

Mic CHECK

1, 2, 3

Mic check, 1, 2, 3 . . . Nice to meet you, my name is Z.
Virtual fist bump.



How are you, my G? (That's your new name, by the way!) You cool? Of course you are – you picked up this book, didn't you?! And IMO (in my opinion), that now makes you cooler than a polar bear in sunglasses. Anyway, welcome to the story of how I actually became Z, because **TOP SECRET**: Z isn't my real name. So this is sort of an origin story, I guess, except I don't turn into a villain at the end. **NO WAY!** I turn

into a **RAP LEGEND** instead! No superheroes included, I'm afraid – that's a different sort of book, my G.

BUT, don't worry. This adventure is:

- BIG** (as in jam-packed)
- BAD** (as in good)
- LIT** (as in sick) and
- LOUD!** (as in pure vibes and wicked energy!)

So hold on tight and don't drop that mic (yet) because we've got A LOT to do in this book, including winning a rap battle! And yes, I said 'we'. Why? Because you're coming with me, my G, all the way.

But, before we go any further, let's set the tone with our first set of barz (a fancy street name for raps). Oh, and don't forget to join in too.

Okay, quick mic check: one two, one two! Now, DJ, drop the beat!

Wowza!

You've just found this out but,
if you take a closer look:

There's a rapper in your book!

NO WAY!

And you know who it is?

R to da **A** to da **P** to da **K** to da **ID**

It's Rap Kid!

So, yeah, that's me: Z aka Rap Kid. A young legend on a quest to become the best. Well, not just the best actually. I want to be the GOAT!*

*Side note 1: **GOAT** stands for **GREATEST OF ALL TIME** by the way, just in case you needed me to say.

Not an actual goat. That would be weird!

Anyway, speaking of rap and rhyming, and as you can

probably tell by now: I LOVE to RHYME! Which basically makes me a rhyme-o-holic and a lyrical G (this G being short for genius). I can't help it – I was actually born this way. Rhyming is in my soul. Call it a 'gift' (or a 'curse'), or a birthmark you hear rather than see. It's like rhyming has always been part of me – bubbling in my belly and then BOOM, the lyrical lava comes rushing up and I just have to spit it out. Pure fire!

Seriously, even my first proper word, 'Mum', was quickly followed up with 'bum', which made her mad (or sad – I was too young to tell). And then when I said 'Dad' for the first time, I rhymed it with 'kebab', which made him hungry, so he went and bought a kebab and shared it with me. Result! There's a photo of baby me eating my first Greek Souvlaki! Yum!

I don't rhyme *all* the time. As I've gotten older, I've learned to control it a bit. Imagine thinking in rhyme... That would be a nightmare. You'd never be able to think about things that don't rhyme with anything else like the words

chocolate, oranges, elbows, purple – which is actually my favourite colour – and definitely not something I want to just dismiss from my life like that.

Now, I keep rhyming exclusively for when I'm writing barz in my Book of Raps, or (less exclusively) when I'm nervous and have to speak to a teacher or in front of people. That's when I DON'T have any control over it, and the rhyming gets REALLY BAD, my G! I suddenly turn into a panic pro, a quiver kid, a worry wombat . . . whatever you want to call it. Simply said: I'm a fluster of fuss when it comes to pressure and public speaking. Do you know what I mean? Class presentation? No thanks! Speaking in front of the whole school in assembly? Just not for me, my G. I know *They* say practice makes perfect when it comes to public speaking, but for me it just seems to make trouble.

Quick disclaimer: If I get nervous at any point during this epic adventure and start excessively rhyming, don't worry, I just need to go through my two-step-system motions:

1. I'll make fresh cup of anxieTEA (best served hot).
2. I will rhyme and rhyme... and RHYME my way out of, or into even more, trouble!

But, here's where you come in to save me. If any of the above does happen or we do encounter a public speaking pressure scenario, just shout:

**HE'S A RAPPER! GET HIM
OUTTA HERE!**

Thanks, bro!*

**Sidenote 2: You'll notice that I say 'bro' a lot.*

This doesn't mean I think we're related in any way.

It also has nothing to do with gender. It's just my way of

saying mate, homie, pal, BRF (Best Rapper Friend),

or BRFF (Best Rapper Friend Forever). It basically

means we're so close and so cool that we could be family.

*Get it, BROmco? Sorry, I can't help it! I can
just tell you're a cool cat**, and I am so excited
to have you come on this adventure with me.*

***Sidenote 2.5: I don't actually think you're a cat. It's just
a saying from the olden days that means you're all right.*

You know: as in you're cool, laid-back, easygoing.

Anyway, that's enough for the intro. It's time to turn the page so you can join me on this next-level adventure to go from a quiet, classroom kid to a straight-up RAP LEGEND (who hopefully goes on to win the greatest rap competition in the world and then becomes the GOAT). Pretty straightforward plan really. You ready to roll? Fist bump if you're in:



That's that sorted then. Great to have you on board, my G. Now let's goooooooooooooooooo!!!*

**Sidenote 3: I almost forgot ... if some of the words I say in this book don't make sense to you, it's probably because you ain't a & from the underground rap scene like me ... yet! But don't worry, BROseph, I've got your back. How? Well, I've taken the liberty of putting together a rap dictionary/glossary thingamajig at the back of the book for you to use whenever you need a translation or vocab breakdown. See, I told you I've got your back. Thank me later!*

No, seriously, do thank me, 'cause putting it together took
aaaaaggggeeeeeesssss!

