

**POLKA DOTS AND SUSPENDERS:
CULTURALLY RELEVANT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
for
PRIMARY HUTTERITE STUDENTS**

PATRICIA COOPER

B. Ed., University of Lethbridge, AB., 1972

A One-Credit Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Lethbridge, Alberta

August 2000

DEDICATION

For Hutterite children everywhere.

For my family and our future generations.

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

- *Eleanor Roosevelt*

ABSTRACT

Polka Dots and Suspenders: Culturally Relevant Children's Literature for Primary Hutterite Students

Imagine the plight of the multi-grade classroom teacher with minimal language arts material that is meaningful to the young English-as-a-Second-Language first grade students. This is the challenge of teaching Hutterite children: How to find and use literature that is meaningful to these children who live in rural isolation and have little knowledge of the outside "English" world, and who come to school speaking and understanding only German.

This project was designed to produce culturally relevant stories for Hutterite children in primary grades. Through an action research project, the materials collected through observations, discussions, the instructional program and a review of the educational literature provided excellent background material for the writing of three stories.

The stories reflect the normal activities of Hutterite children as experienced in the Hutterite colony environment.

Boys' and girls' activities each have clearly defined gender parameters on the colony, in both work and play; therefore, one story is of specific interest to the boys, while another is more suited to the literary taste of girls. The third story involves the entire class and the teacher. The intent was to portray the natural Hutterite way of life throughout the fictional accounts of the children in the stories, thereby providing meaningful literature for young Hutterite children to read.

Through the regular instructional program, by brainstorming and participating in art classes, Hutterite students assumed ownership in certain aspects of the project.

Children's artwork was thoughtfully selected, sometimes used in original form, collaged, or framed with the fabric used in colony clothing. The blend of story line and children's artwork brought the books "to life" with color and texture. This art has provided a connection to Hutterite children and has supplied the medium needed to bring authenticity to this literature.

This creative project leads the participants to believe that Hutterite colony school programs can benefit from the development and use of authentic culturally relevant literature with, not only young students, but all students in Grades One through Eight.

Upon completion, the students became highly motivated to begin an anthology; thus, this action research has become ongoing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest thanks and sincere appreciation to all the special people who helped make this project a reality:

To my supervisor, Dr. Robin Bright, for her energy and enthusiasm, for her patience and understanding, for her useful comments and valuable guidance, and for her camaraderie.

To my second reader, Margaret Rodermond, for her critiquing and suggestions, for her positive feedback, for her expertise and for her friendship.

To the Faculty of Education staff, who have offered me the best professional growth and development of my career.

To my family: Richard, Diana, Natalie and Stephanie, for their love and support, technical help, perseverance and belief in me.

To my parents, John and Irene Krulak, for instilling in me the importance of a good education.

To my friends and colleagues: Sheila Stearns, Laura Kennedy, Kim Kowalchuk, Kathy Cooper, Rob Ficiur, Kent and Cheryl Gairns for their on-going support, input and collaboration.

To the German teacher of my school, Dave Mandel, for his interest and support.

To the students of Prairie Rose Hutterite Colony schools for their original ideas, artwork and inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
RATIONALE.....	5
HUTTERITES.....	7
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
METHODOLOGY.....	29
THE STORIES.....	39
CONCLUSION.....	40
References.....	42
Appendices	
Appendix A Dedications.....	45
Appendix B Banks' Typology.....	47
Appendix C Conference Presentation.....	48

POLKA DOTS AND SUSPENDERS: CULTURALLY RELEVANT CHILDREN'S LITERATURE FOR PRIMARY HUTTERITE STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Hutterite colony teachers are faced with challenges and obstacles in their quest to provide optimum learning opportunities for their English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Hutterite children are unique special needs students, since they need to learn the English language and culture in order to comprehend the curricula. The language of literature in the context of an English-speaking culture may seem foreign to German-speaking Hutterite children. The pictures of people and places, the language and even the font of the alphabet letters in textbooks and children's literature are unfamiliar to them. Before effective learning can take place, teachers must help ESL students bridge the gap between their past, their culture/language and the present circumstances in their new classroom. As Hutterian school teachers, we must discover or invent creative ways to overcome the obstacles. We strive to provide the most appropriate learning environments and use suitable teaching methodologies within cultural limitations.

There is one area which offers educators of Hutterite children the opportunity for growth and improvement: the development of culturally relevant children's literature. To reach the ESL Hutterite learners, teachers need resources and literature that is relevant to the specific learner. In today's educational marketplace, teachers find a myriad of literature for many ethnic backgrounds; yet, for my classroom of German-speaking Hutterite students, I have located little culturally relevant material. This lack of culturally relevant literature for Hutterite students is one of the gaps in the Hutterian education system today.

While teaching grades one through eight on an Alberta Hutterite colony, I became frustrated with the students' attitudes toward some of the literature and course content, which often had little relative meaning to them. These German-speaking children, who live in isolation from the English world, come to school understanding little or no English and speaking none. The process of learning to read the English language seems unusually slow, with strange words, new alphabet letters, plus pictures of such different people and activities. These children know only their families, their community and their colony farm. They have never been to the zoo, the circus, the pet shop, the airport, the ocean; perhaps the infrequent visit to the doctor has allowed them the privilege of seeing a large grocery store or shopping mall. The phonics books and reading series they are exposed to in their classrooms have little content that makes sense to the young students. There seems to be next to nothing available for Hutterite children with stories about Hutterites.

I searched the library for exciting books which had farm animals for the children to identify with, but had difficulty finding enough materials to interest the older students, who had read through all of the cowboy books available. As well, there were not many fictional books about driving semi trucks, the older boys' passion. The romance-type stories, a favorite of the older girls, are not allowed in school, as they are forbidden by the Hutterite colony. While other school library shelves include books on teen pregnancy, homosexuality, AIDS and drugs, these topics are not spoken of on Hutterite colonies. In cities and towns, even the classroom language arts anthologies try to motivate the intermediate and junior high students with interviews and stories of rock stars, technology, travel and the social life of present-day English-speaking society's young

people. There is simply little literature out there which is relevant to the lifestyle of the Hutterite student.

On the next library trip, purely by coincidence, my college daughter noticed the cover of a paperback on the junior adult display shelf. It was colorfully illustrated with Hutterite children against a colony farm background. The book, entitled *Sara's Summer* by Naomi Stucky (1990), is a sad, yet interesting tale of an orphan girl seeking to trace her roots. Through her school counsellor, she discovers that she is the daughter of a 'run-away' Hutterite boy. I was mildly surprised at the positive reaction of my students, since they are fiercely protective of their beliefs and protected lifestyle. I had originally been slightly concerned that the 'runaway' concept might be offensive, but to the contrary; the interest level was high. I was bombarded with requests for the book. A couple of students even got into an argument over who would read it next! It was of special interest to the grade six to eight girls, since Sara was a high school girl. The front cover alone caused excitement among my students. High-level interest in this story about Hutterites became evident as follow-up conversations transpired when several students completed the book. I was thinking that a novel study would be worthwhile to pursue and this experience further developed my belief that there appeared to be a need for this type of literature.

At the next Hutterian Principals' meeting, I spoke to several colleagues about this incident and how the reaction to this book had affected my class. All three of us began discussing ideas related to literature. I wondered if culturally relevant literature would make a difference in the Hutterite students' attitudes toward learning and school itself, and if learning to read English would become easier for primary students if they had

simple stories about Hutterite children, including illustrations of Hutterites involved in their daily activities. After all, what did *we* read, growing up? It wasn't stories of Anna and Jacob, babysitting, picking weeds in the garden, spring cleaning, or cleaning hog barns.

Discovering *Sara's Summer* had been a pleasant surprise; yet I shouldn't have been surprised at all. As a child myself in grade one, learning to read with stories well suited to my Canadian lifestyle, everything just naturally made sense to me as a young learner. The literature was relevant to my life and my language. I think, as members of a majority cultural group, we take a lot for granted, without imagining what it must be like for others not like us. This simple experience with my Hutterite students' reaction to culturally relevant literature made me sit up and think about my teaching. Returning to the library, I searched for more books about Hutterite children. There were several reference books, some out-dated, and some unsuitable for elementary school. Under fiction, *Dance Like a Poor Man* by Samuel Hofer (1995) came up on the computer, but had to be ordered from another library. This was written for older students, and proved to be popular as well. Much later, a colleague introduced me to *Coyote Winter* by Jacqueline White (1991), a beautiful tale for younger students. I have since located some Amish stories, which seem suitable for Hutterite classrooms. In *Amish Adventure* by Barbara Smucker (1995), the lifestyle of the Amish community displayed similarities to the Hutterite culture. My students related well, and subsequently, thoroughly enjoyed the story. One of my junior high students asked me to find *Beyond the Dark River* by Monica Hughes (1992), referenced in his language book. Written for young adults, he recommended it for older students.

The *Sara's Summer* experience spoke to my heart, as I empathized with my students and understood their desire to read stories about people like themselves. I mulled over the possibilities of providing more culturally relevant literature for my students: library books, a primary reading series based on familiar Hutterite topics, stories written by Hutterite parents or children, stories told by children and recorded by teachers, and stories written by teachers who are familiar with Hutterite culture.

So, what could Hutterian school teachers do? I decided that I would like to pursue writing children's literature for Hutterite children in primary grades. Did my colleagues think that might help? They were confident it would be popular among the students and colony teachers, but they simply didn't have the time to do this. I thought that I could use this challenge for my Masters of Education final creative project.

RATIONALE

Students in my classroom demonstrated the desire for and interest in stories about “children like themselves”, proven by the popularity of *Sara’s Summer* (Stucky, 1990), *Amish Adventure* (Smucker, 1995), and *Coyote Winter* (White, 1991). The realization that the classroom, the public library and the educational supply catalogues offer minimal, at best, literature or materials which are relevant to the everyday lives of Hutterite children caused me to ponder this as a problem, requiring further thought and a solution. I also perceived culturally relevant materials as a need for my colony classroom educational program. Since language arts instruction makes up a large percentage of the program, children’s literature became the vehicle of delivery.

The questions I wanted to investigate were: “How can teachers of Hutterite children provide culturally relevant literature for the primary classroom?”, “Would culturally relevant literature help primary Hutterite students learn to read English?”, “Would reading culturally relevant literature improve primary Hutterite students’ writing?”, “Where does one find culturally relevant children’s literature for primary Hutterite students?” and “Would using culturally relevant children’s literature for primary Hutterite students encourage more reading and writing?”

With the keen interest and support of parents and colleagues, I felt this would be a worthwhile and challenging creative project which would benefit both Hutterite children and teachers teaching in Hutterite colony schools.

The purpose of this project is to investigate the needs of ESL Hutterite primary students and to provide suitable children’s literature for the classroom.

To clearly understand the importance and need for culturally relevant children's literature for Hutterite students, one first needs background information on the basics of Hutterite life, culture and education. A list of definitions of terms used throughout this project is included (see Appendix A).

HUTTERITES

Hutterites are an ethnic group of people who live on isolated colonies which exist as large corporate-style farms scattered in remote parts of the Canadian prairies. Based on conservative religious beliefs, the families practice a frugal communal lifestyle.

Their beginnings date back to 16th century Europe during the Reformation, when Jakob Hutter led a group of people who adopted a communal lifestyle based on scripture of "all things common". Although their numbers grew to approximately 15 000 by the early 17th century, religious persecution plagued them with torture, vandalism and even execution. The survivors became a migrant group throughout Europe, until about 800 left for North America in the late 1800's.

Being German-speaking and pacifists caused difficulties during World War I; thus many Hutterites moved to Canada to form new colonies. There are now hundreds of colonies surviving and flourishing in North America.

The provision of religious freedom and ownership of farmland in Canada was negotiated with the agreement that colony members would be educated according to Canadian curricula. Various forms of delivery, including Hutterite children attending public schools, have been employed, with the current system of provincially certified

‘English’ teachers (teachers who teach the curriculum in English) commuting to the colony schools to teach provincially mandated curriculum in grades one to nine.

(Morgan, 1997)

Three subgroups exist within the Hutterite framework: the Lehreleut, the Dariusleut and the Schmiedeleut sects, ranging from ultra-conservative to progressive philosophies and rules. All use German as their first language and all Hutterite children attend German school before and after ‘English school’ in the colony school building. For the first seven years of their lives, children speak only German. At age six, they attend German school full-time to learn how to read and write German. Upon completion of this term, they begin ‘English school’.

Mandatory provincial curricula, with the special exemptions of technology, musical instruments and Human Sexuality in health, is taught during the basic instructional hours expected of public schools in the province. Children begin English school at age seven and finish on their fifteenth birthday. The colony supplies the school building and maintenance, while provincial funding supplies the teaching and paraprofessional staff plus all resources. In Lehreleut colony schools, modern technology, including computers, television/videos, films and filmstrips, audiocassette and record players, and overhead projectors are not allowed. This also holds true of any type of musical instrument or radio. Allowable visual aids would include posters, maps, charts, books, learning centres and art projects, although many colonies only allow the use of minimal bulletin board space. Students are rarely allowed to travel off the colony for field trips or special educational programs.

The Hutterite people have a distinctive dress code. The men and boys wear black hats/caps and black suits with colorful shirts and suspenders. The women and girls have color-coordinated flowered print blouses/skirts with plaid aprons and a special black and white polka-dot starched scarf. Most of their clothing is sewn by Hutterite women, with the colony purchasing all the fabric and distributing it to individual homes, which are equipped with top-of-the-line sewing machines.

In this patriarchal society, there is no unemployment, which makes the colony close to self-sufficient. The colony has a vegetable garden, fruit trees, chickens, dairy cattle, pigs, ducks, beef cattle, grain, specialty crops and hay (with some variation from colony to colony). From an early age, Hutterite boys begin to learn all the jobs related to colony agricultural, mechanical, and construction work. From childhood, Hutterite girls are taught how to babysit and clean house. On their fifteenth birthday, Hutterite students have officially completed English school. This is the day they join the adults in the workplace: a sort of apprenticeship, on-the-job training program. On a rotation basis, they learn all the colony jobs pertinent to their gender group. These unmarried girls and boys who are approximately twenty years old or younger are referred to as 'big girls' and 'big boys' by adults and children. They meet other young Hutterite people when they travel to work on new colonies under construction or older colonies being renovated. The 'big boys' learn carpentry while the 'big girls' paint and varnish. This is also their big opportunity to socialize. Young people also meet at weddings, family events, and farm-related projects such as brandings or harvest.

Hutterites have minimal personal cash, since all of life's necessities are provided by the colony. Small monthly cash allowances are paid to both adults and children for extras.

Families live in rowhouses complete with small tidy yards, with the church, kitchen and laundry situated in the centre of the colony. Sidewalks stretch everywhere, which helps keep the houses and buildings clean. The colony layout resembles a little village of days gone by.

Church service is held daily before supper. The scheduled cooks prepare all colony meals for the 75 – 140 people in the huge stainless steel colony kitchen and bakery. All people eat together in the long dining room off the kitchen, with the men and boys on one side, seated in order of age; likewise for the women and girls on the other side of the dining hall.

Family life is sacred and precious. Families easily include six to ten children. Mothers take care of their babies and toddlers at home; then, at age two, they are off to Kindergarten all day. Seniors are loved, respected and well taken care of. When single men marry, they bring their new brides to the home colony, where they are supplied with a home, and soon begin a family. When 'big girls' set their wedding dates, they know they will begin a new life, not only in marriage, but also at the husbands' colonies. The colonies grow and flourish with new families.

It is an extremely organized, interesting, almost utopic lifestyle. When a colony becomes too large to function efficiently, the accumulated colony wealth provides for the beginning of a new colony.

Teaching on a Hutterite colony is simply a joy. Children are well behaved and strive to do their best in school. They are still just children: curious about the world around them, absorbing information like giant sponges, loving to sing and have fun at recess, appreciating special treats like seasonal parties, and getting nervous about report cards! With one teacher responsible for teaching many grades, possibly from one through ten, structured language arts and mathematics programs are used for individual grades, while thematic units are designed for supplementary activities and social studies, science, health, music, art and physical education programs. Language experience methods, such as writing chart stories that are further transposed into storybooks, are used to help the primary students make connections between their world and English learning. The use of large posters, maps and artwork are the basic visual aids. Teaching is always a challenge!

Parents are extremely supportive and respectful of the teaching staff. Effective classroom management is required, as parents want strong discipline in school. Whatever their children do, the Hutterite parents want them to do it well. Hutterite adults have a strong work ethic and are role models for their children.

Hutterite children on a colony live in a world quite different from average Canadian school children. They lead sheltered and protected lives, coming into grade one with only the German language and knowledge of their colony life. The educational resources, from reading, phonics, spelling and mathematics series and library books, assume the students' understanding and familiarity of the "English" world. Culturally relevant children's literature could make the transition to learning the English language much easier and more natural for these German-speaking children

When I compare my teaching experience with Hutterite elementary students to that of Aboriginal North American primary students, a reverse process becomes evident: The Aboriginal children come to school speaking English and the school board's mandate is to introduce them to their native tongue: Blackfoot. Blackfoot teachers worked with my students for classes on a regular basis. My job was to integrate Aboriginal culture into our lessons as much as possible. What was intriguing was the high motivation and keen interest in doing any kind of work connected to the Native legends, history and especially songs pertaining to Native culture. I remember bringing Paul Goble's (1978) *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses* to class, and having several excited children nearly in my lap, peering to see the beautiful illustrations close-up. I would try to "theme" this author's stories into my classroom activities, using Native legends and Native art across the curriculum, providing cultural relevance through children's literature. These children also must have been sensing how much more important and meaningful literature, with which they could identify, was to them. The whole school encouraged connections to Native language and culture, and books or reading series that portrayed Native North American Indians in the literature were readily ordered. This was culturally relevant literature and culturally relevant teaching at its best.

The absence of culturally relevant children's literature for Hutterite students leads me to research how educators teaching English as a Second Language students of other ethnic backgrounds have dealt with this issue. The following review of the educational literature offers a selection of different ways in which culturally relevant teaching, materials or literature is employed with ESL students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Klippenstein (cited in Santin, 1995), a teacher and principal in Cold Lake, a northern Manitoba community in which the population is 80% native, explains his frustration with trying to teach children, “how to read using books they clearly didn’t understand” (p. B7) - reading materials that reflect an urban lifestyle, with “references to elevators and escalators and farms and paved roads” (p. B7). He claims that his students were not able to relate to the words or didn’t even know the words. His solution was to write his own books: “to depict characters and activities so that every child in the north, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, could say at least once, ‘Hey, that’s me’.”(p. B7) He chose to reflect modern and traditional lifestyles through topics and everyday activities ranging from mosquitoes, ravens, dirt roads, fishing and cooking bannock for the 20-book collection designed for beginning readers.

Receiving the 1995 Lieutenant Governor’s medal for literacy, Klippenstein entitled his reading series *Loon Books* (1994). Illustrated by professional northern artists, the readers are now being used in schools in northern Manitoba, and northern communities from British Columbia to Quebec, Yukon and Northwest Territories. According to Klippenstein, teachers have affirmed the children’s love for the books, because they are “relevant to their world” and express, through art and text, positive and realistic role models for children in the unique and exciting culture of northern Canada.

Teachers and researchers understand the importance of culturally relevant children’s literature for the development of language and literacy skills, while multicultural books celebrate diversity, giving “literary voice to underrepresented groups” (Smallwood, 1998, p.1). Smallwood (1998) studied the use of multicultural

children's literature in adult ESL classrooms to promote family literacy and English language competencies for adult learners. Authentic cultural content, combined with clear illustrations which help students understand the story, predictable language patterns and rhyming or repetitive phrases and sentences, student writing in journals or composing stories, and a connection to classroom curricular objectives all help provide the ESL learner optimum opportunities for success with their new language.

Willmott and Lee-Harris (1996, p.2) speak to the importance of planning children's learning activities to center around relevant experiences. Due to the egocentricity of the young child, appropriate lessons which would work with the self-centered focus of the child include the knowledge a child has about him or herself, followed by the family, the home and community, and the world. The use of multicultural or culturally diverse literature should employ themes "that are important to the child" (Salvadore, in Willmott, p.135), stressing trust, acceptance and self-esteem. Through teaching with a varied selection of children's literature, a desired benefit results: Children can see their "lifestyles validated" (Hsu, in Willmott, p.135). Examples of stories which offer such themes are:

- *Everyone Cooks Rice* (Dooley,1991) - Families of different heritages are eating rice dishes.
- *How My Parents Learned to Eat* (Friedman,1987) - An American man and a Japanese woman learn to eat with a fork, a knife, a spoon and chopsticks in order that their daughter may also learn the eating customs of her combined heritage.

- *Mama Do You Love Me?* (Joose,1991) - The universal message of mother's love, trust and approval is portrayed through the Inuit culture.
- *Speak I English For My Mom* (Stanek,1989) - Helping her mother by interpreting English interferes with the daughter's need for independence.
- *You Be Me and I'll Be You* (Mandelbaum,1990) - A father and son have fun changing their appearances, finally deciding that being themselves is best.
- *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman,1991) - An African-American girl's vivid imagination wins her the part of Peter Pan, even though the character of Peter Pan is traditionally a white boy.

Using stories such as these, which make connections to the child and his/her language and culture, can positively impact identity and attitude towards others (Fereshteh, 1995, in Willmott, p. 135).

According to a study by Wrigley (1992), who examined various innovative ESL programs for adults, language and literacy teaching is changing, partially due to incorporating ideas from applied linguistics, anthropology and cognitive science. The author compared the standard method of teaching literacy, that is, teaching a set of skills, without connection to student experience; then, progressing to alphabet letters, words, sentences, and text to the new innovative approaches being employed by educators which "promote second language acquisition as a process of meaning making that links the experience of the learner to culture, language, literacy, and learning" (p.1). Street & Auerbach (cited in Wrigley,1993) wanted to put "print in meaningful units" (p.1) to

describe students' names, countries, and lives. Suggestions to use photographs, student-drawn pictures and expressions familiar to the students were incorporated into printed form, thus providing opportunities "to bring literacy to life" (p.1).

Reading texts that match learner interests provide students an opportunity to learn new vocabulary in context. Writing offers opportunities for the student to experiment with the new language, using relevant topic material (Rabideau,1993). By using their ideas, students also become empowered through their own voice in their writing. Although oral communication is still an important component of ESL instruction, the focus has turned more to reading and writing. Many ESL educators employ a process approach to teaching reading and writing, in which collections of student writing are published (Rabideau,1993).

Writing enhances language acquisition as students work with words, sentences and larger pieces of writing "to communicate their ideas effectively and to reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they are learning in class" (Bello, 1997, p.1). Bello encourages the use of a language experience approach, when ESL learners discuss common experiences and as a class, work together to develop a printed text. Exact words can be recorded by the teacher or teacher assistant, without corrections at first, keeping the focus on content, or the student's story. A later lesson can teach the appropriate rules of the English language, and the story can then be re-written. When students are ready to do their own writing, he recommends free writing using topics of interest and themes, followed by process writing, with student collaboration, peer-editing and the reading of each others' work.

In summarizing, Bello refers to Nobel Prize-winning author Gordimer (1982)(cited in Bello, 1997), who claims that learners need opportunities to write about relevant topics, and to participate in the writing, to feel that their writing has value, thus finding “their own voices in the new language” (p.3).

Wrigley (1992) discovered that teachers working in these innovative programs have found literacy education most successful when connected to students’ lives through social context and hands-on experiences, such as within the family, community and the workplace. ESL teachers effectively involve food themes to link verbal and non-verbal communication. The making of a fruit salad as a group project can be communicated through drawings, with spoken and/or printed words. This type of picture-writing can become more sophisticated as language use becomes more proficient, as in writing recipes, conducting taste tests, rating flavors and food preference lists. In the workplace, flash cards and work-related pictures have been used to help vocabulary and sentence development.

Using student-generated materials, bridging first languages to English and linking oral communication and use of video technology to enhance student writing and promote language awareness were other highly recommended methods of learning to read and write English. These methods make it possible for all voices to be heard, and feelings of personal pride are accomplished. Stories written by students and shared among the group offer all learners the opportunity to read, write and talk about personal experiences. One of these learner-centred approaches resulted in published women’s stories, with student illustrations, about family celebrations, childhood memories, special events and special places (Peyton, cited in Wrigley,1993). Wrigley (1993) noted that the focus should be on

communication before formal phonics, spelling or grammar. It is best to use a process approach during the brainstorming and writing part of a lesson; then formalize the English language during revision and editing. Using video to view, discuss, relate to and write about was also mentioned, again with students reflecting back to personal experiences or reactions for writing motivation.

Teachers using these different methods helped their ESL students “access literacy and use it in ways that are meaningful to them”(Wrigley, p.3). The use of culturally relevant and meaningful topics, the process of communication and learning as the focus, together with phonics and grammar as tools, all enhance these learner-centred programs.

Kibler (1993) writes of the cultural authenticity of children’s literature, as he investigates literature which describes the experience of Mexican-American students. The increasing number of Spanish-speaking children in American schools has created a need for integrating children’s literature, specifically Mexican-American, into classrooms, using both curricular and social teaching methods. He strongly emphasizes authenticity in cultural teaching in order that all students receive an accurate reflection of the lives of the Mexican-American students. He claims that cultural information should be used in teaching all students because “it is relevant and important” (Kibler, 1993, p.242).

Hoffman (cited in Kibler, 1993) recommends that teachers using cultural resources authentically in their teaching should try “to help students make sense of the world in which they live” (p.247).

On the same note, Kuntz (1997), researched the authenticity of African children’s literature, finding stereotypical stories about rural communities and wild animals, when in actuality, of the 55 African countries on the continent, 300 communities are cities. The

majority of the children's literature, however, was not about city children. This researcher also discovered that African-Americans celebrated their roots through similar African literature, due to a demand for multicultural literature. As long as the stories were about Black children, according to Kuntz, it didn't seem to matter that the African-American children of America's schools had little lived experience in common with the stereotyped rural African children. In her concluding remarks, she alludes to the questionable validity of African children learning about North Americans by reading "...only stories that focused on the Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites from rural communities in Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Ohio or on Brer Rabbit and Paul Bunyan" (Kuntz, 1997, p.11). Kuntz encourages an end to the stereotyping of African children, and instead, suggests the addition of a realistic portrayal of African city children in the literature.

Some of Kibler's (1993) suggestions for integration of cultural learning into classroom teaching include:

- make the most of cultural resources and experiences of individuals in the class.
- use content-based instruction that is grounded in diverse, real-life purposes and contexts.
- aid students in understanding how culture operates in their own and other's lives (p.250).

Multicultural children's literature according to Bishop (cited in Kibler, 1993), is defined as "literature by and about people who are members of groups considered to be outside the socio-political mainstream of the United States" (p.253). Multicultural literature should create a realistic view of a culture, and break down borders (Rochman, in Kibler, 1993, p.253).

One important point with regard to student self-esteem and sense of belonging during classroom storytelling is explained as follows. The familiarity in recognizing oneself in a primary storybook is a common occurrence for most children of the majority culture. Yet children from other cultures may not have the same opportunity to identify with characters in the literature, claims Nieto (cited in Kibler, 1993), and the responsibility to provide these opportunities to children in schools is that of educators.

Kibler (1993) offers the following guidelines for selecting cultural literature:

- **Cultural Information: Accurate and Authentic**-does it offer an "insider's" or informed "outsider's" perspective?
- **Plot: Well constructed and substantial**-is it well organized with actions and events that are interrelated, logical and related to children's personal experiences?
- **Setting: Authentic and Credible**-are the physical contexts of the events as well as the mood of the story authentic and credible?
- **Characterizations: Real and Non-Stereotypical in Context**-does it increase reader's ability to empathize and break down subtle stereotypes; are relationships positive, realistic and intercultural?

- Viewpoint on Diversity: Development of Constructive Attitudes-does it demonstrate diversity within and across cultural groups and decrease ethnocentrism?
- Theme: Significant and Meaningful-are the theme and plot balanced so that students encounter both a good story and a real message?
- Perspectives: Multiple, Balanced, and Inclusive-does it offer positive yet realistic situations or correct distortions or omissions of significant cultural or historical information?
- Self-Esteem: Reinforcement of Positive Impact on Reader-does it provide for a discussion of self-esteem of students from both inside and outside the cultural group(s) involved?
- Global Perspective: Seeing the World as an Interdependent System-does it develop constructive attitudes toward conflict, ambiguity and change?
- Multicultural Awareness: Understanding Prejudice and Bigotry-does it acknowledge the devastating effect of inequality and offer solutions and understanding? (p.256-7)

In order “to clarify our purpose and directions in implementing multicultural instruction with a literature-based approach” (Tomlinson, 1996, p. 2), Banks (1981) (cited in Tomlinson, 1996) describes a meaningful construct which he developed, based on existing theory, research and his study of ethnic behavior in several nations. (see Appendix B) Tomlinson, in her application of Banks’ typology of the stages of ethnic identity development, curriculum goals and relation to literacy education, reaches

beyond the use of culturally relevant literature for ESL students into self-esteem building, thinking and decision-making. Tomlinson, in linking theory and practice, articulates the existence of “...synergy between levels of reading engagement, self-esteem, exposure to and interest in other ethnic groups, positive attitudes or increased value sets regarding other ethnic groups, motivation for increasing one’s knowledge base regarding other ethnic groups, and, ultimately, achievement level” (p. 1). In order for students to realize the next levels of ethnic identity development, she encourages the use of culturally relevant teaching such as discussion of literature, creating culturally relevant environments in classrooms through the use of various media, and challenging ESL students to think and act collaboratively upon relevant community problem-solving projects. She invites educators to use:

- artifacts in the classroom: She describes how to create a cultural environment through the use of self-esteem enhancing posters, flags, photographs of students, families and special events.
- culturally relevant social action: She explains how students, in unique learning environments, should participate in hands-on projects to solve community problems, leading to deeper understanding of cultural and global issues.

In these ways, educators can do much more than celebrate multicultural holidays and heroes, music, costumes and food, as is often shown in children’s literature resources and commonly used in multicultural teaching. Teachers can link theory with practice to produce the highest levels of meaningful multicultural literacy and learning opportunities.

Wardle (1995) describes her “teaching year” at New Meadow Run Bruderhof, a Hutterian school in a 300 member community in the Southwest Pennsylvania mountains. This Hutterite school program focused on learning in the outdoor environment. Although quite different from the academic focus of the Hutterite colony schools in southern Alberta, this interesting integration educated children in animal husbandry, gardening, carpentry, sewing and nature from an early age.

Their philosophy is based on “the Froebelian concept of the development of the whole child, and the importance of outdoor exploration and observation to balance the more ordered academic pursuits and to reinvigorate the child” (p.70). She emphasizes the value of “real activities that are meaningful to the child”... “integrated learning environment”... and “learning from the community”(p.71). Children need to be allowed to explore their environment, and learn about nature, in places such as wetlands, working farms, building sites, gardens, etc.

The author encourages teachers to use nature and community in our programs, since “Classroom activities and academic skills can only be built on a vast foundation of experiential activities ... to view the world as our educational stage” (p.72). She does not mention what portion of the elementary curriculum is devoted to such pursuits, but I understand how important it is to use as many “out of classroom” field trips to various points on the Hutterite colony. Although on our colony we are not allowed any “off colony” field trips, we have several valuable resources, similar to those mentioned in her article, which are meaningful to the Hutterite children and can be incorporated into story-writing and reading.

Klein's (1995) study of Appalachian children, with their unique dialect of the older language patterns of Scotland, Northern Ireland and northern England, shows that children do not need to necessarily be from another country to have literacy problems in city schools. These ESL children, although technically English-speaking, are not understood by, nor can understand, their new classmates in the city schools. They have come from a different culture to that of the school. Their families have moved from the simple lifestyle of the mountains to the northern cities for jobs; yet, the children have spent their early years growing up in the hills. Literature portraying the mountain or "hillbilly" lifestyle, "with all its distinct child-rearing patterns, attitudes and expectations", provides a connection for Appalachian transplant children in city schools (Klein, 1995, p.10). *When I Was Young In The Mountains* (Rylant, 1982) is a children's literature text that provides a good path to understanding this lifestyle and teaches children the strength of the Appalachian people's tradition, their love of the land, the love of their multigenerational families, and the spirit of self-reliance in their homes and on their farms. The story displays the lifestyle of all: the children's chores, the religion and the strength of the Appalachian woman. Kinships and traditions are depicted in *The Relatives Came* (Rylant, 1985), another valuable children's literature resource to help bridge the gap between rural and city cultures. By incorporating cultural content through Appalachian music, dance, crafts and folk stories, educators may ease the daily transition from the world of the Appalachian children to the culturally different school setting.

Klein (1993) explains that the characteristics and experiences of the child are important; teachers must pay attention to the education of the children who are culturally different. She emphasizes that this concern should not only be limited to racially

different children who have come from another country, but must also include children whose family, community and cultural heritages have provided them with distinct early experiences.

Family Stories

Buchoff (1995) writes about the power of family stories as, “narratives in which youngsters or other relatives are the featured characters in simple home adventures of days gone by”(p.230). Since reading children’s literature is one way for students to learn about themselves and their world, what is more natural than using family stories to supply the content? Family stories foster language development since “by reading, listening, and telling stories, children become more confident, articulate speakers” (Burke, in Buchoff, 1995, p.230). Follow-up work such as writing, editing and reading advances literacy levels in the ESL classroom. Therefore, family stories “...lay the necessary foundation for storywriting endeavours” (Temple & Gillet, in Buchoff, 1995, p.230).

Buchoff (1995) further explains how “family stories provide students with opportunities for personal growth as well as memorable experiences” (p.230). Stories can be told and experiences re-lived, as children become older and better able to remember and understand the stories. Family stories encourage students “to learn more about their heritage, to acquire and refine literacy skills, and to develop a greater respect for the multicultural differences that make them unique” (p. 230).

Children’s literature, as it exists in published form, or as in writing new literature, such as language experience chart stories or booklets, or teacher-written stories based

upon experiences and speaking with children, is advantageous to use with ESL children, since it expands their knowledge base and provides models for stories. Buchoff (1995) gives some examples of children's literature using family stories:

- *Knots on a Counting Rope* (Martin & Archambault, 1987), and *Tell Me a Story, Mama* (Johnson, 1989) - Native American and African American children respectively retell stories to their grandfather and mother with little assistance, because they already know the stories so well.
- *The Keeping Quilt* (Polacco, 1988), and *The Patchwork Quilt* (Flournoy, 1985) - Stories are written with stitchery examples of important family memories.
- *My Great Aunt Arizona* (Houston, 1992) - Loved ones are immortalized through a school teacher's experiences with children in the Appalachian Mountains.
- *Grandfather's Journey* (Say, 1993) - A grandson describes a grandfather's love for two different countries.
- *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (MacLachlan, 1985), and *Skylark* (1994) - The author tells stories which her mother told her as a young girl.

Buchoff (1995) contends that stories which are personally significant to the children which are about themselves, their own life stories, their parents, their normal daily activities-all become the focus for memorable meaningful stories. These important stories "promote the values of home, neighbourhood, and community and can be viewed as a gift that one generation bestows upon another" (Barton, cited in Buchoff, p.230).

Buchoff speaks of how children discover that each others' lives contain "the information for rewarding and memorable family stories" (p.232). She emphasizes that recorded family stories not only become "a priceless collection to be treasured for generations to come...become a family's folklore" (p.232), but also provide a wonderful opportunity in the classroom to make reading and writing them an integral part of learning.

Students Writing their Own Stories

Created by necessity, in a Zimbabwe literature project (Vardell,1995), teachers involved students in the writing of original children's literature. The irony of presenting workshops to teachers on the use of children's literature in teaching reading, then discovering the minimal availability of indigenous children's literature in their country, motivated this group into action. This following reading material was discovered by these teachers. Textbook style readers included native folktales, fantasy, historical fiction and poetry, while the *Jafta* books by Hugh Lewin (1981) focused on daily life stories about a young Black boy and his family. Four storybooks of folktales and animal fantasies were also discovered, but not one of the teachers was familiar with *The Alphabet for Africa* by Hugh Lewin (1985), a complete alphabet book which uses cities from African countries, maps, names of children and modeling of the alphabet letters. Nonfiction literature found by these teachers about African animals was deemed suitable only for tourists.

With so little available, the teachers decided they would challenge the children to write and produce their own books. Realizing how this could help improve children's reading and writing skills, they wanted the students to create booklets which would be

shared by schools. The promotion of two native languages and the desire to preserve the oral tradition of storytelling soon became two additional goals.

Against the odds, of scarce monies and classroom materials, teachers and students pooled resources to produce several grade-level appropriate books for reading classes. The children had ideas and experiences to share. Stories ranged from children's personal experiences, to fantasy adventures with colorful illustrations, alphabet books, wild animal collections, and favorite things. Although not constructed from the most durable materials, the completed books were well received by students and teachers.

From this Zimbabwe project, the participants learned the importance of the role of literature and writing in the classroom. Vardell (1995) reiterated her focus on three universal principles which she values as a teacher:

- to actively seek out and keep current in high quality children's literature and other learning resources;
- to build an awareness of and even a market for more indigenous literature that reflects the culture and experiences of the children we teach;
- to view children's own writing as legitimate literature (p.630).

This researcher encourages teachers to find meaningful children's literature and to support children in the writing of original children's literature.

The importance of culturally relevant literature and culturally relevant teaching is addressed throughout the educational literature; yet, minimal literature is available for ESL Hutterite children. With the decision to write authentic stories about Hutterite children, my adventure in authorship begins.

METHODOLOGY

Development of the Action Research Project

My action research project evolved from within my classroom of Hutterite children. These children animatedly tell marvelous stories about who they are and what they do; yet rarely does children's literature depict Hutterites. Hutterite children do not read about or recognize themselves in readers or books, nor does their writing reflect the enthusiasm or competence of their oral storytelling. The lack of culturally relevant literature for Hutterite children prompted me to initiate this project.

After preliminary informal discussions with colleagues on this topic, I researched culturally relevant literature for primary Hutterite students. Upon review of the literature, I developed three stories based on colony activities. I piloted the rough draft stories, as motivation for artwork and to gather feedback, with my colony students and three other teachers and their students in Hutterite colony schools in Prairie Rose Regional Division #8. Through my regular instructional program, I was able to improve upon and expand the stories, bring authenticity to the stories, gather illustrations and involve the students themselves.

Brainstorming, sharing ideas, writing, drawing, coloring and painting, cooperative learning, problem-solving, outdoor colony field trips, having fun learning and loving each other are all parts of the educational experience in my classroom. I felt it was important, based on the literature review, that children themselves contribute to this project, since it is *all about* children and designed *for* children. I highly value the ideas of my colleagues in our school division, and since they were intrigued by my research project, I requested

their collaborative efforts in the illustrating department. Action research in a natural setting, through the regular instructional program, became the model for this project.

I followed the Action Research plan presented in a graduate class by Dr. David Townsend, of the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge, since it suited my teaching style and seemed to be a “perfect fit” for this project. Townsend describes action research simply as: “A fancy term for a great way for teachers to demonstrate their commitment to lifelong learning, satisfy their curiosity, collaborate with colleagues, inspire their students and document their successes” (lecture, February, 1995). Having used this ten-step method as a university class project, a teacher education teaching tool, and two peer supervision professional development projects, I trusted that my previous successes proved its effectiveness.

Townsend recommends the following ten steps for action research:

- 1) Define the focus or problem.
- 2) Collect information.
- 3) Analyze the information.
- 4) Report preliminary conclusions.
- 5) Plan the action.
- 6) Take action.
- 7) Collect information.
- 8) Analyze the collective knowledge.
- 9) Publish.
- 10) Future Action: celebrate, relax and reflect.

The exciting part of this process is that the cycle may repeat itself as/when solutions to problems or questions pose new questions, until the process has provided the action researcher with results.

Define the Focus or Problem

The questions which directed me throughout this project are: “How can teachers of Hutterite children provide culturally relevant literature for the primary classroom?”, “Would culturally relevant literature help primary Hutterite students learn to read English?”, “Would reading culturally relevant literature improve primary Hutterite students’ writing?”, “Where does one find culturally relevant children’s literature for primary Hutterite students?” and “Would using culturally relevant children’s literature for primary Hutterite students encourage more reading and writing?”

Collect Information

I prepared myself mentally and intellectually for the task, through recollection and anecdotal notes of events and experiences with Hutterites and the education I had already acquired through our regular instructional program, plus informal out-of-class conversations with Hutterite children and their parents. In class, I read culturally relevant children’s literature on similar ethnic groups such as Mennonite, Amish and a wonderful story about Hutterite children in northern Alberta: *Coyote Winter* by Jacqueline White (1991).

My own classroom and the colony became the perfect field site for information gathering. I also had access to several colony schools within a one-hour radius. In our

division, teacher visits to other classrooms are encouraged, which made brainstorming for story ideas with other Hutterite children a realistic task. Three teachers became enthusiastic about and committed to my project.

I established positive relations and trust with colony members of my school colony. One June day, while waiting for the German teacher to deliver another flat-deck load of freshly dug radishes from the garden, I met and visited with several women as I helped them prepare radishes for market. Everyone was friendly and enthusiastic to meet me and welcome me to their colony. They told great stories and sang beautiful songs. On other occasions, over coffee at their homes, or at the Christmas concert social, friendships began. The German teacher became a valuable resource and advisor, since his approval directly affects my decisions for story material. I invested two professional development days team-teaching at three colleagues' colony classrooms, where I met more Hutterite children, and sometimes parents and German teachers. All students in these colony schools contributed ideas for stories, and became excited about contributing artwork for the books. From these classroom visits, I gathered enough ideas for about 50 stories!

In adopting a social role, I not only learned the ways of the colony, but I established social friendships. I felt well equipped for this role, since I had worked on a different colony for the two previous years and I was becoming familiar with Hutterite ways. My role as a teacher had already been established since I had arrived at my new colony with colony teaching experience. I had fun getting to know members on my new colony: not just parents, but the grandmas, visiting aunties and other young people.

Anytime I mentioned writing children's books, Hutterite people told me how much they appreciated my interest in helping their children, and how much they liked this idea.

Paralleling the 'action' component of this project, I was concurrently delving into the educational literature on culturally relevant children's literature. I discovered that my perceived problem existed for other ethnic groups. Although limited in scope, I selected several interesting studies and projects which related to my work with culturally relevant children's literature for Hutterite students.

Analyze the Information

After teaching, watching, listening and brainstorming ideas for suitable stories, I realized that I had enough input to write stories for the rest of my life! I was advised that I should do a maximum of three stories. I wanted to make good, yet safe choices, since I had become a respected "outside world" member of their community, one in whom they had bestowed trust in the educational decisions of their children. I wanted this rapport to remain intact. I thought about some of the adults' own anecdotal stories and suggestions, plus I wanted to consider my personal agenda – a true story from my childhood days, about the rescue of a flooded duck's nest, awaited publication. This "true story" of my sister and me as the adventurer/rescuers, with the 1960's rural acreage setting and family characters, is modified to become a colony story.

It hadn't taken me long to figure out that the boys' and girls' groups had quite different preferences for stories. The boys liked the rough and tough outdoor or farm stories, while the girls were interested in stories about babysitting, new babies and weddings.

Report

I discussed the findings with my students and my ideas for story lines that I thought would work best for this project. They thought that individual boys' and girls' stories would work best too.

I conferred with colleagues in person occasionally and via e-mail frequently, communicating current thoughts or problems. The electronic conferences proved to be fruitful and motivational. During our second scheduled 'in-person' conference, we selected story topics that we thought would have universal appeal, yet still portray a strong Hutterite context. We unanimously agreed that there should be one story for boys and another for girls. Everyone loved the idea of my "true story", particularly in the fictional setting of the colony. This would be the classroom story. We discussed illustrating the books. As a group, we committed art class time for illustrations. We also stressed the importance of an authentic 'Hutterite presence' in the artwork.

Plan Action

I decided that I would write a story about Branding Day, since this is one of the biggest events on the colony. Dearest to Hutterite hearts is 'the new baby' on the colony, the happiest of colony events; therefore, a babysitting story was a 'must'. The third story would involve a classroom science project, following the story line of my personal childhood experience. I planned to take some professional development days attached to weekends so I could spend a few days of concentrated time writing. Conducive to writing a story about nature, I arranged a three-day writing weekend in Waterton, since my husband was registered for an environmental conference there.

I planned to design all three stories for primary interest, although, with the bulk of my students in grades three and four, I thought I could be flexible, offering something simple enough for grades three and four to read independently; yet still providing a challenge for grade two students, and a picture book for grade one children.

Take Action

I wrote the stories over a period of several months. They became longer than originally expected, and sections changed periodically. I read rough drafts to my class, who offered useful suggestions. I had never written stories before, and I wanted to find out if children liked them, and if the information describing Hutterite activities was accurate. My students were excellent critics. They gave valuable input and helped with authenticity. For instance, the Hutterites told their children elaborate tales about where babies come from. What did I know about “the stork”, except that it brought Dumbo, the baby elephant, to the circus train? Did I hear detailed stories about the stork! I’d only been to two cattle brandings in my life, so I needed their assistance for the technical information about branding calves. They would have talked all day and tomorrow too, about Branding Day!

The atmosphere in Waterton provided tremendous motivation for writing. I wrote the bulk of the wetlands-based story while sitting on a park bench overlooking Waterton Lake. The sun was shining in our beautiful blue Alberta sky, while the snow was melting, making waterfall-like sounds in the nearby eavestrough draining onto huge rocks near the lodge where we stayed. What inspiration!

On the classroom front, amazing pictures were drawn and colored in pencil crayon, our chosen medium. I displayed the growing picture collection to my class, so they could compete with the high calibre of artwork coming from other colonies. A third conference was required to view completed artwork and to decide how to weave the illustrations into the stories. The project had truly grown into a collaborative effort by teachers, students and one paraprofessional.

Publish

I organized the stories under three titles:

- **Rodeo!**
Two young Hutterite boys experience extra thrills and spills at the colony's Branding Day.
- **Rebecca's Baby**
The new babysitter simply has too many misadventures on her first babysitting assignment.
- **Discovery**
The students take on the unique challenge of rescuing a drowning duck's nest near the colony slough.

