



7 to 10
YEARS

BUILDING BEAUTIFUL INSIDE

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

A Story by Arkedelic



Parents' Guide

STUDENT CONC

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON

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WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

“Tomorrow. 4 PM. Be there,” Sid announced, holding up the community flyer like a trophy.

Jane squinted. “Kids vs Parents’ Cricket Match and Mela’?”

“It’s war,” said Sid. “We win, we get bragging rights and two extra plates of momos. We lose... we get bedtime jokes for a month.”

“Who’s the captain?” asked Mario, already flexing.

“I am. Obviously,” said Sid.

“And I,” came a dramatic voice from the balcony, “will not be participating.”

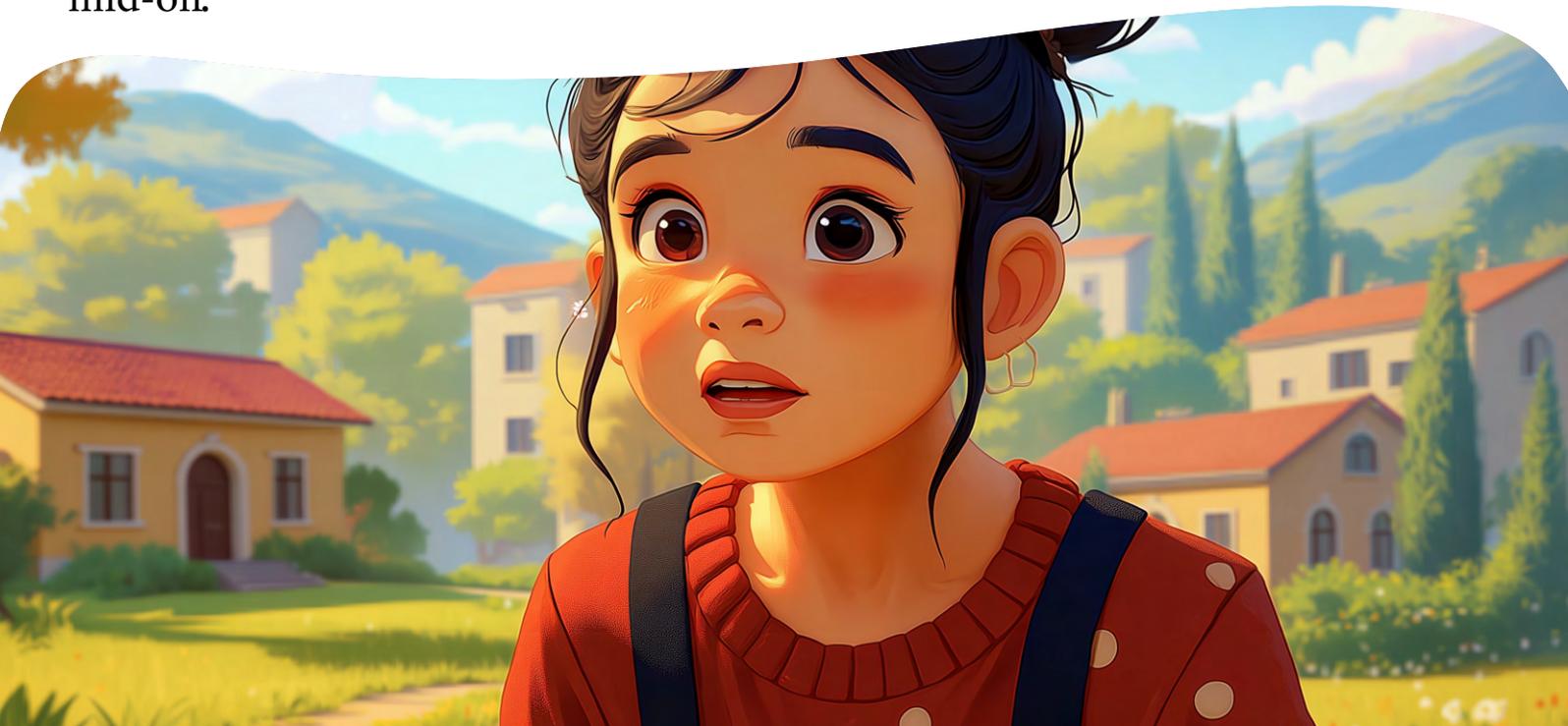
Everyone turned.

