

Never the Answer

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EXT. PARK - DAY

Birds chirp. Trees sway. All in all, a perfect day.

JASON (20s) would surely agree. Strolling along, he whistles. Waves to FAMILIES. Soaks in the idyllic vibe.

Until... WHACK! A BASEBALL BAT demolishes his reverie. Descending at brutal speed, it hits Jason from behind!

Jason crumples to the ground, cradles a wounded shoulder.

JASON

Ow!

Shocked and dazed, he squints up at...

Grinning MARK (30s). Dressed in blue and white, Mark looms over poor Jason, hands choking the bat like he's Babe Ruth.

JASON

What the hell'd you do that for?!?

SPECTATORS gather, encircle the two. Mark waves to the growing crowd. Seems strangely friendly. Even proud.

MARK

Got him in one. Check out the move!

An ELDERLY LADY with a picnic basket nods.

ELDERLY LADY

A for effort. Good job!

JASON

No. NOT good. Not good at all!

Mark twirls the bat, shows off. Jason winces. Shields his face, fears a second strike.

JASON

(squeaks to the crowd)
Help?!?

A few more fancy-bat-moves by Matt. Desperate, Jason waits until it whizzes by.

Rising quickly, he shoves Mark; a double strike to the chest. Only slightly off-balance, Mark bristles.

MARK

Don't touch me, you...you thug!

He turns pleading eyes to the circle of witnesses.

MARK

Anyone get that on video? I was standing here and he attacked me. Unprovoked. Out of the blue!

Members of the crowd murmur in AGREEMENT?!? Jason's jaw drops. This can't be reality.

JASON

"Out of the blue"? You hit me first!

The old woman waggles a finger. Tsk-Tsk.

ELDERLY LADY

No excuses, young man. We all saw you push him.

A MAN IN A RED, WHITE AND BLUE PLAID SHIRT harrumphs.

PLAID SHIRT MAN

The bat was nowhere near you, Son.

JASON

Except when it hit my shoulder!

PLAID SHIRT MAN

Can the whataboutisms. Just now, he was swinging at air. You were on the ground. At least five feet apart!

Mark steps forward, hammer strikes the bat to Jason's left. Then right. Both misses - but moves intended as threats.

MARK

See? I'm not touching you.

JASON

Not now, you won't. Gimme that!

Jason grabs the bat. Fierce hand-to-hand combat ensues. Briefly, Jason gains control of the weapon.

Then the crowd pries them apart. The woman twists the bat from Jason's grip... hands it back to Mark!

MARK

He tried to steal my bat. The thief!

Mark swings again. SMACK - a hit to Jason's thigh! A force so brutal, the wooden bat BREAKS IN TWO.

JASON

Jesus Christ!

ELDERLY LADY
Language. Children play in this park!

Mark sniffs sadly at his busted weapon. The Man in Plaid taps him gently on the shoulder, hands him...

A REPLACEMENT BAT. This one's metal. Way, way worse!

MARK
Thanks!

JASON
(to the Man in Plaid)
You're in on this?

MAN IN PLAID
(shrugs)
This is between you. Not my "war".

JASON
What?!? You're HELPING him do this!

MARK
I have a right to self-defense!

JASON
Is that so, asswipe? I do, too!

Lunging, he aims a punch at Mark's jaw.

The man in plaid yanks him back. Jason angles Left. Right. Desperate to get at Mark. Plaid-Man blocks his path.

JASON
You're on HIS side?!? Why?!?

PLAID SHIRT MAN
You were gonna hit him. This is a FAMILY park. Such shenanigans just won't do.

JASON
Didn't you see what he did to my leg?

ELDERLY LADY
No "buts", Mister. Violence is never the answer. Didn't your parents teach you that much?

Mark struts back and forth. Throws a look Jason's way.

MARK
His kind? I doubt it. Very much.

JASON

Fine. If you freaks aren't gonna help, maybe 911 will.

Jason digs in a pocket for his cell. One look and he groans. The screen's shattered from his fall.

But in the distance, he spots... a UNIFORMED COP. Peeking over spectators' heads, he waves.

JASON

Heeeeeeeelp!