A paraprofessional at one of the participating colony schools volunteered her artistic talent for the book covers. As the principal/teacher of my school, I made the administrative decision to purchase a multi-purpose color printer/photocopier/scanner. Using the experiential method, I learned about desktop publishing. The result is that the published books contain culturally relevant information presented through fiction, and beautifully illustrated artwork revealing the children's creativity and flair for color. The stories have a distinctive Hutterite flavor. The German teacher at my colony has offered to coil bind the books.

Future Action: Celebration and Reflection

My action research project has been a seasonal adventure in Hutterite culture and teaching. The unknown varieties of seeds were carefully planted in the spring. It was appropriate for the sowers of these seeds to be farmers' children. As the tiny shoots were nourished and nurtured, their identities became obvious, and with all the summer sunshine, the stories grew and flourished. The exhaustive fall work of reviewing the educational literature and collecting the bumper crop of original artwork resulted in a bountiful harvest. Then the winter doldrums with cold, snow and wind, caused slight dormancy in the project's life; yet the sunshine of coffee klatches with Hutterite women, and welcoming chinooks of warm conversations with colleagues and university supervisors provided a change in climate and renewed motivation for me.

The cycle is complete, and the rebirth of spring is with me again, as I perceive the need for *more* culturally relevant literature in colony schools. The action research year has gone by so quickly, and I have experienced an incredible learning curve, as each season presented new challenges. The highlights include: vivid snapshots of colony life, friendships formed with Hutterite women, growth in writing for my students and myself, collaborative learning experiences for the staff and the students of four colony schools, increased knowledge of technology and, most important to me: the provision of an avenue for student voice. Distribution of books to participating colonies has been organized into an "author's workshop" format. Staff and students have shared in the responsibility and will now share in the celebration.

The project itself has become a living entity, because more stories have been incubated since the project's conception. My colleagues and I have future plans for a

collaborative anthology project, which completes the cycle of action research, by beginning a new cycle and generating new questions and ideas. An ambitious plan for creating a simple beginner reading series has been discussed. The teachers involved have become a close-knit collaborative unit as we achieved our goal: To provide culturally relevant children's literature to primary Hutterite children.

The process has been exciting, inspirational and educational. The product itself is everything I had hoped for. In these three stories, I have attempted to offer Hutterite children on colony schools fictional accounts of children like themselves in authentic situations. My dream is that continuing collaborative efforts with colony educators will produce more culturally relevant children's literature for Hutterite students.

The Stories:

Rodeo!

Rebecca's Baby

Discovery

Discovery

by Patricia E. Cooper

illustrated by Kathy Cooper
and Wlartitee Cruden



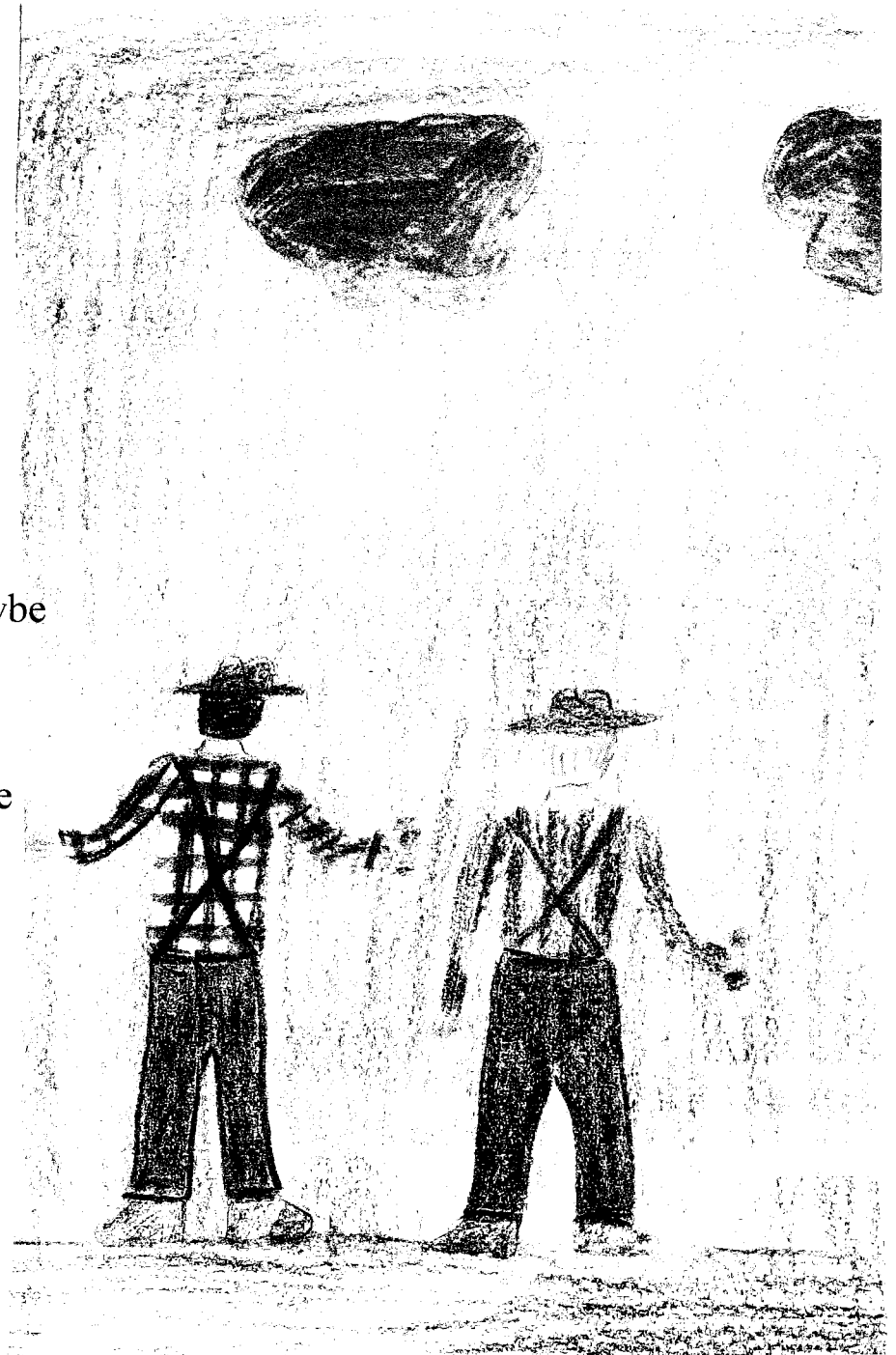
Flies bzzzzzzzzzzound. It was 3:30 p.m. on a hot day in May. hhhhhhhh-hot sun blazed up in the clear blue sky. Two Hutterite boys, Jacob and Ben, were walking along the sidewalk after school.

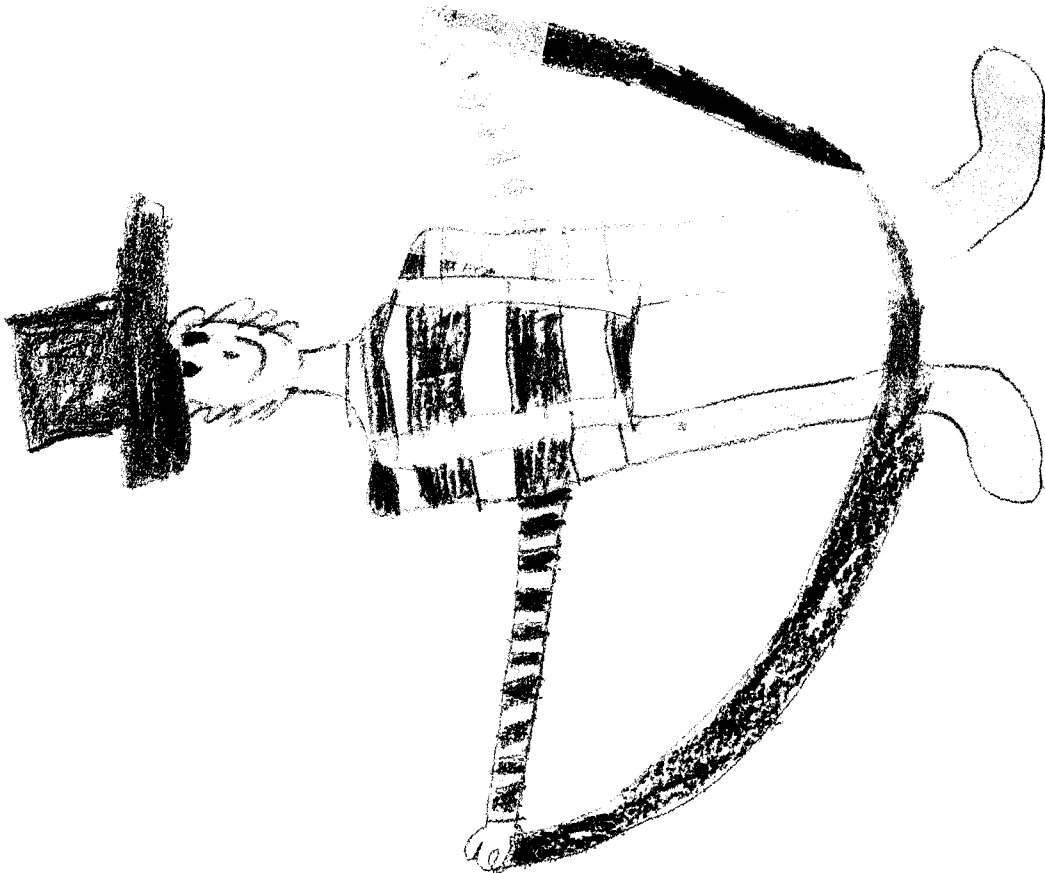
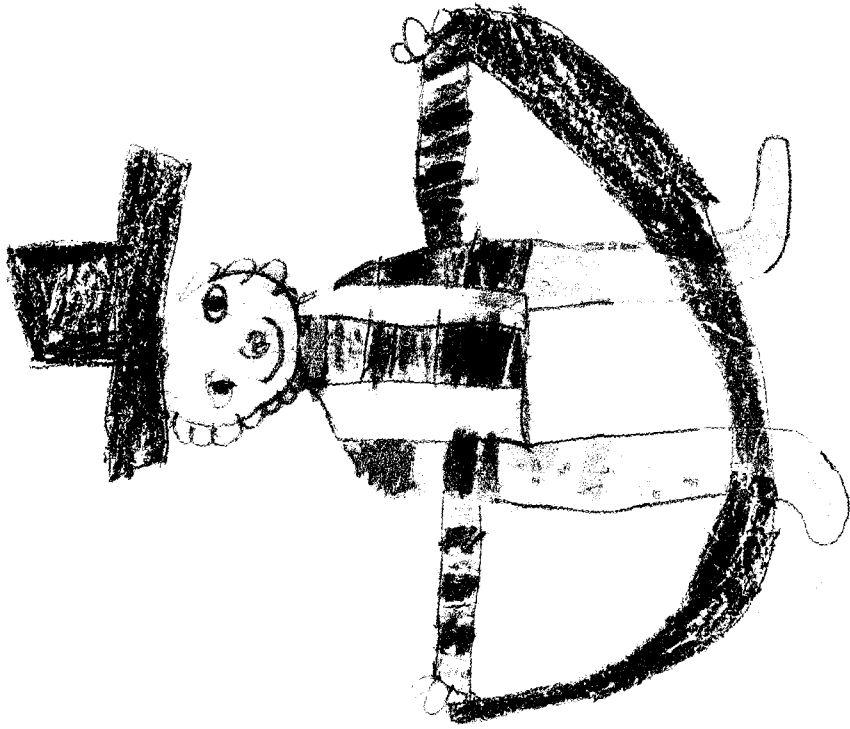
“We don’t have German School today,” said Ben.

“Maybe we have time to splash around in the ditch; maybe catch some minnows.”

“I am SO-O hot! Let’s get some cold pop and hike down to Frog Creek. We can get our feet wet there,” replied Jacob.

Their summer straw hats helped shade their eyes from the bright sun. With sunglasses and cans of coke





and root beer, they looked like the happiest boys on earth. Ben had stopped in at his family's house for a big jar to catch minnows.

"Maybe we can catch that neat little frog we saw yesterday," he suggested.

"Good idea," agreed Jacob. "Then we could take it to school tomorrow morning. Mrs. Cooper would love it. Maybe it could live in the aquarium."

"She'd probably like a snake better!" laughed Ben.

"Oh, yes! And we could scare the girls!" added Jacob. And on they went.

"RIB-IT! RIB-IT!" the tiny pale green peepers croaked. They lived in the shallow pool of the large slough at the far end of the colony farm. They made a lot of noise for such little frogs.

"KNEE-DEEP! KNEE-DEEP" the larger leopard frogs spoke, louder and deeper. They were the biggest frogs in the pond, and could jump high into the air, then dive deep into the water. Their big black spots made their skin look bright green.



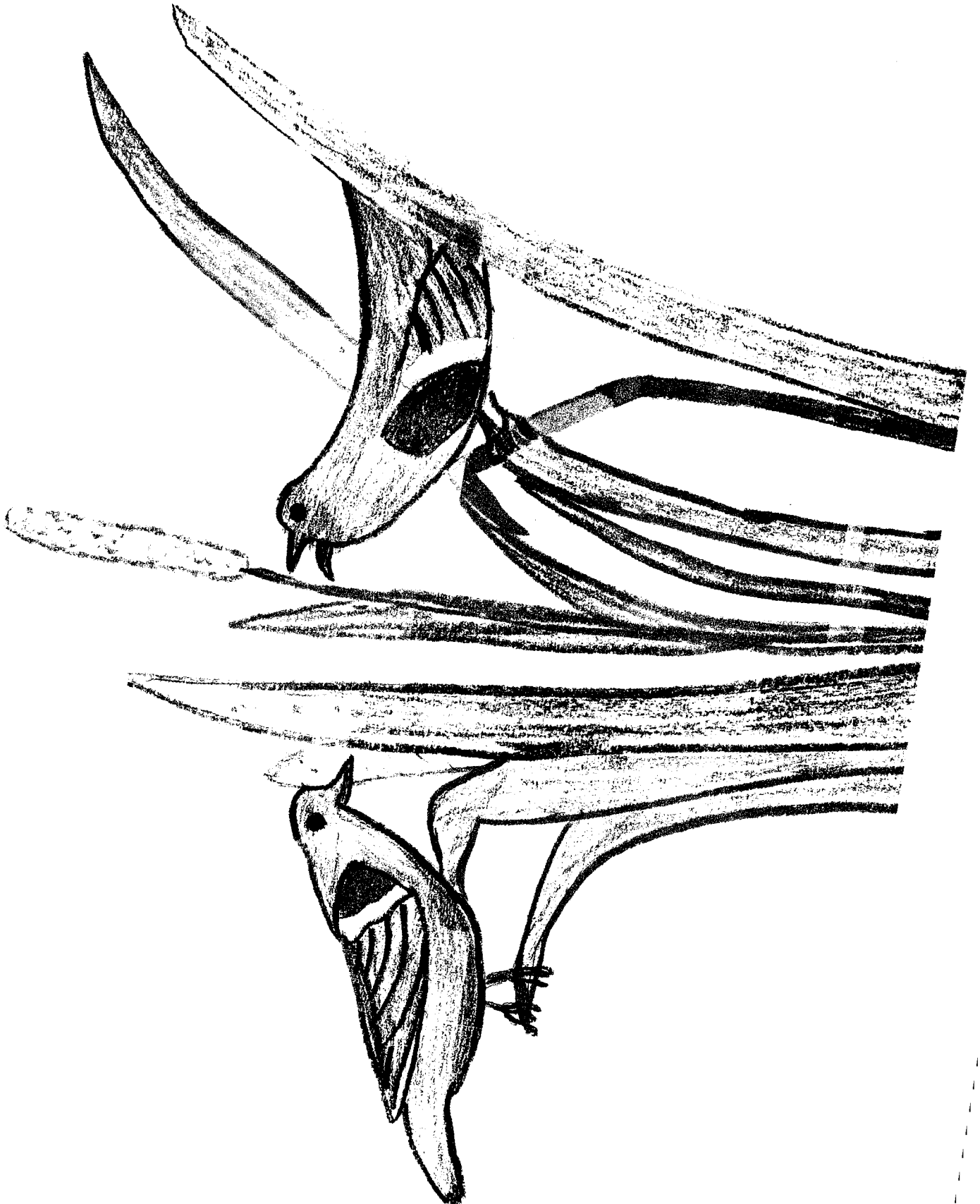
“Where are the boys?” they were asking each other in their special frog language.

The red-winged blackbirds sang as they flitted about in the cattails area. This was the most wonderful place in the world to live: Frog Creek, part of Sandy Creek Colony, Alberta. There was plenty of warm, murky water for frogs to swim in and an excellent growing spot for cattails. The cattails made a great place for red-winged blackbirds to build nests. The spring days were filled with the music of the frogs croaking and the birds singing.

“We love our friends, the red-winged blackbirds,” sang the frogs, “and our favorite game of hide-and-seek with Jacob and Ben. We hope they will come back to play with us again.”

“RIB-IT! RIB-IT! KNEE-DEEP! KNEE-DEEP!”

“Sh-sh ... let’s not scare the frogs,” warned Jacob. The boys were now coming close to the edge of the road. Huge irrigation pipes were sprinkling nearby. A trickle of extra water gently flowed into the side ditch near the edge of the young green barley crop.





Frog Creek got its name because the road and the overflow ditch alongside the field were not level, creating the opportunity for water to gradually flow into a pond. There was just enough slope to cause any rainwater or overflow water from sprinkling to flow down along this little ditch until it arrived at the pond. There the field leveled out, since it had been a pasture for many years. A big row of field rocks formed a peaceful-sounding waterfall where Frog Creek flowed into a small shallow pond next to the big slough. Due to the sandy soil on the colony, fine sandy strips of beach had formed along the edges of the creek and the pond. These rocks prevented erosion when the water moved in too quickly. A huge pool or dugout had been created so the cows could have water to drink during the summer. There were also a few big rock piles near the entrance to this larger deeper slough, to signify 'no swimming beyond this point'. The children knew the rule.

Now the slough also served another purpose – a wetlands area had evolved for birds and water creatures. Cattails had grown tall, and many different kinds of wild flowers, weeds and underwater



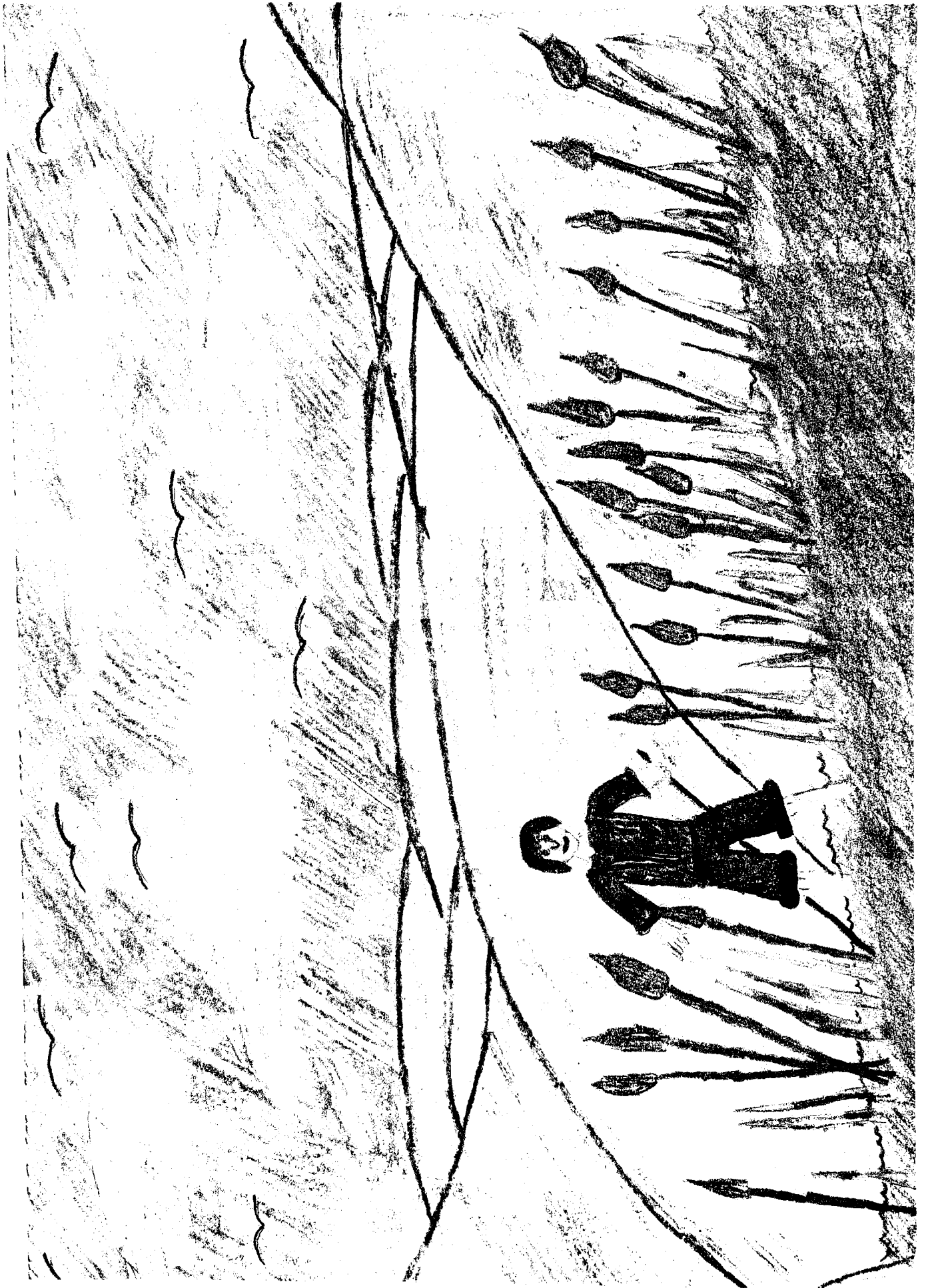


plants had spread along the edges of the water. Many nests were built among the cattails and all kinds of birds, frogs, bugs, fish and even snakes lived all around or in the water. The pasture grass was thick, lush and green around the edge of the water: a perfect place for water fun. It had become an outdoor wonderland for the boys who lived at this colony. This was Frog Creek.

Ben was the first one to take off his boots and socks. In he waded, his black pantlegs getting wet as he spotted today's first frog to catch.

“HA! Got you!” he yelled to Jacob, as he grabbed it. The surprised peeper jumped high into Jacob's face as it slipped through Ben's fingers. Jacob was caught off-balance as he desperately tried to hang onto the slippery little frog. SPLASH! In he fell! SPLAT! Into the muddy water!

“The mud is oozy. Watch out!” laughed Jacob. The little frog leaped far into the pool and quickly disappeared into the murky shallow water under the floating water plants. Jacob now stood in bare feet at the water's edge. He held the jar in his hands.



'Splash'



“Hey, where did it go?” asked Ben.

“You lost the frog,” said Jacob, looking closely at the spot the frog was last seen. “Here. This will help you next time,” he said, while dipping the jar into the water. Suddenly he reached up and dumped the jarful of water onto Ben’s head.

“Uh! Oh ... now you’re in for it!” Ben promised, lurching toward Jacob. He slipped in the mud and fell backwards in the weeds. He sank into the muddy water.

“Ha, ha, ha! That will teach you to scare frogs away,” teased Jacob. Then he took off along the tall grass as Ben came chasing after him.

“The Mud Monster will get you,” Ben yelled as he chased Jacob.

Suddenly, the boys stopped as a great flutter of wings startled them. The squawking was loud.

“Quack-quack!” an angry Mallard duck protested as she nearly flew into their surprised faces while taking off over the cattails.



“A duck’s nest!” exclaimed the boys together.

“Let’s find it!” said Jacob.

“ I think it’s down here somewhere,” offered Ben.

“ Over here - here it is - let’s take a peek inside,” said Jacob.

“Be careful not to touch anything, in case she smells danger,” Ben reminded him. Slowly, they peered into the well-hidden nest near the edge of the bubbling water.

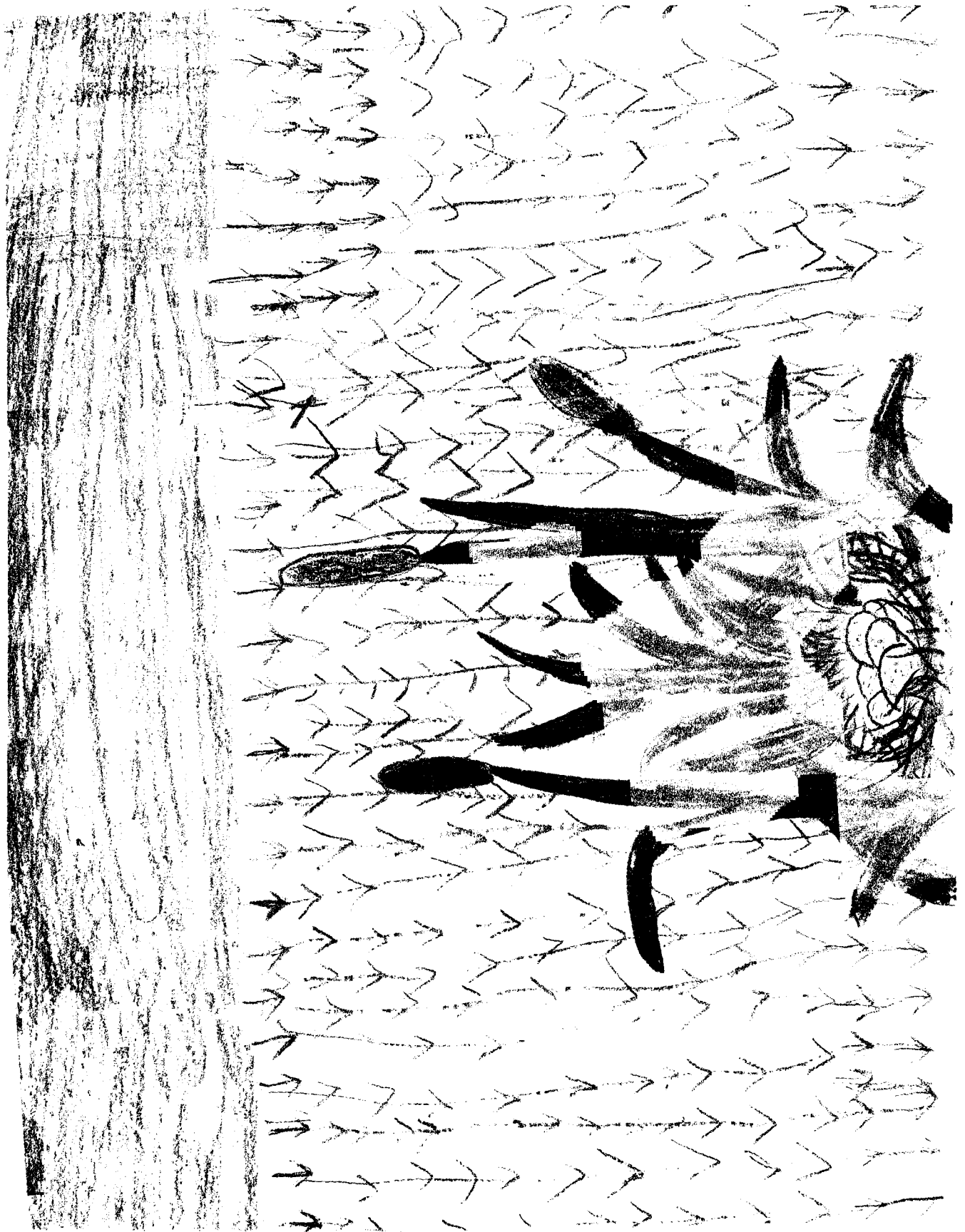
“Wow!” whispered Jacob.

“Six eggs! Do you think they belong to the duck?” asked Ben.

“Who do you think they would belong to - Bossy the Cow?” laughed Jacob. “Of course, silly! Look how careful she was in hiding her nest.”

“Do you think we scared her? Do you think she will come back?” asked Ben.

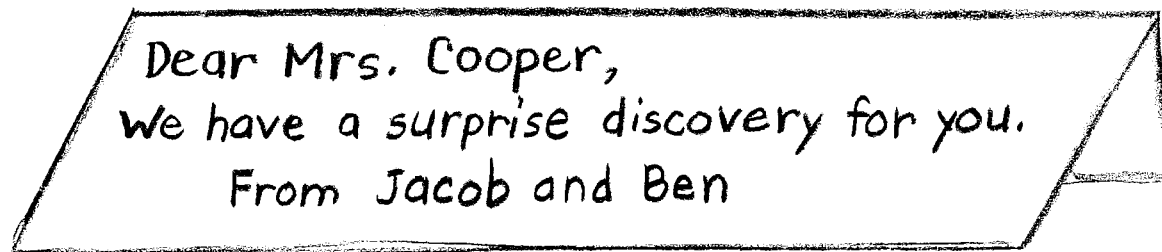
“If we leave the nest alone, she might come back,” replied Jacob.



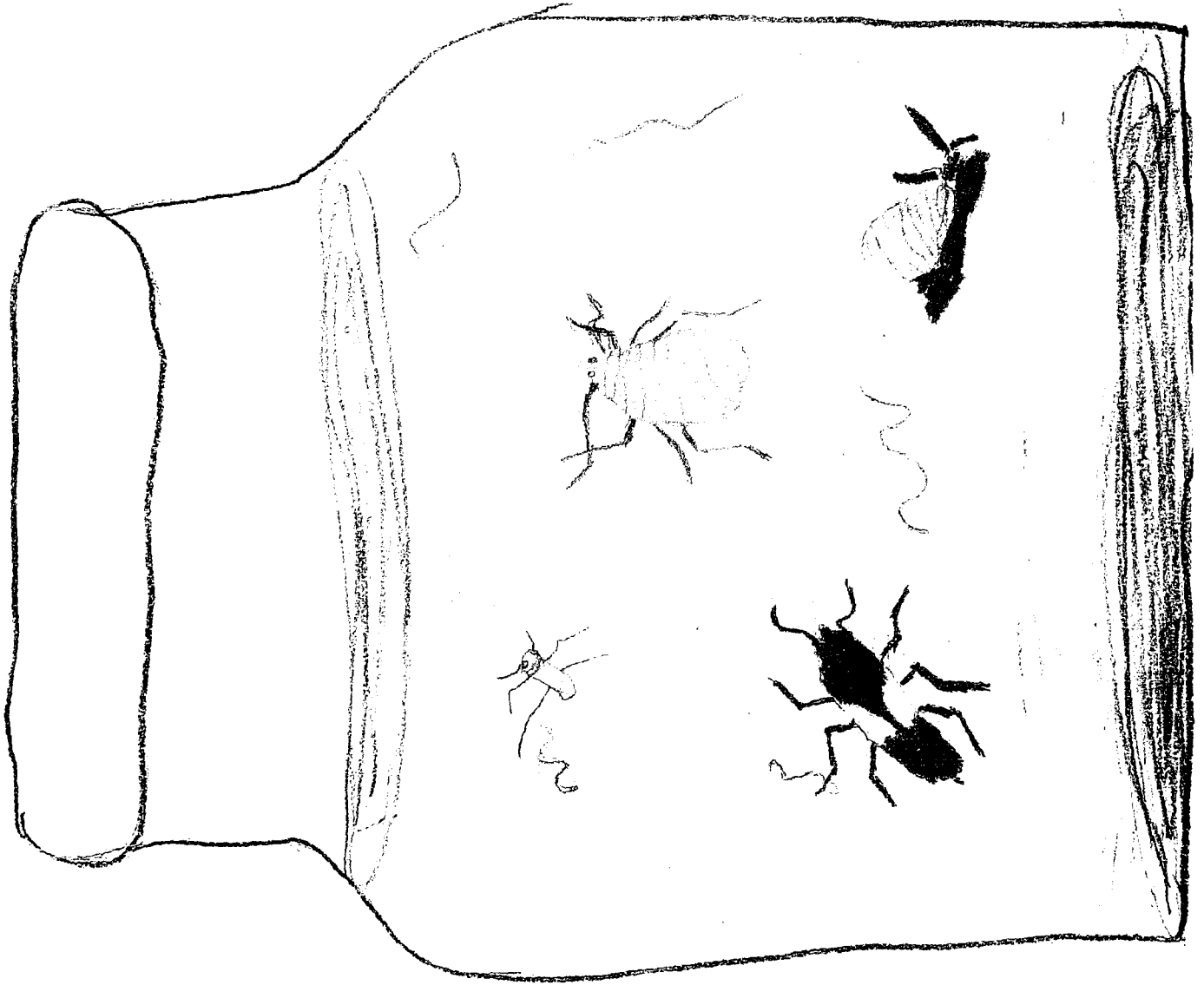
“Let’s take some snails and bugs back to school in the jar,” suggested Ben, “and tell Mrs. Cooper about our surprise discovery.”

“I think we should ask her if the whole class could come for a hike and a picnic tomorrow. But NOT tell about the duck. Let it be a surprise for everyone,” advised Jacob. “Can you keep a secret? That means you can’t tell ANYONE, not even your sister. Or she will tell all the girls,” he warned.

The boys went home to get cleaned up for church. Ben took the jar over to the classroom ready to surprise the teacher in the morning. They put up a big note that said:



Dear Mrs. Cooper,
We have a surprise discovery for you.
From Jacob and Ben



The next morning, the two excited boys waited as their teacher's red sports car stopped in the driveway.

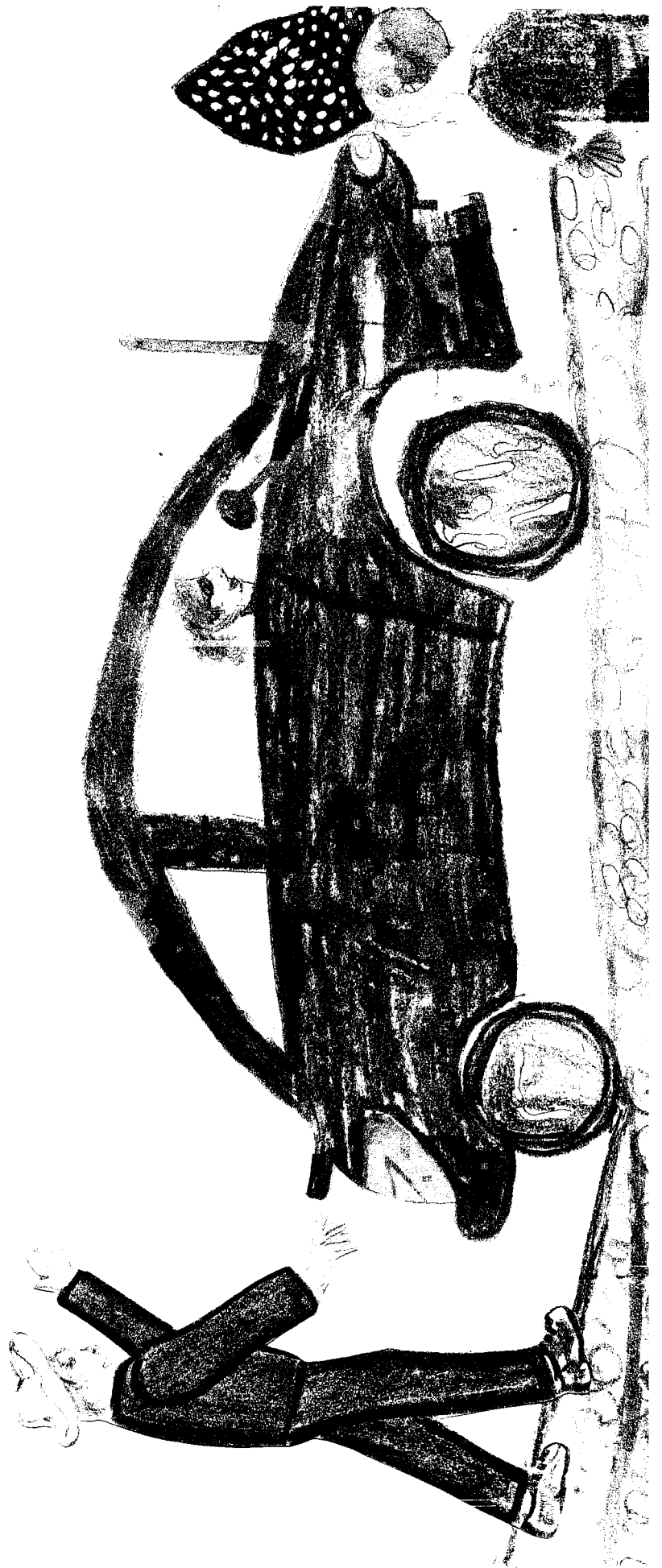
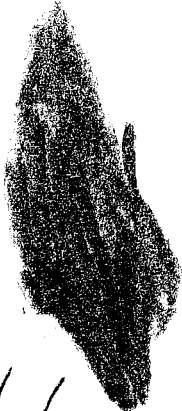
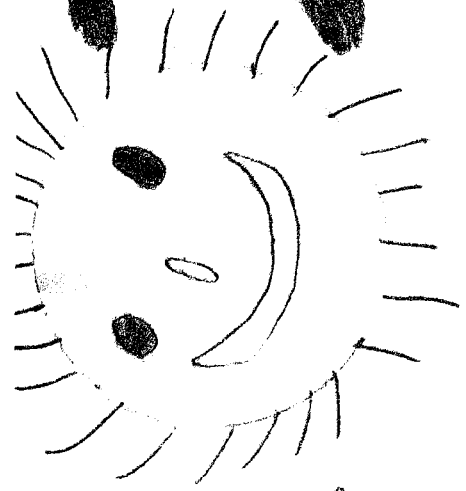
"Mrs. Cooper! Mrs. Cooper, we have a surprise!" called Jacob, before she could even get out of her car. "A discovery!"

Running up to the car, Ben shouted, "You can't tell the class!"

Mrs. Cooper laughed, "No, don't worry. I won't. I don't even know what the surprise is."

"We went to Frog Creek ... " he was shouting, louder than he realized.

"Whoa ... come over here and whisper to me. I am not deaf! And your surprise will not be a surprise for long at that volume!" explained Mrs. Cooper. "Your voice is loud enough to let the whole world know." She leaned her head to him so he could whisper in her ear. As the story unfolded, the teacher's blue eyes grew big and round, while a smile of sheer delight spread from ear to ear. "Wow!" she breathed.

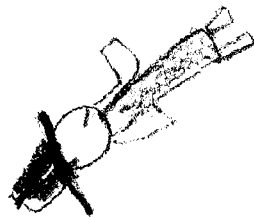
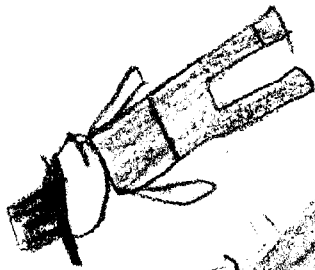
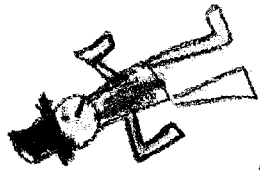
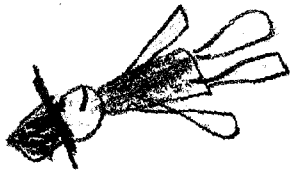
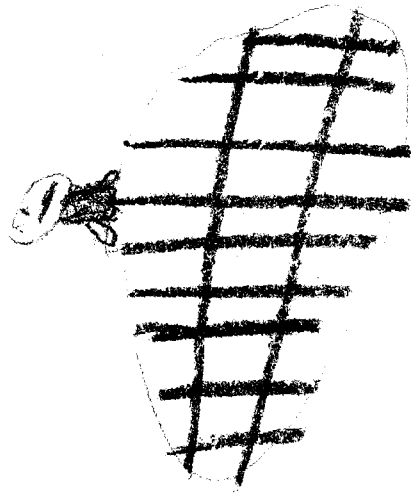


Mrs. Cooper loved the jar of water creatures left on the table. In class, the first thing she did was introduced the new bugs and snails to the children. Then she announced that the class would be having a special field trip in the afternoon. The water jar was left on display for everyone to watch nature in action. The students drew artistic pictures of the different bugs, water walkers, and snails.

What a long day it was for the boys! Finally 2 p.m. was here! With jars and butterfly nets, the fourteen students of Sandy Creek Colony School were ready to go. They didn't know the surprise yet!

Sarah looked up at Jacob with pleading eyes, "What is the big surprise? I know what's in the dugout: frogs and bugs and snakes. I better not see a snake today."

"Oh, you will see a special surprise today," promised Jacob. "It is not a snake. It is an important discovery. You will like it."

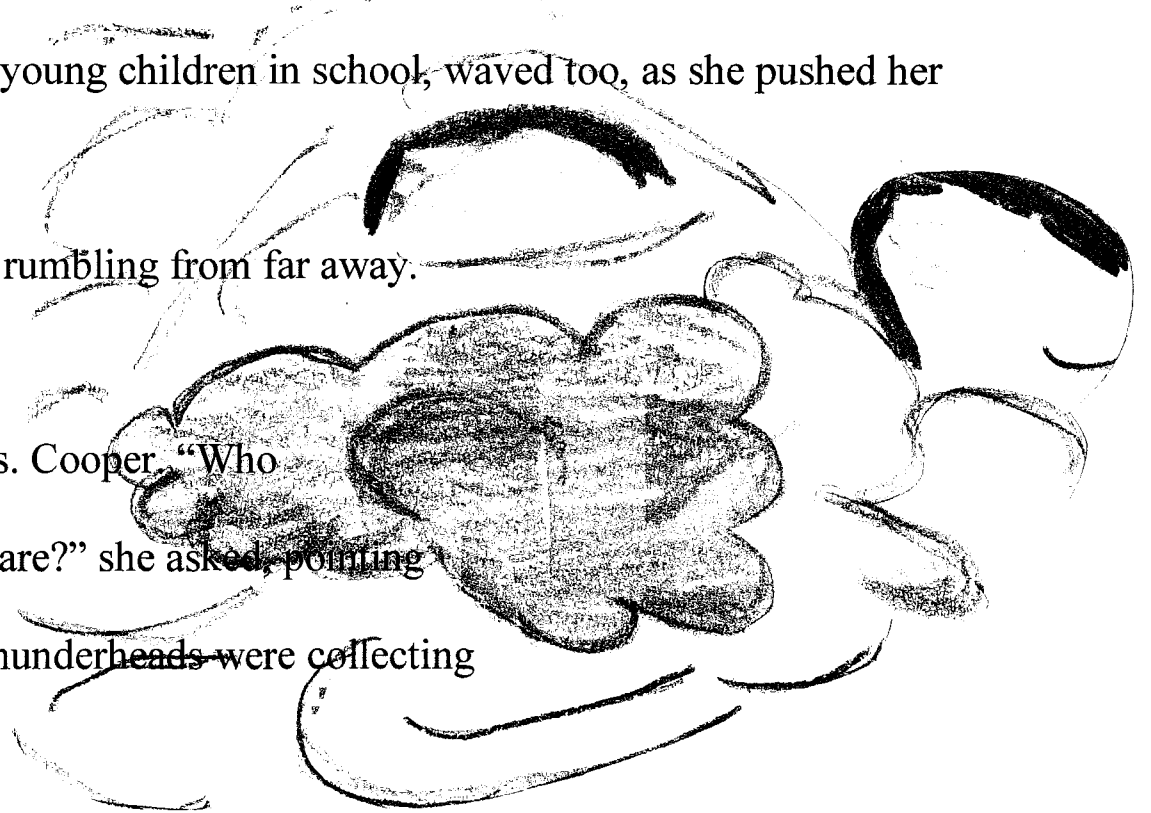


So, down the sidewalk they marched. They resembled a parade: the girls in their colorful dresses and aprons, the boys in contrasting black; everyone waving butterfly nets like flags, and carrying large pickle jars which looked like drums. They walked past the German School, past the church and past the kitchen. Then they walked across to the sidewalk by the houses before they reached the lane leading to Frog Creek. Moms waved at them, as they washed their windows or swept their steps. Ruth, who had two young children in school, waved too, as she pushed her laundry cart home.

Then everyone heard it – a deep rumbling from far away.

It rumbled again, louder this time.

