

# Mamadou and John



A true story about two children  
from Senegal (Africa)

John is moving to a new neighborhood. Yesterday, his mother borrowed a cart to move the only bed they own. Today she is bringing in the rest of their belongings. The three children help her by each carrying something.



They are a bit scared to be in this new neighborhood. However they are happy to have found a house. For the last few weeks they have been living in the house of another family. It was crowded and life was getting difficult.

As soon as they arrive, a child offers to help them carry their bags.



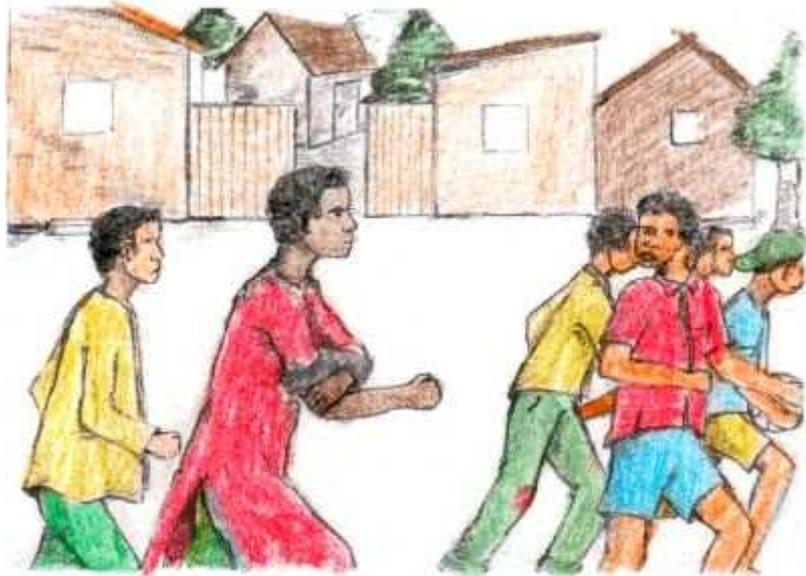
" My name is Mamadou, I live there, " he says, pointing.

In the dark, John can hardly see Mamadou's house.  
It seems rundown and is poorly lit by a candle.



In the morning, John joins a group of children who are playing soccer. Some children gang up on him.

Mamadou takes John's side, and makes the other children leave.



Little by little, with Mamadou, John discovers the neighborhood and the people living there. In the morning, when he leaves for school, he can see Mamadou going to work for a carpenter.

Mamadou tells John about what the carpenter teaches him. He likes this work and he feels that the carpenter is proud of him. But sometimes Mamadou says, " I would rather go to school. "

John sees that Mamadou does a lot to help his mother. She is often sick; then Mamadou takes over her job, doing the laundry for other families.

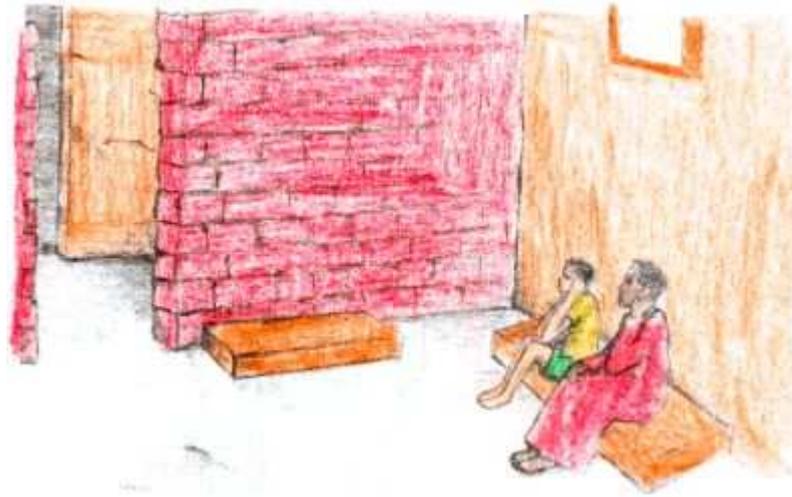


When Mamadou is not busy working, he comes outside to play with John. Mamadou does not speak much about his worries. For him, what is important is to make his family happy.



