
ESOL VOICES

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ESOL Voices is prepared by the students of English for Speakers of Other Languages at **Monroe Community College**, Rochester, New York, under the supervision of Suzanne El Rayess. This collection of articles presents the personal experiences and ideas of ESOL students in their own words. It also presents their ability to write. We hope you will find it interesting. We are thankful to the students and teachers who put their great efforts to make it complete and successful.

We wish you success and happiness.

The Staff



My First Battlefield

By Yuka Suzuki

Complete, cold silence filled the room. Suddenly, the world lost its color, its sound, and its meaning for existence. The space was filled with the strong, rusty smell of massive blood. Up until now, the somewhat irregular but strong electric beeping sound was comforting us. My vision became narrow; in the distance, I saw it; it was under the white sheet painted randomly with marbled colors; it lay motionlessly on the bed. In this frozen world, I was the only one who was allowed to move. The air around me deepened, formed bulk and stuck to my leg like some kind of burden. It required extra strength to move my leg. Haltingly, I approached him, who had just become “it.” “He has passed away.” The voice, though coming from myself, sounded funny and mumbled.

There is one very clear picture in my mind. It is a picture of the first day I met with Ken; the little boy was sitting up on the stretcher under the bright early summer sunlight. “I understand that you will be my doctor?” He was slightly shivering with a high fever. Though his skin was as pale as white paper, his eyes were sparkling impishly and his cheeks wore a lively pinkish veil. I looked into his eyes and replied in as uplifting a tone as possible. “Yes. Call me Dr. Aibara, OK?” He was the very first leukemia patient I took care of as a pediatric resident.

Leukemia is a type of cancer that affects the white blood cells as well as other blood cells. The treatment regimens include chemotherapy and bone marrow transplants; the chances for a cure are usually very good for children with this disease. Though I felt empathy for him, I also felt a thrilling sensation arising inside in me. For the first time, I was going to face up to leukemia. Undergoing chemotherapies,

which have certain merits but also definite side effects, means the patients take poisons. If I make even the slightest mistake, it could result in a critical condition. A great responsibility was now on my shoulders even though I was making every move according to my supervisor.

Ken’s typical day in the hospital did not begin with his mother calling from downstairs, delicious smells of breakfast cooking, or sounds of his siblings moving around, like a normal six-year-old boy. It was the sharp pain from a needle prick which woke him up. Each of his days began with pain and ended with it. Ken never cried out for help during treatments like other kids in the pediatric ward. Instead, he always said to me, “This is to beat the bugs in my body. You are attacking them for me, aren’t you? You are the one helping me, so don’t be sorry.” We did not use the word “leukemia” according to his parents’ wishes, and that was how we explained his disease to him.

As the treatment progressed, gradually, his forearms were covered with soft, purple velvet with many black dots. These were impressions from countless internal hemorrhages and the shots I had given him. His veins used to be like logs lying on a flat road, so even the fresh trainee could easily find and draw the blood from them. Now they were hiding under the thick velvet and were deep down in the muscles, so I had to keep searching after inserting the needle. While searching, my hands became cold and sweaty, and I often felt a tingling in my stomach from nervousness.

Every second of every single day, he was fighting very hard for his life. We were fellow soldiers fighting for the future. One fought to maintain, and one to gain self-confidence. In the middle of the war, I had to leave the battlefield in order to continue my training. Upon saying good-bye, Ken smiled and

said to me, “I am sad about losing my friend, but you will be good to other sick kids. Soon, you will become better at procedures so you do not scare them much.”

Soon after that, he was discharged and continued therapy as an outpatient. Everything was going fine for a while, but eventually, his illness came back and this time it really overwhelmed him. He underwent a bone marrow transplant, which was the last possibility to cure him, but it failed. Ken, who was ten years old, now understood that what he was facing; was not anything like bugs, but leukemia, and knew that there was very little possibility to be cured.

“Hey, you’re back to join my battle again? The facts don’t look too good, but we can beat it, can’t we?” he said in his usual calm voice with a bit more mature tone than I used to hear. “Hey, buddy! Let’s beat them up!” I tried to convey my encouragement to him and to myself. This time I had to meet him under the cold mechanical electric light in the intensive care unit (ICU). He looked very small and tiny in the ICU bed. Innumerable tubes were sticking out, and they looked like the arms and legs of a huge octopus. I saw hope and despair coexisting in his eyes, but maybe these were reflections of my thoughts.

The ending came too soon and too suddenly. I had only fought with him for sixteen days, when he left the battlefield and me behind. I was alone. I felt lonely and needed to cry, but instead I found myself wiping his body which still held a trace of life. In my mind I was apologizing to him over and over again. I was sure that I heard him say, with his usual delightful voice, that he had no regret and that he did not want me to forget his lessons. Those were lessons about how to talk to patients and their families, how to draw blood from invisible veins, and, most of all, how to keep fighting everyday with a positive

mind. Once I stepped out of his room, another battlefield was waiting for me. Even though I will not be able to meet him and to talk to him again, I can always find him in the way that I think and act. I hope I am not causing my very best teacher to feel disappointed.

Yuka Suzuki, a doctor in Japan, is now working as a technician at Strong Memorial Hospital.

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An Invisible Bullet that Hit the Spirit

By Barthelemy Koumassou

A half liter of stinky pus was extracted from my right hand. That had been the result of *Shakatu*, an invisible bullet sent straight to the spirit of the victim. Some evil people in Africa manifest their worst behavior by using witchcraft. Enemies could get rid of others not with a rifle, but if they find a rift in another's spirit, they just soak into it. My first *Shakatu* showed me how a person's attitude can take a turn for the worse.

The sky was gorgeous with a beautiful rainbow near the sun. Suddenly, that nice picture of the landscape changed. I saw flashes of lightning, and loud thunder shook the ground. It was a storm, during rainy season in early June. The wind was blowing as if there were a hurricane. I heard one, two and then three doors slamming in the clinic. A strange sound gave place to a sudden silence which I could hear. I caught my breath and knew I had to leave right away, without getting the shot. But my right hand was still hurting. I hesitated to start my motorbike. However, I did so despite the rain that began to fall all around me. I rode straight home, where I found a cousin who asked me what was going on. "I don't know," I answered.

Then, an inspiration came to him; he told me with his deep voice that it might be witchcraft. He implored me to follow him to the healer. I did so, but I did not trust his healer because he asked for a large sum of money. I thought that he was going to swindle me for my money. I left and went back home. On my bed, I fell asleep. A few minutes later, I began to dream. I visualized a devil trying to hurt my spirit. Also, I saw my dead mother warning me not to give up the fight, telling me I had to struggle to save my own life and beat the challenge.

I imagined something might be going on, so I went to visit my in-laws. As soon as they saw me, they asked me questions about my health, since they could see sickness on my pale face. I showed my swollen right hand. Immediately, my mother-in-law assumed it was the evil practice of people that might be opposed to my marriage to her daughter. She told me without hesitation that it was *Shakatu*, a spiritual weapon that hypocrites use in my country to hurt their enemies or get rid of them. The bullets are not visible and after a maximum of thirty days the victim dies if he is not rescued. *Shakatu* treatment could not be done in the hospital. If the victim had a shot, he could pass away in the hours following.

My mother-in-law had a bottle containing a tea made from leaves mixed with a local alcohol called sodabi that heals the effect of *Shakatu*. She gave me the mixture to drink. Some time later, I sweated, and then she fed me. I felt better. In addition, I had to apply the homemade concoction to my right hand for two more months. Soon after, a half liter of stinky pus came out of my right hand. I was paralyzed for three weeks. Throughout this my in-laws were optimistic. I had to use my fingers and exercise my right hand. One month later I was fully recuperated.

Witchcraft has always been a taboo subject around the world. In fact, it's difficult or impossible to show evidence of such a reality. People with common sense wonder how an invisible bullet could hit the spirit. Nevertheless, *Shakatu* is part of our reality in Benin that should not be doubted.

Barthelemy Koumassou has a law degree in Belen, Africa, and has taught French there and here at Rush-Henrietta. He wants to earn his teaching certification here in NYS.

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Loss

By Figen Cansever

In the middle of the room a woman was lying on the soft pillows, her back turned towards the door. She was sleeping soundly. The TV was on. It was a quiet, silent, lonely night.

The woman heard a sound that startled her. She began to come out of her sleep. She looked around, but didn't recognize where she was. Was it a dream? She could hear a knock on the door. She sat up. She looked around, but nothing looked familiar. She asked herself, "What am I doing here? Who am I?" She didn't remember anything. She tried, but she couldn't. Then, she started to worry. She stood up, looked around at the pictures on the walls, the vases filled with flowers. The clock was showing ten after 2 AM. She wanted to find something that would tell her who she was, young or old, if she was pretty or not. What was her name? Was she married? Did she have kids, or any other family?

Someone was knocking hard on the door. She came up to the door but didn't open it. She listened behind the door. A voice said, "Figen, open the door." "Who

is this?" she asked. "I'm Yuksel. Open the door," the voice said. "I don't know who you are," she said. "Open the door. I'm your husband!"

She froze for a while. A "husband," did she have a husband? Her brain was a black hole. Someone was saying, "I am your husband." Did she really have a husband or kids? She didn't remember how long she stayed there, but the voice was calling her Figen. Was that her name? She opened the door and saw his face. He didn't look familiar. He looked at her face and understood something was going on there! He tried to hide his emotions, but something was really serious. First of all, he thought she might be upset that he came late and hadn't called her; she wasn't acting. He had known her for twelve years. She wasn't that kind of person. Then, he realized suddenly she might have lost her memory!

He started to tell who she was: 28 years old, blond, with two kids - one boy, one girl, a married woman. They had been married for 12 years. They were living in Istanbul. Her parents and his parents were living there too.

She looked very quiet, but, terrified at the same time. Terrified... because she couldn't get out of her black hole. She tried to figure it out, to solve the puzzle, but things wouldn't go in the right places. She couldn't even remember her own kids who were sleeping in the next room. "In the world there is nothing worse than not knowing who you are," she thought.

Now she didn't even go to her mother's house which was only one block away without her purse with her driver's license inside. Nobody knew what had happened or why.

This experience took place in my life time. Losing memory is my biggest fear in the whole world. It didn't take more

than one hour, but still it makes me shiver when I remember. I live my life wondering day to day what if I lost my memory again. Would I be able to get back home to my family?

Figen Cansever comes from Turkey. Her major is Business.

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First Time by Fe Thomann

All my family went with me to the airport to pick him up. I wasn't sure what Kurt looked like, so I took his picture with me just in case. My eyes caught one American walking by himself toward us. "That's Kurt!" my brother Abel told me. I said, "No, he doesn't look like him." My brother encouraged me to call him. "Kurt, right here!" and surely he was happy to see us. I was embarrassed that I hadn't recognized him. Later, when he found out what had happened, he made fun of me, saying, "I forgive you for not remembering me."

Now he had arrived. He had only one week to stay, so he was in a hurry to get married. The judge talked to him first before the ceremony. "Here in the Philippines, we don't have divorce. You have time to back out if you change your mind." Kurt responded to the judge, "Let's start now. What are we waiting for?" After the wedding ceremony, the judge asked my husband to kiss the bride and said, "Show us how a Marine kisses the bride." He kissed me a good one.

I had met my American husband in my homeland, the Philippines. He was a marine on vacation; he had only two days left. I was walking with my friends, and we had noticed somebody following us. They came over to us and introduced themselves. One was tall, and the other

one was short. I shouldn't call him short. He was taller than me; he was about five feet, seven inches tall.

First, he was trying to talk to my friend, but she was shy or didn't know English very well, so Kurt ended up talking to me. I wasn't interested in him either. When he asked me to go out, I replied, "No, I don't have time." I was in college at that time. I was afraid if I went out with him, my parents would kill me, and they would stop me from going to school.

"Here's my address and phone number. Call me anytime and don't hesitate to write. I'll send you a letter, okay!" "Here's my address and no phone number." I wasn't sure if he would write.

One month later, I received the first letter and photo from him. I was surprised, and I felt different. I felt happy and couldn't wait to read it to my family. He looked good. That was the first time I was attracted to him.

One day, he asked me to marry him. "Would you like to come over here? Where do you prefer to get married? Would you marry me?" "Yes, Kurt, I will marry you." Right away, he sent me a fiancée visa. After the embassy approved it, I was able to come to America. But then I started to worry, not knowing whom I was marrying. I told him what I felt about him, so he decided to come to the Philippines to get me.

