



# MY MIDTERM BREAK TRIP

SOPHIA NG

OVER MIDTERM BREAK, MY FAMILY AND I WENT BACK TO THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 11 YEARS.

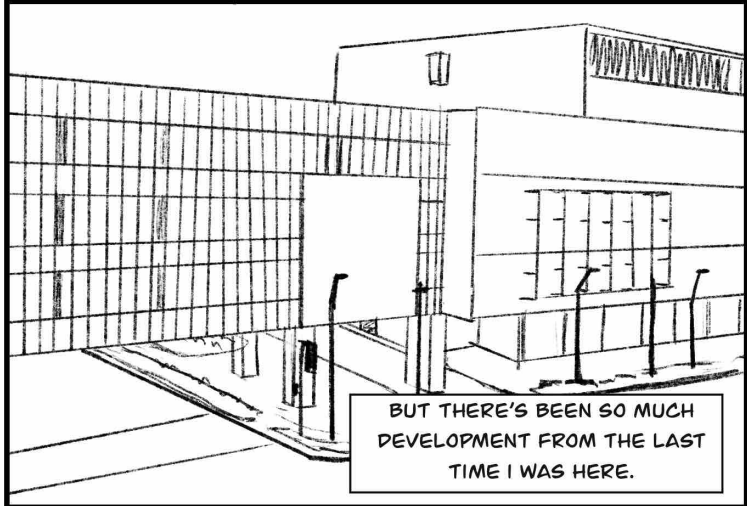


I WAS EXCITED TO RECONNECT WITH MY CULTURE AND REMINISCE ABOUT OLD TIMES,



BUT THIS PLACE ISN'T THE SAME ANYMORE AND NEITHER AM I.

I WAS BORN HERE AND LIVED HERE UNTIL I WAS 7, SO IN THEORY, I SHOULD KNOW THIS PLACE.

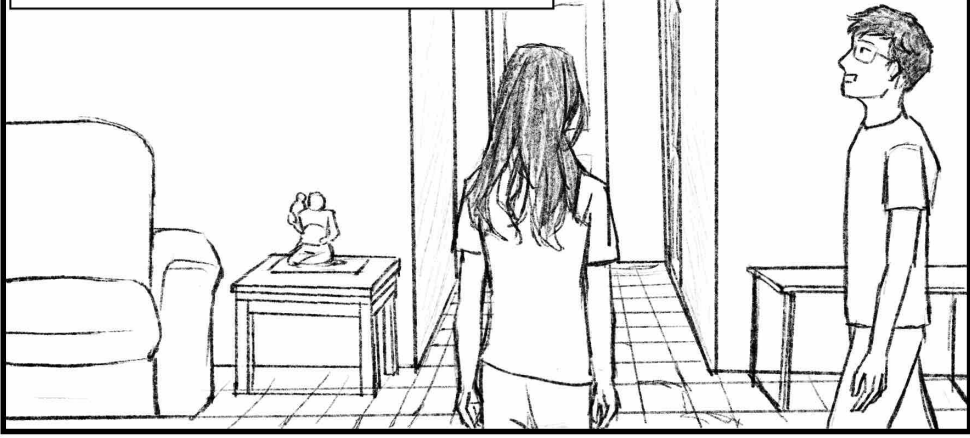


BUT THERE'S BEEN SO MUCH DEVELOPMENT FROM THE LAST TIME I WAS HERE.

MY MEMORIES OF THIS PLACE ARE SO FEW AND FRAGMENTED THAT I WAS ESSENTIALLY SEEING MANILA FOR THE FIRST TIME.



I GOT TO SEE MY CHILDHOOD HOME AGAIN AND IT'S MUCH SMALLER THAN I REMEMBER.



IT HAS DEGRADED OVER THE YEARS WITH UNUSE.