One evening, as he is eating with his family, John hears somebody calling, " Mamadou... Mamadou... "

He goes outside and sees Mamadou's mother with her two younger children. She is worried because Mamadou has not shown up. Usually the carpenter lets him go long before sunset; John knows Mamadou is needed at home.



John knows Mamadou will be home soon. Because of his work, Mamadou has no time to play during the day. That is why he sometimes stops on the way home to play with others at the soccer field or to watch the adults playing video games. Indeed, Mamadou arrives home, a little later, running.



That night, John cannot sleep. He wonders how Mamadou can find more time to play with him and the other children. Suddenly, he gets an idea. He knows what he can do.

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A few weeks later, John tells his mother: "On Saturdays and Sundays, I help Mamadou do house chores for his mother; after that we can have time to play together."

John speaks often of Mamadou to his mother: "The other kids tease him. That makes me feel bad. I tell them to stop. Sometimes they do, but sometimes they go on. Then Mamadou puts his hands over his ears so he won't hear what they say or he runs off to hide and cry. They make fun of his family too. I think it's unfair."

John's mother knows that people in the neighborhood have not been



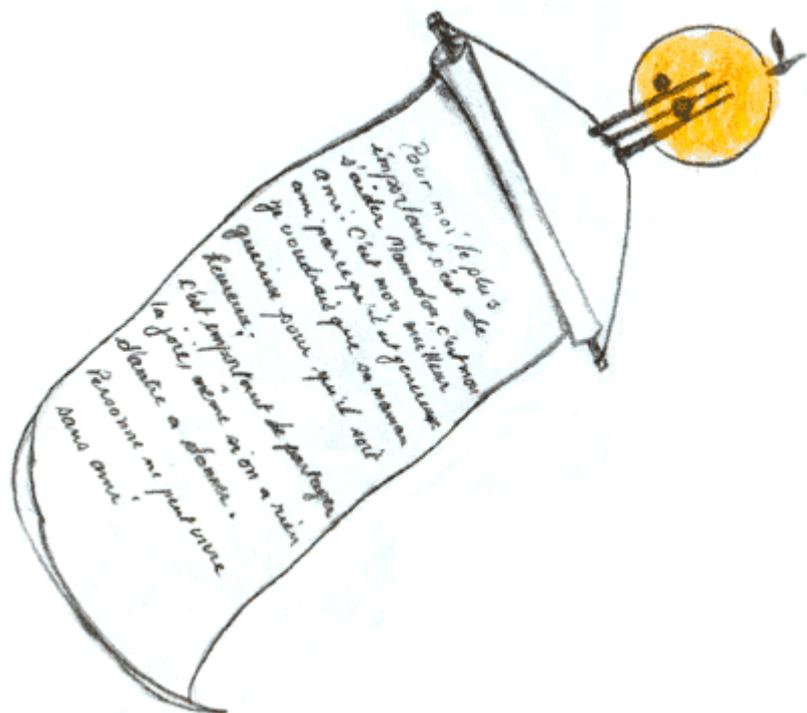
nice to Mamadou's mother. One time, they even accused her of stealing something from a house.

One day, John sees that Mahamou's mother is getting very ill. He asks his mother to please go and visit her. He tells

her, "Mamadou's mother can't get better if nobody visits her."

John receives the Tapani newsletter. He knows how to translate it into their language, Wolof, so Mamadou can understand too. He likes to read it to Mamadou. Together, the two of them discover the life and the courage of children from other countries who also have a hard life.

One day, John writes to Tapani about his friend: "For me, what is most important is that people help each other. Mamadou is my friend. He is my best friend because he is generous. I would like his mother to get well, so he could be happy.



It is important to share our happiness, even if we have nothing else to give."

"Nobody can live without a friend."