

SUPERFAIL

by Max Brunner

Illustrated by Dustin Mackay



RP|KIDS
PHILADELPHIA

CHAPTER ONE

ME [A.K.A. MARSHALL]



I hate my super powers.

Flying at high speed over a city and shooting lasers out of your eyes might sound pretty awesome, but trust me, it's not. Not for me, at least. My super powers are more like a super curse.

This is me trying to use my laser vision.



Yeah, shooting lasers out of my eyes *would* be a pretty sweet power . . . if I wasn't cross-eyed!

When my parents find out that I fried the neighbor's cat, they'll probably sentence me to fifteen to life in my room. At least I'll have some muscles when I get out—everyone knows the only thing to do in prison is to lift weights. I'll probably grow a sweet beard, too.



You might be thinking, why don't you just close one eye and fire your good laser? That'll work, right?



Wrong!

Turns out eyelids can't stop a high-powered laser. Who knew?

What's worse is even if I don't use my powers, I'm still cross-eyed. I have a pair of sunglasses I wear, and those help hide my eyes, but my teachers won't let me wear them in class.



TAKE OFF THE SHADES, MR. PRESTON. THIS ISN'T THE BEACH.



WHOA! CHECK OUT CRAZY EYES OVER THERE. MAYBE IF I SMACK HIM IN THE HEAD A COUPLE TIMES, I CAN KNOCK THAT GOOGLY EYE BACK INTO PLACE.

I'm not going to lie—if they'd let me wear my glasses, I'd totally sleep through history class. But that's not the point.

And my crossed eye is just the start of my problems. About a year ago, I figured out how to fly. Pretty cool, huh? Not for me. The day I learned how to fly was also the day I learned that I get severe motion sickness.

I really can't fly anywhere unless I want to lose my lunch, which means I don't fly anywhere. Ever. I want to be famous for saving the city, not for dropping barf bombs all over it.



So I have awesome powers that I can never use. See what I mean? I'm cursed.

It doesn't help that I have to deal with a bunch of other problems, like my twin sisters... or maybe they're triplets? I'm not really sure. Honestly, I have no idea how many sisters I really have, because at least one of them was born with the power to clone herself.

My mom isn't a big fan of that power.



It's not my favorite, either.

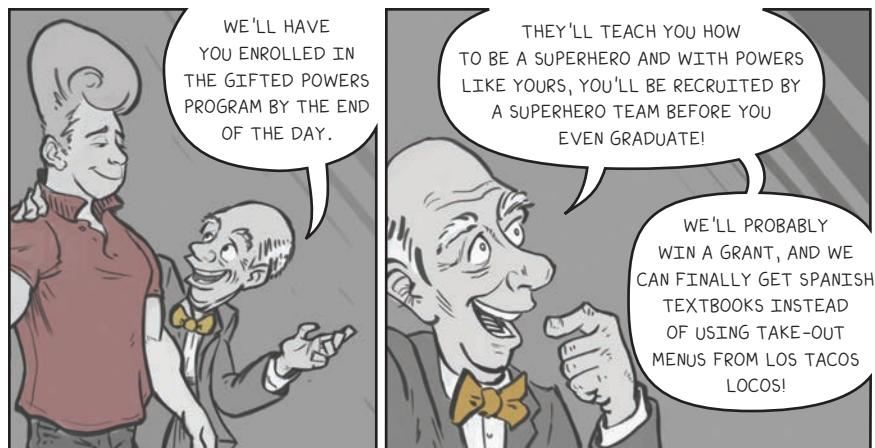


At least *their* power works the way it's supposed to. I'm jealous of my two-year-old sister/sisters. How sad is that?

But I'm way more jealous of the kids at school. Trevor Bretton's a year older than me and he got some sweet powers after a meteor hit his house.



So, his first day back at school was pretty awesome.



A week later, Trevor saved our town from a hurricane created by a mad scientist and was recruited on the spot by the most awesome heroes our city has ever seen—the Superteam. Newscasters called him Superteen and acted like they didn't know his true identity. Seriously? All he did was take off his glasses and put on a cape. Even my sisters knew it was Trevor, and they're only two years old!

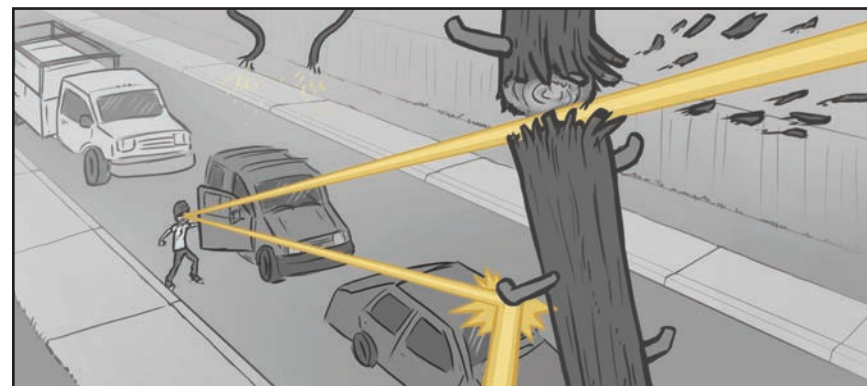


That's been my dream for basically my entire life: to save the city, get my picture in the paper, and be recruited to a superhero team. Then I could move into my own place so my sisters couldn't chew all my stuff, and I could finally kill zombies in peace.

But how would I stop a criminal? By barfing on him? Besides, the closest thing to a crime I'd ever seen in our town was my Uncle Doug stealing his neighbor's newspaper.



And the few times I tried to step in to help with something small, I made things worse.



There are only so many pets you can fry before you decide to hang up your cape. That's why I had pretty much given up on the whole becoming-a-superhero dream.

CHAPTER TWO



My parents make me pull weeds at my grandma's house every Friday. Most grandmas are sweet old ladies who give candy and silver dollars. All kids have to do to earn treats is let them pinch their cheeks.

