

FLY

until YOU



WINGS

Natasha Wanasinghe

Fly Until You Have Wings

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Greenhill International School Kandy

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Preface

Every story begins with an idea, an experience, or imagination. This story is about facing challenges—understanding what they bring to us and discovering whether there is a positive side to them. It explores the importance of perseverance, seizing opportunities, and shaping the talents within ourselves to reach our fullest potential.

Beyond personal growth, this story highlights the value of friendship—how it influences our lives in meaningful ways and how we should support our friends, especially in times of trouble.

I am deeply grateful to our English teacher, **Mrs. Shoba Rathnayake**, and our librarian, **Mrs. Hansika Ranaweera**, for their guidance and encouragement. My heartfelt thanks also go to our school principal, **Mr. Lalith Navarathne**, who constantly provides opportunities to help us develop our talents and skills. I extend my sincere appreciation to my parents, who stand by me through every struggle and success, making my journey easier. A special thanks to the esteemed writer and author, **Mr. Senevirathne Mahalekam**, whose guidance helped turn my dream of writing a book into reality.

I hope this story inspires readers, motivates them to face challenges with confidence, and encourages them to shape their skills and talents.

Natasha Wanasinghe

12.02.2025

Foreword

Literary development is a yardstick to measure the development of a country. The Kotte and Dambadeniya eras stand out in the history of the world because they were literary enlightening periods. If so, this is the golden period in the history of the *Mahamaya* as well. This is the reason why our daughters have been enchanting through book writing for many years now. It is a special event that our writers have succeeded in building a culture of writing books in the school and spreading it to the entire school system and this time involving the global student community in it.

Beyond this, this time the school community itself has also decided to rebuild the past Yatiwara writing tradition in the country in order to pay tribute to the founder of our school, **Karadana Atthadassi Thero**.

The *Pirivena* student monks have also taken up book writing "*The Herana Gatkarani*" project was introduced.

It is a matter of pride for me as the principal to lead the way in bringing about a qualitative change in the education of schools and *Pirivena* education through this academic and religious service, and it is also an achievement for the school.

This book, which is the result of recognizing one's innate talent at an early stage in life and turning to writing, will undoubtedly be a help for future education and future life.

Shashikala Senadheera,

Principal,

Mahamaya Girls' Collage, Kandy

Foreword

This my message which I pen with tremendous joy highlights the creativity, hard work, and dedication of the young writers of Greenhill International School. Moreover, this been our very first attempt in publishing a book with writings of our own young authors, permit me to express how proud I am in the accomplishments of the task given to all at Greenhill and my gratitude to teachers, parents, and mentors who supported the project. May I also emphasize the importance of storytelling, self-expression, and the power of words in shaping the future of these building leaders of tomorrow and the nation at large.

Finally, I encourage readers to appreciate and celebrate the students' voices while inspiring them to continue writing and sharing their ideas.

A special thank you to our librarian *Mrs. Hansika Ranaweera* and veteran writer and author *Mr. Seneviratne Mahalekam* for his guidance and support given to make our dream a reality.

"Duty First Pleasure Next"

Dr. Lalith Navaratne

Principal,

Greenhill International School, Kandy

Contents

- Morning Struggles
- Friendship that Never Fades
- The Great Opportunity
- Turning Point in Life
- What Happens in the Present

Morning Struggles

"Hey, Nethusara! Nethusara, wake up, boy! Just sleeping until the sun comes inside the house... You have to go to school today! Stop wasting time and get up. We are facing a huge difficulty. You should get up, get up... right now!"

Who is shouting like this? It's none other than Nethusara's lovely mother, Anuththara.

Anuththara is 40 years old, but she looks very beautiful. Every morning, she wakes up her son in the same way. To Nethusara, this is nothing new—it's just part of his daily routine. In fact, getting scolded by his mother has become a habit for him. If she doesn't scold him, he feels as if he hasn't had water the whole day.

"Ahh... okay, okay, Mom! I'm awake now... Please, just be quiet. I'm going, I'm going..."

Sigh. This is such a headache. I don't know when I'll be free from this mess.

This is Nethusara Wihaska. The way he talks is a little arrogant. He is just 17 years old—stubborn, playful, careless, and not interested in studying. He gets detention most of the time. Despite attending one of the best schools in the district, he doesn't take his education seriously.

His father passed away in a car accident when he was only two years old. From that day onward, his mother raised him with great difficulty.

That is why she constantly scolds him—to make sure he studies well and builds a better future for himself.

He didn't even know his father's face. The only thing he knew was his father's name—Pahan Wijeweera. He didn't even have a photo of him. So, he never really thought about it, but whenever he saw other kids with their fathers, a deep sadness crept into his heart. However, he never showed his feelings to anyone.

To the world, Nethusara always played a cold and indifferent character, but only he knew how much he was suffering inside. He loved his mother more than his own life.

When it came to studies, he was just an average student. However, he was highly talented in cricket. He also had a hidden talent—he could sing, but no one knew about it.

