

Shell Soup

The Magazine for Writers, Artists & Best Friends

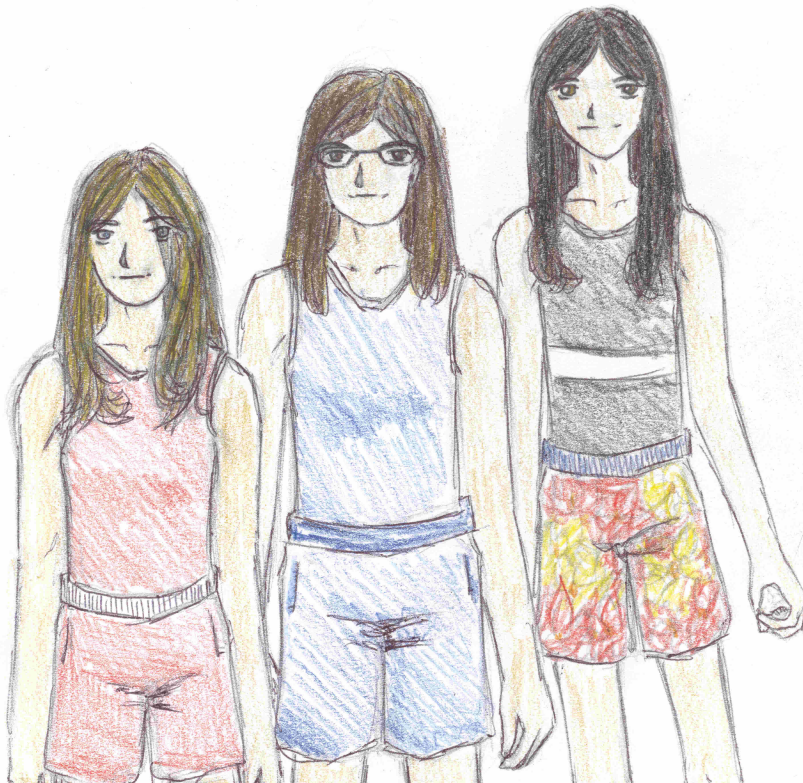


Illustration by Christina Weinman, age 15, from "Of Sea Shells and Best Friends"

Of Sea Shells and Best Friends

What do you do when you're moving away from your best friends?

JUNE 2005

Of Sea Shells and Best Friends

By Dani Alcorn

Illustrated by Christina Weinman

For Caitlin Crowley

SEEN FROM THE BACK we were three silhouettes walking toward the slowly sinking sun. They were almost black against the brilliant orange sky. I walked on the end. The silhouette to my left was a head shorter followed by another silhouette two heads shorter. We strolled along the beach silently, each absorbed in our own thoughts as we gazed out over the rolling surf. We left no evidence that we had been there except for the three lines of footprints that wound back as far as I could see. At last the one in the middle, Dani, sat down far enough from the ocean so that only the strongest waves would reach her toes. The tall one, me, sat down next and I stretched my long bare legs luxuriously in the warm sun. The last silhouette, Christina, sat down on Dani's other side. We sat there quietly for a while until Dani broke the comfortable silence.

"Caitlin, it sucks."

"What?" I asked.

"That you're moving."

"Well, yeah,"

"When are you moving?" Christina asked.

"I don't know, a week? Maybe two?"

Dani sighed. "Guess that's it for the Three Musketeers. Didn't one of them die anyway?"

"No, none of them died. But it's not exactly like I am either. I'm only moving five states away," I said.

"Yeah, five states and a three hour plane trip," Dani muttered.



Dani Alcorn, 14
Orlando, Florida



Christina Weinman, 15
Orlando, Florida



Caitlin Crowley, 15
Southlake, Texas

“Wait,” Christina said. “I mean, we can still talk to each other right? And, I don’t know, we can, like, e-mail and stuff, right?”

There was a pause while we contemplated our avenues of communication.

“It’s not the same.” We all said at once.

Dani picked up a shell and threw it into the ocean. “No offense to you, Christina, but who am I going to talk about books with? Who am I going to discuss the intricacies of writing and literature with?” Dani threw another shell into the ocean.

