

Kapatid,
Sister
(a sad love letter
of diasporic angst)

Phebe M. Ferrer

(Winter 2019)

I watch you fill out the clothes I left behind in cardboard boxes along with all the things I wanted to hide, kept locked away by an ocean and a 12-hour plane ride to cross it.

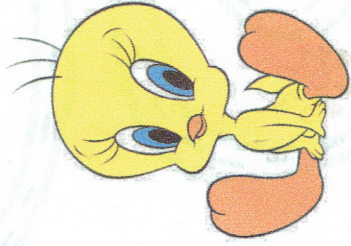


You were my age when you crossed it, too.
Perhaps a bit younger.



I see you use the old hardwood desk from my childhood, from before we first migrated, crossed the ocean to elsewhere, before you existed- but mom says you always existed, like a thought lingering in the back of my mind, waiting to be discovered.

When I see you use that desk, still plastered in now discoloured barbie, digimon, tweety the bird stickers, I believe that. I feel now that I must have always known- that the desk's life did not end with me, that even as I left it behind you would find it for yourself.
Of course, with Mom's help.





You tell me you want to be like me but my sweet, dear kapatid- you mirror my past but you don't land on the same path. the road i took to get here is no longer open, now overgrown with trees and fireflies that scatter like the dust covering my clothes, only holding dim light to illuminate the parts I can remember.



No, your path is alive right now, you are alive right now. I see myself in your tears that I wish I could hold and take in your place, but your tired face reflected back on your ipod screen is just that, your's. Beautifully your's.

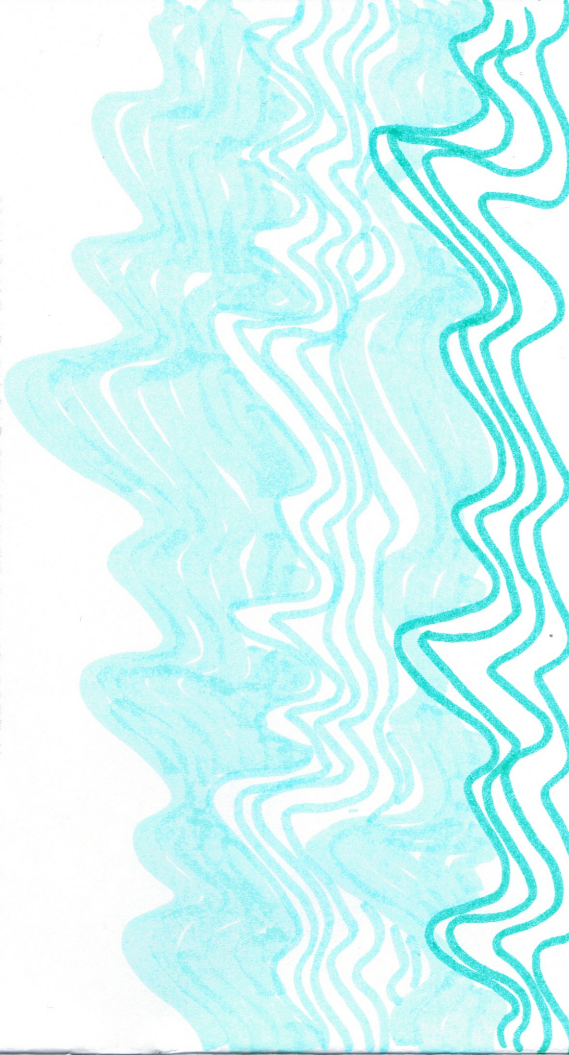


Mountain after mountain, some topped with snow and others with banana leaves, and somehow we still find the time to breathe and laugh. You learned to find the time to still breathe and laugh. even as the hot air threatens to choke you with pollution and smoke in a sky foreign to you.

but how could we not laugh, the view from here is
so beautiful.

it doesn't mean the path was any easier. It doesn't mean
that we don't regret crossing this ocean, and leaving
behind people we thought we would be with for longer if
not forever, it doesn't mean that we don't cry.

The ocean, after all, is inside us too. Honestly, you're
better at seeing that than me.



My dear sister, now we live apart. But while we are together, let's share a bed, a plate of rice with longganisa and eggs, I'll tell you about ghost stories I've heard and you can tell me about the new tagalog slang you learned at school and of course, we can practice your tagalog presentation together.

Habang tayo'y magkasama.

While we're on the same side of this ocean.