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Personal Essay

“Kids, your mum and I need to speak with you about something serious. We are moving to Houston, Texas. It’s going to be a great opportunity for all of us.”

For as long as I can remember, my dad had always wanted to send my sister and I to the United States for college. I was born and raised in Sydney, Australia, home to the Kangaroo. I lived pretty close to the beach so going down to the ocean for a swim was a casual, regular thing. It was what I was used to. School uniforms, footy, and backyard cricket. It was all I knew. I liked living in Sydney, I had no complaints. My friends and family were there, what more could I ask for as a 15-year-old girl?

On a seemingly normal day, my family and I were eating dinner at the table together like we always did. My mum is a great cook and made Indian food for us every evening and as I was mucking around with my sister at the table, my dad clears his throat.

“Girls I know this is going to be hard to hear, but your mum and I have decided that after this semester is over, we will be moving to America for my work.”

I looked at him like he had just told me someone died.

“What? Why? Where?” I exclaimed.

“What about me?” asked my sister. “I just started high school!”

“We know Ashwani, but you’ll start middle school in the U.S., it’ll be fun you can make new friends. Same with you Raveena. You’ll make new cool American friends in high school. You can do all the things you see in the movies. And you’ll be able to go to college like we always wanted!”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. He just expected us to make new friends? I was in tenth grade, I had known the friend I had since elementary school. I didn’t want to make new friends. I was perfectly fine with the ones I had in Sydney. I got up from the table and stormed to my room. My sister followed. I cried and cried and cried. I hated my dad at that moment. I hated him for taking me away from my life in Sydney. It was like my whole world was falling apart. Everything I knew would soon be over 8000 miles away from me, not knowing he was only doing this for me and my sister. I texted my friends and told them the news. They didn’t believe me. Finally, I convinced them it was really happening and I’d be gone in August. No one knew what to say except that they would miss me but we need to make the best of the time we have now.

Fast forward to August, and my whole life is packed in boxes and suitcases. I take one last look at my childhood bedroom and the house I had so many core memories. I would never see my home again. We made our way to the airport with eight suitcases and I took one last look at the city I had grown up in, the city that raised me, the city I loved.

Over the course of a year in Houston, my family and I had a lot of ups and downs. We were always fighting, always blaming each other for things that were no one's fault. I think we were all just taking our anger and sadness out on one another because, at the end of the day, all we had was one another. Before we moved my sister and I were not that close, bickering all day every day. After we moved, we became best friends. We realized that in the end, family is always number one. We had no friends, no other family, just each other. She was all I had and I was all she had. On the other hand, it felt like I grew further apart from my parents. I was getting in trouble all the time, talking back, bad grades, and doing things a kid at 16 shouldn’t have been doing. I felt like I was a lost cause and I didn’t care about anything except trying to feel better about being so lonely. People will be surprised how hard it is to make friends in your sophomore year of high school in a new country when you have a weird little accent. Once I turned 18 and I had matured a little more, my parents and I finally were able to click and we were happier together. I moved to Austin for college and that is really when I started to realize how much I missed my parents and the things they did for me.

It took me over a year to finally feel like Houston was a place I could be happy in. Once I finally made some friends and was integrated into a real friend group, my life changed for the better. These friends are friends I am still friends with to this day and I cannot imagine life without them.

We all figured that home is where the heart is, and our hearts were with each other. Australia will always be where I am from, but America made me into the person I am today. I am proud of where I come from, but in the end, I have had pretty much all of my best memories here in the U.S. and became an actual grown-up person here. All of my most monumental life moments have been here in the United States such as graduating high school, coming out to my family, I had my first loves here, my first heartbreaks, and all my best friends, and I will be graduating college here, starting a new life with a job and hopefully have a family one day too. Life is all about experiences, and I can happily say, this was one hell of an experience.