

# FOE TO FRIEND

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## Synopsis

After a long, restful, and fun summer, Henry and James, two eleventh graders and best friends, are excited about finally getting back to school for the new academic year. They are yet clueless that a student who is one year above their grade level, Joseph, will turn their school experience into a roller-coaster of emotions. Joseph is a big and strong twelfth grader who picks on students for their physical possessions and money. Last year, Joseph was continuously intimidated and harassed for money by another classmate named Evan that used to attend the same school. After being exposed to this for a few months, Joseph was eventually traumatized by this disturbing personal experience. Before that, he was an incredibly kind and thoughtful person who was also liked by all. Unfortunately, instead of using this event to build a stronger personality and grow from this disturbing experience, he instead began to act just like Evan. After Evan moved to another city, Joseph took over his bully role and began to pester students for their lunch money. His first victim is Henry, an eleventh-grade student. Luckily, after their first encounter, James steps into the situation and seeks help from their new friend, Amelia, a twelfth grader that they just met. Soon after the school day ends, Henry learns more about Joseph and the reason why he was picking on him. Will Henry come up with a solution for Joseph's bullying problem and the two boys will become friends, or will Joseph continue to follow Evan's trajectory of cruel and foul behavior at the expense of Henry?

## Characters

### **Narrator**

**Henry**, an eleventh-grade student and a close friend of James, the victim of bullying

**James**, an eleventh-grade student and a close friend of Henry, an upstander

**Joseph**, a twelfth-grade bully who picks on students for money, especially Henry

**Amelia**, a twelfth-grade student and Joseph's classmate, an upstander

**Oliver**, a twelfth-grade student and Joseph's classmate

## Act One

### Scene 1

Falcon Cove Middle School, Fifth Building, Weston, Florida. 9:05 am, ten minutes before the first bell.

**Narrator:** On the first day of school, Henry and James are leaning against the wall, hands in their pockets, excitedly talking to each other about their school schedules that they received a few days ago, trying to find out which classes they will be in together.

**Henry** (*enthusiastically picking up his schedule from his backpack and glancing curiously at it*):  
I guess we have science and math together.

**James** (*similarly sounding cheerful*): Oh, cool, that's going to be fun! Let's do all of the group projects together!

**Narrator:** Meanwhile, Joseph, a tall muscular student, is about to walk into the scene, having troubling flashbacks of his terrible bullying experiences as Evan's victim last year, and feeling an irresistible urge to attack anybody that crosses his path to have things his way this time around. He is vigorously counting a bunch of money, painfully remembering the first time Evan pushed him to the ground, forcefully grabbing the money from his packet at the same spot that Henry and James were standing.

**Joseph** (*sarcastically and loudly to ensure getting full attention*): Well, well, well. What do we have here?

**Henry** (*not sure about the intruder's intentions, slightly reluctantly and with a muffled voice*):  
Hey there. Do we know you?

**Joseph** (*noticing Henry's hesitant voice and observing his drooping body, with a firm tone*): I'm your new best bud, and I'm hungry, and as any generous new friend would do, you are buying me lunch today.

**Henry** (*startled Henry rushes to put his money back in his pocket while trying to stay calm, forces himself to talk with a friendly tone, and manages to put on a fake smile*): I think you meant you would like to join us for lunch. I feel that you could say it more gently though. I'm Henry, and this is my friend James, and your name is?

**Joseph** (*putting his hands on Henry's shoulders and picking on his schedule*): It's Joseph, a twelfth grader who's going to be closely watching you from now on. How about you show some appreciation to your new friend and get me a burger and some French fries for lunch?

**James** (*straightening his body, pulling his shoulders back, and looking directly into Joseph's eyes*): We will take a rain check. We are in the middle of something here, so maybe another time.

**Henry** (*encouraged by James's confident attitude, gazes straight ahead while pulling a sandwich out of his bag*): We happen to have home-made lunch today, maybe some other time.

**Narrator**: Joseph grabs Henry by the arm, takes one half of his sandwich, and starts to devour it.

**Joseph** (*keeping his eyes on the rest of Henry's sandwich, forcefully extending his hand, and opening up his palm*): Yuck. This sandwich is not my taste anyway. Why don't you just pay up, and I'll be on my way.

