

The Magnifying Glass

Faith and Inspiration were best friends. They were in the fourth grade in the same school and lived in the same village in Zimbabwe.

Faith and Inspiration could not have looked more different. Faith was short, stout and strong, and she had big, puffy hair that even her mother refused to try to control. Inspiration was taller than anyone else at school and skinny as a chain of twigs. Inspiration's mother braided her hair tightly to her head - so tight Inspiration would almost cry when she did it. But she sang to Inspiration while she braided her hair, and Inspiration loved her mother's soothing voice.

Faith and Inspiration were different in other ways, too. Faith was serious and always thought ahead. Inspiration was carefree and playful. She made everyone laugh with her constant joking and wasn't afraid to say anything. Sometimes people didn't understand why they were such good friends, but Faith and Inspiration understood each other perfectly and always wanted to be together.

And now the last day of school was here. They could play together almost non-stop all summer. When school got out, Faith and Inspiration headed straight home to drop off their books, leave their uniforms behind, and run out to play soccer. Most of the kids from their class were already at the field. They played until they had to go home for dinner. As kids began to go home, Faith and Inspiration stayed behind as long as anyone was left to play with.

After a while, their friend Mercy was the only one left. When Mercy went to grab her book bag, which she hadn't even stopped to leave at home, Faith and Inspiration heard her say, "Huh, look what I found." She picked something up and brought it over to them. It was a brand new magnifying glass. "I wonder whose this is. Here, you take it. I have to get home, or I'll be in trouble! Bye!" Mercy said as she handed the magnifying glass over and ran off.

"Bye!" they both called after her, holding the magnifying glass and staring at it.

"It sure is brand new," said Inspiration. "Wow!"

"But who would have left it here? It must belong to somebody," said Faith. She thought it was strange to have left such a thing behind. "Why don't you take it, and we'll ask around about it tomorrow."

"OK, but wait, I can see all your secrets!" Inspiration joked as she held the magnifying glass up to Faith's forehead. "Wow, scary! Oh, but you do think I'm the best soccer player ever. And beautiful! Thank you, Faith!"

"Cut it out. Why don't you go home!" giggled Faith.

"Come over in the morning!" called Inspiration as they both started running home.

"See you then!" Faith called back.

When Faith arrived the next morning, Inspiration ran out. Her mother was waiting in the doorway. Inspiration's mother had found the magnifying glass. She gripped it tightly as she stood, angry, at the door.

"Where did you get this?" she asked in an accusing voice that stopped Inspiration cold with fear. Inspiration's mother had the sweetest singing voice, but she also had an angry voice that could give Inspiration goose bumps just thinking about it. Inspiration held on to Faith, turned around, looked up at her mother with wide eyes and quickly explained.

"Mercy found it in the field where we play soccer. She gave it to me! We were going to ask around to find out who owns it. I swear!" Inspiration was scared because her mother's expression was not softening.

"Was Faith there with you?" her mother asked, still looking dead serious.

"Yes!" Inspiration cried, relieved to have someone to testify for her.

"Is this true, Faith?" her mother asked, knowing that Faith never lied.

"It's true. Mercy found it and gave it to us," Faith said, as Inspiration looked hopefully at her mother.

"OK, but you need to figure out what to do with it. Now. This belongs to somebody, and you can't keep it around for yourself while they go worrying about it."

"Yes, mother, I understand. Right away." Inspiration was already smiling and excited again. "We'll go door to door right now!"

Her mother looked at her, finally breaking into a smile. "I guess you may as well have some breakfast before you do that. Come on inside, both of you."

They talked excitedly over breakfast about whose magnifying glass it might be. What if it belonged to Ms. Mugari, the wealthy woman with the largest house in the village? Maybe she would give them sweets or coins as a reward. What if it were Dr. Kunda, the village doctor? Maybe he needed it for medical examinations, and would use it to save someone's life! Or what if it belonged to Mrs. Manyukwe, the scholar who went to the city every week to get tons of books, and she needed it to decode an ancient language of kings and queens!

Inspiration and Faith were jumping up and down, ready to go. "OK, I have a plan," said Faith. "We'll go all the way to the East end of the village, door to door, North and South, and make our way West."

