

DANNY  
HUTCHESON  
*AND THE QUEST FOR COOL*

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## Chapter 1: The First Day of School

Oh great, another school year. I can't wait for another year of brutish bullies, humorless teachers, and clueless parents. And don't even mention Derek.

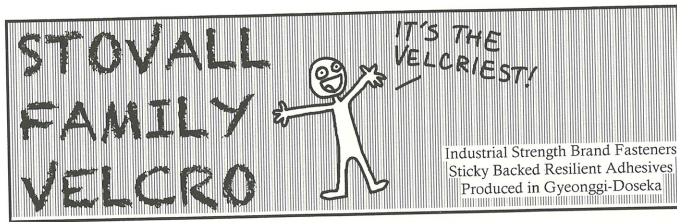
I was hoping I could put this off. Maybe if I ignored my mom's calling for long enough, 7th Grade would just leave me alone. Clearly, my mom had other ideas.



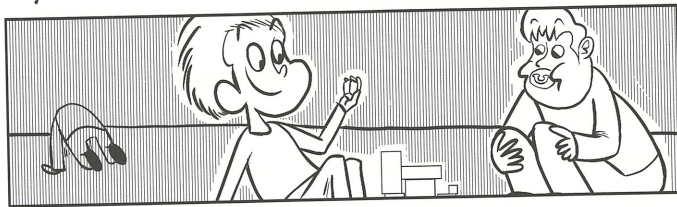
I don't get my mom at all. She means well, but she hates it when she thinks I'm acting lazy, which is pretty much all the time. I'm not really all that lazy, my mom and I just have a different definition of what laziness is.

If she thinks I'M lazy, she should see what Shawn is like.

Shawn is the guy I suppose I'd have to call my best friend, and he's handed EVERYTHING in life. I guess his great grandfather invented a type of Velcro or something, because his family is totally loaded.



So money is never a problem for him. If he wants something, all he has to do is ask for it. He's also totally babied by his family. I've known him since Kindergarten, and I can tell you that he sucked on a pacifier until he was 6 years old.

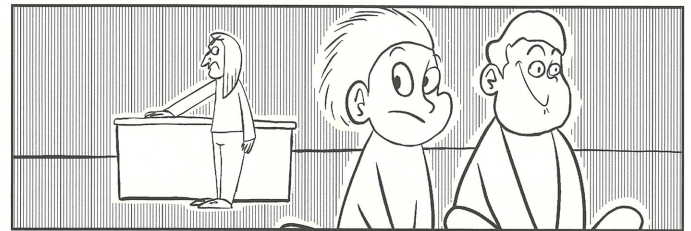


As a friend, I've kept this secret from people, of course. Though it's been hard keeping something so funny from everyone.

Shawn is probably part of the reason Mom thinks I'm so lazy. We usually just play

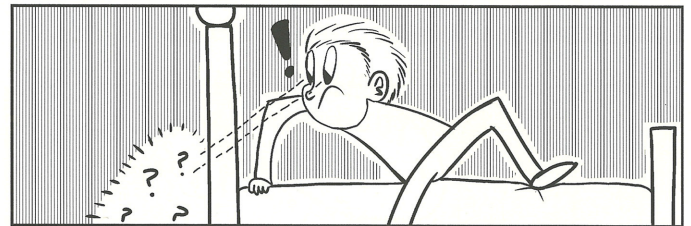
video games whenever he comes over, which is pretty much her least favorite activity, which stinks because it's MY favorite.

Sure, she puts on the sweet mom act whenever Shawn comes over, but I've caught her giving him the stink eye when his back is turned.



The worst part is, whenever she tries to make me "be active", it always ends in disaster. I'll probably go into that later.

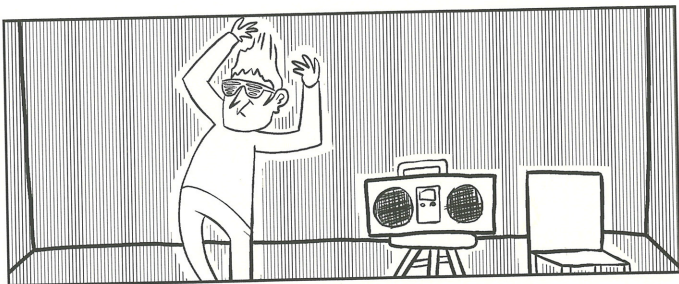
When I finally got out of bed, I noticed that my backpack wasn't where I put it the night before.





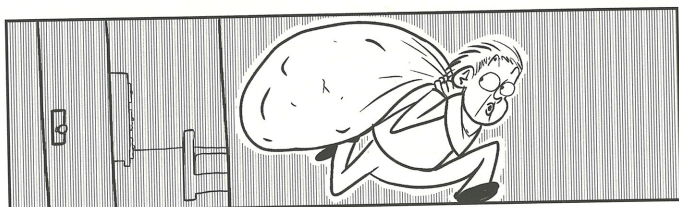
Of course. Derek.

