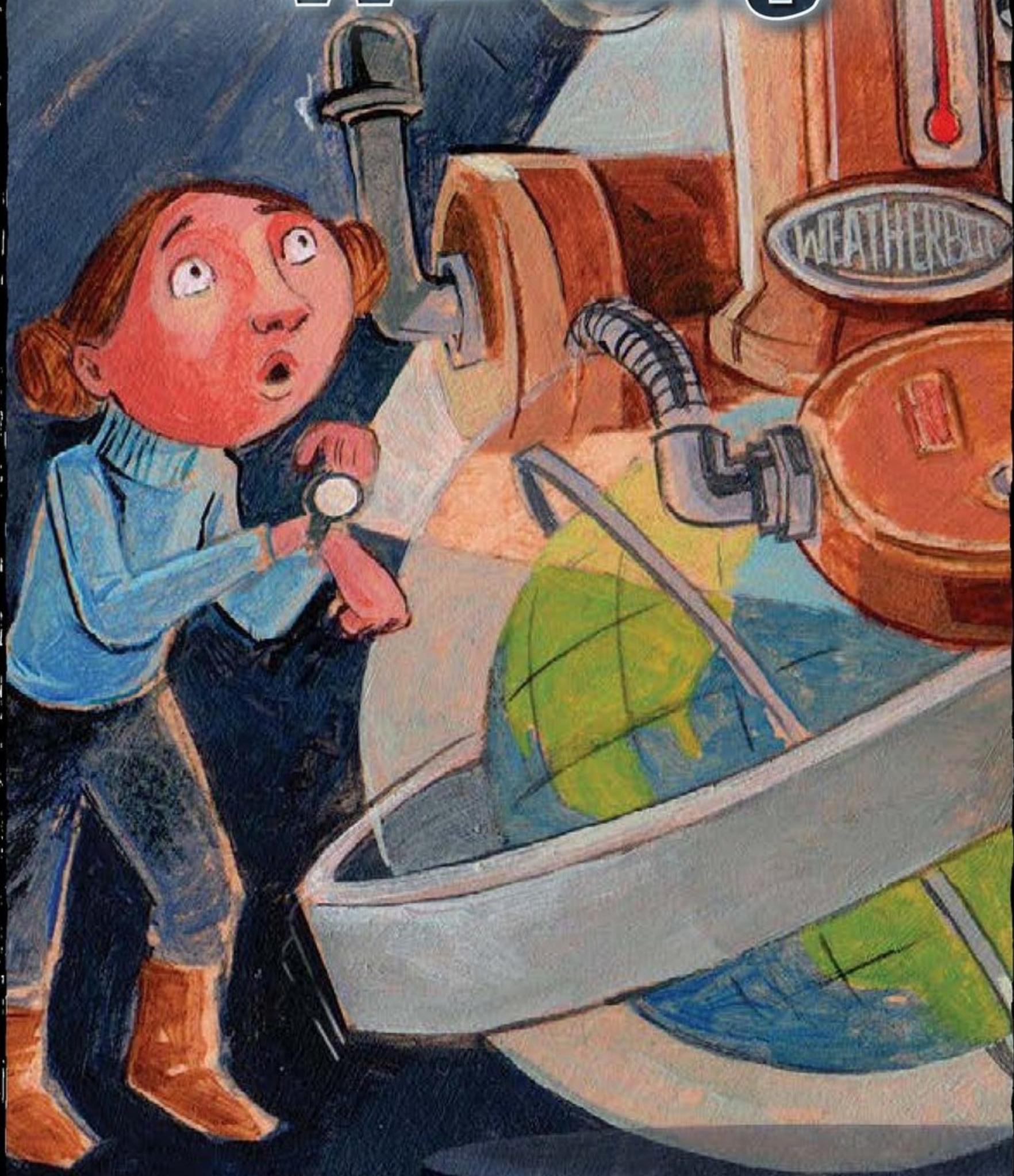


LEVELED BOOK • Q

The weatherBot Warning



Written by Torran Anderson
Illustrated by Jeff Ebbeler

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I wasn't sure where to hide. Missy knew all the best hiding spots in our middle school. I ran down to the basement. I was going to hide in the utility closet but found one of the storage rooms unlocked. I knew students weren't allowed in there, but I went in anyway.

