowns stretched grotesquely by the window lens. As she got used to the distortion, she also saw how there were groups of mōmoke, standing and watching the pā'ua, heads huddled together in secret conversations.

"The trip will take some time. We will use it to learn how to focus thoughts so we are not disturbing others," Tepaeru said, frowning at Bella.

Bella crossed her arms, "Sounds fun."

After their instruction in thought focus, which Tepaeru believed would require much more attention, they relaxed. The pā'ua propelled forward along the dim blue trail of te Anaroa. A light hurtled towards them. It grew, grew, grew, and then passed in a split second.

"How fast are we going?" Bella asked as she turned to watch the pā'ua pass.

"You would measure it as about 1500 kilometres per hour."

Kimi knew this should have impressed her. The show of other capsules zipping by, the moving chairs, the speed, even the fact they were deep underwater and not dead. But for some reason...it just didn't. Kimi had thought it was because she was worried about her brother. But it wasn't just that. There was something every-day about it.

"I've been on this before."

"Yes," Tapaeru interrupted. "You have. But it has been a long time since your last trip."

"I'm confused," said Kimi. "Sometimes I feel like I don't know you and other times I feel like..."

"In your other lives, I was always able to know you from birth. That has not been possible this time. But we have spent a lot of time together, Kimiora. However, this time you are so much older. You are clearly not comfortable with me. Otherwise I would have discouraged Bella from accompanying you."

"Well. I wasn't so happy about it to be honest..." Bella cut in.

"I am actually surprised with how well she has adjusted; she is only human."

"What did you just say?"

Now Kimi cut in, "What do you mean 'only human'? What am I?"

"Well, Kimiora, it means you are more than human."

Tapaeru turned her back to Bella and looked Kimi in the eye. "What do you know of mōmoke, child?"

"I told you. There's the myth from the village, that Ati and the mōmoke had a child. And we are descended from the kid."

“No, tell me all you know. Start at the beginning.”

8. KO ATI E TE MŌMOKE

Kimi looked out into the darkness and thought about Māmā Grace. She saw her Māmā’s hands moving quickly around the knitting needles. The large black pearl ring she wore on her wedding finger bobbing with the motion. Kimi was still small enough to sit on Māmā’s lap while Māmā knitted. She was always making something for one of her moko. Kimi could feel Māmā’s chin on her head and smell the coconut oil Māmā rubbed over herself every morning. She was listening to a story she had already heard but it didn’t matter.

“Once upon a time there was a man named Ati. He was from our village, Arorangi. One day me and you are going back there together. What you think of that, bub?” Mama Grace stretched around to look into Kimi’s face.

“Will Dad come too?” Kimi asked.

“Of course. That boy should’ve gone back to the island ages ago. Anyway, Ati. He had a big garden with taro and ka’ika and kuru and noni – a big garden with a big deep well in the middle. One day he went to check on it because it was almost time to gather some of the crops but when he got there, he saw someone had *ruined* the place!

“You know, on the island, its ok to help yourself to one piece of fruit, or two if you need a kai but someone had gone and taken half the crop! Ati was *so* mad. He ran to the neighbours saying, ‘You betta tell me who took my crop!’ But they said, ‘It’s not us, Ati.’ He couldn’t figure it out and each night it kept happening over and over. So Ati thought he would wait one night and see for himself who was stealing from his garden.

“The night came and there was a full moon so Ati could almost see as if it was day. Ati sat in the pō’iri and waited and *waited*. He was getting real ro’iro’i when he heard

something funny. Like rushing water. And someone laughing. ‘Aha!’ he thought. ‘I got him now!’”

Māmā put down her knitting and held Kimi’s hands—two small hands in two big soft ones. Kimi shifted around to look up at Māmā Grace’s face.

“But you know what? It wasn’t a ‘him’. Oh no! It was a group of young women. *Beautiful* women. Almost as beautiful as *I was* as a young va’ine,” they both chuckled as Māmā Grace posed, patting her grey bun.

“But they were not women from the island. They were mōmoke! They had white, white skin. Some had white hair and some had black but each had long, long hair, down to their waists.”

“Are they papa’ā?” Kimi asked.

“No, child, they looked like us but just with white skin and light eyes and sometimes, they had light hair.”

“Anyway, Ati was *amazed* to see these mōmoke. They were so beautiful and their laugh sounded like the water going over the rocks. He had never seen anything like them before. He watched them and they were dancing and laughing. But *then* he saw they were pulling up all the vegetables. Well, that snapped him out of it alright. He ran after them yelling, ‘Ē! You there! This is my garden, you have no right to come here and steal everything for yourself.’”

“Well, as soon as the mōmoke heard Ati’s voice, they ran for the well and dived right in. Ati ran after them. He jumped in the well and followed them as far as he could go. And even though he was a good swimmer, he couldn’t follow the mōmoke all the way. They went deep, *deep* in the water. Ati couldn’t even see where they went.”

“So the next night he set a *big* net, big enough to catch *ten* people. Even ten of your Uncle Teina! That’s a big net, ē! He went back to his garden and waited. And you know what? The mōmoke, they came back, laughing and dancing and eating all the food.

“Ati went out again and scared them. And they ran off. But *this time*, they ran into the net that Ati had set.

“As soon as they got caught, *oh*, they were *so* mataka. They thrashed about, trying to get out. When they couldn’t, they dragged the net to the big well in the middle of the garden. Then they *threw* themselves in. In the water, they were able to get out of the net.

“Ati was really angry then. He dragged his net up and he thought they had all got away. But do you know what he found in his net? What was it?”

“A mōmoke,” replied Kimi giggling.

“That’s right!” Māmā Grace wrapped her arms around Kimi. “Kua kite koe ē. One mōmoke was still stuck in the net. She was so scared. She was all alone with this strange, angry man and she just wanted to get back to her sisters. Well, Ati took the mōmoke back to his 'are. At first he was angry. He puffed about like Papa Tū grumbling.” Mama Grace scrunched up her face at Kimi and they laughed.

“The mōmoke was afraid and she missed her home and family. It was like this for a little while but as they got to know each other, Ati fell in love with the mōmoke. Then one day he asked her to marry him and she said... yes!” Māmā Grace tickled Kimi under her chin, making Kimi giggle.

“Kua mataora rāua. Even though the mōmoke couldn’t go outside during the day. The village people thought she was strange because the sunlight hurt her eyes and burned her skin. Still, they were so in love, they didn’t care.

“Then one night Ati came home and the mōmoke was crying. ‘E a'a te manamanatā?’
Ati asks.

“And she said she was afraid. ‘I’m going to die,’ she said.

“Because she was pregnant, she had a baby in her tummy, just like Ritea. But the mōmoke was from a place where babies were cut from their mother’s tummies. That is what always happened for mōmoke babies. She was worried there was no-one to cut the baby out so she would die.”

“What happens to our babies?”

“Oh. I’ll tell you another time. But anyway Ati told her, ‘Don’t worry.’

He got his Māmā Ru'au to talk to her. They explained to her that they don’t need to cut the baby out. But the mōmoke was still afraid.”

“When the baby came, the baby and mother were fine. Ati was *very* relieved and the mōmoke was a very loving mother. A good mother.

“But as the baby got older, something was not right. At night the mōmoke would go out and sit by the well.

“So Ati asked one day, ‘Tāku 'inangaro, what is wrong? What can I do to make you happy again?’

“The mōmoke told him she wanted to return to her people. She wanted her people to know that they could have babies without cutting and to show their baby to her family.”

“Of course Ati agreed but only if he could come. They gathered their things and the next night, they went back to the well.

“They took great, big breaths and dived down. Ati took the baby. But no matter what he did, Ati did not get deep enough. They tried again and again. Then the fourth time Ati came up and saw that the mōmoke did not follow him. He called for her but there was no one.

“He got out and waited until the sun came up. Then he saw that she would not be coming back. The days passed, the mōmoke did not return and Ati knew in his heart that she never would.

“Some say Ati called his child Ati-ve'e-Rotopu-ia-taua to signify his heartbreak. He loved her so much.”

Māmā Grace paused and looked into Kimi’s eyes.

“And you know that Ati-ve'e was our ancestor?”

Kimi nodded.

“And that’s why you, Kimiora Ngāmetua, are a little Kuki and have this rouru ke'u. Mānea tikāi tēia and the green eyes, just like a mōmoke.”

Māmā kissed Kimi on the forehead.

“Māmā’s very own mōmoke...”

Māmā Grace wrapped her arms around Kimi tighter and rocked softly as she hummed the ‘īmene of 'Ati and the mōmoke. Kimi snuggled into Māmā, her head resting on the old woman’s chest.

Aue te tangi e te aro'a

Au tei 'inangaro ia ē,

Me tae atu koe ki 'Avaiki.

Mā'ine, ma'ara mai iāku.

9. KO TEPAERU E TE TĀNE

Kimi wrapped her arms around herself and leaned on the outside wall of the pā'ua. She felt Tapaeru's hand on her shoulder.

“I am so happy you had someone like Mama Grace in your life.”

“Me too,” said Kimi, still leaning on the window.

“Did she tell you this story often?” Tapaeru asked.

“Yeah...when I was a kid. When I was older...”

“I see. I know that story well but it is always interesting hearing another version, particularly from the Dry,” said Tapaeru.

“Did you know that mōmoke who ran off with Ati?” asked Bella.

“Yes, I do. I am that mōmoke.”

“Eh? How does that work? I thought it was an old Raro story.”

Kimi looked into the darkness and saw it all. Ati swimming down into the depths of the well and struggling, deeper and deeper before rushing back to the surface. Tapaeru before the last dive, holding Ati's face against hers, trying to encourage him. Ati returning to the surface, turning about, searching for Tapaeru, panic in his eyes, grasping at the rocks, at the edge of the well, out of breath. Ati returning to his home, taking position on the step where he would wait each day. Days passing as Ati maintained his vigil. His face shifting from worry to panic to despair to, eventually, a starved bitterness. Ati muttering in his sleep, calling for the mōmoke, his voice now full of anger and resentment. Tapaeru!

Kimi turned to Tapaeru. “I remember you now. Because I am 'Ati-ve'e. They told me it was a son. But it was me.”

“Ah no. What are you talking about?” Bella said. “I have known you since kindy and this... it can’t happen...”

“No, it is as she says,” said Tapaeru. “Although as someone who experienced the narrative first-hand, I interpret it very differently.”

“What’s the truth then?” asked Bella.

“Truth. I still don’t quite understand what humans mean when they use this word. But I am happy to share my experiences with Ati as I believe it will help Kimiora.”

Kimi looked ahead along the Anaroa tracks leading off into the distance. There was no way to get off the ride now.

“I will communicate the story in a faster way. But you both need to be calm. I might need both of your hands. It would be best if you close your eyes and breathe deeply”

Kimi took a deep breath and tried to empty her mind. She found herself looking up to sunlight shining through a hole at the water’s surface. Around her were other mōmoke, pale with pakā and naked. My sisters! But not *her* sisters, Tapaeru’s. They swam towards the top and appeared into a strange world. It was dry! And it was so still. And it stank! Kimi saw from Tapaeru’s eyes as she reached out for the edge of the well and pulled herself out. So dry! And limp! Everything drooping to the ground.

The sisters explored, laughing, watching how their bodies moved on the Dry, listening to how their hair swished in the air. They touched everything. Kimi shared Tapaeru’s marvel at the dewy surface of the taro leaves, the smell of the tiare māori. Small insects fluttered about and a moko used its sticky feet to slither up a tree. Tapaeru’s sister reached out to touch it and it scampered away. The girls laughed. What a strange place! So smelly and dirty but beautiful and full of otherworldly colour. Her sister approached, *taste this*. Tapaeru raised it

to her mouth. It was soft, squishy, it burst sweet water in her mouth. So sweet! She needed another. This one was different. Slimy and even sweeter. Not a trace of the sea. She did not know a sweetness like this was even possible.

Night after night they returned. Leaving before morning. The pakā could not protect their skin from the bright star. The sisters were not sure if the experience was forbidden. It was their first exploration. A coming of age. They felt their experience of the garden was far outside the Shared Thought. No-one knew it was allowed. Neither did they check. Because the food was delicious, sweet, addictive. The third night, a loud rumbling was heard. Like a loud animal. It jumped out. It leaked sea water from its skin, the girls could smell it. It looked like a mōmoke with its long black hair but the face was strange, it had dark eyes, its muscles were arranged differently and it had big hard feet and hands. It snarled, it couldn't communicate properly. The girls ran, terrified, back into the well.

The next night, the girls discussed whether they should return. The animal was like a mōmoke. It could be intelligent. It might have some form of attachment to that space, as was common with large animals on the Dry. It was difficult to gauge how dangerous it was as there was no way to communicate with it. And it was so much bigger and more hostile than all of the other creatures they had encountered during their other trips to the garden.

