

"IT'S RIVETING," —ALISON BECHDEL, ARE YOU MY MOTHER?, FUN HOME

# YO, MISS

A GRAPHIC LOOK AT HIGH SCHOOL





# Yo, Miss

A GRAPHIC  
LOOK AT  
HIGH SCHOOL

LISA WILDE

MICROCOSM  
PUBLISHING  
PORTLAND, OR

Yo, MISS—THE  
WAY OEDIPUS FLIPPED  
OUT ON HIS POPS, EVEN  
THOUGH HE DIDN'T  
KNOW IT WAS HIS  
POPS, WOULDN'T  
YOU CALL HIM A  
REAL O.G.?

A  
WHAT?

O.G.—  
ORIGINAL  
GANGSTA'!

HUH...CLASS,  
WHAT DO YOU  
THINK? WAS  
OEDIPUS  
ACTING LIKE  
AN O.G.?



# YO. MISS

## A GRAPHIC LOOK AT HIGH SCHOOL

LISA WILDE

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Janis Brian



Shagreena Jasmine



Ralphie and friend

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Dedicated with love  
to all Wildcat students—  
past, present and future;  
and to the memory of  
Andrew Green.  
Your commanding presence  
and joyous laugh  
are missed every day,  
but your legacy continues  
through the lives  
of each student  
who had the privilege  
to know you.

#### NOTE TO THE READER

*Yo, Miss: A Graphic Look at High School* is based on my experience teaching at John V. Lindsay Wildcat Academy, a second chance public high school in New York City. The students in the book are fictionalized composites. However, I have tried to be as true as possible to my understanding of who these kids are. That said, ultimately everything expressed is my opinion and not those of the staff, students or administration of J.V. L. Wildcat Academy.

## 'THE RIGHT ROCK'

KAYCEE ECKHARDT

author of *Katrina's Sandcastles: New Hope From the Ruins of New Orleans Schools*  
Louisiana Charter Teacher of the Year 2009

Teaching is not a series of days, or a litany of plans, or even a series of to do's and checklists and tasks, though sometimes it feels that way. Teaching is about the moments of gigantic success and cringing failure, the children who live them, and the teacher who is educator, mentor, friend, and conscience along the way. In these pages, all three are brought to life with humor, calamity, and love.

Teaching is to watch the moments of days bump and scramble together at the bottom of a stream, nicking and smoothing each other, rushing far too quickly. Despite the speed, some stand out. Moments shimmer and wink brilliantly against the moving waves. Others crumble when touched, anticlimactic and intangible. And others should most appropriately float downstream and from memory, more clotted pond scum than pebble, unwelcome.

In *Yo, Miss, Wilde* takes our hand and draws us deep into this rushing current. Through her candid drawings, she provides us a glimpse into a world where nothing, and yet everything, is possible, and the smallest of successes are celebrated as defiant victories over the status quo.

Wilde points out the right rocks to be turning over, uses her pen to suggest the places we may have missed. Look closely. More than storyline, these sketches reveal the details of moments shared in a time that moves by too quickly: a last chance high school for students society has largely written off. Here, horses prance between the spokes of wheelchairs, and a single snowflake prevents disaster. These metaphors should not be lost on us. The brutal realities of her environment and students do not escape scrutiny, yet she is able to draw them with love and the hope of redemption.

Teaching—and Wilde's book—is also about children, both their imperfections and their triumphs. In each of Wilde's students there is reason to both cringe and smile. I find myself laughing at Danny, and aching for Janis, and being furious with Natalie; I shamelessly cheated, flipping to the end to scan the drawings: who will, in the end, make it across the coveted stage, diploma crunched in one proud fist?

In New Orleans, my students forged the same waters and fought the same demons. It is achingly clear that a system has failed these children; they have not failed themselves. Their determination, joy, and hope despite the chaos of their surroundings reminds me of what is valuable, and what is worth sacrifice. They are not damaged, and they are not casualties of a status quo gone wrong. They deserve, and fight for, lives worth living, and here their humanity becomes startlingly clear. In this book are brilliant examples of both the deficiencies of our system, and those who work for its lasting change.

Finally, teaching is about choosing to be a teacher. Poignantly, Wilde uses her pen to expose both the imperfection and genius of her daily work. She exposes herself as flawed and desperately seeking answers. She struggles constantly for balance in the current, in ways to connect her family and art and the kids who need her most.

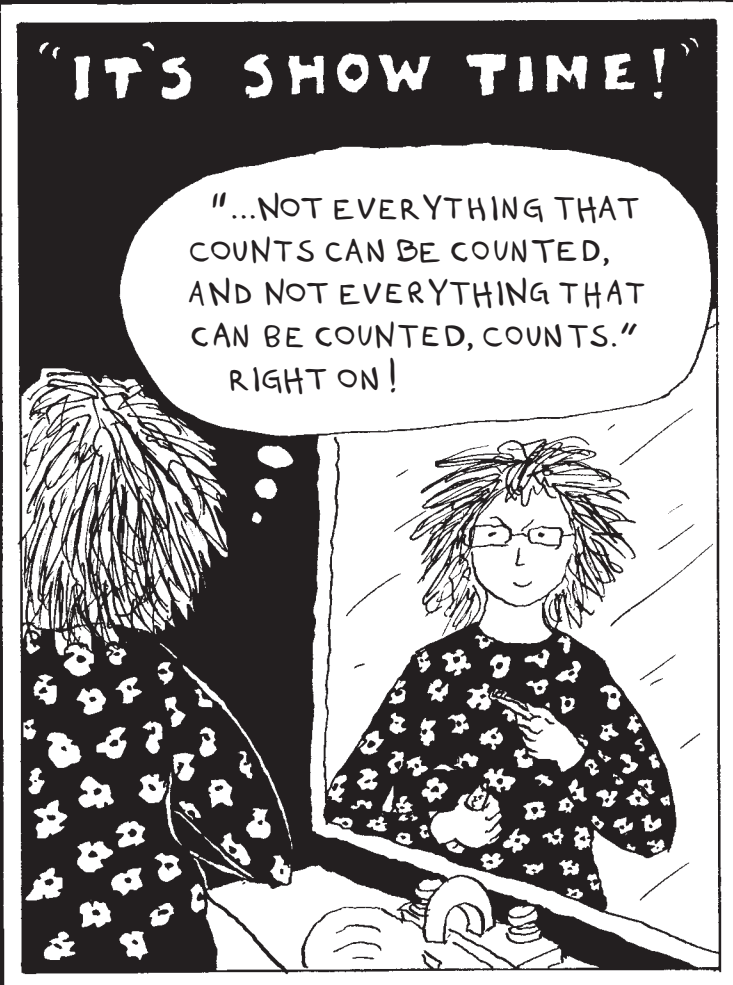
Rather than whitewashing her challenges and ambiguity, she bares both for us courageously, never failing to wade forward. In her drawings, she smirks and scowls, hair standing on end, a fiercely committed look behind the squints and glasses. I get the sense that Wilde will never give up. She wades in the proverbial waters and yet rises above it, superimposed.

Daily, teachers and students make decisions that have great significance. As an educator, I know too well the exhaustion of these choices, knowing their portents, and owning the mistakes to be made. Wilde doesn't turn away from this reality by making these decisions look easy. But she does make all of it—the struggle, frustration, joy, panic, late nights, graphic organizers, fistfights and torpedoes—look *worthwhile*.

It is the close examination of all of this being worthwhile that is at the heart of this adventure. Whether a failed fishing trip or the comic-agony of Danny—again—Wilde makes these students stand out in stark contrast to their often-bleak realities and situations, lines drawn towards futures rather than dead ends.

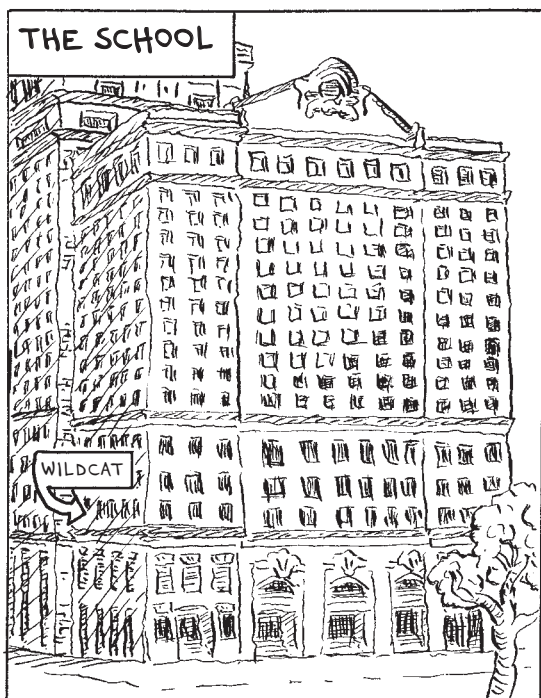
Wilde lays bare each moment with compassion, and infuses us, in the end, with the sense that “at some point in life, the world’s beauty becomes enough.” The stream, for Wilde and her students, keeps rumbling along, its lives and circumstances intersect and bounce apart. And while her students’ trajectory is not for the faint of heart, there is more gold here than glitter. These children do, indeed, shine.

## CHAPTER ONE



QUOTE ATTRIBUTED TO ALBERT EINSTEIN





I TEACH AT JOHN V. LINDSAY WILDCAT ACADEMY, A PUBLIC CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL IN LOWER MANHATTAN, N.Y.C.

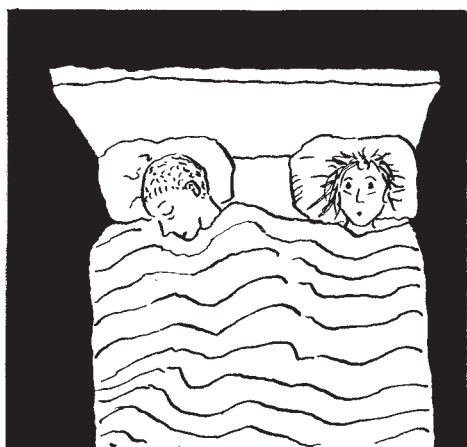
IT'S A SECOND CHANCE SCHOOL. THAT MEANS MANY OF OUR STUDENTS HAVE DROPPED OUT, BEEN KICKED OUT, OR FLUNKED OUT OF OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS



SOME STUDENTS ARE EVEN "REFERRED" BY THEIR PREVIOUS SCHOOL.



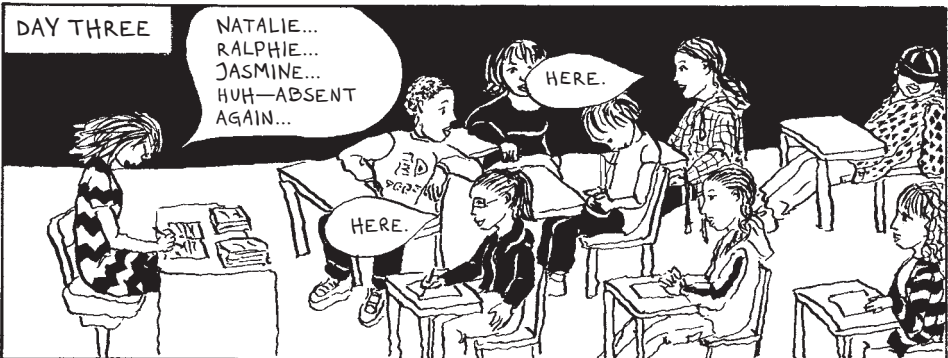
## THE NIGHT BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL



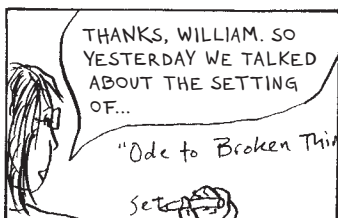
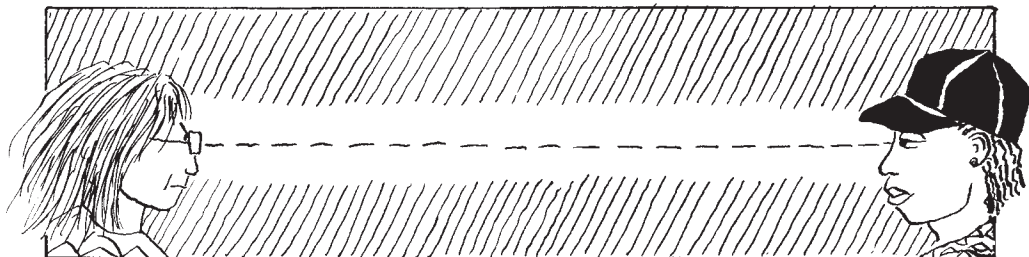
NIGHTMARES ASIDE, THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE



REALITY HASN'T YET COMPLICATED THIS ROUND OF SCHOOL. ON THAT FIRST DAY, THERE IS NOTHING THAT WILL STOP THESE KIDS FROM ACHIEVING THE DREAM OF GRADUATION.

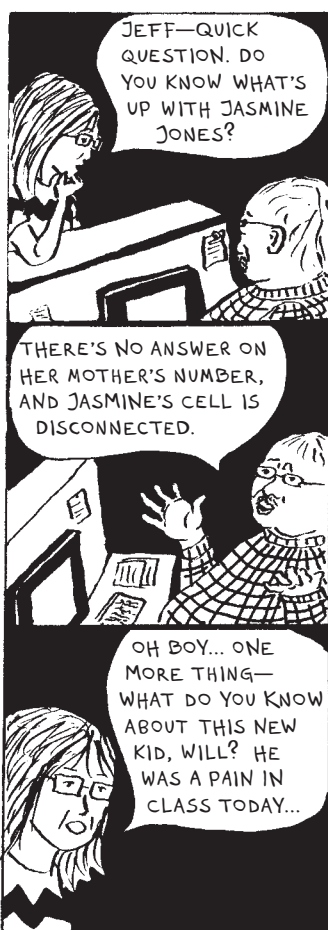
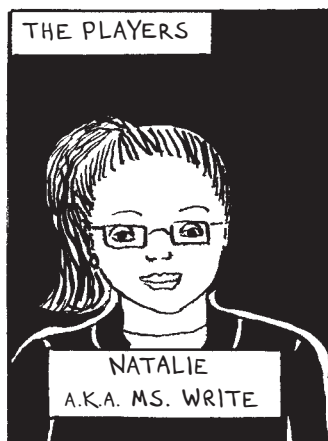












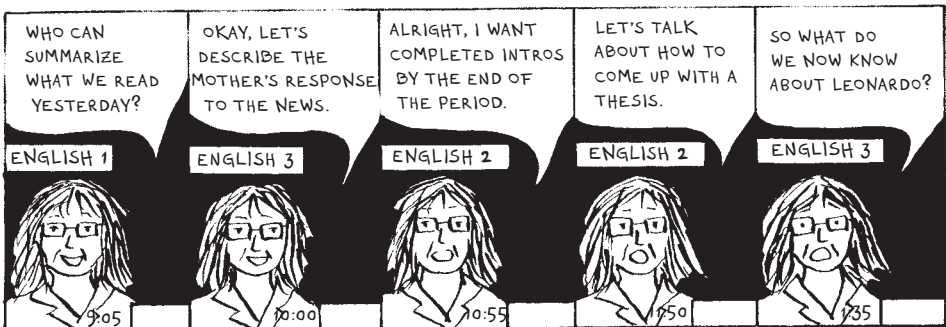


\*PROBATION OFFICER. ACCORDING TO THE TERMS OF WILL'S PROBATION, HE MUST ATTEND SCHOOL.

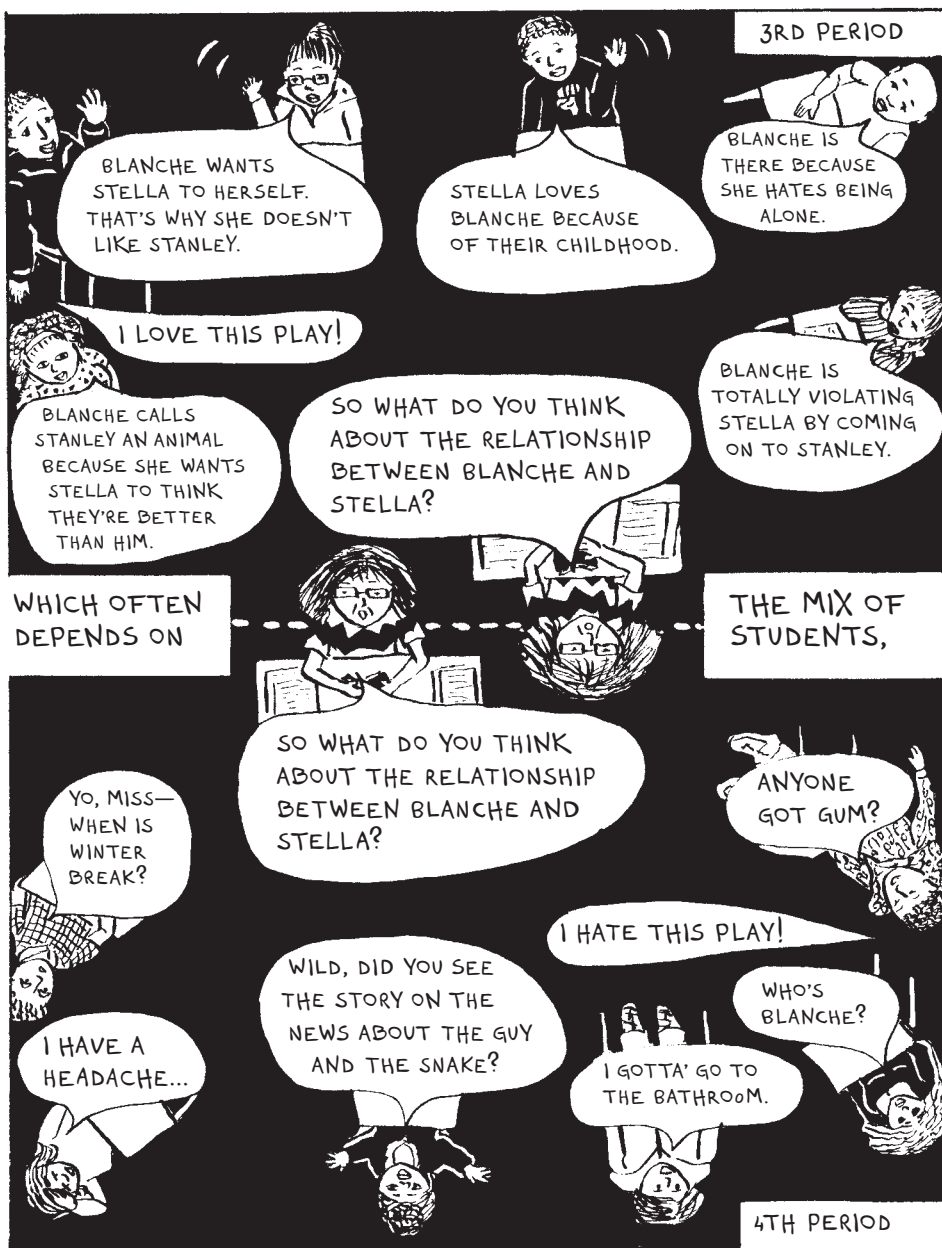


## SPEAKING OF ISSUES,

I TEACH FIVE CLASSES A DAY, WITH THREE DIFFERENT CURRICULA.



EACH CLASS HAS ITS OWN DYNAMIC,



AND EVERY NOW AND THEN,  
YOU GET A MIX THAT MAKES YOU WONDER...

# IS THIS THE CLASS FROM HELL?

AWAY TWO MINUTES AT COPIER BECAUSE 80% OF STUDENTS DID NOT PUT HAND-OUTS IN THEIR FOLDERS AND HENCE DO NOT HAVE THEM.

YO, SNOWFLAKE!

MY GUCCIS ARE POPPIN'  
MY PRADAS ARE TOPPIN'  
MY BENJAMINS ARE DROPPIN'  
MY LIFE IS ALL SHOPPIN'

BOOM CHI  
BOOM CHI  
BOOM...

BAP BAP

ZZZZZZ...

MOVE  
YOUR DESK!

I  
WAS HERE  
FIRST!

MY SISTA, WHY  
DON'T YOU GIVE A  
BROTHA' YOUR  
NUMBA'?

MY SIXTH PERIOD

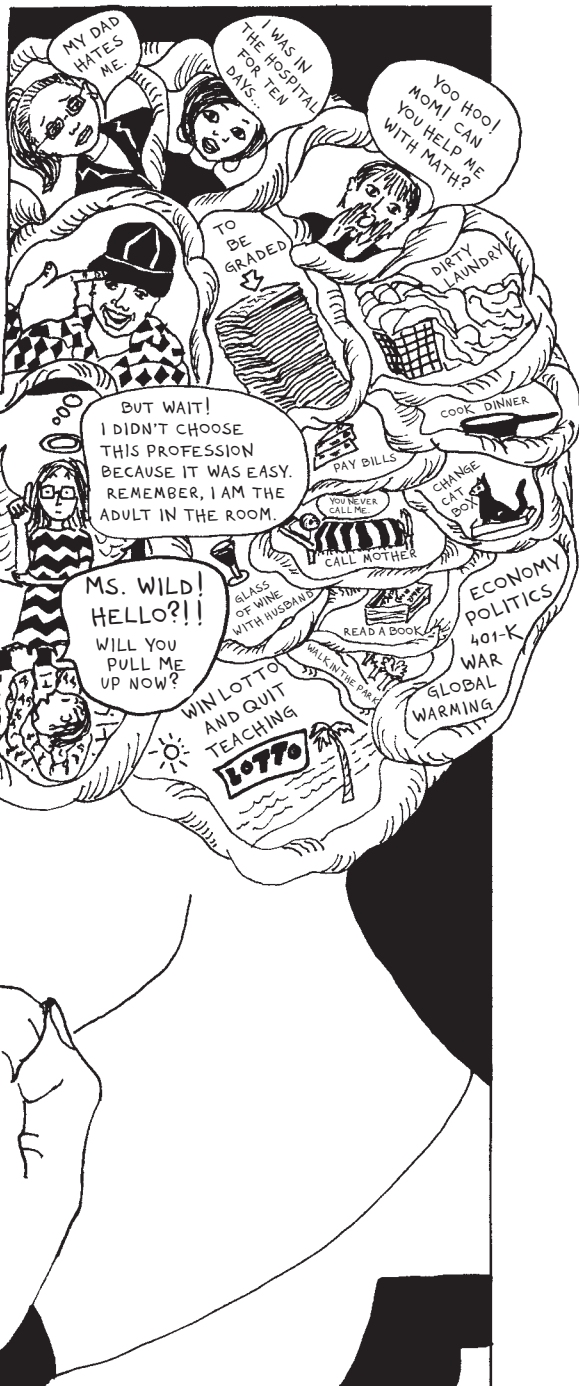




## END OF THE DAY







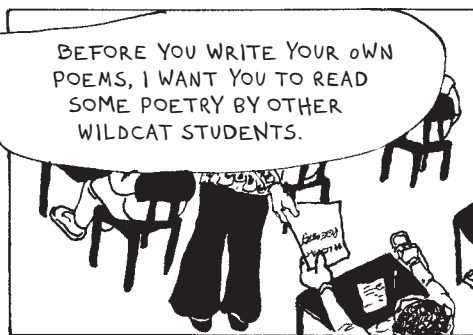
## CHAPTER TWO

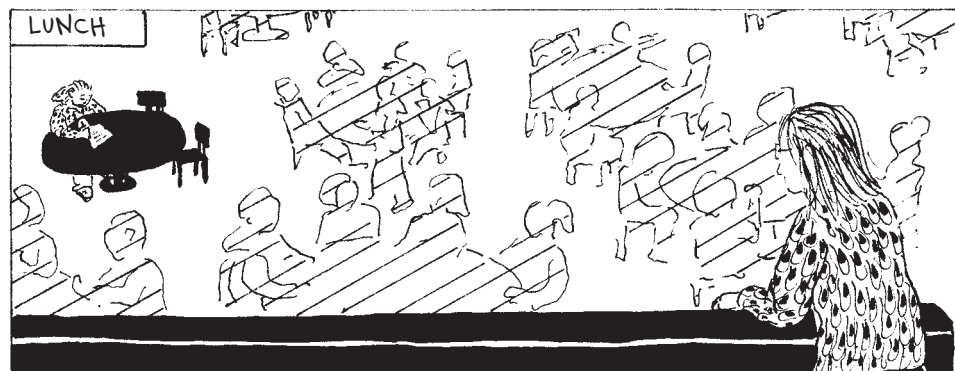


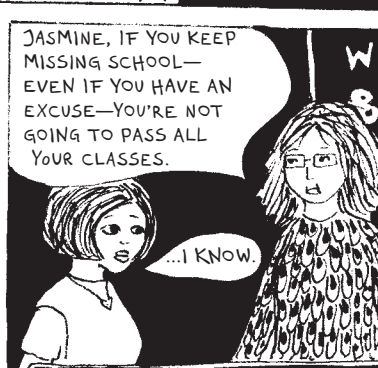
"WE LOST BECAUSE WE TOLD OURSELVES WE LOST."

