



THE FLYING TARO

A certain chief of Kona had a taro patch of which he was very proud, and the plants themselves were proud because they grew so tall and green. In an upper corner grew two friends, the tallest and greenest of all those taro plants.

The wind rustled their leaves until the two could whisper to each other. "Listen!" said one, "I hear the sound of chopping. Someone is cutting wood to heat the *imu*."

At that moment a servant came. He stopped near the two plants as if pulling weeds, and whispered to them, "The wood is being chopped and the *imu* is prepared. Soon one will come to pull you two, for I heard the chief order him to take the two large plants that grow here at the upper end." The servant slipped away.

"We are to be pulled!" the two said fearfully, "pulled, cooked, and pounded into *poi*! No! Let us hide and live!" They hid close to the bank in the shelter of a young banana plant.

They saw a servant come to the upper corner. "The two tall plants," they heard him say, "No two are taller than the others, but all are strong and green. I'll take these two." He pulled some plants and went away.

"We have escaped!" whispered the leaves of the two who hid.

But their escape was not for long. One day the chief walked through his patch. "Why, here are those two plants!" he said. "I thought they grew there in the upper corner." He called a servant. "These two are large,"

TALES OF THE MENEHUNE

he told him, "Be sure to take them tomorrow to be cooked and pounded into *poi*." Again the two plants fled. This time they hid where long leaves of cane were drooping to the ground. The servant could not find them.

Days passed, then the chief found their hiding place. "So you escaped, you two!" he cried. "You'll not escape again!" This time he marked the place and called a man to come at once to pull the taro.

"We must not wait!" the plants exclaimed. They rose in the air, their leaves serving as wings, and flew to the patch of a common farmer. "Here we are safe," they said. And so it seemed. For days they lived unnoticed.

Then came the servant who had been their friend. "The chief knows you are here," he whispered. "The farmer told him, and he has sent me to pull you up. I go now for my digging stick. Save yourselves." Away they flew, their leaves trembling with fear.

Again and again this happened until one day the chief himself came for them, digging stick in hand. The taro plants rose in air and flew toward the south. The chief saw and followed with an angry shout. People left their work to watch. Some shouted to the chief, "You are close upon them! You will catch them in a moment!" Others prayed that the plants might have power to escape.

Tired out, the two sank down to rest in a friendly field. "Do not stay here!" shouted the plants about them. "The chief is even now hunting in this patch. Fly on! Soon you will reach *Ka'iū* where he cannot harm you."

The plants arose on tired wings. The chief saw them and gave chase. He was only a step behind! Suddenly he

TALES OF THE MENEHUNE

stopped for he had reached the border. His taro plants were in *Ka'iū*!

"Here!" someone called. "This is the patch of our good chief. Rest here!" The tired plants sank down.

They were, indeed, in the patch of a good chief. Hearing of their escape, he came to look at them. "In this field you are safe," he said. "No man shall harm you. Live in peace."

And so they did. Happy in each other, proud and happy in the young taro plants about them, they lived to a good old age.

This story means that, in the old days, men had the right to leave the land of a cruel chief, and live unharmd in the district of a good one.

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