"Sure, East and then West and then North-South!" Inspiration chimed in, not understanding the plan at all but nodding eagerly.

"Yes, well, just follow me," said Faith, "Bye, bye, Mrs. Mukaro!"

"Bye, girls!" Inspiration's mother called as they left.

They started on the very edge of the village, at the farthest farmhouse. They did just as they had planned, going door to door, holding up the magnifying glass and asking if anyone knew whose it was. Not one person had any ideas about the magnifying glass, not even the kids who had been playing soccer the day before. Nobody knew a thing!

They stayed out all day and were exhausted and frustrated. The sun was beginning to set. It would be dark soon. Faith was getting nervous about being out in the dark.

Inspiration was getting nervous about going home to her mother with the magnifying glass.

"I just want to get rid of this thing and enjoy our summer!" Inspiration said.

"Me too!" agreed Faith. "Just a few more houses to go."

"Wait!" Inspiration grabbed Faith's arm as she stared ahead, seeing something that Faith didn't. "Come along, hurry!" Inspiration dragged her, running, out the main road.

Faith struggled to get free and to keep up at the same time, holding tight to the magnifying glass. "Wait just one minute!"

Inspiration had seen the tiniest light of reflection from the last rays of sun. Both girls heard a tiny engine starting ahead of them. "Run, now!" cried Inspiration, and with that Faith decided just to follow.

They ran as fast as they could and soon the tiny, rusty truck was in view, bouncing down the bumpy road. In the back of the truck were cardboard boxes, and peeking out of the tops of the cardboard boxes were tiny little reflections of the sun on... metal... on... glass... on shiny little handles sticking out... it was a whole truck full of magnifying glasses!

"I'm not going home with this thing!" cried Inspiration as she grabbed the magnifying glass from Faith like a relay runner's baton, set her sights on the back of the truck and picked up her speed.

"I'm not going home without you!" cried Faith as she picked up her own speed and caught right up. Luckily, the road through the village was very bumpy, and a truck could not move very fast at all, at least not with fragile cargo. The girls could catch up... just maybe!

Inspiration arrived alongside the bed of the truck one step ahead of Faith. Faith caught up just in time to start banging on the side to get the driver's attention. Inspiration continued on far enough to wave at the driver through the window, huffing and puffing and just about ready to collapse!

The driver - a tiny, elderly man with thick glasses - waved back at Inspiration. "Hello, little girl!" he called, and turned to face front again and drive on.

Inspiration had had enough. "STOP... THIS... TRUCK... RIGHT... NOW!!!" and with

that she let out such a scream that the poor driver slammed on the brakes. Faith rolled to the dust, skidded and flopped over to her back.

"We did it," Faith said, wheezing, dust settling on her huge hair and face.

Inspiration bent into the open window, held up the magnifying glass and tried to speak with the driver through her own wheezing. "Is... this... yours... sir...?"

"Is that why you stopped me? You sweet little girls!" They both rolled their eyes. "Yes, I sell magnifying glasses just like that. I'm passing through your village with a shipment. That one must have fallen out. Since you girls worked so hard to get that back to me, you deserve to keep it! Enjoy!" and he beamed with delight, thinking he had made their day.

Inspiration looked at Faith, looked back at the man, opened her hand and let the magnifying glass drop on the seat. She turned, helped Faith up, and they both started staggering home. With her last ounce of strength, she managed to look back and wave away the driver.

"Good riddance," Inspiration said. She smiled, and she and Faith just laughed.

"Suit yourself," muttered the driver, as he went bumping down the road.

1. What did Faith look like compared to Inspiration?

- A. Faith was short and strong, and Inspiration was tall and stout.
- B. Faith was tall and skinny, and Inspiration was short and stout.
- C. Faith was short and stout, and Inspiration was tall and skinny.

2. What did Faith and Inspiration like to do most?

- A. Play soccer.
- B. Stay out late.
- C. Play together.

3. Why did people find it hard to believe that Faith and Inspiration were such good friends?

- A. Because they looked so different.
- B. Because they acted so differently.
- C. Because they were in different grades.

