LIVING ON MY OWN

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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.]

For as long as I can remember I would always dream about going away to school. While sitting in church I would watch the college students return to their pews that had been vacant during the long semester of classes. They looked so cool and collected. They seemed to have the stature of independence that I longed to find in myself. The dream of living on my own grew to broader heights as the years went by.

Books, magazines, and television programs helped intensify my longing. I would see the gorgeous models prance around a dream campus. They never had the appearance of being tired or of being stressed for time. I saw them with their beach-front apartments, their flashy convertibles, and their flamboyant parties. These new adults were never in financial difficulties. Their money would be spent frivolously on new clothes and pizza parties. The activities they were involved in were the endless times of excitement and adventure that I wished for. Parents could not say the nasty sounding words of refusal. These students could now, in my eyes, live life to the fullest.

I also found myself dreaming of the long awaited best friend in college. I was to meet this person the first day away. She would be my roommate. I saw the two of us spending countless hours laughing together. There would be long nights sitting in bed gossiping about the day's events. The thought of our not being compatible never crossed my rose-colored mind. Life in college would be perfect.

Now I am that college student. I am more independent than I have ever been, but now I dream of being safely tucked into my old bed. College life is not all fun and games as I pictured it. Instead of a beach-front apartment, I share a dormitory room smaller than the room I occupied for most of my life without a roommate. The classy convertible I dreamed of is an old pair of walking shoes with more miles on them than an odometer. Most nights are filled with homework. Finding time to party on a week night is as hard as finding a leprechaun outside the vicinity of Ireland. I rarely acquire the number of hours of sleep that are necessary for an active individual. Many days I am tired and pressed for time. I do not have the endless financial means that the characters of my dreams possessed, and my parents do not line my pockets with gold nuggets. Besides sitting through challenging classes, I work afternoons so I can afford the necessities of life. The little elves that used to restock bathroom cupboards at home refused to move to my change of address. I must now replace these items on my own. Laundry is now my responsibility. Clothes no longer magically appear in my dresser drawers or closet. The realities of college life have hit me square in the
face in every aspect. Even my roommate has not fit the pictures that danced in my head.

My roommate is not by any means a miserable person to live with, but she does not possess the qualities I was looking for in a close friend. We are two very different people. We have different majors that require different amounts of study time. Our classes are scheduled at different times causing study conflicts in our own morning routines. Our music tastes conflict, along with other personal interests. I enjoy athletics, but she takes a liking to the arts. I sleep in late, but she gets up early. The differences may not seem important on the outside, but after months of living together they can become stumbling blocks to any relationship.

College life is not all that I expected it to be, but in this world not many things turn out as planned. There are many times when I wish to be that little girl again watching the big kids come home, but I cannot deny the feelings of pride that are generated when I see young eyes watching me now. I see the awe and wonder pass over their faces. I know they are seeing the adventurous lifestyle that comes with living on one's own. They may see me as an individual with the cool and collected stature of an independent, but they do not see the fear of a child who is being thrust into a new world of responsibility. College is a place for learning, and I learned that along with fun and games comes the realization of new responsibilities. Those young eyes will learn that too.