

By Meg Richardson

While I was growing up, my mom had a lot of rules about what I could and couldn't wear.

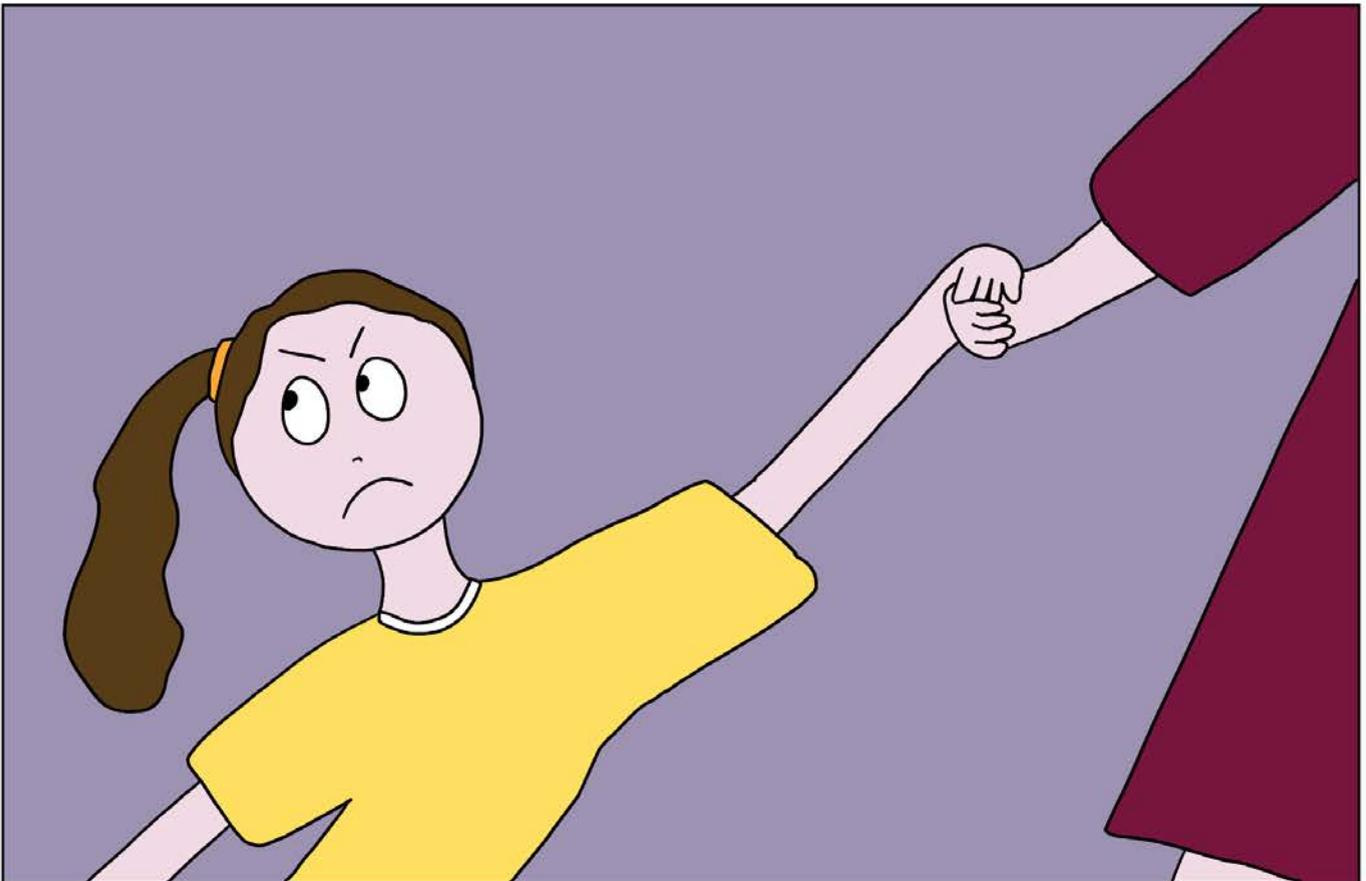




And most of all...

NO SPARKLES!

