

THE BIKER AND THE BOY

It was only a short exchange between two unlikely friends on a sunny day in an amusement park.

The one, a biker in a black leather jacket, and the other, a teenager in wheelchair. The biker, also a diplomat in a foreign embassy, and the boy, a crippled cancer patient.

But whatever their age and other differences, on this day, the two shared one thing: the biggest smiles you ever saw. Peter had rounded up his club, Krimson Kross, to do a FunDayTion outing for 25 kids with cancer. And the newly-built dinosaur park was perfect for this occasion.

A typically warm Philippine sun shone down on all 63 people present for the excursion--children and parents, sponsors, and volunteers. Soon, the day had ended and while a TV camera crew rolled, capturing some of the children's smiles and bursts of joy, that quick conversation took place, in a moment when nobody was listening.

"I hope you enjoyed the day," said Peter to Ian, the teen in the wheelchair. "And we will see you again next time!"

Ian's voice seemed to fade a little as he replied: "For me, there won't be a next time."

I struggled to translate Ian's words to Peter, and waited for his response. I had heard the children say things like this a number of times--they were all chronically-ill--and I wondered how Peter would react.

His face remained calm, his eyes fixed with sincerity as he patted Ian's shoulder.

"That's not true," Peter answered, "You're strong!"

And Ian answered back, not with words, but with a glowing smile which told the whole world that indeed he was, because someone believed he could make it.

I don't know who was stronger that day--the biker, with his words of confidence, or the young boy, with his quiet, resilient spirit.

But I did know that Peter's words were an act of faith.

The children had all lived to see another day, and maybe they would see much more, if only others cared enough to make their time on earth one worth remembering for life.

I for one, had known many boys like Ian, wheelchair-bound and ready for that last terminal stop. They would barely pass from this hour to the next and surely from this night to a darker one.

But then, I had also been blessed to know the few folks like Peter, who took on the challenge of giving the children hope for today...and yes, maybe even tomorrow.

--Nyx Martinez

(--For pictures of this story, see photos by Andy Maluche

<http://flickr.com/photos/andymaluche/sets/72157610878900048/>)