

MSL

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presents a biography entitled:

1867
1934

Maria Skłodowska Curie

Maria Skłodowska, born in Warsaw, was the youngest of 5 children of Władysław and Bronisława. The deaths of her sister (1876) and mother (1878) were the worst memories from her youth.



After graduating middle school with a gold medal (1883) she was sent by her father to the countryside to get some rest...



It was a carefree time: sleigh rides, swimming and games.



Maria and her sister Bronisława dreamt of higher education, but women were not admitted to Warsaw University. They wanted to go to Paris, but they didn't have sufficient funds.

Maria offered a deal to her sister...

Maria, I can't accept it! You should go first.

No way! you will go with what you had saved. It should be enough for a year.

I'll take a position as governess and bring money for you later. When you graduate medical studies I will come to Paris and you help me.

1885

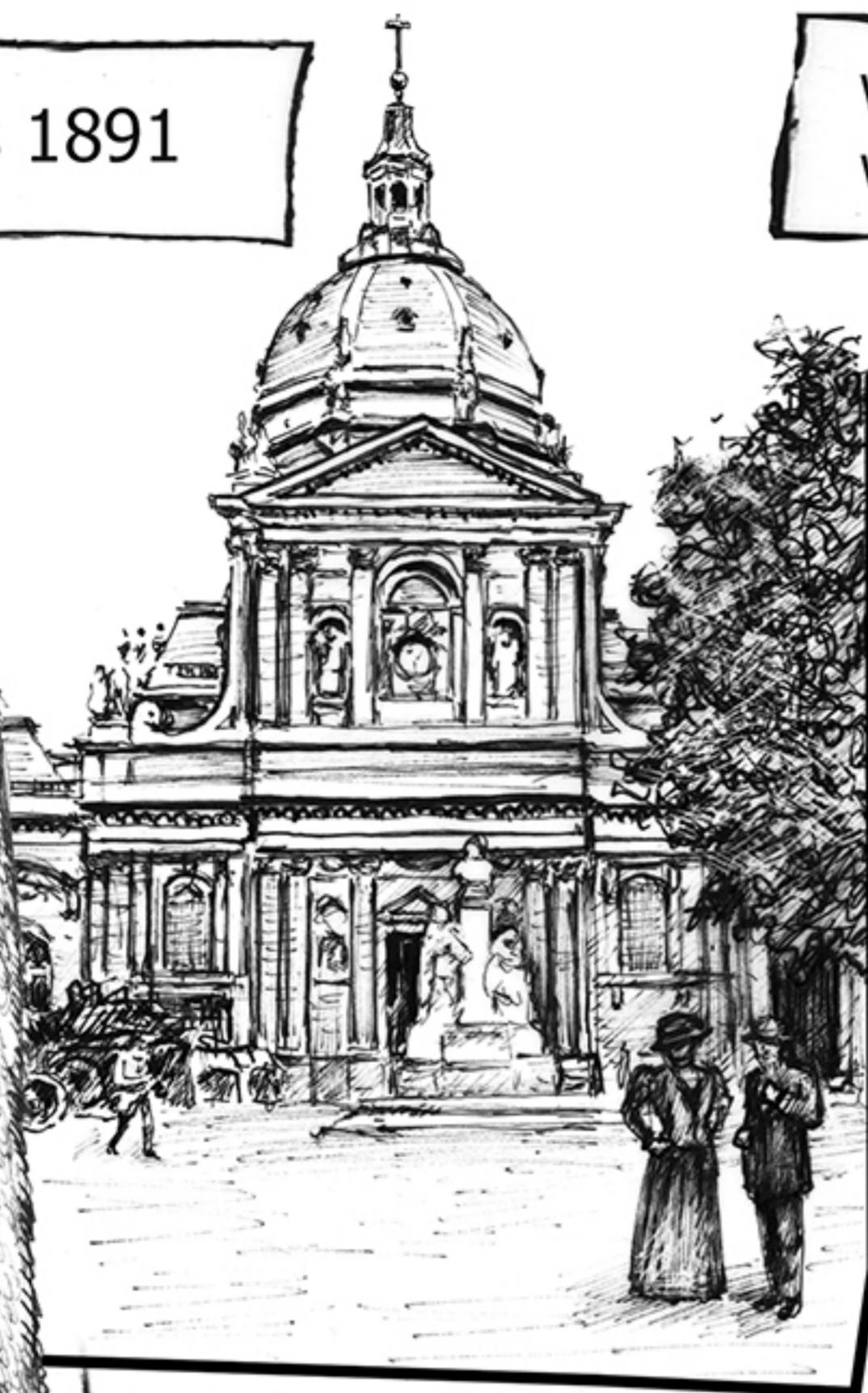


Maria, work well and return safely.

