

MIDDLE SCHOOL

JUST MY ROTTEN LUCK

Too short.

Funny-looking.

Kinda smelly.

Don't know where to put these.



FROM THE NO. 1 BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JAMES PATTERSON

AND CHRIS TEBBETTS

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Sneak Preview

Copyright

About the Book

IF IT WEREN'T FOR MY ROTTEN LUCK, I WOULDN'T
HAVE ANY LUCK AT ALL!

Check this out:

Miller the Killer grew six inches over the summer.

He's forcing me to join the school football team.

Jeanne Galletta thinks I'm a total jerk.

The cafeteria ladies are back with their mystery meat.

I'm in a "special" class that nobody wants to be in.

And that's just the beginning . . .

About the Authors

JAMES PATTERSON is the internationally bestselling author of the highly praised Middle School books, *Homeroom Diaries*, *House of Robots*, *Kenny Wright: Superhero* and the I Funny, Treasure Hunters, Confessions, Maximum Ride, Witch & Wizard and Daniel X series. James Patterson has been the most borrowed author in UK libraries for the past eight years in a row and his books have sold more than 300 million copies worldwide, making him one of the biggest-selling authors of all time. He lives in Florida.

CHRIS TEBBETTS has collaborated with James Patterson on four other books in the Middle School series and *Kenny Wright: Superhero*, and is also the author of *The Viking*, a fantasy adventure series for young readers. He lives in Vermont.

LAURA PARK is a cartoonist and the illustrator of four other books in the Middle School series and the I Funny series. She is the author of the minicomics series *Do Not Disturb My Waking Dream*, and her work has appeared in *The Best American Comics*. She lives in Chicago.

Also by James Patterson

I Funny series

I Funny (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

I Even Funnier (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

I Totally Funniest (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

Treasure Hunters series

Treasure Hunters (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

Danger Down the Nile (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

Secrets of the Forbidden City (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

House of Robots (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

Kenny Wright: Superhero (*with Chris Tebbetts*)

Daniel X series

The Dangerous Days of Daniel X (*with Michael Ledwidge*)

Watch the Skies (*with Ned Rust*)

Demons and Druids (*with Adam Sadler*)

Game Over (*with Ned Rust*)

Armageddon (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

Lights Out (*with Chris Grabenstein*)

For more information about James Patterson's novels, visit

www.jamespatterson.co.uk

Or become a fan on Facebook

**THE
MIDDLE
SCHOOL
series**

THE WORST YEARS OF MY LIFE

(with Chris Tebbetts)

This is the insane story of my first year at middle school, when I, Rafe Khatchadorian, took on a real-life bear (sort of), sold my soul to the school bully, and fell for the most popular girl in school. Come join me, if you dare ...

GET ME OUT OF HERE!

(with Chris Tebbetts)

We've moved to the big city, where I'm going to a super-fancy art school. The first project is to create something based on our exciting lives. But I have a BIG problem: my life is TOTALLY BORING. It's time for Operation Get a Life.

MY BROTHER IS A BIG, FAT LIAR

(with Lisa Papademetriou)

So you've heard all about my big brother, Rafe, and now it's time to set the record straight. I'm NOTHING like my brother. (Almost) EVERYTHING he says is a Big Fat Lie. And my book is 100 times better than Rafe's. I'm Georgia, and it's time for some payback ... Khatchadorian style.

HOW I SURVIVED BULLIES, BROCCOLI, AND SNAKE HILL

(with Chris Tebbetts)

I'm excited for a fun summer at camp—until I find out it's a summer *school* camp. There's no fun and games here, I have a bunk mate called Booger Eater (it's pretty self-explanatory), and we're up against the kids from the "Cool Cabin" ... there's gonna be a whole lotta trouble!

ULTIMATE SHOWDOWN

(with Julia Bergen)

Who would have thought that we—Rafe and Georgia—would ever agree on anything? That's right—we're writing a book together. Discover: Who has the best advice on BULLIES? Who's got all the right DANCE MOVES? Who's the cleverest Khatchadorian in town? And the best part?

We want you to be part of the fun too!

SAVE RAFE!

(with Chris Tebbetts)

I'm in worse trouble than ever! I need to survive a gut-bustingly impossible outdoor excursion so I can return to school next year. Watch me as I become "buddies" with the scariest girl on the planet, raft down the rapids on a deadly river, and ultimately learn the most important lesson of my life.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

JUST MY
ROTTEN
LUCK



JAMES PATTERSON

AND CHRIS TEBBETTS

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA PARK



***TO MY FAVORITE FOOTBALL FAN, ILSE
TEBBETTS
—C.T.***







THIS IS NOT A DRILL

EVER SINCE I'VE known you—how long has it been now?—I've been getting my butt kicked in about a hundred different ways. Well, the butt-kicking officially stops here.

On this page.

Before the next period

•

That's why this could be my best story yet. I've got a ton of stuff to tell you about. More than ever, in fact. For a while, I thought maybe I'd call this book *The Butt-Kick Stops Here*. Or maybe *Look at Me, I'm Special*. Or *First Kiss*. Or *Rafe Khatchadorian: Secret Agent Artist*.

