

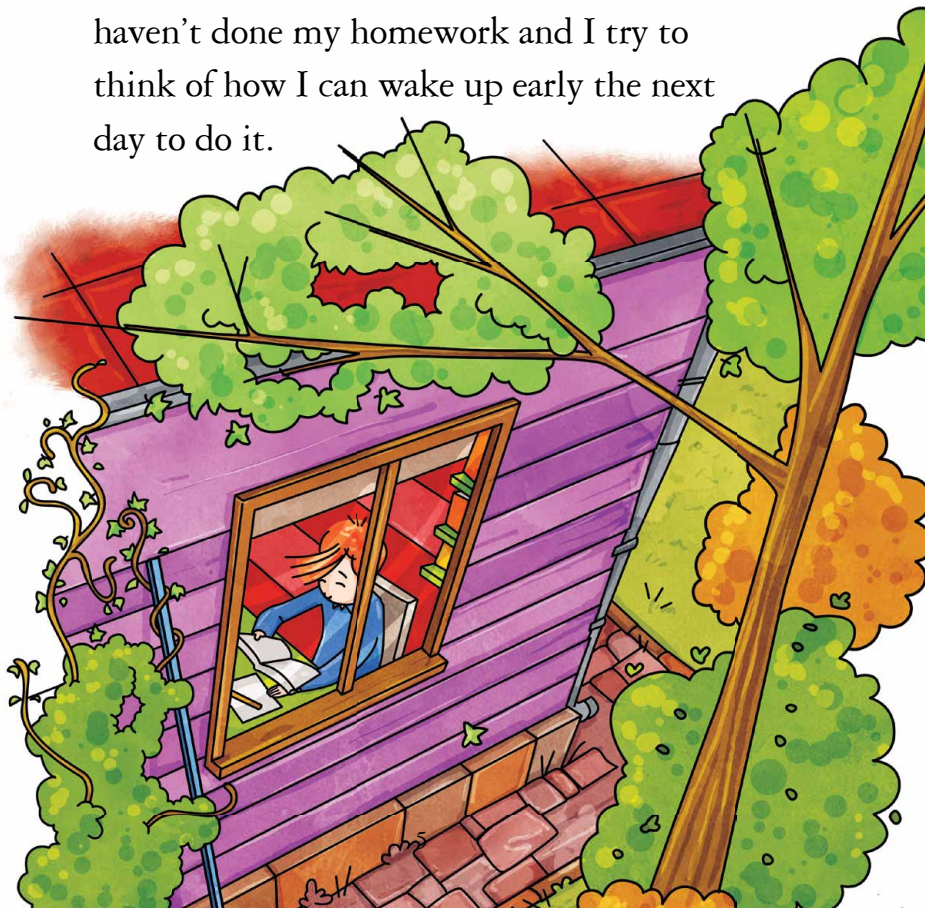
SELIM

and the Haunted
House



The cleanest classroom

Monday is the first day of the week. I get anxious on Sunday afternoon because I know the next day I have to go back to school. I've been going to school for many years, but I still can't shake this feeling. Every Sunday night I remember that I haven't done my homework and I try to think of how I can wake up early the next day to do it.



To top it all off I've got another problem, too. **The clean class, dirty class** situation. I know you don't know what I am talking about. Every Monday the cleanest class and the dirtiest class from the week before are announced at school. It has been a long time since they started doing this but we haven't been chosen as the cleanest class yet. In fact, we are chosen as the dirtiest class almost every week. You can imagine how the other classes tease us when we're named the dirtiest class.



I spent Sunday all stressed out over this. In the morning, I eventually got to school, but my feet were trying to walk back home. I could already hear the other kids teasing us,

“You guys were picked to be the dirtiest class again? That’s unbelievable! Ha ha!”



I got to school just in time. Nobody was talking. The principal repeated the talk he made every Monday. After him, Mrs. Robertson went up to the podium and made the expected announcement.

“Students! The cleanest class of this week is 5-B.”

Everybody cheered. We were proud of class 5-B. Then Mrs. Robertson said, “And the dirtiest class of this week is...” Then he paused.



All the students shouted turning to us,
“4-A!”

Mrs. Robertson continued,

“You’re right children. Unfortunately the dirtiest class didn’t change this week, either. The dirtiest class is 4-A again.”

The Mrs. Robertson’s words set off a roar of laughter in the auditorium. The principal could hardly be heard over the students.





After that day everybody did their share in cleaning the class. Nobody left any pieces of paper on the ground. The hall monitor told people not to drop litter. The class was cleaner than it had been last week. Now we were excited to be chosen as the cleanest class.

We were lined up excitedly on Monday. After the principal's talk, Mrs. Robertson went up to the podium.

"The dirtiest class is..."

Wow! Mrs. Robertson started by telling us the dirtiest class rather than the cleanest one. When Mrs. Robertson was about to announce it, the other students shouted all together,

"4-A!"

Mrs. Robertson said smiling,

"No, you're wrong this time. The dirtiest class is 3-C."

We all let out a sigh of relief. We had got the first good news. Now, we were waiting

to be chosen as the cleanest class. We were hanging on Mrs. Robertson's every word.

"The cleanest class is..."



We all shouted,
“4-A!”
Mrs. Robertson laughed,

“I’m sorry 4-A. You aren’t the dirtiest class, at the same time you aren’t the cleanest class. The cleanest class is 1-B.”



Everybody in the class was disappointed. We were sure that we would be chosen as the cleanest class this week.

After we got back to the classroom, our class president spoke sadly, "We should have been the cleanest class. Think of how hard we worked! I really wanted us to be chosen as the cleanest class before the end of school."

Someone in the class said, "That's impossible!"

The whole class confirmed,

"He is right."



