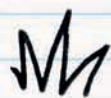
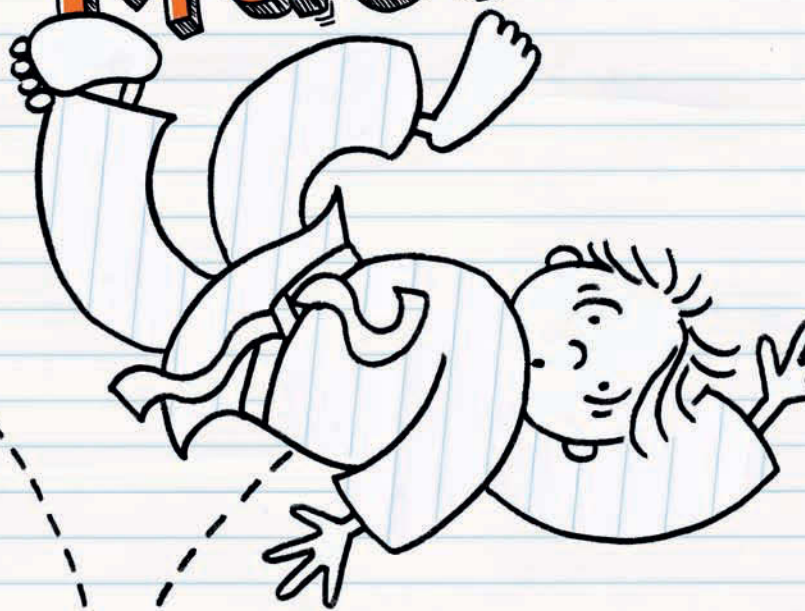


DIARY OF A

Taekwondo Master

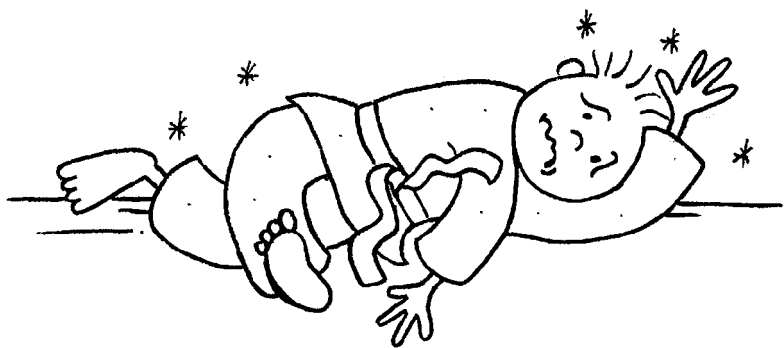


SHAMINI FLINT

ILLUSTRATED BY SALLY HEINRICH

DIARY OF A

Taekwondo Master



Shamini Flint

Illustrated by Sally Heinrich


ALLEN & UNWIN
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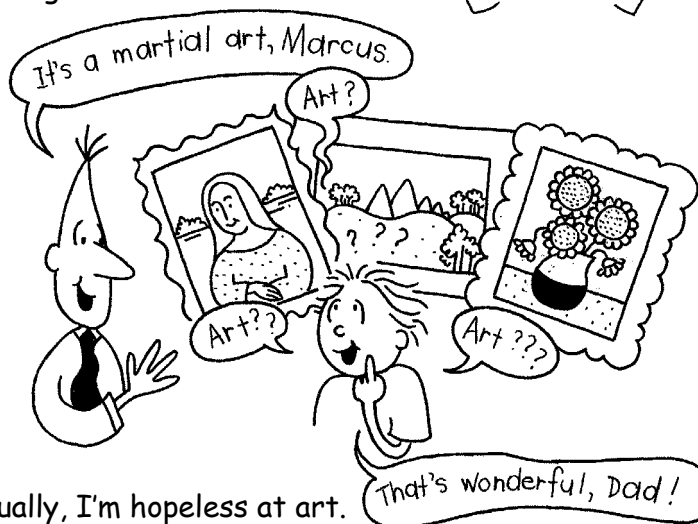
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For Sophia, my beautiful niece

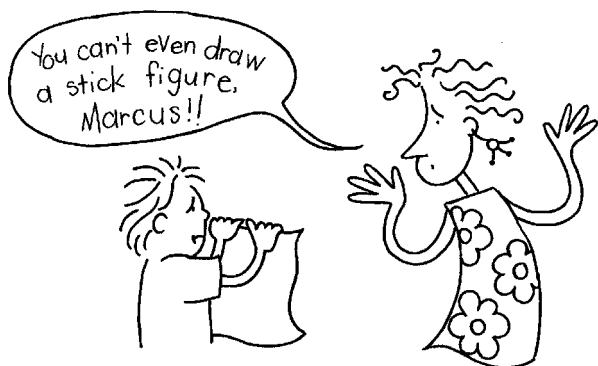
MY TAEKWONDO DIARY

Dad wants me to do taekwondo.

I don't even know what that is!
But knowing Dad, I'm sure
it's dangerous.



Actually, I'm hopeless at art.



(My art teacher, Mrs Quill.)

But I don't care. It will be so wonderful to do something gentle.

For once, I won't get hurt.

Unless someone stabs me with a paintbrush.
And that's unlikely to happen.
I hope.



(Mum loves anything I do for her, even if it's rubbish - I wish my teachers were like that.)



I bet Spot likes art too.
And Fluffy. They could
help me!

I'll do my best, Dad!
Maybe I'll become quite good!
Maybe we can sell my paintings and get rich!

What in the world are
you talking about?

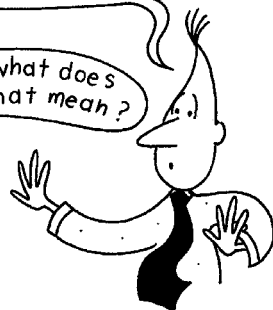
Art!



Not art...

... a martial art!

So what does
that mean?



You're going to be a lean, mean fighting machine!



My name is Marcus Atkinson. I'm nine years old.
And my dad drives me nuts.

Dad never listens ... but he always REMEMBERS.

Don't believe me? I'll give you examples ...

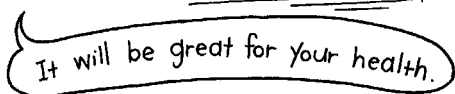


You see? He never listens
to anything I say.

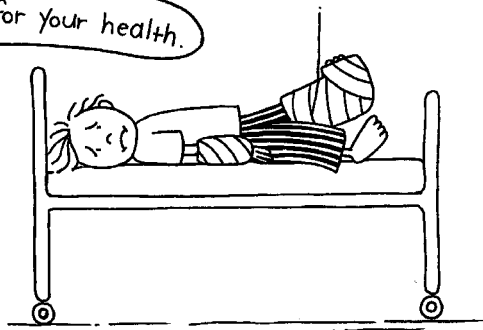
But he remembers everything I tell him - even though he never listens! How does that work?



Yeah, right.



Yeah, right.

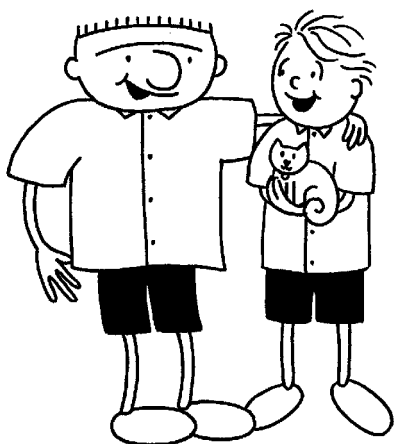




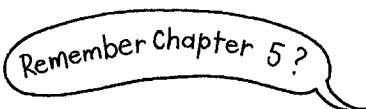
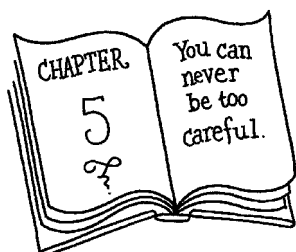
You see, he remembers things I tell him - but at the wrong time ...

JT WAS the class bully.

But now we're friends because I rescued his kitten when his dad wanted to send it to the RSPCA.



I'm looking after the kitten (Fluffy) until JT improves his marks and is allowed to have him back.

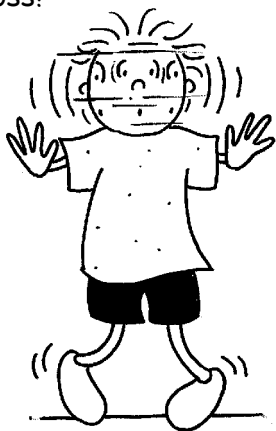


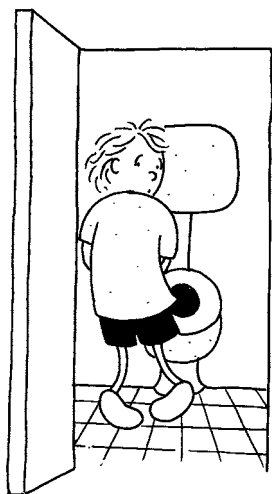
Dad's written a book called *Pull Yourself Up by Your Own Bootstraps!*

He's always quoting from it. Did I mention that Dad drives me NUTS?

Anyway, you *CAN* be too careful ...

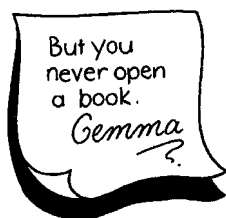
Like if you looked right, left, right to cross a road. And then did it again and again and again ... you'd never get across!





Or if you were afraid of closing a door in case you trapped your fingers ... and had to go to the toilet with the door open!

Or if you were too careful about getting a paper cut, so you never opened a book!



Thanks, Gemma.

Gemma is my sister. She enjoys nothing more than sticking post-it notes in my diary with her dumb comments.

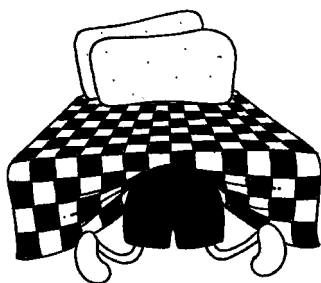
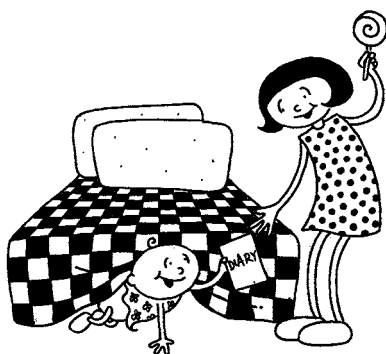
I tried to hide my diaries.

In the garden ...

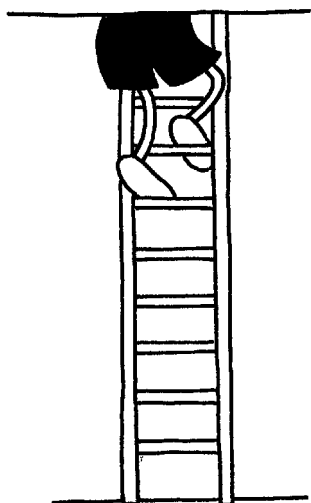


Spot helped her find it.

Under my bed ...



Harriet helped her find it.



In the attic ...

She found it herself.

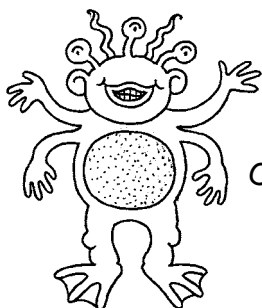


I give up!

So Dad wants me to learn taekwondo so that I can defend myself against someone who is now my friend.

Great timing, Dad.

Wouldn't it be more useful to teach me to defend myself against ...



Or aliens?

Monsters?



Or ghosts?



Now that JT and I are friends, I don't need taekwondo or self-defence or to become a lean, mean fighting machine.



Dad took me shopping before my first taekwondo class. He bought me some pyjamas.



Maybe taekwondo isn't so bad.
More naps than slaps?
Then we got the armour ...



Shin guards, arm guards, chest guards,
helmets and that one guard that is too
embarrassing to talk about ...



And the belt -
which seemed
okay. White.

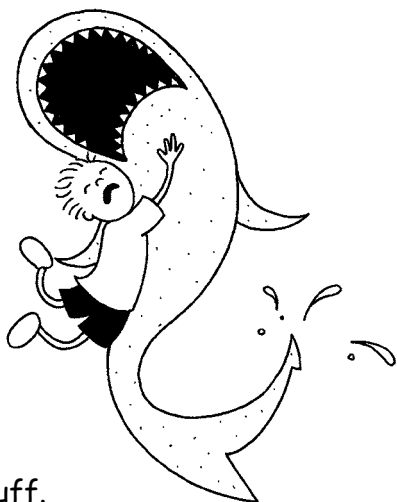


Just for once, I'd like to try something that doesn't involve wearing body armour. Something safe.



