5. PETEREHEMA MARAE

TE RERE I ŌTURU

5. PETEREHEMA MARAE
TE RERE I ŌTURU

The Ōpuiaki River flows from the rugged bush-covered hill country of Hautere, over a waterfall called Te Rere i Ōturu, in the land owned by the Ngamarama Incorporation. The Opuiaki flows into the Mangapapa and eventually into the Wairoa and to Tauranga Moana. At Ruahihi, on the hillside above the Wairoa, stood a pā where a man called Ōturu and his wife and children once lived. He had been born there and had been on many trips up the river and its tributaries into the bush to snare birds and catch eels. Sometimes he went alone and stayed away for several days at a time. When he returned he brought with him only a few small pigeons and skinny eels.

Ōturu made many more trips away, and often stayed away for long periods. Each time he returned, the amount of food he brought back for his family was very small and not enough to keep them healthy. Ōturu's wife grew thin and his children were sick because they did not have enough good food, and yet Ōturu still looked healthy and fit. This seemed odd; everyone knew that there were big, fat pigeons in the forests of Hautere and plenty of big, fat eels in the streams above Ruahihi. Ōturu's wife had two brothers who were especially worried that Ōturu was not looking after his family properly, even though he seemed to be looking after himself pretty well. The brothers decided to follow Ōturu on his next trip upstream into the forest to see what he got up to.

For two or three days the brothers watched. They saw plenty of pigeons and they saw Ōturu catch some big eels too, and they watched while he had a good feed. They also Ōturu put the small pigeons and skinny eels aside in a kit to take home. This was all a bit too much for the brothers; it was an insult to their family that Ōturu did not provide food for his wife and children, whilst he kept the best kai for himself. The brothers rushed down to attack Ōturu where he was sitting alone in the forest after polishing off another good meal. He heard them coming and took to the stream-bed of the Opuiaki as he thought he could move faster over the flat rocks; but the brothers chased him and they could move fast too.

Ōturu ran desperately; he knew his wife's brothers were very angry and were likely to catch up with him eventually. He ran on, leaping from rock to rock, when all of a sudden he reached the top of the waterfall. Below him, the stream fell about 40 metres into the forest below. With the brothers close behind, there was no way out except over the fall. Ōturu took a flying leap and landed on a ledge about half way down. He shouted at the brothers using all the curses and bad language he could think of. The brothers replied by hurling rocks at him; they did not waste energy with words as they were too angry for that. One of the rocks hit Ōturu, and knocked him off balance. He fell from the ledge into the deep water at the bottom of the falls and was drowned.

Thus, the waterfall was named, and is still known as, Te Rere i Ōturu; the fall of Ōturu.