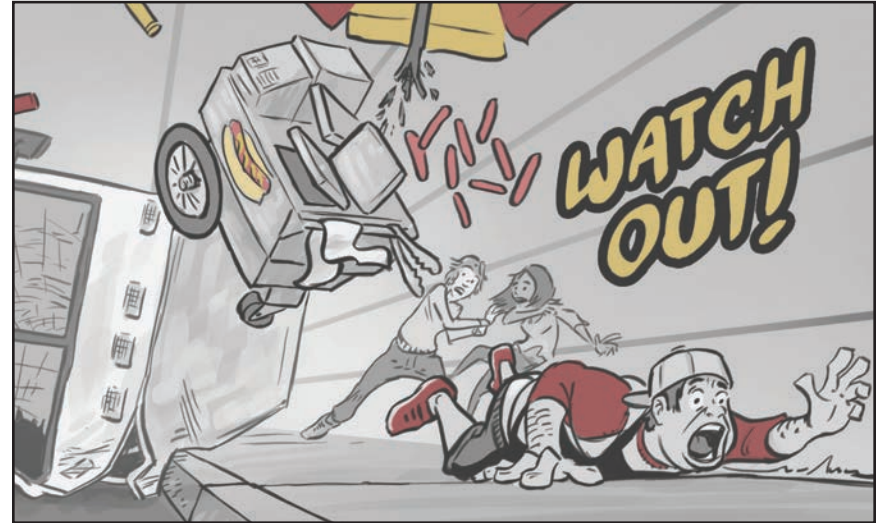
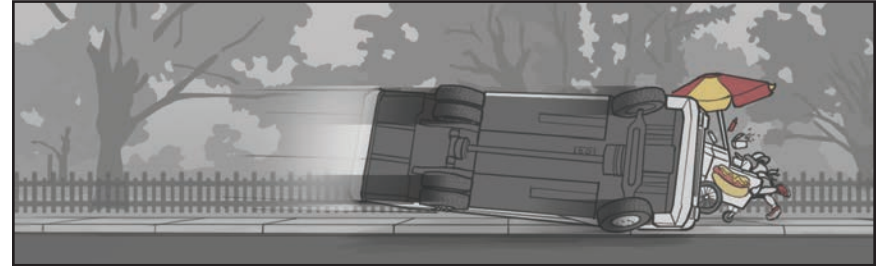
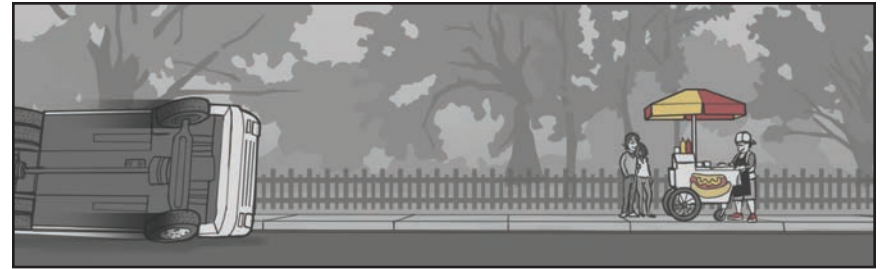
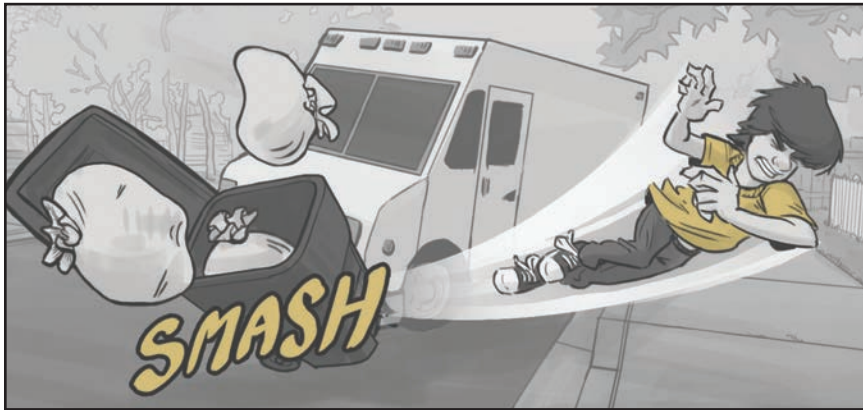
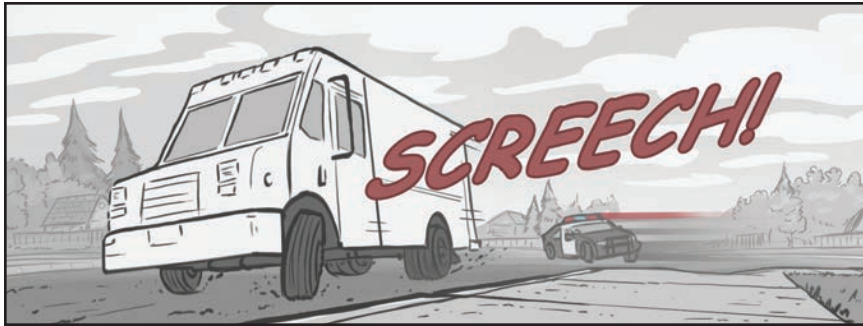
Not my grandma.



The old man next door is just as bad. He's always outside watering his garden, but doesn't pay attention to where he's spraying.



Anyway, last Friday I was hauling my grandma's trash cans out to the curb when it happened.





A bunch of guys jumped out of the van. I knew if I tried to blast them, I'd probably end up frying another pet, so I took off in the other direction. Or at least I tried to. Joey, the biggest tattler in school, rattled me out.





ARE YOU
KIDDING ME
RIGHT NOW?!

Just to rub it in, the jerks in black jumped the fence right next to me.



The cops tried to follow them, but...

