Number’s game

763,760

That’s how many international students there are in the US

25 minutes

That’s how long I battled an automated robot in the USCIS office each time

As it kept telling me to check the website

Crying as I asked to please let me talk to an agent

I called

5 times

for them to tell me

They cannot do anything and hung up

It irks me that I paid

1910$

for the immigration service to tell me

I am finally free to work at a corporate job

But they could not deliver the ID card

So I will just have to wait

After waiting

3 months

after paying

74000$

at a university

my dad sold land to pay for,

where I worked for

10$ an hour

rolling burritos while juggling

18 credit hours

of engineering

3.95

A GPA I crushed myself to achieve

Thinking that my effort would do something

“I want to help the world”

I used to think

Here I am, helpless

9205590153708652189540

A tracking number as long as my patience is short

It will track the package as it tells you

That they sent the documents you needed back

And then lost it somewhere in Kansas

And as I fight through robots who pretend to be people

And people who have become robots

I think of how small the number

1

is

And yet how

significant

That among the

7.888 billion

people

My life has meaning.

My job, my time, my peace matters

Even though it is lost in the numbers of bureaucracy.

I am a person

I want to shout

I want to tell them of long sleepless nights

Of the

289 rejections before I snagged

1 job

Do you know how hard that is?

As an international student??

To know you’re capable

And people won’t even give you a chance

Because of where you were born?

To finally get a foot in the door

For it to close on you?

I want them to taste the bitter disappointment

Taste my salty tears

To walk the last

5 years

of my life

But instead, I say okay thank you

Because I’m an alien

And aliens are polite and thankful

Even when they are crushed

They don’t tell you that

Not when they advertise

The mixed Crayola group of kids laughing on bright green lawns

Only when you come here

Will you realize that you are not even an alien,

Just a number

1427977