

Shine Brighter Première

FlashFile 4 Welcome to Canada

Document 2, Extrait p.44 – Roman *Rooted in Canada: An Immigrant's Story*, Mahesh M., 2025

Rooted in Canada: An Immigrant's Story

We landed at Pearson International Airport in Toronto around midnight, completely drained from the long journey. The cold air felt different, but the warmth of a familiar face made all the difference. A friend was there waiting for us, welcoming us with open arms and offering us a place to stay while we found our footing in this new world.

Jet lag hit us hard, leaving us feeling like we were moving in slow motion. But the following day, the smell of freshly made dhal curry and parata¹ from our friend's kitchen filled the air. That simple, comforting breakfast brought us back to life.

And just like that, our journey in this new land had begun. From there, we headed to our very first home in Canada – a two-bedroom, fairly spacious basement unit owned by a kind Sri Lankan Tamil family. Our friend had already arranged the meeting, and the moment we met the homeowners, we felt an unexpected sense of comfort.

The home was warm, but their hospitality was even warmer. The landlord spoke kindly, explaining the legal responsibilities of being a tenant in Canada. It was all new to us, but his patience made it easier to understand.

¹ Indian flat-bread

We had never lived in a basement apartment before, and honestly, we thought it would feel cramped or uncomfortable.

But to our surprise, it wasn't as daunting² as we had imagined.

Our landlord was incredibly friendly – almost like an older brother – and we didn't take long to sign the lease. It was \$1,000 a month, unfurnished, with shared laundry. Back in 2011, that was slightly above average, but none of that mattered to us. What mattered was the safety of our children and the warmth of the family we were about to live alongside. It felt like the perfect choice.

After signing the lease and receiving the keys, we headed to Walmart for our first grocery trip in Canada. It was yet another new experience for us. Back home, we were used to the familiar aisles, but Walmart felt massive and unfamiliar, almost overwhelming. We picked up groceries, fresh vegetables, fruits, and a small rice cooker. Thankfully, we didn't need to worry about buying pots and pans – our kind landlord's family had generously offered us some to help us settle in.

We also set up our mobile phone connections and a home phone line. I still clearly remember having to leave a \$300 security deposit because we didn't have a credit score in Canada yet.

Once everything was sorted, we walked back to our new home. Even with our winter coats and mittens on, the cold seemed to creep into our bones. Although it was only around 18°C, it felt much colder.

"Isn't it too cold?" I asked the kids.

"No, we like this cold. It's cozy," they replied cheerfully.

"Hmm," I muttered with a slight smile.

² difficult

Our first lunch was simple but comforting – rice, TVP³, and potato curry. Despite how tired we were from all the packing, unpacking, cleaning, and settling into our new space, the meal Mo prepared tasted like home.

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³ Textured Vegetable Protein, vegan alternative to meat