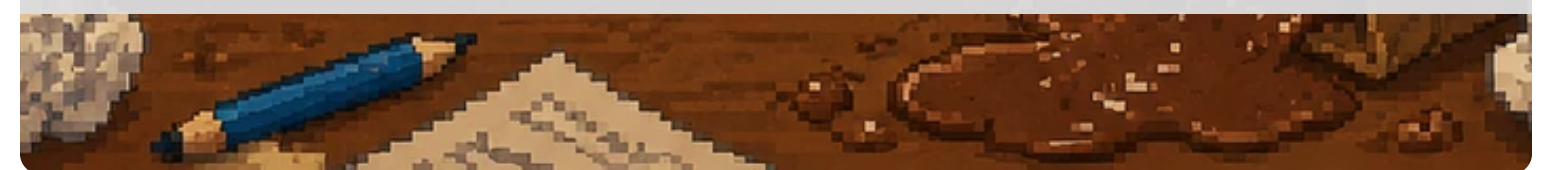




The Totally Tragic (and Hilarious) Chronicles of Jayden Cole Mensah

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I started the day trying to look like a cool seventh grader, but my shoelaces had other plans. I tripped over them and face-planted right into a mud puddle, looking up to see Maya watching the whole thing with a look of pure confusion. The illustration captures the moment of impact, showing me sprawled in the mud with cartoon birds circling my head and my shoelaces tied together in a giant, loopy knot.



Sitting in the cafeteria, I frantically scribbled in my notebook while my best friend Marcus begged me to join the school play. Marcus was gesturing so wildly that he spilled his chocolate milk all over his own shirt, creating a massive brown stain. The drawing shows Marcus looking shocked with milk dripping off his chin, while I sit next to him trying to shield my notebook from the splash.



The science fair turned into an absolute disaster when my volcano experiment erupted with thick, neon green slime instead of red lava. The entire class was covered in goo, and the teacher looked horrified while I tried to hide behind a poster board. The illustration features me peeking out from behind a jagged cardboard volcano with green slime dripping off my glasses and hair.



I was so nervous that I accidentally sent a text saying I love you too to my math teacher instead of my crush. I stared at my phone in pure horror, watching the three dots appear as the teacher started typing a response, my face turning bright red. The drawing shows me with giant, wide eyes and sweat drops flying off my head, holding the phone away as if it were a ticking bomb.



During lunch, I got my arm stuck inside the vending machine while trying to fish out a bag of stuck potato chips. My classmates gathered around, filming the struggle with their phones, while I tried to maintain some shred of dignity. The illustration depicts me bent over with my arm buried deep in the machine, my feet kicking in the air as a crowd of students watches with their phones raised.



At the school dance, I attempted a cool slide across the floor to impress Maya, but I lost my balance and spun uncontrollably. I ended up crashing into the snack table, sending the punch bowl flying across the room in a tidal wave of red liquid. The drawing shows me mid-air, flailing my arms and legs, with the punch bowl floating in the opposite direction.



My nemesis, Tyler, and I had a heated standoff in the library over the last available seat near the window. We were whispering loudly at each other, creating a scene that forced the librarian to shush us with a terrifying, squinty-eyed glare. The illustration shows Tyler and me leaning in close, pointing fingers, while a giant, looming shadow of the librarian appears behind us.



I realized with a jolt of panic that I left my diary wide open on the teacher's desk during class. I could only imagine the entire school reading my deepest secrets about my crush and my thoughts on the terrible cafeteria pizza. The drawing shows the diary sitting innocently on a desk with a pair of reading glasses next to it, while I am frantically trying to reach for it from across the room.



I sprinted through the hallway like an Olympic athlete, dodging students and lockers to reach the classroom before the teacher started reading my diary aloud. I burst through the door, chest heaving, only to find the teacher holding the book with a mysterious, knowing smile. The illustration captures my dramatic entrance, with motion lines trailing behind me and my backpack flying off one shoulder.



Standing in the school yard, I finally realized that even my most embarrassing moments make for the best stories. I sat on a bench, sketching a funny cartoon of myself stuck in the vending machine, and smiled at the chaotic, wonderful mess that is my life. The final drawing shows me sitting peacefully on a bench, happily drawing in my notebook, with a small, confident smile on my face.