

Saying Good-bye

By Adam

My brother came outside with one last suitcase in his hand. He crammed it into the back of my mom's car with all the others. Then Jon slammed the back of my mom's car shut. Through the tinted glass I could see the soccer ball that we would shoot into our goal on hot summer evenings. Our eyes met when he turned around. Sadness flew straight into me as clear as the mournful sound of Jon's bassoon. My brother hugged me. I pulled him closer. "I'm going to miss you badly," he said.

"I will, too," I managed to squeak out, my voice hoarse. It was already happening: my eyes brimmed. I tried to blink back tears, but they wouldn't stop. Tears started pouring out over my eyes. It reminded me of when I was playing basketball and I fell. Pain throbbled through my arm. Jon came to take me to the hospital. With Jon there, I felt safer, calmer, less scared. It reminded me of when I was in camp and I hadn't gotten a letter for days, and loneliness was starting to haunt me. Jon's letter came and filled me with

laughs and warmth and a feel that it was good to have a big brother.

I looked up and saw one tear roll down my brother's cheek. He brushed it away, but I remembered it.

My dad appeared from the house, carrying an old picture of my brother close to his chest like it was a billion dollars. My brother's face was fat and round in the picture. Hair was starting to grow in on the top of his head as if it were a flower, sprouting. I looked up at my dad and he was wiping his eyes with the back of his hand. My dad sat down on the hood of the car and studied the picture like a textbook. He couldn't stop looking at it.

"It's time to go," said my dad "Say your good-byes now." Wearing his Penn hat backwards, Jon walked over to the passenger seat of the car, climbed in and closed the door. He rolled the window down and motioned me over. I walked up to the car, not sure what to say or do. He gave me a little punch. This time I didn't mind. "I'll miss you," he said.

"Yeah, me too," I said. As I walked away, he handed me his hat.

The car pulled down the driveway. I knew my childhood with my brother was ending this very moment. My brother opened the sunroof and waved his hand. I waved back even though he probably couldn't see me. The car made a left and climbed the hill till it was out of sight. I walked to the end of the driveway, to see if I could get a last glimpse of the car.

I knew Jon was moving on. It will only be a matter of time before he has graduated college, and gets married and has kids.

I stood there for a minute, then slowly made my way back up the driveway. I remembered I was holding Jon's Penn hat and I put it on backwards, just as he always did. I walked into his room and sat on his bed. I squeezed his pillow and looked for any sign that Jon was once there.

I picked up Jon's bassoon and put each piece together, the way Jon taught me. I went over to the chair Jon always sat on when he played, and I played the deep mournful sound I had heard coming from his room so many times.

Writing by Emily

Before my sister went to middle school, when the shine in her eyes was still there, matching her bright smile, she used to play with me. We used to play merry-go-round-chair on my mom's spinning chair, but all that changed when she went to middle school.

One afternoon she called me to her room. "Come on my bed," Jen said, patting the spot beside her. "Now stay still." She took out a suitcase from under her bed and put it beside us. She opened it and told me to close my eyes. "Don't move," she whispered while putting powder on my eyes. She spread it around and around with a brush. It felt cold. "Okay open," she said. She moved back to get a far view of me.

Then she dabbed pink powder on my cheeks and nose. Her brush swept up and down. "That tickles!" I said, giggling. Soon Jen was putting goop on my lips. She spread it around with a lip-gloss wand.

"Pthhhh!" I spit the yucky stuff off, and wiped the remaining goo. Jen put an extra dab of blush on my cheeks and finished.

"Voilà. Done." But then she changed her mind and started putting curlers in my hair. "While we wait, come here," she said. I followed her around the house as she gathered clothes. "Wear this and this." I looked at what she was holding; my mom's furry shawl.

I went into the bathroom and wrapped it on. I stared at myself in the mirror. I took the curlers off and fluffed my hair. I looked great! I was finally old; I'd always wanted to be. I looked like one of those old Hollywood actresses with big fur coats and curly hair, walking down the red carpet. I scrunched my hair. "Omigod!" I said to myself trying to be like my sister. I pointed to the tub. "Omigod! It's so round!" I walked over to the toilet "Omigod! That's so gross!"

To the mirror, I said, Omi-" I stopped. Something was wrong. "This isn't me!" I thought, "I'm not the thirteen year old I am trying to be." I splashed water on my face, scrubbing the teenager away. I combed water through my hair and the curls unraveled.

Being a child means jumping on the bed, having laughing contests, making funny faces. I don't want to lose that. When guests come over and look at my baby pictures, or if they haven't seen me in a long time, they say, "Awwww, you've grown so much!"

I have grown taller, but inside I'm still the little girl who plays with Barbies, and the one who's still afraid of lightning. I am the little girl who needs my mom right by my side me. I don't want to grow up! Not yet.

But I did look pretty good in that shawl.

My Grandmother

By Tyler

Have you ever made someone go on something you hated? Did you ever say, you don't have to go on? Or let's not do this? Well, that is the part of you that is eleven years old. Or when you say, please can you go on? That is the part of you that is four. And when you don't let her get off, that is the part of you that is two. Well, this happened to me once.

I stood at the line to get on the roller coaster, next to my grandmother. I was amazed at the roller coaster. My eyes followed it as if it were the strongest magnet in the world, and every second I got closer, closer and closer. The sun beat down on my grandmother and me. Nothing could stop me from getting on. And before I knew it, the roller coaster zoomed right next to me as it almost knocked it off my feet. Impatiently I waited to get on. I jumped up and down like a kangaroo. My hands shook from side to side, not wanting to wait any longer.

