A photograph of a long, empty school hallway. On both sides of the hallway are rows of yellow lockers. The floor is a polished, light-colored material that reflects the overhead fluorescent lights. At the end of the hallway is a set of double doors with a semi-circular window above them. The text "WHEN SCHOOL THROWS YOU A CURVE BALL" is overlaid in a large, white, serif font in the lower half of the image.

WHEN SCHOOL  
THROWS YOU A  
CURVE BALL



First-year high-school student Harry was feeling hungry, but he didn't know what to eat because all he could find in the cupboards was a nasty, dust-covered jar of pickles.

To distract him from the rumbles of his tummy, he decided to play Fortnite.

Although he tried to take his mind off food with video games, his stomach kept making noises that even the characters in the game heard his tummy.

Well, that is what he thought. The hunger made his imagination run wild, and it all seemed so real.



As Harry was contemplating dusting off that jar of pickles, he heard his mum yell down the hallway.

“Harry! You better not be playing video games. You’ve got school exams tomorrow, so you better be ready.”

The blood rushed from Harry’s head, he forgot all about his exams and he definitely wasn’t ready. Fortunately, as he scrambled through his room to find his school work, he found a packet of peanuts in his drawer, so his tummy was no longer a worry.

Harry got out his computer, and started typing crazily, doing everything he can to prepare for his exam.



Long after the sun had set, as the clock was approaching midnight, all the lights went out. The internet was gone. It was the worst possible thing to happen - there was a power cut.

Harry was worried that if he didn't do well on his exams he would be suspended, or worse, have to go to summer school!

All of a sudden, Harry had an idea. He knew his brother Frederick had done these exams before, so he was hoping he would still have a copy of his old papers.

In the darkness of the night, Harry tiptoes down the hall to his brother's room, trying not to wake his parents. He knocked on Frederick's door.

"Are you awake?" Harry whispers.

"Of course I am, loser," Frederick replied as his face was illuminated by his phone screen.

In a panic, Harry explained his situation and asked if he could get a copy of his old exam papers. But instead of helping his younger brother, he decided this was a chance for him to line his pockets.

"I tell you what," Frederick said as he put his phone down and stood up from his bed. "I'll give you my old exam papers, but it's going to cost."

He wanted \$150.50 for the papers, and without even thinking, Harry ran back to his room, grabbed all the money he had been saving that he kept under his mattress, and gave it to his brother. He had just enough.





“Good doing business with you,” Frederick said with a smirk on his face.

Then Harry returned to his room, and went to bed with a sense of relief ahead of his big exam.

## Monday morning

The power was back on, and the sun woke Harry up, so he sprung out of bed. And as he was getting ready for school he was furiously studying his brother's old exam papers.

But it wasn't until he got on the school bus that he noticed his brother's grades. He couldn't believe it, his brother failed the exam and he paid \$150.50 for answers that wouldn't help.

Harry started hyperventilating





As he got to school, he got even more nervous. He didn't know what more he could do. He really didn't want to get suspended. And he definitely didn't want to think about the possibility of summer school.

He went to his locker, and put his stuff inside, and he was comforted to see and remember he had a big bag of lollies in there. He grabbed a couple, Harry really likes the sour ones, locked his locker, and headed to class.

The nerves were enough for Harry to deal with, but the school bully, Patrick, just wanted to make his life a little more difficult.

When he got to class, Harry rushed to his seat, preparing himself for the doom that will come after he fails his exam. But Patrick, being the wise guy he is, put large pins on the teacher's seat to play a prank.

He chuckles while he elbows Harry as he heads past him to his seat.

Before anyone could say or do anything, Mrs Spooner came in, went to sit down, and she was quickly back on her feet again.

"Who put these pins on my chair," she says in a stern, authoritative voice.

And without hesitation, Patrick and the entire class pointed at Harry, blaming him.



Mrs Spooner screws up her face and looks over her glasses. She's not sure if she believes the class, and decided to move on and start handing out papers for the exam.

The paper lands on Harry's desk, and the room starts to heat up. He doesn't know what to do. But coaches himself to get his head into the right frame of mind, and he gets on with the exam.

Once he handed in his exam, it didn't take long to get the results, as Mrs Spooner started marking it straight away.

Mrs Spooner looked over her glasses at Harry, screwed up her mouth and pressed it to one side of her face. And as she handed back his exam, she said.

"You scraped through, but you need to do better."