Like skydiving.

Or wrestling bull sharks.



Or messing with Gemma's stuff.



TAEKWONDO LESSON NO. 1



Right, Dad. That was obvious. NOT!

Marcus, this is Master Choi.
He will teach you the art of taekwondo.

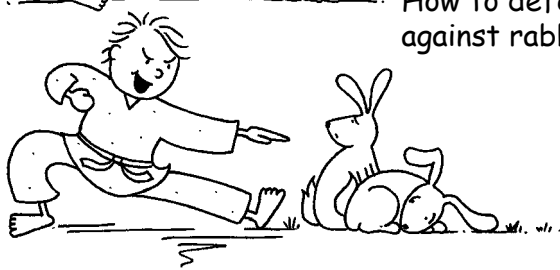
You've got to be kidding
me. This guy?

He's smaller than I am.
He looks like Yoda from
Star Wars.

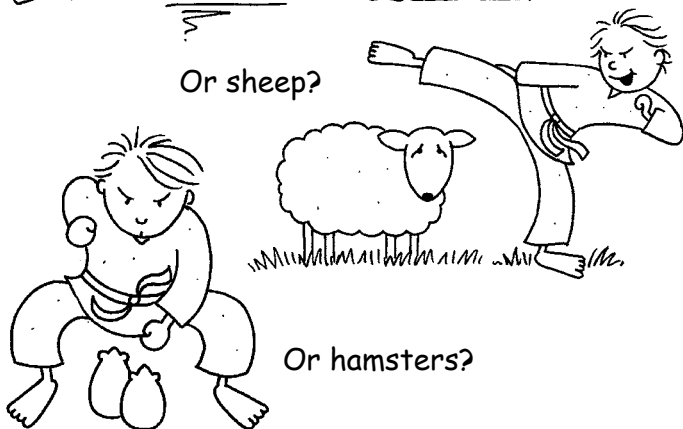
Welcome, Master Marcus.

What's he going to
teach me?

How to defend myself
against rabbits?

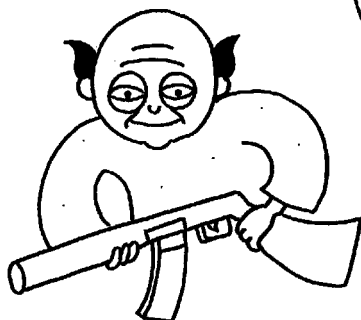
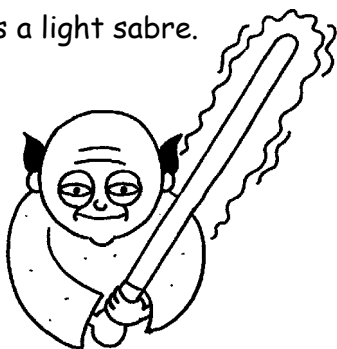


Or sheep?



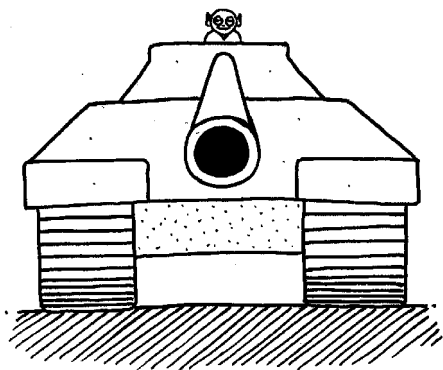
Or hamsters?

I hope for his sake he has a light sabre.



Or a machine gun.

Or a tank.



Otherwise, he's not going to win many fights.
Not even against me.

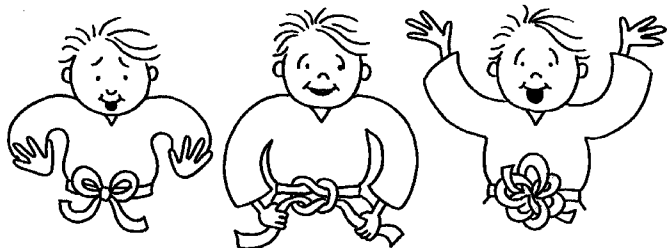
Master Marcus, your belt you must tie.

Sure!



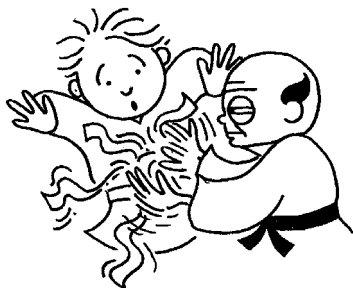
This guy talks like Yoda as well.

I tried half-a-dozen knots - from bows to reef knots.

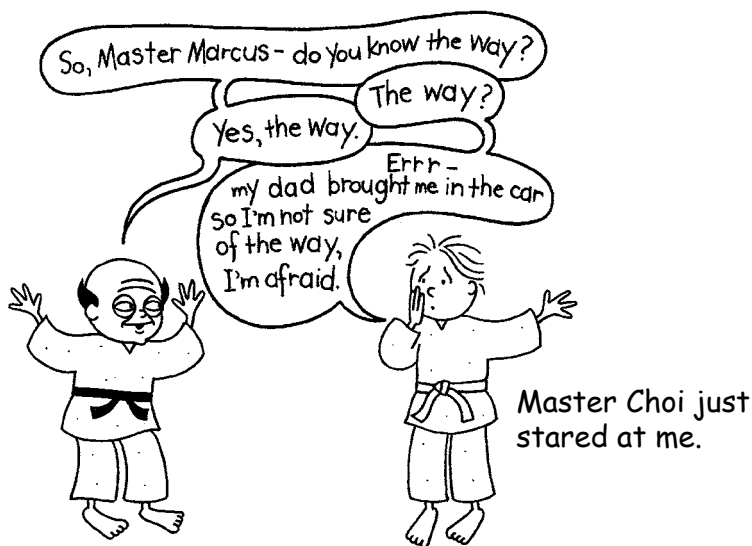


Master Choi did not look pleased.

Finally, he waved me over and tied my belt so quickly that I couldn't see what he did.



Now I'll never get it off.
Looks like the uniform will
be my pyjamas after all.



I was getting desperate. Why was he asking me for directions anyway? This was his dojang! One of the kids - I think his name is Tom - tried to help me out.

Psssst. 'Do' means the way.

What?



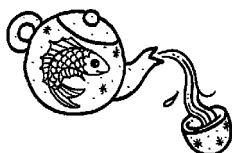
'Do'-you know - taekwondo-means 'the way'.

Ohh!

Errr- no, Master Choi. I do not know the way.



Progress you make, Master Marcus.
A cup that is empty may be filled.

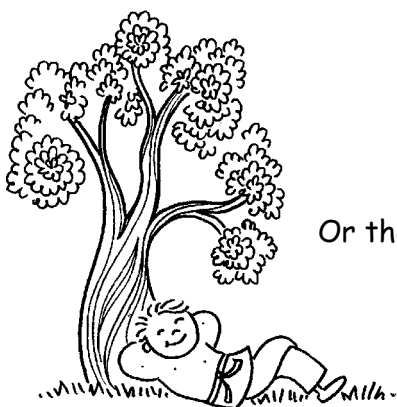
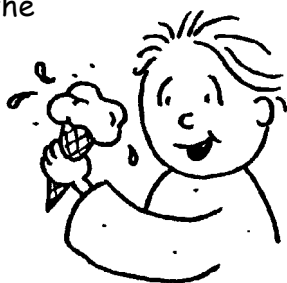


Huh?



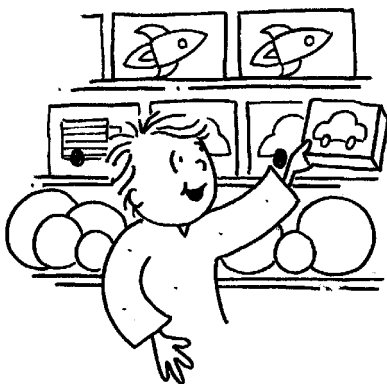


I'd rather know the way to the ice-cream shop ...



Or the park ...

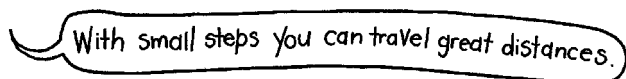
Or the toy store.



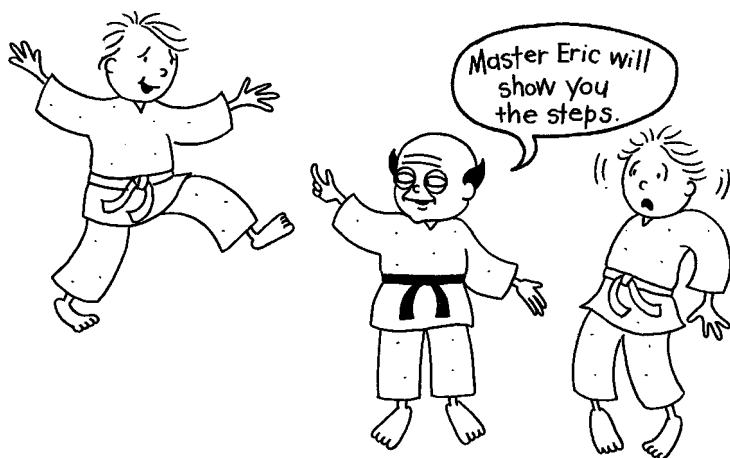


Who's Poom? And what is he saying? And why do I have to learn it?

Turns out the poomsae is a pattern of martial arts steps.

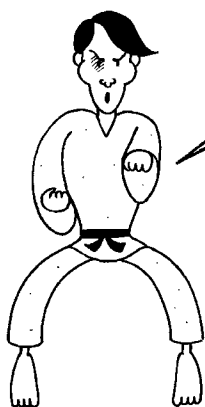


What about big steps? Won't you travel greater distances with them?



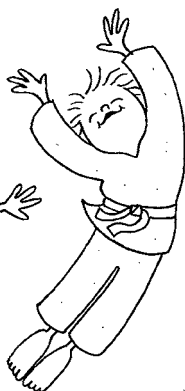
Master Eric was scary. He had a black belt.
And a black eye.





Now do them in a pattern.

I showed Eric my moves.





This time I was ...

Master Eric was not amused.

I think he'd have practised some moves on me but
Master Yoda, I mean Master Choi, was watching.

Phew!

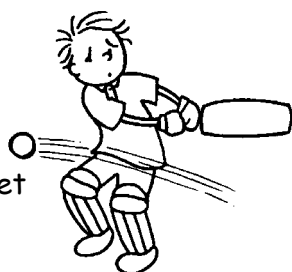


I guess I won't!

Taekwondo doesn't seem so bad. Boring, but a lot less dangerous than ...



soccer



or cricket



or rugby ...

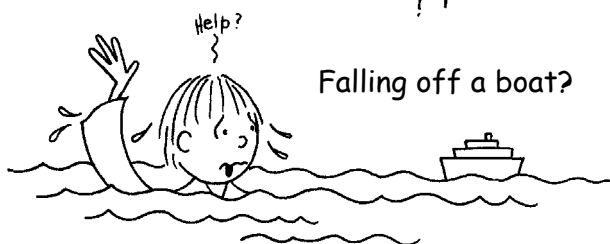
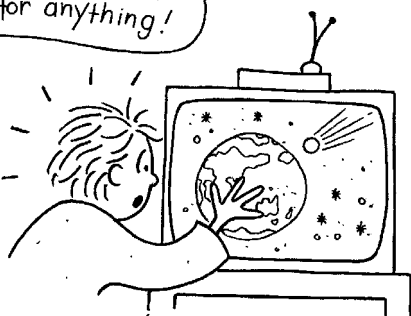
All the other sports Dad has made me try.



Really?

So I'll be prepared for ...

A meteor hurtling
towards Earth?

