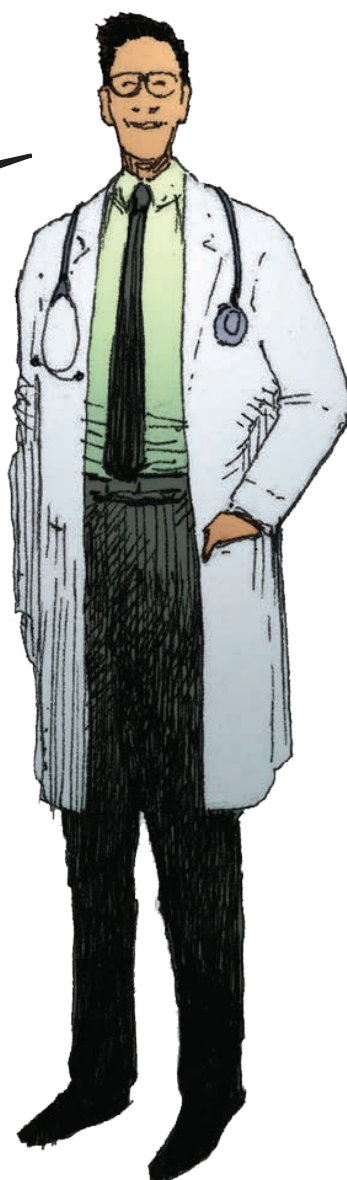




NF HERO COMICS

UNDERSTANDING NF2

MY NAME IS
BILLY AND I HAVE
NF2. THIS IS MY
STORY.



CHILDREN'S
TUMOR FOUNDATION
ENDING NF
THROUGH RESEARCH

UNDERSTANDING NF2

CALIFORNIA.
PRESENT.

MY NAME IS
BILLY, AND I'M A
FIRST-GENERATION
IMMIGRANT.

I'M ALSO
A MEDICAL
STUDENT.

AND A
PATIENT.

CHILDREN'S
TUMOR
FOUNDATION
ENDING NF
THROUGH RESEARCH

1995.
AGE 1

I WAS JUST A BABY
WHEN MY FAMILY
IMMIGRATED FROM
VIETNAM.

BECAUSE OF MY
FATHER'S MILITARY
SERVICE,

HE WAS ABLE
TO BRING MY
MOTHER AND ME
TO CALIFORNIA.

THEY WORKED AS
TEACHERS IN SAN DIEGO.
IT WAS SUNNY, HAPPY,
BEAUTIFUL.

AGE 6

WHEN I WAS SIX,
MY PARENTS TOOK
ME FOR A ROUTINE
EYE EXAM.

SOMETHING
HERE IS... NOT
RIGHT.

AT THAT MOMENT,
EVERYTHING CHANGED.

AGE 7

AFTER A YEAR
OF GOING
FROM DOCTOR
TO DOCTOR,
I FINALLY HAD
AN MRI.

