

Everyone else would go to bed early. But my grandmother and I would be up. Sometimes, she put mehendi on my hand and the scent would fill up the room. Talking nonsense until we both get tired then we go and sleep next to each other on her bed, waiting for a new day.

When I would wake up, I would see a packed bag at the foot of the bed. Doesn't matter who's it was. Someone was leaving for a long time. I would probably see them again but in that moment, I would forget. My grandmother, having got up at the crack of dawn, I presume, would walk into my room. She wanted to know what I wanted for breakfast and that I should probably take a bath before we started the washing machine. I begrudgingly get up and fold the comforter I slept with.

I walk into the other rooms, looking for anyone. I never want to be alone. I see my mother in the kitchen, taping the lid onto a jar filled with some random spice. My aunt and cousin help her. There are several filled jars taking up the kitchen. Each taped up. I look out to the living room, seeing my father, grandfather, brother and cousin sitting around. How typical.

And then I look back at the packed bags sitting idly at the foot of the bed. Waiting to be shoved into the trunk of a car. The driver playing Tetris with them. Someone's leaving. For a long time. How can I eat and shower when someone's leaving for a long time? We'd be 8000 miles apart. When it's day, it's night. And when it's night, it's day. And it breaks my heart every time.

And now that I am older, the anxiety of that day being the last time overwhelms me. It's no longer someone leaving for a long time. It's now someone is leaving and might never come back. And I would never know the last time is the last time. Until I get a call in my apartment, all alone in a big city.

I imagine a life if I stay. What if I stayed? Where would I go to school? What would I do on the weekend? Who would I socialize with? Would I be treated differently? Would I be a different person?

But I would be home with the ones I love.

And every day, I wake up, it would just be a new day.