They decided to go one last time. They would take samples to share and study when they returned home, maybe a little bit extra to eat during the return trip. They took up the equipment they needed and returned for one last trip.

But the animal was waiting.

He ran for them snarling. They retreated to the well. But a structure of sticks and palm leaves had been put in the way. They veered left. What was this? Webbing?! Weed?! A fibre webbing, very strong. They were all entangled, panicking. They managed to drag themselves

to the well and threw themselves into it. The webbing floated. Kimi saw the sisters free themselves. But her wrist, Tapaeru's wrist and arm, was tangled in the webbing. She pulled and it tightened. Her elder sister returned with a small blade and looked her in the eyes. Green eyes, dark hair. Panic but focus. The sister began cutting. The net yanked. The knife dropped. No! Her sister had fear on her face. Her favourite sister. It yanked again. Upwards. The sister grabbed the webbing, pulling down. The others waited below. *What's happening? We must leave.*

The net lurched a third time. The brown arm, the large hairy hand grabbed at the net. *Leave, sister! I will survive, I will escape. Protect our younger sisters, they need your experience.* Karaia-ite-ata, Karaia the shadowy, elder sister of Tapaeru, touched Tapaeru's cheek before she was ripped to the surface.

The animal had been thrown to its hind legs. It seemed surprised to find Tapaeru in the webbing. The animal gestured for Tapaeru to stand but kept her in the net. It had a spear made of wood. It did not want to hurt Tapaeru; in fact it seemed afraid. The animal took Tapaeru to a structure, a platform with a roof of wood and leaves. She was tied to a wooden pole. Woven mats were attached to the ceilings to keep the morning light out. The animal gave her water and sweet foods.

Everyday, Tapaeru was given different sweet foods. She saw the dignity of the animal, a male. Sometimes he pointed to himself. 'Ati,' he said into the air. It was his only way to communicate. Sounds from his mouth. Eating into his mouth, breathing into his mouth, talking from his mouth. Tapaeru wondered about his inner mechanics. She tried to speak with him but he did not hear.

"Tāne," he gestured to himself before he gestured to her, "Va'ine."

"Tapaeru," she formed on her tongue, clumsily, out into the air.

“Tepaeru,” he said.

One day as he fed her sweet foods, he loosened her bonds. After a moment of working at her wrists, he stumbled. He breathed out his gibberish in the air. Tepasaru could see from his wide eyes and his gestures he was alarmed. He sat against the wall waving his hands at her. The bonds were now loose around Tepasaru’s wrists. She knew from observing him the past weeks that she had the advantage of superior physical strength and now might be her opportunity for escape. All she needed to do was remove the bonds. She worked at the rope.

Meanwhile the man calmed himself. He approached her slowly and put his hand on her shoulder.

“I hear you.”

A moment can change how we see the whole world. What we think we know can shift in directions we never knew. All it takes is someone showing us something completely new, completely outside what we know and believe. Ati and Tepasaru provided this for each other. Ati pulled the bonds off and took Tepasaru’s hands in his. He could finally hear her. They spoke of many things. There was so much to speak of. At first Tepasaru admonished him for binding her but learnt of the labour Ati had put into the sweet foods – food the girls had taken without thought. They moved on. There was so much to talk about.

The whole time they held hands.

Kimi felt Tepasaru’s joy at feeling connected, no longer alone in a strange world.

They spoke through the night, then slept side by side, sharing dreams. When they woke again, they spoke while they ate the sweet foods, hands entwined. Tapaeru had never heard stories like Ati's. There were stories about the sun and fire. There were stories about great leaders. She laughed and gasped and watched the stories' images play in her mind. He told a story of how the world was created and Tapaeru was excited to hear how much it aligned with hers. How could it be?

After finishing a tale, Ati would ask to hear about the things she learnt from the elders, about how the tides worked, the locations of different volcanoes, what lived in the deep sea. His curiosity never diminished. He would rub his thumb over the top of Tapaeru's hand as she spoke, looking into her face with eyes wide. He would laugh with delight when something amazed or bewildered him, brushing her hair behind her ears. There was so much to know! His world was only one small part of a huge system of life.

Weeks passed this way. Tapaeru called for her sisters at the well. She reassured them she was well and that, despite how it had seemed initially, the humans were very hospitable. They begged for her return. They did not trust these predators of the Dry.

Kimi felt the tightness in Tapaeru's chest as she began stretching aspects of the truth, concealing others, to her own sisters. Tapaeru retold some of what she had learned already. The humans were capable of thought and foresight. They were caring and considerate. They shared the same creation story as theirs. Her sisters were still reluctant but allowed her to make the final decision. A short time she would stay, she told her sisters at the well, and gather information.

She did not mention that she spent every moment she could in the arms of the human.

Time passed. Something happened that Tapaeru had not anticipated. Tapaeru and Ati were almost always together, always in contact, sharing their thoughts. They began to share more; their hopes, fears, their dreams for the future. Her affection for the human was now her life. It was overwhelming and joyful but also filled Tapaeru with shame. She had told her sisters that she had stayed on the Dry to learn but now she had other reasons. Now there was a life dwelling within her.

How was this even possible? Wasn't it bad enough she was in love with someone considered an animal by her people? Now a child?

She wept. For the first time. The sea leaked from her eyes. *I am still a child; it is only half mōmoke; will it even survive?* The shame I will bring my kin. Fear, shame and love clashed within her stomach. Ati reached for her and she pulled away. She wept in the corner, not wanting him to know.

Her sisters called from the well, but she remained in the 'are of Ati.

One morning after a long night of trying to convince Tapaeru speak to him, Ati approached her slowly as she slept in the corner. He knew she was avoiding him and he was worried. She was so upset and exhausted, her skin was grey. He wrapped his arms around Tapaeru and she did not fight as she was tired of feeling alone with her fear and misery. As Ati embraced her, he discovered the truth.

More ocean sprang from her eyes.

'It is a bad omen, this child' she said.

But Ati did not share her foreboding. In fact he rejoiced in the discovery. A miracle, he called it. This child will be all your brilliance and all my charm. She showed him how mōmoke usually birthed children as she had learnt from the elders. Ati did not understand.

All he knew was that whatever happened in her culture was not possible for his people. He brought one of their females, an elder.

Kimi felt Tapaeru's fear. How would the baby be born without her sisters and mothers to help her? Did the woman have the appropriate skills? No, the woman said. They would try another way: the Dry way.

The baby was born. It was a pain unlike Tapaeru had ever experienced. She did not know she could feel that much pain and stay conscious. Tapaeru emitted sounds she did not know she had in her. Kimi saw the infant covered in blood being lifted above Tapaeru's naked body. The baby did not float within water and it screeched from the mouth. She sensed how Tapaeru was grateful to be alive and horrified by the Dry birth. Kimi steered away from the memory.

But what was this? This new one. She looked like a mōmoke. Her eyes were green and her hair a sunset blonde, a mix of Ati's and like her own. She was not grey nor brown like Ati but a warm milky colour, like sand on a coral beach or the flesh of trees. Her infant gurgled like water from a spring, her laugh like a sun-shower.

Kimi felt Tapaeru's love for her daughter for a moment, the baby warm against her chest, the sweet smell of her crown, and she ached. How could love exist in this quantity?

The girl child was older. Her skin was more fragile to the sunlight than Ati's but she could play in the morning and evening. She ran and laughed with delight. Ati looked on, proud. No father matched his pride. The neighbours still whispered. The woman, Tapaeru, where had she even come from? There was no vaka. Her face had a strange quality. Her forehead more sloped than it should be. Her eyes, so large and green. Have you seen her feet and hands? The daughter has her colouring but luckily her father's features. They say her skin feels like shark leather.

But Ati laughed. Tapaeru was the most intelligent woman he had ever known. Every day he learnt something new. About his home, about the island, about life itself. She was so young but had seen so much.

As Tapaeru sat at the edge of the 'are watching her daughter dance in the evening light, she brushed a mosquito off her arm. A layer of white pakā slipped off.

That night Tapaeru returned to the well. She called for her sister, Karaia, who returned from the depths. Tapaeru met her in the water, half way. Karaia still looked young, even though she was at least 600 years old. Her skin was covered in pearlescent pakā but her black hair floated free, a way of telling Tapaeru that she would not stay long.

Sister, much time has passed. I have worried for you. I thought you might be dead. But now you call after all this time?

I did not want you to worry but I have reasons for my lack of contact. Please trust my judgement.

I will allow you time to explain. You look unwell, sister.

I am unable to explain at this moment and I am quite unwell. I need your opinion on a matter. The pakā - it is deteriorating.

Clearly. It flakes off you like old scales. It was never intended to be used for a long time. You have been here at least five years now.

What can I do to prolong its effectiveness?

Nothing that I'm aware of. You could return to be drenched again. However as it is deteriorating already, your body may have suffered permanent damage. My opinion is that you must return to us to receive the appropriate care. You will need time to recover.

How much time? More than a year?

Sister, I only look at you to know you will be recovering for far longer than one year. Closer to ten.

But Ati. My daughter.

Daughter? Is that what you said?

Tepaeru said nothing and revealed everything.

How is this possible? There was no male with you, there was...Ati? Is this a human? Tepaeru...?

Karaia's mouth closed to a thin line and she turned from Tepaeru disgusted. Even when she spoke again, her eyes remained lowered.

You must return to us, sister. I believe you will not survive to see the next year.

I will bring Ati and my child.

You know that is impossible. They would not even get half way before the depths would kill them. Can the animal even swim? What has happened to you? My sister would never reason in this way.

Sister, I need them. I can't be away from my daughter.

Then your child will soon lose her mother. I sense your emotions and I am bewildered. Whatever you choose to do, I believe your best option requires you act soon. Before you decide, please consider this. This is not the first encounter with humans. Since you have been here, I have dived into the Shared Thought. With luck, Ati may live to the age of 80. Once he passes, what will become of you? What of your daughter? Has she inherited this life cycle? Even if you overcome the shortcomings of the pakā, what will become of you? The humans are superstitious. Will they accept you as they age and perish but you remain? You are not even 250 years old, how long will you dwell among them? Consider also your kin, who wait patiently for your return, who want to care for you and only seek to ensure your wellbeing. Have in mind what is best for your child. Please, sister, consider carefully.

10. NGA'I 'UIPĀ'ANGA

The memory faded into darkness. Kimi found herself sinking away from the surface of the water, watching the hole where sunlight shone in grow smaller. She opened her eyes to the flash of another pā'ua passing. She was resting under Tapaeru's arm. Bella sat opposite, against the window, watching the embrace. The expression on Bella's face made Kimi nervous so she leaned away from Tapaeru, despite the comfort her presence offered.

"...and you think, somehow, Kimi is the kid you had a gazillion years ago?"

"I know she is," said Tapaeru at the same time as Kimi said, "I know I am."

Bella took Kimi's hands. They had learnt to focus their thoughts by touching the person they were speaking too and it was clear she wanted to speak away from Tapaeru. She eyed Kimi, "You believe it?"

"I know it. I remember all of the things she is saying. It's like being around her and being here is unlocking all these memories."

"But look at all the stuff she can do. We're in the ocean, on a mussel train, in these suits. She talks to us in our minds. How do you know she isn't just putting this stuff in your head?"

Kimi paused, "You don't believe me."

"I believe that you think they're memories but I also think that if anyone could plant fake memories in your head, this one could." Bella shifted her eyes over her shoulder to Tapaeru. "And you just said you're really old but Kimi isn't."

"I am still not sure how it works. I left my daughter the first time. I expected I'd never see her again. I assumed her life would be short compared to mine, like all human lives. But I

kept watch of her. I made a home in the reef wall near her home and I would hear her as she went swimming. She was a good swimmer.”

“Like you...” Bella said to Kimi.

Tepaeru continued, “I was grateful, I got to see her life. She even birthed her child in the sea. I saw the birth, it was a daughter. I was so moved by her strength. But her strength could not stop her rapid aging. She became an elder very quickly. It was hard for me to watch. It made me realise I had made the right decision. She was an old woman in the blink of an eye. But I never saw her father with her.”

“He didn’t leave the step,” said Kimi. “You broke him.”

“You didn’t have any mōmoke kids after?” asked Bella.

“No...” said Tepaeru and she looked away.

“So how did that mōmoke kid become Kimi then?” asked Bella.

“I am not sure. The time came when my daughter passed. In her old age she had taken to bathing in the reef every day. One day I felt her weakness and I came to her. She passed away in my arms. I wanted to give her mōmoke burial rites but she turned to...something like sand, as I held her. She just turned to dust and washed away in the sea. It was difficult. I was still so young and I was burying my daughter, who looked like an elder, all alone. None of my people would acknowledge her as kin.

“I stayed near the place where my daughter had passed. It is the custom. After a time I was preparing to leave. There was no longer any reason to stay.

“Then, as I was gathering my belongings, I heard her voice again.

