

*A New
Home*

By Emily Cameron

One summer day, I was out on the farm, packing the last of our things before the long journey to Los Angeles. Today we were going to move out of our farm and to the city. We would no longer be farmers. We couldn't bring our spotted cows, plump pigs, or brown horses along in the small Chevy car, so we had to sell them to other farmers. But we could keep our German shepherd dog, Harold, and our old tabby cat, Mittens. The two pets happily bounded off to the car as I watched them, squinting in the late afternoon sunlight. The moving truck was packed with all kinds of furniture—couches, tables, chairs. I didn't think we could fit anything more into there. But still, the moving men were hauling things in the back, like small cupboards and huge shelves. I searched around the backyard, looking for anything the moving men had forgotten to pick up. There wasn't anything, and there shouldn't have been. It looked like everything was in the truck. I sighed tiredly and leaned against the building, sweat pouring down my face. I hadn't been doing much, and I was sweating because it was blazing hot outside.

“Emily? Are you done yet? Have you found anything?” My father was calling me over at the cowshed. He threw a small chair into the moving truck.

“No, I think you've got everything,” I yelled back, eyeing Mr. Ben, a farmer, as he led a horse named Spotty that had once belonged to our farm to his house. Spotty was neighing, apparently confused. He kept glancing back at me and whinnying. He wanted to stay here, I knew. He didn't want to live at a different farm. He was my favorite horse. But

there wasn't any point crying over him. A horse definitely couldn't fit in our car. He would have to go. Everyone knew it.

“Well, if that's everything, honey, get in the car,” my mother said, stepping through the wide barn doors.

“Okay.” I hurried over to our red car, opened the door, and plopped down on a seat in the middle, Harold and Mittens on each side of me, wearing seatbelts. I giggled. “You guys don't need those,” I laughed.

“Meow,” Mittens replied, licking her tiny paws happily. She never fought with Harold. Good old Mittens, I thought.

Just then, the movers finished packing the last bit of furniture. Dad and Mom got into the car, put on their seatbelts, shouted, “Let's get a move on,” and we drove off with the moving truck behind us. I glanced back at the farm for the last time in my life as the car turned the corner.



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“Turn left,” Mom instructed, gazing at the path ahead of us like a hawk as Dad drove down the narrow, windy dirt road that slipped

between two mountains and disappeared behind one of them. The little farm we used to live in was five miles away from this small valley. I used to look out one of the kitchen windows back at our old house and stare at the mountains and the cars. The two mountains went up and up until the tippy-tops of them stopped, still miles away from the clouds. I always hoped mountains would grow like humans did so they could gently brush the fluffy little clouds, or even touch the moon. But the mountains never grew, and they would never even get close to the clouds.

Now I was leaving those mountains and I could stop hoping they would grow. But for some reason, I wanted to keep on hoping. If I left the mountains I would never sprint downstairs every morning to check if they had grown again. I wouldn't have anything to hope for. And I wanted to hope. I liked the feeling of it.

I leaned out of the window slightly and looked at the orange and yellow flowers on the ground. They looked beautiful as the sun shone down on them. I used to love these flowers. Mom used to like them too, and she kept a small glass vase full of them on the windowsill. But she had to throw the flowers away before putting the vase in the moving truck, and she had seemed reluctant to do so. Every time when I was coming home from school, the flowers would glitter and shimmer all around me, so I would pick some and add them to the already-full vase. The orange and yellow flowers always greeted me as I came home, moving gently from side to side in the soft wind, as though they were waving to me. Even though the flowers only came up to my heel,

I could still see them even if I wasn't looking down, for they shined so brightly.

I leaned out of the window more and managed to pick an orange flower with my right hand as the cars stopped for a old woman to cross the dirt road. I sniffed the flower, and it smelled so wonderful and beautiful I couldn't stop sniffing it for a while. I wondered what type of flowers would be in Los Angeles, and how they would smell.

