

Story: Comforter

March 8, 2026

Exodus 17:1-7

John 4:5-42

I don't know precisely why the ae'o was upset. I don't know whether someone had squawked something at her, or if one of the fish she caught tasted bad, or whether the sun was too hot for her that morning. I suppose she might have been frustrated by a fish that got away, or by the sun's glare in the sky, or by a friend who forgot to say, "Hi."

It could have been any of these things or more. For whatever reason, she was upset and she let everybody else know it.

She squealed and she squawked. Ae'o can be very loud about that. She hollered at the fish she was hunting. She hollered at the ala'e ke'oke'o in the water. She screeched at 'auku'u and the cattle egrets and the kolea and the akekeke. To be honest she yelled at so many different birds that I can't name them all.

She was upset and everybody knew it.

Her family couldn't get anywhere with her. Brothers, sisters, parents, even tutus all flew over to her and asked her what was wrong. She didn't tell them anything – she just shrieked at them without words and they unhappily retreated. They didn't like being yelled at. They also knew that as long as she was yelling at them she wasn't getting less upset, so they went away.

"I don't know what to do for her," said a brother.

"I didn't get anywhere," said a sister.

"She even yelled at me," said her grandmother.

"Let me try," said one of her friends.

"Are you sure?" asked the ae'o's mother. "She's just getting more upset with everybody."

"I think there's one thing I can try," said the friend, and she flew to be a little closer to her upset friend.

She didn't get very close. She just settled onto the shore and started poking at the grasses for bugs and worms. Her friend huffed, but didn't scream.

Gradually, the friend took one or two steps at a time toward her upset friend. Each time she poked her beak down to peck at a bug. Each time she paused before taking any more steps.

Eventually the two birds were standing much closer to one another. The upset one hadn't screeched. Her friend hadn't said anything. She just drew a little closer to her friend, so she could see she wasn't alone.

Neither of them spoke for a long time. It was the upset bird who broke the silence.

"Thank you," she said.

"You're welcome," said her friend.

"I've been so upset," said the first bird.

"I know," said her friend. "And you're not alone."

"That's good," said the first bird. "It's good to know it, too."

by Eric Anderson