

A Class Party at South Middle School (Part 2)

At least it is Friday, Mr. Wheeler said to himself when the day ended, and I do not have to see those kids for two more days. He couldn't wait to be home, and yet he was moving around his classroom slowly in a daze.

Ms. Ko stopped by Mr. Wheeler's room before she left for the day. Ms. Ko was Mr. Wheeler's mentor. She knocked on the door and saw Mr. Wheeler dejected and staring at his desk. "I heard about your day with our darling seventh graders," she said.

"I bet the whole school is talking about nothing else," Mr. Wheeler said.

"Well, that is how middle schoolers are," said Ms. Ko.

"They must hate me," Mr. Wheeler said, "to plan such a cruel joke."

“No,” said Ms. Ko. “They do not hate you, but middle schoolers can be mean sometimes. They spend so much of their day feeling insecure and embarrassed themselves that ganging up on a gullible teacher is sometimes impossible for them to resist. When you come back to class on Monday and show them this horrible day has not gotten you down, they will be glad. Many kids in your class, more than you know, will be rooting for you. But no more class parties, for any reason!”

Ms. Ko waited for Mr. Wheeler to pack his bag with all the papers he needed to grade. They walked out to the parking lot and found their cars. “I expect you to have a good and relaxing weekend,” Ms. Ko said firmly.

Driving home, Ms. Ko remembered her first year of teaching almost twenty years ago. She had once found her purse in the trash bin. She would have to tell Mr. Wheeler a story or two from that first year on Monday.

Still, Ms. Ko would never have been gullible enough to come to school in clown pants and flippers, with no back-up outfit in the car! Mr. Wheeler had a way to go in terms of understanding what a middle schooler is capable of, particularly a charming prankster like Ralph. Hopefully, he was on his way.