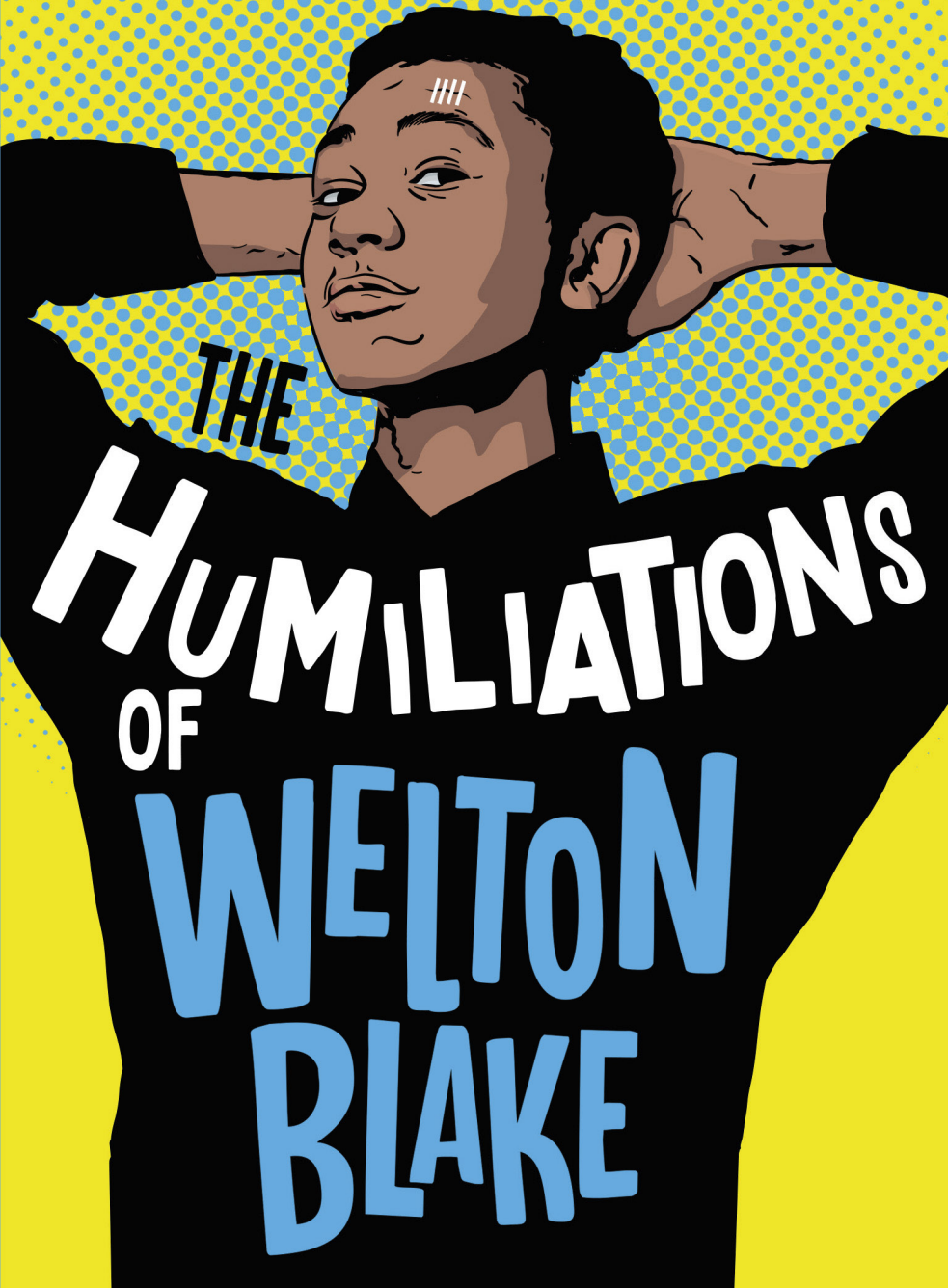


ALEX WHEATLE



THE

HUMILIATIONS  
OF  
WELTON  
BLAKE



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OF  
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BLAKE**

**ALEX WHEATLE**

*For all those comic writers of The Beano, Whizzer  
and Chips, The Dandy and Shoot! who kept this  
young boy's spirits up when it was most needed*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

# **The Worst Day in the History of Everything**

It was one of those days when everything went madly wrong. One of those unlucky days when the forecast was for Tornado Bad Luck to come your way with hailstones the size of basketballs.