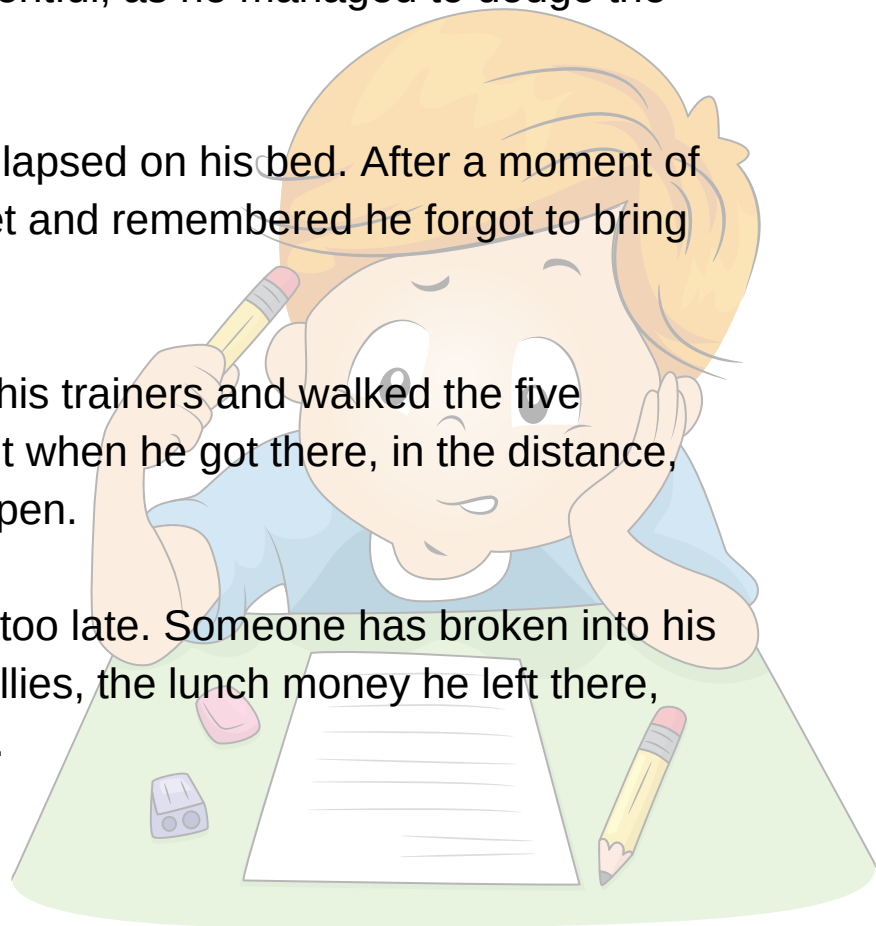
Harry got a C-, but with that came a warning - if he doesn't pick up his grades he will be spending his summer in the classroom.

The rest of the day was uneventful, as he managed to dodge the playground bully Patrick.

When he got home, Harry collapsed on his bed. After a moment of nothing, Harry leapt to his feet and remembered he forgot to bring home the stuff in his locker.

Without delay, he slipped on his trainers and walked the five kilometres back to school. But when he got there, in the distance, he saw his locker door was open.

He swiftly ran to it, but it was too late. Someone has broken into his locker, taken his big bag of lollies, the lunch money he left there, and his favourite water bottle.





## Two weeks later

Harry was still pretty miserable after losing all his valuables he kept in his locker, and no one has been able to find his stuff.

At every turn, he just expected the worst.

That night, at the dinner table, Harry's mum began to open her mouth and Harry braced himself for a growling.

"Good job, Harry," she says.

Harry sat up in his chair, with a puzzled look on his face.

"What for?" Harry replied.

"Your report card just arrived, and you got an A+ in all of your exams," says Harry's mum.



Frederick was so surprised with the news, he was sure Harry was going to fail with his old exam papers, that he passed out and fell face first into his mashed potatoes.

While Harry's mum was worried about Frederick and cleaning the potatoes from his face, Harry couldn't believe it either. His teacher must have got his results mixed up with the smartest kid in his class.

When prize giving came around, Harry was constantly recognised - he received five principal awards.

As Harry was walking down from the stage with his awards, he caught a glimpse of the smartest kid in his class, she looked so confused. And why wouldn't she, she must have received Harry's poor grades.





Her parents weren't happy with her results, so even though she didn't need to enrol in summer school, that's where she was going.

Her alarm was set at 5am every day for boot camp.

And all she was allowed to eat was asparagus for a month!

Harry's eyes sprung open, and he sat up from his bed with a hot sweat.

"Phew," sighed Harry.

"It was only a dream."

Harry rested his head in his hands.

"It must have been those pickles I ate that gave me these weird dreams."

Harry turned his head, and looked at his calendar. He still has a week to study for his next exam.