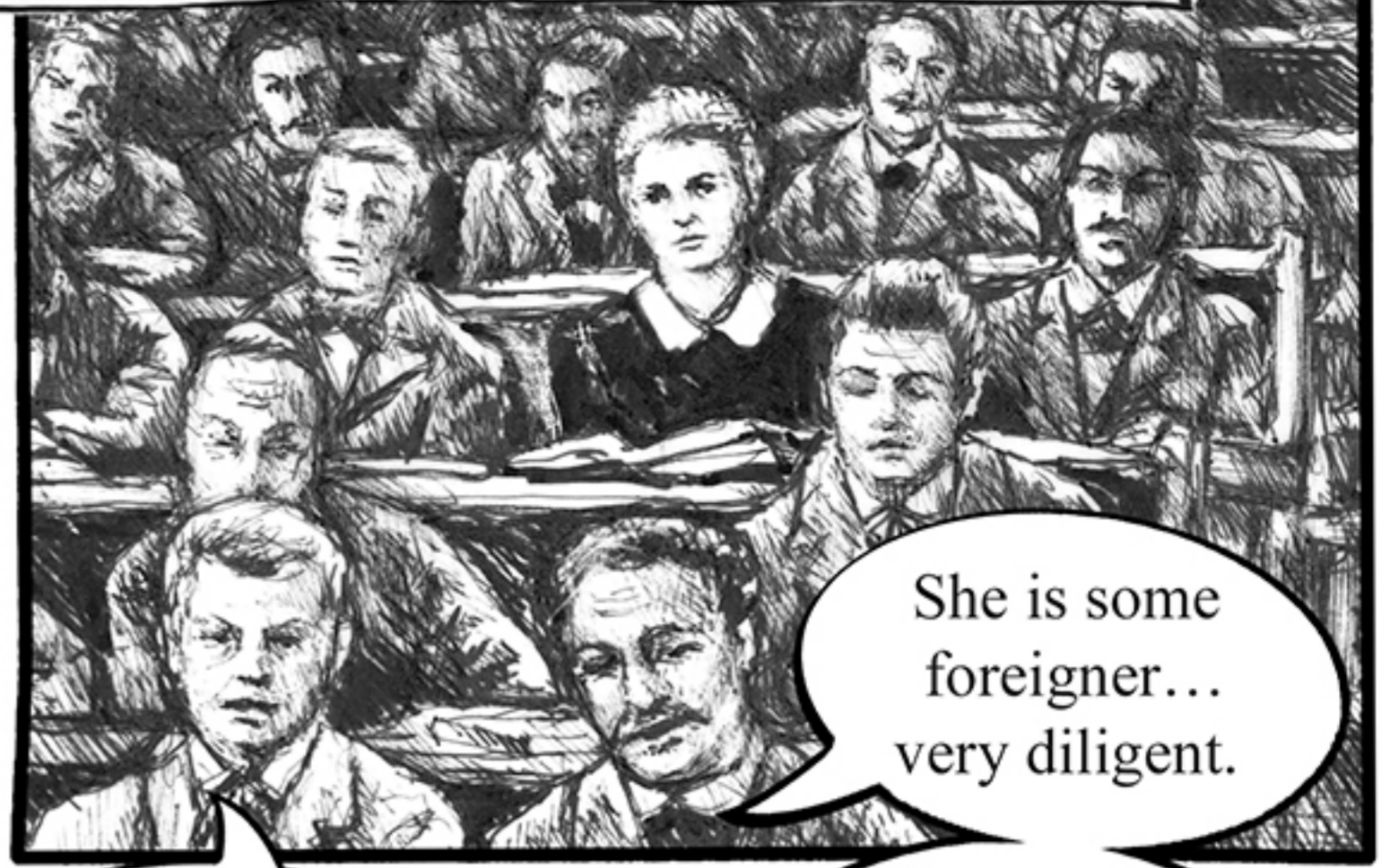
Dad, take care of yourself. I will not be long there! Only two, three years.

Plan was accomplished. Maria left Warsaw in 1891.

