

What Are Friends For?

by Jim Gold

Tom was suffering from writer's block. I think a visit to Jack's house will relax me, he thought. Jack lived on the other side of town, and since Tom needed exercise, he walked.

On the way, he passed trees, houses, children playing, a tunnel, and a truck.

Finally, he saw Jack's place up ahead. And a magnificent house it was: Beautiful shutters hung from each rectangular window; a bright red brick facade shone in the afternoon sunlight; a slate roof crowned the wide second floor, and white smoke was rising from the tall, majestic chimney.

Then Tom noticed that smoke was also coming out of the windows. He saw even more smoke creeping from the sides and bottom of the front door. Jack's house was on fire!

He shoved open the front door and rushed into the living room. He ran down the hallway until he found Jack, in the bedroom, suffocating from smoke and coughing out his guts. Dragging him by the hand and collar, he managed to get him out just as the roof collapsed behind them.

"That was a close call," gasped Jack, sitting on the front lawn. "Thanks for saving my life." He brushed sweat from his forehead. "But am I worth saving? I've been so down ever since my novel was rejected for the sixteenth time. I appreciate your effort, but it would have been better to save the sofa."

"Cut it out, Jack!" cried Tom as the last wall slumped into rubble behind them. "Any life is worth saving, especially a friend's. . . . How did it happen, anyway?"

"When you hear the reason, you'll know I'm a true friend," Jack replied as fire engines came screaming down the street. "I lit it. I love the sound, the smell, the warmth of a fire. And the reason I lit this one is--" Jack gasped for air again-- "is to give you a subject to write about for your next story! I did it for you, Tom, I did it for you!" As he uttered this last, he collapsed to the ground.

“What a friend,” said Tom with admiration.

At that moment the fire captain told his men not to bother throwing water on the house.

Tom turned away from the fire engines and started up the block. Glancing back, he said. “The embers from Jack’s house will glow in my mind forever. I’ll dedicate my next story to him.”

from Carlos the Cloud

Available on Amazon and BN.com, or visit www.jimgold.com