

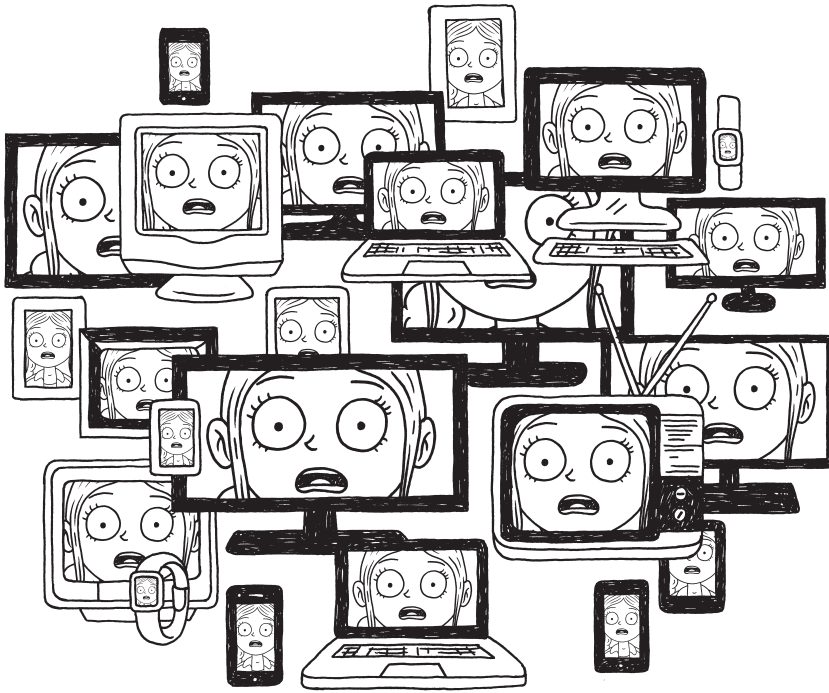
My Name is Georgia Khatchadorian (But You Probably Already Knew That, Didn't You?)

I've wanted to be a famous rock star for a long time now. Then the other day I got my wish.

Believe it or not, I'm famous now. *Everyone* in my hometown knows who I am. In fact, it feels like everywhere you look these days—*there I am again*.

Just not in a good way.

More like a ruin-your-life, wish-you-could-crawl-in-a-hole-and-never-come-out kind of way.



And if you know anything about me and my family, then you won't be surprised when I tell you this is all my big brother Rafe's fault.

Have you ever heard the story of King Midas? He's the guy who turned everything into piles of gold just by touching it. Well, my brother is like the opposite of that. Everything *he* touches turns into huge, enormous piles of *disaster*.



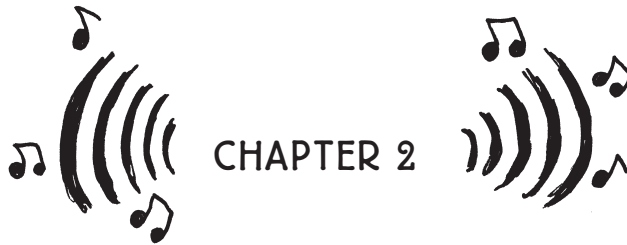
Like, for instance, my life.

For the record, I'm not saying I'm perfect. I've made plenty of mistakes along the way, and I've had some *Titanic*-sized disasters of my very own. But none of it erases the fact that trouble follows my brother around the same way that an awful smell follows a skunk everywhere it goes.

Don't worry, I'm going to tell you all about it. But to do that, I really need to take a step back and start this story where every story starts. At the beginning.

And this one begins with a single, solitary egg.





The Challenge

The name of the assignment was the Great Egg Drop Challenge. Our science teacher, Mrs. Hibbs, said that everyone had to design a capsule that would protect an ordinary egg from breaking when it got thrown off the roof of Hills Village Middle School.

