

Searching for Home

(Middle School Non-fiction)

I lingered in the room for a few moments, standing where my bed had once stood. I ran my hand over the wall, taking in every detail. Then I turned and rushed through the empty halls, out the garage door and into the waiting car.

I stared at the house as we pulled away, an ache growing in my chest. Then we turned a corner and it was gone. As we drove out of the city, I took in all the familiar sights: first the neighborhood houses, then the grocery store. The coffee shop and the frozen yogurt parlor we used to walk to with our neighbors. With these sights, memory after memory of the past five years came flooding back. I sighed and sank back into my seat, trying to convince myself that it would turn out all right. But the ache in my chest didn't go away.

We drove for about four hours before we finally reached the little town of Grass Valley. I had only seen our new house once, and I had to admit I was excited to explore. When we pulled up the steep driveway, I could see members of our family waving from the covered deck. I hopped out of the car and ran up the stairs to greet everyone. Then I hurried in to find my bedroom. Once I had studied it for a while, I walked around, taking in the rest of the house. It was older than our last home, but it had more character. And I even had my *own* room. I decided that I would make the best of things.

But that night, lying on a mattress on the floor of my room, I cried myself to sleep. Because even though I had only been here a few hours, I was already lonely. I knew it would take time to make new friends, and I knew my old friendships would never be the same.

The first few weeks flew by in a whirl of excitement. We had family knocking on our door every morning, helping us unpack, taking us out to lunch, anything! We had joined a new homeschool group, and started going to their summer 'beach days'. But it was always awkward. Since we didn't know anyone there, my sisters and I would hang out together, trying to have a good time despite our loneliness. Still, no one else tried to talk to us.

The only things that helped in the first few months were the constant visits back home, and the times our friends visited us. And then something happened that changed my life in Grass Valley: I joined a drama group.

I loved the theater the moment I walked in. It smelled like sawdust, and at first I wondered why. Then I saw the wooden stage being built in the back. The group had recently relocated here, so it was still a work in progress, but I thought it was wonderful. Once we'd all gathered into the piano room and warmed up, we went around the group introducing ourselves. Everyone was smiling and laughing, and I thought 'These kids have known each other for years!' But I had no problem fitting in. When everyone around you loves the same things you do, you're bound to find a few friends.

But our problems weren't over yet. After weeks of searching, we still hadn't been able to find a good church. Everywhere we went, no one reached out to us. We were just 'the new people'. Then we decided to visit a little church in Cedar Ridge.

It wasn't long before I realized that this church was very different from our old one. It was small, and there were only a few kids our age. At first, I thought this would make it even more awkward than the others we had visited. But I was wrong. Everyone there was so nice. I felt accepted for the first time in a long time. We fell in love with this little church almost immediately.

Once school started, I found friends once again coming my way. It took a few months, but eventually, the connections came. I had good classes, great teachers, and two good friends. What more could I ask for?

After looking back on my first year, I realized how far I had come since my first day in Grass Valley. I had made new friends, and I still kept in touch with all my old ones. And I had stopped wishing we had never moved. Because now, I can't imagine living anywhere else.