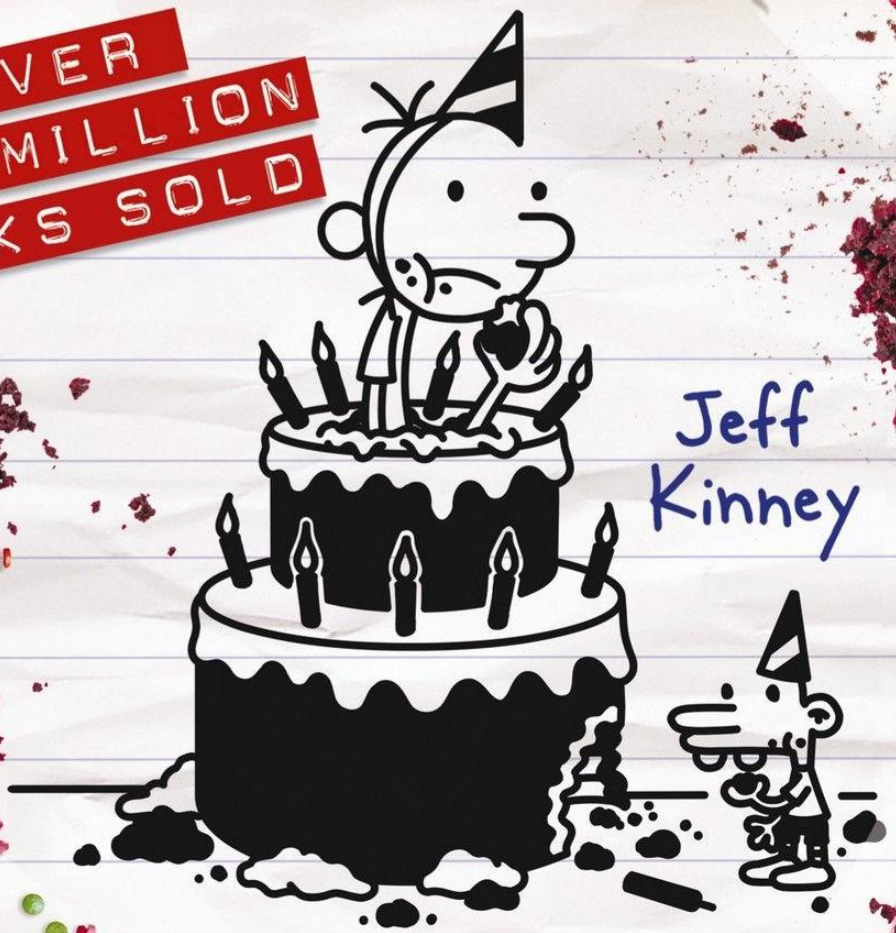
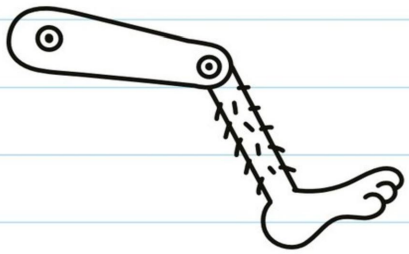
DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

PARTYPOOPER

OVER 300 MILLION BOOKS SOLD



Jeff Kinney



THE *DIARY OF A WIMPY KID* SERIES

1 *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*
2 *Rodrick Rules*
3 *The Last Straw*
4 *Dog Days*
5 *The Ugly Truth*
6 *Cabin Fever*
7 *The Third Wheel*
8 *Hard Luck*
9 *The Long Haul*
10 *Old School*
11 *Double Down*
12 *The Getaway*
13 *The Meltdown*
14 *Wrecking Ball*
15 *The Deep End*
16 *Big Shot*
17 *Diper Överlöde*
18 *No Brainer*
19 *Hot Mess*
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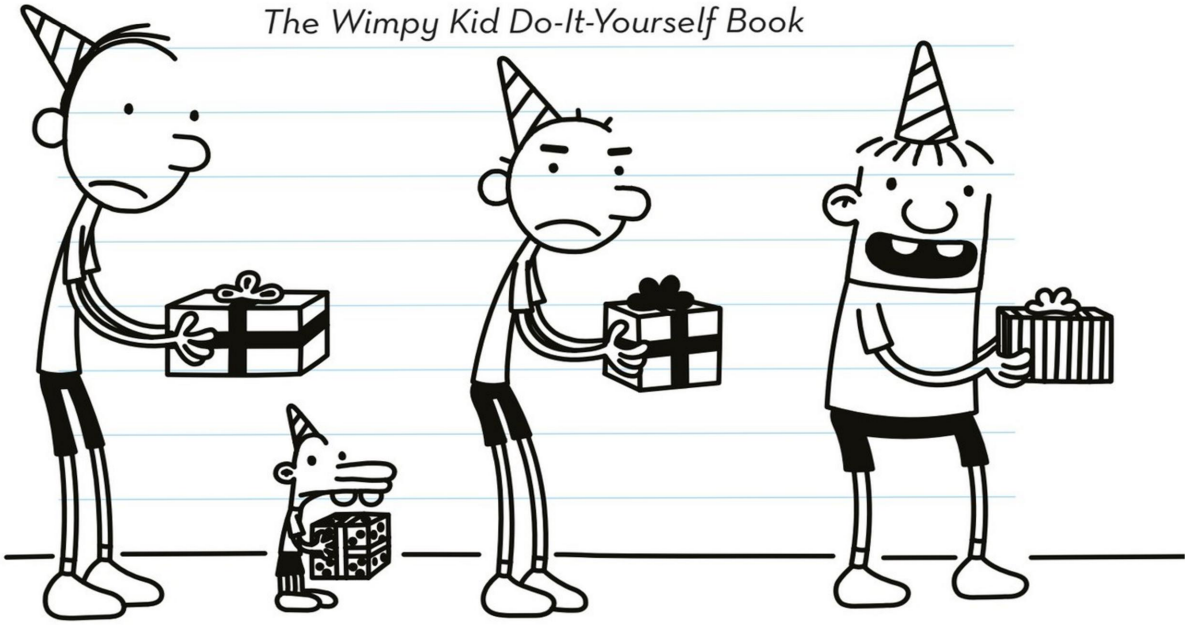
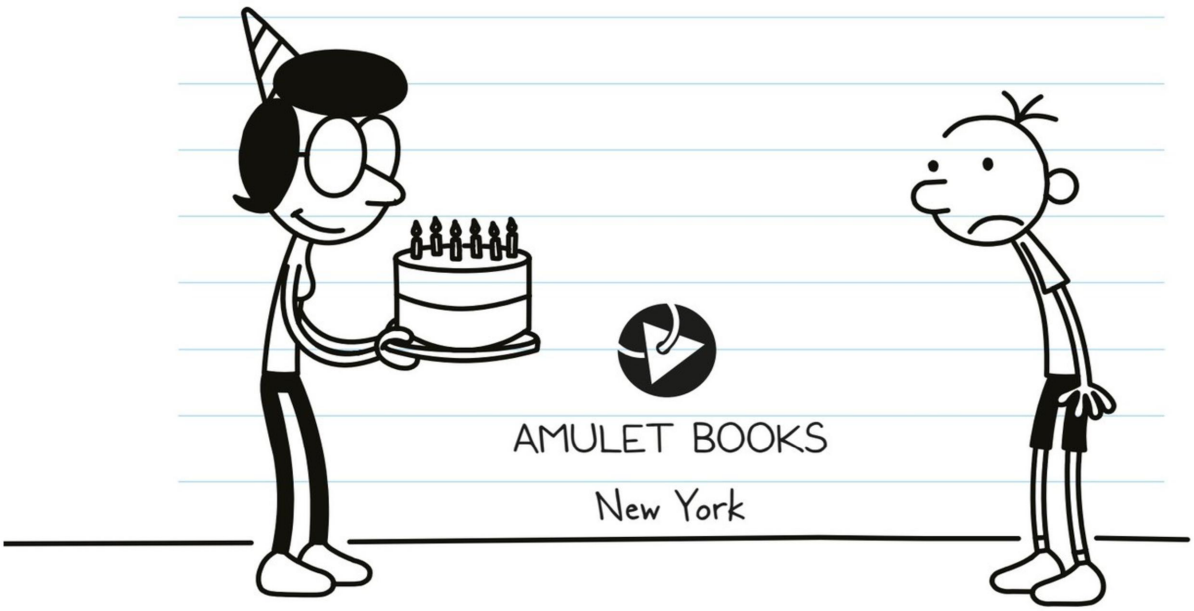
The Wimpy Kid Do-It-Yourself Book



DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

PARTYPOOPER

by Jeff Kinney

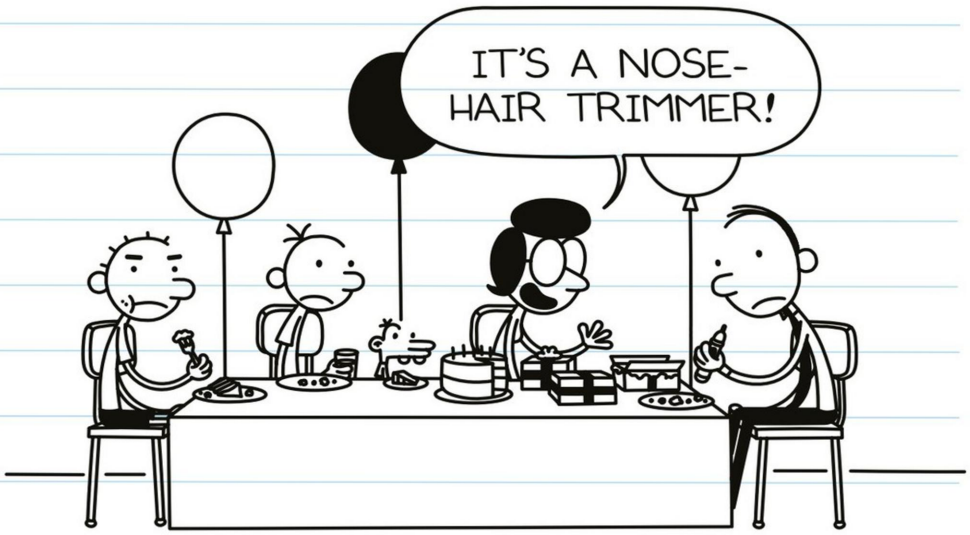


AMULET BOOKS
New York

JUNE

Tuesday

When you're a kid, you've gotta make every birthday count. Because before you know it, you're a grown-up and the party's over.



The thing is, for the first three or four years of your life your birthday is totally wasted on you, since you basically have no clue what's going on. And then you've only got a few prime years before people start buying you grooming products and dress shirts for your birthday.

So if this year is my last hurrah, I'm going out with a BANG.

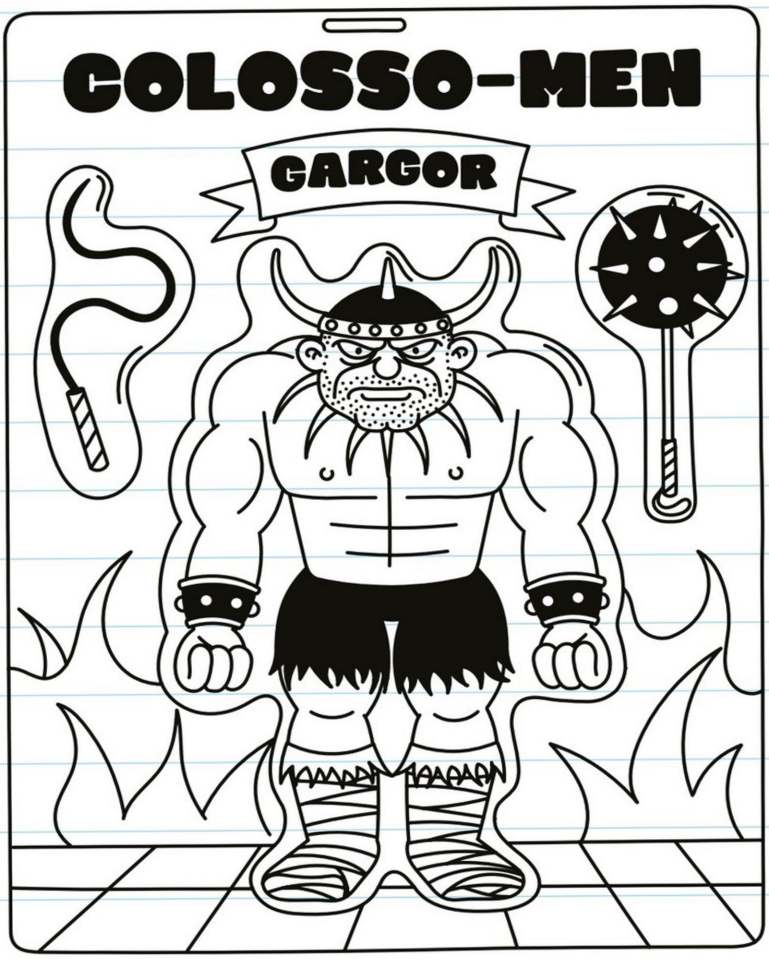
Unfortunately, I'm not sure how I'm gonna make that happen. My birthday is this weekend, and I haven't even decided who to invite or where to have my party. But that stuff can wait because the thing I'm focused on right now is figuring out my WISH.

Every year, you get one chance to make a wish that could change your whole life. But when the moment actually comes, there's way too much pressure.

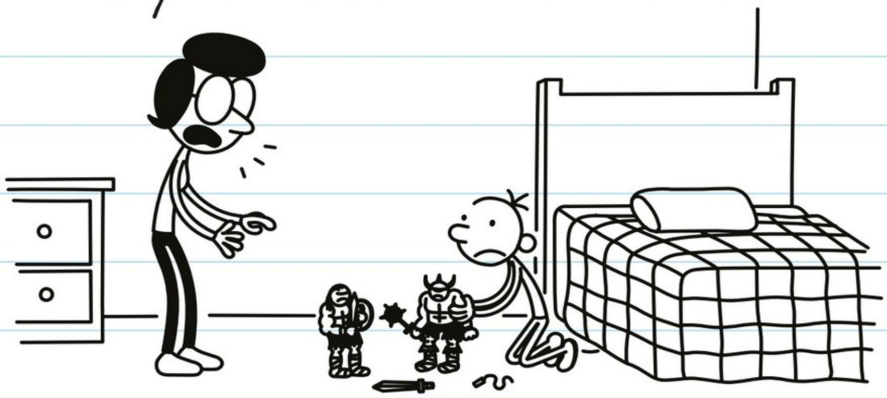
So I usually panic and just say the first thing that pops in my head.

I've been racking my brain trying to come up with something good to wish for this year. But so far, I'm drawing a blank.

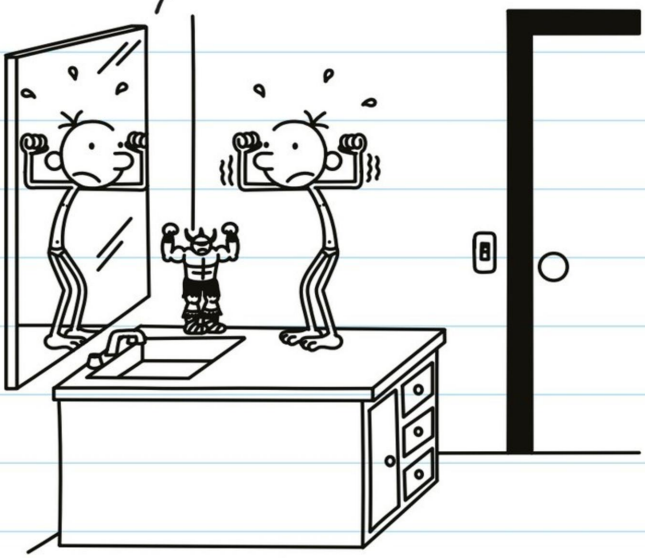
When you're younger, making a wish is easy because there's always some toy that you're hoping to get on your birthday. And when I was seven, I wanted these action figures that were really popular at the time.



But Mom said she didn't feel comfortable with me playing with toys that have "unrealistic body types" because they make kids feel bad about themselves.

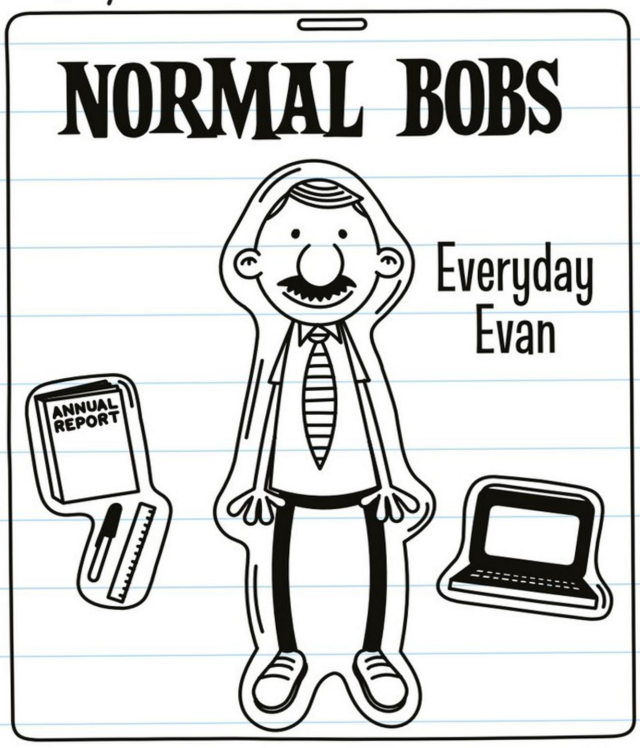


The thing is, I never felt bad about my body until she said that. And I haven't looked in the mirror the same way ever since.

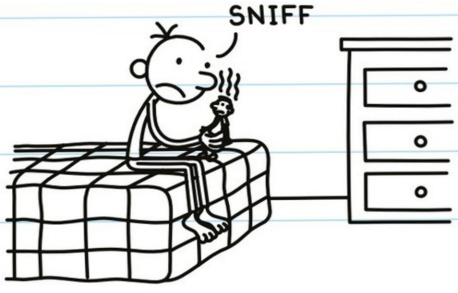


Eventually, Mom stopped getting me Colosso-Men action figures and started replacing them with ones she got at the educational toy store.

And even though the bodies of my new action figures were more realistic, they weren't half as much fun to play with.

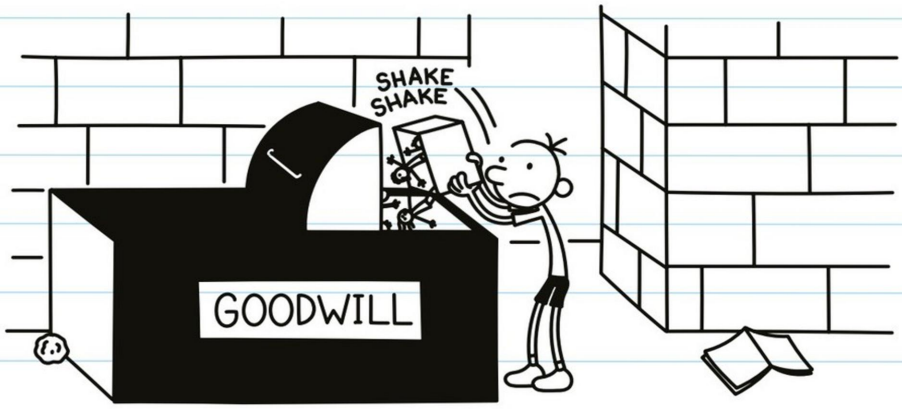


If you ask me, those things were a little TOO realistic. If you didn't wash them every few days, they'd actually start to SMELL. And I have enough trouble keeping up with my OWN hygiene without having to worry about bathing my toys.

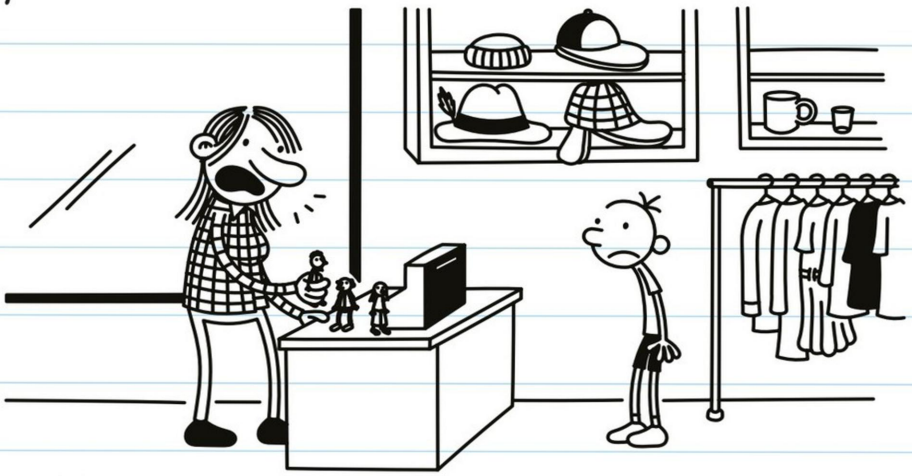


Mom got a little carried away, and she bought me so many Normal Bobs that my bedroom was starting to smell like a locker room. And I was going through a few cans of air freshener each week just to keep on top of the problem.

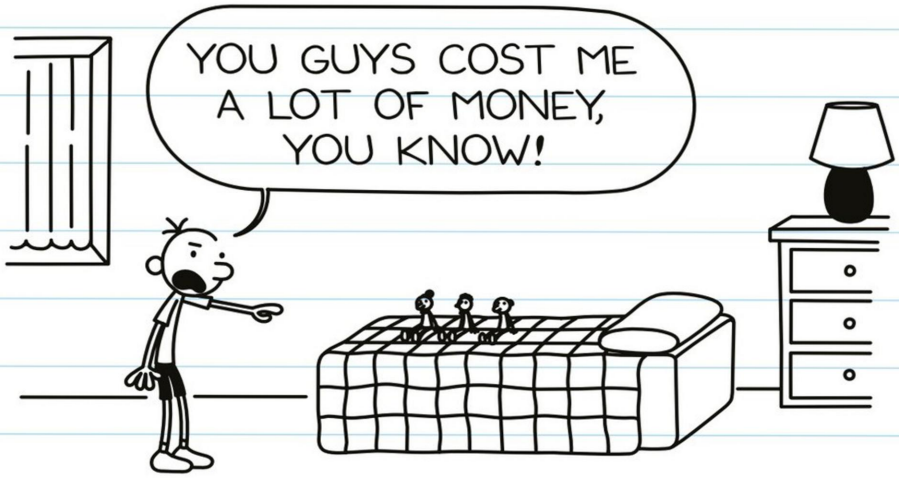
Eventually, I couldn't take it anymore, so I put all my Normal Bobs in the donation bin for Goodwill. And I was happy for them to become some OTHER kid's problem.



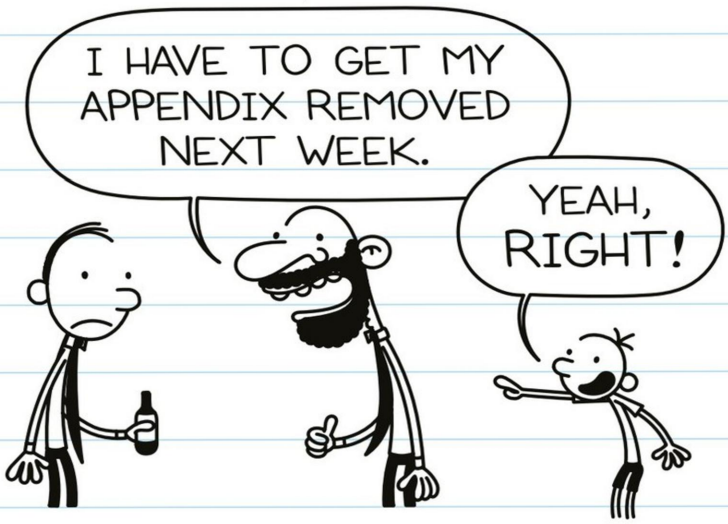
Then I saw this movie where toys came to life when nobody was home, and I started feeling bad about getting rid of my action figures. So I went down to Goodwill to ask if I could have them back. But the lady at Goodwill said if I wanted the toys, I was gonna have to PAY for them.



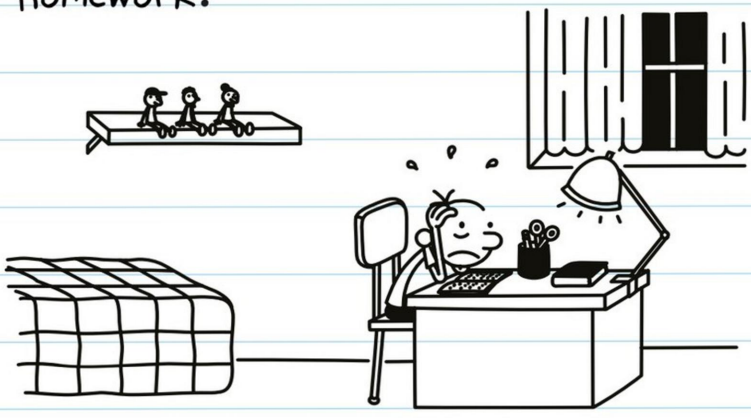
So I had to use my allowance just to buy my action figures back, which is something I never let them forget.



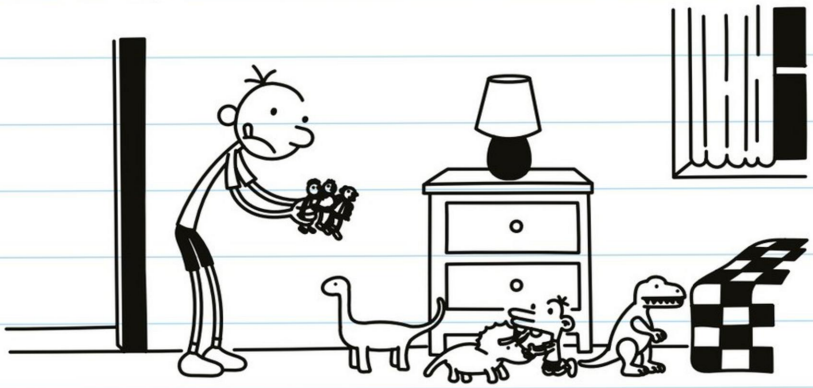
The people who make those kind of movies don't realize how they affect kids. I saw "Pinocchio" when I was little, and I thought my nose would grow if I ever told a lie. And because of that movie, I never believed a word my mom's cousin Gerald said.



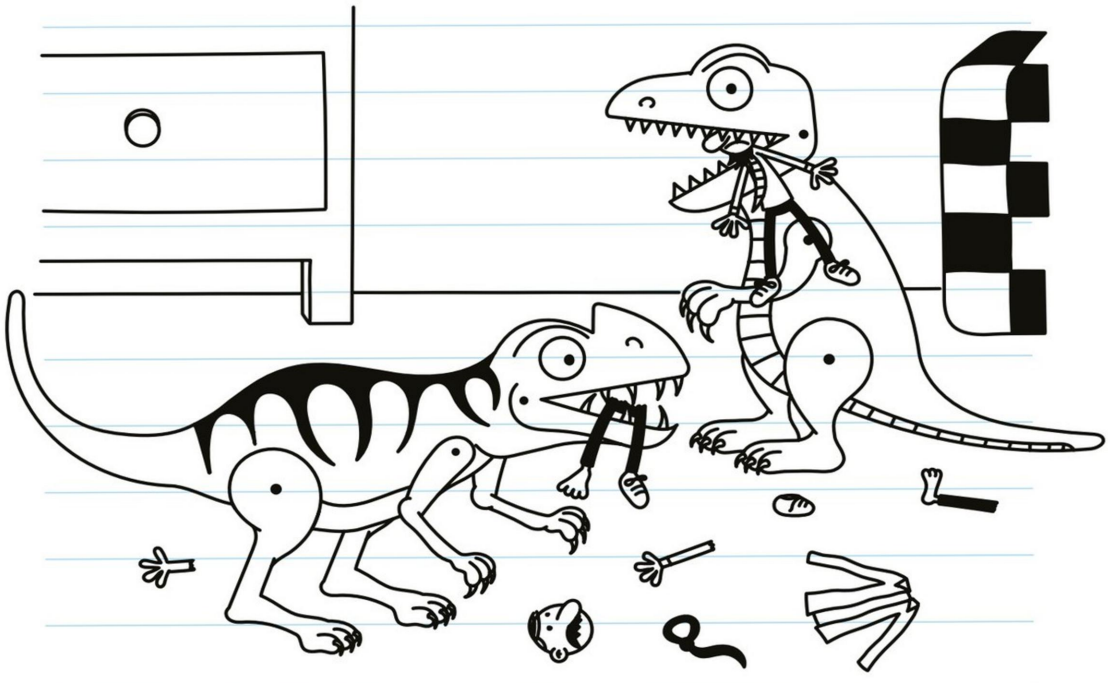
Once I started thinking my toys were alive, I worried they were mad at me for trying to get rid of them. And that made it hard to concentrate on my homework.



Last year, I finally gave all my Normal Bobs to my little brother, Manny, so he could deal with them instead.

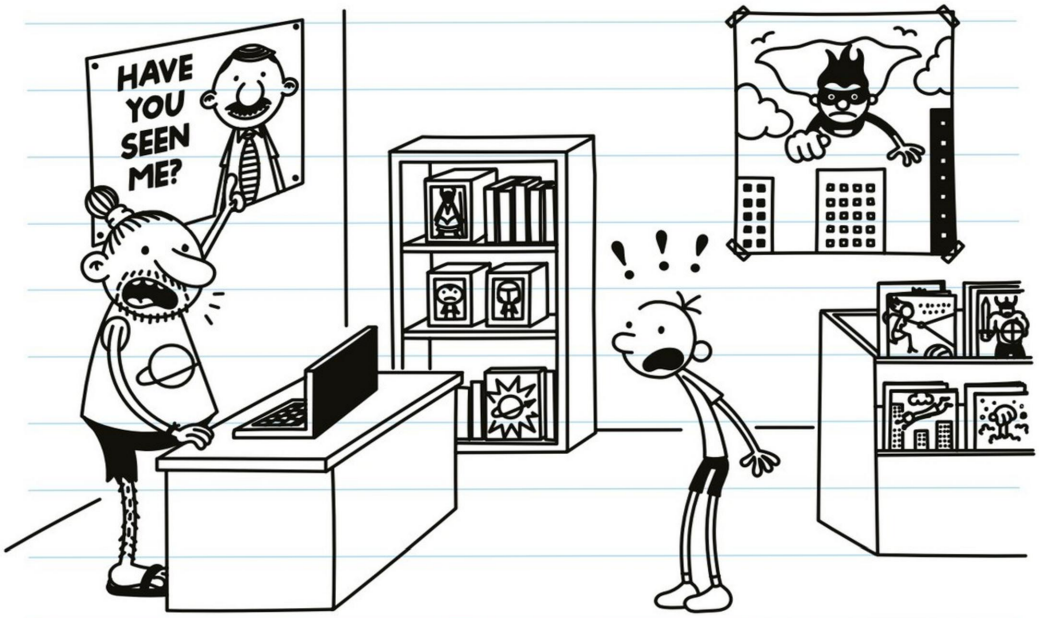


But it turns out that was a TERRIBLE decision. Because at the time, Manny was in the middle of his dinosaur phase.



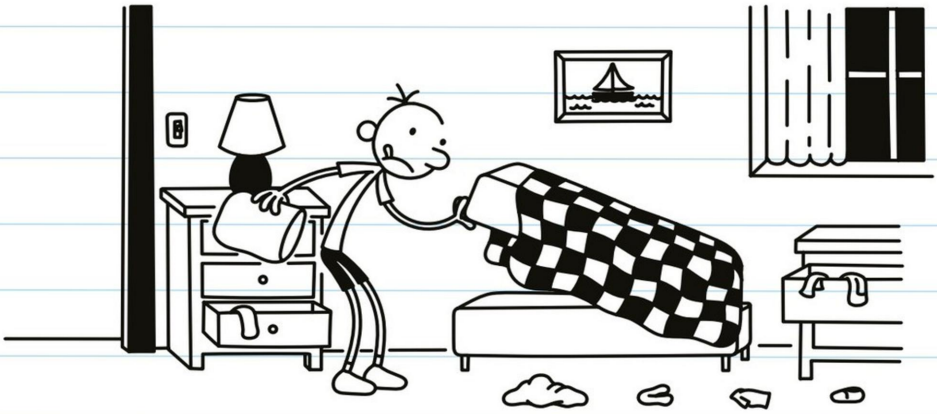
I guess Normal Bobs weren't all that popular with kids, because they stopped making them.

But then the craziest thing happened. All of a sudden, these toys that no one even liked turned into collector's items, and they became SUPER valuable. And I found out at the comics shop that a mint-condition Everyday Evan was going for something like ten thousand dollars.

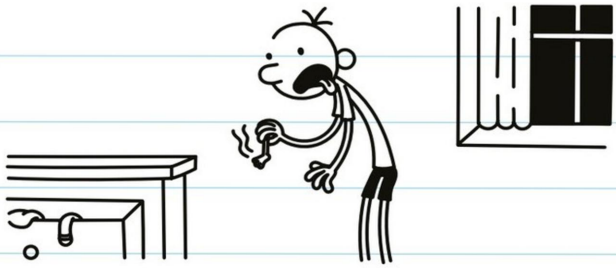


I used to own THREE Everyday Evans, and if I had just been smart enough to keep them in their original packaging, I'd be on my way to an early retirement right now.

When I discovered how much those things were worth, I turned Manny's room upside down, hoping I could find an Everyday Evan that still had all its limbs.



I found a leg under Manny's mattress, and I'm not even sure which character it belonged to. But from the smell, it might've been an Ordinary Oliver.



Eventually, I kind of outgrew playing with toys, which is why I've gotta figure out something ELSE to wish for this year.

The only thing I REALLY want is a katana, which is one of those cool swords that samurai and ninjas use. But something tells me Mom won't allow that sort of thing in the house.

I'm guessing ninjas don't have mothers, because they'd never let them get away with HALF the stuff they do.

I kind of wonder if I'm thinking too small with my wish, and maybe I should go BIG by wishing for something like a Jet Ski. Because that would make going to the town pool a whole lot more fun.

I might be getting too selfish, though, and what I should really be wishing for is something GOOD, like world peace.

But if people could wish for world peace on their birthday, I wonder why it hasn't happened yet. I'll bet it's because sometimes a person will SAY that's their wish, but they're secretly thinking of something ELSE instead.

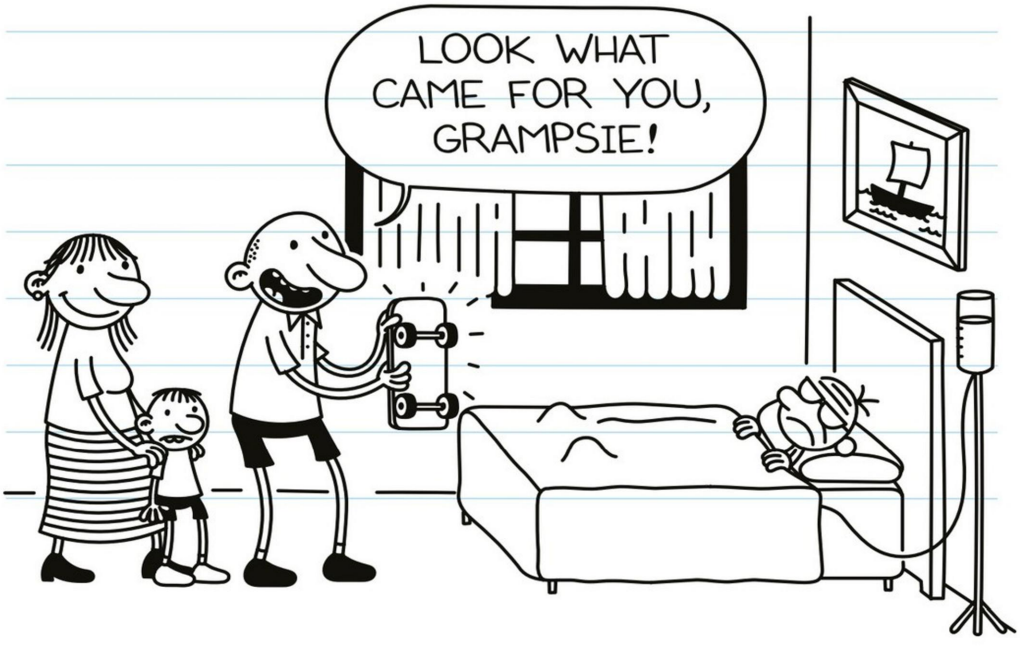
The thing is, you're not guaranteed to get your wish, anyway. There have been plenty of times when I haven't gotten what I wished for, so I must be doing something wrong.

I've always crossed my fingers when I've made my birthday wish because I thought it gave you extra luck to help get what you want. But my brother Rodrick told me that I've got it all mixed up.

He said that crossing your fingers means you're just KIDDING, and it cancels out your wish. So who knows how many wishes I've thrown away by screwing that up.

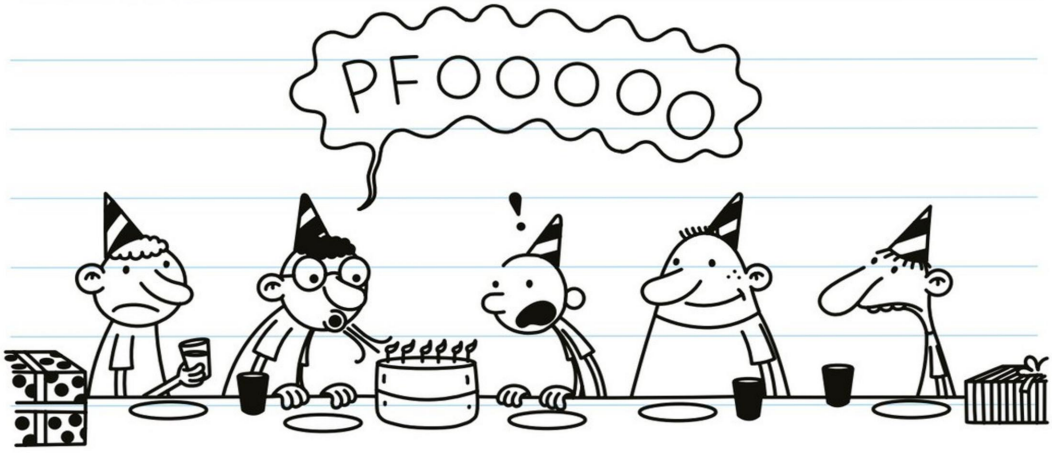
Or maybe I've actually been doing things the RIGHT way all this time, and whoever's responsible for granting birthday wishes has gotten really behind. If that's true, it's possible I'll get them granted later on.

I just hope I don't have to wait TOO long, though, because by the time I get that skateboard I asked for when I was nine, it might be too late to enjoy it.



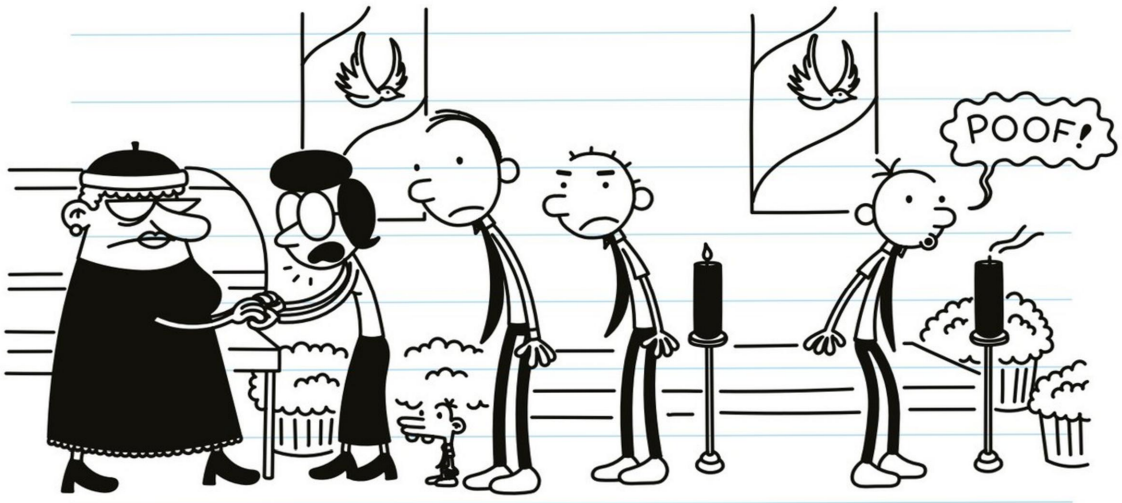
Another thing I'm not clear about is if you can only make a wish when you're blowing out the candles on your cake, or if you can make it ANY time on your birthday. Because one year I got a wish granted, and it was for the dumbest thing possible.

I'm not even sure if it technically has to be YOUR birthday to make a wish. One time Charlie Anderson came to my birthday and he wished on MY cake.



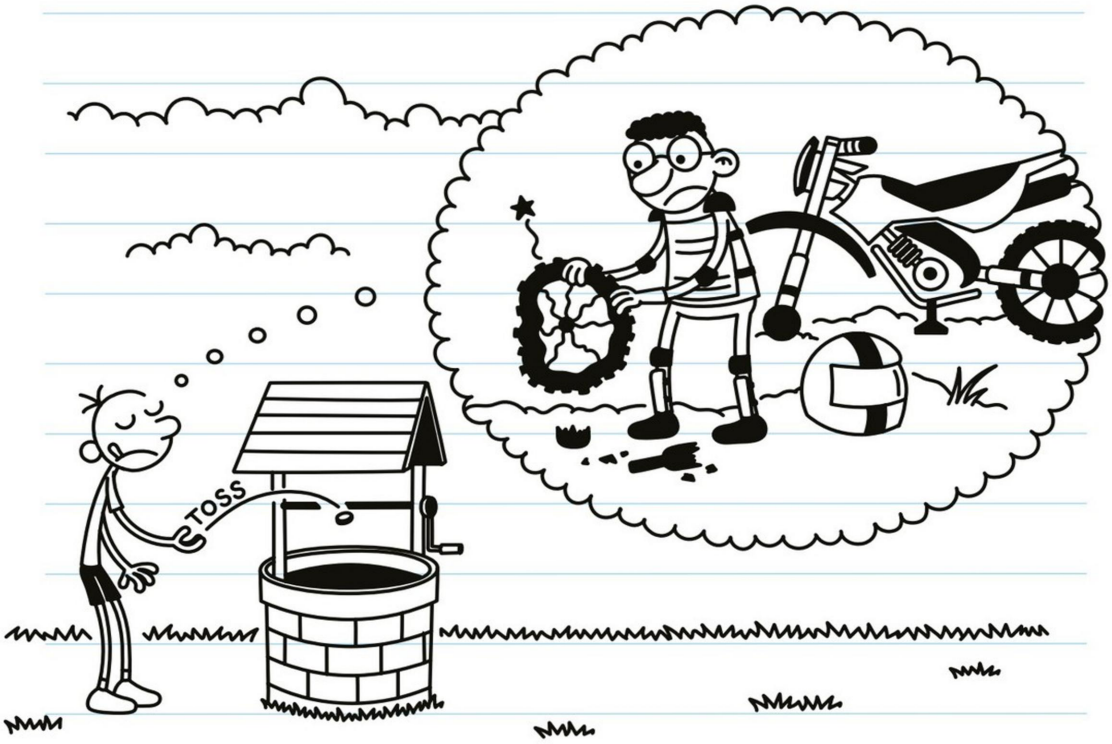
I didn't even need to wonder what Charlie wished for, because a few days later he was riding around on a brand-new dirt bike.

Maybe it doesn't even have to be ANYONE'S birthday to get a wish granted, and candles are the only requirement. So every time I see one, I make a wish in case I'm right.



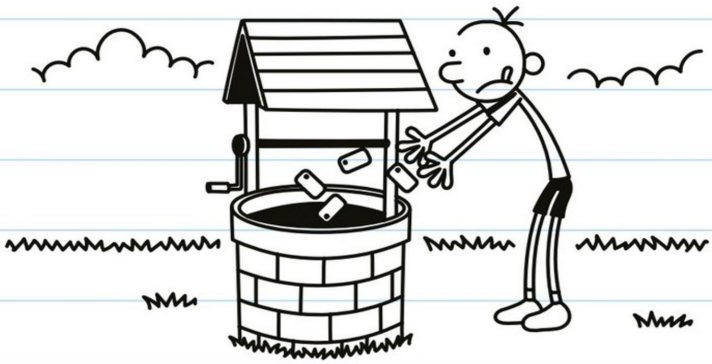
While you're waiting for your birthday to roll around, there are a few OTHER ways to get a wish granted.

At our town park, there's a wishing well, and people toss coins inside. But I'm not sure how reliable that is, because I've spent a lot of money wishing for things that haven't come true.



Maybe you have to pay extra if you want your wishes granted. So one day I tossed a bunch of gift cards into the well to see if that would work.

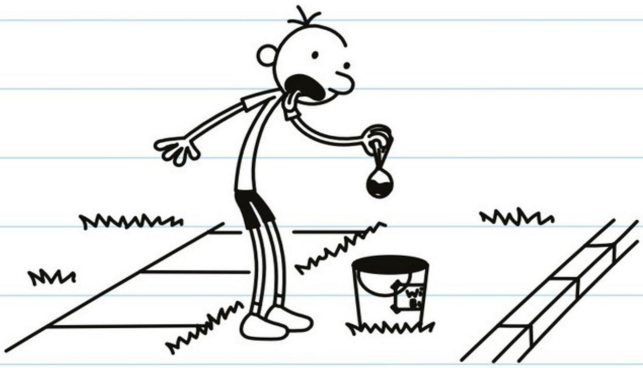
But the wishing well must've known my gift cards had expired, because I didn't have any luck with that move, either.



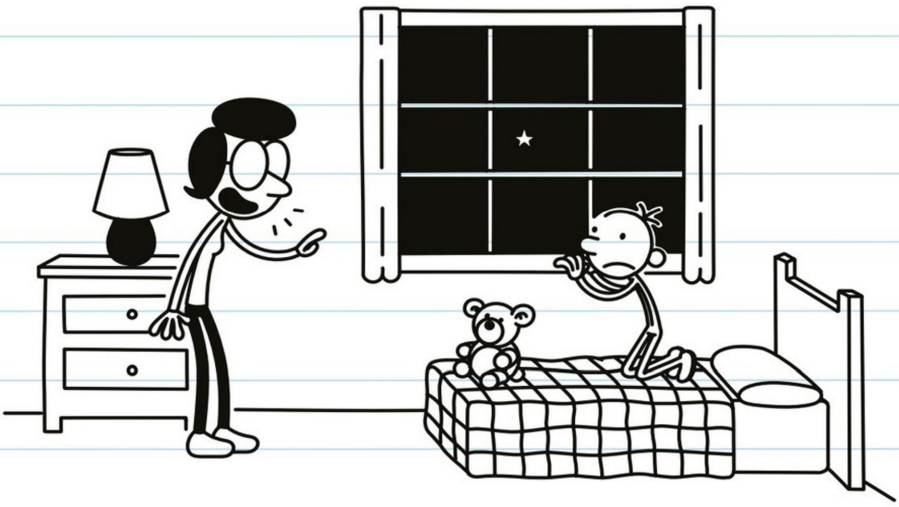
Every few weeks, a park worker pulls up the bucket with all the coins in it, and there's a TON of cash in that thing.

I decided to set up a wishing well in my front yard to see if I could get in on the action. But it turns out digging a well is a lot of work, which is why I kept it simple.

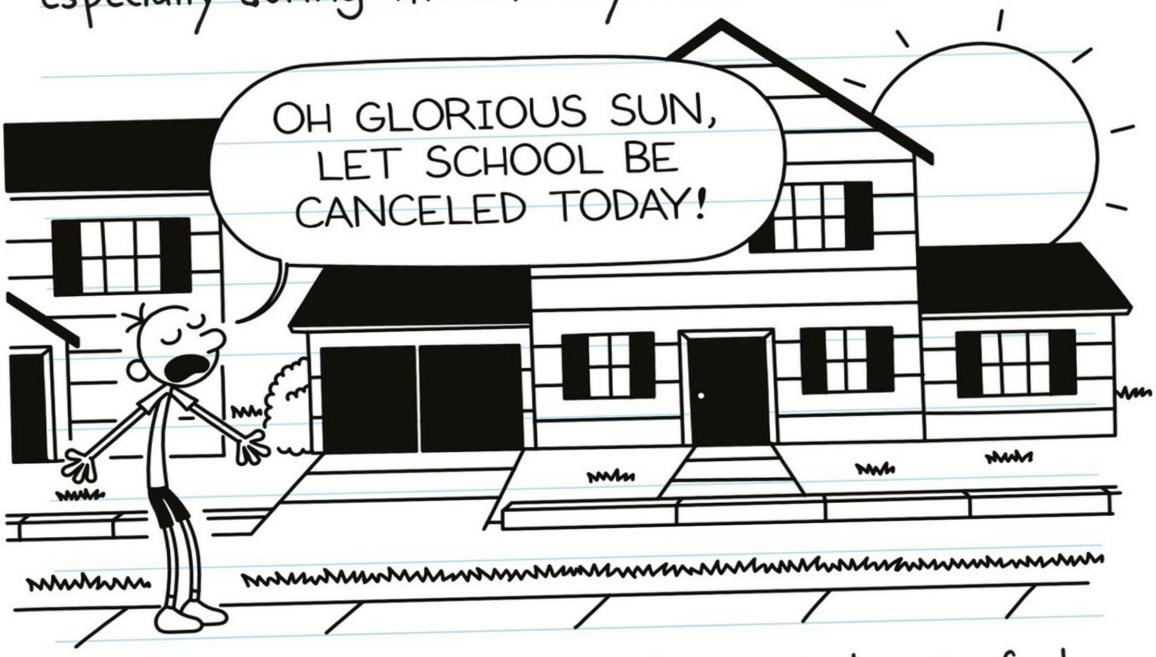
I found out that people on my street are pretty cheap, though. Because when I went to empty the wishing bucket after the first day, the only things in there were some candy-bar wrappers and a plastic bag with dog poop in it.



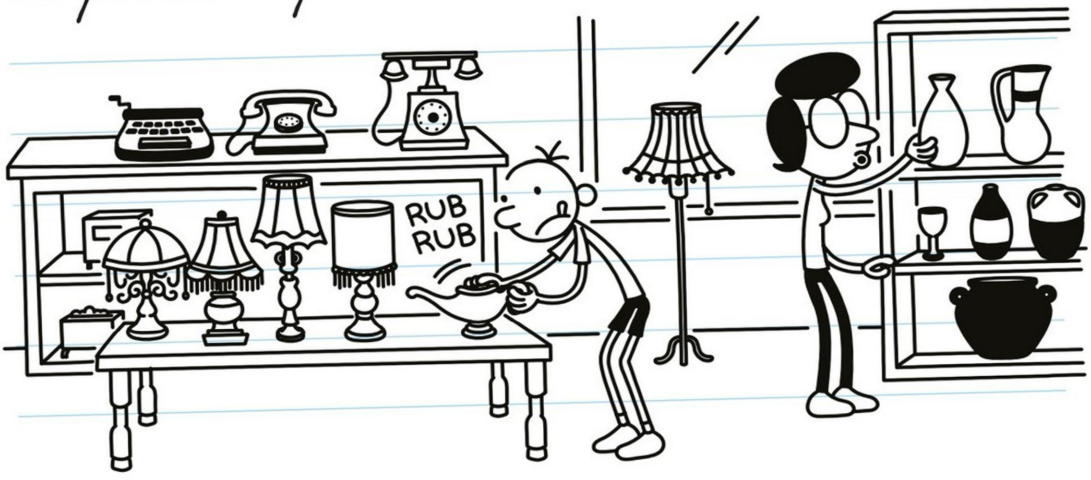
When I was little, Mom always told me that you can make a wish on the first star you see at night. But I figure a lot of OTHER people are wishing on the same star, which means everybody's wish is getting watered down.



The way I see it, the sun is ALSO a star, so I get my wishes in bright and early each day, especially during the school year.

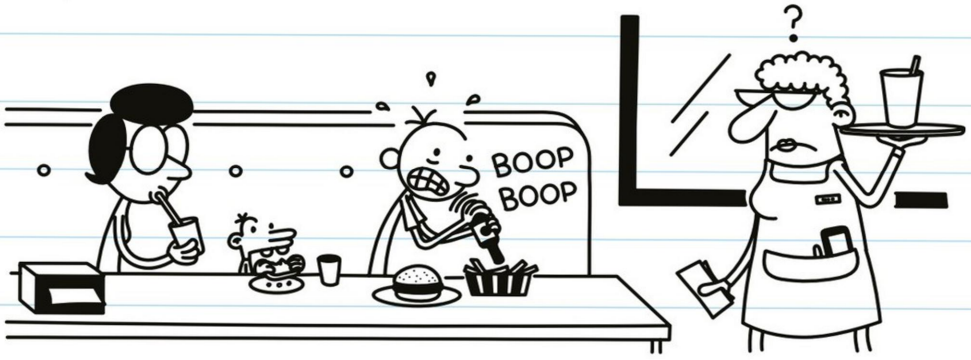


Another way to get your wish granted is to find a lamp with a genie in it. And I don't know if genies only exist in fairy tales, but I've been going antiquing with my mom on weekends in case they're actually real.

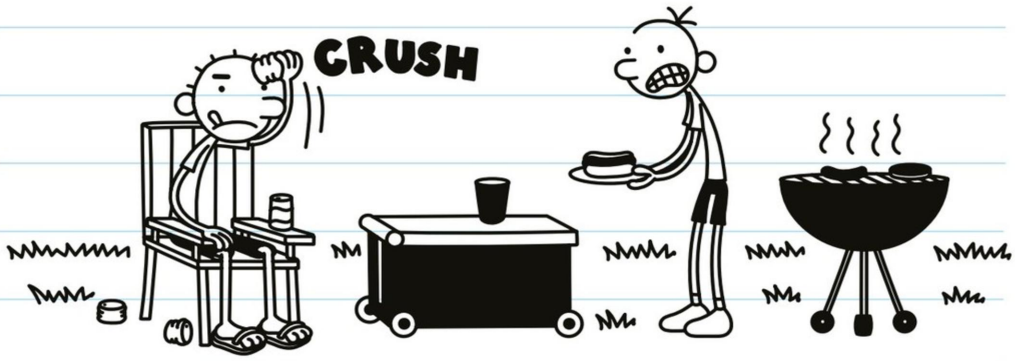


Whenever you see a genie in a movie, they come out of one of those fancy lamps people used back in olden times. But I heard genies get stuck in bottles, too, and I'm really hoping that's true.

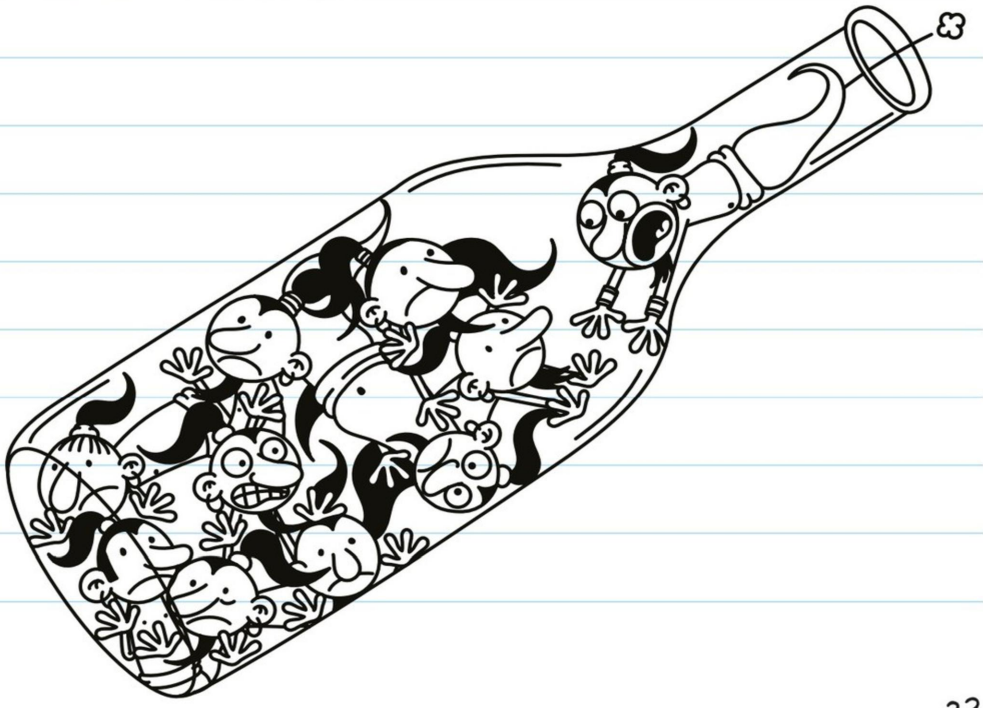
It would be great if there was an easy way to check to see if there's a genie in a bottle, though. Because I get nervous every time I put ketchup on my fries.



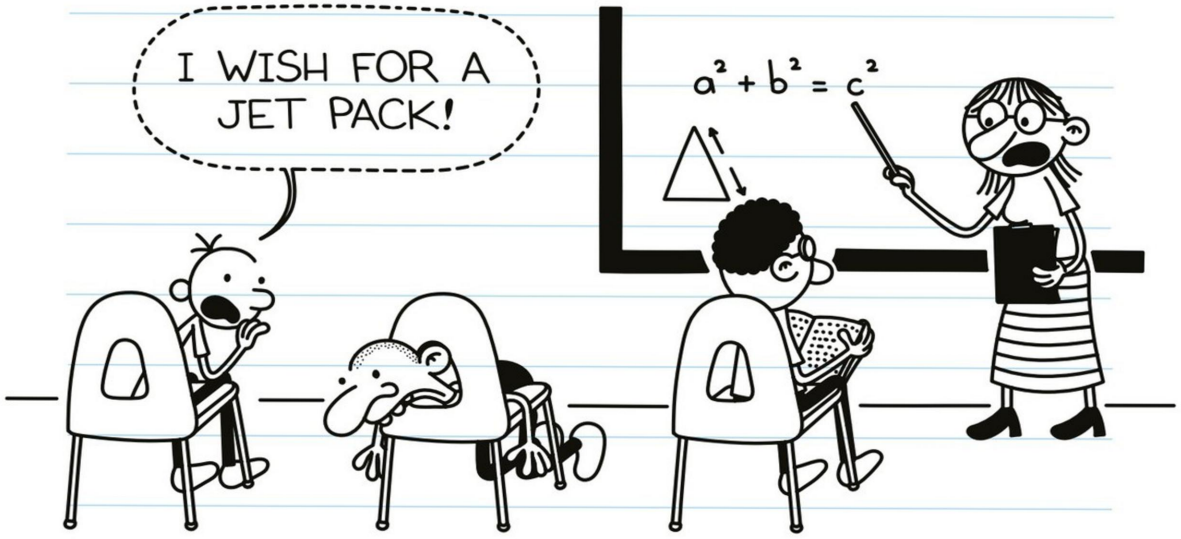
I'm pretty sure genies only come in lamps and bottles and not cans. But if they DO come in cans, then Rodrick might have a hard time getting into Heaven.



The thing I don't really understand is how genies keep getting stuck in bottles. You'd think that after it happened a few times, they'd learn to be a little more careful.



There's this kid in my grade named Jamar Law who gets his head stuck in the back of a chair two or three times a year. Lately, I've been wondering if he's secretly a genie. So the last time it happened, I made my move.



But like I said, I'm not so sure that genies actually exist in the first place, and maybe I'm wasting my time trying to find one.

So I guess I'll focus on coming up with a good birthday wish, because at least there's a shot I'll get it granted. And if I can't come up with something original to wish for, maybe I'll just use it on world peace.

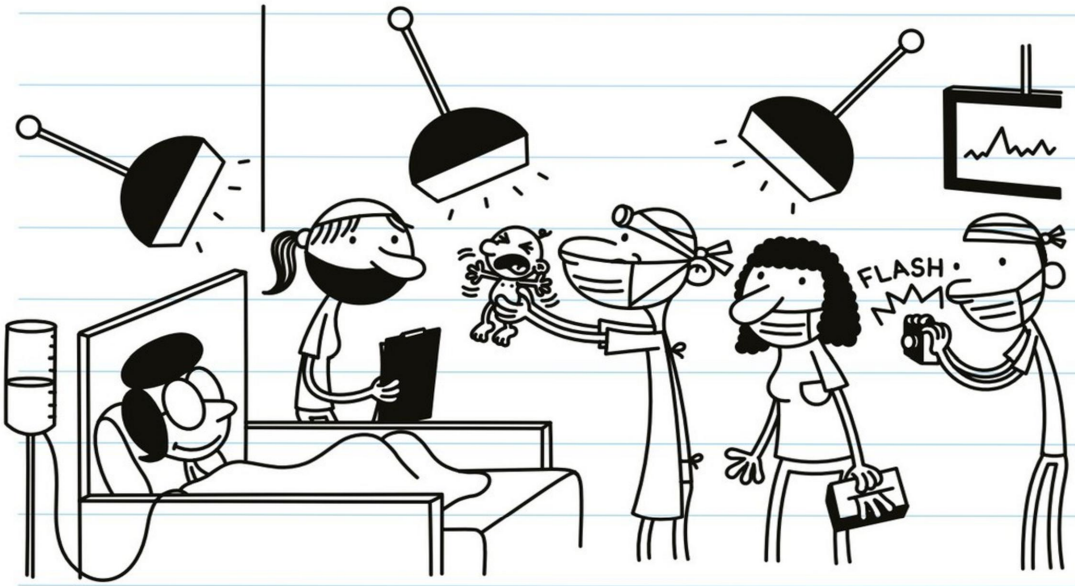
But if my wish DOES come true this time around, I hope people remember who to thank for it.

Because I could've asked for a katana instead.

Wednesday

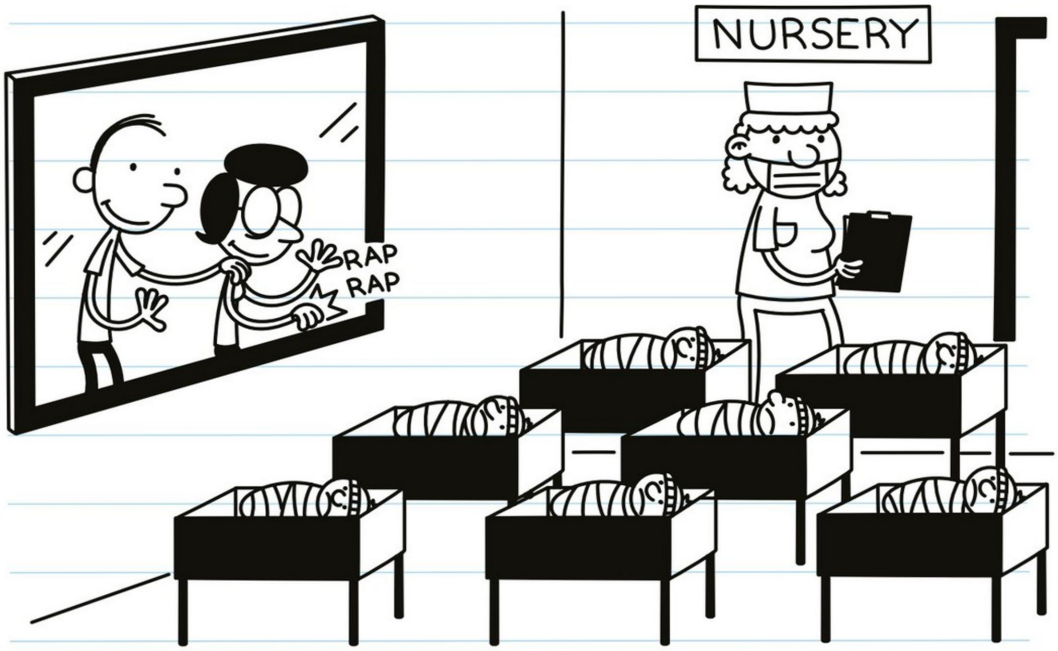
If you think about it, it's kind of weird that people even celebrate birthdays to begin with. Because for most of us, the actual day of our birth isn't something to cheer about.