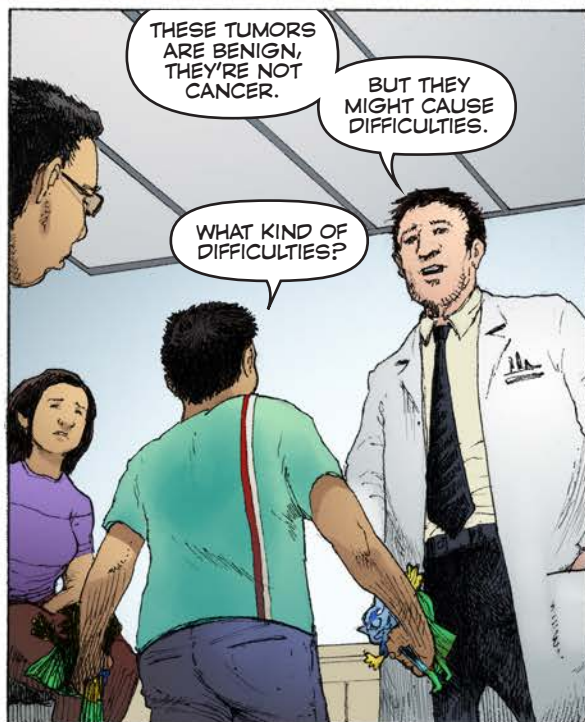
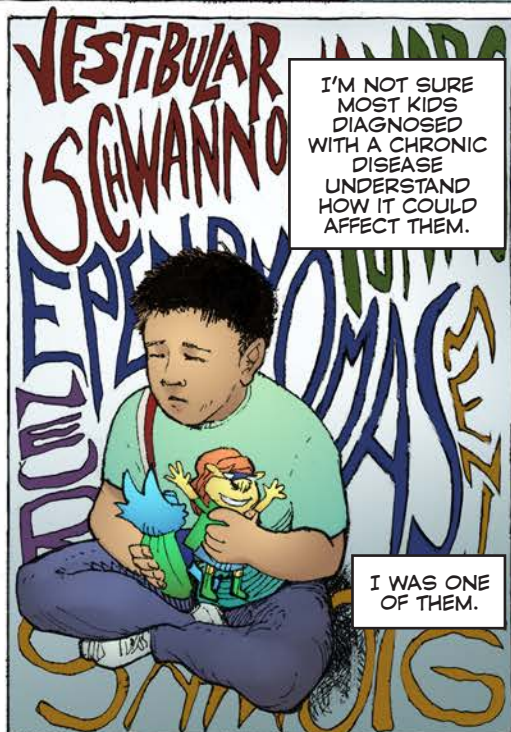
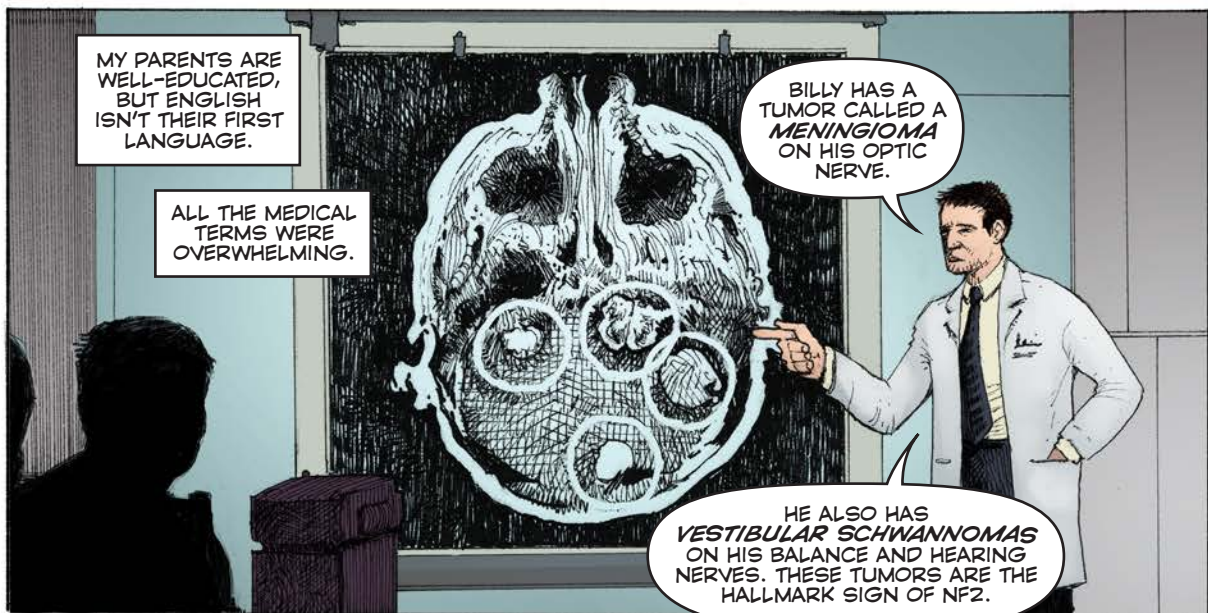
THAT'S WHEN
THEY FOUND
A **TUMOR**.