“Look at the sky, kids,” said Mrs. Cooper. “Who remembers what kind of clouds those are?” she asked, pointing off into the distance. The huge dark thunderheads were collecting





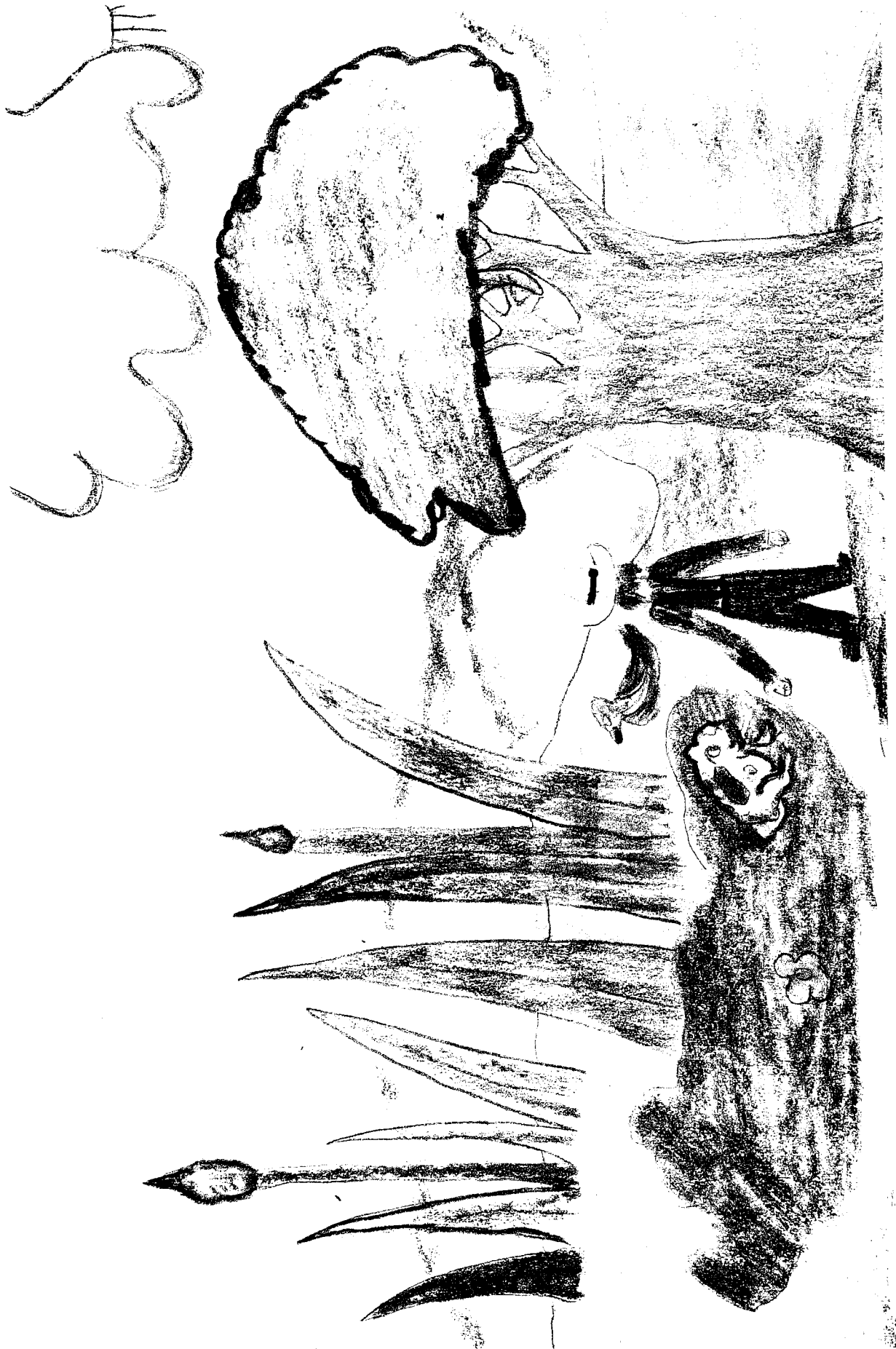
in the northern sky.

“Cumulo-nimbus clouds. Does that mean it will rain on our hike?” asked Mary.

“Probably not this early,” replied Mrs. Cooper. “They look too far away. But it’s been very hot these past two weeks. Remember how clear and blue the sky was yesterday? Now, look up at the sky. Those rain clouds have been building all day. We better enjoy our walk today. Who knows what tomorrow will bring?”

Jacob and Sarah’s mom, Barbara, came to join them, with picnic blankets and a bag of treats. Mrs. Cooper and Barbara chatted and laughed for the rest of the walk. The children sang and whistled at the birds.

They arrived at the dugout, to the familiar sounds of croaking and singing. All the wetland creatures were enjoying the beautiful day too. They were all happy to hear the voices of the children.



“Okay, everyone,” announced Mrs. Cooper. “Now it is time for Jacob and Ben to tell you about their surprise discovery. The rule is: ‘do not touch’, please. You will understand why when you see the surprise. So ... are you ready? Tiptoe quietly, and sh ... sh ... you will soon see why.”

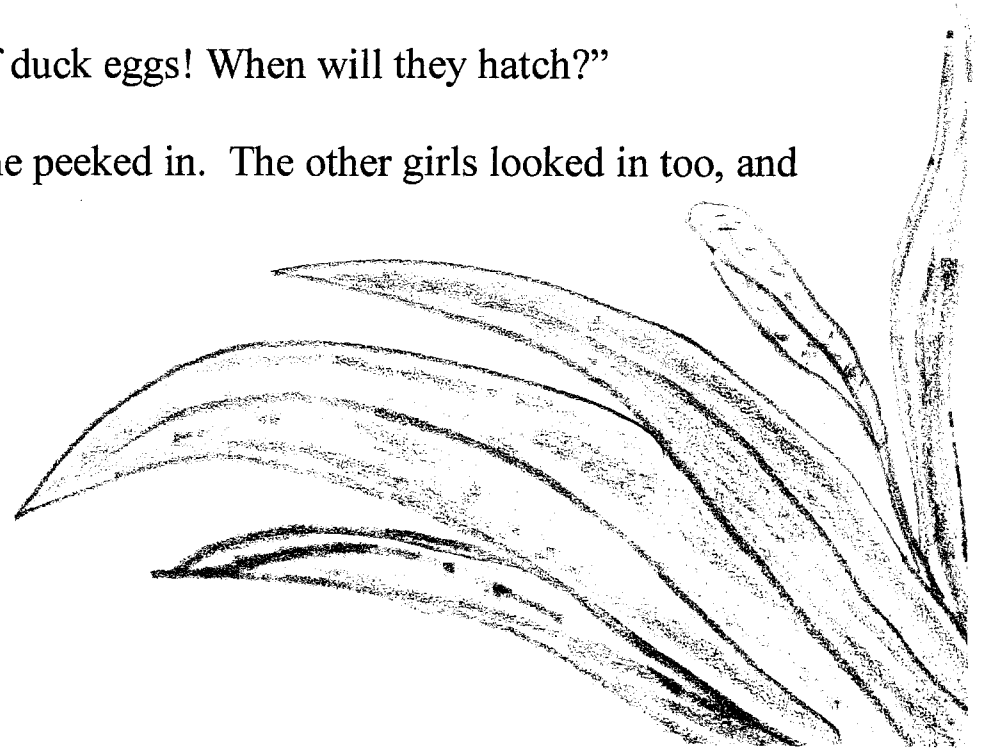
All heads nodded. The children went in small groups with either Jacob or Ben as the leader. Naturally, as the first group approached the hidden nest, Mrs. Duck flew off in a big panic. The girls peered through the cattails and immediately sighted the six duck eggs.

“Oh, MY!” whispered Sarah. “A whole nest of duck eggs! When will they hatch?”

“I can’t see! Move over!” demanded Clara. She peeked in. The other girls looked in too, and everyone’s eyes gleamed.

“Wow!” exclaimed Evelyn and Lisa.

“Will the duck come back?” asked Lisa.





“Oh, yes,” replied Sarah. “If we go away soon, she will be right back to keep her eggs warm. I read it in a book about wild ducks.”

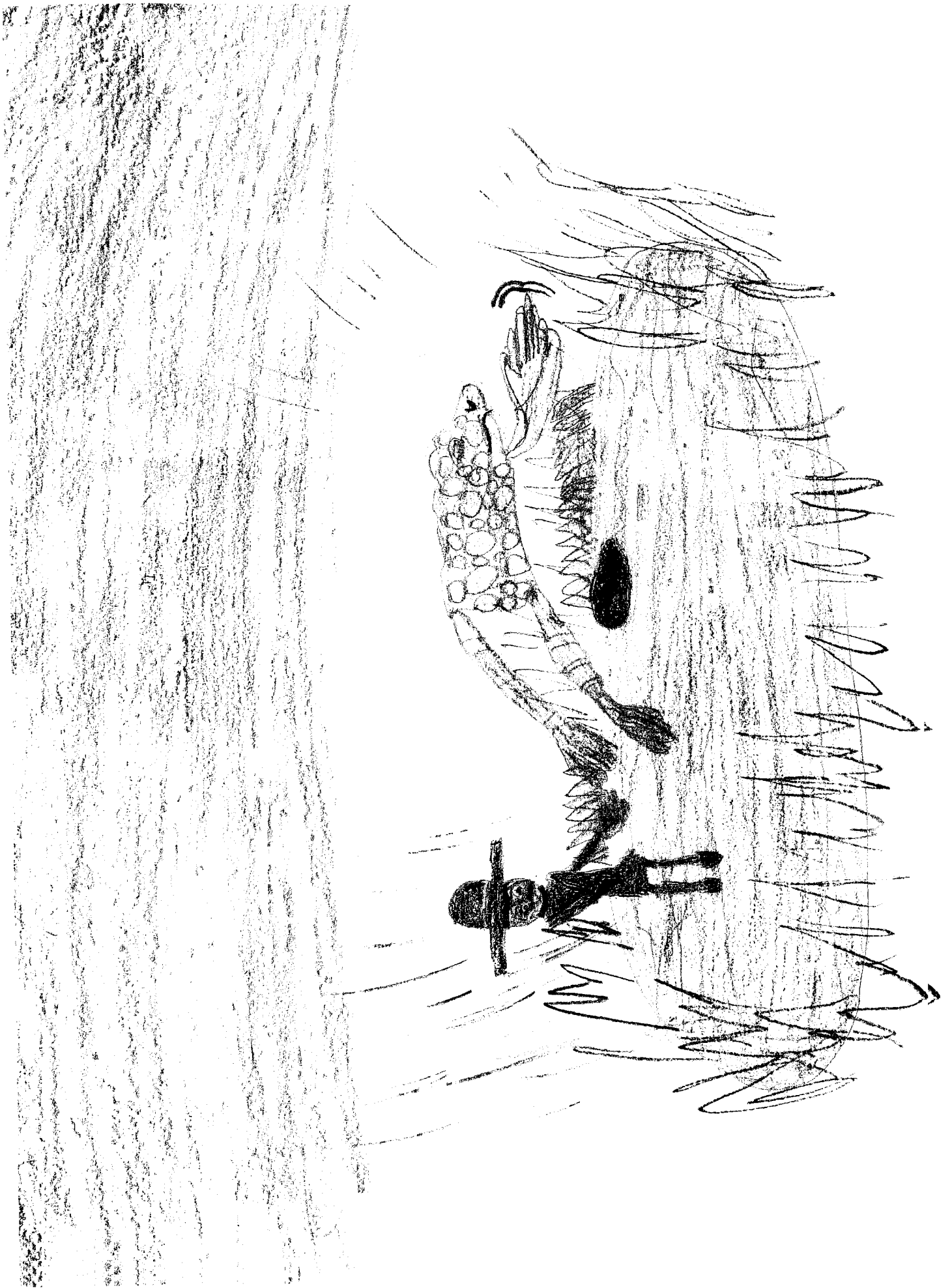
“And you shouldn’t touch the eggs,” advised Tamra.

Jacob brought the three grade one boys next. They were in such awe that they just stared. Then Michael tripped on a broken cattail and – SPLASH! IN he went. He was WET! “That felt nice and cool,” he laughed, as he stood back up. “I was pretty hot.”

That was just an invitation for Jesse and Andy to splash each other.

“Boys, boys! Go splash over there, please! You’re getting us too!” Mrs. Cooper pointed to the other side of the pond.

Barbara and Mrs. Cooper inspected the nest last. “What a nice little home,” said Barbara.

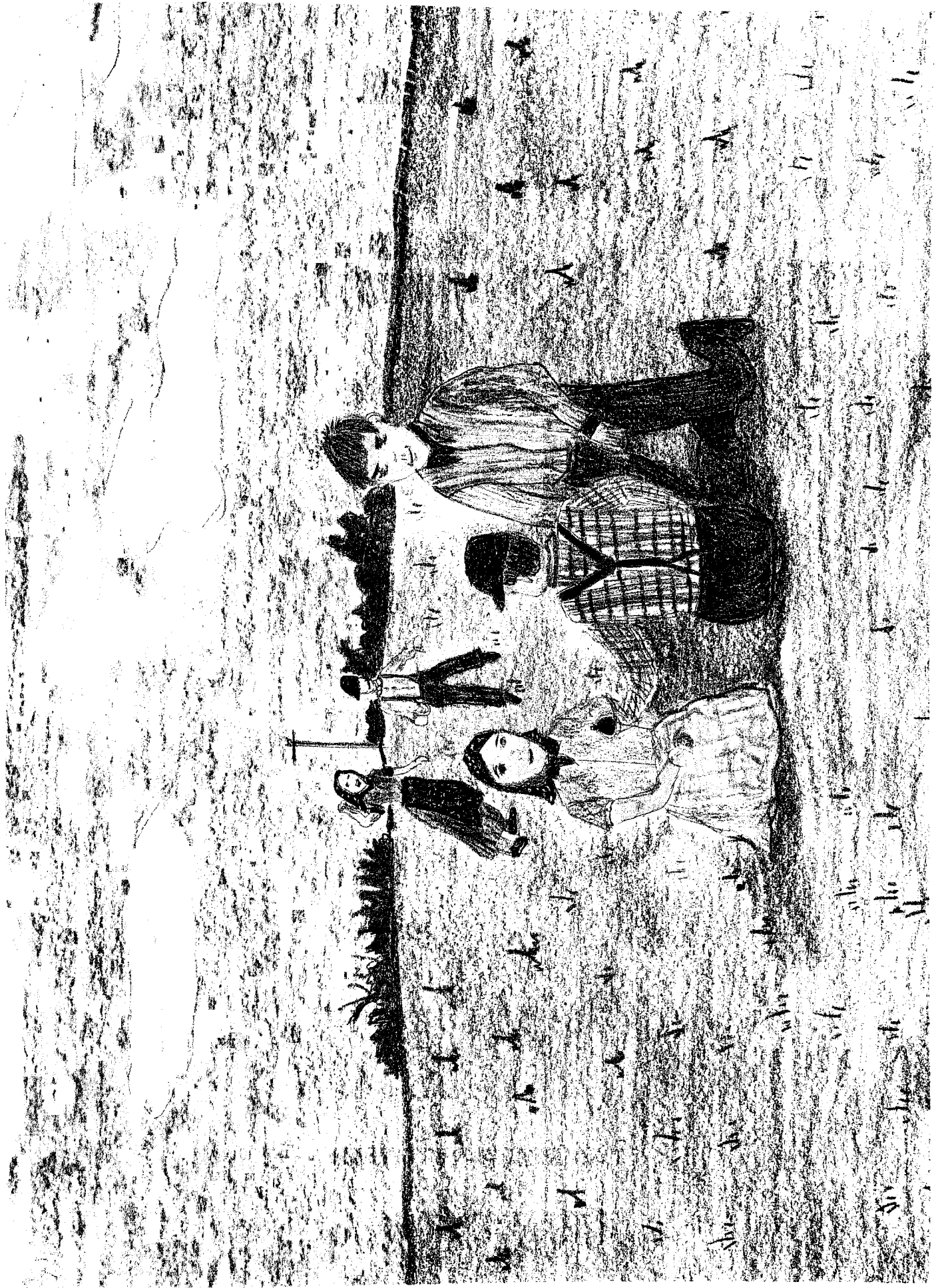


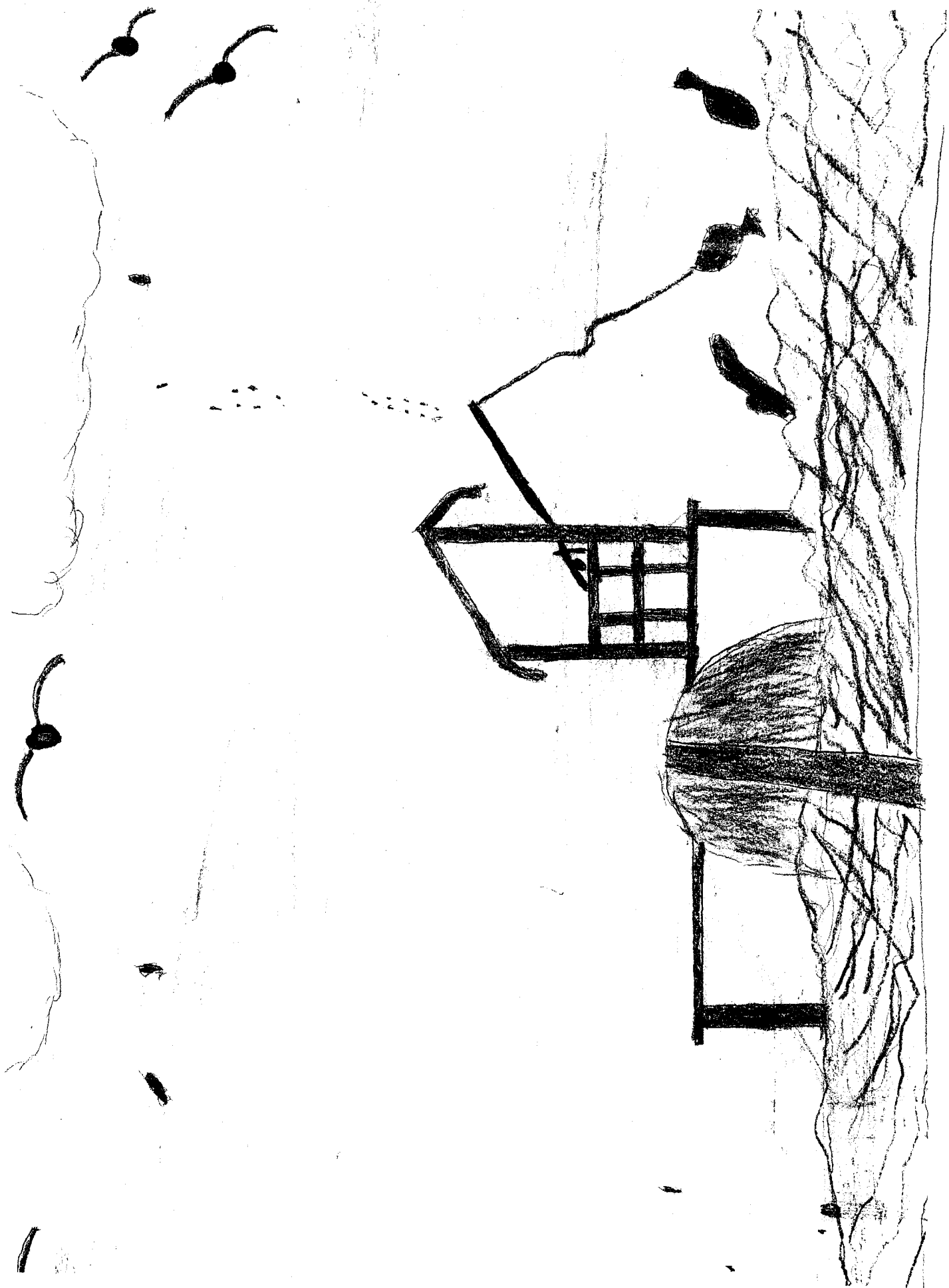
“And so well-hidden,” added Mrs. Cooper. “If it hadn’t been for that frog jumping so high, and the boys slipping into the water, who would *ever* have found this nest so neatly tucked into the cattails near the water’s edge?”

The whole group moved to another area where there was some pasture grass to sit on. They enjoyed their cookies and popsicles as they sat around on the picnic blankets. Barbara passed small baggies filled with sunflower seeds. “Would you like some, too, Mrs. Cooper?” she asked. “We need to finish these up before this year’s are ready to harvest.”

“Thanks. I love sunflower seeds,” said Mrs. Cooper.

“Well, the crop seeding is all done. Now, we could sure use some rain,” remarked Barbara, as she passed the bag of sunflower seeds.







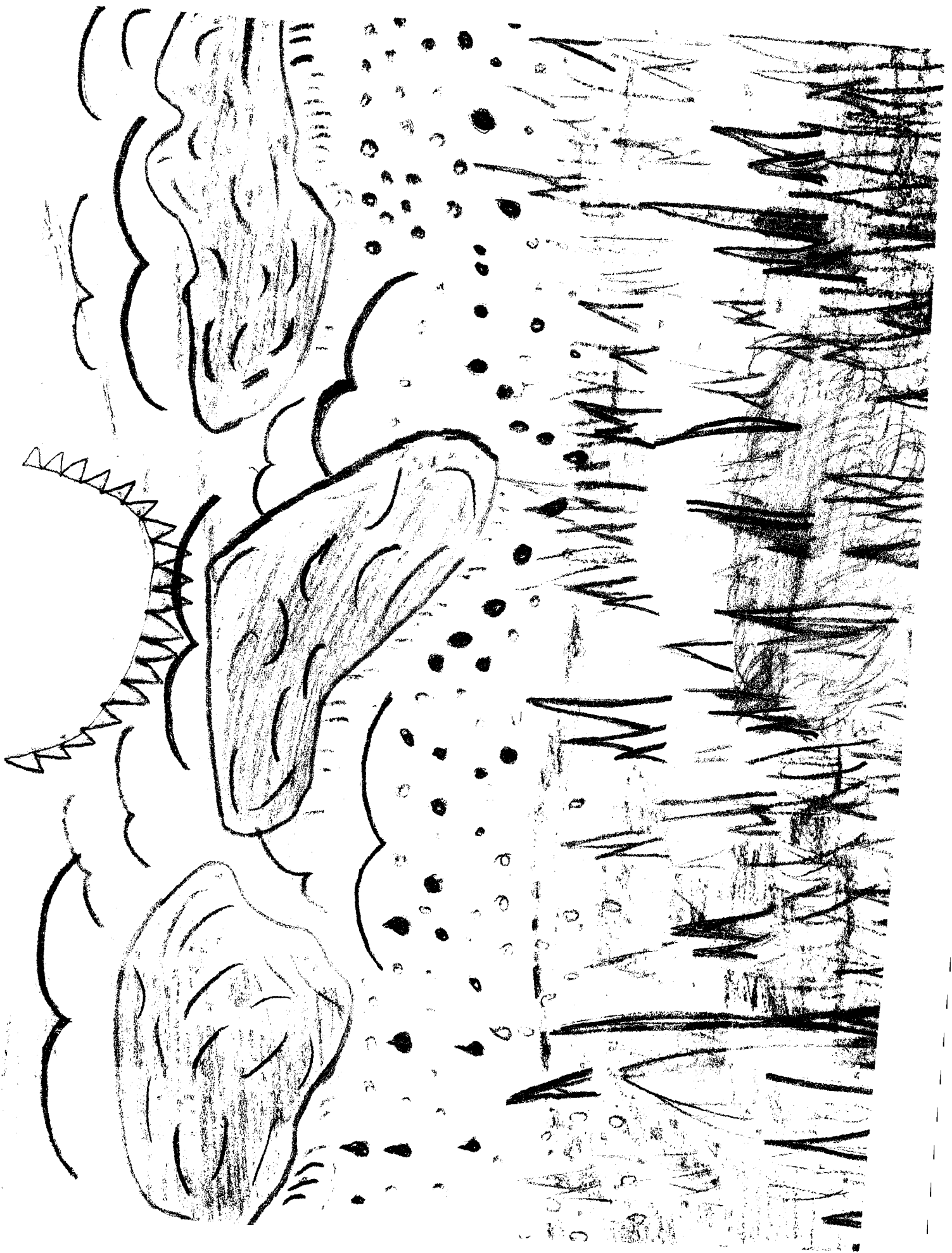
“Yes, it has certainly been hot and dry. It looks like rain may be coming,” Mrs. Cooper agreed, pointing to the clouds, which were much closer now. Just then, another rumble of thunder sounded, and a few drops of rain splashed on everyone’s heads.

“Oh, that feels good on my face!” exclaimed Tamra.

“Mrs. Cooper, can we jump and splash in the water? It is SO hot,” begged Jacob.

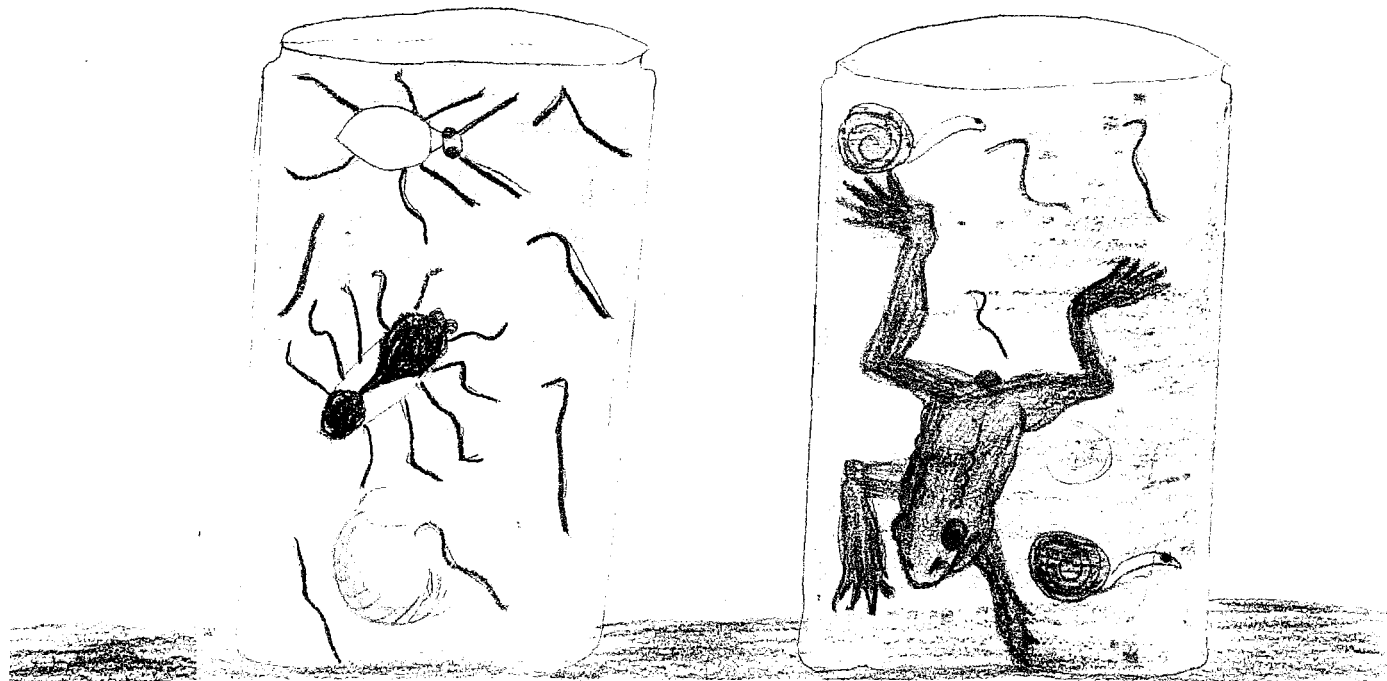
Mrs. Cooper laughed. “Didn’t you boys get wet enough yesterday? I think we should tidy up our garbage, and dip our jars to collect water specimens before the rain really starts. You can come back after school to splash, okay?”

The boys and girls soon had all the popsicle wrappers picked up, and were lined up with their jars full of Frog Creek water. In their jars could be found: snails, little water bugs, minnows, several tiny freshwater shrimp, water walkers and three peeper frogs. The rain was just beginning: first

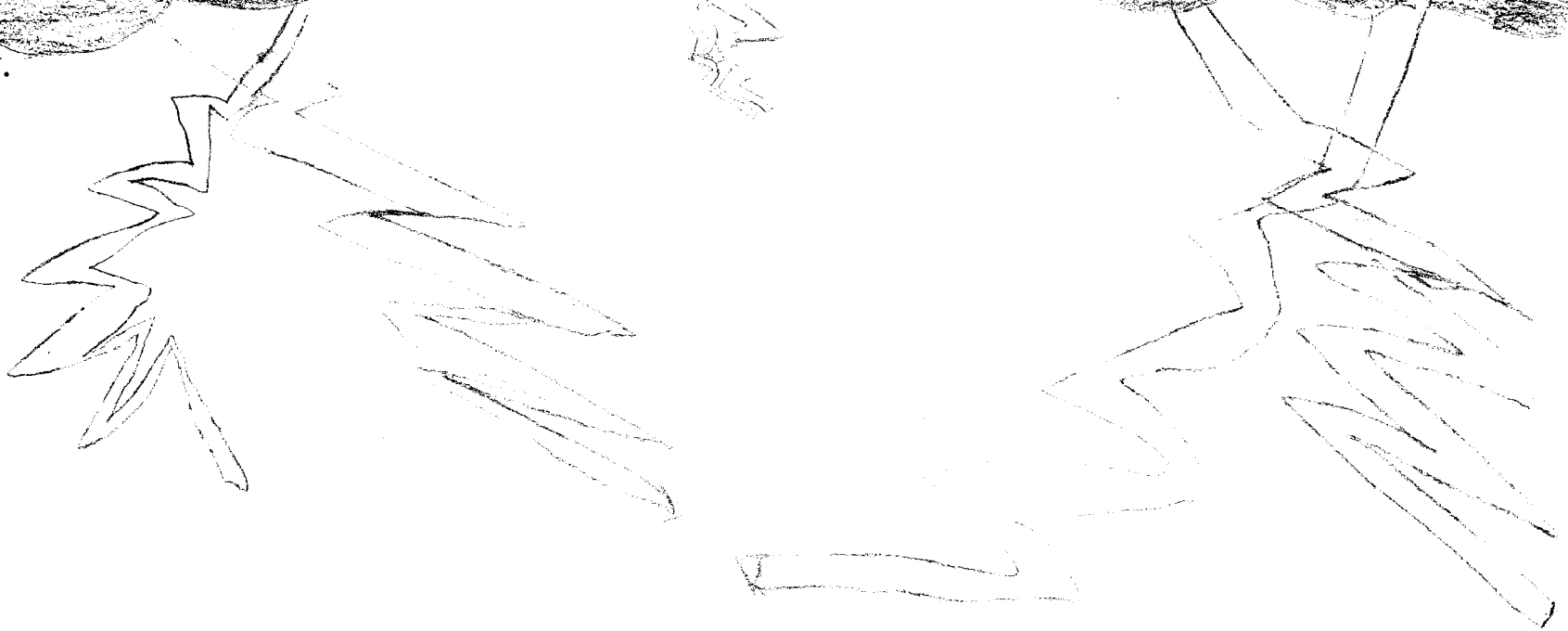


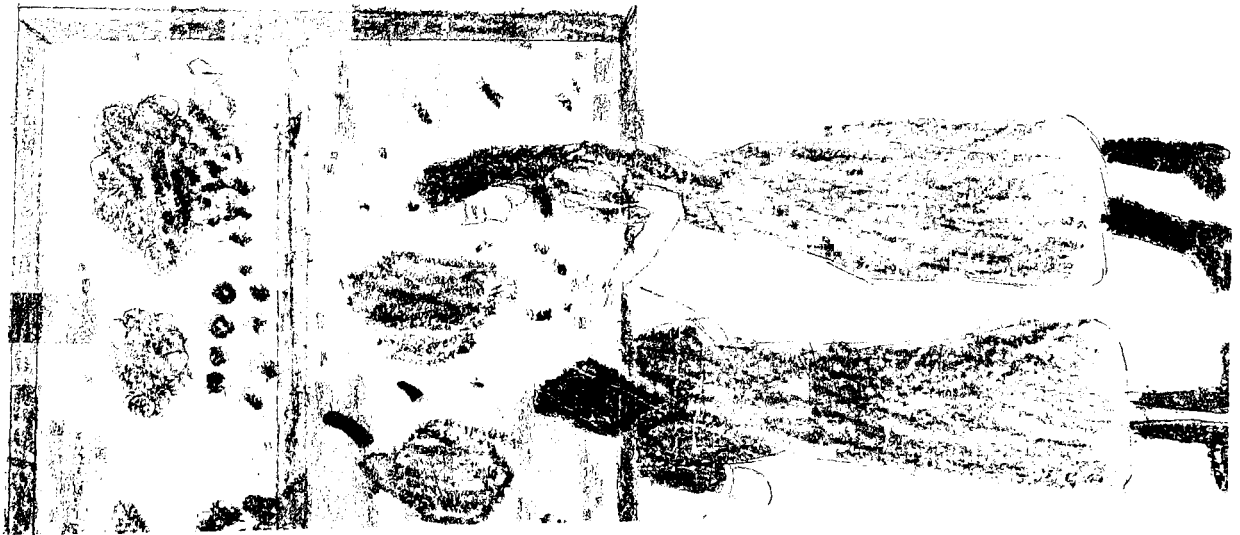
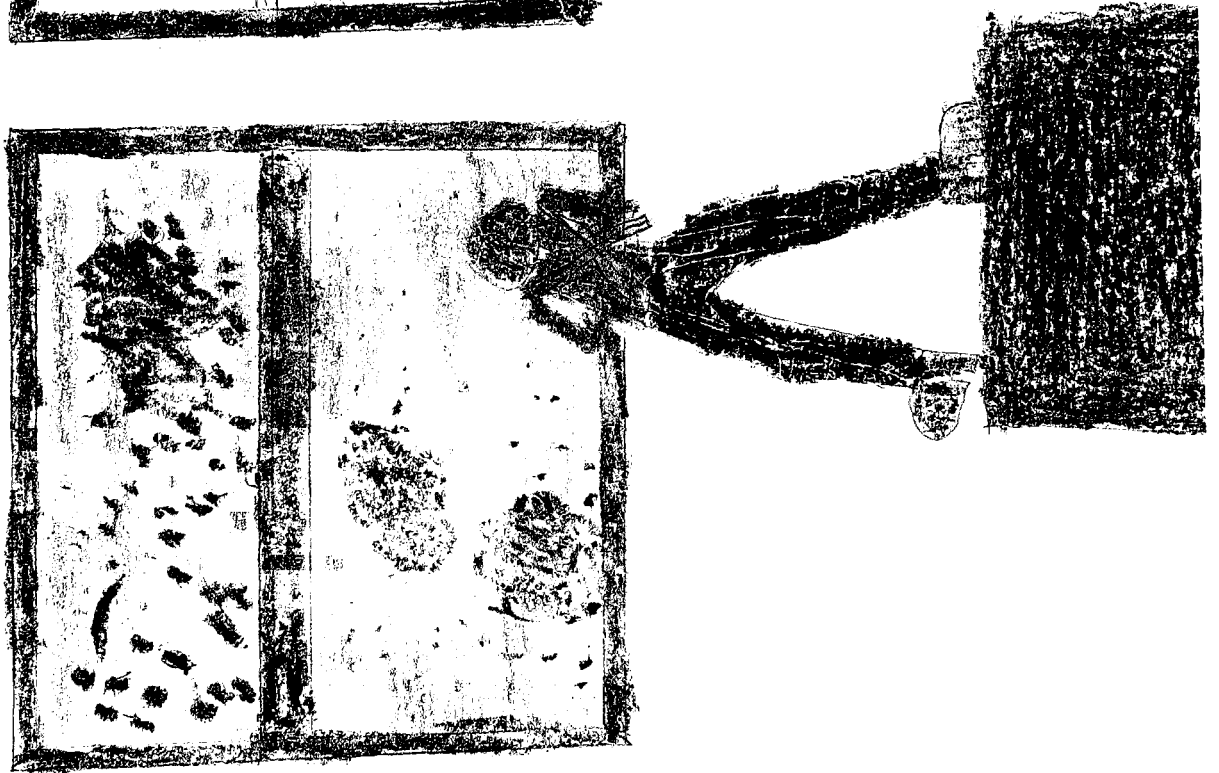
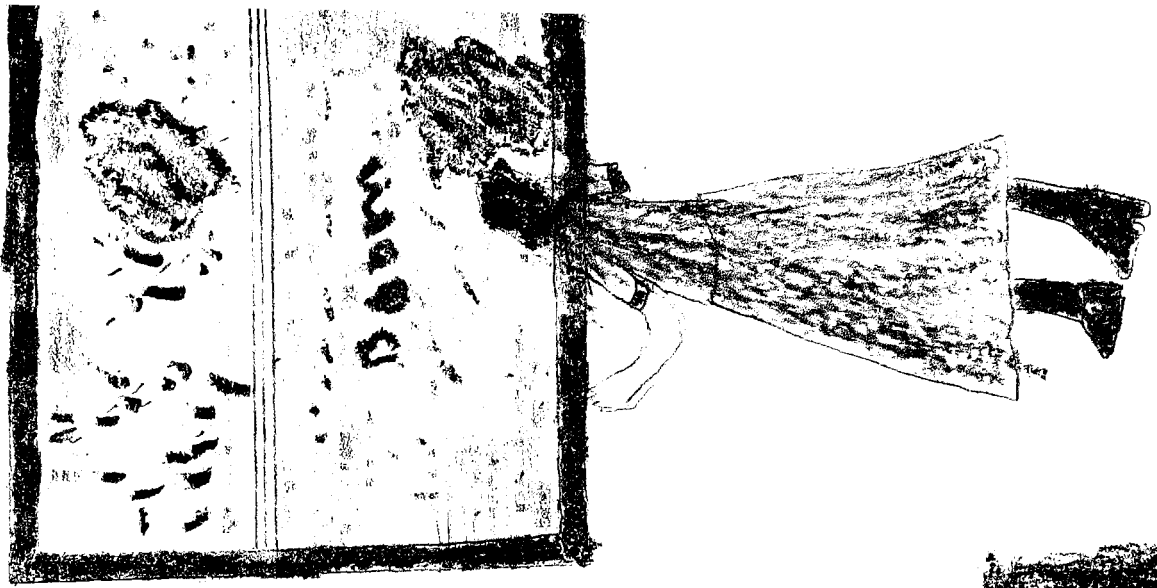
sprinkling a little, then stopping, then splashing a few big drops on peoples' heads, so they walked briskly back to the school.

Back at the school, everyone chattered excitedly about their treasures in the jars, and the big discovery of the duck's nest.



BANG! BAM! BOOM! Thunderheads had moved in close and the spectacular lightning show began. Everyone watched from the windows as the rain began. The thunder was loud, booming right down through the roof, it seemed. Cra-a-a-ck ... za-a-p! The lightning sent zig-zags across the sky.





The sky had totally clouded over. The teacher turned off all the lights, and the room was quite dark. The thunder and lightning storm was exciting to watch. It was nice to be in a safe place as the heavy rain began.

That night the rain continued. It poured and poured. The next day, water was everywhere. The children looked out of the classroom windows. Splish....splash! Splish... splash! The raindrops came splashing down on the windowpanes. The sky was a dreary gray. The rain did not stop. For three days, it just drizzled, stopped for awhile; then it rained again.



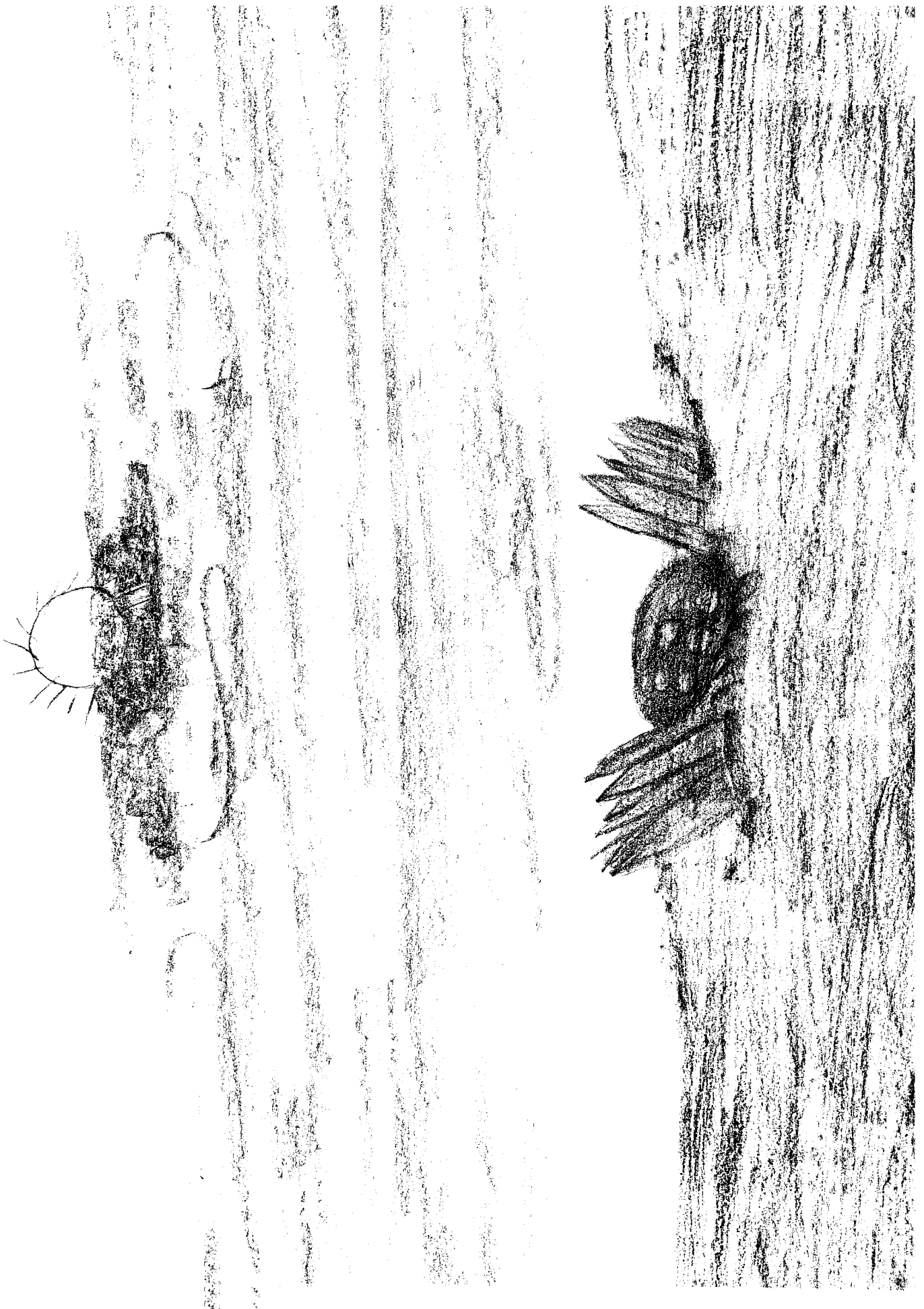
Finally, the rain stopped. The clouds thinned and streaks of blue sky could be seen. Two boys were anxiously waiting to get outside. They were worried about ‘you-know-who’. After they ate their dinner, Jacob and Ben put on their rubber boots and rushed down to Frog Creek pond to see the nest. Would Mrs. Duck still be there?

The water level was high. The boys walked carefully on the soggy pasture grass. Slowly, they approached the nest. Nothing happened. Mother Duck did not fly up.

“Here it is,” called Ben. “Here is the nest. Oh, no. Mrs. Duck is not here.”

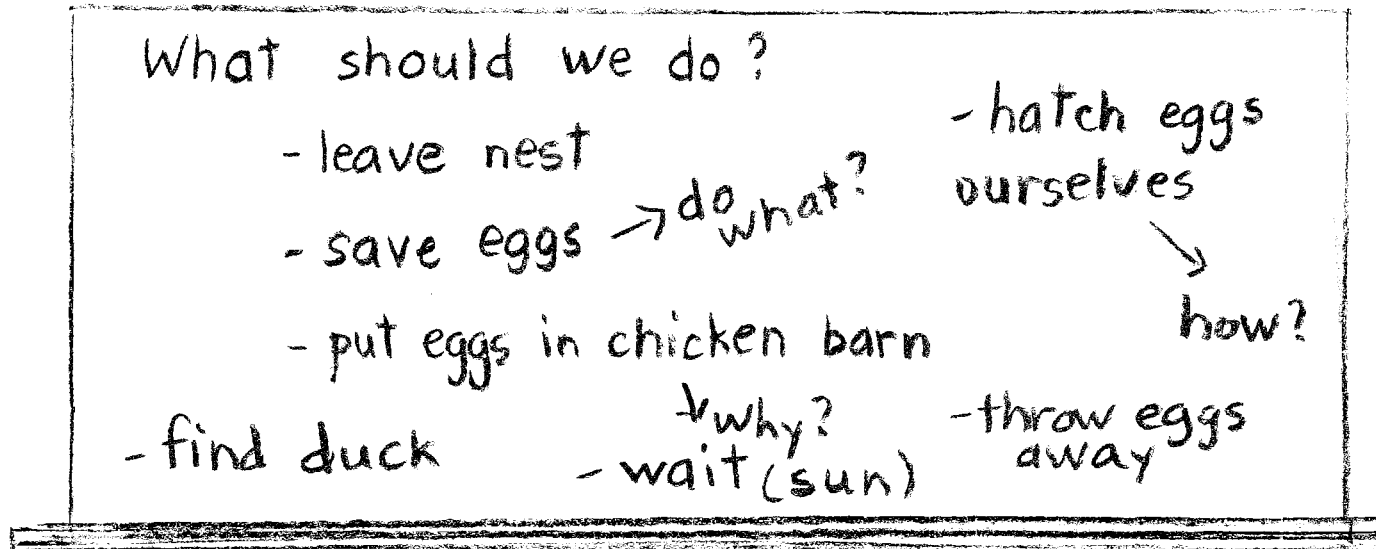
“Let’s see,” said Jacob, as he peered into the cattails. “The nest is full of water! Look – the eggs are all covered with the rainwater. What will happen to the eggs now?”

Ben looked down inside the cattails. “Oh-oh. The eggs are drowning in this flooded nest. We should go and tell Mrs. Cooper. She will know what to do.”