One second, you're floating around and minding your own business, and the next, you're stark naked, surrounded by a bunch of people you've never even met. So right out of the gate, you start off in an embarrassing situation.

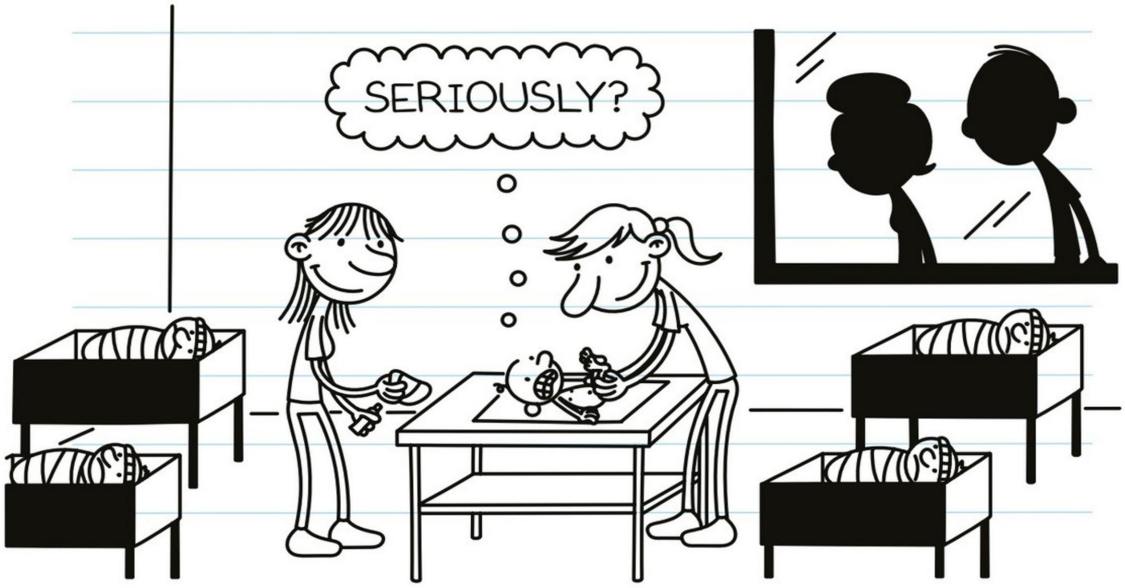


Five minutes later, you're wrapped in a blanket so tight that you can't move your arms or legs.

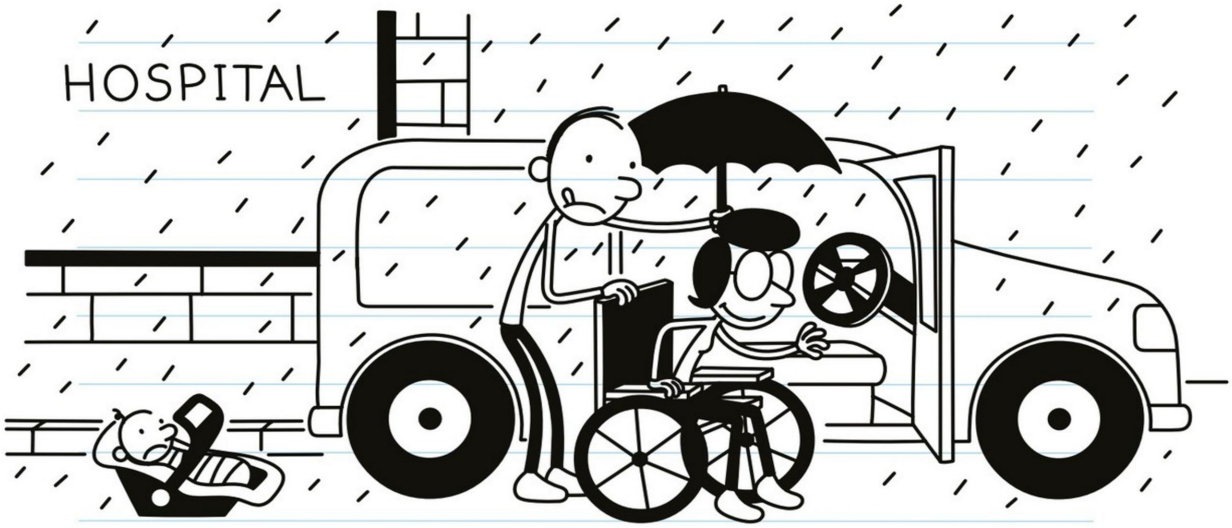
And if you don't like the little knit hat they put on you, there's nothing you can do about it.



The only time they let you out of the blanket is to change your diaper, and that's when you find out you have ZERO privacy.



Just when you finally start to get used to everything, they tell you it's time to leave. And then you discover the world outside is a harsh place, and you're not the most important person in it.

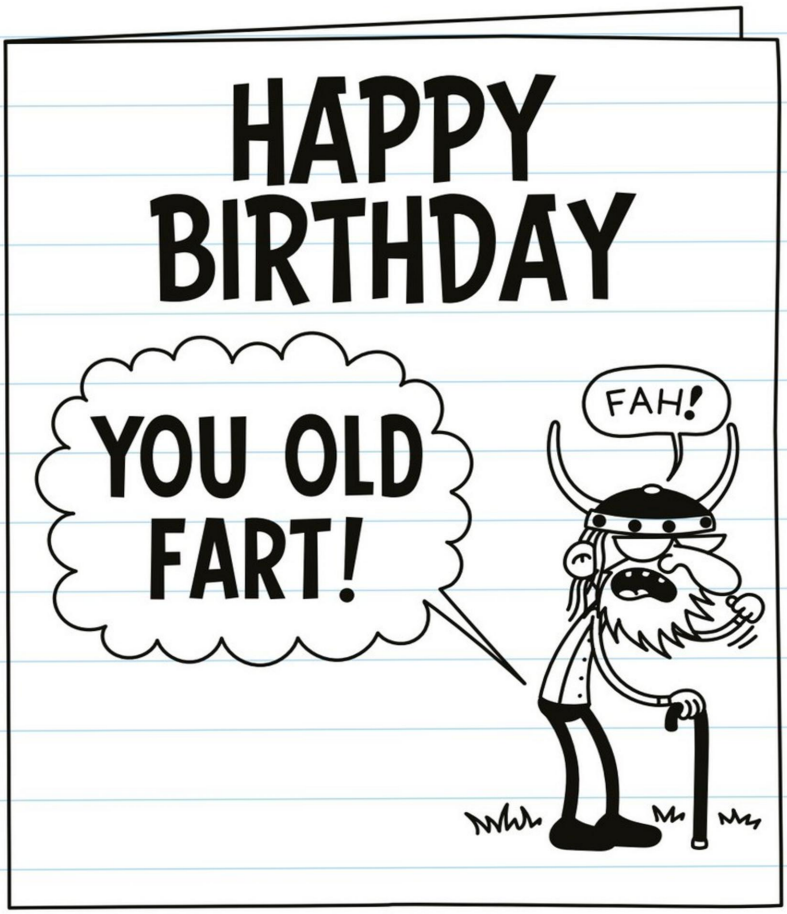


Back in ancient times, they didn't celebrate birthdays, and nobody even knew how old anyone was. So it was probably pretty crazy for a while.

One day someone must've announced it was their birthday, and that was the start of it all.

I guess the whole birthday thing was a popular idea, because the next thing you knew, parents were throwing themed birthday parties for their kids to make the other parents jealous.

Then some genius came up with the idea of selling CARDS on top of everything else. The cards were printed on thick paper, and sometimes they had jokes in them that older people thought were funny.



Later on, someone invented THANK-YOU cards, and if you didn't send one of those to the people who bought you gifts, it meant you were an ungrateful jerk.

I'm not always great about sending thank-you cards after my birthday. Some of my older relatives get pretty annoyed when I forget, and they'll let me know they noticed.

Dear Greg,

I am writing to see if you received my birthday gift. I am worried it didn't arrive since I never received a thank-you card from you.

With concern, Aunt Dorothy

When I DO get around to writing my thank-yous, people like my Aunt Nancy will send another card BACK, which is a little much, if you ask me.

Personally, I think writing a thank-you card for every gift is way too much effort. Not to mention it costs a lot of money in stamps and envelopes.

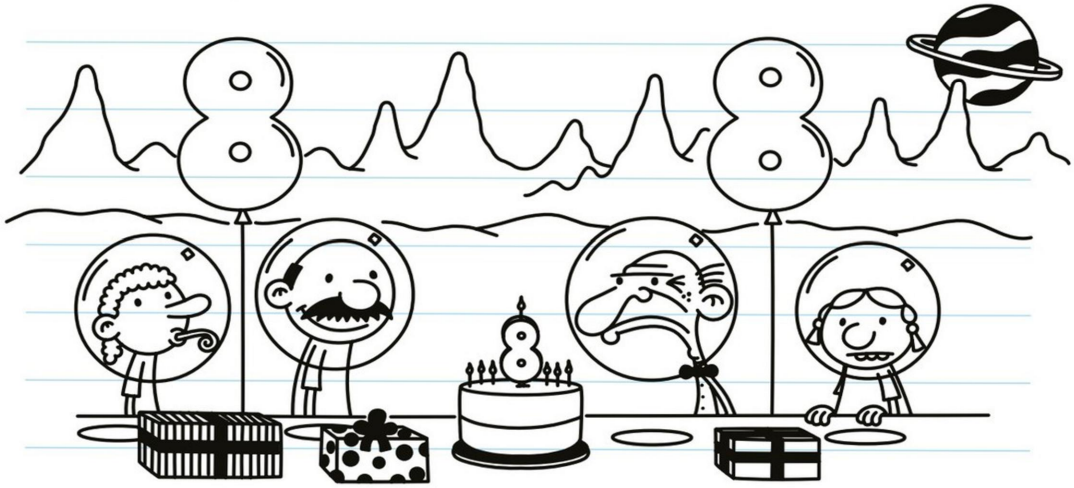
So last year, I decided to say my thank-you out loud to everyone gathered at my party, and I was pretty proud of myself for being efficient.

But Mom said I STILL had to write thank-yous to everyone who got me a present, because she said the older generation likes that sort of thing.

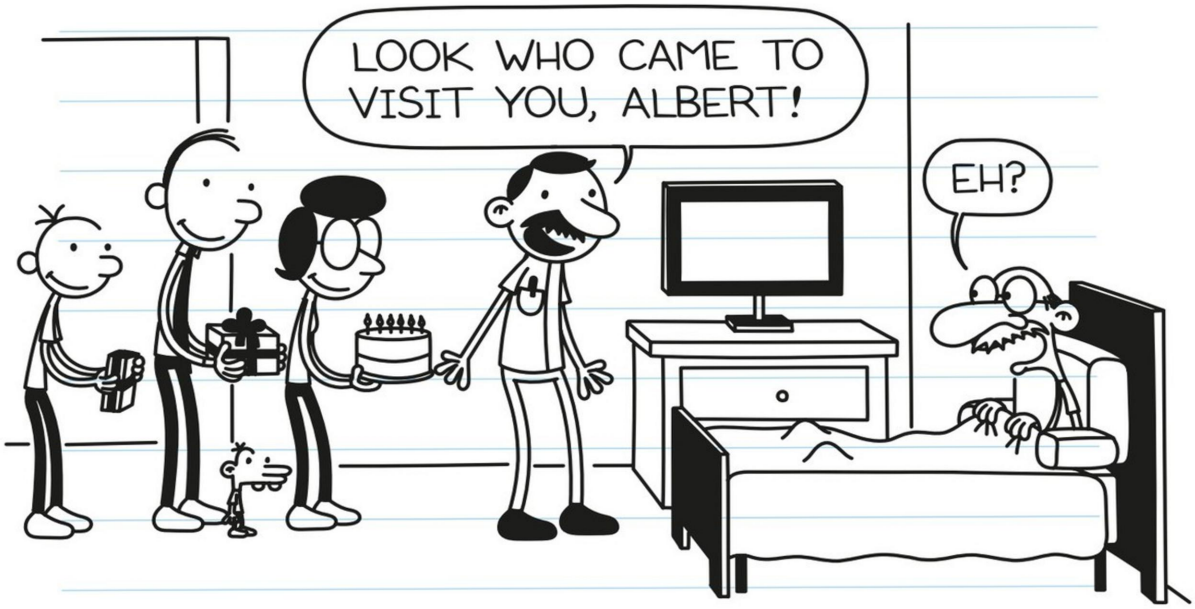
So when I wrote my thank-yous, I added a little message at the end to cover me for a while.

> Dear Aunt Nancy,
> Thank you for the awesome gift. It was so nice of you to think of me!
> Love, Greg
>
> P.S. Please save this card and read it again next year at this time.

The problem is that you have a birthday once a year, so it feels like you're constantly writing thank-yous. But on a planet like Jupiter, a person would only have a birthday every twelve Earth years, which would make staying on top of these things a whole lot easier.



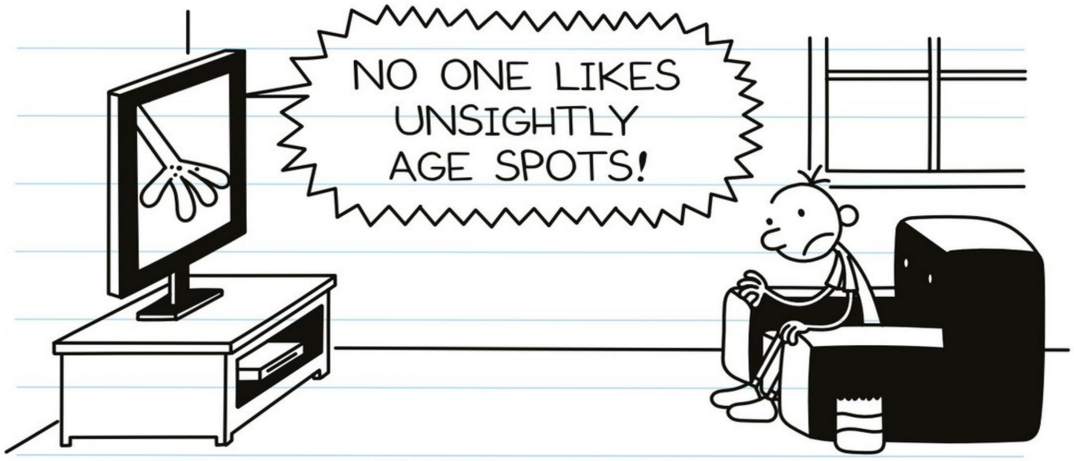
My Great Uncle Albert actually celebrates his birthday a few times a year, because he forgets things pretty easily. So we try to cheer him up every time we see him at the nursing home.



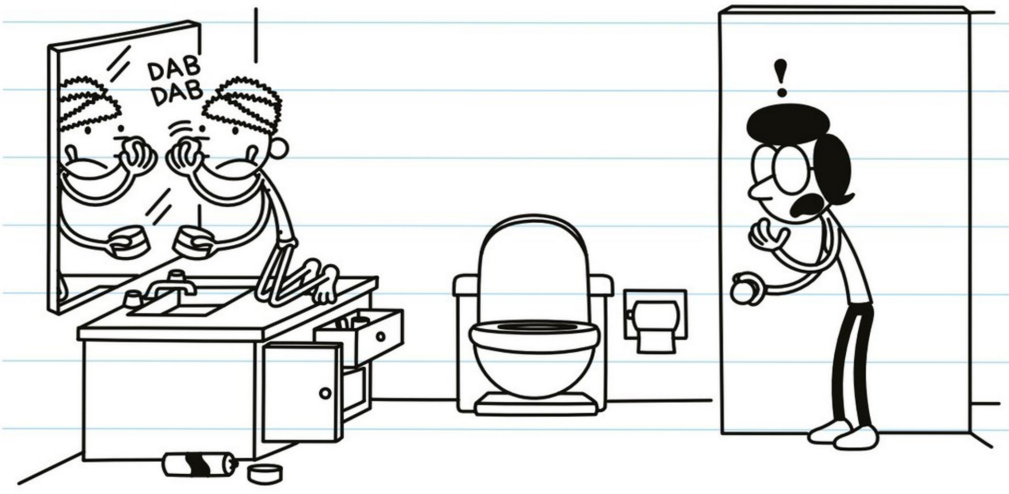
I have a feeling that Uncle Albert is just faking it for the birthday cake, though. But I like cake, too, so his secret's safe with me.

The problem with knowing how old you are is that you're constantly thinking about how much time you've got LEFT.

There are all these commercials on TV that make you worry about getting older. And even though I'm not the target audience for those ads, sometimes I get worried I'm aging faster than I should be.

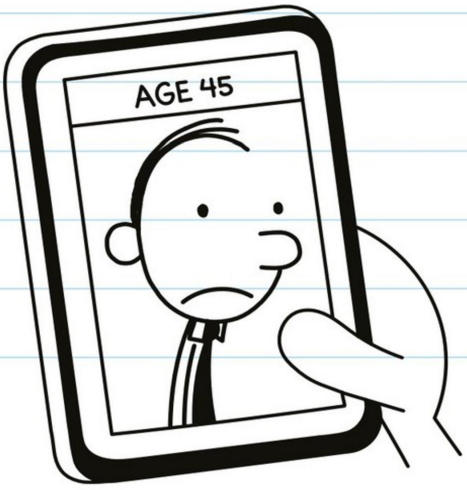


So I started a skin-care routine, just to try and stay ahead of things. I even used my mom's antiaging cream before I went to bed every night, until I got busted.

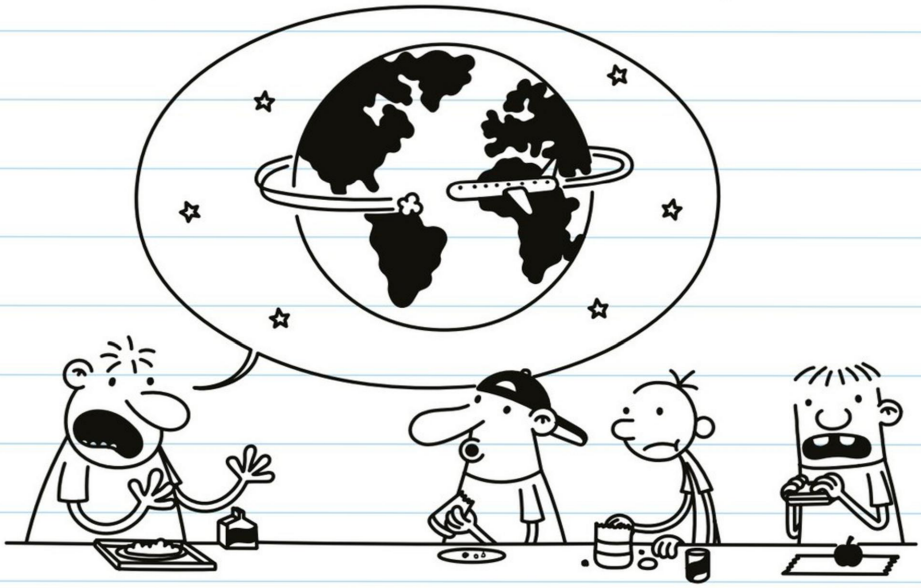


Now I'm kind of worried, because I'd only been using cream on my FACE when I should've been using it all over. I just hope I don't look ridiculous at the beach when I'm in my seventies.

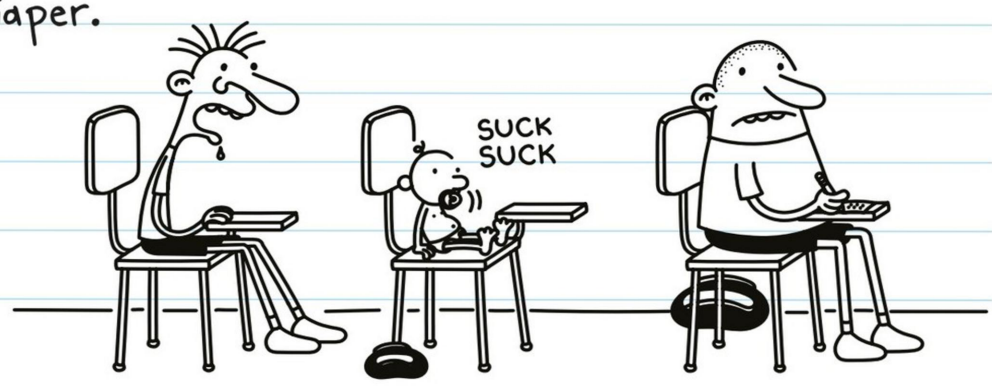
I know EXACTLY what I'm going to look like if I let myself age naturally, though. Rodrick has one of those age-filter apps on his phone, and I made the mistake of checking how I'll look when I'm middle-aged.



But there are ways to slow things down. This kid at my lunch table named Albert Sandy says that if you fly around the world from right to left, you go back in time. And if you keep going in that direction, you can actually REVERSE your age.



He said one person ended up flying TOO far and got younger than they wanted. And I wouldn't want that to happen to ME, because middle school is hard enough without having to wear a diaper.



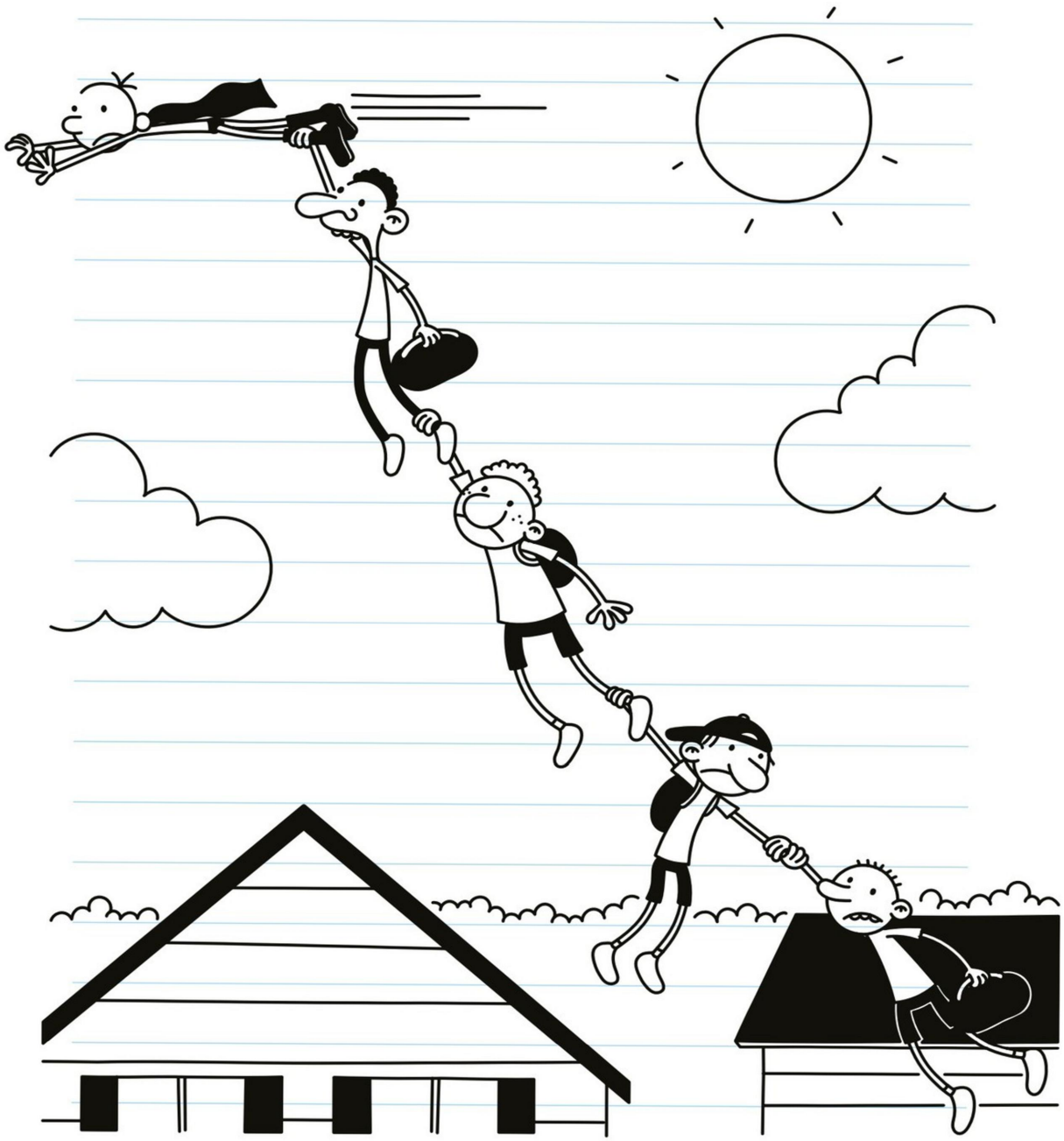
I figure with every birthday, you're one step closer to having to get a job and pay taxes. And then one day you wonder where your whole life went.

A birthday can actually be a GOOD thing, though. I read a lot of comic books, and in some of them, a regular kid gets superpowers when they reach a certain age. And each year, I hope that'll happen to ME. But every time, I end up disappointed.

The year I turned seven, I was so convinced I'd wake up on my birthday with the power to shoot lasers out of my fingers that I invited all the bullies from my grade to my party. And it was kind of awkward when my wish didn't come true.

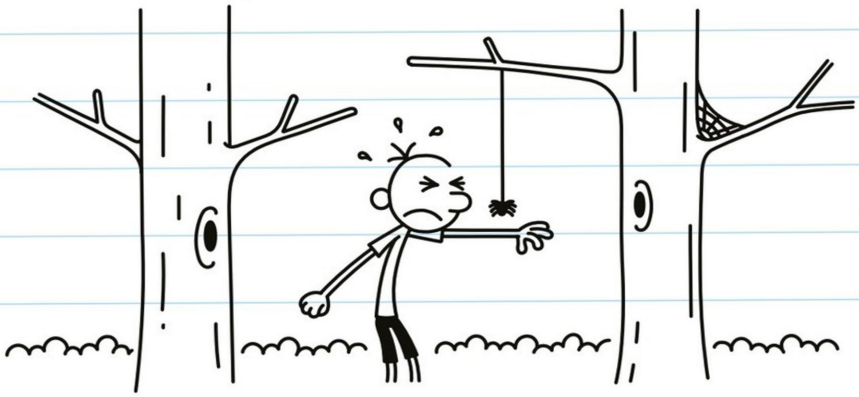
If I DO wake up with a superpower this weekend, I hope it's the power to fly. Because then I can stay in bed until a few minutes before the homeroom bell rings every day.

But there are some serious drawbacks to having a power like that one. The second people learn you can fly, you're gonna get freeloaders who want to hitch a ride.

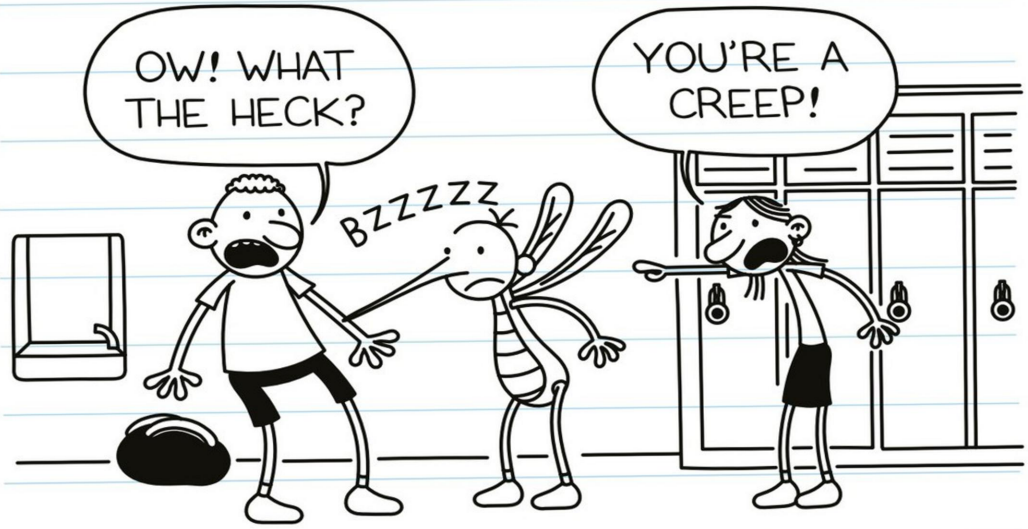


Plus, if everyone knows who you are and where they can find you, you'll never get a moment to yourself. And I'm pretty sure that's the reason most superheroes wear masks.

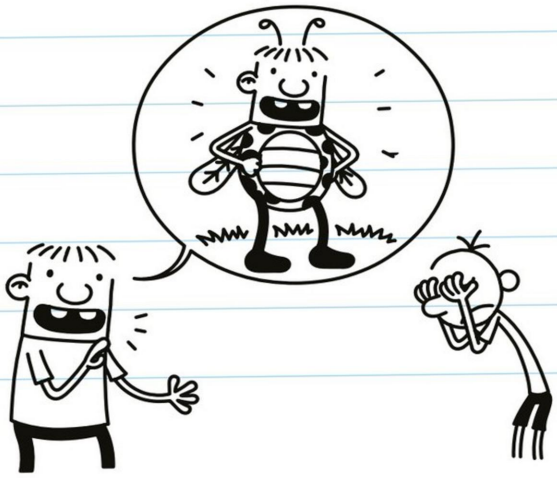
Sometimes something has to HAPPEN for a person to get superpowers, like getting bit by a radioactive bug. And even though I'm willing to suffer a little to get special abilities, I wish there was an easier way to do it.



What I'm worried about is being bitten by the wrong KIND of bug. Because getting the powers of a radioactive mosquito wouldn't make me very popular at school.

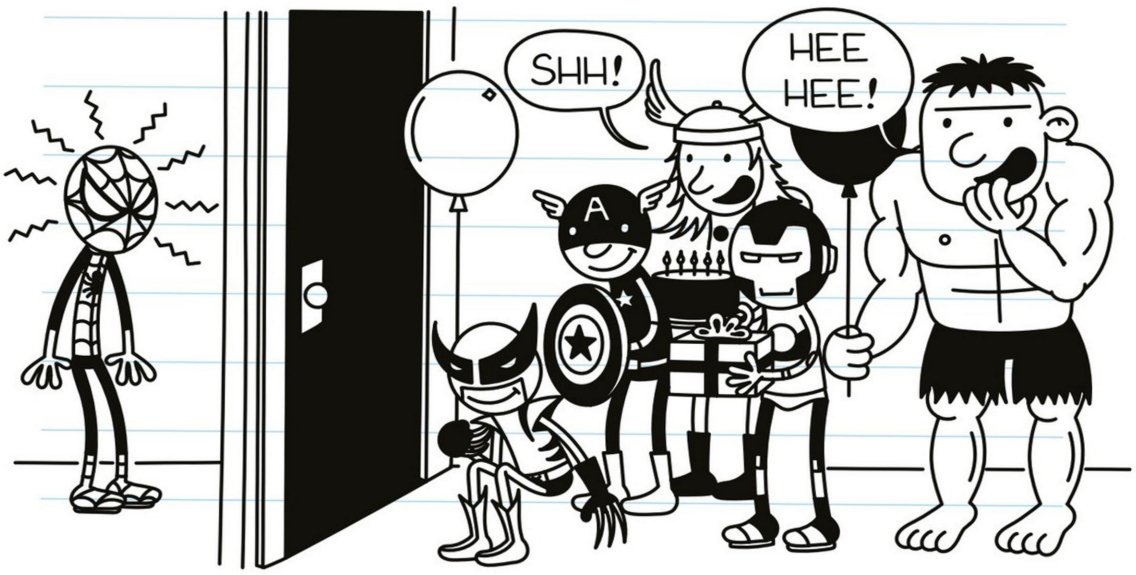


My friend Rowley is always saying he hopes he gets bit by a radioactive ladybug, because it would give him the power of kindness. And sometimes, I don't know about that boy.



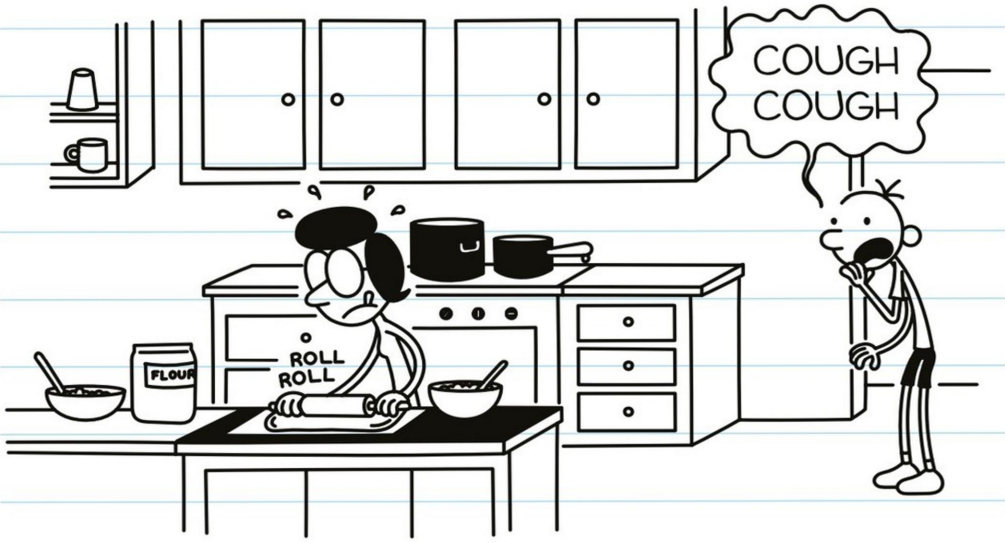
There are a few superpowers that I definitely wouldn't want to have, like the power to guess the future. I feel like movies are predictable enough without knowing for sure what's coming.

And I wouldn't want to have those senses that give you a heads-up that something's just about to happen, either. Because if you're Spider-Man, no one can ever throw you a surprise party.



Come to think of it, my own spider senses have been tingling lately. My birthday's this Saturday, but me and Mom haven't even talked about my party yet. And that's weird, because we usually plan these things a few weeks ahead of time.

I haven't had a chance to talk to Mom about my birthday because she's been busy getting ready for a pie-baking contest that's happening at the church this weekend. And whenever I try to bring up my birthday, it never seems like the right time for her.



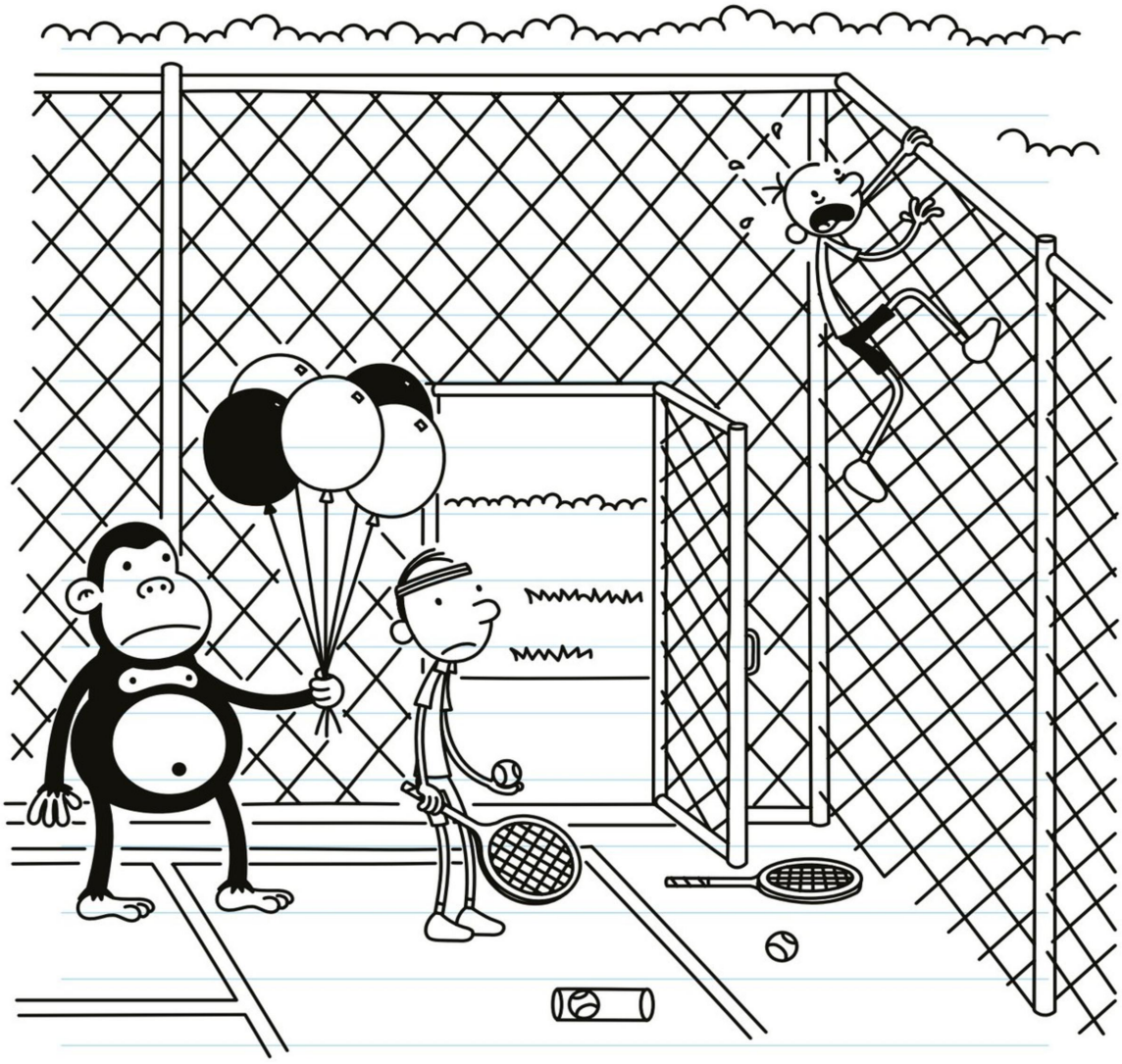
But tonight I realized what's REALLY going on. This whole "pie contest" isn't even a real thing.

It's just a way to get me to show up at the church basement on Saturday, where my family's gonna throw me a SURPRISE party.

I'm actually pretty excited, because I've never had a surprise party before. And it'll still be fun, even though I know it's coming.

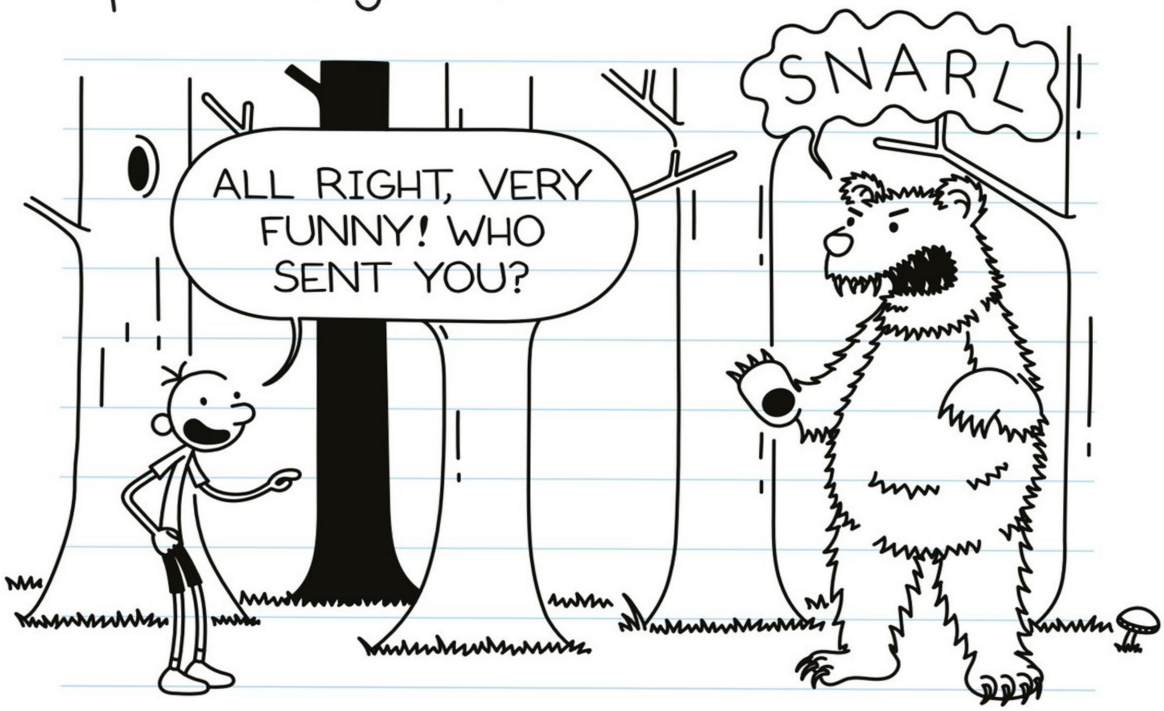
It makes sense that Mom's planning a surprise party for me, because she loves doing this sort of thing. One year, she hired a person dressed in a gorilla costume to surprise my dad on his birthday.

I just wish she'd given me a heads-up, though, because I thought that gorilla was REAL.

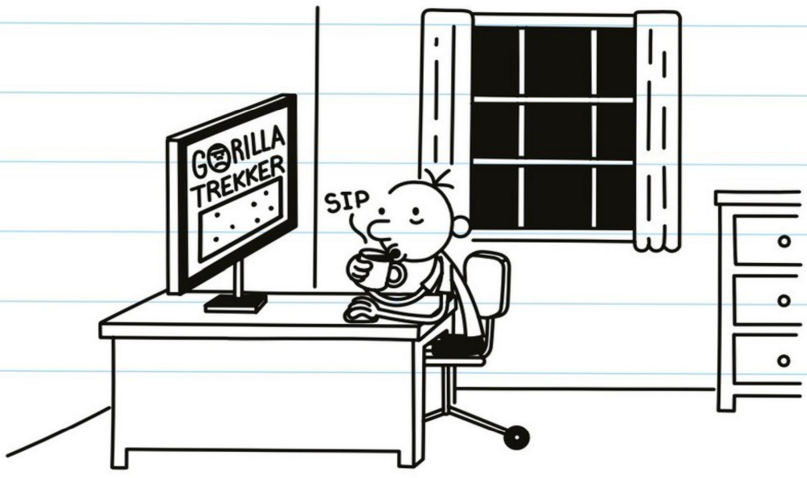


If you ask me, I think it's a bad idea to hire someone to dress up in an animal costume, since all it does is teach people to let their guard down.

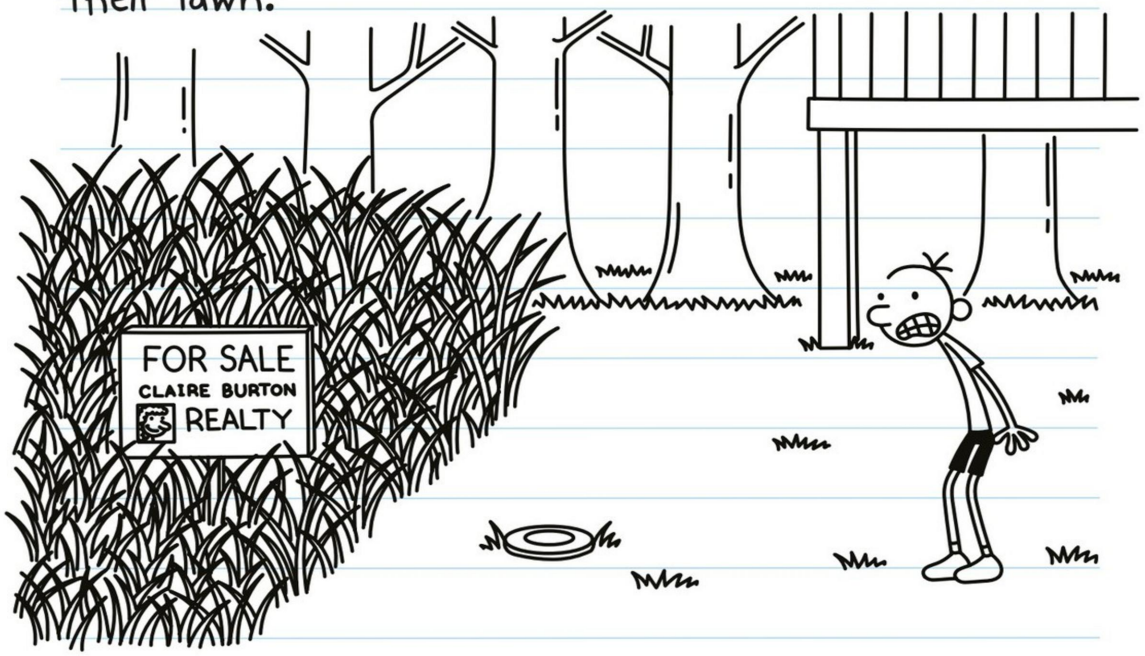
And with my luck, one day I'll think an animal is a person in disguise when it's NOT.



I guess the whole gorilla thing messed with my head, because ever since, I've been paranoid that a gorilla could break out of a zoo somewhere. So I've been visiting this website twice a day to make sure there aren't any gorillas loose in my area.



I've actually got good reason to be worried. Our next-door neighbor moved out a few months ago, and I swear I've seen something BIG moving in their lawn.



Plus, something's been eating the azaleas Dad planted this spring, which led me to do a little research. And sure enough, I found out gorillas are herbivores.

That doesn't mean a gorilla wouldn't attack a PERSON, though, especially if one messes with their habitat. So when Mom said she'd pay me twenty-five bucks to mow the neighbor's yard, I told her I wouldn't do it for a MILLION.

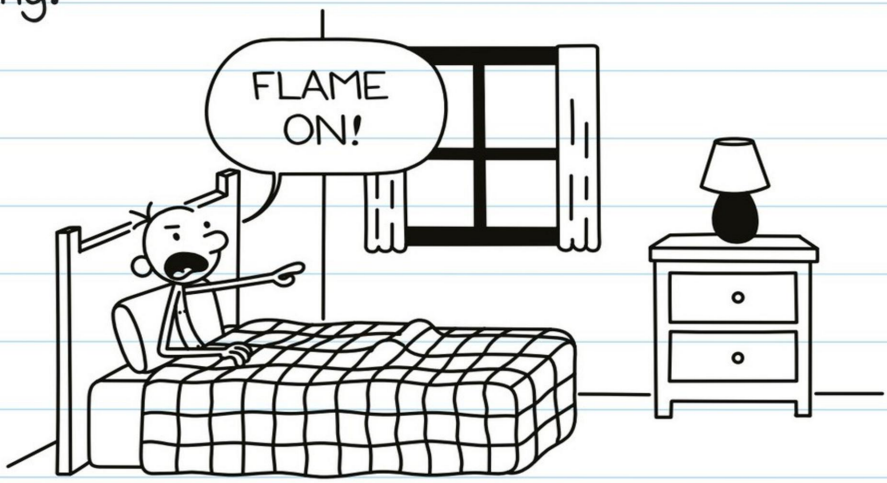
Even though I'm excited about my surprise party, not knowing exactly what's gonna happen has got me a little nervous.

So tonight I came up with a plan. On Saturday, I'm gonna get to the church before everyone else. That way, when the big moment comes, the surprise will be on THEM.

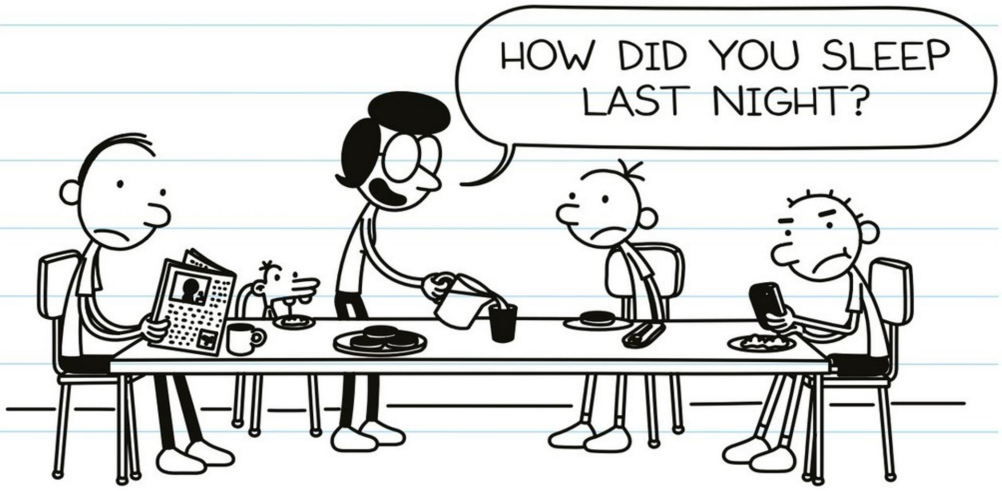
I feel kind of bad turning the tables on Mom like that. But maybe she'll learn that she's gonna have to be a lot smarter if she wants to pull one over on ME.

Saturday

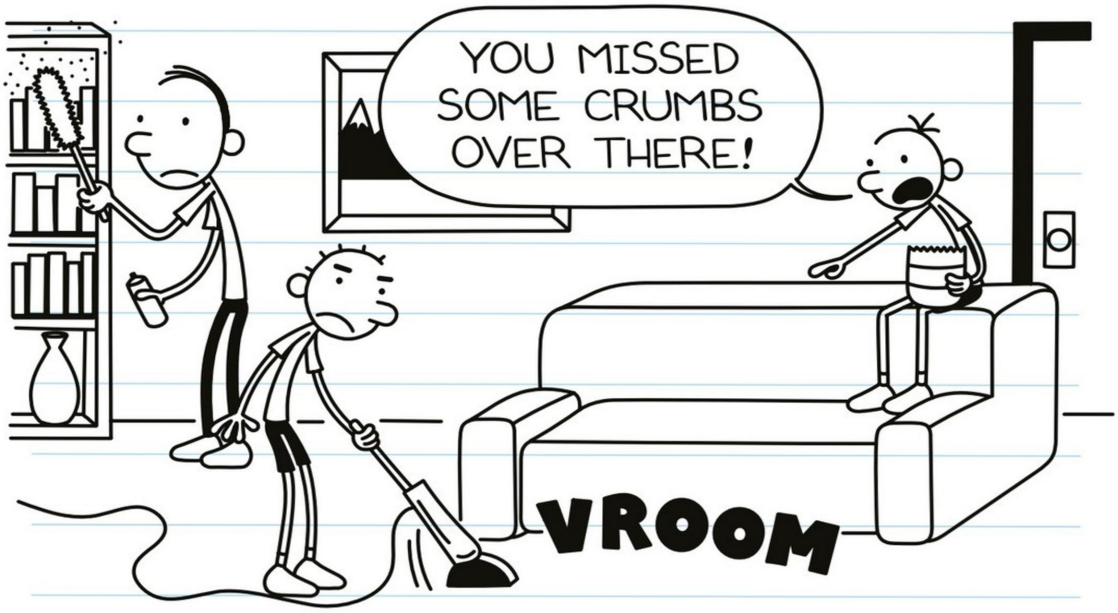
Today was my birthday, and it started off a little disappointing. I didn't wake up with superpowers, but that was probably a GOOD thing.



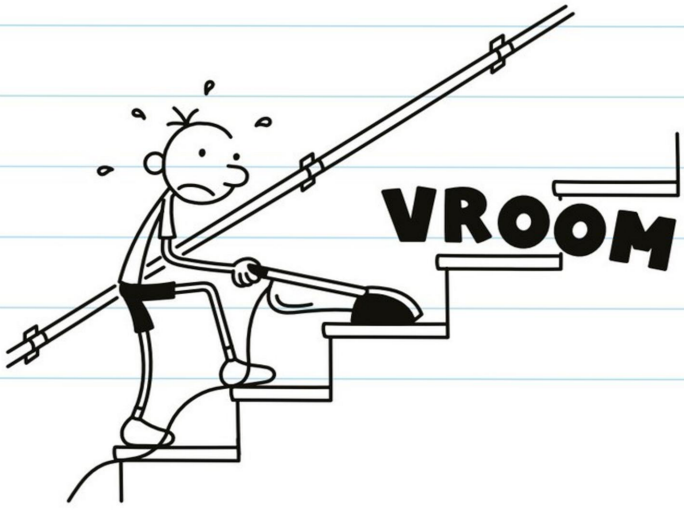
I've gotta admit, it was a little weird that no one in my family mentioned my birthday this morning. But I guess that's what everyone had to do to keep the surprise party under wraps.



The thing is, I feel like they took it a little TOO far. Ordinarily, I don't have to do chores on my birthday. And I like to take full advantage of that perk.

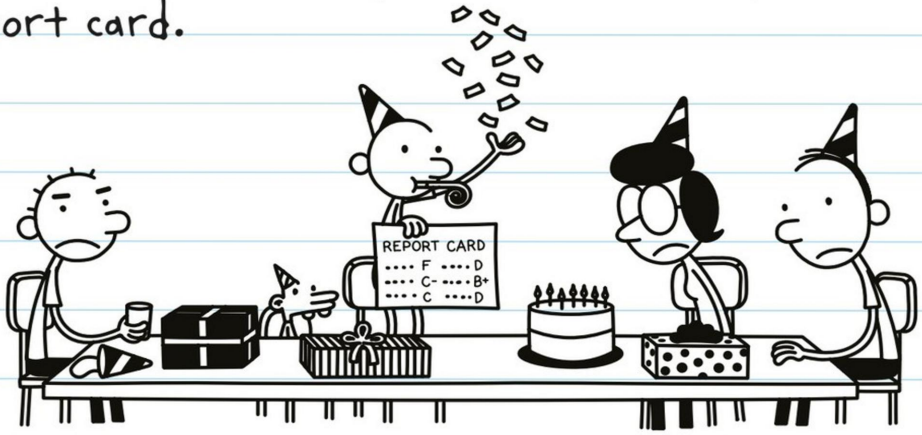


But Dad acted like today was just an ordinary Saturday, which meant I had to do my regular chores. So I bit my tongue and played along.



I usually like to milk my birthday for the full twenty-four hours, and I start celebrating the second it officially begins. But I couldn't do that this year, because of the surprise party.

You can't really get in trouble on your birthday, so it's a good time to deliver bad news. And I still haven't told my parents about my last report card.



Your birthday's the one day of the year when you get to feel like a celebrity, and I usually let everyone know who deserves star treatment.

The worst thing was that I couldn't collect my birthday perks today. There are a bunch of local businesses that give kids free stuff on their birthdays, and I always go around scooping up all the goodies I can.

But if I asked one of my parents to drive me around today, they'd have to admit they knew it was my birthday, and the surprise would've been ruined.

That really stinks, because Bartolini's Bakery has a frosted birthday cookie that weighs a full pound, and I've been looking forward to getting mine for a whole year.

Bartolini's birthday cookie is so legendary that kids PRETEND it's their birthday. So now the bakery requires a birth certificate to prove you're telling the truth.

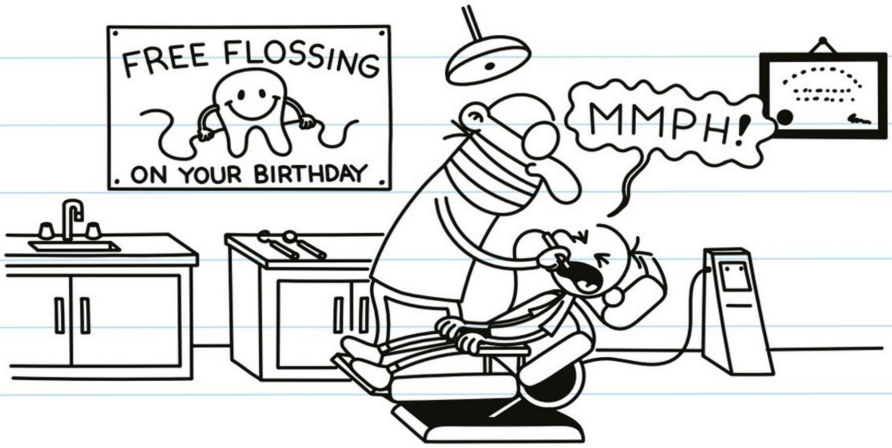
Earlier this year, Ricky Fisher started selling FAKE birth certificates that people could use at Bartolini's.

I admit that I bought one of those fake certificates myself, because the bakery's birthday cookies are totally worth it. But I guess Ricky's forgery didn't look official enough to the cashier at Bartolini's, because they wouldn't take it.

And now that it actually WAS my birthday, I couldn't cash in on that cookie, or any of the other treats I could've gotten today. But I guess I shouldn't complain, because there are a few birthday freebies I'm glad I WASN'T able to collect.

Dr. Kagan offers a free flossing for patients on their birthdays, and Mom usually likes to take me to his office for that.

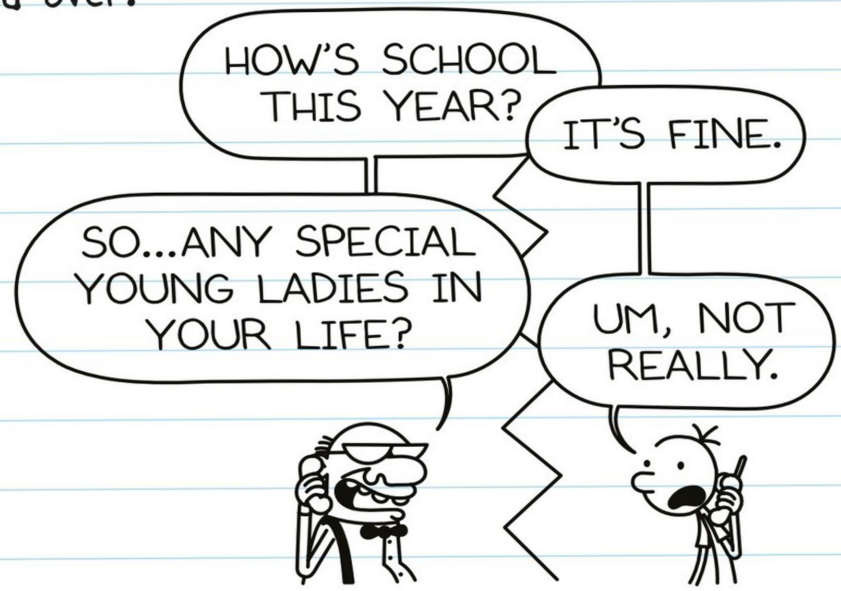
But last year he found two cavities while he was flossing, so I spent my birthday in the dentist's chair. And I don't need a repeat of that situation.



Mom said she wanted our family to be at the church basement at 5:00, which meant my surprise party would probably be over in an hour or two. And after dinner, I knew I'd start getting birthday calls from my relatives, so the rest of the night would be shot.

It's nice of my relatives to call me on my birthday, but it feels like the phone always rings when I'm in the middle of a game.

No offense to anyone, but all those calls are exactly the same. And sometimes it gets a little tiring having to answer the same questions over and over.



So a couple years ago, I came up with a sheet of answers to the questions my relatives usually ask me, and I asked Mom to read them to anyone who called while I was playing video games.

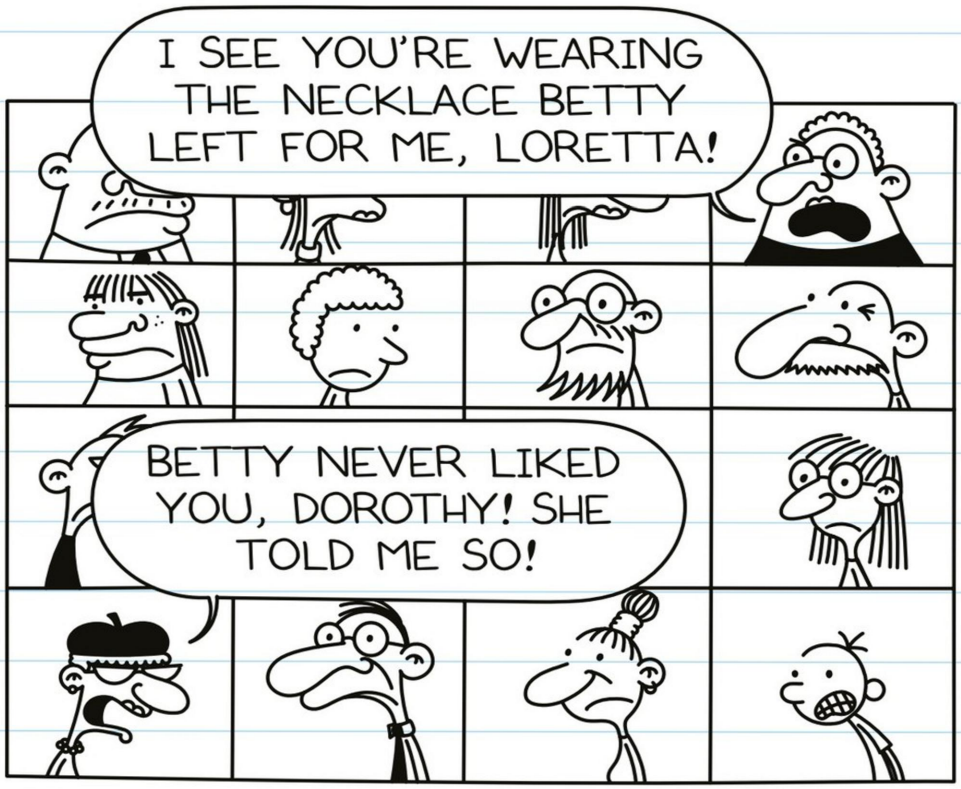
Frequently Asked QUESTIONS

Q: HOW'S SCHOOL?	A: FINE
Q: ARE YOU PLAYING ANY SPORTS?	A: NOT THIS YEAR
Q: DID YOU GET EVERYTHING YOU WANTED FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY?	A: MOSTLY
Q: HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE ONE YEAR OLDER?	A: GOOD
Q: DO YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND?	A: NO

But Mom said that whenever a relative calls to wish me a happy birthday, I need to drop whatever I'm doing and talk to them.

The thing is, I've got a lot of relatives, and those birthday calls add up. So I needed to figure out a way to shorten the whole process. One year, I sent everybody a video link to do one big birthday chat.

At first, it seemed like a good idea, and it was nice seeing my relatives on the screen at the same time. But I forgot that some people in my family don't get along, and a few minutes in, two of my great aunts totally hijacked the call by getting into an argument.



Eventually, everybody dropped out, and the only person left was some guy I'm pretty sure isn't even related to me. And don't ask me how he got the link to begin with.

I realized a lot of my relatives would be at my surprise party this year, so I might not have to take as many birthday calls later on. I just hope that one guy doesn't show up, though, because he really did creep me out.

Mom said it was important to be at the church today, because she wanted me to vote for her key lime pie. And I have to say, I was impressed with her acting skills.

