

AMY

John Bailey

The story of Amy is very upsetting.

When she came into my class at school she was fifteen years old and I was her tutor in English and History.

Amy was an exceptionally smart girl in her school uniform of navy blazer, white shirt, red and blue tie, grey skirt and white knee socks with shiny black shoes. Her black hair was always neat and tidy. She was quiet girl, well-mannered and a good student. For some reasons, which I never discovered, she did not play games or had swimming lessons. She was somewhat of a loner but friendly to everyone. Some of the other girls thought she was stuck up and a swat. She had a winning smile and beautiful white teeth. And she was very pretty but did not promote this.

His parents were really nice people. They did not swear, smoke or drink and they were fully supportive of Amy and of the school. If help was needed at school they were first to volunteer but remained low key. They were not arrogant, conceited or had self importance. They were lovely people as was Amy.

Good living and decent people are always the subject of jealousy and ridicule. Amy did not know that her class mates talked about her in private. She did not get involved in any dispute or argument. She always walked away from trouble and controversy.

I sensed that there might be some resentment gradually building up against Amy. Amy was oblivious to this. Her works always received top grades and her homework was always in on time. There were also rumblings as to why she always got out of sports.

There were two girls who seemed to be the ringleaders of the quietly smouldering campaign against Amy. These girls were Stella and Susan. One could sense the jealousy and hatred building up slowly inside them and yet they remained friendly with Amy who had no idea of the potential problem.

Teenage girls can be so difficult and we teachers, particularly male teachers, are told to make allowances for them which sometimes results in leniency and overlooking their many indiscretions. Boys are punished for indiscretions whereas girls who perform the same indiscretions get away with it.

In our school there is a lounge with soft sofas and chairs where teachers can have consultations with students with an engaged sign on the outer door.

A matter arose about cheating in course work and that some students were using articles on the internet and saying that it was their own work. All the students had to be told about this and I decided to see students in the consultation room three at a time and one trio was Stella, Susan and Amy. I thought that the matter of jealousy might come up from Stella or Susan but I was not going to introduce it. Sometimes body language and attitudes give students away. It is very difficult dealing with hormonal girls.

It was a very hot day and the girls legs were turning brown. It has been very hot for three weeks.

The three girls came in and sat on the sofa opposite me with Amy in the middle. I explained the problem making it clear that no one was suggesting that any of the three of them were cheating. Stella snapped. "Why tell us, sir?" I replied that everyone had to be told. Susan fidgeted, "Some of us struggle with our homework and our coursework. We are not all as clever as Amy!"

Was that jealousy?

Suddenly the two miserable girls turned in towards Amy and each of them grabbed one of Amy's legs just

below the knee and lifted them high up in the air and opened them wide. Amy screamed terribly.

The girls had Amy's legs firmly held up high and wide open.. They were also pinning her shoulders so that she could not move her arms and hands.

"Look at her knickers, sir," squealed the ghastly duo.

I stood up.

"Let her go," I ordered.

This demand only resulted in their lifting Amy more so that her bottom was no longer on the sofa.

I went over and forced Amy's legs down and released her, telling Stella and Susan to report immediately to Mrs Roberts. They laughed raucously but did as they were told.

Amy was now sitting with her knees together sobbing heavily. I gradually eased her up and took her to the school nurse because her room was next door and no one else would see us.

Poor Amy. She had lost her modesty and had been the subject of a serious incident.

The following day I had a visit from the police. Amy had gone home and hanged herself. She had left a letter for her parents which told of what Stella and Susan had done. The letter ended like this

"Those two girls displayed my underwear to Mr Bailey who is the nicest teacher in the school. I had my legs up and wide open and I could do nothing about it. I was so embarrassed. Nobody has ever seen me like that What must he think of me? I cannot face him or school again particularly Stella and Susan. Mr Bailey was very kind and I am very fond of him which makes this event even more distressing. I was made to be cheap and a tart. I cannot go on.

I love you, Mum and Dad.

Amy"

Questions to consider

1. If Stella and Susan argue that this was just a bit of fun can that be justified?
2. Stella's parents said that the fault was with Amy's parents for making her so perfect. Is this a valid comment?
3. Susan's parents blamed Amy for being too sensitive. Is this valid? What relevance does it have?
4. Stella and Susan also said that Amy hanged herself and it was her fault as she was too sensitive? Does this excuse the girls action?
5. How do we define the girls offence against Amy and what punishment should they undergo?
6. How do I, and other teachers, deal with this outrage?

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