LEO TOLSTOY

## THE NEXT DAY







IN NEW YORK STATE A STUDENT MUST FULFILL ALL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR HIS OR HER HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BY THE END OF THE SCHOOL YEAR IN WHICH HE OR SHE TURNS 21. OTHERWISE, HIS OR HER ONLY ALTERNATIVE IS A G.E.D., WHICH IS NOT SEEN AS VALUABLE AS A H.S. DIPLOMA.



DO YOU WANT TO KNOW JASMINE'S STORY? WHY SHE'S 20 AND STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL?

THERE ARE  
REASONS,

OF COURSE. HER  
MOTHER WAS A CRACK ADDICT. SHE  
HAS NO CONTACT WITH HER FATHER

SHE HASN'T HAD A  
STABLE PLACE TO LIVE  
IN OVER A YEAR. OF HER  
MOTHER'S EIGHT CHILDREN,  
ONLY ONE HAS GRADUATED  
FROM HIGH SCHOOL. SHE'S  
EXTREMELY DYSLEXIC. IN THE  
OVERCROWDED, UNDERFUNDED  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHE ATTENDED, SHE  
DIDN'T GET THE INSTRUCTION SHE  
NEEDED AND TOO OFTEN WAS SEEN  
AS STUPID, EVEN THOUGH SHE IS VERY  
SMART. WHEN JASMINE FIRST CAME TO  
WIDLCAT, HER WRITING WAS SIMILAR TO THIS.  
BESIDE DYSLEXIA, SHE ALSO HAD PROBLEMS  
WITH GRAMMAR AND SPELLING. BUT SHE WAS  
EXCELLENT IN CLASS DISCUSSION AND IT WAS  
CLEAR SHE HAD HUGE POTENTIAL. SHE ALSO  
HAD A VERY



DO I KNOW THAT SHE WILL REALLY GRADUATE?

TO GET A DIPLOMA FROM WILDCAT, A STUDENT NEEDS 44 SPECIFIED CREDITS (EIGHT ENGLISH, SIX MATH, SIX SCIENCE, ETC.) AND A PASSING SCORE ON THE FIVE MAIN STATE REGENTS TESTS.

BE IF SHE HAD AN ENGAGED MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY. BUT THAT'S NOT HER STORY.

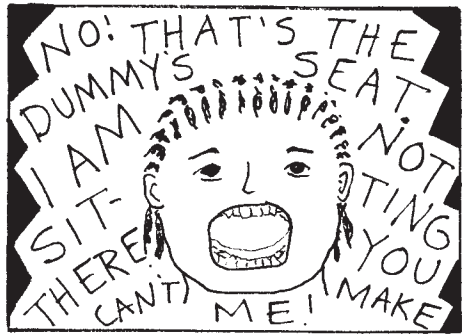
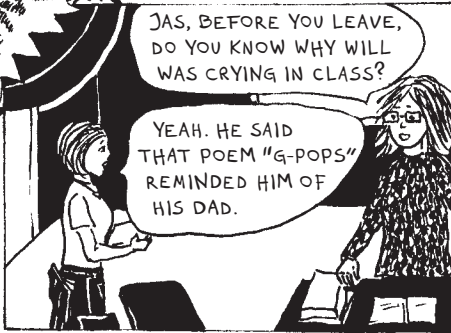
NO... BUT FOR BOTH OUR SAKES, I NEED TO ACT AS IF IT IS A CERTAINTY.



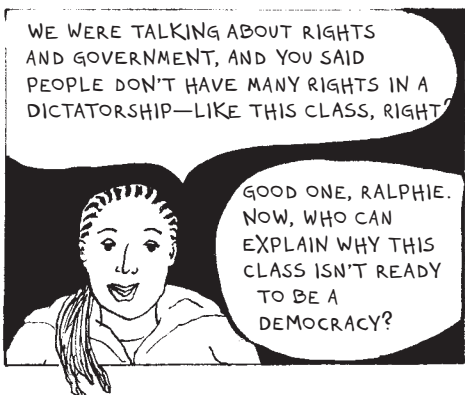
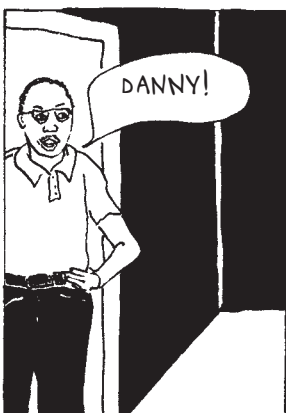
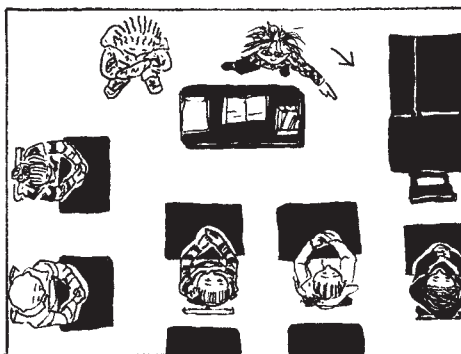
JASMINE IS VERY SMART: I WONDER WHERE SHE WOULD

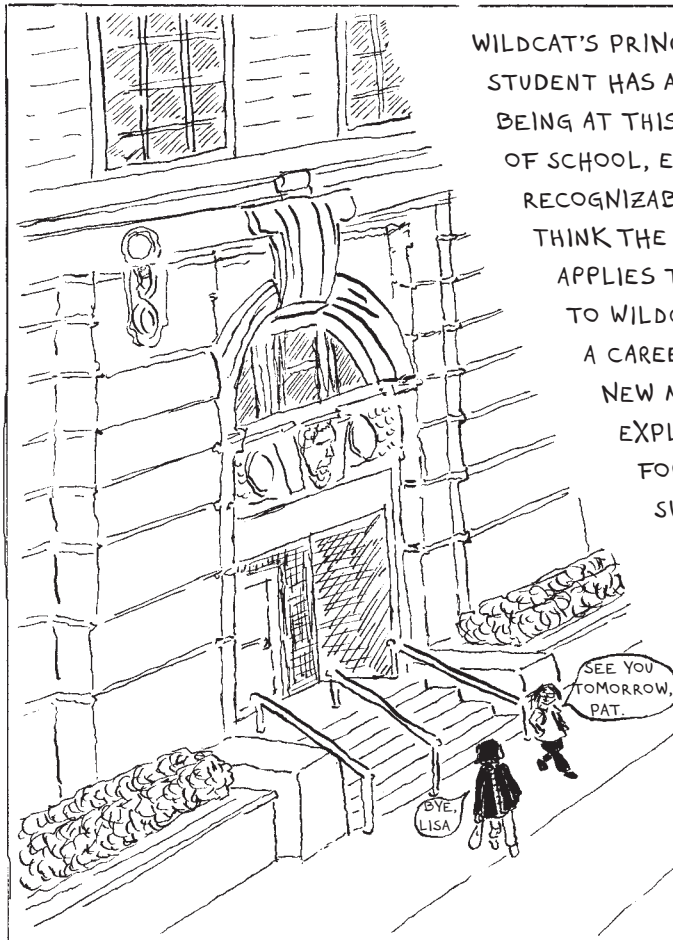
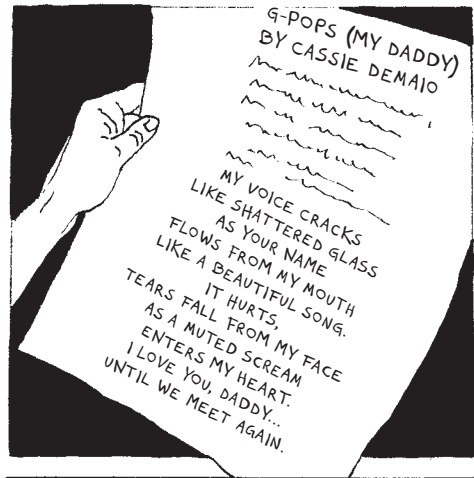


LUNCH IS OVER, AND NOW IT'S SIXTH PERIOD—  
"THE CLASS FROM HELL"




THIS CLASSROOM TECHNIQUE IS INSPIRED BY KALI, A MULTI-ARMED HINDU GODDESS, WHO IS FRIGHTENING, BUT WITH THE HEART OF A MOTHER.





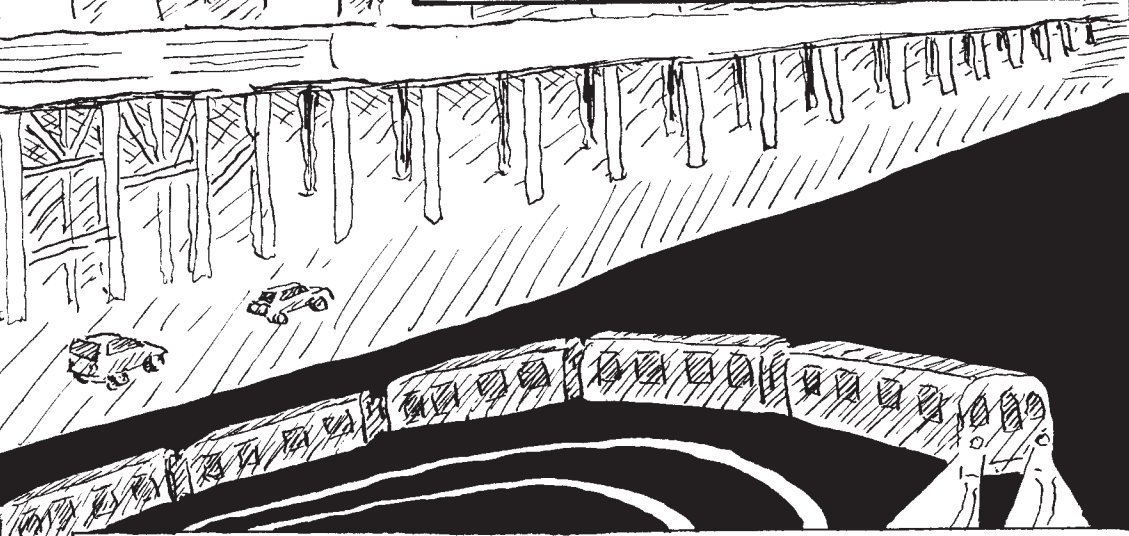
WILDCAT'S PRINCIPAL SAYS EVERY STUDENT HAS A REASON FOR BEING AT THIS PARTICULAR TYPE OF SCHOOL, EVEN IF IT ISN'T RECOGNIZABLE AT FIRST. I THINK THE SAME STATEMENT APPLIES TO STAFF. I CAME TO WILDCAT AT MID-LIFE— A CAREER-CHANGER AND NEW MOTHER. THE BEST EXPLANATION I CAN GIVE FOR THIS DRAMATIC SWITCH IS THAT MY INTERNAL COMPASS WAS WORKING OVERTIME TO GET ME BACK TO A LIFE THAT WAS MORE TRUE TO WHO I REALLY AM.





I COMMUTE TO THE SCHOOL  
FROM BROOKLYN.  
I TAKE THE F TRAIN,  
WHICH TRAVELS ABOVE GROUND  
FOR A FEW STOPS  
ON ITS WAY INTO THE CITY.  
WHEN THE TRAIN  
FIRST GOES OUTSIDE,  
THE VISTA TAKES YOUR BREATH AWAY—  
THE HORIZON WIDE OPEN.  
ON BAD DAYS,  
IT'S THIS VIEW THAT  
GETS ME THROUGH,  
REMINING ME  
OF THE INFINITE  
POSSIBILITY  
THAT LIFE HOLDS

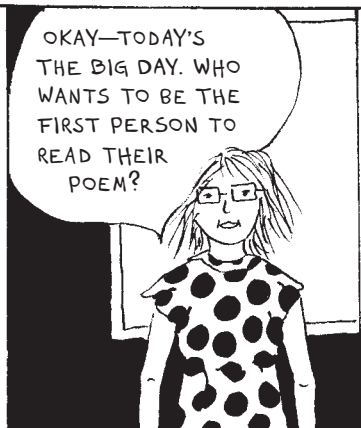
FOR MY STUDENTS  
AND MYSELF.



THEN, AFTER THE WORLD HAS OPENED, THE F FOLDS BACK ON ITSELF  
AND WE RETURN, FOR A TIME, TO THE DARKNESS.




3RD PERIOD— LATER THAT WEEK



\*POEM WRITTEN BY TYRELL DRAMBLE, WILDCAT GRADUATE. USED WITH PERMISSION.



A man with long braids, wearing a patterned shirt, is shown in profile on the left, holding a newspaper. Five children are gathered on the right, looking at him. The scene is set against a dark background with white text boxes.

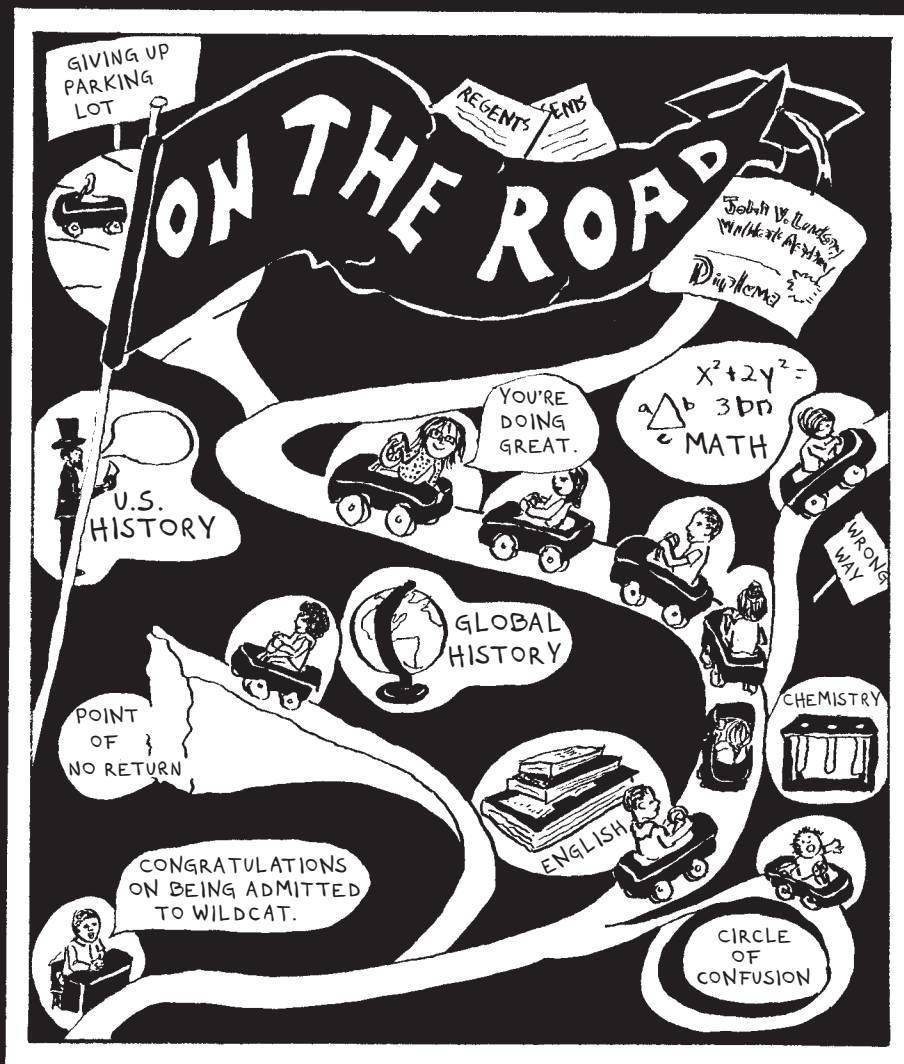
DAD TOLD HIM TO SIT ON THE STOOP,  
MAKE SURE IT'S TEN  
AND DON'T TAKE NO CHANGE.  
A GROWN-ASS MAN NEVER GOT PINCHED,

BUT HIS NAME WAS IN THE STREETS  
LIKE THE BLACK AND WHITE LINES.  
WHEN THE FEDS CAME,  
HE JUMPED DOWN SOUTH,

AND LEFT FIVE KIDS AND A SPOUSE.  
DAD HAD OTHERS, NEVER WANTED THEM TO FIGHT,  
BUT THE WAY THE BOY FEELS,  
HE JUST MIGHT.



## CHAPTER THREE



"HERE'S TO THE CRAZY ONES, THE MISFITS, THE REBELS, THE TROUBLEMAKERS, THE ROUND PEGS IN THE SQUARE HOLES...THE ONES WHO SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY—THEY'RE NOT FOND OF RULES."

JACK KEROUAC

# A SEMESTER ALWAYS HAS ITS PHASES, THE BEGINNING



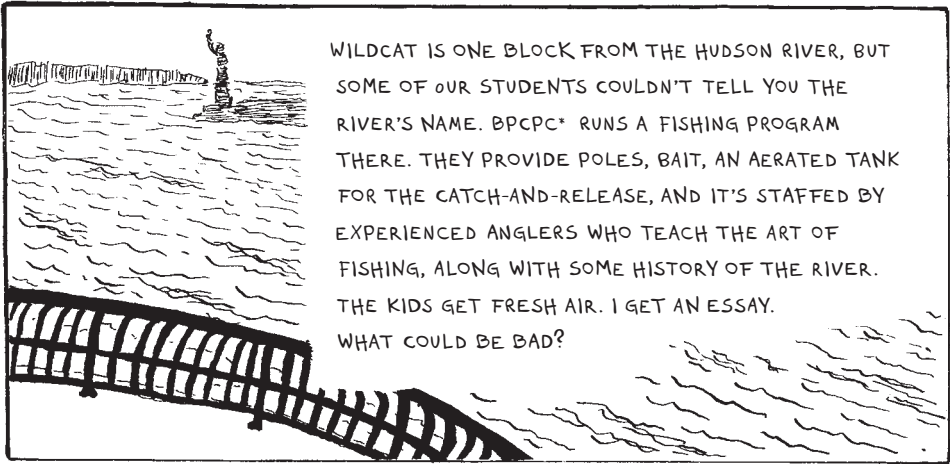
IS WHEN THE RULES AND EXPECTATIONS HAVE TO BE ESTABLISHED. BUT THEN A POINT COMES WHEN YOU BEGIN TO FEEL THE MOMENTUM.



WORK IS APPEARING IN THE FOLDERS. I'M GETTING TO KNOW THE STUDENTS. THEY'RE GETTING TO KNOW ME. IT'S HAPPENING. NOTHING'S

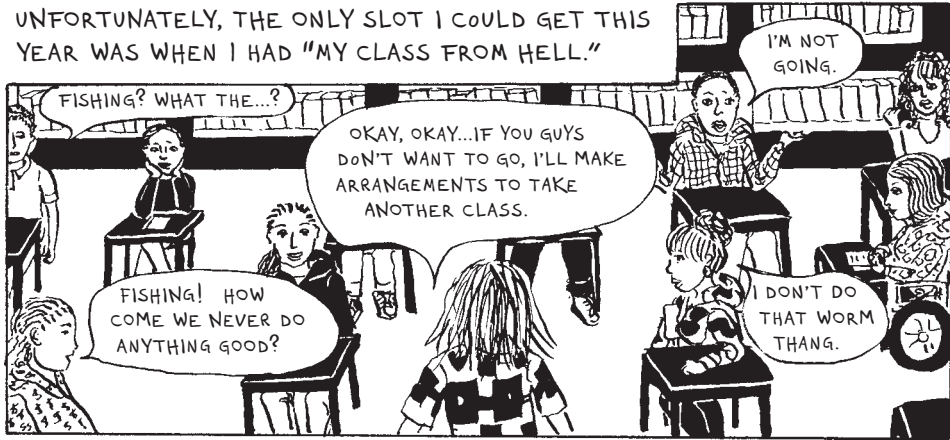


PERFECT, BUT THAT'S TO BE EXPECTED. AND IT'S AT THIS POINT EVERY FALL THAT I TAKE ONE OF MY CLASSES FISHING.



WILDCAT IS ONE BLOCK FROM THE HUDSON RIVER, BUT SOME OF OUR STUDENTS COULDN'T TELL YOU THE RIVER'S NAME. BPCPC\* RUNS A FISHING PROGRAM THERE. THEY PROVIDE POLES, BAIT, AN AERATED TANK FOR THE CATCH-AND-RELEASE, AND IT'S STAFFED BY EXPERIENCED ANGLERS WHO TEACH THE ART OF FISHING, ALONG WITH SOME HISTORY OF THE RIVER. THE KIDS GET FRESH AIR. I GET AN ESSAY. WHAT COULD BE BAD?

UNFORTUNATELY, THE ONLY SLOT I COULD GET THIS YEAR WAS WHEN I HAD "MY CLASS FROM HELL."



\* BATTERY PARK CITY PARK CONSERVANCY





## DAY OF THE FISHING TRIP

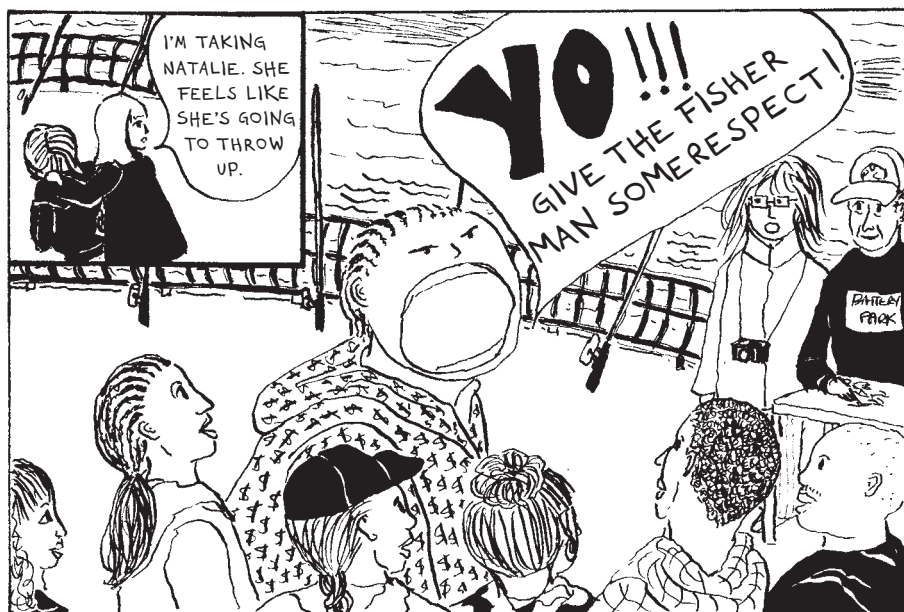


FIVE MINUTES LATER

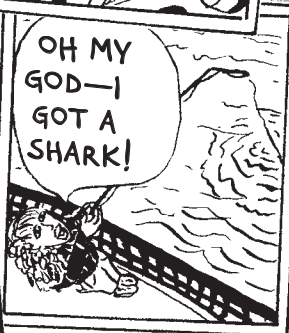
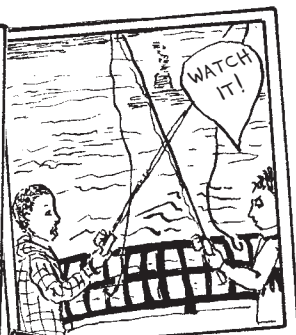
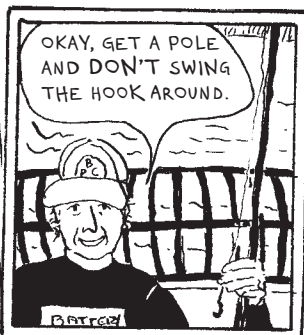