“I returned to the reef. An older woman was bathing a small child. A baby. It was the baby I could hear. Her voice travelled and sounded like the same voice my daughter had as a baby – her shrill cry and gurgle. She sounded just the same but she was also different. I was unsure but, still, I was overjoyed. I could see it was my grand-daughter bathing the child. And she called the child mokopuna, the daughter of her own daughter. She sang about how she knew the child had been sent by her mother as a comfort.”

“Wait. So 'Ati-ve'e, your daughter, has a kid and that kid has a daughter. And the daughter has a baby. And when 'Ati-ve'e died, you could hear the baby?” asked Bella.

“Yes and something of her passed on to the child,” said Tapaeru. “I didn’t consider it possible at first but then it happened again. Then over and over. She would be born, grow old and then pass to another. And she always carried the memories of the others but was always different too, as her blood mixed with other lineages. It was painful but always joyful to be reunited. I became accustomed to it. As her family line grew so did her understanding of the world. I learnt so much of the Dry. As time went by, I decided to return, long after Ati had passed, and share a life with her. It was a comfort to my daughter—her name was Vae at the time—because the village was beginning to think the family had some sort of curse.”

Kimi tilted her head. A curse?

“It was the daughters, those with light hair. One would die and the body was never found. Then a child with the same features would be born. This had been happening about three hundred years by this time, not even a lifetime for me but significant for your people.”

“Why was that a curse?”

“It wasn’t. I was the curse. My presence and my blood running through my daughter’s veins.”

“Is that why there are mōmoke who wanna hurt my brother? Because of me and the curse?”

“No, Kimiora,” Tēpaeru focused sharply on Kimiora. “Why would you think that?”

But the conversation was cut short. “We draw near.”

Light was unfurling before them. They were approaching a small city.

“Welcome to the Nga’i 'Uipā'anga.”

11. TE NGUTU'ARE

When they disembarked, they joined a stream of other passengers. There was no time to admire the mōmoke attire or hair adornments as they were crushed against the crowds. Kimi held Tēpaeru by one hand and Bella by the other as they squeezed through to the exit. The soft green fabric of another passenger floated around her face so she could not even observe what was happening. There was a rustling in her ears as if all of the other voices of passengers were bustling just outside her own mind.

“Keep hold of my hand,” Tēpaeru said.

Kimi looked over the bobbing heads of mōmoke heading towards a large arched exit. Kimi looked up to watch as they passed under the illuminated ceilings of the station, under the arch to the wide black skies of the Ocean, eternal and starless. The congestion burst through the channels of Nga'i 'Uipā'anga and from there dispersed in all directions through the water; left, right, straight, up.

There were no vehicles, just wide channels, providing extra space for all the mōmoke flowing from the station's arched exits. Along the channels, rocky outcrops covered in blue and indigo bioluminescence gave the faces in the crowds a ghostly glow. Occasionally there was a curved window showing spaces within the outcrops. They appeared to be shops. One window displayed a series of spheres encasing different coloured jelly fish. Another had wigs mounted on faceless busts, braided elaborately with beaded adornments. Bella paused in front of a window.

“Can we go here? They sell clothes...”she asked.

“We do not *sell* anything,” Tēpaeru smiled.

Then Kimi noticed a strange red illustration painted on the far side of the window. It was unlike anything they had seen in the stations or on the other windows. It looked like a picture of a face and some sort of writing. Something about it was familiar.

“What’s this...?” asked Kimi. She tugged away from Tapaeru and saw the title of the painting was large but illegible to her. The paint was thick and slimy. Like the one on the boatshed. There was a drawing of a man, his forehead low, his eyes close together with a sharp nose almost lost in a dishevelled beard. His expression was hostile. Kimi drew nearer-

A hand smeared over the image, dragging the image across itself. What was left began to fizz and disintegrate into the water. Kimi turned to Tapaeru who was rubbing the dark paint off her palm.

“Who was that man?” asked Kimi.

“No-one. It was just a drawing,” replied Tapaeru, looking away.

“Yeah, but what did it say about him?”

“Nothing. We are all tired from fatigue. It is time to go,” she took both girls by the hand and dragged them through the streets.

“A man?” Bella asked.

“What colour would you prefer for your gowns tomorrow for the 'Uipā'anga?” asked Tapaeru, knowing this would distract Bella. It didn't work on Kimi.

Eventually the crowds thinned and the shop lights disappeared. Tapaeru lead them along a narrower channel that ambled aimlessly across an open plain. Blue phosphorescence revealed swellings with yellow light that shone dimly from within, dotted across the plain.

“I thought the houses would be different,” mused Bella.

“Do our houses not appeal to you?” asked Tapaeru.

“I dunno. I can’t see inside. I just thought cos you had that big mussel train and lots of weird tech, you would have big flash houses.”

“Our houses provide us with what we need,” Tapaeru replied.

“Mōmoke don’t care about stuff like that,” Kimi added. “I don’t think...” She was still getting used to the ideas that arrived in her head, seemingly the most obvious thing in the world. How did she even know that? When did it become knowledge for her?

“If we desire luxury, it is available. But mōmoke always try to work with what our One Mother has given us. If she has provided a wide landscape, we will try to keep it so.”

“Who’s our One Mother?” asked Bella.

“She’s the centre, the beginning...,” started Kimi.

“We have arrived,” said Tapaeru, gesturing to a large, dark hole coming off the channel.

“Nice,” said Bella flatly.

“Tomo mai ki roto.”

They dropped gently down the entrance into the 'are, activating the lights. Kimi peeled away a piece of weed that clung to her shoulder. Bella was muttering her repulsion. When they reached the bottom, Tapaeru held her hand to a window which lifted at her touch.

Kimi looked around the 'are. Grey grime covered everything. A carving the size of an adult stood beside a beam at the centre of the room, looking ominous under grey shrouds. It was Tangaroa. Kimi recognised his leaf-shaped eyes and square head. Weed grew from the crevices of his face and algae floated from his mouth. It made him appear as if he had been interrupted devouring prey.

Tattered mats covered the floor and Kimi saw something scuttle through the dust from the corner of her eye. Lengths of weed floated from a mezzanine overhead. The whole grey scene made Kimi feel tired. All that travel for this dusty, grey homecoming.

“I will clear the floor upstairs and we will sleep up there tonight. Hopefully everything has stored well.”

“When were you last here?” asked Kimi.

“It’s been some time but my sister has been taking care of the house,” Tapaeru gave a small smile. “But we should rest. We have a big day tomorrow.”

“Shopping?” asked Bella.

“No, the 'Uipā'anga.”

Kimi and Bella stood awkwardly in the centre of the room while Tapaeru banged about in the space above them.

“This is nice huh?” said Bella smearing grime off Tangaroa’s eyes and watching it fizz up to the ceiling. “Hope we’re getting a discount.”

“Yeah, it’s not how I remember it,” said Kimi.

“Mmmm, those memories,” said Bella.

Kimi walked around the perimeter of the 'are, drawing a line in the grey mud on the walls. Tapaeru descended down from the mezzanine. “Girls, there is something important-,”

“Aaah!” Kimi screamed, leaping back from the entrance.

A figure stood outside the 'are, hand raised in greeting.

“Aunty,” the man said as the window lifted. “Kia orāna.”

“Kia orāna e Mata,” Tapaeru kissed the man on the cheek and embraced him as he entered. Kimi saw he was younger than she had initially thought. He was still tall enough that he ducked under the frame but his limbs were long and clumsy. He wore only a pāreu revealing the tattoos around his dark grey shoulders and chest. The tattoos were further adorned with paint of several colours.

Tapaeru turned to the girls. “This is Kimiora, my daughter, and Bella. Matatika is the son of my sister, Karaia.”

“Kia orāna,” Matatika said politely, although his eyes dropped.

He stepped forward gingerly to kiss Kimi on the cheek but Bella cut in.

“Kia orāna Mata, I’m Bella, Kimi’s best friend, no relation,” she reeled with enthusiasm as she grabbed Matatika’s neck and slowly held her cheek against his.

Matatika leaned back, eyes wide. “Yes,” was all he said.

“Kia orāna Mata, ko Kimiora au,” said Kimi as she waited for Mata. He was still glancing wearily at Bella as he kissed Kimi on the cheek. Then he wiped his face with the back of his hand. Kimi noticed he was holding something – a globe. It appeared clear in the Deep.

“Aunty, this was at the top of stairs. I thought it better to bring it in. Mama also gave me some food for you.”

Tapaeru took both the food and the globe. The sight of the globe instantly made Kimi think of Tai. With all the talk of her origins, she had forgotten her brother, sick in hospital. Could she not even remember the whole reason they were here?

“Will you stay for a refreshment Mata? We have not eaten yet,” asked Tapaeru.

“Yes, Aunty. You are kind,” he replied.

Tepaeru went to the end of the oval floor and the wall opened to a small lowered kitchen area, it had as much light and dust as the main room. The door closed behind Tepaeru and the three young people stood silently in the room. Bella smiled coyly at Matatika. Kimi rolled her eyes.

“You are humans,” Matatika eventually said.

“Yeah!” replied Bella, enjoying the attention, placing her hand on her hip.

“How many years are you?”

“Thirteen,” Kimi offered.

“Thirteen!” Matatika’s eyes bulged. “I know of jelly-fish older than that.”

“Well how old are you?” asked Bella.

“One hundred and fifty seven years.” He looked away for a moment as if considering an idea then returned to scrutinise the girls. “I thought you would look different...”

“What d’ya mean?” asked Kimi who was beginning to feel naked in their strange grey suits, even though Matatika was the one bare-chested.

“I don’t know. Less like us...? In the pictures, humans always have hair all over their faces,” he said as he stared into Kimi’s face as if he had found a strange insect.

“Like a *beard*?” Bella asked.

“But aren’t we cousins? Of course we look alike,” Kimi said.

Matatika scrunched his face and looked away. The door opened again and Tepaeru appeared carrying a tray holding four grey balls.

“Aunty, do you need me to help you?”

“Kāre, kāre. E no'o ki raro, inē. I am grateful you brought food from my sister or we would be drinking sea water!”

Matatika laughed politely before sitting in a cross legged position. The girls copied. It disturbed the grime that floated gently up to the ceiling of the 'are. Tapaeru placed a ceramic sphere in front of each of them. Matatika held the sphere to his lips, appearing to sip gently from it. Kimi looked down and saw the sphere had a small indentation on the top. She placed it to her lips and it opened. A liquid came out, it was thick and sweet. As Kimi drank, she could feel her body repair.

“What brings you to your Aunty’s house, Mata?” asked Tapaeru after a long sip.

“My mother wanted to know whether you had found the human child,” Matatika said. His sipping became more intent.

“As you can observe, I have. Although I was beginning to think your mother was correct in thinking I would not find her this time.”

“And now the human is here,” Matatika interrupted. “And the other?”

“Kimiora needed the support of a friend. I do not know much of her papa'anga unfortunately.”

Bella lifted her eyebrows at Matatika and he blanched.

“Will it also attend the Assembly, Aunty? Does it understand the rules of etiquette?” he asked, looking back at Tapaeru.

“I do not wish to leave her without supervision. Please tell my sister that we have arrived safely.”

“I will. 'Aere mai ki te 'are āpōpō, inē. Our family shall attend together.”

Tapaeru smiled. “Of course. Expect us in the morning.”

“Also I need to say...” Matatika dropped his head to the ground away from his aunty. Kimi recognised the gesture. He respected and loved his Aunty but he was uncomfortable with something.

“Tuatua mai koe. What was it your mother asked of you?”

“The...the Dry Objectors, some will be present at the Assembly. My mother doesn't know if it will be safe for the human child. She worries for you.”

“Even the Objectors must follow etiquette. I do not worry for the humans or myself.”

“You have been absent for some time, Aunty. The Objectors are more vocal and numerous now. Especially since the source of the Poisoning has been proven to be from the Dry, more people are reading Ngā To'u. There are still the radicals that spread the vaimara globes. But now they are also attracting those who would have laughed at their ideas before. They are brazen. They paint their messages everywhere. Among their allies are mōmoke of status and power. It is rumoured even one of the Elders joins them. My mother, she urges you to be careful. Her love goes out to you.”

“And my love goes to her and your family. You are good to come to your Aunty on your mother's behalf, Mata.”

Matatika emptied the last of his sphere before returning it to the mat. He stood to leave, “I shall see you in the morning, Aunty,” he stood before the window, “‘E no'o ra.”

“‘Aere ra.”

Matatika stepped back through the entrance and the window closed. They remained seated on the mat as he stepped up towards the path.

“He was hot,” said Bella.

12. KŌPŪ TANGATA

Kimi was nervous as they walked towards Māmā Karaia's house. Was she supposed to even call her Māmā Karaia? Did Mata have any siblings? Would they treat her and Bella like Mata had, calling them 'it'?

