

DIARY of a **Wimpy Kid** **CABIN FEVER**



THE #1
NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLER

Jeff Kinney

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Dear reader,

I'm very excited that you're holding the Kindle edition of
Diary of a Wimpy Kid in your hands.

When I read my first e-book on a Kindle, I was amazed at
the possibilities. Carrying a whole library around with me on a
device I could fit in the palm of my hand? Amazing.

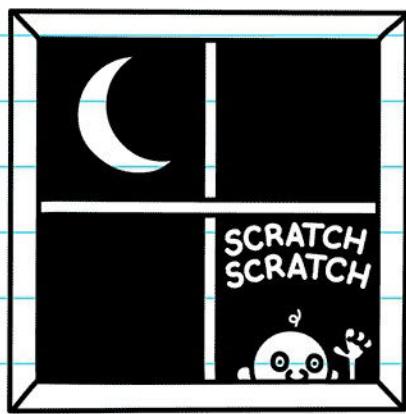
What's been very rewarding to me as an author has been
seeing kids carrying their dog-eared copies of *Diary of a
Wimpy Kid* with them. The Kindle allows kids to have the
whole series at their fingertips, and the reading experience
is crisp and clean every time . . . with no chance of today's
breakfast staining the pages.

Thank you for purchasing *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* on your
Kindle. I hope it gives you lots of laughs and you have as
much fun reading it as I did writing it.



Jeff Kinney

A large, handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Kinney".



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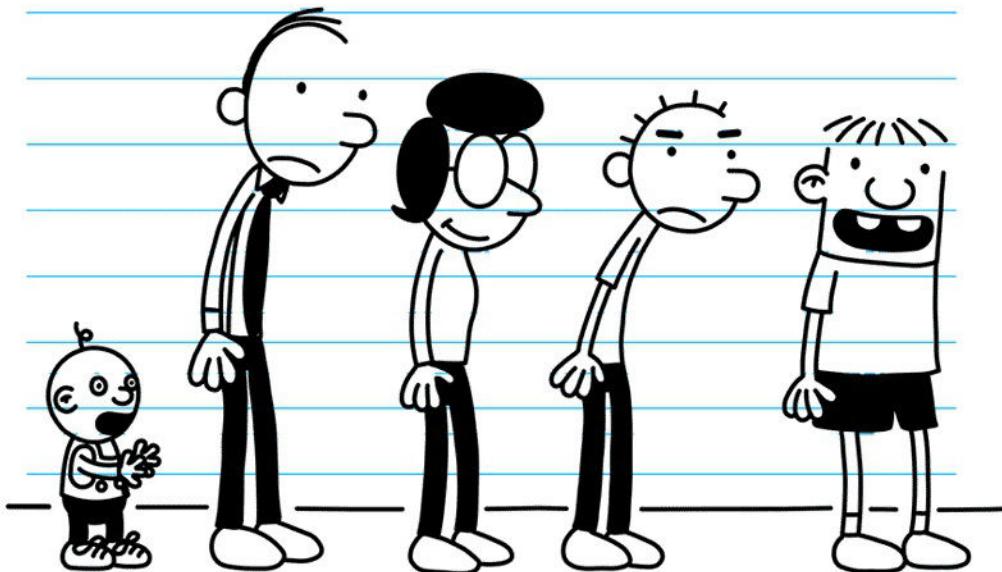
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DIARY of a **Wimpy Kid**

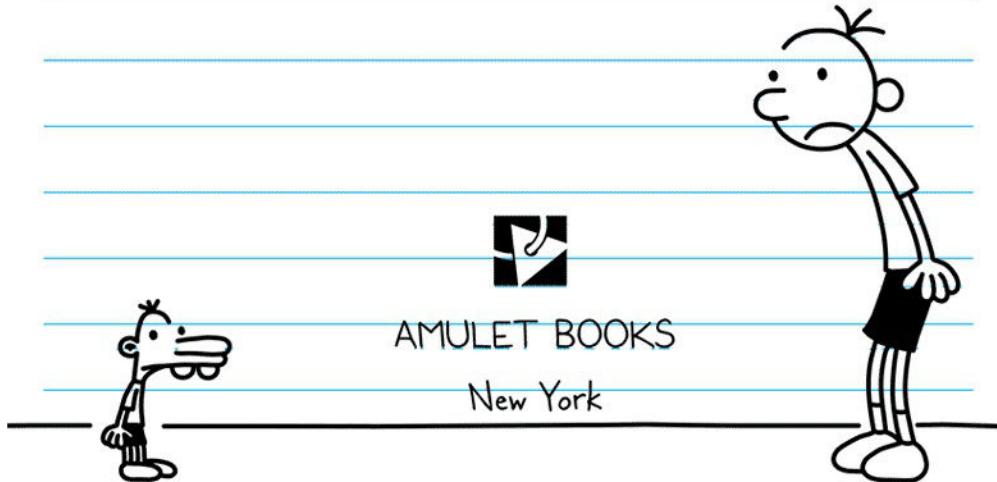
CABIN FEVER

by Jeff Kinney



AMULET BOOKS

New York



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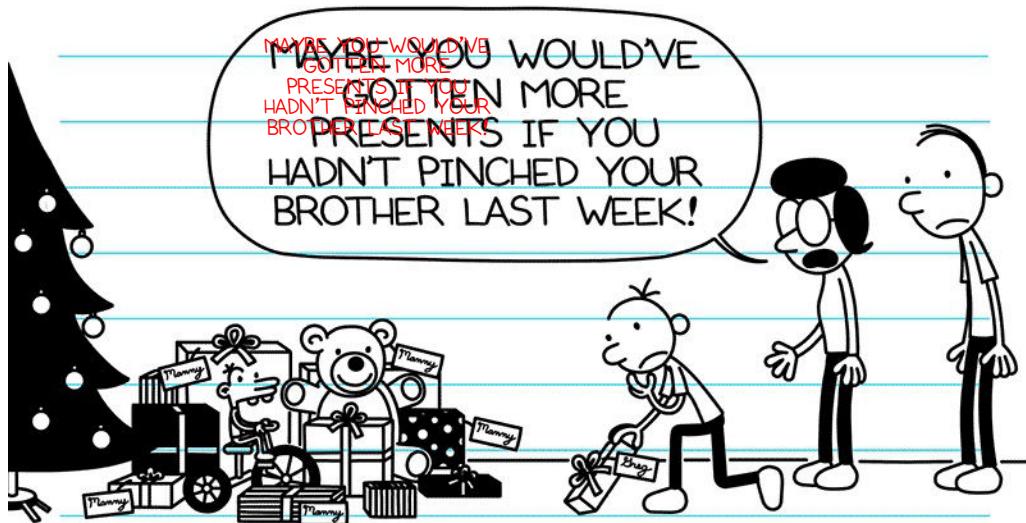
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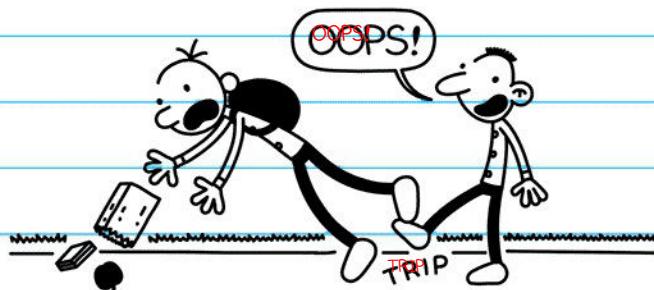
Saturday

Most people look forward to the holidays, but the stretch between Thanksgiving and Christmas just makes me a nervous wreck. If you make a mistake in the first eleven months of the year, it's no big deal. But if you do something wrong during the holiday season, you're gonna pay for it.

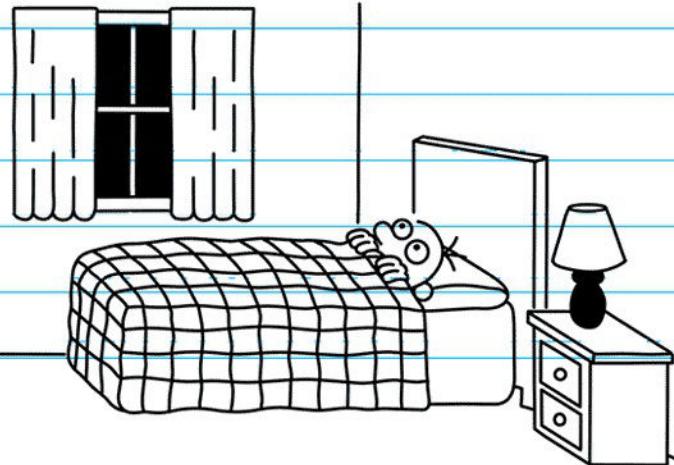


It's too much pressure to be on your best behavior for a whole month. The most I can really handle is six or seven days in a row. So if they moved Thanksgiving to the week before Christmas, it would be fine by me.

Kids whose families don't celebrate Christmas
are lucky because they don't have to stress out
whenever they do something wrong at this time
of year. In fact, I have a few friends in that
category who I think act a little extra jerky
around now just because they can.



The thing that REALLY makes me nervous is this
whole Santa issue. The fact that he can see you
when you're sleeping and knows when you're awake
really creeps me out. So I've started wearing
sweatpants to bed because I really don't need
Santa seeing me in my underwear.



I'm not really convinced that Santa has the time to
keep an eye on you twenty-four hours a day anyway.

I figure he can only check in on each kid once or
twice a year for a few seconds—and with my luck,
that happens at the most embarrassing moments.



If Santa really DOES see everything you do,
then I could be in trouble. So when I write him,
I don't say what I want for Christmas and all
that. I use my letters to paint myself in the best
possible light.

DEAR SANTA,

I did not throw a crab apple
at Mrs. Taylor's cat, even
though it might've looked
that way from a distance.

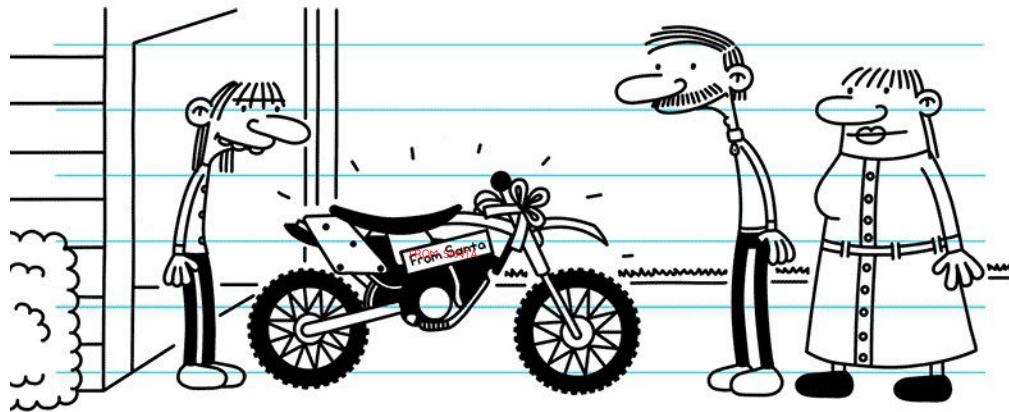
Sincerely,

GREG HEFFLEY

Then there's this "Naughty or Nice" list they're
always talking about. You hear about it, but
you never actually get to SEE it, so it's up to
grown-ups to tell you where you stand at any
given moment. And something about that just
doesn't seem right.

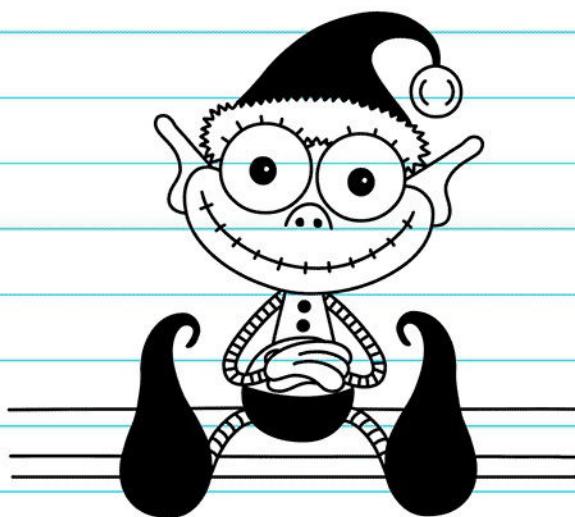


I kind of wonder how accurate the list really is
anyway. There's a kid named Jared Pyle who lives
up the street from me, and if there's ANYONE
who deserves to be on the "Naughty" list,
it's him. But last year he got a dirt bike for
Christmas, so don't even ask me WHAT Santa was
thinking on THAT one.

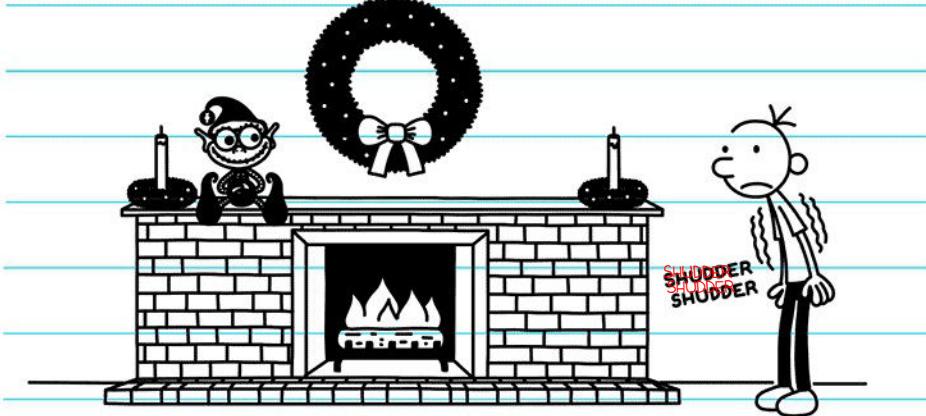


It's not just Santa I've got to worry about,
either. Last year when Mom was going through
some old boxes, she found a homemade doll from
her childhood.

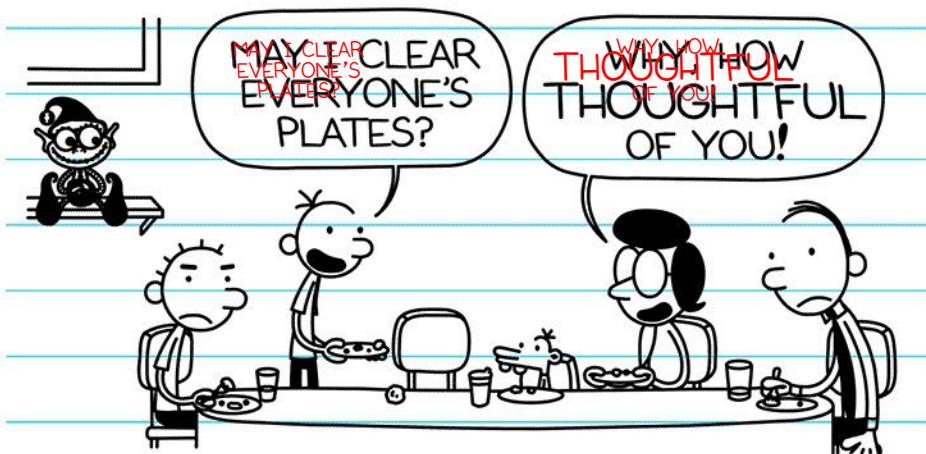
Mom said the doll is called "Santa's Scout" and
that his job is to watch how kids behave and then
report back to Santa at the North Pole.



Well, I'm not a fan of that idea. First of all, I
think you have a right to privacy in your own home.
And second, Santa's Scout gives me the willies.



I don't really buy the idea that this doll is
feeding Santa information, but just in case, I
try to be extra good whenever I'm in the same
room as Santa's Scout.



But it probably doesn't matter anyway, because
my older brother, Rodrick, is constantly feeding
Santa's Scout bad information about me.

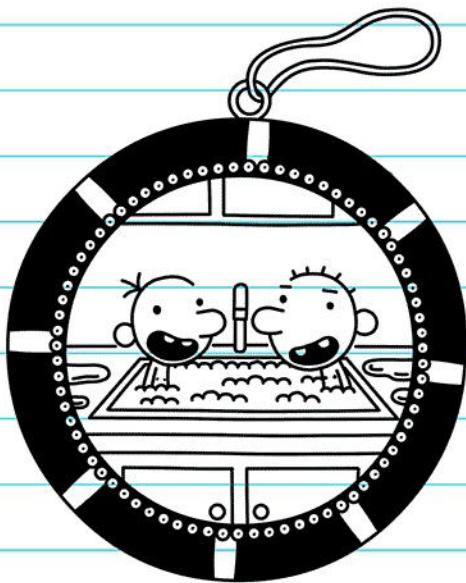


Every morning when I wake up, Santa's Scout is in
a new place, which I guess is supposed to prove that
he traveled to the North Pole overnight. But I'm
starting to wonder if it's really Rodrick who moves him.



Sunday

Today we took all our Christmas decorations out
of the storage room in the basement. We have
boxes full of ornaments, and some of them are
pretty old. There's one with a picture of me and
Rodrick taking a bath in the sink that's really
embarrassing, but Mom won't let me throw it out.



We put up the tree in the living room and started
hanging ornaments on it. My little brother,
Manny, was taking a nap upstairs, and when he
woke up and found out we were decorating the
tree without him, he had a total meltdown.



The reason Manny was so upset was because
someone hung his favorite ornament, this candy
cane he really likes. So Mom took it off the tree
and handed it to Manny to hang up himself.



But Manny wanted his ornament to be the
FIRST one on the tree, so that meant we had
to take all the decorations down, just so he could
get his way.

And that's just the kind of thing that happens

in my house every single day.



Mom hasn't started to use the threat of Santa

as a way of getting Manny to behave, but I'm

sure she will soon. I don't think it's such a good

strategy for keeping us in line, though. Because

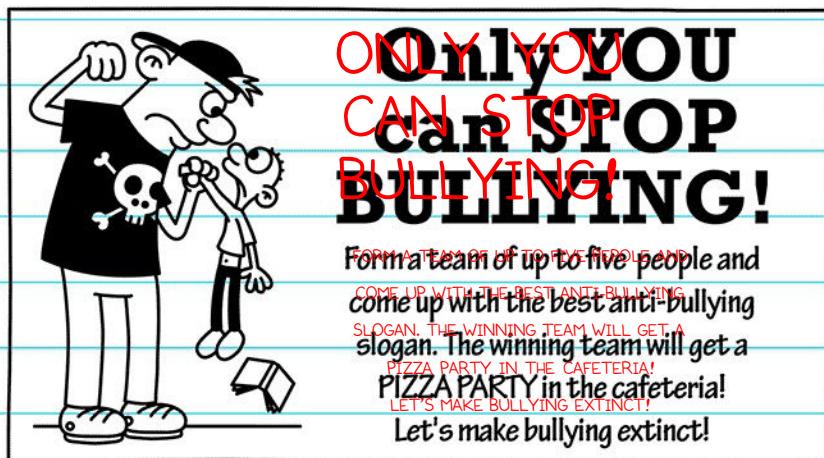
the second Christmas is over, Mom doesn't have

any real leverage.

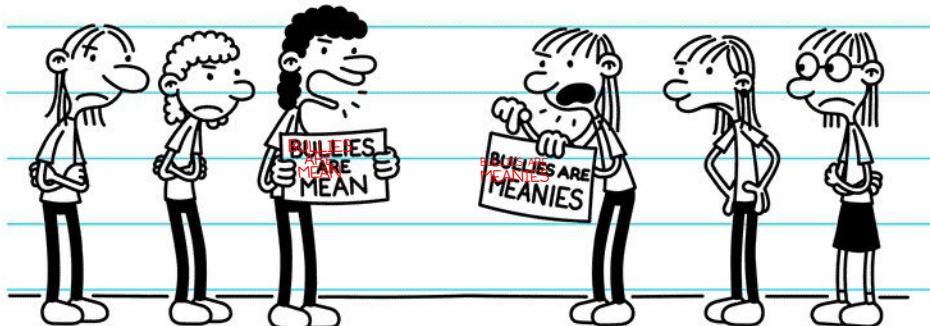


Monday

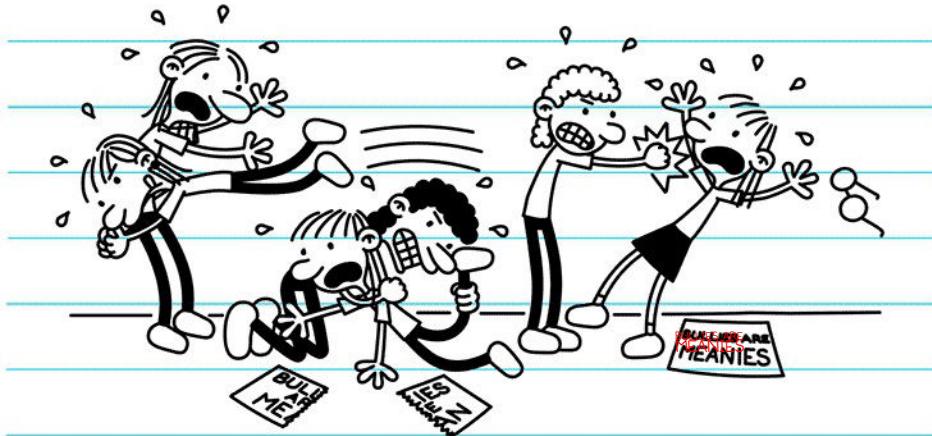
Right before Thanksgiving break, there was a contest at school to see who could come up with the best anti-bullying slogan, and the grand prize was a pizza party for the winning team.



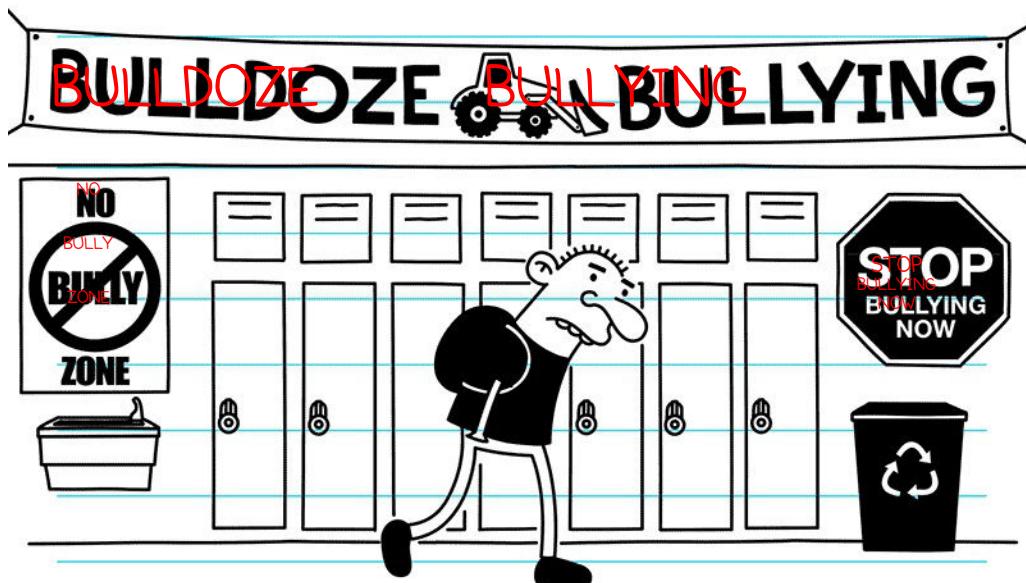
Everyone wanted that pizza party, and people didn't care WHAT they had to do to win it. Two groups of girls in my grade came up with slogans that were really similar, and each group accused the other one of stealing their idea.



The whole situation spun out of control, and
eventually the vice principal had to step in to stop
it from turning into a full-scale riot.

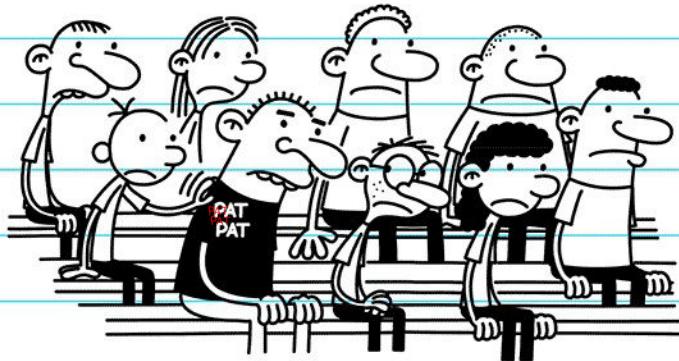


Our school only has one legitimate bully this year
anyway, and his name is Dennis Root. And with
all the signs and posters everywhere, I'm pretty
sure the message is getting through to him.

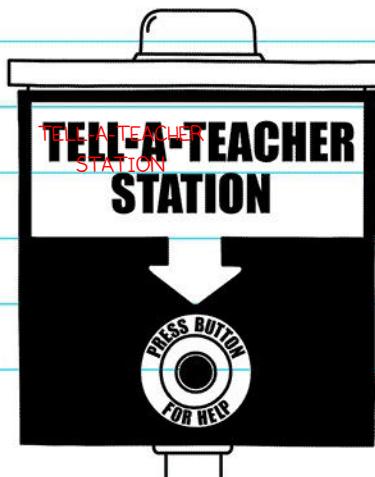


The day before Thanksgiving there was a big anti-bullying assembly, and everyone in the auditorium was looking at Dennis the whole time.

I kind of felt sorry for him, so I tried to make him feel better.



Even though Dennis is the only real bully in our school this year, we had a BUNCH of them LAST year. People were constantly getting picked on at recess, so the teachers set up a station on the playground where kids could press a button if they needed to get a grown-up's attention.

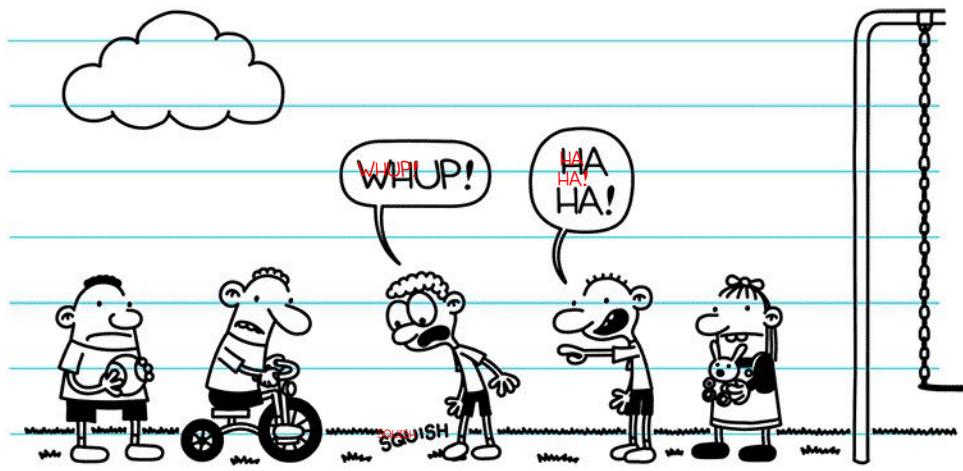


Well, the Tell-a-Teacher station just ended up
being a convenient place for the bullies to hang
out and find their next victims.



The teachers say TEASING counts as bullying,
too, but I don't think there's any way they're
gonna put a stop to THAT. Kids are always
calling each other names and that kind of thing
at my school. In fact, one of the reasons I try
to stay under the radar is because I don't want
to end up getting stuck with a nickname like
Cody Johnson did.

In kindergarten Cody stepped in some dog poop
at recess, and ever since then people have called
him "Dookie."



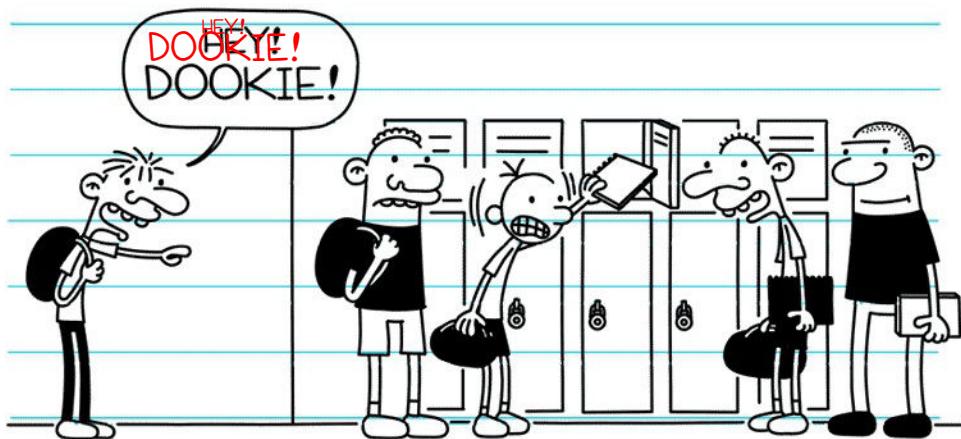
And I'm not just talking about the kids, either.

I'm talking about the teachers and even the
PRINCIPAL.



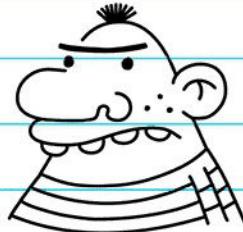
I'll tell you this: If I ever get a nickname like
Dookie, I'll move to a different town.

But what would probably happen is that someone
from my OLD school would move to my new town
and the whole thing would just start back up again.

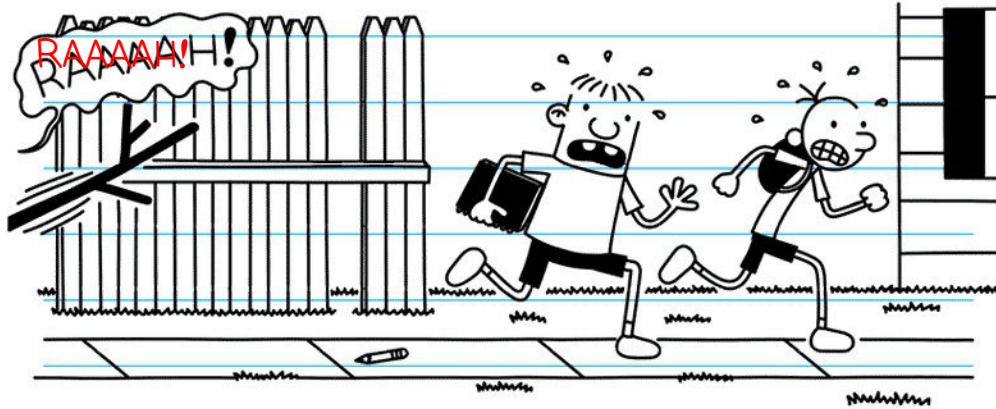


The teachers always say that when you're getting
picked on, you should tell an adult. I think that's
a good idea, but it didn't work out so well when I
was getting bullied.

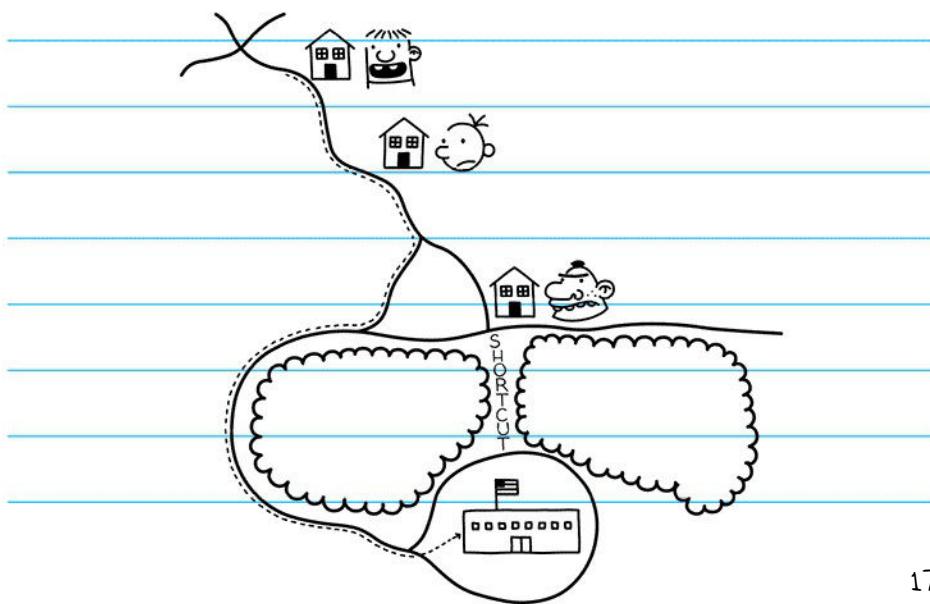
There was this kid who lived in the neighborhood
next to mine, and for some reason everyone called
him "Nasty Pants."



Every time me and my friend Rowley went
through Nasty Pants's neighborhood, he chased us
with a stick.



The thing that really stunk was that me and
Rowley used the woods in that neighborhood as a
shortcut to get to school. So we started having
to go out of our way to avoid getting harassed by
Nasty Pants.



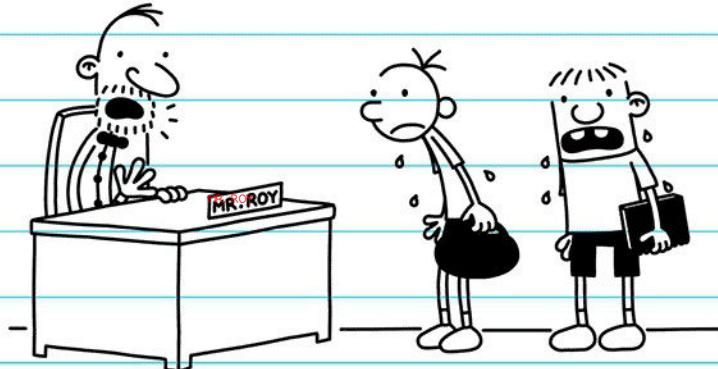
We did EXACTLY what the teachers are always

telling us to do, and complained to the vice

principal. But Vice Principal Roy said that since

Nasty Pants didn't go to our school, there was

nothing he could really do about it.



After getting chased a few more times, I

decided I'd had enough, so I told Dad about

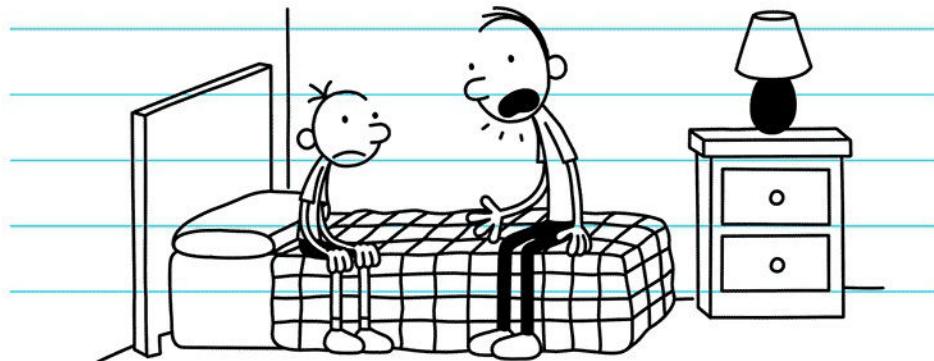
the situation. I was afraid Dad was gonna say I

needed to toughen up and deal with the problem

myself, but he surprised me. Dad said that HE

had problems with a bully at my age and he knew

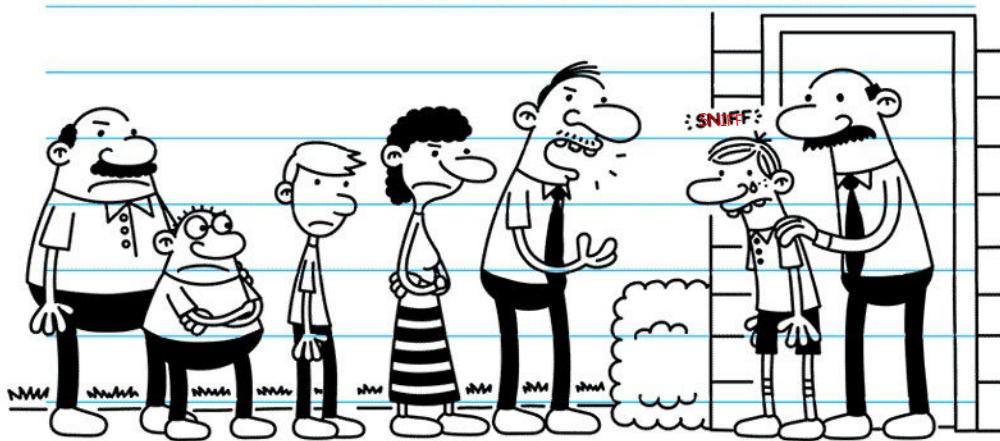
just what I was going through.



Dad's bully was named Billy Staples, and Billy's favorite thing to do was pin a kid's arm behind his back and hold it there until he cried.

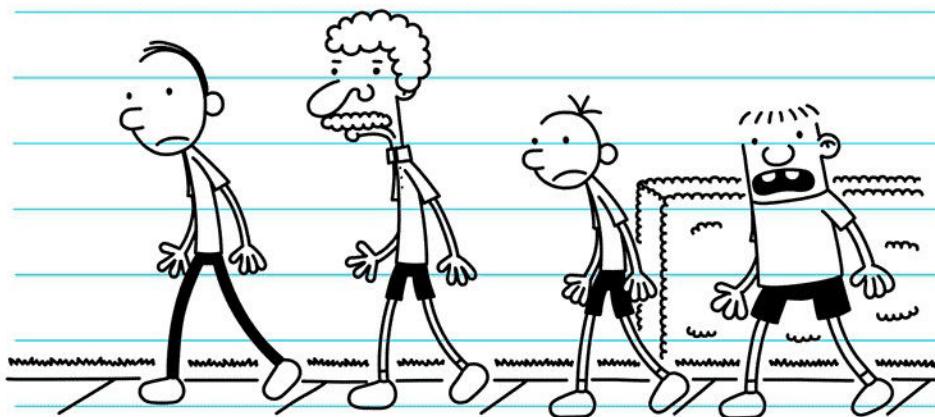


Dad said that the kids in the neighborhood told their parents about Billy and they all went to Billy's house to confront his mom and dad. Mr. Staples made Billy promise to never pick on anyone ever again, and Dad said Billy burst into tears and might have even wet his pants.

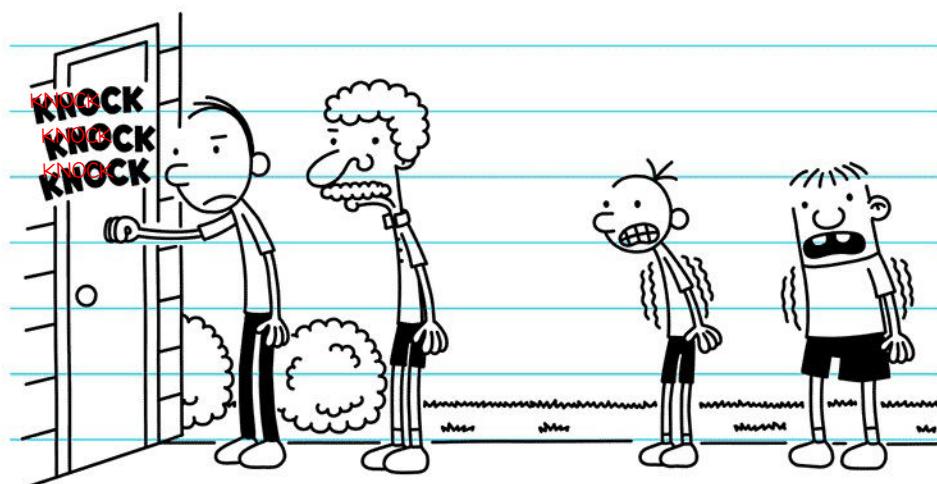


Well, after hearing that story, I don't think Billy
Staples would've been any match for Nasty Pants.

But I told Dad I liked the idea of complaining to
the bully's parents. I called up Rowley and told
him to come over and to bring his dad, because we
needed as much backup as we could get.

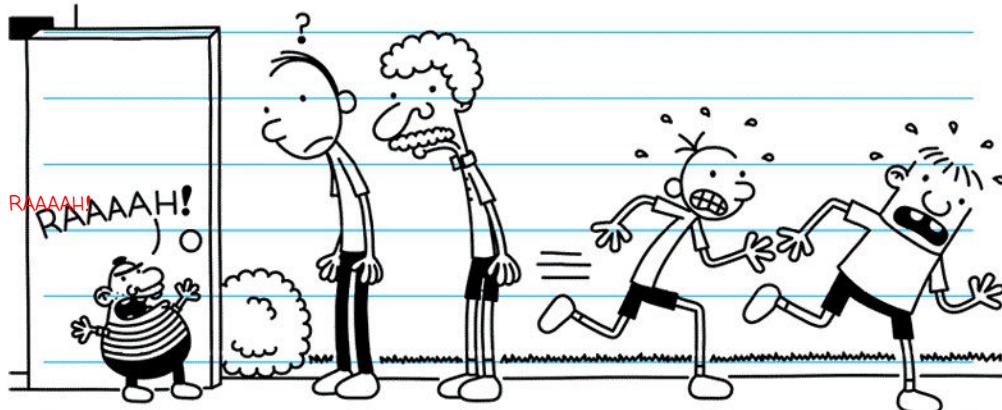


Dad knocked on Nasty Pants's door, and we
waited for one of his parents to open it.



But Nasty Pants HIMSELF came to the door,

and me and Rowley took off.



I guess I should've described Nasty Pants to

Dad, because it took him a while to understand

that the kid who came to the door was the one

who was causing us all that trouble.

Dad talked to Mrs. Pants, and she told Dad her

son was only five and that he just gets a little

wound up sometimes.

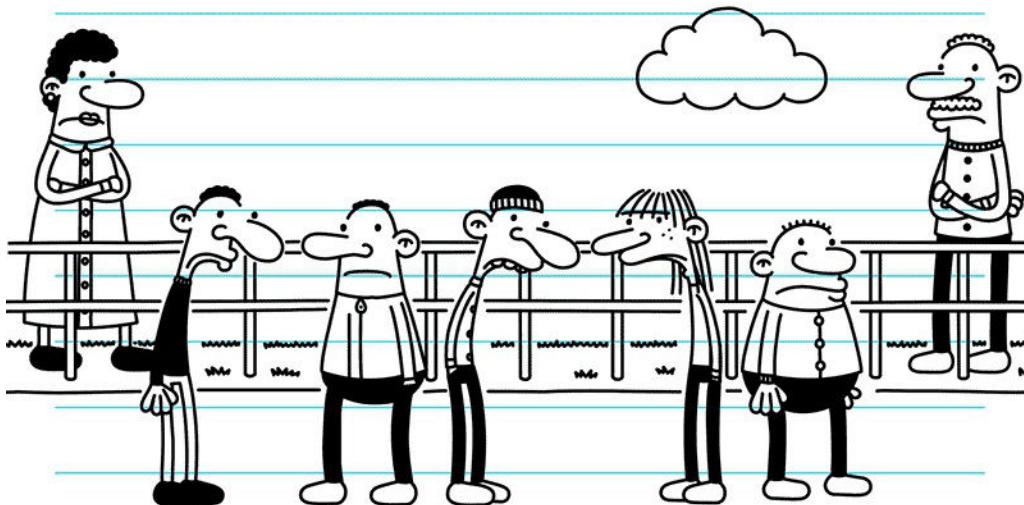


On the way home, Dad was pretty mad at me for
letting myself get bullied by a kid who was still in
kindergarten. But let me just say in my defense
that when some kid is chasing you with a stick,
you don't stop to ask him how old he is.

