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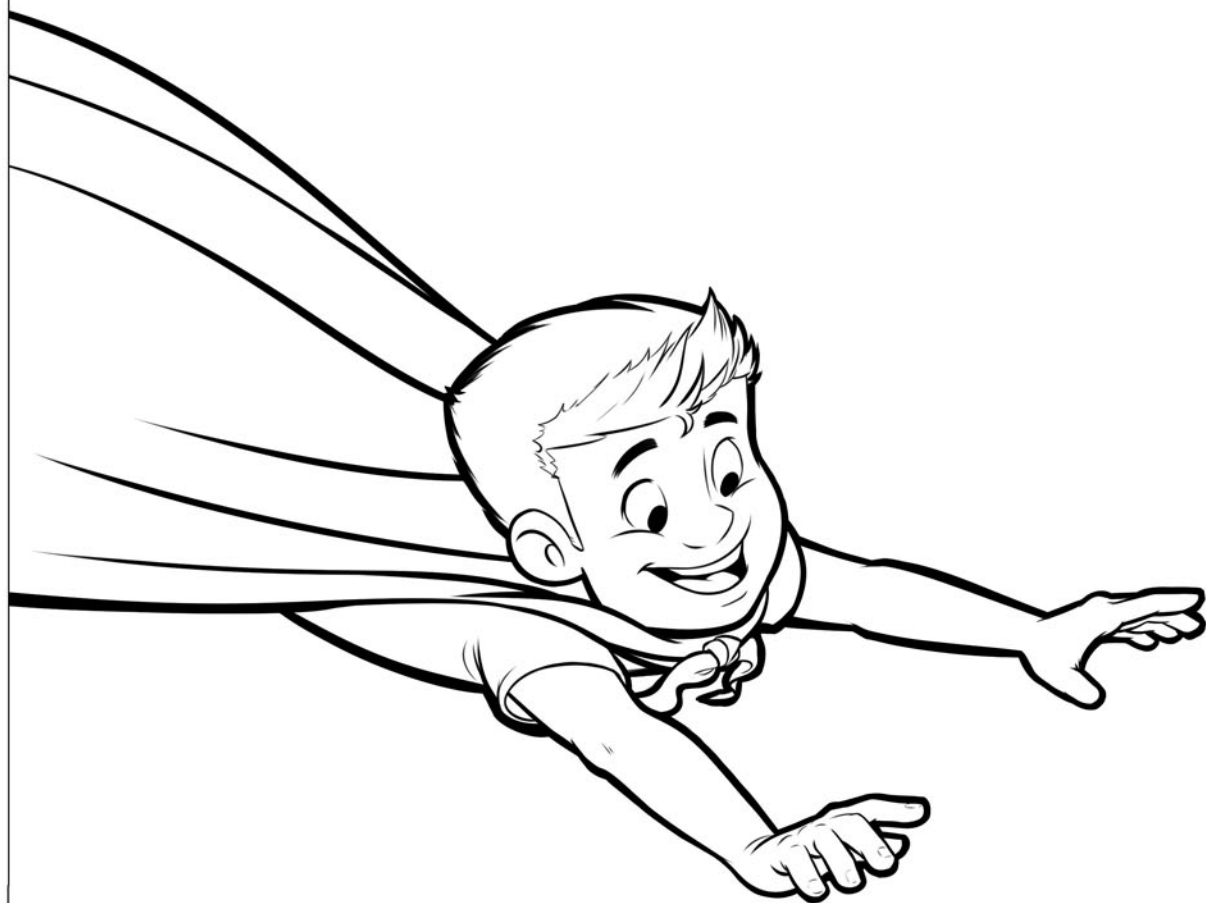
COMIC BOOK