That morning, after grumbling and complaining about everything, he finally woke up angrily and went to take a wash.

“Mom, I’m done getting ready... Where’s my breakfast?”

“Just shut your mouth and look with your eyes instead of your mouth! Breakfast is on the table.”

This was their daily routine. Every morning was the same.

Finally, at 7:00 AM, Nethusara left home to reach school by 7:30 AM. He always arrived just after the first bell rang. If he got caught by the discipline head, his whole day would become a disaster—getting punished for some mischief or another. But by now, he was used to it.

“Ah, Nethusara, good morning! You’re the same, bro... Can’t change, huh?”

“Heh, that’s my style, dear. Don’t take it seriously.”

This was Pahasara Adhithya, Nethusara’s best and only friend. Since grade one, they had been as close as brothers. They couldn’t go a day without each other. Nethusara was the other half of Pahasara, and Pahasara was the other half of Nethusara.

Pahasara knew Nethusara better than anyone else—even better than his mother. Sometimes, Nethusara shared his hidden struggles and sadness with him. Like Nethusara, Pahasara was also talented in cricket, but he was slightly better at academics. He was also wealthier than Nethusara, but he never showed off or looked down on him. Instead, he always stood by his side, helping him through financial difficulties whenever needed.

That day, they attended their classes, did their usual mischief, and went back home.

Friendship That Never Fades

One day, Nethusara and Pahasara went to cricket practice. Although Nethusara stayed for the session, he wasn't feeling well. However, he didn't say anything to Pahasara.

With great effort, he pushed through the practice. But by the end of the session, Nethusara suddenly collapsed on the field.

Pahasara panicked and ran to him immediately. Without wasting a second, he carried Nethusara and rushed him to the hospital. He quickly informed Nethusara's mother, and together, they took him for medical attention.

After a long and thorough check-up, the doctor called Nethusara's mother and Pahasara aside to deliver shocking news.

"I believe you are Nethusara's mother and his friend?" the doctor asked gently. "Please try not to panic, but this will be difficult to hear. Nethusara has a heart condition. He cannot play cricket anymore—it's too risky for him. Even if he feels fine, his body won't be able to handle extreme exhaustion. It could be life-threatening. The good news is that with proper care, he may recover in two to three years. Until then, he must completely avoid sports. Also, keep him at home for at least a week to allow his body to rest."

Nethusara's mother broke down into tears, unable to bear the news. Pahasara stood there, stunned, his eyes filling with tears.

After receiving treatment, Nethusara was finally discharged and sent home. His medical expenses were entirely covered by Pahasara's

family, despite Nethusara's mother's reluctance to accept their help. Pahasara, unwilling to leave his best friend alone, stayed at Nethusara's house for an entire week to take care of him.

They initially tried to keep the truth from Nethusara, but he eventually figured out something was wrong. Realizing that there was no point in hiding it any longer, they decided to tell him everything.

When Nethusara heard the truth, he felt as if the world was spinning around him. His heart sank, but he didn't let anyone see his pain. Instead, he forced a smile and pretended to be completely fine. What else could he do? If he didn't smile, he would break.

Pahasara, on the other hand, was devastated that his best friend could no longer play cricket. He secretly decided to give up the sport as well, thinking it would be unfair to continue without Nethusara. But he didn't tell anyone—not yet. He knew if Nethusara found out, he would be furious. After all, Nethusara had a short temper and could get angry over the smallest things. His aggressive and stubborn nature meant that once he set his mind on something, he wouldn't back down—whether it was a good or bad decision.

Time passed quickly. Eventually, Pahasara told Nethusara about his decision to quit cricket.

Nethusara was outraged.

"Are you out of your mind?! What nonsense are you talking about?" he shouted. Furious, he scolded Pahasara and forced him to continue attending practice sessions. Not only that, but Nethusara made sure to go to every single practice with him. He sat through every session, watched every match, and stood by Pahasara's side in every tournament.

He became his friend's biggest supporter, motivating him at every step.

Each time Pahasara stepped onto the field, Nethusara's eyes filled with tears. But he never let anyone see his pain—not even Pahasara. The agony of losing the one thing he loved most was a burden he carried alone. Every match, every victory, every celebration—it was all a reminder of what he had lost.

He tried his best to hold back his tears, but some pains can only be understood by the heart.

“Hey, Nethusara! You know what, bro? We have a big match next week! You should come with me, ah?”

At that moment, Nethusara felt a sharp pain in his heart. A part of him ached with longing, but another part was genuinely happy for Pahasara. He had always dreamed of playing in a big match and proving his talent. Now, that dream was out of reach. Still, as always, he hid his pain behind a smile.

“Wow! I'm so proud of you. You should show your talent and bring victory to us. Definitely! You all can do it—I'll be there with you.”

