

Lesson 1 The Gift of Friendship

Picasso and His Barber

In Vallauris, a small town in the South of France, a black limousine was parked outside a barbershop. From inside the car, Pablo Picasso impatiently yelled out. "Please, Arias, hurry up. We'll be late for dinner." A curious crowd gathered around the car, wondering who had the nerve to make the legendary artist wait. A few moments later, Eugenio Arias, a man with a cheerful smile, emerged from his modest shop. "Let's go," he said as he climbed into the limousine. Despite the fact that Picasso was twenty-eight years older than Arias, the two had been close friends for twenty years. Let's go back to that summer afternoon when their friendship across generations began.

In 1947, Picasso left the crowded city of Paris and moved to the quiet rural town of Vallauris. As a foreigner, he often desperately longed for familiar faces from his home country, Spain. One day, a friend told him about a local barber from Spain named Arias. But for Picasso, it was not easy to visit the barbershop because he had a belief that anyone who possessed his hair or nails would have control over him. Too superstitious to let other people cut his hair, he normally chose to cut his own hair. Eventually, Picasso gathered his courage and entered Arias's barbershop because he was so eager to meet his fellow countryman. Arias recognized the famous artist right away, but he treated Picasso like an ordinary customer. Leading him to a chair, Arias warmly welcomed Picasso in Spanish. Despite the fact that their conversation was brief that day, Picasso was deeply impressed by Arias's direct and simple manner of speech. He sensed that Arias was a trustworthy individual with a great sense of humor who put people at ease.

Picasso's visits to Arias's barbershop became somewhat routine after that. Whenever he visited, the other customers let him be served first. This situation made Picasso feel uncomfortable because it caused other people to wait longer. Sensing his discomfort, Arias asked if Picasso would prefer to get haircuts and shaves at home. Picasso happily accepted the offer. Arias went to Picasso's house to cut his hair from then on, but he never charged Picasso for his services. In return, Picasso gave him sketches, paintings, and ceramics as a gesture of friendship. As their friendship grew stronger, Arias started to drop by Picasso's house, not to shave or cut his hair, but to hang out. Picasso once said to Arias, "You are always welcome to come to my house. When you're here, I feel like I'm back in Spain." Picasso also paid frequent visits to Arias's home, where he enjoyed Spanish dishes prepared by Arias's mother. When they dined together, they would sit and talk for hours.

Picasso once asked Arias, "What do you think about your own work as a barber?" Arias answered, "Well, when I finish a haircut for a customer, I always notice my mistakes." Upon hearing Arias's response, Picasso suddenly hugged him and said, "You're an artist. I always see some mistakes whenever I finish my paintings."

One day, Picasso was busy painting *War and Peace*, one of his largest projects, when Arias paid him a visit. Picasso had been working hard staying up at night for days. Seeing this, Arias assisted Picasso with his work, from moving a ladder around for Picasso to painting some characters. So Picasso made a joke, "Now I have to sign this painting Picasso and Arias."

As time passed, Picasso's health declined with age. One day, Picasso asked Arias, "What are you going to do with all the paintings and sketches I gave you?" Arias responded that he would build a museum in Spain to display the works. Picasso was moved to hear that and swore to help Arias. But unfortunately, he did not live to see the museum completed, passing away in 1973. Arias was in grief and despair but found comfort in knowing that his best friend would live on through his art. A few years later, Arias returned to Spain and exhibited Picasso's works. This small exhibit attracted visitors from all over the world. A foreign merchant approached Arias one day and attempted to persuade him to sell all of Picasso's works. But he refused to bargain, saying, "Even if you bring all the money in your country, I will not sell any of his works to you. His works are symbols of the friendship between Picasso and me."

The Museo Picasso—Colección Eugenio Arias (The Picasso Museum—Eugenio Arias Collection) was finally completed. This was possible because Arias donated approximately sixty pieces of Picasso's works to Arias's hometown of Buitrago del Lozoya. They comprised a collection of paintings, posters, ceramics, and other works. Each of them is distinct from Picasso's other works because Picasso carved each one with the inscription Para mi amigo, Arias (For my friend, Arias). When visitors enter this museum, they quickly discover that it is more than just a tribute to honor Picasso's artistic legacy; it is also a monument to the artist and barber's lifelong friendship.

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Dog Tails, Dolphin Waves

Can monkeys be friends with horses? How about giraffes and goats? It seems that animals of different species are not compatible to one another, but there is one special friendship that bloomed between a dog and a dolphin. The close friendship between Gunner, a seven-year-old dog, and Delta, a ten-year-old dolphin, is an extraordinary bond that goes beyond the boundaries of their species. Despite their differences in habitat, Gunner and Delta have formed a deep and genuine connection that shows the beauty of friendship between different species. Their first encounter occurred when Gunner's owner took him to the Dolphin Research Center where Delta lives. As Gunner observed Delta swimming elegantly in the water, he could not help but be fascinated by the dolphin's grace and friendliness. Gunner, with his playful and loyal nature, seemed to be initially intrigued by Delta's graceful movements and intelligent behavior. Gunner approached the edge of the enclosure and walked alongside the water while wagging his tail, his tongue hanging out in excitement.

Delta, being an exceptionally clever creature, sensed Gunner's friendly intentions and politely swam over to meet him. The two animals inspected each other with cautious sniffs and gentle touches, quickly establishing a sense of trust. Their friendship blossomed through shared playfulness and mutual respect. Gunner and Delta would have fun together, engaging in playful games. For example, Gunner would bounce around and chase Delta's splashes, and Delta would perform leaps for Gunner's amusement. Their interactions were a harmonious dance of joy and companionship, breaking the barriers of their different physical abilities.