

Friendly Persuasion

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Alan came to our school after he'd been chucked out of West Bay College. At least, I think he'd been chucked out. Some kids said he and a mate had smuggled booze or dope into the School Ball. Other kids reckoned he'd been caught helping the West Bay Principal's daughter sneak out of her place one night. Whenever anyone asked him about it, Alan just grinned his Mr Cool grin, and didn't say anything.

Anyhow, the West Bay Principal had called Alan's parents in, and said they should think about taking their kid somewhere else. They went along with it. Seems like Alan's parents did pretty much what other people told them — and especially what Alan told them.

He came to our school halfway through Year 12. He was this really good-looking dude. The first time he walked along the corridor, all these chicks just stared at him and started going 'Who is he? He is so hot!'

It didn't take the rest of us long to realise that Alan was a good enough guy, as long as things were going his way. He only wanted a good time. Anything else, like work and exams, he didn't give a stuff about. He didn't cause trouble in class or anything; he just liked

taking things easy.

Trouble was, he seemed to make the other kids in his classes start stirring. Since he was such a good-looking guy, most of the girls kept trying to eye him up, even in the classroom, while a lot of the guys (except for those who started hanging out with him at lunchtime) wanted to thump him. Every subject that Alan took, trouble seemed to start up in it. But nobody could ever put their finger on him.

Lots of the teachers wanted to: you could tell that. They'd make him stay behind while they tried to work out what was happening to their classes. Alan just grinned and shrugged, and said he didn't have a problem, so what was theirs?

Some kids reckoned that Mr Lyon, the Head of Maths (everyone called him The Beast, 'cos of his name and this mad temper he had) tried to pin Alan down over what was happening, and after Alan just grinned at him too, The Beast went into the staffroom and started kicking a hole in the wall.

Plus there was this real aggro in the Year 12 IT class, about a month after Alan started at our school. The period before, he'd been coming on to Tyra Jackson — that blonde chick with the nose stud. Then the next day, he started eyeing up Brittany Kahu. And suddenly, about halfway through the lesson, those two chicks were out in the aisle, yelling and swearing and shoving each other, while Alan sat and grinned.

The chicks had to go and stand in different corners of the assembly hall. Our Principal asked Alan's parents to come in and see him, so they could sort a few things out.

Alan's parents came, like they were asked to. Alan had already told them there was no problem; it was just the school getting their Jockeys in a jangle. And he told the guys who hung out with him that his old man and woman said they were sure it was all just a misunderstanding; that Alan was such a well-meaning boy (yeah, right). I dunno what our Principal said.

Anyway, next thing you know, Alan arrived at school in this nearly new red Honda. His parents had given it to him for a birthday present. A car for a birthday present! If you chucked that guy in a sewage pond, he'd come up holding someone's wallet.

The first day he had his car at school, Alan parked it in the staff car park. About ten minutes later, the Assistant Principal came streaming up to where Alan was standing by the library, with all these chicks drooling over him, and wanted to know what he thought he was doing, using the staff parking area. And Alan just grinned, tossed him the car keys and said 'There y'are. Stick the car anywhere you want.' What a line, boy! The Assistant Principal looked like he was going to go up in flames.

Every lunchtime after that, you'd see this bunch of kids hanging round Alan's car. Half of them were chicks who hoped Alan would fancy them. The other half were the guys who hung out with Alan because they hoped the chicks would fancy them instead. Yeah, dream on!

One day, Alan came to school wearing this beanie that a Year 11 chick had given him. So the day after that, half the other guys turned up in beanies, too. Talk about seriously uncool.

About a fortnight later, those beanies turned out to be important. Alan, and Alan's red Honda, and some of the guys and chicks who were usually around it started disappearing at lunchtimes. Nobody did anything. I reckon the teachers were glad Alan wasn't there to wind them up. And we other kids — the ones who didn't spend all our time slobbering over Mr Cool — we couldn't care less.

Then one afternoon, it all happened. This mate of mine whose Auntie works in the school office told us about it.

First, the school got a phone call from some woman whose little kid had almost got bowled on a pedestrian crossing by this red car full of high school kids. Half the kids were wearing beanies, she said.

Straight after that, this old guy rang up. He was

nearly out of his tree because some kids in a red Honda had done wheelies across his front lawn — the part by the road.

And then a cop car rolled up to the school with a Year 11 chick in the back. The cops had found her spewing her guts up by the side of the road. She was so pissed, she could hardly stand. There'd been a Honda with other high school kids in it, but they took off when they saw the cops coming.

The School Principal sent for Alan, who was in Classical Studies and looking like he had nothing to do with it. And then Alan made his big mistake. He tried to grin and talk his way out of things, like he had before. My mate's Auntie said he told the Principal yeah, he had a couple of bottles of wine in his car, and one of the girls had had a few sips. His parents let him have a drink at home any time he wanted. Did the Principal have a problem with that?

Yeah, the Principal did. Ten minutes later, Alan was in his Honda and on his way home, while the Principal rang his parents to say Alan was suspended with a view to making it a permanent suspension. For a few days, the teachers all went round with pleased smiles on their faces. The chicks who fancied Alan all went round looking as if the world was ending.

But after a week, things were starting to get back to normal. My mate's Auntie said she'd heard the Principal saying that school probably wasn't the right place for Alan. Put him in some other environment, and he might grow up to become a decent enough citizen.

The Principal was wrong. The weekend after that, Alan talked those useless parents of his into letting him go out for the evening. Seems like there was this chick from West Bay College he still fancied. (Guess how the ones from our school felt when they heard that . . .)

He was halfway to her place, doing about 120 km/h in an 80 km/h zone, they reckoned, when the Honda left the road. It went somersaulting down a bank and

caught fire. By the time the Fire Brigade got there and put out the flames, there was hardly anything left of the red Honda. Or of Alan.