

MY AMERICAN DREAM | by Tomasz Łuczak

We have all heard the stories about the amazing United States being the world's superpower or about the fact that Americans are very rich and we have seen multiple times these amazing views on television from New York, Los Angeles, and Miami. Some of you wanted to experience the *USA life* for at least a day. Or maybe your wildest dream is to find your true love there. I had a chance to *live* like the Americans for quite a while.

It turned out that I was chosen by my school to be an exchange student and attend to US school somewhere in New Hampshire! To be honest, I sort of hoped for going to California or New York but you can't deny that kind of offer!

After weeks of preparations, I took a very long flight from Warsaw to Concord, NH. Finally, at 6:21 AM (local time) my foot has stepped on the American ground! I was very excited because I knew the fun was just getting started! After accomplishing all of the necessary formalities at the airport, I saw an Afro-American lady with curly black hair, who was holding a sign, which said: *LOOKING FOR AN EXCHANGE STUDENT FROM POLAND*. That was me so I came up to her and she welcomed me like I was her son!

'Nice to meet you! I'm Paula, the principal of the Stevens High School in Claremont that you'll be attending. Are you excited?' she asked.

'I'm exploding from excitement, miss!' I said.

'Are you ready for forty-two miles of driving to your new school?' she asked.

'Totally!' I declared.

'Let's go then!' she said.

We got into her car and she started driving to Claremont. One thing that is troublemaking for Europeans in the United States is the fact that the US still uses the Imperial System to measure things. That's why I didn't know what are these forty-two miles in kilometers. Also, I was surprised that the principal of my new high school woke up very early in the morning to personally pick me up from the airport! I honestly expected that I would have to take some sort of bus to get there but no! She took care of everything. This made me feel ... special. And my way to Claremont wasn't boring at all. Miss Paula was very talkative. Because I was too busy talking with Miss Paula, I didn't notice one thing: we were getting closer to our destination.

'Look left!' she said all of a sudden. 'We're in Claremont already!'

That's right. We saw the sign, which informed us about entering the town. About five minutes later, we saw a couple of huge stores almost right next to each other. Oh, my mum would love this place. After that, we spotted probably the most American thing ever in the town: McDonald's!

'Here's the thing,' said Miss Paula. 'Every single person living in Claremont will tell you that it's no different from any other town.'

'I love it already!' I said.

'Really?' Miss Paula asked me.

'You should see my town one day' I told. 'You'll quickly realize that Claremont isn't that bad after all.'

She may didn't know how to respond so she decided to talk about something else.

'We've just crossed the bridge and that means we're in the town center. If we are here, that means your new high school is within a stone throw. Oh, and also on your right you can see Claremont Opera House which means your new home is somewhere nearby.'

The neighborhood seemed to be nice. I wonder who will be my roommate. What's the school like? What is going to be my first class? English? Maths? Maybe history? Or computer science? What about the teachers?

Are they nice? But my biggest concern was: what will my classmates think about me? My goal was to make the best first impression on them. But I had like a million questions like those! *Okay, I thought, take a deep breath. It's going to be all right!*

'Here it is!' said Miss Paula. 'Stevens High School in Claremont!' she looked at her watch. 'Nice, we still have some time to talk in my office!'

So, my day at the American school has officially started! My new school, unlike my high school in Poland, was huge. It was also much better equipped than my previous school. *Yes, I thought, this is the school I WANT to attend!*

We made it to Miss Paula's office and she introduced me to a boy named Scott. He is tall (but still not as tall as me), he has brown short hair and green eyes. It turned out, I was going to stay at his place. After we got to know each other, Miss Paula introduced me to my timetable and reminded me about the rules of the student exchange.

'Now, get to your class and enjoy it!' Miss Paula told us.

'Yes, Miss Paula!' said Scott and he saluted to her.

She took it as a joke because she quietly laughed. Meanwhile, we were on our way to our first class. He told me that we were about to have...

'FRENCH CLASS!?' I said very surprised.

'Chill out,' told Scott. 'Miss Le Bon is a nice teacher. You'll see for yourself.'

