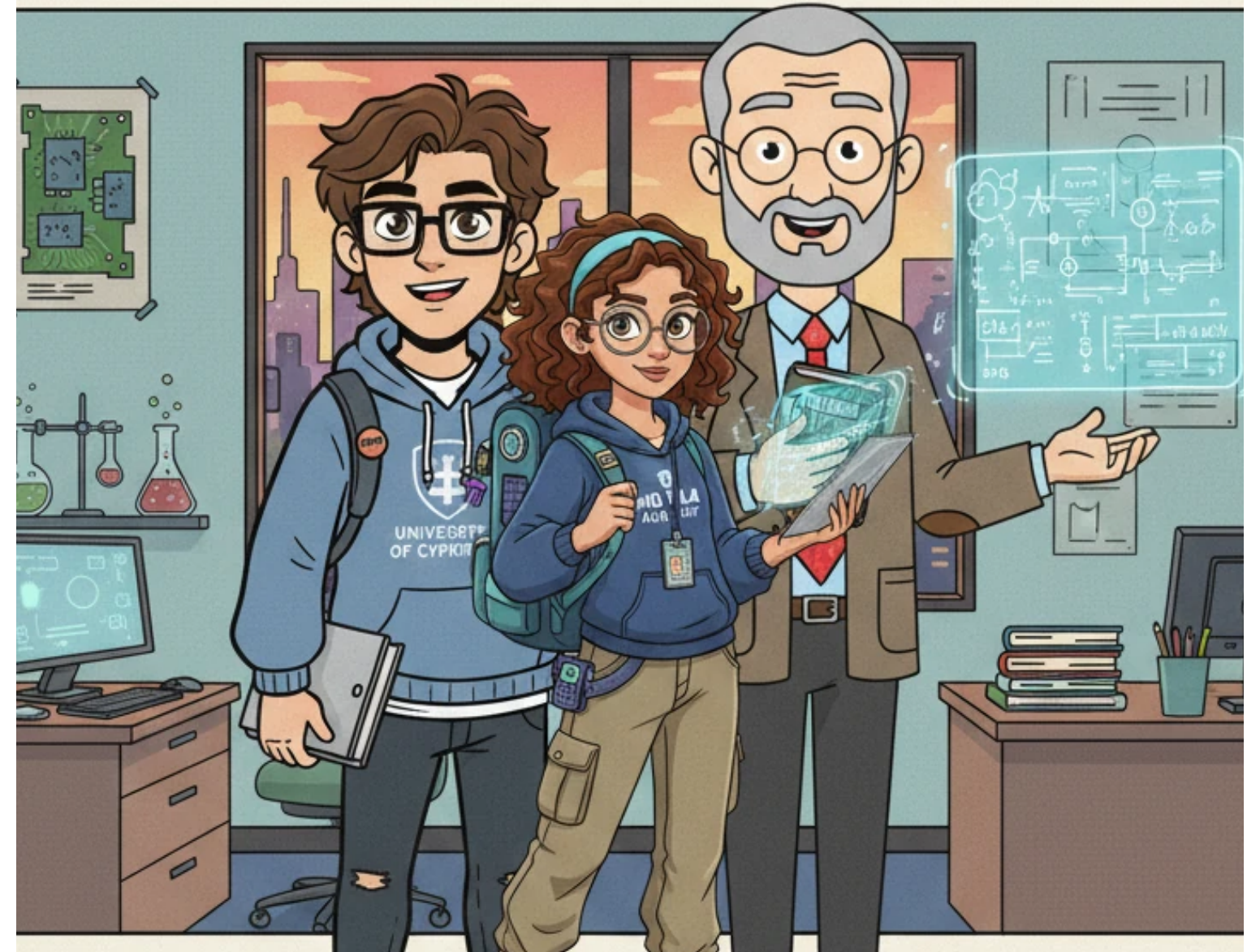


THE ADVENTURES OF
MAYA, CALEB & MR. THORN



The Midnight Algorithm

Teacher Sandra Ábrego

CALEB



CALEB - ALL-NIGHTER

CURRENT STATUS



In the dimly lit computer lab, Caleb sat surrounded by humming monitors and the soft clicking of keyboards. The air felt heavy with the weight of the final project, a gateway to the scholarship his parents so desperately hoped he would win.



Back in his bedroom, Caleb stared intensely at his screen, which was flooded with a sea of red error messages. His ambitious AI study assistant was failing, and the logic gates seemed to collapse every time he tried to fix them.



At nearly three in the morning, Caleb stumbled upon a forum post titled The Perfect Optimizer featuring a sequence of elegant, flawless code. The blue light of the screen illuminated his tired face as he hovered his cursor over the copy button, tempted by the easy solution.



