

A Better Boy

A Better Boy

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A boy gets in trouble at school. That's bad enough but the punishment could be worse than he thought. MUCH worse...

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A Better Boy : Chapter 1

Ricky Brown was the most non-popular boy in the school. It wasn't that people hated him. More like nobody noticed he was there half the time, and the other half the time when they did notice, he was just in the way.

He was terrible at sports. He was so bad, even in PE class he was always the last one left when they picked the teams, and the PE teacher would kind of sigh. And Ricky was so embarrassed he didn't want to be in PE at all. It was his worst subject, he especially hated the part where they had to get dressed in their PE uniforms. It was embarrassing to take his clothes off in front of people and Ricky was small for his age so he got teased. So then Ricky started to forget his PE uniform on purpose.

In the locker room all the other boys were half-changed by now and Ricky was just sitting on the bench. But nobody was really noticing him until the coach came in.

"Ricky, get dressed now!" the PE teacher ordered but Ricky just sat there. "Ricky, I mean it," said the coach. "Where's your PE uniform?"

Ricky was feeling like nothing mattered anymore, he was so tired of being teased he didn't care. "I forgot it," he said.

"That's the third time this week!" yelled the teacher.

Ricky just stared at the floor feeling his face burn. Now everybody was looking at him, some were kind of shocked because Ricky never got into real trouble even though they knew the PE teacher hated him. Mainly because Ricky was so clumsy though, not because he was a trouble-maker.

"That's it," said the PE teacher angrily. "Your going to the office!"

Some kids were used to this but for Ricky it was new, so he didn't know what to do. In the office there was a big counter almost like a fast food restaurant and behind it was the school secretary. She was talking on the phone when Ricky came in, then she hung up the phone and looked at Ricky.

"May I help you?" The words might of been polite words but you could tell by her voice that she was sarcastic.

"Um, I guess," said Ricky. He felt weird standing there. There were some other kids there who were in trouble too, they were looking at him and smiling to each other like he was some kind of joke. "The PE teacher told me to come here," Ricky said.

The secretary sighed like she was really tired of explaining things. "Do you have a referral form?" she asked making it sound like Ricky was stupid.

"Oh, um... yeah." Ricky pulled the pink piece of paper out of his pants pocket. It was kind of crumpled from being in his pocket so long, when he handed it to the secretary.

She held it in her fingers like it was a piece of dirty toilet paper.

"Sorry," said Ricky. He wasn't really sorry so the apology came out kind of rude, making the secretary even more mad.

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"Sit down!" she ordered.

Ricky looked around for a seat but they were all taken. The other kids didn't move over to let him sit down. So finally he found a spot on the floor and sat there with his back against the wall behind a potted plant. It was a big leafy plant almost a like a tree, and he was glad that its big leaves hid his face because he was really depressed now and he had to fight back some tears.

It seemed like forever before his turn came. Ricky was feeling tired from sitting there so long when he heard his name finally being called.

"Ricky Brown! Ricky Brown!" Then the secretary saw the boy's legs sticking out from behind the plant and she yelled "What are you doing on the floor!"

"You told me to sit down," said Ricky.

"Are you being insolent?" said the secretary.

"What?"

"Don't talk back to me. I asked you a question. Stand up right now!"

Ricky quickly stood up. His face was red now and his heart was beating fast. He felt confused, like whatever he said was wrong.

"What do you have to say for yourself?!" said the secretary.

Ricky tried to think of what to say but he couldn't think of anything.

"Fine," said the secretary in a steely voice. She picked up a pen and wrote something down on a piece of paper. Then she put the paper in a folder and pushed a button on her desk.

A big man came out of an office in back of the counter. Ricky recognized the man as Mr. Harrison the assistant principal of the school. All the kids were afraid of him because he had a reputation.

The secretary handed Mr. Harrison the folder and Ricky noticed that his name was on it. Mr. Harrison opened the folder and looked at it, then he looked over the tops of his glasses at Ricky.

"Come into my office," said Mr. Harrison.

