

Undergraduate Student
CGPS International Student Essay Contest 2022

A Faint Darkness Faded Away Into the Light

I usually ask myself questions that always get me caught up. Questions like who I am or what I am doing. They seem simple, but when you closely think about them they seem much deeper. I am not an overthinker, even if I seem like one, I am just a simple person who wants answers. I believe knowledge is the most powerful ability anyone could have. It helps you seek truth and discover the beauty of our nature; the beauty of the creation God gave us. The beauty of us.

In my last year of high school, I decided to put all my energy into my academics and focus on improving myself. Despite the ups and downs I had that year, all my efforts paid off at the end of the semester. I got the highest GPA I'd ever gotten in my life, and I won a scholarship to the U.S. My family was over the moon, especially my mom, whom I had been constantly trying to persuade to let me study in America. She was not convinced at first and wanted me to complete my higher education in Oman, but she changed her mind and seemed satisfied. Surprisingly, I did not feel as excited as they were. Yes, I was happy that I got a scholarship to the country I had always dreamed of traveling to. But it all seemed sort of inadequate and I began questioning myself whether I deserved it or not. At that same time, a friend of mine wanted so badly to go study in the UK, but unfortunately, he did not get the required grade. I started to think that my friend deserved this opportunity more than I did. Not only that, I thought about all the wrongs I had done since the day I was born. Unconsciously, I was mentally and internally torturing myself for everything. I had three months to prepare for my flight to the US, and I spent them all on self-punishment.

On the day of departure, I sent all of my goodbyes to the people I loved. When it came to the person I love the most, my mother, I thought it would be emotional and touching. It was just "Goodbye, mom! See ya in six months!". That was it. Not even a single I love you. This moment stuck in my mind for months. I gradually became cold and emotionless. I arrived in the US in November last year and had to live with five other students. I knew the whole experience was going to be difficult and different. We joined an intensive English program that was designed to help us learn more English and apply to universities. The first few months were strange, being around new people and cultures. I did not have the same life anymore. I kept myself isolated from people and barely made new friends. But there was one person that I got along with really well. Ironically, his name was Ahmed. We were walking down the streets of Philadelphia center city and talking about what's happening in our lives. A few minutes later, he brought up the topic of dreams. "Where do you see yourself in five years?" he asked. I took a moment of silence until they became moments. I simply had no answer to that question. I was so very caught up and lost that I did not even know what I wanted to be. I thought about that question for days, trying to find out what my passion was. I was neither talented nor smart, but just a normal person. I read a

lot of books and listened to dozens of TED talks. I found love in writing and started journaling and writing diaries. I also learned to appreciate the supportive people I have in my life. They also existed, but I was too busy to recognize them. I went back home in June and reunited with my family after seven months of being abroad. The three months I spent in Oman were peacefully enjoyable. I continued developing my skills and started working out. There is an Arabic proverb that says: “The sound mind is in the healthy body.” I was ready and prepared for my next adventure.

I arrived at Philadelphia International Airport in September and drove with my friends to Newark. I finally made it! I had a math quiz right after that day and I nailed it! I met my professors and classmates in person and had tons of blast chatting with them. I started exploring Newark and the University of Delaware a lot deeper. I joined a computer science club and made a lot of friends that I share the same interests with. I am also a member of an American Sign Language club. I thought maybe it would help me understand and appreciate the hearing blessing I have. With all the things I have now in my life, I can call myself “the happiest man in the world”. The University of Delaware is only a step of what’s about to come. I am putting all the effort and focus on my college. It is the only reason I am here in the first place. My dream is to start up my own tech company. I want to take the technology in my country to a completely different level. It is not easy and it will take up my time to make it into action, but my faith and beliefs are guiding me in my journey. Who am I? I am the pain I endure and the love I feel. I am the hatred I fight and the sadness I carry. I am the hope that lights alone in the middle of the darkness.