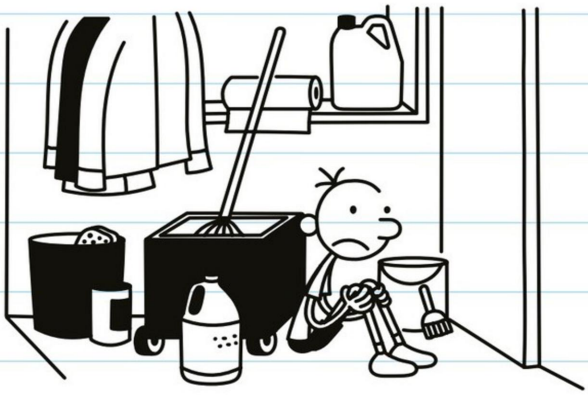
Then I did a little acting of my OWN. I told her I was gonna play video games up at Rowley's, and that I'd ride my bike down to the church after we were finished. She reminded me it was important to be on time, and I promised I would.

I hopped on my bike and headed straight down to the church, because I wanted to make sure I was there before anyone ELSE so I could pull off my big surprise.

I ditched my bike behind the rectory so no one who came for the party would know I was already there. Then I went through the back door of the church and down the stairs.

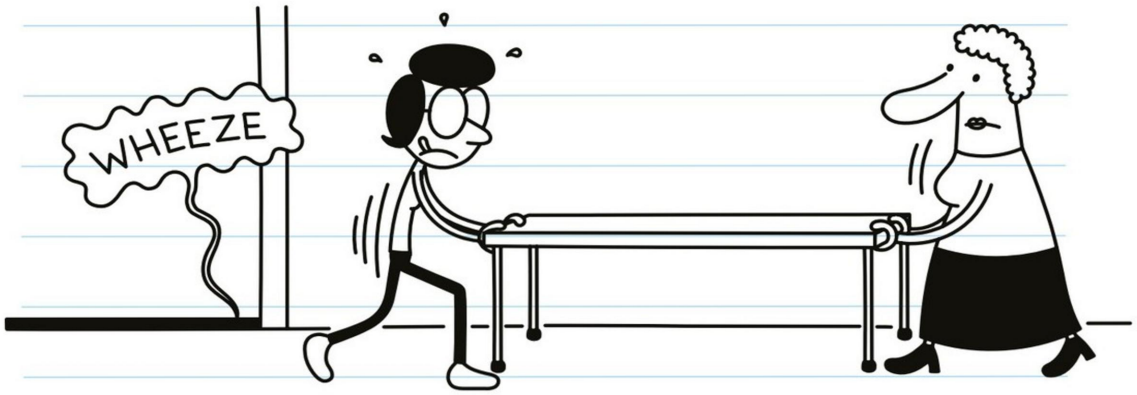
But the second I got to the basement, I heard someone coming. So I had to find a hiding spot before I could even come up with a plan for how I was going to pull off my surprise.

I ducked into the janitor's closet, which was full of cleaning supplies. And I really wished I had brought something comfortable to sit on.

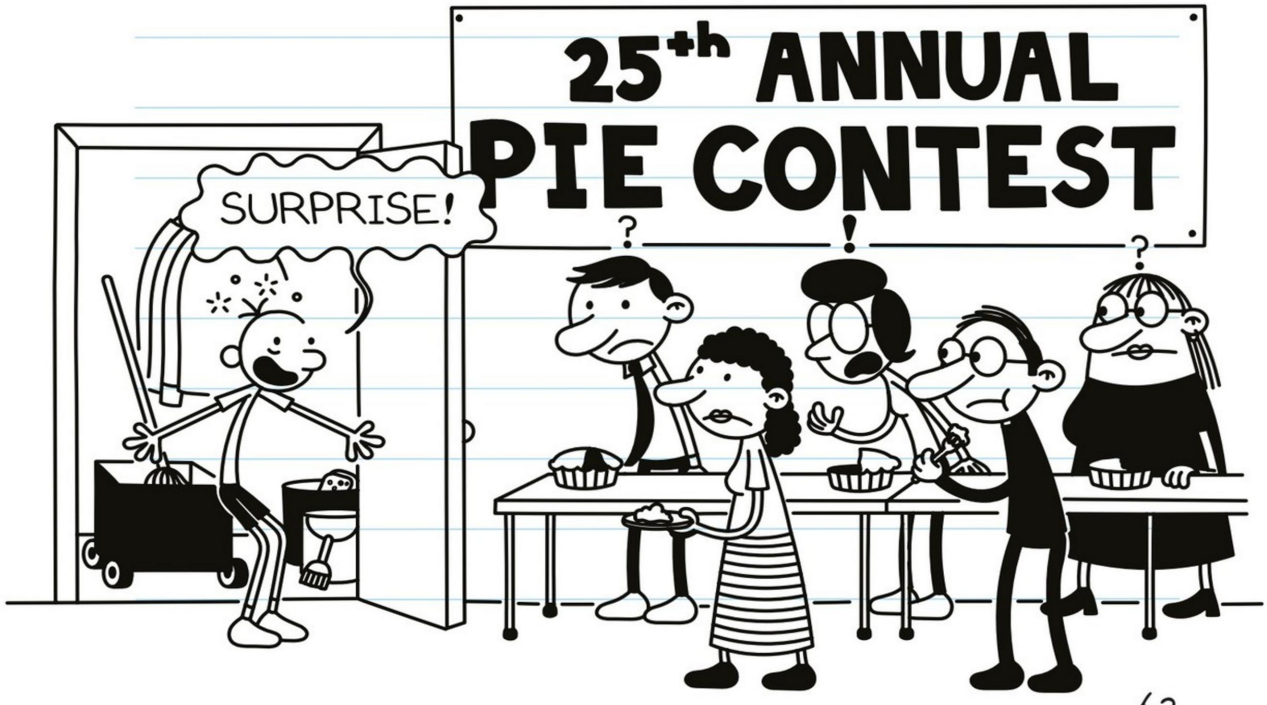


I started getting a little nervous, because the fumes from the cleaning supplies were strong and there wasn't any air circulation in that closet.

By then, I could hear people setting up for the party, and if I opened the door right at that moment, I'd totally blow my cover. I tried getting oxygen from under the door, but that just made me feel lightheaded.



I didn't want to black out on my birthday, so I decided it was time to surprise everyone. But it turned out the surprise was on ME.



So there really WAS a pie contest at the church today, which meant that my family had actually forgotten my birthday. And it took me a few seconds to get over the shock.

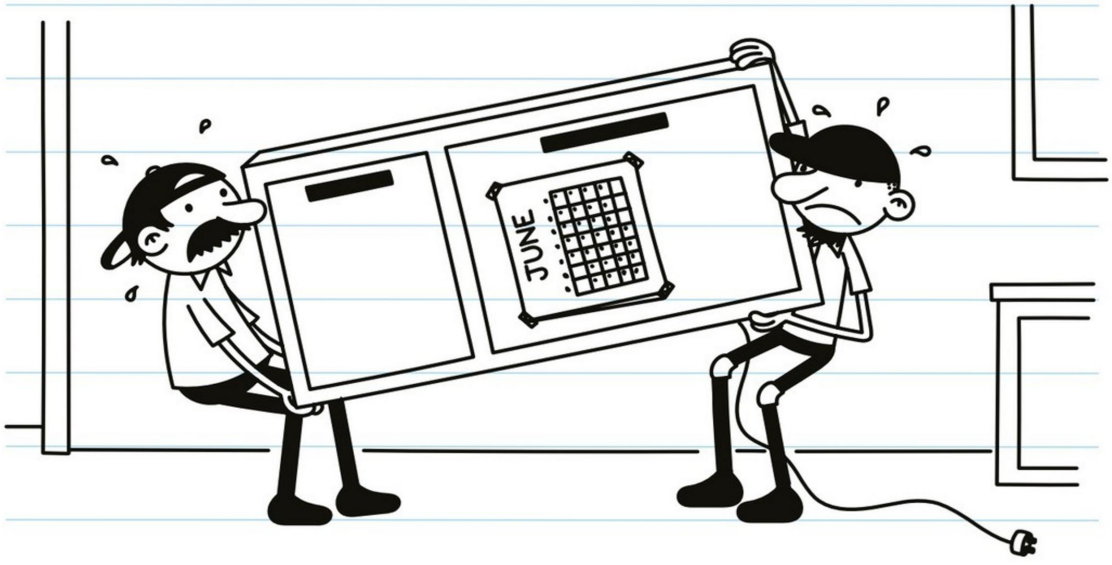
But Mom seemed even MORE shocked, and from the look on her face, she was pretty embarrassed about the whole thing.

Then she tried to play it off like this was the plan for my birthday all along, but I don't think anyone was buying it. And besides, pie is no substitute for cake.

Thursday

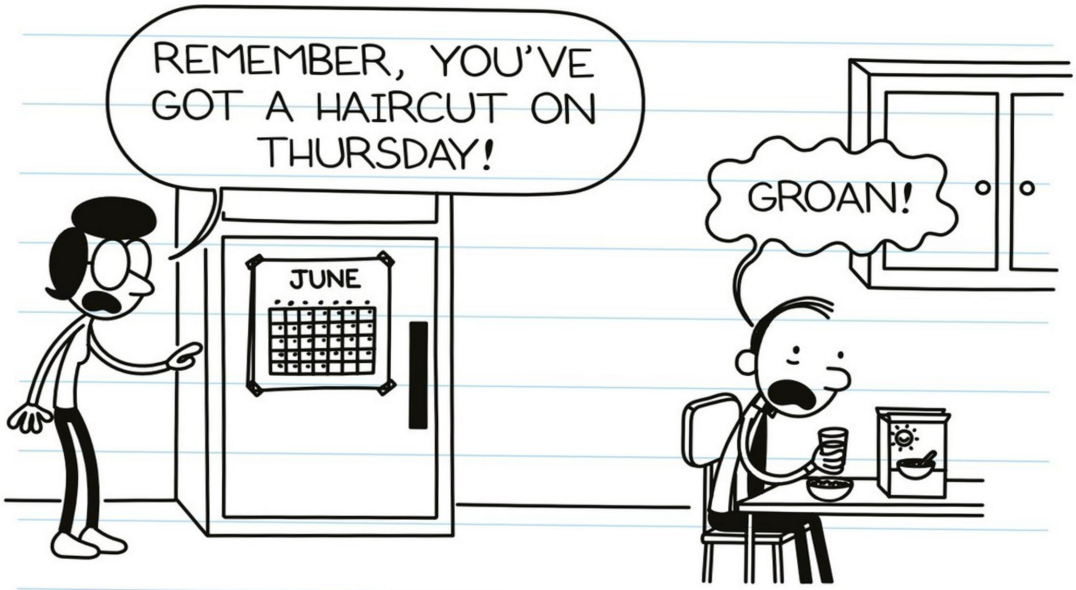
It doesn't feel good having your whole family forget your birthday, but Mom explained what happened.

A few weeks ago, our refrigerator broke, and we had to get a new one. But our calendar was on the fridge the repairmen took away, and that calendar is what Mom uses to keep track of everything that's on the family schedule.

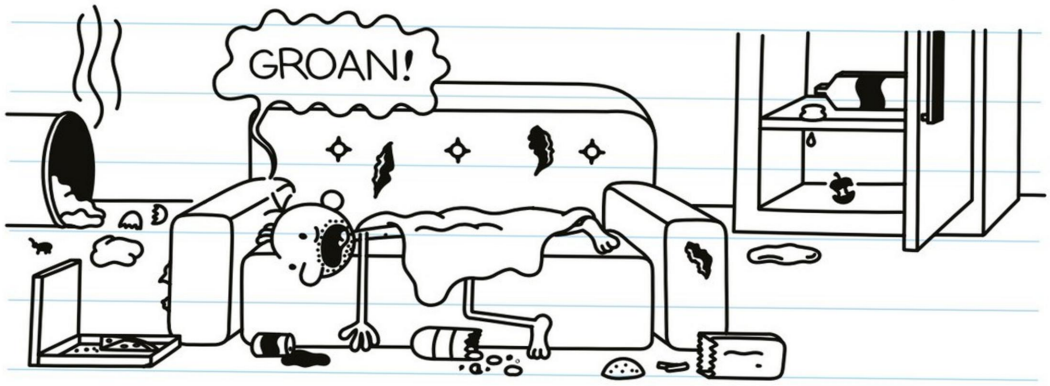


When Mom got a NEW calendar, she put the pie contest on it, but forgot my birthday was on the same day. And I guess I can see how that kind of thing could happen.

You'd think DAD would've remembered his own son's birthday, but I guess if something's not on the calendar, it might as well not exist. And he depends on Mom to remind him about stuff, just like the rest of us.

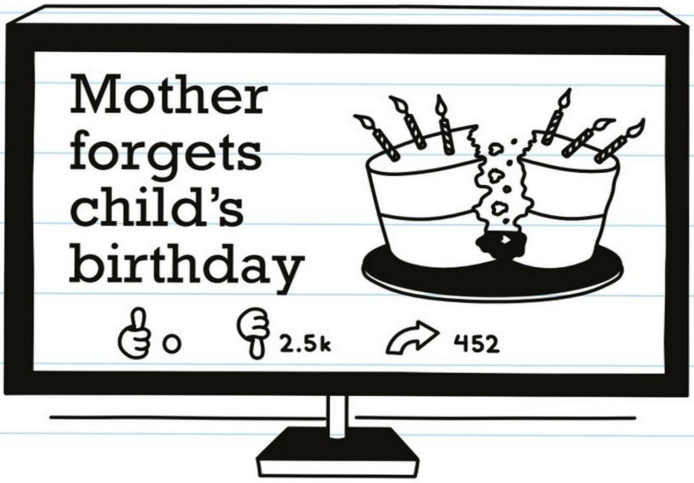


In fact, I'm worried that once I leave home and don't have Mom to tell me what I'm supposed to do, I won't even know how to take care of myself.

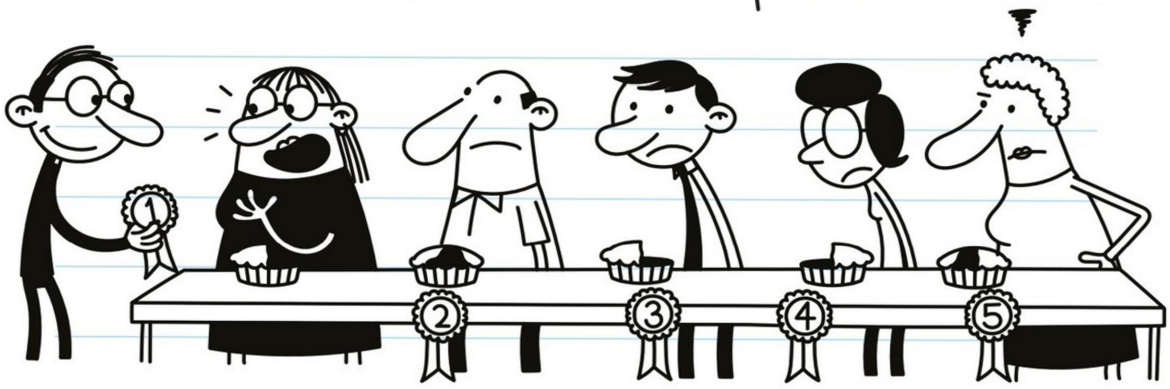


But after everything that's happened since the pie contest, I think Mom's finished being everyone's social secretary.

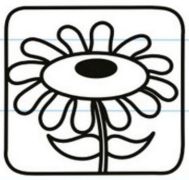
On Sunday night, a story started going around on social media about what happened on Saturday, and I saw it on her computer screen.



Somebody in the pie contest must've posted the story to stick it to Mom. And my money's on Mrs. Fairweather, who took last place.



I guess Mom's pretty annoyed for being singled out, because she created a fake profile and posted something in the comments section.



GoodMom47

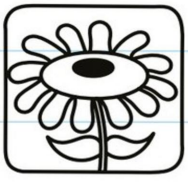
It feels like the child's father shares in the blame!

All the other commenters want to know who the kid in the story is so they can send me something for my birthday. And I wouldn't really have a problem with that.

But Mom's worried that strangers are gonna start showing up at our house with cakes and presents, so she's trying to get everyone to back off.

ConcernedParent48

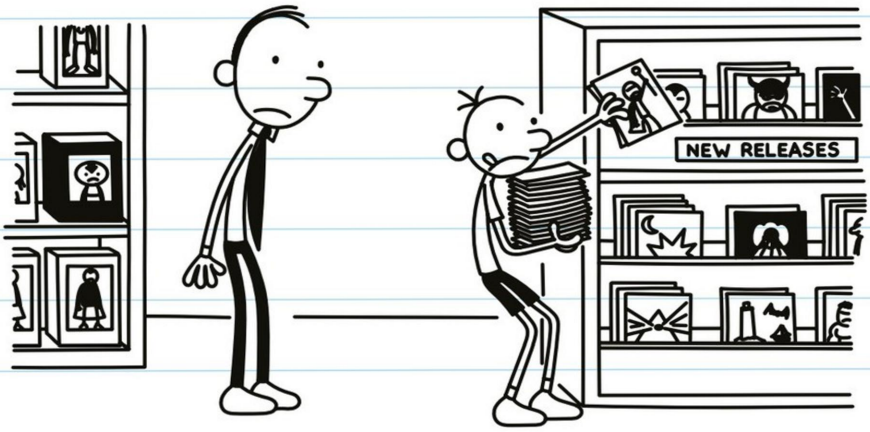
I wish I knew where the kid lived so I could send him something!



GoodMom47

I'm sure the child's parents will make it up to him.

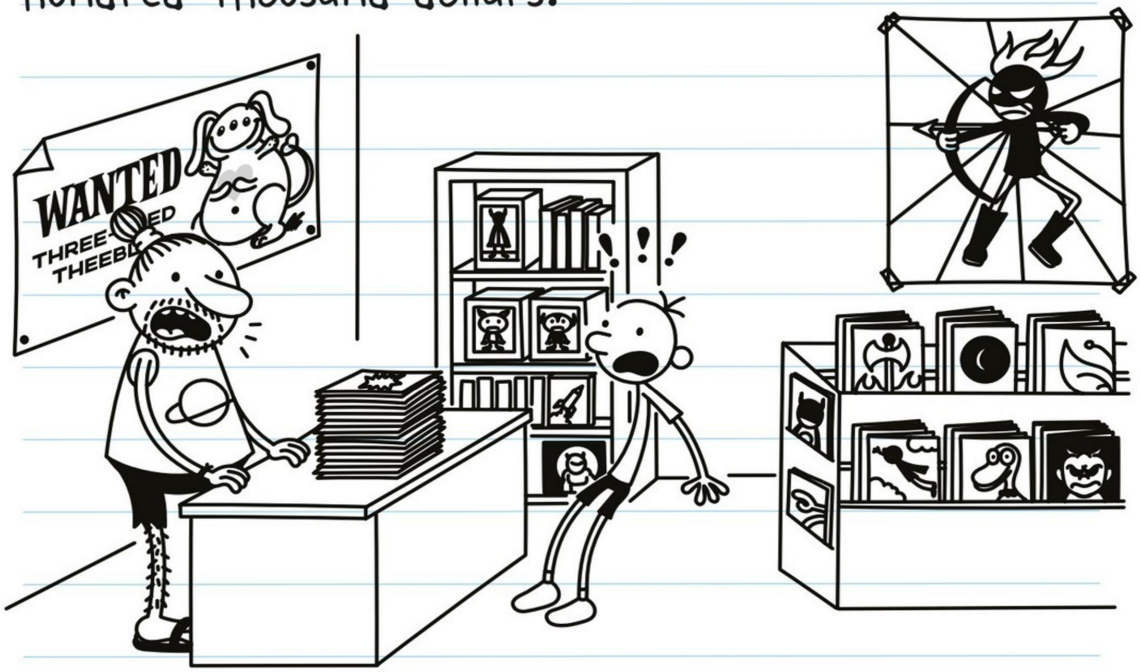
Last night, Dad took me out for some birthday shopping. We ended up at the comics store, where I loaded up on a pile of the newest releases. I'll admit that I might've gone a little overboard, but I figured this was the time to do it.



I was ready to check out at the cash register, but then a poster behind the counter caught my eye.

I was a little confused, because a Theeble is a MicroCreatures monster that only has two eyes. But the guy at the comics shop told me that the card company accidentally printed one with THREE eyes, and now it's worth a ton of money.

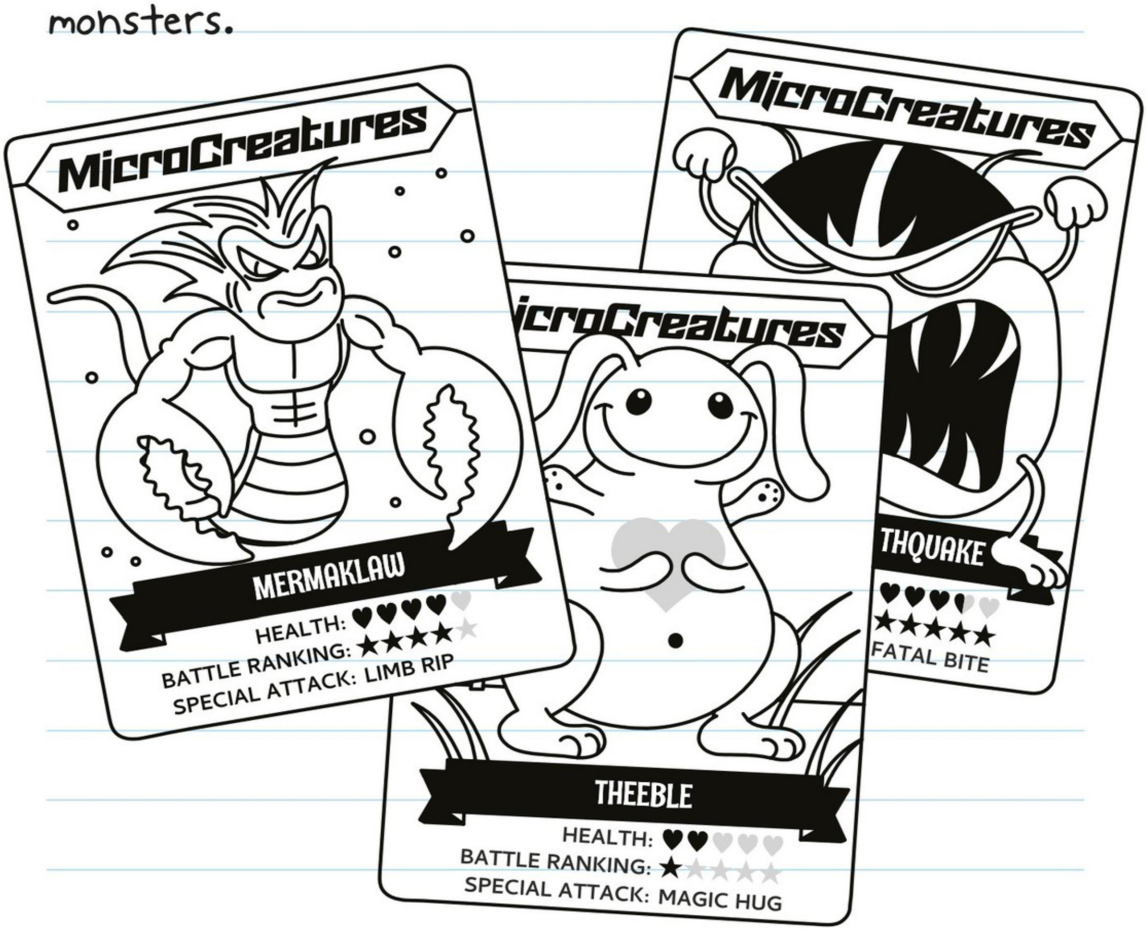
When I asked him how much it's worth, he told me that the Three-Eyed Theeble could go for a hundred thousand dollars.



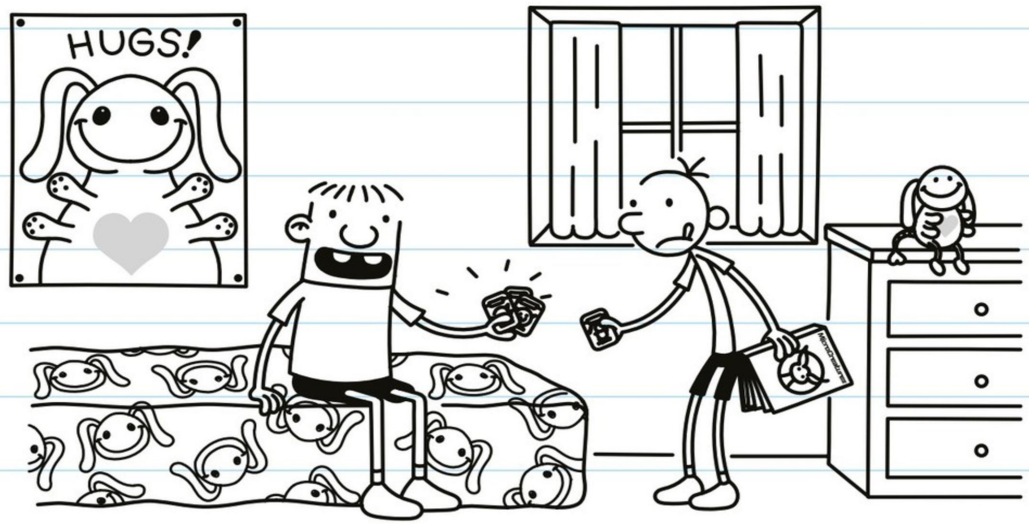
I never thought a trading card could be worth that kind of money. Back in elementary school, everyone was crazy about MicroCreatures, and I had a whole collection of them that I kept in a plastic binder.

Every time I'd get a few bucks, I'd go to the comics shop and buy more MicroCreatures cards. But the problem was that they sold them in these foil packs, and you never knew what you were gonna get when you opened one.

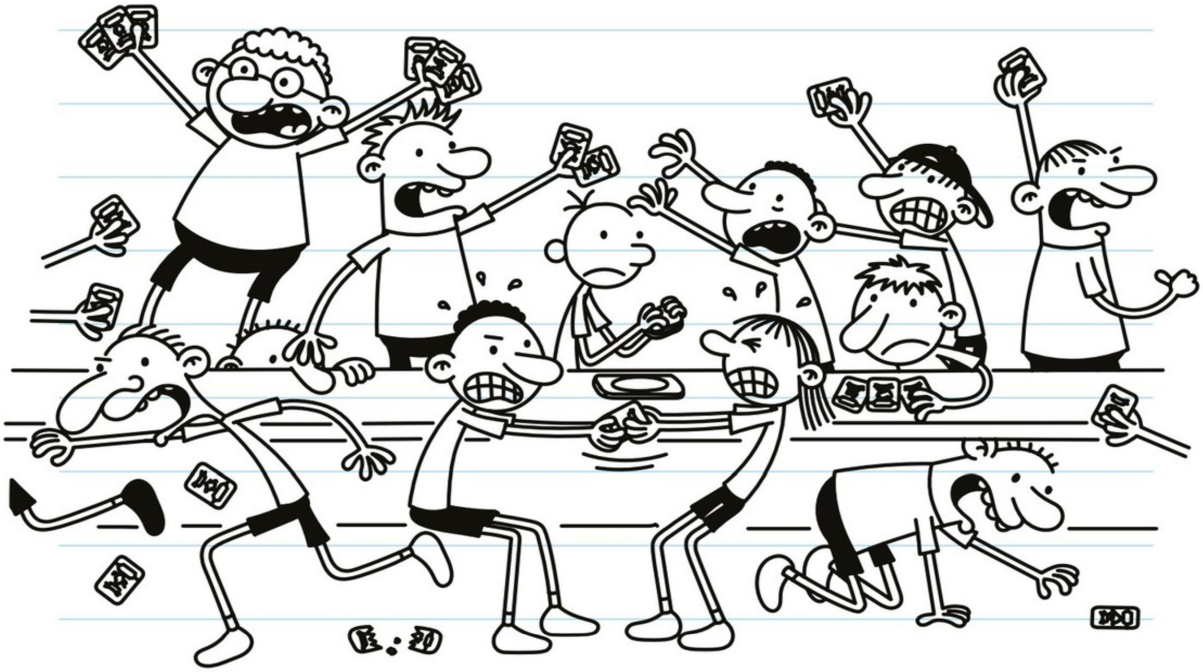
For every good card, you'd get a bunch of duds. And I must've gotten about fifteen Theebles, which are pretty worthless, since they have the worst battle ranking out of all the MicroCreatures monsters.



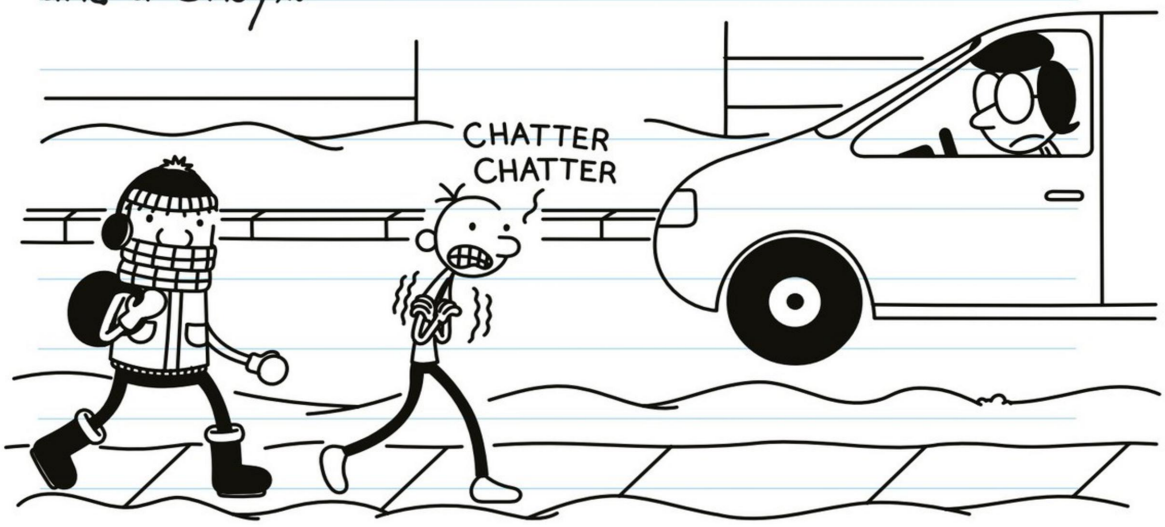
Luckily for me, Rowley LOVED Theebles, so I was always able to trade with him for something better.



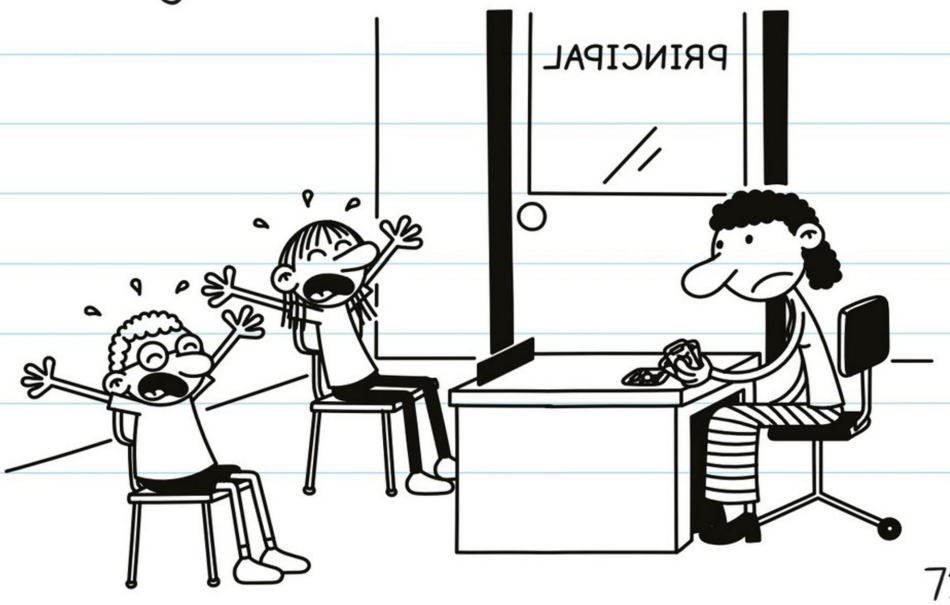
Back then, EVERYBODY at school was trading MicroCreatures cards. And at lunchtime, the cafeteria was like the stock exchange.



After a while, kids started trading MicroCreatures cards for REAL stuff. And Mom wasn't too happy when I traded my winter jacket for two Plickups and a Gnoyx.



Things got so bad at school that the principal was spending half her day dealing with kids' arguments over MicroCreatures cards. And I'm sure she had better things to do with her time.

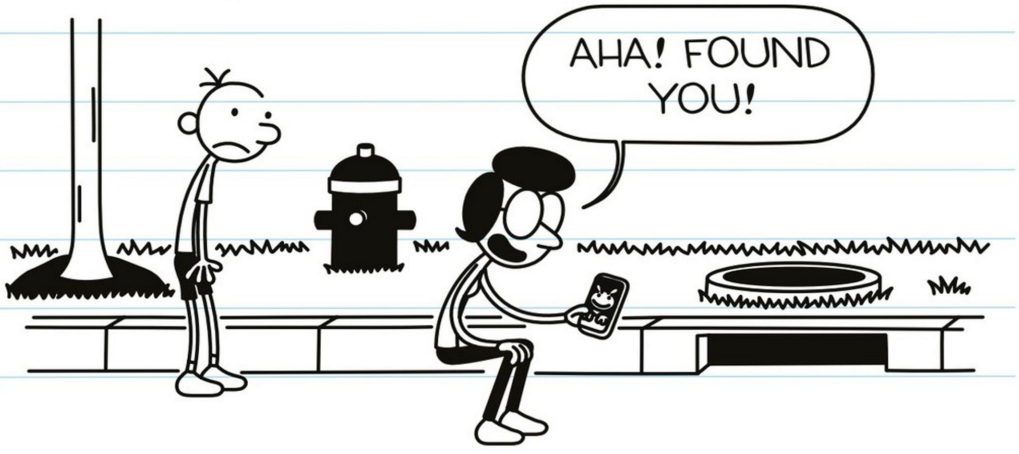


Eventually, the principal banned MicroCreatures trading cards on school property, and sent a letter to everyone's parents explaining the situation.

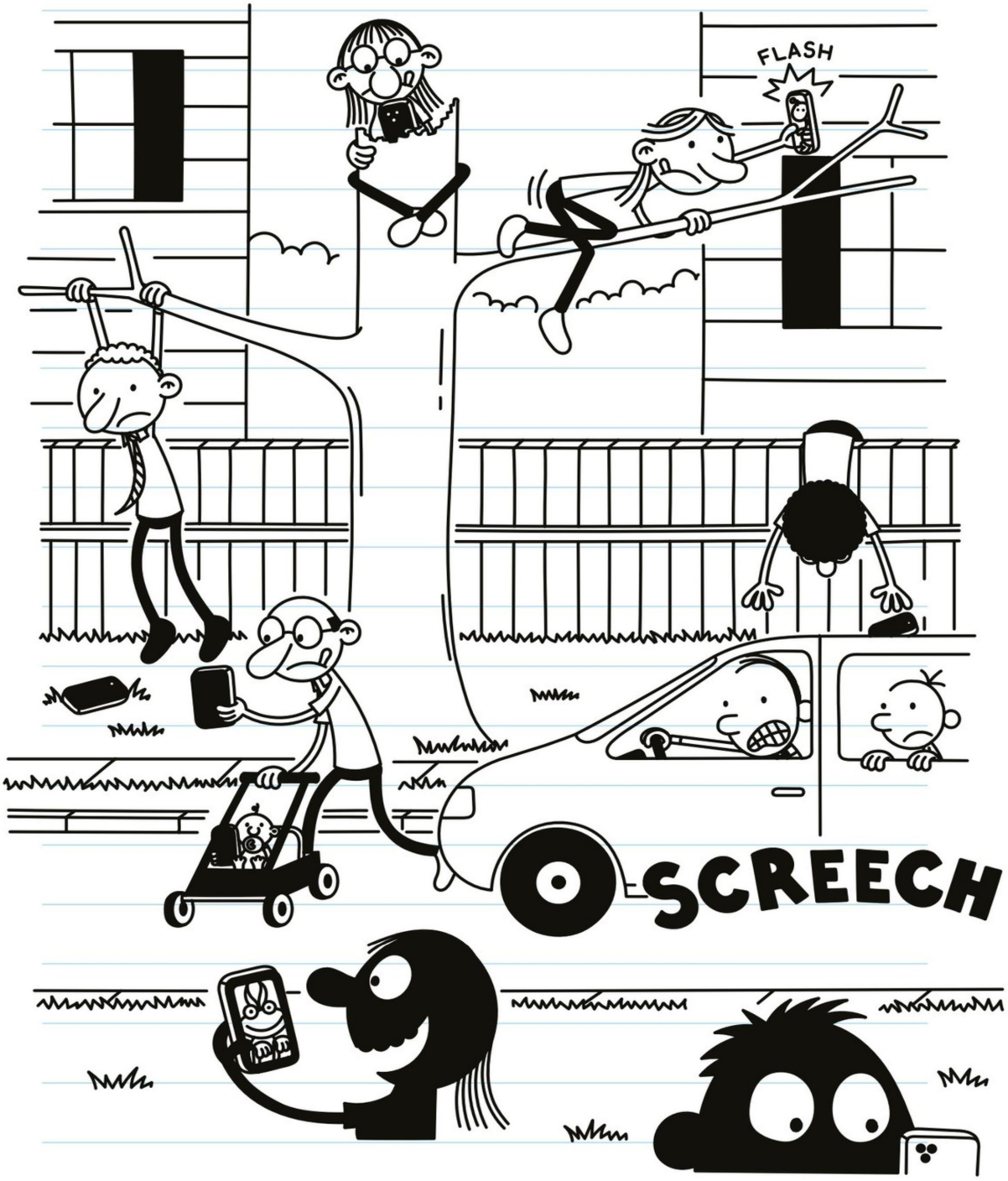
Dear Parents,

I'm writing to inform you that, after considerable thought, I've made the decision to ban the popular "MicroCreatures" trading cards from school grounds, effective immediately.

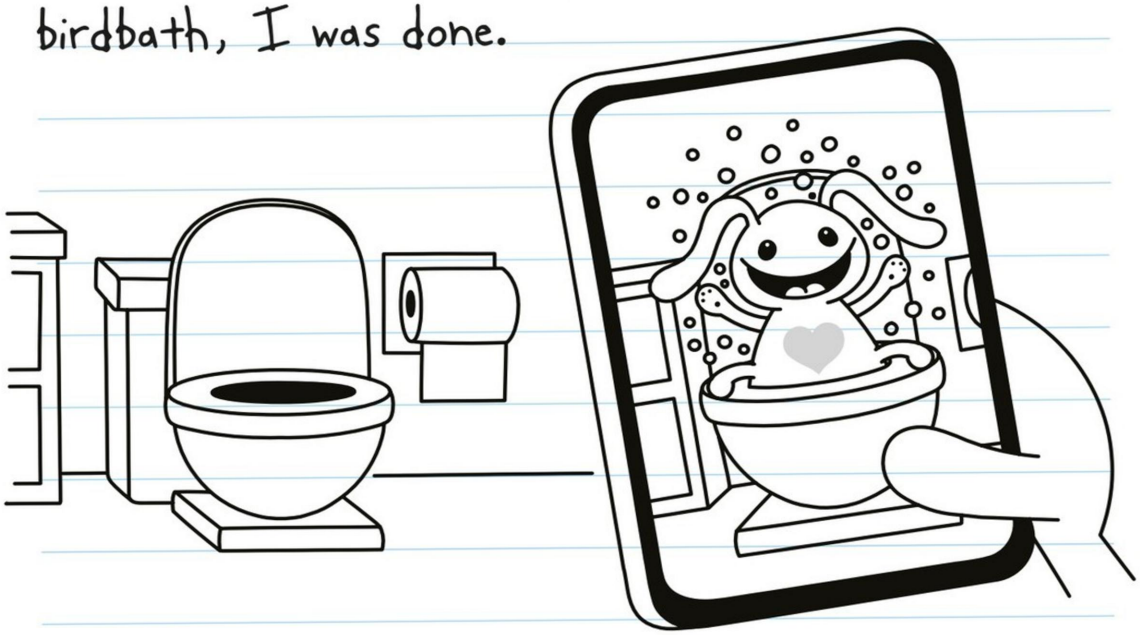
But parents already knew all about MicroCreatures, because that was right in the middle of the MicroCreatures Seeker craze, where grown-ups could use an app on their phones to track down monsters in the wild. And nobody was more addicted to it than MOM, who liked it because it got her body moving.



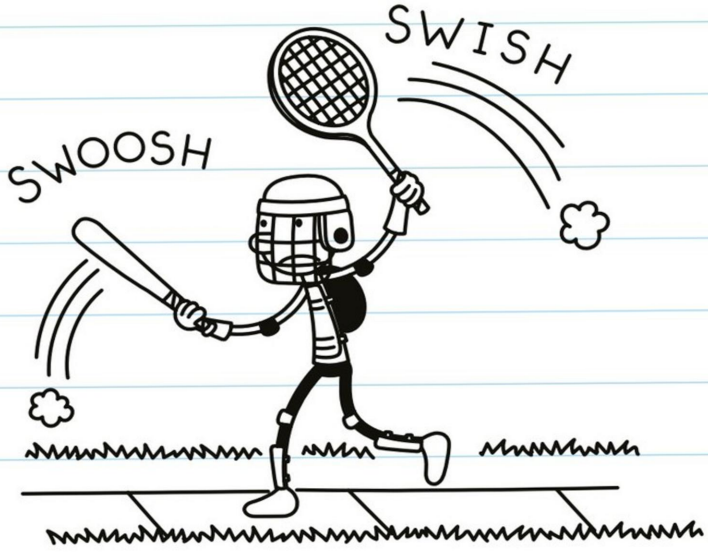
For a few months, it seemed like every grown-up in our town was playing MicroCreatures Seeker. And it's a miracle no one got HURT.



I borrowed Mom's phone to try the game, but I got kind of freaked out when MicroCreatures showed up inside our HOUSE. And when I discovered a Theeble using our toilet like a birdbath, I was done.



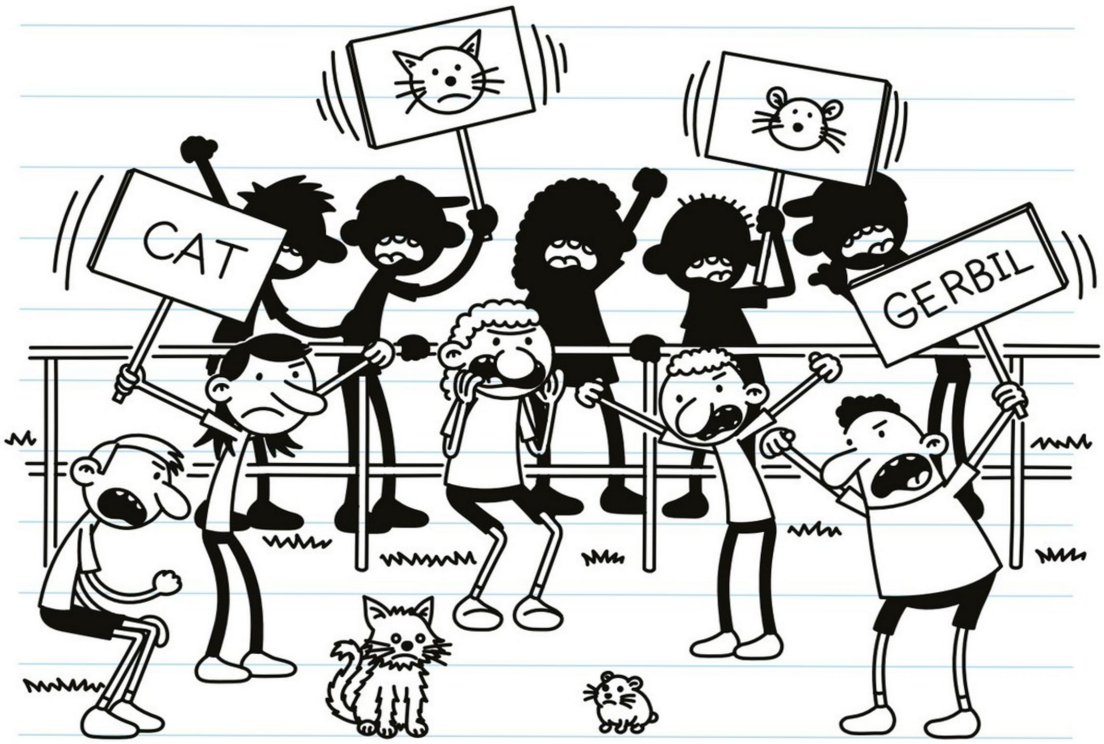
After that, I started carrying protection with me, just in case. Because you never know what kinds of weird things might be buzzing around you.



The basic idea behind the MicroCreatures world is that you capture these monsters to make them fight each other in an arena.

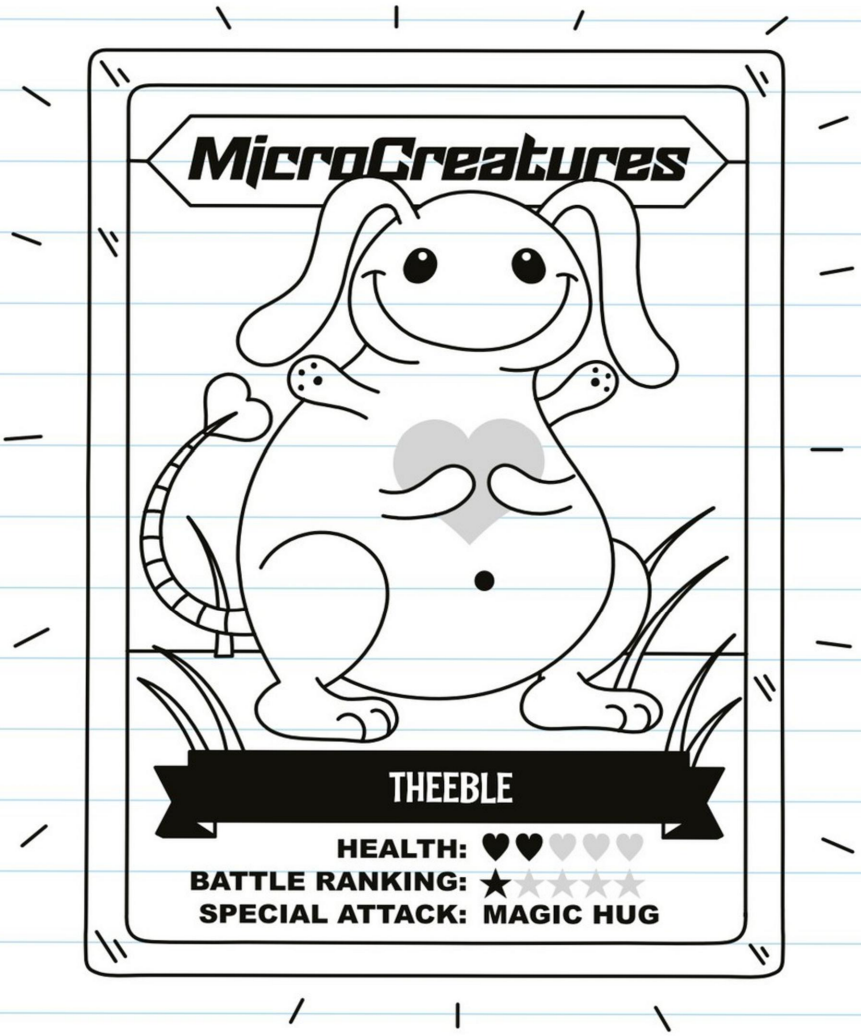
And the more I think about it, the more uncomfortable I get with the whole concept.

I'll put it to you this way: If kids were doing this sort of thing during recess with their PETS, the cops would come and shut it down right away.



After a while, the MicroCreatures craze died down and everyone moved on to other things.

But the company who makes those cards had one more trick up their sleeve, because they introduced this NEW type of card with silver foil around the edges. And a silver-foil card was worth FIFTY of the regular kind.



Even though the silver-foil cards were super rare, this kid named Alex Aruda managed to get a whole BUNCH of them. And the way he did it was pretty smart.

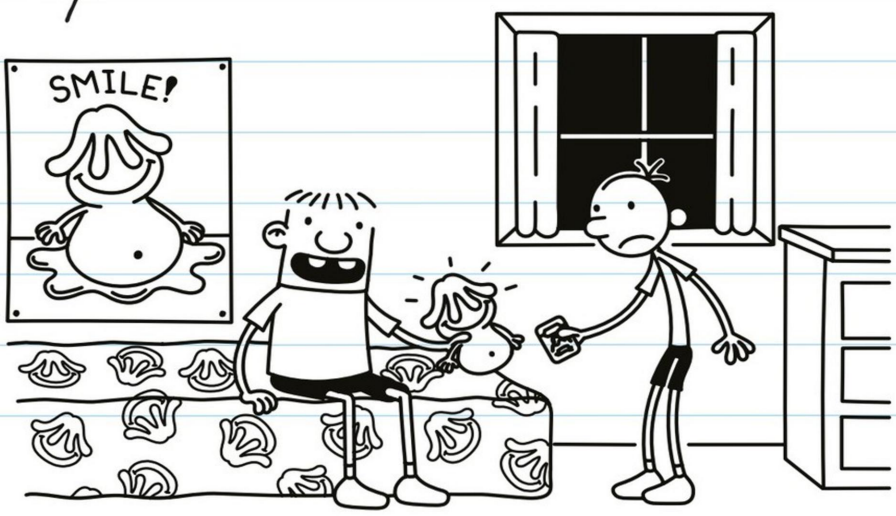
Alex realized that the packs with the silver-foil cards were a little heavier than the ones with regular cards inside. So he brought this fancy scientific scale to the comics store and only bought the packs that weighed more.

I guess other people started doing the same thing, so eventually MicroCreatures stopped making the special silver-foil cards. But I'm sure this rare Three-Eyed Theeble will make everyone get MicroCreatures fever all over again.

I know it's got ME fired up. The guy at the comics store said that no one knows where that Three-Eyed Theeble card is, and it could pop up anywhere. So I put my comic books back on the shelves and got a bunch of MicroCreatures packs instead, hoping I'd get lucky.

But all I got were a bunch of regular cards, including a normal two-eyed Theeble. And that stunk, because it meant I wasted my birthday gift.

I did know ONE person who might be willing to make a trade for what I got, though. Unfortunately, Rowley told me he doesn't like Theebles anymore, and that his new favorite is HunnyPuddles. And sometimes, I don't know about that boy.



Tuesday

I did a little research on this Three-Eyed Theeble card, and I found out a LOT of people are looking for it. There's even a group online whose whole mission is to track it down.

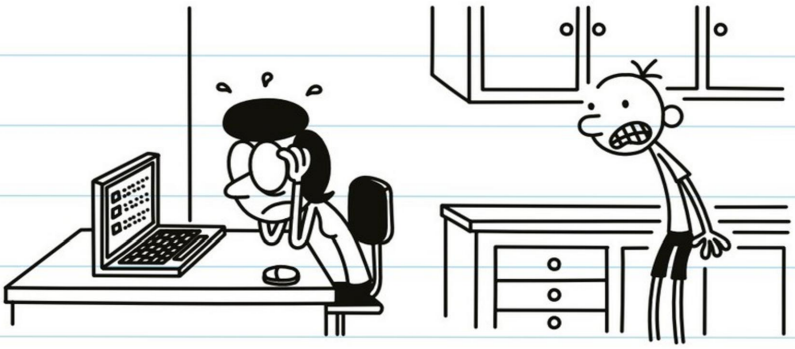
They think they know where the card was shipped to, and they've got all sorts of evidence to prove their theory.

The crazy thing is, they feel pretty sure the card was sent to a store that's somewhere within a fifty-mile radius of where I live. And that means I might actually have a shot at GETTING it.

The problem is that I don't have a way of buying more cards because I don't have any money. I'll have to wait a whole YEAR for my next birthday to roll around, and by then, I'm sure that card will be long gone.

But tonight I came up with a genius idea for how I could score that Three-Eyed Theeble card.

Mom still feels bad about forgetting my birthday, and she's stressed out that people are going to discover we're the family in the story that's been going around.



But I told her we should plan a DO-OVER party for a second chance to celebrate my birthday. And she seemed to think that was a GREAT idea.

I figured a do-over party would give Mom a chance to feel better about things, but more important, it'd give me a shot at getting that CARD.

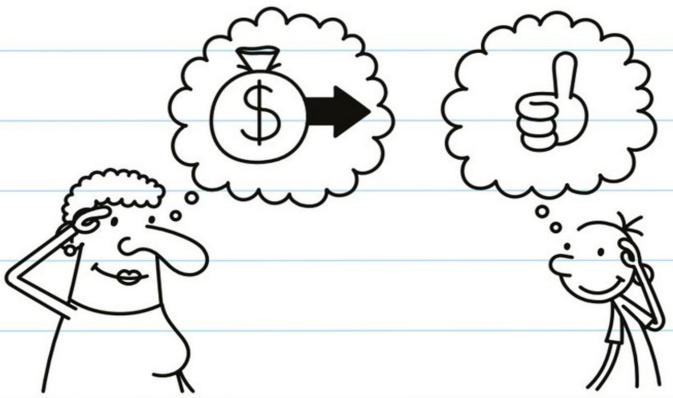
But Mom was a little TOO enthusiastic about the makeup party, because as soon as I suggested it, she launched right into party-planner mode.

Mom said the first thing I need to do is decide if I want a friend party or a family party. But that's not an easy choice, because there are pros and cons to each.

If I have a FAMILY party, I can invite a bunch of my relatives. They usually give me lots of money for my birthday, which I can use to buy more packs of MicroCreatures cards.

My relatives usually give me checks, though, which take a few days to cash at the bank. And I'm nervous someone might find the Three-Eyed Theeble card in the meantime.

One of these days they're gonna come up with a way for people to send money just by using their thoughts. And I'm looking forward to that happening, because it's gonna make thank-yous a lot easier, too.

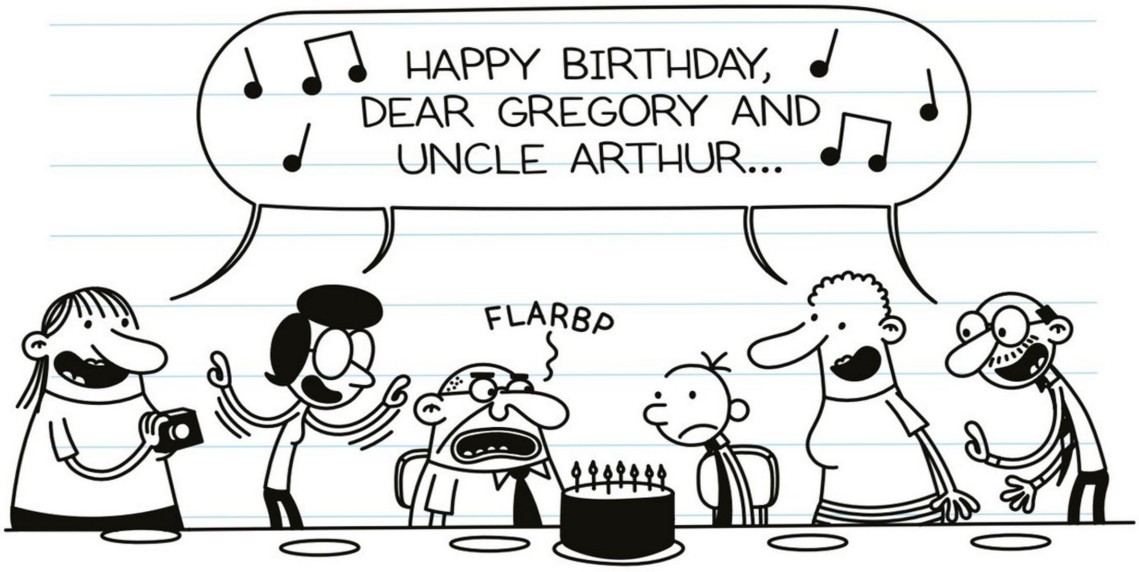


If I DO have a family party, I'm gonna let everyone know that gifts are cash only.

There are some drawbacks to family parties, though. For one thing, family parties with my relatives usually mean going to a stuffy restaurant where they have an all-you-can-eat buffet brunch.

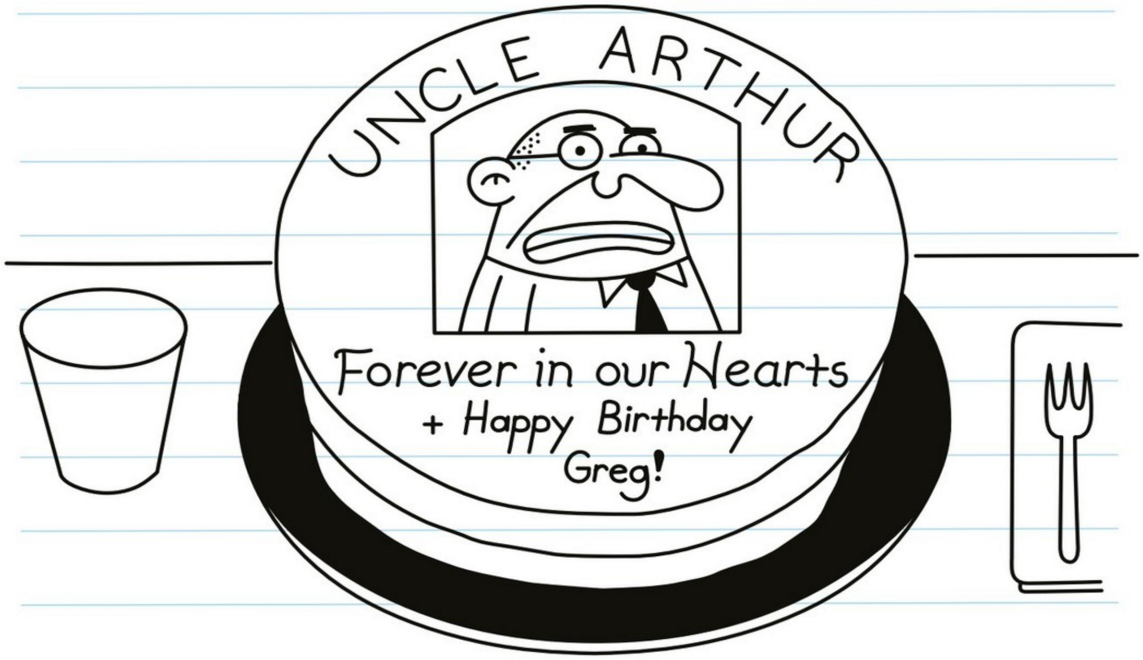
And trust me, no kid wants to have to dress up on their birthday.

One of the reasons we have family parties at a buffet restaurant is because I share a birthday with my Great Uncle Arthur, who likes that sort of place. But it's kind of awkward sharing a birthday celebration with someone you don't have that much in common with.



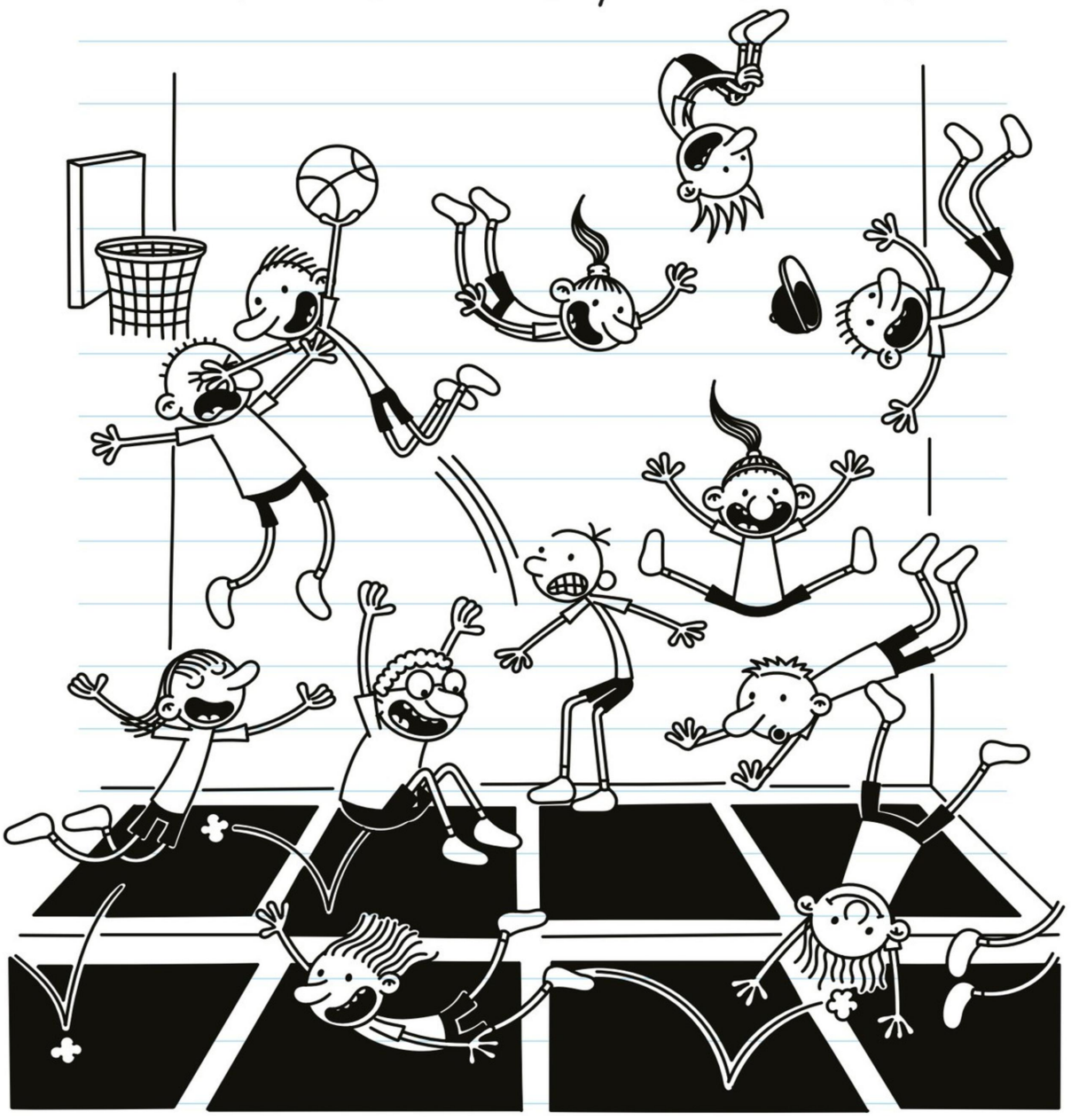
Uncle Arthur passed away a little over a year ago, though, so on my last birthday, I had a party all to myself.

But in honor of Uncle Arthur, we had the party at the restaurant he liked. He was even included on the birthday cake, which was nice, I guess. I just didn't want a slice that had his face on it.



The good thing about FRIEND parties is that they're usually a lot more fun than the family kind. And since most kids my age don't like brunch, there are more options for places where you can throw a party.

The spot a lot of kids have their parties these days is the trampoline park that opened last year. But even though a trampoline park should be a total blast, they let way too many kids in there, so that place is just an injury waiting to happen.