At the embassy, we tried to process my papers, but I wasn't able to come with him because the fiancée visa was no longer valid. The visa requirements had changed. Kurt had to go back to the United States for an immigrant visa. He was sad when he left, and I was too. He was disappointed that I couldn't go home with him.

It took eight months, but finally,

the immigrant visa was approved. He decided to pick me up. This time I would remember him at the airport. He was my husband, my loving husband.

At the Rochester airport, his mother was waiting for us. She had the same facial features like my husband. I recognized her. "Welcome home, Fe. Finally we meet." She hugged me very tight. I was happy to meet her, but I was shy. I didn't say a lot.

On the drive home, I looked around. I thought Rochester would be a big city like New York City, but I was wrong. Everybody was trying to talk to me. I had a hard time understanding them, especially his mother, who spoke too fast.

My first time in America, I had to learn everything. I had to learn how to drive, cook, and work for a big company. The first time I was alone was when my husband was sent to Saudi Arabia for war. We only had about seven months together when they shipped him out. I was alone for three months.

When he came back, we decided to have children, Gretchen and Carl. This year it will be sixteen years since the first time we met.

Fe Thomann is planning to study Radiologic Technology.

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Molded by Life
By Daniel Adam

His name is Joseph. His homeland was the republic of Sudan. His childhood story is hard to tell. When he was nine or ten years old, his country was in great political turmoil, a clash which took many lives. Women, children, and men were killed. A lot of people moved out

of the country. Some of them survived, and others died.

The massive assassination and bombardment by the then Sudanese government triggered the total migration of twelve thousand Sudanese people. Joseph was one of those who were migrating to nowhere. He lost his parents. He was just walking with those who were walking. It wasn't a matter of journey; it was a question of keeping himself alive.

"The one who is older than you is like your parents. He takes care of you, and you have to take care of others who are younger than you. Even if you are a kid, you should act and serve as an adult. Even if you are tired, hungry and sick, you need to go ahead. That is the only way to survive. During that time, the only refugee camp in Africa was in Ethiopia, so we were traveling to Ethiopia."

Imagine, you are walking day and night, but you don't know how many miles you have to go and where the end of your journey would be. Sometimes you have to run to escape from those machine guns that are shouting behind you. However, the highly flooded river is in front of you. Those who could cross the river survived; those who didn't were covering the upper layer of the water. Joseph was one of the survivors.

"You need to walk as fast as you can to keep yourself closer to the other people. If you are left behind, you might turn yourself into a delicious meal for those sharp toothy, dangerous animals like lions and leopards."

After long days and a tiresome journey, they arrived in Ethiopia. But, the country had already entered into civil war. Joseph and others had to move out of this country, too. "We decided to go back to Sudan; we had no other choice."

When they arrived in Sudan again, the government greeted them with an air bombardment. Another voyage was started to the next neighboring country, Kenya. When they arrived in Kenya, there were seven thousand of them left out of the original twelve thousand people. All that harassment and horror, hunger, death and sickness came to an end in Kenya when the United States government gave its permission to give them asylum.

A lot of kids had the chance to be adopted by Americans. Joseph was one of them. "Everyone who gives you love and trust, and takes care of you, can be your family. You don't have to be biologically related." He loves his family. Now he is attending college for a better life.

As metal is heated at high temperatures to be molded, men also have to experience hardship and bad times. A person who knows the happiest page of life may not measure the saddest part of it. Joseph is the right person to tell about the strengths and weaknesses of a human being.

Daniel Adam is a student from Ethiopia. His major is International Business.

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End of the Days
By Ilhan Oksuz

On August 17th, 1999 at 3:02 a.m. local time, northwest Turkey was shaken by an enormous earthquake, catching me in my deep sleep. That night my nephew wanted to sleep in my room. My mother was in the room opposite. My brother and his wife were in the next room. The weather was unbelievably hot. At two minutes past three, I was woken up by

neighbor's dog howling.

Then suddenly the earthquake started. I was sleeping next to the window. When I awoke, not understanding what was happening, everything other than an earthquake came into my mind. I couldn't speak, as if I had swallowed my tongue. Our house and the opposite house were leaning towards each other so much that I could see right into the neighbors through the window. At first I thought that our house had collapsed. It hadn't, but there was a horrifying groaning noise with incredible lights. And that noise was my friend in the house opposite who was trapped under a cupboard. Now it seemed that the earthquake had stopped.

It hadn't stopped. It was as if something had grabbed hold of us from underneath, turned us upside down and was shaking us. The house was moving from side to side, never stopping. Terrible, deep noises were coming from the ground. Then there was a loud noise of buildings collapsing. Screams, the noise of breaking glass. Our house was buried in a deep silence. In the inky black darkness I couldn't feel my own feet. The house hadn't really collapsed. Afterwards they said that I had suffered a shock, a paralysis. When my mom called me, my feet revived and I ran out into the pitch dark night. Suddenly, I remembered my nephew. I ran back into the house and grabbed him and ran out again. My mother, brother and his wife were already outside. The ground was still shaking. There were voices coming from the neighbors' houses. After a lot of effort we managed to get them out.

For two days we slept in the van. We still hadn't been able to get any news of our relatives. Our family was all right! No one dead and no one injured. That momentary paralysis I had suffered was over. But the aftershocks were really frightening. I thought they would never end.

Ilhan Oksuz is interested in working in the field of Computers.

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Angel

By Kate Gwozdz

Do you believe in angels? When I was younger I used to make some room in my bed for an angel, so he would have some place to sit. I didn't want him to stand up all night long right next to my bed. Then as I got older, I forgot about my angel. I wouldn't move to the side; I wouldn't make him space to sit right next to me. I just forgot about him. At this point you probably think that, like most of the kids, I had an imaginary friend. Maybe I did. I still think that there was an angel sitting right next to me, and taking care of me.

One day I was on my way to church with my brother. We decided to stop by my mom's store to get an ice cream. It was late afternoon, about 7:00 p.m. It was chilly outside. My brother had a red jacket on, jeans, his cute yellow shoes with Garfield on his shoelaces. The red jacket looked good on him. He had very blonde hair, and white skin. Matt was an adorable eight year old kid. Everybody loved him, my neighbor, the lady at the store, the mailman. But there was something wrong about that day. It was dark outside. The lights on the street went on as we were walking down the sidewalk. You could see the orange sky after the sunset. Even though it looked like a nice afternoon, inside I felt that there was something wrong.

The church was only ten minutes away from our house. We had to walk through the neighborhood first, then cross the road, which was always busy, and then walk through the neighborhood again. We stopped at the intersection. There

was a small kiosk with magazines and newspapers behind us. I still remember today; it was yellow with green lines. We said "Hi" to the lady that worked there, and then we tried to run across the road. It was busy as always. Buses, cars, trucks, motorcycles, all kinds of vehicles. I was ready to run across when a blond lady that I had never seen before around our neighborhood stopped me and said: "Watch out kids. The traffic is really bad today. We don't want any of you to get hurt." She gave me a calm, warm smile. I don't remember her face very clearly, but I would never forget this smile.

Obviously, a trouble kid like me would ignore a comment like that. I decided to run across the street. I screamed to my brother: "Come on, Matt. We are late". I didn't even make it to the other side of the road. The sound went through my ears and paralyzed me. I turned my head around in slow motion, but it was fast enough for my hair to blow in the wind. I saw Matt's body lying on the side of the road. All the traffic had stopped. I saw a huge red bus coming, so I ran towards it, waving my hands in the air, so he would stop. My brother's yellow shoe fell off his foot. I went to grab it. I was trying to put it back on his small foot, but my hands were shaking. I didn't know what to do. The lady from the kiosk came up to me, and told me that 911 was on their way. "I have to go." I said.

I left my brother, who was unconscious, with the whole crowd. I ran to my house which was just a minute away. All the way there, I was trying to make up an explanation of what happened to Matt. I had no idea what I would tell my parents. Thousands of thoughts went through my head, but only one was the most clear. When I got to my house, my neighbor was there. They were all sitting in the living room, drinking coffee. I just screamed: "Mom! Dad! Matt got hit by a car. You have to come." When I saw the

expression on my mom's face I realized what kind of pain news like that can do to a mother. My mother's face changed so quickly. She grabbed a blanket that was lying right next to her, and then she just ran towards the accident. I ran after them.

My grandpa was already there. A couple minutes later the ambulance came, and they took my little brother to the hospital. My mom went with them. My dad and I drove there. We didn't say a word on our way. I worried about my brother's concussion, but the thing that I couldn't get out of my mind was the lady with the blonde hair, and the face that I had never seen before. When we got to the hospital, my mom told us that every thing was okay; he was conscious when they got there. A few days later Matt came back home. Nothing had really happened to him, just some bruises. He said that he remembered everything that we did before he got hit, even the conversation that we had before that, and my last words to him. But whenever I ask him about the lady with blonde hair... he doesn't remember.

Maybe this experience didn't change the way I look at my spiritual status. Maybe it didn't teach me how and when I should cross the road, but I know for sure that the blonde lady I saw that day was some kind of sign. I do believe that she was an angel. I never saw her before the accident or after the accident. I've been thinking about it so much that all I can remember is her blonde, long hair, her white jacket, her bright smile, and her sweet smell. So, do you believe in angels?

Kate Gwozdz, from Poland, is studying Criminal Justice.

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Accidental Meeting: He is proud to be a Sri Lankan.

By Gaya Pararajasingham

People say sometimes God makes you meet certain people at a certain time. I meet interesting people very rarely. I have met people who seem happier outside but sadder inside, and others who look moody and sadder outside, but enjoy their inner life. I can read people by looking at them or their faces. But how did I fail in reading his face?

Sundays are usually not busy or crowded at all. Only the routine doctors show up where I work. I don't really talk with most of them because of my low self-esteem. I am poor in English. Still, I usually pretend to be a native speaker. I say "hi" and that's it. Nothing else, especially if I see it is an Indian doctor. Then I don't even say "hi," but maybe just a quick, fake smile. I have a horrible ego. Indian and Sri Lankan doctors have a big ego. People respect them as Gods because they save people's lives. This was my perception of all Indian and Sri Lankan doctors. I was so wrong that day.

"Hi, how are you?" I saw next to me a good-looking, young man. This was the first time I heard hi from an Indian doctor! Then "I am Arthur Ajaysingha." "How can I help you?" I said curtly. He repeated his name again and kindly asked, "Could you tell me who the nurse for Mr. John James is?" I pointed to his nurse; he stepped out to talk with her. After he left, I felt a horrible pain – why was I so rude? He seemed to have a really great personality. He was quiet, respectful and very good-looking.

Now that day I had brought some samosa for a party. One of our nurses came to me. "He is handsome, so cute. Is he married?" She forced me to talk

to him. I didn't like that. Quietly, I was losing my temper. "Why should I talk to him?" But my eyes followed her. She was following him, trying to talk to him. I liked the way he ignored her. She asked him, "Do you like samosa? It is delicious. I love them. I asked Gaya for her recipe. Would you like to have some?" "Of course, I love samosa," he replied. I was very surprised. He was excited and said loudly, "The person who has to offer it to me is very quiet. She hasn't asked me to have any yet." Shocked. I hurried into the conference room to give him a piece.

"Which part of India are you from?" I asked. Suddenly he looked strange. "Is there anything wrong? I am sorry," I quickly replied. Maybe he doesn't like personal questions. "Am I Indian? Don't tell me I am an Indian or that I look like an Indian. I am a pure Sri Lankan. I am proud to be a Sri Lankan!" He raised his eyebrows and touched his heart. In the US, Sri Lankans usually pretend to be Indians. Sometimes I do the same. "What about your family?" I asked. "My father is a retired lawyer, and my mom is a journalist. Papa, is Sri Lankan and Mom is Italian. I was born in Sri Lanka, but I moved to London when I was 2 years old. My father and I go to Sri Lanka once a year. I finished my M.B.B.S in London. I have been here for almost seven years." While he was talking, he took out his wallet. "This is my mom and dad." I froze. It was one of my uncle's pictures. That was my mother's elder brother. I never knew about him because she has no relationship with him. She was so angry about his love marriage that she never talked about him with us. Suddenly, I thought, "What a good-looking cousin I have!"

Gaya Pararajasingham is planning to study Radiologic Technology.