France, Paris 1891



When Maria entered the Sorbonne, there were 210 women out of 9000 students.



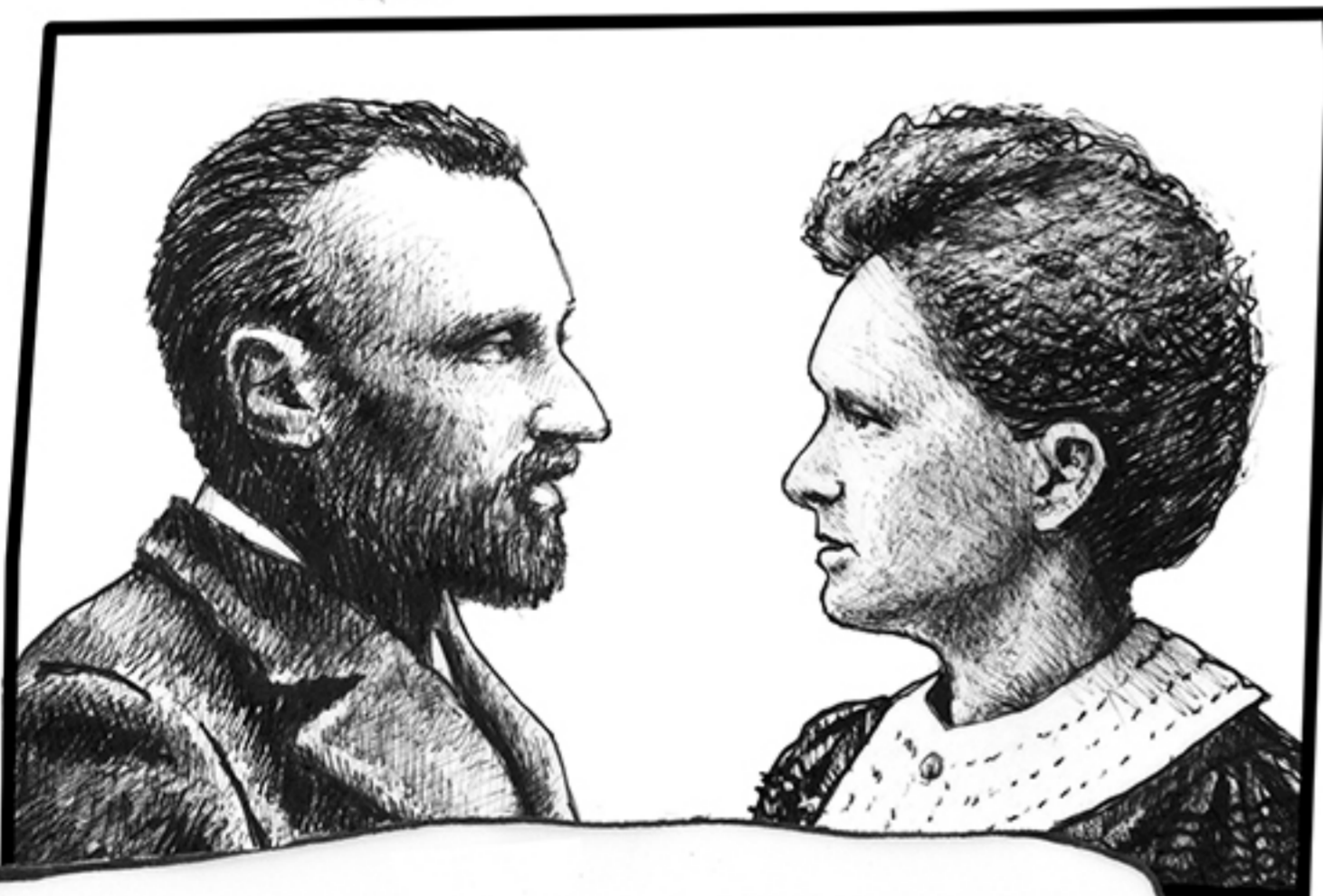
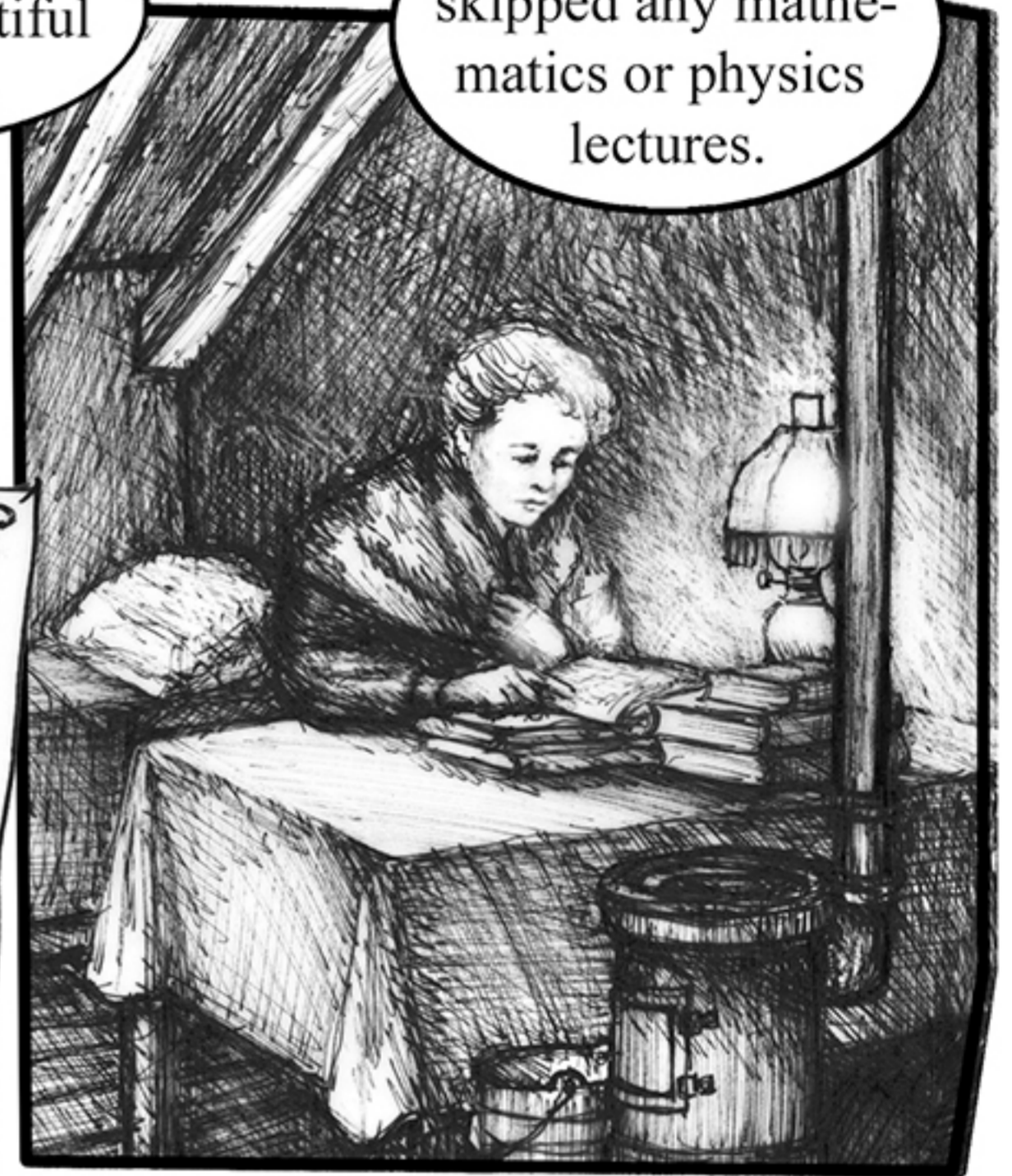
She is some foreigner... very diligent.

