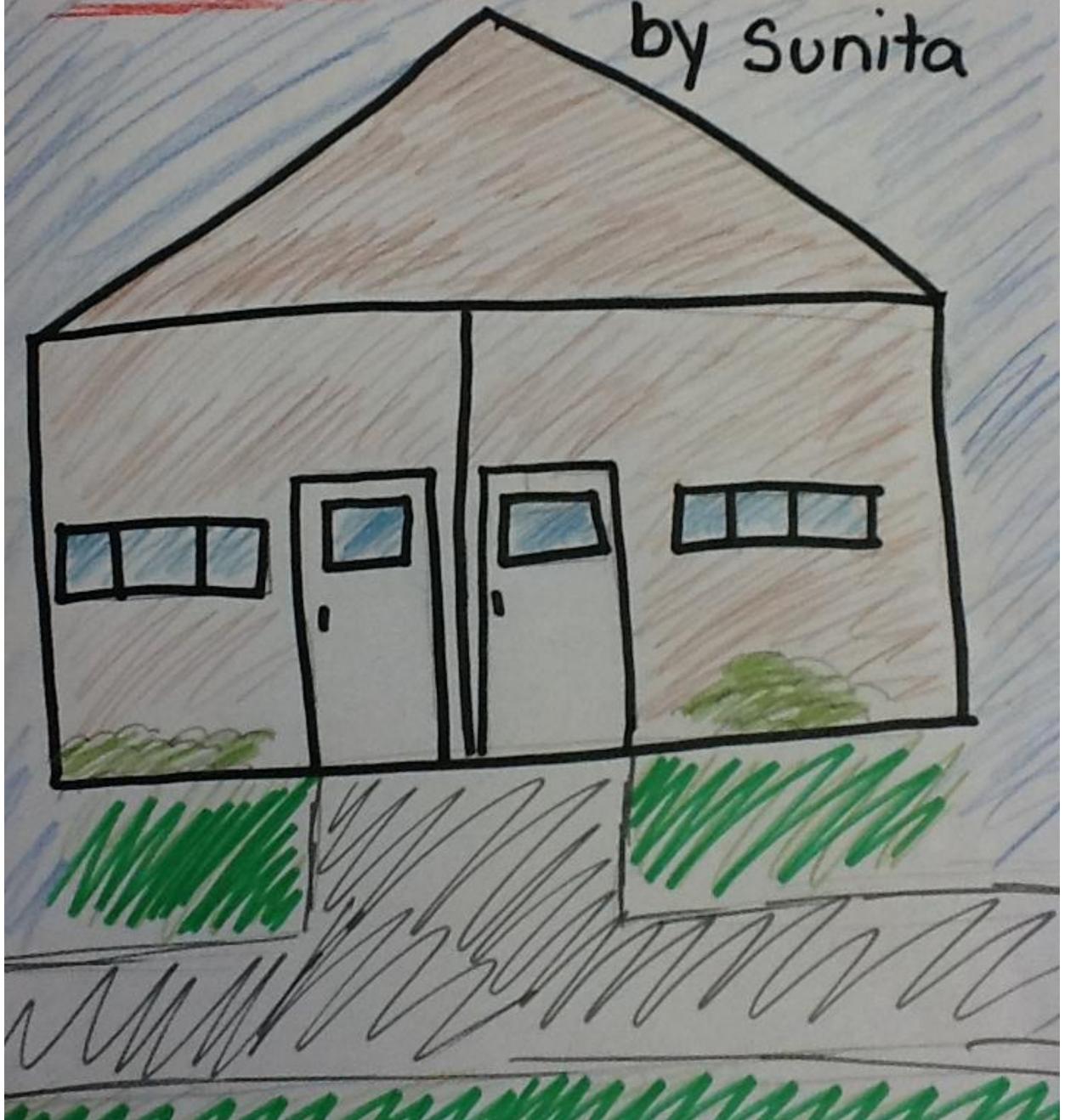


Life in America

by Sunita



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Once we got used to living in America life was a little easier because now we understood some things. When we first came, we didn't know how to use the things in the kitchen or washing machines, but now we could do things on our own.

At one point we heard a family by the name of Thapa was coming from Nepal. I couldn't go to the airport to pick them up because I had school. We heard that relatives of the first Thapa family were coming as well. The two families would live near each other. Then my family moved close to the two Thapa families. That way we made a little Nepali community of friends. My mom started taking me to school and bringing me back home because the Midvale school bus didn't come to pick me up anymore. About a month after we moved, we heard that another family, one we had known in Nepal, was coming as well. That family moved here with 6 girls and no boys. After 1 or 2 years they had a baby that was also a girl! One day, as I was coming home from school I saw a Nepali girl, who I didn't recognize at first. Then my mom told me she was Arita, one of the girls from the family that have 6 kids. She was the first kid that I saw in America who I knew back in Nepal. Even though I knew her, at first I didn't know what to say. But it was comforting to see someone that I knew from Nepal.

All the Nepali families that live here in Madison have some special friends named Mayme and Jason. They help families that come from Nepal. Mayme helps them find a home here. One day, Jason, my brother and I went to an Indian store to buy a Nepali board game. We kept the board game in our basement.

In 2011, my uncle and his family came to America. When I first saw them I kind of recognized them. The whole family was at my home when I came home from school one day. One of my cousins played the Nepali board game with my brother. At first it was weird because I hadn't seen my cousins in a long time, but then I got used to seeing them. Their house is not that far from ours. Even more Nepali families came to America. They live in the same building as my uncle and his family. There is a family by the name of Rai that my uncle knew in Nepal who lives in the building. There is another family they used to know in Nepal but they live 3 houses away who are relatives of the Rai family. Nepali people like to be close to each other here in America. Everyone helps each other out.

