

From Cheaters by Don Zolidis

From Cheaters

MR. ABRAMSON, 30s-40s (MS. ABRAMSON)

MR. LEWIS, 30s-40s (MS. LEWIS)

MICHAEL, 15 (MICHELLE)

(All three characters may be of any gender.)

Someone in the class has been determined to be cheating. Mr. Abramson, the assistant principal, and Mr. Lewis, the teacher, are interrogating a student in a small room.

MR. ABRAMSON

Sit down.

MICHAEL

I didn't do it.

MR. ABRAMSON

Sit down.

(MICHAEL sits. MR. LEWIS enters.)

MR. LEWIS

All right – start from the beginning. Things will be better for you if you tell us everything you know.

MICHAEL

I don't know anything! I didn't do it!

MR. ABRAMSON

Anne said that you did it.

MICHAEL

She's lying!

MR. LEWIS

Anne is lying?

MICHAEL

Yes?

MR. LEWIS

Why would she do that?

MICHAEL

Because you were threatening her!

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MR. ABRAMSON

You're saying that an A student, a student who is innocent, who has absolutely nothing to do with this – she would lie to us, thereby exposing herself to harm, and implicating you.

MR. LEWIS

Tell him what grade you got on the last test.

MICHAEL

I don't know what I got on the last test.

MR. LEWIS

You think we're stupid? You think we're so stupid that we're just going to take her word for it?

MICHAEL

She's lying!

MR. LEWIS

What did you get on the last test?

MICHAEL

Fifty-seven.

MR. ABRAMSON

I thought you said you didn't know what you got on the last test.

MICHAEL

I got a fifty-seven.

MR. ABRAMSON

Twenty seconds ago you said you didn't know what you got on the test. Why did you say that?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

MR. ABRAMSON

So which is it: do you know what you got on the last test, or did you get a fifty-seven?

MICHAEL

I got a fifty-seven.

MR. ABRAMSON

So when you said you didn't know –

MICHAEL

I was lying! I was lying when I said that.

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MR. ABRAMSON

Oh. You were lying to us.

MR. LEWIS

You were lying to us before and now you're telling the truth.

MICHAEL

Yes. I am telling the truth now.

MR. LEWIS

Your default position is to lie to us, and only when pressure is applied do you tell the truth.

MICHAEL

I am telling you I did not cheat on the test.

MR. ABRAMSON

And you are calling Anne a liar.

MICHAEL

Yes. Anne is a liar.

MR. LEWIS

And what are you? Are you a liar?

MR. ABRAMSON

A liar is a person who lies, right? I don't have my dictionary around here, but I'm sure that's what it means.

MICHAEL

Can I call my Dad?

MR. ABRAMSON

Why would you want to do that?

MICHAEL

I just need to talk to somebody.

MR. LEWIS

So you can get your story straight?

MR. ABRAMSON

I think it's about time for you to tell us everything you know, Michael.

MICHAEL

I don't know anything.

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MR. LEWIS

You said that at first. But then again, that was during your lying phase.

MICHAEL

I didn't cheat!

MR. LEWIS

I know.

MICHAEL

You know?

MR. LEWIS

Of course I know you didn't cheat.

MICHAEL

Oh so –

MR. LEWIS

I know Anne is a liar. She was lying when she said she saw you cheat.

MICHAEL

Oh.

MR. LEWIS

What I want to know from you is: did you see Anne cheat?

(Pause.)

MR. ABRAMSON

Think real hard about it.

MICHAEL

She doesn't sit all that close to me.

MR. ABRAMSON

That's not an answer.

MR. LEWIS

We already know she's a liar. Are you sure you didn't see her cheat? Are you sure she didn't have her phone out?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

MR. LEWIS

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She says you did it. Did she have her phone out?

MICHAEL

...yeah.

MR. ABRAMSON

You're saying she had her phone out?

MICHAEL

Yeah. She had her phone out.

MR. ABRAMSON

Now why would she do that?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

MR. LEWIS

Think, Michael. Tell me why she would do that.

MICHAEL

Because she was cheating on the test.

MR. LEWIS

Who else was cheating?

MICHAEL

What?

MR. LEWIS

There were other people cheating too, right?

MR. ABRAMSON

She was helping people, wasn't she? She was texting them the answers?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

MR. LEWIS

Who else? We know there were other people – who else? We already know who they are. If you come clean now, we know that you weren't in on it.

MR. ABRAMSON

Who else was there?

MICHAEL

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Um... Cal... and Angel... and...

MR. LEWIS

Madison? Was Madison involved?

MR. ABRAMSON

Think hard.

MICHAEL

Yeah. Madison too.

(MR. LEWIS nods to MR. ABRAMSON, who writes this down.)

Can I go now?

MR. LEWIS

How do you know?

MICHAEL

I'm sorry?

MR. LEWIS

How do you know they were cheating too?

MR. ABRAMSON

How do you know unless you were receiving the texts too?

MICHAEL

I wasn't!

MR. LEWIS

And yet you're pretty sure that Cal, Madison, and Angel were getting texts. You must have been looking around a lot.

MR. ABRAMSON

If we checked your phone, what would we find?

MICHAEL

There's nothing on there!

MR. LEWIS

How do we know that?

MICHAEL

Check my phone.

MR. ABRAMSON

I need your pin to check your phone. Write it down on this piece of paper and hand it to me.

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(MICHAEL scribbles his pin down.)

MR. LEWIS

Thank you.

(They get up and start to leave.)

MICHAEL

Hey can I get out of here?

MR. LEWIS

Don't be in such a hurry. Makes you seem like you're hiding something.

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