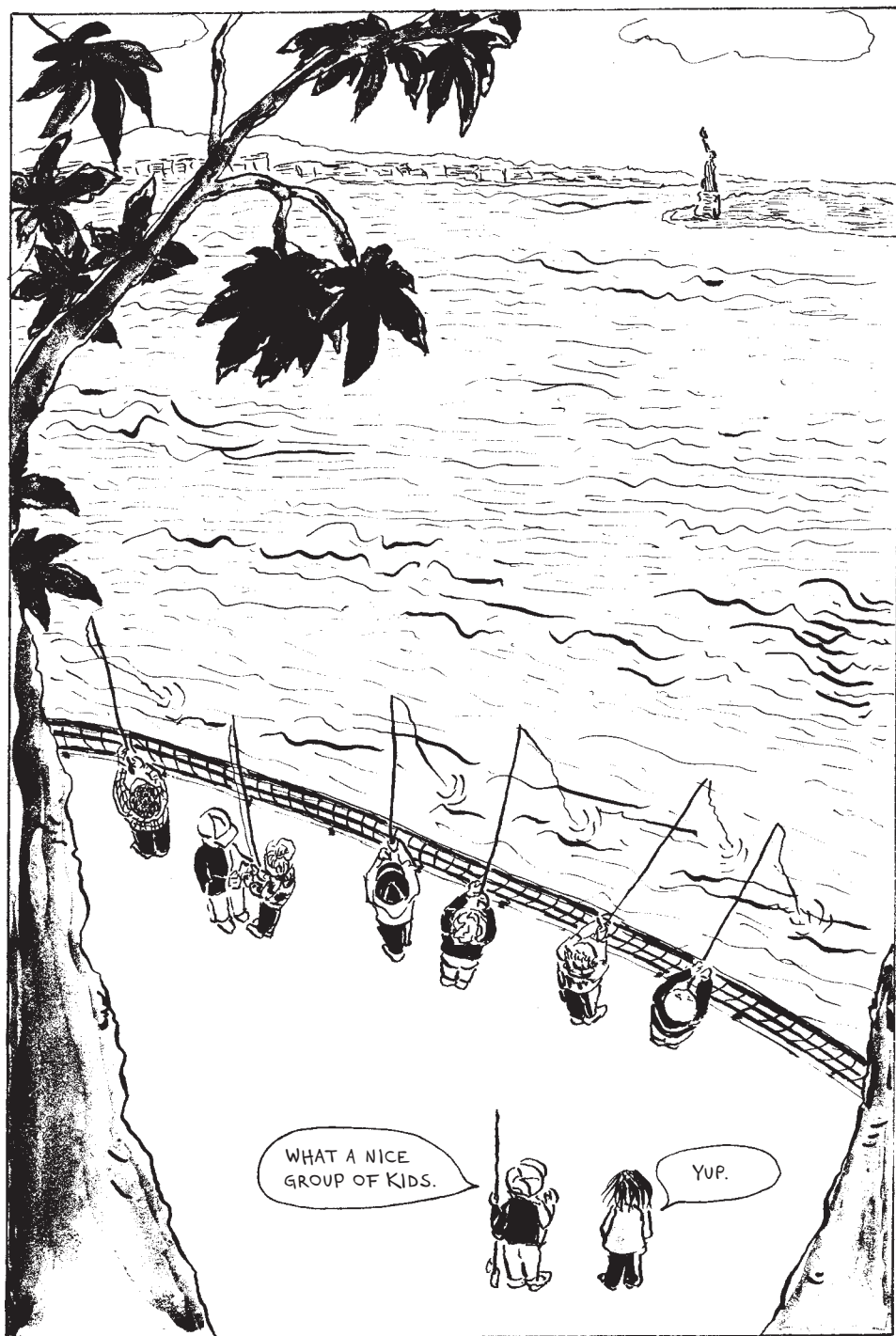


## AT THE RIVER



# FISHING SNAPS





## BACK AT SCHOOL

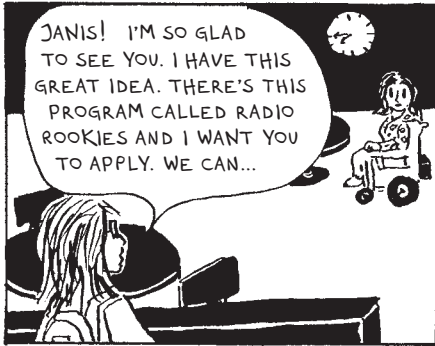


## AT HOME THAT EVENING

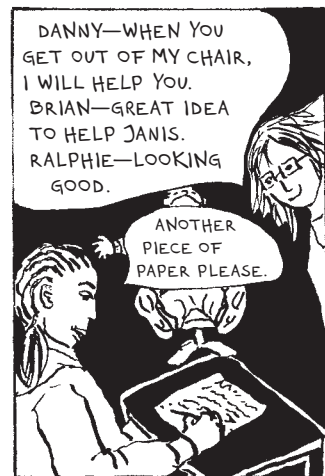
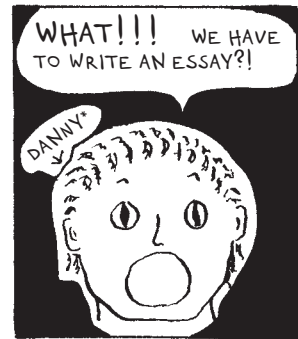
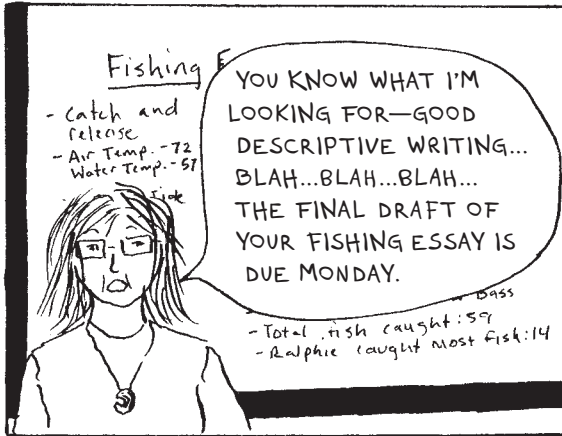


\*RADIO ROOKIES IS A PROGRAM SPONSORED BY PUBLIC RADIO THAT GIVES TEENS THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE THEIR OWN RADIO STORY.

## THE NEXT DAY



## 6TH PERIOD



\* DANNY HAS ADHD—ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER, THUS HE HAS TROUBLE STAYING FOCUSED AND HE GETS HYPER EASILY.



THE PLAYERS



I AM SO PSYCHED ABOUT RADIO ROOKIES. OH MY GOD, I HOPE I GET PICKED. I HAVE SO MANY THINGS I WANT TO SAY TO PEOPLE ABOUT LIFE IN A WHEELCHAIR. HOW SOON DO WE FIND OUT?



JANIS  
A.K.A. SPEEDY



I THINK ALL TEACHERS NEED TO FEEL LIKE HEROES EVERY NOW AND THEN. FOR ME THIS WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS.

THAN THE SWORD

THE PEN IS

THE PLAYERS



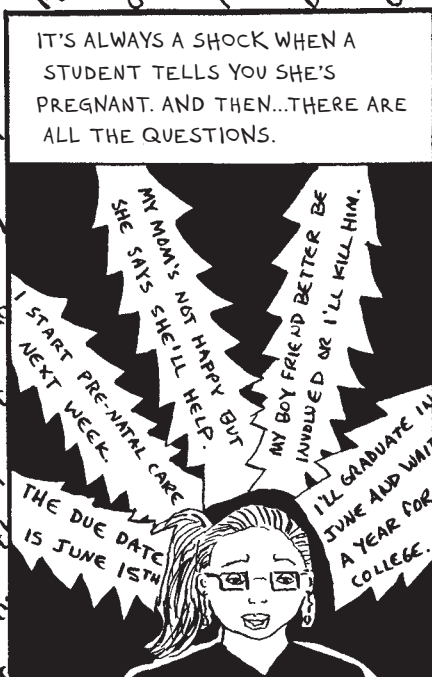
RALPHIE  
A.K.A. PESCADOR

THIS IS THE FIRST ESSAY I'VE WRITTEN SINCE SIXTH GRADE—WHEN MY ASSHOLE TEACHER HELD MY PAPER IN FRONT OF THE WHOLE CLASS AND CALLED ME STUPID BECAUSE I SPELLED A WORD WRONG. BUT I REALLY LIKE THE FISHING TRIP, SO I DECIDED TO WRITE ABOUT IT.



MIGHTIER

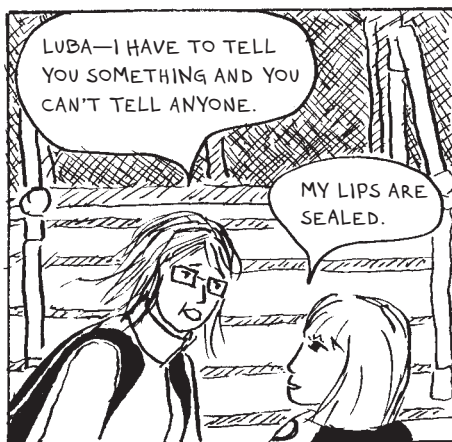
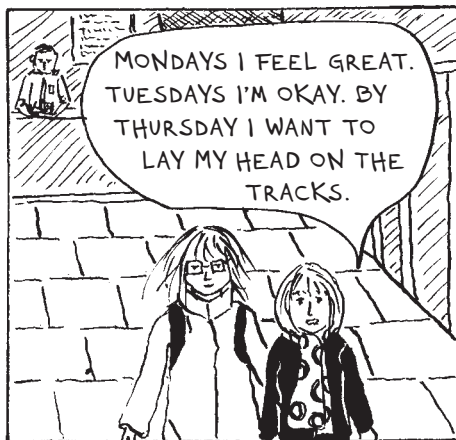
5:00—THE SAME DAY. I'M JUST GETTING READY TO GO HOME.

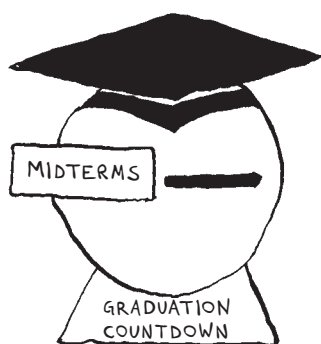




5:30

LUBA AND I HAVE BEEN TEACHING TOGETHER FOR OVER TWELVE YEARS. IT HELPS QUITE A BIT TO BE ABLE TO SHARE THINGS ABOUT THE STUDENTS.





## CHAPTER FOUR



# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

"THERE IS NOTHING SO STRONG OR SAFE IN AN  
EMERGENCY OF LIFE AS THE SIMPLE TRUTH."

CHARLES DICKENS

IT IS JUST ABOUT TIME FOR MIDTERMS, THE FIRST PROGRESS REPORTS, AND OPEN SCHOOL NIGHT. I HAVE OVER 110 STUDENTS ON MY ROSTER, AND IF I'VE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION, I SHOULD KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT EACH OF THEM AND A LOT ABOUT MOST OF THEM.

NOW I WANT TO SEE IF YOU'VE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## POP QUIZ

1. Draw a line from the student to his or her class.  
Each correct match worth 5 points.  
EXTRA CREDIT: Which class is the "good" one?



3rd  
Period



6th  
Period

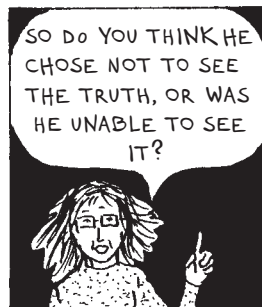
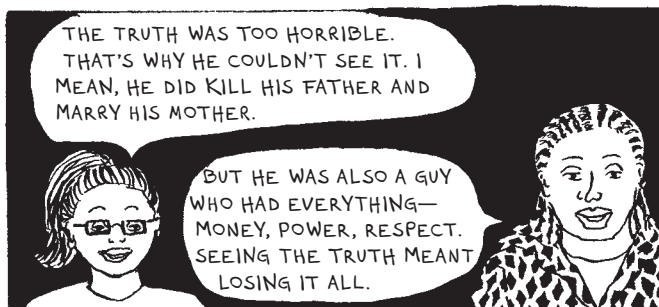
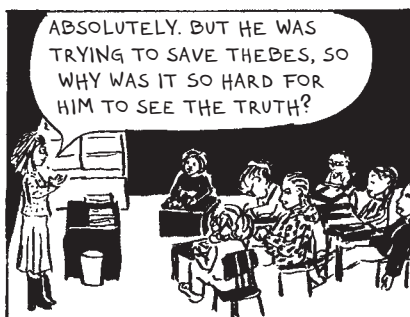
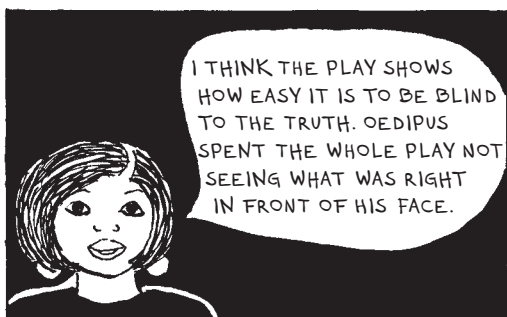


2. The following are worth 10 points each.

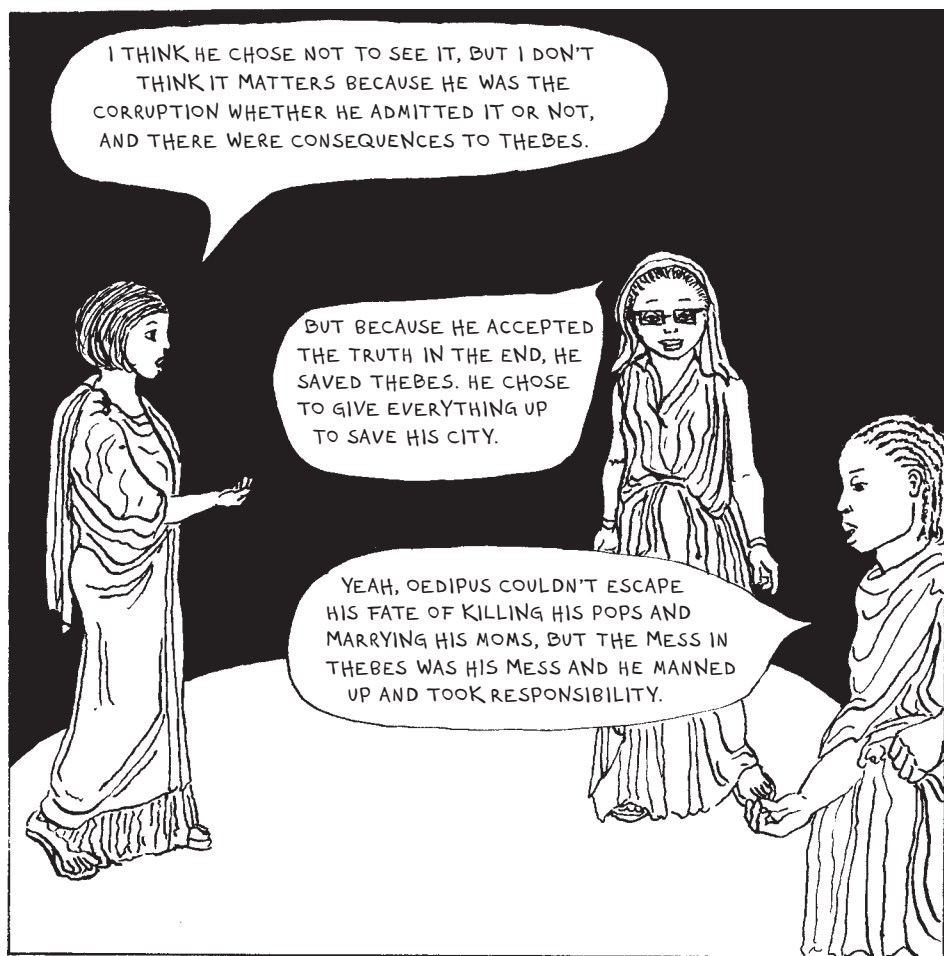
- A. The most likely reason Natalie got sick on the fishing trip is because 1) she is a kid with issues who wants attention, 2) it was a bad day for her astrological sign, 3) she is pregnant.
- B. Danny continues to call me "Snowflake." I should 1) consider it a term of endearment, 2) kick him out of class every time he says it, 3) use it as a way to practice suffering (mine and his.)
- C. Will must come to school every day because 1) otherwise he would get depressed, 2) it is a term of his probation, 3) he needs to practice commuting.
- D. Ralphie is 1) writing a novel, 2) writing a play, 3) writing a short story, 4) not real big on writing.
- E. Janis travels to school on 1) Access-A-Ride, a city-sponsored van service for people in wheel chairs, 2) her Shetland pony Trigger, 3) the subway.
3. Using references from the text to support your opinion, write a minimum of a paragraph about possible reasons why Jasmine is 20 and still in high school. (20 points)

This quiz will be included in your Midterm grade.

IN THIRD PERIOD WE'VE JUST FINISHED READING OEDIPUS AND ARE HAVING OUR FINAL DISCUSSION BEFORE THE STUDENTS WRITE THEIR ESSAY.



\*WILL'S BEADS SIGNAL HIS GANG AFFILIATION. WE WORK HARD TO KEEP GANG ISSUES OUT OF OUR SCHOOL. I HOPE THERE ISN'T A REASON WHY WILL DECIDED TO FLASH HIS BEADS TODAY.





INCREDIBLE, CLASS!  
REMEMBER—THE END  
OF THE MARKING PERIOD'S  
MONDAY.

MS. WILD—I'VE GOT  
ALL MY MISSING WORK.  
EVERYTHING!



JUST UNDER  
THE WIRE, JASMINE.  
HOW ARE YOU DOING  
IN YOUR OTHER  
CLASSES?



FINE...

YOU KNOW  
YOU HAVE TO  
PASS EVERY-  
THING.



I GOT THIS,  
WILD. DON'T  
WORRY.



SIXTH PERIOD IS ALSO FINISHING WORK BEFORE MIDTERMS. THIS CLASS HAS A DIFFERENT FOCUS FROM THIRD PERIOD. STUDENTS ARE PLACED HERE BECAUSE THEY NEED SKILL BUILDING. BECAUSE WE'RE A SECOND CHANCE SCHOOL, THIS ISN'T SURPRISING. MANY OF OUR STUDENTS HAVE A HISTORY OF ABSENTEEISM AND/OR ACADEMIC FAILURE; FOR SOME, THIS TRANSLATES INTO READING COMPREHENSION OR WRITING SKILLS THAT ARE BELOW GRADE LEVEL. MY BRIEF IS TO MOVE THEM AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL SKILLS.

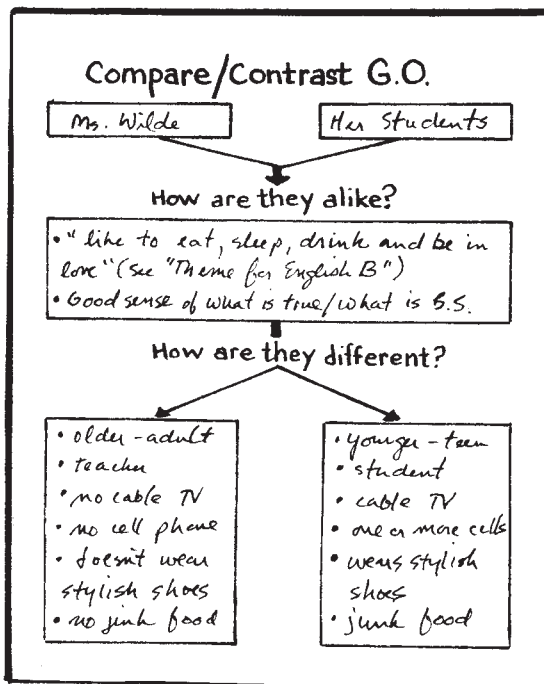
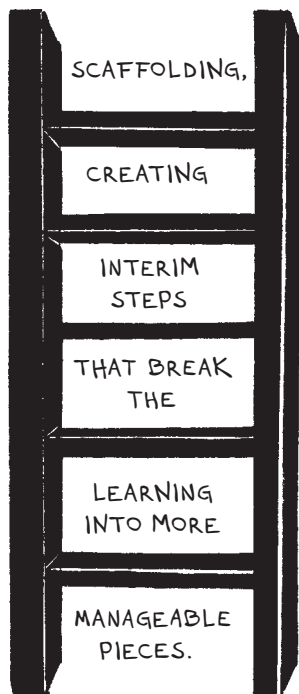
DANNY

WO WO WO!!! ANOTHER  
ESSAY? WHAT HAVE YOU  
BEEN SMOKIN', SNOWFLAKE?



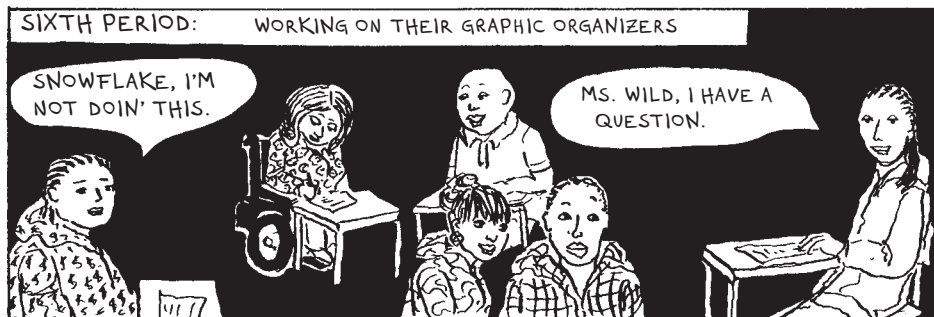


BUILDING THE SKILLS OF THE STUDENTS IN SIXTH PERIOD  
MEANS USING DIFFERENT TEXTS FROM THIRD PERIOD,  
AS WELL AS DIFFERENT METHODS, INCLUDING EXTRA



EXAMPLE OF A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

SIXTH PERIOD IS WORKING ON ONE OF THOSE INTERIM STEPS RIGHT NOW. THEY'RE USING A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER TO HELP GET THEIR IDEAS TOGETHER FOR AN ESSAY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THEMSELVES WITH DAVE, THE MAIN CHARACTER IN RICHARD WRIGHT'S STORY, "THE MAN WHO WAS ALMOST A MAN."

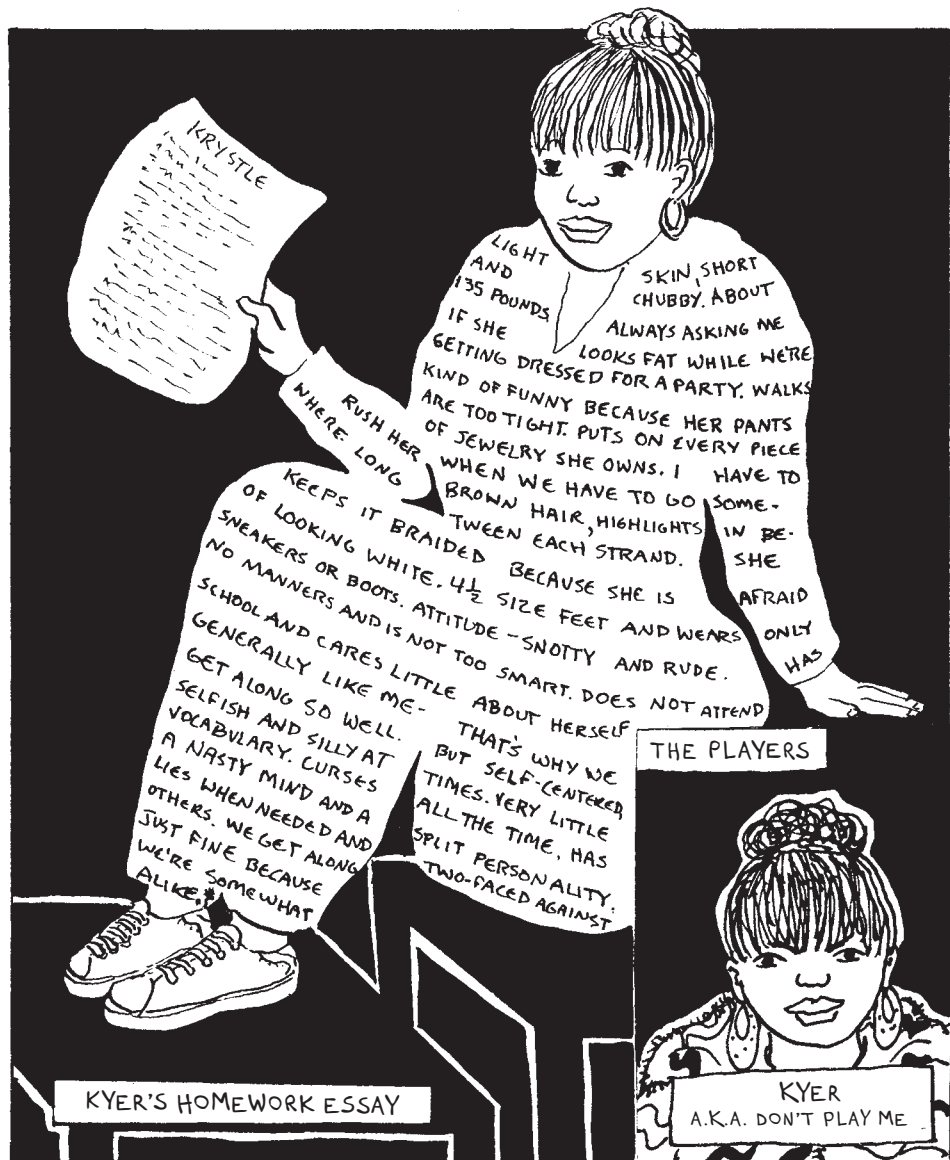
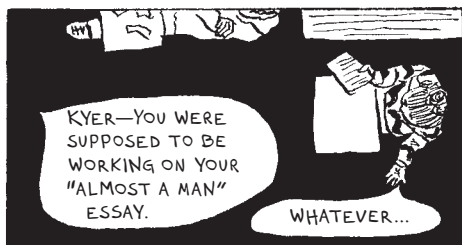




TEACHING OFTEN INVOLVES MULTI-TASKING



THIRTY MINUTES LATER



\* ESSAY BY TANICA DAVIS

BOOM



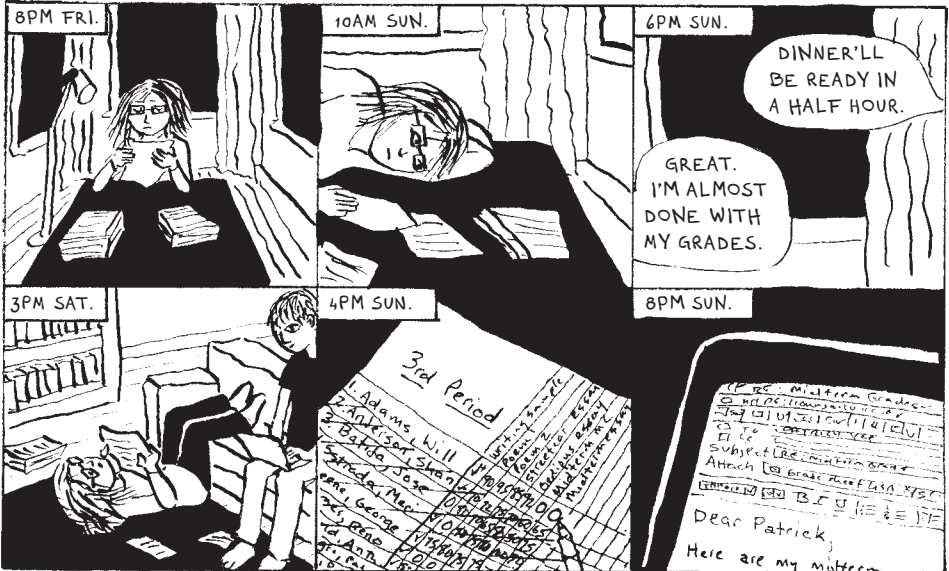
I REMEMBERED RALPHIE'S STORY ABOUT THE TEACHER WHO CALLED HIM "STUPID" IN FRONT OF THE WHOLE CLASS. I SEE WHY DANNY'S COMMENT GOT HIM SO UPSET. BACK TO THE LESSON, GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS AND SCAFFOLDING CAN BE REALLY HELPFUL FOR SOME STUDENTS, THOUGH YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THAT BASED ON WHAT JUST HAPPENED. AS YOU CAN TELL, TEACHING METHODS ARE ONLY ONE ASPECT OF GETTING THESE KIDS TO GRADE LEVEL IN TERMS OF SKILLS.