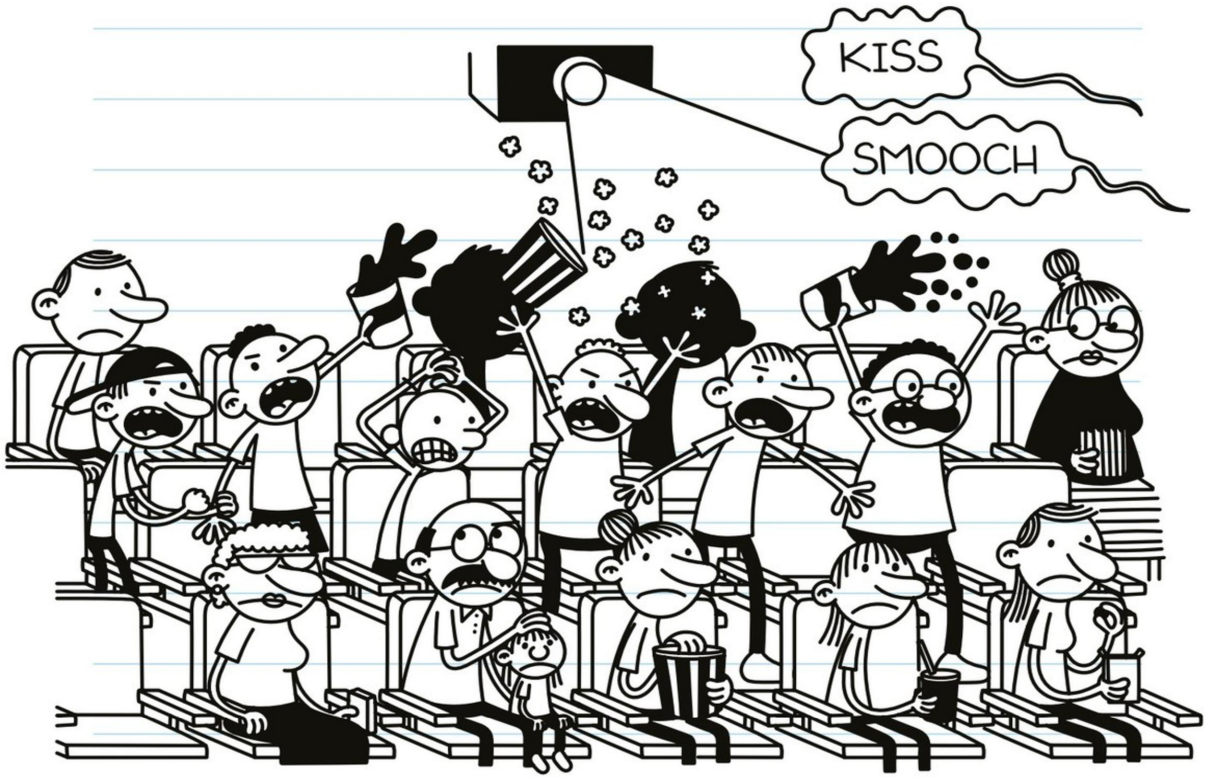


In fact, they just opened an urgent care facility right next door, and I've heard business is BOOMING.

Another place to have parties is at the movie theater downtown. But the problem is that boys my age have no attention span, so if something isn't blowing up on screen every five seconds, guys get restless.

And if there's any kind of ROMANCE in the movie, it's a total disaster. There was a kissing scene in a movie I saw at Shawn Sutton's birthday, and it practically caused a riot.

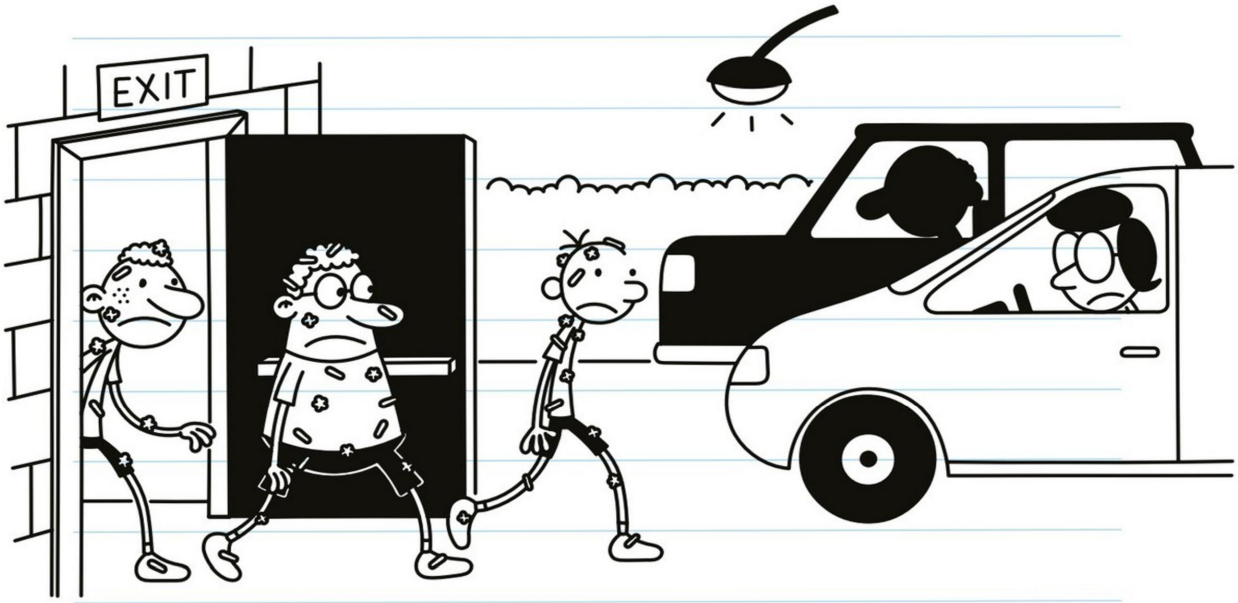
That's why the movie theater started banning middle school boys from having their parties there.



So now if you wanna go to the movies for your party, you have to go to the dollar theater. But the floor is so covered in soda and gum that people's shoes are permanently stuck to it.

If you thought kids at the REGULAR movie theater were wild, it's nothing compared to how they behave at the dollar theater. At one party I went to, everyone was so out of control the manager shut down the projector in the middle of the movie.

That meant we were in the pitch black, which just made everyone go even CRAZIER. And by the time our parents came to pick us up, we were all covered in buttered popcorn and Hot Tamales.

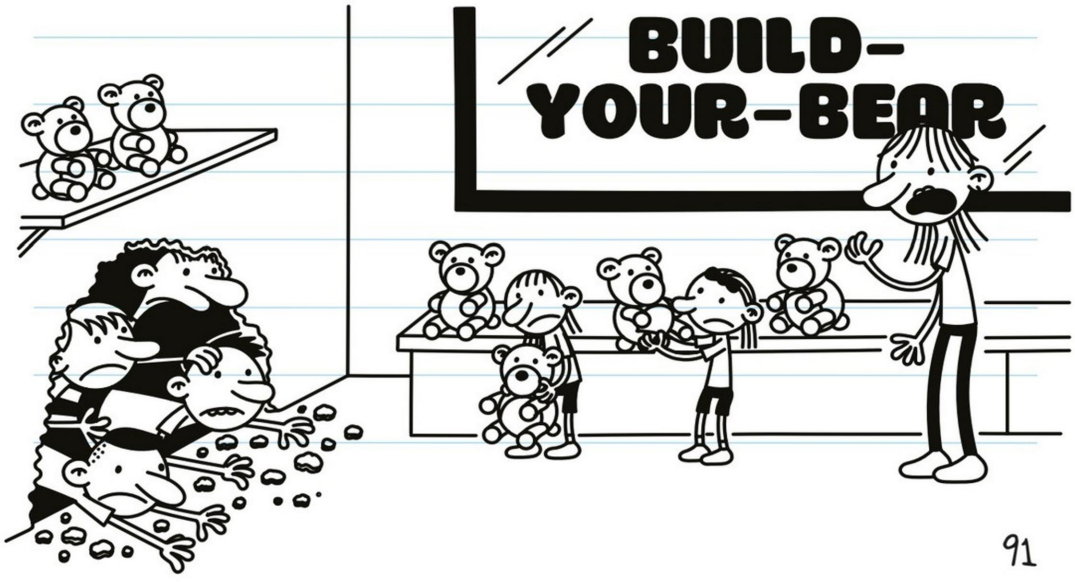


A few days later, I couldn't really hear out of my left ear, so Mom took me to the doctor to figure out what was going on.

And it didn't take long for her to find the Junior Mint lodged in my ear canal.

The latest party craze is escape rooms, which they have at the mall. The way those work is they lock you in a room, and then you have to find clues to earn your way out.

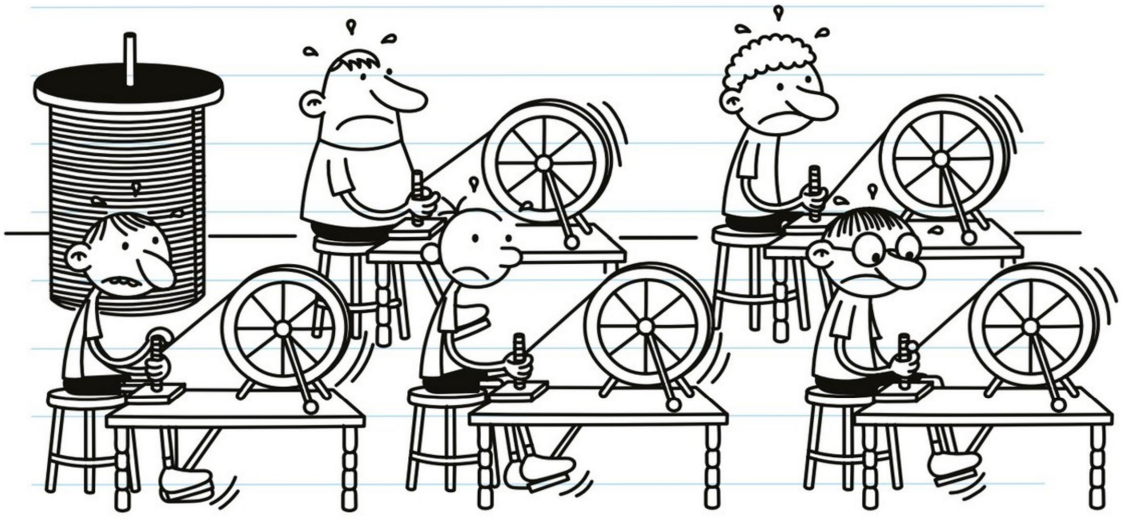
But the guys at Bradley Pickert's party skipped right over the clue-finding part and tunneled their way out into the store next door, which got boys banned from that place, too.



Birthdays are big business, so there are plenty of OTHER places that'll take your money if you want to have your party there.

In fact, these days, it seems like EVERYONE is offering a birthday package just to make a quick buck. There's an industrial mill from the 1700s that our school goes to for field trips, and now you can rent it out for birthday parties.

But if you're putting me to work, I'm gonna need to get PAID.

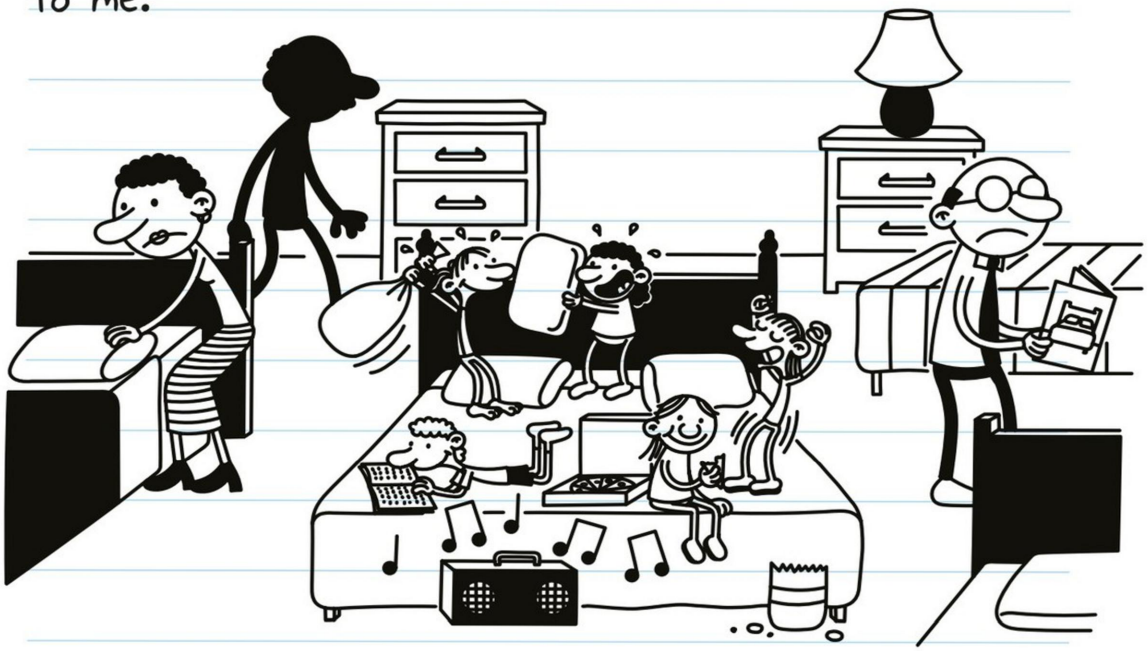


The pirate museum came up with a birthday package, too. And for a hundred bucks, you and five of your friends can spend a few hours in a jail cell, which actually sounds kind of cool.

But I heard the pirates lost the keys to the cell during Kit Ethridge's party, which meant Kit and his friends had to eat his birthday cake through the iron bars while someone tracked down the spare keys.

The latest thing local businesses are offering is birthday slumber parties, where you and your friends get to spend the night.

Lancy's Mattresses just started renting out their store for kids' parties, but I heard it's during normal shopping hours, which seems a little weird to me.

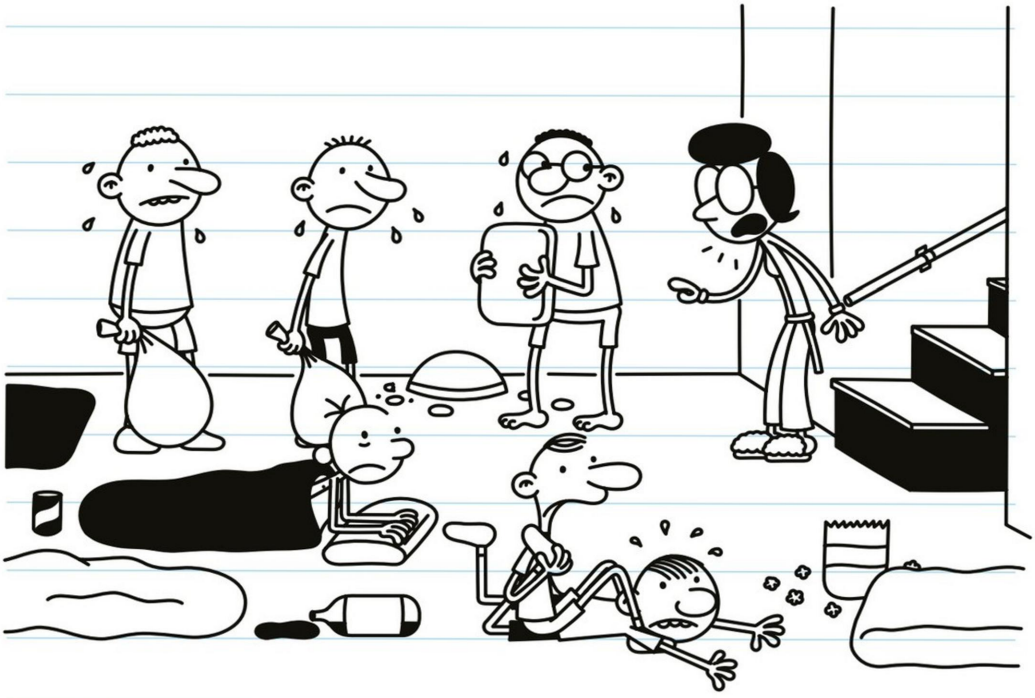


The natural history museum is offering a package where you and your friends can spend the night in the mummy exhibit. But I've seen enough movies to know what happens after hours in museums, and I'm not about to have my birthday turn into a horror movie.

I've had a few bad experiences with slumber parties at my house. So as far as I'm concerned, that option is off the table.

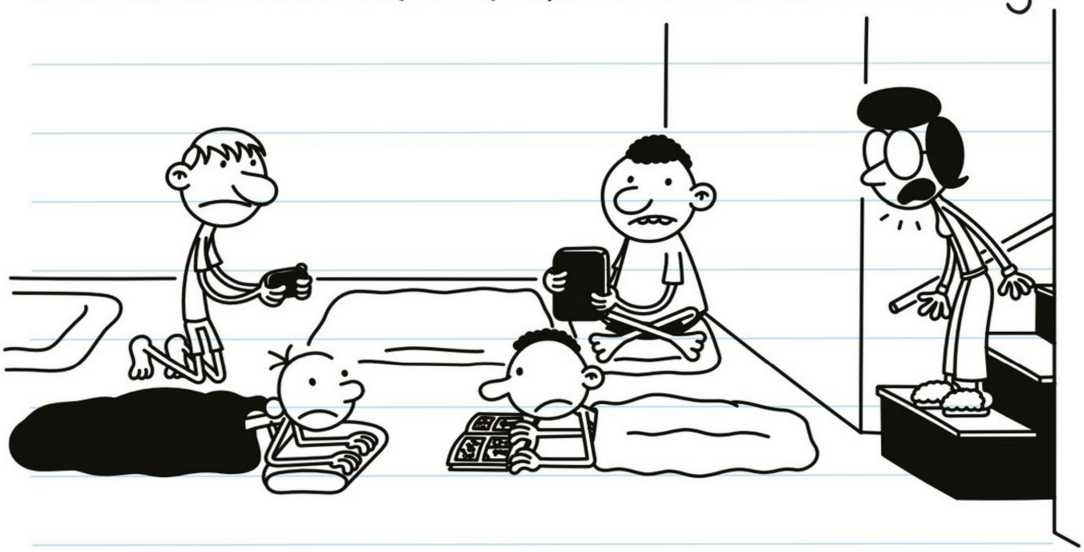
The last time I had a sleepover, my friends drank a bunch of juice and soda while we watched a movie. And at midnight, everyone was still bouncing off the walls.

Eventually, Mom came down to the basement and told us it was time to go to sleep, which was fine with me. Because by then, I was totally wiped out.

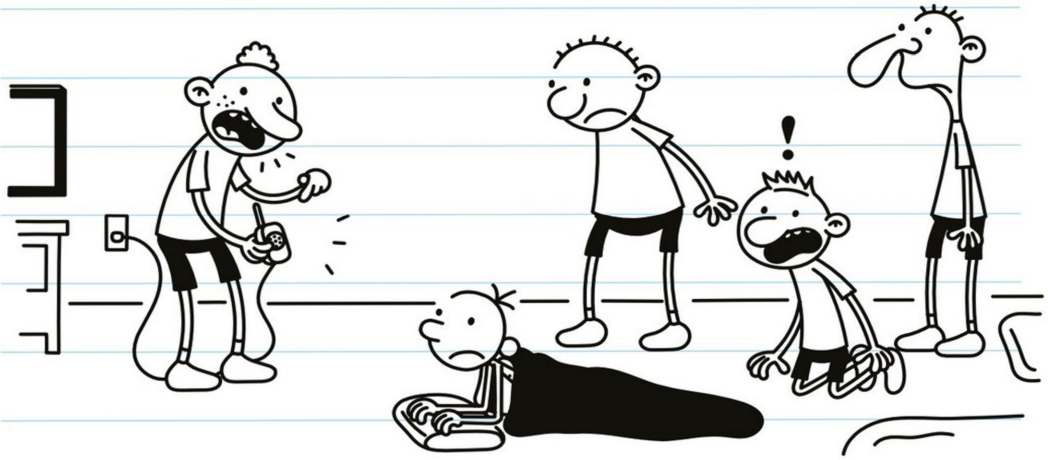


As soon as Mom was gone, everyone went crazy again. When Mom came down a SECOND time, she told my friends they needed to go to sleep or she was gonna start driving people home.

But my friends stayed up anyway, playing video games and reading comic books. So Mom came down a THIRD time and said this was our final warning.



It didn't really make sense that Mom knew what was going on in the basement, since her bedroom is on the second floor. Then Duffy Maynard found a baby monitor plugged into the wall near the TV, which he said she must've been using to SPY on us.

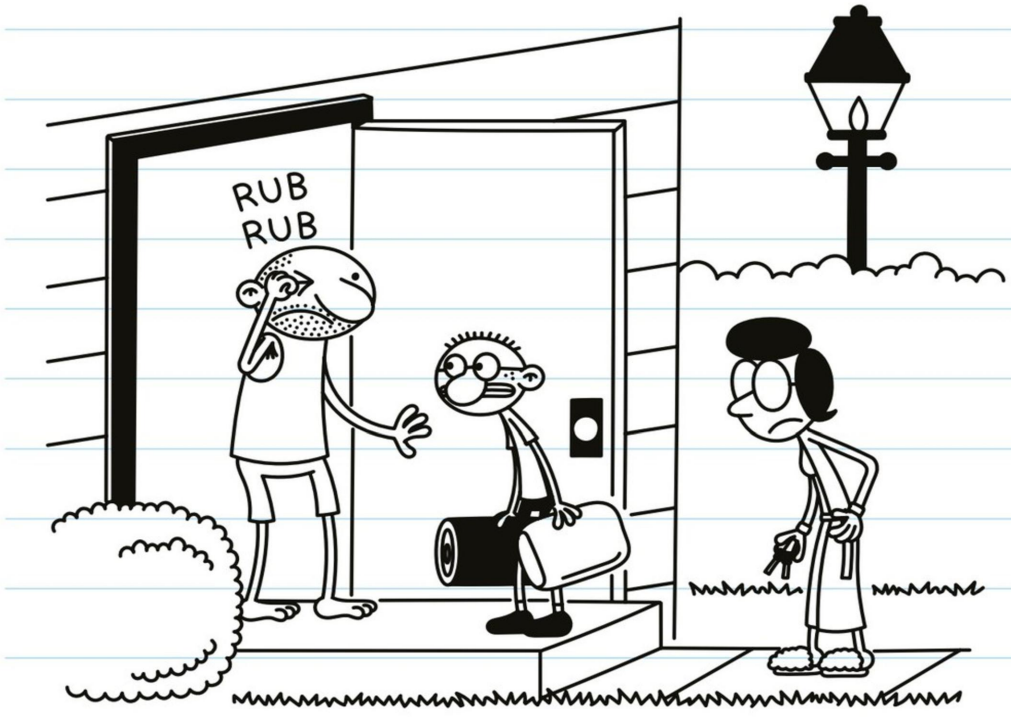


And then Duffy did the rudest thing possible into the microphone.

Five seconds later, the basement door opened, and Duffy barely had time to get in his sleeping bag and pretend he was asleep.

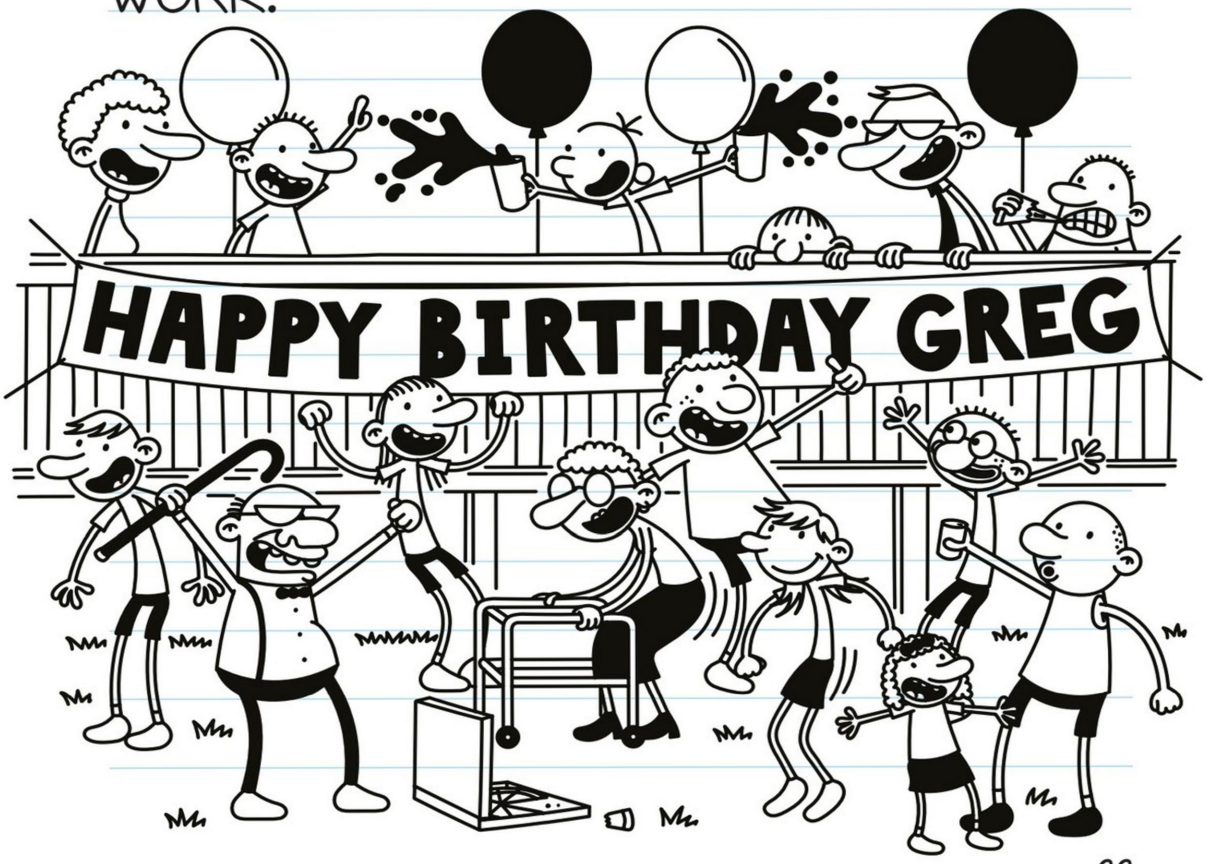
But Mom wasn't gonna leave until she figured out who the guilty person was, so she went from kid to kid to work out who did it.

After a minute or two, Mom decided the culprit was Emilio Zacatenco, and she drove him straight home. And I can see why she thought it was him, because he did smell a little funky that night.

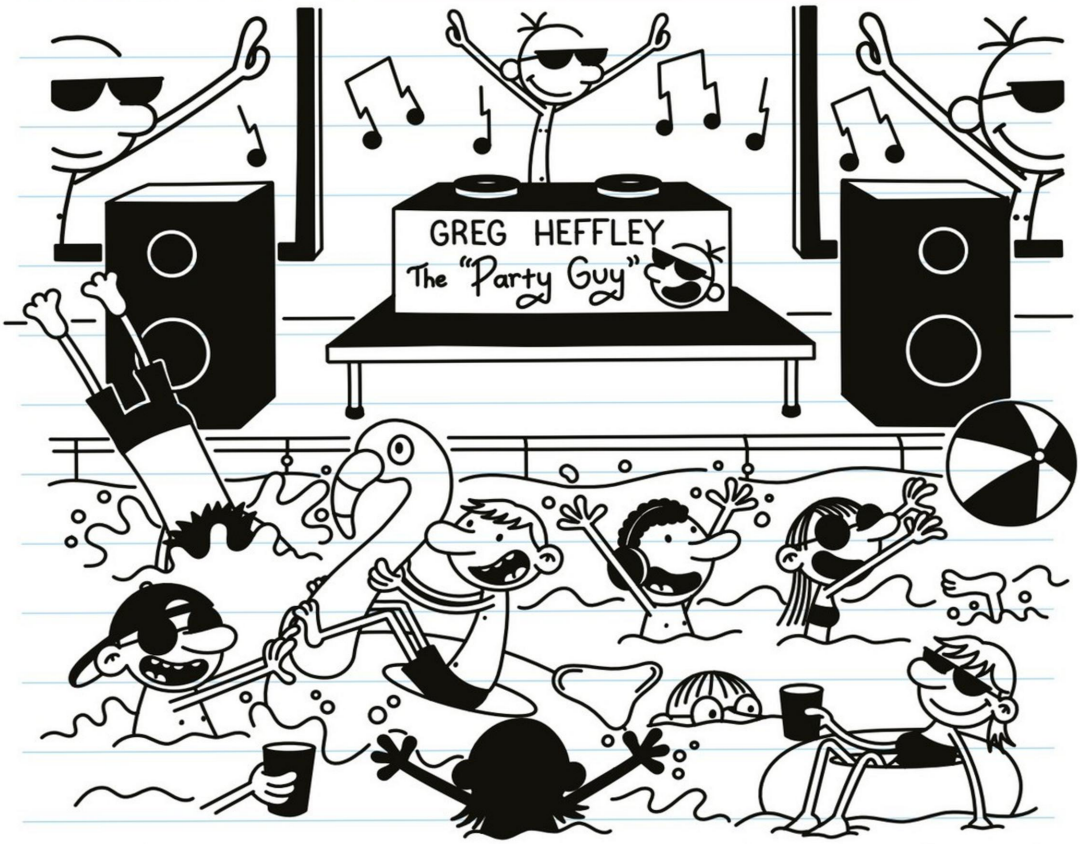


Now that I think about it, I haven't had great experiences with friends OR family parties over the last few years, so I feel like I need to shake things up. That's why I've decided to do something crazy and have a friends AND family party this time around.

The way I see it, the more people who come to my party, the better my chances of landing that trading card. And even though mixing friends and family seems like a bad idea, it could actually WORK.

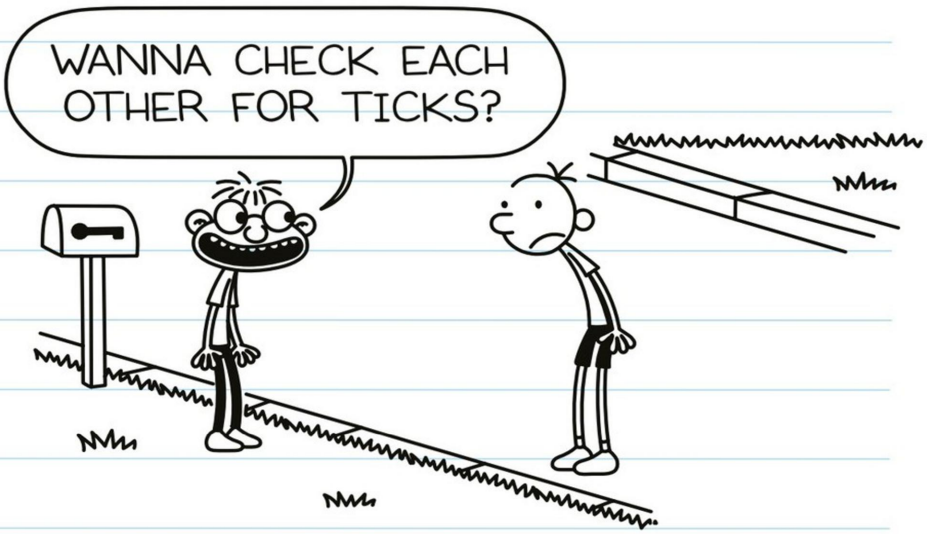


Who knows? Maybe my party will be such a blast that people will start hiring me to host THEIR parties. And if I get a reputation for showing people a good time, I can turn this party thing into a CAREER.

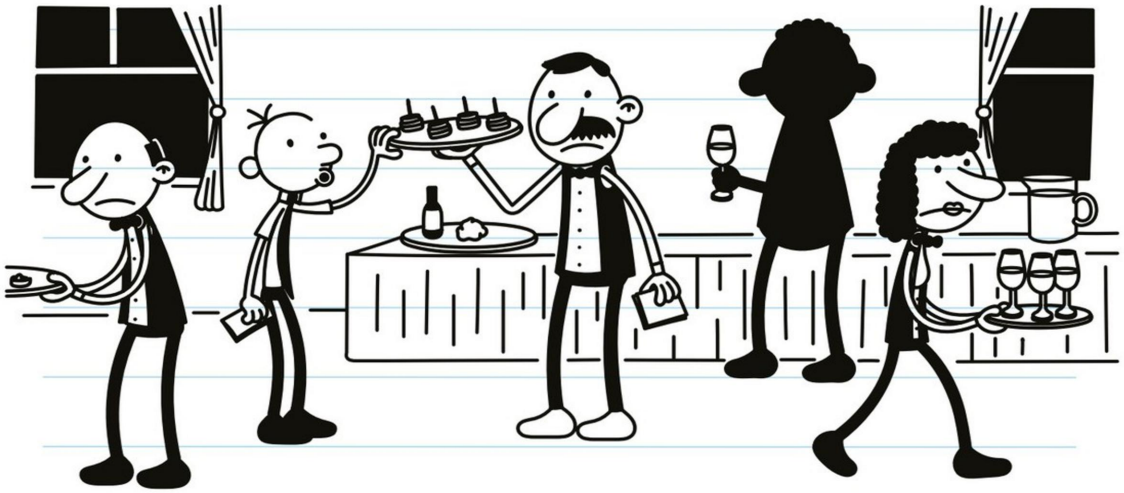


I told Mom my idea of throwing a big friends and family party, and she was totally on board. But she said we should invite all the NEIGHBORS, too, so nobody feels left out. I guess that's fine, because like I said, the more people who get me presents, the better.

But there are a few neighbors I might veto from the guest list, just to be on the safe side.



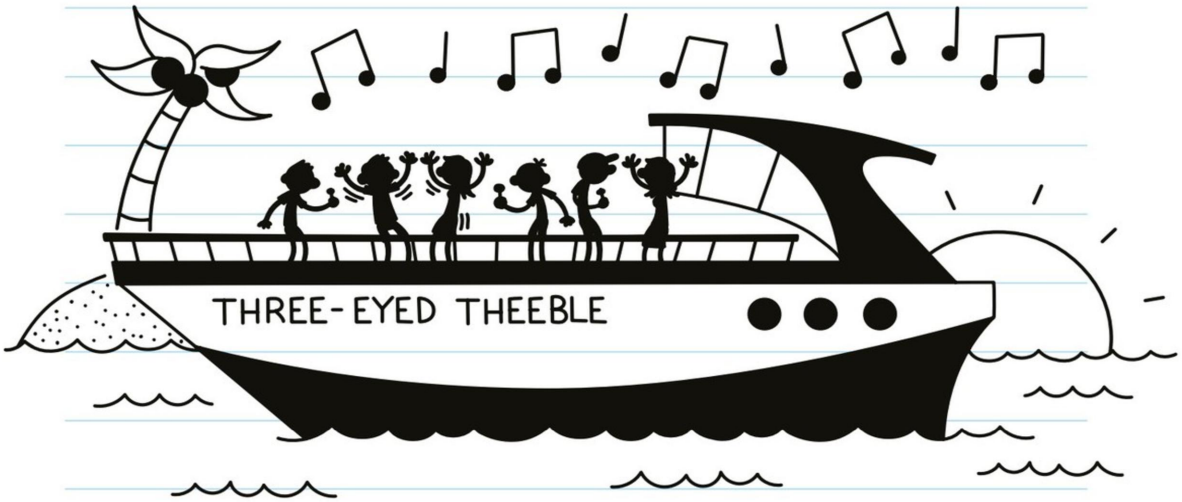
Now that me and Mom had settled on the type of party we'd have, we had to decide on where to have it. I told her a good place would be the country club where Uncle Gary had his second wedding, because I really liked the scallops wrapped in bacon that the servers brought around.



But Mom told me a place like that was too expensive for a kid's party, and we needed to stay on a budget.

Mom said that we could have the party in our backyard, because it would be free. Then she told me we didn't need to hire servers, since people could just help themselves to snacks and drinks. I was a little disappointed, because that sounded like every other kid's party I've been to.

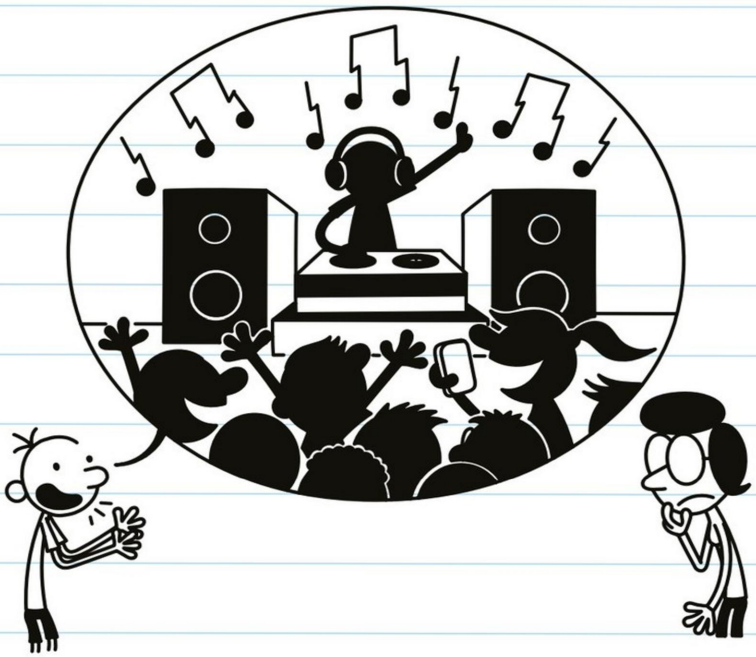
I figure if I manage to track down that card, next year I'll get to throw the kind of party I WANT. And when I do, there's gonna be plenty of bacon-wrapped scallops to go around.



Thursday

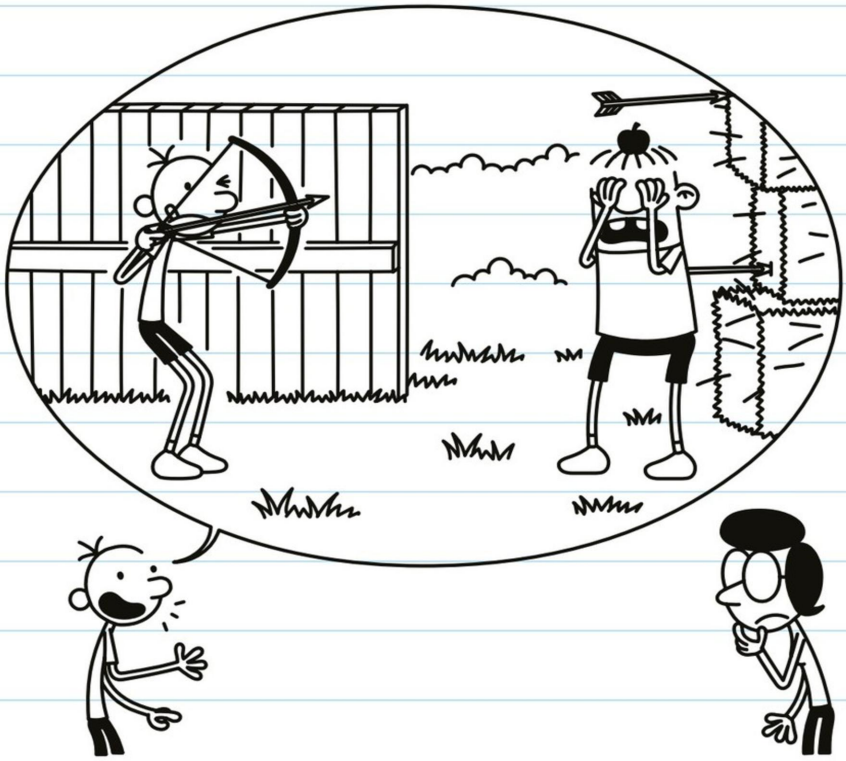
The closer we get to my big day, the more I realize that me and Mom have TOTALLY different visions for how this party is gonna go.

I decided the party would be at night, with a DJ and dancing.



Mom told me we couldn't have loud music, though, because there are rules about noise in the neighborhood. And she said we should wrap things up by 2:00 p.m. because some of our older relatives like to get in an afternoon nap.

Mom said we should have party games, like Pin the Tail on the Donkey and a piñata. I told her those games were kind of corny and that we needed activities kids my age think are FUN. But she wasn't crazy about any of the ideas I came up with, because she said they're too dangerous.

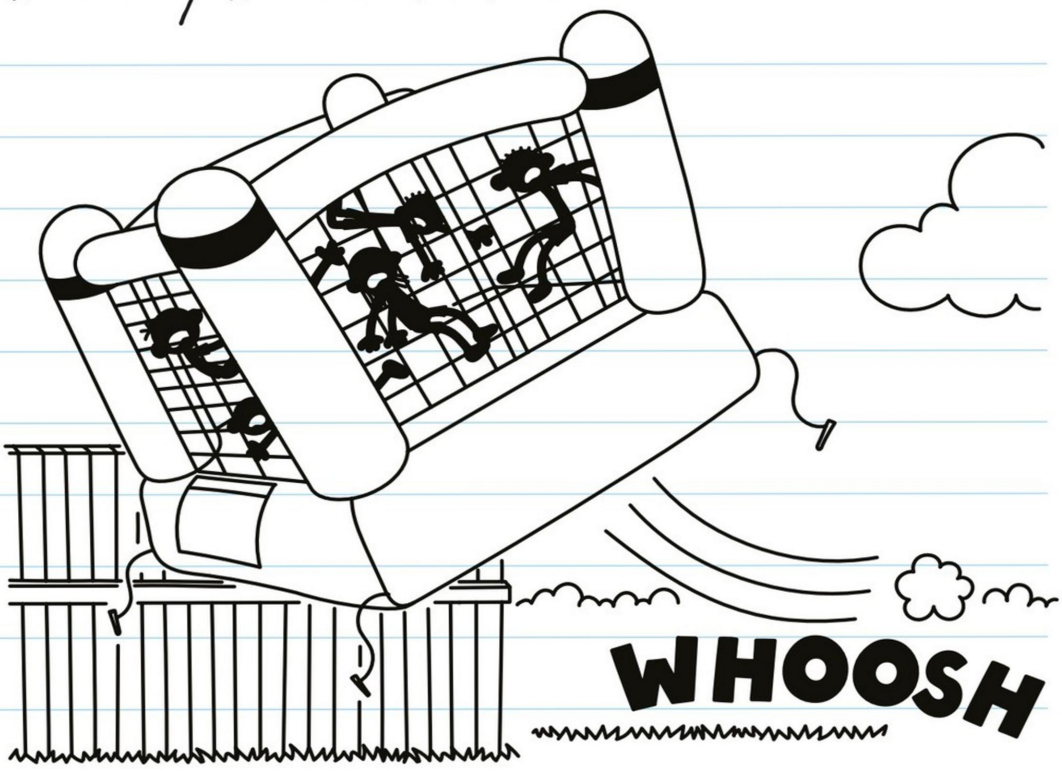


Mom told me we should have different stations in the backyard, like a face-painting table and a "reading nook." So I had to remind her that a lot of the guests would be my classmates, and you couldn't PAY kids my age to read a chapter book.

She said that some of our neighbors had little kids, and they'd need things to do. So she said she was gonna rent one of those inflatable bouncy houses for the party.

I guess I'm fine with that, but there's no chance I'M going in it. The last time I went in a bouncy house was at Jordan Lankey's third-grade birthday party, and his parents didn't anchor it in the ground properly.

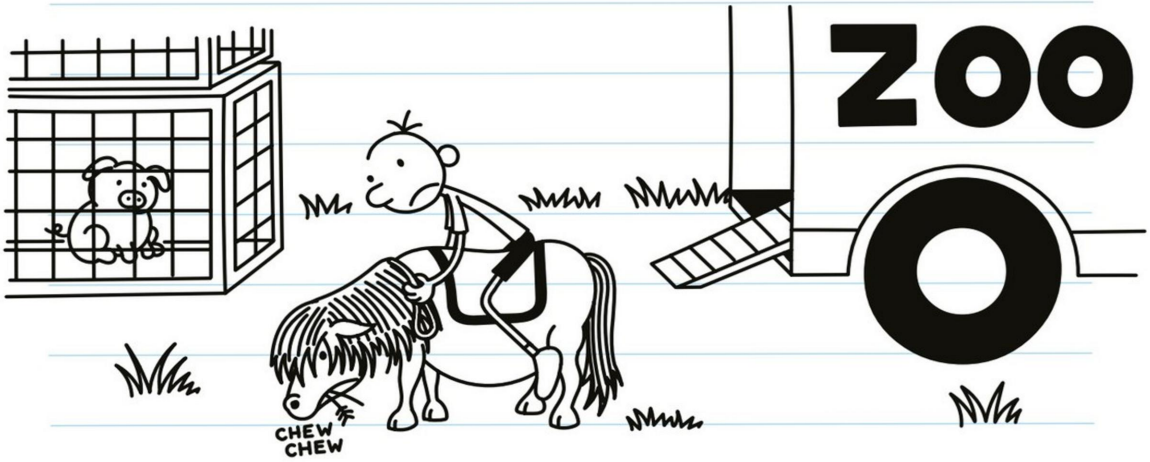
So when a big gust of wind blew through his yard, the bouncy house broke free.



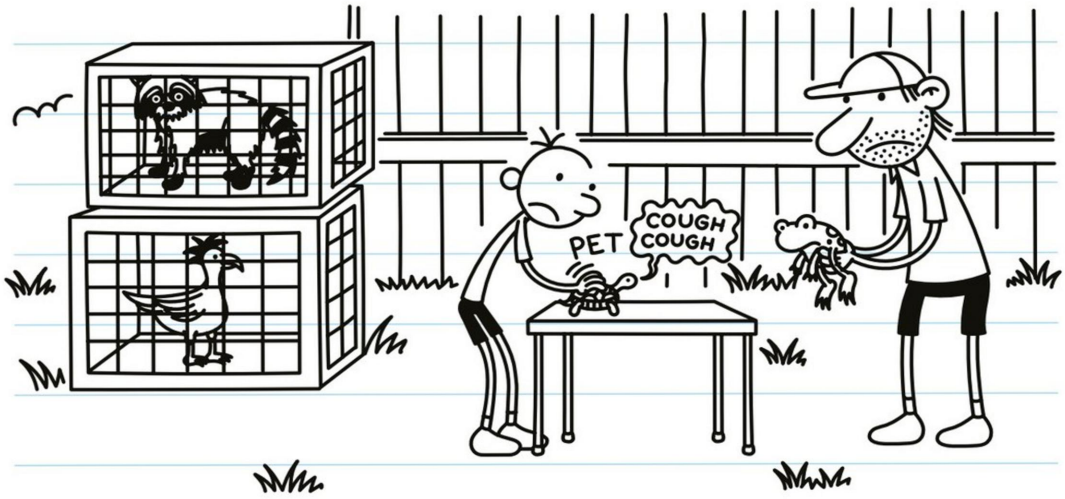
Luckily, the bouncy house didn't fly that far, because it got caught on Mrs. Tan's fence. But Mrs. Tan has a pair of big dogs, and I'm still scarred by that whole experience.

Another thing Mom's really pushing for is a mobile petting zoo, because she says everyone loves that sort of thing. But I've had some bad experiences with those, too.

One time, Rowley got a petting zoo for his birthday party, and you could ride one of those miniature horses. But it was kind of awkward, so I regret doing it.

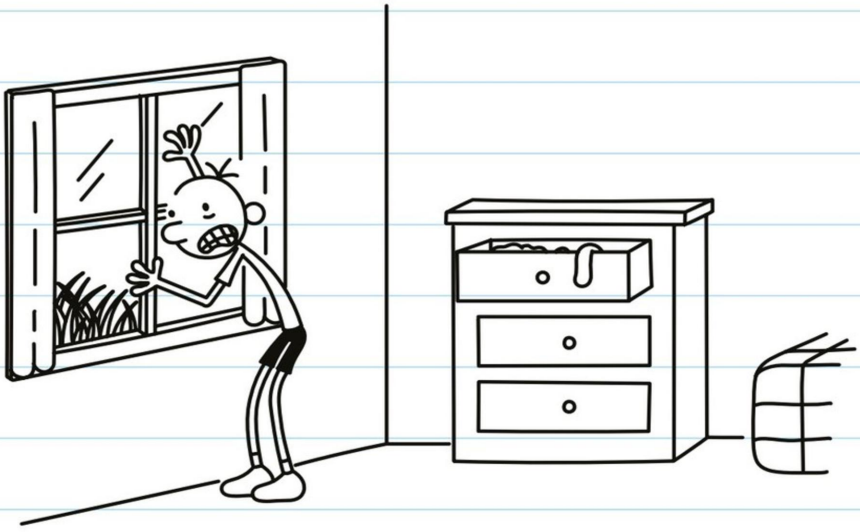


Plus, it was supposed to be a petting zoo, but none of the animals were exactly soft and cuddly. And I'm pretty sure I got sick from petting a turtle that had a cold.



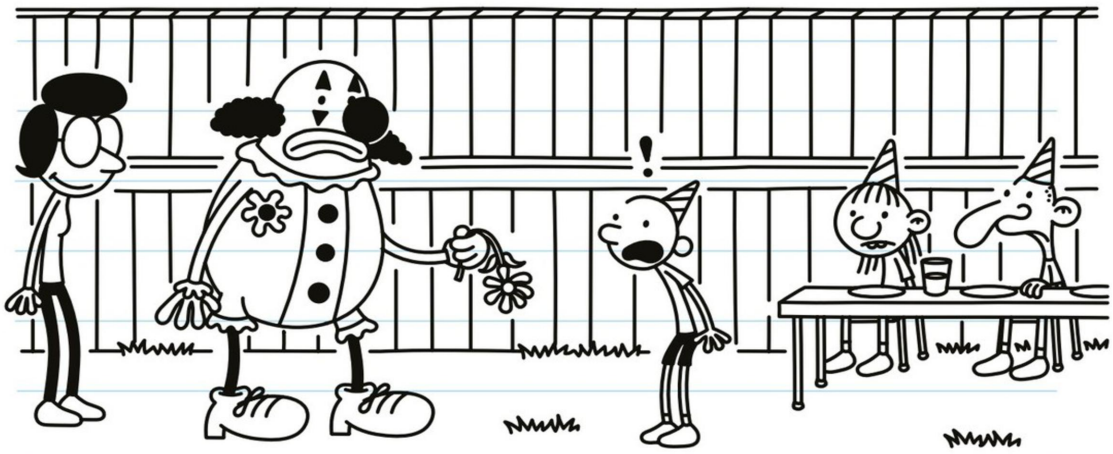
I decided to make the first rule for my party, which is No Animals. Because the second you bring an animal to a party, you're just asking for trouble.

Besides, I'm already worried about what's hiding in the neighbor's grass. And when I looked out the window tonight, I swear I saw a pair of eyes staring back at me.

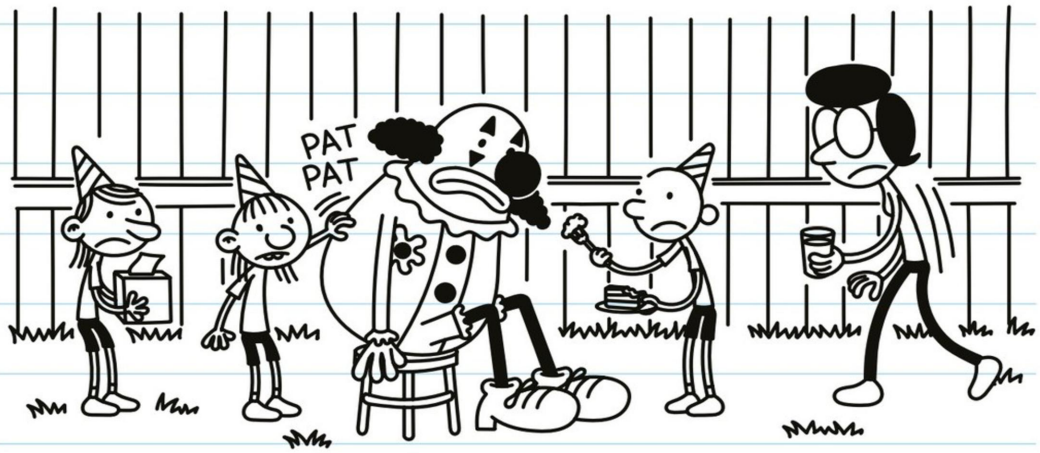


I told Mom I wasn't crazy about any of her ideas, but she said we needed SOME sort of entertainment to make the party feel special. So she suggested we hire a magician or a clown, but I shot down the clown idea right away.

The last time Mom got a clown was for my sixth birthday party, but I guess she's forgotten how THAT went. The clown Mom hired was called "Hopeless," and he really lived up to his name.



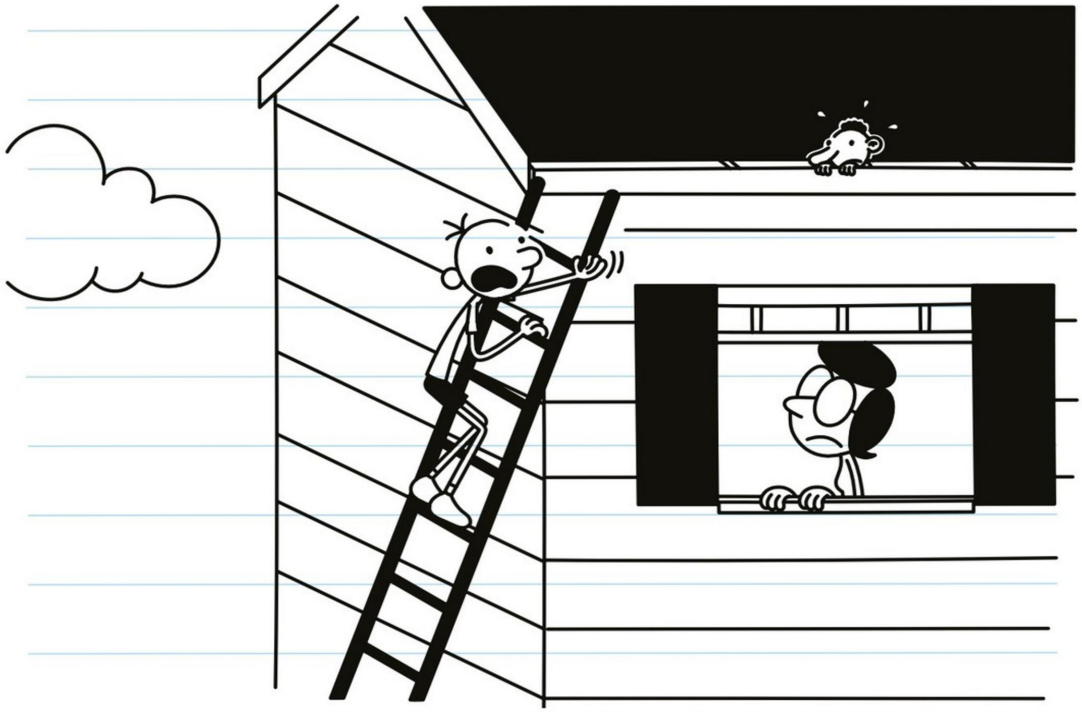
It turns out this guy had just lost his regular job and got dumped by his girlfriend. So everyone spent the whole party trying to make Hopeless feel better.



After I vetoed the clown idea, Mom said she knew the PERFECT entertainer, but was keeping it a secret until the party. And that made me nervous, because I'm not a big fan of surprises, especially when Mom is the one behind them.

Last year, Mom hired someone to dress up in a T. rex costume and come to Manny's birthday party, because she knew he was really into dinosaurs. But Mom probably should've given him and his guests a little warning, because when the guy showed up, it set off a stampede.

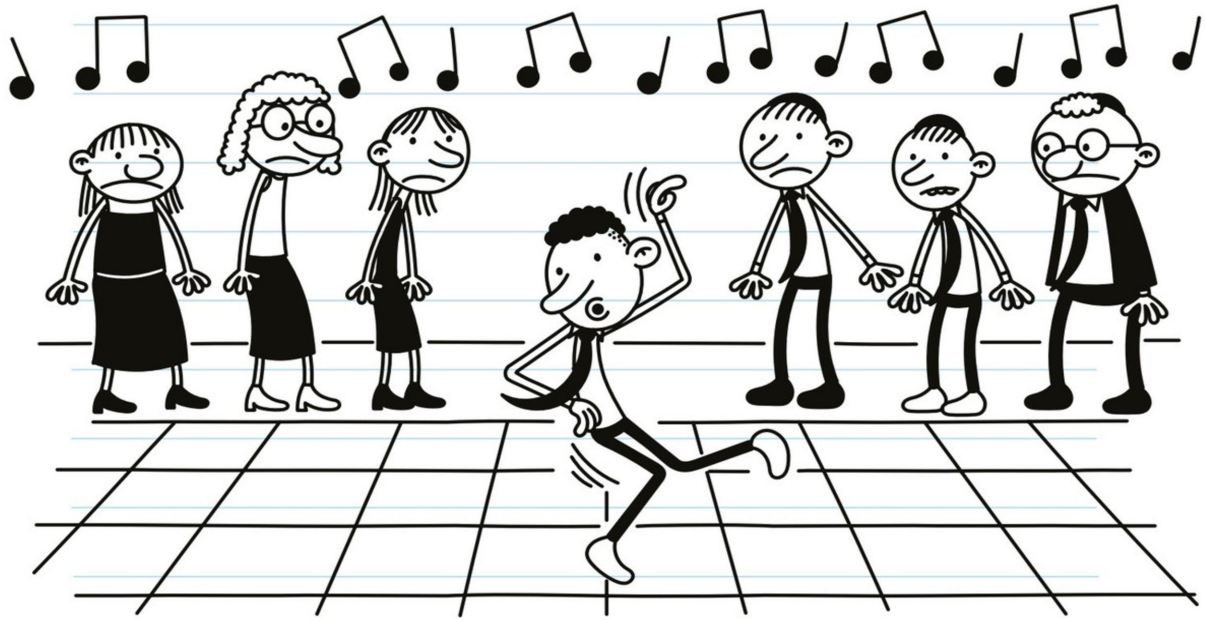
All the kids scattered in every direction, so we had to find everyone before their parents came to pick them up. And it was like playing MicroCreatures Seeker in real life.



If Mom really wants to spend money on an entertainer, she should do what Theo Meltzer's parents did for his bar mitzvah and hire one of those hype guys to get the party going.

At Theo's party, the DJ played music, but no one was brave enough to get on the dance floor. And it felt like the party was just gonna fizzle out.

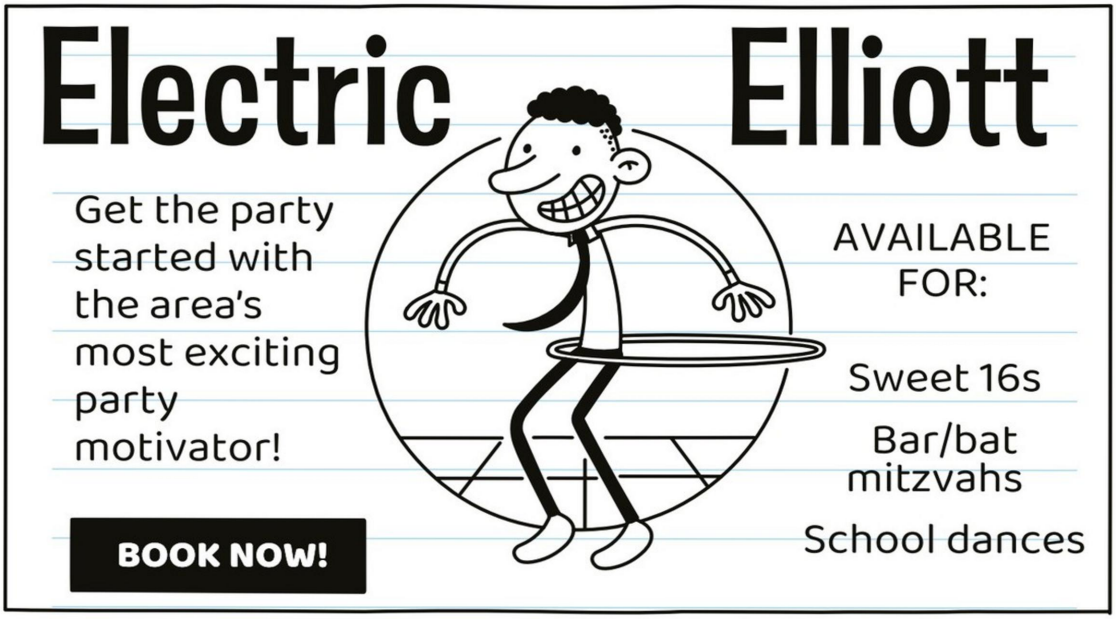
Then this guy got out on the dance floor by himself to try and loosen everybody up.



Believe it or not, it actually WORKED, and after five minutes, the dance floor was PACKED.

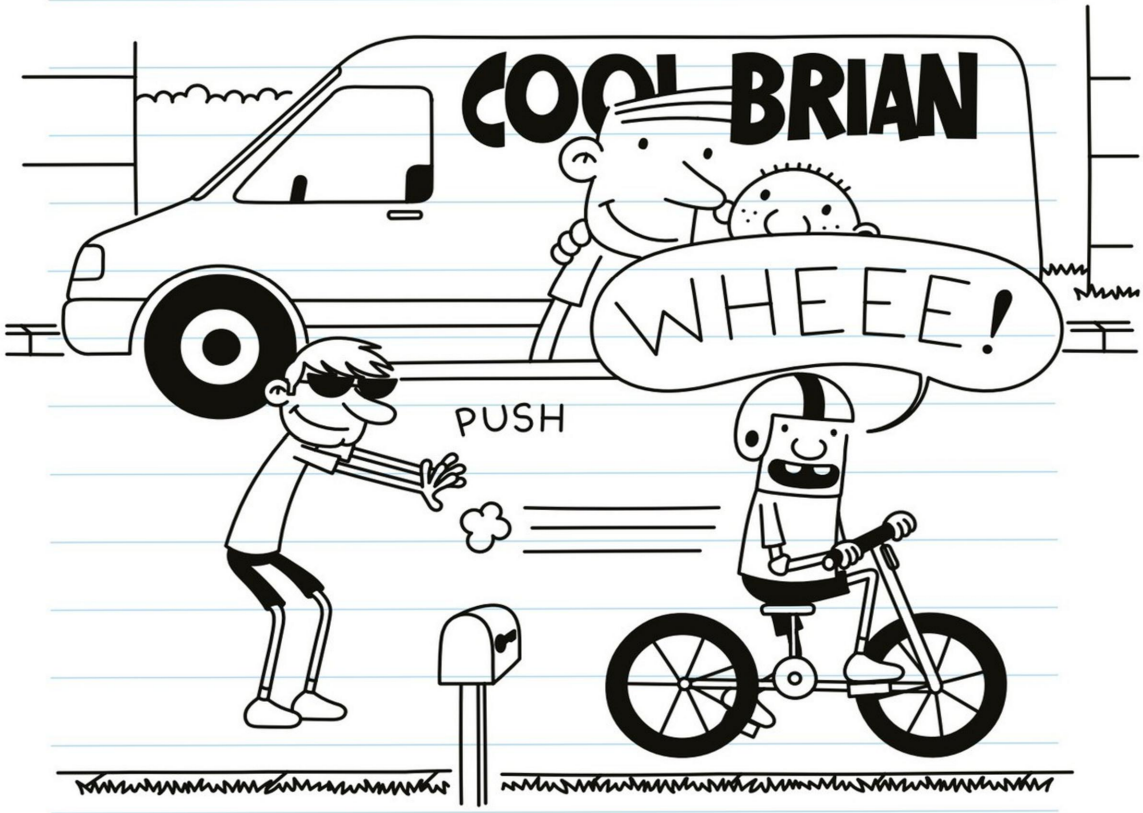
I'm nervous that people won't dance at MY party, especially since it's in the middle of the afternoon. And if nobody dances, it'll be bad for my reputation.