Ricky was feeling pretty scared now as he came behind the counter and followed Mr. Harrison into his office.

In the office was just Mr. Harrison's desk and a really plush leather office chair where Mr. Harrison sat, and on the other side of the desk was an uncomfortable wooden chair. Ricky sat in the wooden chair facing Mr. Harrison while Mr. Harrison read through the papers in the folder that had Ricky's name on it. While Mr. Harrison was reading, Ricky looked around the room. On the bookshelves were books about how to deal with problem children and the walls had framed certificates of where Mr. Harrison went to college.

Mr. Harrison seemed to be reading a long time looking at all the papers in Ricky's folder, and the chair Ricky was sitting on was so uncomfortable he started to squirm.

Then Mr. Harrison gave Ricky a very stern look, and Ricky tried to sit still.

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"Do you have anything you want to say?" Mr. Harrison asked Ricky finally.

Ricky was surprised because Mr. Harrison's voice sounded almost friendly, not mean at all like he expected.

"No sir," said Ricky trying to be polite. "Except, well... I'm sorry I guess."

"You guess?"

"No. I mean yes," said Ricky. He was starting to feel confused again. The words kept coming out wrong.

Mr. Harrison sighed, like Ricky was a really sad hopeless case. Then he started reading from a paper in Ricky's file, "Two counts of disobedience of a teacher. Three counts of insolence. Four counts of back-talking and disrespect. One count of being out of uniform. One count improper use of school furniture. One count of ruining official school records." Mr. Harrison took off his glasses now and looked sternly at Ricky. "Young man these are very serious charges."

Ricky felt Mr. Harrison's eyes digging into him. He felt ashamed to hear all those things written about him, he had to admit it sounded really bad when they put it like that. And he started to be afraid of what was going to happen to him, and of what his punishment was. The tears started to come then and he felt even more ashamed but he couldn't help it. He had never been in this kind of trouble before.

Mr. Harrison didn't say anything, he just stared at Ricky. Finally Ricky stopped and wiped his eyes on his sleeves. Even though his breath was still shaky. He felt totally embarrassed for crying like a wuss.

"Ricky I'm going to be straight with you," said Mr. Harrison. "Your file is very worrying. Your behavior has become so bad so fast, its a red flag. We need to deal with it immediately before it gets out of control. Because of that reason, I am calling your parents in for a conference. And I am recommending you for a B.M.I."

Ricky was really panicking now. A conference was bad and this B.M.I. thing sounded even worse. He didn't know what a B.M.I. was. He wanted to ask what a B.M.I. was but he couldn't get the words out, his throat was so tight and he was so scared.

"Its a special program to help boys with problems," Mr. Harrison said. "Boys like you." He picked up a pen and started filling out a form. "Its nothing to be worried about," said Mr. Harrison as he kept writing on the form.

But Ricky was worried. Very worried.

Chapter 2

Ricky didn't have any real friends at that school but the closest thing to a friend he had was a girl named Sandy. Her real name was Sandra but she liked to be called Sandy instead, and at first you might think she was a boy because she dressed in boys clothes and she was always messing with computers. They didn't hang out a lot because if they did people would call them boyfriend/girlfriend and tease them. But they sometimes sat at the same table at lunch.

"Dude," said Sandy. "You okay?"

Because Ricky was being very quiet and wasn't eating his lunch.

"What's the matter," said Sandy. "You look like you were crying."

"No I wasn't!" said Ricky almost yelling.

"Sor-ree," said Sandy sarcastically.

Now Ricky felt bad and he apologized to Sandy. "Its just that I'm in a lot of trouble," he said.

"Oh yeah," said Sandy. "I heard you skipped PE. What happened, did you get detention."

"No."

"Uh oh," said Sandy. "You mean you got suspended?"

"No."

"Then what?" Sandy was curious now.

"I don't know," said Ricky. "I have to do a special program for problem kids. They call it BMI or something."

"Thats weird," said Sandy. "Your not a problem kid. I never heard of BMI either."