Tuesday

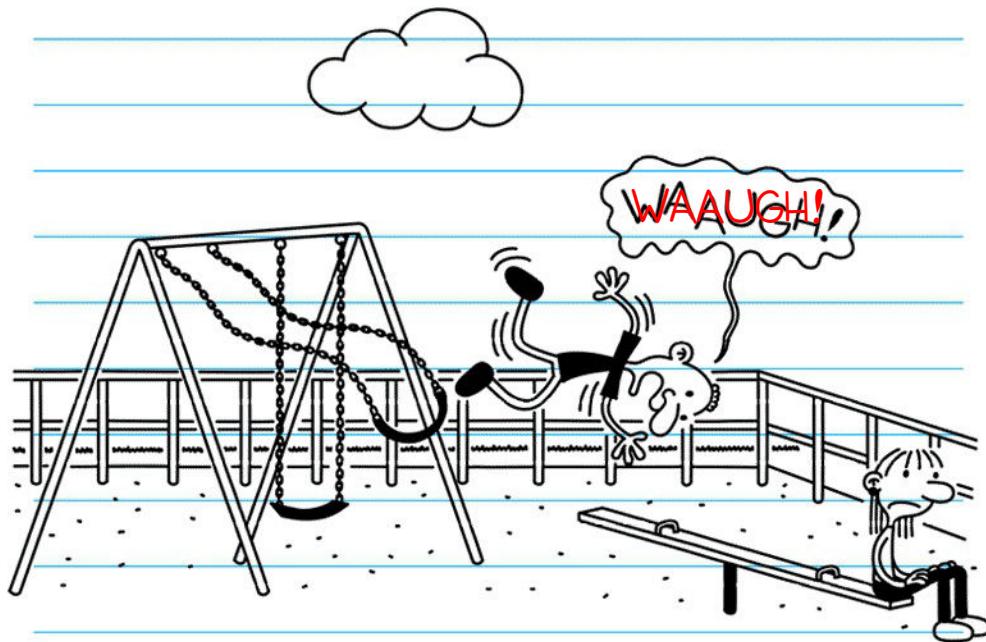
They took the last piece of playground equipment
away at school today. We started off the year
with all sorts of things, like monkey bars and
swings and stuff, but now the playground is an
empty sawdust pit.

So recess is basically like a prison yard.



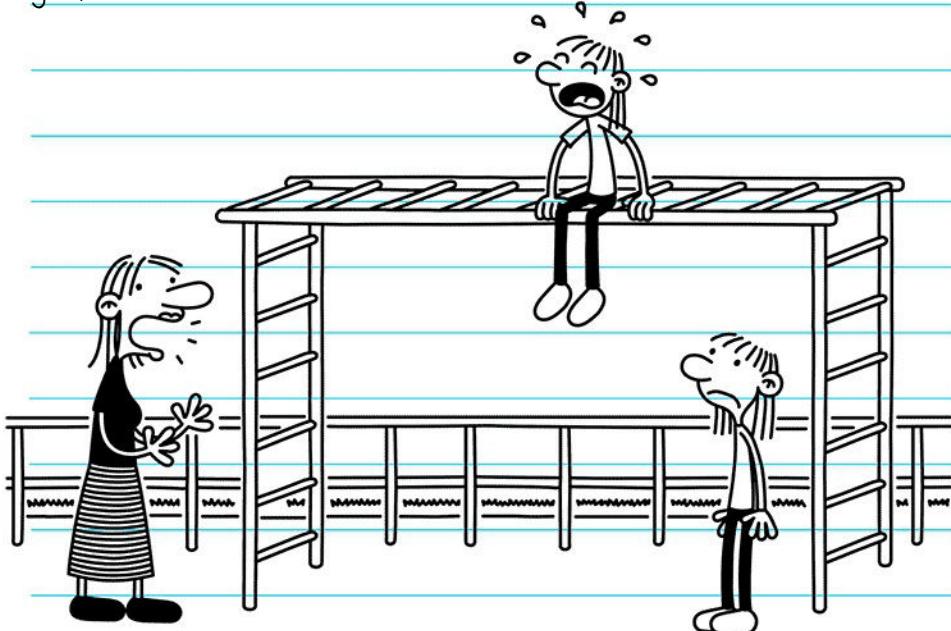
I heard the school was having trouble paying
the insurance for the playground, so every time
there was some kind of accident or injury on a
piece of equipment, the easiest thing to do was
just remove it.

In October, Francis Knott went flying off the
swing set and landed on the seesaw, so that took
out two big items right there.

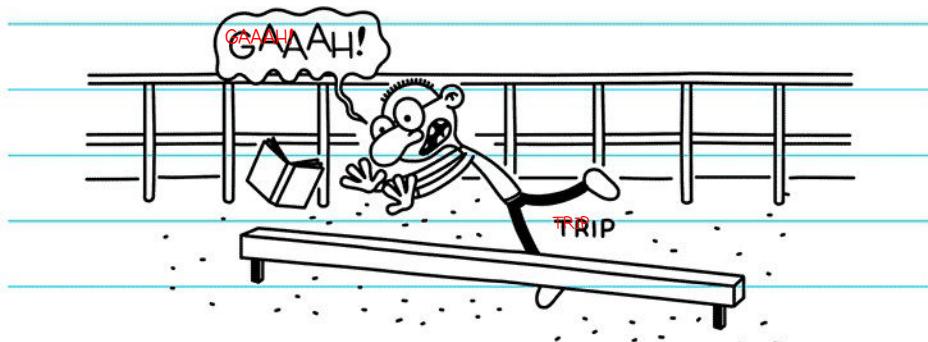


We lost the monkey bars when a girl named
Christine Higgins climbed to the top and then got
too scared to come down.

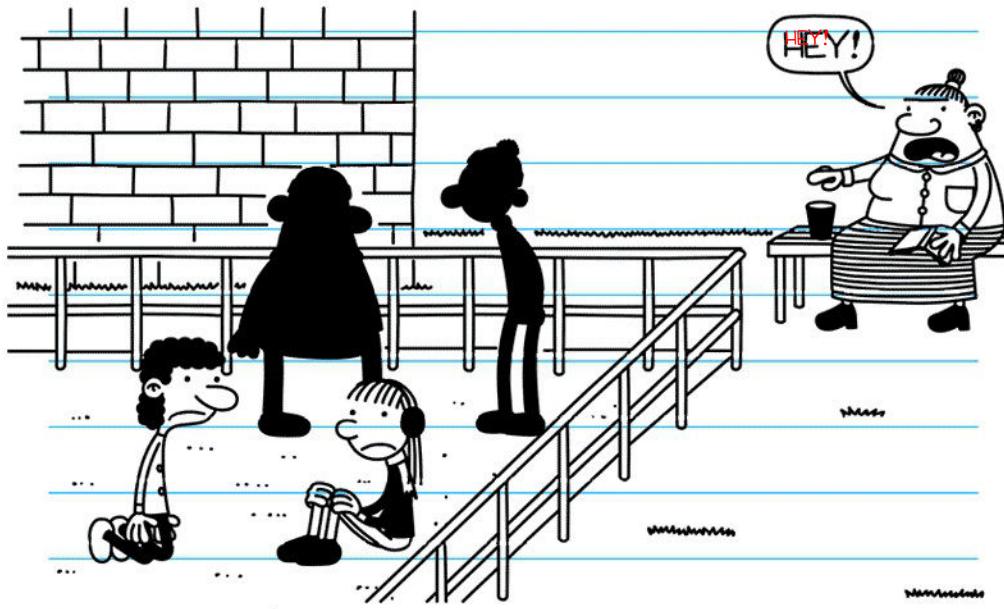
The teachers aren't allowed to touch kids, so
they had to call Christine's parents to come and
get her.



Eventually the only piece of equipment left was
the balance beam, and I figured nobody could get
hurt on THAT thing. But believe it or not, some
idiot wasn't looking where he was going the other
day, so now that's gone, too.

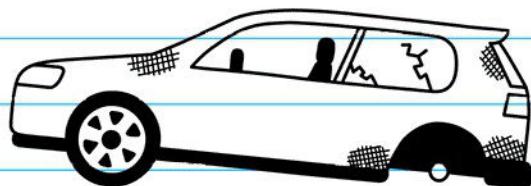


Without any playground equipment, there's really
nothing for us to do. But the teachers won't
even let us sit down, because they say we have to
stay "active."



And it's not like you're allowed to bring in toys
or video games to keep yourself occupied, either.

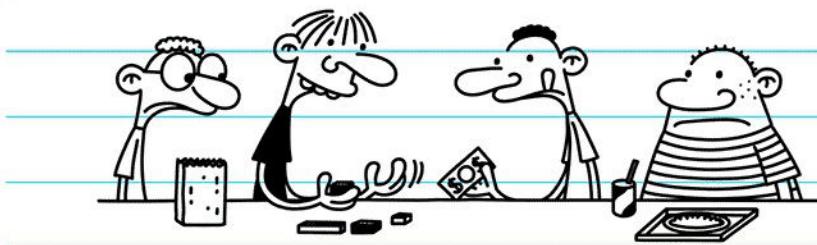
In fact, if you get caught with a toy on the
playground, it'll get confiscated. Last week
somebody found a miniature car buried in the sawdust
that looked like it had been there for years.



The car had three missing wheels, but people were
so desperate for entertainment that they lined up
to play with it while others kept lookout.



Now there's a black market for toys at our school.
Christopher Stangel brought in a bunch of Legos
from home yesterday, and I hear a single brick will
set you back fifty cents.

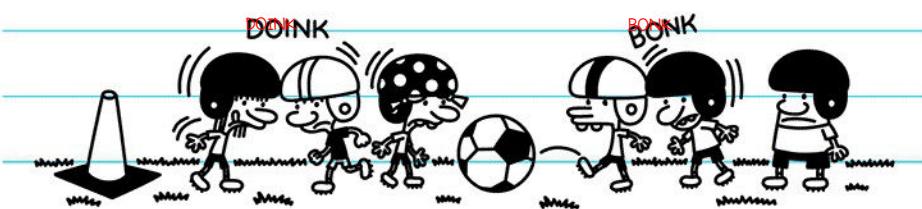


The teachers have banned a bunch of games we
used to play, too. Last week a group of boys were
playing Freeze Tag, but one of them got hurt
when someone shoved him from behind.

So now we're not allowed to touch each other or even RUN. Today people were playing "Air Tag" and getting around by speed-walking, but it wasn't really the same.

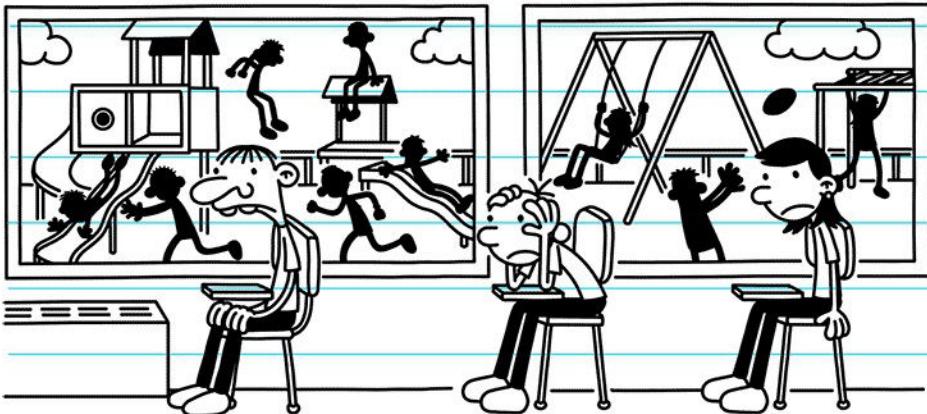


If you ask me, I think people are getting too carried away with all this safety stuff. I went to Manny's peewee soccer game, and all the kids had to wear bicycle helmets.



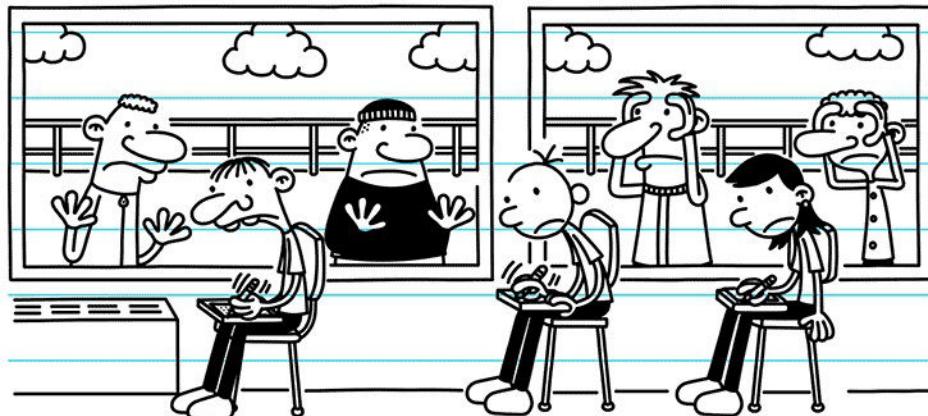
The only good thing about the playground equipment being gone is that now I actually have a chance to start doing well in school.

I'm one of those people who has a hard time
focusing when the teacher is talking, and when
another class is having recess right outside the
window, it's practically impossible to pay attention.

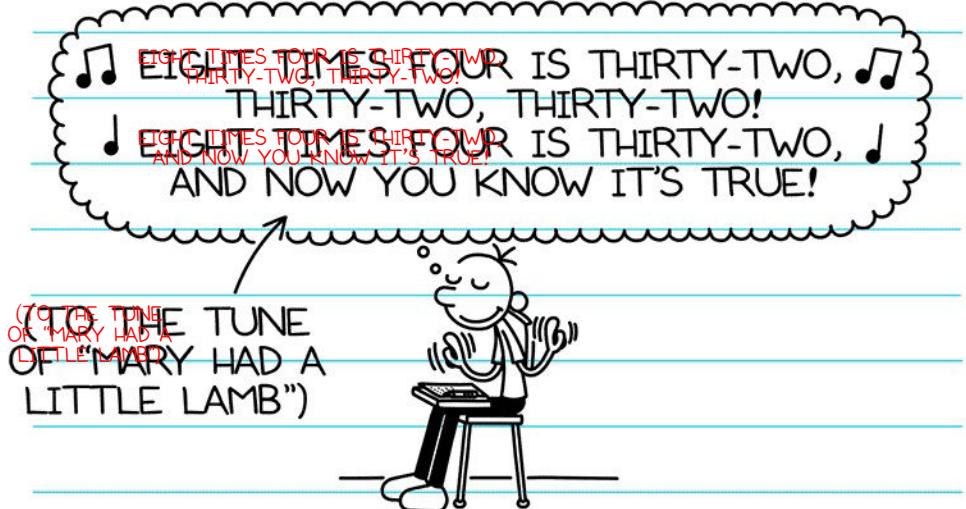


Wednesday

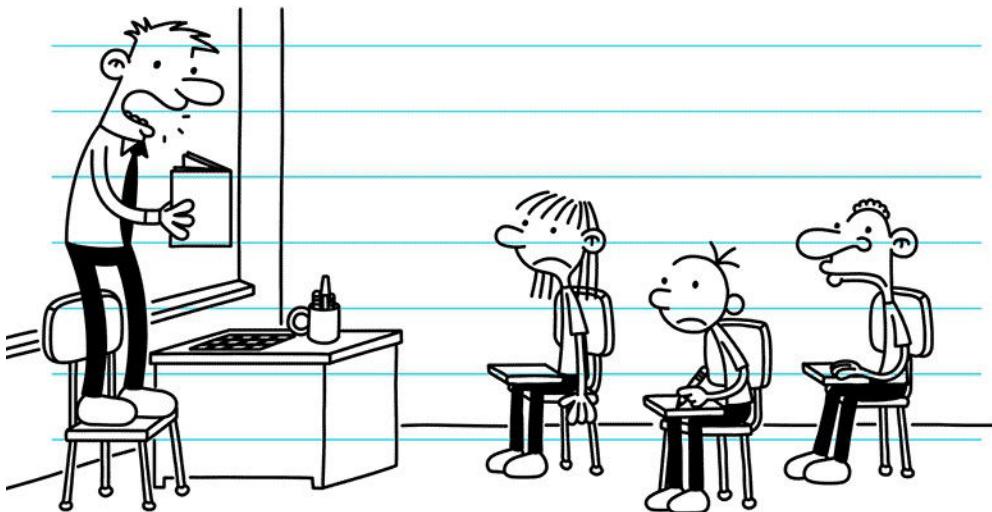
OK, I take back what I said about being glad
the playground equipment is gone. Now the kids
at recess don't have anything to do, so they just
stare in through the windows. And that's seriously
distracting when you're trying to take a test.



It doesn't help that I'm not exactly the fastest
test-taker. In third grade I had a teacher
named Mrs. Sinclair who taught us all these great
tricks for remembering multiplication facts. But
they seriously slow me down.



Earlier this year we had a math teacher named Mr.
Sparks who used to stand on his chair every time
he wanted us to remember something important.

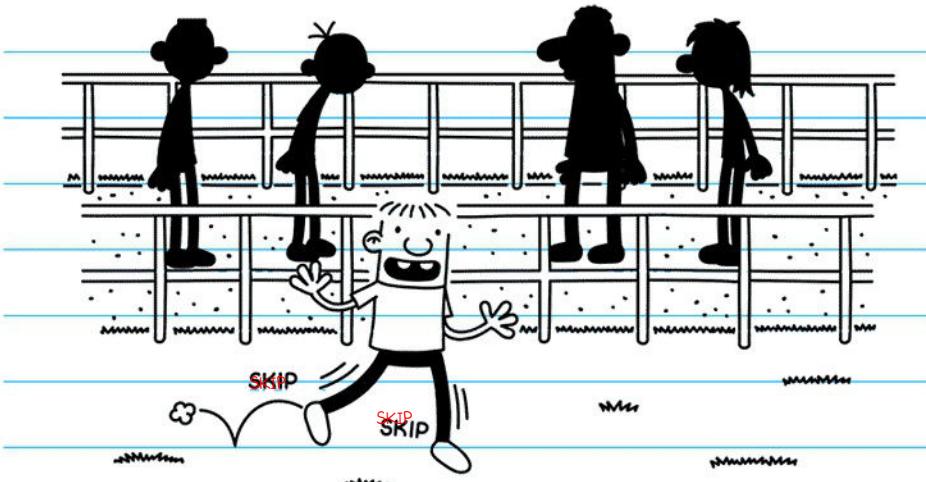


But once when Mr. Sparks was trying to get us
to remember a math concept, one of the legs on
his chair broke and he fell.



Mr. Sparks broke his collarbone, and I heard he's
suing the school over it. I don't remember the
concept he was trying to teach us that day, but I
do always remember never to stand on the furniture.

During recess today everyone was just waiting
to go back inside, but then Rowley got up and
started skipping around the playground.



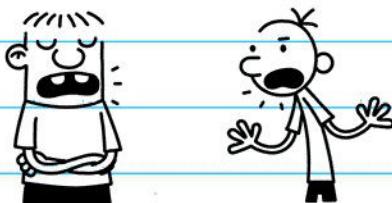
A few people started cheering and clapping.

They must've thought Rowley was protesting all
the new rules by skipping instead of running, but
the truth is, skipping is just something Rowley
likes to do.

For some reason it really gets on my nerves when

Rowley skips, so it bugged me to see him prancing
around the playground like that. Skipping is
actually a real sore subject between the two of us.

Rowley says I'm jealous of him because I don't
know how to skip, but I think it just looks stupid.



I will admit that I never exactly got the hang
of skipping. In fact, I was the only kid in first
grade who couldn't do it.



I was afraid I'd be held back until I learned how
to skip, but luckily they let me move on to second
grade. Still, I'm worried it's gonna come back to
haunt me later on.

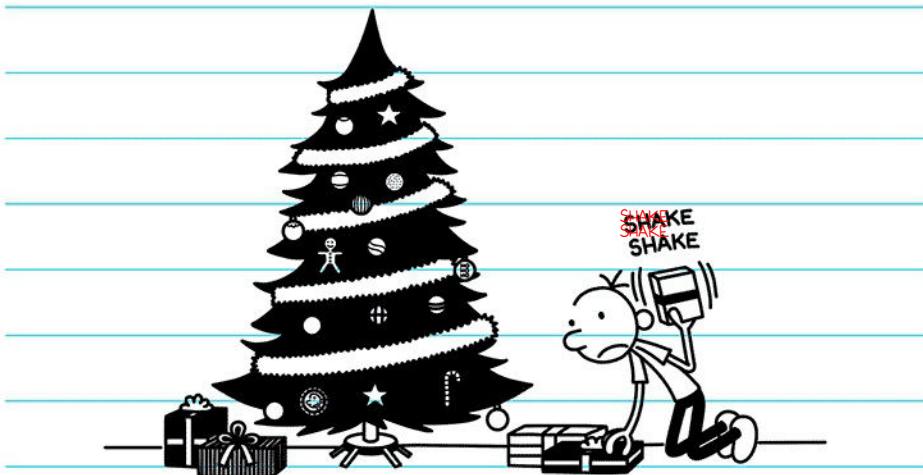


Sometimes I wonder how me and Rowley ended up being friends in the first place, since we're so different. But at this point I figure we're stuck with each other, so I just try to overlook the things he does that annoy me.

Thursday

The thing that stinks about having Santa's Scout watching my every move at home is that I can't get away with the things I used to do during the holidays.

A few years ago Mom and Dad put some gifts under the tree a week before Christmas, and it was driving me crazy not knowing what they were.



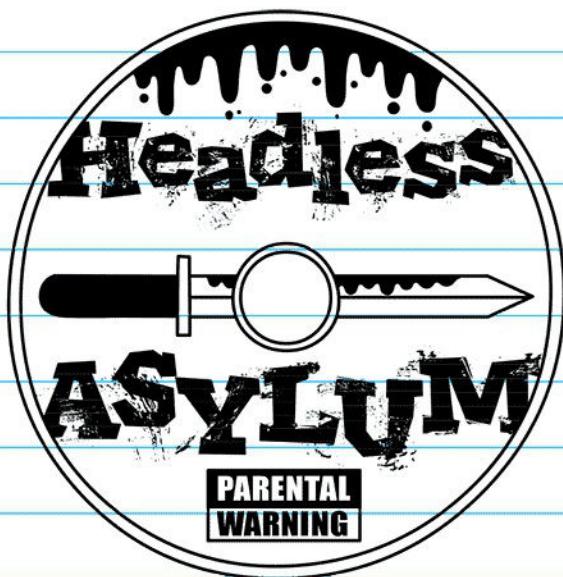
One of the gifts had my name on it, and I was
pretty sure it was a video game. I made a tiny
little tear in the wrapping paper to see, and sure
enough, it was a game I'd asked for.

But then it was bugging me that a game I
wanted was sitting right there under the tree
and I couldn't play it. So I went one step
further and made a slit along the top of the
packaging and slid the box out.

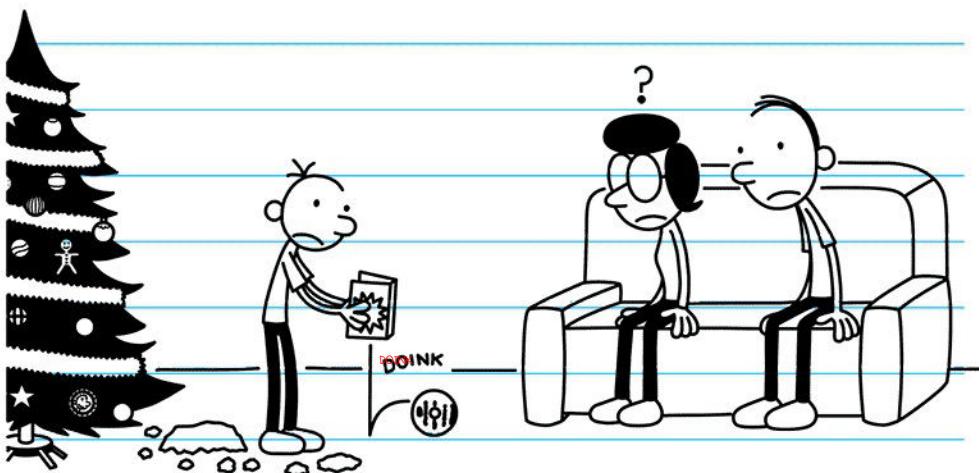


I opened the plastic case and removed the game,
then put the box back in the wrapping paper and
taped it closed.

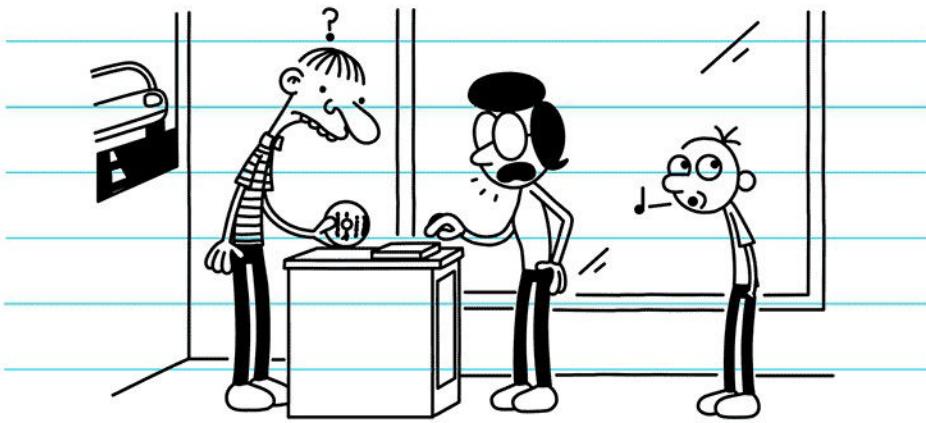
But I started to get paranoid that Mom was
gonna pick up the present and notice it felt
lighter, so I opened it back up and put one of
Rodrick's heavy metal CDs inside the box to make
it the same weight it was before.



I played the video game every night after Mom
and Dad went to bed, and I actually beat it.
But I forgot to put it back in the box, and on
Christmas, when I opened my present in front of
Mom and Dad, Rodrick's CD slipped out and rolled
onto the floor.



The day after Christmas, Mom took the CD to
the Game Hut and chewed the clerk out for selling
her material that was "inappropriate" for kids.



I just don't like not knowing what I'm getting
for Christmas, and sometimes I can't help myself.

Last year I went on Mom's e-mail account and
wrote to all our relatives to see if I could find out
what they were getting me.

TO: GAMMIE, UNCLE JOE, UNCLE CHARLIE,
GRAMMA, GRANDPA, UNCLE GRAY, JOANNE,
Gramma, Grandpa, Uncle Gary, Joanne,
Leslie, Byron, 23 more
more

SUBJECT: Gifts

HEY, EVERYONE-
Hey, everyone-

LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BUYING FOR
Greg this year, so we can coordinate.

THANKS, SUSAN
Thanks, Susan

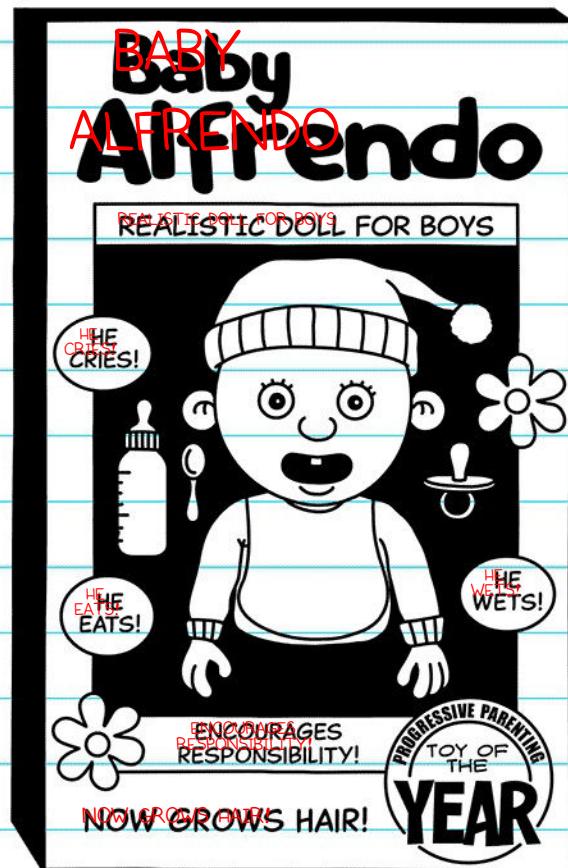
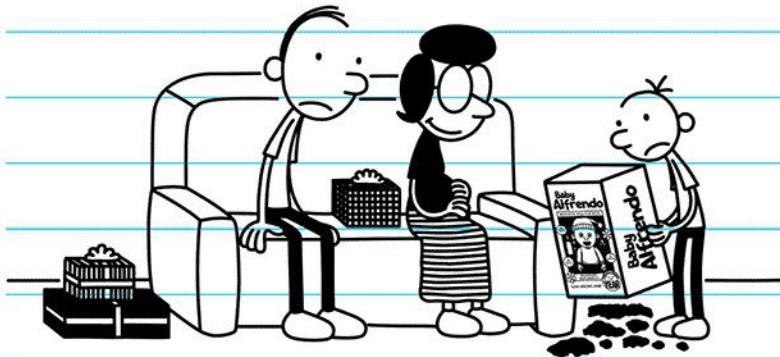
But Mom keeps her e-mail on the computer in the
kitchen, and it's hard to get onto her account
when Santa's Scout is watching me like a hawk.



Tonight I spent some time trying to decide what
to put on my Christmas wish list this year. I try
to be as specific as possible when I make my list,
because whenever I leave my gifts up to Mom and
Dad, I get some crazy stuff.

A few years ago I forgot to write out a wish
list, and I paid the price for it. Mom was
pregnant with Manny, and she wanted me to get
ready for having a baby brother.

So for Christmas, Mom got me a DOLL.



At first I didn't want anything to do with it.

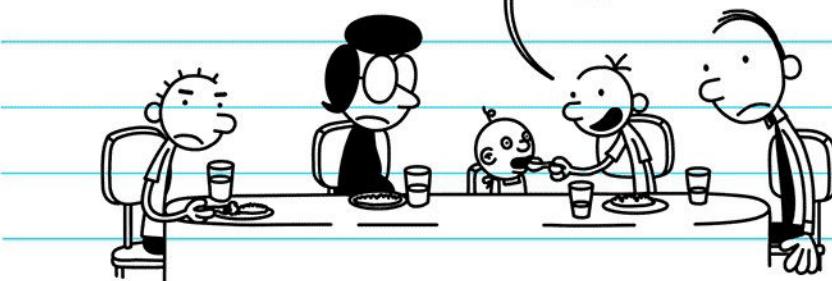
Then I realized having a doll you could FEED

came in handy. In fact, I don't think a

vegetable touched my lips for a month after I

got Alfrendo.

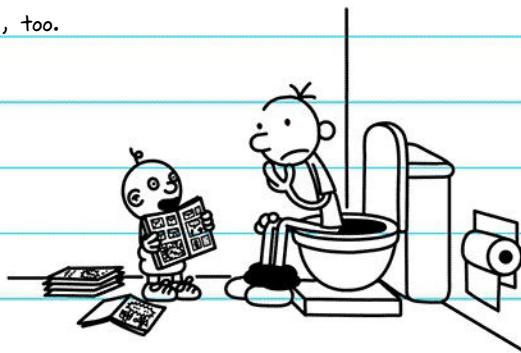
HERE COMES
THE AIRPLANE,
ALFRENDO!
OPEN WIDE!



But that wasn't the only thing I used that doll

for. I found out that he made a really excellent

comic book stand, too.



I have to admit, after a few months I got

really attached to that doll.

Since I didn't have a pet, it was kind of nice to

have something to take care of for once.



But one day I came home from school and I

couldn't find Alfrendo ANYWHERE. I searched

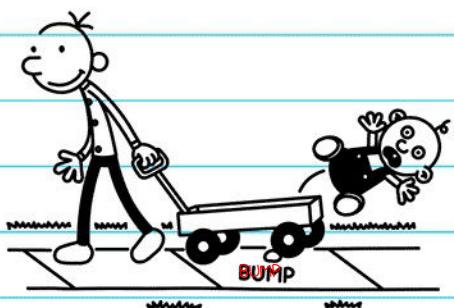
the house from top to bottom, but there was no

trace of him.

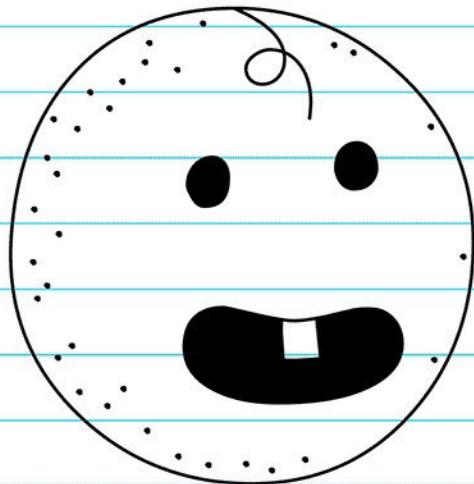
The only thing I could think of was that I

dropped Alfrendo at some point and somehow

didn't notice.



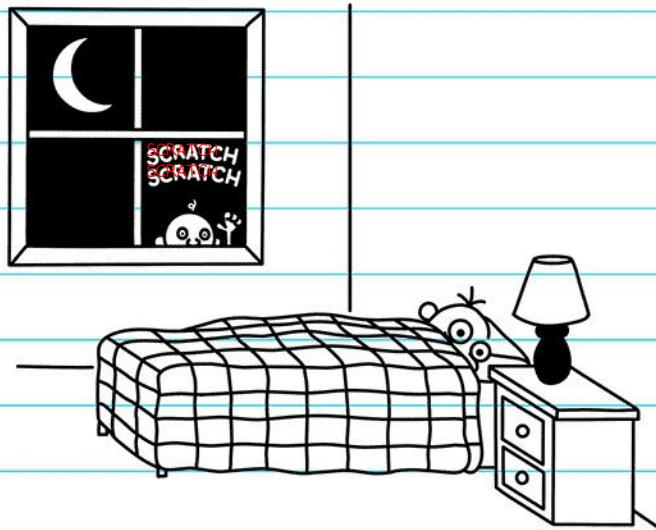
I was pretty torn up about losing my doll, but
what I was REALLY worried about was Mom
thinking I couldn't be trusted around my new
baby brother. So I got a grapefruit out of the
fridge and drew a face on it with a marker.



Then I wrapped the grapefruit in a dish towel,
and for the next three months I pretended it
was my doll.

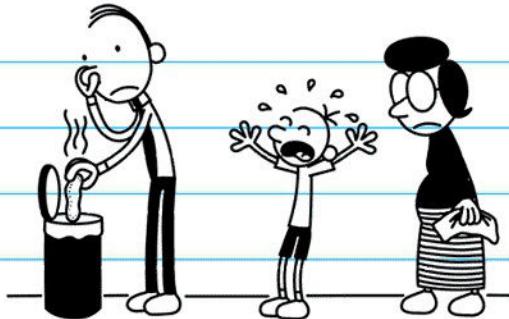


Mom and Dad didn't seem to notice. But I was
terrified by the idea that the REAL Alfrendo
was gonna find his way back home and get his
revenge on me for abandoning him and replacing
him with a fruit.



In fact, I still worry about that to this day.
It's the reason I always check to make sure my
window is locked before I go to bed at night.

I'm a little embarrassed to say this, but I
actually got attached to that GRAPEFRUIT,
too. But after a while it started to rot, and Dad
traced the weird smell back to my Alfrendo decoy.



Mom didn't seem too upset that I'd lost my doll,

but I will say she's never left me alone in the

house with Manny for more than fifteen minutes.

Like I said, though, it was nice to have

something to take care of, and I missed that

feeling. So these days I've been spending a lot of

time playing this game called Net Kritterz.



In fact, I've been playing Net Kritterz every free second I get. The basic idea is that you have to feed your pet and keep it happy. And if your pet is happy, you get tokens so you can buy it clothes and furniture and stuff like that.

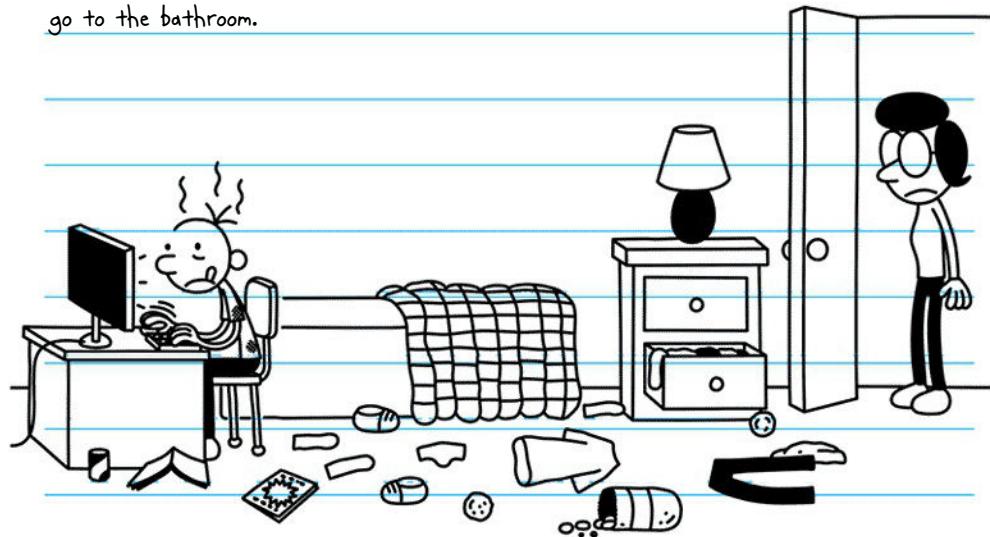
I've played so much that my pet Chihuahua has a mansion with an indoor swimming pool, a bowling alley, and about 150 different outfits.

The only thing I'm not happy about is his NAME. Mom's the one who set up my account, and I can't figure out how to change the name she registered with.

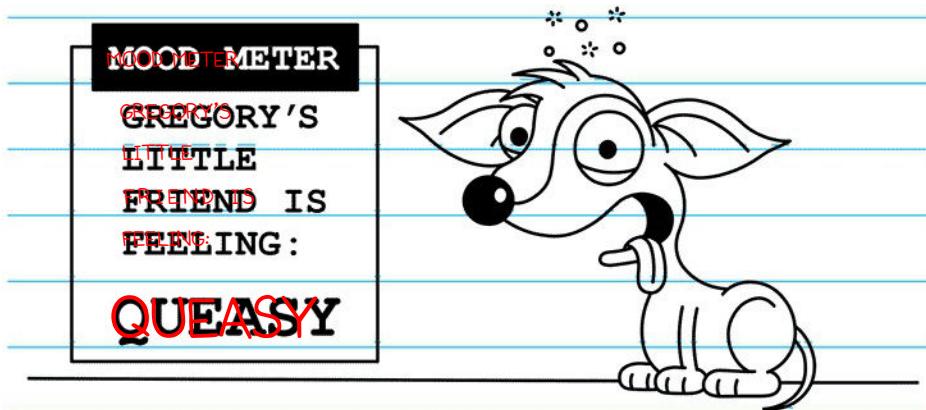


GREGORY'S LITTLE
FRIEND

Mom says I take better care of my virtual pet
than I do MYSELF, and I guess I can't
argue with her there. Over the weekend I played
for sixteen hours without even taking a break to
go to the bathroom.

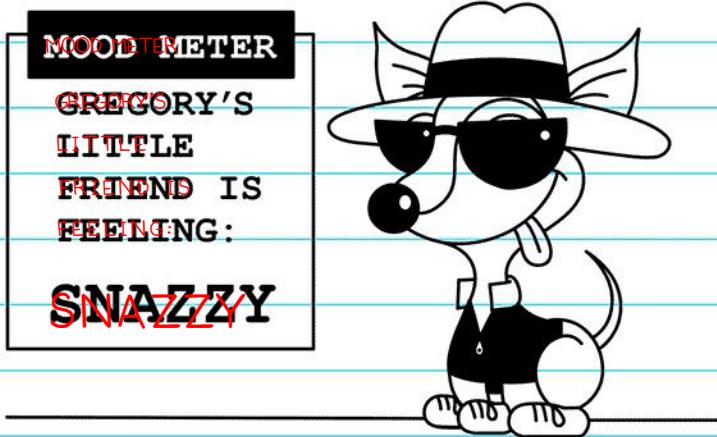


But if you don't keep getting your pet new
stuff, it starts to look unhappy, and that really
stresses me out.



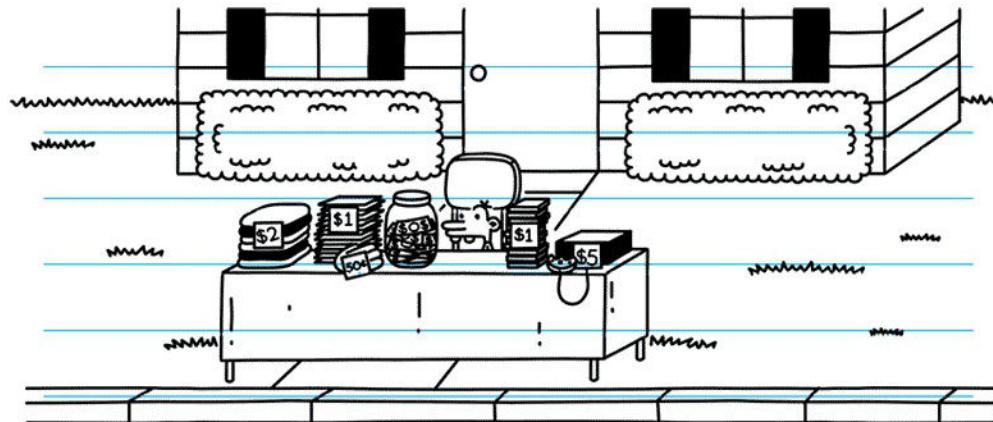
The problem is you can only earn a certain number
of tokens, and after that you have to buy them
with real money. Unfortunately, I don't have my
own credit card, so that means I have to beg
Mom and Dad to use THEIRS.

And it's not real easy to convince Dad to break
open his wallet so you can buy a fancy outfit for
your virtual pet.



This year I'm gonna ask for a bunch of Kritterz
Kash for Christmas. But I'm still trying to figure
out what to put on the REST of my wish list.

I could actually use a LOT of different things,
because a couple weeks ago when I spent the
night at the hospital getting my tonsils out,
Manny sold half of everything I owned.



But I'm not so sure I should ask for a normal gift like a video game or a toy this year. What I've realized is that every time you get something cool for your birthday or for Christmas, within a week it's being used against you.



One thing I know for sure is that this year
I'm only accepting store-bought presents. Last
Christmas, Mom gave me a really nice hand-knit
blanket, and I had that thing wrapped around
me for half the winter.



But I found a picture of the same blanket on Great
Uncle Bruce, who passed away a few years ago, so I
pawned it off on Rodrick for his birthday.

