

BAND
NERD

BAND NERD

 HarperCollins

BY SARAH CLAWSON WILLIS

ILLUSTRATED BY
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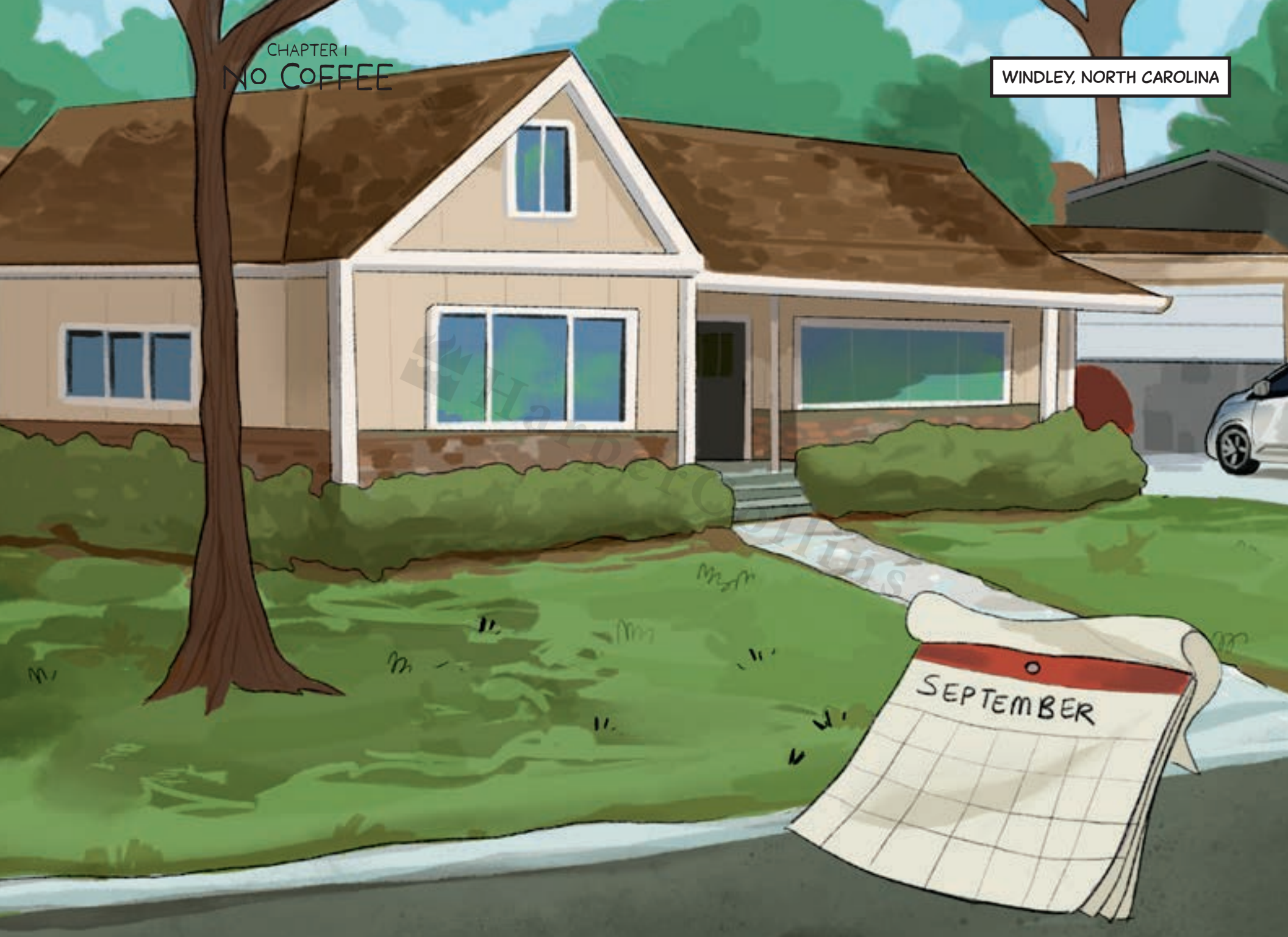
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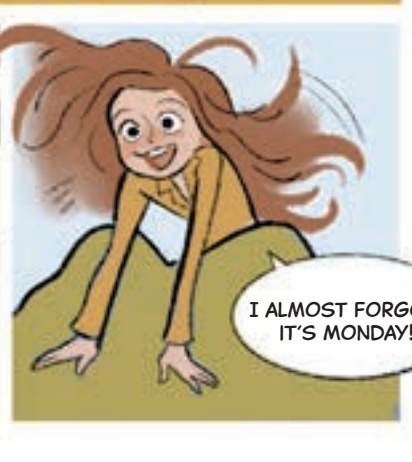
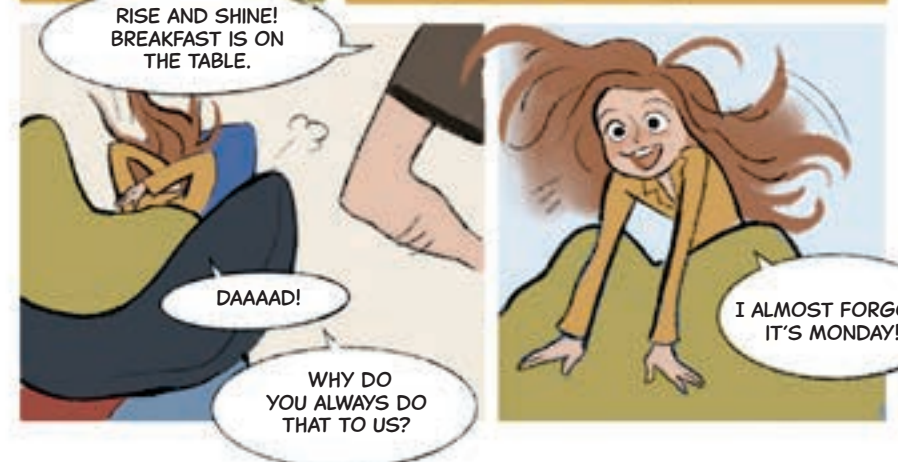
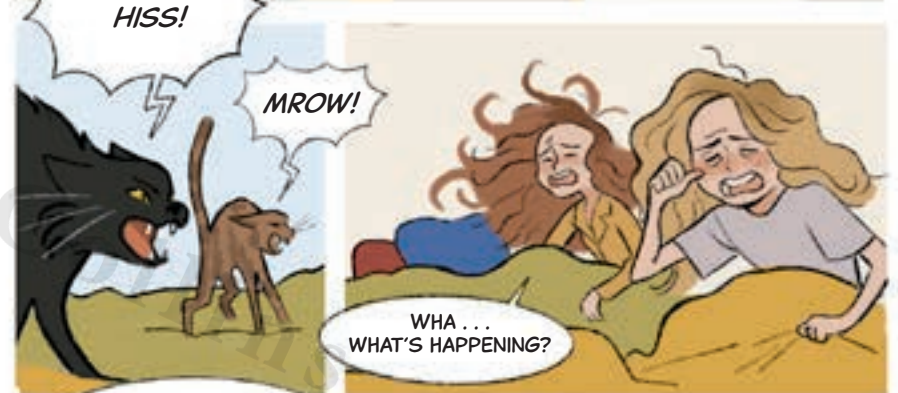
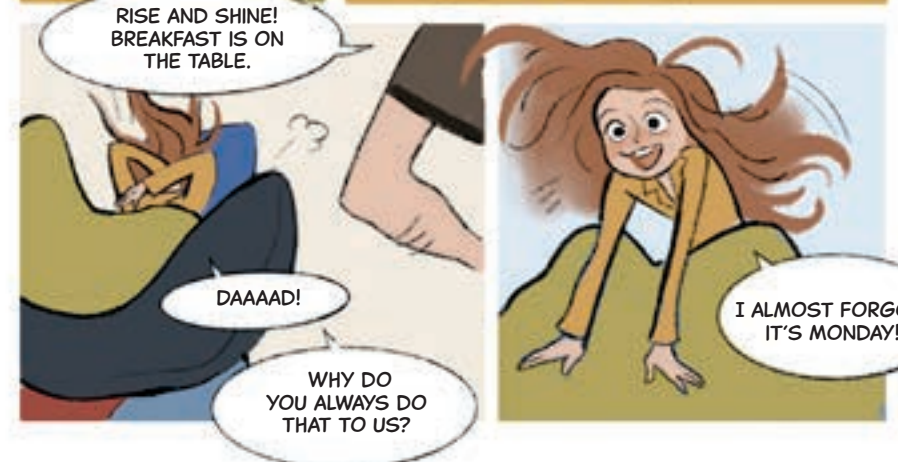
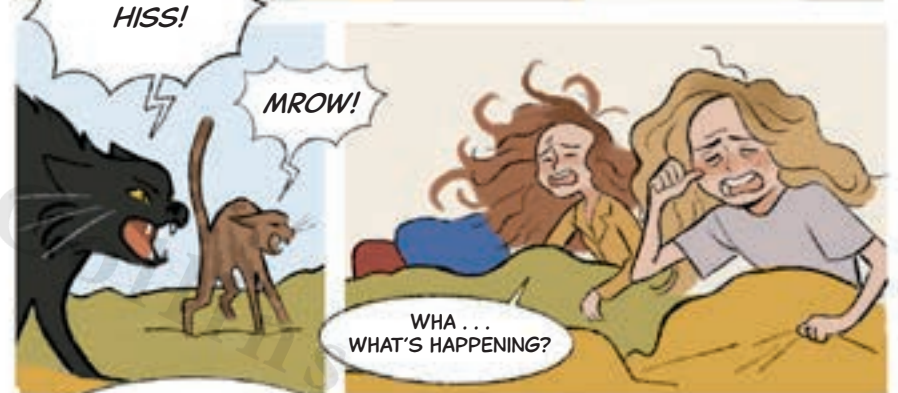
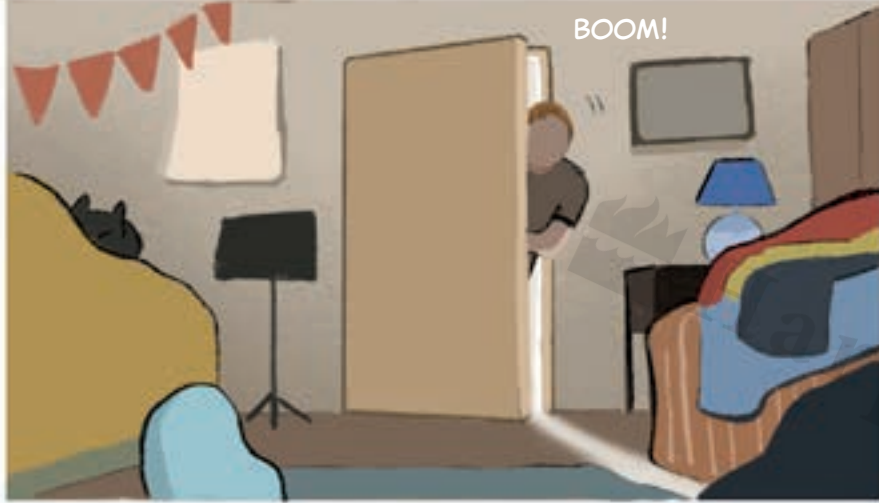
23 24 25 26 27 TK 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

FIRST EDITION

CHAPTER I
NO COFFEE

WINDLEY, NORTH CAROLINA







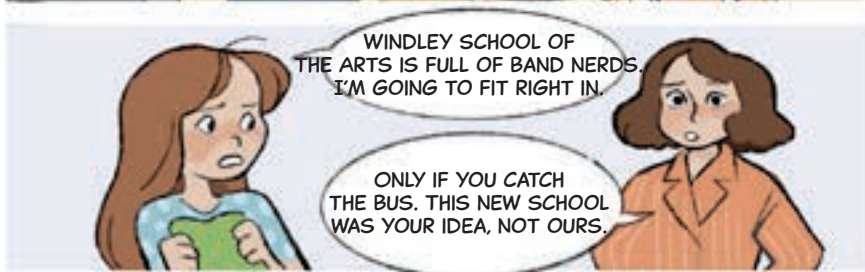
WHY AREN'T YOU DRESSED YET?

HMM.



NOT THAT SHIRT. MIGHT AS WELL HAVE A SIGN THAT SAYS "BAND NERD."

BAND NERD!
BAND NERD!
LUCY IS A BAND NERD!!



WINDLEY SCHOOL OF THE ARTS IS FULL OF BAND NERDS. I'M GOING TO FIT RIGHT IN.

ONLY IF YOU CATCH THE BUS. THIS NEW SCHOOL WAS YOUR IDEA, NOT OURS.



I AM!



GET MOVING!

THIRTY MINUTES IS PLENTY OF TIME.



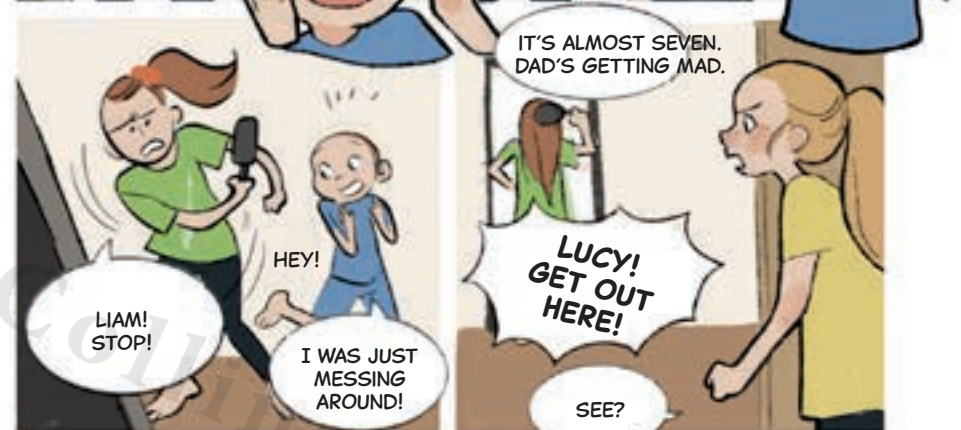
BAND NERD!

BAAAAAAND NERRRRRRD!

BAND NERD!

BAND NERD!

BAND NERD!



LIAM! STOP!

HEY!
I WAS JUST MESSING AROUND!

IT'S ALMOST SEVEN. DAD'S GETTING MAD.

LUCY! GET OUT HERE!

SEE?





IF YOU MISS THE BUS, YOUR MOM CAN'T DRIVE YOU.



WINDLEY IS ACROSS TOWN, NOT DOWN THE ROAD LIKE WEST MIDDLE.

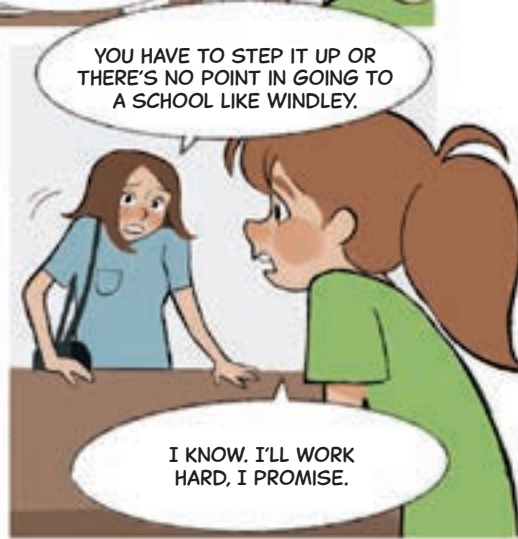


I KNOW, BUT LIAM--

NO "BUTS." JUST EAT. FAST.



YOUR ELDEST IS DILLYDALLYING.



YOU HAVE TO STEP IT UP OR THERE'S NO POINT IN GOING TO A SCHOOL LIKE WINDLEY.

I KNOW, I'LL WORK HARD, I PROMISE.



WE'RE JUST CONCERNED.

YOU'RE NOT THE STRONGEST STUDENT.

I CAN DO IT. I GOT IN, RIGHT?

WINDLEY HAS A MUCH HARDER CURRICULUM THAN YOUR OLD SCHOOL.

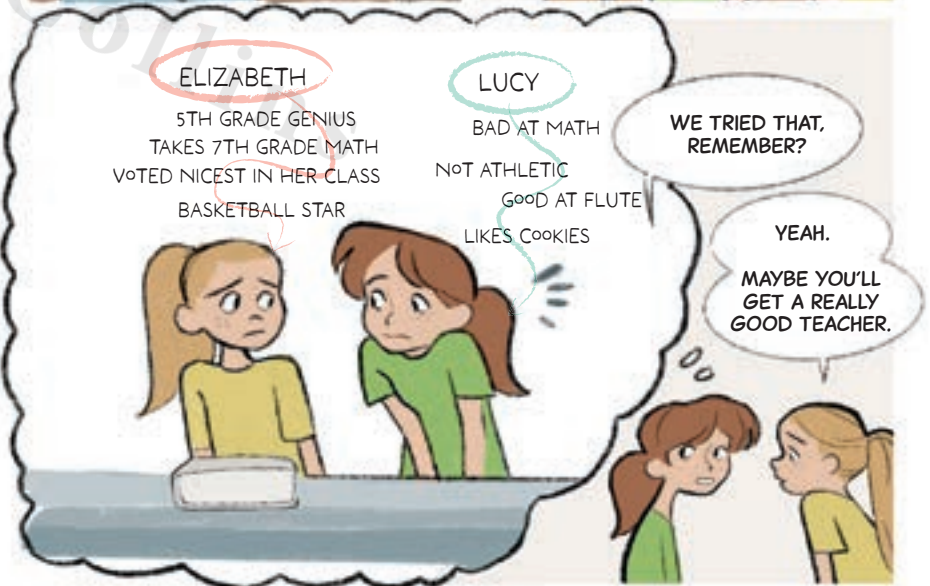
ESPECIALLY IN MATH.

YOU HAD A REALLY STRONG AUDITION.

WINDLEY COULD BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU.

BUT ONLY IF YOU PUT IN THE WORK.

IT'LL BE OKAY. MAYBE I CAN HELP WITH THE MATH.



ELIZABETH

LUCY

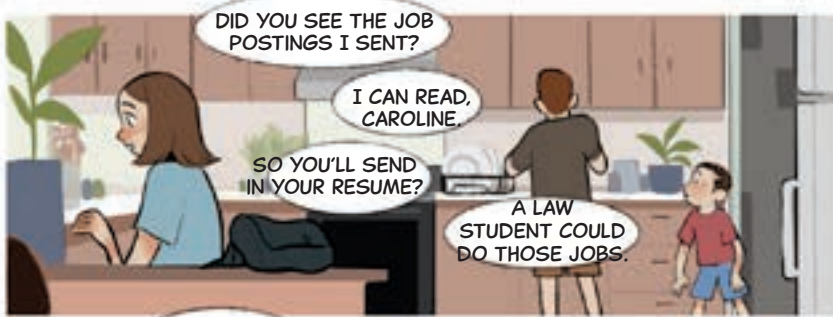
5TH GRADE GENIUS
TAKES 7TH GRADE MATH
VOTED NICEST IN HER CLASS
BASKETBALL STAR

BAD AT MATH
NOT ATHLETIC
GOOD AT FLUTE
LIKES COOKIES

WE TRIED THAT, REMEMBER?

YEAH.

MAYBE YOU'LL GET A REALLY GOOD TEACHER.



YOU DID WHAT YOU WANTED,
JUST LIKE ALWAYS.

A CASE OF BEER
ISN'T HEALTHY.



—SELFISH!

—WASTEFUL!



GOTTA GET
OUT...

... THE...

... BEFORE...



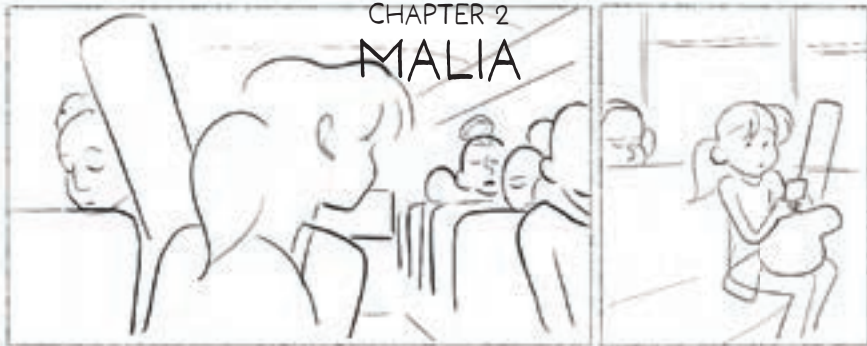
... EXPLOSION.



CLICK



CHAPTER 2
MALIA



YOU'RE IN MY SEAT.

THEY—
THEY'RE
ASSIGNED?

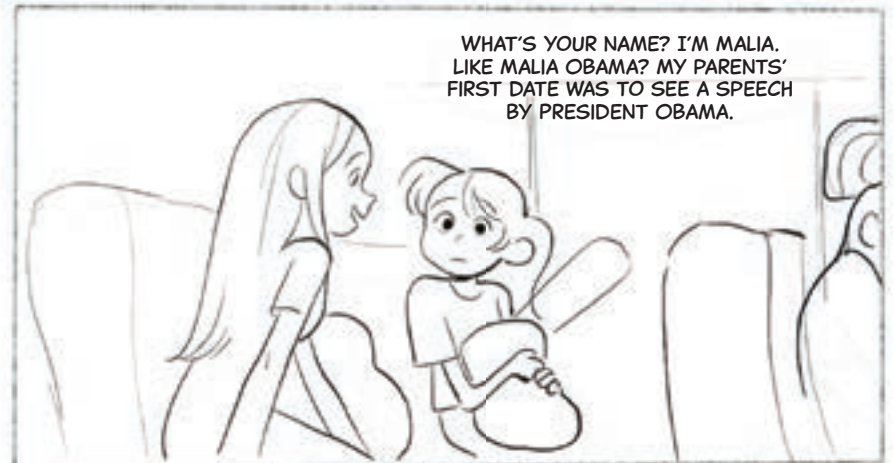


NOT OFFICIALLY
OR ANYTHING.
BUT YOU KNOW
THE RULES.

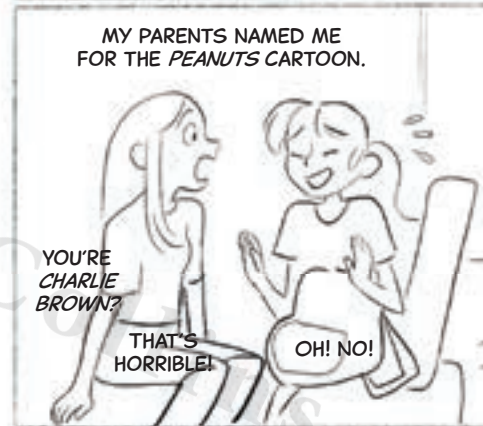
I DO?

I'M IN EIGHTH
GRADE. YOU'RE NEW, SO,
PROBABLY IN SEVENTH.
I SIT WHERE I WANT.

LET'S SWAP.
I WANT THE
WINDOW
SEAT.



WHAT'S YOUR NAME? I'M MALIA.
LIKE MALIA OBAMA? MY PARENTS'
FIRST DATE WAS TO SEE A SPEECH
BY PRESIDENT OBAMA.



YOU'RE
CHARLIE
BROWN?

MY PARENTS NAMED ME
FOR THE PEANUTS CARTOON.

THAT'S
HORRIBLE!

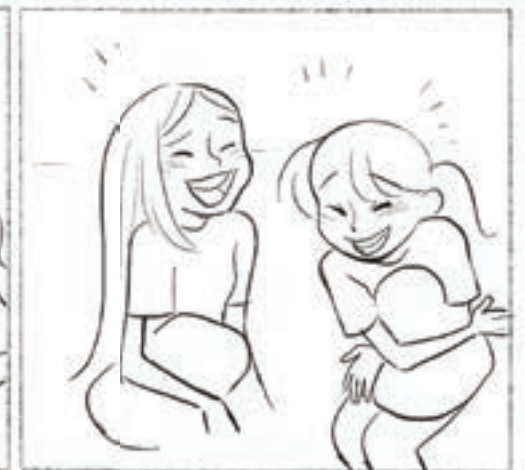
OH! NO!

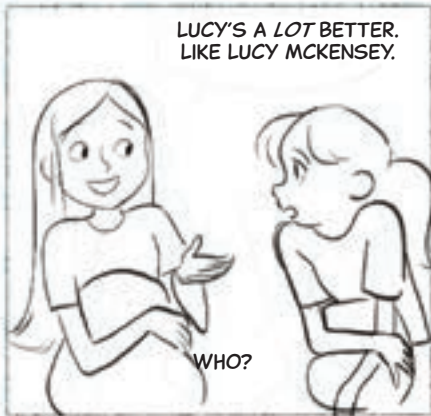
THEY NAMED
YOU SMOOPY?



NO!

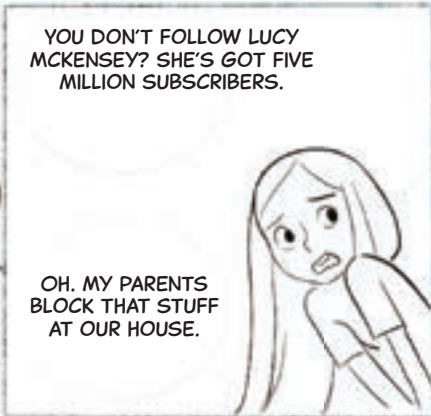
I'M LUCY.





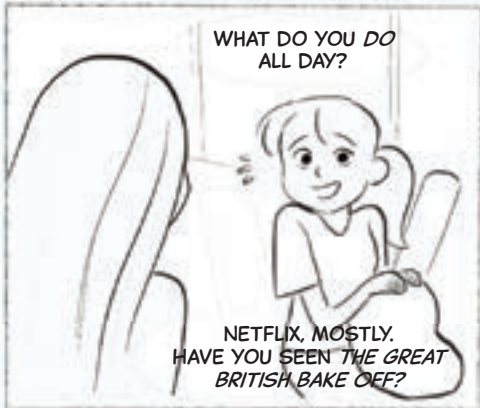
LUCY'S A LOT BETTER.
LIKE LUCY MCKENSEY.

WHO?



YOU DON'T FOLLOW LUCY
MCKENSEY? SHE'S GOT FIVE
MILLION SUBSCRIBERS.

OH. MY PARENTS
BLOCK THAT STUFF
AT OUR HOUSE.

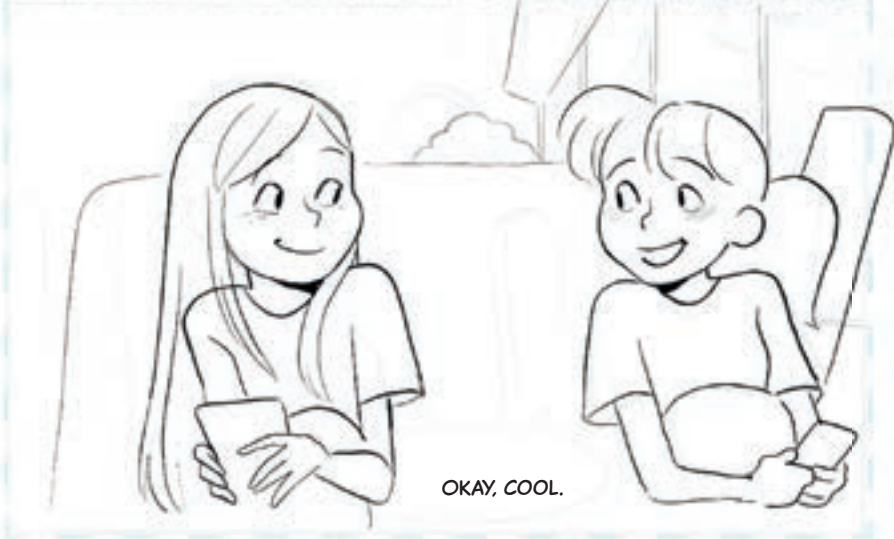


WHAT DO YOU DO
ALL DAY?

NETFLIX, MOSTLY.
HAVE YOU SEEN *THE GREAT
BRITISH BAKE OFF*?



SERIOUSLY, YOU HAVE
TO WATCH LUCY MCKENSEY.
YOU CAN COME TO MY HOUSE.
LET ME GIVE YOU MY NUMBER.

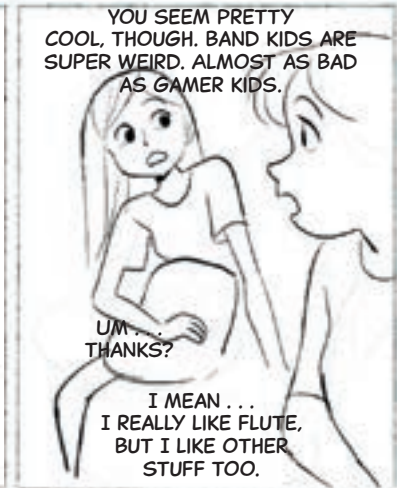


OKAY, COOL.



SO YOU'RE A
BAND NERD, HUH?

FIRST CHAIR
ALL LAST YEAR.
IT'S THE ONLY THING
I'M GOOD AT.



YOU SEEM PRETTY
COOL, THOUGH. BAND KIDS ARE
SUPER WEIRD. ALMOST AS BAD
AS GAMER KIDS.

UM...
THANKS?

I MEAN...
I REALLY LIKE FLUTE,
BUT I LIKE OTHER
STUFF TOO.



STICK WITH ME. I'M IN CHORUS.
WE'RE A LOT MORE CHILL.

CHEERLEADING TRYOUTS ARE
TODAY. ARE YOU GOING?



NO. I NEED TIME TO PRACTICE
MY FLUTE. AND STUDY. I HEAR
THERE'S A LOT OF HOMEWORK
AT WINDLEY.

YOU'LL GET USED TO IT.
I'M SUPER NERVOUS
ABOUT TRYOUTS.



WE HAVE TO DO ALL
THESE DANCE MOVES...



AND
ROUTINES...



AND EVEN
STUNTS!

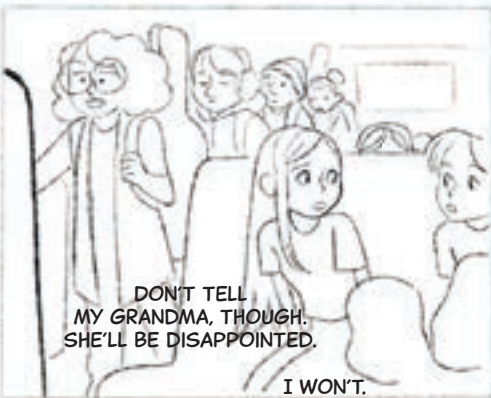


I'M SURE YOU'LL
DO GREAT.



THANKS, BUT I ALMOST HOPE I DON'T MAKE THE TEAM.

I DON'T REALLY LIKE CHEERING.



DON'T TELL MY GRANDMA, THOUGH. SHE'LL BE DISAPPOINTED.

I WON'T.



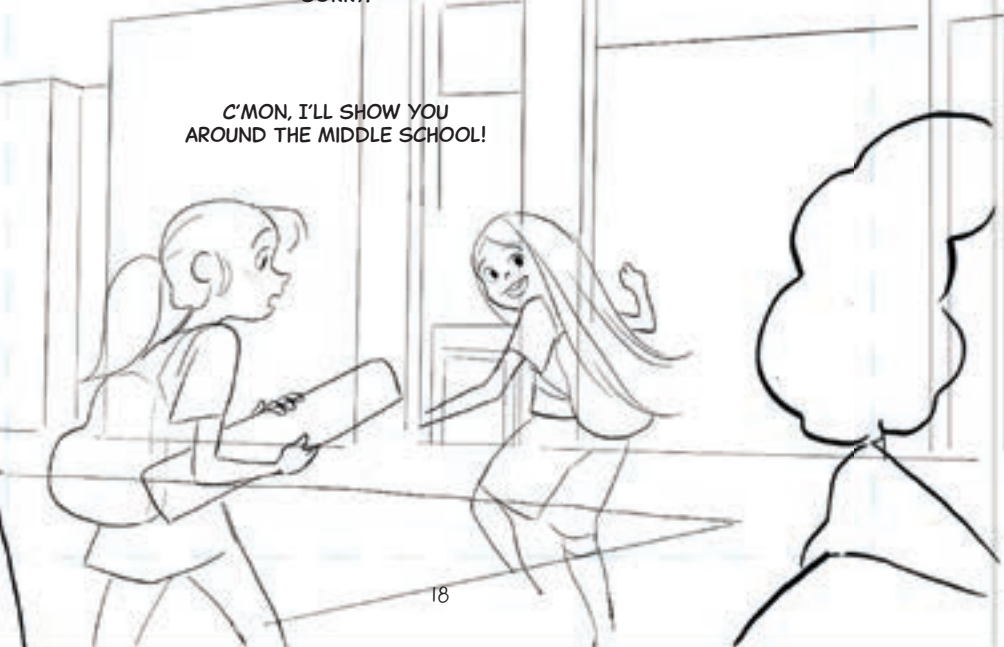
WATCH IT!

UGH.

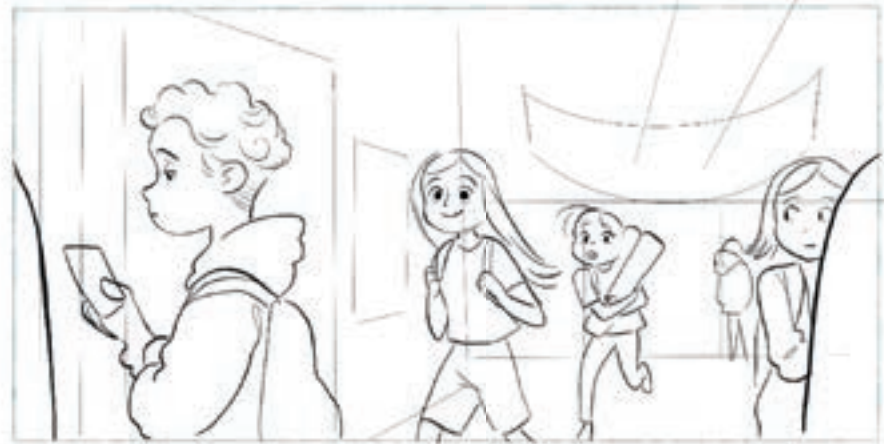
CREATIVE WRITING KIDS. THEY ALL THINK THEY'RE GOING TO WRITE THE NEXT HARRY POTTER.



SORRY.



C'MON, I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND THE MIDDLE SCHOOL!



RING!



SEVENTH GRADE HALLWAY IS THAT WAY.

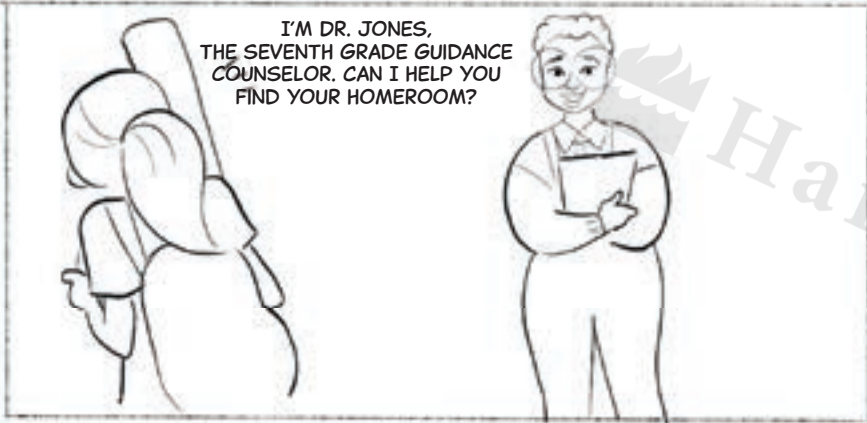


GULP!



YOU'RE GONNA DO GREAT. SEE YOU ON THE BUS?

SEE YOU THEN.



I'M DR. JONES,
THE SEVENTH GRADE GUIDANCE
COUNSELOR. CAN I HELP YOU
FIND YOUR HOMEROOM?



COUNSELORS
ARE USUALLY NICE,
NOSY, THOUGH.

I...
UM.

LET'S SEE YOUR
SCHEDULE.



I DON'T THINK
I HAVE ONE.



I CAN LOOK
YOU UP. NAME?

LUCY CARVER.



CARVER,
CARVER...
HERE YOU ARE!
BAND TRACK.



YOU'RE IN
MS. BAZ'S CLASS.
TWO DOORS DOWN
ON THE LEFT.



PHEW!



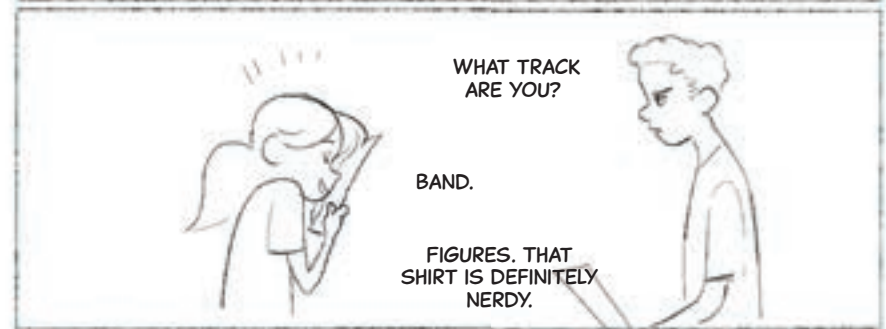
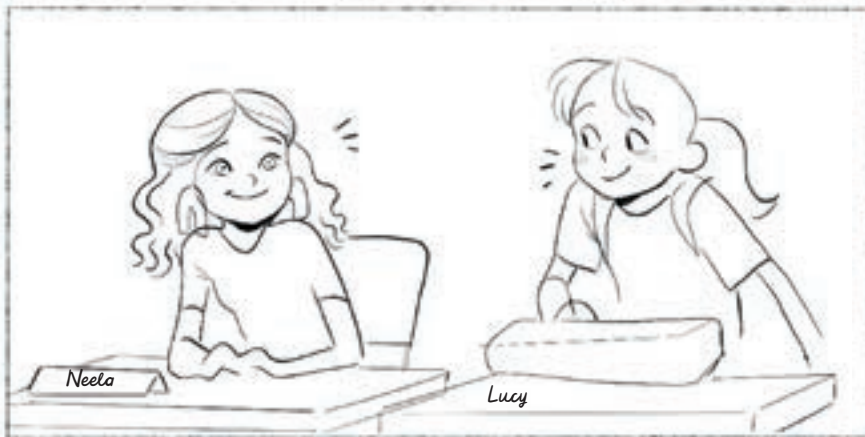
WELCOME, LUCY!

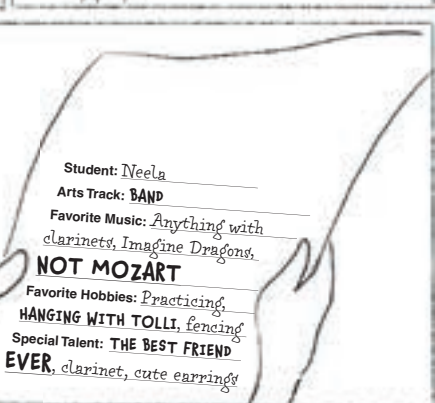
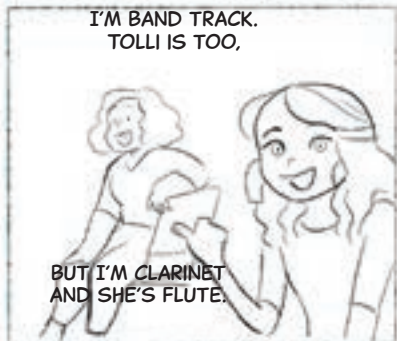
WE'RE GLAD
YOU'RE HERE.

