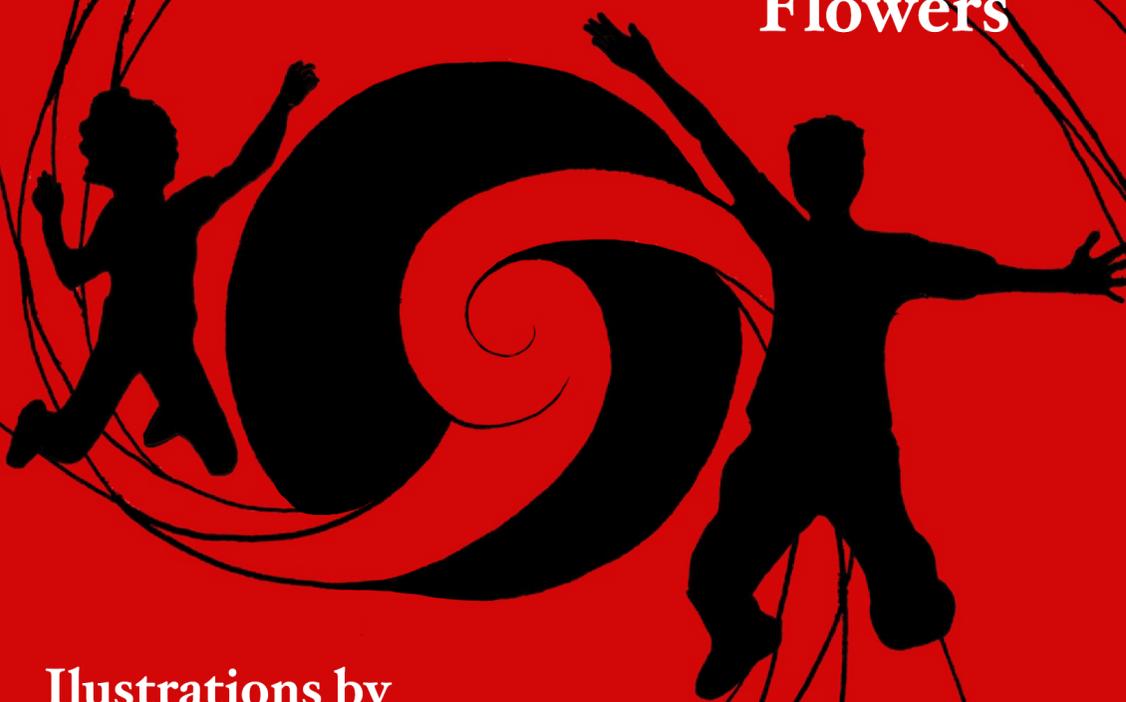


# Ted Heads Down

by Fraser  
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Fraser Flowers

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# Chapter 1: The Birthday Boy

In the grey light of the early morning, Ted knew that his eyes, wrapped with the cob webs of a deep sleep, must be playing tricks on him when he detected something strangely in order on his otherwise out-of-order bedroom room floor. There, among the lego, plastic figures, and other toys scattered across his bedroom carpet, was an impossibly straight trail of shiny silver objects splitting the toy tornado's path in half.

"Hersey kisses!" Ted yelled, and for a brief second, he scratched his head while lifting his eye brows. But this wasn't a time for pondering, and he pounced on the line of loot.

It was like following a rainbow but without having to worry about finding a pot of gold at the end. It was gold from start to finish. He used the bottom of his shirt as a sling and started to fill it up with candy. Ted ate a few of them. He couldn't resist. Yum, he thought, so delicious unaware of a growing chocolate clown smile smeared across his face. The trail of candy's went downstairs. Ted didn't miss one.

He reached the bottom of the stairs, having his head down the whole way. The line of candy's stretched into the kitchen, where his family was waiting patiently for him to arrive. Ted head was still down and looked up slowly spilling the candy's from his shirt on the ground.

"Surprise!", they hollered, "Happy Birthday!"

Today was Ted's birthday. He was turning nine. It had only been a couple months ago when he had his first big adventure. The tree house was the starting point. That's where he met Murdoch who gave him a magic ladder that he used to climb straight to the moon. It all had seemed so real but of course it was just a dream.

