

KINDNESS



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"Please help him, *mama*," I hear in Chottu's voice. I open my eyes even though it seems to take everything in me to do so. Chottu is begging with his hands joined in front of a stranger. His face actually seems worried. It makes me smile. I wonder if I am dying. "Rahin, I am dying, and soon," I imagine hearing again from my mom. When she said those words I panicked. However she seemed calm for some reason. She had said those words as if they were nothing. As if dying was nothing. Is dying really that terrible? "No! I can't! Mom still needs me! I just can't die, not yet..."

I climb down the stairs furiously. I still cannot believe that Mahir, the guy who is lazy, the guy who does not care about the job, got the promotion, that too because of me. His grandfather had died and so he had to leave the city for the funeral. He had asked me if I would finish his work assignments while he was away. I sympathised and agreed to do it, like an idiot. The boss had assumed he did the assignments while he was away and that it showed true dedication. Here we are now, with him getting the promotion for my hard work. He did not even acknowledge the fact that I had helped him! Moreover, when the chief

announced he was the one who was about to get the promotion, he had said, "Ibrahim should learn from him." I should learn from him! While crossing the road, I remember the words which keep on echoing throughout my life — "In this world if you are kind, you are an idiot." I am tired of helping and getting nothing in return. I am tired of being an idiot. As I enter the footpath I realise there is a fleet of people crammed on to it. The road is packed with traffic. Slowly, I move forward as that is the only pace I can take in the saturated footpath. I halt. In front of me is a small boy lying on the footpath. He is shirtless and has tan on different parts of his body. He seems quite small for his appearance. With a whip in my voice I order him to move. He stands up within seconds, and looks at me with a face of urgency. He directly combines his hands as if in prayer and says, "*Mama!* My friend fainted!" He then turns his head to towards the right. There seems to be a small boy who is lying on the floor, pressed against the pole of a crossing bridge. Instinct tells me to run towards that boy and get him to a hospital but what if they are exploiting my good nature? What if that kid is actually acting and when I go towards him he acts as if he just regained his consciousness and asks for money for food? Earlier I decided I will no longer be

an idiot. The small boy with a desperate voice again pleads, "Please help him *mama*."

It is boring to continuously ask for money. I know I have collected enough for my food, for today at least, but still I continue because of Rahin. As I go from car to car, I see Rahin still asking money from the same person for more than ten minutes. He is more experienced than me and so he knows the guy will not budge. But he is desperate.

Rahin's mom has cancer. Ever since then he has been acting like this. He does not eat any more. He keeps on saving money for his mom hoping to help her get medicines. I do not even think Rahin shows his weak state in front of his mom so that she does not have to worry. Whenever he is about to enter his tent he acts all energised but he is not. His mom lies there all day and now it seems he takes care of her. Rahin finally gives up and very tiredly goes to the footpath. I go there too as the light turned green. I sit beside him and ask how much he collected. That's when he suddenly faints! I slap his cheeks and call his name, but no answer. I quickly buy water and help him drink it but it doesn't help. We were in the corner of the footpath and near us was a foot-overbridge. I let him lie on its pole for support and quickly ask for help

from the people. My head is not thinking right. I notice hordes of people passing by. I ask for help but people still pass by as if they can't hear me. They were all looking forward and were focused on their path. I decided the only way they would notice is, if I was on it. So I start to lie down on the footpath and as I do, I think what led me to this. Rahin never tried to mix with the others and was always alone. Literally everyone our age used dirty words except him. He got beat up a lot for it, as most thought he was showing he was better than them but still he never used them. That's why I respected him. He got beat up a lot but never gave up. The pavement feels too hot because of the bright sun. I knew this plan was unrealistic but still I wanted to help him. Maybe because no matter how impossible it looked, I wanted to be there for him. Finally someone sees me and asks me to move. I stand up to see the person. He was wearing a shirt and had tidy hair. He seemed to be young and from his voice I understood he was angry. "*Mama!* My friend fainted!" I scream pointing him towards Rahin. He stays still for some time. The picture of Rahin's state comes to my mind and I say with much urgency, "Please help him, *mama*."

The writer is a class ten student at Mastermind School.