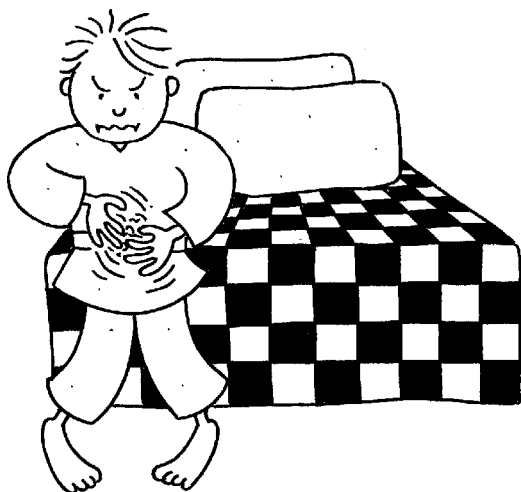


Falling off a boat?

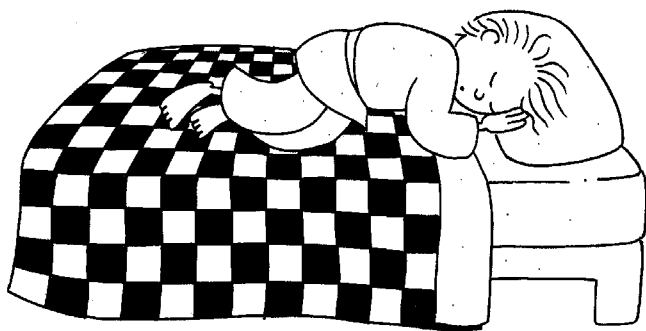
The class play?



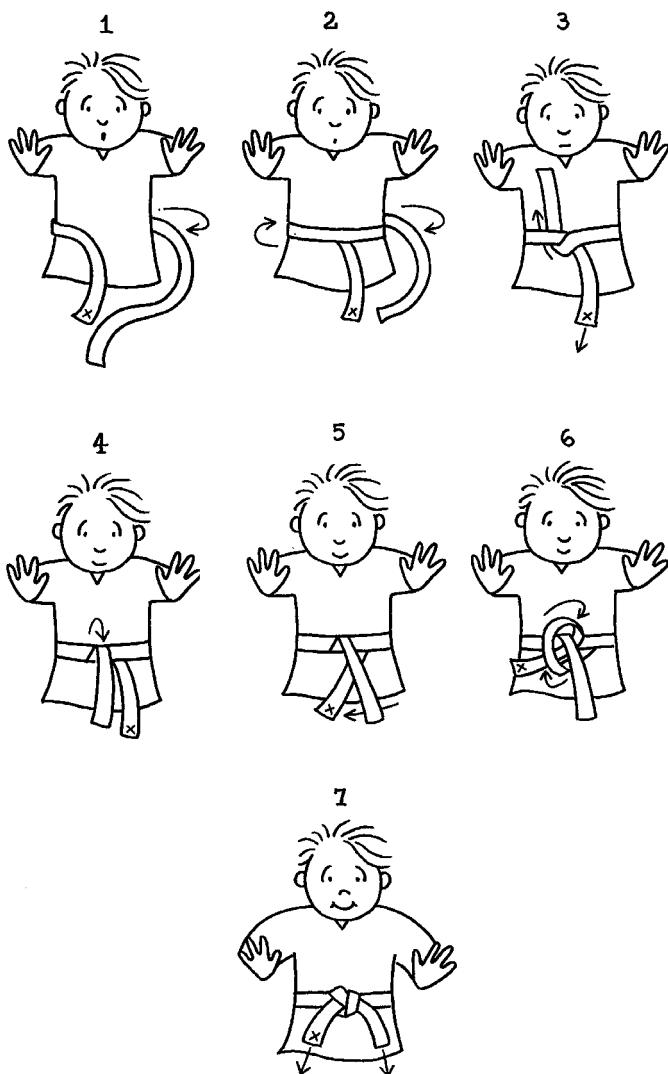
Get real, Dad. So far you've bought me a pair of pyjamas that won't come off at bedtime.



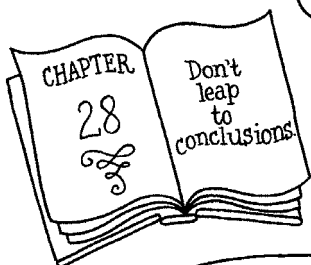
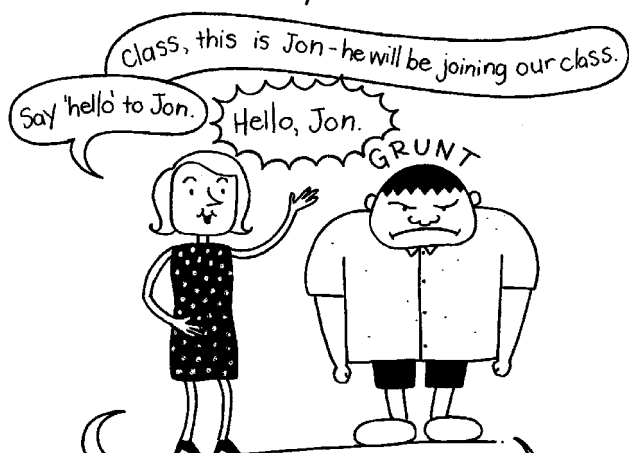
But you know Dad - he just doesn't listen ...



I've figured it out now, by the way.
It goes something like this ...



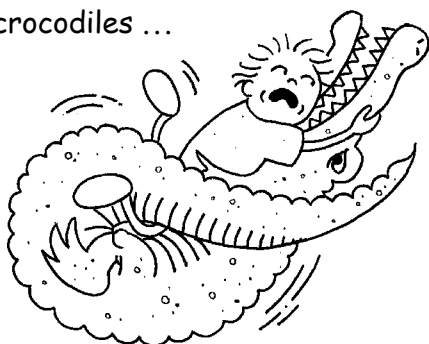
At school the next day ...



He looks scary, but maybe he's a nice guy ...



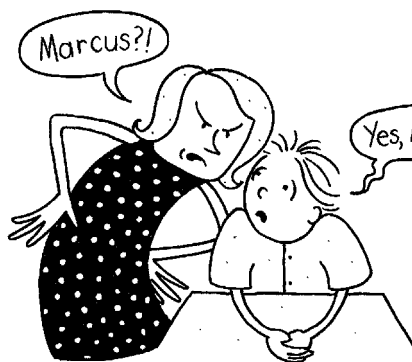
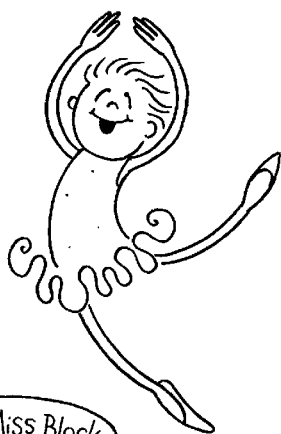
I'd rather wrestle crocodiles ...



Or dance on hot coals ...

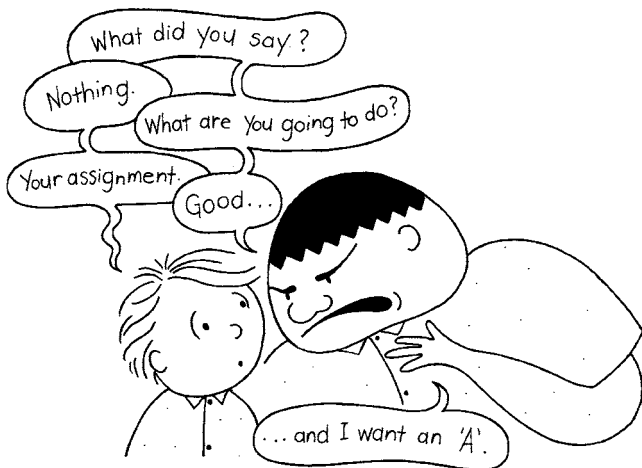
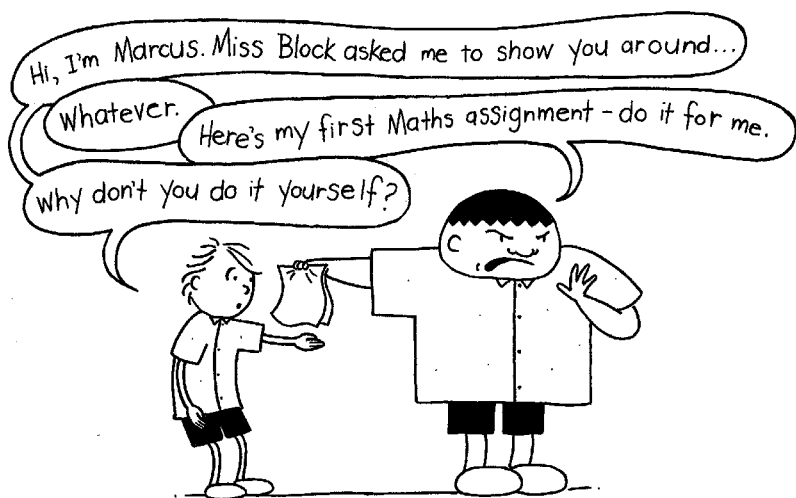


Or join a ballet class!

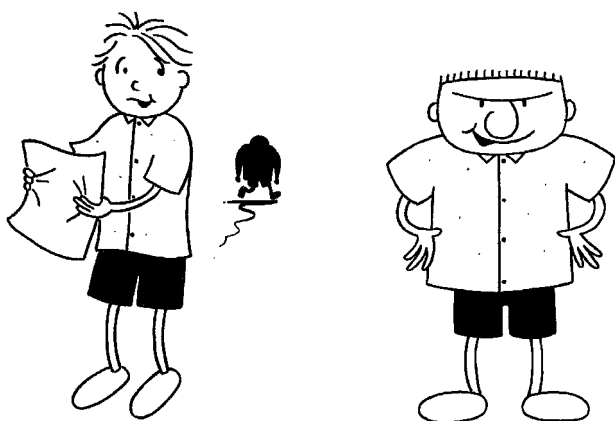


I guess I have
no choice!

At recess, I went over to Hulk.



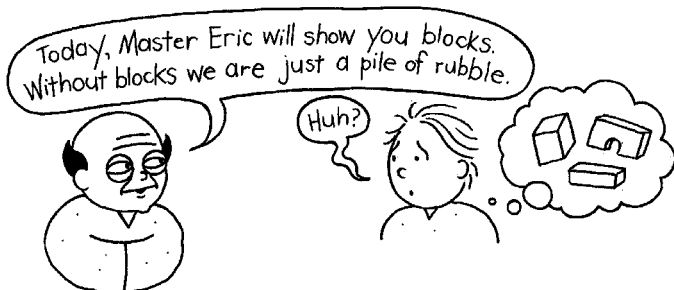
An 'A'? Who'd believe that?



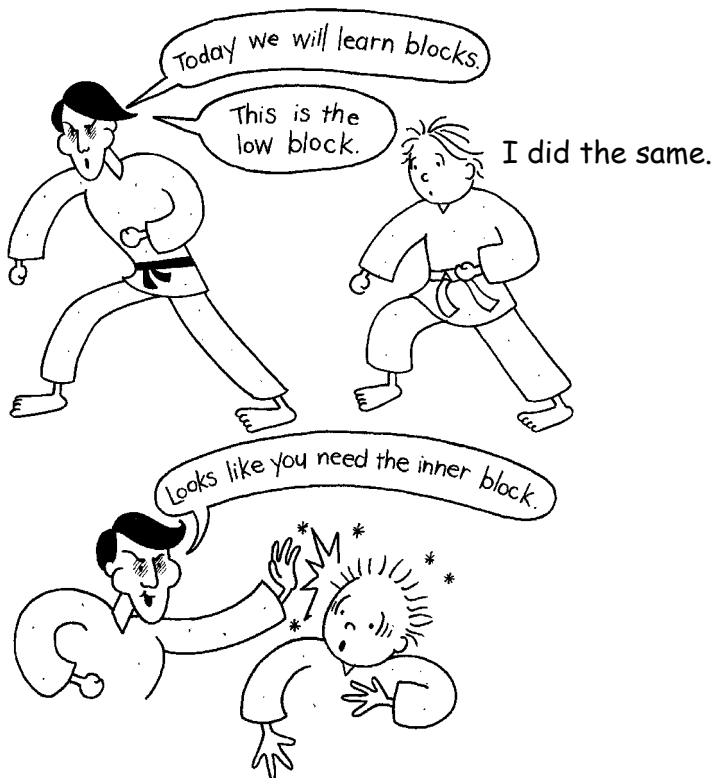
Anyway, I'm not worried.

