

It wasn't that I was gone that was sad, necessarily, but that I had missed the biryani, the *shrimp* biryani, the food she knew I loved the most.

It wasn't a big deal, the clothes she had bought, because really it was only a jacket and some shoes because she knew my brother had worn my Sperrys and they were a bit old now, a bit tattered on the edges. The shoes were on clearance, anyway, so it wasn't that big of a deal.

And the "Mercedes," which I put it quotes because it was devoid of any value associated with a Mercedes. The brakes wouldn't always work perfectly but it was fine because she was buying a Camry, soon, and when she did it wasn't a big deal that she'd drive me an hour to take some unknown test in some unknown place for some unknown reason, really, or whatever game whenever whatever distance. It was a responsibility, a necessity, something that had to be done.

And it wasn't that I was growing older, really, that was so shocking, but now I was out more and spending and earning, a little bit, at least, and that was really something out of the ordinary.

And it wasn't that she missed me, necessarily, but there was enough biryani for four people and only three were home. It was fine, though, because she insisted the biryani wasn't that good. Really, it was subpar at best and I would get to taste it some other time.

Really, it was no big deal.