"Me either," said Ricky sounding really depressed.

"Dude," said Sandy sadly. "Do your parents know?"

"The school is calling them. They have to come in for a conference."

"Oh shit," said Sandy. "Its really bad then."

"Yeah," said Ricky agreeing with her.

When Ricky's parents found out about Ricky being in trouble and that they had to go to the school for a conference with Mr. Harrison, they freaked out. They were so used to Ricky being a good kid, this was new. His mother couldn't deal with it and Ricky could tell how upset she was, she was almost crying. And his father was disappointed and upset too.

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"We pay a lot of money for you to go that school," Ricky's father said. Ricky knew that was true. It was a private school and his family didn't have a lot of money, things were especially bad right now because Ricky's father's funeral parlor business wasn't making enough money. Plus, his mother had a operation recently and there were tons of doctor bills. Now Ricky felt even worse than before.

Ricky got sent to his room and his parents said they would wait till the conference to decide the rest of his punishment. Ricky went to his room. But by now he was so mad about everything that he slammed the door. So his dad came up the stairs and yelled at him some more.

"Ricky what's got into you?" his dad yelled.

"Just leave leave me alone, okay?!" Ricky yelled back.

Ricky's father was shocked to hear Ricky talk back like that. He stood with his hand gripping the doorknob so hard his knuckles turned white. Ricky's dad's face was all red and angry-looking. Then his dad just said, "That's enough. You are in very serious trouble young man. Don't push it."

Ricky was only allowed to do homework. Then he went to bed. But he couldn't sleep hardly at all.

Chapter 3

Next day at school and the next few days after that, Ricky's life kept getting worse. He was so upset about things that he kept making mistakes and teachers were getting mad at him because they thought he wasn't trying hard enough. He flunked his math test and on top of that he came to class late by accident, so his math teacher screamed at him. In front of the whole class. After that he was so upset he couldn't think at all. Plus he felt himself getting mad because of all the things that were happening to him which were so unfair. Pretty soon he got another detention, this is time for fighting. It wasn't really a fight, he only pushed a kid in PE who was teasing him and who pushed him first, but the teacher only saw what Ricky did so Ricky was the one who got punished.

Then Ricky started not to care anymore, it seemed like everything he did was wrong. He even started doing things on purpose because it seemed to him that the teachers and the rules were so unfair. Like, he started chewing gum in class and doing other things. He was spending every lunch time in detention now.

Then one day in detention he felt someone poking him and he turned around and there was Sandy! In detention!

"What are you doing here?!" he said. Because he was shocked to see her in detention, she was normally a good kid. Like Ricky used to be.

"I could ask you the same question," said Sandy. "You practically live here now."

"Yeah. So?" said Ricky. He didn't care about anything now.

"Well I never see you at lunch so I had to get in trouble on purpose just to see you," Sandy explained.

"You really did that?" said Ricky. "That was dumb." But even though he didn't say so he was kind of grateful that Sandy would do that for him.

"Yeah well I needed to talk to you. I found out something. About the BMI thing?"

Suddenly the teacher of Detention saw them talking and yelled at them. "No talking!" It was Mrs. Morlock who had a reputation of being the meanest in school. But her eyesight wasn't too good so you could still get away with things.

So Ricky and Sandy pulled out their cell phones and started texting to continue the conversation. You weren't allowed to have cell phones in school so they had to hide them under their desks. Ricky held his cell phone on his lap and texted to Sandy:

>so what did you find out?

> what BMI stands for

>?

>behavior modification implant

>wtf is that?

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>a thing they put in your brain

Ricky froze. He couldn't believe the words he was reading. So he texted back:

>ur kidding rite?

>no.

>how do u no this?

>i googled it.

Then Sandy sent him the website link so Ricky saved it in his phone. And texted back:

>ty

>yw

Just then Mrs. Morlock was getting suspicious like she smelled something. She started walking up to them. So Ricky and Sandy quickly put the cell phones away in their pockets. For the rest of the detention they had to just sit there because there was no talking or anything in detention, you couldn't even do work.

