

The dirtiest word in parkway

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“ We want a scary story!” The grandchildren shouted excitedly, as they huddled together around the hot fire. The night was cold and starry, the backyard illuminated by a warm glow from the tall, burning logs. The grandmother slowly shuffled to the fire, arms loaded with graham crackers and chocolate. “ Well I think I know a scary story.” The old lady mumbled to the excited kids.

“ Ooo! Tell it, tell it!” Exclaimed the youngest. The grandmother took a seat near the warmth on a hay bale and cleared her throat to capture the young, restless audience. “ It was a long, long time ago....

” she began. “ Back when I was around your parent’s age, probably younger, I was a teacher. I taught at Parkway (At this point, the memories began flooding back, so the old lady shuddered and began to get dramatic). It was at the end of the day, the students, just like you, were lined up to leave and it was around Christmas time. Their break began the next day so you can imagine the chaos (Near this part of her monologue the children started to zone out).

I was making sure Sally had her backpack, Zoey knew what bus to ride, and Gregory had his shirt right side out. In the midst of all this, I said it. The BAD, UGLY, DIRTY, word (Now the children are on edge, completely fascinated by the phrase including ‘ bad’ and ‘ word’).” “ What was it, grandma?” Asked the oldest. “ Yeah, what was the dirty word?” The second oldest pondered.

“ It was the dirtiest word in the Parkway School District,” was the grandmother’s reply. The entire grade level stopped. It was as if someone hit the pause button on life. The teachers stopped fussing and the kids stopped

screaming. Everyone stared right at me, with big, horrified eyes. GASP! Finally, a nuclear explosion sounding gasp escaped from several lips, while hundreds of pins were heard clattering against the floor (The children were unfamiliar with these types of metaphors, and were literally envisioning a nuke going off and it raining pins).

“ That is probably the scariest story I have EVER heard,” said the middle child sarcastically. A firm elbow silenced the girl. “ Then, out of NOWHERE, an entire SQUAT team (meaning SWAT team, but she’s old, so give her a break) was deployed from the ceiling! Microphones were uncovered from the classroom, bystanders were pushed back, and I was arrested! They took me to the Jail of Parkway and I sat nervously in a small cell while the officers began listing my offenses. It was dark and smelled of old pizza (giggles from the audience). There was horrible, processed, cheap food on Styrofoam trays and nothing to drink but a strange sugary liquid. I had to wait several hours to be able to talk to the superintendent of Parkway.

I needed to plead my release and to beg for my job. The only thing in my cell was the mission of Parkway plastered against the cement wall, The mission of the Parkway School District is to ensure students are capable, curious and confident learners that are restricted from celebrating Christian holidays and are not permitted to say, Christmas Break. (The kids at this point, did not pick up on this hint, so the grandmother continued with her story) “ Do you know the consequences for violating your contract?” Asked the esteemed superintendent. In a small voice I squeaked, “ Yes.” “ Then you know and will accept your punishment.

" The mighty one added. " Please!", I interrupted, " I love the kids, my job, and Parkway! I can recite the mission statement by heart! I swear you will never hear a peep out of me!" So then I began begging, bribing and pouting, etcetera, etcetera. After some thought, the superintendent came to a decision. " I will release you from jail. You will not have to pay the 100, 000, 000, 000, 000 dollar fine for mentioning such a politically incorrect phrase, but you may not continue to teach for any district or school ever again." In my head, I thought how could Parkway control even that but given the circumstances, I let it slide.

" Thank you! Thank you!" I jumped for joy and left the jail on a cloud (The kids didn't know this saying either so they pictured an angel). " Parkway sounds like a mean bully!" the youngest grandchild concluded. Then the lisped child added, " Yeah! Whasth tho wong with sthaying Mewwy Chwisthmath?" (Apparently someone did pick up on the clue). " I could not do what I loved to do most, teach. I won't ever see a classroom or chalkboard again (the children asked what a chalkboard was) as long as I live." The fire began to glow less, and the wind began to stir up, so the fireside story was concluded, and off the little ones were sent to bed.

" Thanks for the super scary story, Grandma!" A grandchild beamed as she was tucked under the covers. " If you think that was a super scary story, you should hear what happened to my friend when he wished his students a ' Happy Easter Break'!"