**Narrator**: James is quietly evaluating the conversation in his head. He realizes that Joseph will be a problem for the two boys if they don't set their foot down and claim their boundary now. He wants to help Henry, but also wants to stay safe and away from Joseph. Henry is startled and

upset. He wants to shout and let it out. He feels the anger building up under his chest. He is ready to fight. Joseph's attitude is getting on his nerves. He hesitates. He doesn't want to fight a twelfth grader who is twice his size that he just met. He also knows deep down that this will only make things worse. He takes a deep breath and lets out a long exhale. He makes some quick thinking and reasoning. He figures that he has a steady pocket money and side income from his tutoring sessions. Why not help a grumpy and needy friend if he has the means? With good intention in mind, he reaches into his pocket and pulls out 10 dollars.

**Henry** (*with mixed emotions and a genuine effort of trying to save the day*): That's all I have with me today, Joseph.

**Joseph**: (*a huge grin spreading across his face that claims victory*) That'll do...for this time...

**James**: (*unhappy and looking very serious, staying calm and speaking in an assertive tone*) You should now leave us alone.

## Scene 2

**Narrator**: James knows this is all wrong. He is aware that staying safe is important, but he also knows that without help, this issue may escalate quickly into a nastier situation. He contemplates different ways of reporting the event and getting proper help, but he is not sure where to start. Should they directly go to the principal, the counselor, a teacher, or can they simply resolve this among friends? With a nasty grin on his face, Joseph triumphantly walks away. However, this brief pleasure quickly switches to a bothersome feeling of guilt. He seems to get this emotion every time he teases somebody, but eventually he decides to worry about it later. Soon after the encounter, Amelia, a tall, friendly girl, with always a big smile on her face who overheard part of the conversation, quickly approaches James and Henry. Oliver soon joins the conversation.

**Amelia** (*making eye contact with the boys and pointing to the direction Joseph had just left to*): Hi. It's Amelia here. Happy first day of school! I can see though that you had a rough start. I am the classmate of Joseph, the boy you just spoke to. I couldn't help but observe what just happened. I know how difficult Joseph can be sometimes. Why did you let him treat you like that? That was your money. Your parents and maybe even you worked hard for that.

**Oliver** (*stopping to say something before he walks past the three*): That is so true. His behavior is not acceptable. However, don't assume that Joseph's life has been easy. Indeed, a bully doesn't happen out of blue. He became a bully for a reason.

**Narrator**: Oliver walks away in a hurry, leaving Amelia alone with the two eleventh graders.

**Henry** (*evaluating Amelia's words in his mind and having second thoughts about giving away his money to end the conflict with Joseph*): Well, luckily it wasn't too much money compared to what I earn each week. Also, I feel like I'm doing the right thing, despite his arrogance and unjustified behavior.

**Amelia** (*hearing the bell ring and trying to hide her confusion about what she just heard*): I see. Well, it's time to go to your class. What's on your schedule?

**James** (*still looking very concerned about what had just happened*): We are headed to our math class with Mrs. Smith. Any pointers?

**Amelia** (*still undecided about how much to interfere with the recent incident*): Follow me and try to keep up, and quick, I don't want to miss my class either.

**James** (*looking more relaxed, as if he came up with a bright idea that might save the day*): Amelia, if you have time after school for a brief chat, can you and Henry meet? I have to leave

early today for my soccer practice, but Henry is available. It would be so helpful if you two can brainstorm some ideas to prevent today's incidence with Joseph from happening ever again.

**Amelia** (*enjoying the feeling of gaining their trust and the thought of being part of the solution*):

That's a good idea. Well, then, Henry, you can meet me at the parking lot after school. Now, quickly, follow me.

**Narrator:** The kids follow Amelia. Several kids come bolting in, rushing in different directions to find their classes. Eventually, Henry, James, and Amelia reach the classroom. Strangely enough, both boys feel that a new friendship with Amelia is taking off and Joseph's unacceptable behavior is at the origin of this new relationship.

### Scene 3

Falcon Cove Middle School, Parking Lot, Weston, Florida. 4:05 pm, ten minutes after dismissal.

