

A TASTE OF INDEPENDENCE

by Kaberi Dasgupta

One year and nine months. That's about the time I left for me to enjoy home-cooked meals, a twenty-four hour hotline, and a money supply that seems to extend to infinity, at least from my perspective. In other words, that's how long I have before leaving home for graduate school.

Such a drastic change could be devastating - without practice. Consequently, I welcome the opportunity to rehearse "being on my own" when my family deserts me to have a fun-filled weekend in Halifax or Moncton.

"You're going when?"

"Next weekend."

"What am I going to do?"

This question, believe it or not, is not without basis. I'm not exactly helpless in the kitchen, but even the world's greatest chef would have trouble adhering to the quest that I anticipated:

"Don't touch the stove while we're away."

"Dad, believe me, I can handle the stove."

"It appeared that my parents felt that my inhaling smoke, or perhaps the fire itself, was somehow a result of their being in Halifax."

"You'll forget to turn it off."

"I can't live on sandwiches for the entire weekend."

"Why not?"

My parents' faith in my competence in the kitchen does, however, exceed their faith in my ability to take care of myself.

"Don't worry. I'll be fine. I won't even tell anyone that I'm going to be alone."

"At least have the neighbour's daughter stay with you."

"She's ten years old. You want HER to protect ME?"

Unfortunately they failed to see the ludicrousness of such a situation.

However, after stocking the refrigerator with cooked food (which I was given permission to warm), and ensuring that I had asked a friend to stay with me, they left; it happened to be the

Friday of the university fire, of which they learned when they called that evening.

"You inhaled what?"

"Toxic smoke. But I'm all right." In the background I heard a whispered "See what happens...." It appeared that my parents felt that my inhaling smoke, or perhaps the fire itself, was somehow a result of their being in Halifax.

"Has your friend come over yet?"

"No, she'll be a little late."

"Are you scared?"

I wondered what exactly it was that my father planned to do if I said yes.

"No, really, I'm fine."

"Fine? After inhaling toxic smoke?"

The difficulties of separation did not, of course, lie exclusively with my parents. I did find the house strangely, even disturbingly, peaceful, despite the presence of my

friend and the pet parakeet.

Being accustomed to conversing with four other people, it was difficult to adjust to just one person.

"Be quiet."

"Who? Me?" asked my friend, somewhat surprised.

"No, the bird. He's chirping because he wants my breakfast."

"Oh."

I went into the kitchen to peruse the contents of the refrigerator.

"Just a minute."

"I haven't said anything. Neither has the bird," observed my friend.

"I was talking to the refrigerator."

"You talk to the appliances?"

"The refrigerator beeps if you leave its door open for too long."

For some reason, my friend did not seem to be paying much attention to my explanation.

I was beginning to wonder if I was alone in having difficulties in coping without my family. After all, everyone likes to at least have the illusion of independence. However it soon appeared that my friend, despite having lived away from home for over a year, had her own trouble with life's dilemmas. While I was washing dishes she was suspiciously scrutinizing the potatoes that she planned to bake.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Don't you have to put holes in potatoes before you bake them?"

"Yes. Go ahead."

"How?"

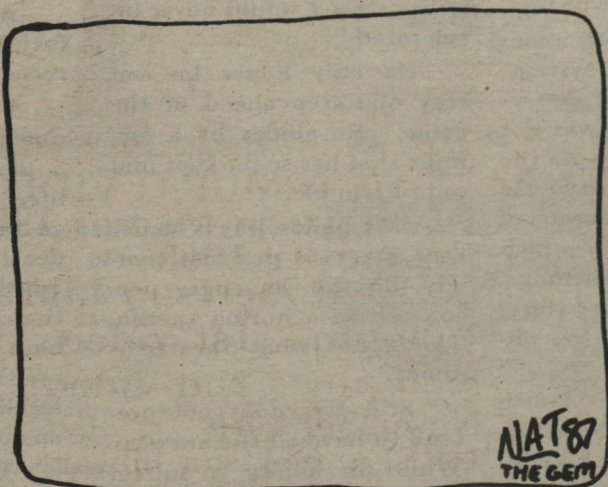
With the air of a connoisseur, I handed her a fork.

When my family returned on Sunday evening, supper was on the table and the house was still standing. Needless to say, they were rather impressed. Perhaps next time they'll leave me the car...

Incident Report

A new weekly feature from the UPEI Department of Security listing vandalism and other events that have occurred on campus in the past week.

- 2 car windows damaged in Blanchard Parking Lot
- Window kicked out of Barn
- 6 signs torn from posts and ground
- Criminal charges pending as a result of an incident at the Barn on Sat. night.
- the usual Halloween egg throwing and window soaping with no apparent damage resulting



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