



AILA MITTLEMAN

Grade 6

La Mariposa Montessori School, Santa Fe

Teacher: Alexa Rockwell

At the end of this school year, I am moving to Bali to attend a school called The Green School, a place dedicated to environmental education. My family and I made this decision partly because we love the Earth. The school is designed to teach students how to protect nature. For example, they call the bus that takes the students to school “The Bio Bus” because it is powered by used cooking oil. Even though these efforts are being made, I hear a song from the Balinese waters. I hear that it needs help.

When I imagine Bali, I see lush green forests, sparkling oceans, and blue skies. But in reality, Bali is dealing with serious plastic pollution. The waves that should be singing a free and peaceful song, are choked by bottles, straws, and other kinds of trash. It’s as if the ocean surrounding Bali, and the waterways that lead to it are in desperate need for help. Aldo Leopold once said, “You can’t cherish his right hand and chop off his left. You can’t love game and hate predators. You can’t conserve the water and waste the ranges. You can’t build the forest and mine the farm.” This made me think about how people say they love nature, but they choose to do what benefits them and take more than they give back. We can’t act like we are protecting nature when we are the ones doing the damage.

I once watched a documentary about the Balinese rivers and waterways. I was shocked to see how much plastic pollution filled the water. What should be clear, flowing water was jam-packed with floating trash, plastic bags, and waste. It was devastated to see this. The Balinese Waterways sang out, “Help me. I can’t do this alone!” When I heard this, I realized that nature speaks to us, not in words, but what it shows us through its human-caused struggles.

The waters demand our respect, but not all of us listen. I feel like my efforts aren’t powerful enough. I wonder if my contributions like making jewelry to fund animal rescues, or picking up trash and creating art from it, really matters. These efforts seem so small from a global view. Then I think about how water changes its path; not all at once but it erodes the earth bit by bit. Every person on the Earth can be like the drops of water that come together to change its path, every little action matters. We need to see the problem and become part of the solution.

One of my goals is to help clear the Bali Waterways and to spread awareness about pollution. I want to educate others about marine life, and our impact on it. I want to inspire my community to act too. If the water could talk, I believe it would ask us to listen, to change, and to care. I would answer, “I hear you. I will help.”