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## **Sibling Rivalry**

Elana Peninah Pamm

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# **Sibling Rivalry**

by  
Elana Peninah Pamm

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Mentor: Donna Barkman

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters in Science in Education  
Bank Street College of Education  
1999

## **Independent Study Abstract – Spring 1999**

**Title:** Sibling Rivalry      **Author:** Elana Peninah Pamm      **Mentor:** Donna Barkman

This Independent Study was inspired by the creation of the children's book Sometimes, I Hate My Brother. The book was written to help children understand that when their brothers or sisters hurt them it isn't their fault, and also to become more aware of the harm caused by them if they hurt their siblings. Family interactions can bring up feelings in children that may overwhelm and confuse them. The book was written with the goal of helping children understand the repercussions of their actions and deal with their feelings when sibling problems exist.

Sometimes, I Hate My Brother is the story of a young girl who is sad because her brother is mean to her. She wants him to like her and because he is mean to her, she thinks that he doesn't. She thinks she must have done something to make him hate her. First, she remembers the mean things her brother has done to her, and then the nice things he has done too. She realizes that her brother doesn't really hate her and she doesn't hate him either. The physical design of the book is meant to convey emotion through illustration. The text is sparse in order to allow children to make their own inferences about how the characters are feeling by interacting with the illustrations.

"Sibling Rivalry" is an exploration of the causes and repercussions of sibling rivalry. It also examines the possible benefits and developmental appropriateness of, Sometimes, I Hate My Brother by examining other books available that deal with sibling rivalry. Additionally, it considers the possibilities of what we as educators can do to help children who are abused by, or are abusers of, their siblings.

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**Rationale**

**Sibling Rivalry**

## Sibling Rivalry

“A key social ability is empathy, understanding others’ feelings and taking their perspective, and respecting differences in how people feel about things.”- Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence

“I do not know why we presuppose that relation of children to their brothers and sisters must be a loving one; for instances of hostility between adult brothers and sisters force themselves upon everyone’s experience and we can often establish that the disunity originated in childhood or has always existed.”  
–Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego

The causes of sibling rivalry can be as different and complex, as children are themselves. While some rivalry and competition between siblings is considered normal, sometimes this rivalry can lead to painful consequences for those involved. There can be many factors that contribute to the development of rivalry between siblings; one of these factors is stress. Because of the many demands put on children by both parents and teachers, childhood can be a difficult and confusing time. In any given situation, children are required to comply with what is considered to be the norm for standard acceptable behavior. For example, they are expected to treat others with respect, obey authority figures and do homework in a timely manner. In short, we are demanding that children behave as adults when they possess neither the emotional nor intellectual readiness such behavior necessitates.

Children attempting to meet these demands can experience feelings of enormous stress.

Children under extreme pressure may react negatively to this stress, which can result in behavioral problems. Because many parents are so overwhelmed by their own problems, they may be either unwilling or unable to understand what their children are going through emotionally. They may be experiencing marital or work related stress, which can have an extremely negative impact on other members of their families. Without meaning to, some parents may take their problems out on other family members, which in turn may cause children to emulate this destructive behavior. In a study by Dadds and Powell (1991), a high correlation was established between marital conflict and aggression in young children. In my family, the existing conflicts between our parents may have been fueling my brother's aggressive behavior towards me as well. Additionally, because many parents subscribe to the stereotypes of behavior held by their parents, if their children are fighting for some reason, they may consider this to be normal behavior. Parents may not realize that their own behavior could be contributing to an ongoing problem. They are often not aware of the negative consequences that can result from the effects of sibling rivalry.

Regarding stress, Judy Dunn (1982) writes, "If families are under stress -financial, emotional- then aggression and quarreling between the children are more common...it seems likely that stress and tension in parents' lives will make them more irritable and less relaxed with their children." During my middle childhood years, my brother became increasingly violent and abusive towards me. This may have been a result of the stress in our household caused by difficulties my parents were going through in their marriage at that time. He may have also been reacting to the pressure he felt our parents put on him to succeed academically. According to Brenner (1984), "Fighting among parents creates tremendous stress in children. It is an invariably frightening experience to observe battling between parents and is bound to make a child tense." I myself witnessed many fights between my parents in which they both displayed behaviors that were extremely frightening to me. I can only assume that witnessing such episodes may have had a similar effect on my brother.

Katz and Gottman (1993) found that where there is a mutually hostile interaction between parents, children are more apt to display externalizing behavior difficulties. Wachtel (1994) concluded that conflict and stress between parents may manifest through a child's symptomology. She asserts that, "In fact, a child's problems are frequently connected to tension and



fighting between adults in the household. It is well known that many children have an almost uncanny ability to pick up on parental tensions and often it is this anxiety that is expressed in irritability, anger or clingy behavior. The children become symptomatic in response to tension in the home that they are unable to control.” Patterson (1983) suggests that a pattern of parental irritability is likely to be mirrored in a child’s aggressive responses. There is an abundance of research available to support the notion that some of my brother’s aggressive behavior towards me may have been in reaction to the tensions in our home between our parents.

Jealousy is an emotion that can also contribute to sibling rivalry. My brother, six years older than I, enjoyed our parents’ attention exclusively until I was brought home three months after his sixth birthday. Because my brother and I were both adopted, he may have felt added anxiety when forced to share “his” parents with a new baby. When he was two, our parents put in an application with a local adoption agency requesting a baby girl, preferably born of a Jewish mother. They waited four long years for me and eagerly anticipated my arrival. In her book entitled, Sisters and Brothers, Judy Dunn (1985) writes, “Ambivalence seen in most firstborn children in the early weeks of the sibling relationship has been commented on by psychologists studying siblings at all stages of childhood and

adolescence.” According to my father, my brother was very happy to have a new sister when I was first brought home. If he was feeling any ambivalence initially, it was seemingly not apparent to my father. However, when I look at pictures taken of my brother and me at this time, he is not smiling or looking happy at all. I believe he may have been experiencing mixed feelings about me from the start

On the subject of jealousy, Dunn (1985) writes “It is easy to see that greater indulgence and protection of a younger child may exacerbate feelings of jealousy on the older child’s part.” Because our parents were extremely over-protective of me, (especially our father), this behavior may have actually fueled any jealousy my brother might have been feeling towards me. Also, because I was the baby and a girl, they were extremely indulgent with me at times, which may have exacerbated his jealousy as well. Dunn (1985) also writes “Not only are there differences in indulgence and maternal support for the different children within the family, but the pressure on a first born to grow-up and be independent because there is a new baby is often quite explicit from the earliest weeks after the sibling’s birth—a pressure acknowledged and often regretted by the mother who is struggling to cope with more than one child.” I think perhaps my brother was feeling abandoned by our mother and resentful of the fact that he was

being forced to do things for himself that he would not ordinarily have been expected to do. After having our parents to himself for more than six years, I would be greatly surprised if my brother hadn't felt jealous of the amount of attention that was being paid to his new baby sister.

According to Levy (1937) "The most immediate empirical effect of Adler's work was a series of studies of sibling rivalry and, in particular, of the jealousy of older siblings." Levy also states "the exercise of power by the firstborn may be greatly increased by his jealousy of the non-firstborn as a baby. A long literature on sibling rivalry attests that sometimes such jealousy can instigate increased aggression and dominance by the firstborn." There exists an abundance of research that suggests that the rivalry between my brother and me stemmed from the jealousy my brother felt when I was first introduced into our family. It also seems that this jealousy may have been the primary cause of his aggressive behavior toward me as we grew older. His feelings of jealousy may also have been intensified by frustration stemming from perceived unfairness with regards to parental behavior.

Another cause of rivalry between siblings is injustice. While I'm sure they had the best of intentions, my parents may have unwittingly fueled the rivalry that existed between my brother and myself by treating us differently. I remember my brother complaining bitterly about how unfair it was that he

received punishments that were harsher than I did because I was a girl. I can also remember feeling resentful that my brother was allowed to do things that I wasn't because he was a boy and he was older. We both perceived the other to be receiving better treatment from our parents. I'm sure this is often true of siblings even in cases where tensions were less severe than they were between my brother and me. On this subject, Dunn (1982) states "As we have seen, firstborns often feel that their parents favor and support the laterborns in any dispute. In fact, many mothers comment that they usually assume a dispute to be the firstborn's fault, especially while the other children are very young." While I do not recall my mother favoring me during disputes as we got older, when I was very young, I believe my mother probably did tend to take my side and blame my brother for any disputes that occurred. If he ever crossed over the line and physically hurt me, she definitely took my side, no matter what I may have done to provoke such an attack. I'm sure she felt that my brother, being six years older (when I was three he was nine), was far more capable than I of taking responsibility for his actions and should have been able to resist the urge to provoke conflicts with me. Also, being much bigger and stronger than I, he was capable of seriously hurting me, which he sometimes did.

On the subject of injustice, Sigmund Freud (1955) said “The elder child illtreats the younger, maligns him and robs him of his toys; while the younger is consumed with impotent rage against the elder, envies and fears him, or meets his oppressor with the first stirring of a love of liberty and a sense of justice.” I can remember feeling intense fear of and anger at my brother as a child. I was torn between wanting him to love me and wanting to get back at him for mistreating me. I also remember having a strong sense of fairness that persists to this day. This feeling may have originated in the injustices that I felt I endured at my brother’s hand during childhood. Regarding the origins of the concept of justice, Anna Freud (1951) wrote “The child’s first approach to the idea of justice is made during these developments of the brother-sister relationship, when the claim to be favoured oneself is changed to the demand that no one should be favoured, i.e. there should be equal rights for everybody.” Equality and fairness are both concepts that are still extremely important to me and I have observed they seem to be equally as important to children in their middle childhood years as well. Frustrations resulting from perceived injustices, jealousy and stress can exacerbate sibling rivalry and lead to negative consequences such as aggressive behavior.

Aggression between siblings can be rooted in several sources. Regarding consensus findings in this matter, Sutton-Smith and Rosenberg (1970) state "All firstborn perceived themselves and were perceived by second born as exercising higher power-that is, they commanded, reprimanded, scolded, and bossed. Reciprocally, the second-born pleaded, whined, sulked and appealed for help and sympathy from the firstborn and others. Similarly, the firstborn used more physical restraint and physical attack, though there had been more of this at the child level, where it had involved beating up, wrestling and hurting. The firstborn also gave more rewards and deprived the second born of more privileges. The second-born responded by harassing, pestering and bothering the firstborn." My brother attempted to exert his control over me from an early age through physical restraint and hitting. I would not characterize my behavior as being submissive to these attacks; in fact, I was more likely to respond with retaliation or harassment. I sometimes intentionally provoked him, which may have actually led to his increased physical aggression towards me.

