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Opening extract from  
**Middle School: The Worst Years of  
My Life**

Written by  
**James Patterson**

Illustrated by  
**Laura Park**

Published by  
**Arrow Books Ltd an imprint of  
Cornerstone**

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1 3 5 7 9 1 0 8 6 4 2

Young Arrow  
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road  
London SW1V 2SA

Young Arrow is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies  
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First published by Young Arrow in 2011

This edition published by Young Arrow in 2017

[www.penguin.co.uk](http://www.penguin.co.uk)

A CIP catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library

ISBN 9781784757649

Printed and bound by Clays Ltd, St Ives Plc

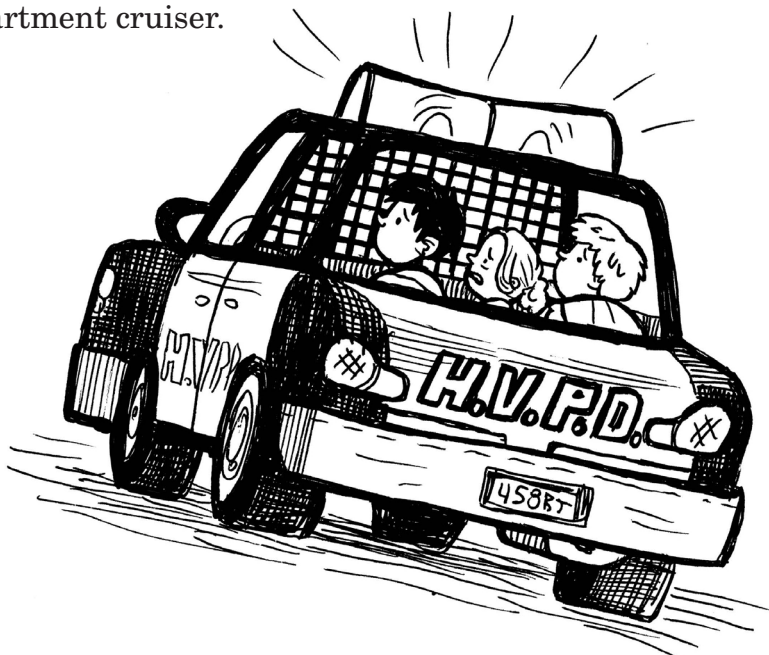
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## CHAPTER 1

# I'M RAFE KHATCHADORIAN, TRAGIC HERO

**I**t feels as honest as the day is *crummy* that I begin this tale of total desperation and woe with me, my pukey sister, Georgia, and Leonardo the Silent sitting like rotting sardines in the back of a Hills Village Police Department cruiser.



Now, there's a pathetic family portrait you don't want to be a part of, believe me. More on the unfortunate Village Police incident later. I need to work myself up to tell you that disaster story.

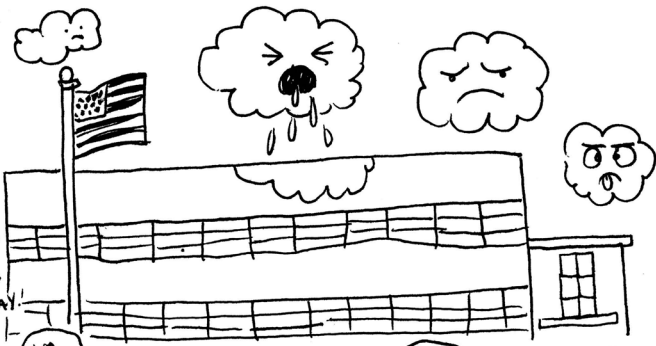
So anyway, *ta-da*, here it is, book fans, and all of you in need of merit points at school, the true autobio of my life so far. The dreaded middle school years. If you've ever been a middle schooler, you understand already. If you're not in middle school yet, you'll understand soon enough.

But let's face it: Understanding *me*—I mean, *really* understanding me and my nutty life—isn't so easy. That's why it's so hard for me to find people I can trust. The truth is, I don't know who I can trust. So mostly I don't trust anybody. Except my mom, Jules. (Most of the time, anyway.)

So . . . let's see if I can trust you. First, some background.

That's me, by the way, arriving at “prison”—also known as Hills Village Middle School—in Jules's four-by-four. The picture credit goes to Leonardo the Silent.

Getting back to the story, though, I *do* trust one other person. That would actually be Leonardo.



Oh have fun AT SKOOL!

HONK HONK

VROOOM

Leo is capital C Crazy, and capital O Off-the-Wall, but he keeps things real.

Here are some other people I don't trust as far as I can throw a truckload of pianos.

There's Ms. Ruthless Donatello, but you can just call her the Dragon Lady. She teaches English and also handles my favorite subject in sixth grade—after-school detention.



Also, Mrs. Ida Stricker, the vice principal. Ida's pretty much in charge of every breath anybody takes at HVMS.

That's Georgia, my super-nosy, super-obnoxious, super-brat sister, whose only good quality is that she looks like Jules might

have looked when she was in fourth grade.

There are more on my list, and we'll get to them eventually. Or maybe not. I'm not exactly sure how this is going to work out. As you can probably tell, this is my first full-length book.

But let's stay on the subject of *us* for a little bit.

I kind of want to, but how do I know I can trust you with all my embarrassing personal



stuff—like the police car disaster story? What are you like? *Inside*, what are you like?

Are you basically a pretty good, pretty decent person? Says who? Says you? Says your 'rents? Says your sibs?

Okay, in the spirit of a possible friendship between us—and this is a huge big deal for me—here's another true confession.

This is what I *actually* looked like when I got to school that first morning of sixth grade.



We still friends, or are you out of here?

Hey — *don't go* — all right?

I kind of like you.

Seriously. You know how to listen, at least. And believe me, I've got quite the story to tell you.