



## OUR AHUPUA'A

## STUDENT READING

### The Sacred 'Ulu Tree

Wākea and his wife, Haumea, lived deep in Kalihi Valley in an area called Kilohana. One day Wākea decided to gather some bananas in the lower part of the valley. Food was always available to those who cared for the land.

Haumea traveled to the Windward side of the island to collect crabs and *limu*. Looking up into the Ko'olau Mountains, she saw a rainbow arched across the skies and rain blanketing slopes of the Ko'olau range. She must hurry home. Something is wrong.

Haumea saw a group of men in the *mala mai'a* (banana patch). Who were these men? What were they doing with her husband? "You have stolen bananas from our *ali'i*," one of the soldiers said. "You will be put to death." Then Haumea saw her husband being led away. His hands were tied behind his back.



Haumea dropped the basket she was holding. The crabs and *limu* she had gathered spilled onto the ground. She then tore off the skirt she had made earlier that morning from *pōhuehue* (beach morning glory) vines and dropped it on the ground. She darted into her hale (house) and changed quickly into a fresh *kapa* skirt and hurried down the trail to the *mala mai'a*.

When she reached the banana patch, her husband had disappeared. Where did he go? Haumea knew she had to save Wākea's life. An evil *ali'i* had sent his soldiers to capture Wākea and put him to death. Haumea knew she had little time to save her husband.

She ran as fast as she could down the uneven trail in search of her husband. As she rounded the bend, she came upon the group. The men had rested near a sacred 'ulu (breadfruit) tree. This would be her chance to save Wākea.

"Ke 'olu'olu nō," she begged the soldiers. "Please allow me to say goodbye to my husband." Haumea acted quickly and threw her arms around Wākea. As she did this,



the trunk of the 'ulu tree opened wide, and the couple disappeared into the trunk of the tree.

The soldiers stood staring. Where did they go? Then one shouted, "Chop down the tree!" The men grabbed their adzes eager to chop it down. "Kali! Kali!" shouted the *kahuna* (priest) who had joined the soldiers. "Put down your adzes. This is a sacred 'ulu tree. You must first offer coconuts and 'awa before you chop it down."

The soldiers gathered the offerings and set them in front of the sacred tree. "Now, you may chop it down," ordered the *kahuna*. The soldiers obeyed and cut it down. But where were Haumea and Wākea? They had escaped to Kalihi Valley. The couple was living safe and happy at their home in Kilohana.

If you ever travel to Kalihi Valley, look for a path leading to Kilohana. There you will discover a fresh water spring. If you look carefully in the pool, you will see crabs and *limu*, which Papa spilled in her haste. On the edge of the pool is a mat of *pōhuehue* vines – the discarded skirt of Papa.

Adapted from:

Puku'i, Mary K. and Caroline Curtis. 1994. *The Water of Kane and Other Legends of the Hawaiian Islands*. Kamehameha Schools Press. Honolulu, HI.