

A child is sitting at a yellow school desk with chrome legs. The child is wearing purple pants and red sneakers with white laces. On the desk, there is a small black and white rat, an open book, and a pencil. A ruler is placed on the desk. A large, circular, purple award is hanging from the desk. The award has the text "NEWBERG HONOR BOOK" and a central figure. The title "The WEDNESDAY WARS" is written in large, orange, stylized letters across the bottom of the image. The author's name "GARY D. SCHMIDT" is written in black letters at the bottom right. A small black and white rat is also visible in the bottom right corner.

The  
**WEDNESDAY  
WARS**

GARY D. SCHMIDT

## September

Of all the kids in the seventh grade at Camillo Junior High, there was one kid that Mrs. Baker hated with heat whiter than the sun.

Me.

And let me tell you, it wasn't for anything I'd done.

If it had been Doug Swieteck that Mrs. Baker hated, it would have made sense.

Doug Swieteck once made up a list of 410 ways to get a teacher to hate you. It began with "Spray deodorant in all her desk drawers" and got worse as it went along. A whole lot worse. I think that things became illegal around Number 167. You don't want to know what Number 400 was, and you *really* don't want to know what Number 410 was. But I'll tell you this much: They were the kinds of things that sent kids to juvenile detention homes in upstate New York, so far away that you never saw them again.

Doug Swieteck tried Number 6 on Mrs. Sidman last year. It was something about Wrigley gum and the teachers' water fountain (which was just outside the teachers' lounge) and the Polynesian Fruit Blend hair coloring that Mrs. Sidman used. It worked, and streams of juice the color of mangoes stained her face for the rest of the day, and the next day, and the next day—until, I suppose, those skin cells wore off.

Doug Swieteck was suspended for two whole weeks. Just before he left, he said that next year he was going to try Number 166 to see how much time that would get him.

The day before Doug Swieteck came back, our principal reported during Morning Announcements that Mrs. Sidman had accepted "voluntary reassignment to the Main Administrative Office." We were all supposed to congratulate her on the new post. But it was hard to congratulate her because she almost never peeked out of the Main Administrative Office. Even when she had to be the playground monitor during recess, she mostly kept away from us. If you did get close, she'd whip out a plastic rain hat and pull it on.

It's hard to congratulate someone who's holding a plastic rain hat over her Polynesian Fruit Blend-colored hair.

See? That's the kind of stuff that gets teachers to hate you.

But the thing was, I never did any of that stuff. Never. I even stayed as far away from Doug Swieteck as I could, so if he did decide to try Number 166 on anyone, I wouldn't get blamed for standing nearby.

But it didn't matter. Mrs. Baker hated me. She hated me a whole lot worse than Mrs. Sidman hated Doug Swieteck.

I knew it on Monday, the first day of seventh grade, when she called the class roll—which told you not only who was in the class but also where everyone lived. If your last name ended in "berg" or "zog" or "stein," you lived on the north side. If your last name ended in "elli" or "ini" or "o," you lived on the south side. Lee Avenue cut right between them, and if you walked out of Camillo Junior High and followed Lee Avenue across Main Street, past MacClean's Drug Store, Goldman's Best Bakery, and the Five & Ten-Cent Store, through another block and past the Free Public Library, and down one more block, you'd come to my house—

which my father had figured out was right smack in the middle of town. Not on the north side. Not on the south side. Just somewhere in between. "It's the Perfect House," he said.

But perfect or not, it was hard living in between. On Saturday morning, everyone north of us was at Temple Beth-El. Late on Saturday afternoon, everyone south of us was at mass at Saint Adelbert's—which had gone modern and figured that it didn't need to wake parishioners up early. But on Sunday morning—early—my family was at Saint Andrew Presbyterian Church listening to Pastor McClellan, who was old enough to have known Moses. This meant that out of the whole weekend there was only Sunday afternoon left over for full baseball teams.

This hadn't been too much of a disaster up until now. But last summer, Ben Cummings moved to Connecticut so his father could work in Groton, and Ian MacAlister moved to Biloxi so his father could be a chaplain at the base there instead of the pastor at Saint Andrew's—which is why we ended up with Pastor McClellan, who could have called Isaiah a personal friend, too.

So being a Presbyterian was now a disaster. Especially on Wednesday afternoons when, at 1:45 sharp, half of my class went to Hebrew School at Temple Beth-El, and, at 1:55, the other half went to Catechism at Saint Adelbert's. This left behind just the Presbyterians—of which there had been three, and now there was one.

Me.

I think Mrs. Baker suspected this when she came to my name on the class roll. Her voice got kind of crackly, like there was a secret code in the static underneath it.

"Holling Hoodhood," she said.

"Here." I raised my hand.

"Hoodhood."

# HOLLING HOODHOOD IS REALLY IN FOR IT.

He's just started seventh grade with Mrs. Baker, a teacher he knows is out to get him. Why else would she make him read Shakespeare . . . outside of class?

The year is 1967, and everyone has bigger things to worry about. There's Vietnam for one thing, and then there's the family business. As far as Holling's father is concerned, nothing is more important than the family business. In fact, all the Hoodhoods must be on their best behavior at all times. The success of Hoodhood and Associates depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has Mrs. Baker to contend with?

★ "Schmidt . . . makes the implausible believable and the everyday momentous . . . a gentle, hopeful, moving story."

—*Booklist*, starred review

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