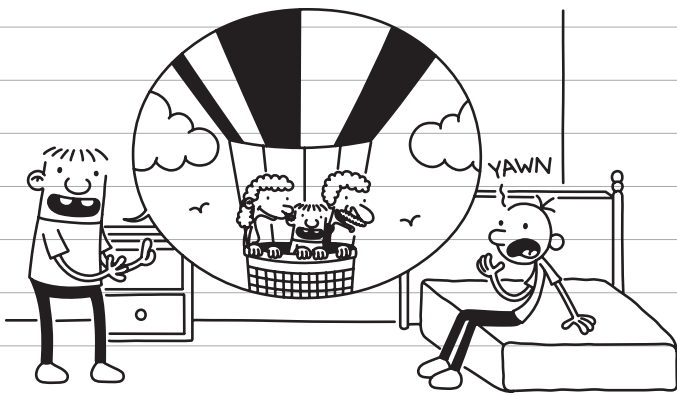
DECEMBER

Sunday

The worst part of having someone tell you about their holiday is trying to pretend you're HAPPY for them. Because no one wants to hear about all the fun they DIDN'T have.



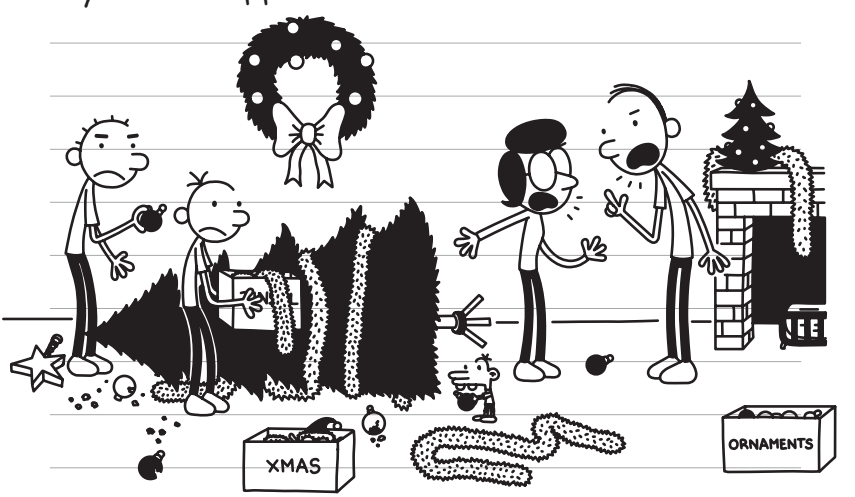
The only holidays I want to hear about are the ones where things went WRONG. That way, I don't feel bad for missing out.



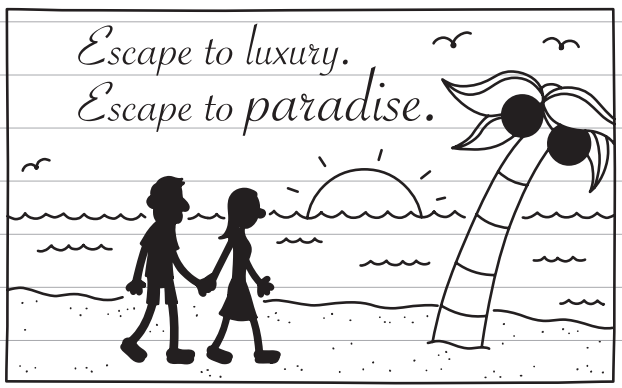
Well, my family just got back from holiday, and, believe me, if I could've stayed home, I WOULD'VE. But I didn't have a choice.

A few weeks ago, this holiday wasn't even supposed to HAPPEN. We were just having a normal December, and I was really looking forward to Christmas.