For Ricky it was like torture because now he was really scared.

Chapter 4

After school Ricky couldn't wait to get home so he could look up the website that Sandy had given him. He came in the door and dumped his backpack on the floor and raced upstairs. He heard his mother yelling at him to pick up his stuff but he didn't care, this was too important. In his room he turned on the computer and typed the website address in the address bar and hit return.

Now Ricky's face turned pale and he got a really sick feeling when he read about what they were going to do him. The more he read the more scared and sicker he felt until he got dizzy and almost passed out.

Just then his mother came into his room to yell at him for dumping his stuff on the floor. Then when she saw him on the computer she almost went hysterical. Because he wasn't suppose to be on the computer, that was part of his punishment.

"Ricky! Your grounded, you are not allowed on the computer!!" she yelled.

"But Mom," Ricky said. "You gotta look at this! Please! Look at what their gonna do to me!"

But she didn't listen. "GET OFF THAT COMPUTER RIGHT NOW!!" she screamed.

"Fine!" said Ricky sarcastically. "Let them cut up my brain and turn me into a zombie. See if I care! I don't give a shit if you don't!!"

"Ricky!" she was shocked to hear him swear like that. "I think your father will have something to say about this when he gets home!"

"Fine! Dad will believe me!!" And he jumped on his bed and turned his face to the wall. He was crying but he didn't want his mother to know.

When his dad came home Ricky tried to tell him about BMI and what it was, but his father didn't listen. Ricky's dad was too annoyed with Ricky for disobeying.

"Dad please," Ricky begged. "I'm really scared, okay?"

Ricky tried to tell him about BMI, how it was a tiny computer they put inside a kids brain. How it could send data over wireless to a big computer and the big computer could send commands to the thing in your brain. How it could control not just your behavior but even your feelings.

But his father just said, "Making up stories is not going to get you out of trouble."

"I can prove it!!" Ricky said. "Let me show you the website!"

"Ricky thats enough!" his dad yelled. Then he sighed and turned off the light. "Go to sleep son. We'll talk in the morning."

Ricky knew now that it was no use, his dad wouldn't listen. He could only hope that at the conference his parents would find out the truth. Then he knew his parents would never let them do something like that to him. Never in a million years.

It was the last hope he held in the dark while he waited for morning to come.

Chapter 5

Next day Ricky went with his parents to the school for the conference. It felt weird because classes had already started and the halls were empty when they got there. Ricky and his parents walked down the hall, Ricky was in the middle of both his parents, like he was a criminal going to be executed.

Finally they got to the office. Mr. Harrison acted really friendly to his parents and even to Ricky, smiling and shaking all their hands and he even said a joke that made his parents laugh. But Ricky was so worried he didn't even hear the joke, his stomach was tied up in a big knot. He felt like he wanted to throw up.

For the first part of the conference Ricky was allowed to sit in and listen. The adults talked about Ricky's behavior and how bad it was getting. Ricky's mom almost choked up when she told how Ricky had changed in the last few weeks. "Its like he's a different kid, he was always so good before," she said. And she told Mr. Harrison how Ricky was disobedient and slammed his door all the time and used rude language even to his parents. And then his Dad listed off some things that Ricky did too, even some things Ricky didn't remember doing. And then it was Mr. Harrison's turn. "Its very worrying especially the violent behavior," Mr. Harrison said.

Then Ricky was made to sit outside Mr. Harrison's office while the adults stayed inside to talk. The school secretary was there doing her work, answering the phone and stuff and sometimes she looked at Ricky and there was a smug smile on her face. She was glad he was in trouble, he could tell.

The bell for second period rang. But the adults were still talking in there. Some kids who

were in trouble came in to show their referral forms to the secretary and she made them sit down. Ricky watched the clock.

It seemed like hours but finally Ricky's parents and Mr. Harrison came out of the office. His mother had red puffy eyes like she had been crying and she blew her nose on a kleenex that the secretary gave her. His father looked really grim like just after he embalmed a dead body.

