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A Different Feel of Beautiful

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A DIFFERENT FEEL OF BEAUTIFUL

Kristina Galicinao

Oregon is not home. Home is where the uplifting warmth of the sun is often there to soak up. An array of tropical flowers that speak of all the colors of the rainbow—hibiscuses, orchids, the bird of paradise, plumeria—make the verdant greenery twenty times as vibrant. The smell of the flowers reminds you of the taste of sweet pineapple, leaving you wanting to just lay back and sunbathe as you cool down with a piña colada.

It's where the light, turquoise blue water stretches out until forever, perhaps beyond. Like a mother singing its baby a lullaby to soothe it to sleep, so is the water that trickles into my ears. Each wave rolls in and out, in and out. It is as if the tide would take me with it. Home is where my parents and best friends are, my constant and genuine source of love.

Oregon is not home.

I keep telling people, "I'm still adjusting; I just need a little more time to get used to this whole college thing." Three weeks of massive amounts of reading and daily homework have now gone by and almost every day remains a tiring chore to get through. The weight of missing home and close friends always burdens me, making my feet heavy to carry as I walk from class to class.

But that's not to say that I don't have my good days here.

Fortunately, I've made a good amount of friends to hang out with. Though it has only been a short amount of time, some have gained enough of my trust to make me feel comfortable to confide in them. They make the load a little more bearable, but of course, never nonexistent.

Unwilling to tend to strenuous homework one Sunday afternoon, Maria, Jessica and I decide to embark on a much less life threatening adventure: sightseeing. As we ride up a winding road, my mind is put at ease by the abundance of lush, green trees that border it. I close my eyes and try to envision a Hawaiian sunset. In my mind's eye I see the vibrant golden sun

that blends into intense tangerine orange and ripe strawberry red, bleeding all over the sky's canvas and reflecting on the water. But the smell of the pine needles and bark seeps up my nose again and I remember where I am. Moments later, we reach the top and I find myself actually comforted by the view. Stretching for miles and miles are the tree covered cliffs of the Columbia River Gorge. Off in the distance, Mount Hood sits serenely, covered in a marshmallow topping of snow.

The river water is calm and is a blend of light blue with a subtle hint of gray, like that of steel. Above it, there is a thin blanket of mist that makes the whole scenery look like a painting. I breathe in deeply the cool air and exhale, trying to absorb everything. I could get used to this, I think to myself.

After a few minutes, we resume our journey and ride along the historic highway. The road seems never ending and there are so many turns, it feels almost as if we are on a rollercoaster. I find sweet solace from the wealth of trees.

Finally, we arrive. I rub my eyes a little in an effort to fully wake myself after falling into a trance of sleep during the drive. Above me, an eagle flies past and for a moment, I attempt to imagine myself in its place. How wonderful it must be to simply spread your wings and soar high over all of God's creation, everyday, not bound to the ground by gravity's pull.

The sound of the water falling brings me back to reality. It coaxes me from my day dreams. And I walk on.

Weaving through the crowd of people, I make my way to the railing and stop to stand in awe. Hundreds and hundreds of feet of water continuously crash to the base, creating a roar like a lion's. I freeze the picture in my mind. The water looks like white taffy in the process of being stretched or massive amounts of sugar being poured into a bowl. Below the waterfall, the logs float carelessly. They seem to have no other responsibilities than to just be. I breathe in deeply and feel the warmth of the sun upon my skin.

Here, in this moment, I feel completely humbled by the works of God's hands. Somehow, I could have sworn that He was smiling down and telling me, Yes, my precious child, you're in the right place. You're right where you're supposed to be, I promise.

Oregon is not home. It's not palm trees or light brown sand, it's not tropical sunshine and warm breezes, and it's not surfboards and beach towels or the salty air in your face. But Oregon is equally beautiful in its own way. There are tons of tall, green trees that are so full of life. There are parks to take long walks in and scenic drives that speak of history. Oregon is meditation.

It's where I should be, and that's just as beautiful.