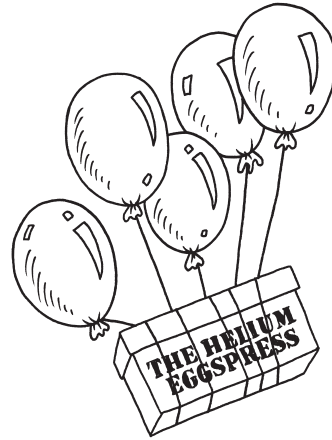
Kind of cool, right?

For my capsule, I used a shoebox. Inside it I put a block of Styrofoam with an egg-sized hole cut out, and I tied five purple helium balloons to the outside.

Those balloons were my secret weapon. If this worked, my capsule was going to float gently down to the ground like it was made of feathers. I was

really careful about the way I designed the whole thing and spent a lot of time putting it together for a few days before it was due.

As for my brother, I think he started his project about ten minutes before we had to leave for school that morning. I could hear him crashing around in his room while I ate my pancakes.



“What’s he doing in there?” Grandma Dotty asked.

“Just barely scraping by,” I said, because it’s true. The last time Rafe got his homework done ahead of time was...never.

“Rafe! If you want me to drive you to school, now’s the time!” Mom yelled.

“Here I come!” he said, which is when his project came rolling down the hall.

Have you ever seen *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? You know that part where a giant boulder goes tumbling after Indiana Jones and it’s so big it

takes up the whole tunnel? Well, that's about what our hallway looked like just then. Except instead of a boulder, it was a giant ball made out of Bubble Wrap. Miles and miles and miles of Bubble Wrap.

"That's your egg capsule?" I said.

"When in doubt, think big!" Rafe said.

Basically, that's my brother's motto. But he also has a history of BIG-thinking his way into BIG trouble. Which is why my motto is more like, "When in doubt, do the opposite of Rafe."

"It's not even going to fit in the car," Mom said.

"That's what this is for," Rafe said, holding up some rope. "It's going on the roof."

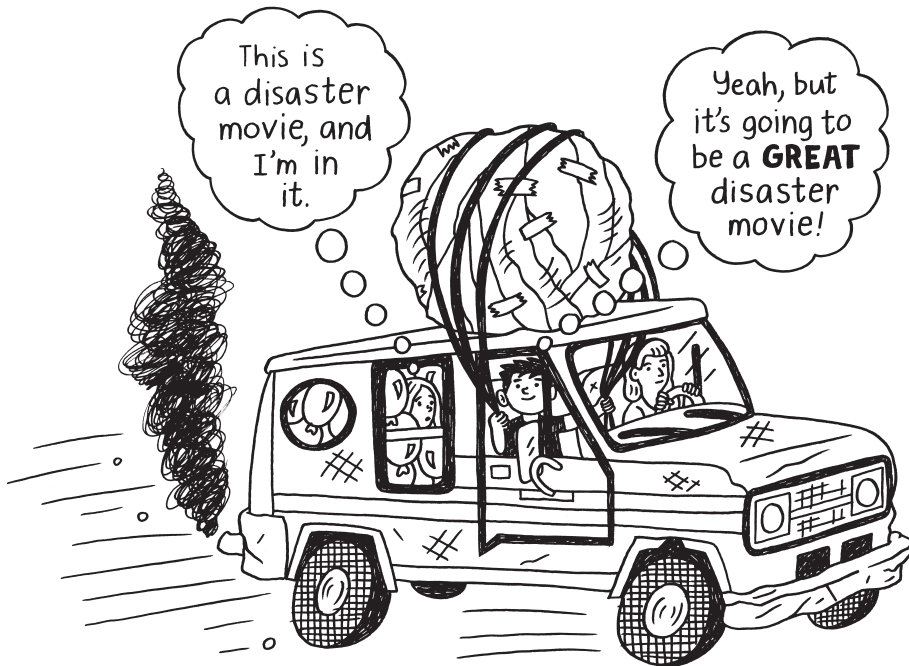
I couldn't tell if Rafe's capsule was going to pass the challenge or if his egg would wind up like Humpty Dumpty Junior on the sidewalk. And to be honest, I didn't really care. I just wanted to get an A on my own project.

