

I always thought we'd stay friends. I'd known him since I was three. You wouldn't think someone who was always there, might one day, not be.

Honestly, I liked having a boy best friend. There was less drama for one. And he was always like a big brother to me even though we were only a year apart.

Living across the street from each other was also a plus. It made it so we could walk to school together every morning, and hang out after school every night. Birthdays, vacations, late nights, and ice cream runs were spent with Liam for what I thought would be forever.

"Elinor," he said as we stared up at the sparkling sky the night of my 14th birthday.

"What's up?" I replied.

He let up a sigh and sat up.

"What's wrong?" I asked, slightly concerned.

He hung his head and mumbled, "I'm moving."

My chest tightened and a thousand thoughts of what the future would look like, started clouding my brain. But, every thought was about how this would affect *me*. Not why I would miss Liam, or the fact that he would be alone in a new city, new school, with new people.

Just me.

As the weeks passed, I watched the movers as they took pieces of my childhood and packed them in the back of a truck. Liam helped pack up boxes and carry them outside. He had asked me to come over quite a few times since he told me the news, but I just couldn't do it.

Like maybe if I pretended nothing was happening, it would eventually be true.

It wasn't though.

It never would be.

The last box was slid into the back of Liam's parent's car and my mom called for me to come say goodbye. Tears welled up in my eyes and my heart sank.

I jumped up and locked my door. Refusing to come out. Hoping that maybe this wasn't happening. That it was all just a bad dream.

Minutes later a knock came from the other side. "Go away Mom!"

"It's Liam."

"Go away Liam."

"Elinor, I'm sorry. I don't want to leave but I have to. Please just open the door."

I sat with my arms crossed on the carpeted floor, not saying a word.

A honk came from outside and Liam spoke again through the door, "I'm leaving now, Elinor. Are you coming out or not?"

I didn't say anything but I heard a snuffle from outside and a slight crack in his strong and steady voice, "Okay, I'll see you —" He paused, searching for the right word, "— someday." His footsteps echoed down the hallway, out the door, and into the car that I watched from the window, drive away.

Tears poured down my face and I let out a cry of anger, pain, I don't even know what.

It felt like my life was truly crumbling apart, in reality I was just starting my journey.

I spent years wishing I'd said goodbye. I spent years angry at myself for being cold and selfish.

Freshman year was... lonely. I had some friends, but none as close as Liam. I ate lunch alone from the first day until the last. I took the same route home everyday, just without the same person. I don't think the emptiness in my heart ever healed. It throbbed everytime I looked across

the street. Remembering the times we played in the roads until the streetlights came on, swam in the river behind my house, climbed the tree in his front yard and stayed there for hours.

All of it. Gone.

Then, during my second semester of Junior year, I was walking home from school, bookbag thumping against my back, sun beating down on my head, and wind whipping me in the face. I lurched over the hill that my house sat on and stopped in my tracks. In the driveway of Liam's house was the same car I saw drive away 2 years ago.

*It can't be.*

I stood in the middle of the street as a tall boy with the same shaggy blonde hair and boyish grin stepped out of the car.

I felt myself choking back the tears that were threatening to spill, "Liam?" I called.

He spun around, blue eyes looking into my hazel ones, "Elinor?" he yelled back.

A huge smile spread across my face as I took off towards him.

I ran into his arms and sobbed harder than I ever had. His arms were much bigger and stronger than I remembered. Holding me tight and spinning me around, his cries of joy echoed in my ear. He set me down and grasped my shoulders, practically shaking me as he spoke, "ELINOR! I'M STAYING. I'M STAYING!"

I knit my brows together in confusion, "What do you mean? Like you're moving back? Forever?" "YES!"

I wrapped my arms around him, not believing the chances of him ever coming back.

"I have to unpack some stuff, but do you want to go get ice cream later?"

I smiled softly, "Of course!"

That day, I got something that not many people do.

A second chance.

And I promised myself that this time I would cherish every moment.