

## *VIGNETTE FOR CULTURAL AWARENESS SEGMENT*

One day when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all his books. I thought to myself, “Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd.” I was busy with thoughts of all I had planned for the weekend with my friends, so I shrugged my shoulders & went on.

Suddenly there was a bunch of kids running toward Kyle. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying and I saw them land in the grass about 10 feet from him. He looked up & I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him, so I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses, I noticed a tear in his eye. I picked up his glasses & as I handed them to him, I said “Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.” He smiled faintly & said, “Thanks!”

I helped him pick up his books and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before, but we talked all the way home & I carried some of his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool guy. I invited him to play football with my friends. We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know him, the more I liked him, and my friends liked him too.

Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I said, “Boy, you’re going to build some serious muscle with this pile of books!” He just laughed and handed me half of them to carry.

Over the next four years Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors we began to think about college, and even though we were going to different schools, we knew we’d always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He wanted to be a doctor and I was going to college on a football scholarship to major in business.

Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to give a speech for graduation. I was really glad it wasn’t me having to get up there & speak in front of that crowd! On graduation day, Kyle looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He had filled out & actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was a little jealous! Today I could see that he was a little nervous, so I smacked him on the back, and said, “Hey, big guy, you’ll be great!” He gave me a really grateful look, smiled & said, “Thanks.”

As he started his speech, he said “Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years—your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach....but mostly your friends. I am here to tell you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story.”

## *VIGNETTE FOR CULTURAL AWARENESS – Continued*

I stared at my friend in disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. Kyle had planned to kill himself that weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn’t have to do it later and was carrying all his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. “Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable.”

I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his darkest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth.

***Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or worse.***