

# WHITEOUT

W.C. MACK

**Scholastic Canada Ltd.**

Toronto New York London Auckland Sydney  
Mexico City New Delhi Hong Kong Buenos Aires

**Scholastic Canada Ltd.**

604 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1E1, Canada

**Scholastic Inc.**

557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, USA

**Scholastic Australia Pty Limited**

PO Box 579, Gosford, NSW 2250, Australia

**Scholastic New Zealand Limited**

Private Bag 94407, Botany, Manukau 2163, New Zealand

**Scholastic Children's Books**

Euston House, 24 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1DB, UK

[www.scholastic.ca](http://www.scholastic.ca)

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Mack, W. C., 1972-, author

Whiteout / W.C. Mack.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-4431-4868-9 (softcover).--

ISBN 978-1-4431-4869-6 (ebook)

I. Title.

PS8625.A24W45 2018

jC813'.6

C2017-904992-5

C2017-904993-3

If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as "unsold and destroyed" to the publisher, and neither the author nor the publisher has received any payment for this "stripped book."

Cover photo © yulkapopkova/iStockphoto

Copyright 2018 by Wendy Smith. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher, Scholastic Canada Ltd., 604 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1E1, Canada. In the case of photocopying or other reprographic copying, a licence must be obtained from Access Copyright (Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency), 56 Wellesley Street West, Suite 320, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S3 (1-800-893-5777).

6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Canada 139 18 19 20 21 22



# CHAPTER ONE

I pulled the carefully rolled posters out of their cardboard tube, hoping they'd survived the trip from Kansas.

They were still in mint condition. No rips, no folds, no creases.

Whew!

I took off the rubber bands that held them together and flattened the stack out on the floor of my new bedroom.

I had thick blue carpet this time, and blinds instead of frilly curtains, which was cool. I even had a walk-in closet for all my gear. I knew from experience that things could have been a lot worse.

I knelt down on the floor to flip through my poster collection. Other than my family, it was the only thing in my life that never changed.

On top of the pile was a shot of Christian Vigo in the middle of his Backside 720 from the Snowboarding Grand Prix in Mammoth. Next up was Matty Doakes in the coolest Oakley jacket ever, holding a bronze Olympic medal and smiling like he'd conquered the world (which he almost had!) Underneath that was one of my favourites: D-Day with nothing but bright blue sky around him as he pulled a Fastplant Frontflip at the Winter X Games.

Now *that* was sick.

*Wait. Did they say sick in Oregon?*

Or did they say awesome, sweet, cool or something else? Something I'd never even heard before?

I'd find out soon enough. School started at eight o'clock the next morning, and my stomach was already knotted up. I wasn't ready for another new school. I'd barely gotten used to the last one.

I turned to the next poster and stared at Cody White's face, grinning back at me like he didn't have a single thing to worry about.

Why couldn't *I* be a pro snowboarder?

I wouldn't have to make friends because I'd already have teammates. And I'd be famous, so regular people would automatically want to hang out with me. And school? I could have a tutor or something, like movie stars do, and I'd never have to be the new kid in a classroom again. *Ever.*

I weighed down the poster corners with a pencil

case, two unmatched sneakers and the Cody White book I'd read over and over again.

As much as I loved the book, I couldn't help hoping I'd have a little less time to read in Oregon.

I wanted to be busy with friends.

Which meant I had to *make* friends.

I knew from seven moves in five years that the only way that might happen was if I looked and sounded like everybody else.

But I had no idea what everybody else looked or sounded *like* at Evergreen Middle School.

Catching up with Math, English or any of my other subjects was a total breeze, but preparing for life in the hallway and cafeteria? That was something else.

If there was a way to study for a new social life, I would have happily crammed all night.

At least it wouldn't be too tough to learn my way around town. Timber only had two gas stations, a bank, a library, a grocery store, a Mexican restaurant and a Dairy Queen. That was a lot less than most of the places I'd lived, which was kind of nice.

Then again, there was only one middle school, which meant there were fewer kids to try making friends with too.

"Whatcha doing?" Thomas asked, from my open doorway.

My little brother didn't have the same problem I did. No matter where Dad's job took us, the kid always had

a handful of friends on the first day. By lunch. People liked him right away, and the most annoying part was he didn't even have to try.

"Getting my room ready," I told him.

"You're gonna put all the same stuff up *again*?"

"Yup." In exactly the same places. Just like last time and the time before that and the time before that. Those posters made me feel at home, even if the place was only mine for a little while.

"My room's pink," Thomas muttered.

"More like light brown," I said.

He raised one eyebrow. "It has a Minnie Mouse light switch."

He had me there. "Okay, it's pink," I admitted. "But maybe the landlord will let us paint it."

"Maybe," he said.

"Two bathrooms. Better than the last place."

"Better? I don't have enough outlets and I can't find a power bar for my Xbox."