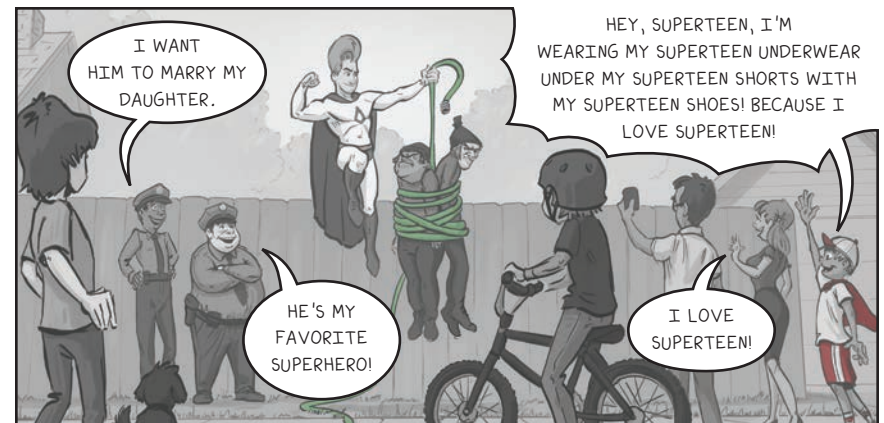


Guess who showed up to save the day?



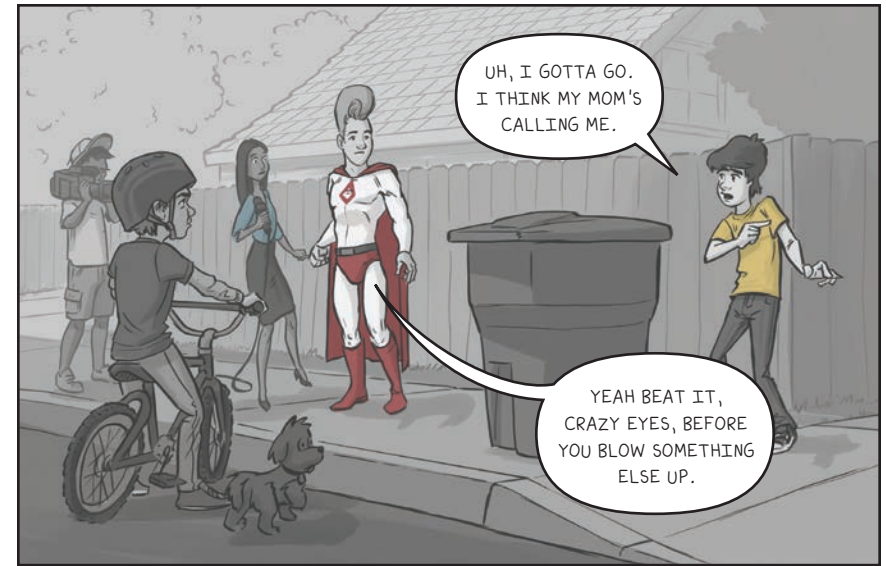
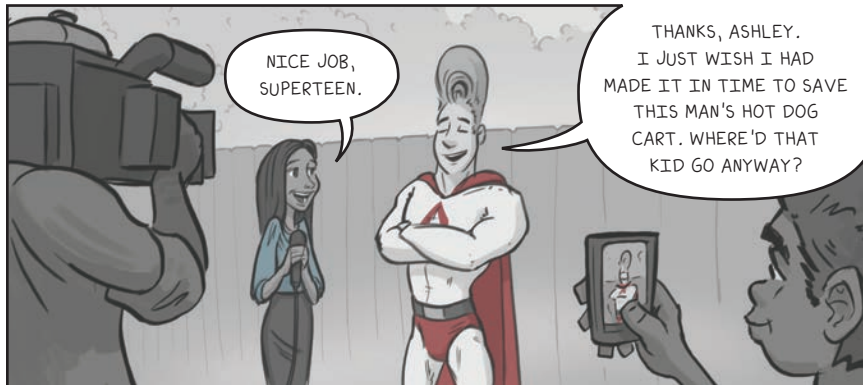
I felt even worse after that.

Trevor rounded up the bad guys in about four seconds, and, of course, everybody cheered.



I should have been the one capturing those criminals. And if my stupid lasers had gone straight, I would have. Then everyone would have cheered for me.

Once the cops finished taking pictures with Superteen, they put the bad guys in the back of their squad cars.



As if it wasn't bad enough that my lasers blew up a hot dog cart, Trevor had to show up and embarrass me in front of the whole crowd. That was the last time I was going to use my powers. Ever.

Or so I thought.

CHAPTER THREE



On my way home, I walked by the fence the bad guys had jumped over and noticed a piece of paper on the ground. One of them must have dropped it. I guess everyone had been too busy idolizing Trevor to notice.



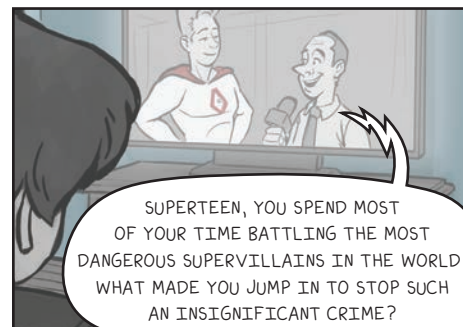
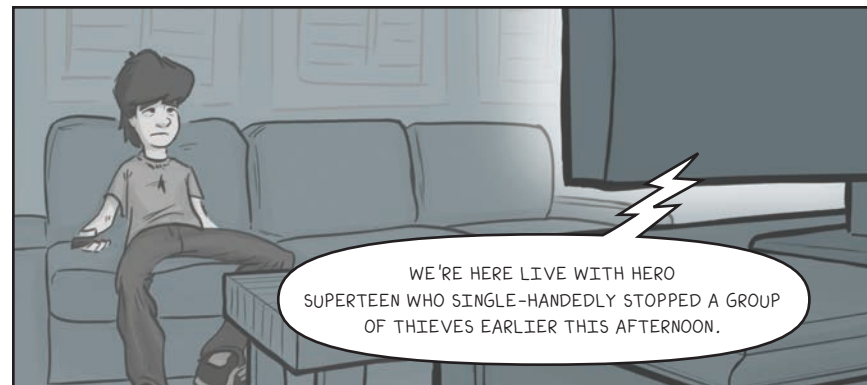
There was no way I was going to try and stop whatever was going down at the museum, not after the humiliation I had just gone through.