NOW THE MARATHON BEGINS—MIDTERMS...

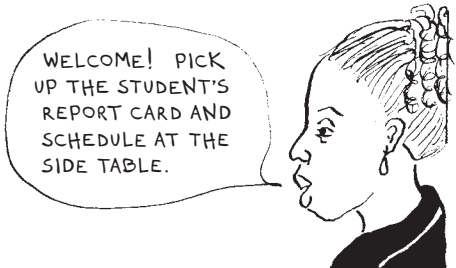


FOLLOWED BY GRADING...

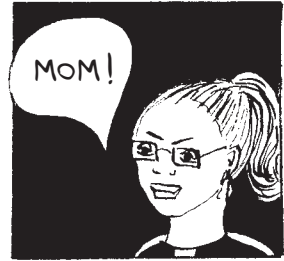


FOLLOWED BY OPEN SCHOOL NIGHT.

AT OUR SCHOOL THIS IS WHEN MIDTERM  
PROGRESS REPORTS ARE GIVEN OUT AND  
PARENTS AND GUARDIANS ARE INVITED  
TO SPEAK TO THE TEACHERS.

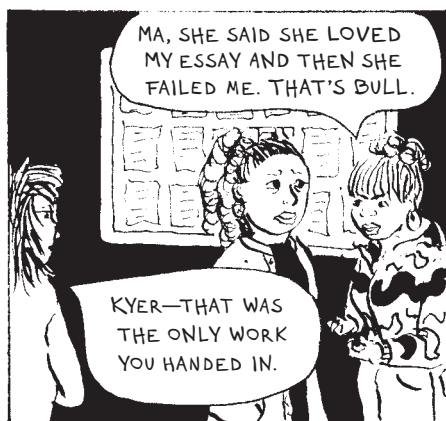


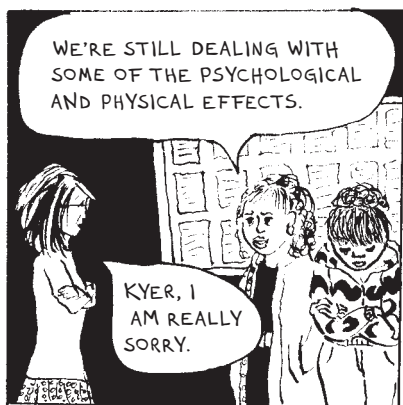




MIDTERM PROGRESS		
Jasmine Jackson		
PERIOD	COURSE	GRADE
1	Living Environ.	60
2	Global 3	75
3	English 2	80
		100

\* A 60 IS A FAILURE. IF JASMINE DOES NOT PASS ALL HER CLASSES AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER, SHE MAY AGE OUT BEFORE SHE CAN GRADUATE.

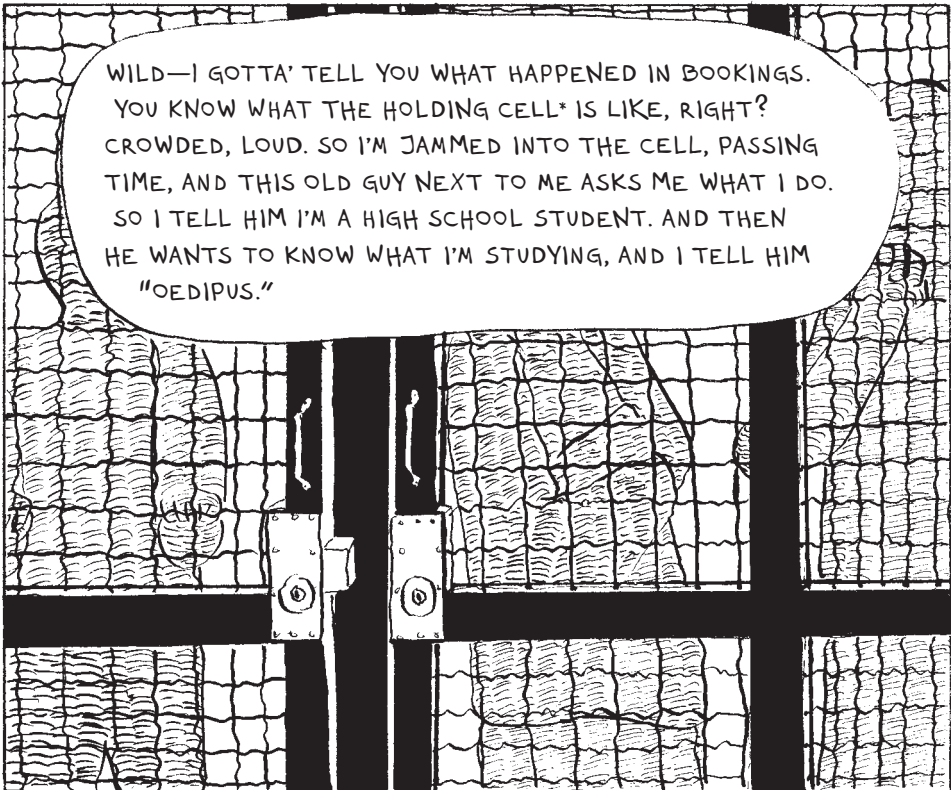




\* A SWEEP IS WHERE THE COPS LOCK DOWN AN AREA DIRECTLY AFTER A CRIME AND BRING EVERYONE ON THE STREET IN AS POSSIBLE SUSPECTS.



IF THIS IS SEEN AS A VIOLATION OF WILL'S PROBATION, HE COULD BE IN BIG TROUBLE.



\* PEOPLE SUSPECTED OF A CRIME ARE BROUGHT TO THE COURTS BY THE COPS, WHERE THEY ARE LOCKED IN A HOLDING CELL UNTIL THEY SEE A JUDGE, WHO THEN DETERMINES IF THEY HAVE TO STAY, CAN GO FREE, OR MUST POST BAIL UNTIL TRIAL.

AND HE DOESN'T KNOW THE  
STORY, SO I BEGIN TELLING IT.

AND I'M GETTING INTO OEDIPUS  
AND THEBES AND TIRESIAS  
AND THE CORRUPTION, AND ALL  
OF A SUDDEN I NOTICE THAT  
THE WHOLE CELL IS SILENT—  
EVERYONE IS LISTENING TO ME.

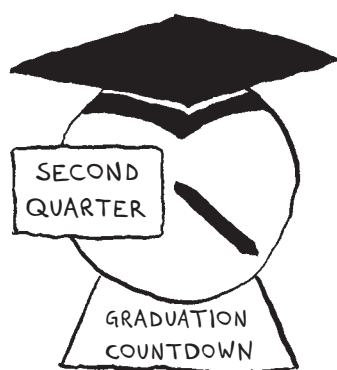
SO I KEEP TALKING.... AND NOW I'M GETTING  
TO THE PART WHERE JOSCASTA'S TRYING TO  
FRONT ON OEDIPUS, ACTING LIKE SHE DOESN'T  
KNOW, AND THE WHOLE CELL IS INTO IT...  
AND THEN THERE'S THIS GIANT COMMOTION—  
C.O.'S COME IN TO TAKE GUYS OUT, THEY BRING  
NEW GUYS IN, DOORS SLAMMIN', YELLIN'  
—AND THE STORY'S LOST.

FINALLY THINGS SETTLE DOWN, AND I'M THINKING MAYBE I'LL TRY TO GET A LITTLE  
SLEEP. SO I'M MOVING TO THE BACK OF THE CELL TO SEE IF I CAN FIND A CORNER  
WHERE I CAN SIT DOWN, AND THIS WHOLE GROUP OF GUYS TURNS TO ME. NOW I'M NOT  
STUPID, SO I'M WATCHING MY BACK. BUT THEN THEY SAY TO ME, ALMOST IN ONE VOICE:

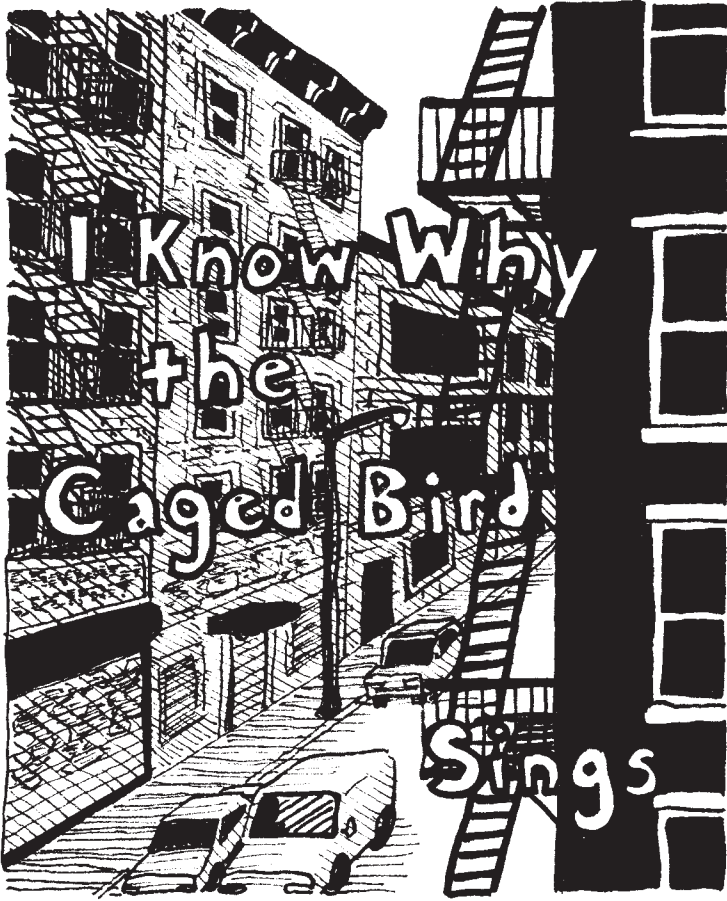








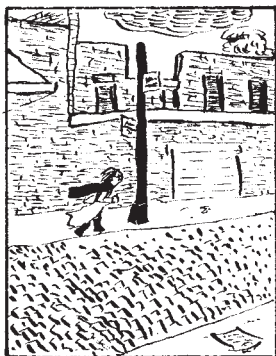
## CHAPTER FIVE



"ALL GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS REQUIRE TIME."

MAYA ANGELOU

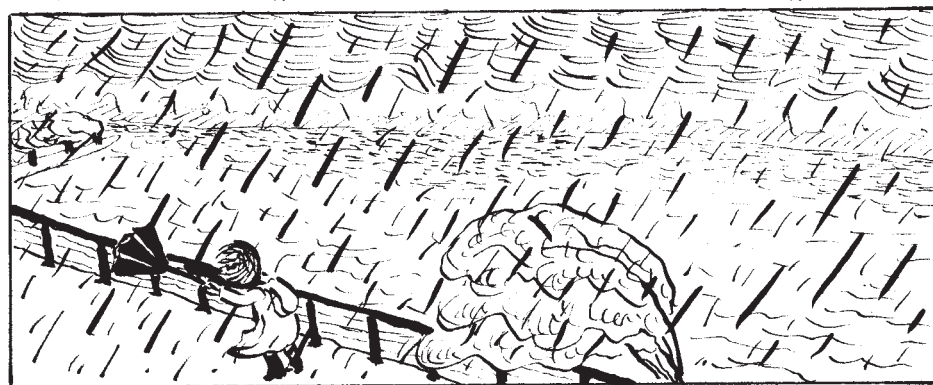
## DAY AFTER OPEN SCHOOL NIGHT



ON MY WAY TO WORK, I TAKE THE SUBWAY FIVE STOPS PAST THE STOP FOR WILDCAT. THEN I WALK BACK TO THE SCHOOL, GOING ALONG THE HUDSON RIVER.



IT'S A WAY TO GET EXERCISE, BUT ALSO TO HAVE SOME TIME ALONE. I GET TO CLEAR MY HEAD OR WORK OUT PROBLEMS OR JUST THINK.



RIGHT NOW I'M THINKING ABOUT WHY I'M GOING BACK TO SCHOOL LESS THAN TWELVE HOURS AFTER I LEFT.

SO WILL'S BACK, BUT HOW COME JASMINE ISN'T HERE?

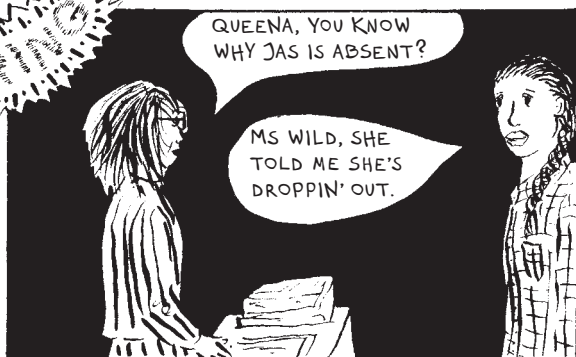
3RD PERIOD

TODAY WE'RE STARTING OUR NEXT UNIT. WE'LL BE BLAH BLAH BLAH... REMEMBER, THE THEME OF THIS SEMESTER IS TRUTH. HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT IS TRUE? BLAH BLAH...



QUEENA, YOU KNOW WHY JAS IS ABSENT?

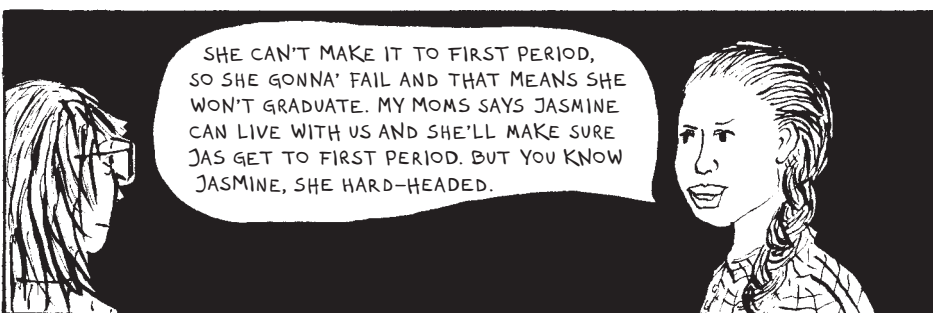
MS WILD, SHE TOLD ME SHE'S DROPPIN' OUT.



WHAT?!

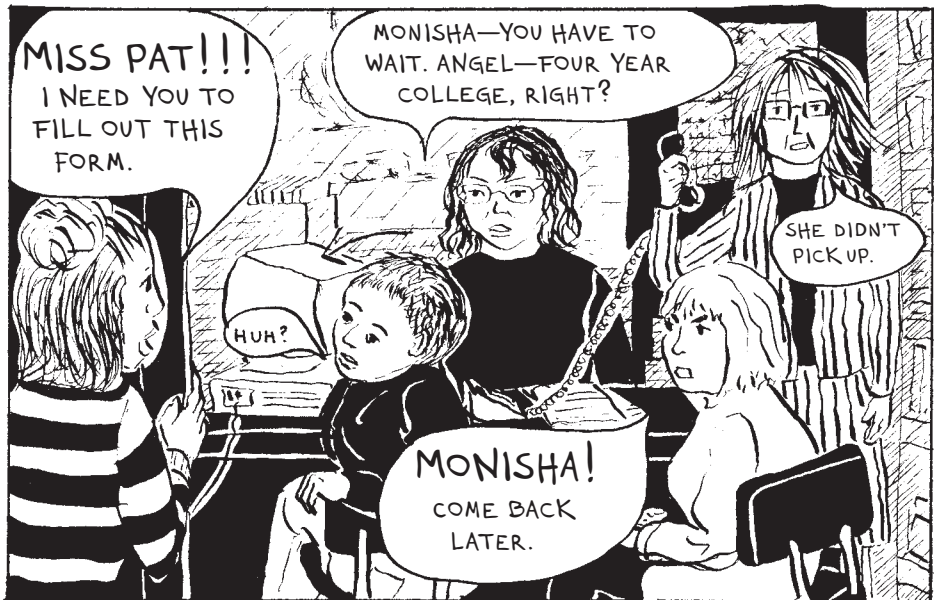


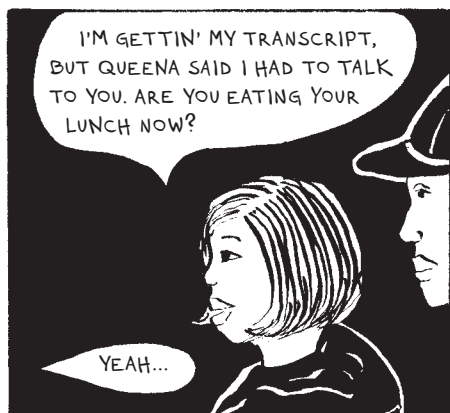
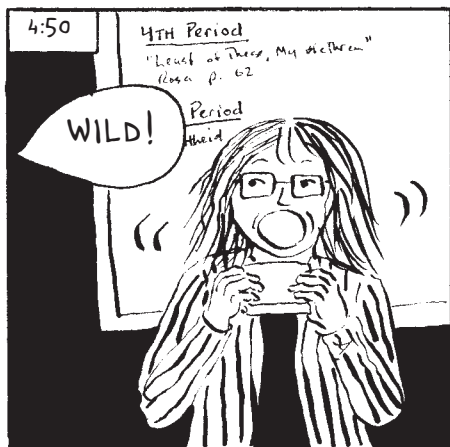
SHE CAN'T MAKE IT TO FIRST PERIOD, SO SHE GONNA' FAIL AND THAT MEANS SHE WON'T GRADUATE. MY MOMS SAYS JASMINE CAN LIVE WITH US AND SHE'LL MAKE SURE JAS GET TO FIRST PERIOD. BUT YOU KNOW JASMINE, SHE HARD-HEADED.





I DECIDE I HAVE TO TRY TO GET AHOLD OF JASMINE BEFORE SHE DOES SOMETHING DRASTIC. PAT ALWAYS HAS ALL THE NUMBERS AND INFORMATION. SHE'S THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR FOR SENIORS, AND SHE AND LUBA ARE MY BEST FRIENDS AT WILDCAT.







# JASMINE'S JAW STORY

MY SISTER GOT INTO A FIGHT WITH HER BOYFRIEND AND HE BROKE HER JAW.



BUT DON'T FEEL BAD FOR HER. SHE'S CRAZY!

AFTER SHE CAME TO, WITH HER JAW ALL CRUNCHY, SHE WENT AND GOT BLEACH AND THREW IT IN HIS EYES.

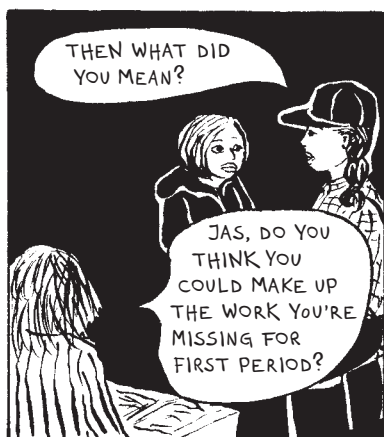


THEY WENT TO THE HOSPITAL TOGETHER.

AFTER THEY GOT OUT, THEY KEPT LIVING TOGETHER—MY SISTER WITH HER JAW WIRED SHUT AND HER BOY FRIEND WITH THE WHITE GAUZE ON HIS EYES.

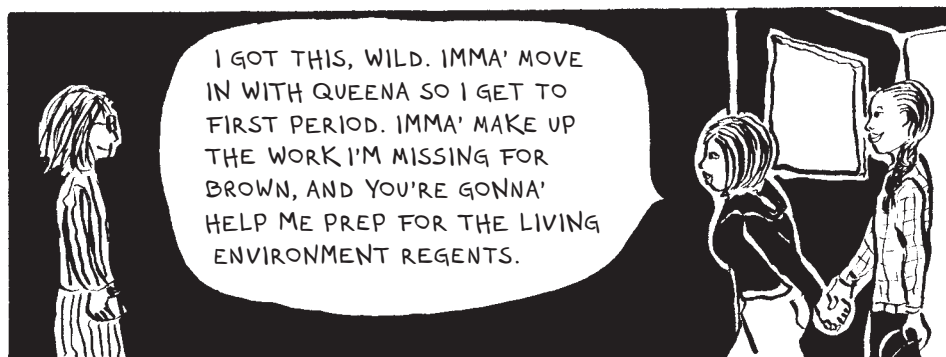


AND SHE GOT THE BEST OF THE SITUATION. SHE'S A BIG GIRL AND SHE COULD ONLY GET FOOD THROUGH A LITTLE STRAW THAT WENT IN A HOLE BETWEEN HER TEETH, SO WHEN SHE GOT TOO HUNGRY SHE WOULD BEAT UP ON HIM, AND HE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING BECAUSE HE COULDN'T SEE.





MR. BROWN'S ROOM



WHETHER JASMINE DROPS OUT OR NOT, SCHOOL KEEPS GOING.



ONCE MIDTERMS ARE OVER, THE SEMESTER FEELS LIKE IT IS FLYING BY.

BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, THANKSGIVING'S ARRIVED.



THEN A FEW MORE WEEKS OF SCHOOL BEFORE WINTER BREAK.



THIS YEAR WE'RE HAVING A TALENT SHOW BEFORE THE HOLIDAYS



YOU WILL NOT BE IN THE SHOW IF YOU'RE NOT LINED UP NOW!



OUR C.F.O. CECILIA IS ORGANIZING IT.

SHE'S REALLY GOOD.



THIS SHOW IS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE FOR THE STUDENTS.

NAT—YOU'RE NEXT.

GO, JD.

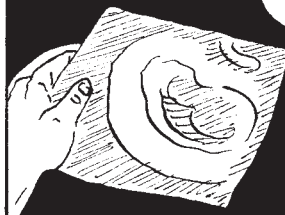
WILD—I HAVE TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING



THEY READ POEMS, DANCE, SING.

MY BABY'S FIRST PICTURE!

NATALIE—IT'S YOUR TURN.



PARENTS ATTEND, KIDS BRING THEIR LITTLE BROTHERS AND SISTERS...

SNOWFLAKE—THESE ARE MY BROTHERS. I WANT THEM TO GO TO WILDCAT TOO!

NAT—A LITTLE SLOWER.

WAH!





AND IT'S BEAUTIFUL!



