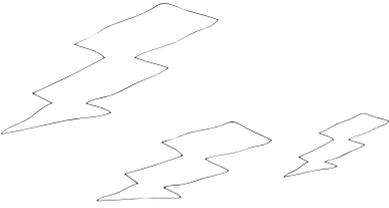


I AM
UNDERDOG



ANNE SCHRAFF





MEET THE



KEMBA

Age: 11

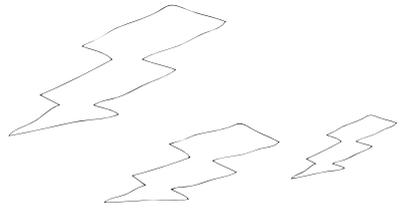
Favorite Food: sweet and sour chicken

Favorite Video Game: Underdog

Best Subject in School: math

Best Quality: compassion

CHARACTERS



UNDERDOG

Age: superheroes live forever

Major Life Event: hurt in a car crash

Goal in Life: helping others

Unique Characteristic: eye patch

Best Quality: bravery

NO FRIENDS

“He has no friends.” That’s what Kemba Spencer’s mom said. She spoke in a loud voice. She didn’t know Kemba was home.

“I’m worried about him,” Dad said. He sounded sad.



Kemba had just gotten home from school. The Pepper Tree School. He was in sixth grade. He stood there. Just listening.

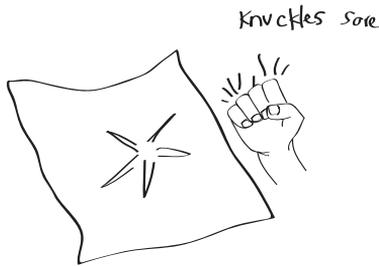


Fingers folding into fists. Hating to hear his parents talk about him like that. Like he was weird. Kemba wanted to punch the wall.

“I don’t know.” His dad sighed. “What’s wrong with him? He’s a good kid.”

“He’s just shy,” Mom said.

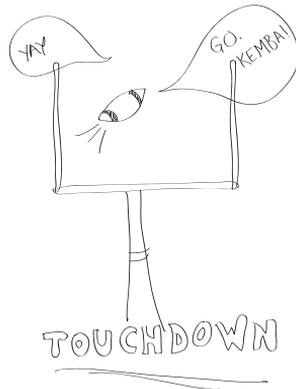
Kemba was an only child. He wanted his parents to be proud of him. He threw his backpack onto the sofa. Sat down. Punched one of the pillows. Hard. He punched it again. And again. Until his hand hurt.



Kemba liked to play computer games. Ones with superheroes. It was fun to pretend

he was a hero. Doing exciting things.

Sometimes Kemba dreamed he saved people. From bad guys. From burning buildings. From accidents. Sometimes he won big football games. He would make the winning play. He loved to hear the crowd shouting, “Kem-ba! Kem-ba!”



In school nobody cheered for him.

“Look at Kemba.”

“He looks like a second grader!”

“You shouldn’t be in sixth grade.”

“Twerp.”

Kemba felt anger wash over him. It made his neck hot. He pounded the pillow again. He listened to his parents' sad voices.

“I had a lot of friends in school,” Dad said. Dad was a big man. He had been a big kid. He loved to tell jokes. He loved sports. He was his high school's quarterback. Kemba had seen pictures. “Junior Spencer Won the Game,” the headlines read.



“I had lots of friends too,” Mom said. “Our house was always full. I had parties. It was fun.”

Kemba closed his eyes. He pressed his lips together. Then he grabbed his backpack. Headed for his room.



“Kemba!” Dad looked upset. “How long have you been there?”

“Just got home,” Kemba lied.

Dad was afraid Kemba had heard something.

“How was school?” Mom asked.

“Okay,” Kemba said.

