

We sat
under Nan's Tōtara tree,
our olive skin
soaking up the rays
of golden light.
The cousin's
licked away at their
dripping sugary treats at hand and
by the end they were laughing
with
simper smiles and
sticky mouths.
The leaves from the Tōtara tree
branched out
above us
creating a secluded area,
leaving just enough room
for us to soak in the sun's rays.
Tonight is the start of Matariki,
The Māori New Year - Te tau hou Māori
A time to gather with our whanau and friends
To reflect on the past
To celebrate the present
and to plan for the future
We watch Koro as he starts building the campfire,
getting the young tama to help him.
We continue to sit under Nan's Tōtara Tree and
when the sun fades and the sky is painted velvety black
with perfectly polished silky stars
We say;
'Tihei Mauri Ora'
The Māori new year - Te tau hou Māori has arrived.
Nan makes us cover ourselves in kawakawa oil;
it has a fresh natural smell
and keeps the mozzies at bay.
The fire is spitting and crackling in no time and
the smell of salty steak waft through the air
creating pools of saliva in our mouths.
The air smells of smoke - peppered with the subtle scent of kawakawa.
We look towards the burning flames
and see Koro's withered face and toothless grin
flickering at us through the dim light
as he tells stories to the young tamariki about how
Maui slayed the sun.

Meanwhile Nan repeats her yearly quote;
'It's our greatest advantage as Māori;
having the stars to look out for us.'
I hope they look out for Nan.
The stars are our tipuna,
our ancestors.
Nan will be with our
Whetu Atua;
our star gods,
our gods of the realm above,
and the world below.
She will be there in her own time,
she tells us;
'When our Whetu Atua call on me, the time will be right.'
With that,
we watch as Koro's grin doesn't falter
and Nan's eyes sparkle as they mirror the glory of the stars.
So we all begin to seep in
to the black of the night.