**Narrator:** James leaves for his soccer practice and Henry meets Amelia in the parking lot to inquire about potential solutions for the situation.

**Henry:** Hi Amelia. I cannot thank you enough for agreeing to meet with me. I should have asked you myself to meet with me in the first place. James probably felt obliged to step in because he has always been a supportive friend. He is also a natural in personal relationships. I think he strongly believes that there is a problem that needs to be solved. If he was confident that the two of us would be able to easily deal with the situation, I am pretty sure he wouldn't bother you. James knows me well and I value his opinion. We stick with each other all the time. So far, this was good enough to avoid situations like today. However, in this case, I would benefit from another point of view. I am still very upset about the way I was treated by Joseph today. I have this strong urge to be helpful to everyone around me. Yet, I cannot afford to be forced to share

my earnings like that all the time. Since you seem to understand Joseph's motives and already know the ropes and drills of the eleventh grade, I really hope that you can help me.

**Amelia:** I am happy to help, Henry. That could be me. You would do the same. There are various ways you can resolve this problem. Why don't you express your feelings and thoughts to Joseph, discuss some solutions with him, apologize to each other, and become friends? If that strategy doesn't work, you can always come to me, and we can escalate this case to our teachers and even to the administration. Needless to say, your parents need to know about all this. I know you can handle this by yourself, but it is key that they know, just in case everything does not go according to the plan. At school, your math teacher, Mrs. Smith is amazing. Joseph was the best student in the math class last year. She knows him well and she is wise and fair. You can trust her. You can ask for her help if this ever happens again. If you keep her informed, she can step in at the next sign of trouble. You should probably know that it is possible that his family is going through a financial hardship. In class today, he explained to our math teacher, Mr. Johnson that his financial aid was late, which is why he did not have his math book with him today. Of course, you cannot and should not be his financial aid. Perhaps, you can help him better manage his current situation with your own experience. I understand that you already have gained your financial independence, which is quite impressive!

**Henry** (*knowing that there is a high chance that the plan will work*): You are a genius, Amelia! I think I know what I need to do now. It is time to put my personal experience as an asset to into work. Wish me good luck!

**Amelia** (*her eyes brightening up, happy that she is able to help*): That's great. You and James should stick with me for the next couple of days, just in case. Find me in the lunchroom during the recess times. Let's make sure that Joseph is on board with your plan first.

**Henry** (*enthusiastically*): Of course. That's clever. We will do. Thanks again.

**Narrator**: Henry and Amelia say goodbye to each other and head home. Henry calls James once he gets back to his house in order to share his communication with Amelia and lays out the details of his proposed solution. James is content. He agrees and gets on board with the plan. Henry shares everything that happened during the day with his parents and apologizes for giving away his money to Joseph. He promises them that he will find a way to get his money back and prevent such incidences from happening again. In return, his parents promise him not to interfere with the situation immediately. Yet, if his plan is not successful, Henry promises to accept help from his parents. At bedtime, Joseph recalls the feeling of guilt he had earlier in the day and starts to feel ashamed of himself. He realizes that he treated Henry the same way as Evan used to treat him, and he knew that Henry didn't deserve to feel that way. He was wrong to behave like that, but he had his own problems, and he wasn't ready to ask for Henry's forgiveness yet.

#### Scene 4

**Narrator**: The next day, Joseph walks into school, finding Henry and James talking energetically in the same spot as the day before. He starts heading towards them.

**Henry** (*with a confident posture: shoulders back, gaze straight ahead, body and back straight, before Joseph can utter a single word*): Hello, hello, Joseph. You seem to be in a good mood this morning. That's refreshing to see.

**Joseph** (*staring blankly at Henry*): What...what did you say?

**Henry** (*his eyes sparkling with hope*): I was just saying how glad I am to find out that we have some joint friends. Amelia and Oliver said so many positive things about you. Did you know that we have something in common? It appears that we both excel in math. As a matter of fact, I want

to ask you a favor. I work as a math tutor but lately I have been struggling to meet the increasing demand. I have too many students asking for help, but not enough time to handle them all.

Would you be interested to tutor some of these students? That would mean so much to me. I know that they will be in good hands. The good news is that the pay is pretty good. We could form a partnership together. I would gladly put the good word for you out there, and you could help me teach the kids that I might not have time for. What do you say?