Ricky stood up. His legs were shaking. His mother came up and hugged him.

Thats weird, thought Ricky. Normally they only hugged at the airport. Or when somebody was going away.

"Ricky," said his mom, "Mr. Harrison and your father and me have decided on a plan. Your behavior has been bad but we love you. We want to help."

Ricky felt his legs go weak. Finally he said, "Does this mean I'm still grounded."

"Ricky," Mr. Harrison interrupted. "Your parents have signed some forms. You won't be coming home right away."

"What?!" Ricky was stunned.

"Mr. Harrison is putting you in a special program. Please listen to him and do everything he says," said his mom.

"I'm sorry Ricky but this is for the best," said Ricky's father.

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"But Mom, Dad," Ricky said, "do you know what their gonna to do to me?!!"

"Make you a better boy," said Ricky's father.

"Dad please!!!" Ricky begged, he was starting to choke up.

"Ricky, don't make a scene," his father said sternly. Then he took Ricky's mom by the elbow and said, "Come on honey lets go."

His parents started to go. Ricky tried to follow them but then Mr. Harrison's big hands gripped him by the shoulders. "Don't worry, we'll take care of him," said Mr. Harrison. Ricky's parents waved goodbye and left.

Now Ricky felt more alone and more scared than ever in his whole life.

"Now then, young man," said Mr. Harrison. His voice sounded less friendly now that Ricky's parents were gone. "Just relax and everything be will fine." Ricky thought about running away but the assistant principle was holding Ricky tight. Mr. Harrison's fingers were biting into Ricky's neck.

Then a man in a white jacket came in carrying a syringe. It had a long sharp needle.

"It won't hurt," Mr. Harrison said. He nodded to the man in the white coat. The man in the white coat stepped toward Ricky with the syringe.

"No please!" Ricky begged. He struggled to get away.

"Don't resist," Mr. Harrison said. "It will just make it harder on you."

Ricky kicked Mr. Harrison hard in the leg.

"Shit!" Mr. Harrison screamed. He loosed his grip on Ricky for just a second and Ricky slipped away.

"STOP HIM!" Mr. Harrison screamed but Ricky was already out the door and running through the hall. But the hall was crowded because the next period bell had just rung and he kept bumping into people. People got mad and swore at Ricky. And then coming the other way he saw two policemen.

Ricky turned around and went back the other way. But there were policemen coming from that direction too. And the man in the white coat was with them. He saw Ricky and pointed to him and yelled, "There he is!"

Now Ricky had nowhere else to go, so he ran into the boys bathroom and hid in a stall.

Which was exactly where they found him. The policemen dragged Ricky out.

Now it was all over there was no use fighting anymore. "Are you gonna call my parents?" he asked one of the policemen. It was Ricky's last hope.

"No need," said the policeman. "Your guardian is here."

"My what?" said Ricky.

Just then Ricky felt a shadow behind him and he turned around and there was Mr. Harrison.

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"Hullo Ricky," said Mr. Harrison. He smiled in a way that made Ricky's blood turn cold.

"Please!" Ricky was almost crying now. "Don't let them take me! Their gonna cut up my brain!"

The Policemen just laughed.

"The boy has some issues as you can see," said Mr. Harrison. He nodded to the man in the white coat.

Then Ricky felt the prick of the needle and the medicine going in. Suddenly he was really sleepy. Everything went dark.

Chapter 6

When Ricky woke up he was in a hospital bed with a tube going into his arm. A nurse came in and asked him how he was feeling, and he said he was fine.

And he really was. He felt the back of his head and there was a bandage there. So he guessed they had done the operation. And it wasn't so bad as Ricky thought. He even kind of laughed to himself about how silly he was to be afraid.

Later Mr. Harrison came to visit him. And Mr. Harrison was really nice and asked him how he was.

"I'm fine," Ricky said.

"Soon you'll be ready to go back home," said Mr. Harrison smiling.