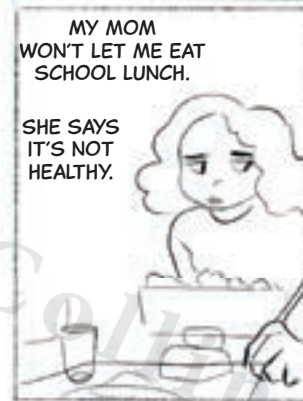
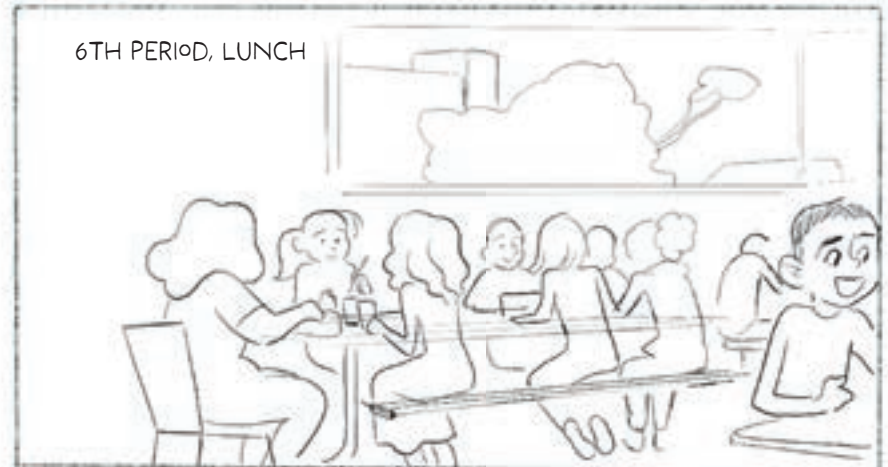
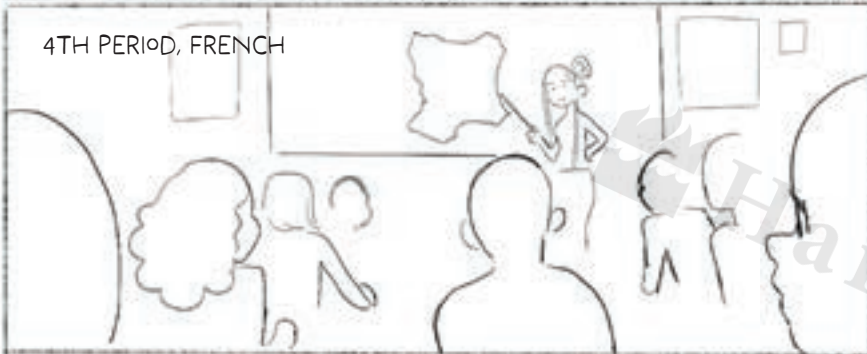


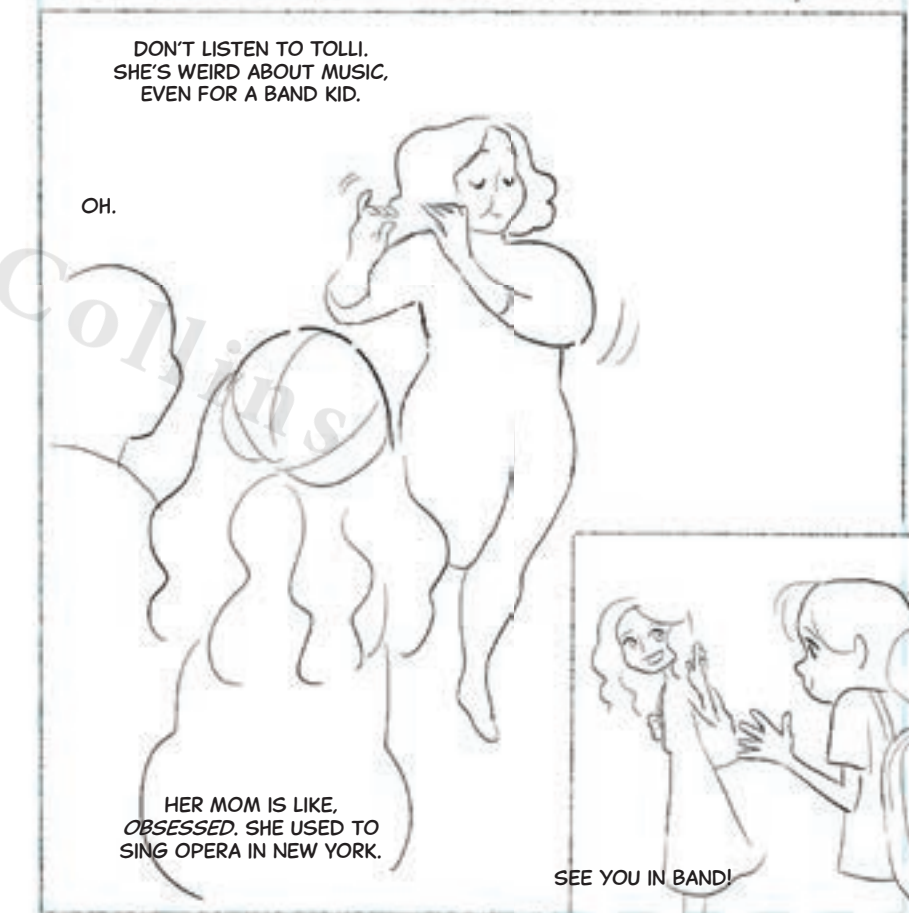
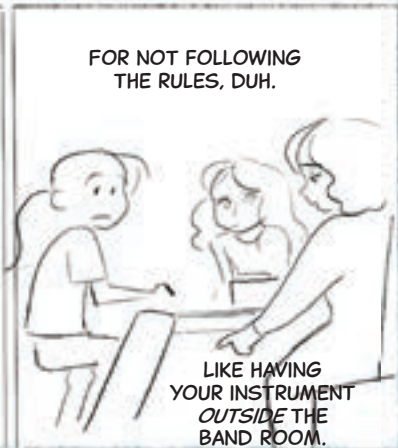
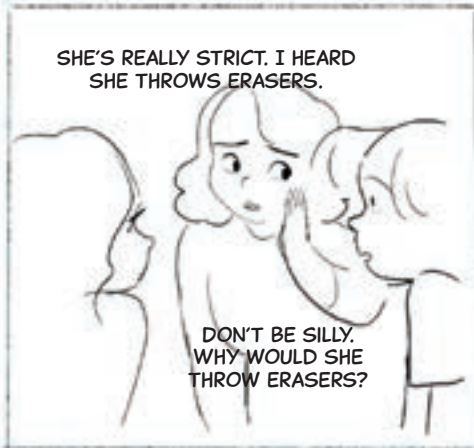
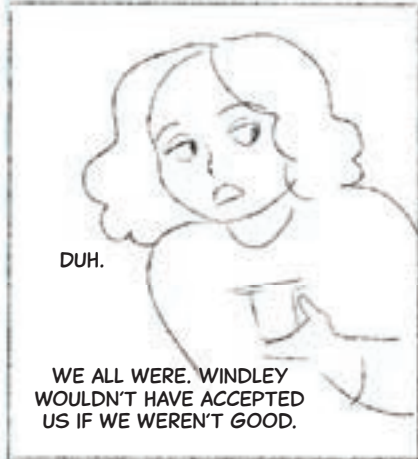
CHAPTER 3
ICEBREAKERS

1ST/2ND PERIOD, LANGUAGE ARTS & SOCIAL STUDIES



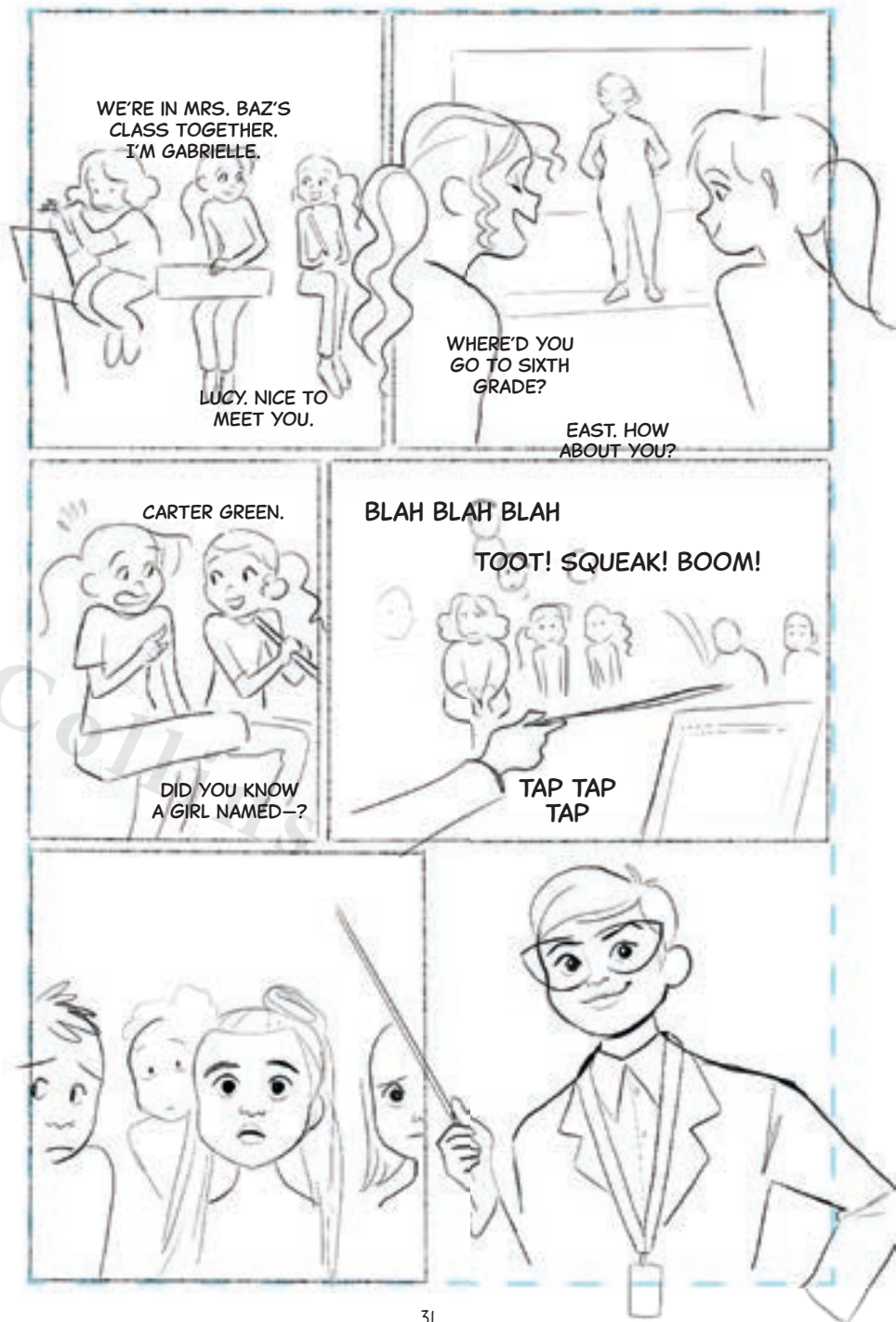
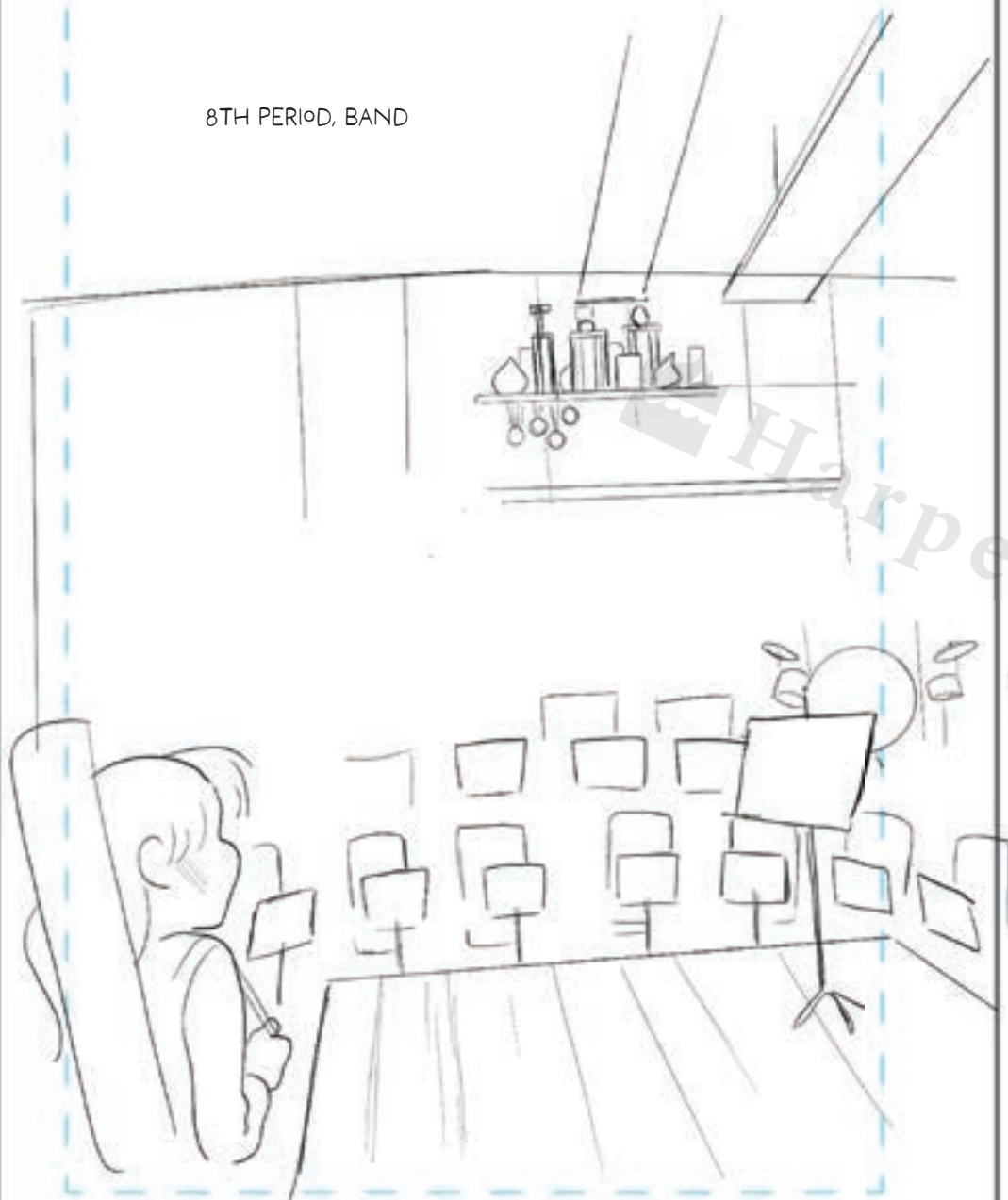






CHAPTER 4
ERASERS

8TH PERIOD, BAND



I'M MS. KELL,
AND THIS IS SEVENTH
GRADE BAND.



IN HERE, WE HAVE
SOME RULES.



RULE
NUMBER
ONE:

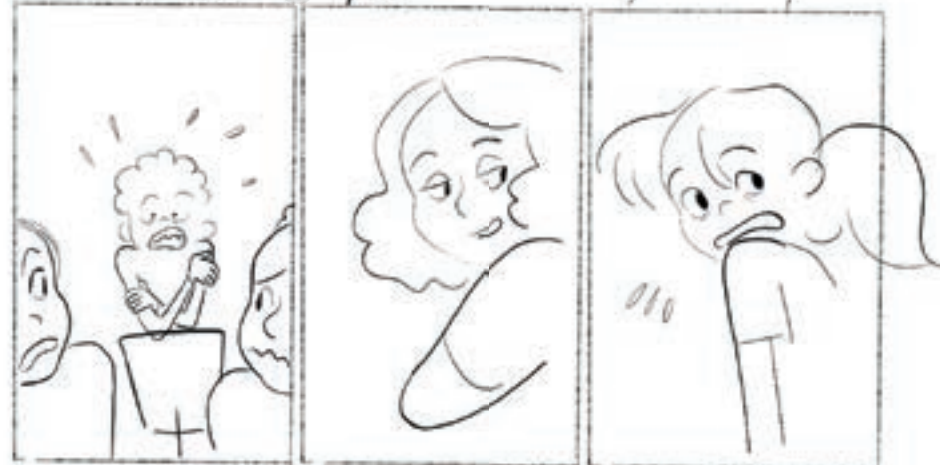
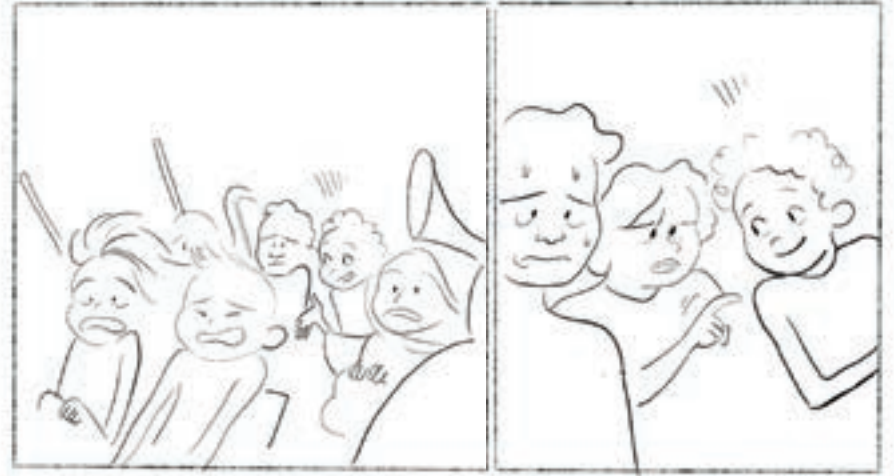
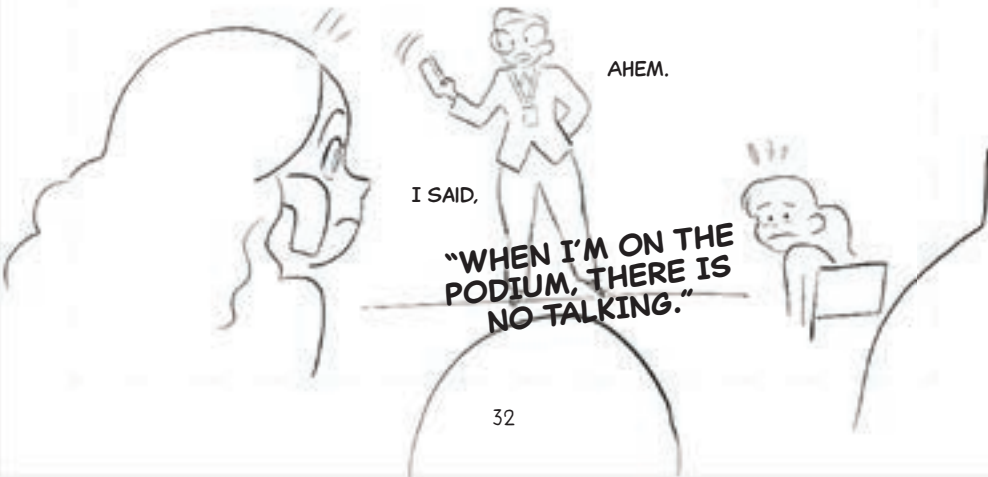
WHEN I'M ON
THE PODIUM, THERE
IS NO TALKING.



AHEM.

I SAID,

"WHEN I'M ON THE
PODIUM, THERE IS
NO TALKING."



ANYONE ELSE PLANNING TO BREAK RULE NUMBER ONE?

NO!

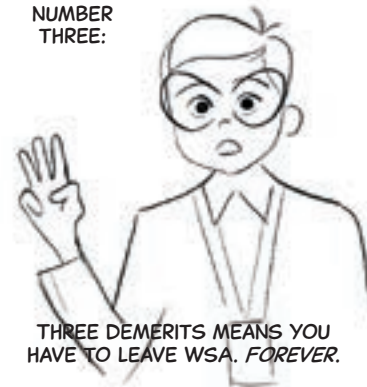


GOOD.

HOW MANY OF YOU BROUGHT THE MUSIC I SENT OVER THE SUMMER?



RULE NUMBER THREE:



THREE DEMERITS MEANS YOU HAVE TO LEAVE WSA. FOREVER.

BEING A STUDENT HERE IS A PRIVILEGE. AM I UNDERSTOOD?



YES!

MUSIC? WHAT MUSIC?



RULE NUMBER TWO IS TO BRING YOUR MUSIC AND YOUR INSTRUMENT EVERY DAY.



EXCELLENT.



NOW, OPEN THE BOOKS ON YOUR STAND TO PAGE 1.



I TOLD YOU SHE WAS STRICT.

IF YOU BREAK A RULE, YOU'LL RECEIVE A DEMERIT.



WHAT'S A DEMERIT?

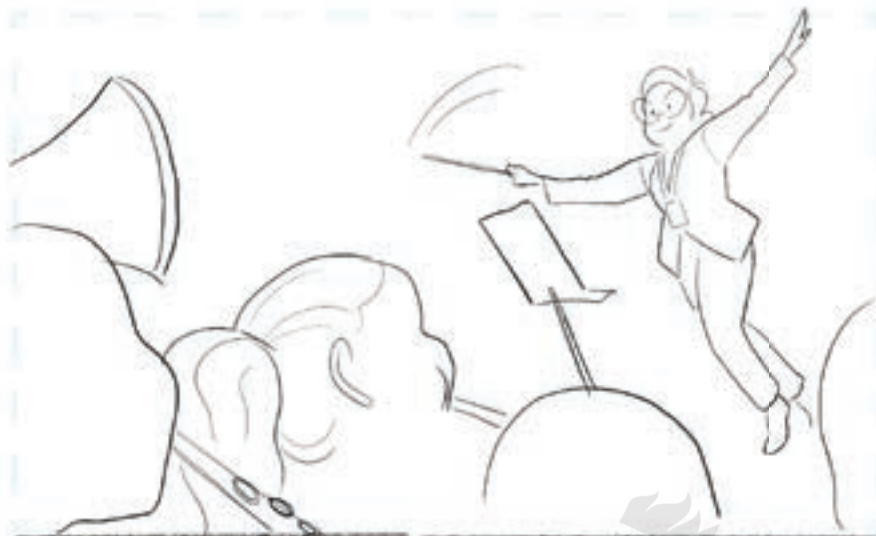
OKAY, FROM THE TOP.



WANNA USE MINE?



THANKS!



NOT BAD.

NOT BAD
AT ALL.

GET READY
TO WORK HARD
THIS YEAR.

WE'RE GOING
TO HAVE A LOT
OF FUN.

GO AHEAD AND
PACK UP THE BELL'S
READY TO RING.

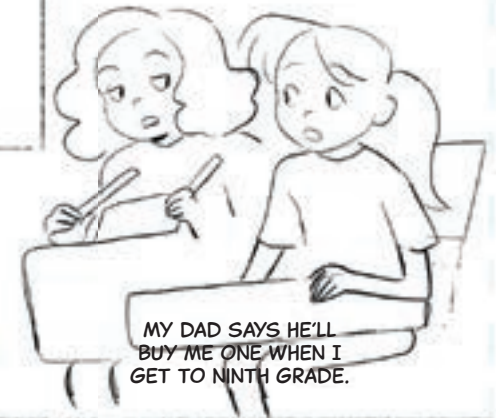
A WHAT?

YOU DON'T
HAVE AN OPEN
HOLED FLUTE?

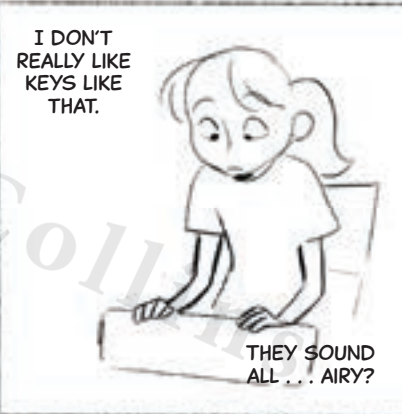


OH.

OPEN HOLED.
IT GIVES YOU
BETTER TONE.



MY DAD SAYS HE'LL
BUY ME ONE WHEN I
GET TO NINTH GRADE.



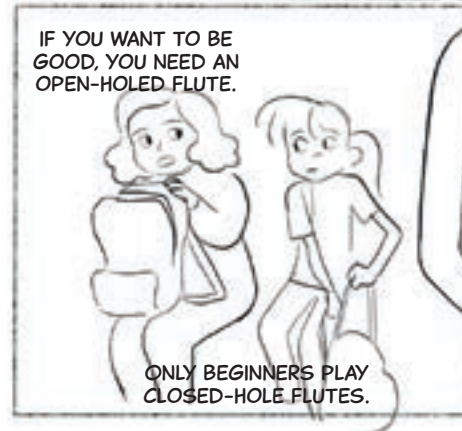
I DON'T
REALLY LIKE
KEYS LIKE
THAT.

THEY SOUND
ALL ... AIRY?



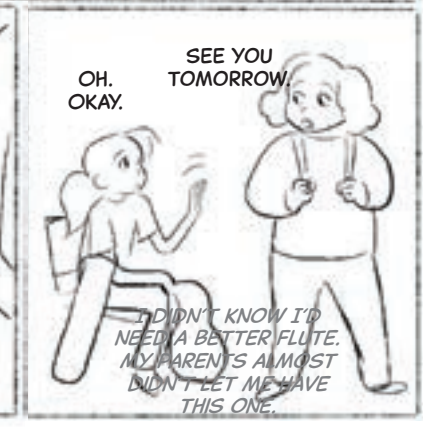
THAT'S BECAUSE YOU DON'T
KNOW HOW TO PLAY IT YET.
IF YOU PRACTICED ...

GOTTA GO. SEE
YOU TOMORROW,
LUCY!



IF YOU WANT TO BE
GOOD, YOU NEED AN
OPEN-HOLED FLUTE.

ONLY BEGINNERS PLAY
CLOSED-HOLE FLUTES.

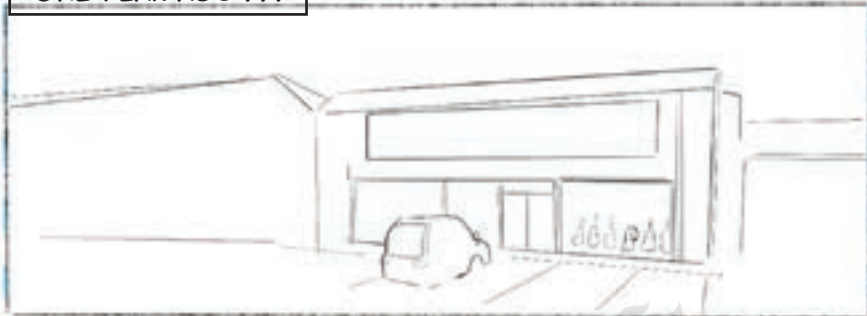


SEE YOU
TOMORROW.
OH.
OKAY.

I DIDN'T KNOW I'D
NEED A BETTER FLUTE.
MY PARENTS ALMOST
DIDN'T LET ME HAVE
THIS ONE.

CHAPTER 5
BAND CENTRAL STATION

ONE YEAR AGO . . .



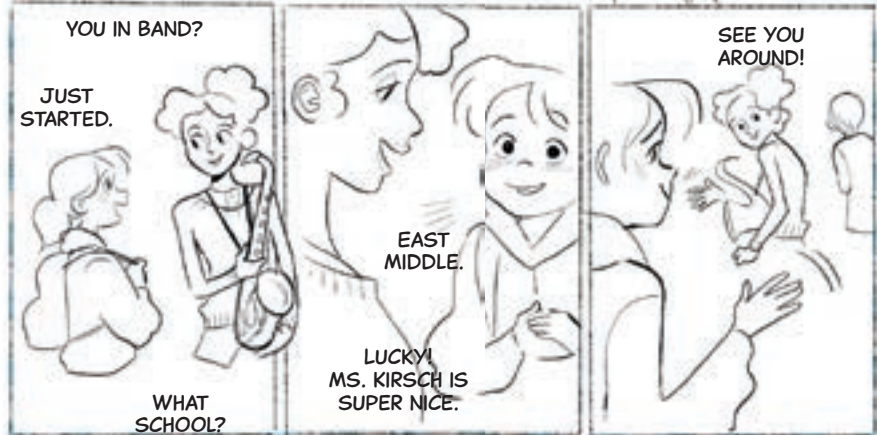
DUN DUN DUN DUNNNN!



WELCOME.



THOSE GIRLS
ARE SO COOL.



YOU IN BAND?

JUST
STARTED.

WHAT
SCHOOL?

EAST
MIDDLE.

LUCKY!
MS. KIRSCH IS
SUPER NICE.

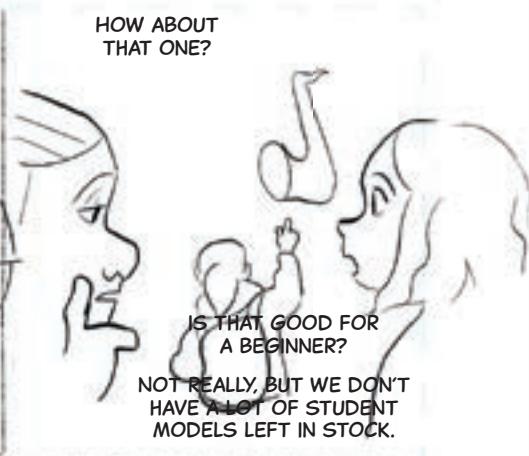
SEE YOU
AROUND!



PRETTY GOOD, HUH?

YEAH.

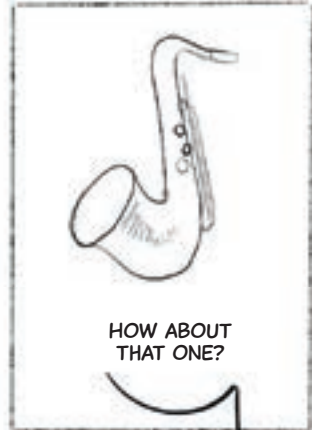
YOU COULD BE TOO, WANT TO TRY SOMETHING?



HOW ABOUT THAT ONE?

IS THAT GOOD FOR A BEGINNER?

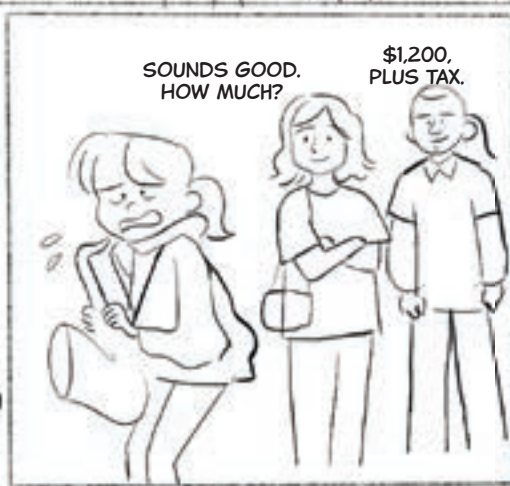
NOT REALLY, BUT WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF STUDENT MODELS LEFT IN STOCK.



HOW ABOUT THAT ONE?



WHEEEZE!



SOUNDS GOOD. HOW MUCH?

\$1,200, PLUS TAX.



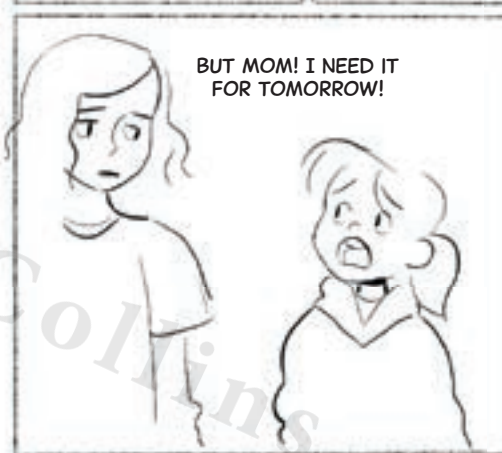
OUR BUDGET IS TWO HUNDRED, MAYBE THREE.



WE DON'T HAVE MUCH IN THAT RANGE.

HAVE YOU CHECKED ONLINE?

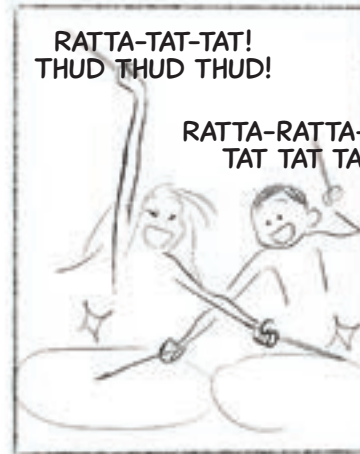
NO, BUT THAT'S A GOOD IDEA. MAYBE THIS WEEKEND—



BUT MOM! I NEED IT FOR TOMORROW!



HOW ABOUT PERCUSSION? THAT'S VERY AFFORDABLE.



RATTA-TAT-TAT! THUD THUD THUD!

RATTA-RATTA-RAT! TAT TAT TAT!



THIS ONE DOESN'T COST THAT MUCH.

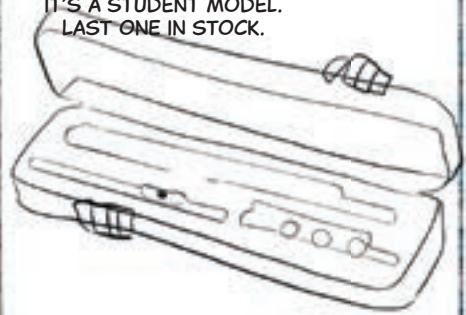
CAN I TRY THAT ONE?

GO AHEAD.

RAP! RAP! CRASH!

BAM! CRASH! BOOM BOOM BOOOOM!

IT'S A STUDENT MODEL.
LAST ONE IN STOCK.



GIVE IT
A TRY.

TOOT! TWEET! TOOOOT!



IT'S FLUTE OR DRUMS.
AND I DON'T THINK I CAN
HANDLE THE DRUMS.

TWEET! TOOT! SHRIEK!



FLUTE.
DEFINITELY
FLUTE.



WE'RE READY.

THAT'LL BE
\$421.38.



THAT'S SO
MUCH!

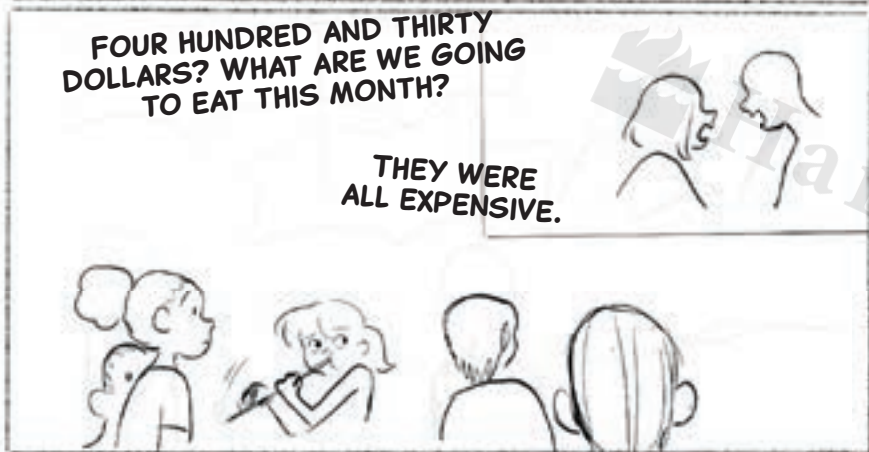
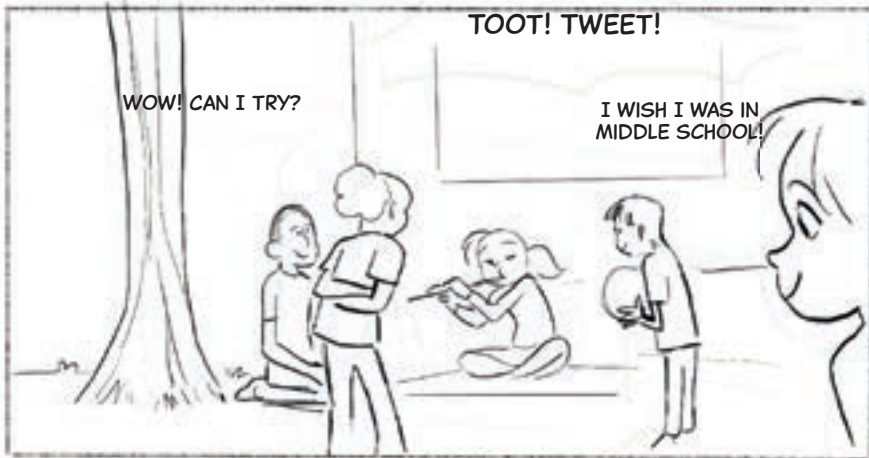


RUN A HUNDRED
DOLLARS ON THIS ONE
AND I HAVE A SECOND
CARD FOR THE REST.



I CAN'T WAIT TO
SHOW EVERYONE!





CHAPTER 6
WORK ETHIC



FLUSH!!!

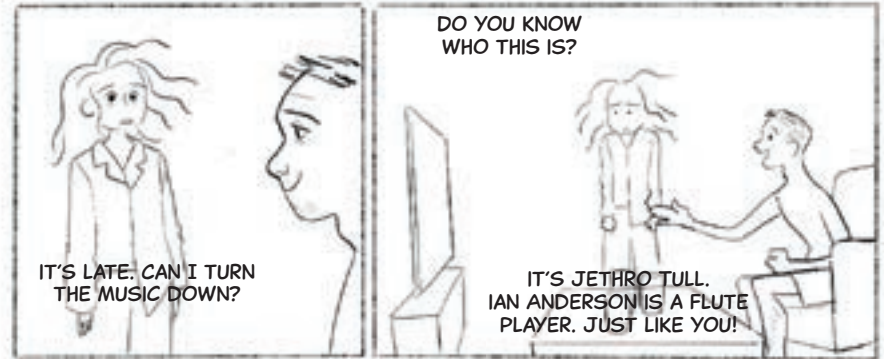


WHO'S THAT?

IT'S ME.

UH
OH.

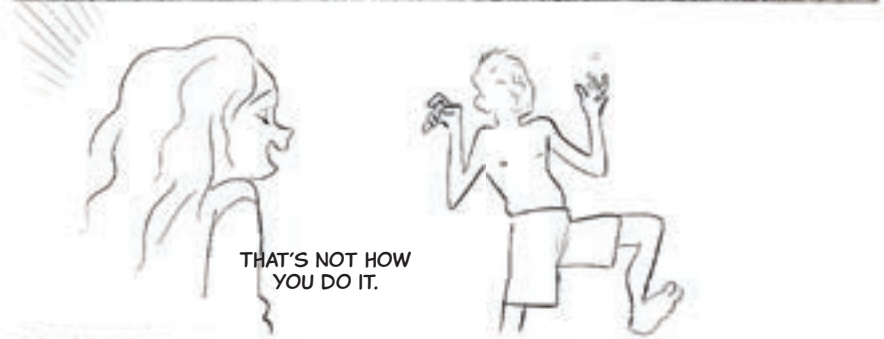
MY NUMBER ONE!
C'MERE, KIDDO.



IT'S LATE. CAN I TURN
THE MUSIC DOWN?

DO YOU KNOW
WHO THIS IS?

IT'S JETHRO TULL.
IAN ANDERSON IS A FLUTE
PLAYER. JUST LIKE YOU!



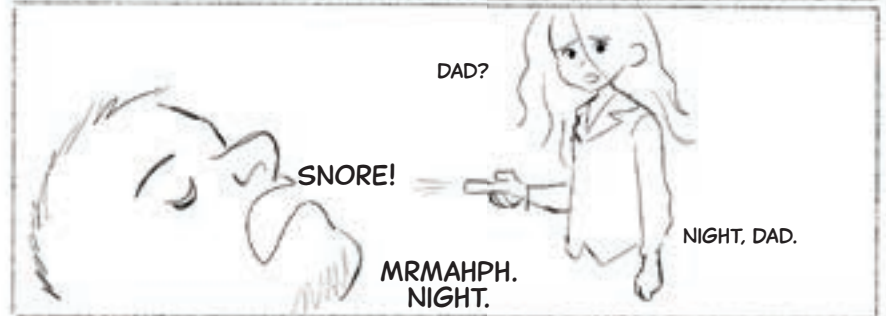
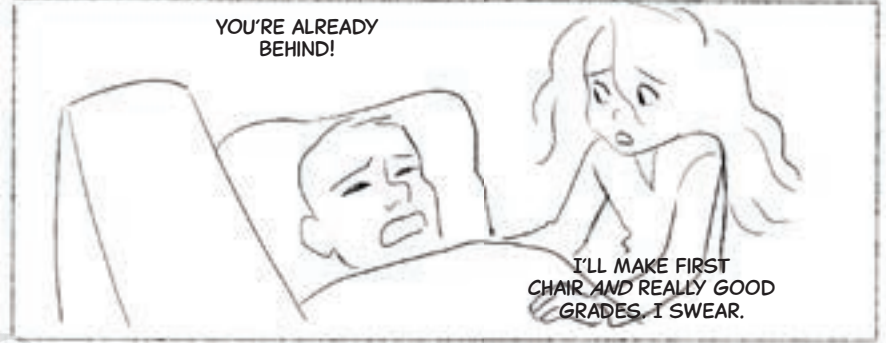
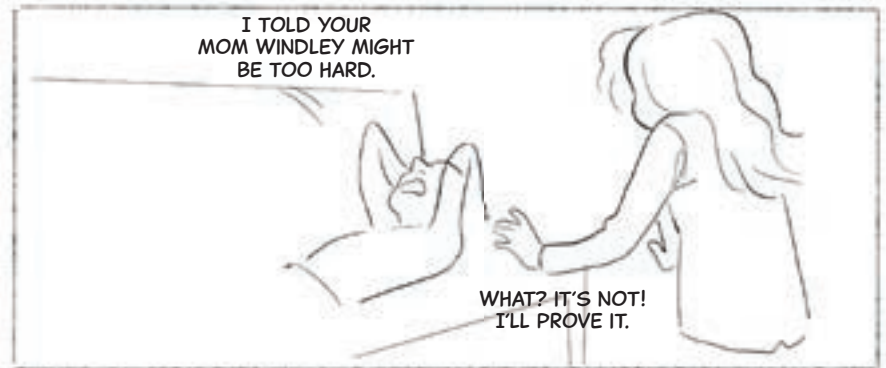
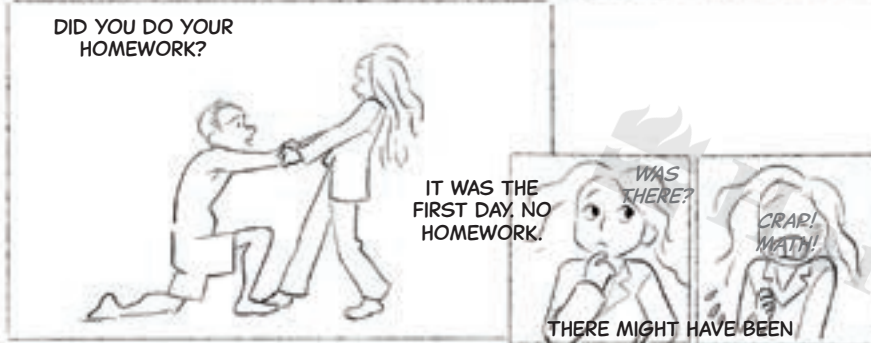
THAT'S NOT HOW
YOU DO IT.

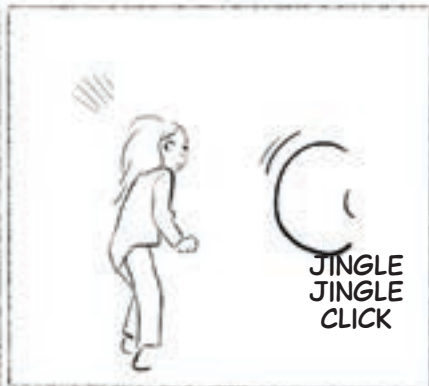


OOPS!

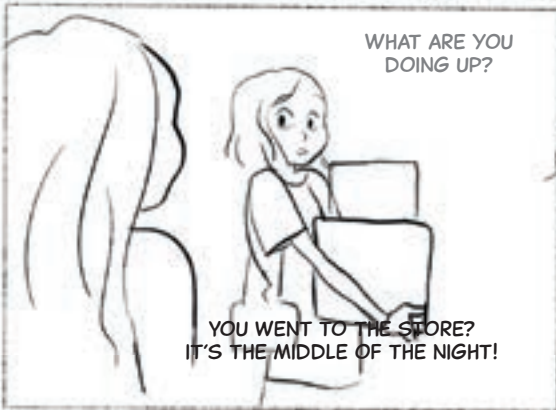


SHH! YOU'LL WAKE
EVERYONE UP!





JINGLE
JINGLE
CLICK



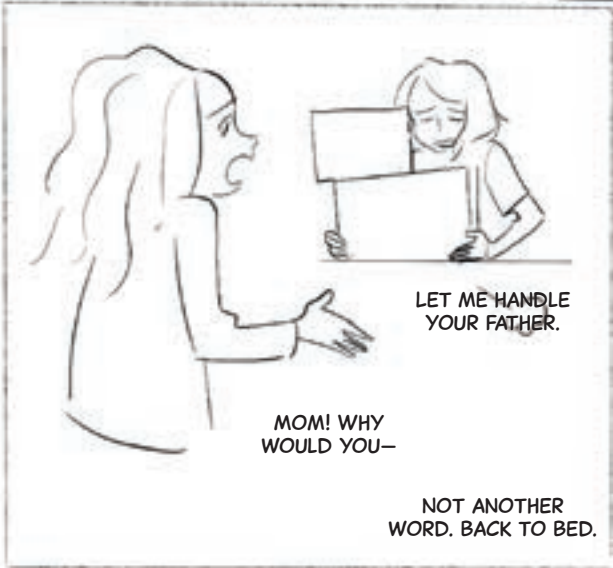
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING UP?

YOU WENT TO THE STORE?
IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!



I HAD TO
WORK LATE.

YOU SAID A
CASE WAS UNHEALTHY.
THAT'S TWO-



LET ME HANDLE
YOUR FATHER.

MOM! WHY
WOULD YOU-

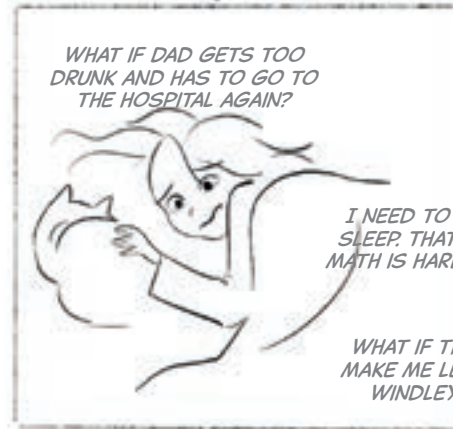
NOT ANOTHER
WORD. BACK TO BED.



TWO CASES ARE WAY TOO
MUCH. WHY DOESN'T SHE
JUST STOP BUYING BEER?



I'LL SHOW THEM I CAN DO IT.
FIRST CHAIR AND HONOR ROLL.



WHAT IF DAD GETS TOO
DRUNK AND HAS TO GO TO
THE HOSPITAL AGAIN?

I NEED TO
SLEEP. THAT
MATH IS HARD

WHAT IF THEY
MAKE ME LEAVE
WINDLEY??



WHAT IF DAD DIES
NEXT TIME?

CHAPTER 7
 CREPES AND CHAIR TESTS

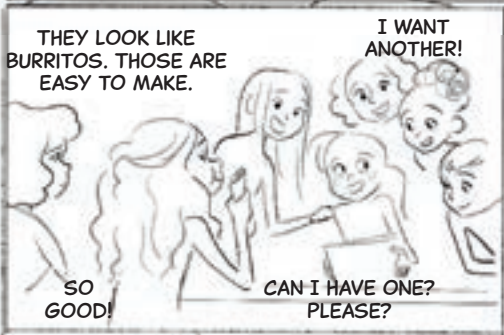


CHOCOLATE
 CREPES?

WOW!

THE RECIPE TOOK
 ALL DAY YESTERDAY.

I ALMOST DIDN'T
 FINISH THE FRENCH
 HOMEWORK.



THEY LOOK LIKE
 BURRITOS. THOSE ARE
 EASY TO MAKE.

I WANT
 ANOTHER!

SO
 GOOD!

CAN I HAVE ONE?
 PLEASE?



I MADE ONE
 FOR YOU TOO.

NO THANKS.
 THEY'RE SO FULL
 OF SUGAR, THEY'LL
 MAKE ME SICK.



I'LL EAT HERS.
 THESE ARE GOOD!



ARE YOU GOING
 TO SKATE NIGHT
 TONIGHT?



I DON'T KNOW.

I HAVE FENCING
 PRACTICE, AND IT'S
 A SCHOOL NIGHT.

IT'S A SCHOOL
 FUNDRAISER, NEE.

YOUR MOM WILL
 TOTALLY SAY YES.

MAYBE ...



ISN'T IT KIND
 OF EXPENSIVE?

I'LL PAY.

