

Rainbow in Flames

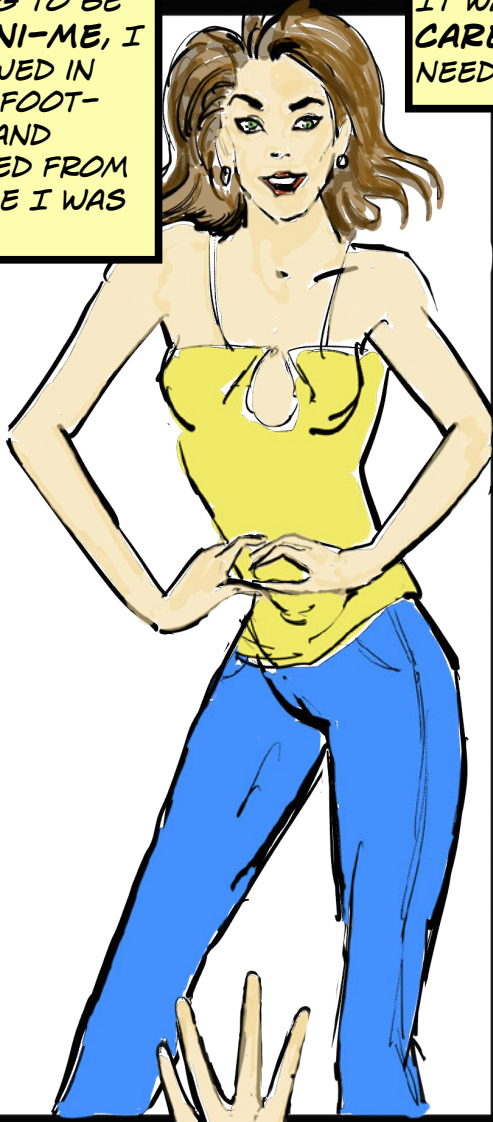


Ramin Abhari

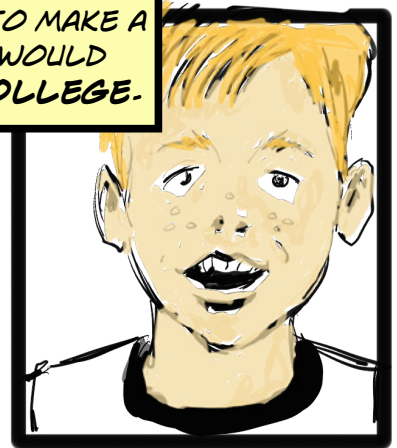
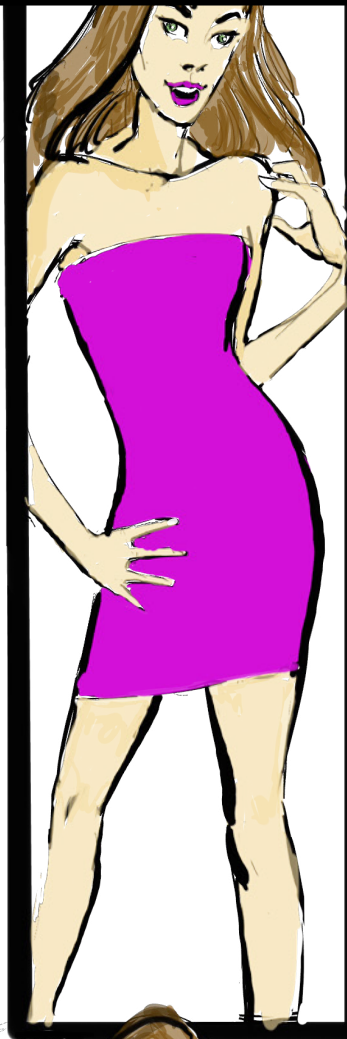
Inspired by the story and words of
Calais Weber Biery



WANTING TO BE HER MINI-ME, I FOLLOWED IN MOM'S FOOTSTEPS AND MODELED FROM THE TIME I WAS A BABY.



IT WASN'T SOMETHING I AIMED TO MAKE A CAREER OUT OF, BUT I KNEW I WOULD NEED THE EXTRA SAVINGS FOR COLLEGE.



MY JUNIOR YEAR CHEMISTRY TEACHER—MY FAVORITE TEACHER—HAD THREE SONS. THE ELDEST WAS IN MY CLASS AND THE YOUNGEST WAS A SWEET KID I HAD SEEN SEVERAL TIMES SINCE SHE ALSO HAPPENED TO BE MY BASKETBALL COACH.

I LOVED CHEMISTRY CLASS AND THAT CAME PRETTY EASILY TO ME.



...THEN MULTIPLY BY MOLECULAR WEIGHT TO FIND OUT HOW MANY GRAMS WE NEED!



EXACTLY RIGHT! CLASS, DID EVERYONE FOLLOW THAT?