Speaking of time ... it's SHOWTIME! See you in chapter
one, BROski!

CHAPTER 1

This Is Me!

NEWS FLASH! NEWS FLASH! THIS JUST IN:

Rap Kid wins! A number-one album, the biggest-selling song of the year, a killer clothing line and now he's officially the Golden Mic Royal Rap Rumble: Battle of the Barz champion! Can anyone or anything stop this young legend from dominating the rap world?

Nope! Absolutely NOT! I told ya, this is meant to be, my G. The fire barz, the fresh garms, the sick cars and my



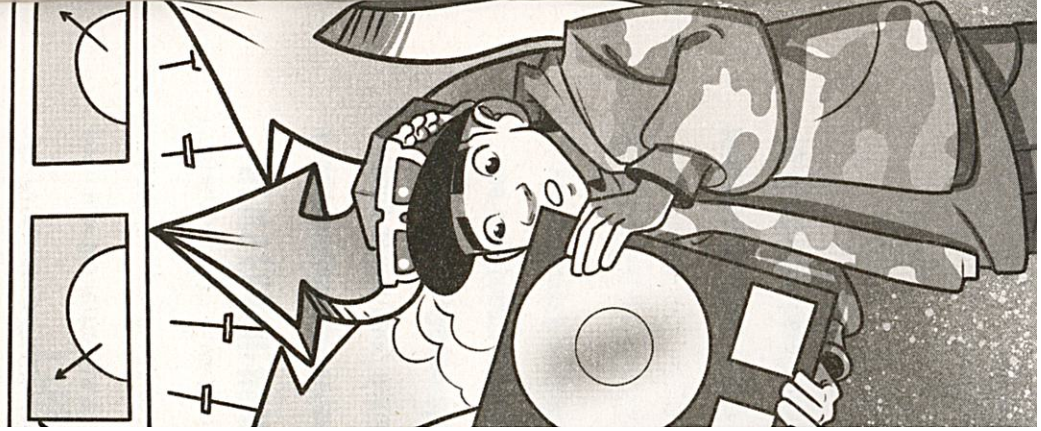
name in bright lights: I'm a rap superstar! It's in my baggy genes! LOL. Get it? In fact, with all of this success (and this drip, of course), sources say you can see me shining from the moon. And that's the truth, Ruth!*

**Sideneote 4: Wait, just to be clear, I'm not saying your name is Ruth by the way, unless it actually is which is pretty sick - hi, Ruth! 'Ruth' just happens to rhyme with 'truth', so that's why I said it.*

See, I told ya, I can't help myself: always rhyming and always shining! And climbing and designing and redefining ...

STOP!

(See, that was the point when you were meant to shout out: **HES A RAPPER! GET HIM OUTTA HERE!** Next time, my G, next time!)





'Wake up, you daydreaming wasteman!'

Oops! Was I daydreaming again?

Uh-oh. I know that voice, and that smell: the combination of Badboy 2.0 aftershave and hot HATERade breath can only mean one thing. It's Bully Boy! Yep, that's his name and his game. The biggest bully in town and he's always in my face and space like a mosquito on Dracula's burrito. A proper pest!

'Fantasizing about being a famous rapper again, loser?'

Ha! As if!

He knows I won't answer, just in case I rhyme and say

something silly in front of everyone, so I stay quiet. As usual. That's why they call me Z after all. Z means zero. Zero words. Zilch! And while I am not a fan of it as a name, I know there's just no point in me saying something. Why? If I do, it will rhyme and they'll all laugh at me. And that's even worse!


'Thought so! Well it's time to wake up, big man, 'cause you actually need a voice to be a rapper. Your barz are weak and your flow is dead.'

Bully Boy's posse are pointing at me. Here we go AGAIN. I like to call them The Snicker Squad or The Ha-Ha Hooligans 'cause of the way they chuckle and giggle to their phony homies. So predictable.

WAIT! Bully Boy's got my Book of Raps!

A billion words are bubbling inside my mind right now like the word 'no', but ... I'll probably rhyme that with 'bro' and he's defo not my bro!

Or the word 'wait', but then I might rhyme that with 'mate' and that's something we'll never be, so I'm staying quiet just to be sure.

Oh no! He's not going to do what I think he is with my book, is he?  *(Instead of OMD, I say OMD - it means 'oh my days'.)*

OMD! He is. I can't even grab it from his hands because they're way too high in the sky for me to reach.

Too late. He's done it. He's thrown my Book of Raps across the class like a frisbee. And guess what? It's hit Mrs Malinki on her head. Uh-oh!

THIS.

IS.

NOT.

GOOD.

I mean, she already hates me after my first day in her class when I accidentally said, 'Yes, Mrs Malinki', and then I rhymed it with 'stinky' when she called my name for the register. I told you, I can't help it! So now I just nod or raise my hand, but she's never forgotten. Neither have I.

And now I'm definitely in for it! See, this rhyming can be a dangerous game, my G, so that's exactly why I stay

quiet most of the time and just write all of my thoughts down on paper instead. It's a lot safer, trust me!

It's also a great way to get things off your mind. Here, check out this rap I wrote about Bully Boy. If you like it, you can try rapping it too. Let's GO!