Who is it? What beautiful hair...

She hasn't skipped any mathematics or physics lectures.

Maria stayed in her sister's apartment. Bronisława and her husband Kazimierz Dłuski had a consulting room.

After a few months she rented a small attic room to live closer to the university. Due to lack of money, she only had a poor little stove and couldn't afford to buy coal. In winter water froze in the basin. Life was very hard then, but brought a valuable sense of freedom.



Maria met Pierre in March 1894. He was 35, Maria 27. Pierre worked as a physicist in a newly-opened school: The City of Paris Industrial Physics and Chemistry Higher Educational Institute. He was curious about a woman who gained a licence for physics after one year studying and was preparing herself for a second one in mathematics. He was attracted to her from the first moment.

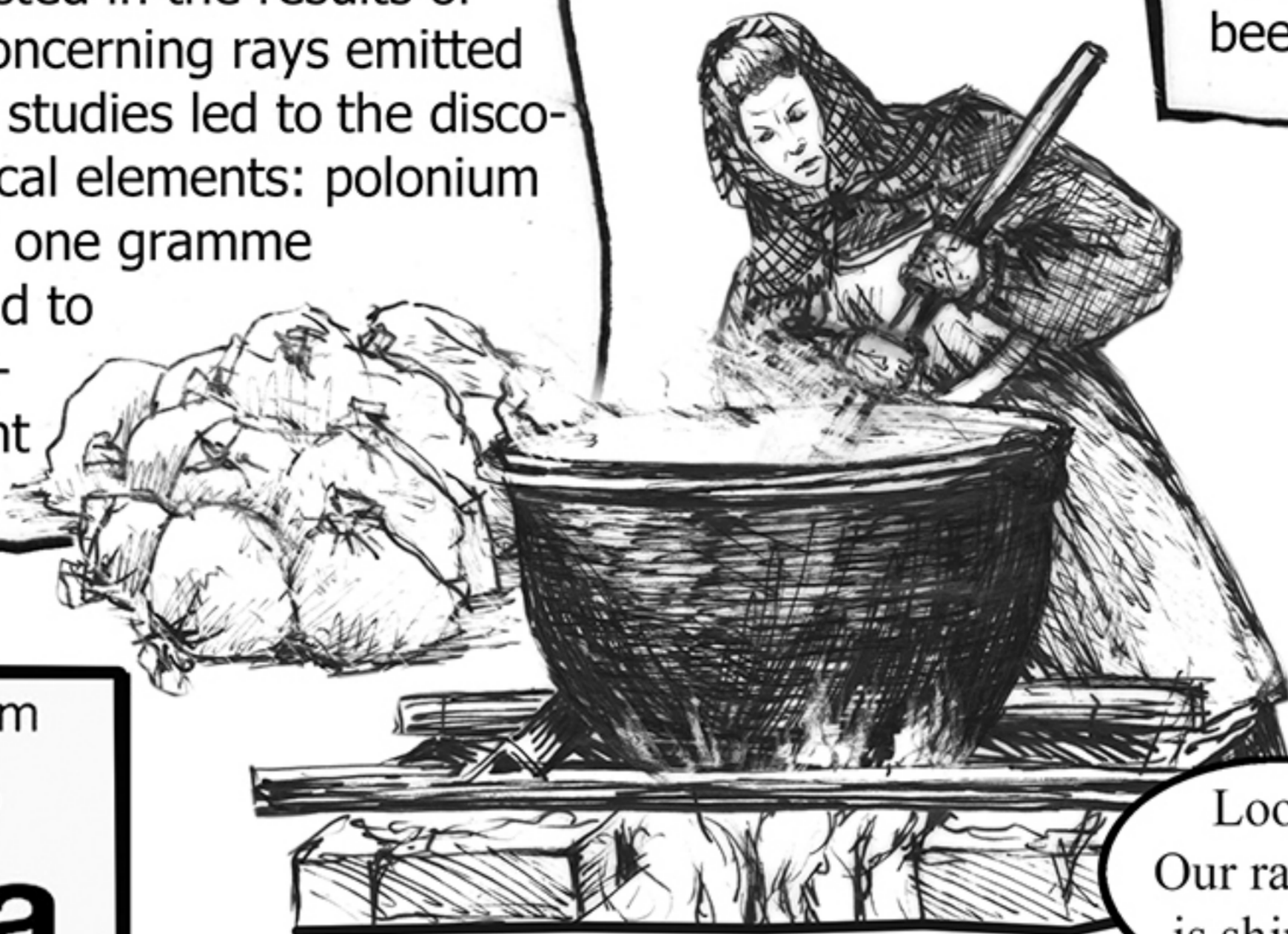


The wedding took place on the 26th of July 1895. Their honeymoon trip was a tour of Brittany on bicycles which were a wedding gift.

1897-1902

In 1897 Maria started to write her PhD thesis. She was interested in the results of Becquerel's research concerning rays emitted by uranium salt. These studies led to the discovery of two new chemical elements: polonium and radium. To extract one gramme of pure radium they had to process 8 tons of pitchblende that they brought from Bohemia.

Apart from scientific work Maria kept house and took care of her little daughter Irena, who had been born in 1897.



polonium

84

Po

[209]

radium

88

Ra

[226]

Look! Our radium is shining!



