

EDMOND - Sounds of fighting, destruction and action quietly echoed from a quiet suburban driveway. The sounds from the TV thrummed off the metal garage as Michael was wide awake with anticipation. Surrounded by vintage posters and sports memorabilia, Michael sat on a futon watching the TV as he listened to the phone ring. Michael had dialed the phone five times before 1:20 a.m. without an answer until his sixth attempt finally yielded a pickup.

"Are you ready to watch?" Michael said before I could say hello. I yawned affirmatively into my phone and turned on Disney+ to watch *The Mandalorian* with my younger brother. The weekly TV series had been a constant topic of conversation between my 14-year-old brother and me since the new season. The latest episode premiered at 2 a.m. following Thanksgiving day. My brother and I would be spending Thanksgiving apart for the very first time. Michael's upcoming leg surgery had required him to quarantine, and my workplace quarantine mandate had produced this early-morning virtual watch party.

According to Michael, it had taken some "extra convincing" for him to stay up till 3 a.m. "I took an hour nap," Michael told me. I had not taken an hour nap. Staying up this late, with his phone no less, was a rare occurrence for the dedicated *Star Wars* enthusiast, but I was glad my parents had made an exception since it was Thanksgiving.

Michael had spent the beginning of his 8th-grade year isolated. A recent move forced a goodbye to his friends and a virtual start to the school year — a situation that

was all too familiar. Four years prior, Michael left his childhood home and spent 4th grade homeschooled as our family sold our home and moved across the country. This relocation had its similarities but came with additional obstacles. Shortly after arriving, Michael fractured his leg on a longboard, which started a four-month recovery that included a wheelchair, crutches and scheduled physical therapy trips. A global pandemic, virtual school and a fractured leg were among the numerous obstacles Michael endured, including celebrating Thanksgiving with a limited amount of family.

At 2 a.m. Michael and I watched our most anticipated episode. The show's sound reverberated through my speaker phone as we intensely discussed the story and characters as the show met every one of our expectations. After the credits rolled, we stayed up an additional hour talking about the past 45 minutes until we had trouble staying awake. The five hours of sleep did not help the obstacles that the next day threw at me. Despite my lack of sleep, I plan to virtually spend more time with my brother until we can watch *The Mandalorian* together in the garage.