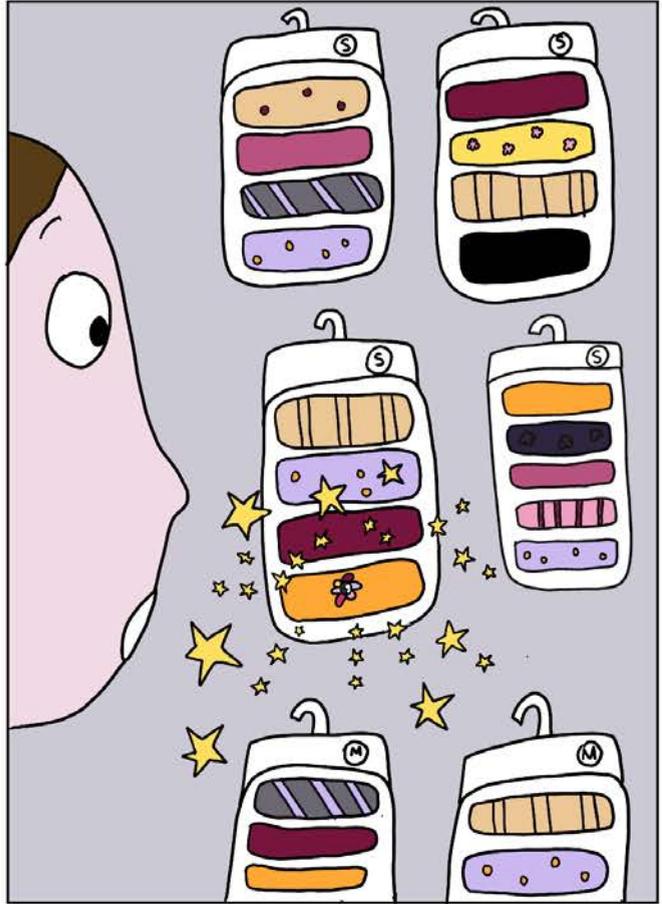
People need to pay attention to you because of your ideas, not because of how you look!



But, everything changed one day when I was six.

Pick out a package of underwear.
Cotton underwear.

Okay.



Nestled in a row of bland, normal underwear was the most perfect pair of underwear I had ever seen.





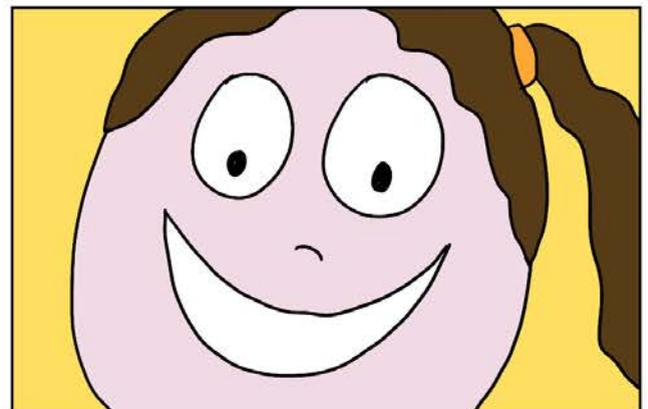
Bright orange.

A sparkly...yeah that's right, SPARKLY yin-yang flower on the front.

Cotton, so I wouldn't die of whatever my mom thought people who don't wear cotton underwear die of.

I knew that if I could get my mom to buy this underwear for me, my life would be forever changed.





I decided to call the underwear my "power undies."



I had recently been feeling the need for a certain type of power—the power to soak up the specialness of my life, and maybe even stall the process of growing up.

I was becoming very aware of the fact that my childhood, and life itself, would not last forever.