Last year my second uncle and his family and my grandma came to America. We had waited a long time for them to come because of the process they had to go through. My brothers and I went to my uncle's house to see my second uncle. When I first saw them it was weird because their skin was darker. But after they lived here for a while their skin got lighter like mine did. Jason and Mayme and other Nepali people were at the house too. My uncle, his family, and my grandma were eating when we arrived. When I first saw my cousin that had just come from Nepal it was strange, because he is older than me but smaller in size. They live near my first uncle's house. Almost my whole family is in America now. I have a cousin that is in Nepal. She looks kind of like me. She is younger than me. She will be coming to America soon.

In America I went to two different schools. My first school was Midvale. When I was going to Midvale I sprained my arms from falling down a staircase. In second grade I started going to Van Hise Elementary, and a Nepali boy also went to school with me. He was in 4th grade when I was in 2nd grade. Now he is in 6th grade. In school I have always been shy. School used to be harder for me because I didn't understand what people were saying. But now, I am doing well in school because I understand most of what kids and teachers are saying. What's still a challenge for me is being confident.

My oldest cousin is past high school. My 2nd oldest cousin goes to high school, my 3rd oldest cousin goes to middle school, and my 4th oldest cousin goes to elementary school. The cousin in Elementary school goes to school with the Rai family's kids. Last year, one of my brothers graduated from high school just as my other brother started high school. Now my big brother started college, and I started 4th grade.

At church we do bible study. We have two groups. One is the kids group and the other is the adults group. In the kids group we read a book kind of like a bible. Sometimes we go to a park. Sometimes we do activities. In the adults group they first sing a Nepali Christian song. Every Saturday the Nepali people have a bible study. First they practice a Nepali Christian song that they will perform in the church. Sunday is church service.

Every Christmas the Bhutanese church in Chicago and the church in Madison switch. One Christmas the Chicago church comes to Madison and

celebrates Christmas with us. The next Christmas the Madison church goes to Chicago and celebrates Christmas there. We switch every Christmas. Last Christmas the Madison group went to Chicago to celebrate Christmas. When we got there we had a hard time finding a parking spot. In the party some people performed. My friends and I did a play about hands and what they can do. I was the narrator. We ate Nepali food. On our way back to Madison, I feel a sleep because it was long time till we got to Madison.

Every year the Nepali people have a picnic. We dance, sing, play, and eat. One time for picnic the Nepali people went to Blue Mounds. We have this picnic to celebrate the Bhutanese people coming here. Mayme is always at the picnic.

The first time went I camping was at Mayme's house. My friends and I went camping together. When we got there, we first set up the tent. Then we made the bonfire. For dinner we had pizza, but also roasted marshmallows on the fire. I was scared to camp because I had never camped or slept outside. In the morning it was raining. When I woke up I heard raining drops falling on the tent. Then we went in Mayme's house and ate breakfast.

One time Jason, Mayme, my friends, and I went to Devil's Lake. There I went canoeing for the first time. I was scared. My brother cut his foot, and Jason took him to the doctor. He got 12 stiches. The first time we went to Mayme's house we thought it took a long time to get there. But the more we went the shorter we thought it took to get there. When we first went to Mayme's house we went for a picnic with only Americans. Jason took my brother and I on his tractor turn by turn. When I first came here I was afraid of dogs. But now I'm not afraid of them anymore. Mayme had a dog named Jack. Jack died then they got a new dog. They also have chickens and a cat.

In America I have a lot of memories. One funny story is when we went shopping for food. I told Mayme and Jason that I wanted grapes but they didn't know what I wanted because I was pronouncing grapes wrong. Then they pointed at some fruits to me to tell what I wanted but they didn't get grapes. Then I pointed to some grapes in a cart then they understood I wanted grapes.

The first time I saw snow I liked it. One time, Emily, my brother, and I made a snowman. The first time we went to the zoo we walked there. I liked the zoo the animals. When I first came here I liked mango a lot but I don't like them as much

now. When I was little I went bowling. I wasn't good at it but got some spares. But one time I rolled the ball softly, then it rolled slowly to the pins then it knocked all the pins down and I got a strike. When I was little and when we first came to America we had to take lots of shots. I would always cry when I had to get a shot. Now whenever I go to the hospital I get scared.

Near my home there are no Nepali kids around anymore. When the Thapa families used to live near my house, my brother and I played with their kids. We would play Nepali games and American games. But they moved. Then we were alone. We didn't have anyone to play with. I play with Nepali kids if they come to my house. My brother likes to play soccer, but I don't.

Things have changed since we first arrived. My brother used to draw a lot. But now he almost never draws. My brothers and I used to play together a lot when I was little. But now we never really play together anymore. Some things about our life here are different than in Nepal. For example, my mom and dad go to work at night. Some things are the same; my mom still cooks Nepali food. I used to understand Nepali very well but now I don't understand Nepali that well.

When I first moved to America I didn't know any English. But now I know English better than Nepali. I don't know how to write and read Nepali. But I know how to write and read English. Sometimes I don't know what things are called in Nepali. Sometimes I don't know how to explain things in Nepali. My family sometimes reminds me what it is called. I don't even know one Nepali letter. Last Christmas Mayme got me a book about how to write and speak Nepali. I tried to learn the Nepali letters but it was too hard.

Life has been great In America. I hope one day I will visit Nepal just to see it again. I learned in America a different way of life. My life is great in America.