So when I got home, I called the police to take care of it, but they wouldn't listen to a twelve-year-old with a note from a guy with no name.



So the museum was going to be robbed. I wasn't happy about it, but what could I do? No one would listen to me. Besides, wouldn't it be better to have some thieves steal a few museum pieces than to have my lasers burn the place to the ground?

That afternoon, I sat down to watch some TV and forget about the whole thing, but then a news report came on.



As much as I hated to admit it, Trevor was right. The museum's security guards were in danger. How could I just sit back and let them rob the place when I could at least try to stop them? Like Trevor said, it was my duty—super powers or not.

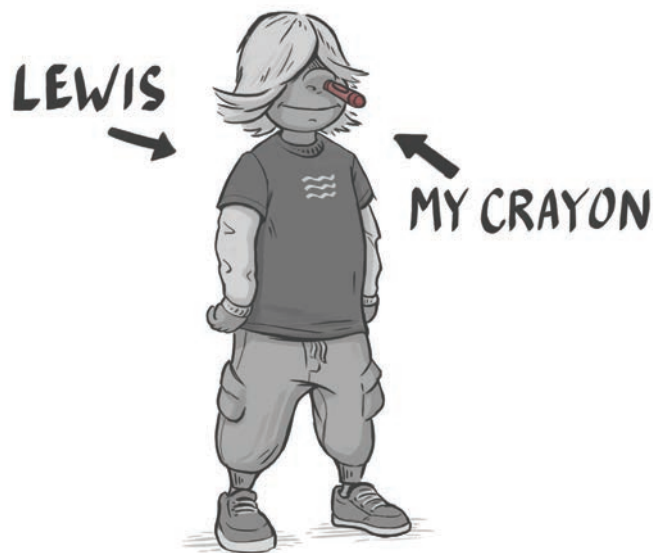
So it was up to me and Lewis to save the day, which was kind of sad.

Wait, I haven't said anything about Lewis yet, have I? We've been friends for a really long time now, like a whole year. He isn't exactly the most popular kid at school, but then again, neither am I. We hang out because he's the only other kid my age who's still into playing with action figures. Everyone else makes fun of me for it. It's really annoying. Last year, almost everyone I knew played with action figures, and now all of a sudden everyone's too cool for that kind of stuff.

Not Lewis, though. Nothing about Lewis is cool, really, but that's fine by me.

I've got a few more friends at school I hang out with, though. Lewis—not so much. No one really talks to him. At times, I can't say I blame them.

I mean, for one thing, Lewis isn't smart, at all.



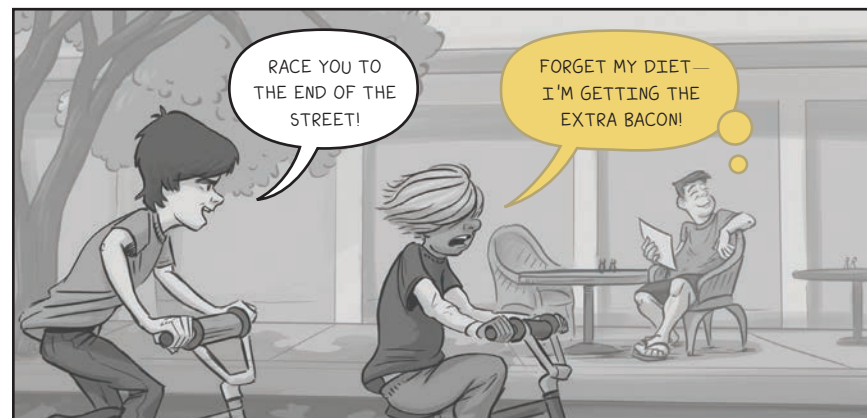
And he almost never says anything unless he's using his powers.

He's a ~~tele-tele-tub~~...uh, Lewis can read other people's minds. The problem is he always reads them out loud.

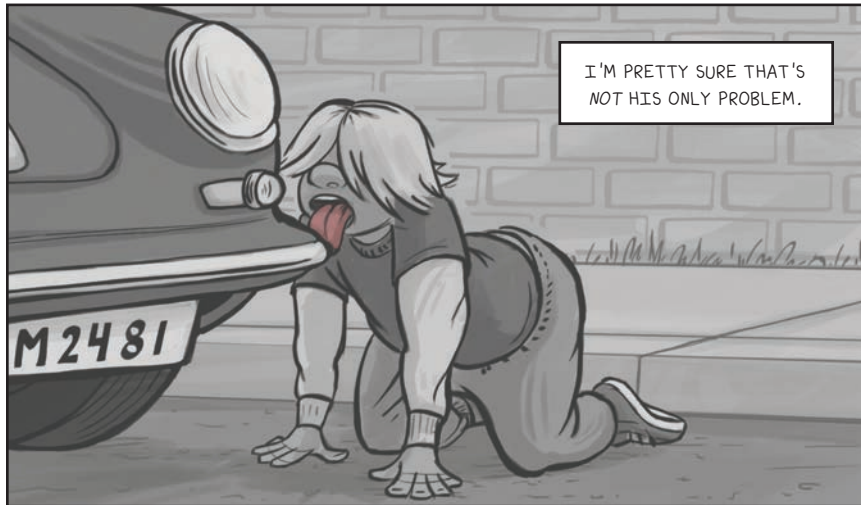


Which is why my dad hides in the basement when Lewis comes over.

Lewis definitely takes some getting used to.



His mom says he's a little different because he spends so much time in other people's heads.



As you may have guessed, Lewis and I didn't qualify for the Gifted Powers Program at school, so our chances of getting picked up by a superhero team were pretty much zero.