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A Dream from the Past

By Iraida Nesterov

“It is so cold to wake up every morning, knowing that I am alone again. I just had a beautiful dream, almost unbelievable. I saw my mother and her beautiful smile. I could smell the aroma of a freshly baked pie. I could see my father. His always-tired look made me feel sorry that he had to work so hard in order to earn a living. Working so much outside made his skin look older, even though he is still young. I could also see and hear my sister and brother laughing, and running around my parents. I love these mornings, where all our family is gathered together for breakfast. However, a few minutes later, I realize that it was just a dream, or better said, just one of my memories about our once-happy family...” This became the most common dream of the majority of the Moldavian children.

Poverty, the unstable economic situation, and increased level of corruption forced a lot of the parents to leave their children and move to other countries in order to make a living; this separation had a negative effect upon the Moldavian children and destroyed their once happy and complete family. With every year the number of these children drastically increases. They are left with the oldest child to supervise them, or with their grandparents. Usually, the grandparents are too old and unable to take good care of the children. The huge age difference between them created a base for conflict and misunderstanding.

It all began with the separation from the USSR. Now Moldova has become an independent country. However, along with independence came poverty, insecurity, and economical instability. After being divided from a very powerful

country, Russia, which had always provided Moldova with electricity, gas, and petroleum products, people began to feel the negative results of this political change. Later on, corruption in the name of privatization overtook the country. Most of the population lost their houses, money and everything that was once valuable. Unable to provide their families with sufficient income, people started to flee to other countries, leaving behind their children. As a result of being left alone, children became more and more affected by the bad street influences. They had to face real life in the form of drugs, poverty and alcohol abuse before finishing high school. The increased number of divorces and orphans was the result of one’s desire to become independent.

There was no time for sentiment or children’s interests, only time for hard work in order to survive. Overnight, the government and the politicians stole their citizens’ savings, by changing the currency. They crushed people’s faith in honesty and truth. They ruined people’s ability to trust and to have a normal family, and normal relationships. Friendship, trust, and happiness were all gone from the Moldavian people’s lives. They started to live in the present, surrounded by betrayal, dishonesty, rudeness, and various forms of corruption. The majority of the population had to go through divorces, or separations from their loved ones. Children forgot how happy it was to celebrate holidays in the family circle. Instead, they were facing conflicts and misunderstandings with their parents who stayed with them, but were too busy to spend quality time with them.

It was all different back then, before the separation from the USSR. People had stable jobs; they knew that their children’s future was clear and prosperous. Without having social, economical, and political problems, the

Moldavian population concentrated on the improvement of their homes and their families’ lifestyles. Parents were directly involved in their children’s lives. They would play together, learn together, do some work around the house, and spend quality time together. Parents tried to be a good example for their children. They taught their children to respect and help elders. They guided their children through happiness and sadness. They were the kind of support and love that every child was looking for. Growing up in a healthy family environment, children would eventually follow their family’s values and try to pass them on to the next generation. Love, respect, tenderness and wisdom were the major characteristics of a normal family’s values in Moldova before the independence, but that all changed quickly.

There is nothing more important than a family in society. The ideal dream of any human being is to have a family and be embraced with love, happiness, and understanding. Children represent the essence of our existence, and they are the ones who should carry the family’s traditions, values, and legacy. Separating children from their parents is the most horrible crime on earth. It is the same as ruining the synchronization of our universe. Sadly, a lot of people do not realize how important this connection between parents and children is. Driven by different reasons, parents leave their children to destiny’s will. They ruin their children’s lives without even realizing it.

Children are the most beautiful gift that parents can ever have. They are honest, open and ready to love their parents. Children do not need their parents’ money. They do not care how hard it is for parents to earn a living. They just want to experience their love and attention. Therefore, every parent should think carefully before

making this difficult decision to leave their children. They should confront each economical or political set back, and try to keep their families together. Parents should also understand that although fleeing to other countries has some positive moments, like earning the needed amounts of money, it has more negative ones than positive, such as losing their children, not being able to see their children growing, not being able to educate them, and not being able to provide a happy and warm environment for their loved ones. There were always rough times in our history when people had to suffer; however, they always managed to keep safe the most valuable treasure – their families, together.

Iraida Nesterov is majoring in Accounting.

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Why Did It Have to Happen to Me?

By Carlos Hernandez

It started one bright, shining morning when I had just woken up. I sat on my bed for a few seconds thinking what this beautiful day might bring. I stood up from my bed and started walking towards the bathroom. I opened the door and grabbed the toothpaste. Meanwhile my mother was getting ready. I wondered if we were going somewhere, when I heard a voice that said, “*Papito* would you get ready please?” I responded, “Where are we going?” “to Grandma’s house.” I was so excited because I would have done almost anything to get out of the house.

My mother and I started walking on the sidewalk towards my grandma’s. I could hear the birds singing and the cars passing fast. I held my mother’s hand

all the time.

Once there, my face was glowing like a star. I said, “*Bendicion abuelita*” which means, “Bless me Grandma.” She answered. “Bless you, my child.” I knew I had to say that before anything else, or I would have gotten in trouble. It’s a respectful thing. There at my grandma’s house was my grandfather, my six aunts, two uncles, my six cousins, my mother and I, and of course my grandma, Dona Goya.

I heard really fast stomps, loud laughing and screaming. My neighbors and cousins were playing hide and seek. I sure was looking forward to playing, but I had to ask permission first. I started playing with my friends and relatives, and it just seemed like the perfect day. After a couple of hours playing, I was already tired. While my family talked on the porch, I went to the refrigerator and got a little bit of juice.

Around mid day, my eyes wide open saw a big dark-skinned man carrying a little brown lunch bag. I knew who he was, but at the same time I didn’t want to know. It seemed like the clock had stopped, and everything had gone still. In a heart beat I was standing near my mother. I could hear my mother saying to my aunt, “Look who’s coming.” When this man arrived, he and my mother started talking. Suddenly I heard him say, “My son, would you come here? I have something for you.” I started walking very slowly. It was like I had to ask permission for each step that I was going to take. When I finally got to the fence where they were talking, he gave me the little bag; it was filled with candy.

I could see the face of this man getting angry while talking to my mom. The only words I heard were, “Can we go for a walk in the park? I need to talk to you in private.” Quickly, my mom refused. Turning her back to him, she

grabbed my shoulders, and we walked back to the house. He left, agitated and mumbling.

After entering the house, I was asked if I wanted to eat. I said yes, but only if there was ketchup. My mother reached for a plate, spoon and started serving my food, one of my favorites, white rice with corn, beef, and of course the ketchup. I sat in a rocking chair. While I was eating, the sky suddenly turned grayish, as if it was going to pour. My cousins were eating on the floor and trying to gulp their food as fast as possible because they wanted to play in the rain.

A light breeze started flowing through the air and little drops of water were coming down from the sky. By then we were all jumping from excitement. Out of nowhere it started raining hard; we ran in it without hesitation. Only five minutes had passed when we saw the first lightning. I got really scared and went in the house to change while my cousins stood outside playing in the rain.

Meanwhile, my mom was getting ready to leave, “Go get your candy; we are leaving as soon as it stops raining.” When it finished raining, I gave everyone a kiss and told my aunts and Grandparents, “*Bendicion.*” Now that we were leaving, I remembered that man. Was he going to be in the corner store? I sure didn’t want to go by it with my mom, but we really had no choice whatsoever. My mom held my arms tightly while walking quickly. I was right! He was waiting outside the store like he knew that we were coming. In a blink of an eye he crossed the street and started walking with us. Once again he insisted on talking to my mom. She finally agreed, but only for a second. There was an unpleasant smell coming out of his mouth when he was talking. He had a bottle in his hand, and it wasn’t soda. He was drunk. I could feel

him getting agitated. I knew this man was bad and dangerous. I had seen him hit my mom before. I had seen her suffer in silence. Many times I had dried her tears.

We were standing on a little hill in front of a church when all of the sudden the man started telling my mom, “You are never going to be happy. I am going to make sure to make your life miserable. I am going to take my child with me, and you are never going to see him again. Better yet I am going to kill you both.”

I felt like the world had just collapsed. I burst into tears. My dear mother picked me up and said to the man, “Shut up. You are making him scared, not that you care.” The only words that came out of my mouth at the moment were, “Mom let’s go. Let’s leave. Mom, let’s go.” Nervous, shaking and still crying, we headed back to my grandparents’ house where we could feel safe. I could see the fear in my mom’s voice when she was talking to my aunts. I couldn’t believe what I had just witnessed.

“It’s late; why don’t you and Carlitos (me) sleep over here tonight?” my grandmother asked. Before my mother could say anything, I sadly, but quickly said, “Please, Mom, please.” We ended up spending the night there. My grandma tried to entertain me, trying to clear my head of all the bad things that had just happened. We played bingo, but for some reason those powerful words that that man had said were playing in my head. “It’s time for bed.” My mom tucked me in and cuddled with me. “Don’t worry; everything is going to be alright. I love you.” “I love you too, Mom.”

The following morning I was awoken by the bright shining sun. I got up, went to the bathroom, took a shower and washed my mouth. Luckily, my mom and aunt had gotten my clothes and tooth brush while I was playing

bingo yesterday with Grandma. I sat at the table and started eating pancakes. While eating breakfast, I was told not to get close to that man and not to leave with anyone. With a scared look in my face I said, “Okay, Mom.” I knew for some reason that this man was going to keep bothering us. All day long I didn’t feel relieved. I was frequently thinking that I was going to be apart from my lovely mother. I was constantly thinking that I was never going to see her again and that made me sad, angry, scared, and nervous. I was so nervous that I developed the habit of eating my finger nails. I bled a lot because I ate all the nail, literally not leaving anything on my fingers.

I am still struggling with these thoughts in my mind, but I don’t tell anyone. I just become sad thinking about all the things I have gone through. Sometimes I stop and think, Why me? Why out of all the people in the world did it have to happen to me? The one thing that breaks my heart is the constant thought of my own father wanting to kill me.

Carlos Hernandez, from Puerto Rico, is studying Interior Design.

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Can You Be a Tall Stake?

By Yuka Suzuki

“*Deru kui ha utareru.*” or “A tall stake catches a hit.” This old Japanese saying is equivalent to “a tall tree catches much wind” in English. Though these sayings mean the same, they teach us opposite lessons. In English, a taller tree stands higher than the others; it can see farther ahead than shorter trees; it can be seen from a distance; it can

progress faster. Being a taller tree is desirable. In contrast, a Japanese taller stake stands out among the others; it has a greater chance to be hit. It tells the Japanese not to stand out. This precisely illustrates points of divergence between recommended Japanese viewpoints and American attitudes. Both Japan and the US play a huge part in the world economy. However each country attributes its main driving force to virtually opposite ideologies. The radical growth in modern Japanese society is mainly based on the idea of conformity. In US, the social structure stands on individuality.

The best way to understand how the ideology differs between countries is to look at the education provided in each country. Many Japanese elementary, junior, and high schools require students to wear school uniforms. There are recommended satchels, shoes, and hats. At the beginning of each class, all the students stand up, bow to the teacher, and sit down in unison. Yet, you seldom find schools requiring specific outfits in the US, and American students can choose what to wear according to the weather and their tastes. No bowing is required before class. The Japanese way reminds me of military training. It is very true that these practices originated before World War II, when Japan followed a militarism style. Interestingly, it has not changed drastically. Japanese ways practically require you to be exactly the same as all of the others. What is more frightening is that you will become accustomed to these ways.

The learning and teaching styles are also different. For example, imagine that you are a schoolgirl, who is going to draw a winter animal. An American teacher allows you to decide the type of paper and paints, and animal you wish to draw. In Japan, a white paper will be handed out; you have exactly the same paint kits; a teacher may even tell you

what kind of animal you should draw, in case the student cannot decide. The American way allows you to explore various trials, and whatever you choose means something. In contrast, there is less opportunity for creativity and imagination in Japan. You might think that this is a tiny difference. However, we all know very well that many little bits make a lot.

The American style of education can provide more variety and flexibility. It encourages students to think, solve and create by themselves. In my eyes, this method is not really teaching, rather it is self-learning. This method allows individuals to develop abilities to find one's own way even though it is not concerned much about overall academic achievement level. The system can shape many geniuses, and at the same time more failures can be born.

