

Ikaika 'Io to the Rescue

Ikaika 'Io perches atop the tallest branch of an 'ōhi'a tree. He looks around seeing the forest for all its parts. From the pilo to the hapu'u to the ho'awa and 'ōhelo, the forest is green, healthy, and in fruit. The forest birds are chirping, flying from one lehua to another and landing momentarily to skip along the branches searching the liko for insects. The ferns and mossy rocks are still dripping with the morning dew.

Olopua Oma'ō has hopped from the pūkiawe shrubs and pāhoehoe flow toward the pilo on a mission this morning, croaking all the way. As Olopua finds the forest edge, she uses the pilo to hop to an 'ōlapa and upwards toward Ikaika's 'ōhi'a perch. She's nervous to approach Ikaika, but needs to deliver a message:

Beyond the forest edge, the nēnē are in trouble. Nanea Nēnē and her goslings are grazing the fresh-cut grass at the park, but the cranky cats and meany mongoose are crouched in the bushes planning to take a gosling.

Olopua takes a breath, thinks about this important message, and says, "Ikaika 'Io, I've come a long way. Nanea and her goslings need your help! The cranky cats and meany mongoose are working on a plan. Please help! Can you see what's happening now?"

Ikaika feels his time is very important, but also has a strong sense of right and wrong. He wants to keep watch over his forest, but wants Nanea and her goslings to travel safely back into it. Without words, Ikaika 'Io takes flight. He soars above the forest toward town. He knows that the cranky cats and meany mongoose must be in one place. As he lands on the broad top of a strong papaya tree, Ikaika uses his excellent vision to look toward the park.

Ikaika sees Nanea teaching her goslings about the grasses and sedges. She likes the tender grass at the park and she likes the seed heads on the sedges in the native landscaping. Nanea is coaching her goslings to eat and become strong. She's taking them toward the water's edge, but her path is alongside a shrubby area and the gnarly roots of a banyan tree- the perfect place to hide and watch. This is where Ikaika can see the cranky cats and meany mongoose gathered discussing their plan.

Ikaika thinks to himself, "If I soar above the park, the cranky cats and meany mongoose won't dare act on their plan."

Ikaika soars. He makes a wide circle above the park, casting his shadow on the ground. At this moment, Nanea coaxes her goslings into the water and the crankiest cat becomes bold. Nanea has three goslings, and one is slower than the others. As she points her beak toward the water watching two of her babies waddle in, the slowest gosling falls behind.

Ikaika 'Io is watching as he soars. He can see that the slowest gosling is distracted by the yummy grass and is waddling even more slowly. Nanea nēnē is motioning toward him, but the crankiest cat is creeping faster.

Nanea turns her body to protect her gosling, opens her mouth and sticks out her tongue to hiss at the threatening cat. Ikaika notices the urgency of the moment and dives.

Crankiest cat is frightened! Ikaika is agile as he moves swiftly toward the ground, eyes locked on Crankiest cat with his talons pointed downward.

The other cranky cats and meany mongoose sit watching for a moment, and then quickly, they scatter. They don't want to be associated with any wrong-doing and they want to avoid consequences from Ikaika 'Io.

Crankiest cat is not so lucky! He's scooped up by Ikaika 'Io and taken into the clouds, feeling scared and wondering what will happen next. Then, Ikaika dives again. Crankiest cat howls, and before he knows it, he's plopped down in the deepest water. Crankiest cat's punishment is to swim his way to shore.

Meanwhile, Nanea nēnē gathers her goslings in the shallows. She explains to them that cats and mongoose are their biggest threat in public places like the park. Nanea is eager to return to the forest and asks her goslings to gather their energy for the waddle back. She looks to the sky and is grateful to see Ikaika still there.

All together Nanea and her goslings say, "Thank you, Ikaika 'Io," and they begin to waddle.

I kaika 'Io watches as they go, soaring above and riding the air currents. He's happy to know that the forest will shelter them all another night.

Finally, as Ikaika 'Io touches down in his 'ōhi'a tree, Olopua Oma'o breathes a sigh of relief. She's comforted to know that the nēnē will return to the forest that night to nestle among the ferns. All is well in their forest home.