I, for one, seem to make a mess everytime I try to use my powers, even for simple things like using my lasers to cut paper in art class:

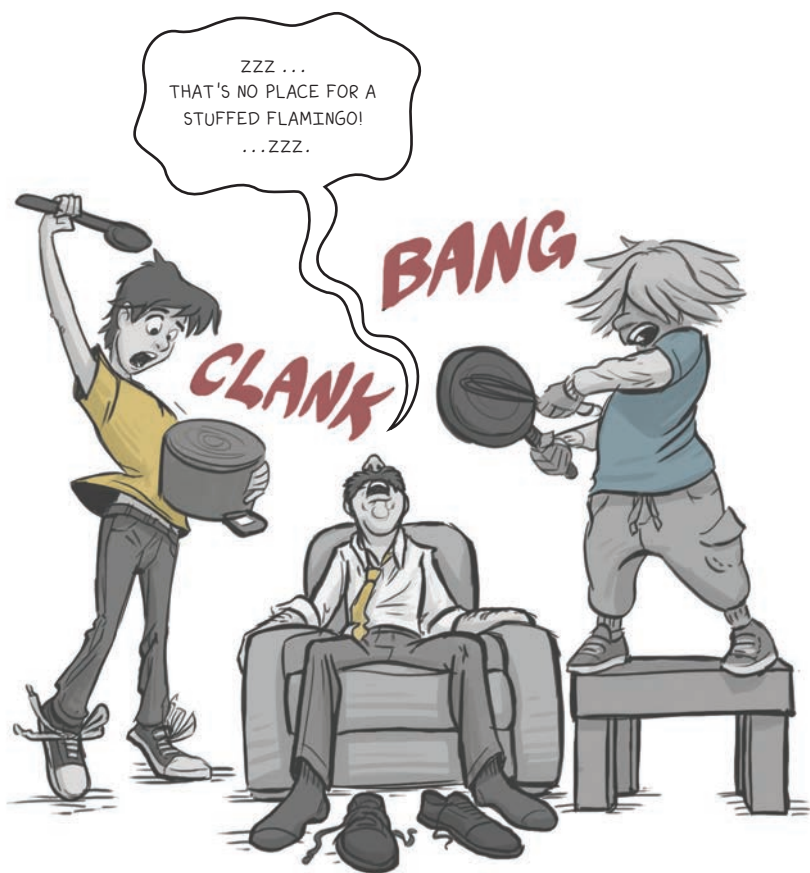


If you think nerds get picked on a lot at school, you should see how Defectives like Lewis and I are treated. That's what people call kids like us with powers that don't work right—Defectives. Beating up a kid with super powers probably makes them feel tough, even if their victim's powers don't work right.



Back to last Friday: I didn't know how much help Lewis would be against real villains, but he was the only help I was going to get. We set up a sleepover at his house for that night so we could sneak out to stop the heist at the museum.

My parents would totally bust us if we ever tried to sneak out of my house, especially after midnight, but Lewis's mom was away at a work conference, and we knew his dad would fall asleep in front of the TV, like always. And nothing wakes him up. I mean, nothing.



We got to work making costumes but couldn't really come up with anything good. When I went through Lewis's old Halloween clothes, the only halfway decent thing I found was an old Zorro outfit.

It was either that or the purple crayon costume he's worn for the last three Halloweens in a row. So, of course, I went with Zorro, which didn't make me happy. I mean, I wanted to look like a superhero but ended up looking like the Hamburglar.

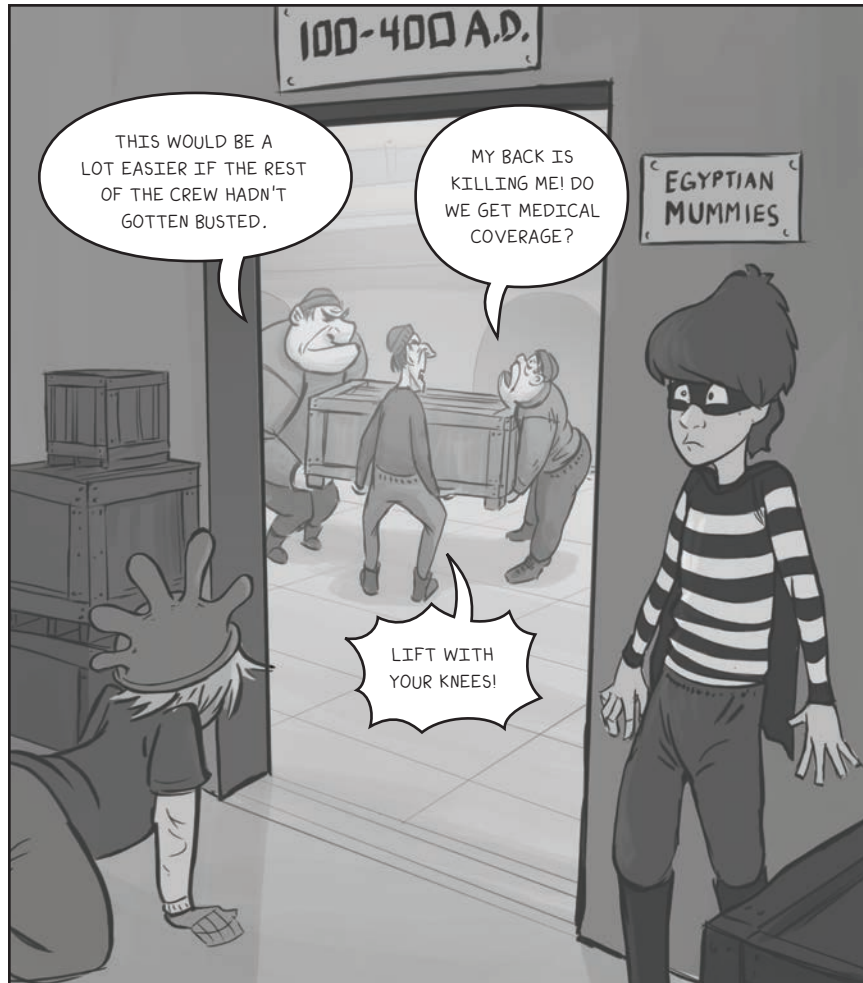


And let's just say that was the last time Lewis would be in charge of designing his own costume.