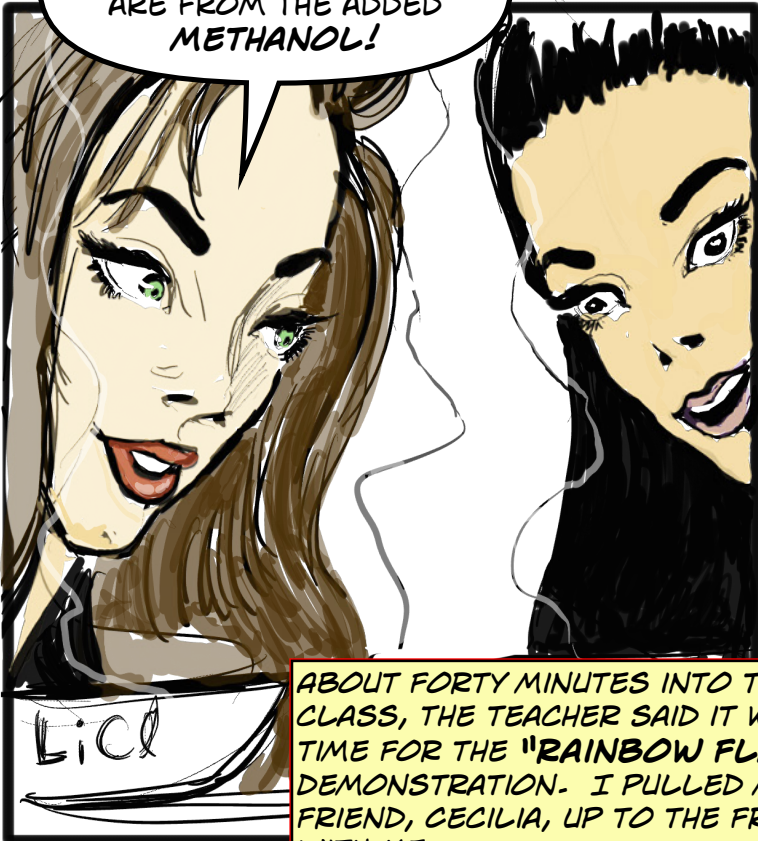
ON MONDAY, JAN. 23, 2006 I HAD CHEMISTRY CLASS RIGHT AFTER LUNCH.

I HAD SEEN THE YOUNGEST SON THAT PAST FRIDAY AFTER CLASS BECAUSE HE WAS HOME SICK FROM SCHOOL.

SO I WASN'T REALLY SURPRISED TO SEE HIM AGAIN THAT DAY BECAUSE I FIGURED HE WAS STILL SICK.



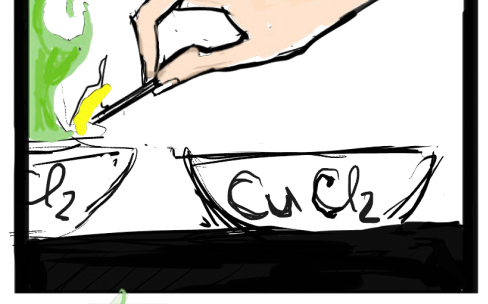
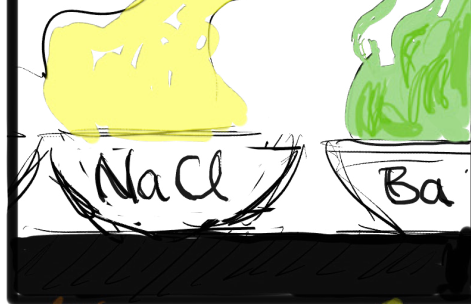
LITHIUM IS GOING TO BURN RED! THE VAPORS ARE FROM THE ADDED METHANOL!



