

## DOUBLE SWITCHED

By

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### Chapter One

*"I was born to play baseball." -- Roberto Clemente*

Connor Anderson stood on a toilet in the boy's bathroom at Buckley Elementary School. He checked his watch. Two minutes had passed since he had hidden, but it felt like two years. Still, standing on a toilet was better than what everyone wanted him to do with his day.

BANG! The bathroom door swung open. Another boy ran in. Connor thought it was his friend Matt, but he couldn't be sure.

The boy opened the first stall door. "Gross!" He moved on and threw open Connor's stall door.

"Augh!" Connor and Matt jumped at the same time.

Connor flailed his arms, grasping for balance. His left foot slid into the toilet bowl. He tried to lift it out and discovered that his heel was wedged into the back of the bowl.

Connor and Matt stared at each other. "Now what?"

Matt snapped his fingers. "Got it." He reached for the lever.

"Don't!" Connor protested, but it was too late. Water soaked Connor's jeans, almost to his knee.

"Pull your leg out!" Matt yelled.

Connor lifted his foot. This time it slipped easily out of the toilet bowl. He jumped down and his sneakers sloshed onto the bathroom floor.

Connor groaned and headed for the sink. "You blew my plan, Matt."

Matt washed up at the next sink over. "That's the thanks I get?" He glared at Connor in the mirror. Matt's blond hair, pale skin and hefty body were a stark contrast to Connor's dark curls, dark skin and agile build. Matt stood so tall that it didn't look like he and Connor should be in the same sixth grade class.

"What are you doing here, anyway?" Connor asked.

"My bus won't be here for ten minutes," Matt said. "What was your plan? Stand on the toilet all day?"

"If I miss the bus, I don't have to go to enrichment class," Connor explained. "I haven't figured out what to do after that."

"I'm not excited about my class either, but you don't see me standing on a toilet," Matt said. "I don't know why they changed everything. None of my other special education classes were called 'enrichment.' Miss Gomez said she was concerned about my self-esteem last month, so this must be the answer."

"I wish Mom and Dad would just let me quit," Connor complained. "You know enrichment will stink as much as gifted. Worse. I'll have more makeup work, and baseball practice will be longer. If I don't keep my grades up, no more baseball."

"No way your parents will ground you from baseball," Matt scoffed. "It's your life."

"You know my dad as the guy who coaches your baseball team and makes popcorn when you come over," Connor said. "He doesn't tell you he had to work twice as hard as anyone to make it in baseball because he was black. But he makes me work three times as hard as everyone else. At everything."

"I never thought of your dad that way, but I do know one thing," Matt replied. "Hoker will write us up if we miss our buses."

Matt had a point. Mr. Hoker, their history teacher, already knew about both enrichment classes. He'd call Connor's parents if he skipped the class. But maybe if Connor went today, he could figure out a game plan for how to avoid it next time without getting in trouble.

Connor and Matt peeked out the door of the bathroom. The hallway was empty. They raced to the front entrance of the school to join about a dozen students boarding two buses, labeled 202 and 402.

"Which one's yours?" Connor asked Matt.

Matt shrugged.

"Hurry up," the bus 202 driver snapped.

Connor stepped forward. "Am I on your bus?"

The driver pulled out a clipboard and flipped back several pages. "Only one student left. Connor Anderson. That you?"

"Yeah." Connor turned around to Matt. "That bus is yours," he whispered as he pointed to the bus 402. "Hope your class is better than mine."

"Don't worry," Matt said. "You're not going to get grounded from playing baseball."

Connor sighed. "I hope you're right. See you later." He boarded bus 202 and the door closed behind him.

Nobody knew, but a switch had been thrown.