

Hit the brakes!

Slowing the spread of Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death...



Aponi and the rest of the high school girls volleyball team are traveling to Hawai'i Island for a national tournament. They are looking forward to seeing volcanoes, hiking in the rainforest, snorkeling with tropical fish, and of course—playing LOTS of volleyball!

When the plane begins its descent, Aponi watches an in-flight movie about the ecological and cultural importance of Hawai'i's 'ōhi'a lehua trees, and a disease that is killing them—**rapid 'ōhi'a death...**



After getting settled at the hotel, Aponi and her friends jump right into practice—there are volleyball teams from all over the country!



Aponi notices that there are several dead and dying 'ōhi'a trees in this section of the forest.



The tournament organizers planned a break mid-week so that all the teams could spend a day doing some volunteer work on the island. Aponi and her friends sign up for trail restoration so they can see the tropical rainforest.



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The volunteers break for lunch. Afterwards, they start piling into their vans so they can drive to another site where they will continue working for the rest of the afternoon...



As one of her teammates climbs into the van ahead of her, Aponi notices that her shoes are covered in mud, and she has some 'ōhi'a branches tucked into the pockets of her backpack. She remembers from the video how important it is not to move soil or 'ōhi'a plants to avoid spreading the fungus that causes rapid 'ōhi'a death.

Aponi tells her teammates about the video, and about the dead 'ōhi'a trees she noticed when they walked along the trail.



Coach helps them use rubbing alcohol from their first aid kit to clean off all of their tools. They clean all the mud off their shoes and a local forest ranger takes care of the 'ōhi'a branches. **That was a close one!**

Aponi and the rest of the team spent the rest of the day installing water bars on a trail at another park. They return to the hotel and, after a good night's rest, win the rest of their volleyball matches! Taking 1st place in the tournament feels extra good knowing that they also had a chance to give back to the island, and they avoided spreading such a terrible disease into a new part of the rainforest.



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