



FOURTH PLACE RECIPIENT

The Test of Integrity

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Two years ago, I faced the ethical dilemma of whether to help my friend cheat or find an honorable way to support her. My close friend, who struggles with dyslexia, was failing our English class. We had one more test at the end of the year, and it would determine whether she could participate in our eighth-grade promotion ceremony. That day, I learned the difference between cheating someone out of failure and helping them succeed.

Dyslexia is a learning disorder that causes major struggles ranging from reading to writing, making English classes particularly challenging. My friend has always been bright, hardworking, and ambitious, but her confidence faltered when faced with our teacher's news that she was failing. It hurt me deeply to see her struggle with something beyond her control. Without thinking, I offered my help. My conscience couldn't stand the thought of her being punished for a disadvantage she couldn't change.

That evening, we spent hours at my kitchen table, the wood hidden beneath the sea of papers and books. We reviewed essays, quotes, and re-read books, working late into the night. It was late into the night when I handed her a practice final I had made. She scored four out of twelve. Her frustration grew, and she vented about how unfair it all seemed. Her scores didn't reflect her effort, and I sat there, feeling powerless to help. Then, the idea hit me, I could give her the answers during the test. I could save her grade.

On the day of the test, the classroom felt stifling.

My nerves were overwhelming as I considered my choices. My friend sat beside me, anxious and tense. But at that moment, I knew I couldn't go through with it. I apologized, and she nodded, understanding my decision. For the next hour, I battled guilt and fear. When the test ended, I waited outside, heart pounding. My friend emerged, smiling widely. "I passed!" she shouted. Relief and joy washed over us, she had succeeded on her own merit, and she would be able to walk at graduation.

This experience was the beginning of my dedication to helping others. Helping my struggling friend sparked a passion in me that inspired me to pursue a career in medicine. I realized that my dream job was being there for others when they needed it. This experience not only serves as a reminder of making an honorable choice in a tough situation but also the greatness in helping those around me.

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