

# Around the Carousel

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This is the first instalment in a recollection of memories. Before I even discovered Tucker Max or the erotic and deeply personal book by an unknown sex columnist I had long decided that I needed to immortalize the person I had become by reaching back into the depths of my mind and pulling out (most ofâ€¦ or maybe just lots of) the men that had ever entered my life. The lovers, the friends, the heartbreaks and the conquests. It was through all these various relationships where solidified, confident me was formed. I have to pay tribute to all these men. How could I not?

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## Around the Carousel : Chapter 1

~\*2009\*~

"Seriously Matt for the last time, I am not bringing you a pizza."

"Come *on*, it's so cold outside and you know how much I love my pizza. I'll even share with you."

I snorted into the phone. "I'm leaving now. I'll be there in ten."

"You know what would be even sexier? If you got here in twenty minutes with a pizza."

I laughed loudly as we both knew that wasn't happening and flipped my phone shut. That was Matt for you. One-track mind with a face too cute and a little nerdy for words like 'sexy'. It was probably why I never got offended or disgusted when he used cheesy pick up lines just to say them, or used bad stereotypes to win an argument.

It was always innocent with Matt. Even when, back in 2002, we went too far in the back of his mom's station wagon after catching a late-night flick; effectively making me the cheater in my first and very short relationship. It might be noteworthy that it was his best friend who was my first casualty, but then again. I remember feeling exceptionally calm towards the thought of cheating.

*I don't want to seriously date a bunch of guys, I just want to get off. How is that cheating?*

My revved up teenage brain justified the act with a notion that sexual desires were meant to be fulfilled though not necessarily by just one person.

*And why the hell should anyone feel bad about that?!*

Matt and I had grown in to a routine over the years and probably never realized it while it was happening. After a few heartfelt but failed attempts at an exclusive relationship we reverted back to the friends with benefits role. I loved this role a lot more than was probably healthy for me but that's why they say hindsight is 20/20. Matt unlocked a side of intimacy that I would never have known was possible to attain without being in a monogamous union. He personified the whole 'have your cake and eat it too' thing. I mean, I could continue to be friends with the gender I was most comfortable with and we could sleep together without lying to ourselves and each other about wanting no one else? This inadvertently encouraged me to exclusively seek out these kinds of partnerships and revel in my success. For years I would rock up in leggings and an old favourite t-shirt and know I'd still get laid.

Tonight's outfit consisted of fitted black sweats, a Hollister hoody, and a thong that I considered cute, but not sexy. Totally fitting for the guy I was about to hop into bed with. Of course, after I hopped the fence into his parents' backyard. Matt had a weird thing about not wanting me to come in through the front door. Part of me believed him when he said it was too late at night, but part of me also believed it was because he was still ashamed that he "stole" me away from his best friend; a guy who grew up around Matt's family like one of their own and yet hadn't been seen at the house since I started hanging out there.

"Come *on*, hurry up and shut the window, you're letting all the heat out!" Matt jokingly said through chattered teeth whilst hopping about his room.

"You know, there's always the option of coming to *my* house now and again," I said as I dropped down onto the bed.

"Yes but then I would have to put on pants and we both know how much I hate pants," Matt replied.

I smiled. It had been an ongoing joke for years. Matt really did hate pants, cursed their existence, and only wore them when he had to leave the house. Even then they were four sizes too big and I used to tease him that

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he could fit another person in there until one day he suggested we try it. Turns out, four sizes too big can be just the right fit for two horny teenagers.

After our usual small talk I took out my little Bob Marley tin box and got started.

"Have you heard of *The Big Bang Theory*?" Matt asked as I broke up some pot.

"Are you insulting my intelligence again? Of course I know about the big bang theory, but that's not really a discussion I feel like getting into at midnight."

A tiny hysterical Matt laugh. "No silly, *The Big Bang Theory*, as in the TV show! I watched an entire season yesterday."

I raised my eyebrow. "Seriously, an entire season? Even for you, that's a bit much!"

He swivelled around and around in his office chair. "You have no idea how funny it is. 'If I could talk the language of rabbits, they would be amazed and I would be their king.'" he quoted in a terrible Indian accent.