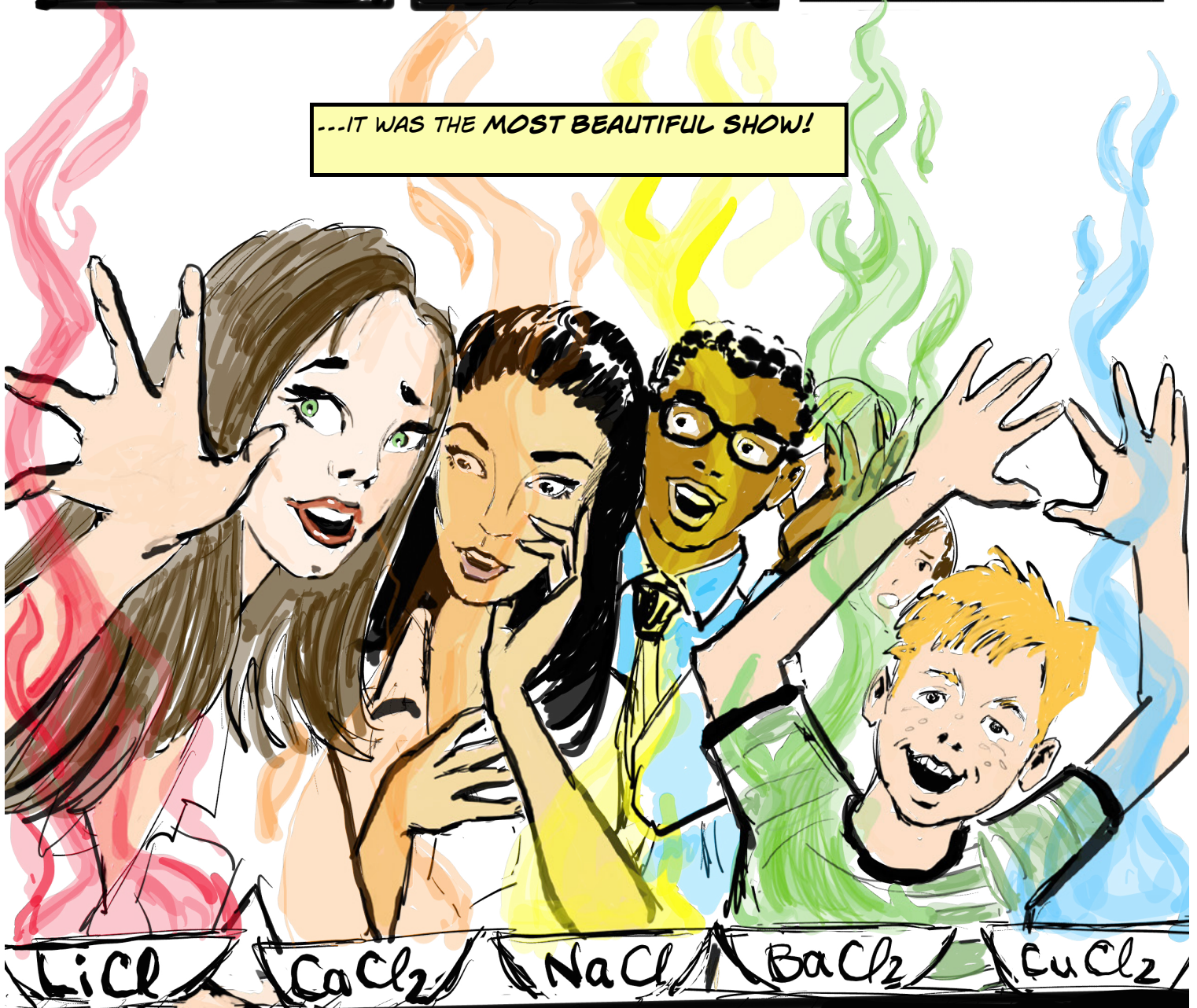
ABOUT FORTY MINUTES INTO THE CLASS, THE TEACHER SAID IT WAS TIME FOR THE "RAINBOW FLAME" DEMONSTRATION. I PULLED MY FRIEND, CECILIA, UP TO THE FRONT WITH ME.

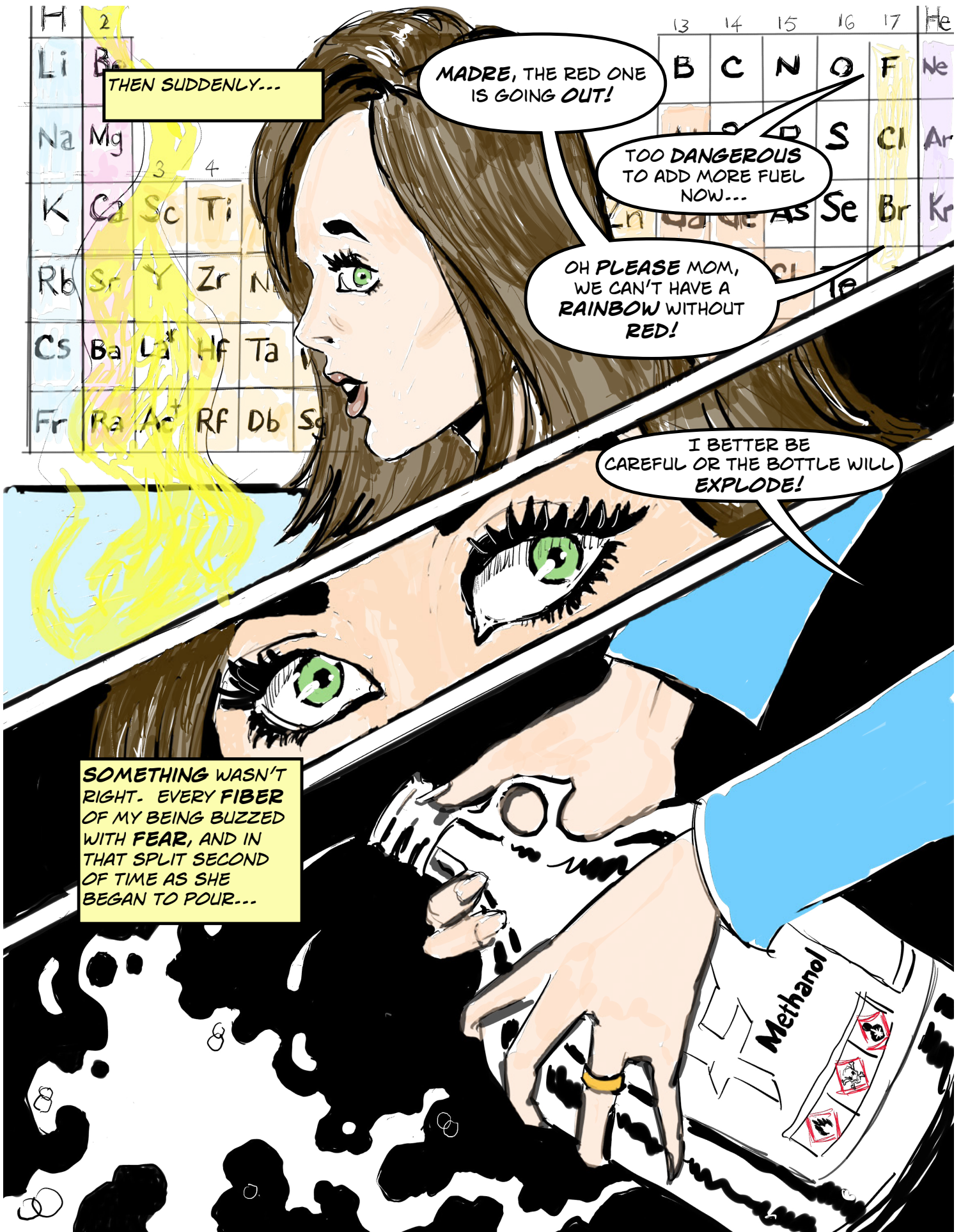
HE WAS FINE, HE SAID, AND TOLD ME HE WAS PLAYING HOOKY TO SEE THE DEMONSTRATION HIS MOM WAS DOING THAT DAY. HE THEN HELPED HER SET UP THE EXPERIMENT, MIXING VARIOUS METAL SALTS IN METHANOL.