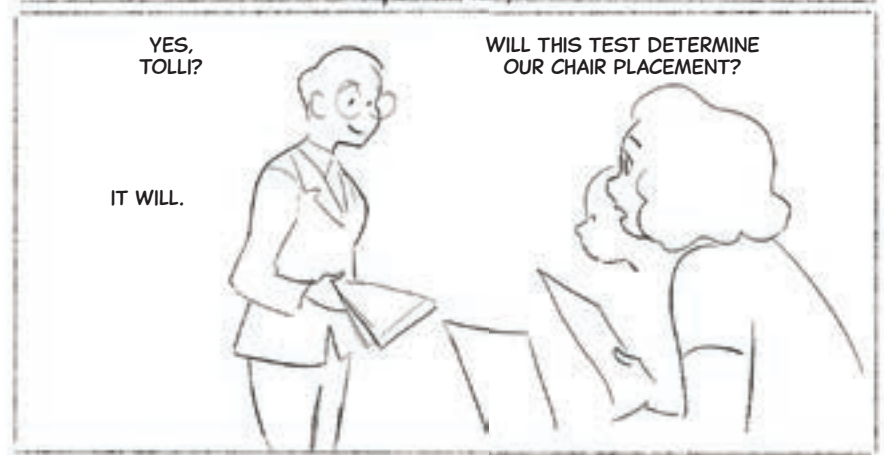
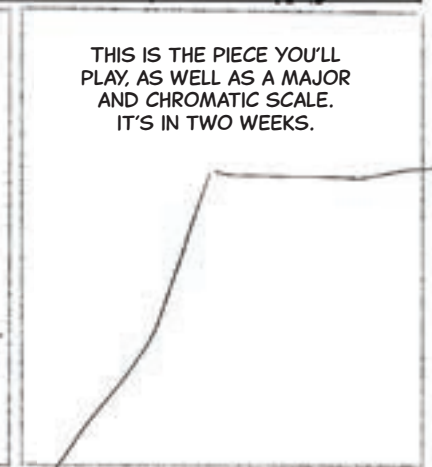
MY MOM AND
 STEPDAD GAVE
 ME A HUNDRED
 DOLLARS FOR IT.

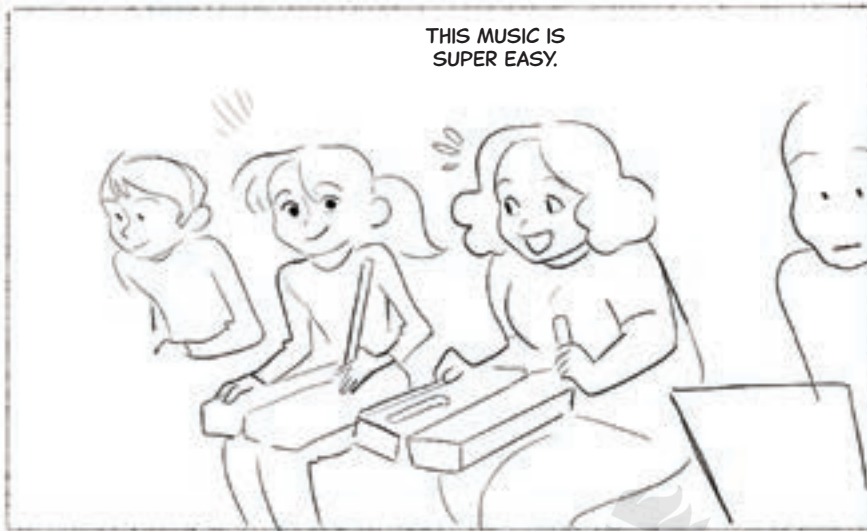
JUST HAVE YOUR
 MOM DROP YOU
 OFF AT SIX.



COOL! I'LL TEXT
 MY MOM.

I HOPE I CAN GO.
 I'LL TEXT YOU LATER WITH
 WHAT MY MOM SAYS.





THIS MUSIC IS SUPER EASY.



YOU THINK SO?

I'VE BEEN PLAYING A LOT LONGER THAN YOU. TRUST ME, IT'S EASY.

IF YOU SAY SO.



I'M DEFINITELY GOING TO BE FIRST CHAIR.

MY MOM IS GOING TO BE MAD IF I'M NOT.



MAYBE. BUT MAYBE IT'LL BE ME. WE'RE THE TWO BEST PLAYERS.

YOU? I GUESS YOU'RE OKAY. BUT YOU CAN'T EVEN GET THOSE RUNS IN "LINCOLNSHORE."

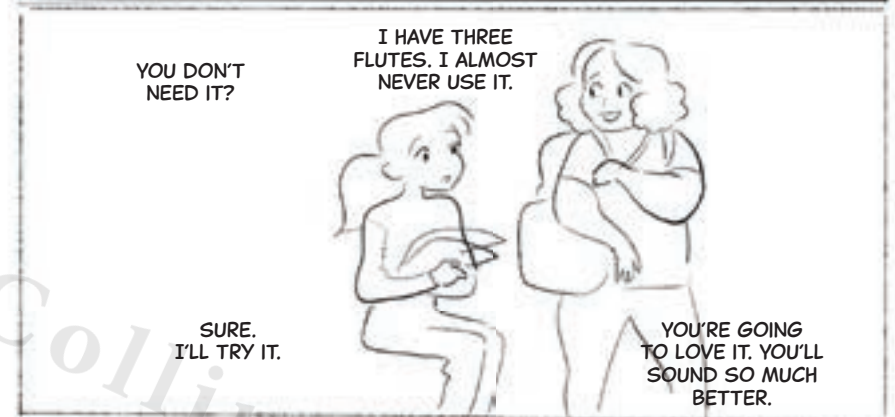


I'LL GET THEM. I JUST NEED MORE TIME.

THE STUPID MATH HOMEWORK TAKES FOREVER EVERY NIGHT.



MAYBE YOU COULD DO THEM IF YOU HAD A BETTER FLUTE. DO YOU WANT TO BORROW MY OLD ONE?



YOU DON'T NEED IT?

I HAVE THREE FLUTES. I ALMOST NEVER USE IT.

SURE. I'LL TRY IT.

YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE IT. YOU'LL SOUND SO MUCH BETTER.



THERE'S MY MOM.

GOTTA GO BEFORE SHE TRIES TO LECTURE MS. KELL ABOUT SOMETHING.

BYE!



TOLLI'S MOM USED TO BE AN OPERA SINGER, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN TOLLI HAS TO BE FIRST CHAIR.

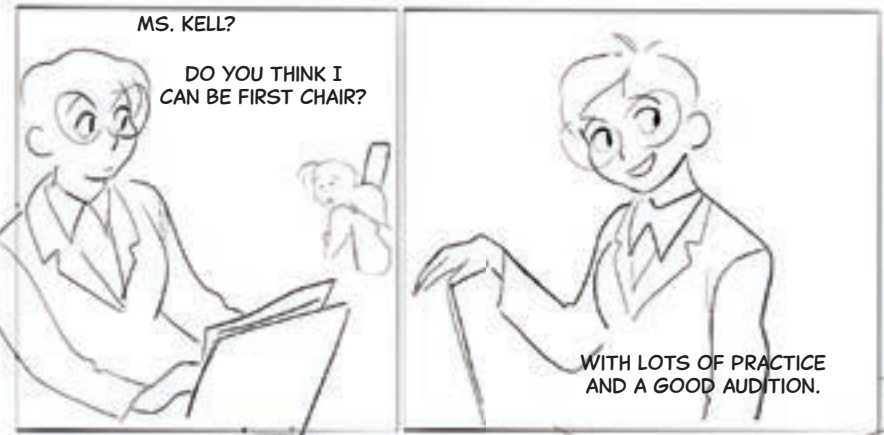
I WAS FIRST CHAIR ALL YEAR AT EAST, I CAN BE AS GOOD AS TOLLI.

I'LL HAVE TO PRACTICE A LOT, AND MAYBE HER FLUTE WILL HELP.



EARTH TO LUCY! YOU'RE GOING TO MISS YOUR BUS.

SORRY! I'M GOING!



MS. KELL?

DO YOU THINK I CAN BE FIRST CHAIR?

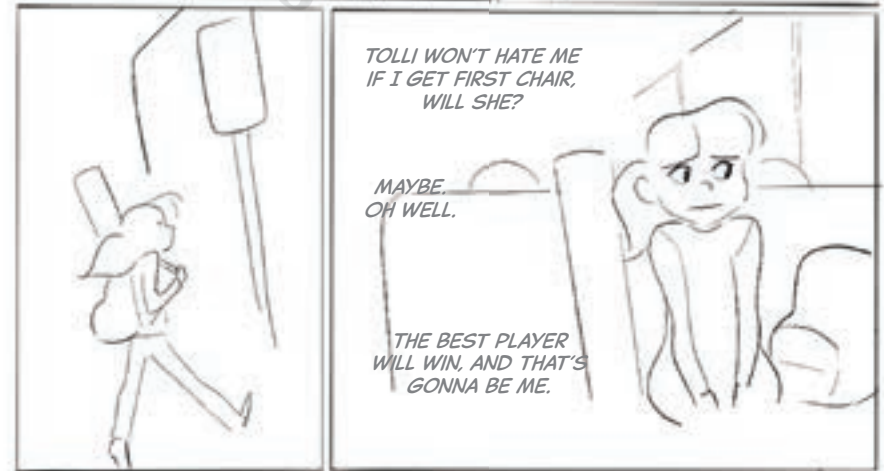
WITH LOTS OF PRACTICE AND A GOOD AUDITION.



I'VE ALREADY MEMORIZED ALL MY SCALES.

I WILL! THANK YOU!

GOOD START. KEEP WORKING HARD, AND YOU'LL DO WELL.



TOLLI WON'T HATE ME IF I GET FIRST CHAIR, WILL SHE?

MAYBE. OH WELL.

THE BEST PLAYER WILL WIN, AND THAT'S GONNA BE ME.

CHAPTER 8
THE LUCKY BALLERINA



ARE YOU GOING SKATING TONIGHT?

NO. GRANDMA JO HAS PRAYER GROUP.

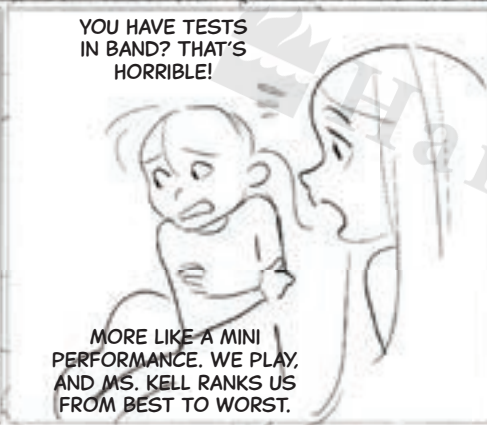
YEAH!

MAYBE YOU CAN COME OVER THIS WEEKEND. I NEED HELP ON MY CHEER ROUTINES.



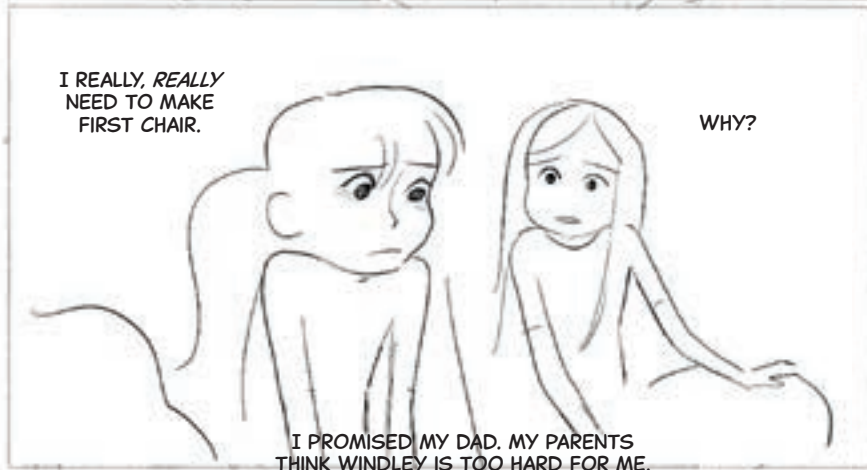
YAY! I KNOW IT'S ONLY THE JV TEAM, BUT THOSE DANCES ARE HARD.

OH NO! I ALMOST FORGOT. I NEED TO PRACTICE FOR MY PLAYING TEST.



YOU HAVE TESTS IN BAND? THAT'S HORRIBLE!

MORE LIKE A MINI PERFORMANCE. WE PLAY, AND MS. KELL RANKS US FROM BEST TO WORST.



I REALLY, REALLY NEED TO MAKE FIRST CHAIR.

WHY?

I PROMISED MY DAD. MY PARENTS THINK WINDLEY IS TOO HARD FOR ME.



YOUR GRADES ARE BAD?

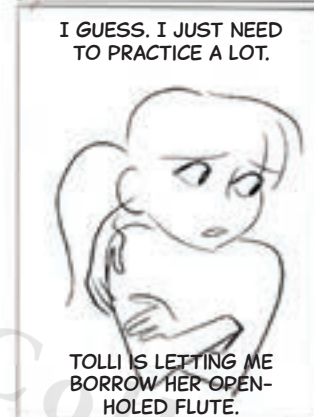
ALREADY?

B'S AND C'S IN EVERYTHING.

THEY'RE REALLY WORRIED. THAT'S WHY I NEED FIRST CHAIR.

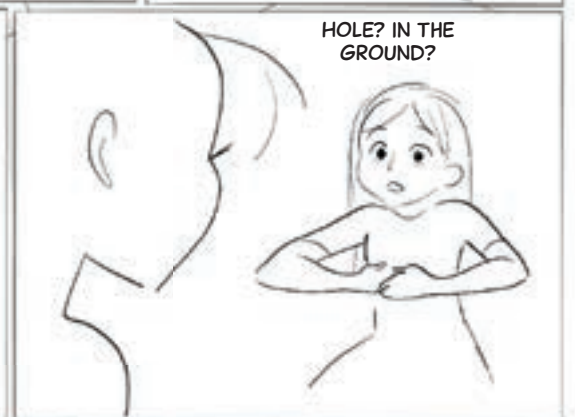
I NEED TO DO SOMETHING GREAT TO TURN IT AROUND.

THEY SOUND SUPER STRICT.

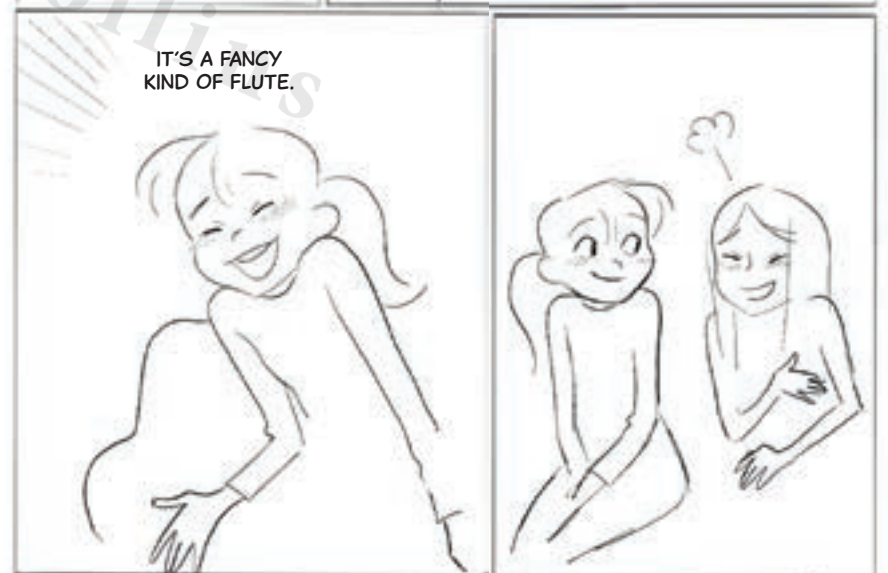


I GUESS. I JUST NEED TO PRACTICE A LOT.

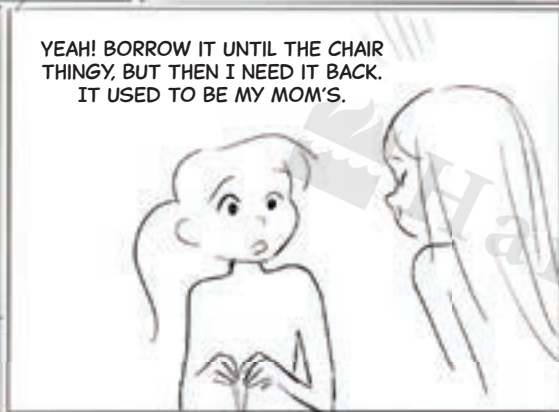
TOLLI IS LETTING ME BORROW HER OPEN-HOLED FLUTE.

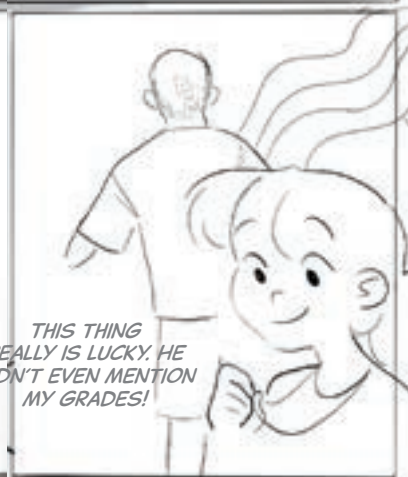
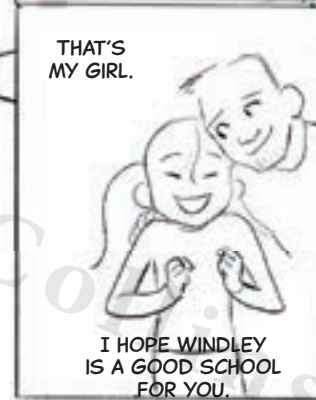
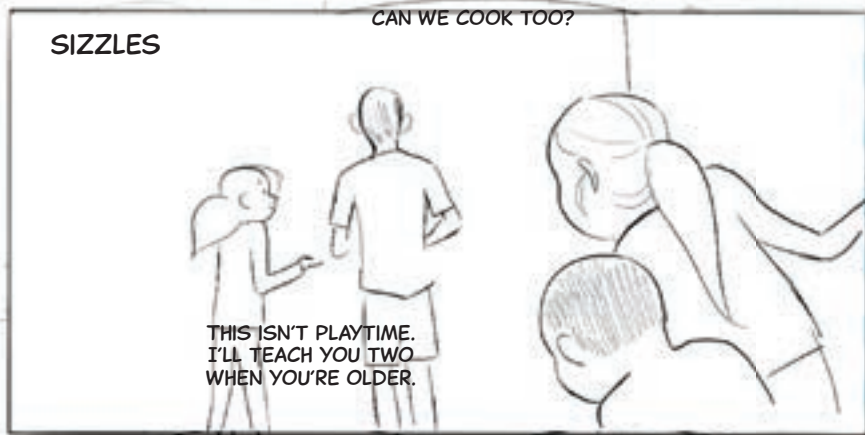


HOLE? IN THE GROUND?



IT'S A FANCY KIND OF FLUTE.



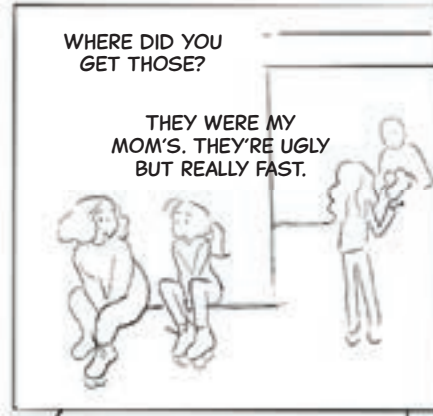


CHAPTER NINE
ROLLER-SKATING



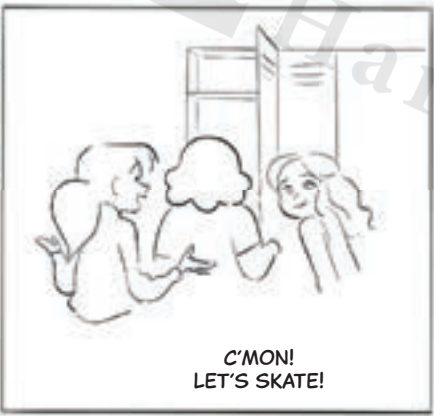
I GOTTA GET SKATES.

WE'LL BE AT THE LOCKERS.

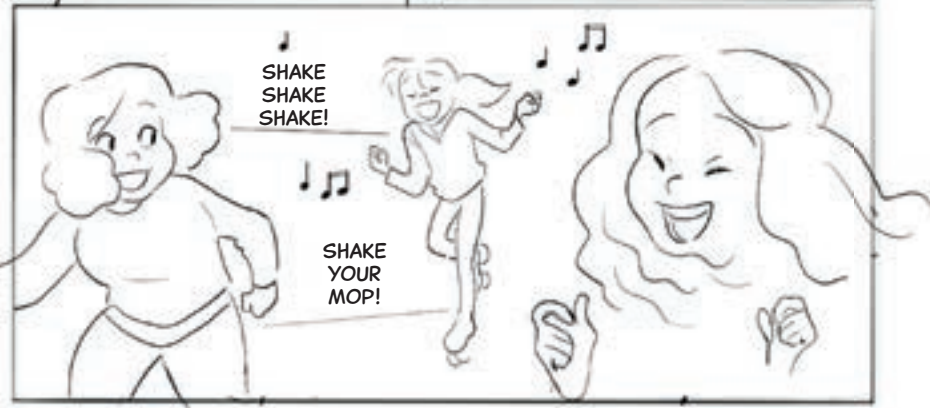


WHERE DID YOU GET THOSE?

THEY WERE MY MOM'S. THEY'RE UGLY BUT REALLY FAST.



C'MON!
 LET'S SKATE!



SHAKE
 SHAKE
 SHAKE!

SHAKE YOUR MOP!



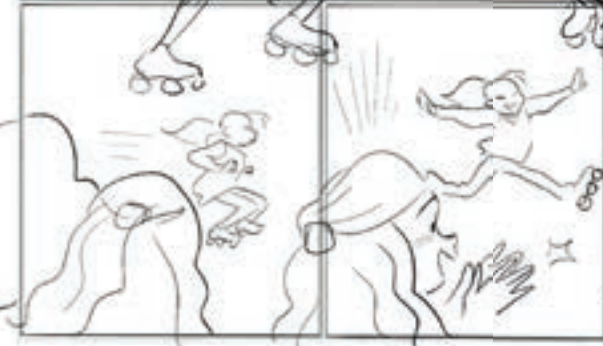
WHY ARE YOU SKATING SO FAST?



THIS IS MY REGULAR SPEED.



IT'S NOT A RACE!



I'M BORED. LET'S GO THE SNACK BAR.





I'LL HAVE A SMALL DIET COKE AND NACHOS, NO CHEESE.

JUST CHIPS? NOTHING ON THEM?

YEAH.

SPRITE AND THE BIG BAG OF SKITTLES, PLEASE.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

I'M OKAY.

HERE. I TOLD YOU I WOULD PAY.

I'M NOT HUNGRY.

SHE SHOULD HAVE JUST BOUGHT HER OWN. YOU CAN HAVE SOME OF MY SKITTLES.

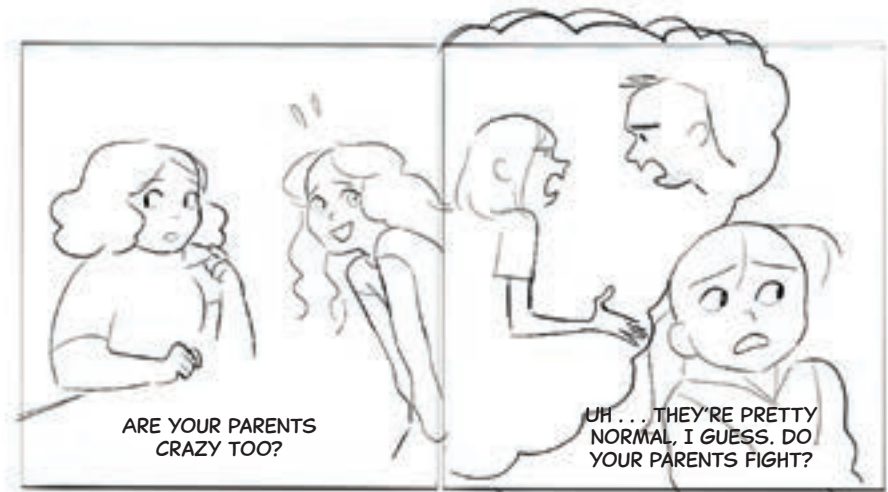
I GOTTA LEAVE EARLY. MOM NEEDS ME TO BABYSIT.

IT'S REALLY OKAY. I ATE AT HOME.

YOU'RE ALWAYS BABYSITTING.

I KNOW. MY MOM HATES FUN.

MY MOM TOO. SHE'S ALWAYS LIKE, "GO PRACTICE! YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BE A PROFESSIONAL MUSICIAN!"



ARE YOUR PARENTS CRAZY TOO?

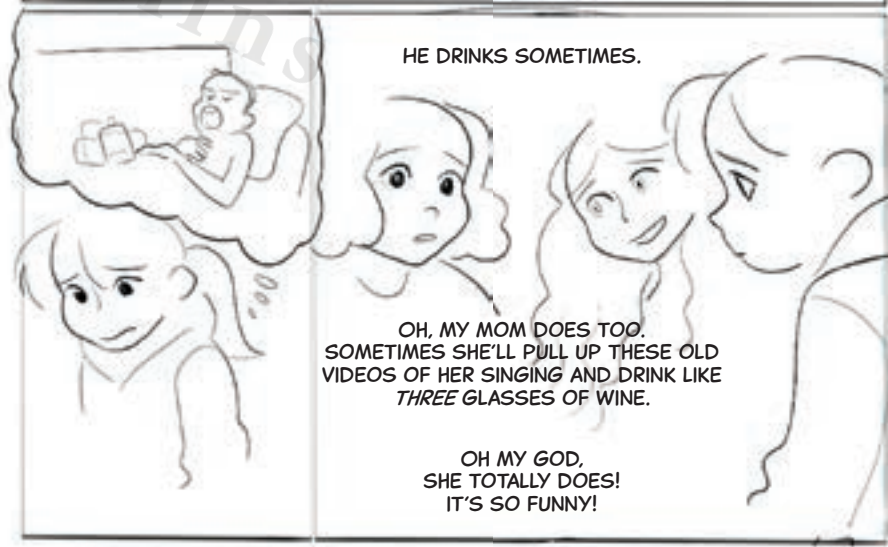
UH... THEY'RE PRETTY NORMAL, I GUESS. DO YOUR PARENTS FIGHT?

YES! ALL THE TIME. MOSTLY ABOUT MONEY.

MINE TOO! MY DAD LOST HIS JOB BECAUSE HE CAN'T DRIVE, AND...



WHY CAN'T HE DRIVE?



HE DRINKS SOMETIMES.

OH, MY MOM DOES TOO. SOMETIMES SHE'LL PULL UP THESE OLD VIDEOS OF HER SINGING AND DRINK LIKE THREE GLASSES OF WINE.

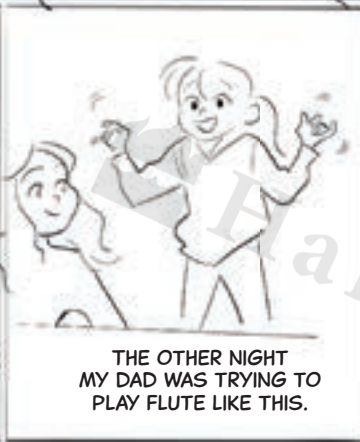
OH MY GOD, SHE TOTALLY DOES! IT'S SO FUNNY!



THE BEST IS WHEN SHE STARTS SINGING:
"O SOLE MIOOOO."



NO, IT'S LIKE,
"LALALALALALAAAAAAA!"



THE OTHER NIGHT
MY DAD WAS TRYING TO
PLAY FLUTE LIKE THIS.



THAT'S NOTHING.
THIS ONE TIME MY MOM
THREW UP IN A FLOWERPOT.
MY STEPDAD WAS
SO ANGRY!



A FLOWERPOT?
EWWWWWWW!



OH YEAH? ONCE MY DAD DRANK
A WHOLE BOTTLE OF WHISKEY.



IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN A
BOTTLE. MY GRANDDAD DRINKS
WHISKEY IN TINY GLASSES.

YEAH. WOULDN'T
HE, LIKE, DIE?



IT WAS A BOTTLE!
HE DIDN'T DIE, BUT
HE DID HAVE TO GO
TO THE HOSPITAL.

OH. WAS HE OKAY?

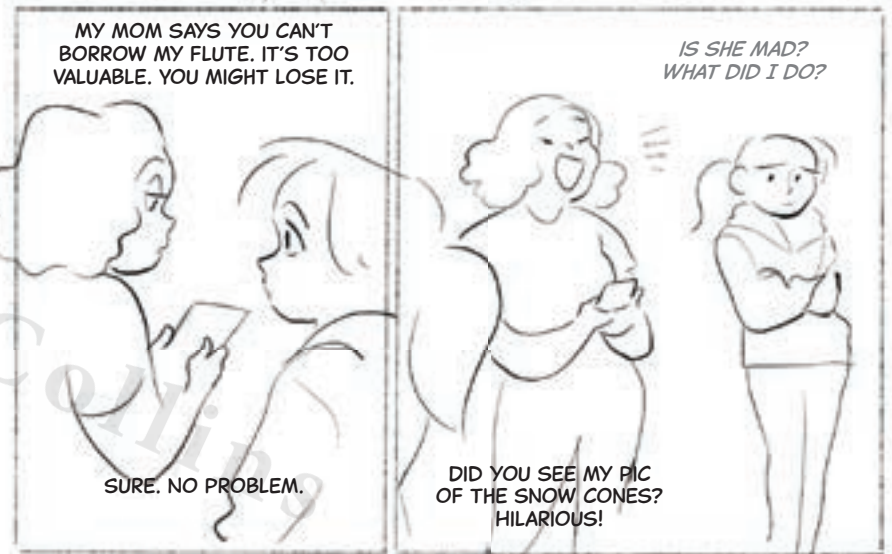
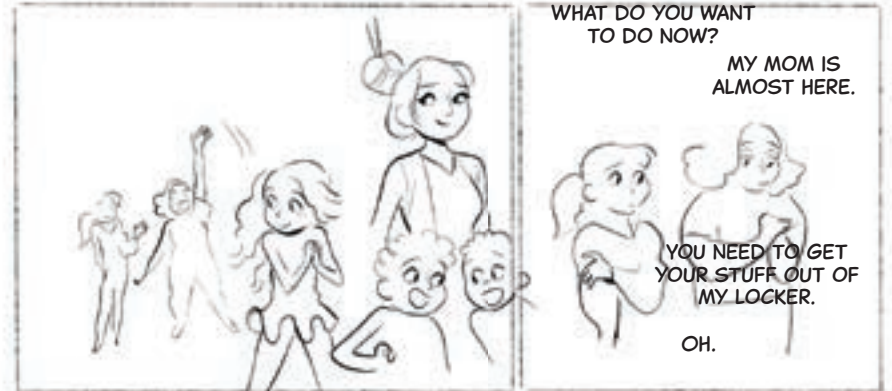
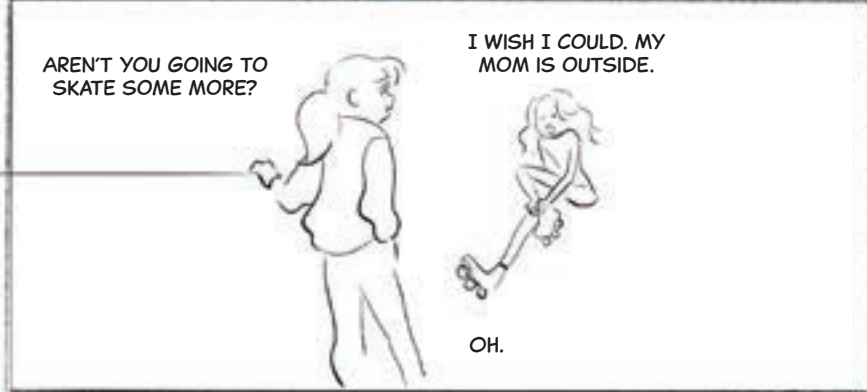
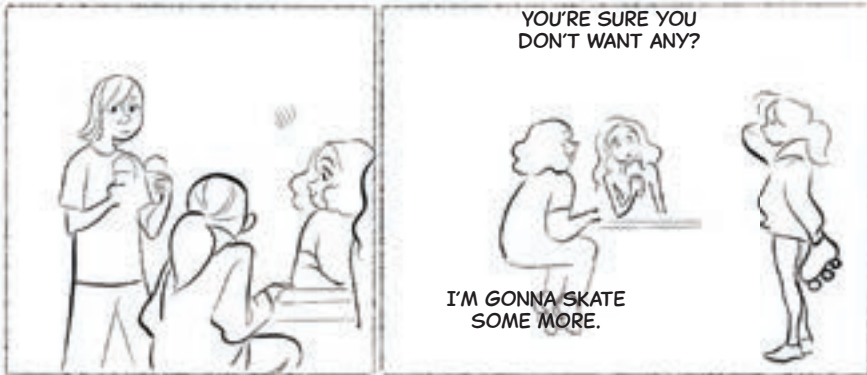


YEAH. BUT IT WAS
KIND OF SCARY.

I'M SORRY.



WHO WANTS A
SNOW CONE?



CHAPTER TEN
GRANDMA JO'S HOUSE

KNOCK
KNOCK!

I'M PRACTICING!
LEAVE ME ALONE!

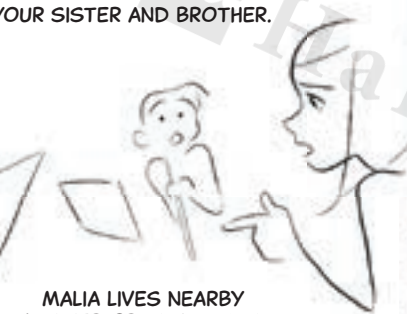


IT'S TIME FOR A BREAK.
FOR ALL OF US. YOU'VE BEEN
PLAYING ALL WEEKEND.



I REALLY, REALLY WANT TO
MAKE FIRST CHAIR. TOLLI GETS
SPECIAL LESSONS AND—

GO PLAY OUTSIDE WITH
YOUR SISTER AND BROTHER.



MALIA LIVES NEARBY
WITH HER GRANDMA. CAN I
BIKE OVER THERE?

ONLY IF HER GRANDMA
SAYS IT'S OKAY. AND I'LL
NEED A PHONE NUMBER.



I'LL TEXT AND ASK.



UGH. THIS SIGN IS SUPER EMBARRASSING. GRANDMA JO IS OBSESSED.



I THINK IT'S CUTE.

I HATE IT.

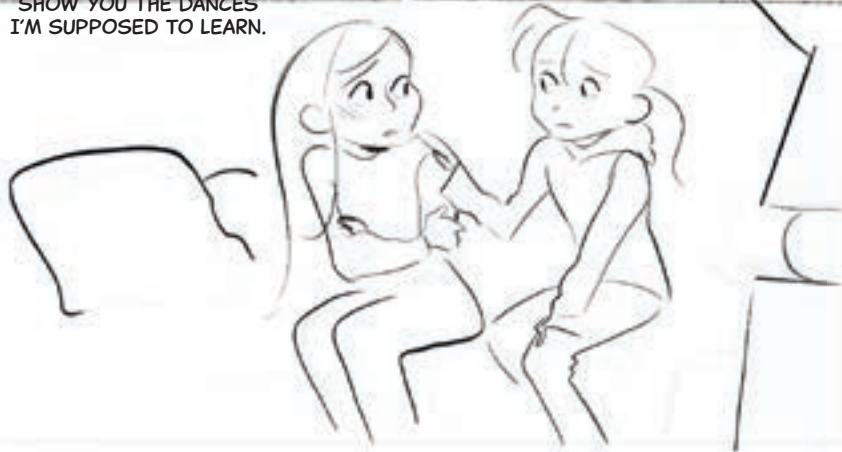
JV ONLY CHEERS AT WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL GAMES. THEY'RE SO BORING!

ARE YOU GOING TO QUIT?



I CAN'T. GRANDMA JO WOULD KILL ME.

I GUESS I'D BETTER SHOW YOU THE DANCES I'M SUPPOSED TO LEARN.



THESE ARE SO BORING. LET'S WATCH SOMETHING ELSE.



HAHAHAHA

AND THAT'S WHY YOU LOVE LUCY MCKENSEY, RIGHT?



YOU ARE MY HERO, HERO, HERO.



HEERROOOOOOOOOO!

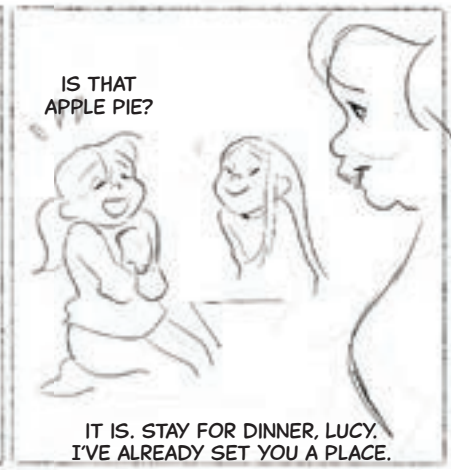
GIRLS, IT'S ALMOST FIVE.



OH NO!

YOU JUST GOT HERE!

IS THAT APPLE PIE?



IT IS. STAY FOR DINNER, LUCY. I'VE ALREADY SET YOU A PLACE.



DUTCH OR TRADITIONAL? DID YOU MAKE A LATTICE TOP?

IT'S TRADITIONAL WITH A LATTICE TOP. JUST LIKE MY MAMA USED TO MAKE.



YOU DIDN'T TELL ME YOUR FRIEND LIKED TO BAKE.

SHE MADE CHOCOLATE CREEPS LAST WEEK!

CHOCOLATE CREPPES, SHE MEANS.



THIS TABLE IS LIKE A MAGAZINE. THE BIG PLATES MATCH THE LITTLE ONES!

THANK YOU, HONEY.



COME BACK SOON! NEXT TIME YOU CAN MAKE THE PIE.

CAN'T WAIT!



DID YOU HAVE FUN?



YEAH! GRANDMA JO SAID I CAN BAKE A PIE NEXT TIME. CAN I GO TOMORROW?



BETTER NOT WEAR OUT YOUR WELCOME.



WAIT. IN A FEW WEEKS YOUR DAD HAS HIS JOB INTERVIEW.



OCTOBER TENTH. I WAS GOING TO SIGN YOU ALL UP FOR AFTERSCHOOL.

AND I COULD GO TO MALIA'S INSTEAD? PLEASE, MOM? GRANDMA JO WON'T MIND.



YOU KNOW WE HATE AFTERSCHOOL!

IT'S SO BORING!

TEN IS OLD ENOUGH TO STAY HOME ALONE. I'M ON THE SAFETY PATROL!



ENOUGH! IT'S NOT YOUR DECISION.

I DON'T NEED A BABYSITTER!

IF MALIA'S GRANDMA SAYS IT'S OKAY, YOU CAN GO.



BUT YOU BETTER SPEND AT LEAST AN HOUR STUDYING FOR MATH OVER THERE.

I WILL! I PROMISE!



STRAWBERRY
RHUBARB? BLUEBERRY?
COCONUT CREAM?

UGHHHHH.



CLEAN UP THE PLATES AND GET STARTED ON THE DISHES.



I DID THEM LAST NIGHT!

NOT IT!

GOTTA SHOWER!

WHY DON'T THEY HAVE TO HELP?



YOU PLAYED ALL DAY.

SO UNFAIR! NOBODY DID ANY WORK HERE EITHER.



CHAPTER ELEVEN
BATHTUB

FINALLY DONE. UGH.

YOU KNOW I HATE DISHES.
WHY DIDN'T YOU HELP?



WHY WERE YOU AT
MALIA'S SO LATE?



GRANDMA JO
MADE DINNER AND THIS
AWESOME APPLE PIE—



THUD. THUDTHUDTHUD.

THUMP. WHUMP WHUMP.

WHAT WAS
THAT?



PROBABLY DAD. HE'S
BEEN DRINKING ALL DAY.

NOT THAT YOU
WOULD KNOW.

C'MON, E. YOU GO TO FRIENDS'
HOUSES ALL THE TIME.



YOU WERE GOING TO
MAKE US CUPCAKES.

AND YOU DON'T HAVE
TO GO TO AFTERSCHOOL!
IT'S NOT FAIR!

THUD! WHOOMP!



DAD?



LIAM?

THUD. WHUMP.

IT'SSSS ME.
GO BACK TO BED!



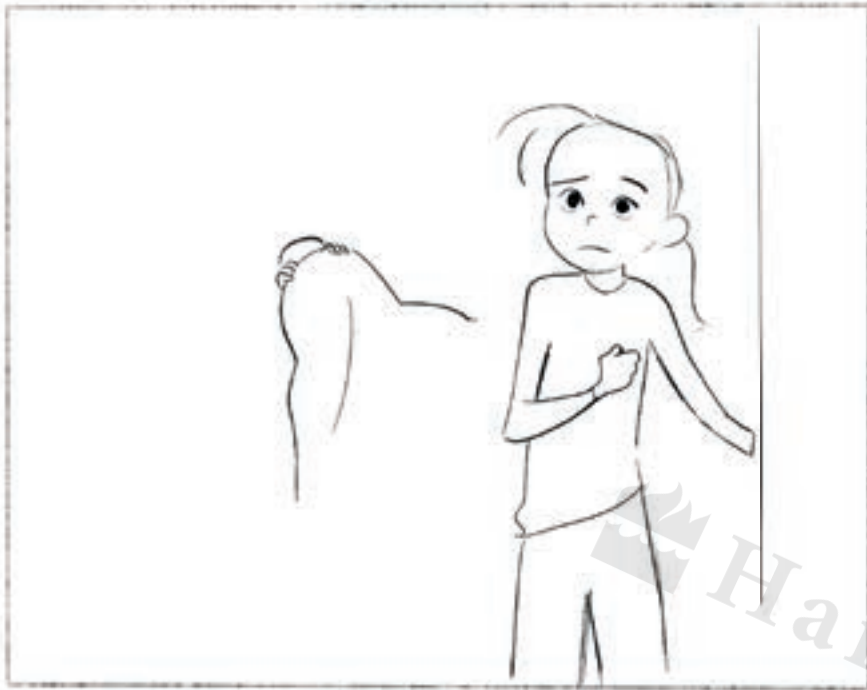
IT'S NOT
EVEN EIGHT!



I SSSAID, GO TO
BED. NOW.

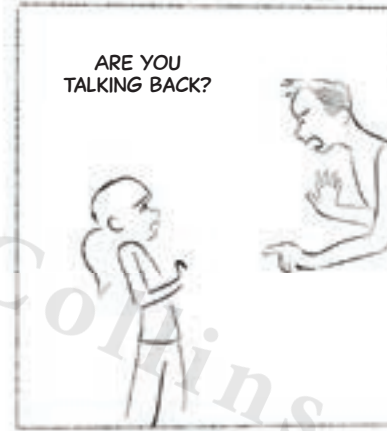


DON'T! HE GOT IN A BIG
FIGHT WITH MOM WHILE
YOU WERE GONE.



LUCY! SHUT THE DOOR!

IT'S NOT BEDTIME. WHY CAN'T WE STAY UP?



ARE YOU TALKING BACK?



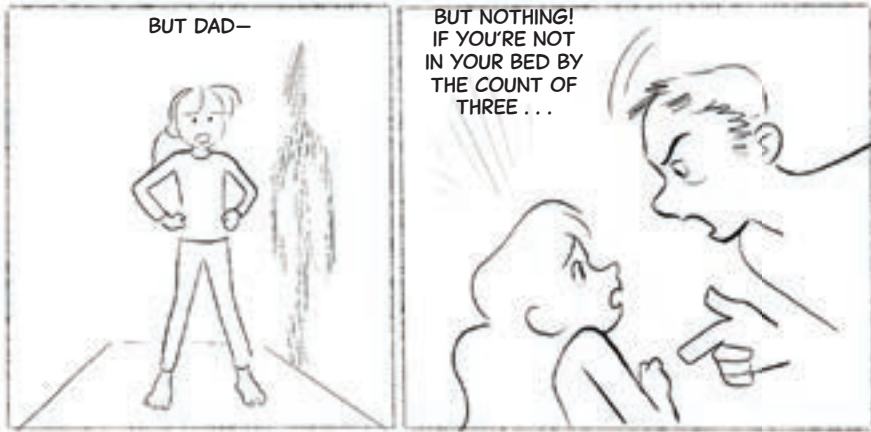
NO, JUST--



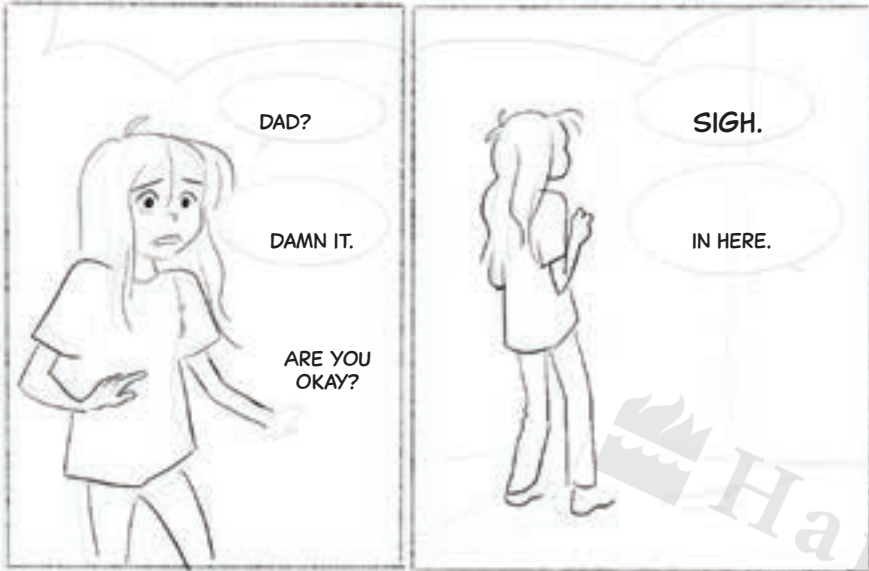
I DON'T WANT THEM TO FIGHT AGAIN.

