

My First Night Home Alone

Eric Gau

Mom had just been promoted, and was on her first business trip overseas. She would be gone for two weeks. Dad wasn't on a trip, but he was so busy with his start-up company that I never saw him; I woke up and went to school before he got up, and I was in bed asleep by the time he got home from the office. So, essentially, I was home alone, for the first time, and more importantly, for the first night — and I was only seven.

After school, I walked back to my house alone, as was my custom. I used my key to let myself in, making sure the door was properly locked behind me after I closed it. I took my customary after-school break, eating a snack and watching television for an hour. Things seemed absolutely normal then; even if mom had been in the country, she wouldn't be back from work so early.

Rousing myself from my television stupor, I got to work on my homework. Sitting at the kitchen table, I did my math problems, wrote an essay, and read a chapter of the history text. As I quietly plough my way through the stack of assignments, the sun silently ended its journey beyond the horizon, slowly covering everything in darkness.

I turned on the lights to finish my homework. Once I was done, I went to the kitchen to see what there was to eat. Mom had made a bunch of lunchboxes for me to live off of, since Dad wouldn't be home and didn't know how to cook anyway. I grabbed a box of fried rice, heated it in the microwave, then took it and a cup of water back to the living room to watch some more television. The noise from the television helped it seem like I wasn't so alone in the house.

Suddenly, I realized how many different entrances there were to the house. I checked the door to the garage, the front door, the double sliding door to the patio, the door in my parents' bedroom to the patio, and the door in the laundry room to the side yard. While checking all these doors, I also realized how large the house really was, and how very, very dark it was outside. In the town of Saratoga, California, where I lived at the time, there were no streetlights in the residential areas. Outside the house, everything was pitch black. I hurriedly retreated into my room, where I was surrounded by comforting, familiar objects.

I spent the rest of my evening there, reading and playing video games. In the back of my mind, I was always alert for the slightest suspicious sound, half-hoping that Dad would come home earlier so he would be there to protect me if anything happened. Of course, he didn't, and I didn't need protecting either.

When my bed time rolled around, I got myself ready by brushing my teeth in my nightly ritual. I checked all the doors again, just in case, before climbing into bed. I turned off my bedside lamp, and darkness enfolded me. I drifted off to sleep, all alone.