Physically aggressive behavior is one of the many forms of abuse that can result from sibling rivalry. On this subject, Dunn (1982) writes "Frequent physical punishment seems to make children increasingly physically aggressive themselves." Also with regard to aggression between

siblings, Gerry Patterson's (1975) studies reveal that "Siblings rather than parents appeared to be the family members who primarily elicited hitting and teasing from the aggressive children. During exchanges between these children, the younger siblings usually assumed the 'victim' role and submitted to attacks by their older brothers. This submissive behavior causes the older brothers to increase the frequency of their attacks. Then the younger sibling begins to retaliate by being aggressive in turn, and this leads to further aggression." This aggression may also have been fueled by a need to prove his masculinity.

One theory behind the causes of physical aggression between siblings is the need to reinforce one's gender identity. Koch (1955) writes, "displacement by an opposite sex younger sibling is sufficiently threatening to sex role identity at age 6 years to cause a strong counteractive identification with their own characteristic sex role. Perhaps threatened by the different sex of the younger sister, this firstborn male counteracts by becoming even more masculine." This perceived threat might have caused my brother to feel the need to demonstrate his masculinity by being physically abusive towards me. This may have also contributed to his verbally abusive behavior toward me as well.

Another form of aggressive behavior that can be a result of sibling rivalry is verbal abuse. Koch (1955) writes that "Firstborn tend to be more aggressive in an adult way, deflating the younger born with verbal criticism, and creating alibis for their own inadequacies." My brother often made insulting comments towards me regarding my weight and my intelligence. I do not know if these insults were born of some insecurity on his part, I only know that I was extremely hurt by these cruel remarks. Judy Dunn (1985) writes, "Firstborns tend to be more verbally aggressive, criticizing and disparaging their younger brothers and sisters mercilessly." While initially my brother was primarily physically aggressive towards me, as we grew older my brother also asserted his self-declared superiority through verbal attacks, insults and criticism. My parents, who seemed to prefer to leave us to work things out on our own, did little in terms of intervening on my behalf.

Regarding parental intervention, Judy Dunn (1982) writes "Parents take very different views about the extent to which they should intervene in children's quarrels, or whether the children should be left to sort it out for themselves. Some parents stress that children are going to have to cope with fights and hostility outside the home, and thus must learn at home to be independent. Other parents feel that they should act as arbitrators, and try to



get each child to understand the other's point of view-especially if the children have resorted to physical violence." I do not know if my parents had or have any formally constructed policy with regard to parental intervention in sibling disputes. I do know that my parents would tell us to stop, separate us and send us to our rooms without discussion. In general, my parents were reluctant to discuss any feelings, let alone those born of conflict. They did not encourage us to talk out our problems or to try to understand why we felt the way we did. We were expected to conform to their demands of proper and appropriate behavior regardless of how we might be feeling. This was how they were raised, and based on their own experiences in childhood, these were the accepted practices in our home. Like many other parents, it was not their practice to intervene in disputes between my brother and me. Such intervention on the part of parents could possibly prevent children who have been victims of physical or emotional abuse from suffering from negative consequences later in life.

There can be many negative consequences of sibling rivalry. Patterson's (1983) follow-up studies concluded, "the poor relationship between the siblings was linked to later delinquency." Also, that "It is important to note, however, that the time spent with the sibling and the poor relationship with the sibling were both higher in families in which there was

little organization, poor discipline by the parents and little parental monitoring of the children." Repercussions of sibling rivalry can also be seen in relationships between siblings when they reach adulthood. Dunn (1982) writes, "Preferential treatment by parents, favoritism, and overt or covert comparison by parents cause conflict between adult siblings just as they did with young children." Sigmund Freud (1955) also believed that rivalry between siblings continues into adulthood. Freud writes, "I do not know why we presuppose that relation of children to their brothers and sisters must be a loving one; for instances of hostility between adult brothers and sisters force themselves upon everyone's experience and we can often establish that the disunity originated in childhood or has always existed." Wachtel (1994) writes, "When a child seems filled with rage, we must not only help the child get control of his anger, but also understand what might be provoking anger so intense that he has not developed acceptable levels of control."

In families where children of different ages or genders are treated differently regarding expectations and punishments, parents may unwittingly cause or exacerbate sibling rivalry. When competition and aggression between siblings is seen as a normal part of childhood development, aggressive behavior can become severe enough to cross over

the line from roughhousing into abusive behavior. Abuse in any form, such as physical, verbal, or emotional, can cause damage leading to psychological disturbances in children that may continue into adulthood. Children who have been abused by siblings can suffer from low self-esteem that sometimes leads to depression and eating disorders. Their lack of self-worth can also leave them vulnerable to such negative influences as peer pressure, drugs, promiscuity and academic decline. I myself have struggled with all of the aforementioned issues in my adult life. There is, of course, the possibility that these experiences are unrelated. I might have had difficulties in these areas regardless of my brother's behavior towards me. There were also many other contributing factors to my feelings of low self-esteem and struggles with depression. However, I feel it would be foolish to ignore the likelihood that the events I have described in this paper have made an enormous contribution to my emotional difficulties. Because of this, I feel strongly about sharing my experiences with others. By promoting awareness of the potential dangers of sibling rivalry, perhaps some children can be spared the painful repercussions that others like myself have endured.

I have compared how sibling rivalry is played out in several published children's books and have found that while there are some similarities between Sometimes, I Hate My Brother and these books, there are some

major differences as well. One such book is My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother by Patricia Polacco. In this book, the main character is a girl who is extremely competitive with her older brother. They are engaged in a continuous battle of one-upmanship. The girl feels her brother thinks he can do everything better than she can and she is determined to prove him wrong. While the competitive relationship depicted in this book is an example of one form of sibling rivalry, this particular aspect is one that is not explored in Sometimes, I Hate My Brother. However, these two books are similar in that, by the end of the book, certain circumstances cause the main characters to have the realization that their brothers may actually love them after all.

The Pain and the Great One, by Judy Blume is also a book written for children that deals with sibling rivalry. There are several ways in which this book differs from Sometimes, I Hate My Brother. In Blume's book, the sister is two years older than the brother. In contrast, in my book, my brother is older and there is a much greater age difference between the siblings. Also, in Blume's book, the siblings aren't physically or verbally abusing each other. The books are similar in that the siblings are feeling jealous and frustrated because they each believe the other is receiving better treatment from their parents.

Another book that deals with sibling rivalry is I'll Fix Anthony by Judith Viorst. In this book, a younger brother plots revenge against his older brother because he feels his brother is mean to him. While this book also depicts sibling rivalry, it differs from Sometimes, I Hate My Brother in a few ways. One way it is different is that the siblings are both boys, as opposed to being siblings of both genders as they are in Sometimes, I Hate My Brother. Also, the siblings are fairly close in age and the only apparent cause of the rivalry between them is the older brother being "mean" to the younger brother. They are similar in that in both books, it is the older brother who is mean to his younger sibling.

Who Put That Hair in My Toothbrush? by Jerry Spinelli is a chapter book dealing with sibling rivalry. In this book, the brother is 14 and the sister is 12. This is only a two-year age difference, the same as the difference between the siblings in My Rotten Redheaded Older Brother, by Patricia Polacco. While in both books the siblings are of both genders, in Sometimes, I Hate My Brother only the brother teases and sabotages his sister. In Spinelli's book, the siblings are archenemies who tease and sabotage each other. Also, the sister doesn't seem at all hurt by her brother; she just wants to retaliate like the younger brother in Judith Viorst's book.

Another chapter book that depicts sibling rivalry is Nobody's Fault by Patricia Hermes. In this book Emily and her older brother Matthew, who are several years apart have an extremely conflicted relationship. She calls him "Monse", which is short for monster. He teases her ruthlessly and even hits her with a door, accidentally giving her a bloody nose. While she is plotting her revenge, he is accidentally killed, which causes her to feel extremely guilty. She remembers all of the nice things he did for her and feels conflicted because she was so angry with him for being mean to her before he died.

This is an intense book dealing with many complex issues. The main differences between this book and Sometimes, I Hate My Brother are that Nobody's Fault is a chapter book and there are no deaths in Sometimes, I Hate My Brother. There are actually more similarities between this book and Sometimes, I Hate My Brother than any other book I have found dealing with sibling rivalry. In both books, the older brother physically and verbally abuses the much younger sister, but then turns around and does something nice, a pattern of behavior that is very confusing for the sister. However, the most important quality that these books share is that the younger sister is in a tremendous amount of pain and feels extremely isolated.

From the research I have done, I feel that there is clearly a need for the book I have written. While there are several books available in children's literature that deal with certain aspects of sibling rivalry such as competitiveness, one-upmanship, teasing, and pranks, none of these books really explores the issues arising in cases where sibling rivalry crosses over the line into sibling abuse. This is a difficult subject for most people to deal with and certainly not one that people typically associate with children's books, hence there are few available. While children can enjoy and benefit from a wide range of books from a variety of genres, there is definitely a need for books which allow children to confront and deal with feelings arising from situations, or events which may be causing them pain. The shootings that have occurred in schools over the last two years suggest that somewhere along the line, children, especially boys, are not getting the help they need in order to deal with negative feelings in a healthy and constructive manner. Also, girls are not getting the help they need dealing with their victimization. Perhaps this book is one place we can start giving these children the help they both need and deserve.