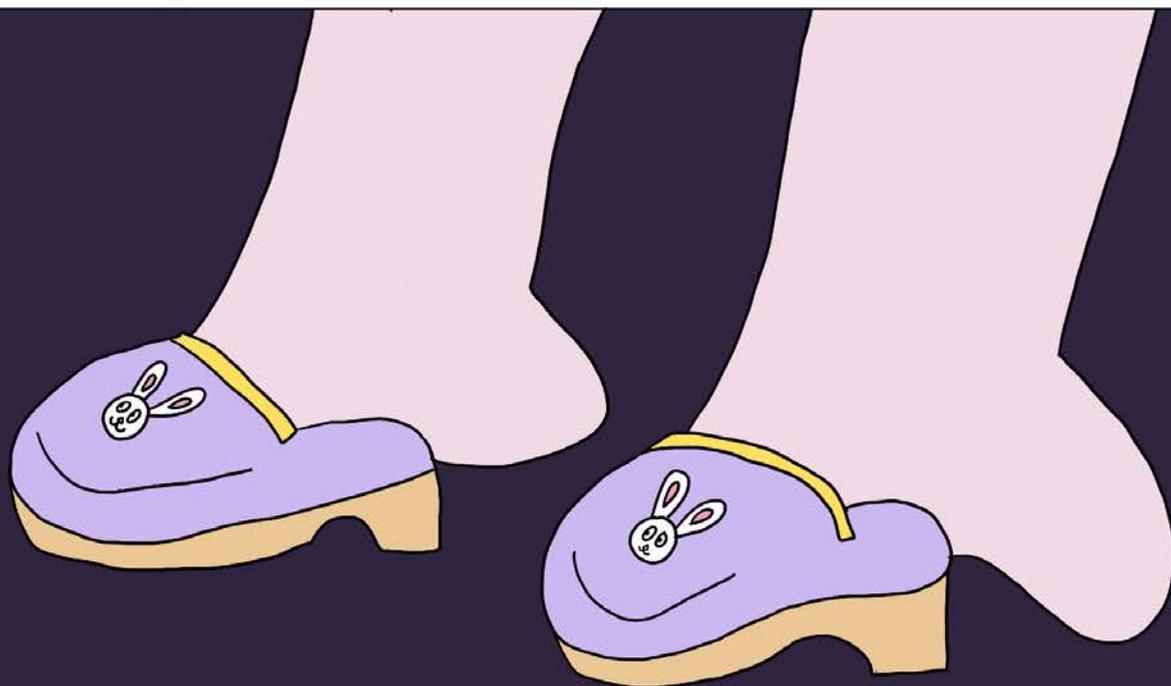
My best friend's grandma had just died.



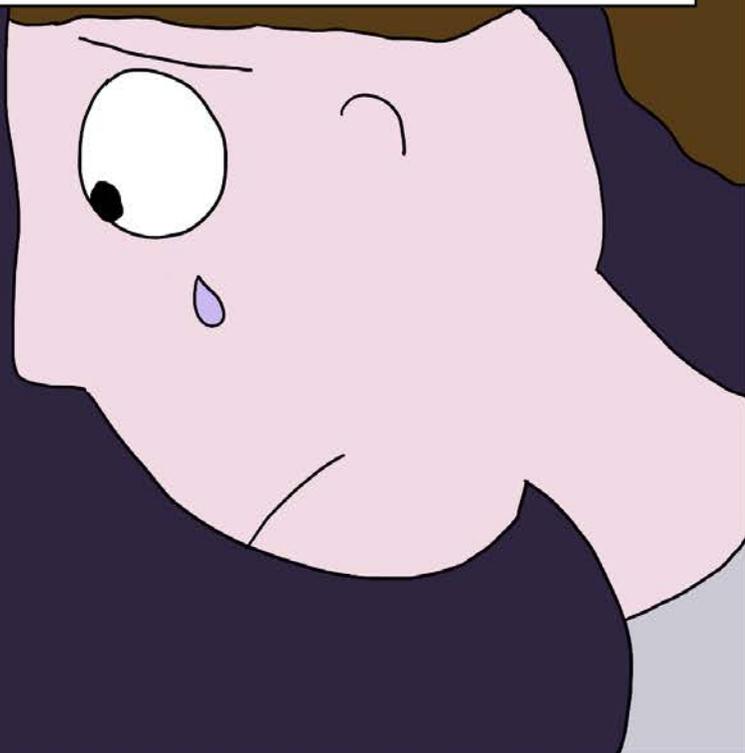
She told me that people turn into dirt when they die, just like the banana peels we put in the compost pile at our school.



I had also just grown out of my favorite pair of clogs with bunnies on them.



And the company didn't make bunny clogs in a bigger size.

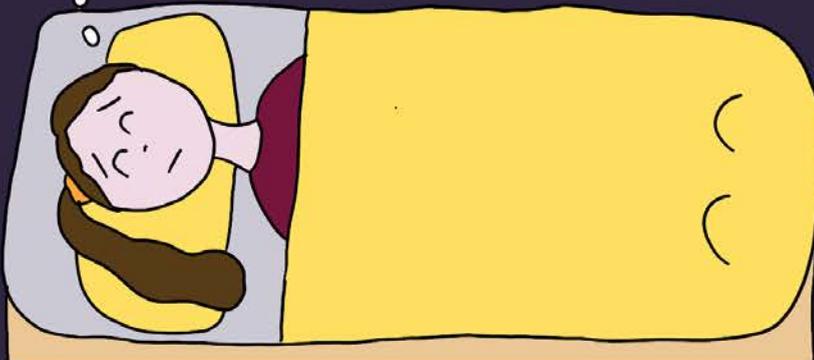


I felt like my life, and all its specialness, was running away from me and I couldn't stop it.