A Rap About Bully Boy

Once upon a time in a faraway land,

Bully Boy lived with his Bully Boy gang.

One day he went for a walk and fell

Into the oblivion.

Oh well!

Ha! That was jokes! As you can tell, I am not a Bully Boy fan. Or a fan of bullies in general. The words 'my life' and 'nightmare' have come together in helly-matrimony since he face-planted into my world.

ARRRRGGGGGGHHH!

Sorry, I had to let that out. You know that feeling you get when you just wanna scream really loudly to get some of that frustration out? Happens to the best of us. And, here are some simple steps if you really want to nail it:

1. Look up at the sky. A variety of backdrops can work for this: green field, urban jungle, bedroom window.
2. Clench both of your fists till your knuckles turn pale or throb a little.
3. Drop to your knees. The more dramatic the better. Puddles are even more theatrical if there's one nearby (but not essential).
4. Scream the word 'argh' really loudly whilst shaking your fists in the air, still looking up at the sky.

How did you get on? Trust me, it is a great way to feel better. And it looks really impressive!*

**Sidenote 5: You've probably realized by now that I'm a bit rampant when it comes to a tangent!*

My mind just bounces from one thing to another. I call it a brain wave. I'll be thinking and talking about one thing and then SPLASH! Another thought comes crashing down and takes over! So stay alert, my fr, 'cause this adventure is going to have a ton of brain waves. In other words, there will be lots of side stories in the big main story . . . if that makes sense? It's just how I roll, sorry. (Not sorry!)

Anyway, snap-back to reality and Mrs Malinki is vexed and stomping towards me like a hungry raptor. And nah, not the cute one, Blue, from that movie. This dinoROAR can't be tamed. She is absolutely fuming! There's actual smoke blowing from her ears like she just drank a smoothie mix of extra hot sauce, a Sichuan hot pot AND a vindaloo. Extra spicy!

'What do you have to say for yourself, young man?'

Silence. Cue the tumbleweed and Wild West music.
'Silence. Again. Fine! Off you go to Mr Grimewood's room.'

Now, I know what you're thinking: the 'Grime' in his name must come from the street word 'grime' as in grime music, the genre you emcee over or rave to, right? And with that logic, Mr Grimewood must be some kind of famous street DJ, correct? Well, sorry to break it to you like Father Christmas's foot through a gingerbread house, but this ain't that kinda party, BRObama. Nope! Grime (in our school) is more likely to come from the dictionary definition:

Grime

/grɪm/ A layer of dirt on the skin or a building

Synonyms: filth, muck, gunge ...

I couldn't have put it better myself, 'cause our 'Grime' is all of the above, except he gets UNDER our skin and is

ALL OVER the school building. EVERYWHERE! You should see the state of his office — proper grotty. Let me break it down for you in detail: he has a bald head like a boiled egg, a hungry caterpillar monobrow, a total of eight teeth and the smallest ears you've ever seen. Imagine two walnuts on the side of your head and you've sorta got the picture.

There's even a rumour going around that Mr Grimewood is actually heartless. As in he has no heart! Far-fetched, I know, but apparently they weren't giving out hearts the day he was born, years and years and years ago, which means he now just has an angry dance DJ in the middle of his chest blaring a booming bassline to pump blood around his big, burly body. The guy is proper strict and I'm now heading straight to his room of doom.

DUM!
DUM!
DUM!

A few minutes later

(Tip for the future: stalling for a little while adds dramatic effect.)

Knock knock!

'Come in!'

He's screaming already. Wowza! This doesn't look good, my G. Whatever, I'm going in . . . And BOOM! There it is: over the massive desk is his bald, shiny head – and it looks like this egg is ready to crack!

'What did you do this time, Z?'

He ain't even looking up from his pile of important teacher stuff. He's probably reading some old-skool manual about how to be the meanest headteacher on the planet. I suppose everyone's gotta have dreams about being good at something, don't they?

You know the deal by now, my G: I'm not responding because if I do, I just KNOW I'll say the wrong thing. Like call him 'SLIME' instead of 'GRIME', or 'egg preacher'

instead of 'headteacher'.

'Z, if you don't answer me, I will assume you did in fact throw your silly little book of words at Mrs Malinki . . .'

Nope! Still not replying.

He's looking at me, and now another crack has appeared on his egg head. I'm not YOLKing! Get it? LOL! Woah! Okay, when I say 'crack', I mean 'vein'. Big and bogey-green. So big it's like a beanstalk about to sprout – bigger than the one Jack climbed to grab that golden hen. But there's no golden hen here, just a giant – and it looks like he's ready to blow!

Again, I ain't saying a thing. There's no way I'm going to chance a rhyme with Grime. N to the O! I feel like there's steam coming off his head and it's making the room smell like eggs, so it's time to get out of here before I end up fried, poached or scrambled!

'Fine! You want to play it the hard way. Then it's two weeks of detention before and after school starting Monday. Now, get out. Your face is offending my *feng shui*!'

Holy Quackamole! I did not EGGspect that. That's a low blow! But hey, at least I can leave the room of doom and go and find my Book of Raps back in class. Yep, that's the mission, and you're coming with me, BRObi-Wan Kenobi, so let's roll on to chapter two!

