

# So ... Monterey

written by Holly

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The kid called last night. He's got a room with one of the friends he made in basic, overlooking mountains, with the evening temperature hovering around 60°. It was dusk, a fog was rolling in, and he was elated that he only had to share a room with one person, and that showers were private.

He's already been warned that the dropout rate for his school is brutal, that washbacks are common, that this course he has chosen is incredibly difficult and will continue to be incredibly difficult the entire time he's doing it.

In spite of the warnings, he's happy. He's discovered that he can do a hell of a lot more than he thought he could. He can run, do sit-ups, do push-ups. He can get through a gas chamber, coming out the other side still standing and functioning, and leave the TI impressed that it's possible for one human being to produce that much mucus on short notice. He can pass an obstacle course, be screamed at and still function, hit a target with a weapon, work with teammates, strive for the greater good. He's looking at a future he won through his own hard work, and the fact that he still has hard work ahead of him is something he can view as a challenge, not as an obstacle.

He's not the same kid he was three years ago. He's grown in good ways. And though I'd love to take all the credit, I can't. I can take credit for telling him from an early age that I believed in him, and for making sure he knew that there would be no gravy train – that I was damned sure he could make his dreams into realities, but that he was going to have to do it on his own.

That was hard. But it was what my parents did for me.

As a parent, we want good things for our kids. As a parent, I've come to believe the worst thing we can do is try to give them the things they need to earn for themselves.

We don't owe our kids a free ride, free college education, everything they ever wanted – and we do them vast disservice if we give them those things. If we make their way smooth, we allow them to be weak. Not good for them, not good for us, not good for anyone.

We owe our kids our guidance, our love, and our faith that if we refuse to hand them the entitlement package we're told we **should** give them, they will be able to develop the backbone to carry themselves through life well, and will be able to take the values we've offered them and make something good of them. At the age of twenty, and going into the third year of pursuing his goals actively, the kid is just barely getting started. But I think he's starting well.

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