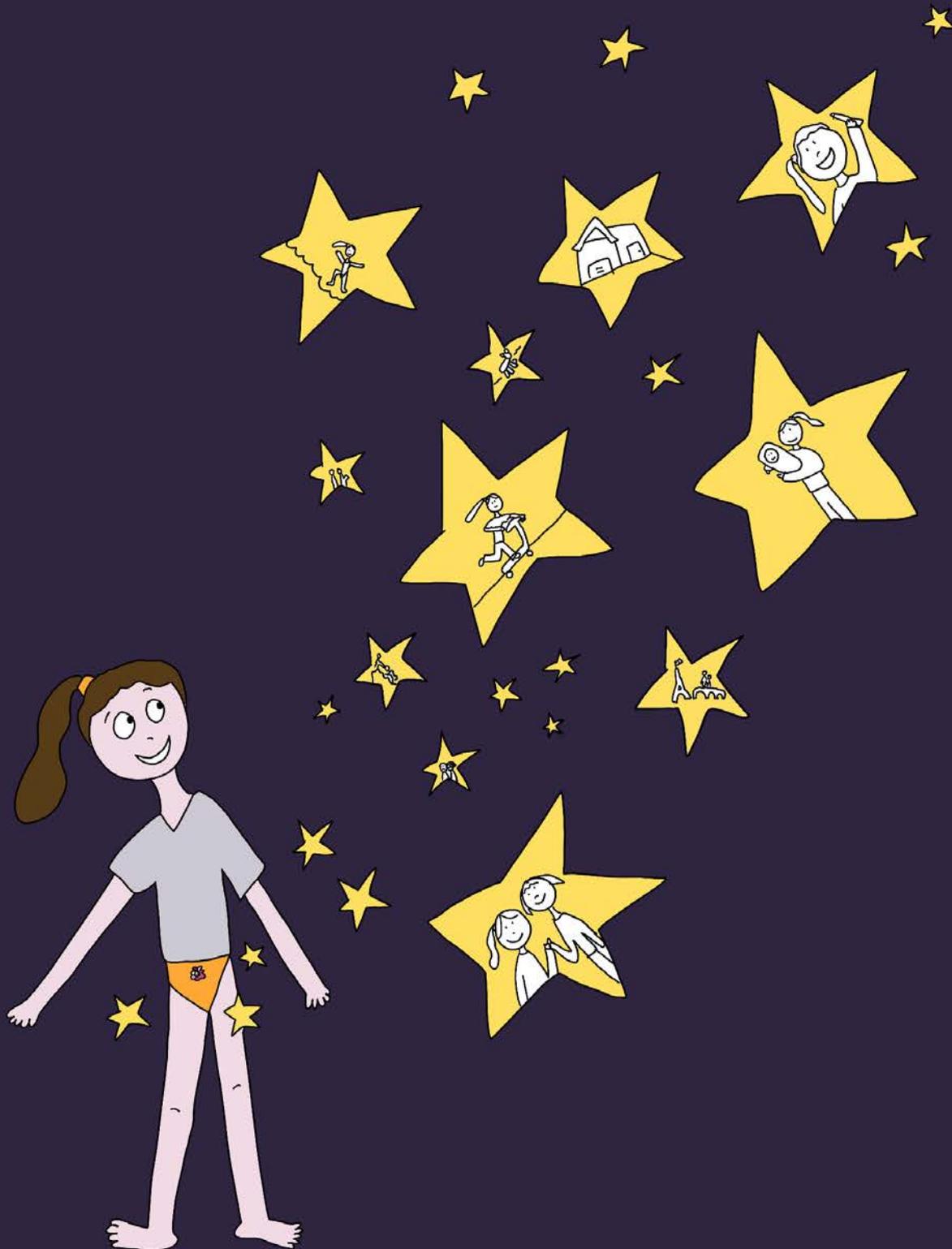


I would lie awake at night trying to remember every detail of special days, to catalogue and preserve them, but I couldn't.

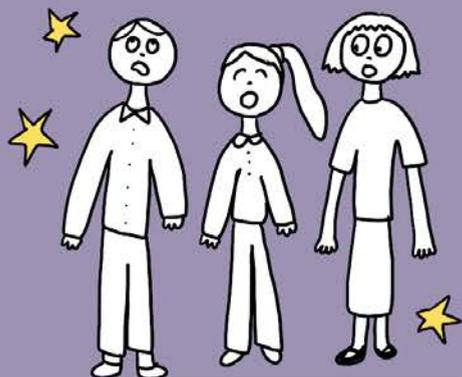
...And then we ate rice pudding... and then we read the Bible...and then we sang. Wait, no, I'm forgetting something!



