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Opening extract from  
**Middle School Series 6: Save Rafe:**

Written by  
**James Patterson**

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*To Angela Galyean, Paul Lusher,  
and the students of Hinesburg Community School  
—C.T.*

*To Lilliana Rose Park and Baby Behan-Johnson.  
I'm looking forward to knowing you both!  
—L.P.*

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## CHAPTER 1

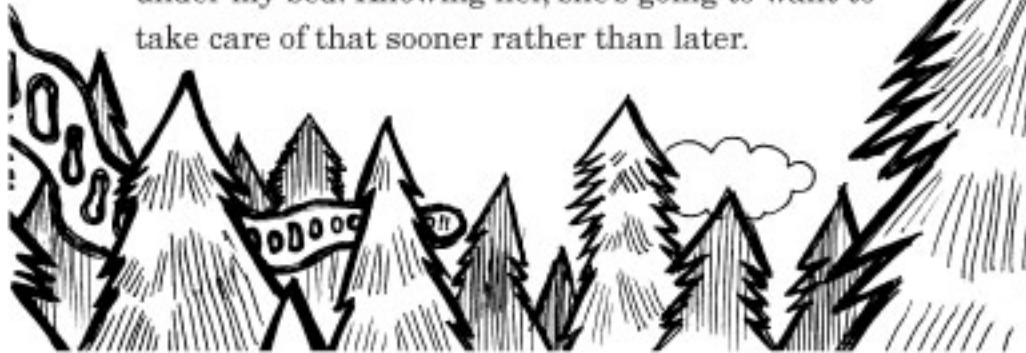
### THE END IS NEAR!

**S**omething tells me this story isn't going to have a happy ending.



I'm hanging on the side of a cliff by the jagged edges of my broken-off fingernails. The only thing between me and the ground is about half a mile of air, and I don't know how much longer I can hold on. Once I lose my grip—and I'm betting I *will*, any second now—it's going to be like taking the world's fastest elevator ride to the bottom. Without the elevator.

Good-bye, cruel world! Tell my mom that I love her. Also that there's a half-finished meatball sub under my bed. Knowing her, she's going to want to take care of that sooner rather than later.



This is it! The end of the line for me!

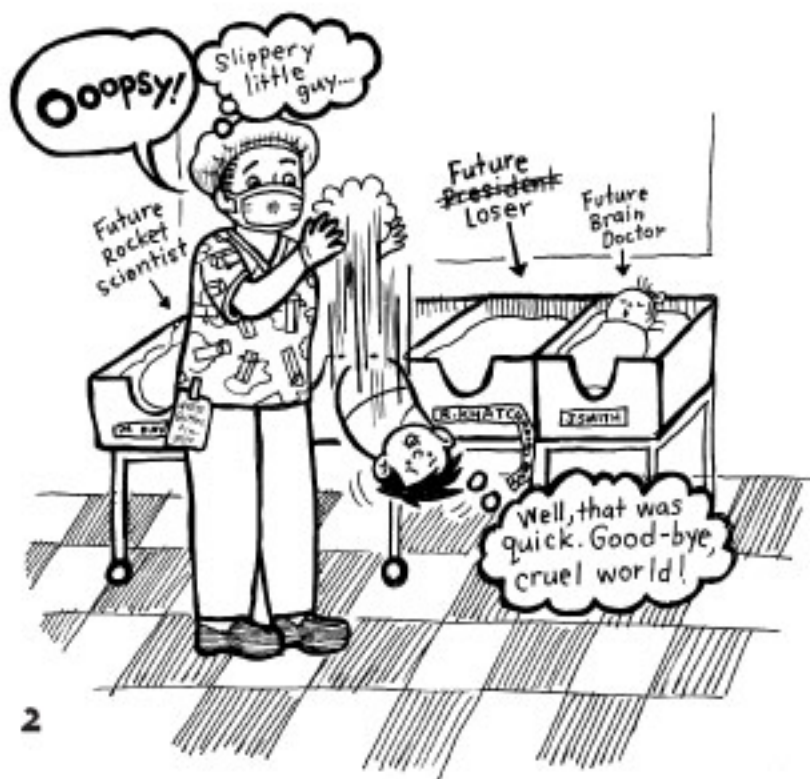
Except...wait a second. Here's the part where my whole life flashes in front of my eyes. And what do you know? Looking back, I guess I've been falling for a long time now.

Falling like Niagara.

Falling like my grades.

Falling like the leaves in...well, you get the idea. Just take a look. I don't have much time here.

It all started on the day I was born....



It didn't get any easier after that either. Mom said I had an "adventurous spirit" before I could even walk. Like for instance, the first time *this* happened.



And then there were the falls I never saw coming. Maybe I should have...but I usually didn't.



I mean, I know that everyone's life is supposed to have ups and downs. But for me, it's been more like ups and downs...and downs...and downs. I wouldn't have minded a few more *ups* once in a while. Sometimes I didn't have a whole lot of choice in the matter.



And just for the record, I want to say that not *all* of these disasters were my fault. Like for instance, this one was Jeanne Galletta's fault. (Technically.)



So I guess it makes sense that I'd wind up like this—dangling half a mile off the ground and waiting for gravity to turn me into sausage meat once and for all. I just wish I had a little more time. Then I might have a chance to prove I'm not a *total* loser.

But that's not going to happen. I'm down to my last fingernail, and there's no one around for a hundred miles to save me. I'm completely out here on my—

"HEY, RAFE!"

Wait a minute. That voice sounds familiar. Still, I can't believe it. I look up, and there she is—the last person in the world I expected to see.

"Georgia? Where'd you come from?" I scream. How did my little sister even get here that fast? It doesn't make any sense.

"Don't worry about that!" she says. "Just give me your hand!"

"I can't!" I yell. "If I let go of this branch, I'm going to fall!"

"Well, in that case," she says....

