

Dear Mom: I Miss You

It all started in April of 2006. My mother was to leave in five weeks for her six month deployment to Afghanistan. She was selected to go on a peace keeping mission, but lately I have seen all over the news that these "peace keeping" missions have turned more into combat missions. This terrified me and my younger brother Charlie. We didn't know what to think or how to react. My mom, that I have never been away from for more than one week for summer camp, was leaving our family. She would miss out on so much: my school play, my brother's soccer tournament and even my grade eight graduation. I knew this was her job, but I just couldn't deal with the fact she would be gone, and may never return. My dad told me that she would not get hurt, and was doing a good thing, but I did not seem to understand.

We were all standing outside the airport, my blonde hair whipping in the wind, and my mother's matching locks, cut short for the military. Oh how I missed her hair. It seemed at this point, it was everything little that was adding up to my distress about my mothers leave.

"Chloe, you know I will return. We will stay in touch, I will never leave you," promised my mom.

"I will miss you so much!" I cried.

Suddenly, my dad and brother began to cry. It was time to say good-bye, and it all happened very quickly, we just wanted to get it over and done with.

The next few months seemed like an eternity without my mother. I felt like I had nobody to confide in, even though I deep down I knew there were many people who loved me still in Canada. Once again, it was the small things that upset me, like us not always having milk in the house (my mom was always the one to make sure we had milk with our dinner).

An evening in late May, my dad and I were watching the news on CBC, and the headline was that the death toll of Canadian soldiers was on the rise, currently sitting at forty-five, with four deaths by a suicide bomber that day. (Storm, 2006) I was in disbelief! How could we let my mom go, if innocent soldiers were dying left, right and center for “peace keeping”? I was so angry at the Canadian government. People think that “kids don’t know anything” and “we are only young” but sometimes I think we pick up on more than adults do in their self-absorbed lives. I decided to write my mother right away. The fear I was experiencing was unbearable, and I couldn’t think of what I would do without her.

After that evening watching the news, my dad became very quiet. I knew the reason for this, but of course my brother didn’t understand. All he knew was that “mommy was trying to help people that needed it” and that “she would be back soon”. My father wasn’t doing the things he enjoyed anymore, just living life because he had to: to take care of us. I think this took my dad by surprise because he didn’t expect to react this way; he is usually the rock that holds my family together. I knew he missed my mom as much as I did, she was our best friend. Time was taking its toll-on the three of

us, and I was beginning to wonder if my mom would ever return as she promised. I saw my friends with their mom's going on shopping trips and eating lunch together on the weekends. Oh how much I missed that.

In the middle of June, I got a letter from my mom about the treatment of Afghan women and how I should be proud to receive my grade eight diploma, as that was merely a dream for many young women overseas.

Chloe,

I am just outside of Kandahar, and I had a bit of extra time, so I wanted to remind you how very sorry I am that I won't be there for your graduation. I know it means a lot to you, but I want you to be thankful that you were able to even get an education. Eighty-five percent of the women and girls here are illiterate and many are even hanged for simply fighting back when they are getting raped or harassed. (Liven, 2006) The world is a harsh place, and I want you to understand why I am trying to help. I probably won't change the world, but at least I know I tried. I will be returning in just a few short months, and I know you and the "boys" will be just fine without me. Of course I'd rather be home with you guys watching TV together, but I know this is something I need to do for not only Canada, but for myself. On a happier note, there is a new Tim Horton's in Kandahar! I love it! The only difference is that I order an iced cappuccino instead of my usual "double double" as coffee is a little too hot for me in this fifty degree weather. (Chao, 2006) It was such a nice touch of home and it reminded me of our late night

drives to Tim Horton's. Anyway, my Chloe, I hope you keep in mind everything you have and don't take anything for granted. I love you and miss you tons, see you very soon!

Love, Mom

After receiving this letter from mom, it kind of changed my perspective on the whole war in Afghanistan. I still did not agree with the death of innocent men, women, children and soldiers, but I knew that democracy would eventually need to be accomplished in Afghanistan. If it did not happen now, at least this is a start. (Luck, 2007) Mom was right, but it didn't help the fact that I need her more than anything. I'm going through so much, with my graduation, boys and friends- all things that only a mother can help with. I decided for myself after reading that letter that I would be proud of my mother, not resentful for what she is doing for our country. I try to think back to the stories I have heard about my grandfather and how he helped our country become the one it is today. Even though war is not always glorious, something usually gets changed in the end.

It was the night of my grade eight graduation, June 26, 2006. I was waiting ten years for this, and my mother wasn't there. This night was extremely emotional for me but to my surprise, mom had taped a special congratulations message before she left. As much as I wanted her to be there for my special night, I knew she wouldn't be and the tape really helped. I had heard that many soldiers had been doing so for their families. It was also requested by the history teacher at my school to say a speech on bravery present

in soldiers, so I obviously chose my mom as the main topic. I felt so proud talking about her in such a way. My favourite lines were, "My mom is helping many people right now. She may be missing the biggest night in my life, but she may be saving someone else's life in one single night. I am so proud of her; she is the bravest women I know. And the best mother in the whole wide world!" The night of my graduation ended up being one of my most proud moments. It made me realize how much my mom really was giving to help.

In October of that same year, it was time for my mom to come home. You could just feel the joy in my family! She came home on a sunny fall afternoon, with a huge smile on her face. You could see the love in her eyes, and the pride in her heart. The moment my mom hugged me, I felt like something had changed but not in a negative way. I think the six months we were apart somehow made our bond stronger, and less like the typical mother-daughter bond, but more like a friendship. The first chance my mom and I had some time to spend just the two of us, we went to Tim Horton's and she was so excited to finally have that double double that was replaced with an Ice Cap for six straight months.

I know that someday, nobody knows when, my mother may have to leave my family again for another mission. But I also know that our family can get through anything together, it just takes a little extra effort. I still have different opinions on the war, like some societies my never be democratic, but I respect my mother's goals. I still get that nervous feeling in the bottom of my stomach whenever I hear anything

mentioned about Afghanistan, but it is my reality and I now know I can survive anything.

And like my mother told me, I will always have my high school graduation!

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