I crept to the back of the room and ducked under a tarp that was covering a large machine.

"Ready or not, here I come!" Missy yelled.

Ten minutes passed, and there was no sign of Missy. She must have thought I hid under the bleachers by the football field.

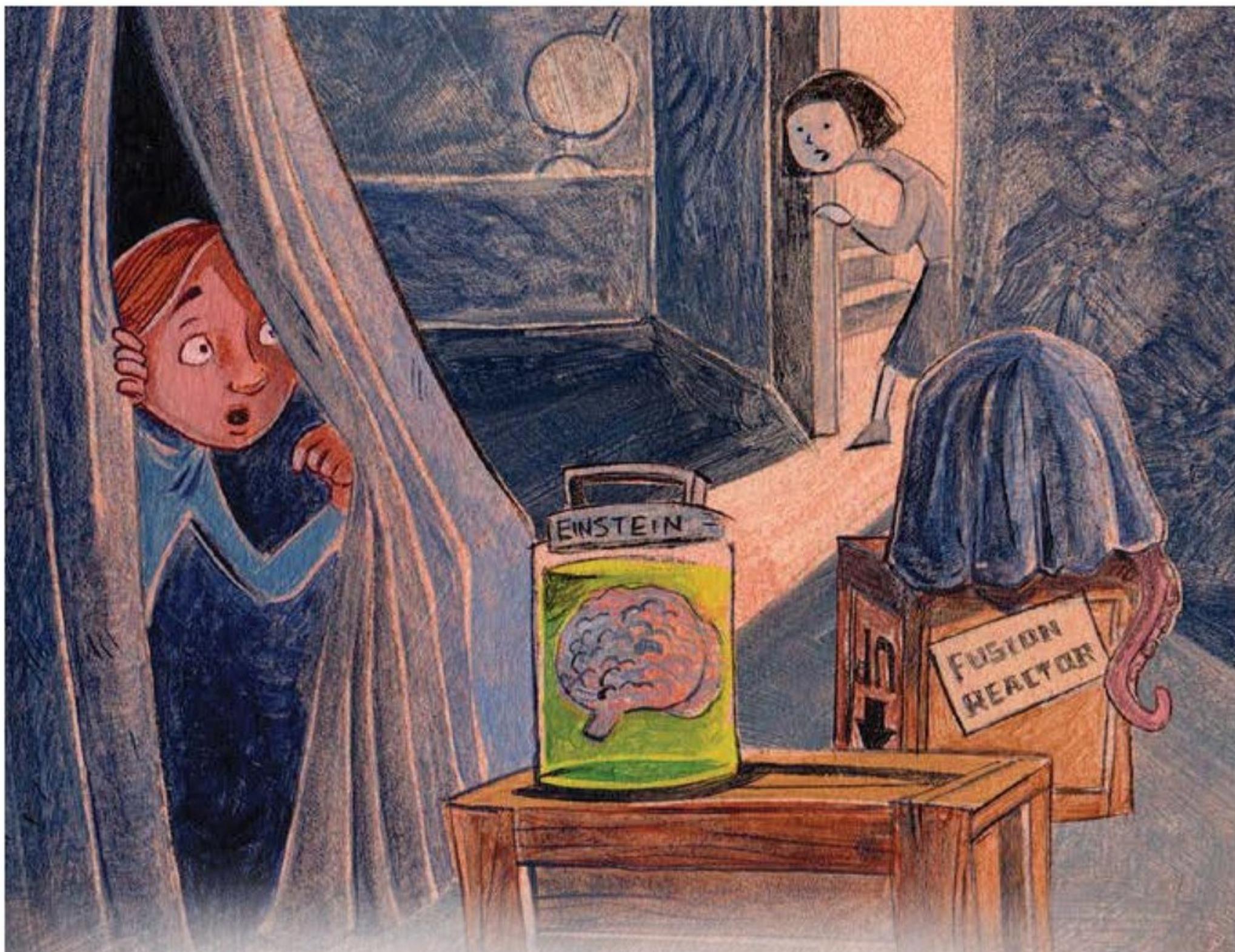
I leaned against the machine to rest and heard a humming sound. Green and red buttons flashed. In the dim light, I could make out the word *WeatherBot*.

What's a WeatherBot? I wondered. I turned on my watch light and studied the device.

