

ESSAY PAGE

Part of being a teenager means acting like every bad turn in life is the end of the world; if we break our leg, catastrophic, if we break up with someone, the sky is falling. However there are moments in life when, although the world is not coming to an end, the sorrow seems to suffocate us in an endless void to the point where we wish the world would cease to rotate. I was sucked into this abyss my freshman year in high school when my mother told me that she was going to be deployed to Afghanistan for six months.

Thinking back, my mother being gone so long wouldn't have been so terribly bad if my step dad was home all the time; however, being an airline pilot made my home his for only two days a week. Most kids my age would have been ecstatic about the unprecedented freedom, think of all the parties I could throw. However, I have never been like most kids my age and six months alone seemed terribly frightening to me. But scared or not, it was something I had to do and in the end I hoped I would make my parents proud.

Freedom is a funny word to define such a situation. I sure didn't feel free. All my life I had been like milk three months past expiration, spoiled rotten. The road to maturity was the most frightening thing for my curdled self. Although my parents made arrangements with neighbors to keep an eye on me, no one was going to be at my house to feed me, do the laundry or make sure I got to school on time. It was truly lonely. In essence, I was trapped, trapped in a narrow path to maturity that I felt, with a deepening dread, would never have an end.

As time passed, I somehow managed to walk that lonely road. After the first month or so, I learned how to balance the responsibilities that were laid upon me and still have fun with my friends. I even stepped up my studies and received the best grades of my life: straight A's! At home, what once seemed like boring tasks became my everyday wonders as the humming of the washer and dryer became the song that soothed my soul.

The balance I was able to establish during this difficult time filled my heart with a previously unknown satisfaction. Perhaps the road was manageable; maybe it wasn't impossible; maybe I was ready to finally grow up. When it was over, I found I had opened the mystery box of my soul and pulled out a man. I learned that if I could survive six months on my own, I had what it took to survive whatever life wanted to throw at me.