**Original Material**

**Sometimes, I Hate My Brother**



Sometimes, I Hate My Brother

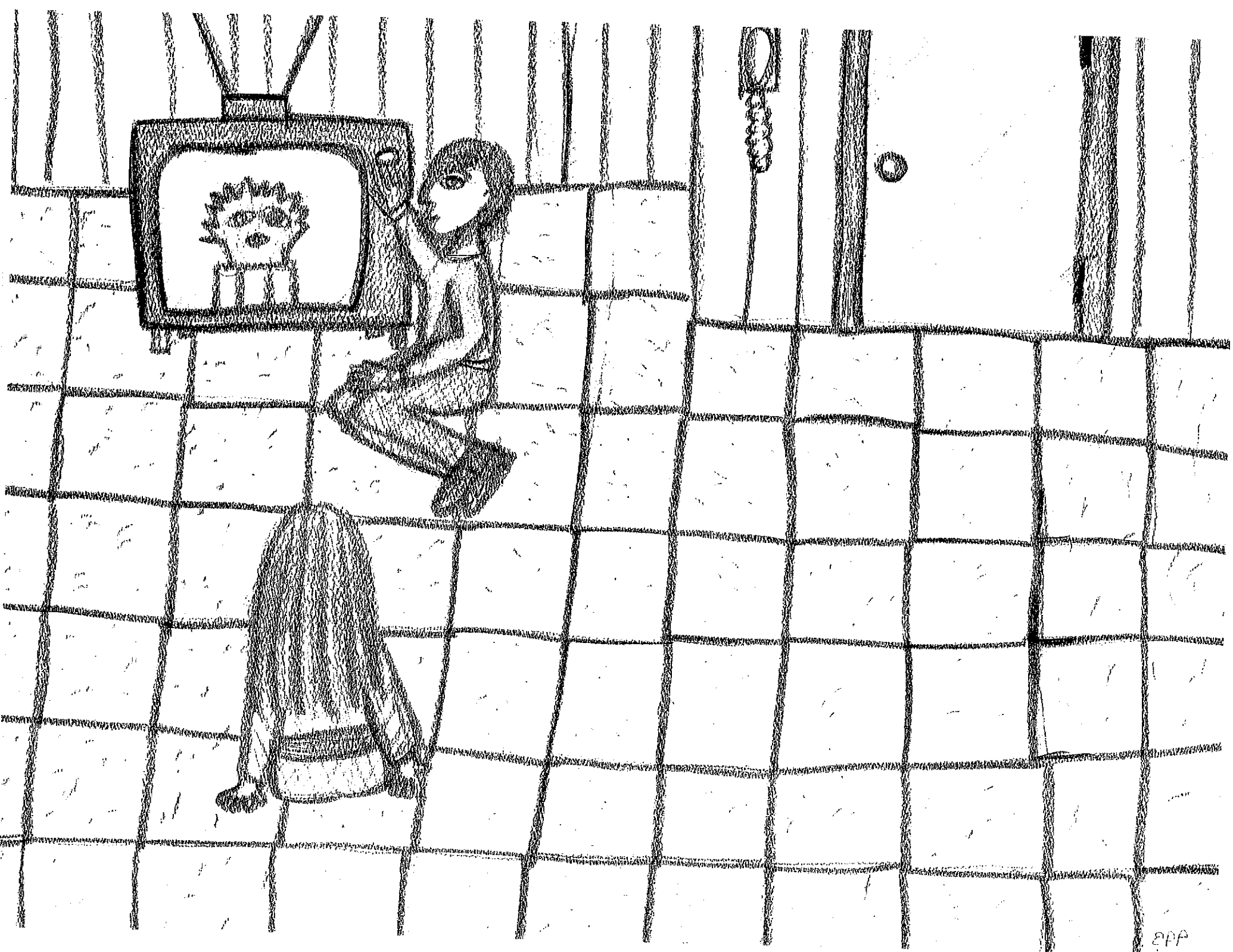
By Elana Peninah Pamm

My brother is really mean to me. Just because he's bigger and older, he thinks he can boss me around.



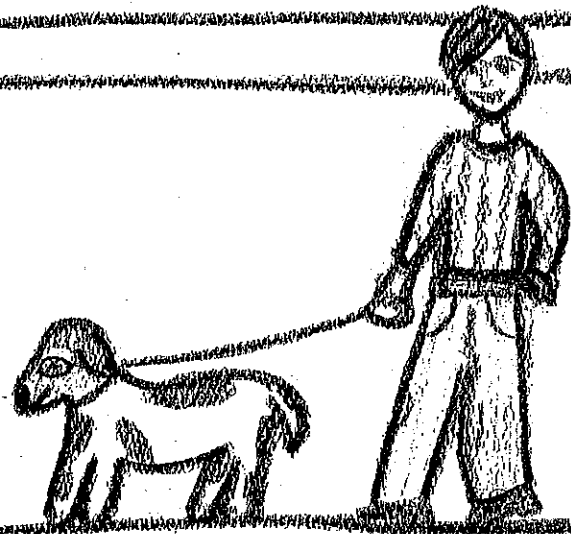
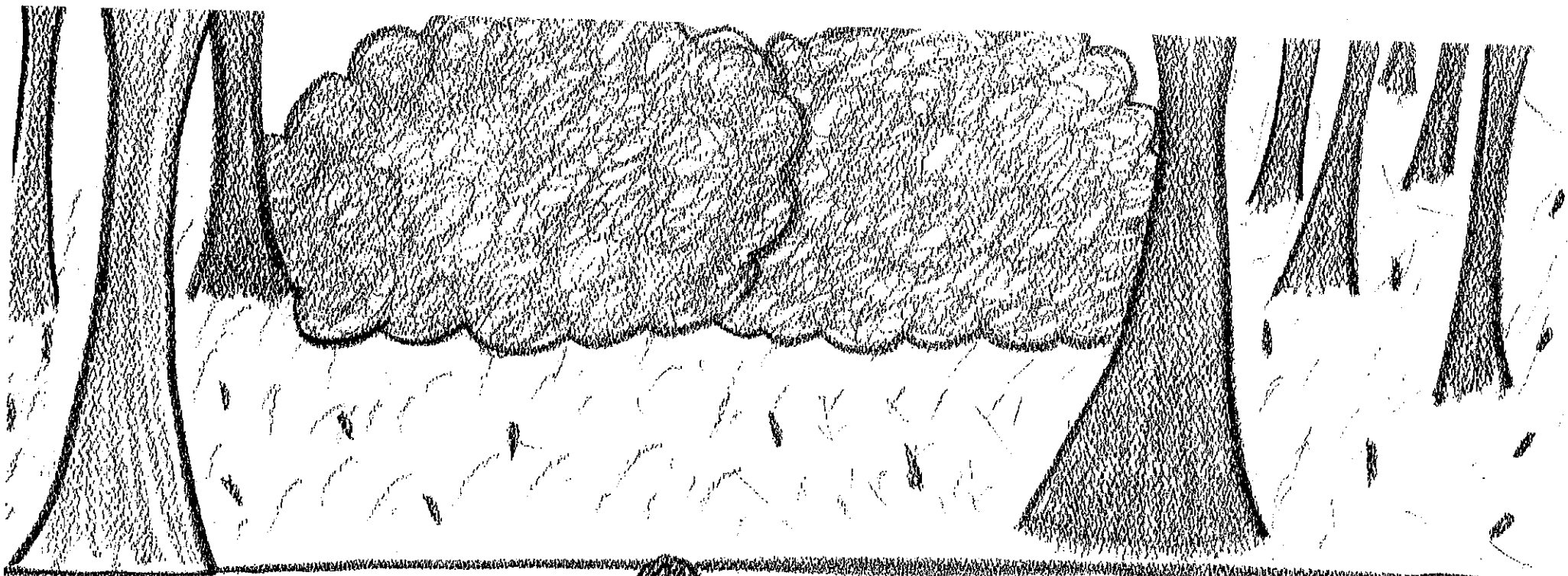
EM

When I'm watching TV, he'll just come over and change the channel, like I'm not even there.



APP

He won't let me walk "his" dog.  
He says Daddy said I couldn't  
cause she could pull me and  
hurt me, but I think he just  
doesn't wanna share her.



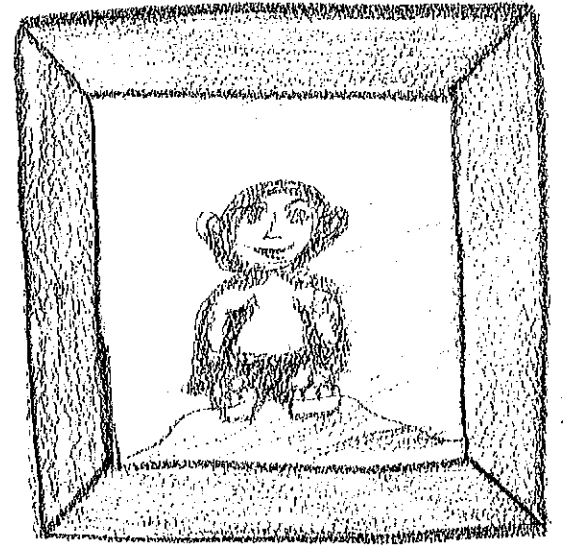
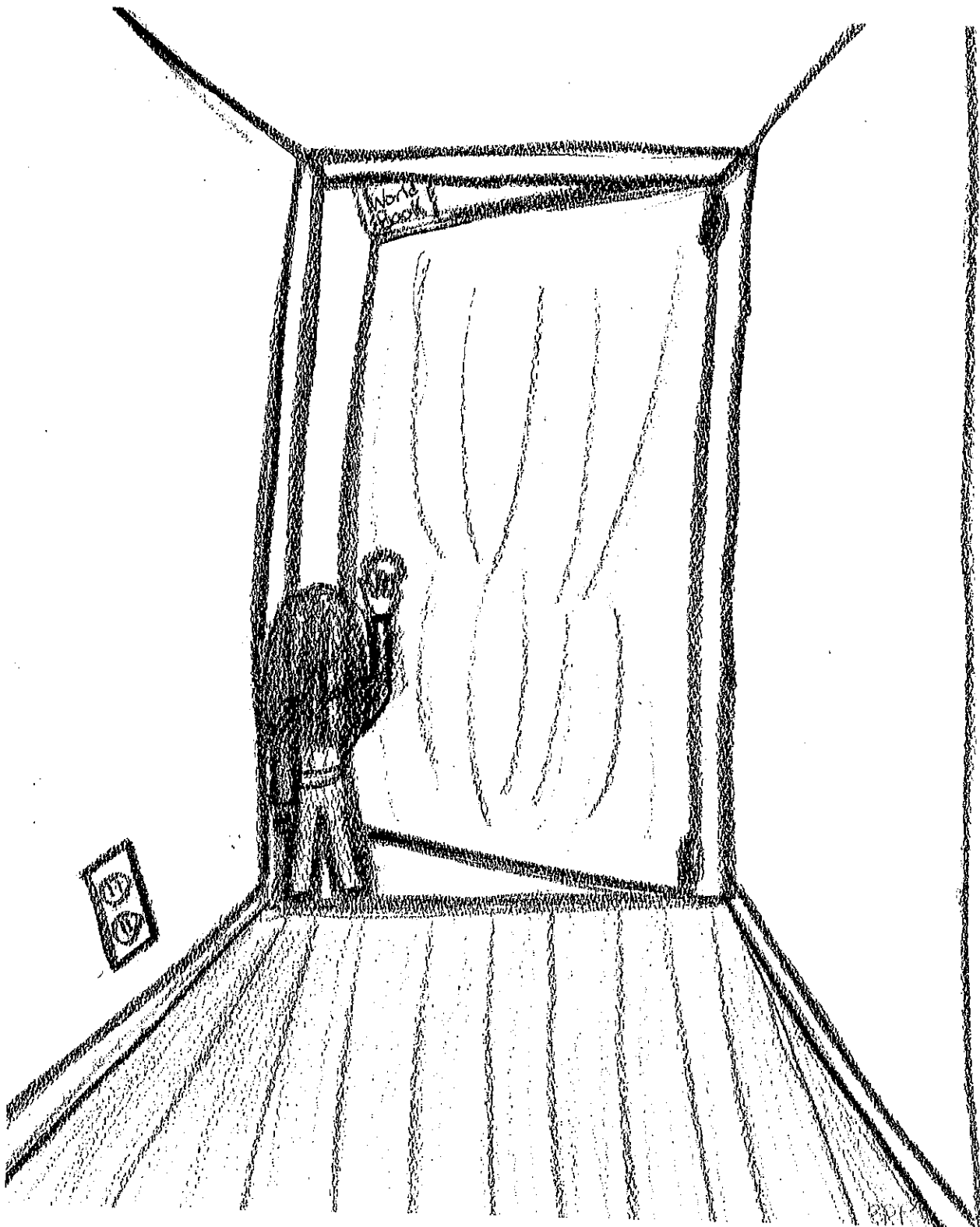
EPP

