

# THIRD EYE EDITION

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## Letting go...

Dear Son,

When you were little you disobeyed me a zillion times. So now I'm going to disobey you this one time. You and your younger brother put a blanket ban on my writing about you in this column. You are growing up to be macho young men and there's nothing macho about having a mother who makes a public show of her affection for you. But I can't help it this time. You see son, it's not about you and me. When I write this, it's about all the parents who must part from their children, who must let go, and it becomes a universal kind of thing. Out there are mothers, countless of them, who are feeling the way I do, and they may take some comfort from these words, as we share the buoyant exhilaration and aching pain of bringing up our children.

Today morning we were at the railway station. You were going back to college in Delhi after the autumn break. I had prayed and prayed the train would be late and I'd steal some more hour with you. But the train was right on time. You strode ahead of me carrying your bags. I had to run to catch up with you. I was beginning to cry when we said our farewells and you chided me gently, enveloping me in a bear hug. All the colour and the music seemed to recede from my life as the train rolled out of the station. How different it was just to weeks ago when you had arrived the day before Sasthi for your autumn break, bearing gifts for all of us, and so many anecdotes about life in Delhi. As I listened to you, I felt I was living life through you, absorbing the college slang, eating at the mess, making friends with young people from all parts of the country, attending classes and having a blast at Kamalanagar, or swaying to the music at the Harmony fest, studying till dawn.

As I listened to all this, I mused about how your freedom didn't come in a day. When you were a couple of months old, you lay in bed between two velvet pillows. You lay there for hours, kicking your legs, following me with your big eyes, trying to suck your toes, without much success I'm afraid. Then one day you manage to clamber over the big pillow and crawled determinedly to the edge of the bed. My scream stopped you in your tracks. You needed a maximum security prison. It came in the form a wooden cot as high as your head, its bars painted a bright red. We filled it with all the G- Joes and He-mans we could find but you screamed your lungs out to be let out. Then it was the tricycle, with the front door firmly bolted. Even then you managed to escape one morning, clad in a vest, a tiny pair of shorts, and wearing your father's helmet. You waddled barefoot in search of a restaurant in Silpukhuri that sold delectable dosas. I was in hysterics until a kind stranger carried you home. And when you went to play school, I built up this imaginary world of endless delights, the most amazing toys, rabbits that would be given to you as pets, an endless adventure waiting to be plunged into. But life was different. You dragged a heavy bag filled with books on History and Geography and Maths and Science. You were a hard worker, never giving up. From a school that was nearby you went to a higher secondary school that took more than an hour to travel. Often I would wait for the yellow bus, much to your embarrassment, so that we could walk home together. Today I hoard those memories like a miser, and they bring back the sunlight and the rainbows in my life.

Son, I'm sorry for clinging on to you. Do you remember the anxious phone calls? The way I breathlessly ask questions – are you eating properly? Do you sleep well? Are you careful

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about money? Are they ragging you? Remember the days we talked four times a day? It's a miracle you didn't switch off the cell phone. Now, I am like a pestering child. It needs so much maturity and understanding to put up with that.

Life is going to be difficult with your absence, however temporary. I can't bear the sight of the empty chair at meal times. I can't bear to make caramel custard or deep fried chicken that you relish. I can't bear to hear Bon Jovi or Westlife that you played all the time. I can't bear the fact that your little brother must sleep alone at night and not share all that man to man conversations with you. When you are here life is so complete. So perfect. And now your absence is a period of waiting, a kind of limbo, for that magic to return.

Son, my tears have dried now. I know God is looking out for you. Your friends are waiting to catch up with you. Hope the goodies I packed turn out to be enough. The long Delhi winter is about to arrive. Do you know how I watch the weather news to see how hot or cold Delhi is? The only reason is because you are there, my boy – man. I'll be waiting for your call, son. And you and your brother will be the centre of my world, always.

Take care,

Mum

P.S.: I'm sorry there's nothing macho about this letter.