

Chapter 5

The Dividing Line

“Boy,” sighed Mark Davies over the lunch table, “was Wizzle ever mad! He asked me if I printed the paper and I said no. Then he asked me if I wrote the articles and I said no. Then he asked if I knew who did and I didn’t answer, so he gave me ten demerits for not answering. I’ve got to do two hundred lines! Listen, Bruno, the next time you get a brilliant idea, use someone else’s printing press!”

“At least he got the message,” said Bruno, pleased.

“He got the message, all right,” said Boots. “At this morning’s assembly I thought he was going to kill all of us. The Fish didn’t look too pleased either.”

“I got lines last night,” muttered Wilbur sourly. “Boy, did I get zonked at dorm inspection! He took away all my food and left eight demerits. Now I’ve got eleven.”

Chris Talbot joined the conversation. “Pete and I picked up three demerits for having a messy room. Our room isn’t messy!”

“And it doesn’t look like Wizzle is going away,” added Larry. “I overheard him talking to a member of the Board, complain-

ing about the *Free Press*. He raved about how immature and irresponsible we are, and he said he was taking down his input boxes because we were too childish to merit them. And he said he's staying."

"Hey, Larry," asked Pete, "do you have any idea what's going on at Scrimmage's? They're doing nothing but phys. ed. over there, and there's this lady with a real loud voice."

Larry shrugged. "The word is that Miss Scrimmage has a new assistant. That must be her."

"It's unreal," confirmed Boots. "She's running around there at dawn barking orders like a drill sergeant. I feel sorry for the girls."

There was a loud crash behind them. "Hi, guys. I'm out." Sidney Rampulsky gathered up the things that had fallen from his tray, put his lunch down on the table and sat down beside Mark, his roommate.

"Welcome back, Sidney," Bruno greeted him. "Did you get a copy of *The Macdonald Hall Free Press*?"

"Yeah, I was reading it on my way over here and I bumped into Mr. Wizzle. He gave me five demerits just for having a copy! But I think he was mad because when I fell, he went down, too."

"Did you fall again?" stormed Mark.

"This time it's okay," grinned Bruno. "He fell on Wizzle. All right, you guys, when should we publish the next *Free Press*?"

"*Never!*" chorused everyone.

Bruno pounded the table. "Well, come on, then. We need ideas on how to get rid of Wizzle. Are you just going to sit there and let him walk all over you?"

“Yes!” chorused everyone.

“What?” cried Bruno.

“Look,” said Chris Talbot. “Wizzle’s really mad. As it is, he’s taken away the whole school’s off-campus privileges indefinitely.”

“Yeah,” said Mark, “and my paper is shut down. If something else happens, Wizzle’s going to start expelling people.”

“But we can’t let little things like that scare us,” protested Bruno.

“Being expelled is not a little thing,” put in Boots. “It goes on your record for good.”

“Not to mention that your parents kill you,” added Pete. “I have enough trouble explaining my grades.”

“Gee, Bruno,” said Sidney, “I don’t like Wizzle very much, but I don’t want to risk getting expelled.” There was general agreement all around.

“Besides,” said Larry, “if we all keep our noses clean, the only problem will be the dress code, and we’ll just have to get used to that.”

Bruno’s eyes reflected deep pain. “But what’s the point of having a committee if we don’t do anything?”

“Well,” said Wilbur, “I guess we don’t have a committee, then.”

Bruno leapt to his feet. “You’re darn right we have a committee! As long as there’s a Macdonald Hall, there’s always a committee! I don’t care if you all walk out! Boots and I are still on the committee!”

Boots turned to his roommate and best friend to deliver the message that had been in his mind all day. “Not me, Bruno. I’m

out. I'm sorry. I think it's great that you have so much school spirit, but this is the end of the line. It's just too dangerous."

"Come on, guys," said Larry. "We've got to get to classes."

They got up and moved out of the dining hall, leaving Bruno all alone, staring at the empty chairs.