Derek is my older brother, and he is the biggest jerk on the planet. He's always going out "clubbing", which I know means he's just going to a friend's house and dancing like a moron in the middle of their living room.



And whenever he's not "clubbing", he's messing with me. Lately, we've gotten into the habit of stealing each other's stuff whenever either of us gets annoyed.

It starts off small, things like remote batteries or computer cables. But soon enough we're making off with each other's clothes, books, furniture, you name it.

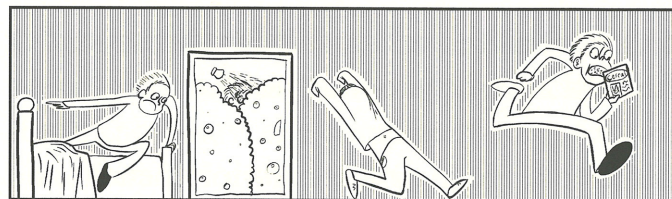


It got to the point where we pretty much had to trade rooms because all of our stuff was in the other brother's room.

I guess this backpack thievery is revenge for me stealing his headphones two days ago.

I was all set to sneak into his room and steal a bunch of his lame sunglasses, when I noticed that I only had 10 minutes to get ready for school. I guess I'd spend more time in bed than I'd realized.

I got myself ready for school faster than I'd ever done before.



With only a minute left, and no sign of the backpack, I frantically searched for Derek. When I asked Mom where he was, she proudly told me how Derek had taken shown initiative and responsibility by driving himself to school that day.

He's a criminal mastermind.

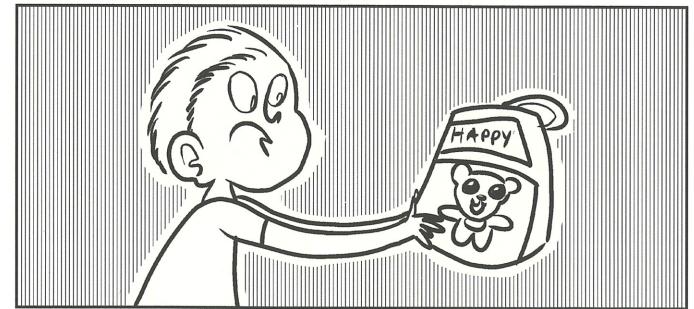
When I told Mom that Derek had stolen my backpack and probably taken it to school, she reasoned that it was probably just a misunderstanding.



He had it all thought out. If I wasn't so mad at him, I'd have been taking notes.

Mom told me to find some more pencils and notebooks, and she'd try to look for another backpack I could borrow until I got mine back.

Once she came back, I immediately began to regret my careless attitude towards my old backpacks, because the only one she could find that wasn't half-destroyed was the one I used for PRESCHOOL.



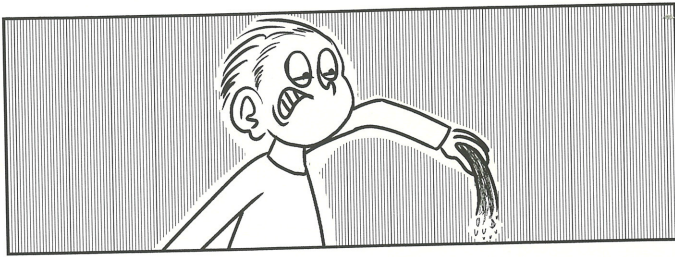
I told my Mom I absolutely could not use that backpack, but she wouldn't listen. I tried to explain how all the kids would make fun of me, how there was nothing that could possibly be more embarrassing than bringing that backpack.

Of course she wouldn't listen. She said that was the price I paid for losing my backpack. I don't know how she completely forgot it was Derek's fault I didn't have it.

Right after I left the house, I got rid of the backpack. I got all the supplies out of it, then dumped it in the trash just to be safe.

I ended up putting everything in my lunch box. It worked out fine for the day, although my binder got a little bit soggy.



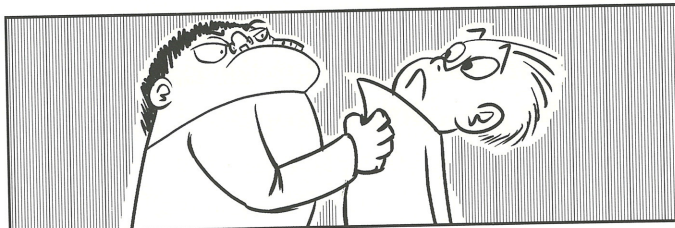


And with that, I was on my way to school. Let me tell you a little about my school. The most important thing here is popularity.