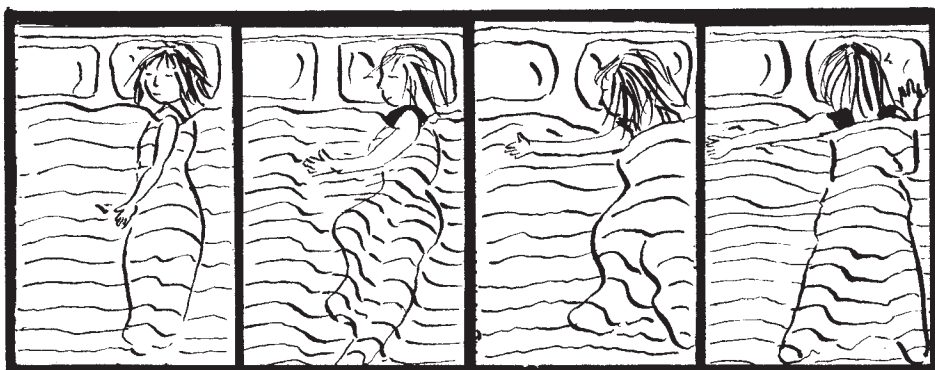
\*FROM A SONG BY WILDCAT GRADUATE LUIS FLORES



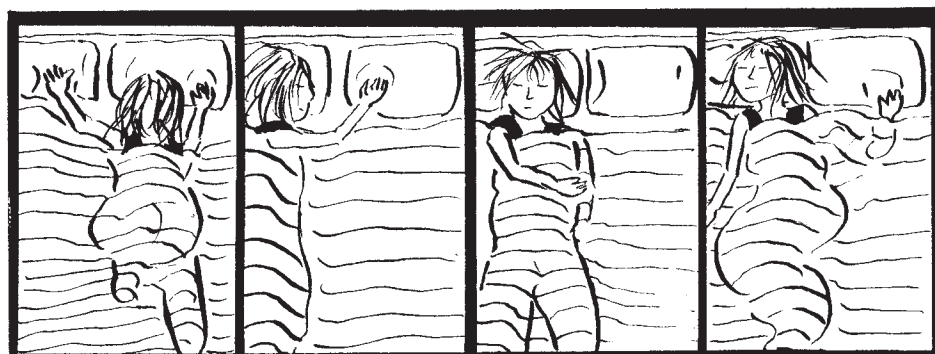


AND NOW—WINTER BREAK!!!

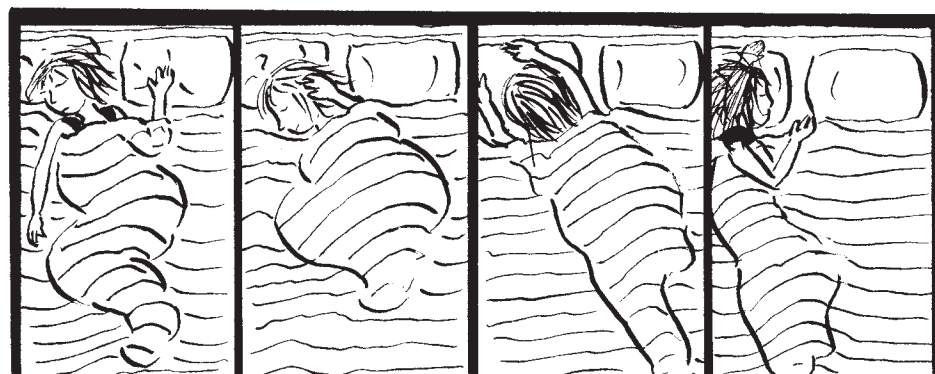
**VACATION ASSIGNMENT:** WRITE A MONOLOGUE IN THE VOICE OF A CHARACTER WHO IS DESCRIBING HIS OR HER EXPERIENCES OVER WINTER BREAK. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL OR FICTION.



THIS IS HOW I WISH I COULD SPEND WINTER BREAK.



AN ARTICLE I READ SOMEWHERE DESCRIBED THE BEST TEACHERS AS "TIRELESS." I GUESS THAT'S NOT ME.

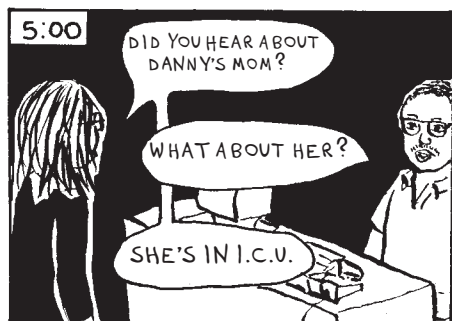


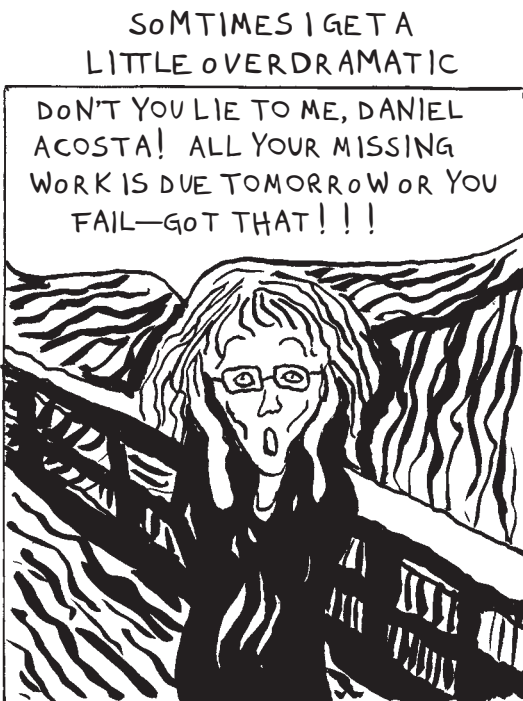
I AM TIRED. REALLY TIRED.

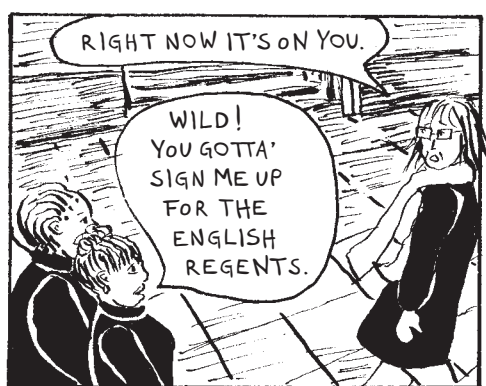
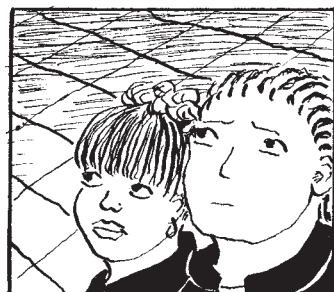
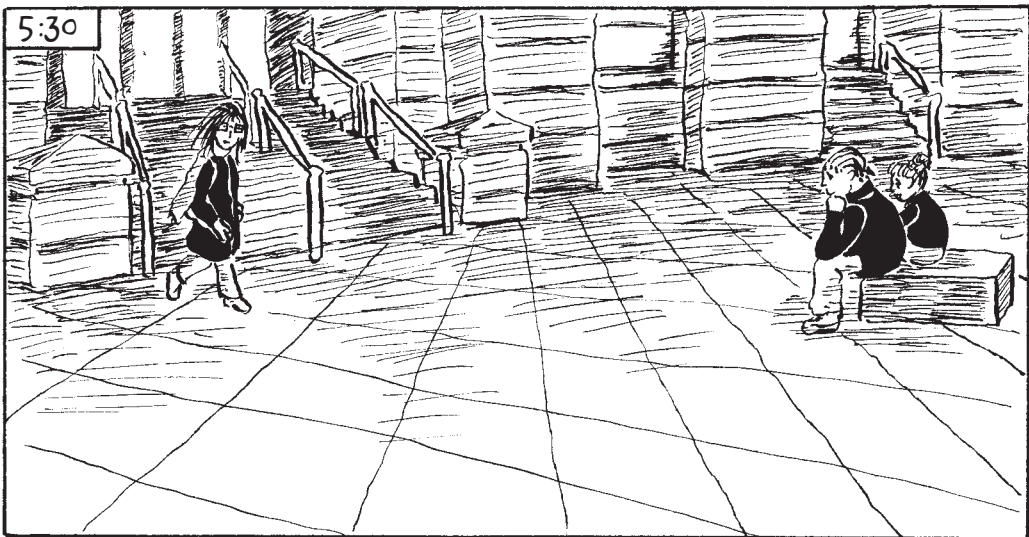
THEN WINTER BREAK IS OVER, AND IT ALL STARTS AGAIN.



MR. GREEN IS OUR DEAN IN CHARGE OF DISCIPLINE.







HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES  
IT TAKE TO CHANGE A  
STUDENT SO THE  
LIGHT BULB  
GOES  
ON?

MAYBE ONE.

SOMETIMES  
IT'S CLEAR  
WHAT A  
STUDENT'S  
OBSTACLES  
TO GRADUATING  
ARE. SOMETIMES  
THOUGH, IT'S NOT  
ABOUT OBSTACLES—  
IT'S ABOUT BUY-IN.  
THESE KIDS DON'T SEE  
THE NEED TO GRADUATE,  
AND UNTIL THEY DO,  
IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE  
TO GET THEM THERE.  
DANNY AND KYER HAVEN'T  
BOUGHT IN, WHICH IS WHY I  
AM GOING TO HAVE THEM BOTH  
TAKE THE ENGLISH REGENTS  
AT THE END OF THE  
SEMESTER. IF THEY PASS,  
THEY'LL BE THAT MUCH  
CLOSER TO GETTING THEIR  
DIPLOMAS, AND  
MAYBE THEY'LL  
FEEL IT'S  
WORTH  
IT.

MAYBE THE  
WHOLE  
STAFF.







# TEACHING ALWAYS INVOLVES JUGGLING



SPEAKING OF JUGGLING, IT'S TIME FOR THE REGENTS, THOSE MANDATORY NEW YORK STATE TESTS. WHY IS THIS ABOUT JUGGLING? BECAUSE TEST SCORES MATTER — IN TERMS OF OUR SCHOOL'S SUCCESS AND MY EVALUATION. WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO GET HIGH TEST SCORES? TEST PREP. JUST ASK PRINCETON REVIEW AND KAPLAN. BUT TEST PREP IS JUST THAT, AND IT'S NOT EDUCATION. WHAT'S A TEACHER TO DO?

## COMPREHENSIVE ENGLISH

The University of the State of New York

REGENTS HIGH SCHOOL EXAMINATION

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

9:15 — THE ENGLISH REGENTS



9:20 OKAY—WE'RE STARTING.



THE TEST BEGINS WITH A LISTENING PASSAGE.

9:25



DO NOT OPEN THIS EXAMINATION BOOKLET UNTIL THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN.

WHAT DANNY IS HEARING  
RIGHT NOW.



\* SLANG FOR "YOU'VE JUST RUINED MY DAY."





# FIRST SEMESTER REPORT CARD

DANNY: PASSED NO REGENTS. FAILED EVERY CLASS EXCEPT GYM AND MUSIC. ON ACADEMIC PROBATION.

WILL: PASSED ENGLISH REGENTS WITH AN 84. ON THE HONOR ROLL. HE IS FINALLY BEGINNING TO BELIEVE HE SHOULD GO TO COLLEGE.

KYER: THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT SHE PASSED HER ENGLISH REGENTS. THE BAD NEWS IS THAT SHE FAILED FIVE CLASSES.

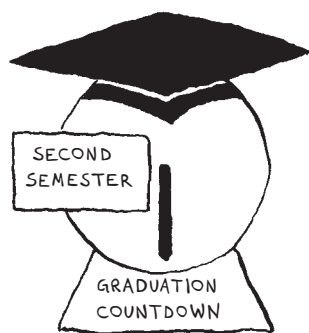
RALPHIE: HE WASN'T READY FOR REGENTS, BUT HE DID PASS SIX OUT OF SEVEN CLASSES. THAT'S A LOT BETTER THAN AT HIS OLD SCHOOL, WHERE HE ONLY EARNED TWO CREDITS IN TWO SEMESTERS.

JASMINE: GOT THE HIGHEST SCORE ON THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT REGENTS, SO SHE GETS ALL HER CREDITS AND IS ON TRACK TO GRADUATE.

JANIS: PASSED HER ENGLISH AND SCIENCE REGENTS AND ALL HER CLASSES. WILL GRADUATE IN JUNE. IS ALREADY APPLYING TO COLLEGE.

NATALIE: ON TRACK TO GRADUATE IN TERMS OF CREDITS, BUT MISSED THE ENGLISH REGENTS BECAUSE OF PREMATURE CONTRACTIONS. SHE AND THE BABY ARE OKAY, BUT THE JUNE TEST IS ON HER DUE DATE.





## CHAPTER SIX

# PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM



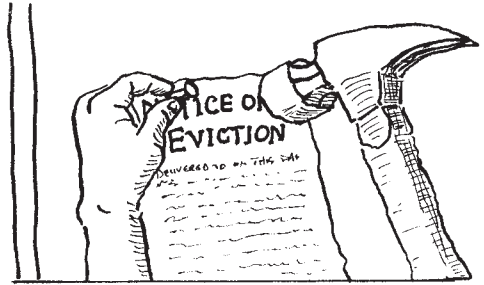
"I THINK THIS IS THE BEGINNING  
OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP."

RICK IN "CASABLANCA"

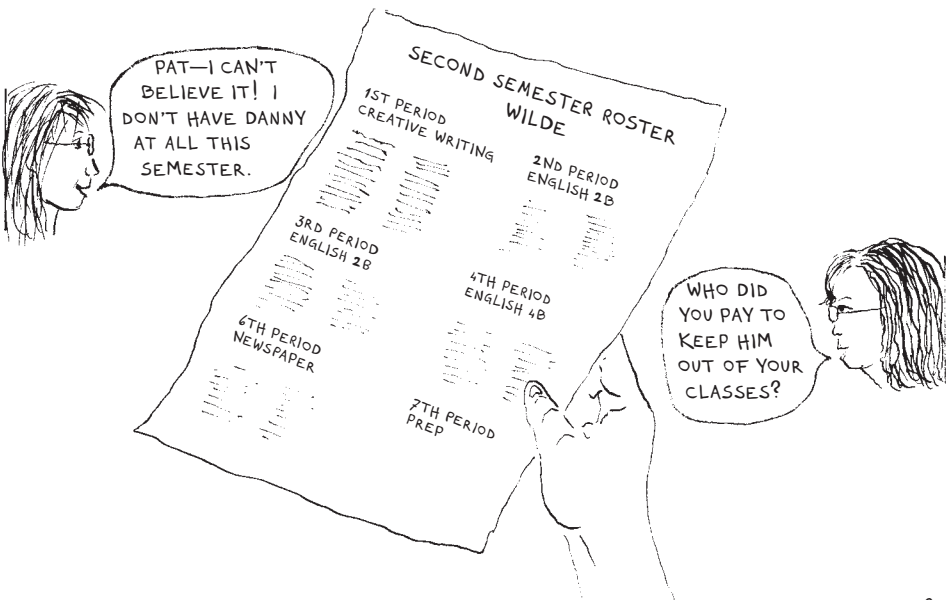
I USED TO DREAM THAT I DIDN'T HAVE A PLACE TO LIVE.



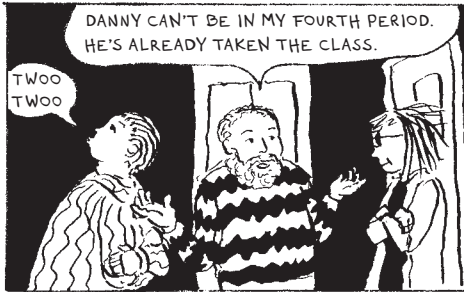
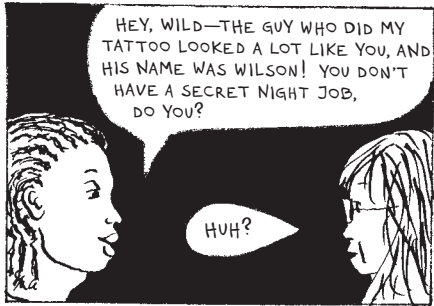
THEN MY DREAMS CHANGED AND I HAD A PLACE TO LIVE, BUT IT WAS NEVER VERY SECURE.



RECENTLY, IN MY DREAMS I AM LIVING IN A PLACE THAT'S MINE, BUT —LIKE PENELOPE AND HER SUITORS, THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE HANGING OUT AND EATING MY FOOD WHO WON'T LEAVE.



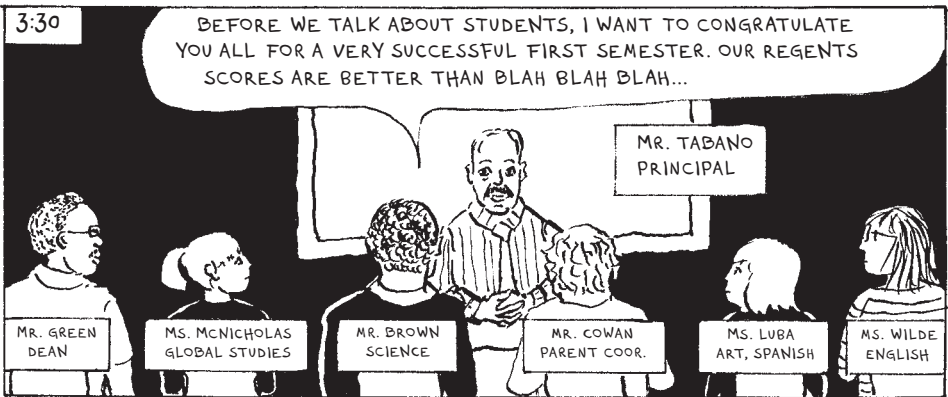
SECOND SEMESTER: NEW CLASSES, BUT MOST OF THE SAME STUDENTS. BECAUSE EIGHT ENGLISH CREDITS ARE NEEDED FOR GRADUATION, MR. STEINER AND I END UP SEEING MANY OF THE SAME KIDS FOR TWO OR MORE SEMESTERS.





## FIRST STAFF MEETING OF SECOND SEMESTER—

ON FRIDAY AFTERNOONS THE STUDENTS ARE LET OUT EARLY SO THAT TEACHERS, SUPPORT STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATORS CAN MEET. WE LOOK AT DATA, GO OVER BUREAUCRATIC RESPONSIBILITIES, HAVE EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS, AND DISCUSS STUDENTS.





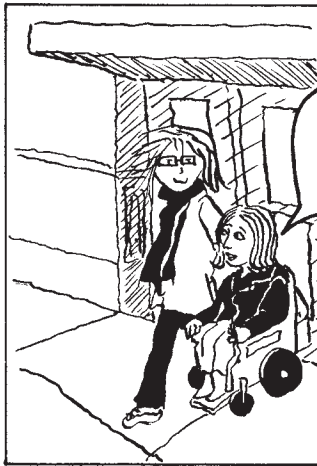
\*THE N.Y.C. BOARD OF EDUCATION PROHIBITS STUDENTS FROM HAVING PHONES IN SCHOOL. OUR POLICY, LIKE MANY SCHOOLS, IS TO CONFISCATE A PHONE IF WE SEE IT.





\*RADIO ROOKIES IS THE PROGRAM JANIS APPLIED TO IN THE FALL. SPONSORED BY PUBLIC RADIO, IT GIVES TEENS EXPERIENCE PRODUCING THEIR OWN RADIO DOCUMENTARIES.

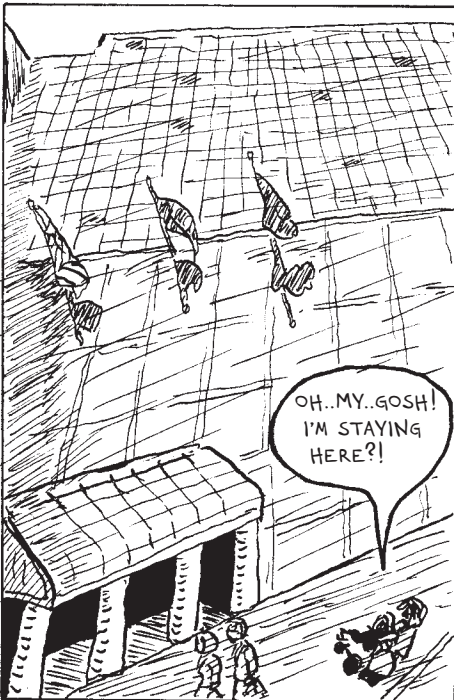
# JANIS'S RADIO ROOKIE WEEKEND



MS. WILDE, THANKS FOR COMING WITH ME.  
JUST STAY FOR THE BEGINNING. I'M SO  
NERVOUS. I'VE NEVER STAYED IN A HOTEL  
BEFORE...AND WHAT DO YOU THINK...



...I MEAN, THE OTHER KIDS,  
ARE THEY GOING TO BE LIKE  
ME, OR DO YOU THINK THEY'RE  
GOING TO BE RICH AND SNOTTY?  
WHAT IF THEY GIVE ME TWO  
FORKS, AND I DON'T KNOW  
WHICH ONE TO USE?...



AND I KNOW MY IDEA WAS ABOUT  
MY DISABILITY, BUT WHAT IF THEY  
HAVE A PROBLEM WITH IT? I AM SO  
NERVOUS. CAN YOU TELL THAT I'M  
NERVOUS?

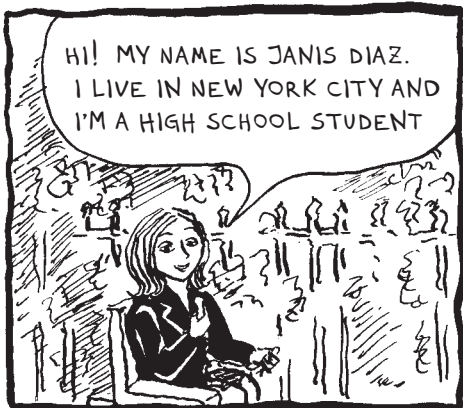
HI, JANIS? I LOVED  
YOUR IDEA! HELP  
YOURSELF TO THE FOOD.  
WE'RE GOING TO START  
IN TEN MINUTES.



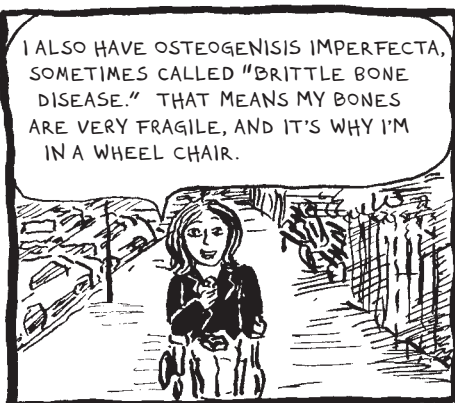
# A DAY IN MY WHEELS

BY JANIS DIAZ

HI! MY NAME IS JANIS DIAZ.  
I LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY AND  
I'M A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT



I ALSO HAVE OSTEOGENESIS IMPERFECTA,  
SOMETIMES CALLED "BRITTLE BONE  
DISEASE." THAT MEANS MY BONES  
ARE VERY FRAGILE, AND IT'S WHY I'M  
IN A WHEEL CHAIR.



A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE NO  
IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE TO  
LIVE WITH A DISABILITY,  
SO THAT'S WHAT I WANT  
TO GET AT—A DAY IN  
MY WHEELS.



RIGHT NOW I'M IN A PARK, AND THERE'S  
A CUTE GUY ON A BENCH RIGHT ACROSS  
FROM ME... EXCUSE ME, WOULD YOU  
EVER DATE A DISABLED GIRL?



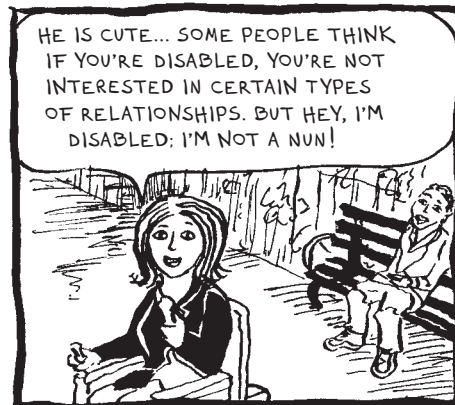
I KNOW IT SOUNDS LIKE I'M COMING  
ON TO YOU, BUT I'M MAKING A RADIO  
DOCUMENTARY. WOULD YOU EVER  
DATE A DISABLED GIRL?

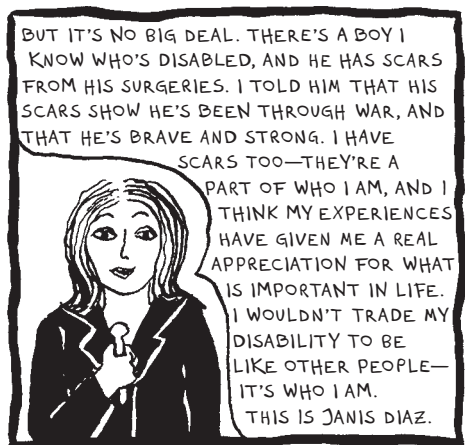
IF SHE'S PRETTY  
LIKE YOU.