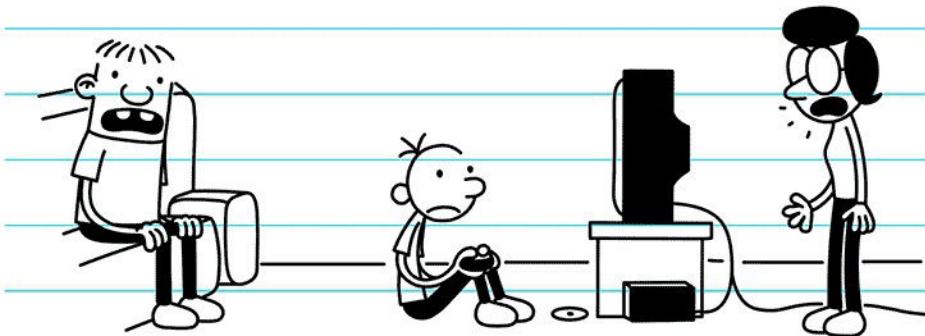


Sunday

I was gonna play Net Kritterz all weekend,
but yesterday Mom said the amount of time I'm
spending playing that game is "unhealthy" and
that I had to interact with a "real live person."

So I called up Rowley and asked him to come
over, even though I was still a little bothered by
the whole skipping thing.

When Rowley got to my house, we sat down in
front of the TV to play video games, but Mom
said we had to shut off the machine and interact
"face-to-face."

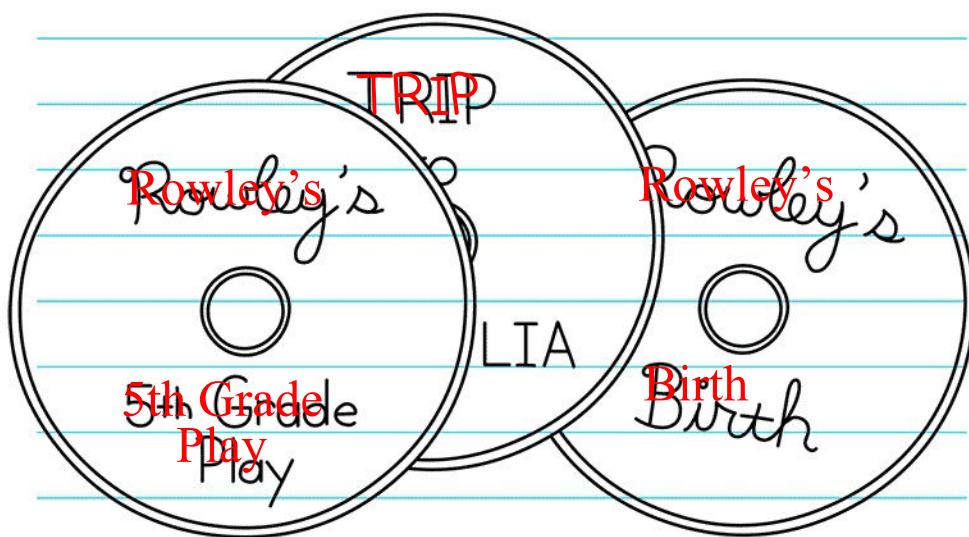


But one of the things that makes my friendship
with Rowley work is that he doesn't MIND
watching me play video games.

Plus, the reason our ancestors invented technology
in the first place was so they didn't HAVE to
interact with one another.

Mom sent me and Rowley down to the basement,
and the two of us tried to figure out what to do.
I'd asked Rowley to bring some DVDs with him so
we could stay up late watching movies.

But he only brought HOME movies, and you
couldn't PAY me to watch THOSE.



Mom brought us down some "Wacky Sentences"
books, where you fill in the blanks to create
funny phrases.

For the first round, Rowley came up with the words and I wrote them down in the blanks. The phrases we made were actually pretty funny, but what WASN'T funny was Rowley's new habit of saying "LOL" instead of laughing.



It was really driving me CRAZY. So we switched roles, and I came up with the words instead. Rowley started by asking me for the name of a sport, so I said "volleyball." But he told me it's "olleyball," with a "b." So then we got into this huge argument about what letter "volleyball" starts with.

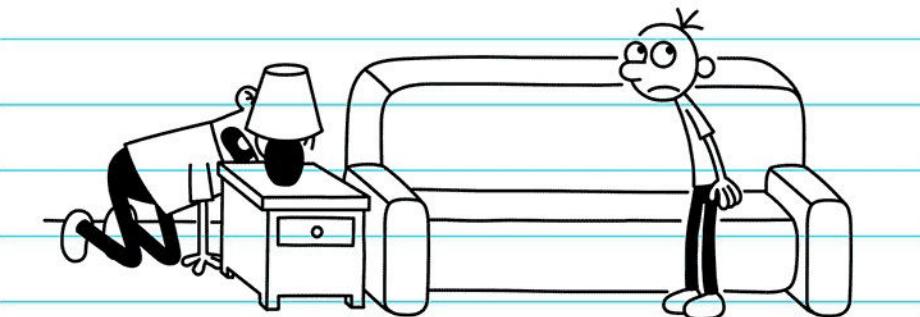
I found a dictionary and handed it to Rowley
and told him to look it up himself. But instead
of flipping to the letter "v," Rowley read every
single word in the "b" section. And when he
couldn't find "olleyball," he started over from
the beginning.



Rowley accused me of having an outdated dictionary
and said that's why "olleyball" wasn't in it, so
THEN we got into an argument about what year
olleyball was invented.

By this point Rowley was really getting on my
nerves, and I realized we'd better change gears
or we were gonna end up in a fight, as usual.

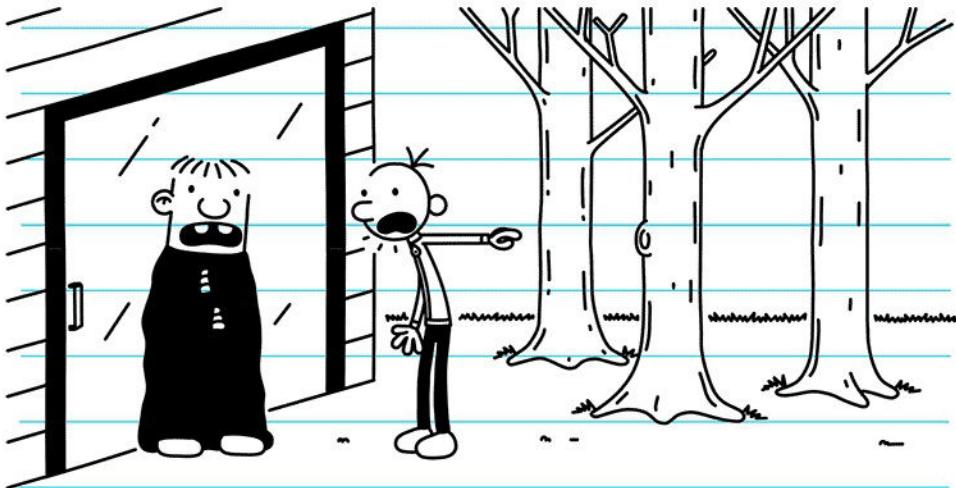
I told Rowley maybe we should do something different, and he said he wanted to play Hide-and-Seek. But the problem with playing Hide-and-Seek with Rowley is he thinks that when he can't see YOU, you can't see HIM. So that makes him really easy to find.



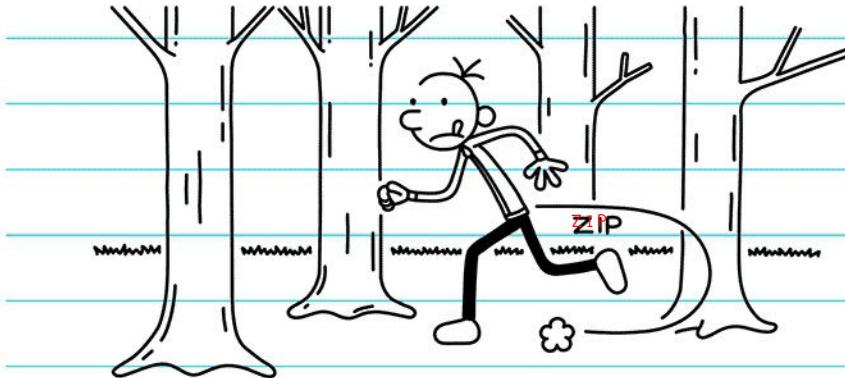
I decided we just needed a break from each other, so I came up with an idea. I told Rowley we were gonna see who was braver, me or him, and we stepped out the sliding glass door.

Each of us had to walk into the woods and write our name on the tree fort we built last summer. And whoever chickened out was wrong about volleyball and had to call the other guy "sir" for the rest of his life.

Rowley seemed to think that was a fair deal.



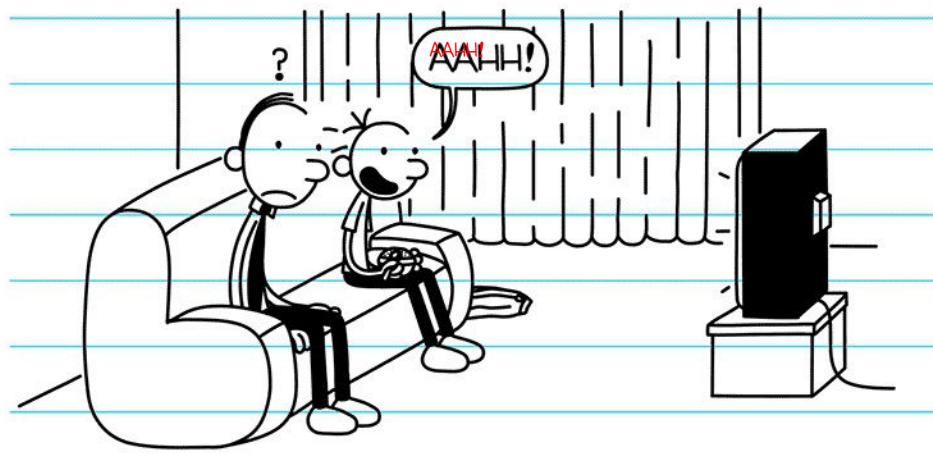
I told Rowley I'd go first, and I walked into
the woods. But as soon as I knew he couldn't see
me, I ran around to the front of my house.



There's no WAY I was gonna go into those
woods by myself at night. I had written my name
on the tree fort when me and Rowley built it over
the summer, and that's the reason I came up
with the dare.



I walked in the front door, made a bowl of ice
cream, and relaxed for a while. And I have to
say, some time to myself was just what I needed.



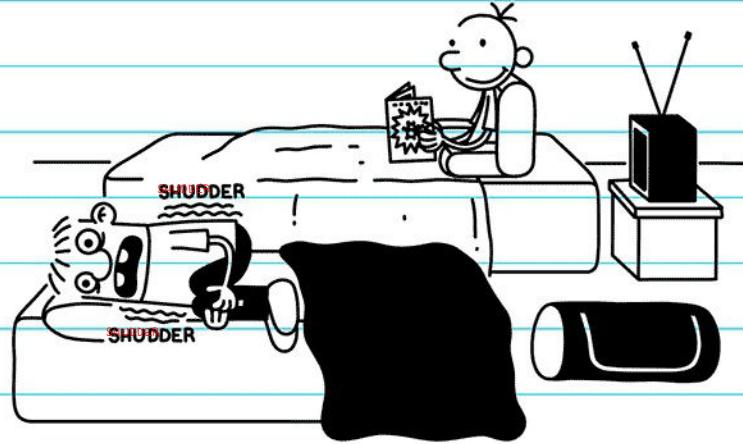
Once I finished my ice cream, I walked around
the side of the house, rubbed some dirt on my face
and clothes, then came running out of the woods.



I probably shouldn't have added that last part,
because Rowley totally gave up on the dare after that.



Anyway, that break was just what the doctor ordered, and the rest of the night was argument-free.



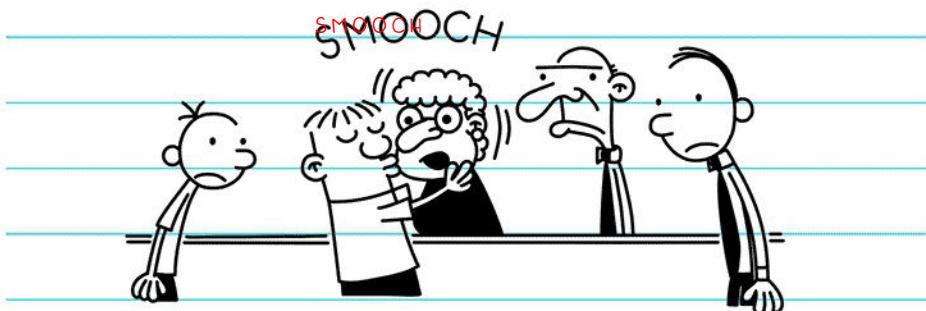
This morning my family headed to church, and Rowley came with us. I don't think Rowley's family really goes to church that much, so he's not used to all the rules about what you're supposed to do and when. So I always have to tell him when you need to kneel and stand and all that.

Toward the end we all did the "Peace be with you" part, where you're supposed to shake everyone's hand. I said "Peace be with you" to Rowley, but he started giggling.

I think he must've thought I said "Peas be with you," like the vegetable.

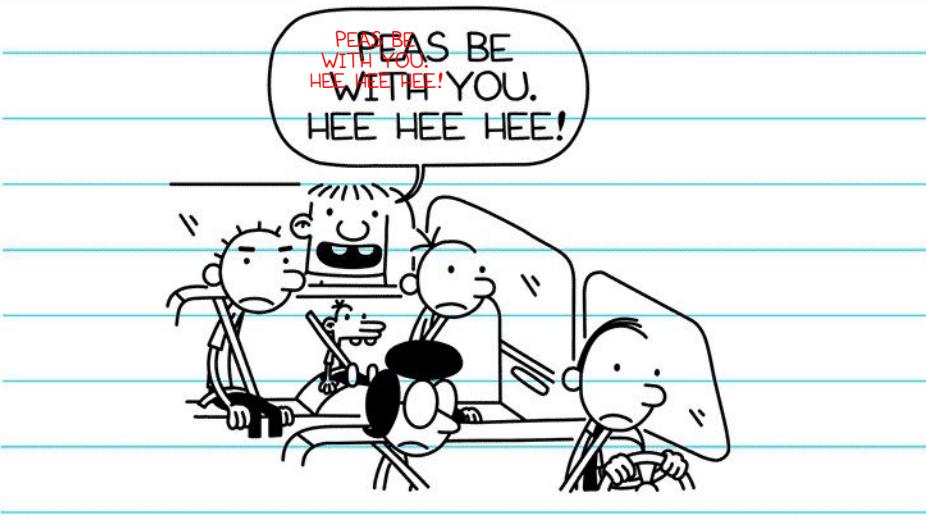


I don't think Rowley totally understood that you're just supposed to shake hands with people, either, because when the woman in the pew behind us said "Peace be with you," Rowley gave her a big wet kiss on the cheek.



After church we dropped Rowley off at his house, and I was glad he was gone and that I could go back to playing my game.

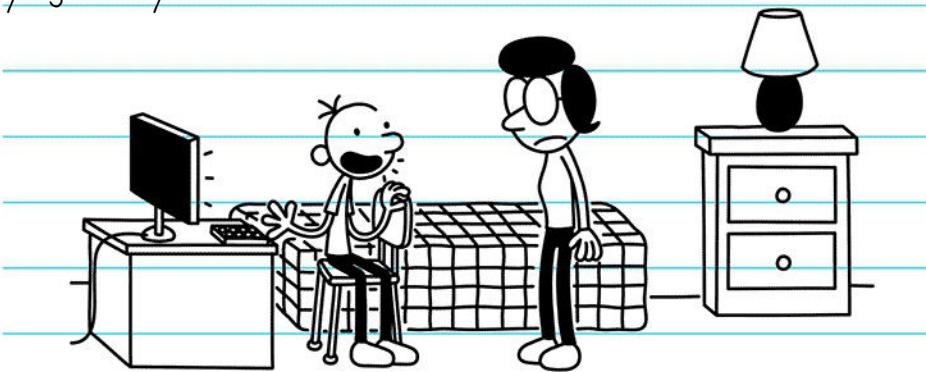
And something tells me Mom felt the same way.



DECEMBER

Tuesday

Today I was playing Net Kritterz in my room,
and Mom walked in. She watched for a while, then
asked what I was doing in the game. I explained
that I was watching my Chihuahua watch TV,
because if your virtual pet watches at least two
hours of commercials a day, it makes him happy and
you get twenty bonus tokens.



Then I asked Mom if she wouldn't mind spotting
me ten bucks because the Net Kritterz store
just started carrying trampoline shoes and I was
pretty sure Gregory's Little Friend would really
like to have them.

But I guess I picked the wrong time to ask Mom
for a loan, because it seemed like she was in a bad
mood. She said I didn't have any appreciation for
the "value of money" and that if I wanted to pay
for my Net Kritterz "habit," it was gonna have
to come out of my own pocket.



I told Mom I didn't have any money of my own
and that's why I kept hitting up her and Dad.
But she said there were PLENTY of things I
could do to earn some. She said it's supposed to
snow tonight and I could go out and shovel our
neighbors' driveways tomorrow.

I REALLY don't feel comfortable knocking on
doors and asking our neighbors for money. My
school has three fundraisers a year, and I have
to go from house to house begging people I
hardly know to buy something from me.

And half the time I don't even really know what
it is I'm selling.



I wish the school would give us something USEFUL
to sell, like candy bars or cookies. The Girl Scouts
are lucky, because at least they get to sell stuff
people actually WANT.

The way the system works with these fundraisers

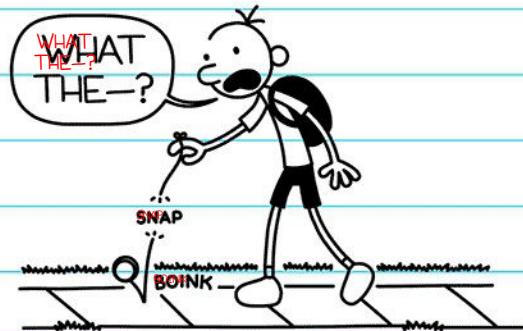
is that us students do all the work and the

school gives us these junky prizes as rewards.

One time I sold twenty dollars' worth of gourmet

coffee beans, and all I got was a cheap yo-yo

that broke before I even got off school property.



But Rowley REALLY got stiffed. He sold \$150

worth of beans and got a Chinese finger trap as

his prize. It actually worked like it was supposed

to, but Rowley couldn't get his fingers out, and

his mom had to cut it off when he got home.



Last year the school tried something different.

They had us sell raffle tickets, and whoever won

the raffle would get a spring yard cleanup from

the seventh-grade class.

Mrs. Spangler, who lives down the street from

me, won the raffle, and on the first day of

spring the whole seventh grade showed up at her

house. But there were only two rakes for all those

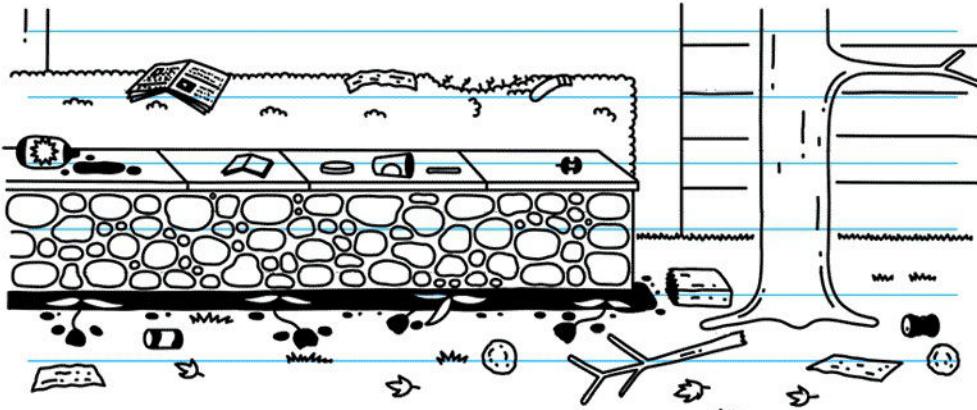
kids, so most of the class just ended up sitting

around with nothing to do.



And by the time the "spring cleanup" was done, Mrs.

Spangler's yard was worse off than when it started.



The new thing the school is doing is these

Walkathons. The idea is that we'll walk around

the track at school a certain number of times, like

one hundred or two hundred laps, and get our

neighbors to sponsor us for each lap we complete.

WALKATHON Sponsor Sheet

\$0.25/lap

Name	# of laps
1. George Krammer	100
2. Tony Sinclair	150
3. Henry Nielson	50
4. Leslie Simpson	100
5. Barbara Preston	150
6. Lavar Collison	100
7.	
8.	

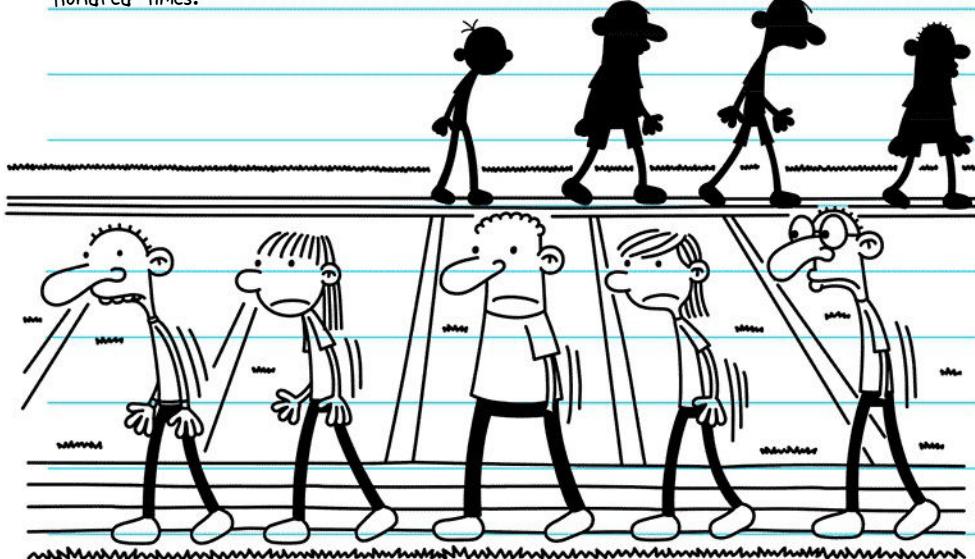
I can understand asking someone to pay for seeds

or coffee beans or whatever, but I don't know

what kind of person gets pleasure out of having

some kid walk around a football field a couple

hundred times.



The reason the school put on the Walkathon in

September was so they could pay for a billboard

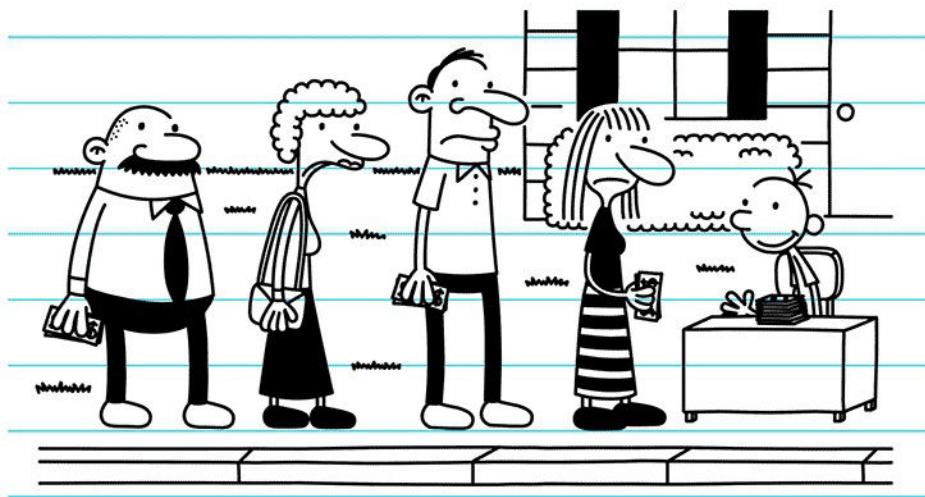
near the town park.



I couldn't figure out why the school didn't
just skip the Walkathon and have the kids
clean up the town park instead. But I guess if
the seventh grade was involved, they might've
completely trashed it.

I've done the math, and I've figured out
that each grown-up on my street gives me an
average of twenty-three dollars a year for school
fundraisers.

So I should just invite all the neighbors to my
house once a year and tell them to bring me the
twenty-three bucks in cash, because it sure would
save everyone a lot of pain and anguish.



Wednesday

It showed last night just like Mom said it would,

and while all the other kids in the neighborhood

were enjoying their day off from school, I was

pounding the pavement looking for work.



I thought about whose door I should knock

on first, but it wasn't easy. Mrs. Durocher lives

right across the street, but she's a little too

affectionate, and I usually do my best to avoid her.



Then there's Mr. Alexander, who moved into the

Shellas' house. He must not have worn braces as

a kid, because his teeth aren't very straight.

Unfortunately, the first time Dad met Mr. Alexander

was on Halloween, and Dad must've thought his

teeth weren't real.



So I decided to skip Mr. Alexander's house, too.

There are people who live on my street that I

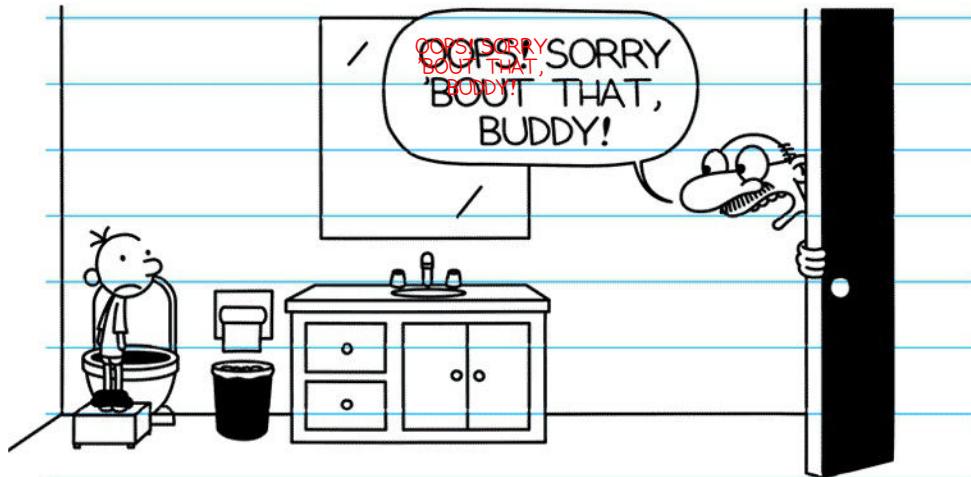
haven't spoken to in YEARS. When I was about

four, Mom and Dad had a cocktail party for some

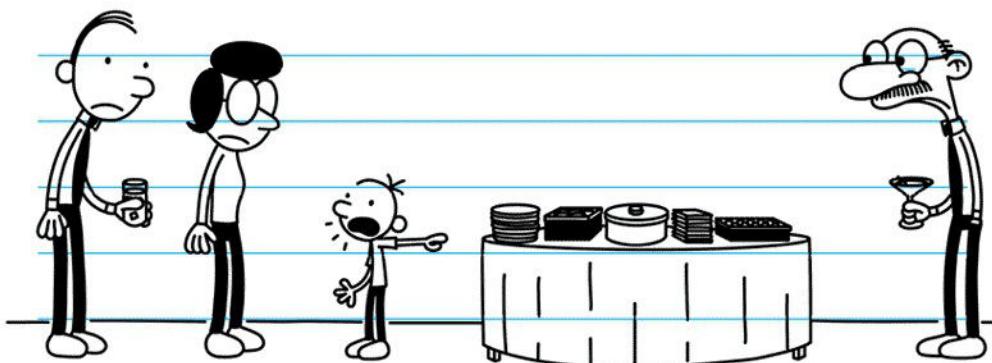
of the couples in the neighborhood, and I went

downstairs during the party to use the bathroom.

But I guess back then I didn't know you were
supposed to keep the door locked, so Mr. Harkin
walked right in on me.



When I was done I found Mom and told on
Mr. Harkin, and I'm sure he felt like a jerk.



So I'm not about to knock on the door of some
guy I ratted out when I was in preschool and ask
him for money, either.

Today I realized there's just too much history
between me and the people in my neighborhood, so
I decided to go one street over to Prentice Lane
and start fresh.

I walked up to the house on the corner and
knocked on the door. But I recognized the lady
who answered. She was Mrs. Melcher, one of
Gramma's friends from Bingo.

I told Mrs. Melcher I was trying to earn a
little money shoveling people's driveways and that
I'd be happy to do hers for five bucks.



But she told me she never gets visitors and

invited me inside to chat.

I didn't want to be rude, so the next thing I

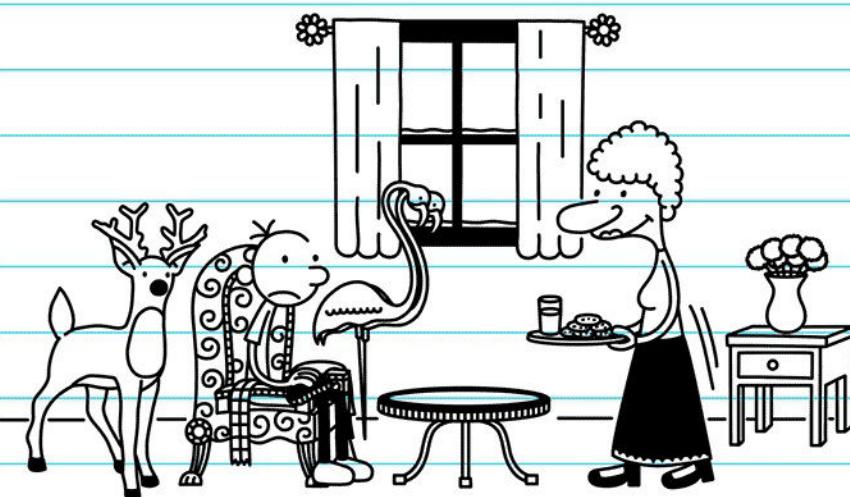
knew I was sitting in Mrs. Melcher's living room

surrounded by the lawn ornaments she took inside

for the winter. I felt a little uncomfortable, but

I figured if I was gonna ask someone for money

the least I could do was try and be polite.



But all I could think about the whole time I

sat there was how much money I could've been

making if I'd just knocked on someone else's

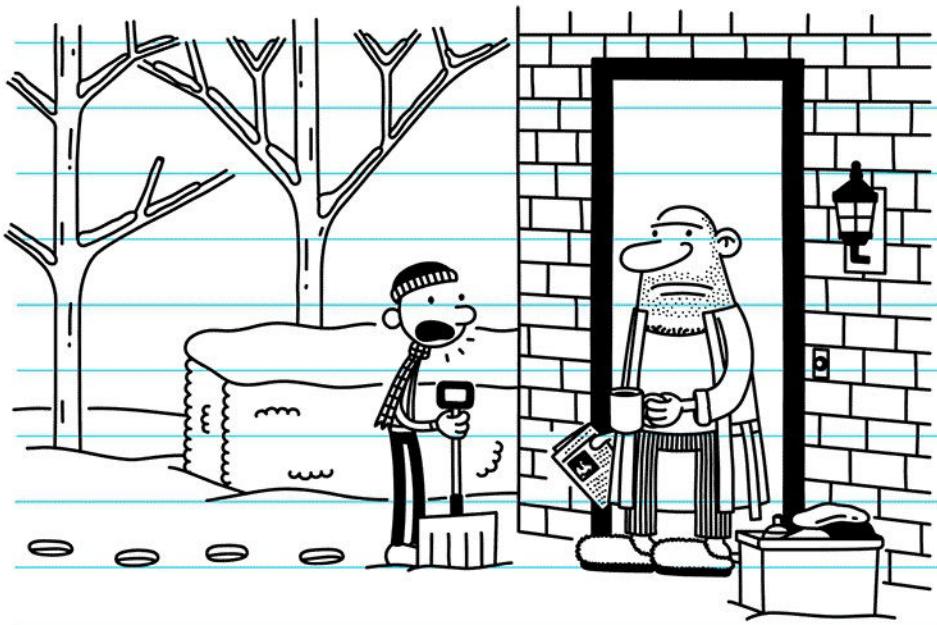
door instead.

I must've been in there for an hour before I
was finally able to steer the conversation back
to the subject of me shoveling her driveway.

But Mrs. Melcher said her son was coming by in
his pickup truck any minute and he plows her
driveway for free. So that's an hour of my life
I'll never get back.



I headed back out onto Prentice Lane and
started knocking on doors. I guess most people
were at work, so it took me a while to find
someone who was actually home. I finally got lucky
when a guy who looked like he just woke up came
to the door. I told him I'd shovel his driveway
for five bucks, and he said it was a deal.



I got to work and was making pretty good
progress. But it started snowing again while I
was shoveling.



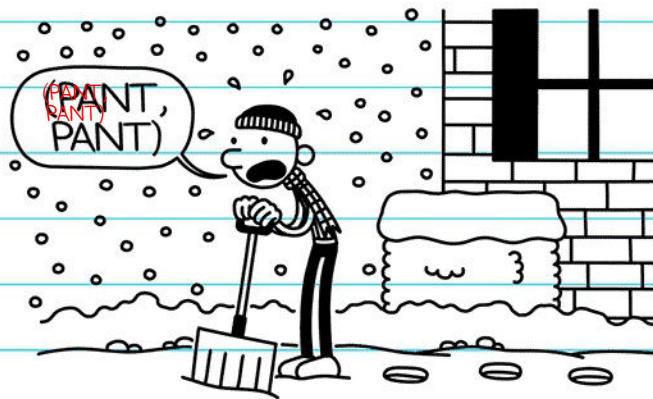
By the time I finished, it had snowed so much
that you could barely tell I did any work.

So I rang the doorbell and asked the guy if
he wanted me to shovel his driveway again for
another five bucks. But he wouldn't go for it.



And to make things worse, the guy said he
wasn't gonna pay me the first five bucks until his
driveway was clear like I promised. See, this is
why it's a good idea to have a contract before you
start working for someone.

I got back out there and started shoveling, but so
much snow was falling that I was getting nowhere.



Then I had an idea. Gramma's house was only a few streets away, and I remembered that she keeps her lawn mower in the garage. So I walked over to her place and pushed the mower back to the driveway I was working on.

I thought the snow-mowing idea was genius, and I couldn't believe no one had ever thought of it before.

Unfortunately, it didn't go as smoothly as I hoped it would. I thought the snow would shoot out of the side, but the blade cut right through it and the snow stayed where it was.



Eventually the mower started making funny sounds, and then all of a sudden it stopped.

So I guess those things aren't really built for
cold weather.



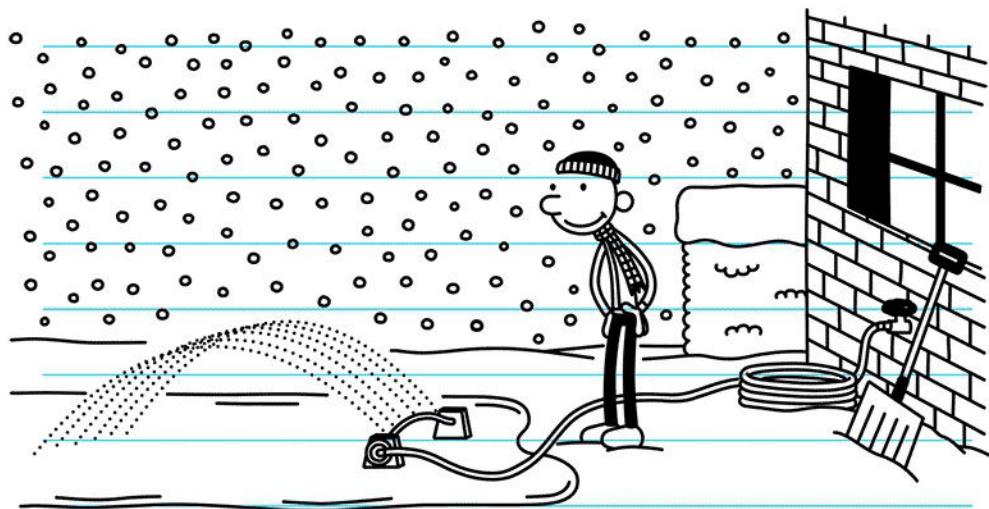
I pushed the mower to Gramma's and put it back
in her garage. Hopefully it will thaw out before
the summer rolls around.

I still had this guy's driveway to deal with, but
now the snow was REALLY coming down, and
there was no way I was gonna spend the rest of
my day working for five bucks. I needed a quick
solution so I could move on.

I could see that his garden hose was attached to
the house, so I turned it on, put the nozzle to
the "shower" setting, and sprayed down the snow
in the driveway.



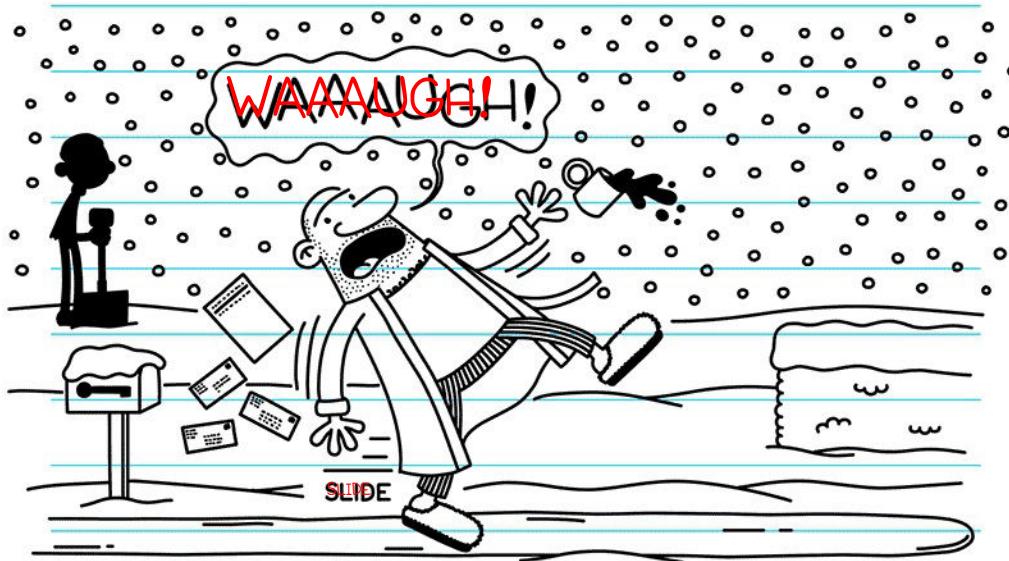
It was GREAT. The water melted the snow
on contact, and I was cruising. Then I saw a
sprinkler leaning up against the house, and I got
an even BETTER idea.



Once I was finished, I turned off the sprinkler
and knocked on the guy's door. He paid me my five
bucks when he saw that his driveway was cleared.

I was pretty excited about the way things
worked out, and I figured if I found some more
people with sprinklers, I could have multiple jobs
going at once.

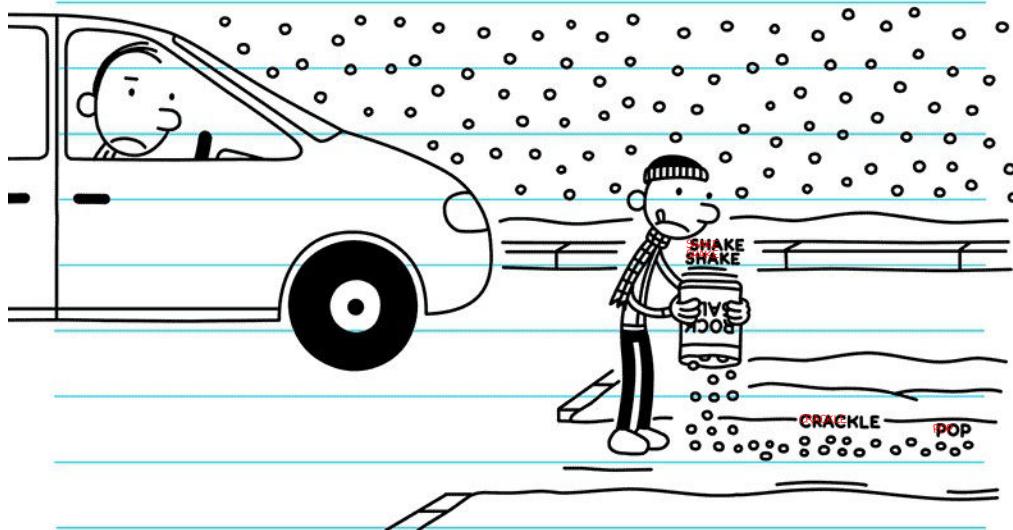
Unfortunately, I couldn't find anyone else who
was home. But my idea probably wouldn't have
worked out anyway. Because by the time I
walked back down Prentice Lane, the driveway I
hit with the sprinkler was frozen over.



When Dad got home, we had to go out and buy five
big bags of rock salt to melt the guy's driveway.

So now instead of having money in my pocket for

all my hard work, I'm twenty bucks in the hole.



Thursday

Dad wasn't too happy that I turned somebody's

driveway into an ice-skating rink yesterday, and

he said he was disappointed in me for using "poor

judgment." That's the exact same phrase he used a

few weeks ago when I scratched up his car.

It all started when I won Student of the Week

at school. When you win Student of the Week,

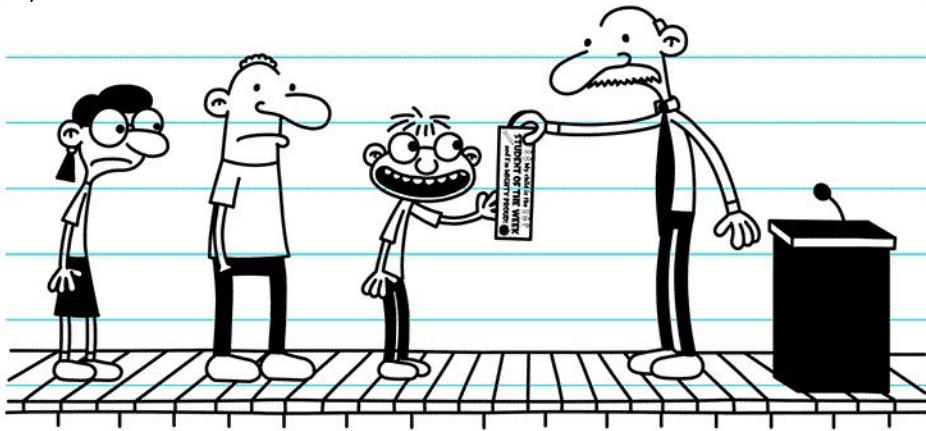
they give you a bumper sticker that you can put

on your family's car.

The bumper sticker is pretty corny, but it was
still cool to win it.

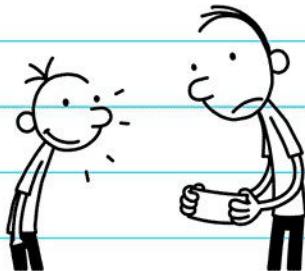


I'm not sure why I won, but I think they just give it to everyone eventually. Fregley won Student of the Week this past Friday, and I'm guessing it was for not biting anyone for five days straight.



Mom wanted to put my sticker on her car, but
her bumper is so overcrowded that I knew it
would just get lost on there. So I asked Dad if
I could put it on his car.

Dad recently bought a new car, and I thought
my Student of the Week sticker would look really
sharp on his bumper.