We made it to the right class. Scott entered first. I think he apologized in French for the fact that he was late. He showed me to come inside. Miss Le Bon asked to introduce myself. So I did. After that, every single person in the class came up to me and greeted me. That was nice.

I sat down next to Scott and some blond girl. I was terrified at the beginning because I knew like five words in French while the rest of the class was about to have a big discussion about what would happen if the French language ruled the world. I'm not making that up. They discussed that without using any English word! I was just sitting there and feeling like a complete idiot.

Next, we had a biology class, where we talked about human anatomy. I find that subject, unlike all the other biological topics, actually interesting. And during the class, I learned much more than in my previous school. Probably, because the teacher was nice...

The following class was the worst out of any classes: it was maths! I didn't have any idea, what was the teacher talking about! Although Mr. Robins was very demanding to others, he pretended like I wasn't there so I didn't end up getting an F on my first day.

After that, we had computer science, which was awesome because of the funniest teacher I met in my life: Mr. Spencer. He was throwing jokes in every direction.

'So you're from Poland?' he asked me. 'I wish I knew a fact about your country. I mean, Poland is a country. That's all I know.'

'That's ok, sir!' I said. 'I got used to this. That's alright.'

I honestly didn't mind. I expected that most of the people I would meet, they would probably know nothing about my country.

History was up next. *Well, it's time for a nap,* I thought. And this time, I was right. The history teacher was talking about the beginning of the Cold War but the way Mr. Johnson was talking about it was ... special. He showed us a picture of President Truman and he told us everything about him. Every single fact about him! That was so boring! One thing I managed to accomplish is falling asleep ... in two minutes!

Next, we had some lunch and then we had English, Geography, Physics and Religious Education, which I could legally skip because I am an atheist. During the Physics class, just like in maths, I did not understand a single word the teacher said.

Finally, at 3:00 PM, the bell rang and I could leave the school. But there was one major problem: where should I go? I was supposed to stay at Scott's house but he still was at that Religious Education. I wasn't sure if I had to wait for him. It seemed like I could be all alone in Claremont. Until...

'Hi, stranger!' said someone.

It was Amy, who sat close to me in school. She asked me if I enjoyed my first day at Stevens High School. Sure I did. Then, she asked me this:

'You wanna grab some ice tea, milkshake, donut or something?'

'Yeah, why not?' I answered.

She suggested going to Dunkin' Donuts and so we did. We had some amazing donuts and milkshakes. But they were incredibly sweet as well. I thought I was going to become a diabetic after today.

'So, how are you enjoying the US so far?' she asked me.

'I still can't believe this is happening!' I said. 'I love the United States!'

'Glad to hear it.' she responded. 'You know what? Close your eyes.'

'Why?'

'Just close them!'

'Okay.'

I closed my eyes, just like she wanted. All I heard was a noise that was going on in the restaurant. Suddenly, my lips felt some sort of touch. Was Amy kissing me? I was surprised but ... I didn't want her to stop.

Unfortunately, nothing lasts forever...

All of a sudden, my alarm clock woke me up. I checked my phone and it turned out ... that it was 7:00 AM on MONDAY! And that can only mean one thing: the cruel reality is back! So ... was all of this a dream? Sadly, yes. I couldn't stop thinking about the dream. The experience felt very real! But if dreams do come true, maybe mine will come true one day...

How death loved life... | by Julia Madej

It was winter, more precisely on December 24 of the memorable year. The snowy street walking was figure dresen in long black coat and with a scythe in his hand. Passers-by passed indifferently, as if no one was there.

The sun was setting slowly, the snow was falling harder and the inhabitants were slowly coming back home. Only on a swing hanging alone in a small park sat a sixteen-year-old girl.

A teenage girl sat there almost every day. Everyone in the city knew her as a kind, cheerful and creative little soul who helped everyone. According to many, she was a role model, a kind of good spirit. In the city they call her a good spirit.

It was in her direction that the mysterious figure walked. She had an unusual task. She got them from her father, the ruler of the underground world. This was her first task. Take the girl's soul to Hades, to the Champs-Elysees.

Only this was missing her from being a being that all people in the world are afraid of. That's all she

lacked to become death. One negligible human life. It was enough to do so little to become the greatest fear in the world. It was enough to take one life.

