TIMMY FAILURE

IT'S THE END WHEN I SAY IT'S THE END



STEPHAN PASTIS



WALKER
BOOKS

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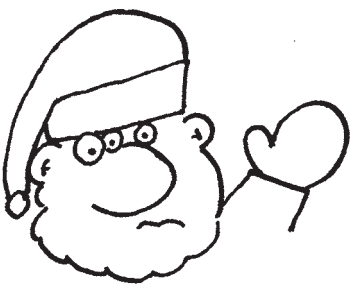
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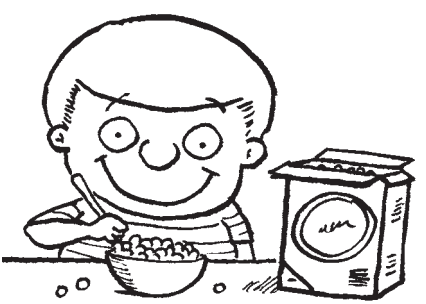
To my cousin Nick Tripodes, who never could have guessed when he drew this odd Santa in a Christmas card that I would steal it and use it in a book.



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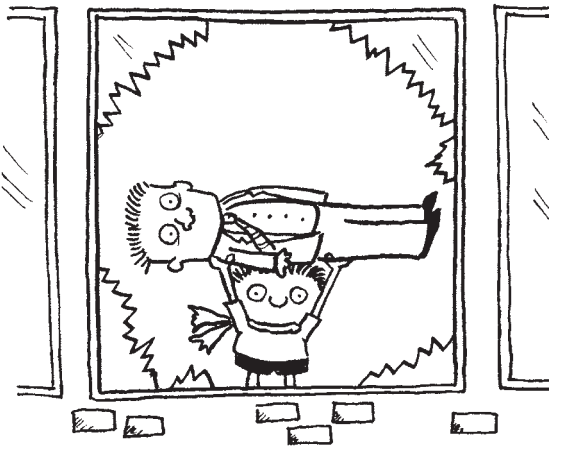
A Cliff-hanger of a Prologue That Will Make You Want to Read More of the Book. Also, It Contains a Giant Chicken.

Some kids start their day eating a complete, balanced breakfast.

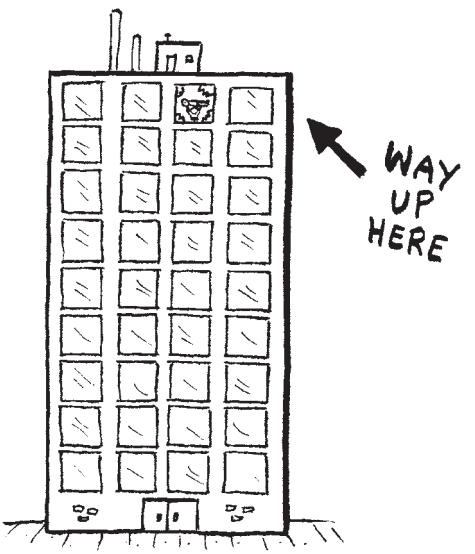


I start mine trying to throw a principal out a window.

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A window that is ten storeys high.



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I should have known it would end up like this when they wouldn't let me into the bar.



Even after showing my ID.



So I subdue the bouncer with a mix of

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charm and martial arts and kick open the double doors of the bar.



Where I am accosted by two thugs I recognize: Rick "Drill-A-Kid" Drillashick and Crispin "Bowling Turkey" Flavius.



