

Anna sat in front of her laptop, swigging back her can of coca-cola; headphones making her oblivious to the world around her. She sat in her fan-fiction reading pose. Chin prop up of one fist, elbows on the table as she leaned into the screen, anyone who knew her knew what she was doing without even looking at her screen them selves. This was what she did everyday she wasn't working in the department store. Never for very long though, she did hate the read much. Mostly she spent her days on her laptop drawing, improving her skills with every stroke and when getting bored with that she'd go for a walk.

Finishing her coke and the last sentence in the fan-fiction, she felt the urge to wander. Not even taking the buds fro her ears she plugged the cable into her I-pod from the laptop, gathered her elder sisters little dog Miso, put on her shoes, and left the house. Miso, her sisters annoying black toy poodle skipped happily along side her, always excited to leave the house while once again Anna was lost to her favourite songs from Disney movies.

While walking along her usual track along the river, Anna felt a little uneasy. Almost like someone was following her. Miso had long since gone off ahead, knowing the route and not the get out of her line of sight. She continued walking forward but turned the Lion King sound track down, listening for a sign of anything behind her; and that was when she noticed the silence. Not a bird or cricket chirping in the mid-afternoon sun; all that was to be heard was the flow of the river.

She didn't want to look back.

Something told her soul deep not to; even though her mind tried desperately to rationalise what all this could possibly mean. Anna and Miso approached the part where two paths intersected, a dirt track crossroad. The dog got within two feet of the crossroads and came to a dead stop, refusing to go any further. Thinking it would probably be better to but Miso back on his lead and take him home Anna bent down to do so, as the dog started and high pitched whine. Feeling more disturbed by Miso's sudden fear, Anna picked him up and started to cross, then stopped.

There was a hand on her shoulder, ice cold, and large.

She froze on the spot. Fear gripping her. Miso made a dash from her arms and off into the surrounding bush.

"This one;" A rough voice whispered in her ear just before Anna's entire world went black.

'Was the sky usually that shade of black-green?' Anna wondered just before she realised the twig digging into her back and thought 'what am I doing lying on the ground?' Gingerly Anna picked herself up off the forest floor and surveyed her surroundings. This wasn't the shaded bush area she walked through with Miso. This was a gargantuan forest. Twisted trees closely packed in together, reaching seemingly beyond the limits of the sky and into space itself. Stars seemed to be living amongst the leaves of these impossible trees. Birds, native to her homeland swooped low and free in flight or looped about the forest floor. Kiwi scuttled through Anna's legs, completely unafraid of humans it seemed, and while Anna was more than a little shocked by this extensive array of natural

beauty which had just seemingly popped up out of nowhere, it was probably the giant Moa stalking about the place that really freaked her out. While the birds didn't mind her just standing there, they all did the birdie thing and take off at her stream of various insults and questions to the universe.

"Where the hell am I? Did I take any drugs with me cereal this morning? ...No, I don't do that kinda thing so... then... What?! How?! Why?!—"

"Aio taitamati!" The voice sounded calm and gentle but the words held no meaning to Anna.

"Turituri!" the voice said again, as Anna started spinning around the enclosed forest looking for its source and questioning her sanity.

"To waha!!!" Said something seeming angrier and gruffer.

"She speaks English, dumb-nuts, not Maori. You know like most people on this land now-days?" A young, refreshing voice sounded.

"Ahuaatua Aporo!" said the gruff voice again.

"Where are you? What are you? Where am I?" Anna asked the canopy, now dizzy but stationary.

"You are in the "tapu wao" or scared forest. We are the children of the god Tane Mahuta." The young voice said as a figure stepped out of one of the massive trees. Its eyes held a speckled red on green, its skin the light grey bark of a tree, its head twisting into branches with bright green leaves spilling from its head all over its back past its feet onto the twig laden ground.

"So... you're tree people..."

"Basically; yeah."

"Hore tatou tahi" said the calm voice from before as another figure dropped down from the emerald canopy. At first Anna thought it was some bloody great big bird but the stooping figure rose up to look humanoid as the tree thing did.

"English, Kereru. It makes no sense to people when you know what she's saying yet still speak Maori."

As the bird thing, Kereru, turned Anna could see it was covered with feathers, the most noticeable being the breast area covered in startling white. The rest of its plumage was a purplish green, its eyes an almost demon red.

"You're a wood pigeon!!!" Anna suddenly yelled, pointing at the bird-human thing.

"Yes, thank you for that stunning revelation" Said the gruff voice, from behind Anna. Turning to it Anna found herself looking at another tree thing. This one however had darker bark and more gnarled braches coming not only from off its head but also its back and arms. All of them reaching up to cloud together, in a mass of dark green leaves and bright fuzzy red flowers; its eyes though where a sparkling blue of the summer ocean.

“And you one of those national Christmas trees!” The first tree thing laughed at that statement, while the tree thing in question looked incredibly pissed off; Hard lines chiselling his bark into a frown.

“Pohutukawa; Thank you.” It said through gritted teeth.

