

Some Glue, a Few Questions---and the Police Come for One Boy

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Some Glue, a Few Questions---and the Police Come for One Boy

The two boys sat, quiet but uncomfortable, on wooden chairs along one wall of the office that is headquarters for the two security agents assigned to Hamilton High.

They had been spotted near the school's bike racks by a teacher who summoned security. Glue had been squirted on the wall and doors of a building and on a number of bicycle seats.

One security agent, Johnny O. Nevels, is out inspecting the damage. The second security agent, Arnold Tanner, has informed the boys of their legal rights, but is having little success in getting them to talk.

"It always pays to tell the truth, fellows," he tells them, "because 90% of the time we have some good witnesses."

Without making a firm promise, Tanner is suggesting that if they make a clean breast of things, they may only have to face a reprimand and clean up the damage.

Nevels, the first security agent, returns and tells the two: "You're already in trouble—malicious mischief."

The two boys decide to talk. The first takes all the blame and says the second boy—a friend of his—was only a bystander and had nothing to do with it.

"I picked up the glue from the ground," the first boy admits. "I wanted to see if there was anything in it. So I hit it with my foot."

He laughs, embarrassed, and continues, "I put glue on the seats." He also admits to squirting the walls.

That is enough for Nevels, who promptly says to the first boy: "You're under arrest. Malicious mischief."

The boy is told to empty out his pockets, which he does. His hands are then cuffed behind him. "Hey, man," the boy protests, "you just want to show off."

Tanner and Nevels go outside to confer, and Tanner returns. "Eight or 10 bicycle seats. All over the wall. All over," he says in a sadly disapproving tone.

The first boy, meanwhile, is angry because he thought he had made a deal to clean up the mess, get a reprimand, and that would be it.

Tanner reminds the boy that no promises were made and explains again that it is good to tell the truth because, now, the police will be easier on him.

He tells the boy he has committed a "criminal act." The boy looks dubious.

Now the boy, telling Tanner he has never been

arrested before, wants to know what will happen. Tanner says he will probably be taken to the police station where his mother will be called to pick him up.

"I still get a chance to come back in school, do I?" the boy asks, getting worried.

Tanner says that is up to the school administration.

Boys Vice Principal Leonard George enters, gets an explanation from Nevels who has returned in the meantime, and tells both boys: "You're automatically suspended. It'll be a three-day suspension."

The first boy tries to disclaim responsibility for all the damage, and suggests someone else did some of it before he arrived at the bike racks.

"You had the glue in your hand when the teacher caught you. That's enough for me," Nevels says.

The second boy, meanwhile, is protesting the vice principal's decision to suspend him also.

"You were with him and that's all I need," George says.

Tanner tells the first boy that his mother is responsible for the damage and may end up having to pay for it.

"You ought to know better than that," he says. "Why put your mother in that position?"

The second boy asks Tanner to intervene on his behalf with the vice principal, who has left the room:

"Why didn't you walk away?" Tanner asks him. "All you had to do was walk away."

Two Los Angeles policemen arrive. They inspect the damage, return to the office, and one reads the boys their legal rights. The other asks: "What's the story here? What happened? You tell me."

The story is retold by the first boy. The policeman tells the second boy that what happens to him is up to the school. To the first boy, though, he says: "You're coming with me."

The policeman is solicitous about the hat that the first boy, handcuffed, is unable to place on his head. The policeman asks the boy how he wants to wear the hat, tries a couple of positions, finally puts it in place. The boy grins weakly.

Nevels needs his handcuffs back, so they are removed from the boy and replaced by the policeman's handcuffs.

The boy protests, and asks the policeman why he is being handcuffed.

"It's because it makes me feel good," the policeman says, lightly.

"It doesn't make me feel good," the boy says. "It ain't supposed to," the policeman responds.