

**WE NEED TO TALK
ABOUT TONY**



BY ROGER MITCHELL



Tony turns around and runs back out into the playground.



The teacher turns and sees me approaching down the corridor.



Did you hear that? Did you hear what he just said to me? You need to exclude him for that.



To be honest, if you had approached me in that way I might well have responded to you in a similar manner.



But I'll see you about that later.

Right now I need to find Tony.



I did find Tony.



He agreed to come and sit in the comfy chair in my office while I got on with some work.

At first, Tony could barely speak.

It took quite a while for him to calm down.



But when he was ready to talk about it, a fuller picture emerged.



My dad came back last night.



He beat my mum up really badly.



The police took him away.



I don't know how badly hurt my mum is.



I slept on my auntie's sofa.



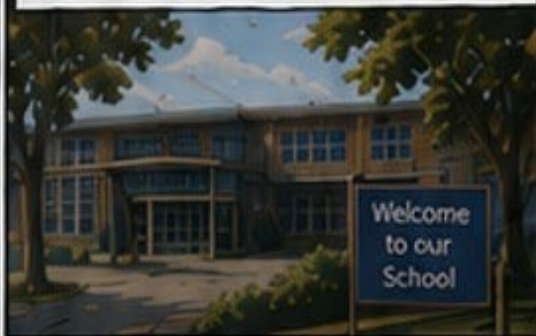
And I don't know where my baby sister is.



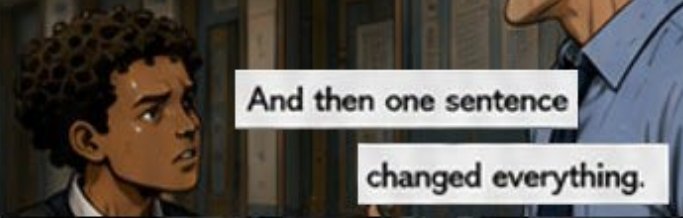
Tony had come into school early because he was desperate to find his teacher – one of the safest and most trusted adults in his life at that point.



He came because he believed school would be a secure place where he could feel safe.



What do you think you are doing in here at this time, boy?



And then one sentence

changed everything.

A single interaction completely undermined everything Tony needed from school in that moment.



Children rarely arrive carrying only the behaviour we can see.



Behind anger, defiance, or aggression there is often fear, trauma, confusion, grief, or shame.



Research suggests that in around 90% of serious confrontations between pupils and adults in schools, the behaviour of the adult has contributed to triggering and/or escalating the situation.