He took the bottom step off his treehouse just so I can't reach it and climb up. He says Daddy made him do it so I won't get hurt, but I don't believe him.





He told me not to go in his room, so he put books on top of the door that hit me on the head if I try and go in. (I don't mean paperbacks, I mean like encyclopedias!

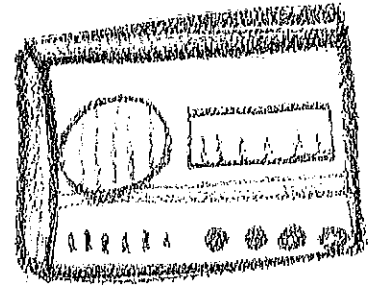
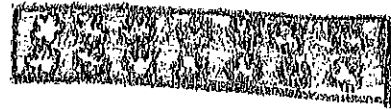
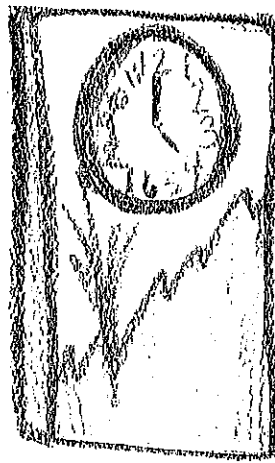
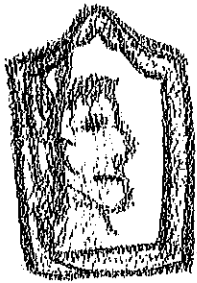


Sometimes, I hate my brother.

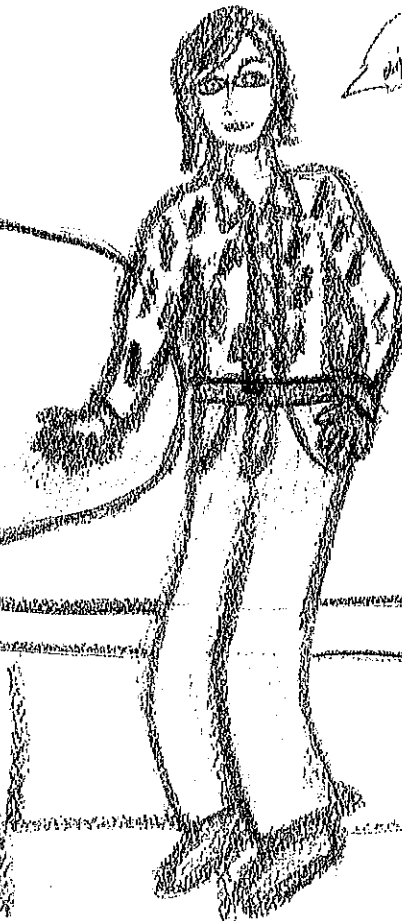
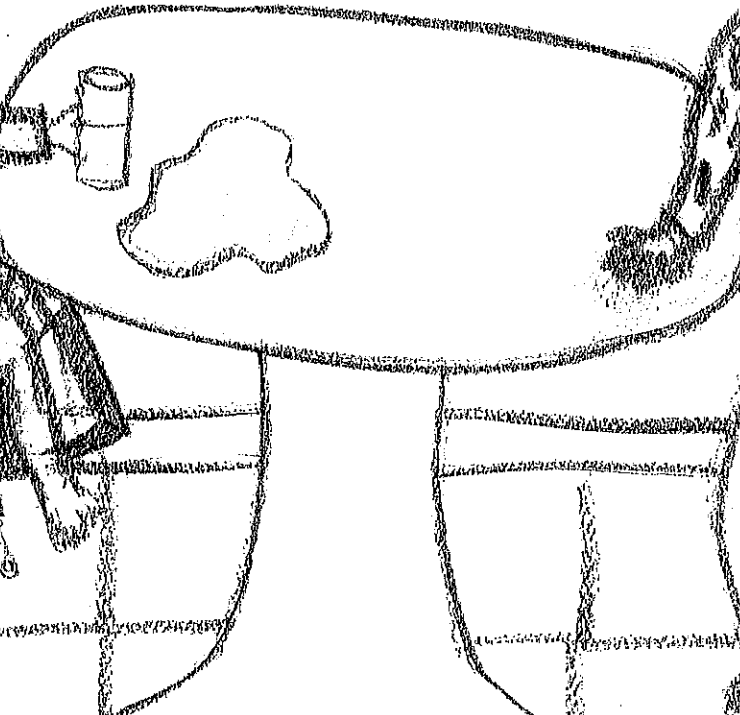
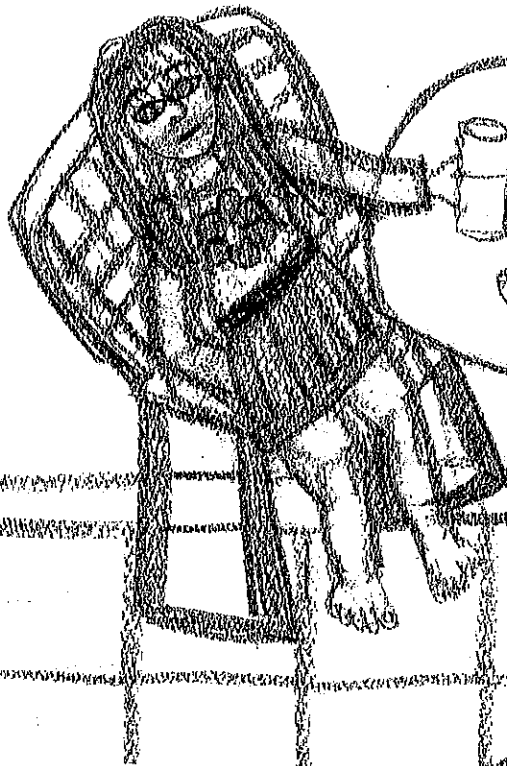


One time while I was drinking milk, he made me laugh on purpose and milk came out of my nose all over the kitchen table.