But I didn't call it any of those things. In case you haven't already noticed, I called this one *Just My Rotten Luck*.

And even though that doesn't sound like the happy-go-luckiest title you've ever heard of (with plenty of good reason), there's a lot that happens in this book that's pretty awesome.

Like me being a football hero.

Yeah, yeah. I know *football* and *Rafe Khatchadorian* don't exactly go together like ham and eggs. But that really was me, hitting the field for the Hills Village Middle School Falcons. It really did happen.

Really, really.



Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying this story is going to be all about touchdowns and cheerleaders screaming my name. (*Obviously.* I mean, have you seen what I look like?)

I'm just saying...well, you know what? Maybe I should start at the beginning. And for that to happen, we have to go back in time a little bit. And *that* means I'm going to need a good old-fashioned flashback. Then a flash-forward, and then who knows what else after that.

So buckle up, people. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

All set? Good.

Here comes the flashback!







CHAPTER 2

ROUGH START

WELCOME TO THE PAST! Don't worry, we didn't go that far. Just three weeks earlier, to be exact.

I was at the tail end of a pretty lousy summer, which is *supposed* to be the best time of the year for most kids. Me, not so much. Camp Wannamorra had been a disaster, and my time at The Program in the Rocky Mountains just about killed me in six different ways. (Well, okay, just *one* way, but still...)

None of that was the worst part, though. That happened on the Friday before school started, when Mom took me to Hills Village Middle School. We had a meeting scheduled with Mrs. Stricker and Mrs. Stonecase so I could get re-enrolled there.

You remember Mrs. Stricker, right? And Mrs. Stonecase too? They're the principal and vice principal of HVMS. They're also sisters—for real. That's like getting twice the trouble for half the price. Not to mention, if there was a Worldwide Khatchadorian Haters Club, they'd be the president and vice president.



So anyway, as soon as I was stuck inside that lion's den (I mean, sitting down in Mrs. Stricker's office), I got a two-ton piece of bad news dropped on my head.

"If Rafe wishes to come back to Hills Village Middle School this fall," Mrs. Stricker said to my mom, "he'll have to be enrolled as a special needs student."

And I was like, "Say WHAT?"

But Stricker wasn't done. She kept going, like a tidal wave of meanness that just couldn't be stopped. "Whether he'll finish middle school on time or have to put in an extra semester or two—or *more*—well, we just can't say at this point," she told us.

And then I was like, "Say WHAAAAAT???"

I don't know what they call it at your school. IEP. SPED. Special Education. Barnum & Bailey's Three-Ring Circus. At HVMS, the kids have plenty of names for it—just not ones they say when any teachers are around.

And now I was in it.

I tried to talk Stricker, Stonecase, and even Mom out of making this horrible mistake, but they wouldn't budge. Mom wasn't being mean about it or anything. I know she wants what's best for me. She just said I should give it a try.

"We'll see how things go once the school year starts," she said. "Who knows, maybe you'll even like it."

Which is such a MOM thing to say.

In the meantime, if you're thinking this story is all about bad news, don't worry. Some cool stuff happens too, like that first kiss, and some other things I haven't even told you about yet.

But so far? My school year was off to the worst start ever. And it hadn't even started yet.



CHAPTER 3

SPECIAL

CHRISTMAS IS SPECIAL.

Finding a dollar on the ground is special.

Personal pan pizzas with double pepperoni are special.

But getting put in a “special needs” program with “special” classes and no guarantee of getting through middle school anytime *especially* soon?

Not so special.

Before we left school that day, Mom and I had a meeting with my new “Learning Skills” teacher, Mr. Edward Fanucci. It’s pronounced fuh-noochy, and sounds to me like something you’d eat with tomato sauce.

“Rafe, welcome back to HVMS,” he said. “I’m glad we’ll be working together this year. And it’s Jules, is that right, Mrs. Khatchadorian?”

“Jules is fine,” Mom said.

Mr. Fanucci recognized Mom from the diner where she works—Swifty’s over on Montgomery Boulevard. She even remembered that he liked his cheeseburgers well done and sat by himself at the counter for breakfast every Sunday morning.

In fact, the two of them were having a great old time talking about cheeseburgers while I sat there thinking about how miserable my life was about to get.

What did all this mean, exactly? Was I just plain dumb? Could I have gotten out of it if I'd paid more attention in school? If I'd eaten more veggies when my mom told me to? If I didn't have an imaginary friend who I used to talk to all the time?

If I wasn't so *weird*?

"Okay, Rafe," Mr. Fanucci finally said, "we need to review your IEP. Then I'll let you go, and you can start enjoying the last few days of your summer vacation."

I wanted to ask how he thought I could *enjoy* anything with this hanging over my head, but I didn't say a word. I just thought, *NONONONO NONONONO!*

Supposedly, *IEP* stands for *Individualized Education Program*. But if you ask me, it was more like *In Extreme Pain*.