Christina had been drawing in the sand while Dani spoke. “Well no offense to you either, but who am I going to talk about drawing and Manga with? Who am I going to go and see new Miyazaki movies with?” Dani was about to throw another shell into the ocean but Christina reached over and grabbed it, throwing it far out into the waves.

“I know you guys, but...” I faltered, “It’s hard, I mean my Dad has to go and, well, so do we.” I gazed helplessly at my two best friends, their faces so sad and hopeless.

“It’s just like the time my best friend moved in third grade.” Dani said, “She moved away and I haven’t heard from her in six years.”

“Where did she move?” I asked. It would be awful if five states could separate us for so long

“Australia.”

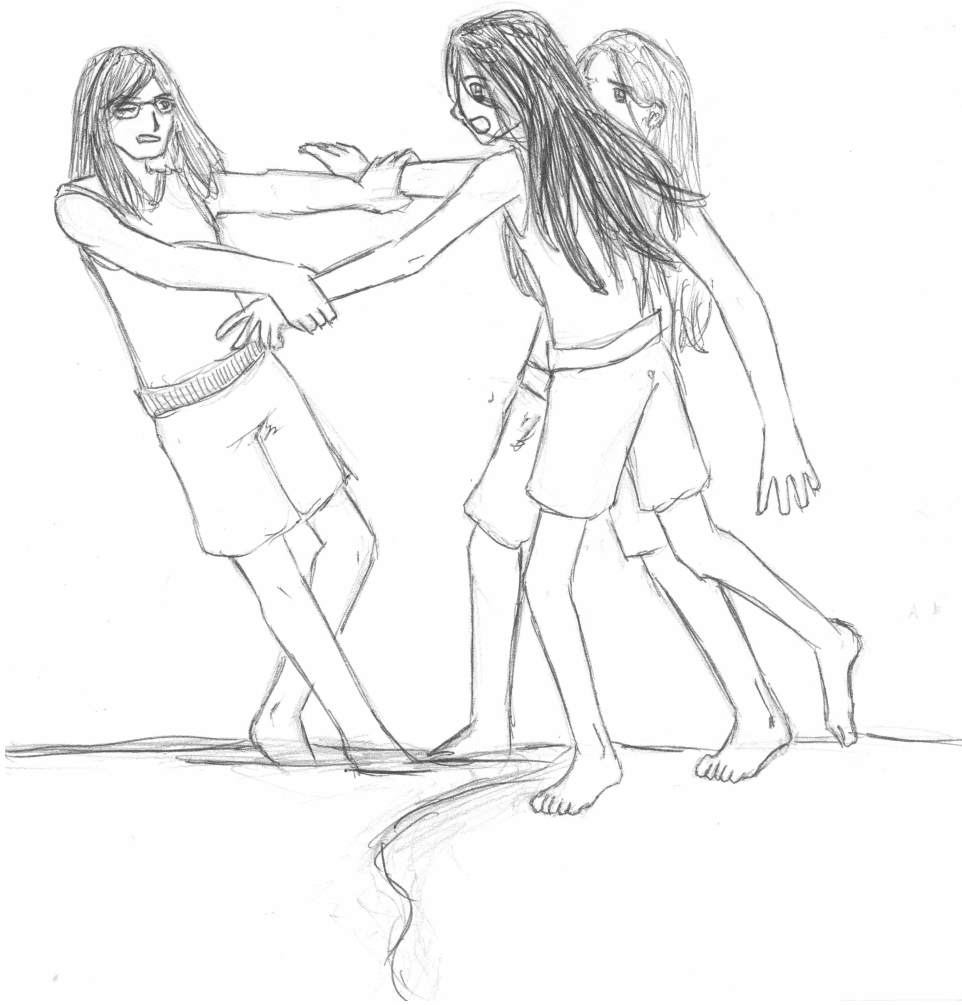
“Well that’s a little different than Texas,” I said, relieved.

“Yeah, well we’ll see.” Dani said. She stood up and then ran a hand across the back of her legs, brushing sand off. She held out a hand for Christina and one for me. We both took them and she pulled back, helping us up. When Christina and I reached a standing position it became clear that Dani had over compensated for both of our weights. She lost her balance and started to fall backwards. Unfortunately she was still holding our hands and the tide was coming in. The three of us ended up in a tangled heap as a warm Florida wave came up the beach. “Ahh!” we all cried.