It didn't help that she had slept poorly. Sleeping thousands of metres under the sea for the first time might have been the reason. Or the fact her brother was still sick and all Tapaeru could talk about was the 'Uipā'anga. But then there were all the memories that had been jostling against each other aside all day, like Auika and the mako. As she had slept, her mind had crashed in on itself and those memories had frolicked in the ocean of her exhaustion.

She had seen the bright blue water of the reef in Rarotonga. Kimi knew this was her own experience but from another time, from another life. Her own hands, small, chubby and brown, splashing away a bright yellow fish. An infant's gurgle coming from her own mouth. Tapaeru, sitting beside her in the water, smiling, holding her Kimi's small body upright as a mother would. *Look!* her old self had thought.

Then she had seen the world whirl around her as her long arms swung around the trunk of one coconut palm to another. Then another and another until she stopped. The pale figure of Tapaeru partially concealed by the palms ahead – *You have returned!*

She had seen the rocks that border the well, the entrance that connected her village to Tapaeru's world. It was night. Her own adult hand, resting in the water, holding Tapaeru's loosely. She felt sadness as Tapaeru let go and dived down to the well's depths. *Will I see you again?*

She had seen a great blue tīvaevae on her own lap. There was pain in her fingers as they ran over the small stitches and beading. The smell of the tropical air. The tīvaevae was finally finished. She turned to Tapaeru and smiled, *Auē, I am tired.*

Then she had seen her first trip along te Anaroa. It was almost the same. Kimi's head leaning on Tapaeru's shoulder. She had felt the excitement of the experience but also the love of her other self. The way her other self loved her mōmoke mother, Tapaeru, in a way as simple and true as the love she had felt for her human mother.

When she had woke, Kimi had been aware that her other self felt something for Tapaeru that she did not. She now followed Tapaeru along the path across the plain, looking exactly the same as it had when they arrived, there was no sun to change the appearance of the landscape. Kimi gather at one of the red drapes of her kāka'u, seeing it across her hand instantly brought to mind Tai, pooling his blood in his hand.

“When will we get the cure for my brother?” asked Kimi.

“First, we must attend the 'Uipā,” Tapaeru replied.

“Why? You haven't explained why we need to go. Is the place that makes the cure far?” Kimi asked.

“Yes, there has not been a good opportunity to talk but I hope it will reveal itself.”

“Are we meant to be doing something at this Assembly?” asked Bella.

“Akara, we are here,” said Tapaeru gesturing to a passage. “You look beautiful, almost like a real mōmoke.”

Kimi put her hand to her head self-consciously, lightly touching the thick braids, coral beads and ribbon woven into them to match the blood orange colour of her kāka'u. She felt

the soft drag of the dress as it floated behind her but not around her like she imagined fabric should in water. Kimi had never spent so much time getting dressed in her life.

“Almost as beautiful as me,” said Bella as she shimmied her shoulders, causing ripples in the green drapes of her kākā'u.

They followed Tapaeru down.

When they entered, the main room was filled with mōmoke. Kimi attempted to stay behind Tapaeru as she could feel everyone's eyes assessing her.

“Kimiōra, here is your Māmā Karaia.”

“Kia orāna,” they both said as they exchanged a kiss on the cheek.

“Sister, this is Bella, a friend of Kimiōra.” There was an exchange between the sisters as Māmā Karaia searched Tapaeru's face for extra explanation but Tapaeru had nothing more to add.

“Kia orāna.”

And that was the first of many introductions as they met the two dozen people in the room. It reminded Kimi of her first trip to Rarotonga –after the first five relatives, she knew she wasn't going to remember anyone's names, let alone how they were meant to be related. She did notice how the younger ones refused to greet her or Bella, hiding their faces in the gowns of adults, eyes wide with fear.

They sat around a mat to eat. It was mostly silent as everyone ate, apart from a moment of panic when a child spilt her food. Kimi thought the child's mother was strangely

distraught as the food floated up and out of the room through some vent. It was just a small bit of whatever the sweet stuff was.

A young boy leaned forward so he could watch Kimi sip from her sphere. Kimi shifted her head quickly to eye the child and he quickly sat back to hide behind another relative. Generally the family kept their eyes averted. Even when Kimi looked around, she would catch her cousin and aunties turning away as if she had just missed meeting their gaze.

After breakfast Māmā Karaia sent the children away. “Aere atura, inē. You will be called when we leave. Don’t ruin your kākā'u or your pāreu or your rouru.”

All of the children rose and headed towards a door at the back of the room but Kimi was unsure of what to do, being in between child and adult. Tēpaeru looked at her and shifted her head towards the door to indicate that Kimi and Bella should follow her younger cousins. The adults watched silently as they left the room.

Kimi followed her cousin to a doorway that opened at the top of a large cavernous room. Kimi imagined that on land, the room would have a loud echo. It appeared to be filled with playthings, toys, things to climb and ride but the group of children were standing in the centre of the room in a tight group, eyeing Kimi and Bella as they floated down. There was about ten of them who looked they were aged four through to early teens. They watched, some with open mouths. Not even a minute had passed when one lost control of his curiosity.

“I can’t believe there’s humans in our 'are!”

“Why don’t they have hair on their face? The pictures always show them with hair everywhere.”

“Why aren’t they wearing plastic kākā'u?”

“I thought humans were ugly: these ones look normal.”

“How old are they?”

“Are they here to take our guts to feed to the other humans?”

“How do they know how to talk?”

“Why do we have to call it ‘cousin’?”

“Because Aunty Tapaeru’s crazy, that’s why! She spent too much time on the Dry and her brain shrivelled up.”

“How can animals from the Dry even be here? Don’t they explode?”

“Who you calling ‘animal’?!” Bella glared at the girl who had sent the thought. She wore the simple attire of a child, an orange pāreu tied at her chest and her hair was pulled into two braids that fell to her hips. Right now her large, hazel eyes were wide with fear. The other children watched on silently, as if watching their cousin stare down a rabid dog – a talking rabid dog.

“You hear me?”

“Āe...”

“Bella, you’re scaring her,” said Kimi, as she stooped to be eye level with the child. The other children leaned away, saving themselves as the girl covered her face with her hands. “We’re not animals, ok? Not mōmoke but not animals either. Kua mārama koe?”

“Āe.” The child replied meekly. “I only said that because that’s what everyone says. I didn’t know humans didn’t like it.”

“Just call us Kimiora and Bella,” she said softly. “Can you remember that?”

“Āe, they told us before. Bella’s a strange name. What does it mean?”

“It means ‘beautiful’ in French or something,” said Bella said, leaning against the wall and running her hands through her hair. “What’s your name? I forgot.”

“I’m Marama, daughter of Moeterau’uri of Nga’i ‘Uipā’anga”

“Oh yeah. I gotta cousin called Marama.”

Her face suddenly changed from scared to shocked, her hands dropping. “There’s a human called Marama?”

From there the mood lightened. Unlike the adults, the children were open about their curiosity. They touched their hair and faces. They continued to ask questions which Kimi and Bella answered as best they could.

Then Marama asked, “Why do the humans want to poison us?”

“What? Who told you that?” asked Kimi.

“Everyone knows that,” said Matatika, deliberately looking Kimi in the eye. He stood far taller than the others, at the edge of the group and now his cousins turned to him, their tuakana. “It is said that the humans started poisoning us because they want te Moananui. The humans think everything that exists belongs to them, a strange kind of ownership where you don’t have to care for something.”

“It’s because they don’t live long and they can only see with their eyes. They have forgotten their histories and Our One Mother. They’re afraid of dying and only believe in what exists in front of them,” said Marama, becoming more confident.

Kimi turned back to Bella to check if she understood. Bella shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. When Kimi looked again, she found the children were searching her face – *Isn’t this what you do? Isn’t this what you are?*

“And now they have finished fighting over pieces of the Dry,” continued Matatika, “So they are fighting over te Moananui. But first they have to kill us. The humans think that before they can possess te Moananui, they must make sure everything else is dead. That’s why they poison the things we eat and our home.”

“Even though they eat the same things as us! Every year they take more and more,” piped in another. “And they still want to destroy everything. They don’t care about hunger if they possess things. That’s the way they are.”

“The humans can’t help it,” said Marama sadly.

“What are you even talking about?!” asked Bella. “Do *I* look like I wanna poison you and fight and stuff?”

“Kāre,” said Matatika, his face scrunched up as he thought about Bella’s statement. “But the poisoning...it is proven.”

“And Ngā To'u say that after the radiation comes the Dry filth and poisons and after the poisoning come the rising,” said Marama, proud of her knowing.

“Eh? Radiation?” Kimi asked.

“What do you know about Ngā To'u?” Mata mocked.

Kimi looked at the children, waiting for her answers and for the first time she saw their hunger. She had thought it was physical fitness that gave them a slender physique. Was this whole community on the brink of famine?

“You wanna see the vaimara globe we found,” said one of the younger ones, stepping to the front, hands on his waist, a wide smile on his face.

“Mareka!” the group scolded.

“What? It’s their ball...,” his face dropping as his lip stuck out.

Meanwhile Marama appeared. In her hands was one of the globes, glowing turquoise.

“Be careful with it, they are made to break,” an older girl hissed.

“What is that?” Kimi asked, interested to hear the explanation from Marama

“A vaimara globe,” Marama whispered. “You know. Humans make them to kill children. They dye them bright colours and put human treasures inside because they know children will like them. And then they leave them places. But we know it’s poison!” With her last statement, Marama pulled her shoulders back and eyed Bella and Kimi.

“What? Who makes them?” asked Kimi.

“My cousins believe humans make them but they are from the labs of the Dry Objectors,” said Matatika flatly before asking Marama, “Where did you get this?”

“We found it at the park. Look at the poison in it! It’s special,” Marama grinned as she held it to Kimi and Bella.

Kimi leaned forward to look inside it. There was a plastic car, the type made for babies. Its details and colour were faded and it looked like it was disintegrating. The turquoise liquid was clouded with plastic particles and it made the toy look eerie and alien.

“My one just had some wispy stuff in it,” Bella said.

“One of these has made my brother very sick,” said Kimi. “That’s why we’re here.”

“Really?” asked Marama. “We thought you were here to try and take over the 'Uipā for the humans...”

“Really?” Bella rolled her eyes.

“What’s your brother’s name?” asked Matatika, her head tilted.

“Tai. Well it’s short for Tautai. The day he was born my Papa went out and caught a massive tuna, the biggest he had ever caught and asked Dad to name him for that,” she chuckled sadly. It was something that they teased Tai about. If this cure didn’t work out, Kimi worried where that would leave Tai and the family.

Matatika was about to say something when the door opened. Marama quickly pulled the ball behind her back and closed her eyes. Matatika stepped in front of her. Upstairs, Māmā Karaia appeared.

“Aere mai kōtou. We are leaving to go to the 'Uipā,” then she squinted down at them. “E a'a ra kōtou?”

“We were talking to the humans, Māmā,” replied Matatika.

“Well, enough talk. Tāviviki.”

“Āe,” they replied as she walked back into the room.

Her young cousins took a deep breath. Everyone was excited. Marama was gleeful in her successful deception but then she saw Matatika’s glaring eyes. He took the vaimara globe and put it on a tall shelf. When he returned to walk up with everyone and Kimi smiled at him, he gave a weak smile back. He no longer looked disgusted as he had when they were at Tēpaeru’s house. He looked worried.

13. TE 'UIPĀ'ANGA

When their group of three had left for Māmā Karaia's, there had been some bustle on the street but now as they left for the Assembly, the larger family group joined a great throng. There was an air of celebration, like a parade at a night festival. Kimi almost expected to see fireworks as everyone drifted in a relaxed manner in the same direction. For the most part, everyone moved en masse shoulder to shoulder, like a shoal of fish. As the pathway veered uphill, Kimi could see in the distance a couple of groups with dark canopy-type shelters over them, like the one she had seen at Te Pā o Paikea. Other mōmoke gazed at the ground and gave more space as they passed the slow moving groups that sheltered the elders.

Kimi reached her hand behind her to grab Bella's hand. She told herself it was so they wouldn't get lost.

The centre of the city was arranged in and around large caverns and mounds. Kimi saw something on the top of a mound, like a billboard, written in huge dark red letters over top of the blue luminescence that covered everything. Around her, no-one seemed to notice it, like it meant nothing to them. "The Dry are not welcome!" it said, beside it was the same picture of a bearded man with a big cross over his face.

"Bella, do you see that big sign? With the beard face?"

"Yeah," she replied. "I still don't get it but they're all over the place."

After drifting through the city for some time, the crowd slowed. From behind a mound at their left, a giant squid flew over the crowd. Children squealed and raised their hands reaching out as if to touch them. Another came from ahead, enormous. It turned one huge eye to look over the crowds as it swam over, tentacles following.

"E Tiaki o te Pā tēnā," Tapaeru said. "The 'Uipā is the only time we see them. They are secretive but see everything,"

The throngs were entering a large cave, its mouth wide enough to let hundreds of people in at one time. Several squid scuttled over the entrance. They made the cave look like a rock monster with a dozen eyes swallowing up an enormous school of brightly coloured fish. As they approached the cave, one squid lingered where Kimi and the family entered. Kimi felt like it was following her— she could almost see her reflection in the onyx depths of its eyes.