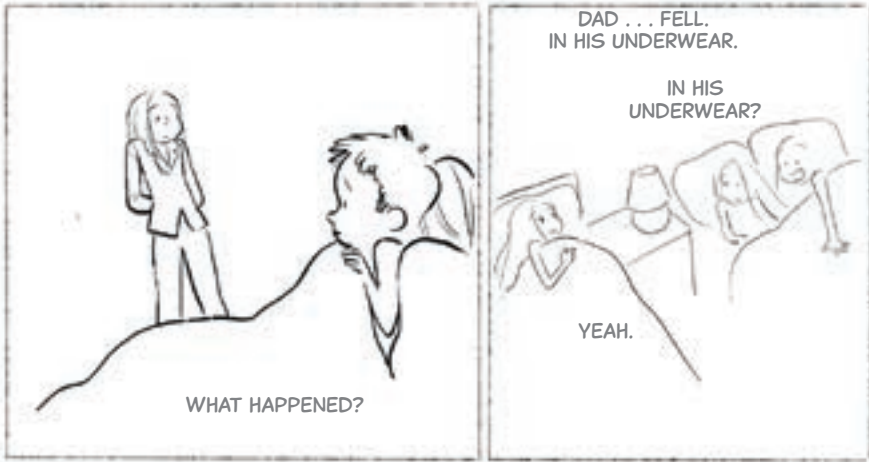
I DON'T CARE WHAT TIME IT IS. YOU KIDS ARE GOING TO BED.



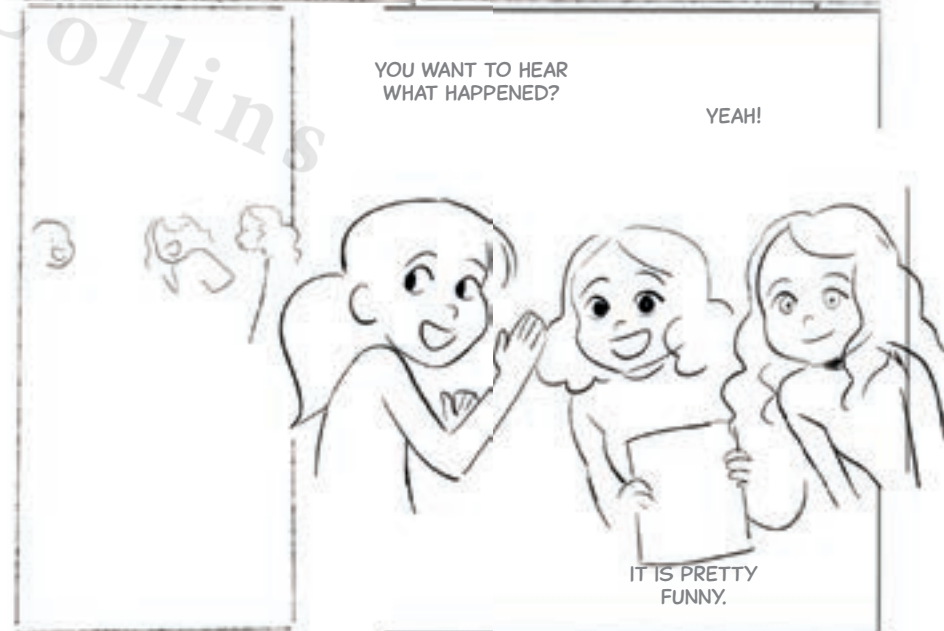
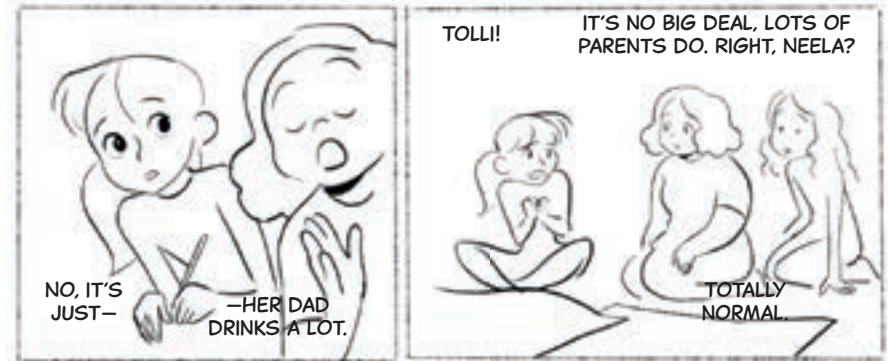
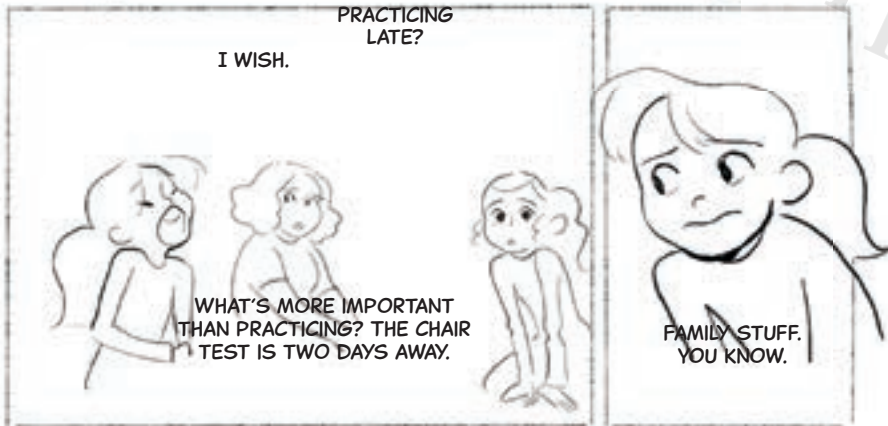


BUMP BUMP BUMP. THUD.





CHAPTER TWELVE FAMILY STUFF





THE BATHTUB!

SO CRAZY!



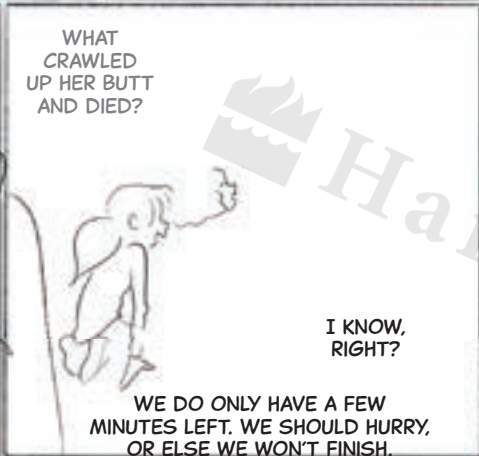
IN HIS UNDERWEAR.
SWEAR TO GOD.



WAY TOO MUCH
CHATting, LADIES.
DO I NEED TO
SEPARATE YOU?

NO,
MA'AM!

NO!
SORRY!



WHAT
CRAWLED
UP HER BUTT
AND DIED?

I KNOW,
RIGHT?

WE DO ONLY HAVE A FEW
MINUTES LEFT. WE SHOULD HURRY,
OR ELSE WE WON'T FINISH.



MICHAEL TOTALLY
LIKES YOU. DO YOU SEE
HIM WATCHING YOU?



YEAH, BUT CHARLES PUT
HIS MAP RIGHT NEXT TO YOURS
I THINK HE LIKES YOU.

YOU
THINK?



CUTE! SMART!
NICE! SWEET!

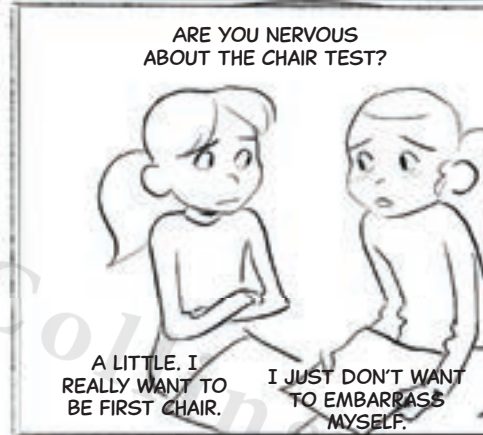
WHO CARES ABOUT THEM?
WE NEED TO FINISH.



I HAVE A TWO-HOUR
FLUTE LESSON TONIGHT.
I HAVE TO FINISH THIS
PROJECT NOW.

TOLL!

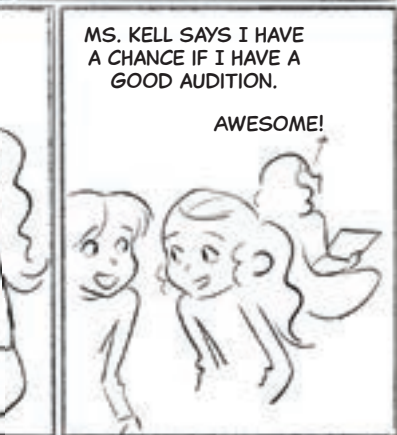
YOU DON'T HAVE TO
EMBARRASS US.



ARE YOU NERVOUS
ABOUT THE CHAIR TEST?

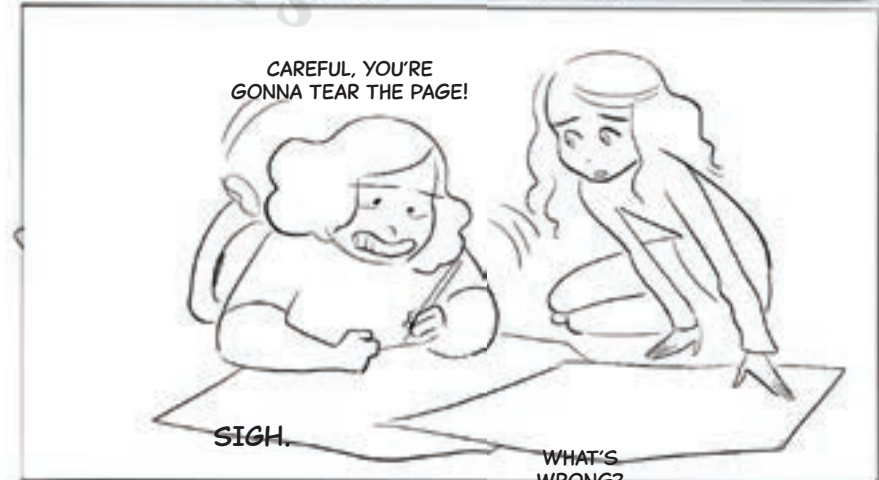
A LITTLE. I
REALLY WANT TO
BE FIRST CHAIR.

I JUST DON'T WANT
TO EMBARRASS
MYSELF.



MS. KELL SAYS I HAVE
A CHANCE IF I HAVE A
GOOD AUDITION.

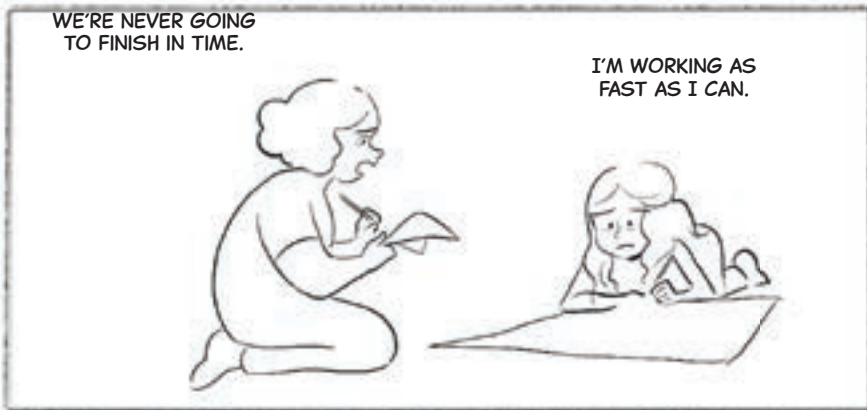
AWESOME!



CAREFUL, YOU'RE
GONNA TEAR THE PAGE!

SIGH.

WHAT'S
WRONG?



WE'RE NEVER GOING TO FINISH IN TIME.

I'M WORKING AS FAST AS I CAN.



WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TALKED SO MUCH. MY MOM IS GONNA KILL ME.

CALM DOWN. I'LL FINISH IT AT HOME IF I HAVE TO.



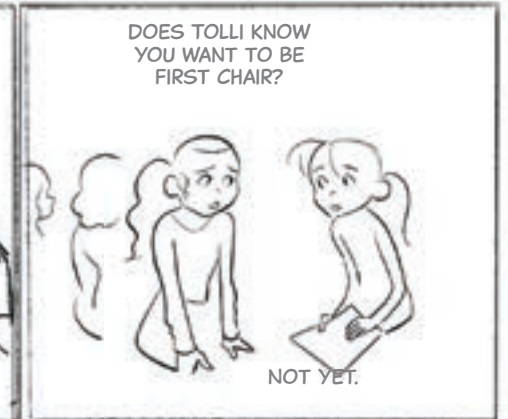
I'M SORRY. YOU KNOW HOW I GET BEFORE A PERFORMANCE.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE.



WHAT IF I FREEZE UP LIKE AT MY PIANO COMPETITION? MY MOM IS GOING TO FREAK IF I'M NOT FIRST CHAIR.

DON'T WORRY SO MUCH ABOUT IT.



DOES TOLLI KNOW YOU WANT TO BE FIRST CHAIR?

NOT YET.



TIME TO CLEAN UP. BELL'S ABOUT TO RING.



I HOPE SHE'S NOT MAD.



ME TOO.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
CHAIR-TESTING DAY

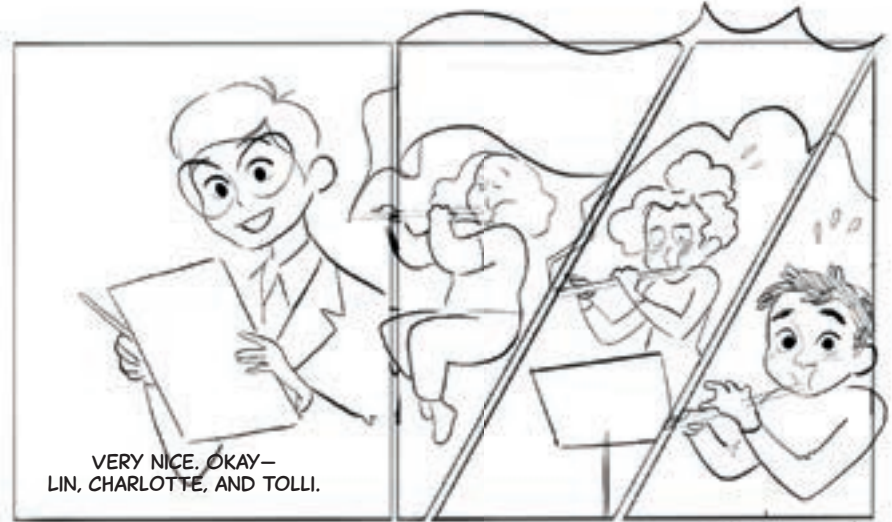


IT'S CHAIR-TESTING DAY.
 EVERYONE READY?

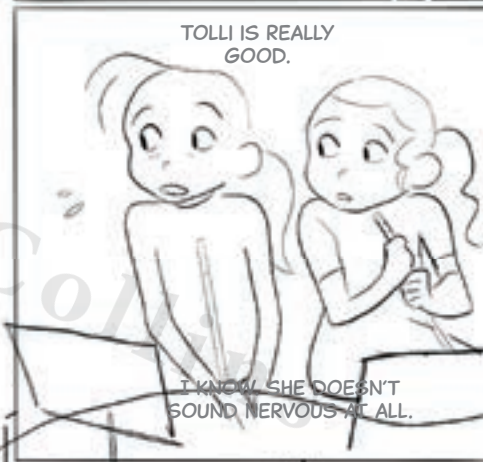
I'LL START WITH WOODWINDS.
 WE'LL DO PAIRS AND GROUPS
 OF THREE.



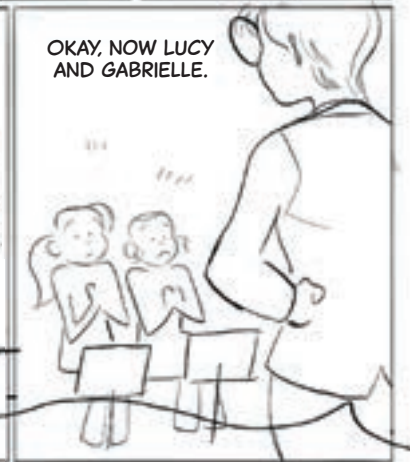
JESSLYN AND
 JESSIE FIRST.



VERY NICE, OKAY—
 LIN, CHARLOTTE, AND TOLLI.



TOLLI IS REALLY
 GOOD.

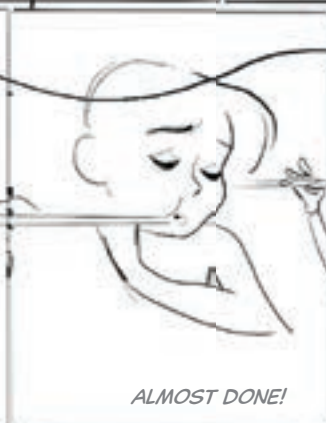


OKAY, NOW LUCY
 AND GABRIELLE.

I KNOW SHE DOESN'T
 SOUND NERVOUS AT ALL.



GOOD SO FAR!



ALMOST DONE!

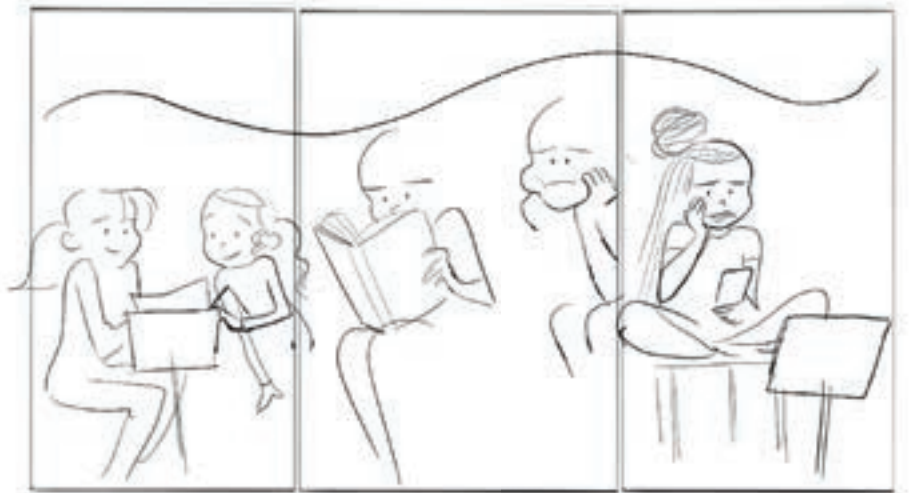
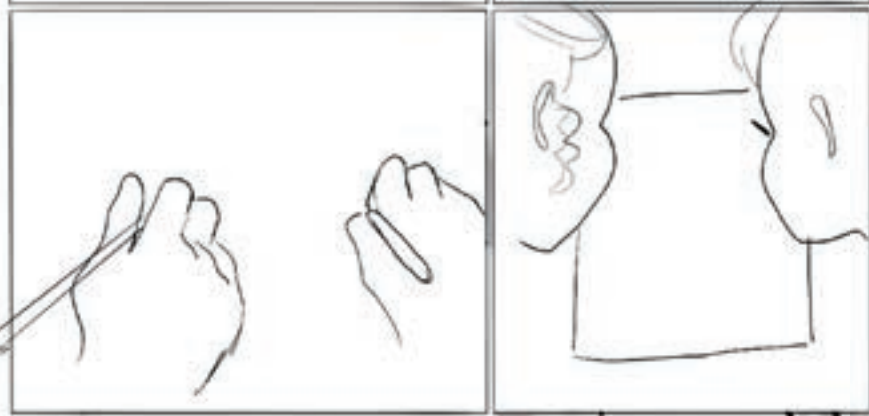
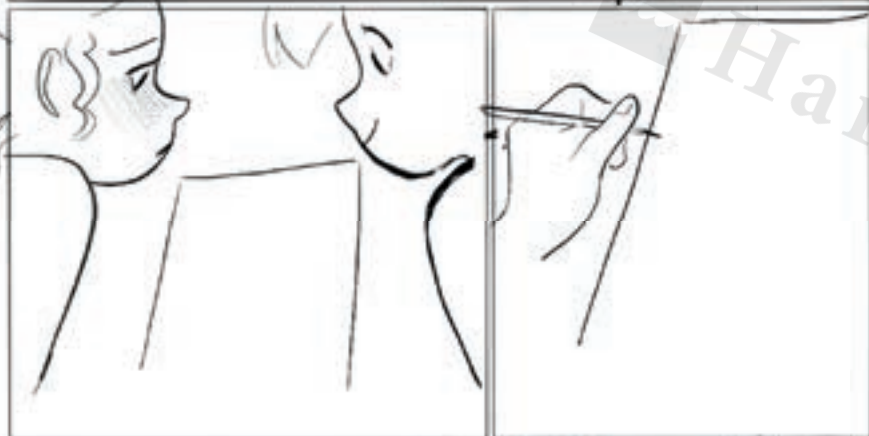


OH NO!
 KEEP GOING!



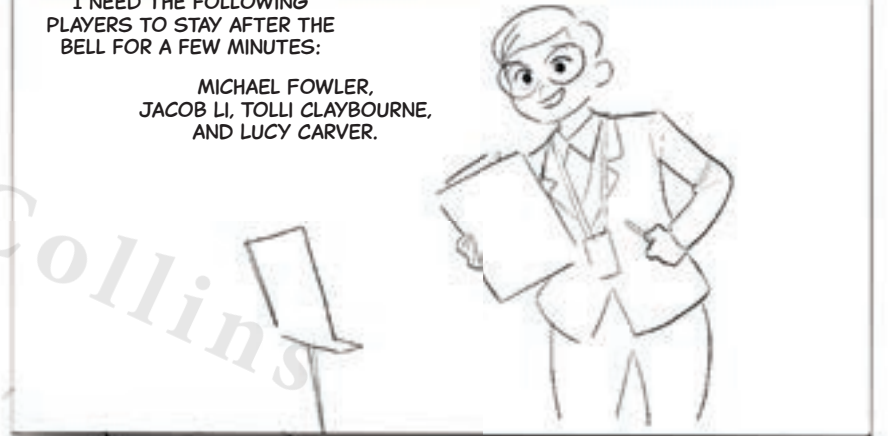
VERY NICE!

DONE!
PHEW!



I NEED THE FOLLOWING
PLAYERS TO STAY AFTER THE
BELL FOR A FEW MINUTES:

MICHAEL FOWLER,
JACOB LI, TOLLI CLAYBOURNE,
AND LUCY CARVER.



RING!

YOU FOUR WERE TOO CLOSE TO CALL. I NEED TO HEAR MORE.

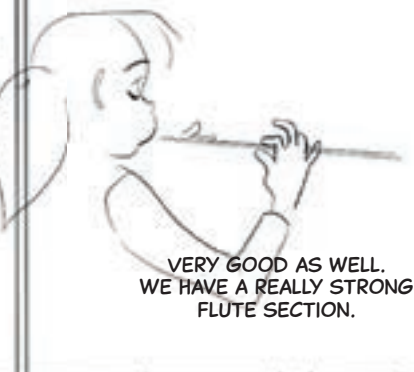
MICHAEL AND JACOB, GIVE ME A C-MAJOR SCALE.



VERY GOOD. NICE VIBRATO AT THE END.



VERY GOOD AS WELL. WE HAVE A REALLY STRONG FLUTE SECTION.



YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I WANT TO BE FIRST CHAIR.



I DO TOO. I WAS FIRST AT EAST ALL LAST YEAR.



I THOUGHT WE WERE FRIENDS.

OKAY, GIVE ME A CHROMATIC SCALE.



GOOD ENOUGH. THANKS, BOYS.



YOU'RE DISMISSED.

YOU BOTH PLAYED VERY WELL, BUT THERE ARE SOLOS IN THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT.



SO I NEED TO HEAR YOU PLAY ALONE TO ASSESS TONE.

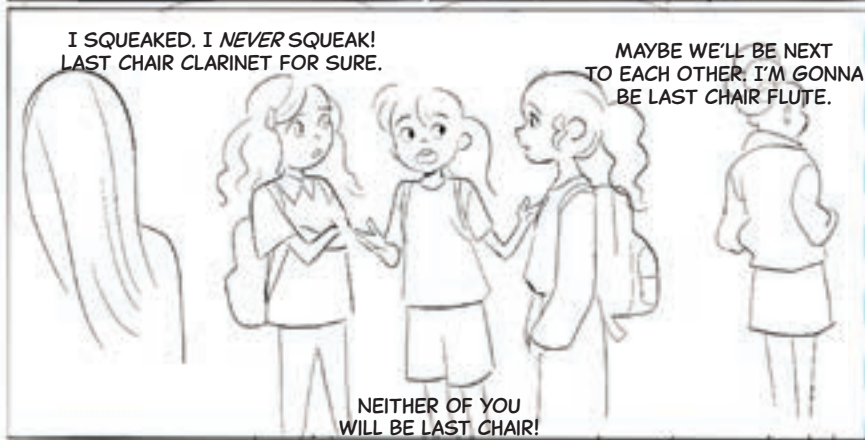
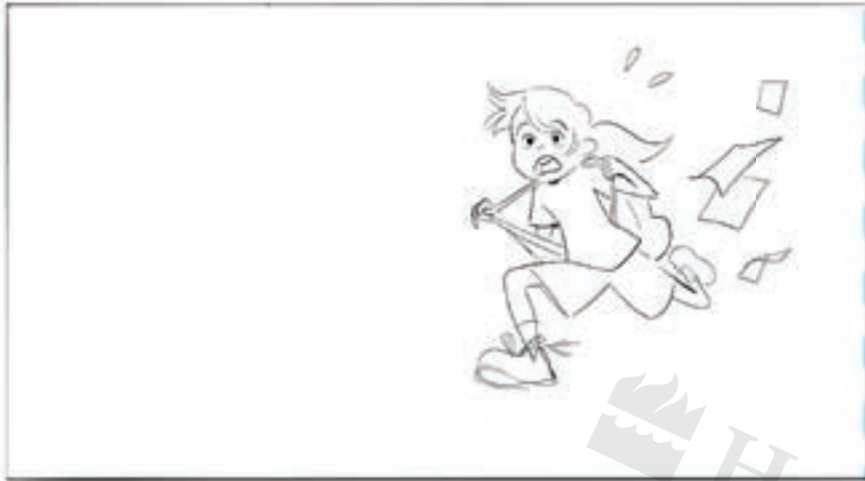
WHY ARE YOU SO MAD? THIS IS AN ARTS SCHOOL. WE ALL WANT TO BE THE BEST.



WHATEVER.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN
CHAIR TEST RESULTS



I SQUEAKED. I *NEVER* SQUEAK!
 LAST CHAIR CLARINET FOR SURE.

MAYBE WE'LL BE NEXT
 TO EACH OTHER. I'M GONNA
 BE LAST CHAIR FLUTE.

NEITHER OF YOU
 WILL BE LAST CHAIR!



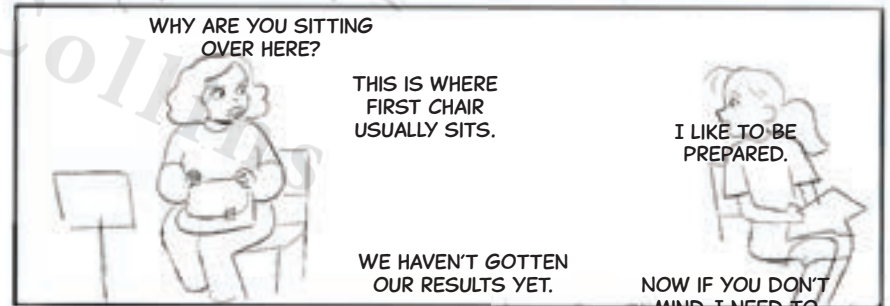
EASY FOR YOU TO
 SAY. YOU WERE ALMOST
 GOOD AS TOLLI.

YEAH!

MAYBE BETTER.
 BUT THAT'S UP
 TO MS. KELL.



SHE LOOKS
 STRESSED.



WHY ARE YOU SITTING
 OVER HERE?

THIS IS WHERE
 FIRST CHAIR
 USUALLY SITS.

I LIKE TO BE
 PREPARED.

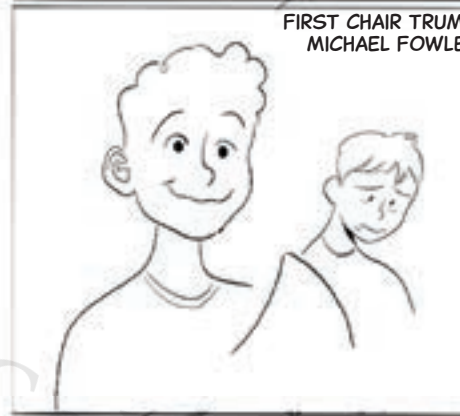
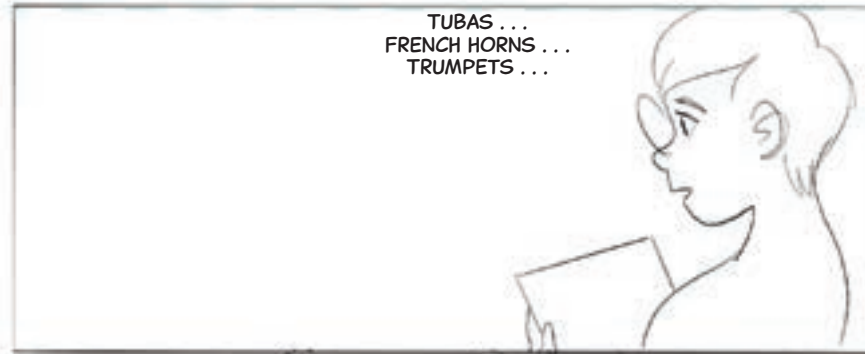
WE HAVEN'T GOTTEN
 OUR RESULTS YET.

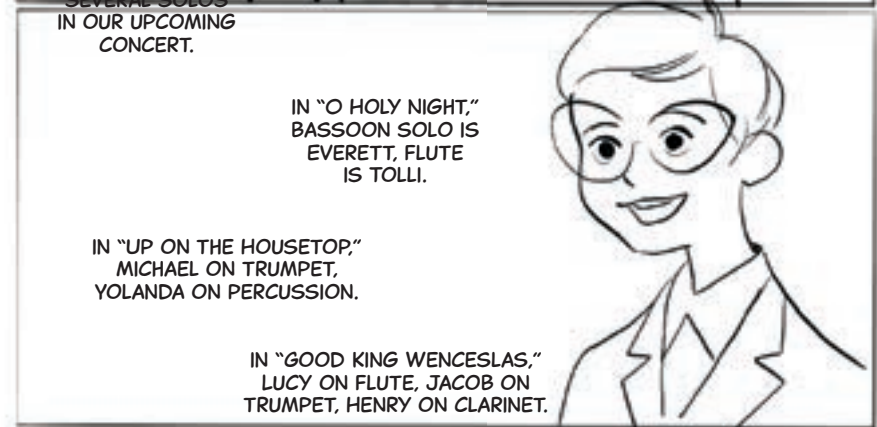
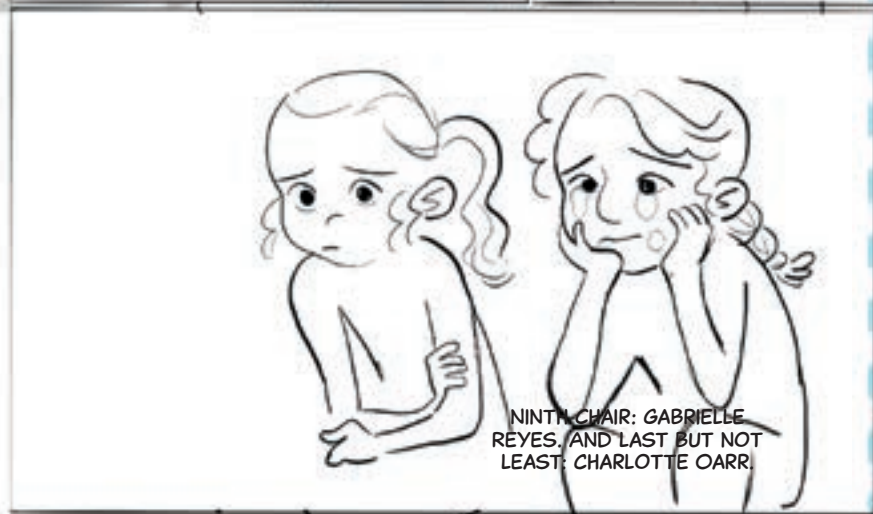
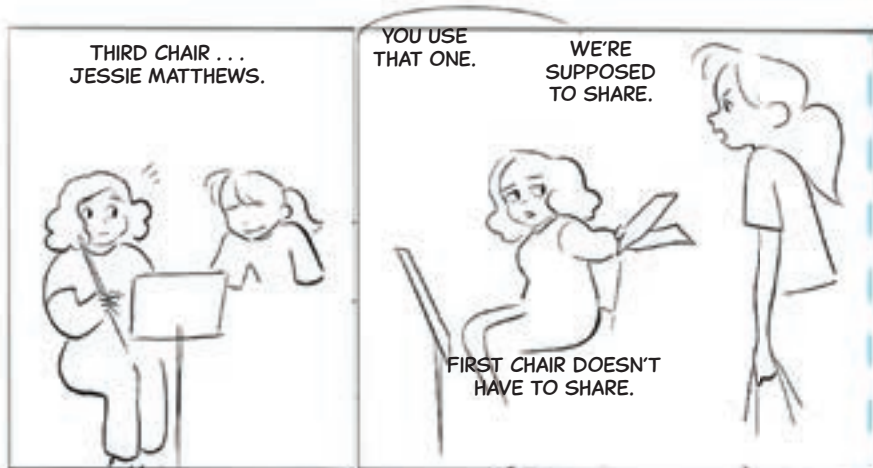
NOW IF YOU DON'T
 MIND, I NEED TO
 WARM UP.

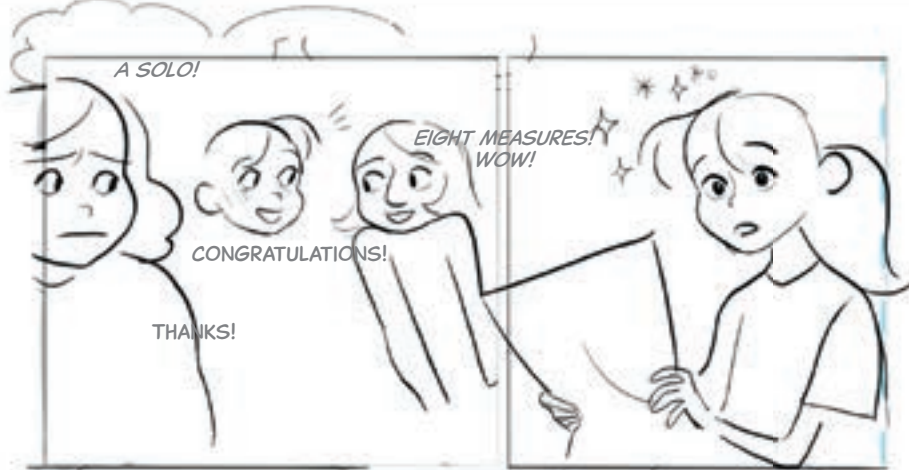


I THINK IT'S SAFE TO
 SAY SHE'S MAD AT ME.

YEAH.







A SOLO!

EIGHT MEASURES!
WOW!

CONGRATULATIONS!

THANKS!



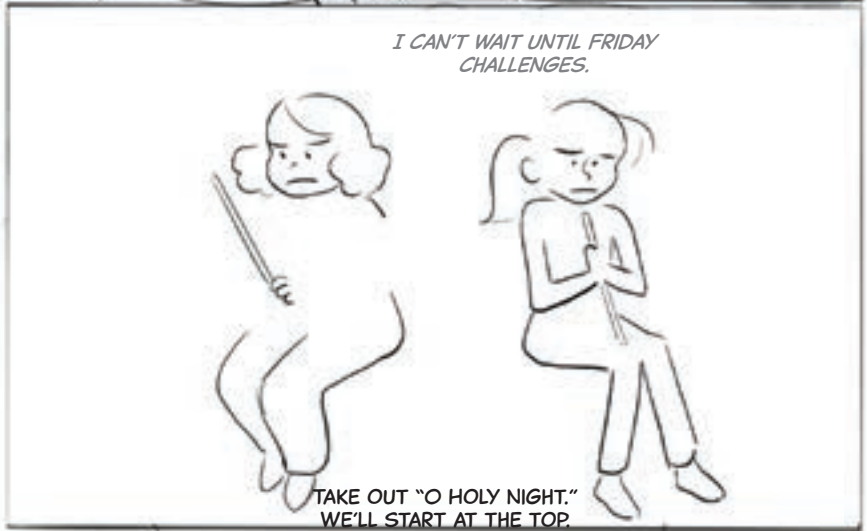
THAT SOLO IS PRETTY EASY.
IT'S A GOOD CHOICE FOR YOU.

YOU DON'T HAVE
TO BE MEAN, YOU GOT
FIRST CHAIR.



DON'T BE SO SENSITIVE.
I JUST MEANT THERE AREN'T
HARD RUNS TO TRIP YOU UP.

WHATEVER.



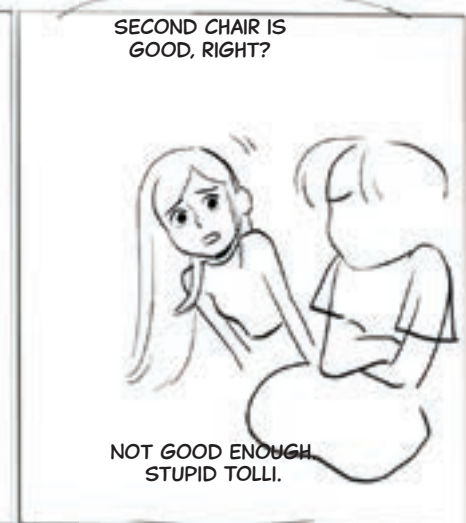
I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL FRIDAY
CHALLENGES.

TAKE OUT "O HOLY NIGHT."
WE'LL START AT THE TOP.



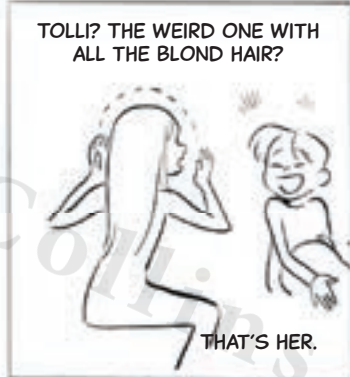
HOW'D IT GO?
ARE YOU, LIKE, BEST
FLUTE OR WHATEVER?

THE BALLERINA DIDN'T
WORK. SECOND CHAIR.
AND I TOTALLY FAILED
MY SCIENCE QUIZ.



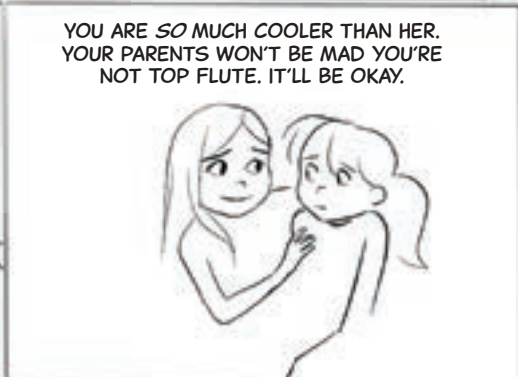
SECOND CHAIR IS
GOOD, RIGHT?

NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
STUPID TOLLI.



TOLLI? THE WEIRD ONE WITH
ALL THE BLOND HAIR?

THAT'S HER.



YOU ARE SO MUCH COOLER THAN HER.
YOUR PARENTS WON'T BE MAD YOU'RE
NOT TOP FLUTE. IT'LL BE OKAY.

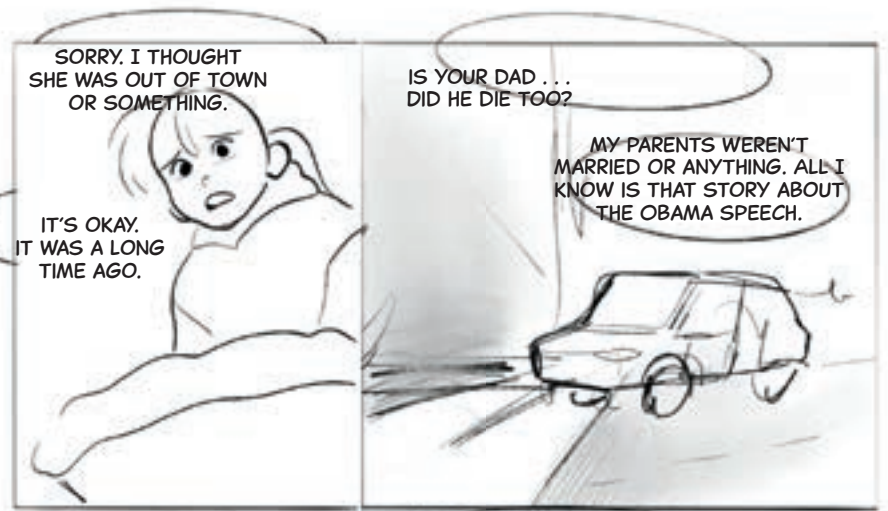
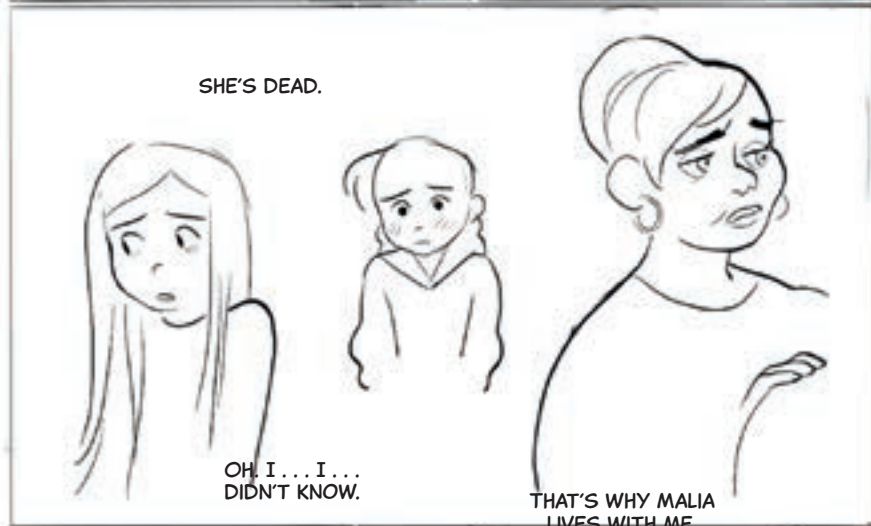
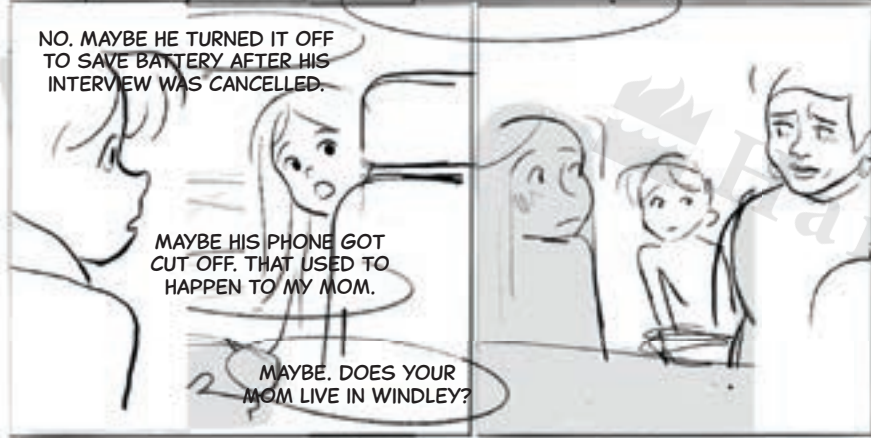


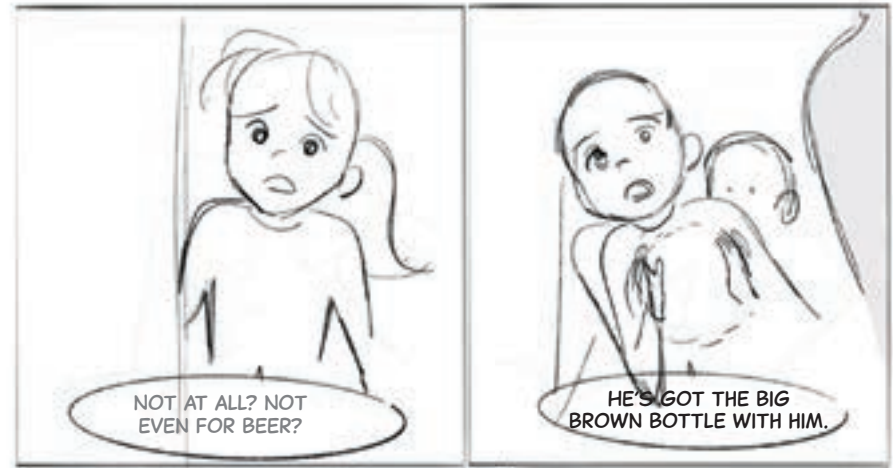
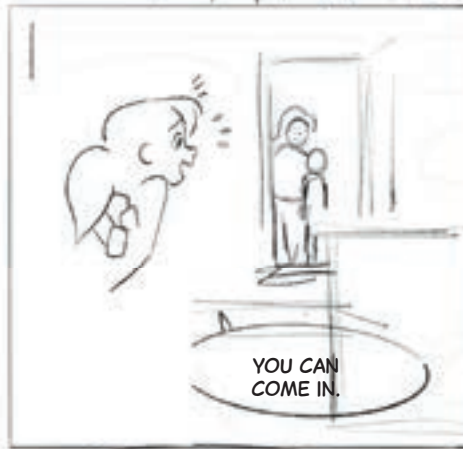
DID YOU WATCH THAT
LIZZO VIDEO I POSTED?
SHE'S SO AMAZING-

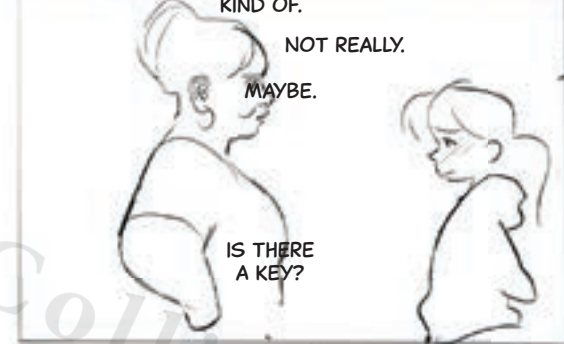
THEY MIGHT BE MAD.
ESPECIALLY ABOUT
THAT QUIZ



CHAPTER FIFTEEN
DAD IN TROUBLE







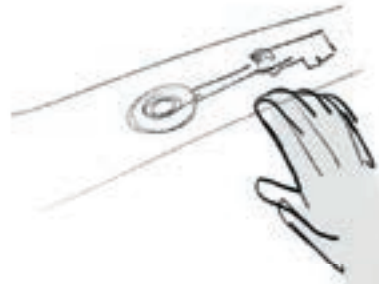
WHAT ARE YOU
LOOKING FOR?