It's time for MISSION BOOK GRAB. LET'SSSSSS
GOOOOOOOOO!

CHAPTER 2

A Kid on a Mission With...

There it is! I can see the book, my G. Winner, winner, chicken dinner! Woah, but wait! Mrs Malinki is sitting next to it. What? She usually goes to the staff room for lunch. Oh man, my mission is over before it's even started!

Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!
(FYI: that was one of those baby cries you see toddlers doing lying on the floor in the middle of a supermarket. You know? The ones where their mouths are open wide, and you can see they're so upset but no sound is coming out, until...)

(((GONG!)))

Woah! What was that?

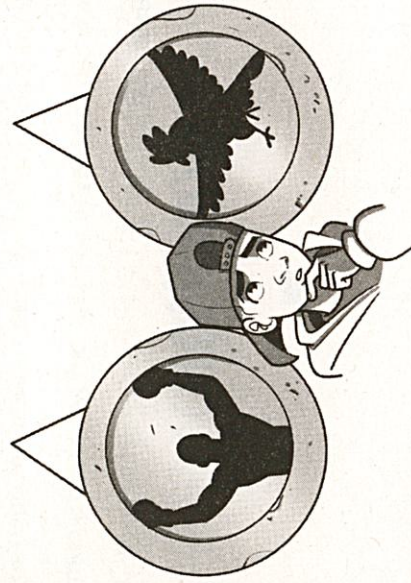
'Stop crying, young padawan!'

Huh? That wasn't the toddler tantrum sound I was expecting. In fact, who is that?

(((((GONG!))))))

'Rappers never quit, Z. You must be at one with the problem and only then will you reach the true solution.'

Ah! I know who that is now! It's my inner **WARRIOR**. Should have known from the GONG sound. Trust me when I say that things are about to get pretty DEEP, my G. Yep, whenever you hear that sound, it'll be him. Unless the GONG is a little more high-pitched, then it's likely to be my inner **WORRIER**. They both have a habit of



popping up with their thoughts in times of desperation or decision-making.

I like to think of them as my **INNER CHICKEN vs INNER CHAMP**. They don't always agree, which means I am often left feeling proper confused and bamboozled! Here's what's happening right now in my head:

WARRIOR vs WORRIER

WARRIOR: You can do it, Z. I believe in you.

WORRIER: Don't you dare, kid! If you get caught, it's all over.

WARRIOR: Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision. Make the right one, my son.

WORRIER: Actually, fear is an indicator, like in a car, and you should do a U-turn and get away pronto!

WARRIOR: It's never wrong to fight for what is right!

WORRIER: There will be no fighting in school and certainly no stealing that book back!

See: It's so annoying, I mean, what would you do if you were me right now, my G?

You know what? Let's have some fun! Why don't you let me know what you would do by ticking below:

- Do the BIG-MAN-TING and go for it. Full 100!
- Act like a lost chicken who just bopped into a fried chicken shop by mistake and GET OUT OF THERE ASAP!*

*Side note 6: Hey, can I just say that I know that we've just sorta met, but I'm getting the vibe that you'd go for it, so I will too. I have to!

There are so many sick lyrics and proper bangers in that book from back in the day (infants) right up to this very

moment (almost secondary school), I can't just remember the Paper Recycling Gods, Lost Property Lord or, worst case, the King and Queen of Confiscation. If that happens, the world may never get to hear my classic raps... *Wile*

The Chicken Fajita Rap.

Check this out:

The Chicken Fajita Rap

This is a rap about wraps.

I'm a rapper and a wrapper, how's that?

I've got a red onion and a pepper
in my hand,

And sizzling chicken in a pan.

Ooooh, or the one I wrote about the smelliest fart in Europe that goes like this:

The Smelliest Fart in Europe

Everybody get out,

Everybody run!

I can feel something humming in my bum.

Everybody escape,

Everybody flee,

I can feel it coming on the count of three!

1 ...

2 ...

3 ...

(Insert your best fart sound here)

Now, fire away! Literally, LOL!

Anyway, as I told ya: there are some absolute stonkers (and some absolutely bonkers ones) in there, so there's no way I'm letting Mrs Malinki take them! Bet she wants the raps for herself to hijack my future superstardom. Yeah,

that's it! Well, I'm saying NO to the WAY and we're going in, fam! Decision made.

But first, we need an action plan.

And do you know what *They* say the best plan of action is? DISTRACTION!


Actually, while we're on the subject of *They*, who actually are *They* with all of this advice and bla, bla, bla quotes? Seriously, who does say all of this stuff? People – mums, dads, teachers, in particular – always say, 'Well, you know what *They* say ...' and then reel off some wise piece of advice that's centuries old. Doesn't make sense! We listen to *them* all the time, but we don't even know who *They* are! I mean, *They* might not even be that wise.



Warning: It's time for a brain wave!

Just for fun, I have put together some of *They's* greatest hits below, alongside some of my totally-more-than-acceptable responses:







🗨️ **THEY say never meet your heroes.** Ridiculous! I've met my local ice-cream-van owners, a power couple called Milly and Vanilli (bet he invented the flavour vanilla), and they're absolute LEGENDS in the ice-cream-van community. Let me tell you, I've met them many times and they've always hooked me up with an extra flake, or drizzle of strawberry sauce. So IMHO (in my HUMBLE opinion) they're still massive heroes of mine.

