

**Gift of Knowledge**

**By Lokelani C. of Hawaii**

**2008-2009 Honor Award – Winter Break Short Story Contest**

---

Once again, another hot day in this place so-called “paradise.” School’s out, everyone heading with their surfboards and friends to the beach to catch some waves. And days like these, are the perfect kind of days to go to the beach. Good day, good waves.

Since Kahuku High School is so close to the beach, everyone is bound to go there right when the bell rings, confirming that summer break has officially started. Like I said, everyone but me, Mana’o Kahanui. I’m grounded, since I got bad grades, and on top of that, I have to go summer school! For all I know, this is probably going to be the worst summer break ever; a 6-week torture. Gosh, I’ll be lucky if I get to see the outside of our house.

When the bell rang, there were cheers, shouts and yells. I headed towards my car, passing by kids with surfboards strapped on top of their cars, food in the back of their trucks, even my friends who were calling me.

“Eh Mana’o,” Ryan called out to me, “come with us, the forecast said get good waves out there.”

“Nah it’s okay braddah, I’m good,” I replied. I never like tell him I cannot because I’m grounded. So shame.

“Brah, you okay? I know you, and you would never turn the beach down,” Ryan said.

“Yeah I’m fine,” I replied. I hope he didn’t hear the sarcasm in my voice.

“You sure? Can’t miss a day like this.”

“I’m sure.”

“Okay, if you ever need me, you can always come my house,” he said as he jumped in his truck full of people sitting in the back. “Shoots den,” he yelled while flashing me the shaka sign. I gave one to him in return.

I finally got back to my car with rage at the fact that I can’t go out and cruise with my friends on a day like this. “Ryan probably thinks I’m retarded right now,” I thought. I started the car and headed for home. When I got there, my mom was home from work, praising my thirteen-year-old brother ‘Ike. “What’s all the commotion about?” I asked.

“Your brother just got a 4.2 for his GPA!!” said Mom cheerfully. What a surprise. “Well what do you expect? He goes to Punahou,” I said. Punahou is know all over the world with its successful graduates such as Michelle Wie, one of the youngest all-star golfers, our mayor Mufi Hanneman, and now our newly elected President Barack Obama even went there.

“Don’t be jealous just because your GPA is mines in reverse,” said ‘Ike.

“For your information, my GPA is a 2.7,” I snapped.

“Mana’o, stop fighting with your brother,” Mom said. She always favors ‘Ike more than me.

“Fine, he’s the one going to the haole school anyway,” I said.

“Well, you’re going only to a public school and you’re barely passing with a D-.” Great. My torturous summer break had just begun.

“So? Kaipo and Kaleb them got F’s in that class and their parents seem to be okay with them.”

“Well I’m not their parents,” Mom replied.

“Well you should meet them one day, they’re really nice people,” I told her in a wise voice.

“That’s it!” she shrieked. ‘Ike nearly fell off of his chair. “I’ve had it with you and your wise mouth! I try to be the best mother I possibly can, raising you and your brother by myself as a single mother and this is my reward!?! You coming home with a D- and giving me attitude?”

“Well, maybe you should get me tested,” I insisted, “because I think I’m retarded.”

“Retarded?” Mom said, surprised.

“Yeah, I’m the only one in the family who doesn’t go to a private school.”

“It doesn’t matter what school you go to. In the end, it’s all about what you have in your head.” Then she started off to her room with tears swelling up in her eyes. “Oh, and your summer school English teacher is on the counter,” she said before she shut the door.

“Once again, Mana’o did it,” said ‘Ike.

“Be quiet will you?”

“Mom’s only hard on you because she knows you can do it.” Then ‘Ike went off to his room.

I suddenly remembered my mom telling me my summer school letter came in, so I picked it up from the counter. It said my room was in Building A, in Room 104. “At least it’s on the bottom floor,” I thought. My teacher’s name was Mrs. Boately. Boy is this going to be an interesting class.

Summer school came so fast, I was almost late to school. But somehow, I ended up sitting in the classroom in front of my summer school English teacher.

She doesn’t even look that mean. “Welcome Juniors,” she said. “I’m Mrs. Boately. I’m going to tell you right now; I don’t give out a lot of A’s. In fact, I hardly do. And in the next

four weeks that I have with you, you'll all be pushed to your best." Great. I hope she pushes me out of this class of hell.

"The final exam for this class," she explained, "is an open-topic exam. That means you may write about anything you like, as long as it's well structured, has proper grammar and punctuation and is a five-paragraph essay." Wow, I just can't wait. Now I will learn to break my hand by writing too much.

The next week came, and we had time to work on our essays for the exam. Mrs. Boately came by my side and said, "Hey Mana'o, what are you writing about?"

"Nothing," I replied.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing; I think I'm just retarded." Usually, teachers would go away after I say that. But she stayed. "There's got to be something," she said. "What are your interests?"

"Surfing," I said.

Out of nowhere, she said, "What does your name mean?"

This surprised me. "It means knowledge."

"And that is a very gifted name," she responded. "Trust me, when actually do your work, you can write powerful, meaningful, and heartfelt essays. Think deeper: What makes you happy?"

I actually thought for a long time, and Mrs. Boately never left. Finally it hit me. "I love my culture," I told her. She smiled. "Well, I can't wait to read your essay."

Then, I started writing on the paper in front of me. I just kept writing about how I felt about my Hawaiian culture, how much it means to me being a Native Hawaiian, and how I

preserve my culture by speaking Hawaiian as well as following old traditions such as dancing hula, chanting, and working in the taro patch.

Finally, exam day came; the last day of summer school. Mrs. Boately just passed out pieces of blank folder paper and all she said was, “You guys know what to do. Good Luck!”

I was so confident in my essay and I finished way before everyone else. So I proofread it, reading it over and over again, making sure it’s perfect. Then when I turned it in to Mrs. Boately, she sort of winked at me. I smiled back, feeling more confident in my essay. I sat back down at my seat and fell asleep.

A week from summer school, my mom got a letter in the mail. She took a while to read it, and when she finished, she was so happy and started jumping around. When I got in the living room I first thought, “What did ‘Ike do now?” But Mom came and hugged me really hard and said, “You got a perfect 100% on your exam!!”

I was so thrilled; I couldn’t believe it! I did it! “And that’s not all,” she said. “Mrs. Boately showed this to Kamehameha Schools, and now they want you to join their senior class this school year!” As soon as I heard this, I was ecstatic. I went to my room and wrote Mrs. Boately a letter thanking her for everything and for pushing me to strive for my best. As the Hawaiian saying, “Ma ka hana ka ‘ike; in the work there is knowledge.”