THE RED CAPE



THE LEARNING ADVENTURE BEGINS

BE PART OF THE RED CAPE NATION





THE RED CAPE

WRITTEN BY RACHEL VITEMB

LAYOUT BY DAN KUENSTER

ILLUSTRATED BY ABBY ESTERLY

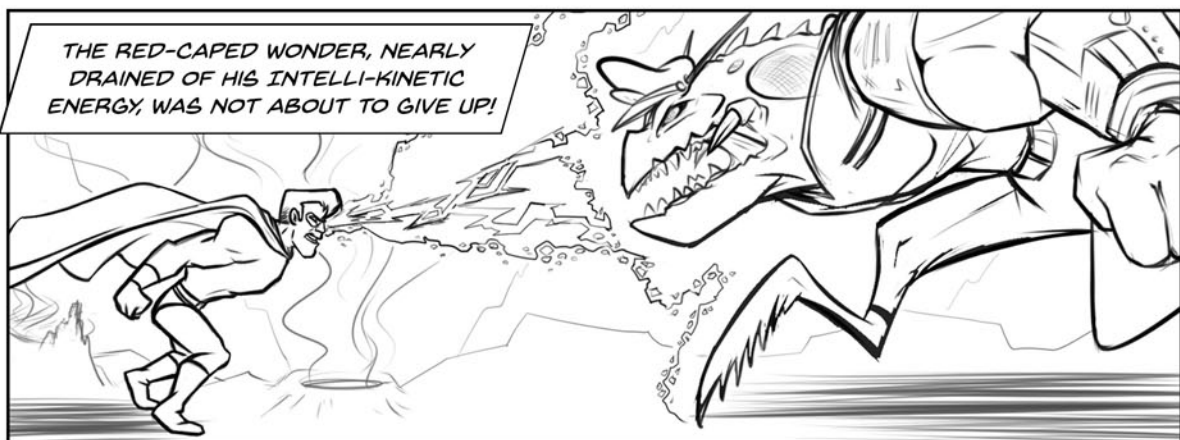
COLORS BY STERLING HANDRICK



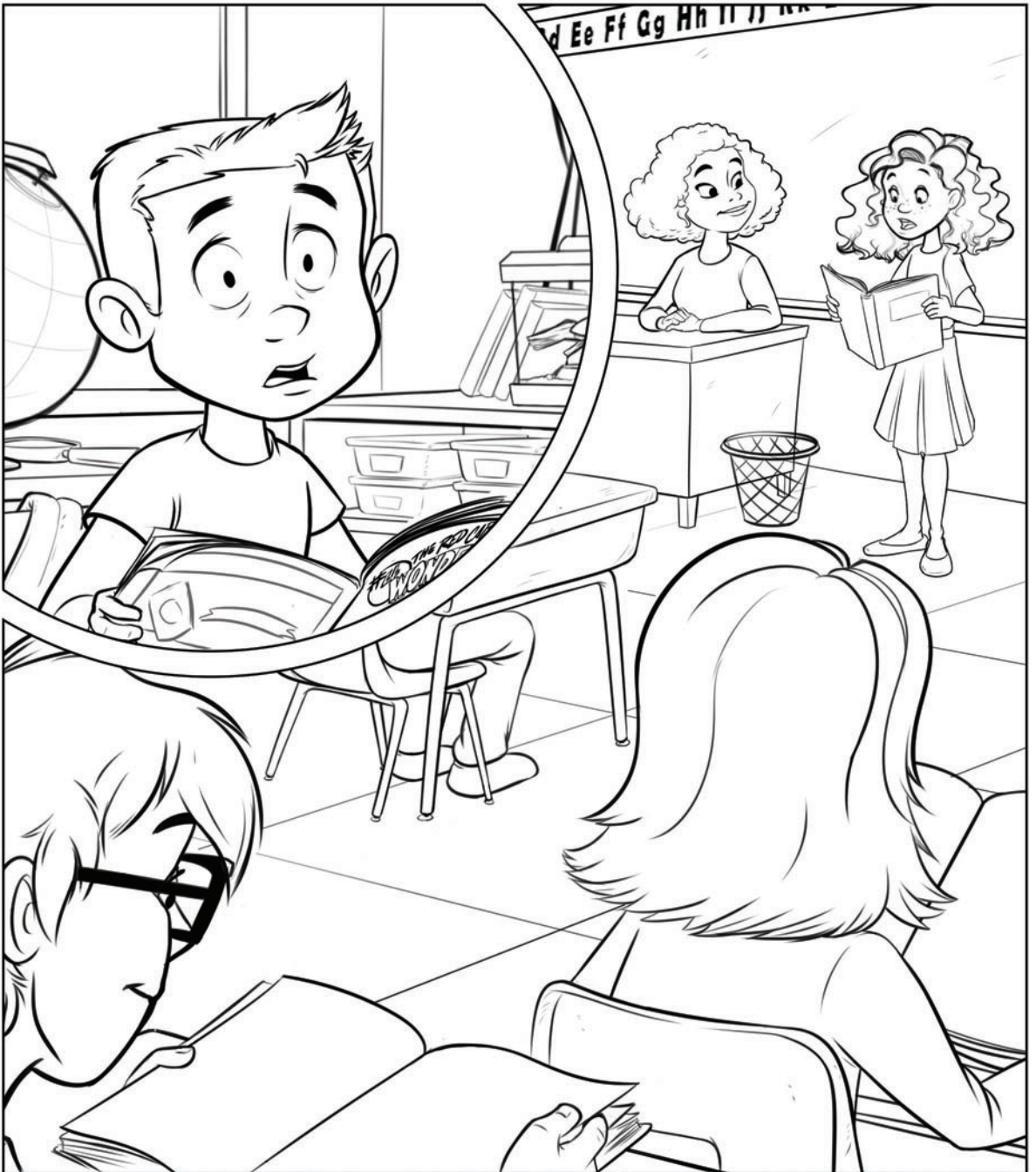
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CHEERFULLY FLIPPING TO THE NEXT PAGE OF HIS FAVORITE COMIC BOOK, DANNY WOULD FINALLY DISCOVER IF THE RED-CAPED WONDER DEFEATS THE EVIL CAPTAIN MANTIS. "THE RED-CAPED WONDER, NEARLY DRAINED OF HIS INTELLI-KINETIC ENERGY, WAS NOT ABOUT TO GIVE UP! HE SLOWLY STEPPED TOWARD THE TROUBLESOME CAPTAIN MANTIS, WHEN--" DANNY SUDDENLY JERKED HIS EYES UPWARD TO REALIZE TODAY WAS THE DAY HE DREADED MOST, READ ALOUD DAY. ONE BY ONE, EACH STUDENT WAS READING TO THE CLASSROOM AS IF THERE WAS NOTHING TO IT.



"DANNY, IT'S YOUR TURN," SAID MRS. FISHER. DANNY CLUMSILY SET DOWN HIS COMIC, TOOK OUT THE ASSIGNED READING, AND SLOWLY WALKED TOWARD THE FRONT OF THE CLASS. AS HE STOOD THERE, THE BOOK TREMBLED IN DANNY'S HANDS WHILE HE STRUGGLED TO PIECE EACH WORD TOGETHER.

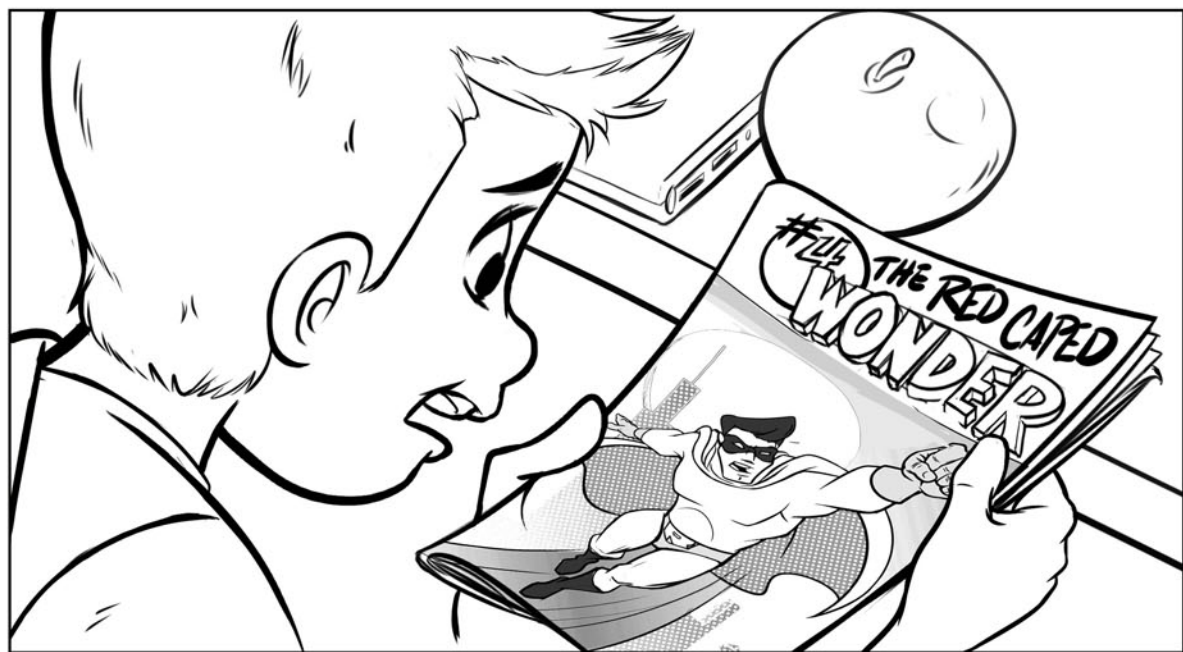


LAUGHTER FROM HIS CLASSMATES FILLED THE ROOM. "HAHA, DORKY DANNY DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO READ!" CACKLED MELINDA, ONE OF THE MEANEST BULLIES IN CLASS.

