

More Ways Than One

by

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Cast of Characters

<u>MR. AGNON:</u>	48
<u>PORTERFIELD:</u>	16

Place
Suburban Town

Time
12:15 PM

2.

Setting: The office of high school principal Mr. Agnon. A neat and tidy office with a United States flag in one corner, a globe in another corner and a large wooden desk with a ton of papers and folders on it.

At Rise: Mr. Agnon sits at his desk with authority and watches as student Eddie Porterfield sheepishly enters his office.

MR. AGNON (authoritatively): Come in, Mr. Porterfield, sit down.

(Porterfield sits)

I want to hear it from you.

PORTERFIELD: What?

MR. AGNON: What took place?

PORTERFIELD: I asked Kyle if I could borrow a dollar.

MR. AGNON: For what?

PORTERFIELD: Lunch. I was short and I needed a dollar.

MR. AGNON: And then?

PORTERFIELD: He called me a peasant.

MR. AGNON: And then?

PORTERFIELD: I punched him...

MR. AGNON: In the face...you broke his nose.

PORTERFIELD: I intended to.

MR. AGNON: Porterfield! (calming) It's that kind of attitude that's getting you suspension and possibly expelled.

PORTERFIELD: He called me a peasant!

MR. AGNON: I've been called way worse young man.

PORTERFIELD: I had to defend myself.

MR. AGNON: You go and tell the teacher or better yet, come straight to my office and tell me and I'll handle it.

PORTERFIELD: That doesn't work.

MR. AGNON: What are you saying?

PORTERFIELD: I came here last week and she wouldn't let me see you.

MR. AGNON: Who's SHE?

PORTERFIELD: Mrs. Mills, she was rude and shouted at me to leave.

MR. AGNON: I see.

PORTERFIELD: So I already tried to come and see you.

MR. AGNON: And what was your original purpose?

PORTERFIELD: Cause Kelly Smith and her loyal posse were making fun of me.

(Beat)

MR. AGNON: Did you have lunch?

PORTERFIELD: ...No.

(MR. AGNON reaches into his pocket and hands PORTERFIELD a five dollar bill.)

MR. AGNON: When you leave here I want you to go and get yourself lunch.

PORTERFIELD: I don't want it.

(MR. AGNON sits the five dollar note at the edge of his desk)

MR. AGNON: ...You remind me a lot like me. I bet you think this desk between us divides us in more ways than one. You would be wrong. I know where you live, (holds up folder) this file here, tells me everything I need to know about you...everything. Every single negative occurrence, since you were born. There is no doubt that either you are a troublemaker or trouble seems to find you. Which one do you think it is?

PORTERFIELD: I don't know...both.

MR. AGNON (statement): Both. Which one would you prefer me to believe?

PORTERFIELD: I don't know.

MR. AGNON: No. You DO know. Perception is a key element to life. How others perceive you, says a lot about your character as a man. How do you think others perceive you?

PORTERFIELD: I don't care about what other people think about me.

MR. AGNON: Do you care about what you think about yourself?

(pause.)

PORTERFIELD: No.

MR. AGNON: Neither did I. For quite some time, I didn't give a damn about a damn thing.

(enter MRS. MILLS)

MRS. MILLS: Excuse me, Mr. Agnon, you have an important call...

MR. AGNON: What is it?

MRS. MILLS: Mr. Arson, from the town---

MR. AGNON: Yes, yes, I know who it is...tell him I'll call him back, I'm in an important meeting, oh and Mrs. Mills, this here is Eddie Porterfield---

MRS. MILLS (wisely): Yes, I know the infamous Porterfield---

MR. AGNON: From now on when Mr. Porterfield enters this office, see him through.

MRS. MILLS: Let him in?

MR. AGNON: That's right.

MRS. MILLS: To your office?

MR. AGNON: Do you have a problem with that, Mrs. Mills?

MRS. MILLS: Um, no, no problem at all.

MR. AGNON: Mr. Porterfield and I are working together, and it is of the utmost importance that you see to it that this young man does his duty.

MRS. MILLS: I'll see to it.

MR. AGNON: Thank you.

(MRS. MILLS exits)

In all truth, I am not happy with you. In fact, I am angry with you, not because you punched Kyle in the face but because you allowed yourself to punch him in the face. You see, from now on, I would very much like for you to shut down your emotional impulses. Whenever you feel the need to strike out, you come get me because I have your back. I am your go to person, you understand?

PORTERFIELD: I understand.

MR. AGNON: These files paint a horrible picture of you as a human being but your eyes paint a different story. Problem with today's society is that we look at the opinions of others, we look at track

MR. AGNON (cont'd): records but we never assess the individual in their totality and even that assessment is jaded because who can judge another in his or her totality? Is that even possible? ...You look confused.