At midnight, we snuck out the back door and rode our bikes a couple blocks to the museum.

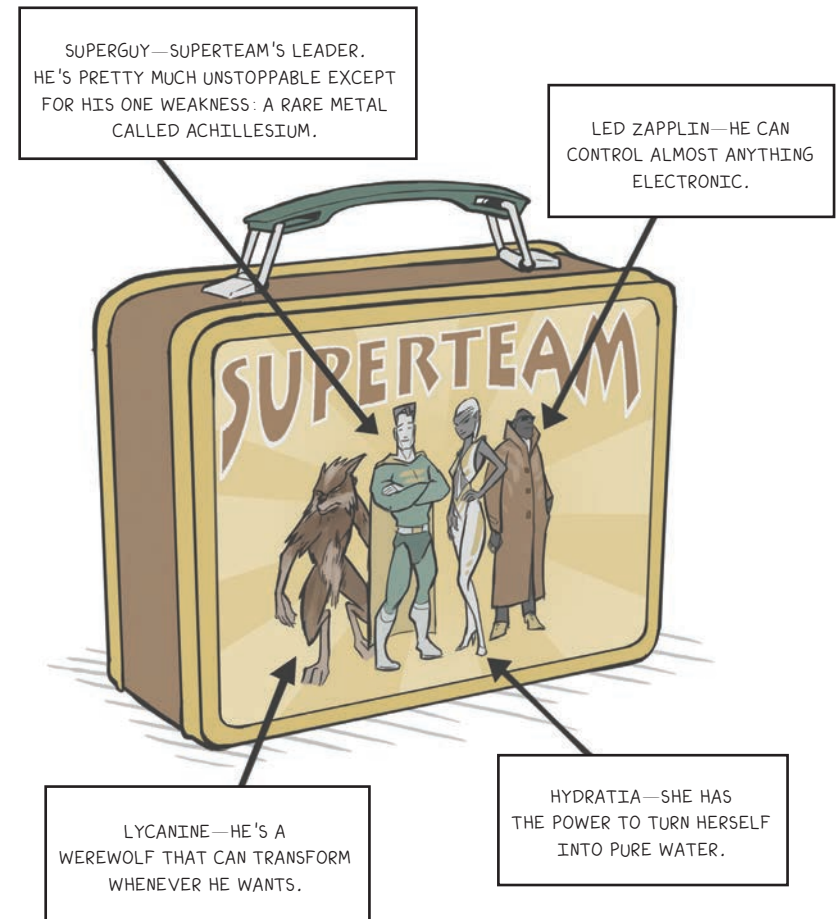
When we got there, everything looked fine until we went around to the back of the building.



This was it! A real crime with real criminals!

The problem? There weren't any real heroes to stop them—just me and a kid with a rubber glove strapped to his skull. We could get seriously hurt ...but we could also get seriously famous if we captured these guys.

If we could stop the bad guys, we'd be heroes, *real* superheroes. We'd get our pictures in the paper, land a bunch of TV interviews, be on lunch boxes—all that cool stuff. Just like the Superteam.



And if Lewis and I pulled this off, we'd be the most popular kids at school. People would want to hang out with us at lunch, and we'd get some sweet selfies with the cheerleaders. Kids might even stop calling me Defective.

Maybe.

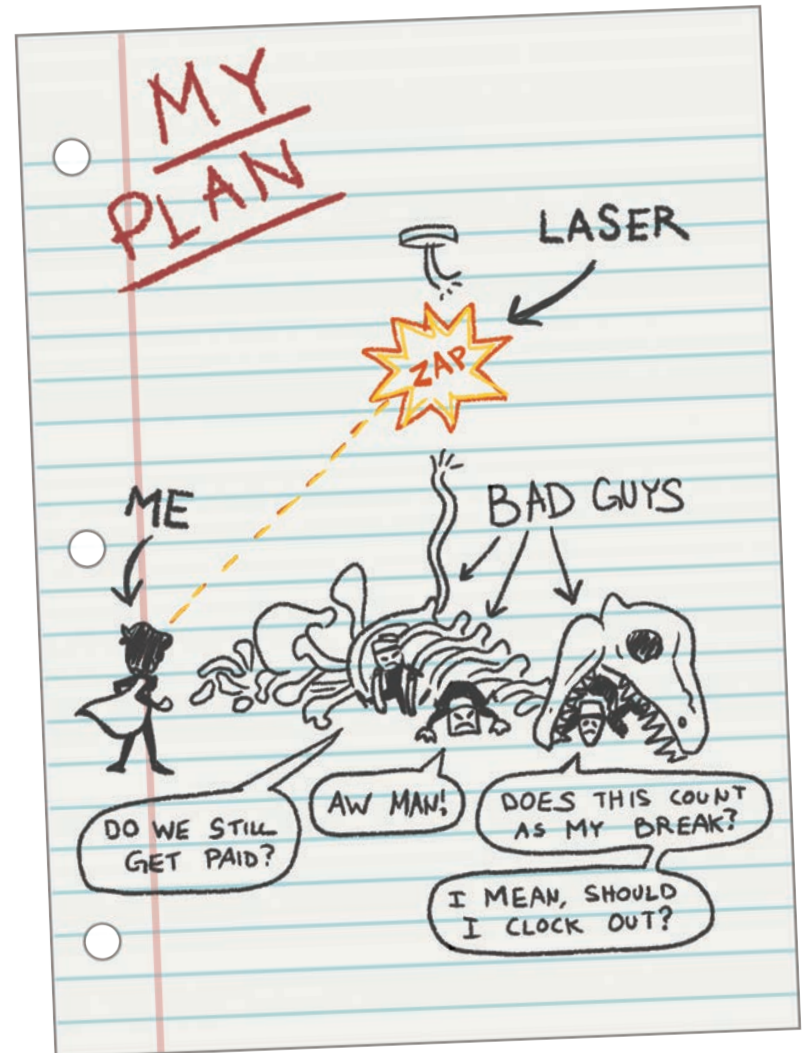
CHAPTER FOUR



Our wildest dreams were about to come true. All we had to do was stop a couple of thugs.