I raised my other eyebrow. "Uh-huh. Sounds amazing." (Funnily enough, *The Big Bang Theory* would come to be one of my favourite shows after that night. Every single time I watch that episode I think of Matt when Raj says that line. And I always remember the copyrighted Matt laugh that went along with it.)

"Hey, you haven't said anything about my new room arrangement," Matt suddenly stopped spinning and mock-pouted at me. "Didn't you notice I changed it?"

"It's hard to keep track when you move your furniture around every other week," I said sweetly in response, "But this totally suits you. That computer desk was just such an eyesore when it used to be three feet to the left of where it is now."

"I know, right?!" Matt giggled hysterically. "I think I am almost satisfied with it. Actually I should probably move my table closer to my bed. And I will never paint this room again. Blue for life, baby!"

"Right, so, we smoking this before or after the movie then?" I held up the joint in response, knowing all too well the limits of Matt's short attention span.

"Before. Always before," an excited Matt jumped from his swivelling chair. "But firstâ€¦" he crawled onto the bed next to me and wrapped his arms around me, kissing me with his full lips that I always loved to suck and nibble on. He grinned sheepishly as he pulled away. I smiled in return and removed his glasses. I ran my eyes over his tall figure that was tucked underneath an old, grey university sweatshirt and black boxer shorts. Then we both got lost in lust and routine.

## Chapter 2

~\*2002\*~

My first time having sex did not leave me wanting more. In fact, I couldn't wait for it to be over. It was painful and awkward- all the things we learn in hindsight but never a thought in the mind of a curious teenager. Even though my boyfriend was a proud nine inches, I had to ask if it was all the way in. I wanted to brace myself for more pain.

*Why would people put themselves through this when they can just make out? I don't think I want to go past third base again.*

I distracted myself with the hockey game that was on the TV to my right as my boyfriend plunged away.

*Why did the Leafs always manage to give it away in the last five minutes? And why were the lights still on in here?*

As he was finishing I couldn't help but notice the ridiculous expression on his face. I wondered if the reason couples always had sex with the lights off was because they knew what they were doing was painful, silly, and ultimately for naught. Darkness made the act bearable and forgiving should a body part slip out of place. Additionally, you were spared the close-up, unflattering expressions that your partner was no doubt making as he or she neared orgasm. For the next six years I never once had sex with the lights on.

## Chapter 3

~\*Spring 2003\*~

"Okay, I think I've got everyone's money. Are you finally going to book the place today?" Patrick asked me in between second and third period.

"Yeah for sure," I replied as I tried to stuff my running shoes into our large, shared locker. "Can you grab that bag up there please? I'm struggling here."

Patrick snickered as he easily reached the bag on our top shelf. "I don't know why you keep throwing things up there when you can't reach them."

"Well in my dress shoes it's no problem, but as you can see I'm kinda barefoot at the moment."

"You mean your ridiculous Spice Girl platform shoes?" Another snicker. "Whatever. Just book it and give me the details ASAP."

"Yes, sir!" I saluted to Patrick. "Stop worrying already. All week you ask me the same question every day. No one else will book that place, I promise you."

"Emma, only *I* tell people not to worry. Your job is just to get it done," Patrick responded with a familiar smile spreading across his face as he walked away, knowing his black and white statements always pushed a button of mine.

I rolled my eyes and shook my head in annoyance but secretly smiled as my wavy, auburn hair fell over my face.

Patrick was the first friend I ever made in high school. Back in 1999 we met in homeroom as his surname followed mine on the alphabetical list. This meant we were assigned lockers side by side and for the first few months I thought I would kill him.

Grade 9's got the third floor lockers which were so skinny that you could barely fit two textbooks side by side within them. When you opened them all the way, the door completely covered the locker to the right of them. You always hoped you'd get a courteous locker neighbour. Day after day, Patrick would wait for an opportune moment to annoy the heck out of me. He was one of the hundreds of kids that was bussed to and from school which he used to his advantage at the end of each day.

"Patrick! What the hell!" I would yell at him as he flung his locker door open.

"What?!" Patrick would respond in mock defence, "I need to catch my bus!"

"That doesn't mean you need to open your locker door *all the way*. You can still get your shit out without blocking mine!"

"You walk home. You can leave at any time. I need to get out of here *now*."