In Japan, learning means memorizing. Learning is not creativity, or originality. In this system one can create uniformly smart kids, but it also encourages us to be identical. There should always be a single right answer. If you have only one appropriate answer to give, all the rest are wrong. There are merits to people being uniform. Having unvarying workers enables companies to manage employees with ease. There is less conflict within organizations. What is the downside? The world is becoming smaller and smaller, and we are faced with dealing with diverse affairs more and more. Understanding and accepting different concepts are essential in modern society.

Are the ideologies used different between Japan and US? Does this affect our every day life? I think the answer is yes. We can find prime examples in the medical field. The concept of order-made treatment is very popular in both countries. Doctors modify treatments according to each patient. However, the real contents of "the

order-made treatment" differ. Let's say that you are newly diagnosed as having Diabetes Mellitus, and you have a reversed life style, meaning that you sleep during the daytime and wake up at night. Japanese doctors will ask you to change your life style, and give you instructions for taking medicines as you should when following the traditional life style. Instead of changing you or your habits, American doctors try to fit, or modify treatments according to your lifestyle. Again, Japanese doctors think there is a single correct life style. Because they believe the way a patient is doing is wrong, they tend to lead a patient to the direction that they think is appropriate.

The ideologies professed by the Japanese and the Americans are almost opposite. Japanese modern society has grown because its ideology demands conformity. On the contrary, America became one of its kind among countries all over the world by believing in individualism. The roots of divergence are seen within the educational system, and in learning and teaching styles. The principle idea penetrates and affects our daily life without our realizing it. There is no single correct answer as to which ideology is more preferable. Both possess possibilities, in which extremes can be harmful to people, and, both possess merits and faults. However, the fundamental principal that upholds individualism and has a high regard for the idea of cooperativeness and harmony is the most desirable. Japanese society needs to accept this, to adapt to it, and to teach it. Being a taller stake is not wrong. Rather, it requires more courage. Those who are taller stakes should be proud of themselves.

Yuka Suzuki, a doctor in Japan, is now working as a technician at Strong Memorial Hospital.

Did She Cry for Help?

By Anam Ashfaq

The sun hid its face behind the clouds as if it was frightened to explain to anybody what it had seen. It was feeling pain while setting behind the mountains. The weeping clouds were dissolving in embarrassment as if they were the culprits, and they were trying to remove every bit of evidence against them. The steps of every man, woman and child were moving towards the center of the road where there was already a huge crowd of scared and frightened people. Shocked, they were trying to find the answer for what had happened. Their faces were pale and inquiring. They couldn't take a single step further. Their legs were forbidden to move. The wind was trying to push the people back, trying to hide what nature had done, but it failed. The sound of the siren of an ambulance pierced our hearts.

My heart was sinking in grief when suddenly someone shouted, "Anam! Anam!" A voice searching for me finally found me. I turned my back from the scene outside the terrace. "What were you doing here? I have been calling you for about five minutes." That was my mom. No words slipped from my mouth. For the first time my eyes met her eyes and what I could see were her broad eyes and lifted eyebrows. But before I said anything, the phone rang. "Take the call. I have to turn off the oven," my mom said as she passed from the bedroom to the hall. I grabbed the receiver and forced my tongue to say "hello." But after a moment I dropped the receiver to the floor, and ran as fast as I could towards the terrace. My mom who was confused by my behavior chased me, grabbed my shoulders, and then asked, "What happened?" Her eyes full of love and her deep voice gave me enough strength to tell her that Dr. Sarah was

no more. My finger pointed at the road outside the terrace. The unbelievable and sudden death of Dr. Sarah left my mom stunned. But she got control over her emotions and prayed to God for Sarah with her watery eyes and soft voice, "May God forgive her sins and give her a place in heaven." She hugged me, and then a stream of tears started flowing from my eyes as if it would never stop.

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Half an hour earlier, I decided to spend some time on the terrace with a cup of coffee to relax. I was alone because my brothers had a cricket match at my aunt's house, my father was at his office and my mom went to inquire about the old granny of our neighbor who had just been released from the hospital the night before. The sky was decorated with showering clouds. It was really a beautiful scene, and the sun was about to set. Suddenly, I saw a bike slip in the center of the wet road. The man on the bike fell along the curb, but the lady who sat behind him was thrown right into the center of the road. Before the man regained his senses, a truck right behind the bike ran over her, smashing her face and neck like a boiled mashed potato. The man was only staring up at the sky. I couldn't see their faces because the scene wasn't close to my apartment. I stood like a statue; I couldn't understand how the beautiful evening had turned into a horrible, scary night. Was the rain the cause of her death? In the meantime my mom returned, and I received a call. There would be a funeral for a lady I loved, Dr. Sarah. Dr. Sarah was the daughter of my mom's friend, and I had known her since I was five years old. She had four sisters and two brothers. There was a large age difference between Sarah and me but we were friends. I admired her a lot because most of our interests were the same. We were even interested

in the same profession, medicine. Two years ago she had finally graduated from medical school, and in the same year was married to Dr. Hamid. She had two cute daughters, a one-year old and a baby two months old.

I watched the scene of the death of the person that I admired the most. I felt sad for her kids. Sarah's mother couldn't accept the fact that her daughter was no more. For three months she was very depressed, and believed that her daughter would come back. But how can those persons ever be returned who have already gone so far from this world? That was the worst experience of my past. The death of a twenty-eight year old hard working and beautiful girl let me believe that the most untrustworthy thing in this world is life. I sometimes wonder when Sarah was nearly dying, did she cry out for help? Did she call someone? Did she want to see her kids for the last time? How helpless she was! Imagining all these things, I felt tears burst from my eyes. I had no control over my emotions. The police did catch the truck driver. But would this ever return the daughter to the crying mother? Would this ever replace the mother of two very little girls? I prayed to God to place her in heaven and give patience to her mother and kids.

I couldn't understand what her life was about. Till the age of twenty-six she was studying madly to achieve her goal, and when she got the fruit of her efforts, she was married to a man she loved, and had two kids. Then what happened? She left the world, and left her little heaven. My heart broke into pieces when I saw her youngest daughter who never received her mom's love completely. I felt sad for Sarah's mom who sometimes by mistake calls out her daughter's name. I felt sorry for Sarah. It is a fact that a child's death is the deepest grief for parents. Sarah's sudden and early death left a painful memory in our minds forever.

We say that our life is ours, but actually it is not ours because we have no control over our death. We cannot stop someone from dying, and we don't know if the dream we are imagining will come true in our presence, so who are we? Nothing, only puppets that act on God's command. God lends our life to us, and what we borrow from someone will never be ours. Two years have passed, and the lesson that I learned from this horrible experience is that we should not trust in our lives because we don't know if the air that we are inhaling will be able to come out. We should try to be happy in this world and pass these moments cheerfully. We should try not to disappoint others.

Always try to make them happy because this is what life is all about.

Anam Ashfaque, from Pakistan, is planning to become a physician.

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Grandfather *By Hui Li Wu*

Now it is Friday night in New York, but Saturday morning in Shanghai, China. It is the right time to speak to my auntie. I am picking up the phone and dialing my auntie's phone number. I hear my auntie's phone ringing. Two minutes later, someone is picking up the phone. "Hello." "Hi Uncle. It's me Lili. Can I talk to Auntie?" "Lili, what's up?" she asks when she takes the phone. I say, "I've been thinking about Mom and Grandfather, but he died when she was only nine. She can't tell me anything about him really. Could you tell me Grandfather's story?"

My grandfather was born in Zhejiang, a small city in China. His family was big and rich with a lot of servants. That's why he got a good education.

His major was building design. After he graduated, he designed his own house first, then opened his own business. In that period, my grandfather met my grandmother. A year later, my big uncle was born. Because business wasn't very good, they decided to move to Shanghai. It is a big city; Grandfather would find a lot of chances for his business.

In his Shanghai period, there was a big change for my grandfather and grandmother. Grandfather worked very hard when he first got there. After his business became successful, he wanted to go out every night, sometimes with his business friends. Because he went out a lot, he met a woman called "a dancing lady." Her job was to dance with men. In that period, women still didn't have freedom; also men could have more than one wife, so I had a second grandmother that I had never heard about! Now he had a second wife, but my grandmother couldn't accept her. He decided to leave my grandmother alone. She went back to her hometown with her three children.

Because of the war in Shanghai, Grandfather, his second wife and my uncle moved to Neijing. They lived there until after the war finished. Since times changed, men now could only have one wife, so he divorced his second wife, leaving her the five houses he had built. He didn't have any children with his second wife, although with my grandmother he already had four. Since the divorce, we never heard about her again.

Grandfather picked up Grandmother, and they came back to Shanghai. My mother was born at this time, the last child in the family. My grandfather and grandmother now had five children. When my mother was nine years old, there was a terrible accident. Grandfather was very responsible at his job; that was why his business was successful. When he designed a building, he did

everything by himself. That evening, the weather was terrible. He was worrying about his new building. He wanted to go check on it. "If I don't check it tonight, I won't be able to sleep." But he never came back; a beam fell down from the building and killed him. He didn't finish his dream. He had already bought a place to build six houses, for himself and his children, which meant he and his children could live together forever. Actually, my mother lived only a short time with her father, and Grandmother had to raise her children alone. She lived a very hard life.

"Auntie, do you think Grandfather was a good father?" "Yes. Maybe he wasn't the best father, but he was a responsible one. He planned a future for his children." After I hung up, I still thought about my grandfather's story for a long time.

Hui Li Wu is majoring in Accounting.

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Beyond the Limit by Daniel Adam

Sometimes those who love too much lose everything. We were bonded together by a hidden spirit. I felt her, and she felt me. We shared love, sadness, the good and the bad. Once, we laughed together and cried together. Life tested and rewarded both of us.

The time that we spent together, the long way by which we traveled almost all my life, was unexpectedly approaching its end.

When I was twenty-one years old, I graduated from my two year college. I got my first job as a history teacher forty kilometers away from where I

lived. That was the first cold situation which separated us. However, every weekend I was home. She made me food for my weekdays. At that time, each and every Friday was a lost day. I didn't do my job regularly. My mind was calculating the time the bus was coming. I was spending almost one third of my salary for transportation. But my food source was her. Then, things changed completely.

She was standing outside, next to the giant eucalyptus tree. It was a reddish evening. The pure blue sky was decorated with red sun light. The sun was blessing a good night for everyone. My heart was beating like a baby. She gave me a big smile.

Besides my love, my wife, there was another thing hidden in my heart, my mother. I was going to leave her. She was waiting for this. She knew that one day her son would spend many, many days without seeing her. She was ready, but I wasn't.

I thought nothing would separate us. However, sometimes we can't have the life that we wish for. When something is happening, it paves the fertile ground for another thing. First, I left her because of work, then for marriage. And now, it is huge like a rock. Not only does it separate us, but it creates something that is lost. I have moved out of the country. I have lost my advisor, my mom, my sister and my friend. She was the one and the only one that could be everything for me. Have you ever been very close to your mom, beyond the limit? If so, you can feel it when you have lost it.

Daniel Adam is a student from Ethiopia. His major is International Business.

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My Dream Came True

By Noodkensie Anis

I have one best friend, Carline, a beautiful sexy woman, with long black hair, and a pretty caramel color. She has her own cosmetology business. An only child, she is living with her mother, a sweet old lady. They live together like angels with love and respect for everyone. Carline is very happy. Now that I am in America, I think about her all the time. I miss her and our past days together when I was growing up in Haiti.

It was July 3 in the afternoon. It was very warm outside, and the sun was shining. I was sitting outside to enjoy a little bit of the warm weather. I saw Carline's car parked near my house. She came near me with a big smile on her face, and tears in her eyes. I said, "What happened to you. You never cry my dear friend. Tell me if something bad has happened to your mother or to you." I took her hand, and we entered the house. "Nothing wrong happened to my mother, but something happened to me." "What is it?" She smiled at me, and said, "I'm having a baby." "Wow! my dear friend, I'm so happy for you," I exclaimed, and we both cried with joy. Her mother always dreamed to have a grandchild. I told Carline, "When you deliver your baby, call me because I want to see everything. Don't go to the emergency room alone. I will pray for you." "You always act funny," she replied. "When I was a little girl, I always wanted to see the way a baby came out. I always dreamed about that," I continued. "I won't promise you I will stay in my house to deliver the baby. Only God knows," she answered.

About two months later, Carline called me to say she had gone to the hospital to do an ultrasound. "My baby will

be a girl, the doctor said." Her mother was happy because she would have a granddaughter.

Four months later Carline and I went to the cinema to see the movie, *How you raise your child*. We lived on the same street, and my house was five houses from her house. We talked on the phone all the time every day, and most every day I saw her.

