

Name: Maeve Caine  
Mailing address  
Telephone number  
Author's e-mail address: 890222987@rcsd121.org  
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## Friends

Today was the day. I was going to conquer high school, this was my year. I had friends, pretty decent grades, and some community service I could put on my application to a college. Now all I had to do was keep it up for 4 years.

"Gemma! You are going to be late if you keep fidgeting with your hair!", my Nonna exclaimed. My parents and I were born in America but my grandparents weren't, they met in Italy and moved to America later on. Now, here we are in Seattle. As I got on the bus I looked around and the only seat open was right next to a kid I didn't know, I plopped down next to him and at the time I didn't notice but he was eating a PB and j sandwich. I instantly fell asleep because of how late I had stayed up trying to perfect my outfit. When I got off the bus I saw my friends waiting for me. My friend Jolene, the most popular of the group said "Oooh! I love your outfit Gem!" I mock curtsied and the six of us laughed. Little did I know they weren't laughing with me, they were laughing at me. The entire day people looked at me like I had three heads. By the time I got to the nursing home I volunteered at, I knew something was wrong. I walked towards Brenda and she looked at me the same way everyone else at school did. But instead of snickering or whispering to a friend she walked over, grabbed some napkins, and said "Don't worry hon we'll clean you up in no time."

We headed towards the bathroom, I looked in the mirror and all over my white blouse, there were jelly stains. Every one of my friends knew and they didn't say a thing. I felt anger and even worse, betrayed. Brenda was like my second Nonna, she was always so lovely and gave great advice. After I changed and helped with the bingo game, Brenda and I sat down and talked about my day. I told her all about the looks I had gotten from the other kids and how nobody told me about the stains. The more I talked about it and thought about it, the more hurt I became and by the end of my rant I was crying. She wiped the tears off my face and said, "Gemma, fake

friends are like shadows; they are near you at your brightest moments, but nowhere to be seen at your darkest hour.” Real friends are like stars, you don't always see them, but they are always there”, she continued thoughtfully.

That night I pondered what Brenda had said. Interestingly enough, Jolene was there whenever we had a test or if I won a contest, but she was never there when I needed her the most. As I lay there I realized what I had to do. The next morning when I got on the bus I made sure I didn't sit next to someone with food. A short time later as we arrived at school. As I walked up the steps instead of waving to my friends, I looked Jolene right in the eyes, took a deep breath and said “I'm sorry Jolene, but I can't be your friend anymore. You are a nice person, but you are never there when I need you. But the funny thing is you are always there when you need something. A friendship shouldn't be one-sided”. I sighed, pulled my shoulders back and paused, giving her an opportunity to respond. She smirked real sinister-like and said “That's okay, I didn't need you anyway.”

She stormed off, walking away hurriedly. I thought I might feel sad or anxious, but I didn't, nor did I feel embarrassed. I actually felt a wave of relief and at that moment I knew what I did was right. Amazing how things just align when you do what is right. The rest of the day went pretty well and in geometry, I met a girl named Amy. From our first encounter, I could tell she was a much better human being than Jolene. It felt like she actually cared about my feelings and we became instant friends. She even had two other friends, who were just as thoughtful, caring and cool as Amy. Their names were Marrie and Veronica. The best time of the day is when we all eat lunch together. We exchange snacks and information, like real friends. We also make sure no one has food stains. I told Brenda all about them and she was so happy for me, happy that I have real friends. It seems like things are finally starting to workout.

*By Maeve Caine*