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## **This Little Bird Goes Back “Home”**

This little bird is afraid of flying.  
*Home*, they say. *Home is where you are.*  
But I was not born here. I cracked open  
in a land not our own.  
The only land I know.

This little bird watches the flock that is  
Her father’s, the flock that is not hers,  
baste their feathers with a magic that will  
make them nice and as white as a swan.  
They tell me they are too dark. But then  
*what does that make me?*

This little bird has never been to the sea.  
*Hold on*, they say. *Hold onto me.*  
But I am sinking. I gulp down  
the water that does not claim me.  
This water that does not want me.

This little bird is a *balikbayan*.  
This bird’s children will be *balikbayan*.  
My children will not know what  
*Balikbayan* even means. That it means  
we are not from here, we are imports, we  
are not white as a swan or as brown as a  
Philippine eagle, dangerous and endangered.  
But my children will still have beaks.  
They will still have wings.  
They will swim, even if the sea tries to take them.  
Even if the land ignores them.