"Just because I walk home doesn't mean I have to wait around for *you* to finish whatever you're doing!" I would spit back whilst trying to pry his locker door away from mine, always to no avail against his lanky forearm that held the door firmly in place.

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*He's totally got Only-Child Syndrome*, I remember thinking during our daily squabbles. While fourteen-year-old me tried to hate him, I couldn't deny I was loving this sort of new attention. My closest friends from elementary school (who were mostly male) always made me feel like one of the guys and nothing more, which was totally cool. I knew my place with them. Patrick, however, teased me like a little sister but was also interested in spending lots of time with just me which left me wondering if this was how real boyfriend-girlfriend relationships started. He was the strong and silent type which always left me questioning some of his actions but I knew we shared a special connection. Even if we didn't quite know how to define it.

Here we were, four years later, still just friends and nothing more. I think this bothered our friends more than it bothered us. We had developed a tight knit group that constantly teased our bickering ways and asked when the hell we were just going to start dating already. We always brushed off the notion because that sort of chemistry just wasn't there. Graduation was less than a month away and I was sure if anything was going to happen, it would have damn well happened already.

I made it to my third period World Studies class just as Mr. Bortello was closing the door. I scurried over to my desk next to Andrew and tucked my kilt under my legs as I sat down quickly. He gave me a smile and waited until Mr. Bortello had allowed us to partner up for an assignment to begin talking about something that had nothing to do with the assignment whatsoever.

"I hear everyone's put in for the deposit. Is the cottage booked yet?"

"I was literally just talking about this with Patrick," I responded while pretending to go over Andrew's notes, "and I'll book the place tonight just so people can stop asking me."

"Sorry," he said through a short laugh, "I just didn't think it was going to happen. For sure thought some people would back out once they had to come up with the money."

"I know, I seriously can't believe we're going to have twenty people staying in this cottage. Who needs to follow the ginos to Wasaga Beach when you can get a place like this after prom? Best idea *ever*."

"Until something breaks," Andrew stated. "Are you sure you want to put this place on your credit card?"

"Don't worry," I responded calmly, "I know where everyone lives. They break something, I break them."

"Cool," Andrew smiled at that. "How many bedrooms again?"

"Umm, I think five plus two big living rooms and a dining room."

"Who do you think you'll share a bed with?"

"I dunno, probably Patrick or Erica."

"Sleep with Patrick."

"*ANDREW!*" I whispered loudly as Mr. Bortello glanced over at us again.

"What?! I just meant sleep in the same bed as him, where is *your* mind at?" He asked teasingly.

I narrowed my eyes at him, "You know what you meant. And it's not happening."

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"Why not? You've slept with like three guys already, what's one more?"

"Umm, maybe because Patrick doesn't *want* to sleep with me and I don't *want* to sleep with him."

"Pretty sure he'd sleep with you if you made the first move," Andrew leaned back confidently in his chair.  
"He's never going to make the first move. He's too shy for that."

"Andrew, I don't like him! So this stuff doesn't matter at all!"

"Sure you don't." Andrew said, still rocking back on his chair.

"You know it's not like that with us," I said, exasperated. "I wish people would just get that already. Why can't me and Patrick just be friends like you and I are? What's so wrong about that?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all, my dear," Andrew sat forward and pulled his notes up. "Shall we?"

We eventually completed our joint assignment and used the rest of class time to "work on our other studies" which is code for gossip or do as little of anything as possible. Andrew and I continued talking about who we thought would be pairing up at the cottage, who would go in who's car, who might hook up. The bell sounded and I was off to enjoy my spare by heading home early. I headed back to my locker and took my time sorting my things out. I left a note for Patrick to call me later so we could discuss the final details of the cottage and was immediately left thinking about how big the beds were, how they were arranged in the room, and what I should bring to sleep in if Patrick and I were going to share a bed.

*Damn you, Andrew....*



## Chapter 4

~\*Summer 2003\*~

After lazing about for my first week of summer as an adult I had gathered the energy for a bike ride. It had been a really warm night so I cycled around the local neighbourhoods for a lot longer than I normally would have. No need to rush back for anything or anyone. As social as I was I adamantly made alone time every day a priority and really cherished these small moments. Cycling had always been a favourite activity and my own time of self-reflection. Tonight's agenda: reflect on how to break up with the boyfriend.