Pahasara understood his feelings. He always did. More than anyone else, even Nethusara's mother, Pahasara could read him like an open book. Nethusara didn't have any other close friends—Pahasara was the only one who had always been there. Other students didn't like Nethusara much. Some avoided him because of his cold attitude, some were jealous of his talents, and some mocked him behind his back. But Nethusara didn't care—he had more important things to focus on.

“Nethusara, please don't be upset. I'm here for you. I promise—I'll bring back a medal or a trophy just for you. So, my boy, don't be sad, okay? I'm here because of you, dear.”

And that was true. Pahasara had come this far only because of Nethusara. It was Nethusara who had pushed him to attend practice,

scolded him when he was being lazy, and even helped him catch up on missed schoolwork.

“Yeah, you should! And anyway, just forget it—I’m not sad. I’m happy for you,” Nethusara said, forcing a smile.

Finally, the big day arrived.

Pahasara was busy preparing for the match, and Nethusara was always there to help him. When the time came, just before stepping onto the field, Pahasara turned and winked at Nethusara before running onto the ground.

The match was intense. It was competitive, and the scores were close. Only a few runs were needed for their school to win the championship.

And then, the final ball of the match was Pahasara’s.

His heart pounded, his hands felt cold, and he could feel the pressure weighing on him. He was nervous, almost afraid. His heartbeat raced.

But from the pavilion, Nethusara called out:

“It’s all okay. Just relax and do your best.”

That was all Pahasara needed. His best friend’s words filled him with strength and confidence.

As the bowler released the ball with all his power, Pahasara swung his bat with everything he had—**and hit a six!**

The stadium erupted with cheers. Their school had won the championship!

Among everyone, the happiest person in the crowd was Nethusara. Overwhelmed with joy, he ran straight to Pahasara and hugged him

tightly. At that moment, he couldn't hold back his emotions anymore—he burst into tears.

Quickly, Pahasara calmed him down, and together, they celebrated this incredible moment.

During the award ceremony, Pahasara was named "**Best Cricketer of the Event.**"

As soon as he received the award, he didn't hesitate—he ran straight to Nethusara and handed it to him.

Nethusara was speechless. He didn't know how to express his happiness.

That night, a grand celebration was held at Pahasara's house. Nethusara and his mother were invited, and together, they celebrated their happiness to the fullest.

That night wasn't just about winning a match.

It was about friendship. About dreams. About unbreakable bonds.

The Great Opportunity

Days, weeks, and months passed, and soon it was time for the term exams. The two friends started studying at their respective homes. If one stayed at the other's place one day, the next day, they would switch. They both worked hard, balancing their studies along with rehearsals for the upcoming concert.

Finally, the exam day arrived. With confidence, they both faced their papers.

When the exams were over, the entire class erupted in celebration—throwing ink water at each other, shouting, singing, and doing all sorts of mischief. Amidst the chaos, Nethusara picked up a guitar, walked to the center of the school ground, and sat down.

Then, alone, he began to sing.

At that moment, the sky darkened, and the rain started pouring heavily. But he didn't stop. He continued singing in the rain, lost in his own world.

Meanwhile, Pahasara was looking for him.

"Hey, did you see Nethusara?" he asked a few classmates.

"No, I didn't. Some teachers are looking for him too," one of them replied.

Just then, another voice spoke up.

"Mmm... should I come with you to find him, if that's okay?"

Pahasara turned to see Sihel—a student who never really liked Nethusara.

"Okay... but why all of a sudden? What happened? You usually don't even like to face him."

Sihel hesitated before replying.

"Yeah... yeah... sorry for all that. I just... I need to talk to him. I have to work with him and you for the concert agenda. That's why. And... I realized something. I know now the struggles he faces."

Pahasara stayed silent for a moment.

Sihel came from a wealthy family and had always been somewhat arrogant about it. Though he wasn't as talented as Nethusara

academically or musically, he had never acknowledged it before. But now, for some reason, he wanted to be friends with Nethusara and Pahasara.

Meanwhile, the teachers were also searching for Nethusara, but he was nowhere to be found.

Suddenly, Sihel pointed towards the school grounds.

"Look! Look! There he is—in the middle of the ground!"

Pahasara's heart pounded.

"What is he doing in this heavy rain?"

Without wasting a second, they both ran towards him.

What they saw left them stunned.

Nethusara was sitting on the wet ground, strumming the guitar, singing as the rain poured down on him. His voice echoed beautifully through the air, filled with deep emotion.

Sihel and Pahasara stood frozen for a moment before quickly calling the rest of the school to witness this unexpected moment.

As Nethusara finished his song, he slowly opened his eyes—only to be shocked at the sight before him.

The entire school was watching him in complete silence.

Confused, he hesitated for a moment before awkwardly smiling and looking at Pahasara, as if to ask, **"What just happened?"**

"Nethusara, you are incredibly talented. You should take part in the concert. I'm sure this is a great opportunity for you," the principal said with admiration.

Nethusara just smiled. Until this moment, the principal had no idea how talented he was.

"Yes, bro! You must sing a song in the concert!" Pahasara added excitedly.