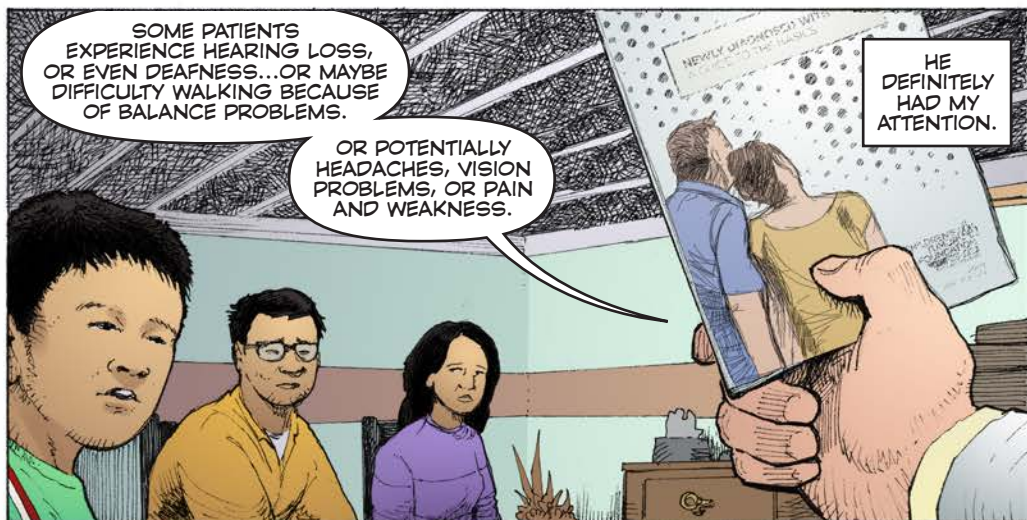
A LOT OF
TUMORS.

HE HAS
CANCER?!

NO. BILLY HAS A
RARE DISEASE CALLED
**NEUROFIBROMATOSIS
TYPE 2, OR NF2**.

IT'S A **GENETIC
DISORDER** THAT
CAUSES TUMORS
TO GROW ON
NERVES.





AGE 13

AS A CHILD, I DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND NF2, AND I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS VERY SIGNIFICANT.

AS I GREW UP, IT STARTED TO MATTER.

ONE OF YOUR TUMORS HAS GROWN RAPIDLY. WE NEED TO CONSIDER SURGERY.

ON MY BRAIN?

YES. WITHOUT IT, YOU MAY LOSE YOUR VISION.

I COULD GO BLIND?!

IN IMMIGRANT FAMILIES, SOMETIMES THE CHILD MUST TRANSLATE MEDICAL TERMS FOR THE PARENTS.

WHICH CAN MAKE A CONFUSING SITUATION EVEN MORE SCARY.

GIÁI PHẪU? KHÔNG CÓ LỰA CHỌN NÀO KHÁC?

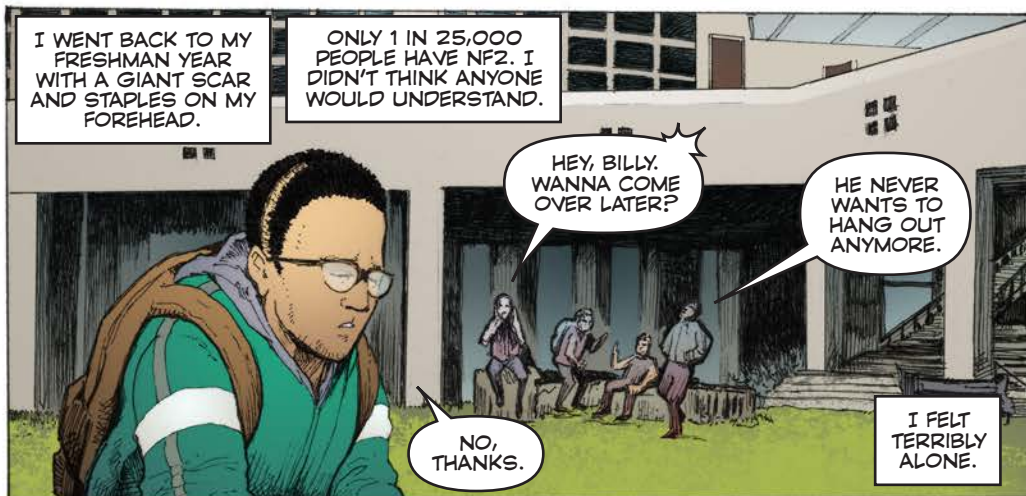
...I DON'T KNOW, OKAY!!!