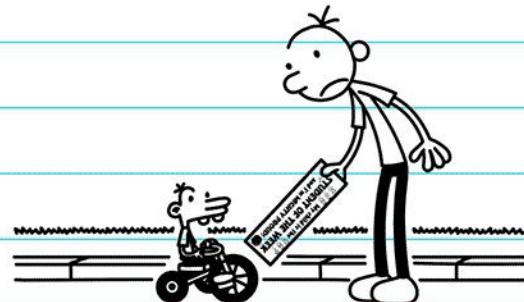
But Dad said he didn't want to "junk up" his new
car. At first I was disappointed, but I guess
I could kind of understand where he was coming
from. My family doesn't have anything that's really
nice, and when Dad came home from the dealership
with a sporty car, I was pretty surprised.



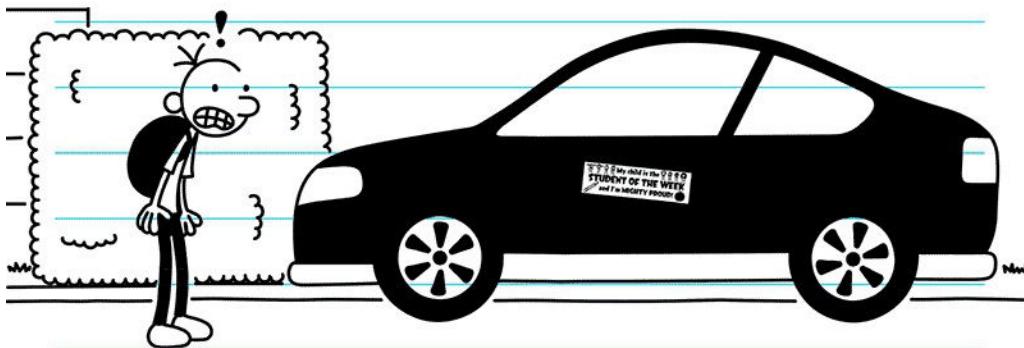
Mom wasn't happy that Dad picked out a car
without talking it through with her, though.

She said the car looked "flashy" and that since
it only had two doors, it wasn't "practical" for
a family of five. But Dad said it was the car he
wanted, and he kept it.

After I talked to Dad, I didn't know what to
do with my bumper sticker, so I just ended up
giving it to Manny and telling him he could put it
on his wagon or something.



But Manny turned right around and put it smack
in the middle of Dad's driver's-side door.



I freaked out because I knew Dad was gonna
think I was the one who put it there. I tried
to peel it off, but they must use superglue on the
backs of those things. So I got some soap and
water and tried to SCRUB it off.

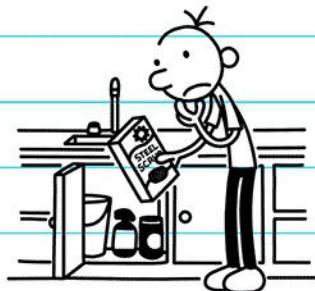


But after twenty minutes of scrubbing, I'd barely
made a dent.



I started looking for different cleaning supplies
in the cabinet under the kitchen sink, and I
found some steel wool pads that looked like they
might do the trick.

Those things work pretty good on the pots and
pans, so I figured they were worth a try on the
car since it was metal, too.



Sure enough, the steel wool made the bumper
sticker come off the car as easy as pie.

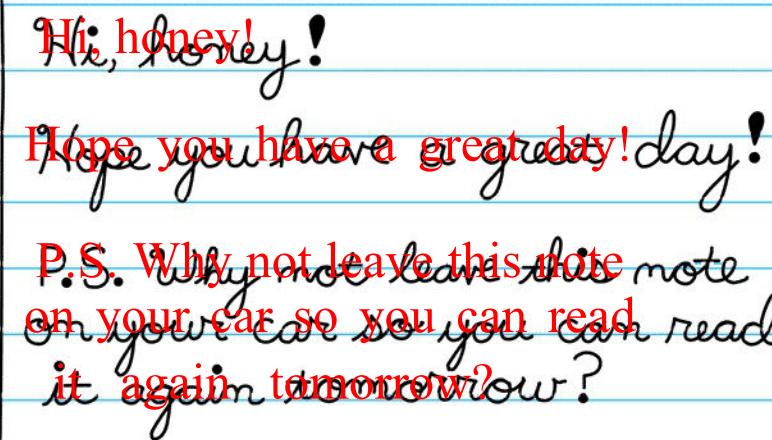


In fact, it was so easy that I kind of got
carried away. I used the steel wool pads to scrape
off the bugs and bird poop, too. I figured Dad
would be pretty happy I was cleaning his car for
free. But when I rinsed the car off with the
hose, I got a huge surprise.

The steel wool didn't just scrape the bumper
sticker and bugs off the car. It scraped the
PAINT off, too.



I panicked and started filling in the bare spots
with a permanent marker. But the area where the
bumper sticker had been was too big, so I wrote
a note in Mom's handwriting and taped it over
that spot.



I thought the note might buy me a few days,
but Dad uncovered the big area in no time flat.



Dad was really mad at me, but Mom came to my defense. She said everyone makes mistakes and that the important thing is that I learn my lesson and move on.

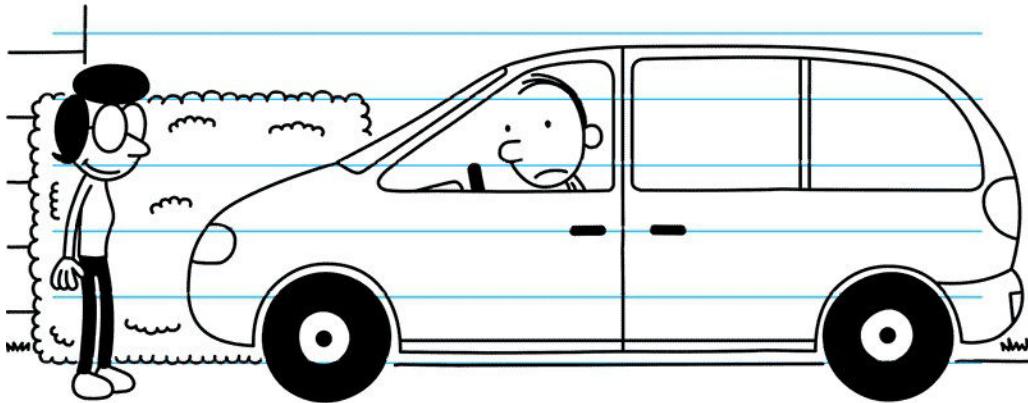


I owe Mom for that one. She calmed Dad down and I didn't even get grounded.

Dad took the car to the dealer to see how much it would be to get the paint touched up.

The dealer told him it was gonna cost a lot of
money because it was a custom paint job.

Mom told Dad this was a "sign" that it was a
mistake to get a fancy car in the first place and
that he should just trade it in for a used minivan
instead. So that's what he did.

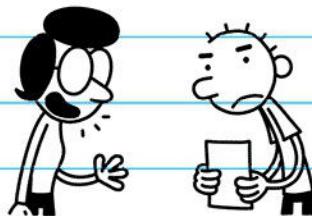


The funny thing is that the minivan already HAD
a Student of the Week sticker on the bumper
from the previous owners. But Dad didn't seem to
appreciate the humor in that.

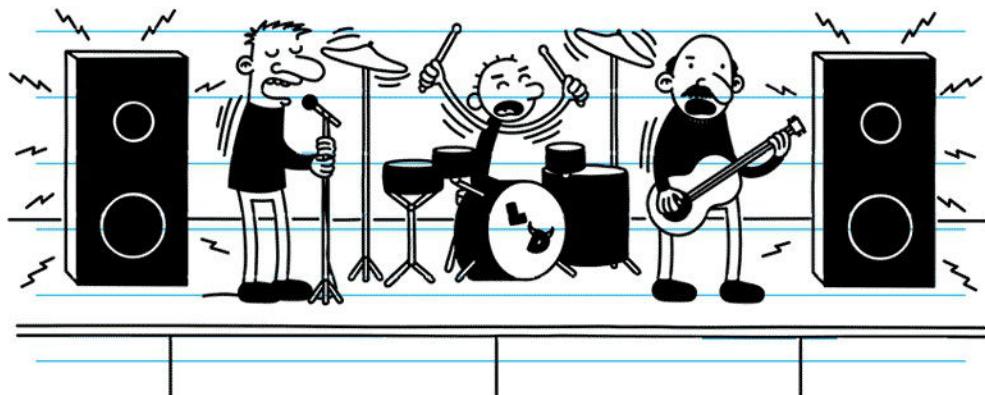
Sunday

Our family usually goes to church at 9:00 A.M.,
but today we went to the folk service at 11:00.

The folk service has a different kind of music
than the regular one, and there's a band that
plays guitars and stuff like that. Last week
Mom convinced Rodrick to join the folk group
because she got a flyer saying they were looking
for a "percussionist."



I think Rodrick imagined he was gonna get to
play his drums in church, so he signed up.

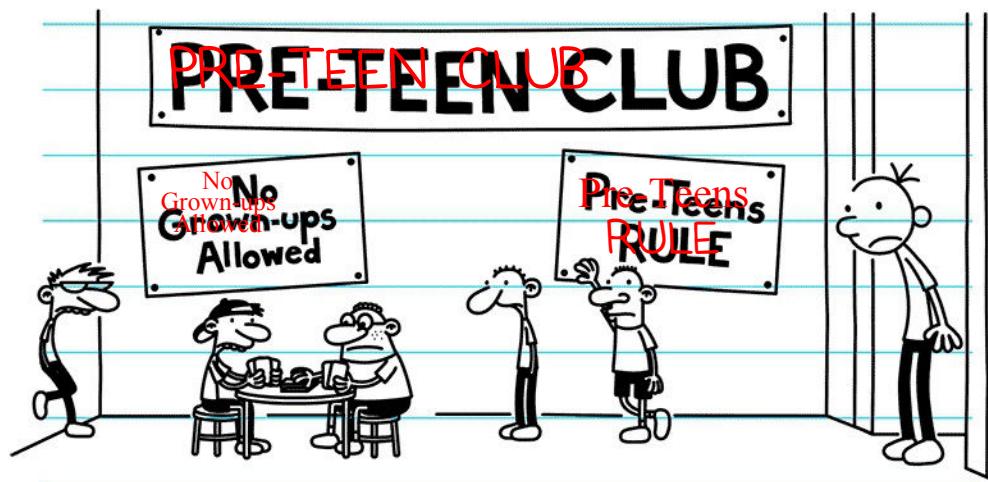


But it turns out the folk group was looking for
someone to play HAND percussion instruments, like
the tambourine and castanets.

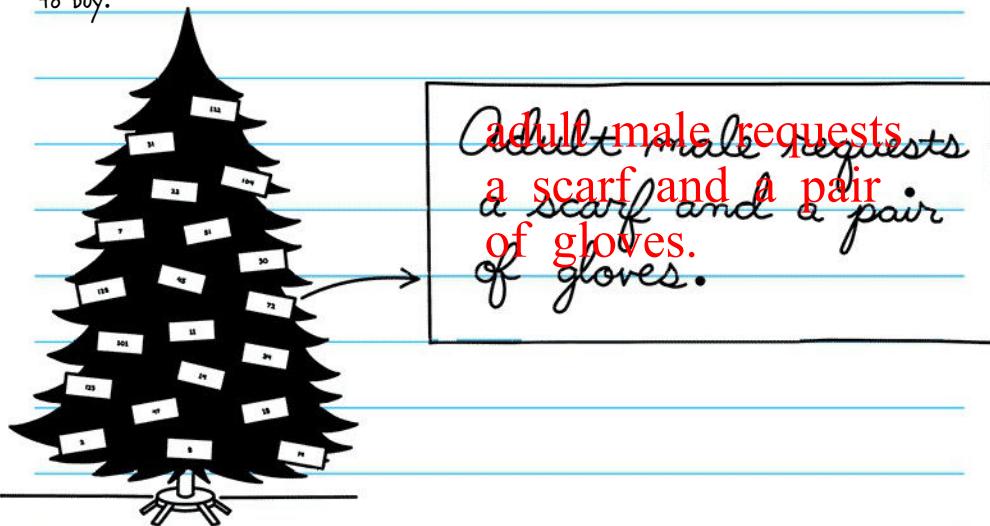
Rodrick tried his best to look cool up there in the front of the church today, but it's really hard to pull that off when you've got a pair of maracas in your hands.



I can totally relate to getting duped into joining something without knowing all the details. Last year Mom told me I should join the church's Pre-Teen Club, but then I found out they were really lax about who qualified as a "pre-teen."



Every year our church does this thing called the "Giving Tree," where people in need put their requests in envelopes and hang them on the tree. Then a family picks a random envelope, and whatever it says inside is what they're supposed to buy.



adult male requests
a scarf and a pair
of gloves.

As far as I know, there aren't any rules about who's allowed to put a request on the Giving Tree, so I decided to try my luck and fill out a form of my own.

But something told me Mom and Dad wouldn't approve, so I made sure it couldn't be traced back to me.

Juvenile male requests cash, as much as you are willing to donate. Please leave the money in an unmarked envelope under the recycling bin behind the church.

P.S. Make sure you're not followed.

Monday

This year at school they taped off a bunch of tables in the cafeteria so kids with nut allergies could eat in a separate section. I think it's great the school did that, but it means there's a lot less room for the rest of us to sit.

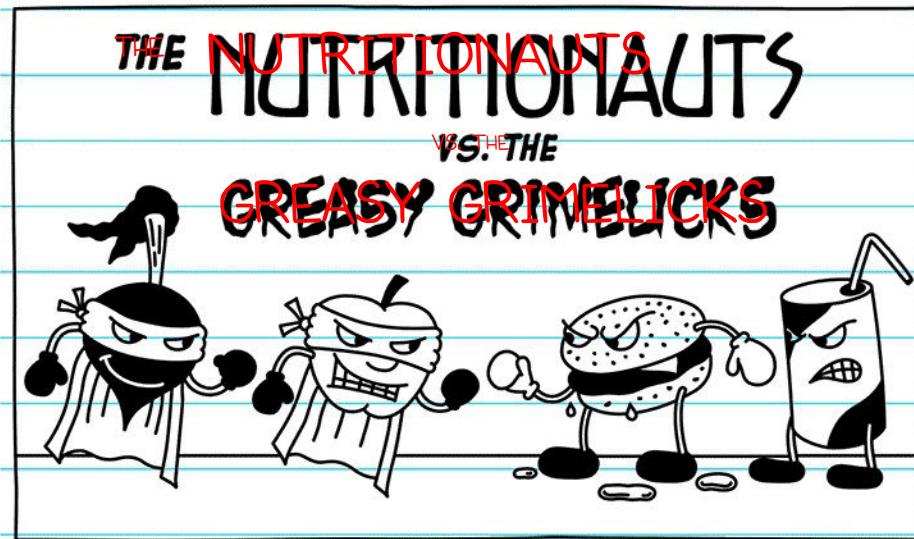


I'm not sure anyone at my school is actually allergic to nuts, though, because for the first two months of this year the tables in the taped-off area were completely empty.

But I guess Ricardo Freedman liked the idea of
all that elbow room, because today he plopped
himself down in the middle of the Nut-Free Zone
and ate two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches
he brought from home.

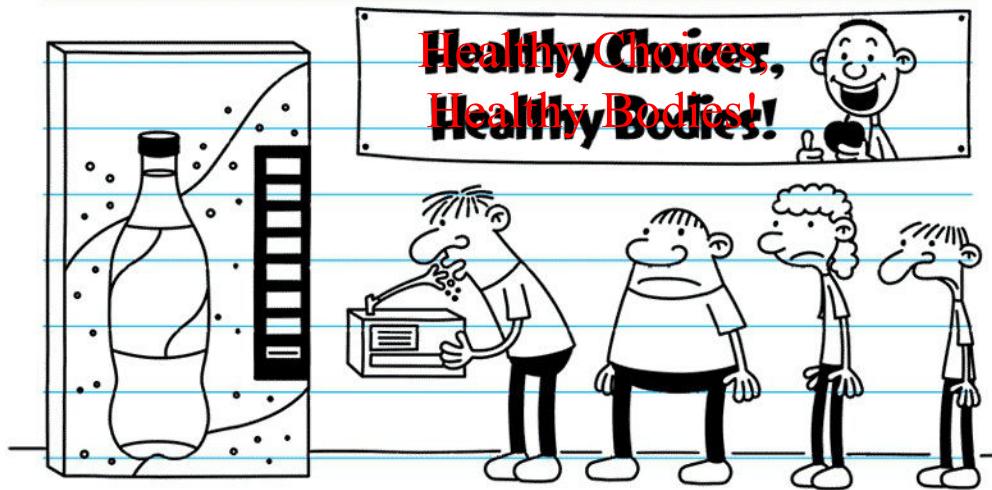


Today we had a general assembly, and everyone
was all excited because they told us we were gonna
get to watch a movie. But it was just one of those
educational films about healthy eating.



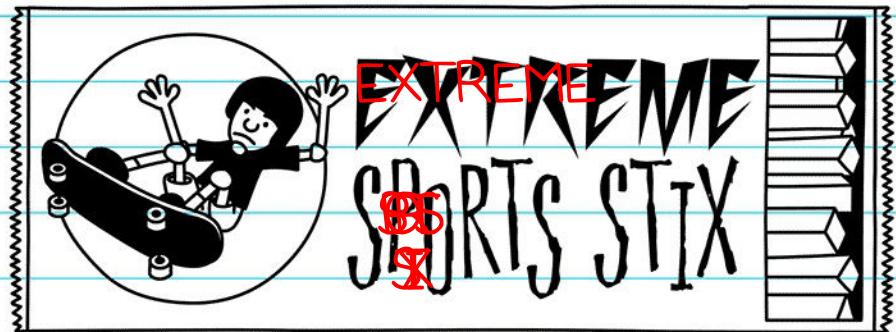
I know I need to eat healthier, but if you
take fast food out of my diet I'm in big
trouble, because I'm probably something like
95% chicken nugget.

The school has really been cracking down on junk
food in the cafeteria. Last week they replaced
the soda machine with a bottled water machine,
but if they're gonna charge a dollar for a bottle
of water, they should probably think of a better
place to put it.

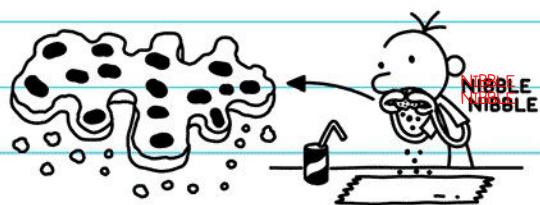


The school also got rid of a bunch of menu items,
like hot dogs and pizza, and replaced them with
healthier stuff.

They even replaced french fries with a new item
called "Extreme Sports Stix," but it took everyone
about five seconds to figure out that Extreme
Sports Stix are just sliced carrots.



I usually bring a bagged lunch to school, but the
one thing I would always buy from the cafeteria
was a chocolate chip cookie. Last week, though,
the chocolate chip cookies were replaced by oatmeal
raisin cookies. I still buy them, but I eat around
the raisins, which is a lot of work.

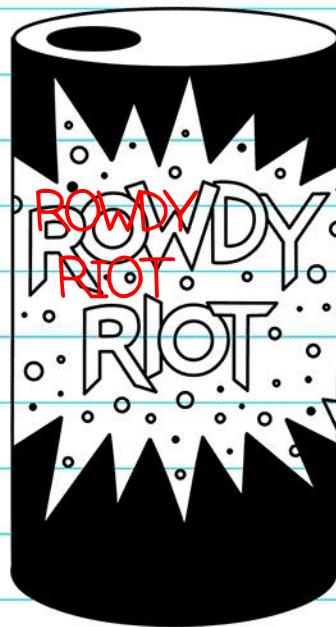


I can't tell you HOW many times I've bitten
into an oatmeal raisin cookie thinking it was
chocolate chip.

I have a theory that oatmeal raisin cookies were
invented as a practical joke a long time ago and
that they were never actually meant to be eaten.



Most of the kids at school aren't too bothered by
all the menu changes, but the thing that really
set people off was when they took away the
energy drinks.



The reason the school stopped selling Rowdy Riot was because teachers were complaining that the red dye was making kids hyperactive. And if you walked into my classroom after lunch, you'd see what they were talking about.

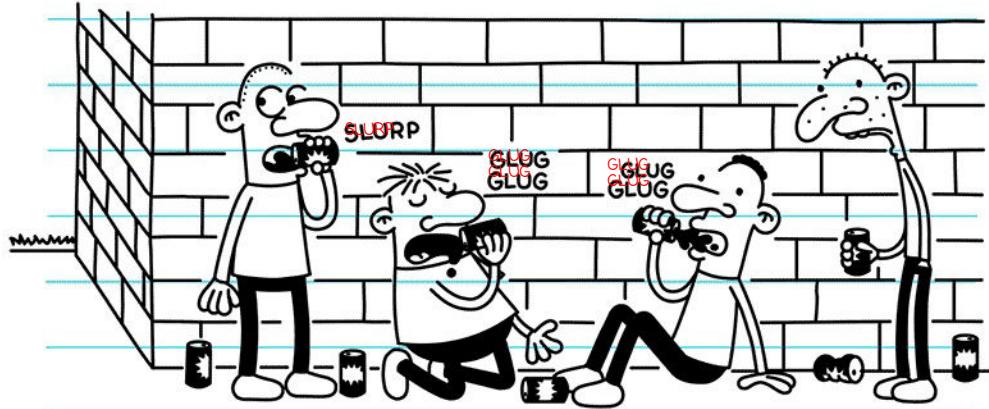


But when they stopped selling Rowdy Riot, people who were used to drinking three or four cans a day were totally unprepared to go cold turkey.

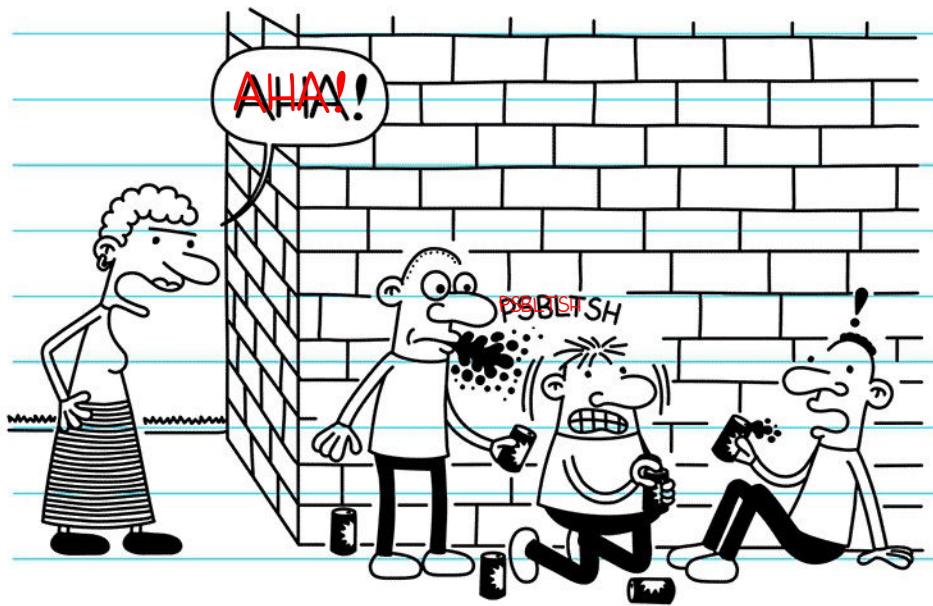
In fact, some kids ended up having to go down to the nurse's office because they had the shakes from withdrawal.

The school wouldn't bring Rowdy Riot back no matter HOW much people complained. But the other day, Leon Goodson snuck in a backpack full of Rowdy Riot he'd brought from home and sold cans for three bucks a pop.

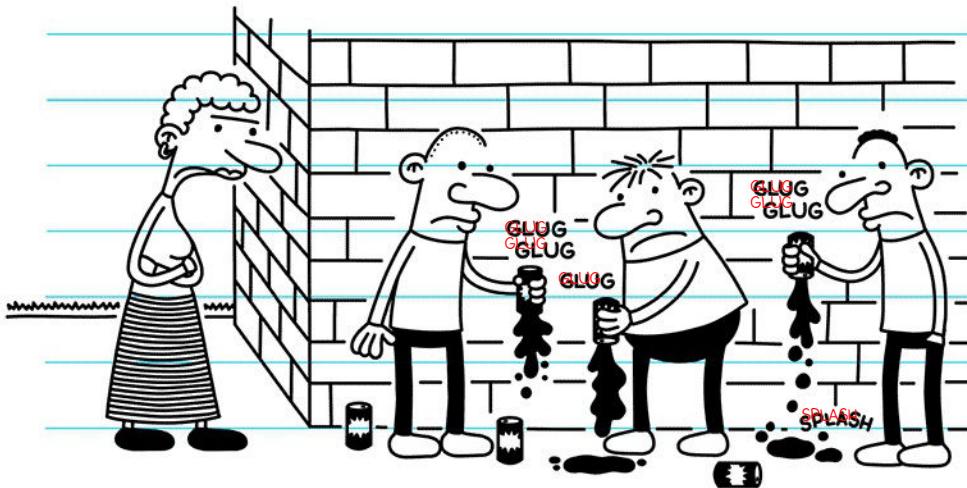
At recess a few kids who'd bought Rowdy Riot
from Leon ducked behind the school and slurped
down their drinks where no one could see them.



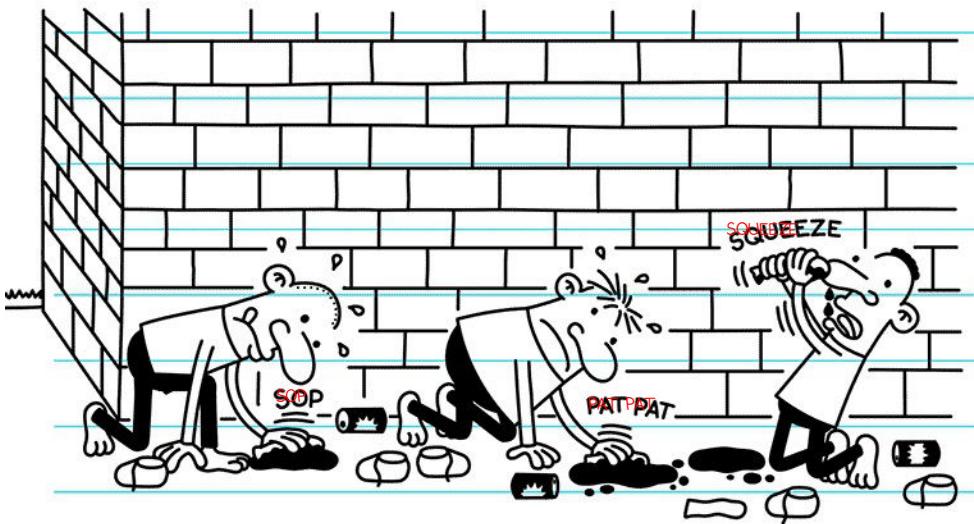
But one of the recess monitors, Mrs. Lahey, got
suspicious and went back there to see what was
going on.



Mrs. Lahey told everyone they had to pour out
their drinks immediately or she'd report them to
the principal.



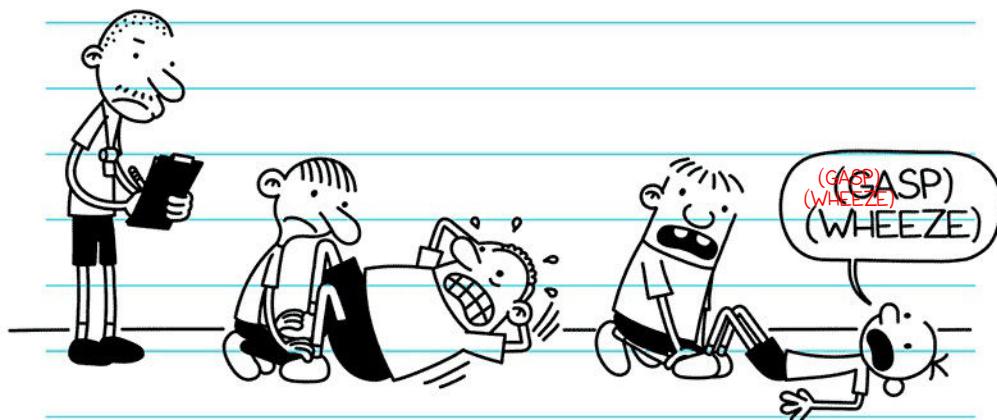
But the second she was gone, the kids took
off their shoes and sopped up the puddles with
their socks.



Tuesday

One of the reasons the school has been getting
on us about our eating habits is because the
Presidential Fitness Test is coming up, where they
measure you on all sorts of stuff, like how many
sit-ups and chin-ups you can do.

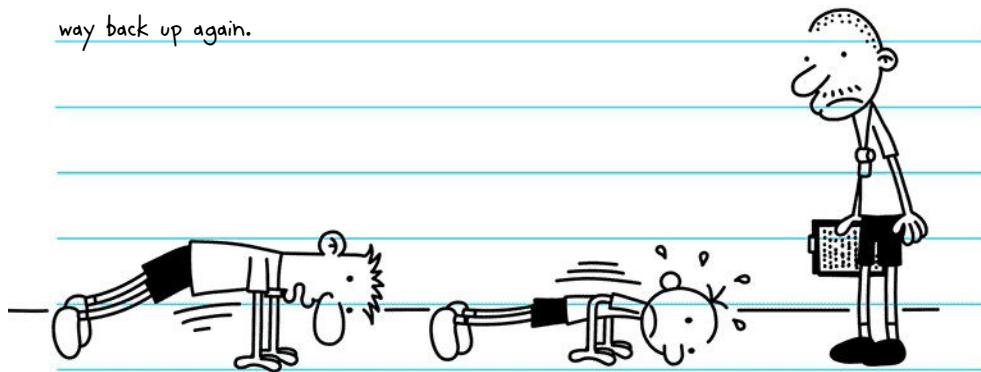
Last year our school was in the bottom 10% in
the country, and I guess the school is trying to
do anything they can to turn that around.



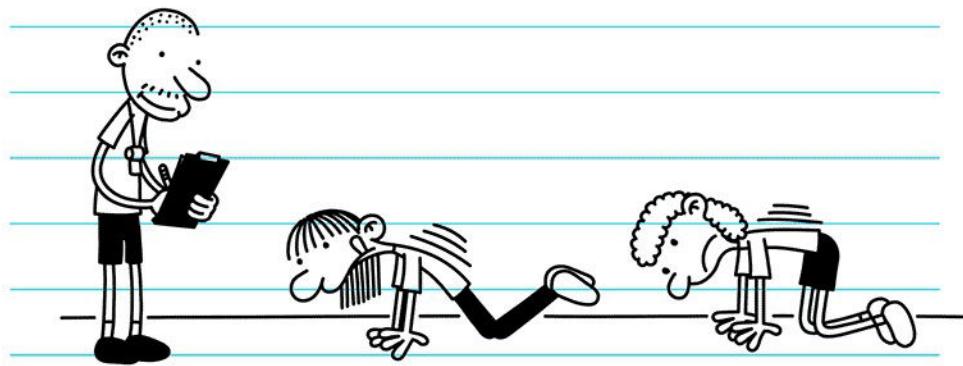
Grown-ups say there's a big problem with kids
in our generation being out of shape because
they don't exercise enough, but I don't think
taking away our playground equipment is really
helping matters.

In one part of the Presidential Fitness Test,
they check to see how many push-ups you can do
in a row. The girls in our class did better than
the boys, but that's only because the girls get to
do an easier kind of push-up.

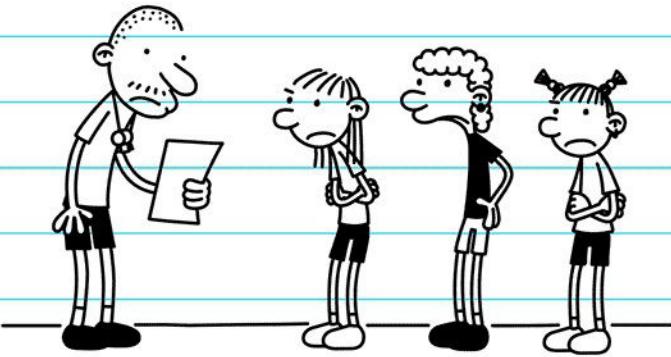
The boys have to keep their whole body straight
and go all the way to the floor and then all the
way back up again.



But the girls get to let their knees touch the
ground, so they have a HUGE advantage.

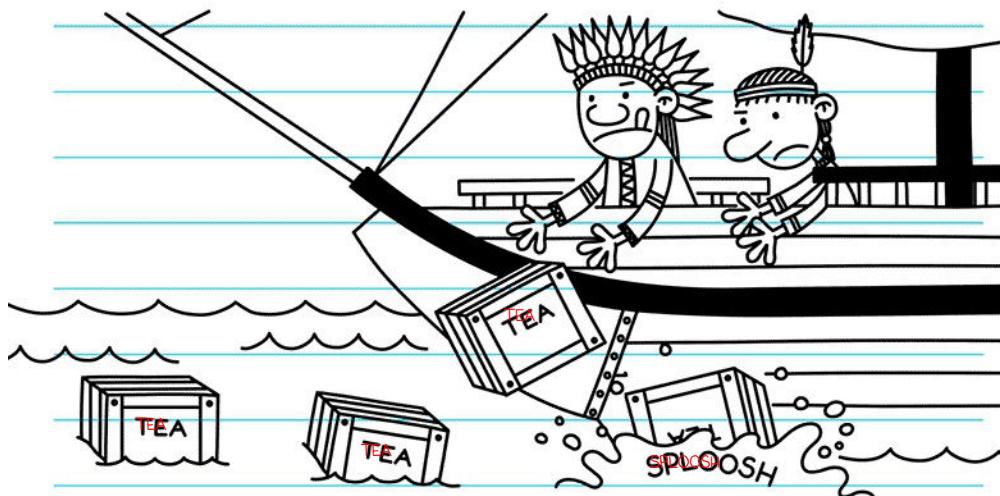


Not all the girls were happy that they got to do easier push-ups than the boys, though. In fact, a couple of girls signed a petition saying they demanded to do the same kind of push-ups as the boys.

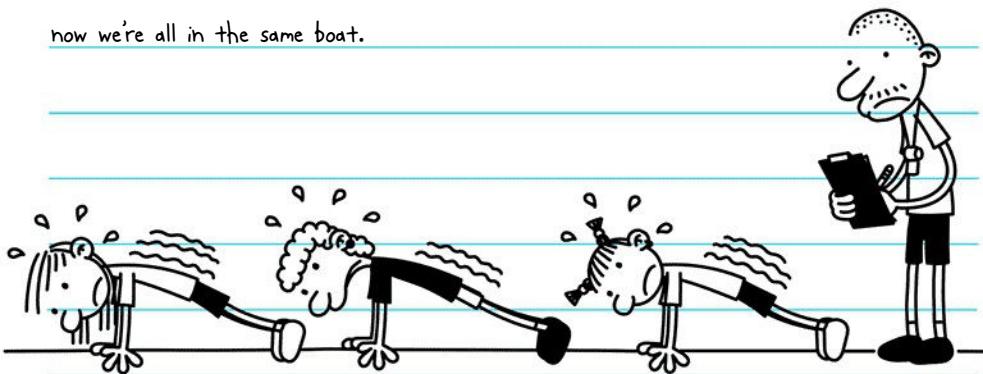


I'm pretty sure I know where they got that idea.

In Social Studies we're learning about different ways people throughout history have protested to change things they weren't happy about.

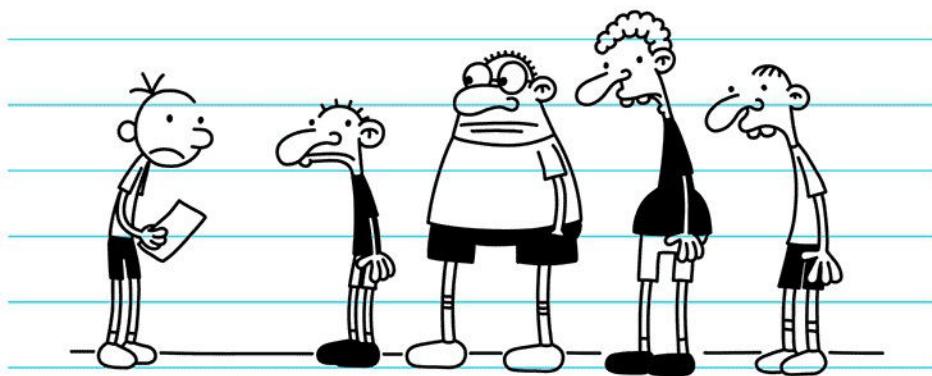


I think the girls were expecting a big fight out
of Mr. Underwood, but he just told them they
could do regular push-ups if they felt like it. So
now we're all in the same boat.



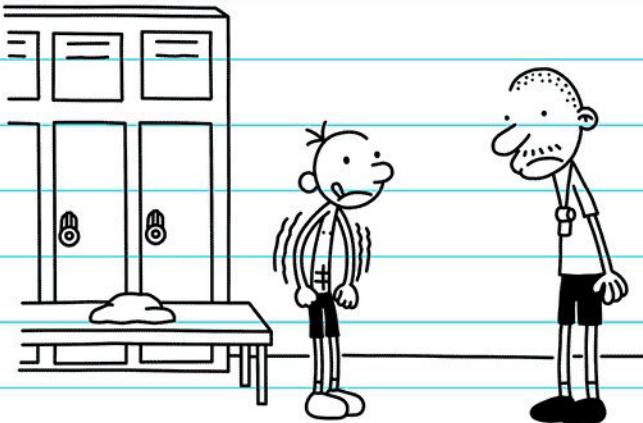
I thought that petition thing was a good idea,
though. I figured us boys should be allowed to
do the easy push-ups if we want, so I wrote a
petition and tried to get signatures.

But I got a bad feeling when I saw the group
of guys who wanted to sign my petition, and I
decided to just drop the whole thing.



A couple of weeks ago we had to do sit-ups
during Phys Ed, but I got cramps and asked
Mr. Underwood if I could just do the rest of
my sit-ups as homework. He said that was OK,
but he wanted proof that I did them.

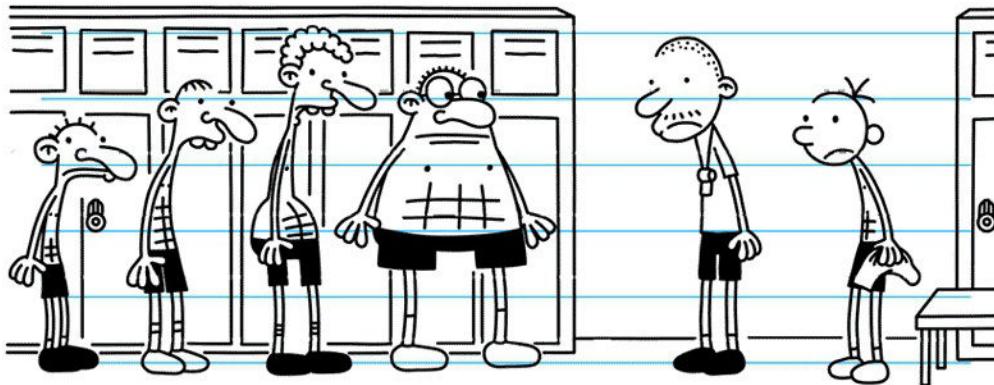
So the next morning I got some of Mom's mascara
and drew a six-pack of abs on my stomach. Then I
made sure I had my shirt off when Mr. Underwood
walked through the locker room.



The next thing I knew, though, I had a
bunch of copycats, and the following day half
the guys in my class showed up with their OWN
fake six-packs.

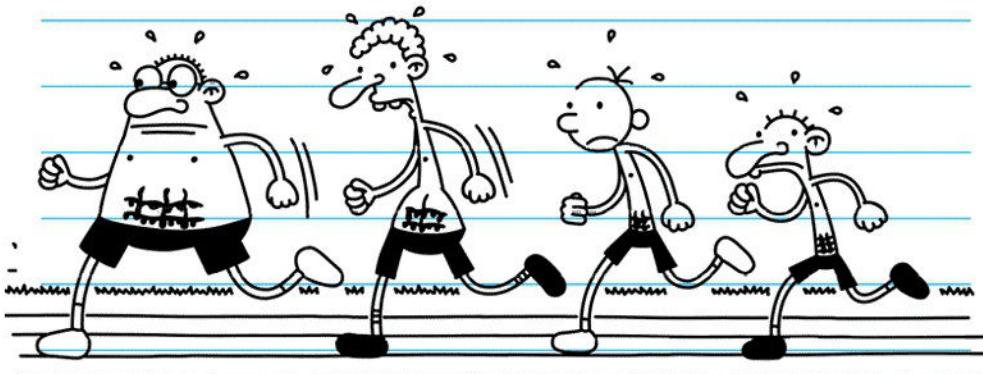
But some of those guys were REALLY awful

makeup artists.



Still, I think we had Mr. Underwood fooled. At

least until we got sweaty and the mascara ran.



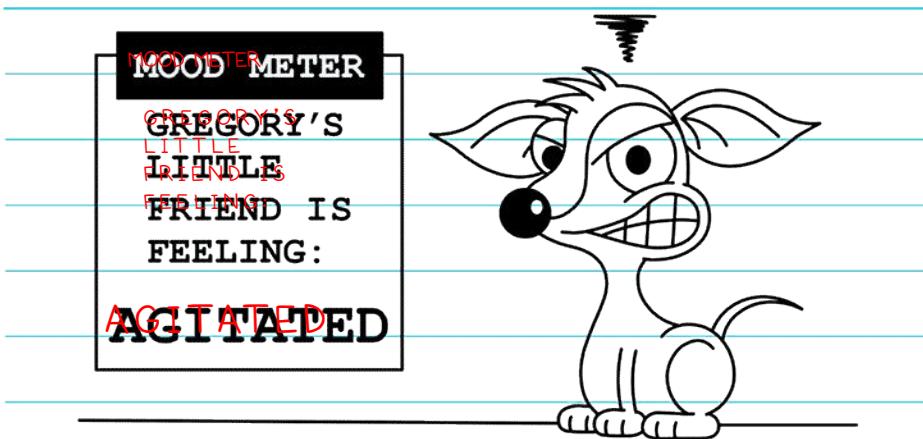
Wednesday

For the past few days I've been getting alerts

on my Net Kritterz account, and if I don't get

some Kritterz Kash soon, I could have a problem

on my hands.



I asked Mom if she could just float me a few
bucks so I could get my pet's Mood Meter back to
"Calm," but she wouldn't budge.