"NO MORE! WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE!" BARKED STAN, MELINDA'S EQUALLY RUDE PARTNER IN CRIME.



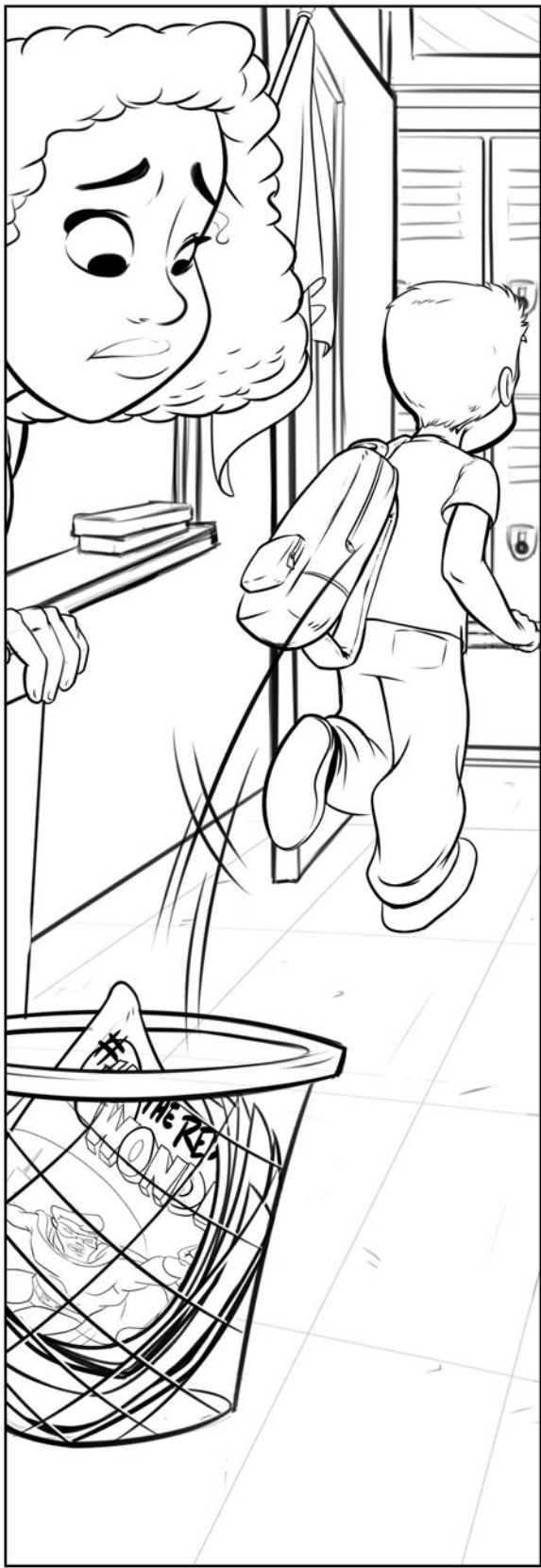
"QUIET EVERYONE!" SAID MRS. FISHER STERNLY. "THAT TYPE OF BEHAVIOR IS UNACCEPTABLE. I DO NOT WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE REMARKS FROM ANYONE." THE CLASS TURNED SILENT AND READ ALOUD DAY RESUMED.



AS DANNY BEGAN TO WALK OUT OF CLASS, MRS. FISHER CALLED HIM TO HER DESK. "I SEE YOU READING COMIC BOOKS ALL THE TIME, DANNY. I KNOW YOU HAVE IT IN YOU!"