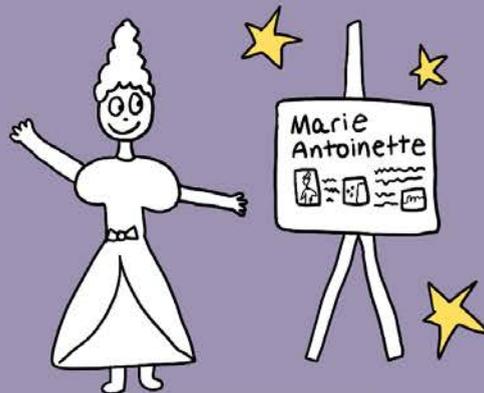
My power undies would solve this. The sparkle on them would soak up all the specialness I experienced, and would put it somewhere magic and permanent.



I wore my power undies on every special day. If I had to grow up, at least the special things I was experiencing as a kid weren't going to waste.



Choir concert



History fair



Sleepover with my cousins



Meeting my babysitter's turtle



Protest against the Iraq War



Swedish smorgasbord

A few years later on Halloween, I was getting ready to go trick-or-treating with my friends.

Does this blood look like real blood?



Can you fluff my tail?



I can't move my arms.



As we were about to leave, I had a terrible realization. I wasn't wearing my Power Undies!

Guys, wait for me for one second!*



*It would take much longer than one second for me to get up and down the stairs in my costume.

I made it to my room and grabbed my power Undies. But there was another problem.



I couldn't get my costume on and off by myself.

Hhhaa!



Ghrrr!