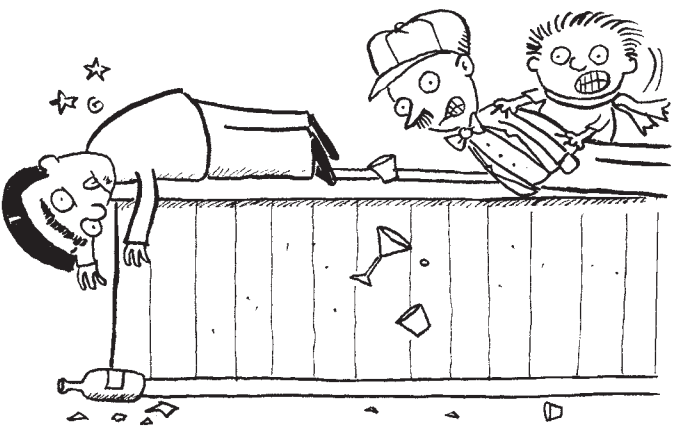
"Listen, boys," I tell them. "It doesn't

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have to go down this way. I'm just here for a drink."

But they refuse to listen.

So I hurl them down the surface of the bar like they are human bowling balls.



And take my seat at the now-empty bar. Cool as the unopened beer bottle poised menacingly above my head.

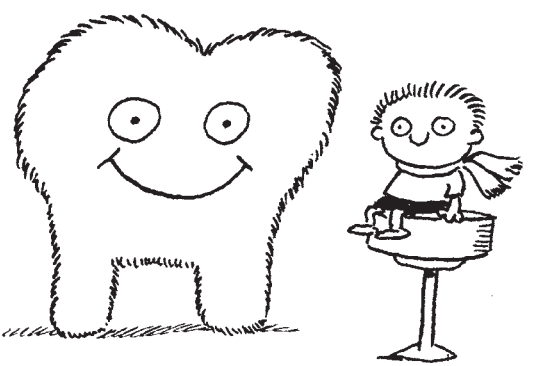
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"Dr. Alfredo Goni," I mutter, tapping my fingers on the shiny bar. "I should have known they'd throw an orthodontist at me."

"Right-o," he answers menacingly. "And I brought backup."

I whip around and see his accomplice.



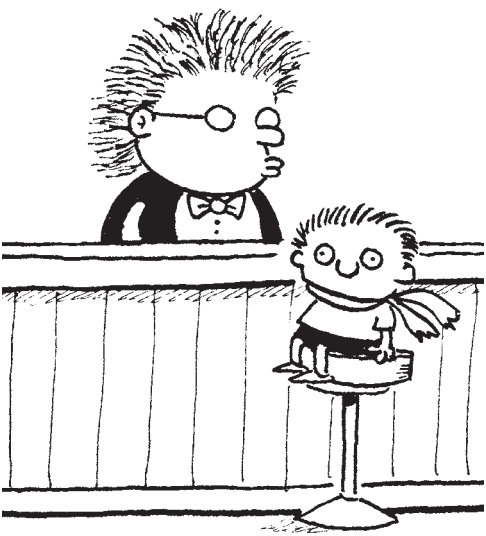
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“I don’t want any trouble,” I tell Mickey Molar.

It is a tense moment. And nobody moves.

Except the grizzled bartender, who waddles toward me from behind the bar.

“Whaddya want?” she asks.

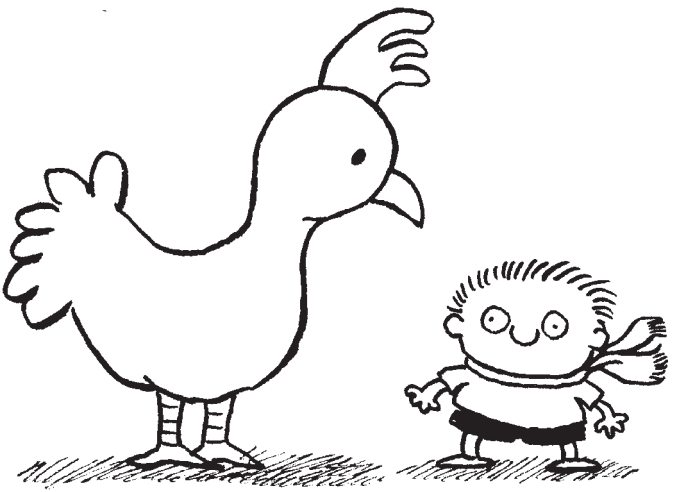


“Whiskey, neat,” I tell her. “And don’t try anything funny, Toots.”