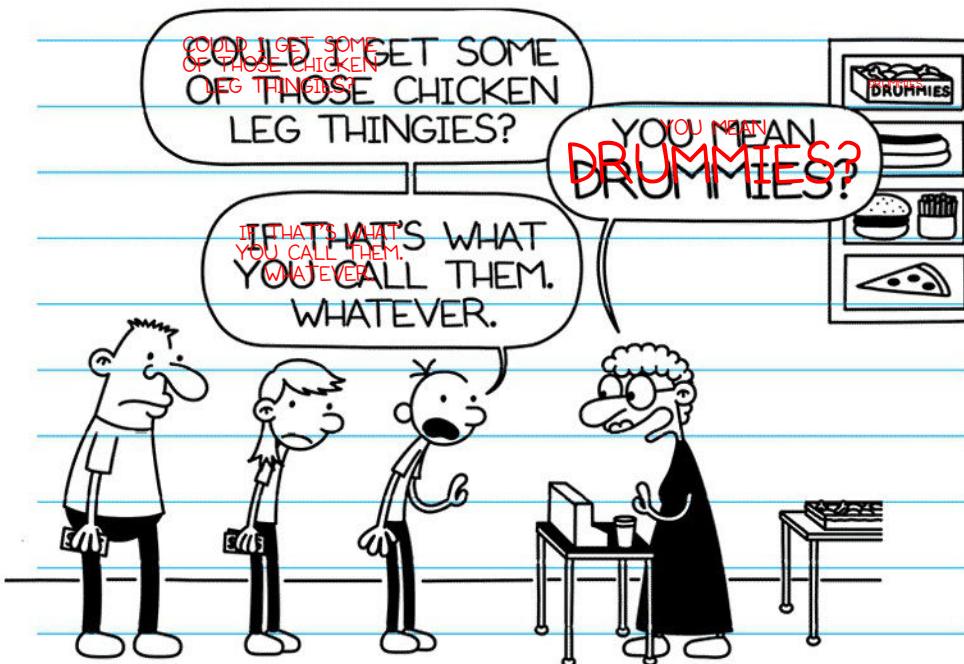
Then she said I shouldn't expect her to give me
money to buy Christmas presents for the family
this year, either. She said I'm at the age where
I need to be spending my own money so that my
gifts "mean" something.

Usually Mom gives me twenty dollars to spend on
presents and I do all my shopping at the Holiday
Bazaar at school. It's great because I can get all
my Christmas shopping done in one shot and the
stuff at the Bazaar is dirt cheap.

So I always come away with a little money I can
spend on myself.



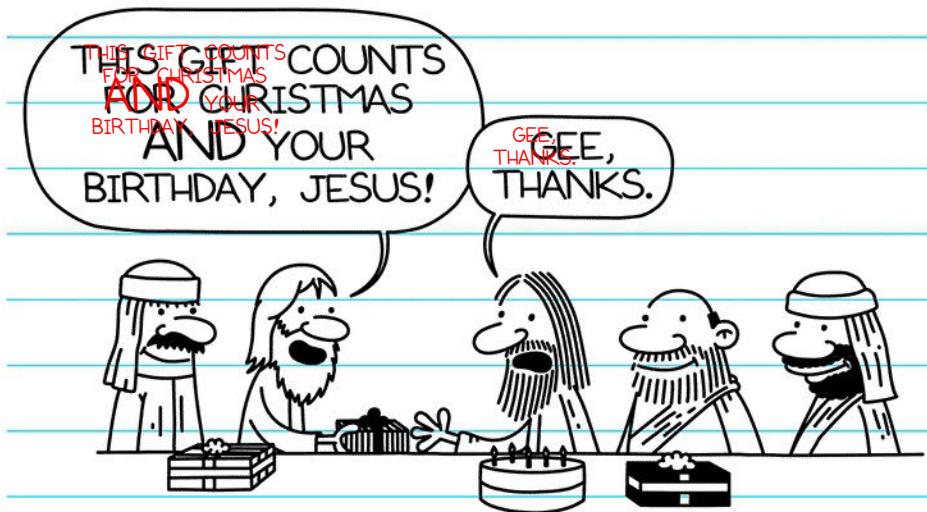
I usually spend most of my money at the
concession stand. They have the most delicious
chicken drumsticks I've ever tasted, but they
have a really goofy name and you feel stupid
ordering them.



I don't know how I'm gonna scrape together
enough money to buy everyone a present. Basically,
there are two times a year when I can count
on getting spending money, and that's on my
birthday and Christmas.

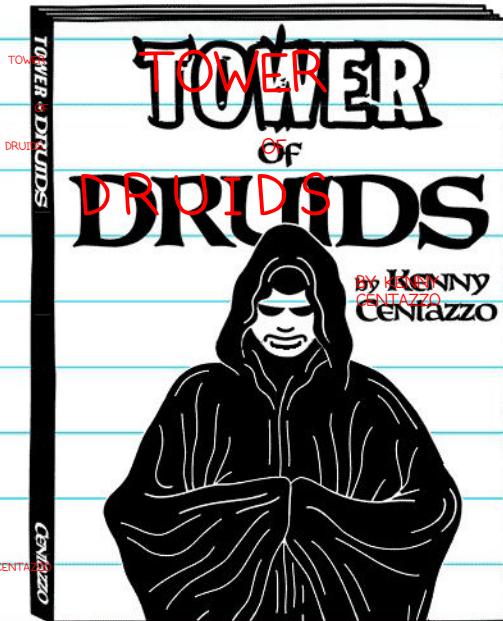
I'm just glad my birthday's a few months away
from Christmas so I get separate gifts for
BOTH. I feel bad for people who have their
birthday right around the holidays, because it
gets lumped together with Christmas and they
end up getting cheated out of a gift.

It's not fair, but I guess it's been happening for
thousands of years.



I realized something today, though. I might not have any cash, but I DO have something valuable:

my first-edition signed copy of the "Tower of Druids" graphic novel.



I got "Tower of Druids" signed by the author, Kenny Centazzo, at the comics convention in the city last year.

Well, actually, I didn't technically get it signed—

Mom did. I waited in line for two and a half hours, and then I had to take a bathroom break.

By the time I got back, Mom had gotten my book signed.



I was bummed that I didn't get to meet Kenny

Centazzo, but at least I got his autograph.

I looked on the computer today and found out

that a first-edition signed copy of "Tower of

Druids" is worth forty bucks. So that'll cover me

for Christmas presents, and I'll have enough left

over to get Gregory's Little Friend that jacuzzi

he seems to want.

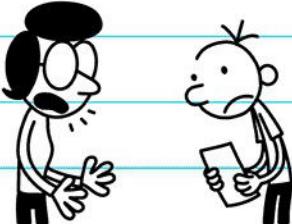
I told Mom about my plan to sell my book, and

she didn't like the idea. She said I waited a long

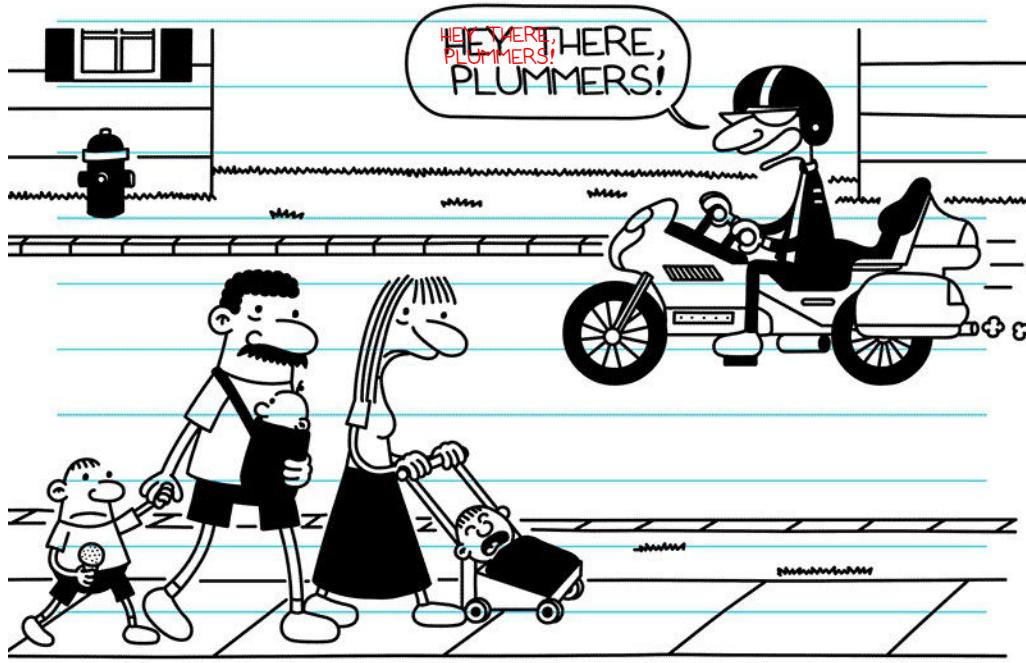
time to get that thing signed and I would really

regret selling it.

Mom said that when I had kids, they'd be mad I
sold it because it'll be worth a lot of money.

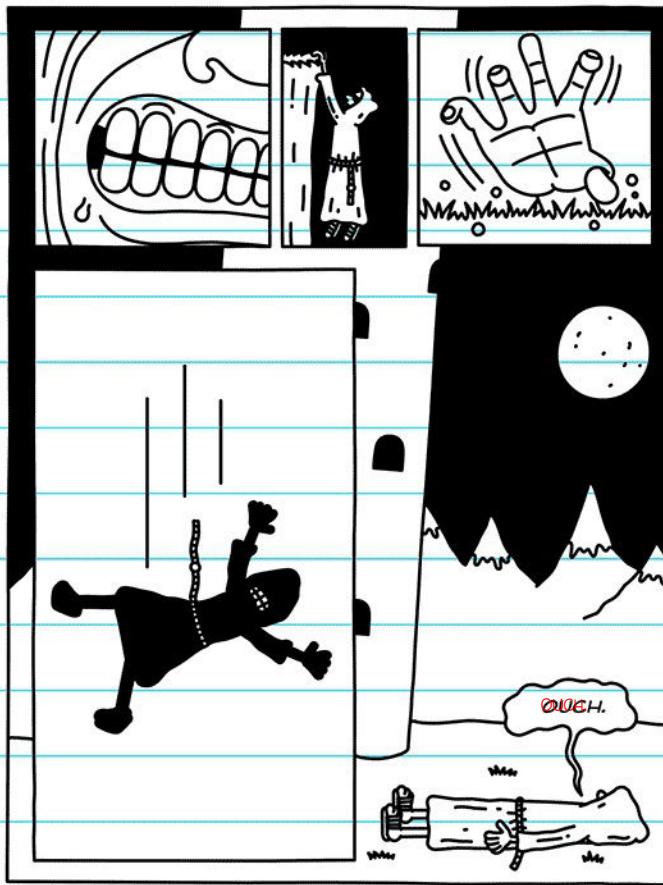


Well, that settled it for me. I've already decided
I'm not HAVING any kids. I want to be a
bachelor like my Uncle Charlie, who spends all his
money on vacations and heated toilet seats and
stuff like that, instead of forking it over to a
bunch of ungrateful kids.

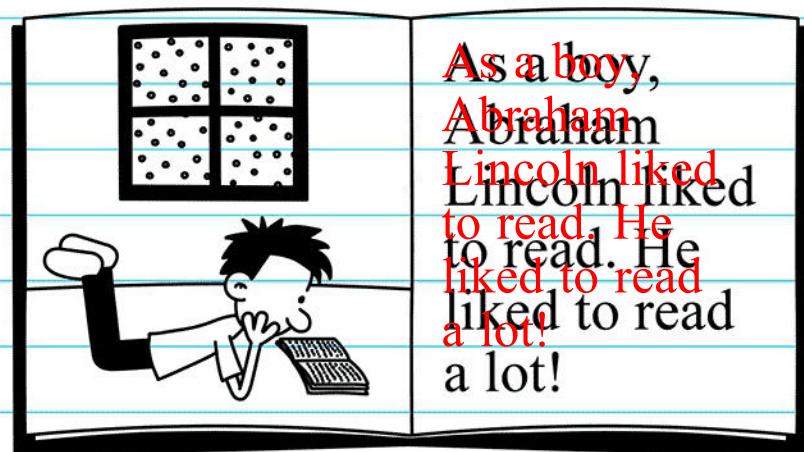


I can thank my librarian, Mrs. Schneiderman, for getting me into the "Tower of Druids" series to begin with, because she's the one who started the graphic novel section in our school library.

I don't know when they started calling comic books graphic novels, but I'm glad they did. Some of the teachers complain that they don't count as REAL reading, but the way I see it, if they're in the library, they're fair game for book reports.



Unfortunately, when Mrs. Schneiderman put in
the graphic novels, she got rid of the Easy
Reader section. I always used the books in the
Easy Reader section to do my reports for Social
Studies, because you could whip through one of
them in about forty-five seconds.



When I was little I used to want to be an
author myself. But whenever I started telling
Mom my ideas, she'd say my story was just like
some book that was already published.



I realized all the good ideas were taken before I
was even born.

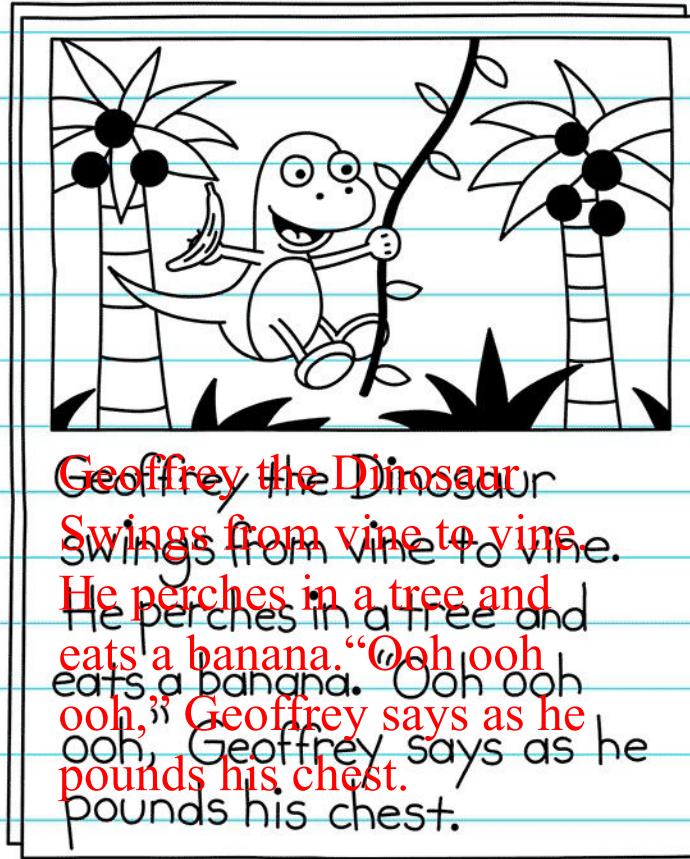
Mom said if I wanted to be an author, I should
try coming up with something original. But it was
really hard coming up with a fresh idea, so I just
took one of my favorite books and more or less
copied it word for word with a few small tweaks.

When Mom read what I wrote, she was really
impressed, and I guess she thought I was some
kind of genius or something.



But I think Mom got a little carried away. She
sent my book to a publisher in New York, who
told her I'd plagiarized "Geoffrey the Gorilla,"
which was already a bestselling kids' book.

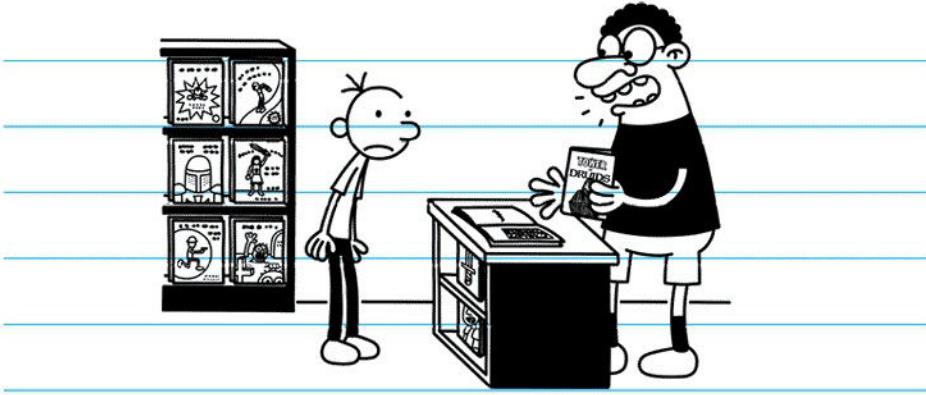
Mom was pretty mad at me for passing off the book as my own, but I'm surprised she couldn't figure it out herself from reading it.



Geoffrey the Dinosaur
Swings from vine to vine.
He perches in a tree and
eats a banana. "Ooh ooh
eats a banana. Ooh ooh
ooh," Geoffrey says as he
pounds his chest.
pounds his chest.

Thursday

Well, it turns out my first-edition copy of "Tower of Druids" is totally worthless. I brought it to the comic book shop yesterday afternoon hoping to cash in, but the guy who works there told me the autograph was a forgery.



I told him he didn't know what he was talking about, because Mom got my book signed by the actual author. But the comic book guy showed me a catalog with Kenny Centazzo's signature in it, and it looked COMPLETELY different.

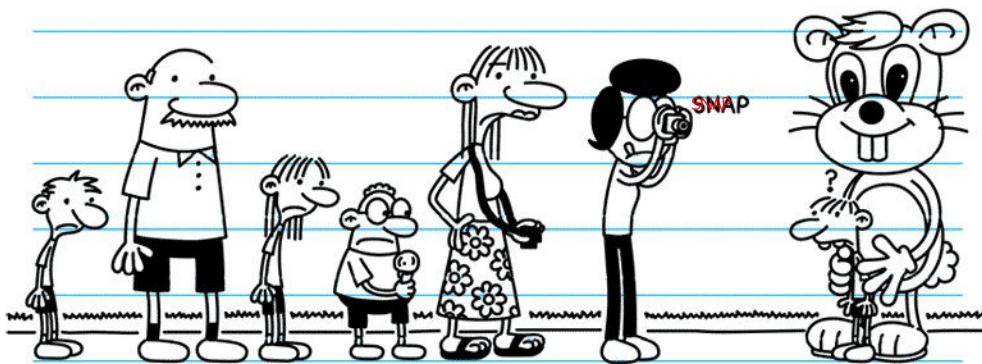
I was really confused, but on the walk home I realized what must've happened. Mom probably got tired of waiting in line at the comics convention and just signed the book HERSELF. In fact, I should've figured that out from the inscription.

Readers are winners! Keep reading to make your dreams come true!

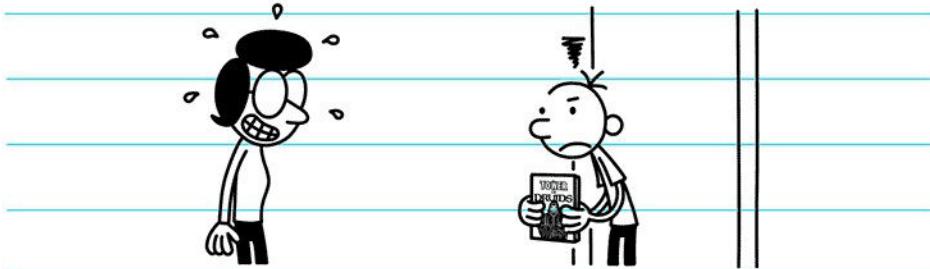
Your pal,
Kenny

It wouldn't be the FIRST time Mom pulled this
sort of thing, because she has ZERO patience for
waiting in line.

When I was little I used to like to get my
picture taken with the characters at theme parks.
But whenever there was more than a five-minute
wait, Mom would just walk to the front of the
line and snap a picture of the character and
whatever kid was posing with him. That's why
our vacation photo albums are full of pictures of
random people.



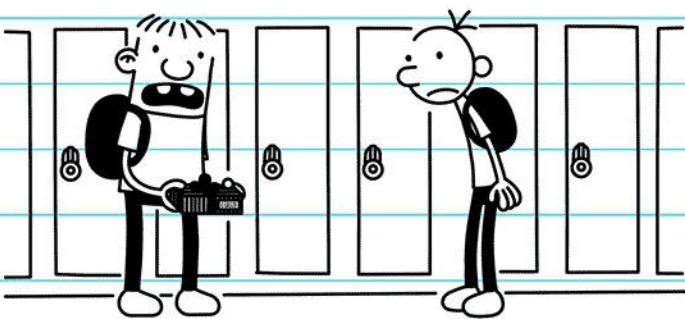
When I got home I went straight to Mom's room
with my book, and the look on her face said it all.
So now I know why she didn't want me to sell it.



I just hope Mom knows that when she doesn't
get a present from me on Christmas, she's only
got herself to blame.

Friday

Even though I was still pretty mad at Mom for
forging that signature, she bailed me out today.
At school Rowley was carrying a present, and
I asked him what it was for. He said it was his
Secret Holiday Buddy gift.

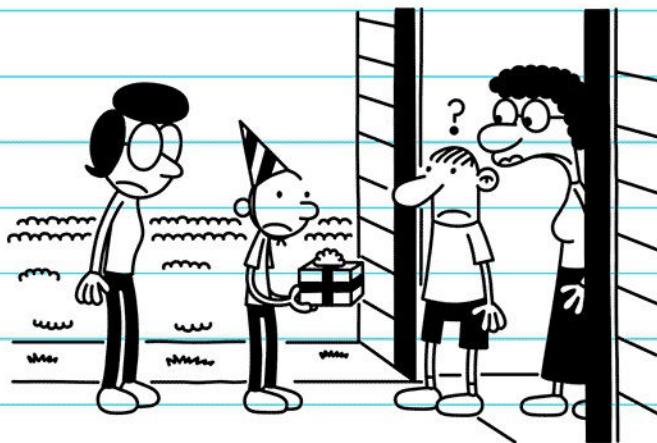


I forgot all ABOUT the Secret Holiday
Buddy thing.

Everyone at school is supposed to buy a gift for
the person they get assigned and then give it
anonymously.



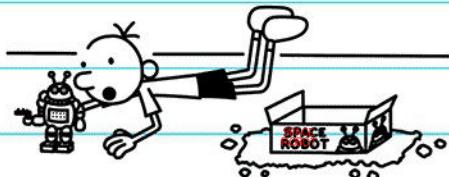
The person I was supposed to get a gift for was
Dean Delarosa, who I've known a long time. Back
in third grade, I got invited to Dean's birthday
party, but Mom got the date wrong and I
showed up at his house a week EARLY.



Dean's mom told us the party was the following
week, so we went home.

But the gift Mom bought for Dean was really

cool, and I ended up playing with it myself.



By the time Dean's actual birthday rolled around,

I'd already broken the robot's hand and lost the

gun that came with it, so I skipped the party.

I've felt guilty about that ever since, and today

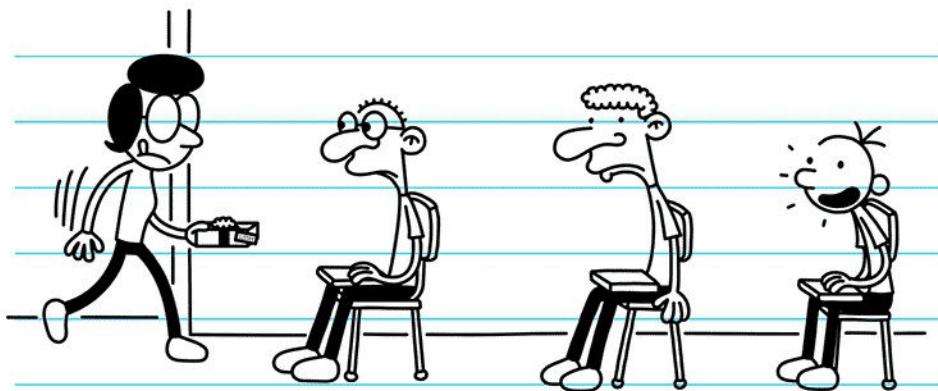
I didn't want to cheat Dean out of a gift for

the second time. So when I got to school, I

asked the secretary in the front office to call

Mom and see if she could pick something up for me.

And she came through just in time.



The teacher started handing out the Secret
Holiday Buddy gifts, and I got a jar of gummy
bears. Finally, there was only one present under
the tree, and it was the one for Dean.

Unfortunately, Mom didn't understand that the
gift was supposed to be ANONYMOUS, so it
was totally embarrassing when the teacher read
the card on Dean's present out loud.

THIS ONE SAYS "TO
DEAN DELAROSA, FROM
YOUR SECRET HOLIDAY
BUDDY, GREG HEFFLEY."



Dean looked like he wanted to crawl under his
desk and hide, and I felt the same exact way.

Saturday

I always thought the only place in the world
where you could get Drummies was at the Holiday
Bazaar. But today me and Mom were at the
grocery store, and you'll never BELIEVE what I
found in the frozen food aisle.



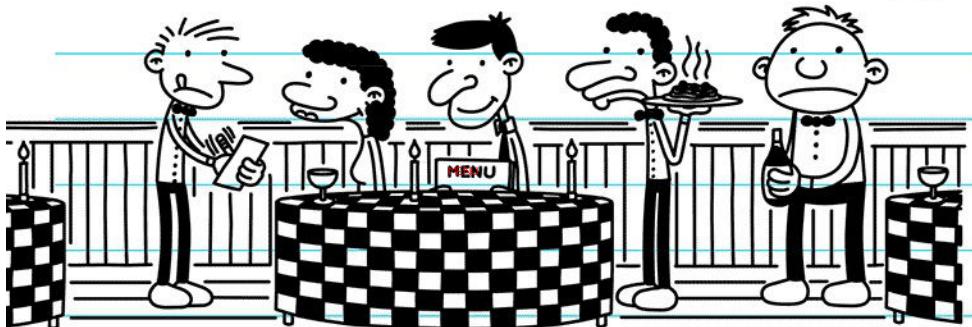
Now I know that I can have Drummies whenever
I want and that they're TOTALLY ripping us
off at the Holiday Bazaar. You can buy a whole
BOX at the store for what they charge for three
or four individual Drummies at school.

In fact, now that I could get my own Drummies,
I realized I could run my OWN Holiday Bazaar.

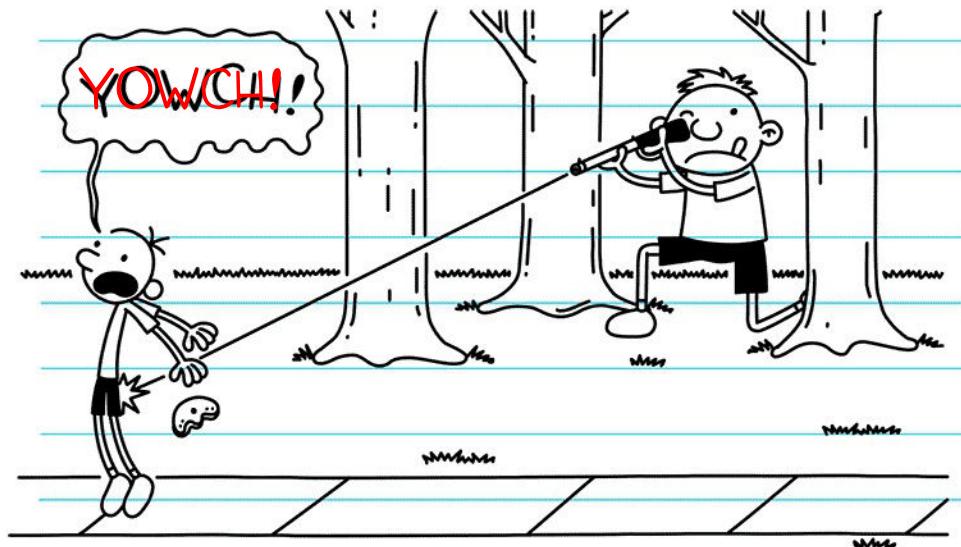
But first I had to buy up the grocery store's
supply before the school beat me to it.



Other kids in my neighborhood have done this sort
of thing before. Last summer Bryce Anderson and
a bunch of his cronies set up a restaurant for all
the neighborhood parents.



I heard they pulled in almost three hundred
bucks, and I know for a fact that one of Bryce's
goons bought a brand-new BB gun with his share.

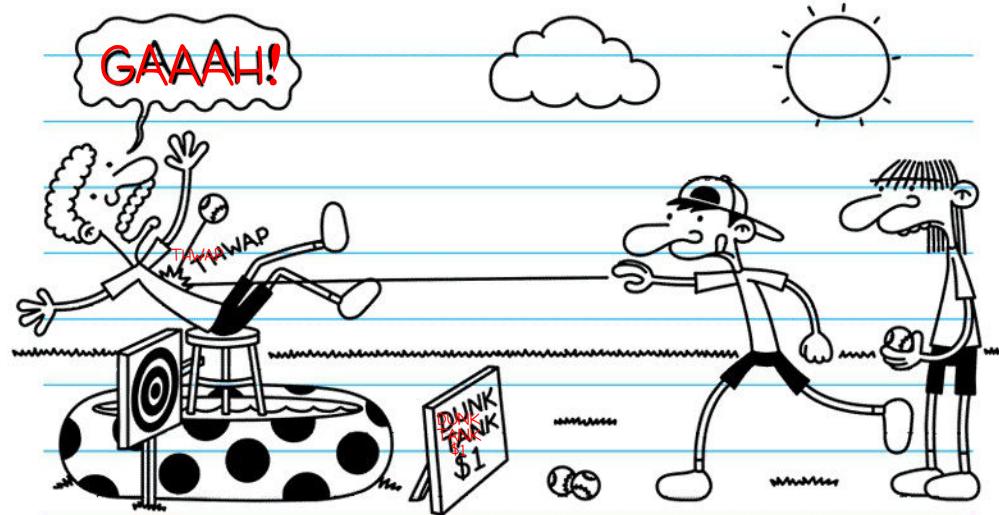


I knew I couldn't run a Holiday Bazaar all by myself, so I called Rowley and asked him to help out. We found some Christmas ornaments and some other stuff in my basement we could sell.

But I figured if we were gonna compete with the school's Holiday Bazaar, we'd have to come up with better games than the beanbag toss and the ping-pong-ball bounce.

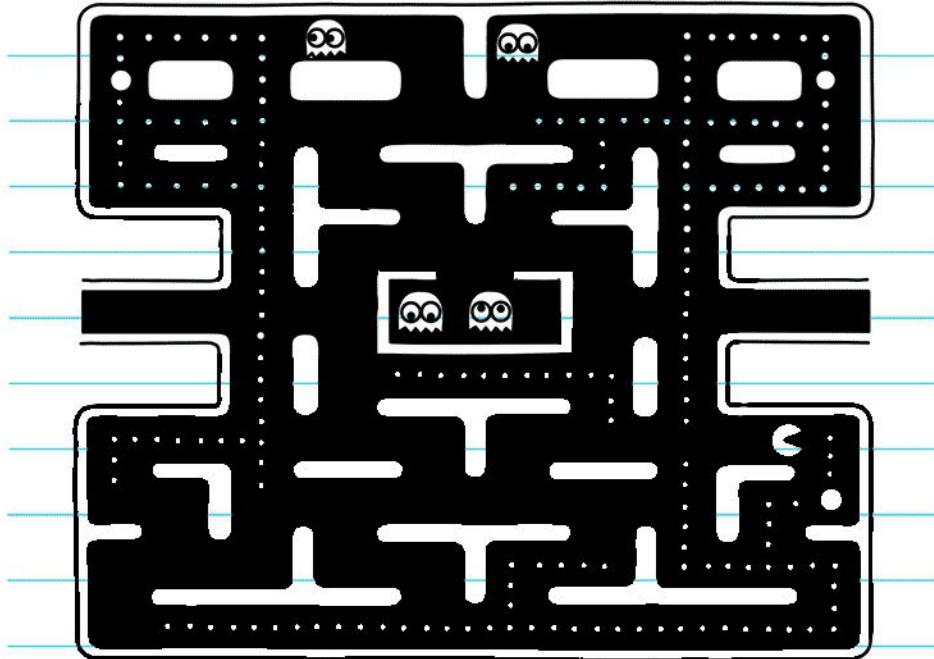
Rowley suggested a dunk tank, but I told him I didn't think Mom would allow that in the house. Plus, we had a dunk tank when we ran a Fun Fair in Rowley's yard over the summer, and it was a DISASTER.

We didn't know you were supposed to protect the
guy in the dunk tank by putting him in a cage.

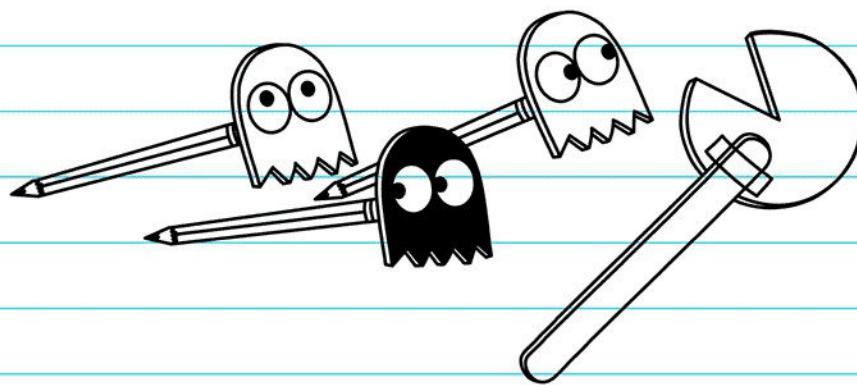


Me and Rowley decided it would be really cool if
our Holiday Bazaar had a video game arcade. We
didn't have the money to buy real arcade machines,
so we got a bunch of cardboard boxes out of the
basement to make homemade versions.

We started off with Pac-Man because we thought
it would be pretty easy to make. In Pac-Man
you've got a little character who goes around
eating pellets while getting chased by ghosts.



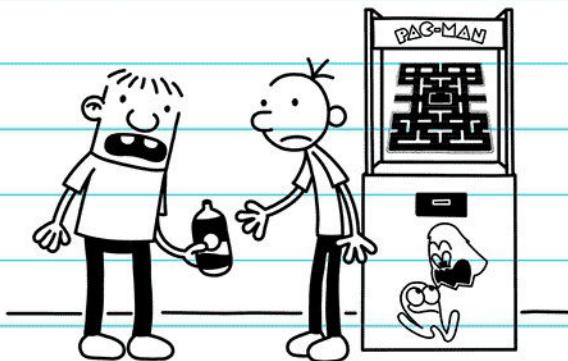
In our version we were gonna have Rowley on
the inside of the box operating ghosts glued to
pencils, while the person who was playing the
game maneuvered Pac-Man from the outside with a
popsicle stick.



We spent the next two hours making the box look
just like the real thing.



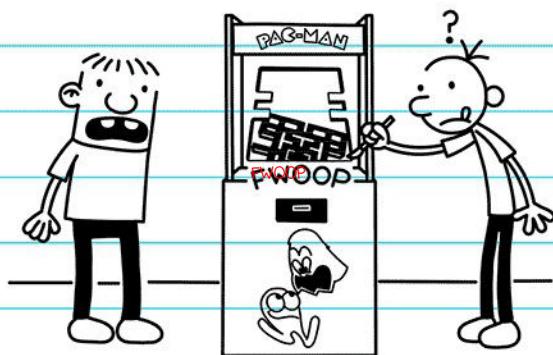
But while we were working, Rowley started asking
questions about how long he was gonna be in
the box and what would happen if he needed a
bathroom break. I gave him an empty two-liter
soda bottle to keep in the box for when he had to
go Number One.



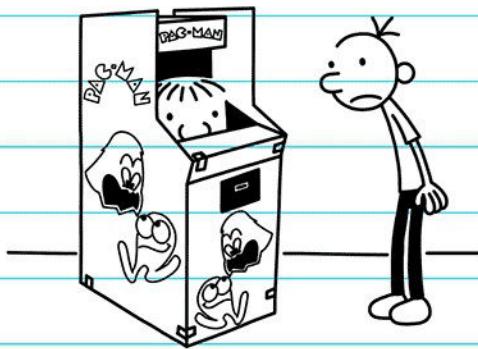
Rowley asked what he would do if he needed to
go Number Two, but I told him we'd cross that
bridge when we came to it.

Once we were done coloring in our machine, we
started cutting out the groove where the popsicle
sticks were supposed to go.

But I guess we weren't really thinking ahead,
because as soon as we cut the outer border, the
whole maze fell inside the machine.



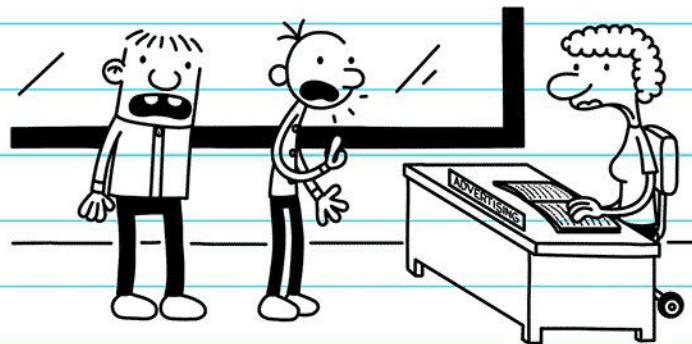
So I guess we're not gonna make a lot of money
on Pac-Man unless people are willing to pay
twenty-five cents to see Rowley sitting in a box.



Sunday

Me and Rowley still have a lot of work to do to set up our Holiday Bazaar, but I realized we'd better not wait until the last minute to let people know about it. So we went down to the town newspaper's office and told them we wanted to order up a full-page color ad in tomorrow's edition.

They said an ad like that would cost a thousand dollars, and I told them we could pay for it the day AFTER our event. But they wouldn't take an IOU, even when I told them how many Drummies we were planning on selling.



I suggested maybe they could just write an article about how two regular kids were putting together their own Holiday Bazaar and not charge us anything.

But they told us they didn't consider our Holiday

Bazaar "newsworthy."

I think it stinks that the newspaper basically

gets to control the information people are

getting. At home, I complained to Mom, and

she suggested me and Rowley start our OWN

newspaper and write about our Bazaar.

I thought that was a GREAT idea, and we got

right to work. We came up with a name for our

paper and put together the front page.

The Neighborhood TATTLER



Drummies Pricing Scam EXPOSED!

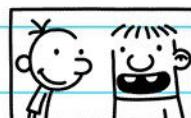
Tattler reporters have uncovered a price-gouging scheme at the school Holiday Bazaar that has been running unchecked for years. The popular chicken drumstick items, "Drummies," have been sold at the Bazaar for more than six times their retail value.

"I'm outraged," said a loyal customer who did not want to be named. See DRUMMIES, A2

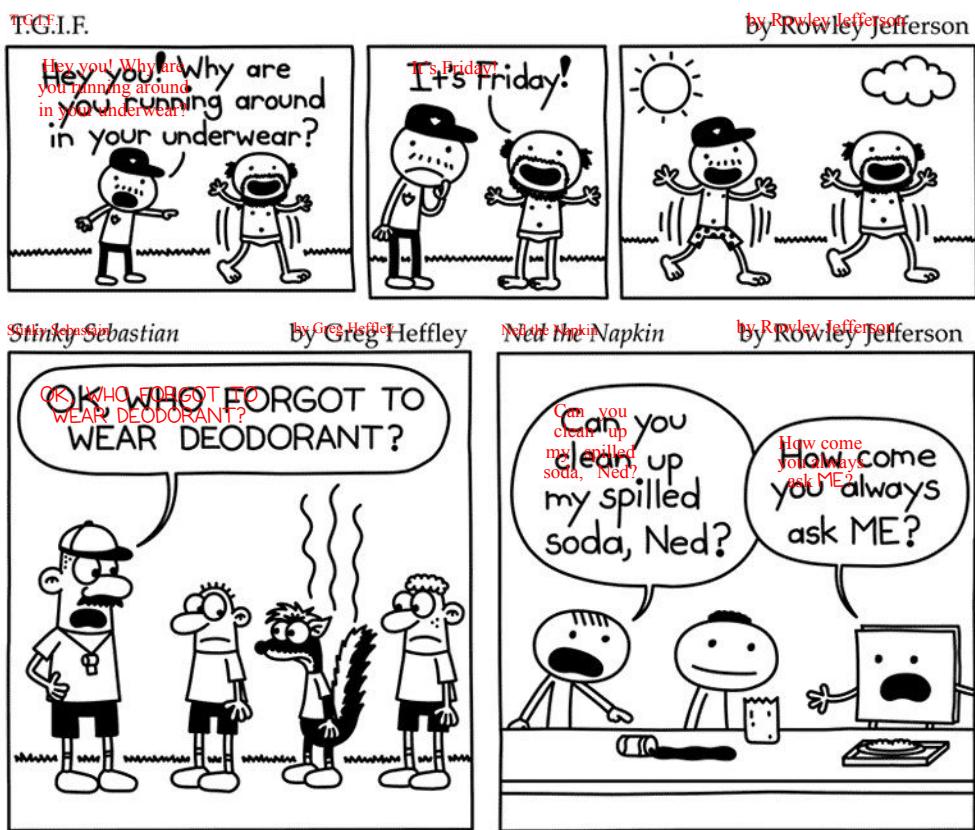
New Bazaar Offers Alternative to School Event

With the community reeling from the Drummies scandal, two boys have decided to make things right.

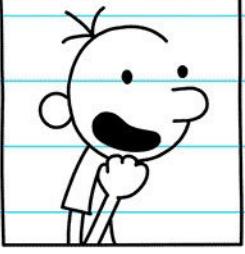
"We decided to start our own Holiday Bazaar," said Greg Heffley, an entrepreneur. See BAZAAR, A3



We realized we were gonna have to come up with
some more pages for people to take our newspaper
seriously, so we started brainstorming ideas for
other sections we could add. I figured we needed
a comics section, so we started there.



We added an advice column, where people write in
questions about problems they're having. But we
didn't have time to wait for people to send in real
questions, so we just made a few up.



**ASK
Greg**

Dear Greg,

My wife is always criticizing everything I say. The other day it was a little chilly out so I wore socks with my sweater. She said I was a little chilly out so actually made me go back inside and put on shoes. I feel like my wife treats me like a child. She has a very strong personality and I'm afraid to stand up to her. What can I do?

Sincerely,
FRUSTRATED

Dear FRUSTRATED,

It's NEVER okay to wear socks with sandals! You should apologize to your wife immediately.

Greg

Dear Greg,

Are you single?

Sincerely,
THE LADIES

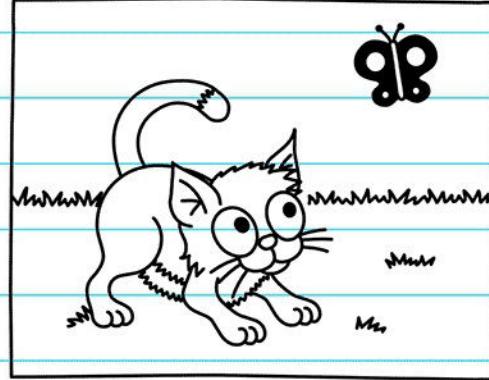
Dear THE LADIES,

Why, yes, I am!

Greg

Rowley was all excited about this newspaper, and he said he wanted to be like a real reporter and go out looking for stories. So I told him he should go around the neighborhood and see if he could dig up any dirt. But what Rowley came back with wasn't exactly hard-hitting news.

Kitten has a fun day



Mittens enjoys the nice weather yesterday.

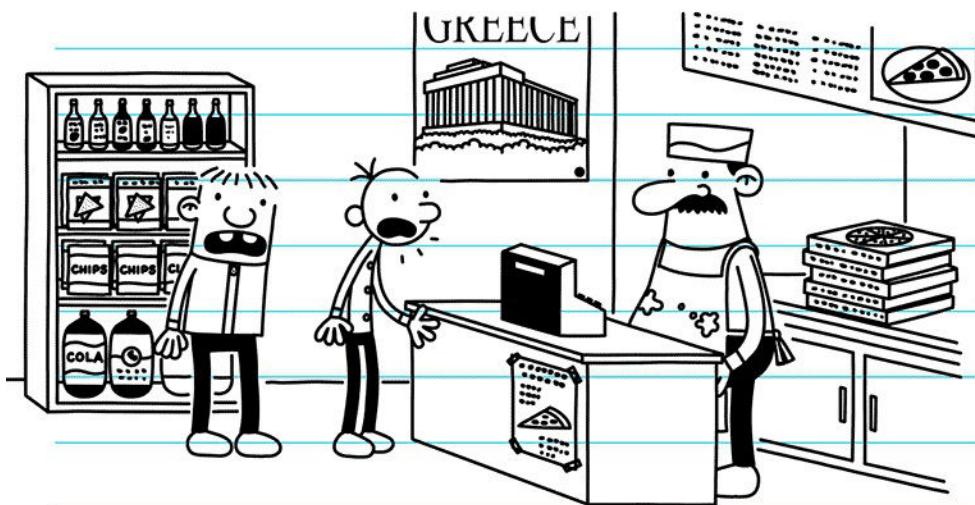
By ROWLEY JEFFERSON

Yesterday Mrs. Salter's kitten Mittens was seen frolicking in the front yard. She spent an hour and a half chasing after a butterfly that was flying around the house. Once off, Mittens got very interested in something that was jumping near the front porch. But by the time I got close enough to see what Mittens was chasing, the thing had hopped away.

