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## Same Earth, Different Planet

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## Same Earth, Different Planet

### Cover Page Footnote

I would like to thank my first college English Professor, Kristin Rajan, for helping me produce a piece of work that I am extremely happy with.

## Same Earth, Different Planet

by Daisy J. Anderson

“How was school today?” The same question every child gets asked routinely at 4pm after slinging their backpack beside the front door. My day was the same as always. I attended the same small school, Kelsall Primary, with the same students I had known for years. Most of us even looked the same and wore identical uniforms unless you wished to receive the dreaded call home. It seemed I answered this question the same each time it was asked because there really was nothing new to mention. I sat on our small tan couch in the compact TV room, reciting the bland details of my uneventful day at school, when my father entered the room with half a smile and wide eyes. What on earth could a look like that signify? He slightly nodded and jerked his head back to gesture my mum to stand with him. My sister and I shared a momentary confused glance and then reconnected our gaze upon my parents. In this moment I would be faced with a statement that would define the rest of my life. “Girls, I have been given the opportunity to work in America.” My dad announced. I was now forced to decide how I faced change: to resist or to embrace. That is what made my dad’s statement so heavy.

It was a grey Tuesday morning in England, 2015, and the lights in our home, Bulls Cottage, were trickling on. The day had finally arrived: my family and I were moving across the pond. At this point in my nine years of living I had moved three times already, but this one was by far the biggest. What on earth did I expect life to be like on a completely different continent?

“GIRLS!” my mom bellowed at four in the morning from the bottom of the narrow, short, staircase. “Ummhhumm,” My sister and I responded to signal that we were in fact awake despite our quiet-as-a-mouse-like movement. The only part of me awake was my arms and legs moving me from my bedroom to the living room, which really was not far. It was difficult to comprehend the

reality of the situation because of the unearthly hour. Nevertheless, I did happen to notice my leaf-green school uniform peering out from the top of my bin. There was no room to pack it, and no reason to ever need it again. I was informed that at my new school I would be able to pick my own clothes to wear! One of the only freedoms I was used to in school was choosing the color of my headbands. Twice a year I could wear as I pleased on non-uniform day: the best days of the year. My heart fluttered at the thought of being able to select the colors and designs that I wanted. I could express how I felt each day based on my outfit and was eager to make that part of my regular morning procedure. I attached no sentimental value to my uniform at the time as it was something so common and routine. It was a negative element of school in my 9-year-old eyes because it meant I had to be the same as everyone around me. The same green button up, white collar shirt, itchy black tights, and shiny black pumps. It felt as if we were all clones.

After snapping myself out of my long gaze, I said my last goodbyes to my childhood room. At first, I was oblivious to the fact that I would never have another bedroom quite like that one. The old burnt wood beams and re-purposed foundations made that room so unique, one of a kind. “Don’t forget to say your last goodbyes!” My mother bellowed up to me. In saying this, she implied that I wouldn’t be back here again. I pinched the old metal lock mechanism and slowly dragged the charcoal, wooden door to a final close. Suddenly, my heart felt heavy. A moment of reflection stunned me. I didn’t think I even liked that room with its large spiders and unpractical shape. However, the thought of never being there again caused me more sadness than anticipated. I took a breath using all of my lung’s capacity, closed my eyes, and turned my back on the karaoke, sleepovers, and music videos that once existed there. Meanwhile, my dad began collecting our final belongings. He jammed everything into our compact car parallel parked on the “two way” street. I am still convinced that all town roads in England are one way because one car barely fits onto the road alone.

Upon stepping off that gigantic bird, part of me had already metamorphosed into an American. I felt my ghost-white skin darken with the instant touch of sunlight and my stomach flew away with butterflies of excitement. I had not yet realized what I left behind. As I gazed upon the Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta airport, I felt smaller than a speck of dust on an unread book. My surroundings seemed to swallow me because I was nothing in comparison to them. How could people find their way around such a complex building and why were the staff so concerned about what I had in my carry on? I was accustomed to the Manchester UK airport and its minimal terminals and bodies. Now we were walking at least a mile to get where we needed to be or taking a train. I was getting the impression that every building, toy, and meal I once knew would now be supersized. The level of security was extremely new to me. I would assume that more security would provide me with reassurance, but instead it instilled great fear. In order for there to be so much protection, there must be a reason: crime, terrorism, even bombs. This was a difficult change to embrace at a young age, I didn't fully understand the realness of crime in this generation.

The first few hours in America were stressful and chaotic. We were in go mode, navigating through what felt like a Nike store on black Friday. Racing through the airport and taking in all of my surroundings invoked a new mindset and perspective on life. Within the first few moments there I could already notice the beautiful variety of races, languages, and styles that I had never had the opportunity to see in my hometown. The robotic lady on the overhead intercom spoke in Spanish, French, and English! Not that I understood, but it was still fascinating. Similarly, the music playing in the terminals was by artists I had never heard of and genres I was not accustomed to. What I now know as country music was initially such a foreign concept to my British ears. I was able to build a new appreciation for the diversity around me. I understood this was a new

opportunity for me to learn about new cultures and familiarize myself with a new lifestyle. As a result, all five of my senses were heightened and searching for the unfamiliarity's that surrounded me.

Soon enough we were fully preoccupied with not driving on the left side of the road, on the route to our new home. However, I was not focused on our destination at this time. My mind was fixed on how on earth people drove on such an intricate system of roads. It didn't seem like eight lanes were necessary for people driving in the same direction. Not only were the roads big, but so were the vehicles. I had never seen a truck before. Specifically, one lifted 5 feet off the ground with a bed that could fit horses. Even our hire car, a ford escape, was bigger than any car I had ever ridden in. Each minute I was facing a new form of diversity that was so exciting and new.

My family and I entered our new home in complete silence, a rare occasion for us. This was a moment I will never forget. I felt closer to my family than ever before. It was as if we were a group of children getting dropped off on their first day of school. What do we do now? A strange feeling of abandonment filled me, my whole cottage in England would have fit in one room of this house, surely, I was dreaming. We had nothing but each other now- an amazing thing. If anything could bring my family closer together than it already was, moving was it. We didn't know anyone on this new planet, that's what made having each other so important. As I raised my hand to the shiny silver doorknob of my new bedroom, my face rushed with blood and my eyes glazed over. Staring back at me was my checkered green scrunchie still grasping my wrist. The one piece of my school uniform that managed to cross borders with me, a subtle reminder to never forget where I came from. It made me realize that I do not want to forget about my uniform because it symbolized so much more than uniformity amongst my peers. It symbolized the culture I was a part of and the place that built the foundations of who I was.

I have now lived exactly half of my life in America, moved to three states, and have enjoyed every moment of my journey. I can no longer imagine what my life would be like if I still lived in England, but I will forever cherish the culture and relationships my background gave me. Family is the most important element of my life and moving only helped strengthen those bonds. Moving taught me how important it is to experience life outside of what is familiar. New ethnicities, foods, cultures, and languages opened my eyes wider than ever. I needed to embrace these changes and accept them to grow myself and my own identity. Making the decision to embrace and adapt to change was the best decision I could have made. Eventually, I got used to the large buildings and scorching temperatures and allowed all unfamiliar experiences and environments to become part of my new lifestyle. Living in this new place has made me a more accepting, forgiving, and well-rounded person because I have seen two worlds that many people have not.