

How do you say goodbye to a best friend?

Tawanda!

by *CHRISSE ANN GREEN*

It was the last day. Could you believe it? No more sunny days at the pool or going to Jeffrey's and trying on ballroom dresses. Or funny sleepovers when we would wake up at midnight with a craving for homemade brownies with chocolate chips. It was all over.

See, Kristen was my best friend. She stood by me last February when my 72-year-old grandfather died of cancer. I can remember it so clearly. I was in the funeral parlor, crying. I had to go there three days in a row. No one was there for me. On the third day, I was in the hall trying to stop whimpering when the front door opened. She was there. She held my hand and talked about more cheerful and glorious things than death.

I can remember going to see movies at Roosevelt Field. I especially remember the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes*. Our favorite word was "tawanda," and it

came from that movie. We said it when we tried to eat a lemon with sugar on top without squinting. We said it when we dove off the high dive for the first time. Or even just trying blueberry ice cream, we said it. It was the word of freedom to us. As if we would always be like the Three Stooges doing stupid things.

But not anymore. She would never be there again. Because, just like my grandfather, she left too, though not in the same way.

She left in a truck with her family. She rode in a truck with furniture.

We walked into her house for the last time and saw that kitchen, with no refrigerator or microwave popping with popcorn, with no furniture in her den. We were surrounded by white walls in her room: empty, empty. I could visualize the two beds parallel to each other, one with Little Mermaid blankets and the other plain peach. I could see her little sister playing on the bed with the hamster and saying, “Chrissie, Chrissie, pick me up!” and hugging my legs because she was so short, and seeing that huge smile on her face when I gave her gum.

We left the house and I saw Kristen for what seemed like the last time, standing there in her black and orange Umbros, orange shirt, white Keds, and a narrow white headband. Turning her head and holding me with a grin, she said it—the one word that meant everything to us—“Tawanda!” She smiled and started to laugh. Then she climbed into the truck and said “Connecticut or Bust!”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chrissie Ann Green lives in New Hyde Park, New York, and attends Herricks Middle School in Albertson, New York. She is active in sports as a member of her school's basketball and soccer teams. She also plays on a traveling soccer team, the New Hyde Park Wildcats. Other interests include music and dancing.