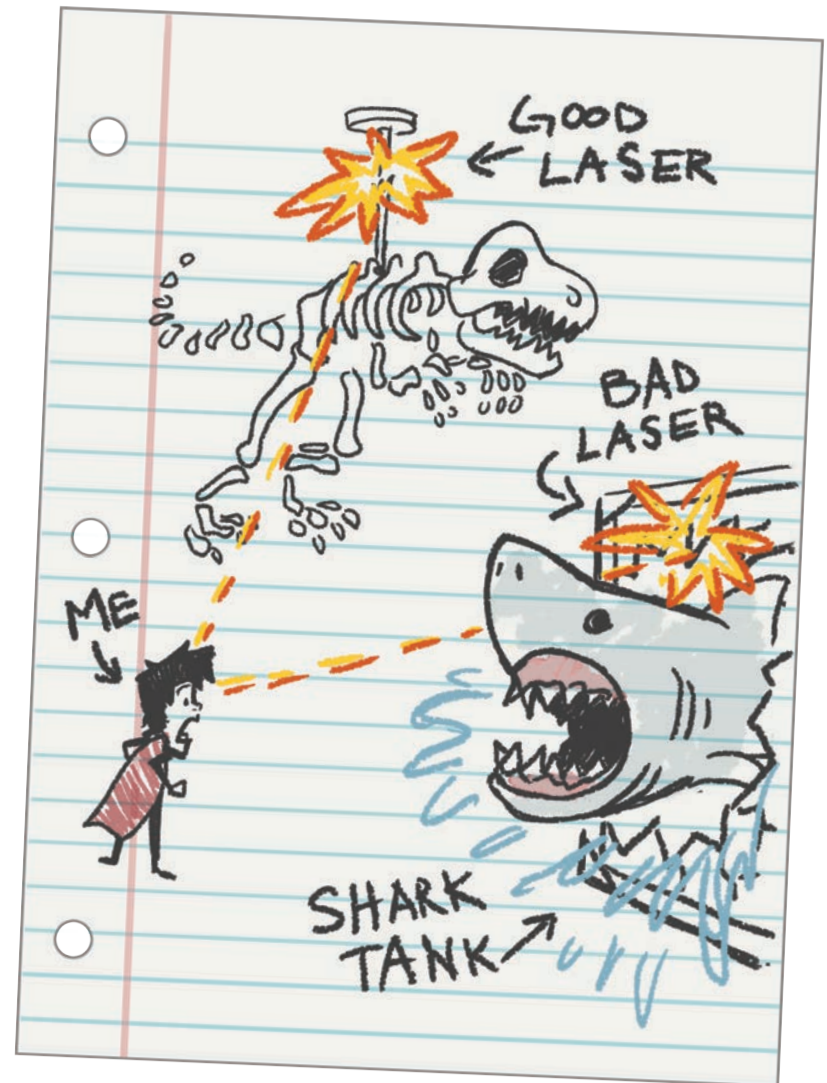
When the coast was clear, Lewis and I snuck in through the back door.

The thieves were loading boxes into the back of a van when an idea hit me: I knew exactly how to stop them.





Lewis was right, which meant I was right, because when Lewis said that, he was reading my mind. What if I missed? Every time I fired my lasers, they ended up hitting the worst possible thing. And in a place like this, the worst possible thing could be a lot of things.



I might get to sit with the cool kids at lunch if I saved the day, but I wouldn't be sitting with anyone if a shark bit me in half!

I could always start my superhero career with something a little less dangerous. I mean, superheroes are always walking old ladies across the street and stuff like that, so I could start with something simple and wait for word to get around. Old people always talked about how handsome and polite I was. I could bring a few of them to school so they could talk me up in front of some news reporters or something.



As a rule, I always go with whatever plan has fewer sharks in it, so instead of trying to catch the thieves, Lewis and I headed for the exit. Besides, now that a crime was happening, we could call the cops and probably get our picture in the paper, anyway. That would be a decent start for a superhero.

We were halfway to the door when Lewis had to go and blow our cover.



Lewis just stood there, crying. I'll admit I'm not the best friend in the world, but I wasn't going to leave him there all by himself, surrounded by a bunch of goons.

So I held my breath and fired my lasers.



As if allowing the bad guys to get away wasn't bad enough, I also got a mouth full of fake bunny hair!

At least I hoped it was fake....

Which reminds me, I still need to thank Lewis for all his help.



You would think, because we were just kids, the robbers would take it easy on us, like call our parents or just kick us out of the museum.



They say your whole life flashes before your eyes when it's about to end, but all I could think was that I didn't want to die dressed like a character from a fast-food restaurant!

The guy was just about to carve me like a pumpkin when ...



BUSTED!



At first, I thought some *real* superheroes had shown up to save us, but it was just Crash and this guy named Tim—two kids who had been kicked out of our school last year. They both have super powers, but they're not much better off than Lewis and me.



Crash can run so fast that he can break the sound barrier! Whatever that is. His only weakness? Stopping.



The same thing happens when he tries to change directions.



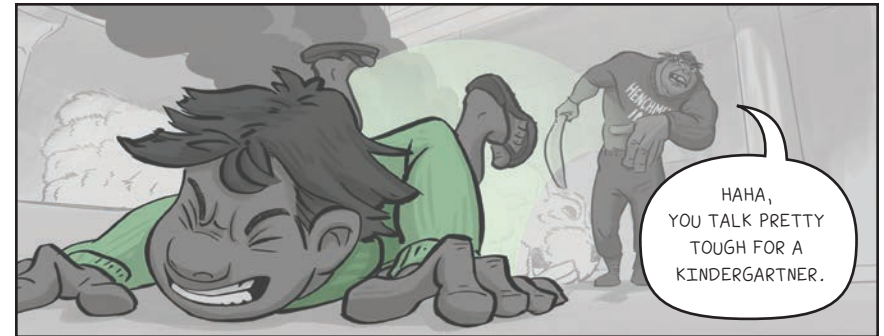
Don't get me wrong, I'm glad Crash and Tim showed up, but they weren't exactly the help I was hoping for.

