

# **FRIENDS FOREVER**

## **A Fictional Story on Earthquake**

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It was Monday, and the town school started as usual. Ms Rose Marie entered the class. She was a middle-aged lady, who taught children from grades five to eight. Her way of teaching was very unique. She explained every lesson with some live examples. Students enjoyed her classes and eagerly waited for that.

"Good morning, Mam," the children greeted in chorus.

"Good morning, everyone", Rose greeted them back.

"So how was your weekend?" Rose asked her students.

The children were over enthusiastic about their answers and each narrated their own stories of spending their time with family, some went for bike ride around the town, some enjoyed gardening with their parents. Rose listened to them patiently. The interest that she showed in the kids made her their most favorite teacher.

She was about to teach "The Epic of Gilgamesh", a Babylonian poem that is among the earliest known literary works in history. It narrated the friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu.

When a student finished reciting one fourth of the poem, she started to explain the general idea that the poet wished to convey to the world through his poem. Before she could finish, she saw at the corner of the class, there was a hand raised.

"Yes, Rivesh, may I know what your query is about?" Rose asked.

"Pardon me Mam, if you feel I am wrong. I just wanted to ask that do you really feel true friendship exists? Did you ever see a never ending bond between friends?"

Rose was taken aback by the question. It meant she had to narrate a story, which she had buried in her heart long time ago.

After pausing for a moment, she said, "Yes, I have seen."

"Please tell us." The students requested her.

So Rose started speaking in a gentle voice. She stared through the window for a minute before she could meet the enthusiastic eyes of her pupils.

She said, "Children this is a true story, which I myself have seen in my life."

She started:

I was teaching in the small town of Bolivia, in South America. At that time I taught students from standard three to five. They were very young and fresh, as you all are. The students who came to the school were from families belonging to average income group.

One day, a family moved to the town. They looked very affluent. They had a son who was around seven years in age. He was very rude and impolite. His parents moved here for their professional reasons. Both of them were doctors in the town's famous hospital. So John moved along with them here and was admitted to the school, where I taught.

The first day he came, he broke one of the panes of the classroom window. He fought with other children, tore their shirts, pushed some, and broke their belongings. This went on for a week. We teachers thought that he would improve with time. After every mischief, he was told not to do it, but there was no effect, no change in his misdeeds.

Later we thought to call on his parents, but they seemed so busy, that they did not pay any heed to our request.

This made me feel that due to lack of parental care, he grew up in this way. I thought of trying a new technique, in order to help John. I made him sit beside the best boy in the class. Martin was not only good in studies but also in every thing he did. At the same time he was extremely polite and modest.

The first day when John and Martin sat together, John ate all of Martin's lunch from his box. He often used to do that and enjoyed when the other person got annoyed or started to cry. But he was shocked when Martin just smiled and said, "May I have yours, I m hungry". John was so spellbound by his answer and the pleasant request, that he opened his box and handed it over to him.

The next day, John tore one of the pages of Martin's book, and he was sure that Martin would now shout or start a fight with him. But he was again taken by shock when Martin went to the teacher to ask for glue tape to join the page. He did not say a single harsh word to John.

John was growing impatient with the peaceful nature of Martin and tried all possible techniques to annoy him. Everyday he would spoil something or the other that belonged to Martin, but Martin would have silently restored everything to its earlier shape.

After a month, John gave up his misdoings and asked Martin, "Where do you get such patience. Why don't you fight me back?"

Martin smiled and then turning towards John, he said, "I do not fight my friends. Why would I hurt someone unnecessarily, when I know I can mend back the particular item or when there exists some other solution to that problem."

"You know something John", Martin continued, "My mama says, if you hurt someone's feeling, it hurts you back at a double rate."

Martin's words worked wonders on John; he sat there staring quietly at Martin. Martin said, "It's my turn to ask question. Tell me John why you go around spoiling others' things. Instead of making friends you turn them into enemies. What drives you to do all these?"