"Set it up downstairs," I suggested.

He shook his head. "Mom probably won't let me. She hates *Zombierville*." He scratched his head. "And *Alien Blasters*. And *Vampire Assassin*. Have you seen my headset?"

"Nope," I told him, glad that he couldn't find it. My brother spent more time playing video games with total strangers all over the country than he spent talking to his own family.

He looked at me for a couple of seconds, then asked, “So, are you ready for tomorrow?”

“I guess so,” I told him, with a shrug.

Was I ready for thirty sets of eyes staring at me when I was introduced in homeroom? Was I ready to spend most of the day lost and late for classes? To hear a hundred whispers call me “new kid”? Just like Libertyville and Benton, they’d *probably* still call me new kid if I lived there until I was a hundred. I’d never be *from* there.

I sighed. I’d never be from anywhere.

“You don’t have to walk me to school, you know,” Thomas said. “It’s cool.”

I glanced up at him. Like every waking minute of his life, he was a total mess. His hair was sticking up all over the place, he had either dirt or chocolate (or both) smeared on his face and I counted three pink toes sticking out of the holes in his socks. His “So What?” T-shirt was a perfect fit.

“Yeah, I do,” I told him. “Mom said.”

Thomas rolled his eyes. “I’m not a baby, Steven. I can walk a couple of blocks by myself.”

This might sound crazy, but I *wanted* to walk my eleven-year-old brother to the elementary school. Those few minutes would probably be the only time all day that I talked to anyone who wasn’t a teacher.

It stunk that *I* was supposed to be the leader of the two of us. *I* was supposed to be the cool one who didn’t

want to hang out with my little brother. And yet, Thomas had always seemed older than me. It wasn't that he was smarter (although sometimes he was), but that he'd always been more confident. He was comfortable with how he looked and who he was. He didn't care what people thought.

Unless . . .

Was he worried that I'd embarrass him?

"Thomas," Mom said from the hallway. "You're walking with Steven."

I didn't know why we were even *going* to school at all. One stinking week, right before Christmas break? There was no point.

"I'm eleven, Mom," he reminded her.

She appeared in the doorway. "I'm aware of that. In case you've forgotten, I was going to drop you both off and you were horrified at the thought."

"Because it would be totally humiliating," I reminded her.

"Yeah," Thomas agreed. "No one else's *mommy* is going to be there."

"And we all agreed on a compromise," she said, firmly. "That you two would walk to school together."

"Why can't we just stay here?" I asked.

"I'm going to be running all kinds of errands. As we've already discussed, you don't want to come and I'm not leaving you here in an empty house, in an unfamiliar town."



“We’ll stay inside,” Thomas promised.

“Playing video games,” she countered.

“What’s wrong with video games?” he asked.

“I wouldn’t be sitting in here,” I told her. “I’d be snowboarding.”

“Not by yourself,” Mom argued.

“Seriously? I’m *thirteen*, Mom. Way too old for the buddy system.”

“There’s no age limit for the buddy system, Steven. It’s a matter of safety and common sense.”

“Okay, okay. But Mom, the runs are going to be so clear this week. Once Christmas break starts, the whole world is going to be swarming the mountain.”

Mom sighed. “The topic is closed.”

“But Mom—”

“You are *not* missing a week of school. Period.”

“Fine,” I sighed, giving up.

“And Steven?” she said, heading back into the hallway. “Let’s get some clothes laid out for the morning, okay?”

“I will. I just want to get these posters up first.”

She poked her head into the room again. “Decorating can wait.”

“It’s not decorating, it’s—”

“Not a priority right now,” she interrupted. “We’re not scrambling around looking for clean jeans in the morning.”

“I know,” I told her. “I’ll be ready.”

When I was alone again, I moved the posters to my bare mattress and started unpacking my clothes. It was best to blend in on the first day, so I dug out a pair of jeans that were almost clean and my favourite Burton hoodie. There was snow on the ground, but I wouldn't be caught dead in rubber boots, so I found the missing shoe from my pair of Vans and set them next to my bed.

My hair had grown out from a buzz and it was at that weird in-between stage, so I went through my beanies and picked a plain black one. I looked everything over and nodded. It was safe.

"Steven, Thomas!" Mom called about twenty minutes later, just as I was tacking Eli Taylor up next to the window. "Dinner!"

When I made it downstairs, I was amazed that she'd managed to pull the whole kitchen together in the same amount of time it took me to hang a few posters.

"Spaghetti?" Thomas asked, handing his empty plate to Mom. "Awesome."

"I'm glad you approve," she said, smiling.

When it was my turn, Mom loaded up my plate with noodles, sauce and three fat meatballs.

"Thanks, Mom," I said, grabbing the seat next to my brother.

Just as I started to twirl noodles onto my fork, the front door opened.