**Joseph** (*looking surprised but not totally buying the idea*): I might be interested in that. Why would you offer me out of everybody else? You just met me. You don't even know me.

**Henry** (*with confidence and trying to sound believable*): Well, I have a good feeling about this. Good talent is hard to find. So, what do you say?

**Joseph** (*looking more convinced about the idea*): I guess, my answer would be "yes". This may help getting some of the financial pressure off my back. That sounds like a good idea.

**Henry** (*with a reassuring tone*): No worries. But you will have to promise me that money will no longer be an issue among us and that you will pay me the 10 dollars you borrowed yesterday as soon as you kick off the tutoring sessions.

**Joseph** (*switching to a more sincere and friendly look*): That's fair. I apologize for what I did to you, and I hope you can forgive me, Henry. I feel terrible about it now. I used to be subject to the same treatment in the past, and I guess I was heavily impacted from the situation.

**Henry** (*putting one hand on Joseph's shoulder to comfort*): Let's forget about it. I wish I had mentioned this opportunity to you earlier. Sorry it just did not cross my mind at the time.

**Joseph** (*looking grateful*): Thank you, you have no idea how much this means to me!

**Henry** (*with an enthusiastic voice*): No problem! We are here for you.

**Joseph**: How about I take you two out for lunch to celebrate this partnership after my first tutoring session? This will be on me.

**James** (*looking relieved*): That would be awesome! Good to have you, bud!

**Narrator**: The bell rings and the three kids head to their class. Everybody feels so content that the situation is happily resolved.

## Scene 5

**Narrator**: A year later, Henry, James, Joseph, and Amelia are having a picnic at the park.

**Joseph** (*happy as a clam*): Hey, I just remembered the old days when I gave you all such a hard time. Oh, boy, I am so thankful to you all for opening my eyes. I was so lost back then.

**Henry**: I barely remember any of that. It is now in our distant past. You should also put it behind. Don't beat yourself with it. Your family was in financial difficulty. What matters is that when this conflict happened, we dealt with the problem together in a peaceful and positive way. We were so lucky to have the support of our friends and family. We should give ourselves credit 'big time' too, because we got things resolved before they could even grow into a big problem.

**James**: You are absolutely right, Henry. We all worked together. I am glad you had Amelia to remind you that asking for assistance from others is totally fine.

**Amelia**: Well, I am happy that James stepped in to call my help! I am proud of your ability and willingness to empathize with each other's feelings. Henry made extra effort to understand Joseph's motive and circumstances. He came up with a clever plan that was suitable to address

his problem. He was ready to take responsibility for his part in the conflict. He was calm and positive, focusing on the issue, instead of singling out anyone as the source of the problem.

**Henry:** That whole experience for me was about learning about each other, sharing feelings with one another, brainstorming about possible solutions together, and compromising and apologizing to come up with healthy ways to reach a resolution to any conflict. I got frustrated initially, and I was more than ready to pick a fight, but I remained calm and peaceful, thanks to you all.

**Amelia:** I learned from James the importance of body language to project self-confidence: happy face, shoulders back, gazing straight ahead, body and back straight. Henry was quick to realize the importance of his posture and self-confidence and fixed his mistake, signaling to Joseph that he was not vulnerable. When responding to Joseph, he looked in his eyes and spoke clearly, calmly, and strongly, but without offending him in any way to avoid any further tension.

**James** (*nodding at Amelia in agreement*): Asking for help was better than dealing with the problem alone. Certainly, collective wisdom generates more effective solutions. Thanks to Amelia's insights, Henry came up with a new perspective that he didn't originally think of. Amelia inspired Henry with an effective resolution plan that he successfully implemented.

**Joseph:** You taught me to be proactive and earn my own pocket money, rather than trying to forcefully get it from others, Henry. James spoke up, acted as a true friend, and looked out for you. We all became great friends in the end! No one can put a price on it! Cheers to that!

**Narrator:** Joseph takes a deep breath and says his goodbyes to the old bully in his mind and his heart. The four friends laugh and celebrate the beginning of their beautiful friendship.

**The End**