



Crises stories

(about 20 minutes)

Flood: The Lake in our Living Room

(Uriah de Lasan, Philippines)

We live on the coast of the Philippines. It's really beautiful there. I love the water and I love swimming in the water. Every morning before we go to school, my siblings and I go swimming. That is the easiest and most fun way to wash ourselves in the morning.

But once we also had a lot of problems with the water. It was in the early evening and we were at home alone. My uncle was supposed to watch us but he was sleeping because he works at night, so he always sleeps in the afternoons. I was playing with my two younger brothers on the floor when we suddenly saw water coming into the flat. The water just came in and started making a lake. I called out into the next room to wake up my uncle but he just grumbled that I should be quiet and fell back asleep. I tried again to explain to him what was happening but he didn't listen. OK, that's how it is, I thought to myself and decided that I had to do something.

First I told my brothers not to bathe in the floodwater anymore because I knew it could make them sick. I told them to go upstairs and said they should wait there and look at a picture book. As fast as I could, I grabbed smaller pieces of furniture and things and carried them upstairs. It was really hard! But I managed it somehow. I was surprised that I was able to take everything upstairs pretty quickly and I didn't have any time to think about whether I might be tired or exhausted. I just did what I could. Then I heard my mother at the door, running worriedly into the house and she almost ran into my uncle, who was standing half-asleep in the door and looking in dismay at the lake in the living room. Then they both looked at me and I will never forget the amazement and pride in their eyes when they saw that I had saved our things. I was six years old then and even today my mother still tells the story of how I managed to save my siblings and all of our things from the flood.



Earthquake: The foreign girl

(Marcelo Flores, Chile)

My name is Marcelo and I live in Chile, that is the long, thin country in South America. When I was six years old and in the first form, a new girl came to our class. She came from Europe and didn't speak any Spanish. The teacher put her at the table next to us and the whole day I was too shy to even look at her from the side of my eyes. During recess, I saw her standing alone at the fence but I was too shy to go over to her.

On the next day, she was already in the room when I came in and sat at her table. We had art but she didn't have the cardboard that we were supposed to bring with us. She probably just hadn't understood what the teacher had said. Luckily, my mother had given me two, so I could give her a piece of cardboard. She took it and smiled at me. My heart leaped in my chest and my face turned a little red. Then we began to make animal masks. We were supposed to make "animals on the farm" and I made a bull mask. The foreign girl made a cat mask. When we were done, we were supposed to put the masks on our head using a rubber band. It was a good thing my mother had given me too many rubber bands so that I could give one to the foreign girl. We helped each other make the right length and set down under our desk as if it is our stable. "Meow," she said. "Mooooo," I answered, and we had started a funny discussion in animal language when suddenly the earth began to shake. An earthquake. It happened often where we lived but this time it was much stronger than usual. Everything in the classroom was shaking and I heard glasses falling to the ground and shattering in the room next to us. We all immediately followed the rules because we had done it lots of times - like I said, earthquakes happen a lot in Chile. We all know the rules: 1. "Stay calm," 2. "Go beneath your table" – so suddenly everybody sat under their desks. 3) Then we form a queue at the door and calmly follow the teacher out of the classroom.

When we had all left the classroom, I noticed that someone was missing: the new girl! I quickly ran back and heard the others calling out, "Leave your things there! We have to get out!" But I knew what I had to do. But where was she? The classroom was empty. The walls shook again and I saw her in the very back corner. Curled up on the ground in the corner. I quickly went to her, knelt down next to her and spoke to her in a calm voice, telling her that she didn't need to be afraid. This building is safe from earthquakes but we still have to get out. She probably didn't understand me, but she must have felt what I meant. I put my bull mask on and took her hand. She seemed to understand, put on her cat mask, and together we ran out of the room and to our class, who was waiting outside. You should have seen the teacher's frightened eyes. I in my bull mask and the girl in her cat mask walked past everyone and I just said: "Come on, it's time." And we went out, where all the classes had gathered at the points they were supposed to. When everything was calm again, we went back and the new girl was still holding my hand. On that day, we shared our snack with each other and played animals on the farm. After that day I never saw her again but she told me that her name was Maline and she came from Denmark. In Denmark they don't have earthquakes like we do. Starting that day, I knew that I was strong and can help others when someone is really afraid. And I will never forget Maline's smile.



Fire: The Advent Wreath

(Lars Klostermann, Germany)

Here in Germany we have a beautiful tradition that you might know: in the four weeks before Christmas, each Sunday one of four candles is lit on a wreath made of pine tree branches. Often the candles burn the whole day and make a warm, beautiful light. You really get to feel like it's Christmas and every week the excitement grows. Especially last year when there wasn't any snow for sledding - everything was just cold and wet but my friend Martin and I didn't let that get us down because we had a big train set. We played for hours and must have forgotten the time a little but that didn't matter because my parents weren't home.

Somehow we got the idea that we could make the tracks even bigger if we used my tracks. No other houses were close, but our two houses were luckily right next to each other, so I ran off to get them. I opened the garden gate, jumped up to the third step like usual and that's when I noticed the light that was shining out of the big terrace doors on our house. Confused, I went more slowly. "Is someone at home after all?" I thought. My parents weren't planning on coming home until that evening. The closer I came to the terrace, the stranger the light seemed - brighter then darker, somehow it seemed to flicker. Suddenly I realised what it was. I was only about 2 metres away from the terrace door and stared into the living room. The advent wreath that was on our living room table was up in flames. A campfire on the middle of our living room table.

I yanked open the door but then stood still, unsure of what I should do. What should I do? For a few seconds I just stared at the fire and didn't know what to do next. Get help? But from whom? Can I put it out myself? But how? Uncertain, I took a step back. I looked at the situation more closely. "I could go through the hallway and get water from the kitchen," I thought. "Put out the fire. You can do it." And then I ran past the fire, through the hallway, into the kitchen, grabbed a bowl filled with water, ran back to the living room and poured it over the fire. The fire crackled and smoked and there was a loud hiss but the flames went down. I got another bowl and another and after the third bowl, the fire gave up. I had won. I had saved our house.

When Martin's parents and my parents came back a few hours later, they were all very happy and proud of me. My father said: "Well you really kept calm and reacted quickly for only being 9 years old," and my mother added: "You can only do something like that when the fire isn't too big," and I told her that I looked very closely to make sure that it wasn't too dangerous to run to the kitchen. And Martin's mother said that what I had done was exactly right. She also said that there are other kinds of fire, like when oil starts to burn in a pan. If you try to put that kind of fire out with water, then it will only get bigger and the hot fat can burn you very badly. For those fires you have to cover the burning fat, put a lid on it or put out the flames with a thick blanket. Martin and I were very impressed and I had the feeling that if we ever saw that kind of fire, we would know what we had to do. On that evening, I was able to fall asleep very quickly. I had done what was needed and that was a great feeling.