A KEY FOR MOM
AND DAD'S ROOM.



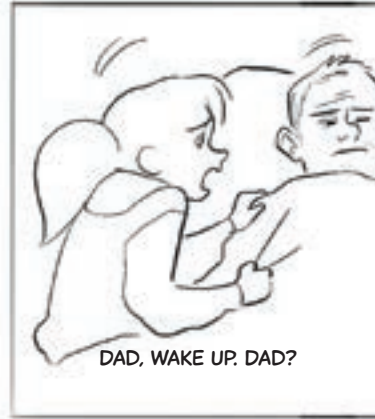
UP THERE.



CLICK.



WE'LL JUST
GIVE THEM SOME
PRIVACY.



DAD, WAKE UP. DAD?

TAP
TAP



DAD! WAKE! UP!



LUCY SAYS HER FATHER
ISN'T FEELING WELL. I'LL
JUST CHECK ON THEM.

HI! YOU MUST BE GRANDMA JO
AND MALIA! I'M CAROLINE.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHY ARE THEY HERE?



HE WON'T
WAKE UP. I'VE TRIED
EVERYTHING.



SHAWN? SHAWN!
THIS ISN'T FUNNY!
WAKE UP!



UGGMMPH

CAN YOU STAY WITH THE KIDS? THERE'S NO ONE ELSE . . .



OF COURSE, CALL WITH ANY UPDATES.



WHO WANTS PIZZA?



ME! ME! ME!



ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR MOM?



SHE DIED FROM DRUGS. GRANDMA JO DOESN'T LIKE PEOPLE TO KNOW. SHE SAYS THEY'LL THINK WE'RE TRASH.

YOU'RE NOT TRASH. YOU'RE AMAZING! THE BEST SINGER AND CHEERLEADER EVER.



I'M GOOD AT SINGING, BUT PRETTY AWFUL AT CHEERLEADING. I WANT TO QUIT SO BAD.

I'M SORRY.

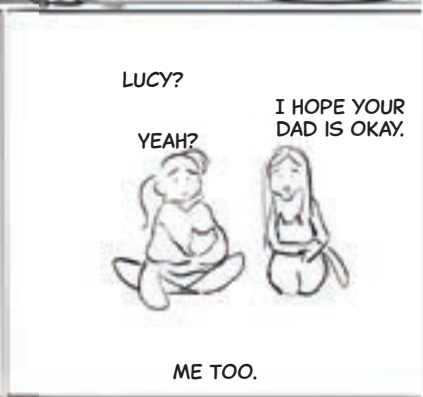


DO YOU THINK I'M TRASH?

NO WAY! WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT?



I DUNNO.



LUCY?

YEAH?

I HOPE YOUR DAD IS OKAY.

ME TOO.

MEETING WITH Dr. Jones
 CHAPTER SIXTEEN
 DR. JONES (PART I)

I MADE AN APPOINTMENT FOR YOU TO TALK TO DR. JONES TODAY.



DR. JONES?

YOUR DAD IS COMING BACK FROM REHAB THIS AFTERNOON.



THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR? WHY?



SO?



SO THE REHAB CENTER THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU KIDS TO TALK TO COUNSELORS.



I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO HER. I'M FINE.

FINE? YOU GOT A THIRTY-FIVE ON YOUR LAST MATH QUIZ, AND ALL YOU DO ALL DAY IS PRACTICE YOUR FLUTE.

WITH DAD AWAY, WE'VE BEEN AT AFTERSCHOOL, AND I CAN'T PRACTICE THERE.



IT'S TOO MUCH. HOURS A DAY. IT'S AFFECTING YOUR GRADES.

I KNOW YOU LIKE YOUR SCHOOL, BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO STAY IF YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE WORKLOAD.



I KNOW.

WE DIDN'T SEND YOU TO WINDLEY TO FAIL. MAYBE IF YOU CUT DOWN ON PRACTICING...



MOM! I HAVE TO PRACTICE.

JUST TALK TO DR. JONES. MAYBE SHE'LL HAVE SOME IDEAS.



FINE.

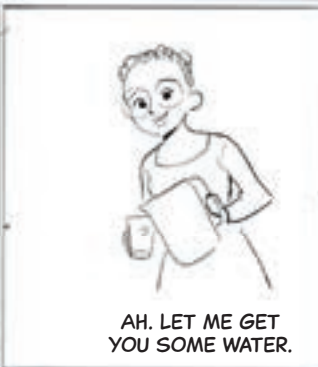




YOU DIDN'T RUN HERE, DID YOU? YOU'RE NOT IN TROUBLE.



NO MA'AM. WE'RE RUNNING THE MILE IN P.E.



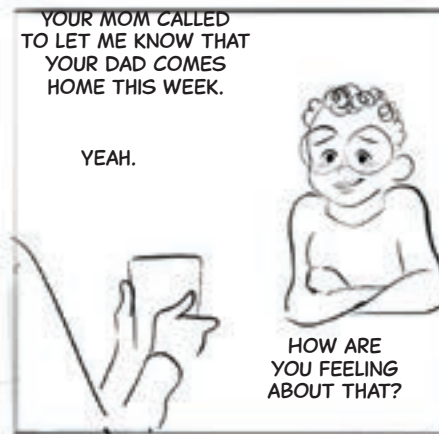
AH. LET ME GET YOU SOME WATER.



HOW HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?



I'M GOOD.



YOUR MOM CALLED TO LET ME KNOW THAT YOUR DAD COMES HOME THIS WEEK.

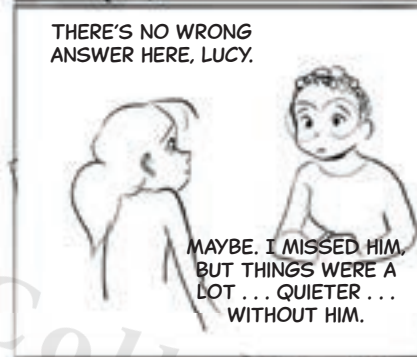
YEAH.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING ABOUT THAT?



FINE.

ARE YOU NERVOUS ABOUT SEEING HIM AGAIN?



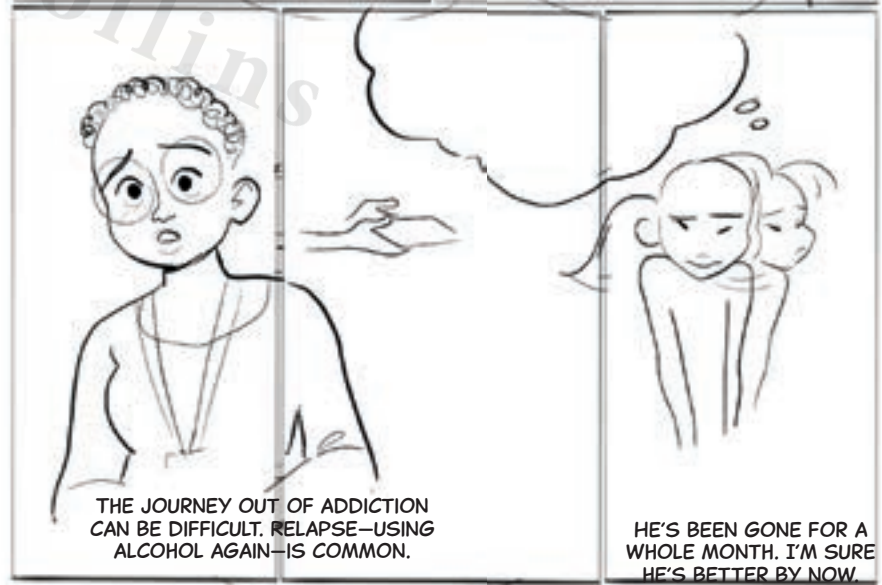
THERE'S NO WRONG ANSWER HERE, LUCY.

MAYBE. I MISSED HIM, BUT THINGS WERE A LOT ... QUIETER ... WITHOUT HIM.



COMING HOME FROM TREATMENT CAN BE DIFFICULT.

HOW? HE'S BETTER NOW, RIGHT?



THE JOURNEY OUT OF ADDICTION CAN BE DIFFICULT. RELAPSE—USING ALCOHOL AGAIN—IS COMMON.

HE'S BEEN GONE FOR A WHOLE MONTH. I'M SURE HE'S BETTER BY NOW.

YOUR FATHER MAY STRUGGLE. JUST KEEP IN MIND THAT NONE OF THIS SITUATION IS YOUR FAULT.

I KNOW.

IT'S WEIRD TALKING ABOUT THIS.

THAT'S NORMAL LUCY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE?

UM ...

LET'S TAKE A LOOK.

I'M KIND OF FAILING MATH? AND ...

A LOT OF MY OTHER GRADES AREN'T SO GREAT EITHER.

HMMM. CAN YOU RETAKE THAT LAST QUIZ?

I THINK SO.

THAT WILL HELP. WHAT ABOUT THE MISSING ASSIGNMENTS?

I GUESS COULD ASK ABOUT MAKING THEM UP.

YOU GUESS?

I WILL. I'LL ASK TODAY.

SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD PLAN. YOU'LL BE BACK ON TRACK IN NO TIME.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT?

NO.

YOU'RE SURE?

I'M SURE.

SECOND CHAIR IS REALLY GOOD.

THERE'S MAYBE ONE OTHER THING. I'M SECOND CHAIR IN BAND.

WELL, YEAH, BUT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN FIRST CHAIR. AND AT WINDLEY I'M ... NOT. TOLLI IS.

HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?

HORRIBLE!

I DON'T KNOW. TOLLI GETS LESSONS AND HAS ALL THESE FLUTES. IT'S NOT FAIR. WE USED TO BE FRIENDS BUT NOW SHE HARDLY TALKS TO ME.

WHAT WOULD HELP,
DO YOU THINK?

GOOD! YOU'RE REALLY
PROGRESSING ON THIS PIECE.

HOW WAS
WORK?

GREAT! CAN YOU
BELIEVE IT? TWELVE
MONTHS SOBER! LET'S
GO OUT TO DINNER
TO CELEBRATE.

NOTHING.

NOTHING?

NOTHING. MAYBE I'M NOT
GOOD ENOUGH FOR WINDLEY.
MAYBE IT WAS A MISTAKE TO
LET A KID LIKE ME IN.

YOU'RE DEFINITELY GOOD
ENOUGH. EVEN IF YOU SAT LAST
CHAIR, YOU'D STILL BELONG HERE.

TODAY? I CAN'T MISS LUNCH. MY
BIRTHDAY PARTY IS TOMORROW,
AND IT'S THE ONLY TIME I CAN
PLAN WITH MY FRIENDS.

CAN I GO BACK TO CLASS
NOW? I CAN'T MISS BAND.

A PARTY? THAT
SOUNDS FUN.

LET'S MEET AT LUNCH TO KEEP
TALKING. I DON'T WANT TO RUSH
THIS CONVERSATION!

YEAH. I'M REALLY LOOKING
FORWARD TO IT.

I'D REALLY LIKE
TO MEET WITH
YOU AGAIN.

I DON'T WANT TO PUSH
THINGS. JUST PROMISE
THAT YOU'LL SIGN UP FOR
AN APPOINTMENT IF YOU
NEED TO TALK, OKAY?

I'M FINE. I SWEAR.
I REALLY AM. MY MOM
JUST WORRIES.

I WILL.
I PROMISE.

HAVE FUN AT
YOUR PARTY!

THANK YOU!
WE WILL!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
SCHOOL DRAMA



THAT'S MY SHOE.



THESE ARE MINE.

YOU'RE STANDING ON IT.



SORRY.

WHATEVER. YOU PROBABLY RUINED IT.



IT'S FINE!

WHATEVER.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?

I HEARD ABOUT YOUR STUPID PARTY. NEELA TOLD ME SO I WOULDN'T GET MAD WHEN YOU WERE PLANNING AT LUNCH.



OH, I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT THAT. MY MOM SAID I COULD ONLY HAVE THREE FRIENDS OVER.

I DON'T WANT TO GO TO YOUR DUMB PARTY. BUT NEELA IS MY BEST FRIEND. NOT YOURS.



FIRST YOU CHALLENGE ME EVERY FRIDAY AND NOW YOU'RE STEALING NEELA. AND THIS SHOE IS FILTHY!

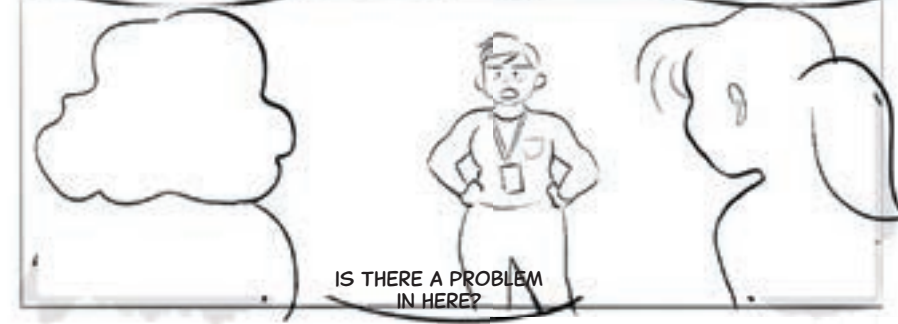
IT'S FINE!



YOU HATE ME BECAUSE I'M A BETTER MUSICIAN THAN YOU.



NO I DON'T! AND YOU'RE NOT—



IS THERE A PROBLEM IN HERE?



DO YOU TWO NEED A TRIP TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE?

NO.

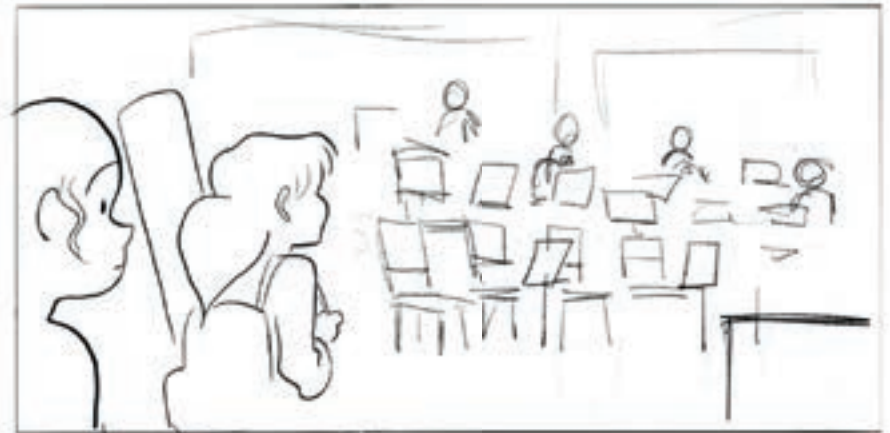
NO, MA'AM.

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT. MOVE IT EVERYBODY, BELL'S ABOUT TO RING.



I CAN'T BELIEVE SHE BLEW UP OVER A SHOE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE USED TO BE FRIENDS.



HEY!

HEY.

ARE YOU CHALLENGING TOLLI TODAY?



YEAH. NOT THAT IT'S GOING TO DO ANY GOOD. NOT WITH MISS PERFECT OVER THERE.



HOW COME YOU NEVER CHALLENGE ME?

I DON'T WANT TO PLAY IN FRONT OF EVERYONE. BESIDES, I'M HAPPY WITH MY CHAIR. ALMOST EVERYONE IS ... EXCEPT YOU.



SOMETIMES I WISH I DIDN'T CARE SO MUCH.



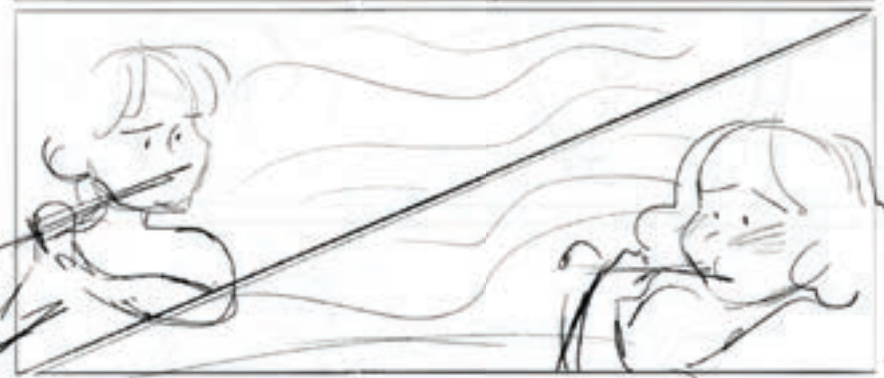
ANY CHAIR CHALLENGES TODAY?



OKAY, BEGINNING WITH THE TUBAS.

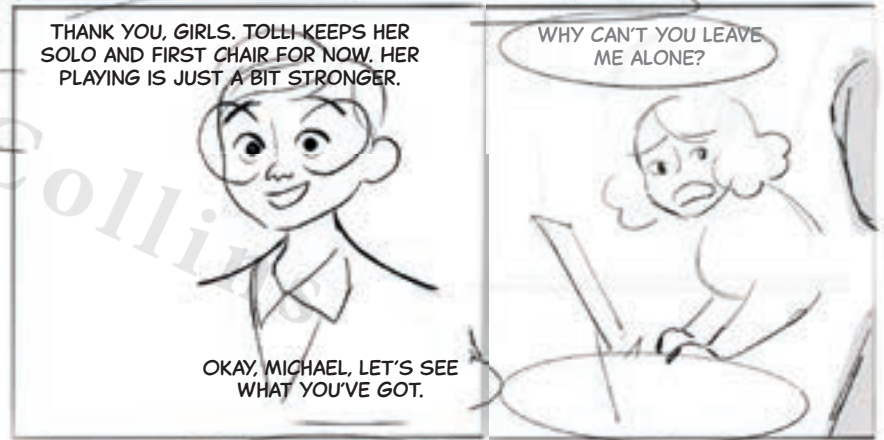


NOW, FLUTES. LUCY? FROM MEASURE TWO-TWENTY OF "O HOLY NIGHT."



THANK YOU, GIRLS. TOLLI KEEPS HER SOLO AND FIRST CHAIR FOR NOW. HER PLAYING IS JUST A BIT STRONGER.

WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE ME ALONE?



OKAY, MICHAEL, LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.



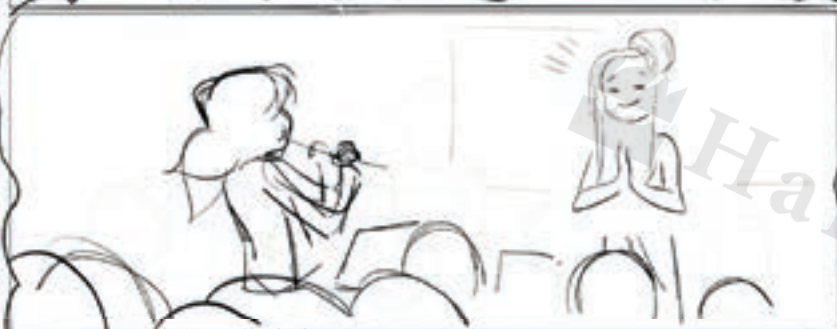
IT'S NOT ALWAYS ABOUT YOU.

I JUST WANT FIRST CHAIR.

FIRST CHAIR IS THE BEST. AT EAST, EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT.



I NEVER HAD TO CHALLENGE ANYONE.



I HAD ALL THE SOLOS.

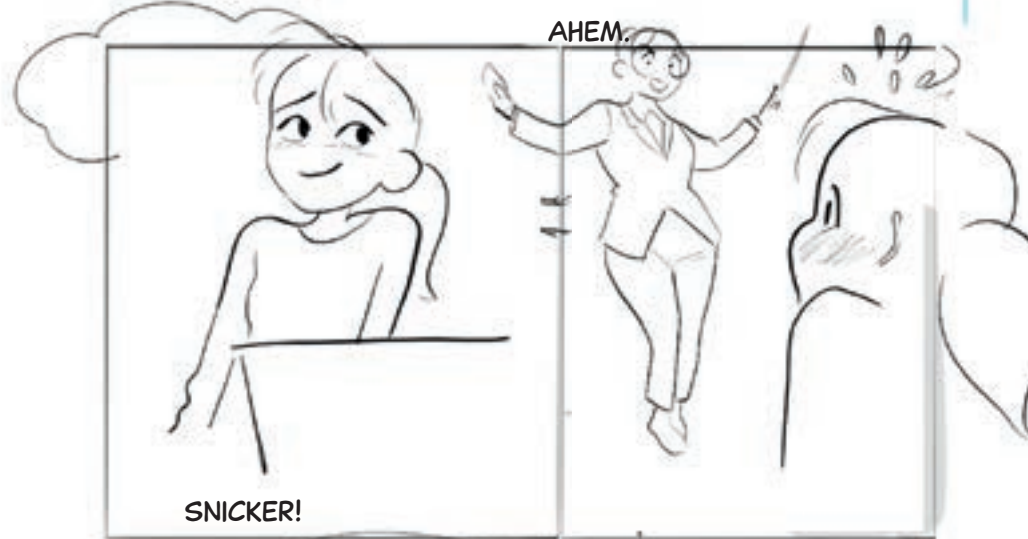


I HAD HARDLY ANY HOMEWORK, SO THERE WAS PLENTY OF TIME TO PRACTICE.



DAD AND MOM WERE ACTUALLY HAPPY SOMETIMES.

EVERYTHING WAS BETTER WHEN I WAS FIRST CHAIR.



AHEM.

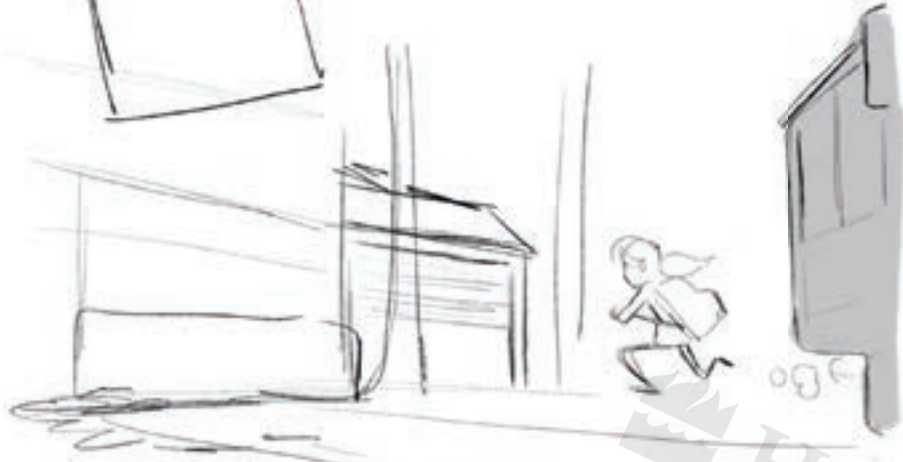
SNICKER!



SHE'S SO GOING DOWN.

HarperCollins

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
DAD COMES HOME (PART I)



DAD!

HOW'S MY NUMBER ONE?

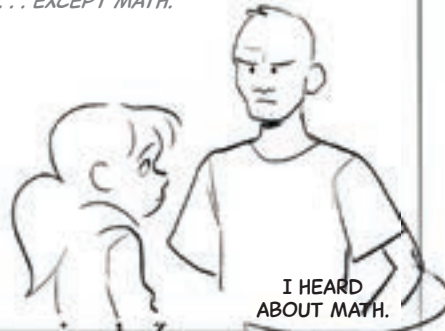


PRETTY GOOD.

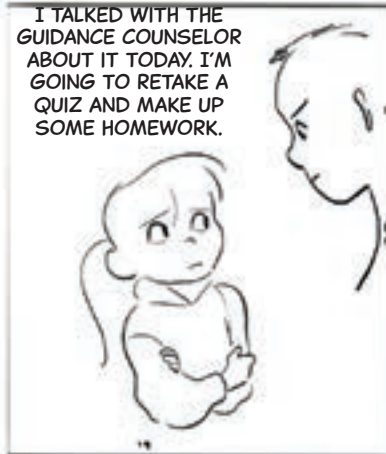
... EXCEPT MATH.



I MADE BEIGNETS, I HAVE A SOLO IN THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT, AND MY GRADES AREN'T HORRIBLE.



I HEARD ABOUT MATH.



I TALKED WITH THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR ABOUT IT TODAY. I'M GOING TO RETAKE A QUIZ AND MAKE UP SOME HOMEWORK.



BETTER START STUDYING. YOU DON'T WANT TO FALL FURTHER BEHIND.

I WILL. WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

MOM'S COOKING TONIGHT. SHE PROMISED TO HELP MORE SO I HAVE TIME TO APPLY FOR JOBS.



I THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T GET JOBS BECAUSE YOU CAN'T DRIVE

THAT'S ONLY PART OF IT.

I'M TIRED OF MOM'S COOKING. SHE COOKED EVERY NIGHT YOU WERE GONE.

THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU HELP?

SPEAKING OF HELP ... GRAB A RAKE. THE YARD IS A MESS.



DAD! I NEED TO PRACTICE. CHALLENGES ARE NEXT FRIDAY AND I WANT TO MEMORIZE ALL MY—



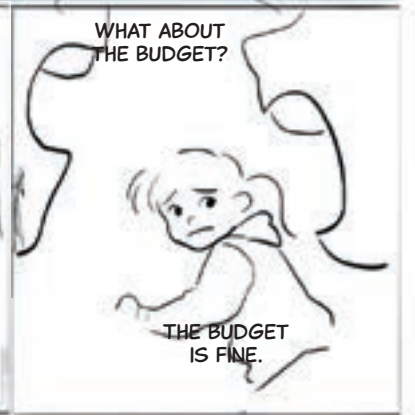
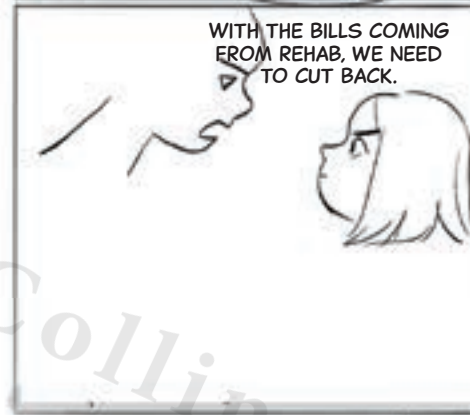
YOU PRACTICE TOO MUCH AS IT IS.

CAN'T ELIZABETH OR LIAM DO IT? THEY'RE JUST PLAYING WITH THEIR FRIENDS.



I JUST GOT HOME. DO YOU REALLY WANT TO ARGUE ABOUT THIS?

NO.

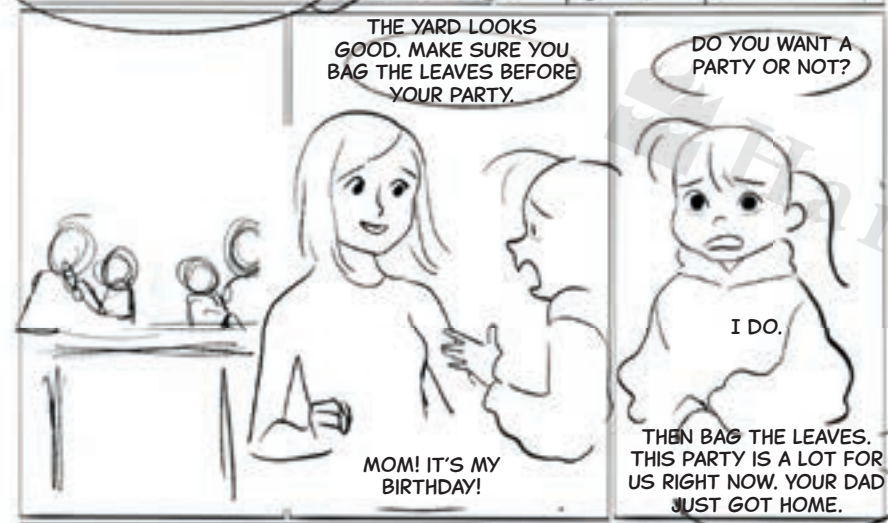




GUESS THIS FAMILY IS BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME.

DON'T TWIST MY WORDS.

AND YOU WONDER WHY I DRINK ALL THE TIME!



THE YARD LOOKS GOOD. MAKE SURE YOU BAG THE LEAVES BEFORE YOUR PARTY.

DO YOU WANT A PARTY OR NOT?

I DO.

MOM! IT'S MY BIRTHDAY!

THEN BAG THE LEAVES. THIS PARTY IS A LOT FOR US RIGHT NOW. YOUR DAD JUST GOT HOME.



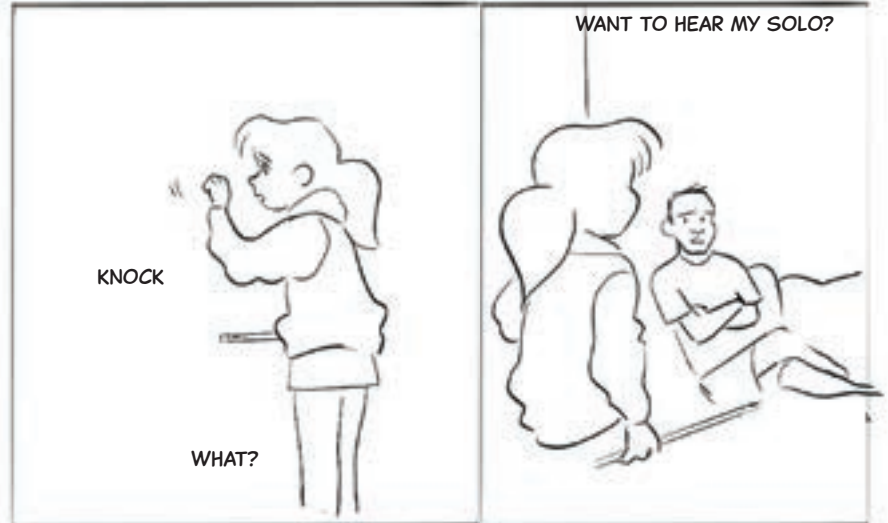
SHE'S MAD AT DAD NOT YOU.

I KNOW. IT'S STILL NOT FAIR.

WE'LL HELP RIGHT, LIAM?

RAKING IS THE WORST, BUT FINE.

I'LL DO IT. I'M NOT LETTING ANYTHING RUIN MY PARTY.



KNOCK

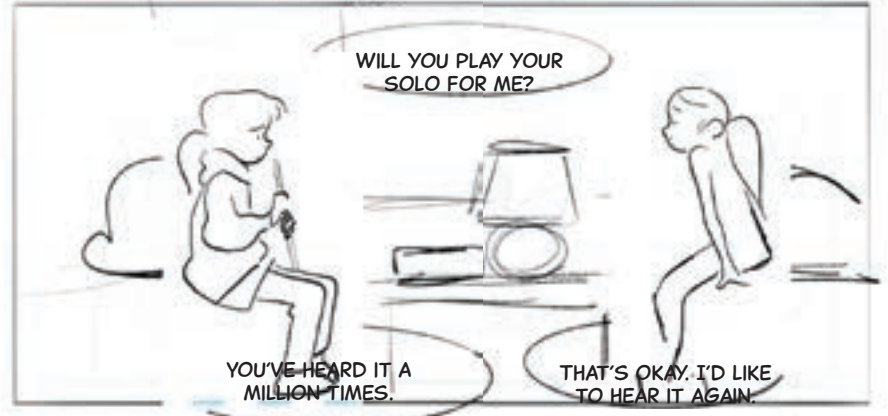
WHAT?

WANT TO HEAR MY SOLO?



MAYBE TOMORROW. I'M NOT IN A GOOD MOOD RIGHT NOW.

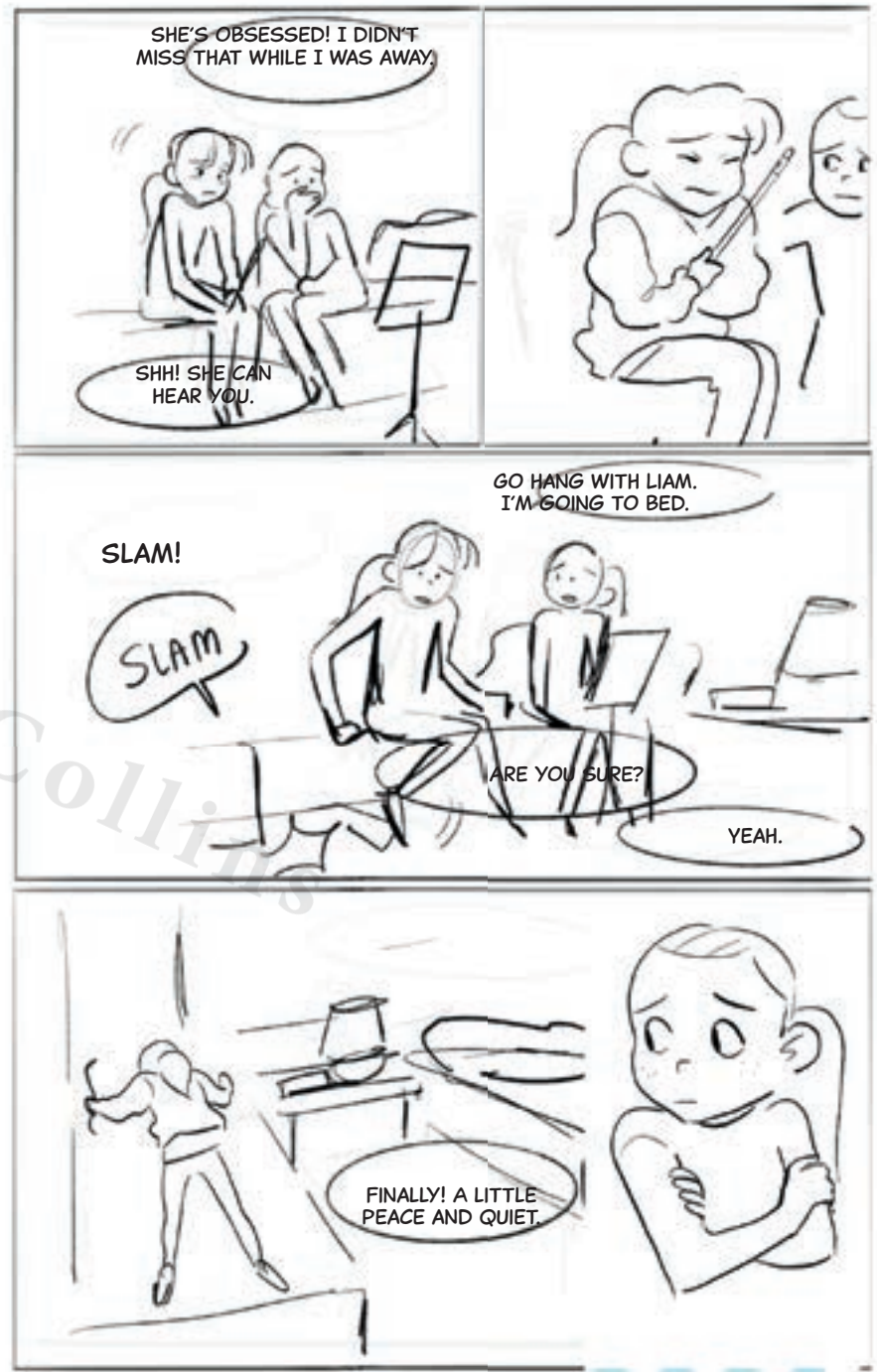
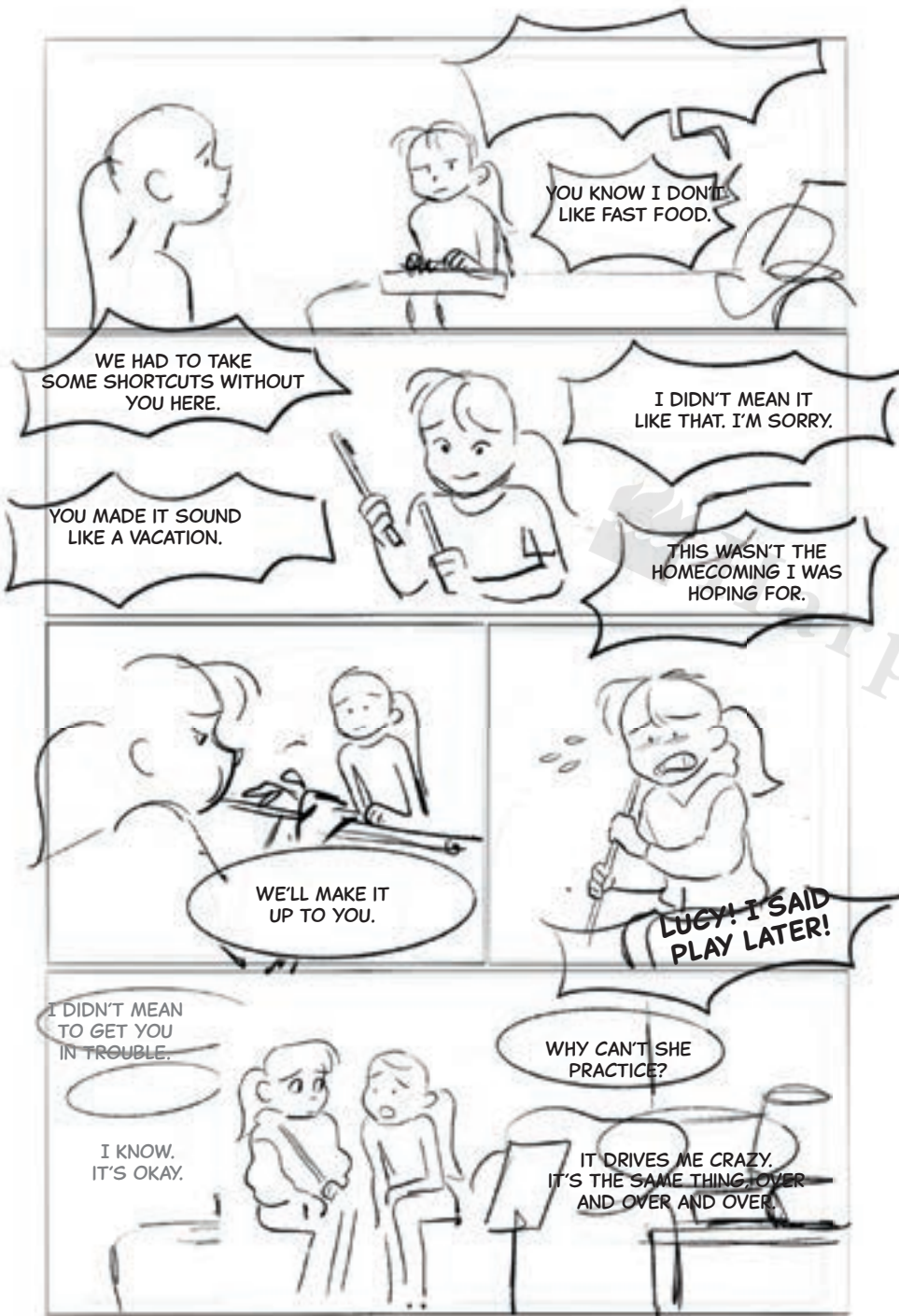
OKAY.



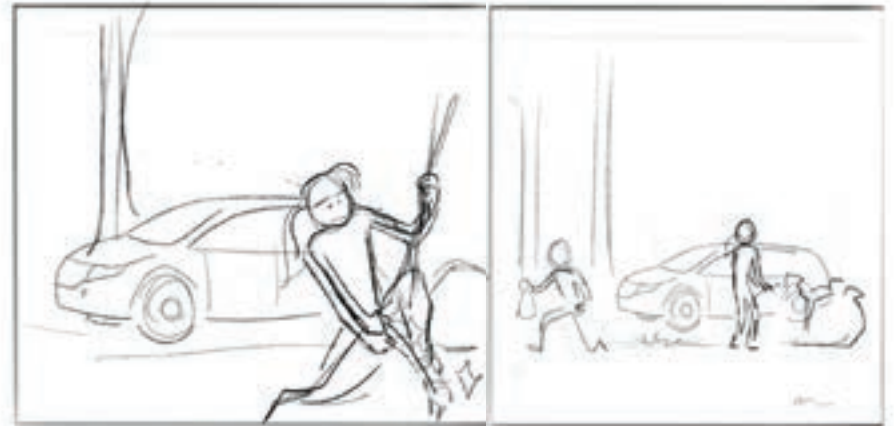
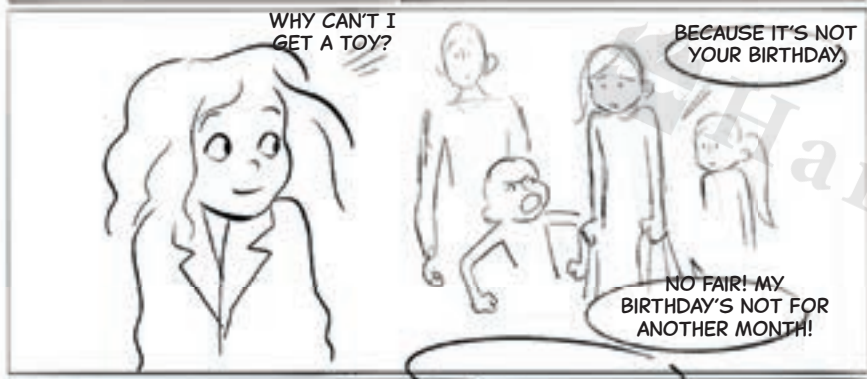
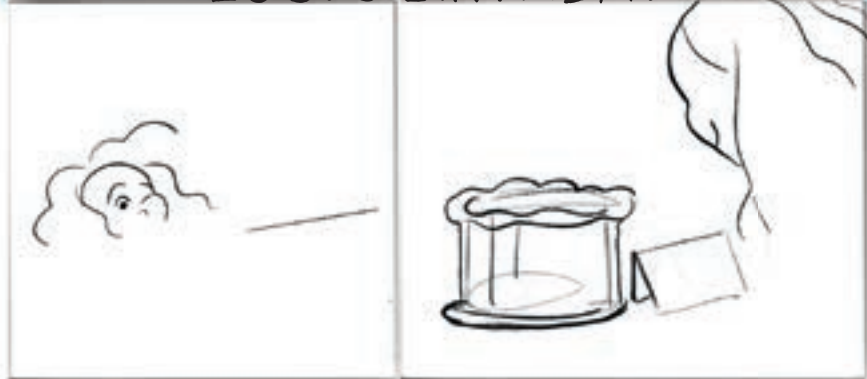
WILL YOU PLAY YOUR SOLO FOR ME?