Sam stood in her tracksuit. Arms crossed. Eyebrow arched.

“My mom,” she said slowly, “is captaining the parents’ team.”

Later that night, the Squad gathered in Sid’s hallway, strategising.

“We open with Mario bowling, Nik on long-on, Jane keeping,” Sid said. “Sam, mid-off”



Sam hesitated. “About that...”

Five heads turned.

“Come on, Sam,” said Jane. “You’re good at this.”

“I know,” Sam muttered. “But my mom’s on the other side.”

“Exactly why we need you,” said Mario.

“No, I mean... what if she thinks I’m taking your side against her?”

There was an awkward silence.

Then Nik said, “Why is this so complicated?”

“Because,” Sam said, “sometimes the pitch is flat, but the situation isn’t.”

The next day, the park was buzzing.



Kids in face paint. Dads in sneakers that hadn’t moved since the 90s. Mums with caps, whistles, and matching wristbands.

The umpire was Jane’s grandfather, armed with sunglasses and a foldable chair.

“Coin toss,” he barked.

Sid called heads. Lost.

The parents won and, just to be annoying, put the kids in to bat first.

By the time the kids wrapped up their innings, they had managed a modest score. Not great.

Not bad.

Then the parents came in to chase.

And things started heating up.

Sam’s mom, bold as ever, was not just hitting runs, she was also offering loud commentary.

“Textbook swing, but I’ll give it a 5 out of 10 for flair,” she said mid-over, winking.

Kids whispered.

“She’s trash-talking us!” Jane hissed.

“She’s not wrong,” Mario whispered back.

Then came the big moment. Sam’s mom hit a high one. It soared toward the boundary.

Sam sprinted under it. The ball dropped cleanly into her hands.

OUT!

“Not out,” her mom called immediately. “Too close to the rope. Her heel touched the line.”

“What?!” Jane exploded. “She was a metre inside!”

Umpire Grandad looked uncertain.
“Hard to say. Let’s redo the ball.”

Sam opened her mouth, then closed it.

Her mother met her eyes. Just for a moment.

Sam stood frozen in the grass.

The rest of the over was a blur.

Later, sitting by the snack stand, Sam stared at her drink. “She didn’t cheat. She just... defended herself.”

“She also didn’t respect the call,” Jane muttered.

“She thought I stepped out.”

“Did you?”





“I don’t know.”

Sid sat down next to her. “Look, it’s okay. You don’t have to pick us. But you don’t have to pick her either.”

Sam looked up. “Then who do I pick?”

Sid shrugged. “Maybe fairness. Maybe you.”

Final over. Parents needed 6 to win. Sid was bowling. Sam was back at mid-off. Her mom was on strike.

Two balls left.

CRACK! Her mom hit it flat between two fielders.

Sam saw it happening.

One fielder hesitated. The other lunged too late.

Sam darted between them, dove forward, and snatched the ball just before it hit the ground.

Stunned silence.

“OUT!” Grandad shouted.

Sam got up, grass on her elbows, dust on her knees.

Her mother smiled — a half-smile. Not angry. Not proud. Just knowing.

Sam jogged back to the Squad.

“Good catch,” Jane muttered.

“Solid spine,” added Sid.

Sam shrugged. “Didn’t want either side to lose unfairly.”

That evening, as the sun dipped and the winning plate of momos arrived, Sam’s mom walked over.

“You were brilliant out there,” she said.

“Thanks,” Sam said. “You too.”

They stood quietly for a second.

Then her mom added, “Just so you know — the boundary call? You were in.”

Sam laughed. “Too late now.”

“Maybe. But it matters that I say it.”

Sam blinked.

Then smiled.

Because sometimes standing up doesn’t mean standing against.

It just means standing.

Even when both sides matter.