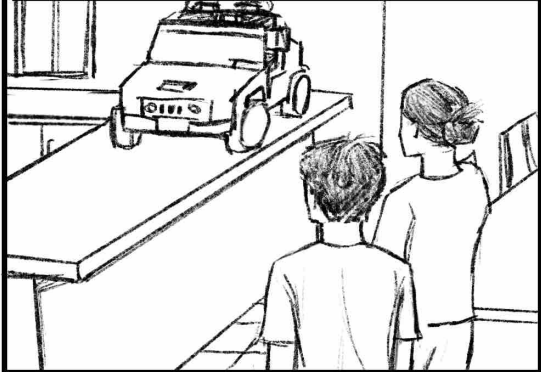


MY CHILDHOOD BEDROOM HAS BEEN CONVERTED INTO A DUSTY STORAGE ROOM,

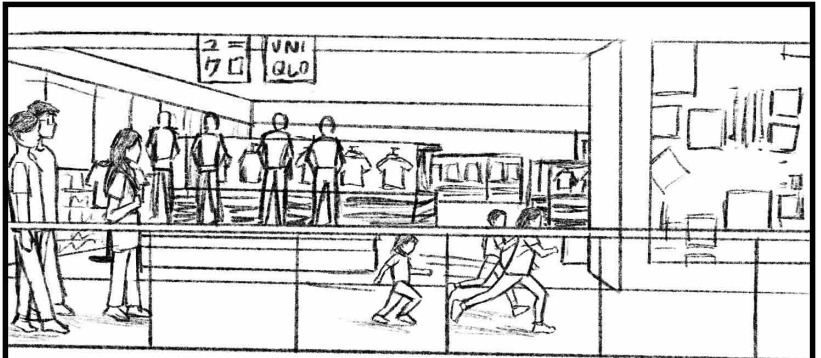
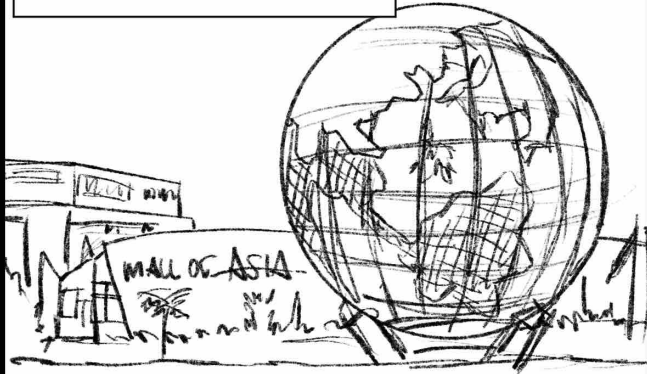


THE KITCHEN DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE AND THE DEN IS EMPTY NOW.

I WAS EXCITED TO SEE MY OLD HOME, BUT IT FELT BLEAK. LIKE THE PLACE HAD FADED AWAY WITH THE MEMORIES MADE INSIDE IT.



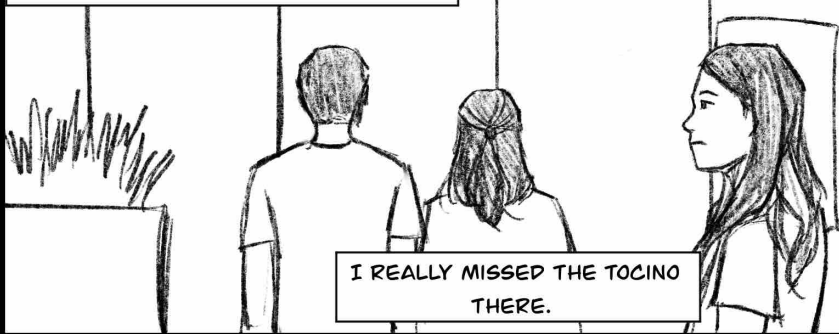
MY CHILDHOOD MALL ISN'T THE SAME AS IT ONCE WAS.



ALL THE STORES ARE NOW OF BRANDS THAT I RECOGNIZED. I'M NOT ACTUALLY SURE IF IT CHANGED ALL THAT MUCH, OR IF MY PERCEPTION DID.

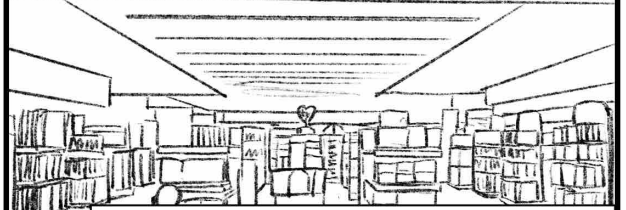
WE WERE LOOKING FOR THE RESTAURANT UCC TO HAVE LUNCH, NOT KNOWING IT HAD CLOSED DOWN 8 YEARS AGO.

