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Those favourite toys that never grow old or die



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A life lesson learnt: in choosing to do the right thing over demands made by friendships, it is wiser to choose the former

In the mid-1990s, my husband and I were struggling young doctors, still in our training jobs. The stipend amounts barely stretched till the end of the month for our meagre household expenses. It was around that time one day that I found Paul and many others

These were horribly expensive stuffed toys that fit in the palm of your hand, and but for their surplus numbers and possibly age accumulated dust, would never have fit into my budget. Although we rarely ever splurged on luxuries, I thought our four-year-old, who generally favoured cars, and robots with movable joints, deserved this treat. Krish eagerly adopted Paul when we took him home.

Krish was a self-sufficient little boy who could spend hours minding his own business and playing by himself with his toys. So there one would find him, sitting on the floor with remarkable flexibility, on his bent back leg, assembling the parts of his plastic rocket made up of virtually a million pieces, being watched quietly by Paul while the two discussed the suitability of the different pieces available.

Krish grew up and Paul remained the same. Nestled in his cupboard, lying around on his table, scrunched up on his bed – he was always around somewhere. Paul made it through not less than six moves, including two years spent in storage while we were out of the country. By the time Paul made it out of the box after his hibernation, quite a few changes had occurred in the world outside. For one, Krish had acquired a little brother. After 10 years of solitude and calm, he now had to accommodate in his life a long-cherished sibling, but a tornado nevertheless. Although Krish had first rights to Paul, he was not averse to sharing, and Paul sometimes found himself in the company of his little brother.

The little one was at an age where the lines between right and wrong were not clearly drawn. On one of those boisterously creative yet perversely destructive play sessions that happened at home one afternoon, the little one and his friend decided to make movies of their play sessions on the iPad. So when the friend suggested that they flush Paul down the toilet and record the deed, the little one just went along. He probably has no first-hand memory of it now, but the regret prompted by the retelling of the story is always intense.

His first lesson in life that when it comes to choosing to do the right thing over demands made by friendships, it is wiser to choose the former. Paul was now gone forever, and it was a very sad day for the whole family, notwithstanding the fact that he was just a stuffed toy.

Krish never spoke much about that episode, but I know my boy, and I knew his hurt. The wound was probably hurting a great deal, because he even told his close friend about it. She later moved to England to complete her education, but they kept in touch.

I don't know if she actively went on a Beanie Baby hunt or if she came across one and was reminded of Krish's loss. But a few years later on his birthday, she sent him a picture of an identical Paul that she had bought for him as his gift. It was a few months more before Paul

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the last mile journey in a courier box to our home.

I am sure Krish was very aware that it was not his Paul, but the thoughtfulness of the gesture and the utter beauty of this remarkable experience is sure to have touched his soul.

The rest of us are just even more than happy to have Paul back – nestled in his desk drawer, lying around on his table or scrunched up on his bed.

As for the little one, he is now grown older and wiser, and still plays, albeit more responsibly with Paul.

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