

Life changing
experience



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I had a close, childhood friend whose name was Jesse. He was my closest and only true friend throughout elementary school. His family was mine, and my family was his. When I felt down, he was the only person I could go to and share my grief with, something he also did so that both of us offered solace to each other. He was my only source of happiness. In him, I found true friendship. He is the person who taught the chief lesson: “ a friend in need is a friend in deed”.

Everything has its season. The lovely time that Jesse and I had in elementary school came to a sudden end. It was time to part ways because he had gotten a chance to join a high school separate from mine. The look on his face showed a sign of uttermost frustration because of the bitter reality that each one was taking his own direction. I felt the same. I knew I would miss my dearest with whom I had spent some of the wonderful moments during those tender years, at home and in school.

At that point in time, it was neither in his hands nor mine, to change the course of things. It was a terrible turn of events, but what was more prudent than accepting the unbearable truth? I tearfully shook his hand and gave him a tight hug, signifying a strange, new beginning in the friendship that existed between two close friends. There was a bright, new life ahead, and everyone looked expectant of the glorious things it would present. He had his ambitions, and I had mine. Since his and my interests were not quite clear, no one bothered to share about them. It was time for each one to join and, perhaps, refine his aspirations and interests as he prepared for his career life ahead.

While in high school, I felt a change in the way I interacted with my former classmate, a friend with whom I grew up in the neighborhood. The new life had a drastic impact in the way I interacted with and treated other people. I guess it was the process of self-discovery that had such remarkable alterations in behavioral patterns. I became concerned more with myself than anyone else. I cared less about others than I did for myself. My past had just flown away quite fast. Worst of all, I no longer valued the extraordinary friendship I had in Jesse. After a short period of keeping in contact with him, I found myself busy in the search for new friends in my new place. At that moment, the present became the most critical time of my life. I forgot where I had come from, and did not even have a clue where I was going.

Occasionally, Jesse wrote to me asking for help. I ignored him and simply told him off because I did not have time for him anymore. I felt like he was not necessary at that time. I did not care how I talked to anyone because of the sudden change that high school had brought me. There was no element of sympathy left in me. It seemed that he needed more than that, perhaps empathy, but I just had no time to give his long letters any attention. In fact, I ignored some of them. I never responded to those that I abhorrently took time to go through at some moments, when I had nothing serious to do.

People change. For me, the change was so much that I could realize the fundamental things in my own life. My friend needed my assistance, but I had no moral sense to notice that. I thought I was on the right track by ignoring those on the wrong path. I did not have the discipline to get them where they needed to be. I lacked the decency and courtesy of paying to those who had problems in their life. Jesse had his problems. He had resorted

to destructive ways that posed a danger to his own life. He needed honest encouragement from at least a friend. He believed I was his friend, but I had forgotten that he was mine. He lacked a shoulder to lean on, heaping his emotional challenges to unbearable levels. When it got beyond his capacity, and he could not handle the pressures anymore, he remembered once again that he a friend in a different in a different place. In spite of my lack concern for his pleas and request for help, Jesse found time to write to me. It was the final letter. He had this to say:

Tuesday 30th March, 2010

Hello mate,

Steph, I know it has been a long period since we last talked. But I need to let this out. Every day I can feel myself closer and closer to ending it all. Every passing day is just another reminder of how painful it is to live in this world. I struggle each day to wake up and live in this hell I am forced to call life. I am so sorry about all of the pain and frustration my weakness may have caused you. I know you think that it was all an act, but I truly am suffering by being alive. I am sorry that my life here will be cut short. I'm so sorry for giving up. Every day that I am here is misery, and I can't live through it anymore. I truly hate everything about myself, on the inside and out. I once read somewhere, " What's more selfish, committing suicide or forcing someone to stay in a world where they are suffering?" I am suffering. No matter how good my day seemed, my thoughts were constantly consumed with negative thoughts. Those thoughts drove me insane; there was no escape, not even in my sleep. The dissimilarity between the two of us is that as you wake up, your

nightmare ends. I tried to listen to you, I tried to be good, but all it did was drain me. I felt as if I were breaking and there was nothing I could do to fix it. I never understood why it was after someone died that people started to care. Why is it that I have to dye me sheets red, or hang myself from my ceiling to care? When I told people about how I had been feeling, no one showed they cared. I felt so alone. I may not have always had hurtful things said to me, but people don't realize that silence has meaning also, and I was given so much of it. I'm sorry that I have to do this. This is not your fault, and I don't want you to blame yourself.

Love, Jesse.

I ignored it, as usual. I assumed it was another one of his attention-seeking techniques. I felt I could not just let him have his way the way he liked. He should have sought for satisfaction elsewhere because I was not ready to play a fool in this game. I did not tear it. I kept it somewhere so that I could read it, maybe, when I had time to do stupid work like reading letters from the attention seeker.

It was on Friday, 2nd April, 2010. I gathered the courage to open the letter. The content was not the usual one I used to get. It elicited a different feeling; it was disturbing a little. At first, I felt confused and did not even understand what I was feeling. Something crossed my mind: perhaps Jesse had genuinely asked me to help him. I grabbed my cell-phone and immediately called his parents. It was difficult calling, but it was terrible accepting the news that I received. He had taken his life, just as he said in his letter. A feeling of guilt and immense depression filled my heart. I had to live with the

unbearable that I was directly responsible for his death. I made him feel worthless and a bother to others. He accepted it and made up his mind to bid the world goodbye. I lost a friend. It was the most heartbreaking moment in my entire life.

From that moment, I realized how hurtful it is telling people what I wanted. I regretted having ended my friendship with Jesse simply because he was unhappy with his own life. I realized that I could have helped had I remained the true friend I once was to him. It came to my senses that I needed him as much as he needed me. However, I had burnt all the worth of the friendship that existed. He had gone for good, and I did not expect him to show up ever again. I attended his funeral on Tuesday 6th April, 2010 at St. George Anglican Church. I felt empty. It is then that I discovered that one cannot live on their own. Everyone needs one another person, and that is how I am going to live for the rest of my life. Will for others because I know that I cannot make it on my own. I learnt this the hard way, but it makes sense, anyway.