4. What was the main problem for Faith and Inspiration?

- A. They had to find the owner of the magnifying glass.
- B. The girls didn't know how to start looking for the owner.
- C. Inspiration's mother thought the girls stole the magnifying glass.

5. What plan did the girls come up with to find the owner of the magnifying glass?

- A. Ask the doctor if he owned it because he would need it to examine patients.
- B. Go door to door throughout the village asking who owned the glass.
- C. Start in the middle of the village and work in both directions asking questions.

6. Why did the truck driver want the girls to keep the magnifying glass?

- A. It could no longer be sold.
- B. He didn't want it anymore.
- C. They earned it as a reward.

7. How was Inspiration different from Faith?

- A. Inspiration was always more serious and careful about what she said.
- B. Inspiration was much more carefree and would say whatever she wanted to.
- C. Inspiration liked to play a lot, but she didn't like joking around very much.

8. What did the girls figure out right after they saw light shining off glass in the boxes in the truck?

- A. The boxes were full of magnifying glasses.
- B. Finding the owner was going to be hard.
- C. The driver wasn't going to slow down.

9. What was this story mostly about?

- A. The problem that friends can have when they don't make good choices.
- B. Good friends trying to do what one of their mothers thought was right.
- C. Children trying to have fun on their summer break from school.

- 10. What were the girls most concerned about at the end of their day while going door to door?**
- A. Being completely exhausted and still needing to look for the owner of the magnifying glass.
 - B. Being out in the dark and having to bring the magnifying glass back to Inspiration's mother.
 - C. Getting in trouble with Inspiration's mom because they couldn't find the owner.
- 11. What did Inspiration's mother want the girls to do about the magnifying glass?**
- A. Take it back to Mercy, and tell her that she had to find the owner.
 - B. Think about whom the magnifying glass could possibly belong to.
 - C. Figure out what to do with it because they couldn't keep it.
- 12. Why did Inspiration grab Faith's arm and drag her to the road?**
- A. She wanted her to see something like glass reflecting the light of the setting sun.
 - B. She wanted her to see a small truck carrying boxes that was roaring down the road.
 - C. She wanted Faith to hurry up so that they could finish looking for the owner of the glass.
- 13. What were the girls like when they finally went home?**
- A. Tired of running, and they just wanted the truck driver to get out of their lives.
 - B. Tired out, dirty, and unhappy because they weren't able to keep the magnifying glass.
 - C. Tired out and dirty but glad that returning the magnifying glass to its owner was over.
- 14. What was the driver of the truck like?**
- A. He was concerned that the girls might get hurt if they kept chasing him.
 - B. He was very interested to find out what Faith and Inspiration wanted.
 - C. He was only concerned with getting his shipment of boxes delivered.

15. What were the girls probably thinking about doing by the end of the day?

- A. Keep on trying to find the owner, even if they had to work into the night.
- B. Just giving the magnifying glass to anybody so they could go home.
- C. Giving up for the day and telling Inspiration's mother that nobody owns the glass.

16. How did the story end?

- A. The girls were glad to see the truck drive away with the glass.
- B. Inspiration dropped the magnifying glass on the seat of the truck.
- C. The driver was thankful to get the magnifying glass and drove off.

17. What finally caused the driver to stop the truck?

- A. Inspiration screamed that he should stop the truck.
- B. He could see that Inspiration wasn't going to give up.
- C. He thought that Inspiration had been hurt by the truck.

18. Why did Faith and Inspiration not keep the magnifying glass when they could have?

- A. Finding the owner of the magnifying glass was so hard they just wanted to get rid of it.
- B. What Inspiration's mother told them had a strong effect on what they decided to do.
- C. The girls didn't want the driver to get into trouble for losing part of his delivery.

19. What will Inspiration and Faith probably do during the rest of the summer break?

- A. Make their own decisions about what they find, and not tell Inspiration's mother about it.
- B. Forget about the magnifying glass, forget what Inspiration's mother said, and have fun.
- C. Be very careful about what they decide to be responsible for so they can enjoy the break.

20. What was the driver thinking when he told the girls to keep the magnifying glass?
- A. It was probably the best thing that happened to them all day.
 - B. He was a really nice person for deciding to give it to the girls.
 - C. It wasn't a big deal because he had plenty of them in his truck.