YOU'VE HEARD IT A MILLION TIMES.

THAT'S OKAY. I'D LIKE TO HEAR IT AGAIN.



CHAPTER NINETEEN
LUCY'S BIRTHDAY





DING-DONG!
Ding Dong

COMING!



WHO'S WINNING?

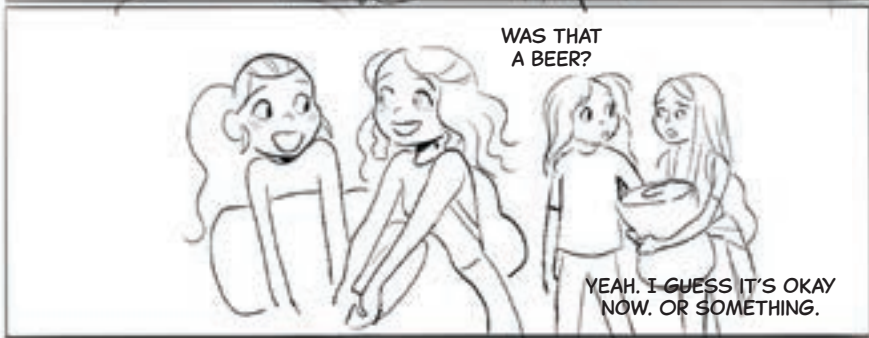
CAROLINA, BY TWO TOUCHDOWNS.



COME ON IN!

HEY GIRLS! I'M LUCY'S DAD.

DAD, THEY KNOW.



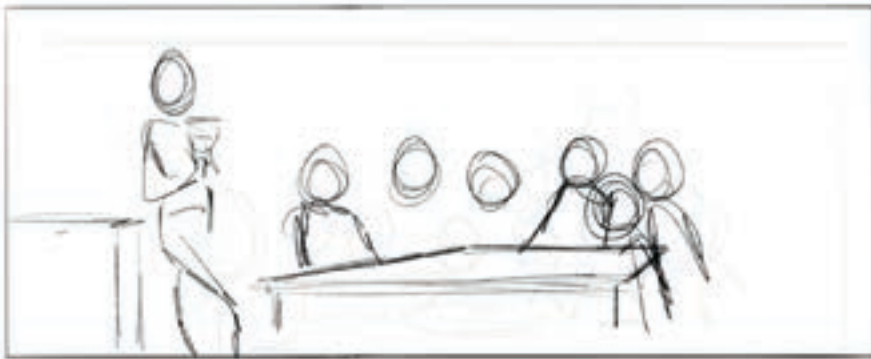
WAS THAT A BEER?

YEAH, I GUESS IT'S OKAY NOW. OR SOMETHING.



GIRLS! PIZZA'S READY!







GIRLS, TIME TO MOVE TO THE LIVING ROOM. ELIZABETH AND LIAM NEED TO GO TO BED.

AWW MAN!



DAD'S NOT OUT THERE, IS HE?

HE'S GONE TO BED.



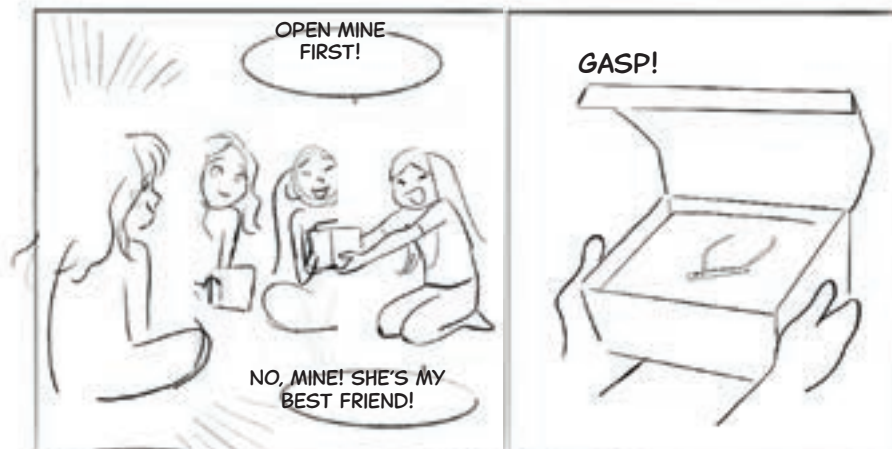
I'M HUNGRY. LET'S GET A SNACK.



WOW! YOUR DAD DRANK ALL OF THESE TODAY?

I GUESS SO.

LOOK WHAT I FOUND!



OPEN MINE FIRST!

NO, MINE! SHE'S MY BEST FRIEND!



GASP!



THANK YOU!

IT'S FROM ME AND GRANDMA JO. MAYBE IT'LL HELP YOU WIN FIRST CHAIR.



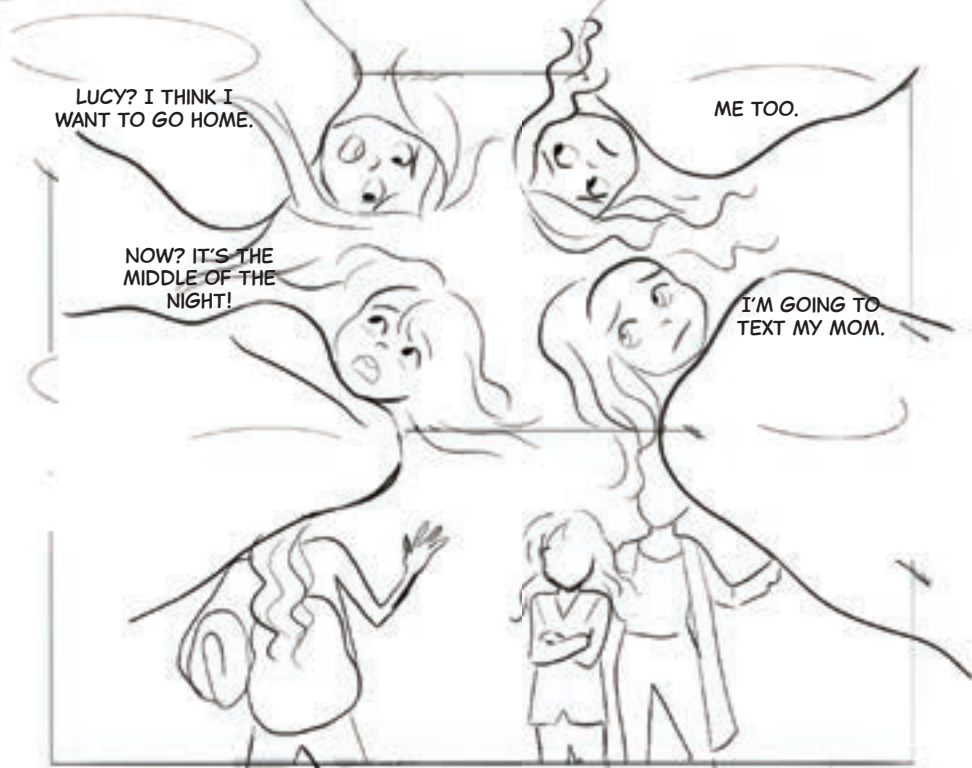
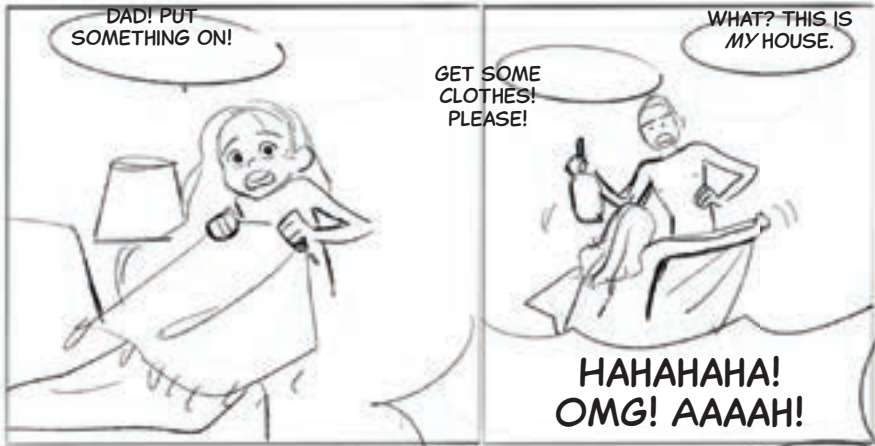
OH MY GOD! IS YOUR DAD IN HIS UNDERWEAR?

WHAT? NO!

HE WAS. I SAW IT TOO!



EEEEEE!! SQUEEEEEAL! AAAAAH! AAAAAH!!!



CHAPTER TWENTY
BACK TO REHAB

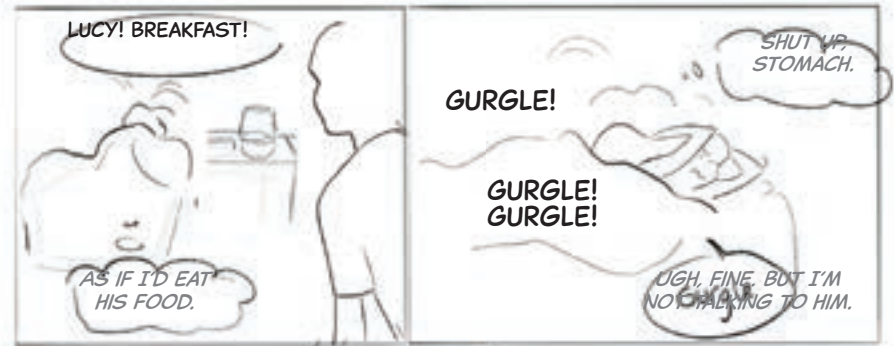
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

BUZZZZZZT

8:15 a.m.

CAN I PLAY WITH YOUR RADIO?

WHAT? NO. I'M SLEEPING!



AS IF I'D EAT HIS FOOD.





LAST NIGHT WAS BAD.
I'M REALLY SORRY.



I'VE GOT TO DO BETTER.
GET BETTER, SOMEHOW.

THAT'S FOR SURE.



I'M GOING BACK
TO REHAB. SOMETHING
DIDN'T TAKE.



MY FRIENDS LEFT, DAD.

I KNOW. I'M REALLY,
REALLY, REALLY SORRY.



THIS ISN'T THE KIND
OF LIFE I WANT YOU
KIDS TO HAVE.



HOW LONG WILL
YOU BE GONE?

ANOTHER
THIRTY DAYS.

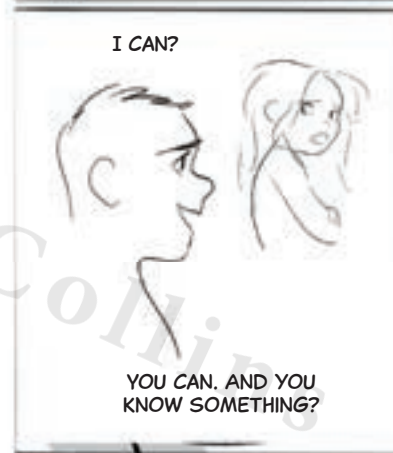
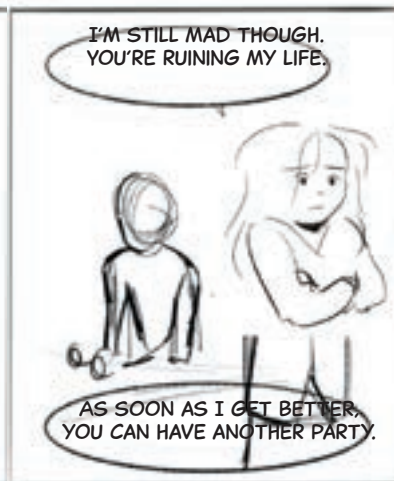
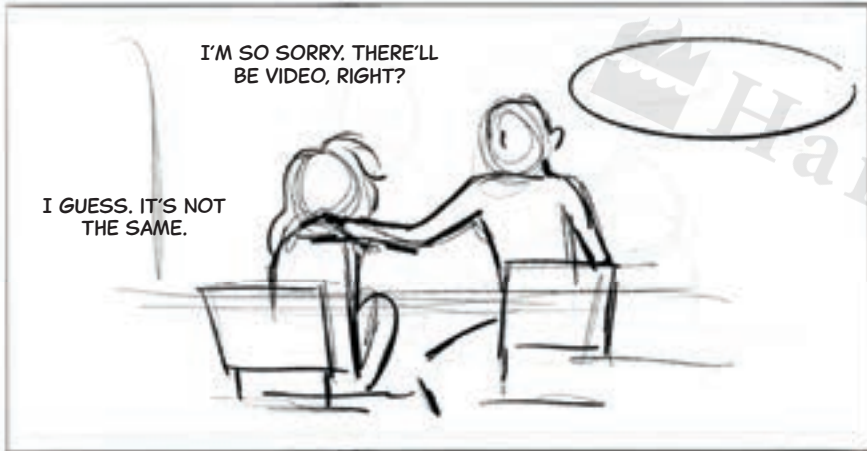
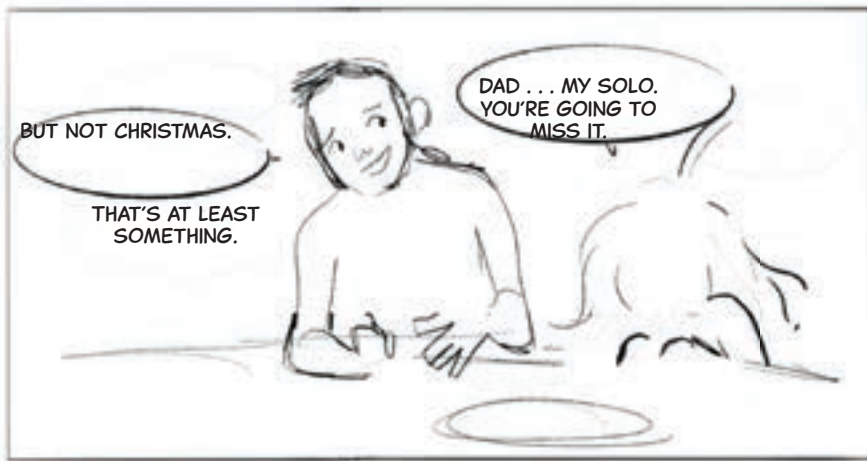


YOU'RE GOING TO
MISS THANKSGIVING.

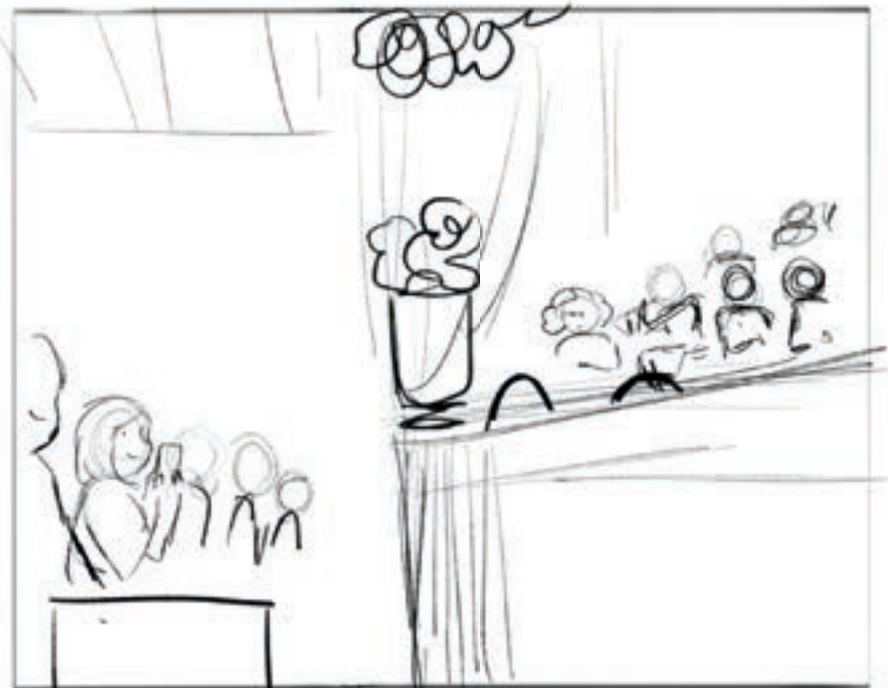
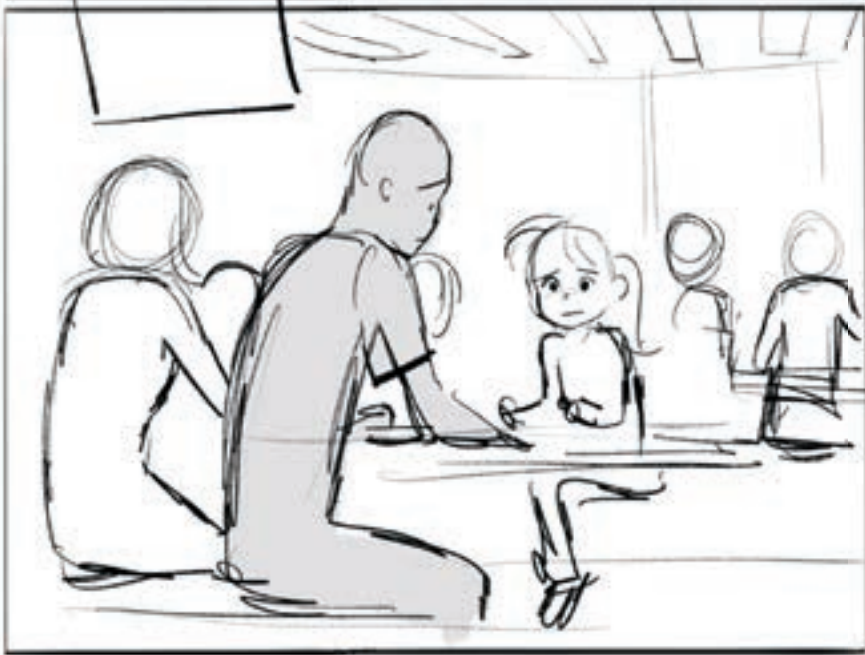
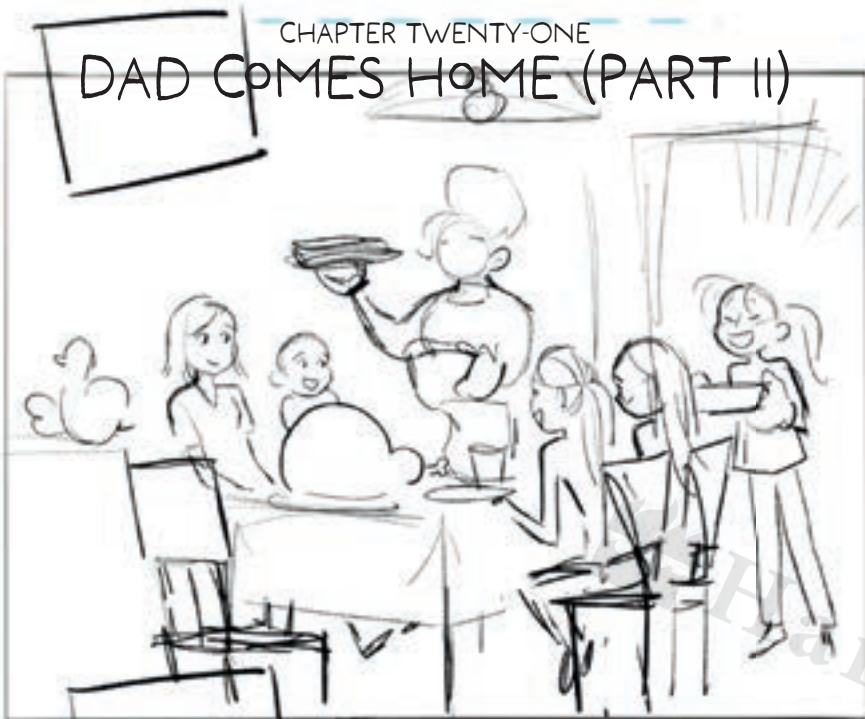


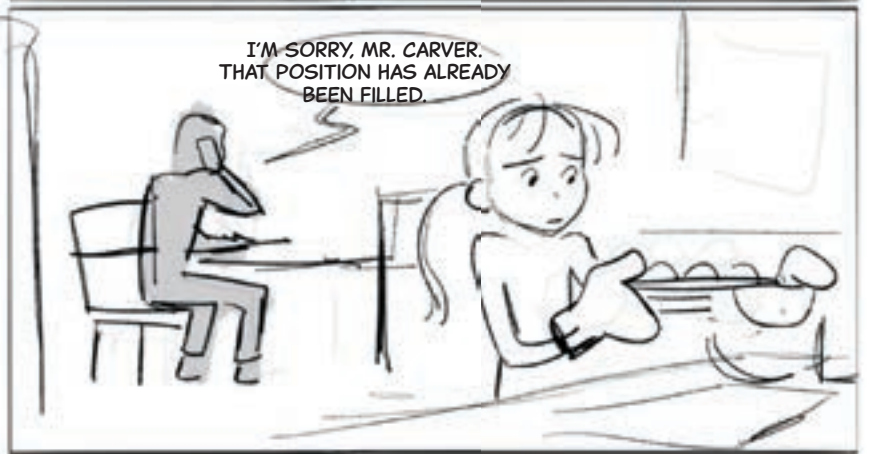
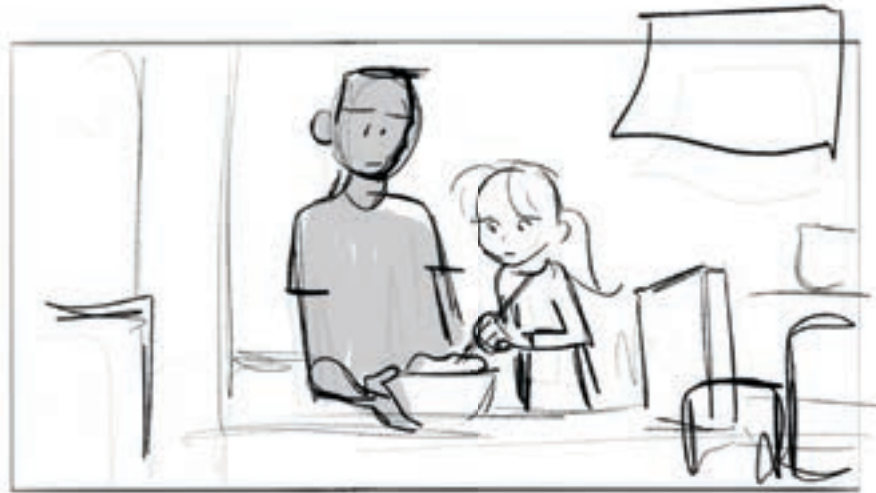
UGHHH!
UGHHH!

AND MY
CHRISTMAS
CONCERT!



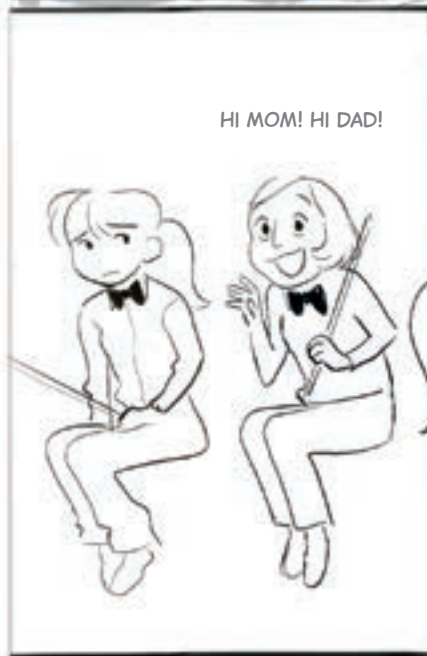
DAD COMES HOME (PART II)







CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
SPRING CONCERT



HI MOM! HI DAD!

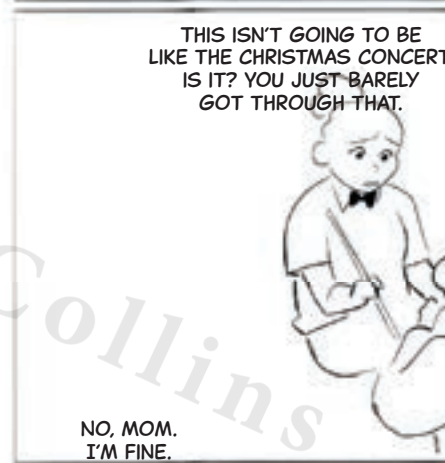


IT'S ALMOST TIME TO START. WHERE ARE THEY?



DON'T FORGET THE BREATHING EXERCISES WE TALKED ABOUT. THEY REALLY HELP YOUR TONE.

OKAY.



THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE LIKE THE CHRISTMAS CONCERT, IS IT? YOU JUST BARELY GOT THROUGH THAT.

ARE YOU SURE? BECAUSE YOU SHOULD GIVE FIRST CHAIR TO LUCY RIGHT NOW IF YOU CAN'T DO IT.

NO, MOM. I'M FINE.

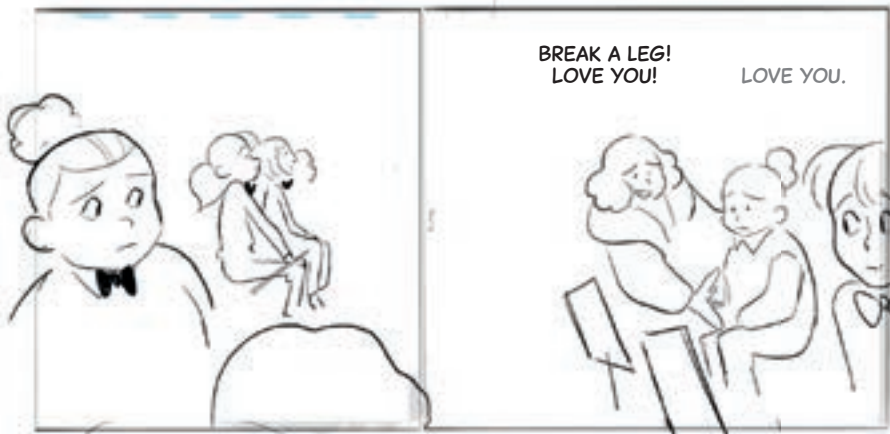
I'M FINE.



YOU'RE HURTING ME.

YOU CAN DO THIS. YOU'RE THE BEST MUSICIAN HERE.

SORRY. I'M ONLY TRYING TO HELP.

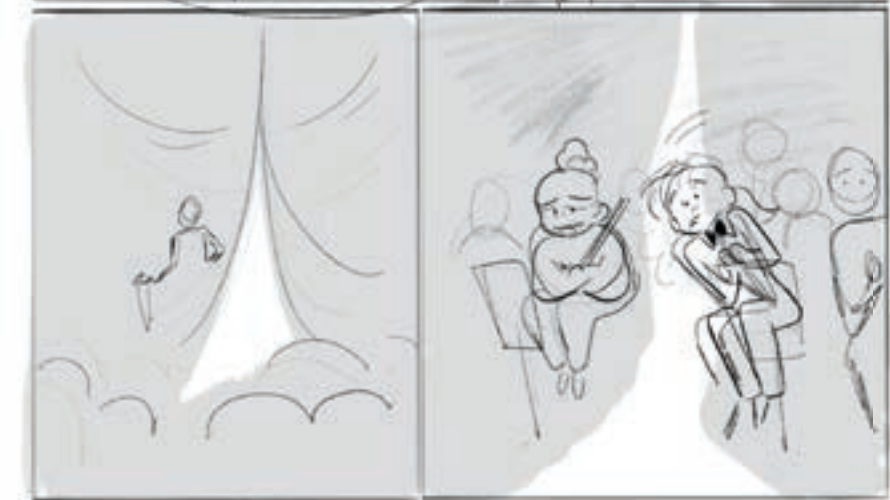


BREAK A LEG!
LOVE YOU!
LOVE YOU.



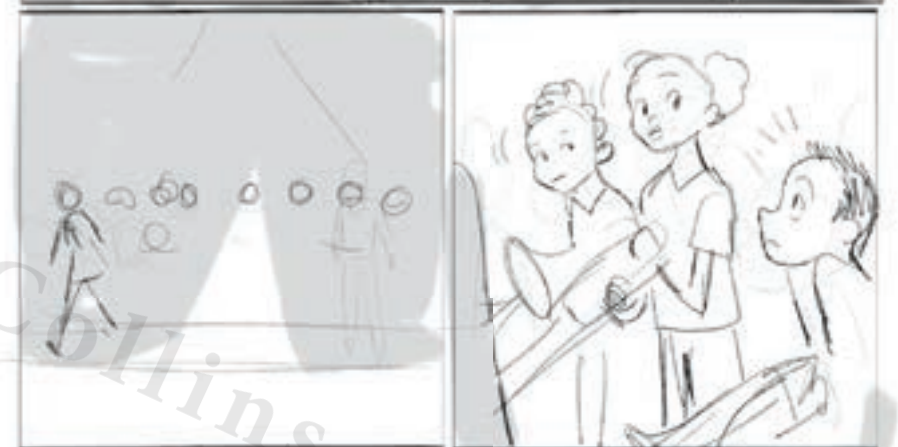
YOU'RE GOING TO DO GREAT.
YEAH. JUST LIKE ALWAYS. DON'T EVEN WORRY ABOUT IT.

I'M FINE. DON'T PRETEND LIKE YOU CARE.

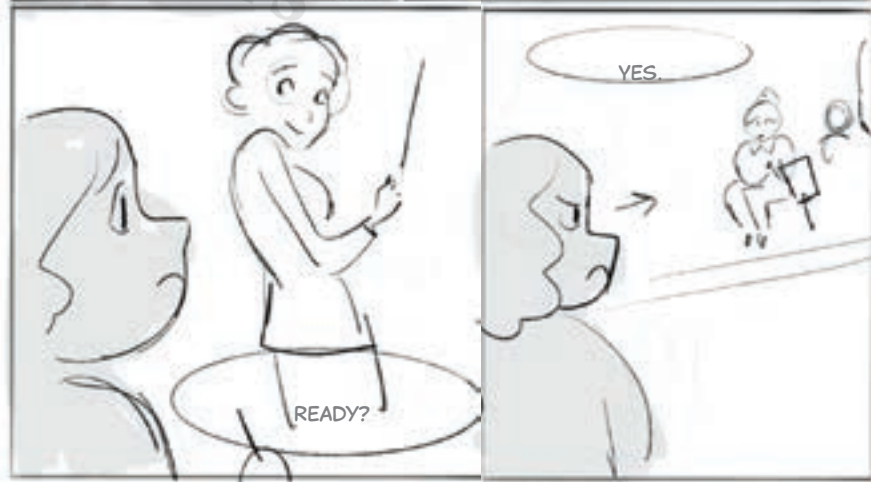
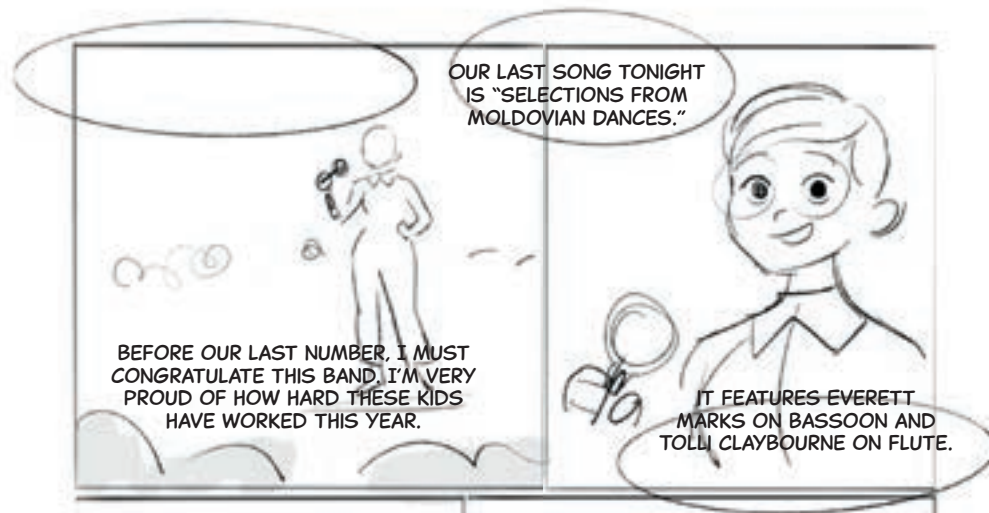
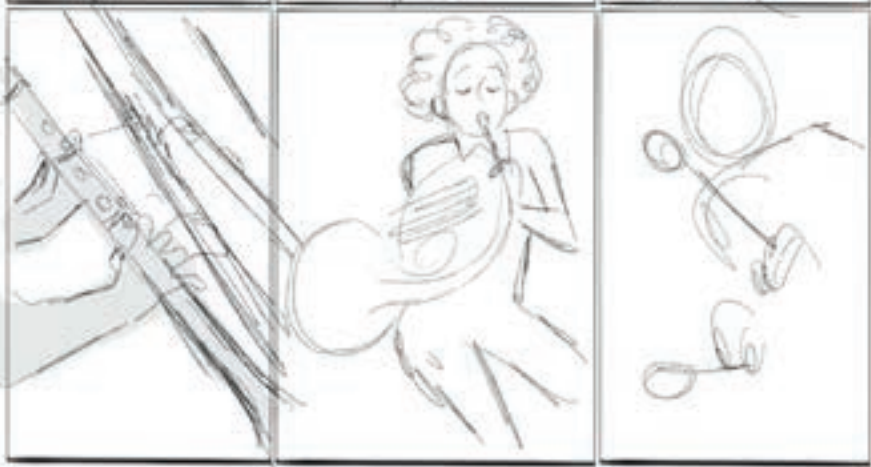
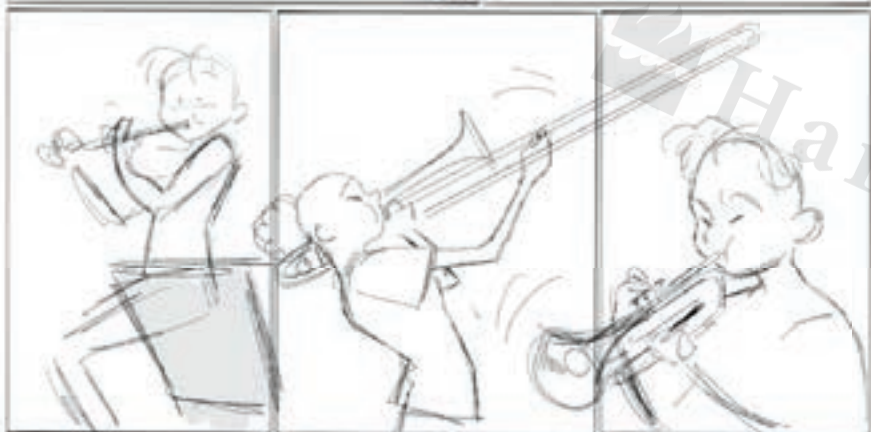
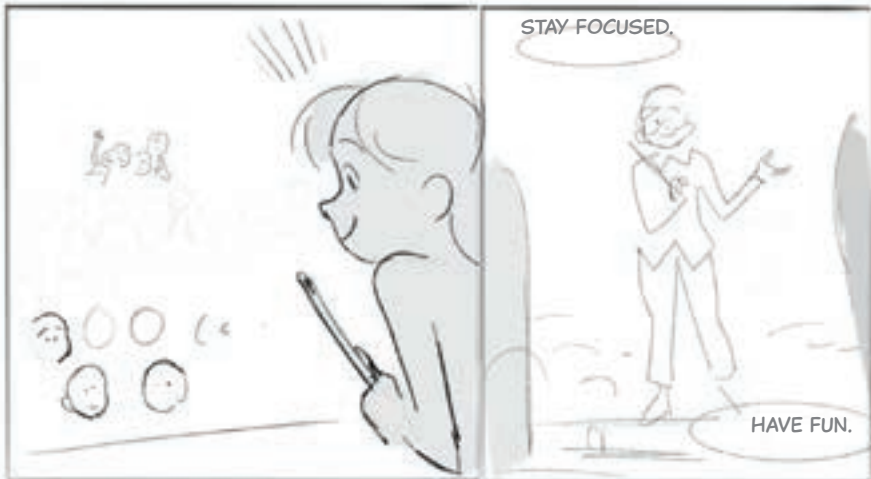


IT'S TIME.

ONLY TWO THINGS TO REMEMBER: STAY FOCUSED AND HAVE FUN. OKAY?



WHERE ARE THEY?

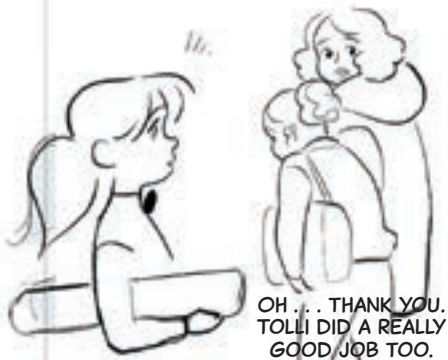




WE'LL KEEP WORKING ON YOUR NERVES.



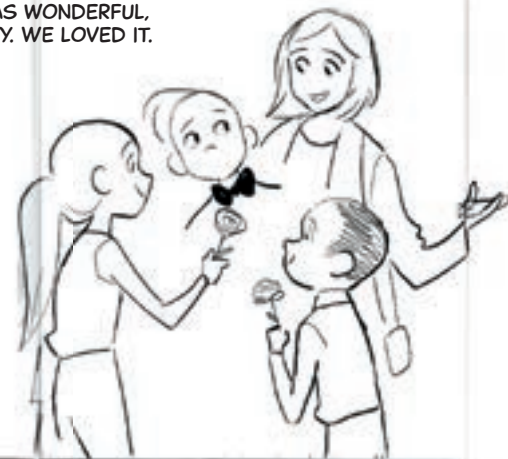
NICE JOB
TONIGHT, LUCY.



OH... THANK YOU.
TOLLI DID A REALLY
GOOD JOB TOO.



IT WAS WONDERFUL,
HONEY. WE LOVED IT.



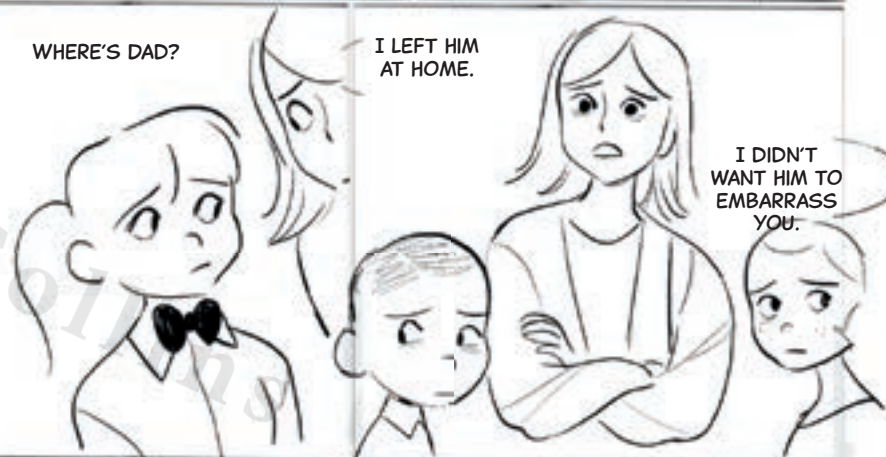
IF ONLY SHE HAD A TENTH
OF YOUR AMBITION. I HAVE TO
PUSH HER TO DO EVERYTHING.



LET'S
GO.

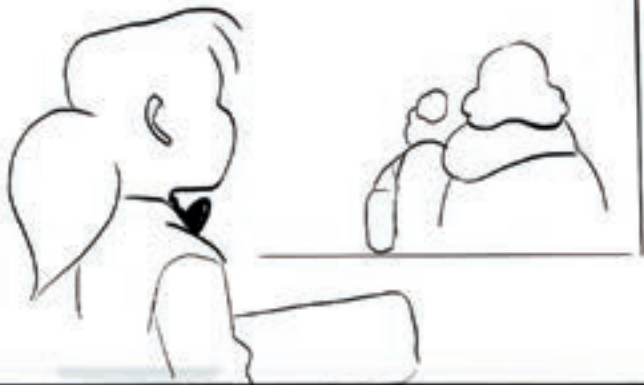
WHERE'S DAD?

I LEFT HIM
AT HOME.



I DIDN'T
WANT HIM TO
EMBARRASS
YOU.

IF HE WANTS TO
SEE YOU PERFORM, HE'LL
STAY SOBER FOR IT.



THEN HE'S NEVER
GONNA SEE ME.

CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKE



LUCY! COME PLAY!

CAN'T. WE GOT OUR MUSIC FOR OUR FINAL CHAIR TEST TODAY.

YOU NEVER PLAY WITH US ANYMORE.

I DON'T HAVE TIME. IF I WANT TO MAKE FIRST CHAIR—

SO?

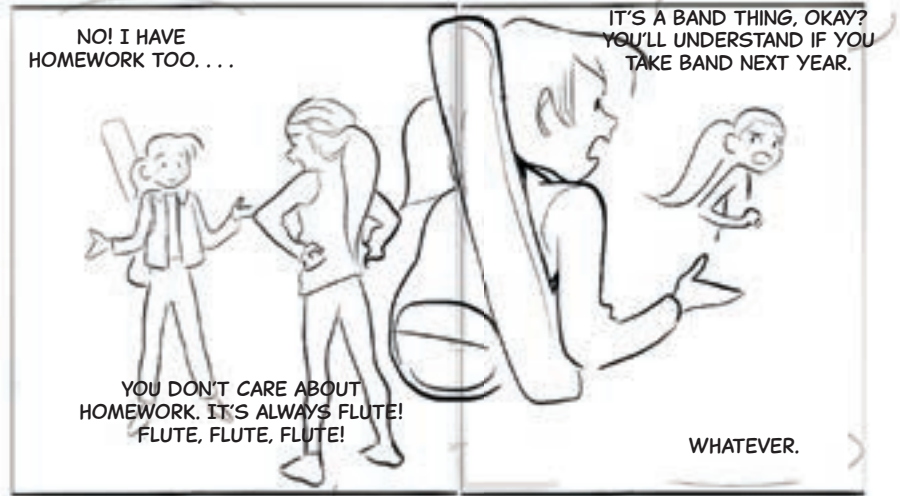


WE ONLY HAVE A FEW WEEKS TO PREPARE.

IT'S MY LAST CHANCE TO MAKE FIRST CHAIR. MS. KELL SAID NO MORE CHALLENGES THIS YEAR.



FIRST CHAIR. UGH. THAT'S ALL YOU CARE ABOUT.



NO! I HAVE HOMEWORK TOO. . . .

IT'S A BAND THING, OKAY? YOU'LL UNDERSTAND IF YOU TAKE BAND NEXT YEAR.

YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT HOMEWORK. IT'S ALWAYS FLUTE! FLUTE, FLUTE, FLUTE!

WHATEVER.



I DON'T EVEN LIKE BASKETBALL!



DAD?

SIGH

GUESS I'LL BE PRACTICING OUTSIDE.

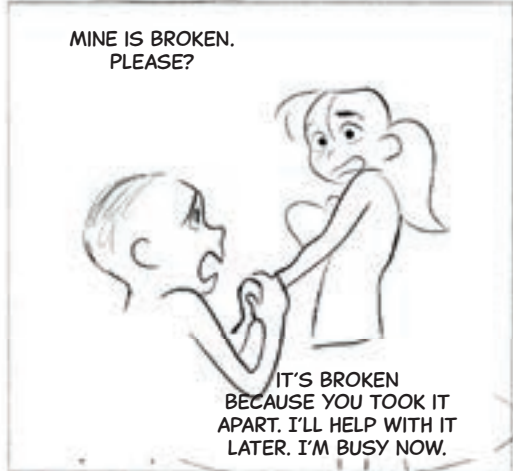


CAN I BORROW YOUR CLOCK RADIO?