9 CHICKEN



I REALLY MISSED THE TOCINO THERE.

TOY KINGDOM



I ALSO WENT TO WHAT WAS ONCE MY FAVOURITE STORE, TOY KINGDOM, AND SADLY ENOUGH, IT DIDN'T EVOKE THE SAME WHIMSY AND EXCITEMENT AS IT DID BEFORE.

DID YOU FIND THE SYLVANIAN FAMILIES SECTION?



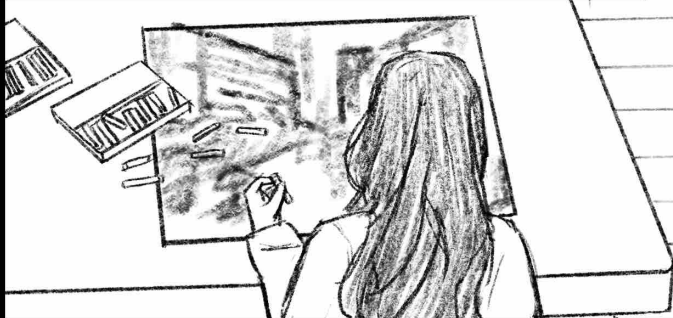
I DON'T THINK THEY HAVE ONE.

DAMN.

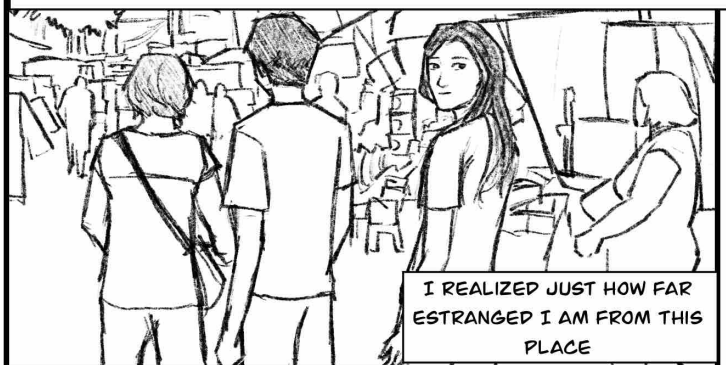
SOMETHING THAT DID STAND OUT TO ME, THOUGH, WAS THE COLOURFUL CART UMBRELLAS YOU SEE ALL AROUND.



I HAD DRAWN A LOT OF THEM LAST YEAR WHILE CREATING AN ART PIECE OF A SPECIFIC PART OF MANILA I WOULD ALWAYS PASS BY TO TRY AND SALVAGE THESE MEMORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD.

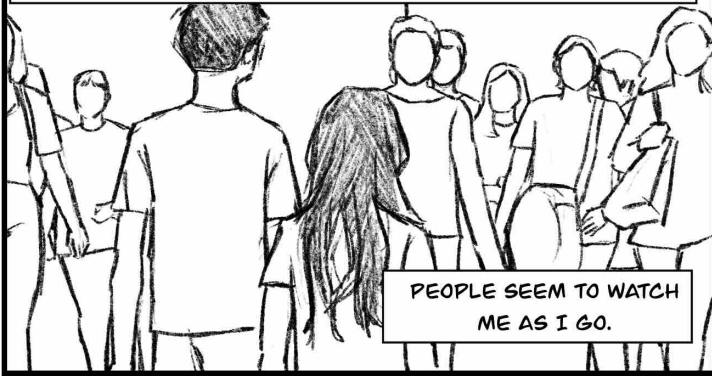


BUT SEEING IT AGAIN, I ONLY REMEMBER THE SMELL OF THE ART ROOM, THE FEEL OF OIL PASTELS GLIDING ACROSS THE PAPER AND THE STORY OF THE AUDIOBOOK I WAS LISTENING TO.

