

YELLOW

One breezy overcast day, Justin, the school bully, and his two friends were sitting on their favourite play equipment whiling away the remaining couple of minutes of recess. Justin glanced up from the comic he was reading and noticed a small frail-looking boy approaching the water taps near one end of the schoolyard.

Justin thought he recognised the kid; he had seen him once or twice around the school but he didn't know to which class he might've belonged. 'Probably from a lower grade' he thought to himself, and figured the boy may have just started school. This piqued his curiosity; to him the boy became a kind of unknown, an uncharted territory... just the thing for a bully to suss out before class.

Justin decided to test the kid's mettle.

He climbed down from the bars, turned to his friends, who were still languidly sitting on top of the structure, and said "Watch this."

With that he began to walk across the yard towards the taps.

The boy had just finished his drink and was about to walk away when Justin casually stepped in front of his path. Justin leered down at the boy, who in turn looked up through innocent eyes.

Right then the recess bell rang, and like switching off a motor the various games around the yard ground to a halt as, in dribs and drabs, the children headed back to class.

Everyone except Justin and the new kid that is. Even Justin's friends headed back, yelling out to him "C'mon, you know what the teacher will do if we're late... again!" But he ignored them. He had caught his victim and he wasn't about to let go.

Justin began to lecture the boy in a low mean voice, a snapping swearing melody designed to break the kid down. The boy darted his eyes around in a kind of panic, looking for an exit that wasn't there – for Justin was considerably larger than him, and was blocking his path.

Elsewhere the last few stragglers climbed up the stairs and through the large green doors of the school building.

The yard grew quiet.

Suddenly the boy's face changed – it relaxed.

Justin faltered. His verbal berating didn't seem to be working; in fact the opposite seemed to be happening. 'You're supposed to cry' Justin thought to himself.

The boy's face took on a stern, hardened look as, carefully and calmly, he reached into a pocket and pulled out a bright yellow stump of chalk. He slowly took a step back, crouched down and began to draw. He drew, carefully, and from left to right, a perfectly straight line that dissected the space between Justin and himself. He rose up again taking another step back. His face remained emotionless as he looked up at Justin.

Justin was perplexed.

He fell silent.

The yard was empty. A slight breeze blew an old Twisty packet up against a fence.

‘It’s a challenge’ Justin thought. Now he understood. The kid was challenging him to cross that line. “Ha!” he half chuckled, a grin appearing on his face. ‘He thinks that’ll stop me, the little rat.’

Justin took a step forward towards the boy, confident that in crossing this meagre defence, his victim’s defiance would crumble before him.

As he passed over the line however, Justin suddenly felt very heavy – as if he was collapsing, or more correctly being dragged down. He began to yelp out of confusion and surprise but before any sound passed his lips he was sucked downward into the line, leaving only his wriggling fingers briefly visible before they too disappeared.

The boy stared at the line for a moment, watching its yellow wispy vapours recede, and then quickly glanced around to see if there were any witnesses.

There were none.

He put the stump back into his pocket and straightened his shirt. He then took a deep breath and with the slightest hint of a smile, purposefully stepped onto the line... and in an instant vanished from sight.

The doorway snapped shut, the line faded and they were gone.