

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place, Prose, Grades 7-9

### **The Big Goodbye--Isa Melendez**

I looked out the window. There were fluffy silver clouds, and I saw a golden hint slowly shining through the little crack of the clouds. I heard soft chirps and saw spiraling butterflies of all colors lightly whipping through the air. Then my eyes drifted towards the dark of my house. I looked up to see my lightbulb flicker out of place and go dark. Then I looked outside again, and this time the sun was gone and had been lowered down. The birds had left to go to their nests, leaving nothing but darkness. I also heard the usual yelling from my sister's room between my parents and her—and even an occasional bang on the hard wood table that made me wince. But my sister and I have been like best friends ever since we were little kids, so I wasn't worried about us as much.

Then I heard the yelling get even louder and the occasional bang on the wood become more constant, and my mind started to pour out all of the times we sat together at the family dinner table, laughing at each other's jokes, even if they weren't funny, and sitting together as a family that had proud smiles on their faces. But the noise was gone, the slam of the door assured that.

I started to walk out of my room and make my way to my parents' whispering voices down the staircase and through the kitchen to the living room.

"Mom? Dad?" I said as I slowly started to walk into their sight. My parents both turned around, as if they weren't expecting me to come.

"What were you fighting about this time?" I asked as if it was something normal, but from the looks on their faces, I had a little thought that maybe it wasn't.

"Well..." my mom started, looking down at her fingers as she stroked the chair in nervousness. "Penny is 18 now, and she has been looking at some apartments to live in since she's older, and she told us that she found one...and she wants to move into it and not live with us anymore."

I stared at them in disbelief. My sister, my built-in best friend who I thought would want to live with us forever, is moving?

"But Julie, it's not like we are sure she is leaving," my dad piped in, trying to make it sound better.

"Well, then why were you fighting about it?" I asked, still with fire in my eyes.

"Because..." My dad stopped for a second.

"Well, uh... Penny hasn't even thought about the money. And we haven't even discussed how she's going to pay for it," he said quickly.

I looked at him with a curious look in my eyes. My family always kept a watch on my sister's money.

Then I heard footsteps trudging down the stairs and through the hall. I turned around and saw Penny, her dark brown hair covering her face like a shield and her hands clenched into tight fists by her sides. When she saw me, she stopped, looking between me and my parents.

“Mom...Dad...did you tell her our whole conversation?” she said with half fear and half anger in her eyes.

My mom said, “Not our whole fight...Just...” My mom took a quick glance over at me. “Just the important stuff she should know.”

“What?! I told you *not* to tell her anything! You know now she’s going to hate me!”

That was it. I ran through the living room and out the front door, not even taking a look back. I can’t stand any more fighting. And I can’t stand the fact that my sister might be leaving our house for good.

I walked over near the shed and opened the door to the muddy floor. But I don’t care. I’d rather be stuck outside for the rest of the night than stay in our house with my sister. I crouched down, trying my best not to sit in the mud, but my pants were cold and damp. I looked out the little window and I didn’t see anyone in the living room, so I guessed that they just went back to their rooms and forgot about me.

But I still couldn’t get my mind off that my sister Penny might be leaving. And what did my mom say? That she only told me the important parts of their conversation? Then what else was there? Why does Penny want to leave?

I pulled up my sleeve and looked at my watch. It was already 12 AM, and it had seemed that I had been just watching the sun go down an hour ago.

But then I heard the sound of heavy stuffed duffel bags hitting the ground in front of me. Then I heard Penny’s voice.

“Julie, are you in there?” Then I heard her knock softly on the door.

I hesitated. I guess my sister is leaving now. Right in the middle of the night and right at this moment.

“So you’re leaving,” I started, slowly creaking open the door. “But why?” I asked. The question that had been trapped in my mind finally got let out.

“Remember when we were kids and we always did plays together?”

I nodded. But I still didn’t know why she was mentioning that.

“Well, I signed up to be in a play that I really wanted to be in. I have been doing some small plays in the little wooden house down the street, but this play is a big deal.”

“What, is it like Broadway or something?” I asked sarcastically.

Penny grinned for a second but then became serious again.

“No...that would be amazing. But it is on the trail of going on Broadway, so I signed up for it, and I already tried out, so I am going to be in it.”

“Okay...” I started, curious. How does this have anything to do with her moving?

“So you’re buying an apartment because you are going to be in a play? That makes no sense.”

“It’s not just that,” Penny said, and then she sucked up a whole bunch of air and then blurted out, “The play is in a different state. It’s in Florida. And I already bought the apartment.”

I couldn’t do anything but cry. My sister was leaving me. Leaving me to act in her stupid play that I wish didn’t exist.

She said, “Oh Julie, you know this is my dream. You know how much I have been wanting to be in a cool play like this. Please don’t be sad. Please. Especially when I am leaving now.”

Then it hit me. Penny was leaving. Now. And she was about to pursue her dream, which she had been wanting to do for a while.

“Wait,” I said, wiping back my tears. “What about all of the fighting? What was that all about?”

“ Mom and dad didn’t want me to leave. They knew you would be upset. They knew this would happen, so they sent me out here to say goodbye before I leave.”

All of this time my sister had just been wanting to follow her dream, and we had been holding her back. All of us.

Then I started to smile, all of the happiest memories coming back to me.

I slowly walked out of the shed, my sweatpants wet and droopy from the water and mud inside the shed.

I saw my parents who were smiling too. I knew in my heart that they had made up with Penny. I could just feel it like how much I could feel the cold muddy water sticking to my skin.

“Come on, you’ve got to go,” I said, picking up her duffel bags.

Penny smiled and looked excited. She started to run to the car like a little kid, and my dad opened the door and sat in the driver’s seat to drive her to the airport.

I slid the duffels in the trunk and slowly closed it, and then I waved to Penny, smiling, and happy that she was going to be performing in the play.

My last wave to her was like I was saying goodbye to our whole childhood together. But I knew I would be able to see her.

After my dad and my sister drove away from my house, I looked for a second longer and then started to make my way up the steps and through the door.

The next morning I stared out the window, the sun poking through the ground and slowly making its way through the sky. Then it was shining with the sunshine gleaming through the air and leaving nothing but light.

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