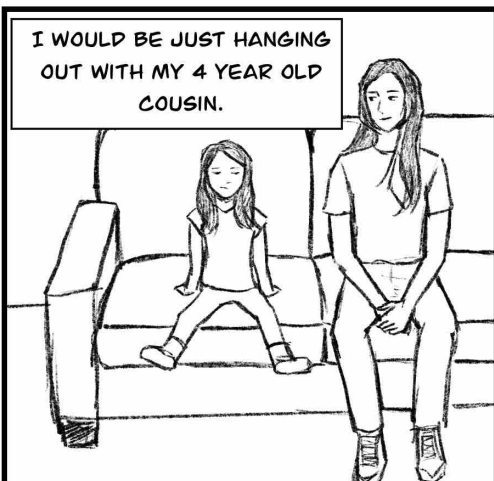
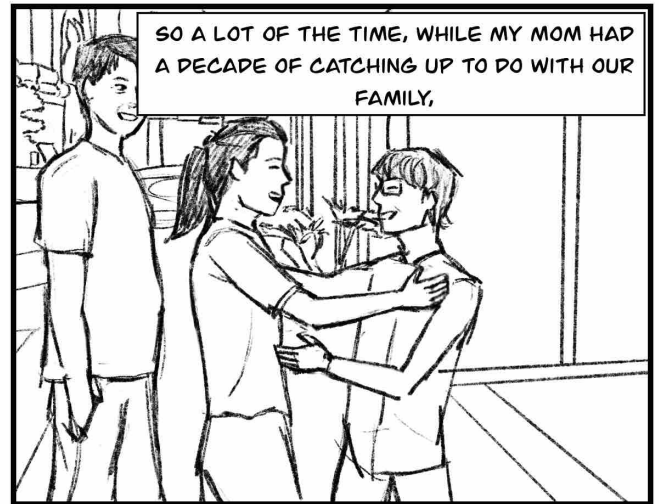
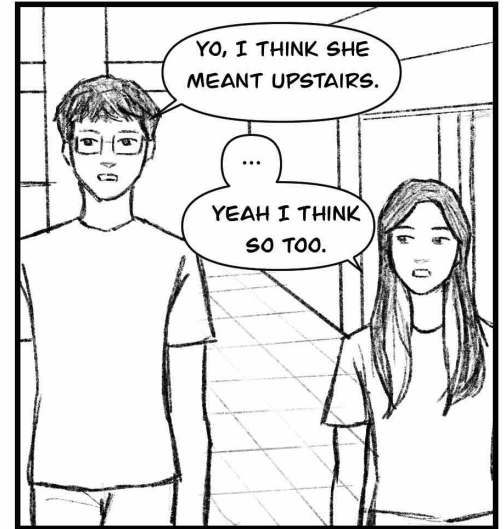
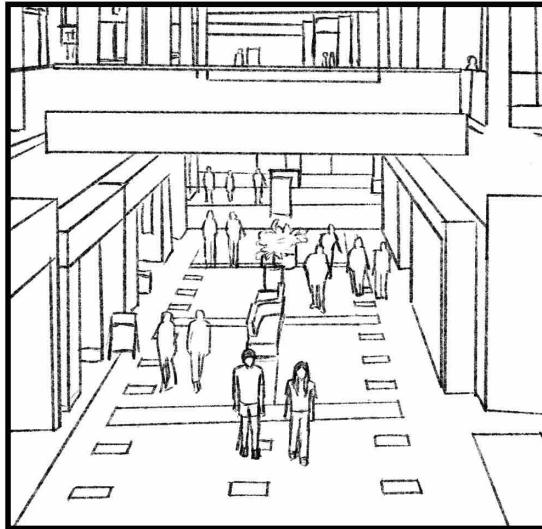


I REALIZED JUST HOW FAR ESTRANGED I AM FROM THIS PLACE

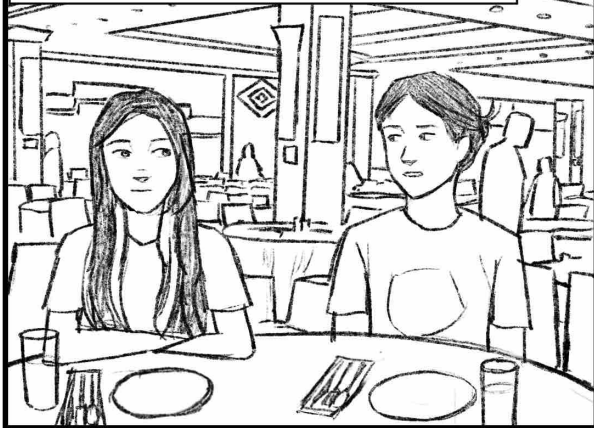
AND EVERY TIME I GO OUT, I'M REMINDED THAT I'M NOT TRULY FROM HERE. IT SEEMS LIKE WE STICK OUT AMONGST EVERYONE ELSE.