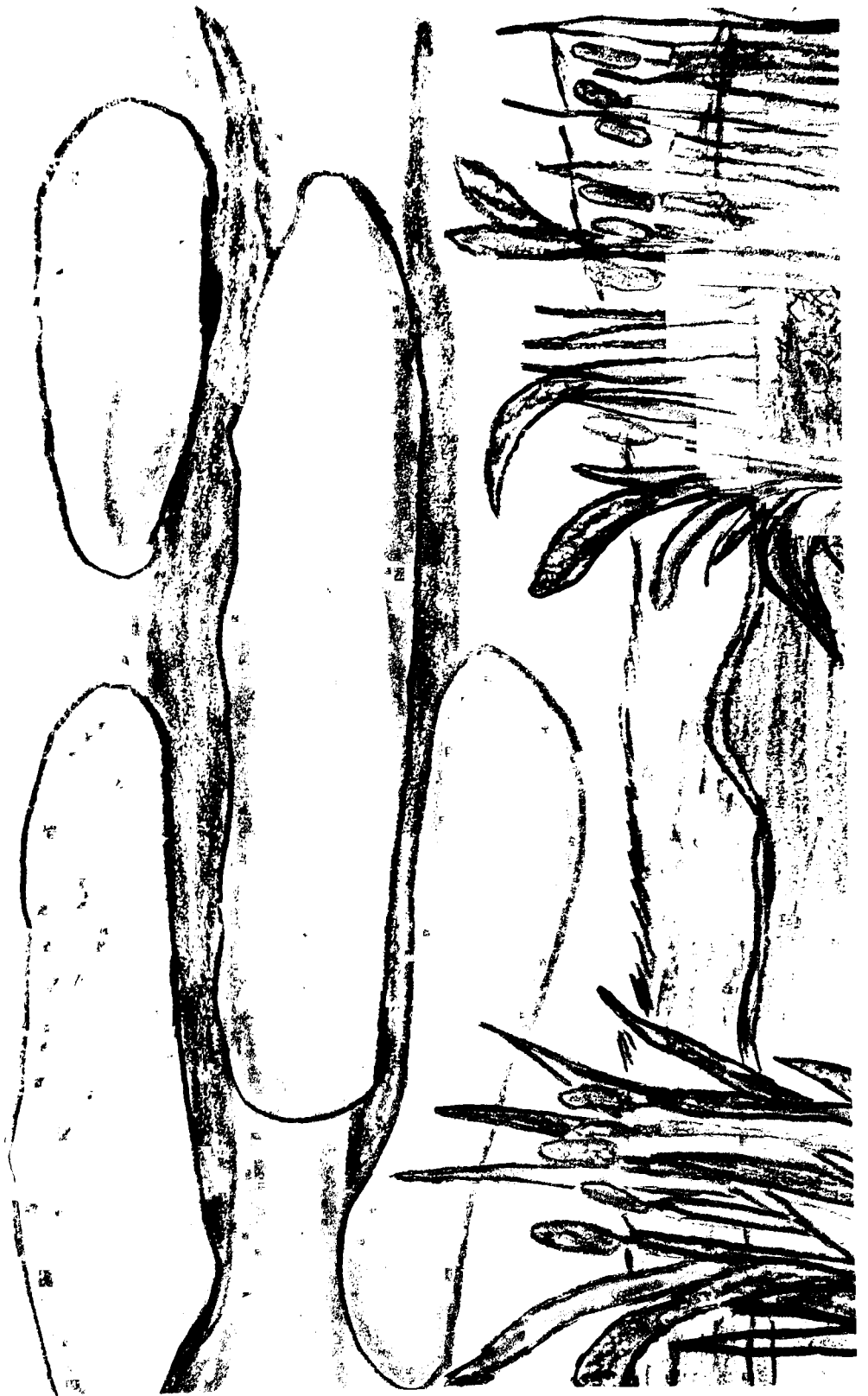




The boy told to the class about the flooded nest. Mrs. Cooper asked each student what they thought the problem. All ideas were put on the board:



Some good ideas came out, with this decision: leave it for another day in case Mother Duck comes back; then, if she still doesn't, collect the eggs in a stainless steel bowl nest, and keep them warm with a brooder lamp from the chicken barn. The girls and boys set out to collect all the equipment, just in case.

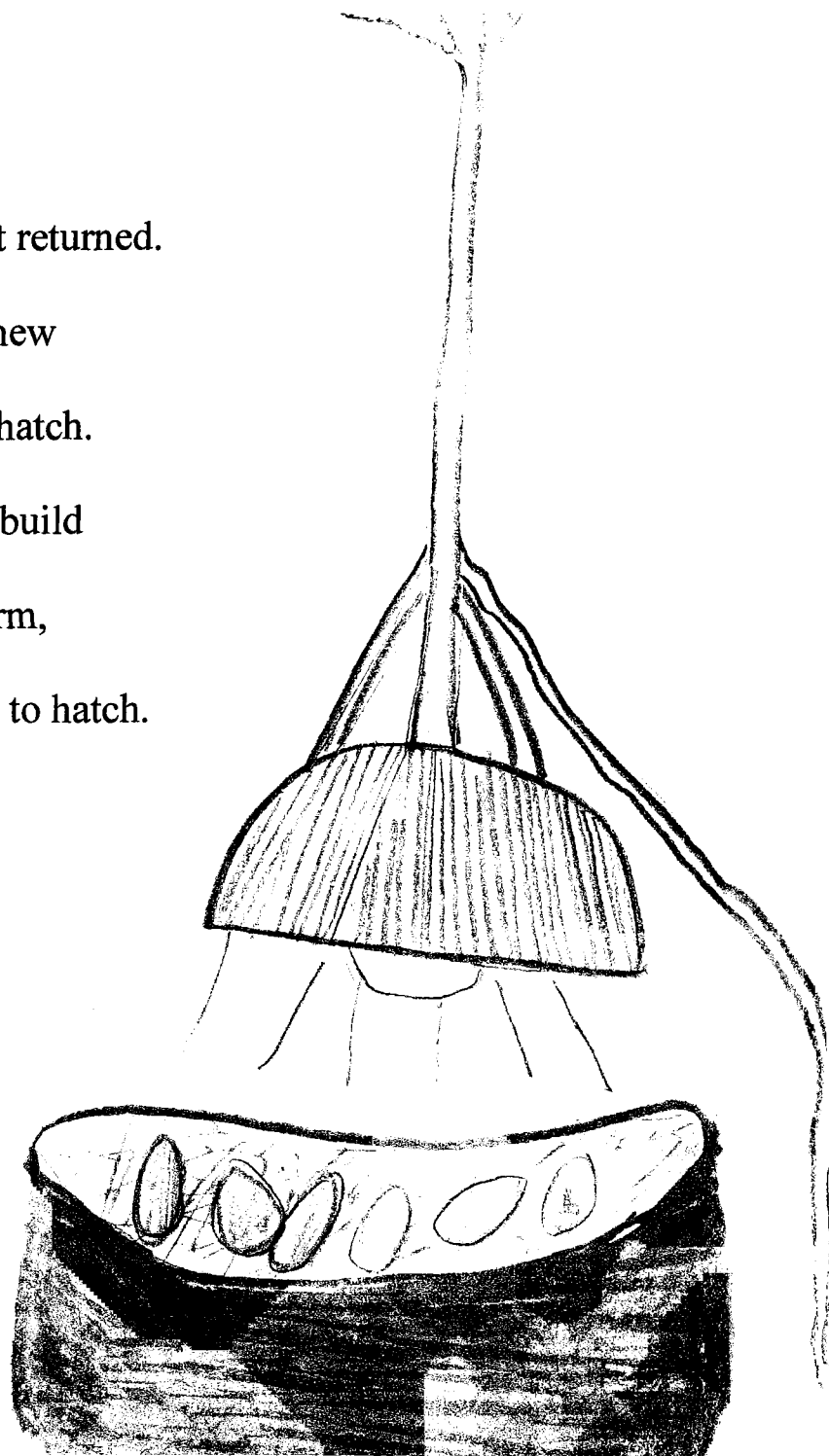


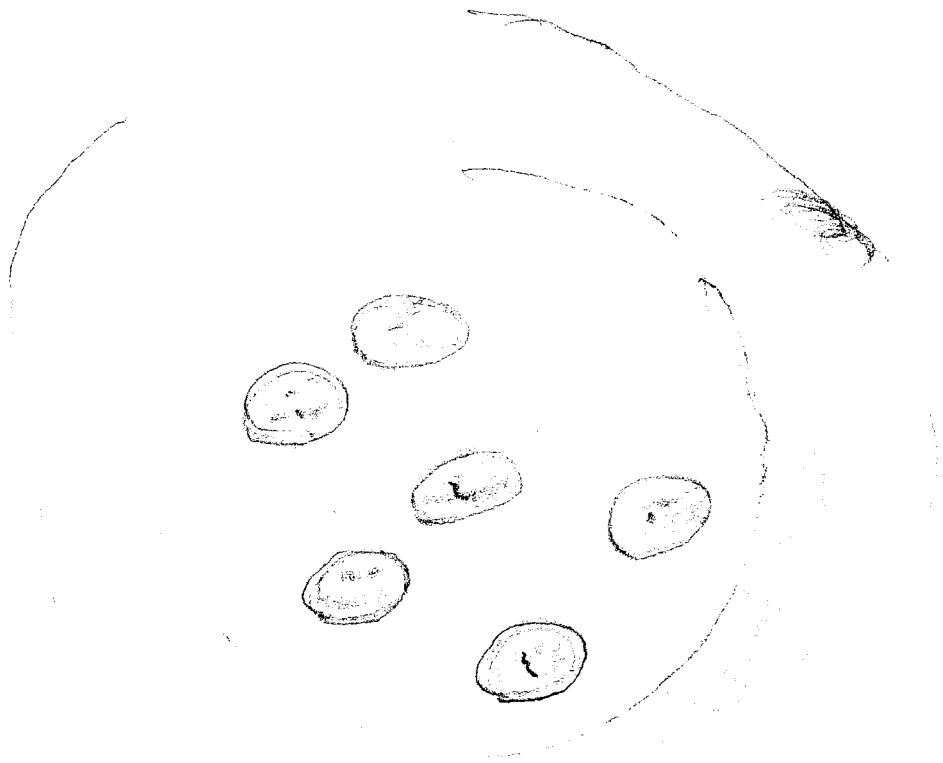
After nearly two days, Mother Duck still had not returned.

The class voted to go out and collect the eggs for the new classroom nest. Everyone hoped the eggs would still hatch.

The older children researched egg incubation: how to build an incubator, the temperature needed to keep eggs warm, humidity requirements, and how long it takes for eggs to hatch.

This is what the egg-hatching corner looked like:

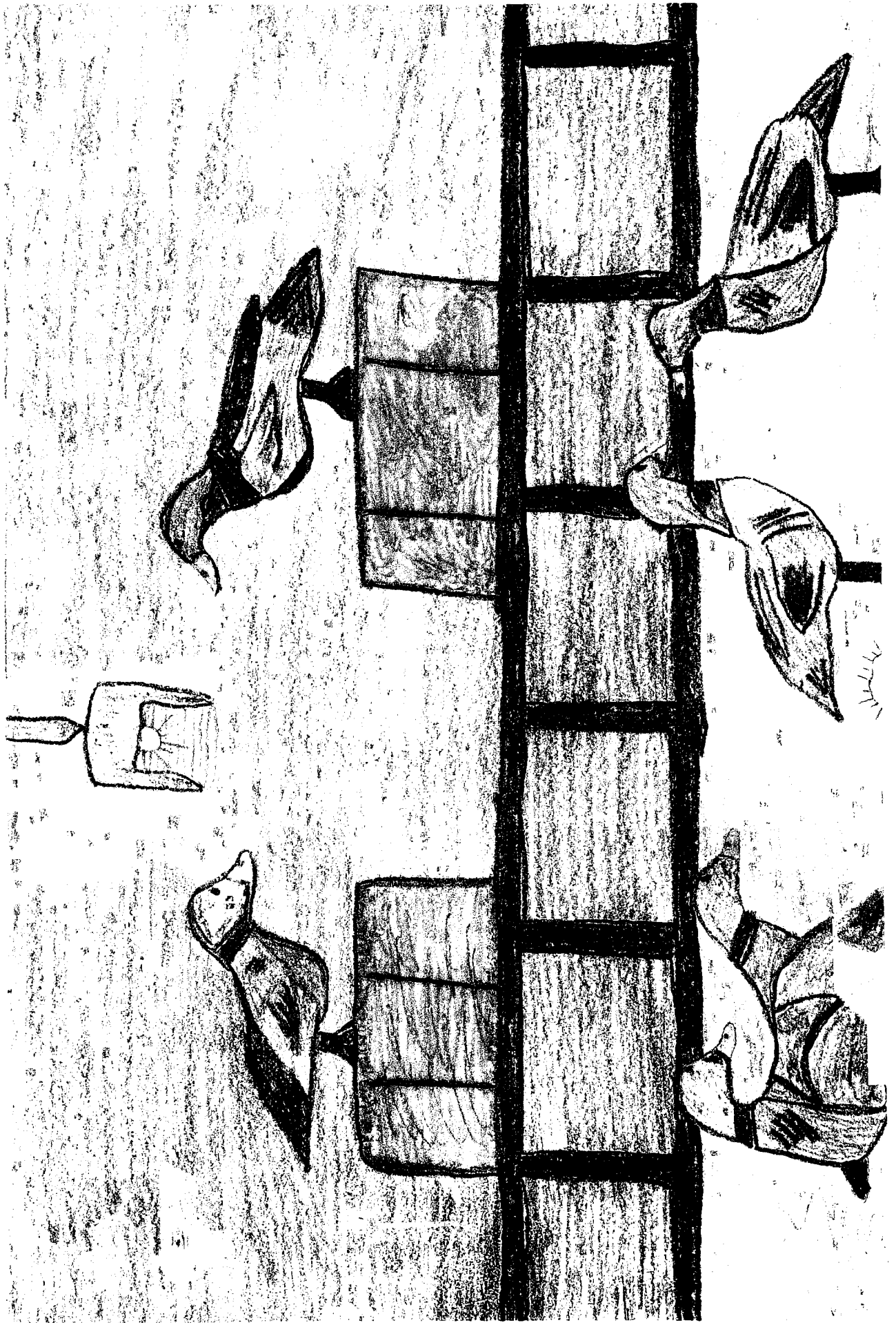




The human “Mother Ducks” of the classroom watched the eggs closely every day. Late one afternoon, just before 3:30 p.m. Tamra thought she heard a peep inside one egg. When Jacob looked, he saw a tiny crack on the shell. Everyone carefully examined the egg. It was a strange crack. It was cracking from the inside out, and there was a tiny tapping sound inside that egg.

The next morning, the children came in to the sound of peeping and a stinky smell. Three little ducks were peeping and pooping! This caused great excitement!





“Well, Jacob and Ben. Our rescue team has achieved success! Congratulations to all of you,” praised Mrs. Cooper. “Now comes the work. For a start, we need to assign kids to keep the duck pen clean, some to get feed, some to keep the water bowl fresh. Then we need to decide when to take the ducklings back to the pond,” she instructed. “If we don’t, the poor little ducks will think that we are their mother, or brothers and sisters, and that they are people. That’s called imprinting. They need to learn how to be ducks, how to swim and how to find food.”

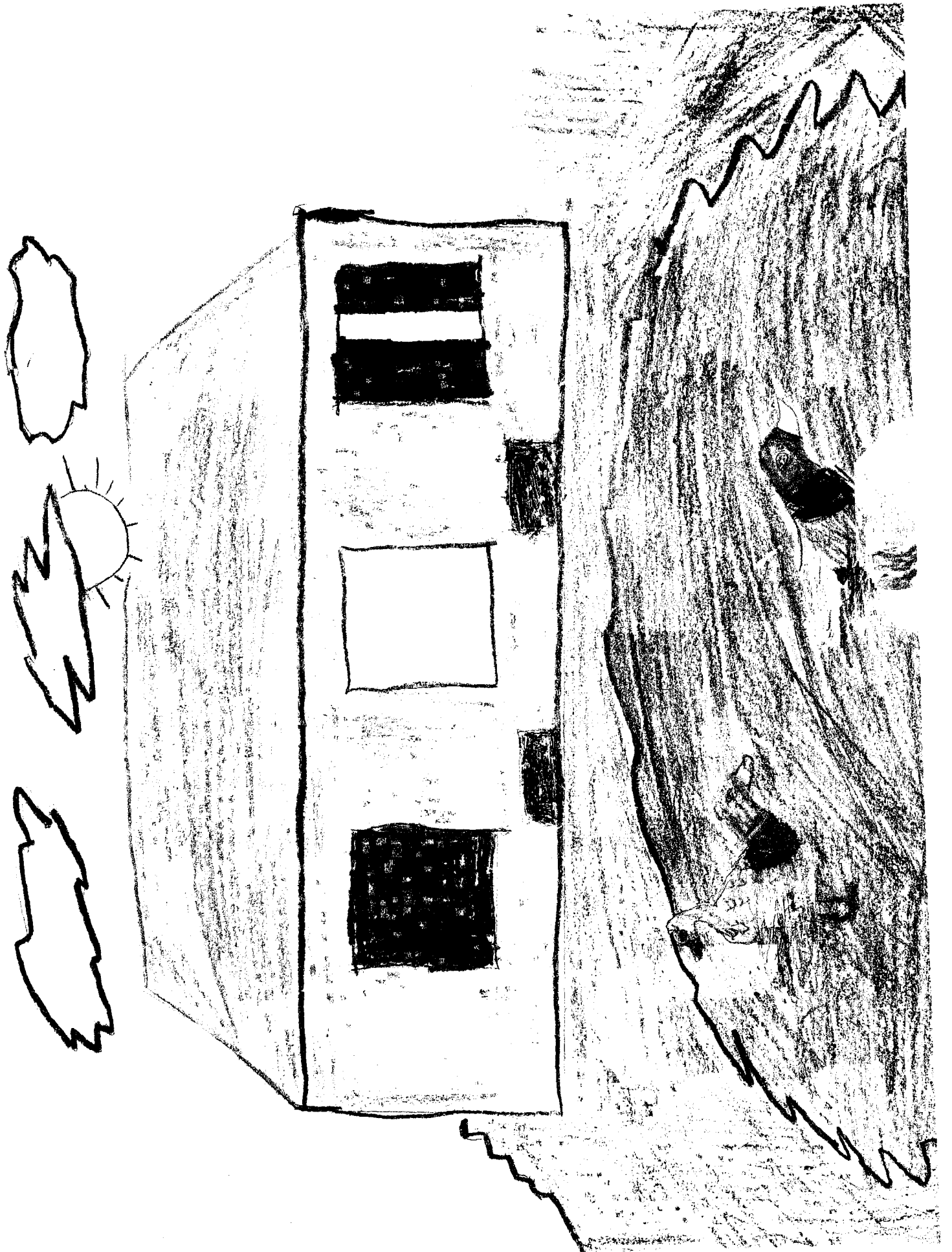
“We have to take the ducks back to the pond?” Lorna asked in disbelief.

“What did you want to do with them?” asked Jacob.

“Well, I thought we could play with them,” replied Lorna.

“Oh, no, they will be much happier being ducks. Ducks love to swim and listen to the frogs and the red-winged blackbirds. All their food is in the pond. We don’t want to keep them locked up. They are wild birds.” Mrs. Cooper gently explained.





“Besides, they will love it in the pond where they belong,” declared Ben. “Our job was to help them. Now we must help them again by letting them be ducks.”

Katie added, “There will be more space for them in the dugout. Where would they be able to play in this room? There is no water here.”

Mrs. Cooper reassured them that this was true. “Also, I don’t think we’d have too many volunteers for cleaning up duck mess all day long, do you, girls?” she asked.

“Mrs. Cooper, what will we do with the other three eggs?” asked Lucas.

“What do you think, class?” she asked.

“I think we should wait one more day. If they don’t hatch by the end of tomorrow, then I think they are rotten eggs. We should throw them in the garbage dump,” Joshua matter-of-factly declared.

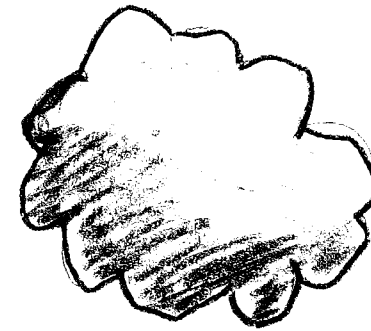
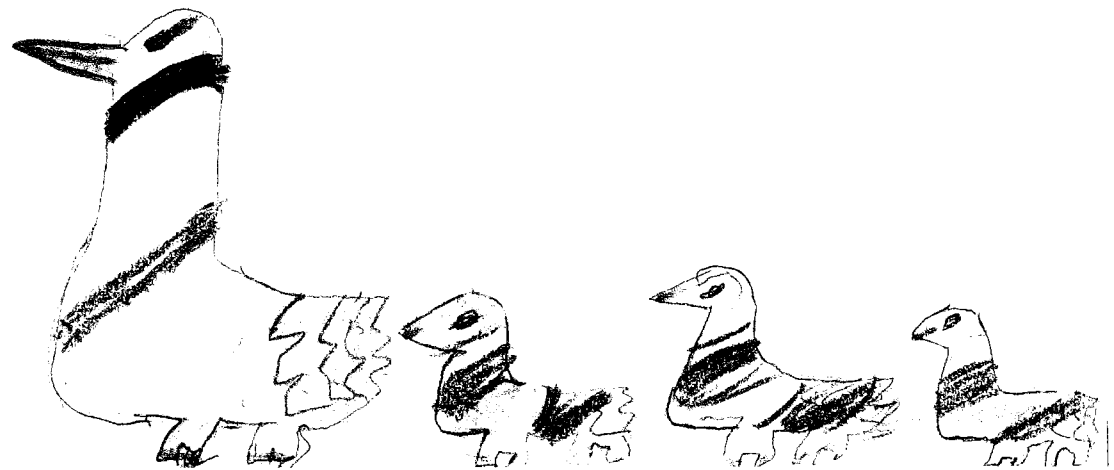
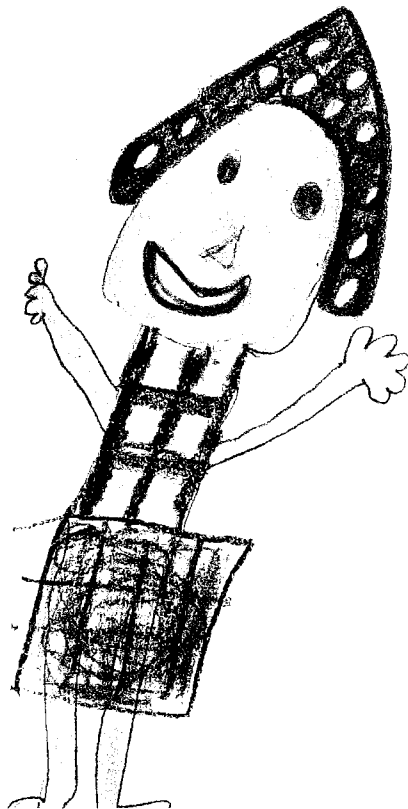
“All in favor – raise your hands,” said Mrs. Cooper. All fourteen hands went up.

“Can we still all go back to Frog Creek for a picnic again?” asked Sarah.

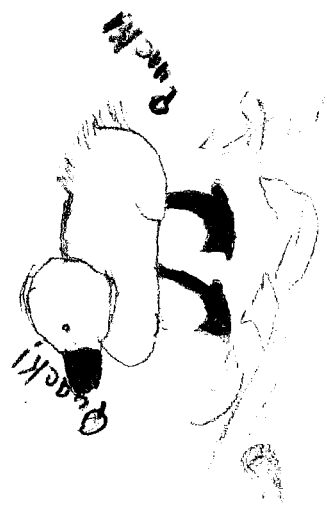
“Oh, yes,” said Tamra. “Right, Mrs. Cooper?”

“We sure will - when we return the ducklings to the pond. Maybe we should have a celebration picnic. All in favor, say ‘QUACK-QUACK!’” replied Mrs. Cooper.

“QUACK-QUACK!” came the enthusiastic reply.







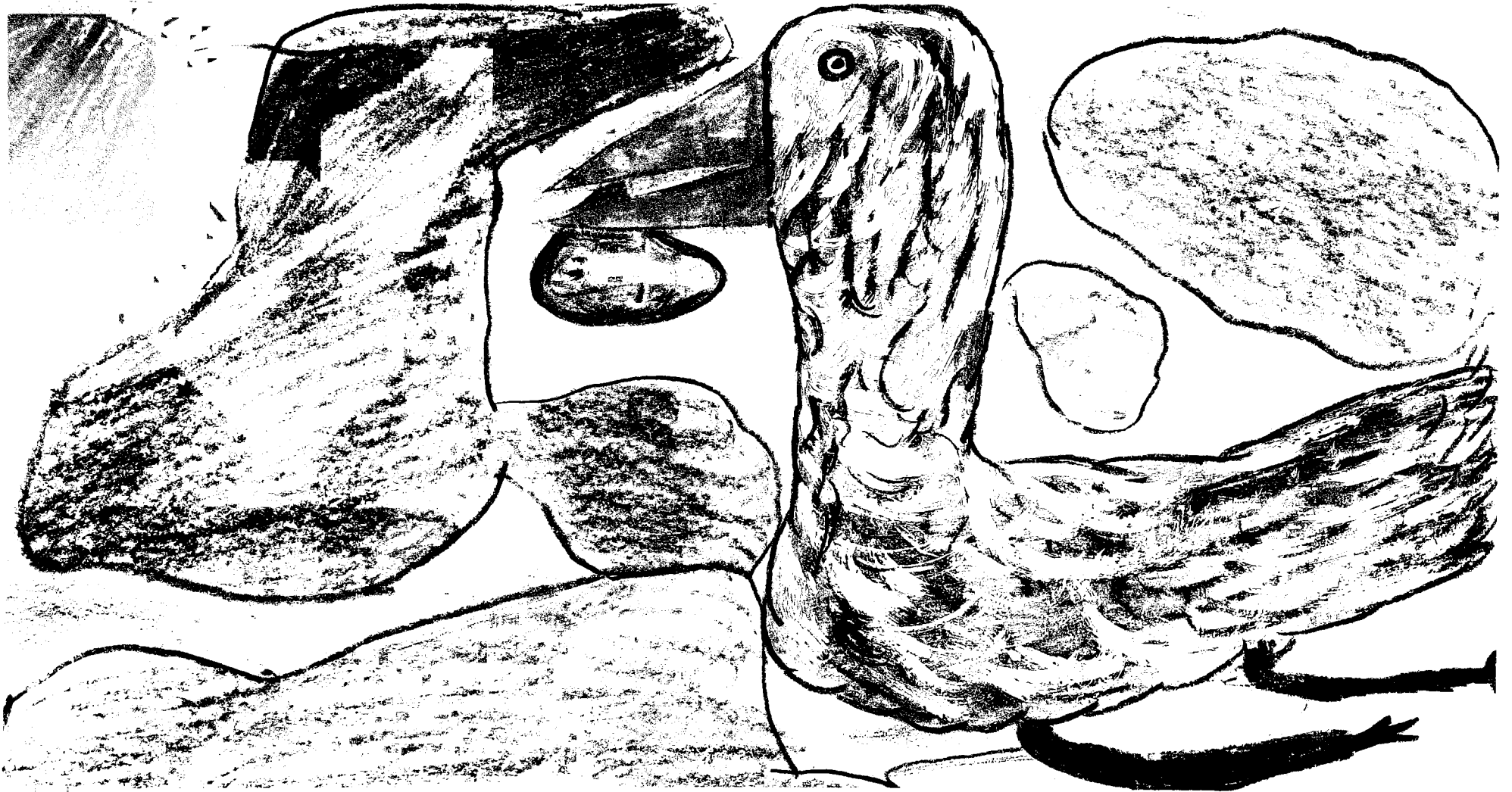
Rebecca Baby

by Patricia E. Cooper

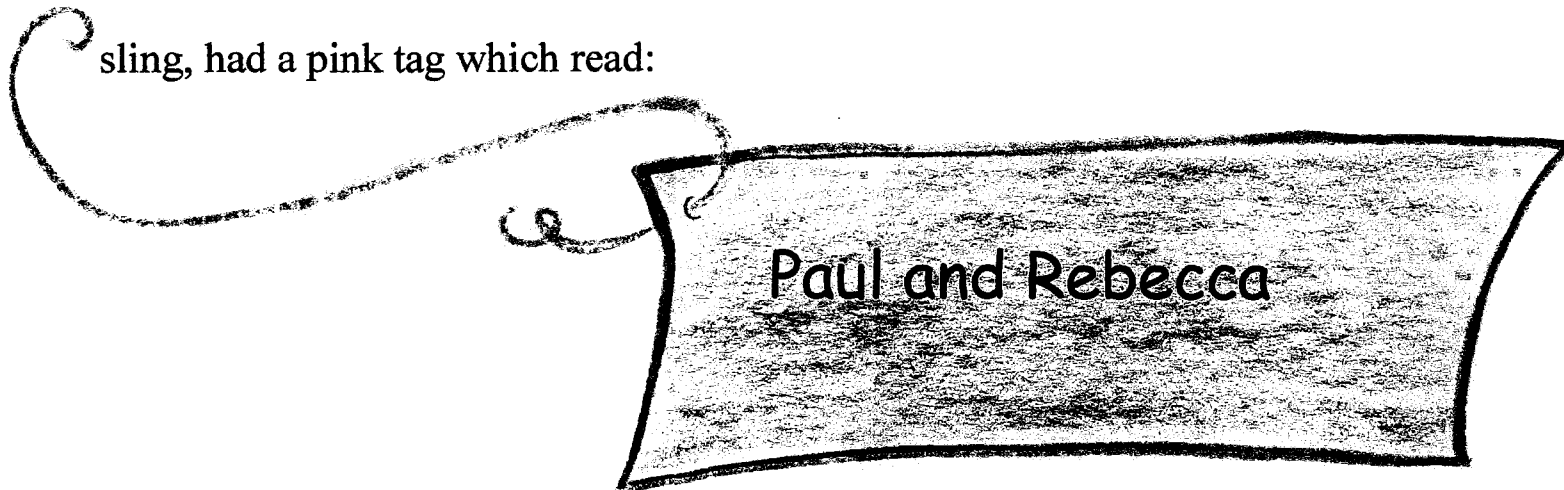
illustrated by Kathy Cooper
and Hutterite children



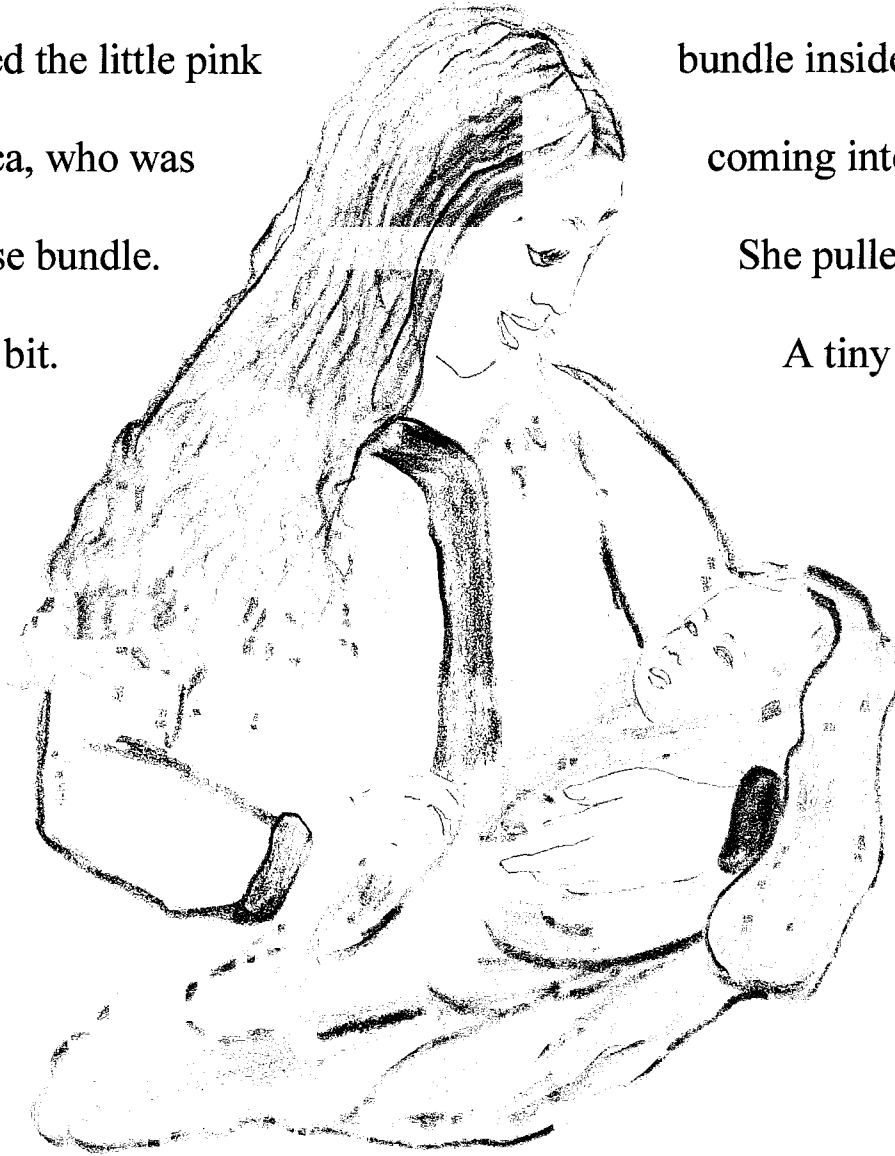
It happened on February 28. A big gray and white bird had been spotted up in the blue sky the day before. The stork was looking for Paul and Rebecca at Sandy Creek Colony. It had a delivery especially for them.



Paul woke up at 6 a.m. as he did every day. But this day was different. It would be quiet in the house until Rebecca and four year old Joshua would get up at 6:30. This morning Paul thought he heard the loud sounds of big wings near the window and over the rooftop - almost like a strong gusty wind blowing. But there wasn't any wind today, just beautiful sparkly white snow on a crisp clear winter morning. He opened the door to check outside. A huge white bird was just flying over the shop roof. And, there, right on his doorstep, was a pink bundle. The bundle, loosely tied into a big sling, had a pink tag which read:



He gently picked it up and called to Rebecca. “Rebecca! Rebecca!” called Paul. His wife, Rebecca, was still asleep. He carried the little pink warm and soft. He took it to Rebecca, who was now. Paul gave Rebecca the surprise bundle. pink blanket. The bundle wiggled a bit. from within.



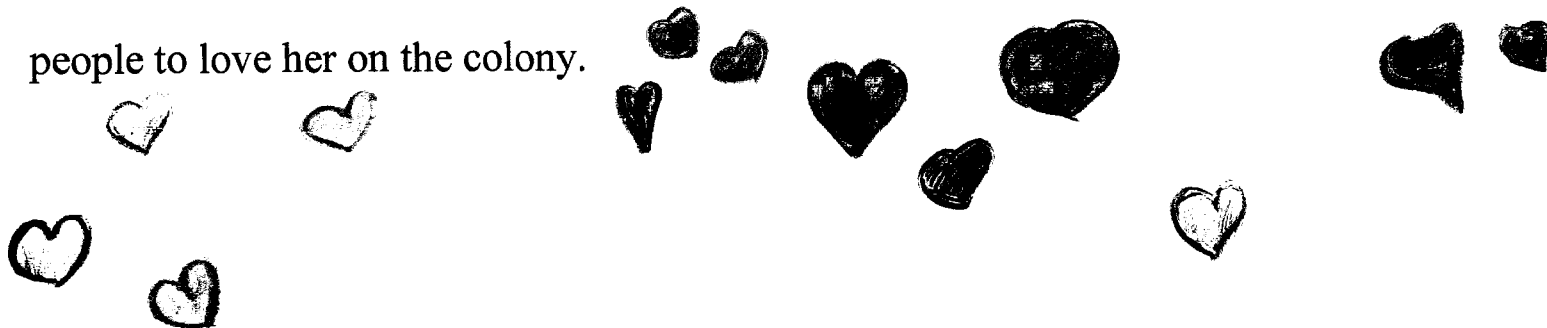
bundle inside. It was coming into the room She pulled back the A tiny face peered

“She’s beautiful! I will call her Maria,” Rebecca said. She held the tiny baby close. She gave Maria a kiss on her nose and cuddled her up close to her chest. Rebecca and Paul looked at each other and smiled. They were very happy. They were both wishing for a little brother or sister for their son, Joshua.

“This will make Joshua happy, too,” whispered Paul.

Joshua was four years old. For eighteen months, he had a beautiful baby sister, Susanah. But Susanah was a sick baby for a long time. Then one day, she went to Heaven. The family still talks about Susanah as their little angel. Now Susanah and Joshua both have a new baby sister.

That day, everyone was happy to hear about Rebecca’s new baby. Maria would have many people to love her on the colony.

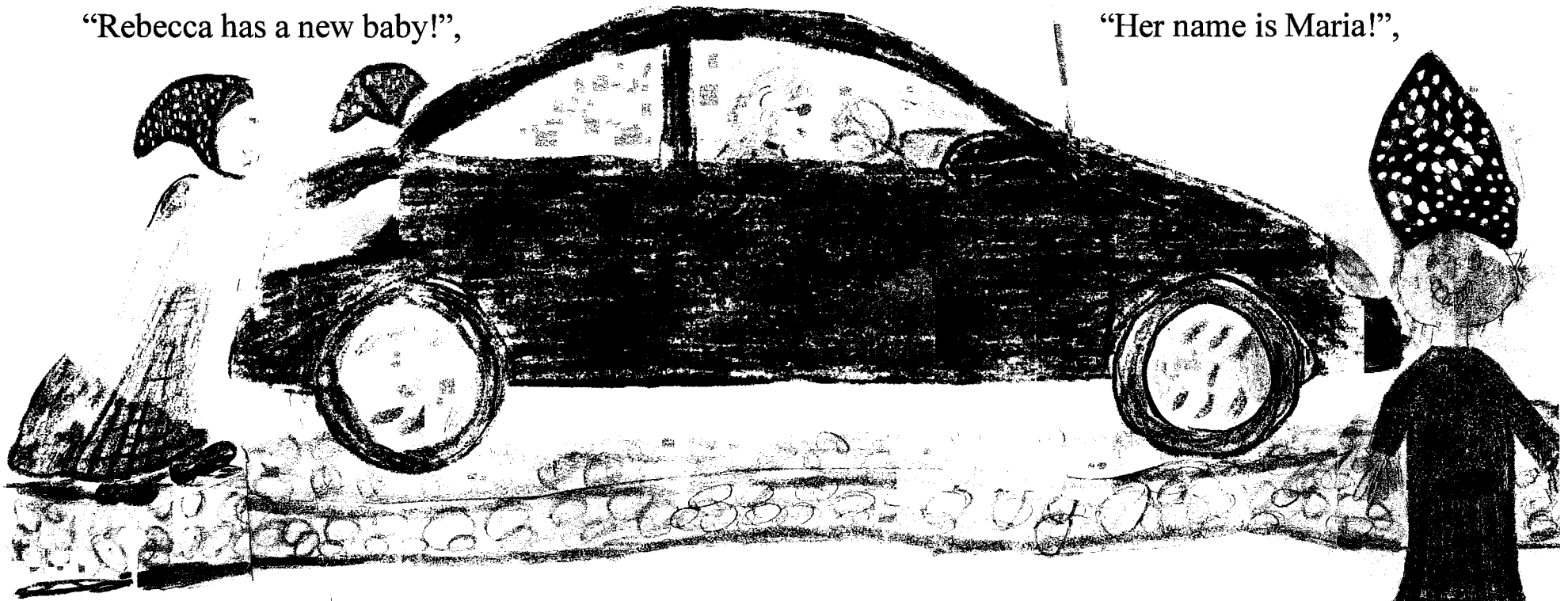


At school on Monday morning, the girls could hardly wait to tell the English teacher. The teacher's birthday was also on February 28! Wouldn't SHE be surprised?!

Mrs. Cooper's red car was finally here! The children all came running, excitedly shouting:

"Rebecca has a new baby!",

"Her name is Maria!",



"She came on your birthday!",

"You should come see her! She is SO CUTE!"

The girls were just *so excited*. Mrs. Cooper said, “Should we cancel school for today? Then we could just go play with Rebecca’s baby?”

“Oh, YES!” the girls replied together.

“Could we?” asked Rachel.

Mrs. Cooper winked at them and laughed. She took her books and lunch bag out of her car.

“Do you want me to get fired? We’ll see what we can arrange for a short visit at recess. If I let you have an extra ten minutes at recess, will you get twice as much math finished before recess?”

“Oh, yes, we promise!” said Rachel, with a serious look in her eyes, “and we’ll get it all done right too.”

“It’s a deal,” agreed Katie. “and we’ll have our best classroom manners too.”

That morning, all the children worked extra hard for their ten minute recess extension. Finally, it was time for recess. Mrs. Cooper walked to Paul-Rebecca's house with the schoolgirls. Rosa, Clara and Rachel were all in Grade Two, Gloria was in Grade Three, and Katie in Grade Eight. This was a special day.

"I will babysit Maria," announced Gloria. "My Grandma from Mountain View Colony is here to help Aunt Rebecca for one month. I will learn from her how to take care of Maria. My Grandma will teach me how to hold her, how to put her in the swing or the crib, and even how to change her diapers!" Gloria's dark brown eyes were just sparkling with pride and excitement.

"Wow. That is a big job for you, Gloria," said Mrs. Cooper. "I know you will be careful. You will be an excellent babysitter."

"Here is Paul-Rebecca's house," said Katie. "I'll go to the kitchen to get the coffee."



“Happy Birthday, Mrs. Cooper,” Rebecca greeted us with a smile. “Come in, girls.”

“Who said it was my birthday?” laughed Mrs. Cooper.

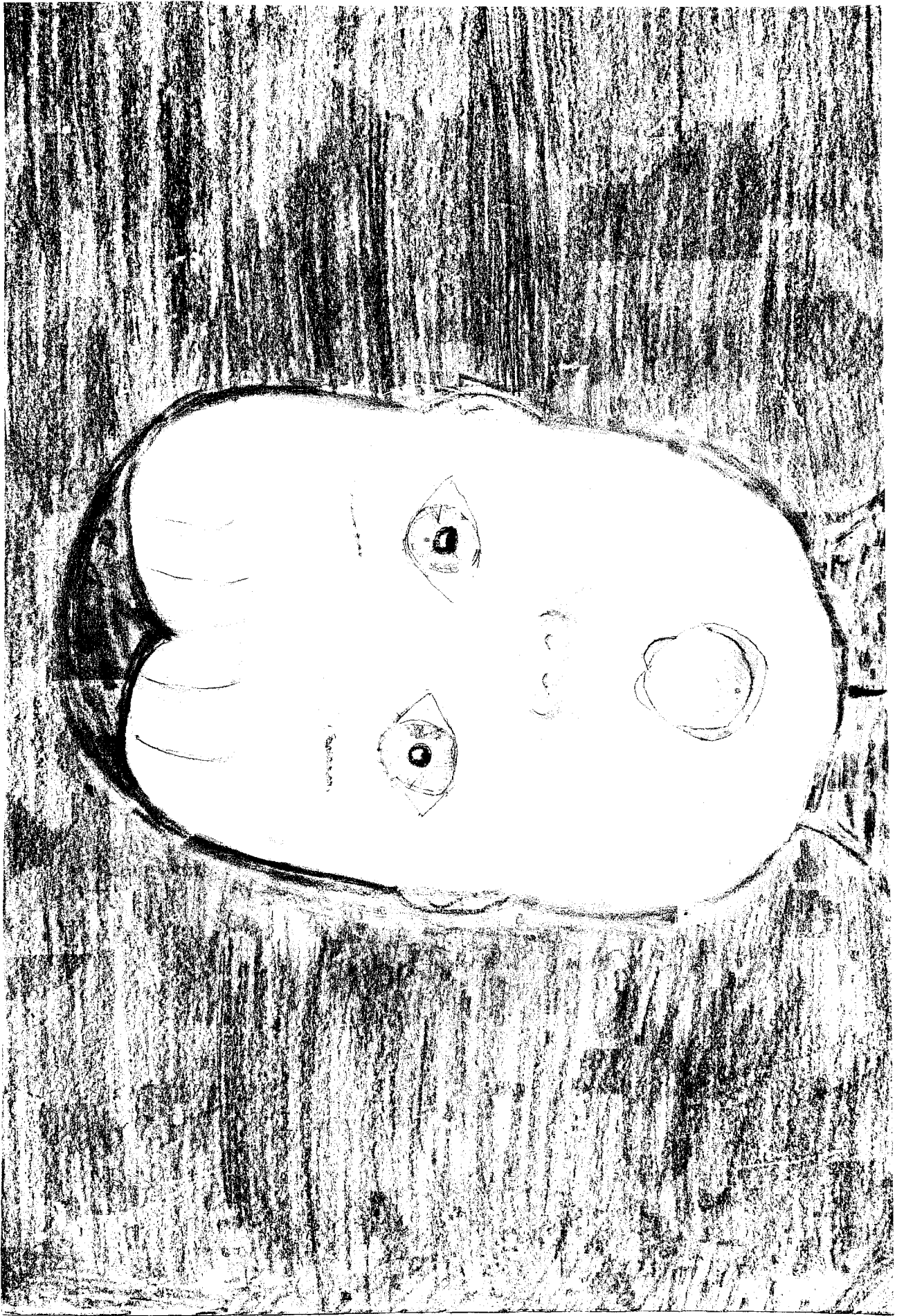
“Oh, half the fun of Maria’s birthday is that it’s your birthday, too,” replied Rebecca. “The girls told everyone Maria was born on your birthday! Now you will always remember Maria’s birthday. The girls couldn’t wait to tell you!”

Everyone sat down on chairs and stools. Rebecca went to get Maria from her crib. Katie came in with coffee and cake. The girls had big grins across their faces. This was indeed a happy day!

