

FIRE FRIENDSHIPS

By, K.S.

They don't have to last long, but they can have limitless impacts. To most friendships, there are three stages: the spark, the fire, and the ember. Once a friendship has gone through such stages, it is considered a Fire Friendship, even when it is already over. But no matter the length or duration, Fire Friendships are sure to make an imprint on your life and leave a fingerprint that will never fade.

They start off with a spark. These are usually very small first meetings, and many times they don't even seem like much at the time they happen. The most common example might be something like a short conversation comprised of small talk; perhaps a chance meeting by some crazy random happenstance. I met one of my best friends in the fourth grade. I was injured and needed crutches, my knee having been hurt in a recent trampoline incident, and my teacher had assigned her to help me carry my books through the hallways. Meetings like this wouldn't appear at first to have the ability to make a lasting impact on your life, but, really, they are the flint striking the steel, creating the potential for something that could be much bigger than originally thought.

Then, with careful guidance, we enter the second phase: the fire. The fire stage is usually the longest-lasting out of the three. It's also the happiest, the one that everyone wants their

friendships to stay in forever. This is when the two people call themselves friends, and like to spend time together and enjoy each other's company. Soon the flames of the fire spread and grow bigger and bigger, carelessly going on their way without ever worrying about the day their friendship will be snuffed. Here, the Fire Friends like nothing better than to believe that this phase will last forever and often say it, maybe even putting it on matching bracelets, until they convince themselves that their companionship is too great to not be immortal, thus the phrase "Best Friends Forever". My "book-carrier" from the fourth grade remained my best friend for five years, and we, too, considered ourselves under the blissfully ignorant title of "BFF's". Now for many people this fire really does last forever, and good for them. However they aren't, in that case, considered Fire Friends, for we still have one last stage to go through.

The Ember Stage, the final and most dreaded phase, is the saddest of the entire friendship. This is usually caused by the two friends moving away from each other, or just simply their two lives going in different directions. The two friends promise to stay in touch and remain friends, which most often doesn't happen. At first the friends will call each other every day. However, eventually different schedules will come in to factor until eventually there's only a letter once in a while, a hand-written sentiment making a feeble attempt at reconnection, but that's all. The fire is already out, and all that's left are a few glowing embers, struggling to stay alive. The occasional letter will send one brisk blow to the almost-dead embers, but they will glow only briefly before they grow dim again, with the pitiful will to live but not the real strength or effort.

Eventually time will go by and the friendship that was once a happy fire, a blaze of glory, is nothing but a memory, the dead, burnt debris that's left over, the ghost of something that was once great. My friend and I haven't spoken since the 9th grade after we left to go to different high schools. The only thing that's left is the annual birthday text (maybe even around Christmas sometimes). But now the fire's out. The flame is dead. And the Fire Friends are gone, until each meets a brand new person and starts a brand new spark all over again.