

Why We Are All Secretly Squidward

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Not everyone is mentally equipped to sing "I'm ready! I'm ready!" while hopping to work. Mornings can be a slow start for those who can see the repetitiveness of everyday existence; walking feels more like dragging yourself around and prancing excitement of singing and starting the day slowly melts down to a half consenting "Hmm."

Squidward Tentacles is perceived as a bitter cashier at Krusty Krab who, living in Bikini Bottom, only drowns in his own self-pity. However, he's not just the average down-on-luck anthropomorphic octopus. He is multifaceted in ways that represent a large number of rather uncomfortable traits and emotions.

The most blatant of Squidward's problems is the constant feed of redundant loud noise from his neighbours, SpongeBob SquarePants and Patrick Star. Now, who hasn't faced the frustration of a continual blaring of music systems at parties, or the head-splitting sounds of bricks being crushed at construction sites? It takes a lot of self-restraint to not scream out complaints, and like Squidward, we often find ourselves lacking that control.

If you can move past the noise, think of the neighbours themselves. We have Patrick who is so ignorant and blissful under his rock that he proves himself to be the most oblivious and incompetent person around. SpongeBob, on the other hand, is the overly excitable neighbour who doesn't think twice about barging in and parroting views, however unfounded, he believes in.

While it can be argued that SpongeBob goes out of his way to make Squidward happy, it's important to realise that SpongeBob has a perfect success rate of 0.00% and

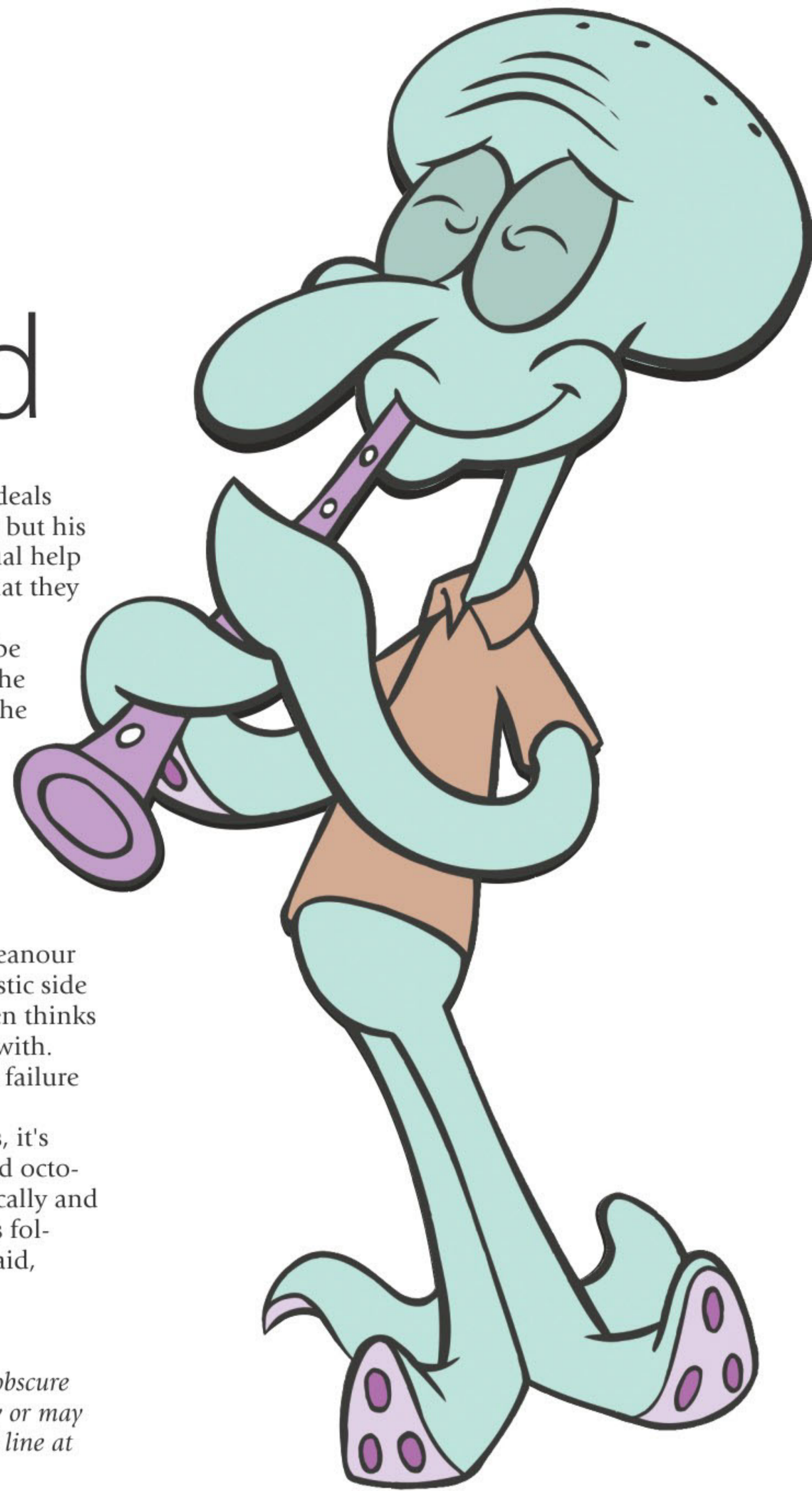
often worsens things for Squidward. Squidward deals with depression and entertains suicidal thoughts but his neighbours don't feel the need to get him to actual help but rather straps him onto ridiculous rides of what they find enjoyable.