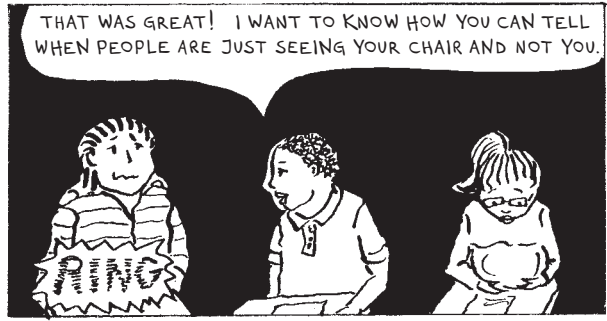
...I'LL GET YOUR  
NUMBER LATER...



HE IS CUTE... SOME PEOPLE THINK  
IF YOU'RE DISABLED, YOU'RE NOT  
INTERESTED IN CERTAIN TYPES  
OF RELATIONSHIPS. BUT HEY, I'M  
DISABLED: I'M NOT A NUN!





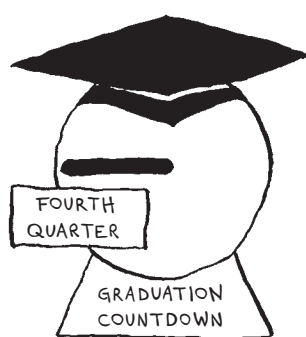




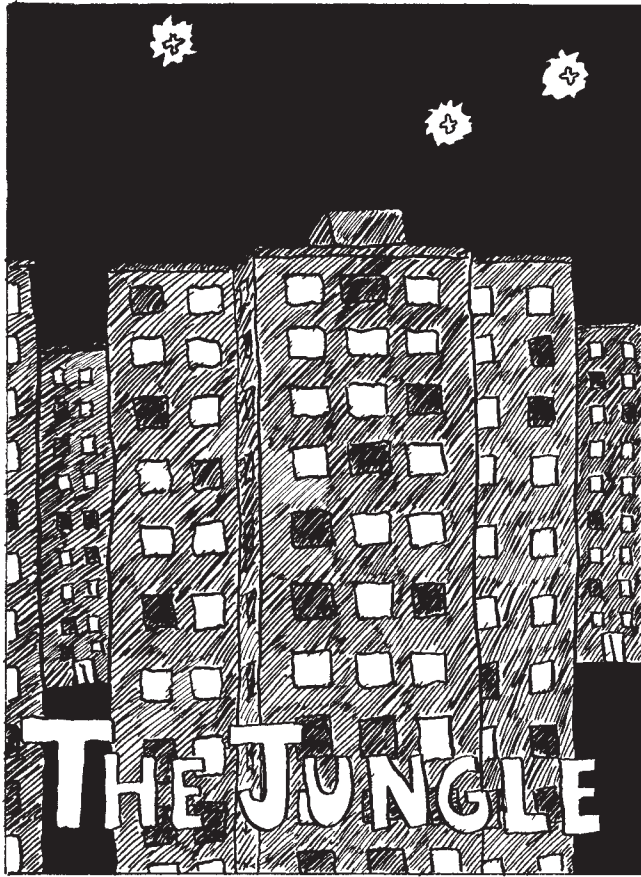
DANNY IS STILL ATTENDING WILDCAT, EVEN AFTER THE NAKED CELL PHONE PHOTO INCIDENT. THAT'S THE THING ABOUT A SECOND CHANCE SCHOOL—WE GIVE KIDS SECOND CHANCES, BECAUSE CHANGE DOESN'T NECESSARILY HAPPEN QUICKLY OR EASILY. WOULD OUR SCHOOL HAVE BETTER DATA IF WE "ENCOURAGED" KIDS LIKE DANNY TO TRANSFER SOMEWHERE ELSE? ABSOLUTELY. BUT WOULD THAT HELP DANNY?







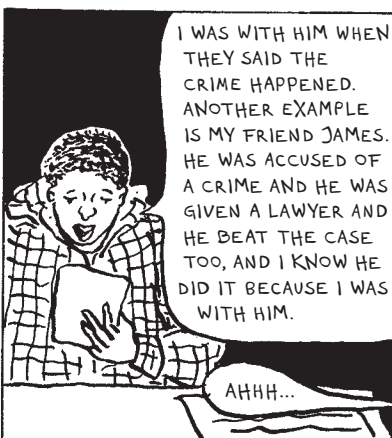
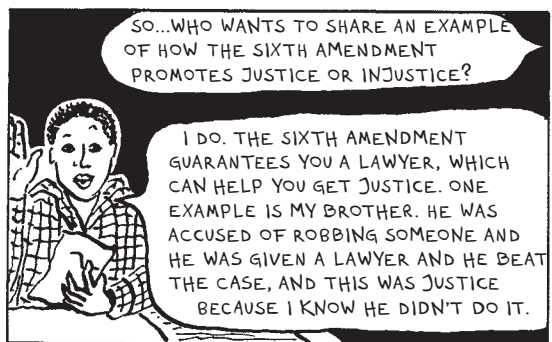
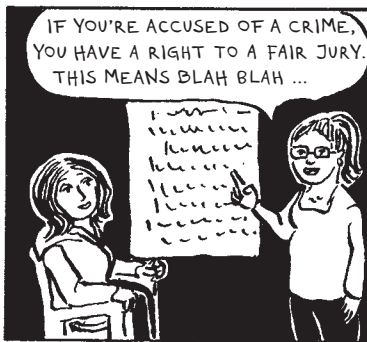
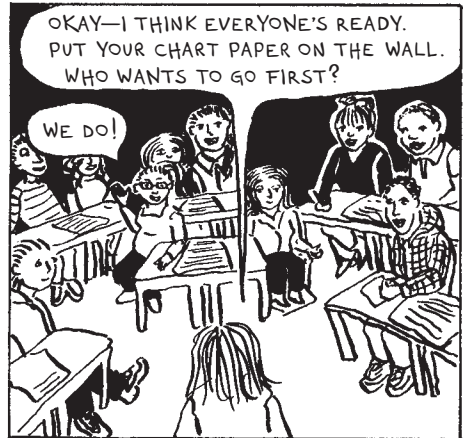
## CHAPTER SEVEN

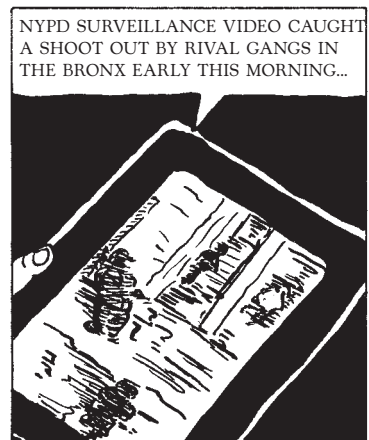
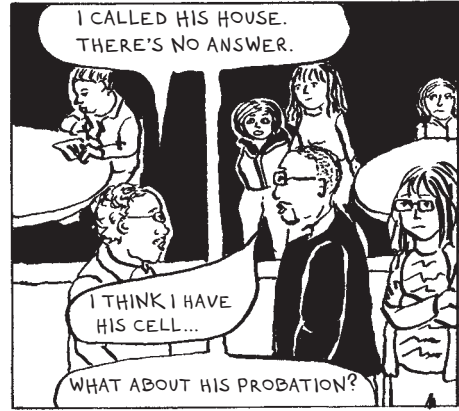


"THERE IS NO WILDERNESS WHERE I CAN HIDE  
FROM THESE THINGS, AND THERE IS NO HAVEN  
WHERE I CAN ESCAPE THEM."

UPTON SINCLAIR

IN 4TH PERIOD WE'RE WORKING ON A UNIT BASED AROUND THE IDEA OF JUSTICE. TODAY THE STUDENTS ARE LOOKING AT THE SIXTH AMENDMENT— INTERPRETING THE CONCEPTS AND CONNECTING THEM TO JUSTICE OR INJUSTICE.

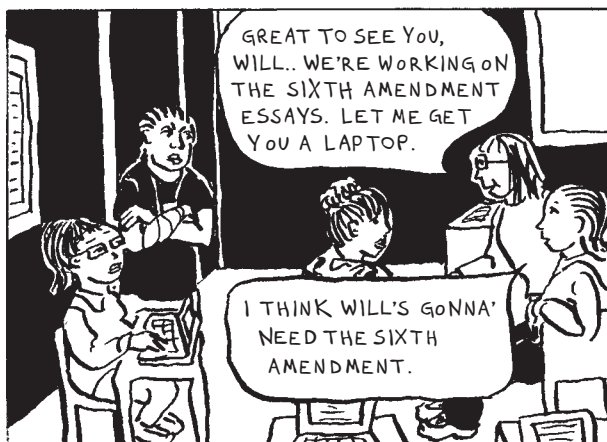




\*RALPHIE'S DAD HAD SURGERY, SO RALPHIE HAD TO TAKE OVER HIS DAD'S WORK AS A BUILDING SUPER.



A WEEK LATER, WILL IS BACK AT SCHOOL. LIKE TYRONE SAID, HE'LL RECOVER FROM HIS PHYSICAL WOUNDS. THE OTHER CONSEQUENCES AREN'T CLEAR.







FIGHTS ARE EXTREMELY RARE AT WILDCAT, BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN THEY HAPPEN. LIKE ALL SCHOOLS, WE HAVE A SAFETY PLAN IN PLACE.



OKAY, EVERYONE—GO TO CLASS. ANTHONY, COULD YOU TAKE DANNY UNTIL I'M DONE WITH WILL?



LET HIM GO, ALEX. JUST MAKE SURE HE LEAVES THE BUILDING. I'LL CALL HIS MOTHER WHEN I'M DONE WITH DANNY.



AFTER YOU, DANNY.



TWO MINUTES LATER

DANNY, WHAT  
DO YOU THINK  
WE SHOULD DO?

TWO DAYS LATER

DANNY, HAVE YOU COME UP  
WITH ANY ANSWERS?

MR. TABANO, I KNOW YOU HAVE GIVEN DANNY  
MANY CHANCES. BUT I AM BEGGING YOU FOR  
ONE MORE. IF HE HAS TO LEAVE THIS  
SCHOOL, I AM REALLY AFRAID FOR WHAT  
WILL HAPPEN TO HIM.

DANNY—WHAT'S GOING  
TO CHANGE?

I PROMISE I WON'T  
SAY STUPID THINGS TO  
PEOPLE ANY MORE.

I PROMISE I WON'T GET INTO  
ANY MORE FIGHTS...I PROMISE  
I'LL DO MY CLASSWORK.

...I PROMISE I'LL DO MY  
HOMEWORK...LOOK, TABANO,  
I'M NOT A CHURCH BOY. I  
GOTTA' JOKE EVERY NOW  
AND THEN TOO.

WHAT A WEEK...THE  
CONSEQUENCES: DANNY  
IS GOING TO BE GIVEN  
ONE MORE CHANCE.



THIS TIME I THINK  
IT REALLY IS HIS  
LAST CHANCE.  
AND WILL? I  
HAVE A  
FEELING HE  
WON'T BE BACK  
FOR AWHILE. I  
DON'T KNOW  
WHAT THE  
SHOOTING  
MEANS FOR HIS  
PROBATION.

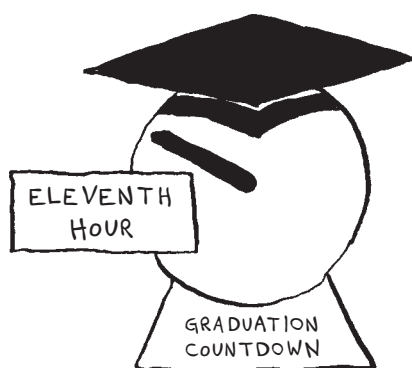
WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT I HAVE TO  
GRADE ALL THESE ESSAYS BY MONDAY.

BUT I AM REALLY WORRIED ABOUT WILL.









## CHAPTER EIGHT



"IF THINGS ARE GOING UNTOWARDLY ONE  
MONTH, THEY ARE SURE TO MEND THE NEXT."

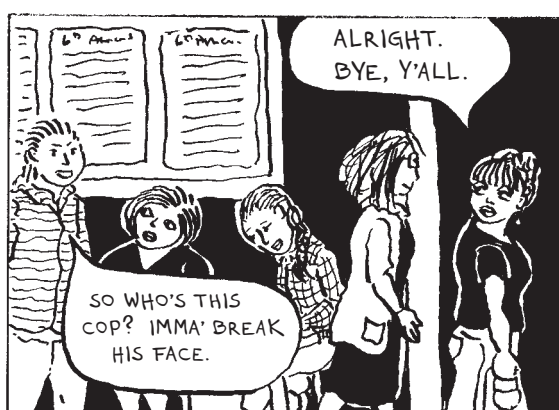
JANE AUSTEN

ALMOST EVERY SEMESTER I HAVE A SHORT UNIT WHERE THE STUDENTS WRITE THEIR OWN POEMS. THE PROBLEM WITH THIS IS IT MEANS I'M NOT USING THAT TIME ON LESSONS THAT CAN DIRECTLY TRANSLATE INTO HIGHER STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES. BECAUSE TESTS ARE SO IMPORTANT IN TODAY'S WORLD, SPENDING A FEW DAYS ON KIDS' CREATIVE WRITING CAN SEEM LIKE A BAD CHOICE. BUT I DO IT, BECAUSE I KNOW THE VALUE—EVEN IF IT ISN'T NECESSARILY QUANTIFIABLE.

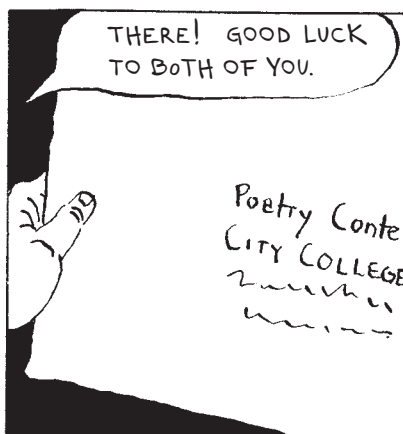
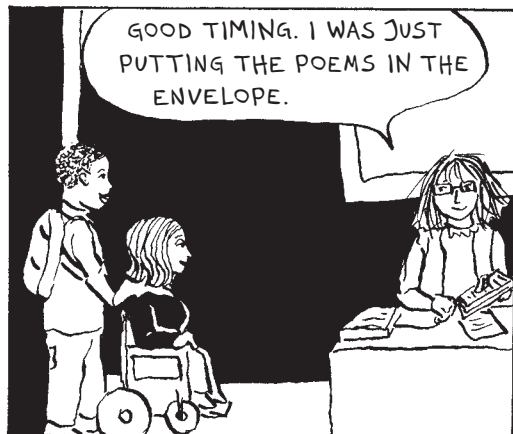


\*CITY COLLEGE HAS AN ANNUAL POETRY COMPETITION FOR N.Y.C. PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

\*\* FROM "FOUR QUARTETS" BY T.S. ELIOT

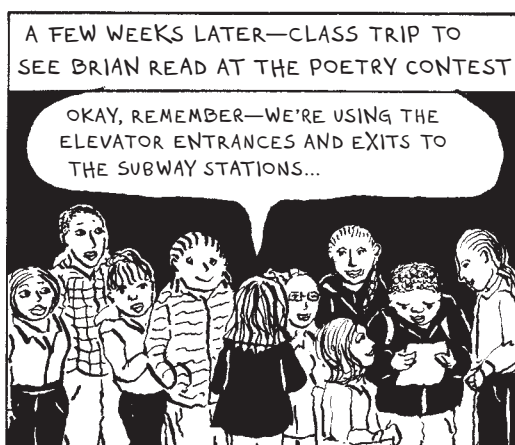


AFTER SCHOOL

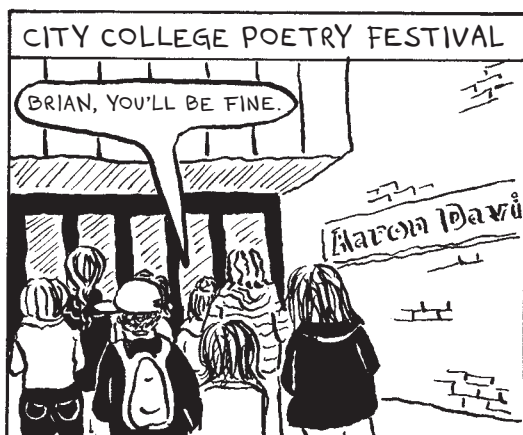




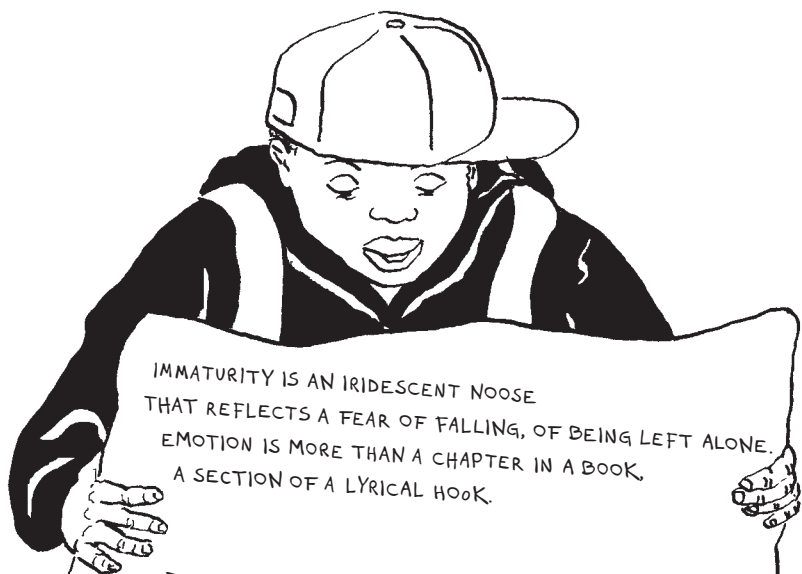




\*WILL HAS BEEN OUT FOR THE PAST MONTH AS HE SORTS OUT HIS LEGAL SITUATION.



## "IMMATURITY IS"\*



IMMATURITY IS AN IRIDESCENT NOOSE  
THAT REFLECTS A FEAR OF FALLING, OF BEING LEFT ALONE.  
EMOTION IS MORE THAN A CHAPTER IN A BOOK,  
A SECTION OF A LYRICAL HOOK.

THE NIGHT LOOKS AT ME AS I LOOK AT IT.  
IN MY BEDROOM IS WHERE I LET MY IDEAS FLOW AND,  
LIKE THE WAVES OF THE PACIFIC WITH WHIRLING WIND,  
I WANT TO KNOW THERE'S A NAME FOR EVERYTHING,  
BUT INFORMATION IS BEST IN SMALL DOSES  
IF YOU WANT TO EVER ACHIEVE REAL CLOSENESS.

AS I SEE THE NIGHT DIVORCE THE SKY RUSHING SUNLIGHT,  
I DWELL ON THE SHADOW OF THE MOST BRILLIANT CRYSTAL,  
WONDER WHEN IT'LL LOSE ITS SHINE.  
I'M A PERFECT SAMPLE OF MISUNDERSTOOD.  
SOME CALL ME DIFFERENT; OTHERS JUST SAY STRANGE,  
BUT TO ME I'LL NEVER CHANGE AND I FEEL INDIFFERENT  
IF THIS IS SIMPLY MY COURSE OF LIFE  
AND I AM GIFTED.

\*POEM BY WILDCAT GRADUATE ANDRES VELEZ. USED WITH PERMISSION.

## OUTSIDE AFTER THE POETRY READING



THE GUY I NEVER KNEW\*

WHO IS HE,  
I'M NOT WILLING,  
DAYS, MONTHS,  
STILL WONDERING

NOW I'M OVER  
BUT NOW,  
YOUR FATHER THIS,  
I SCREAM BACK,

"HE ISN'T MY FATHER: HE'S A SPERM DONOR!"  
I DON'T EVEN KNOW THIS GUY.  
YOU SEE, SHE TOLD ME HIS NAME, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER.  
I DIDN'T CARE MUCH FOR IT.

THE POEM'S ABOUT MEETING  
MY DAD FOR THE FIRST TIME

HOW DOES HE LOOK, WHO CREATED ME?  
BUT WONDERING.  
YEARS, BIRTHDAYS,  
—IS THIS THE DAY I FINALLY SEE YOU?

WONDERING.  
DAY-IN AND DAY-OUT,  
YOUR FATHER THAT.

REMEMBER THE DAY  
I CAME IN HIGH?

SO HERE'S  
THE POEM.

JANUARY 10, I'M SCANNING THROUGH THE NEWSPAPER.

I SEE A GUY'S NAME SIMILAR TO MINE,  
ARRESTED FOR ROBBERY—\$100,000.

MONTHS LATER MY MOTHER TELLS ME  
SHE SAW MY FATHER, AND HE WANTS  
TO GET TO KNOW ME.

I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO HIM.  
EIGHTEEN YEARS—WHAT COULD HE SAY TO ME,  
"I'M SORRY?"

NOW PHONE CALLS HERE AND THERE,  
BUT THAT'S NOT ENOUGH.  
I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS, WANT SOME ANSWERS.

I DECIDE TO GO TO SEE HIM.

THEY CALL OUT C73. I'M SITTING THERE  
IN THIS SOFT/ROUGH YELLOW CHAIR AT A SMALL BLUE TABLE  
ACROSS FROM THIS CARAMEL SKIN, BALD HEAD, LIGHT BROWN EYES MAN  
I DON'T EVEN KNOW.

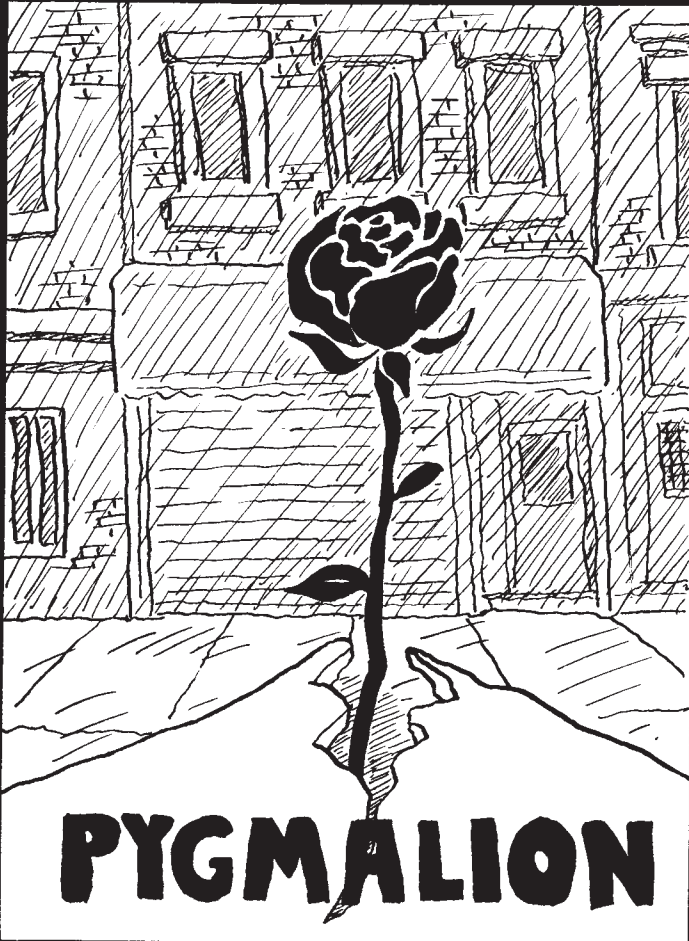
AND ALL I SAID WAS, "EIGHTEEN YEARS—NO CALL, NO LETTER.  
YOU KNOW WHERE MY FAMILY LIVES. THERE IS NO EXCUSE,  
AND DID YOU EVER THINK ONCE WHEN YOU DID THAT ROBBERY  
OF ALL THE BIRTHDAYS YOU MISSED? DID YOU EVER THINK  
TO PUT A BIRTHDAY CARD IN THE MAILBOX WITH SOME MONEY  
OR EVEN THINK OF ME NEEDING ANYTHING FOR SCHOOL?"

BUT YOU KNOW, IT ALL GOOD. THIS IS A NEW YEAR,  
WE CAN PUT THIS BEHIND US  
AND NOW YOU CAN BECOME  
MY FATHER.

THAT WAS THE DAY I WAS  
SUPPOSED TO MEET HIM, AND  
I JUST COULDN'T HANDLE IT.

\*POEM BY WILDCAT GRADUATE CORELLE BAYNE. USED WITH PERMISSION.

## CHAPTER NINE



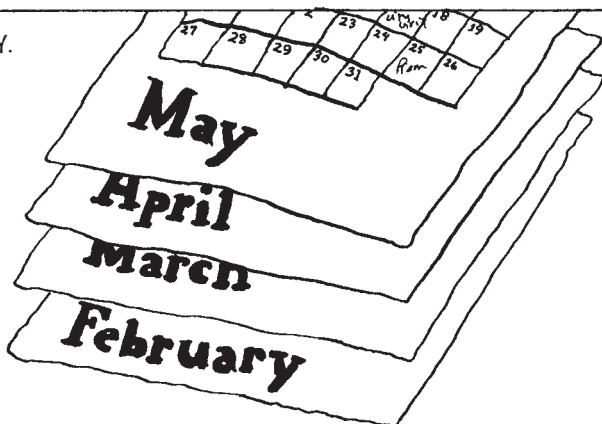
# PYGMALION

"REMEMBER YOU ARE A HUMAN BEING WITH  
A SOUL AND THE DIVINE GIFT OF ARTICULATE  
SPEECH."