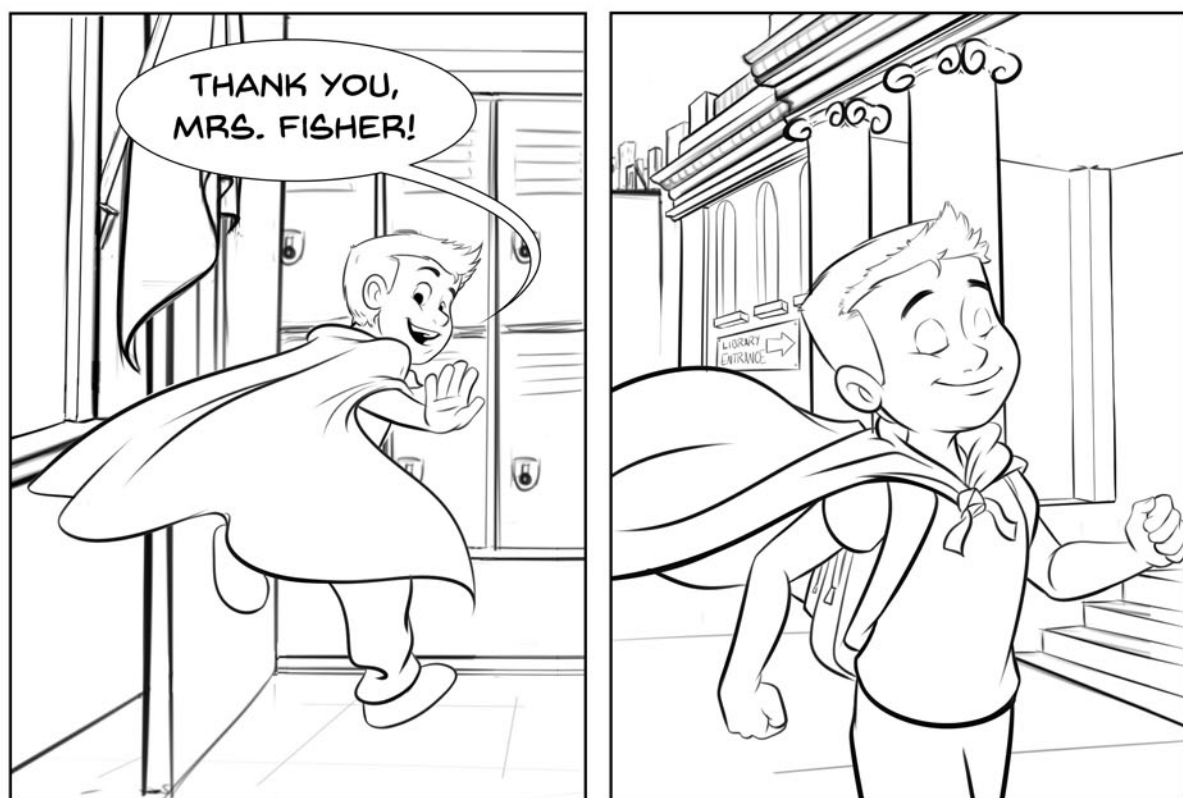
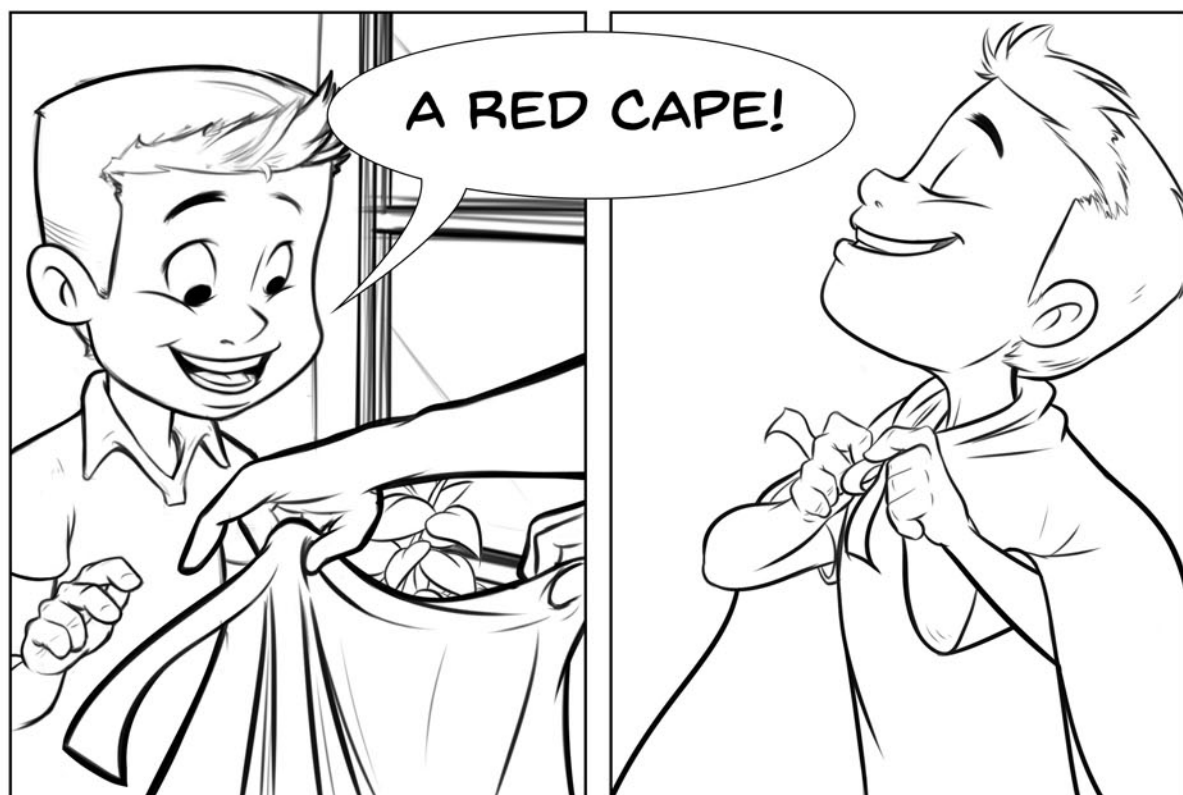
WITH HIS HEAD HANGING LOW DANNY REPLIED, "I LIKE SUPERHEROES! THEY ARE UNBEATABLE. NOT LIKE ME."

FRUSTRATED, DANNY THREW HIS COMIC BOOK IN THE TRASH AND RAN OUT THE DOOR. MRS. FISHER, WITH SADNESS IN HER EYES, PULLED DANNY'S COMIC BOOK OUT OF THE TRASH. SHE LOOKED AT IT AND GOT AN IDEA . . .



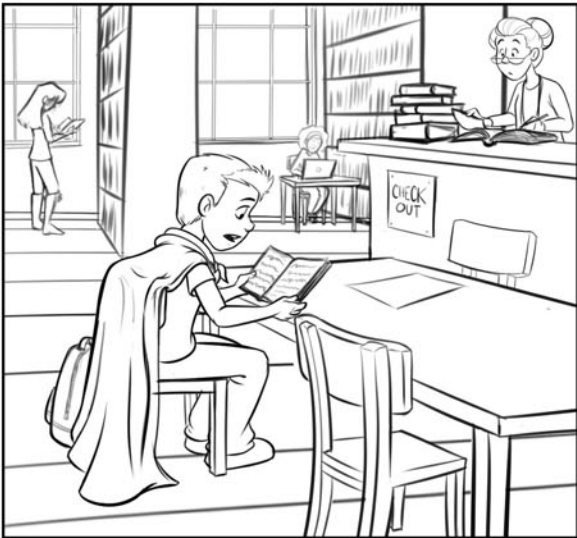
THE NEXT DAY AFTER CLASS, MRS. FISHER CALLED DANNY OVER AS HE WAS LEAVING. SHE HANDED HIM BACK THE COMIC BOOK HE HAD THROWN IN THE TRASH. "YOU ARE JUST AS AWESOME AS THE SUPERHEROES IN YOUR COMIC BOOK, AND YOU CAN READ AS WELL AS ANY STUDENT IN THE CLASS. YOU ARE JUST MISSING ONE THING, A RED CAPE." SHE PULLED OUT A CAPE SHE'D MADE WITH SHINY RED FABRIC THE NIGHT BEFORE.