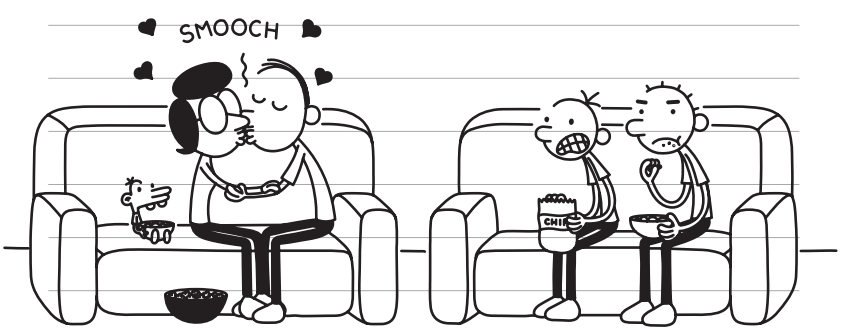
But Mom and Dad were getting all stressed out about everything we had to do to get ready for the holiday season. We were WAY behind on decorating the house, and nothing was going the way it was supposed to.



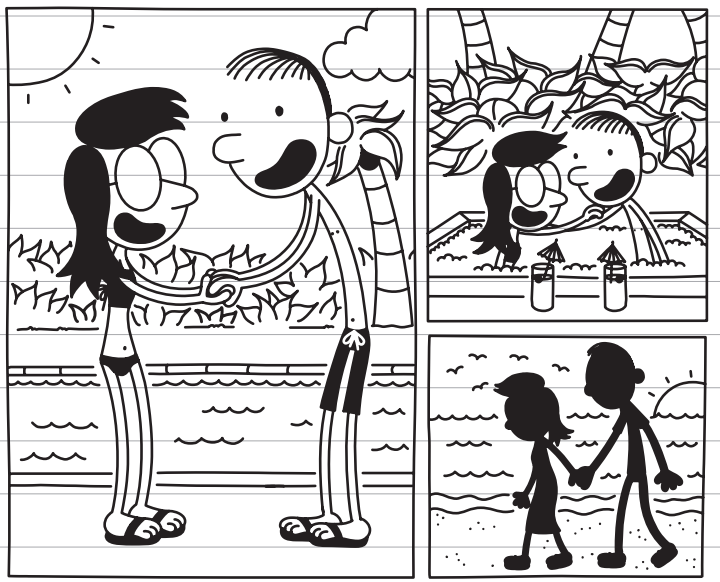
I'm sure we could've got our act together in time. But one night an ad came on TV that TOTALLY turned our Christmas upside down.



The commercial was for this place called Isla de Corales, which is where Mom and Dad went for their honeymoon. And the reason I know that is because every time an ad for that place comes on TV the two of them get all kissy-faced.

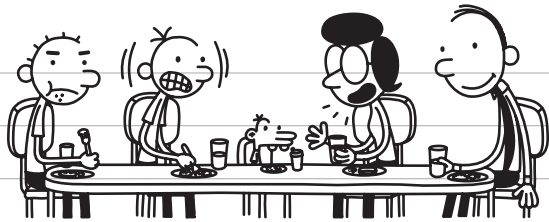


It makes me uncomfortable thinking about Mom and Dad before they had us kids. And I wouldn't HAVE to if Mom didn't bring out their honeymoon album every year on their anniversary.



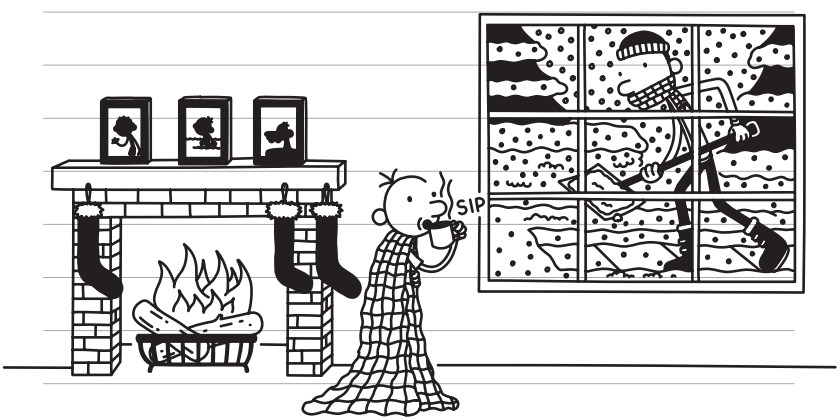
The night after that ad came on, Mom and Dad made an announcement. They said that THIS year we were gonna SKIP Christmas and all go to Isla de Corales instead.

