

I Hate Hawaii

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I don't want to move to Hawaii, I just started forth grade, I want to stay in the United States of America. Nobody asked me if I thought Dad's new job was a good idea – move right after Thanksgiving? How can anybody think this is a good idea?

Hawaii is hot in December. Hotter than Vermont in August. Good thing our apartment is air conditioned.

“Mom, mom, mom, where's the tree? we gotta get a Christmas tree.” She says they're too expensive here. “Well, then let's move back to Vermont!” No tree AND I don't get to move back.

“Mom, Mom, Mom. How is Santa supposed to find me? I'm in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.” Even in Vermont I worry he won't find me. Dad let me write my name in the snow. I shouldn't tell this. You know how you write your name in the snow?? Never mind. If you're a boy? Never mind. So Santa could find me, Dad'd let me.

No snow here. In this apartment. Maybe I should make a big sign, hang it outside the window. And no fireplace! Where's the stocking supposed to go?! “Mom, do something!?”

Kid next door, Kimo, what kind of name is that?! Kimo. Bobby or Bud or Mike or Clarence, those are names. Kimo? We meet up in the playground. I tell him I hate it here, I want to go back to the United States of America. He says, “You stupid or what? You're in the United States of America.” He tackles me, really cheats, I never saw it coming. Holds me down, won't let me up until I say Hawaii is a state, “it's a state, it's a state, it's a state, okay already, it's a state.”

A state I hate.

Christmas Day, somehow Santa finds me, but you're not going to believe where we're supposed to eat Christmas dinner. Kimo's! My mom met his mom in the laundry room and she invited us.

“Mom mom mom, can't YOU make dinner? You always make dinner— turkey and ham and stuffing. What are they going to have, seaweed? I'm not going to eat it. You can't make me.”

And a present, Mom says I have to take Kimo something. Well, I'm not going to give him anything nice, he beat me up, he made me say Hawai`i's a state fifty times.

I wrap up my stinky baseball that is too cracked and crummy to even play with. He can have that for a present.

Mom and Dad are so talking to these strangers at Kimo's apartment they don't even notice how I'm suffering— no air conditioning — I don't see a turkey anyplace. Just some steaming rolled up leaves. What am I? A cow who eats leaves?

We sit down to dinner. Kimo, his parents and big sister who is back her college on “the mainland.” I want to scream out, don't you mean her college on the United States of America? I don't recognize anything on the table...except mashed potatoes and sweet potatoes and stuffing and gravy, I don't know

what THAT'S for, there's no turkey— and cranberries and roasted chestnuts. Then Kimo's Dad brings in a turkey! It was in the barbecue! They SMOKED it. Well it probably doesn't taste very— it's ... good. I can't believe it, it doesn't even need gravy it's so good. They pass me the steaming leaves. I don't take one. I pass them onto Mom. Mom gives me the evil eye and I can hear her in my mind "Just taste it or no ice cream." So I take and peek inside this soggy leaf and don't even recognize this stuff as food. I take a teeny tiny, ...oh... not bad. I end up eating two of them. Dinner's okay, but I don't see any pumpkin pie any place. I ask what's for desert. (Shock) Something called dobash. What is that, cabbage? (Beat) Oh. Chocolate cake. I eat three pieces. I would have had four but Mom was giving me the evil eye again.

Kimo and his family have this stupid way of opening presents. Everybody watches everybody open a present, one person at a time, one present at a time, which takes ABOUT THREE THOUSAND YEARS. Kimo's Mom gives my Mom a present and she opens, then Mom give's Kimo's Mom a present and she opens, then my Dad, then Kimo's Dad, then Kimo's sister, then ME. (beat, surprised) Kimo gives me a present. Well it's probably some wrapped up box of horse poop.

It isn't horse poop. It's a lei. It's made out of candy. He made it. There's life savers and something called crackseed, which I taste and I think I'm poisoned but I can't spit it out because everybody is looking at me so I have to finish and by the time I'm done sucking on it I really want another one. It's enough candy to last me for the whole vacation.

It's Kimo's turn. I'm supposed to give Kimo his present. I stuff my crummy baseball into the cushions on the couch I'm sitting on. "I think I forgot it. It's under my bed at home." Mom says, "I don't think you forgot it. She goes under their tree and hands me a box I saw that she brought but I thought it was for Kimo's parents. Oh, my Mom has saved my life. "Yeah, here Kimo. Here's your present." He opens it and it's comics, all the best ones.

Later we all pile into Kimo's Dad's station wagon and go to the ocean. Me and Kimo sit in the way back, and he lets me read the Spiderman and I give him some lifesavers. When we get to Bellows Beach, he shows me how to bodysurf and we watch some old guys do long boards. In the ocean on December 25th. Don't even have to be in the Polar Bear Club. I think maybe I could like this Hawai'i. State number five oh.