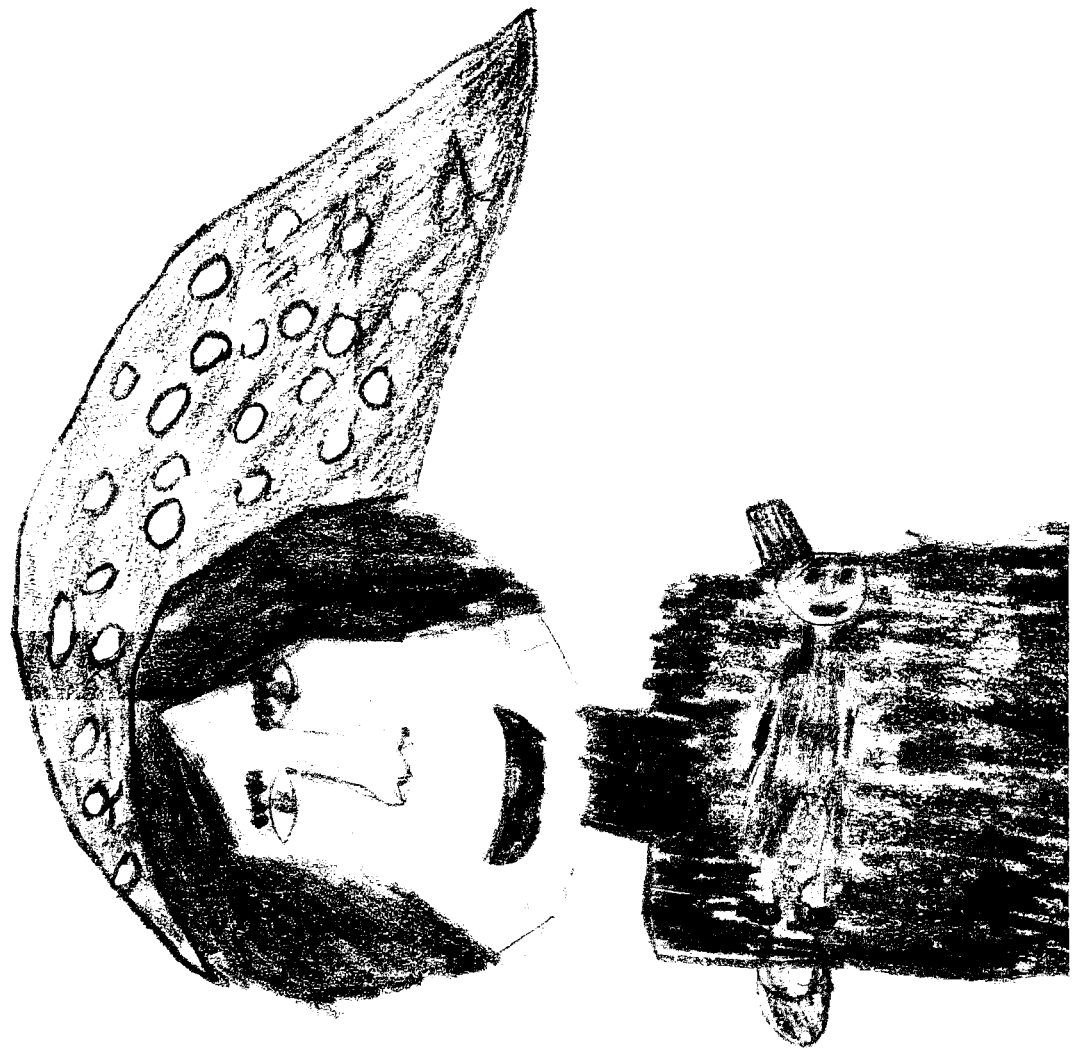
“Oh, look... she is so cute... can Mrs. Cooper hold her?” asked Gloria.

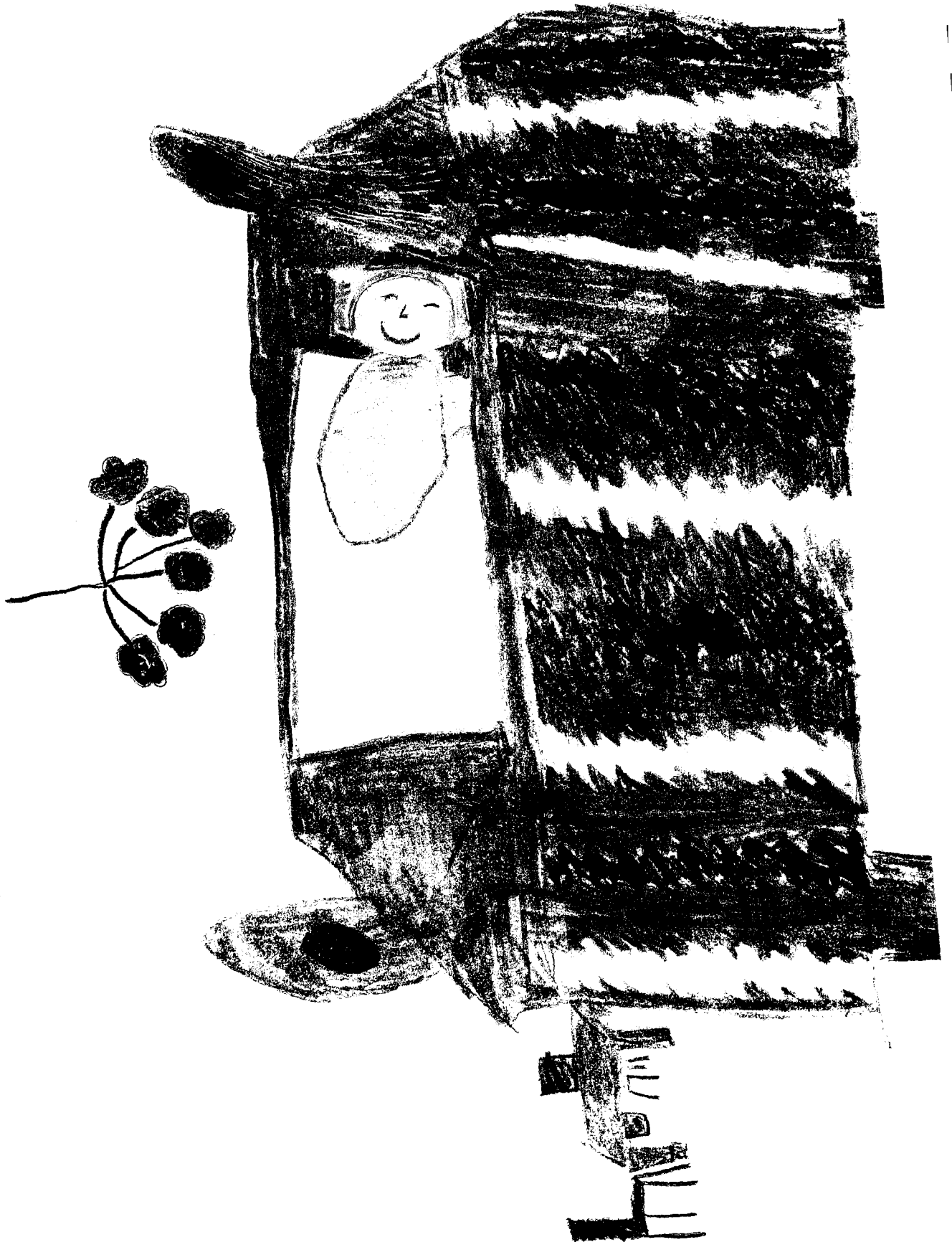
“Oh, yes... Here she is ... there, let’s just unwrap her a little now,” said Rebecca.

Little Maria just blinked at us and leaned her face when we touched her. She wanted milk!







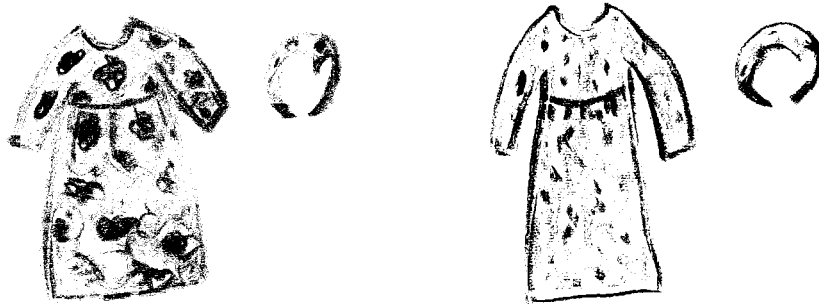


Mrs. Cooper had brought her camera. She took some pictures of the girls with Maria. We all looked at Maria's little fingers and toes and her little pink sleeper. Rebecca showed some of the new baby dresses that Maria would be able to wear in one month. The table was covered with presents.

"Look," said Gloria. "Maria has baby toys, Pampers, bibs, sleepers and small baby dresses."

"Oh, what lovely little dresses!" exclaimed Mrs. Cooper. "They look something like your dresses, girls, and made of such colorful fabric. You lucky little girl, Maria!"

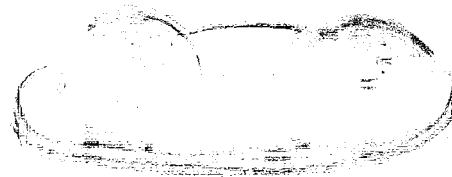
Each girl had a turn holding Maria while everyone else had their coffee and cake. Then Mrs. Cooper said, "Oh, girls, look at the time! We are late already. This has been such a nice visit, Rebecca. Thank you so much for having us. May we come back to see Maria in her new dresses?"



“Oh, yes! Come in a month from now, when Maria will fit into her new dresses. Then she will see better too, as her eyes come into focus. If you could come after school, you could stay longer,” suggested Rebecca. “Gloria will also be babysitting by that time.” Everyone agreed on a one-month birthday party for Maria. She would look so pretty in her new dresses!

The next month flew by quickly, since there was lots of snow for the school children to play in. They went sliding down the hillside at the south side of the school. They used a toboggan, crazy carpets and a snowboard. The weather was sunny and the snow was deep, making it so much fun for sliding.

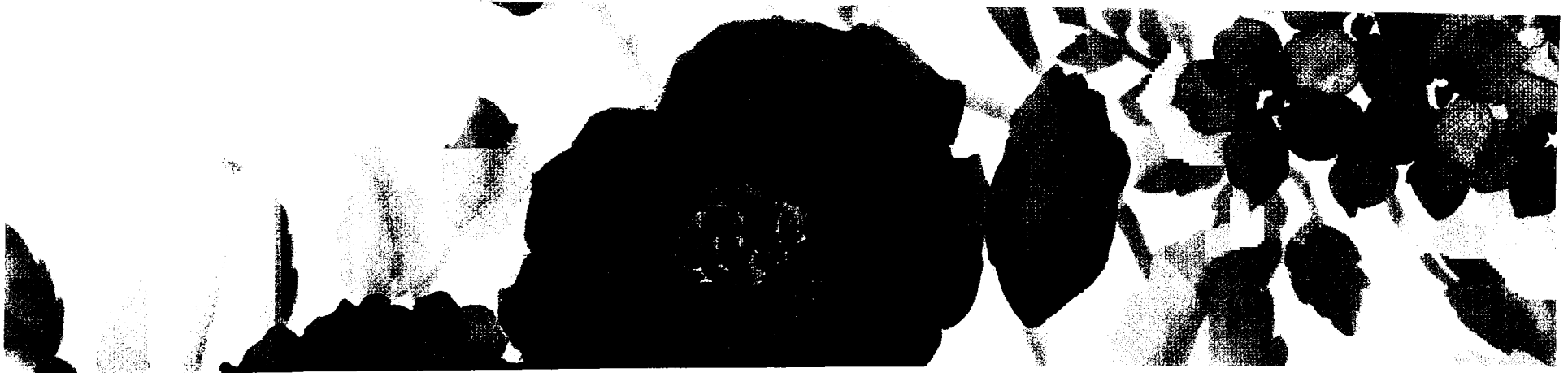
At noon, one sunny spring day, Katie brought two baby buns for Mrs. Cooper. The baby buns were still warm and smelled so good.



“We make baby buns when the new baby is one month old. They are special sweet buns. Rebecca says you should come after school to see Maria in her dress,” said Katie. “If you could come right at 3:30, because Maria has a nap around 4.”

Mrs. Cooper replied, “Great! I will come as soon as school is dismissed.”

Finally, it was time to go visiting. This was such a treat for the girls to walk their teacher over to see Maria again. Maria looked like a little doll in her new dress. Rebecca showed everyone all the new dresses she had been sewing. They came right down to Maria’s ankles, just like a long gown, but the fabric was similar to what all the girls and women on the colony wear. Even a cap was made of the same material as the dress!



Everyone cooed and laughed at Maria. She looked around, listened and even smiled. She was so cute. This was the last day before Gloria's Grandma would go back to her home colony. She told all the girls that Gloria was going to make a good babysitter. Rebecca put an angel food cake on the table. The women had coffee while the girls drank pop. It was a nice visit.

The next morning, Gloria told Mrs. Cooper that on Monday, the colony would be butchering chickens, and SHE would be babysitting Maria all day long. Her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm.

"Why don't you come to Paul-Rebecca's house for dinner?" Gloria asked her teacher.

"Sure. That would be nice, Gloria. Do I get to hold Maria?" asked Mrs. Cooper.

"Oh, yes. You could hold her lots. I will tell Aunt Rebecca," Gloria replied.

On Monday there was only one girl at school: Rachel. She did not have a babysitting job yet. When the colony would have the next new baby, Rachel would become the new babysitter. On Butchering Day, the boys all helped in the barn or the slaughterhouse. The schoolgirls babysat so the

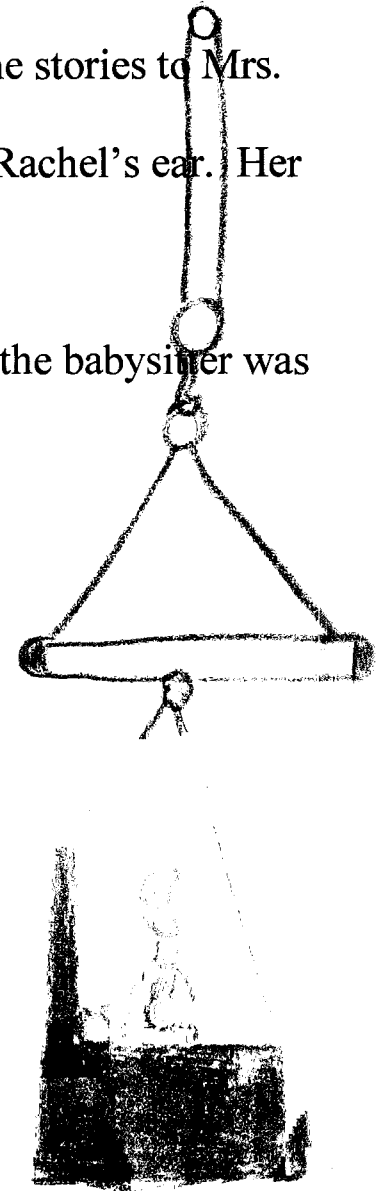
women could work cleaning and cutting up the chickens. It was so quiet with so many children helping with colony work. Rachel worked on her math assignment; then, read some stories to Mrs. Cooper. When it was close to 10 o'clock, Mrs. Cooper whispered something into Rachel's ear. Her eyes lit up with a "yes!" What do you think she asked Rachel?

They both put on their coats and walked to Paul-Rebecca's house to see how the babysitter was doing. Rachel ran to the kitchen to get some coffee and pop.

Mrs. Cooper knocked on the door. "Babysitter, Babysitter, where are you?" she called as she opened the door. Gloria's head popped through the doorway from the living room. She was surprised. Then she smiled.

"How are you doing, Gloria? Rachel and I were lonely, so we came for a coffee break. Is your baby being a good girl?"

Gloria said, "Come in here and see Maria. She is in her swing."



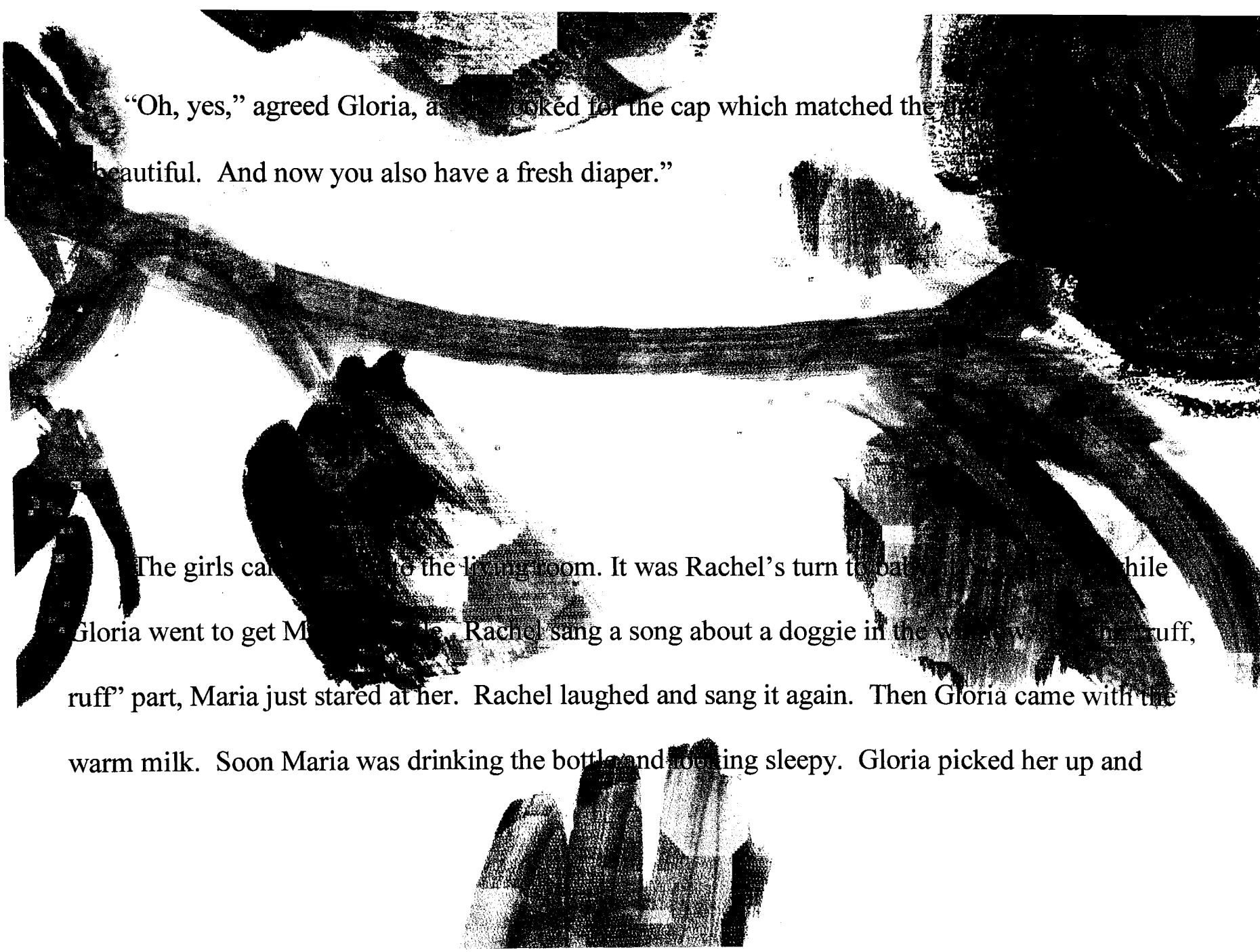
Rachel came in with coffee and pop. They all sat in the living room and watched Maria. She looked so cute in her pink flowered dress and matching cap. Gloria and Rachel pushed Maria gently in the baby swing. She cooed and laughed little baby laughs. All of a sudden, she became very quiet and everyone heard a huge gurgling noise coming from inside the bottom of the swing.

“What was THAT?! Coming from such a tiny baby?!” Mrs. Cooper teased. (as if she didn’t know!)

Everyone stared at the expression on Maria’s little face. The girls giggled. Then they were all roaring with laughter. Gloria got up. “I think she needs a clean diaper!” she announced, still laughing.

Together, the girls took Maria into her bedroom to the change table. They carefully changed her diaper and put on a different dress. This one was pale blue with big purple flowers all over.

“Put on a cap the same color,” said Rachel.



“Oh, yes,” agreed Gloria, as she looked for the cap which matched the dress so beautiful. And now you also have a fresh diaper.”

The girls came into the living room. It was Rachel’s turn to bathe Maria while Gloria went to get Maria’s milk. Rachel sang a song about a doggie in the window with the “ruff, ruff” part, Maria just stared at her. Rachel laughed and sang it again. Then Gloria came with the warm milk. Soon Maria was drinking the bottle and looking sleepy. Gloria picked her up and

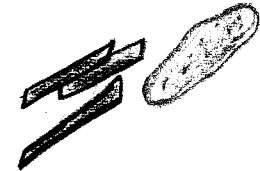
rubbed her back until Maria made a little burp. “Good girl, Maria,” Gloria whispered. “I think I will put her in her crib now. She is ready for a nap. Will you come back at dinnertime?”

“Yes, we will, Gloria,” answered Mrs. Cooper. “Rachel, you will have to ask your mom, okay?”

Gloria only took a minute and she was back to wave at them as they walked down the sidewalk. She had a big smile on her face. “She is already asleep! She is such a good baby!”

“And you are such a good babysitter!” said Mrs. Cooper. “Have a good morning. Bye!”

At dinnertime, Mrs. Cooper and Rachel enjoyed their lunch with Gloria and Rebecca. The kitchen cooks had prepared delicious French fries, garden peas and thick, juicy pork chops. On the plate were carrot sticks and dill pickles. Dessert today was pie with prune filling. Rebecca fed Maria, and she was soon falling back asleep. “Gloria must have kept her very busy this morning, that she is so tired,” said Rebecca. She winked at Gloria. Gloria just beamed.





The girls ate dinner quietly while the women chatted.

“How many chickens did the colony butcher today?” asked Mrs. Cooper.

“I think they said eleven hundred,” replied Rebecca. “Did you want some today?”

“Yes, I told Jerry already. He will put six in my car when they are ready. Are most of the chickens being sold to the grocery store?” asked Mrs. Cooper.

“No, seven hundred are being taken to Calgary tomorrow morning. There are several Chinese restaurants in Chinatown which buy as many chickens as we can deliver. They want the chicken feet too, for their special Dim Sum dishes. Then about ninety are for local customers in the neighborhood,” said Rebecca. “The same people come to buy our chickens every time. The rest go into our freezers downstairs. And we will make Kentucky Fried chicken for dinner tomorrow.”

“Oh, that is Mrs. Cooper’s favorite dinner,” said Rachel.

“Do you like our Kentucky Fried dinner?” asked Rebecca. “I like the real Kentucky Fried chicken from the take-out in town much better.”

“I like yours better,” said Mrs. Cooper.

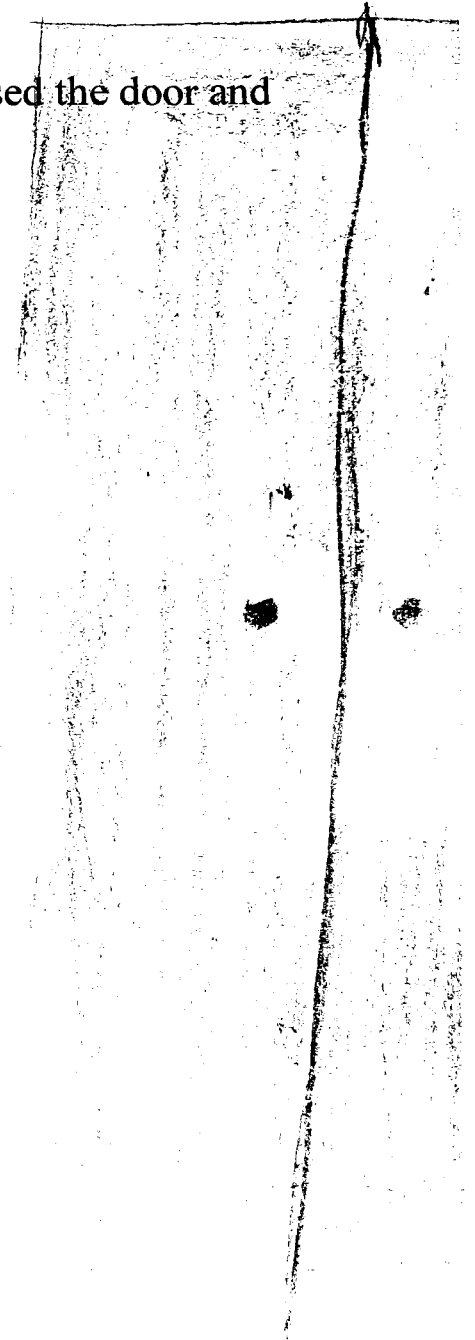
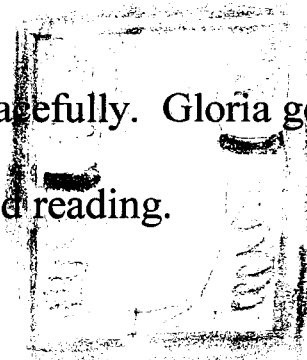
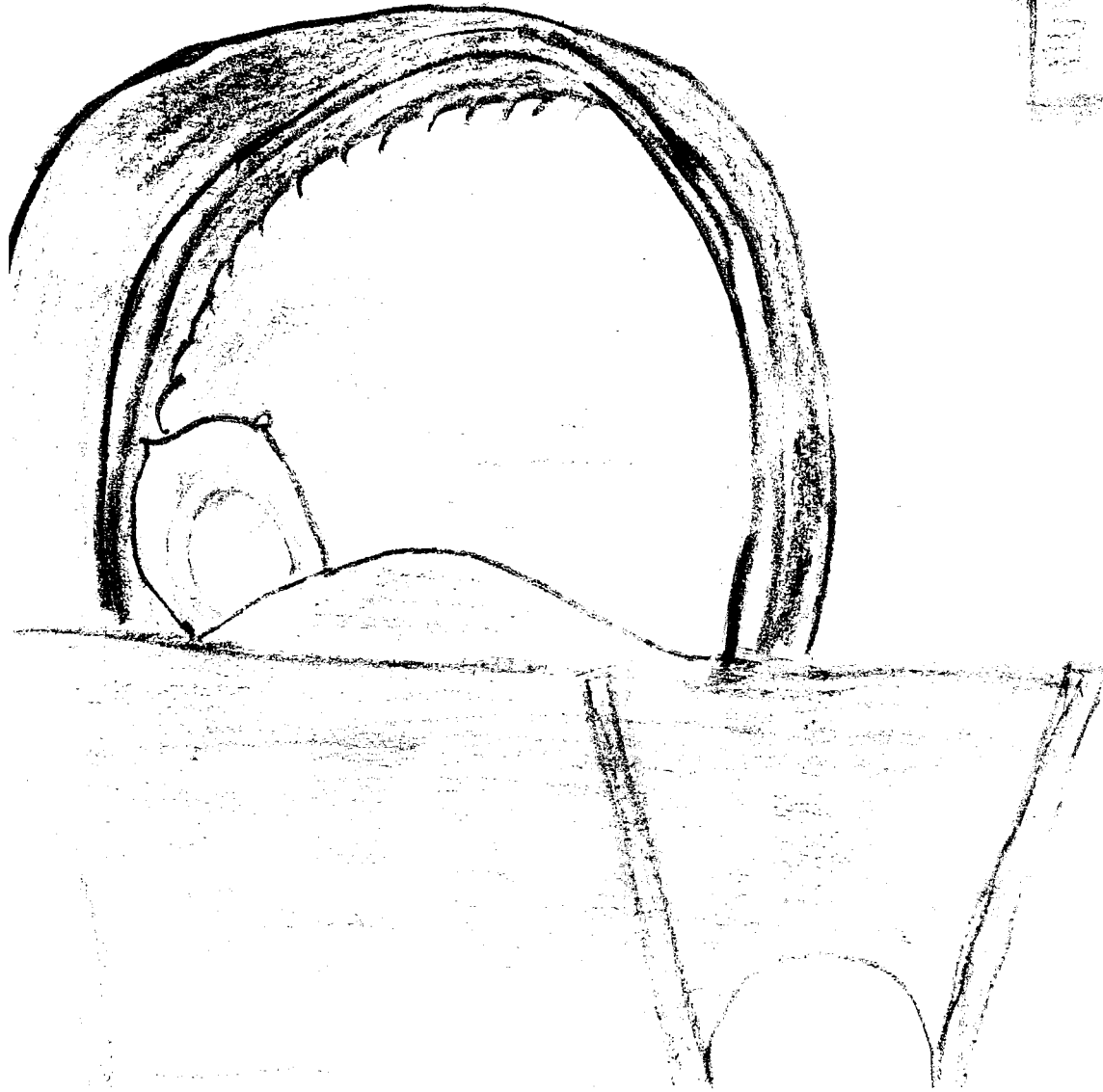
“So do I,” agreed Gloria.

“Well, I better get back to the slaughterhouse or they will be starting the next batch without me,” laughed Rebecca, “so you enjoy your dessert, and you come back anytime to visit.”

“Thanks, Rebecca. And thank you, again, for dinner,” replied Mrs. Cooper. “Gloria, have a good afternoon. I think I will go back to the school and do some work too. Rachel, maybe we should leave the new babysitter alone for awhile.”

The house was quiet when Rachel and Mrs. Cooper went back to school. Gloria tidied up the dishes, putting them into the gray Rubbermaid bin to send back to the kitchen. Then she tiptoed into

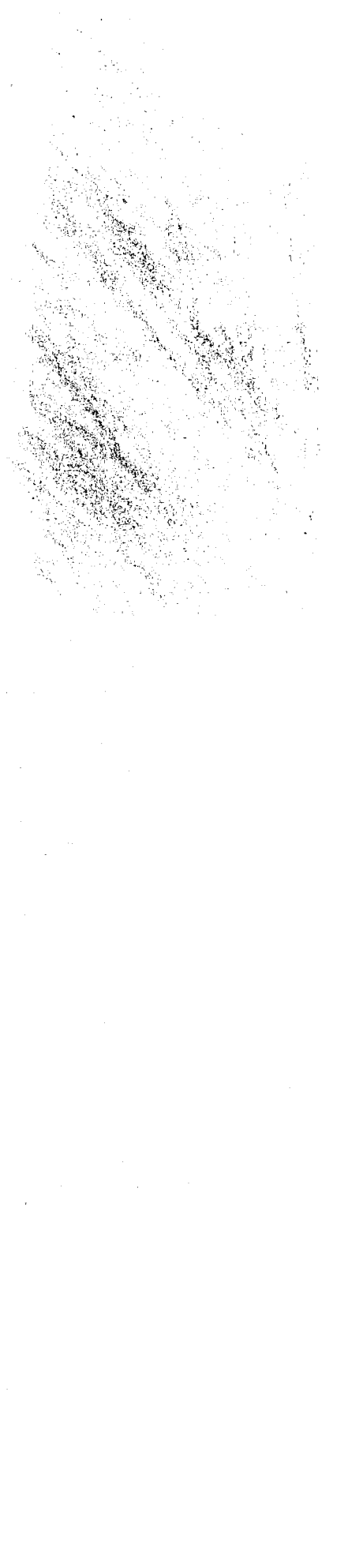
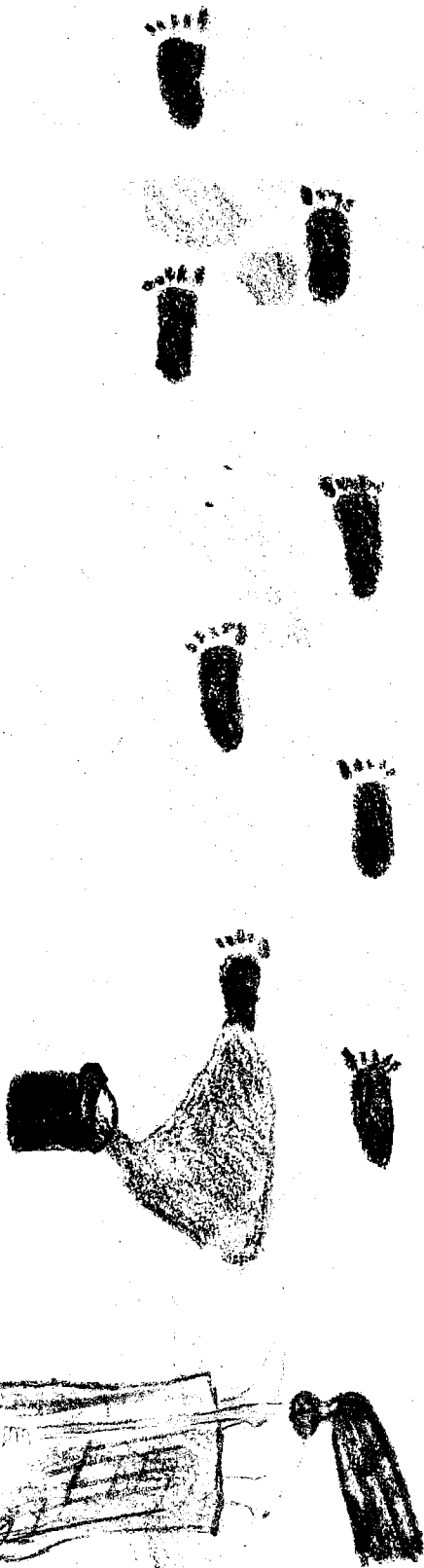
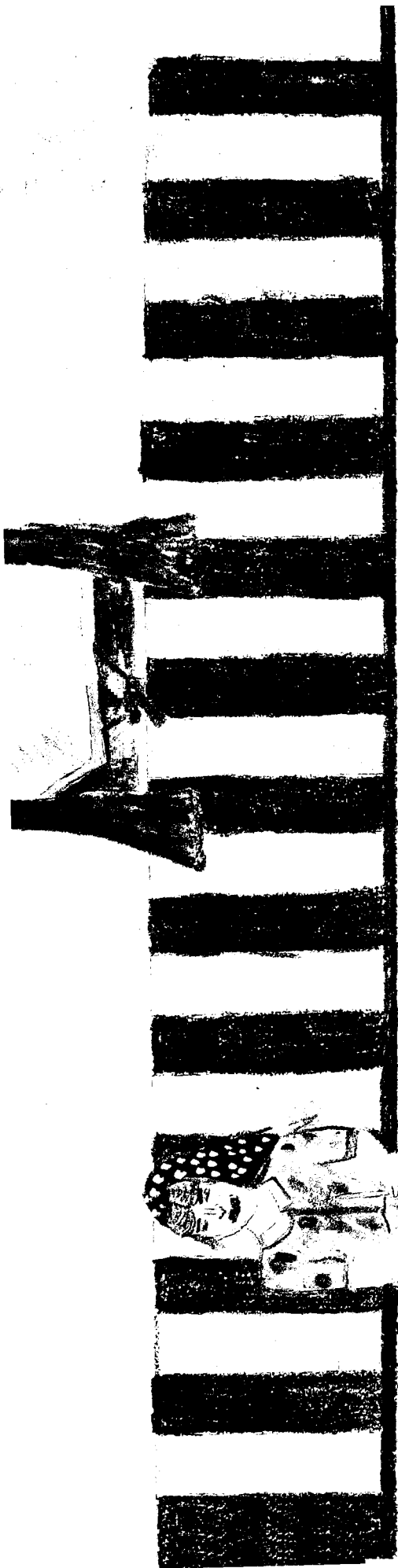
the bedroom to check on Maria. She was sleeping peacefully. Gloria gently closed the door and found her chapter book *The Secret Garden*. She loved reading.



All of a sudden, the outside door flew open, and two little boys ran into the room, yelling at the top of their lungs. Muddy footprints all over the floor! “YOU BOYS GET OUTSIDE!” hollered Gloria. The boys quickly took off around the side of the house. “Oh, great. Now look.” She filled a pail with soapy water and began washing the floor. Finally, the floor was spotlessly clean.

She sat up and was just about to take the water outside, and BOOM! The door knocked over the pail; dirty soapy water went EVERYWHERE and so did the two little boys, bare feet and all, slipping and sliding. This time they squealed with glee, as the warm water felt good on their bare toes.

“Joshua! Samuel! You boys dry your feet, get some clean socks and shoes on and go back to the kindergarten!” warned Gloria. “The baby is sleeping!” They quickly did as they were told, while Gloria mopped up the wet floor yet one more time. “Boys!” she muttered to herself.



“Wa-uh, wa-uh, wa-uh,” came the little sounds from the baby’s room. Gloria listened for a moment, thinking that Maria would go back to sleep. “Wa-uh, wa-uh, wa-uh,” cried Maria in a louder voice until Gloria picked her up.

“Oh, my, what are we going to do with you now? You don’t need to eat yet, and you haven’t slept very long,” Gloria talked to herself as she walked around the living room, cuddling little Maria.

When she glanced out the window, she noticed Rachel pushing her doll in the stroller on the sidewalk. “Hey, there’s an idea – let’s bundle you up and go for a little buggy ride with Rachel’s doll. What do you think, Maria?” asked Gloria. She opened the door and called Rachel to come over. Together, they settled baby Maria in with the doll. Maria had a big sun bonnet



on, and Gloria spread a baby blanket over the handles to give Maria some shade from the sun. Off they went, down the sidewalk. The two babysitters talked to each other as they pushed the stroller up and down the sidewalks along the houses.

“Should we take Maria over to the dairy barn? We could push the stroller across the road,” suggested Rachel.

“Sure,” said Gloria. “I think she would like to see the baby calves, wouldn’t you, Maria?”

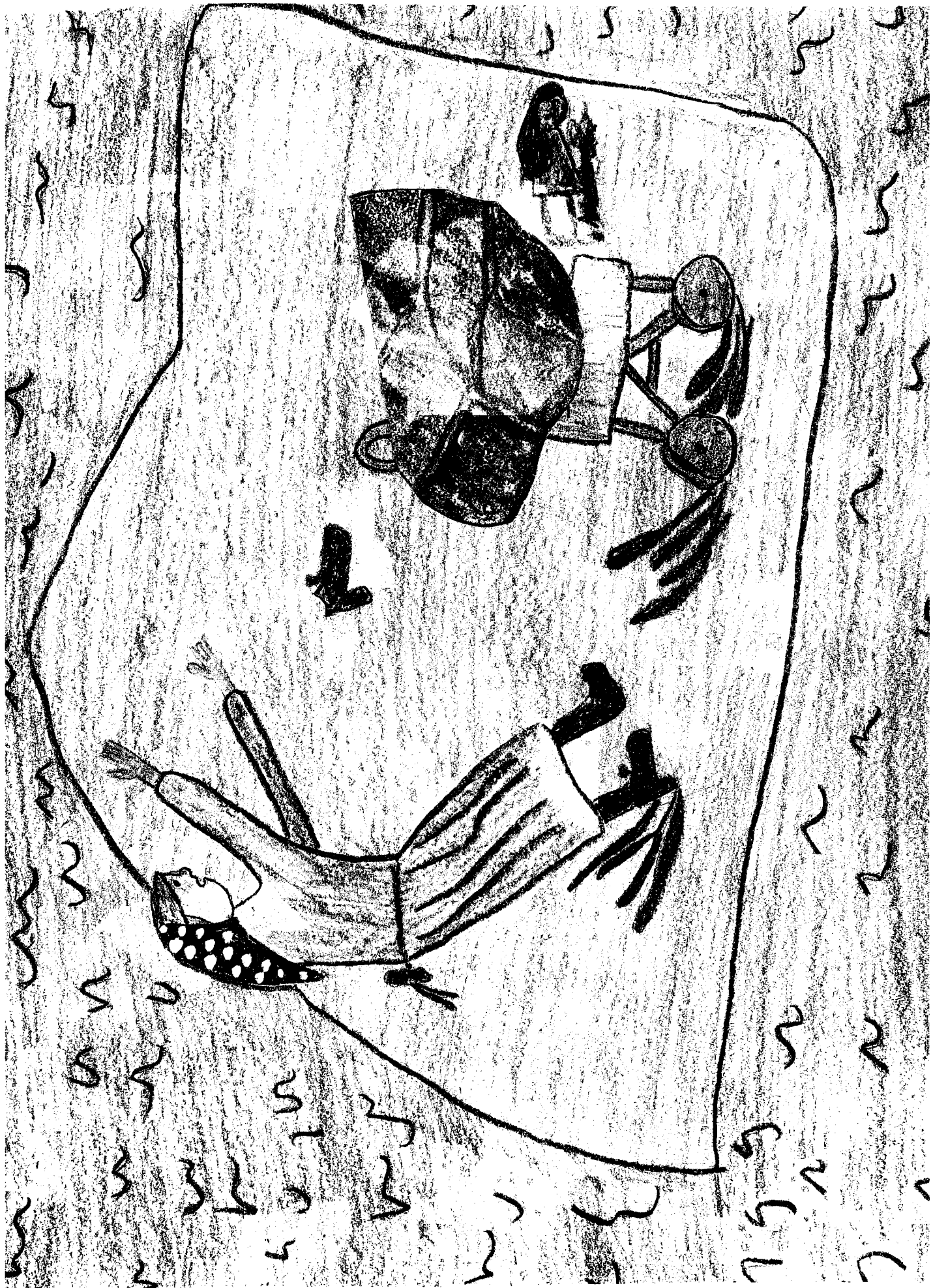
The girls carefully pushed the little stroller across the gravel road, and alongside the wall of the huge dairy barn. Suddenly, the wheels seemed to be going deeper and deeper into the dirt. The dirt was really mud!

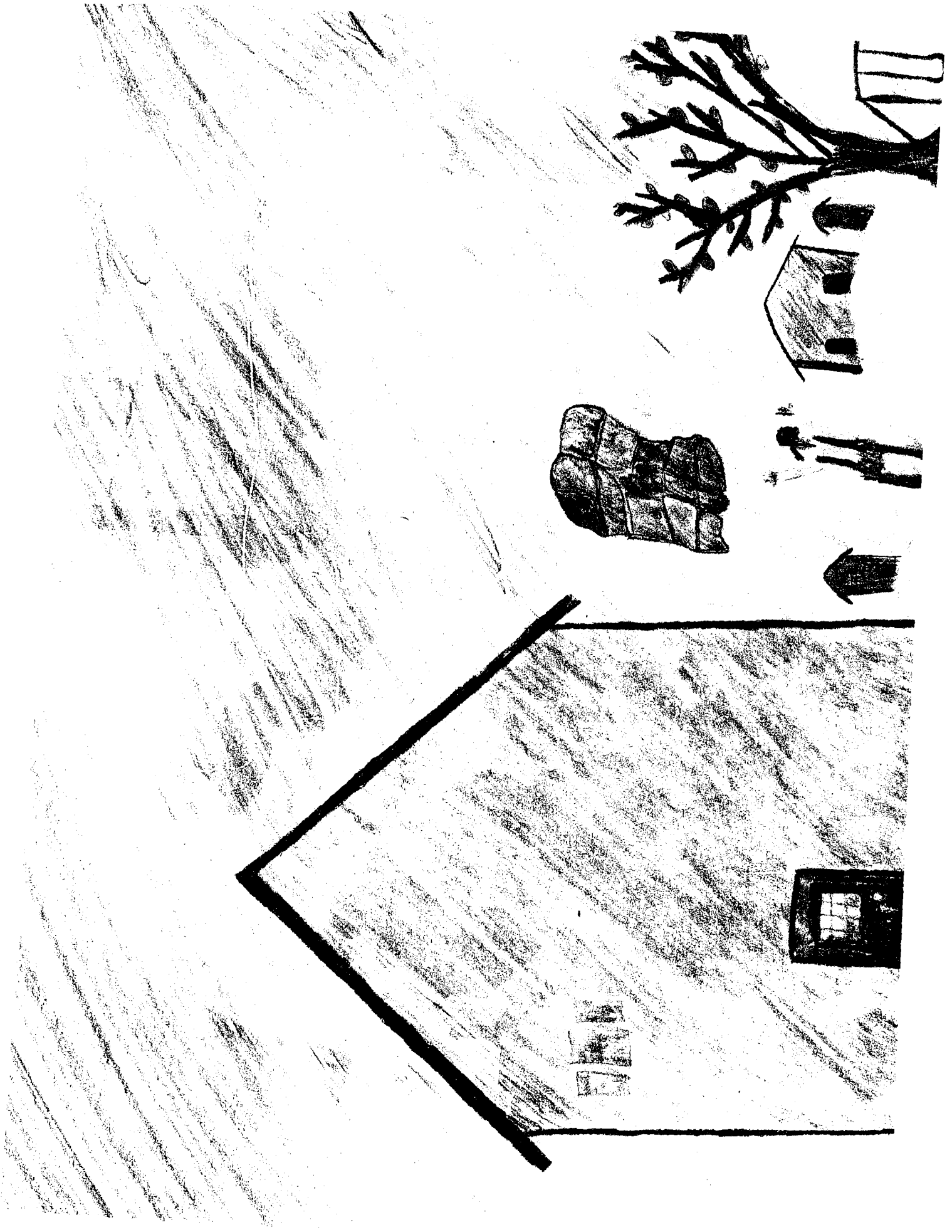
“Oh, no. I think we are getting stuck,” complained Gloria. “I didn’t think it would be so muddy here. I guess the snow and ice melted, so the dirt is too soft for this buggy. Can you help me

pull, Rachel? Those front tires are right in that mud. Oh, we will have such a mess to clean up! Pull harder!”

With one more big pull, the stroller came out with a big JERK, and the whole stroller went flying, baby and all! Gloria went over backwards, with her body landing right in the middle of a mud puddle. Maria, who was all wrapped up, rolled forward onto dry soft dirt, and Rachel grabbed the stroller before it landed on top of the baby. What a sight! Gloria looked like a mud monster from the back, and mud was oozing into her shoes! Now Rachel had Maria in her arms, but a gusty wind had grabbed the baby blanket and blown it up on top of the barn roof. Somehow, her sun bonnet had come off, and it, too, went flying with the wind. Oh, what a crazy thing to happen!

Gloria started crying. “How can I go home with all this mud all over me?” she sobbed. “Can you go in the dairy barn and find my dad? He will be starting the milking machines right now. Maybe he can help us. Oh, I am going to be in big trouble!”





Rachel, carrying Maria in her arms, went to find Gloria's dad. Soon they were both coming out of a side door, near the scene of the accident. When he saw his daughter standing in the mud, he started to smile; then he just laughed and laughed. He couldn't believe what a sight he saw! His helper, Jerry, came out of the calf barn when he heard all the laughing. Jerry got a ladder to rescue the blanket and the bonnet from up on the rooftop.

"Stop laughing. It's not funny! I need to get Maria home and I need help," begged Gloria.