"Yeah, yeah! I can even add a special event for you since we're preparing the agenda. So come on, I'll take care of it!" Sihel chimed in, surprising everyone.

Nethusara, confused, got up from his chair and walked over to Pahasara. "What's going on here?" he asked in a low voice.

Pahasara explained everything—the way his song had moved everyone, how the entire school wanted to see him perform again, and how this could be a turning point in his life.

"Nethusara, you should participate, son," his class teacher encouraged him. ***"As the principal said, this is a great chance for you. Who knows? This might even lead to bigger opportunities!"***

Pahasara kept pushing him as well. After much thought, Nethusara finally agreed. Maybe... just maybe... this could be a turning point in his life.

Reluctantly, he paired up with Sihel to work on preparing the concert agenda. That day, for the first time in a long time, Nethusara went home feeling genuinely happy.

His mother immediately noticed the change in him.

"Nethusara, what happened, son? You look so happy today," she asked with curiosity.

"Yes, Mom, I'm really happy because today, I sang a song in the middle of the ground alone. And by the time I finished, the entire school was surrounding me. They all requested me to participate in the concert!" he said, his eyes shining with excitement.

"In this heavy rain, you were in the ground?" she asked, slightly in a angry mood.

"Yes, Mom, but don't just see that part. See the opportunity I got! Ahh, you wouldn't understand!" he said playfully.

His mother sighed. *"Hmm... It's a good opportunity, I understand that, and I'm happy for you. But what if you catch a fever, son? You know how much I worry about your health. I don't even like to see you getting a small cold."*

Nethusara hugged his mother tightly and looked into her eyes. He could see so many emotions—love, concern, and pride.

"I'm sorry, Mom, for what I said and did," he whispered.

"There's no need to say sorry, son. I understand your feelings. You're happy about this, and that's what matters," she said, gently stroking his hair. *"Now, start practicing from tomorrow onwards. Enjoy your life, my dear. Stay determined and focus on your goals. You can succeed. My blessings are always with you, even when I'm not alive. I just want to see you happy. You are my strength, Nethusara."*

It was rare for Nethusara to cry, but his mother's words weighed heavily on his heart. His eyes welled up with tears.

His mother was his everything—his world, his only family. If anyone ever spoke ill of her, he wouldn't hesitate to fight back. She was his strength and his weakness.

From the next day, Nethusara began his practice sessions. Sihel, who was working closely with him, gradually got to know Nethusara and Pahasara better. He realized how kind and genuine Nethusara was, contrary to the cold, distant image everyone had of him.

However, these days, Nethusara and Pahasara couldn't meet as frequently. Pahasara was busy with cricket practice, while Nethusara

was focused on music rehearsals. Yet, whenever they had a break, they would run to find each other and talk.

Finally, the long-awaited day arrived.

Everyone was busy with their work, especially Sihel and Nethusara, who were in charge of the event's agenda. Teachers were making final preparations for the students, and Pahasara was running around, giving instructions, helping wherever needed.

After ten performances, it was time for Nethusara's turn.

Before going on stage, he quickly went to see his mother and Pahasara's parents.

Pahasara, being an only child like Nethusara, had a very close bond with him. Their families had become like one.

After meeting them, Nethusara ran to Pahasara.

"I'm going, bro... I feel so nervous," he admitted.

"Don't be scared. You can do it. Just relax. I'll be right in front of the stage, where you can see me clearly. You have nothing to worry about," Pahasara reassured him.

"Hmmm... okay then, I'm going," Nethusara took a deep breath.

"Good luck, Nethusara!"

"Okay, thanks, Sihel," Nethusara said as he stepped onto the stage.

The stage was dark. Spotlights turned on, shining brightly.

Through the glare of the lights, Nethusara could see his mother and Pahasara in the audience.

The music started.

He took a deep breath, calmed himself, and began to sing.

As he sang, he closed his eyes, letting the emotions of the song take over. He had chosen a song about his mother—one that resonated deeply with him.

The entire audience fell silent.

Many were moved to tears in the darkness.

Towards the end of the song, Nethusara himself became emotional. His voice wavered slightly, but he quickly regained control, holding back the tears. He finished the song with all his heart.

For a moment, there was silence.

Then—

A thunderous applause erupted.

The entire audience gave him a standing ovation.

His eyes searched for his mother. She was looking at him with tearful eyes, filled with pride.

Pahasara ran onto the stage and hugged him tightly. Sihel followed, congratulating him.

Nethusara then walked towards his mother. She embraced him, holding him close. Pahasara's mother and father also hugged him warmly.

The event was a grand success.

From that day onwards, Nethusara earned a special place in the school. Those who once refused to speak to him now wanted to be his friend. But Nethusara didn't trust them. He only spoke to those he truly cared about.

At the end of the concert, the principal called him privately.

What could it be about?

Perhaps, this was the real turning point of his life.