Then, on the night of September fourth at 9:00 PM Carline's mother called me. "Carline is having her labor quickly. She doesn't have time to go to the emergency room. She has terrible pains." I woke up, and I didn't even have time to put on other clothes. I went there with my pajamas. I saw a midwife near Carline to help her deliver her baby. She was screaming from the pain; it was not easy for her. Her midwife said, "Push Carline, push..." After two minutes I saw her baby's legs, and in three seconds I saw the baby coming out, face down. The baby wasn't breathing correctly, and everyone was scared for the little newborn. After two seconds, she started crying very loudly. The midwife said, "The newborn is okay now." But Carline almost died because of the different way the baby came out. "When you see the baby's legs first, both of them are in danger. But thanks to God everything is all right now," her midwife replied.

We all welcomed Judeline. She was beautiful with her big eyes. Her lips were a little bit pink, but she was a normal baby girl, and healthy. Her grandma was so excited to hold her granddaughter. I saw everything that night. I saw my dream come true, to see a baby being born. I will never forget that night in my life. It was a miracle for me. It is so rare to see birth.

NoodKensie Anis comes from Haiti. She is studying Human Services.

A Charitable Country

By Kira Kiriakidi

If you tried to estimate the amount of stress on a scale of 1 to 100, moving to a different country would probably be 110 points. Everything is different: language, roads, buildings, traditions and holidays, the way people communicate and relax, financial and educational institutions, and the health care system. For the first several months after moving to America we felt as if we had been smashed out of our convenient familiar road. We did not know where to go or what to expect in the new territory. Impressions are said to be food for the soul. We had a lot of impressions during that time; some of them have lasted until now. Every time I think about the institution of volunteering in America I feel amazed and awestruck.

We did not have such an organized and so broadly spread volunteer system in Russia as it exists here. In America, every time you step into the hospital you will see colorful jackets of volunteers who will help you to find your way in the building or bring a disabled patient in a wheelchair to the X-ray room. They will stay by the side of a terrified cancer patient and help him or her to go through the pain of chemotherapy. They work regularly, sometimes for years, but do not expect to get paid for it.

During my first year in America, I had English lessons with a nice older woman, Carol, who was a tutor at Literacy Volunteers of America. She met me every week for two hours over the period of one year, talked with me, corrected my mistakes, and explained to me how to use expressions and idioms. I received absolutely free help, practice in spoken language, and the luxury of communicating as well.

In addition to English tutors, there are hundreds of thousands of volunteers who work in ambulance service, fire departments, schools, libraries, and during fundraising events. Why do they do this? That was my first question when I realized the extent of volunteering all over the country. Probably, the most important reason is cultural – people here want to do something valuable. Doing volunteering work is very respected and socially approved.

Volunteers benefit from their work as well. Younger persons often begin volunteering in order to receive some experience in the field they are interested in, so they will have more chances in the future to receive a paid position. For older people, who are retired, volunteering is an excellent opportunity to feel busy and helpful. It really fills their life with purpose and energy. I am so sorry for most Russian retired people who are not able to live fully because of a lack of opportunity to socialize, to use their time productively, or to travel. It is also a question of the miserable pension they receive, but I believe such a system of volunteering would help them live differently.

In Russian history we had an example of an attempt to establish the tradition of working for free. Once a year, usually in April, on one of the Saturdays, all schools, all universities, and all businesses would stop their usual schedule and go outside to clean up their land, or to plant some trees. But it was not truly volunteering. It was mandatory and therefore was associated with something unpleasant and unwanted. In most of the cases, the work to be done was set as a task quite artificially so you might not even see the sense in doing it.

In Russia, the middle class does not exist as a big social group. There are few very rich people and a majority who live just above the poverty line or even below it. Most people struggle to earn a living,

just to make both ends meet. Doing some work for free would have caused misunderstanding at the very least.

In America, people have every opportunity to live comfortably, at least in material ways. Volunteering might bring psychological comfort, which could be one more reason why this system exists. People donate their time and energy for the good of society. I can literally feel this atmosphere of kind and sincere giving. It is the reason for my respect and gratefulness for living in this land.

Kira Kiriakidi, a medical doctor in Russia for many years, is currently looking for a residency position for 2007 to continue her medical career.

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What's on the Menu?

By Marta Mamos

Everything around me was bigger: buildings, cars, even people. “So, this is the beating heart of America! It looked different in the movies” was the thought that came across my mind while I was dragging my overstuffed bag on crowded and garbage ridden Fifth Avenue. I could hear grumbling in my stomach mixed with the honking of stuck-in-a-traffic-jam cabs which were filling out the whole street, making it look like a wide yellow river with very little flow. “This, probably, is the time when everyone goes back home,” I thought again glancing to the left and to the right, trying to find any familiar place to get a bite to eat. Among many other colorful neon signs I noticed one I already knew: “Pizza Hut.” It probably was just before my stomach got glued to my spine. That brought a big smile to my face, together with a memory

of the amazing pizza which I had had numerous times in Poland. Kicking a couple of plastic cups out of my way, I stepped into the pizzeria to have my first meal in “America.”

The first thing that hit me was the odor of burnt fat. There were no waitresses in white shirts saying “Welcome to Pizza Hut,” no bar, not even a salad bar. A little disappointed, I ordered “combo number two,” and a minute later I got two slices of pepperoni in a box and a medium coke in a plastic cup. Even though it took me a while to find a table with no trash on it and a few napkins to clean my chair, I was happy to finally sit down. Immediately, the heaviness in my legs started going away, but my stomach still craved food. Even the dripping fat from my pizza did not gross me out, and I devoured it right away. Sipping the coke, I was wondering what a different kind of experience it turned out to be from what I was expecting. I learned my first lesson though. Stay away from Pizza Hut!

“I am meeting my friend for brunch. Would you like to join us?” “Sure,” I answered without even thinking too much about it. That was a few weeks later in a different city. I was already dating a man who became an important part of my life a couple months later. Anyway, that was also the time when I was still buying lunch in McDonald’s or in China Town. One reason was that it was affordable for my \$140 a week au pair budget. Another, and probably more significant one, was that it was enough to say “number three please” or point to a picture in the case of a Chinese restaurant.

“Hi guys,” Jeremiah greeted us when we reached the entrance to Panera Bakery. It was a beautiful, sunny day, right in the middle of lunch time. People were rolling in and out constantly, making it quite a crowd inside. The guys went looking for an available table.

Meanwhile I stood in front of a long counter, staring at a giant blackboard with the menu on it. I started reading yellow, blue, and green names of meals, but they just sounded like alien words which I was not able to associate with any kind of food. Other people around me were skillfully going through the process of changing three or four lines and getting their food at the other end of the counter. I was standing there “lost in translation” and feeling stupid when I felt a gentle touch on my shoulder followed by a velvety voice asking “What do you want, sweetie?” “I am not hungry.” That was all I could draw out of myself. That was the first time I left a restaurant hungry, but I did learn how to proceed through all four lines as well as what a Caesar salad, clam chowder, and a club sandwich were.

A few days later, we went to lunch again. This time we were meeting Ethan’s friends in a cozy Greek restaurant. There was neither a long counter, nor blackboards on the wall, just bright wooden tables with the menus on them. Struggling to follow an ongoing conversation, I tried to find a Caesar salad. Unfortunately, I could not see it on the list, which made my well-prepared plan collapse. I was back to square one, digging in a thicket of meaningless words, trying to find something to eat. My heart started to pound and my hands were already sweating when I saw a waitress approaching our table. “Are you ready to order?” she asked smiling toward us. “Yes,” my party answered before I was even able to open my mouth. “Okay then,” she said, and her eyes met mine. My heart almost jumped out of my chest when I heard “What can I get you?” I had no clue, but I did not want to discredit myself in front of my boyfriend and his friends. I read the first thing I was able to catch out of the corner of my eye. My voice was trembling when I said “Greek string beans, please.” “All

right,” she said, writing my order in her little checkbook, shifting her attention to another person at the table. I sighed with relief, my muscles relaxed, and I started wondering what I had just ordered. It turned out the beans became one of my favorite meals in that restaurant. That was the day when I broke the ice with the American restaurant business, and my learning process gained speed.

Going to the USA, I was aware that a lot of things would be different and very often difficult. Even in my darkest dreams, I did not expect that getting food would be so challenging and stressful. I never anticipated choosing not to eat over the stress of ordering food. Now, a couple years later, I am able to order my salmon well done, with rice on the side, and ranch dressing on my salad without my heart pounding. I can even have a little chit-chat with the waitress about their wines.

Marta Mamos has a university degree in Physical Therapy from Poland.

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My Pain Never Goes Away *By Tanya Shyshko*

A long time ago I studied at the Ukrainian music school where my major was cello, and I was very excited about it.

One day, when I had an elementary school music class, I was five minutes late. I apologized, but it didn’t work. “Get out from this room!” barked my teacher, Mrs. Dura. “No,” I said. I was a very stubborn little girl, and I wanted to stay in the class under any circumstances. “Go out!” she hollered. When I said “No” again, this mean

woman completely lost her mind. She grabbed the collar of my winter coat and pushed me out the room. I could barely hide my tears. My little heart was beating so quickly. Oh, how sensitive and naive I was! After the teacher threw me out like a football, I did not want to go to the music school anymore. I was extremely upset.

A month later I still had the pain in my little heart. However, my love for music was stronger than my personal feelings. I decided to go back to my music school. Hesitantly, I opened the door. “Come in,” muttered Mrs. Dura in an unfriendly tone. I was scared. My body was shaking, and my tongue was paralyzed. “If you want to continue your music studies, take these books,” she said indifferently. Silently, I took the books and went out.

Five years later, I successfully graduated from the music school, but I have never forgotten this teacher’s name and her mean facial expression. Many years have past since my childhood, however, occasionally I dream about this incident. In my dreams Mrs. Dura yells at me.

A long time ago one woman hurt me so much, and this pain has never gone away.

Tanya Shyshko has studied Food Production.

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Embraced by the Light

By Ornella Fiorillo

Some days are gray, a color that often becomes black. Then the black gradually becomes blue, the intense blue of the sky.

When you lose a loved one you feel your breast heavy; you are suffocating. Tears, questions, memories overcome you. Only one hope prevails: "They do still exist!"

Who can breathe the last breath without pain? Is death always suffering? No human being departs this life without the profound feeling of separation from this world. It is not an effortless departure, but a "deletion" from this existence.

September 16th, 1995, my brother, Michele, got married. I wasn't able to be part of the ceremony since it was in the USA. That day I called them on the phone to congratulate them. I could hear their happiness. "Our dreams have come true. Michele and Annette are now husband and wife forever and ever." I was extremely happy for them and yet saddened not to be there to share this day with them. I really would have liked to share their joy.

August 1996, I made my mind up to take a trip to Rochester, where Luigi, my boyfriend, and my brother and my sister-in-law were living. My sister-in-law was expecting a baby. I was so happy for her. I knew how much she wanted to have a child. She was going to deliver the baby soon, and everybody was really excited. I decided to spend twenty days with them, and I was all wound up to be seeing my boyfriend. We had a long distance relationship which sometimes wasn't simple. Thinking about seeing him, my heart started beating. He was

my sister-in-law's cousin, so everything was in the family and I could easily spend time with all of them.

* * *

Having Annette as part of our family was a pleasure for us. Everybody loved her from the first day. She wasn't only beautiful, but also sincere and genuine. Her unique personality made her a special person for everyone. Her inner strength and calm composure were startling to us. I never saw her mad or sad. She was always able to resolve each problem, dilemma, difficulty. She was exceptional.

* * *

During my vacation I spent a lot of my time with Annette. Sometimes she was feeling strange, but I thought that it was because of the pregnancy. I remember one day seeing her eyes very bright and her pupils enlarged. When I asked how she was doing, calmly like always she answered that she needed some rest. Looking at her, I knew that something was wrong. I was unsure if it was the pregnancy or something else. Days passed, and everything seemed normal. Although I was having a wonderful vacation, I had the feeling that something terrible was going to occur. I didn't really know where and what was going to happen, but since I was so far from my country, my first thought was my family. I was wrong and yet right.

My vacation was at an end. It was time for me to go back to my usual life. I left the USA on August 21. Everything was ok. Everybody was pretty good. Annette seemed to be chubbier, but beautiful like always. Her big stomach was already prominent. That day she seemed to be very healthy and feeling good.