When I asked how we were gonna get our gifts to the resort, Mom said the trip WAS our gift.

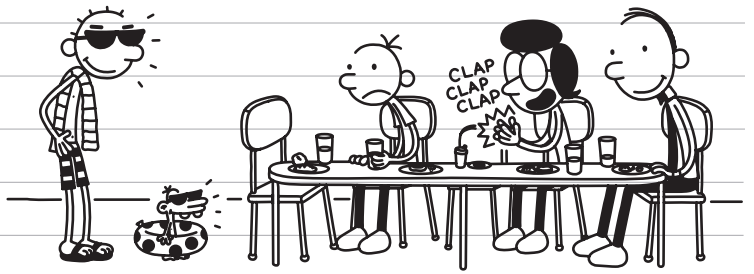


I thought that sounded like a TERRIBLE idea, and I was surprised Dad was on board with it. He usually doesn't like to spend a lot of money, and I was sure this resort was gonna cost a FORTUNE. But he said he was sick of the cold weather and he wanted to escape to someplace warm.

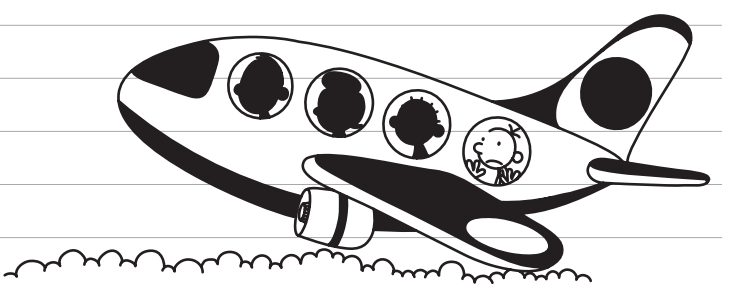
Personally, I don't have a problem with cold weather. In fact, generally speaking, the worse it is outside, the happier I am.



I figured Manny and Rodrick would help me talk some sense into Mom and Dad, and we'd put a stop to this idea. But those guys weren't any help at ALL.



So I had to accept that we weren't gonna have a normal Christmas at home. But what I REALLY didn't like was that we had to FLY to this place. I'd never been on a PLANE before, and I wasn't crazy about the idea of locking myself in a metal tube.

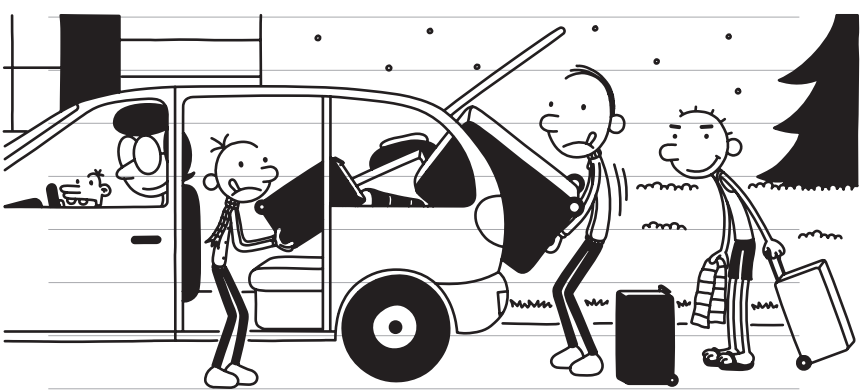


Nobody ELSE seemed worried, though, and two weeks later, on a night when we should've been hanging up our stockings and sitting around the fire watching Christmas specials, we were packing our suitcases for this island getaway.

Monday

We left the house around 8:00 on the morning of Christmas Eve. Dad was pretty uptight because he wanted to leave an hour EARLIER, but Mom said he was being ridiculous and we'd get to the airport in plenty of time.

It was only about minus five degrees outside, but Rodrick was already dressed for the holiday.



