

# MOKO

Hey little one, where are you going? My Nan was calling to me from her verandah. I called back — I'm just going down to the beach Nan, want to come?

Aae my little mokopuna, I'll come. Come and help me get ready.

I ran up the path and helped Nan get her old jersey and her kits for pipis.

We set off down the road together, talking.

E moko how's your mum today? How's my daughter getting on?

She's o.k., bit tired. Susie kept her up all night crying.

Aue, that little one still not sleeping.

She'll be o.k. Mum's taking her to see Aunt Ruihi today — she'll fix her up.

The sun was hot on our backs as we walked on. The rough road was lined with bush and scrub. The sky was clear blue — like the blue of the inside of a paua shell Nan had once shown me. The bush around us was alive with the sound of birds calling to each other.

Hey Nan, I cried excitedly. Did you hear that — it was a piipiiwharauora calling... and there's a tui answering it.

Aae e moko. Do you know what happened to tuis in the past?

No Nanny — you tell me....

I took her hand as she recalled to me.

The tui was sometimes kept as a pet and taught to talk...

What, but how?

Just wait your hurry moko. Let me finish, she continued... Some tui were kept in cages in a hidden place, the bristles on their tongue were cut down and they were made to talk every day. These tui were sometimes used to welcome guests onto the marae and these tui were very clever and powerful creatures.

Wow, wait till I tell little Susie about that.

Nan laughed softly as we walked on.

Nan, there's the water we're nearly there.

A short way up ahead you could see the water — it was sparkling in the sunlight and the light was so bright I had to shade my eyes.

Here we are moko. Now. Can you remember where I showed you is, the best place for pipi?

Of course Nan, I joked, Come I'll show you...

We walked over the hot sand until we were across from the small rise in the land Nan had shown me before.

Now Nan, See over there — I pointed — there's the little rise, so you go straight down to the water here for pipi. O.K. moko... Nan chuckled away... Let's go... And she was off — racing me into the tide.

Hang on Nan I'm coming, and I raced after her.

Boy moko, I can still beat you.

Aue Nan, I said puffing, You took me by surprise.

I heard my Nan laugh as she hitched up her dark skirts and started feeling in the sand for pipi with her feet.

She was my Nan I thought proudly and the aroha I had for her swelled up inside me as I watched her digging. She moved in a rhythm with the sea, feeling, bending down and up again. Rising and falling like the never ending motion of the sea around us.

I bent down, down with my Nan and I could see straight to the bottom. The sea was cool against my bare arms and I pulled up many pipi, for my kit.

Hey Nan.

Aae moko I'm just here.

How did we fish in the old days — you know, way back.

Well moko — that's a long story. The men would go out in their canoes and they used nets — all different types of nets, long, short, fat, skinny... to catch the different fish. They caught them by line too — just like we do now. There was big feasts and celebrations when the canoes would come in — Aue moko I remember....

My Nan's eyes grew misty, thinking back to her childhood.

But Nan, why did it all change? Why is it different now?

Aue moko — My Nan's eyes grew angry and cold. She stood tall and proud in the dark water.

It is because of the white man moko. They came and took our land, our seas and our ways from us. Nowadays you can see with your own eyes moko. The Maori is a stranger in our own land. No more can we live as we always have. We have to live under the white man's ways.

My Nan's voice was spiralling higher and higher. Her body stood firm —

anger pouring forth from her words and actions.

She seemed to have forgotten that I was there... and then she turned to me, her eyes flashing with anger.

E moko, remember always what you are moko. A Maori. A Maori of this land. Remember your reo, moko and the Maori ways you were brought up with. Never forget moko.

Her voice then softened and she drew me close to her.

Never forget moko, Aue never forget moko.

I could feel her aroha and warmth flow through her to me.

I will remember Nan, always remember you Nan.

Aue moko, she cried, and her strong arms held me close.

We stood together until she was calm once more.

Aue moko, let's go in I'm cold. Bring your pipis in and we go.

Aae Nan.

We walked hand in hand from the sea to the shore. From the darkness to the light.

And my Nan and I knew, I would never forget.

## CANTERBURY MAORI STUDIES ASSOCIATION:

An organisation established to ensource research in the field of South Island Maori Studies. We publish a quarterly newsletter, TE KARANGA, hold occasional evenings, and plan a Resource Centre.

Enquiries: Terry Duval, 85 Caledonian Road, Christchurch 1. Phone 65-831

or Piritihana Mikaere, 94 Windermere Road, Christchurch 5. Phone 526-227