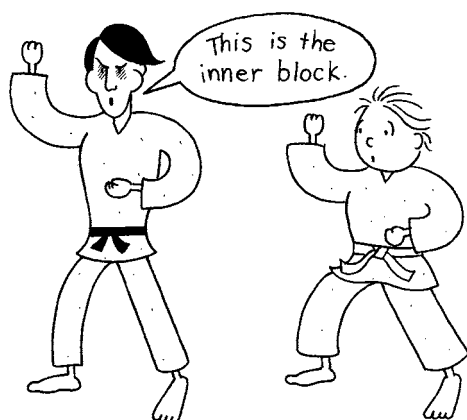
JT will soon sort this new kid out.

TAEKWONDO LESSON NO. 2

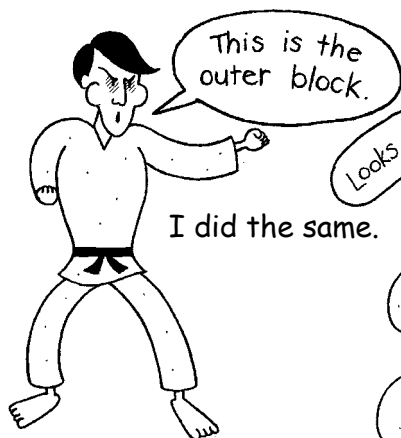


Eric was smiling. He still had his black belt on. But this time he had two black eyes. I didn't even want to think what the other guys looked like.





I did the same.



I did the same.





I shook my head. I needed
to chase the birds away ...



Note to self: Do not annoy Eric.
Or the Hulk.



Dad is worried about me because I don't want to learn to fight.

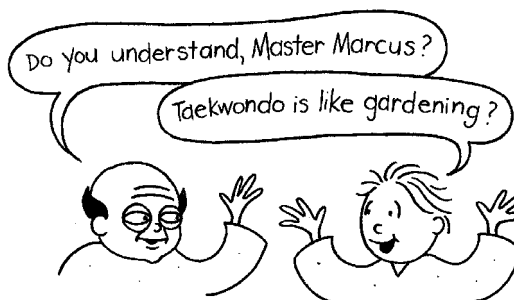


Him I know. But I'm pretty sure fighting hurts less when you're a plump, animated panda. Apparently the others are martial arts stars. Who knew?

TAEKWONDO LESSON NO. 3

The colour of your belt indicates your level ...

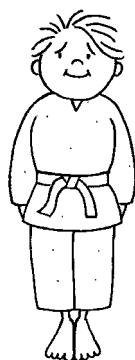




Do you understand, Master Marcus?

Taekwondo is like gardening?

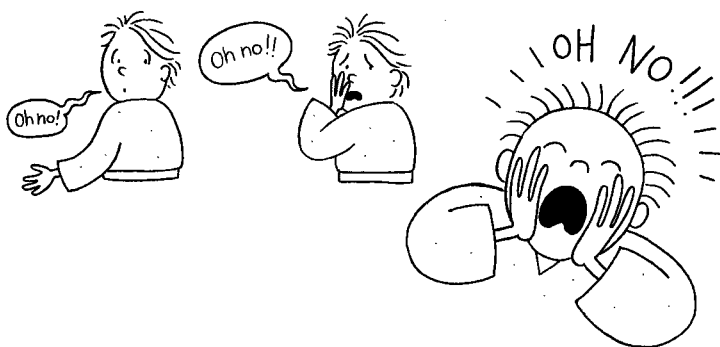
I had to stand in the attention stance for twenty minutes. I didn't mind. Better than giving Eric an excuse to show me a few more blocks.



Red signifies danger.

And black- the highest level-
earned with blood, sweat and tears.

There was a sudden commotion at the front door.



Oh no!

Oh no!!

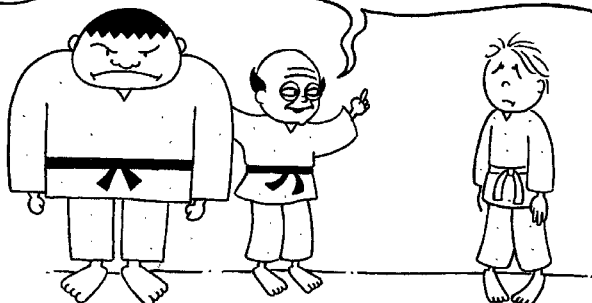
OH NO!!!

Hulk!

Hulk at taekwondo!!

Hulk in a black belt!!!

Marcus, please be showing our new student around the dojang.

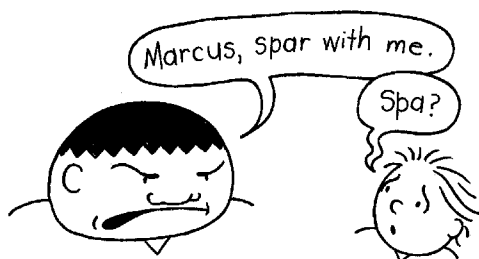


Once is bad luck.

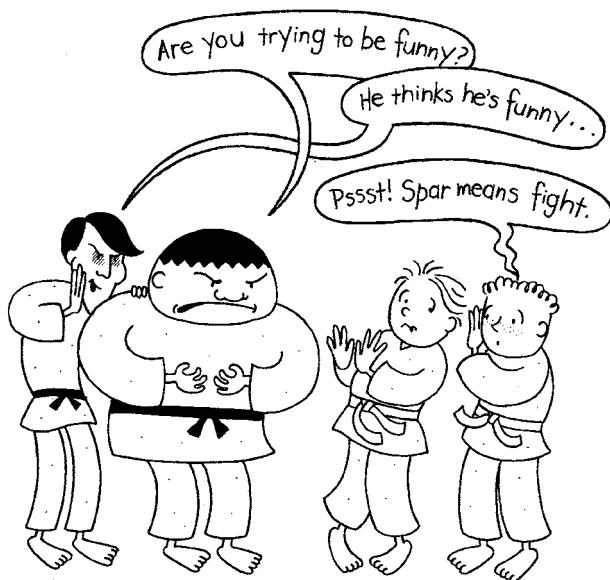
Twice is a nightmare, plain and simple.

I doubt there'll be a third time.

At least here Hulk can't ask me to do his homework.



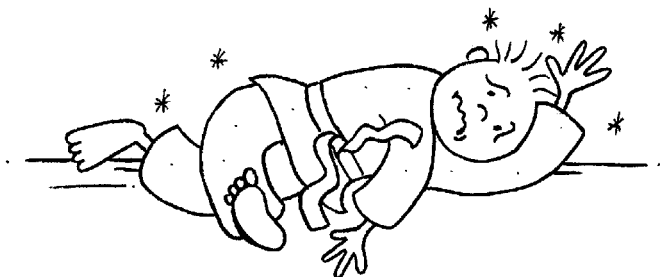
My mum goes to the spa when she needs a massage or to have her nails done.

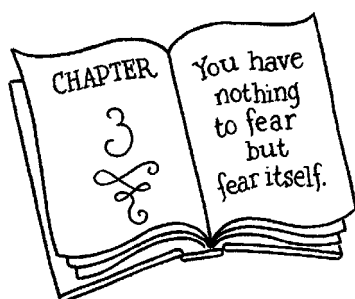






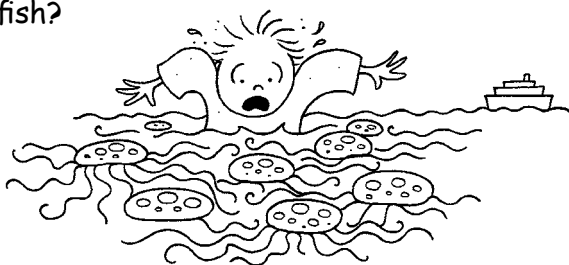
'No contact' obviously means something different on Hulk's planet than on Earth ...



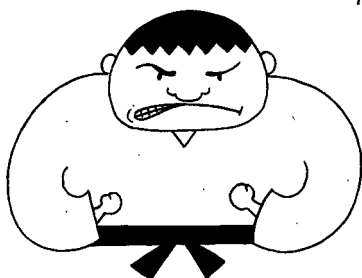
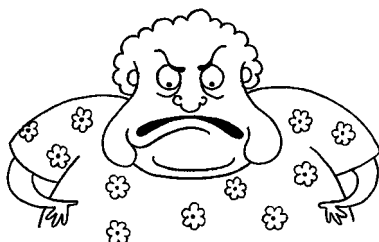


Really? I can think of lots of things!

How about falling off a boat into a swarm of jellyfish?



How about forgetting your homework for Ms Bulldog's class?



How about the big guy with the black belt and the bad attitude?



We can talk about it when I stop running!
I'm amazed Dad lived long enough to grow up.

At school the next day, I went looking for JT.

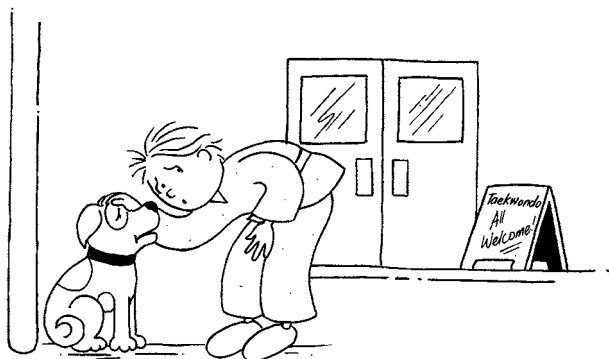


I know JT - he'll let his fists do the talking.

I just hope he hasn't gone soft. He hasn't had much practice recently.

TAEKWONDO LESSON NO. 4

Spot doesn't like taekwondo because he has to wait outside.



I don't like taekwondo because I have to wait inside.

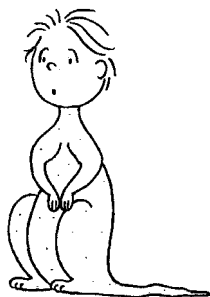


Burrow? Eh? Does he think I'm a mole?



Or an earthworm?

Or a meerkat?

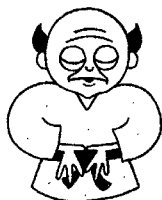


Later Dad told me Master Choi was speaking Korean. Great. That's really helpful. Because I speak Korean. NOT!!!



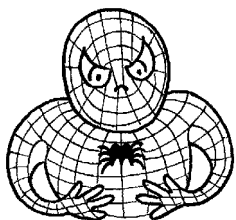
Ki Hup
must come from the stomach.
Stronger it makes you...

How about deaf it makes me?



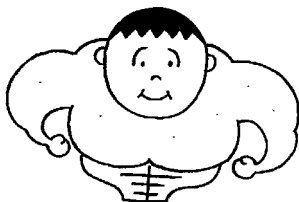
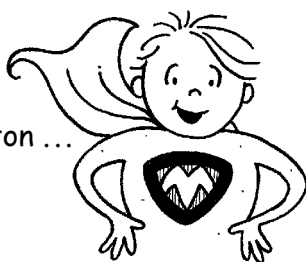
I didn't say that out loud. I didn't want to spar with Hulk again. Besides, Master Choi probably wouldn't hear me - not if people have been 'kiyooping' at him all these years.

Power from within is stronger than any other power...

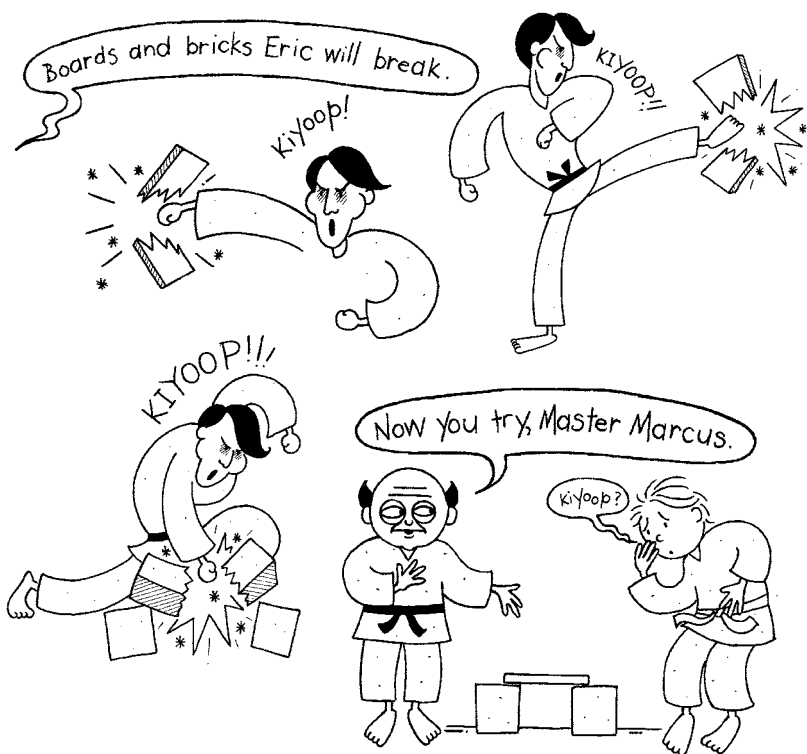


Only if you've been bitten by a radioactive spider ...