Ted stood up slowly, completely awe struck but smart enough to cradle his sling of sweets. His dad was closest to him, waving his hands in the air while blowing on a plastic kazoo. His mom

was wearing an apron, splattered with white flour, and held out a chocolate cake. The kitchen was decorated with pink and blue streamers, balloons, and there was a giant sign arched above the kitchen entrance that spelled out: 'Happy B-Day Ted'.

Ted tried to hide his smile while collecting a few Hersey kisses that he had dropped. He dumped them all into a pile within reach, and stood up in the door way.

Sheryl was first to hug him and then his father hugged him and Ted thought he saw a sense of pride in his eyes. Ted deserved their praise. Not only was this his birthday, but he was actually doing better in school. He had flipped Ds into Cs, Cs into Bs, and even earned a B+ in history.

He was starting to experience the adventure of learning, and had improved his grades as promised. Straight As were still out of reach, but fortunately he hadn't promised the moon and could still shoot for them. While his grades were on the up, he now had another monster to worry about that was poised to drag him down, but we'll get to that later for now he was safe, surrounded by people who loved him very much.

His father patted him on the back. His mom was scouring through the drawers and found a lighter. She had her back to the family and light all the candles. She turned around and the entire family began to sing. "Happy Birthday dear Teddy..." Ted blushed and watched as the bright sparklers on the chocolate cake burned down.

He sat in his chair with wide eyes.

"Make a wish!" His dad said.

"Yeah, Yeah make a wish, Ted" His mother and sister chimed in, "Make a wish!"

Ted closed his eyes and wished. Then quickly blew out the candles. Sheryl nestled up to Teds side. "So what did you wish for?" She said as she raised herself on her tippy toes.

"Come on Sheryl," her mother said, "If he told us it would never come true."

"I hope it was something grand!" His father said with a smile

on his face.

“Let’s eat the cake!” Sheryl hollered.

“We’ve already eaten breakfast, Is it alright if we eat some cake?” His mother said, “I’ll make you the best bacon and eggs you’ve ever had.”

“Sure dig in.”

His father continued to blare the kazoo. His mother cut into the cake and served them on the finest china. His family sat around the table filling their mouths with cake.

Ted looked around the kitchen, and underneath the table.

“What are you looking for?” His mother said with a mouthful of cake. Ted gave his mother a look.

“Oh I think I know what your looking for.” She raised her eyebrows and then looked at Sheryl.

“Presents!” Sheryl yelled.

They sang a made-up song known only to their family: “Where could Teds presents be, where could Teds presents be, oh where, oh where could they be...” which they repeated over and over. His father waved his fork in mid air as if was the conductor.

“Presents! Presents! Let me get yours first!” Yelled Sheryl.

She retreated to her room and returned back to the kitchen. She handed him a red box with a white bow. There was a card on top. Ted’s name was written sloppily in yellow and green crayon. The outside of the card was decorated with macaroni and purple sparkles. There was a drawing of Ted on front. It was a rough drawing but it seemed to capture his shaggy blond hair and bright blue eyes, with his lanky body frame. Ted opened it. Sheryl pointed to the picture.

“The big person is you, and the little one’s me, and the heart means we’re joined together.”

“Thanks Sheryl, this is so...”, Ted swallowed, “...creative, I love it.”

Ted set the card down on the table and picked up Sheryl’s gift.

“What on earth could this be?” He said turning over the box examining it carefully.

Sheryl hung her arm on Ted's shoulder rocking back and forth. "C'mon Ted, open it!" She said, and clapped with delight.

Ted shredded the wrapping paper revealing a box. He looked at Sheryl with a smile and opened it.

There was a plastic package inside with bold bubble letters. Ted studied it flipping it over and back in his hand.

"They're stars for your ceiling. They glow in the dark!"

"Huh? How about that, so they do." Ted said, "Cool!"

"Now, Ted, your sister put a lot of thought into this gift," Joan said putting her hand on Ted's shoulder, "the least you could do is thank her."

"Didn't I? Oh sorry, Sheryl, my mind was else where. I was just thinking what constellations I'll arrange on my ceiling. Big or little dipper? Ursa Major or Minor?" Ted said catching a proud grin from his father who recently read him a bed time story about the wonders of the milky way. It certainly dispelled Ted's idea that it might be a good place for Oreo cookies.

