

The Grass is Not Always Green

Moving away, pulling up your roots, and planting them in different soil is not always easy. Major tough obstacles you face that require time and effort to overcome.

You become the unknown outsider, a culture distinct from your own, no longer part of the majority.

With all your challenges and struggles, major changes in your personality will occur that nothing else can, but when you follow your dreams, conquer your fears, and take on the unfamiliar, that's when the magic happens.

Enjoy the read

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The time was six o'clock in the afternoon. The sun was slowly disappearing behind thick, white clouds, and the strong, cold breeze of September was elevating the feeling of cold.

I was still sitting on my comfortable sofa in the garden, surrounded by a couple of lemon trees, green grass, and a few white flowers planted at the far end of the garden.

I was so deeply involved in reading a novel that I did not realize I had spent more than five hours without moving, but I was completely focused on the novel. Putting down the novel on the little side table, I felt like having a hot drink to warm up my body. I moved towards the house, crossing a short corridor before reaching the kitchen.

I waited for a couple of minutes till I heard the water boiling. I prepared my tea and took several sips till I felt the effect of warmth in my entire body. I looked around, and my eyes stopped on a large family picture with large smiles all over the faces.

My wife Sabina and my two adult sons. Probably the picture was taken a few years before my final firm decision to return to my hometown in Turkey for good after long years of being away from home.

It was not a sudden decision, but a cumulative little incidents that were built up that convinced returning was mandatory.

I had to admit that my decision was a shocking one to my small family. They thought the decision was taken out of a temporarily tense moment and that reconsidering the decision was expected; however, when they felt my decision was final and firm, they slowly and gradually expressed their reluctance to join me.

I took a couple of tea sips, went to my bedroom, picked up a light coat, and returned to my comfortable sofa in the garden while my old memories were driving my mind back when I lived in Italy for almost twenty-five years.

I had a little smile on my face while remembering the start of my new life in Italy I started from scratch, even below the usual entry level of any fresh university graduate. I had only a little English, which was nearly impossible to use when communicating with Italian people.

I had to learn the Italian language from an entry-level. During the early learning process, I had to use hand signals in supermarkets and public transportation.

The habit of purchasing Italian newspapers and my endless persistence in forcing myself to catch up with the language were the major factors in learning the language quicker than average.

By that time, I gained the confidence to borrow Italian books from my work colleagues till I reached the level of communicating as fluently as the Italians themselves.

An hour later, the cold breeze turned to be more windy with scattered rains that my light coat did not support, I collected my book, and a couple of magazines and entered the house passing through the kitchen towards the living room, my favorite place in my entire house because of its easy accessibility to my books, Television and the small wooden chimney that I always use during the real cold weather.

An old photo album was placed on the side table. I picked it up. The first page of the album was my parents, my twin brother, and me.

The picture was taken on the occasion of my twin brother's university graduation, with large smiles all over our faces, mixed with genuine hope and facial expressions, particularly my father's.

He used to have great hopes and high expectations that the heavy responsibilities of his factory would be naturally and smoothly shifted to me and my brother, once we graduated. He was impatiently waiting for such a day as he wished to perform his hobbies of traveling, mountain climbing, and be satisfied with managing the factory from a distance.

We used to work at the factory during our summer vacations, moving across various departments as per my father's instructions to gain complete knowledge and experience.

I have to admit, my brother was the one making extraordinary efforts, getting involved in all major details out of passion, while my interests and passion were somewhere else.

From a young age, I was infused and inspired by the European culture and the European lifestyle, with such passion, I was actively encouraged to read and discover what was on the other side of the Mediterranean. Gradually, my passion turned into an obsession and eagerness to live in Europe.

I had no courage to share such an obsession, neither with my parents nor with my twin brother; however, my performance and attitude at the factory during the daily work indirectly communicated a clear and transparent message to my father that the factory field was not an interest to me.

My father has patiently tried to expose the bright side of working in our factory, the financial and income return, and the working hours flexibility; however, my passion and obsession with living abroad had all the time the edge over any other seduction.

He thought my lack of interest in working in the factory was due to a lack of maturity that could be fixed with time, but he never realized the ambitious dreams I had in my mind for many years

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I kept flipping through the photo album. I paused on a picture of my ex-wife Sabina with our two adult sons, the picture was taken a few years back in one of the European cities during Christmas vacation. I was the one who took the picture, in spite Maria was not in favor of recording our trips.

I remember when I met her for the first time, it was the first day of my arrival to Italy, I was not acquainted with the city, I met her at the reception desk of the hotel I used during the first few days of my arrival, I have to admit, she was the one who gave me the first moral injection and assisted me throughout my entire journey.

Our relationship had quickly developed, and we used to frequently meet either during her lunch break time or dining out in her favorite pizza restaurant close to her office.

Mutual respect and admiration were the main drivers of getting quickly attached especially since we had the same level of education. Despite the different cultures, values, and backgrounds, diversity was the main factor in getting closer.

In spite I was not being legally authorized to work in Italy, Sabina has greatly assisted me in getting a suitable job in one of the factories with an acceptable hourly pay. It was a turning point as the monthly income supported me in getting more involved in Italian society and working on myself to get more settled.

In a relatively short time, our relationship reached a different level and naturally, I proposed to formalize our relationship and get married. I was not confident of her reaction towards my proposal; however, I was pleasantly surprised when she remained silent with a cheerful smile on her blushed face.

One of the main obstacles we both faced at the beginning was the reluctance of her parents to our marriage. They kept

rejecting the idea of having a stranger join the family from a different culture, roots, and values.

Her parents had the fear of my real marriage motive; they had the absolute belief I wanted to legalize my stay in Italy by getting married to an Italian citizen. It took some effort from me and with the support of Sabina, family fears and concerns gradually disappeared till I reached the level of being the favorable person in the family

I looked at my watch, and surprisingly, the time was referring to one o'clock after midnight. It was rarely unusual to stay awake that late. I switched off the lights, took a quick tour around the house to make sure the house gate was closed, and the lights were switched off, then dashed to my bedroom to catch up on a few hours of sleep.