“It sees you.”

Kimi turned to find who had spoken to her but she was surrounded by family, all of whom were looking to the entrance. Children were reaching for the squid, smiles of anticipation were on their faces. Bella, who was right behind her, caught her eye and squeezed her hand.

“She did say that once we got started, it would be hard to turn back.”

Beyond the entrance, there was a large underground cavern with a valley shaped floor. What had been one large crowd now split left and right, swarming across the upper edges of the cavern. Everything was smooth and shiny from wear. Kimi could feel the age of the place, the spirit stored within it, the secrets it kept. She followed her family. Once she was seated she looked down to the bottom of the valley. There was a circular platform arranged around what looked like a spring. From the spring came a fizzing stream of bubbles that floated to a large vent in the ceiling. Small animals, glowing red, frenzied around the ceiling vent, shimmering in the heat and giving light to the arena. Kimi could feel the warmth of the valley, knowing it must be extremely hot to penetrate the controls of her pakā.

The walls of the valley curved around the circle creating a type of arena and already there was little space for any more people to sit. Kimi looked around at the spectacle of

mōmoke in their most extravagant attire; beads, fluorescent colour, drapery, even what looked like small living animals. There was a buzzing inside Kimi's head—thousands of mōmoke attempting to conceal their thoughts from each other. Everyone except Bella.

“This place is massive! I thought that place with the mussel train was big but this place...”

The buzzing sound in Kimi's head was beginning to make her feel dizzy. But suddenly, it fell away.

The whole crowd directed their full attention to the platform at the floor of the arena.

In the lower rows were several dark canopies that sheltered the Elders. From beneath one of them emerged the first, an old woman.

A large black headpiece obscured most of the Elder's face. Her long white hair spilled over the long black trains of the gown. The slow pulsing movement of the Elder's approach to the circular platform made her appear like a black jellyfish. The Elder seated herself at one of several seats positioned around the borders of the platform, facing towards the spring.

In the same moment, the Elder's image appeared suspended before them, large and clear. Beside Kimi, Bella jumped back in fright. A woman turned back to glare at Bella for swearing. The image shimmered as the small bubbles of the spring fizzed through it. Kimi leaned her head over to test an idea that turned out to be true – the Elder appeared to be looking at each member of the crowd no matter where they sat.

Seeing the elder close up was terrifying. She was old but not like Māmā Grace. Well, maybe if Māmā Grace had stopped eating, and stayed out of the sun and lived for a thousand years. Her hair was thick and white and fell wild around her. A large black hat partially covered her large round eyes. Her eyes had none of the detail of a human eye but were more

like green marbles, reflecting light upon themselves. Her black gown was gathered in hundreds of small knots. Apart from her face, only her bone hands were exposed, translucent and pale blue.

“Why does she wear kākā'u kerekere?” Kimi whispered Tēpaeru. “Everyone else is wearing so many colours.”

“Māmā Tutuariki is very old, ancient, and her eyes are very sensitive because she lives at a great depth. She prefers the dark,” Tēpaeru replied before she held her arm over Kimi and Bella as another to say “Hush”.

The Elder Tutuariki grimaced before she spoke.

“Kia orāna kōtou kātoatoa.”

“Kia orāna Māmā,” the audience replied in unison. There was something strange about watching the image, knowing the voice that echoed around the arena belonged to it even when the mouth didn't move. The Elder's thoughts were emphasised in the movement of her face and hands.

“Acknowledgement of our One Mother, Our Beginning, whose power springs from 'Avaiki,” she nodded and gestured with an open palm to the spring at the centre of the circle.

“Acknowledgement to Tangaroa's realm, Te Moana Nui, The Great Ocean, that nourishes us, sustains us and provides for the life we know,” she slowly raised an arm and her hand made a sweeping half circle that her face followed.

“Acknowledgement to Te Ō Nui, The Great Valley to the West, its great depths, our place of origin,” she held her hand out in the direction of the Anaroa station.

“I acknowledge te Tumu-te-varovaro, my 'Eua Marō.

“I acknowledge Ngāti Tai'o'onu, my people and kin.

“I acknowledge 'Ina, the great explorer and my ancestor,” she held her palm to her chest.

“I am Tutuariki, Elder, daughter of Tuionu.

“Kia orāna tātou kātoatoa,” Tutuariki gave a small nod. “I acknowledge my other Elders, 'Anautoa...” She gestured to the other canopies, naming each Elder individually while acknowledging their people, ivi and home-waters before she continued, “From all parts you have come: Namomuito, ki te 'opunga; Nihoa, ki te maoake; Rapa Nui, ki te 'itinga; Omaui, ki te tonga. To the heads of families, the ariki, tribes and clans that have come.” Tutuariki gestured to individuals seated in the front rows of the crowd who nodded as they too were named in turn.

After Tutuariki had acknowledged what seemed like the twentieth ariki and their people and their home-waters, Bella grabbed Kimi’s arm and hissed, “This is worse than the Marae.”

“This is worse than a Family Committee Meeting and White Sunday put together,” Kimi answered and they both giggled, bubbles escaping their mouths. Tapaeru shot them a look.

After the acknowledgements were finished, the other Elders made their way to their seats around the borders of the bubbling spring. They began to talk about different topics, most of which Kimi could not understand but guessed they were to do with their science and technology.

An old man was speaking who had introduced himself as 'Anautoa. He had the same translucent complexion and large eyes as Tutuariki but he was bigger. What had once been muscle hung off his broad bones as loose skin. He sat with his arms folded across his tattooed

chest. A red pāreu was wrapped around his torso and covered his legs, his feet folded underneath. Even as he spoke, he kept his head lowered and looked as if he was about to fall asleep.

“And my concern is for our future generations,” he muttered through thick lips.

“What will they-,”

“Oh 'Anautoa, must we really discuss these other matters when there is so much at stake?” another Elder interrupted, his voice loud and snarling, his arms in the air in exasperation.

“Otire, you break etiquette,” muttered another Elder. Her glaring green eyes matched the thick green lines of an ancient tāmoko that was etched on her chin. “Your way is not right.”

“Why does that one look like Māori from home?” whispered Bella.

Kimi shrugged, “Maybe she is.”

Another Elder seated beside Otire drew the decadent folds of their gown away in an attempt to create distance. It was a graceful action and their willowy bearing contrasted with the hard lines of Otire. He had a proud face, hooded eyelids over his opal eyes. His straight wide nose flared with aggression and his hard mouth was clenched shut. Around his torso was a stiff, light coloured textile, bound with a woven tie. He stood suddenly, his face before the crowd.

“You know me. Otire-o-Avaiki, of Te Ō Nui. Niue is the Marō of my people but I have never been there. Why would I?!” Otire threw his hand up, disgusted. Some of the audience expressed alarm at this. “I belong in the Deep with my kin, near the beating heart of our One Mother and 'Avaikinui. But even in the Deep, we cannot escape the Dry. Their waste

and poison sinks into our homes. Everyday there is more,” Otire stood and paced around the platform in front of the other Elders. His face lost from the fizzing stream, forcing the crowd to look down at him and meet his eyes.

He stopped and called, “My people! My people, how long will we wait?” He took a moment to look among his crowd. “How long will we let them devastate the cloak of our One Mother which she has woven from her own being, with love, for us to dwell upon? How long will we let them drop their poison from the surface, filling Te Moana Nui with death and sickness? How long will we let the humans taint our food, our nourishment, our kin and our homes? Soon there will be nothing left of Moana Nui but jellyfish!”

There was a murmur of reluctant approval.

“We have gathered today, knowing that the most anticipated discussion regards how to address the problem of the Dry.”

“Otire, this is no longer entertaining,” said an Elder, gathering their hair, part of which was braided with coral beading.

“Do you find the humans constant attack entertaining, Matāura?!” Otire roared. In response, Matāura looked away as if bored.

“Even you Piki te Ora,” Otire gestured to the first Elder with the tāmoko and then another. “And you 'Anautoa, must agree the most important challenge facing our people is the Dry Poison?”

'Anautoa said nothing but crossed his arms across his chest and twitched his nose in irritation. Piki te Ora did not respond. Staring past Otire, it appeared as if he hadn't even addressed her.

“And now, my people, we have an opportunity to restore balance. We have a solution that will stop the poison at its source on the Dry.”

Bella leaned into Kimi and whispered, “What does he mean when he says ‘solution’?”

Kimi shrugged but there was a heavy feeling at the bottom of her stomach, a sick feeling in her throat.

“Our researchers have shown that the climate on the surface is going through a process of significant and ecologically detrimental change. There is little doubt that the humans have caused this themselves, being the careless things they are. Are we surprised? No. It was foreseen in Ngā To'u. The rising!”

There was a scandalised ripple across the crowd. Although Kimi still did not know exactly what Ngā To'u were, she sensed that it was something the mōmoke did not like to discuss.

“My people, we rejected the writers of Ngā To'u and the Elders of the past tried to hide it deep in the Shared Knowledge but now we see – they were right. The humans are systematically destroying us and our world. But by trying to destroy us, the Dry has created a solution for us.”

Otire stopped, he offered an open palm to the audience, “For those who have not had the opportunity to hear the proposal, it is quite simple. We accelerate the temperature increase already happening, causing the water levels to rise quickly, and flooding their large settlements and areas allocated for food production. The humans will experience the strain of population movement, famine and salination of the freshwater they need. Our researchers predict the conflict caused by these events will ensure the humans virtually eradicate

themselves. A simple solution to a complex problem that helps us avoid the conflict that our Elders are all so afraid of,” Otire’s tone was mocking as he ended his last sentence.

The Elders turned their heads away, repulsed. Mōmoke across the arena were looking at each-other perplexed. Kimi watched as the crowd shifted from reception to scepticism. Several mōmoke stood and their questions scattered quietly across the arena. *Is the Elder, Otire, suggesting we start a civil war among the Dry communities? That we accelerate a process of damage in an attempt to preserve our own way of life? In what way does this solution align with the way of Our Mother? Surely there is another solution, less shameful and more tika?*

Kimi turned to Bella in the din. “Did he...? Did he just say he wanted to flood the world so we start killing each other off?” asked Kimi.

“Yeah, that’s what I got.”

They almost laughed. That couldn’t be what they were discussing. Kimi looked around. She felt relief at the sight of mōmoke shaking their heads in disbelief but there were other responses. Some sat quietly and calmly among their people, nodding slowly in agreement.

Suddenly a splintering sound cut through the disorder. A vaimara globe smashed on the edge of the circle behind Tutuariki. Her attendants rushed to protect her with their own bodies becoming a ball of black drapery. For a moment everything was still except for the small shards of glass disintegrating and floating up towards the ceiling like jagged fairy dust.

“It’s the poison!” a child called, breaking the spell.

The liquid, heavier than the water around it, lingered, shifting in colour from turquoise to purple. On the Dry, it had looked ocean coloured but now Kimi could see it was

obviously unnatural. Within it, something fluttered and bubbled, dragged about like a damaged butterfly into the current of the spring.

“Is that...a plastic bag that was in that globe?” asked Kimi. The appearance of something so boring and inane in the context of the 'Uipā confused her.

Several mōmoke looked back at Kimi and Bella, appalled. A thought scuttled across the crowds, “The humans recognise their poison. They know. They know. They know what they do.”

The bubbles of the spring broke up the liquid and the bag vanished. Kimi felt the crowds buzz with private thoughts.

“I would hate to trouble you but I wish to speak!” A voice boomed across the arena.

The noise instantly hushed. The one named Otire was illuminated again. He stood to speak.

“After all, these are just the ramblings of an old man,” he paused as he waited for silence. His proud jaw, jutting out.

“I know the Dry solution seems unethical and contrary to what we know is right. But my people, we have long known the ways of the people of the Dry. They only see what is laid before them. They do not have the ability to communicate as we do. Maybe there was a time when we knew them, when we could almost consider them kin. We have long understood their strengths and shortcomings as we do any other neighbouring species. But there is a difference, my people!”

“The jellyfish is toxic but does it gather its toxins to drive whole families to starvation? No, its poison is to gather food, keep itself safe and prolong life. The squid is strong but does it use its strength to bully other species into subservience? No, its strength is

to travel, gather prey and prolong its own life. The shark, a fierce predator, always feeding off others, but does the shark destroy and pillage for the pleasure or it? No, its power is used to hunt, feed and pro-long life.”

“Humans are small like us but more powerful than the shark. Their power is felt beyond the Dry realm from the skies above our Great Ocean to the Deep of Te Ō Nui. Humans are physically weak but stronger than the squid when they combine their abilities which, they always do when seeking domination. As is well known they seek to possess our Moana Nui. Human bodies do not produce toxins but they create the greatest poisons of all. They twist what our One Mother provides us, they dig, they mine, they split to make radiation and plastic and stink and filth.