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



TIME IS SPEEDING BY.



THE WEATHER FEELS LIKE SUMMER,  
WHICH OFTEN TURNS A TEEN'S FANCY TO THOUGHTS OF LOVE,



AND OFTEN TURNS AN ADMINISTRATOR'S FANCY TO THOUGHTS OF...

## DRESS CODE.

### STAFF MEETING



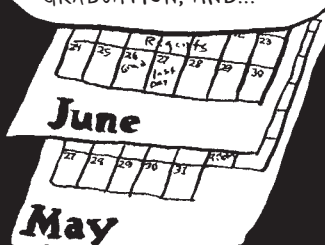
IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN. I NEED TO REMIND EVERYONE THAT WE'RE ALL RESPONSIBLE FOR ENFORCING THE DRESS CODE. IF YOU SEE SOMETHING YOU SHOULDN'T BE SEEING, SEND THE STUDENT TO ME!

THESE POOR BOYS. WHEN WARM WEATHER ARRIVES, IT'S BOOBS, BOOBS, BOOBS.



THANKS, ANDREW. OKAY, YOU ALL HAVE YOUR CALENDARS. LET'S GO OVER UPCOMING DATES.

ON THE CALENDAR, YOU'LL SEE PROM, FINALS, WHEN GRADES ARE DUE, GRADUATION, AND...



DON'T FORGET THAT THE CITY'S COMING IN TO OBSERVE US ON THE 21ST.\*



ENOUGH WITH THESE CITY AND STATE INSPECTIONS. IT'S LIKE A NEVER-ENDING COLONOSCOPY.

I KNOW WE ALL WANT TO TALK ABOUT STUDENTS. LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW ABOUT WILL. I THINK EVERYONE'S AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CHARGES HE'S FACING. AFTER DISCUSSION WITH HIS FAMILY, WE DECIDED HE SHOULD TAKE SOME TIME OFF TO DEAL WITH WHAT HE HAS TO DEAL WITH.



ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO HELP?



LUBA—IT JUST HIT ME. WILL'S TATTOO—THE FIRE AND THE ROSE—THEY'RE BOTH HIM, AND I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS GOING TO WIN.

YES. ANYONE WHO WANTS TO WRITE A CHARACTER REFERENCE, GIVE IT TO PAT AND SHE'LL SEND IT TO WILL'S LAWYER.

\*THE CITY AND STATE USUALLY COME INTO SCHOOLS AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR AS PART OF THEIR EVALUATION PROCESS.

I WANT TO GO BACK TO THE CITY VISIT. DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIFICS ON WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR?

YES. THEY WANT EVERY CLASS TO HAVE AN EXIT ASSESSMENT. THEY ALSO TOLD US...

WHEN YOU'RE BEING OBSERVED BY THE CITY OR STATE, YOU OBVIOUSLY WANT TO GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT, SO THE DAY OF THE VISIT YOU MAKE SURE YOUR LESSONS HIT THE ITEMS ON THEIR CHECKLIST.



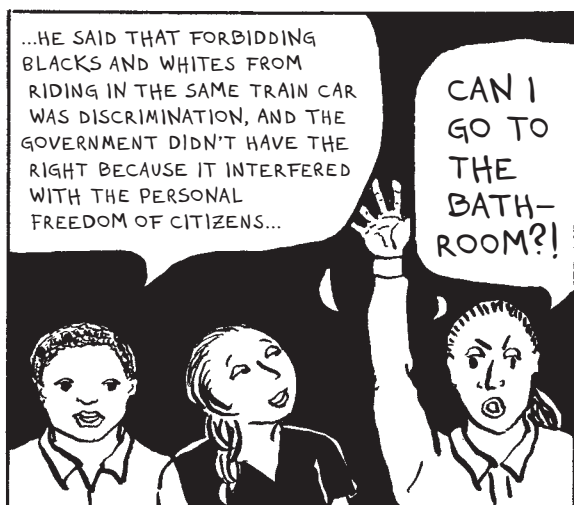
#### DAY OF CITY VISIT

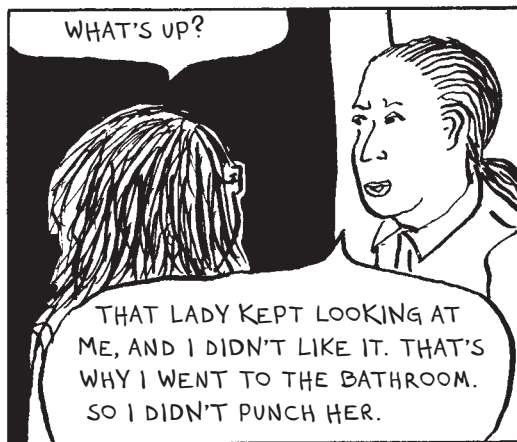


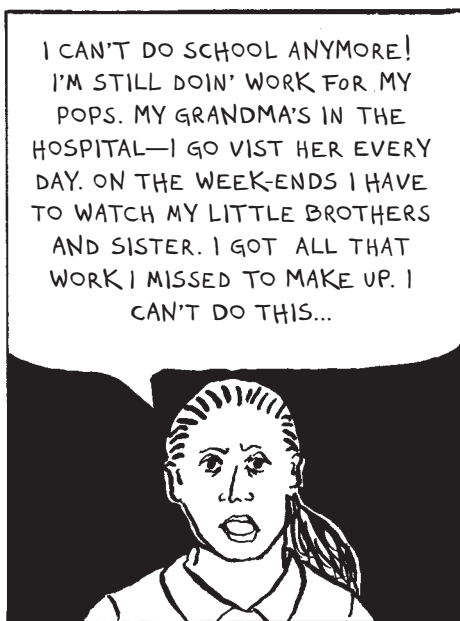
I WANT YOU ALL TO REMEMBER—THE LADY FROM THE CITY IS HERE TO LOOK AT ME, NOT YOU—SO DON'T WORRY. OKAY, OUR FOCUS IS ARGUMENT AND EVIDENCE AND WE'RE LOOKING AT THE MAJORITY AND DISSENTING OPINIONS IN PLESSY V. FERGUSON...

...YOU HAVE 25 MINUTES TO FINISH FILLING OUT YOUR SHEET, AND THEN WE'LL PRESENT. I'LL BE GOING AROUND TO CHECK YOUR WORK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS...

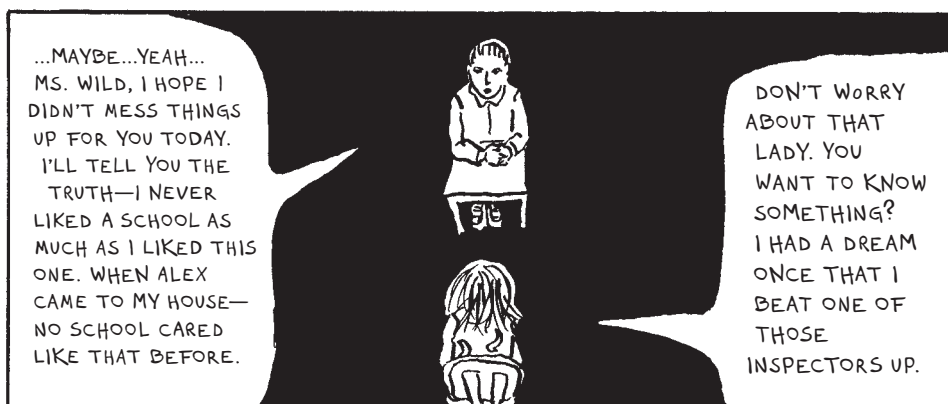










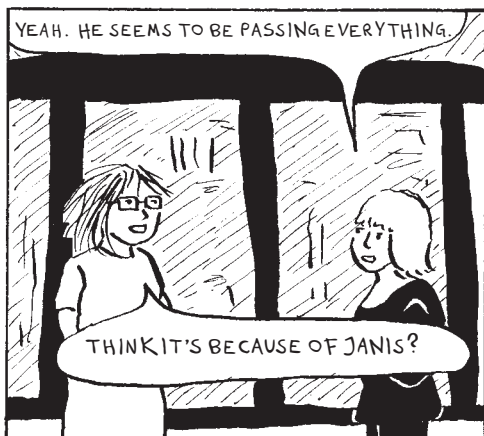


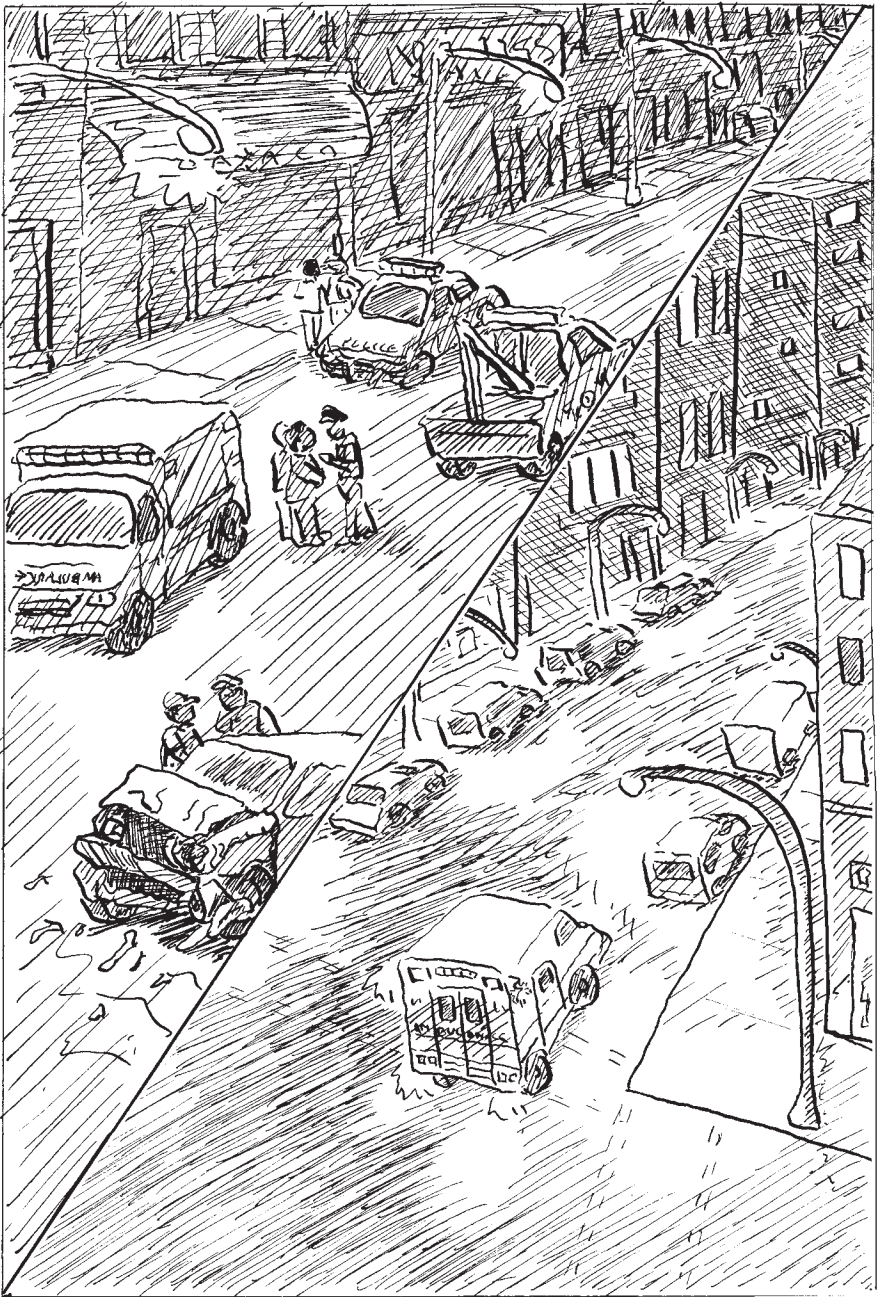
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# Prom





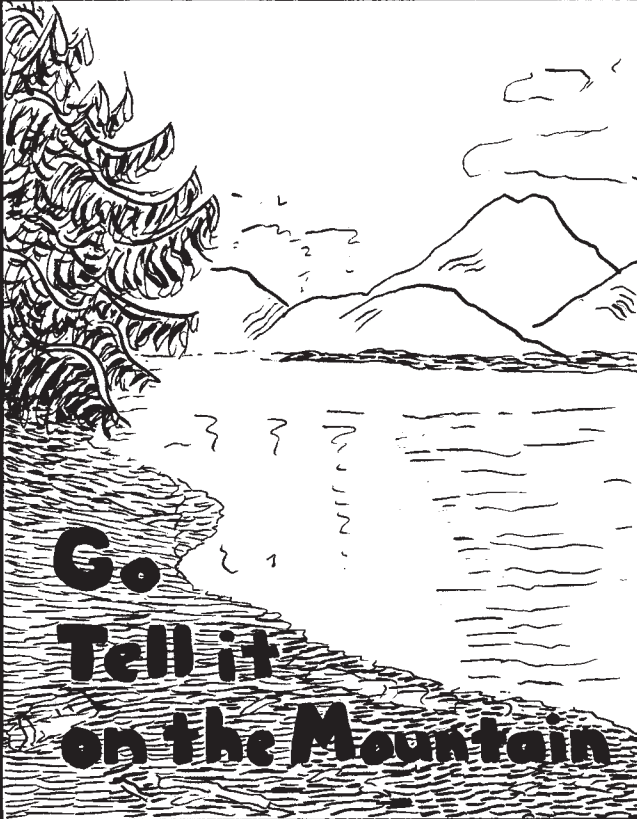




JANIS AND BRIAN'S TAXI WAS HIT BY A CAR WHILE THEY WERE HEADED TO THE PROM AFTER-PARTY. IT WASN'T A BAD ACCIDENT, BUT JANIS—BECAUSE OF HER O.I.—COULD BE IN THE HOSPITAL FOR MONTHS...

"WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?" IS AN INCREDIBLY RESONANT QUESTION FOR OUR STUDENTS. FOR MOST MIDDLE CLASS KIDS, THE NARRATIVE IS DEFINED—GET YOUR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND GO TO COLLEGE. BUT OUR STUDENTS' NARRATIVES ARE OFTEN NOT FIXED. PROBLEMS OR TRAGEDIES, WHICH CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE, ARE NEARLY ALWAYS AMPLIFIED BY POVERTY.

## CHAPTER TEN



"NOT EVERYTHING THAT IS FACED CAN BE  
CHANGED, BUT NOTHING CAN BE CHANGED UNTIL  
IT IS FACED."

JAMES BALDWIN



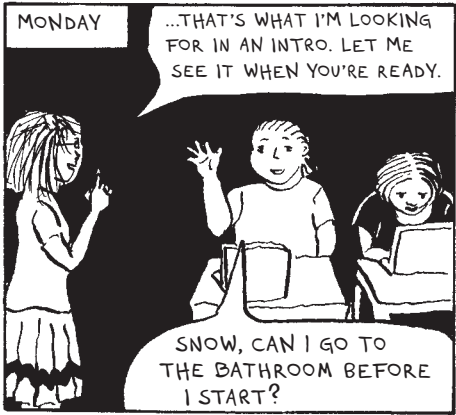
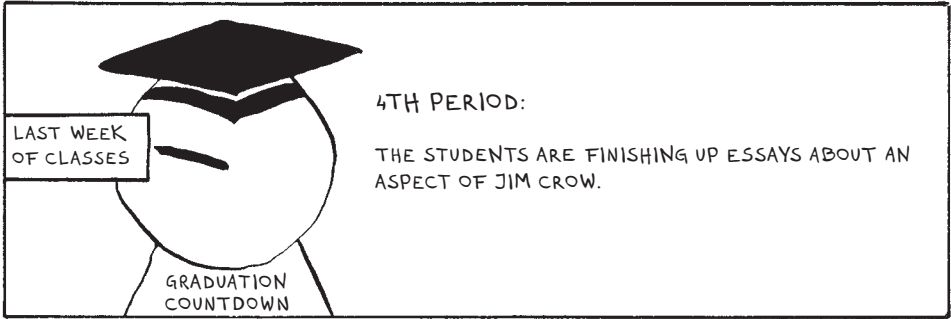
THIS IS WHERE IT ALL SHAKES DOWN—WHO'S GOING TO GET THE CREDITS THEY NEED, WHO'S GOING TO PASS THE REGENTS, WHO'S GOING TO WALK ACROSS THE STAGE IN JUNE AND GET A DIPLOMA. THERE'S SO MUCH TO DO, AND SO LITTLE TIME. I ALWAYS FEEL I AM BARELY KEEPING UP WITH THE TEACHING, THE GRADING, THE TEST PREP, AND THE TRIAGE.



AND THEN LIFE GIVES ME A REMINDER THAT PUTS IT ALL IN PERSPECTIVE.



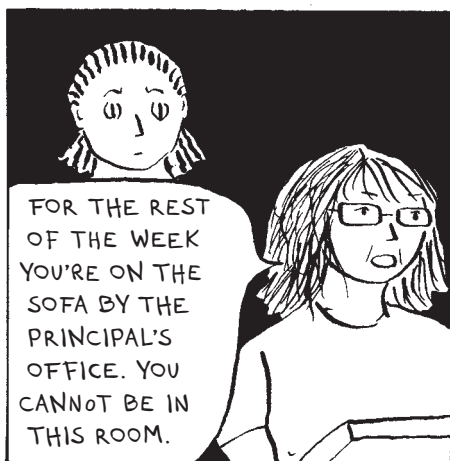
SO JANIS WILL NOT BE GRADUATING IN JUNE. SHE'LL PROBABLY BE ABLE TO FINISH HER INCOMPLETES OVER THE SUMMER, BUT SHE WILL HAVE TO TAKE HER FINAL REGENTS NEXT JANUARY. HOWEVER, SHE WILL BE ABLE TO GRADUATE, AND THAT'S WHAT COUNTS.



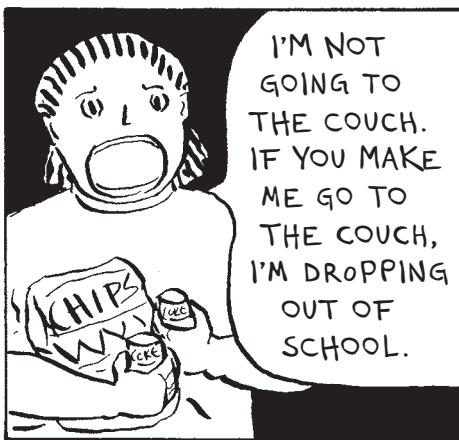
ALL RIGHT—THAT'S IT.  
LET'S GO.



FOR THE REST  
OF THE WEEK  
YOU'RE ON THE  
SOFA BY THE  
PRINCIPAL'S  
OFFICE. YOU  
CANNOT BE IN  
THIS ROOM.



I'M NOT  
GOING TO  
THE COUCH.  
IF YOU MAKE  
ME GO TO  
THE COUCH,  
I'M DROPPING  
OUT OF  
SCHOOL.

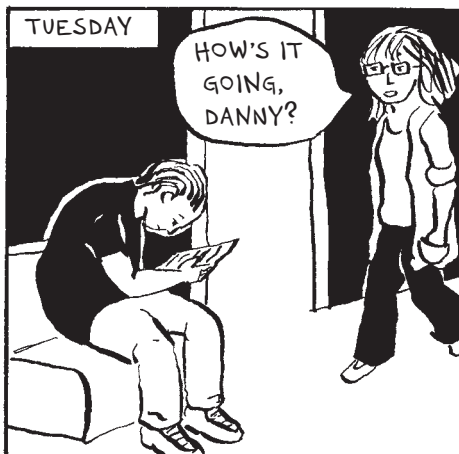


NOPE. YOU ARE NOT DROPPING  
OUT OF SCHOOL. YOU ARE SITTING  
ON THE COUCH, AND YOU ARE  
FINISHING THIS ESSAY. COME ON.



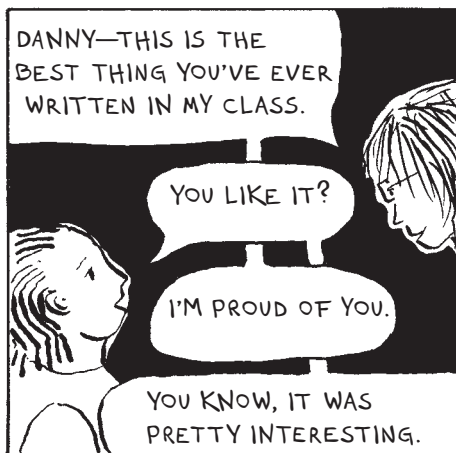
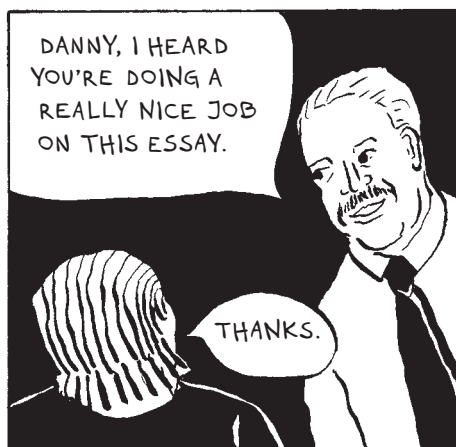
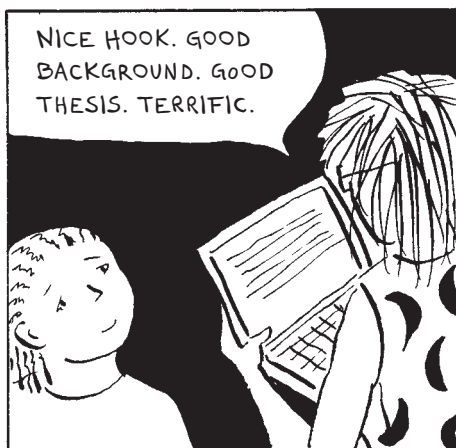
TUESDAY

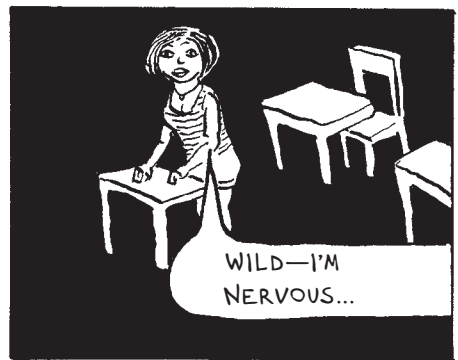
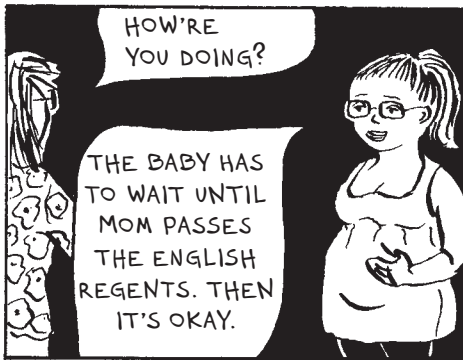
HOW'S IT  
GOING,  
DANNY?



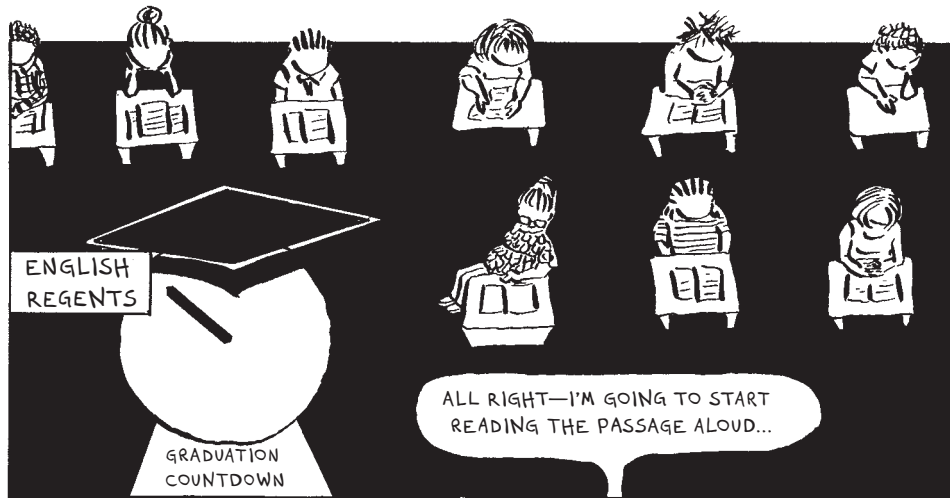
I DO NOT GET THIS THING WITH  
THE CLARKS AND THE DOLLS.



