

WAYNE COUNTY SENIOR GAMES

LITERARY ARTS

SHORT STORY

PUSHED TOO FAR

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Pushed Too Far

We were taught to be respectful to adults. Afterall, they are our elders. We taught our children and their children the same thing. Any child who came to our house was expected to do the same thing, or they could not stay at our house. Parents stood together on this behavior. There was never any question when it came to this expectation. You were respectful. Period.

So, help me to understand what has happened in our society? When did things change? Why did they change? When did it become acceptable for a child to speak to an adult in just any manner? Worse than that, explain why some parents stand by and defend this behavior! I just don't get it! This is not the way things were supposed to be! I simply cannot wrap my mind around this change in society.

All these thoughts and more were moving around in my head as the police officer was telling me to put my hands behind my back. The click of the handcuffs was such a foreign sound to me. What was happening right now? Why were the police here and talking to me like I had done something wrong? In my present state of stupor, I could not focus. Too many thoughts were moving through my head! Why didn't I recognize anyone around me?

I remember I was home. The children were coming soon for tutoring. Where were they? Did they arrive yet? Were they alright? Were they seeing what was happening? Do they know why this was happening? If I could only find one of them to ask.

Then I saw a familiar face, my friend Nurse Holliman. But wait. Why is she in her EMS uniform, and pulling a stretcher? Why is an ambulance here? Why is she looking at me in such a look of disbelief, like she didn't even know who I was? **WHAT IS HAPPENING?!**

I see the children now, but they are crying. Why? I need to console them, but the officer yanks me back and won't release my arm. Am I under arrest? Why? **WHAT IS HAPPENING?!** Why won't someone tell me what is happening, and why I have on handcuffs? All the police shows I have ever seen are racing through my head, and before I know it, I am shouting, "I know my rights! You can't arrest me

without reading me my rights! You have to tell me why you think I should be arrested!” Everyone is looking at me as if I have lost my mind! WHAT IS HAPPENING?!

Finally, I see another familiar face. It is Detective Reed from my church. She is walking towards me with a very serious look on her face, yet there is calmness and, I think, compassion in her face. She whispers something to the officer holding on to my arm, and the officer releases me. Detective Reed nods in the direction of some trees. No one else is there, so we head in that direction. She turns and faces me and asks me what happened. I am totally clueless, and I tell her that. “You don’t remember hitting Mr. Jones in the face with your iPad mini?” I look at her incredulously.

“You don’t remember pouncing on him as he fell backwards, and hitting him over and over again with that iPad?” Still nothing registers.

“You don’t remember your husband grabbing you around the waist and pulling you off of Mr. Jones?” Still no recollection.

“You know you should not have threatened his child. Why were you surprised when this dad confronted you....”

Her voice fades as the memory of what just occurred began to rush to the forefront of my mind! It all came back! I understand what is happening now!

Time and time again I have reminded LaVontae of the way he should talk to me when he comes for tutoring. “You are in my house, so you follow my rules. You will speak with respect, use low tones, and never roll your eyes or smack your lips when talking to me.” I’m old-school and follow old-school rules. However, lately LaVontae has been behaving like he is itching for a fight. I have spoken to his dad about the many times that LaVontae seems to “forget” the rules. Unfortunately, his dad always has an explanation, reason, or excuse for the behavior. Two days ago, I told LaVontae, his dad, and his mom if things did not change, LaVontae will no longer come to me for tutoring. I am not LaVontae’s peer, so he doesn’t get to talk to me like I am. I am old enough to be his grandmother! That behavior make work at home, but there is no place for it here. Dad needs to man up and talk to LaVontae about his behavior,

rather than simply saying (in a very passive voice), “We’ll talk about this when we get home.” Talk about it now, while it’s fresh and I am here with you. That never happened.

I remember LaVontae walking into the house with a chip as big as a house on his shoulder. I asked him what the problem was, and he just looked at me, shrugged his shoulders, and turned his head. Strike one. I let him know that it is obvious that something is troubling him. I suggest that we talk about it, and he responds, “You ain’t my momma! I ain’t gotta tell you sh**!” HOLD UP! That just ended the game! I told him to get his stuff and get out of my house! You are ten years old! Why do you think that this is acceptable?

I forgot that the other two students were already in the house when this happened. I did not care! He’s got to get up outta here! Fortunately for him, his dad is just backing out of the driveway. I tell LaVontae to stop his dad, tell him what just happened, and why he has to leave! I was so furious and deep in my feelings, I knew it was not the time to go directly to the dad. I went back in the house and waited for him to come to me.

It was not long before there was a knock on my door. The dad and LaVontae were standing there. I told the dad he could come in but not his son. He wanted to explain why his son needed to come into the house, but I cut him off by telling him, “NOT TODAY!”

The dad had LaVontae stand outside as he and I discussed what had happened. Things were going well until the dad said, “If you would not be so unreasonable and stop pushing him so hard, he probably would not talk to you like that. He only talks like that when he feels threatened.”

“He’s ten!” I shout. “No ten-year old gets to talk like that! EVER! Especially in my house!” “Well, if you did not have such high demands! Don’t shrug your shoulders. Respond with “Yes ma’am or No ma’am.” Don’t smack your lips. And do not roll your eyes. Who do you think you are any way?” The dad completed his thought like he was challenging me! And in my house! He continued. “LaVontae is just a little boy. Instead of becoming upset with him, you need to try to understand him. Afterall...”

Those were the last words I remember hearing some out of his mouth. I don’t remember picking up the iPad mini. I do remember watching myself hit Mr. Jones square in the face with it! I remember

jumping on him as he fell backwards and just plummeting him with the device as I screamed at him in words that were incoherent even to me!

I am mortified at my behavior! I look towards Nurse Holliman. She just shakes her head in disbelief. Officer Reed notices the look of pain, humiliation, and concern on my face, and says, “Don’t worry. It’s just a broken nose. It could have been a lot worse if your husband had not been there to stop you.”

At that very moment, I hear my husband say, “Do you think I can talk to her for a minute please? We won’t leave this spot.” Officer Reed nods and walks away to give us some privacy. When my husband turns around to face me, I bury my head in his chest and begin to cry and wail like a wounded animal! He lets me get it out for a few minutes before he tries to console me and calm me down. Once I’m calm, he tells me that I am under arrest for assault. Apparently one of the kids called the police while he was trying to pull me off of LaVontae’s dad. An attorney has been called and will meet us at the police station. Officer Reed rejoins us and lets us know it is time to go. With great remorse and sorrow, I go with her.

After I have been booked, photographed, and fingerprinted, I am taken to a room where I can privately talk with my attorney. My husband had explained everything when I suddenly realize I recognize the voice and face of the attorney to whom my husband is speaking. It’s one of my former fourth grade students! I am really mortified and terrified now. She looks at me, pats the back of my hand and says, “I’m glad you recognize me. I am even more pleased that you called me. I know you as a person and teacher. We will plead “temporary insanity”. Remember how you used to say that teachers are crazy because they must be certified to teach and when you are crazy you are certifiable? I understand now. This is the perfect defense. I would probably lose my mind if some ten-year-old child cursed at me! The dad added insult to injury by defending his child’s behavior. I’ve got you. It will be okay. You were just pushed too far today.”