But she ducks. And my eye catches the quick flash of a beak in the mirror. And I spin around.

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“Edward Higglebottom the Third!” I cry, hopping off my barstool. “I must say, I wasn’t expecting a giant chicken.”



And in a flash, the bar explodes in a frenzy of violence.

Punches. Kicks. Chicken feathers.

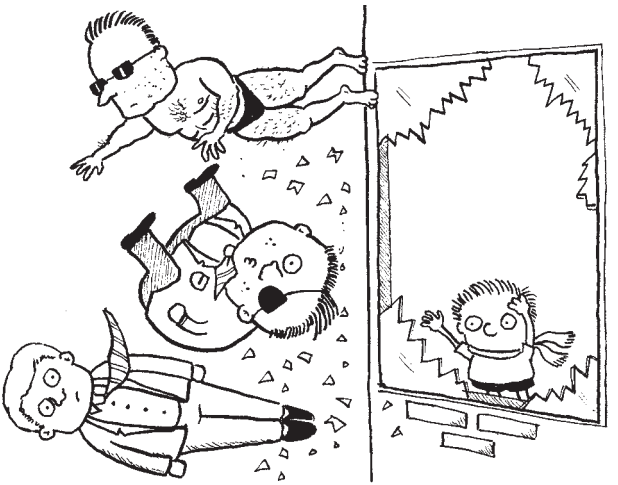
And one by one, I hurl a series of would-be assassins from the high window.

Ron “Speedo Steve.”

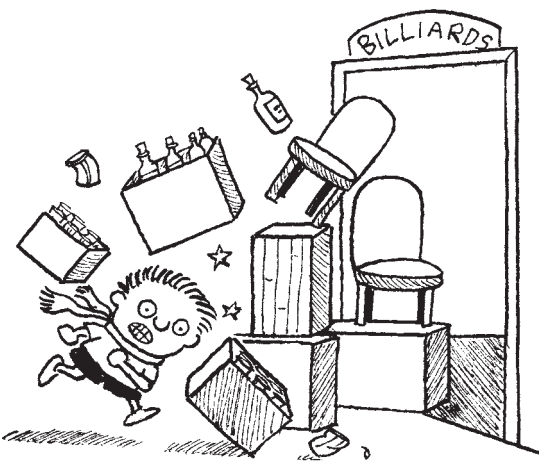
“Minnie the Magnificent” Benedici.

Donny “Dangermouse” Dobbs.

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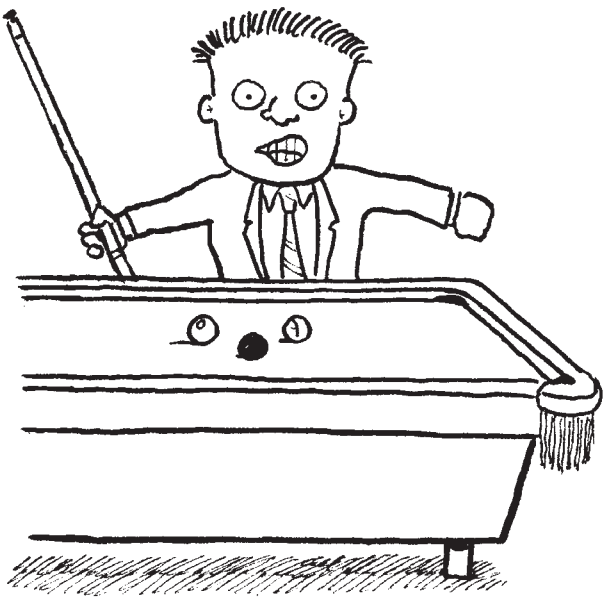
And I make a run for the billiards room, crashing through the makeshift barricade.



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And I enter the dark, dingy room.

