

# Pania of the Reef

Compiled and Translated  
into English  
by Mere Caesar

Maori Folk Tales:  
Pania Of The Reef

Compiled and Translated by  
Mere Caeser

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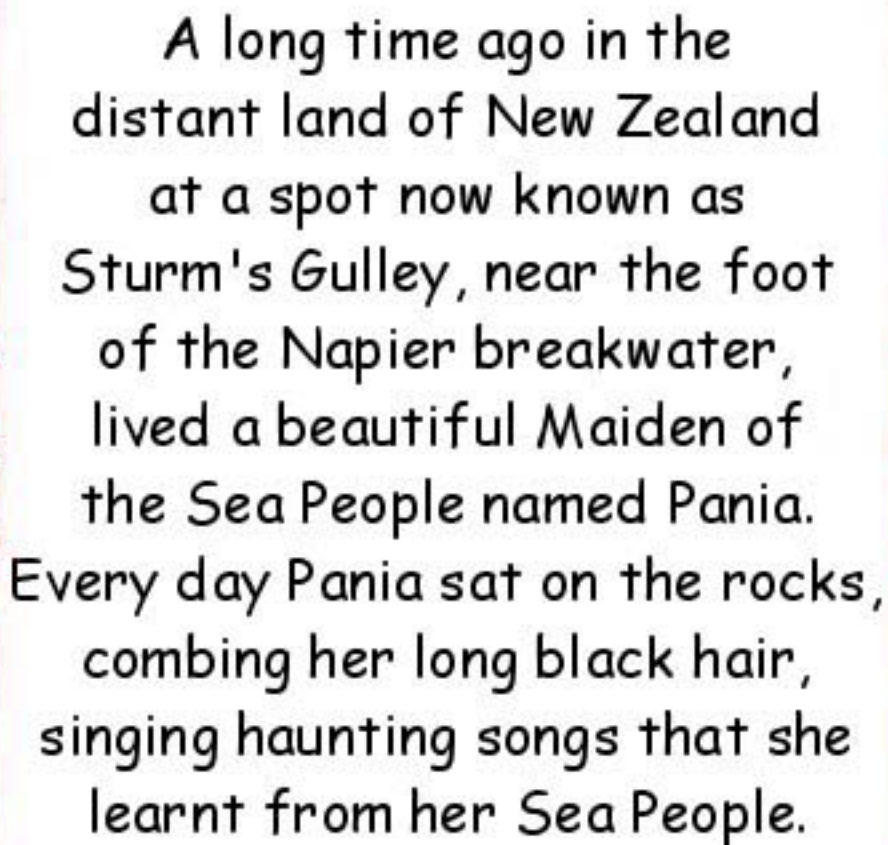