I returned home well after the sun had set and headed straight for the "computer room" to go online and hopefully gather some inspirational ways to break up with a decent guy. My break-up with my first boyfriend (Matt's best friend) took the better part of an hour. Yes, I am also one of those people who peels off band-aids slowly and wades my way into a cold pool. Once the computer was ready to go I routinely opened MSN Messenger first and signed in. Within a minute an orange tab bar was flashing on the bottom of my screen.

*Matt says: Sooo, did u have fun at the cottage?*

~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: *OMG you have nooo idea how much shit happened. Funny stuff mostly. But justâ!*  
*Wow. Such a good time. A tree almost landed on my friend's car!*

*Matt says: say WHAAAT??*

~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: *lol yeah there was a storm on the second night and her car was parked way down the long driveway so we told her to move it in case the storm got worse and she needed to get stuff from her car. And I swear like an hour later lightning struck the tree and this huge branch cracks and lands right where her car was!*

*Matt says: Holy shit that is insane! Maybe there were ghosts playing tricks on u. hehehe silly ghosts.*

~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: *I wouldn't doubt it, u shoulda seen this place. More of a 1930's abandoned murder house than a cottage! Every morning we'd come downstairs to find another piece of furniture on the dining room table. Everyone swore they didn't do it but I have an idea of which two guys were behind it. At one point there was a couch, a loveseat, and two chairs on top of the table.*

*We made a few of the guys go down in the "basement" the night the power went off to flip the breakers and they saw something supposedlyâ! everyone was screaming, freaking out, but laughing the whole time too."*

*Matt says: hehehe u definitely had ghosts. I wish we had something cool like that happen!*

~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: *Oh there's more, I'll tell you stories next time I see you. How was your prom and after-prom?*

*Matt says: Meh prom was okiesâ! u know I didn't have a date so didn't care for the dancing part. The after-party at the hotel was good but kinda weirdâ! Me and Lou crashed a party happening on the same floor and I was so close to hooking up with this chick!*

~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: *Haha oh no what happened??*

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*Matt says: Okie like there was this really really cute girl who answered the door and I smooth talked her into letting us come party with them. She was totally flirting with me but I donno, u know I'm kind of shy and her friends wouldn't leave her alone. What if I made a move and she rejects me in front of all them? Would be so totally embarrassing right.*

*so for almost the whole night she is next to me squeezing my arm and laughing every time I made fun of Lou. And when I ask her if she wants another drink all of a sudden her friends pull her away and say she's not interested.*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: Ugh that is so typical. Girls like that don't know what they want.*

*Matt says: No but like it wasn't her, it was totally her friends. One of them locked herself in the bathroom saying she was scared that me and Lou were gonna rob them or something.*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: Lol wtf?! I swear you always meet the weird ones. Poor Mattie!*

At this moment another tab starts flashing orange at the bottom. It's the boyfriend. I ignore it for the time being.

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: So what happened then? You didn't hook up with her and didn't see her after either?*

*Matt says: Nope. No sex for Mattie hehehe. It's okay, I mean I wasn't looking for anything. If it happened then that's cool, but she just seemed like a fun girl. Would have been nice to have more time with just her, u know?*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: \*sigh\* yeah I know. Don't worry, that makes two of us not hooking up at our proms.*

*Matt says: But you have a boyfriend. You don't even have to try to get laid!*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: Haha yeah well, my boyfriend was actually falling asleep at my prom. He works nights at Loblaws and was really tired the whole time. He didn't even want to dance with me. Then he went to sleep within fifteen minutes of getting to my friend's party.*

*Matt says: Wow that's really shitty. But who cares if u had sex on prom night or not, it's all about the after party at the murder cottage! Meeeww!*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: Yeahâ. About thatâ. Lol he didn't come.*

*Matt says: He didn't go AND he fell asleep at your prom? Wow what an asshole.*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: No he's not an asshole, to be honest I didn't really want him to comeâ.*

*Matt says: Oh okiesâ I don't understand. I thought u really liked him?*

I bit my lip as I debated how to write my next sentence. I wanted to tell Matt that I hooked up at the cottage. I wanted to tell someone because it was killing me to keep it a secret. Matt would understandâ but he might reconsider our "arrangement". We had been sleeping together casually for the last eight months but I didn't want him to think I was a total slut and stop hanging out with me. He already thought it was a bad idea that we kept hooking up since he believed he and he alone caused the break-up between myself and his best friend.