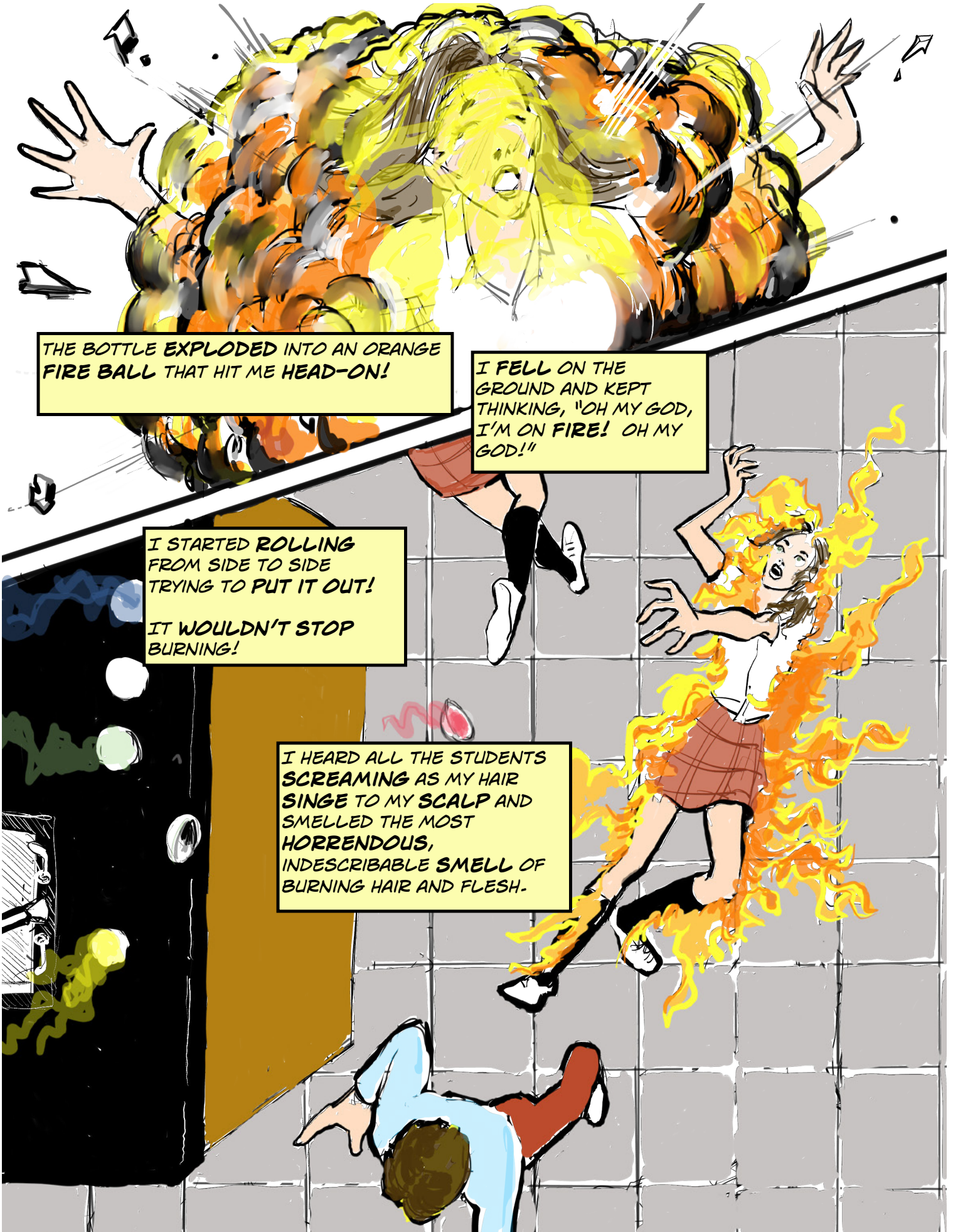
THE THEORY BEHIND THE EXPERIMENT IS THAT WHEN METAL COMPOUNDS ARE BURNED, THEY EMIT VISIBLE LIGHT. DIFFERENT METALS EMIT AT DIFFERENT WAVE NUMBERS WITHIN THE VISIBLE SPECTRUM, PRODUCING DIFFERENT COLOR FLAMES...



