



Across the World

By Mia Florendo

Moving Away

On a warm summer morning, mom will wake you up and tell you to finish packing. You slowly get out of bed, take a big stretch, and continue to put all your favorite pieces of clothing in a big suitcase. You run around the house to gather the last little things and head off to the airport an hour later in an airport limousine.

Once arriving at the airport, you will check in all your luggage, go through security, and start walking towards the departure gate. You prepare yourself for the long 12-hour flight ahead by going to get some snacks in the store nearby. Once in the airplane, Dad will help you lift your luggage into the cabinet above the seats, and you'll get all comfy with your travel pillow and blankets.

When you land many hours later at Hiroshima Airport, you're greeted by your grandpa who's nicely dressed with his signature hat, and has his soft voice saying “おかえり” (welcome home). You give him the biggest hug since you haven't seen him in a while, and he has a big smile on his face. Driving back to your new home from the airport, you see the true nature and

beauty of Japan. You finally learn to appreciate all the smaller things in life that will lead to a stronger future ahead.

Time for School!

The first bell rings. You walk into campus with your new backpack and nice outfit on, a bright pink shirt and some jean shorts, a typical outfit worn in America, and confidently walk into your new class with your new name tag on. Everyone takes a look at you because you're "new" but really you just haven't been to the school and seen your friends since you were younger.

Everyone will come up to your desk to greet and welcome you and you will be very happy. But once you settle in, and become more familiar with the environment you start to think if you actually enjoy being here. The school and the people are amazing, it's just that something doesn't feel right.

You overthink a lot of things, but fitting into the school is hard for you and that doesn't make you happy.

You are a very social person and not being able to communicate well with your friends hurts you and creates a step back from having a fun experience at school. You work endlessly to learn the language quickly so you can just talk with your friends and teachers. Communication is definitely one of your challenges but as time goes on you overcome that barrier, and make the most out of it.¹

Dance the Night Away

A few months pass and while walking home from school, you come across a poster that is promoting a dance academy. You take a quick picture and hurry home to tell mom about it. You discuss with her over dinner and she will allow you to go audition. You will be overjoyed by her answer and can't wait to start practicing.

After weeks of practice in the studio, the audition is one day away. You pick out the perfect outfit with your favorite pair of leggings and bright colored tank top, and your excitement for the audition is over the roof. As you're brushing your teeth to go to bed, you take a few deep breaths to mentally prepare yourself. You look in the mirror to get one last look.

Happy audition day! You're awake bright and early at seven AM, and you start to get ready to be there around ten. You will feel the nerves start to hit as you're driving towards the venue. You feel like you have butterflies in your stomach and can't process reality. You'll arrive 20 minutes early and quietly walk to the waiting room.

¹ Boston University, TIPS for successful communication with international students, September 28, 2010, <https://www.bu.edu/isso/files/pdf/Tips-Successful-Communication-Intl-Students.pdf>.

Looking around makes you more nervous because you see that everyone is much more beautiful and talented than you. You stop to think and feel like you don't fit the "standards".²

Putting that aside, you walk into the room to see a panel of judges, all with their clipboards. You take a deep breath and proceed to introduce yourself. You'll remember to keep a big smile on your face and focus to make eye contact with the judges. You will successfully complete the audition and a week later you will get the call telling you that you've been accepted. You run to mom to tell her the news and she seems really proud of you.

Saying Goodbye

Three years go by.

You're getting ready for your last academy showcase before you move back to the US. It suddenly hits you that this will be your last time on the studio stage, performing with the friends you love endlessly. You'll break down into tears but once walking onto the stage, you'll know to switch emotions. You put your whole heart into every dance, almost as if this is your last time dancing ever.

The final curtain closes.

Everyone runs to give you one last hug on the stage and all you can see is water in your eyes from all the crying. You think back to your very first day in the academy and realize how much you've grown since then. You give the biggest hugs to your teachers throughout the years and thank them for their guidance of not only dance but also as a person.³

As you're packing all your things to move back home, it feels like you're packing up a part of your life. Tomorrow everything will be back to "normal", and these three years will feel like a dream come true. You'll have to accept reality and learn to move on to try and explore new things.

² Shanon Maglente, "The Truth About Asian Beauty Standards," Good Housekeeping, November 29, 2021, <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/beauty/a35953292/asian-beauty-standards/>.

³ Santa Monica, "Whole Person Development: Assessing the Bigger Picture," Gloveworx, March 27, 2018, <https://www.gloveworx.com/blog/whole-person-development-assessing-bigger-picture/>.

Bibliography

Maglente, Shanon. "The Truth About Asian Beauty Standards." November 29, 2021. Accessed June 2, 2023.

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/beauty/a35953292/asian-beauty-standards/>.

In her essay on how Asian beauty ideals affect young people's mental health, Maglente included both personal experiences and evidence from history to support her claims.

Using this source, I was able to sample the experiences of a variety of Asian kids who were dealing with mental health problems, particularly those that were connected to the media's promotion of the beauty standards in Asia.

Monica, Santa. "Whole Person Development: Assessing the Bigger Picture." March 27, 2018. Accessed June 2, 2023.

<https://www.gloveworx.com/blog/whole-person-development-assessing-bigger-picture/>.

Monica's article on the importance of recognizing the whole person focused on sharing the highlights of accepting human life. Building confidence and self-esteem takes time but when effort is put in, things can be accomplished more than you may think. With the help from my dance teachers, my confidence as a performer and person has developed to be stronger.

University, Boston. "TIPS for successful communication with international students." September 28, 2010. Accessed June 2, 2023.

<https://www.bu.edu/isso/files/pdf/Tips-Succesfull-Communication-Intl-Students.pdf>

According to Boston University, there are certain steps to take in order to effectively communicate with international students. The most important thing is to let the students know that you care about them by listening to what they want to share first. "Second

language students often develop a "script" in their mind of what they want to say to you before they enter your office." Communicating in a language you're not familiar with can definitely be a challenge so when my friends were listening to me talk, I felt like I had made a connection with them.