DANNY'S EYES GREW AS WIDE AS SAUCERS, AND HIS SMILE STRETCHED FROM EAR TO EAR. HE FELT POWERFUL AS HE TIED ON THE CAPE AND THEN BOLTED FROM THE CLASSROOM, SAYING, "THANK YOU, MRS. FISHER!" WITH HIS CAPE FLOWING BEHIND HIM, DANNY MARCHED TO THE LIBRARY WITH RENEWED DETERMINATION.

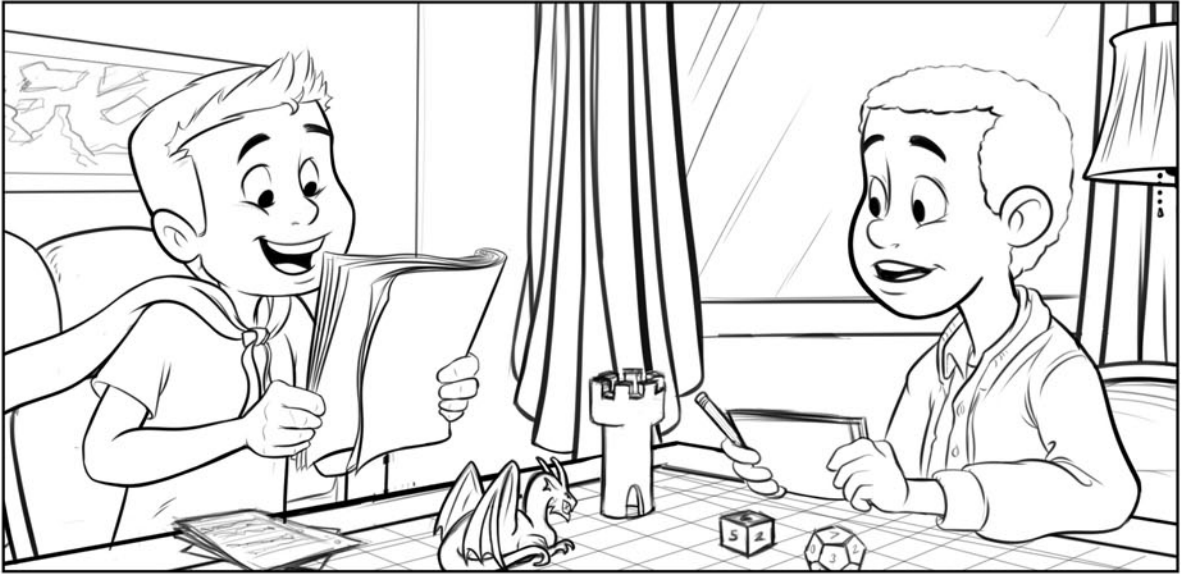
DANNY OPENED HIS ASSIGNED READING TO WHERE HE HAD LEFT OFF AND BEGAN TO PRACTICE READING ALOUD. MRS. BARNES, THE LIBRARIAN, NOTICED DANNY STUMBLING ON HIS WORDS AND WALKED OVER. "TRY PLACING YOUR FINGER ON EACH WORD," SHE SUGGESTED. "IT MAKES DECODING WORDS EASIER!"



OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS, DANNY WORE THE CAPE AS MUCH AS HE COULD. DANNY LEAPED OFF THE JUNGLE GYM, HIS RED CAPE SWISHING IN THE WIND AS HE ROARED: "LET'S DO THIS!" WHILE GROCERY SHOPPING WITH HIS MOM, HE SLOWLY WORKED THROUGH THE WORDS LISTED ON EACH AISLE: "B-A-K-ING P-OW-D-ER."