When the future death was close enough, she began to carefully watch the girl. According to him, she was not of average beauty. She was really pretty. She had delicate features, a small nose, chestnut hair and sea-colored eyes, from which it was so difficult to look away. They reminded him of a friend whom he had not seen for many years.

At one point, teenage girl turned to him. Death knew that the girl could not see him, but in her eyes he could read the surprise. Suddenly she did something unexpected. She waved to him and smiled shyly.

Death was surprised. He came closer uncertainly, all the time illustrated with the curious look of the girl. He himself did not believe that the teenager saw him. According to him it was simply impossible.

- Who you are?- the girl asked as death stood beside her

- What do you think?- he asked

- You are death.- she answered calmly, then lowered her head

There is silence for a moment. The whole city seemed to be asleep. The sun had just set and the only light was from a small lighthouse standing nearby. At one point, the teenager let out a deep breath, then raised her head and looked far ahead.

- You came for me. she said more affirmatively than questioningly

- Yes. - he replied briefly, but seeing the composure on the girl's face, he asked - Are you not afraid of me?

- Why should I be afraid of you?- She asked

- I'm death. Everyone I take is always afraid of me. - He answered truthfully - Are you ready? - he asked even though he shouldn't

- Can I have one, only request? - she asked, and death nodded - I would like to spend the last Christmas with my family. Could I?- She asked

Death thought about it. This girl intrigued him. He had never seen a man so calm in the face of death. Although he wanted to complete the task as soon as possible, something in this girl did not allow him to do it. It intrigued him so much that he couldn't refuse it she.

- If I agree, will you come with me tomorrow without any problems?

- I promise.- she answered calmly

- Well then. You can spend your last Christmas with your family. I will come for you tomorrow. I hope you will wait to me - death replied

- I always keep my word.- she replied, then got up from the swing.- See you tomorrow, Nico.- she said and gone leaving surprised death

When death was sure that the girl was gone, she leaned her scythe against a tree and pulled a large hood off her head. If anyone was watching now, he would notice a young teenager with a slightly thin and pale face, strands of black hair falling on his forehead and dark brown eyes that attracted so much attention.

The boy sighed deeply, then sat on the swing on which the girl was previously sitting. He started thinking about her. He knew everything about her. He knew his name was Sophie, that she was the daughter of the mayor, that at the age of 5 she lost her brother in an accident, that she loves mint ice cream, that she wrinkles her nose sweetly when she wonders. Now he knew that he knew nothing about her.

At one point, death rose from the swing, swung the hood over her head, grabbed the scythe by the hand, and quickly walked away in a direction that only she knew.

The boy stopped in front of the small house. Slowly, he went to the window and started looking at the family sitting together in the cozy living room. A 40-year-old man with a light beard was sitting on the sofa, and next to him a woman of the same age. A 4-year-old boy was sitting on the carpet and a black Amstaff lay next to him. On the chair sat just she, Sophie. She was sitting in the armchair next to the fireplace. The girl watched the photo album and probably remembered the old days.

At one point, she raised her head, and her sea eyes met those dark brown. The girl smiled slightly to death. She said something to her parents, then got up from the chair and left the room. After a moment the door opened, off them left she.

- Come to us, do not stand in the cold, because you will catch a cold- - she said

- Why are you worried about me? After all, I'm only death.- The boy asked

- Because nobody should be alone today, -she replied, then pulled him inside

When they were in the corridor, Nico looked around carefully, then took off his coat and turned the scythe into a small key ring, which he attached to dark trousers. The girl grabbed his hand and pulled him towards the living room, where the family's laughter came from.

- Mom, Dad, I brought someone,- she said

The couple looked towards them. The man smiled widely, while the woman did not react specifically.

- Hello boy. It's nice to meet my daughter's friend. - said the man - Darling, if you want, go upstairs.

You don't have to sit with us. he turned to his daughter

- Ok dad. - She replied - Let's go, I have chocolate in the room. - This time she said to the teenager, then pulled him with her again

Death was surprised and at the same time intrigued. He had never seen anyone like her. She knew he was talking to death, but she didn't care. She acted as if she met her good friend. That was what attracted the boy to her. The courage she had was unheard of.

