

## Entry #4

Saturday, April 23, 1958. Shermer High School, Shermer, Illinois, 60062. Dear Mr. Roberts, while I agree that Joey Mitchel should have to spend every Saturday in detention, I don't think me or Aaron did anything wrong. Joey started it and Aaron was just breaking us up. Let's agree that it was all a misunderstanding and that Joey should sit in here alone for the rest of the day. Sincerely, Richard Vernon.

"Mr. Roberts! I'm finished." The principal kept his eyes fixed on last week's newspaper.

"You can't be finished. It's only been ten minutes."

"Can you please just read it?" Mr. Roberts waved him over, still not looking up. Rick slapped the paper onto the table. Mr. Roberts licked his fingers and looked at it for a couple of seconds. He stroked his mustache.

"Start over."

"What? You're joking!" The principal stared at him.

"It's barely a paragraph. I told you to write a whole page, Richard."

"Okay, so I'll just add onto it."

"You could, yes, but blaming the whole thing on Mr. Mitchel is hardly acknowledging your mistake." Joey looked up.

"You did *what*?"

"I blamed the whole thing on you, because I didn't do anything!"

"Didn't *do* anything? You must have a very selective memory then because I recall you doing quite a lot!" Mr. Roberts slid the paper back to him. "You should both think long and hard

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about how you're going to learn to get along or you'll be back here next Saturday."

"Look what he did to my face!" Rick said, displaying the shiner on his left eye. "He should've been expelled, not put in detention!"

"You're lucky you can still eat without a straw!"

"Shut up, both of you," Aaron said. Joey glared at him.

"Stay outta this, jockstrap."

"Mr. Mitchel, I'm warning you. One more word and you're booked for the rest of the month."

"Yeah right. You really want to spend every Saturday coming here to babysit me?"

Mr. Roberts went quiet.

"Just stop fighting, all of you. And write your papers." Rick went back to his desk and flipped his paper over.

Thursday, April 21

"Hey Vernon!" Joey yelled from down the hall. "You think that's funny or something?" The hallway cleared as he zeroed in on Rick's locker.

"I'm sorry, I just couldn't take it anymore."

"You little snitch! I knew it was you!" Joey grabbed him by the shirt with both hands and pinned him against the wall. He gathered his saliva and spat right in Rick's face. "I *told* you not

to tell anybody! Our business is between you and me.” Tears formed in Rick’s eyes.

“If you would just leave me alone, I wouldn’t have had to!”

“You’re a *loser*! What do you expect me to do, give you a high-five?” “Let go of me!” Joey slammed him again.

“Or what? Are you gonna bite me or something?” Rick reached into his open locker and smacked Joey in the face with his textbook. Joey fell back and groped the red mark on his face.

“cute.”

“Shut up!”

“Then lose the book and fight me like a man.” Rick slammed the book on the ground and made a fist. His eyes were wide. The whole school was circled around them. “Quit stalling! Hit me!” Joey was hunched over like he was waiting for him to give him a kiss on the cheek. Rick swung as hard as he could. Joey didn’t even stumble before unloading on him. He tackled him and sucker punched his face until his knuckles bled. “Remember this next time you feel like running your mouth.” Aaron shoved his way through the crowd.

“Hey Joe! Leave him alone!” Joey’s smile faded. He stood up and kicked Rick in the ribs.

Aaron exploded toward him and tackled him into the wall. They twisted each other to the ground. Joey pinned him and repeatedly slammed his head on the floor. Rick struggled to get to his feet. He trudged towards the others and jumped on top of Joey, putting him in a choke hold. Joey went pale and fought for air. Mr. Roberts finally stormed down the hall.

“If you want to continue going to this school, break it up now!”

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An hour had gone by and Rick's page was still blank. He tapped his eraser on the table and rested his head.

"I apologize," Mr. Roberts said, "I have to go take care of a family emergency. Mrs. Harris has agreed to step in for me, but she won't be here for another half an hour." He put on his coat and headed for the door. "Aaron is in charge. I want no funny business before she gets here. She didn't have to say yes and I don't intend for her to regret it." The door creaked closed. Joey pushed his desk towards the door. "That's disappointing. I was hoping it would be you Ricky."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I guess you deserve it. I never would've gotten to where I am today without your help." Aaron sat up.

"What are you doing?" Joey ignored him and dragged another desk. "I'm not kidding man."

"Ha, Ha, Ha! Boy, I've gotta hear you when you *are* kidding. You must be a *riot*." "I can't get in trouble again or coach will have to bench me."

"Oh no, what will we ever do without our star outfielder! What if, no. I can't even say it. What if we lost a game?"

"Move the desks back from the door before I come over there and make you." Joey laughed and grabbed another desk. "I'll stop when Ricky apologizes." "What? No way!"

"Okay. Your loss." Aaron inched towards him.

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“Cut the crap alright. What do you think is going to happen when Mrs. Harris shows up and the doors are blocked?”

“Well gee, I never thought about that! Crap! I guess I *have* to put them back, don't I?”

“Do what he says.”

“Say you're sorry.”

“Why do you even care so much anyway? You get in detention every week.” “Do you really want to know?”

“Well yeah, it's kind of important!”

“Nah. You wouldn't even care anyway.”

“Maybe not, but at least I'll know what I'm not apologizing for.”

“You know what, fine. Not every trip to detention comes with a phone call home. This one did.”

“So? A phone call! That's all this is about! A phone call!”

“I knew that's what you would say. You wouldn't understand, with your A's and B's and your nice family with both parents hanging around to say, ‘how's school sport?’” Aaron and Rick didn't know what to say. “You know what? Aaron, stay out of my way or you'll never see any field again for the rest of your life.” He dropped the desk he was holding and crept towards Rick. He cracked his knuckles.

“If you hit me again you'll get expelled.”

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“I’m counting on it.” He bolted towards him. Rick shot out of his chair and rounded the bookshelf. Joey grabbed books from off of the shelf and whipped them at him.

“Joey, leave him alone.”

“You stay out of this! This is between me and Ricky.” Joey picked a side of the bookshelf to chase him. Rick ran around it on the other side. Joey stopped and reached through the books, grabbing Rick by the collar of his shirt. He pulled him to the end of the bookshelf and threw him on the ground.

“Why can’t you just leave me alone?” Rick cried.

“I hate you.” He kicked him in the ribs over and over. When he tried to sit up, he stomped him back to the ground. Rick gasped for air. Joey didn’t stop kicking until Aaron pulled him away from him, already unconscious on the ground.

“What did you do! He needs to go to the hospital!” Now Joey was starting to cry. He pounded the bookshelf.

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Call an ambulance.”

“Okay, but you’ve gotta get out of here. I’m pretty sure you could go to jail for this.”

“Promise you won’t tell them it was me. Please.”

“Okay, if you promise to never give Rick trouble ever again.”

“Deal. But what if Rick tells somebody?”

“Don’t worry. I’ll tell him you promised.”

“Okay. I’m sorry.” Aaron went to go get the phone and when he looked back, Joey was gone.