

## CHAPTER 1 — Comrades

**M**ashtinna was a handsome young man, and, moreover, of a kind disposition. One day when he was hunting, he heard a child crying bitterly and made all haste in the direction of the sound.

On the furthest side of the wood he found a man tormenting a baby boy with whips and pinches, laughing heartily meanwhile and humming a mother's lullaby.

“What do you think you are doing, abusing this innocent child?” demanded Mashtinna. But the man continued to smile and replied pleasantly, “You do not know what you are talking about! The child is cranky, and I am merely trying to quiet him.”

Mashtinna was not deceived, for he recognized the man as Double-Face, an unpleasant joker who delights in teasing the helpless ones.

“Give the boy to me!” he insisted. Double-Face became angry and showed the other side of his face, which was black and scowling. “The boy is mine,” he declared, “and if you say another word, I shall treat you as I have treated him!”

These words made Mashtinna angry. He fitted an arrow to the string of his bow and shot Double-Face through the heart. Then he took the child on his arm and followed the trail until he came upon the small, poor teepee of the child's grandparents. There lived an old man and his wife, both of them nearly helpless, for all of their children and grandchildren, even to the smallest and last, had been lured away by wicked Double-Face.

“Ho, Grandfather, Grandmother! I have brought you back the child!” exclaimed Mashtinna as he stood in the doorway.

But the poor old couple had been deceived so many times by the heartless Double-Face that they no longer believed anything they saw or heard. They cried out, “You liar! We don't believe a word you say! Get away with you, go!”

Because they refused to take the child and it was now almost night, the kind-hearted young man wrapped the boy in his own blanket and lay down with him to sleep. When he awoke the next morning, he found to his surprise that the child had grown up during the night and was now a handsome young man. They looked so much alike that they could have passed for twin brothers.

“My friend, we are now comrades for life!” exclaimed the strange youth. “We shall each go different ways in the world, doing all the good we can. But if either is ever in need of help, let him call upon the other and he will come instantly to his aid!”

Mashtinna agreed, and they set out in opposite directions. Not long after, Mashtinna heard a loud groaning and crying as of some person in great pain. When he reached the spot, he found a man with his body wedged tightly in the forks of a tree that was swaying to and fro in the wind. He could not by any means get away and was





“I will take your place, Brother!” exclaimed the generous young man. The tree immediately parted, and the tree-bound man was free. Mashtinna took his place, and the tree closed upon him like a vise and pinched him severely.

The pain was worse than he had imagined, but he bore it as long as he could without crying out. Sweat beaded on his forehead, and his veins swelled to bursting. At last he could endure it no longer and called loudly upon his comrade to help him. At once the young man appeared and struck the tree so that it parted and Mashtinna was free.

Mashtinna continued on his journey until he spied a small wigwam by itself on the edge of the woods. Lifting the door flap, he saw no one but an old blind man who greeted him thankfully. “Grandfather,” Mashtinna said.

“Ho, my Grandson! You see me. I am old and poor. All day I see no one. When I want a drink, this rawhide lariat leads me to the stream near by. When I need dry sticks for my fire, I follow this other rope and feel my way among the trees. I have enough food, for these bags are packed with dried meat for my use. But alas, my grandson, I am blind and lonely. If I could only see again, then I would be happy.”

“Take my eyes, Grandfather!” at once exclaimed the kind-hearted young man. “You can go wherever you want, and I will remain here in your place.”

“Ro, ho, my grandson, you are very good!” replied the old man, and he gladly took Mashtinna’s eyes and went out into the world. Mashtinna stayed behind, and because he was hungry, he ate some of the dried meat in the bags.

The meat made him thirsty, so he took hold of the rawhide rope and followed it to the stream. But as he leaned over the edge of the stream to draw water, the rope broke and Mashtinna fell in.

The water was cold and the bank slippery, but after a long, hard struggle, he got out and made his way back to the wigwam, dripping wet and miserable. He decided to make a fire and dry his clothes. So Mashtinna grabbed hold of the other rope and followed it into the woods for sticks.

However, when he began to gather the sticks he lost the rope. Being quite blind, he could do nothing but stumble over fallen logs and bruise himself against the trunks of trees. He scratched his face among the briars and brambles until he could bear it no longer and cried out to his comrade to come to his aid.

Instantly his comrade appeared and gave him back his sight, along with this warning: “Friend, be not so rash in the future! It is right to help those who are in trouble, but you must also consider whether you are able to hold out to the end.”

---

## **How Well Did You Read and Understand the Story?**

Hint: To make finding answers easier, try reading the questions before you read the story. Watch carefully for clues as you read.

1. Who is the protagonist?
2. Find an example in the story where Mashtinna acts before he thinks. What is the result?
3. According to the story, where does Double-Face get his name?
4. What message does the author hope to convey in this selection?
5. Do you think Mashtinna is a hero or a villain? Consider all the evidence in the story as you explain your answer.
6. Name a character that plays a small but important role in the story. Why is this character necessary to the story?
7. Pick a character from the story. Did he or she seem believable? Why or why not? Back up your answer with text.
8. How do you think the story would change if it were told from the comrade's point of view?
9. Re-read the last paragraph of the story. If Mashtinna's comrade hadn't given him back his sight, do you think Mashtinna would continue to be kind? Why or why not?
10. (Just for thought!) You probably all know somebody who reminds you of Double-Face. Picture the last time you saw that person giving somebody else a hard time. What did you do? If you didn't do anything, why didn't you? Next time, what do you think you would do?

**\*CHALLENGE: You can see in this story how a little kindness goes a long way. Heed the comrade's warning and go out of your way to be kind to somebody who may need kindness today!**