

Webbo

Davy has arrived at Webbo's school in Liverpool, and Webbo has decided he's an easy target for bullying.

Why me? Why had he taken such an instant dislike to me?

The term's first rounders match had got me off to a bad start, of course. I remember Webbo yelling 'Get it!' Well, how was I to know Lianne Whalley would sky the ball straight at me just when I was busy watching the seagulls pecking the leftover crisps off the Infants' yard? I didn't ask to be in the vital place at the last match-deciding moment. Five rounders each and only my hands between victory and defeat.

'Catch the thing!' bawled Webbo as he raced toward me. I didn't, of course. I tried. I stuck out my hands and did my best to cup them under the ball. I suppose my big chance to be a hero was just too much for me. I closed my eyes and hoped for the best, but the ball popped out of my hands as easily as it had dropped in. Lianne completed the rounder with her arms raised in triumph, while Pete Moran laughed himself sick at my attempt at a catch. Webbo wasn't laughing. He only played to win, and I'd just scuppered his hopes. Webbo didn't like being on the losing side – ever.

'You,' hissed Webbo, prodding a finger into my chest. 'You are dead.'

No, he definitely did not like being on the losing side. I looked around. Nobody was listening, nobody except Craig, and he just grimaced sympathetically.

'Try to keep out of Webbo's way,' he advised on the way back into school.

That was easier said than done. I'd realized on my first day since the move from Yorkshire a few months back that Webbo and I weren't going to get on.

'Hey, Woollyback,' he had shouted in the playground.

I must have looked blank.

'Yes, you,' he said. 'Don't you know what a Woollyback is?'

I shook my head. That was a mistake.

'Well, soft lad,' explained Webbo. 'It's like this. There are two kinds of people in the world, Scousers and Woollybacks. If you don't come from Liverpool, then you're a Woollyback. You're not from Liverpool, are you?'

No, I wasn't. I'd finally discovered that I had something in common with Michael Jackson, Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Pope and Mother Teresa of Calcutta – we're all Woollybacks!

'So now you understand, don't you, Woollyback?'

I nodded and turned to walk away. Carl O'Rourke barred my way.

'Who said you could go?' demanded Webbo.

'Nobody,' I admitted. Silly me, I didn't know I needed permission!

'Then you wait till you're told you can go,' said Webbo. 'Understand?'

'Yes,' I murmured nervously.

'I understand.'

Chicken, Alan Gibbor

