

Swechya Banskota

## Acknowledgement

Mamu and Baba, thank you for being a constant source of inspiration and motivation. Sandesh, thank you for being the best brother I could ever ask for. I love you all so much!
If You Believe

The Fa/f

## I was reading a book when. . .


. . . there was loud thunder.

If You Believe


Then, the lights went out, and it was dead silent.

Cricket!

Cricket!

Cricket!
If You Believe

I tried to shuffle my way through the dark towards the window carefully but hit my knee on the table.

## Shuffle <br> shuffle

## Thunk!

## Ouch!

It was eerily quiet, but I didn't mind. I felt something significant coming.


Cricket!

. Wh00000000000000sh .

## As I inched towards the window, the sounds slowly faded.



## I parted the blinds to peek outside, disturbing the silence in the process.


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I saw my older sister, Shakti, standing in the wind, her posture and arms open as if welcoming the incoming storm.

If You Believe

The hissing sounds tried to break the silence.
Sisssssssssssss...


But I was distracted trying to figure out what my sister was doing. I admired how fearless she looked.



## I decided to let the blinds fall and go outside to find out what my sister was up to.


If You Believe

I tried to find my way to the door in the dark, but I jammed my toe on my way there.

## Aa-a-ouch! Why ami so clumsy?

As I neared the door, I found myself running towards it. I got closer, and the mysterious noise grew louder and louder until I was consciously processing the stimuli.


## The door flung open when I pulled it, as if it was unhinged.




I hadn't realized that my brother was also outside.


Puzzled, I turned to find my sister gathering wind under her arms, her shawl, and her hair. I was amazed.


Slowly, she caught more and more wind until her feet no longer seemed to be firmly planted on the ground.

## It didn't take her long to catch more wind and be lifted even higher in the air.


If You Believe

## My brother took her advice to heart and started to apply it right away! I was still trying to process what was going on.





If You Believe

Lottery $W_{i n n e r s}$

When my family was on its way to apply for the lottery that opens doors for millions of immigrants to come to the US, a cat crossed our path. . .


This poor cat would be remembered and demonized by my family for almost five years. . . The most attention a stray cat has probably gotten in Nepal!


Yes, that's me with the crazy hair and kohl all around my eyes!


The picture above is from that day at the DV Center. We decided to take a family picture when we were taking single, passport-size photos for the lottery application.

Half-a-year later. . . Well, we won the lottery and even ended up getting an interview at the embassy. . .

... And our visa application got approved, so we forgot the black cat that crossed our path that day-at least temporarily. Our bad luck awaited us in near the future.

In the months leading up to the visa interview, my parents had tried to control us by saying that if we were naughty, the American Embassy wouldn't let us go to the US. However, they used that trick even after the visa approval. . .


And it worked. Every. Single. Time.



In fact, my parents had decided to give the idea of coming to the US a try so that we could get better access to education and resources to advance in life.

The ©reakdown

Pretty soon, the time came for us to depart. We had to leave very early in the morning. The sun had barely lightened the clear sky, so I was able to see the silhouette of the mountains surrounding the Kathmandu valley and even the Himalayas in the horizon.


The clear weather was very rare for the season. It seemed magical at the moment. Nature knew that it would be a long time before we would be able to see Nepal's beauty again.

Even though it was very early, people from my village were all coming towards our house to say goodbye.


I recognized a few of my friends, my brother's friends, my sister's friends, my parents' friends, and my grandparents' friends. People that frequently came to our place. People I was leaving behind and wouldn't see for a long time.

I guess the gravity of the situation got to me because Aama found me crying by the windowsill. When Aama first came into the room, she said, "Shiva," remembering, not my dad, but Lord Shiva, the Hindu god. She says this whenever she is surprised. She was awed by the sight of light glinting off the mountains on the eastern facing side, making the mountains appear golden and majestic. She was then taken aback by the sight of me crying.



I took my time replying.


By the time I replied, she had come down to sit with me and watch the view.


We sat there in silence for a long time, sharing the mutual feeling.


We sat in the silence agcin for a while.







We might not be able to grow bananas where we will be living, but I bet there are a lot of bananas we can find at the large stores for you to eat everyday!



Years later, my mom told me that this conversation worked like a therapy session for her, also. It made her feel strong and ready to tackle the obstacles we would face in the US.


If You Believe


Yes, indeed, my mom was correct. Our tiny living room was packed with people.


My sister and her friends were huddled in one side of the room.


They had become friends at a very young age, so it was understandable that they were heartbroken to part at the age of fourteen. I couldn't even comprehend the pain my sister must have felt at the thought of leaving her friends behind in Nepal.