“And now, one of us, one of our own people, has convinced her kin to have humans amongst us in their homes!”

Otire’s image vanished. She looked down, following the gazes of the mōmoke around her. Otire had walked away from the spring, bare feet rooted at the edge of the platform. His chest and shoulders heaved. His arms fell at his sides before he swiftly lifted his hand, pointing with accusation straight at Kimi.

“There! It sits among you!”

Otire opened his mouth and released a bubbling torrent, the froth of his rage.

14. TĀMAMAE'IA

The mōmoke below the family turned to look up at Kimi. The entire Assembly gathered their panicked thoughts and they crashed down on the girls.

“Our Elder, Otire-o-Avaiki, speaks the truth.”

“The Dry seeks dominance.”

“The Dry will destroy us.”

“You and your poison are not welcome here, strangers from the Dry.”

Kimi’s head felt like a balloon, filling and expanding as it filled with the voices of the crowd. She thrust her hands through her hair, ripping at beads, braids and ribbons.

“Kimiora,” a small voice said but it was not enough.

“STOP!” Kimi screamed as she rose to her feet. The word escaped from her mouth in a boiling stream that rose to join the bubbles of the spring. “STOP, STOP, STOP, STOP!”

All she could hear was her voice gurgling inside her head. The mōmoke grabbed at their heads, turning away with their eyes closed.

Jumping down the arena, skidding down, Kimi plunged desperately for the spring.

“Kimi!” shouted Bella, leaping after her.

Other mōmoke scattered out of Kimi’s way, afraid of what would happen if she even touched them. She was almost at the bottom when Otire twitched.

“Tiaki.”

Scattered around the arena, the guards stood, previously invisible among the crowds. All of them were tall, muscled with elaborate tattooing over arms and chests. They wore red

pāreu tied simply and their hair was in an unadorned braid. Each walked calmly in Kimi's direction. The first arrived quickly, clamping his hands on Kimi's arms to her sides. The second, pushed Kimi's shoulders forward gently as the man bent her arms awkwardly behind her. Kimi was unable to escape. The same was done to Bella. The guards had no need to exert themselves. The humans were weak. But they didn't expect the struggle.

"They writhe like eels!" Otire exclaimed, turning to the crowd to share in his amusement. "Bring them to the spring."

"Be calm," whispered the woman holding down Kimi's shoulders. "You shame yourself."

The girls were dumped at the edge of the circular platform where the Elders were seated. From her position, curled over and bowing to the ground, Kimi's eyes were level with the Otire's wide, pale feet. The other Elders remained seated and did not even turn from their seats to face her. Kimi looked up but didn't dare look up at Otire's face.

"You may not know this, human, but if we were to drop you into this spring, our connection with Our One Mother, who dwells in the centre, 'Avaiki, if we dropped you here, you would turn to dust, food for our chandelier," he gestured at the red jellyfish that swarmed around the hole in the ceiling.

"I do not wish to trouble you, Elder, but please, my daughter is still only a child," interrupted Tapaeru, from where she stood among her family.

Otire snapped his head up to face the woman, a gap in the crowd having opened around her. Tapaeru's family shifted uneasily under his gaze.

"Daughter?" he scoffed. "Without your pakā sorcery, this human would be a mess of guts and red blood."

“Otire, be calm,” hissed Matāura from behind him. “The pakā is hardly what one would call sorcery.”

Otire ignored his peer and continued his attack at Tēpaeru. “But this *daughter*, she looks different every time I see her. There is absolutely no proof that this *human* is your kin. Tēpaeru, this obsession with humans shames you and your kōpū tangata.”

Tēpaeru looked down at her hands resting on her lap and closed her eyes.

“I am her daughter,” whispered Kimi, her head still down.

“It speaks,” said Otire sarcastically. “And what proof do you have, human?”

“I don’t need proof. I feel it.”

“Oh yes, the humans and their feelings. They don’t communicate, just spit sounds from their mouths like all animals of the Dry but they *feel* things,” he mocked.

There was a chuckle from parts of the crowd.

Otire dropped on one knee to address Kimi, “And tell me human, what do you feel, when you drop your poison into our Ocean? What do you feel when you choke our kin with your waste? What does it feel like to show your power over other realms?” He stressed the word ‘feel’ as one would an insult. Now he stood to address the crowd. “Have they even had the opportunity to *feel* the damage they cause? My people, shall we show them what it feels like to be under constant assault from their poison? Join me. Tell them, my people, let the humans *feel* what you know!”

“Kimiora!” a voice said. Kimi remained prostrate. Bella crawled up beside her and grabbed her hand, her eyes now scrunched shut. Kimi did the same. They both knew

something was coming. The second before the attack began, someone threw themselves over both girls.

The thoughts screamed down from the crowd like a storm. They felt almost physical as they plunged down.

And the images. Splitting through Kimi's brain like a siren. Painfully, her subconscious acknowledged some were familiar. Birds choked by bits of plastic from bottles, wrappers, toys, containers, the bodies of animals contorted as they grew around plastic that strangled them. Islands of plastic that drifted like great abandoned nets alone in a wide ocean, plastic bags that were caught on coral reefs. Hundreds and thousands of images. And the screams of pain.

But then there were the unfamiliar images. These were thrust into Kimi's mind with more feeling. You will see what you have done! Small chips of plastic that fell from the surface like rain on the heads of children, who held their hands out to catch it, not knowing. Water-filled bottles bobbing over the pristine plain of an ocean floor. Mōmoke working over animals starving themselves as plastic in their stomachs replaced their hunger. Shaking their heads. The poisoned dead, creatures who would spread the poison to dwellers of the deep who feed on them. Because nothing was wasted in the Deep. Unlike the Dry who created indestructible waste to crowd out and poison the perfection created by the One Mother and her children. The images started to change pitch from screams to explosions as they crashed upon the walls of Kimi's skull, heavy with accusation. Tumu-te-varovaro. The mōmoke shared their disgust, their bewilderment, their fear. Kimi screamed, squeezing Bella's hand. She could hear Tēpaeru weeping.

“Enough!” said a voice. “The people have spoken and now they understand.”

It was Māmā Tutuariki. Her voice was firm but she still appeared as calm as ever, like the scene interested her as much as another trip along the Anaroa.

“E tū ki runga,” Tutuariki told Kimi and Bella.

Kimi opened her eyes and saw red. A stream of blood was floating up from her nose. Bella was crying silently. The same red stream floated from one of Bella’s ears as they brought themselves up from under another, who turned out to be Tapaeru. There was something wrong. Instead of rising with them, Tapaeru’s body shifted and fell off them onto the ground, lifeless.

Kimi looked up at the Elders behind Tapaeru’s still body. “What have you done to her?!”

“Sister!” Māmā Karaia called as she ran down to be them.

Kimi dropped to cradle Tapaeru’s head. “Somebody help her! What’s wrong with her?”

Four women wove down through the audience, arriving as Māmā Karaia did. They looked older, old enough to be grandmothers, although what that meant in mōmoke years, Kimi didn’t know or care.

“Māmā Karaia, make them help her,” Kimi cried as Māmā Karaia kneeled beside her.

“The Healers will take her, Kimiora,” replied Māmā Karaia as she gently transferred the support of her sister’s head to the women. “Her mind is injured. She was protecting you from an assault that would probably have killed you.”

Kimi remained kneeling as she watched the woman place her mother on a stretcher and carry her away. She covered her face with her hands, trying to keep herself from falling

to pieces and floating up with the spring, like everything else in this horrible place. Why did Tapaeru bring her here?

She felt an arm around her shoulder. Bella's. Her own hands dropped to her lap and the pooled blood from her nose floated up like a red cloud.

"Tapaeru. She really loves you," said Bella, looking down at Kimi's hands. It was when their eyes met that something in Kimi snapped.

15. TIKA'ANGA

Kimi stepped onto the platform and there was a sense of bafflement from the mōmoke. The human approaches the Elders?

The feeling intensified as Kimi shoved clumsily past Otire.

“It touches me! Tiaki!” Otire yelled in disgust.

“Oh Otire, leave it be. Tiaki, remain as you are,” said Matāura who sat beside Otire’s seat, flicking their hand dismissively in Otire’s direction.

Otire turned, “Matāura, you defy me?”

Matāura dropped their hands onto the soft folds of their extravagant gown and rolled their eyes, “Auē! It is a human child, not a starved shark.”

But even Matāura shrunk back in his chair when Kimi took Otire’s seat at the spring well. The image of Kimi’s face sprung up at the centre of the arena.

“Now listen!”

Kimi saw mōmoke lean back, terrified. Everyone except Matatika. He sat upright, staring straight down at her. Kimi couldn’t tell if he was baffled or impressed.

“You’re lucky you’re way stronger than me or I would be losing it right now,” Kimi snarled. “Like really going crazy on you guys. But I’m not strong here. I’m just a girl. Just a normal girl who was living a normal life in Porirua until yesterday. Which feels like a million years ago. You know the only reason I came here was to get help for my brother. He’s sick from the vaimara and Tapaeru said you could help. But now I’m here. And I still haven’t got the cure. And you guys hate us. And I get that. I would hate us, too. And it’s worse than you think.

“We’re not trying to kill you. It’s nothing like that. We learn about it at school. Everything we need to do to fix things, the rubbish, the pollution and the other problems. But it’s just so big. And you know what? It’s not fair. I’m just a kid. *I didn’t dump all the rubbish. I didn’t make all the plastic. I didn’t drop the nuclear bombs!* They got dropped near my home, Rarotonga! It was other people. My family didn’t want that. We fought. They hurt us too. You see? The world was already messed up when I was born,” Kimi pulled at her hair nervously. “There is so much wrong with the world. Well, wrong with us,” she stopped and seem to search around for something else to say. The mōmoke watched the child, large and clearly illuminated before, helpless in their midst.

“It’s so messed up. I just...but I just want to say that we’re trying, well some of us. I’ve always been told we come from te Moananui a Kiva—we share this ocean with you. It’s so important to us. But I know that not everyone is the same as us. We have ruined things and we know we don’t have much time. And I hope it isn’t too late, that we haven’t failed.”

“Failed at what?” asked Matāura, eyeing Kimiora with raised eyebrows from their chair.

Kimi looked into the spring, her eyes lowered before the audience, “We were meant to be mana tiaki. We were meant to be look after our home but we got lost. We forgot that caring for our world is caring for ourselves. What are we...if we have no home?”

Bella dropped into Otire’s seat beside her. Above them, the girl’s faces were illuminated side by side, two young faces bruised and battered finding comfort in the other. The mōmoke gazed up to the projections, curious and pensive.

“But we can learn again. We can remember and pay attention to what our world is telling us.”

Matāura stood, majestic and walked to the girls. A long slender hand with beaded nails was placed on Kimi's shoulder.

“Those who listen to our One Mother are always rewarded.”

There was silence before Māmā Tutuariki tilted her chin. The crown froze as they waited for what would be said next.

“Your names are Kimiora and Bella, I believe,” she inquired. There was a communal sigh.

“Āe,” the girls offered in unison, instinctively recognising the authority of the Elder.

“Do you deny the damage that the Dry causes?”

“No, it's true,” said Kimi, “And I'm sorry.”

“Me too but it's not even our fault! We're just kids! I only just turned thirteen,” said Bella exasperated as blood floated from her nose and left ear.

“Thirteen...” said Māmā Tutuariki.

There was a moment of silence. As if every mōmoke was holding their breath. The human girl, barely older than a crab, speaks to the Elder this way, the Elder Tutuariki, thousands of years old, descendent of Tangaroa's daughter 'Ina, whose anger is seen in the bruises on fish living today.

“If not yours, then whose fault is it, child?” asked Matāura gently.

Kimi looked into the long lashed eyes of Matāura and sighed. “It's all of ours,”

“Yeah, she's right,” Bella said as her shoulders fell forward. Then added, “But I just don't wanna get all the blame.” She leaned on Kimi's shoulder.

The Elders regarded the girls who both looked down. One with arms folded stubbornly, the other with fidgeting hands.

“This one reminds me of someone,” mused Tutuariki. She gestured to Otire with her eyes.

“How dare you compare me to a human,” replied Otire flatly.

Tutuariki’s face replaced the girls in the spring image. The mōmoke seemed to relax at the sight of her.

“And how dare you disrespect the tika'anga of the 'Uipā, even after my sister, Piki te Ora, addressed you,” scolded Tutuariki. “Trust me when I say this incident will be discussed further. You have shown disrespect, poor judgement and corrupt use of rank. Your judgement has shown to be lacking. Even a child would be able to assess the absolute impossibility of accelerating environmental destruction as an option for self-preservation. Destroy thousands of habitats and millions of species so you can indirectly encourage the eradication of one species. While trying to convince us it is for our own protection. Shameful.

