

## OFF TO NEW LANDS

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TGIF: for my family, this was the one day of the week in our chaotic lives that we would all have dinner together. We always went to our favorite restaurant, Applebee's, where we knew all of the waitresses and staff since half of them went to my high school. The waitresses knew our names and the orders of the four of us by heart: one broccoli fettucine alfredo, two chicken enchiladas, an order of quesadillas without sour cream, one coke, one diet coke, and two waters with straws. Though we all went off in different directions after dinner, my sister and I out with our friends and my parents to rent a movie, this was two hours of the week that my family spent together conversing about our weeks and what was on our minds. My parents always wanted to know about school, work, dance, and who I was going out with that night. The same questions were asked of my sister. Then my mom, who is a homemaker, always had something to say about our crazy cat or who she had lunch with. My dad was always last telling about his week and work. He told of new projects that he was working on and what companies he was consulting for. One company kept popping up week after week and he knew that they liked the work that he was doing for them, especially since he is one of a select few in the world to have the knowledge and background that he does in researching airborne particulate matter and filtration.

So one Friday evening, dinner progresses and it is my dad's turn to enlighten us on his week and we all expect to hear about the projects he completed or what important "big cheese" he talked to that wanted him to do research. Little did we know what would spill out of his mouth on this particular day. It came out as if he had been practicing it all the way home from work. I remember it like it was yesterday, though it was in February during my junior year in high school.

Very nonchalantly he asked our thoughts on moving. I thought that he was just kidding. I was going to be a senior in high school the next fall and there was no way that he would pull me out of high school for my last year and stick me somewhere else. The thought crossed my mind that if I was still within driving distance of school, I could just drive back and forth as a commuter and then it would be no big deal to me if we moved. I was up for it. We had been living in our house for ten years and a change might be nice. Well, to my surprise, when he said "move" he meant move halfway across the country to an itty-bitty (with an emphasis on itty-bitty) town in Connecticut. Our whole extended family lived in Minnesota and

all of our friends were there. My sister and I grew up in the suburbs of Minneapolis and to leave the only people that we ever knew would break our hearts.

This company that my dad consulted for asked him to take a managerial position, and with his expertise, he knew that he would be an asset to their company and that he could not pass this opportunity up. He did tell us, though, that it would be a family decision. He is very understanding and respectful of my feelings and of my sister's. Sure, I knew that this would be an excellent opportunity for him, but I could not help being selfish, not wanting to move for my senior year in high school.

We had questions though to ask the company, with salary being a very important one. They offered him what he was already making in Minnesota and with the cost of living approximately 30% higher in Connecticut, they were going to have to do better than that. Why would my family pick up and move half way across the country when my dad would be making the same salary, to live more expensively? Of course they wanted to give him the least that they could to get him to work for them, but it was going to take a lot of enticing on their part to get our family to pick up and move across the country to an area that we were not familiar with.

The other big question facing us was when did the company want him to start working. My dad certainly wanted my sister and me to finish out the school year. Once the school year was over, our belongings packed and our house sold, he would be available to work the first of July. The company was willing to work with that, but I still did not want to move for just a year and especially before I went to college; I would feel so out of place for just a year. Everyone knows that by their senior year, everybody has a clique of friends and they are oblivious to the new kid in town. If my sister was going to move though, this would be the year for her to move because the high schools out there start at the sophomore and not at the freshmen year, and she would be a sophomore in fall starting at a new school.

My dad was understanding, though, about how I felt about moving before my senior year. We made this decision as a family in an attempt to accommodate everybody and what we all needed. My father chose to move to Connecticut and live in an apartment by himself for a year and a half, while my mom, sister and I stayed in our house in Minnesota so I could finish my senior year in high school. I do not think that my dad minded too much about leaving us behind because we talked to him every night and he came home almost every other weekend. We were all so busy anyway that we hardly ever saw each other, and I hardly saw my dad

when he did live with us because he was always working or I was working and doing my own thing.

During senior year, everybody decides what they want to do with the rest of their lives. I knew that I wanted to go to college, but the question of where became even more difficult. Do I stay with my friends in Minnesota like I always thought I would, do I follow my family to the East Coast, or do I go someplace that has everything that I am looking for in a school regardless of location? I was looking for a small, private, Lutheran, liberal arts college with a good business school. Had my family not been moving, I would be at St. Olaf in Minnesota majoring in economics and math, but since my family was moving, I started looking at schools outside of Minnesota and namely on the East Coast.

Predominately, the East Coast is not Lutheran though, and I did not have too much luck in finding exactly what I was looking for. So I chose Valparaiso University, half way between Minnesota and Connecticut, where I did not know anyone. Valpo was the closest school to the East Coast in which I found everything that I was looking for in a school. Had my dad not taken his job, not only would I not be at Valpo, but I would not have scholarship money and an internship for the next three summers and a job offer already when I graduate from Valpo. Of course I miss all of my friends back in Minnesota, but with such technological advances in computers and communication, I am able to keep in very close contact via e-mail.

I believe that my family made the right decision, but at the time it was very stressful on our family. We relied a lot on our faith and on each other. I just feel sorry for my sister who had to adjust to a new school her junior year. She is outgoing though, and is doing really well academically and socially. I guess that people like her, because she was nominated for Homecoming Queen, so she was pretty excited about that and felt more confident in herself. I miss her though, and my mom and dad, but I think that we made the best decision at the time and I think that we all benefited in our separate lives.

One of the hardest things that I have ever done is to have lived without a father for a year and a half. My mother did not have much control over what my sister and I did; not that we were bad kids, but in all honesty, what was she going to do to us if we came in an hour past curfew? My father was more strict with the rules and we would never disobey him because we knew that he would lay down the law and not let us go out the following week if we came in late. We still had our weekly trips to Applebee's, but the fourth chair was empty. My father's company sent him back home to Minnesota to see us almost every other week, but it is not even close to the same as living with a dad and having him there

supporting us in our lives. I feel so sorry for those children who have either lost a parent or whose parents are divorced. I know that I cannot sympathize with them completely, but I think that I have some idea of how they feel.

## CHILDHOOD REMAINS

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As one grows older it is the normal belief in society that they must transform into an adult. Contrary to this belief I prefer to remain in the simplistic, pure stage of childhood. For nineteen years now I have been perfecting my abilities of acting like a child. I would like to inform others of what it takes to be a kid, and remain joyful in a sorrow-filled society. The tasks are simple but they must be followed accurately. If any step is disregarded you will lose yourself and fall into the vile depths of adulthood. I have seen this happen to many of my friends and even to my family. Adulthood is a scary episode that will hold a person forever no matter how hard they try to escape.

The first, most dangerous, thing you need to remember is never to drink coffee. This is the strongest poison in the life of a child. All it takes is one pleasing sip of coffee and you are lost forever. I can not stress how important this is. Coffee is like chemotherapy. Once it gets in you it slowly kills every part of you, and you are gradually mutated into a totally different person. Experience crosses your lips and you are gone forever.

If someone offers you coffee my advice is to politely ask for hot chocolate instead. This drink offers a lot to those who are trying to remain infantile. It is pure sugar. Hot chocolate offers the same caffeine rush that coffee does, but it also provides one with a rich, sugary taste. The best part of hot chocolate is that it can be drunk with whipped cream on top. This offers more sugar, which is always a good thing, and the chance to have a whipped cream mustache.

Getting a mustache from a drink is an art that anyone trying to remain infantile must master. You can basically get it from any drink. the