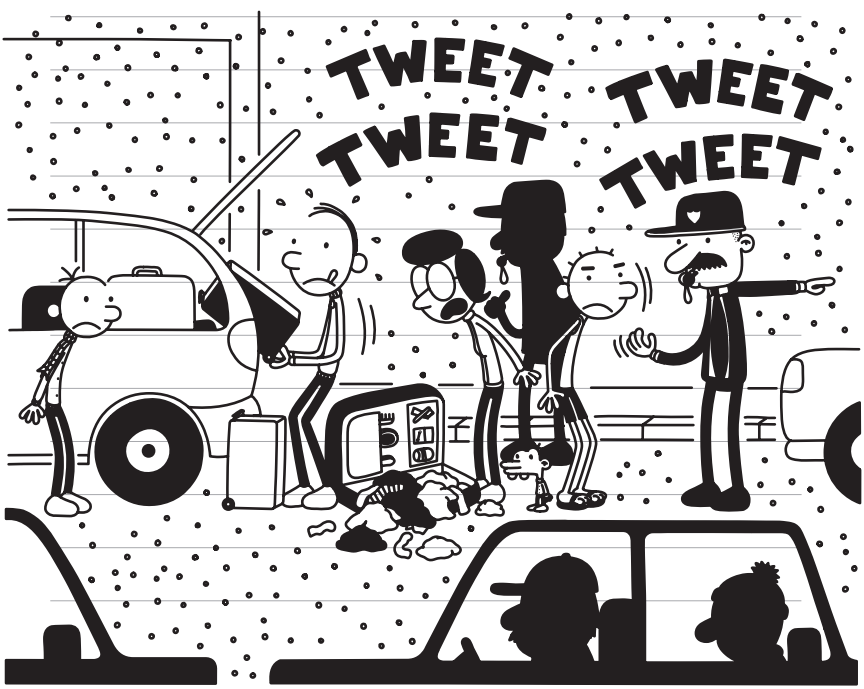
It turned out Dad was right, we should've left earlier. Apparently, Christmas Eve is one of the busiest travel days of the year, so the roads were CHOKED with families driving to see their relatives. And nobody really seemed to be in the Christmas spirit, either.



What made things a lot worse was when it started to SNOW. After that, things slowed to a crawl. Mom and Dad started arguing over what time we should've left, and Dad almost missed the exit for the airport. He had to cut across three lanes of traffic, which didn't look easy.

When we reached the airport, the main parking lot was full. That meant we had to park in the economy lot, which was pretty far away. Dad said he'd drop the rest of us off at the kerb with all the luggage and then come and meet us after he parked.

When we got to the passenger drop-off area, it was COMPLETE chaos. We tried to unload our bags, but the cops weren't letting anyone stop for more than thirty seconds. And that just stressed everyone out and made things worse.



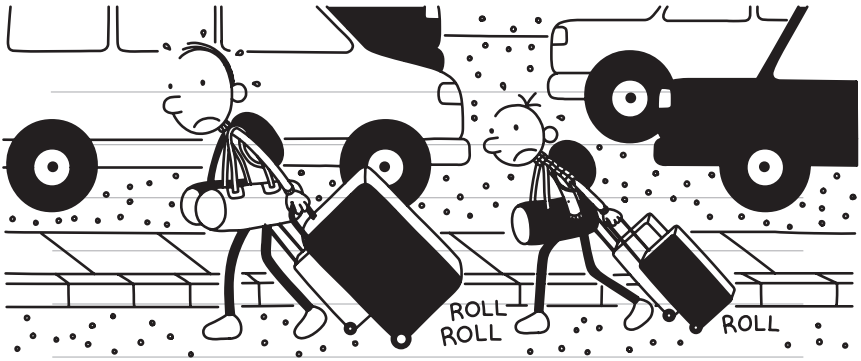
I had to get back in the car so I could help Dad with the rest of the bags. Ordinarily, that kind of thing would've been Rodrick's job, but since he was dressed for thirty-degree weather he got out of it.