So I looked into hiring Theo's hype guy for MY party. But it turns out he's super popular and is already booked into next year.



Plus, he's really expensive, and I knew Mom wouldn't pay that kind of money just to get people dancing. So I tried to come up with a more affordable option.

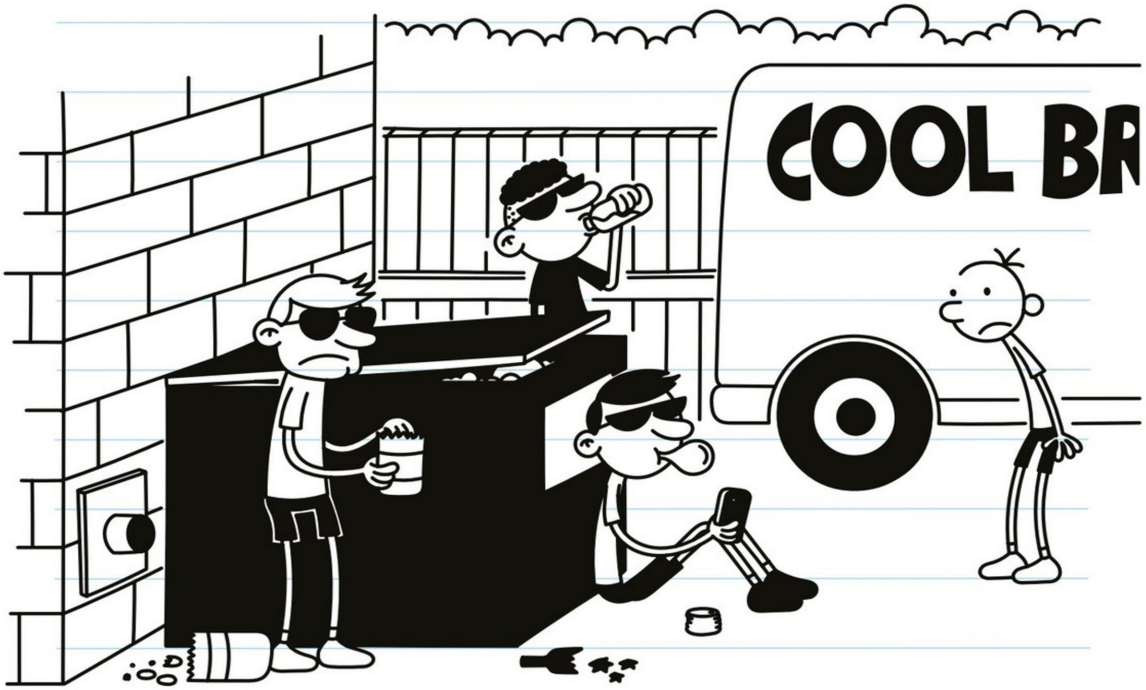
That's when I remembered this company called Cool Brian that rents out pretend big brothers. And Rowley's parents use those guys all the time.



I've heard their rates are reasonable, so I thought Mom might even let me hire a BUNCH of Cool Brians to supercharge the party.

When the Cool Brians aren't working, they usually hang out behind the convenience store.

And that's exactly where I found them.



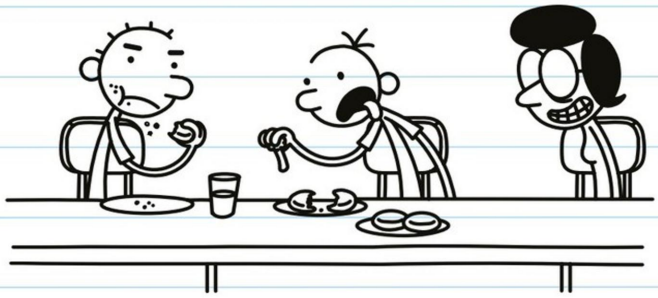
I told them the idea of being hype guys at my birthday party, but they said they were already booked to do yard work for a real estate agent that day. And even though I tried to tempt them with a promise of free cake, they wouldn't budge.

But I don't know if they were telling the truth about the lawn work or if they just didn't want to come to some random middle schooler's birthday party on a weekend.

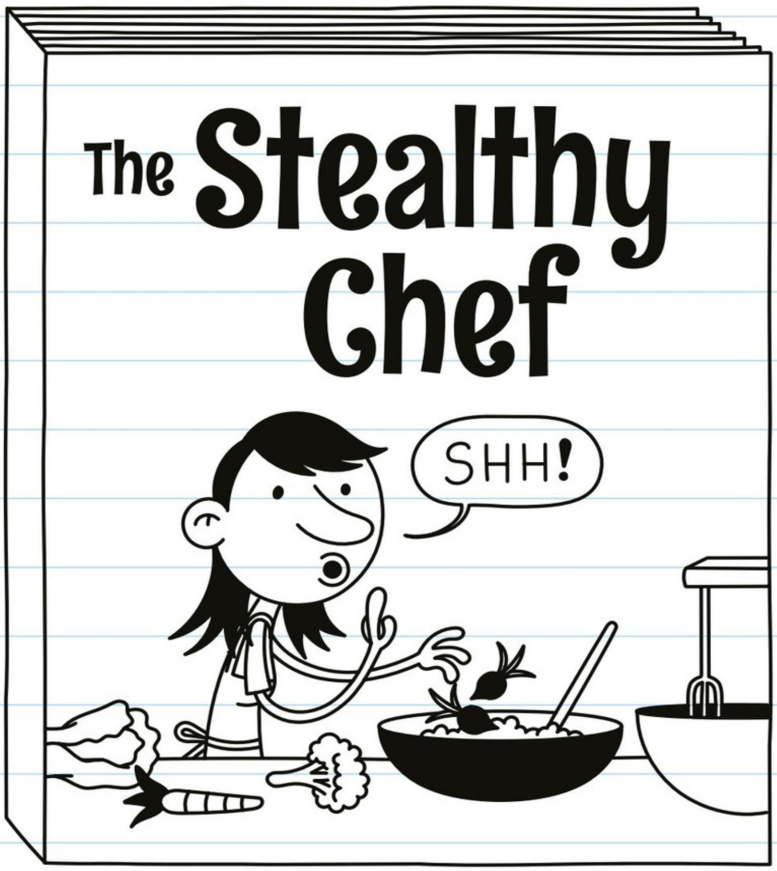
I told Mom I was worried the party might not be fun enough, and she told me the entertainer she was hiring was a TON of fun. But I didn't have a lot of confidence in her judgment, since she hired a clown named Hopeless for a six-year-old's birthday party.

Then I found out there's something ELSE that me and Mom don't see eye to eye on, which is the birthday cake. She wants to make the cake from scratch, but I want it to be store-bought.

No offense to Mom, but when it comes to desserts, I don't really trust her. That's because she likes to sneak healthy stuff into things like cupcakes and cookies, and one time I pulled a broccoli spear out of a snickerdoodle she baked.



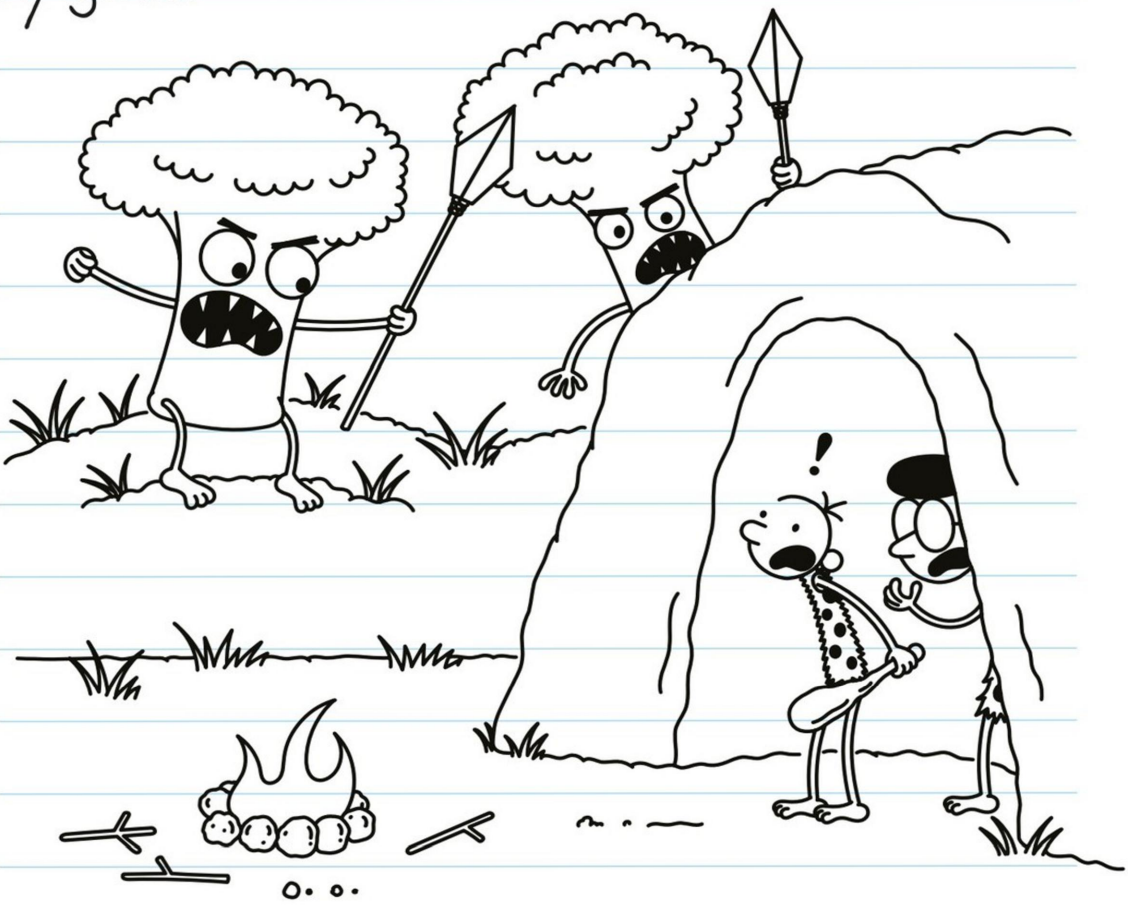
Recently, I found the book she gets her recipes from in a drawer next to the stove, so now I've got her whole playbook.



I actually understand why Mom feels like she needs to hide healthy ingredients in my desserts, and that's because I've never been a huge fan of vegetables. So she's just trying to do her job and make sure I'm getting all the nutrients and stuff I need.

I don't know why, but the vegetable that's the hardest for me to eat is BROCCOLI, even though people say it's really good for you.

I've heard that when a human being sees a snake or a shark, they automatically know to be afraid, because it's coded in their DNA. So I'm guessing my ancestors must've had a bad experience with broccoli way back when, and that totally scrambled my genes.

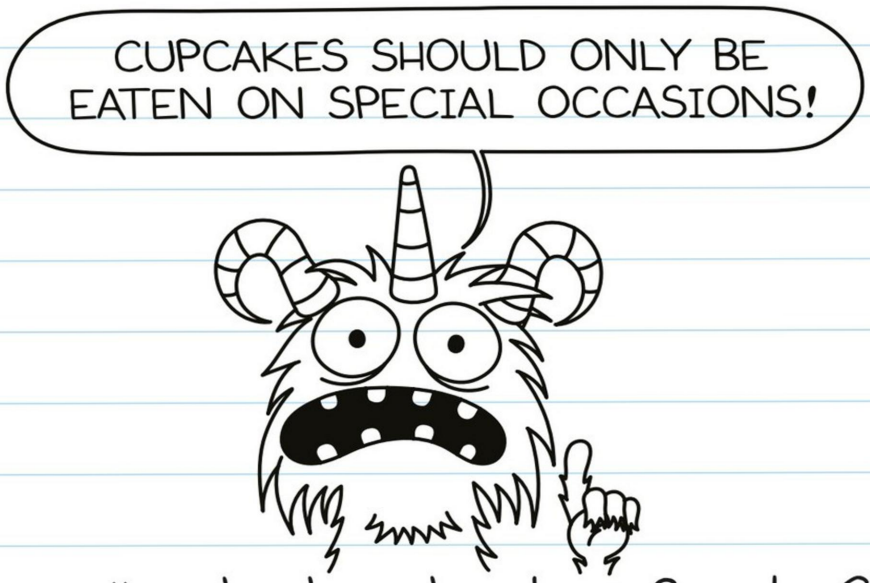


I wish I was one of those people who loved vegetables, because I'm sure I'd end up living a lot longer. But the one food I can't get enough of is sugar, which I know is terrible for you.

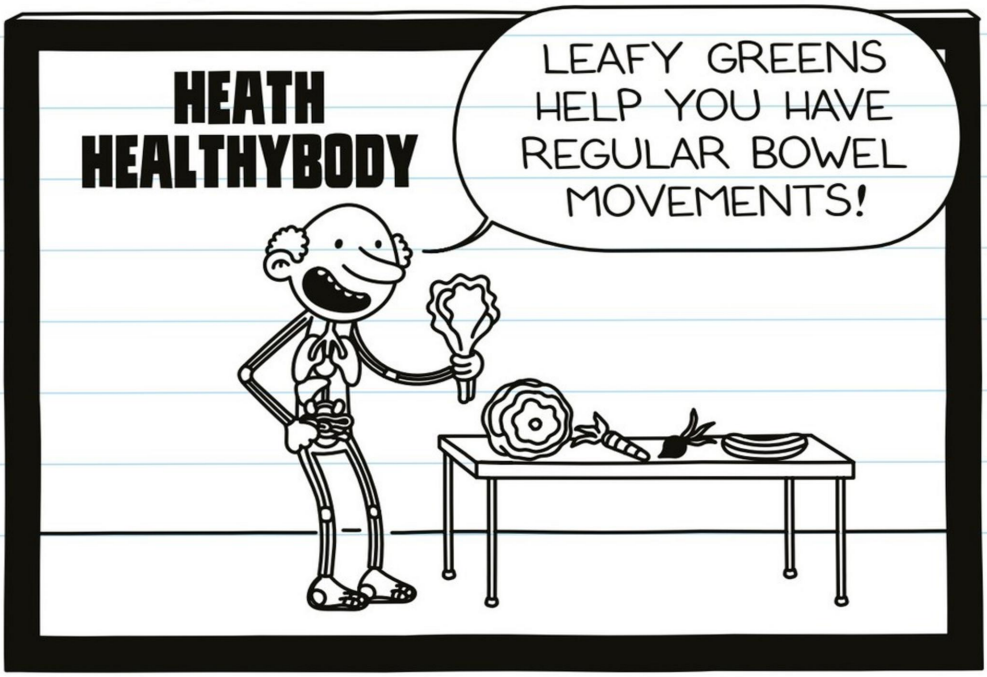
When I was little, I used to watch this show that had a character named Cupcake Gobbler, who went absolutely nuts for anything covered in frosting.

But after all these studies came out that said how bad sugar is for you, parents started calling in to the show to complain. So they made a few changes, and now Cupcake Gobbler doesn't eat so much sugary stuff. Which is kind of sad, because he's got "cupcake" right in his name.

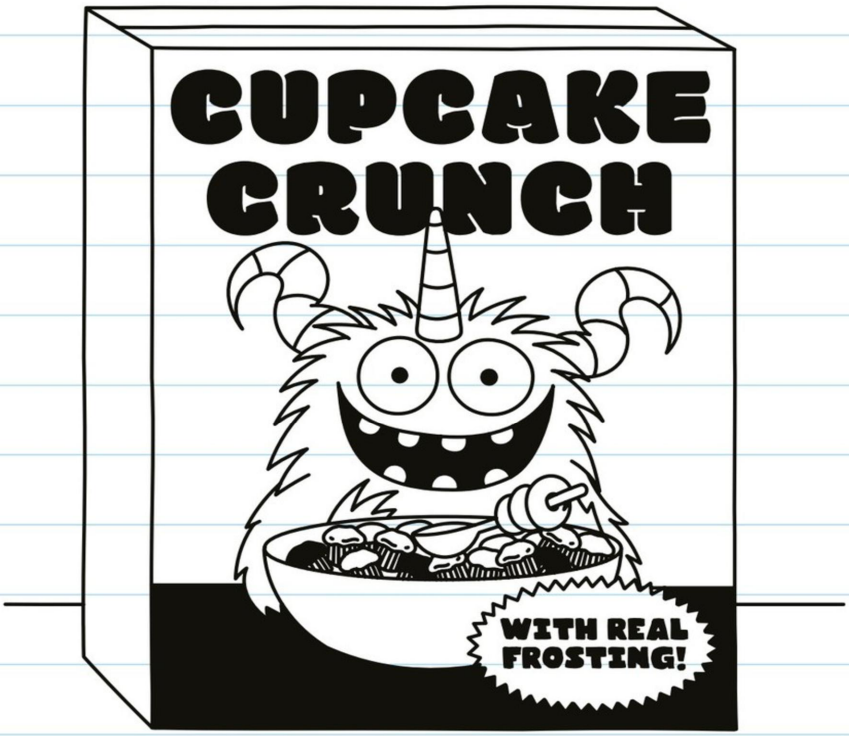
And even though he's healthier now, he's definitely not as much fun.



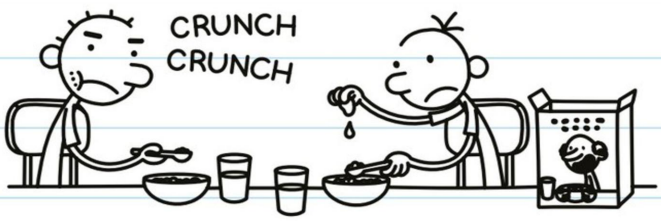
Eventually, the show phased out Cupcake Gobbler and replaced him with this guy named Heath Healthybody, who teaches kids about their organs and stuff. But he's a little too preachy for me, which is why I tuned out.



When Cupcake Gobbler got booted from the show, they canceled his cereal line, too. And that's a pity, because the kind with the little rainbow sprinkles were my FAVORITE.



They switched Cupcake Gobbler cereal with Heath Healthybody cereal, and I was willing to give it a try. But no kid wants to eat miniature lungs and kidneys, especially for breakfast.



The main reason I'm insisting on a store-bought cake for my birthday party is because I want to know exactly what's in it. And that doesn't just go for the ingredients.

There's a kid in my neighborhood named David Eisner who's a legend at hide-and-seek. The last thing I need is for him to sneak inside my cake, because if anyone can do it, it's HIM.

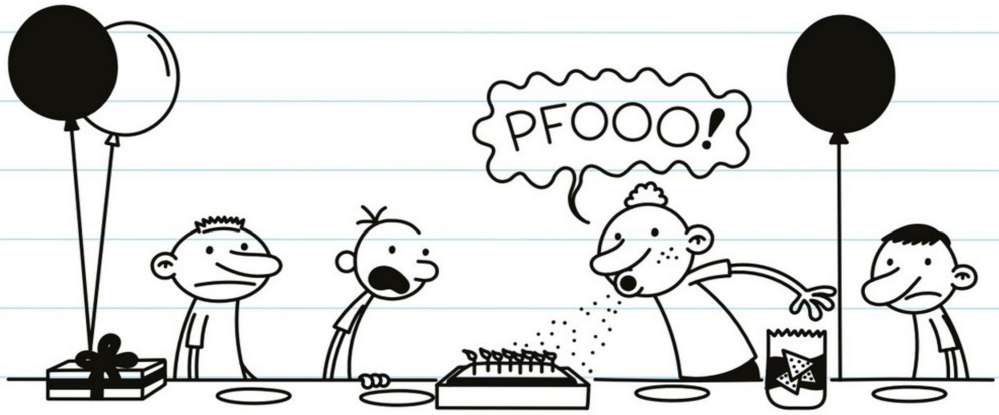
In fact, I'm already getting a little stressed out about it. So I'm gonna have someone ELSE cut the cake at my party, because I really don't need to go to jail over this kid.

The other thing I'm nervous about is people pranking me on my birthday. I've seen these videos where some person is about to blow out their candles and gets their face smashed into the cake. And I'm not willing to be the star of someone's viral video.

I guess the whole cake-smashing thing started at weddings, but if you ask me, that seems like a bad way to kick off a marriage. And I'm pretty sure it's one of the reasons things didn't work out between Uncle Gary and his first wife.

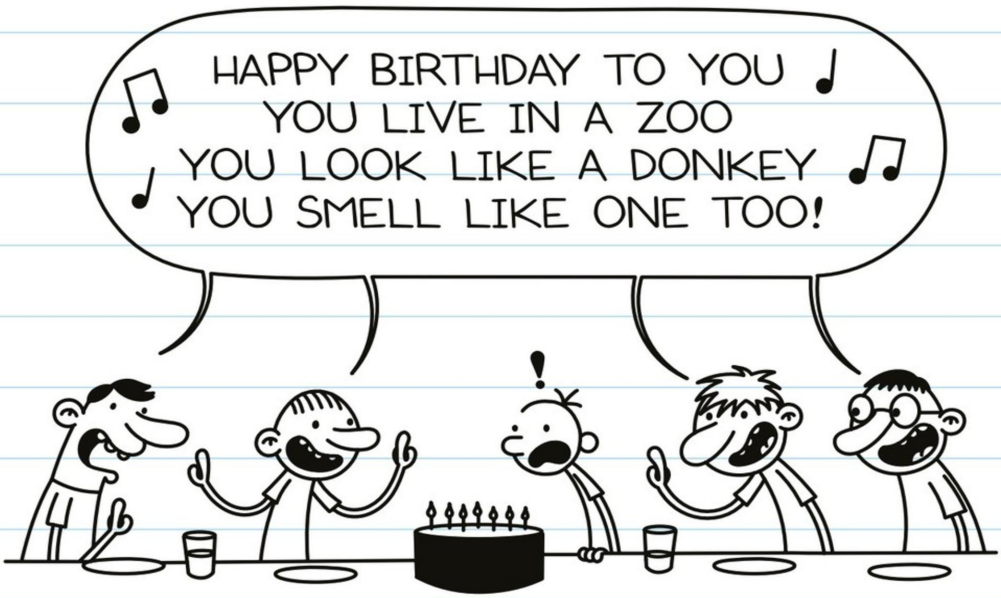
I definitely don't want anyone helping me blow out my birthday candles, either. Because I don't need a repeat of what happened with Charlie Anderson.

Plus, it's unsanitary for a bunch of people to breathe on something you're about to eat. ESPECIALLY Duffy Maynard, who always seems to have a mouth full of Doritos.

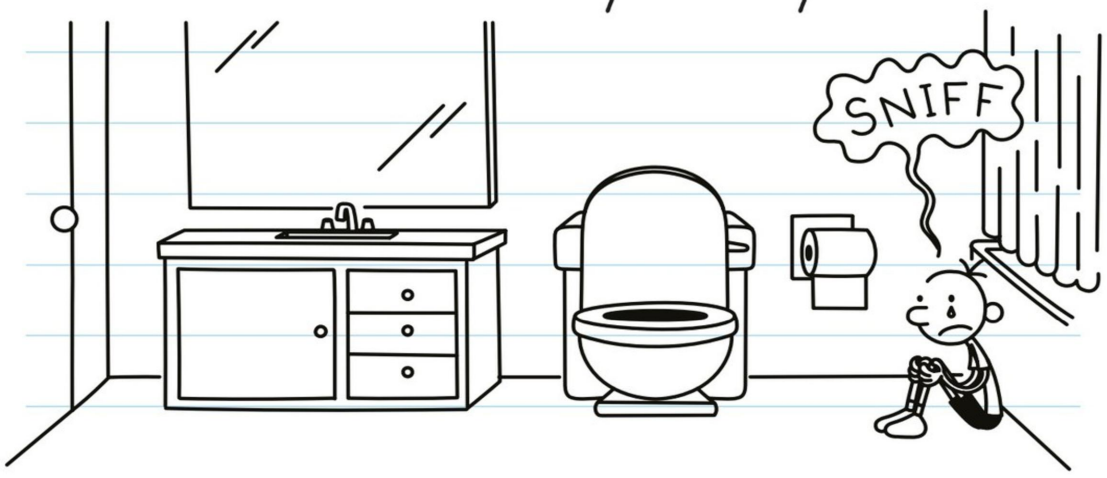


So I've already got my squirt gun filled up, and if anyone gets too close to my cake, they're in for a rude surprise.

I also don't want people singing the "Happy Birthday" song before I blow out my candles. Kids my age always sing the regular song, and then they ADD a part that's really rude. And I don't need to be insulted at my own birthday party.

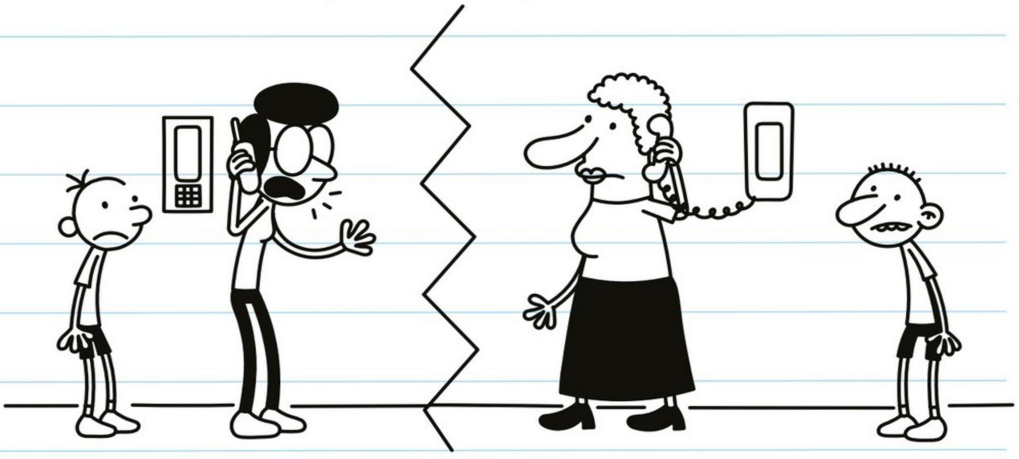


The first time I heard that version of the song, I thought I smelled like a donkey for REAL. And it ruined the rest of my birthday.

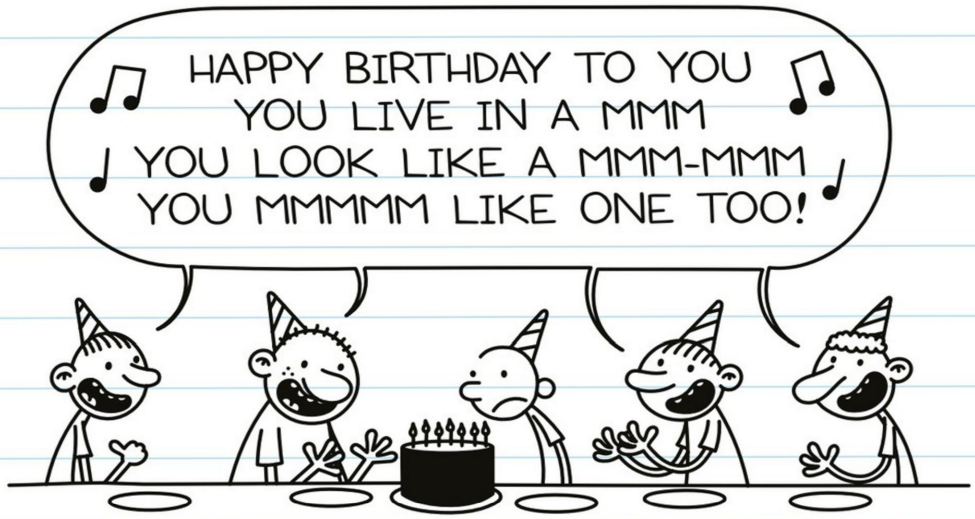


Mom explained that the other kids were just being silly and I didn't actually smell like a donkey. But I was still kind of paranoid, and I started asking Rowley to make sure I smelled fresh before we went to school each morning.

Mom knew I was nervous about the donkey thing happening at my NEXT birthday, so the night before my party, she called all the OTHER moms and asked their kids not to sing the donkey part during the "Happy Birthday" song.

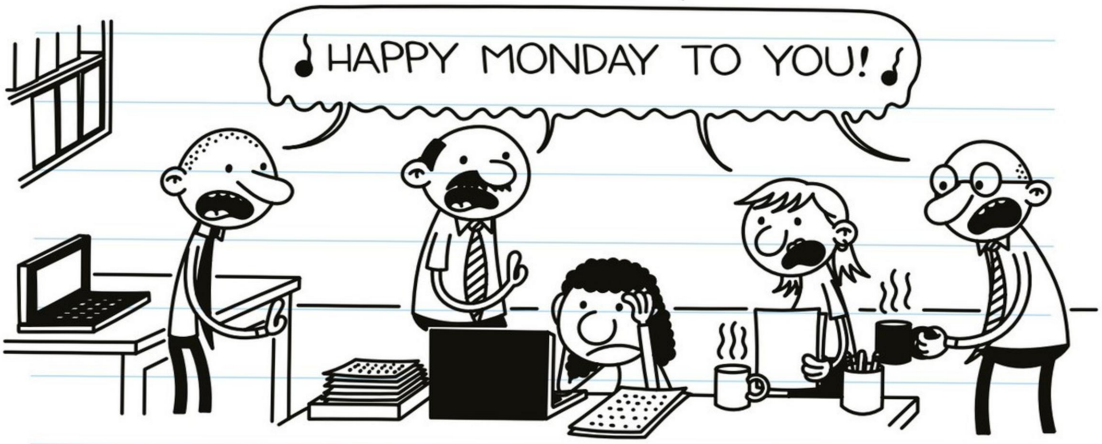


But instead of saying the words, they hummed that part of the song, which might've been WORSE.

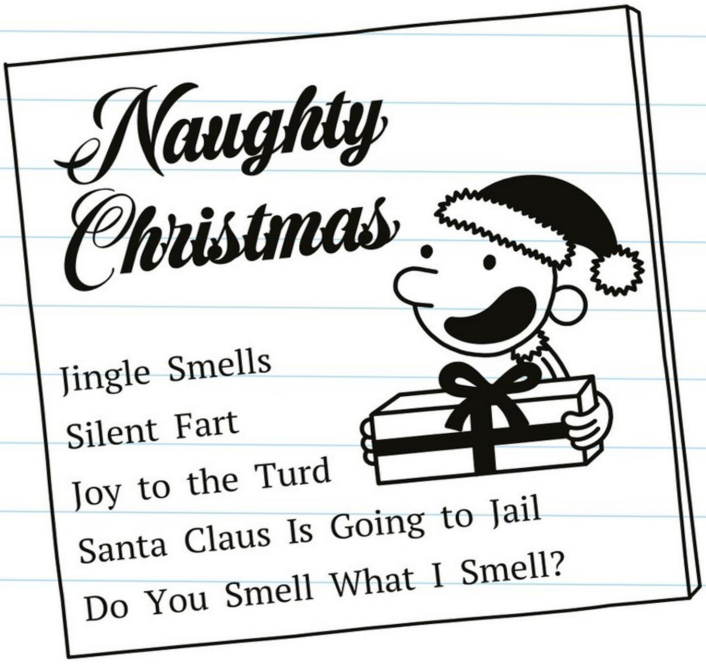


Rodrick told me that the person who came up with the original "Happy Birthday" song wrote it a long time ago, and they actually got PAID every time someone used it in a TV show or a movie. And that seems like a pretty good way to make a living to ME.

But the person who wrote that song could've earned a lot more money if it was for something that happens more than once a year.



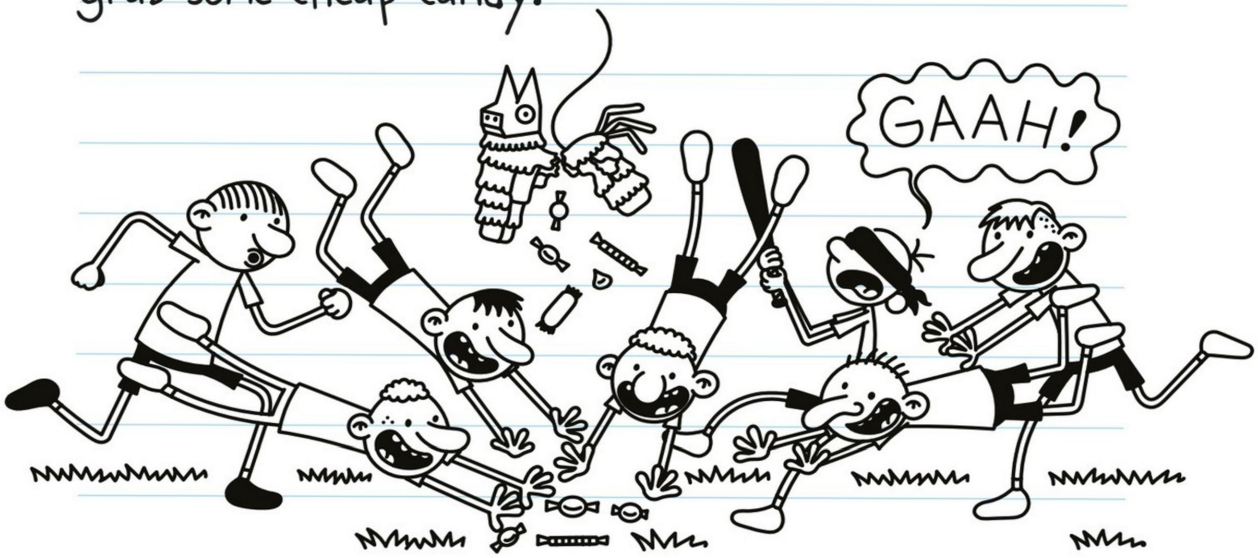
By now, the rude version of the "Happy Birthday" song is probably more popular than the original. So I'm seriously thinking about writing a whole album of insulting versions of holiday classics and cashing in.



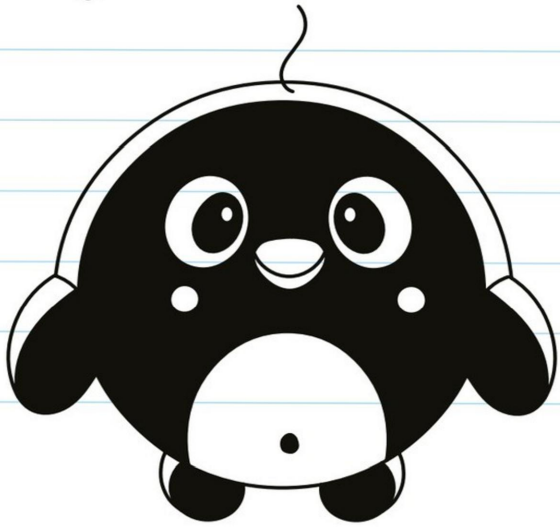
After me and Mom got the details of the party sorted out, we went to buy some decorations. But I guess the party store is going out of business, so there wasn't a great selection of birthday stuff.

We had to make a bunch of substitutions for things like napkins and plates. Mom said nobody's gonna notice, but I'm not so sure.

Mom really wanted a piñata, but I wasn't crazy about that idea. Because nobody wants to get trampled to death by a bunch of kids trying to grab some cheap candy.

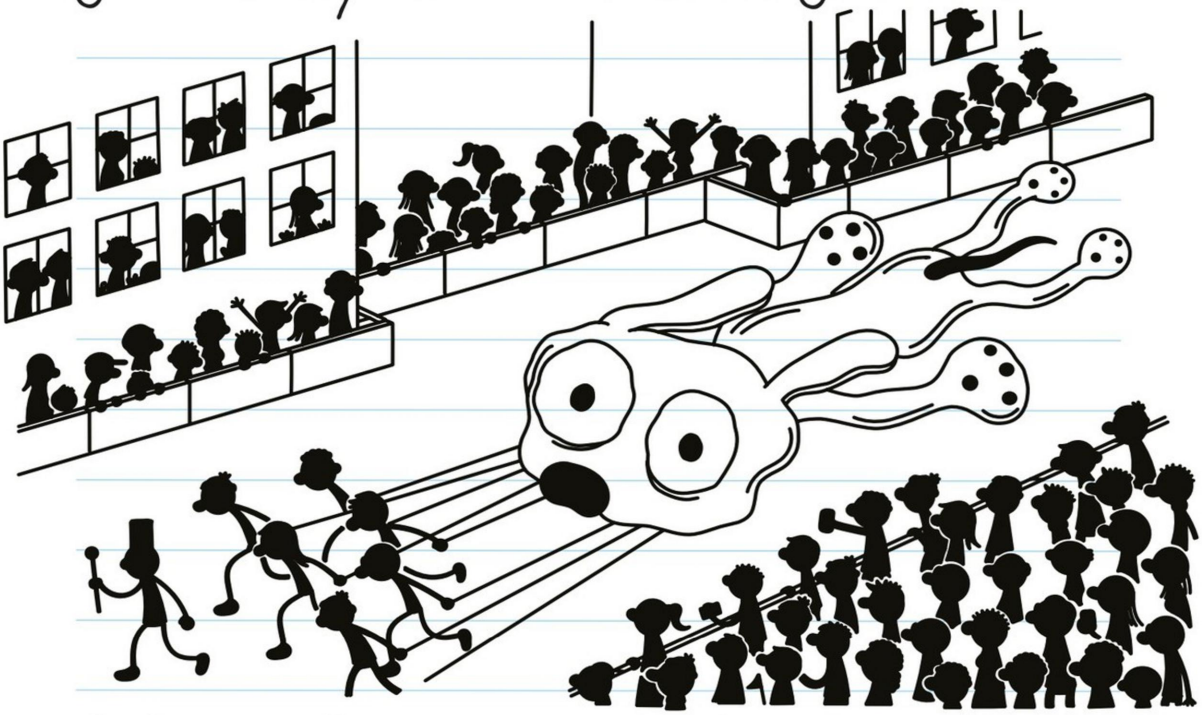


But Mom insisted, because she said kids Manny's age would love it. The piñata shelf was also picked over, and the only one left was a baby penguin. And I don't know who's gonna want to take a swing at something that cute.



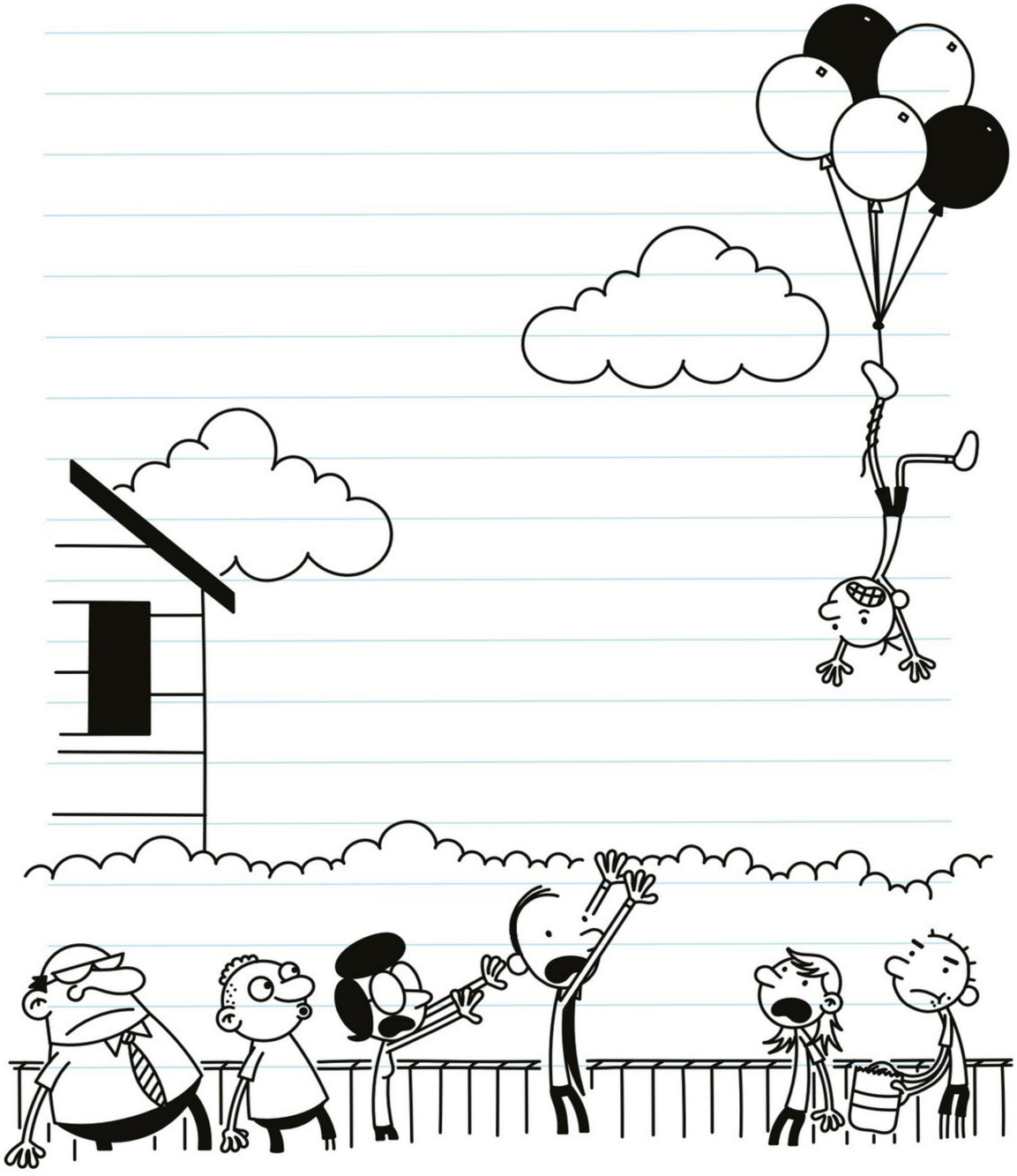
The store still had plenty of balloons, and Mom bought a few packages, then rented a helium tank to blow them up. But I'm not a fan of helium balloons for two reasons.

One, I've heard there's a limited amount of helium left in the world, so I don't think we should waste it on a birthday party. Because if we use it all up, those parades with giant balloons aren't gonna be very much fun for future generations.



And two, I've seen cartoons where someone gets lifted into outer space by a bunch of balloons, and I really don't want that to happen to ME.

Mom says that's make-believe and couldn't actually happen in real life. But I'm skinny, so I don't want to take any chances. Because even though I want this to be a party that people remember, I don't want it to be for the wrong reasons.



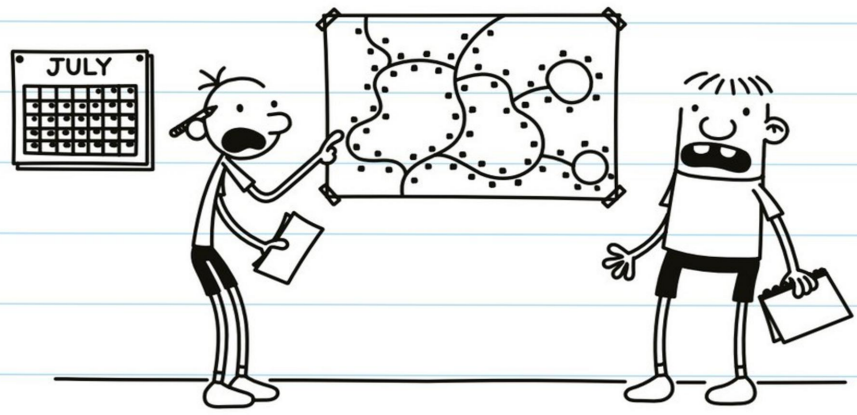
JULY

Monday

The party's this weekend, and I put together a list of everyone I want to invite. But the thing I'm worried about is people showing up who AREN'T invited.

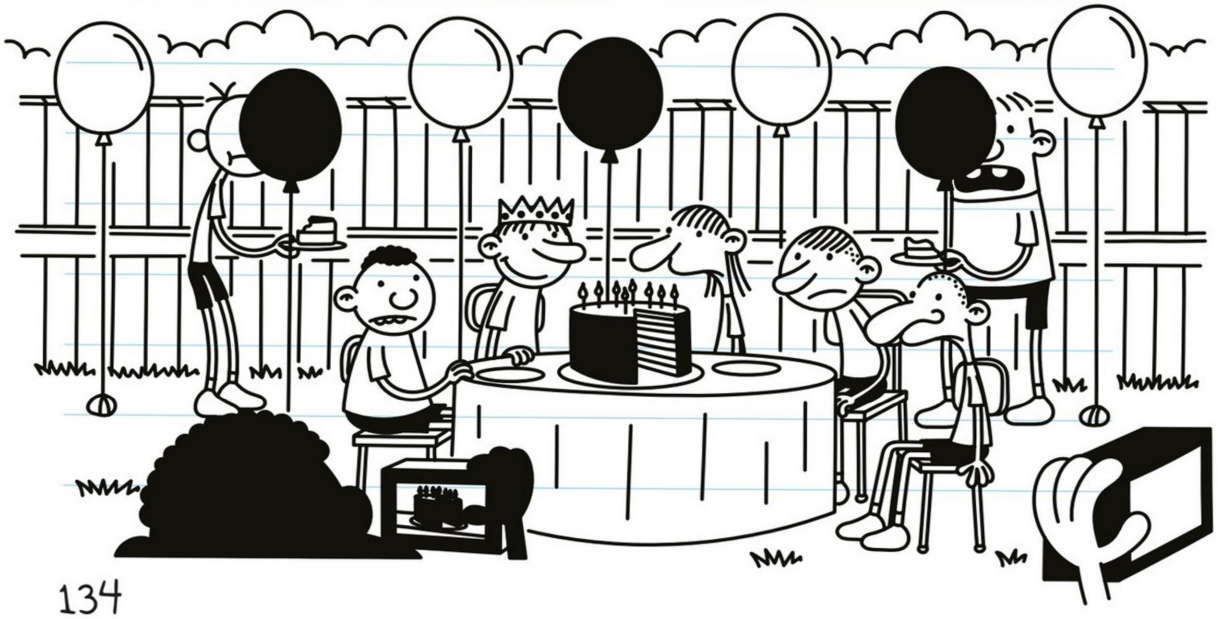
There's a certain type of person who shows up at a party just to get the free cake. And I know what I'm talking about, because I used to BE one of those people.

Last summer, me and Rowley mapped out all the birthdays happening in the neighborhood, then planned how we could hit each one. And it wasn't easy, because on some days, there were three parties going on at once.



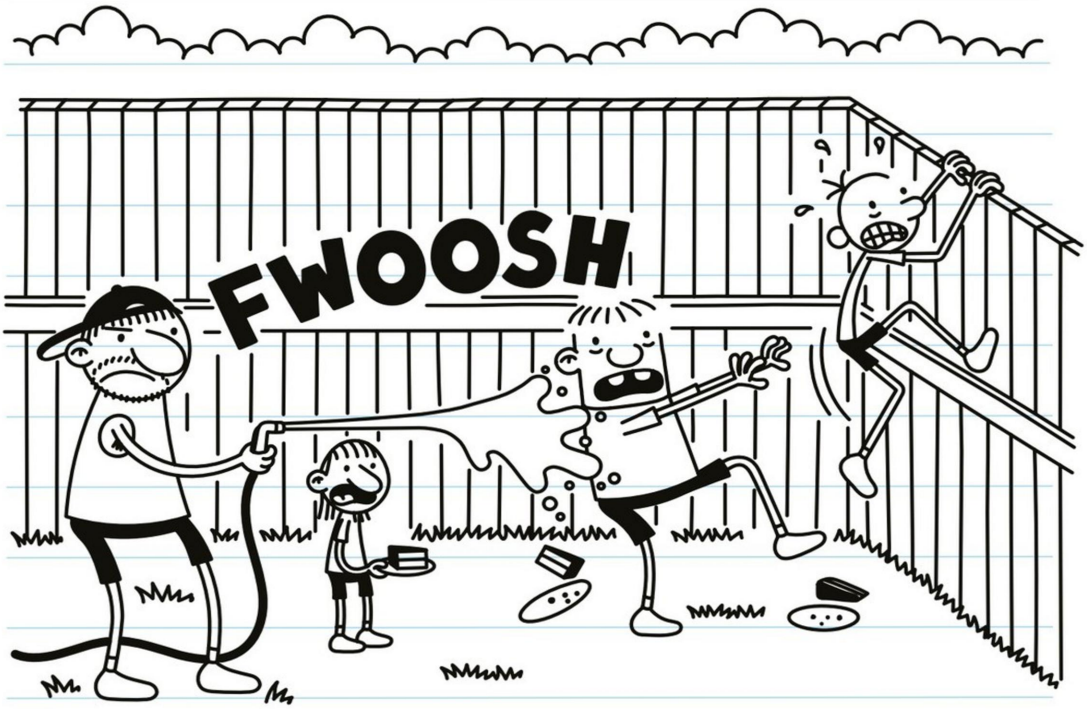
Our strategy was to wait until some kid's party was halfway over, then drop in and grab a few slices of cake. And most of the time, no one even noticed us.

But we were always nervous about getting caught, so when the cameras came out, we'd do our best to blend in.



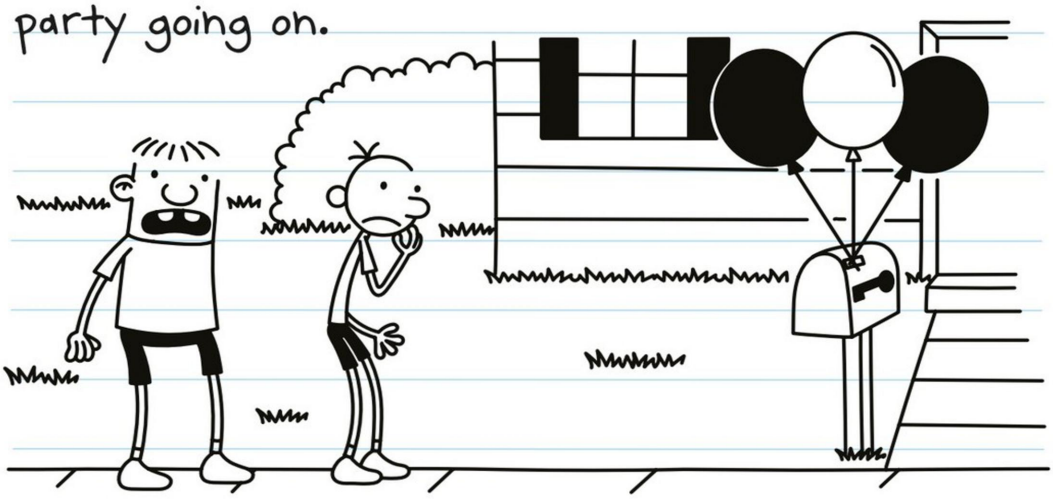
I guess we weren't as careful as we should've been, because word got around that two kids were crashing neighborhood birthday parties, so parents were on the lookout.

We had a really close call at Lorraine Widrow's party, where we didn't even get a chance to enjoy our cake before her dad chased us out of there.

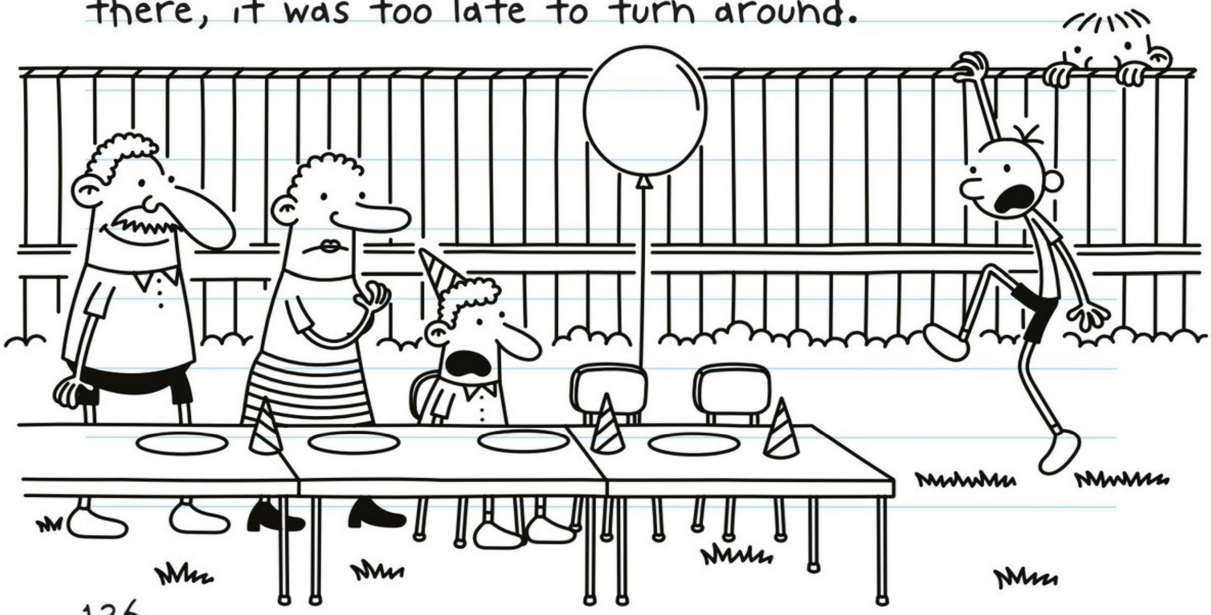


We knew if we wanted to keep doing this, we were gonna have to change our strategy. So we started going to parties in a different neighborhood.

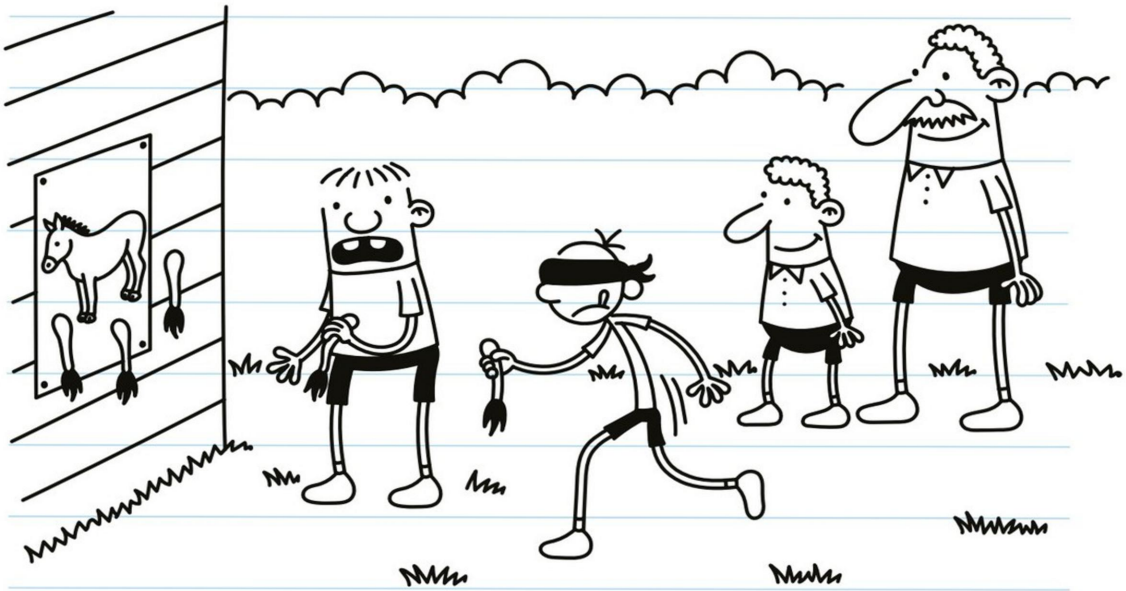
The problem was that we didn't know when those kids' birthdays were, so we had to go house-to-house looking for parties. And one day we came across a house where we could tell there was a party going on.



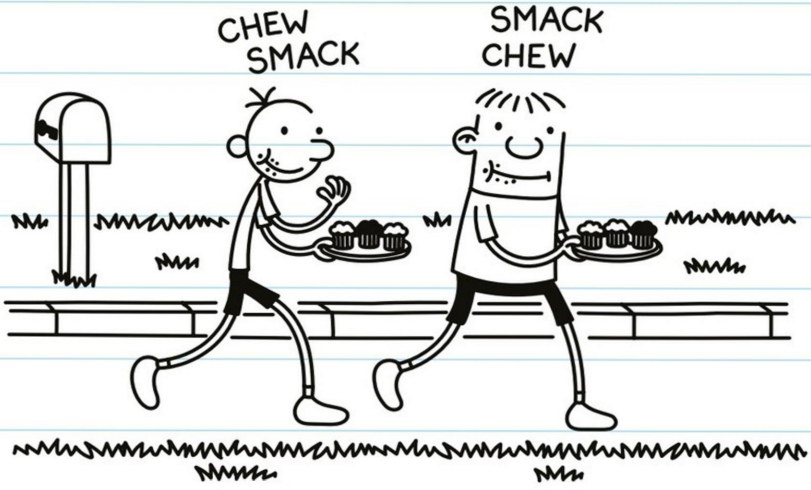
It turns out the family had just moved in, so the birthday boy didn't have any friends yet. But by the time we found out we were the only kids there, it was too late to turn around.



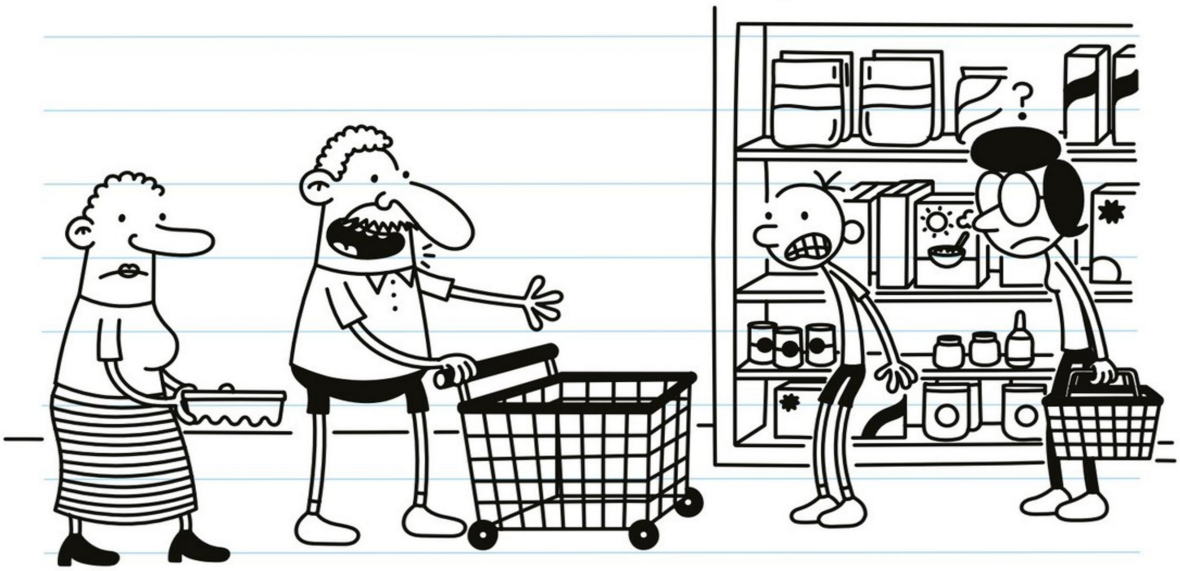
This kid's parents were THRILLED that someone came to their son's party, though. So we spent the whole afternoon trapped at this random kid's house playing party games.



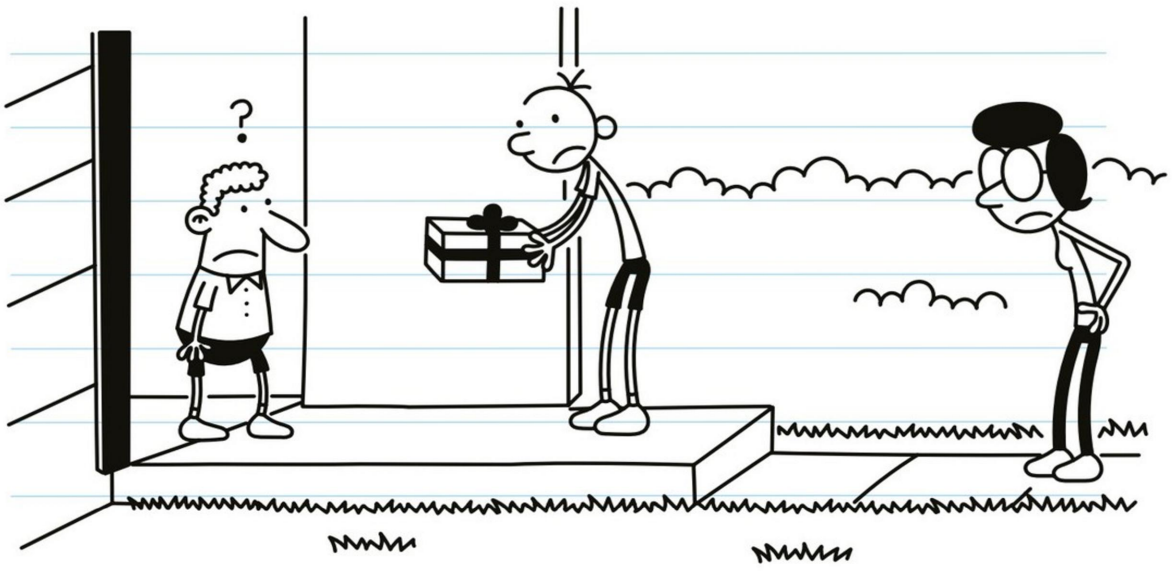
But it wasn't a total waste of time. The parents were really nice, and the kid's mom sent us each home with a plate of cupcakes.



I forgot all about that day until I ran into the parents at the grocery store a few months later. And it was kind of awkward, because that's how Mom found out I was at the party.



Mom wasn't happy to hear that I went to a kid's party without bringing a gift. So she made me buy him a present with my allowance and bring it to his house.



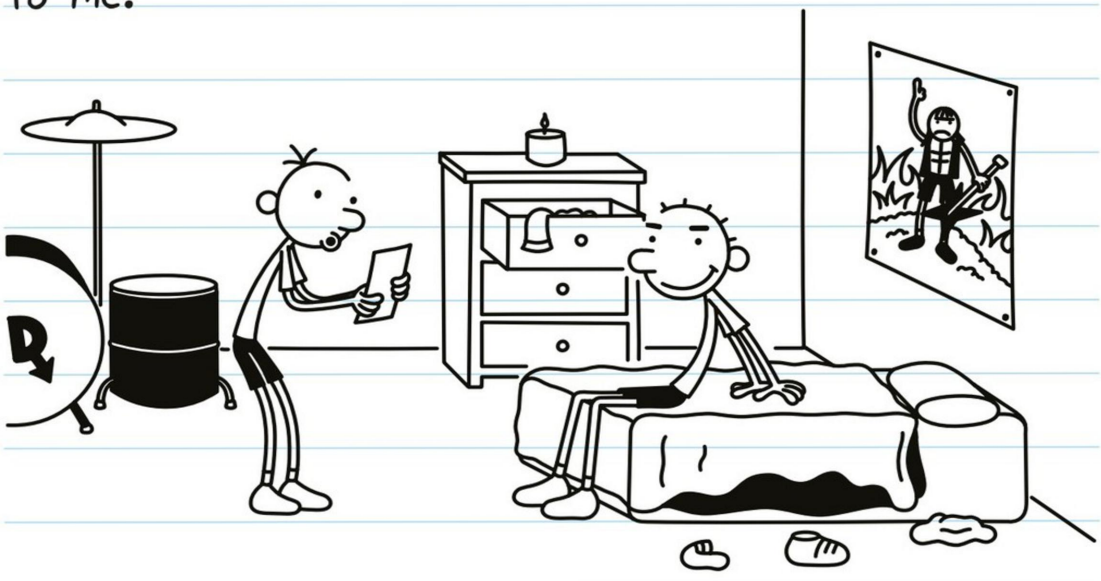
I don't want a bunch of freeloaders showing up at MY party without bringing a gift, because the whole point is for me to get that trading card.