"Dad!" Thomas shouted, through his mouthful.

“How are we doing?” Dad asked, stomping the snow off his boots as a gust of cold air made goosebumps pop up on my arms. “Smells fantastic in here.”

“Spaghetti,” I explained, reaching for a piece of Mom’s garlic bread, which was the best I’d ever tasted.

Dad closed the door and took off his coat, then grabbed an empty plate to carry over to the pot.

“I can get it,” he said, when Mom reached for the scoop. Thomas and I pretended not to notice when he kissed her.

“Did you get them?” I asked Dad as soon as he and Mom joined us at the table.

“They’re in my coat pocket,” he said, nodding. “Season passes for all of us.”

“Awesome,” I said, grinning. Free passes were the best thing about Dad working for the mountain.

Unlimited access meant I’d be spending every minute I wasn’t stuck in the classroom on my board. And every minute out there practising brought me one step closer to being a pro.

What if I had posters of *myself* to hang on my walls one day?

Okay, that would be kind of weird . . . but kind of awesome, too.

“How was the office?” Mom asked.

“Good.” Dad pierced a meatball with his fork. “Vikki showed me around and everyone seems nice.”

Sometimes I forgot that Dad was a “new guy” too.

He worked for the Forest Service and he got moved around a lot, depending on where they needed people. Every time he transferred, he had a new group of co-workers, a new office and new duties. And Mom would be looking for a brand new job as soon as we'd all settled in.

I looked up at the dark wood ceilings, liking the cabin feel of the house. It was a lot cooler than the apartment we had back in Kansas.

"By the way," Dad said, interrupting my thoughts. "I saw something at the office that might interest you."

"What?"

He wiggled his eyebrows. "An autographed picture of Cody White, taken right here on the mountain."

"No way," I gasped.

"Way," he answered, with a laugh.

"Pulling a Double Mondo?"

"Now that, I don't know."

"It's his trademark."

"A double what?" Mom asked.

"Mondo. You saw one on my *Whiteout* DVD."

"The one you've watched a hundred times?" Thomas asked, rolling his eyes.

"More like a thousand, but yeah." And I'd watch it again, as soon as the computer was set up. Once Thomas got his Xbox unpacked, he would totally dominate the TV. "Do you think he'll come back?" I asked Dad.

“Your guess is as good as mine, Steven,” he said, spinning noodles onto his fork.

“I hope so.” I grinned. “Can you imagine a pro, right in our backyard?”

I didn’t wait for an answer from anyone at the table. I was too busy daydreaming about hauling down the same runs as Cody White or any of the pros in my pile of posters.

What if the only thing I had to think about every morning was which board I’d use or which goggles I’d wear?

I smiled as I spun some more noodles onto my fork, saving the juicy and delicious meatballs for last.

For the rest of the night, all I could think about was the fact that Cody White had stood just a quarter of a mile away from where I was sitting.

That is, until I got ready for bed. I had only a few hours left before school started, and my nerves were working overtime.

I changed into my pyjamas and looked at my walls, half-covered with legends.

I bet D-Day never had to worry about starting at a new school. Or Toby Briggs. I sighed, lifting the rest of the posters onto my bed so I could look through them. And there he was: Cody White, with his super-blond, curly hair streaming out of the back of his helmet.

“That design is pretty cool,” Thomas said, from my doorway. He was pointing at the jagged “White” splatter on the bottom of the board. “You should ask for that one for Christmas. I mean, you’re a White too.”

“Yeah.” My Christmas list was already pretty long and knowing how much some of the gear cost, adding a new board would be pointless.

And if I was going to add one, it would be the Burton I’d seen in their catalogue. It was bright green, with graffiti-style drawings all over it. I’d never seen one like it and I’d fallen in love on the spot.

It was called the Green Beast.

“Wouldn’t it be cool if we were related to him?” Thomas asked.

“Huh?” Was he still talking about Cody White?

“Steven?” Thomas asked. “Wouldn’t it be cool?”

“Yeah, but . . .” I started to say, then the most amazing idea popped into my head. “That’s it!” I gasped.

“What?”

My mind had gone from zero to sixty in about two seconds.

It was *perfect!*

“What?” he asked again.

“Never mind.” All of the pieces were clicking into place and I didn’t have time to explain.

“Whatever.” He shrugged.

I glanced up at the Cody White poster and knew that I was on to something.

Something awesome.

I wasn't going to be the anonymous kid who got bumped into lockers and didn't know his way to home-room. I wasn't going to be the guy no one wanted to take a chance on in gym class or sit next to in the cafeteria.

I wasn't going to be known only as "new kid" until we moved away again.

I had a master plan, and for the first time I could remember, I was actually looking forward to my first day of school.

And it was all because of a blinding flash of pure genius.

I was going to be instantly cool.

I was going to be unbelievably popular.

I was going to be Cody White's cousin.