

FROM BUCKEYE TO NUTMEGGER

By Cecilia K., Grade 8

“Now as you may know, our dear Cecilia will be leaving our school community, and this is her last day. I hope you’ll all wish her luck, as she prepares to leave for Connecticut. I also hope those *New Englanders* aren’t too rough on her when she arrives.”

I watched Mrs. Door chuckle, as she presented Cecilia to the whole school cafeteria, as if she were a prize. A very red-cheeked, seemingly embarrassed prize who would, like Mrs. Door said, be moving to Connecticut in the coming days. So, Cecilia stood next to her teacher, gave her a quick smile, and hurried back to our table. She sat down and gave me a look like she had just been sung to in a restaurant. The long table, filled with giggly students, was hit with a wave of laughter. Even though they felt this bubbly excitement for their classmate, they also felt the sorrow that would come with her upcoming disappearance from their lives. The next class with my friend, science, wasn’t as productive as it should have been. I was supposed to be studying for a very important assessment the next day, but instead of focusing on cells I conversed with Cecilia and our tablemates.

The end of the day came quicker than it should have, and I waited as Cecilia packed her things.

“Gotta empty my locker out. Madison would ya wait for me to get everything in my bookbag? It’ll only be a minute or so, then we can walk home,” Cecilia said to me.

“Oh, of course I’ll wait. We can walk back to your place so I can see what it looks like all packed up.”

When Cecilia’s bookbag was stuffed near the point of literal explosion, we walked to each individual classroom where she had been learning during the first half of the year. She gave teachers hugs, as they wished her well in her new state, then she walked down the halls with me and out the main door. It was December, yet outside we were greeted with warm sun and a soft breeze instead of cold or snow.

Cecilia and I walked to her apartment, a quaint brick building surrounded by a garden of orange flowers and different vegetables. Parked out front, in the large, shared parking lot, was a moving truck longer than any cafeteria table. Cecilia’s bike sat on the small lawn in front of the building, and we watched as a burly man picked it up with one hand and packed it for moving. We moved towards the porch and the sun was beginning to set; the breeze had picked up. The apartment’s door stood wide open, as there were movers who needed to walk in and out constantly. Inside, the air was cool.

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“Madison,” Cecilia said to me, “let’s follow my cat down to the basement. Wait ‘til you see how empty it all is!”

“Yes, I do love Stretch. Let’s see what he’s up to.”

I tried to be cheerful, as we jogged down the carpeted steps, but I was quickly realizing that one of my best friends would be gone. *Tomorrow*. I decided to use these last moments with her wisely, so instead of moping and grumbling, I followed Cecilia to her sneaky Siamese. He was very much ready to play, and we were happy to do so. In the empty finished basement of Cecilia’s apartment, we rolled around on the comfy carpet with Stretch the cat and chucked his toys like they were skipping stones to a pond.

It was getting dark when we finally climbed back up the stairs, yet the front door was still ajar. I sent my stepdad a text saying I was ready to leave - not that I really wanted to. We waited on the porch, being sure not to get in the way of the movers, and talked a little bit more.

He arrived shortly after I texted him, and I gave Cecilia one final hug before hopping into his car. I leaned out of the window and stared back at my friend, as our silver vehicle sped away. Quickly she and her porch disappeared from view, and all I could see were buckeye trees and apartments.

A few months later, I wasn’t sitting with the same friends or talking to the same people in my classes that she had introduced me to. It felt weird to walk down the halls or stand at my locker without Cecilia there to joke and laugh. While we keep in touch, I still miss walking with her from school, petting her playful cat, and waiting for her to unlock her bike from the familiar walnut tree. It’s strange to think that I’d only known her for half a school year, yet she had been the glue that kept everything together.