G

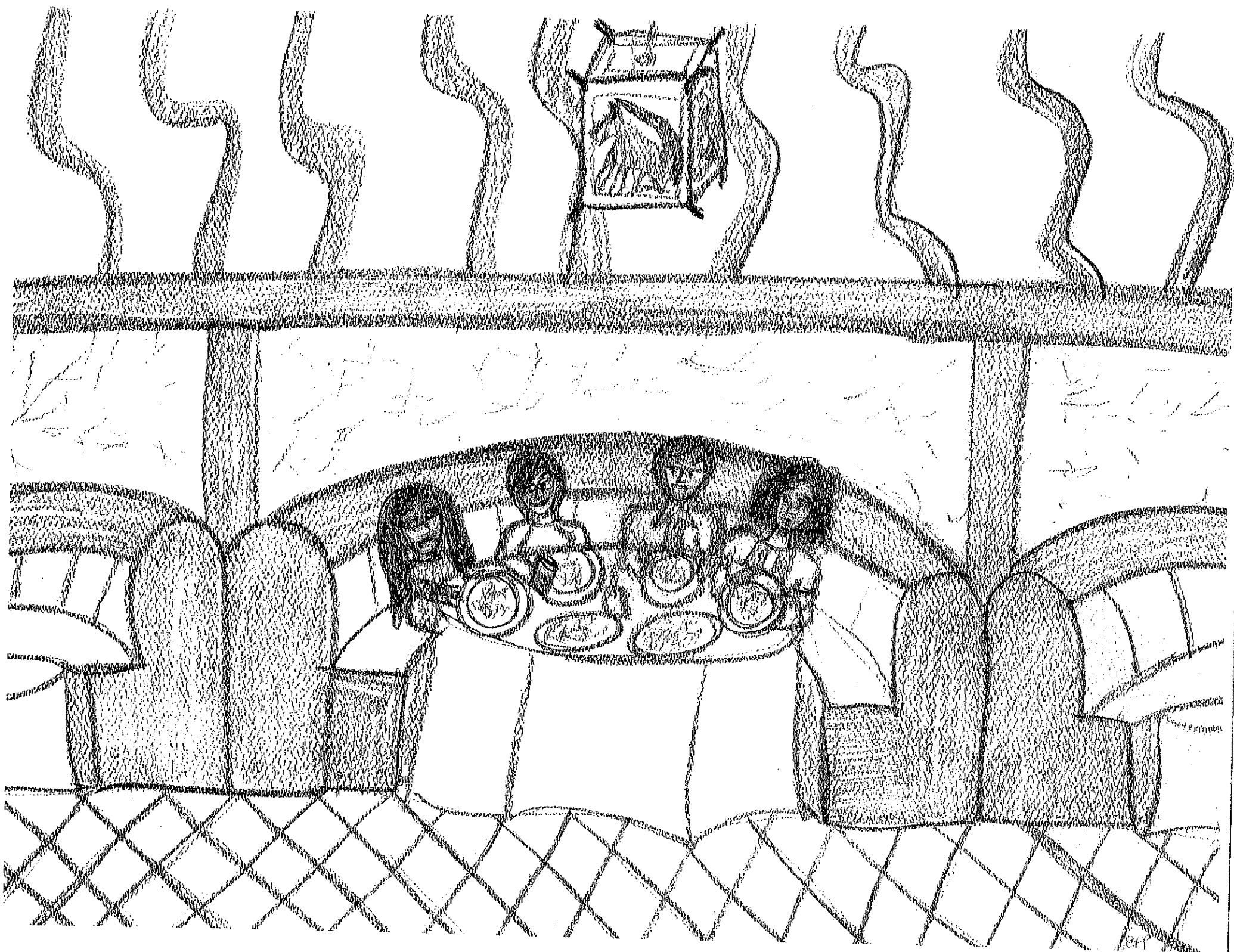


Mother  
Monday's

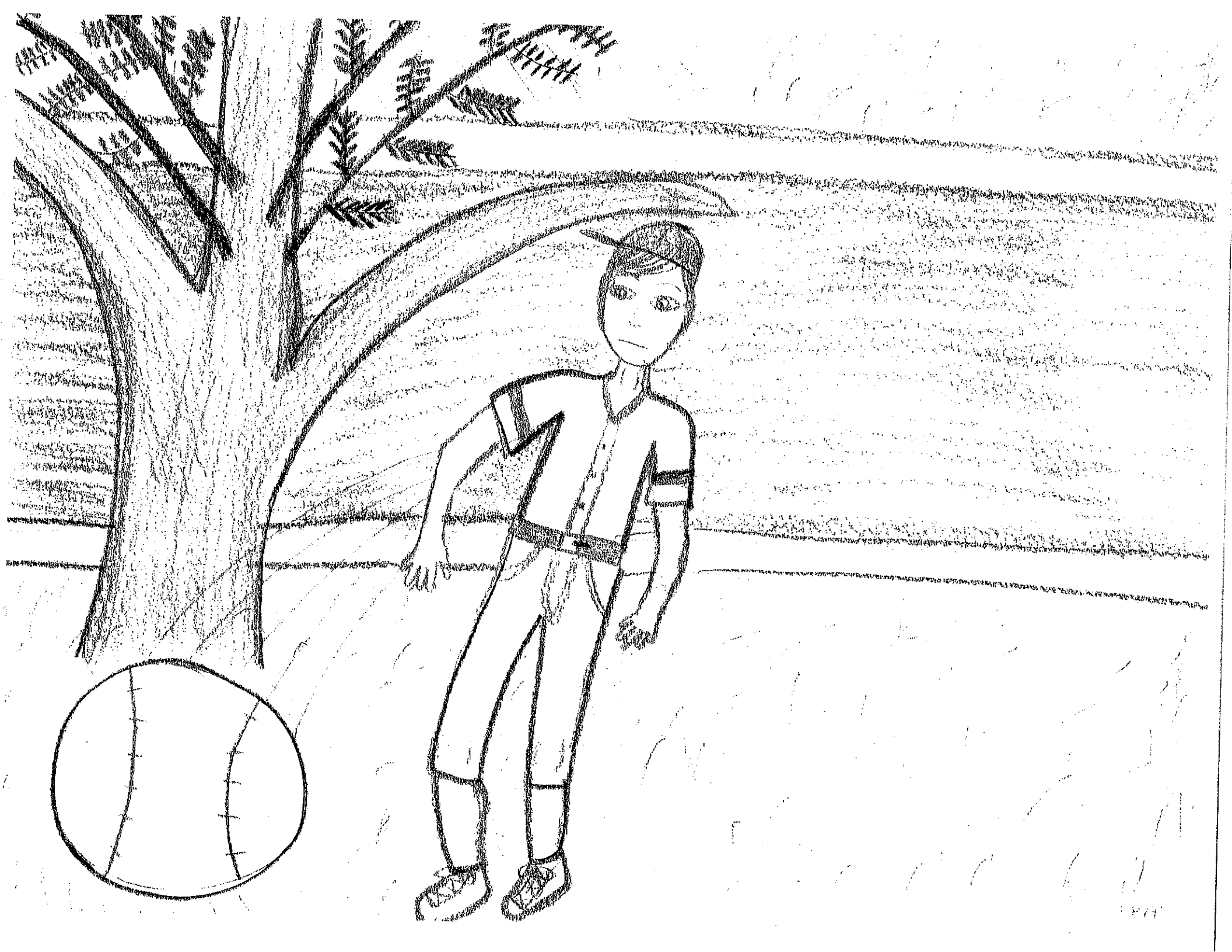


Another time, he got me to try mustard at a Chinese restaurant by telling me it wasn't spicy. (He lied.)

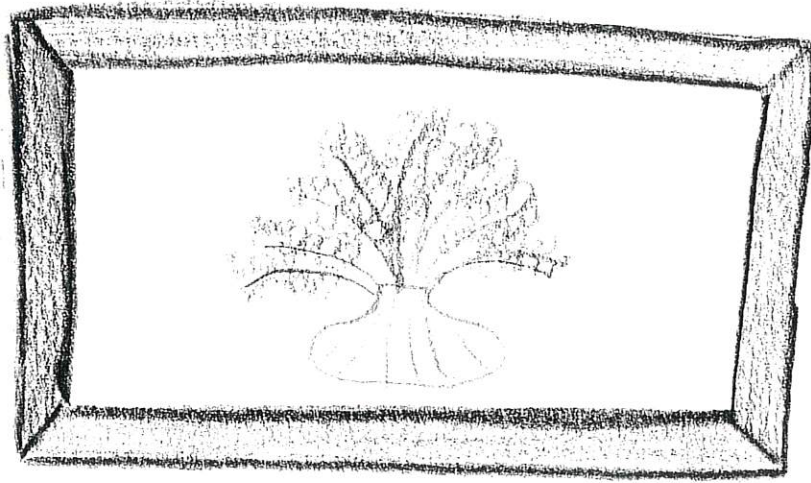




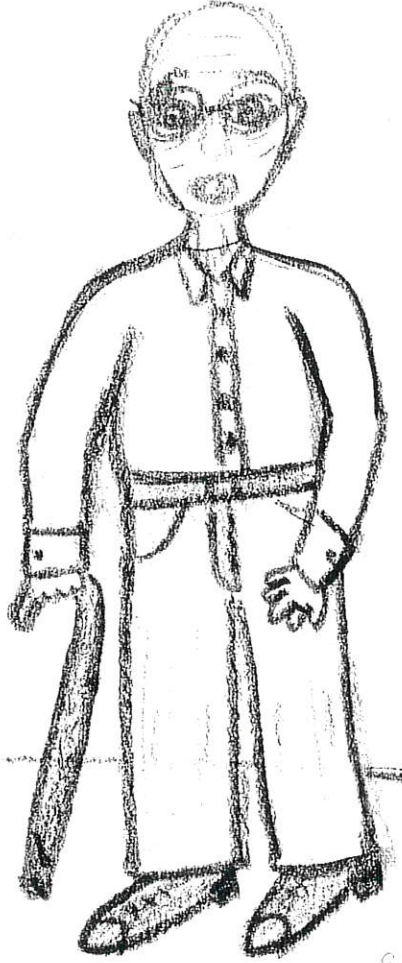
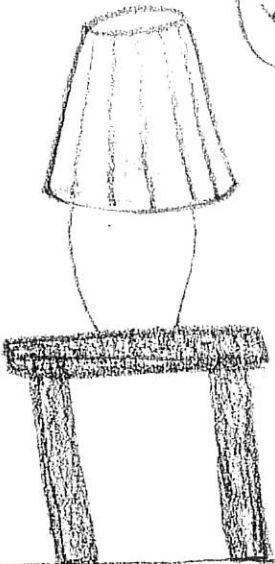
He "accidentally" threw a  
baseball right into my nose. I  
was bleeding everywhere!



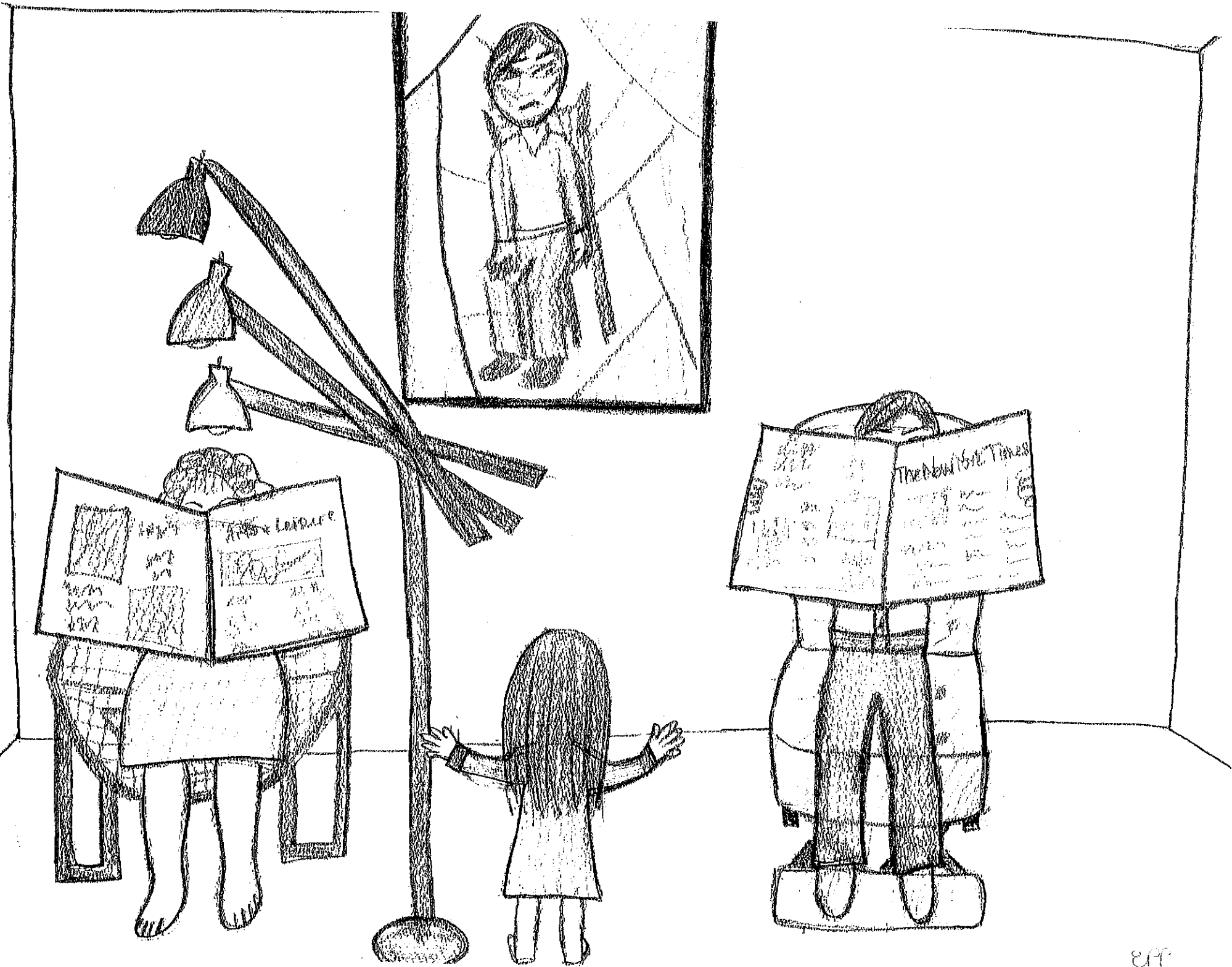
While visiting our Grandparents in Miami Beach, he folded me up in their sofa-bed. OK, so I told him he could, but I didn't think he'd leave me in there that long. I couldn't breathe! I've never seen Grandpa so mad. I think he even hit him.