† THE END



**VALUES FROM
THE STORY****1. How do I help my child when they don't want to choose sides but don't want to stay silent either?**

Context in the story: Sam is caught in a classic emotional bind — her mother is captaining the parents' team, while her closest friends are on the kids' team. As tensions rise in the match and a controversial call puts her mother at odds with her teammates, Sam is forced to choose: speak up, stay silent, or find her own way. Her decision to stay calm, hold her ground, and act fairly shows that taking a stand doesn't always mean taking a side.

Real-world connection: Children often find themselves in uncomfortable situations where they're pulled between people they care about — family, friends, or classmates — and worry about hurting someone no matter what they do. This fear can lead to silence or people-pleasing behaviours.

How parents can use the story: This story offers a gentle way to explore what it means to act with integrity, even when loyalties are divided. Ask your child if they've ever felt stuck in the middle — between two friends, between siblings, or between peer pressure and their own beliefs. Help them see that they don't always have to “pick a side” — but they can stand for fairness, kindness, or truth. You can also affirm their right to speak up without taking responsibility for others' feelings. That's how confidence and clarity are built.



2. How can I help my child understand and respect personal space and boundaries — their own and others’?

Context in the story: Sam doesn’t feel ready to fully align with either team, and her discomfort is real. While her Squad pushes her to join, she articulates her hesitation and sets a clear emotional boundary: “I don’t want to feel like I’m going against my mom.” This boundary is respected (eventually), and her ultimate actions — catching a ball, not picking a side — show that children can participate without losing their internal sense of self.

Real-world connection: Children often feel pressured to “go along” with friends or family, even when their inner world is saying something else. Helping them understand their feelings and set emotional or social boundaries is essential for long-term self-respect and healthy relationships.

How parents can use the story: This story opens a natural conversation about boundaries, especially emotional ones. Ask your child what they think Sam was feeling, and why it was hard for her to decide. Use that to help your child notice when they’re doing something just to keep the peace — and when they’re truly comfortable. Affirm that it’s okay to speak up, say no, or ask for time. When children know that their voice and space matter, they learn to offer the same respect to others.





3. How can I help my child show loyalty, care, and stand by loved ones?

Context in the story: Sam’s loyalty is split — between her mother and her closest friends. Instead of choosing one over the other, she finds a third path: staying fair. She doesn’t defend her mother blindly, nor does she blindly follow her friends’ anger. Instead, she acts with care, strength, and honesty, showing that true loyalty sometimes means telling the truth gently and doing what’s right, even when it’s hard.

Real-world connection: Children often associate loyalty with “always taking someone’s side.” But real loyalty includes truth, fairness, and thoughtful disagreement. Loyalty is not about silence or obedience, it’s about love with spine.

How parents can use the story: This story is a chance to deepen your child’s understanding of what loyalty truly means. Use it to talk about examples where loyalty might mean asking tough questions, giving honest feedback, or standing quietly beside someone rather than cheering loudly for them. Remind your child that they don’t have to choose between love and truth — real loyalty can hold both. It’s a powerful message for both friendships and family relationships.



Assessment Questions for “Whose Side Are You On?”

Q1. Why did Sam feel torn between supporting her mother and her friends?

Purpose: To help children recognise that fairness sometimes means standing alone, not picking sides.

Follow-up: Have you ever been caught between two people you care about? How did you decide what was fair?

Q2. How did Sam begin to see that everyone in the argument had a reason for how they felt?

Purpose: To show that empathy and shared experiences can help replace shame with courage.

Follow-up: What happens when you take time to listen before choosing a side?

Q3. How did Sam manage to stay steady while others were upset around her?

Purpose: To teach that calm thinking helps in conflict more than reacting in anger or panic.

Follow-up: What helps you stay calm when everyone else is arguing or shouting?

Q4. Why was it hard for Sam to disagree with her mum even when she felt her friends were right?

Purpose: To show that the words we tell ourselves can shape how we feel.

Follow-up: Can you still care about someone and tell them they're wrong? Why or why not?

Q5. What did Sam finally learn about what it means to be fair?

Purpose: To remind children that true fairness isn't about rules — it's about empathy and courage.

Follow-up: How can you show fairness in your own group — at home, at school, or with friends?

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