



Pushed Once Too Often

Read this story and be prepared to discuss the questions that follow.

Yvonne knew that Tracy wasn't passing out gumdrops, especially since crumpled money exchanged hands. In fact, just about everyone knew that Tracy sold a seemingly endless supply of crack cocaine. Tracy managed to avoid arrest because most people were intimidated by Simon, the enormous man in a silver car who picked Tracy up every day after school. Yvonne didn't want to get involved. Drugs were a fact of life. She refused to take drugs herself, but she was smart enough to leave alone people who did.

Besides, even though Tracy took in a lot of money dealing drugs, more often than not, she looked exhausted and ragged. Her mother, who suffered from chronic arthritis, couldn't handle five younger kids or make her welfare check stretch from month to month. Tracy lived up the block from Yvonne, and Tracy and Yvonne had hung around together before Tracy started pushing. Yvonne had liked her dry sense of humor and grim realism. But after Simon entered Tracy's life, she seemed cold, more hostile, more desperate. Now everything had changed. Yvonne and Tracy hardly spoke to each other anymore.

One day after school, Yvonne was standing at the top of the school steps talking with her friend Joe when she spotted Tracy down on the

street. Then Yvonne saw Mike, her own younger brother, stop to say something to Tracy. In an instant, an exchange was made. Yvonne leaped down the steps, but stopped while Joe shouted after her, "Hey, what happened?"

"Sorry, Joe, I gotta go," Yvonne answered. "I just remembered something."

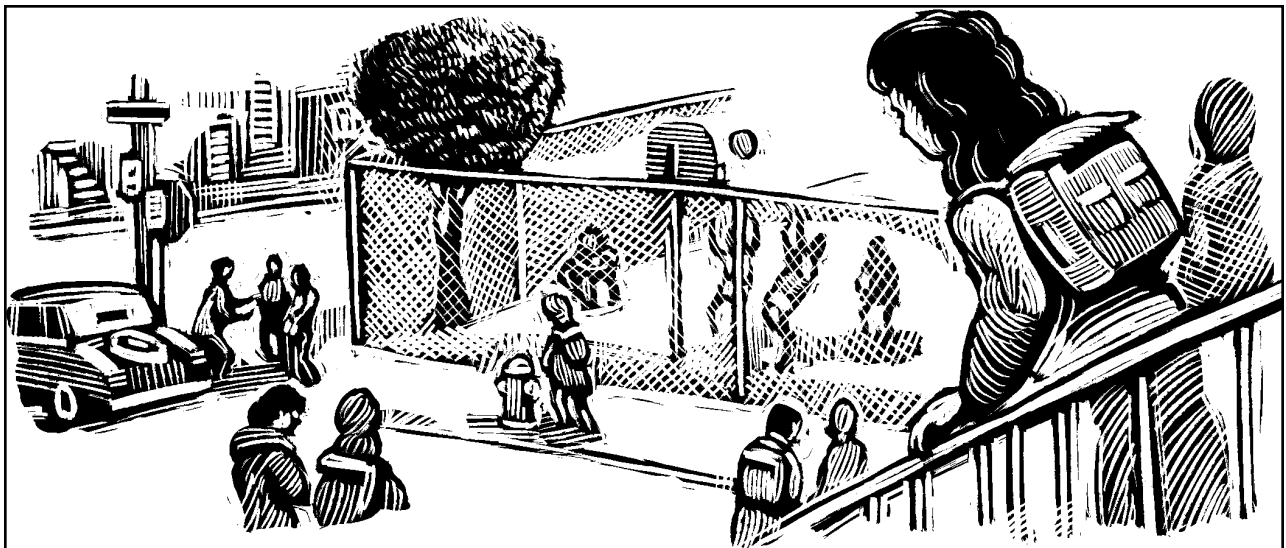
By the time Yvonne got down to the street, Tracy had vanished in Simon's car. Yvonne's brother was gone too.

Yvonne felt betrayed. By the time she got home, her fury at Mike was white-hot. No brother of hers was going to do crack. She opened the front door with such force that it smacked into the wall. Slamming it shut, she stormed up to the room Mike shared with his two little brothers. Yvonne knew that the boys would be home any time, so she wanted to settle things right away.

Without knocking, she barged into Mike's room. Startled, his eyes widened. He had never seen his sister like this before.

"Where's the crack? Don't even try to deny it. I saw you with Tracy. Now where is it?"

As Mike tried to slip his hand under his pillow, Yvonne grabbed his arm. The struggle was short-lived. Yvonne's anger, athletic quickness, and four years on Mike helped her snatch the vial out of his hand. She rushed to the



bathroom and flushed the crack down the toilet. Then she threw the vial on the floor and stamped it into pieces. Mike watched, his mouth hanging open.

"If I ever catch you with crack again, you'll wish you never had a cent to give Tracy," Yvonne screamed. "What if Jimmy and Freddie had been around? You want them to be on drugs?"

Mike fled to his room. Suddenly dead-tired, Yvonne went to the kitchen, grabbed a bag of chocolate chip cookies, and plopped down on a chair. She opened the bag and started eating. Half a package later, she went to the phone, thumbed through the directory, and dialed a number.

"I need to talk to somebody about turning in a crack pusher at my high school. . . ."

1. Why had Yvonne previously not reacted to the drug pushing at her school? What made her change and get involved?
2. Do you consider Yvonne's action courageous, vengeful, noble, just, disloyal, or something else?
3. How might the situation have been different if Yvonne and Tracy were on friendly terms or if Mike had been the one selling crack instead?
4. What parts of the LISTEN process might Yvonne have been considering while she sat eating cookies?
5. How much of a role does apathy play in the continuation of drug pushing in schools and communities?
6. How much does fear and intimidation play a role?
7. What other factors contribute to the continuation of drug pushing in our society?