Turning Point of Life

About a week after the concert, Pahasara and Nethusara were unexpectedly called to the principal's office. They exchanged nervous glances, trying to recall if they had done anything wrong. While they had their fair share of mischievous moments, nothing had been *too* serious.

With curiosity and a bit of tension, they made their way to the office. As they reached the entrance, both took a deep breath, peeked inside, and spoke at the same time—

"Excuse me, sir."

The principal chuckled.

"Ah, come in, come in! Why do you two rabbits look so scared? I'm not going to eat you!"

Hearing this, both of them let out a small sigh of relief, but their curiosity and nervousness remained.

A few minutes later, the cricket coach and the music teacher also entered the office.

"Take a seat, sir. Take a seat, madam. So, what's the good news for these two?" the principal asked.

"Sir, we'll let them see it themselves. It's better than us telling them," the cricket coach said with a knowing smile.

"Yes, yes! That's correct," the music teacher agreed.

The principal handed them two sealed letters at the same time. Once again, Pahasara and Nethusara exchanged glances before opening them.

"Oh, these two rabbits are scared again! Relax, it's not a suspension letter!" the principal joked.

They hesitated for a moment but then tore open the envelopes. As they read the contents, their eyes widened in shock. Their hands trembled slightly as they looked at each other in disbelief. They felt like they were dreaming—unable to believe what they were seeing.

On one hand, they were overwhelmed with happiness; on the other, they were completely speechless.

"Yes, Pahasara, you saw it right! You have been selected for the Under-19 National Cricket Team!" the principal announced with pride.

"And you, Nethusara, have been selected for a live audition in a national music competition happening next month!"

They were so overwhelmed with joy that they could barely contain themselves. They wanted to scream in excitement, but since they were in the principal's office, they struggled to control their emotions.

"Congratulations to both of you! Honestly, I didn't realize you two were this talented. Now, it's time to showcase your abilities to the world."

"Yes, congratulations, boys! From now on, you must dedicate yourselves to your training and practice hard," the music teacher added.

"Hmmm... Practice well and bring us more victories. Ah, and one more thing—it's time for you two to stop your stubborn mischief and maintain your discipline. You both have a lot of

responsibilities now, so stay focused. Alright, you can go back to your classes. We will hold a special function tomorrow morning."

They nodded obediently, walked out of the office *decently*—and the moment they reached their classroom, they exploded with excitement.

They jumped, shouted, and celebrated with their classmates. As if things couldn't get better, their exam results were also surprisingly good this time.

When school ended, they rushed home to share the news with their parents. Their families were beyond proud, and to celebrate, Pahasara's family invited Nethusara over for a small party.

The next morning, as promised, the principal held a special assembly to announce their achievements to the entire school. Everyone cheered and congratulated them. After that, life returned to normal—but not for Pahasara and Nethusara.

They were now busier than ever. Their training schedules barely left them any time to meet.

Time flew by, and soon, the day of their competitions arrived. Unfortunately, since both events were happening at the same time, they couldn't be there to support each other in person.

That morning, before leaving, they both wished each other good luck.

They first went to their parents to seek blessings.

"God bless both of you. You can do this!" their parents said encouragingly.

"Mmm... We will be there before the event starts, so don't be scared."

"Yeah, yeah! Now go, darling," Nethusara's mother said, smiling warmly.

"Okay then, we're leaving. Bye! Come safely!"

They got on the bus together, chatting for a while, but as they neared their respective destinations, they had to part ways.

Nethusara turned to Pahasara and smiled.

"Bro, it's time for us to go. Don't be afraid. All the best!"

"You too, Pahasara. This time, we aren't there for each other. Good luck to you as well."

"Okay then... Bye! Be careful."

"Mmm... Bye."

And with that, they went their separate ways, stepping into the biggest moments of their lives.

Nethusara glanced around, expecting to see his mother, but she hadn't arrived yet. His heart tightened. A small voice in his mind whispered that something was wrong, but he refused to believe it.

Time passed. He tried calling her, but there was no answer. His chest felt heavier with each unanswered ring.

Then, the moment arrived—it was time for Nethusara's performance.

As always, he chose a song dedicated to mothers, pouring his emotions into every note. His voice carried a deep longing, a raw love that moved the audience. He sang through all three rounds flawlessly, but with every passing moment, his eyes kept searching for her in the crowd.

Still, she did not appear.

Now, it was time to announce the winners.

Six competitors were called onto the stage. Out of them, only the top three would receive prizes:

- **First place** – 500,000 rupees and an award.
- **Second place** – 300,000 rupees and an award.
- **Third place** – 200,000 rupees and an award.

The atmosphere was thick with anticipation. The competitors stood on stage, hearts pounding, hands slightly trembling. The audience held their breath, whispering guesses, their excitement filling the air.

The announcer walked onto the stage with a confident smile, holding the result sheet. He scanned the competitors, making eye contact with each one.

"Okay, the moment you've all been waiting for! Let's see if you can guess the winner!"

The crowd erupted into cheers.