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I FELT LIKE I HAD TO FIGURE IT OUT ALL BY MYSELF.

SLAM!







I WENT BACK TO MY FRESHMAN YEAR WITH A GIANT SCAR AND STAPLES ON MY FOREHEAD.

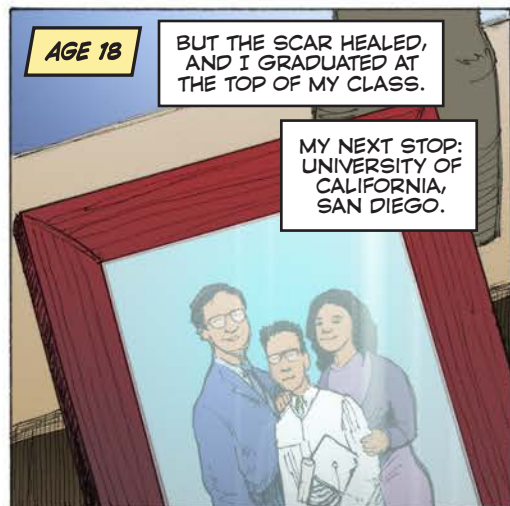
ONLY 1 IN 25,000 PEOPLE HAVE NF2. I DIDN'T THINK ANYONE WOULD UNDERSTAND.

HEY, BILLY. WANNA COME OVER LATER?

HE NEVER WANTS TO HANG OUT ANYMORE.

NO, THANKS.

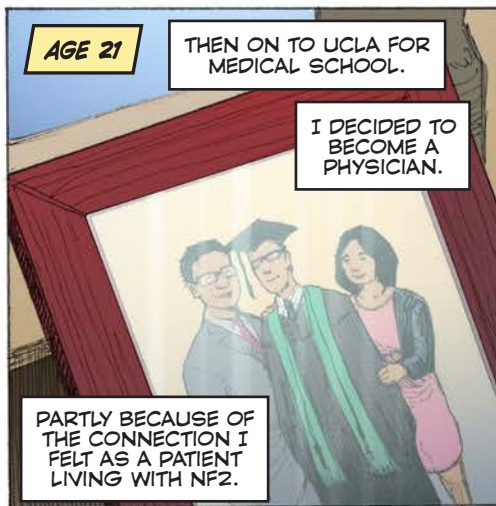
I FELT TERRIBLY ALONE.



AGE 18

BUT THE SCAR HEALED, AND I GRADUATED AT THE TOP OF MY CLASS.

MY NEXT STOP: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO.

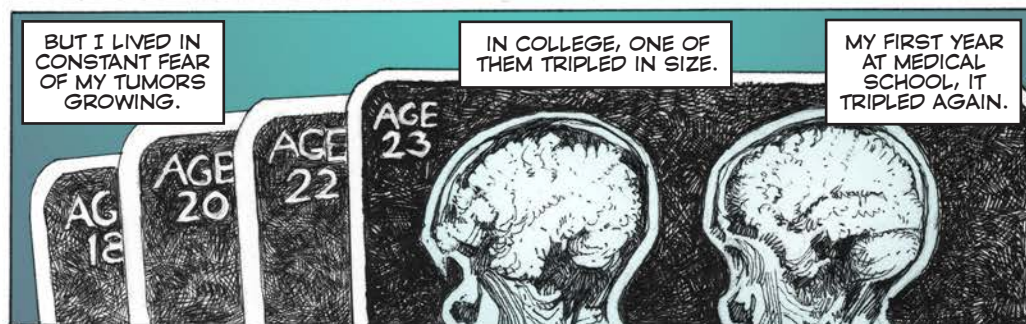


AGE 21

THEN ON TO UCLA FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL.

I DECIDED TO BECOME A PHYSICIAN.

PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE CONNECTION I FELT AS A PATIENT LIVING WITH NF2.



BUT I LIVED IN CONSTANT FEAR OF MY TUMORS GROWING.

IN COLLEGE, ONE OF THEM TRIPLED IN SIZE.

MY FIRST YEAR AT MEDICAL SCHOOL, IT TRIPLED AGAIN.