I decided to make myself editor in chief so I could control the kinds of things we had in our newspaper. Because if Rowley had his way, our paper would be like a little girl's coloring book.

Mom told us we should go to some businesses downtown and see if anyone was willing to pay for ads to cover the cost of our first printing.

The only person who was willing to buy an ad in our paper was Tony from Papa Tony's Pizza, and I'm pretty sure the reason he agreed to help is because we're in there at least twice a week and he didn't want to lose our business.



Tony gave us just enough money to buy some color ink cartridges, so we printed a hundred copies.

Monday

Yesterday we went around town trying to sell our papers, but nobody wanted to pay and we had to start giving them out for free. When we handed a paper to Tony, he didn't seem too happy that his ad was running next to a negative review of his restaurant.

Papa Tony's pizza stinks!

By Food Critic
GREG HEFFLEY

Have you noticed that Papa Tony's has started to really go downhill lately?

It all started when they took the barbecue chicken pizza off of their menu and replaced it with a spinach pizza.

Then they stopped selling grape soda. Papa Tony's was the only place in town you could get grape soda, so now I have to drink root beer, but it's really not the same.

And half the time the soda water doesn't mix right with the syrup, so you either get the syrupy juice or you get water, which is just trying to give you a bad Mountain soda experience so you'll pay for the canned soda, which costs twice as much.

My last complaint is about the napkins. You used to be able to take as many as you wanted, but now Tony only lets you have two, and if you take more he gives you a dirty look.

Papa Tony's

Two-for-One Deal

Order any topping pizza and get a second one FREE!

Members get an additional \$1 off your order.



OFFER EXPIRES ON
DECEMBER 31

I told him if he bought a BIGGER ad for the

NEXT edition of the paper, we could arrange for

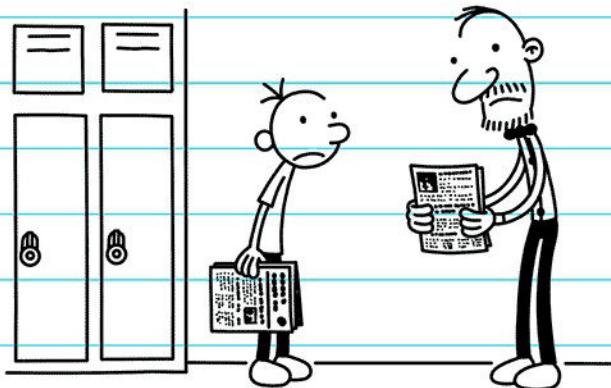
a more positive write-up.

We still had a few dozen papers left, and since

we were handing them out for free, I figured I

could unload them at school.

But when I started giving them to kids as they
walked in the door, Vice Principal Roy asked me
what I was doing.



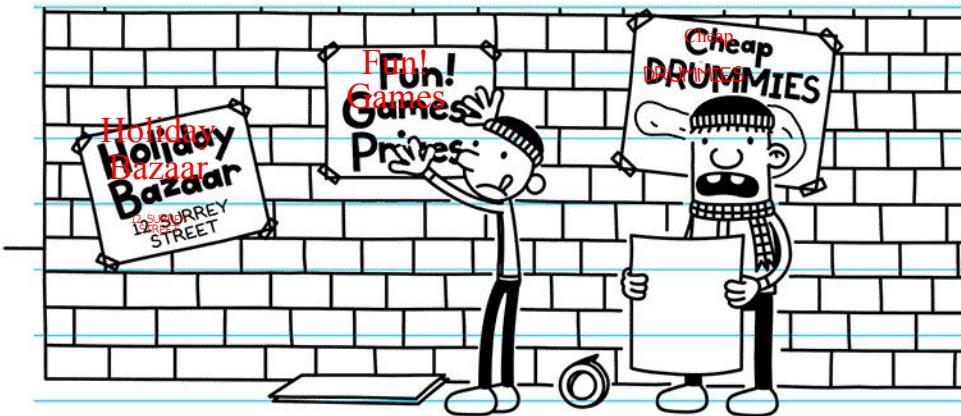
He said I couldn't hand out an "unauthorized
publication" on school grounds and that he was
going to have to confiscate my papers. But I
knew what this was REALLY all about. Vice
Principal Roy was just spooked that we were
gonna give the school a run for its money with our
Holiday Bazaar.

I was still pretty mad about the whole thing
when I got home this afternoon, and I decided
I wasn't gonna just roll over and let Vice Principal
Roy shut us down.

Even though Vice Principal Roy took our papers,
I figured I could make some signs and hang them
up around town to advertise.

I knew Mom kept poster board and markers in
the laundry room for school projects, so I got
to work. I used the neon green poster board,
because I wanted to make sure you could see our
signs from a mile away.

I finished making the posters after dinner and
called Rowley to ask for help putting them up. We
started with the school because I figured a lot of
parents would see them when they dropped their
kids off in the morning.



But right when we were done hanging them up, it

started to rain, and the marker on our signs ran.

And soon they were pretty much worthless.



But when we pulled them down, we got a huge

shock. The rain had made the green dye from the

poster board bleed, too, and now there were huge

green splotches all over the brick wall.



We tried to get the green dye off the wall, but

that stuff was like permanent ink.

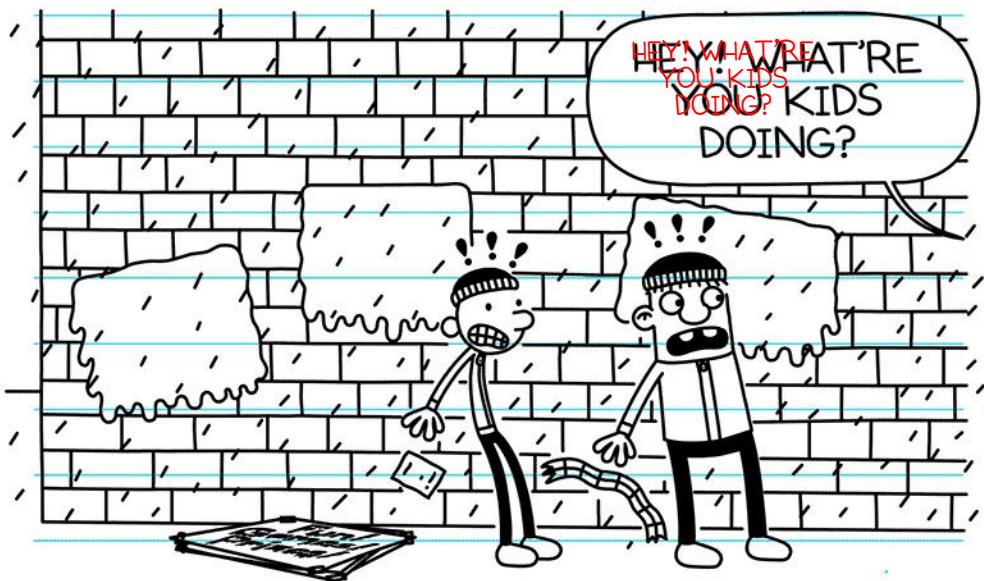


I knew we couldn't leave giant green stains all

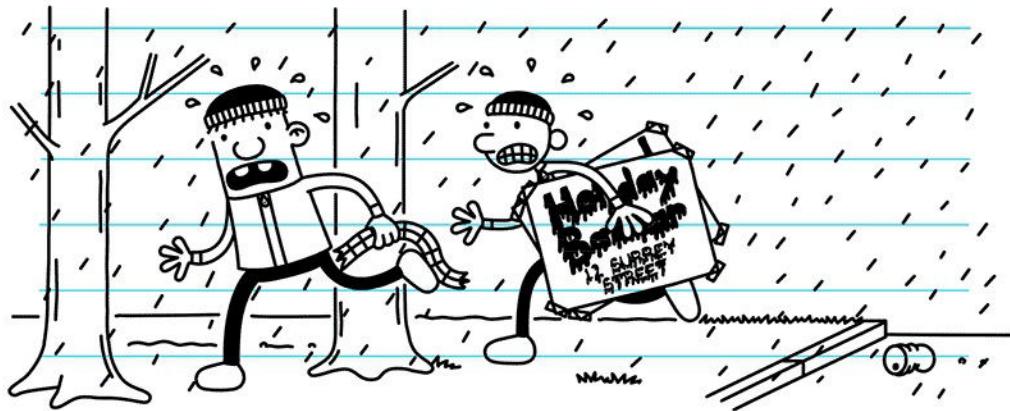
over the school, so I tried to figure out what

to do next. But right at that moment, someone

yelled at us from the street.



Me and Rowley panicked and took off. We ran
across the parking lot and through the shortcut
in the woods, then kept running until we were
sure we'd lost whoever was back there.



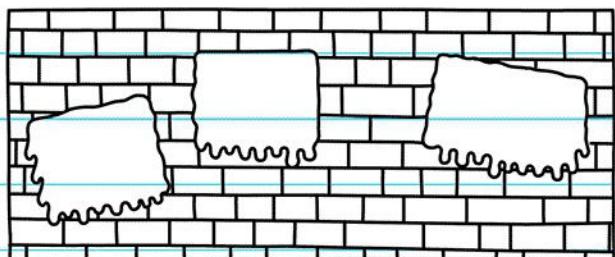
I wish we didn't run, because if we had just
stayed and explained ourselves it probably would've
been fine. I don't know if the person who called
out was a parent or a police officer or WHAT, but
I just hope they didn't recognize us. Because if
they did we could be in some SERIOUS trouble.

Tuesday

When I woke up this morning, I thought maybe
everything that happened last night was just a
bad dream. But then I saw the newspaper on the
kitchen table.

The Daily Herald

Vandals deface middle school



Top: Juveniles left these green smudges on the school last night.



Left: Police sketches of the
juveniles who left the
smudges on the school based on
an eyewitness account.

The juveniles fled
the scene when
confronted by the
passerby.

Vandals struck
last night under
cover of darkness
and left large, bright green
stains on the front
wall of the town
middle school.

The meaning of
the green blobs is
still unknown, but
police suspect it
could be gang-related.

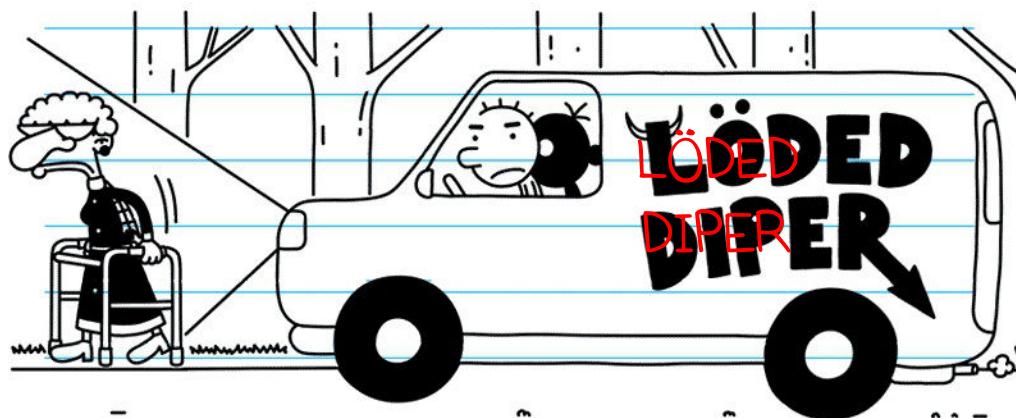
Graffiti artists
have caused a lot
of property damage
in the past six
months," said Sgt.
Peters of the town
police force.

SEE VANDALS, A2

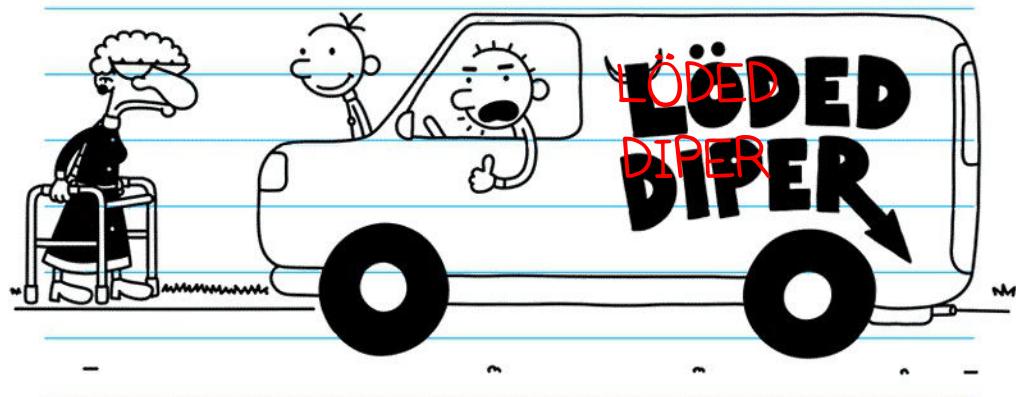
So now I'm basically a criminal. Believe it or not,
this isn't the FIRST time I've been falsely
accused of a crime.

When I was in the Boy Scouts, I was trying to
earn my Service Project merit badge, and I had to
do some kind of good deed. Mom said I should go
over to Leisure Towers and see if there were any
elderly people who needed help carrying groceries or
something like that, and she told Rodrick he had to
give me a ride.

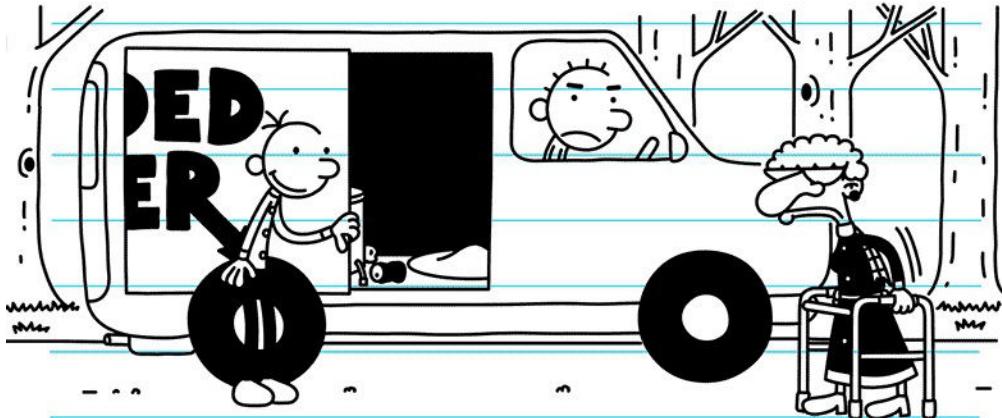
When we got to the parking lot of Leisure
Towers, there was a lady walking around who
looked like she was lost.



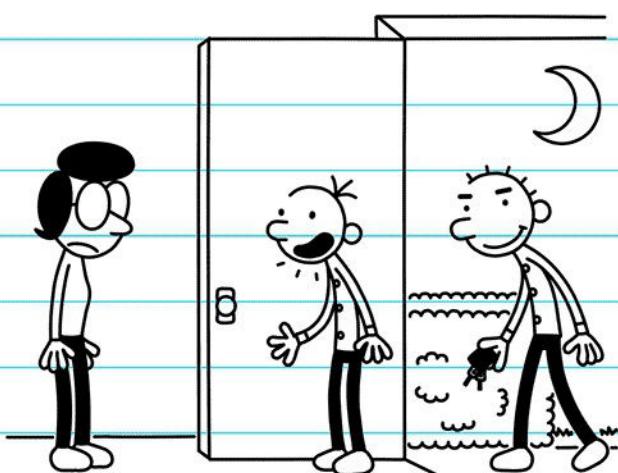
We asked the lady if she needed any help, and
she said she was just walking to the supermarket
on the other side of the apartment building. But
I knew the nearest supermarket was almost five
miles away in the opposite direction, so we said
we'd give her a ride.



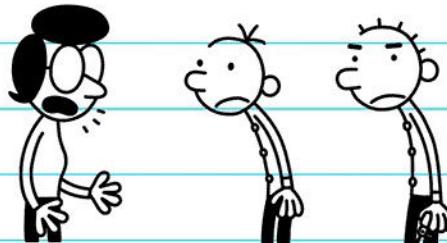
The only condition was that she had to ride in
the back because I had already called shotgun.



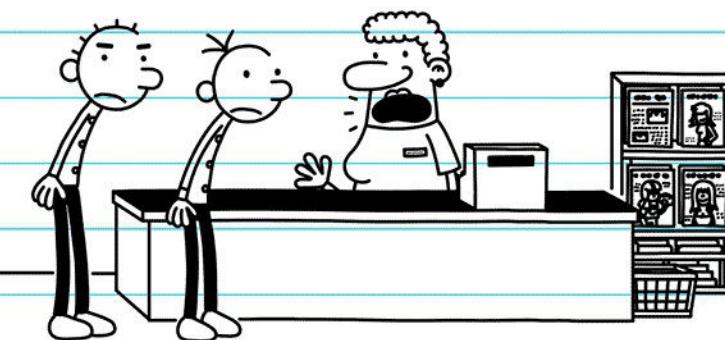
We dropped the woman off at the supermarket,
and then we went home. When we walked in the
door, I was pretty excited to tell Mom about my
good deed. I told her about the lady and how
we gave her a ride to the supermarket a few miles
from Leisure Towers and saved her a lot of walking.



But Mom said there was a brand-new supermarket
a block away from Leisure Towers and the woman
had probably been heading THERE. So that
meant we dropped her off five miles from where
she was trying to go, and now she didn't have a
way to get home.



Mom said we had to get back in the van and
see if we could find the lady, so we went to the
supermarket where we dropped her off. But a
cashier told us she'd already finished her shopping
and left.



We eventually found the lady walking along the
highway with her groceries.

We tried to offer her a ride back to Leisure

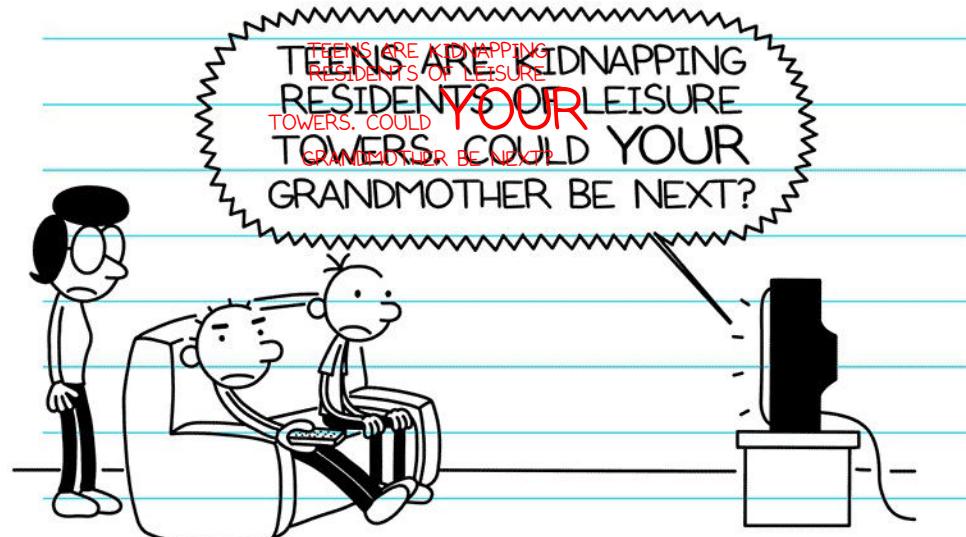
Towers, but this time she wouldn't get in the van.



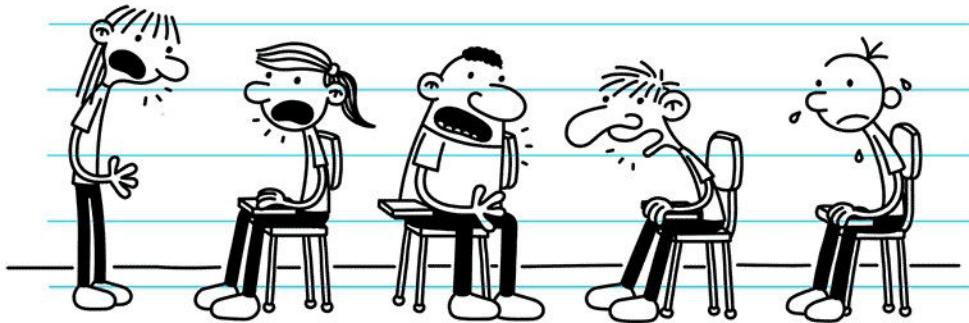
I guess she must've called the local TV station to

report us once she got home, because that night

we were on the news.



This school vandalism thing seems a LOT more serious, though. Luckily the eyewitness sketches in the paper didn't really look like me and Rowley, so I thought maybe we'd be OK. But when I got to school, all anyone wanted to talk about was who was behind the green blobs.

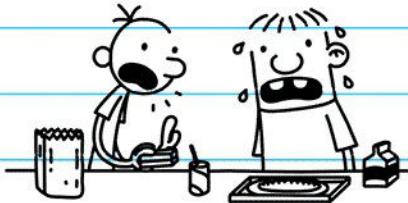


The school had a general assembly in third period, and the topic was the so-called graffiti on the front of the school. Vice Principal Roy said someone had spray-painted the front wall and he was sure the perpetrators were students at our school.

He said someone in the auditorium knew who was responsible and that it was terrible to live with a "guilty conscience." Then he said he was gonna put a locked box in the cafeteria to make it easy for someone to leave an anonymous tip.

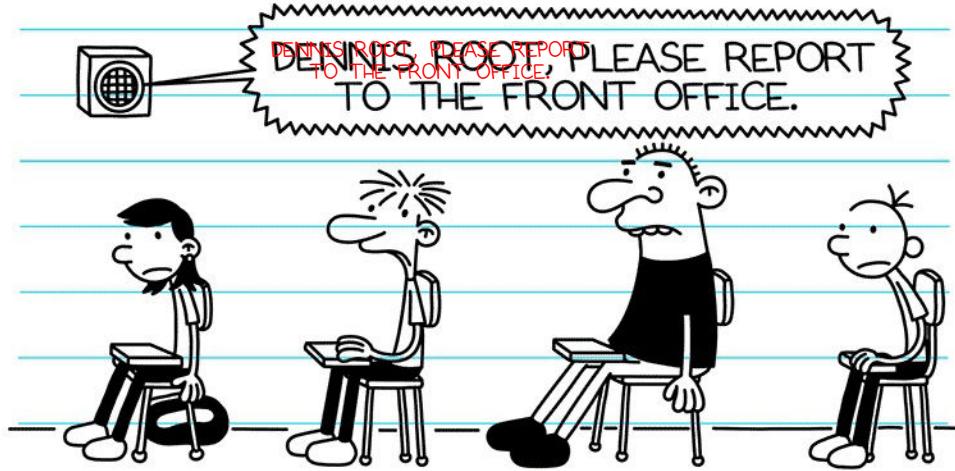


At lunch I could tell Rowley was really freaking out, so I reminded him that this "vandalism" thing was a lot of baloney and we didn't really do anything wrong. But Rowley said if he got a criminal record, he wouldn't be able to get into college or get a job and that his whole future would be ruined. It took a while, but eventually I convinced him to just stay cool and wait for the whole thing to blow over.



After lunch the POLICE came to the school, and Vice Principal Roy started calling kids down to the front office one by one. At first I was worried someone had identified us, but then I realized Vice Principal Roy was only calling the names of the worst troublemakers.

That's when I knew they didn't have any real evidence, and I started to relax.



At recess a kid named Mark Ramon told us what happened when he went in for questioning. The police had a machine that they said was a lie detector, and they claimed it was foolproof, so there was no point in fibbing.



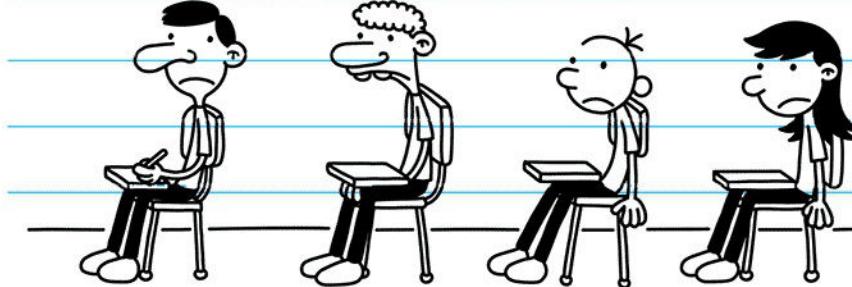
Mark said it was pretty obvious the "lie detector" was really just a photocopier. But whenever Mark said something the police didn't like, Sergeant Peters hit the "copy" button and out came a piece of paper.

He's lying.

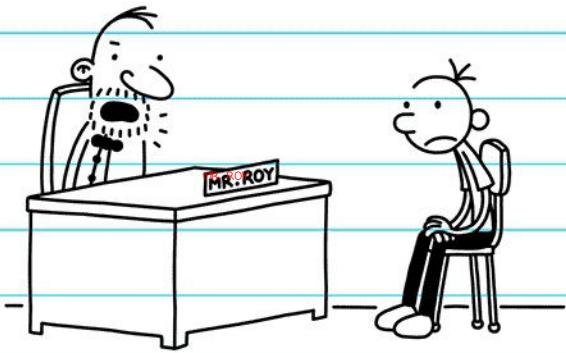
I guess the police eventually gave up, because
after lunch Vice Principal Roy stopped calling kids
down to the front office. So I finally feel like
we're off the hook.

Wednesday

When I got to school today, I thought the
green dye incident was totally behind me. So I
was pretty surprised when I heard MY name on
the loudspeaker during morning announcements.



I walked into Vice Principal Roy's office, and he told
me to take a seat. He said he knew I was one of
the "culprits" responsible for the green blobs and
asked me if I had anything to say for myself.



I looked around the room for the lie detector
machine, but I didn't see it, and I decided my
best move was to just keep quiet or maybe ask
for a lawyer. Then Vice Principal Roy pulled a
piece of paper out of the anonymous-tip box and
showed it to me.

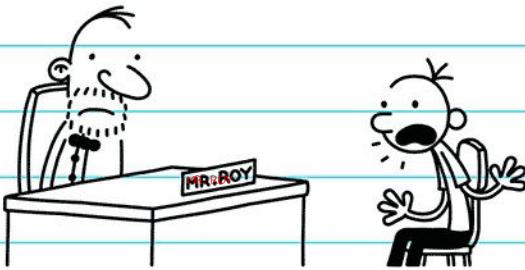
Me and Greg Heffley
vandalized the school.
vandalized the school.

All of a sudden, everything made sense.

Rowley confessed, but he kept himself anonymous.

I don't know if Rowley did it that way on purpose or if he's just a total doofus, but I'm guessing it's door number two.

I didn't see any reason to play dumb at that point, so I told Vice Principal Roy the whole story. I told him about the signs and how the rain made the poster board bleed and how we panicked and ran.



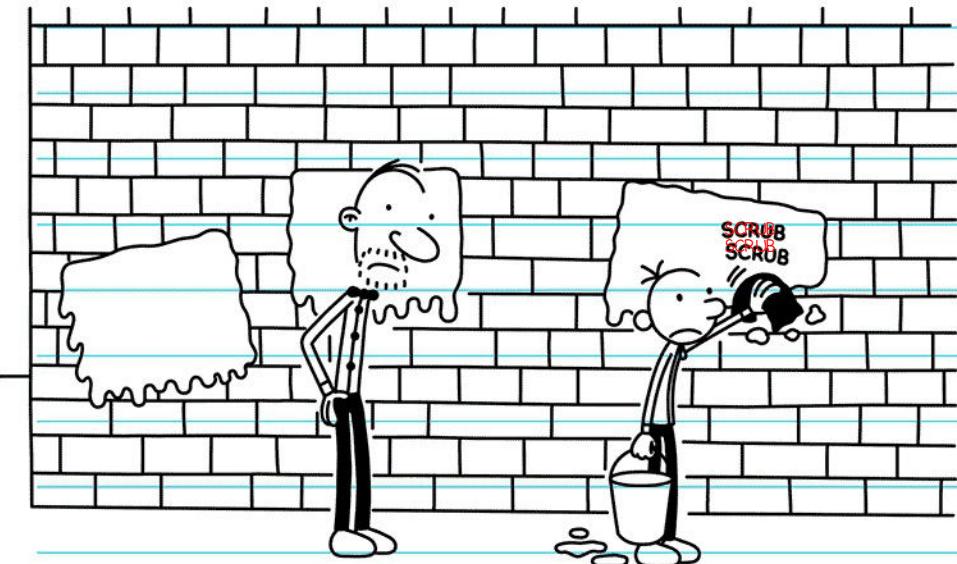
Vice Principal Roy thought about it for a while, and then he told me I should've come clean earlier. He said he was gonna have to give me a punishment to make sure I learned my lesson and said that after school I had to scrub the green dye off the wall with bleach.

Then he gave me a choice.

He said I could name my "co-conspirator" or I
could just take the punishment myself.

Let me tell you, that was not an easy one. I
really wanted to stick it to Rowley for writing my
name on that piece of paper, but I also didn't
see the point in both of us getting in trouble for
something that I basically dragged him into.

So I decided this time around I'd just take one
for the team.



And if Rowley gets into a good college or gets
some dream job later on, I hope he remembers to
thank me.

Thursday

It took me two hours to scrub the green dye off the wall yesterday, and it was hard work. I tried to get Vice Principal Roy to get me a few steel wool pads so we could speed things along, but he told me I needed to stick with the bleach.

I finally got home around 5:00 p.m., and there was a note on the front door. When I read it, I almost passed out.

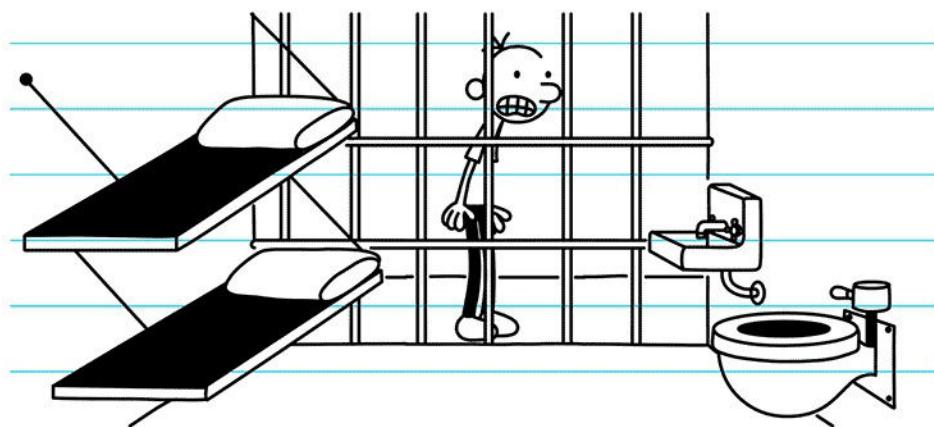


I couldn't BELIEVE Vice Principal Roy gave me up to the police. I thought we were gonna keep this between us and that once I served my punishment, it was over and done with.

All I know is, I can't go to jail. This year they took our class on a "Scared Straight" field trip to the local prison. They had these prisoners talk to us about what their lives were like in jail, and it really freaked everybody out.



But it wasn't the idea of being locked up that scared me. It was the fact that the toilets in the cells are right out in the open.



I have a HUGE issue when it comes to privacy.

It's bad enough at school when you come back

from the bathroom and everyone wants to know

all the details.



I've never actually broken the law before, but

when I was little I THOUGHT I did. They

used to have this thing at my supermarket called

the "Cupcake Club," where they gave a free

cupcake to everyone under eight years old. I had a

membership card and everything.

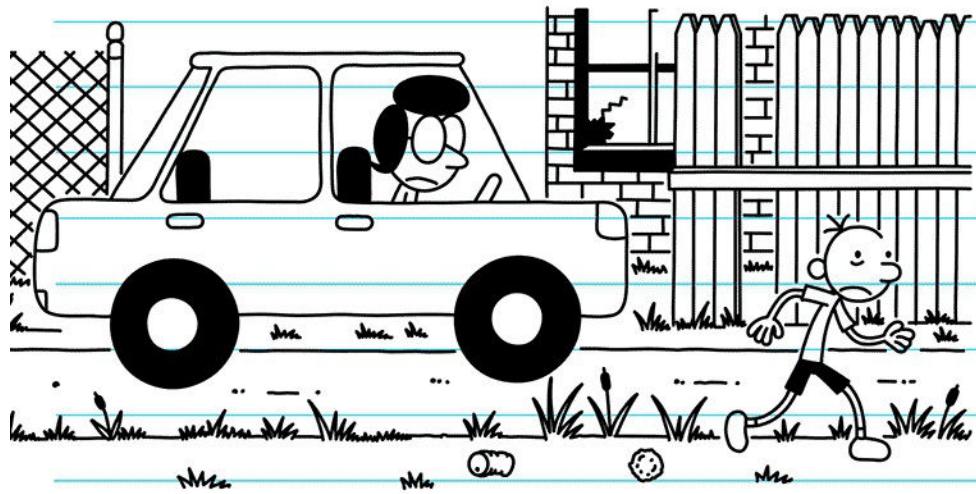


Well, I kept taking a cupcake even AFTER I
turned eight, and every time I did I thought
I was gonna get busted. Then this one time an
alarm went off at the EXACT moment I bit into
a strawberry frosted cupcake with sprinkles.



Looking back, I'm pretty sure what happened
was that someone accidentally tripped the fire
alarm or something, but I was convinced it was
for me and that the cops were gonna swoop in
and place me under arrest.

So I made a run for it. Luckily Mom found me
a few streets away, because as far as I was
concerned, I was a fugitive and had started my
life of crime.



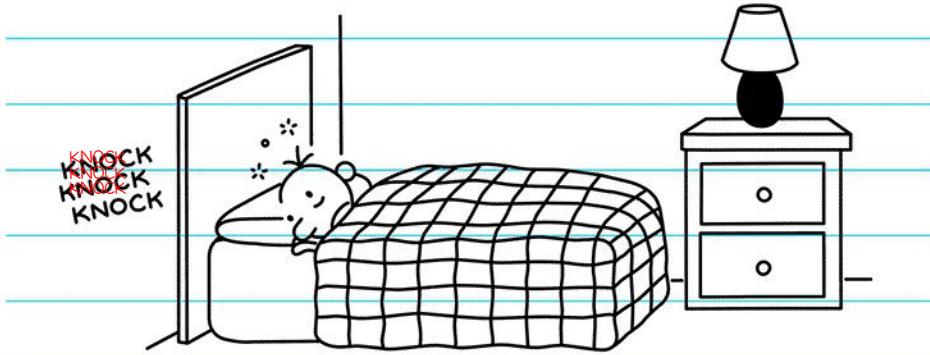
But this vandalism thing was a whole lot more
serious than the Cupcake Club episode. So when
Mom got home with Manny, I didn't tell her
about the note.

The person I was really worried about was DAD.
I haven't been on his good side lately. In fact,
this morning we had an incident I'm sure he's still
sore over.

I was asleep when I heard someone knocking on
the front door, but I didn't wanna get out of
bed to answer it.

I was hoping whoever was there would just go

away and come back later.

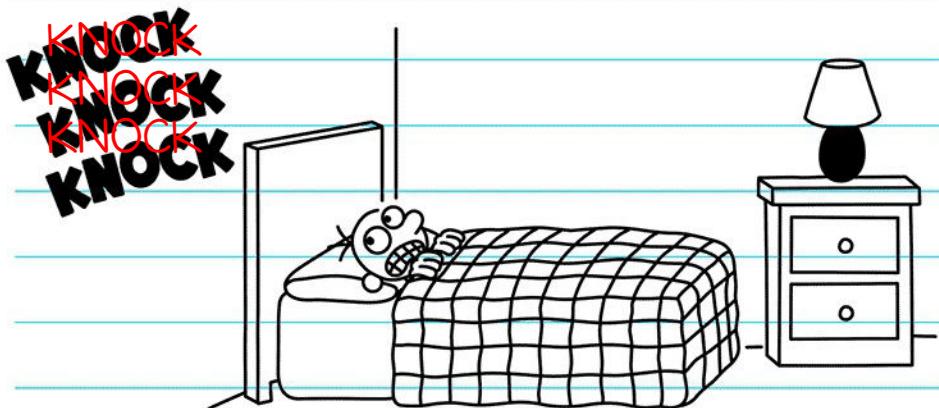


But the knocking got louder and louder, and

the person out there was acting like a maniac. I

buried myself in my covers and just prayed that

whoever it was wouldn't knock the door down.



I thought about calling the police, but then I

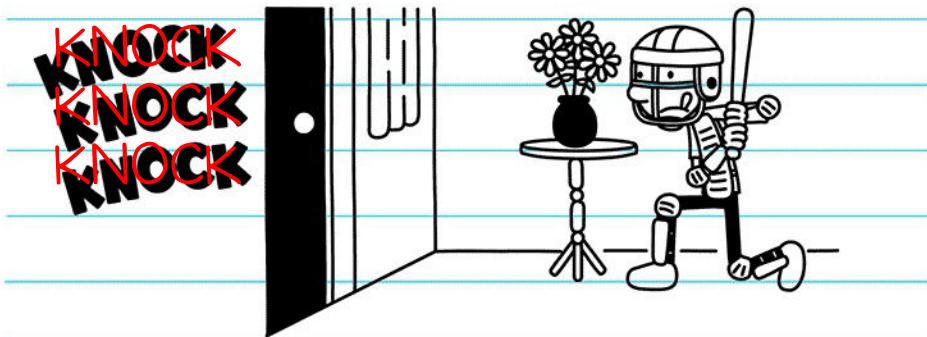
remembered I was a wanted man and that I'd

have to deal with this problem on my own.

Eventually I got brave enough to go downstairs

and grab a baseball bat out of the garage to

protect myself.



Then it got quiet, and I pulled the curtain

back to see if the person was still out there.

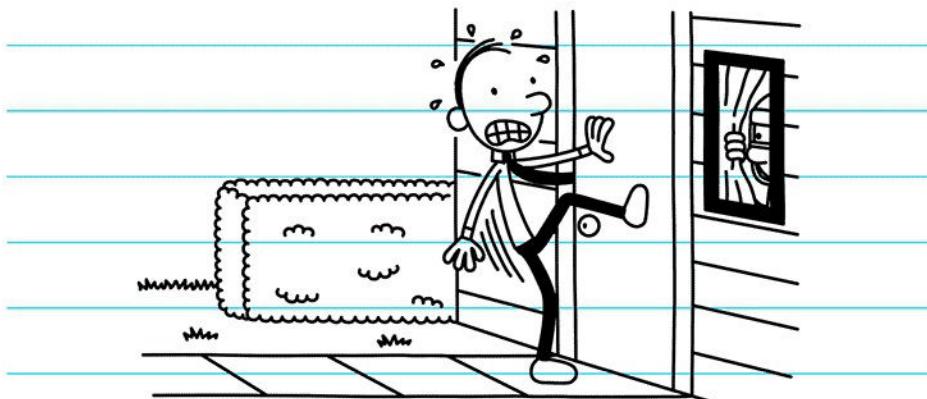
But I was surprised to see DAD standing on

the front step.

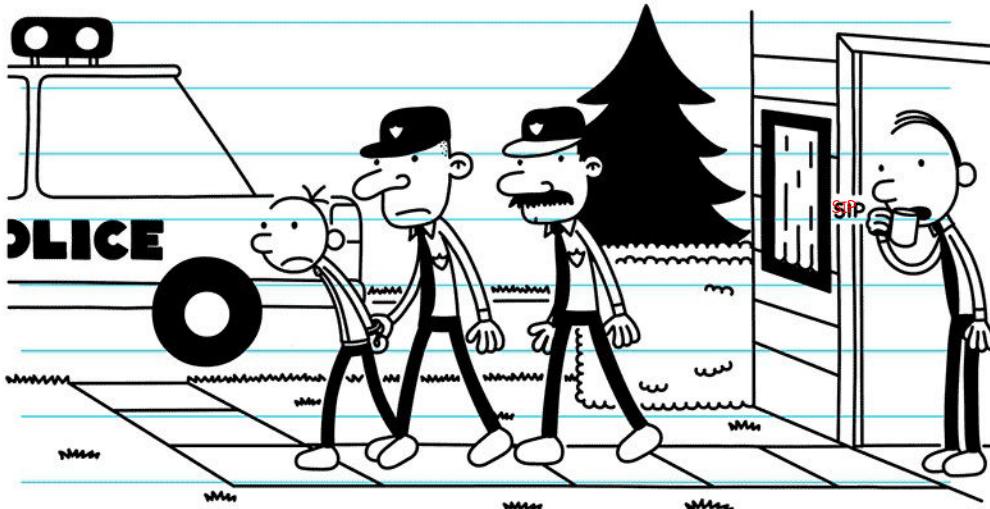
He had gotten his tie stuck in the door and had

left his keys inside, so he just needed me to open

it to let him loose.



So I'm sure Dad is ready to ship me off to
juvenile detention the first chance he gets. In
fact, if he's home when the police come, he'll
probably hand me over into their custody without
batting an eye.



It turns out I don't have to worry about Dad—
at least not for the next twenty-four hours.

It started snowing pretty hard around dinner
tonight, and Dad called Mom to say it was too
dangerous for him to drive home, so he was gonna
stay overnight in a hotel near his office.

That means I've got until tomorrow to figure out
my next move.

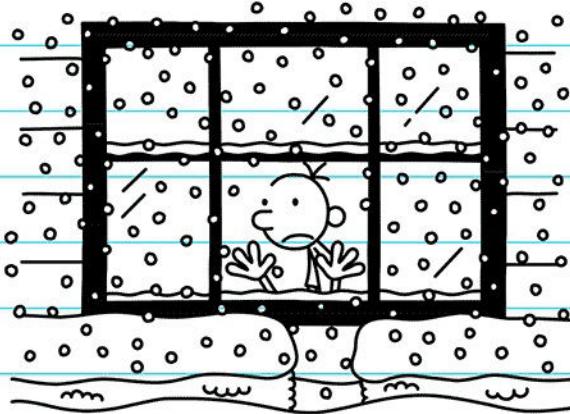
Friday

It looks like I'll have more time than I thought.

It snowed all night, and by the time I woke up

this morning the snow was three feet high. They

even canceled school.



Apparently we're in the middle of a BLIZZARD.

Rowley actually called last night to tell me we

were supposed to get a ton of snow, but I didn't

believe him.