“And I’m Aporo, or Apple” said the cheerier tree, its smile carving smoother lines into its pale bark skin. For a while they all just stood there; Pohutukawa scowling, Apple smiling and Kereru looking at a lost, as Anna thought about her options at this point. Burning the place down seemed like a pretty legit plan as her first thought but trying to start a fire quickly in a damp forest with moving trees and stuff was going to be pretty hard. So she decided to ask more questions.

“Are you gonna eat my soul now or something?”

“Ahhhh... no. Why? Do we look like we would?” Apple said anxiously.

“Well the question is what would wood do? And that’s no something one would know straight off the top of ones head, unless they where of course wood.” Anna said simply.

“Right...”

“The reason we brought you here, ‘Heahea’, is because our father, the god, Tane Mahuta has a task for you.” Pohutukawa sneered.

“What dose Heahea mean?” Anna asked Apple, as she saw it frown.

“Crazy or Idiot, in this case both.” Pohutukawa answered, cutting whatever answer Apple was about to air. Feeling its distaste for the early comment Anna decided not to play nice either.

“Awww... what’s wrong there Puhu? Not feeling the Christmas spirit?” Anna said with innocent looking face, though inside delighted with the look of loathing it shot at her.

“Alright, enough of that;” Kereru interjected. “Pohutukawa was correct, Tane Mahuta, father to all forest life, wants you to do something for him.”

“So, what exactly dose Tane Mablahblah want me to do and why should I do it?”

“Its Tane Mahuta and you will do it.” Pohutukawa snapped.

“Dude, I don’t have to do nothing.”

“Yes. You Do.”

“All Tane Mahuta would like for you to do it plant this seed.” Apple threw in, placing said seed in Annas hand.

“Umm... Why?”

“Because...”

“Because why?”

"The seed is special! Magical even!" said Kereru quickly

"So why don't Tane Mahuacares plant it himself? If it's so special a god should probably do it, not just some random off the bush track."

"Because it.... It can only be planted by a mortal!"

"Why?"

"Because magic's weird like that okay?!" Apple yelled, getting annoyed with all the 'whys' in the conversation.

"Welp, I've got stuff to do you know. I ain't got time for that; and trees, and stuff." Anna said tossing the seed back at Apple, and turning to leave.

"But, but! You can't not do what Tane Mahuta tells you!"

"Why? Give me one good reason..." she said over her shoulder as she went to walk into the forest; not for any reason but to try a start a fire away from prying eyes and the damp.

"He's a God."

Anna stopped in her tracks at that.

"Well that is a pretty good reason... but it ain't good enough."

Loosing all patience Pohutukawa then stomped over to Apple and grabbed the seed only to thrust it back into Anna's hand.

"Take the seed. Plant it. Or you will never see your I-pod again." It said with gritted teeth.

Through all of this adventure Anna had been calm, confused yes but it was now that Anna immediately went into shock. Screaming, Anna flung herself at Pohutukawa; grabbing it by the shoulder branches and shaking it while yelling. "Give it back to me you fuzzy red bastard!!!"

"You'll get it back, when we put you back into your reality." Apple said calmly.

"But we aren't taking you back until you promise to plant that seed." Pohutukawa affirmed; sternness craved into its very features.

"Fine! Fine! I promise! Now give me back my I-pod, Tree-breads evil minions."

Kereru blinked at that. "Did- did you just make a Lord of the Rings reference? At us?"

"Yeah I did, you bird thing with eyes from the deepest pits of hell! You guys are holding my I-pod hostage! You're all lucky this forest is too damp to burn!"

"Okay, well, this has been fun... yeah?" Apple said turning and pushing Anna away from them. "You just go plant that seed okay? And everything will be... awesome! Kay?"

"My I-pod had better be there, or this place will look worst than an Australian bush fire..."

“That’s nice... bye-bye now!”

“Hey wait, how do I get—” was all Anna got to say before her head collided with a fast swinging tree branch.

“That bitch... that rotten-to-the-core; apple; face; bitch!!!”

“Hey Anna...”

“Yes!?”

“Ahh... why you shovelling?”

“ ‘Cause I got to plant this stupid seed!”

“So they got you again huh?”

“Wait, what?” Anna said throwing down the shovel to look at her sisters.

“You know, the Faye; the fairies?”

“The tree-people...” Laura explained.

“So they do this to you guys too? And what do you mean ‘again’?” Anna asked.

“They make you do it a lot. Don’t you remember? All those trees over there are yours.” Laura said pointing to the row of trees behind Anna’s hole.

“Son of a bitch!”

“They only got us the once, but that’s why we don’t walk that path anymore.” Explained her elder sister.

“Yeah, everyone in town knows not to walk that way too much or they’ll get you to plant a tree.”

“Wait, everyone in town plants a special, magic tree? Is this place full of magic trees now?”

“Nah,” said her eldest sister with a shrug. “They aren’t magic, their just regular trees.”

“Son of a Bitch!!!”

“Oh by the way,” Laura noted, “I found your I-pod tangled in Miso’s collar and lead; guess he ran home after they abducted you. You may have to buy a new one though... the screens cracked to hell.”

“SON OF A BITCH!!!”

