

For whom the siren tolls.

DAILY EXPERIENCE proves that one person can safely violate a rule while for others a violation could be fatal. The difference is fundamental, but the first person is oblivious to it. To the second, the difference is definitive, obvious, and life-shaping.

Case in point:

NO TRESPASSING, read the oversized block letters on signs adorning the chain link fence around the private high school's football field. A sign hung every fifty feet, NO TRESPASSING. At the bottom of each sign etched in red were the school's name and a tiny red cross. A padlock secured each gate to the field. NO TRESPASSING.

Inside the fence, the field was a still-life in the breezeless autumn day. Football fans the night before had decorated the stands with colorful candy wrappers, pom-pom fronds, plastic pop bottles, styrofoam cups, and the occasional single glove, all waiting for the weekend custodian to pick up.

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On the Sunday after the game, a man got out of his Buick outside one of the gates at the football field. He reached up his arms as if to pluck the sun from a picture-postcard sky. He wore blue running shorts with a matching top. After checking the gate - sometimes the groundskeeper forgot to lock it - he walked to the far end of the field, water bottle in hand, where the fence was only waist-high. At the base of that section of the fence, a cinder block served as a step to hop the fence. He tossed the water bottle over the fence, turned the cinder block on end and stood on it, grasped the

top of the fence, and vaulted in. In another minute he was on the track stretching, then jogging. In the announcers' box above the bleachers, the weekend custodian prayed: *I sure hope that old guy doesn't have a heart attack.*

From afar, a siren sounded, its urgency screaming louder and closer to the field. The jogger spotted the custodian and felt relieved. He took comfort in the certainty that, if he needed help on the track, the custodian would call 911, and an ambulance would be on the way to help him.

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On the Sunday after the game, Codell and his homeboys walked to the football field and inhaled the picture-postcard day. They wore old shorts and dark, comfortable hoodies. After checking the gate - sometimes the groundskeeper forgot to lock it - they walked to the far end of the field, football in hand, where the fence was only waist-high. At the base of that section of the fence, a cinder block served as a step to hop the fence. They tossed the football over the fence, turned the cinder block on end and stood on it, grasped the top of the fence, and vaulted in. In another minute they were on the field throwing the football around. In the announcers' box above the bleachers, the weekend custodian prayed: *I sure hope those hoods don't see me.*

From afar, a siren sounded, its urgency screaming louder and closer to the field. The kids on the field spotted the custodian and felt afraid. They took off in the certainty that the custodian had called 911, and the police were on the way to bust them.

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