Or are from the planet Krypton ...



Or have been experimenting with gamma radiation.

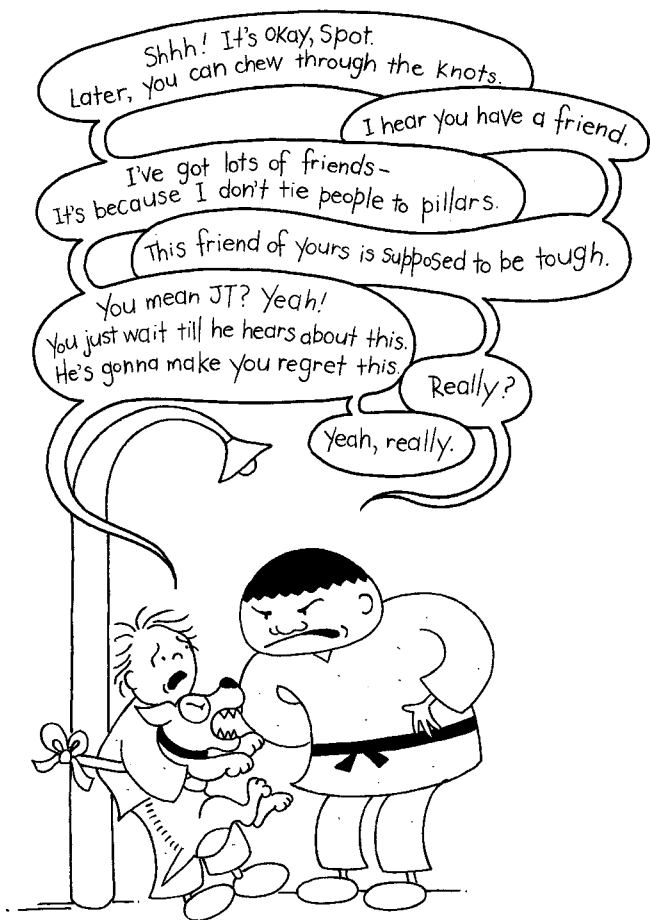


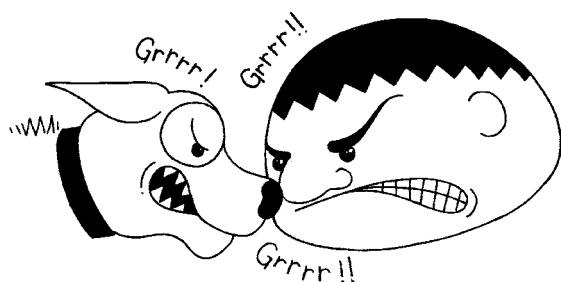
Okay. If it works I might try it on Hulk. His head is shaped like a brick.



Hulk tied me to the lamppost outside after class. Whose bright idea was it to have a belt on this uniform, anyway? Haven't these taekwondo guys ever heard of buttons or a zip?

I had to hang on to Spot. He really wanted to help, but I don't think he should try to bite Hulk. Hulk's sure to taste bad. And he might bite back.





I let Spot and Hulk do the growling.



Spot chewed through my belt.

I walked home.

I was really excited.

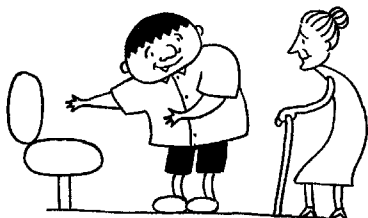
JT would soon fix this problem with Hulk.

Hulk would probably learn an important lesson and turn into a really nice guy.



The sort of person ...

Who lets little old ladies have his seat on trains ...



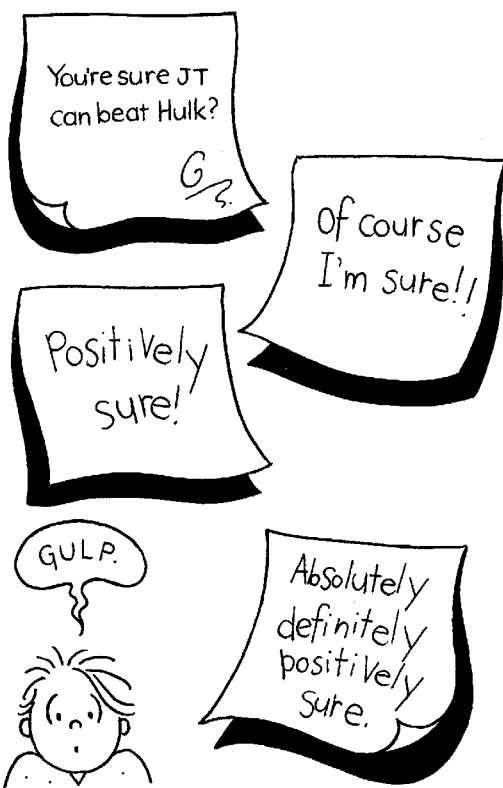
Or finds lost puppies ...

Or rescues kittens from trees.



I can't wait!





I took Fluffy and Spot to visit JT that evening. We drop in often so JT can play with Fluffy.

He was doing his Maths homework when we got there.



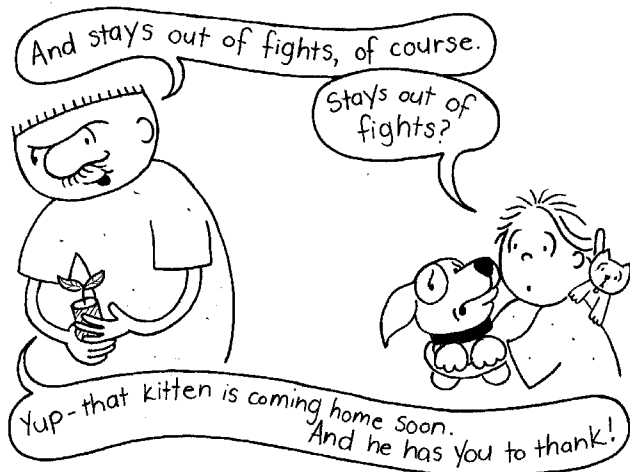
Poor JT. It must have been a lot easier for him when he used to make me do his homework.

I waited in the garden with JT's dad. He scares me.

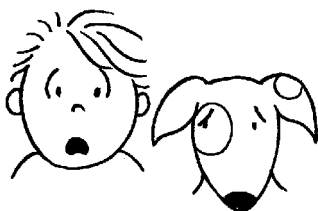


He was gardening. Guess that's not so scary.

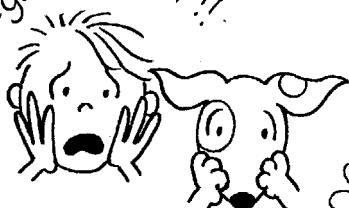
It would be tough not to have your pet with you.
I hugged Spot. I'd be really upset without him.



Disaster!



Mega disaster!!



Mega mega disaster!!!



No fights?

What about Hulk tomorrow behind the gym?

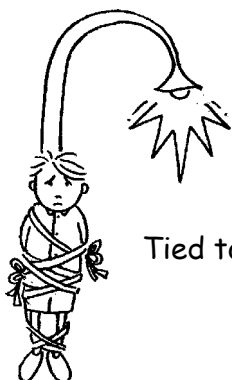
What if JT's dad finds out?

JT will never get Fluffy back!!

And it will all be my fault!!!

But if JT doesn't turn up, I'm going to spend the rest of my life ...

Doing Hulk's homework ...



Tied to lampposts ...

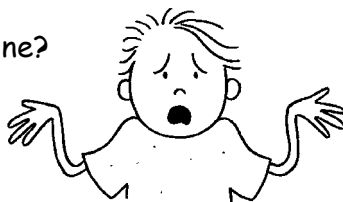
Afraid of my own shadow ... or his.



I don't know!!!

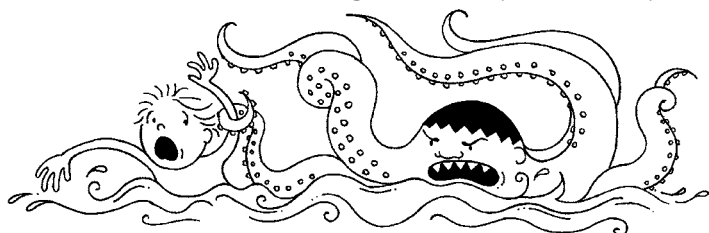
Any ideas?

Anyone?



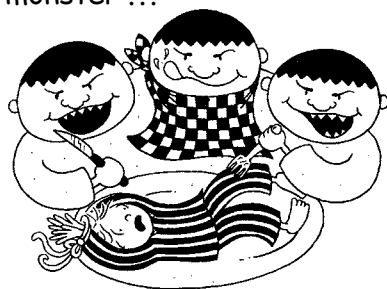
I had nightmares last night.

I dreamt that I was being chased by a sea serpent ...



who looked like Hulk.

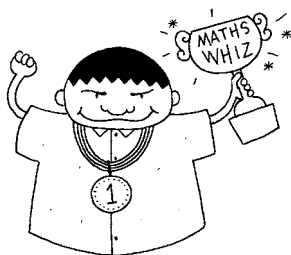
I dreamt I was being eaten by a three-headed monster ...



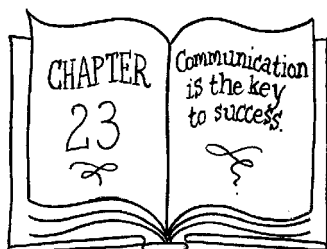
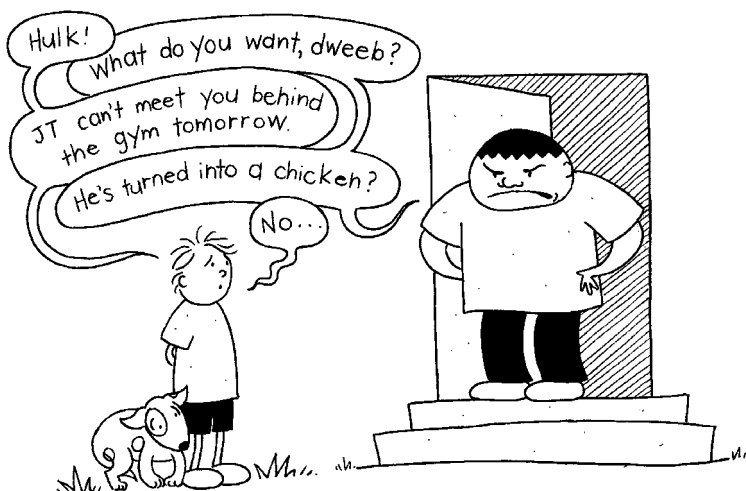
and all three heads looked like Hulk.

Worst of all?

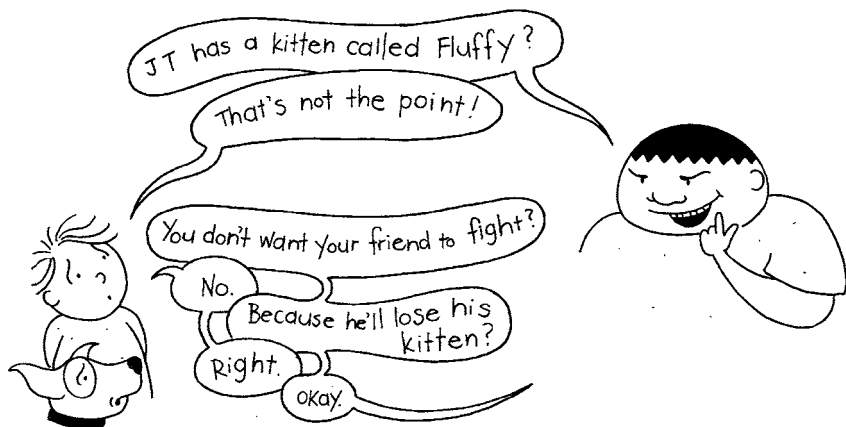
I dreamt that Hulk was given a Young Maths Whiz of the Year award - because of my work!!!



