

889 Words

Baseball or Chores?

by

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Jimmy wiped sweat from his face and surveyed the weeds invading the flower bed along the front walk. Dad would be coming home soon after a two-week business trip, and although the lawn was mowed and trimmed, the weeds were an eyesore. They had to go. Jimmy dropped to his knees and began the tedious process of pulling the weeds while skipping the flowers.

“Hey, Jimmy, are you coming? A bunch of us are going to the field to hit some baseballs.”

Jimmy looked up and sighed. Decisions can be tough when yard work is stacked against baseball.

“I’d love to play, Joe, but I need to finish my chores. I’ll try to get finished and join the game later.”

Joe kicked his bike pedal and shook his head, “Man, you work hard. Maybe next time.”

Jimmy watched Joe’s carefree ride down the sidewalk. He determined to conquer the weeds, certain his choice was the right one.

Jimmy was putting the tools away when Mom stepped onto the porch with a tall glass of lemonade.

“Jimmy, the yard looks great, and your Dad will be happy he can rest Saturday instead of working in the yard. Are you thirsty? By the way, Mr. Scott just called and wondered if you could help him for a while. He says it’s important.”

Jimmy finished the lemonade in record time. He had another choice to make—baseball or help Mr. Scott?

“I was hoping to meet the guys at the field, but I can stop to see what Mr. Scott needs.”

“I’ll call him back and tell him you’re on your way.”

Mr. Scott lived near the ball field and knew more about gardening and wildlife than anyone Jimmy had ever met. Jimmy mowed the man’s lawn and often helped with the flower gardens. The pair had teamed up on several projects in Mr. Scott’s shop, and their current venture was a bird feeding station. Jimmy designed it and planned to enter it in the town fair in a few months.

A police cruiser with flashing blue lights blocked Mr. Scott’s driveway. The yard was a shambles. The pristine white picket fence was broken in several places with pickets scattered among the rose bushes. Mr. Scott’s trash cans were overturned and litter fluttered across the grass. Spray painted designs marred the side of Mr. Scott’s sky blue house.

“Mr. Scott, are you alright?”

Mr. Scott put his arm around Jimmy’s shoulders.

“I am fine, Jimmy, but my yard is a mess. Officer, this is my friend Jimmy. He helps in my shop, and I called him to help me straighten things up.”

“You have a big job ahead of you, son. Mr. Scott, you take a minute to get Jimmy started while I call in. And don’t you worry. We’ll catch the guys who did this.”

As the officer walked away Mr. Scott pushed a broken picket away from his prized Mr. Lincoln rose bush using the tip of his cane. Jimmy could not miss the sadness on the man’s face.

“What happened, Mr. Scott?”

“Vandalism, Jimmy. One person destroys something belonging to someone else. And there never seems to be a good reason.”

Jimmy ran to the shop behind the house and returned with a rake and shovel. Baseball will just have to wait.

“I’ll get this trash cleaned up first then we can look at the fence.”

Jimmy raked trash into piles then scooped it with the shovel to drop into the can. As he worked Mr. Scott finished with the police officer.

Squeaking bike brakes interrupted Jimmy’s thoughts. Joe’s glove hung from his handlebars, and the bat was wedged under the seat. The ball game was over.

“Hey, Jimmy. What’s up?”

Jimmy explained about the vandals.

Joe stepped off his bike. “What a mess. Let me help.”

“That would be great, Joe. Have you met Mr. Scott?”

“Glad to meet you, sir. We just finished a game so maybe I can catch some of the guys, and we can give Jimmy a hand.”

Joe pulled his cell phone and thumbed text messages.

Soon other boys joined the cleanup crew. With Mr. Scott’s direction the workers picked up broken pickets and repaired the fence.

“Mr. Scott, we’ll need to replace the broken boards.”

“Behind the shop next to the compost pile is a stack of new pickets, Jimmy.”

The boys completed the fence in record time. Joe inspected the paint sprayed along the house.

“This is dry but it might come off with some rubbing. Let me call my Dad and see what he thinks.”

While the crew cleaned the house, Mr. Scott ordered pizzas.

“Gentlemen, thank you for giving your beautiful afternoon to help an old man clean up his yard.”

Joe nodded.

“Sir, your yard always looks nice, and my Mom says you make the neighborhood a better place. She loves your flowers.”

“Please tell her to stop by and chat anytime, and boys, that goes for you, too.”

“Mr. Scott, we’ll be here in the morning. If I know Jimmy he will be painting the fence, and if all of us pitch in to help he’ll be free to play baseball after lunch.”

Joe turned to Jimmy.

“Deal?”

Jimmy stretched. The day’s work had made him tired, but it was a good tired.

“It’s a deal, Joe.”