

The title of my speech is “More than Just Friends.” Some of you are probably thinking, “Oh, Sylvia and romantic intrigue?!” Now, I don’t want to disappoint you, but today I am speaking about friendship. As my title promised, though, I want to share with you something more, one of the best things in life: the friend who becomes family.

In the fall of sophomore year, my parents were pretty upset with me. As an only child, when both of your parents are outspokenly disappointed in you at the same time, it can literally feel like you have no family at all. The subsequent emptiness left me at a loss, and I couldn’t separate my head from my heart, letting down my boyfriend as well. I thought I had one last ray of sunshine, the friends who had filled my freshman year with joy and who I believed would be my college family. Yet, when I needed them the most, they couldn’t keep up with my insecurity and lack of self-confidence.

One cold and cloudless night, after I had cathartically dropped many tears on the steps of A-entryway, I came to a realization. Those friends from freshman year did care about me, but they were more like “fair-weathered” friends, as someone once explained to me. They were the people with whom I shared some of the happiest and most carefree times in my life; however, when the clouds rolled in to block the sun and pelt the ground with rain, they couldn’t handle the change in weather. Many people I know would not call them friends, and would call me naïve or idealistic. To me, though, they were and are my friends, and I appreciate them for who they are. Although the realization did break my heart, it also reminded me of the friends who weathered all the storms with me, the friends who became family.

Kelly and Ashley, my sisters from another mother as they say, are my diaper buddies. I’ve known them since before I can remember, and though our paths have taken us to different life spheres, they have always been by my side. When someone lets you cry on her shoulder, leaving blotches of tears on her pajamas, as you struggle through hours of painful phone conversations on Christmas Eve, and then holds off on questions but rather suggests we watch the movie *How to Train Your Dragon*, you know she is the real thing. To me, Ashley and Kelly are more than just friends.

Jo and Rebecca are my college sisters. I’ve only know them since the beginning of freshman year, but they know pretty much everything that’s happened to me in those 3.5 years. When someone takes the time to talk to her parents for their advice in the matter; or writes you a multi-paragraph, multi-issue email inching toward several pages; or texts and calls you every half day just to ask “Are you ok?” and then really care about the answer, despite the fact you’re on a six-hour time difference, you know she is the real thing. To me, Rebecca and Jo are more than just friends.

Lubo, the love of my life, is one of my best friends and has probably experienced more trials than necessary because of me. But when someone embraces you on the speckled sands of the Canary Islands as the soft sea breeze mixes your salty tears with the waves breaking on the shore, and he does not let go even though everything tells his head he should, you know he is the real thing. To me, Lubo is more than just a friend.

To Jarlene, Chris, Van, Sandy, Mary, Ian, Minji, Miguel, Richard, Maeve, to all those I’ve mentioned today, and all those I haven’t: I dedicate this speech to you. Thank you for your steadfastness through clear blue skies and hurricanes, and for your compassion and friendship. One such friend Eliot once told me, “...your close friends are as good of family as anyone can ever hope for.” As I said, one of the best things in life is to have a friend who becomes family. One of the best things you can do in life is to be that friend who is family, rain or shine.