THAT'S WHEN THE HEARING LOSS BEGAN, ON MY LEFT SIDE.

I STARTED TO DOUBT EVERYTHING. ESPECIALLY MYSELF.

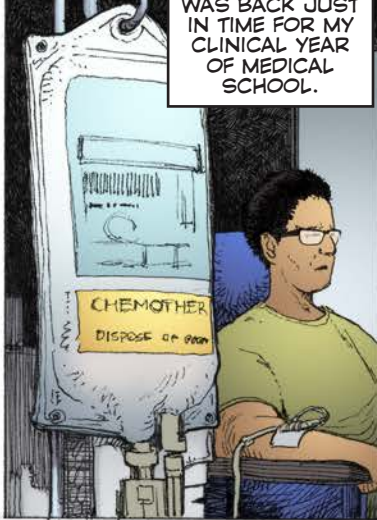


HOW CAN I BECOME A DOCTOR WHEN I CAN'T EVEN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF?

AGE 23

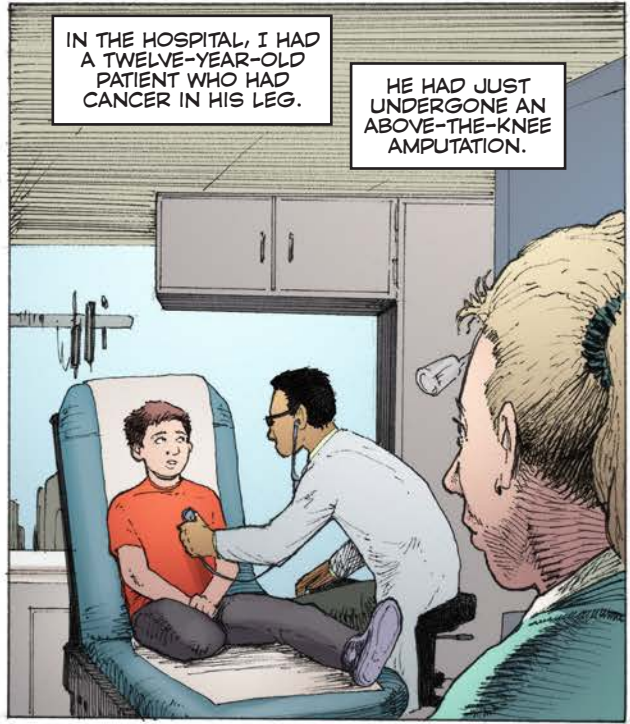
FORTUNATELY, I STARTED A NEW TREATMENT. IT CHANGED EVERYTHING.

MY HEARING WAS BACK JUST IN TIME FOR MY CLINICAL YEAR OF MEDICAL SCHOOL.



IN THE HOSPITAL, I HAD A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD PATIENT WHO HAD CANCER IN HIS LEG.

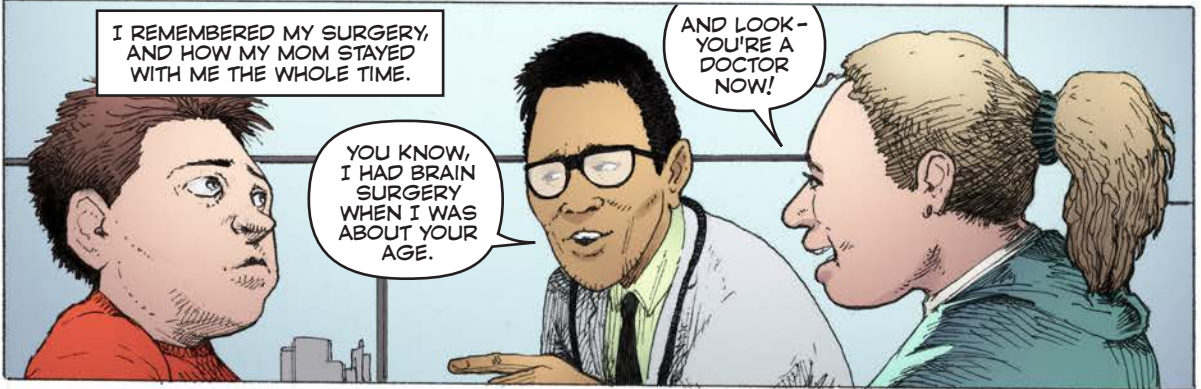
HE HAD JUST UNDERGONE AN ABOVE-THE-KNEE AMPUTATION.