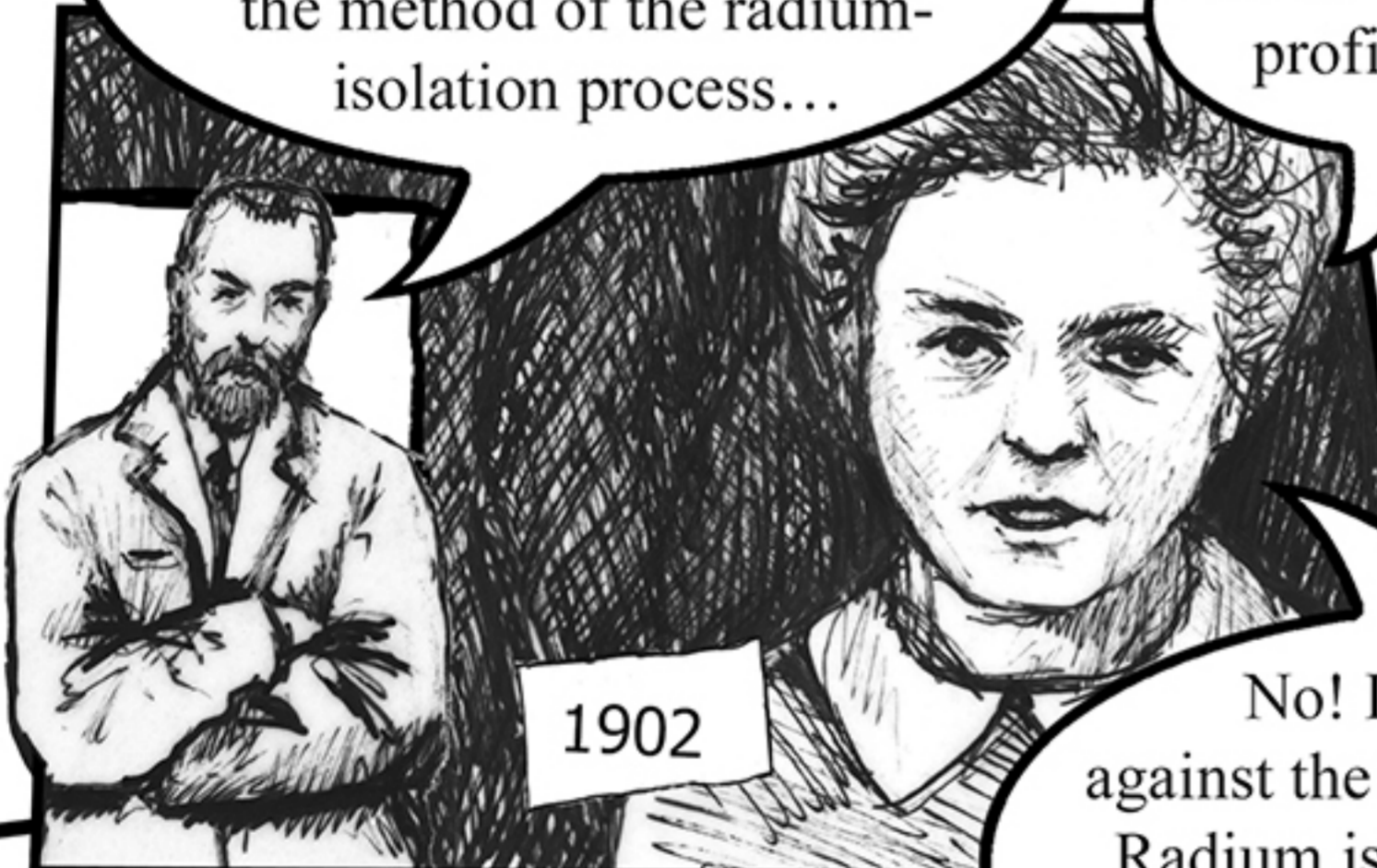
A letter came from Buffalo factory. They wanted to start production of radium and asked for technical guidance.

When it turned out that radium can be a cure for cancer its value grew. The price was very high (\$ 7,000 per gramme) due to its low mineral content.

We must make a decision. Either we reveal all results of our research or patent the method of the radium-isolation process...

...and we expect profit share?

1903 - The Nobel Prize in Physics was divided, one half awarded to Antoine Becquerel, the other half jointly to Pierre and Maria Curie.



1902

No! It would be against the spirit of science. Radium is supposed to be a curative. We can not make money from it.



