

Risky business — well, sort of

The sign said 'Wet Paint.' But was it really? The sign might have been left up there for days. And paint dries quickly nowadays. It didn't look wet.

I knew what I had to do. There was no way around it. I looked around to make sure nobody was looking and then carefully moved my index figure toward the wall.

I knew it. It wasn't wet at all. You thought you could defeat me? You can't defeat me. I walked away quite content with myself. I took the risk, I faced danger in the face, and I won.

Okay, it's not skydiving, bungee jumping or mountain climbing, but I've got more. You know those little catsup, relish or soy sauce packages? I roll them and roll them in my fingers. I push out the air on one side and then the other, taking them to the very edge of their breaking point. A little bit more of a squeeze and the package breaks and stuff is squirted everywhere. And okay, maybe once or twice they actually broke, but it doesn't stop me. The next time I get one of those packages I'm back at it again.

I don't think I'm alone with this stuff. Maybe with the catsup packages, but not the wet paint. Maybe we feel the need for



On the loose

with MURRAY TOWNSEND

adventure and risk, without much risk.

Or it could be there's a bit of the rebel in all of us. As soon as we see a sign or are told not to do something, we want to do it. 'Do Not Tap on the Aquarium?' Tell me you don't have an itch to just tap it a little bit. Just to show you can take that risk and get away with it.

'Do not open until Christmas?' Fat chance.

The risk-taking doesn't extend too far. If I see a sign that says, 'electric fence, do not touch or you will die immediately', then it's a good bet I probably won't touch it. Probably. And I'm not sticking my tongue on a metal fence in the winter, even though there's a certain attraction there.

Breaking the law creates a whole new dilemma, no matter how insignificant. If I'm on a deserted country road late at night with no cars within miles

I will sit at that red light for 10 minutes wrestling with my conscience. I want to go through that red light, but I just can't bring myself to do it. It's the same with handicapped parking. There could be seven open spots in front of where I want to go and no other cars in the parking lot and I can't bring myself to park there even for a minute. Mind you, I know people who take those family or expectant mothers spots just out of principle.

It's not even just as adults. Kids take risks all the time, doing things they know they're not supposed to do, their only fear being that they don't get caught by their teachers or parents. Most of that is not going too far, and if they have any moral values at all they know enough not to deface public property or steal.

For example, I used to get a flashlight when I had to go to bed and read my Hardy Boys books under the covers. The thrill of getting caught made it more exciting, but hardly death defying.

I won't be taking a toaster into the bathtub any time soon, just to see if I can survive it, but give me a 'Wet Paint' sign and the adventure begins.



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