Hump Mrf!

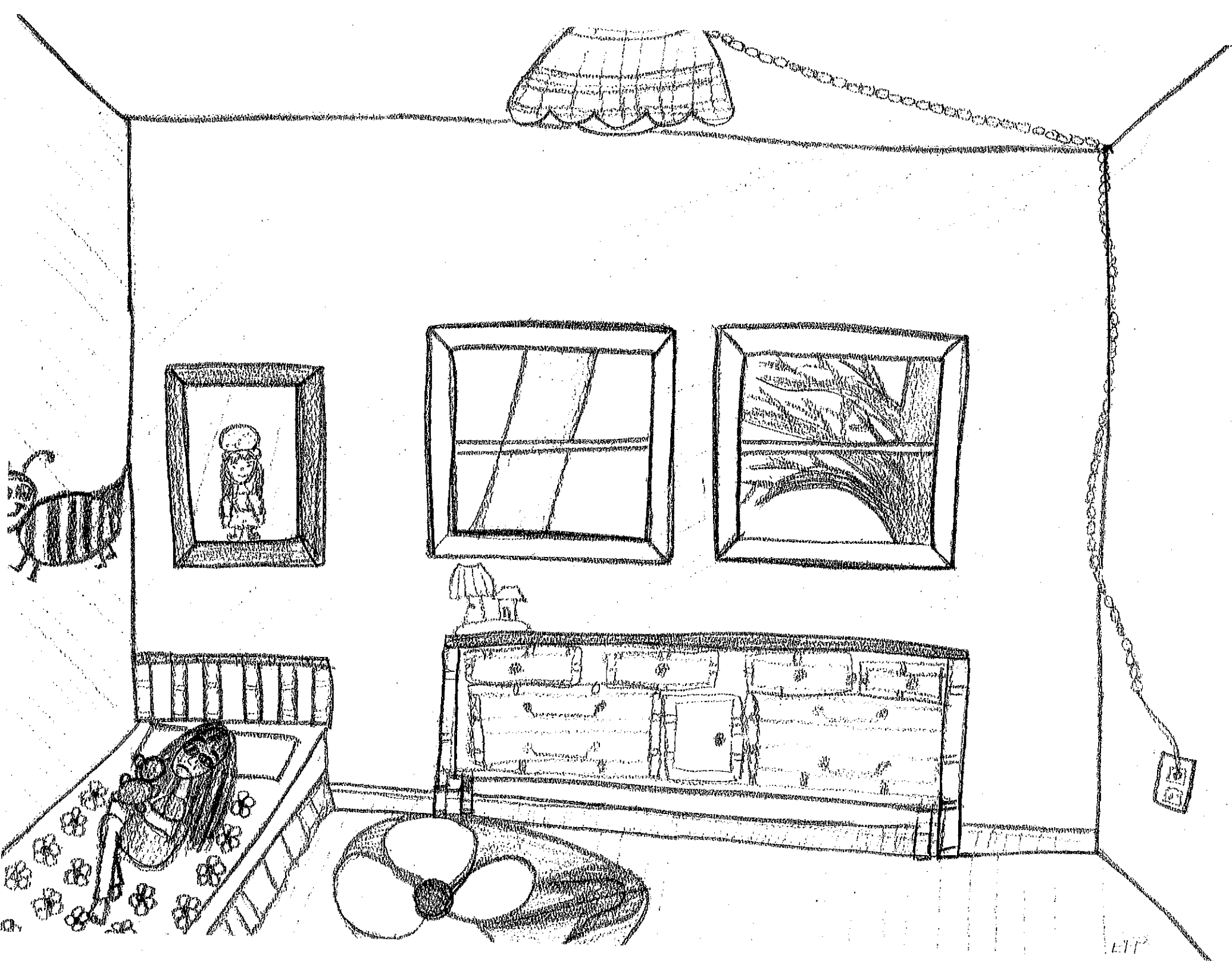


One time when I was mad at him, I lied and said he hit me when he really didn't. (That time.) Now when he really does hit me, nobody believes me.



I think my brother really hates me!





LET

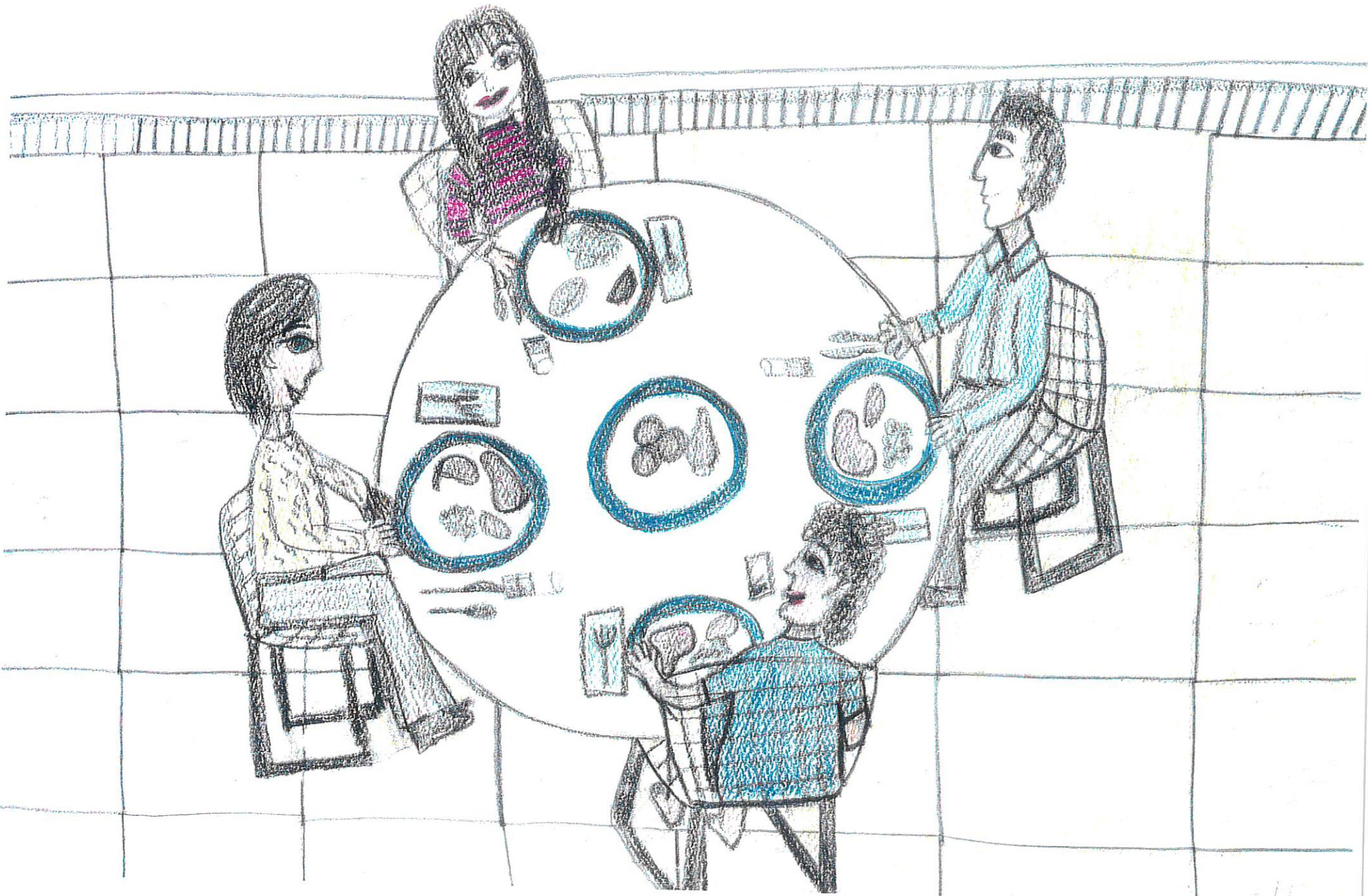
I know he used to like me when I was  
little. I've seen the pictures.