“You would also be reminded that I knew you as a child. You call on our people to hurt this child when her youthful audacity matches your own.”

“You patronise me in front of our peers, the entire Assembly?” Otire said, folding his arms and glaring at the ground.

“Will we pretend I was not already a grown woman when you were feeding at your mother’s breast?” Tutuariki mocked.

“Leave him, Tue. He is already bad-tempered,” said Piki te Ora, a smirk resting above the tāmoko on her chin.

“Auē! When is he not?” Matāura rolled their eyes.

'Anautoa laughed loudly after which the crowd laughed cautiously. Māma Tutuariki was the eldest after all, friend of their mothers and grandmothers.

The Elder rose slowly to her feet. Kimi caught a glimpse of a smile of the Elder's lips and her eyes twinkled at Kimi, the spark of a young spirit.

“My people,” she said as she moved slowly over to the girls who remained at Otire's seat. Her image vanished from the spring and the mōmoke all dropped their heads to watch as their Elder stood by the humans, supported by Matāura. She rested her hands on the girls' shoulders and tipped her head up to address her people. “It is clear the humans are careless, wasteful, forgetful and overly reliant on their eyesight. But, my people, as any of you can see, the humans can show us so many things. The most important lessons come from the way they appear so much like us. We are like two sides of a shell, one rough, one smooth but ultimately entwined and of the same creator.”

Otire glared at the girls as Māmā Tutuariki spoke and then searched the crowd for their responses. But each mōmoke kept their eyes fixed on her as she moved slowly around the circular stage, addressing them all, resting her right side as Matāura walked with her. It distracted Kimi a moment, Matāura so tall and adorned in such extravagant colour with Māmā Tutuariki, a compact fist of black drapery.

“We must consider that our people have a longer history to learn from,” Māmā Tutuariki continued. “When we judge the humans, we must consider that our significant advantages. Our lives are longer so we have time to development sound judgement and skill sets. We enjoy more intimacy with our world and provider, the Great Ocean. We must remember that we are in closer communion with our One Mother, the centre, who will always

redress imbalance in her own time. We have clear physiological advantages over the people of the Dry and more efficient communication methods. We must judge accordingly.

“But although the advantages are clear, we cannot forget, People of Te Moana Nui, we can never forget that we are not gods,” Tutuariki walked around looking up the mōmoke for a moment before facing Otire.

“We are not gods.

“My people, we can judge according to our own views of what is right and true and balanced. But we can never assume that we are more entitled to life than those of the Dry.

“And for that reason, I see that the Dry solution proposed by my peer and Elder, Otire-o-Avaiki of Te Ō Nui, can never be an accepted course of action. It goes against our way. The destruction it would cause. Would we risk further damage to the realm of Tangaroa? My people, I too have been angered by the humans. They often act in ways that make no sense to us. But I will not let my anger cloud my judgement and my understanding of what is right and true.”

The Elders sat still, pondering her words as they gazed into the spring. The audience sat quietly attentive. Tutuariki returned to her seat and her face appeared in the spring. Everyone looked up to her.

“What happened to these two young ones was cruel. It is not our way to harm individual children or blame them for the shortcomings of their people. Especially babes, not even twenty years old. How shameful. But I accept that you are fearful, my people. We are experiencing great change. But remember often the young are the best advocates for returning things to a state of balance.

“I propose an alternative course of action. We will send the humans back to their home with their knowledge of our way and several tools to aide them. We will trust them to seek assistance to attend to the problem of the human poisons invading the Great Ocean.”

“There will be conditions given by the Elders, of course. And I hope you, my people, can place your trust in the Elders to ensure that the conditions maintain what we know to be right and true and balanced.”

Many mōmoke nodded in agreement. It was obvious that the words of Māmā Tutuariki were soothing and reassuring.

“And now I address you, the Daughters of the Dry. We will return for a special 'Uipā'anga to will discuss your progress and decide on a direct judgement then. As we speak there are experts preparing an outline of our request and the things you will need. We seek your commitment. I have watched you, Kimiora, Daughter of Tēpaeru from the 'enua marō, te Tumu-te-varovaro, and you, Bella, from the 'enua marō, te Ika-a-Māui, near the mouth of the fish. You are young now but even the young can achieve the impossible. Bella, you have love and great loyalty. Kimiora, you are perceptive and diligent and you will stand up for what is right. And you both understand the importance of addressing the imbalance caused by the Dry poisons in our te Moananui a Kiva. I know you will not fail.”

Kimi nodded, her eyes averted out of respect, “We will not fail.”

This response seemed to signal an agreement to Māmā Tutuariki. Kimi nudged Bella to respond as she was still resting on her shoulder but Bella's head dropped forward onto Kimi's lap. Blood continuing to leak from her ears in thick clouds. Kimi placed her hand on her friends face.

“Bella,” Kimi whispered trying to hide her panic. Kimi did not know if she could handle this without Bella.

“Bella, get up!”

Matāura leaned back to address someone, “The Healers are needed.”

A group of men and woman in the yellow pāreu of the healers appeared at Kimi’s side but she would not give Bella up.

“She’s not going anywhere without me.”

16. VAIRĀKAU

Once Kimi had been convinced that Bella was safe and she would be able to follow, the group had left the Uipā. Kimi had caught the smallest snippet of Otire's rant as he expressed his rage at the proceedings, the other Elders waving their hands at him dismissively. The discussion was not over but right now Kimi didn't care what they thought. Her friend lay on the stretcher the Healers had arranged. Her eyes were closed and her face had no expression. Even when asleep, Bella's face normally contorted with emotion, but right now there was nothing.

“What are you going to do?” Kimi asked the Healers.

“We are not sure yet because we are not entirely sure how your body differs to ours,” one of them answered, an older woman with long grey hair. “But we can see that the concentration of energy that occurred before has a much greater impact on you. I imagine that is why Tapaeru protected you. But even with her absorbing most of the impact, it has still caused a lot of injury. We will need to assess both of you.”

They arrived at a large rocky outcrop at the edge of the town. Kimi assumed it was like a hospital but there didn't seem to be anyone else around, no other patients, no nurses. Just the healers, Kimi and Bella.

Like all mōmoke structures, it was dimly lit. They walked along extended tunnels before they entered a room where Kimi was asked to sit. Bella was put on a platform where three of the Healers attended to her. Kimi moved around on her seat so she could keep an eye on Bella, even though she knew it didn't make a difference.

Finally one of the Healers kneeled before Kimi, the one with the long grey hair, and looked her in the eyes, “Kia orāna Kimiora, ko Karape au. It is sad we meet this way. We need to examine you so we can help Bella. Please sit back and stay still.”

It was difficult to understand what was happening. Karape leaned over, assisted by a younger woman who handed her a series of tools. Kimi remained still as she felt small pricks of pain and saw small bursts of light. After Karape finished with each tool, she returned it to the assistant who then dabbed at a large transparent sphere suspended before her. Lights flashed within the sphere in response to the assistants touch. Karape handled her gently but Kimi still felt as if she was being invaded.

“I know this must make you uncomfortable and you must feel like you have no power,” said Karape. “But I can tell you that it is important for your friend that we learn about you quickly.”

She handed back another tool to the assistant who then held the sphere before Karape to observe. “Interesting,” Karape muttered.

“Would you agree that the two appear to have slightly different brain physiologies?” asked the assistant.

“Yes. It will make the healing more complicated I expect.”

Karape looked back at Kimi as if considering her potential and then she turned to address her peers, including those with Bella. Kimi heard the buzz of Karape, hiding her thoughts. After a moment they nodded.

Karape turned back to Kimi. “Is she ok?” Kimi asked. If she had been back on the Dry, tears would have been falling down her face.

“We have assessed the two of you and we believe we can help your friend. However, we will probably compromise the integrity of her pakā in doing so. So once we have completed our healing, you will need to return to the Dry immediately. It will not be until you

return to the surface that we will know if we have been successful. It is risky. So we ask that you return with her.”

And then it occurred to Kimi in a great shock of guilt. “But my brother! We were meant to get the cure! And Tapaeru isn’t even here!” Kimi could feel her heart race into a panic. Her face contorted as she wept. Over Karape’s shoulder she saw other Healers hovering with their strange tools over Bella’s face, which remained as still as death.

“My brother. It’s all for nothing. I can’t take this,” she sobbed. She wanted to scratch up the walls.

“Kimiara,” said Karape. She had dark eyes like Bella but they were still and sure. “What is wrong with your brother? Is he here or on the Dry?”

“My brother, Tai, on the Dry, he cut his hand on a vaimara globe from the Dry Objectors. Tapaeru had told me that you had a cure.”

“I see. We have developed an antidote for ourselves and other mammals. They are different you see. It has not been tested on humans,” Karape looked off into the distance, eyes narrowed for a moment. “But I suppose you understand your brother will die without intervention.”

“Please help him,” Kimi pleaded.

“We will do the best we can. If you wish to farewell Tapaeru, you should see her now.”

“What?” Kimi asked. She was unsure whether she could stand to leave Bella. She glanced around Karape again.

“I would suggest you see her. I do not believe she will be able to see you again. Go to her.”

Kimi followed the assistant out of the room and along dimly lit corridors. Like before, they encountered no-one. Occasionally the assistant turned back over her shoulder as if worried Kimi would do something unexpected. Kimi didn't even bother looking back at her.

“Someone will return when the healing of the other human is over.” With that the assistant left Kimi who stood awkwardly in the doorway.

Inside the room, Tapaeru lay on a stretcher similar to the one she had left Bella on. When she saw Kimi, Tapaeru stretched her arms out to her.

“My daughter, I heard you spoke to the Assembly,” she said.

Kimi stood for another moment, looking at her feet. “Bella, she fainted and...I don't know. I don't know if she's gonna be ok. It's my fault she's here. And I dunno if we can get the medicine for Tai. It's all my fault,” She cried into her hands.

“Kimiora, 'aere mai,” called Tapaeru.

Kimi kept her face covered as she approached the stretcher. Tapaeru gave Kimi a short embrace before holding her shoulders. “Kimiora, you know your friend is strong. She would never let you get away with all of this,” Tapaeru said chuckling.

“I'm scared.”

“I know.”

“The Healer said you might not be able to see me again.” Kimi said as she took Tapaeru's hand.

“Āe, tāku tamā'ine. It was such a short time with you. But like every other time, it was wonderful. You always challenge everything I know. A part of you is always the same

and there is also something of you that is new. It's like each time you return, a new layer comes with you. E mako rai tēia. My love for you is like nothing else."

Kimi sucked her lips into her mouth and then rested her head on Tēpaeru's shoulder.

"Why did you bring me here, Māmā? Did you know what Otire was planning?"

"I did. And I was scared. I didn't even know where you were," said Tēpaeru as she placed a hand on Kimi's head, touching the remaining beads and braiding. "And then you appeared. Just before the Assembly. I had two choices; keeping you for myself, safe on the Dry, if only for a short time, or bringing you to the 'Uipā."

"But what were we supposed to do? Did you really think we could do anything?"

"You did exactly what I knew you would do. You showed everyone what is wonderful about you, the way you quickly take to ideas and other people, your loyalty, your aro'a for others. I knew my people would see you and know it was not our right to encourage the destruction of the humans, no matter the cause. We are bound by aro'a," Now Tēpaeru shifted to hold Kimi's head in her hands. "You know, you will have to do as the Elders have asked. You will have to try to make things right."

"Āe."

"I know you will do it."

"Āe."

Kimi continued to look down.

"What is it, e tamā'ine?"

"It's not fair. I have only just found you and now I will lose you."

At that moment the door opened, revealing the assistant.

“The Healing is finished. You must return now.”

Kimi grabbed at Tapaeru’s hands, “No, it’s not fair. Why do I have to choose?”

“Kimiora, you do not have to choose. You must go with Bella. She needs you,”

Tapaeru held her forehead against Kimi’s and her voice echoed in her mind, “I will never be as far away as you think but if you ever need me, even just to talk, remember how I found you all those years ago, a baby swimming in the reef.”

“Kimiora,” the assistant called again.

“Aere ra e tāku tamā'ine.”

“E no'o ra e tōku Māmā.”

17. TE KĀPUA'ANGA

Above them the sharks cut shadows across the surface of the water, circling. Kimi sensed Auīka was among them, her rein ready for Kimi's grasp. The Healers, covered in pakā, attached an unconscious Bella to Vakatere, the most experienced of the group. It wasn't until they had set off towards the surface that Kimi realised they were still at a great depth. Two days in the Deep had made her eyes accustomed to the dim light of the Nga'i 'Uipā'anga. Now that the group swam swiftly towards the light blue waters above, Kimi kept her eyes squeezed shut to the bright yellow light permeating through the water.

The pakā was breaking down through Kimi's whole being and it felt as if she was crumbling away. Her body no longer cut through the water like a dart but dragged in a swishing mess, pakā dust and foam drifting in her wake. She coughed and spluttered and wondered how much longer she would breathe comfortably under the sea.

