

My most  
unforgettable  
character



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

He is a tall, thin man with a hunched back. His dark, suntanned face with its countless wrinkles and creases, reminds you of a prune. He has sunken cheeks and you will know why when he gives you a broad smile-only one golden tooth is left on his upper gum. He looks around ninety years old. But when you ask him how old he is, he will shake his head and say he was born on the day the Japanese invaded Malaya. It is left to your historical knowledge to count the number of years he has been around. I first met him when I was collecting seashells along the seashore.

My parents had always wanted a house by the sea and their dream came true when they inherited some money from a rich uncle. I was walking along the seashore when I saw this old man. He was stooping and picking up something and throwing it into sea. When I drew near, I saw that he was throwing the bright starfish that were washed up along the shore by the high tide. I told him that he was being silly as he could not possibly save all the starfish, as there were countless ones gasping for breath along the seashore.

He told me that although he could not change the destiny of all the starfish, he could surely save some, and that made a difference. He said that we were born on this earth to make a difference. It was up to us to choose whether we wanted to or not to contribute towards a better world. From that day on, I became his shadow. I would meet him in the morning and help him throw as many starfish as I could into the sea. It was only when I was much older that I understood the joy of throwing those sea creatures back into the sea. It has been five years since I met Embon Mat. We have become inseparable.

I have learnt to appreciate the man with a heart of gold, who leads a simple and humble life. When I approach him in an angry mood he will be quiet until I pour out all my troubles to him. Then, he will advise me. My acquaintance with him has changed my perspective towards life. He has taught me that honesty, diligence and determination are important for success. He tells me not to let success go to my head. "A courteous, generous, kind and caring nature will attract true friends to us," he tells me. "Always speak the truth," he advises if I ever complained that I was treated unfairly by someone.

He is my mentor, my patient listener and my counselor. He gives his advice freely and does not hesitate to scold me when I am in the wrong. Now that I am working in a busy cosmopolitan city, I look forward to the opportunity to drive down to my seaside haven to be with my mentor. I will recognize him from afar-the hunched figure stooping low to pick another starfish and throw it back into the sea. He will not turn to look at me for he knows that I will soon join him in changing the destiny of some starfish. I am truly blessed to have known him.