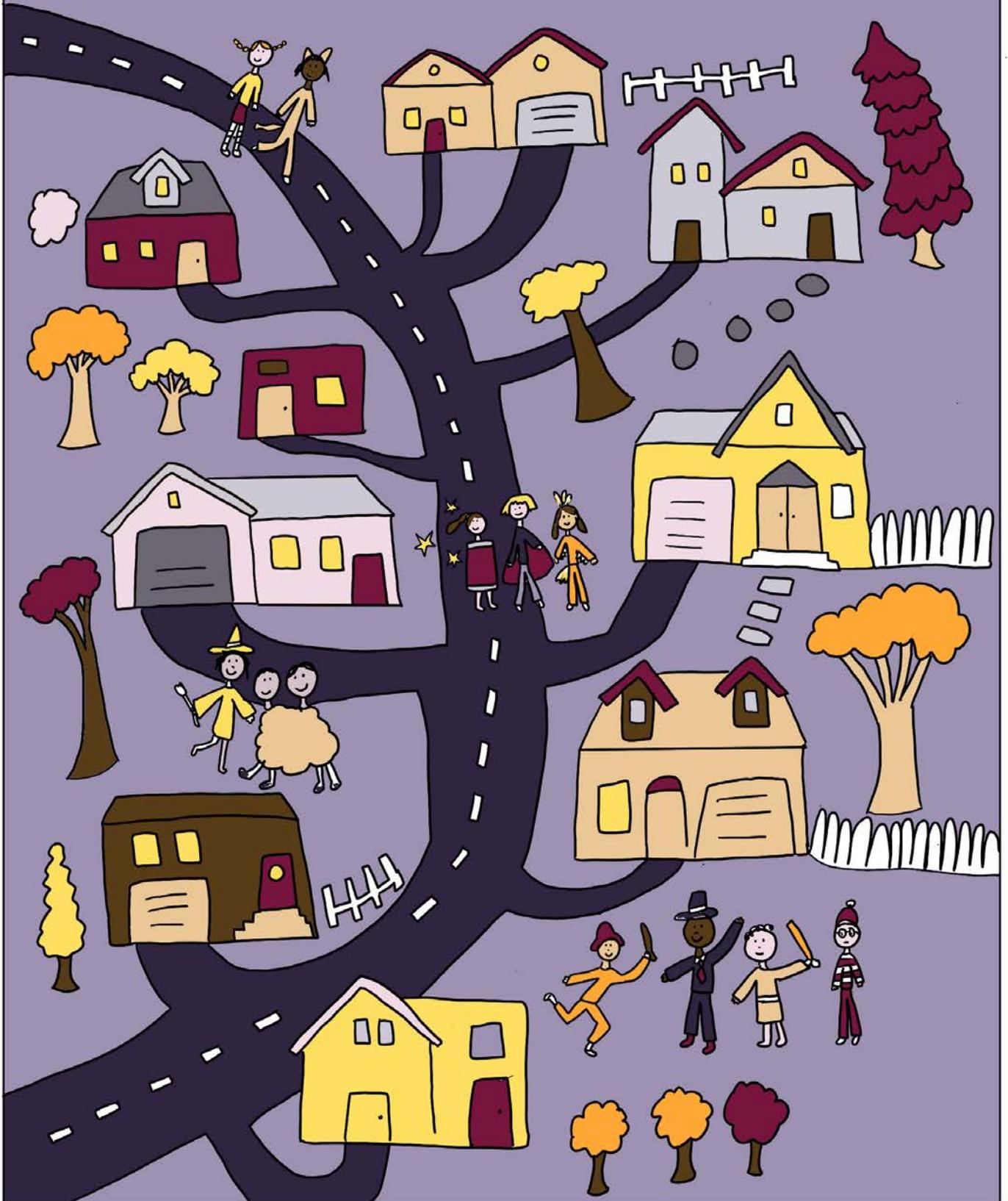


I decided to stuff the power undies into the foil of my costume. They would still be able to record Halloween from there. I was ready to go.

Let's do this!



It was a great night of trick or treating.



But when we got back to my house, I realized that my power Undies were gone. I didn't know what to do. I was nine by this point, a little old to believe in magic underwear.

Oh no oh no.



My friends and I traded candy with my brother and his friends. Usually this was one of the best parts of Halloween, but I couldn't focus on negotiations. I was panicking.



Then my mom put me to bed, but I couldn't sleep. Was all the specialness that my power Undies had recorded gone forever?



I went downstairs and told my mom everything, even that the underwear was sparkly.

Sniff, I know I'm not supposed to wear sparkles, sniff, but actually most of the sparkles have worn off...sniff. I'm sorry.

It's okay. I'll go look for them.



I think a lot about my mom outside on that Halloween night...

holding a flashlight, retracing our steps, looking for a pair of orange underwear in piles of orange leaves.



I think about how she and I had similar impossible goals during this time, even if we didn't realize it.



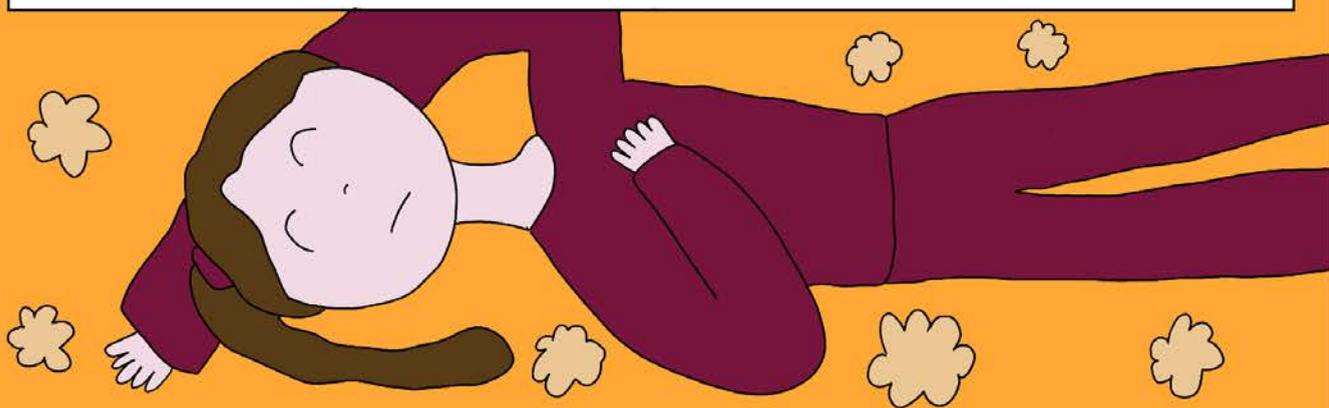
My mom was trying to stop me from wearing clothes that were too grown up, and I trying to record my childhood with my power undies.