Every year around this time, Rowley calls to

tell me there's a huge snowstorm coming, and

he's always wrong. His family taped one of those

holiday specials a few years ago, and the night

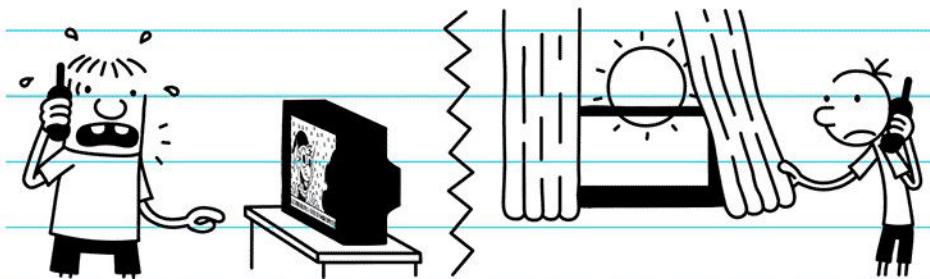
they recorded it a "severe weather" warning was

on the bottom of the screen.

So now the weather warning is a permanent part
of the recording.



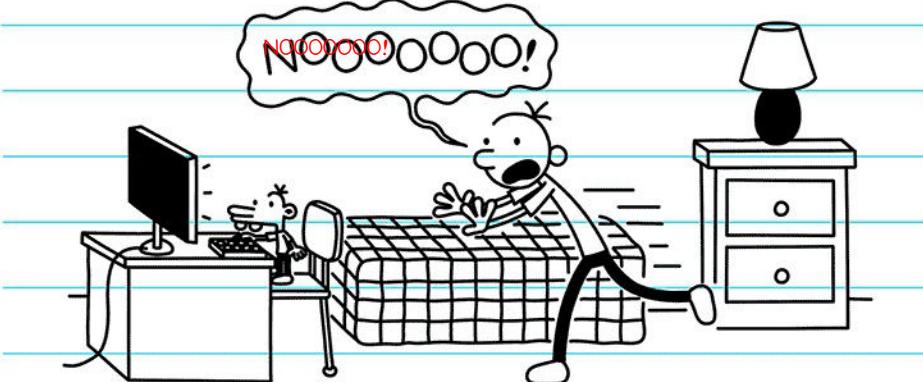
Every time Rowley watches that holiday special,
he calls me up and tells me a blizzard is coming.
I used to fall for it, but I stopped believing him
after he called me in a panic when he watched the
special over summer vacation.



So it looks like we're snowed in. Ordinarily I
would be really happy to be stuck in the house,
because it would give me a good excuse to play Net
Kitterz all day long.

But my account is locked thanks to Manny.

A few days ago Mom decided it would be a good idea to teach Manny how to use the computer, so she let him play on my Net Kritterz account while I was at school. By the time I got home, Manny traded in everything I ever earned in the game for tokens and then blew all of them in the Kritterz Kasino.



And the worst part is that Manny somehow figured out how to change my PASSWORD, so now I can't even play the game and earn my stuff back. For the past few days I've been getting e-mails from Net Kritterz telling me I need to get back on the site, but there's nothing I can do about it.

And if something doesn't change soon, I don't
think my Chihuahua is gonna make it.

TO: Heffley, Gregory
~~FROM: Net Kritterz~~
SUBJECT: SOS!

Dear Gregory-

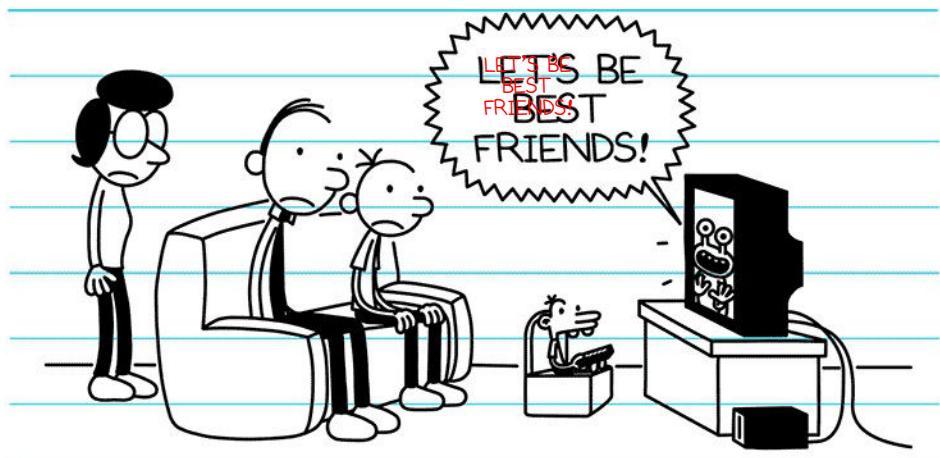
GREGORY'S LITTLE FRIEND
~~misses you!~~

Purchase more tokens
~~for your virtual pet~~
before it's too late!



This isn't the only password Manny has changed,
either. He figured out how to mess with the
settings on our TV and changed the "parental
lock" feature.

The parental lock thing is supposed to allow
parents to control what their kids can watch,
but Manny changed the settings so that the only
shows we can watch are HIS favorites. And he
won't give up the password, no matter how much
we try to bribe him.



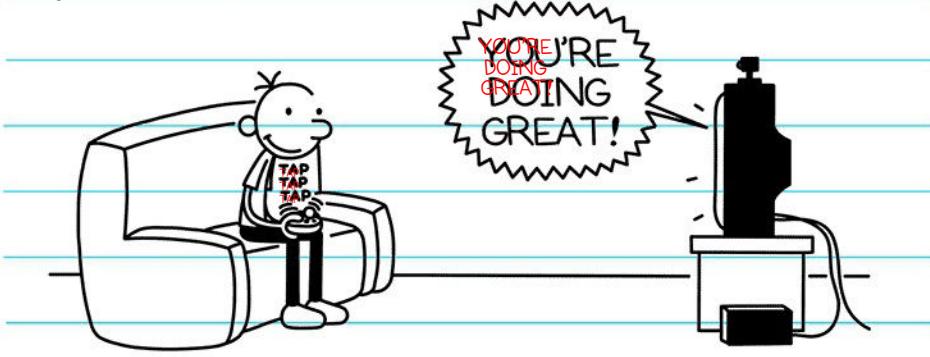
Luckily I can still play video games on the TV.

But Mom just got this exercise game, and now she
spends an hour a day using my system.



When it got cold a few weeks ago, Mom said she
wanted the whole family to use her exercise game
so we'd stay active during the winter. I tried
it out, but I don't really like to sweat while I'm
playing video games.

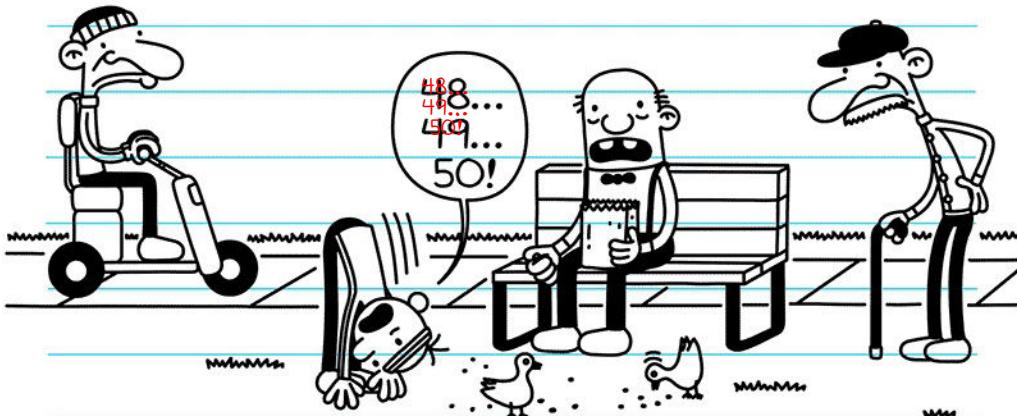
The problem is, the game keeps track of how
much you exercise each day, so Mom was on my case
about not using it. But then I figured out I
could use the controller instead of my body, and
within a few days I had all the high scores on
the game.



When Mom saw my high scores, she took it as a
personal challenge to beat them. I feel like I
should probably come clean and tell her I cheated,
but she's already lost five pounds trying to get
on the leaderboard, so I think I'll do her a favor
and keep my mouth shut.



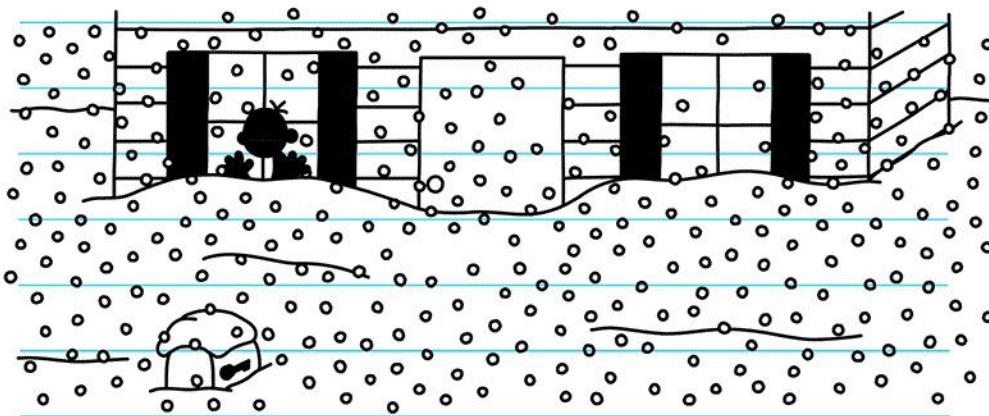
Mom always says I need to spend less time on
the couch and more time being active. But the
way I see it, I'm just conserving my energy for
later on. When all my friends are in their eighties
and their bodies are broken down, I'll just be
getting started.



This morning Mom wanted to turn on the weather
channel to see when the blizzard was going to
end, but Manny wasn't budging on the parental
lock, so she went into the kitchen and turned on
the radio.

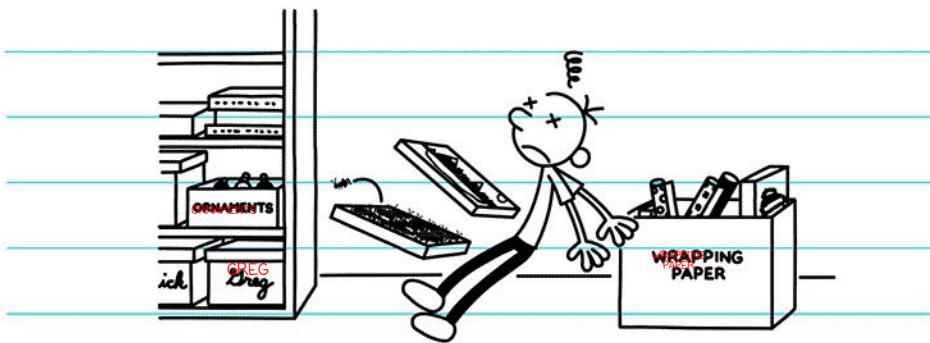
The weather report said we could expect another
foot and a half overnight, which means this storm
is gonna break all the records for our area by the
time it's finished.

On the one hand I was pretty happy, because
that meant I had some more time to figure out
what to do about the police situation. But I was a
little worried, too. The snow was already up to our
mailbox, and it wasn't showing any sign of stopping.



Mom wasn't stressed out about the snow, though.
She said it was a good opportunity to slow down
and relax and told me I should go down in the
storage room to get a puzzle.

But there was no WAY I was getting a puzzle
from the storage room. I have a big phobia
about puzzles, and that's because once when I
got one out of the basement, I opened the box
and it was full of CRICKETS that had made a
nest in there.



After lunch Mom said that even though we were
gonna miss school, she was gonna make sure we
didn't fall behind in our education. She said that
two hundred years ago all the kids went to school
in one classroom and that we could do the same
sort of thing in our house.

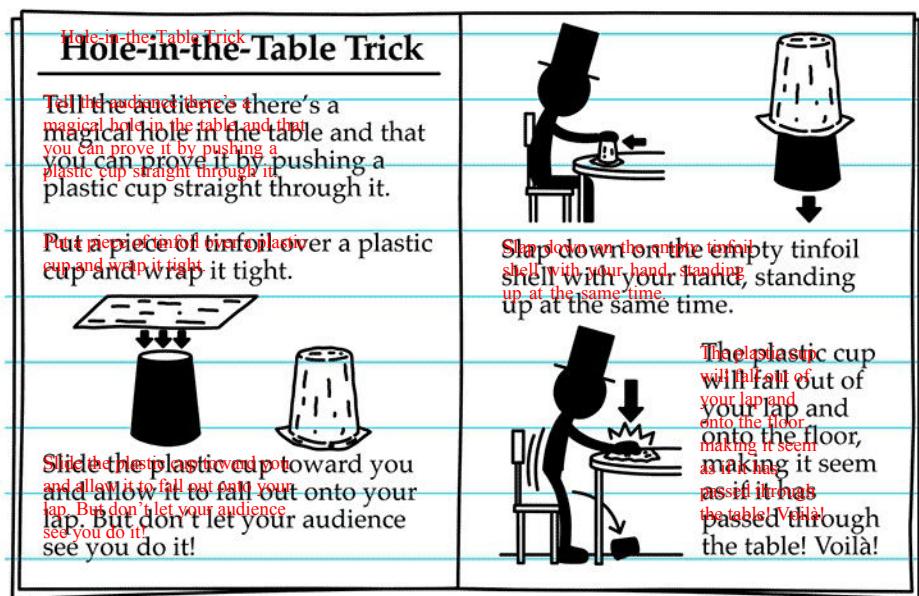
But if I was in the same classroom as a kid
Manny's age back in the old days, I would have
gone bananas.



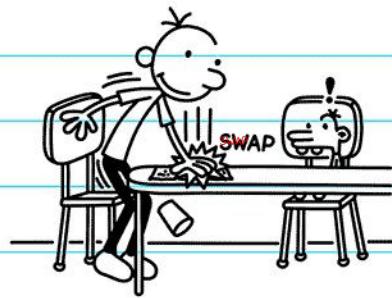
Saturday

Last night Mom brought up some stuff from the basement to keep us entertained. She found a magic set I got for my sixth birthday, and all the tricks were still in it.

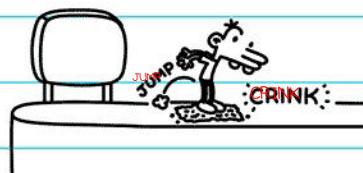
I never really played with the magic set because I couldn't read the directions when I got it. But today I read through the instructions and tried a few tricks out.



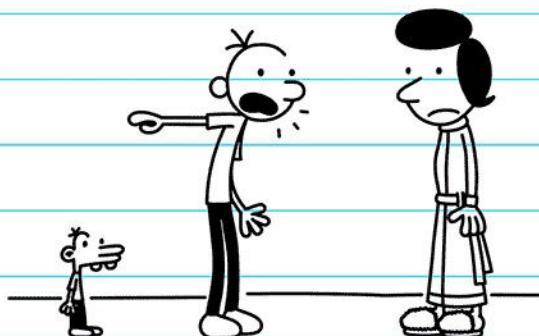
The first trick worked pretty well, and I had many believing there was actually a magical hole in the table.



I really wish I hadn't done that trick for
Manny, though. When Mom was in the bathroom
washing her face, Manny got her glasses off the
dresser and brought them into the kitchen to try
the trick himself.



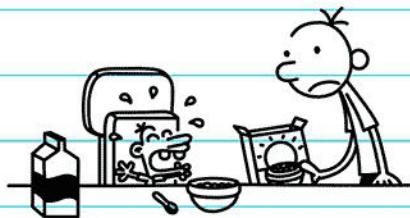
When Mom got out of the bathroom to look for
her glasses, I had to tell her what happened.



Mom is practically BLIND without her glasses, so
she said me and Rodrick were gonna have to help
her out with Manny until Dad came home and she
could get a new pair. Rodrick said he had some
urgent homework assignments to work on, and
he took off for the basement, leaving me to deal
with Manny.

I had to brush Manny's teeth and tie his shoes,
and then I had to make him breakfast. I poured
some milk in the bowl and then dumped Manny's
favorite cereal on top.

Well, Manny was upset that I poured the milk in
first, and he had a fit. He wanted a new bowl of
cereal since he said I did it in the wrong order.



But I didn't want to waste a perfectly good bowl
of cereal, so I refused to do it.

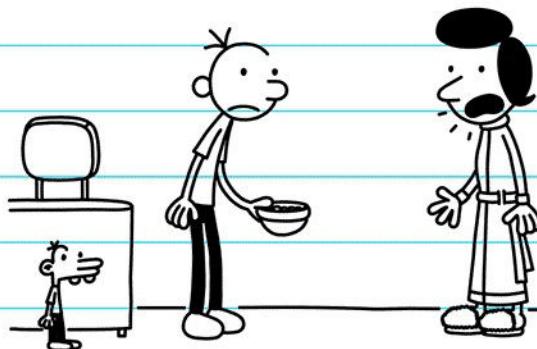
Mom asked what was going on, and I told her

Manny was just being ridiculous. I expected her to

back me up and tell Manny to just eat his cereal

the way it was, but Mom said she wouldn't eat it

with the milk poured in first, either.



You know, back in the old days adults were

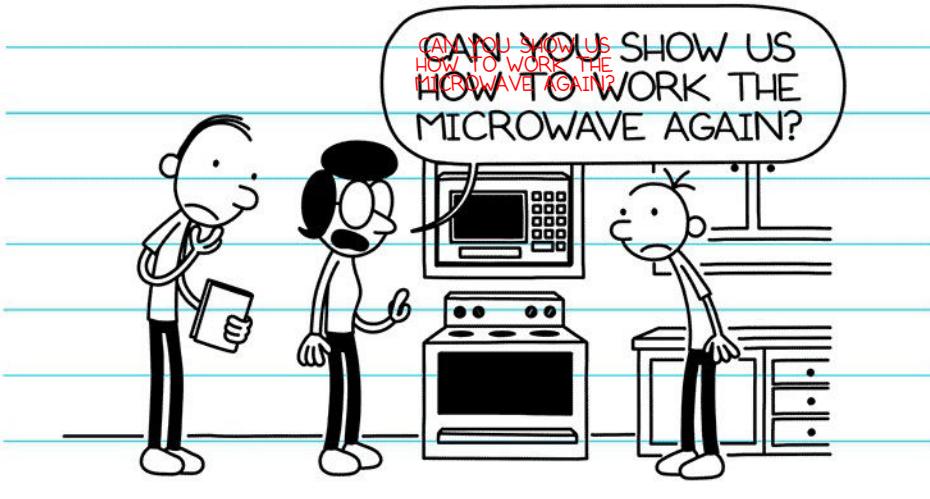
respected because of how wise they were, and

people went to them to help settle disputes.

FOR YOUR CRIMES, YOU
MUST REPAY YOUR
NEIGHBOR WITH THREE
HENS AND A ROOSTER.



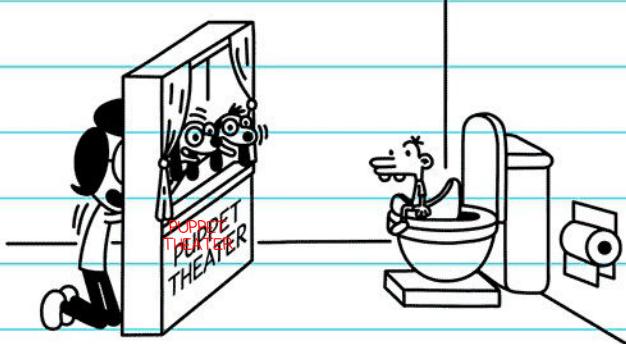
Nowadays it's a whole different world, and half
the time I wonder if grown-ups should really
be in charge.



Mom went upstairs to take a shower, and after she
was finished she yelled down and said there were
no towels in the bathroom. So I got one from the
linen closet and tried to give it to her. But the
handoff was tricky because she couldn't see and I
was shutting my eyes as tight as I could.



Later that morning Manny had to use the bathroom, and Mom said she needed me to go in there and keep him "entertained." But that's where I put my foot down, because I knew what she had in mind. Manny used to make Mom read to him while he sat on the potty, but it just escalated from there.

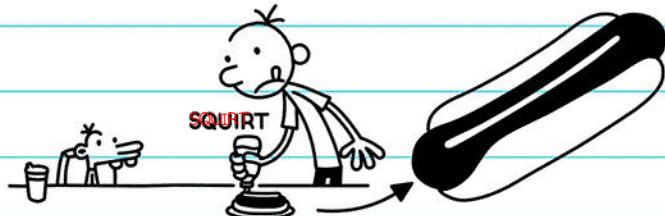


After Manny was finished in the bathroom, Mom said I needed to make him lunch. She said he likes hot dogs, so I got one out of the refrigerator and put it in the microwave.

Mom told me Manny is really finicky about the way his mustard goes on his hot dog, and she said he likes a straight line right down the middle.

I didn't want a repeat of Manny's breakfast meltdown, so I tried to make the line of mustard as perfectly straight as possible.

I was pretty sure I got it right.



Manny had another temper tantrum, though.

I thought the line must not have been straight enough, so I got a napkin and wiped the mustard off to give it another try. But I guess Manny thought that hot dog was tainted, so I had to microwave another one.

This time I tried to be extra careful with the mustard, but when I showed it to Manny, it was the same exact result as before.



Mom asked me to describe how I was doing it, and I told her I was making a straight line of mustard along the length of the hot dog.

But Mom told me Manny likes his line of mustard

ACROSS the hot dog, and when I did it like

that, he finally calmed down.



See, this is the kind of nonsense I'm dealing with

right now. I've seen a lot of movies where a kid

my age finds out he's got magical powers and then

gets invited to go away to some special school.

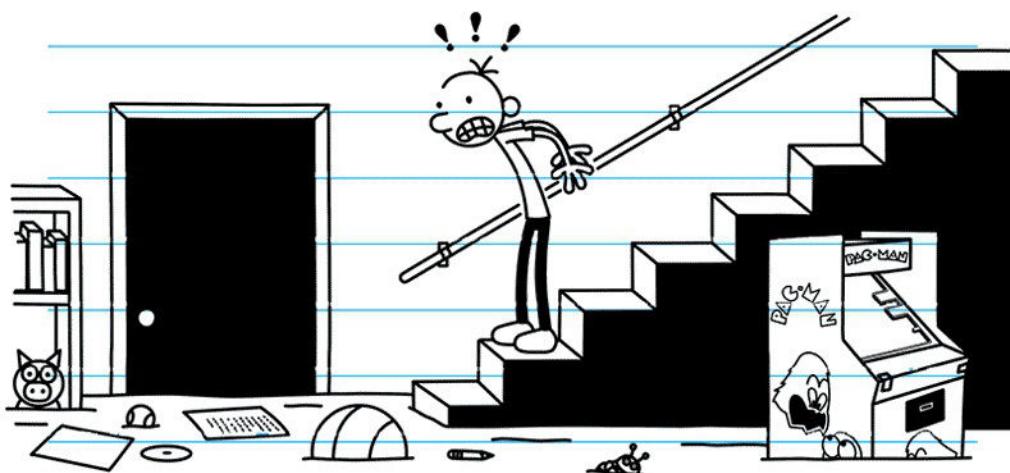
Well, if I've got an invitation coming, how would

be the PERFECT time to get it.



Sunday

This morning at 10:00, Mom told me to go
downstairs and wake up Rodrick. But when I
walked down the basement steps, I could tell
something was seriously wrong.



There was at least a FOOT of water covering
the basement floor. I guess all that snow was
too much for the ground to hold and it caused
the basement to flood.

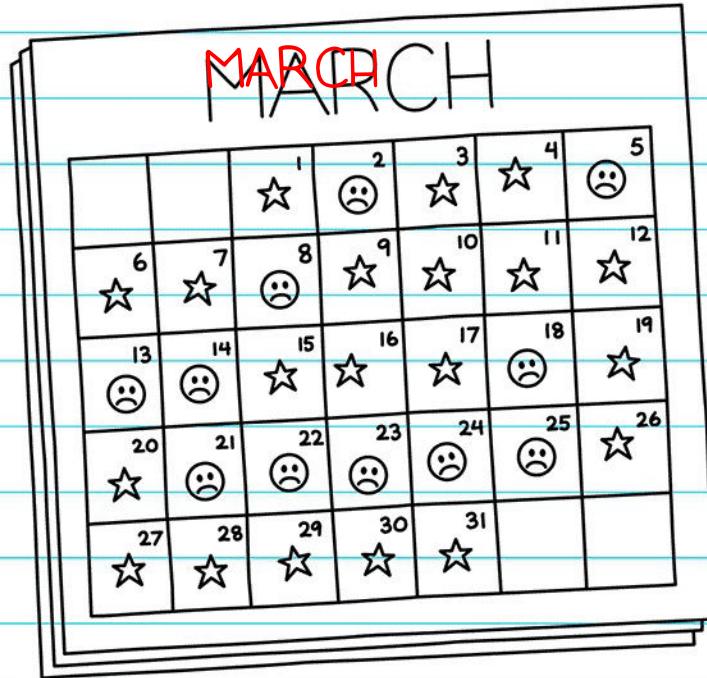
I told Mom to come downstairs quick, and when
she did, she was REALLY upset that a bunch of
our stuff was ruined. But to be honest with you,
there were some things floating in the water that
I didn't MIND getting wrecked.

Mom keeps a "memory box" for each of us kids,
and mine was on the bottom shelf, so it was
mostly underwater. One of the things that was in
the box was my bed-wetting calendar from when I
was eight years old.

Let me just say in my defense that there was
a perfectly good reason why I was wetting the
bed back then. In those days I drank a lot of
water before I went to sleep at night, and then
I'd have these crazy dreams that made me need
to go.



I finally figured out what the issue was, but not
before I got five frowny-face stickers in a row.

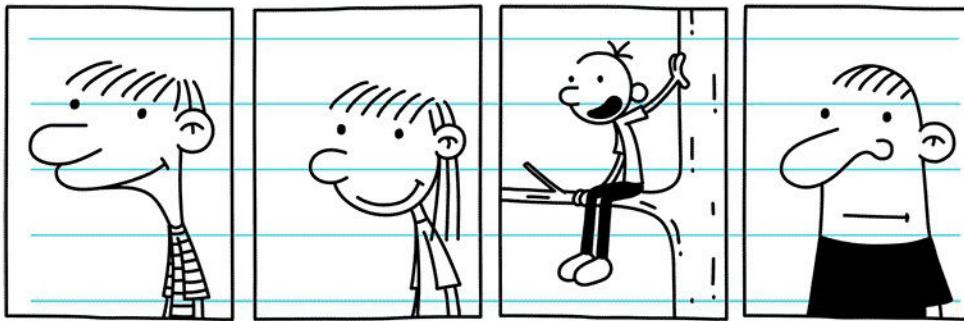


Some of the yearbooks from my elementary school

days were soaked, but I didn't mind that, either.

My fifth-grade yearbook was in my memory box,
and that's the one where we were allowed to
choose whatever kind of background we wanted for
our school picture.

I was the only kid in the whole school who chose
"Natural Setting."



Haverty,
Jordan

Heath,
Olivia

Huffley,
Gregory

Henry,
Jared

I knew I should've just gone with a regular background, but Mom talked me into it when the forms came home from school.

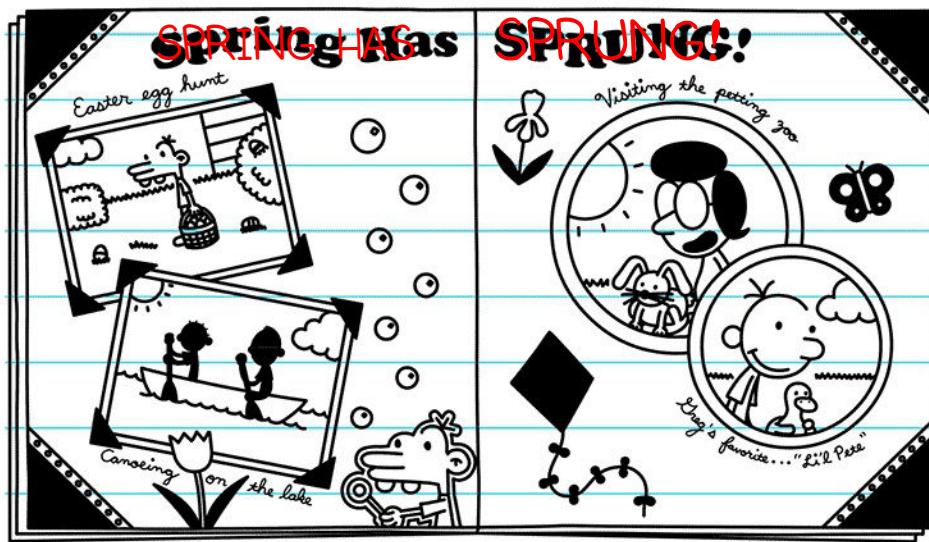


I don't really understand why Mom was so upset. Most of the stuff that got ruined was in the basement for a reason, and that's because we never USE it. One of the things Mom was really sad about was a "spoon carousel" Gammie gave us five or six years ago.

I think we were supposed to collect a spoon from
every country in the world, but we only got up
to Canada.



I did feel pretty bad for Mom when she found
out one of the family photo albums got ruined. A
few years ago Mom got into scrapbooking, and
she spent a lot of time cutting out pictures and
doing these really fancy photo pages.

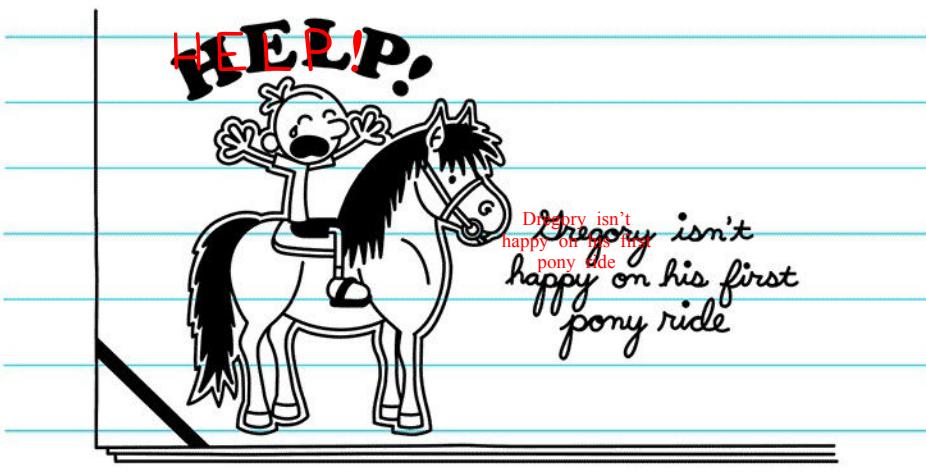


But there's one page in that album I didn't like,

because Rodrick always teases me about it. It's

the one where I had a breakdown before a pony

ride at the state fair.

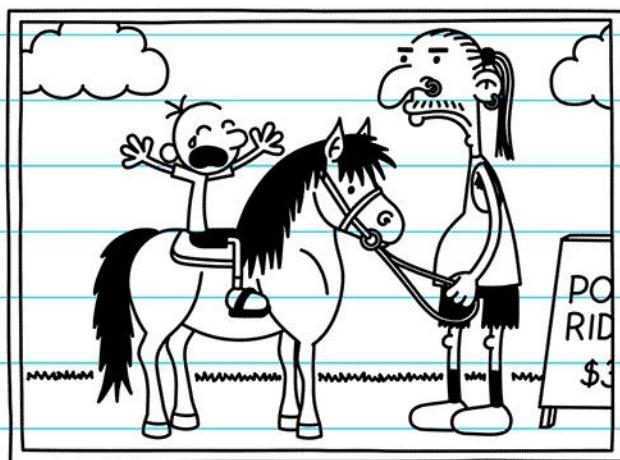


Rodrick always says I was scared of the pony,

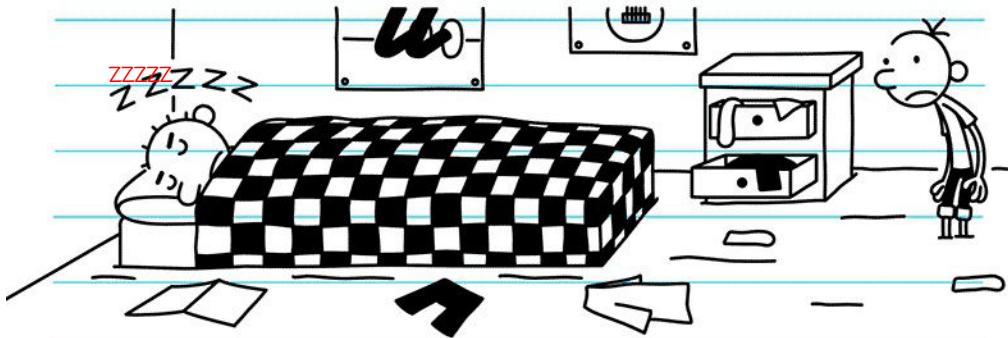
but that's not true at all. I was scared of the

guy HANDLING the pony, but Mom cropped

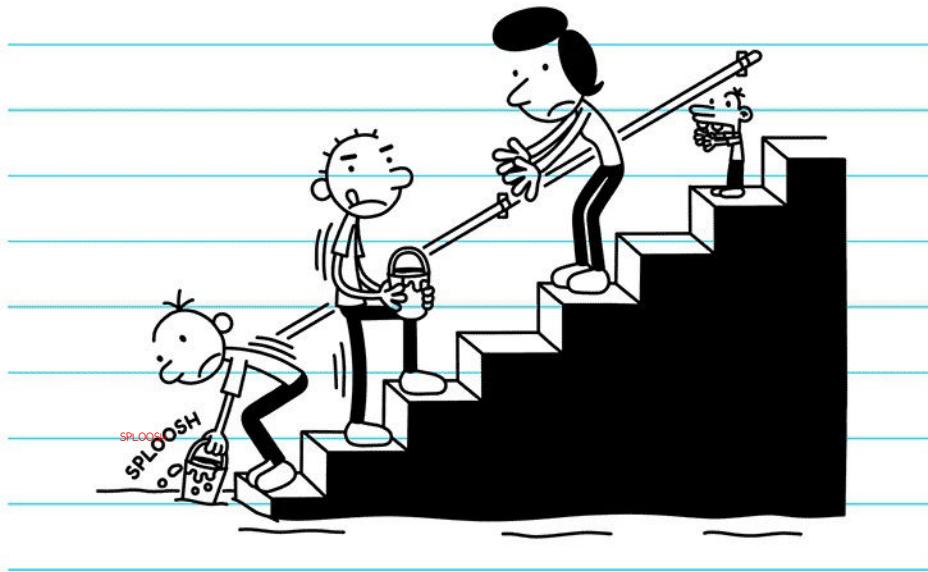
HIM out of the picture.



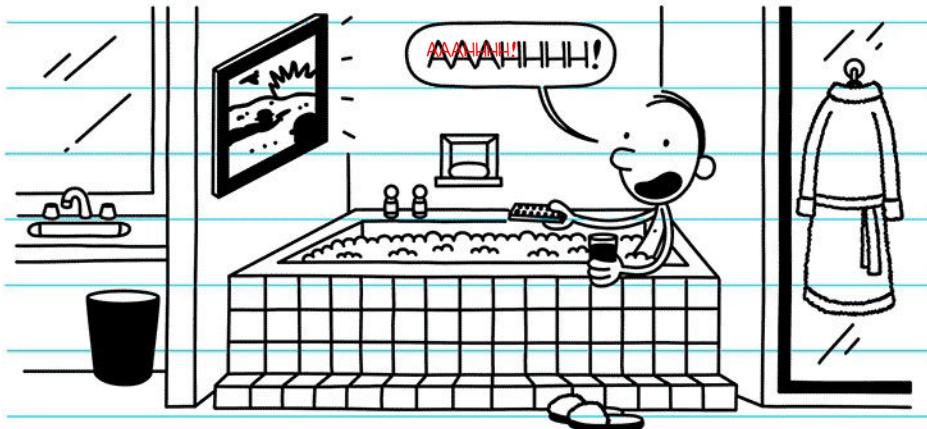
Speaking of Rodrick, the flooding didn't seem to bother him at all. In fact, I'll bet if I hadn't woken him up he would've kept sleeping even if his bed floated up the stairs and out of the house.



The rest of the day was pretty awful. The water in the basement kept getting higher, so we had to make a bucket relay line with some of Manny's sand pails.



Dad called from his hotel room to check in on
us, and Mom told him what happened. Dad said
he was really sorry he wasn't home to help, but
something tells me he's OK with the way things
worked out for him.

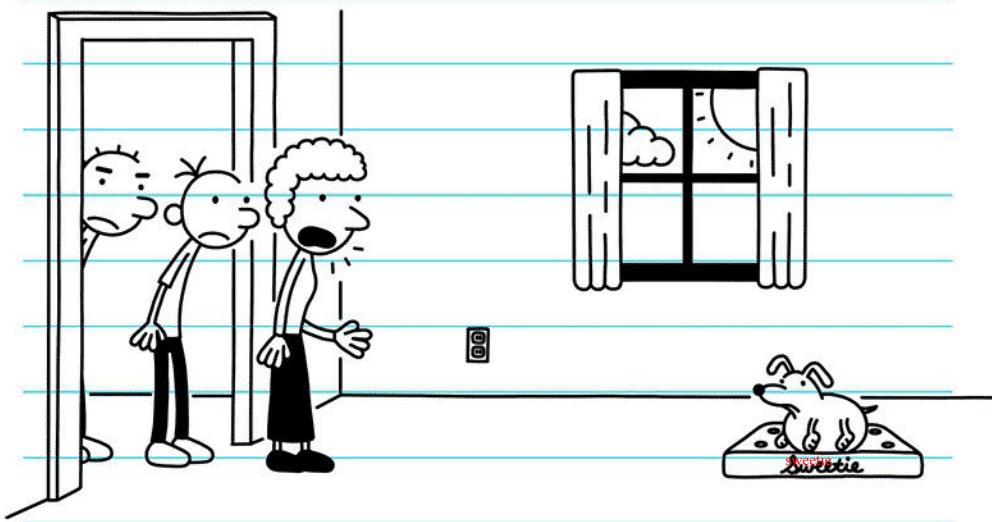


I would LOVE to trade places with Dad right
now, because he's got a clean room and a king-size
bed all to himself.

Mom told me and Rodrick that since the basement
was flooded, we're gonna have to share MY room.
She said it would be good for both of us to get
used to having a "roommate," because it was practice
for college.

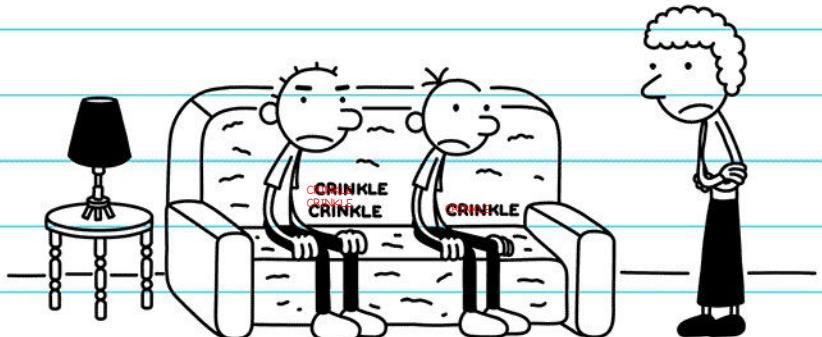
Me and Rodrick shared a room this summer for
a weekend. We had to spend a few days at
Gramma's while Mom and Dad took Manny to a
kiddie amusement park. Gramma has a guest room,
so I figured one of us would sleep on her couch
and the other would get the guest bed.

But Gramma said the guest room was "occupied," so
we couldn't sleep there. She'd given the whole room
to Sweetie, the dog we gave her. But you'd hardly
know he's the same dog, because Gramma feeds him
so much he looks like a tick that's about to pop.

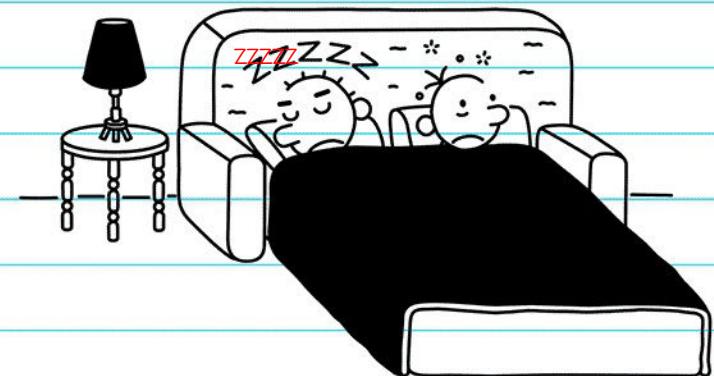


Gramma said me and Rodrick could sleep together
on the pullout couch she has in the living room.

But that couch is covered in plastic because she
doesn't trust us kids not to spill something on it.



So me and Rodrick spent a whole weekend sleeping
side by side on a queen-size pullout couch. I'd wake
up every morning in a pool of sweat, and I don't
even know if it was Rodrick's or mine.



I'm pretty sure that in prison you sleep in bunk
beds, so if they lock me up at least I'll have
a better sleeping arrangement than I did at
Gramma's this summer.

Monday

After twelve hours of sharing a room with Rodrick, I'm thinking of marching down to the police station and turning myself in. Because there's no punishment they can dream up that could be worse than what I'm dealing with at home.

Last night Rodrick brought a bunch of his stuff from the basement and put it in my room. This is supposed to be a temporary living situation, but Rodrick is treating it like a permanent one.

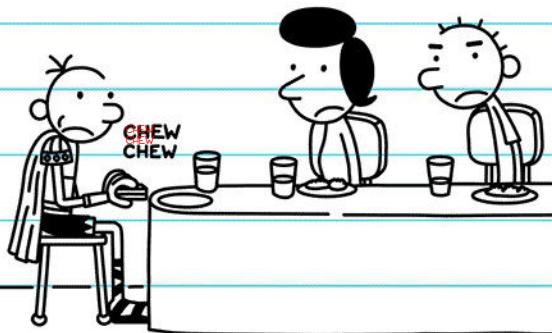


Rodrick's got his drum set on stacks of books to air it out, and his dirty clothes are EVERYWHERE.

This morning when I was getting dressed, I put
on a pair of boxer shorts that was sitting on my
dresser. But by the time I realized it was actually
Rodrick's dirty underwear, it was too late.