"Oh, come on, Little Babysitter. We'll help you. Jerry, can you walk back to the house with Rachel and Maria? I will carry Gloria into the barn and help her get cleaned up. Rachel, Gloria will come over to Paul-Rebecca's as soon as she's had a bath and changed. Can you babysit for a little while, please? Here, Gloria. Let me help you," said her dad, kindly.

"Rachel, you can put Maria in the swing for awhile. She loves to swing," suggested Gloria.

So off they went, Jerry carrying the muddy stroller, Rachel cuddling little Maria. Rachel was singing *Way up in Heaven* as they walked back to the house. By the time they arrived, the baby was fast asleep. Rachel gently put Maria into her crib, blankets and all.

Soon, Gloria came back to the house, all dressed in clean clothes. Her muddy clothes were left soaking in a big tub in the barn. Her mom would help after supper. When she came into the house, Rachel was reading *The Secret Garden*. Gloria looked all around. “Where is Maria?” she asked.

“Oh, she fell asleep when I walked back to the house,” Rachel replied. “I sang some songs to her, and the next thing I knew, she was sound asleep. She is in her crib.”

“Oh, my gosh, what a day! I could crawl into a crib too; I am so tired now,” said Gloria.

“Oh! I just remembered – I am supposed to be at school! I better go back and tell Mrs. Cooper all about our babysitting adventure! Bye!” Rachel exclaimed, as she jumped up and headed for the door.

“Rachel, thanks for playing with me and helping me babysit today. It was fun until I got stuck,” said Gloria. “I think you will make a good babysitter too.”

Someone was at the door. It was Gloria’s dad. He wasn’t laughing anymore. He brought Gloria a can of pop and a bag of chips. “I thought you might need a little snack after your babysitting accident. Are you okay now? We will have to explain to Rebecca what happened. Do you think it might be a good idea to play with the baby INSIDE the house until she gets a little older? You are lucky that it was YOU in the mud and not Maria. Babies are special little people who trust us to take care of them. We must keep them safe. You will have to promise Rebecca that you will always be careful with Maria. We want Rebecca to know that you a dependable babysitter. What do you think?” asked her dad.

“I know. We should not have taken her outside in the stroller. It looked sunny and warm outside, but I didn’t see the mud under the stroller, and then the wind came from out of nowhere. Oh, I hope Rebecca will still let me babysit Maria,” Gloria sadly spoke to her dad.

“Well, you are a big girl, and you will have to explain. I’m sure Rebecca will understand. Remember, she was a babysitter, too, when she was your age. Just be honest, Gloria.” After giving her a little hug, he left to finish his milking. Gloria sat in the rocking chair and thought about the afternoon’s adventure. She would have to tell the truth and promise to prove what a good babysitter she could be.

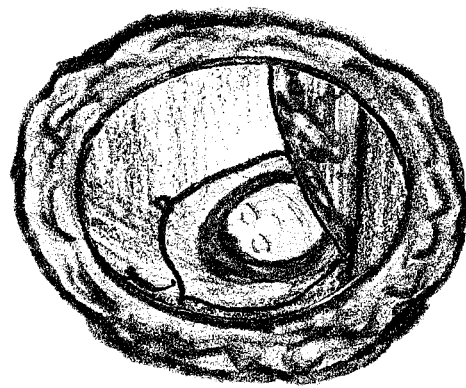
The house was quiet with Maria sleeping, and the motion of the rocking chair lulled Gloria into a short nap. The next sound she heard was Rebecca’s voice. “Hello-o-o! Is anybody home?” she called. Gloria’s eyes quickly opened as Rebecca came into the living room. “So, how is my best babysitter? How was your day?”

Gloria smiled and nervously said, “Oh, everything went just fine... until...”

Rebecca winked at her, gave her a big hug and said, “I heard you took good care of Maria, even when you got stuck in the mud! And, my gosh, this floor looks so clean! Have you been scrubbing all day? What a good babysitter I have!”

“Wa-uh, wa-uh, wa-uh!” came the sounds of a hungry baby. They looked at each other and smiled. Rebecca and Gloria slowly walked into Maria’s bedroom together.





Rodeo!



by Patricia E. Cooper

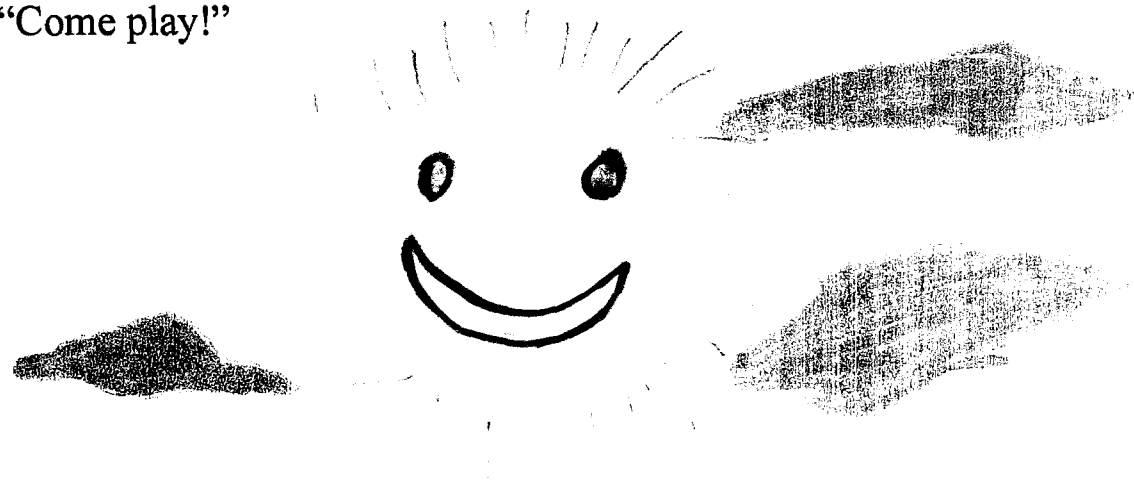
illustrated by Kathy Cooper
and Hutterite children

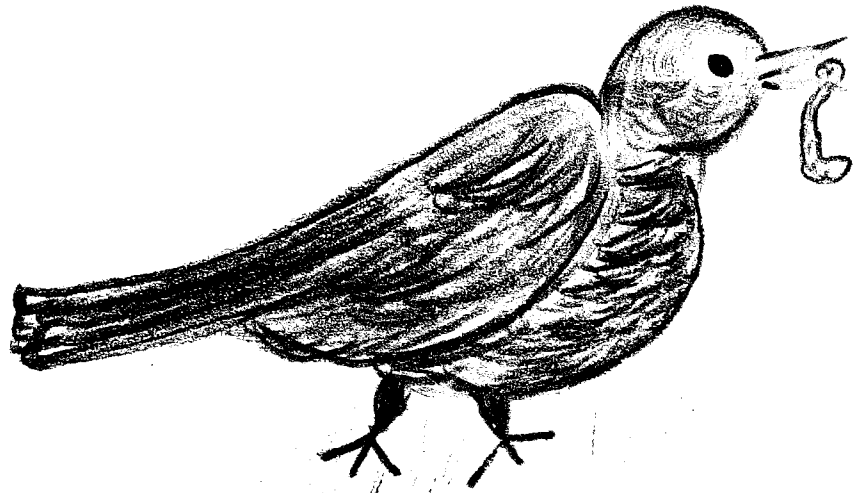
The warm spring day was like an invitation to the two young Hutterite boys. English school was finished for the day and so were their chores. There was still plenty of time before going to church.

“Come out and play,” Sun said, as it smiled down on Sandy Creek Colony. Sun liked to watch the boys as they tackled new adventures outside.

One warm day in May

The Sun said, “Come play!”





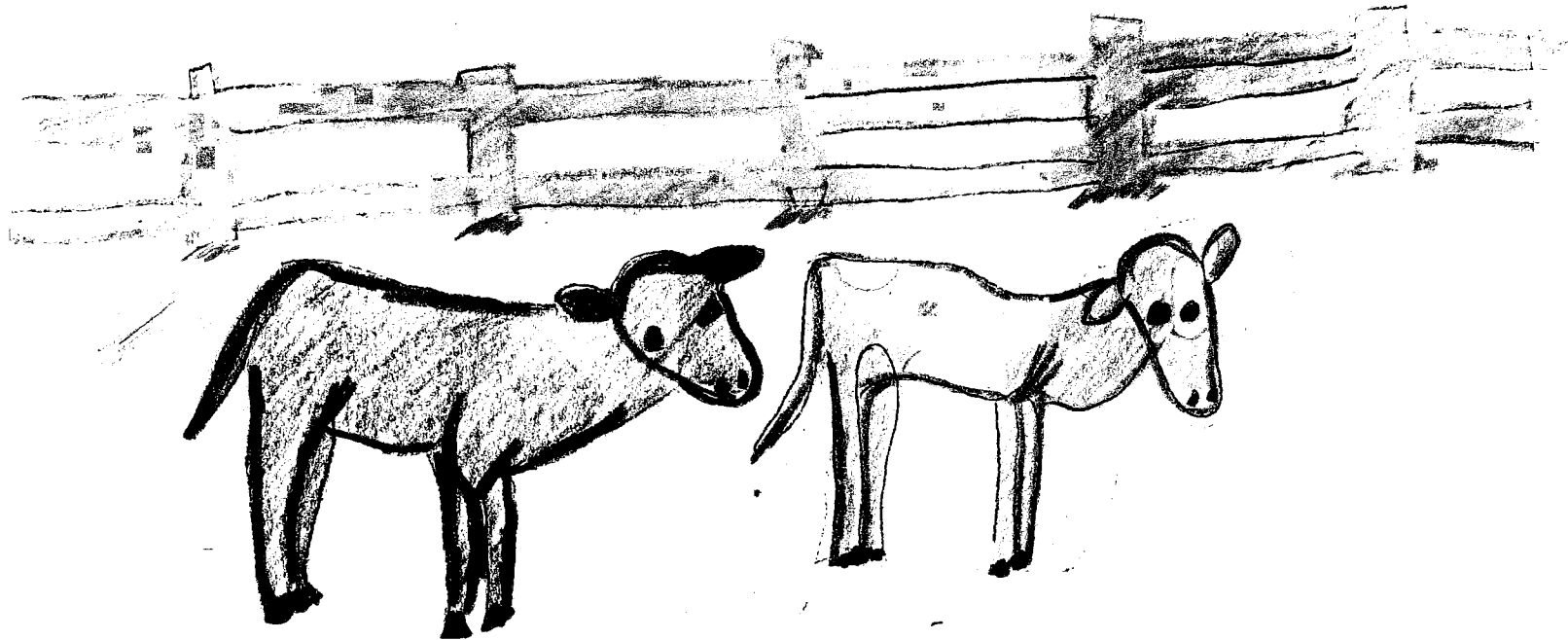
Red robins sang their songs,
Building nests won't take them long.

Gophers ran all around,
Popping up from underground.



Spring calves are here.

Branding time is near.



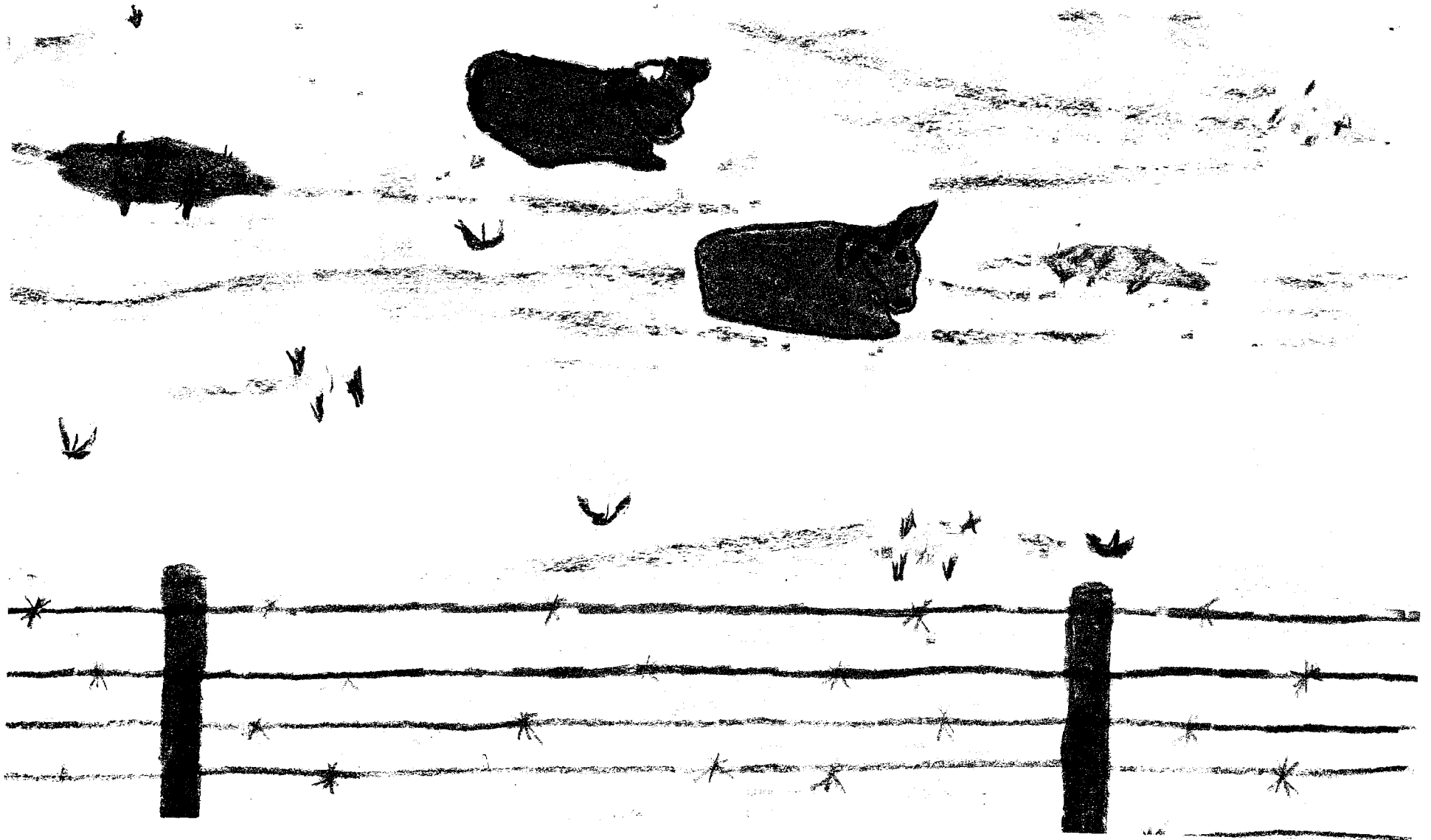
Oh, life is a joy -

When you are a Hutterite boy!

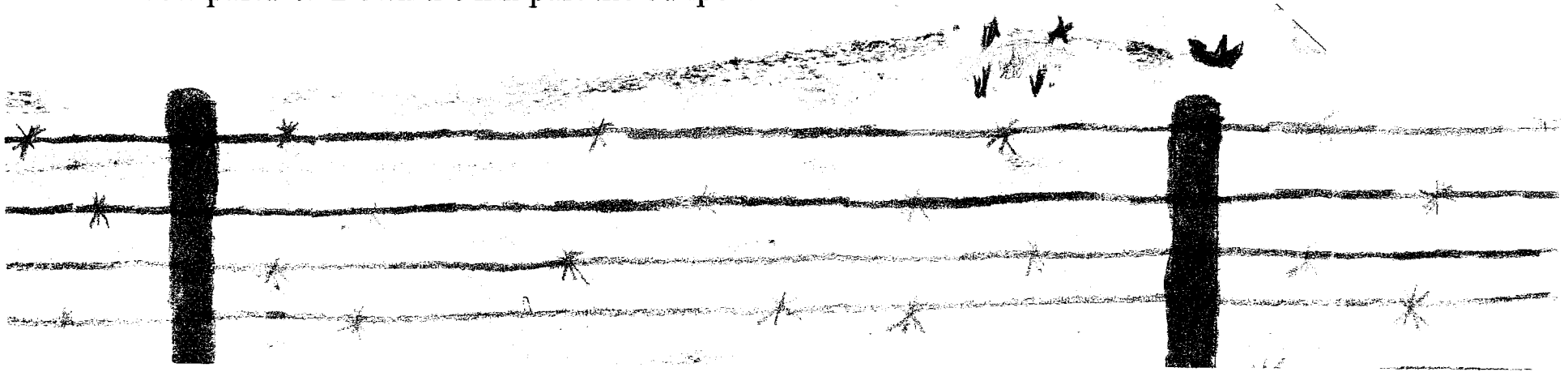
Arnie and Luke were skipping along the lane near the cow pasture. They decided to count the new calves.



“Look. There are two new calves,” whispered Luke. He didn’t want to wake them up from their warm lazy nap in the glorious sunshine. The calves looked up as the boys approached.

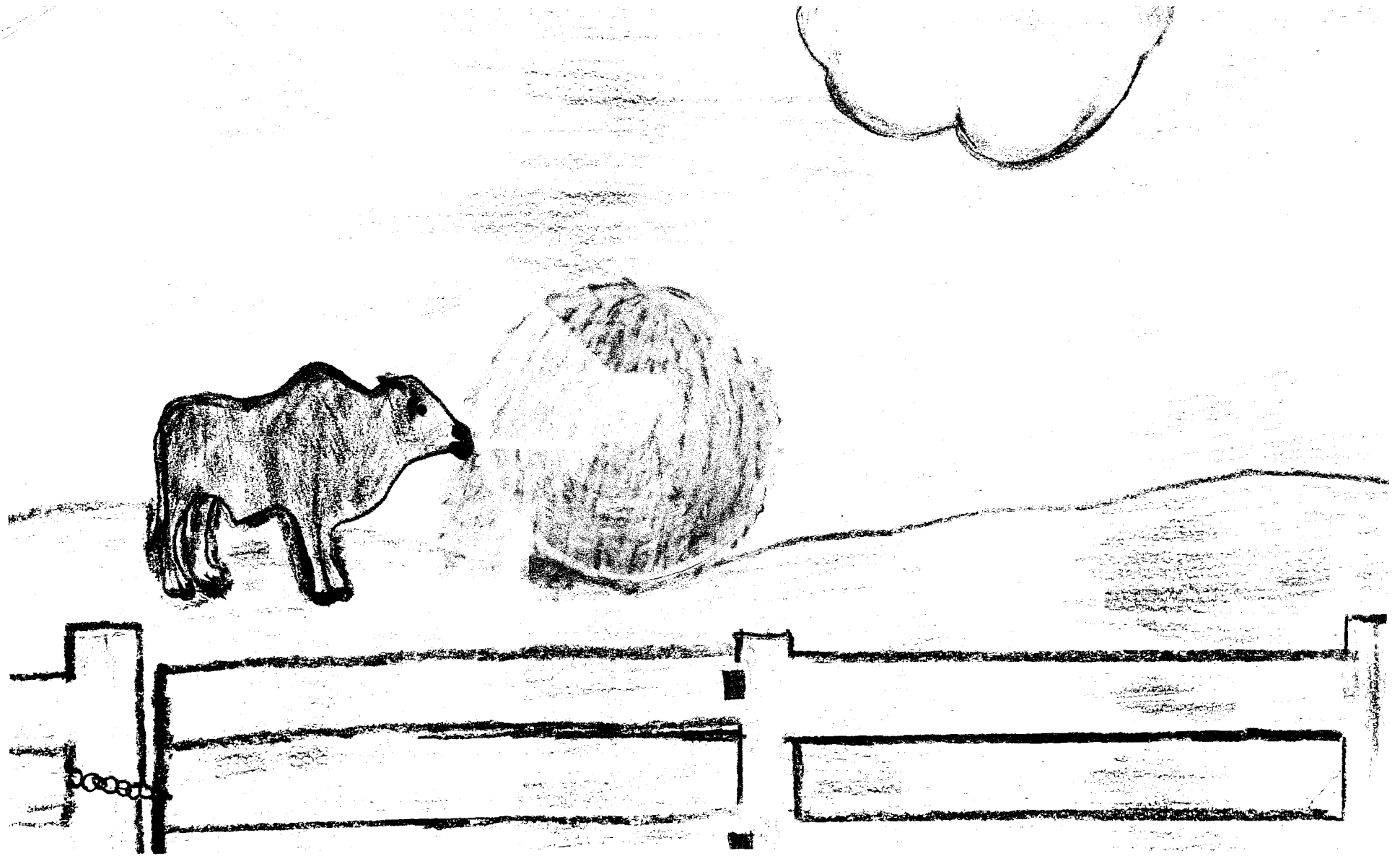


“Let’s count all the calves,” suggested Arnie. Down they slithered, under the fence, carefully so they wouldn’t tear their pants on the sharp spikes of the barbed wire. Down they walked toward the cow pasture. Down the hill past the bullpen.

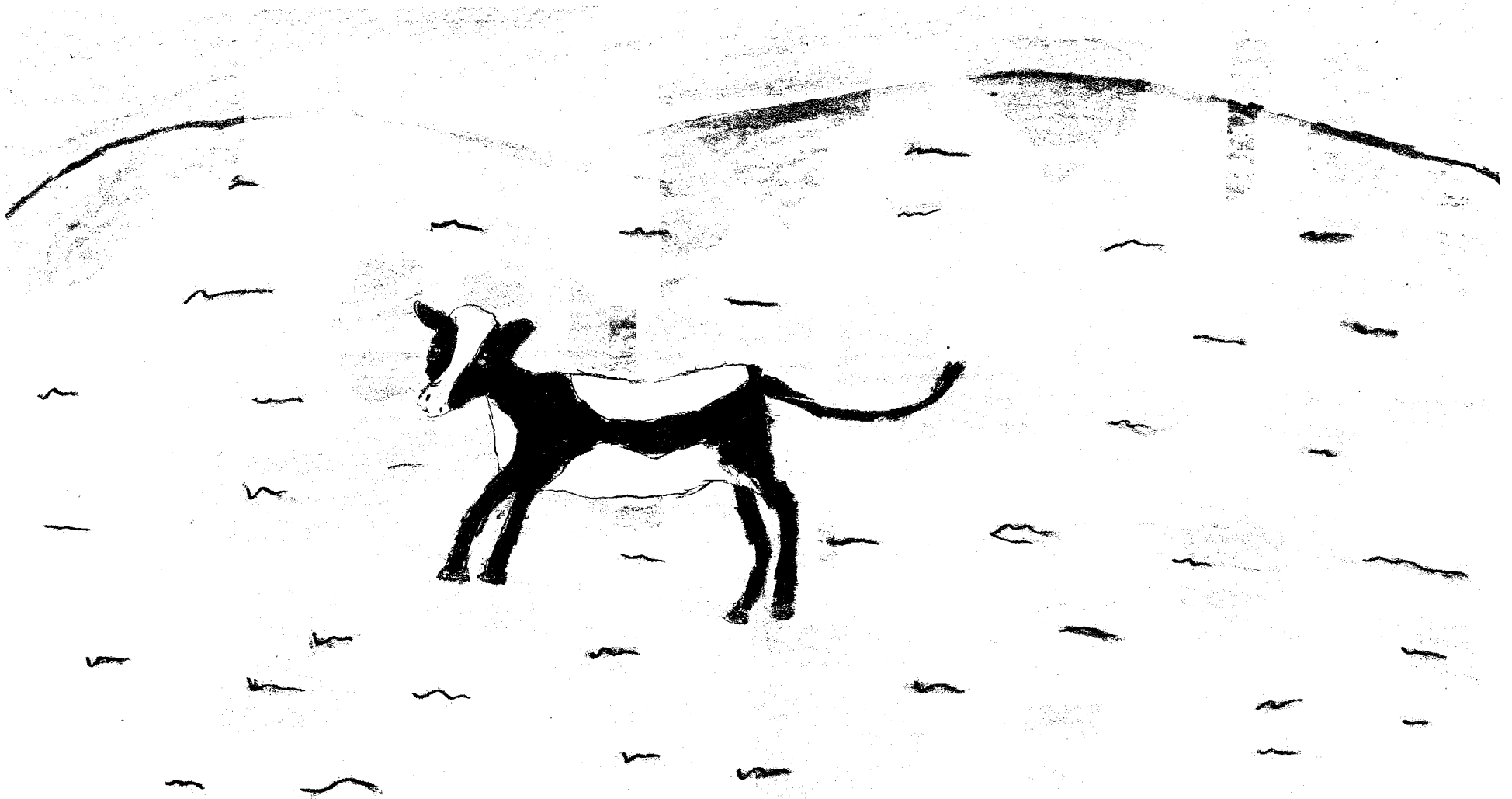


“MMmmmm..mmmm,” moaned the boys as they noticed a big bull munching on a round bale near the fence. “I like talking to the bulls,” said Luke. The bull casually lifted his huge head. He was munching on his afternoon snack of delicious alfalfa hay. He stared at the two boys. Then he took two big bull steps toward the fence.

“MMM...MMMMMMMM!!!” he announced his approaching nearness. The boys ran.



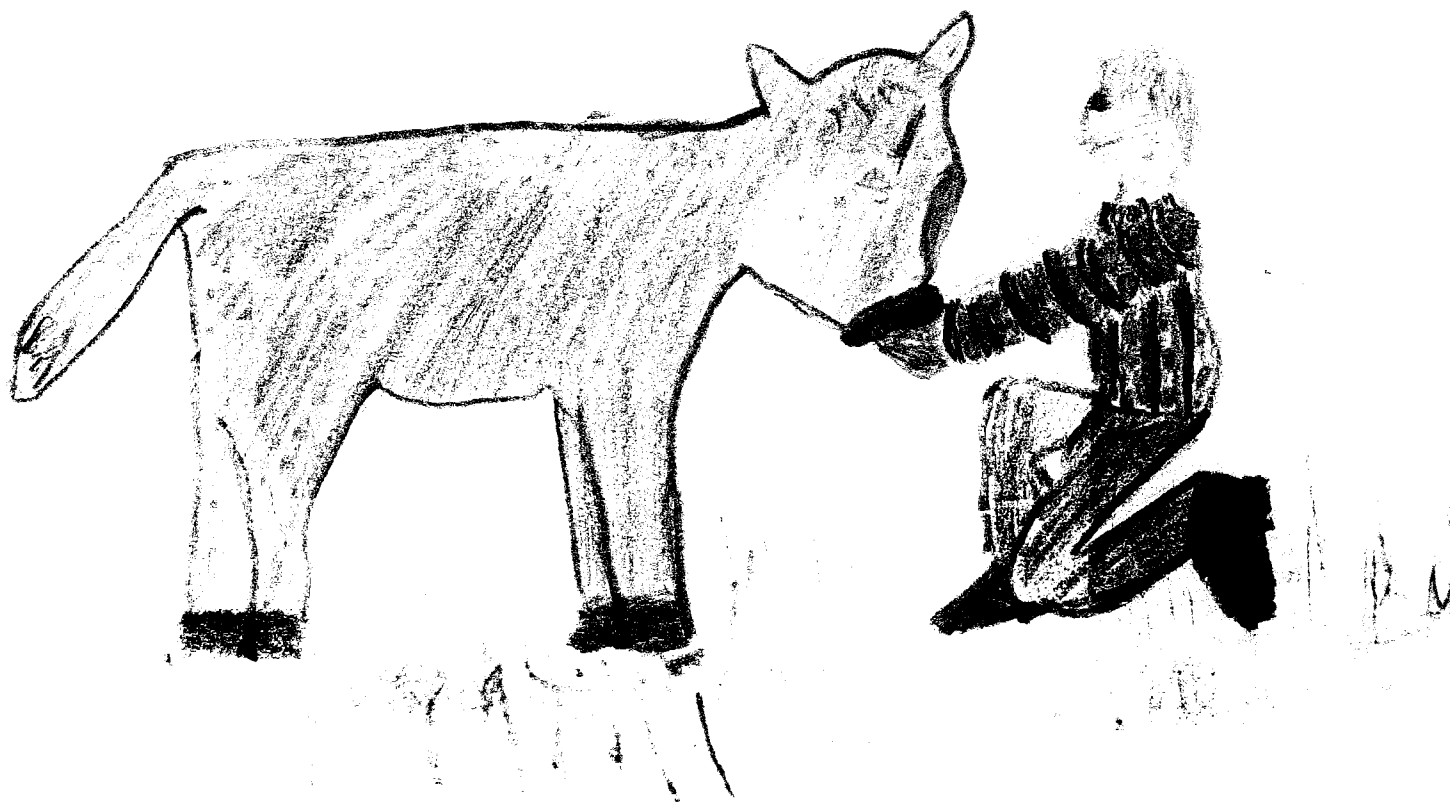
Next, they walked along the fence line, counting the calves by two's. "Two, four, six, eight ... oh, I may have counted that one twice," said Luke, pointing to the frisky black and white calf.



The boys stopped to pet the new baby calves. The new babies were not afraid. They were friendly. They licked the boys' outstretched hands.

“They are so cute and soft right now,” said Arnie. “Hey! This one is going to EAT my finger!” he squealed in delight. “He likes me!”

“Maybe it thinks you are its mother,” Luke declared, as he watched it sucking Arnie’s fingers.





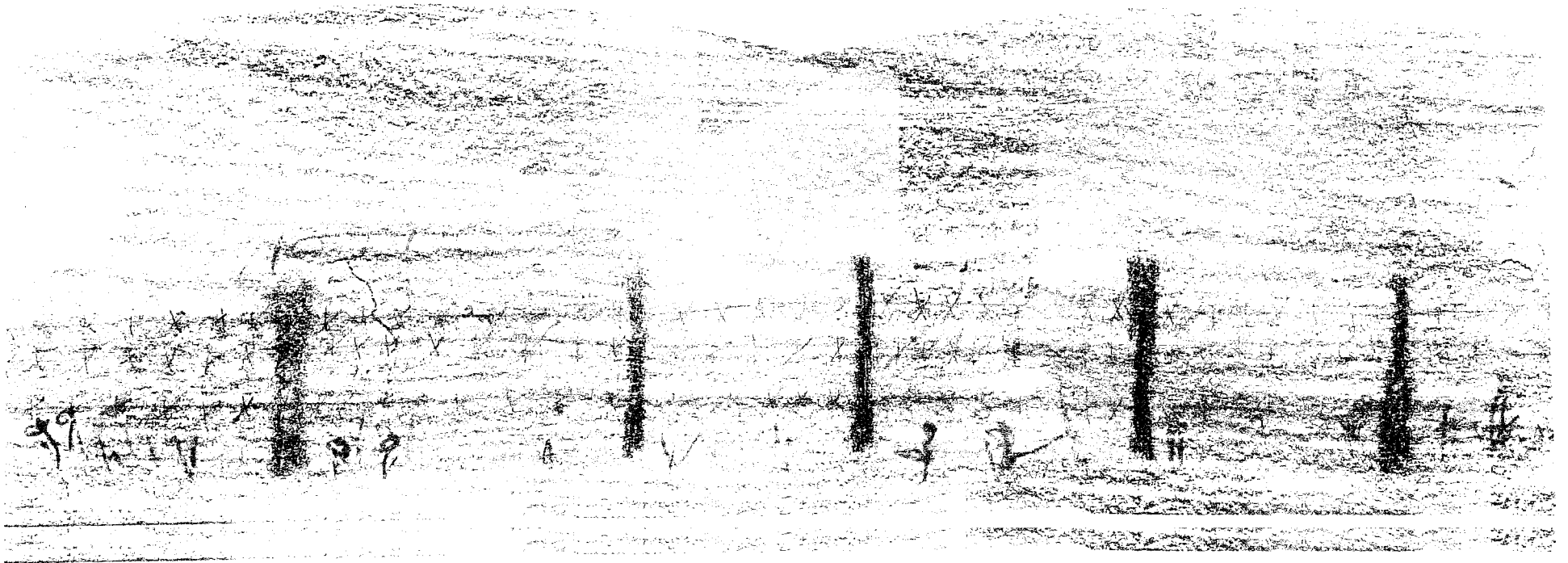
Just then, Uncle Joe and Peter came over the pasture hill. They were riding horses.

“Good afternoon, boys,” said Uncle Joe. “I see we have two new calves.”

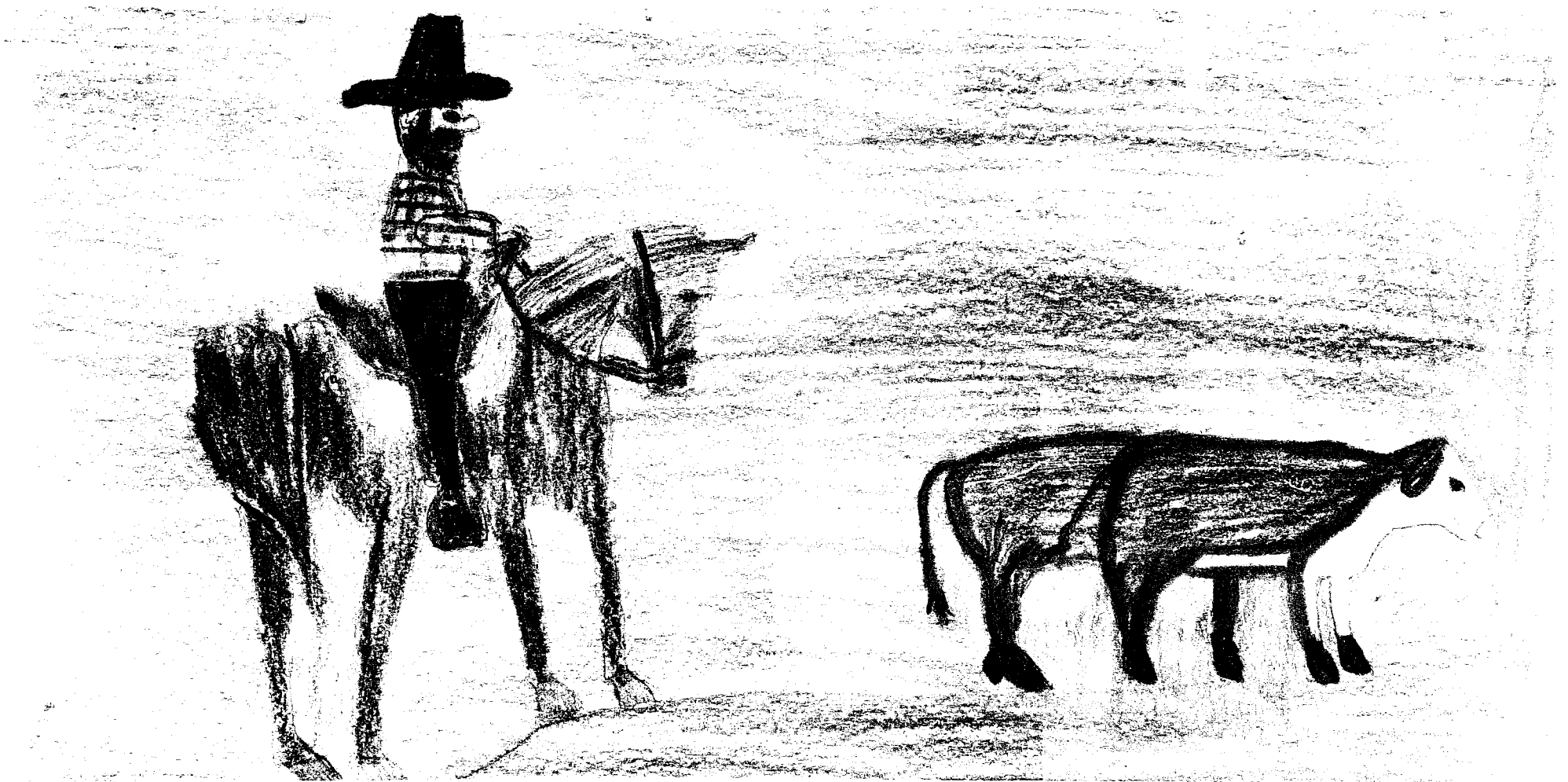
“We’ll have to brand them later in the summer,” Peter commented to Uncle Joe.

“Are we branding today?” asked Arnie.

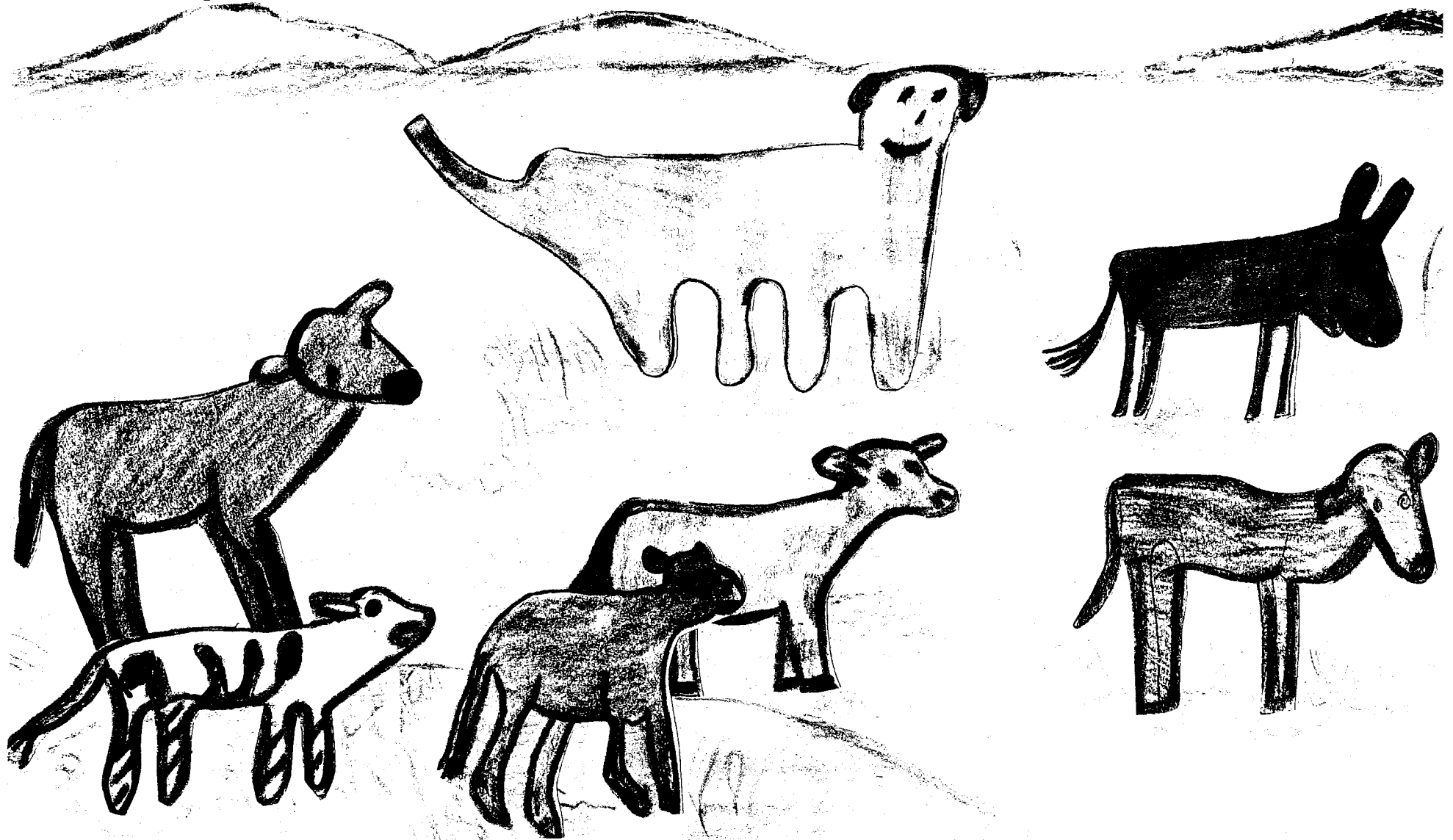
“Not today. We just came over to look at all the calves. Do you think they are ready for branding, boys?” asked Uncle Joe.



“Oh, yes!” replied both Arnie and Luke. “We counted 78 calves altogether yesterday,” offered Arnie, “and we have two new ones today. Now we have 80 to brand.”



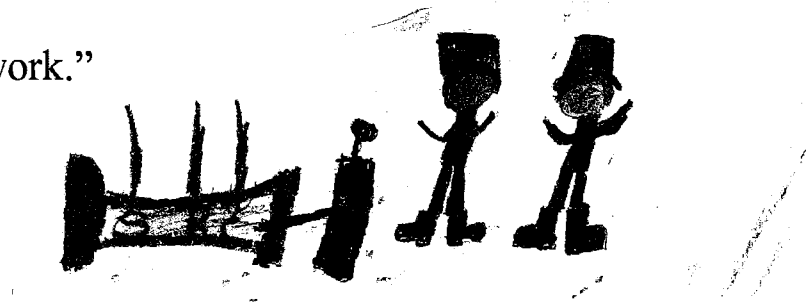
“Oh, so you boys HAVE been busy. Thanks for counting them,” said Uncle Joe as he looked over the pasture. There were cows and calves everywhere.



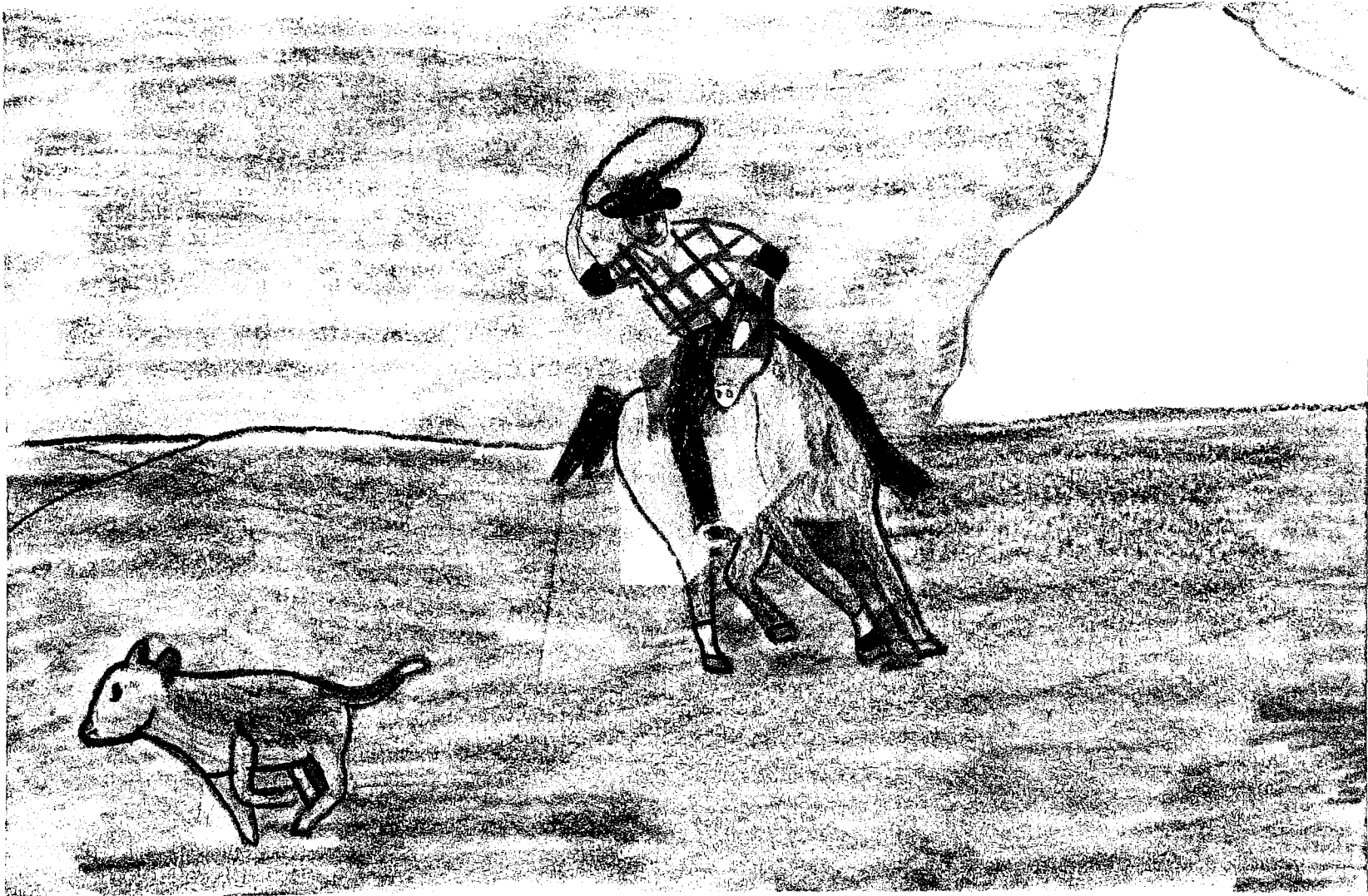
At supper, all the children were excited. Uncle Joe announced that tomorrow would be Branding Day. Even the 'big girls' were laughing and talking about Branding Day. Usually 'big boys' from other colonies came to help. Everyone loves Branding Day!

Later that evening, Arnie learned his German verses. After that, he was just too excited to sleep. His dad was still up. "Dad, does it hurt the calf when you brand?" Arnie asked.