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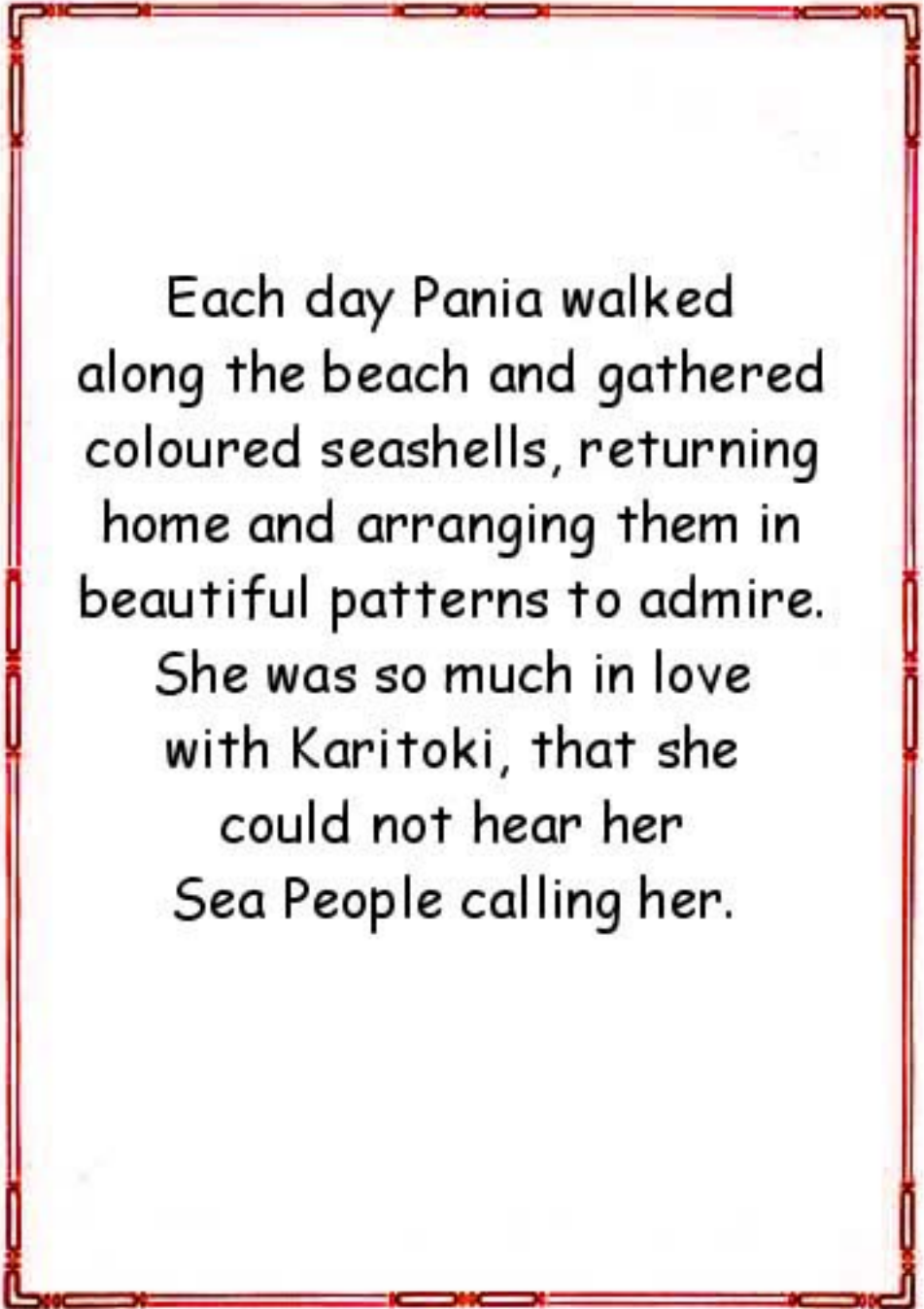
A long time ago in the  
distant land of New Zealand  
at a spot now known as  
Sturm's *Gulley*, near the foot  
of the Napier breakwater,  
lived a beautiful Maiden of  
the Sea People named Pania.  
Every day Pania sat on the rocks,  
combing her long black hair,  
singing haunting songs that she  
learnt from her Sea People.

But she no longer wanted  
to return to her Sea People  
as she had found happiness  
with her husband, the handsome  
mortal called Karitoki.  
Sometimes Karitoki would say:

"O my beautiful Pania,  
can you not hear your  
Sea People calling you to  
return to the Sea?  
Can you not hear  
them my love?"

Pania with so much love  
for her husband  
would answer:

"Karitoki, I will never  
leave your side, my love  
for you is so strong.  
I will spend the rest  
of my years by you,  
living in so much  
happiness and in  
your mortal world."



