

COMING TO AMERICA

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[Assignment: Write a narrative essay about a issue that represents a discovery experience for your and your reader. Establish your thesis, develop your supports and word pictures, and write with conviction.]

The end of 1991 was at hand; another precious year slipping away. My endeavors for joining the military had been in vain, and the future held nothing but anxiety and uncertainty. The world we live in has always aroused my curiosity, infinite in mass, wonders, and mysteries. Wouldn't it be marvelous if one could just explore, and learn, and explore. People who travelled had always been the target of my envy. In my mind, then and now, travelling is the best form of education. Then why on earth did I search for glory in the military? Due to my ignorance and lack of vision, I was going to lose a precious year of my life. All the deadlines for college admission had passed. A friend of mine, also trapped with an unquenchable desire to go to the United States to study, told me to apply to Valparaiso University. He himself had done so and most importantly, Valpo had no application deadlines. The name of the school was striking enough, and they also had a golf team (neither of which actually mattered at this point), so I applied. After receiving the application forms on the thirteenth of December, I had them completed and in the office of admissions by the seventeenth. On the twenty-second, an acquaintance from my home town and a student at the very same institution, brought my certificate of admission. I was in!

My friend Osman had also been accepted. The very next day, we were at the Consulate of the United States of America, standing in line for a visa. Denial had serious consequences, and all but one of the eighteen people ahead of us had to face them. It wouldn't be entirely wrong to say that obtaining a visa for the land of opportunity is like breaking the Gordian knot. Osman succeeded, and I was told to return the next day with more information on my finances. After some serious questioning, the mean and vicious-looking man at the consulate, who seemed to get his kicks by teasing the general public, granted me a visa. The airline tickets were bought, followed by packing and good-byes. I boarded the plane with endless dreams, overshadowing the tears of those whose dream I myself represented. The day was January the fifth, 1992--the day I stepped into the real world.

Osman and I had the front row seats, lots of leg room. As we approached them, we were showered by desperate pleas from a young lady with an infant to exchange seats with her because of her baby. Not realizing the value of the property, we gallantly stepped aside feeling rather good about ourselves. The feeling didn't last very long, for the next twenty-two hours were filled with shrill and irritating cries and no leg room. Nevertheless, the past two weeks had worn me out, and I soon left the conscious world.

When I awoke, the plane was descending over German air space. Destination: Frankfurt. I gazed outside in amazement; even the tip of the wing wasn't visible due to the mist. Then, in the wink of an eye, all was clear and the lush green German countryside was at arm's-length. I had always been fond of Germany, for it excelled in sports and technology. By no means was I disappointed. The airport was a shining structure of modern technology, and the people were sturdy, developed, and beautiful. I sensed in them command and authority, along with tranquility and friendliness, a sure sign of excellence. However, on this splendid land I experienced a few of the most horrifying moments of my entire life. While reboarding the aircraft, the baggage security machine swallowed my briefcase. Poof! Into thin air. It might not have been so serious had it not contained my passport, letter of immigration, bank draft of eight thousand dollars, wallet, original educational certificates, all my contacts, and, in short, my life. Here I learnt the true meaning of "never put all your eggs in one basket." I stood there with my heart in my mouth yelling at the giant, yet puzzled, security officer, who had the machine wide open and absolutely no explanation. Meanwhile, Osman ran ahead to check whether anyone had picked it up by mistake. Realizing that standing there wasn't doing any good, I also proceeded forward. To my dismay, Osman hadn't yet returned to the seat. There I was, all the blood sucked out of me, attempting to describe Osman and the briefcase to the airhostess. Then I saw him walking down the aisle, clenching the cursed thing in his hands. I couldn't believe my eyes, and didn't care how he'd gotten it back. It was back and that's all that mattered.

The flight from there to New York was relatively uneventful. It took us close to two hours to clear immigration, a tedious and unnerving process. The rest of the trip was to be made on United Airlines. Our luggage automatically transferred to the connecting flight. Osman and I were not as fortunate. The flight was full, and we were on standby, meaning we'd be placed on board if someone failed to show up. This was also the last flight of United to O'Hare for that particular day. We took the option of flying out of LaGuardia instead of JFK. The cab fare was twenty-three dollars. What! Six hundred rupees?

In any case, our luggage arrived on the original flight two hours before we did, and the wait for the bus to Merrillville began. The bus was due in another hour, and I remember the wait in the freezing cold weather. One thing that truly amazed us was the countless number of limousines that went by. Finally, we were on our way, marvelling at the glorious sight of the skyscrapers by night. At Merrillville we were greeted by the director of international studies, and the final leg of our journey began. We'd been on the move for over thirty-six hours by then, and were exhausted. However, the sight of the magnificent structure of the Chapel filled me with a fresh burst of energy, for I was now at the beginning of the rest of my life.