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Spreading the News

ALTHOUGH I WAS too shy to act when I was at secondary school, my teachers insisted that I should play the part of a policeman in a drama called “Spreading the News”.

The play began with a man (let’s call him Jack) who had borrowed a gardening fork from a friend (let’s call him George) to do some gardening at Jack’s home. When they had finished their work George set off home, but forgot to take his fork with him. When Jack noticed this, he decided to hurry after George to return the fork and thank him.

As Jack passed by a neighbour’s house, the neighbour asked, “Where are you going, Jack?” Jack replied, “I’m going after George with this fork.” The neighbour misunderstood Jack’s reply, and rushed to his next-door neighbour to tell him “Jack’s gone after George with a fork. Maybe they had a quarrel and he wants to kill George.”

In a very short time the story spread around the village that Jack was going to kill his friend George. In the end they called the village policeman to go and stop a murder taking place. The policeman rushed to George’s house, prepared to arrest Jack when he arrived with the fork. Of course, the policeman soon found out that Jack had no such intention.

The moral of the story is that people often spread stories

without knowing all the facts, causing terrible misunderstandings among friends.

We used to play a game at parties. About ten children stand in a line, and someone whispers a message into the ear of the person at the front of the line. That person, whispers the message to the next person, who passes it on to the next until the message has reached the last one in the line. The last person then tells everyone what message he received. The real message is then read out by the person who started the game. Usually the two are totally different. As the message is passed along the line, it is misheard and changed. It can be very funny.

From this story we can learn the lesson that many problems are caused by people repeating rumours they did not hear correctly.

Remember this Asian proverb:

*“One person tells a falsehood,
and one hundred repeat it as truth.”*