

Stranger in a strange land

On starting, it's exciting. Tough too. A bittersweet feeling to be precise. You have always lived in the shadows of your parents, in the presence of your siblings, and in the company of your relatives and friends. It is not easy to leave the fond memories behind, especially when the calling is so sudden. Faith has its way of doing things and it happens in the most unprecedented of manners.

Never could you have imagined living apart from your family and that too, 13,219 kilometres away. Remember how you would not let go of your mother's hands on your first day of school? Or how the teacher permitted your mother to sit in class at the sight of your misery? Now, you are separated from her by oceans. Funny how life changes, eh?

Nonetheless, the anxiety seeps away and newness engulfs you. The glowing neon lights of the billboards, the towering glass structures, the diverse crowds; you wonder how drastically different your cultures are, how different life can be even though we belong to the same planet and to the same species.

When you open your eyes in the morning in a new room, for a moment the unfamiliarity of your surroundings envelops you. You push yourself out of bed realising you do not have anyone to prepare breakfast for you, no one to wash your dishes, to help you clean the room

and make your bed.

You sit at your makeshift dining/study table with a cup of coffee to go through your emails, eagerly waiting for a reply from the job you applied to a few weeks ago. You count again the number of prayers you have muttered under your breath in the last minute; your blood rushing with adrenaline, your pupils widening, your fingers trembling, you click on the new email's notification as you begin to read —

"Thank you for your interest, we sincerely appreciate your application. We have reviewed your resume and have carefully considered your qualifications. We regret to inform that you have not been selected for the position at this time."

You knew that a few rejections would come your way. You were prepared to not let rejections have the better of you and keep on going, keep on applying. There are 37 more openings that you have yet to apply to. One of them will definitely call back, right? If school has taught you anything, it's probability, the math of hope; one of them has to call back. Right?

You find yourself subconsciously going to your once redundant Gmail app and refreshing the page every few minutes. Nothing! The same routine follows until another notification flashes. Rejected. That's alright, there are 17 more places yet to get back. But it's been 20 days already.

Your application is probably archived in their database. Nine companies left now. But that should not let you down. This is the land of opportunities; your magic moment will arrive. It must.

But then uncertainty spears right through your brain. You begin to question your worth, your degree, the reputable career you built and were so proud of in your country. You knew you would have to start over in the new land, but deep inside, you knew; you knew that you can make it.

You can hear people's commentary in your head already, talking about your failure, mocking your decision to leave a safe and secure life and moving to a foreign land. You wonder if you are being compared to the alleged success stories of their children, of their relatives, of their fathers. Your insecurities start seeping into your goals and your dreams until all that is left of you is an endless dejection.

But. But what can you do when you only have barely enough finances with you to survive? When you have to shoulder your family back home? You are their only hope.

You shrug off the negativity, muster up your mental strength and strike the keys for the umpteenth time — "Dear Hiring Manager."

By Ali Sakhi Khan

Ramblings of a twenty-eight-year-old

I thought I would stay cool my whole life. Having lived through the years when Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat were invented, we millennials felt we were on top of the world. Before the world of bloggers and influencers came into being, Instagram was created for millennials when we began to think elders were infiltrating Facebook with their 'Good Morning' memes and countless blurry selfies taken with selfie sticks. Instagram was a place for us to post philosophical quotes and nature photos with countless filters and trying to pretend to find a deeper meaning to life.

The good time did not last long for us. Like any other big invention, people of all ages stormed Instagram and now, it is a world of highly curated posts and photos. I still have to think fifteen times before posting a photo lest people think it is not good enough. On the bright side, my social media posting game is strong and worthy. At least according to my much younger cousins.

I truly thought I would spend my years being different from our previous generations and change the world in my own way. Now at twenty-eight, I find myself relating to those same people in Facebook I thought were not on par with us. One day, I am feeling I am young and hip (now I'm even using the phrase young and hip like an advertisement for

hip surgery) and the next day I realise I have a favourite grocery store and going to that store counts as a holiday. Now I get giddy when I get the chance to bust open a new Scotch Brite over buying a new top. I kid! I still get excited shopping for new clothes. The difference is now I feel happy over both new dish sponges and clothes.

In my early twenties, I would look forward to brunch outings with my girlfriends in order to retell stories and updates about my dating life and career options I was still allowed to think about. At twenty-eight years, I still look forward to those brunch dates with girlfriends with fearful enthusiasm to discuss marriage options, babies, and reminiscing how fun and dramatic we used to be.

Speaking of marriage and babies, being twenty-eight and having neither a doting husband nor bouncing babies on my lap, I find myself somewhat of an abomination in my family and society's eyes. Anywhere and everywhere I find random aunties thrusting biodatas of 'good boys' in my hands.

I find it both admirable and hilarious when they look at me with pity and say something along the lines of "Sweetheart, don't wait too long to get married. Married life is wonderful!" and then the next minute, complain how tired they are of their husbands and wish they chose

someone else and how obnoxious their children turned out to be.

Funny thing is, now I do understand sometimes where their opinions come from. It is okay to want something everyone is doing around you and also complain about the very same things you ended up doing.

Being a dopamine junkie in my early twenties meant doing things to try to please people and getting short bursts of happiness from their approval, but now, it is a miracle if I can muster up enough enthusiasm for my best friend's birthday.

I pride myself on being mature now (at least according to me). I mean, I still like to think myself as the young and fun person who can kick up a storm at a party but only if the party ends at 10PM and I can be in bed by 11PM. This girl needs her seven hours of sleep to function the next day!

No one tells you how drastically your opinions and thoughts change as you grow older. Now it is a competition between my brain and heart in trying to be practical yet not accepting the realisation that I'm a full-grown adult.

Nearing your thirties means I still feel I am young, yet at the same time feel so old. In Garth Brooks' wise words: "I'm much too young to feel this damned old."

By Melisa Khan

FUSION FLAVOURS

CHIANGMI TALUKDER LENA



Desserts for those special occasions



Sweets can be part of a healthy, lifelong eating pattern as long as they are consumed in moderation.

The word 'dessert' originated from the French word 'desservir', meaning 'to clear the table' with a sweet course that concludes a meal.

Usually, all over the world, basic ingredients of a sweet dessert contain sugar such as cane or palm, brown sugar to honey, and flour or other starches; cooking fats such as butter or lard, dairy, eggs, salt, acidic ingredients such as lemon juice, and spices and other flavouring agents such as chocolate, peanut butter, fruits, and nuts.

The proportions of these ingredients, along with the preparation methods, play a major part in the consistency, texture, and flavour of the end product. Thus, a dessert differs from look to taste, shape to size from one land to another.

If you have a sweet tooth, *just pick any one of these recipes and celebrate your sweet day.*

TURKISH DELIGHT — ORANGE LOKUM

Ingredients

For sugar syrup —

1½ cup water

2½ cup white sugar

2-3 tbsp lemon juice

For corn starch paste —

1 cup water

1 cup orange juice (can be used any juice, such as pomegranate)

1 cup corn starch

1 tsp cream of tartar

1 drop orange food colour (optional)

1-2 drops of orange flavour (optional)

For coating —

¼ cup powdered sugar

¼ cup corn starch

¼ cup shredded coconut