I decided the best way to keep party crashers away was to make the invitation be the ticket to get IN. So I designed an invitation, and I even added one of those special codes to make it look extra official.

I realized it would be smart to mail some invitations to my relatives who live far away, because those people wouldn't come, but they'd probably still send a GIFT.

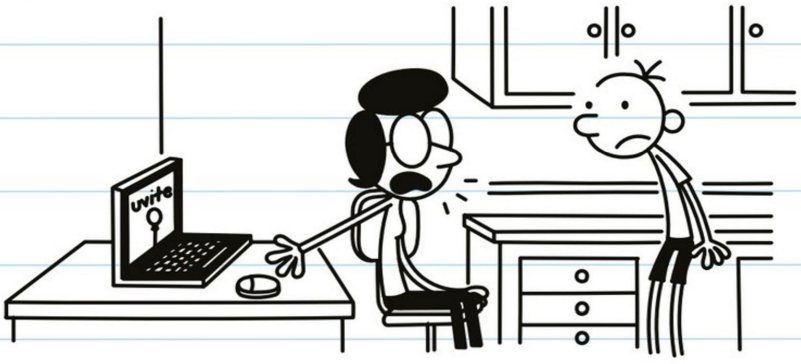
The thing is, I didn't know WHICH relatives to send invitations to, because I've got a lot of them, and stamps are expensive.

But Rodrick keeps a list of what everyone does for a living and how much they make. He told me he'd let me borrow the list in exchange for two months' allowance, which seemed like a no-brainer to me.



I sent out a few dozen invitations to some of the high earners in my family. I even invited Aunt Nancy, even though she lives all the way in Hawaii. But she's a lawyer, so it was definitely worth the stamp.

I asked Mom if she could drive me around town so I could hand-deliver the rest of the invitations. But she said she ALREADY sent out invitations to my party from a website she uses for this sort of thing.



And let's just say Mom's invitation was a little different from mine.

The worst thing is that Mom's invitation didn't mention the trading card packs at ALL, even though that's the whole point of this thing.

Now I'm stuck having this giant party, and I don't even have a prayer of getting what I want. So all I can do now is cross my fingers and pray my Aunt Nancy from Hawaii comes through with a big fat check.

Friday

Mom's getting nervous because those people on social media are zeroing in on the identity of the mother who forgot her son's birthday.

ConcernedParent48

NEW INFO on the child whose parents forgot their birthday... apparently the mother was preoccupied with a church pie contest!

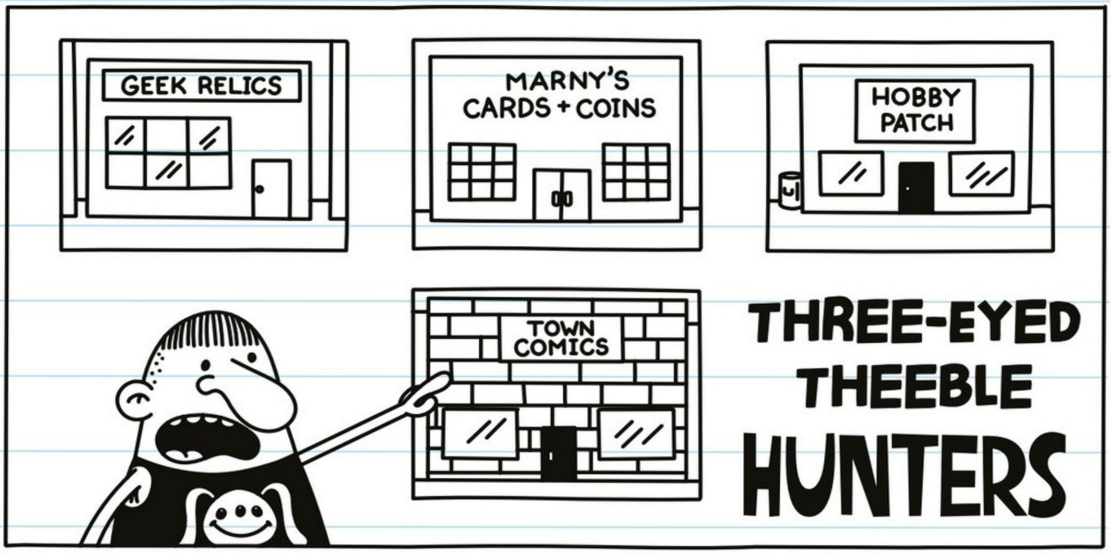
KoolMom1998

It shouldn't be too hard to find recent church pie contests. I'm on the case!

Mom's worried someone's gonna crack the case before she has a chance to set things right. So this do-over party can't come soon enough for her.

But I've got my own problems to deal with. The group that's tracking the location of the Three-Eyed Theeble has got it narrowed down to four stores they think might have it. And believe it or not, my local comics shop is ONE of them.

So this party can't come soon enough for ME, either.



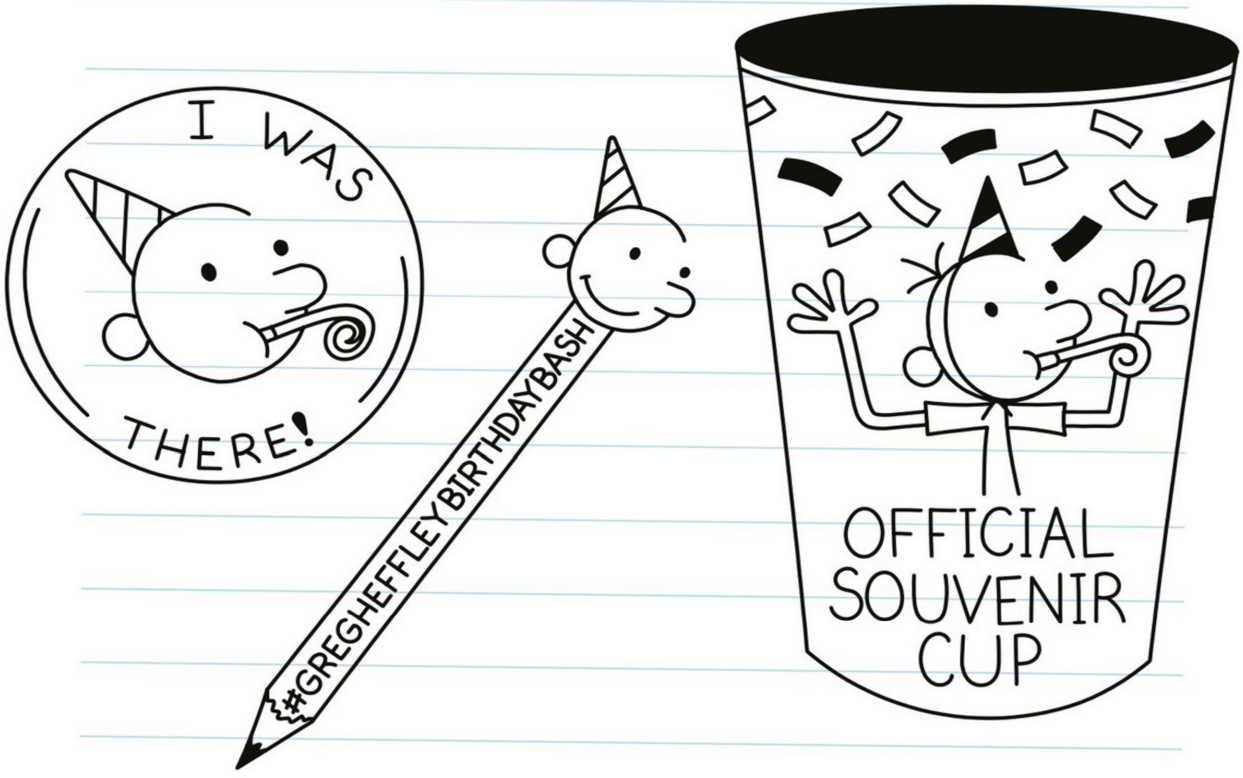
The card hunters are talking about traveling to each of the stores to buy up their supply of MicroCreatures cards. That means it's a race against the clock, and I need to figure out a way to snag that card before THEY do.

My only hope is getting enough cash at my party to buy a bunch of card packs. But I'm worried my guests won't come through for me.

So I've been dreaming up some OTHER ways to earn extra cash.

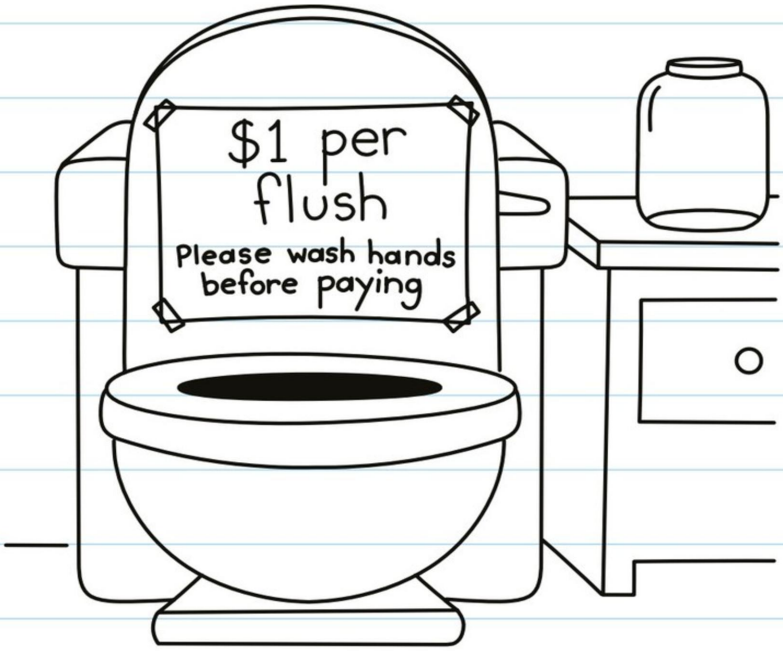
First of all, I'm gonna have a bunch of exclusive items for sale that you can ONLY get at my party. Because later on, people will want something to remember the day by.

I'll sell commemorative cups, which will cost five dollars a pop. And then I'll sell specialty drinks, which I'll charge extra for.



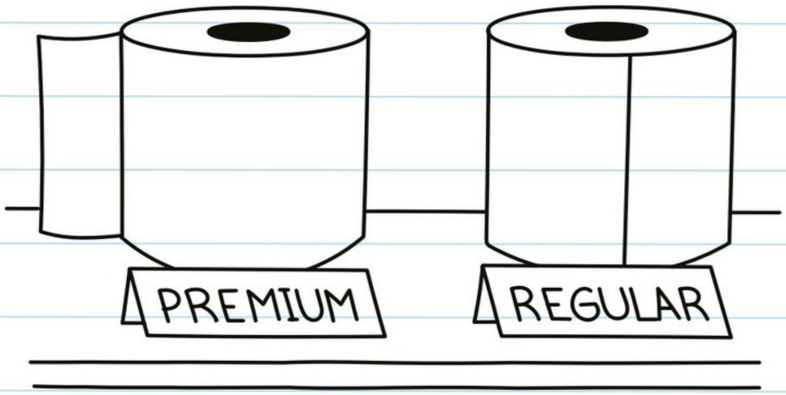
To make sure people buy lots of drinks, I'll give away salty snacks like chips and pretzels for FREE so everyone stays thirsty.

If people are drinking a lot, they'll have to use the bathroom. So I'll put up a sign with a recommended donation.

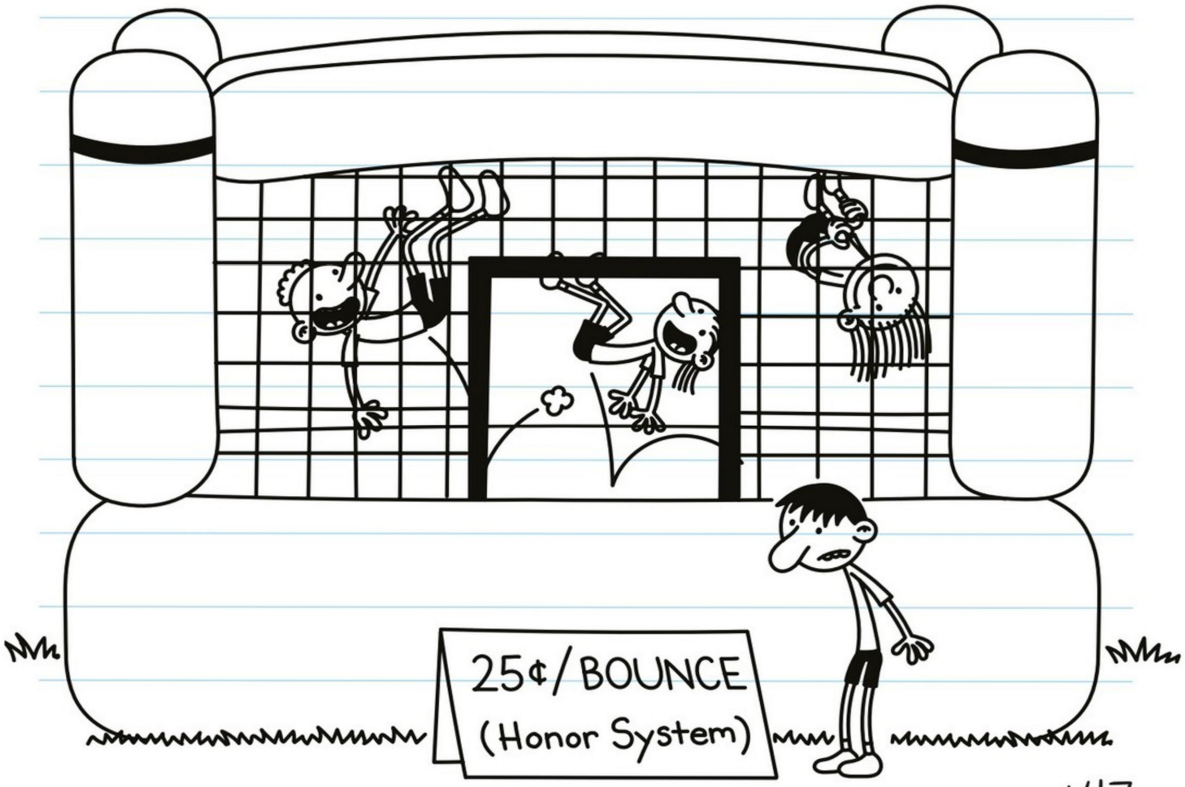


I'm a little nervous that people won't pay up when they're behind closed doors, though. So I'll hire a bathroom attendant just to keep them honest.

To make a little extra money, I'll buy two types of toilet paper: the good kind and the cheap kind. And if you want to use the premium stuff, you'll have to pay for it.

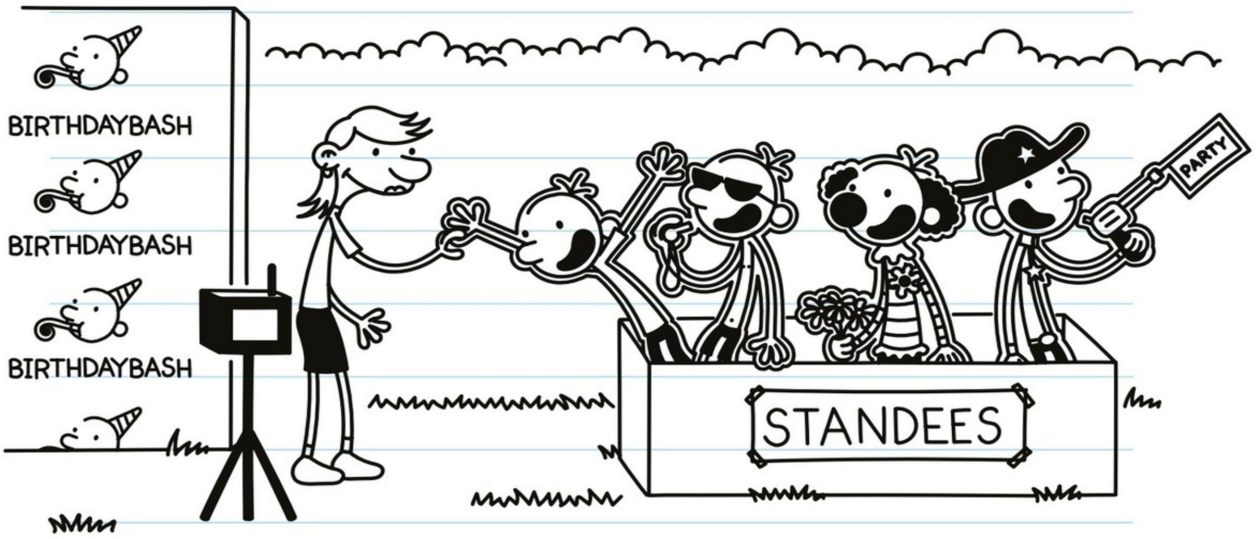


At first, I wasn't crazy about the bouncy house idea, but I figure there's a way to make money off THAT, too.

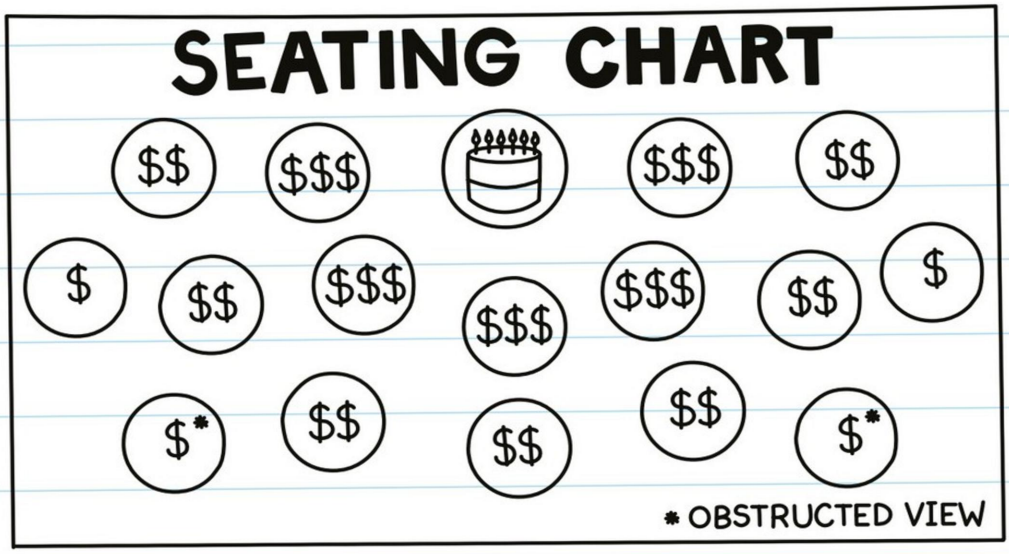


When you're the birthday boy, you're the star of the show. So I'll give people the opportunity to take pictures with me, for a small fee.

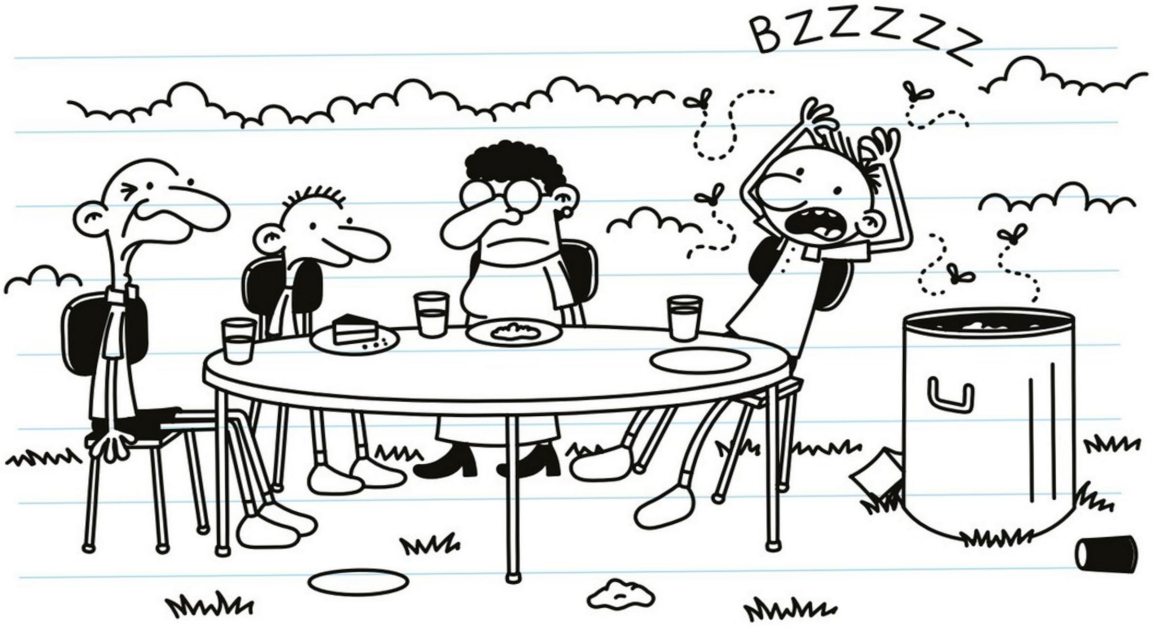
But I can't be pinned down to one spot at my own party. So I'll create a few cutouts that people can pose with when I'm making the rounds.



At a party like this one, where you sit really matters. So there will be options for people to pay to be near the head table.

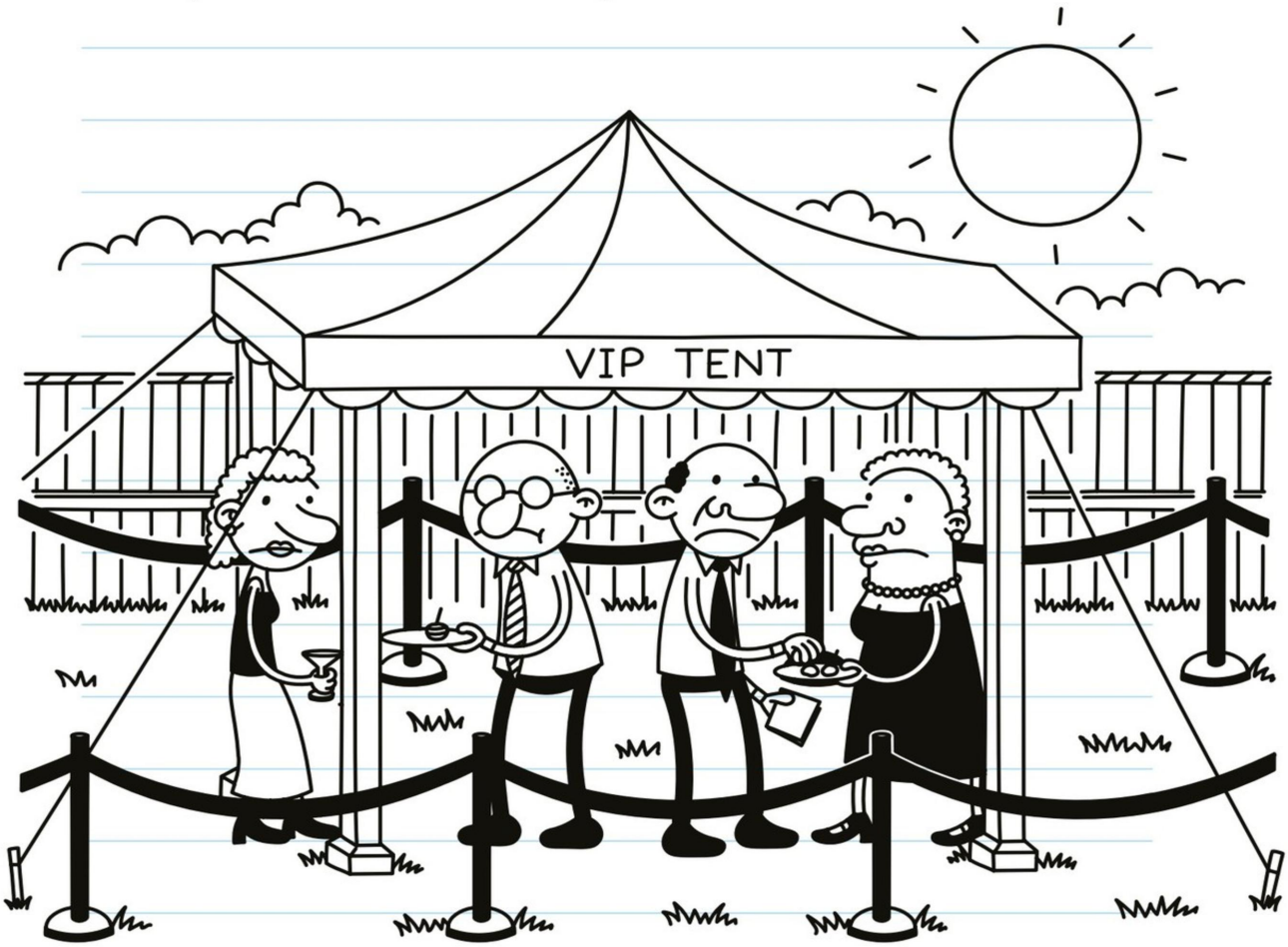


Of course, it's important for EVERYONE to have a place to sit, so there will be a couple of free tables, too. But personally, I wouldn't want to be at the one next to the trash can.

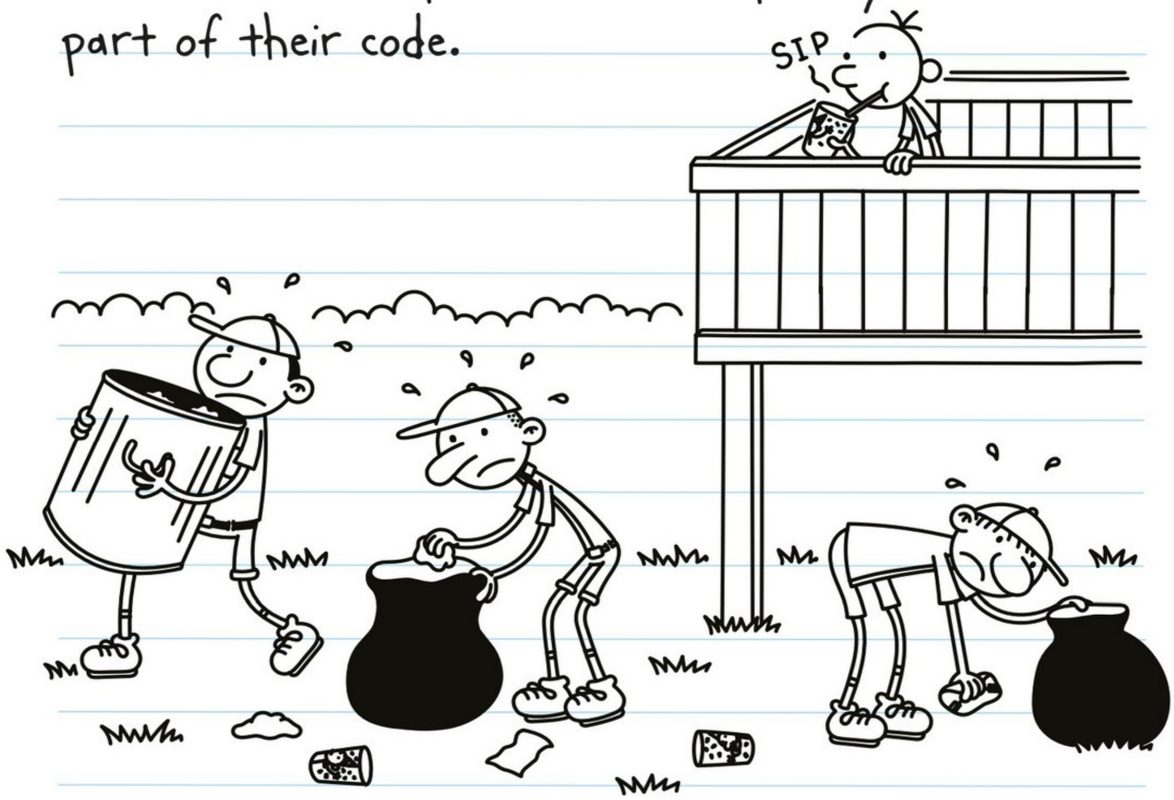


A lot of people are coming to this party, so it could get crowded in the backyard. That's why it's important to have a separate section for VIPs, where the most important guests don't have to rub elbows with the riffraff.

It's supposed to be hot this weekend, and the VIPs are gonna want to be in the shade. That's why I invited a few Boy Scouts to the party to set up a tent for the high rollers.



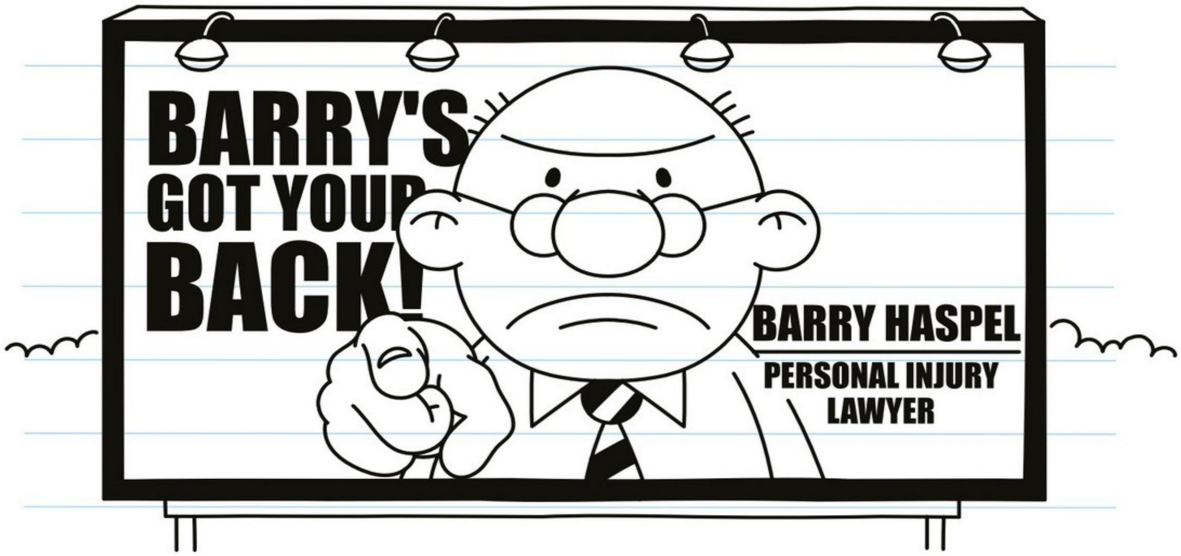
Then, when the party's over, I'll ask the Boy Scouts to clean up, because I'm pretty sure that's part of their code.



When I looked at the guest list, I realized we didn't have a lot of VIPs on it. So I tried to think of a few local celebrities who might actually make an appearance.

The problem is that there aren't a lot of famous people who live in my town. The closest thing we have to a celebrity is Larry Mack Junior, who owns a car dealership. But something tells me he wouldn't show up for my party.

The SECOND most famous person is a lawyer named Barry Haspel, who's got billboards all over town. But from the way he looks, I kind of doubt he'd be willing to come to a middle school kid's birthday party.



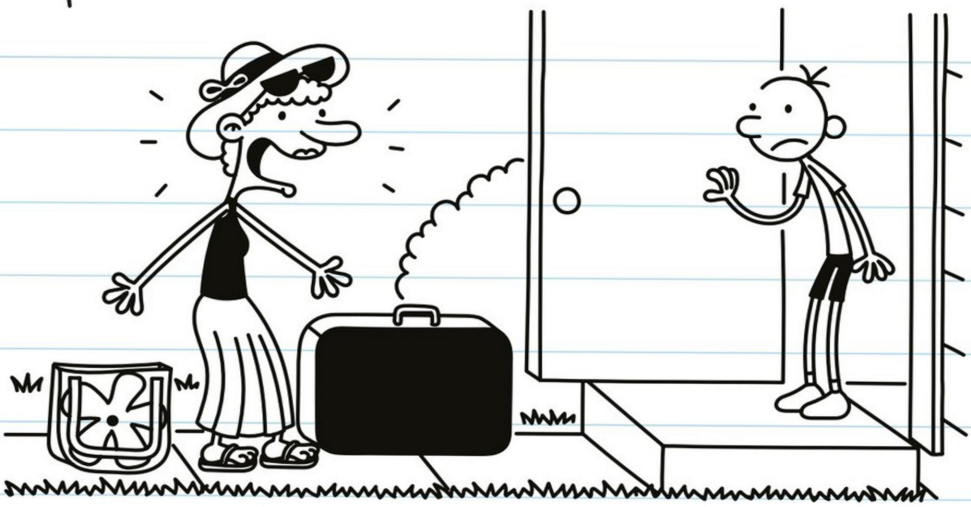
I figured there wasn't any harm in inviting him, though. But I changed the wording on his invitation to make it more likely that he'd show.

Dear Mr. Haspel,

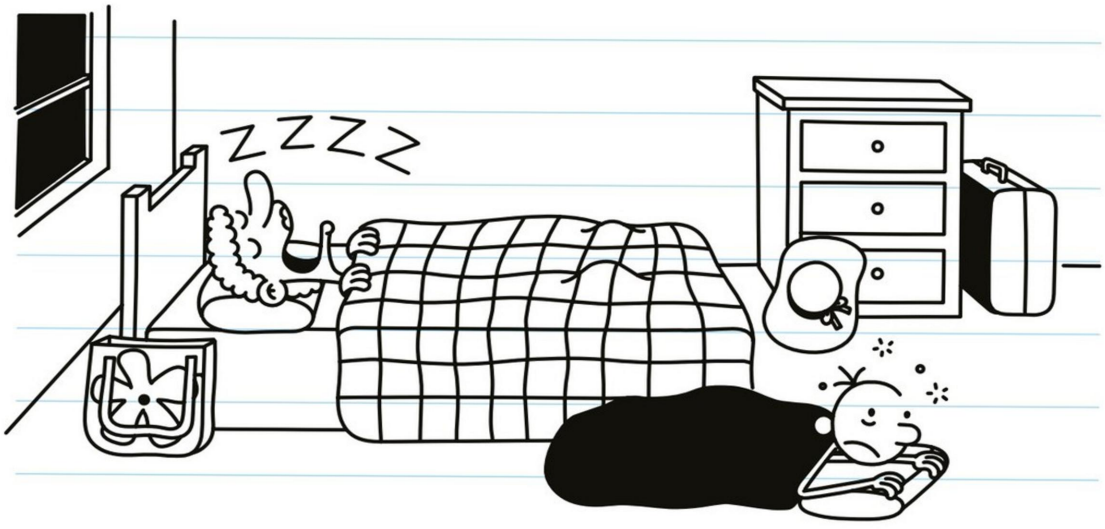
I slipped and fell in the grocery store parking lot. Please come to my house at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday to discuss my case.

Sincerely,
Greg Heffley

The last person in the world I was expecting to come to my party was Aunt Nancy from Hawaii, but she showed up at our house tonight. I guess she doesn't usually get invited to family events, so when she got my invitation, she hopped on the first plane out here.



But it would've been nice if she'd given someone in the family a heads-up. Because then we might've had time to set up the guest room.

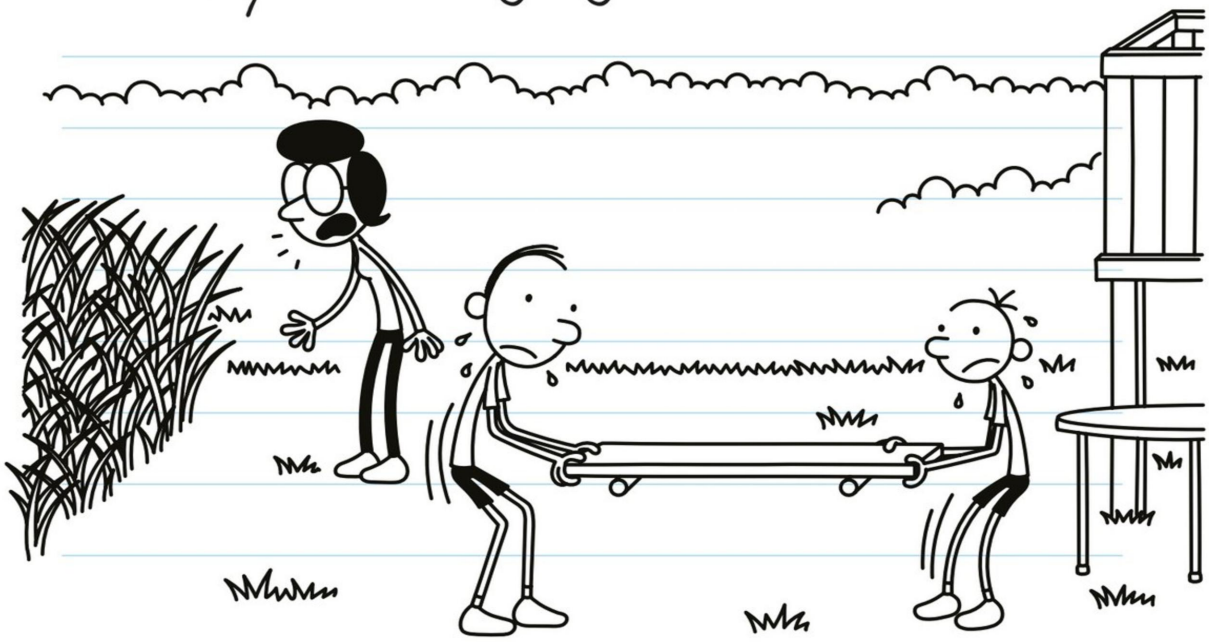


Saturday

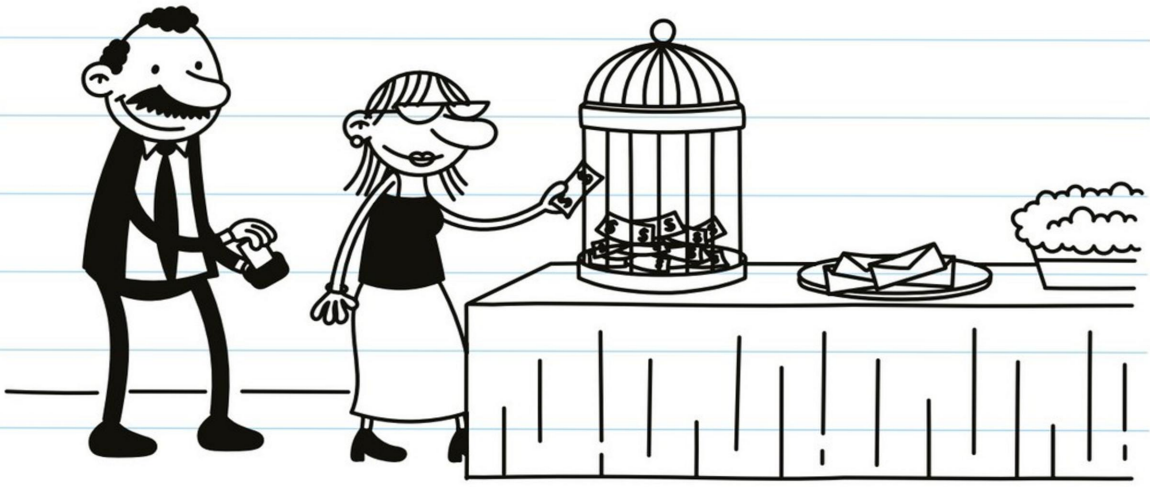
Today's the day I'd been waiting for. And even though I was looking forward to officially kicking off the party, there was a lot of work to do before guests started showing up.

Dad helped me bring some plastic tables and chairs up from the basement. Rodrick was in charge of going to get the cake, and Mom set up the party games and activity stations in the yard.

Mom was upset that no one ever mowed the next-door neighbor's yard, but I didn't think anyone was gonna be bothered by a little overgrown grass when they were having a good time.



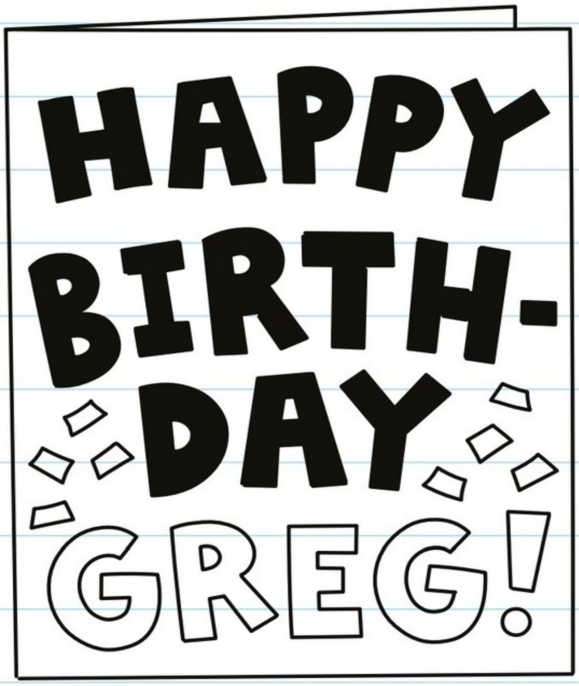
I set up the gift table on the back deck. At one of Uncle Gary's weddings, they put out a birdcage where people could leave money. I thought that was a good idea, so I decided to do the same thing.



We didn't have a birdcage, though, and the best I could come up with was a birdhouse I made in the fourth grade. But it was kind of small, so I figured I'd have to remember to empty it out every half hour or so during the party.

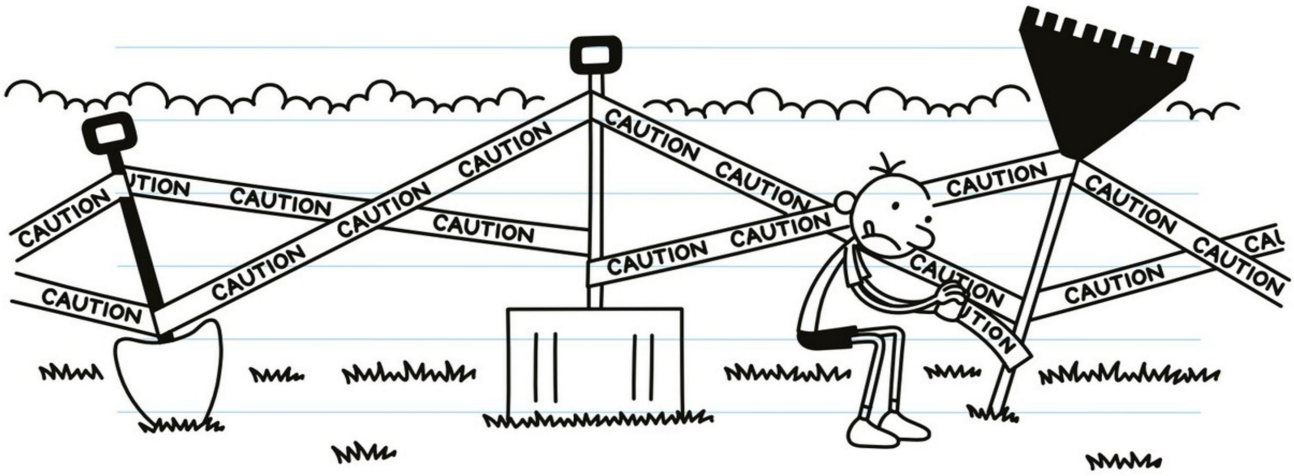
I had asked the Boy Scouts to come to the house early to set up the VIP tent, but I guess they were running late. Which is weird, because I thought punctuality was kind of their thing.

I set up a check-in desk by the driveway, to make sure everyone who showed up was actually on the guest list. Mom put a giant birthday card on the table, which she said everyone could sign when they checked in.



I thought that was a little corny, but then I realized getting everyone to sign the card was smart. Because then if someone didn't bring a gift, I'd know who to track down later on.

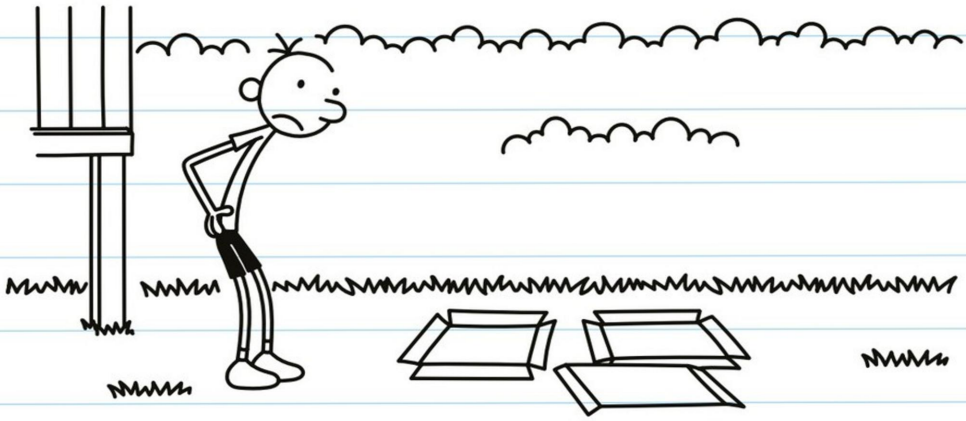
I didn't want anyone sneaking into the party, so I roped off the whole backyard with a roll of plastic tape that the construction workers left behind when they worked on our house. And even though there were some gaps in the barrier, I figured it would keep out some of the bigger party crashers.



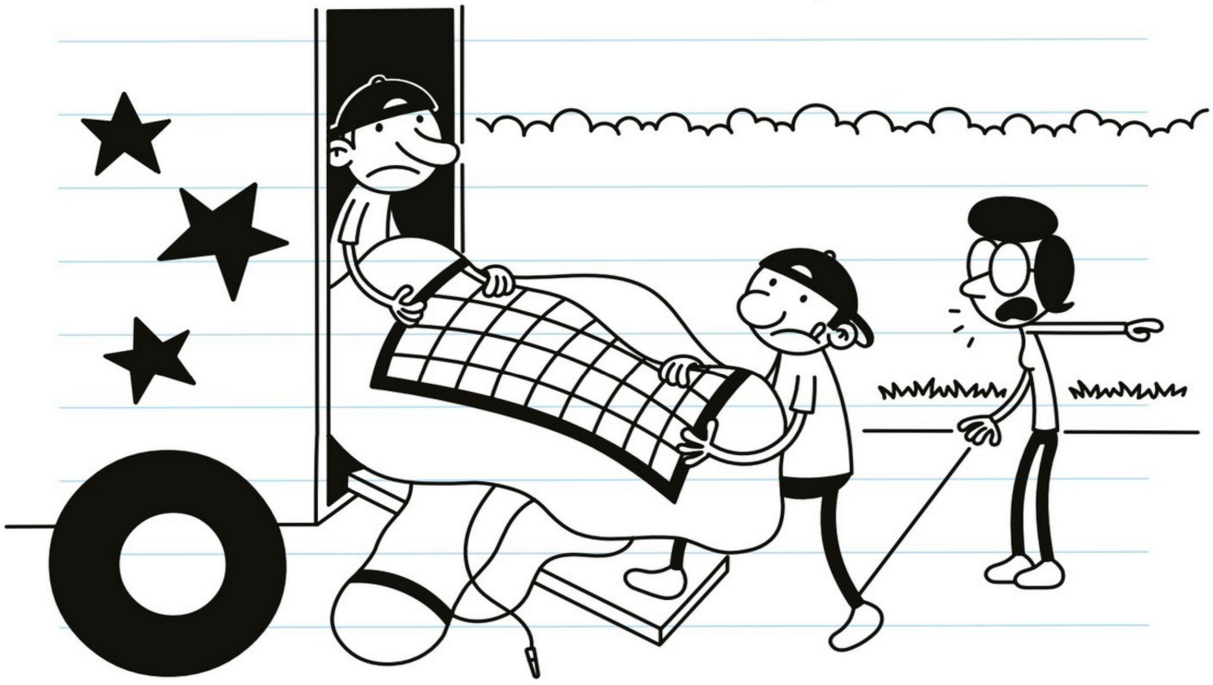
It rained last night, so the grass in the backyard was still a little soggy. I was worried that would make it hard to dance when the party got going, so I decided to set up a cardboard dance floor.

But Mom told me that we put all our cardboard in the recycling bin on Wednesday, and it had already been collected.

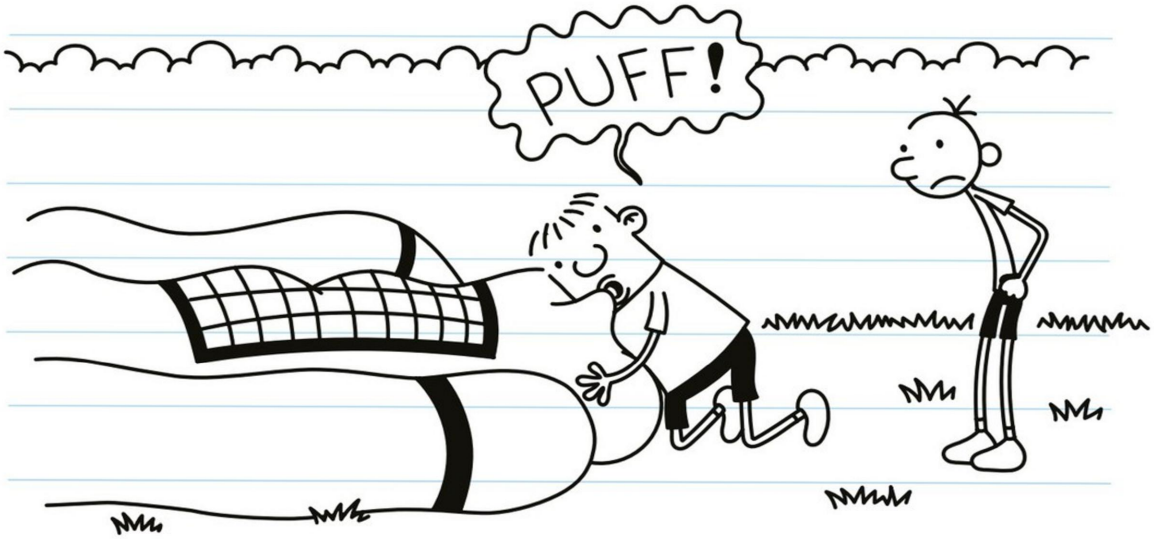
So I scrounged up the cardboard I could find in the house, which was two shoeboxes and an empty box of mac and cheese. And even though the dance floor wasn't that big, I figured it was better than nothing.



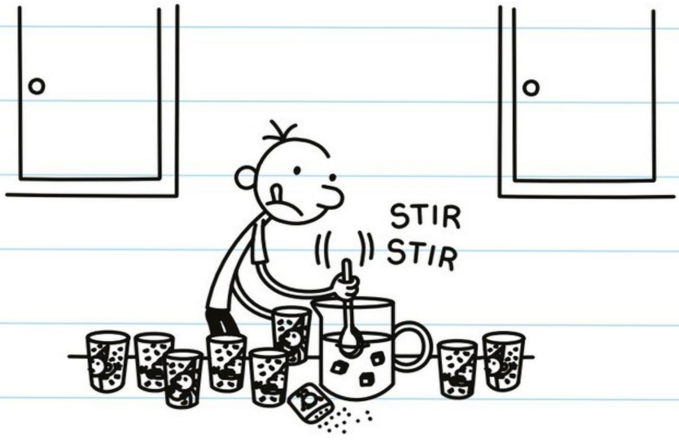
A truck rolled up in our driveway, and it was the guys delivering the bouncy house. Mom showed them where to set it up in our backyard.



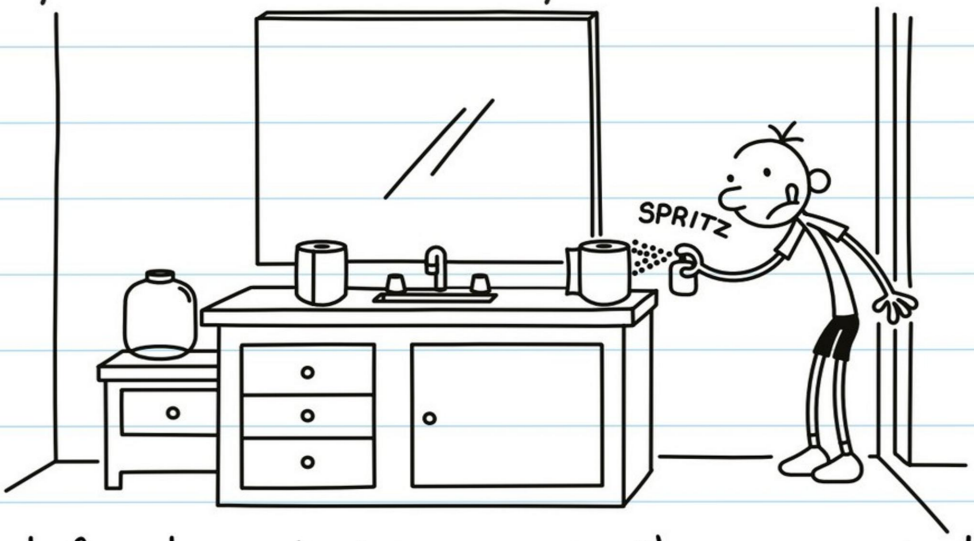
But they forgot to leave a PUMP, so we didn't have any way of inflating it. Luckily, Rowley arrived to help us set up, so I put him on bouncy house blow-up duty while I took care of more important things.



I made a few gallons of the specialty drink, which was just cherry and grape Kool-Aid mixed together. But if people knew that, they'd never pay the three bucks I was charging.



I'd forgotten to ask Mom to get good toilet paper when she went to the grocery store, so I had to come up with a different plan. But the best I could do was spritz a few rolls of REGULAR toilet paper with Rodrick's body spray to make it smell fancy.

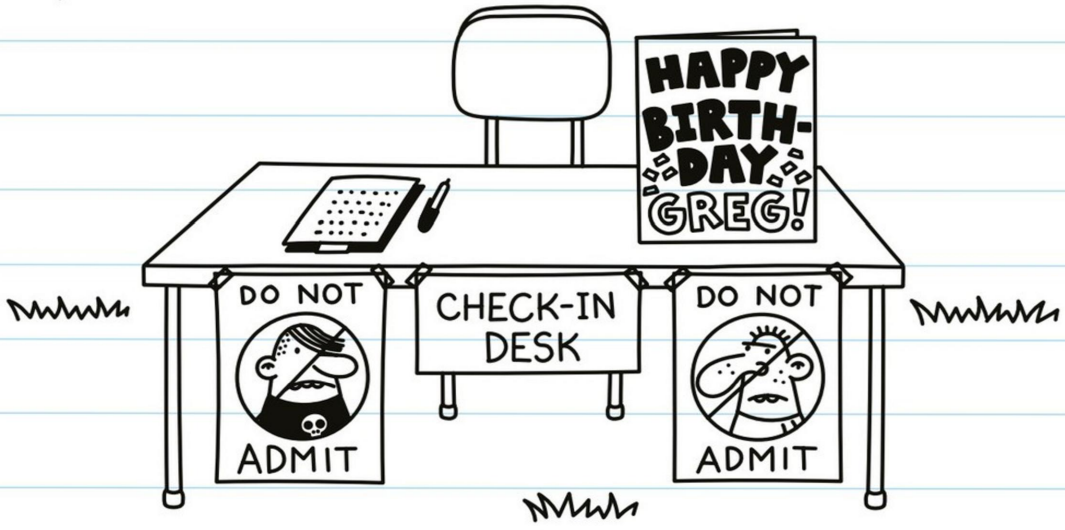


Dad found an electric pump in the garage to blow up the bouncy house, which meant I could switch Rowley to a different job. So I put him in charge of checking people in at the front desk.

I told him to ask grown-ups for their driver's licenses when they checked in. But kids don't carry official identification with them, so I gave him an old yearbook to match their faces to their school pictures.

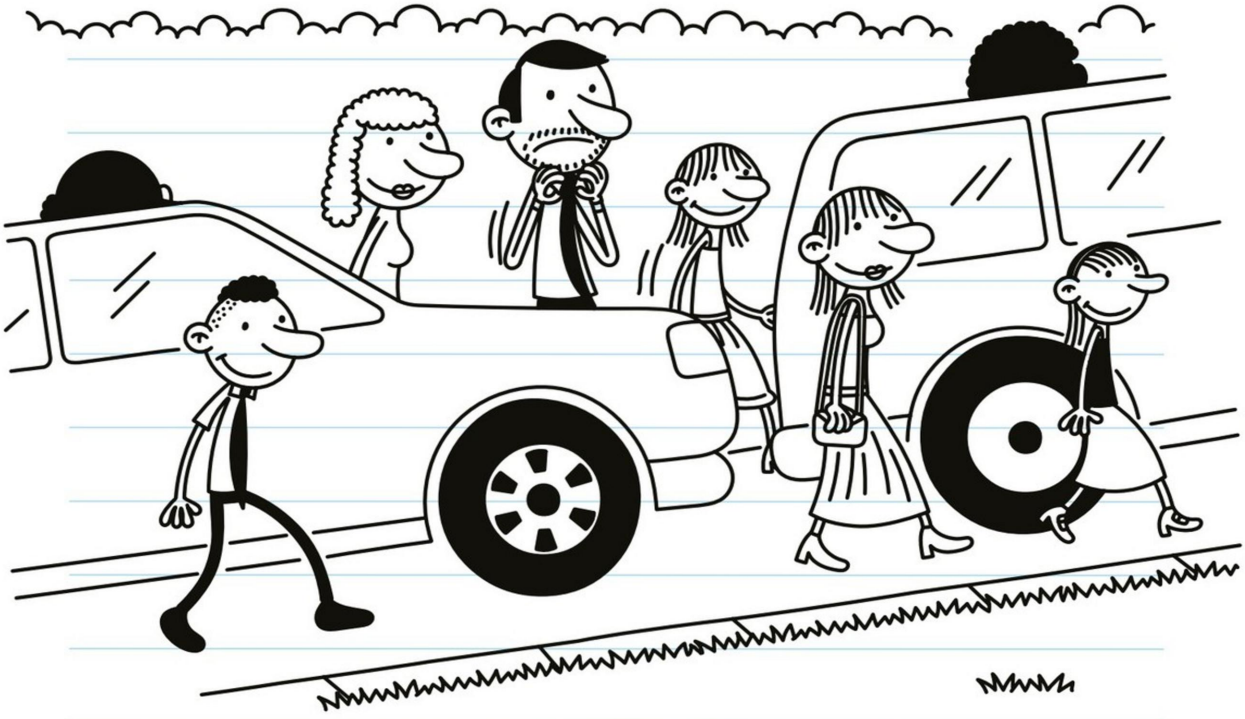
Mom didn't ask me who should be on the guest list before she sent out the invitations, so there were a bunch of random people coming to the party. She even invited all the kids who came to my kindergarten party.

But two of them have grown up to be troublemakers. So I did my best to make sure they didn't get past the check-in desk.



A bunch of cars started parking on the street, and I figured some of my guests had arrived a little early.

But it turns out there was a wedding at a house at the top of the hill, so these people were hogging all the prime parking spaces.



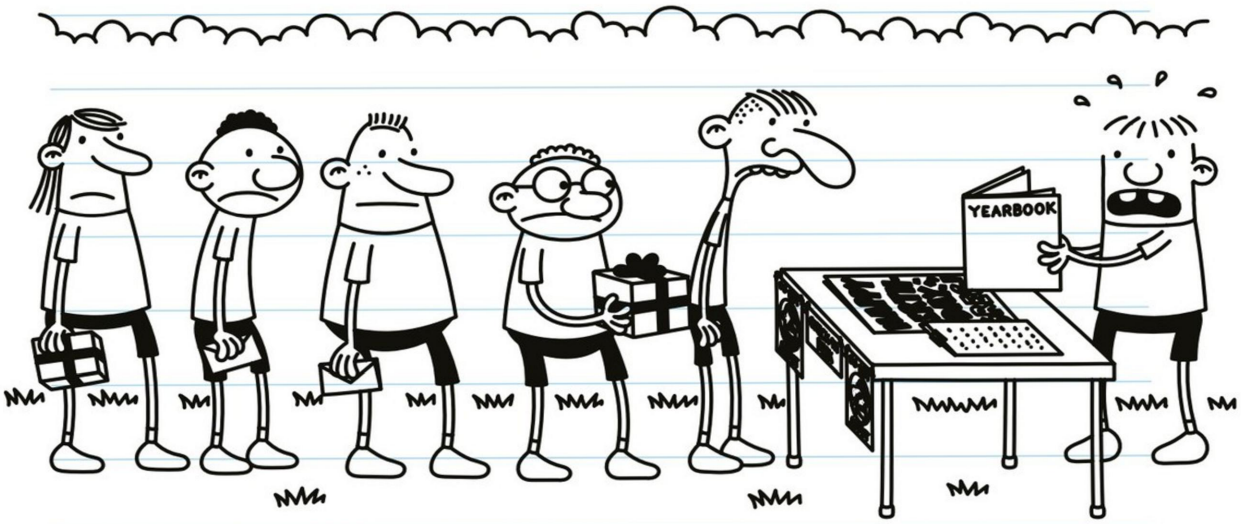
That meant everyone coming to my party would have to park far away, which wasn't great, because it was a hot day. In fact, Rodrick had to park at the bottom of the hill, so when he showed up with the cake, it was a goopy mess.

But the cake was ruined anyway, because Bartolini's messed up the inscription by writing the exact instructions Mom gave when she called in the order.

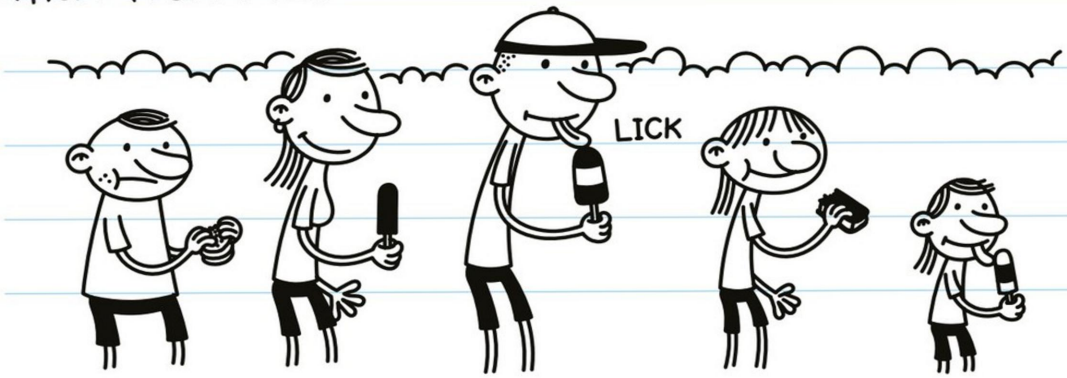
Mom was freaking out because she wanted everything at the party to be perfect. So she brought the cake into the kitchen to try to fix it.

By then, it was already past the official start time, and a single guest hadn't arrived yet. I was getting nervous, because the ice cubes in my specialty drinks were melting, and with every second that went by, I was losing money. So I went to the front yard to see what the holdup was.

