

***To the Province* by Sophie Carroll**

Young Creative Awards 2021 Winner (Creative Writing, 19-24)

1. Home or Bahay?

Summer is missing in Mabini.

At some point, seven-thousand miles
became too far. I still feel the press
of wrinkled hands against a sticky
forehead. The air raining hot oil,
grounds permanently greased
during fiesta season. Lolo cooks
against the backdrop of the village
hum. Tagalog spoke around mouthfuls
of fluffy rice. The sound fades as I fade
into that hammock outside.

Summer is missing in Mabini. Adrift
somewhere around the hundred islands.

What if I go back and it can be found?

2. Clouds besides the Nipa Hut

Clouds the pig has never seen the sky.

Uncle keeps him besides the hut, sheltered
with weathered nipa leaves.

Clouds leans into the light. The sun slips
through fissures in bamboo rods. I've never
seen a pig before, he's going to be my friend.

Clouds rolls around while I lie
on the dry dirt. He bobs his head more
when I hum softly.

Clouds eats messily, spills brown slop
on yellowed grass. The bowl is overturned,
he pushes food and earth around with his snout.

Clouds looks depressed, so I hug him all the time.
My family smiles thinly, humouring
the way I love this pig.

Clouds walks around while I lie on the ground
in the dark. I look at the stars for him. My mum
pulls me inside, roughly scrubs soil from my skin.

Clouds squeals. I think he sees the sky.

Uncle is throwing soapy water at the bamboo,
blood seeps into grass, tinting the blades pink.

Clouds is on the kitchen table. All my relatives dig in.

3. Jetlagged Haze

In the air I am rootless

inconsequential among the clouds.

Ice maps itself on half-shuttered windows,
journeys from one corner to the next.

Leave or stay? Maybe it is better

to leave queues labelled

foreigners and aliens.

I am thinking myself stupid

when I should be washing sick out my hair.

In the air I am rootless. Ruthlessly

inconsequential among the clouds.

It swallows the wing momentarily,

I imagine myself disintegrating into water vapour.

I am thinking myself stupid

when I should be washing sick out my hair.

Among the clouds I am rootless.

It is when my feet near the ground

that I begin to feel out of place.