

Part 1 - Times and Places

Chapter 12 - Discipline

When Father comes home from the war, my spoiled life changes. After ignoring simple instructions, my little butt is slapped. As I grew up, my bigger butt is strapped with Father's belt. Mother never hit me.

To deal with this, I do segregated behavior: one style when Father is home and the other when I am home alone with Mother. Then Mother and Brother started ratting on me. Father imposes more punishment. I have nowhere to hide except MomMom's. I always behave there.

From age 5 through 10, the most tough times are at the dinner table on Walnut. Mother often fixes pot roast with potatoes. I love mashing the potatoes and covering them with French dressing. Then I cut up the beef or venison and mix it into an orange mush. Somehow, this meal makes me ravenously hungry.

Father is always in his training mode. He constantly watches for fast eating, chewing with mouth open, sitting up, elbows off the table, etc. Sometimes he verbally warns me. Mother warns me as well. But sometimes the food is too tempting, and I lose myself in it. Then it happens.

Father reaches out while I not watching. He blindsides me with a hard slap across the face. The force almost knocks me off the chair. Right in the middle of my favorite meal, Father invokes hate from me. I cry. He will not let me leave the table. Brother is never done this way. Mother leaves the room and cries too. I am trapped. I do not want to eat at the same table with Father for the rest of my life. This happens many times. It is hard to forgive.

Other misbehavior events like riding my bike down in the forbidden riverbed or lying about something gets a strapping from Father. As I get older the strapping subsides and he makes me sit for about 15 minutes while he stares at me. That never works either. One late afternoon in my early teens, he decides to get the belt out again. I refuse to accept the punishment. We get into a wrestling match in the middle of the dining room. Chairs go everywhere. Mother is yelling. Brother is standing away looking frightened. I manage to put Father on the floor. I stand over him. I try to explain that the belt will no longer work. I feel ashamed for dominating my own father. I apologize to him. I try to help him up.

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When on his feet, he lands a right hook on my jaw, and I go down. (*that worked*). I stay down and let the event soak in. Brother says that Father knocked me out. I eventually get up and leave the scene. He never apologizes.

I have a very good 10th-grade English teacher. Mr. W appreciates my work. I do not misbehave in his class. Except for one time. It is the morning of the final exam at 1st period. I am in class well before the bell. Mr. W comes in, drops the printed test forms in the bottom drawer of his desk, and walks out.

There are two girls studying in the class. I do not know why I do it, but I go to the desk, pick up the stack of tests and wave them at the girls. I put them right back in the drawer without reading the test questions. I return to my desk. How stupid that was.

Two days later, Mr. W takes me to the principal's office. Mr. N sits us down. I am asked if I stole the test. I say "No", but I did pick it up before I was supposed to. I told him exactly what happened. Mr. N asks Mr. W about my behavior and performance. Mr. W. stands up for me and tells Mr. N that I have an "A+" for the course. Mr. N then pronounces the punishment. I can either take the 10th-grade course again and try for an "A+" or accept a "B" for this one. Shucks, that was an easy decision.

I manage to intercept the mail from the school. I never figured out which girl told on me.

In 11th grade English, I have a weak teacher, Ms. H. I do not sit still for weak teachers. I get in trouble a couple of times and Ms. H sends me to the Office. The Vice-Principal tells me if I am sent in again, I will be withdrawn from the course and sit in study hall.

I love to show off. Ms. H has a big standup placard advertising a play near the front exit door. Ms. H leaves the room. I decide to play around, go to the front of the room, and move the sign into the doorway. Then I hustle back to my desk. I do not make it. Ms. H writes a note and tells me to go to the VP.

I sit. I tell her I cannot go. She tells me again. The class is frozen in silence. What's going to happen? I say "No" and explain that it will mean that I will have to drop the course and lose the credit. I ask her to give me one more chance and she will have no more problems with me. She lets it go, thank God. The class relaxes. I received an A in the course and a few points with the girls for being a "bad boy".

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I have a car for all 3 years of high school,. I go steady with a different girl every 3 weeks. A new girl moves to town. "S" is a 10th grader. I am an 11th. She is beautiful, has a locker near mine, and I am available. We talk. I get a date with her. We get along lovingly. I ask her if she wants to shoot a hook and let me show her the Bottomless Lakes Park east of town.

On Friday at lunch, we sneak out to my car and start out 2nd street. We stop for gasoline. We get to the Park. We 'park". I mention skinny-dipping and she seems to be game, but the water is like 50 degrees. So, we park some more and come home. Father gets a call from the gas station owner. He wants to know where I went. I tell him the truth. I went to the Lakes for a possible skinny dip with a beautiful girl. He is quiet and then says, "Well, I guess there are many ways to get an education".

You never know about this guy.