When they were in the girl's room, they sat down in the fort from blankets and pillows, and then began to talk as if they were really good old friends. They didn't even notice when it was midnight. It was only at two o'clock that they realized how much time they were talking.

Then the girl left the fort, dragging death with her. They quietly ran down the stairs, dressed, ran outside, throwing at themselves fresh, fluffy snow that had just fallen to the ground.

- Nico, follow me. I want to show you my favorite place. -She said and started walking, and death followed her

They walked in silence, holding hands. In general they did not feel cold. They didn't care what time it was. The most important thing was that they were together.

At some point they came to the old block. They went up the fire stairs to the roof. They climbed next to the edge, leaning their backs on the upper part and began to watch the stars, and the moon, which shone really beautiful that night.

- You asked me why I'm not afraid of you. The answer is simple. I saw something in you that made me feel safe, -the girl said

- I do not know what to say. Everyone was always afraid of me. I've never had too many friends, because everyone was running away, -he said and put his arm around her

They sat in silence watching the stars and the moon. At one point, the girl laid her head on the boy's shoulder, and he rested his head on hers. They stayed in this position quite a lot of time. At one point, the girl looked into his dark eyes and gave a warm smile.

- I'm ready, - she said

- Are you sure about this? -He asked

- Like nothing else, son of death, - she said

- When you wake up, you'll be in a better place and I'll be next to you, -said the son of death

Sophie smiled again. At one point she closed her eyes and her breathing began to weaken. The last time Nico heard her heartbeat, he saw a lonely tear of happiness running down her cheek.

Death sat for a long time at the girl's body. When it began to dawn, he carefully laid the girl on the ground, kissed her already cold cheek, and then he go, putting on the black hood.

The young boy returned to the land of death to meet his father. When he entered the throne room, he met his father's black eyes, staring intently and curiously at him.

- I did it, father,- said the boy

- I'm proud of you, my son.- said the lord of the dead

Nico nodded slightly, then turned and wanted to leave, but his father's voice prevented him from doing so.

- You know where to find her.- Hades said, then rose from his throne and then he left

Young death quickly ran out of the palace and headed for the Champs Elysees. He ran as fast as he could, past the souls of the dead, staring at him with interest. He stopped only at the park gate. He walked slowly through the gate and headed for the swing standing alone.

He could see her from afar. He could see her from afar, sitting on an old swing and staring at the sky. He quickened his pace, and when he was only a few meters away from her, he stopped.

- Did you miss me? - asked

The girl turned at the sound of his voice, and when she saw him, tears appeared in her eyes. Immediately she got up from the swing and after a while fell into his arms, where she was locked in a tight embrace of death.

- You don't even know how much.- she said very quietly, tightly hugging the boy.

The thing about death | by Roksana Fiolka

Blood. Blood and nothing else. Everywhere you looked there was this repulsive red substance. And in the middle of the largest puddle of blood, there was a body. A body of a young and quite handsome man. Philip put on a mask and started to clean up. He carefully checked if there wasn't anything that could point him to Daniel's death. He checked fifteen times. When he was done, he left the house and got in his car. He immediately drove off. Getting rid of the body wasn't his job. He was just supposed to make sure the target wouldn't breathe again.

Philip entered his house and the first thing he did was taking his pills. He still couldn't believe he didn't take them with him. It was already three in the morning, so he went to his sister's room and gave her a quick kiss on the forehead.

When the bag with tools and materials he used was already outside and ready to be taken by another man, he finally went to bed. If it wasn't for the pills, he wouldn't even try to fall asleep. Thankfully he got some rest.

Philip quietly lifted an old, metal door built into the ground and put his foot on the first step. He counted to three and took another step. He repeated that until he reached the end of the stairs. He showed up in the meeting room exactly at two. If he was there a minute later or even earlier he would be punished. He took a seat where he was supposed to and sat without saying anything. After one minute, Makam showed up. He stood on the platform and had a really strange look on his face. Philip had never seen his boss looking like this. Some may say he looked sad or annoyed but to Philip, he was concerned. Finally, Makam took the floor.