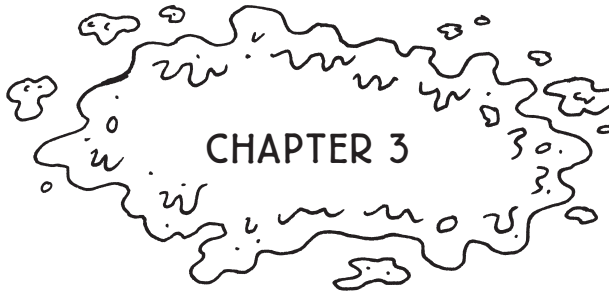
IMPORTANT FACT #1: There are some things you're going to need to know for this story. The first is that Rafe and I are in some of the same classes, even though I'm younger than him. Mom says we all have our own special talents. Being smart wasn't one of Rafe's.

But you know what else? If I'd known about the Mount Everest-sized trouble that egg was going to cause by the end of the day, I would have faked sick, stayed home, and skipped the whole thing. Too bad for me—I'm better at science than I am at seeing into the future.

So I got in the car with Mom and Rafe and headed off to school to begin the craziest, best-worst, most up-down and awful (but also awesome...but mostly awful) day of my life.

So far.





Sam and Eggs (Get It?)

Here we go!" Mrs. Hibbs yelled from the roof of the gym. "Let the Great Egg Drop Challenge begin!"

And just like that, it started raining egg capsules.

Mrs. Hibbs sure knows how to make science class fun. She's one of my favorite teachers because of her awesome project assignments. And it was especially fun to see my own capsule touch down at about zero miles an hour. And let's just say, some of the landings weren't as graceful as mine was. I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said it honestly looked like some capsules exploded on contact.

I held my breath the whole time it took me to retrieve my shoebox, but when I looked inside, my egg was still whole, not a gloppy mess. Yes!

Mine wasn't the only one, either. About half of the eggs made it through the challenge, including Rafe's. His giant Bubble Wrap ball got the most attention when it dropped and bounced a few times, but it definitely wasn't the best capsule. The best one was Sam Marks's. He made a whole self-deploying parachute for his, which was a bit like my balloon idea, but better. And more sophisticated. And cooler.

Which brings me to...

IMPORTANT FACT #2: I have a big fat crush on Sam Marks.

Sam is the cutest boy I've ever known. He's also really nice. Nice to be around. Nice to look at. Nice to everyone he knows, including me. And it doesn't even seem like he's pretending!

We even danced at a school dance one time, but I didn't know if that meant Sam liked me the way I liked him...or not.

That's the problem with *nice*. It can mean all kinds of things!



So anyway, I was putting my capsule away after class, and Sam came right up to me at my locker.

“Hey, Georgia,” he said. “Cool capsule.”

“Thanks!” I said. “But yours was better. My balloons will only last for—”

“Twelve to twenty hours,” he said. “I know. I thought about using them, but then I came up with the parachute instead.”

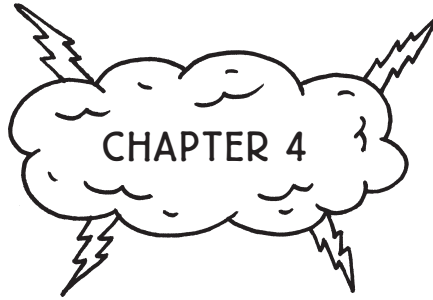
I haven’t even mentioned yet how smart Sam is. He’s kind of a geek, but that’s one of the reasons I like him. I’m kind of a geek, too. Which makes us perfect for each other. Sam probably just hasn’t realized it yet.

I didn’t get any closer to finding out, either. Because that’s when the first really bad thing happened that day. And it was really, *really* bad—almost as if a dark, evil shadow that brought pain and suffering to everything it touched just happened to cross my path at the exact wrong moment.

And this time, I’m not even talking about Rafe.