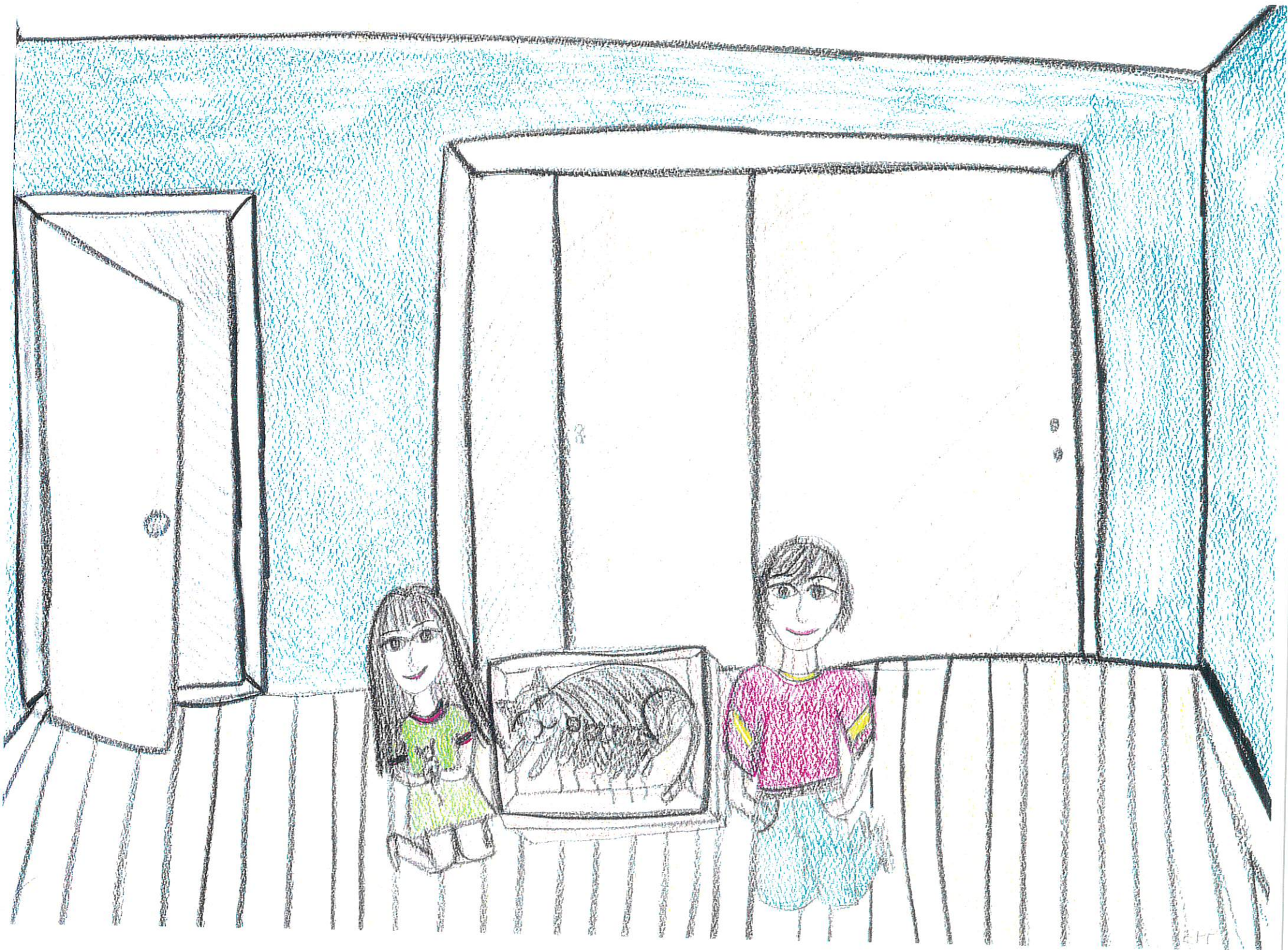


He told me he liked me better when I was little because I would always give him half my steak. I couldn't eat a whole steak then, it was too big for me, so I would give him half. Then when I got bigger, I could finish my steak myself. Maybe if I still gave him half my steak he would like me again.



Still, when his cat Tigger had kittens, he did let me keep one. (I named her Roo, like in Winnie the Pooh!)





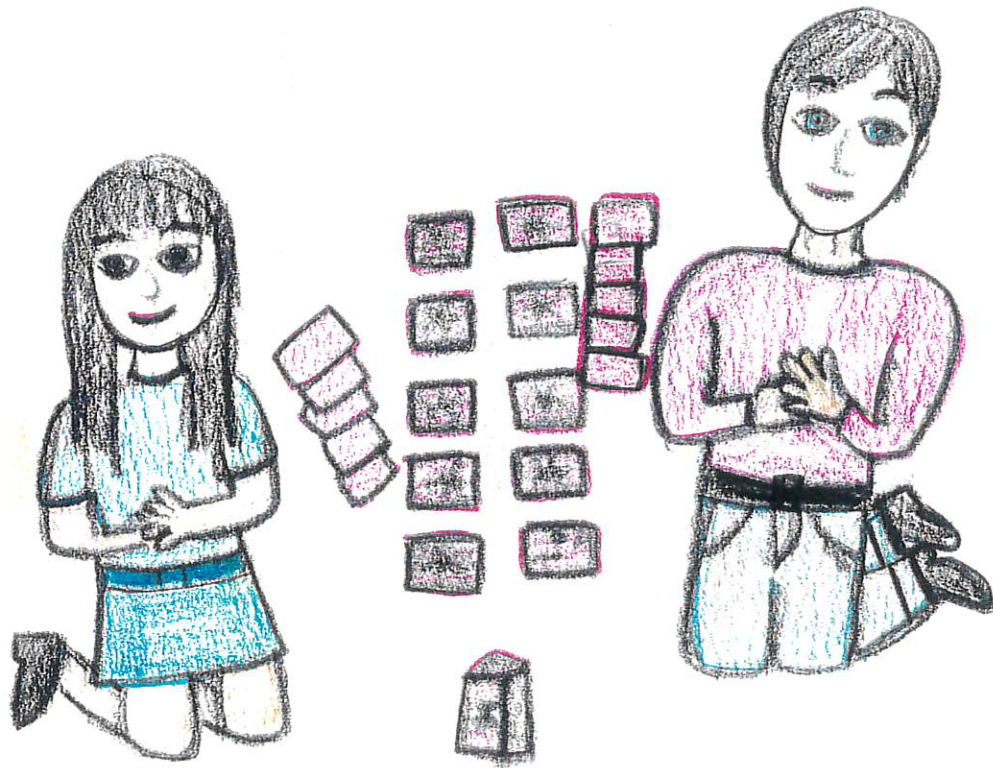
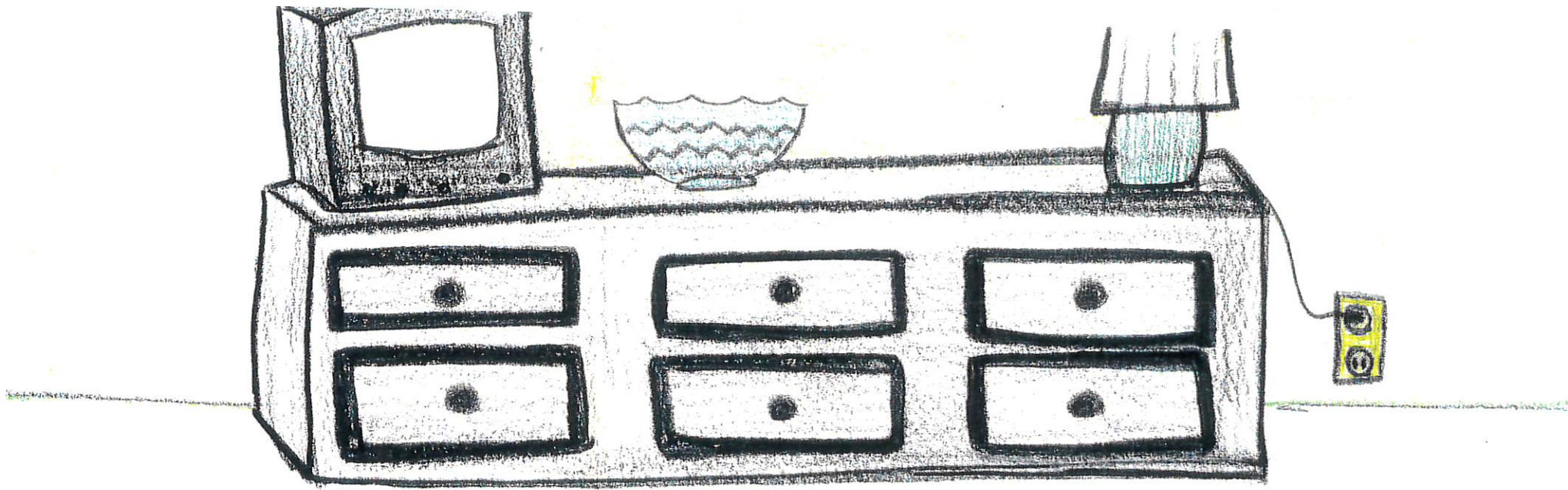
He did do magic tricks at my 2nd grade birthday party, and he told ghost stories at my 3rd grade birthday/slumber party. (I think my parents may have made him though.)





