

# CHOICES

## Scenario 24

### The Empty House

Not far from school is an empty house. It has been that way for years.

Most of the kids refer to it as 'the haunted house'.

One day you are walking home past the house. An older student called Jack is leaning against the fence. He says to you,

"Wanna see inside?"

"I don't know."

"C'mon. Just a look."

No one is around. The windows are boarded up. No one can see in.

Jack opens the back door. In you go.

The house smells rotten.

"What a heap!" says Jack. "Everything's wrecked."

He picks up a plate that is lying on the sink.

He smashes it on the floor. It makes a loud noise.

He laughs.

Then he takes up a piece of wood. He takes a run at the wall, and smashes it in.

"Great fun, eh? Why don't you try?"

He hands you the piece of wood.

"Let's go crazy!"

What should you do?

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**A You say, "Jack. I was wrong to come in here. Do whatever you want. But smashing things up is not my thing. I'm going."**

**What next?**

You walk out of the empty house.

Jack is still in there. You can hear the noise of him smashing things.

You walk slowly away.

A lady who lives next door is looking out of her window.

At the end of the street, you turn back. You can still hear Jack at work, destroying things.

Suddenly, a police car drives up. It stops at the old house.

Two police officers get out. They go to the front door.

You watch. They knock. There is a silence.

Jack comes running out. He jumps over the fence and runs away.

A policeman grabs him.

You watch in silence as he is put in the back of the police car. And driven away.

As it passes, Jack looks out at you.

**Think about it**

Vandalism is the deliberate destruction of public or private property. It's breaking something for the sheer pleasure of wrecking.

Is it a crime when no one lives there, and no one gets hurt? What's wrong with breaking a few plates, and knocking holes in walls in an abandoned house?

But it's not Jack's property to do with as he pleases. He's doing it because he thinks he won't be caught.

Would Jack be OK with someone smashing his plates or knocking a hole in his bedroom wall?

No one quite knows how much vandalism costs, but it runs into the billions of dollars.

*Do you want to look at another scenario involving breaking the law? (Go to 2)*

*Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 24)*

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**B You take up the wood and start bashing the wall.**

**What next?**

Minutes later, you stop.

There is the sound of knocking at the door.

"Let's get out of here," calls Jack.

He runs out the back door – right into the arms of a big policeman.

You drop the wood.

Another officer comes slowly into the room.

"We got a report from a neighbour," he says quietly. "Do you want to tell me what you're doing here?"

You say nothing.

"All right. Give me the number of your parents."

**Think about it**

What could you say in this situation?

"He forced me to do it."

“It was only a bit of fun. I wasn’t harming anyone.”

There are laws against damaging property. In extreme cases it can mean ending up in court.

Imagine what your parents’ reaction would be if the police turned up at their door.

Going along with other people is fine, within reason. But when you cross the line into behaviour that involves damage, or illegal acts, you have put yourself in a bad place.

Then, when things go wrong, there is only one person who can be blamed.

“Maturity is not about age, but about accepting responsibility.” (Winston Churchill)

*Do you want to look at another scenario involving peer pressure? (Go to 5)*

*Do you want to try the scenario again? (Go to 24)*