...IT WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SHOW!







THE BOTTLE EXPLODED INTO AN ORANGE FIRE BALL THAT HIT ME HEAD-ON!

I FELL ON THE GROUND AND KEPT THINKING, "OH MY GOD, I'M ON FIRE! OH MY GOD!"

**I STARTED ROLLING FROM SIDE TO SIDE TRYING TO PUT IT OUT!
IT WOULDN'T STOP BURNING!**

I HEARD ALL THE STUDENTS SCREAMING AS MY HAIR SINGE TO MY SCALP AND SMELLED THE MOST HORRENDOUS, INDESCRIBABLE SMELL OF BURNING HAIR AND FLESH.



I DECIDED THE FLAMES WEREN'T GOING OUT BECAUSE I WAS ON LINOLEUM FLOOR, AND THAT I NEEDED A BLANKET TO SMOTHER IT.

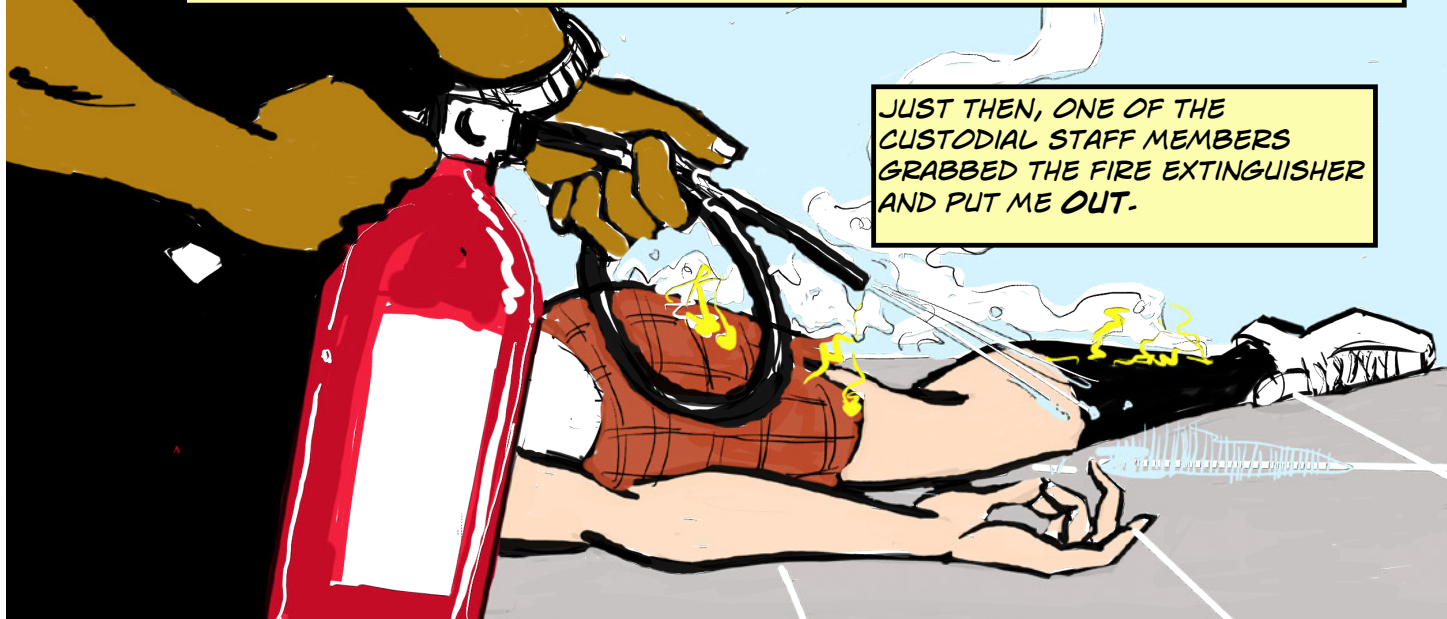
I COULDN'T STAND UP BECAUSE MY POLYESTER UNIFORM SKIRT HAD MELTED INTO THE GROUND. SO I PULLED MYSELF ACROSS THE FLOOR TO THE DOORWAY LEADING OUT TO THE HALL WHERE IT'S CARPETED – PERHAPS THE CARPET WOULD WORK?