🗨️ **THEY say Rome wasn't built in a day.** Durrri! This is obvious, isn't it? The temporary traffic lights in my endz have been there for three weeks now and the council are just fixing a burst water pipe! So how would you build a whole city in a day? Nonsense!

🗨️ **THEY say love makes the world go round.** Hmrrrrrr. I'm pretty sure the cause of the Earth spinning on its axis is actually gravity and its




relationship with the sun. Pretty obvious then that the *They* who said this, must have failed science at school.

🗨️ **THEY say that the pen is mightier than the sword.** Yeah, maybe in a poetry slam or rap battle, but I am pretty sure that no matter how hard your barz and raps are, you ain't winning a sword fight against a knight with just your pen, my Gi!

And finally: saving the best (or most deluded) till last...

🗨️ **THEY say the early bird catches the worm.** Right, and what about the innocent little worm, aye? What about if he/she/they were to listen to this little nugget of advice too? Then what happens? Picture it: the little worm waking up at the crack of dawn checking his Instagram, only to see such profound advice from *They*. Then, feeling motivated





and inspired, they (the worm) head out confidently before anyone else in Worm World with their coffee and croissant ready to seize the day. Oh, but look who else is up early and has just seen the same wise post: the EARLY BIRD. Now what?

Disclaimer: Skip this next part if you're squeamish or if you have a pet worm.

Shall I tell ya? Ready? DEATH! Gory, gruesome, horrible DEATH! Why? Because of *They*. *They* said, 'the early bird catches the worm!' and the early bird did! It caught it and it KILLED it! 'Cause birds like to eat worms! So, with that in mind, and this goes out mainly to all of the worms out there: STAY IN BED, little worm! BE LATE, little worm! BE LAZY, little worm and you'll be ALL GOOD! Oh, and don't ever listen to *They* and their terrible advice again!



Anyway, now I've got that off my chest. It's GO TIME. Thankfully, I do some of my best strategic thinking when the rest of my brain is off on a tangent. So, my G, this is how I am gonna get my Book of Raps back (cue evil laugh).

Check this out:

STAGE 1

Step 1: Open the classroom door, just a crack. This requires precision – open it too far and it will creak and alert Mrs Malinki to my presence.

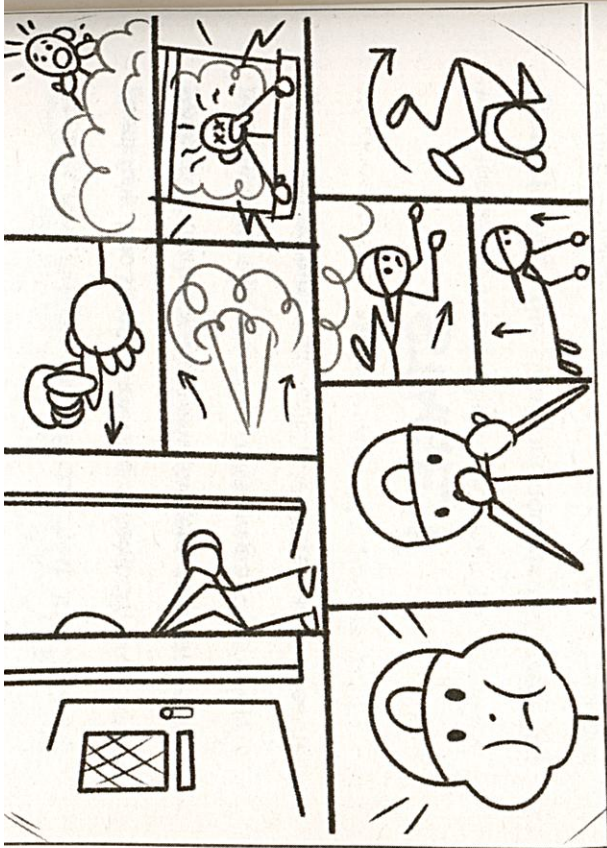
Step 2: Shimmy and shuffle my butt into the crack. A crack in a crack! Get it? LOL LOL LOL and LOL!

Step 3: Pull my own pinky finger and . . .

Step 4: Drop the BASS! (That's the fart, by the way.)

Step 5: Let it linger. Mmmmmmm.

Step 6: Waft. (This is when you use your hands like a fart fan to spread the love.)



As soon as Mrs Malinki feels the true wrath of this stinky dinky and goes to open the window, it's time for stage two of the plan.

STAGE 2

Step 1: (Well, it's sorta step seven, but you know what I mean): Breathe in!

Step 2/8: Hold nose.

Step 3/9: Stay low. Smoke rises, remember?

Step 4/10: Using only two pinky fingers, do a power-push up to rise high like Bruce Lee and then grab the book!

Step 5/11: Ninja roll out of there and breathe.

Wooooooooooooooooo!

Okay, you ready to go, my G? Good, me too!

I'm going in!

Creeeeeeaakkkkkkk!

Shhhhhhh!

Shimmy.

Slowly . . . slowly.

The butt has arrived, a first-class delivery. Amazon

Prime time!

Right, we're in position, so the only thing left to do: vaporize! Repeat after me.

Eyes closed.

Cheeks squeezed.

Deep breath in.

Pinky finger up.

Now, just one pull of this finger and there's no turning back...

3...

2...

1...

'Stop!'