NO. WHAT IS IT WITH YOU AND MY RADIO?

I'LL SHOW ELIZABETH I CARE ABOUT MORE THAN FLUTE.

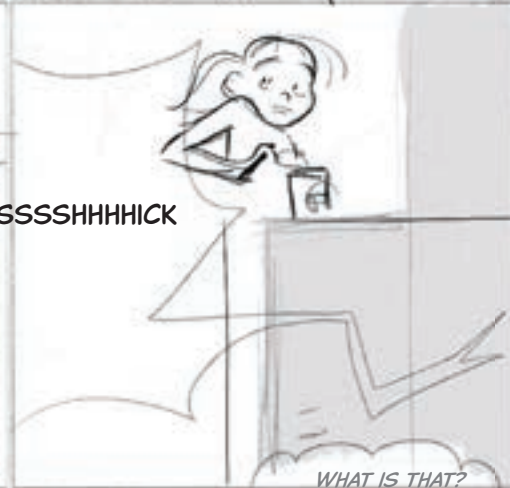


MINE IS BROKEN. PLEASE?

IT'S BROKEN BECAUSE YOU TOOK IT APART. I'LL HELP WITH IT LATER. I'M BUSY NOW.



SSSHHHICK



WHAT IS THAT?



WHIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!!



THANK YOU. THE NOISE WAS KILLING MY HEAD.



SORRY! CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKE!

WHAT'S ALL THIS RACKET?



CLICK

I'M ALMOST DONE, AND THEN I'LL PRACTICE OUTSIDE. WE GOT NEW MUSIC TODAY FOR THE LAST CHAIR TEST—MY LAST CHANCE TO BEAT TOLLI THIS YEAR.



BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP



UH-OH!



CAREFUL!



NOOOOO!

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP



AAAAAAHHHHHHH-HHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

AAAAAA



CALL YOUR MOM!

NOW!



IT HURTS SO... MUCH.

FLUSH!

THUMP THUMP THUMP!

IN FINANCIAL NEWS, THE STOCK MARKET PLUNGED YESTERDAY ...

CLANG! CLANG! RATTLE!

Click click
CLICK CLICK CLICK

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU CAN'T EVEN PLAY YET.

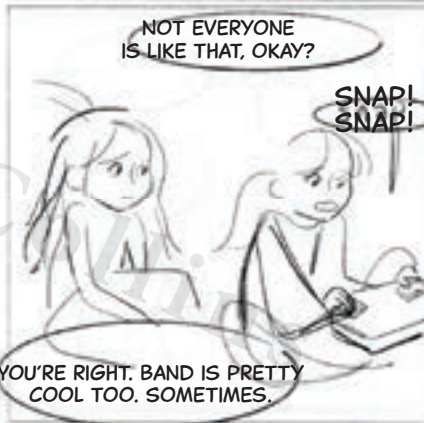


I JUST KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT. IF ONLY I WAS FIRST CHAIR, MAYBE THINGS WOULDN'T SEEM SO AWFUL.



IT'S LIKE YOU WENT CRAZY THIS YEAR. YOU'RE OBSESSED WITH FLUTE.

YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL AND BASKETBALL AND BOOKS. ...



NOT EVERYONE IS LIKE THAT, OKAY?

SNAP! SNAP!

YOU'RE RIGHT. BAND IS PRETTY COOL TOO. SOMETIMES.



I WANT PANCAKES.



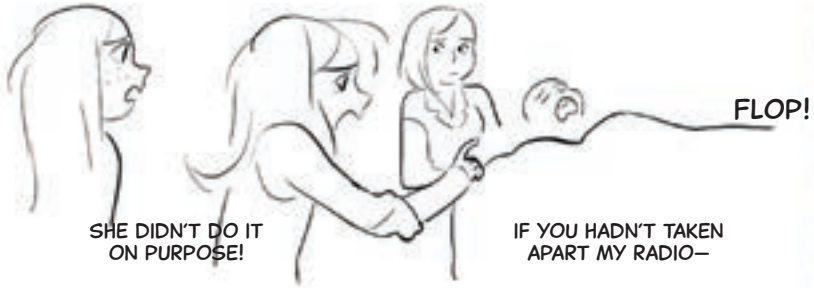
SORRY, BUD. WE ONLY HAVE CEREAL.

I'M SO TIRED OF CEREAL.



THINGS WILL BE BACK TO NORMAL SOON, I PROMISE. WE'LL BE HOME BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.

WHY'D YOU HAVE TO
GET BURNED?



SHE DIDN'T DO IT
ON PURPOSE!

IF YOU HADN'T TAKEN
APART MY RADIO—

FLOP!

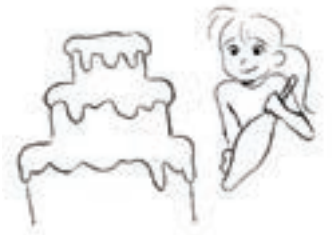
I MISS OUR HOUSE.



I MISS PRACTICING.

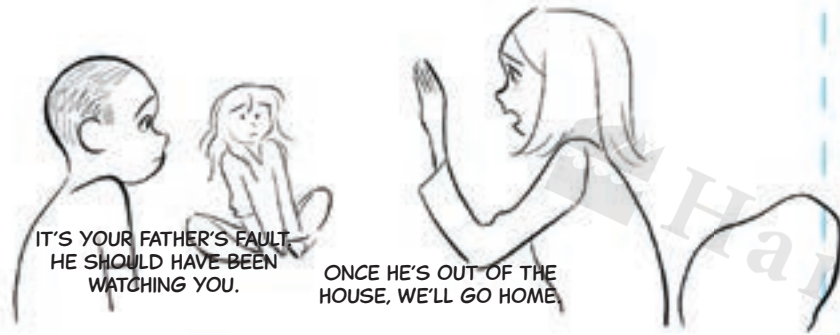


I MISS BAKING.



IT'S YOUR FATHER'S FAULT.
HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN
WATCHING YOU.

ONCE HE'S OUT OF THE
HOUSE, WE'LL GO HOME.



I MISS
DAD.

ME TOO.



YEAH. MOM'S RIGHT,
THOUGH. HE'S WHY
WE'RE HERE.

*AND DAD TOO.
SOBER DAD, AT LEAST.*



LUCY! I NEED TO GO!



*WHY CAN'T I HAVE
A NORMAL LIFE?*



LUCY! I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO TALK TO YOUR MATH TEACHER AGAIN. YOU'VE GOT A FIFTY-FOUR.



LUCE, THIS ISN'T OKAY. WE DIDN'T SEND YOU TO ARTS SCHOOL TO FAIL SEVENTH GRADE.

YOUR SCIENCE GRADE HAS TANKED TOO. I THOUGHT YOU FINISHED YOUR MAKEUP WORK.



UM... THERE'S STILL SOME STUFF I NEED TO TURN IN.



DIDN'T YOUR TEACHERS GIVE YOU AN EXTENSION?



THEY DID, BUT THERE'S ALL THIS NEW WORK TOO. I CAN'T KEEP UP.

ALL YOU DO IS PRACTICE. YOU HAVE TO MAKE TIME FOR YOUR OTHER HOMEWORK TOO.

WE WERE WORRIED WINDLEY MIGHT BE TOO HARD. MAYBE YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO EAST. YOU DID WELL THERE.



NO! BAND IS SO MUCH BETTER AT WINDLEY!



DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. YOU LOVED EAST YOU WERE FIRST CHAIR THERE.



I DON'T CARE ABOUT EAST! I WANT FIRST CHAIR AT WINDLEY!

BANG BANG



PIPE DOWN OVER THERE!

I THINK WE BOTH KNOW THAT ISN'T HAPPENING THIS YEAR.



THERE'S ONE MORE CHAIR TEST.



LISTEN TO YOURSELF! IT'S NOT HEALTHY!

GET THESE GRADES UP OR YOU'RE LEAVING WINDLEY.



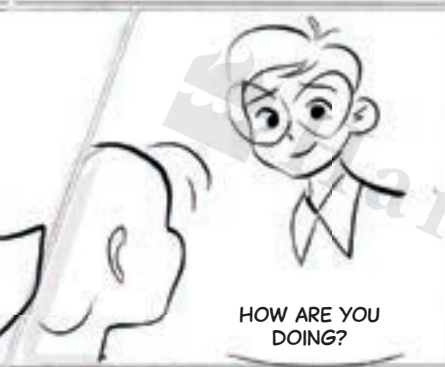
HI, LUCY.

CAN I DO MY MATH IN HERE?



SURE, YOU'RE HERE EARLY TODAY.

I HAVE MAKEUP WORK IN A LOT OF MY CLASSES.

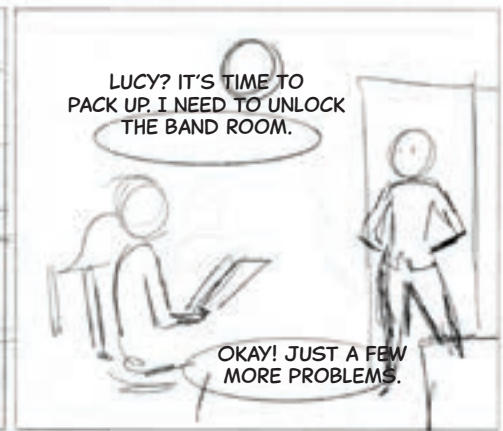


HOW ARE YOU DOING?



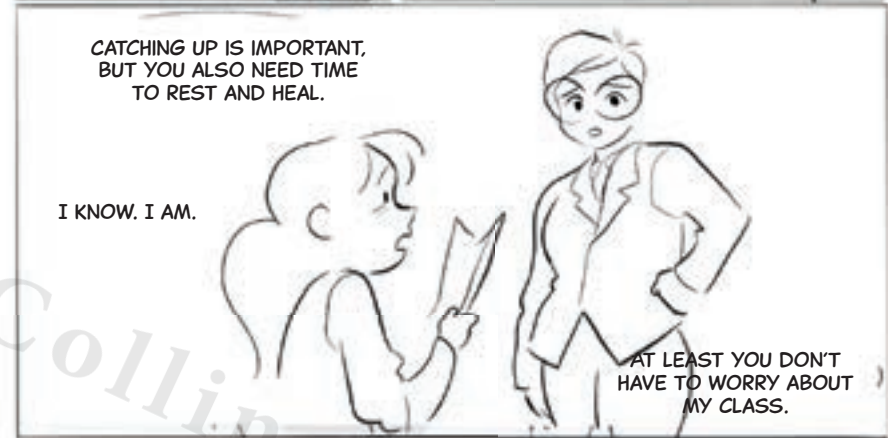
I'M OKAY. I MISS PLAYING.

I'LL BET.



LUCY? IT'S TIME TO PACK UP. I NEED TO UNLOCK THE BAND ROOM.

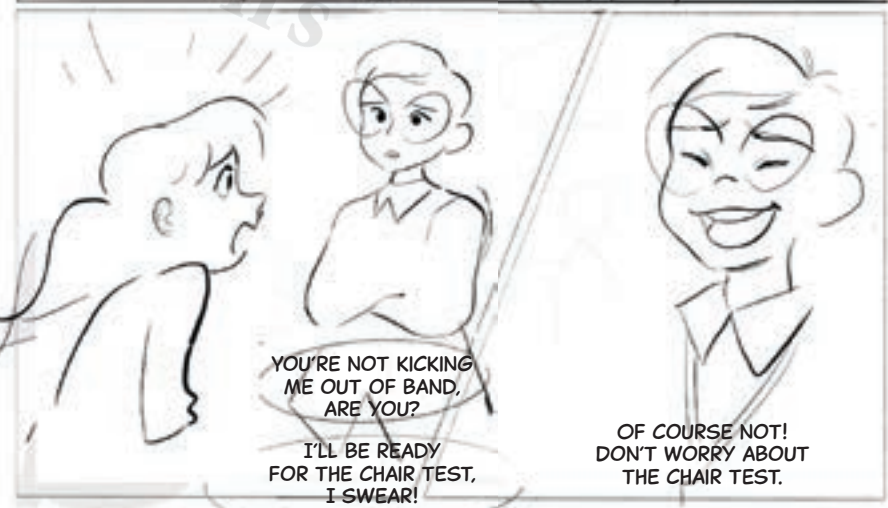
OKAY! JUST A FEW MORE PROBLEMS.



CATCHING UP IS IMPORTANT, BUT YOU ALSO NEED TIME TO REST AND HEAL.

I KNOW. I AM.

AT LEAST YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MY CLASS.



YOU'RE NOT KICKING ME OUT OF BAND, ARE YOU?

I'LL BE READY FOR THE CHAIR TEST, I SWEAR!

OF COURSE NOT! DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE CHAIR TEST.



NOT WORRY ABOUT IT? HOW?
IT'S MY LAST CHANCE TO BEAT TOLLI.
AND WHAT ABOUT SOLOS? AND IF I DON'T
PLAY WELL I'LL DEFINITELY LOSE MY SEAT
TO JESSIE OR—

LUCY!

WORK ON HEALING THAT ARM.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TAKE THE TEST.
I'M NOT GOING TO PENALIZE
YOU FOR AN INJURY.

DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF TO
OTHERS. YOU CAN ONLY BE THE
BEST YOU CAN BE.



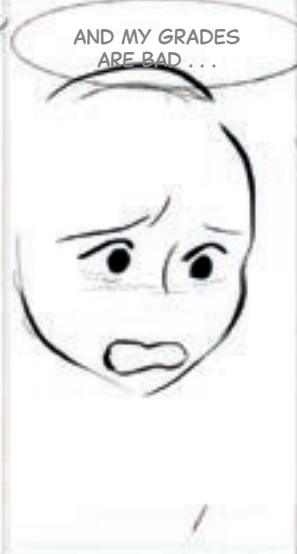
BUT THEN I CAN'T MOVE UP.
IT'S JUST SO UNFAIR, TOLLI
GETS LESSONS AND HAS
EXPENSIVE FLUTES.



BUT HOW CAN
I DO THAT WHEN MY
ARM IS HURT ...



AND I CAN'T PLAY AT
ALL RIGHT NOW ...



AND MY GRADES
ARE BAD ...



AND MAYBE I
SHOULDN'T HAVE
COME TO WINDLEY.



HAVE YOU TALKED WITH
DR. JONES ABOUT ANY THIS?

YEAH.

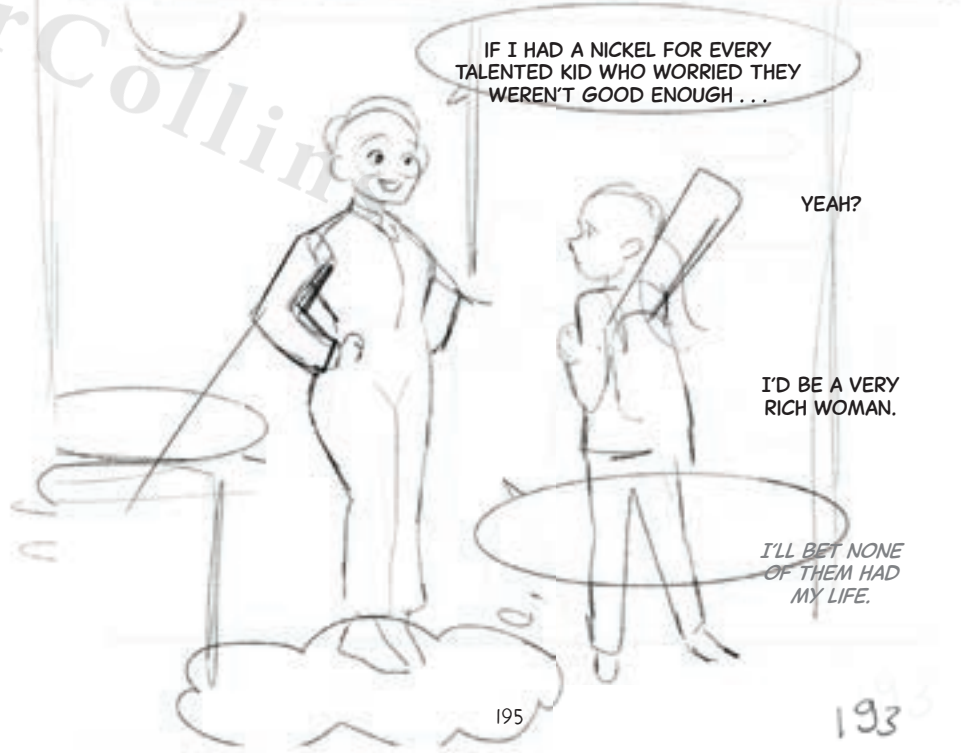
AND?

SHE SAID THAT EVEN IF
I WAS LAST CHAIR, I STILL
BELONGED HERE.



AND THAT'S
THE TRUTH.

TIME TO PACK UP. I NEED
TO LET IN THE HORDE.



IF I HAD A NICKEL FOR EVERY
TALENTED KID WHO WORRIED THEY
WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH ...

YEAH?

I'D BE A VERY
RICH WOMAN.

I'LL BET NONE
OF THEM HAD
MY LIFE.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE
PEP RALLY

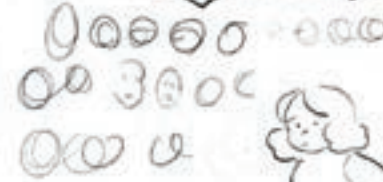
WELCOME TO YOUR WINDLEY
 BLUE DEVIL SPRING SPORTS
 PEP RALLY!

MALIA LOOKS LIKE SHE
 HATES BEING OUT THERE.

I DON'T THINK
 CHEERING IS
 HER THING.

I HOPE SHE QUILTS SOON.
 SHE'S SO MISERABLE.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR BOYS'
 AND GIRLS' TRACK!



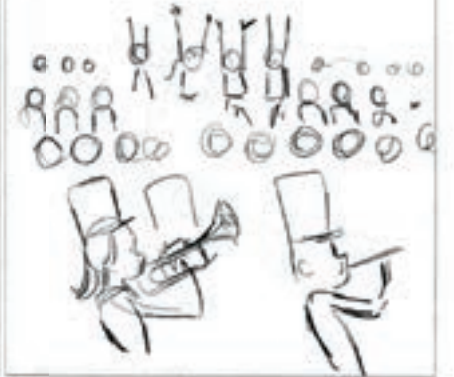
I DIDN'T KNOW
 TOLLI RAN TRACK.

I'M SURPRISED HER MOM
 LET HER DO SOMETHING
 BESIDES MUSIC.

BLUE DEVIL LACROSSE!



NOW FOR THE FIGHT SONG!



THAT WAS GREAT!

I CAN'T WAIT TO BE
 IN MARCHING BAND!





I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY MADE US MISS CHORUS FOR A STUPID PEP RALLY.

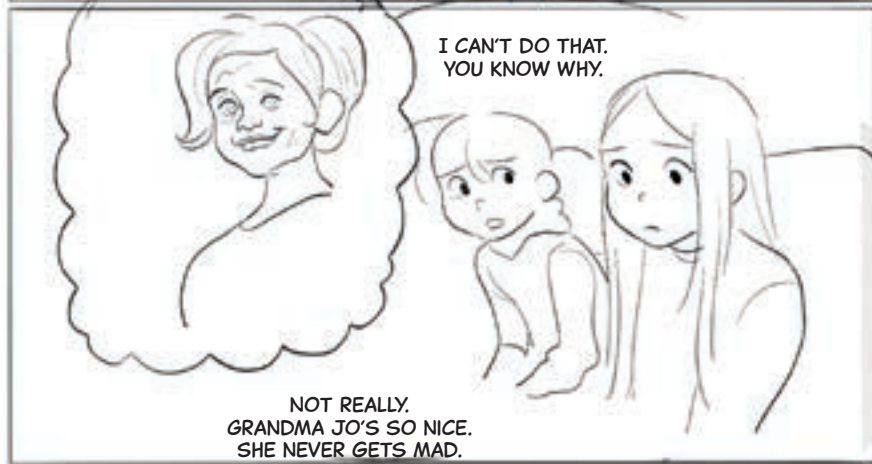
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO JUMP AROUND FOR AN HOUR.

I THOUGHT IT WAS FUN.

TRUE.



WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO TELL GRANDMA JO YOU HATE CHEERING?



I CAN'T DO THAT. YOU KNOW WHY.

NOT REALLY. GRANDMA JO'S SO NICE. SHE NEVER GETS MAD.



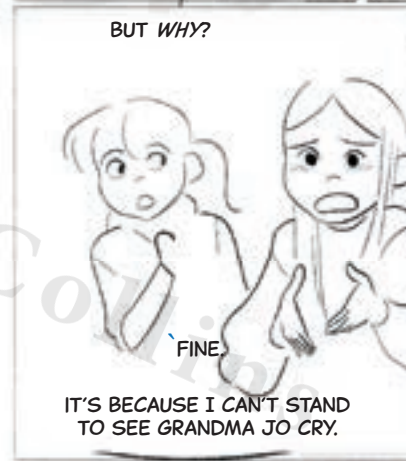
SHE WOULDN'T BE MAD, BUT I STILL CAN'T QUIT.

YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND.

WHY WOULDN'T I UNDERSTAND?

WHY?

IT DOESN'T MATTER. I DON'T WANT TO TELL HER, THAT'S ALL.



BUT WHY?

FINE.

IT'S BECAUSE I CAN'T STAND TO SEE GRANDMA JO CRY.



IT'S JUST CHEERLEADING. SHE'S NOT GOING TO CRY.

SHE MIGHT. SHE SEWS ME A CHEERLEADING COSTUME EVERY HALLOWEEN. EVER SINCE I WAS A BABY.



OKAY, SHE LIKES CHEERLEADING, BUT SHE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO BE MISERABLE. TELL HER THE TRUTH.



I DUNNO.



FINE. I'LL TELL HER FOR YOU. THAT WAY YOU WON'T HAVE TO SEE HER GET UPSET.

SEE? THIS IS WHAT I MEAN. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

NOTHING.

TELL ME.

YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW?



YOU'RE USED TO YOUR FAMILY FIGHTING AND BEING MESSED UP. YOU EVEN LAUGH ABOUT IT WITH FRIENDS.

SO?



SO THAT'S NOT NORMAL!

I'M NOT NORMAL?



NO! THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. I CAN'T MAKE GRANDMA JO CRY. SHE CRIES ENOUGH ABOUT ... YOU KNOW.

YOU'RE NOT NORMAL EITHER. YOU'RE AFRAID TO TALK TO YOUR GRANDMA!



IT'S DEFINITELY NOT NORMAL TO LIVE IN A MOTEL.

WE'RE HOME NOW!



OR TO HAVE YOUR DAD IN HIS UNDERWEAR AT YOUR BIRTHDAY!

YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE ISN'T NORMAL? ABANDONING YOUR BEST FRIEND AT HER PARTY

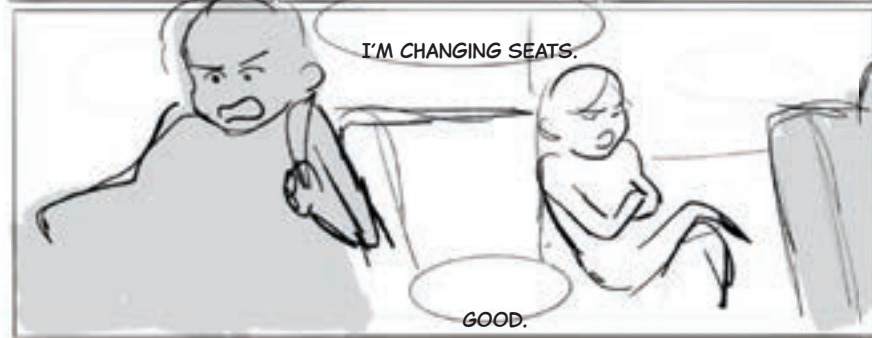


NEITHER IS BEING OBSESSED WITH FIRST CHAIR. ALL YOU DO IS PRACTICE!

NEITHER IS HIDING YOUR DEAD MOM. THAT'S LIKE THE DEFINITION OF NOT NORMAL.



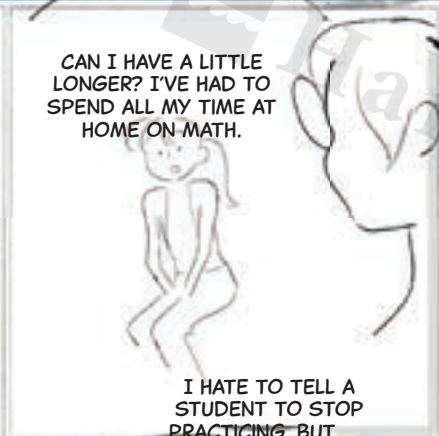
GASP!



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX
SABOTAGE



LUNCH TIME!



CAN I HAVE A LITTLE LONGER? I'VE HAD TO SPEND ALL MY TIME AT HOME ON MATH.

I HATE TO TELL A STUDENT TO STOP PRACTICING, BUT ...



JUST A LITTLE LONGER?

IF THE PLAYING TEST IS CAUSING TOO MUCH STRESS, MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE IT.

IT'S NOT, I PROMISE. I JUST NEED A LITTLE EXTRA TIME.



ONLY FIFTEEN MORE MINUTES. THEN, MAKE SURE YOU EAT SOMETHING BEFORE YOUR NEXT CLASS.

I WILL! THANK YOU!



12:18pm

IT'S NO USE. I'LL NEVER BEAT HER.



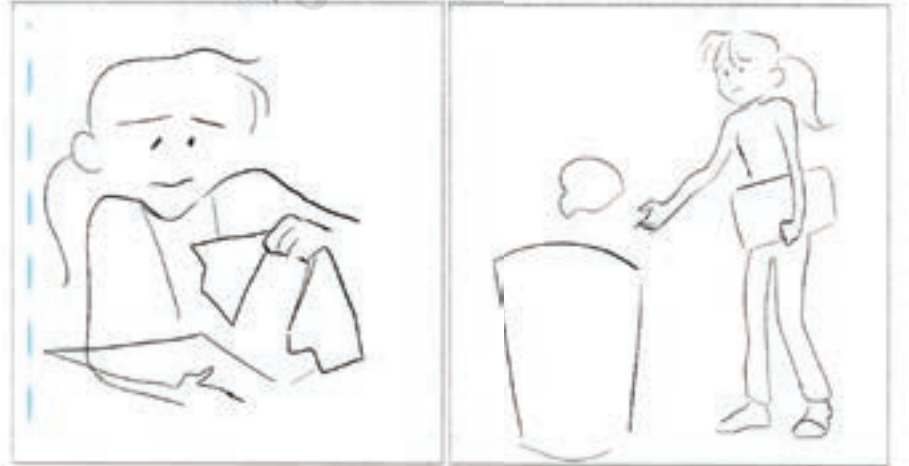
I JUST WANT ONE THING
IN MY LIFE TO GO RIGHT.
ONE THING.

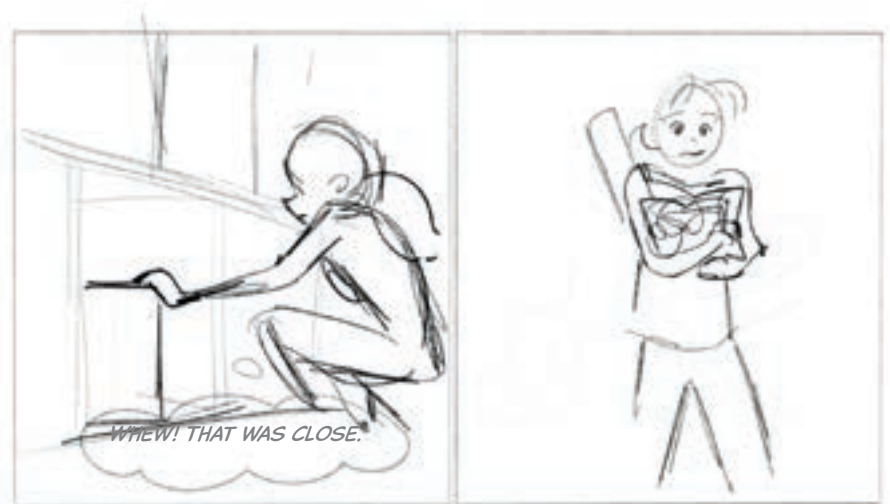
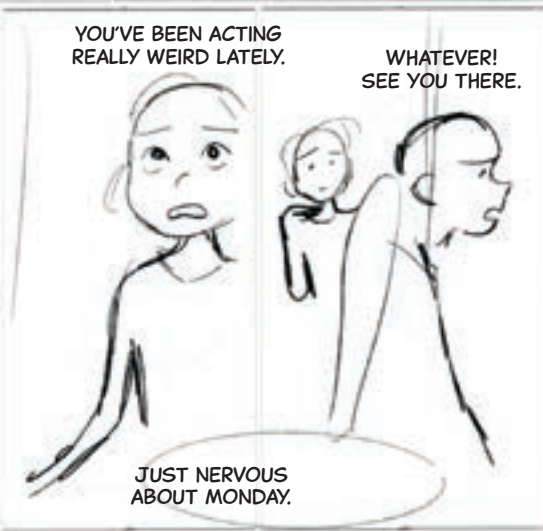
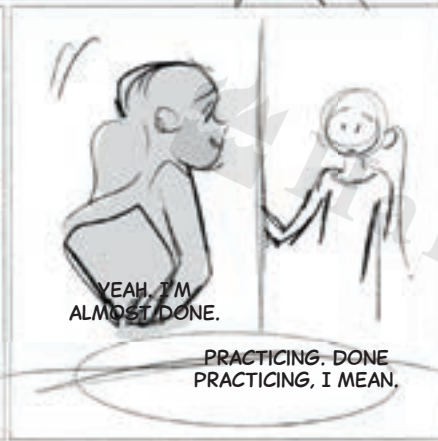


IT WAS JUST HERE. I DON'T
KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.



IF SHE COULDN'T PRACTICE,
IT WOULD FINALLY BE FAIR.
I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO
PRACTICE FOR WEEKS.

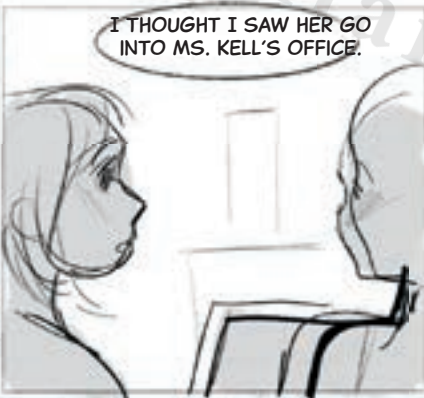




FINAL CHAIR TEST



WHERE'S TOLLI?



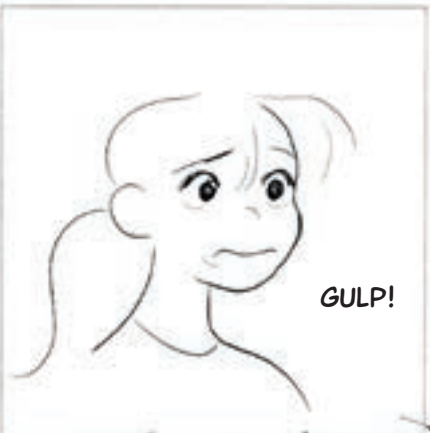
I THOUGHT I SAW HER GO INTO MS. KELL'S OFFICE.



I HEARD SHE LOST HER AUDITION MUSIC.



NEELA SAID TOLLI CRIED ALL WEEKEND. YOU THINK SHE'S OKAY?



GULP!

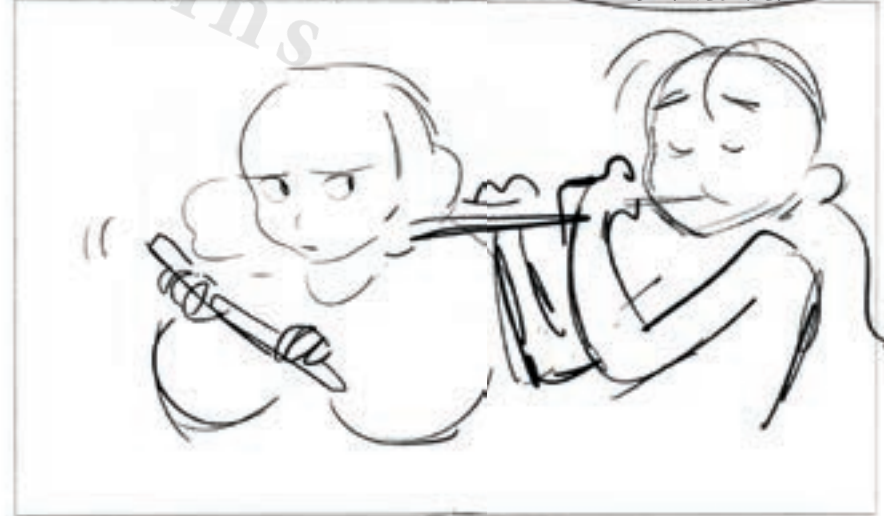


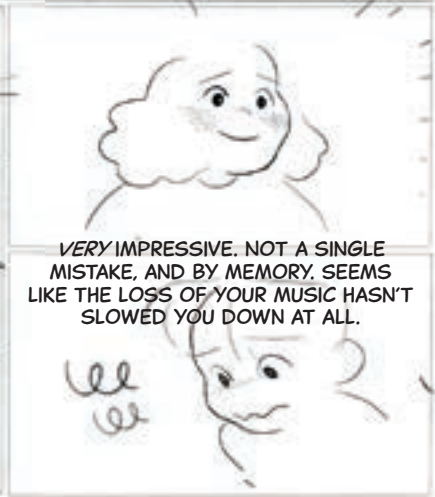
WHAT DID SHE SAY? DO YOU STILL HAVE TO AUDITION?



NO, BUT I THINK I'M GOING TO TRY ANYWAY. SHE WAS REALLY NICE ABOUT IT.

GOOD! YOU'RE GOING TO DO AWESOME.





YOU CAN PACK UP NOW.
I'LL ANNOUNCE THE RESULTS
TOMORROW ALONG WITH
THE SOLOS.



I GUESS THAT DIDN'T
GO LIKE YOU PLANNED.



I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.

YOU'RE ALWAYS FIRST CHAIR. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I DO.

I DESERVE IT!
I PRACTICE REALLY HARD.

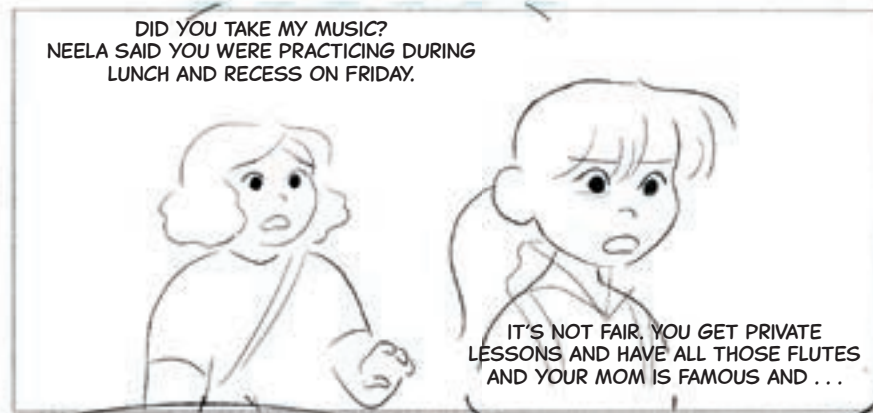


SO DO I!

NOT HARD ENOUGH.
OR ELSE YOU'D ALWAYS
BE FIRST CHAIR.



WHATEVER. I PROBABLY WON'T
EVEN BE HERE NEXT YEAR. I'LL BET
THAT MAKES YOU HAPPY.



DID YOU TAKE MY MUSIC?
NEELA SAID YOU WERE PRACTICING DURING
LUNCH AND RECESS ON FRIDAY.

IT'S NOT FAIR. YOU GET PRIVATE
LESSONS AND HAVE ALL THOSE FLUTES
AND YOUR MOM IS FAMOUS AND ...



YOU DID!

LUCY ... THAT'S, LIKE,
ACTUALLY HORRIBLE.



I JUST WANTED
THINGS TO BE FAIR.

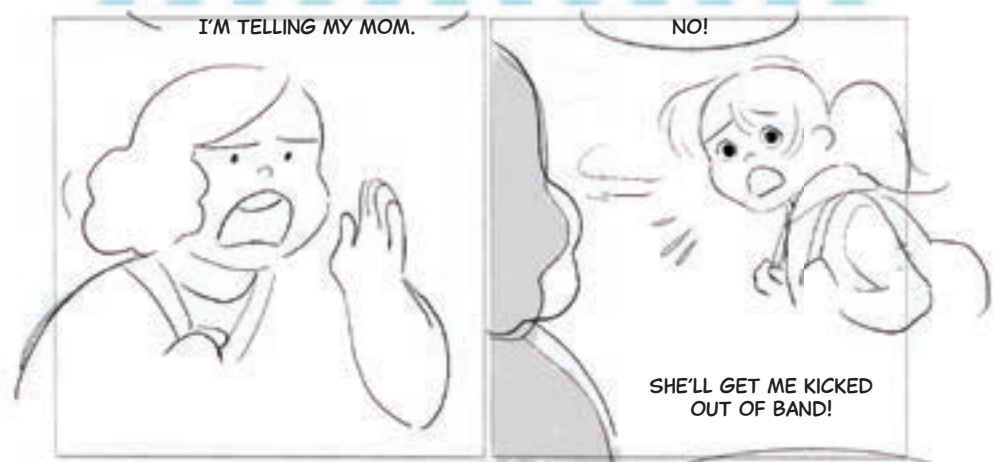
STEALING? HOW IS THAT FAIR?

THAT WAY YOU'D
MISS PRACTICE TIME
JUST LIKE I HAD TO.



THAT'S SO
WRONG!

I GUESS I'M LUCKY
YOU DIDN'T BURN ME.



I'M TELLING MY MOM.



NO!

SHE'LL GET ME KICKED OUT OF BAND!

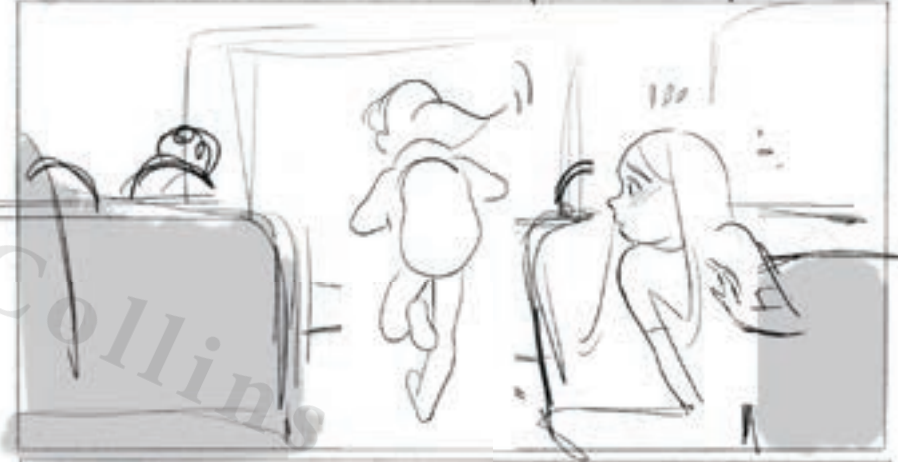


TOLLI, PLEASE. YOU CAN'T TELL YOUR MOM. WHAT IF I GET KICKED OUT OF WINDLEY?

YOU STOLE MY MUSIC.



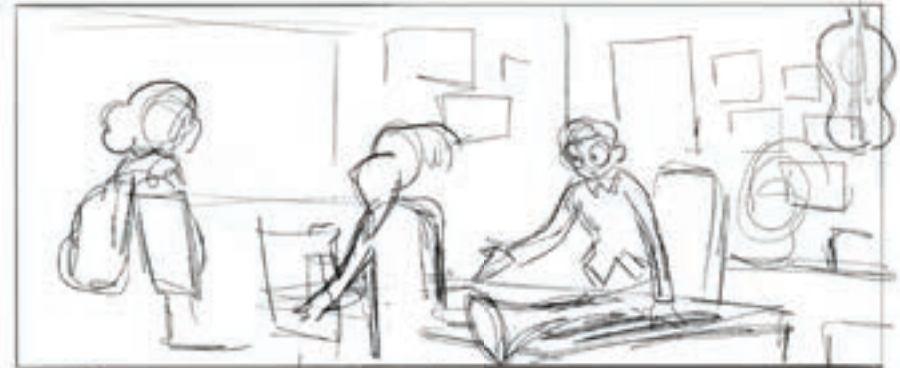
FINE. BE THAT WAY.

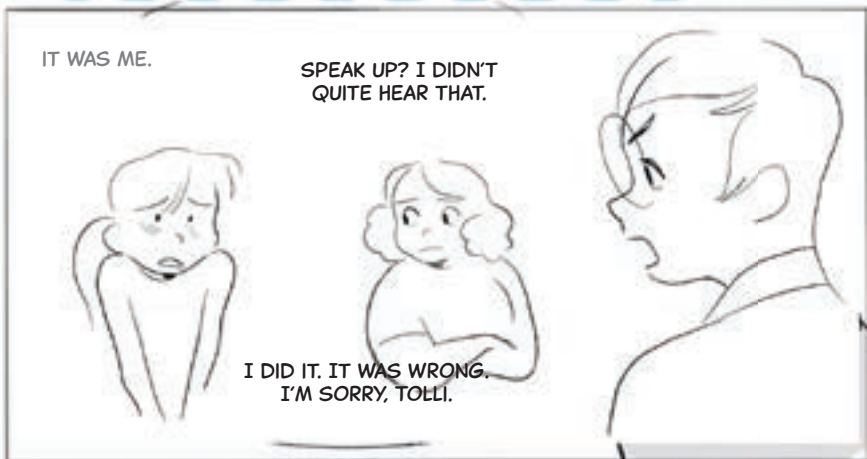


STUPID SCHOOL. MAYBE MOM'S RIGHT.

MAYBE I DON'T BELONG HERE.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT
CAUGHT





IT WAS ME.

SPEAK UP? I DIDN'T QUITE HEAR THAT.

I DID IT. IT WAS WRONG. I'M SORRY, TOLLI.



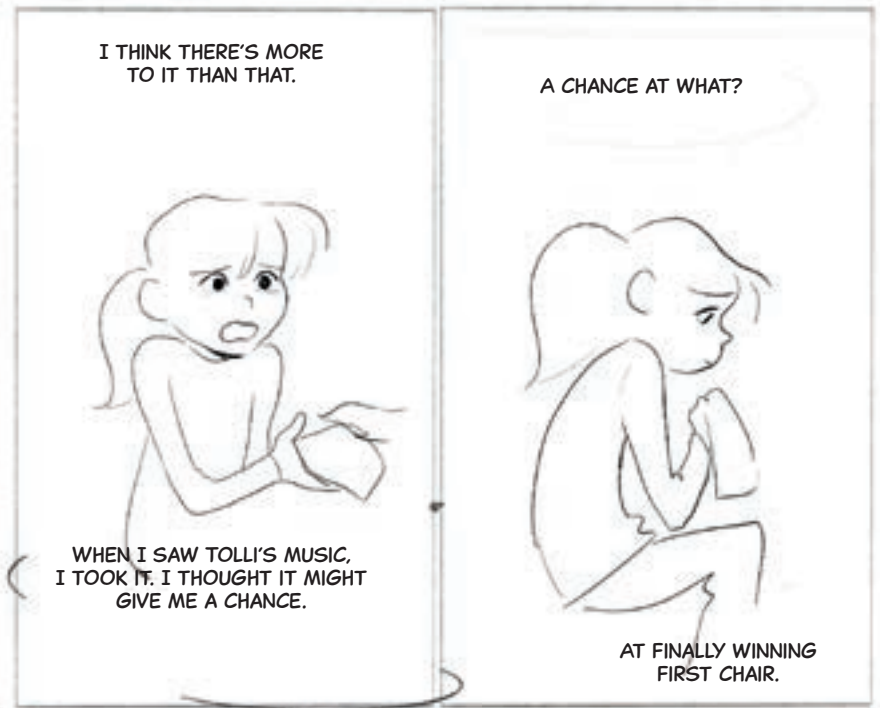
THANK YOU, TOLLI. YOU CAN GO.



I'VE TAUGHT BAND FOR TWENTY-ONE YEARS. NEVER, IN ALL THAT TIME, HAS A STUDENT TRIED TO SABOTAGE ANOTHER STUDENT.

TELL ME WHY.

BECAUSE I CAN'T BEAT HER.