But today I knew what I had to do ...

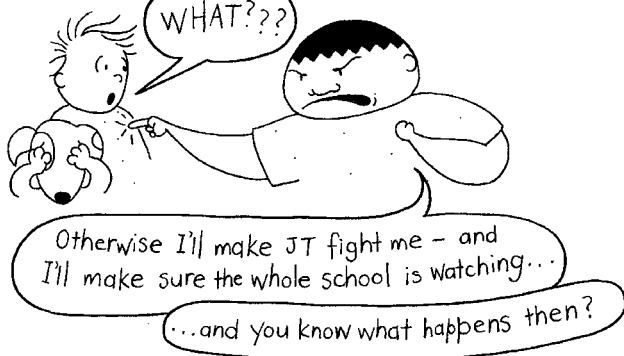
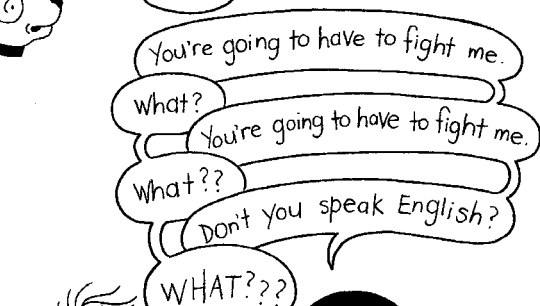


I explained how JT would never get Fluffy back if he got into a fight at school.

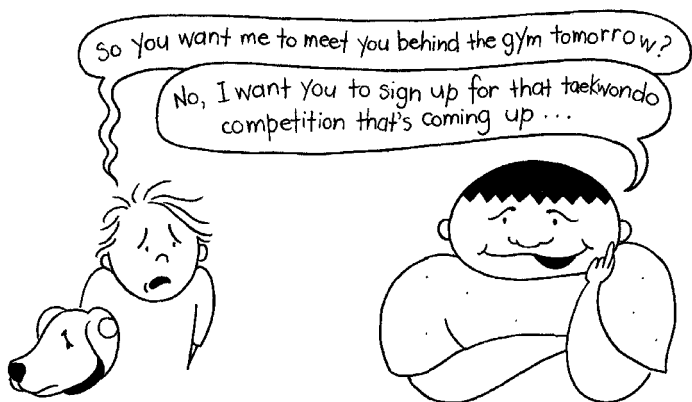


Okay??
OKAY??

Dad was right! Communication is the key to success!!!

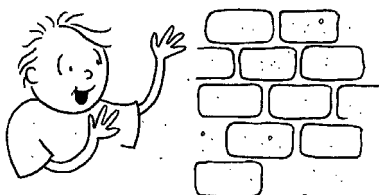


Poor JT. I couldn't let that happen. I just couldn't.

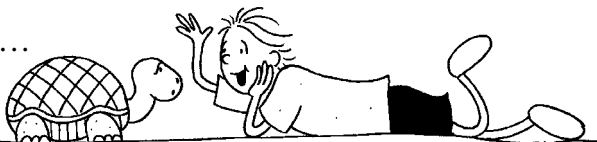


Communication is the key to success? Really, Dad?

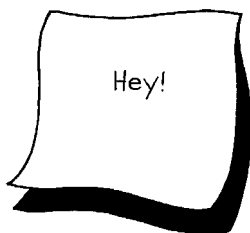
I'd have more success talking to a brick wall ...



Or a tortoise ...



Or Gemma!



At the next taekwondo class, I saw the competition notice.



Hulk doesn't want to fight me? No.

phew!

You were afraid of losing?

No-but Dad said if I got in a fight, I'd never get Fluffy back.

Oh... but you were still going to do it?

Yeah- can't have you doing his Maths homework for the rest of your life!

Thanks, JT. It was great knowing you...



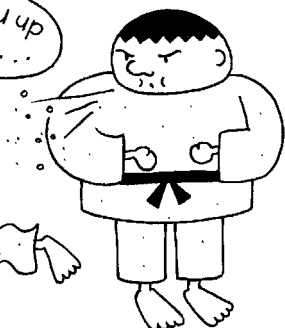
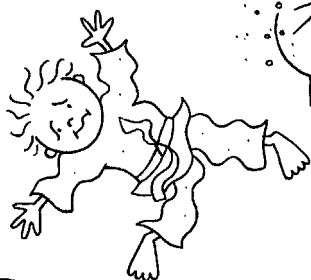
I hear you're gonna take part in the competition?



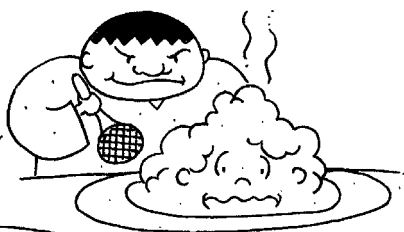
Hulk is going to flatten you...



He's going to chew you up
and spit you out...



He's going to turn you into
mashed potatoes...



He's going to ...

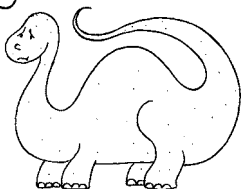
Okay! Enough already! I get it!!

I'm history...



Like the Romans.

Like the
Ancient Greeks.



Like the dinosaurs.



Yeah, right! That's going to happen - NOT!!



He strapped weights to my ankles.



This time I didn't ask him if he was sure.

I punched him.

He ducked.

I tried again.

He sidestepped.

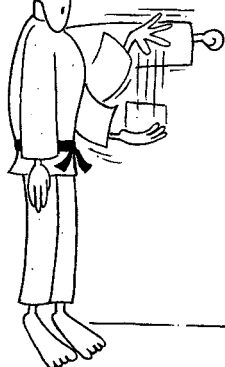
I tried again ...

It was like trying to hit a mosquito with a baseball bat.





Drop this block, extend your arm for a full punch, retract and then catch the block before it hits the floor.
Like this...
it will improve your speed.



Like
this?



Patience you must have, Master Marcus.

Remember, an empty cup is like
an empty mind.



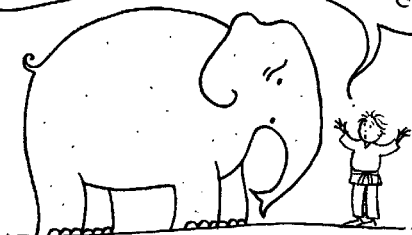
Eh?



Even when this guy
speaks English I have
no idea what he's
saying! He might as
well speak Korean ...

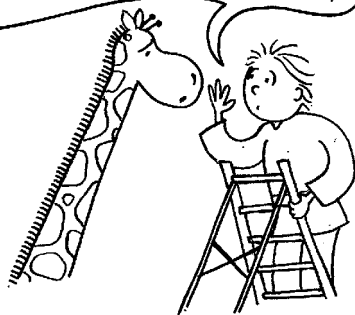
The answers you seek are with the animals, Master Marcus.

How do I fight Hulk and survive?



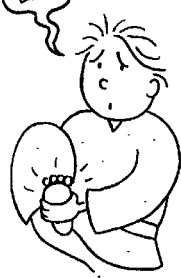
How do I fight Hulk and live?

How do I fight Hulk and win?



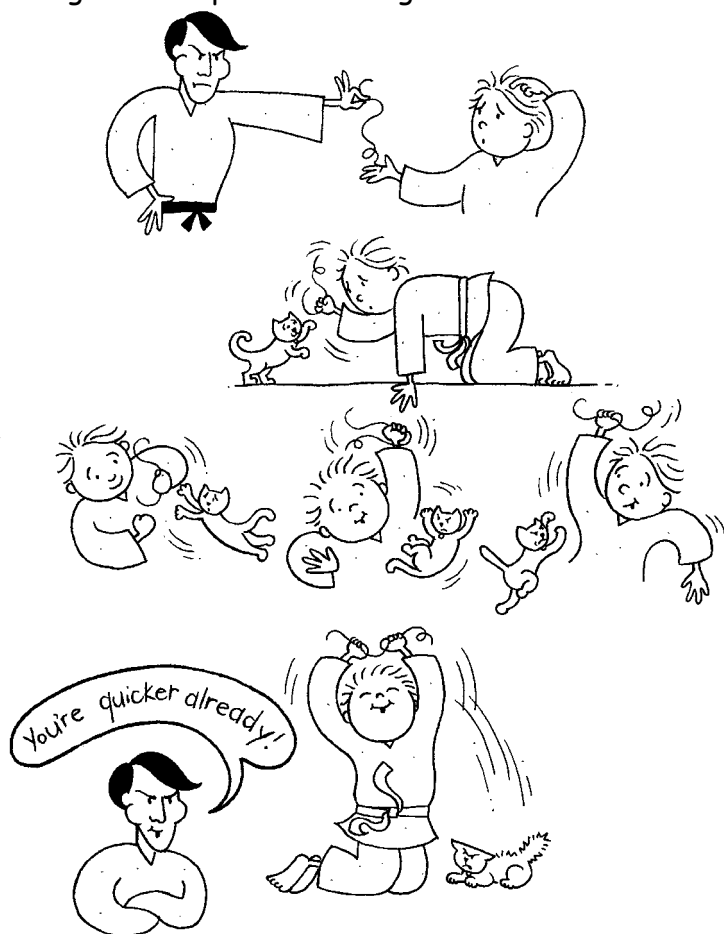
You speak with great wisdom, Master Choi.

Eh?



Come with me, Marcus!

He gave me a piece of string ... and told me what to do.

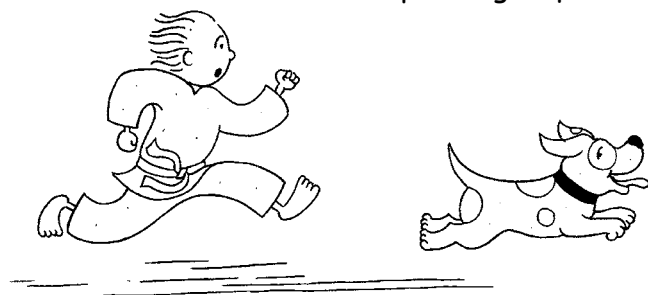


Yup - I'd be just fine if I was entering a string-snatching competition with Fluffy ...

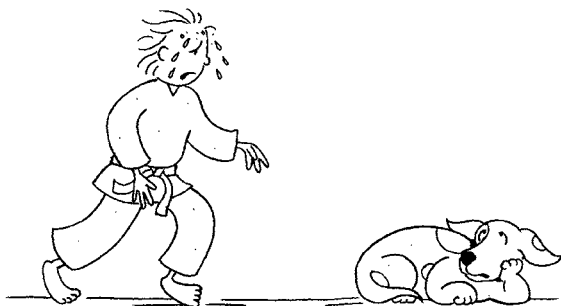
But I'm not - I'm fighting Hulk in a taekwondo competition!!!

Spot wanted to help too.

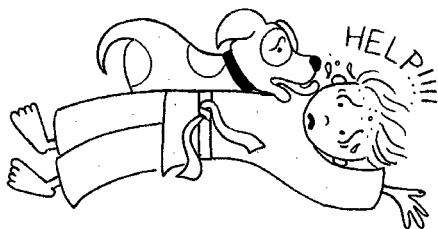
Eric decided I should race Spot to get quicker.



Spot beat me every time.

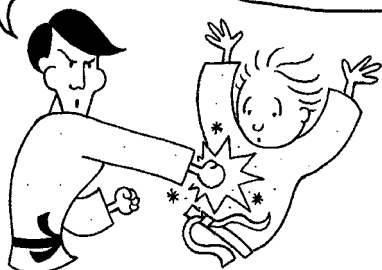


In the last race, he sat down and waited for me.



It looks like I won't even be able to outrun Hulk ...

You score points by hitting Hulk hard enough to shake him up.



One point for a punch or kick to the body.

Two points if it's a spinning kick.



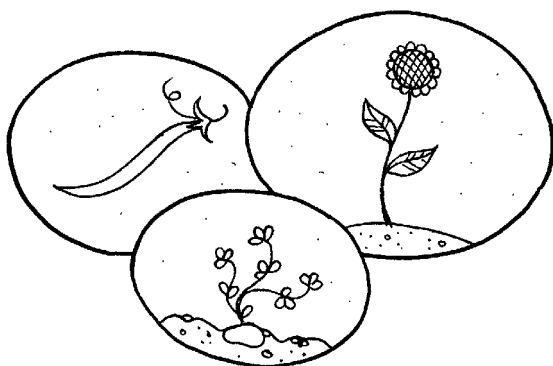
Three points for a kick to the head.



