

Moving On

I have always been a rather outgoing person. Sometimes, that has been a positive, but sometimes I think that scares other people away. I've never really had a tight circle of people, lots of temporary friends, but no best friends. Something I struggle with is keeping friends. I try, I really do, but we always drift apart. I usually am the first to talk in conversations. When I was younger, that was a good thing, people like a talkative leader. I was never popular per se but I always had a friend. When I was in 3rd grade, I met the first person whom I consider my best friend. She was loud, outgoing, and a contrarian like me. We immediately clicked, it was a fast transition from acquaintance to best friend. We were basically the same person most of the time. We played on the playground during recess and played with our Tamagotchis (It was a phase).

Every day, I would walk to school with her. We had a set meeting spot, and we would walk the same 15-minute route every single day, rain or shine. It was nice that we chatted, bantered, and discussed our books together. It was nice, stable. But then, as all good things do, it ended. Wednesday, July 3rd, summer of 6th grade, but I remember it like it was yesterday. She texted me, "We are moving, and they just need to finish the house inspection before we leave." Obviously, I was shocked. She had never mentioned moving before. I knew her dad worked at a different school, but the idea of her moving right before school started was unimaginable. I didn't text back right away because I genuinely could not process what she had just said. I sat there on the couch for a bit just being devastated. I eventually asked her if she was serious. She was. About a month later, the house was bought, and she moved to another school district.

As previously established, I didn't have many friends. If you had asked me who my best friend was going into middle school, I would likely have said either books or that I don't have any friends. The transition to middle school was difficult, and I had a really hard time fitting in. I

read over 100 books in 6th grade. Not graphic novels, real novels from the young adult section. In fact, I read so much that my book was taken away more than once. I've always loved reading because even in situations like this, books were always there. I went from being one of the most talkative kids to the quietest. I went to my classes, then home every...single...day. My first months were like that, I basically shut myself out from other kids in fear of losing another friend. I tried out for the school play in hopes I would make a friend or two. I didn't even get in, let alone make a friend.

School was more challenging academically as well. Grades mattered, and classes were harder. My least favorite part of the day was P.E. I was (and still am) very uncoordinated. I could kick a soccer ball just fine, but the second the coach called for dodgeball, I knew it was over. Every time I would get hit and not be able to do anything about it. Of course, that isn't too significant since P.E. was once only 2-3 times a week anyway, but either way, it was the worst.

One day, during P.E., I was walking the perimeter of the gym reading my book. I didn't notice her at first because I was at the climax of my book. She walked next to me and said hi. As expected, I was pretty distrustful. I basically just ignored her and continued reading my book. I wanted to be friends with her, I really did, but I just couldn't stand the idea of getting my hopes up and losing a friend. I was ready to move on, but my heart was still broken from the sudden move. One random Thursday after finishing another book, I decided I'd had enough of this. I walked up to her and introduced myself. Our conversations were awkward at first, but once we started talking, I found out we actually had lots in common. We both liked reading, animals (specifically dogs), and even though our personalities differed, it just...worked? Rather than the usual dread of P.E., I felt something different. I was actually excited to go and get hit in the face constantly because at least I had someone to talk to now.

What really made her different, though, was that she listened. When she asked me how I did at a forensics meet or if I liked a musical, she didn't just hear me, she listened and cared about my opinion. It made me feel respected, which I'd never felt in a friendship before. It pushed me to become a better person. It made me listen more, not just hear, because I wanted to give others what I'd never really had before until I met her. Needless to say, we remained friends throughout middle school. We won at state Battle of the Books, we have completed dozens of group projects, and we have made many unforgettable memories together. Now, I am in 8th grade. We may be going to different high schools, but I would do it all over again if it meant I could spend more time with her. Because even though she was only in my life for 3 years, she has changed me forever.