"Cool," said Ricky. He was looking forward to seeing his parents again and even going back to school. He couldn't believe he had been so stupid to run away. "I'm sorry Mr. Harrison for all the trouble I caused," he said.

"That's okay," said Mr. Harrison. "I'm just glad your feeling better now."

Soon Ricky was back home and getting back into his old life except things were much better now. He wasn't arguing with his parents all the time like before, instead he was getting along fine. And his parents were glad to see that the rude behavior had stopped, Ricky cleaned up his room and did what he was told without complaining. And he seemed happier.

At school things were good too. His teachers noticed that Ricky was paying attention better and his attitude was good. He did all his homework on time and he was doing great on all the tests. If this kept up he was going to make honor roll.

Even in PE he was doing better. He always got changed right away into his PE clothes and did what he was told. And he had more confidence now so he made less mistakes. He still got picked last some times but he didn't mind. He always tried hard in the games and even if he wasn't that good the other kids didn't tease him so much. They even started to like him a little.

He even started to get other friends. He still sat with Sandy sometimes because he didn't want to hurt her feelings but now he also sat at some other tables with the boys. Sandy wasn't jealous but she seemed worried. "Are you really okay?" she asked him.

"Sure," said Ricky. "I feel fine. I feel great in fact."

His friendship with Sandy was maybe the only thing in his life that wasn't so good as before. She looked at him funny, like he was a different person.

"What did Harrison do to you?" she asked.

"Nothing," said Ricky. "Helped me, is all."

"Okay," said Sandy. But her voice sounded suspicious.

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Ricky wished Sandy could understand. How things were better now and Mr. Harrison was really cool and the things people said weren't true. But she never really did.

Ricky had to check in with Mr. Harrison every day now. But Ricky didn't mind. He liked Mr. Harrison and couldn't understand why kids were afraid of him. Mr. Harrison was nice once you got to know him.

Mr. Harrison told Ricky how proud he was of him. "You've really come a long way Ricky," he said. "In fact I was wondering if you would help me with my research."

"Really?" Ricky was really curious now.

"I have a little friend I want you to take care of," said Mr. Harrison.

Mr. Harrison pulled a cover off a little cage, and there was a little white rabbit in the cage.

"Oh cool!" said Ricky "Can I hold him?"

"Of course," said Mr. Harrison. He opened the cage and let Ricky pet the rabbit.

Ricky was holding the rabbit against his chest, feeling its nerves and the pitter-patter heart. "I'm gonna call him Mr. Suds," said Ricky because he looked like soap suds.

From then on it was Ricky's job to feed and pet Mr. Suds every day. Ricky was glad to help after Mr. Harrison had done so much for him. But he also loved that little rabbit.

Ricky's parents saw Ricky taking responsibility with the rabbit. Things were going great, they were grateful to Mr. Harrison for all he did for Ricky. They invited Mr. Harrison over to dinner to thank him.

At dinner the adults were talking and Ricky was listening to the conversation. (His table manners were really good now.) Mr. Harrison was talking about all the help Ricky was giving him with his research. And then he said, "I would like Ricky's help with something else if its okay with you. I have to give an important speech to a bunch of scientists next week and I would really like Ricky to be there."

"Cool!" said Ricky. His parents gave permission straight away. He was so happy to finally have a chance to really help Mr. Harrison. And he would miss a whole day of school too which made it more special. Ricky could hardly wait...

Chapter 7

The big day came when Ricky was going to help Mr. Harrison with his speech to the scientists. It was a pretty boring speech with lots of hard words Ricky didn't understand. But he heard Mr. Harrison say his name a few times and how much of a success Ricky was, and that made him feel good.

And then Mr. Harrison said, "And now let us meet this much improved boy. Ricky can you stand up please? Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome Ricky Brown!"

Ricky stood up and went on the stage. He was carrying Mr. Suds like he was told to. On the stage behind Mr. Harrison was a man in a white coat typing into a computer.

Everybody clapped. Ricky felt a little embarrassed and nervous but he tried to smile.

