



single parenthood

By Lynn Armitage

Sun-kissed

Summer ends and so does my daughter's childhood

I'm sure I speak for parents in every imaginable Census category when I shriek with uncontainable joy: "Thank GOD, summer is over and the kids are back in school!" Remember that commercial for Staples where a father skips through the store throwing back-to-school supplies into a shopping cart, singing, "It's the most wonderful time of the year!"? That's precisely how we all feel, isn't it?

Just think, for the next 10 months, the state of California will be watching our kids for us. That means we won't have to scramble for childcare so that we can go to work every day. Or come up with creative diversions, like an eight-hour swim date at a friend's house . . . so that we can go to work every day. Or fork out ridiculous amounts of money for Camp This and Camp That to keep our kids entertained . . . so that we can go to work every day.

By the way, did you know that you can attach the word "camp" to anything and it will sound really fun to kids? Time-Out Camp, No-TV Camp, Eat-Your-Vegetables Camp. I've enrolled my daughters in Clean-Up-Your-Room Camp. I like that it's year-round.

Looking back on this summer, it was one of discovery. I took my daughters to Club Med in

Florida where we discovered archery, trapeze, torrential rainstorms and White Chocolate Bread. My oldest daughter met other 12-year-olds from France, England and Canada and discovered a world much bigger than her own. She now wants to pursue a career in international business.

As she looks toward her future, I reminisce fondly on her past – those pigtailed, bubble-blowing, Play-Doh days when I was the center of her world. And she was mine. I was married then, a stay-at-home mom, and we had more time and disposable income to be silly and inseparable. But along came a sister, a divorce and my rebirth as a single mom. Life has pulled me in other necessary directions, away from her. Year after fleeting year.

This summer, while I was busy worrying about who would watch my daughters – so that I could go to work – somewhere under the California sun, my little girl grew up. She sprouted the most beautiful, long legs and now wears the same size shoe as me. (I guess I'll have to start buying really ugly shoes.) Mother Nature also conspired in the transformation, slimming her down and padding her in all the right places. Now boys, and even



grown men, are starting to look at her.

How did this happen? Where did my little girl go? Why wasn't I watching?

She picked an odd time to become a woman. Or, maybe the perfect one. Just as this tender rose is blossoming, my own bloom is fading. A yin and yang thing. Life in perpetual balance.

This summer, my daughter was kissed by the sun, by nature herself. Kisses of a different kind await my newly minted teenager in the summers ahead. Probably while I'm at work . . . and not watching. ☺

If anyone has seen a darling little girl, with curly, golden-blond hair, who likes to blow bubbles, please contact Lynn Armitage. I miss her.

Sometimes you need to talk to someone who can help.

You don't need to do it alone!

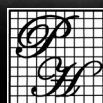


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