

924 Words

Baseball or Chores?

by

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Jimmy wiped sweat from his face and sighed. Dozens of weeds had invaded 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 looked terrible. They had to go. Jimmy dropped to his knees and began 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. Yard work or baseball! What a choice!

“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 as Joe pedaled down the sidewalk. He decided to conquer the weeds at high speed.

“I know my choice is right, but I would rather play baseball.”

Jimmy finished the job and 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 that he can rest Saturday instead of doing yard work. Are you thirsty?”

“Thanks, Mom. I am so thirsty I could drink from a puddle!”

Jimmy chugged the lemonade.

“By the way, Mr. Scott just called and wondered if you could help him for a while. He says it’s important.”

Now Jimmy 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 often mowed the man’s lawn and helped with the flower gardens. The pair had teamed up on several projects in Mr. Scott’s woodshop, and their current project was a bird feeding station. Jimmy designed it and planned to enter it in the town fair in a few months.

A police car with flashing blue lights blocked Mr. Scott’s driveway. The yard was a mess. The 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.

Jimmy skidded to a stop, parked his bike, and ran up the driveway.

“Mr. Scott, are you OK?”

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, I’ll give you 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. That is when one person destroys something belonging to someone else. And there never seems to be a good reason for it."

"We'll get it cleaned up, Mr. Scott!"

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

"I'll pick up this trash first."

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.

“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 repair in record time.

“You boys are great workers,” Mr. Scott said.

Joe inspected the paint sprayed along the house.

“This paint might come off with some cleaner and scrubbing. I help my dad paint houses all the time.”

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

“Men, 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 his aching arms. The day’s work had made him tired, but it was a good tired.

“It’s a deal, Joe.”