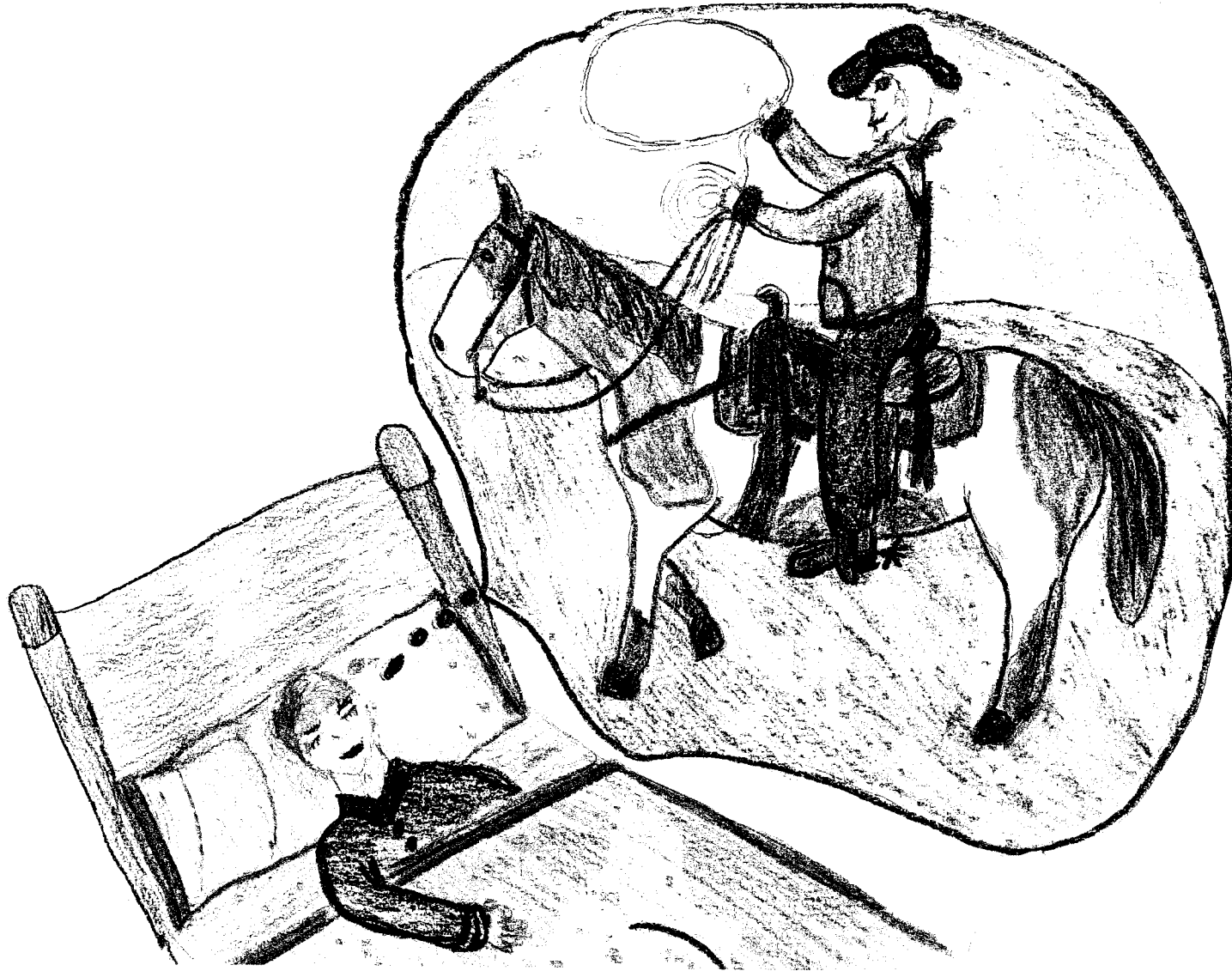
"Oh, I think it might sting a little, but not for long, Arnie," he answered. "The hide is thick, not like our skin. It happens so quickly that when it hurts, it is also finished. It is important to identify our cattle with our *Sandy Creek Colony* brand, which is SCC. It is a job that must be done; just like the vaccination, so the calves stay healthy. The calves settle down soon after. You will see tomorrow," continued his dad. "Now, we should both go to bed so we have a good night's rest. We have a busy day tomorrow. Branding is hard work."



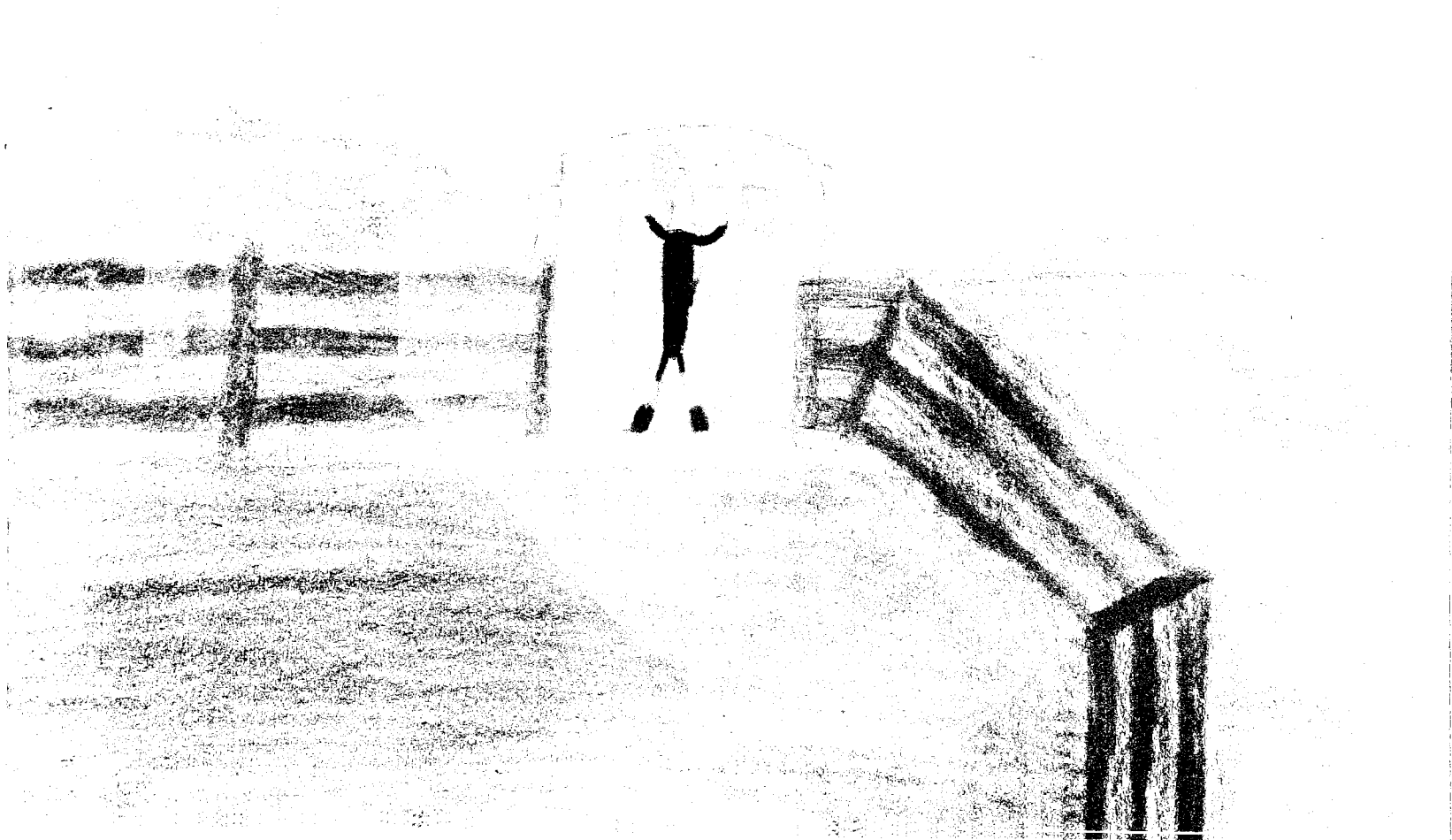
Luke went to sleep soon after he learned all his German verses, too. He was dreaming about bulls, calves, and cowboys riding horses.



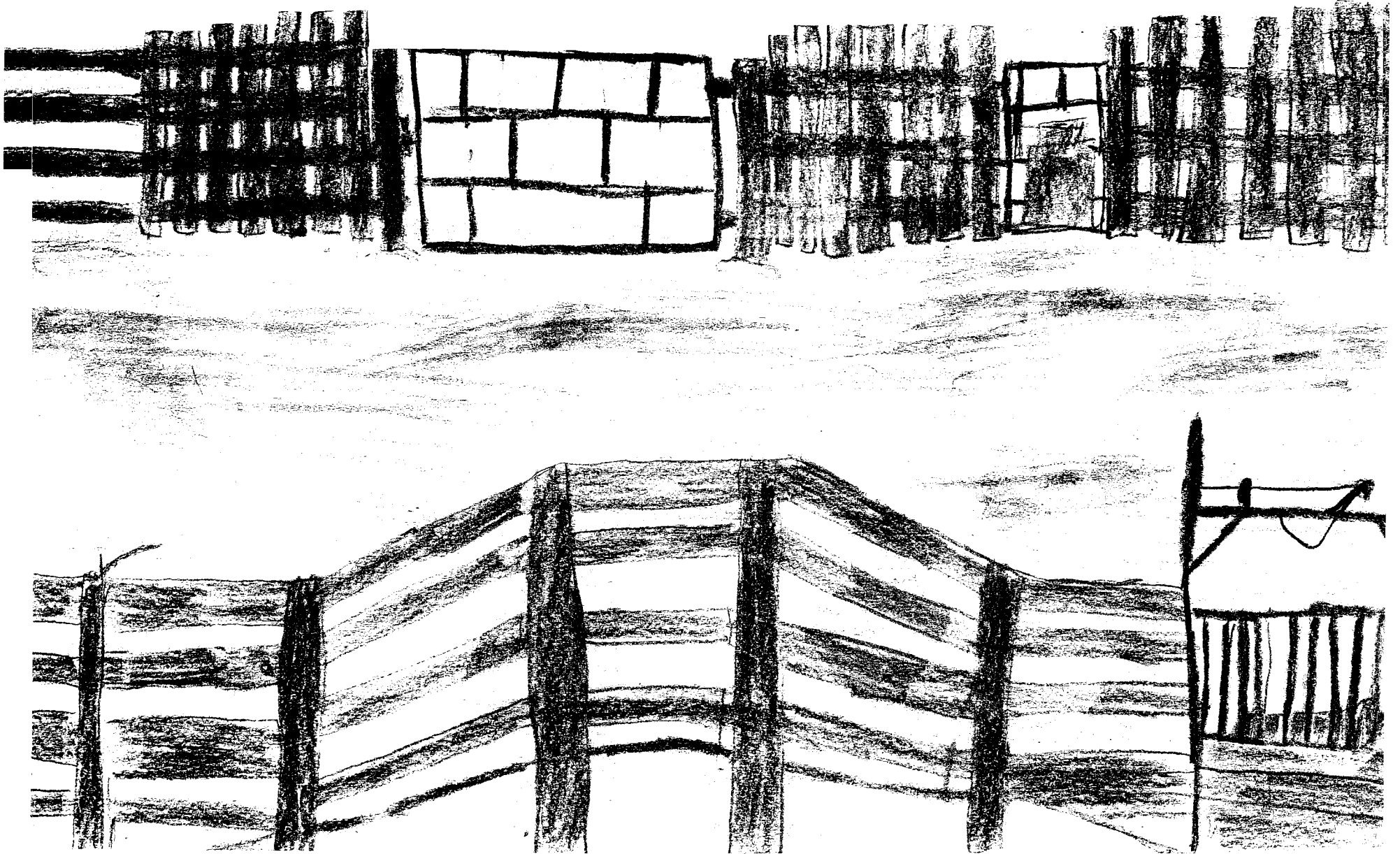
In his dream, he was wearing a cowboy outfit. And he was riding a beautiful Paint horse. He had a lasso in his hand. Calves were hopping and running all over the place. It was a good dream.



Before he finished his dream, he heard his mom say, "Luke! Time to get up, Sleepyhead! You must be having a good dream because you just said 'YAHOO'!" She laughed, "Come on to the kitchen for breakfast. The men need you to help with the calves today." Luke's eyes popped open. He got up quickly. He could hardly wait for Branding Day to begin!



The empty corrals were ready for the action to begin.

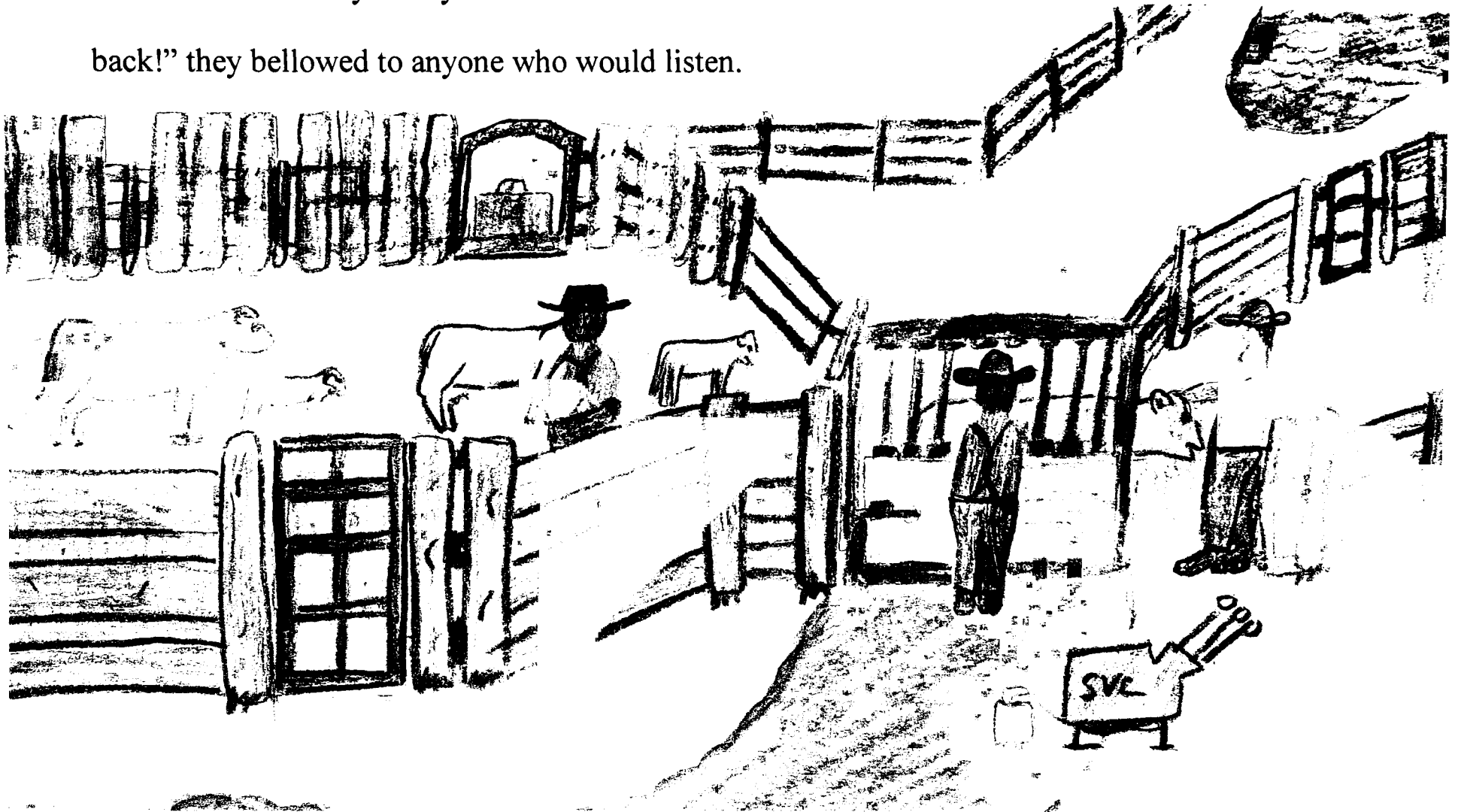


The boys were allowed to skip English School to help the men. The English teacher, Mrs. Cooper, would come down later with the girls to watch. There would be moms, the kindergarten children and people from other colonies down at the corrals. It would be an exciting time for everyone.



Luke was very excited. “I hope they bring down a cooler of pop,” he thought. “It will be hot and I will be thirsty.”

It was finally time for branding to begin. The calves were organized into three holding pens. Their mothers, the cows, were making lots of noise. “MOO! MOO... MMMM ... MOO! Someone took our babies away!” they cried. “MOO! ... MOO ... MMMMMM ... MOO! We want them back!” they bellowed to anyone who would listen.

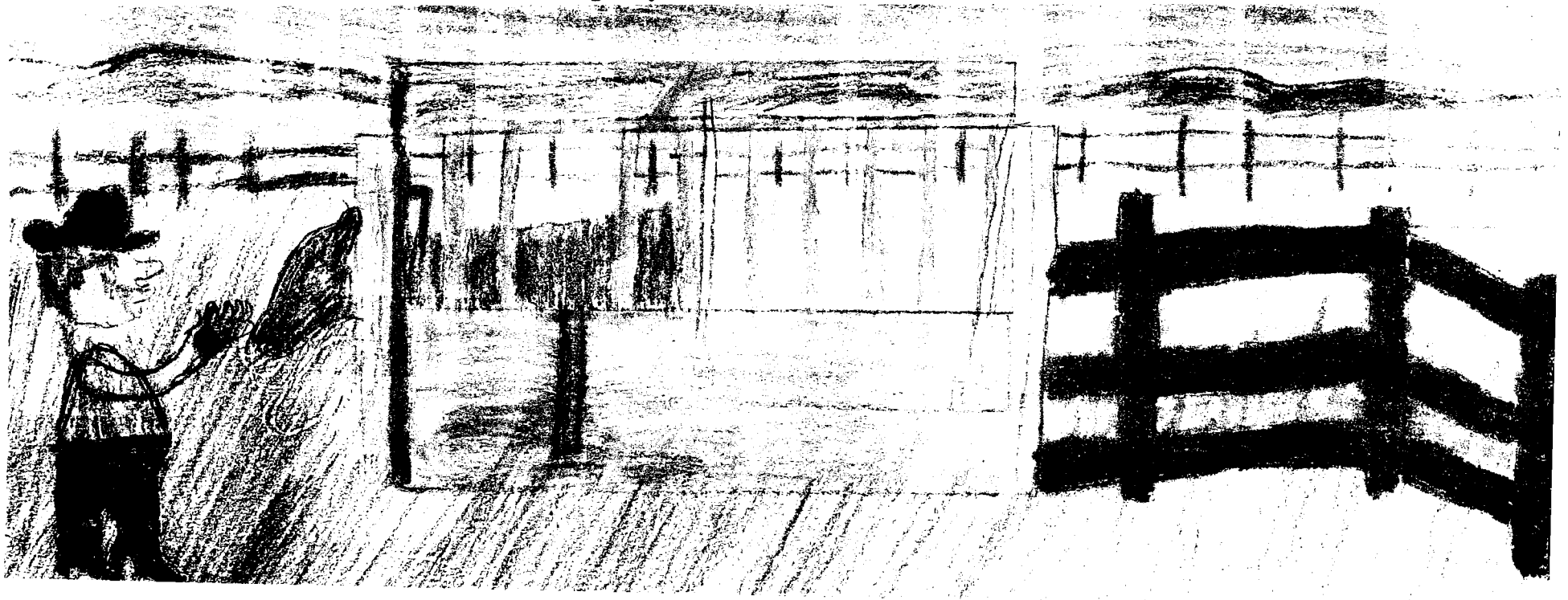


“Boy, are they loud today,” commented Luke. “ I think they want their babies.”

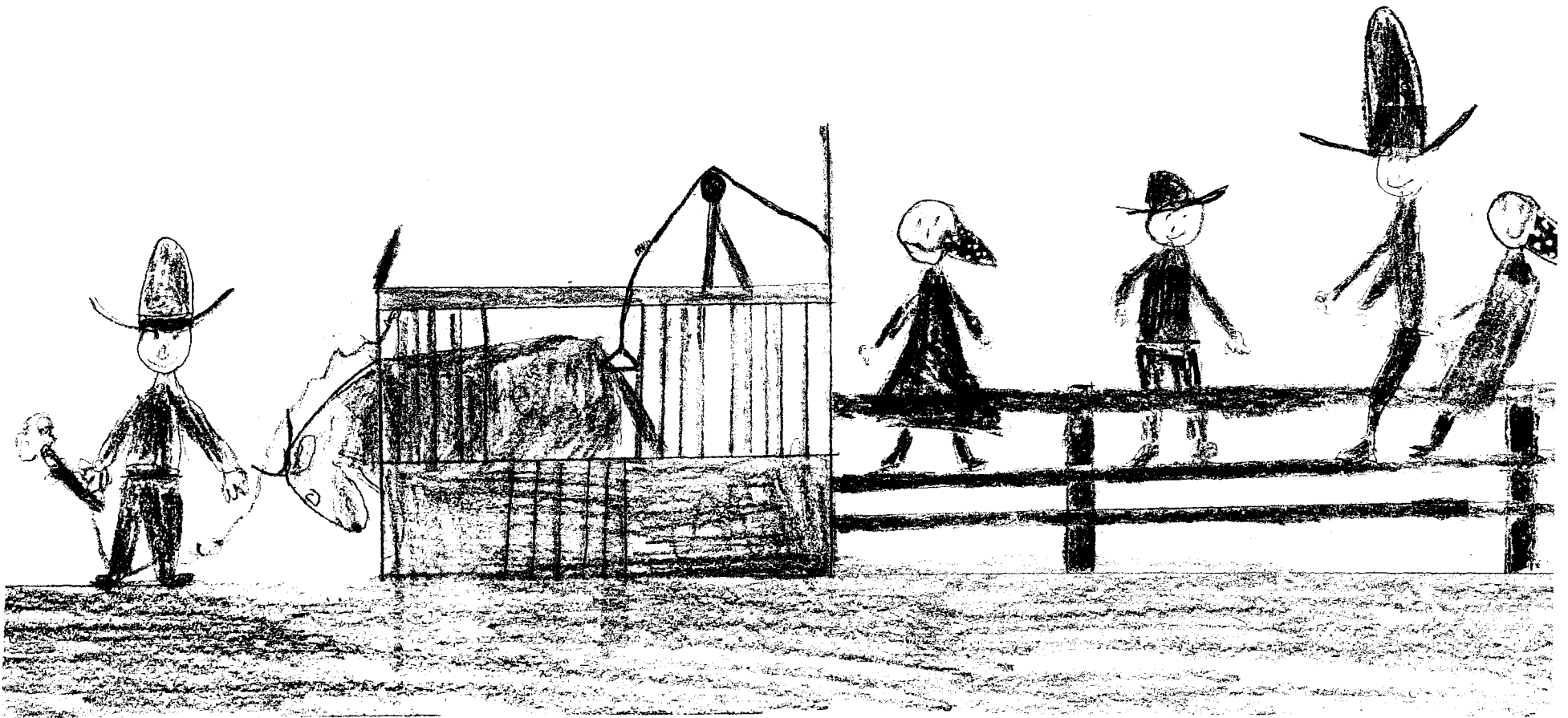
“Take it easy, Girls! Don’t worry. You’ll get them back!” Uncle Joe called out to the cows.

“Do they understand you, Uncle Joe?” asked Arnie.

“Oh, they might feel a little better when I talk to them,” replied Uncle Joe, chuckling. He looked over toward the men and ‘big boys’.



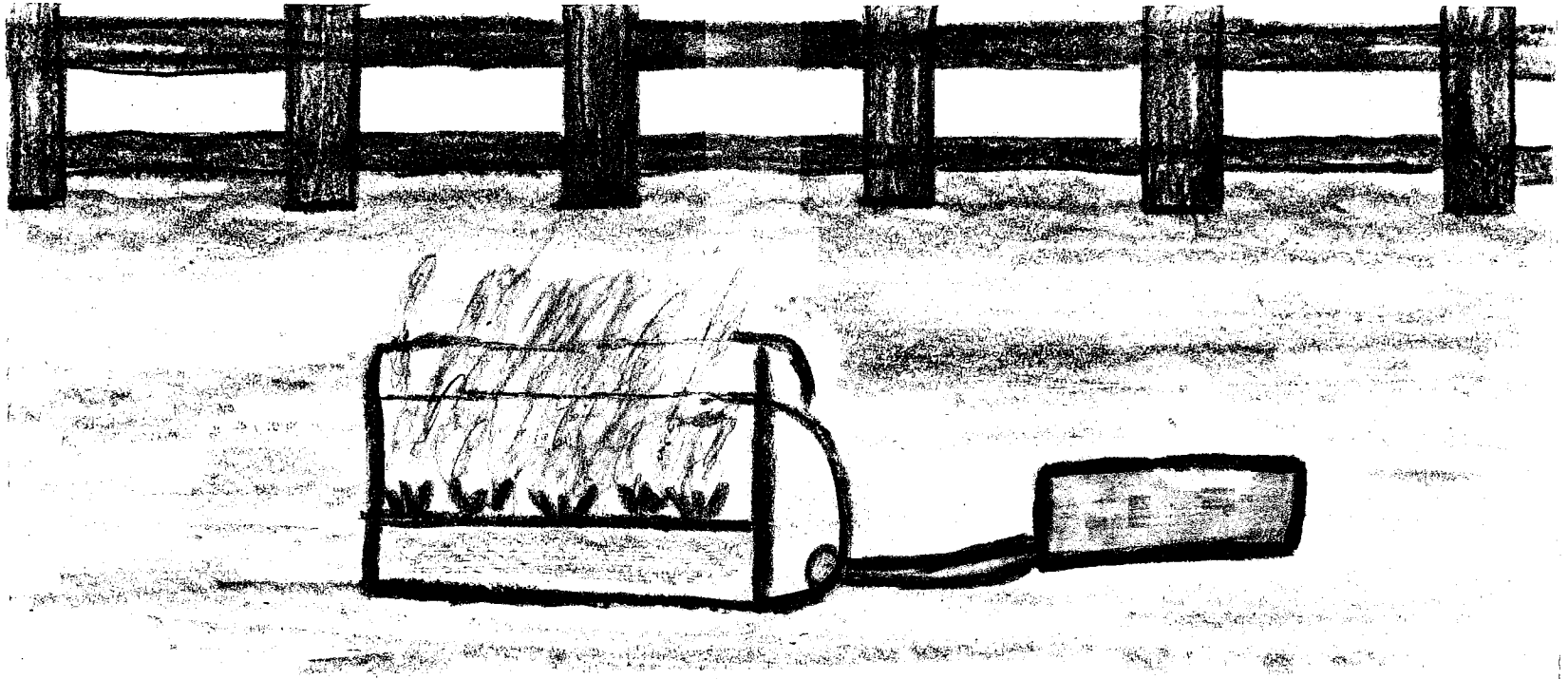
Everyone was busy talking, laughing, checking the propane tanks, the branding irons and the medications. Peter was helping Ben, the colony boss, with the cattle squeeze.





“Okay, Peter, let’s get started,”
directed Uncle Joe. “Is all the
equipment ready?”

“You bet. First one, coming
right up,” Peter shouted over the
mooing of the cows and the bawling of
the calves. Peter was on his horse. He
quickly lassoed a big healthy calf.



Two 'big boys', Jason and Gideon, soon had the calf flipped on its side. Uncle Joe took the hot branding iron from the propane burner. Joe had all the vaccination equipment ready. In less than two minutes, the calf had the colony brand and a shot of "5 way" to prevent disease.





WATER

“Oooh ... smell the burning hair,” said Luke.

“That branding iron sure looks red hot. Ouch!”

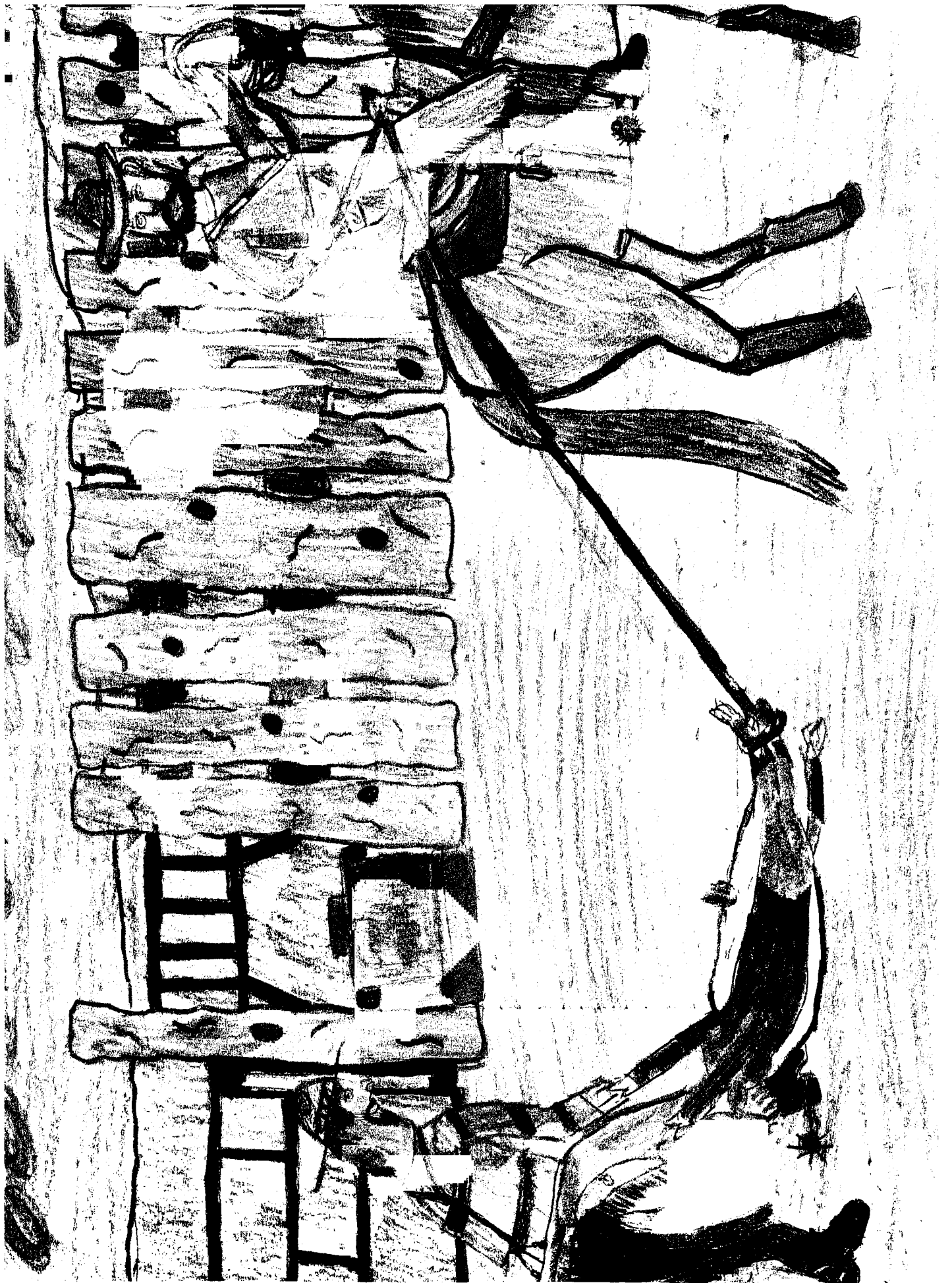
“The branding iron has to be hot enough to burn quickly. They’re cows, you know, not people. Their skin is thick and tough, not like ours. The hair burns quickly and the colony brand goes onto the hide,” explained Arnie. “My dad said it doesn’t hurt them long. They just get surprised and a little scared, and then they hop off to play with the other calves right away.”

The brand spelled **SCC** .



“Oh,” murmured Luke as he watched the men at work. The calves fussed a bit, but not for long. Peter got kicked twice. Soon eleven calves were back with their moms.



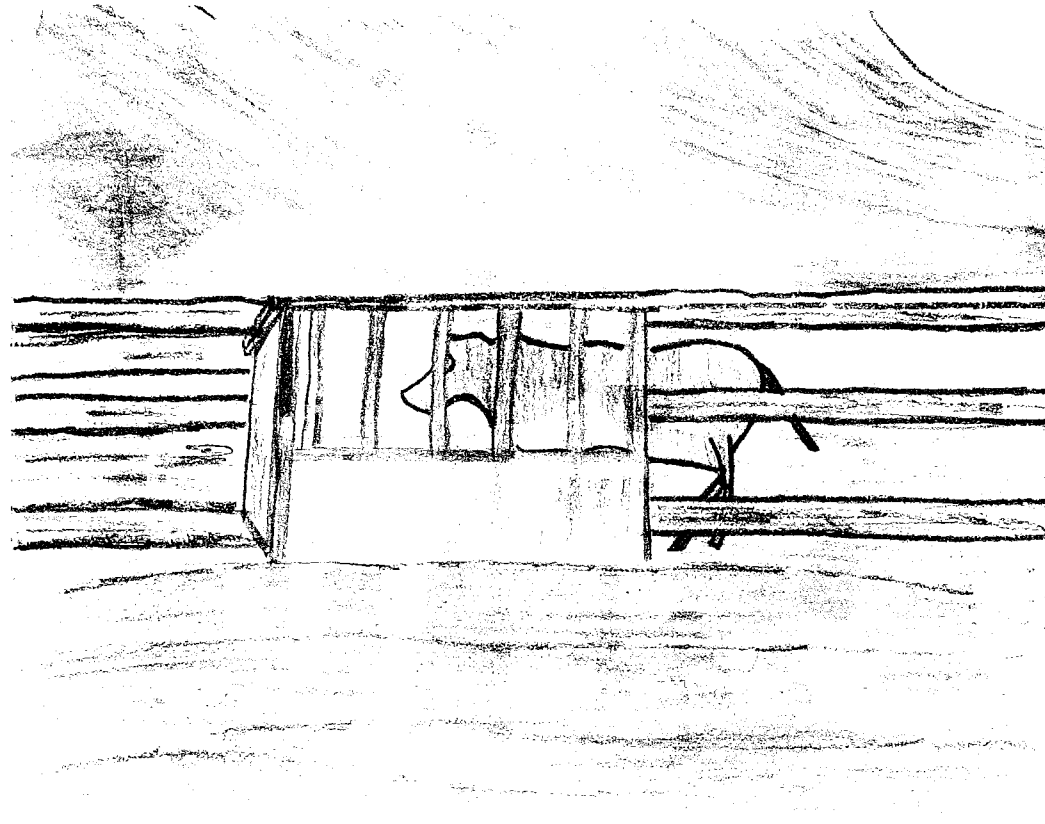


The day was beautiful and warm, but not too hot. Now the air was filled with smoke from the burning hair and dust from the kicking calves. Many women were there. They brought down a huge cooler of pop. Everyone was having a good time. The women visited, laughing and talking. Mrs. Cooper had come over, too, with the girls. Small children watched from the rails or ran around playing games along the fences.

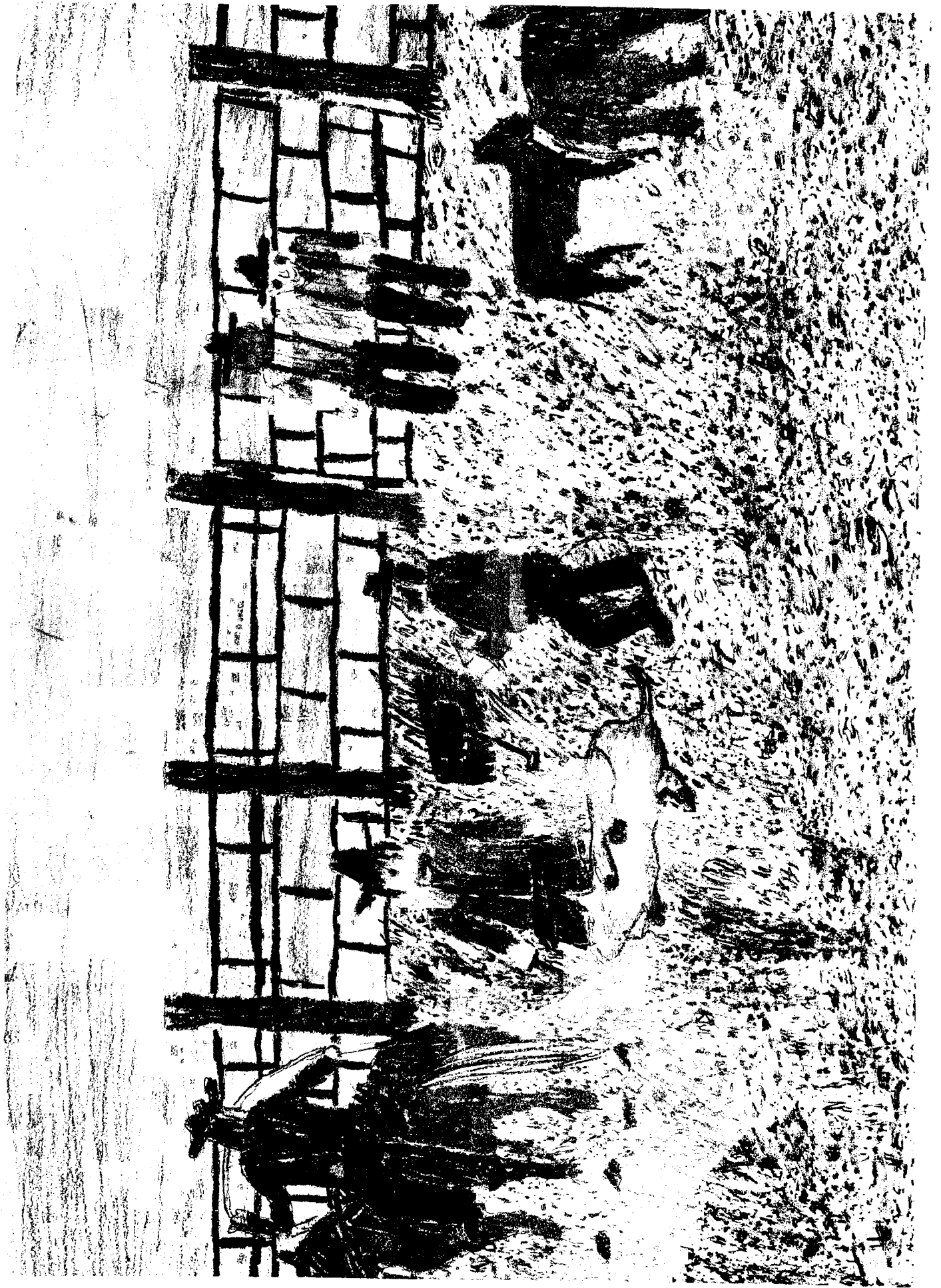


The 'big girls' came down too. The bright prints and plaids of their skirts, vests and aprons gave the dusty corrals a colorful "flower garden" look. In natural three part harmony, they sang their favorite country songs. They laughed and talked as they watched and drank pop.





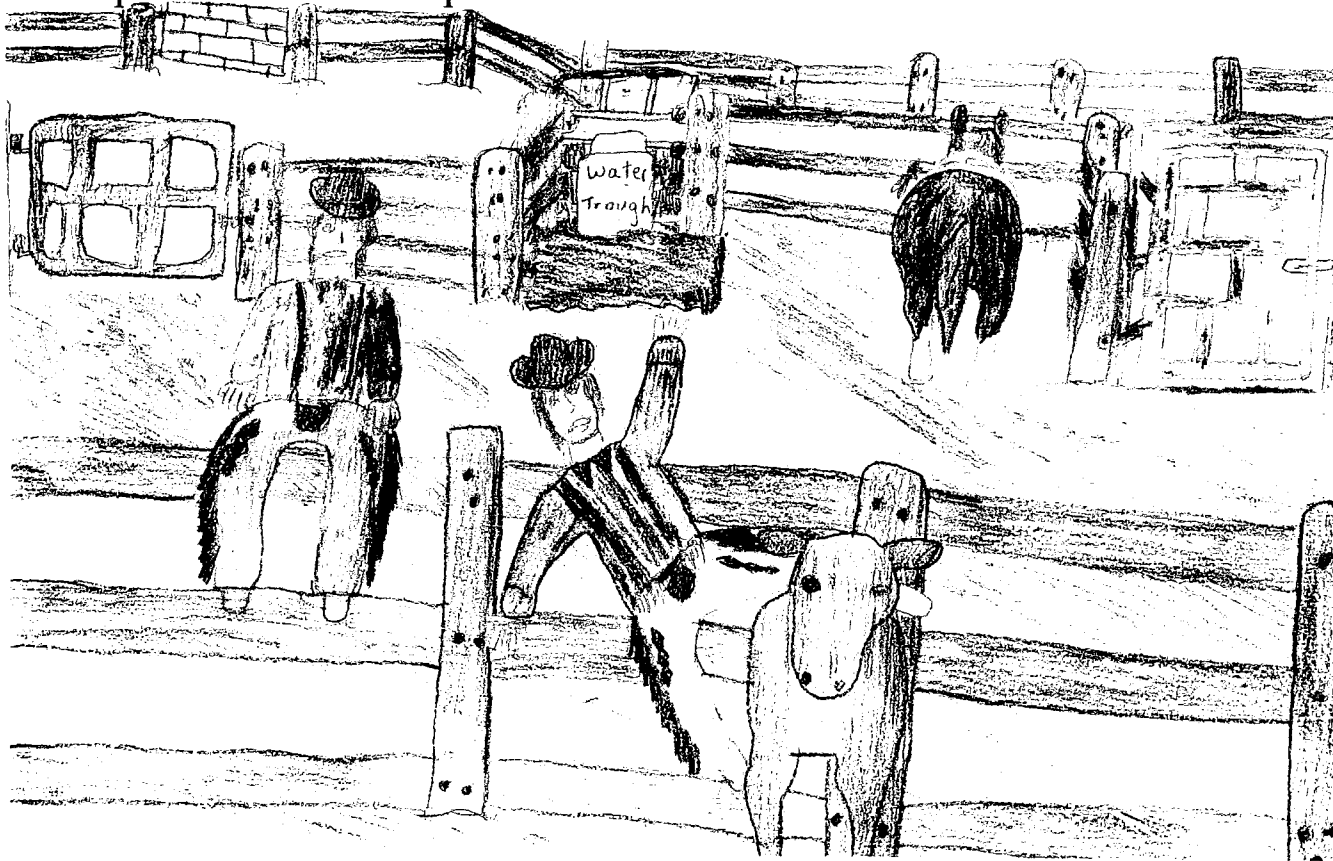
The main corral was beginning to look like a rodeo now. On horseback, the ‘big boys’ were roping two calves at a time, and the men were ready for branding and vaccinating. When everyone worked, the job went quickly. It was real teamwork. Everyone seemed to know just what to do next. Arnie and Luke watched in fascination. They wished that they could be part of the action.

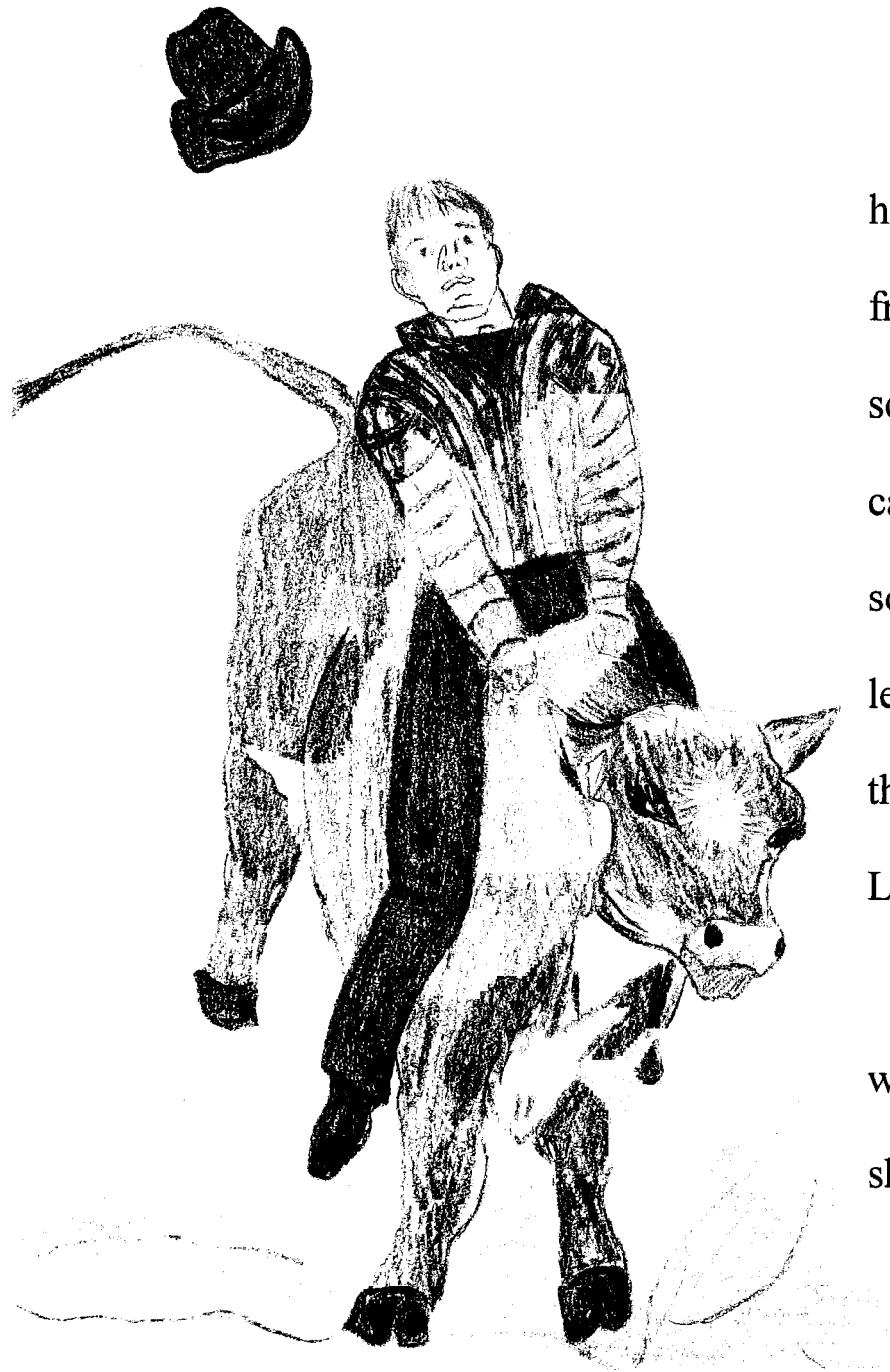


“Let’s have a pretend rodeo,” suggested Luke. “I want to be a bull-rider.” They sauntered over to the last pen. “Come on,” called Luke, “I want to ride a bull.”

