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Betrayal

by Sue Hitchcock

Ian, the head boy, was a sensitive, brilliant young man, who read the notices at the lectern on the stage for morning assembly in a dignified manner. He had been elected by the upper school and yet he couldn't be described as popular. Ian had joined the co-ed grammar school in the second year, having experienced an undisclosed problem during his first year at the nearby boys grammar school. He had no role in disciplining his fellow students – indeed there was only one rule – not to run in the corridor, apart from wearing the school uniform.

Why he was not popular may have been because of his intellectual excellence. In exams he would be asking for extra paper, before anyone else had half-filled their answer book.

He had just started to read the notices one morning when a bucket of whitewash was emptied all over him. There was silence, then laughter and assembly was curtailed, while he was rescued.

The headmaster called a meeting with the prefects to ask them to find out who was responsible, but he deferred the decision about punishment to them. About half of the sixth form were prefects and the remainder were sub-prefects. This led to some hostility between the groups, who had common rooms at opposite ends of the building.

The prefects discussed the problem and decided that, although Ian had to be compensated for the cleaning of his uniform, they would never find out who was guilty if a punishment were announced. What sort of punishment would be appropriate, given the notoriety would be a sort of reward? When it became known that no consequences were to follow, the names of the criminals were whispered about. The instigator was Jim, but he could never have rigged up the bucket on the stage without the help of his friend, Ron.

Why had Jim felt the need to avenge himself on Ian? Jim was not unlike Ian, in that, along with enormous talent playing the piano, he had a rather reticent manner. He wasn't used to being one of the downtrodden. He had astonished everyone by driving to school in his own car when he was seventeen. Ian was an actor and writer, so surely together they could have written songs together, but Ian was too proud and dismissed Jim carelessly. So the plot was devised and enacted theatrically in their chosen place, the stage