The cop approaches. Hand on his gun, he eyes the crowd. The blood on Jason's clothes. Mark's victimized, forlorn look.

COP

Fill me in - what's going on?

JASON

(points at Mark)

Arrest him. He attacked me!

MARK

I absolutely, positively did not!
Everyone knows the aggressor's him.

He points back at Jason. The crowd nods.

MARK

That savage shoved me. Tried to punch me, too. In plain sight!

JASON

After you hit me with that fucking bat!

MARK

Ah-ha! Arrest him. He confessed!

The officer turns eyes to Mark. Who extracts a DOCUMENT from his jacket. Handing it to the cop, Mark points out lines.

MARK

This paragraph *clearly* states I have a right to hit him, when he's in this vicinity. A proactive first strike: 100% justified!

The officer reads through carefully.

COP

I see. Good to know.

JASON

See what?!?

Mark flashes the document at the crowd.

MARK

All of it legal. In black and white!

JASON

Speaking of "legal" - if this is a
prank, I'm gonna sue!

He grabs for the paper. Mark yanks it back. Jams it into
Jason's face.

MARK

I got it notarized. Look.

JASON

(reads)

"This hereby states that Mark -"

MARK

That's me. And you're you.

JASON

"...retains the right to use
potentially lethal force..."
This is crazy shit. Notarized or not!

ELDERLY LADY

At least make the *effort* to talk
civilly. Or is that too hard for you?

JASON

I didn't agree to this. My signature
isn't on this thing!

MARK

Who cares? It's legal.

JASON

What this IS, is insane!

Jason tries to grab the paper. Mark plays keep-away. Jabs
Jason in the nose. Insult on top of injury.

Jason growls. Spectators intervene.

ELDERLY LADY

If you don't like it, don't complain.

JASON

I'm supposed to let him use me for pinata practice QUIETLY?

ELDERLY LADY

Do something productive. Run for office. Vote. Change the rules!

JASON

Why is his crazy "contract" MY responsibility?

MATT

See? He doesn't want to take responsibility!

JASON

For you trampling on ME?!? Officer, you see how unjust this is?

COP

Sorry, it's my job to uphold the law. And the document's legal. So-

The cop turns away. Mark holds up a pleading hand: wait.

MARK

Please. Stay a little longer. You know... in case he acts up again?

JASON

This is ludicrous!

The man in plaid points towards the park entrance.

PLAID SHIRT MAN

If you don't like the rules, you're free to leave.

JASON

Leave? This is my park, too!

MARK

(sighs)

Suit yourself.

Mark SWINGS again! Jason dodges. A too-close-for-comfort miss. On the next swing...

Mark connects with Jason's stomach. He doubles over.

JASON

Oooof!

He's down again - vulnerable. Dodging strikes, Jason pleads.

JASON
He's gonna kill me. Someone, do something!

PLAID SHIRT MAN
"Something"? Be specific, Son.

JASON
I dunno! Kick out his legs, maybe?

ELDERLY LADY
Kick his legs out? Hmmmph. Violence is never the answer. Don't you people ever learn?

JASON
If violence isn't the answer, what's he doing now?

PLAID SHIRT MAN
That's not violence. Stop playing victim.

JASON
I AM a victim!

ELDERLY LADY
It's all legal. So - you're not.

Mark laughs, aims for Jason's head - a potentially lethal blow. The bat comes down viciously HARD.

Jason rolls free. The bat crashes down on Mark's TOE. Bones CRUNCH. The crowd winces. Mark drops the bat, howls.

MARK
My foot. OMG - it's broken!

Mark hops around. The woman darts over, hands fluttering.

ELDERLY LADY
You poor dear. Don't hurt yourself. Please - sit down!

Jason staggers to his feet. Plaid-man storms over.

PLAID SHIRT MAN
Look what you've done!

JASON
(shrugs)
You guys SWORE it "wasn't violence".

ELDERLY LADY

So?

JASON

So - it's still not. "Enjoy" your
game. Whatever this is. I'm out.

Brushing himself off, Jason stiffly walks away. Fails to
suppress a grin as he hears Mark sob.

FINAL FADE OUT