1906

Pierre is dead? Dead? Really dead?

Maria Curie inherited her husband's Chair of Physics at the Sorbonne as its first female professor.

On the 19th of April 1906 Pierre died in a street accident. A carriage fractured his skull. He orphaned his nine-years-old daughter Irena and 18 month-old Ewa.





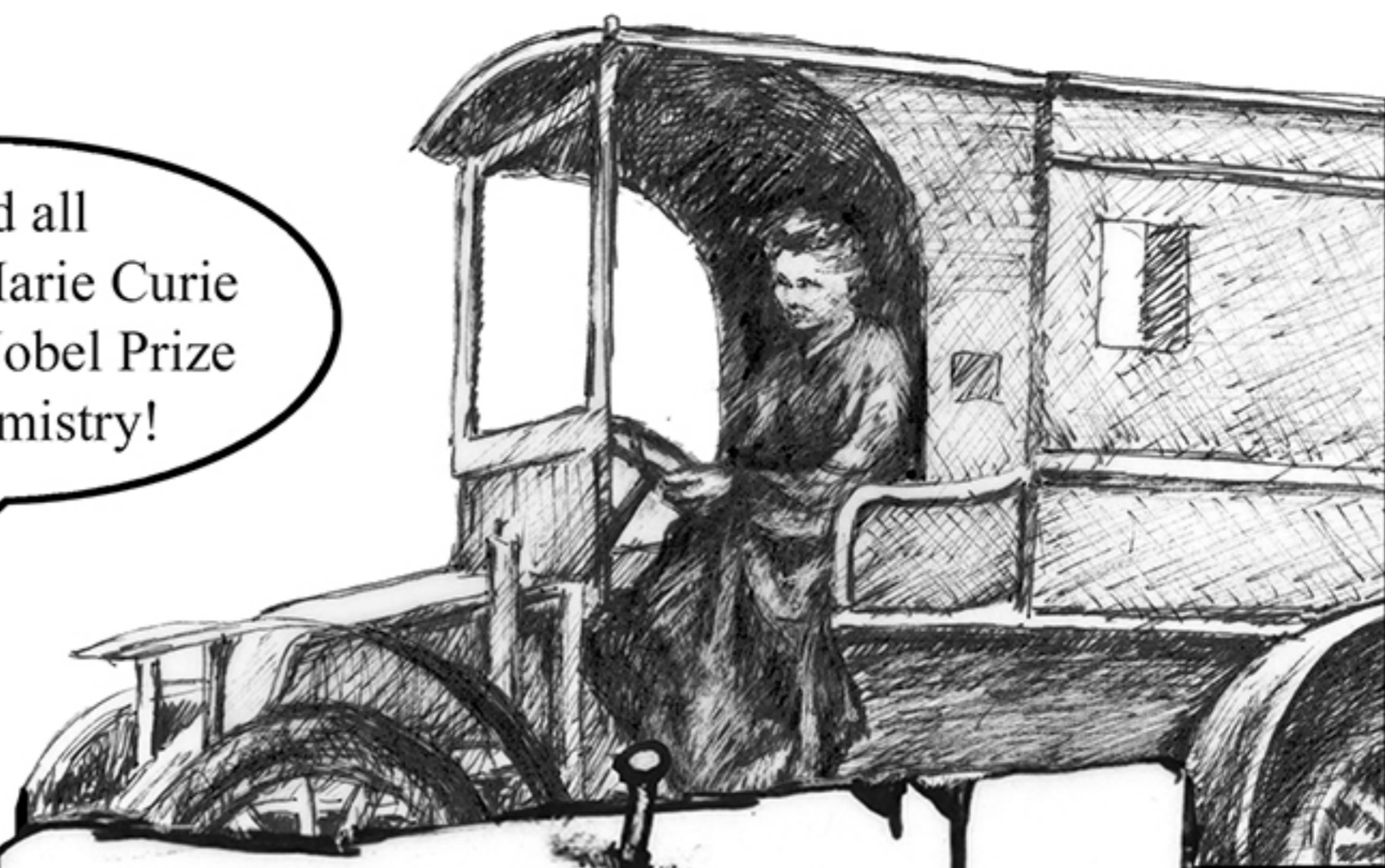
Away with this foreigner. She appropriated high positions!

Read all about it! Marie Curie awarded Nobel Prize in Chemistry!

