

**He Mala****Student Reading #2****Pe'elua Hill**

A very long time ago, there lived a beautiful girl named Pele. She was the daughter of a chief who lived in Pālā'au. One evening, Pele met a handsome young man. His body was strong and sturdy like a *koa* tree. His bronze skin glistened under the moonlight.

They secretly courted for almost a year. Pele concealed her love for the young man from her parents. She worried about her father's reaction what he would say about their relationship.

As the days passed and their love grew, Pele began to grow pale and listless. Her father and mother were deeply concerned about their daughter's condition.

"We must see the *kahuna* (high priest)," Pele's mother said. "He will know what is wrong."

The *kahuna* immediately knew the problem. "Pele is in love with the caterpillar *'aumakua* (family guardian), Pe'elua. When she sees him at night, he is a handsome young man. But his power is draining her strength. You must destroy him to save Pele."

The parents were stunned. They did not know the young man or where to find him.

"Tell your daughter that you know about her lover," the *kahuna* advised the parents. "Tell her that she will die if Pe'elua is not killed. She must tell you where Pe'elua lives."

That evening, Pele's parents confronted her. They shared with her what the *kahuna* had advised. "And so you see, my beloved daughter, we must destroy Pe'elua." Pele wept but in the end she agreed to divulge where he lived.



That evening, Pe'elua came to visit Pele. When he was fast asleep, she tied a piece of *kapa* to a wart on his back. The next morning he woke with a start. He had overslept!

Pe'elua raced up the hill in Ho'olehua. Pele's father, the *kahuna*, and some other people followed close behind. As they climbed the trail, they noticed that the footprints had disappeared replaced by the imprint of a very large caterpillar. Shreds of *kapa* were attached to bushes leading to the top of the hill.

The group followed the *kapa* pieces and arrived at the top. Under a cluster of large boulders they discovered the sleeping caterpillar.

"We must gather wood to build a fire," ordered the *kahuna*. Even as twigs and branches were being placed on top of Pe'elua, he lay there fast asleep.

"Now light the fire!" the *kahuna* shouted. No sooner had the fire been lit, Pe'elua burst into a million tiny caterpillars that scampered away.

Today, Pe'elua Hill is named after the caterpillar 'aumakua, Pe'elua. Pe'elua Hill is in the *ahupua'a* of Ho'olehua. This area is also famous for its sweet potatoes. The *pe'elua* or caterpillars like to feed on sweet potato leaves.

Source

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