

Darian Church

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English 110C

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### Out of the Shadows

Throughout my childhood, I had always been more of a quiet and tranquil person. I almost never talked to anyone, but my friends at school and in my neighborhood. And even then, conversation with me was limited to a couple of simple sentences and head nods when I was with them. The silence came from the thought that I did not have anything interesting to share. I was going through some struggles that made me fall silent on anything that could interest me. It was these challenges that made me realize that I wanted a better life for myself when I grew older.

### Elementary School

Most of the hardships in my life came early during my time in elementary school. I had gone to three different elementary schools because of family problems. To start off, my family was not in a financially stable position. My mother, a single mother, was struggling through paying for our home and raising six kids. We could not afford the luxuries of other families that I saw, as we could barely pay for food. Because of this trouble, my younger sister and I transferred to our father's custody. Our father lived on the eastern shore close to his side of the family. The eastern shore was dull and there was not much to do. My sister and I continued going to school

and living there until my mother became financially stabler. Although my mother had solved the problems at the time, it was not long before the same problems arose again. Due to these issues, I was taken into the foster care system with my sisters. We were all separated except my younger sister and me. We arrive at our new foster parent's home in the evening as it was getting dark. They had opened the door and as I looked around their house all I could think of is how different this was to me. Standing in a foreign place and not being with all my sisters scared me at the time. The people that took us in were an older and very Christian couple. They were nice and caring to my sister and I, as they understood our situation. Through them, I learned that kindness and helping others were especially important traits in a person. After a year with them, we went back with our mother because she was in a better financial position.

### High school

During high school, I had the third most challenge part of my life. During my first year, the pandemic started. While the advance from being a first-year student to a sophomore was easy. My sophomore year was not as such. My sophomore year much like all other students was filled with virtual learning and online assignments. I had trouble adjusting to the new setting for school. The reason is because I figured out that I learned more when I had in-class teaching. I started to fall behind in grades due to the virtual environment. But I knew I had to pass no matter what. So, I studied harder and watched external videos from my classes. My choices allowed me to pass most of my classes with good grades and advance to being a junior. Through junior year, I was focused on NJROTC and classwork. That continued even through senior year when I switched schools. But, unlike junior year, I found friends at my new school. I participated in a program in NJROTC called Cyber Patriot. This brought about my interest in cybersecurity and gave the idea to try to make it a career. During this time, I also got involved with the Army

National Guard. They told me about the benefits of enlisting and the pay I would get. My recruiter scheduled me a time to go to MEPs, so that I could be instated into the military. I went to MEPs in late December and came out a recruit in the Army National Guard.

### Military Career

The second most hardship I have had is when I had first entered the military. Starting from the moment I had gotten on the plane to my training base. I was alone. I had to figure out my own problems without my mother or my sisters to lean on. I was stationed in Fort Sill, Oklahoma for my basic training. It was early morning when I arrived at the base. The sergeants there carry the other recruits and I through all the procedures and took us to our barracks. The next morning would start the longest and most boring week of my life. All my battle buddies and I did was get registered in the government systems, get shots, and get issued supplies and uniforms. Other than those tasks, we would sit in a spacious room filled with chairs and other recruits, and we could not sleep at all. If you fell asleep, you would wake up to a Drill Sergeant yelling at you, telling you to get in the front leaning rest position. After that week passed, we were transferred to the battery that would be our home for the next nine weeks. In the battery, my battle buddies and I, were split into platoons based on our last name. I was in first platoon. During the first 72 hours, we were disciplined heavily, yelled at even more, and PT'd for punishment. At the start, my platoon only had one Drill Sergeant, as our Senior Drill Sergeant was away for training. Our drill sergeant told us that, first platoon was the best every single cycle and the same would be said for us. Over the next 9 weeks, my battle buddies and I were placed through harsh training. This consisted of CBRN training, rappelling, 10-mile ruck marches, and platoon competitions. Throughout, these 9 weeks we were put through these challenges, and we prevailed. At the end, we graduated and went to our separate advanced individual trainings.

My advanced individual training was stationed in Fort Gregg-Adams, Virginia. I was dropped off at place called Ordnance Island on the base. This island contained most of the maintenance MOSs. We were given more freedom than when we were in basic training. You could have your phone in AIT and leave off base during the weekend. I was trained as an HVAC technician for the army. At first, my class started off learning the written knowledge of HVAC, then we moved onto the hands-on training. I had great memory, so I passed all the tests that were given on the first try. Unfortunately, about five my battle buddies did not have the best of memory, so they got recycled into another class. After the fourteen weeks of training, we were told our rankings in the class, and I was at the top. Then, we graduated and split of to our unit where we would spend our military career.

### The Now

Through every one of those challenges, I had only three thoughts in mind. Make it to the end no matter what, do the best in my assignments, and success to make my family proud. These thoughts and trials brought me to where I am today. I will continue to overcome even more challenges as I move forward. That way I can make the life that I feel comfortable with and be better than before.