That's going to happen - NOT.



Yes, and so were a string bean and a sunflower!
Not to mention a weed!!

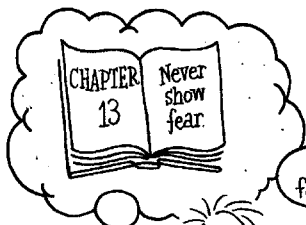


At school the next day ...

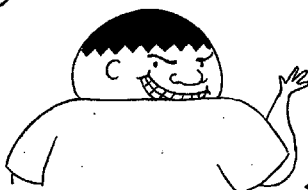
Only two days to go, dweeb!



Just you and me and a small square mat.
Nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.



I'm looking forward to it.

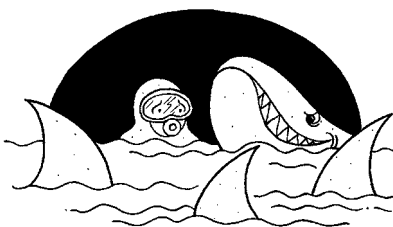


Remember, if you don't last three rounds - the deal is off.

Yep. I'm looking forward to it -
like a trip to the dentist ...



Or going cage-diving
with sharks ...

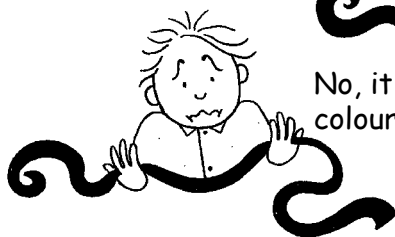


Or wrestling a grizzly bear.

When I got home, Spot and Fluffy were waiting for me. So was a long black snake.



No, it was my belt. Someone had coloured it black with a texta.

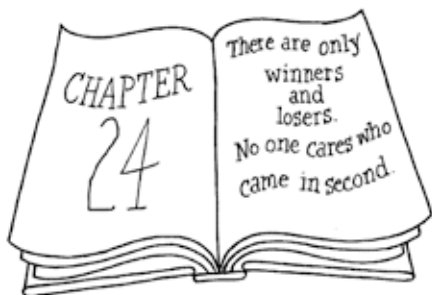


Just trying to
help...
+thanks
Gemma.
You're welcome.

P.S. If you don't
survive, can I
have your
remote-controlled
tank? No
Gemma



I was so desperate, I
read Dad's book ...



I guess that's because
whoever came in second
is DEAD!

I asked Master Choi for advice ...

Suppose I was to fight someone larger and stronger and better, Master Choi - how would I ... errr, win?



To win one must combine the rage of a tiger, the speed of a dragon, the courage of a bear and the cunning of a snake.



Oh! That's easy, then. I'll get right on it. NOT.

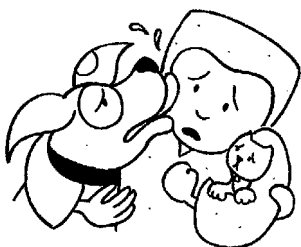
Or maybe I'll try the rage of a rabbit, the speed of a sloth, the courage of a pigeon and the cunning of a mule?



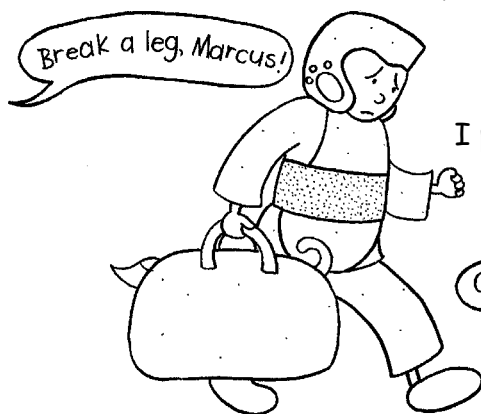
The day of the fight.

I put on my armour. I put on my black belt.

I hugged Spot and Fluffy and then hid them in my bag.



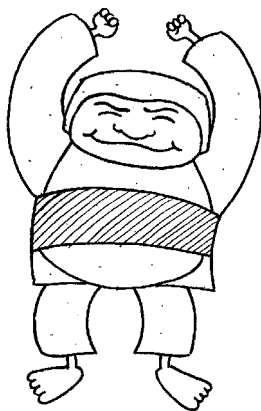
Even though it was a secret, everyone seemed to know about the taekwondo competition.



I probably will ...

Chin up, Marcus!

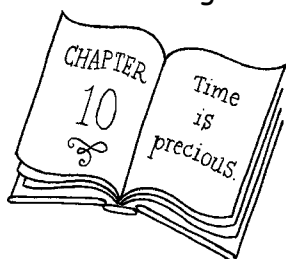
That will just give Hulk one more thing to hit ...



Hulk was waiting ...

ROUND 1

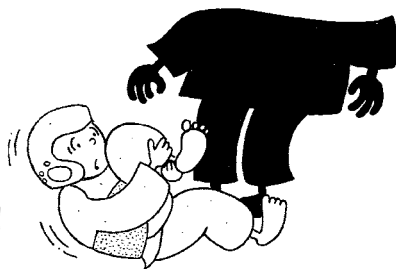
The bell rang ...



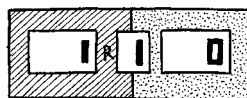
I figured out what to do - I needed to waste time.
The more time I wasted, the less time he had to hurt me.

Hulk came closer.

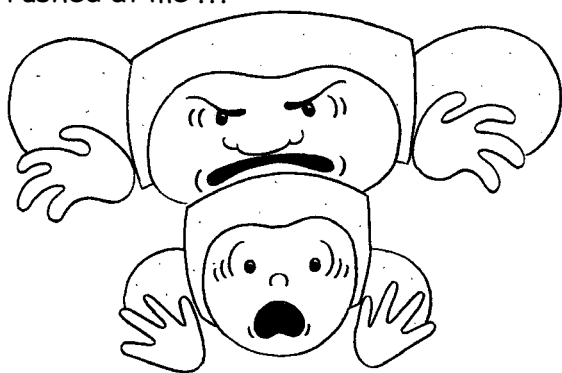
I collapsed to the ground and clutched my ankle.



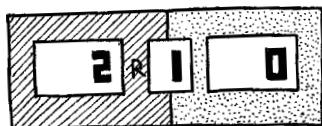
Hulk got a point! He didn't even touch me!



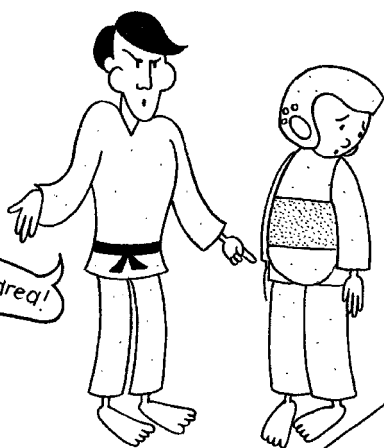
Hulk rushed at me ...



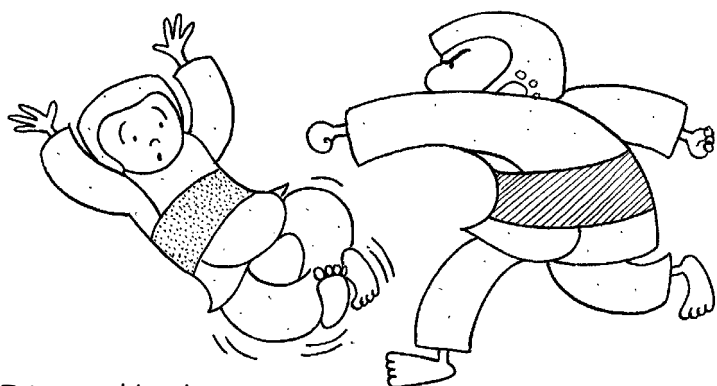
I turned and ran. He chased me!
I ran out of the area!!



Hulk got a point!!!

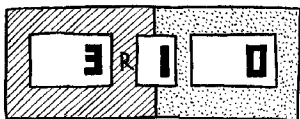


Hulk aimed a punch at my chest.



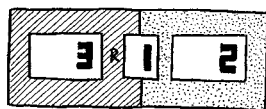
I jumped back.
I tripped over my feet.

Hulk got a point!



Hulk was mad now.

He rushed at me, grabbed my uniform and shoved me. I ended up outside the area again. Great - another point for Hulk.



I got two points! Why?

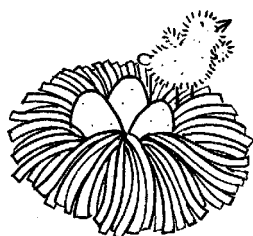
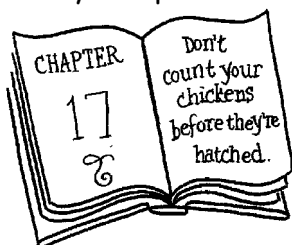
You're not allowed to grab and shove your opponent.



ROUND 2

So far, so good.

One round done and I wasn't even injured. And I was only one point behind.

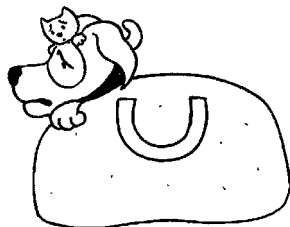
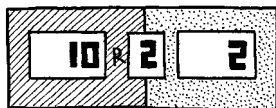


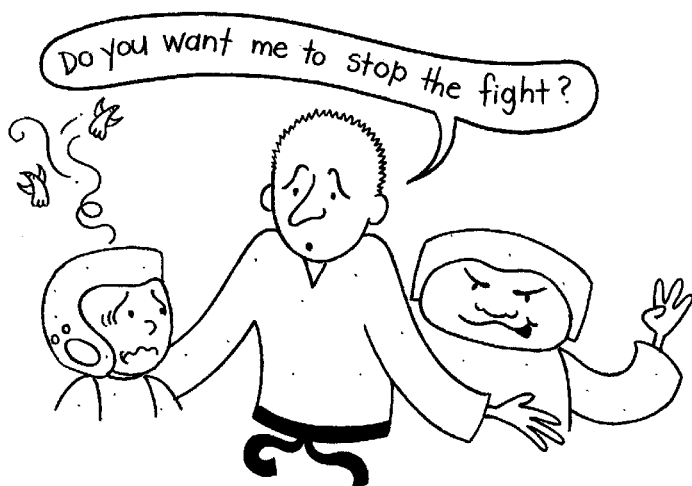
Hulk attacked!

Don't count my chickens?
How about the birds?



He hit me seven times.





Hulk held up three fingers.

I knew what he meant. I had to last three rounds.
Or Fluffy would never get back to JT.

I saw JT waving at me. I knew I had to stay in.

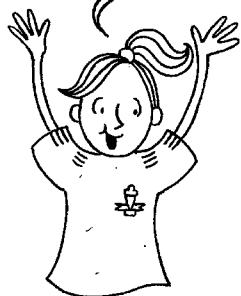


ROUND 3

Hulk and I faced each other.

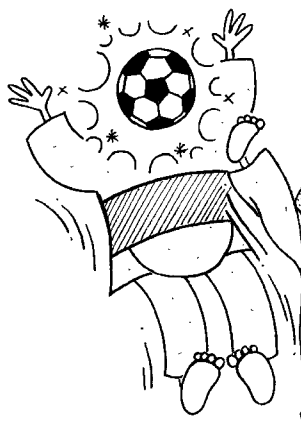


Marcus, score a goal!!!



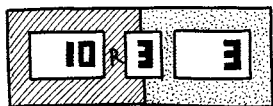
It was Lizzie, my friend from soccer - still wearing her Liverpool kit.

I imagined the ball ...



Great front snap kick, Marcus!

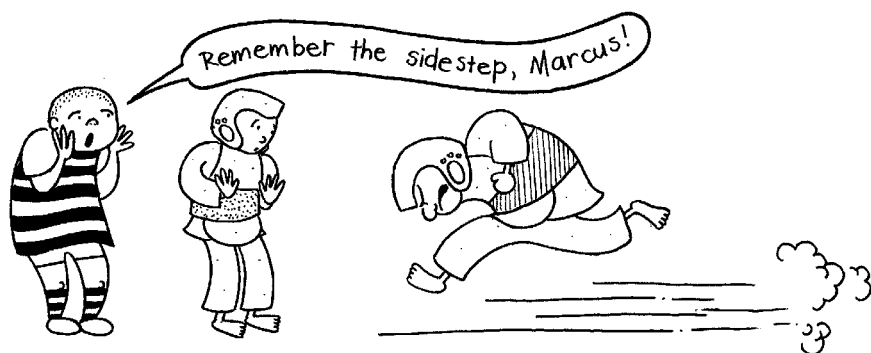
Really?