BY THE TIME I REACHED THE DOOR, THE ROOM WAS SILENT. ALL I COULD HEAR WAS THE SOUND OF THE FLAMES STILL BURNING AND THE FIRE ALARM. THE METHANOL HAD GONE DOWN MY THROAT, SO WHEN I FINALLY TRIED TO SCREAM FOR HELP, NOT EVEN A WHISPER CAME OUT!



OH MY GOD!

I HAD NO CONCEPT OF TIME, AND FOR ALL I KNEW IT HAD BEEN SECONDS OR MINUTES OF BEING ON FIRE. I LOOKED UP AT THE DOOR AND SAW THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER NEXT TO IT ON THE WALL, BUT COULDN'T REACH IT. IT WAS THEN THAT I FIGURED THAT NO ONE WAS GOING TO HELP ME, AND I WAS GOING TO DIE.



JUST THEN, ONE OF THE CUSTODIAL STAFF MEMBERS GRABBED THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER AND PUT ME OUT.

WHAT HAPPENED AFTER IS A **BLUR**. I REMEMBER EVERY DETAIL, AND YET IT ALL SEEMED TO HAPPEN AT ONCE.

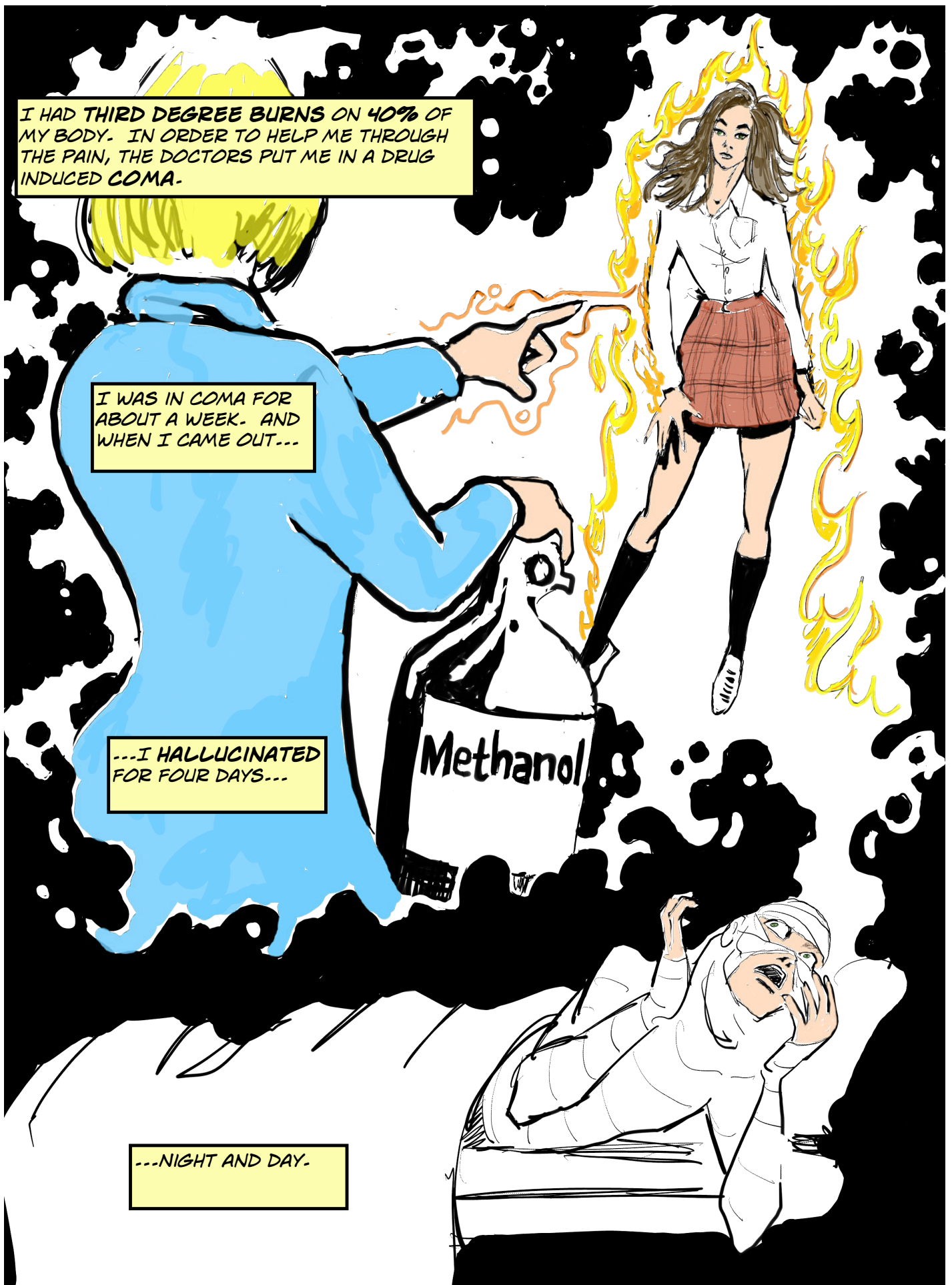
I REMEMBER THE TEACHER COMING AROUND THE CORNER AND TELLING ME I WOULD BE OK BEFORE DARTING OFF WITH HER SON WHO HAD ALSO BEEN SERIOUSLY INJURED.