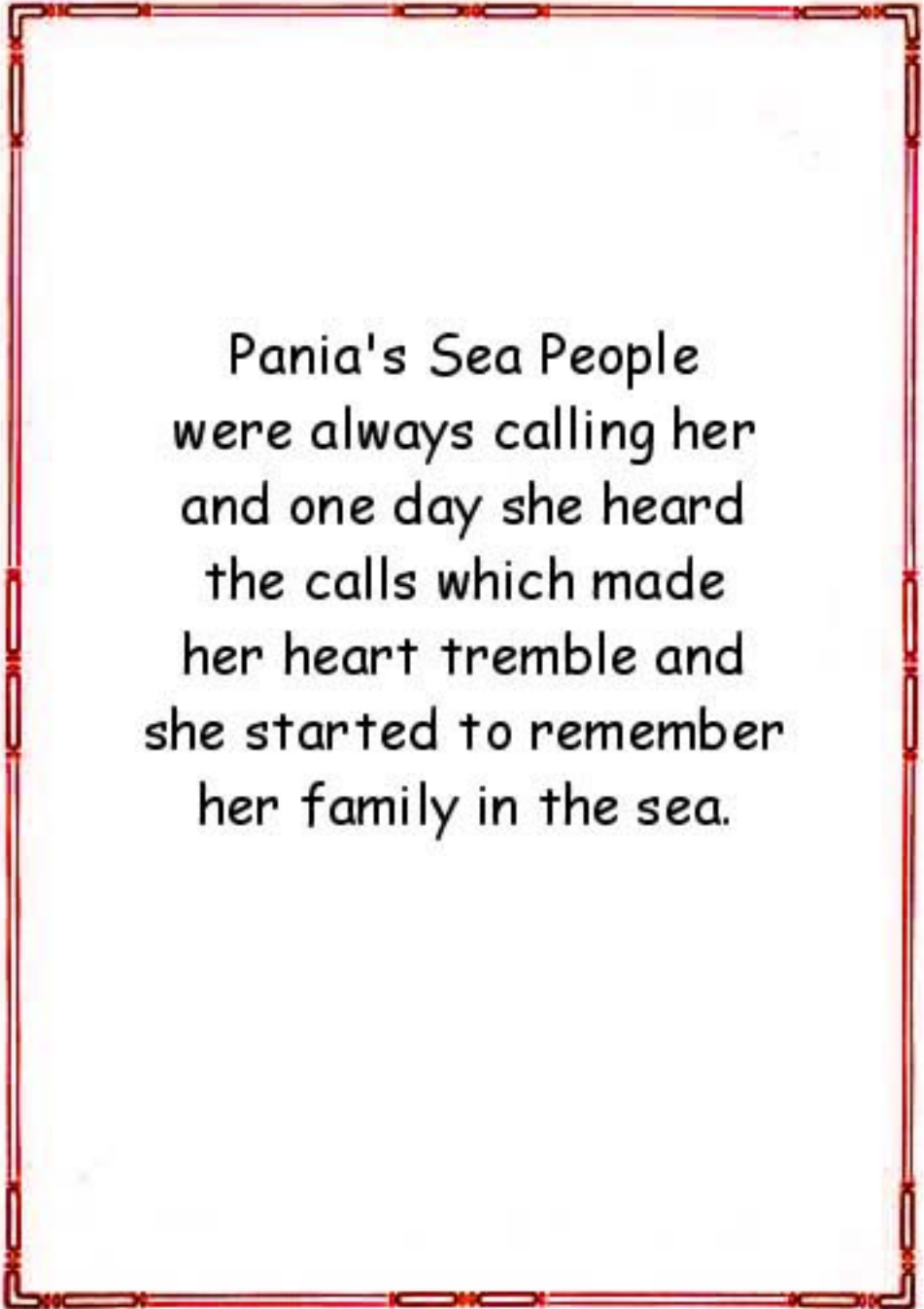
Each day Pania walked  
along the beach and gathered  
coloured seashells, returning  
home and arranging them in  
beautiful patterns to admire.

She was so much in love  
with Karitoki, that she  
could not hear her  
Sea People calling her.



"Pania, come home to us, our  
darling Pania, hear us as we  
call you. We love you Pania,  
and we miss you, bring your  
beautiful smile and love back  
to us. O Pania hear us  
calling you!"

"Pania this is your Mother  
calling, hear me my child,  
come back to your home in  
the Sea my dearest, come  
back to me. I want you so  
very much to return home,  
leave that world Pania, this is  
where you belong,  
come back to the Sea?"



Pania's Sea People  
were always calling her  
and one day she heard  
the calls which made  
her heart tremble and  
she started to remember  
her family in the sea.

She remembered her beautiful Mother and the wisdom she was taught by the Elders, she remembered the songs she used to sing to the Whales and the Dolphins, her many friends of the Sea. She remembered the Great White Shark, her guardian, who protected her from danger, she remembered her friends and family.

"No, I will not answer!"

And Pania resisted their calls for a long time. But one day, the lure of the Sea People became too much for Pania and she was overcome by their haunting calls and she swam out to meet them just this once. The Sea People came from the depths of the sea and surrounded her, they pulled her down into the caverns of the sea, she would never return to the land of mortals.

Today, if you pass over the reef where the kingfish shoal and gaze into the depths, you will see Pania with arms outstretched, her tears creating breaking waves in the sea, her beautiful long hair turned into green slimy seaweed lashing against the rocks.

The Sea People watching over Pania, forbidding her to leave the sea, and as much as she tried and tried to return to Karitoki, she knew that this could never be, because she answered the call on that fateful day.