“The bull would buck you right off! You could get hurt,” warned Arnie.

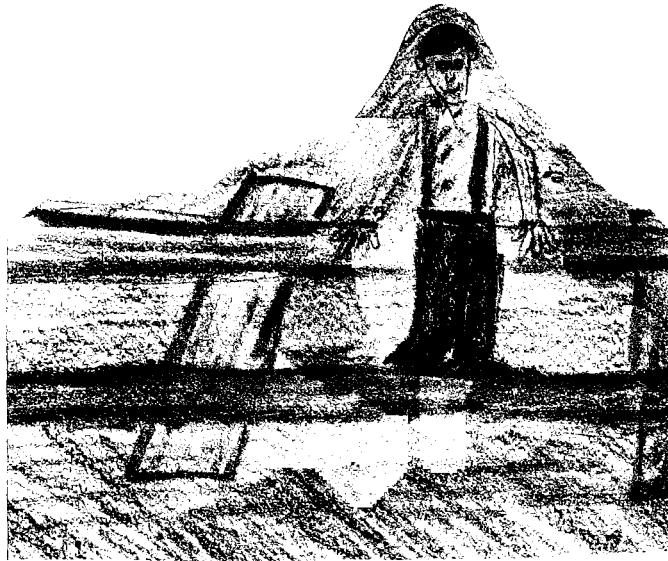
“Not THIS bull!” Luke said as he climbed onto a big calf that was jammed into a corner. He pulled a little rope halter out of his pocket.





“Ride ‘em, Cowboy!” Luke yelled, with his legs holding tightly onto the sides of the calf. The calf was frightened and tried to move out of the corner. The scared calf bellowed, “Get me out of here!” as the other calves moved around. They were crowded together, some nervous, away from their moms. Some wanted to leap and play. Others were simply trying to get out of the pen. Suddenly the rodeo calf jumped up and down. Luke went up and down too.

“YAHOOO—WOO-OO! This IS a rodeo!” whooped Luke. “Come on, Arnie! This is fun! You should ride one too. Look – there is a nice red one!”



He grabbed onto his rodeo calf's neck with both arms.

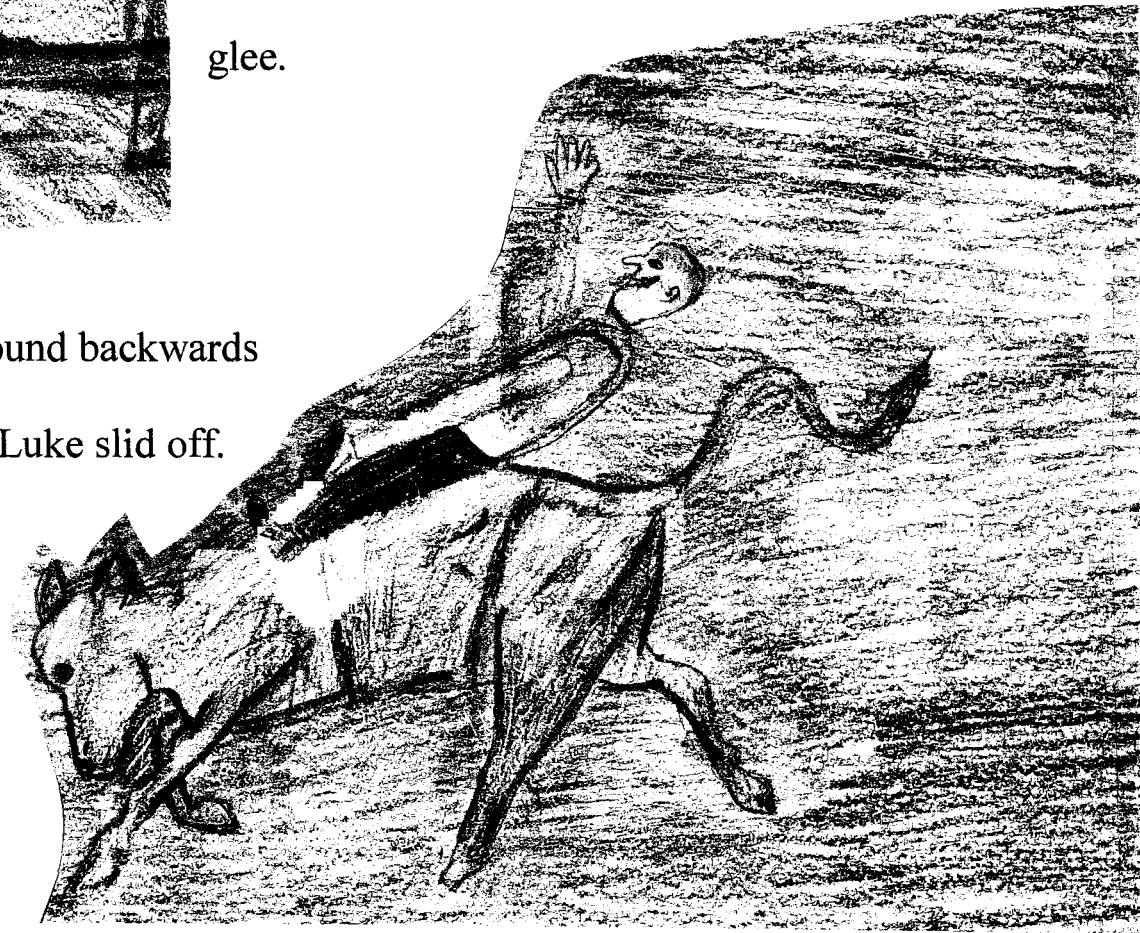
“Here, I have another halter in my pocket!”

The calf bawled and ran around in fast circles. BUMP!

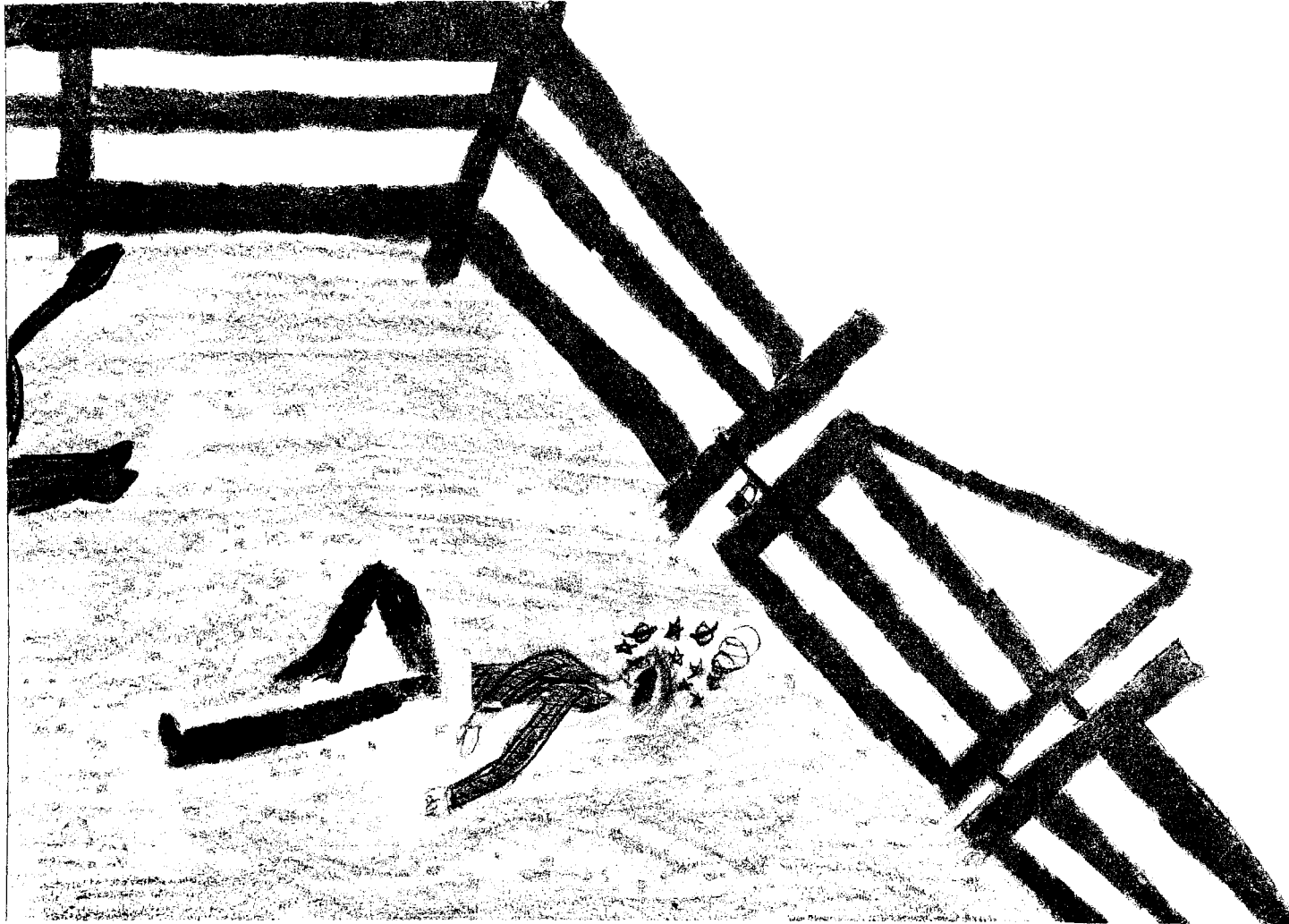
It hit the corral rail. Luke hung on and yelped with glee.

THUMP! It suddenly swung around backwards and hit the rail again. This time Luke slid off.

The other calves got scared.



They jumped. They bumped. They went everywhere. Luke was now on the ground. Several calves ran over him. The rodeo calf jumped over another calf and stepped on Luke. Then it ran off, with its rope halter still on.

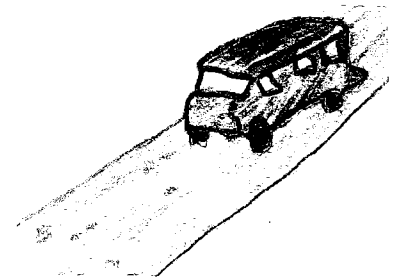


“HELP!” screamed Arnie. “HELP LUKE!” He called loudly, wanting someone to hear over the loudness of the branding noises. Some ‘big girls’ came running.



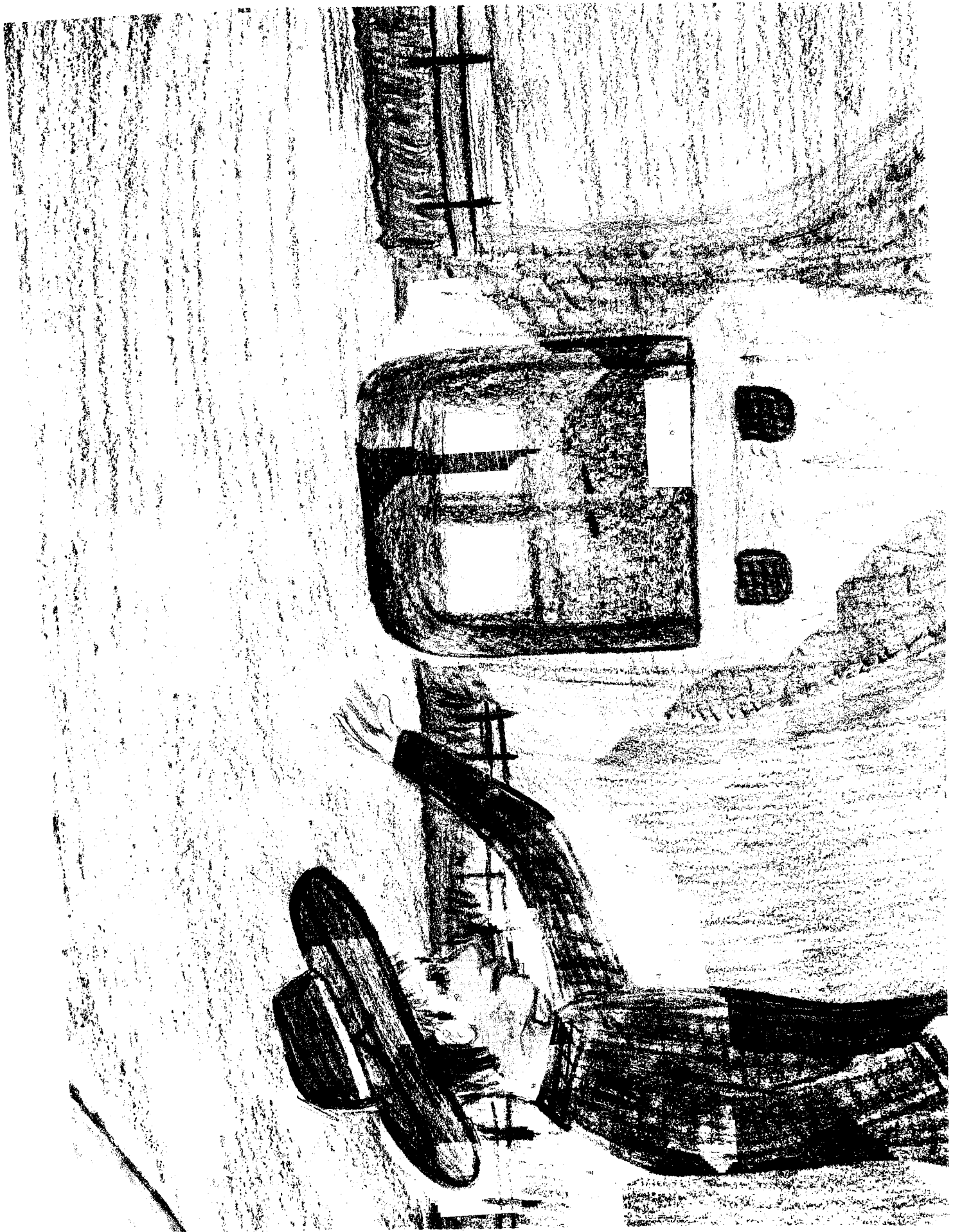
Arnie knelt down and looked at Luke. His eyes were closed. There was blood on his head. His body looked crumpled. One leg was under him. Big tears spurted from Arnie's blue eyes. "Is he dead?" he cried as Mary and Lydia approached. "Oh, no! We were just playing rodeo!"

Mary was kneeling down by Luke now. She had taken First Aid Training. First, she checked his pulse, put her ear to his mouth to check for breathing, and gently probed his limp body. By this time, Arnie was sobbing uncontrollably.



Calmly, Mary declared, "I think he will be okay. He's just stunned. But we need to get him to the hospital. He may have broken his leg. Laura, please go call Uncle Joe."

Lydia and Debbie took Arnie away from the accident scene to find his dad. Laura had brought Uncle Joe down and they were talking quietly. Peter came with the colony van, and soon they had safely tucked Luke onto a stretcher and into the back of the van. Off to the hospital! Arnie sadly watched the van leave the yard. He prayed that God would take care of his best friend.



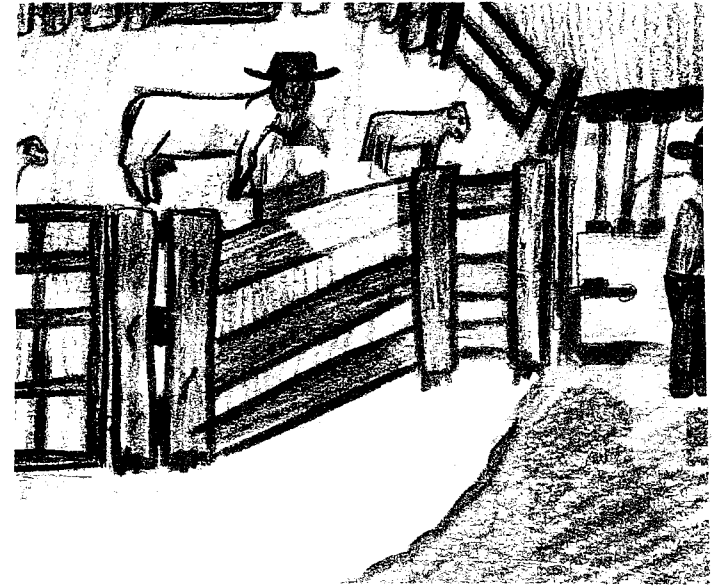
Arnie was scared now. He didn't want to tell his dad about the accident. He knew both boys would be in big trouble. He looked down when he saw his dad coming with Lydia. He sobbed as he told the whole story. He told the truth. His dad gave him a hug. "Arnie, I am glad you came to me right away. Accidents happen so quickly. Now you see how dangerous it can be when children play games they shouldn't. We will go to Luke's house tonight and talk to his parents." His dad looked serious and worried.

Arnie went home to be alone. Now Branding Day didn't seem fun anymore. He felt sorry for himself. He was so worried about his best friend. Would the doctor be able to save his leg? "Oh, God, please let Luke be okay," Arnie prayed, as he lay on his bed, shaking and shivering. Later, his mom brought him lunch and talked quietly with him, asking him to come back outside to help the 'big boys'.

“Do they even want me out there? I did something bad today,” Arnie said with a look of remorse.

“Oh, yes, Arnie. They want you,” she said, convincingly. “They know, and they want to give you a job so you don’t have to play rodeo. You should come out and show them that you are a good worker.”

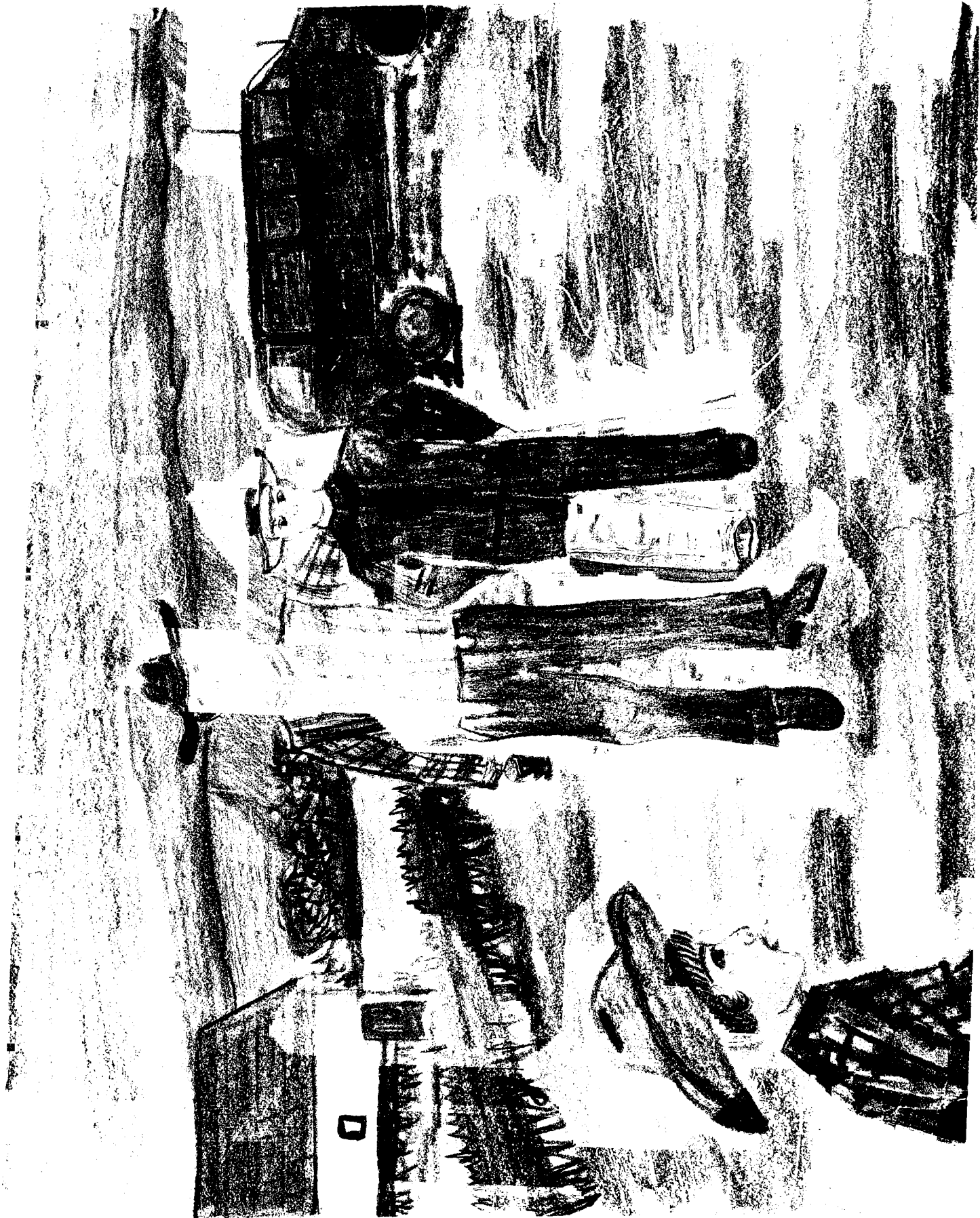
Arnie walked over to the ‘big boys’. They wanted him to open the gate each time a calf was branded, so it would go back to its mother. This way he could be busy and see a little action. He was so proud that they wanted him to help them. It was a perfect job. He felt like he was actually branding, since he was so close to all the important activity. It was fun listening to the ‘big boys’ and the men. He wanted to be just like them when he grew up. He felt important now, even though he still felt guilty about the accident.



The hot afternoon seemed to last *forever*. Arnie kept watching the road for the colony's blue van. It had been four long hours since the accident. What were they doing to him in the hospital? Would he have his leg amputated? Would he have a brain injury? Did his stomach get kicked? Will he live? All these terrible thoughts kept going through his mind. He had learned about the human body in school. He knew of some of the ways things could go wrong if you didn't take proper care of your body. Oh, he never should have gone down to that end pen with Luke!

“Arnie, the van is here!” called Clara, his older sister. “Let's go see!”

He looked up from the gate latch, and could see Peter driving the van closer. He was coming over to the branding area. He held his breath. Soon Peter stopped, got out and opened the van's sliding door. He picked up Luke and carefully stood him beside the van. He was wearing a huge white bandage around his head. He also had one leg in a big white cast. Then Peter passed him the crutches.



“I got eleven stitches in my head, and a fancy cast for my leg,” beamed Luke, “and Peter even bought me a can of pop!”

“This was a *good* thing?” thought Arnie, in disbelief! He had spent all afternoon feeling so sad, and his friend was grinning, like he had just been to the circus!

Luke grinned and said, “Well, what do you think? Do I look funny? What’s wrong? I am not the Frankenstein monster!”

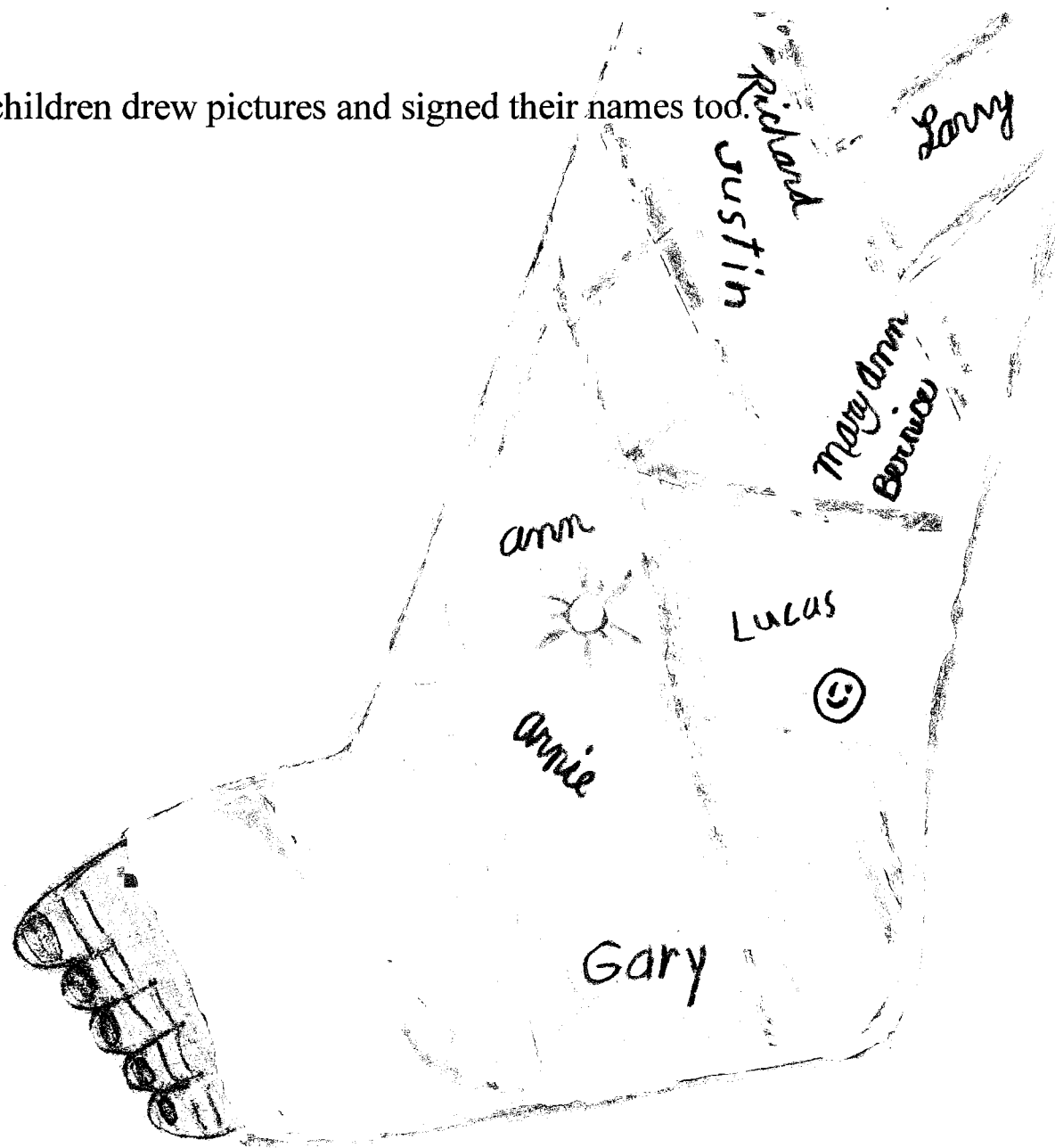
Arnie smiled and ran over to his friend. “I am just so happy that you are okay.” Tears formed in his eyes and streamed down his dusty cheeks. He hugged Luke.

Then, one by one, moms and dads, ‘big girls’ and ‘big boys’ came to look at Luke’s cast. Each person gave him a big hug. The English teacher put her name on the cast first. She wrote:

*To the bravest bull-rider
at Sandy Creek Colony ~ Mrs. Cooper*



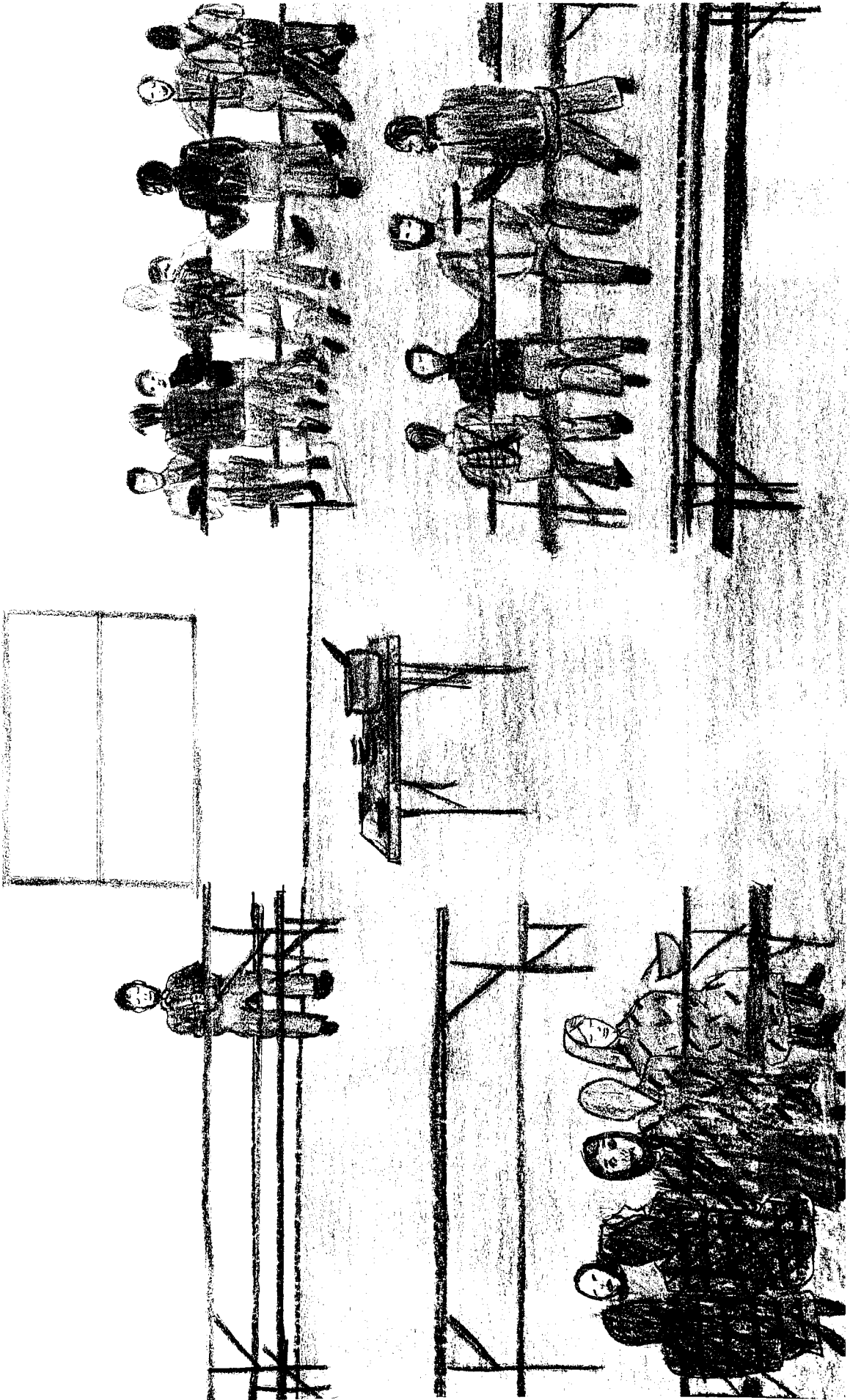
Then other children drew pictures and signed their names too.



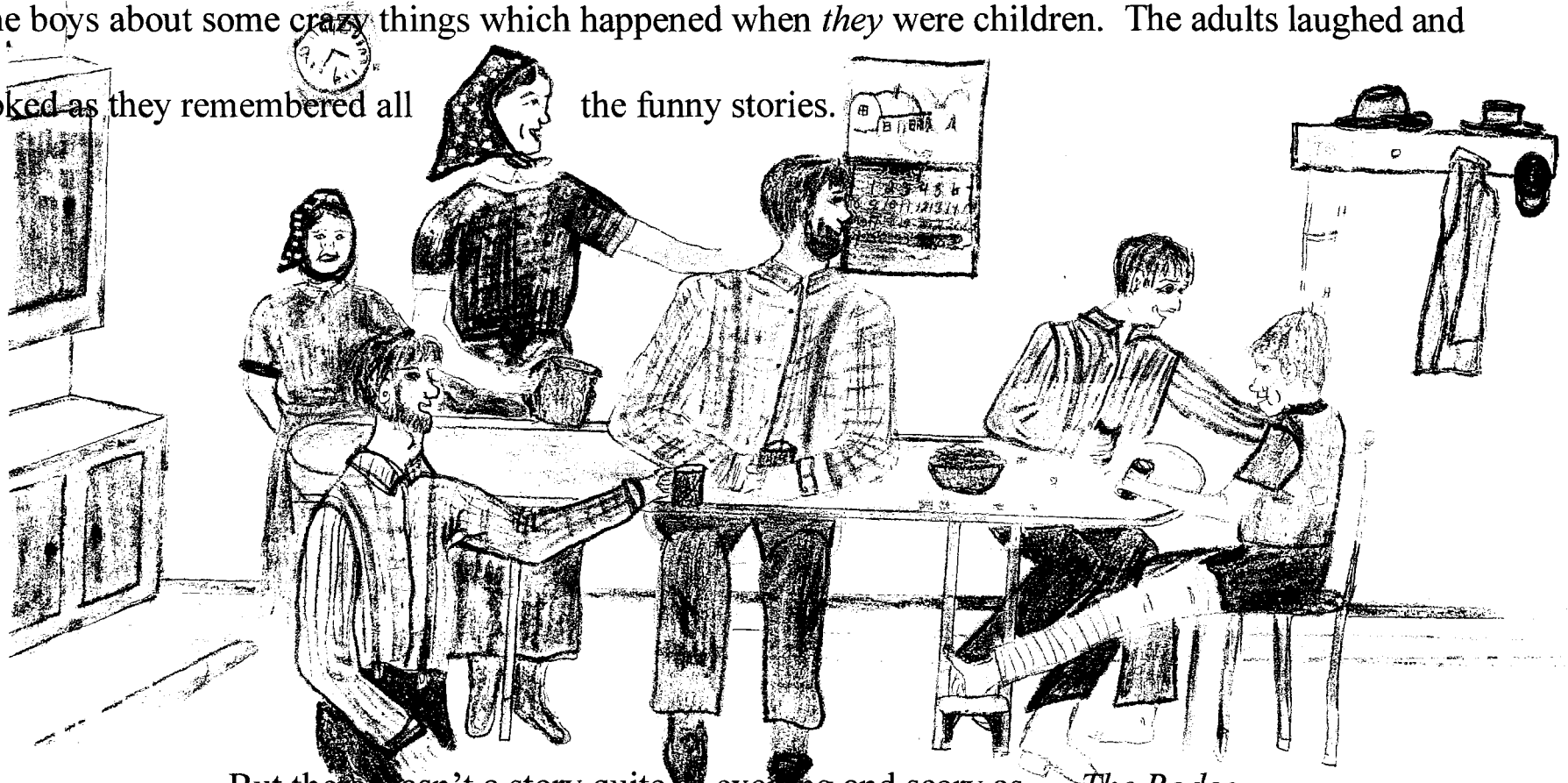
Branding was finished now, so everyone sat around and drank pop together before cleaning up for supper.

Before supper that night, Uncle Joe thanked God for Luke's safety. He told everyone: "Work is important. We have to be careful when we make decisions. Is it a good decision? Will everyone be safe? Luke's decision today to become a bull-rider proved to be a dangerous choice. Arnie could have been hurt too, or Luke could have been hurt more than he was. We need to take care of ourselves and all the people we work with and play with. Boys, we were lucky this time. This will be a Branding Day AND a rodeo to remember." The boys sat quietly with their heads down, feeling embarrassed about the rodeo accident.

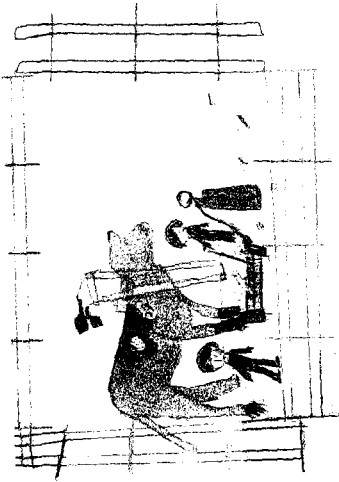
Then everyone had a good supper, after a hard day's work.



Later that evening, after studying their German verses, Arnie's family went over to Luke's house. Their parents reminded the two boys about how serious this rodeo accident was. They told the boys about some crazy things which happened when *they* were children. The adults laughed and joked as they remembered all the funny stories.



But there wasn't a story quite as exciting and scary as ... *The Rodeo*.



CONCLUSION

The interest and excitement that my stories have caused in four colony classrooms has been the reward for my efforts. One classroom presentation has been made, with a check for authenticity. All three stories passed with flying colors, as the students gave parts of the stories appropriate laughter, the hush of suspense and my questions positive responses, with the common Hutterite, “Oh...YES!” Some of the artwork was immediately recognized, while there was great curiosity for the artists’ of other drawings. “Which colony did that one come from?” they wanted to know. We shared a wonderful morning celebrating our culturally relevant stories, followed by a barbeque lunch.

It was also my privilege and an honour to be asked to present at the International Conference of Hutterian Educators in Edmonton (see Appendix C). My session included 26 Hutterian school educators from schools across the Canadian and American prairies. This was a highlight of my professional development! Using my title page for *Rodeo!* and my *Abstract*, I briefly explained my project. Then we created five writing groups, where each group produced a simple culturally relevant story, based upon an experience at their colony school. Artwork on each page was done as a black felt pen outline drawing, and the large primary style printing was completed by the designated printer. All participants received a master copy of all five stories. When photocopied at their prospective schools, each student will have a personal culturally relevant book which he/she can color. The atmosphere throughout my workshop was one of positive high-energy and collaboration. The complimentary responses were simply overwhelming, reiterating the need for this type of literature in our Hutterian classrooms.

My adventure into the world of writing children's literature has truly become an odyssey which has taken me from Hutterite colony school classrooms into Hutterite homes, to colleagues' homes, to conferences and through the learned halls of the university. I wanted to give Hutterite children stories for them about them. In this way, Hutterite students will be able to reap the benefits of reading culturally relevant children's literature. I have accomplished this, and more. My wish, now, is for Hutterite children everywhere to have access to my stories, and for more teachers to join in a collaborative effort to produce more culturally relevant children's literature for Hutterite students.

REFERENCES

- Bello, T. (1997). Improving ESL learners' writing skills. [On-Line]. Available: <http://www.cal.org/ncl/DIGESTS/Writing.html>.
- Buchoff, R. (1995). Family stories. The Reading Teacher, 49(3), 230-233.
- Canfield, J., & Hansen, M.V. (1995). A second helping of chicken soup for the soul. Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, Inc.
- Dooley, N. (1991). Everybody cooks rice. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books
- Flournoy, V. (1985). The patchwork quilt. New York: Dial.
- Friedman, I. (1984). How my parents learned to eat. Boston: Houghton Mifflin
- Goble, P. (1978). The girl who loved wild horses. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
- Harder, G.G. (1990). Christmas goose. Newton, KS: Faith and Life Press.
- Hofer, J. (1982). The History of the Hutterites, W.K. Printers' Aid Ltd.
- Hofer, S. (1995). Dance like a poor man. Winnipeg, MB: Hofer Publishers.
- Hoffman, M. (1991). Amazing Grace. NY: Dial
- Houston, G. (1992). My great aunt Arizona. New York: HarperCollins.
- Hughes, M. (1992). Beyond the dark river. Irwin Publishing.
- Johnson, A. (1989). Tell me a story, Mama. New York: Orchard.
- Joose, B. (1991). Mama do you love me? San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books
- Klein, H.A. (1995). Urban Appalachian children in northern schools: A study in diversity. Young Children, 51(3),10-16.
- Kibler, J.M. (1996). Latino voices in children's literature: Instructional approaches for developing cultural understanding in the classroom. In J.L.Flores(Ed.), Children of La Frontera: Binational efforts to serve Mexican migrant and immigrant students, 239-263.
- Kuntz, P.S. (1997). City children in African children's literature. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2-13.

- Lewin, H. (1981). Jafta. Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- Lewin, H. (1985). Alphabet for Africa. Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- MacLachlan, P. (1985). Sarah, plain and tall. New York: HarperCollins.
- MacLachlan, P. (1994). Skylark. New York: HarperCollins.
- Mandelbaum, P. (1990). You be me, I'll be you. NY: Kane Miller Book Publishers
- Martin, B. & Archambault, J. (1987). Knots on a counting rope. New York: Henry Holt.
- Morgan, S. (1997). Grainview: A novel about a teacher's experience on a Hutterite colony. Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education.
- Polacco, P. (1988). The keeping quilt. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rabideau, D. (1993). Integrating reading and writing into adult ESL instruction. [On-Line]. Available: http://www.cal.org/ncl/DIGESTS/INTEGRATING_RANDW.html.
- Rylant, C. (1982). When I was young in the mountains. New York: Dutton.
- Rylant, C. (1985). The relatives came. New York: Bradbury.
- Santin, A. (1995, November 22). Tales of the north: Books speak to children in terms that they understand. The Edmonton Journal, p. B7.
- Say, A. (1993). Grandfather's journey. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Smallwood, B.A. (1998). Using multicultural children's literature in adult ESL classes. [On-Line]. Available: <http://www.cal.org/ncl/DIGESTS/Kidlit.html>.
- Smucker, B. (1983). Amish adventure. Toronto, Ont.: Penguin Group.
- Stanek, M. (1989). Speak English for my mom. Nile, Ill.: Albert Whiteman
- Stuckey, N.R. (1990). Sara's summer. Waterloo, Ont.: Herald's Press.
- Tomlinson, L.M. (1996). Applying Banks' typology of ethnic identity development and curriculum goals to story content, classroom discussion, and the ecology of classroom and community: Phase one. University of Georgia, 9-29

Vardell, S. (1995). Looking for literature: Lessons from Zimbabwe. The Reading Teacher, 48 (7), 628-631.

Wardle, F. (1995). Alternatives...Bruderhof education...Outdoor school. Young Children, 51(3), 68-73.

White, J. (1991). Coyote winter. Toronto, Ont.: Lester publishing.

Wilmott, K.E., & Lee-Harris, S. (1996). Childhood education: International perspectives. Nova Southeastern University, 2-6.

Wrigley, H.S. (1993). Innovative programs and promising practices in adult ESL literacy. [On-Line]. Available:
http://www.cal.org/ncl/digests/INNOVATIVE_PROGRAMS.html.

APPENDIX A – DEFINITIONS

Hutterite colony – an agricultural-based commune on which families share common religious beliefs, customs, language and lifestyle.

Kitchen – refers to the colony kitchen, where all cooking supplies and goods are stored, meals are prepared by a team of cooks, and the coffee pot is always on. Hutterites eat all meals together in the adjoining dining hall. Meal preparation equipment, bakery and large appliances, including walk-in coolers and freezers are housed in this building, since colony homes do not have regular kitchens. Whenever someone would like coffee or a piece of pie, the coffee is available and the pantry door is open.

Paul-Rebecca's house – refers to the home of Hutterite husband, Paul Hofer and his wife, Rebecca; expression used to identify this joint ownership. The nameplate at their door would be a plaque with their initials: P.R.H., the husbands' initial first.

'Big boys', 'big girls' – young Hutterite adults, average age of 15-20 years, who have completed school; yet are not old enough for baptism and marriage.

German school/German teacher – classes usually held before and after English school and Saturday mornings, when written and spoken German is taught by a colony-designated Hutterite man. A separate building located at the south central end of the colony, with adjacent outdoor play area, is designed for German and English education.

English school/English teacher – multi-graded classes offered in English, which follow curricula, taught by provincially certified teachers. Hutterite students attend English school from age 7 to their 15th birthday, usually completing grades 1 through 8.

Branding Day – a busy agricultural and social event held in late spring when the colony's new calves are branded and vaccinated, castrated and ear-tagged. This can be one of the most entertaining and exciting days in a typical colony year.

Stork – in Hutterite lore, a large white bird which delivers brand-new babies in an elaborate tale explaining human reproduction.

Culturally relevant – pertinent, fitting and related to a specific culture.

Authentic – refers to information that is genuine or reliable, describing a concept, object, situation or event as it actually exists or happens.

Bank's (1981) Typology of Ethnic Identity Development		
Based on existing theory and research and the author's study of ethnic behavior in several nations (Banks, 1978), the construct indicates that an individual may progress or regress across stages at various times.		
Stage	Name of Stage	Characteristics of Individual's Behavior
Stage One	Ethnic Psychological Captivity	Experiences ethnic self-rejection and low self-esteem believes negative ideologies about his/her own culture and may strive to become highly culturally assimilated.
Stage Two	Ethnic Encapsulation	Believes in ethnic exclusiveness and voluntary separatism, believes in the superiority of his/her own group, and may feel that his/her way of life is threatened by other ethnic groups.
Stage Three	Ethnic Identity Clarification	Acceptance of self, the ability to accept positive aspects of one's own ethnic group, and the ability to clarify internal conflicts about one's own group.
Stage Four	Biethnicity	Functions effectively in two cultures and demonstrates an orientation toward a more multiethnic and pluralistic view of society.
Stage Five	Multiethnicity and Reflective Nationalism	Clarifies ethnic self-identity and a positive attitude toward other ethnic and racial groups.
Stage Six	Globalism and Global Competency	Demonstrates reflective and positive ethnic, national, and global identifications, and the knowledge, skills and commitment needed to function within cultures

APPENDIX C – CONFERENCE /PRESENTATION TITLE PAGE

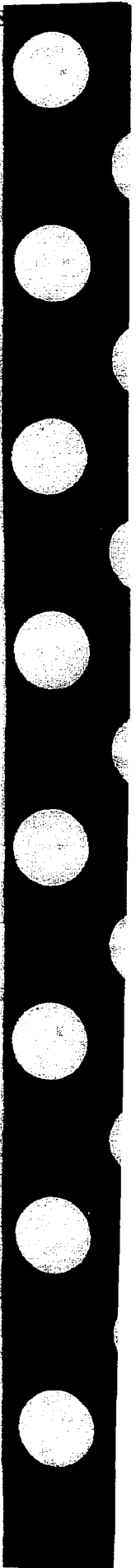
International Conference of Hutterian Educators

Delta Edmonton South
Edmonton, Alberta

June 1st, 2nd & 3rd, 2000

**Polka-dot Paper: Culturally Relevant Children's
Literature for Hutterite Students**

Patricia Cooper, B. Ed.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF HUTTERIAN EDUCATORS

*INTERNATIONLE KONFERENZ DER HUTTERISCHEN ERZIEHER
(LEHRER)*

Building



Bridges

JUNE 1, 2, AND 3, 2000

EDMONTON,

ALBERTA,

CANADA