I guess Mr. Fanucci could tell I was about as excited as a kid in the dentist's chair, because he started getting all buddy-buddy with me.

"Believe it or not, you're going to be glad for this program," he said. "It's going to help you do better than ever in school, like getting some extra gas in the tank. You'll take most of your classes with everyone else and work with me on your assignments. Three times a week, we'll have our Learning Skills group, with some kids like you who need extra help."

"Kids like me?" I said.

"Yeah," he said. "Kids who learn differently."

Which was just another way of saying SPECIALS. Dummies. Rejects. Weirdos. Freaks.

You know—kids like me.

CHAPTER 4

AMBUSH

YOU KNOW HOW I said that day was the worst part of my whole summer? Well, hold on, because the day wasn't over yet.

While Mom was talking to Mr. Fanucci some more, I asked if I could wait out in the parking lot. The last thing I wanted was for anyone to see me hanging around the office and start asking questions.

So there I was, sitting on the bumper of our car and wondering what kind of job a middle school dropout could get (answer: NONE), when my day got a little worse. And by "a little worse," I mean a *lot* worse.

"Yo! Khatcha**DORK**ian!" said a familiar voice.

I looked up and saw...wait for it...or maybe you can guess?

That's right. Miller the Killer.

Yup. Just my rotten luck.

He was coming my way, along with a bunch of guys from the HVMS flag football team. I guess they'd already started practice for the season, because they were all wearing their cleats and headed for the fields behind the school.

Which put me right in their path—like a rickety little straw hut in a hurricane.

When I first went to HVMS, Miller made my life about as enjoyable as a box of rabbit poo that you thought was juicy

raisins. The last time we'd tangled, both of us ended up bloody. Mostly because he got my blood all over him.

So you could say we didn't exactly part ways as friends.

"What are *you* doing here?" Miller said. "Don't tell me you're coming back to HVMS."

"Okay," I said. "I won't tell you that."

"Wait," he said, and got that familiar, confused look on his face. "So you *are* coming back?" Miller isn't "special" like me, but he's not exactly the brightest bulb on the Christmas tree either.

"This is going to be good," Jeremy Savin said, and gave Bobby Davidson a fist bump. The way they were all looking at me, it was starting to feel like feeding time in the gorilla house at the zoo.



If I could have, I would have gotten out of there. But what was I going to do, snap my fingers and disappear? Tell him I had to go to the bathroom? (Actually, I *did* have to go to the bathroom, but that wasn't much help.)

And I couldn't tell Miller to shove it either. That would have been like sticking a piece of dynamite in my mouth and handing him a lit match.

Except then I got a lucky break. Coach Shumsky showed up at the top of the football bleachers and started yelling our way.

"Miller! Savin! Davidson!" he said. "You joining us for practice today? Or are you planning on sitting out the opening game this season?"

"Coming, Coach!" Jeremy called.

"Right away, Coach!" Miller said, like they were in the army or something. Trust me when I tell you, these guys take their flag football verrrrrry seriously. Once they get into high school, they'll play full tackle ball. In the meantime, they like to practice their tackling skills on guys like me.

"This isn't over," Miller told me, and pointed a finger right in my face. I could even smell what he'd had for lunch: bologna sandwich, spicy mustard, and grape soda.

"*What's* not over?" I said. "There's nothing... started."

That's when he gave me one of his Miller-sized chest thumps. If I hadn't been shoved up against Mom's bumper, I probably would have fallen flat on my butt. And it wouldn't have been the first time.

"*Now* it's started," he said. Then he and his gorilla goons headed off toward the field.

To be honest, I've never understood why Miller hates me so much. The only reason I hate him is because...well, because he hates me. I know I should have kept my mouth shut at that point. Obviously. But I'm not always so good at *should*.

“Hey, Miller!” I said. “What’s your problem, anyway? What have you got against me?”

Miller just looked back at me once, shrugged, and kept on walking.

“Soon as I remember, you’ll be the first to know,” he said. “See you in school, buttwipe.”

Yeah. That’s exactly what I was afraid of.



NO COMMENT

WHEN WE GOT home, Grandma Dotty was making a big batch of Dotty's Meatballs for dinner. My grandmother and my mom can both cook like crazy, which is great because I can usually eat like crazy.

But not today. For once in my life, I wasn't hungry, even if the whole house did smell like one giant, delicious meatball.

"How did it go, kiddo?" Dotty asked.

"I don't want to talk about it," I said.

"Why?" my sister, Georgia, asked. "What happened?"

Anytime Georgia gets a whiff of bad news that has anything to do with me, it's like she turns into a bloodhound. She won't stop until she's hunted it down.

"I said I don't want to talk about it!" I told her.

"Especially not to you."

"Me? What did I do?" she said, but I was already heading for my room.

Still, Georgia wouldn't quit.

"What happened?" I heard her asking Mom. "Is Rafe in trouble? Why is he so mad? What did Mrs. Stricker say?"

And that's when I exploded.

"SHUT UP!" I yelled all the way down the hall. "FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE, JUST SHUT YOUR STUPID NOSY MOUTH!"