"NETHUSARA! NETHUSARA!"

The announcer smirked in satisfaction, turning to look at Nethusara.

Nethusara stood frozen, his heart racing. But even at this moment, his eyes darted through the crowd, hoping—*praying*—that his mother would appear.

She didn't.

His fingers curled into fists. ***Any second now... she'll come. She has to.***

But deep inside, he knew—there was no magic in real life. No one was going to make her appear.

The announcer raised the microphone again.

"Alright then, let's not keep you waiting any longer. Here are the results!"

The hall fell silent.

"The third place... goes to... Nadun!"

Applause filled the hall as Nadun stepped forward to receive his prize.

"Now, who will take second place?"

The tension thickened.

"The second place goes to... Sithmi!"

A mix of cheers and gasps filled the room. Sithmi smiled as she stepped forward.

Now, only one name remained.

The audience buzzed with excitement.

"And now... the moment of truth. Who will be today's winner?"

The announcer teased the crowd, stretching the suspense.

"Is the audience's guess correct?"

"YESSSSS!" the crowd roared.

Nethusara felt lightheaded with anticipation, his entire body tingling with nerves. His vision blurred slightly—was this real? Was he dreaming?

The announcer smirked.

"Mmm... let's see... the winner is..."

A pause.

A heartbeat.

"The winner... is..."

The tension was unbearable.

"The... W...I...N...N...E...R... I...S..... YES! YES! IT'S NETHUSARA WIHASKA!!!"

For a moment, everything around him disappeared.

The world became silent.

Then, the sound came crashing back—cheers, screams, applause.

Nethusara felt a wave of emotions rush over him. His chest swelled with happiness; his hands trembled. He wanted to cry, to shout, to celebrate.

But then, as quickly as the happiness came, it vanished.

His eyes instinctively searched the crowd once again.

Still, she wasn't there.

His smile slowly faded. A hollow feeling crept into his chest.

Why isn't she here? Why now, of all times?

But he forced himself to smile again. He had to.

He stepped forward, received his prize, bowed, and thanked everyone. The event ended, and as the crowd dispersed, he rushed outside.

His eyes scanned the streets, searching for a familiar face. His mother. His mother's friend. Anyone who might know where she was.

But there was no one.

The joy of his victory suddenly felt meaningless.

With an empty heart, Nethusara pulled out his phone and called Pahasara.

"Hey bro! Guess what? I got first place! I feel so relieved, man. I feel like I'm floating! I won five hundred thousand rupees as a prize—and an award too! I can't wait to give it to Mom. She's going to cry, man... ah, she'll hug me so tight... Ane, I just want to see her face quickly!"

He was talking so fast that he barely took a breath.

"Oh... really, my dear? Ane, I'm so happy! I have no words to say! And yeah, as you said, Aunty will cry, man... she'll be so proud. As for me, we got the runner-up. If you had been with me, I could've done even better."

"Why, man? Okay, okay, wait—I'll come! But... ane, why didn't my mother come? Did your parents come? I feel like something bad has happened."

"Why do you think like that? My parents didn't come either. Wait, I'll call them."

"Mmm... okay."

They hung up. Nethusara immediately tried calling his mother again. This time, his phone rang, and he felt a rush of relief. But as soon as he answered, his blood ran cold.

His mother's voice came through the speaker, trembling, panicked... crying.

"H-Hello... Mom? What happened? Why didn't you both come? I was looking for you everywhere—"

Before he could finish, Pahasara's mother's voice broke in.

"Pa... Pahasara... just listen... but don't... don't panic... th... that... Nethu... Nethusara's... mo... mom has... has had an accident... hit... hit by a container..."

Pahasara froze.

"W-what...?"

"Dear... we're at the h-hosp... hospital... she... she didn't make it... sh... she passed... away... before... before she could be taken... to the hospital..."

The world around him blurred. His ears rang.

"Ane... how... how will he bear this...? I... I don't understand... please... come quickly..."

Pahasara felt like he was going to faint. The words repeated in his mind over and over, but he refused to believe them. His hands trembled as he clutched his phone.

"Hey bro! Guess what? I got first place! I feel like I'm floating! I won five hundred thousand rupees... I can't wait to give it to Mom. She'll cry, man... she'll hug me so tight... Ane, I just want to see her face quickly!"

The words echoed in his head. His heart ached.

Ane, Nethusara... what do I do, man? How... how can you bear this?

His fingers shakily dialed Nethusara's number.

"H-hello... ah... Nethusara... wait... wait there... I'm coming..."

"Eh? What happened, Pahasara? Wai—"

Before Nethusara could finish, Pahasara hung up. He couldn't hold back his tears anymore. He covered his mouth and sobbed.

Without wasting a second, he ran to the bus stop, got on the first bus to Nethusara's place, and clenched his fists the entire way.

When Pahasara arrived, he saw Nethusara standing outside, confused.

At first, Nethusara smiled. ***"Bro, you scared me! What happened? Why did you hang up so suddenly?"***

Pahasara couldn't bring himself to speak.