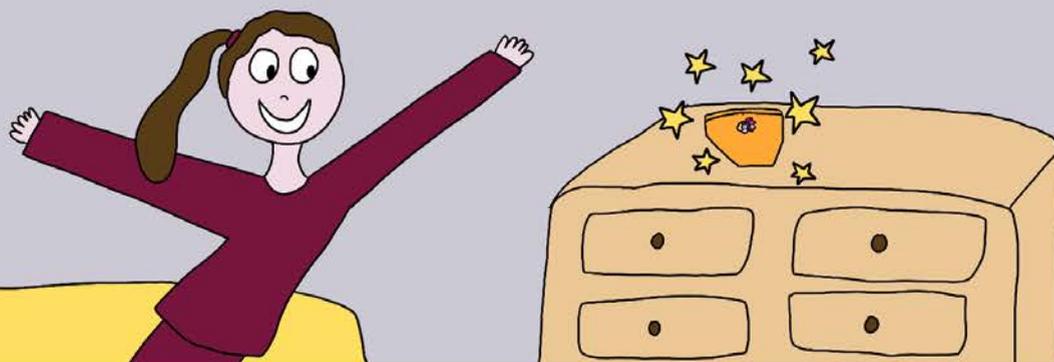
we were both trying to stave off the inevitable-that I would get older, and the world would stop feeling as benevolent and magical as it once had.



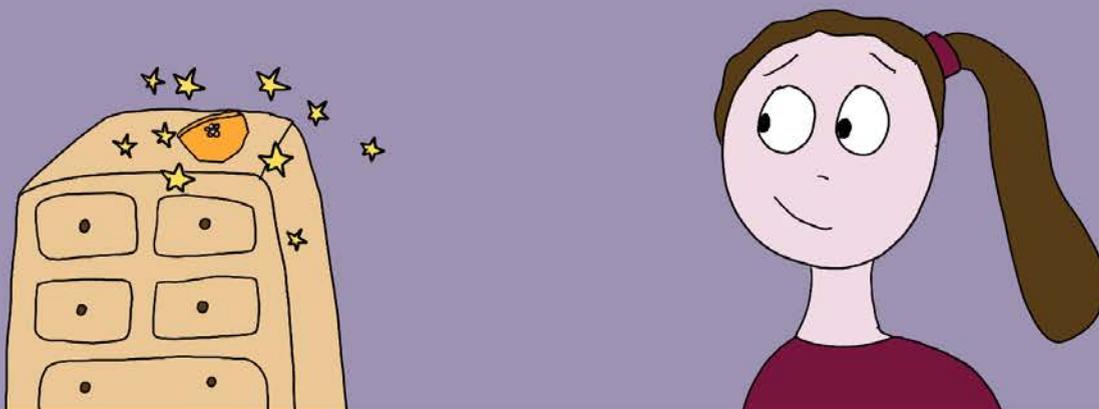
I fell asleep on the couch while my mom was still out.



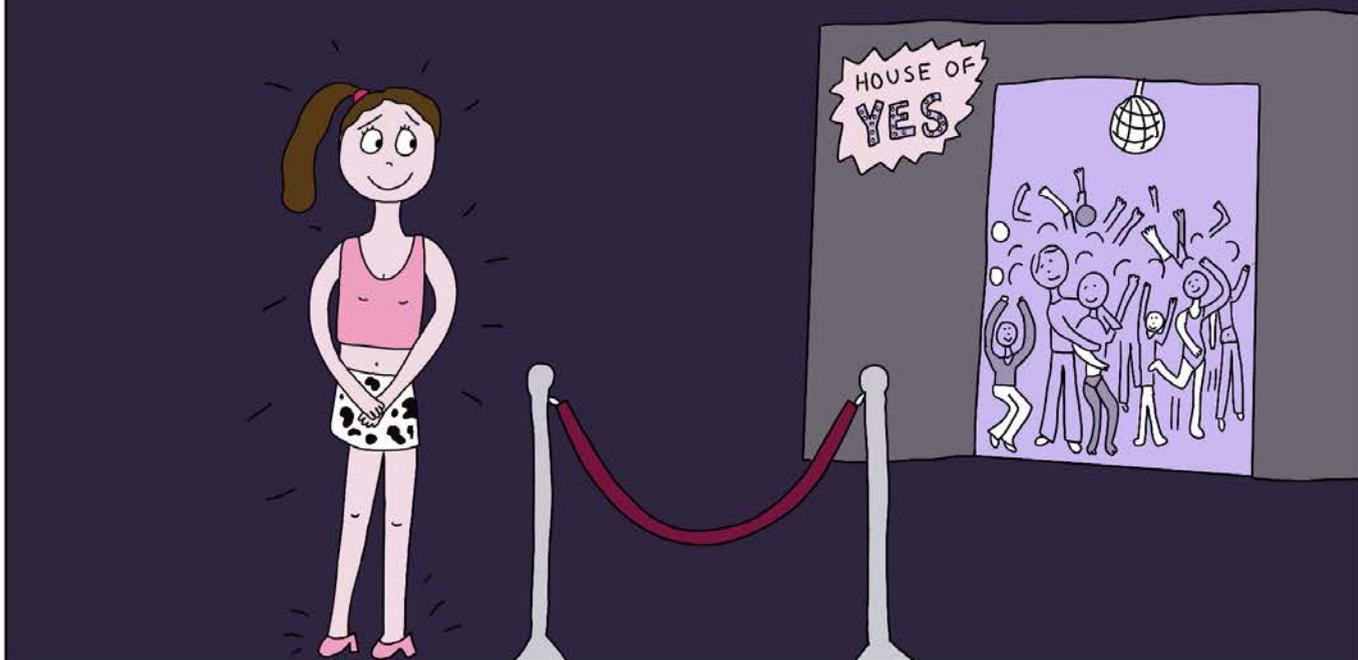
In the morning, I was in my bed, and my power undies were on top of my dresser.