I REMEMBER THE FOOTBALL COACH SCOOPING ME UP AND **SPRINTING** DOWN TO THE AMBULANCE.

I REMEMBER RIDING IN THE **AMBULANCE** NEXT TO THE TEACHER AND HER SON.

I REMEMBER HEARING THE TEACHER'S SON KEEP SAYING, "ARE WE GOING TO DIE?! WE'RE GOING TO DIE!" NEXT TO HIS MOM WHO WAS CLUTCHING HER BURNED HAND **UNRESPONSIVE** AND IN **SHOCK**.





I HAD THIRD DEGREE BURNS ON 40% OF MY BODY. IN ORDER TO HELP ME THROUGH THE PAIN, THE DOCTORS PUT ME IN A DRUG INDUCED COMA.

I WAS IN COMA FOR ABOUT A WEEK. AND WHEN I CAME OUT...

...I HALLUCINATED FOR FOUR DAYS...

...NIGHT AND DAY.

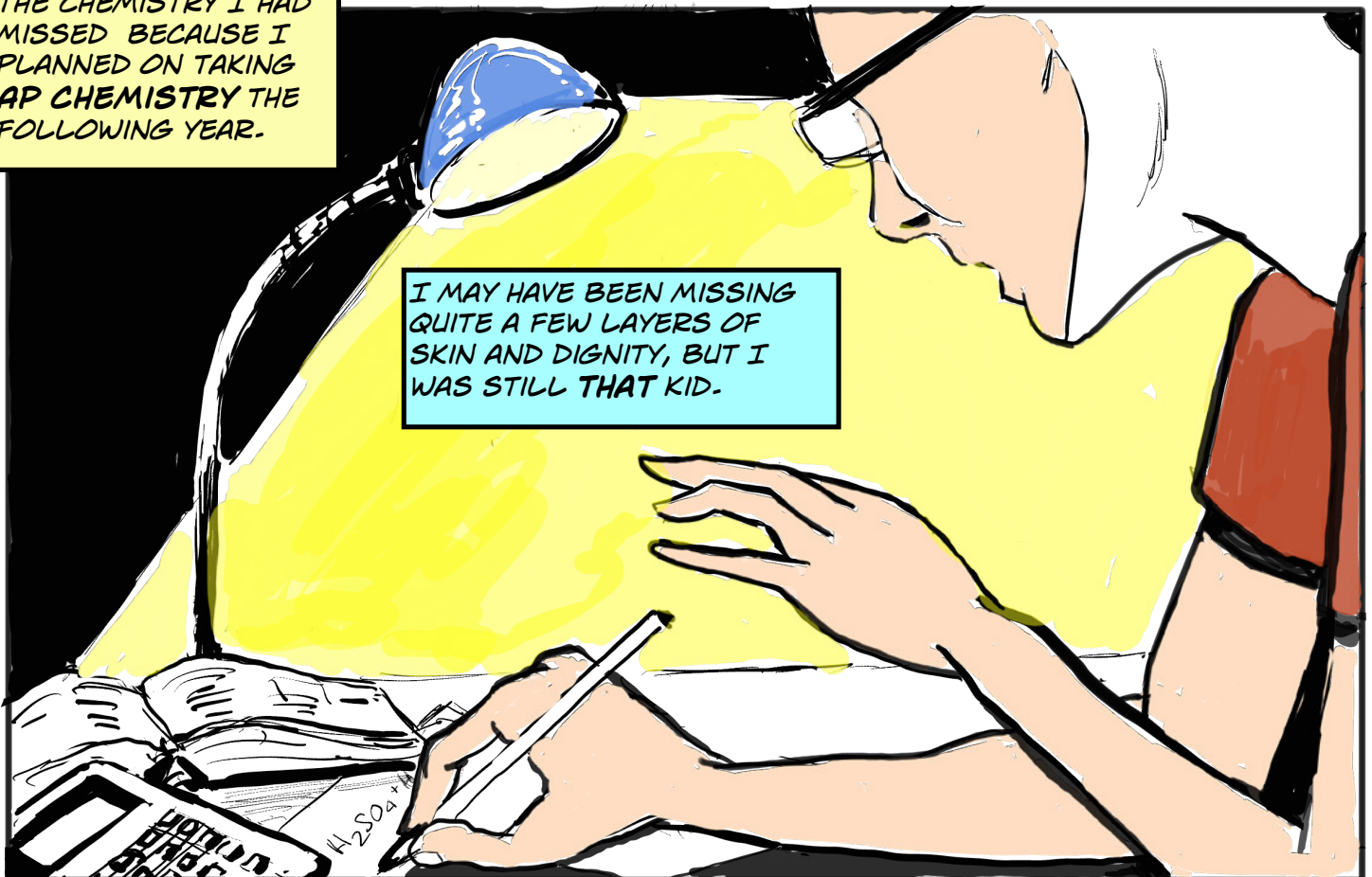
I WON'T GO INTO THE DETAILS OF THE HOSPITAL STAY—DRESSING CHANGES, THE SCRUB ROOM, SURGERIES, ILLNESSES, INFECTIONS... ALL IN AN ENDLESS CYCLE.