Wait, that's Mr G's voice. Oh, allow it, man! I was so close...

'What are you doing, Z?'

I'm saying nothing. Now he's just looking at me,

surveying the scene like he's ready to call the Grime-scene investigator, aka Mr Grimewood, to analyze the evidence. Eleven-seventeenthths of my eyes are closed, hoping that if I can't see him, he can't see me. The only problem is 110% of my butt is still deep in the classroom.

'Z, is there a reason why your bum is stuck in a classroom door?'

Again, silence. I'm saying nada, nowt, zilch, diddly squat!

'Whatever you're doing, Z, I want you to stop and come with me. There's someone I want you to meet.'

Meet?

Who?

But I've still got stages four to eleven of my masterplan to execute, remember? Oh, whatevz! Let's GO! I want to see who this mystery person is, and I actually like Mr G. He's cool. Not a cool cat, but cool for a teacher. Definitely 'my G' potential, if he wasn't a teacher. He dresses smart – not street smart, but smart for a teacher. Always a shirt and tie at least. Sometimes

a jacket as well. Do you have a cool teacher in your school, my G?

'Oh, and hurry up if you want this book back!'

OMD! My Book of Raps is in Mr G's hand. NO WAY!

Coming! I say in my head, of course, as I'm running to catch up with him. I'm keeping my eyes on the ground just in case looking at him reminds him to interrogate me about why my bum was stuck in Mrs Malinki's classroom door. Looking at the ground ain't a bad thing, especially if you get to spot a sick pair of kicks, and Mr G always wears wicked ones with his suits. That's how I know he has the potential to be a G, not just a Mr G. That's a golden rule in my book: you can always tell by someone's choice in footwear their level of cool.



Warning: It's time for a brain wave! In fact, here's my official guide to selecting the right footwear, just in case.



CREP CHECK

1. Keep it simple. Keep it classic.
2. Never exceed the two-flourish rule. Whether its colourful laces, light-up soles or a neon heel, LESS IS MORE. Going too hard means you're trying too hard.
3. Laces can either be purposefully untied or tucked in. NEVER neatly tied in a bow. That's ordinary. And ordinary can never be EXTRAordinary.



Sorry about that. Another sneaky brain wave. But now we're back and at least I have my Book of Raps (well, sorta), and I'm off to meet a mystery guest. It could be worse. Like what's going on with my guts right now. FYI: I actually really do need to fart. Maybe I prepped too hard. And I've heard that if you hold a fart in it can end up leaking out of your mouth when you speak. Nah, my G, I ain't letting that happen! This twisting tornado is coming

out now from its rightful exit point, so hold on tight!

3 . . .

2 . . .

1 . . .

BRRAAAAAA PPPPPPPPP!!!!*

**Sidenote 7: That's the sound a roadman makes when he farts, by the way! True story!*

Ooooo weel! That's the last time I am having a Mungo's Chicken meal-deal special offer – I knew those one-star DripAdvisor reviews must have meant something.

I'll tell you what, why don't you move on to the next chapter. I'm just gonna hang here for a second just in case there's any unfinished business . . . you know: a second wind, literally. I'll see you in a second, BROprah.

Oh, and thanks for hangin' with me.

Fist Bump!



you know the deal by now: I have also taken the liberty of including my completely reasonable responses:

1. **No seasoning!** And no I'm not talking about the spring, summer, autumn, winter seasons. We all know that being a meteorologist requires little to no accuracy anyway. What I'm talking about is the flavour (or lack of) of the school canteen food! I'm pretty sure, the word 'flavour' is actually a word these chefs ain't even heard of, trust me! The same goes for the words palatable, yummy, scrumptious, tender, tasty . . . As a matter of fact, when it comes to food these lot are connoisseurs in the bland, dry, plain and straight-up BORING! That's why there's always a little backup bottle of hot sauce in my backpack. SNM!

2. **Snacks brought in from outside of school can't have a packet or be made in a factory and must therefore be grown naturally!** Rewind, selector!

Say that again . . . That's what you're thinking, right? Yep, me too! And to put it plain and simple: crisps, chocolate, sweets and cakes are all cancelled in my school! Not even on fish-and-chip Friday. Terrible behaviour!

3. **To use the toilet in lesson time, you need a toilet pass.** And, if you are caught without one, you receive a week's detention before AND after school. Oh, and only one person can go at a time from each class. One second: what if I'm desperate? What if I am bursting like a balloon, better yet a hot-air balloon, actually, a WATER BALLOON? (Except it ain't filled with water, if you get what I'm saying?) And then when I go to ask, someone has already just gone from my class? What then, aye? It won't be pretty, will it?

Anyway, that's enough of that. Back to reality . . . and the new kid on the block: the mysterious girl.

Woah! I think she just looked at me. Shall I smile at her?

100% No, that's corny, bro!

Too late! My smile never fails.

But wait, this time it has.

She didn't even flinch. Nuda. I know: another smile will do it. She must have missed the first one. This time it's gonna be one of those weird ones where you scrunch your nose, squeeze your cheeks and then your neck juts forwards followed by a little nod. The type of smile you do to strangers to be polite when your mum wants you to say hello to them. You know the kind I am talking about.

Shall I do it?

Yep! Allow it!

I'm going for it, my G...