I knew this would be the last time I would see the flowers here. I decided to keep the little orange one I had, as a reminder of this brilliant place. I had been living here all my life, and it was slightly sad for me to see our old farm go. I saw Spotty, my favorite horse, gallop past my car and run into Mr. Ben's horse shed, where one of the horse's old friends was. They started to neigh to each other, as if to say, "A new friend for me!"

I smiled. At least Spotty would be happy, just like I wanted him to be. I remembered how, last year, Spotty had chomped down hard on my middle finger, and I learned to never feed a horse from the fingertips, only on the palm on your hand. I remembered how he had run so fast with me on his back that I fell off into a messy clump of rosebushes and how he had carefully closed his teeth around the scruff of my neck and pulled me out of the bush and how I had always loved him, and I still did now, even though I might never see him again.

I thought about my best friends and my enemies and smiled to myself. The happy times, the sad times, and the sort-of-good-sort-of-bad times with them made me laugh and beam.

I thought about what I loved and clutched the flower tighter. It would remind me of the beautiful life on the farm, the one I was now leaving, the one I might never see again, and the one I had always loved.

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Hours later, we had passed the farmland and the countryside, and we were now driving on the highway, where there were smooth, paved roads. Miles ahead, Los Angeles was visible along the horizon, glinting and gleaming like one large diamond. It was dark now, so it was difficult to not mistake the city building windows for the stars above. Huge oak trees bent over the highway, leaves rattling in the wind. Interesting pink and purple flowers surrounded the trees like guards surrounding kings. I had to admit, Los Angeles was very pretty, maybe prettier than the old farm I used to live in. But it was new to me, and I didn't like new things. I liked usual, normal things, like the farm. And this place certainly looked fancy. Back at the old farm, you could relax and be happy, and no one would mind if you put your feet on the coffee table. But this city looked like you couldn't do that. You had to be super neat and clean here, I was sure, and I was definitely neither of those things.

“Can I still pull flowers out of the ground here?” I asked hopefully.

“No,” Dad replied sternly.

“Can I play roughly here?”

“No.”

“Can Harold and I run through sprinklers?”

“No.”

“Then what *can* I do?” I whined.

“Read books, play checkers, watch TV, play computer games,” Dad said, counting on his fingers.

I slid down in my seat glumly. Los Angeles looked like it would be pretty boring to live there. No more beautiful orange and yellow flowers, no more hoping, no more watering the plants every morning—what fun would it be if we had to read books all day and play board games? Mittens would surely get lost if I let her outside to walk around the neighborhood, because the city was just so busy. Harold would be lonely not knowing any other dogs to play with. And I would be sad everyday when I came home from school and had nothing to do, for Mom had to wash the dishes so she couldn't play a game of checkers with me, and besides, checkers was boring. I had already read all the books on the shelf, and Mom and Dad kept forgetting to buy me more. Watching TV—maybe here they didn't have my favorite channel. And we didn't have many computer games that were fun. Running through sprinklers with Harold was really awesome, and sometimes even Mittens would join in. We used to do that at the farm, but people wouldn't allow that sort of childish behavior in Los Angeles. No pulling flowers out of the ground—that would make the old glass vase be useless if we couldn't fill it up with something. And no playing roughly—running around the house trying to make Harold and Mittens wear a pair of Mom's old underwear was always so fun. But if we couldn't do all that life in Los Angeles would be plain boring.

Harold barked loudly. He was obviously hungry after all those hours without food. We hadn't even stopped for a snack, and cake shops that made my mouth water passed by our window.

"Shush, Harold!" Mom said urgently. "Dad is trying to drive!"

"Nope, I'm not," Dad said, shaking his head. "We're stuck in this traffic. I guess everyone wants to go to Los Angeles." He shrugged gloomily. "Ah, well, might just stop for a snack when this traffic clears and we can drive."