**BEWARE ALL
WHO TURN
THIS PAGE!**





Princesses on Patrol

That's when Missy Trillin came slithering by.

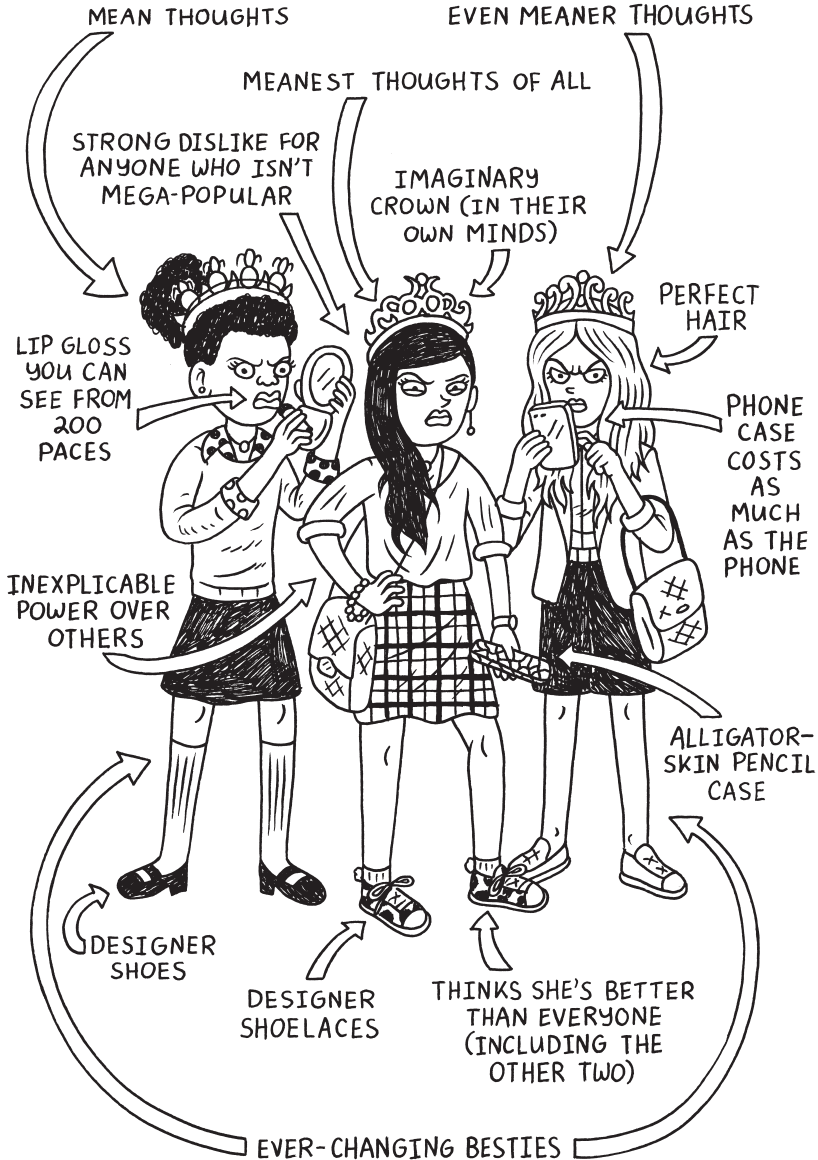
At school, Missy is the Queen of Mean. The Duchess of Darkness. The Sultan of Snobbery.

Missy makes it her full-time business to make sure everyone knows how much better she is.

"Oh, look who it is," she said. "Tell me, you two. Which came first? The geek or the egg?"

Which is when her two friends started cackling like they were at a junior witch convention. I call them the "Princess Patrol," because the princesses keep changing so there's no point in using their names. These days, Alicia and Chloe are on patrol, but Missy Trillin switches best friends the way other people change their underwear.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU'RE A Princess



The thing about the Princesses is, you can't avoid them. They're just an unfortunate fact of life. Like diseases. Or tornadoes. Or that boiled vegetable medley they serve in the cafeteria.

