



Not of this World

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Rollercoaster of Emotions

By Rachel Culwell

The summer before fifth grade, I was just like everyone else. A little awkward, caught in between childhood and adolescence, but also completely unaware of my own gawkiness. It didn't matter in fifth grade if you were skinny or fat, straight teeth or crooked, blonde or brunette. All that mattered was having fun with your friends at school and coming home to your family, who you actually enjoyed being around. Life was good. But my life was about to change. One night, my parents sat my sister and I down and told us that we were moving. Not to a different house, not to a different city, but a different country. They told us of their plans to move to Xalapa, Mexico for

for a year to do missions work. My first reaction was, "Cool! I don't have to go to school! No homework for me!" If my parents told me today that we were moving, my reaction would be slightly different. There would be a

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a war in the Culwell house and I would insist on living with my friends. But not in fifth grade. I was excited about doing something new. I was excited that is, until my parents told me that I would

have to attend a Mexican school with no Americans besides my sister. And not only would I have to attend this school, but also I would be expected to keep up in my classes from America as well. It's amazing how when we are little the idea of "no homework!" brightens our view of things, but that bubble of hope and excitement had been quickly popped. On my first day of school in Mexico, I loved it. My outgoing personality quickly attracted other students to me; they were fascinated by Americans and all wanted to be around me. I quickly felt my self esteem rise when boys told me they thought I was "guapa" (cute) and the girls fought over who



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was my friend. Well, pride comes before a fall. There came a point when the "thrill" of the American girl wore off. And like most middle schoolers would, the girls turned against me and the boys quickly followed suit. For no reason at all other than they felt it would be entertaining to take the new girls friends away. In a little less than a week I went from having too many friends, to what felt like none at all. I resorted to eating lunch in the bathroom. The bathroom! That's something that you think just happen in movies and books. Well I thought that too, until fifth grade. It was the first time in my life where I felt utterly alone. My sister was too absorbed in her own friendships to notice that I had none. The only times I ever talked to my friends at home was through email or instant messenger, and an occasional phone conversation. But they too were living their own lives and had their own pressing fifth grade drama to deal with. Your parents can only be your friends to a certain extent, and I couldn't exactly take them to school with me (Although the idea did cross my mind). So, I did what any fifth grade girl would do. I told God that He simply had to send me an angel to be my friend and make all the girls feel foolish for choosing to be my "ex-friends". Of course I told God he could make the angel's wing invisible to hide

the truth, but I wanted an angel friend nonetheless. Well, no winged deity came to Xalapa, Mexico the next day. So, after another period of self-pity, I moved onto plan two: forgive the girls and befriend them once again. The girls were taken aback when I returned their cruelty with congeniality. They didn't know how to respond to my inviting them over to my house when they made sure I knew about the birthday party Maria Emilia had the night before that they had "forgotten" to invite me to. But with continued forgiveness and the extension of friendship things began to change. Near the end of the year, we mended our friendships. All was right in the world of fifth grade girls once again. When it was time for me to go back to Texas, I was ready to leave, but found myself crying as I said my goodbyes to the girls that I had hated so much. I realize now that was because in fifth grade, we were quicker to forgive, forget and move on. It was so much easier to be "ex-best friends" one day and inseparable the next. While the experience of spontaneously moving to Mexico was a roller coaster of emotions, it is an experience that I have learned so much from, and would not trade for anything.