Where, brandishing a cue stick, is my school principal, Alexander Scrimshaw.



"We meet again," I tell him.

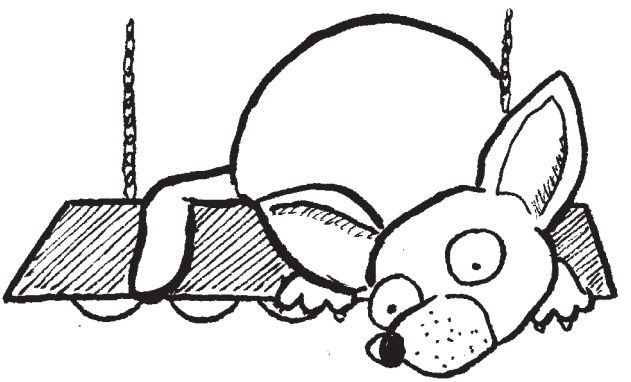
"Now look what you've done," he answers, surveying the damage to the bar.

"Mistakes were made," I tell him. "But none of them mine."

"Yeah, well, to get to me, you're gonna

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have to go through the Scrum Bolo Chihuahua," he says, pointing to a giant Chihuahua perched atop the light.





So I offer the Chihuahua a doggy treat.

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And he licks my hand and runs off.

"I expected more," says Scrimshaw.

I watch as Scrimshaw backs farther away, waving the pool cue like a club.

"All we wanted was world domination," he says, "but you stood in the way. You, Timmy Failure. So I had to crush you. With algebra you'll never use. Pop quizzes you didn't expect. Boring novels you couldn't endure."

"I know," I answer. "And all under the guise of being a school principal."

"Yes."

"So what were you, really?" I ask.

"A secret agent for a vast criminal organization. All school principals are."

"Of course."

"So do what you will," he says. "But you won't take me alive."

"This could get ugly," I tell him.

"Principals like ugly," he answers.

And when I turn briefly to check for more of his goons, he kicks me behind the knees, sending me reeling.

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As I struggle back onto my feet, he runs for the double doors. I spring like a cougar onto his back.



And from high atop his shoulders, I grab

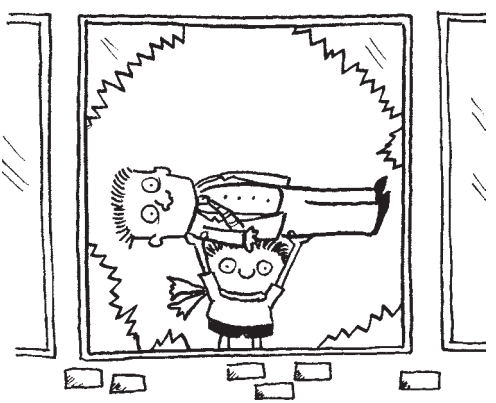
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him by both ears, steering him into the bar, the tables, the walls.



Dazed from the impact, he falls to the ground.

And I drag him to the broken window and lift him high overhead.



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“Wait, wait, wait,” he says, gasping for breath. “I will make you a deal.”

“I am about to vanquish my enemy forever. There is nothing more I could want.”

“But there is.”

“Then talk fast,” I tell him. “Because you’re very heavy. Portly, even.”

“Next Tuesday,” he says, “there will be a pop quiz in geography. Spare my life and you don’t have to take it.”

“Will I still get a good grade?”

“B,” he answers.

“A minus,” I say.

“B plus,” he counters.

“Deal,” I say, putting him down.

And when I do, he shoves me with both hands.

And I fall through the window.

Where my shoelace snags on the window frame.

And my life hangs by a thread.

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"You fiend," I utter as I dangle like the pendulum of a clock.

"It's the end of Timmy Failure," he says, bending down to cut the shoelace with a piece of broken glass.

"It's the end when I say it's the end," I tell him.

And he cuts the shoelace.

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"Okay, now it's the end," I say.

And I fall.

But not before leaving him with some final words of wisdom:



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