A reason behind Squidward's depression can be that his talents go completely unrecognised and he has to succumb to becoming a cashier at a place he wholeheartedly hates. His skill of playing the clarinet is only rarely appreciated. His higher taste in art goes completely ignored and often times disrespected. All he aspires to be is so out of reach that in an episode he is shown to bring flowers to a gravestone reading "Here lies Squidward's hopes and dreams."

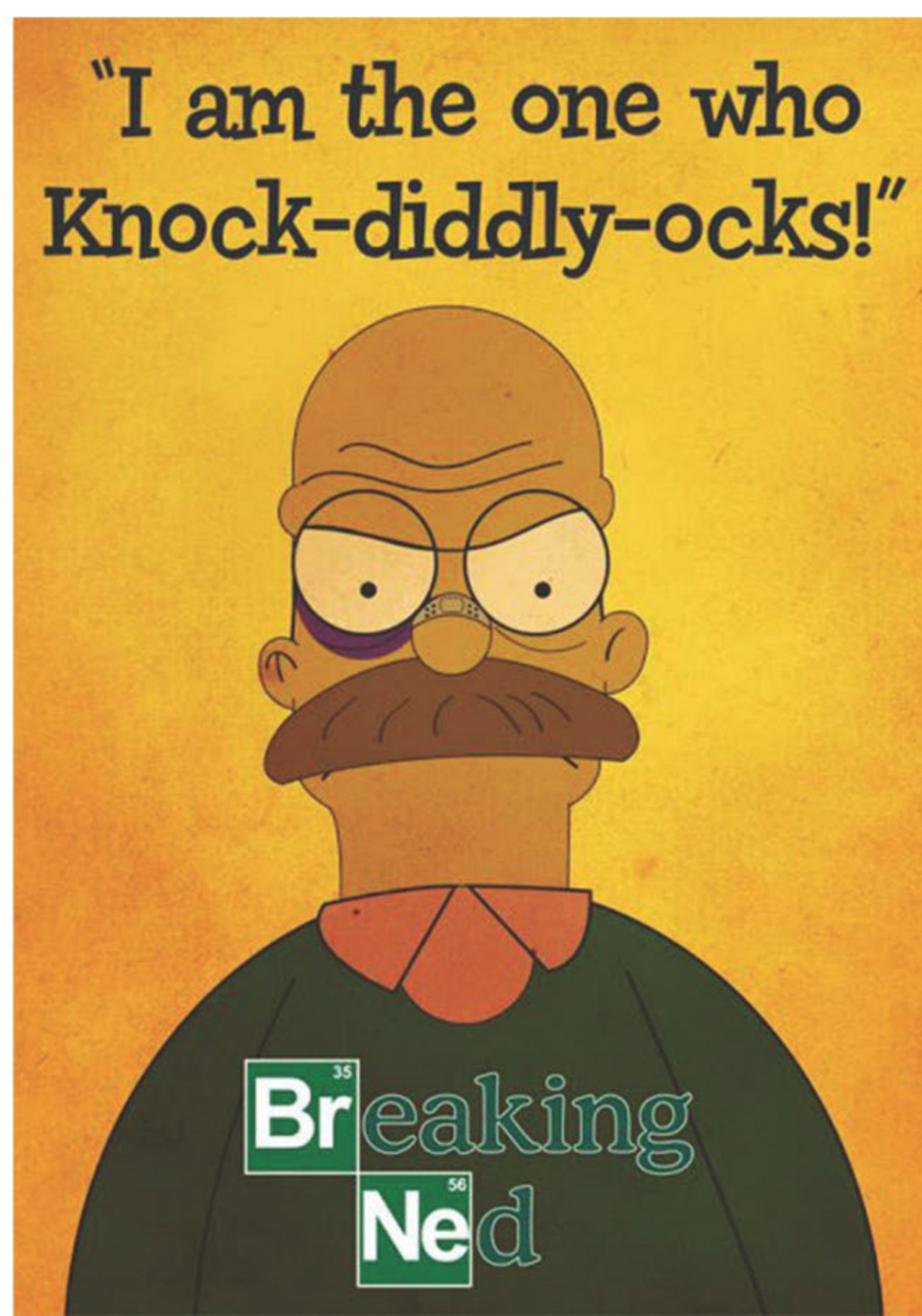
Interestingly enough, despite his general demeanour of being in misery, Squidward also has a narcissistic side to him. He has at least 492 self portraits and often thinks himself to be better than everyone he associates with. This feeling of superiority coupled with constant failure makes Squidward what he is.