"Thank you Sheryl." Ted put the package in his pocket.

"So..." Ted said looking underneath the table and raising his head back up. "Where are all the other presents?"

"Honey what about the other presents?" Ted's father asked, pretending to sound puzzled.

His mom had been sitting there like a stone sculpture until she heard those words and suddenly cracked, breaking her form and raced into the other room.

Ted returned to unraveling the Hersey's kisses; eating them one by one. His sister bounced up and down from a sugar fix affirming the rule why chocolate was not usually allowed in the house seeing that it turned them into hyper-active bumblebees. When Joan came back in the kitchen, she held a black jacket and matching black splash pants in her arms. She draped it across her chest and legs, "What do you think?"

Ted forced a smile. "I...like it? aren't I a little old for snow pants?!"

"These are rain pants! Your father has a pair too. Oh come on,

get off your rump and try it on. They're warm and 100% water proof! They really lock the heat in. 100% cotton. This coat even has a built-in hood."

Ted slowly got off his chair and went over to his mother. Ted's mother helped him as he put his arms in the sleeves.

"What to you think, gang? It's great for all seasons. The woman in the store said it was tested by Sherpas. Spin around and show me the back." Sheryl and Ted's dad clapped, "Spin Ted, Spin!"

"Alright you can take it off now."

Ted took it off and returned to his seat.

"Well I guess that's it for the presents." She paused teasing Ted, "I'll just start tidying up."

"So that's it." Ted looked at her with wide eyes.

"That's it," She said starting to collect the wrapping paper.

"Really," Ted pleaded, "Are you sure?"

"Well...", she said scanning the room, "There might be one more present. This one's from your father. Sheryl, Drum roll please."

While both Dad and Sheryl took their utensils and rattled them against the table, Ted's mom slipped out and quickly returned with returned with a small rectangular package about the size of shoe box, exactly what Ted had been hoping for. "Ta da!"

Ted eyed the colourful package with light blue wrapping paper and red bow on top. He thought, "Oh please be it".

"Here it is, Sport," Joan said placing the package in front of him, practically confirming its contents.

"I think you're really going to like this one." His father chipped in while he tapped him on the shoulder.

Unlike his first present, Ted was more careful opening up this gift, giving him time to savour the suspense. He took the wrapping paper off and was left with a box. Yes, a shoe box. Ted opened the lid and peaked into the depths of the container.

"KD's!" He exclaimed slamming down the lid and lifting it up quickly again, "KD's! You got me KD's!"

He repeated this a few times, each time with surprise. He looked at his family and picked the shoes out of the box. They were

basketball shoes, but not just any basketball shoes they were the special edition designed basketball shoes designed by the superstar himself. Everyone on the playground wanted a pair. He loved Kevin Durant and his gigantic slam dunks, a giant leaping over other giants. He believed he was the best player in the NBA, and now he was now holding a piece of his hero in his hands and felt even closer to him.

“Thank you so much, Dad.” He got up and gave his father a hug.

“Try them on see if they fit.” His mother said.

He took the one shoe out the box and took the stuffing out of the insides.

“Hey wait a second,” Ted looked at the insole. “Where’s the signature KD insole?! these aren’t KD’s! These aren’t KDs!”

“Unfortunately,” his Dad said shuffling his feet and tweaking his tie, “they were sold out. But those are just as good! Aren’t they?”

Ted held up the fake in his hand. They looked exactly like KD’s. They were bright orange with a tiny blue swirl of a logo. No sign of the Nike swoosh though. Ted flipped them over in his hand, and then slipped them on his feet. He jumped up and down a few times.

“I tried my best to find those shoes, son, but they were sold out everywhere.”

The shoes did have some spring to them. Ted bounced into the bathroom room to try to look at them in the mirror. His frown slowly turned upside down. He smiled. Ted liked the colour and they felt like he was floating on a cloud. His father had tried. Maybe they would grow on him.

Ted bounced back in the kitchen, further exaggerating his steps. “They’re ggggrrreat, dad,” Ted exclaimed copying the classic arm swing of Tony the Tiger, “I really like them.” He hugged his dad.