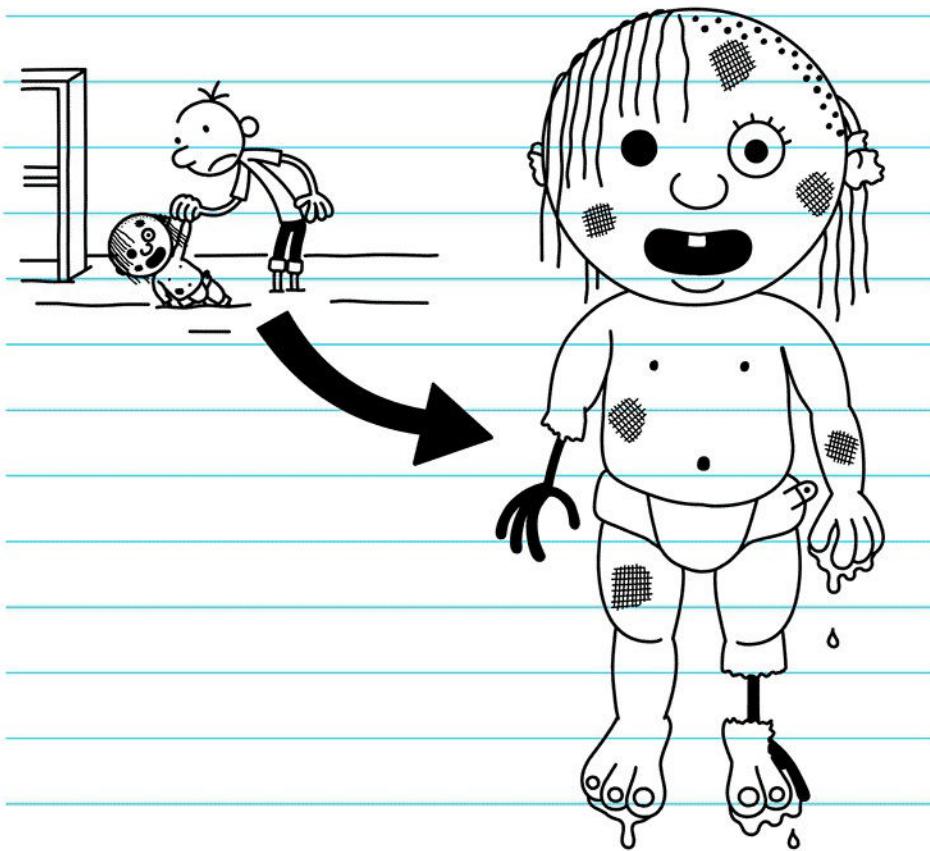
So until Mom did a load of laundry, I wore my
Halloween costume. It was uncomfortable, but at
least I knew for sure it was CLEAN.



This afternoon we were down in the basement
seeing if there was anything we could salvage
from the flood.

I noticed something strange floating in the water
in the storage room, and when I picked it up I
almost passed out.

At first I thought it was a real baby, but then
I realized it was my long-lost doll, Alfrendo.



After all this time, Alfrendo wasn't looking too
good. I think a mouse must've gotten to him, and
spending a day in the water didn't help, either.

But in a weird way I was kind of glad to see him.

I was living with the guilt of losing Alfredo for

all these years, and now I found out he was in

the house all along.

In fact, I couldn't figure out how he wound up

in the storage room. But I realized it HAD to be

Dad. He was never really on board with the whole

doll idea, and I'm sure he got rid of Alfredo

when I wasn't looking.



I figured I'd confront Dad about kidnapping my

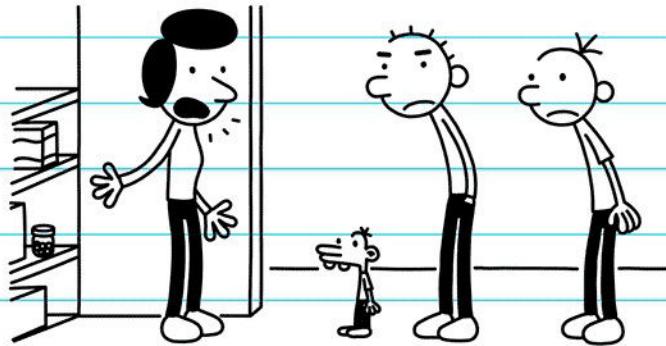
doll when he got home, but at the moment I had

bigger things to worry about. The first one was

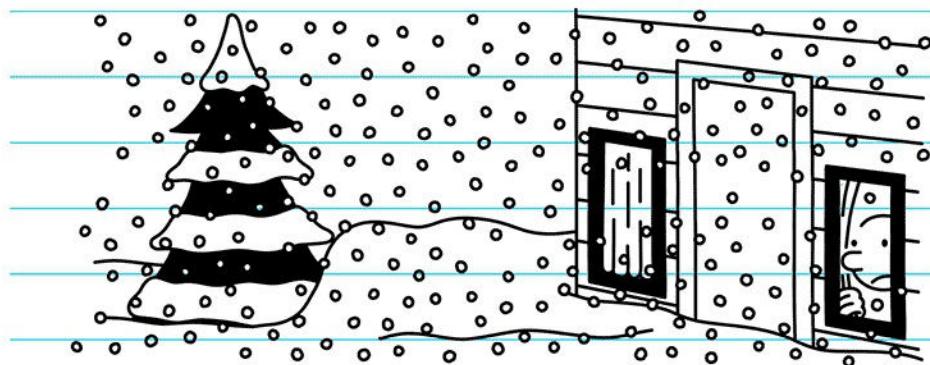
what I was gonna EAT.

Over the past few days we've been running low on
food, and if this snow doesn't melt quick, I don't
know WHAT we're gonna do.

Mom was supposed to go grocery shopping the day
the blizzard hit, so we have less food than usual
to begin with. She said we're gonna have to start
"rationing" until she can go back out.



That could be a while, though. The snow is piled
up three feet high against the front door, so
we're basically trapped inside.

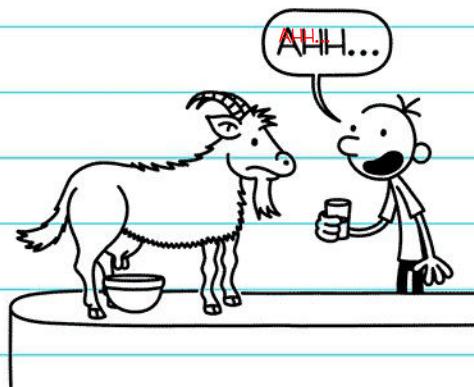


And Rodrick is spoiling the food we DO have
left. He drinks milk straight from the carton, so
there's no way I'm gonna touch that now.



I'm actually kind of mad at Dad, because if it
wasn't for him, we'd have all the milk we wanted.

A few years ago I won a contest at the state
fair where you had to guess how much a baby goat
weighed, and the winner got to take it home. I
guessed the weight right, but Dad wouldn't let me
have the goat. And if we had that goat, I could
have a glass of milk whenever I wanted.



Mom found some burritos in the back of the
freezer last night and made them for dinner,
but they tasted funny, so I wouldn't eat them.

Mom said I needed to eat SOMETHING, so I
had ketchup as my main course.



Manny didn't seem to mind the burritos, but he'll
eat just about ANYTHING as long as he's got
his favorite condiment on it. When Sweetie lived
with us, he used to chew on the furniture, so we
sprayed it with this stuff called "Bitter Apple
Spray" that dogs can't stand the taste of.



But for whatever reason, Manny LOVES the taste of Bitter Apple Spray, and to this day he uses it on almost everything he eats.



Speaking of Sweetie, I got so hungry today that I was seriously thinking about eating some of the dog treats I found in the back of our pantry.

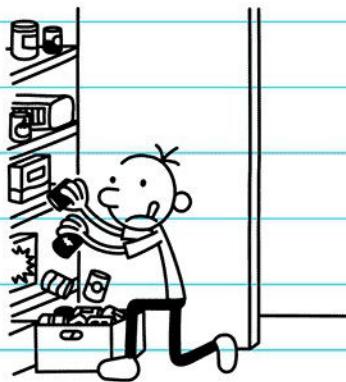


But Mom told me they have different standards for making dog food than they do for people food, so that stopped me from eating any, at least for now.

I can't believe I'm practically starving here
while Sweetie is living the good life at Gramma's,
enjoying her home-cooked meals.



I only have myself to blame about the food
situation, though. We had a bunch of canned
food until a week before Thanksgiving, but then
I gave almost ALL of it to the Food Drive at
school. I got rid of the things I don't like to
eat, like yams and beets.



But I'll bet whoever got our rejects is having a

pretty good laugh about it right now.



I was starting to wonder whether toothpaste had

any nutritional value when I remembered I actually

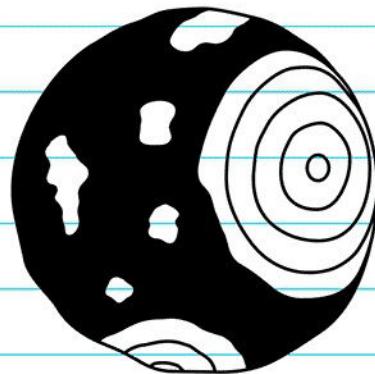
DID have something edible in my desk drawer.

When Dad wouldn't let me take the goat home

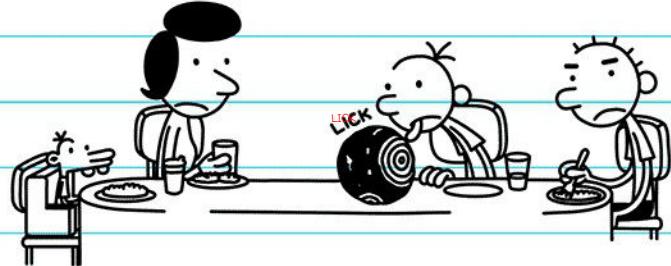
from the state fair, Mom got me a giant

gobstopper to make up for it. I spent the whole

fall working on that thing.

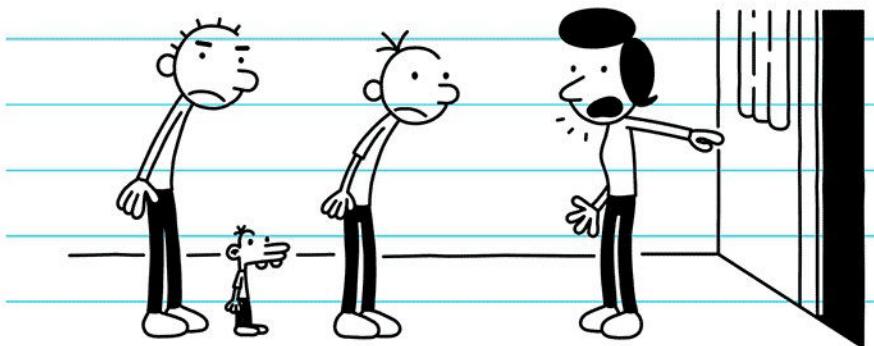


I figure if we DO run out of food in the house,
that gobstopper will help me survive at least
another week.

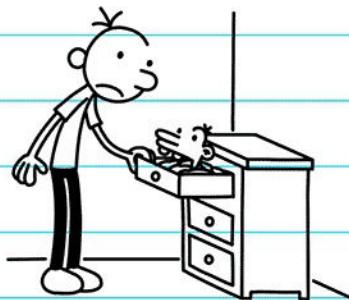


Tonight the electricity cut out for a few seconds
and then came back on. Mom said there was a lot
of ice on the power lines and we were probably
gonna lose our electricity at some point.

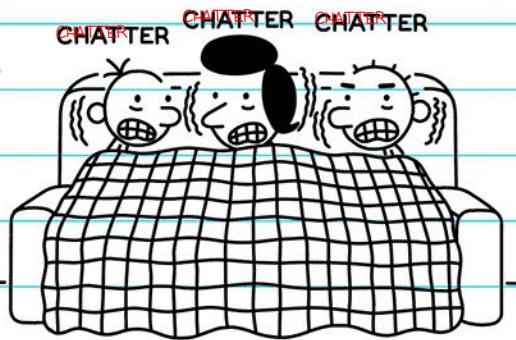
She said if that happened, we needed to keep the
freezer door closed so the food inside didn't thaw
out and get ruined. She also said we'd need to
keep the doors to the house shut so we didn't lose
too much heat.



Manny got REALLY upset, and whenever he gets scared he hides in his room. One time when Manny was younger, I told him a witch lived in our basement, and he got really spooked. He went missing for a few hours, but we eventually tracked him down to his sock drawer.



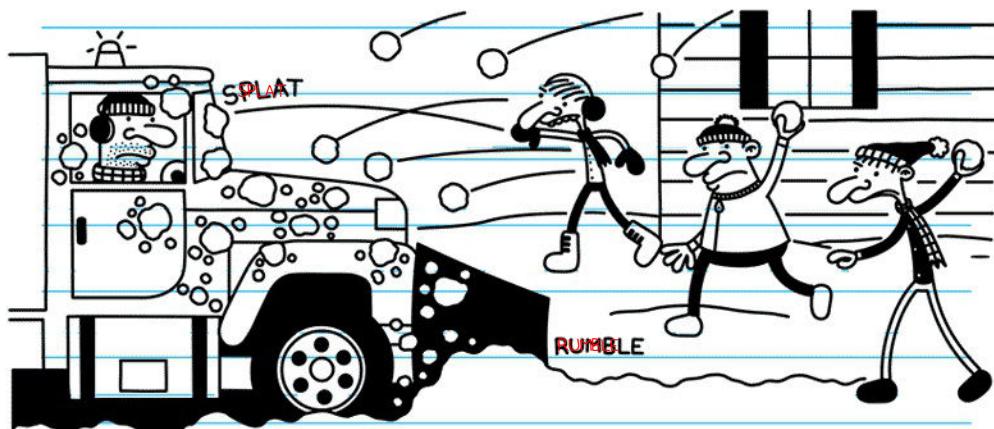
Mom was right about the electricity, because fifteen minutes after her prediction, the power cut off and didn't come back on. She tried to call the electric company, but her cell phone battery was dead. Every hour the temperature dropped another two or three degrees, and we had to get a blanket to keep ourselves warm.



Manny just stayed in his room the whole time,
and I'm sure he was scared out of his mind. I was
actually pretty worried myself.

When you're used to having electricity and then all
of a sudden it's taken away, you're basically just
one step away from being a wild animal. And with
no phone or TV, we were totally cut off from the
outside world.

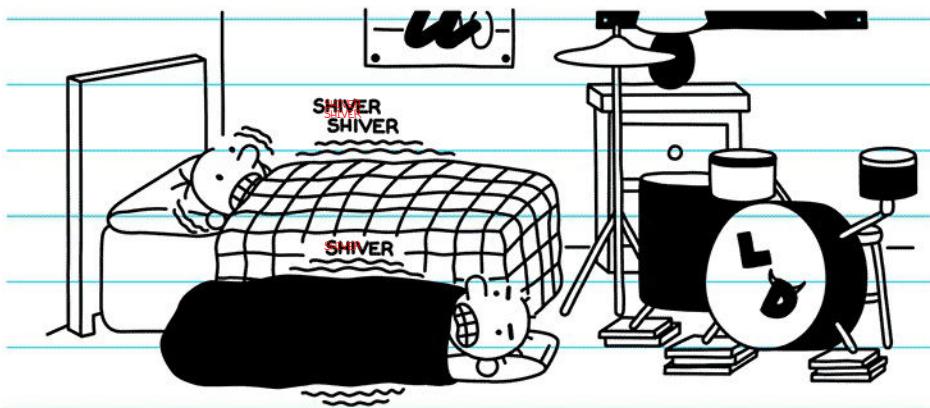
I would've felt a lot better if our street was
plowed, because then we'd at least be connected to
the rest of civilization. But I'm sure the snowplow
guy is gonna come to our street last, because every
time he comes up our hill he gets ambushed.



There really wasn't any point in staying awake, so
I just went to bed, and Rodrick followed me into
the room a few minutes later.

It was freezing cold, and I remembered a story
I read in a magazine about these two guys who
were stranded out in the wilderness and had to
share a sleeping bag to conserve body heat.

I looked over at Rodrick and thought about it
for a second, but then I decided my dignity was
more important to me than staying alive.

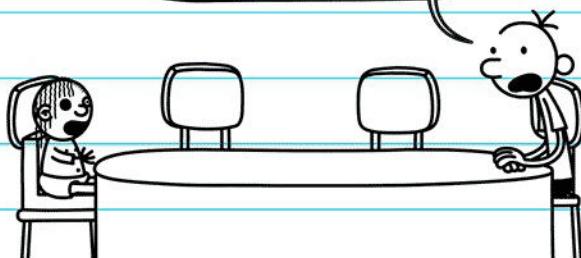


All I can say is, prison's gotta be a lot better
than THIS. I'm pretty sure they guarantee you a
warm cell and three meals a day, so when the police
do come back, believe me, I'll be ready to go.

Tuesday

When I woke up today, I realized I'd somehow lost Alfrendo again, but I wasn't too upset about it. I was pretty happy to be reunited with my doll yesterday, but it hasn't been easy picking up where we left off.

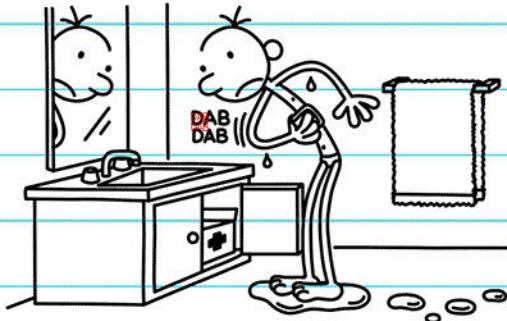
SO...WHAT'S
BEEN GOING ON
WITH YOU?



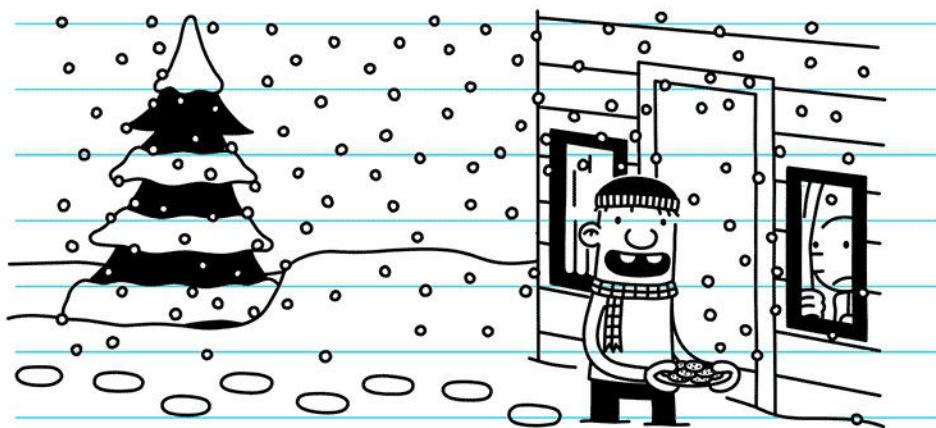
This morning I noticed it was snowing a lot less, but the electricity was still out, and Mom said we were just gonna have to adapt to our new circumstances until the snow melted.

She said I hadn't showered in a few days and I couldn't live like a "savage." I promised Mom I'd bathe TWICE a day once the electricity came back on, but she made me go upstairs to take a shower anyway.

The water was freezing cold, and the only towel
in the bathroom was one Mom used yesterday. So
I had to dry myself with some gauze I found in
the cabinet under the sink.

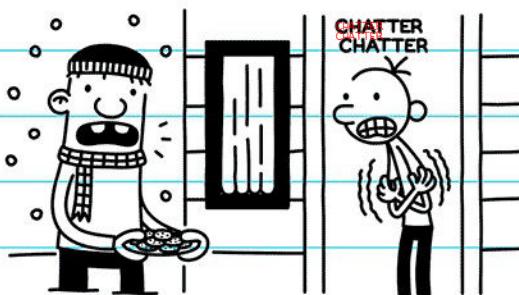


After I got dressed, I heard a knock on
the front door. I thought maybe the police
had finally come to take me away, and I felt
dizzy. But when I looked out the window I saw
ROWLEY standing there, and he had something
in his hands.



I thought Rowley had come to RESCUE us. But
when I opened the door, he told me he brought us
Christmas cookies, and then he asked me if I wanted
to come outside and play. I told him he was out of
his MIND and asked him how his family was surviving
without any electricity, but he looked confused.

Rowley said his family still had electricity and
everyone else on the street did, too. And sure
enough, I could see people's Christmas lights on
up and down the street.

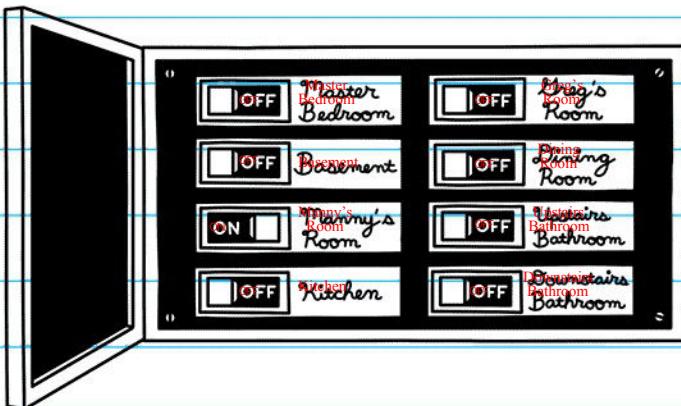


Then Rowley asked me if I wanted to make a
snowman. I slammed the door shut, but only after
I helped myself to a few cookies.

I told Mom what Rowley said about the electricity,
and she told me to go down to the basement to see
if there was something wrong with our fuse box.

When I opened it up and looked at the circuit

breaker, here's what I found—



The only switch that was ON was the one for

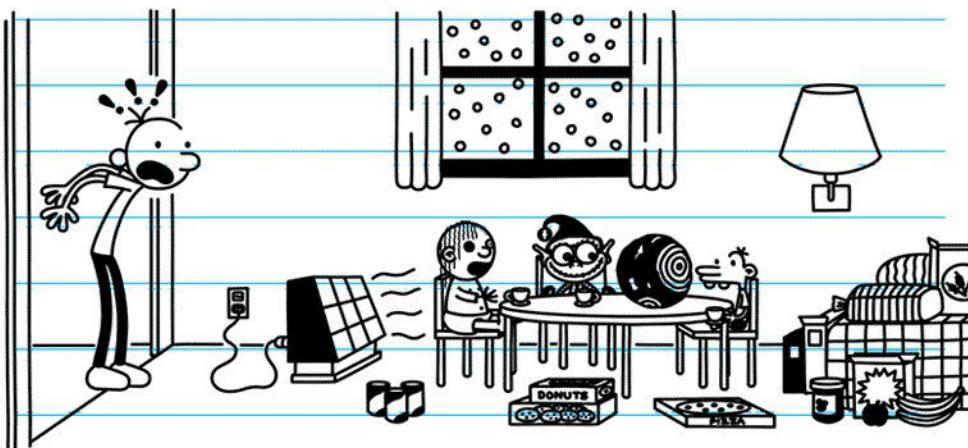
Manny's room.

I ran upstairs, and when I opened Manny's door

I got a blast of heat. Manny was sitting there

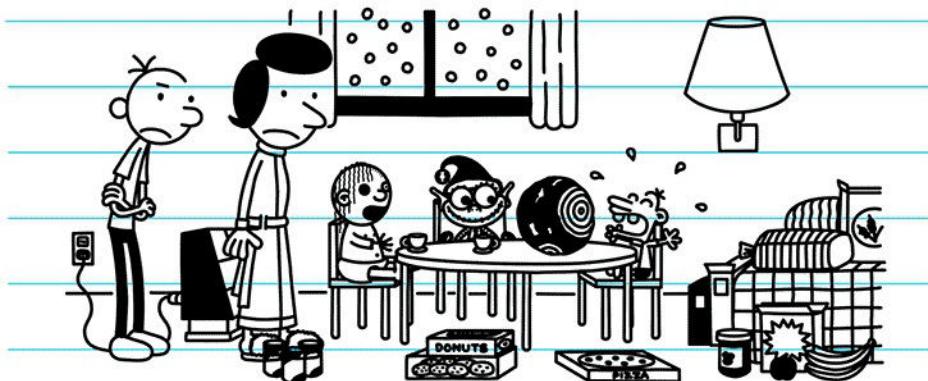
with a space heater, a pile of food, and a bunch

of OTHER stuff, too.



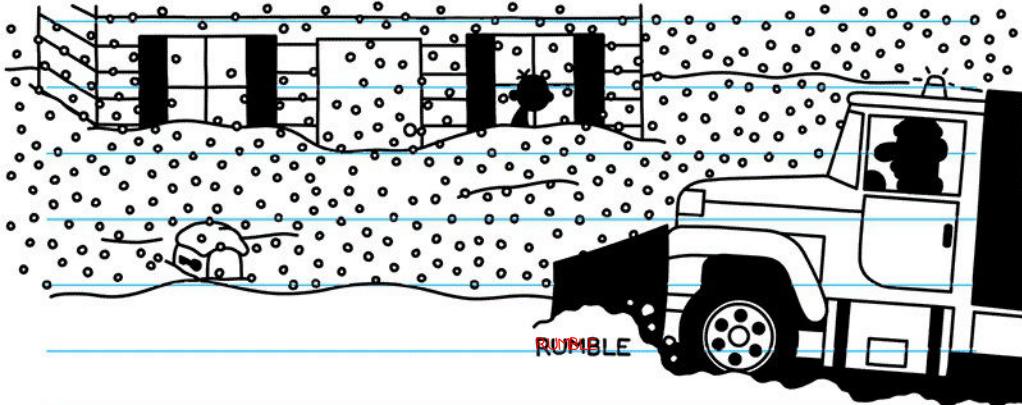
When things got bad, Manny must've figured it
was every man for himself. I think he would've let
the rest of us freeze to death as long as HE had
enough to survive.

Mom asked Manny why he cut off the power to
the rest of the house, and he started blubbering
that it was because no one ever taught him how to
tie his shoes.



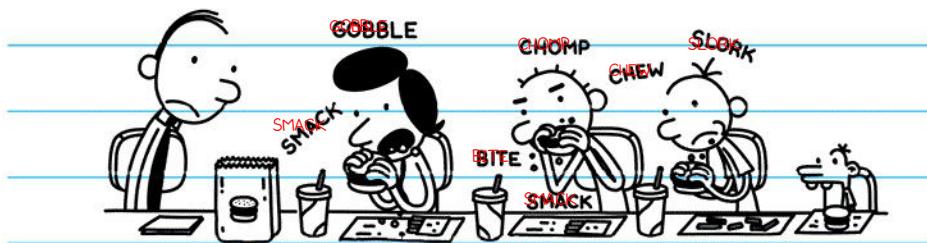
While Mom dealt with Manny, I went down
to the basement and switched on the circuit
breakers for the rest of the house. The
electricity came back on, and the furnace kicked
in. A few minutes after that, Dad called. He
said the highways were clear and that he was
coming home.

I looked out the window and saw the plow coming
up our hill.



Mom said it was a "miracle" that Dad was gonna
be home for Christmas Eve, but to be honest with
you, I had totally forgotten what day it was
until that moment.

Dad picked up some food on the way home, and the
rest of us ate like a pack of wolves. And let me
just say, I'll never take food for granted again.



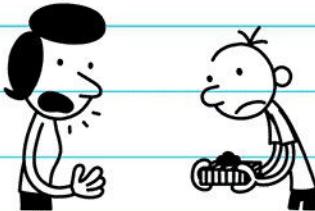
Mom said she was gonna go out with Dad to try
and find a place that was open that sold glasses.

Before she left, Mom asked me to take a present

down to the police station for the Toy Drive and

put it in the outdoor bin, because today was the

last day you could turn a gift in.



But I wasn't too eager to show my face at the

police station, and I REALLY didn't need to

spend Christmas in jail. I knew I'd let some kid

down if I didn't turn in our present, though, so

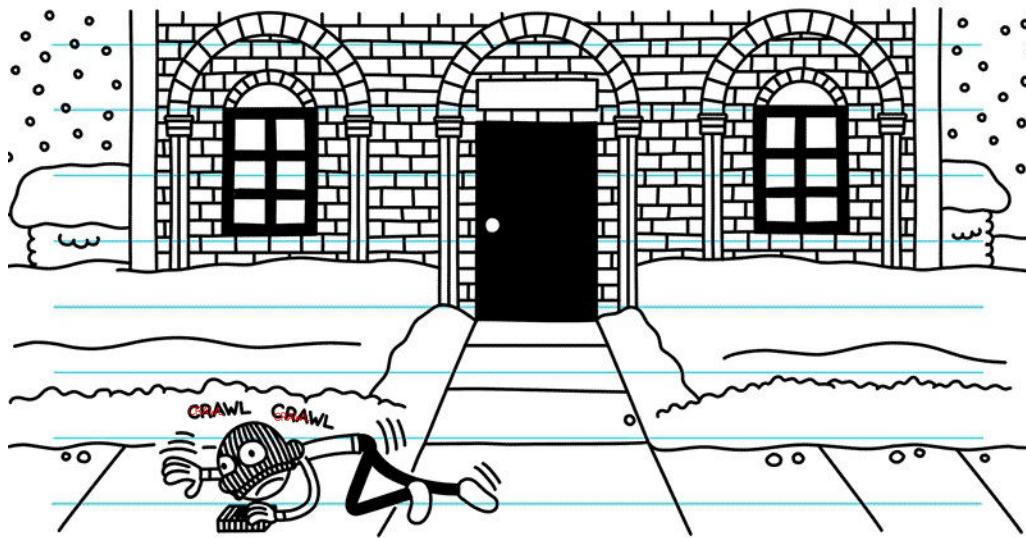
I found a ski mask in our closet and headed out.



It took forever to get to the police station, and

I crawled the last twenty feet to the bin just to

play it safe.



Once I knew the coast was clear, I stood up and
tossed the present in the bin.

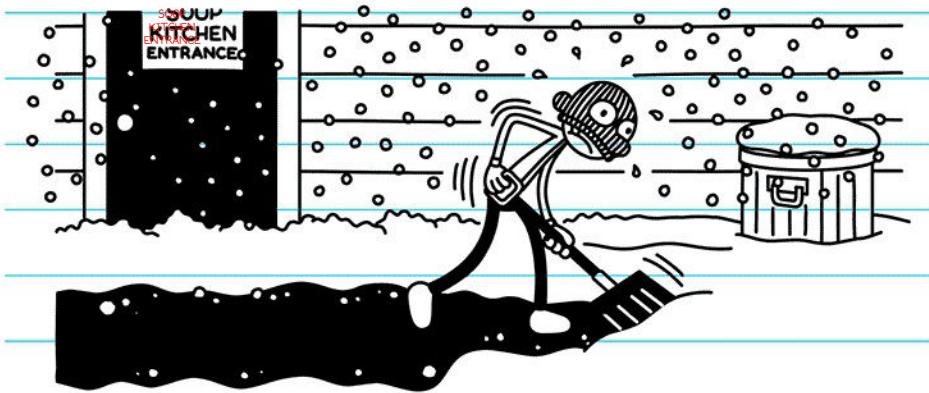


Then I turned around and headed home. But
when I walked by the church, I remembered
something. I had filled out a request for the
Giving Tree, and I asked whoever got my
envelope to leave my cash under the recycling bin
behind the church.

The church parking lot was covered in snow.

I was pretty sure the recycling bin was buried
somewhere behind the church, but I didn't know
the exact spot.

Luckily there was a shovel leaning up against the
wall, and I started digging to find the recycling
bin. But it wasn't in the place I thought it would
be, and I ended up clearing out a HUGE area
looking for it.



I wish the church had a hose attached to the back
of the building, because that would've made the job
go a lot easier. I was pretty desperate to find
that envelope, because I figured if I was gonna
start my life on the run, I could really use a big
wad of cash to get me by for the first few weeks.

But when I finally found the recycling bin, there

was no envelope beneath it.



I was pretty bummed on the walk back home, and

I forgot all about being careful not to be seen.

So I was totally unprepared when I got to my

front door and a police car pulled in the driveway

right behind me.

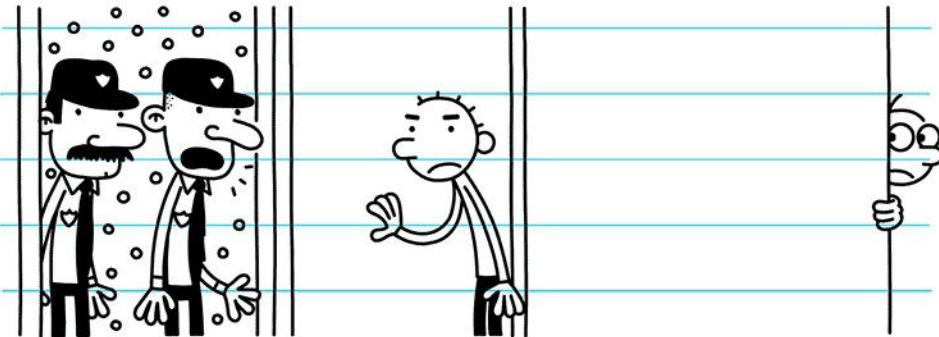


I thought this was it for me, so I ran inside

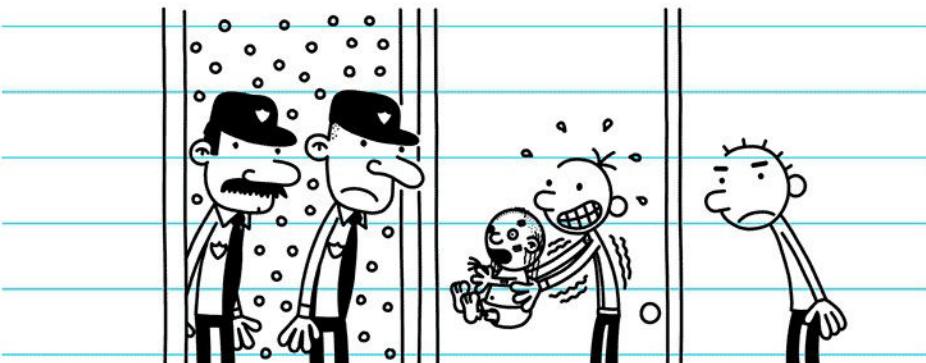
and locked the door. But when the police knocked,

Rodrick let them in.

I thought about jumping out the back window
and making a run for it, but I'm glad I didn't,
because I would've looked like an idiot. It turns
out the police weren't there for me at all. They
were just there to collect last-minute gifts for
the Toy Drive.



I thought they might be bluffing and that they
were just using the Toy Drive as a way of flushing
me out. But I finally worked up the courage to go
to the front door, and I even brought a donation
with me and tried to act casual.

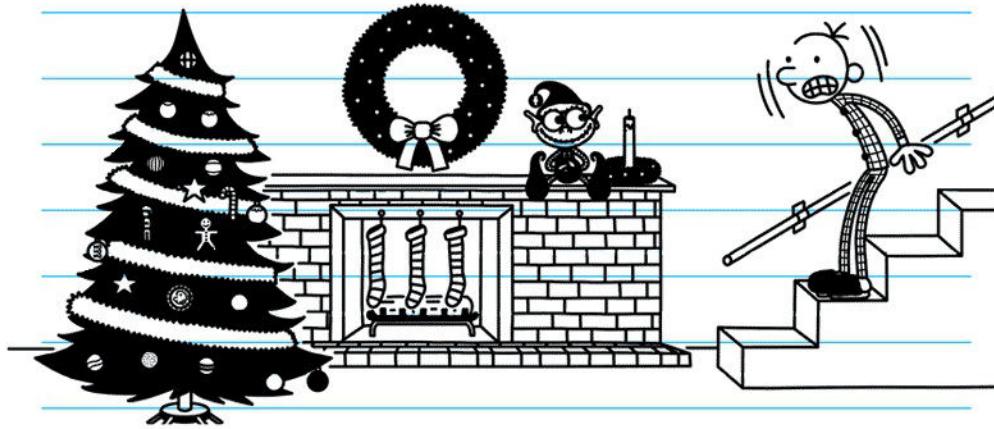


The police said they couldn't accept a used toy as
a donation and that they were only taking new
items in their original packaging. I actually think
they were just a little freaked out by Alfrendo,
because they seemed to leave in a hurry after that.

Christmas

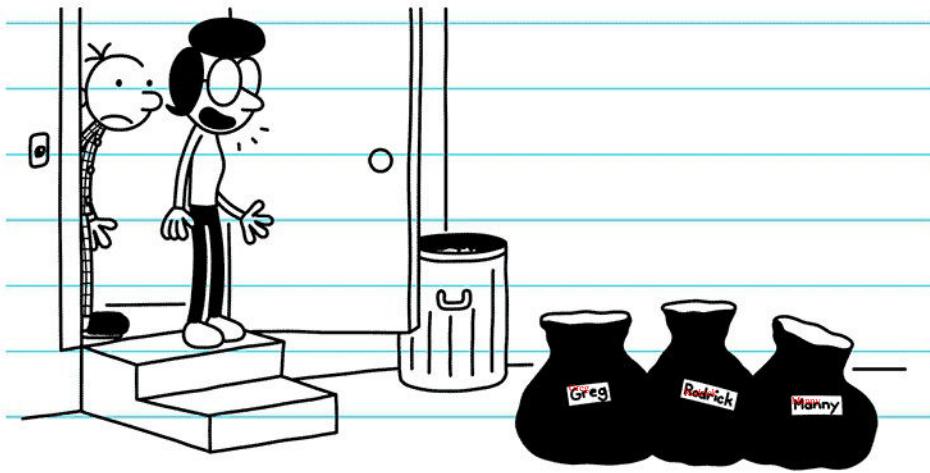
When I woke up this morning, I couldn't believe
it was Christmas and I was in my house with
electricity and heat and wasn't on the run from
the police.

I went downstairs to see if there was anything
under the tree, but I was totally shocked to find
there weren't any gifts at ALL.



At first I thought it was all Santa's Scout's
fault and that he'd been running his mouth about
the trouble I've gotten myself into lately. But
Mom came downstairs a few minutes later and told
me Santa DID come last night and that he left
our gifts in the garage.

Mom said the snowstorm really messed up Santa's
schedule, so he ran out of time to wrap presents
and just put them in garbage bags instead. That
didn't make a lot of sense to me, but at that
point I was relieved to be getting any gifts at all.

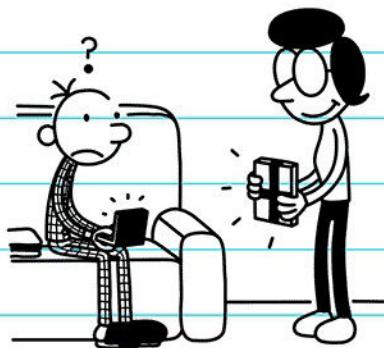


The rest of the family came downstairs, and Mom
said we could have fun reaching in the trash bags
and guessing what our gifts were.

It wasn't really the same. But I think Dad was
pretty happy he didn't have any wrapping paper
to clean up.



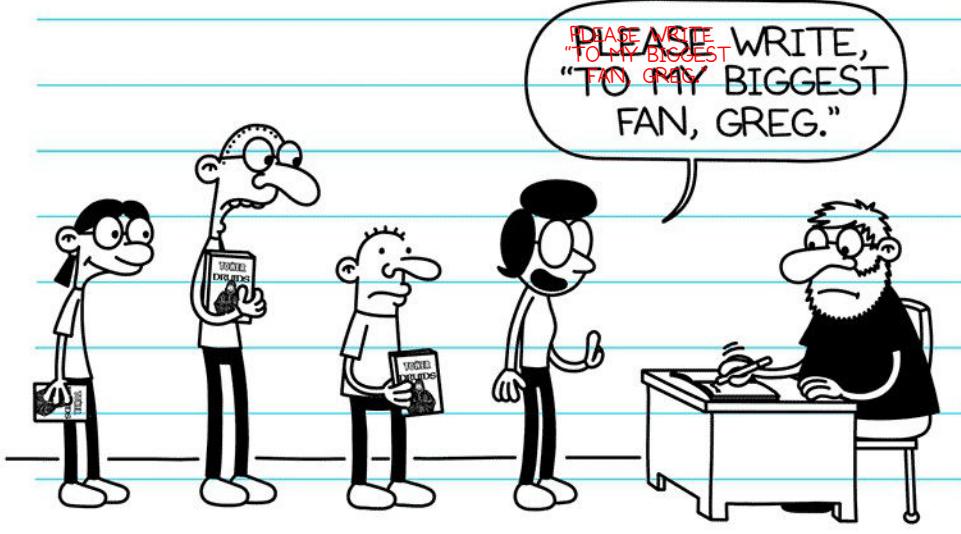
After I was done with the gifts in the trash
bag, Mom handed me a wrapped present that she
said was from HER.



It was my "Tower of Druids" graphic novel, so I
was a little confused. Mom said she felt bad about
forging Kenny Centazzo's autograph, so she
found out where he was appearing a few weeks
ago and got my book signed for real this time.

She said she had to wait in line for three hours

but she was happy to do it for me.



But based on what's written in my book now,

I'm guessing Kenny Centazzo didn't hear my
name correctly.

To my biggest
fan, Craig
Kenny Centazzo

Hopefully I can find a rich guy named Craig who's
really into graphic novels so I can sell it to him
for a pile of cash.

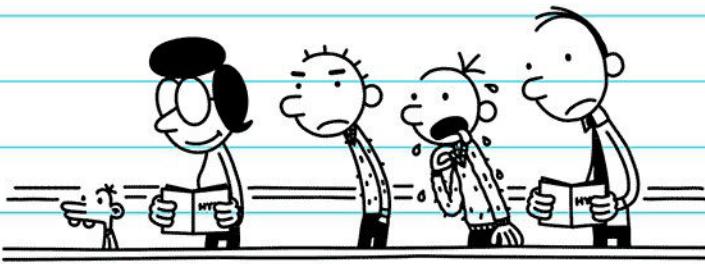
Rodrick got a snare drum and some drumsticks,
and Manny got a bunch of toys and a pair of
sneakers. Even though Mom taught Manny how
to tie his shoes yesterday, it looks like he'd
prefer to have her do it for him anyway.



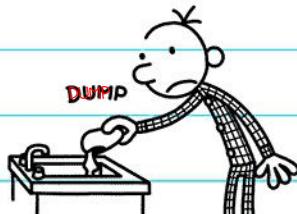
After we were done opening presents, Mom said it
was time to go to church. I told her we couldn't
go because we didn't have any clean clothes to wear,
but that's when she pulled out three last gifts.



I really like to spend Christmas in my pajamas,
and the second you put on dress clothes, it feels
like it's over. So I decided to put my clothes on
OVER my pajamas and pick up where I left off
once we got back home. But it was a mistake to
wear flannel pajamas underneath corduroy pants
and a V-neck sweater for a two-hour service.



After we got home from church, I went upstairs
to change. I actually had puddles of sweat in
my shoes, so I had to empty them out in the
bathroom sink.



When I got downstairs the newspaper was on
the kitchen table, and here's what was on the
front page—

The Daily Herald

Unidentified Do-Gooder Clears the Way



Welfish Act Allows Soup Kitchen to Open

The blizzard that crippled the town and shut down many basic services threatened to cancel the soup kitchen, which many less fortunate individuals rely on for a hot meal on Christmas. But an unidentified do-gooder spent his Christmas Eve shoveling out the church sidewalk to make sure that didn't happen.

See MYSTERY, A2

Well, the newspaper didn't exactly get the story

right, but I'm not gonna complain. In fact,

that article inspired me to put out a new edition

of the "Neighborhood Tattler." And I'll bet we

can sell a TON of copies.

The Neighborhood TATTLER



Masked Hero REVEALED!

The Tattler can exclusively report that the mysterious do-gooder who shoveled the church sidewalk on Christmas Eve is none other than our very own editor in chief, Greg Heffley.

"I wanted to do the right thing," said Heffley when asked why he decided

See HERO, A2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to all the teachers and librarians who have put my books in kids' hands.

Thanks to my wonderful extended family for all the laughter and love. We have a really special group, and I feel very fortunate to be a part of your lives.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeff Kinney is an online game developer and designer, and a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author. Jeff has been named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World. Jeff is also the creator of Poptropica.com, which was named one of *Time* magazine's 50 Best Websites. He spent his childhood in the Washington, D.C., area and moved to New England in 1995. Jeff lives in southern Massachusetts with his wife and their two sons.

Greg Heffley is in big trouble. School property has been damaged, and Greg is the prime suspect. But the crazy thing is, he's innocent. Or at least sort of.

The authorities are closing in, but when a surprise blizzard hits, the Heffley family is trapped indoors. Greg knows that when the snow melts he's going to have to face the music, but could any punishment be worse than being stuck inside with your family for the holidays?



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