I saw five people get off and I heard, "That was awesome, let's do that again." That only got me wanting to go on even more. I heard the cranking of the roller coaster as it went up and up. And then it stopped for a half a second and dropped like a cannon ball getting shot out of a cannon. I heard a scream as the roller coaster hovered over my head. But in a theme park with a lot of roller coasters, you shouldn't be so surprised

when you hear screams from a roller coaster.

Then it swooped up to the left, then another drop and another scream. Out of the corner of my eye, I spied my grandma sighing with a scared face. The ride tracks made a sharp left and the people were tugged to the left, then up. I heard nothing else, noticed nothing else. There was only the roller coaster. A drop, and a thunder scream, then it tugged to the right and suddenly stopped! And then they got off. I saw the big sign that read THE INTIMIDATOR. I waited impatiently, wanting to block everyone off from moving and just cut the whole line. I could not pay attention to anyone or anything else.

Suddenly I noticed my grandma was acting strange. She stared wide-eyed, like it was some kind of monster. She shouldn't be going on this ride, I said to myself, feeling sick inside.

"Grandma, if you don't want to go on you don't have to. It is a pretty big ride."

"Tyler, I want to do this. If I don't go on this is roller coaster, I will be afraid of roller coasters for the rest of my life," she announced to me.

"This is our last chance; do you want to get off?" I said to her.

"No, Tyler. I want to stay." She said this, but anybody could know that she was lying.

We stepped into the roller coaster and sat down. As we

sat, we pulled the handle bar against our stomachs. I heard a click, click as it locked. And I realized my grandma was trapped into her worst fear. Like when you have the scariest nightmare and you just can't wake up and it feels like forever.

We were cranked up like a huge fish. We moved up and up and up and her hand tightened, harder and harder on mine. At the top we stopped and, just before we began to fly down, I heard a scream so loud it felt like my ears drums had exploded. I pulled my hand away from her and tried to close my ears as hard as I could.

As I covered my ears I said to myself, why would I make my grandma go on a scary roller coaster? Who else can I blame but myself? I knew she would scream like a crazy person from the beginning to the end. She wouldn't do it for anybody but me. I turned my head and saw her face. She was still screaming and so scared.

As we got off the ride, she said, "I am sorry for ruining your ride, Tyler. I kind of overdid it on the screaming."

"You made it better by going on with me. And if you didn't go on I would forget it after a while. That was a ride I will never forget," I said, my ears still hurting.

"That is the last ride in my life. I will never go on that again — or any other ride," Grandma panted.

"Until tomorrow. Then we will go on a bigger ride," I replied with a smile.

When You Stay

By Ali

Some people think being brave is jumping off a cliff, running into a burning building and saving a person, diving in front of a bullet. Well, I think being brave is also telling off a bully, not running away from something you're scared of, waiting. And at first you may feel like you let someone important in your life down, that you weren't as brave as you wanted to be. It could be you don't hardly see your braveness. That is what I think being brave is.

I stood in the dark hallway in front of my parents' bedroom door, which led to the bed where my dad was lying. I pushed open the door. It swung all the way back to the wall and made a little clicking sound when it hit. I saw my dad, a pile of pillows and blankets all around him. I didn't go in, not yet. *I am going to go in there and act normal, as if nothing is wrong. I will tell him about my almost goal and my 95% in spelling. This time he will say, "Good!" to me.*

I walked in, then started to turn around. I stopped mid-turn. "No, Ali, stay," I told myself. I took a deep breath. I began to walk toward the bed again.

I crawled up onto the bed, being very quiet, trying not to wake him if he was asleep. He wasn't.

"Today at soccer I was running down the field. I wound up for a big shot, kicked it . . . ! It stopped about two feet from the goal. We can work on my shooting together," I said.

No reply.

Does he not care? Is he in too much pain? That was it, that was the whole reason he was in bed. Too much pain! The pain had not only taken over my dad's life, it had taken over mine.

I stared at him with tough eyes. I wanted him to know that I was upset with him. He had caused me a lot of pain. He didn't get to see my almost-goal and he didn't get to help me study for my spelling test.

He looked back at me with sad puppy eyes. He was sorry.

I don't know if I wanted to forgive him. Giving me a little twitch of his eye, a little brush of his hand against the blanket. That wasn't normal for him. It amazed me. He was such a full guy. His movements were always full, not half.

I had to forgive him, though. He needed me and I needed him. I stayed, waiting for him. I sat next to

him, holding his hand, watching the clock tick by.
3:33 . . . 3:34 . . . 3:35 . . .

I gently let go of his hand and placed it by his side. I got up and walked back to the doorway. I stood leaning against the wall, looking at him. I stood there, waiting. Expecting him to talk to me, expecting him to push his pain behind him. If I stood there long enough, he would come, get up, and practice my shot with me.

No, he couldn't. I knew that. So I guess I was just going to have to wait awhile. So I stayed.

When you're done falling off a cliff, when you're out of surgery to check for infections from when you were shot with a bullet, people clap and cheer for you and on your return home, news cameras are waiting to interview you. Those people's signs of bravery are on the outside. But when you walk away from a bully that you left behind wide-eyed, or when you stand close to the thing you were once scared of, those people's signs of bravery are the feeling of proudness, the feeling of people clapping that is on the inside of you. My sing was little sparkled, like a fairy sparking her golden dust over me.