Watching episodes of SpongeBob SquarePants, it's difficult not to relate to Squidward. The six legged octopus is designed to fall flat on his face both physically and metaphorically – incidents which are often times followed up by explosions. As a wise person once said, "Such is life."

With a keen eye and a broken brain to mouth filter, Mahejabeen Hossain Nidhi has a habit of throwing obscure insults from classic novels at random people who may or may not have done anything to warrant them. Drop her a line at mahejabeen.nidhi@gmail.com



LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR



MYAT MOE KHAING

Our first attempt at socialising starts with our neighbours, people you surely see gathering on the ground floor right after an earthquake. They are the people who should never have an idea of what you're up to, lest they tell your parents that you've been bunking classes. They are diverse and our relationship with them can ease or worsen our communal living.

We all have lived next to a house which we know is occupied, though the windows and doors are always shut. You don't see anyone entering or leaving the house, or even taking out the garbage. Call an exorcist, splash the house with holy water – that's the only logical thing to do.

Certain neighbours put you in the position of Robert Neville in the movie "I am Legend". Like the mutants, they won't acknowledge your existence. It's a relief because being a socially awkward person, I don't have to smile at them, but I really hope my phone magically rings when I share the lift in awkward silence.

Almost all neighbourhoods are living examples of modern day symbiosis. From babysitting to tutoring, our neighbours are our saviours. What's a neighbour if he/she does not borrow a cup of sugar because their guests have arrived without a notice?

The nicest neighbours are aunts who send us *pitha* and *samosa*. The smell of the *biryani* from their kitchen is itself a signal of what can possibly reach your home in an hour. The taste variety in *naru* and *achar* is best understood when your neighbours use their own special recipes. However, overly nice neighbours are

the kind you see in movies, waving their hands at everyone. They are so super-friendly that they greet you and ask you annoying questions at every encounter.

"Labib, what are you doing?"

"I am checking our electricity bill, uncle"

"Electricity bill? Hey, we get that stuff too."

Our neighbours paint the true picture of diversity. On Puja, we get to see candles lit, while Eid comes with plates of *shemai*. But when it comes to being loud, neighbours are more than a binary spectrum. Imagine prepping for an exam when you hear *Potolkumar Gaanwala*, and you can't believe your ears that such a name for a TV serial could exist. On the other hand, a few neighbours will probably call the police if the woman living upstairs doesn't stop grinding *masala* at 5 a.m.

Buas are an indispensable part of our lives. But when 5 flats start hiring the same *bua*, schedules can get messed up, risking friendly relations with our neighbours. These *bhabi*-fights will culminate with a derogatory remark about a certain family's income's legality.

We break our neighbours' windows while batting, ask them for *salami* on Eid, and play with the kids every afternoon. We greet them almost every day and watch cricket matches together. At the end of the day, our neighbours are an integral part of our mundane lives.

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