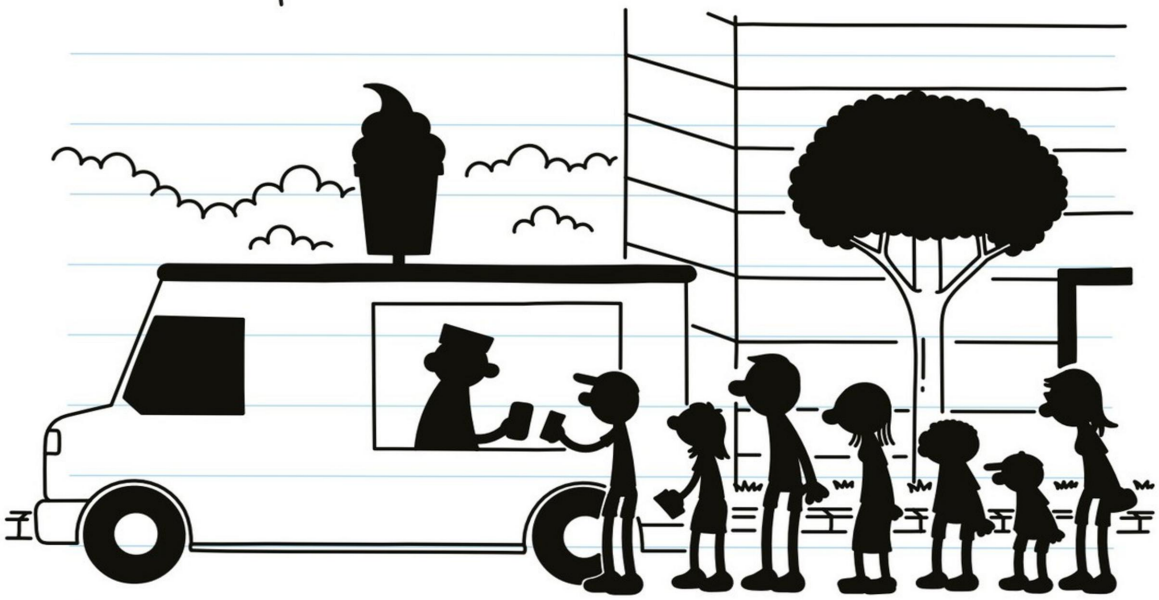
There were actually a lot of people in line, but they were bunched up at the check-in desk. Rowley was having trouble matching kids to their yearbook photos, because a lot of them had changed since elementary school.



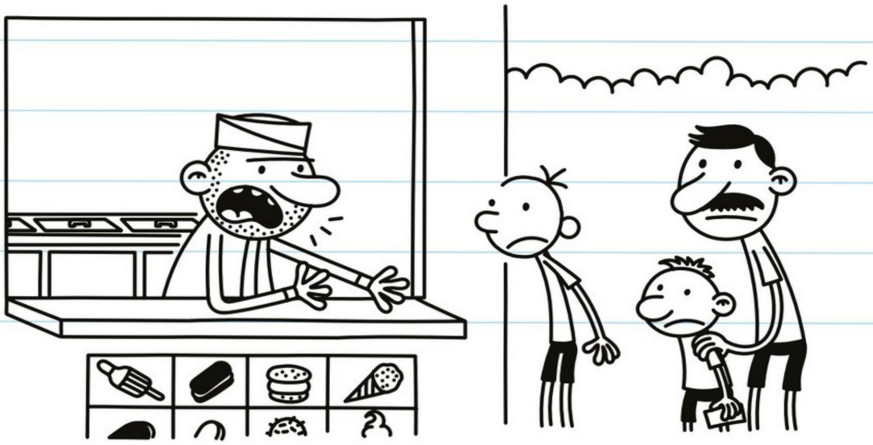
People were getting pretty annoyed, because the sun was really beating down. I noticed that a few guests in the back of the line were eating ice-cream sandwiches and Bomb Pops, and I didn't know where they got them, because they sure didn't buy them from ME.



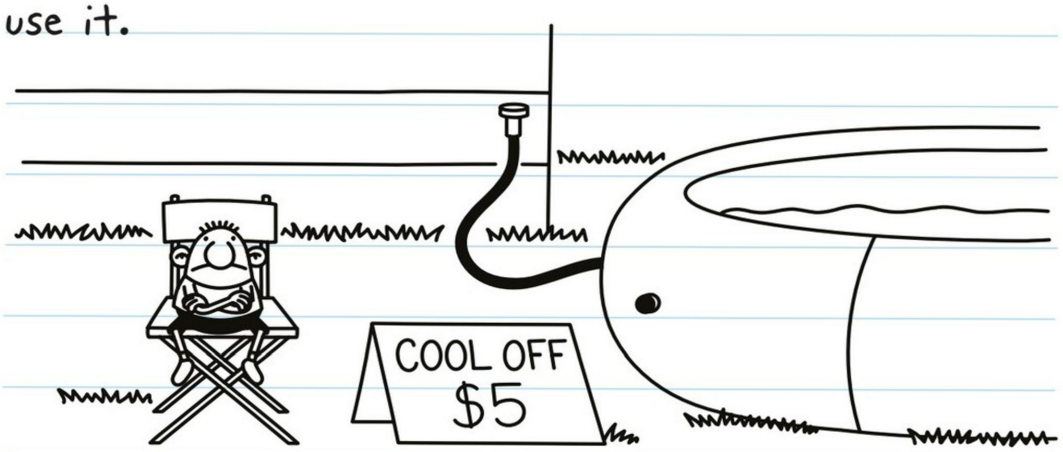
Then I saw the ice-cream truck parked in front of my house. The driver must've seen a group of people standing around in the heat and realized he had some potential customers.



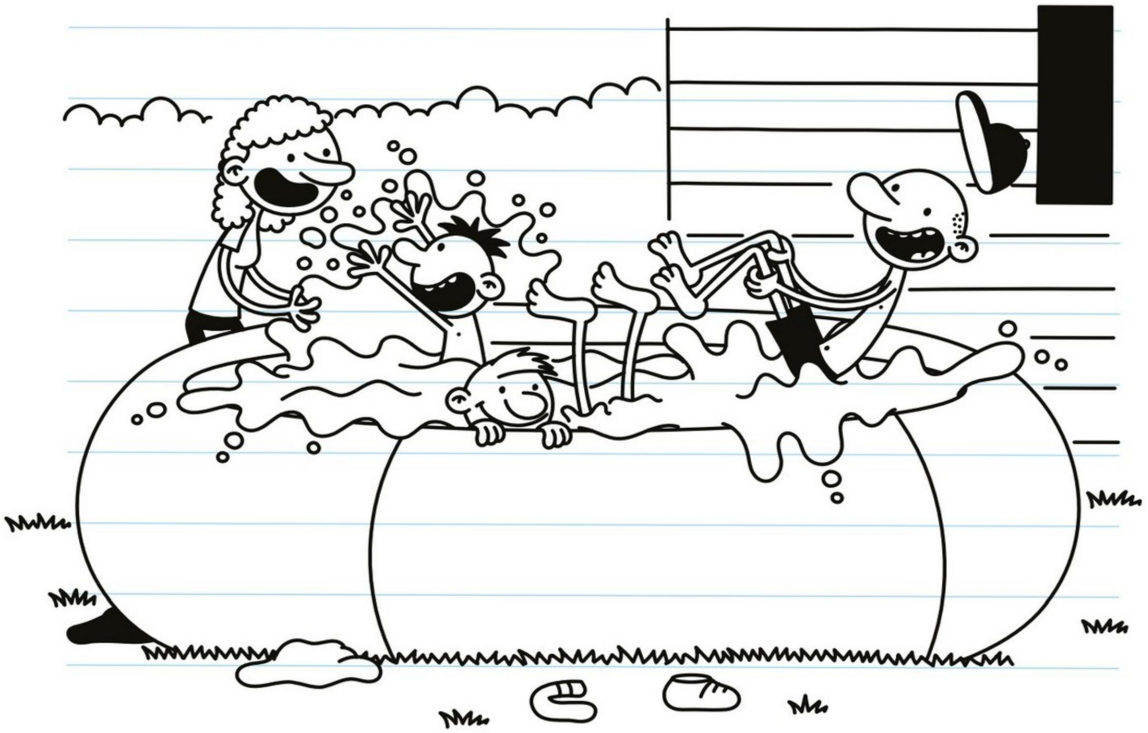
This guy was basically stealing MY customers, and the more money they spent on ice cream, the less they had to spend at my party. But when I told him he'd have to leave, he said it was a public street and he had a right to be there.



But that wasn't my only competition. Cedric Cunningham had set up an inflatable pool in his front yard, and he was charging five bucks to use it.

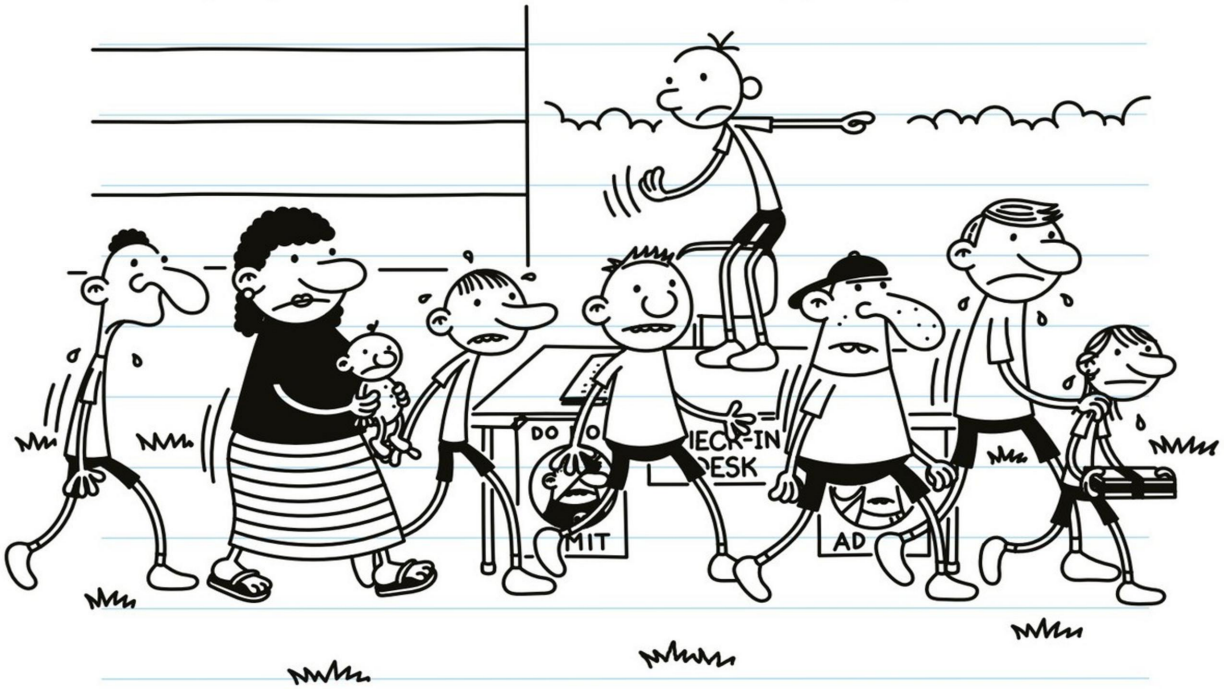


I didn't think anyone would go for that, because no one was wearing a bathing suit. But a few people took Cedric up on his offer anyway.



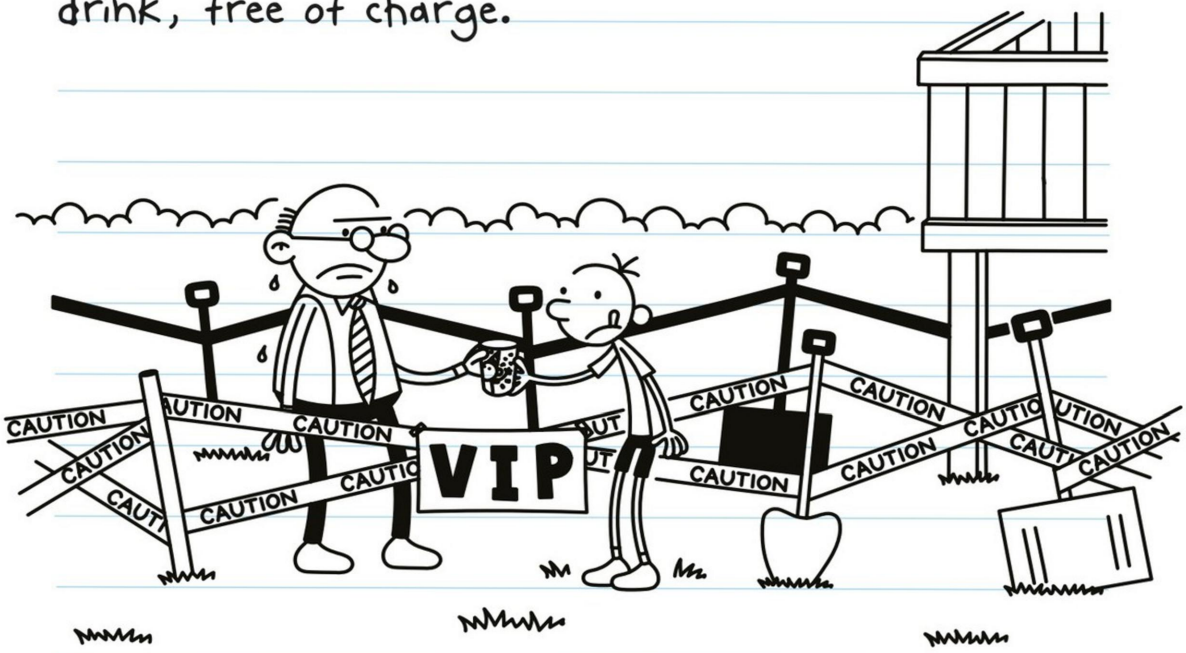
I realized I needed to do something to speed up the check-in process, or everyone was gonna spend all their money before they even got past the desk.

So I dropped the identification requirement and just started waving everybody in. And that wasn't great, because I was pretty sure one or two people on the banned list slipped past me.



I was surprised to see that one of the guests at the back of the line was Barry Haspel, the personal injury lawyer. And I was kind of embarrassed, because making a celebrity sweat it out with everyone else is no way to treat a VIP.

So to make it up to Barry, I personally escorted him to the VIP section and gave him a specialty drink, free of charge.

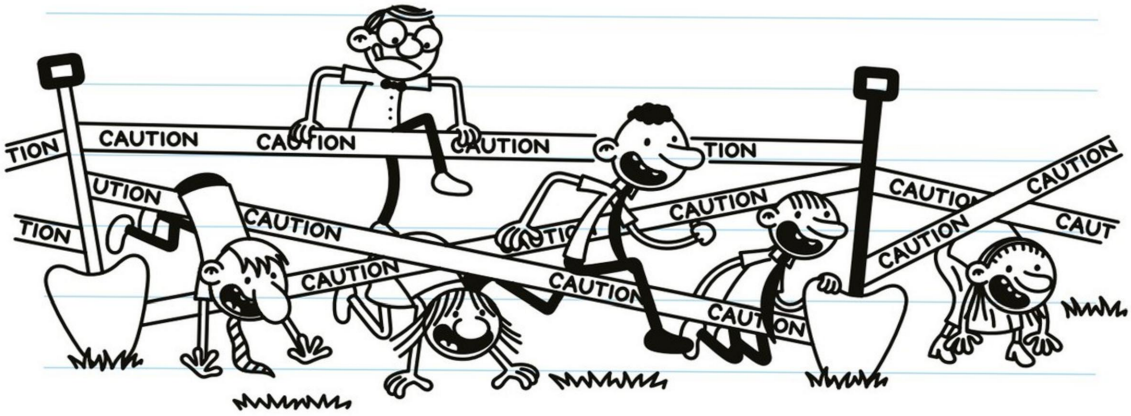


The Boy Scouts finally arrived, and they started setting up the VIP tent. It was just in time, because the sun was blazing hot, and Barry looked like the kind of person who probably burned easily.

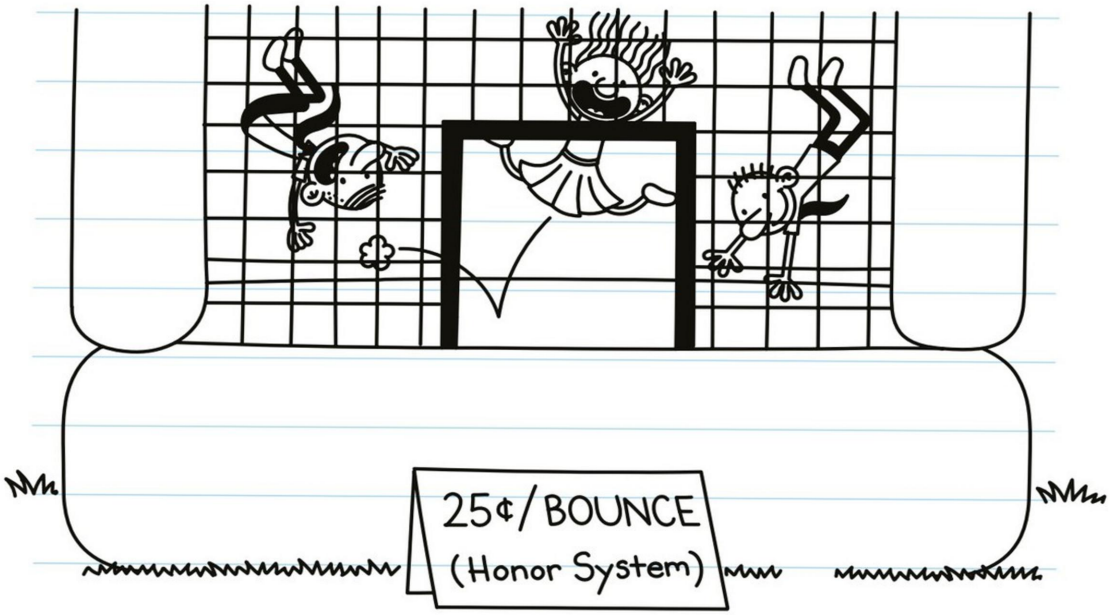
The backyard was getting pretty full, and it felt like the party was kicking into gear. Some guests were actually playing the party games, and there was a decent crowd at the face-painting station. So I had to hand it to Mom for knowing what people would like.

The most popular activity was the piñata, so I was wrong about that, too. I was worried little kids wouldn't want to take a swing at something so adorable, but it turns out they're absolute SAVAGES.

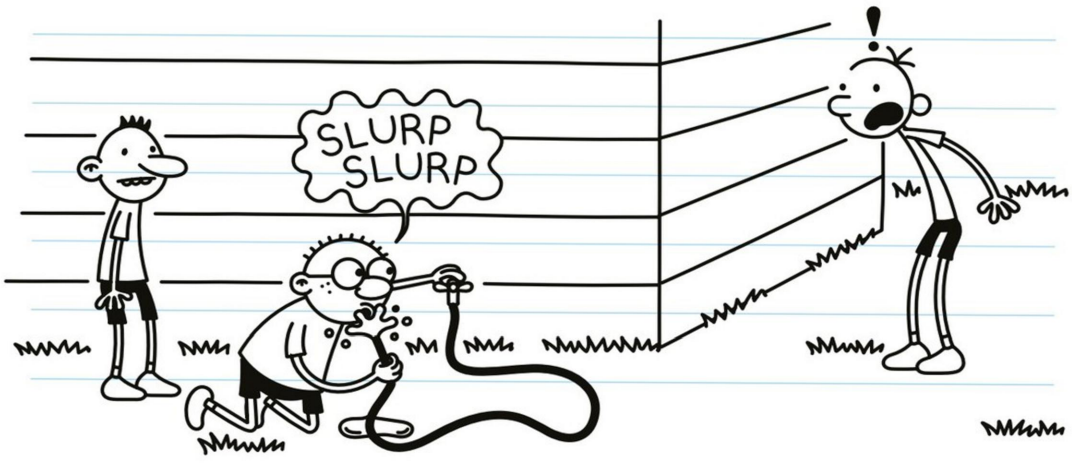
Then things got really out of hand. A bunch of kids from the wedding up the street must've heard the music and seen the bouncy house, because they started pouring in through the barriers.



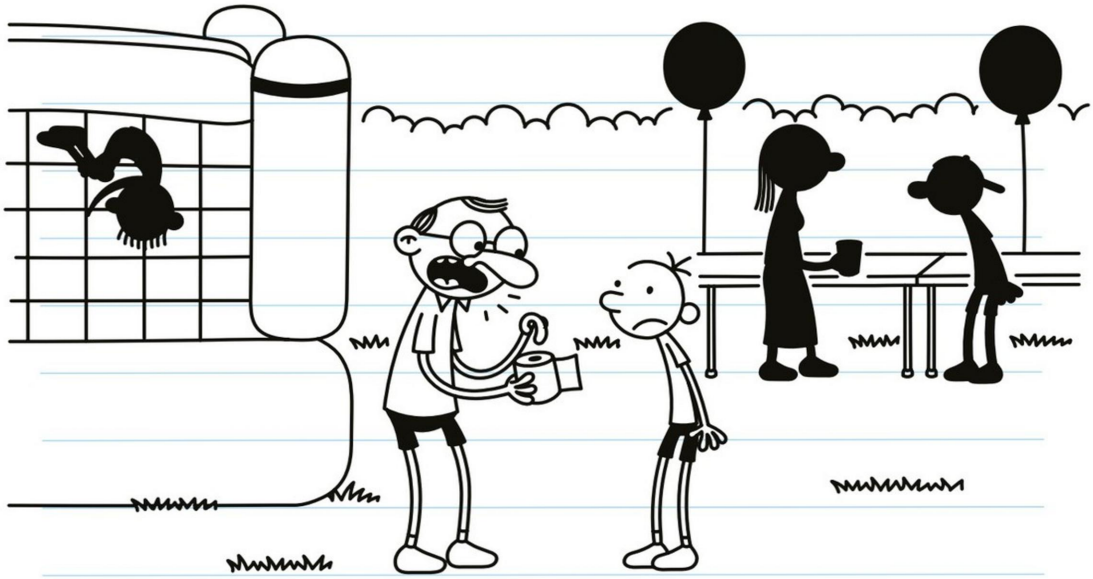
And that was pretty annoying, because most of them weren't even old enough to read the rules about pricing.



But they weren't the ONLY ones getting a free ride. Nobody was buying any of my specialty drinks, and I caught a few guests helping themselves to water from the hose on the side of the house.



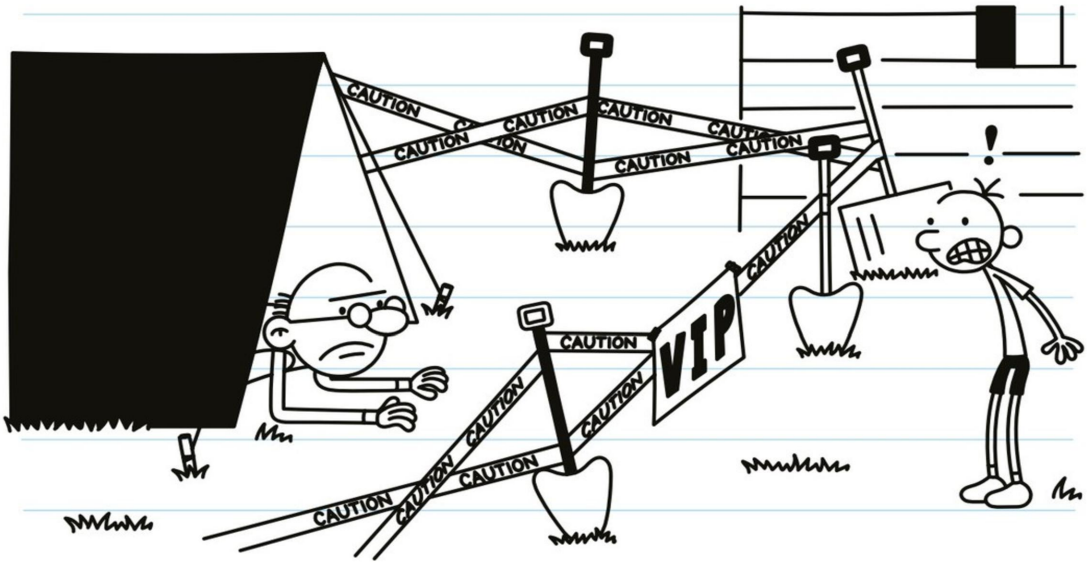
In fact, the only person who was actually paying was our neighbor Mr. Lawrence, who bought some of the premium toilet paper. But then he complained about getting a rash.



I feel like he only had himself to blame, though. The way I see it, you shouldn't go number two at a kid's birthday party, because that's the kind of thing you should take care of at home.

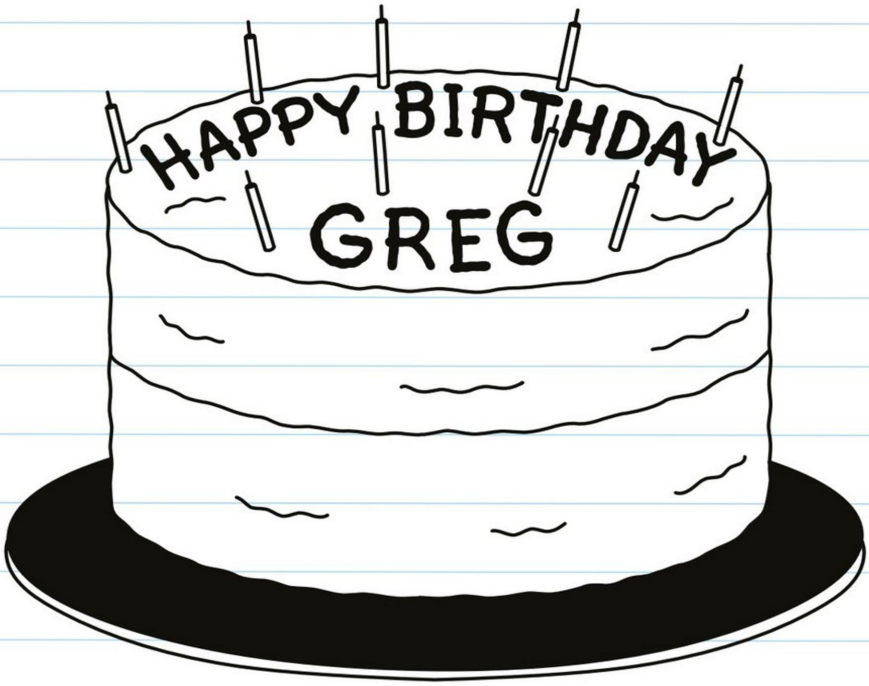
To get away from Mr. Lawrence, I told him I needed to spend time with some of the other guests. But when I checked on the VIP area, I found out the Boy Scouts had totally dropped the ball.

I'd asked them to set up a party tent, but they pitched a CAMPING tent instead. And Barry Haspel didn't look like he was having a good time.



I went to grab Barry another complimentary specialty drink to smooth things over with him, but that's when I ran into Mom, who was coming out of the house with the cake. And she'd somehow managed to change the writing to a birthday message.

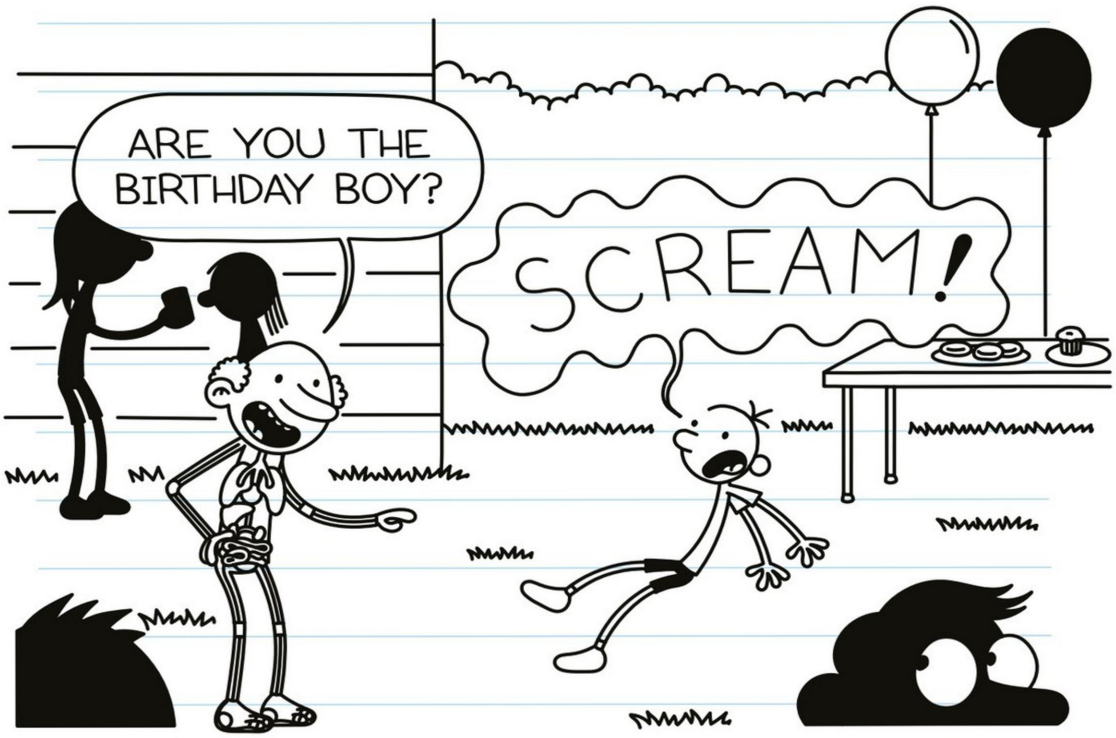
Mom explained that she covered up the strawberry frosting with mayonnaise that she dyed with red food coloring. Then she wrote a new inscription using chocolate syrup, and it didn't look bad.



She told me the cake was only for pictures, and that we should make sure nobody actually ate it. Especially since the mayonnaise had expired.

I don't know if it was the heat or the smell of the mayonnaise, but all of a sudden, I wasn't feeling so great. But things were about to get a lot WORSE.

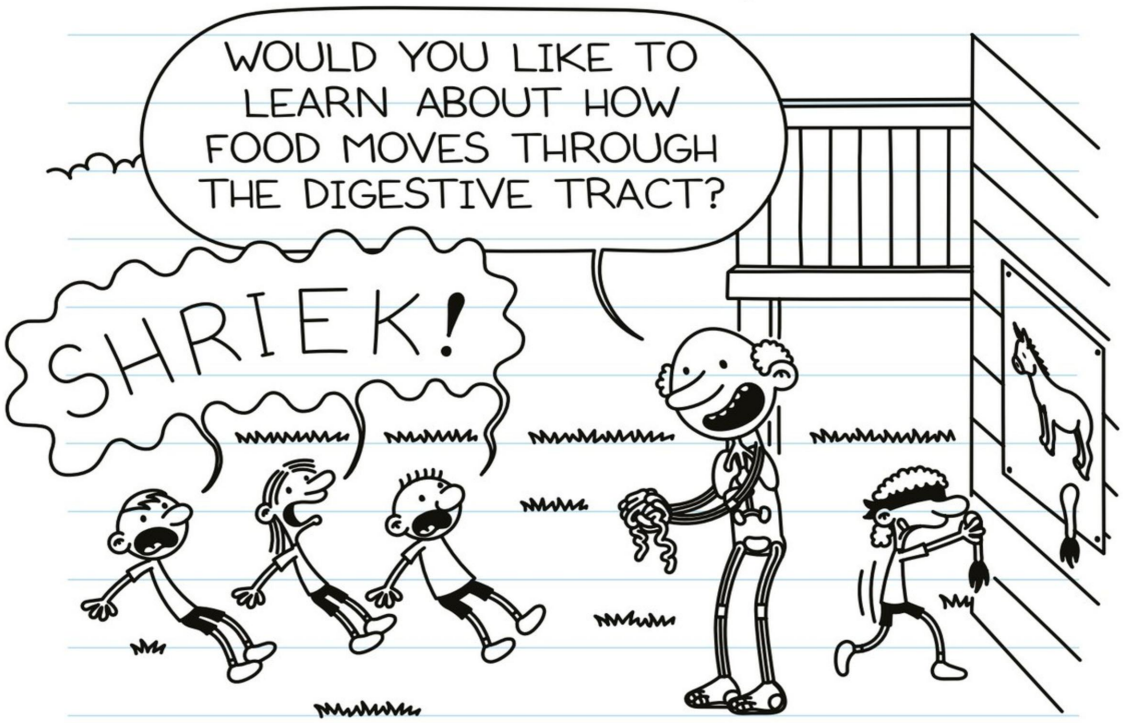
Because that was the moment the entertainment arrived.



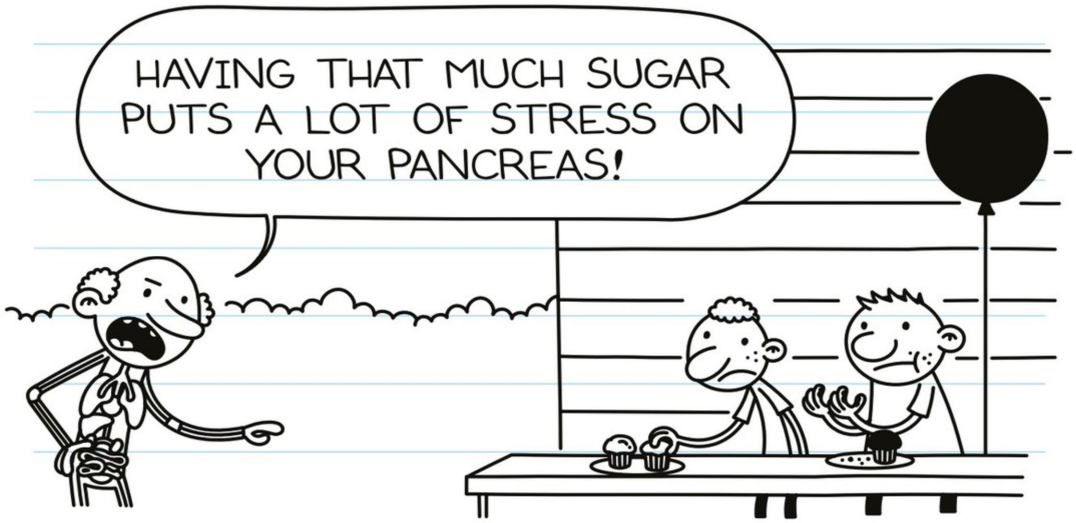
I have no idea what Mom was thinking by hiring the actual Heath Healthybody to come to my party. I guess she felt like she needed to do something showy to make up for forgetting my birthday.

But he must've cost a FORTUNE, and I wish she had saved the money she spent on hiring him and given it to ME instead.

It kind of backfired, though, because it turns out some kids weren't prepared to see a person with organs on the outside of their body.

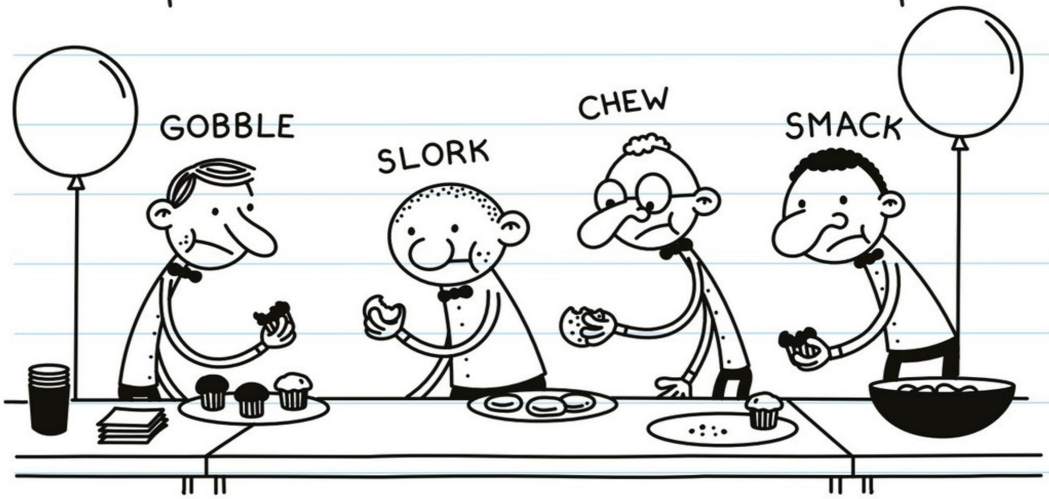


Plus, since this was a party, nobody seemed to be in the mood for a nutrition lecture.

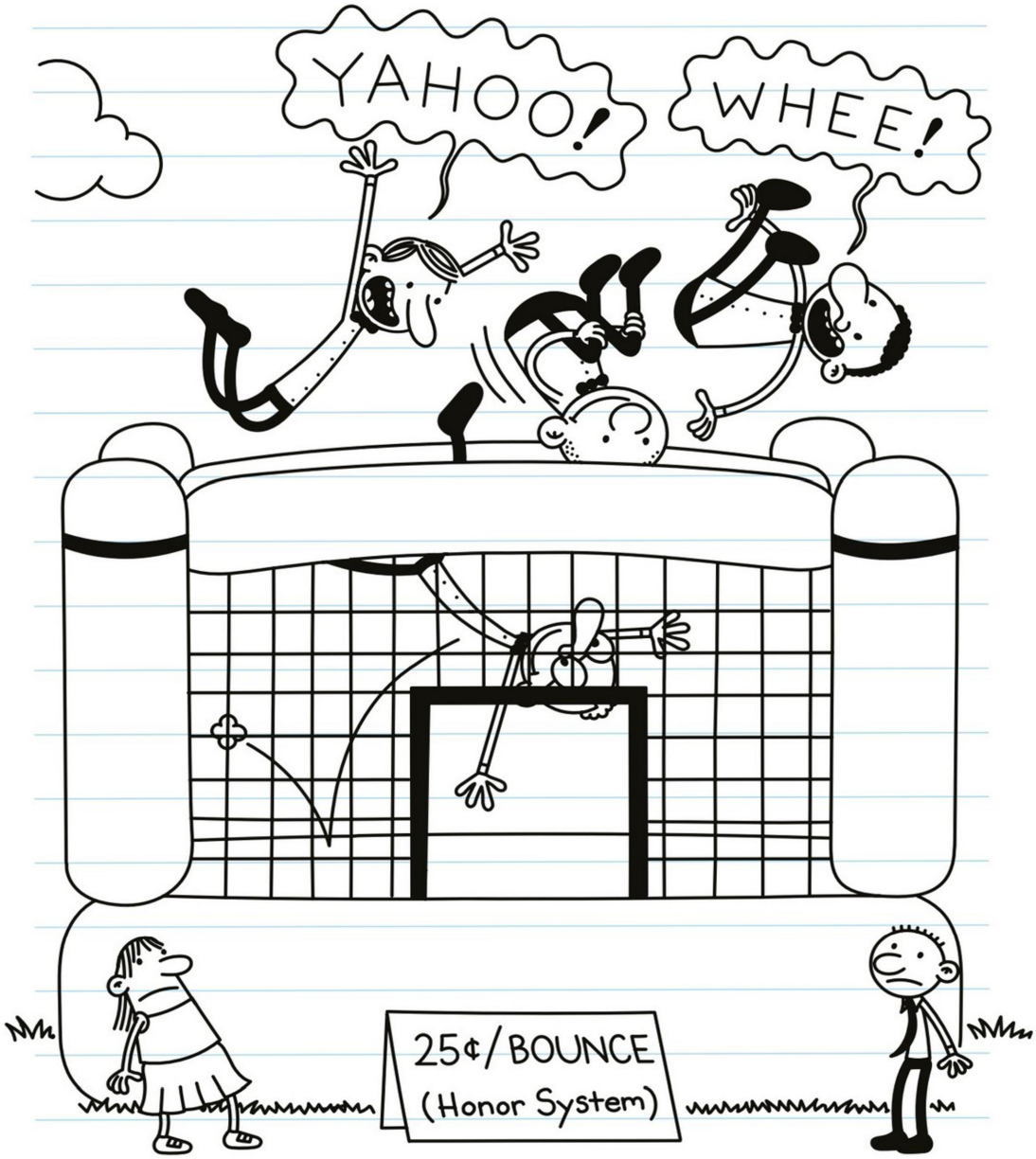


Heath Healthybody didn't last long in the sun, anyway. He was wearing a spandex bodysuit, and I'm guessing that thing was like a FURNACE. So he took lots of breaks, and he wiped out what was left of my specialty drinks.

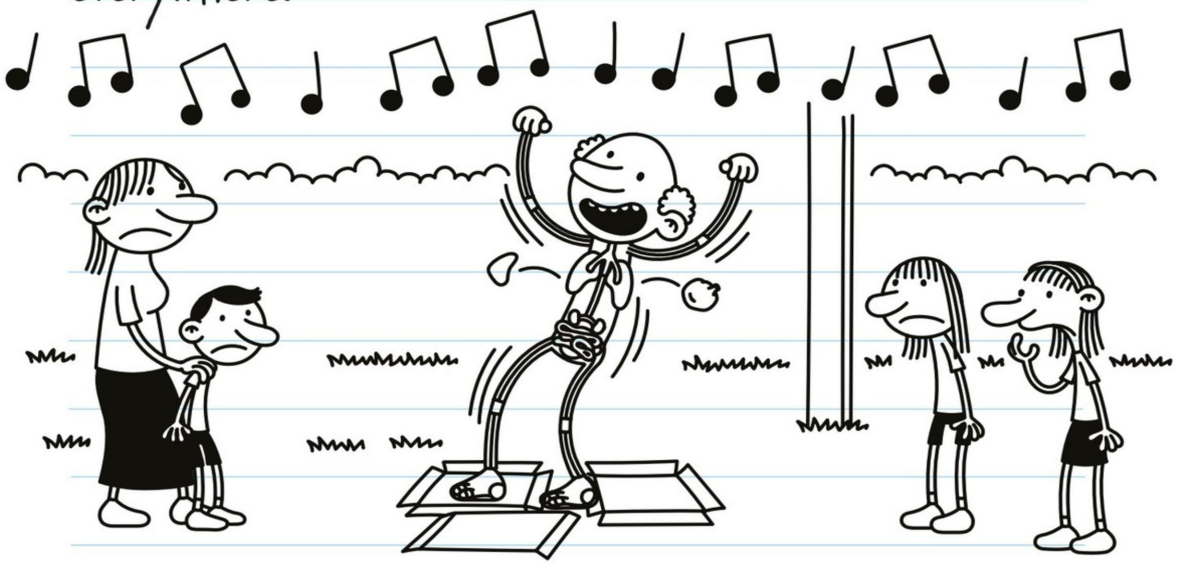
Some groomsmen came down to fetch the kids and bring them back to the wedding reception. But our snacks must've been better than the ones they had up the street, because the groomsmen stopped and helped themselves to our cookies and cupcakes.



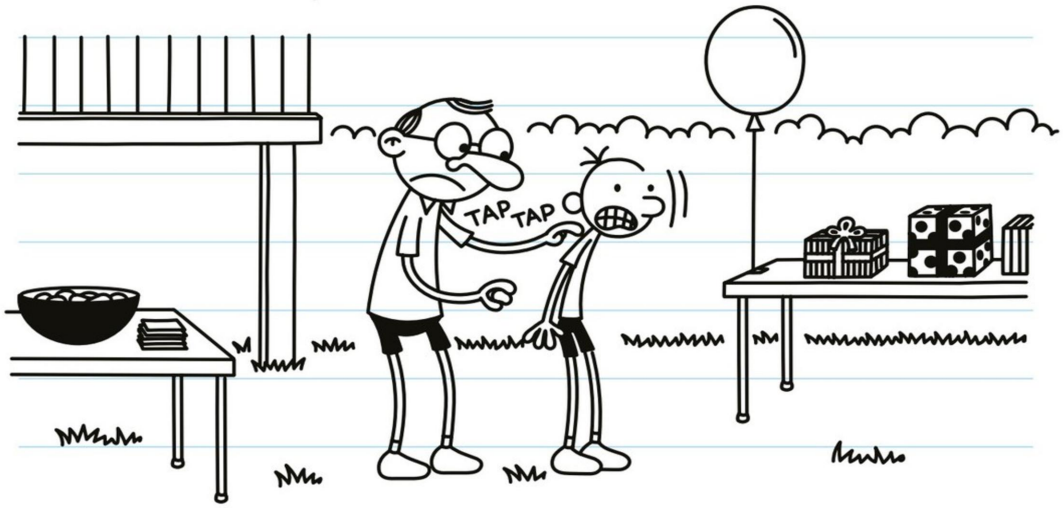
After they were done stuffing their faces, I thought they'd gather up the kids and head back to the reception. But once they saw the bouncy house, they decided they wanted to take a turn, too.



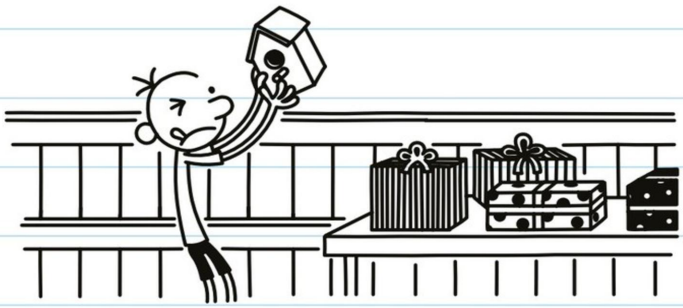
They weren't the ONLY grown-ups having fun, though. Heath Healthybody was going so hard on the dance floor that pieces of him were flying everywhere.



In fact, he had been shedding organs ever since he showed up at the party. So I had to deal with Mr. Lawrence again, who complained about finding a kidney in the chip bowl.



I decided this was a good time to go around and check the places where people were supposed to leave money, but everything was EMPTY.

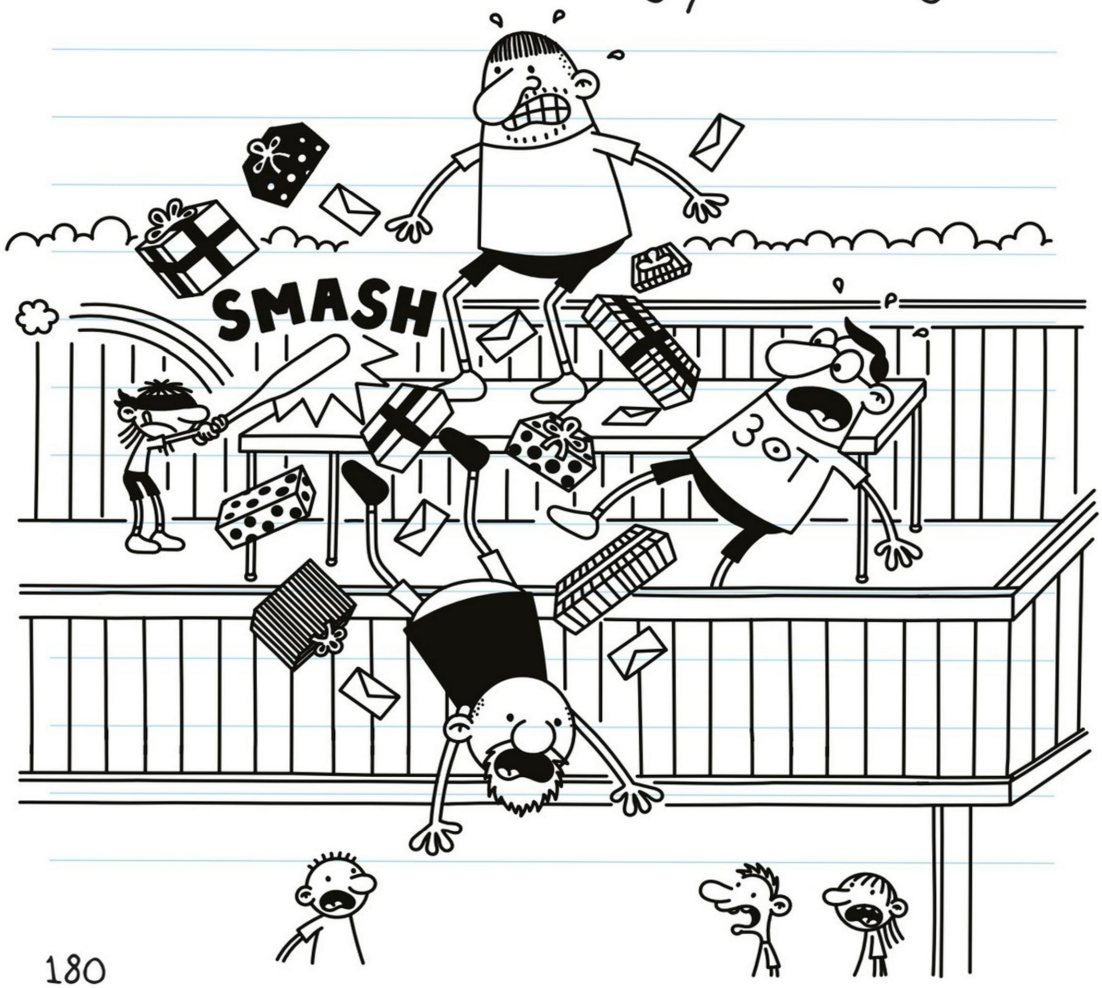


I realized the party was a total BUST, and there was no chance I'd get enough money to buy any trading card packs.

That's when I noticed some suspicious-looking grown-ups hanging out by the gift table who definitely weren't on the guest list. But there was something that looked familiar about these guys.

When I saw the MicroCreatures T-shirt that one of them was wearing, I realized EXACTLY who they were. They were the card hunters, and they must've caught wind that a kid who was asking for MicroCreatures cards was having a party.

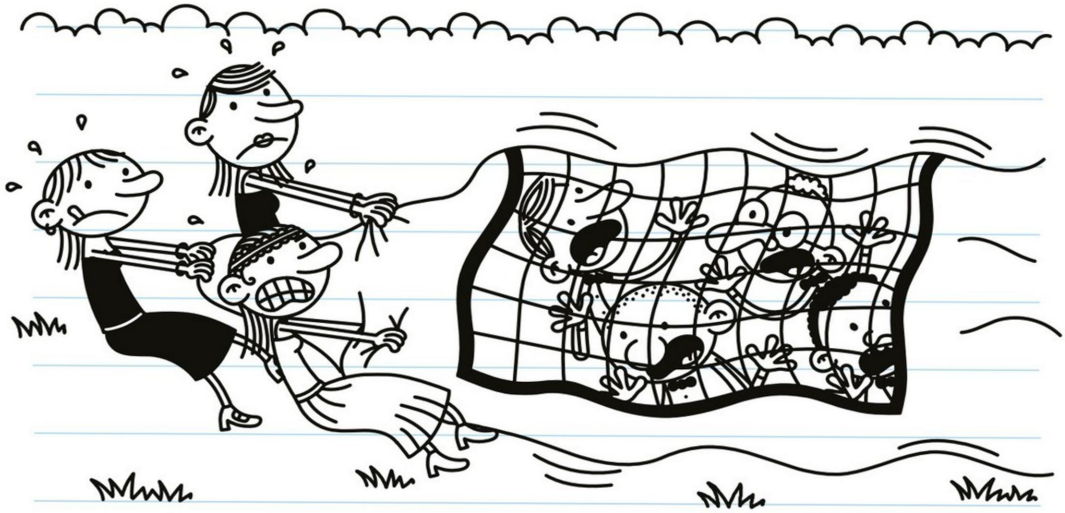
I was about to call the police, but it turns out I didn't need to. Apparently, nobody told the blindfolded kid with the piñata bat that the game was over, and she sent those guys scattering.



That's when even MORE unexpected guests showed up at the party.

The bride from up the street came through the backyard, along with some of her friends. Apparently one of the guys I thought was a groomsman was actually the GROOM, and his new wife was mad he was missing his own wedding reception.

The groom asked for a few more bounces, but the bride wasn't having it. So she and her bridesmaids dragged the whole bouncy house up the hill with the guys still IN it.



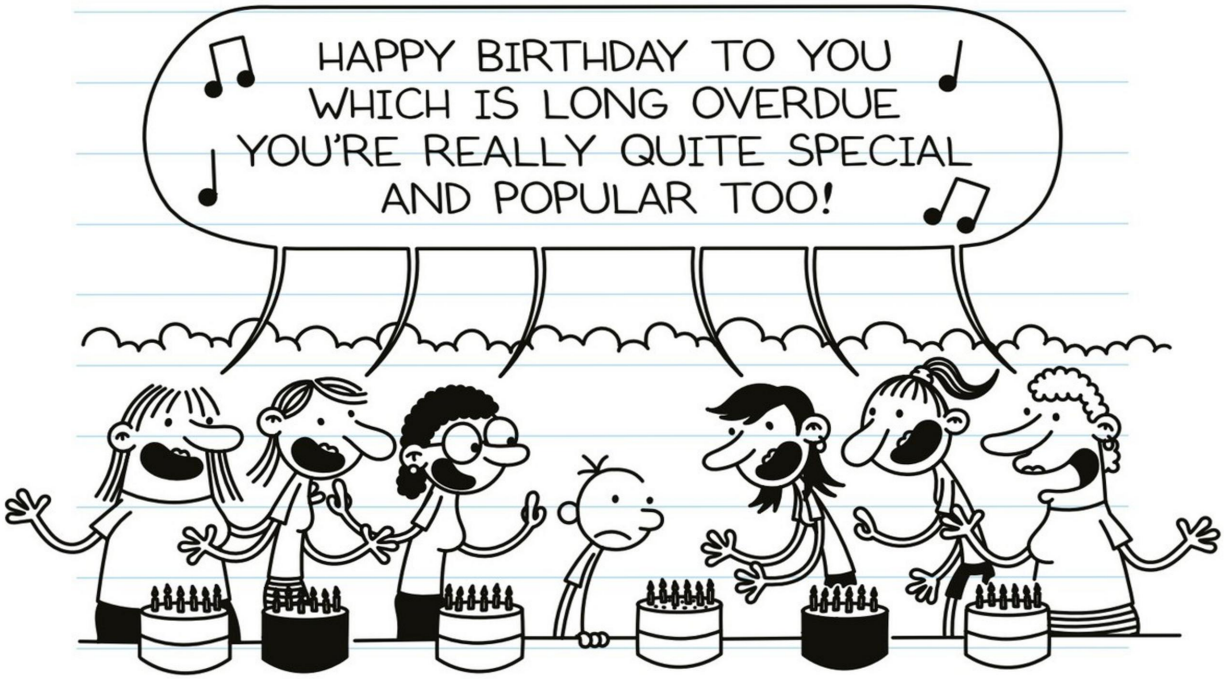
As soon as the wedding party left the scene, a bunch of NEW people came in. And even though I didn't recognize any of them, I was happy to see that they'd actually brought presents.

Not only that, they brought CAKES. And if I wanted to eat birthday cake for the rest of my life, I probably could.

It turns out these were the ladies on social media who'd been trying to track down the kid whose mom forgot his birthday. And somehow they finally found me.

I think Mom was eager for a distraction, so she said it was time for me to blow out my candles. And that's when I realized I still hadn't made my birthday wish, which was my last chance of getting that trading card.

So everyone gathered around and sang the birthday song. And their version actually made me miss the one with the donkey.



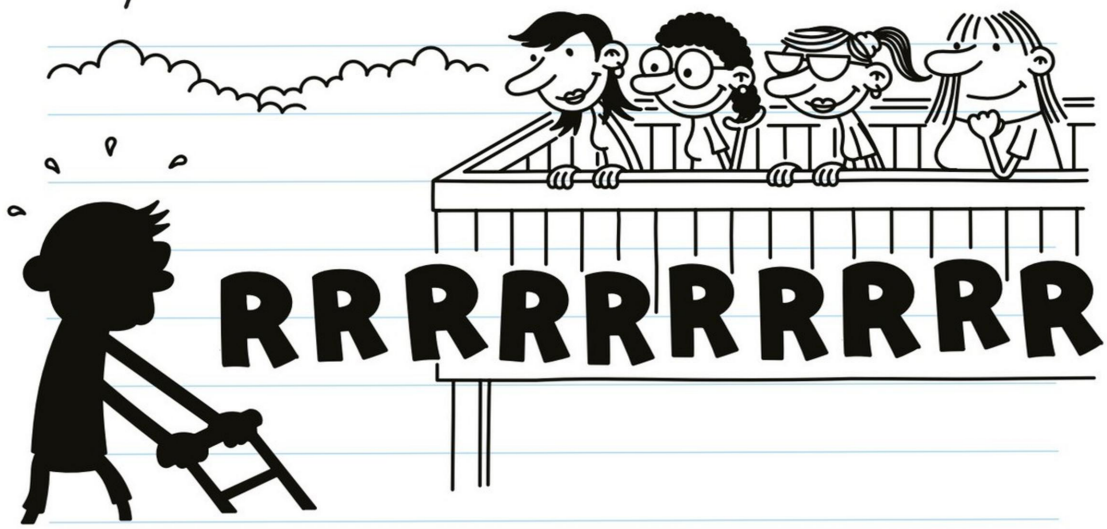
I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, then focused on my wish. I figured if I could see the card in my mind, I could make it REAL.

But right before I could blow out the candles, a loud noise came from next door, which totally broke my concentration.

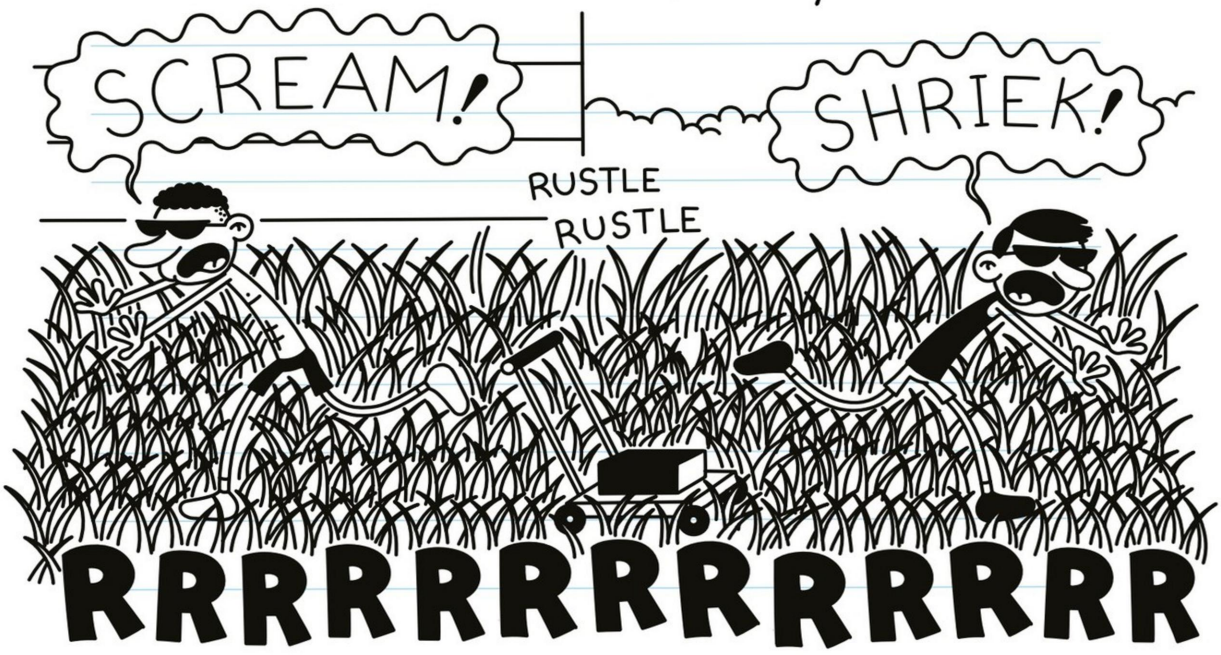
RRRRRRRRRRRR

It was the sound of lawn mowers. Turns out, the Cool Brians had come to mow the neighbor's grass.

I was kind of annoyed, because for one thing, they were ruining my big moment. And for another, they drew attention to themselves when all eyes should've been on ME.

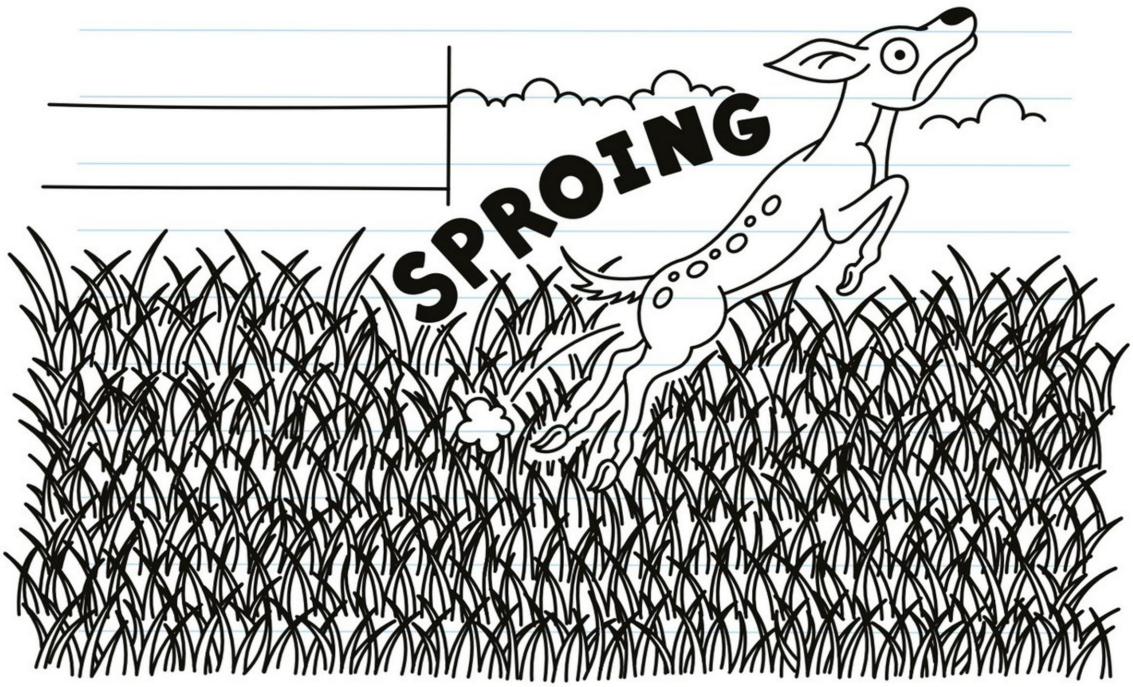


The next second, the Cool Brians abandoned their lawn mowers and fled the neighbor's yard.



I saw something big moving in the grass, and I knew it could only be one thing: a GORILLA.

But it wasn't a gorilla. It was a DEER, which makes a little more sense now that I think about it.



The deer jumped over the caution tape and into our yard, sending guests running in every direction. And it's a miracle no one got hurt, because that thing was like a bucking bronco.