The question had pierced straight into little John's heart. For the first time there were small tears in his eyes. He held his head in shame and buried it in his hands. Then with a low and choked up voice he said, "My parents never paid any attention to me. They never greeted me either in the morning or at night. My governess was always there for me. But I wanted to be with my parents. Once I broke a very expensive statue in our house, that day I saw my father in front of me, he was scolding me but at least he was near me. Another day I screwed our TV. That day my mother slapped me tight, but at least she touched me. I thought that if I do some mischief, I would get the time to be around my parents. This started on and I felt that if drawing attention means spoiling things, I would better do that. You have no idea Martin, how it feels to be unwanted." Tears started rolling down his soft cheeks.

Martin felt very sad. He felt that it was his question that made him cry.

"Oh John, I am very sorry, I really did not mean to hurt you."

"Okay John, would you promise me something." Martin asked enthusiastically.

"What?" John replied from under his hands.

"If I be with you, throughout your life, during times both good and bad and if I promise to pay you full attention, irrespective of whether you need me or not, would you stop being mischievous? I can assure you I will be there for you always." Martin said holding John tightly.

"Yes I will stop all the mischievous stuffs that I do." He smiled crookedly. Rubbing his tears, he hugged Martin.

Next day, to everyone's astonishment, John walked in front of the class and apologized for his wrong doings and promised them that he would prove to be a very good friend. He came to me, to thank me for making him sit beside Martin. I was more than happy to see a changed and well-mannered John.

Years went by. Their friendship grew stronger and stronger. Martin helped him from studies to sports, and in everything John needed his help. He kept his promise. He would study first and then explain it to John, so that he too did well in his academics. With Martins encouragement and motivation, John made it to schools basketball team. Both of them represented their school in inter-school basketball competitions.

Days went by and I was happy to see their ever-growing love. Martin was very protective of John. He would shield him from anything that posed a threat to John. But somehow, deep in my heart I felt that John is not as selfless as Martin is. He has still slight feeling of envy or jealousy deeply rooted in him, though from his refined behavior, it was hard to understand.

It was winter. The day was June 9, 1994. In the morning we felt a little tremor as if our bed was shaking and our utensils were rattling. No one paid any attention. By morning 8:00 AM, the school started as usual. At 10:00 AM the school building started vibrating in very violent manner. It was an earthquake of higher magnitude. We somehow announced the children to come out of their classrooms. The pleasant environment of the school turned into a total chaotic mess. We started pulling out junior classes first as the senior students would be able to manage themselves.

The quake was hitting now and then. After maximum of the students were pulled out of the school, some of us, ran throughout the building to ensure that no one else is left in the school building. When I reached the third floor, I saw John, lying on his chest, supporting himself with the help of pillar and stretching his hand out as if trying to pull some one up. To my surprise, it was Martin who was hanging down. The sidewall had broken due to the high magnitude of the quake and he slipped through it. I also joined hands with John to pull Martin up.

Martin cried, "I won't make it, you both save your lives. Go run."

I said, "I am your teacher, I cannot let you die in front of my eyes."

John was already sobbing. In his broken voice he said, "If I leave your hand today, I won't be able to survive through the rest of my life. You were the one who taught me human emotions, to love and to be loved. You were there for me in every moment of my life, be it sorrow or joy, so how come you expect me to run away leaving you in such a situation. Moreover you promised me to be with me throughout my life. I won't let you break your promise, my friend."

My heart melted by listening to their conversation. What I thought about John was totally wrong. Both John, and me somehow were able to pull Martin up slightly, at least Martin was able to hold an iron rod for his support. They both were grown ups, and for John and me it was not possible to pull up another grown up boy like Martin. I asked John to hold Martin's hand tight and asked Martin to take the support of the iron rod and in the mean time, I would call some more people for help. I hurried down the steps, I found some teachers for help. We were on our way and just reached the other end of third floor, from where we could see John lying on the ground. With fast and hasty steps we were approaching them, when the quake had hit again. We somehow, caught the windows and doors of the classroom to keep our balance. Before we could stand on our feet, we no more saw John on the floor. When looked over the corridor wall we saw that both of them had fallen on the ground. Their heads were lying in pool of blood. But their hands were joined to each others'. They kept their promise; they did not leave each other till the end.

The principal and we teachers rushed them to hospital, but the doctors said that they had already breathed their last some hours ago, may be when they hit the hard ground while falling from above.

Rose ended the story. There were tears at the corner of her eyes, as if she had re-visualized the mishap. Without a word more, she left the classroom.

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