Again, nothing. Okay, one last try, but this time with words. After all, I am a legend when it comes to words, so

I can't fail here. Well, I can, but I'm hoping I won't, because even though I've just met this kid and she hasn't spoken or smiled yet, I kinda like her. And to keep things short, sweet and straight to the point, I'm going for the classic and charismatic welcome greeting.

'You cool, fam?'

What! Not even an inch of a flinch of acknowledgement. And now her head is bowed fully down so all I can see is the top of her hijab. Bare rude! It's a cool hijab though.

'Z, this is Essef.'

Oh yeah, I forgot Mr G was here too.

'Essef?' I roll the name around my brain. It's different, but it suits her.

'Yes, Essef Xubair, or Essef X,' Mr G replies.

'Essef X as in SFX?' I ask.

Mr G nods.

'Short for sound effects?'

He nods again.

Cool name. And I nod too because it's cool to nod at

cool things. I wonder if she's a sound effects specialist.

'SFX has just started here, Z,' Mr G says before I can ask. And before you ask – I know I've spent pages and pages explaining that my name is Z because I never talk at school, but it's different with Mr G. I trust him and he gets me, so I can be me, if that makes sense? Glad we got that sorted! Anyway, he's about to say something else.

'I've been keen for the two of you to meet. I think you'd make an awesome dynamic duo.'

Duo? I don't ask it out loud, but my face must show my question because Mr G answers.

'Yes, I can see it now: Z and SFX! You spit barz, and SFX drops beats,' he declares.

It's bait, but I can't help but look at her for her response. She ain't saying a wor—

'BOOTS!'

Huh! Did someone just say 'boots'?

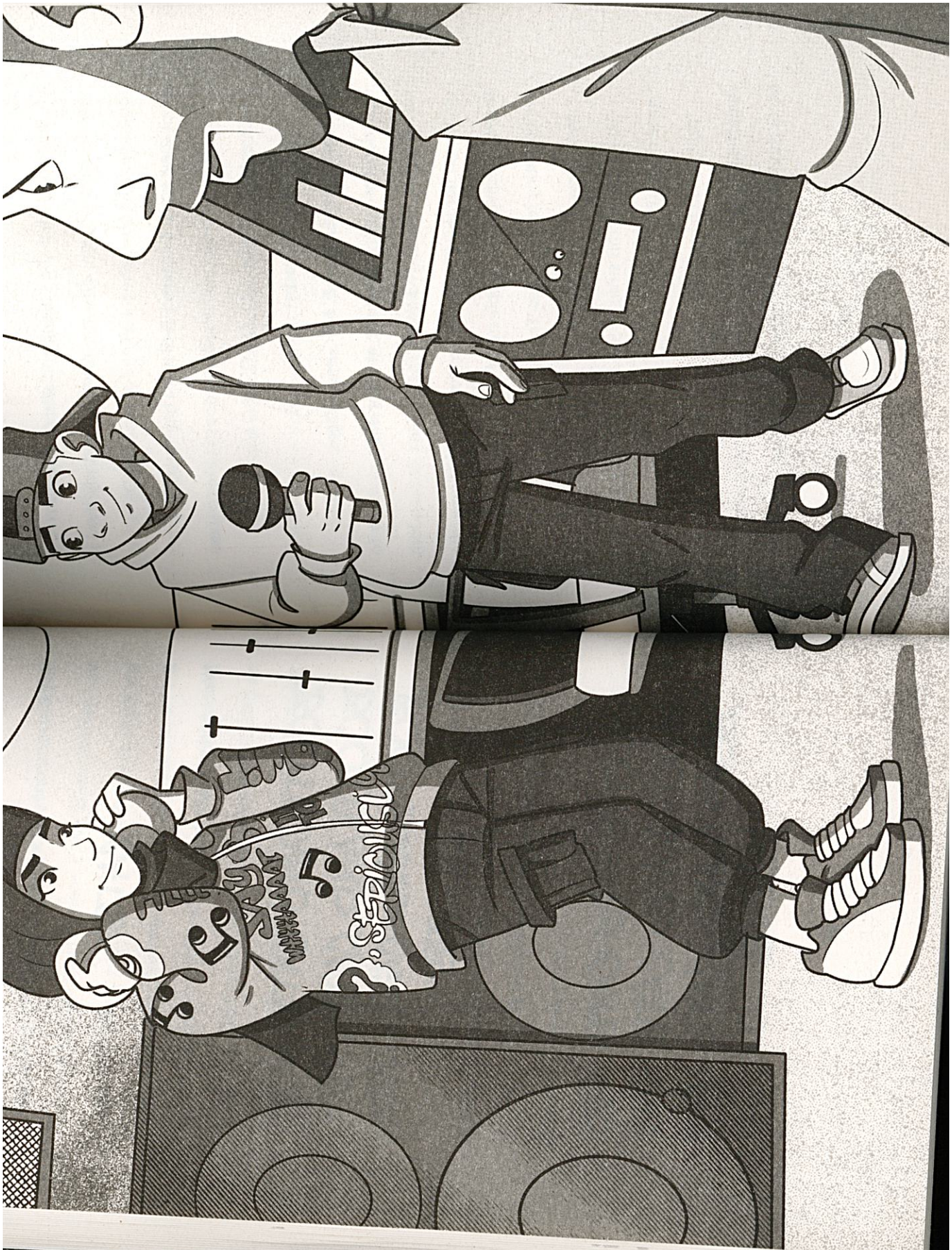
'CATS!'

