



**Where we love is home,
Home that our feet may leave,
But never our hearts.
– Oliver Wendell Holmes**

Dear Friends

When I knew I would be returning home, I started noticing little details of my life here in the Philippines. All the things I didn't get a chance to see or do. All the people I would like to spend more time with became glaringly apparent.

For example I never learned the name of these little cloths. This brought to mind all the facets of life here that were once foreign to me, that now seem common place. The assortment of customs, colors, textures, sounds and smells that I have grown accustomed to, learned to understand (tolerate?) and appreciate over the past three years.

These scraps of colorful fabric have a sense of humor and an almost quilt like quality. They are functional, handmade, and individual. Perhaps representative of our lives here? Imperfect, kind of funky, partly kitsch, they are a bit of a hybrid. I know that living here has made me a bit of a hybrid too; I will never look at life in the same way. I recall the first time I saw a cashier in Makati Market use her cloth like the one above to smear the black belt before I put my groceries down. That seems like a lifetime ago.

From now on I promise to take time to say good morning and good afternoon as I have been taught to here. Although no one will tell me "in a while" any more, I think may end up being a more patient and gentler version of myself. Because of this place and my encounters, I now have the luxury of being able to as my husband, (the eternal optimist) puts it "reinvent" myself. What a responsibility!

My original intention was to write each and every one of you a note...you deserve it. The reality is that I ended up being an emotional wreck after two notes. I prefer to spend the time I have left smiling. Instead you will get this impersonal "form" letter with an invitation to visit me in Texas and a PLEA to keep in touch even if it is once or twice a year only! Attached are countless good wishes, sweaty Manila hugs and thank yous, enough for all!

The going away party at Bunko was perfect! I am flattered and love the gifts and lunches! Each one of you has colored my experience here in a different way and I am fortunate to have met you.

I hope when you see these little "whatchamacallits" during the rest of your time here in the Philippines, you will think of me and know I am sending good wishes your way.

Your friend

Ann who is writing one last time from "almost Heaven, Muntinlupa". -TM

PS: Excuse my out of focus photo and I hope there are no typos!