



The Story of Mauao

retold by Toni Rolleston-Cummins

This story is for Kihi Ngatai, the great chief of Ngāi Te Rangi and Ngāti Ranginui. He passed away on 1 August 2021 at the age of ninety-one. Kihi loved his maunga. He walked around it three times a week. Toni Rolleston-Cummins shares the story with Kihi's blessing.

Long ago, before the first people lived on the shores of Tauranga Moana, there lived three maunga. There was Ōtanewainuku, a chiefly maunga who ruled over the forest of Hautere. His body was covered in the korowai of Tāne-mahuta. Tawa, rewarewa, and other trees grew tall and proud.

The second maunga, named Pūwhenua, was a great beauty. For her, Papatūānuku had chosen only the best trees and ferns. Many maunga had fallen in love with Pūwhenua.

Finally, there was a third mountain. He was so overlooked that no one had bothered giving him a name. He was a pononga – a mere slave – to Ōtanewainuku. He was known as the “nameless one”.

For many years, the nameless one lived peacefully in the Hautere forest. During the day, he worked for his master. But at night, he played with the magical patupaiarehe. The forest creatures would slide down his back and swing from his trees. They repaid him for this kindness by massaging his tired body with their feet.

One night, as the forest sparkled in the moonlight like pāua shell, the nameless one looked out over the land. His eyes fell upon the incredible beauty of Pūwhenua, and he fell in love. From that moment, the nameless one gazed at Pūwhenua each night, but she never once looked his way.

The nameless one begged the patupaiarehe to help. He had to win the heart of Pūwhenua. But the patupaiarehe had a warning. “She is a vain maunga, that one. She will only bring you pain.”

The nameless one didn’t care. He begged his friends to deliver a message of love. The patupaiarehe were fond of their maunga. Despite their fears, they agreed to visit Pūwhenua.

Time passed. The nameless one waited for his friends to return. Each day, he scanned the horizon, becoming more and more impatient. The patupaiarehe were nowhere to be seen. Finally, they returned with news: Pūwhenua only had eyes for Ōtanewainuku.

The nameless one was so overcome with sadness, he begged the patupaiarehe to drag him far away. He wanted to be taken to the moana, where he could forget his sorrow. The kindly creatures couldn’t bear to see their friend in such pain and agreed to help. They wove a strong rope from harakeke, then chanted a karakia to Tāne-mahuta, asking for his help. They tied their rope around the nameless one and began to haul. As they pulled, his tears flooded the land. “Ka haere, ka mapu. I go, and I sob,” he lamented. The nameless one’s tears became a spring, today known as the Waimapu (weeping waters) spring.

Throughout that long night, the patupaiarehe dragged their heartbroken friend. As they pulled, they carved a great valley, where the Waimapu awa now flows. At dawn, they finally reached Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.



The nameless one was about to throw himself into the moana when the early morning rays of Tamanuiterā began to flicker. The patupaiarehe panicked. They were creatures of the night. If they didn't leave at once, the light would destroy them. Before they said goodbye, they gave their friend a name.

"From now on," they said, "you will be known as Mauao, Caught by the Dawn."

The patupaiarehe returned to the darkness of the Hautere forest. They left Mauao looking out over the moana, his back turned on his love forever. And that is where he remains. Over time, Mauao grew to become regal and handsome. He was now so handsome that people came from all around to gaze and walk upon his beauty.

Today Mauao guards the entrance to Tauranga Harbour. He is recognised as a maunga of great mana, an important tipuna for the iwi of Tauranga. Many people now call him Maunganui, a name given by Tamatea, the captain of the *Tākitimu* waka. But to the iwi of Tauranga Moana, he will always be known as Mauao.

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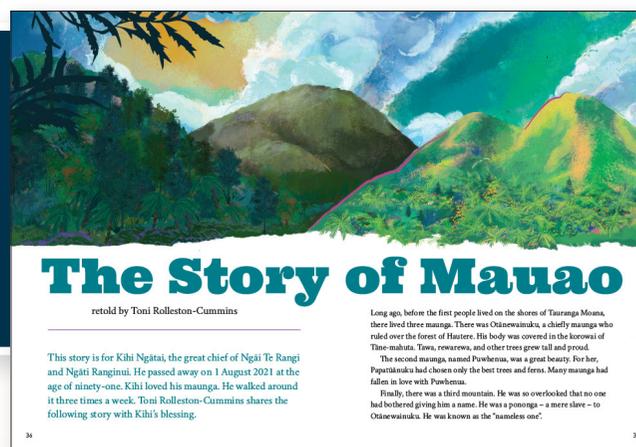
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