– Last week we conducted three major operations. One of you made a mistake. I am not familiar with the identity of who did it but whoever it was, I will know eventually. If anyone wants to come clear, now is your chance.

Philip broke out in a sweat. Could it be him? Could've he made a mistake? No, it was impossible. He did everything he was supposed to, he did his job as he should have. It wasn't him.

– I see – Makam continued his speech. – You've all been trained in how to talk to the police. It's the same protocol every time and it's the same in this situation. We shouldn't be too concerned because none of you have ever been seen with anyone in this room. Stay alert and keep doing operations you are assigned. The next meeting will be tomorrow at the same time. You can go now.

Philip left the company's base and headed home. Suddenly, somebody pulled him behind one of the dumpsters.

– Caroline? What are you doing? – he asked seeing a familiar face.

– What do you think I'm doing? We need to talk. – said Caroline.

She also looked concerned, although her facial expression was a lot different than Makam's. She looked more like a human than a robot. That was a good thing since she was, indeed, a human. Philip wasn't sure if Makam was. Even when Caroline looked worried she still had those little sparks in her eyes. Beautiful, green eyes. Philip was focusing too much on how good she looked instead of what she had to say, but he didn't see her outside the meetings for two years and didn't want to completely forget her. He didn't think it was even possible to forget Caroline.

Philip wanted nothing more than to just look at her but what she had to say seemed pretty important. So he listened.

– Why are you so worried? It's impossible, it was two years ago. Whatever tapes there were are probably already destroyed. Nobody ever saw us together and even if somebody did, they wouldn't remember – he said as Caroline finished talking.

– I wouldn't be so sure. Just don't say anything and delete all your photos with me.

– Why did you assume I still have any?

Caroline looked around and left. She didn't say anything but she knew she was right. She got in the car and drove home.

When Philip entered his house his sister was already waiting for him in the kitchen with dinner ready on the table.

– I'm so sorry Ellie, I didn't know my meeting would take so long – he said as he set his foot in the kitchen.

– What did you do? – she asked without even looking at him.

– What do you mean?

– The police were here. They asked about some girl, about you and where you work. I didn't answer any of their questions because I don't know anything. I want to know! Why aren't you telling me about your life? – she asked and started to cry.

– Go to your room, Ellie. I promise I'll tell you everything, just not now.

Ellie left the kitchen. She didn't expect him to tell her everything, she knew he was very secretive. But they were siblings and she deserved to know. Ellie was also scared for his brother, why would the police ask questions about him?

Philip sat down and sighed. The police coming to his house wasn't a very good sign. He immediately deleted all of the photos with Caroline. He couldn't risk anything.

– Thank you all for your presence here today. I have extremely bad news for you. We've been discovered by the police. Mistake made by one of you couldn't be overlooked and is the reason why in exactly two minutes the police are going to arrest all of us. You can run but we won't fight. We are going to surrender and the man who risked our company is going to be punished.

Philip couldn't believe what he had just heard. Why are they giving up so easily? They can still run away, they have an emergency plan after all.

– May Philip Kellogg stand up?

These words felt unreal. The room was completely quiet and all eyes were directed at him. His body tensed up and he began to sweat. He slowly lifted his body from the chair. He wanted to run. He wanted to run so bad but he couldn't move. Before he did anything the police rushed into the meeting room. They started arresting people. Suddenly, Makam pulled out a gun and shot a bullet straight into Philip's head. His limp body fell to the ground. Police officer aimed his gun at Makam but he managed to hide behind the rostrum.

– Don't worry, you will kill me eventually. That's what I deserve. That's what all of us deserve and that's what Philip Kellogg deserved. I just wanted to do it myself – Makam was screaming while running and trying to hide from the police officers. – There are a lot of bad people on this planet and I'm one of them. I don't hide it. I hired people to kill other people. Turns out, you can actually control death. See, I wanted to kill this bastard and I did. Now I'll stand up and one of you will kill me. Because I want you to. Because I'm pointing a gun at you and killing me would be legal right now. You'll say you acted in self-defense. It's not true but who cares anyway?

Makam stood up and a bullet was shot into his chest immediately. He fell on the ground but managed to say his last words.

– The thing about death is... you can control it.

He breathed one last time and was gone forever.