The man in the white coat came up and pinned a little microphone to Ricky's shirt.

"Ricky, tell us how you are feeling," said Mr. Harrison.

"I feel okay," said Ricky and he was surprised to hear his voice over the loud speakers. He sounded like a little kid. "Well a little nervous I guess," Ricky added.

Everybody laughed. But Ricky didn't feel they were laughing at him so he just smiled.

"That's understandable," said Mr. Harrison. Then Mr. Harrison nodded to the man in the white coat, and the man in the white coat typed into the computer. Then Mr. Harrison asked Ricky again, "How do you feel now Ricky? Still nervous?"

"No sir," said Ricky. And it was true, he didn't feel nervous at all. "I feel fine now."

"Would you sing for us?" Mr. Harrison asked.

Some people in the audience laughed.

"Sure I guess," said Ricky. He didn't understand why Mr. Harrison would want him to sing but it didn't bother him.

"Sing America the Beautiful," said Mr. Harrison.

So Ricky sang the song. Holding Mr. Suds the whole time against his chest. His voice hadn't changed yet so it sounded kind of childish in a way that would of embarrassed him before. But now he didn't mind, he just did his best. He didn't miss any notes and he finished the song. The audience clapped.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said Mr. Harrison, "look at the confidence of this young man. Before he was shy and unconfident. But now look at him." The audience clapped some more. "But wait, theres more. Before he was disobedient and had problem behavior but now he is showing good behavior at school and at home. And this is without any kind of punishment."

The audience clapped again.

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"This new technology will make schools better. Imagine no punishment, just children learning and doing what their suppose to. But not just in school. As you will see the new technology has other uses too besides school."

The audience got quiet now and Mr. Harrison turned again to Ricky.

"Ricky I see you brought a friend with you."

"Oh you mean Mr. Suds?" said Ricky smiling.

The audience laughed and then got quiet again.

"Tell us about Mr. Suds," said Mr. Harrison.

"Well he's a rabbit," said Ricky.

The audience laughed again.

Then Ricky explained how he took care of Mr. Suds to help Mr. Harrison with his research.

"How do you feel about Mr. Suds?" asked Mr. Harrison.

Ricky held the rabbit up to his cheek and felt the warm nerves of the little rabbit and the heart beating. "Well I love him," said Ricky.

Then Mr. Harrison said, "Ricky, I want you to kill Mr. Suds.."

Ricky looked at Mr. Harrison like he didn't hear right. "What?" he said.

"Kill the rabbit," said Mr. Harrison again. "Smash his brains out right here, right now on the stage."

Ricky didn't know what to say. He felt his heart beating fast. He felt his throat get really tight.

The room was really quiet now. The microphone squeaked and then Mr. Harrison said, "Ricky tell us how you are feeling now."

"Bad," said Ricky.

"Kill Mr. Suds Ricky!" Mr. Harrison ordered.

"NO!" Ricky shouted. Then he realized he was being rude so he said, "Mr. Harrison, please don't make me."

"Now we will re-program the insert device," Mr. Harrison announced to the audience. "Notice that this is all done with wireless." Now Mr. Harrison nodded to the man in the white coat, and the man in the white coat typed some more into the computer.

Ricky stood there confused, he didn't know what was happening. He hugged Mr. Suds.

Then Mr. Harrison turned again to Ricky and said, "Kill Mr. Suds, Ricky. Do it right now."

So Ricky kneeled on the stage. There were tears coming down his face still but he felt calm as he took the rabbit and smashed its little white head on the floor. Blood sprayed everywhere and little pieces of

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rabbit-brain and white fur stuck to Ricky's face and clothes. He smashed the rabbit again and again. He was pretty sure it was dead now.

Now Ricky stood up again and wiped some of the blood and stuff off his face.

It was really quiet in the room now.

The microphone squeaked. "How do you feel now Ricky?" Mr. Harrison asked.

"Fine sir," said Ricky. "I feel fine."

THE END

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