Wait? And who just said 'cats'?

**'BOOTS AND CATS AND
BOOTS AND CATS AND
BOOTS AND CATS AND
BOOTS!'**

It's SFX! She's beatboxing, and she's sick!

**'BOOTS AND CATS AND
BOOTS AND CATS AND
BOOTS AND CATS AND
BOOTS ...!'**



Just copy what she's doing and you can beatbox too, my G! Seriously, my eyes are popping and my head is bopping right now! She's a legend at this! OMD!

'I knew you'd be gassed, Z. SFX is a beatboxer and uses sound effects to express herself. She doesn't like to speak much either. Isn't that right, Essef?' Mr G asks.

SFX points at her jacket.

'Come a little closer, Z,' Mr G encourages.

I step forwards and squint at what she's pointing to on her jacket. I see it. NO WAY! Those aren't just random quotes on her jacket – they're responses. You know, the answers to questions people might ask her. And right now, she's pointing to the words 'True Story'.

Mind blown!

'So let me get this straight. She literally spits beats and I write rhymes?'

'Yep! A match made in heaven, especially when there's something super special coming to town next month.'
Mr G chuckles as he walks towards his massive classroom

cupboard and disappears into it.

Talk about a mysterious exit. Seriously, he's proper left us hanging in here . . .

Actually, scrap that. He's back! I was just being impatient.

'Aha! Here it is! Have a look at this.' He walks towards us with a flyer in his hand but I can't see what it says.

And for the first time, SFX takes a step forwards and looks at me. She's either warming up to me or she just really wants to see what's on the flyer too.



AMATEUR RAPPERS WANTED

THE ROYAL RAP RUMBLE;
BATTLE OF THE BARZ
IS COMING TO TOWN

CASH PRIZE

FOR THE WINNER AND
THE ILLUSTRIOUS WORLD-FAMOUS
GOLDEN MC TROPHY

DO YOU HAVE WHAT
IT TAKES?

NO WAY! A real-life rap battle. Just like in the movies. And they want amateur rappers to sign up! What do you think, my G? Do I have what it takes?

'So I think you two should enter,' Mr G says as he hands us a pen to fill out the application form.

'Us?!' SFX and I ask at the same time, which makes Mr G chuckle again.

'Uh-huh, and I am going to be your coach.'

'Us?!' we ask again.

'Yep! You two!'

'But, Mr G, you're not thinking this through. How am I going to get on stage and spit bars in front of hundreds of people when I haven't even rapped in front of my own mum before?'

'You're going to work together as a team. You won't have to get up alone – SFX will be with you. And I have already thought of your name,' he says, clearly buzzing with himself.

We both look at him expectantly.

'Beatz 'n' Barz! You've got the barz -' he points to me - 'and you've got the beatz -' he points to SFX.

We look at each other again, and I can see she's feeling just as nervous about all this as me. Maybe even more nervous. I mean, she started a new school today as well. That's a lot for one person to process. New school, teachers, people - and now thrust into the spotlight for the performance of a lifetime. No pressure. This must be how contestants feel on those reality shows . . . Except they sign themselves up for those, so not the same AT ALL.

Beatz 'n' Barz. I do like it though. It's got a bit of a ring to it.

'Beatz and—'

'Barz,' SFX finishes. And she smiles too, which cements the friendship and seals the deal. Partners in crime! Or should I say 'rhyme'? LOL!

'You like it?' I ask her.

She points to another phrase on her jacket. 'HELL TO THE YEAH!'

RiiiiiiiiNNNNNNNGGGGGGGGG!

Oh no, that's the school bell. Lunchtime's over! What a buzzkiller!

'One more lesson until the weekend, you two. On Monday, Beatz 'n' Barz boot camp begins! Now hurry up or you'll both be late. Remember, every moment counts!'

In another life, Mr G could definitely have been a motivational speaker because I am feeling proper gassed right now and like we can definitely win the Royal Rap Rumble.



Wait: Brain wave! What makes it royal? Do you think the King will be there, my G? Now that would epic, but at the same time I think I'd be shaking like a leaf in a hurricane!



RiiiiiiiiNNNNNNGGGGGGGG!

Second bell! I really have gotta go. We'll have to sign up for the competition later! See you on the flipside**, my G. Thanks again for rollin' with me still! I guess you're part of the crew now. In fact, let's make it official!

Beatz 'n' Barz and _____
(insert your name here). Hopefully it's a sick rapper name*!

**Sidenote 8: If you can't think of a sick rapper name, you can use my name 'rap name' generator at the back of the book. See, as I said before, I've always got your back, my G!*

***Oh, and when I said flipside a second ago, I meant in the next chapter. Don't go trying a crazy backflip or anything. I'm not insured for injuries or damage.*

Peace out, BRO-yo!

CHAPTER 4

So, Where to Next?

Why do they have a 'last lesson' on a Friday anyway? Everyone knows that every kid in the world uses this lesson to think about their weekend and all of the evil—Whoops! I mean awesome plans they have. And that's exactly what I'm doing. And I bet that's what you do as well, am I right, my G?

My S-Days Strategy is simple ('S-Days' is Saturday and Sunday, by the way):

- Write barz
- Spit barz