

# Sandy Photos

The airplane bypassed the shrinking houses and roads.

The wave goodbye to my homeplace.

The island I was born on. The place where my dark skin contrasted with the umber, sienna, and bronze colors of others. I swiped through the pictures on my phone. The blues that folded over each other of the ocean, the golds and pinks that blended together in the sky, and the sand that speckled in different colors. My mother peered over my shoulder, pointing out different things that I had captured in the photos, where I had found truth in the blushes of color. Most of the photos were of my mother. Her laced white dress and flowing brunette hair. My camera had captured the perfect moments. But the most beautiful one, the one that I couldn't help but linger my finger on as I took in the savoring moment. Mother dipping her feet in the water, her dress curling around her ankles. The sunset captured her skin tone perfectly. You could take one look and tell where she was from. She held the sun in her heart-shaped hands. It reminded me of the love the island shared, my feet that had pressed into the hot sand, folding in between my toes. It was the heart of my life. I couldn't help but fall in love with the white sand beaches in Romblon, Philippines, where the people that lived nearby would collect their towels and dive

into the water. Loud hearty laughs and the most fun many people had in so long. It was where the wind sang a mellow song and made the water run in laps one over the other. We had been there for a week, but it went by like one day. It was hard to leave it, leave the place you were born and where you spent your childhood. Where the beach would always be waiting for you, where the sunset that exploded of colors could only be captured true with bare eyes. It was the type of place where you had to hold on to your memory, or it would fade away, even if you had a picture.

The white sand beaches were where my ancestors had stood, long before me, where they created their lives.

It was where we couldn't make money. That was why we moved to America, where the lands were great and where my family could clean floors and serve food. It was where snow fell in feathers and padded onto the ground, creating a pillow for our boots. But where you could taste success with the tip of your fingertips.

Mother was the first person in my family to move out of the Philippines. She packed up our bags when I was only seven.

"I wanted what was best for you, bata," Mother would tell me. Her heart was mine and always has been since the day I opened my eyes to the world. It was best for me and the new generations that came after. But forever Romblon would be

our home. Where you would climb up trees with your bare feet, pick off coconuts, and drink its juice from the inside.

“You should show that one to Lola when we get home,”

Mother said, pointing to the picture. “She would say, ‘perpektong.’” Which meant perfect in Tagalog.

I laughed.

“Then she’ll hang it up right next to Lolo’s picture. The place to remember,” mother said. I smiled. Capturing moments, finding truth, and holding a camera was what I enjoyed most.

Truth. Where I could look at a picture, not for the life of thoughts or regularity, but for how it truly was. Mother said that it was finding the bare in the clothed, it had layers, it was being judged. But sometimes, with magic, I could show something for its beauty. It was looking into a world where everything was different, but I decided to focus on one enthralling thing. The beaches had a history for each individual. You leave it a blank canvas for remembrance and memory. To brush your own paint and colors, leave your own mark.

I would spend hours editing and taking photos on my phone. I could capture each moment with the perfect angle, the change in colors, and the liveliness to make people feel as if they were there. It was the heart of finding something that was mine.

I pressed my head against the window, watching my  
homeplace pass by. Fog breathing out of my open mouth as I  
whispered, "I'll be back."  
"Soon," I added.