A clipboard with some notes hung on the machine.

To initiate a rainstorm, push the green button, then the red button, then flip the bottom switch.





"A rain machine!" I said. "I wonder if it works."

I pushed the green and red buttons and flipped the bottom switch.

Nothing happened. I didn't hear any thunder crash overhead—only Missy's voice yelling, "Zarela, where are you? The football game's about to start."

I ducked out from under the tarp as Missy entered the room.

"Come on," Missy said. "Your mom's waiting for us."



Mom, Missy, and I sat at the fifty yard line. A big crowd was there to see our team play against Greenville in the first game of the season.

"How was school today?" Mom asked.

"Good. I'm working on my science project for your class," I said.

"I can help you with that," Mom said.

"The other kids might think that's unfair since you're the science teacher," I answered.

"I'm also your mom, and we can work on it together," she replied.

"It's okay—I can figure it out myself," I said.

The Vetero Badgers took the field, and we screamed, “Badgers, badgers, fight, fight, fight!”

By the end of the first half, the game was tied at seven points apiece. A light rain was falling.

“That’s weird,” Missy said. “The weather **forecast** called for blue skies today.”

“That *is* strange,” Mom said. “I hope it doesn’t give Greenville an advantage. They get more rain than we do, so they’re more used to playing in it.”

Did I cause the rain by pushing the buttons?
I wondered. I didn’t think the WeatherBot even worked.



"What if this rain is part of Greenville's strategy, and they built a machine to make it rain?" I asked.

"That's impossible," Missy said.

Mom laughed. "When I was in college, I built a machine to try to control the weather. I was too **inexperienced** to realize what a horrible idea it was. The one time I used it, the college was struck by lightning fifty times in one night. For years afterward, the college was surrounded by a strange fog. Good thing I only used it once."