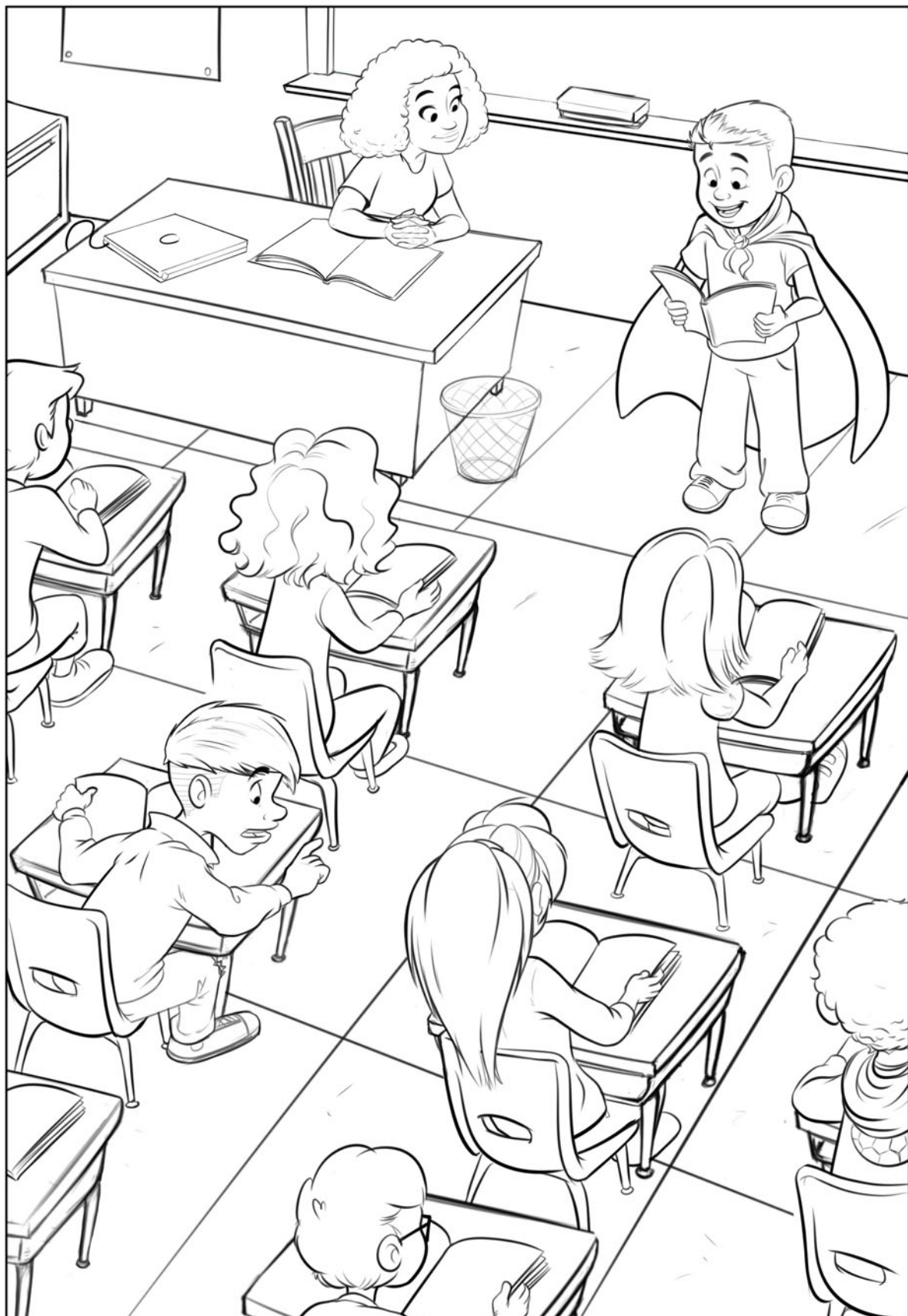


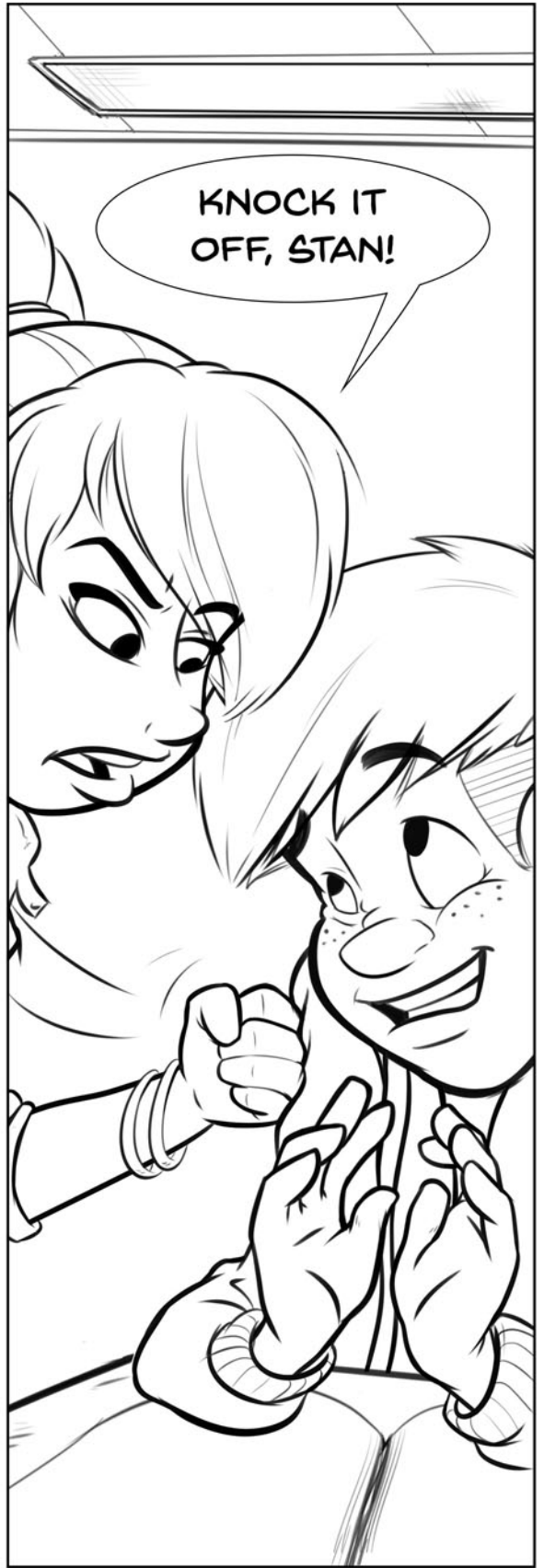
IT WAS ESPECIALLY FUN TO SEE THE SURPRISE ON HIS BEST FRIEND JIM'S FACE AS DANNY READ THE DIRECTIONS TO A BOARD GAME: EVERY TIME YOU ROLL A SIX, THE ENCHANTED MERMAN GRANTS YOU THIRTY POINTS.



SLOWLY BUT SURELY, DANNY KEPT PRACTICING. LITTLE BY LITTLE, HE BECAME MORE FLUENT. EXHILARATED, DANNY THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, "THE CAPE HAS DONE IT! TOMORROW I WILL READ FOR THE CLASS LIKE NEVER BEFORE."

IT WAS A NEW DAY AND DANNY DIDN'T DREAD HIS TURN TO READ. WITH CONFIDENCE, HE DONNED HIS RED CAPE AND READ ALOUD BETTER THAN EVER.





MRS. FISHER AND THE OTHER STUDENTS WERE IMPRESSED, EXCEPT FOR MELINDA, WHO SCOWLED. "KNOCK IT OFF, STAN!" SHE WHISPERED TO HER FRIEND, WHO WAS CHEERING WITH THE REST OF THE CLASS.

LATER, MELINDA AND STAN BEGAN DEVISING A PLAN. "YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD BE HILARIOUS?" SQUEALED MELINDA. "HIDING DANNY'S RED CAPE."

"HA, YEAH!" SAID STAN ENTHUSIASTICALLY, THEN QUICKLY TURNING CONFUSED, "UH, WHY ARE WE DOING THAT?"

MELINDA ROLLED HER EYES IN EXASPERATION. "BECAUSE EMBARRASSING DANNY IS FUN, DUH! JUST FOLLOW MY LEAD."



OVER THE NEXT WEEK, DANNY CONTINUED TO PRACTICE HIS SKILLS. BEFORE HE KNEW IT, IT WAS AGAIN READ ALOUD DAY.

