A Simple Act

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ANCHOR TEXT | NEWS BLOG



This text is an alternate version of the original selection, which appears in your student edition.

1	It was the first day of September in 1986. The morning rain had given
	way to bright sunshine. A successful advertising executive made her
	way across 56th Street toward Broadway. She was on the west side of
	Manhattan. An eleven-year-old boy dressed in scruffy clothes asked for
	some change for something to eat. Laura Schroff lowered her head and
	walked on. Manhattan was full of panhandlers. She hardly even noticed
	them any more.

- But something drew Laura back to the boy. She still doesn't know what it was. She calls it an "invisible thread." There's an old Chinese saying. It says that an invisible thread connects two people who are destined to meet and influence each other. Laura believes she felt that thread. She turned back from the middle of the street and took the boy to lunch.
- The boy lived in a single room in a welfare hotel with his mother and many other relatives. It was only two blocks away from Laura's home, but it might as well have been a different planet. They talked over their lunch. Laura learned about the boy's life. She herself had not had an easy childhood, but what she heard shocked her. Before she left, she told him to phone her if he was ever hungry. When she didn't hear from him after several days, she returned to the spot they had met. There he was, in the same clothes and too-tight sneakers. They arranged to meet again the next Monday.
- Every Monday, Laura Schroff and Maurice Mazyck had dinner together. Some Mondays they ate at Laura's home. There, Maurice discovered a life he had only seen on television. Slowly, Laura became the young boy's first role model. She encouraged him to have dreams about his future. She got involved in his education. Maurice's teacher was perhaps the only other person who believed in him. She made Laura take a long hard look at what she was doing. Was she helping Maurice just as a way of helping herself? Could she commit to being there for Maurice even when she didn't feel like it? What would happen to Maurice if she were to abandon him after becoming so important to him? Laura thought it through. She came to a decision.
- The two continued sharing dinner every Monday. A close bond formed between them. Laura introduced Maurice to new places, new ideas, and new possibilities. Maurice became almost like the child Laura had always wanted. One day, she offered to make lunch for Maurice. She said she

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	would leave it with her doorman for him to pick up on his way to school. He asked her if she could put the lunch in a brown paper bag. That way, the other kids would know that someone cared about him.	NOTES
6	Maurice had never left the city until Laura took him to visit her sister's family on Long Island. Her memory of their trip is a favorite one. She had expected Maurice to be amazed by the huge front lawn and backyard. But what amazed him the most was the large dining room table where they all sat down and talked and ate together. He declared that he wanted a table like that when he had a family of his own. Only months earlier, Maurice had seriously doubted that he would live to be an adult.	
7	Laura and Maurice's relationship lasted. In 1997, a magazine published a short article about it. Laura's friends suggested that she write a book telling the whole story. It was 10 years before she began writing. And it was another three years before she found a co-writer and started seriously getting down to business. The result of their work, <i>An Invisible Thread</i> , reached number one on <i>The New York Times</i> best sellers list.	
8	Today, Maurice works in construction. He is the first person in his family to earn a paycheck. He has a family of his own. His children are all very fond of their "Aunt Laurie." If you were to visit the family's apartment, you might notice that there is no couch in the living room. But there is a huge dining room table.	
9	The writer Ernest Hemingway said, "The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them." Over the years, Laura discovered the truth of that statement. She feels that Maurice has given her one of the greatest gifts she has ever had. He repaid her trust by giving her life more meaning than her success at work ever did. He taught her to be grateful for what she has, and for the chance to share it.	
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