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: He's really sweet and does all the cute boyfriend things that I think is supposed to happen in a relationship butâ I just don't think he's the right guy for ME. I mean, he's twenty years old and*

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*he still has a curfew. And no driver's license, not even a G1. When he hangs out with me and my friends he just sits there and stays quiet. \*sigh\* I know I have to break up with him. I'm just not sure how to do it. Like he hasn't done anything wrong for me to get mad at himâ he's justâ I dunno.*

*Matt says: I think if you're not happy then u should tell him. If u wait around then I think it will only make it harder for u to break up with this guy. I know if it was me I would want to know sooner rather than later so I could get out there and find me some rebound sex!*

I laughed out loud at this. Matt was shy in large groups and far from being a "player". Yet he could easily convey his would-be confidence through our chat sessions. I leaned back far in my chair and stared blankly at the ceiling for a minute. I straightened and leaned back over the keyboard.

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: lol that was awesome. Thanks Matt. I know I have to do it, I just have to figure out when is a good time. Maybe I should get drunk first.*

*Matt says: lol yes alcohol is the answer!! You can only make good decisions with sexy alcohol.*

*BTWâ u don't have to tell me if u don't want to, but did something happen at the cottage? It's just like, last week u were so excited to go to prom with this guy and the next week u want to break up with him.*

I sucked in a quick air of breath. How on earth could he have guessed that?! He was a smart guy but he didn't always pick up on social cues.

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: No, nothing happened. Been feeling like this for a little while now.*

*Matt says: Okies, but u know you can tell me if u want. I promise I won't think bad of u or anything.*

I paused. Then I threw caution to the wind. I was going off to college in less than two months, who cares if Matt thinks poorly of me?

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: Okay but PROMISE ME you won't say anything to anyone!!*

*Matt says: hehehe I promise Emma. I don't know your friends well enough anyway.*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: Okay sooo, the night the power went out was when X kissed me. We were kinda drunk and he had been holding me in a bear hug cuz I'm scared of thunderstorms and then when the lights went out, he kissed me. Annd I kissed him back.*

*Matt says: X? You're not gonna tell me his real name? It's not like I know himâ or do I?!*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: lol you're on a need to know basis! You don't know him, don't worry. Anyway when the lights came back on I asked Patrick if he could switch beds with X for the night because X was really upset about something and needed to talk to his oldest buddy about it.*

*Matt says: lol that is such a lame excuse. And he bought it?*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: He questioned me a bit but in the end he slept in one of the other rooms.*

*Matt says: So u and Patrick shared a bed the whole time but u kicked him out so u could hook up with another guy instead?*

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*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: When you say it like that I sound like a slut! Patrick and I don't like each other like that so whatever, no issue there. I would have done the same for him. And I wouldn't in a million years expect anything to ever happen with X butâ for the next three days we were making out a LOT. No sex, just making out. It was really good but I'm not sure where we stand nowâ I've known him for a long time, I really don't want to lose a friendship over this. He said the night he kissed me he felt really guilty cuz he knew I had a boyfriend and didn't want to be the cause of our break-up. But I didn't even care Matt, I just wanted to keep making out with him.*

I stared at the screen barely blinking an eye, heart beating a little harder as I saw the truth of what I had done in front of me. How would Matt react to this? He said he wouldn't judge but maybe this would make him think twice about having sex with me again. I hoped this wouldn't be the case as I saw him typing a message, then stop, then start typing again, and repeat this cycle for the next three minutes.