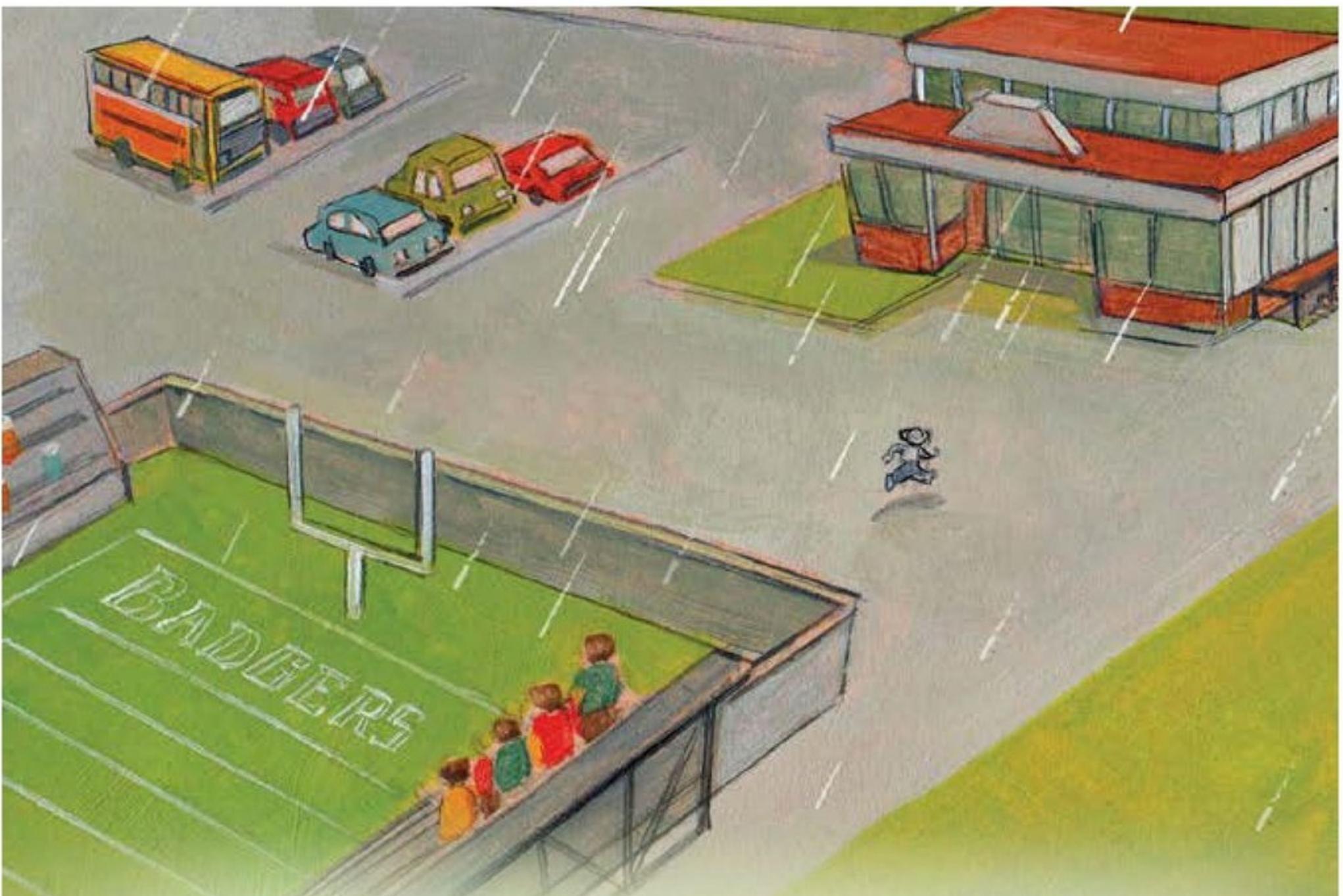


"What happened to the machine?" Missy asked.

"I stored it away in case I ever thought of a way to make it safe. I never did, though. Maybe there are some things science just shouldn't mess with," Mom said.

My heart pounded. I felt as though I was going to be sick. Mom's WeatherBot actually worked, and there was a whole crowd of people sitting outside. Maybe a bunch of lightning bolts were about to hit the bleachers!





The rain started to intensify, and the clouds began to turn black.

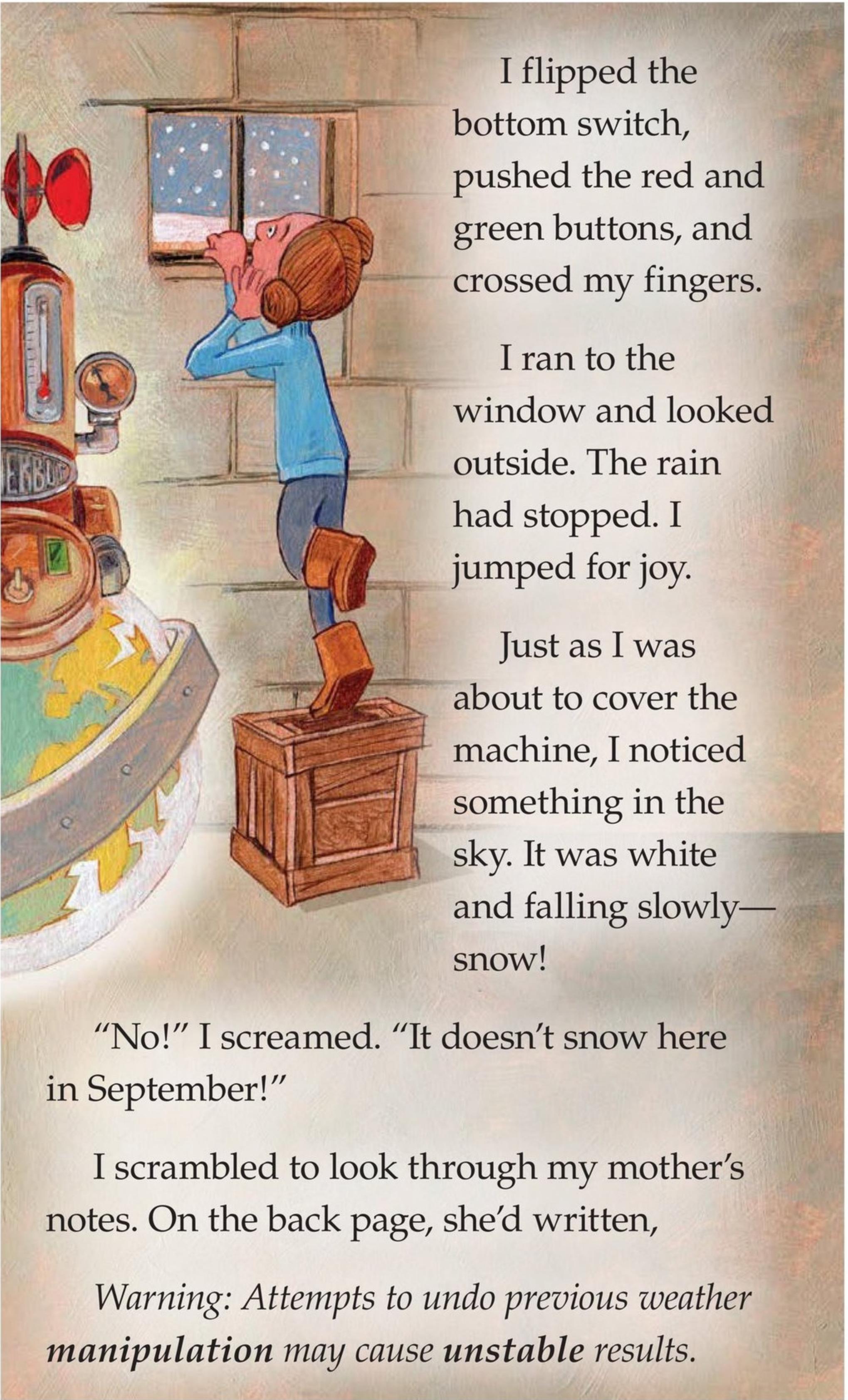
"It's halftime," Mom said. "Zarela, do you want some more popcorn?"

