

CHANGES

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[Assignment: Compare and contrast your expectations towards something (e.g., place, event, trip, person) with your actual experience of it. Remember to have a reason for doing so and to keep audience in mind. Write to show how the mental picture changed.]

Free Day weekend was the first time that I had gone home for the entire weekend. I was excited about the fact that this would be the first time my family would be together in a long while. I expected everything to be the same as it had been in the past; everyone would fit perfectly into their usual place. My home was a place where I could find security since everything there was so stable. What I discovered, however, was that this was far from true. Something had changed and I realized that things at home would never be the same again.

When I left for college in August, my mother and I were very close. My parents immigrated from Greece quite a few years back. However, it was difficult for my mother to express her thoughts and communicate with people in English. Every place she went she would take me along in case she did not understand something. Eventually, we became very close and a friendship developed. No longer did I go along as a translator; I went because my mother respected my opinions and liked my company. She consulted me before purchasing anything, from a dress to a car. My mother did not just need me, she wanted me there for her. This relationship we shared always made me feel special. There was a bond there that many mothers and daughters do not experience.

It was not always possible to go to my mother for advice or help. These were the times I would go to my bedroom to sort out my thoughts. From the time we moved into our home twelve years ago, I had dedicated a good amount of time decorating it to perfection. The carpeting was a deep mauve that felt soft under my feet. The walls were a delicate pink, so delicate that it could hardly be noticed. On one wall was my collection of porcelain masks and on the other were three silhouette paintings that set off the color of the carpeting. The furniture, of course, was always freshly polished and neat. This was my room, the place where I grew up. I knew that this familiar surrounding would comfort me. In my room, I could relax and be myself.

In addition, my sister-in-law, Christina, was a part of my life that I had become accustomed to. It was exactly a year ago when she moved here from Greece. Her arrival was scary for everyone. We had never met before, and we did not know how well we were going to get along. Soon after, we became very close. I loved showing her around and she loved seeing it all. We became fast friends and spent a good portion of our time together. In many respects we began to rely on each other to be there for one another. I introduced her to my friends, to the women at church, and to all the other people she would encounter here. For the past year, we spent countless hours shopping, gossiping, and hanging out. I always felt

responsible for being there whenever she needed me and this was a role I was more than willing to fulfill.

These were the things I never expected to change. They were aspects of my life that I felt confident and secure about. They are also the things I expected to find when I went home last weekend. I was quick to realize that some changes had taken place.

The first thing I noticed when I got home was a stack of furniture brochures that were sprawled across the kitchen table as my mother sat there looking through them. I asked her who was buying furniture. To my amazement she told me that she had already ordered it and it was to arrive in about two weeks. Rather selfishly, I became a little upset at the fact that she had not consulted me before actually ordering the furniture. Then I asked her who helped her pick out the new style. Again, she had done it on her own. I realized that my mother was competent enough to do everything herself now. She no longer needed me to be there with her. Throughout the weekend, spending time with her felt strange. It seemed as though something was missing from the relationship we had had before. Even the conversations we had were limited. I saw her differently than I had before.

Making this realization, I moped around and made my way to my bedroom or what was supposed to be my bedroom. The moment I flipped the light switch, I did a double take. The room had been completely transformed. The carpeting was covered with wet towels, dirty and clean clothes, and about four pairs of shoes. Gone from the walls were my beautiful silhouette paintings and up were pictures of my sister's brace-faced friends grinning at me with their obnoxious teeth. I shuddered at the sight. The masks were intact, but clad completely in dust. I was in shock. Even my bed was covered with junk. I could not bring myself to sleep in the room the entire weekend. No longer could I sit on my bed and think things through. It was as if my presence in that room for the preceding twelve years had never existed.

I think the thing that bothered me most was the change I found in Christina. In a month and a half's time, she had acquired her driver's license, found a house to buy, and found a job. To be totally honest, I was extremely proud of her for adjusting so well and so quickly to America. But once again, as with my mother, I felt like I was no longer needed. Even the conversations we had were limited. I was amazed at how much change had taken place in her in just a month and a half.

I know that my family will always love me, and that no matter what I will always be welcome at home. The emotions I experienced, however, were of harsh realization. Call it self-pity, but I felt forgotten. It did not take long to feel really uncomfortable at home and I wanted to come back to school as soon as possible. It was my mistake for assuming that things at home would never change. Then I thought to myself--maybe home wasn't all that had changed. After all, I was the one who had left. That is when I realized where the biggest change had taken place--in me.