

PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME MOVE!

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[Assignment: Henry Adams, in his autobiography, claims that the most important things he learned in life he learned accidentally. Write a list for yourself of all the things you remember learning accidentally. Choose one interesting and important item from your list; make another list of all the details that flood into your mind as you recount that learning process. Then, write a narrative essay about what happened. Your purpose is twofold: to tell the story as completely as you can, and to comment on what the process has meant to you.]

"Please don't make us move! Mom! I don't want to move! Please!" It looked like they decided not to listen to me, because before I knew it I found myself being moved from the little town that I had lived in my entire life, all five and a half years of it. One day Mom and Dad said "We're moving" and that was that. I had absolutely no say in the matter. All I knew was that there was no place on earth like Venedy and I didn't want to leave.

Venedy is the type of town that time has forgotten. It is a small farm town in southern Illinois that has remained virtually unchanged since it was founded in the 1800's. In Venedy the only grocery store was destroyed by a fire and never rebuilt. If you wanted bread or milk you could walk down to Moose's Tavern to buy some, but you would take your chances as to whether it was fresh or not. Moose's was always a blur to me inside. I would never stay for very long; it always seemed to be so dim inside, even when it was a bright, beautiful day outside. Venedy is also the type of town that requires you to go down the road to pick up your mail at the tiny, shabby, one room post office. There were many times that I would take the long, round-about way to get there because I was afraid of our neighbor, Alfred. It wasn't Alfred personally that I was afraid of; Alfred was wonderful. But there were times that he would stand in the street shooting some of the many squirrels that lived in the huge trees in his yard. That is what scared me, even though I knew he wouldn't hurt me.

I lived in Venedy until I was nearly six years old. It is such a laidback town. Everyone knew everyone else and kept their eyes out for them, especially me. I was the pastor's little daughter which meant that everything that I did was followed by many people. Even today this happens quite a lot but on a larger scale than it did back when I was little. I spent so much time with my neighbors who were all members of Dad's church, the only church in town. On Saturday mornings Mom would send me down the street, past the church and the church hall to Roger and Joyce's house. When I got there Roger was usually already out milking the cows so Joyce and I would make breakfast which was usually pancakes or waffles. After breakfast I would help her clean the house. I think that I probably caused more trouble than good while we were cleaning because of my tendency to get into everything. If I wasn't cleaning I was usually playing with the stereo or trying to get a sound out of Joyce's antique

pump organ. That was pretty tough for a little girl whose feet could barely reach the pedals.

On Saturday evenings Mom would once again send me off to another neighbor. This time I went across the street to the Sieving's house. I kept Esther, Frannie and Alfred busy. They were older sisters and a brother who had lived in the same house their entire life. After Alfred died a few years ago, Esther and Frannie moved. It is still very strange to see someone else living in their house. I spent so much time with them. On Saturday nights we would make dinner and then we would usually make snickerdoodles. I still have the Disney children's cookbook that they gave me one year for my birthday. After dinner we played Parchesi and Alfred would tease me nonstop. He liked to say "Bah Humbug" a lot. Whenever he would say that Frannie and I would echo back with "Fiddlesticks." Alfred would always let me have some of his favorite black licorice, probably because I was the only other person there who liked it.

On Sunday mornings I would be right back at the Sieving's. As church was letting out I would run back to their pew and walk home with them. They always kept me busy and supplied with sweets. I always loved to visit them. In the summer I would help them pick blackberries from the bushes that they had in their backyard. They would often have a special birthday party for me and our family would visit them every year before church on Christmas Eve. Santa always came early at the Sieving' house.

We had a huge yard in Venedy. My parents planted what came to be known as the "Venedy Gardens." These were large gardens with many different kinds of flowers and vegetables. I learned how to zip the zipper on my coat one day in the gardens while I was watching Dad pull weeds. Behind our yard was the church cemetery. Across the cemetery was my friend Krissy's house. During the day I had no problem running across the cemetery to visit her, but at night I was rather hesitant. I knew that there was nothing there that could actually hurt me, except for the occasional stick I would trip over, but still I would get a little bit scared.

"Don't make me go to school Mom, please don't make me go to school!" I suddenly found myself in a new school and in the middle of a completely unfamiliar situation. I did not like my new situation at all. I missed Venedy so much, sometimes I would call our old house but there was no one there to answer the phone. I threw many tantrums the first few weeks that I lived in Collinsville, but it didn't convince my parents that we should go back to Venedy.

Our new house was in Collinsville, Illinois. Compared to Venedy, population about 150, Collinsville, with a population of 22,500, was immense. I now know that that is not an extremely large place, but to me at the time it was terrifying. When we got to Collinsville and I started my new school I was probably the most obnoxious kid to live with. I would do *anything* to avoid going to school. I hated my new school. I tried to hide in the basement or under my bean bag chair but Mom always found me. Then I would cry until she dropped me off at school. When I was in the room I became very quiet. Everyone kept looking at me, saying, "There's the new girl with the really long name." It took me a while to warm up to everyone

there. Soon I began to make friends and start to have fun. Eventually I really liked to go to school to see my friends, until seventh grade that is. I still liked to see my friends but I continually conned Mom into thinking that I was sick so that I wouldn't have to go to school.

It took a while for me to become accustomed to life in Collinsville. Our street is very quiet and I quickly became friends with all of our neighbors who are all elderly. I spent a lot of time playing cards with Mrs. Miranda and sitting on Angie's porch talking. I spent a great part of the summer over at Angie's. Every few months she would measure my sister and me and put a pencil mark on the wall. Even now, ten years later, those marks are still on the wall.

I came to find that even though Collinsville was larger than Venedy people still knew who you were. It took a bit of time but I soon became acquainted with most of the people from church and people that my parents knew. I still have people reporting back to my parents. There have been many times when my parents have informed me that I have been caught driving too fast or that I was out somewhere, like St. Louis, where I was not supposed to be. It seems as though someone from church had seen me out and reported back to my parents which usually ended up in some form of a reprimand for me. I've always meant to thank those people for getting me in trouble. It was very difficult to get away with anything.

It has been twelve years since we have moved to Collinsville. I have gone back to visit Venedy several times since then and each time I find that the town is always the same. Now I am glad that we did move. I have had so many more opportunities and met so many more people in Collinsville than I would have in Venedy. I like Venedy because everyone is so friendly there, but now I think that it is too small of a place for me. In Collinsville there is usually something to do whereas in Venedy the only possible excitement is sitting around, in a cornfield perhaps, and watching the cows mill about.

Looking back, I realize that the move was a good thing. I also know that a situation that looks bleak and horrible at the time will often turn into something wonderful.