



FOURTH PLACE RECIPIENT

Pride Tested, Pride Earned

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I sat ramrod straight in my local tutoring center, watching the kid in front of me complete his classwork. As it was my first week on the job, I was eager to please. And that meant following the explicit instructions given to me by my manager: to monitor the kid at my table, Max, to make sure that he wasn't making the usual mistakes on his multiplication worksheet. At the same time, I was to continue grading work from students who had come earlier.

By the time Max left, I was confident in a job well done. Whenever I would (admittedly sporadically) glance up from my grading, his comfortable demeanor bolstered my own conviction that he was doing well. So when I started to grade his worksheet, I looked forward to another achievement I could give my manager.

Yet, the first question was wrong. Then the second, the third, and the fourth. Unease swirled around in my stomach as I double-checked the answer book and Max's worksheet. $53 \times 24 = 1262$? No, he'd forgotten to carry the one. Most of the worksheet was incorrect and would need to be put back in the file for corrections...meaning that my manager would see it. It would be obvious that I'd failed to properly monitor him.

Amid the churning dread and regret, I considered another option. It would be almost laughably easy to mark the set correct in the record book and slip it into the recycling with the rest of his homework. Neither my manager nor Max would ever know; my position would remain [solidly] intact.

Or was it my pride?

Ironically, as a part of Ethics Bowl at my school, we often debated situations involving moral conflicts. However, none of the practice scenarios had been as mundane as mine. And despite the seeming triviality of my situation, I felt heavily conflicted on the right course of action.

At that moment, I realized ethical judgments are ingrained in every aspect and moment of life, not just big decisions. No matter how small or insignificant, each choice speaks silent volumes about one's character that could inadvertently influence our moral compass, shaping our future actions. Yet these choices rarely impact one: in this scenario, I would be affecting Max as well—who would lose this chance for improvement—in addition to the integrity of the center and the reputation of my manager.

Did I really want to be someone who put my pride over another? During ethics discussions, I always picked the choice that seemed the most just. I did the same here.

Although I could feel the approval of my manager slipping away, I marked Max's work incorrect and placed it in his file for corrections. Next week, when I received Max's file moments before his arrival, there was a note from my manager. "Don't forget to help him carry the one!"

Something erupted in my chest. It wasn't relief. It was pride in knowing I did the right thing.