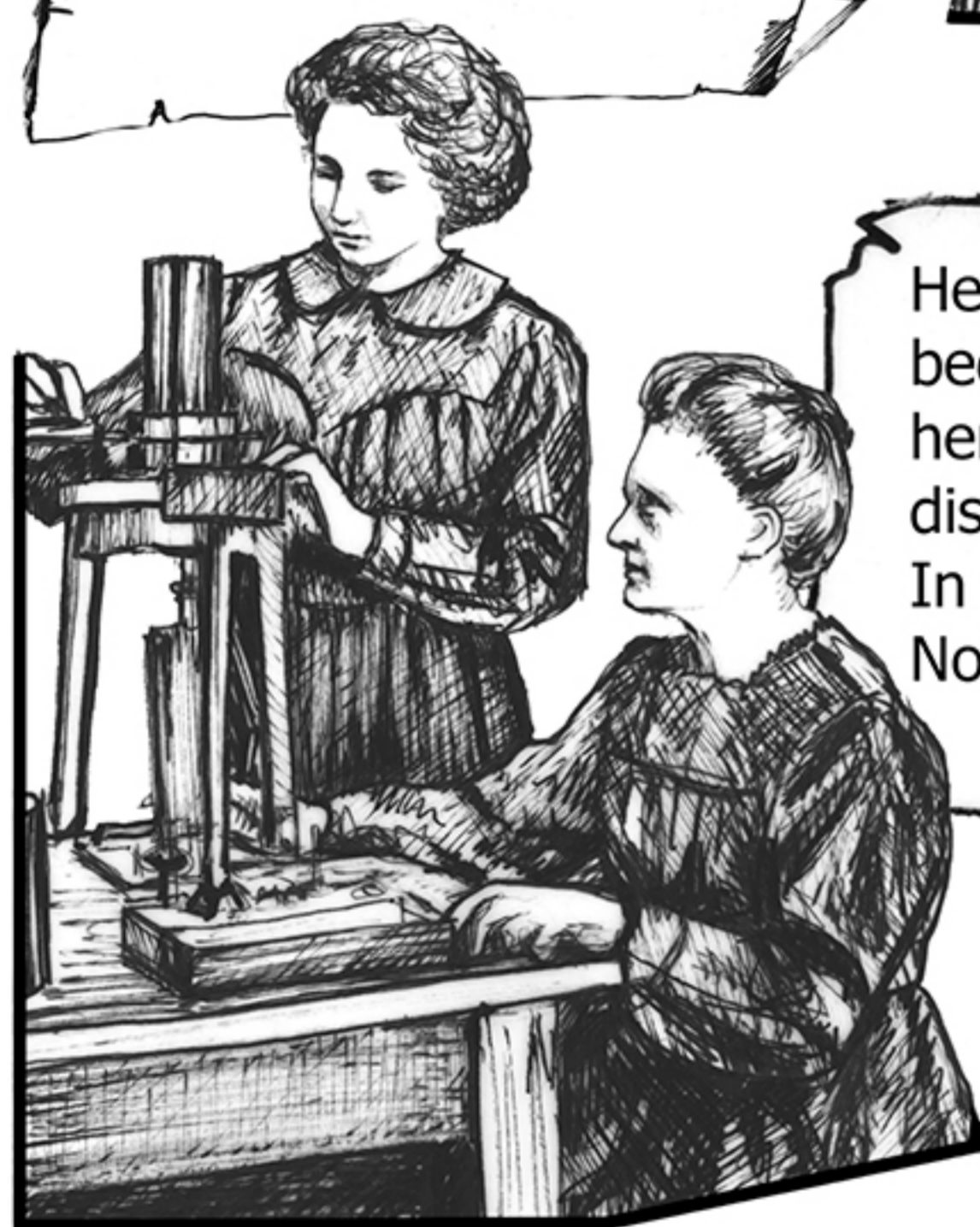
Maria Curie generated strong emotions. Some people admired her, but they were also her opponents and rivals.



1911



Maria adapted over 200 vehicles into mobile radiography units (the Little Curie) that enabled X-ray scanning for soldiers at the front during First World War (1914-1918).



Her older daughter Irena also became a scientist. Jointly with her husband Frédéric Joliot discovered artificial radioactivity. In 1935 they were awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry.

In 1995 the remains of Maria and Pierre were transferred to the Panthéon, national mausoleum of France. Maria Skłodowska-Curie is the only woman so honoured.



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