I arrived in Italy the same day, with the persisting sense that something was going to happen. I had had a very long trip. I was dead on my feet. Turning from one side to the other, finally I fell into a heavy, long, deep sleep.

The next day I couldn't wake up. I couldn't open my eyes. The phone rang. I couldn't tell who answered. I could only hear "Oh no! I'm so sorry!" My sister – in – law had lost the baby. I was shocked. I had just seen her yesterday. She was feeling good. How did this happen! I was so worried. I felt awful because I had known that some horrible thing was going to crop up, and I hadn't done anything. How dreadful I felt!

Annette had delivered the baby naturally, and they named him Nicola. He was two months premature. All my family tried to encourage my sister-in-law and my brother. They were young, and so they could have other children. Nevertheless, we knew that the loss of the first one was unforgettable. It was a deep cut that nobody was certainly able to mend. Perhaps, only time heals all sorrow.

Weeks passed, and Annette was still discouraged and sad. Losing a child for a mother isn't easy at all. Everyday she tried to comfort herself, to be positive, but to no avail. Each day she was becoming more feeble. Once again something was wrong. Nobody would say more than a few words. No one seemed to know anything. All was dark. I knew that something else was going to happen once again, and once more I was unable to do anything. I had to find out. My brother and her family were hiding something to keep us from worrying.

Days passed and everything was still the same. I started making phone calls to everyone I knew. I called Luigi, and I asked him to tell me the truth. "Ornella, things here are worse than you think," he whispered. "What, what... I want

to know. It doesn't matter what," I answered furiously. "Ok, calm down," he replied and breathing deeply he continued "...Annette...has ...cancer."

An unfathomable silence prevailed over the phone. I couldn't think. I couldn't speak. Perhaps, it was a dream. "It is impossible, unbelievable, inconceivable!" I couldn't understand why she had to suffer so much. "Where is God? There is no God." I was speaking to myself, yelling to myself to better understand. "Are you sure?... and... Michele?" I said... "He is going to collapse too if somebody doesn't do something to help him to be strong. He couldn't find the courage to talk on the phone."

My family, I had to find the courage to tell my family. I didn't know where to start. It was night; I couldn't sleep. Everyone had to know the tragedy that was going to affect our family, the monster that was going to greedily consume our sister-in-law.

A month passed since Annette and Michele lost their child. Now Michele was tremendously terrified to lose his wife too. What horrific destiny was going to overwhelm this lovely couple? Annette was extremely sick. However, she talked to us on the phone, always nice, constantly calm. Probably she knew that there weren't many long phone calls left, where she could speak to us.

October was coming. Nothing changed. Things were always worse. We knew it. My brother was talking less on the phone. October 2, 1996, it was the day of angels, so the calendar said. It was a memorable day because our angel flew away from us.

Her mom told me that Annette that day was praying as always, her own personal prayer. She woke up, took her shower and started talking with

someone when she passed away. Annette was very peaceful. She wasn't in pain. Over and over she whispered to her mom that many people in white robes were waiting for her. Probably she was delirious, but I don't think so. Annette was just embraced by the extraordinary light of angels.

When you lose a loved one, you feel your breast heavy; you are suffocating. Tears, questions, memories overcome you. Only one hope prevails: "They do still exist!" The grey sky will become blue!

Ornella Fiorillo comes from Italy. Her interest is Commercial Art.

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A Friend of Mine *By Liliya Chiley*

Last year, on a Sunday evening in April, my best friend told me some horrible news about our friend from church. At first, I wouldn't believe it. But then, I went to that place, where the horrible news happened, saw it with my own eyes, and had to believe it.

Alex Klepanchuk, my friend, a member of our Rochester Youth and church, had died in a car crash. He was driving over 100 mph in a 35 mph speed zone. His car, a BMW-X5, was chasing after his best friend's car, a BMW-M5.

When he flew in the air for over 100 feet and up to 10 feet high, he lost control. His car crashed into a cement pole in someone's driveway, slammed a pick-up truck, and fell into a shallow stream that was flowing between the houses.

The car flipped over into a nearby creek, and 21 year-old Alex died while speeding along North Greece Rd. The

other driver, Pavel Sushko, also 21 years old, of Greece, called 911 after the crash.

He wasn't hurt, but he got arrested, charged with reckless driving, and with speeding, racing. The firefighters rescued Alex from his overturned vehicle, and transported him to Strong Memorial Hospital. The medical examiner ruled that he died from multiple injuries.

Alex's family came to the United States nine years ago from Ukraine. In his family, there were nine children, but now only eight, because Alex had died. My family and his family had all been living in the same region back in Ukraine. As a matter of fact, they moved to United States first, before my family.

Alex had been attending at Monroe Community College, studying Computer Information Systems. But he decided to take time off from college to earn some money for tuition.

He had been a wonderful friend because he was there when I needed him. He also was friendly and handsome. He enjoyed playing volleyball with me and with the other young people in our group. Most of the time, he loved spending time with his own family.

This sad moment will always stay in my mind because he was a wonderful friend, and we lost him. I think this kind of tragedy proves that people have to pay attention to how they drive. There is a good reason for speed limits, but not for speeding.

It was a very sad and dreadful day when Alex died. I will miss him very much. I'll miss that time when he and I played ping-pong and tennis together after youth service every Monday.

I was so upset about his death because I couldn't believe that a good friend

like Alex had died in a car crash. I also felt stunned when I found out that he was racing with my third cousin, Pavel Sushko.

Liliya Chiley, from Ukraine, is majoring in Accounting.

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Is My Language Skill Good Enough for Americans? By Tewodros Bashu

English is a second language for me. Amharic is my first language; I am from Ethiopia. I studied English as one subject in school. However, I watch movies, listen to music and read as much as possible to learn how to use the English language. Although my English is not as strong as others, I have learned to talk with body language. Expressing yourself through body language is sometimes better than opening your mouth.

One of the things I love to do is smile. Before I say hello to someone I smile at him or her. In my opinion, that is one of the most important things about speaking English. Smiling makes people talk in a more positive way. As an English talker, I like to listen to people. I think that the key in the English language is to respond back. I am not a loud person, and this can be a good thing. You don't have to be loud to get your point across. I say what I mean and get directly to the point. It is hard for me to talk in an angry way. I talk in a very calm and peaceful way.

I am a shy person. If I have a question about something, it takes a very long time for me to ask it. I get really nervous when I am speaking to someone for the first time. To talk well with another

person, I have to know them. Sometimes I speak too low, and people have a hard time hearing me. The reason why I speak low is because I feel like I am saying the wrong word, and I don't want to be embarrassed. I don't express myself clearly on the telephone. It is easier for me to speak face-to-face with someone. I do not talk well with emotions.

I would like to learn the different styles of talking with educated or with un-educated persons. I would like to learn how to read other people's emotions and body language. Body language helps people like myself to understand what people really want to say. This ESOL 201 class has helped me understand what type of skills I have. I will be able to strengthen my weaknesses.

I've learned so much about myself as an English language talker. I never really realized all of my weaknesses before. As a person who spoke another language for most of my life, English is so very different from Amharic. When you are an adult, people expect you to be a complicated talker. My goal is to be a good communicator by the end of this semester's ESOL 201.

Tewodros Bashu, from Ethiopia, is a Liberal Arts major.

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A Short Guy with Big Dreams By Ornella Fiorillo

I remember hearing once that everyone should meet people from around the world to appreciate more the value of an individual life. Meeting foreign people isn't as hard as people think. In this melting pot having an international conversation can be an

everyday happening. I have met many people from all over the world, but the short guy with a huge smile is the one who made me think hard about how little daily things can make a person happy, and how persistence can make dreams come true.

* * *

One day while I was walking into the cafeteria, a big smile greeted me. While waiting in line with a dish full of chicken wings and pizza, a short, skinny guy started talking to me. He seemed so happy, and when I asked him how much he liked pizza, he simply answered that it was just food. I took my pizza too and we walked together out to the dining hall. It was the first time that we had lunch together. Both of us had taken the same courses for two consecutive semesters; however, we didn't know too much about each other. It was a very interesting time, out of the ordinary, with good conversation, funny jokes, and a good person that unexpectedly grabbed all of my attention; I found myself in silence, listening to someone else's inconceivable history.

During our lunch he said "Oh! You grew up with pizza!" I just replied that here pizza wasn't as good as in Italy; it was too sweet for me. Smiling and looking around, he said "American people eat sweet foods because they haven't enough sweetness." He then brought a big chicken wing to his mouth and sank his teeth into it. It looked like he was starving. Fascinated by his intriguing ways of seeing things, I invited him to tell me a little bit about himself. At first this confused him; then without hesitation he started!

Daniel Adam is a 26 year old man from the country of Ethiopia, from Gondar, a small city where everybody knows each other. Proud of his hometown he said, "A person who doesn't know about this city is like someone who likes France,

but doesn't know Paris."

Continuing our talk, we moved from the dining hall to the library where I could listen peacefully to him, and where Daniel seemed to be less distracted; to focus his mind on his own life.

Ethiopia has many appearances. It is made up of many villages called tribes where tradition, life style, and languages are different. Since he is from the northern part, he speaks a national language, Amharic, and his tribe is called *Amhara*.

Daniel has three brothers and two sisters. His childhood was extremely poor and dreadful. During the civil war his country was under communist rule. Thousands of people were jailed, tortured, and killed throughout this period. "Red Terror" – which means mass assassination – was readily conducted. One day a civil revolution started, and people tried to run away, abandoning their homes and fleeing to neighboring countries. At that time, Daniel was four years old, and with his parents, he tried to escape by going to Sudan, a neighboring land. During the evasion his parents left Daniel in the countryside, where the enemy was active. As they moved in another direction, the family became separated. Luckily, someone from his village seeing Daniel brought him to his grandmother's house where he was then brought up.

After two years his mother came back, but his father was nowhere to be found. He finally saw his father after twenty years, when he decided to move to the USA. He whispered, "*I didn't know my father. I grew up with my grandmother. She was like my mother.*" He continued, saying, "*I decided to go to my mother only when my grandmother started to feel sick. Soon after, she died. I was in the sixth grade!*" As he got to know his mother again, they developed a strong

and unbelievable relationship; he said "*It was a relationship that I can't explain. It was probably due to all of the past situations.*"

His voice was calm, but very deep. His eyes seemed to be looking at me, but I could not tell. They appeared to be profoundly concentrated on a certain vision. All this remembering made him look cheerless, and when I asked what he had in mind regarding the war, he just replied "*I was too little to remember. Now I read and study the history about it.*" Going on, he whispered "*What I remember is that I have always worked since I was a child.*"

Daniel has a major in history. He taught history in the English language in Ethiopia. Due to his irresistible love for this field Daniel would like, someday, to travel around the world and see first hand what he has studied in books.

The little, young man has a wife, Melesu, and a two year old son, Befikir – which means "we fell in love." He met his wife as a child. They were neighbors, and since they were the same age, they grew up together, falling finally in love. By winning the lottery, both of them had the opportunity to move to the USA. It was a good chance for Daniel to receive a better education, and to find a better life.

Nonetheless, he misses the lifestyle of his city where people are warmer, and socializing is easier, probably because everybody knows each other. In his country, even though each city has contrasting differences in lifestyle, languages, clothing, they are very close. Although his childhood was really remarkable, he keeps in his mind memories of his city, and especially of his people. There everybody is friendly and helps each other. He said, "*I miss my country every day. Everyday I miss my country.*" He especially misses his hometown during January 21, a big

holiday for orthodox people. Everybody is on the streets. The city is alive with music, jokes and food. Everyone is a friend that day; you don't need to know anybody. Their food will become your food just as their music will turn out to be yours, too; only having fun during the holiday is important then.

Daniel looked homesick, but he is not depressed living in the USA. "*I love my country, and of course I miss it. I'm living in the US and nothing bothers me. I have an open mind; I can adapt myself to any place.*" Continuing he emphasized, "*The biggest difference between my country and the USA is that Ethiopia is uncivil and the US is civil. Ethiopia is an undeveloped country and the US is developed. This is the best analogy to make people understand. It is like day and night; it is probably the only way to compare.*"

Daniel's major will be international business. Today his life is crazy with work, studies, and family. He only has time to do his assignments and take care of his son. However, he is happy, even with this busy life because he knows that it is temporary; some day his life will change in a positive way. He is full of positive vibrations.