“Oh good I thought you’d be mad.”

“I wasn’t sure at first. They’re not KDs. But they’re fine. I like them. I think they’ll most likely fool my friends. I thought they were real at first.” The whole family grew quiet.

“Well,” Joan said, “It’s time to put them to the test. You’ll be late for school. Off you go”

He manoeuvred around his father, skipping out on cleaning up the wrapping paper. Ted's dad hardly noticed, consumed with shoveling in his second helping of cake. Already dressed his coat and shoes, Ted thought he only needed to stuff the package of stars in his backpack; one more thing he could show off. His mom thought otherwise, "Ted, aren't you forgetting something?"

"Umm", Ted looked around and then down at his PJs, "Whoops." In all the excitement he had forgotten to change for school and quickly hurried upstairs.

Now fully dressed in jeans, t-shirt, and new shoes, Ted ran back downstairs and threw on his new jacket, but left the pants for a rainy day. "Well, don't we look smart!"

Ted smiled looking down at the new coat and shoes.

"Ah shucks, come over here and give your mother a hug."

Ted reluctantly stepped forward a couple steps and hugged his mother.

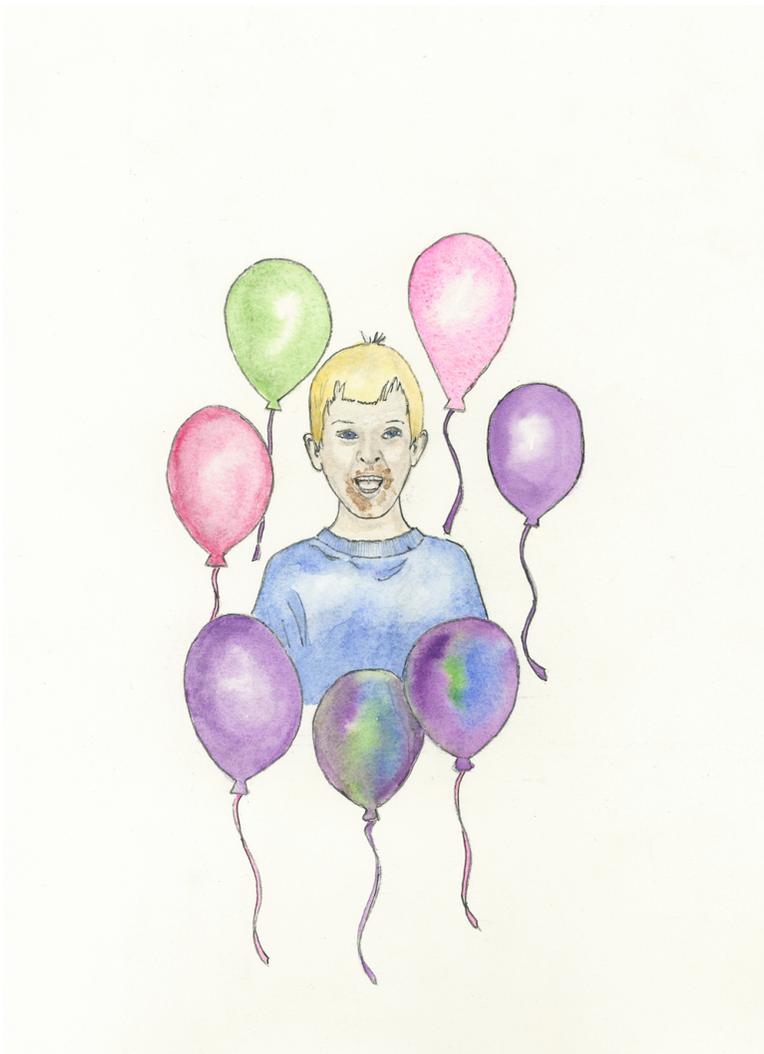
"That's better. She brushed his hair aside. Now you can go."

Ted walked towards the door and exited the house.

"Hey, don't forget your sister!" Ted stopped in his tracks and rolled his eyes.

Sheryl came bounding down the stairs with her backpack, swinging back and forth, making considerable noise as if she was going on a camping trip with pots and pans tied to it.

"Let's go Sheryl! I don't want to be late for class."



**The Birthday Boy**