Boy, do I hate that vegetable medley. It's like Alicia and Chloe are the mushy carrots and corn and Missy is the lima beans, which are twice as bad as both of the other two put together.

Before Sam could answer Missy's mean little joke, I glared right at her. "Buzz off, Lima Bean," I said. "We're talking here."

"Did you just call me Lima Bean?" Missy said.

The other two looked at me like I'd spat on the Queen of England. Or, at least, the Queen of Hills Village Middle School. Nobody talks to Missy that way, but I gave up worrying about her a long time ago.

Still, I probably shouldn't have made that "buzz off" comment. And I don't mean because it was rude or uncalled-for—I mean, I shouldn't have said it the same way you shouldn't poke a hornet's nest with a stick.

So there I was, standing between the nicest boy at HVMS and the meanest, most vile collection of

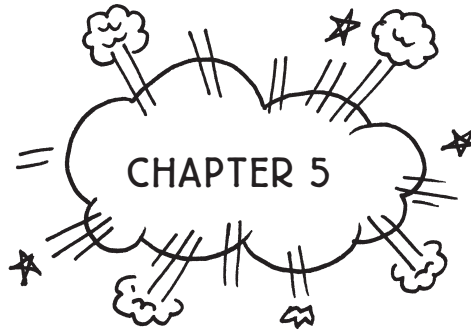
girls on the face of the earth, not knowing what to do next, when something else came along and changed everything...*again*. I told you this was a roller-coastery kind of day, right?

Because that's when the world's coolest news hit like a ray of sunshine made out of hundred-dollar bills and unlimited Skittles.

But you're just going to have to turn the page again to find out what I mean.

**I WARNED YOU NOT
TO TURN THE PAGE!
TWICE!**





Best. News. Ever!

Before Missy could pounce, and before Sam could say another word, my friends Nanci, Mari, and Patti came running up the hall, grabbed me by the arm, and just kept on moving, sweeping me right along with them.

“Come with us,” Mari said.

“What’s going on?” I said.

“Something good,” Patti said. “See you later, Sam! Georgia has to go now!”

They totally ignored the Princesses. But as we were flying away, I heard Chloe behind me.

“Why did Georgia call you Lima Bean?” she asked.

“Shut up, Chloe,” Missy said.

“See you later, Georgia!” Sam called, and just like that I was gone with the wind. I mean, with the band.

IMPORTANT FACT #3: I’m in a band. Like an actual, real band. That’s a big part of this story, too. It’s pretty cool, but probably not as cool as it sounds. For starters, the band’s name is We Stink.

Obviously, this had something to do with We Stink—but what? Whatever it was, it had to be some kind of high-security matter, because we headed straight for the bathroom. And believe me, nobody goes in there for the cozy atmosphere.

“Look at THIS!” Nanci said, as soon as the door swung shut behind us. She held up her phone and pressed Play on a video of a commercial.

“Why are you—?” I said.

“Just listen!” Mari said.

The voice in the ad said: “Okay, all you young rock stars and mock stars out there, start warming up, because Lulu and the Handbags are looking for a warm-up act.”

I’m not sure what it said next, because I was too busy screaming. It was like my ears blew open, my

brain caught on fire, and my stomach filled up with popping corn, all at the same time.

Lulu and the Handbags is one of my three favorite bands, and Lulu is my number one idol. She's totally cool, and talented, and she's not a supermodel or a princess or any of those other things. She's just Lulu.

And Lulu is AWESOME.



“It’s open to anyone under sixteen,” Nanci said. “First, you have to post a video on the contest site. Then the top twelve vote-getters will be invited to the live auditions. And the winner of that round will be the warm-up act for Lulu’s big show in the city—”

“*And* win a thousand bucks!” Mari said, and we all screamed again.

To be honest, I don’t like all that girly stuff, like screaming when you’re excited. But for Lulu, I made an exception. If anything was worth screaming over, I’d say that a chance to meet my idol and warm up for her band was it.

This was turning out to be the best day ever!
For about another twenty seconds.