NOTHING ABOUT ME GIVES AWAY THE FACT THAT I'M FROM THE PHILIPPINES. I'M NOT EVEN ETHNICALLY FILIPINO AND I DON'T SPEAK TAGALOG.



I CAN'T SHAKE OFF THE ISSUE OF WEALTH DISPARITY HERE.

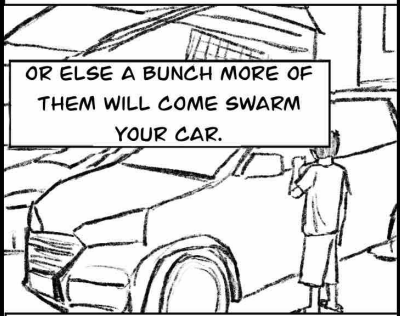


THERE'S PEOPLE LIVING IN THE WORST SITUATIONS.



CHILDREN WHO DON'T HAVE THE MONEY FOR PROPER CLOTHES, BASIC NEEDS.

THEY KNOCK ON YOUR CAR WINDOWS, BEGGING FOR FOOD, AND I WAS TOLD THAT YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO GIVE THEM ANYTHING



OR ELSE A BUNCH MORE OF THEM WILL COME SWARM YOUR CAR.

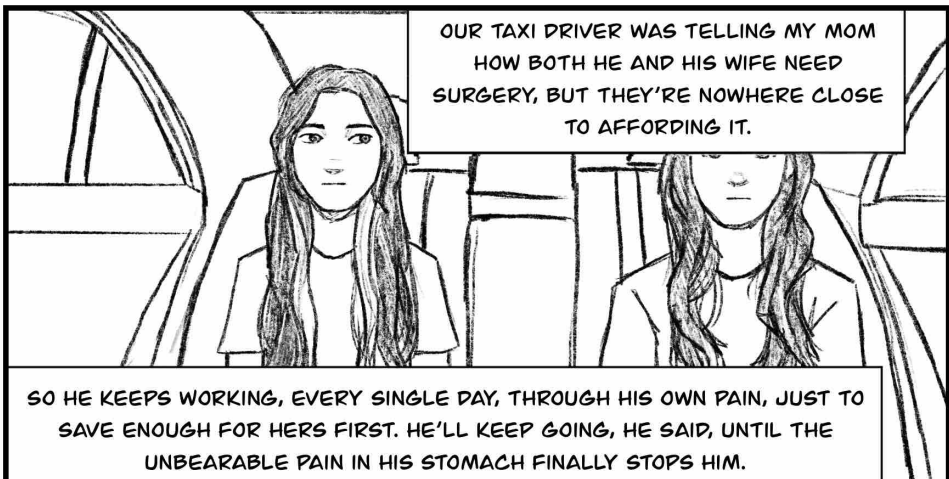
THE SAME REASONING THAT'S GIVEN ABOUT FEEDING THE BIRDS IN PARKS.

THIS PLACE LITERALLY STRAIGHT OUT OF A DYSTOPIAN MOVIE.



YEAH.

OUR TAXI DRIVER WAS TELLING MY MOM HOW BOTH HE AND HIS WIFE NEED SURGERY, BUT THEY'RE NOWHERE CLOSE TO AFFORDING IT.



SO HE KEEPS WORKING, EVERY SINGLE DAY, THROUGH HIS OWN PAIN, JUST TO SAVE ENOUGH FOR HERS FIRST. HE'LL KEEP GOING, HE SAID, UNTIL THE UNBEARABLE PAIN IN HIS STOMACH FINALLY STOPS HIM.

AND HERE I AM STAYING AT THIS EXTREMELY EXTRAVAGANT HOTEL WHILE SURROUNDED BY RELATIVES THAT ARE SO IMMENSELY WEALTHY THAT THEY'RE ESSENTIALLY LIVING IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WORLD.