And she was exhausted. Overwhelmed by emotions. She felt the loss of her relationship with Tēpaeru, a mother she had known for centuries and for only two days. She felt the immense pressure of the judgement given at the Assembly—a pressure she knew would shape her and Bella's entire lives. She felt guilty about her Dry family and a deep fear for her brother Tai.

A small glass tube was fastened to her hip: Tai's only chance. The Healer had explained that the poison used by the Dry Objectors used a toxin found at depths humans had barely reached. It was processed in way that no human doctor would identify and Tai would need the cure in the next day or so. Even then Karape was not sure if Tai would survive, let alone be completely healed.

Kimi was too exhausted to even cry. All she felt was a large weight in her chest.

Auīka’s dance through the water was beginning to make Kimi feel nauseous, something she didn’t remember from the last trip. It was better to sleep.

The screams of seagulls matched the feeling in Kimi’s lungs. She opened her mouth wide and still felt she could not bring enough air into her chest. She choked on the sea water rising up her throat, almost vomiting. Tried to breathe again. Coughed up water. Breathed again. Her throat was raw but now her breath was returning to a rhythm. In and out, still quick and desperate but coming back.

Her chest and head fell back on the sand.

The sand.

Kimi was on her stomach, lying on wet sand. Grey skin flaked off her knuckles, clenched at eye-level. She pushed her fingers through the sand, but nothing floated away. The grit of it scraped at her hands and dug under her nails. The Dry.

She had no energy so she lay for a while, listening to her own breathing and the crash of the waves and the seagulls circling above. Then she remembered. She reached down to check. The tube was ok. Light rain dabbled on her face, making her eyes flicker.

Something touched her shoulder. It squeezed. With effort, Kimi lifted her head and dropped it to face the opposite direction.

“Bella,” she said.

“Bella.”

Bella gazed at her. Then her lips, cracked and flaking, moved. “You need to use your mouth, idiot. No fairy magic here.” Her fingertips patted Kimi’s shoulder gently.

Kimi smiled while tears welled up in her eyes. They pooled in the crevices of her nose before falling across her eyes to the ground.

“Are you ok to get up?” the air pushed through Kimi’s vocal chords and brushed everything raw in her throat.

“I dunno,” Bella croaked. “But I wanna get dry. I’m a bit over the water.”

Kimi smiled before sucking at her cheeks. “Girl...I’m sorry.”

“Yeah,” Bella croaked. “You owe me...you owe me for the rest of your life.”

“I know,” Kimi crackled.

“Your voice is the worst,” Bella croaked.

“You sound like Uncle Pat,” chuckled Kimi. Uncle Pat, grey haired and smoking, a beer resting on his tummy as he laughed with Kimi’s dad in a way that sounded like he was choking.

The girls began to giggle. Then they giggled more at the sound of their crackled giggling.

“You think our gear is ok?” asked Bella.

“Dunno.”

They picked each other up off the sand and brushed the dead pakā off. They were in the same place that they had left for the Nga’i 'Uipā'anga but the pakā bath was gone. The path was no longer blocked. Everything was as it had always been. Grey brown rocks, seaweed and driftwood. Rain fell softly over the jade-coloured surf. Kimi almost doubted the whole thing had happened until they found their things.

After wearing the mōmoke kāka'u, their clothes felt rough against their skin and both girls frowned as they were dressed. Kimi pulled at her t-shirt, disappointed. Then she pulled the tīvaevae out of her bag to wrap it around them for warmth. When she held it, Kimi couldn't help but feel that the tīvaevae was now more than something for her bed.

“I wish we wore nice colours like the mōmoke,” said Kimi as she draped it over both of their shoulders.

“Yeah,” Bella agreed. “I looked so good.”

Kimi's mouth into a loose smile and she shook her head. “Girl, do you ever stop?”

“Stop what? Hey,” Bella's smile fell and she started breathing heavily. “We didn't get that medicine for your brother.”

“No, I have it,” Kimi was not letting it go until she could sneak it to Tai. “Woah, what are you crying about?”

Bella was sobbing, “I just thought coz I was unconscious and I thought we had just been sent back and I didn't know. I thought it would be all my fault he died! And I'm just so tired! I wanna go home.”

Kimi sighed. “Let's go,” she said, picking up her pack and pulling the tīvaevae tight.

“Where are we going?”

“Let's go to my house first.”

Bella sniffed, “And we'll just say we've been at my house?”

“Yeah.”

It wasn't the first time they had used this tactic. Usually, they used the house swap lie to get out of doing chores or give them time to meet up with others at the beach. It made

Kimi feel guilty for a moment but this was a different kind of guilt. This childish fib was to hide a big truth.

A truth that would be impossible to express. I have another mother. She is a mōmoke. She found me and lost me. I love her.

But there was also the bigger truth.

There are beings in our Ocean, Te Moana Nui a Kiva. They are angry with us. With *all* of us. And they *deserve* to be angry.

We need to change and we need to do it now.

Part Three: O'ora te Tīvaevae

The final stage in the tīvaevae framework is called o'ora te tīvaevae. Futter-Puati describes this as presenting the report/findings (4). This is by far the most significant stage and for me there are two objectives to fulfil. The first o'ora'anga for this work will be the submission of this work as a thesis.

However, the o'ora'anga will not be complete unless I can ensure my Kūki 'Āirani community benefits from my work. As a va'ine Kūki 'Āirani, the work of writing this thesis is women's work, which means that it needs collaboration and communal reception in order for it to be considered successful. Te au tama-iti Kūki 'Āirani, our children of the Cook Islands, need a book that speaks to them and this is my primary intention with this work. The necessity of a public o'ora'anga is illustrated by Courtney Wilson when she describes how she felt after hearing Karlo Mila's poetry:

Sitting in that tutorial, I dimly sensed that the words were opening themselves up to me in a way that Chaucer's or Spencer's had never done. The day after, I was avidly reading her recently published first book of poetry Dream Fish Floating at the expense of an essay due the following day. Back then, I could not have known how much of an impact her work would have on me, but I felt already that here was a woman I trusted. I knew she was one hundred percent genuine, because she was saying stuff I knew about already. I knew what it was like being brown, but white, but brown. Suddenly, I held a kinship with a Tongan/Samoan/Palangi woman who didn't know I existed.

Or maybe she did.

'That's my stuff' (6).

I know from my experience teaching that there are currently very few books that speak to the experiences of Cook Islands children. This is for them. Arguably, this thesis is submitted for academic review while it is still in the pākoti/tuitui stage. There still may be work to be done on my novel. But I am adamant that there will come a time for te o'ora'anga o tēia tīvaevae tātā.

Works Cited

- Anae, Melani. "Research for better Pacific Schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va – a Samoan Perspective." *MAI Review*, vol 1, 2010, pp. 1-24, www.review.mai.ac.nz/mrindex/MR/article/view/298.html. Accessed 12 May 2018.
- Connell, John. "In Samoan worlds: culture migration and identity in Albert Wendt." *Writing Across Worlds: literature and migration*, edited by R. King, J. Connell and P. White, Routledge, 1994, 263-279.
- Figiel, Sia. *The Girl in the Moon Circle*. Suva: Mana Publications, 1996.
- Futter-Puati, Debi, and Teremoana Maua-Hodges. "Stitching Tivaevae: A Cook Islands Research Method." *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, Mar. 2019, pp. 1-10, doi:[10.1177/1177180119836788](https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180119836788). Accessed 12 April 2019.
- Gilda, Anahera. "Speaking in a New Language." *New Zealand Review of Books: Pukapuka Aotearoa. A Quarterly*, iss. 115, Spring, 2016, nzbooks.org.nz/2016/literature/speaking-in-a-new-language-anahera-gildea. Accessed 17 May 2019.
- Grace, Patricia. "Influences on Writing." *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, Rowman and Littlefield, 1999, pp. 65–73.
- Hall, David E. "Curfews, Culture, and Custom in American Samoa: An Analytical Map for Applying the U.S. Constitution to U.S. Territories." *Asia Pacific Law & Policy Journal*, vol. 2, iss. 1, Winter, 2001, pp. 69-107, www.hawaii.edu/aplpj. Accessed 17 May 2019.
- Hayward, Matthew. "Indigenizing Intertextuality: Literacy and Orality in Albert Wendt's *Pouliuli*." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 41, iss. 2, 2018, pp. 96-111.
- Ihimaera, Witi. *Whale Rider*. Auckland: Reed Publishing, 1987.

- Ilaiu, Charmaine. "Tauhi Vā: The first space." *Interstices*, vol. 10, 2009, pp. 20-31, interstices.ac.nz/index.php/Interstices/article/download/359/358/. Accessed 15 Jun. 2018.
- Ka'ili, T. "Tauhi vā: nurturing Tongan sociospatial ties in Maui and beyond." *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 17, iss. 1, 2005, pp. 83-115.
- Keown, Michelle. *Pacific Island Writings: The Postcolonial Literatures of Aotearoa/New Zealand and Oceania*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
- . *Postcolonial Pacific Writing : Representations of the Body*. Routledge, 2005.
- Lopesi, Lana. *False Divides*. BWB Texts, 2018.
- . "Beyond Essentialism: Contemporary Moana Art from Aotearoa New Zealand." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, vol. 46, 2018, pp. 106-115. www-journals-uchicago-edu.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz. Accessed 14 May 2019.
- Marsh, Selina Tusitala. *Fast Talking PI*. Auckland University Press, 2009.
- . "Theory "versus" Pacific Islands Writing: Towards a *Tama'ita'i* Criticism in the Works of Three Pacific Islands Woman Poets." *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999, pp. 337-356.
- Matuku, Steph. *Flight of the Fantail*. Huia Publishers, 2018.
- . *Whetū Toa and the Magician*. Huia Publishers, 2018.
- Maua-Hodges, T. .Personal interview. 16 April 2019.
- . *The Tivaevae Model: Designing and making of Tivaevae as the framework for research*. 2001. Victoria University, Unpublished manuscript.
- Mila-Schaaf, K. "Vā-Centred Social Work: Possibilities for a Pacific Approach to Social Work Practice." *Social Work Review/Tu Mau*, vol. 18, iss. 1, 2006, pp. 8-13.
- Moorfield, John C. *Te Aka Online Māori Dictionary*.
<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=mana>. Accessed 14 May 2019.

- Najita, Susan Y. *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific : Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction*. Routledge, 2006.
- Nicholas, Sally Akevai Te Namu. *Ko te Karāma o te Reo Māori o te Pae Tonga o Te Kuki Airani: A Grammar of Southern Cook Islands Māori*. 2018. Auckland University, PhD thesis. <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2016/01/apo-nid110786-1242106.pdf>
- Powell, Emma Emily Ngakuravaru. *Stitching to the back-bone: A Cook Islands literary tivaivai*. 2013. Auckland University, Masters thesis. researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/20287.
- Rokonadravu, Mary. "Famished Eels." *Black Marks on the White Page*, edited by Witi Ihimaera and Tina Makereti, Penguin Random House New Zealand, 2017, pp. 61-70.
- Rongokea, Lynnsay, and John Daley. *The Art of Tivaevae : Traditional Cook Islands Quilting*. Godwit, 2001.
- Savage, Stephen. *A Dictionary of the Maori Language of Rarotonga*. Suva: Star Printery, 1990.
- Sharrad, Paul. "Albert Wendt and the Problem of History." *The Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2002, pp. 109-116.
- Te Ava, A. *Mau Piriia Te Korero 'A To 'Ui Tupuna, Akaoraoraia: Culturally responsive pedagogy for Cook Island secondary schools physical education*. 2011. Auckland U, PhD thesis. <http://hdl.handle.net/2292/10112>.
- Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui. *Talking Therapies for Pasifika Peoples. Best and promising practice guide for mental health and addiction service*. Auckland: Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui, 2010. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/ResourceFinder/Talking-Therapies-for-Pasifika-Peoples.pdf>
- Tuagalu, I'uogafa. "Heuristics of the Vā." *Alternative (Ngā Pae O Te Māramatanga)*, 2008, pp. 107-126, www.researchgate.net/publication/280941728_Heuristics_of_the_Va. Accessed 10 May 2018.

Waiti-Mulholland, Isabel. *Inna Furey*. Huia Publishers, 2007.

Wendt, Albert. "Afterword: Tatauing the Postcolonial Body." *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, Rowman & Littlefield, 1999, pp. 399-412.

---. *Nuanua : Pacific Writing in English since 1980*. Auckland University Press, 1995.

---. *Ola*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1995.

---. *Pouliuli*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1977.

---. "Towards a New Oceania." *Mana Review*, vol. 1, iss. 1, 1976, pp. 49–60.

Wilson, Courtney. '*That's My Stuff*': *Pasifika Literature and Pasifika Identity*. 2013. Victoria University. Masters Thesis.

Young, Lani Wendt. *Telesa : The Covenant Keeper*. Kale Print, 2011.