

# Hawaii

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If you live in Hawaii for a long enough time you develop a sort of relationship with her, less sensual and more physical. You understand her mannerisms and curves. You feel her grooves and memorize the way she reacts when you put things into her. The way she feels underneath your feet, in your backyard, on a hiking trail, on the sand. The way her sand creeps between your toes and sticks when it's wet. The way her red volcanic dirt clutches and holds the tightest grip upon your white soles.

Every day I wonder if the day before was as hot as today. And I wonder about the pavement. I wonder if the potholes make themselves, if they burst out in the night and refuse to go away. I wonder why I am wearing pants while everyone else is wearing shorts. I wonder why I am not at the beach. I wonder where I am. Then the lunch bell rings. High School.

French fries with all of their health benefits and seasonings and succulence don't taste anything like the Pacific. I think that the salinity of the water would be a close cousin to that of the French fries, but I am mistaken. Waimea.

I dive. I mistime my breath. I don't taste French fries.

You (visitor) come here for a week, go home and buy the Glade air freshener: Hawaiian Breeze. I (resident) wake up, go to school or play, and smell nothing. Maybe my senses are oblivious. Maybe when I am walking through the courtyard of my adolescence the smell of marijuana and minute noodles overtakes that Hawaiian Breeze. Pele, goddess of

Volcanoes, cannot seem to send her collection of sulfur dioxide and other vicious gases far enough west to meet me on the island of Oahu.

I am late for class and need a pass. I know the security guards so they let me fill out my own. You are late to the tour bus and have to take an overpriced taxi to catch up to the group. I (resident) am your tour guide, here to take you (visitor) around the island.

Hawaiian gods showing their omnipresence. They are involved in more than just the murals and statues covering downtown. They are felt within the shiver of my aunts back as she takes her ten o'clock walk from the front porch to the end of the road or around the block. The stale noise of the night reacts with the trade winds and marks her. Back pain. Advil.

Polynesians found their way to this island chain by looking up at the night sky. I (resident) ride around suburban street blocks, through alleys trying to find my way too. I look up. Koa branch. Trip. I fall off board. Breathe in, very hard, so much so that I think I could self-destruct. Subtly smile to thank whoever could have made this possible. La'a Maomao, god of wind, sees this and kisses my cheek with sea breeze. Blood drips off my elbow and I watch it mix with the red dirt. I think of rubies, a crown, jewels.

Royal powers: a majesty. They don't compare to that of the Ko'olau Range. Allergies: a rainforest. Itch on the nose. Ferns: top mountain ranges. A reminder that they've been on this Earth for several million years. You leave your home in the north for an escape, a chance to have something to flash and stuff in the face of your relatives at Christmas time. The hope Hawaii has for you is to remind you of how small you actually are. And also to introduce you to Hawaiian plate lunches and Poke.

Green is the first color that comes to mind when you (visitor) picture the island chain of Hawaii. The mountains project colors beyond the capabilities of the movie green screen and there are words to describe the image to a friend but I (resident) just choose to keep the image for myself. My vision expresses tones of red and green and brown all

at the same wavelength, not allowing for me to experience the same colors as my sister might. The shades of what may either be blue or purple or some combination of the two spill across the water like splattered and streaked oils. The tones of what seem to resemble flesh red and amber yellow streak across the sky like spilled and splattered paint. The accents of what could echo volcanic dirt or moss green splatter across the ground like streaked and spilled acrylics. Acrylics to color. An abundance of color an abundance of green. The dollar bill was never green to me until Hawaii. until I understood how rare, how precious, and how necessary money was. I need work.

I (resident) need work. To stay, or to go North? Money is such a necessity, not just money but lots of it. Lots of hours at the Aulani dressed as Mickey Mouse and lots of nights at the Honolulu International Airport in the baggage claim tossing Mickey Mouse luggage. All those hours and all of those nights returning home to my roommates, to my parents. But not before I buy a \$5 gallon of milk. I decide on the North.

Ten feet above sea level on the western side of the island a mile into shore, sugar cane fields have been stripped and suburbs of half a million dollar homes and multi-million dollar homes have been established. Here is where my family resides. My family is modest so when my parents were designing their home they made sure the mortgage would not exceed six-hundred thousand. The storm windows, the manicured garden, the balcony with a flag pole and porch furniture was my family's way at making sure that the homeless people who were living less than a mile from our home would understand why they needed to vacate the premises. What are you (visitor) imagining at this point? How are you.

Hawaii differs greatly from the normal routine of your (visitor) hometown though, it is still in the United States. It is like saying that you are trying something new but are not yet comfortable with a completely new experience so you pretend to try something new, you take the tiniest bite of a potential for adventure for mystification and for miscom-

munication. There's shopping centers, there's cyber cafes, there's hair salons, and the local currency doesn't consist of sand dollars. I keep forgetting that some people have never been there. Non-natives might want to hear some local dialogue:

Wanna go beach?

I don't know, it's pretty hot today.

Yeah that's kinda like, the point.

No yeah we go, Ko'olina?

I mean we always go there.

Well that's cause it's the fuckin' closest one.

It isn't actually, there's White Plains like right here next to my house. Or Nimitz.