It all started in the morning. I woke up and found my mobile phone had died. It refused to charge. No matter what buttons I pressed, it wouldn't switch on. Not even a flicker. Not even a small white dot in the middle of the screen. I took out the SIM card and put it back fifteen times. Sweet diddly nothing.

I should've taken that as a sign that my day wasn't gonna be blessed. I should've faked a brain-ache and stayed in bed. But, oh no, I didn't

do that. I swung my toes out of bed and planted them on the floor.

I dragged myself to the kitchen. Ever since I'd started secondary school, I had to make my own breakfast. I had my regular two slices of toast and a glass of mango juice. Then I grabbed a fistful of peanuts from a bag I'd bought the evening before. Mum was going on about her boyfriend visiting later on. I didn't give her twittering too much attention.

At the breakfast table I tried switching my phone on again and ... nothing. Not even a slight vibration. How was I going to text the great love of my life, Carmella McKenzie? Even worse, how was she gonna text me? It'd taken me four months to build up the courage to chat to her. I'm talking about the kind of bravery like Luke Skywalker stepping out in front of Kylo Ren's space fleet with just his lightsaber.

Carmella was one of the most delicious-looking females in the school. No, delete that. She was *the* A-plus, top-rated girl in the school. Skin the colour of caramel, deep brown chestnut eyes, cute gold stud in her nose and a smile wider than the Millennium Falcon.



After school yesterday, I don't know what got into me. There Carmella was at the bus stop. Alone. She had her headphones on. She was bobbing her head to her music. There weren't any of her friends in sight to boy-block me. It was a once-in-a-lifetime chance. I took a deep breath. *This is the moment*, I told myself.

I took in a lungful of air and stepped up to her, Jedi-style. I slowed down when I was about ten paces away. Now was the time to deliver my cool walk. I'd been practising it on the balcony of our block of flats. There was a kind of bounce and a dip to the walk. My body leaned to the right. I hadn't worked out exactly what to do with my arms, so I decided to swing them with my left shoulder higher than the other. The movement strained my neck and my side, but it was for a most important cause.

"Hi, Carmella," I said.

"Hi, Blakey," she replied. I normally didn't love being called Blakey, but Carmella could get away with it because she was super-pretty. "What's happening?"

I tried to look as cool as possible. I put on my best pose. It hurt my back, but it had to be done.

“You all right, Welton?” she asked. She looked proper worried, like a really sweet nurse caring for a cancer patient who only had three minutes to live. I couldn’t believe she’d called me Welton.

“Do you ...” I started. “There ... There’s this film. Yes, there’s this film that’s showing in the cinema. You know, the one in the Orchard shopping centre ... the cinema there. Films show there. In the afternoon and evenings.”

“I know where the cinema is, Welton. I was born in these ends.”

There was this tiny percentage of a smile starting at the corners of Carmella’s mouth. Mr Mountjoy, my hairy Maths teacher, would call it about 2 per cent. At that moment I rated my chances of going to the movies with Carmella McKenzie at less than 0.011 per cent. By now, my back was really hurting from my pose.

“Can ... can I take you to see a film?”

My legs turned to pasta as I waited for Carmella’s answer. I started to sweat like a Sumo wrestler in a sauna. My heart started to sprint like a Jamaican relay-runner.

“Yeah, all right,” she said. “Call me to tell me what day, what time the film starts and where to link.”

“I ... yes, of course I’ll call you. Thanks so much ... I haven’t got your number. I need your number to call you. You know. Otherwise I can’t call you. This is soooo wicked! Thanks so much for saying yes.”

She smiled. This time it was about 30 per cent. My heart stopped vibrating inside my throat. I wiped the sweat from my forehead. My palm couldn’t have been wetter if I’d dipped it in a lake during a monsoon.

We swapped numbers. My brain was rushed with pictures. Sydney Harbour as the clock ticked to 12.01 a.m. on New Year’s Day. The Olympics closing ceremony. The whole of Middle Earth bowing to four hobbits. Luke Skywalker, Han Solo and Chewbacca receiving their gongs from Princess Leia in *Episode IV*.

I had got over one of my worst fears and asked a girl out. But now, a day later, my phone had deleted itself. *How am I gonna link with Carmella and set a time for our date?* It was the worst crisis I had ever had in my life. Well,

maybe not the worst. Dad leaving home for another woman might have topped it. I could still remember finding Mum in the early hours of the morning curled up in a corner of the kitchen. She'd been crying lakes. It'd taken me the length of a *Star Wars* boxset to persuade Mum to go to her bed.

But I couldn't log on to my parents' issues right now. I had to use my Jedi powers to clear away Carmella's boy-blocking friends, step up to her and tell her my plans for our date.