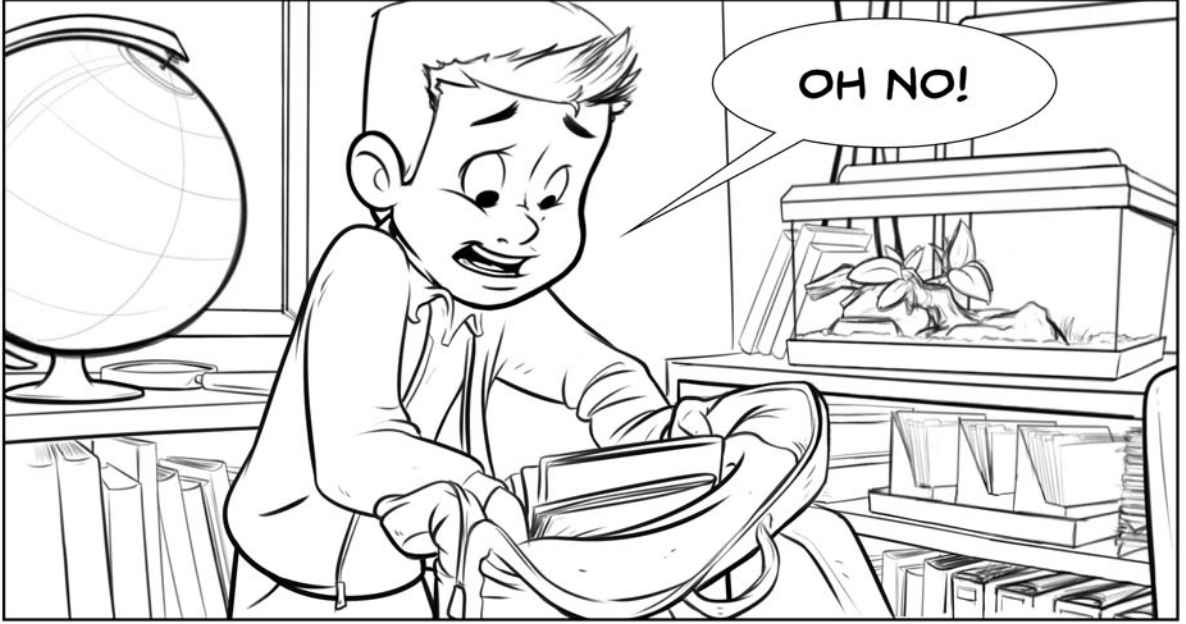




IN THE SCHOOL'S HALLWAY, MELINDA AND STAN SNEAKILY CREPT BEHIND DANNY AND LIFTED THE RED CAPE FROM HIS BACKPACK.

THEY QUICKLY RAN AWAY GIGGLING AND CELEBRATED WITH A HIGH FIVE BEFORE STUFFING THE CAPE IN STAN'S LOCKER.

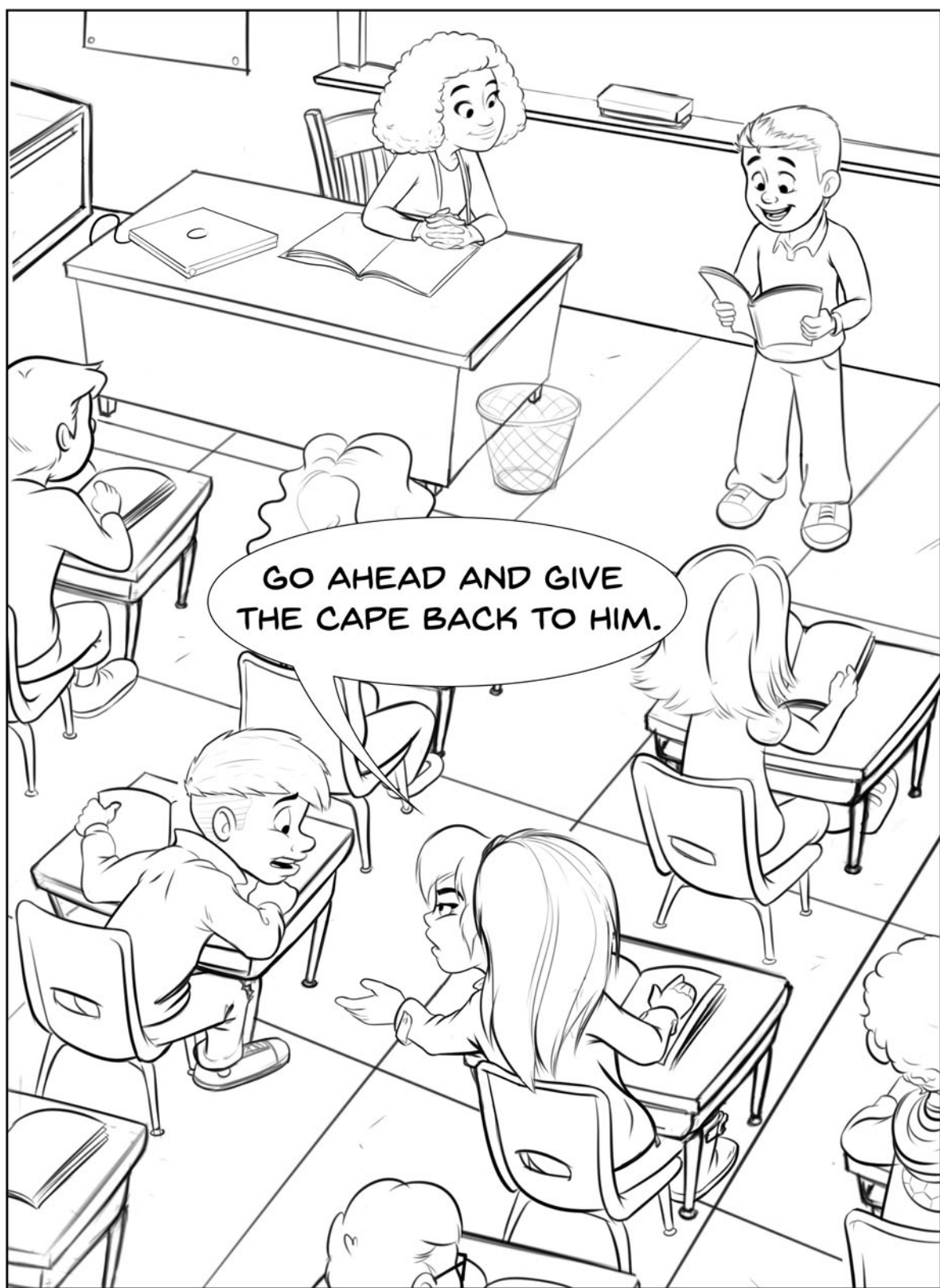
DANNY ARRIVED IN CLASS AND WAS TAKING HIS BOOKS OUT OF HIS BACKPACK WHEN HE REALIZED--THE RED CAPE WAS MISSING! BUT IT WAS DANNY'S TURN TO READ AGAIN. HOW WAS HE GOING TO READ IN FRONT OF EVERYONE WITHOUT THE RED CAPE?