I REMEMBERED MY SURGERY, AND HOW MY MOM STAYED WITH ME THE WHOLE TIME.

YOU KNOW, I HAD BRAIN SURGERY WHEN I WAS ABOUT YOUR AGE.

AND LOOK - YOU'RE A DOCTOR NOW!



SEE JOHNNY, YOU CAN DO IT TOO. SURGERY LIKE THIS DOESN'T HAVE TO STOP YOU.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING YOU WANT!



IT MADE ME REALIZE HOW MUCH MY EXPERIENCE CAN INSPIRE YOUNG PATIENTS.



**THE PRESENT.
AGE 25**

I NEVER THOUGHT I COULD
BECOME A DOCTOR. IT SEEMED
TOO FAR OUT OF REACH.

MY HEARING
IS STABLE
NOW.

BUT I'M UNDER
NO ILLUSION
THAT THINGS
WILL STAY THIS
WAY FOREVER.

I REALIZE
HOW LIMITED
MY TIME IS.

OUR CURRENT DRUGS
ONLY HELP SO MUCH...

...HOPEFULLY WE CAN
BUY ENOUGH TIME,
UNTIL WE FIND A MORE
PERMANENT THERAPY.

ONE THAT WILL
CURE NF2.

BUT UNTIL
THEN, WE
KEEP ON
FIGHTING.

**SYNODOS
FOR NF2:
LET'S END NF**

CHILDREN'S TUMOR
FOUNDATION

A WISE MENTOR ONCE
TOLD ME, LIFE IS 10%
WHAT HAPPENS, AND 90%
HOW YOU RESPOND.

I WANT TO
RESPOND
LOUDLY AND
CLEARLY.

THIS DISEASE WILL NOT LIMIT ME,
BUT IT WILL MOLD ME INTO THE
BEST PHYSICIAN I CAN BE.

I'VE BEEN IN
YOUR SHOES AND I
KNOW HOW SCARED
AND CONFUSED YOU
MUST FEEL, MARIA.

BUT I DID
IT, AND I KNOW
YOU CAN TOO.

I CAN'T MAKE IT
ALL GO AWAY, BUT
I CAN HELP YOU
UNDERSTAND.

YOU'RE
NOT ALONE.
I'LL JOIN
YOU ON YOUR
JOURNEY IF
YOU'LL HAVE
ME.

I'D LIKE
THAT.



NF HERO COMICS

CHILDREN'S
TUMOR
FOUNDATION
ENDING NF
THROUGH RESEARCH

UNDERSTANDING NF2

**NEUROFIBROMATOSIS TYPE 2, OR NF2,
IS A GENETIC DISORDER THAT AFFECTS
1 IN EVERY 25,000 PEOPLE.**

NEUROFIBROMATOSIS CAUSES
TUMORS TO GROW ON NERVES
THROUGHOUT THE BODY,
AND CAN LEAD TO DEAFNESS,
BLINDNESS, DISFIGUREMENT,
BONE ABNORMALITIES, LEARNING
DISABILITIES, DISABLING PAIN,
AND CANCER.

**THERE ARE THREE TYPES
OF NEUROFIBROMATOSIS:
NF1, NF2, AND
SCHWANNOMATOSIS.**

**THE CHILDREN'S TUMOR
FOUNDATION (CTF)**
IS A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
DEDICATED TO FINDING
TREATMENTS FOR PEOPLE LIVING
WITH NF. TO DO THIS, CTF DRIVES
RESEARCH, EXPANDS KNOWLEDGE,
AND ADVANCES CARE FOR
THE NF COMMUNITY.



Writer
Vanessa Shealy
Based on the Story of
Billy Nguyen

Artist
Kevin Colden
Flatter & Colorist
Chris Sotomayor

Letterer
Nate Pride

Additional Art
Sarah Elkins

Managing Editor
David Gallaher

Produced by
Bottled Lightning

ctf.org

**LET'S
END
NF!**