

For **Isabella Corrales**, **Tinggay Cinco**, and **Aries Soledad**, Manila Bay is personified as an old friend who after meeting the first time was taken away by distance, time and opportunities but still, a treasured friend whose current being has been molded by pain and suffering.

Dear Manila Bay,

I remember seeing you for the first time in 2013. I had just shifted from Management to Environmental Science course and I joined my very first coastal clean-up with classmates. There must have been a hundred of us along Roxas Boulevard that day – pants folded up to our knees, collecting trash stuck on rocks and placing them in sacks. I still had a narrow view of environmentalism back then. I thought it was enough that I reduced consumption, picked up trash and planted trees. But over the years, I realized that there are forces much, much bigger than me that make my actions almost negligible.

While I've never been aware of you and what you're going through, it's different hearing from people who live with you – people who rely on you for food and livelihood; people who study the birds that make you, their home. Despite our different backgrounds and experiences, we seem to have very similar sentiments about what you are. You're a parent, friend, treasure – something we can't imagine life without.

I wonder what you looked like in your glory days. It's been a while since I've visited but I've seen pictures and heard stories and it looks like things have gotten worse over the years.

You must be sad and disappointed. You were perfect the way you were, but the government and all these big corporations decided to change you. Your waters that once cradled life are now filled with sand. Your shores that were once home to mangroves and humble fishermen are now a playground for the rich. I worry that soon the birds that come to visit during winter will be replaced by hunks of metal that soar in the skies.

Manila Bay, I still have hope that things can change. You've inspired movements across the nation, and I would like to believe that we have a fighting chance. I don't know if it's enough that I raise awareness, support research efforts, and take to streets. But please know that I will never stop fighting for you. You are a heritage to the Filipino people, and I dream of a future where you're enjoyed by generations after my own.

Yours sincerely,
Isabella

P.S. Please don't hesitate to take back what's yours.
Kaya mo yan, friend!