ONCE RELEASED, I BURIED MYSELF IN MY BOOKS. I WAS TUTORED BY A COUPLE OF MY TEACHERS TO FINISH WHAT I HAD MISSED THAT SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR IN TIME TO TAKE MY ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAM FOR COLLEGE CREDIT.

THAT SUMMER I TOOK THE CHEMISTRY I HAD MISSED BECAUSE I PLANNED ON TAKING AP CHEMISTRY THE FOLLOWING YEAR.



I MAY HAVE BEEN MISSING QUITE A FEW LAYERS OF SKIN AND DIGNITY, BUT I WAS STILL THAT KID.



MY PARENTS DID NOT WANT TO SUE THE SCHOOL, BUT WE HAD NO CHOICE.

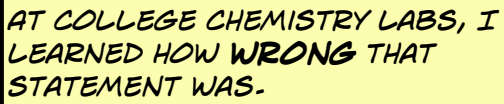
MY FAMILY'S HEALTH INSURANCE WOULD NOT PAY FOR THE HOSPITAL BILLS BECAUSE THEY SAID THE SCHOOL WAS RESPONSIBLE.

AND THE SCHOOL'S INSURANCE WOULDN'T PAY BECAUSE THEY SAID THE FIRE WAS DUE TO NEGLIGENCE.

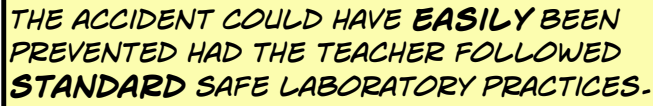
WE WERE TOLD THAT WE NEEDED TO GET A LAWYER AND SUE THE SCHOOL.

ALL THIS MADE MY SENIOR YEAR THERE HELL.

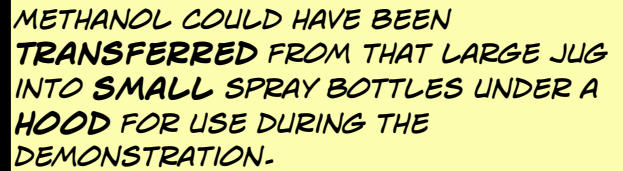
A LOT OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS RESENTED ME FOR SUING, BELIEVING THE SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL STATEMENT THAT IT WAS ALL AN "UNFORTUNATE, UNPREVENTABLE ACCIDENT."



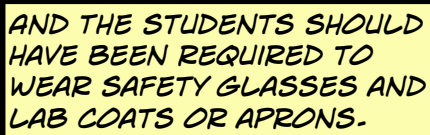
AT COLLEGE CHEMISTRY LABS, I LEARNED HOW WRONG THAT STATEMENT WAS.



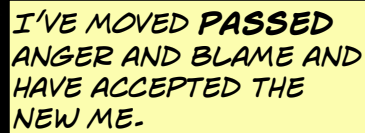
THE ACCIDENT COULD HAVE EASILY BEEN PREVENTED HAD THE TEACHER FOLLOWED STANDARD SAFE LABORATORY PRACTICES.



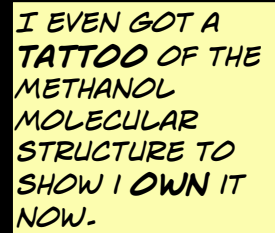
METHANOL COULD HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM THAT LARGE JUG INTO SMALL SPRAY BOTTLES UNDER A HOOD FOR USE DURING THE DEMONSTRATION.



AND THE STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO WEAR SAFETY GLASSES AND LAB COATS OR APRONS.



I'VE MOVED PASSED ANGER AND BLAME AND HAVE ACCEPTED THE NEW ME.



I EVEN GOT A TATTOO OF THE METHANOL MOLECULAR STRUCTURE TO SHOW I OWN IT NOW.



MORE IMPORTANTLY...

