

I AM  
UNDERDOG



ANNE SCHRAFF

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MEET THE



KEMBA

**Age:** 11

**Favorite Food:** sweet-and-sour chicken

**Favorite Video Game:** *Underdog: The Beginning*

**Best Subject in School:** math

**Best Quality:** compassion

# CHARACTERS



## UNDERDOG

**Age:** unknown; superheroes live forever

**Major Life Event:** hurt in a car crash

**Goal in Life:** helping others

**Unique Characteristic:** wears an eye patch

**Best Quality:** bravery

# 1

## NO FRIENDS

“He has no friends.” Kemba Spencer’s mom was loud. She didn’t know Kemba was home.

“I’m worried about him,” Kemba’s dad said. He sounded sad. “It’s not normal. A boy should have friends.”



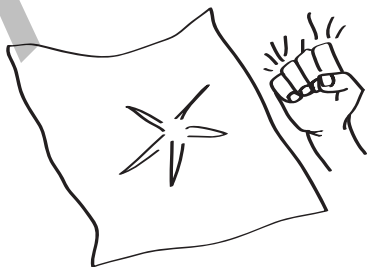
“Yes. But Kemba is different. He likes being on his own. I think,” Mrs. Spencer added. “It’s hard to tell.”

Kemba had just gotten home from school. He stood in the hall listening. His parents talked like he was weird. It hurt. They didn’t get him at all.

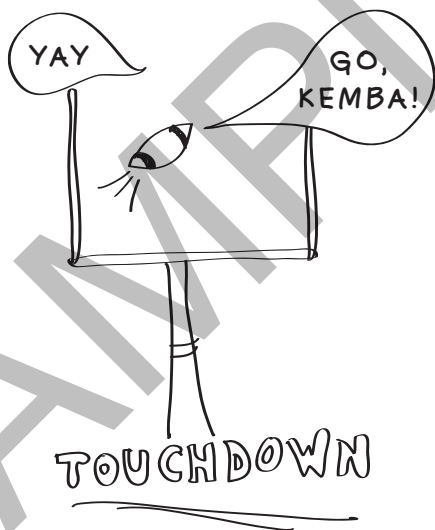
“What’s wrong with him?” Mr. Spencer sighed. “He’s a good kid. I don’t get it.”

“He’s shy,” Mrs. Spencer said. “Other kids think he’s strange.”

Kemba threw down his backpack. He sat on the sofa. Without thinking, Kemba hit a pillow. Then he hit it again.



Sometimes Kemba dreamed he was a hero. It was fun to imagine saving people. Bad guys didn't stand a chance. In other dreams, Kemba was a football star. He'd make the winning play. The crowd would cheer. "Kem-ba! Kem-ba!"



In school, nobody cheered for him. He got picked on instead. Kids said really mean things.



“Look at skinny little Kemba.”

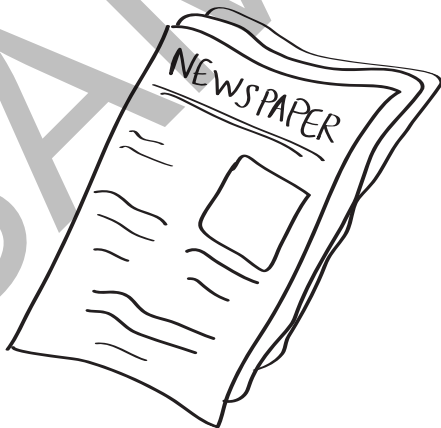
“He can’t be in sixth grade.”

“Is that a little kid?”

“What a loser.”

Kemba felt angry. His neck was hot. He could still hear his parents talking about him.

“I had tons of friends,” his dad said. Mr. Spencer was funny. He was also good at sports. Kemba had seen pictures. There were newspaper stories about him too.



“So did I,” Mrs. Spencer said. “Our house was always full. I had parties all the time. It was fun. Maybe Kemba should have one.”

“Who would he invite? What if no one came?”

Kemba closed his eyes. *One, two, three*, he thought. Sometimes it helped him relax. He grabbed his backpack and headed for his room.



“Oh!” Mr. Spencer was startled. “Hi, Kemba. When did you get home?”

“Just now,” Kemba lied.

Mr. Spencer looked nervous. His cheeks were red. He didn’t know how much his son had heard.



# I AM UNDERDOG

Underdog is my  
name. Protecting the  
innocent is my game.



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