PORTERFIELD: No, it's just, what...

(PORTERFIELD gets emotional)

MR. AGNON: Kyle had it coming, didn't he?

(PORTERFIELD laughs)

PORTERFIELD: Yeah...

MR. AGNON: Alright, listen, that kind of behavior isn't allowed, we both know that, right?

PORTERFIELD: Yes.

MR. AGNON: I'm going to have some headaches when his parents arrive here. I'm going to take a lot of heat for your actions. You put me in a difficult position, Mr. Porterfield...I could lose my job.

PORTERFIELD: You can?

MR. AGNON: Most certainly. If the town begins to think that I'm running a violent school and have no control over my students, they'll toss me out for good.

(Beat)

...I'm going to take you out of school for one full week. I want you to take this time to reflect on our conversation because you've reached a crossroads.

PORTERFIELD: Crossroads?

MR. AGNON: You can either go one way or choose to go another.
(beat) Did you know I was the leader of a gang when I was your age?

(PORTERFIELD laughs)

Yes, yes, it's funny but it's true.

PORTERFIELD: No way.

(MR. AGNON rolls up a sleeve and shows
PORTERFIELD a scar on his arm)

MR. AGNON: See that scar? Someone tried stabbing me and they got me here. (pointing) It's why I never wear short sleeve shirts.

PORTERFIELD: Wow.

MR. AGNON: I was a wild kid and got very very very lucky. My brother wasn't so lucky. He was murdered on the street like a dog...they drove over him repeatedly while he screamed. A bit graphic? Maybe. But it's the truth and I know you can handle the truth. (beat) If I was capable of changing my life, so can you. I'm not going to try and force you, that would be foolish, it's entirely up to you, you understand?

PORTERFIELD: Sorry about your brother.

MR. AGNON: ...Yeah...

PORTERFIELD: Mr. Agnon...um...the things that I deal with everyday, it seems to always be happening to me and how do I know when it's big enough for me to get you. I don't want to bother you over every little thing that happens to me because then I think you will get angry at me as if it's my fault and I know, I know I'm no angel but I think it's all because of the fact that things started out wrong for me and ever since, it's always been a problem, like you said earlier, perception, people see me as some loser and over time that perception has only been cemented in people's minds...cause, I've tried, I've tried to show other sides of myself but I'm never looked at differently, it's like a curse I can't break and I guess I've sort of accepted the fact that I am this loser, troublemaker or whatever you want to call me, I've grown to become this character from everyone's mind because it makes everyone happy...I bring comfort in a way cause I'm labeled and I know I sound crazy but these are the things I'm dealing with and I just wanted you to hear it from me.

MR. AGNON: We're going to change your narrative.

PORTERFIELD: How?

MR. AGNON: You take a week to reflect and when you get back come straight to my office and I'll have some things for you to do.

PORTERFIELD: What things?

MR. AGNON: Things I won't trust just anyone to do for me. You have a great gift, do you know what that gift is?

(PORTERFIELD nods his head no)

The gift of leadership. Because you are who you are, you can lead through action.

PORTERFIELD: Mr. Agnon, no offense, but I don't think---

MR. AGNON: Porterfield, would you be interested in helping me carry out a program for some students?

PORTERFIELD: Program?

MR. AGNON: I would very much appreciate your help, if you were to assist me with the younger students in middle school. These are troubled students, students who need guidance. I'm developing a program where each student will have what is called an angel. I am only selecting five angels from our High School and would very much like for you to be one of the chosen five.

PORTERFIELD: Me?

MR. AGNON: You.

PORTERFIELD: But I'm the worst student in this school.

MR. AGNON: Which is why you will be our greatest angel. I have no doubt that you will rise to the occasion and lead by example. You don't have to say yes. Take the week to reflect and decide. When you come back to school, give me your answer. No pressure. If you don't want to be an angel, that's quite alright, but I already have chosen my other four and I'll leave your slot open, until you---

PORTERFIELD: I'll do it.

(MR. AGNON extends his hand and
PORTERFIELD shakes it.)

MR. AGNON: At some point I will want you to make amends with Kyle.

(PORTERFIELD Sighs heavily)

No, no, in my office...I will arrange it.

(PORTERFIELD nods)

Go home now. Your parents are welcome to call me.

(MR. AGNON hands out his card)

I'm not pleased with what you did. You can be thrown out of school but I give you my word I'm going to fight for you because I believe in you and I believe you deserve a chance. We're going to change your narrative, right?

PORTERFIELD: I'll try.

MR. AGNON: (pointing) Take that five dollar bill.

(PORTERFIELD grabs the money)

Get out of here.

(PORTERFIELD exits)

(MR. AGNON sits back in his chair)

END OF PLAY