CALEB

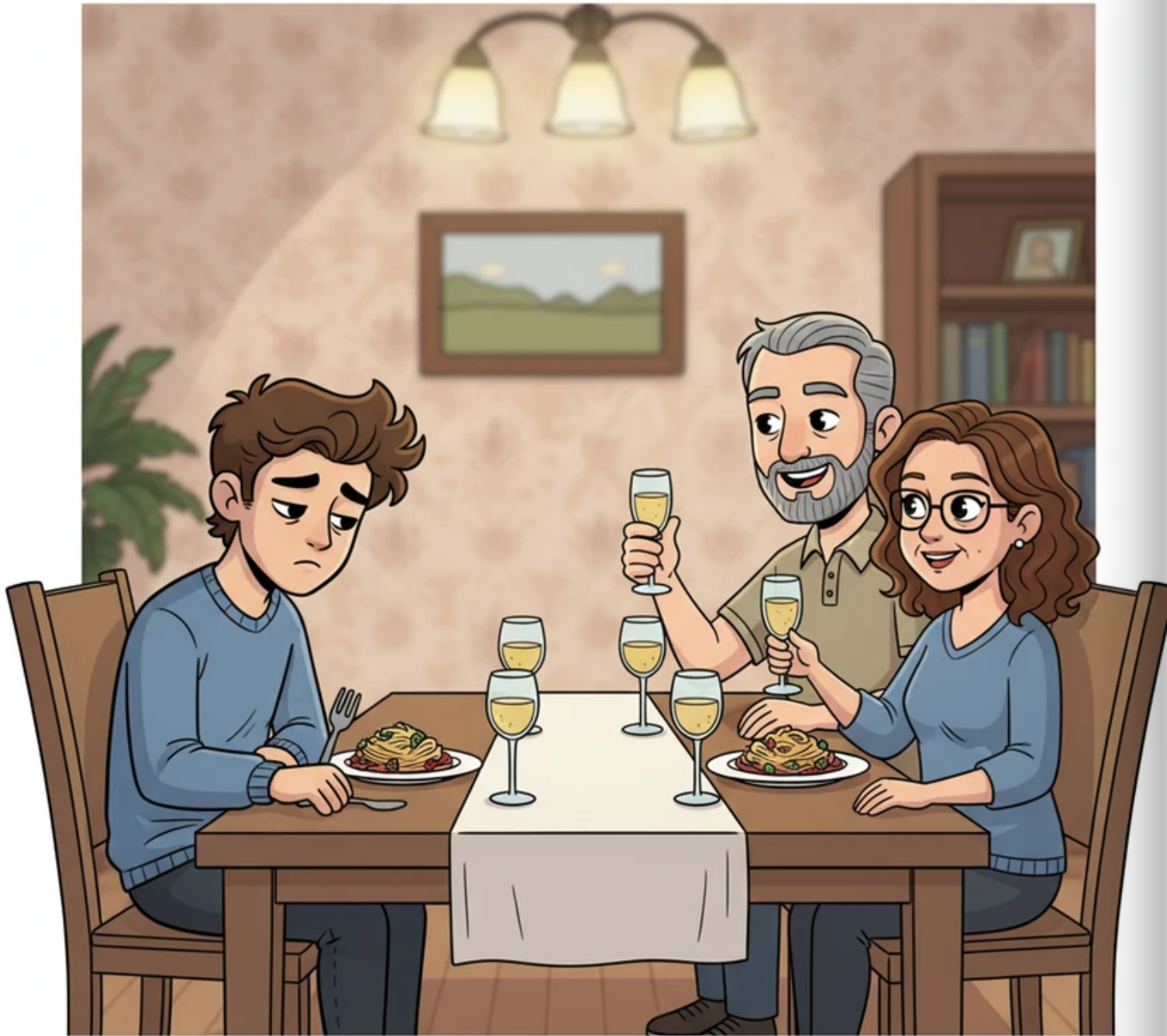
With a single click, Caleb pasted the stolen logic into his project and watched as the red text vanished instantly. The program ran perfectly for the first time, but the silence of his room suddenly felt cold and accusing.



During the Friday Gallery Walk, Mr. Thorne looked at Caleb's laptop with genuine admiration, marking an A-plus on his digital rubric. The classroom was filled with sunlight, but Caleb felt a strange shadow looming over his accomplishment.



His classmates gathered around to cheer, and Maya gave him a tired, sincere smile for his professional-grade work. While everyone saw a genius, Caleb looked at his shaking hands and felt like a complete fraud.



At a celebratory dinner with his parents, the clinking of silverware and proud toasts felt like noise Caleb couldn't process. He stared at his plate, realizing that keeping this secret meant carrying a lie into his entire future.



Monday morning arrived under a heavy, grey sky as Caleb walked toward the computer lab instead of his usual class. His heart hammered against his ribs, but his mind was finally made up about what he had to do.



Caleb stood before Mr. Thorne and confessed everything, pointing out the specific lines of code that weren't his own. The teacher listened in silence, his expression shifting from surprise to a quiet, heavy disappointment that hurt more than anger.



Though his grade was changed to a zero and his scholarship was at risk, Caleb walked out of the school building breathing easily for the first time in days. He had lost a shortcut to success, but he had finally begun to build a reputation worth keeping.