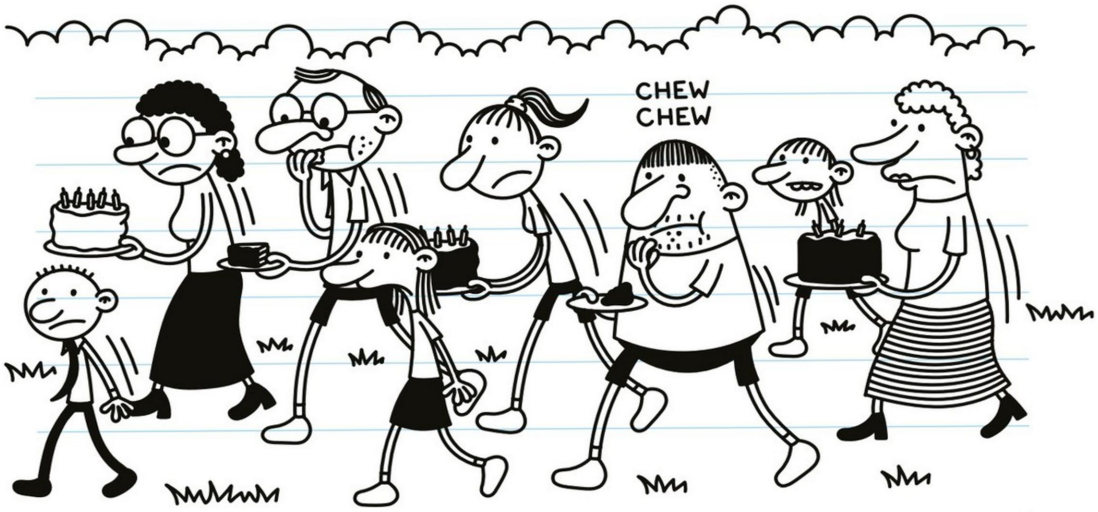
I was just glad to be out of harm's way, but then the deer got up on the DECK.

The deer totally freaked out that it was trapped, and it went absolutely BANANAS. Luckily, everyone on the deck managed to escape unharmed.

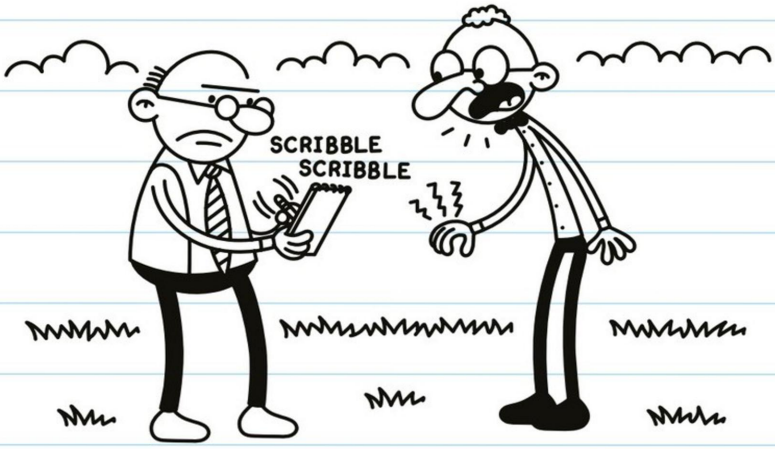
Finally, the deer jumped over the railing and ran into the woods.

But by then, the damage was done.

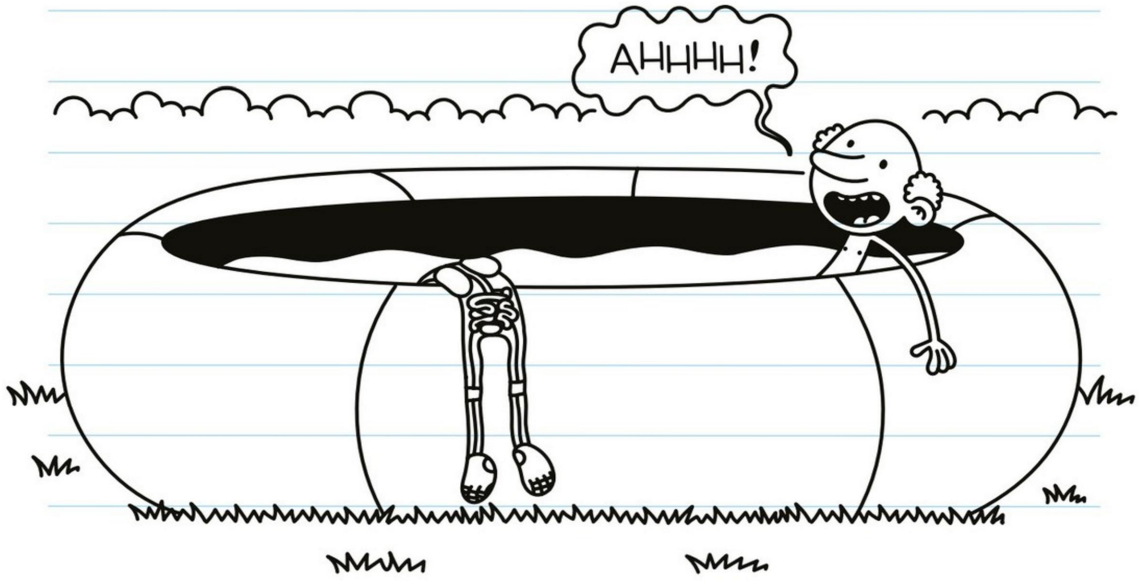
After that, it was pretty clear the party was over, and people started to leave. But a few of them helped themselves to my birthday cake on the way out. And if they got sick from the expired mayonnaise, I feel like that was on them.



The only guest who stuck around was Barry Haspel, who I saw talking to a groomsman who got hurt in the bouncy house. And I'm just crossing my fingers that our family doesn't get sued.

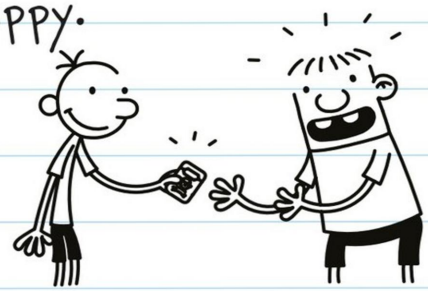


Heath Healthybody missed all the excitement because he was in Cedric Cunningham's yard, using his pool. And all I can say is that I hope he was wearing something under that bodysuit.

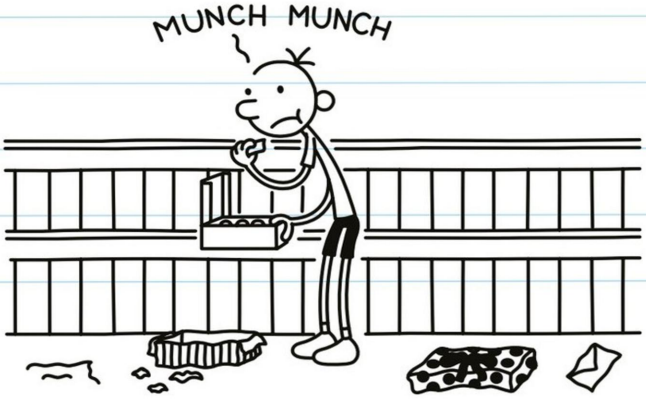


Most of my presents got destroyed by the deer. I did get a few packs of MicroCreatures cards, but they were banged up, and none of them had any Theebles anyway.

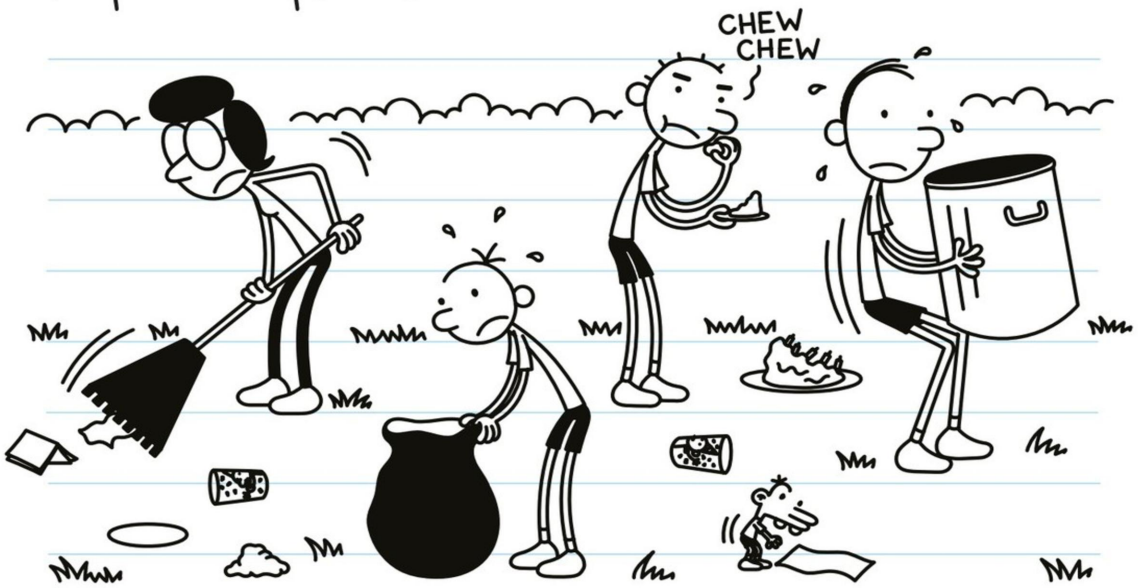
I did find a HunnyPuddles that was in decent shape, so I gave it to Rowley as payment for working at the party. And you've never seen someone so happy.



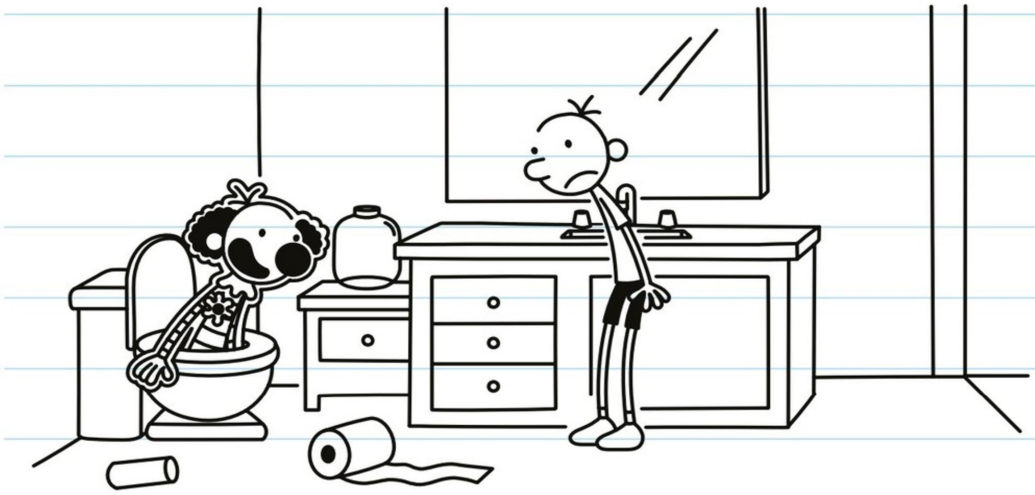
The only other present that wasn't damaged was a tin of gourmet cheeses. And even though I'm pretty sure it was meant for the bride and groom up the street, I figured after everything I'd been through, I deserved to treat myself.



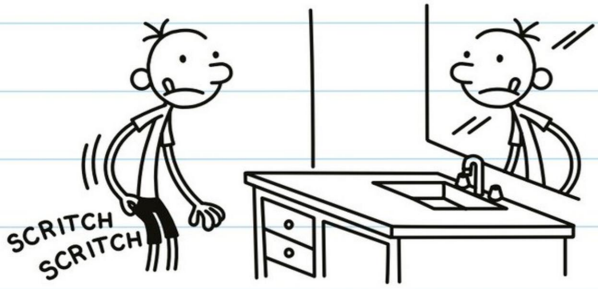
After the party ended, it was up to me and my family to pick up the pieces. And for the record, the Boy Scouts didn't bother sticking around to help clean up, either.



The guests left a giant mess, and it felt like some of them went out of their way to be rude.



Even worse, people used up all the regular toilet paper, so now we only have the premium kind left. And I'm pretty sure I've already got a rash.



After we finished cleaning up, I couldn't sleep because of all the noise coming from the wedding up the street. It turns out all my guests went there for the after-party, and from what I heard, it was EPIC.

Wednesday

So my party was a total failure, but I'm trying to get over it and move on.

The person who's really struggling is MOM, though. Everyone in the world knows about the party, and this time around, she's not anonymous.

Mom throws child a disaster party

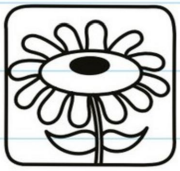
0 4.5k 812

The unfortunate child's mother, Susan Heffley, surveys the destruction.

Somehow, Dad got dragged into the story this time. But Mom doesn't seem too eager to set the record straight.

MommaBear2323

I heard that the child's father was selling scented toilet paper at the party.



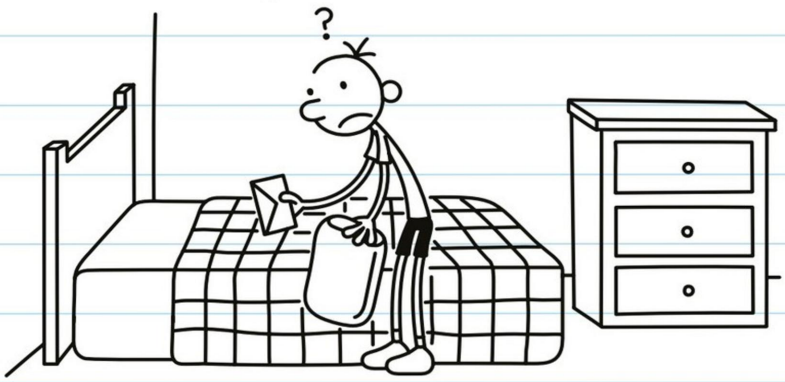
GoodMom47

What kind of person would do that?

Mom and Dad aren't the ONLY ones whose reputations are suffering, though. After what happened this weekend, any chance of me becoming a legendary party host has gone up in smoke. And I'll be lucky if anyone shows up at my NEXT birthday.

The only person who seemed to have had a good time at the party was Aunt Nancy, who stayed for a few days after. She left for Hawaii this morning, which means I finally got my bedroom back.

Aunt Nancy cleaned my room before she took off, which she really didn't need to do. And she left an envelope under my pillow.



It was a thank-you card for being invited to my party. And I can't believe they actually make cards for that sort of thing.

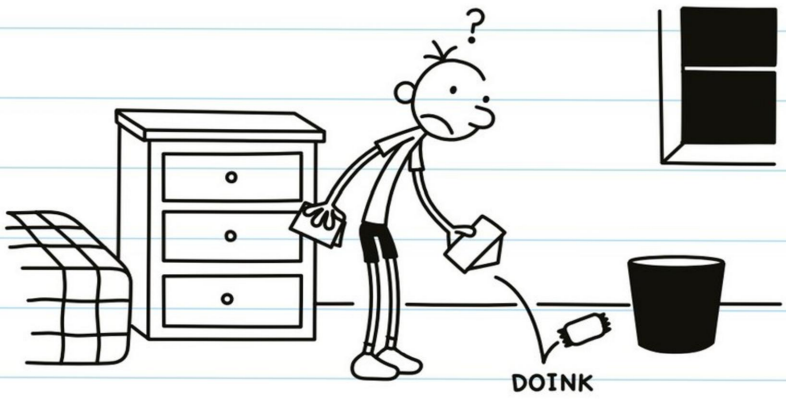
She wrote a really nice note inside, which made me feel good about inviting her. But at the same time, I felt a little guilty about the reason I did in the first place.

Dear Greg–

Thank you so much for including me in your birthday celebration. It certainly was a day of surprises! I had a lovely time.

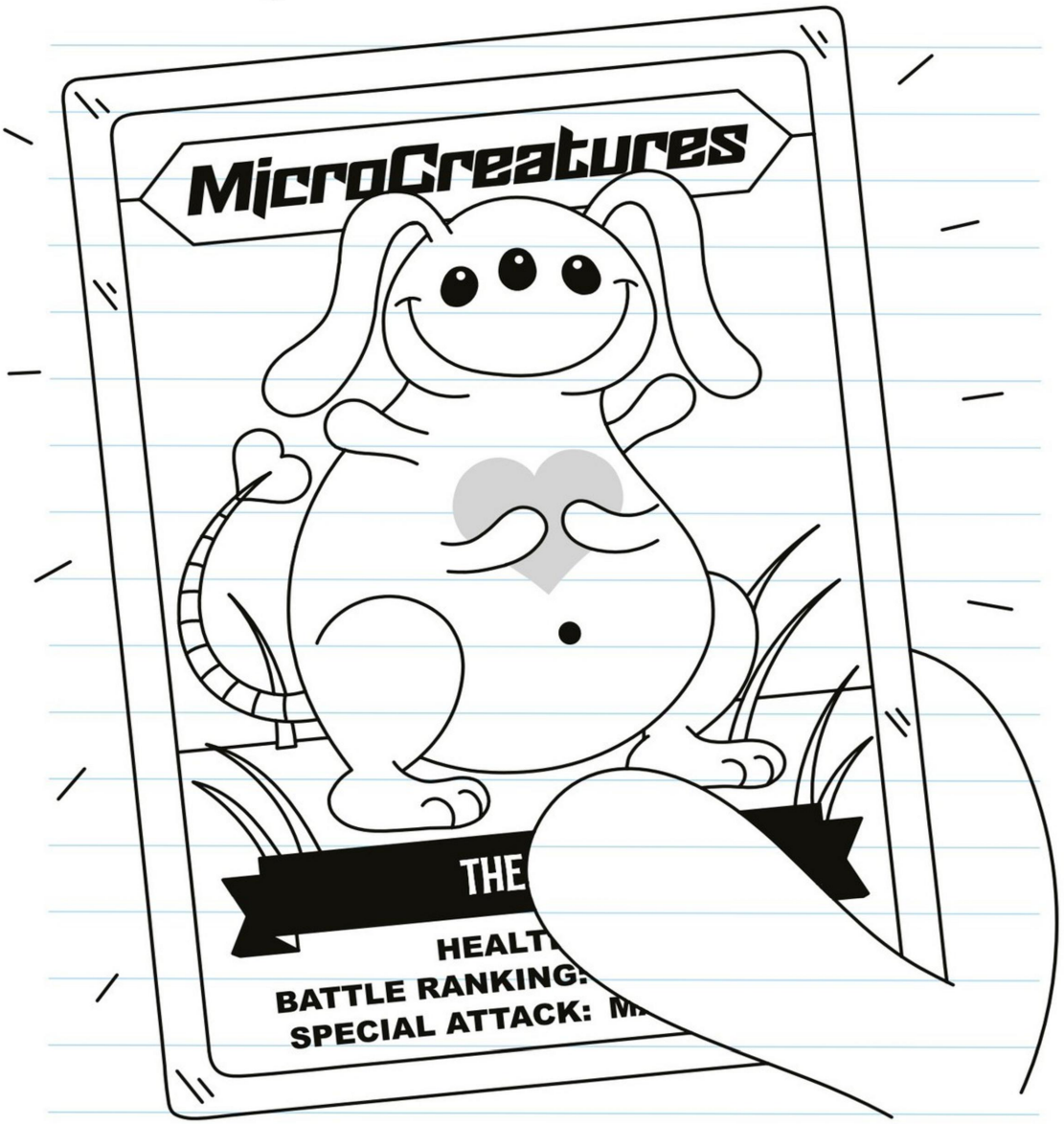
Love, Aunt Nancy

While I was reading the card, something shiny dropped out of the envelope.



The second I saw the foil packaging, I knew EXACTLY what it was. So I took a deep breath before I tore open the MicroCreatures card pack.

And sure enough, inside was the one thing I've been wishing for all this time.



I couldn't believe I was holding the world's only Three-Eyed Theeble in my hand. And it took me a few minutes to calm myself down.

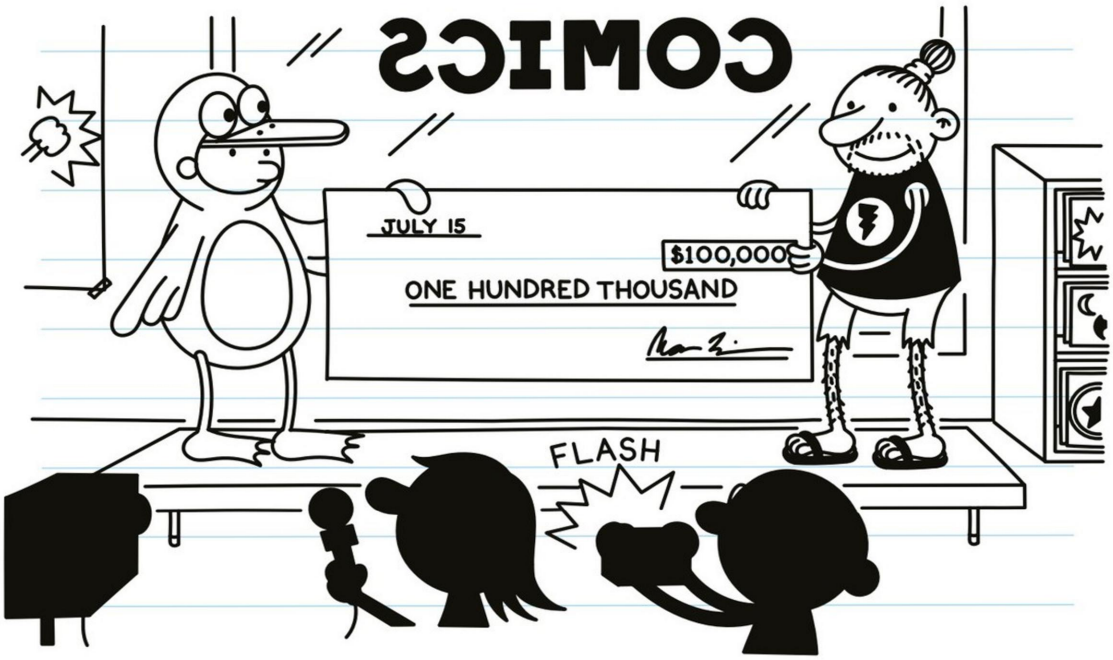
I realized the sweat from my hands could be damaging the card, so I put it down on my dresser as carefully as I could. And I stood there for a long time, trying to figure out what to do NEXT.

I wanted to ride my bike straight down to the comics shop, hand over the card, and collect my money. But I was worried the card might get bent or scratched or something, and I needed to keep it in mint condition to make sure it kept its value. So I put it in my sock drawer while I decided what to do.

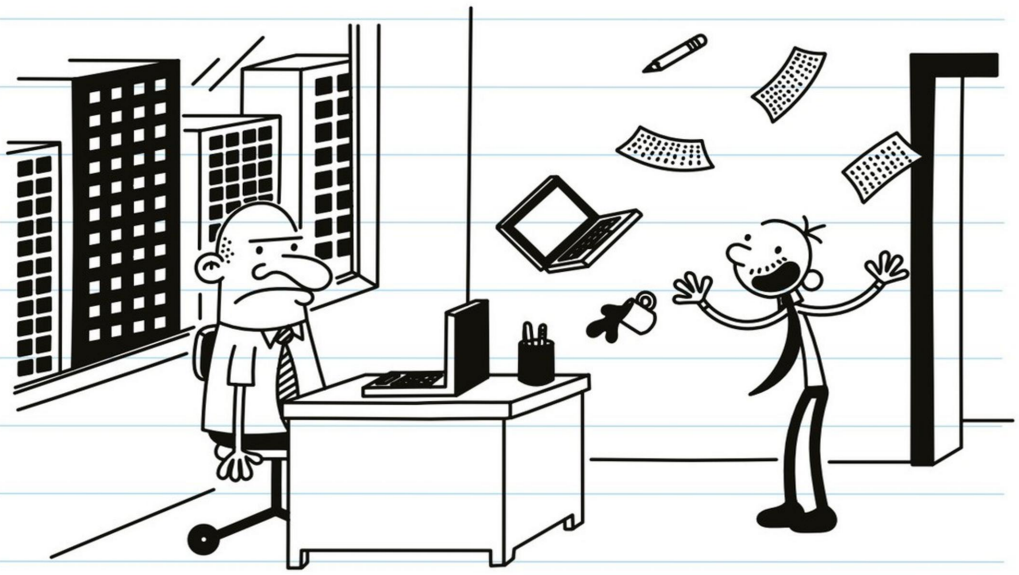
One thing I knew for sure was that I was going to keep this news to MYSELF, at least for now. Because the more people who found out I had this thing, the more complicated things would get for me.

I've heard about how winning the lottery can actually ruin your life, because all of a sudden, everyone you know wants money from you.

In fact, sometimes people who win the lottery show up to collect their winnings in DISGUISE. And that definitely seemed like a smart approach to ME.

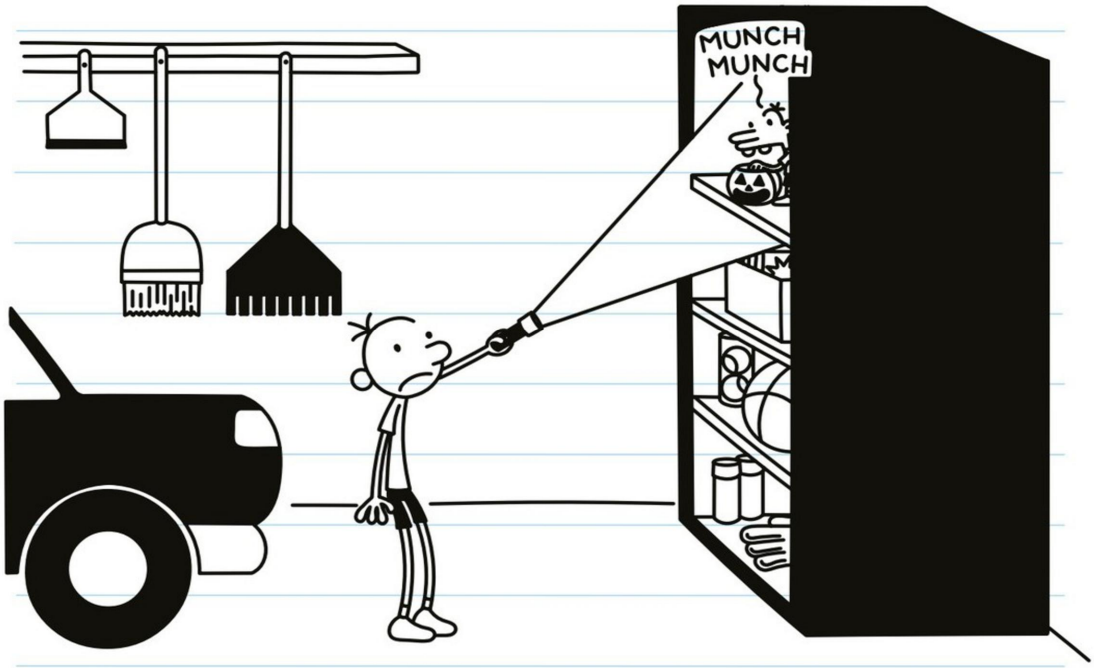


My one regret is that I don't have a job yet. Because it would be really fun to go in to work tomorrow and tell my boss off.



I needed some time to plan out my next move, and I knew I'd have to play it cool in front of my family in the meantime. But at dinner tonight, I'm pretty sure Manny could tell something was up.

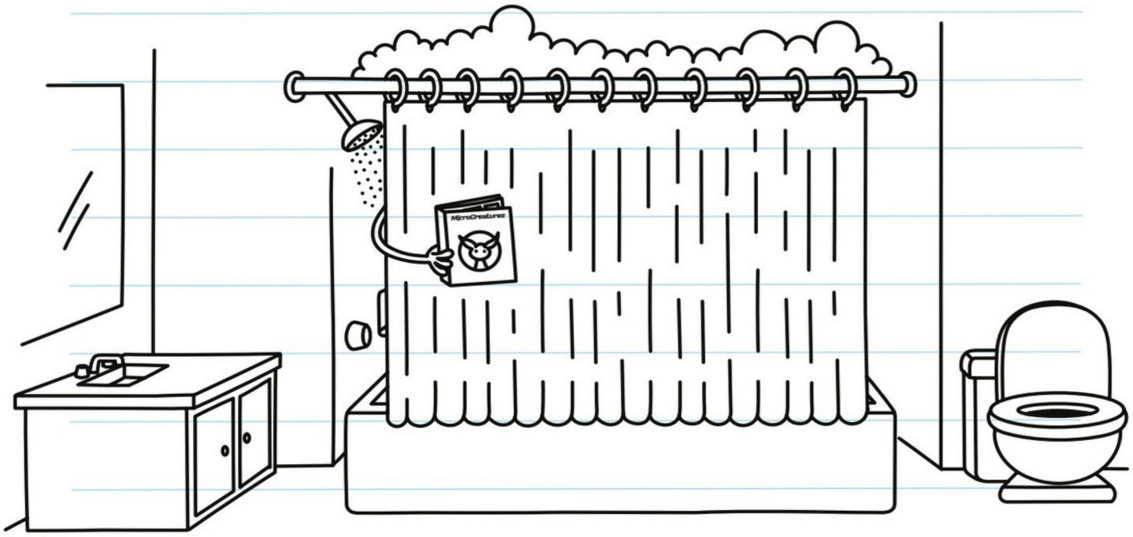
Whenever I try to keep something hidden from Manny, he ALWAYS finds it. So I've pretty much given up trying, especially when it comes to my Halloween candy.



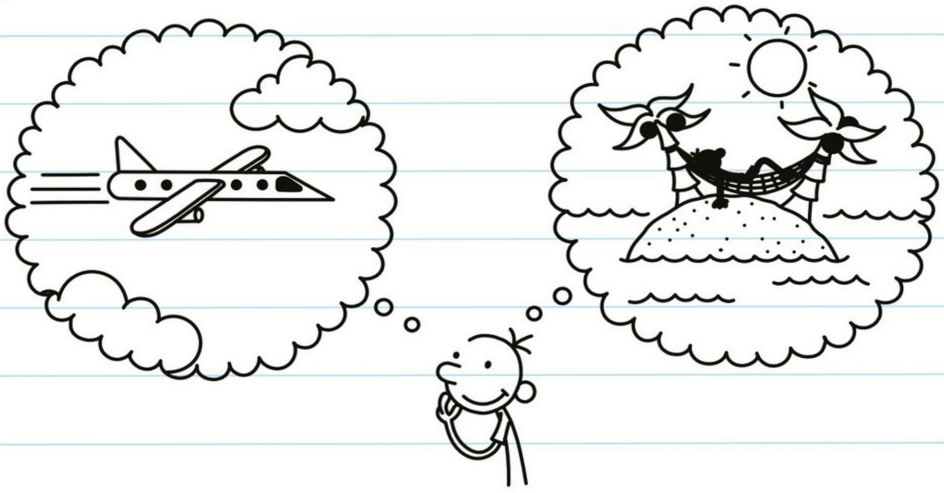
I knew if I kept the card in my sock drawer, it was only a matter of time before Manny found it and wrecked it.

So I slipped the card into the binder with my old MicroCreatures cards to keep it protected, and I'm planning on keeping it with me at all times while I figure out what to do.

But that's been a lot harder than I thought it would be. Because it's not so easy washing your hair when you've only got one hand free.



I've been starting to imagine what I'm going to do with all the money I'm gonna get for this card. Maybe I'll buy a jet or a private island, or maybe even BOTH.

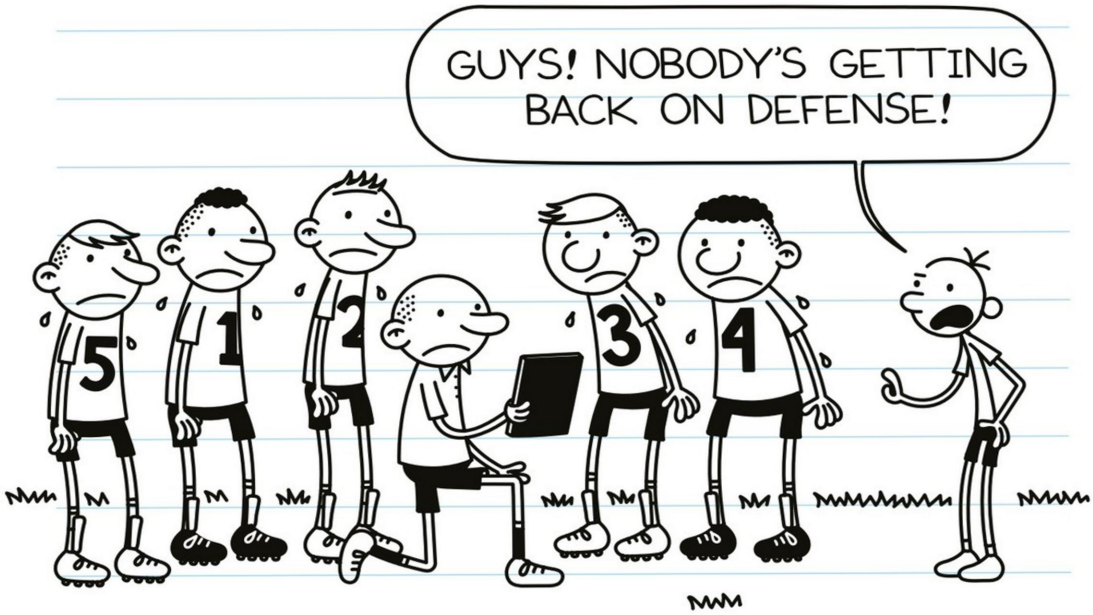


One thing I realized is that if I'm gonna be rich, I'm gonna have to find new friends that I have something in common with, so we have stuff to talk about.

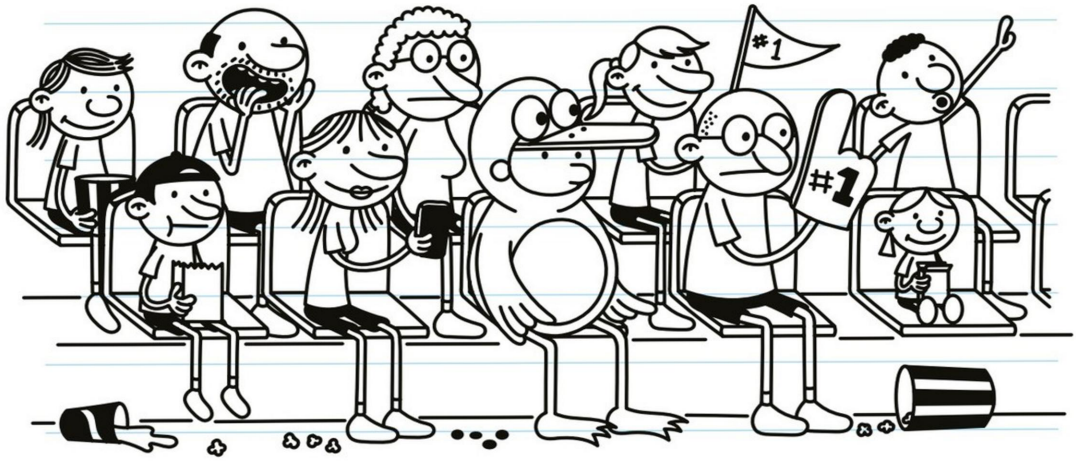
I guess I should be responsible and put the money in a bank account, then live off the interest I'll earn. I'm young, though, and I need to figure out how to spend my time.

So I've started looking into how much it costs to buy a professional sports team. But if I'm gonna spend all that money, I don't wanna just go to games and be a fan.

I wanna be one of those owners who's actually INVOLVED.



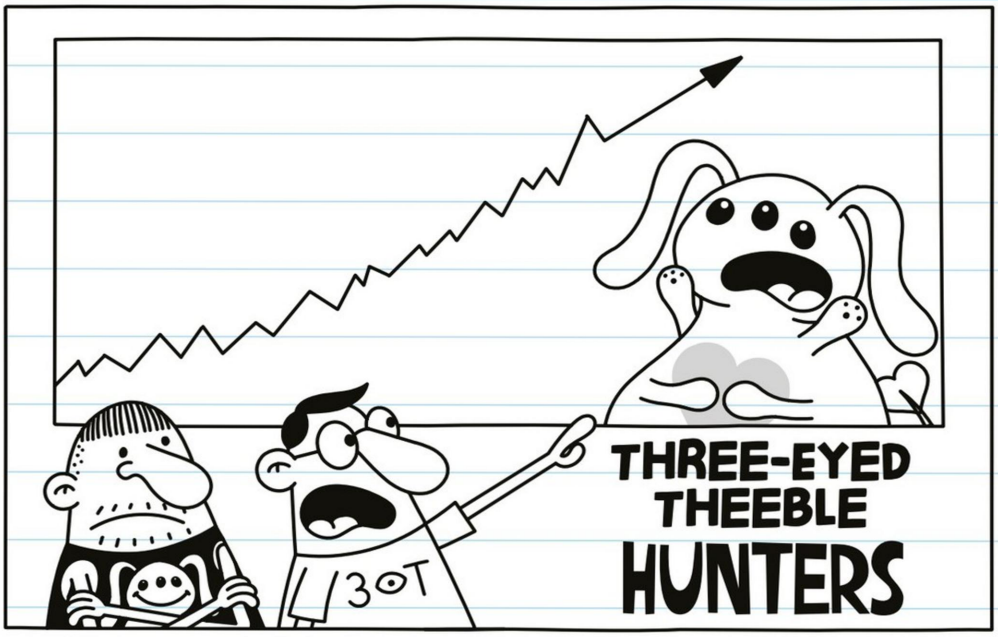
Now that I think about it, if I buy a team, everyone will know who I am, which means people will be coming up to me and asking for money. So if I go that route, I'll want to stay anonymous.



Wednesday

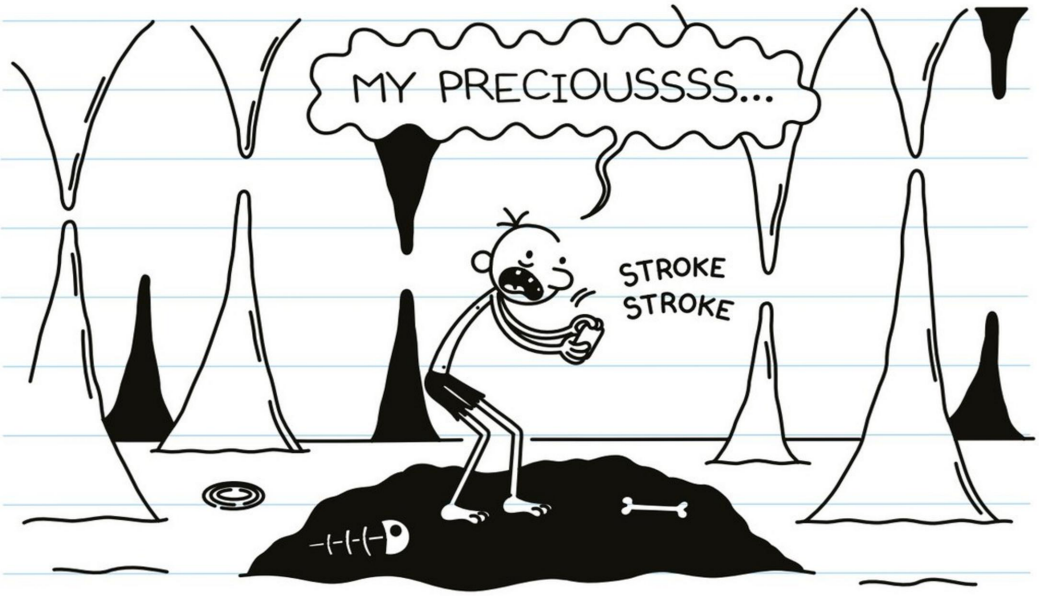
It's been a week since I got the Three-Eyed Theeble card, and I still haven't figured out what to do with it.

I've kept an eye on the MicroCreatures card hunters, and they say the value of the card has only gone UP in the last seven days.



It's actually pretty stressful, because that means I'm sitting on a gold mine with this thing. And it hasn't been fun keeping the card on me twenty-four hours a day.

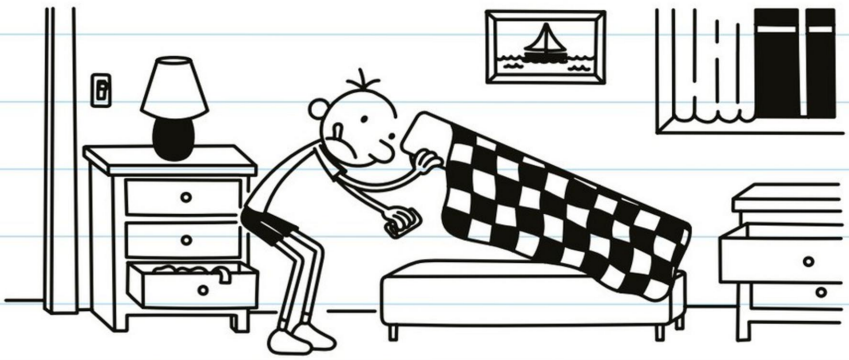
In fact, I started worrying about the effect the card is having on my SANITY. I've seen movies where a valuable object can make a person lose their mind, and I got nervous that was happening with ME.



I felt like I needed to take a break from the card for a while, but I couldn't decide where to put it so Manny wouldn't find it.

Then I came up with a crazy idea. I realized that the last place Manny would look for something of mine would be in his own room. So I decided to hide it THERE.

I waited until Manny was watching a movie in the family room and slipped the card underneath his mattress.

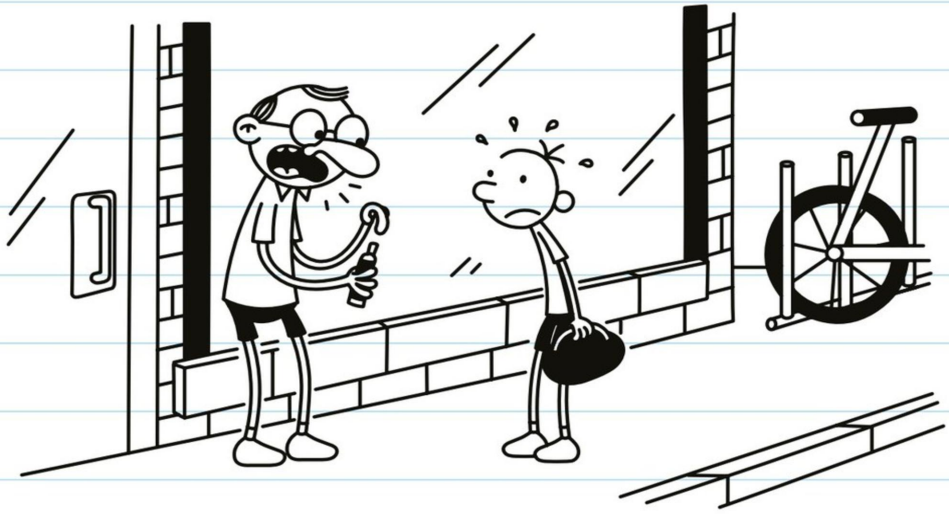


I knew the card wouldn't be safe there for long, so I started making my plans for turning in the card at the comics shop. I decided I'd just show up without giving anyone advance warning, because I wanted to avoid a media circus.

After dinner tonight, I went into Manny's room to get the card, and I was happy to see it was still there. So I slipped the card into the binder, and put the binder in my backpack.

I rode my bike down to the comics shop, hoping I wouldn't run into anyone I knew on my way.

But of course Mr. Lawrence was coming out of the pharmacy, and all he wanted to talk about was the special cream he bought to treat the rash he got at my party.



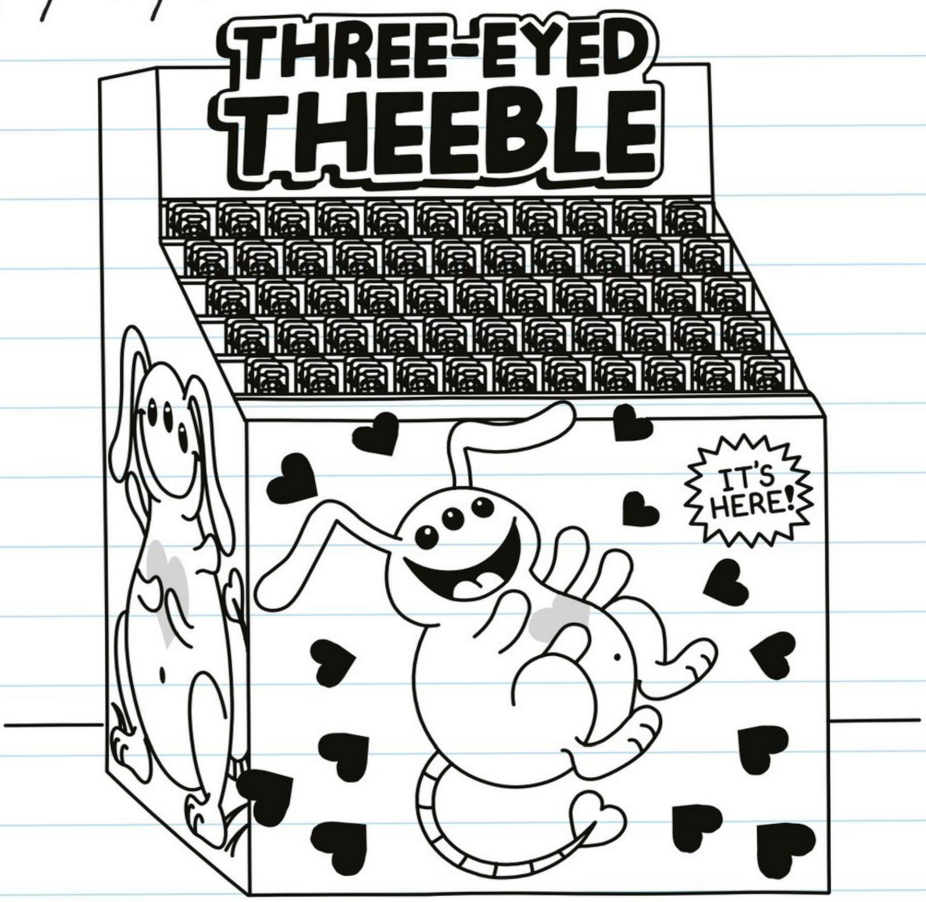
I finally broke free from him and went into the comics shop, which I was hoping would be empty.

But there was a customer at the counter having a debate with the comics shop guy about which superhero would win in a fight.

Finally, the customer left and it was my big moment. I was worried the guy who worked at the comics shop might pass out when he saw my mint-condition Three-Eyed Theeble.

I pulled my binder out of my backpack and was about to open it. But when the guy saw the MicroCreatures sticker on the cover, he asked me if I'd heard the big news.

He said the Three-Eyed Theeble card was so popular with fans that the card company printed a million MORE of them. Then he pointed to the display they had in the store.

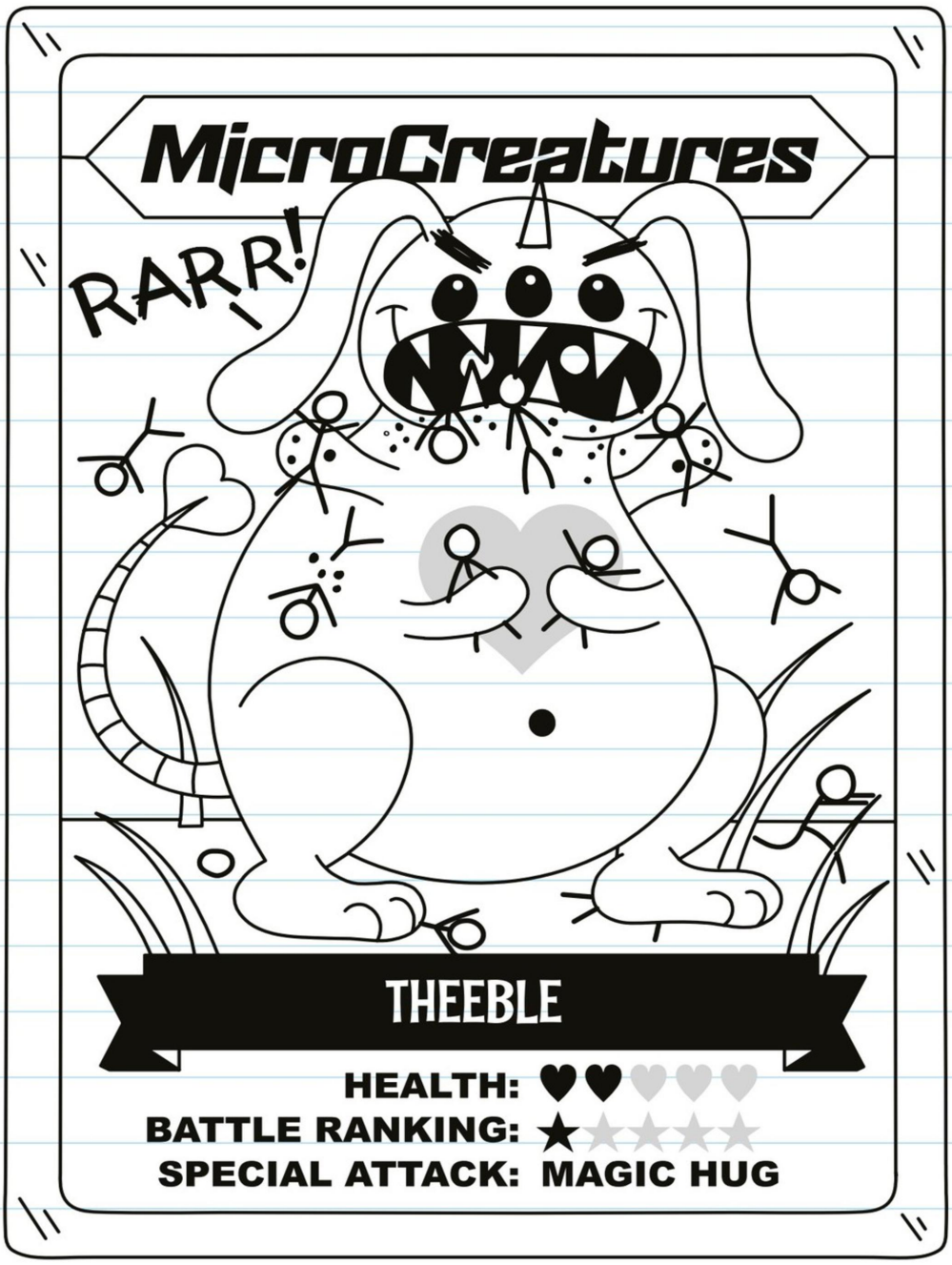


I felt like I got punched in the stomach, because if there were a million Three-Eyed Theebles, that meant mine was WORTHLESS.

But then I realized the ORIGINAL could still be worth a lot of money.

So I opened my binder to take out the card.

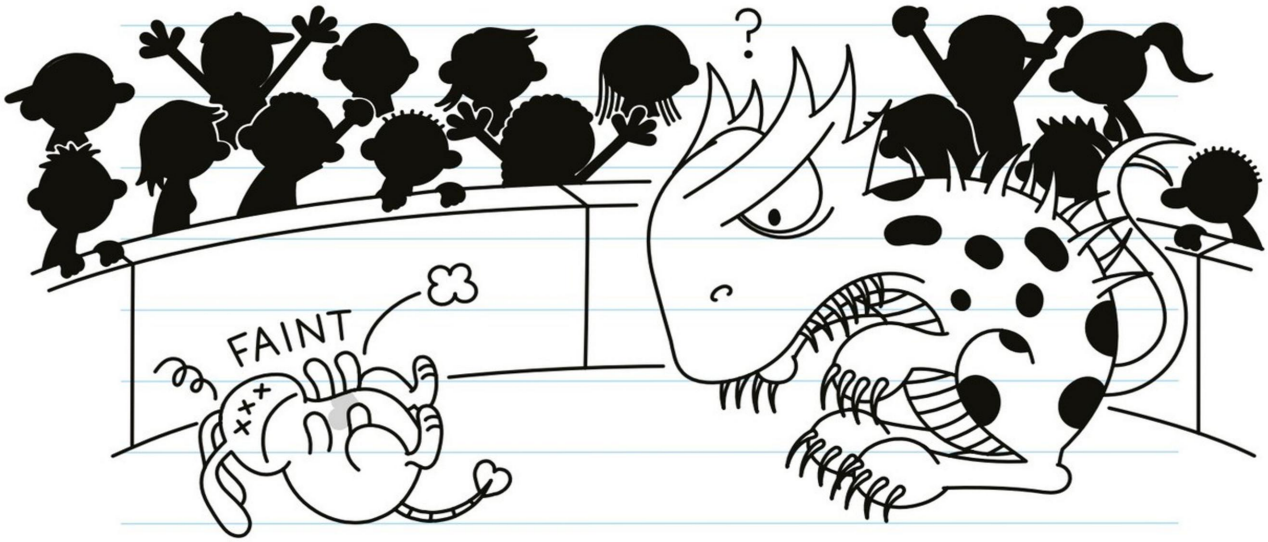
But I guess Manny had found it after all. And apparently he's still in his dinosaur phase.



Sunday

The MicroCreatures card company made a giant mistake printing so many Three-Eyed Theeble cards, because now nobody wants them.

It turns out they made ANOTHER mistake when they reprinted those cards and gave the Three-Eyed Theeble zero health. So it's doubly worthless, because he can't last two seconds in the arena.



At this point, I'm kind of over the whole collector's card thing anyway. And I'm a little embarrassed I got swept up in the MicroCreatures craze to begin with.

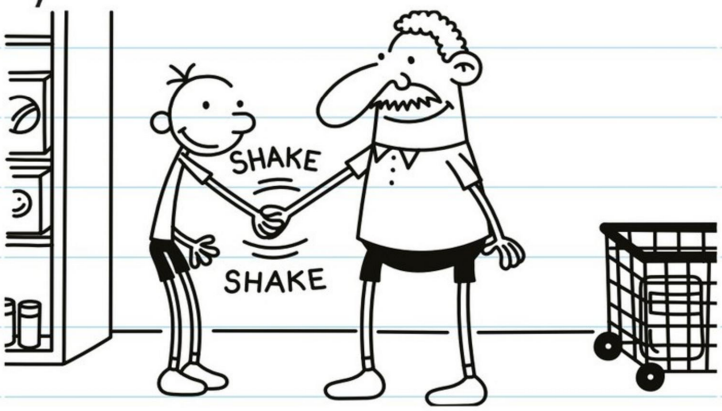
Me and Mom have been lying low ever since the party, waiting for things to blow over. But the other day we went to the store to stock up on toilet paper, and we ran into the father of that boy whose party I crashed last year.

It turns out he'd heard about MY party, and I figured he was going to give me a hard time about it. But then the craziest thing happened.

He said that everyone in his neighborhood is buzzing about my party, because they heard it was totally WILD.

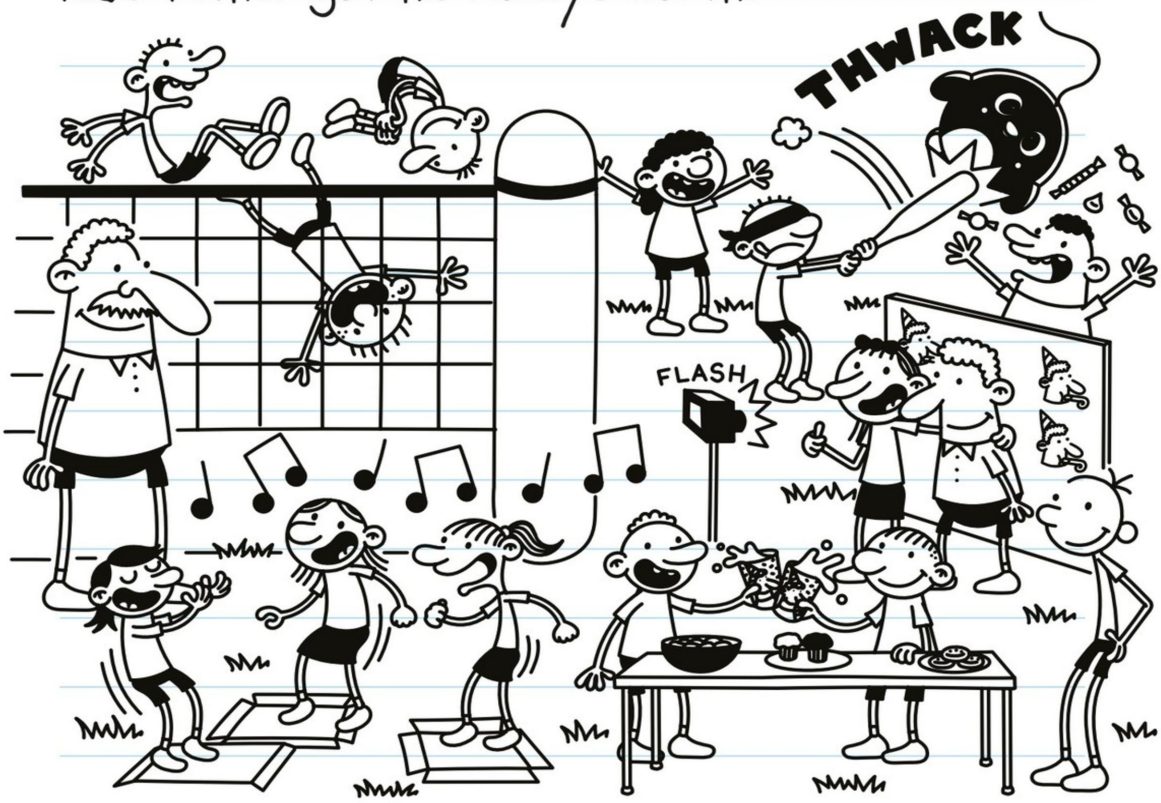
Then he asked if I'd be willing to host his SON's birthday party, which is a week away. And he wanted the party to be exactly like MINE.

I thought that sounded like the worst idea I'd ever heard, because I never wanted to go through an experience like that again. But when he told me how much he'd pay me to host it, I was totally IN.

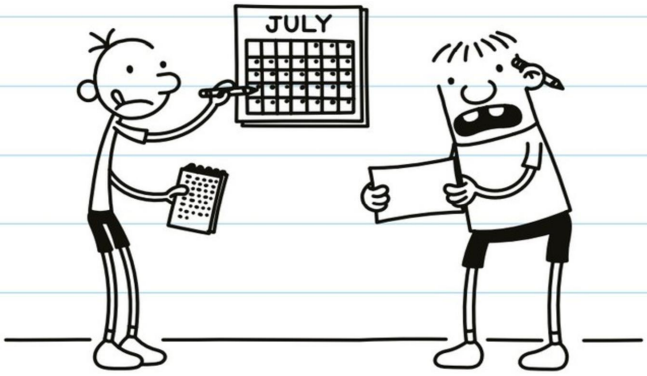


I knew if I was gonna pull this off, I was gonna need a little help. So I got Rowley on board, and we put a lot of work into planning a party that would be just like mine.

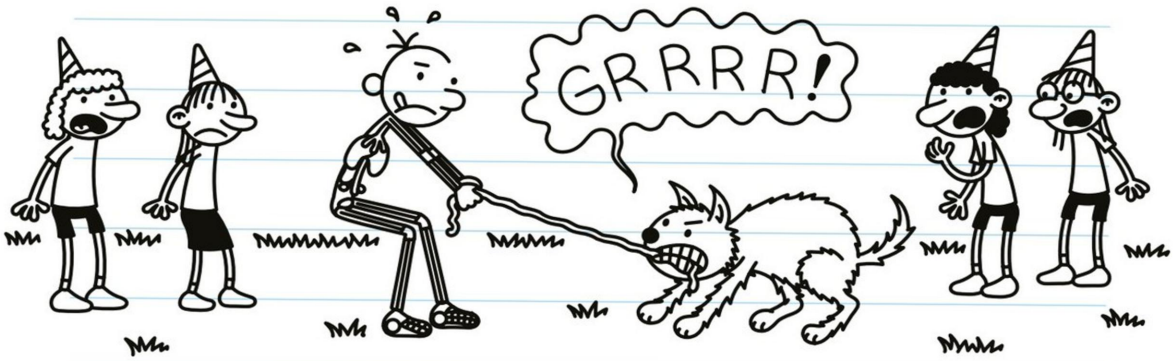
And I don't mean to brag or anything, but that kid's father got his money's worth.



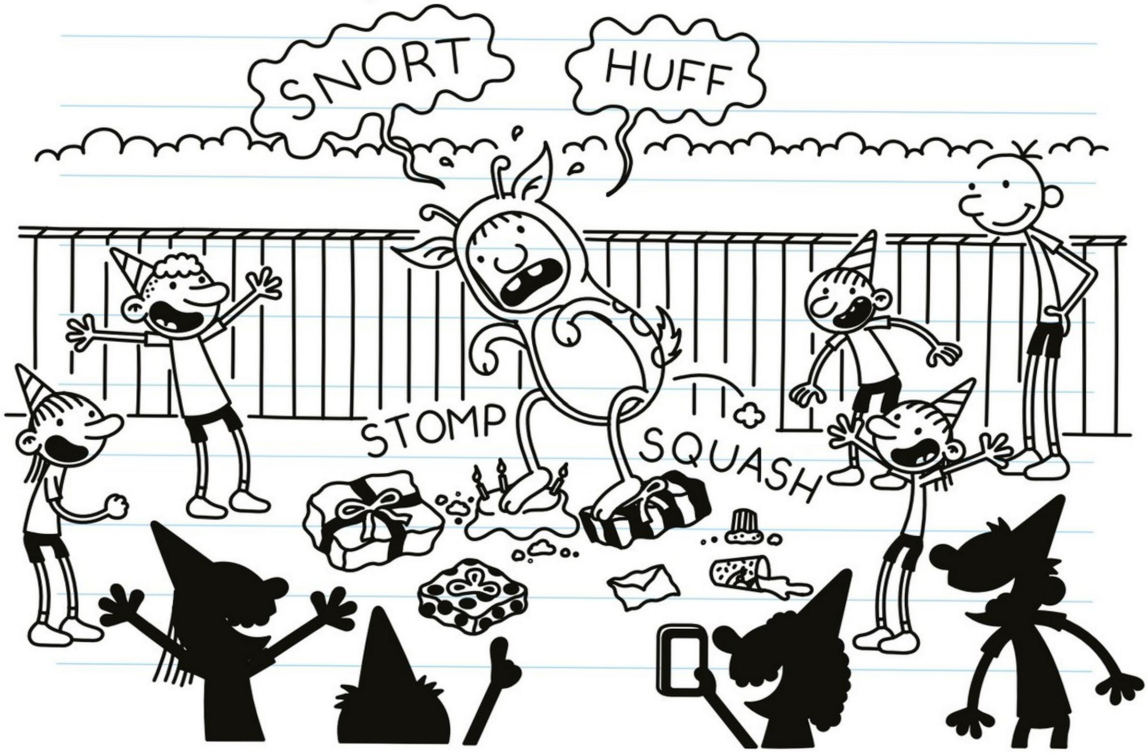
I heard that after the party, his son became the most popular boy in his neighborhood. And now EVERYONE wants to hire me to host their kids' birthdays, so my summer schedule is really filling up.



I even started wearing the suit that Heath Healthybody left behind, because the way I see it, finders keepers.



Who knows? If this thing gets big enough, maybe we can take it nationwide. And even though this wasn't exactly what I was wishing for, sometimes you just gotta roll with it.



Greg Heffley is not a fan of surprises—especially when it comes to his birthday. But he never could have guessed the shocking surprise his family has in store for him this year.

When Greg's epic party plans start to unravel, he holds out hope that he'll get his one birthday wish—a rare trading card that's worth a fortune. The problem is, everyone else is after it, too, and there's no guarantee he'll snag it first.

Will Greg's birthday dreams come true? Or will he learn to be careful what you wish for?

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