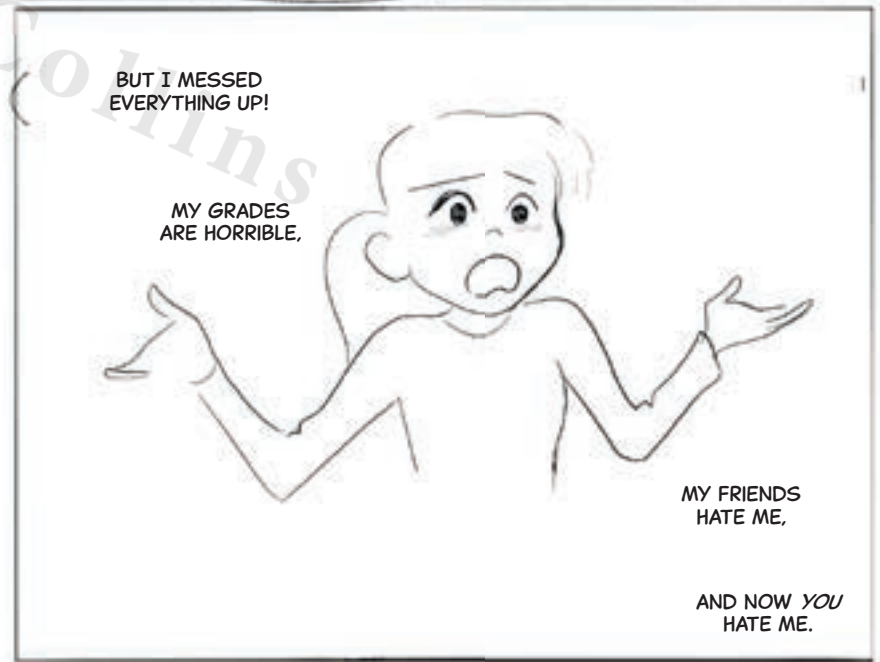


I THINK THERE'S MORE TO IT THAN THAT.

A CHANCE AT WHAT?

WHEN I SAW TOLLI'S MUSIC, I TOOK IT. I THOUGHT IT MIGHT GIVE ME A CHANCE.

AT FINALLY WINNING FIRST CHAIR.



BUT I MESSED EVERYTHING UP!

MY GRADES ARE HORRIBLE.

MY FRIENDS HATE ME,

AND NOW YOU HATE ME.



I DON'T HATE YOU. I CARE ABOUT YOU. WHAT'S GOING ON?

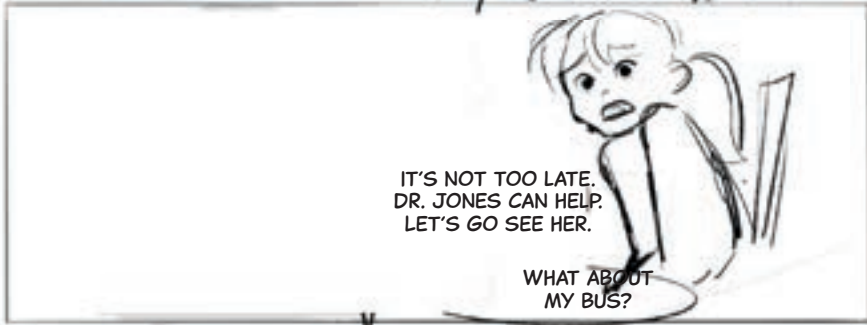
I DON'T BELONG HERE. I NEVER SHOULD HAVE COME.



I'D LIKE YOU TO TALK TO DR. JONES AGAIN.

WE TALKED ABOUT THAT, BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE STILL STRUGGLING.

IT'S TOO LATE. I MESSED IT ALL UP.



IT'S NOT TOO LATE. DR. JONES CAN HELP. LET'S GO SEE HER.

WHAT ABOUT MY BUS?



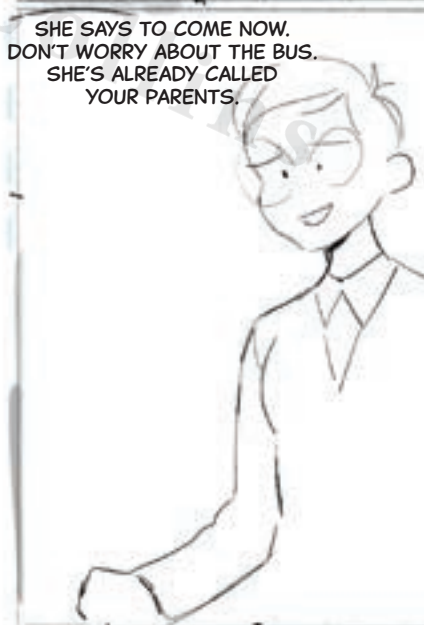
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT RIGHT NOW. LET'S SEE IF DR. JONES IS IN HER OFFICE.



IT'S FRANCINE. I HAVE LUCY CARVER HERE.



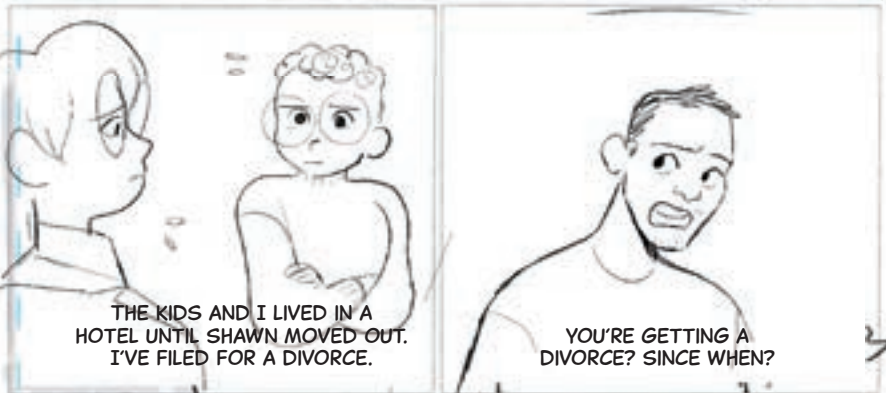
YES. I HEARD FROM MS. FERGENFERGER AS WELL. OKAY. THANKS.



SHE SAYS TO COME NOW. DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE BUS. SHE'S ALREADY CALLED YOUR PARENTS.



CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE
DR. JONES (PART II)





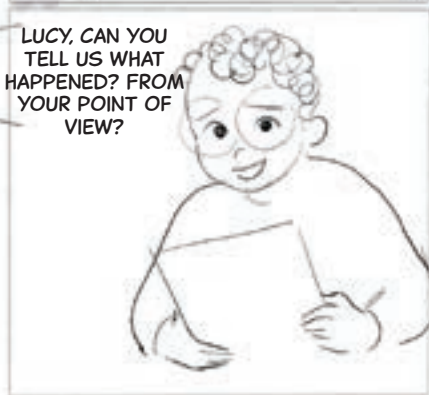
MR. CARVER!
MS. CARVER!
SIT DOWN!



WE'RE NOT HERE BECAUSE OF THE BURN, BUT THANK YOU FOR THAT INFORMATION.



IT GIVES US A BETTER PICTURE OF WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON WITH LUCY.



LUCY, CAN YOU TELL US WHAT HAPPENED? FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW?



I STOLE TOLLI'S MUSIC AND THREW IT AWAY.



BEFORE YOU SAY ANYTHING, I'D LIKE TO HEAR MORE FROM LUCY.



WHY?
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING IN THAT MOMENT?

I WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY CHAIR TEST.



WHY? WE TALKED ABOUT IT. YOU DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO TAKE IT.



I'VE WONDERED ABOUT THAT SINCE WE TALKED. WHY DO YOU WANT TO BE FIRST CHAIR?

IT WAS MY LAST CHANCE TO BE FIRST CHAIR.

OF COURSE SHE WANTS FIRST CHAIR! BAND IS TOO COMPETITIVE HERE.

AND THE ACADEMICS ARE TOO HARD. LUCY HAS NEVER BEEN THE BEST STUDENT.

SHE PRACTICES NIGHT AND DAY.

AND NOW SHE'S STEALING!

IT'S DECIDED. SHE'S LEAVING THIS SCHOOL FOR GOOD.

EAST WAS A MUCH BETTER FIT.

WE REALLY NEED TO HEAR FROM LUCY.

IS IT LIKE THEY SAY? DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE?

I DON'T KNOW. WINDLEY IS A LOT HARDER THAN EAST, BUT ...

... BUT EXCEPT FOR MATH AND TOLLI, I LOVE IT HERE.

I'VE MADE REALLY GOOD FRIENDS. AND BAND IS ...

... BAND IS AMAZING. I CAN'T IMAGINE LEAVING.

AND WE CAN'T IMAGINE YOU LEAVING.

LET'S TALK A BIT ABOUT TOLLI. ARE YOU MAD AT HER?

NOT REALLY. SHE THINKS I HATE HER, BUT I DON'T. I JUST WANT FIRST CHAIR.

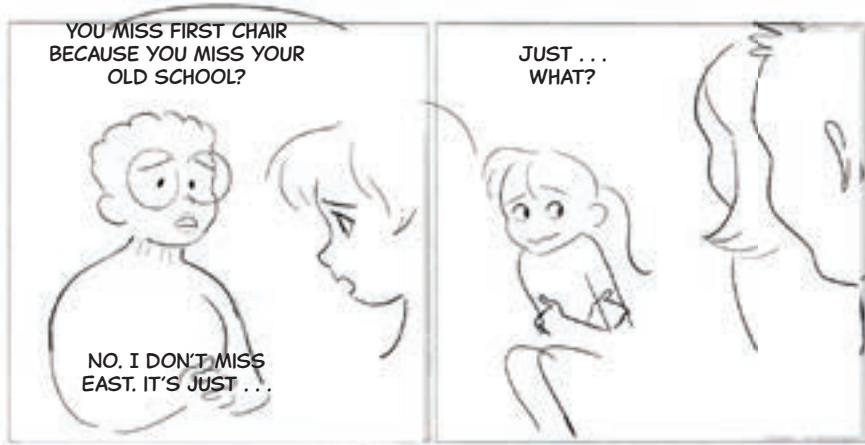
WHAT MAKES FIRST CHAIR SO SPECIAL?

WELL ...

I JUST REALLY MISS IT.

YOU WERE FIRST CHAIR BEFORE?

ALL LAST YEAR.



YOU MISS FIRST CHAIR BECAUSE YOU MISS YOUR OLD SCHOOL?

JUST ... WHAT?

NO, I DON'T MISS EAST. IT'S JUST ...



THINGS WERE BETTER LAST YEAR.

I WAS FIRST CHAIR.

DAD HAD A JOB.

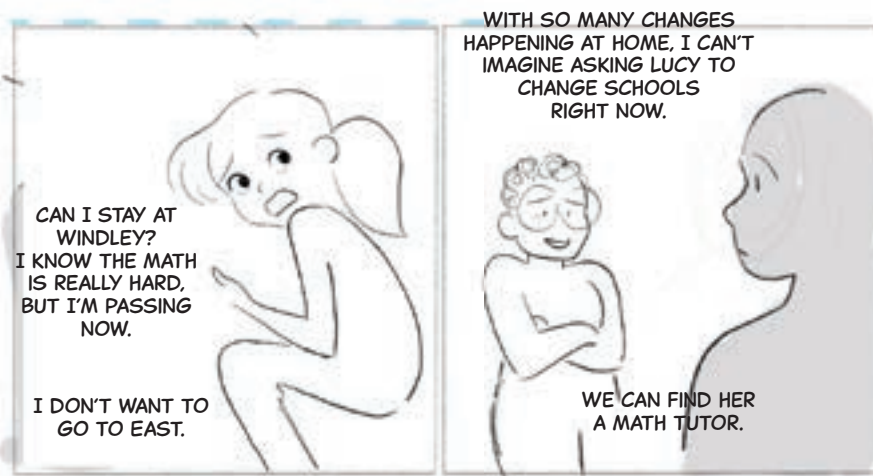
THEY DIDN'T FIGHT SO MUCH.

THEY WERE PROUD OF ME.



WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

I'M SO SORRY, HONEY.



CAN I STAY AT WINDLEY? I KNOW THE MATH IS REALLY HARD, BUT I'M PASSING NOW.

I DON'T WANT TO GO TO EAST.

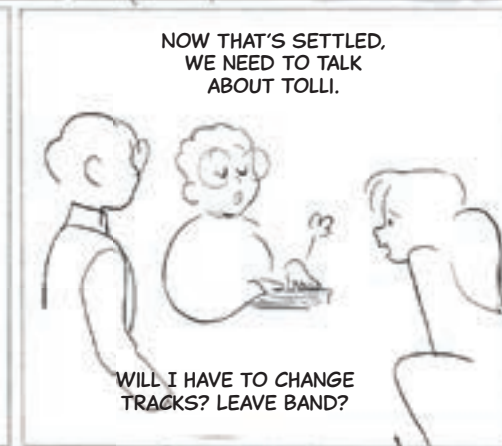
WITH SO MANY CHANGES HAPPENING AT HOME, I CAN'T IMAGINE ASKING LUCY TO CHANGE SCHOOLS RIGHT NOW.

WE CAN FIND HER A MATH TUTOR.



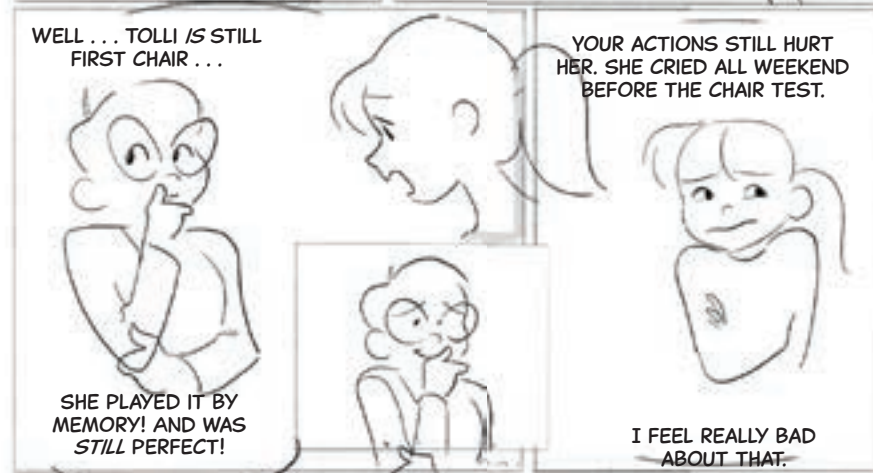
OF COURSE NOT. YOU CAN STAY, HONEY.

DEFINITELY. WHATEVER YOU NEED.



NOW THAT'S SETTLED, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT TOLLI.

WILL I HAVE TO CHANGE TRACKS? LEAVE BAND?

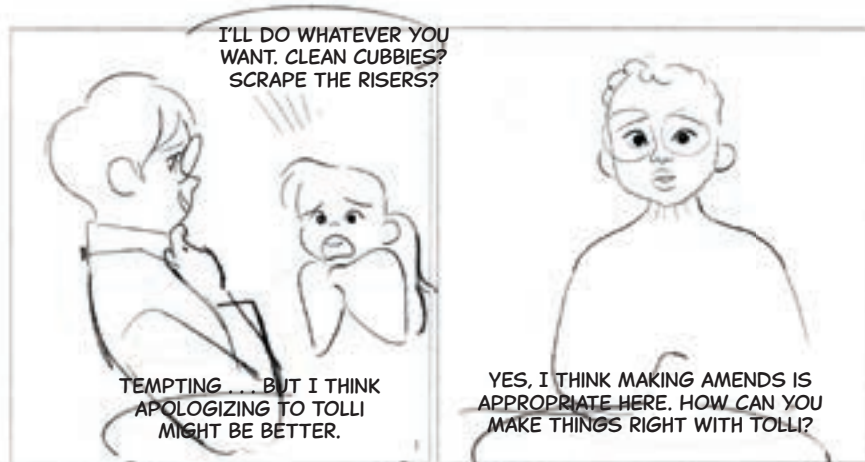


WELL ... TOLLI IS STILL FIRST CHAIR ...

SHE PLAYED IT BY MEMORY! AND WAS STILL PERFECT!

YOUR ACTIONS STILL HURT HER. SHE CRIED ALL WEEKEND BEFORE THE CHAIR TEST.

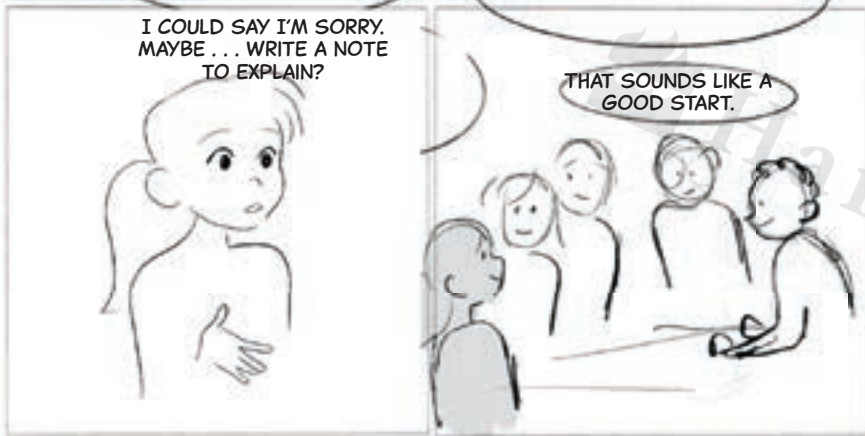
I FEEL REALLY BAD ABOUT THAT.



I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT. CLEAN CUBBIES? SCRAPE THE RISERS?

TEMPTING... BUT I THINK APOLOGIZING TO TOLLI MIGHT BE BETTER.

YES, I THINK MAKING AMENDS IS APPROPRIATE HERE. HOW CAN YOU MAKE THINGS RIGHT WITH TOLLI?



I COULD SAY I'M SORRY. MAYBE... WRITE A NOTE TO EXPLAIN?

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD START.

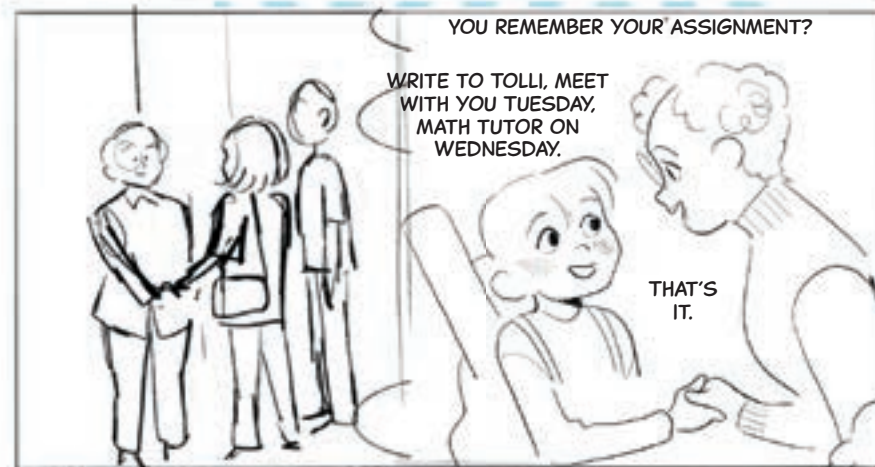


LUCY'S TAKING STEPS TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT WITH TOLLI, BUT NOW THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT.

LUCY NEEDS MORE SUPPORT. I'D LIKE TO REFER YOU TO A FAMILY THERAPIST.

DEFINITELY.

WHATEVER LUCY NEEDS.



YOU REMEMBER YOUR ASSIGNMENT?

WRITE TO TOLLI, MEET WITH YOU TUESDAY, MATH TUTOR ON WEDNESDAY.

THAT'S IT.



WHAT'S WRONG?

EVERYONE STILL HATES ME. EVEN MY BEST FRIEND MALIA.



I'LL BET THEY DON'T HATE YOU. TRY TALKING TO THEM.

I'LL TRY.

IF THEY'RE STILL MAD NEXT WEEK, WE'LL TALK OVER SOME IDEAS.

CHAPTER THIRTY
MAKING AMENDS



Dear Toli,

Dr. Jones said that I should write to say that I'm really, really, REALLY sorry that I stole your music before our chair test. You sounded, like AMAZING anywayz, and are definitely going to be first chair forever. Like forEVER. But I was wrong. I'm sorry. I also feel bad for challenging you every week, but I just really, really wanted first chair.

Do you hate me?

I don't hate you. I just really wanted first chair.
Can you forgive me?

You are **THE BEST MUSICIAN**
IN THE ENTIRE WORLD
and Neela is lucky to be your friend.

Sorry again,

Lucy

Ps: Remember how worried you were after Moldovian Dances? No offense, but your mom was TOTALLY WRONG. I wasn't lying. You sounded great. You always do.

PPs: These are chocolate raspberry truffles. They're made with no sugar, and only HEALTHY ingredients. I hope you like them.



Dear Malia,

I'm so so so so so so soooooo sorry for what I said on the bus. You were TOTALLY right and I was TOTALLY wrong. I know you can probably never forgive me but I want you to know you were the best friend I've ever had. Tell Grandma Jo hi. I miss hangin out with you . . . especially when we do DANCE MOVES and watch funny videos. Your soooooo funny and SUPER nice.

Your (Former) best friend,
Lucy

PS: I hope you and Grandma Jo like your pie. I made it with a lattice top just like she does.

PPS: I will keep your secret about . . . you know what . . . forever.



DEAR LUCY,

YOU SEE DR. JONES? SHE'S SO NICE. I SAW HER ONCE AFTER THE SPRING CONCERT WHEN . . . WELL YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED. I TOLD MY MOM YOU WROTE AN APOLOGY. SHE SAYS THAT SOMETIMES MUSICIANS CAN BE TOO COMPETITIVE AND ALL I CAN SAY IS WELL DUH! I DON'T HATE YOU BECAUSE YOU STOLE THE MUSIC. I DIDN'T EVEN NEED IT. I DID KIND OF HATE YOU BEFORE, BUT DON'T NOW.

TOLLI

PS: THANKS FOR WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT MOLDOVIAN DANCES. I DIDN'T TELL MY MOM ABOUT THAT.

PPS: THE TRUFFLES WERE AMAZING. MY MOM EVEN ATE ONE!



NEED SOME HELP?

OKAY.



YOU'VE BEEN BAKING A LOT THIS WEEK.



IT'S A GOOD WAY TO SAY I'M SORRY TO MY FRIENDS.



THEN MAYBE I SHOULD BAKE YOU A CAKE.

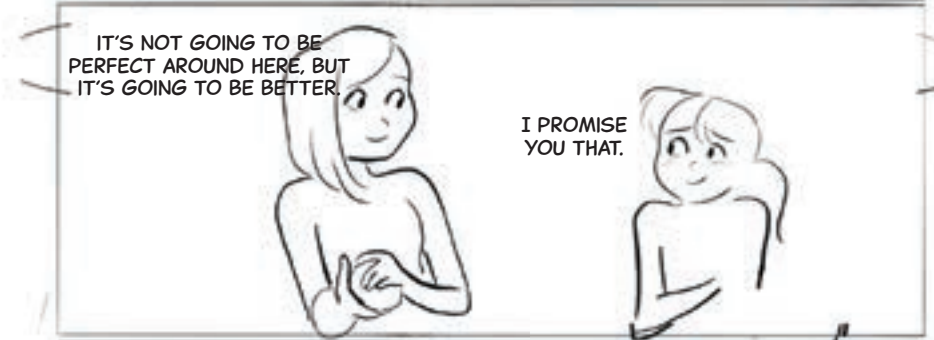
MAYBE A HUNDRED CAKES.

WE'RE GONNA NEED MORE FLOUR.



I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW HARD ALL THIS HAS BEEN FOR YOU. I SHOULD HAVE NOTICED.

I'M SO SORRY.

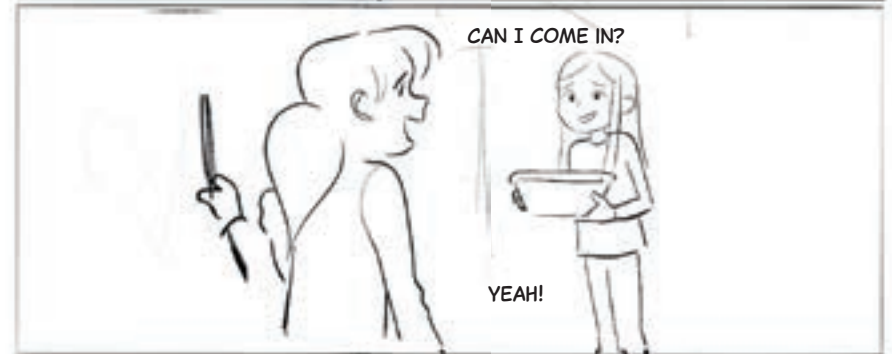


IT'S NOT GOING TO BE PERFECT AROUND HERE, BUT IT'S GOING TO BE BETTER.

I PROMISE YOU THAT.



ding DING DONG! Party



CAN I COME IN?

YEAH!

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE
DAD'S PLACE



YOUR FAVORITE.

CHERRY CRUMB?

CHERRY PIE!

YAY!

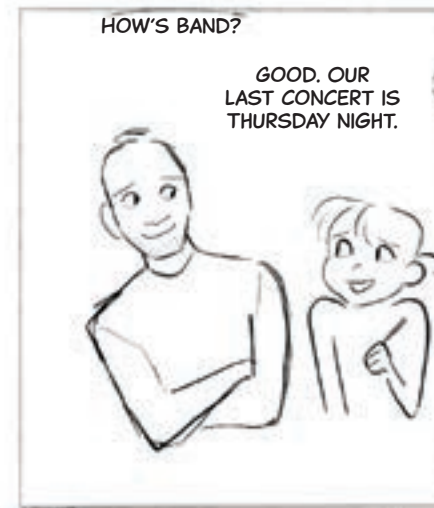


YOU ALL LOOK TALLER.



YOU'RE NOT IN HIGH HEELS, ARE YOU?

DAD! NO!



HOW'S BAND?

GOOD. OUR LAST CONCERT IS THURSDAY NIGHT.



WHAT TIME?



SIX O'CLOCK.

I'LL HAVE TO LEAVE WORK EARLY BUT I'LL TRY TO MAKE IT.



WORK? YOU GOT A JOB?

ELMO'S PIZZA. IN THE KITCHEN.



DAD! THAT'S AWESOME!

DO YOU GET FREE PIZZA?

THANKS. AND YEAH, I'LL BRING A PIZZA OVER NEXT WEEK.



I NEED TO TALK TO YOUR SISTER. LAPTOP'S IN THE BEDROOM. NETFLIX IS SET UP IF YOU WANT TO WATCH A MOVIE.



HOW'S SCHOOL BEEN? HAS TOLLI FORGIVEN YOU?



SHE DID. MALIA TOO. MY MATH TUTOR IS HELPING A LOT. SO IS DR. JONES.



THINGS ARE BETTER NOW.

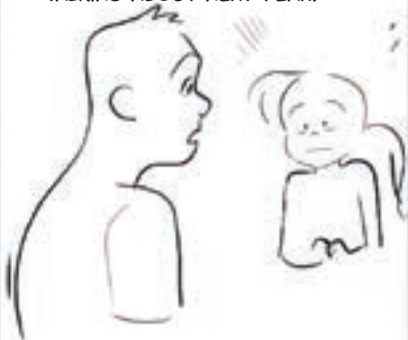
I'M SO SORRY ABOUT ALL OF THAT.



WINDLEY IS A TOUGH SCHOOL, BUT WE SHOULD HAVE HELPED YOU, NOT MADE THINGS HARDER.



OH! THAT REMINDS ME. YOUR MOM AND I HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT NEXT YEAR.



WE'RE NOT TAKING YOU OUT.



WHEW!

NOW THAT I'M WORKING FULL TIME, WE HAVE A LITTLE MORE MONEY. NOT A LOT, BUT A LITTLE.

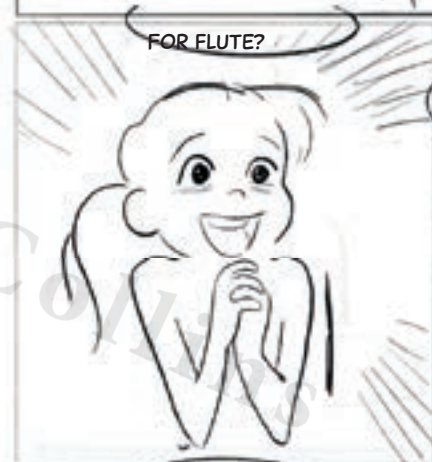
YEAH?



I THINK YOU SHOULD START PRIVATE LESSONS OVER THE SUMMER.



FOR FLUTE?



NO, FOR TAMBOURINE.



YES, FLUTE! YOU'RE GOING TO BE THE NEXT IAN ANDERSON, RIGHT?

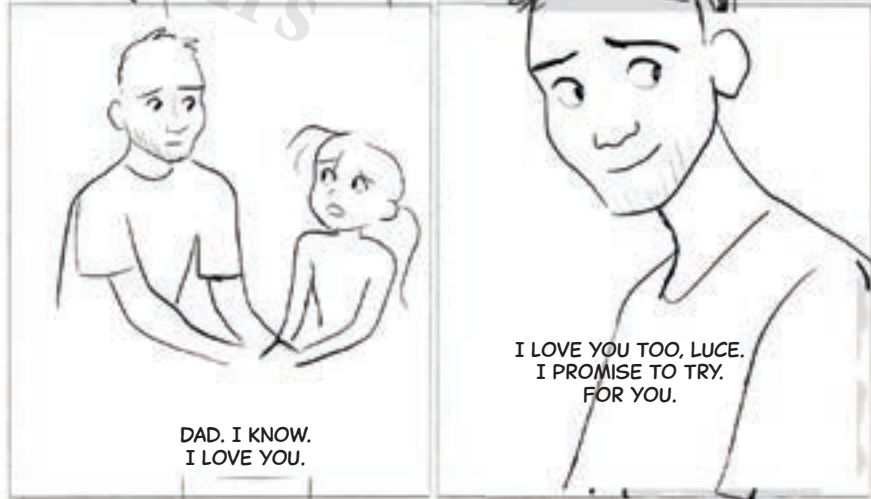
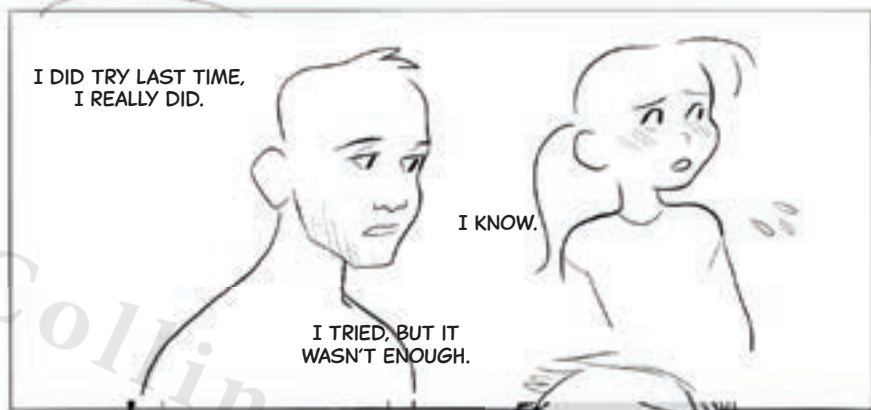
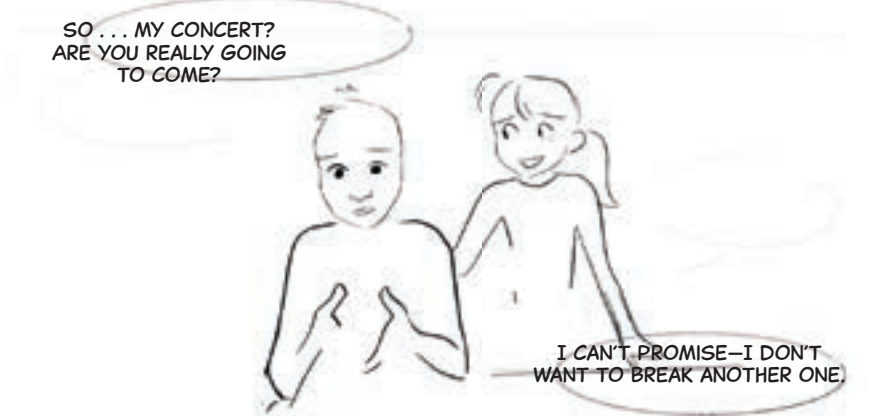


RIGHT.

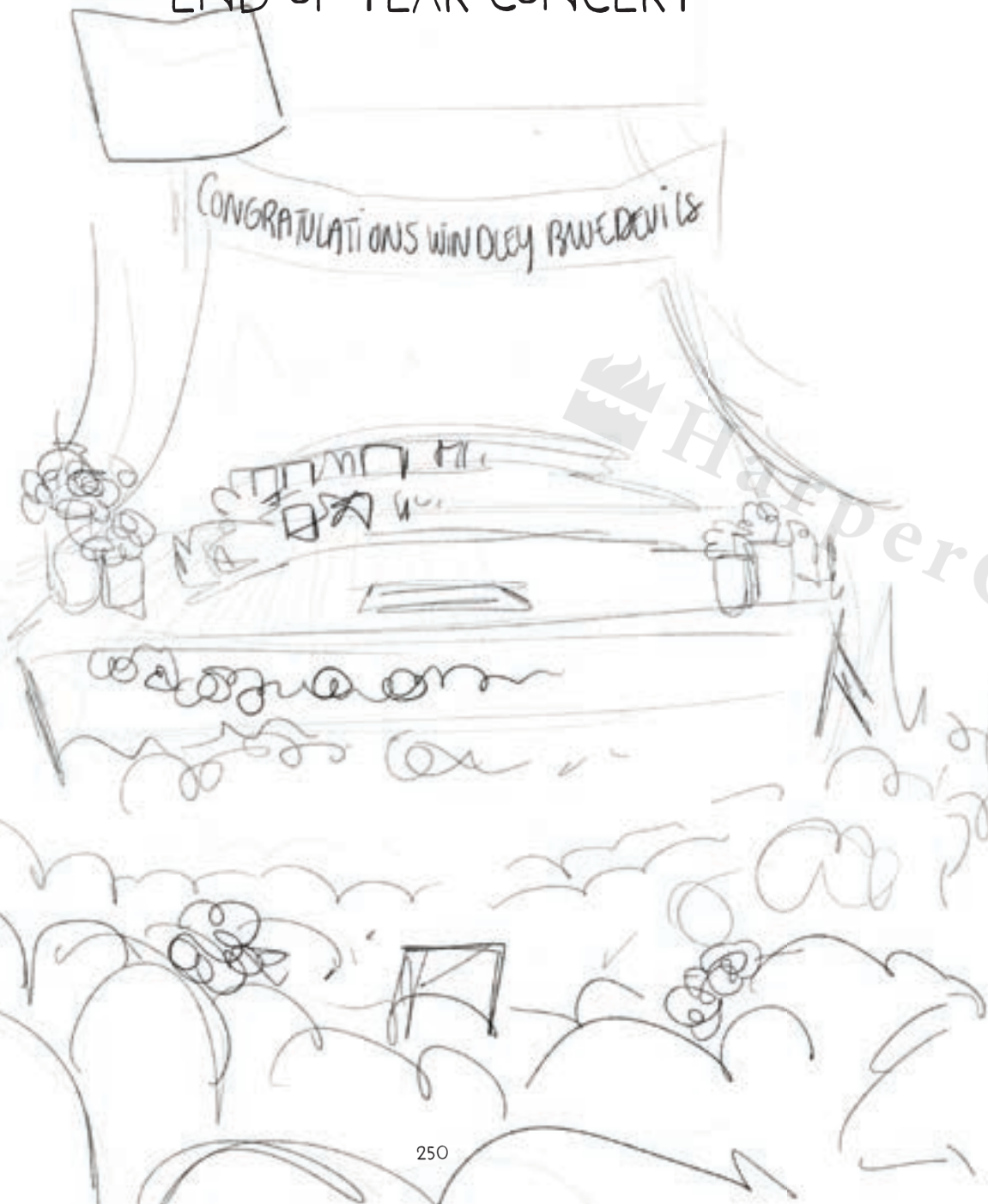
WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU LOSE YOUR JOB? IF YOU GET TOO ...

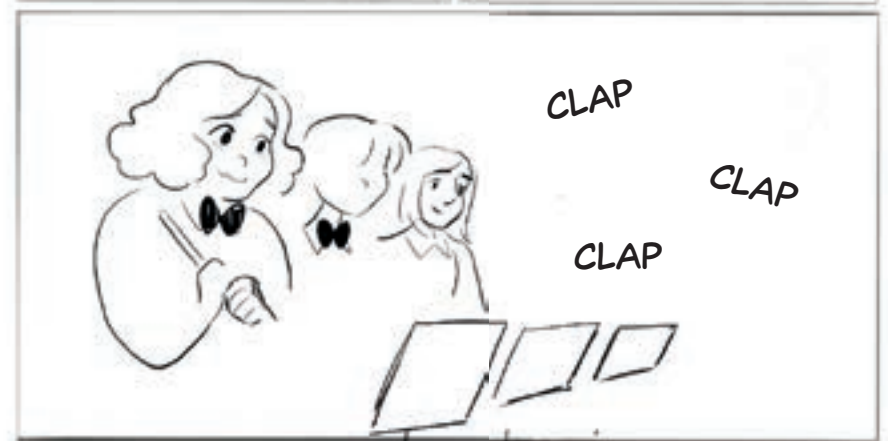
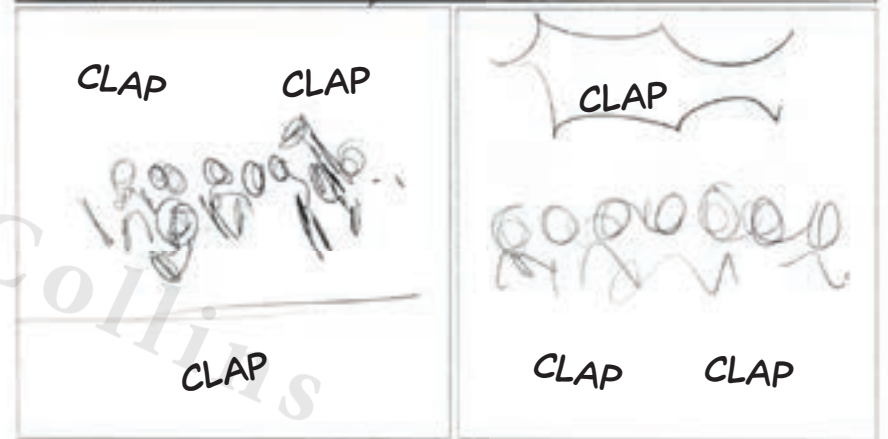
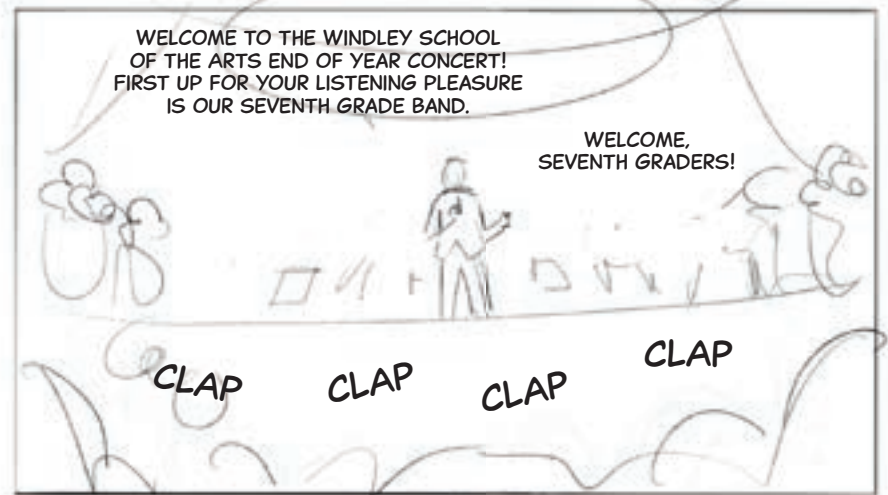
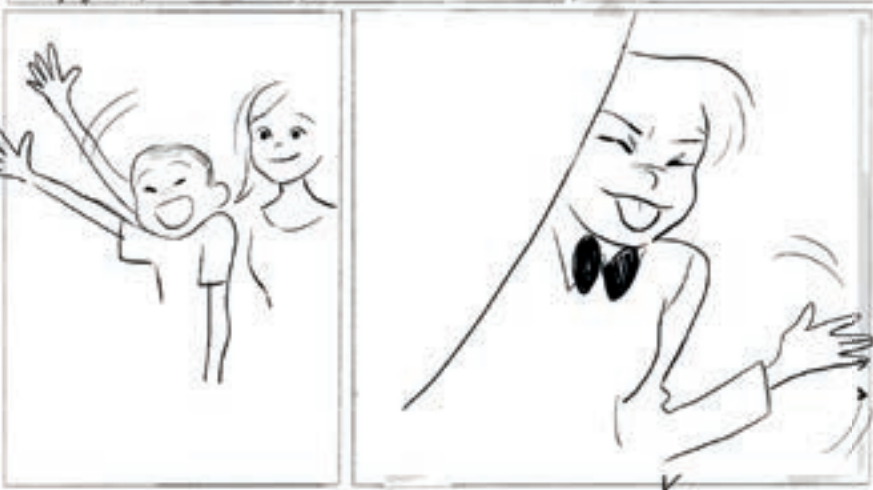
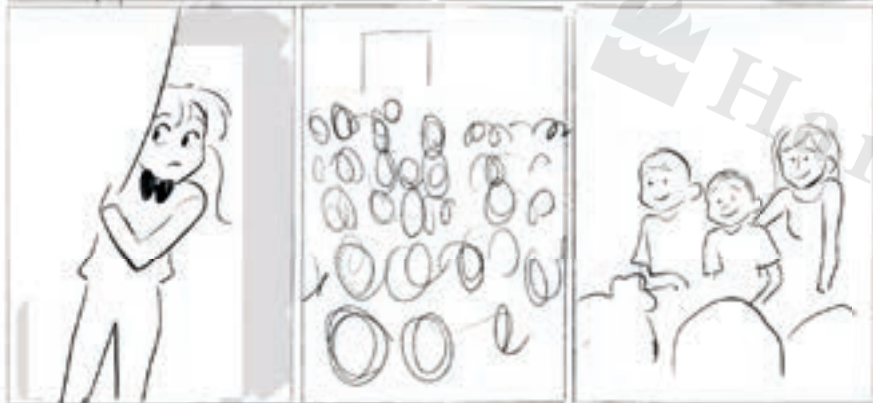
TOO DRUNK?

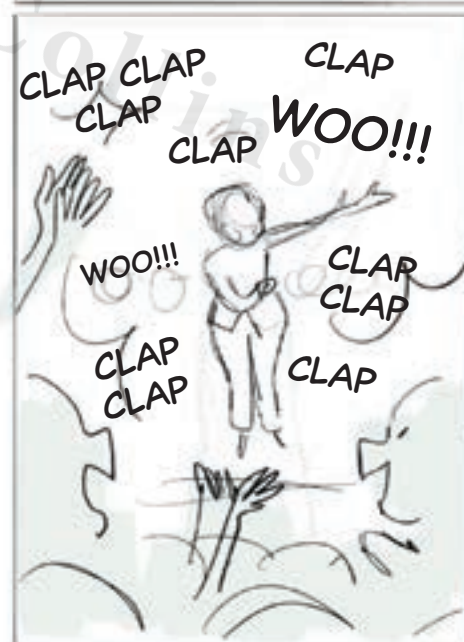
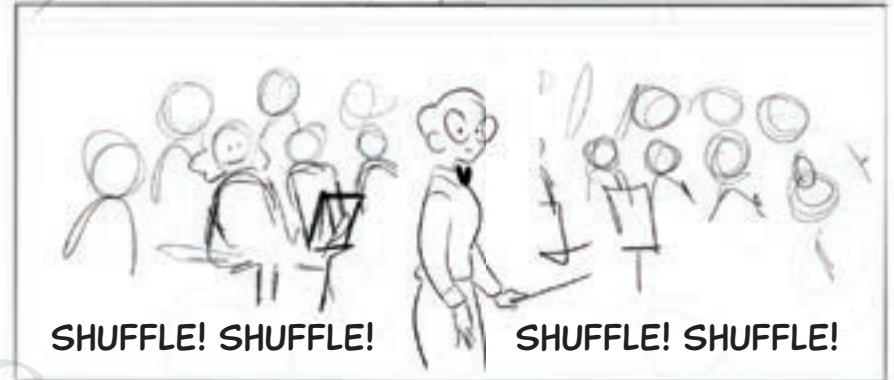




CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO
END OF YEAR CONCERT









*THIS IS EXACTLY
WHERE I BELONG.*

THE END

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