

"This brilliantly lewd novel is hilarious."

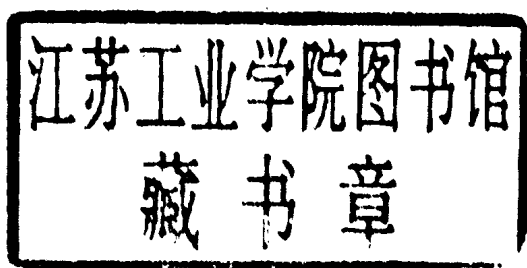
—*Chicago Tribune*

# SPANKING SHAKESPEARE



JAKE WIZNER

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**JAKE WIZNER**

RANDOM HOUSE  NEW YORK

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jake Wizner's life improved significantly after he graduated from high school. These days he lives in New York City with his wife and two daughters and teaches eighth-grade English and history. *Spanking Shakespeare* is his first novel.

# SPANKING SHAKESPEARE

A Book Sense Children's Pick  
An ALA-YALSA Best Book for Young Adults  
A *Publishers Weekly* Flying Start

"High-school life at its most embarrassing, hilarious best."

—*New York Post*

\*"Bold and bawdy. Wizner knows just how  
to set up his outrageous jokes."

—*Publishers Weekly*, Starred

"Wizner infuses [Shakespeare's] voice with an over-the-top, biting wit that punches his seemingly sane life episodes into knee-slapping, lewd-icrouous territory. Alternating between Shakespeare's reality and his writing, Wizner's first novel packs the stitches tight."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Wizner endows his narrator with a hilarious, self-deprecating comedic voice. Laughs alone make this effort successful, but Wizner allows Shakespeare to grow and learn just a little, too—  
an extraordinary feat for such a raucous read."

—*School Library Journal*

For Kira

# SPANKING SHAKESPEARE



# 17 DOWN

What's in a Name?

1

The Early Years

21

The Time My Parents Sent Me to a Camp  
Straight out of *Lord of the Flies*

53

The Time My Mother Used Emotional Blackmail  
to Deprive Me of the Only Thing  
I Ever Really Wanted

71

The Time I Got Caught with a Pornographic  
Magazine in Math Class

95

The Time I Got Hit in the Face by a Baseball  
at a Yankees-Red Sox Game

122

The Time I Watched a Pornographic Movie with  
My Mentally Unstable Grandmother

144

The Time I Visited a Sex Doctor

182

The Time I Saw My Father Get Drunk and  
Act like a Complete Idiot

209

The Time I Became a Published Author

251

# **SENIOR YEAR**

September

7

October

32

November

60

December

81

January

109

February

134

March

153

April

194

May

226

June

273

# 17 DOWN

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

It's hard to imagine what my parents were thinking when they decided to name me Shakespeare. They were probably drunk, considering the fact that my father is an alcoholic and my mother gets loopy after one glass of wine. I've given up asking them about it because neither of them is able to remember anything anymore, and the stories they come up with always leave me feeling like it might not be so bad to dig a hole in the backyard and hide out there until I leave for college next year. That is, if I get into college.

My mom used to tell me that she and my father put the names of history's greatest writers and artists and musicians into a bowl and decided I would be named for whoever they pulled out. "I was hoping for van Gogh," she said.

"Didn't he cut his ear off?" I asked.

"Yes," my mother said dreamily, stroking the side of my face. "To give to the woman he loved."

My dad remembers that he and my mom always talked about giving me an "S-H" name to match the "S-H" of our last name, Shapiro. "We thought about Sherlock, Shaquille, and Shaka Zulu before we settled on Shakespeare."

"You really wanted to make my life miserable, didn't you?" I asked.

My father licked the rim of his martini glass. "That was the plan."

The worst was the time my mom came running into my room and told me she finally remembered how she and my dad had come up with my name.

"We did crazy things when we were younger," she said.

"Is this going to traumatize me?" I asked.

"Sometimes we would dress up in costumes."

"I don't want to hear this. You're an insane woman."

"We were doing a scene from Shakespeare on the day you were conceived."

"I'm calling Child Services!" I yelled, running from the room.

Her voice shrilled after me. "Your father was Othello!"

Take a moment to consider the implications of a name like Shakespeare Shapiro. It's the first day of middle school. Everybody is trying hard not to look nervous and self-conscious and miserable. I have intense pains in my stomach and begin to wonder if it's possible to get an ulcer in sixth grade.

"Good morning, everyone," the teacher says. "Please say 'here' when I call your name."

Michael and Jennifer and David and Stephanie and all the others hear their names and dutifully identify themselves.

"Shakespeare Shapiro," the teacher calls out.

The class bursts into laughter.

"Here," I squeak.

She looks up. "What a fabulous name. I've

never had a student named Shakespeare before."

Everybody is staring at me and whispering. If the teacher doesn't call the next name soon, the situation will become critical. Already I can see some of the more ape-like boys sizing me up for an afternoon beating.

"I bet you're a wonderful writer, Shakespeare," she says kindly.

I begin to wish for a large brick to fall on her head.

She looks back down at her roster.

Come on, I think. You can do it.

Her head pops back up.

"Just read the next name!" I blurt out.

And so, less than ten minutes into my middle school career, I'm already in trouble, and all because of my ridiculous name.

This is the story of my life, which has been a series of catastrophes, one after another. I'd like to say there have been some happy times, too, but the reality is that with seventeen years down, nothing much has gone right so far. As I begin my senior year of

high school, here are the facts I wake up to each morning and go to sleep with each night:

1. After six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, and three years of high school, I have only two close friends: Neil Wasserman, whose favorite thing to do is discuss his bowel movements; and Katie Marks, whose favorite thing to do is tell me how pathetic I am.
2. I have never had a girlfriend, never kissed a girl, and spend most Saturday nights watching TV with my parents before whacking off to Internet porn in my bedroom.
3. My younger brother—two years younger—has a girlfriend, is extremely popular, and will definitely lose his virginity before I do.

I should warn you. Some of the material you're about to read is disturbing. Some of it will make you shake your head in

disbelief. Some of it will make you cringe in disgust. Some of it might even make you rush out into the stormy night, rip your shirt from your body, and howl, "WHY, GOD, WHY?"

Then again, maybe you'll just sit back and smile, secure in the knowledge that your name is not Shakespeare Shapiro, and this is not your life.



# SENIOR YEAR

## SEPTEMBER

My high school is named after Ernest Hemingway, a writer who consumed tremendous amounts of alcohol, wrote simple declarative sentences, and eventually killed himself with a double-barreled shotgun. Hemingway High School claims to offer the finest writing program in New York. Every twelfth grader must take a year-long seminar, and it is in this class that we are expected to complete our senior project, a major piece of writing about our lives. These memoirs, often in excess of one hundred pages, have made the school famous. Not only has the award for best senior memoir eclipsed the valedictory award for graduation's most prestigious honor, but also a major publisher has offered contracts to several past winners.

To guide us through this massive undertaking, we get either Ms. Glass, who is boring, Ms. McCurry, who is mean and boring, or Mr. Parke, who is completely off his rocker. In my years at Hemingway High School, I have often seen Mr. Parke wandering the halls, smiling and nodding at the throngs of students, or else deep in conversation with himself, completely