

Eliza S.

Adjusting

“It’s weird going to school without Zoey being there, isn’t it?” one of my best friends, Amanda asks me on the bus ride to the third day of school.

“Yeah it is.”

And it was. Last year, Zoey, our other best friend, was our glue. She connected the Harry-Potter-lovers, to the cool dancers, to the teacher’s pets, to the boy-crazy-pre-teens. But this year, with Zoey moving to Jacksonville, Texas, it was different. I was devastated, and it didn’t help that she broke the news to us two days before the school year started. But no one else seemed to be, not even Amanda, because they all went on with their lives. I wanted to do that, too, I *had* to, but how could I? How could anyone go on living when my best friend moved two-hundred miles away?

“But at least I have you!” I said to Amanda.

She nodded, but didn’t say anything.

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“How was your day?” Amanda’s mom asked us, as we stepped into the car that afternoon. I was staying at their house for the first week of school while my parents were in Sweden.

“Fine,” I said.

“Bad.”

We both looked at Amanda.

“Why, honey?” her mom asked.

“I don’t have classes with my friends. I don’t like my teachers. ”

We pulled into their driveway. "Do you really not like school anymore?" I asked on the way inside.

"Yeah."

"Well what are you going to do?"

"I don't know."

Neither of us said anything. I tried to think of something to tell her. I could've said:

It'll all work out! You'll make new friends!

But I didn't know if that was true.

Or I could've said:

Get your schedule changed! That'll fix everything!

But she wouldn't have believed me. And maybe she had right not to. But she could've at least *tried*.

"I might move to Hogg Middle School," Amanda said, interrupting my thoughts.

"*What?!*"

"I dunno. If I can't get my classes fixed and I'm unhappy..."

I shook my head, but didn't say anything.

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As the week went on, Amanda's excuses became more and more lame. From, "I've never liked the teachers here. It was really only my art teacher I liked," to, "The academics are bad here. I don't feel challenged enough."

Sometimes I just wanted to scream at her. If she wanted to make the decision to leave our school, while I was actually staying at her house, that's bad enough. But to lie and make up the reason, that's even worse.

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That weekend, after my mom had come home, her phone rang. She walked over to it and looked back at me.

“It’s from Amanda’s mom.”

And then I knew. I knew that Amanda had convinced her parents that she hated our school, after only a week of seventh grade. I knew that she was going to go to a mediocre school two minutes from her house, instead of one farther away that she loved the year before. I knew that it didn’t matter what excuse her mom typed into the phone, it wasn’t true. I knew that I had really known all along that she was going to leave. And I knew that I shouldn’t be mad at her because she was my best friend, but I knew I was. I was mad that she left me so early in the year and that she barely had a reason to leave. But mostly I was mad that she was gone.

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Days went by. Weeks.

“Oh my god, you are so photogenic!” my friend exclaimed, pushing the girl next to her, playfully.

“No, I’m not!” the girl said.

“Um, yeah you are! Have you seen your ID picture? It’s perfect!”

“Ugh. Fine, but so are you!”

“Maybe.”

They both laughed.

“Hey, guys! Wh-” I started from behind them, trying to see over their touching shoulders.

“I’ll meet you at your locker, okay?” the girl interrupted, disregarding me completely.

“Okay.”

I opened my locker and saw the picture of Zoey and me from fifth grade. The purely happy, laughing girls stared right back at me. I grabbed my backpack and slammed my locker shut. I finished packing and stood up, hoping, but not expecting the girls to be waiting for me. They weren’t. With no other choice, I ran to catch up with them.

When I reached them, they didn't look at me like I was ruining their conversation, but they didn't greet me warmly or try to include me in it. They didn't acknowledge that I was there at all. In fact, I didn't even think they realized they had left me at all.

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Pretty far into the school year, Zoey came home to visit. We met at Amanda's house. I was less upset at her now, more sad.

We all went outside to catch up, asking formal questions like:

"So how's school?"

"What's your favorite subject?"

Things we never would've had to ask the year before.

Things we should've known. But we didn't. We had to ask.

I went to bed that night, feeling depressed.

My best friends didn't know what classes I took.

I thought back to what my mom had said when I had come home that night.

"You have to make an effort. You don't go to the same school, and that sucks, but if you want to stay connected, you have to try."

So I made a decision that night. I was going to stay connected with them. They were my best friends. And if they didn't know everything about my school life, that was fine.

The next morning, I woke up and texted Amanda and Zoey. Just a simple, "Have a good day!"

And at lunch, I sat in the middle of the table, not the end. I talked a little here and there. Then a girl told a joke and the entire table erupted into laughter. Instead of telling myself it wasn't funny and rolling my eyes, I laughed with the rest of them.