When the cars started moving again, Dad signaled to the moving truck behind us. We pulled up at a small, dirty, dingy restaurant called Wanda's Coffee Shop and got out of the car. I glanced around. The little store only had a few tables, and a few customers were sipping coffee inside, flies buzzing around their head.

Mom, Dad, Harold, Mittens, the movers, and I strode over to the shop, our stomachs rumbling with hunger. We opened the door, which creaked, and stepped inside. Instantly, flies started flying around our head. Harold twitched uncomfortably. You could easily tell he didn't like insects.

"It's okay, buddy, they ain't gonna hurt cha," said a stout woman, hurrying over to us and patting Harold, who jumped. "Now, sit here, lads, and I'll get you a free sample of our new coffee, peppermint-tasting coffee. See if you like it, eh?" The woman pointed to a chalkboard that read, "New! Peppermint Coffee! Delicious!"

Mom, Dad, Harold, Mittens, and I sat at one table, and the moving men sat at another. The small woman, who had a nametag that read, “Daisy,” brought over a cup of coffee for each person. To Harold, she gave three dog biscuits and a dog bone, and to Mittens she gave her three silver fish and a red ball of yarn.

Harold ate the biscuits greedily, and Mittens gulped down the fish in one bite. Then they started playing with the toys Daisy had given them. The little woman said, “You can keep those.” Harold and Mittens looked happier than ever.

I sipped the cup of coffee, and it was the best that I ever had. It melted in my mouth and the delicious peppermint flavor made me feel warm and cozy.

Mittens’ ball of yarn rolled across the dusty floor and she chased after it, purring happily. Harold gnawed on his bone so hard one of his sharp fangs sank into it and got stuck. I laughed. “Silly doggie,” I giggled.

“So—what d’you want to today, folks?” Daisy asked kindly, taking out a small black clipboard. “Ladies first, so I’ll take you girls’ orders before the boys. What do you want, kiddo?”

“Um—well, I *do* like the peppermint coffee, if Dad doesn’t mind—” I glanced at my father, who nodded, smiling “—and I guess that’s all,” I said, finishing my coffee and slopping some down the front of my clothes.

“Yes,” said the lady, scribbling *peppermint coffee* on the clipboard. “Yes, that old cuppa peppermint coffee is delicious. How ’bout I make it half the usual price—two dollars, okay?”

“Oh, yes please, thank you,” I said, smiling sweetly. I glanced at Dad, who was grinning. Maybe living in Los Angeles wouldn’t be so bad, and perhaps we could come here every day to drink coffee.

About forty-five minutes later, Dad announced we had to leave as he handed Daisy a twenty dollars bill and said, “Keep the change.” The little lady looked startled. “No!” she said. “You don’t have to pay for pets’ stuff!” Dad grinned and gave her a ten dollars bill instead. Daisy beamed at my father as a grim-looking moving man handed her his credit card.

“Thank you!” I called as we all headed out the door. “I loved the peppermint coffee! I hope to see you next time!”

“Thank *you*,” Daisy shouted cheerfully, “for coming to Wendy’s Coffee Shop!”

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Hours later, we arrive at Los Angeles. It was pretty place, with smooth, paved roads filled with chattering people buzzing about. I saw a young girl squealing as she tried to chase her dog. Harold looked up at it and barked. The dog turned and stared at Harold. Dad parked our car and we got out. The dog growled and dashed over to Harold. They sniffed and rolled around on the ground happily. I started to like this new city.

Several hours later, we were moving into a new house with freshly painted creamy white walls. The moving men unloaded all our furniture and put it where Dad told them to. Finally, they finished their job and went away. Mom showed me my room. My bunk bed was in the far corner of the room, my bedside table next to it, and my desk on the other side. My toys were in a big box at the far wall. My large shelf was next to it. The walls were light blue, my favorite color. Little pictures of flowers had been painted onto the walls. I liked this room! And I was sure going to like Los Angeles!