"Wait... why are your eyes red?" Nethusara's smile faded. ***"Did you get a message from my mom? I tried calling her just now... she isn't answering. Did something happen?"***

Pahasara's throat tightened. He couldn't say it.

How... how can I tell him? How do I say that the person he loves the most... is gone?

"Ane, Nethusara... how... how could you face this?" he thought to himself.

Nethusara stepped closer. ***"Pahasara... why aren't you talking? You're acting so weird."***

Pahasara quickly forced a smile. ***"Oh, no, no... I'm just happy for you, and a little sad about the match. That's all. Now, let's go."***

But Nethusara could feel it—something was wrong. Something was *very* wrong.

He followed Pahasara silently.

On the way, neither of them spoke a word.

When they reached the hospital, Pahasara took a deep breath, then grabbed Nethusara's hand tightly.

Nethusara looked at him, confused.

"Ah... I fell down during the match. I need to get medicine for my leg. Let's go inside. Don't ask any more questions."

His voice was strict.

Nethusara didn't like the way he was talking to him. Something wasn't right. But he followed him anyway.

They both stopped in front of the mortuary.

Nethusara frowned. ***"Hey... why are we here, man? Did a ball hit you while playing? See, even Uncle and Aunty are here..."***

Pahasara gave a small, sad smile and nodded.

Something inside Nethusara snapped. His patience was gone.

"Pahasara... enough of this! Stop acting and just tell me what's going on! Where is my mom? Why did you bring me here?!"

His voice echoed through the corridor.

Pahasara swallowed hard. ***"Just... be calm, Nethu—"***

"Calm?! RELAX?! HOW CAN I RELAX? WHERE IS MY MOM?!"

He was shouting now, his voice shaking with fear and frustration. He stormed toward Pahasara's mother, eyes burning with desperation.

"Aunty... please... don't tell me my thoughts are right. Nothing happened to my mom, right?"

Pahasara's mother hesitated, her eyes brimming with tears. She opened her mouth, her voice barely a whisper.

"Dear son... please listen... she... she won't come ba—"

"Aunty, ENOUGH! No... no... you're lying... Paha...!"

Before he could say another word, the world around him faded to black.

When Nethusara opened his eyes, he was lying on a hospital bench. His vision was blurry, but the first thing he saw was Pahasara sitting beside him, holding his hand tightly.

Nethusara sat up suddenly, gripping Pahasara's hands with desperate force. His voice cracked as he spoke.

"Pahasara... this is a dream, right? You're all just playing a joke on me, right? Tell me! WILL YOU TELL ME?!"

He shook Pahasara by his shoulders, his voice rising in hysteria.

Pahasara didn't say a word. He just pulled Nethusara into a tight hug, holding him as if trying to keep him from falling apart.

Minutes passed.

Finally, Nethusara pulled away, his eyes hollow. He walked slowly, almost lifelessly, into the mortuary.

His heart pounded in his chest as he stepped inside.

There, on the cold metal table, lay his mother.

Still. Silent. Wrapped in white.

His hands trembled as he reached for her.

"Mom... why are you sleeping like this?" he whispered. "I came now... see, I brought you a small gift... don't you want to wake up?"

His voice cracked.

"Am I alone in this world now, Mom? Just give me an answer, please... Now who will wake me up in the morning? Who will shout at me?"

Tears streamed down his face as he choked on his words.

"Mom... who will scold me like before? 'Nethusara, don't just look with your mouth, look with your eyes, son!' Tell me, Mom... do I deserve to be alone in this world? Do I not deserve your love?"

He clenched his fists.

"I never even saw my father... Am I that unlucky, Mom?"

He let out a shuddering breath.

Then, he smiled.

A broken, painful, but determined smile.

"Okay, Mom... be like this, then. Now it's my time to go too... but I promise you this—" he placed his trembling hand over her cold one "—the happiness you always wanted to see from me... I'll show it to you. I'll make you proud. I'll be strong."

A tear rolled down his cheek.

"Please forgive me, Mom. If I had been with you... if I had come with you... you wouldn't have left me like this. But don't be angry with me, okay?"

He bent down and kissed her forehead gently.

"I love you so much... You are my world."

His voice softened to a whisper.

"For the last time... please, tell me... 'Nethusara, you are my strength...'"

Silence.

Only the sound of his own quiet sobs.

Nethusara sighed and turned away—still smiling, but with a heart shattered beyond repair.

Nethusara turned to Pahasara, his eyes calm but distant.

"I want to go home... My mom is waiting for me."

Pahasara's eyes widened in confusion. He reached out, gripping Nethusara's wrist.

Nethusara smiled faintly and tapped his chest.

"For you all, she may not be in this world anymore. But for me... she's still here. She lives inside me, breathing within me."

With that, he stepped forward to leave.