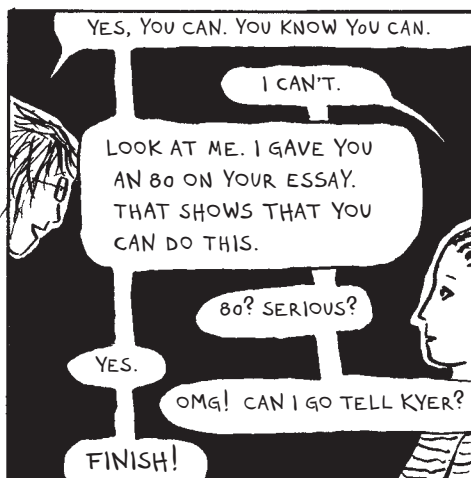




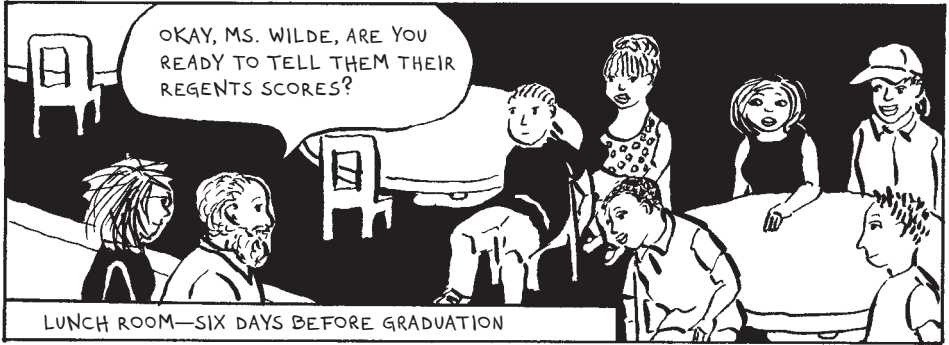
# 9:15 - MORNING OF THE ENGLISH REGENTS







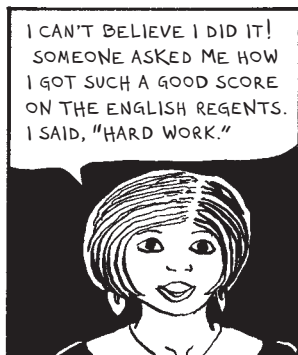
IN A FILM, THE NEXT PANEL WOULD BE A FREEZE FRAME AS WE FIND OUT WHO WILL GRADUATE. IN A FAIRY TALE OR A STORY TOLD TO FULFILL THE DESIRES OF THE CITY, STATE, AND FEDERAL BUREAUCRACIES, ALL THE CHARACTERS WOULD BE GETTING THAT PIECE OF PAPER IN A WEEK. BUT THIS IS NOT THAT STORY. EVEN THOUGH DANNY SEEMS AFFECTED BY DIVINE INTERVENTION (OR A BIT OF MATURITY), HE DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH CREDITS TO BE DONE IN JUNE. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT WILL IS NOT GOING TO BE GRADUATING NOW, IF EVER.



# ALTERNATIVE YEARBOOK

written and photographed by Wildcat Yearbook Staff

**Jasmine Jones**



I CAN'T BELIEVE I DID IT!  
SOMEONE ASKED ME HOW  
I GOT SUCH A GOOD SCORE  
ON THE ENGLISH REGENTS.  
I SAID, "HARD WORK."

Graduating for Jasmine means accomplishing a goal she has set for her life. It wasn't easy for her to get to this point because she had a number of obstacles to overcome, but she didn't give up and now she will be attending college in the fall—the first person in her family to go. Congratulations, Jasmine.

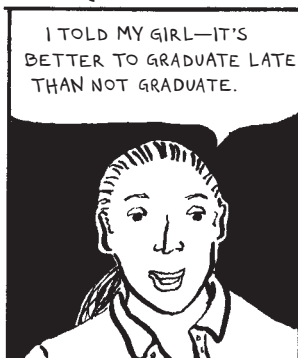
**Daniel Acosta**



DON'T WORRY. BIG  
DIESEL'S GOT THIS.

Danny ended the semester in a great way—passing seven classes and getting a 72 on the English Regents. All Danny needs to graduate are twelve more credits and the U.S. History Regents, so expect him to be wearing a cap and gown next June.

**Ralphie Gonzalez**



I TOLD MY GIRL—IT'S  
BETTER TO GRADUATE LATE  
THAN NOT GRADUATE.

Ralphie had to stop coming to school at the beginning of the semester because he had to work for his dad, but now he's back and he's better than ever. Ralphie plans on graduating next year, and then getting an apprenticeship in carpentry or electrical work.

**Kyer Spencer**



TO ALL THOSE PEOPLE  
OUT THERE WHO SAID I'M  
NOT GONNA' MAKE IT—  
YOU'RE WRONG!

Since she's been at Wildcat, Kyer has come a long way. She's already passed all her Regents, and this semester she passed every class. She hopes to graduate next spring and then go to college to achieve her dream of being a poet.

### Brian Brooks

IT'S PRETTY COOL TO  
BE GRADUATING. JANIS—  
HANG IN THERE.



Brian is very excited to be graduating and moving on with his life. Once Brian decided to focus, graduating was not that difficult. Brian will be attending a CUNY school this fall to study computer graphic design. Good work, Brian.

### Janis Diaz

BROKEN BONES ARE NOT  
GOING TO STOP ME FROM  
ACHIEVING MY DREAMS.



Janis is not letting her accident hold her back. She's going to graduate in January, and because of her *Radio Rookies* experience, she is going to go to college to become a disability rights advocate. Janis will be the first person in her family to graduate from high school.

### Will Smith

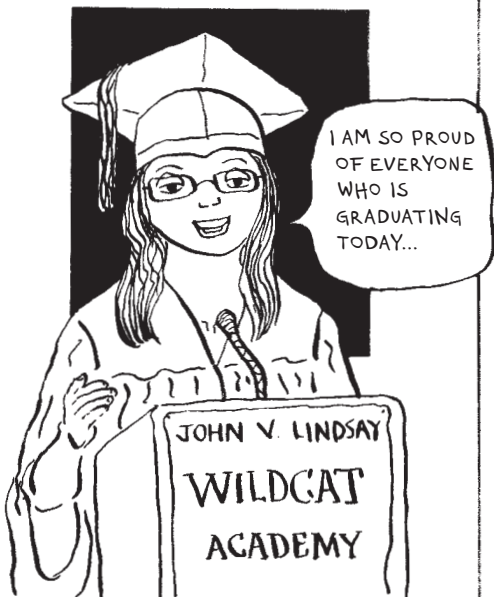
I CAN'T DEAL WITH  
SCHOOL RIGHT NOW.



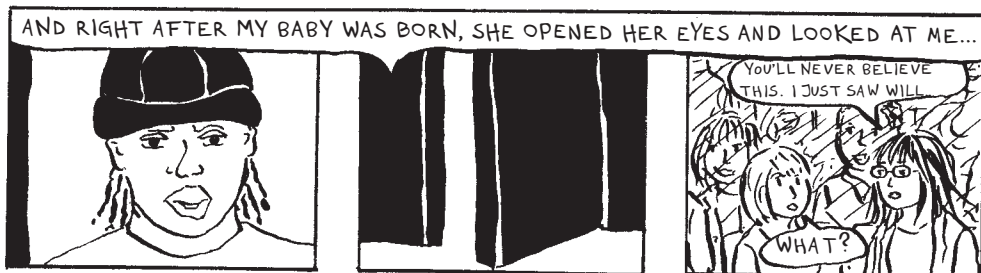
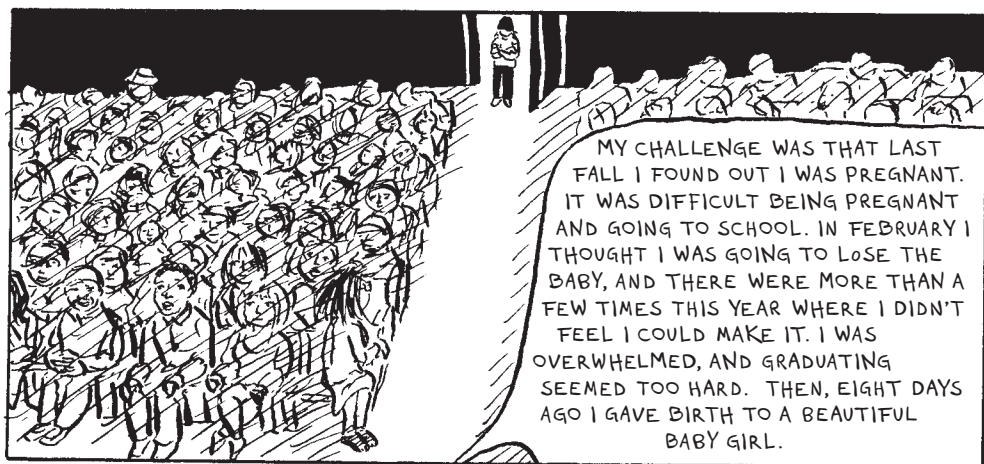
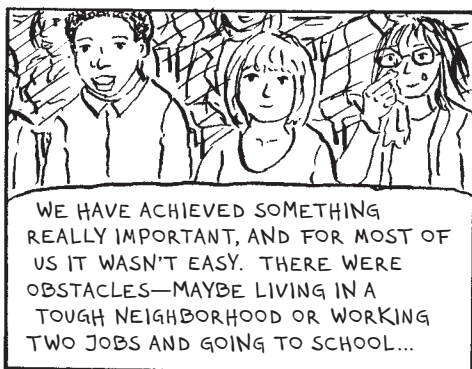
Will was on the Honor Roll first semester, but had to take a leave of absence second semester to take care of some personal business. Once things get more settled in his life, Will hopes to be back in school and finish his degree.

### Natalie Maldonado

I AM SO PROUD  
OF EVERYONE  
WHO IS  
GRADUATING  
TODAY...

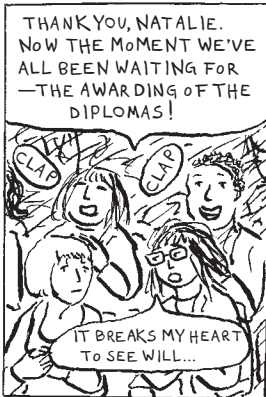


Natalie had a few rough moments this semester, being that she was pregnant, but it all worked out and now she is the proud mother of Elena. Natalie will take a year to stay home with her baby, but then it will be college and pursuing her dream of becoming a journalist. Great job, Natalie!

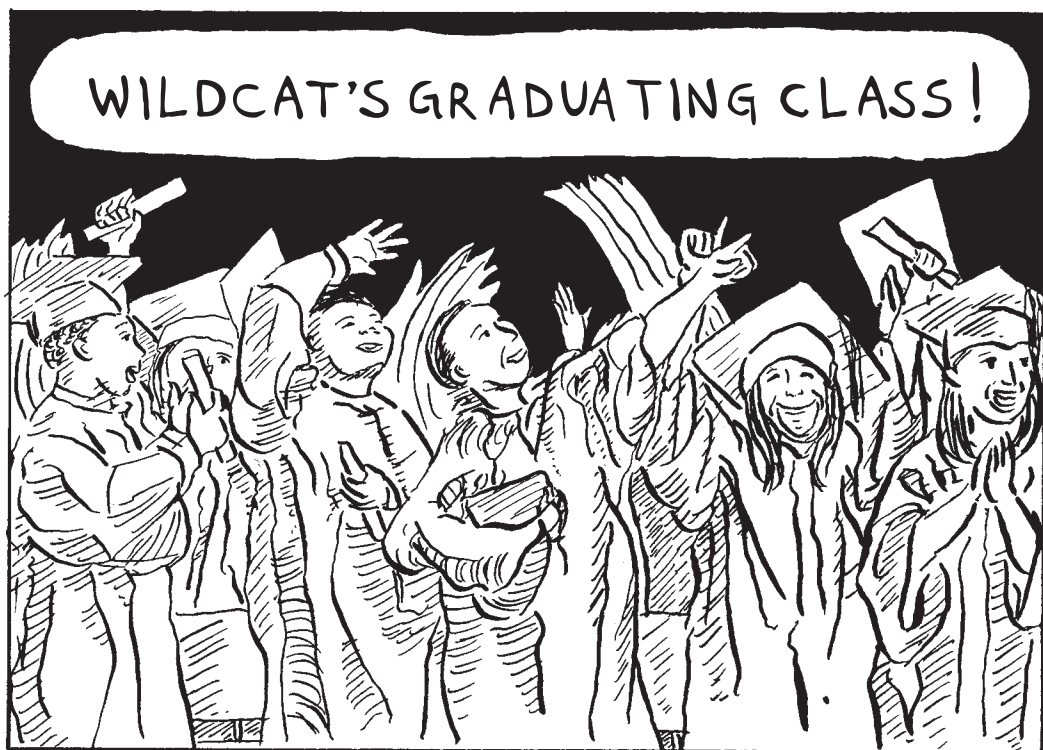


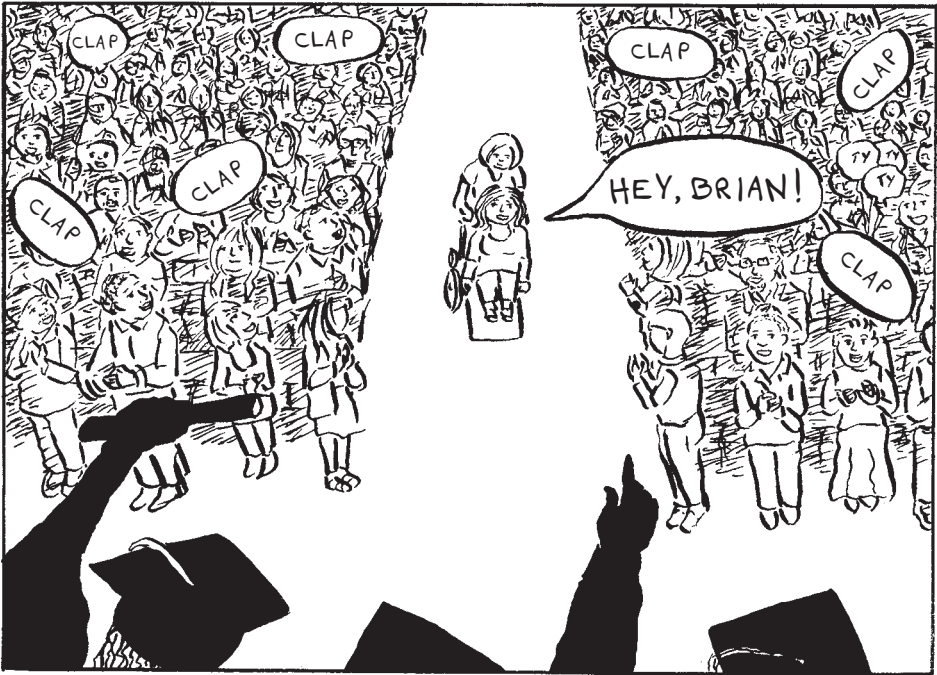


BACK INSIDE THE AUDITORIUM

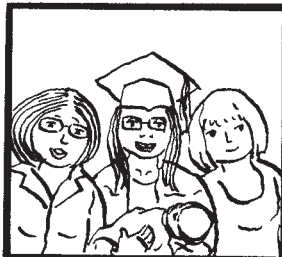








## AFTER THE CEREMONY





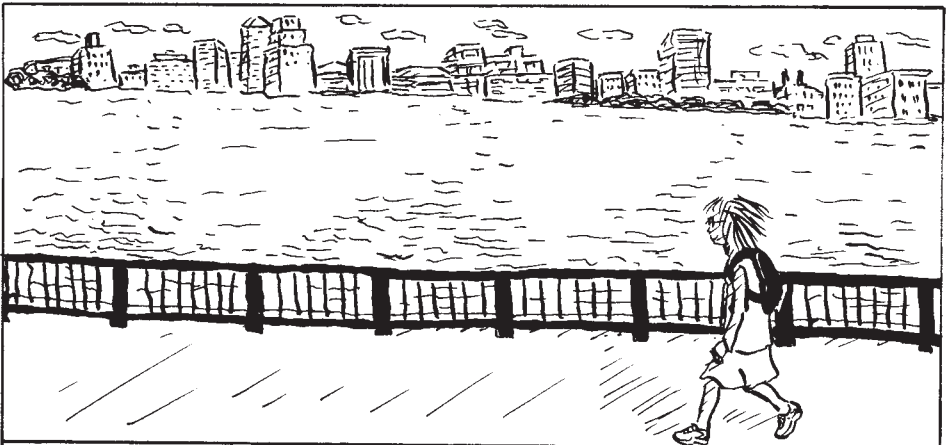
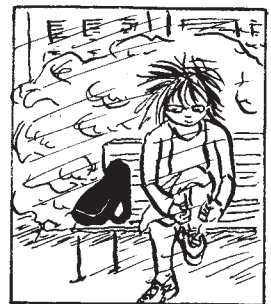
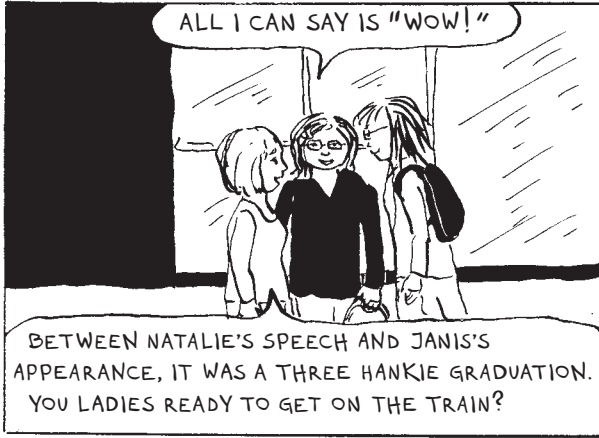
EPILOGUE



"AT SOME POINT IN LIFE, THE WORLD'S BEAUTY  
BECOMES ENOUGH."

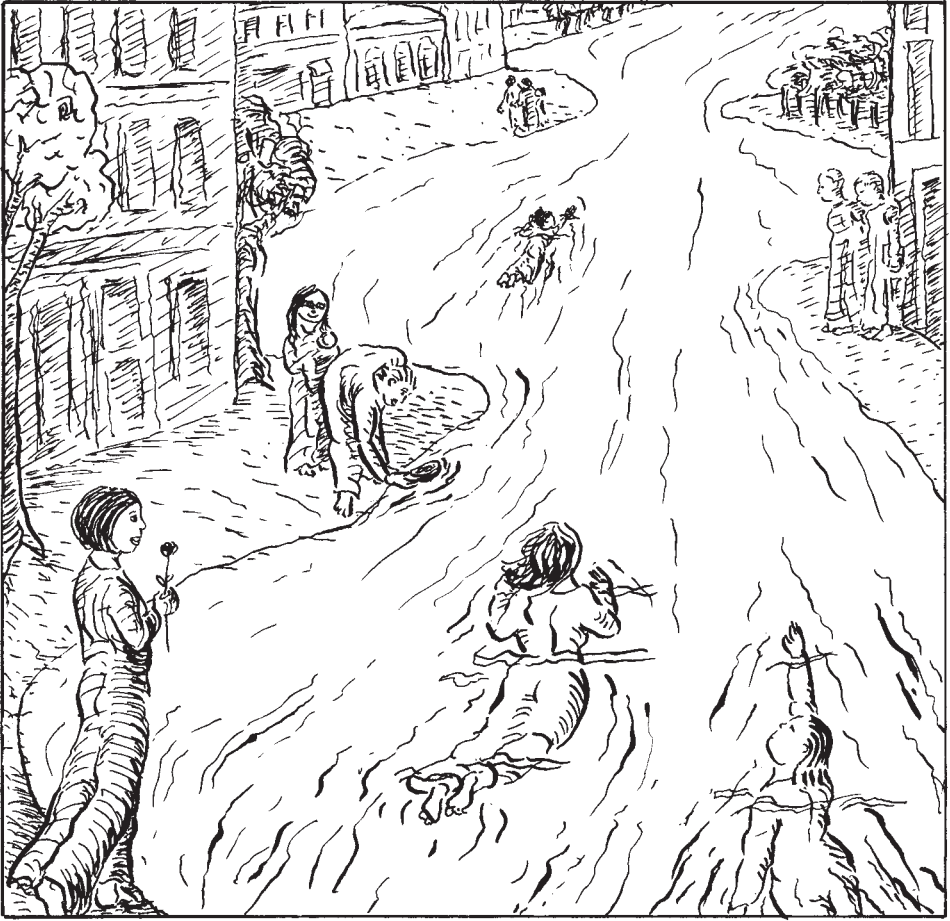
TONI MORRISON

# LEAVING GRADUATION



A FEW NIGHTS AGO I HAD A DREAM WHERE I WAS SWIMMING IN A RIVER, AND MY FAMILY WAS THERE, ALONG WITH SOME STUDENTS.

ON BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER WAS A CITY, BUT THE WATER WAS CLEAN.  
EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL AND THE MOOD WAS PEACEFUL.



WHEN I WOKE UP, I REALIZED THE IMAGE WAS LIKE A DRAWING, BY  
WILLIAM BLAKE, CALLED "THE RIVER OF LIFE." AND I THOUGHT,  
YES—THIS IS WHAT I WANT FOR ALL OF US—A LITTLE HAPPINESS  
IN THIS BEAUTIFUL RIVER CALLED LIFE.

...AND I ALSO REALIZED THAT I REALLY NEEDED SUMMER BREAK, AND THAT  
WAS WHAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO DIVE BACK IN WITH THESE KIDS IN FALL.



## BACK AT SCHOOL



## AFTERWORD

I have been teaching since 1997, and during that time period I have seen many positive changes in public education. The kids who come to our school are definitely better prepared academically than in the past, and some of that is directly attributable to higher standards enforced through standardized testing.

However, in this brave new world of trying to verify everything with data, it is critical to value what is not so easily quantifiable, but also what we—as humans—know has worth. Creativity, for example, is almost impossible to evaluate using a standardized test, and the increase in the amount of standardized testing and its significance to the survival of public schools has lead—in many schools—to dropping creative, imaginative assignments and course options in favor of ones that help raise a student's test score.

One of the biggest challenges for public education going forward is how to enforce (and measure) academic skill success, while fostering what may be unmeasurable. This is particularly critical for students like the ones at Wildcat, where many of the kids are, as Jack Kerouac wrote, “The ones who see things differently,” students who often have gifts that are not captured through multiple-choice questions. These are also kids whose access to resources outside of school is limited, and for whom the consequences of graduating or not graduating can be life changing.

Ultimately, we need public schools that policy makers would feel comfortable sending their own children to. As a society, we need to realize that these children—all of them—are our children.

Lisa Wilde  
Brooklyn, NY  
Nov. 30, 2104

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*This book has been supported by many people. To paraphrase Rachel Naomi Remen, may your kindness come back to you a hundredfold.*

*Huge thanks to Wildcat students, staff and administration. The students' and school's success speaks for itself. Great thanks to Ron Tabano, Pat Wong, Luba Koziolkowski, Anthony Brown, Alex Martinez, Michael Steiner, and DFaye Anderson. Many of you appeared in these pages (thank you!) and have provided incredible support for my teaching and this project. Also, wonderful Wildcat graduates Jessica De La Rosa, Tyrell Bramble, Andres Velez, Corelle Bayne, Infinite Cubia and Matthew Shields provided their work, gave me their time, and gave much inspiration.*

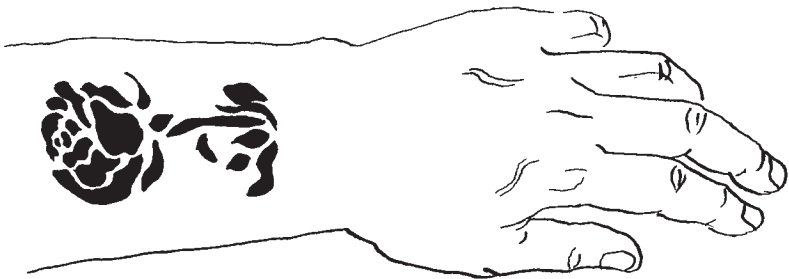
*Big thanks to Joe Biel and Microcosm Publishing for having the belief in this project, and their vision of a "bookish" future. Deep thanks to Joanna Herman who was there at the conception of Yo, Miss. This project would not have existed without her unfailing guidance in every way—artistic and personal. Much thanks to Myra Goldberg, who had the faith that I could teach a workshop to graduate students.*

*Unlimited thanks to Anne DeMarinis, talented and smart designer that she is, who spent hours and hours with me helping my analogue brain switch ever-so-slightly to digital requirements of making a graphic novel. In addition, she designed my incredibly good looking website.*

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*Unlimited thanks to everyone else who read, commented, gave me advice and all other forms of assistance. Unquantifiable thanks to Mark and Noah for being who they are.*



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