“I’m sorry you guys! I’m so sorry!” Dani said, she got up and looked down at her dripping beach cover. “I’m so sorry.” She surveyed my drenched swimsuit and Christina’s sopping hair. She held out her hands again.

“No thanks,” Christina said as she struggled to drag a buried foot from the sand.

I pulled myself up at the same time Christina’s foot emerged from the sand.



She lost her balance and started to fall backwards.

I looked at the three of us, wet and dripping, and began to laugh. Slowly Christina and Dani's faces lost the grim look that had haunted them all week and they began to grin. Then the three of us, laughing, ran back down the beach, arm in arm.

* * *

We didn't return to the beach until the night before I was scheduled to leave.

Again we sat near the water. If the mood had been heavy the week before it was now ten times more somber. The sun was again low in the sky. I had a plane to catch the next morning. By this time the next day I would be in my new "lake front" house. "Puddle front" was more descriptive. Dani sat with her chin resting on one knee and Christina sat cross-legged, elbows on knees with her chin in her hands.

Dani got up and started pacing the shoreline. Her bare feet left shapeless dips in the sand. She spied a good throwing shell and bent down, a long way. She's grown a lot since I first moved here two years ago, I realized. Noticing the change in Dani I looked across at Christina.

One hand had fallen away from her face and she was sketching in the sand. She only had a few marks in, but already I could tell it was going to be perfect. She's grown a lot too, I thought, but in a different way.

Life is so unfair. As I was finally taking the time to sit down and look at my friends and see how different they had become and really appreciate them I had to leave.

I got up and brushed the sand off my long, now tan, legs and went to the edge of the water near Dani. I watched her throw shells for a while, then turned and looked at Christina's drawing. It was me, I realized. Looking at the picture in the sand I thought about how I had changed too.

I was no longer so reserved and focused on school, Manga and reading, I was finally taking the time to stop and experience life. And it was because of these same friends I was about to leave.

I can't just fade out, I thought, we have to keep in touch. It's just not the same on the phone as it is in person, right here, right now on this beach.

Dani picked up a shell. It glittered in the fading sun. She raised her arm to throw, "Wait!" I yelled and caught her wrist. I took the shell out of her hand. She gave me a funny look while I studied the shell. It was a light cream color with dark brown spots all over. The tips of my fingers felt the smooth bumps on the bottom. It was perfect.

"Christina, come here." I said. She got up and came over to where Dani and I were standing.

"What is it?" She asked.

"Look at it." I said, "Hold it up to your ear." Christina took the shell and

listened, then handed it to Dani who also held it up to her ear. They both looked puzzled.

“All I hear is the ocean.” Christina said.

“Exactly,” I said, “This shell traps the sound of the ocean.”

“Right.”

“Well, remember last week how happy we were when we ran down the beach?”


“Yeah.”

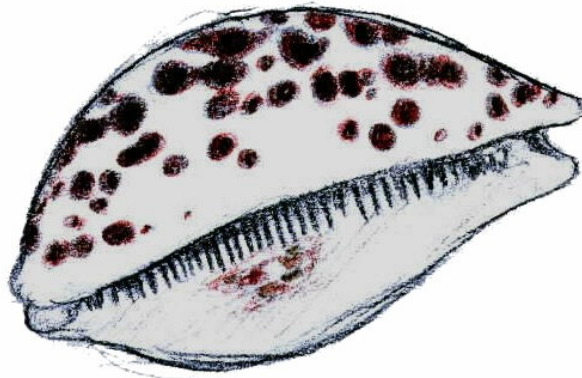
“It’s a special shell because it came from this beach, a beach where we were all happy once. As the shell catches the sound of the ocean the shell can catch the sound of our voices. We can mail the shell back and forth between Florida and Texas with a letter. If we read the letter to the shell before we mail it then it’s twice as good as a phone call.”

I watched as slowly their faces broke into the same grins I had seen the week before as the reality of what I had said sunk in.

“It’s better than a phone call.” Christina said.

“It’s perfect.” Dani said.

I put the shell into my pocket and the three of us walked silently back down the beach, safe in the knowledge that these were friendships that never had to end. 





"Wait!" I yelled and caught her wrist.