Daniel has big dreams to visit Japan and Sydney, Australia, and certainly to go back to visit his country. He defines himself as an international person, open-minded.

Finally, I just asked him, "Who is Daniel?" He came back with "I'm just Danny, a short guy with big dreams." It was a response that made me further reflect on the optimistic ways of someone with a hard, painful past who enjoys each little daily opportunity and never resigns himself to anything. Every dream should come true!

Ornella Fiorillo comes from Italy. Her interest is Commercial Art.

Forever Young

By Kate Gwozdz

When I was asked to write this essay, I had no idea who to interview or what kind of questions I should ask. The answer was sitting right next to me. I decided to interview my boyfriend. I wanted people to learn what it means to be a survivor.

He was fifteen years old when he started using drugs on a daily basis. Pot, coke, pills, THS, dusters were just some of the drugs that helped Mark forget, but at the same time, they were the drugs that changed his life into a nightmare. Decisions that he made under the influence of those drug left a huge and painful mark on his memory, and those memories are going to haunt him for the rest of his life.

Mark's story begins in fifth grade. "One day I just came back home from school, and everybody was there... I knew that something was wrong," he takes a deep breath; "I felt it in my heart." As soon as he got home, his mom asked him to sit on her knee; it was then when she told Mark the secret that she was trying to hide from him.

During seventh grade his life changed completely. Dealing with his mom's illness was the main reason. It was the second year since he found out that his mom had breast cancer. He knew that there wasn't a lot of time left. The symptoms were getting worse and worse with every passing day. Because of chemotherapy, she lost all of her hair, and a lot of energy. During that school year, she had her first surgery, which they thought would be the last one.

That summer Mark's mom got really bad. "We all went on vacation, but it wasn't the same, and she ... she was just sitting there looking at us." At the beginning of eighth grade, her health got much worse. A couple weeks later

his grandpa died. "I remember this one part of his funeral. I remember it so clearly. My mom didn't say goodbye to him; she didn't." Mark begins to cry. "She said to him, 'I will see you soon, Dad,' and then she left." A few weeks later, her condition got really bad. "She got very sick, and they took her away from me." The night before she died, he went over to his friend's house. The next morning he got a wake-up call from his brother. "Mom is bad. We have to go!" It was the last time Mark saw his mom, last time he could touch her, last time he could talk to her, last time he could look at her. Even though she was in a coma, he believes that she was able to hear his voice and feel his touch on her soft skin. "And then she just died. I don't remember what happened. I was in shock." Another tear comes out of his eye. I can't really understand what he was saying. "I lost my mom, and they were trying to take her away from me. I screamed at those people 'Don't put my mom in the freezer!' and then I put a blanket over her."

About two thousand people came to the funeral. "And they played her song, her favorite one, Forever Young." This painful experience was why he started taking drugs. Looking for attention, pity, trying to fight with agony, coming back to an empty house every day, waking up with no reason to go through another day, this is how he felt. He thought that he found a way, but in March 2003 he realized that his life was going downhill. "I had a dream one night. It was my mom. She told me that she wanted me to stop, and I did." It's been two years since he stopped doing drugs. He found other ways to express his emotions and anger – working out, hunting, snowboarding and all kinds of different activities. "Do you still miss your mom?" I asked. "Yeah... every single day."

Kate Gwozdz is from Poland. Her major is Criminal Justice.

Creating Her Own Path

By Figen Cansever

She was three years old, when her father passed away. She was the youngest child out of three. Her mother never remarried again. In the single family that she grew up in, she faced financial and emotional problems. Having to grow up without a father made her want to stabilize her life.

To achieve a master's degree in library science was not easy. That was her dream as long as she can remember. In her childhood she volunteered to work in the library. She loved being in books, different stories, different lives. She loved getting lost till late hours as she worked, filed, and read the books in the library. She shared her knowledge with others. Her positive character made it possible to connect with so many other people.

Now she has been a library administrative for a very long time. The part she likes most about her job is meeting all kinds of different people, and to be included in their lives, as she includes them in her life. She admits that it's been a long and a very tough road to get to where she is today, but she enjoys it, and is thankful for what she has got.

Originally, she was born and raised in Buffalo. She came back to do her graduate school after being gone for so long. "I liked being home because I got to hang out with my mom, to go to dinners and activities. It wasn't like a mother-daughter relationship. Over the years we've gotten very close. She didn't have to nag me about doing my homework, and I didn't have to rebel for a little bit more freedom. I always said I was going to go back to the East coast. There is always something to do

here, and it's closer to the water, too. You could just hop on the train or the bus, get off anywhere you like, and voila, you're there." Her friend gave her an application for MCC to become a part of the Library Administration; she only applied to practice her interview skills. When she got the job, she was very surprised. "After thinking about it, she decided to go ahead with the job offer. It was close to home, and she could do this just for a while to get by and get a little bit of experience. But she ended up meeting her husband, and settling here.

Was this first sight love? She doesn't remember, but he is her soul mate, her friend, her companion at sports, and the father of her son. Her husband is also very into sports; that was how they met. When she was sailing with an older couple, they met at a dinner for the very same couple they both sailed for. But because they sailed at different times they had never seen each other before. She says it was a disaster. We both weren't very impressed with each other. But the year after, it was a totally different story. They fell in love. They started seeing each other, and came to the conclusion that they were "it" for each other. He took care of her when she dislocated her shoulder, and when she got sick. By doing such a thing, he even amazed and impressed his own parents. They are each other's comforts, and each other's support.

She is one of the simply lucky ones. She had to go through lots of difficulties as she was growing up, without a father. Over the years she was able to get over it in order to go on with her life, and achieve big things. She never gave up no matter how hard it got. She has reached her goals. She has a master's degree in Library Science and works at MCC as Assistant Director. Her name is Ann Pinak Penwarden. She married her soul mate, and has a lovely son. They're the

epitome of your picture perfect, happy, a little above the middle class, American family. Ann Pinak created her own path. She lives by it every day.

Figen Cansever, from Turkey, is majoring in Business.

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Seemantham Ceremony

By Gaya Pararajasingham

Delivering a baby is unloading a heavy rock. The nine month period is incredible with moments that fill the woman's entire life. When women deliver the baby, they touch the edge of life and death and come back. The baby's birth happens the same in every day life all over the world, but there are still cultural differences in how pregnancy is viewed.

In Sri Lanka, a pregnant woman is a princess in her family. They say "a woman after a year of marriage has to deliver a baby into her husband's or parents' hands." Otherwise, in the early days they would look for another girl for their boy. It is still that way in some areas in Sri Lanka. So when the husband and his parents hear their wife or daughter-in-law is pregnant, they start to "hold" her in their hands. She can't carry heavy things, she can't work hard, she can't walk upstairs, she can't run, and she can't eat all foods. What she has to do is stay in the home, have lots of rest and have routine foods such as fresh fruit juices three times a day, only some specific fruits, lots of nutritious, homemade fresh foods three or four times a day and at least a cup of milk two times a day before bed and after getting up from bed. She should do some light exercises three times a day.

She has to go for a routine check up. She can only watch some peaceful movies and listen to peaceful, soft music. The very rare exceptions are women who work professionally. Women who elope or have non-arranged marriages won't get these benefits.

We have a ceremony called "seemantham" performed to satisfy the pregnant woman's desires, cravings and passions. This is traditionally her mother's family that celebrates it as the mothers are the ones who take charge. Usually, most pregnant women stay in their mother's house during these nine months. We decorate the pregnant women, perform *poojah* (a religious ritual) for them and have a party. All of us pray for the mother and baby to ensure a safe delivery and a healthy birth. The baby is considered to be a god in our religion, and so everybody blesses the new mother. All the married women, old and young, wear lots of bangles which they put on her arms.

At the delivery, the husband is not allowed to watch. There are no male nurses or PCT (patient care technicians) in maternity units. Sometimes male doctors are there, but very, very rarely.

After the delivery, the new mother can't eat spicy or hot foods, oily foods, no water at all, only chicken. She can only eat specific foods. She is given special care and doesn't do any work at all. The 31st day from delivery, they shave the baby's hair and perform a small ritual of *poojah*. The babies can have a head upward position after six months - basically they lie down for six months. They choose the name for baby regarding the date of birth, time they are born and depend on their birth charts. There are choices only with certain groups of words. For example: - Tamil has 212 letters in the alphabet. If the name has to start with K, but the choices are Ki, Ku, Ka, and Ke, then they discuss with their families and pick one name

that starts with one of those letters that match with their date of birth and birth charts. Generally speaking, we don't use the baby's grandparents' names because we feel it is disrespectful.

I like how people treat the pregnant lady in Sri Lanka and their ceremonies. On the other hand, I would like to have my husband with me while I deliver the baby. I think I would be nervous, so if my husband was next to me, I could share my pain, emotions, and all the excitement. Also, I would feel safe. I would love to share everything with my husband, including my delivery pain.

Gaya Pararajasingham is planning to study Radiologic Technology.

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Living a Lie

By Carlos Hernandez

11:00 P.M, flashing lights, loud music, people talking and dancing surround the bar, pictures, the long red curtain, and the tables and chairs. A friend of mine introduced me to this short guy. His name was Robert.

After a while, Robert and I decided to leave and go for an early breakfast at nearby East Ridge Restaurant. Once there we were immediately waited on. In order to know each other, Robert decided to share some information on how he told his brothers that he was gay; in other words, how he came out.

For twenty-eight years he struggled with the thoughts of being rejected by his family, neighbors, and friends. He had had such an uncomfortable feeling in his teenage years. Day by day he had to pretend to be someone that he wasn't. Each day he woke up and went to work with the thought of what people at work

would think if they found out that he was living a life that didn't belong to him. "I never had a social life. I was living a lie." Most of the time he came home from work and stayed there. While everyone was partying in clubs and hanging out with friends, he was home watching television and reading books. Sometimes he would go with his mother to his brother's house.

Each day was the same routine. Wake up early in the morning to go to work and at the end of the day come back home. He would sometimes go for drives alone, but never sharing time with anyone. Most of the days he spent time just with himself.

Robert felt like he had no life. Because of this, he became moody. His character changed. He was always depressed and irritated because he was holding such a big secret. Something was holding him back from telling the truth. His parents had become ill with cancer, and he didn't want to put more pressure on them than what they already had. Not only was he faced with the fact that he was living a life that didn't belong to him, but he was living a double life as well. He was very confused; he didn't know what to do. In December 1998 his parents died; it destroyed him.

A year had passed when he decided to invite all his brothers to his house. Once they were there, he called his sister-in-law to his room. He told her that for years he had been carrying the secret that he was gay, keeping it a secret because he was afraid of rejection. "Maria immediately understood and told me that there was nothing wrong with being gay and that everyone would be there to support me."

After talking for an hour or so, Robert asked her if she could do him a favor and tell his secret to his family who was waiting for them downstairs. She went downstairs and talked to them while he

waited upstairs. Five minutes had passed when he heard his brothers calling him. He got emotional and started crying. Then, he decided to go downstairs. His brothers gave him a big hug. "We will be there for you. There is nothing to worry about."

That same night everyone decided to go celebrate with him at a nightclub, the same club where we met each other. Finally, he had told his secret of being gay and now he was free; he didn't have to lie any longer.

Carlos Hernandez, from Puerto Rico, is studying Interior Design.

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Selam

By Senait Begashaw

One day after I finished my classes, I went home for lunch. My sister's friend was sitting in the dining room having lunch with her. The girl, in the beginning of her twenties, looked younger than her age except for her hair. It was totally white. She didn't have any black hair at all. She said, "It is hereditary." My sister introduced us and I sat down across from her, to hear her story.

Selam is the elder daughter of her parents. Her mother died after she was born, so everybody thought she had very bad luck. She didn't have any childhood memories like others. Kids didn't want to play with her and elders looked at her in a cruel way. She got married when she was thirteen. Her father arranged the marriage without her permission. She hadn't seen her future husband before the wedding day.

Her husband was twenty-one years old and didn't have his own place to live with her, so they started living at his parents'

house. His mother was very annoying; she didn't treat her like a young girl. She made her work from dawn to dusk every day. And she didn't think she was perfect enough for her son; she started abusing her. Selam didn't want to go back to her father's house because if she divorced her husband, the neighborhood would see her as a cursed person.