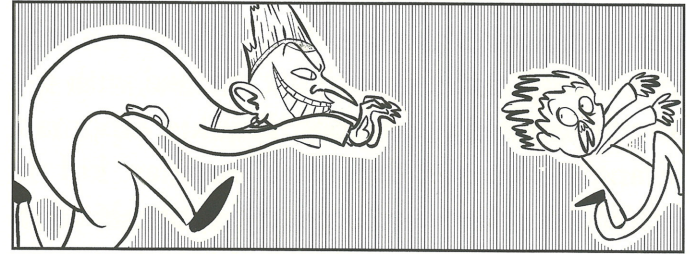
Not because it affects how kids treat you, not because it decides who you go to prom with, but because it's a matter of life and death.

My school's social class is ruled over by the two biggest tools you will ever meet in your life: Gerard Bratten and Jonathan Creeden.

Gerard looks like to be the result of a mad scientist's experiment to combine a bulldog and a human being. At the very least, he seems to have the brain of a bulldog.



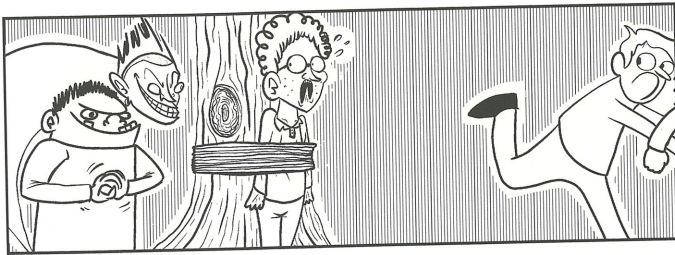
Nobody is able to tell whether Jonathan has been held back in every single grade, or if he's just an adult man who sneaks into the middle school to torment children. Either way, he's terrifying.



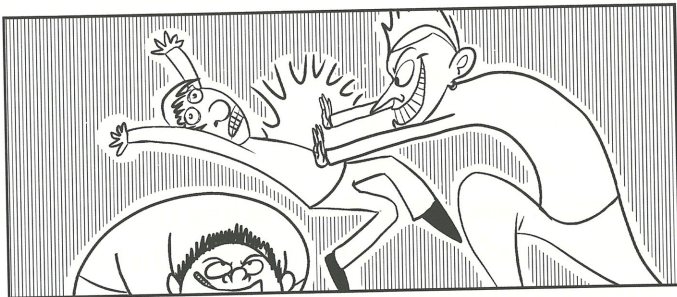
Together, they took control of the school's popularity system and announced that their torments would be based on how unpopular their victim was.

Kids ranked higher in popularity are naturally safe, while those in the lower levels are constantly fighting amongst themselves, desperately trying to reach higher and escape the bullies' grasps.

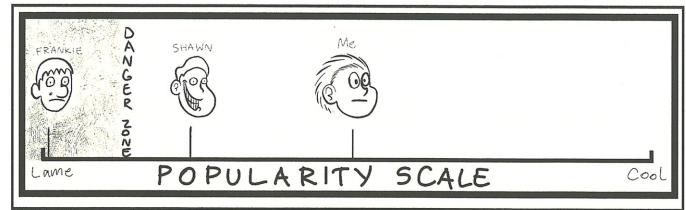
The lower you are, the more likely you are to be sacrificed to the bullies in order to save everyone else.



I'm somewhere near the middle of the popularity ranks. I don't get messed with too much, certainly less than Frankie Lippman. Frankie became the least popular kid in school after he was discovered eating his own boogers. He received the full brunt of their fury for an entire week.

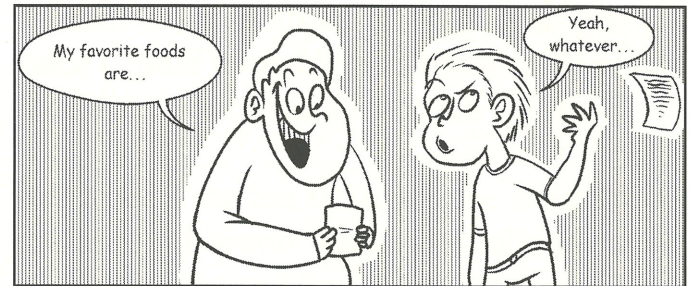


I'm nowhere near that on the popularity scale, though I'd easily sell someone out to rank a little bit higher. I'd do it to Shawn, but he's my friend, and more importantly he's already way lower than me.



Surprisingly, nothing much happened on the first day of school. The whole day was mostly spent on all the dumb exercises the teacher has us do to “learn about our classmates”.

They had us find someone with three of the same favorite kinds of food and dumb stuff like that. I just went to find Shawn for all of them.



It wouldn't be so bad if they hadn't done it in every single class that day.