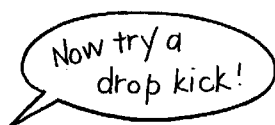
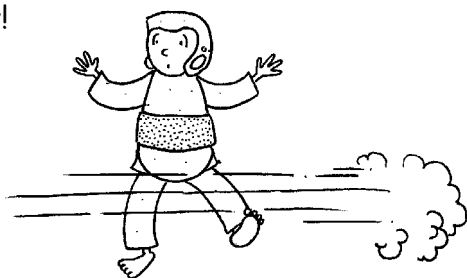
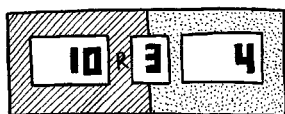
I got a point!
I got a point!!
I got a point!!!

(Pity I missed his head - that would have been three points.)

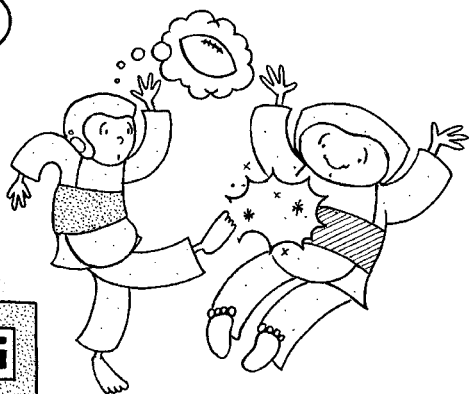
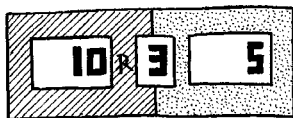
Hulk was mad now. He charged at me ...



It was Tank from rugby!
I sidestepped.
Hulk was going so fast,
he ran out of the area.



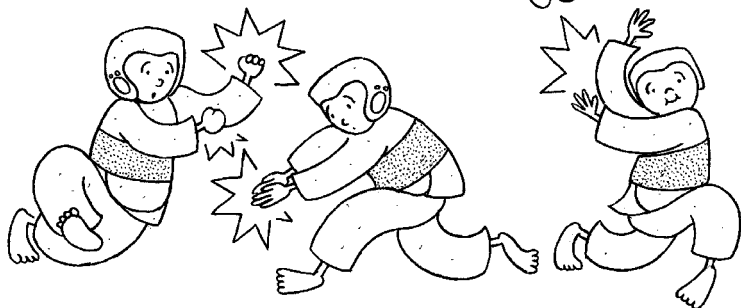
I did!



Hulk tried again.

The sweep shot!

It was the Little Master,
my friend from cricket.
I knew just what he meant.

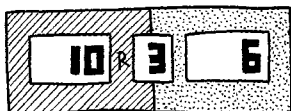


I blocked three kicks in a row.

Hulk was so angry, he kicked me in the knee.

OWWW!

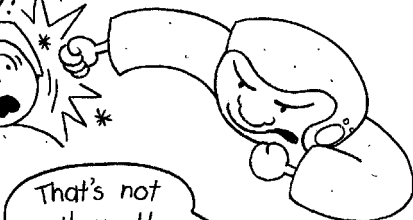
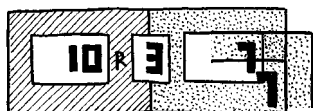
That's not
allowed!



He punched
me in the head.

OWWWWW!

That's not
allowed!



You need three points, Marcus!!



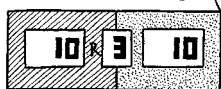
Three points? How in the world was I going to do that?



I spotted Lizzie. She had a ball under her arm. She threw it in the air and volleyed it against the back wall.

Good idea!

Great roundhouse kick, Marcus!



This time I hit his head!!!
Three points!!!



A draw! And I'm still standing!

And JT will get Fluffy back!



Phew! They need to change their expressions.



How did they find out about the fight?



I told him about Hulk, JT and Fluffy.



I realised something important. I had to finish the fight.

It was the only way to deal with bullies. Show them you weren't afraid.

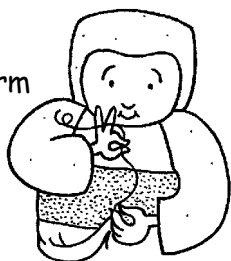
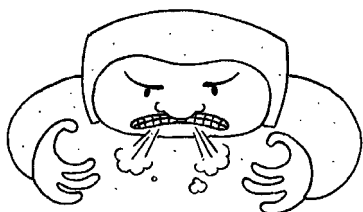
Unless, of course, you had a chance to rescue their kitten instead.



I spotted Fluffy and Spot ... and had an idea!

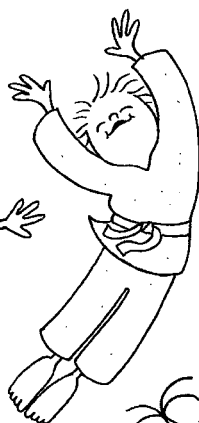
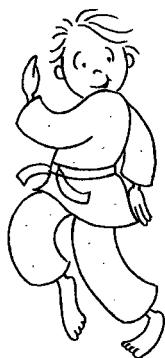
SUDDEN DEATH ROUND

I pulled a thread from my uniform and clutched it in my fists.



Hulk charged at me.

I evaded him with my personal poomsae.



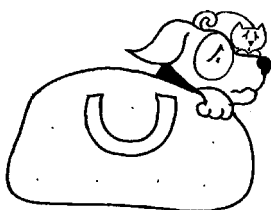
Master Choi looked depressed.



Dad looked embarrassed.



Everyone else just looked.



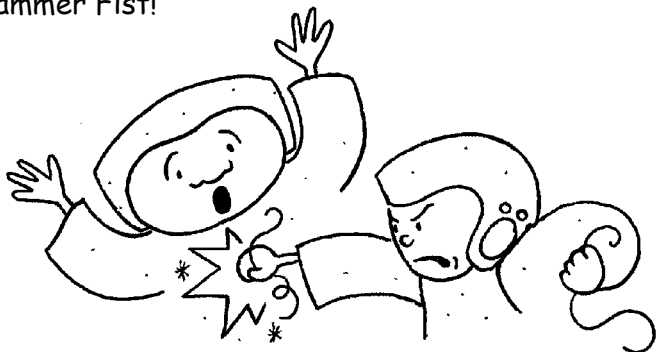
Including Hulk.



And then I started jerking that string around as if I was playing with Fluffy.

My fists were like lightning bolts.

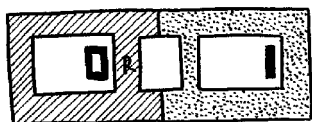
I punched Hulk in the chest using the Hammer Fist!



He swung his leg out ...
I remembered Spot jumping up to lick my face.
I leapt in the air!



He missed.



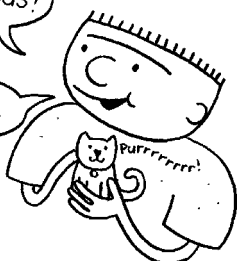
Dad says I can keep Fluffy because I didn't get into any fights.

Great!

Hey, Marcus!

What?

Thanks.



I guess these fights will be easier once I get my other belts, Dad!

Other belts?

No way!



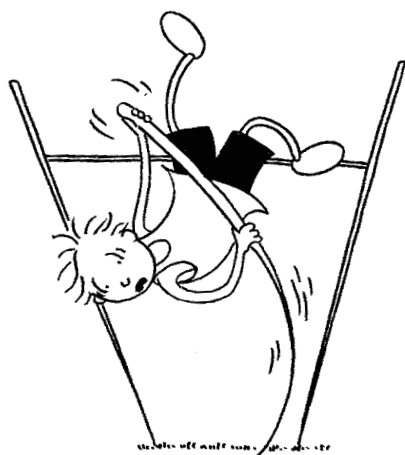
I'm not letting you do anything that dangerous again!

From now on - you just do stuff where you get to stay away from the other competitors!!!

The way you leapt in the air...



You were born to jump!
I just know it!

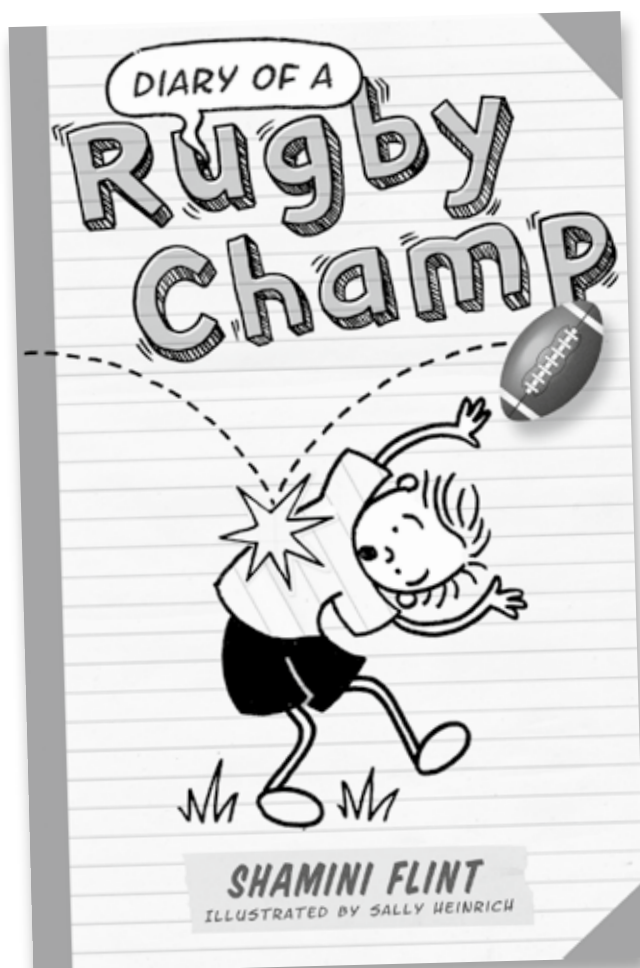


About the Author

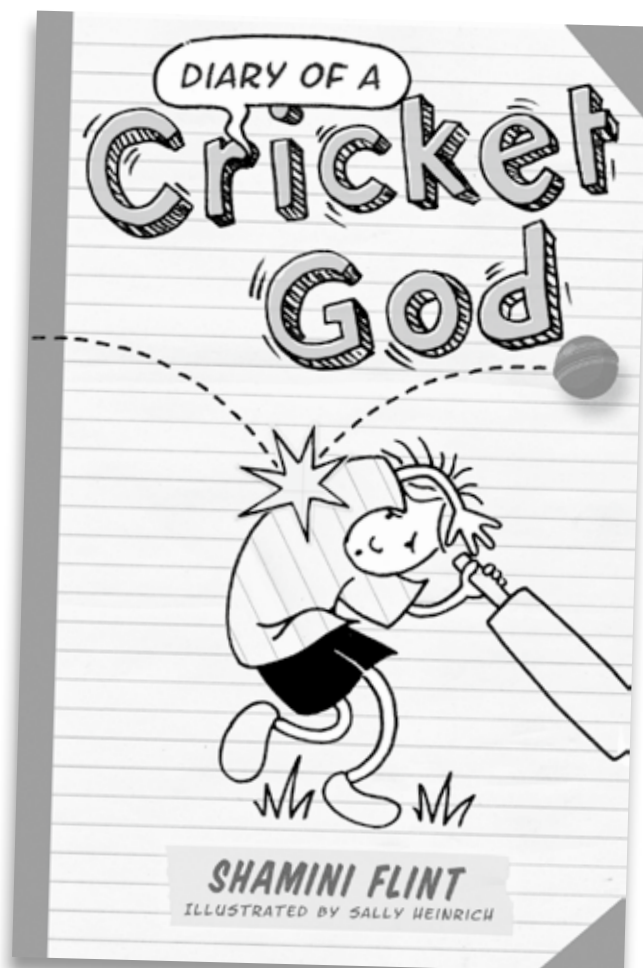
Shamini Flint lives in Singapore with her husband and two children. She is an ex-lawyer, ex-lecturer, stay-at-home mum and writer. She loves taekwondo!

www.shaminiflint.com

What about my
Rugby Diary?



Have you read my
Cricket Diary?



And of course
my Soccer Diary!

