

The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked

David Benjamin



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"Awjeezma!" was the universal dissent, whined—repeatedly if necessary—at an unreasonable mother who wanted the vacuuming done now-not-next-year or a pile of encrusted dishes washed or the sputtering heater refueled.

"Awjeezma! Do I gotta?"

"If I have to tell you one more time-"

"Awjeezma! Awright! Jeez!"

Through the telling of his own madcap childhood, David Benjamin pays homage to the exuberance of countless untamed boys who grew up in Middle America in the 1950s. Whether he's stalking frogs through the bogs of Tomah, Wisconsin, playing four-kid baseball with his bothersome little brother and two favorite cousins, or sneaking into the theater to watch Saturday afternoon Westerns, Benjamin is the kind of little kid who eagerly would have fallen in with the redoubtable Tom Sawyer.

His tales—including one about a truly sorry incident with Snappy, the snapping turtle, and another about a run-in with a particularly fiendish squirrel—are by turns hysterically funny, caustic, aggrieved, and movingly sincere. Traversing the nooks and crannies of kidhood, from ballfields to swimming holes, **The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked** captures a moment in twentieth-century American life, as Benjamin magically recalls the myriad scrapes, intrepid adventures, and wanderlust that once made childhood such an exhilarating enterprise.

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