

BIGMOUTH

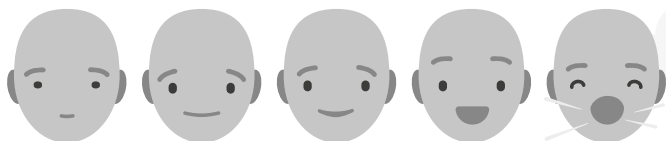
A stylized, monochromatic illustration in shades of blue. It depicts two people from the chest up, facing each other. The person on the left is shown in profile, with their mouth wide open as if shouting or singing. The person on the right is also in profile, looking up at the first person, with their mouth slightly open. Their hands are positioned near their mouths, suggesting they are interacting with each other's breath or sound. The background consists of several concentric, curved lines that create a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized sun or a series of sound waves. The overall composition is dynamic and expressive.

EVAN JACOBS

Talk Less, Smile More



Thuy doesn't say a word without thinking about it first.



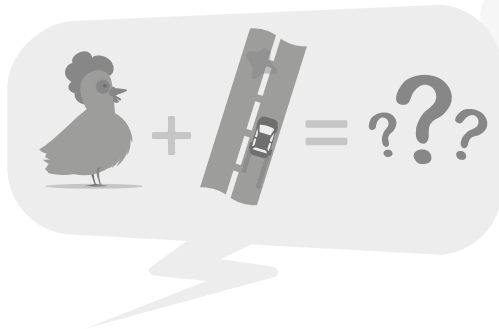
Doug's little brother never stops talking—
except in the dojo.



Fun Facts

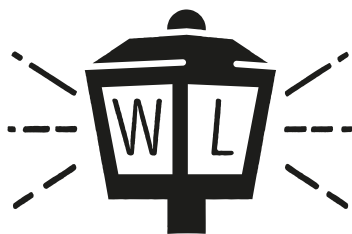


Clark used to put his foot in his mouth all the time.



Steve forgets the punch line to every joke he tells.





Chapter 1

English Class

You're so ugly! You make dirt look good," Kevin Detroit said.

"Well," Marlon replied, smirking. "You too! You broke every mirror in school."

Marlon sat at his desk. The teasing was fun. Marlon and Kevin could take it. Clark Pham, one of Marlon's best friends, sat next to him. Thuy Le sat close too.

Clark laughed at the teasing. Thuy rolled her eyes.

The students were in first period. It was

English. The bell was about to ring. Mrs. Egan had finished the lesson early. She told the students they could talk. “Don’t be too loud,” she had warned.

“You guys ever tell ‘yo mama’ jokes?” Clark asked.

“Why do you guys diss each other?” Thuy asked.

“‘Cause Marlon’s ugly,” Kevin said. “Even a makeover can’t cover up that face.”

Clark cracked up.

Kevin was new at the school. He stood out. The new boy was tall. And he was different. Kevin had moved from Detroit. Kids called him Kevin Detroit. His real last name was Kennedy.

“You’re so ugly,” Marlon said. “They made you leave Detroit.”

“Really?” Kevin eyed Marlon. “Well,

yo mama's so ugly," he said. "They wouldn't let her drop you off at school. You have to walk every day."

Clark snorted. Thuy shook her head.

Marlon smiled. He knew guys liked to goof around. Still, he never liked joking about people's moms. He didn't want anyone making fun of his mom.

The guys were just playing, right?

"Well," Marlon started. "Yo mama's so ugly. Dude, she isn't even yo mama! Your dad left her in Detroit."

Clark smiled. Marlon's joke wasn't as funny as Kevin's. It was payback time.

"You talkin' about my mom, punk?" Kevin glared at Marlon. His posture changed. He wasn't relaxed. Kevin's spine was straight. He seemed mad. "Are you?"

Marlon, Thuy, and Clark stared at him.

“I told you not to mess around.” Thuy eyed Marlon.

Kevin was known for being tough. He’d set the tone during his first week. There was a fight. He’d given a student a bloody nose.

There were rumors too. A sophomore from the high school had picked on him. They’d fought. Kevin broke the kid’s jaw.

Kevin and Marlon had always been cool. Until now ...

“Dude, you dissed my mom first,” Marlon said. “I was just—”

“I don’t care!” Kevin yelled. “You’re dead. See you after school.”

Tension filled the room. Marlon went cold inside. An icy jolt seized his heart. Then it ran through his body.

Other students kept talking and

laughing. Everything was normal. But now, Kevin wanted to pound Marlon.

“But—” Marlon couldn’t say another word. The bell rang. Students got up and left.

“Better not tell a teacher,” Kevin said. His voice was low. He put his backpack over his shoulder. “That’ll just make things worse.” He left the classroom.

Thuy and Clark got their things. Marlon still sat at his desk. He was stunned. How had things changed so fast?

“What are you going to do?” Clark asked.

“I don’t know,” he said. But he knew one thing. He was really scared.



Chapter 2

Science Class

Dude! I missed first period. My mom took me to the dentist. And what happened? You got in trouble. I can't leave you alone for a second. What did you say to Kevin?" Steve asked.

Marlon eyed his best friend. "Shhh!" he said.

Students were coming into the science classroom. Marlon motioned to the back. Steve followed him. Class would start in a few minutes.

Marlon spoke in a whisper. “Don’t say it so loud!”

“What do you mean?” Steve laughed. “It’s all over social media.” He held up his phone. It showed a split photo. On one side was Kevin. Marlon was on the other. There was a cool font. Who had time to do that? It read, “*Fight of the Year!*”

But there was more. Under the text were more words. “*Kevin ‘The Killer’ Detroit vs. Marlon ‘The Mouse’ Moore.*” Finally it said, “*After school.*”

“Why am I the mouse? And why is he the killer?” Marlon asked. “How is this already news?”

There were 150 likes now. Wow! Many kids wanted to see Marlon get pounded.

“There’s a bigger question. Why are you fighting him?”

“I’m not!” Marlon said.

More students came into the classroom. The science teacher was erasing the whiteboard. Then he started writing two science facts.

Mr. Troller kept a clean room. There were science books on the shelves. Scratch paper and some pencils were on a table. The teacher’s desk was neat. It had his computer and a pencil sharpener on it.

“We were joking around at first,” Marlon said.

“Let me guess,” Steve said. “Bigmouth Marlon took it too far?”

“I didn’t. I was just playing. He told a ‘yo mama’ joke. It was a diss at my mom. So I said one about his mom.”

“Marlon,” Steve sighed. He moved his blond hair out of his eyes. “You never, ever

make fun of a guy's mom. Especially a guy like Kevin.”

“But—” The bell rang before Marlon could say more.

“All right,” Mr. Troller said. He turned around and faced the class. “Phones away until it's time to work. Then you can use them. Or you can use your tablet. Everybody in their seats. Let's get started.”

Steve went to his desk. All the students were sitting down. Some of them were ready to take notes.

Marlon sat down at his desk.

Mr. Troller started the lesson.

Marlon didn't hear any of it.

This was bad. He was upset when Kevin threatened him. But now, everyone knew. This made it worse.

BIGMOUTH

Kevin Detroit can't take a joke. He promises to beat up Marlon after school. This is not good news. Marlon is terrified. He makes plans with his crew. How can he avoid the pounding?



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