*Matt says: Wow I wish I was a girl. I would be having so much sex I would probably hurt myself.*

*I don't think you're a slut hehehe I think you're sexy and know how to have fun! But sounds to me this was just a one time thing, at least that's how Mr X seems to want it. Unless you're wanting it to be more?*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: I don't think it would be right if we dated. And I don't think he likes me in that way anyway. You're right, it was just a bit of fun that won't happen again. Thank you for letting me get that off my chest.*

*Matt says: hehehe no probs! But I don't think u should tell your boyfriend about this when you're breaking up with him.*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: lol yeah I'm already going to be breaking his heart, I don't want to pour salt in the wounds!*

*Matt says: Oh no that would hurt big time!*

*Soâ I Emma is going to be single again hehehe. We should celebrate your freedom some time.*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: What are you doing right now? It's a really nice nightâ maybe we could get some slushies and go for a drive?*

*Matt says: Stop reading my mind, woman! I was just thinking about going to Mac's for some delicious slushies. Should I come pick u up?*

*~\*Jaded Em\*~ says: Give me twenty minutes, I just gotta change first.*

*Matt says: Okies but we both know it doesn't matter what you're wearing ;) see you soon.*

I smiled and was about to sign off MSN when I noticed the other orange message box still flashing at the bottom of my computer screen. My smile faded as I stared at it for a few seconds then signed off without even reading the message from my soon-to-be ex-boyfriend. If I was going to hell, I was gonna have a fun time getting there.

## Chapter 5

~\*Fall 2003\*~

It's amazing how at times in your life you can feel like two people at once. In the summer between graduating high school and starting college I felt like both a kid and an adult and then nothing at all. It's in this time period where you start to want to make those changes that bring you into adulthood but also don't want to lose the final connection to your childhood innocence. It's a delicate balance and any miniscule event can push you into that next life phase.

I can't say that any one event brought me into that next stage. I was always apprehensive towards change. I suppose as a child and teenager you have a tendency to think that whatever you feel and whatever you believe is cold hard fact and will never change. However, the feelings that surfaced during this time surprised me enough to start taking more observations of what was happening around me.

I've thought about it extensively and have come to the conclusion that friendship is a delicate thing. Its bonds are not formed by blood and it's tethers not strengthened by romance. We go through phases in our lives where we hate our siblings or parents but still love them because they are *family*. We fight with our spouse because they crossed a line, but when the dust settles we go into overdrive trying to get back to our happy place because they are our *other half*.

So, when you think about it, friendships are the hardest relationships to maintain and yet the effort that goes into them is often overlooked. Why? Maybe we take these connections for granted. Not everyone comes from a good family and no one expects to find an absolute perfect spouse, so our friends are the people who fill in those gaps. They are our parents when we need to get pulled back into line. They are our brothers and sisters when we need to someone to confide in. And they are our boyfriends and girlfriends when we need to feel loved and wanted. These are just the expectations we have without question.

From a young age I regarded my friends as family; as my brothers (and a few sisters). I love them deeply. When I was seventeen, I casually told my mother I would not be inviting any of our relatives to my future wedding because I only wanted my friends there. I did not want to pay for people's dinners who had no interest in my daily life. She was taken aback by this and we proceeded to get into a lengthy argument that had her furious and me puzzled. Wedding invites were sent to those who are closest to the bride and groom, no? My blood family always felt like polite strangers to me. Neither my mother's or father's extended family ever made much of an effort to include us in their lives so it seemed only natural that the people closest to me would share my most intimate events in life.

By mid-2003 most of my friends had accepted university and college offers in the city and would be staying at home while continuing their education. Nothing would change for us except that we'd only get to see each other on weekends instead of every day. A few had selected schools that required them to move away. Andrew and Patrick were two of those people. As summer wound down I found myself getting more and more sad at the idea of losing two of my best friends. They both continuously reassured the group that they would be back for Christmas and random weekends and that it was only for a few years and nothing would change. But even though I hadn't experienced friends moving away for school before, I knew it couldn't stay the same. Our group dynamic would most certainly alter if we removed two people from it. The reality of this thought weighed heavily on me and finally slammed me in the chest on one of Patrick's last nights with us. We were watching his soccer game and in the final minutes I found myself running to my car so I could burst into tears without having everyone see me do so. Why would I do that? Friends grew up and they moved away; that's why we had telephones and MSN Messenger. I couldn't believe how poorly I was handling this fact of life. This sudden realization that change was imminently upon us made me swear to myself that

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retaining this level of friendship with the guys was top priority. Nothing would ever sway me from that.

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