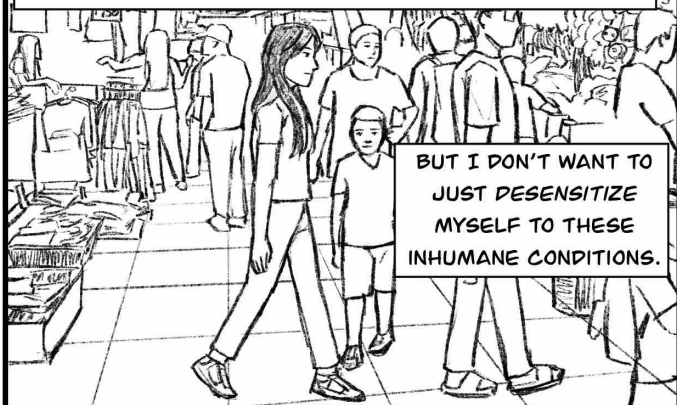


I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT. HOW DO THOSE WITH THE POWER TO HELP THESE PEOPLE JUST TURN A BLIND EYE?



HOW DO THEY LIVE ON, WITNESSING THE SUFFERING GOING ON AROUND THEM WHILST HAVING EVERYTHING THEY COULD EVER WANT?

IT'S ILLOGICAL TO BE ANGRY. POVERTY IS PART OF THE NORMS OF A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY AND IT SHOULD BE SOMETHING YOU SHOULD JUST ACCEPT,



BUT I DON'T WANT TO JUST DESENSITIZE MYSELF TO THESE INHUMANE CONDITIONS.

I WANT TO DO SOMETHING, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD EVEN BE ABLE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.



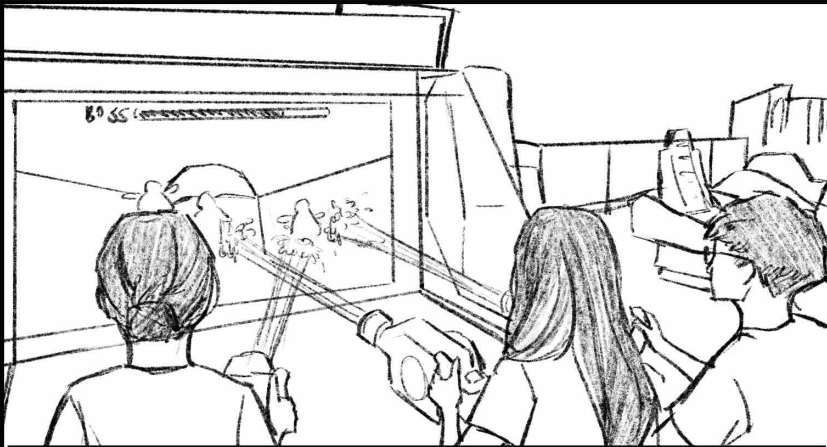
IT'S SUCH A MASSIVE AND CONVOLUTED ISSUE AND I DON'T HAVE A REAL CONNECTION TO THIS COUNTRY ANYMORE.

I'LL DEFINITELY COME BACK AGAIN, THOUGH.



THE PHILIPPINES IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF MY IDENTITY AND I'M INEVITABLY TIED TO THIS PLACE.

EVEN THROUGH ALL THIS, I STILL LOVE THIS PLACE. IT FEELS LIKE HOME.



IT'S SO SATURATED WITH STORES, RESTAURANTS AND STUFF TO DO THAT I DON'T KNOW HOW I CAN GO BACK TO VANCOUVER AND NOT BE BORED.

DESPITE MY LANGUAGE BARRIER, IT'S GREAT TO HAVE CONNECTION TO OUR INTERMEDIATE FAMILY.



AND THE FOOD HERE IS ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL. I'LL REALLY MISS THE FOOD.



I'LL COME BACK TO THE PHILIPPINES AGAIN, HOPEFULLY NEXT TIME WITH MORE DIRECTION ON HOW I CAN MAKE AN IMPACT.

BUT FOR NOW, I STILL HAVE A LOT TO FIGURE OUT.