"MRS. FISHER, MRS. FISHER!" DANNY NERVOUSLY RAN UP TO HIS TEACHER AT HER DESK. "I'VE LOST MY RED CAPE! I DON'T THINK I CAN READ ALOUD TODAY."

"DANNY," MRS. FISHER CALMLY REPLIED, "THE RED CAPE WAS JUST A SYMBOL FOR THE SUPERHERO THAT LIES WITHIN YOU. YOU HAVE ALL THE POWER YOU NEED."





THAT DAY, DANNY READ WITHOUT THE CAPE WHILE SHOWING STRENGTH AND FLUENCY. MELINDA AND STAN'S PLAN WAS THWARTED. "GO AHEAD AND GIVE THE CAPE BACK TO HIM," MELINDA WHISPERED TO STAN, DEFEATED. "IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER IF HE HAS IT OR NOT AT THIS POINT."

STAN RETURNED WITH THE RED CAPE AND GAVE IT TO DANNY AFTER CLASS. "HEY. WE'RE SORRY ABOUT TAKING YOUR CAPE," HE SAID.

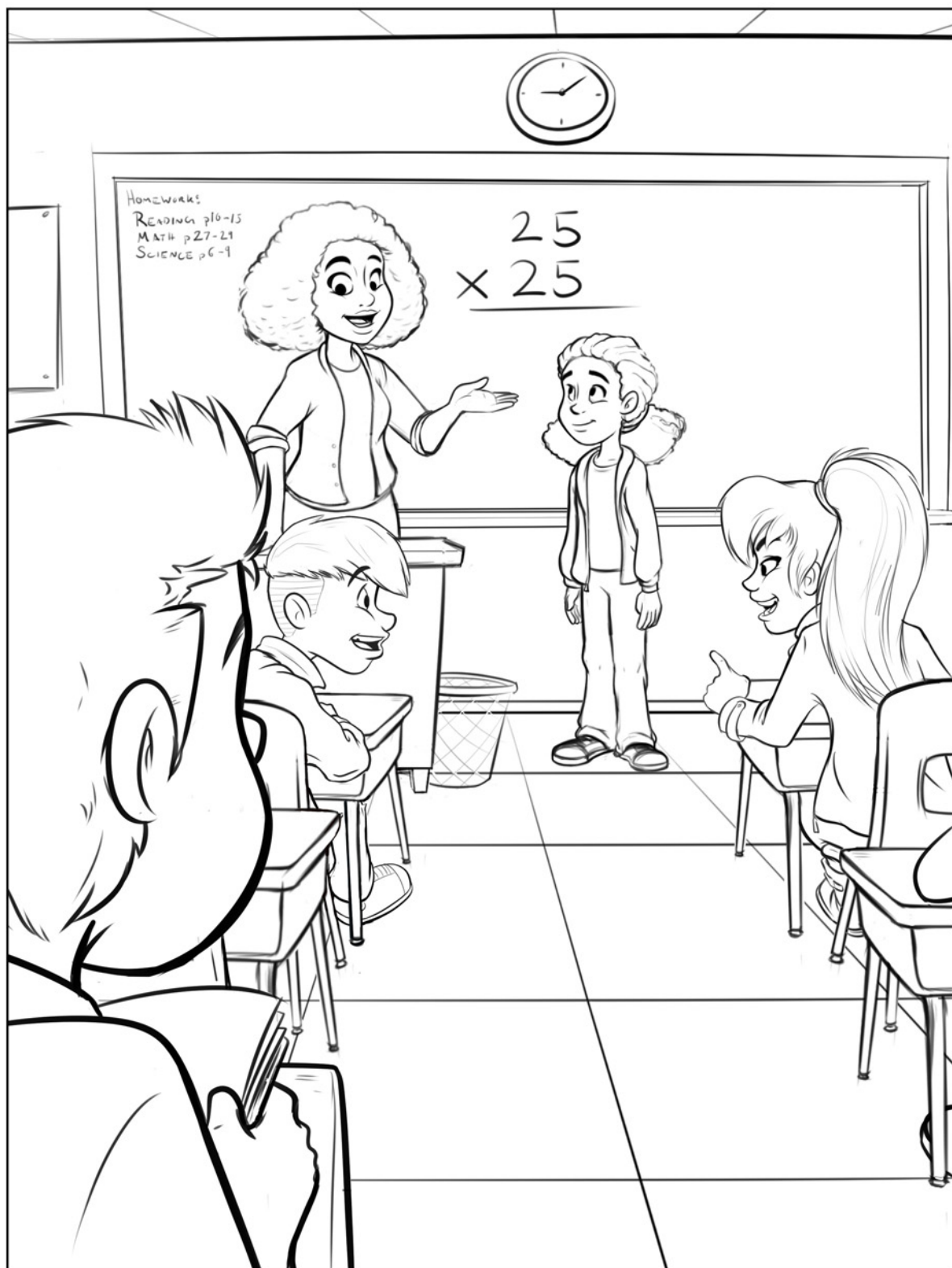
MELINDA, WITH HER EYES DOWN, MUTTERED, "YEAH, YOU AREN'T SO BAD AT READING AFTER ALL."



DANNY TOOK THE CAPE. "THANKS! YOU GUYS ARE REALLY COOL FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO ME." STAN BLUSHED. SEEING THIS, MELINDA ROLLED HER EYES.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, A NEW STUDENT ARRIVED IN CLASS. MRS. FISHER INTRODUCED THE CLASS TO ABBY.

"SINCE IT'S MATH DAY," SAID MRS. FISHER, "WHY DON'T YOU START WORKING ON THIS MULTIPLICATION PROBLEM ON THE BOARD?" ABBY PICKED UP THE DRY ERASE MARKER, TURNED TO THE BOARD, AND FROZE.



DANNY PULLED THE CAPE FROM HIS BACKPACK AND PUT IT OVER ABBY'S SHOULDERS. SHE SMILED WITH RENEWED CONFIDENCE AS SHE SLOWLY BUT SURELY SOLVED THE PROBLEM.



"EXCELLENT JOB, ABBY!" MRS. FISHER EXCLAIMED. MRS. FISHER KNEW IT WAS THE RIGHT MOMENT TO WRITE A MESSAGE ON THE BOARD FOR HER CLASS: "ALL YOU NEED IS TO BELIEVE IN YOURSELF, AND YOU TOO CAN BE A HERO."



THE END

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