

Manila Bay has filled Alab Ayroso with wonder the first time she saw her. She likens it to a stranger whom 10 years after, continued to provide her comfort and solace during her first heartbreak, someone that she wants to continue learning from and get to know deeper.

Dearest Manila Bay,

When we first met, you were new to me and filled me with wonder. I met you again, ten years later and your calm disposition during the sunset comforted me during my first heartbreak. Time and time again, you gave solace. However, now that I see you, there's something different about you.

I always saw you as a giver, a provider, but there is so much more to you than that. There are other sides of you that are hurting, the parts of you that are exploited and destroyed. You've survived storms, pollution, and greedy men. The more I see you the more I realize that I am only meeting the side that your tormentors want to show the world. But I've heard from others how important you are to them. I know how much you are loved.

You are loved to the point of uprising because of simply what you are, and that makes me want to get to know the real you. I guess it's just a recognition that even if I may not super know you yet, I aspire to get to know you more. Isn't that exciting in a sense? I may not know you as well as your other friends, but that only means there's so much that we can do together in the future! So much to discover and learn and share!! And that gives me hope.

I read this quote from Lualhati Bautista that reminded me of you: "Tranquil shores are only for those who boldly oppose raging waves during the storms."

I can't wait to see you again, but this time with a movement that is stronger than the storms you are enduring. We will gather our allies and increase our strength to fight for your peace. And we will survive these storms.

Embracing you,  
**Alab**

