

The Doghouse

**RAISE YOUR HAND TO TALK
KEEP YOUR HANDS TO YOURSELF
STAY IN YOUR SEAT
USE A SOFT VOICE**

Four rules were posted above the blackboard in the classroom at the end of the hall at W. T. Melon Elementary School. In the corner of the blackboard, the tall teacher was drawing a doghouse with chalk.

After completing the peaked roof, he turned toward his class of third-graders. “If you break a classroom rule, your name goes into the doghouse,” he explained. “That’s a warning. Break a rule again and I put a check mark by your name. That will cost you five minutes of recess. Another broken rule, another check mark, another five minutes of recess lost. Any questions?”

The tall teacher studied his new students. On this first day of school, they wore looks of excitement mixed with concern mixed with curiosity.

“What if we get a hundred check marks by our name?” asked Matthew in the second row.

“Do the math, Matthew,” said the teacher. “Five minutes

times one hundred. That's a lot of missed recesses."

Hannah, who sat in the fourth row, raised her hand. "Can we still hug each other?" she asked.

"Hands to yourself means hands to yourself, Hannah," said the teacher. "You can hug all you want on the playground."

From the third row, Alex called loudly, "But I can't remember all those rules."

"The rules will remain posted above the blackboard all year, Alex," said the tall teacher. "And don't forget the fourth one. Keep your voice down."

"How can I go to the boys' room if I have to stay in my seat?" said Zachary from his back-row chair.

The third-graders giggled, and the teacher's ears glowed pink. He called on Loren, who had her hand raised.

"Do we have to take many tests this year?" Loren asked.

Miss Nosewiggle, a guinea pig with orange fur, stirred in her cage on the science shelf.

"We'll talk about testing later, Loren," said the teacher. "Now, does everyone know what the expression *in the doghouse* means?"

"It means you're in trouble," Paul blurted out from the second row. "My mom's always telling my dad he's in the doghouse."

"That's correct, Paul," said the teacher. "But don't forget to raise your hand if you want to talk. Now, class, I think that's enough questions, and we'll begin our morning."

Just be careful to follow the classroom rules throughout third grade so you can stay out of the doghouse. I know we're going to have a great school year together."