Nimitz has all those rocks though.

Ok well then what do you want to do?

Let's go to that trampoline place.

Here you can read the lives of the locals played out in real time. There is the concept of "island time." Locals are indefinite about their choices, relying upon their impulse rather than any habit. Their sense of time has become nearly wiped away, relying mainly on the position of the sun to calculate the time that they have left on shore, or in this case, at 'that trampoline place.' The island speaks in a different way than the north. To you (visitor) and I (resident).

Morning dew slithers down the window of my parent's Hyundai and I wonder if water is capable of reaching every facet of the island. The potholes have unearthed parts of the road that I didn't know existed, that you didn't know were a problem.

Hawaii has a road problem, a population problem, a native problem, a tourist problem, a beach problem, a seal problem, a military problem, a lava problem, a foreign problem, a Micronesian problem, a Mexican problem, an Asian problem, and many other problems created daily.

In 1893 these problem were overlooked when a handful of white business men decided to take the island from its people. Locking the queen in her summer home to be prisoner there until her death. Meanwhile the white business men suckled the Wahines and bathed in coconut juice.

Hawaiian history class was a requirement in high school.

In 1959 these problems were added to the union. Added and amplified. After the Japanese and Americans spilled oil and pieces of metal and flesh into Pearl Harbor, the United States saw the militaristic advantage of making Hawaii a state. After the local Japanese people were forced into internment camps they helped to vote and pass the Hawaii Admission Act granting Hawaii Statehood. Usually when family comes into town to visit from the north, mom senses their desire to visit the still sunken Arizona battleship. People are supposed to remain quiet throughout the tour. And if you (visitor) are, you can hear the screams of the bodies still trapped within the hull. Pushing against the walls of the boat—they create the waves.

Hawaii is good if you're lactose intolerant; Hawaii is good if you don't have your driver's license and want to borrow your father's car and drive all the way from the edge of the west side of Oahu to Pearl City to visit your girlfriend. Hawaii is good for fish. So good that fishing is unregulated, no sort of identification required. All you need is reason and intuition on where to go on the island, where people aren't and the fish are. Hawaii is good for skin cancer. Hawaii is good for Adam Sandler and Disney and movies based on pirates exploring the Caribbean.

Hawaii is good for nail salons run by immigrants. New Americans you may ask? Just immigrants. No one is foreign in Hawaii, everyone belongs, there is no application essay, and everyone is accepted. You can see this accepting nature of the island in the high schools. The kids vary in clothes and music choice as much as the kinds of pineapple vary. Hilo, Kona Sugarloaf, Smooth Cayenne.

The sweetest fruit can be found in Hawaii. I remember when I first stuck my hand up a girl's skirt. Sharing a beach chair on the shore of Iroquois Point where we were able to see planes take off back to the mainland or Japan. Waikiki in the distance she was Japanese. The pacific wasn't as wet as my fingers though the Pacific was saltier. At this point I didn't think anything about French fries. I did think about berries and how you have to pick them at the right time,

how there's a season, and it's always summer in Hawaii.

My dad always said that it was a summer love; my counter argument was that Hawaii enjoyed an endless summer. I head for the north. Endless winter. Suddenly she hates me, she's transfixed. She whispers to the island what I've done and immediately two of the most important women in my life are gone.

I mean, I hate her too, the island. I hate the fact that there are people in Hawaii who don't need anything else than that tiny chain of islands. I want to be able to be satisfied with her. I want to be able to drink from her as I once did and taste from her as I once did and not feel like my time is limited there within her, within Eden. I (visitor) hate that Hawaii no longer welcomes me with the sincerity that she once did. I (visitor) cannot hear what she used to whisper, the messages that she used to convey. I (visitor) hate that I (resident) used to be able to sense what she needed from me. Who I (resident) needed to be for the island. I (resident) can still get the Kama'aina discount but I (visitor) don't deserve it. I left her and she recognized that, she knew that if I truly cared then I would not have left.

I still understand her mannerisms and curves, her grooves. Though now she doesn't react the same way when I try to put things in her, when I try to help. She pushes against the bottoms of my feet in my backyard. She cuts against the bottoms of my feet on a hiking trail. She burns against the bottoms of my feet on the sand. Her motions are routine. She no longer enjoys making them for me. I pay to visit her. I don't stay long enough for her red volcanic dirt to clutch onto my shoes on to my sole. Finally she decides to speak to me and she says:

Joe.

Friends work at new places and tea spots welcome new faces and a new sushi shop opened downtown and it all happened while you weren't around. And if you were in love then from this place, from within me from my hidden cove you wouldn't have shoved. Tomorrow when you leave, put your home address as someplace else. And put all the pictures you have of me on some deep dark shelf.

I make my return to the north and buy the Glade air freshener, Hawaiian Breeze. Here in the north I can dream of watching the Hawaiian monk seal nap upon the shore. As my boots covered in snow lie upon the floor. You (visitor) with your vacation time and savings can visit when you want. You can stride upon her. Leave your imprint in her. You can pay for nights with her at the Hawaiian Hilton. You can taste what was once all mine. Put your hands in places that I've touched. But you are a visitor, you are a tourist, a user. Me too.