Pahasara tightened his grip. ***"Nethu..."***

Nethusara chuckled softly. ***"Yeah, yeah, I know what you're thinking. But I'm totally fine, man."***

But they both knew—he wasn't

The funeral customs were held at Pahasara's home. Nethusara stayed with them for those days, and Pahasara made sure he was never left alone. Not even for a second.

Days passed.

"Eh, Pahasara... I'm going now. Thanks a lot. My mom is waiting, bro."

Pahasara watched him walk away, his heart heavy with worry.

Days turned into weeks. Weeks turned into months. Nethusara changed. He became colder, distant. It was as if he had locked away all

his feelings, refusing to let anyone in. Even Pahasara, his closest friend, felt the growing gap between them.

But Pahasara didn't let go. He stayed.

Exams approached, and both of them faced the challenge bravely—after all, they had always studied hard.

After the exams, Pahasara returned to his cricket practices. Nethusara, on the other hand, buried himself in his music.

During those months, he poured all his emotions into an album. Every song was about a mother's love, written by him, sung with the depth of his pain.

Finally, the exam results were released.

Both of them had passed—with **island ranks**.

At the same time, Nethusara's album was released.

It became a **massive hit**. His songs trended everywhere, and soon, he was invited to concerts and live shows. His schedule filled up with performances, while Pahasara focused on his cricket matches.

Though they were both busy, they **never lost contact**.

Nethusara worked relentlessly, pushing himself beyond limits. With determination, **he fulfilled the promise he made to his mother that day**.

He built the life he had always dreamed of.

But the most important person—the one he wanted to share it with the most—was no longer there to see it.

Even in his success, whenever he thought of his mother... he cried.

Through it all, Pahasara had played a **major role** in Nethusara's life. He had been more than a friend—he had been *a brother, a pillar of strength, a constant presence in the storm.*

We all need a friend like that.

Because with the right people beside us, even the hardest journeys become a **little easily.**

Flashback ends

What Happens in the Present

Nethusara sat at a café, staring into his coffee, lost in thought.

Across the table, Pahasara watched him silently. His friend had been like this for a while now—staring into the distance, lost in a world only he could see.

"Hey man, what are you thinking about so seriously?" Pahasara finally broke the silence.

Nethusara blinked, snapping back to reality. He looked up and smiled faintly.

"Oh no, bro, nothing. I just... drifted into my past." He exhaled, running a hand through his hair. ***"When did you come? Sorry, I didn't even notice you."***

Pahasara leaned back. ***"Why suddenly thinking about the past?"***

Nethusara glanced to the side, where a mother was gently patting her child's forehead. The little one had a fever, and the father stood nearby, worry evident on his face.

He sighed. *"I saw that mother crying because her child was sick. It reminded me of my mom... She was the same. She would cry whenever I wasn't feeling well."*

Pahasara nodded. *"Mmm... No need to be sorry. But don't think about it too much. Though... I know telling you this is useless."*

Nethusara chuckled. *"Come on, bro. This is life. We have to face challenges, and those challenges make us stronger. They taught me to stand on my own."* He patted Pahasara's shoulder. *"Don't get upset. Let's go. If you weren't with me, I wouldn't be here today. Thank you—a million times over."*

"Yah, yah, I've told you not to thank me so much," Pahasara said, rolling his eyes. *"And look at you—you're exhausted. What if you get sick? Take a rest before the concert, man."*

Nethusara shook his head, standing up. *"No, no, Pahasara. We have our work today. Not tomorrow, not later—today."* He grinned, raising his fist in determination. ***"WE SHOULD FLY... UNTIL WE HAVE WINGS"***

Pahasara smiled. *"Mmmm, let's go then."*

With that, they walked out of the café—side by side, as always.

THE END

Afterword

According to my concept, under the project that has been running since 2014 to direct school children to writing, we have been fortunate to have planted more than sixty thousand writer seedlings in the local literary field. The objectives of this project are to improve the quality of education, to promote literature that will contribute to the future development of the country, to hone the abilities of the future generation, and to build a platform to showcase the creations of children.

It is our social responsibility to create the fertile soil for those seeds to sprout and grow. This is the only project in recent history that has been implemented continuously for several years at the school level, provincial, national and international levels for the sake of the productivity of education. This time, it is special that the *Pirivena* student monks have also been involved in this. The nation should be grateful for the dedication shown by the Principal, daughters, teachers, parents and alumni of *Mahamaya Balika Vidyalaya*.

The printed book is still the main tool of our education. The enjoyment that a child gets from a book cannot be provided by anything else.

It is experimentally proven that the use of various electronic devices to store human knowledge and the distancing of children from books has been detrimental to the quality of education and has created various problems in society. This project, which is being implemented as a solution to this, has been adapting the smart younger generation of the digital age to modern technology by writing electronic works for the past two years, together with school children in the country.

To take their creations to international readers, Mahamaya girls have built a digital fiction for their own, literary creative abilities.

My congratulations to the young writers who have entered it through their creative abilities.

Project Founder and Coordinator,

Senevirathne Maha Lekam