He was lucky he DID, too. When we got to the gate for the economy lot, Dad couldn't reach the ticket from his window. So he made me get out of the car to grab it.

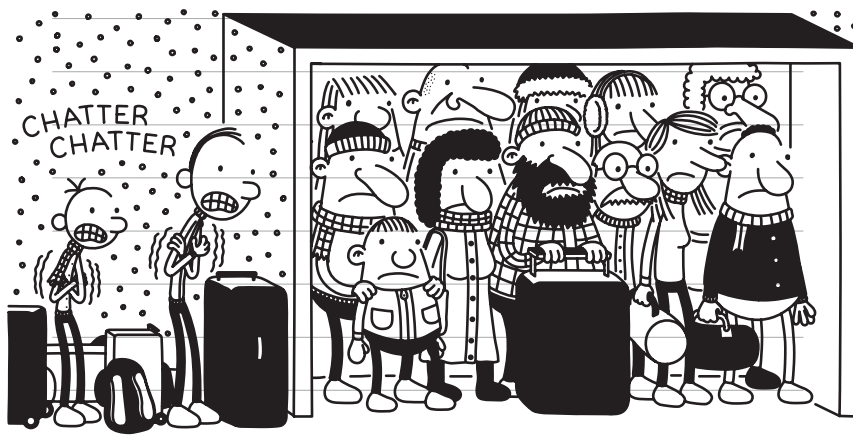
Unfortunately, I didn't notice that there was a giant slush puddle on my side of the car until it was too late.



After we parked, we rolled our bags to the nearest shuttle stop, which wasn't a lot of fun.



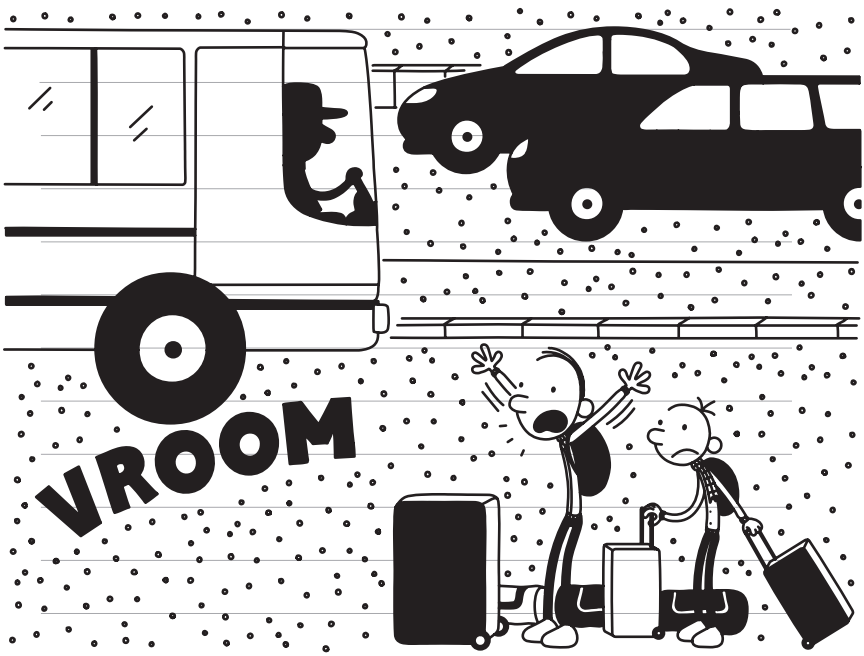
The sign said the shuttle bus to the main terminal came every ten minutes. But there was no room for us in the bus shelter, so we had to wait outside in the freezing cold.



Twenty minutes went by without a bus, and Dad started getting really anxious about the time. He said we were just gonna have to WALK to the terminal, which was about a mile away.

I would've tried to convince Dad to wait a little longer, but my sock was starting to turn to ice, and I didn't wanna get frostbite.

Sure enough, once we got about a hundred feet from the shelter, the shuttle bus pulled into the parking lot. We tried to get the driver to stop, but he just blew right by us.



So we RAN to the shuttle stop, but we didn't make it back in time.