Even though Crash is also pretty much indestructible, his brain gets rattled when he hits stuff too hard.



That's probably why he keeps Tim around.

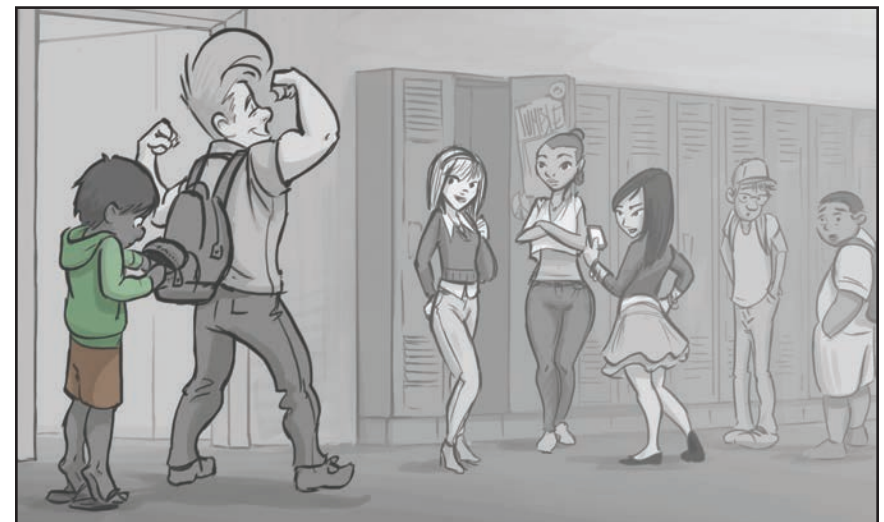
Because of Tim's powers, you've got to use him as a last resort, which is fine with him. He hates using his powers. When he finally does, boy, you better watch out, no matter what side you're on.



That's when Tim took out his secret weapon: peanuts.



Back when he was still enrolled at our school, Tim would steal other people's lunches all the time. Remember Trevor, the kid who got super powers and stopped the hurricane? Well, the day after the meteor hit Trevor's house, Tim stole the lunch out of Trevor's backpack when he was busy bragging about how great he was.



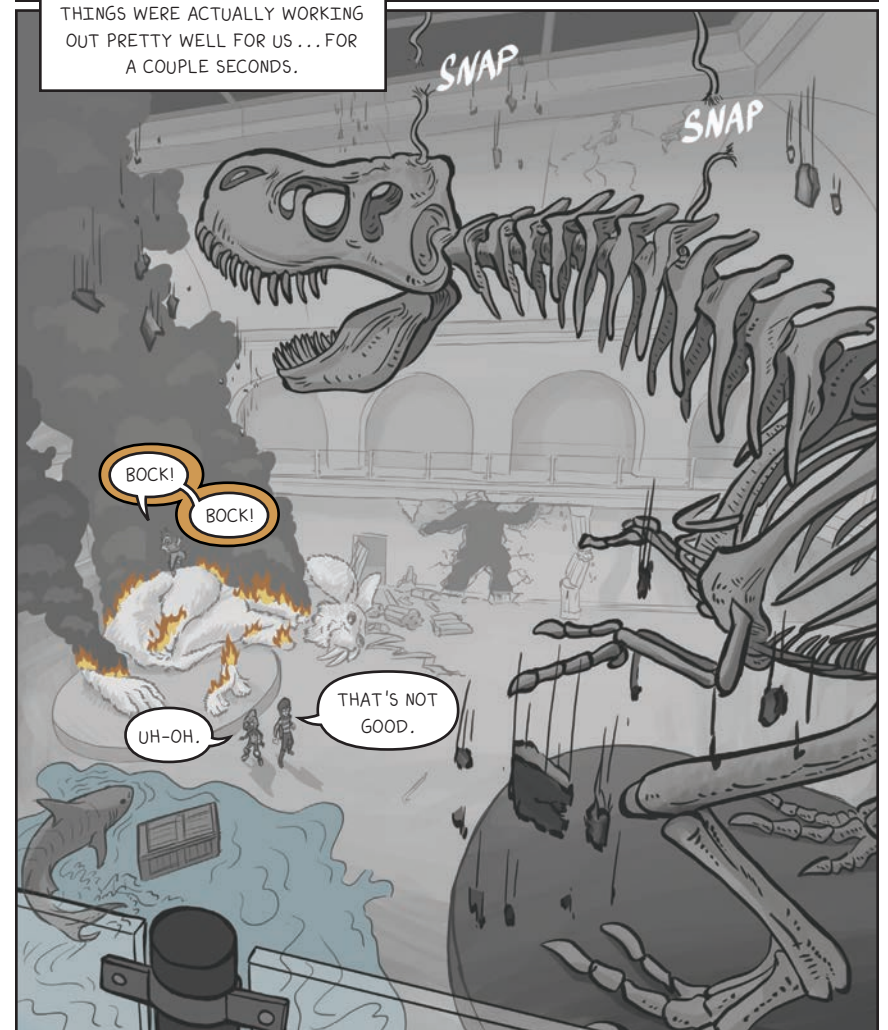
The problem was that Trevor's mom had made his sandwich the night before and it must have gotten some of the meteor's radiation on it. The meteor gave Trevor some awesome super powers, so Tim might have gotten some pretty sweet powers, too...



So, what happens when you have an allergic reaction to radioactive peanuts?



You grow ten feet tall and smash everything in sight because your throat is swollen shut!



The whole building came down right on top of us! Luckily, the dinosaur bones fell first and protected Lewis and me from the falling rubble.



By the time we were able to crawl out, the bad guys had gotten away.

Since I was wearing a costume that made me look just like a burglar, we decided to hightail it out of there before the cops showed up.



After all that, we weren't any closer to becoming superheroes. But on the bright side, we weren't dead.