Soon I grew out of my power undies, literally and metaphorically.



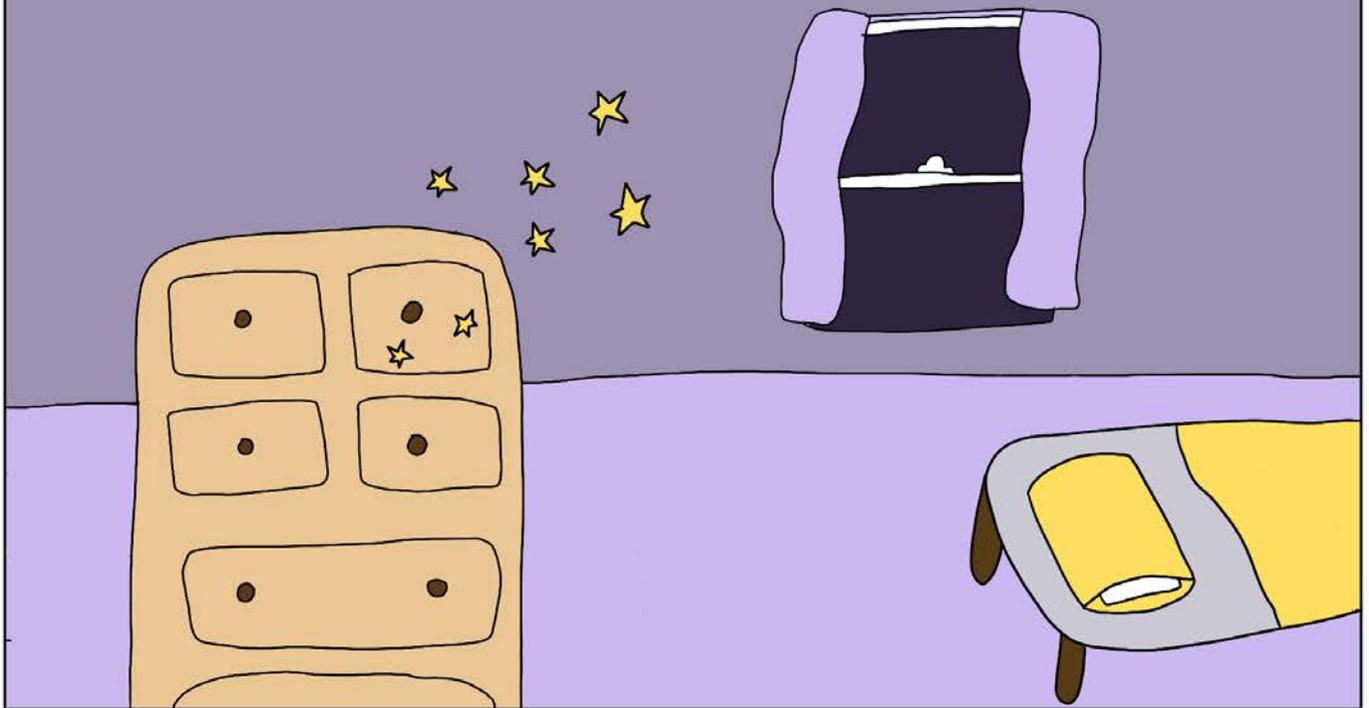
I wore pink and animal print and sparkles and underwear that wasn't cotton.



People paid attention to me because of how I looked, not because of my ideas.



But my power undies are still in my dresser drawer at my parents' house.



I hope the specialness they recorded is somewhere too.