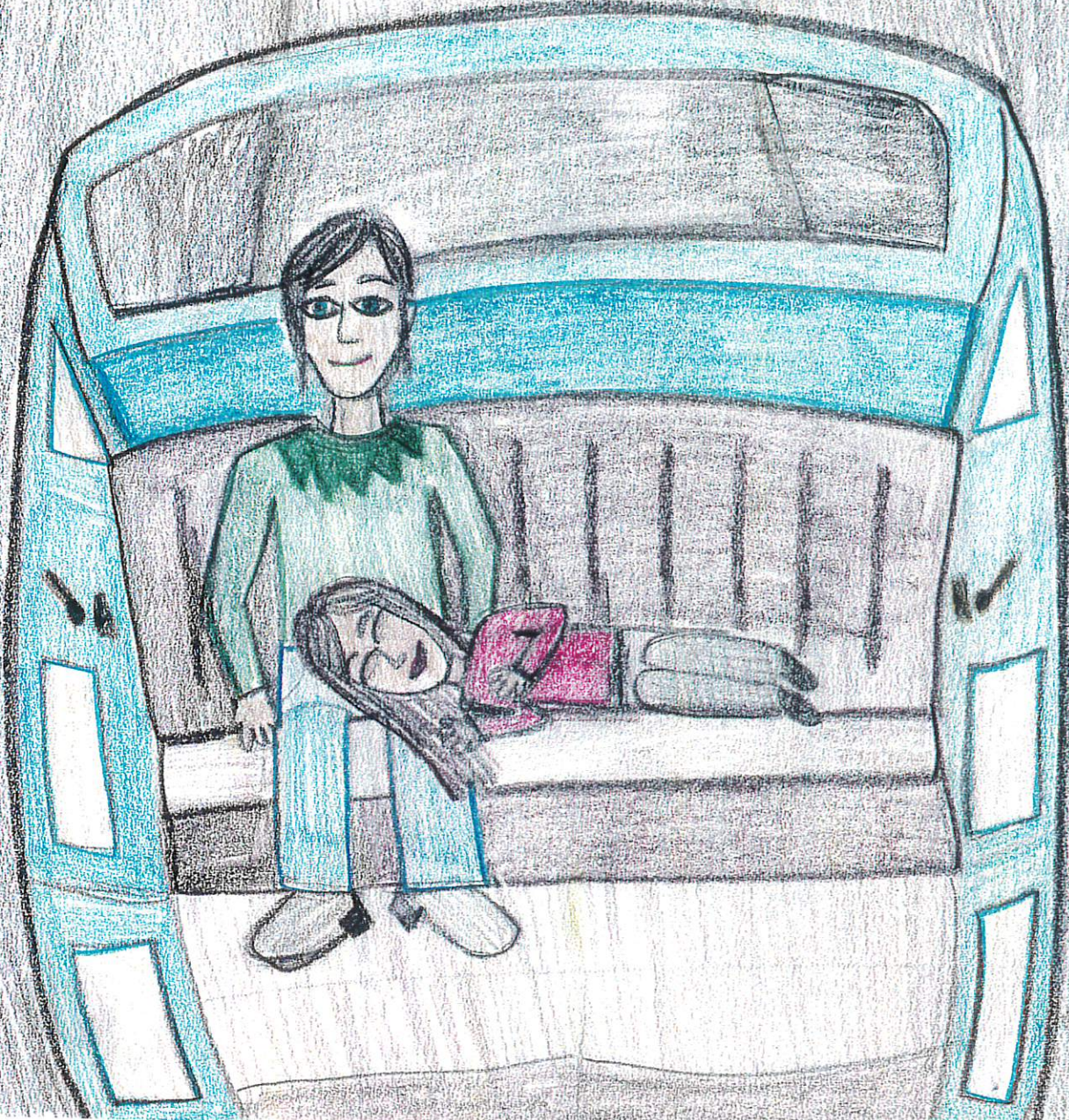
And he did teach me how to crack my  
knuckles and how to play "spit".





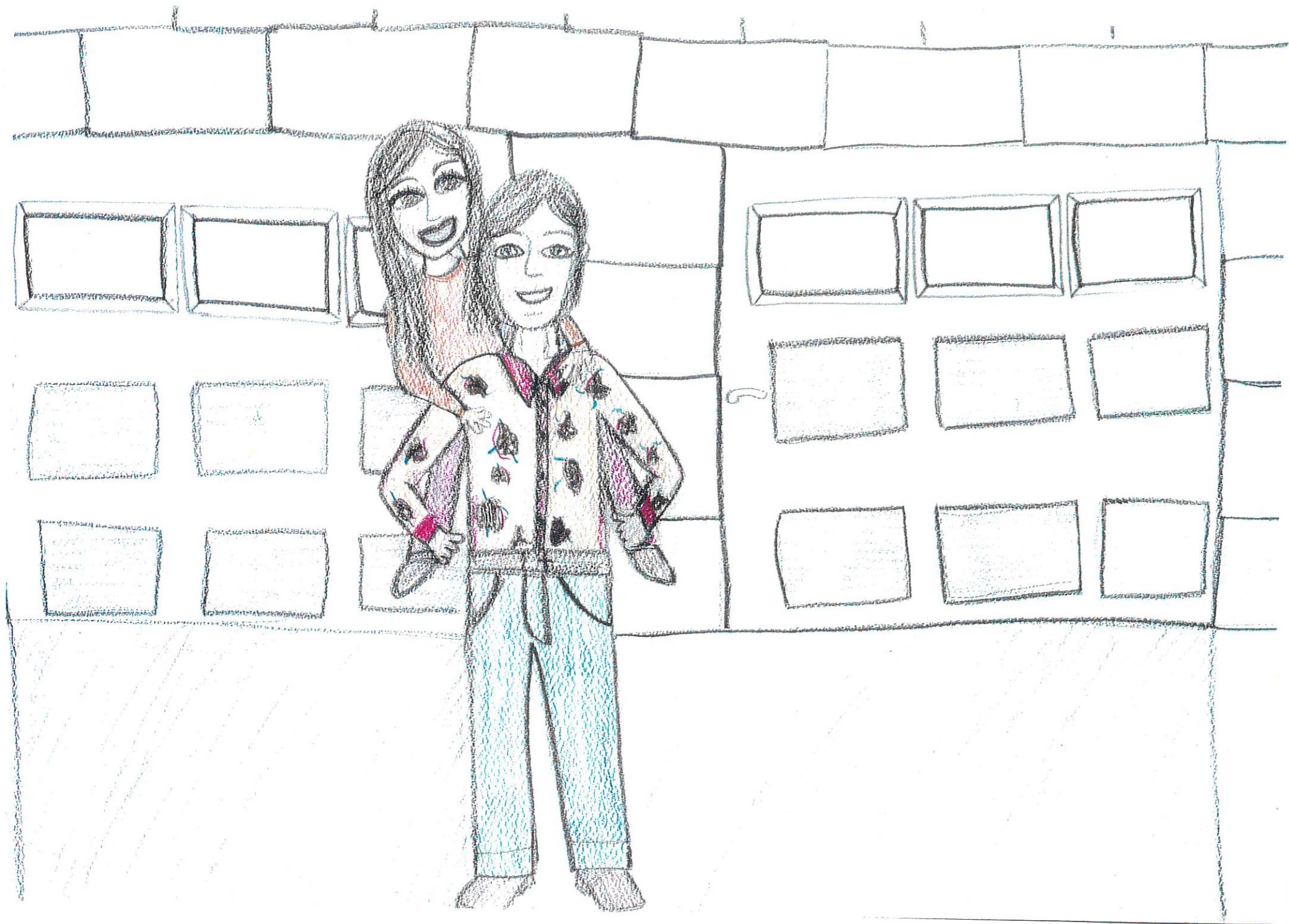
Sometimes on long car trips, he lets me sleep with my head in his lap. If I'm still sleeping when we get home, he'll even carry me up to bed! Sometimes, I pretend to be asleep just so he'll carry me in. (Shh, don't tell!)







He also sometimes gives me piggyback rides when I'm tired. I guess maybe my brother doesn't really hate me after all! (But I'm still gonna watch out for him, just in case.....)



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## **Appendix A**

### **Applications and Possibilities for Learning**

## **Applications and Possibilities for Learning with Sometimes, I Hate My Brother**

The following are several ways in which the children's book Sometimes, I Hate My Brother can be used in the classroom. These applications of the text are only suggestions for how the book could possibly be used. Teachers should rely on their own experience as to whether this book will be appropriate for their classroom environment.

Sometimes, I Hate My Brother can be read by children of any age level or even adults, although it is specifically intended for children between the ages of six and twelve. It is my hope that this book will inspire thoughtful discussion on the subject by children both at home and in the classroom. It could also be an effective tool for school psychologists who are counseling children in abusive situations.

### **Individual Study:**

Though the text of Sometimes, I Hate My Brother can be used in the classroom to inspire group discussion, the text is intended to be experienced by the individual, therefore is an appropriate independent reading choice. Students can read the book during silent reading time, or take it home to read during their free time. Because of the sensitive nature of the material, some

children may be hesitant to voice their true feelings about the book in a group discussion setting. Children should be given the opportunity to interact with the text privately in addition to a group experience with the book. Exposure to this book should give children the opportunity to examine their own feelings about their relationships with their siblings. This reflection is the beginning of the self-awareness necessary to express one's own feelings. It is also a necessary tool allowing them to take another's feelings and perspective into account. Such reflection should lead to rich discussion on a subject most children will be able to relate to whether they have been the aggressor or aggressee in sibling interactions.

**Group Study:**

Sometimes, I Hate My Brother can also be used in group-study situations. The book focuses on situations where a child may feel sad, rejected, lonely or isolated. These are feelings that many children may be able to relate to, but they also may have difficulty discussing or expressing such feelings. Teachers can use the text to encourage children to explore their own feelings and attempt to relate to the child in the book. Teachers can create an atmosphere where children will feel safe to share their feelings on the subject. Children can also break off into smaller groups or pairs to

read more intimately and then return for continued group discussion.

Teachers can give the children a few guided questions prior to any discussion to give the children a chance to reflect and to keep the discussion on track.

There are a variety of ways in which teachers can involve students in experiencing this book. Students can be encouraged to role-play situations in the book or re-enact conflicts that may have arisen between themselves and their siblings. Children can help each other to come up with different conflict resolving strategies that might be effective in diffusing confrontational situations involving themselves and their siblings. Through role-play, children could also be encouraged to try to switch roles and explore the other person's perspective.

Teachers can also extend interaction with Sometimes, I Hate My Brother into a writing activity. Writing could be particularly valuable for those children who have difficulty discussing this subject openly in front of the group. Children should be encouraged to write their response to this book. They could also write their own book about interactions between themselves and their siblings. This will give children more of an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and explore their feelings. It will also give teachers an opportunity to see how children are really feeling

about this book and help them to identify children who might benefit from further discussion on this subject, or actually are in need of some form of professional assistance.

**Age Versatility:**

The types of activities described above are appropriate for any age group interacting with Sometimes, I Hate My Brother. Even children who are not yet able to write for themselves can communicate their feelings to an adult and have the adult write down their words for them. With younger children, drawing a picture can be an appropriate and effective way to allow them to explore and express their feelings. This is a book teachers may wish to come back to again later in the year to see if responses have changed or expanded in any way. Healthy and appropriate interaction between siblings is a relevant and important topic for discussion for all age groups.

Younger children may wish to spend more time discussing the illustrations than the text. The illustrations are designed to convey the emotions of the characters, so children will be able to interact with them in a way that will expand their understanding of the book. Older children can benefit from expanding their discussions with the intent to explore the illustrations further as well.

Other activities that may be used to foster further understanding and exploration of the issues presented in Sometimes, I Hate My Brother include music, movement and art. Teachers and children can bring in musical selections that they feel convey the some of the emotions being expressed in the book. Children can also try to find ways to communicate these feelings through moving their bodies. There are many types of art activities that could be used effectively in relation to this material such as painting murals of feelings, or using other materials such as clay to make dioramas depicting scenes from the book or their own experiences. Artistic expression is an excellent way to explore and convey one's feelings. Children can only benefit from every opportunity they are given to do so.

**Appendix B**  
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