My brother's friends had also come to wish him farewell. They tried to make most of the little playtime they had available.


Like a lot of kids in Nepal, we were misled by some cartoons we saw in TV into thinking that the houses in the US were made of chocolate.


Finding out that it was not true was one of our biggest initial disappointments when we arrived in the US.

My brother was pulled out of his day-dream when my dad came to make an announcement nobody was ready to hear.


Pretty soon, we had everything loaded into the car.


By now, the rest of the village had also come to say goodbye. Our front yard was crowded with tearful faces.


My grandparents had prepared a traditional farewell by making us flower garlands. My mom put her saree's shawl over her head to show respect, but otherwise, my parents were speechless, both by sadness about departing and the gesture.


Out of the corner of her eyes, my mom saw my brother tearing up.

It was our turn, and none of us were prepared to say goodbye.


We stood stunned and dumbfounded, trying to digest all of the farewell wishes our grandparents told us.


Finally, we came to our senses. I went to hug hajur-aama first and, then, hajur-baba. My brother reached towards their feet to get their blessings, and my sister thanked them and wished them the same.


After we had climbed into the car, my siblings and I tearfully waved goodbye from the back of the car.


If You Believe



After five minutes, we said goodbye for the last time before hopping on the taxi and driving away.


In a village about 100 km northeast of Kathmandu, a five-year-old boy and a sixty-five-year-old woman were waving goodbye to every plane that flew in the sky since 10am local time (the time of our flight).


These were my mom's mom, my grandma, and my cousin. We hadn't been able to tell them goodbye before we left, and we wouldn't be able to see them for a long time either.

In a country like Nepal, landlocked and isolated for the most part of history, goodbyes like this are not very common. In most cases, only death would separate family members.


It would be years before we saw them again; some of the people from our past, we would never see again.


However, we didn't realize this at the moment, when we were flying away from Kathmandu, away from Nepal. We were already thinking about our first visit back.

If You Believe



I am going to try to get more hours at work. If I work a lot, maybe we will be able to finally save some money this month.



I have also already picked up extra shifts at work. But what will the kids do? They are going to be all alone!


Don't worry-our kids are really smart. Besides, Shakti is old enough now to babysit them. She is really brave, and she will also take care of them really well.

At first, my brother and I would have agreed that they couldn't have been more wrong!

If You Believe

About an hour later. . .

If You Believe



My sister was dedicated to every task she committed to and always pushed us to try our hardest, also.




10:30pm, and my parents weren't home yet. . .


They are always late! Do they not care about us? I hate them!


Hey! Watch your tongue! Can't you be patient for an hour?!! They will probably get here

If You Believe

## WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!!



Let her cry! Only spoiled kids cry like that.
If You Believe



If You Believe

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If You Believe



If You Believe

If You Believe


Shiva, please stay 15 minutes longer today for a package delivery!

If You Believe


If You Believe



If You Believe


If You Believe

Whe אoad orion

Fourteen years later. . . Today is a pretty big day for my family.


The whole family, including my grandparents, who came from Nepal just last week, is driving down to attend the commencement ceremony of my sister who just finished her Masters degree in Engineering.

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I feel bad for not being happy because today is a special day for my family. My sister's graduation signifies a great achievement for all of the sacrifices my parents have made and all of the struggles my family went through. However, this puts a lot of pressure on me. I think that the whole family expects me to pursue a career in either engineering or medicine, and I am not interested in those at all. That's my brother and sister; they are the ones who like and do well in the math and sciences. I haven't figured out what I want to do yet, which makes me even more nervous. . .


We actually make this trip every 3 or 4 months because my parents get super worried about my sister; even when they know perfectly well that she is perfectly capable of taking care of herself.


However, it seems like we are making this trip for the first time today because there are so many things to notice and point out to our grandparents, so they don't get bored. . . .


We are trying our best, but it is hard to spin gold out of corns. . . Maybe it would have been easier to with wheats because they actually have straws.


And my dad has taken the responsibility of a tour guide for my grandparents., describing the US and its abundance in a positive light. I wonder if my grandparents are able to see through this.



If You Believe
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If You Believe


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If You Believe


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Shanti, don't feel defeated. You started flying without hearing the rest of my advice. You are unique, and you have unique abilities. Accordingly, you will be able to fly if you give the skills you have a chance rather than trying to copy either your brother or me. The same things applies to everything else in life. You must believe in yourself and give your unique abilities a chance! Try your bike!


If You Believe




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