"Ah, no. I forgot something in the school. I'll be right back," I said, trying to sound casual.

I bolted toward the basement. I had to fix the weather before the second half started.

I raced into the storage room and threw off the tarp. I grabbed the notes and read:

*To halt a rainstorm, reverse the sequence:
bottom switch, red button, and green button.*



I flipped the bottom switch, pushed the red and green buttons, and crossed my fingers.

I ran to the window and looked outside. The rain had stopped. I jumped for joy.

Just as I was about to cover the machine, I noticed something in the sky. It was white and falling slowly—snow!

“No!” I screamed. “It doesn’t snow here in September!”

I scrambled to look through my mother’s notes. On the back page, she’d written,

Warning: Attempts to undo previous weather manipulation may cause unstable results.

"Thanks, Mom!" I muttered. "You couldn't have put that note first?"

The storeroom door burst open. Mom stood in the doorway.

"I'm so sorry!" I blurted out. "I'm the one who used the WeatherBot."

"You are *so* grounded!" Mom said. "Why would you use a strange machine when you don't know how it works?"

"I'm sorry," I cried. "At first, I didn't think it worked. Then I just wanted to fix everything before you found out."





Mom lowered her voice. “Zarela, you can always talk to me. I’m your mother—I want to help you.”

I wiped my eyes with my shirtsleeve.

“I really am sorry,” I said. “I should have told you as soon as the machine turned on.”