One day she decided to leave that house. The day before, she started preparing herself when her mother-in-law went to visit her friends. She slipped quickly into her room and took some of her clothes and put them under the mattress on her bed. The others she put on before she went to bed. The next morning, before daylight, she left. No bags, nothing in her hands, not even a penny. She left the house, her heart pounding... if they caught her, they would lock her up forever. She ran for an hour, glancing over her shoulders. Then she sat down next to the river to drink some water. She ran again for another half hour, reaching a small town called *Debere Berhan*, the first bright light of the day. But she continued, walking to the big city of Addis Ababa because no one could find her there. It took her one day. People stared at her, surprised, because she was exhausted and dressed like a person from the countryside. Her bare feet were bleeding.

There was a sunrise on the mountain, and she thought at that moment that she had never felt so free. It would be a good life for her there. But she was really very sick and couldn't concentrate. She tried to sit down at the edge of the pavement and fainted. When she opened her eyes, she was in the hospital. She asked herself where she was. She didn't know what had happened and how she got there. She couldn't believe what she saw. Then a lady who shared the room with her said, "How are you feeling, girl?" She slowly replied, "I am fine." A nurse came to her and asked, "We couldn't find your ID.

Where are you from?" She didn't want to answer. She was very nervous as she heard the question because if they found out, she might be sent back. Tears rolled down her face, "I don't want to go back to that house again." The nurse asked if she had any relatives in the city. She shook her head slowly and said no. "I am sorry, but you will have to leave the hospital in the morning," the nurse answered, leaving the room.

There were tears on her cheeks rolling slowly down towards her chin. Selam put her head under the pillow and started crying out loud. Her roommate dragged herself towards her and started wiping her tears with the edge of her scarf. "Don't worry, girl, you can go with me." Her voice was a whisper when she spoke. Selam was unable to find a word to thank her. She just hugged and kissed her, continuing to laugh and cry.

The next morning they left the hospital together, the lady treating her like one of her own children. Their relationship was one of a mother and a child still living together. Now she is very happy. After six months, the lady left for the USA to get special treatment for a spinal cord problem.

Finally, Selam said, "So much has happened to me. Now it's over. It was a nightmare, an ugly, horrible nightmare, but it's over. However, the same nightmare is happening all over Ethiopia in the countryside." Selam is working now to stop arranged marriages like hers.

Senait Begashaw, from Ethiopia, is hoping to study Nursing.

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Remember

By Epifanio Maldonado

My eyes felt heavy. It was the only day that I had for sleeping, just the weekend. I used to work like a pack horse with a heavy burden on its back, from Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and then go to school where I was taking business administration at the Universidad Metropolitana in Cupey, Puerto Rico. At night I used to do my homework.

This Saturday I heard a ring. It sounded like a church bell. I wasn't dreaming. It was my home phone. Ring, ring, ring. After the third ring, I got up with a lazy walk. "Hello. Hello, Johnny. This is Lucy." She is my daughter's mother. "Hi, Lucy. How are you?" I said. "Good, thank you," she responded. "Did you get your check?" she asked me. "Yes," I answered, "but I will give you the money this afternoon."

I always gave her a hundred and fifty dollars every month for her expenses. It wasn't too much, but I couldn't afford any more. My daughter was just three years old. She is my beautiful gold, my biggest jewelry, the one I love most. I always try to be responsible. I support her with the most I can afford. It is not just with money, but with love and dedication. That is so important in a father and daughter's relationship.

After a while, we started to recall the past. We talked about our friends, all the terrible and unforgettable moments that we lived together. "Johnny, do you remember when Jojanny was born?" "Yes, I do. I am never going to forget that." I was so happy when I remembered. We went back to those days, like we were living those moments again. "Do you remember when we fought?" "Yes, I remember. That was the only time that we fought.

It was Valentine's Day. We went out with my two cousins, my girlfriend's sister, my girlfriend and I. We were dancing, jumping, enjoying ourselves and laughing all night. The place was full of lovers who were there to celebrate the occasion. My girlfriend and I were wearing white pants and red shirts, the colors of love for Valentine's Day. When the party finished, we went to Rio Piedras, a city in Puerto Rico. Then my cousin asked me if I wanted to go to another club without the women. Lucy started to complain. "No, no, you are not going anywhere." I hadn't said that I was going with them. She was out of control!

Lucy was in the front seat, next to the driver, and I was in the back seat. I told her to calm down, but she wouldn't pay attention to me. I pulled her hair and I told her to please shut up. After that she came back at me. She scratched my face; I grabbed her hands. Then, she got out of the car, yelling a lot of bad words. "Get out Cabron. Get out hijo de puta." I got out from the car. I left from there. I walked and she came behind me. "Stop, stop Johnny. Stop, Maricon." I got upset, but at the same I felt bad and uncomfortable about this situation. I never stopped. I was on my way to my mother's house. Then, I saw a blue car. It looked like my sister's car. She stopped next to me and said, "Muy bien, Johnny. Haciendo show en las calles," meaning, "Well Johnny, you are putting on a show on the street." I got in and I told her, "Let's go." When my sister asked me what was happening, I said nothing. I didn't want to talk about it. I was embarrassed with my sister because she had never seen me like that. I was so furious. That night I slept in my mother's house.

The next day, I didn't know what I was going to do. I was so empty, but at the same time I was so angry with Lucy for what she had done on this

special day. After I thought too much, I decided to end our relationship and pick up the clothes that I had in her apartment. When I got there, we felt like two strangers. I said to her, "I just came to take my clothes." She told me they were on the porch. All my clothes were in a plastic bag. I took it, and I went back to my mother's house. I was organizing the clothes in my closet when I realized that they had all been ripped up. I couldn't believe that. "Look, look at that, Mami. She tore all my clothes." Thank God I always kept some clothes in my mother's house.

After we talked about all those things, we talked about my friends, my male friends. She asked if I had had any kind of relationship with them. I told her that I had never cheated on her. They were just friends. She had in her mind that I did, but no, I wasn't that way. I didn't want to play with a person's feeling, and I didn't like anyone playing with mine. I knew what that is. That is why I didn't do it. And, I was like a lovebird. I had been so in love with her.

Epifanio Maldonado, from the Dominican Republic, is majoring in International Business.

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'Old Grandfather' Has a Wish

By Ting Ye

My uncle picked up my 'old grandparents' at the Rochester Airport. I heard my uncle say they lived in San Francisco. I thought I had never met them before. That was my first month in this new country.

We helped them put their stuff in a room. My real grandmom made some

coffee and asked them to have a seat in the living room.

"Our family can live in here, the USA, that's all because of your 'old grandfather,' " my own grandfather said to me. Sitting in the middle of four old people, grandparents, I knew they must have some interesting story or something I could learn from their past. I had heard some stories about what happened to my grandfather during the Cultural Revolution in China.

"If there wasn't the Cultural Revolution, how would I have met your 'old-grandmom' in Taiwan?" 'Old Grandfather' asked with smiles on his face. His hands were shaking. "Sometimes, both of his legs shake too," his wife said. They had eye connection with each other.

"Ting, come here. Sit closer to me. I only have seen you once and that was about fifteen years ago, before your great-grandparents died. You were very little, even though you were the oldest child. See you're a big girl now." His voice was very soft.

"Really? I didn't know I had seen you before. You have been living in America very long. Do you miss China? Why didn't you go back anymore?" I asked. I had been sitting with him just about fifteen minutes, but he made me feel like I knew him. Maybe that was because I had seen him in pictures. We are blood relatives; he was my grandfather's older brother. We just didn't see him very much, so I wanted to know more about him.

"I haven't gone back home for a long time, about fifteen or more years. I was thinking about going back if I retired. But I decided not to," he moved his eyes and looked at me; I felt he was worried about something if he went back. I didn't know what it was.

“You don’t look like you have just come from China,” he said. “Why? What do I look like?” I asked. “You look more like a girl from a big city. Do you know what I mean? En...the homeland girls are not that open like you,” he said. “Open? I am not that open.” I didn’t know why he said I was an open girl. “Yes, you’re more open than them. You know, some Chinese girls are very shy to talk to people, but you’re not. You sit and dress more like American girls. That’s good, I like it,” he explained to me.

“But my clothes were brought from China. The girls in China are not shy any more. Some of them are still, but I think most of them are not. People are much more open than before. Also our city, WuHan, is the third largest city in China. When did you leave China?” I asked.

“Do you know what Mao did to students in the Chinese Cultural Revolution? He ‘closed’ all students, but I wanted to finish my school. I was in my third year of high school. So Mr. Jiang lied to us,” he said. “Who? Mr. Jiang lied to you? Who was he? What did he do?” I asked. “Because he said to educated people he would let us go back to school if we followed him to Taiwan. I was Mr. Jiang’s student, but he made us go into the military academy, first. Later we had good government jobs in Taiwan. And when I had a high government job, they didn’t want me go to school anymore; I had to study at home. They didn’t want us to leave Taiwan if we got better. I didn’t feel free there.” ‘Old grandfather’ looked at his wife with a smile and said, “All I earned from there was my wife; I met my wife over there. Another main reason we decided to come to America was to have better education. That’s why we wanted you guys to come here too. I left home for more than fifty years. I don’t know what I can do or how it will be if we go back to live in China because everything has changed. People are not

like before ... but I still want to go back someday when I feel better.”

“Do you want some Chinese tea?” my ‘old-grandmom’ asked him. “Yes, Mrs. Yee,” he answered to his wife. “Here take your pills with your tea,” ‘Old-grandmom’ said. “Do you want to know how I met your old-grandmom? I was poor...” He told us a lot about his past.

He always smiles; he is a kind old man. When his health gets better he would like to go back to his homeland. We don’t know when it will be, but ‘Old-grandfather’ has a wish. “His legs and hands are shaking; we better let him take a nap. He hasn’t talked that much in ages, only today.” He is seventy-six years old.

Ting Ye is studying International Business.

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The Roundest Moon *By XingWang Gao*

On the 15th day of the 8th month of the lunar calendar (24th Sept. this year), the moon is full and it is time for Chinese people to mark their Moon Festival, or the Mid-Autumn Festival. The round shape symbolizes family reunion. Therefore, this day is a holiday for family members to get together and enjoy the full moon - an auspicious token of abundance, harmony and luck.

Sons and daughters will come back to their parents’ house. Sometimes people who have already settled overseas will return to visit their parents on that day. Adults will usually indulge in fragrant moon cakes of many varieties with a good cup of piping hot Chinese tea, while the little ones run around with their brightly-lit lanterns. After

nightfall, entire families go out under the stars for a walk or picnics, looking up at the full silver moon, thinking of their nearby relatives or friends, as well as those who are far from home. A line from a verse, “The moon at the home village is exceptionally brighter,” expresses those feelings. It is also a romantic night for the lovers, who sit holding hands on riverbanks and park benches, enraptured by the brightest moon of the year.

The weather is turning cool gradually, and there are big differences of the temperature between day and night. As the atmosphere of autumn is becoming more and more evident, the mid-autumn festival is coming. The moon on the fifteenth of August of the lunar calendar is the roundest in the year, and the day is a time of reunion for Chinese people. People who are far away from their homes undoubtedly miss their relatives and friends much more on this day. I even have a little sense of sentimentality as I think back.

It was a quiet and beautiful night. The round moon was hanging in the sky with many shining stars. My father put a table in the yard. Besides some moon cakes, there were slices of watermelon, apples and grapes on the table. My grandfather, grandma, mother, father, uncles, aunts, cousins and I were around the table enjoying the delicious food and talking and laughing. All my loved ones were around me; there was rare excitement in the heart, and everything was so peaceful. The moonlight was very gentle and warm, and our family was as whole as the moon then.

I remember that I was very lucky I could take that day off to celebrate with my whole family. I worked at a power plant two hours away. That was the first year I worked, so I was not supposed to take the day off. That Mid-Autumn festival celebration was the last one I celebrated in China.

I have lived in the USA more than two years now, and I have a small family with my parents in Rochester, but a sense of loneliness comes into my heart from time to time. Walking among the crowds of people, I don't feel as if I belong here. I always cannot help recalling the people and things in my hometown. At night, when the moon is round, I particularly miss my relatives and friends in my hometown. Looking up at the moon here, I think the moonlight is so dismal; it makes me feel greatly empty. The longer I am away from my hometown, the more seriously I am homesick. Although it is the same moon, there are thousands of kilometers between the people who enjoy the moon at that time. People often say that what you are thinking about is what you can see from the moon. When will I sense the pleasure and the satisfaction of reunion instead of the loneliness?

XingWang Gao is studying Engineering Science.

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