Kenny stood up.

“Guys, I’ve got an idea.”




Whenever Kenny has an idea, I knew we needed to be careful. He may get us into trouble. After all, Kenny only has a head for mischief. The class president said,



“What’s your idea?”

“If we want to be the cleanest class, let’s make the other classes dirty. When our class doesn’t get dirtier, we will be chosen as the cleanest class.

How about it?”



It was obvious that Kenny's idea was wrong, but we were all still interested in it somehow.



We set to work right away. We carefully planned how to make the classrooms dirty. We assigned people who were going to do the dirty work. We made the whole school look the way our class used to look. Mrs. Robertson couldn't understand what happened. She asked Mr. Matthews, the custodian, who gave her information every week,

"How did the school turn into a garbage heap in just a week?"



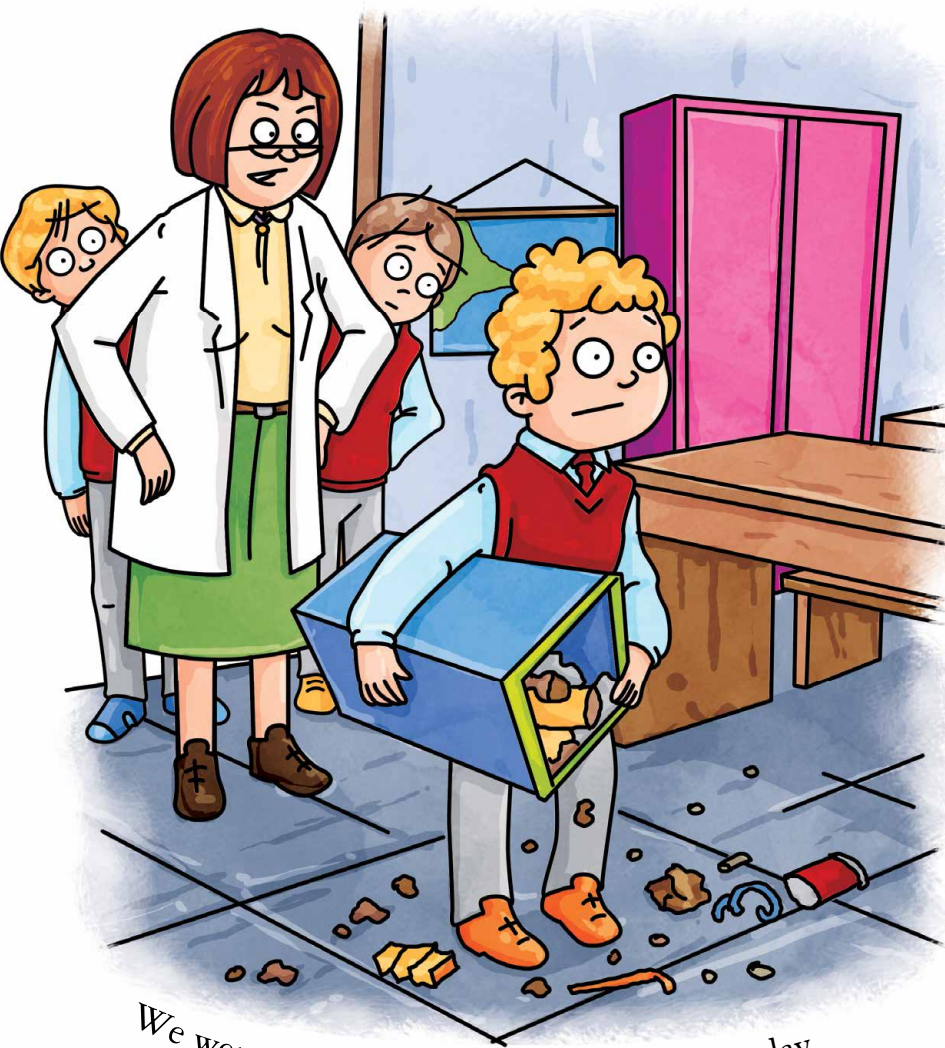


Mr. Matthews replied,

"I don't know Mrs. Robertson. I have worked much more this week. It is as if the whole school is against me. The students should be reasonable! And something else doesn't make sense; class 4-A isn't getting dirty."

"I think it will make sense soon, Mr. Matthews."





We were chosen the cleanest class on Monday, although it was tricky. We decided to go on making the classrooms dirty. But then the whole operation was blown when Kenny was caught red-handed.

One day, first Kenny, then Mrs. Robertson entered the class. We realized from Kenny's face that there was something wrong. When we saw Mrs. Robertson, we all stood.

"Sit down, please. Is such respect appropriate for you?" She asked.

Then we could tell from Mrs. Robertson's face that she had learned everything. We hung our heads in shame.

"We're sorry teacher. We just—"

Mrs. Robertson cut us off,

"You will apologize not to me but to your friends whose classrooms you've made dirty."





The next morning, we went up to the podium and each one of us apologized to all the students. As a punishment it was decided that we would help Mr. Matthews the janitor after school.

We worked with Mr. Matthews for two hours every day after school for one week.

Mr. Matthews teased us often,

“If you’re not going to study,
you might as well learn a trade.
Sweep well, boys!”

“Oh Mr. Matthews, we feel bad enough
already. Don’t make it worse.”

It is a very difficult job to keep a school clean. We learned this while helping Mr. Matthews. We apologized to him for making the school dirty. What we had done was wrong and we deserved this punishment. Days passed. Our punishment had ended and everything had been forgotten. We had returned to our normal lives. But there was something saddening us: It seemed that Mrs. Robertson was still upset with us. She wasn’t paying attention to us like before. When she passed us in the hall, she would smile at the other students but not even look at our faces.