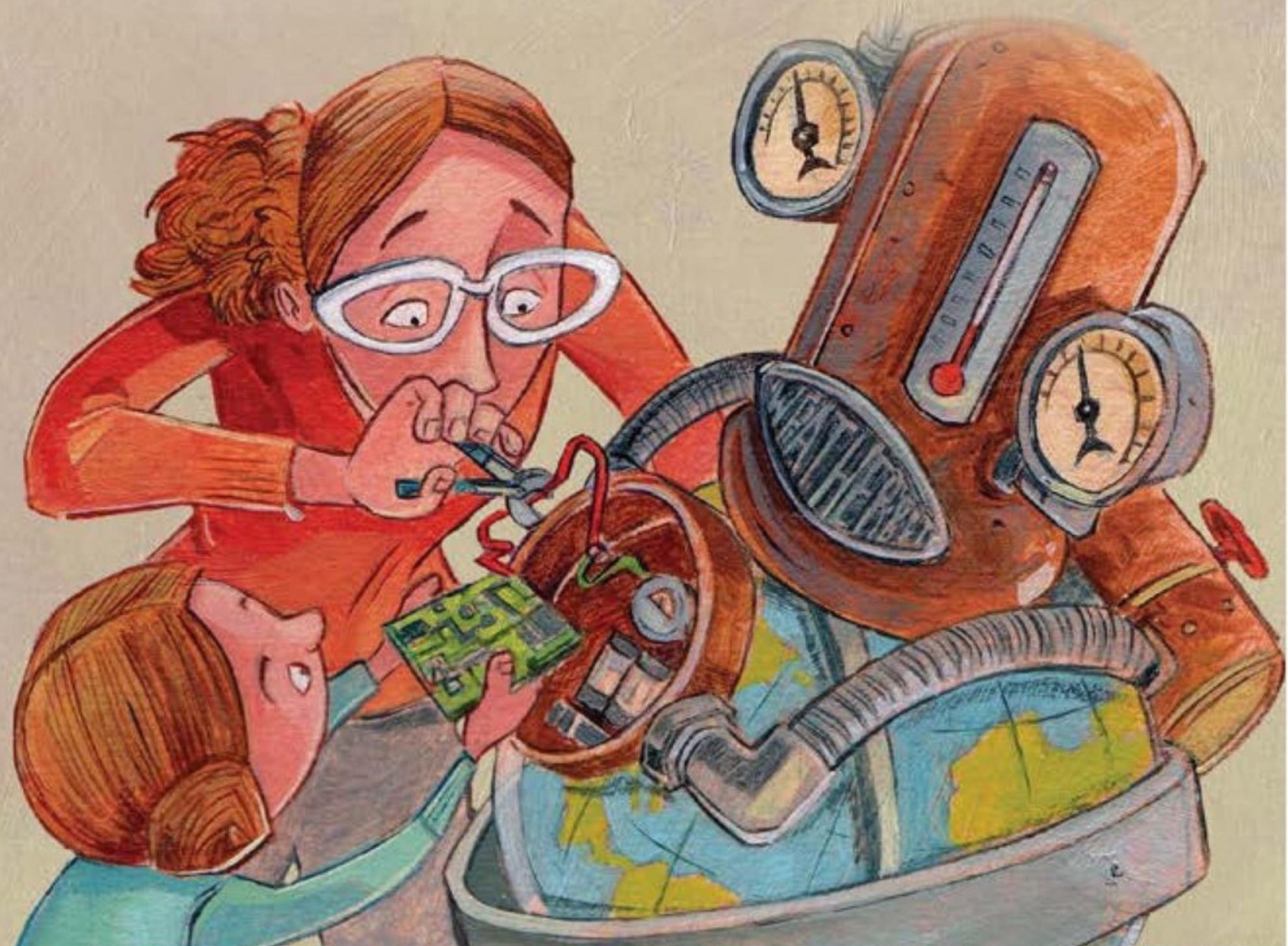
“It’s all right,” Mom said. “I’m sorry, too. I should have gotten rid of this machine a long time ago. I was too proud of my greatest invention to let it go.”

I looked out the window. The football game was interrupted, and everyone was staring up at the snow.

"Mom, I think we'd better do something before Vetro turns into the North Pole," I said.

"We have to destroy the machine," Mom said. "It's the only way."

Together we took off the front panel. Mom cut the wires leading to the buttons, and I removed the **circuit board**. The WeatherBot made a high-pitched whine, and the lights flickered off for the last time.





Mom and I walked out to the snow-covered football field. A thick fog now blanketed the school.

"Oh, no," I said. "Now we'll have to reschedule the game."

"I'm afraid it's worse than that," Mom said. "This fog will likely hang around for years. Although we might be able to build a fog-removing device . . ."

"No way, Mom!" I said. "Let's not invent any more weather machines. There are some things we just shouldn't mess with."

Glossary

circuit board (<i>n.</i>)	a board that houses many tiny electronic parts that make a computer or other electronic device work (p. 14)
device (<i>n.</i>)	a thing that has been built for a purpose (p. 4)
forecast (<i>n.</i>)	a prediction of expected weather conditions (p. 7)
inexperienced (<i>adj.</i>)	marked by a lack of experience or understanding (p. 8)
initiate (<i>v.</i>)	to begin or start (p. 4)
intensify (<i>v.</i>)	to make or become stronger (p. 10)
manipulation (<i>n.</i>)	the act of handling or operating something, especially skillfully (p. 11)
sequence (<i>n.</i>)	the order in which things happen (p. 10)
unstable (<i>adj.</i>)	not balanced or steady; unreliable (p. 11)

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